



THE BOSS

A TALE OF DARK, DISTILLED SECRETS IN A BOTTLE

GENEVIEVE COLTER
A DARK TRAPEZOHEDRON PRODUCTION



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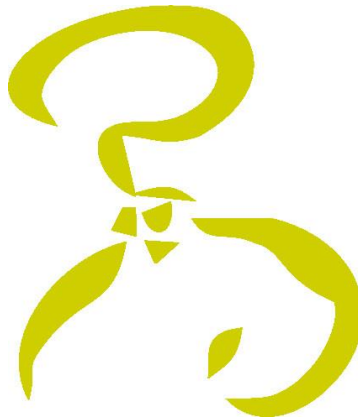
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INTRODUCTION

DRINKS AND A SHOW



This story is a quick but deadly one-shot mystery thriller for 3-5 players. It is designed as a surreal horror experience and while fairly straightforward, is intended to be difficult to escape from without losing a good amount of Sanity. Because of this, it is not recommended for inexperienced Investigators or for players who like to “rush into” a fight – the battles here most definitely aren’t ones that can easily be won, nor are they necessarily ones that even count as a typical fight!

Prohibition and 1920’s Decadence

As any scholar familiar with the history and culture of America in the 1920’s can tell you, Prohibition was the period from 1920 to 1933 where the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages was illegal. Due to the 18th Amendment and after much lobbying from multiple special interest groups as well as various societal events including WWI (the Great War as it was then known), all legitimate means of drinking in public were outlawed, causing the rise of an underground ring of smugglers, gangsters, and crime. It was in this era that Al Capone and his mobsters famously were active, and in this era that bootleggers and ‘shine runners moved clandestine orders to and from major cities. Just about every city and town in the USA had secretive stills, hidden speakeasies, and home brewing operations. Many drug stores at this time sold “medicinal alcohol” and ingredients that were not themselves alcohol but could be used to make moonshine and homemade liquor. This did not end until the 21st Amendment was ratified, undoing the 18th Amendment entirely. Even today, however, some counties in the United States remain dry or restrict liquor sales on certain days of the week.

Most of the American public obeyed prohibition law, however it is no secret that crime syndicates grew extremely powerful during this time. It’s also no secret that there were plenty of people who disobeyed the law, which was poorly enforced for much of its run. Criminals were well-armed, often very wealthy, and caused an uptick in violence in large cities like Detroit and Chicago. The stereotype is of course of a group of tommy gun toting, fast-talking gangsters and their molls in a big warehouse full of rum barrels with an old Ford Model T ready to go. But these syndicates could and often did operate from anywhere and everywhere, including in places least expected such as storefronts, apartment complexes, restaurants, and even the basements of their own homes.

It is this sort of operation that this scenario explores, taking place in a performing arts guild that has long been associated with wealthy patrons. Unfortunately, these bootleggers and ‘shiners have something else up their sleeves, a deadly secret ingredient that could prove fatal unless stopped.

The Keeper’s Secrets

It is 1924 and in whatever town the Keeper so chooses to set this scenario, there is a local group known as the Lakeside Guild, a club of sorts which aims at promoting the arts and culture of the city. In particular, they are known to be generous sponsors of several local artists and often donate to local theaters, both stage and screen. Nearly everyone who knows of this place has a positive word to say about it, and outwardly it would seem that nothing is the matter.

However, the Lakeside Guild is not all that it seems to be. In its basement levels, it’s hiding a group of small-time gangsters who have set up a distillery and begun quite the lucrative bootlegging operation. Due to their territory around the theater district and their location in the Lakeside Guild, they call themselves the Shakespeare Gang, and they’ve been working on getting this distillery to maximum production for the last four years. Most of the gangsters now live in the guild basement as a sort of safehouse that is near inaccessible to anyone they don’t allow in. The security is tight, and nobody enters or leaves without the gang’s express approval. A hidden elevator in the back of the building allows the movement of people, shipments, and supplies in and out. And their boss, Steven Marlone, has recently taken control of the Guild, enjoying the benefits of both the distilling business and the wealthy donations of patrons to the guild itself. Recently, he’s even taken up services of blackmail, extortion, bribery, and hit services as needed.



“Roll out the barrels, boys!”

The actual guild employees themselves are for the most part not aware of the secret operation in the basement, but they themselves have something to hide. Since the late 1800's, the Lakeside Guild has slowly but surely become infested with the dark influence of the Unspeakable One, Hastur. It began when an odd new patron donated a script to a rare play rather than money. Thinking it would be a wonderful addition to the guild's library, the Guild kept it, deciding it might make for a useful script later. This script was none other than *The King in Yellow*, and upon reading the play for the first time, all of the chosen actors at the guild went irreparably mad. From there, the madness became all-consuming, a small cult to Hastur festering within the guild. One by one, everyone at the guild was forced to read the script, see the Sign, and become worshippers of the Unspeakable One until the entire guild fell under the sway of Lost Carcosa's dark influence. Those who would not submit were tortured into submission, and those who still would not repent were sacrificed to Hastur. Now, due to his malign influence and various cult activities, not only can the King come and go freely within the building without Aldebaran needing to be above the horizon, the entire Lakeside Guild building is beginning to merge with Carcosa. It has started to become as surreal as the play itself, slowly becoming part of the play's world as it is erased from reality and rewritten into fiction. So warped are its walls and halls that even being in the building for too long, exposed to its impossible sights and strange influences, can drive a person insane.



A cultist embraces his King.

It was into this that Steven Marlone and the Shakespeare Gang unwittingly fell. While most of the bootleggers and 'shiners in the basement don't know of the guild's true nature, Marlone and some of his men very much do – and they've all themselves fallen or started to fall under the influence of the Yellow Sign. Once he took over the guild, Marlone was forced to read *The King in Yellow* and indoctrinated into the Lakeside Guild's rites, and in turn he began to indoctrinate those most trusted of his gang. With the power of both his gang and the entire cult on his side, Marlone has become a very dangerous man. Now the Lakeside Guild is much more than a pocket of surreal darkness in the heart of the city. It is now a serious threat to reality itself, unless the Investigators intervene.

The Lakeside Guild: Disciples of the King

This esoteric Hastur cult operates as a club for patrons of the performing arts. Known variably as "The Disciples of the Twin Suns", "The Servitors of the King", and the "Lakeside Performers' Guild" (their street name so to speak), they have about 25 known members and are always seeking more. Members are generally artists, musicians, singers, and actors, some of them very prominent. The group is tied to not just illegal smuggling and distillery, but also to disappearances and extortion, murder, and hitman services. There are even rumors that the group engages in orgies, torture, and child pornography. These rumors, however, are mostly spread by a local church, which finds the group a nuisance and a distraction from the Christian Faith.

Various groups in the city have spoken both in favor of and against the Performer's Guild, making the group a conscientious issue for most people in town ever since they set up shop. The group meets every Sunday evening, after dusk, in the Lakeside Guild building. In terms of Mythos activity, they are also associated with the smuggling of Mythos tomes and artifacts, human sacrifice, and forced indoctrination.

Cult members identify themselves by wearing gold jewelry – men generally wear small gold cufflinks in the shape of a three-pronged crown, while women typically wear a gold necklace with a pendent that depicts two suns overlapping each other. Most patrons of the Guild are cultists or employees of the Guild. No cultist knows the true face of any other cultist outside of cult meetings, as during their rituals they always wear gold-accented white masks to obscure their faces. Employees at the Guild do know which patrons are likely cultists, but similarly do not know other cult members by exact face or name. The only exception is the current head of the cult, Steven Marlone, and his immediate staff members – they know who every patron and employee is, why they became cult members, and the true nature of the cult's work.

The Disciples do not take kindly to outsiders snooping around in their affairs, and swiftly punish anyone caught doing so with gruesome tortures. Examples include *A Clockwork Orange* style torment of the victim being forced to stare at the Yellow Sign for hours, being brought before Hastur and subjected to his whims, the victim being read the entire text of the play out loud from start to finish, and the victim being fed to or intimidated by Byakhee. All these torments are a fate most horrible indeed, and are designed to be will-breaking, sanity-crushing, soul rending fates that can drive even the sturdiest, most stable investigator over the edge... All such tortures cost 1d8/1d10 SAN to endure over the course of several hours (with the exception of the Byakhee, use the SAN penalty for seeing it as normal). If torture extends for days, reroll at the start of each new day and after 1d6+1 days, halve the SAN penalty until the cost is down to 0/1 SAN or the captured victim is rescued).

On a less torturous note, people meddling in the cult's actions or asking too many questions commonly are sent letters containing a single piece of paper, which bears the Yellow Sign on it. The effect and shock of seeing the Sign (0/1d6 SAN) and hallucinating thereafter is generally enough to get the meddler to back off, the cult's way of saying "You will leave us alone, or you will suffer a horrible fate!" If they do not relent, they are then kidnapped and kept prisoner, tortured, and possibly forcibly indoctrinated into the cult. This is likely to be the fate of truly incautious Investigators if the Lakeside Guild is not eliminated in its entirety, or if the Keeper wishes to use them as a long-term threat for a campaign.

A Different Yellow Sign?



It may be noticed in this scenario that the design for the Yellow Sign does not always follow the Chaosium version so typified in various Hastur campaigns. This decision was made due to widespread public knowledge of the Chaosium Yellow Sign – it's on pins, merchandise, jewelry, t-shirts, and even stickers for cars. Since the mystery and intrigue of the symbol isn't exactly preserved by people knowing what the symbol looks like and is, the author has chosen to give a redesign to the symbol for this scenario and encourages Keepers to come up with their own designs for it as well. However, there's certainly nothing stopping the Keeper from using the infamous and well-known version of the Sign, if they so choose. In fact, the Sign could morph between various designs, differ for every viewer, or otherwise change in bizarre ways as the Keeper wishes.

THE BOSS

GETTING THE INVESTIGATORS INVOLVED

Depending on the group and the Keeper's plans for a given campaign, this scenario can easily slot in anywhere as needed. It works particularly well as an interlude if the Lakeside Guild's presence is built up and should begin with some NPC asking the Investigators to look into a disappearance, strange happenings at the guild, or some other juicy hook. However, if the Keeper is running this as a one-shot or needs ideas to get the PCs together, here are two ways it could be done.

Option One: Death and Taxes

The Investigators bear witness to a grisly accident involving a man in his mid-40's. Either they are at the scene when it happens, or they are called on to investigate it by another person. In all cases, the event occurs as follows.

While the Investigators are either on the job, travelling to work, or doing some other mundane activity while waiting for the subway to arrive, allow them to roll Spot Hidden. Success indicates they see a very pale, slightly jaundiced-looking man running from a nearby stairway down, holding a piece of paper tightly in one hand and a briefcase in the other. The man is sweating profusely and looks terrified. Psychology notes he seems to be in the grips of panic or a nervous breakdown. The next subway car is about to rush by on its way to the next station, signaled by a horn for people to step back.

This is precisely when, without preamble, the man suddenly runs towards and off the platform, despite others trying to stop him. Landing squarely in the rails below, he turns to the Investigators and seems to grin madly even as the subway driver attempts to slow down and slams the horn again. Alas, it's too late to stop, and the next sound is an awful crunching splatter as the man is pulled under the train, followed by a spray of bright blood and gore all over the track. Shortly thereafter a mass panic erupts in the station – women faint, men are shocked, and children cry. If the Keeper feels like being cruel, any Investigator close to the platform at this point (ask or roll Luck) may possibly be sprayed with blood or pieces of flesh from the impact. All Investigators witnessing this horrific suicide take 2/1d6+1 SAN for its gruesome and shocking nature.

When the subway car passes and cops have been called, the Investigators (if they feel brave enough to stomach it or are on the job to do so!) can look at what remains of the mangled body on the tracks. It's barely human and cut nearly in half, blood painting the tracks and the brick nearby. The suitcase has been flung into the far wall, sending what appear to be various tax and accounting documents everywhere.

The man's ID (Spot Hidden to notice) shows him as one Robert Meldrum, a somewhat wealthy businessman. Inside the wallet is a card identifying him as a donor to the Lakeside Guild in town, and still clutched in the one unmangled hand he has left is that piece of paper (Boss Papers #1). Retrieving this paper reveals it to be a blackmail letter, the ink smudged by blood and teardrops, at the bottom of which is a curious yellow symbol. This is of course the Yellow Sign, and it takes o/1d6 SAN to see.

The Investigators will not have much time to identify the body or look the scene over before the police arrive and begin ushering people out of the subway station. The Investigators are asked to give statements and sent on their way, and that station is closed for the rest of the evening while cleanup commences.

At this point, the Investigators are free to do whatever they want with the information. Research yields the clues about Robert Meldrum and the Lakeside Guild as before, but nothing too concrete. If the Investigators want answers, they'll have to infiltrate the Guild for themselves...



"Got a bizarre one for you this time, chief..."

Option Two: The Shakespeare Job

This is perhaps best done with Investigators that are of criminal bent but could also be done with Investigators that are law enforcement if the Keeper desires. In this case, the Investigators somehow catch a feisty 'shine runner who might just have answers if they apply the right pressure.

This scene opens with the Investigators either catching, or having just caught (Keeper's choice), a 'shine runner by the name of Basil Coulter. This fiery Irish immigrant with dark hair and icy blue eyes mainly runs for whomever pays him, but this time he's smuggled for the wrong gang and gotten in deep trouble. Basil isn't normally the talkative sort, but something about his gaze looks troubled this time as he sits in the chair, hands and legs bound. Perhaps whomever asked the Investigators to deal with him has told them as much.

