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THE
ASSIGNMENT

CALL OF
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INTRODUCTION

This scenario is meant to be played by one player and one keeper.

KEEPER INFORMATION

The player takes the role of Fenius, a finder. One day his patron, Kaeso Neratius, calls him to his dwellings. Two nights ago something was stolen from him and the player will