As the Investigators enter the room, Basil looks up. Have them roll Psychology, and on a success, they can tell the man is hiding barely restrained fright behind his eyes, the kind of silent fear that a shell-shocked soldier might show in their eyes. All the same, he refuses to respond to any questions about who he was working for, how long he's been running for them, etc. The only possible tactics that might work are interpersonal skills (especially Intimidate and Persuade) or physical violence. Once the Investigators get him to talk, the following information can be gleaned from him as he speaks in a nervous, halting manner.

Basil was asked to run a job for the Shakespeare gang. It was supposed to be a totally normal job – get in, meet up with a guy named Marlene, pick up the shipments at the Lakeside Guild, get out, take them to the next town over. However, when he came to pick up the shipments, he didn't get any response, so he looked around for another entrance, thinking that he was either early or the others were late for the pickup. He found one by sliding down some sort of vent, probably an unused coal chute, and eventually did find the shipment. However, nobody seemed to be there, though he could hear machinery running. As he searched around in the dark distillery for the shipment, he heard something else – some sort of massive animal or something approaching very quickly – and he figured it was a dog, so he tried to stay quiet and hide as best as he could.

Unfortunately, the animal was not a dog – it was "some sort of monstrous bat-wasp thing", according to Basil (a byakhee), and it was bigger than a car. The thing at first didn't notice him, but Basil panicked and screamed, and the thing attacked him. He isn't sure how the hell he made it out of there alive, but he ran and ran until he eventually got caught by the police, still carrying a box of the liquor he had grabbed onto in his fear. He's been trying to keep it together ever since, because he knows that nobody would believe him if he told the truth. If the Investigators ask him about the liquor, he says he's never seen anything like it – a golden liquid with little black flecks in it, almost shimmering. He has no idea how the guys make it or what they put in it to give that shimmer, but he knows it's strong – one sip, and you're out cold for a couple hours. He also states that there was a strange symbol on some of the barrels, burned into the wood. If asked to draw it, Basil draws a very crude (and harmless) approximation of the Yellow Sign. "It was this real funny-looking thing I think, and it made my eyes hurt..."

In actuality, the liquor is Space Mead, brewed for the purposes of both consumption and ritual deeds. The Shakespeare Gang not only uses this for the Guild's rites, but also sells it, heavily diluted, as a beverage to special clients. It's the latter brew that Basil was asked to transport, but he came during a ritual night, and was left on his own with the guardian Byakhee in the distillery. The Yellow Sign on the barrels denotes that a certain batch is for ritual use, not consumption.

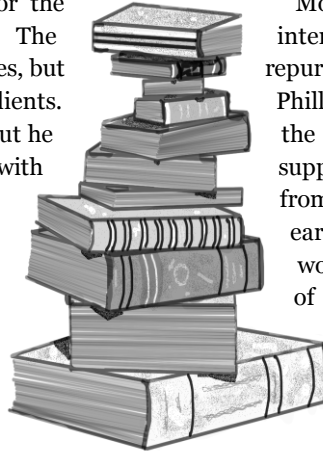
There's not much more the Investigators can get out of Basil. He doesn't know who runs the Shakespeare Gang, and this is the only time he's interacted with them. But he does give a warning as the Investigators part, perhaps to go follow the leads he's given.

"Listen, you," he says as they leave, eyes wide and wild. "You best stay away from that Lakeside Guild if you know what's good for you. That thing probably got Marlene, I'm sure of it! You gotta believe me... There's something going on there, and it ain't nothing Godly. If you go there... well, you might not ever come back again. Not in one piece, anyway."

Researching Leads

Investigators trying to obtain information on the Lakeside Guild might be frustrated by the lack of any hard evidence of wrongdoing. Checking in the papers will find only glowing reviews of its community service efforts, artistic value to the city, and generally excellent taste. Some members count themselves among the ranks of the rich and famous for the city. Whether or not these glitterati are initiated members of the cult, or even know the Guild is a front for both a cult and a bootlegging operation, is left to the Keeper to decide. There is an obituary concerning the mysterious and tragic death of Lawrence Wright, the former owner and administrator of the Guild, dated about four years previous to the current date, which can be found with Library Use and is reproduced in the handouts section (Boss Papers #2).

Investigators who opt to go to the Library instead of the papers can discover a bit more about the Lakeside Guild's prior history. There are a few easily found (no roll needed) books on the topic describing the origins, founding, and cultural impact the Guild has had on the city, but all only state that the Guild has been a staple of the local art scene for some time and has donated generously to many local causes. At the Keeper's option, there may be listings of artwork owned and displayed by the Guild, along with playbills for past stage productions and musical performances the Guild has helped to fund. None of these have any Mythos significance whatsoever, but might be a bit abstract or creepy if the Keeper feels that would enhance the story. The author recommends looking at the works of Beksinski, Dali, and similar surreal artists for an idea of what the Lakeside Guild tends to exhibit in its galleries.



More crucially, Library Use uncovers a few interesting things. The Guild is centered in an older, repurposed house that was once owned by a man named Phillip Antony Wright. Wright, who was a member of the state congress in the 1800's and famously supportive of the arts, tragically passed away in 1875 from pneumonia, which had claimed his wife a year earlier. When it became apparent to the man that he would not live through his illness, he set aside much of his money and his entire estate to preserving the arts and culture of the city, and so it has remained to this day. His son, Archibald Wright, maintained the estate until he was called to duty during the Great War, however he

was paralyzed during battle by a stray bullet to the spine, forcing him to return home. He ran the estate until passing it down to his son, Lawrence Wright, whose obituary is currently in the paper. What the Investigators' research does not uncover is that Lawrence Wright (like his father before him) was the former leader of the cult until Marlene murdered him in cold blood for his smuggling operation.

Archibald Wright is still alive and resides in the local asylum, where the man's dabbling in the secrets of Carcosa has finally caught up to him and left him deranged. If they do decide to visit him, they find a man who believes himself to be the current King of the United States of America and is quite beyond long-term coherent discussion. He can, however, explain that he designed the Twin Sun insignia of the Guild if the Keeper so wills it, though he will not reveal his purpose for designing it. Otherwise, his babbling is only decipherable as pertaining to Hastur if a Cthulhu Mythos check is rolled.

Researching the symbol they've found is not easy, and requires Library Use to obtain. Several hours of searching in the right places yields information that the sigil is of an occult nature and has been found at the scene of tragedies, occasionally on bodies as a brand or tattoo, and sometimes painted as random graffiti. Occult checks determine that it is thought to be a symbol of some power and is considered a bad omen by some. The significance of the symbol is mostly unknown, but it is known to cause headaches and significant emotional distress in some people, although nobody seems sure as to why.

The Investigators do not find any connection to Hastur, Carcosa, or *The King in Yellow* just yet, but an old news article from 1872 can be uncovered concerning a terrible riot in a London theater during the premiere of a new play entitled *The Queen and the Stranger*. Multiple people including all of the actors died, and the symbol was found on some of the props for the show, leading the article's author to believe that the play itself inspired the riot. This article is reprinted in the handouts section (Boss Papers #3). For more about this incident, see Chaosium's published scenario *Tatters of the King*.

Looking into Steven Marlone (if they have that connection) requires a trip to the police station, and applicable Law or other rolls to see his files. Marlone is a known criminal, but the Police currently have no idea where he might be. He's wanted on various charges of extortion, murder, and possession and distribution of alcohol. The boys in blue would greatly appreciate any information the Investigators may have. Criminally inclined and law enforcement Investigators already know Marlone is a criminal, possibly one who has cheated them or otherwise inconvenienced them.

Looking into Robert Meldrum (if they have that connection) unveils nothing more than a bunch of grieving coworkers and family who are shocked he would have committed suicide. His wife is besides herself with grief and nobody they ask had any idea he was struggling. In fact, he'd recently gotten a promotion and was considered one of the best tax preparers in the company. Meldrum was very much not the type of person, nor did he have any apparent motive, to end his life. He loved the arts and donated to the Lakeside Guild generously, though he never much visited it. He had no enemies, and nobody in the company is familiar with the Sign on his blackmail note if shown it (although it is likely to distress those who view it).

No further leads anywhere can be found, it all seems to lead back to the Lakeside Guild. If the Investigators want to know the truth of what happened, they will need to visit the Guild for themselves.

Visiting the Gallery

It is likely that as soon as the Investigators finish their research, they will want to immediately check on the Lakeside Guild. While the Guild is owned by a cult, it's also a functioning art gallery, and as such it is open to the public. If the Investigators choose to enter the Guild as sight-seers, they will not find much difficulty as long as they don't bother the staff or attempt to enter any staff or members-only areas (See the Map handout for details on where these are). The Guild's operating hours are 10 AM to 6 PM Monday through Friday, with shortened hours on Saturday. The Guild is closed on Sundays – this is when cult activities are set up and take place.



Investigators visiting during operating hours find themselves greeted warmly by a young, golden-haired receptionist named Elle. She is the stereotypical friendly and overly nice type, always smiling and rarely seeming to blink. A Hard Psychology roll detects that this is a “mask” of professionalism she wears, but does not detect anything untoward about it – it's just how she must behave at work. A Spot Hidden will note her dual-sun pendant around her neck, which she explains is a gift to all Guild members (it is not, it's only for cultists).

Elle is happy to provide information about the Guild (nothing they haven't already heard before), a map of the gallery areas, and some base guidelines on what is on display. She will also mention that there are currently a few Guild members upstairs and in some of the back rooms working on various projects, and they must not be disturbed. These people are left for the Keeper to create or place into the scenario from other scenarios as so desired. If there is any sort of trouble or the Investigators have further questions, she can bring them face to face with Steven Marlone, the owner of the guild.

Elle seems like a kind young lady, but her smile is a façade. Beneath the blonde, blue-eyed sweetheart lies a high-ranking priestess of the Disciples of the King, a dangerous magic user and well-practiced tormentor with a smile. She will keep up this act even if she has the Investigators as hostages until it is clear that her plans are falling apart, in which case she will dramatically and psychotically rage. It would do well for the Keeper to play on her seeming kindness in a way that causes more paranoia than reassurance – think a Stepford Smiler or the mean girl from high school all grown up. Her stat block is given in the back of this scenario.

Breaking and Entering

If the Investigators are of a more criminal bent or simply feel like a bit of a heist is in order, they may desire to sneak into the Guild. This is easier said than done, especially on Sunday evenings when rites to Hastur are held and the King is contacted for dark wisdom of the Hyades. If the Investigators want a chance of sneaking in, they had better do it on Saturday, when the guards around the building are replaced by much less savory characters. An alley running behind the building leads to a back entrance, where the Investigators can find a dumbwaiter that leads down into the basement distillery of the Guild, however this area is almost always guarded. A stakeout can verify the following information concerning the Guild.

During the Week

Monday through Friday, there is nothing odd that happens after hours. Nobody goes in or out, at least not until late in the evening. Multiple guards, however, numbering at least 6, patrol the Guild to protect the artwork there. All of these Guards are cultists and trusted bodyguards of both Elle and Marlone, and all of them know every area of the Guild from top to bottom. Each is armed with a truncheon, and two of them are armed with handguns. See their stat block in the back for more info.

The Guild is silent inside and out during the week, with guards patrolling the hallways and perimeters every few minutes. These guards don't want to kill interlopers, rather they will try to overwhelm and take them hostage as sacrifices to Hastur. Sometimes, Guild members will use the upper rooms of the building as a sort of temporary lodgings, and these may hold other, sleeping people as the Keeper desires. Stealth, Locksmith, Spot Hidden, Listen, and Sleight of Hand rolls are all useful here, not to mention a little Luck if things become too rough! Getting in can be achieved through the backdoor, the dumbwaiter, or a side window if they're careful, but all of these require Locksmith.

On Fridays, if the Investigators are lucky enough, they may catch an old, plateless Model T rumbling into the back alley to drop off supplies. This is an infrequent sort of drop usually done about once a month to offload extra brewing ingredients, weapons, and the occasional prisoner who's crossed the Guild or the Shakespeare Gang one too many times. An incautious Investigator may even count themselves among this unfortunate cargo if they're not careful!

On Saturday Evening

If the Investigators stake out the Guild on a Saturday night, they find the Guild is not nearly as guarded as before. Perhaps four armed guards roam the halls, and all of them are clearly less professional looking. These are Marlone's men, and they're there to ensure the shipments go smoothly. If they suspect there are intruders, they will shoot to kill unless otherwise told not to by Marlone.

If the Investigators didn't see a drop-off on Friday night, they will see one now, this time to pick up rum shipments and offload supplies for the operation. The drivers are Roscoe and Clyde, two unwitting rum runners more coward than fighter, and if sufficiently Intimidated or outnumbered they will back down without a fight – they just want to do their job and get paid. If somehow questioned, neither know anything about the Lakeside Guild's true operation, but they will admit to knowing Basil and corroborate his story.

If the Investigators are careful, they can sneak into the building from a side window or even the dumbwaiter, but the latter is not recommended as almost all of Marlone's men are brewing in the basement and watching the dumbwaiter for intruders. It's much safer for them to Locksmith and Stealth their way in through the front or back doors, or a window on the outside of the Guild.

On Sunday Evening

All seems normal enough as they settle in to observe the Guild, and everything is quiet for several hours. However things quickly take a turn around 9 PM when the lights go back on in the Guild, and multiple people begin to gather and enter. Spot Hidden sees that all of these people have either crown-shaped cufflinks or dual-sun pendants on. If the Investigators want in, they should be prepared to wait until everyone has entered.

Perhaps surprising to the Investigators, the Guild does not seem to be at all guarded on Sunday evenings. This is a trap for the unwary – there are large numbers of armed cultists inside performing various rites to Hastur in the back alcove of the building's first floor. Sneaking into the building through the front doors is suicide and will get them captured and sacrificed on the spot. A better option would be to use the dumbwaiter or a side window into a separate room with Locksmith and Stealth rolls as applicable. If they are careful and lucky, the Investigators may be able to find the typical cultist garb – a white featureless mask adorned with gold filigree – in the room they are in. In this case, as long as they don't speak to anyone prominent, they can pass as cultists and even see the rites firsthand; if they do, they should roll Stealth checks to make sure they are not recognized.

Every Sunday evening, the cultists gather in a small room in the back, which approximates a stage. On this stage, a number of things may happen. If indoctrinating new cult members, a performance of *The King in Yellow* occurs, during which the King himself manifests and approves of the new recruits (1d3/1d10 SAN if the mask comes off at any point; 0/1d3 SAN for the King otherwise). If not, a sacrificial rite occurs wherein imprisoned people are fed to 1d4 summoned byakhee as offerings (1/1d6 SAN). Both rites are shockingly decadent affairs involving every possible act of self-supplication and dedication imaginable – human flesh is consumed, creative self-injury is flaunted, and lavishly deranged parodies of sexual acts are on offer, all with the same atmosphere as if in a church during sermon. Bizarre soliloquies, mad prose, and insane artwork from the mind of the twisted is on display prominently. The Keeper is encouraged to draw inspiration from things like *Eyes Wide Shut*, *The Wicker Man*, and other similar scenes in film. Witnessing the play performed is good for a 1d6/1d10 SAN loss and witnessing the sacrificial rites and its decadence is worth 1d4/1d6 SAN loss.

On occasional nights when Aldebaran is visible in the sky, and especially if the Investigators are taken hostage, the cult performs a special rite meant to Contact Hastur in his King in Yellow avatar, bringing him to earth for a brief time to accept special sacrifices or hear certain direct pleas from his followers. These are oddly regimented affairs wherein Hastur directly accepts any gifts offered and may "bless" certain cultists with further knowledge, maddening insights, or eldritch mutations using his face-tentacle. Those he disapproves of are destroyed. This of course involves the mask being removed, so seeing him is a 1d3/1d10 SAN loss.

In any case, once the vile rites are completed, all the cultists generally wrap up by finishing whatever acts they were doing, cleaning up any mess, then almost politely bidding each other farewell before leaving the Guild or taking to its members-only guest rooms to sleep. By morning, even these people will have cleared out, preparing the Guild for another week of pretending to be a mere art gallery dedicated to the public.

EXPLORING THE LAKESIDE GUILD

The Lakeside Guild operates out of a repurposed manor, so it has multiple repurposed areas. Much of the interior is dominated by gold and crystal chandeliers, intricate decor, and stately mahogany wood. There are two floors, a 2-level basement, and an attic. Its exterior is stucco and wood, carved and molded with various figures. The Wright Family Crest – a black and maize depiction of two crowing gryphons – still remains over the doorway, carved into the wood.

Over the years the building itself has remained relatively structurally unchanged except for one crucial addition – an elevator was put into the house in 1911, only to later be covered over by a false wall. This hidden elevator spans the entire height of the house, leading all the way up to the attic and all the way down to the basement. The dumbwaiter in the back is mainly for smuggler use, while the cultists use the hidden, more modern elevator to move quickly between floors and discreetly transport captives.

As the Investigators explore the Lakeside Guild, surreal events will occur. Because this building is an earthly anchor to Hastur, it is slowly merging with Carcosa and beginning to show some of the bizarre properties of that place. Most of these have been left to the Keeper to devise.

The following is a list of various locations within the Lakeside Guild building.

THE FIRST FLOOR

This area of the building contains the lobby, multiple side rooms for storage and for cultists to rest or work in, and the main art gallery. Also here are side rooms used as auxiliary galleries.

The Lobby

The warm and inviting lobby is the first thing the Investigators will see on walking through the front door. There are generally visitors to the gallery milling about in here, a few members of the Lakeside Guild around answering questions about the pieces on display, and an information desk to the left of the main entrance. A grand two-way staircase dominates the far end of the room, along with a beautiful crystal chandelier, both of which mark the entryway to the main gallery. Off to each side are many smaller rooms of myriad use, mostly repurposed for art sales and the like. Artwork of a surrealist nature dots the walls, some already having been sold to lucky purchasers.

The décor screams Art Nouveau, from the filigreed yellow wallpaper to the intricately woven carpet. The Lakeside Guild members are easy to identify; they all wear either the two-sun pendant or crown-shaped cufflinks and eagerly answer questions. At the information desk stands a woman with blonde hair and a bright smile – this is Elle, who will helpfully explain where visitors can find things while also keeping tabs on interlopers.

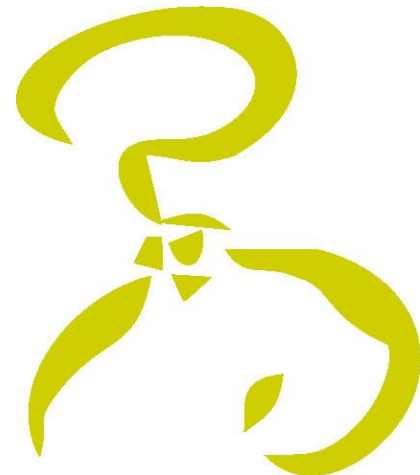
Immediately front and center of the room is a hand-sculpted marble reflecting pool, crowned with a central statue of remarkable detail. The entire piece is made all from one piece of black stone. It is lit from above with small spotlights, highlighting the subtle nuances that make the piece seem almost alive.

The Blackstone Sculpture

It depicts what at first glance appears to be a robed angel of some sort with a flaming sword, but closer inspection with Spot Hidden notes stranger details. For one, the statue does not seem carved so much as formed, as if the stone were molded like clay. The detail is highly impressive, giving the illusion of the robes moving as the light plays off the water in the fountain. What appear to be wings in fact look more like membranes or surreal furls of the robe, and the “sword” proves instead to be a staff of sorts. The figure itself has only the vaguest approximation of a face. Located at the base of the sculpture are the initials H. B., along with myriad arcane-looking symbols.

If an Investigator rolls Credit Rating, EDU, or Appraise, or if they are themselves connected to the arts, they recognize the initials as belonging to the local sculptor Hildred Blackstone. The statue’s hyper-realistic yet surreal stonework is indicative of his style, and comparable in some ways to the controversial work of painter Richard Upton Pickman. Blackstone is known for his bizarre and dreamlike sculptures that seem to have movement to them in the right light; he is currently quite popular in certain circles of the art world. Mr. Blackstone is unavailable for comment in this adventure, but if the Keeper runs this scenario along with its companion piece *When Angels Weep*, the Investigators may well be able to meet him.

There are other, more sinister details of the statue that bear notice. Cthulhu Mythos gleans that this is a depiction of Hastur the Unspeakable; an upsetting discovery, but nothing that is incriminating to the Guild itself. History notes that the figure appears very much like depictions of some kings and rulers were in religious artwork of the Middle Ages.



Occult uncovers that the arcane sigils around the basin of the pool appear to be reminiscent of a language or script, possibly Aklo, but unless the Investigator is able to read that dead tongue the meaning of the symbols is unknown. Occult or a Hard Spot Hidden also turns up a curious symbol inlaid in gold in a nearly invisible spot of the statue. This symbol is the Yellow Sign, and makes anyone looking at it feel a strange sense of nausea and foreboding.

If the Investigators think to ask the Lakeside Guild members about the statue, they are told it was gifted to them by a long time patron of the Guild. They are not told that this statue is a sort of grounding beacon that the Yellow King can use as a tether to our world, nor that the statue tends to vanish from its basin on ritual nights...

The Information Desk

This area is usually where visitors first acquire information about the gallery. Tours of it also meet here, with a member of the Guild acting as guide. It's a lovely mahogany desk with golden accents, strewn with papers, visitor logs, new patron membership forms, and the like. Behind the desk is a small office that belongs to Elle, where she does all of her work when not attending to visitors.

During the day Elle is behind the desk, a young woman with an angelic face. She is more than willing to answer any mundane questions the Investigators may have about the artwork or the Guild. It is through her that Marlone hears about any potential trouble with patrons who get cold feet, and it is through her that most blackmailing occurs. She will always report anything suspicious in the Guild to Marlone before acting on it herself.

If the Investigators ask to speak with the boss of the Guild for any reason, Elle will immediately call up to Marlone and set up a time, but the meeting will be on a later date during the week. If she suspects bad faith on the Investigators' part or becomes suspicious of them, she schedules it for Sunday afternoon – the cult will ambush the Investigators and overpower them if they attend this ill-fated “meeting”.

If however, the Investigators show interest in being patrons of the Guild, she will be most happy to directly send the Investigators up to speak with Marlone. Asking for Marlone by name will also get the same response, albeit with a more suspicious tone – Psychology in this case will indicate that Elle seems to be wary of what the Investigators want to talk to him about. She does not know about Marlone's criminal activities, only that he makes the rules and is the cult's leader.

Elle will try everything possible to make herself look innocent of any crime or suspicious activity in the Guild. She will first play dumb, then act shocked – she is a very good actress – and if all else fails and she thinks she can get away with it, then she is liable to attack the Investigators with magic to subdue them for later sacrifice. If she can't get away with that for any reason, she will let them leave after looking around a bit, then later blackmail them with letters containing the Yellow Sign. Receiving such a blackmail letter is good for a 0/1 SAN loss if the Investigators know the significance of it, on top of the SAN loss for seeing the Yellow Sign for the first time if they have not yet (0/1d6 SAN).

If the Investigators break in at night and check behind the Information Desk, they will discover a set of keys to everywhere in the Guild. If they used these on the office door (also openable with Locksmith or STR check against STR 30), they gain access to Elle's office. Within the office is a lone set of bookshelves on the far wall, a desk with mundane items in the drawers, and various further leads. There is a latch on the rightmost bookshelf that, if opened, swings the shelf forward to reveal a secret staircase that spans from the attic to the sublevel basement. Elle and Marlone uses these stairs frequently and are the only people in the Guild who know of them.

In the office, they discover a small closet with off-white robes and a pale, gold-filigreed mask (these are not in the closet on ritual nights) as well as an unfinished letter of blackmail to an unknown person and a note meant to be sent up to Marlone's office. These handouts (Boss Papers #4 and #5) are printed in the back of this scenario and positively connect Elle to the cult's activities. If the Investigators get any blackmail letters or have the one from the dead taxman, they can positively match the handwriting with these letters, confirming Elle's involvement with the cult.

If Elle for any reason suspects that her office has been broken into, she will immediately tell Marlone and the Investigators will be blackmailed the following day.

The Artwork on the Walls

Strange, surreal, and unnerving paintings, but nothing more. There are occult themes in some, but there is no Cthulhu Mythos relevance whatsoever to this artwork – all of those pieces are kept upstairs in special rooms. This mundane art can do nothing worse than give the Investigators a little pause, and perhaps even interest the Investigators in buying one. Unfortunately, all of these pieces are either too pricy or have been sold to others. There are, however, other pieces for sale in the main gallery, as any Guild member is happy to point out.

Of more interest to the Investigators who Spot Hidden very closely, or who have read *The King in Yellow*, is the wallpaper which decorates every square inch of the building's walls. On closer inspection, the wallpaper's design has incorporated strange workings into the fleur-de-lis filigree. As the Investigator looks closer, they begin to recognize a symbol in it – the Yellow Sign. It squirms and pulses obscenely, as if reaching for or watching the Investigator; after several minutes the feeling subsides (0/1d6 SAN). Should an Investigator fail the sanity check, they will find themselves fascinated by the wallpaper, obsessed with studying it and convinced there is some inherent meaning in the curlicues. It will take a hard POW check to convince themselves to stop, and a lot of convincing (Interpersonal skills would apply) from any Investigator who tries to pull the obsessed Investigator away from their study.

The Main Gallery

Directly adjacent to the lobby and under the grand sweeping dual staircases is the main gallery. As with the art on the walls, these paintings, sculptures, drawings and more are all mundane pieces, ranging from pleasant and dreamlike to frightening and unnerving. The Keeper may describe these pieces in any manner they so desire, although all of them are surreal in tone, and all exude a strange wistfulness. The Keeper may also, at their discretion, include a few minor mythos-related pieces if it suits their run.

If an Investigator wishes to purchase any of these mundane art pieces from the Guild for any reason, they will need to make a Credit Rating check to see if they can afford it first unless they are very wealthy. Even if they fail the check, the Guild member will graciously accept a small donation of any amount and will wish to remain in correspondence with them.

Buying or attempting to buy the art will cause the Guild members to become much more friendly towards that Investigator, encouraging them to become a patron – especially if they are rich or interested in the arts. This is a mistake, as saying yes to this demand puts the Investigator directly on the cult's radar if they suspect any wrongdoing. It also opens them up to coercion and blackmail from Elle. This may be an interesting thread to consider if the Keeper desires a more Chambersian, *Repairer of Reputations* style bent to their run of this scenario, or if the Lakeside Guild becomes an ongoing threat in a long campaign...

Side Rooms

These rooms are repurposed as auxiliary galleries with more mundane if somewhat challenging art, rooms for visiting Patrons to sleep in (these are locked and Elle has the rental keys for them), studio space for artists, and storage. The artists in the studio rooms and people staying with the Guild, whether or not they're cultists, pieces of art found here, and other finer details have been left to the Keeper to elaborate upon.

If the Investigators for any reason find themselves needing to stay the night at the Guild (a dangerous prospect), Elle will not put them in any of these rooms – rather, she will put them in an upstairs room furthest from any of the exits so as to make their escape more difficult once the cult ambushes them in the night. There is nothing untoward in these rooms, but if the Keeper feels impish, they may have one or two pieces in progress in the studios be Mythos-adjacent. These should not take more than one or two points of SAN at most to see, since they are unfinished and may not even be recognizable as Mythos art.

THE SECOND FLOOR

The second floor of the Guild is dedicated to two wings of rooms, more studios, and office space, and it has much the same décor and the same intricate wallpaper as everywhere else in the building. In the leftmost wing, Marlene's office is at the end of the hall with the Guild's Library on the left. In the rightmost, there are bathrooms and access to the attic (the door up is currently locked with heavy locks and chains on the other side, STR 80) as well as the distinct sound of something rumbling behind the southernmost wall (Listen check).

If any Guild members are asked about the noise, they make the excuse that it's the old pipes in the building acting up. In reality, this is the sound of the hidden elevator being used by cultists to move bound victims and bodies out of their attic worship space.

The Left Wing: Library

The lavish and well-stocked library is a repurposed den containing shelves of material, a fireplace, and comfortable seating. All of the books in here are about art, history, and theater, with a modest collection of play scripts as part of it.

Investigators snooping in here find it open to the public. It is an inviting space of study, and at first nothing jumps out. Above the fireplace, there is one painting of note, a beach scene of a woman in a pale dress staring longingly out to the shoreline during sunset. The image is titled *A Memory of the Lakeshore*. Investigators looking closely at just the right angle (Spot Hidden) can notice oddities:

- The woman in the painting appears to have two shadows, something only possible if there were two light sources as an INT roll would suggest. Physics or Astronomy would suggest that this means that there are two suns in this image, one of which is not in the frame of the picture.
- From a certain angle, the woman appears to be wearing a pale white mask.
- In one corner of the image, there are what appear to be yellowish spires on the horizon, just barely blended into the image itself. The spires are arranged in such a way that they seem to be almost mirage-like.

- Along with the barely-shining stars in the sky, there are flecks of black that seem to serve no purpose. Astronomy or Occult suggest that these may represent distant stars.
- Cthulhu Mythos confirms that this appears to be an image of Cassilda on the shores of Yhtill, seeing Lost Carcosa in the distance.
- The piece is not signed by any artist, but its intense realism bears similarity to certain pieces by Boston artist Richard Pickman.

In addition to the painting, Investigators who make Hard or better Spot Hidden near the fireplace notice that it appears to have a seam in the back of it, as if there is a wall intended to slide back. INT recalls there is no similar fireplace on the adjacent floor below. This is, in fact, where the Dumbwaiter down to the illegal distilling operation of the Shakespeare Gang is. It can be opened up by a button situated just behind a book of collected Shakespeare plays on the adjacent bookshelf, findable with Spot Hidden or Mechanical Repair (to determine where the mechanism may be).

While most of the books in here are of no occult significance, there is one exception. On a nearby shelf of plays, one book has been pulled slightly free. While initially an Investigator may believe this slim, black, rebound octavo volume to be the trigger for the mechanism, it is in fact a copy of *The King in Yellow*. It has been rebound to hide it from prying eyes and is written in English. If an Investigator is foolish enough to open the tome, have them roll Luck. A failure means they are able to peruse at their leisure. A success indicates they flip directly to Cassilda's Song in the First Act and become instantly absorbed in the book, requiring a POW check to break free or continue reading. Should the Investigator finish the script, which takes about 20 minutes, they take 1d10 SAN and gain 4 percentiles in Cthulhu Mythos. They are also now much more susceptible to the Yellow Sign, and the Keeper has full permission to throw hallucinatory, dreamlike imagery at them based on the play as a result. Surreal events will happen anyway as the Investigators explore, but it's much more fun if the Investigators believe reading the play is the catalyst for those occurrences...

The Left Wing: Marlone's Office

Steven Marlone's office is generally off limits to the public unless they have an appointment, and breaking into the office is ill advised. Not only are the doors strong oak with sturdy locks (STR 60), but Marlone is often in the office, armed and ready to shoot interlopers. The doors' locks can be picked with Locksmith or unlocked with Elle's keyring. What the Investigators discover here depends on if they are visiting during the day or night, and what the purpose of the visit is.

Marlone's office contains a desk, a wide window, an armoire with yellow robes, books with uncut pages (they're merely for show; he doesn't read them), and a small safe behind an insipid painting of the Manhattan city skyline (Marlone was born and raised in Manhattan before moving to work at the Guild).

Visiting at Night

Marlone's office is mostly empty and dark, with little sign of the man himself. Investigators checking the desk find it locked; Marlone has the only key, but it can be brute forced open with relative ease (STR 20). Inside the desk is a letter from smuggler Basil Coulter concerning the events around his last job for the Shakespeare Gang (Boss Papers #6), a .45 revolver and one box of ammo, and a notebook of contact information for various members of his smuggling operation. If the Investigator rolls INT and succeeds, they can discover that the number for one "Johnathan Hyde" is not a phone number at all – it is much too short and nonsensical to be one. In fact the number is the code for the safe. If this clue is missed, the safe can be picked with a Hard Locksmith check – Marlone spared no expense in making sure his most important items were kept safe.

In the safe are records of his recent shipments of liquor, a list of people who have been targeted for blackmail by the cult (which might include the Investigators' names if they were discovered), a single scroll in French detailing the spell Summon/Bind Byakhee, and a brass diadem inside of a cookie tin. On the inside lid of the cookie tin the Yellow Sign has been crudely inscribed as well as a Latin phrase. A Latin check translates it as, "The power of a King is defended by the hands of the Living God." Occult notes the biblical connection and also points out it appears to be protective in nature.

In the armoire, the robes are a pale yellow with the Yellow Sign emblazoned on the back in a darker yellow. Marlone, paranoid of them being stolen, has had Elle enchant this pale fabric with Song of Hastur, so that anyone aside from him who wears the robe and diadem will suffer that spell's damage. The diadem or robe by themselves are harmless, it is only when a person other than Marlone attempts to wear both that the spell is triggered. On ritual nights, the robes are not present in the armoire and the diadem is not in the safe.

Behind one of the shelves of books is a latch against the far wall, hidden behind the adjacent window curtain and findable with Spot Hidden. If this latch is released, the shelf swings open, revealing a set of stairs up to the Attic and down as far as the second Basement level. Only Marlone and Elle know of these stairs, and they use them frequently.

Visiting During the Day

Marlone is happy to talk with visitors during the day provided they make an appointment with him. If they show immediate interest in becoming Guild patrons or mention him directly, he will see them immediately; otherwise the Investigators will need to come back at the scheduled time. Should any of the cult members become wary of the Investigators, they will also immediately tell Marlone and direct them to speak to him.

Steven Marlone himself is a serious-looking, dark-haired man who oozes confidence. He's also as cryptic as he is powerful, and a few moments of discussion with him will quickly determine that he himself answers to someone else. He will defer and answer questions in such a way that Psychology or Interpersonal Skill checks will be needed to get a straight answer from him. However, he cannot be Intimidated, and will Intimidate anyone who tries right back. He is a sucker for a pretty woman, so female Investigators might have an advantage here if they are charming enough or have high enough APP.

Once they've got him talking, the Investigators can quickly discover a number of things, though he will never admit to any wrongdoing or criminal activity even if the Investigators are criminals themselves. They have nothing to hold him on anyway as he's already served his time for smuggling.

If Marlone is shown the taxman's blackmail letter, he feigns unfamiliarity with the symbol or with Robert Meldrum. If pressed, he will admit that Meldrum did taxes for him personally at one point, but professes no other connection. He will not admit that he knows the symbol is the Yellow Sign.

If Marlone is asked about Basil Coulter or the Shakespeare Gang, or told that Basil sent them, he again professes he doesn't know what they're talking about and doesn't know anyone named Basil. If pressed he will admit that he knew Basil at one point: "Back when I was a criminal years ago, but I'm a different man now. I don't associate with those types anymore." He claims he hasn't spoken with the man since, and certainly doesn't know anything about any sort of monster in the basement. "You sure he wasn't just trying to get off the hook for his own crimes? He's done that before..."

Marlone confesses that he works for another person if asked about who he answers to. However, he never names his superior – "We don't speak about the Boss much around here, gets him real angry if you do." This is true – he serves Hastur. He also claims he came to the Lakeside Guild after attempting to turn over a new leaf. This is a lie. If pressed on this issue, he will summon some Guild members to kick the Investigators out and then instruct Elle to blackmail them.

If the Investigators are pretending to show interest in becoming Patrons or members of the Lakeside Guild, he is intrigued and talks about art, literature, theater, and other such things with them. He asks them who they are, where they're from, and what brought them to the Guild. He's in reality trying to ascertain as much info about them as possible so that he can have them kidnapped or ambushed. He plans to attempt to indoctrinate any of the captured parties at the next cult meeting. They may even be asked to participate in the setup of the play or in a similar cult activity, or otherwise tricked.

Showing knowledge of the play, Hastur, the Yellow Sign, or any particular leanings towards the secrets of Carcosa is a grave error on the Investigators' part. Marlone won't wait to have them ambushed in that case, and instead will offer them some (drugged) water from a nearby carafe. The knockout drug requires increasingly difficult CON rolls to resist; any who resist it enough times will be ambushed and subdued by cultists. Whether or not they take the water, Marlone will excuse himself to the men's room, lock the office door, and instruct the cultists in the building to immediately capture the Investigators if they try to flee. If they don't drink the water, he instead retreats to a crawlspace above the office in order to hit the Investigators with knockout darts. If all else fails, he hides in the attic and summons a Byakhee into the office, instructing it to capture the Investigators alive.

In any case, once the Investigators are satisfied with their lack of real information gleaned from Marlone, they are free to leave his office. At least, they're free in theory – as soon as they exit the room, Marlone becomes paranoid and triggers a magical "silent alarm" that will cause the doors, windows, and other exits to lock, keeping the Investigators trapped in the building. He will then summon Elle and tell her to let the other cultists know that the Investigators must not be allowed to leave under any circumstances, and not to interfere with whatever they choose to look into. He knows his cover is blown and has no reason to hold back now.

The magical trigger has one other special property – it imbues the building with a bit of the essence of Carcosa's reality, causing it to begin showing much greater signs of bizarre, localized activity. Doors will loop back to other places, the dumbwaiter will no longer lead the Investigators out into the alley, and technology such as elevators and lights are likely to suddenly fail at the worst possible moments...



The Right Wing: Attic Access

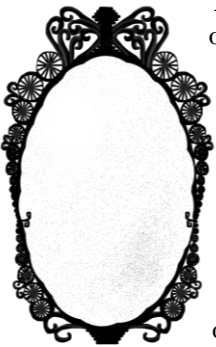
This doorway hides stairs to the attic level, where the cult does some of their dark work. If the Investigators open this door, they discover a set of rather plain-looking wooden stairs; there is no light to illuminate these stairs at night, making them appear as if they stretch into darkness. If they wish to go up the stairs, have them roll Listen or Spot Hidden in order to tell if anyone is coming, and then Stealth to move up the rickety stairs, which creak under their weight regardless of SIZ.

If they make it to the top, they discover another door hidden in shadow. This door is reinforced (STR 80) and locked very securely, with no way in except for Marlone's key. Rolling STR to open this door can be done, but it's a bad idea as it would make way too much noise as well as damage the Guild's property; the same could be said of trying the old movie trick of shooting the door's locks with a Firearms check. A Locksmith roll only reveals that the locks on the door are of some of the most advanced make the Investigator has ever seen, and would require someone very skilled to open them. If the Investigator has Marlone's key or makes an Extreme Locksmith check, they can open this door and enter the attic, however a Guild Member will eventually realize they're up there and notify Marlone, setting a trap to catch them.

If they are caught by a Guild member, they will be asked to avoid that area ("It's a private studio") and brought to one of the other gallery rooms. There, they will be kept while Marlone is contacted to deal with them and another ambush trap is set. The Investigators have proven dangerous, and the cult is paranoid of being caught. They have done this sort of trap multiple times, and will not allow a few visitors to ruin their hard work.

Assorted Galleries, Rooms, and Studios

These rooms are scattered about upstairs as the Keeper desires. Two are bathrooms, one is a closet for janitorial supplies, four are galleries, and all the rest are studios/rental rooms to stay the night in.



Aside from the Galleries, none of them are of any particular interest to the Investigators – many of the studios are locked and have people working inside of them, from writers to actors to painters and sculptors. If the Keeper is running this scenario with its companion piece *When Angels Weep*, one of these studios could belong to Hildred Blackstone. A fun Lovecraftian touch could see Mr. Pickman or one of his contemporaries having a studio here as well.

The four galleries are each dedicated to different art forms: painting/drawing, sculptures, clothing/fashion, and photography/filmography. All four are much more occult and Mythos-tinged, but still require a Cthulhu Mythos or Occult check to determine this. Otherwise, they are simply highly unnerving pieces of artwork requiring a 0/1 SAN loss. Studying any of the pieces in these galleries for too long may cause further Sanity loss as the Keeper wishes. The Keeper is free to describe the areas as they wish, but here is a general breakdown of each area.

- The Fine Art Room: Dedicated to painting, drawing, and other technical pieces. The artwork trends towards surreal imagery as with the pieces on the first floor, however these seem... wrong somehow. There are paintings of places like R'lyeh, Carcosa, Atlantis (with strange fish-like people swimming around – Deep Ones), a tall domed city cast in perpetual sunset (Ilek-Vad), and Ancient Egypt overrun by ghoulish creatures (Sand-Dwellers). The Keeper may wish to look at how Miles Shipley's paintings in *Masks of Nyarlathotep* are described for more inspiration. There are also pieces depicting such gruesome scenes as cult sacrifices, ghouls consuming the dead, and bizarre nightmare creatures that seem frighteningly real. Some pieces are abstract. There are several pieces that depict a figure in yellow robes, a strange black-spired city with two suns and black stars in the sky, and bizarre boneless humanoid figures (all Hastur-related).
- The Sculpture Room: Dedicated to unnervingly lifelike depictions of sculpted humans and humanoid creatures, abstract creations that bely a sense of strange dread, and even some Dadaist works. All the sculptures are strangely malicious in intent. There are figures that depict what appear to be Ghouls, Hunting Horrors, Gugs, and other creatures of the mythos along with demons and occult creations. There are no sculptures of Hastur or the King in Yellow, but there may be a sculpture of Cassilda or Camilla here. There is one sculpture in the gallery that seems to be a play on Egyptian art and is carved of basalt; it depicts a shadowy pharaoh figure with a strangely dark and enigmatic smirk, and a malicious look in his almost lifelike eyes (Nyarlathotep in his Black Pharaoh avatar). Any and all of these sculptures might change position, seem to watch the viewer, or appear to make different expressions as the Keeper desires. The more abstract sculptures are liable to twist themselves into different forms, subtly changing.

- The Costume Room: This room is a claustrophobic area dedicated to works of textile art – fashion, conceptual work, and costumes for theatrical productions. The textures and colors of some of these costumes feel and look strange, perhaps even unnatural? There are masks along one wall, depicting various creatures – Investigators can pick out masks that depict Deep Ones, Byakhee, and more. One mask is starkly pale with no mouth and seems to have rust-colored streaks from the eyes. This is the Pallid Mask, or a damn good approximation of it. There is a whole section dedicated to theatrical costumes, some of which seem to depict figures from *The King in Yellow*. There's a costume version of the title figure; its tatters moving slightly even without an air current. This particular costume is liable to move around the room if the Investigators take their eyes off it for too long, and might even end up outside of this gallery, as if imbued with a malevolent life all its own...
- The Photography Room: Somewhat different to the others, this room is filled with photographic art. Experimental techniques seem to have been used to add color in some; cyanotype and silver-based images mingle with more standard film-style imagery. This is also the room where simple films are displayed via projector on screens. Some of these depict images of monstrous creatures – surely those must be costumes? Others seem to be of strange landscapes, people, or places. All of them appear to have something subtly off about them, but the Investigators cannot place quite why – the Keeper is free to elaborate on these: faceless figures, images of the Investigators themselves, people and buildings with inhuman proportions, etc. The short films playing appear to be anything from animations to actual footage, and move with an eerie flicker to them as the projector ticks away. The Keeper is encouraged to use “found footage” or “lost animation” style Creepypasta and internet stories for inspiration on these.

THE ATTIC

This space, hidden from all but the cultists and their leaders (as well as the unfortunate victims who are dragged here), is where the majority of the cult's “reputation repairs” happen. It at first appears to consist of a short hallway of little import. The small “hallway” is very short, and all secret stairways and passages (except the dumbwaiter) lead here. This area also contains access to the electrically operated elevator which runs from the attic to the basement distillery, plus the sub-basement cult worship area.

The hallway contains a hidden door to the rest of the attic space; the button that slides the door open is a small knot of wood in the “wall”, visible with a Hard Spot Hidden check. It is dark up here, especially at night, so unless the Investigators have a light source, finding the button is difficult.

Once inside the attic proper, the Investigators might be rather taken aback at what they find next, especially since it's not bootleg rum.



Skeletons in the Attic?

A House of Horrors

The room beyond has been set aside as a torture chamber for the cult's unluckiest victims. Bedecked in easily cleaned but long-yellowed tile and lit only by a bare bulb in the center of the room, it contains what at first seems to be a metal table or shallow tub with straps of tough leather. A drain leads out to one side and down into the main sewage line for the building. Anyone with Medicine or who makes an Idea check can see it for what it really is – an autopsy table, repurposed as a means of restraint and still stained with blood. This revelation is good for 0/1 SAN loss.

Near the entrance of the room, a long table to the right has a set of keys on a ring (these are to the cells) as well as various wicked-looking tools of torture, most of them medieval in design. There are blades, brands, needles, vials of poisons, and worse – as many as the Keeper's twisted imagination deigns there to be. All of them are bloody, some have been recently cleaned but still retain stains. To the left appears to be a small altar of some sort with a statuette of the King in Yellow, a book with a list of people to have their reputations “repaired” (including whatever names the Keeper desires, including Investigator names to really get under their skin), a small dagger of ornamental design, some yellow tallow candles, and a small bronze or brass bowl that gleams unwholesomely in the dim light. Above this altar is a small banner on which the Yellow Sign has been printed. Rituals are not often conducted in this room, but the altar serves to bless the room with Hastur's favor anyway.

The room smells faintly of bleach, as if it has been recently cleaned. Off to either side of the room are doors, some of them metal with grates. One room is designated as a special room, one as a dark room, and one door is actually a set of double doors leading to an elevator. Whether the elevator is at the top or needs to be called (or mysteriously opens itself up) has been left to the Keeper to decide.

The Cells

Most of these are empty, however one cell contains a pitiful, blinded figure within. His whimpers echo off the walls of the room as the Investigators enter, and only increase as they come close – he believes them to be cultists.

Investigators who do look into this cell see a shockingly emaciated, scarred, branded, and tormented figure with grimy blonde hair. He is naked, missing fingers and toes, and looks as if he's been through hell in general. He has – this is one of the victims of the cult, and he has been here for quite some time. Some of his brand scars include the Yellow Sign and the sigil of the cult. His eyes have been gouged out, noticeable only once he turns towards the viewer. If they call to him or try to get his attention, he turns towards the sound before panicking and backing into the corner of the cell. “Stay back!” he cries, his voice hoarse from screaming. “I’ll not be your Thale today! Not upon me, O King!” Viewing this man’s terrible state is good for a 0/1 SAN loss. If the Investigators are worried about the noise, let them be – they have no way of knowing the room is soundproofed, and the concern makes for good tension and roleplay opportunities.

A Psychology or Interpersonal Skill check is needed to subdue the man and get him to talk. Once he’s talking, it’s not only clear he’s completely insane, but that he was once a prospective member of the cult. He does not remember his name, only that he is “Thale” and he came to the Lakeside Guild as a young actor. They gave him the script to *The King in Yellow* to read, and asked him to play the part of Thale – and he threw himself into the role, studying the script. He found it deeply engaging and identified intensely with his character, almost to the point of eeriness. Once he was confident, he remembers “Cassilda” and “The Stranger” (Elle and Marlene) taking him aside and telling him that he was “ready” for something. There was some sort of fuss, he went in an elevator, and somehow ended up below the basement.

“I saw demons there,” he mutters madly. “I saw the lake, I saw Carcosa... I saw the King. He was there! He was real! I touched his tattered robes...”

The event was so scarring to “Thale” that he ended up going completely insane – but not in the way that the cult had hoped. Instead, he snapped and pretended to be in on the cult’s rituals, but really, he was trying to destroy the entire Guild. He nearly succeeded, but he was caught by “The Stranger” before he could finish the job, and was dragged up here to have his behavior “corrected”. He’s been here ever since.

There is, sadly, no helping this man recover from his madness, or his wounds. However, he could be a useful if unstable ally since he knows the layout of the Guild and a bit about the cult’s inner workings. If the Investigators like, they can take pity on him and help him escape the Lakeside Guild, allowing for a first hand testimony of the horrors there – but to do that, they will need to escape the Guild first.

The Dark Room

A small room accessed by a closet-like door, some 3x3 foot square. It contains chains and shackles, and a single drain. This room is used for solitary confinement, generally for psychological torture reasons. If an Investigator walks in here and shuts the door, they find it is impossibly, eerily silent and impossibly, eerily dark. If they shine a flashlight in, they can discover what appears to be some form of speaker or radio system, used to pipe in sounds as desired by the tormentor – this is most often static or loud and jarring noise.

The Special Room

Contains only a projector, a screen, and a metal chair looking something like an electric chair. It has straps and restraints, as well as what seem to be small clamps designed to keep a victim’s eyelids open, a bit like the device used in *A Clockwork Orange*. The projector is currently not on when the Investigators enter, but it is prone to randomly turning on if someone bumps it by mistake. If the Investigators turn it on themselves, or if it otherwise is switched on for any reason, the projector displays a grotesque, pulsating Yellow Sign on the screen, making the room’s purpose obvious. This room is designed to force victims to study the demented symbol until they either comply with the cult, are brainwashed, or suffer serious damage to their sanity.

This particular Yellow Sign is imbued with dark magic that makes it more active and dangerous than usual. Simply being in the same room as it, even if the Investigators have seen the Yellow Sign before and taken the sanity loss for it, causes a 1/1d6 SAN loss for every 30 minutes it is playing on screen. Those who succeed the check reel in a sudden sense of dread and become dizzy. Those who fail the sanity check or have already fallen prey to the Sign before are enthralled, and must make a POW check to break free of the symbol’s toxic hold over their minds. In addition, the symbol exudes strange energies that allow glimpses of bizarre creatures, strange cityscapes, and even the King himself, all of which seem to have a hypnotic effect on the viewer. These effects end once the Investigators turn the projector off, leave the room, or have gone insane.

The Elevator

This lavishly decorated elevator moves between the attic, basement, and sub-basement of the building, and contains the same wallpaper and design accoutrements of most of the building. There is a button on each floor that opens the doors with a soft “ding”, and the interior only has the three buttons for each floor. When the Investigators first step in and press a button, the elevator moves slowly down to the chosen floor as soft classical music plays. The author suggests playing either the Spring movement from Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* or Muzak to set the tone, perhaps with small distortions in the music if the Keeper is audio-editing inclined.

The ride down in the small cabin is uneventful. However, this elevator is very capable of travelling dimensions, including all the way to Carcosa if the Keeper so desires... If the Keeper feels so inclined, they can alter this with the following event.

Everything is normal, at least for a bit. However, about halfway down, the elevator breaks down – the wheels grind to a halt and the cabin jerks severely before settling, and a yellow emergency light flares on. It is oppressively quiet. Allow the Investigators to ask if everything is okay, then subtly let them know that there is someone else in the elevator with them. It could be a shadow in the mirrored surface of the elevator, a movement, or a sound. In one playtest, this event looked like the following:

Player: "Keeper, is everyone okay?"

Keeper: "Oh yeah, all six of you are just fine."

Player: "There's five of us."

Keeper: "Sorry?"

Player: "There's only five of us in our group."

Keeper: "That's weird. Could have sworn there was someone right behind you..."

In any case, once the Investigators notice the extra passenger, ask for a SAN check. Those who succeed see a dark shadow that gradually fades to nothing, while those failing see the King in Yellow. If the Investigators have read the play, are familiar with Hastur and Carcosa, or have seen the Sign, they all see the King. Seeing the King in Yellow is a 0/1d3 SAN loss; he will not remove the Pallid Mask here unless the Keeper is very cruel, in which case it causes a 1d3/1d10 SAN loss. The apparition quickly vanishes after this, the light turns on in the elevator, and it continues on to its destination.

Another particularly cruel event could be the elevator going to the wrong floor instead of the floor desired, or going *past* the known number of stops (three) to bring them into Lost Carcosa itself. This experience, however, has been left to the kindly Keeper to devise.

THE BASEMENT AND SUB-BASEMENT

These areas are where the cult and the smugglers do business. They are divided into three areas, as shown below.

The Basement: Storage and Boiler Room

This area is a standard basement, reachable by stairs down from the first floor and the elevator. Lit by a bare bulb, it takes up the first half of the basement area, and contains various closets, storage areas, and the like. Many pieces of artwork not yet on display are stored here, as well as crates of supplies (none of which are suspicious or illegal in any way if checked) for the cult. The door down here is hidden in a closet on the first floor, and is locked (STR check vs, STR 50 or Locksmith to open). Coming down here will be discouraged by the Guild and might bring the Investigators actions to their attention.

In one side room is the boiler room, fuse box, and other necessary things for the building to function. The elevator has its own backup generator. The boiler is coal-powered owing to the building's age. Mechanical Repair or Electrical Repair when looking at either the fuse box or the boiler can detect that there are some pipes and/or wires that lead to an unknown area not on the Guild's map – these go to the hidden brewery area to run that operation, as well as down to the sub-basement and up to the attic. This may be their first clue that there are hidden areas in the building, or it may confirm other suspicions.

In one of the storage closets is a trapdoor leading to a very dark area. Shining a flashlight down, the Investigators can see a short drop followed by a long tunnel. A Listen check detects the sound of strange scraping, scratching, and keening noises in the dark. If the Investigators enter, they can see that it leads into the dark for some distance before splitting off, but they will need some form of rope to climb back out of the hole. Travelling further down here results in them rapidly becoming lost without a Navigate or Track roll to get back out, as this area is a mazelike set of burrows. In these tunnels lurks a single hungry and very territorial byakhee – the cultists throw victims they are finished with and bodies down here for the creature to eat. In such closed quarters, the Investigators will quickly be outnumbered.



Death in a bottle.

The Basement: Smuggler's Hideout

This area is only accessible from the outside of the building in the back alley through a trap door in the ground, or via the dumbwaiter in the Guild proper. It contains a makeshift distillery operation, storage for the produced alcohol, and many barrels of booze in storage. If the Investigators are looking for evidence of criminal activity, they'll find it here.

There are several barrels, and one large fermenting tank, filled with a strange gold liquid and marked with the Yellow Sign. These barrels and tank are in a side room, and Marlone and his immediate underlings hold the only key to it, but the lock can be picked with Locksmith. These containers hold Space Mead, and drinking it is a very bad idea. If consumed, in 1d4 rounds, the drinker becomes drowsy and falls into a stupor from which they cannot awaken until the next day. During this time, they are effectively asleep and subject to strange dreams and visions of Carcosa. As this mead is meant for space travel, the cult may use it to drug a person before sending them on a forcible trip to Carcosa as punishment. It can also be used to drug the unwilling in general, and has ritual purposes. The Space Mead is precious and takes a long time to make, so it is never bottled and given out without good reason. There are perhaps 6 barrels of it and one small tank compared to the rest of the stores of alcohol, which consist of ten or twenty barrels and five tanks. Some of these are already bottled and in crates for shipment.

It is unlikely the Investigators will drink any of the regular alcohol, but if they do, there is a chance that some barrels have fermented incorrectly and are comprised of the toxic methanol (wood alcohol). Have an Investigator drinking the alcohol roll Luck. On a failure, they have encountered a toxic batch. This poisonous brew causes vomiting, nausea, blindness, and death if consumed. Should an Investigator foolishly drink this poison, have them roll Hard CON to resist its effects. If they fail, STR, INT, and CON checks are all halved, and Spot Hidden checks are at Hard Difficulty until they receive medical attention. If they fumble, they will begin to go blind and possibly die, taking 1d4 HP an hour until unconscious or dead. If they succeed, they vomit violently and feel ill, but will be alright within 1d4 rounds. If another Investigator rolls Medicine, First Aid, or Hard Idea, they can realize that ethanol will stop the effects of methanol poisoning. If the stricken investigator is fed non-tainted booze, they can recover from their illness in 1d4 rounds regardless of if they failed or not. However, they will be drunk for the rest of the evening and as a result all INT and coordination-related checks are at Hard difficulty, while Sanity damage is halved for the duration of their drunken spell.



“... You hear that? We ain’t alone in here, boys...”

There are around 1d4 Shakespeare Gang members, armed with various types of guns, in this area at any given time except on Sundays when there are none. During Fridays and Saturdays, there are up to 1d8 gangsters here, including Marlone. They mostly sleep during the day in one of the side rooms and operate at night.

Not every member of the Shakespeare Gang is a member of the cult, only high ranking members are. The ones in here are grunts, and know nothing of the Guild’s true activities, although if captured and pressed they will admit they work for Marlone and are concerned he’s been acting strangely and is more paranoid than usual. See Basil’s confession earlier in this scenario for an idea of what they may discuss. They have occasionally heard odd noises such as growling and screams through the pipes, but they assume it is just Marlone and some of his boys “dealing with a difficult client” and have never asked questions about it. None of them know what the Yellow Sign is, nor are they familiar with anything to do with Carcosa.

The Sub-Basement

The Investigators can only reach this area via the elevator or secret stairs in Elle and Marlone’s offices. It contains a ritually sanctified stage-like area dedicated to worship of the King in Yellow. It is decorated with sticklike structures, tattered yellow fabrics of many shades and hues, and several Yellow Signs and blasphemous artworks. There are seven stone pillars arranged in a V-shape holding the ceiling up. Regardless of if Aldebaran is on the horizon or not, this liminal area is a place where the King can freely manifest to accept sacrifices, bless his followers, or give edicts. There is a 1d4 chance the King will appear here to terrorize the Investigators. This area is only inhabited by cultists on Sunday evenings and is quiet every other time.

There are multiple places to hide in this area, allowing for Investigators to observe the cult’s ritual activities if they so desire. See “On Sunday Nights” above for more information on what these ritualistic activities might be. Otherwise, this area is fairly calm. If the Investigators make it down here, they have either been captured by the cult, or are soon to be discovered by the cult. It is also possible for them to access a (limited) version of Carcosa this way, depositing them in the King’s throne room. A good idea of how this encounter could play out is given in the scenario “Tatterdemalion” from Chaosium’s *Fatal Experiments*, if the Keeper has a copy of it on hand. Otherwise, this encounter is up to the Keeper to create.

SONGS UNSUNG: ESCAPING THE GUILD

It should become apparent that the Investigators in this scenario are intended to become trapped in the Lakeside Guild. From the second they enter as visitors to the time they leave, they are watched by the cult and will find it difficult to do anything without their meddling. The important takeaway for the Keeper is that they must keep things subtle until the Investigators find clear evidence of cult involvement, and by then the clues are obvious and everywhere.

If the Keeper plans on using this scenario as part of a campaign, they may wish to have the Lakeside Guild first threaten the Investigators before trapping them in the building. If this scenario's being run as a one-shot, the Keeper can trap the Investigators inside as soon as they have read the play, seen the Yellow Sign, discovered the Guild's true nature, or have met Marlone for themselves. In both cases, for all intents and purposes, the Investigators must at first believe they were hired to look into a strange death or deal with a normal bootlegging operation, not a Mythos incursion.

The Guild seems harmless enough on the surface. Nothing odd occurs until the first discovery of something being off – the Sign in the wallpaper, the strange painting and the script in the library, or the artwork on the second floor are all good examples. The Sub-Basement and Attic both make for good WHAM moments that hammer in when things really are wrong. Once the initial discovery of strangeness is uncovered, all bets are off and the Keeper is at full liberty to truly terrify their Investigators with the full brunt of the Lakeside Guild's power, surreal images, and psychologically unnerving events.

The Keeper is encouraged to use strange figures, stalking shadows, imagery from the play, and more to get to their players. Statues walk, light vanishes, and glimpses of Carcosa are seen out of windows. In other words, treat it a bit like a haunted house. It is recommended such scares as these cause around 1/1d4 SAN loss each, more if they are plainly impossible by natural laws of physics. A good example of eerie details and inspiration for scares can be found in Chambers' work, *House of Leaves*, and *1408*. The Guild building should seem to be a character itself, a malevolent entity intent on keeping the Investigators trapped within its walls. The only hope the Investigators have for escape is to either break the illusion or find an unconventional way out of the building.

One possible way they could escape is by destroying as many Yellow Signs as possible. As these are a locus of power, they can weaken the hold Hastur has on the building by defacing or removing them. Once 1d10 different Yellow Signs are destroyed, the door out of the Guild is unlocked, allowing them to leave. This same method could occur by desecrating the basement's ritual grounds (say, with an Elder Sign or by toppling the pillars for Call Hastur) or destroying the Carcosa-related artworks in the building.

Another method could be to deal with Marlone and Elle. If they realize these two are the dual leaders of the Lakeside Guild, they can kill or incapacitate them both in order to stop the magical effects tied to them. Alternatively, the Keeper may decide that one or the other is the true brains of the operation, and that killing only, say, Elle will stop the events in the building. Killing a person for someone inexperienced with such an event is a 1/1d4 SAN loss, or requires a failed SAN check.

The Investigators could escape by disrupting a ritual to Hastur in the basement on Sundays. If they successfully do this, it immediately halts the bizarre effect in the building, but has the side effect of angering the King and causing him to transform into a more loathsome form (1d10/1d20 SAN), a dangerous proposition if he's already there! The spell Call/Dismiss Hastur could be found in Marlone's safe if the Keeper desires, or in another area of the Guild.

If the Investigators have been captured by the cult, they may be able to escape simply by making it to an exit without being caught again by the cult. The building will not make this easy, however, and neither will the cultists.

Finally, it's also possible that the cult has drugged them, and their time in the Guild is actually a Dreamlands-type experience, meaning the Investigators must seek an alternative portal out of the building. It could be the elevator, a window, or something far more subtle. The door may be hidden by illusion or operate on dream-logic. If the Investigators were all to drink the space mead in this scenario, they may find themselves back in the building, this time able to escape its strangeness. If they do this and the Keeper deems it appropriate, have them roll POW. A success indicates they have escaped successfully; they will wake up in the hospital with a concerned doctor telling them they were found having fainted in one of the Lakeside Guild's galleries. If they fail, they remain trapped in the Lakeside Guild and must find another way out.

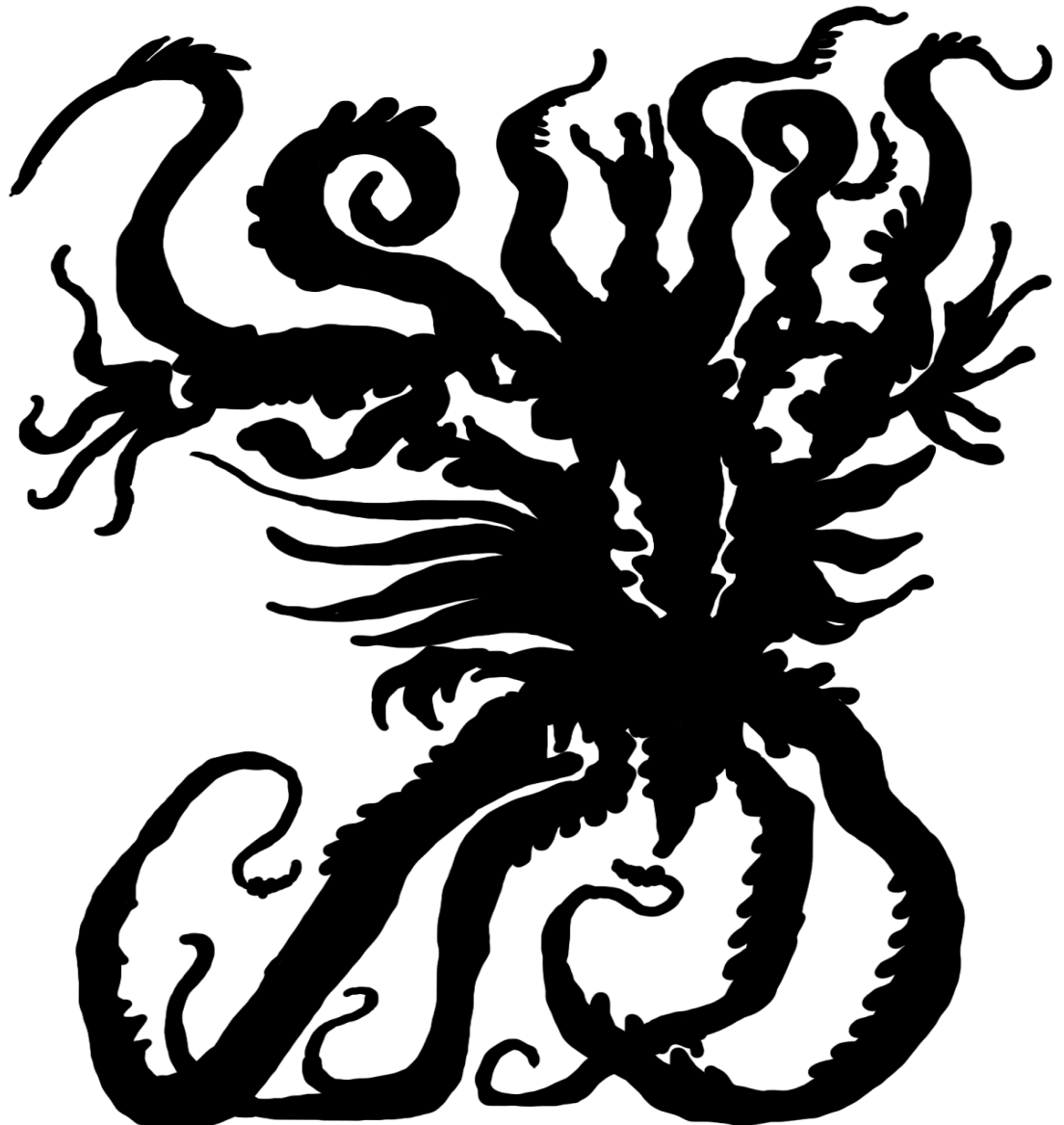
The Investigators will likely want to destroy the Guild once they escape. The gas pipes in the building are very old, and prone to leaks. An Investigator could sabotage this system or the boiler with Mechanical Repair, resulting in a catastrophic fire in the building. However they will have to answer to the police if they are tied back to this act of arson, there is a chance some cultists might escape, and the byakhee in the basement will be free to wreak havoc on the surrounding countryside. This could provide some interesting unfinished business for the Investigators to wrap up after the fact.

If the Investigators escape and they've found the rum, have "Thale" or another prisoner in tow, or have evidence of illegal activity, they can get the police to help them crack down on the Guild. Whether or not they help is moot – multiple officers will go mad and die in the final assault, but the cultists will be arrested and the Guild will be destroyed. Marlone will end his own life rather than be captured, and Elle will escape before the police can capture her to start the cult anew, as she's done many times before in other cities. Again, this could prove to be a problem for the Investigators later if the Keeper decides to make her a recurring foe. She's certainly more than up to the challenge of eliminating these pesky Investigators for her King.

Rewards

Consider what the Investigators have done, then apply the following rewards for successfully completing the scenario.

- **If the Lakeside Guild has been completely eliminated:** +1d6 SAN
- **If Marlone and Elle have both been subdued:** +1d4 SAN
- **If one but not both of the cult leaders are subdued:** +1d2 SAN
- **For killing the Byakhee in the basement:** +1d6 SAN
- **Getting Thale and any other prisoners safely out of the Guild's clutches:** +1 SAN per prisoner
- **If the Shakespeare Gang is stopped:** +1 SAN
- **If Hastur is somehow dismissed:** +1d20 SAN
- **If the Lakeside Guild has not been fully dealt with:** -1d4 SAN



KEEPER UTILITIES

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Steven Marlone, 34, “The Stranger”

Steven Marlone is a hardcore, tough master criminal with many murders and heists under his belt. He was born in the Bronx to a poor Italian immigrant family, and grew up having to fight for everything he has ever had. He dropped out of school at a young age and ended up on the wrong side of the law, joining up with the Mafia before starting to become a threat to its leader. Eventually, he accrued too much attention in New York, both from suspicious Mafia members and the police, and was forced to flee the state. As a man, his dark hair and imposing height, strikingly cold grey eyes, and scarred face lends people to instantly fear and respect him, as they very well should.

Steven is a shrewd, harsh, and paranoid man who has been driven mad by being caught up in something he never intended to find. He has been shown the true nature of the King in Yellow, and now leads both the Shakespeare Gang and the Lakeside Guild. Most of his underlings don't know he's mad, unless they're mad themselves, because Steven hides it very well. He is not magically adept, however – where he brings the brawn, blackmail, and manpower to the cult's enemies, others bring the spellcasting power.

STR 60 CON 70 SIZ 65 DEX 55 INT 70
 APP 45 POW 45 EDU 40 SAN 0 HP 14
 DB: +1d4 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 10 Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 45% (17/7), damage 1D3+1D4
 Thompson SMG 35% (15/7), damage 1D10+2
 .45 Revolver 40% (20/8), damage 1D8/1D4/1D2

Armor: Steven fears sneak attacks and hides a metal tray under his shirt as armor, affording 2 points of protection.

Spells: Summon/Bind Byakhee, Contact Hastur (King in Yellow), Call Hastur.

Skills: Sleight of Hand 65%, Fast Talk 45%, Listen 55%, Spot Hidden 40%, Intimidate 65%, Psychology 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 10%.

Elle LeBlanc, 28, “Cassilda”

A beautiful, waif-like young blonde with a charming smile, Elle LeBlanc is sweet poison to her enemies and a blessing to the cult. She came from a wealthy family and has been helping to lead the Lakeside Guild since she was first indoctrinated as a child. Her skill for manipulation is unsurpassed by any in the Guild save Steven, and her magical ability is a dangerous weapon against her foes.

Elle is a skilled liar, easily fooling anyone who might cross her into thinking she is harmless, or even a victim of the cult. However, she would die to protect the cult if it comes to that, and counts only the Yellow King as her superior. Where Steven brings the firepower, Elle brings the deception and subtle attacks to the cult's arsenal, making her a formidable opponent. The cult believes she is Queen Cassilda reincarnate, and will lay their lives down for her.

STR 45 CON 50 SIZ 40 DEX 75 INT 55
 APP 80 POW 75 EDU 65 SAN 0 HP 9
 DB: -1d4 Build: 0 Move: 8 MP: 15 Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 35% (17/7), damage 1D3-1D4
 Derringer 30% (16/6), damage 1D8/1D4/1D2

Armor: none.

Spells: Flesh Ward, Wrack, Song of Hastur, Call Hastur, Contact Hastur (King in Yellow), Summon/Bind Byakhee. The Keeper might give her more, if they desire.

Skills: Art/Craft (Acting) 65%, Fast Talk 75%, Charm 60%, Listen 40%, Psychology 25%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Average Shakespeare Gang Member

Rough and tumble gangsters or beautiful look-but-don't-touch molls, there are roughly 15 members of the gang, but only five of them are of Marlone's personal guard. If any of them were to see what their boss were really up to, they would probably switch allegiances to the Investigators' side in a heartbeat, provided they aren't insane first. They may be male or female. These stats are averages; the Keeper may tweak them as desired.

STR 60 CON 65 SIZ 55 DEX 40 INT 45
 APP 35 POW 50 EDU 40 SAN 45 HP 12
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 10 Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 35% (17/7), damage 1D3
 Thompson SMG 30% (10/6), damage 1D10+2
 .45 Revolver 30% (10/6), damage 1D8/1D4/1D2

Armor: None.

Skills: Intimidate 55%, Fast Talk 35%, Sleight of Hand 35%, Listen 25%, Spot Hidden 30%.

Steven's Elite Guard, Five in Number

These gangsters are Marlone's toughest and most trusted men, people who have followed him out of the Bronx to enforce the Lakeside Guild and Shakespeare Gang. All of them are male and will obey him without question, and are wiler than average as well as completely insane from their brush with the Yellow King. There are only five, but that's more than enough to cause trouble for any snooping Investigators under foot...

STR 65 CON 75 SIZ 60 DEX 40 INT 45
 APP 35 POW 50 EDU 40 SAN 0 HP 13
 DB: +1d4 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 10 Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 40% (20/8), damage 1D3
 Thompson SMG 35% (15/7), damage 1D10+2
 .45 Revolver 45% (25/9), damage 1D8/1D4/1D2

Armor: None.

Spells: Call Hastur.

Skills: Intimidate 55%, Fast Talk 35%, Sleight of Hand 35%, Listen 25%, Spot Hidden 30%.

Average Cultist of the Lakeside Guild

Appearing normal at first, during ritual nights they don yellowish cloaks and gilded white masks that hide their faces. These cultists may be male or female, and these stats are averages. The Keeper may tweak them as desired.

STR 50 CON 50 SIZ 55 DEX 55 INT 45
 APP 55 POW 30 EDU 60 SAN 0 HP 10
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 8 Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 35% (15/7), damage 1D3
 Stiletto 30% (10/6), damage 1d4+1

Armor: None.

Spells: May have any combination of the following – Call Hastur, Shriveling, Summon/Bind Byakhee, Song of Hastur.

Skills: Art/Craft (Acting) 55%, Fast Talk 35%, Listen 25%, Spot Hidden 30%, Stealth 30%

MONSTERS AND CREATURES

The statistics for the King in Yellow and Byakhee are found in the *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition* handbook, however statistics for one particular monster are found here – Hildred Blackstone's bizarre statue in the lobby, which occasionally moves about at night.

The False King, Animated Statue

An obsidian statue of the King in Yellow, this statue is a beacon for Hastur in our world, behaving like an anchor for him and for Carcosa. It also acts as a power reserve for spell-casting cultists and can become animated at night due to the Guild's odd local reality. When animate, it behaves much like the actual Yellow King, with the exception that it cannot remove its mask or cast spells of its own. It can gain more POW, but begins with 50 and is frighteningly hard to kill due to its stone body. Once it loses whatever POW it has, it goes inert and is harmless until reactivated by various cult rituals and activities. If somehow destroyed, Carcosa's earthly connection to the Lakeside Guild is severed forever.

STR 85 CON 75 SIZ 55 DEX 50 INT N/A
 APP N/A POW 50 EDU N/A SAN N/A HP 10
 DB: +1d6 Build: 0 Move: 7/12MP: N/A Luck: N/A

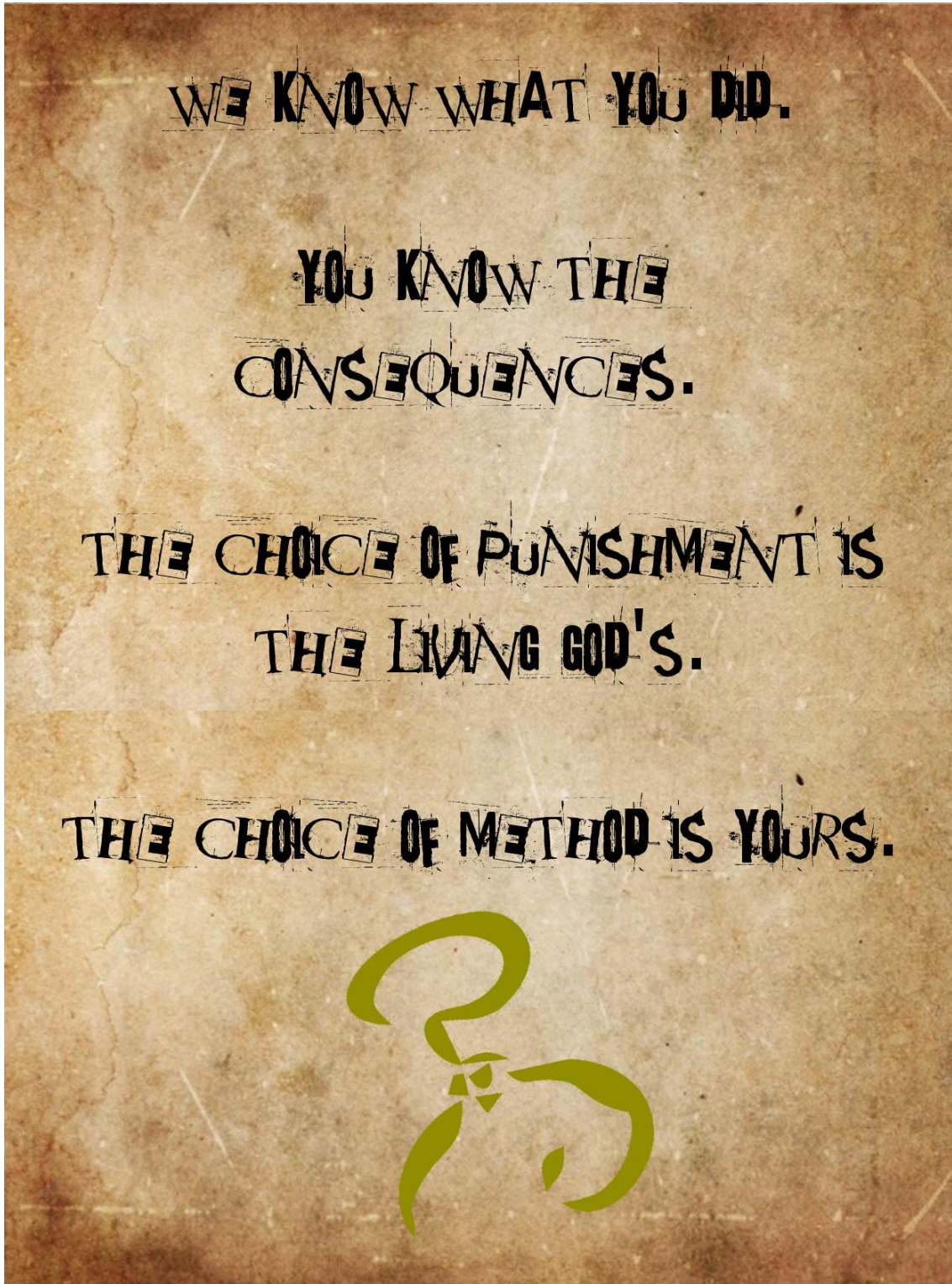
Attacks per round: 1 or 2

Brawl 35% (15/7), damage 1D3+1D6
 Obsidian Claws 35% (15/7), damage 1d3+1d6+bleed
 Obsidian Tatters 35% (15/7), damage 1d4+2+bleed

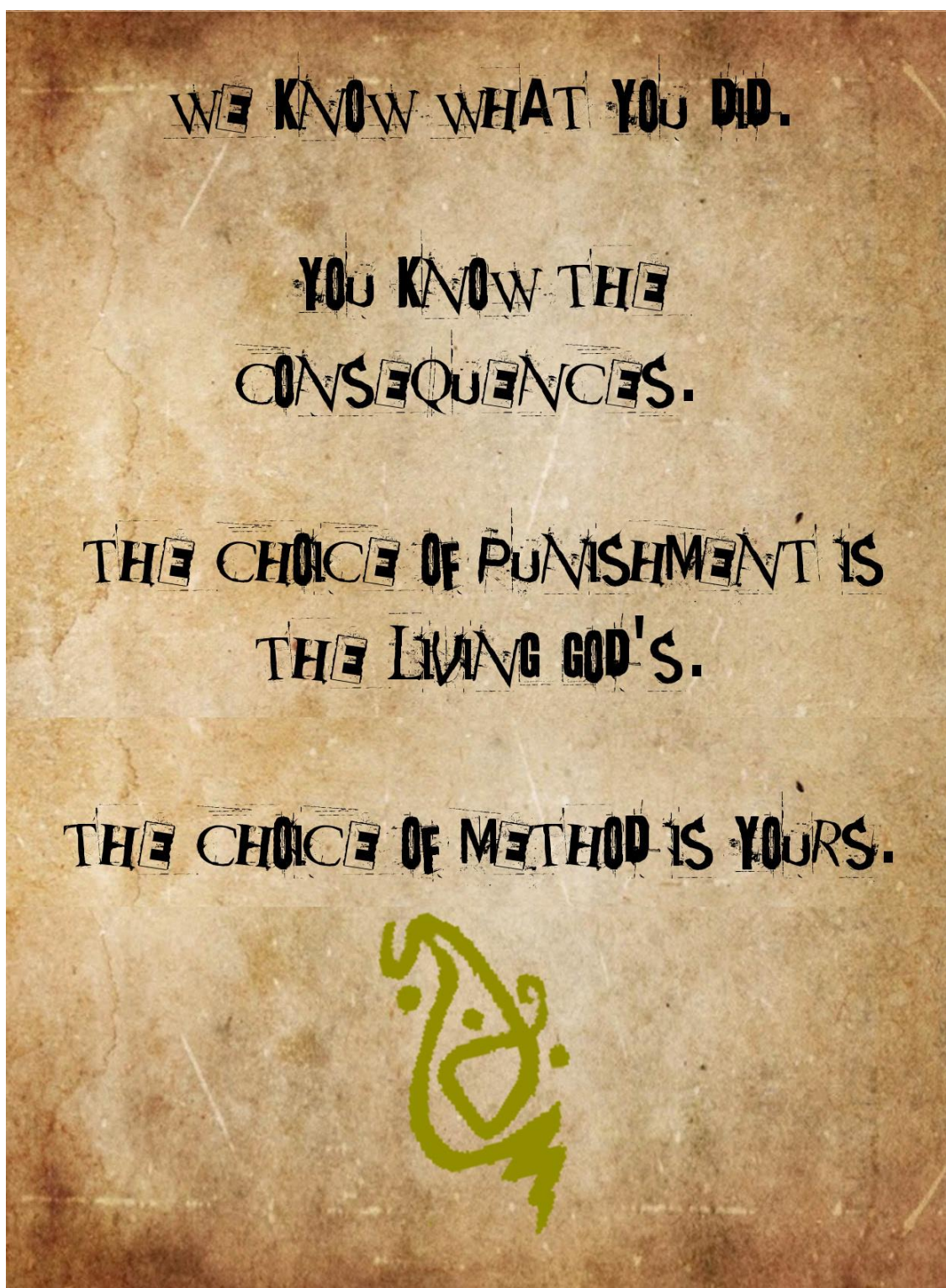
Obsidian Claws/Tatters: The obsidian edges of the False King are so sharp, they can inflict very deep cuts without a target realizing at first. When a target is struck, the razor sharp stone edges inflict severe bleeding, which takes 1D2 points of HP from a victim per round it is left unhealed. Should the victim die, half of their current POW is added to the False King's total POW.

Armor: +3 points solid stone. There is also a chance that if pieces of the statue are broken off violently, such as by gunshots or very hard blows, the resulting shards will hit the attacker for 1D2 HP.

HANDOUTS



Boss Papers #1: Meldrum's Blackmail Note



Boss Papers #1 Alternate: Meldrum's Blackmail Note



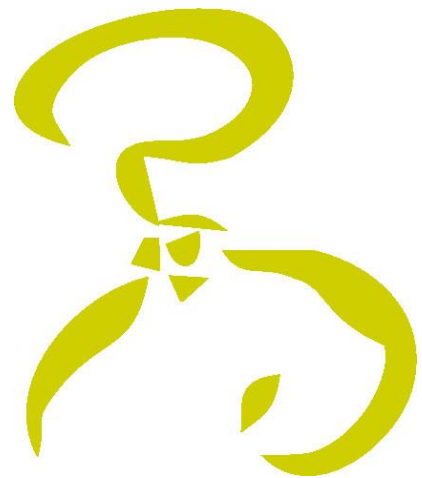
Boss Papers #2: Wright's Obituary



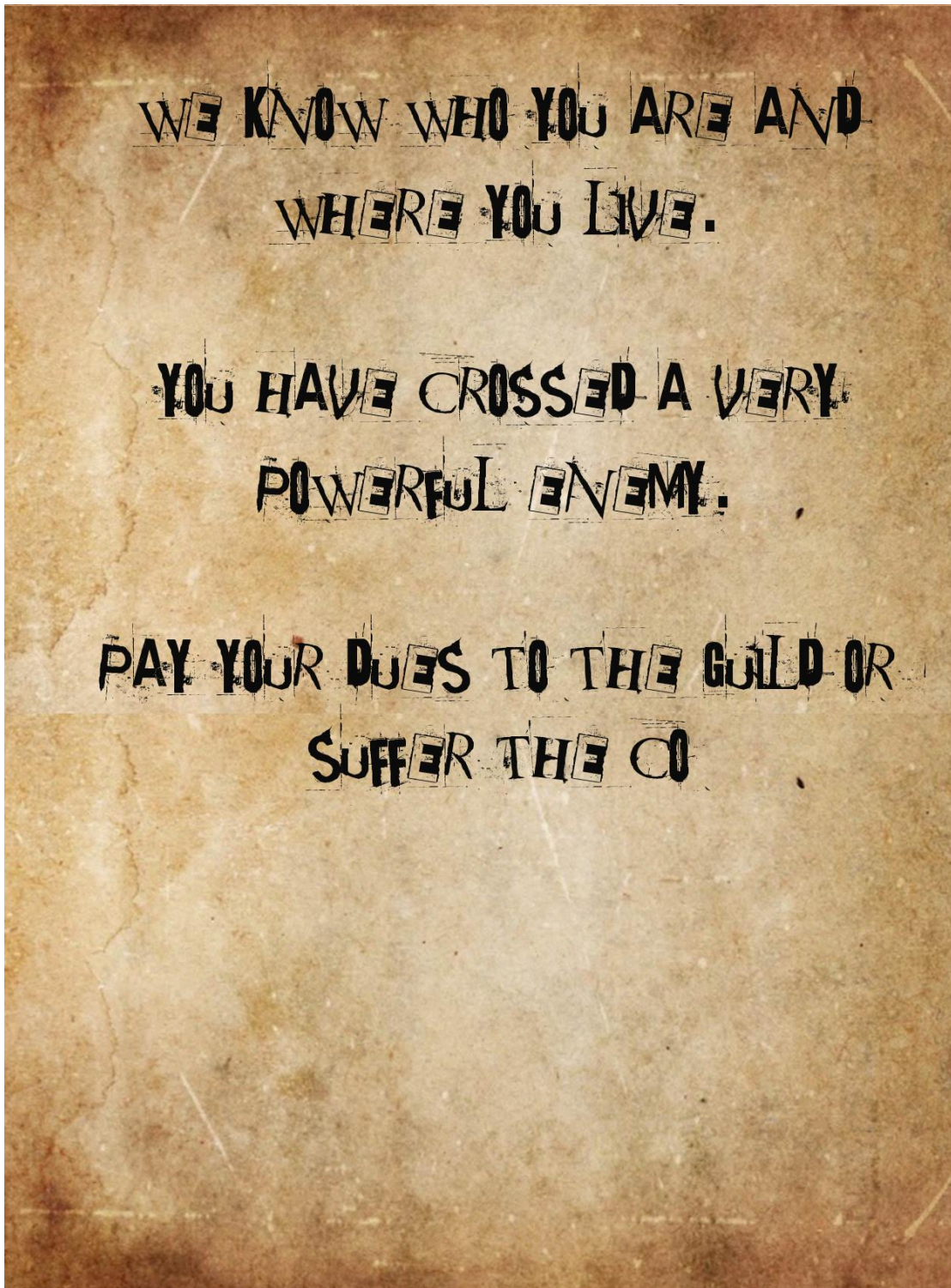
Boss Papers #3: Riot Article



Boss Papers #6 Alternate: The Yellow Sign



Boss Papers #6: The Yellow Sign

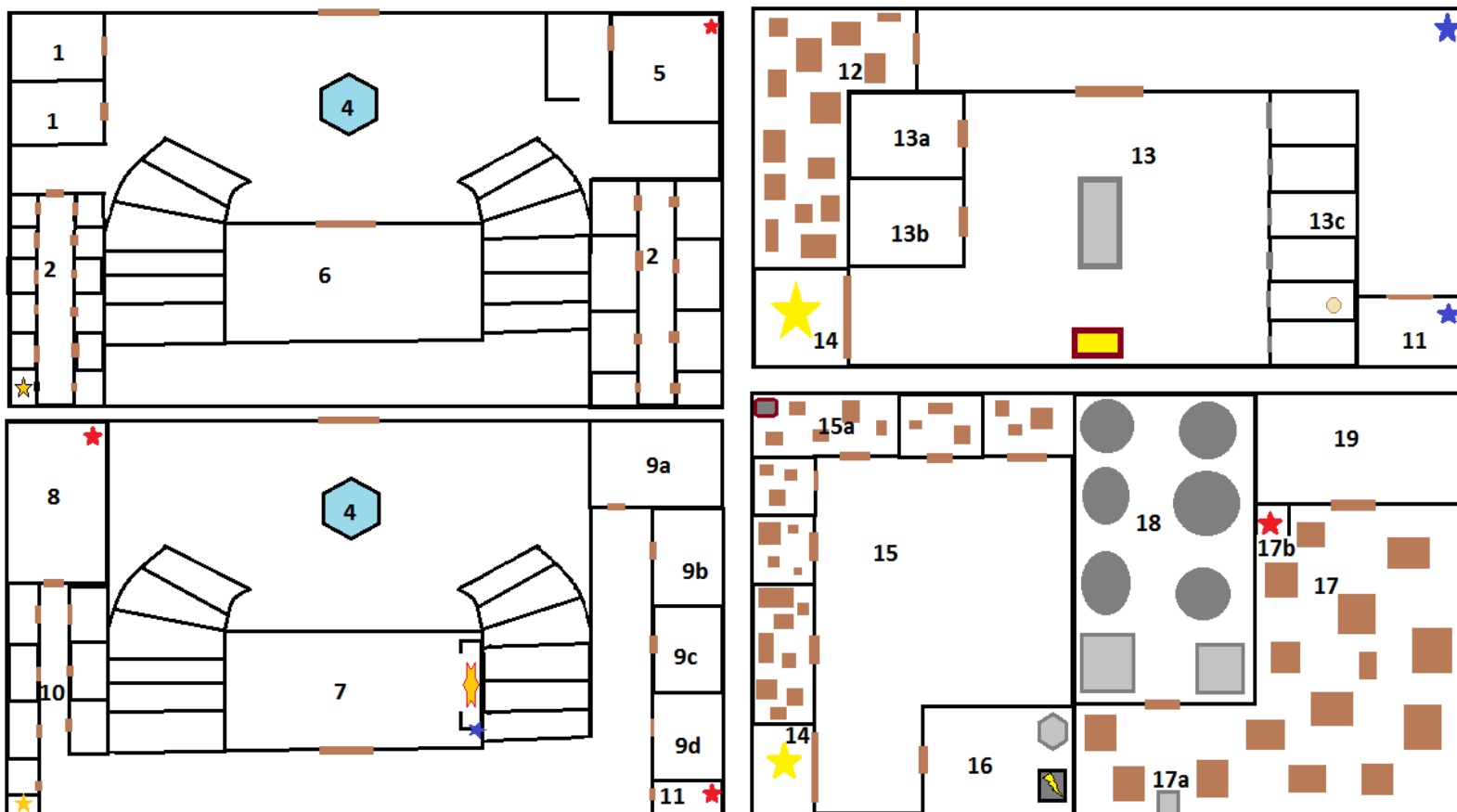


Boss Papers #4: Unfinished Blackmail Note




Steven,

There was a certain patron who has not paid his dues to the Guild since the last ritual. Our King was not pleased with this insult and it was likely this person, a Mr. Meldrum, could become a loose end if he speaks to the wrong person. I hope you do not find it too forward of me, but I have sent him a memo for you. I expect he will be taken care of soon.

~Elle



LEGEND

1	First Floor: Art Galleries	7	Second Floor: Library	10	Second Floor: Art Studios	14	Elevator Access	18	Basement: Distillery
2	First Floor: Guest Rooms	8	Second Floor: Steven's Office	11	Second Floor: Attic Access	15	Basement	19	Basement: Smuggler's Hideout
	Elevator Shaft (Inaccessible from Second Floor)	9a	Second Floor: Gallery, Sculptures	12	Attic: Storage	15a	Basement: Storage with Hidden Trap Door	<i>All locations are approximate. Starred areas, Area 6, all attic areas, and areas 17-19 are hidden to the Investigators until they discover a way in.</i>	
4	Obsidian Fountain	9b	Second Floor: Gallery, Fine Arts	13	Attic: Main Torture Room	16	Basement: Boiler and Fuse Box		
5	First Floor: Elle's Office	9c	Second Floor: Gallery, Photography	13a	Attic: Isolation Room	17	Basement: Distillery Storage		
6	First Floor: Hidden Ritual Stage/Area	9d	Second Floor: Gallery, Costumes	13b	Attic: Projection Room	17a	Basement: Coal Chute		
	Secret Pathway Up		Secret Pathway Down	13c	Attic: Holding Cells	17b	Basement: Dumbwaiter		

PROHIBITION, THE FINE ARTS, AND AMBER LIES...

It's 1924 and Prohibition is in full swing, but that's hardly stopped the Shakespeare Gang from making a living out of it right under the noses of a local arts collective, the Lakeside Guild. While the Guild plies its community-driven approach to the arts, the rum-runners below operate with impunity... or do they? The Lakeside Guild itself has a secret, a dark operation of its own hidden behind the tattered remnants of community service. But what does the Shakespeare Gang's boss, Steven Marlone, have to do with it?

The Boss is a psychological horror, closed oubliette scenario where the Investigators seek out answers to one question, but find much more than they bargained for. The threat is two-fold, blending a yellow-tinged cult and the criminal underground into one surreal, devious, and mind-warpingly horrific experience.

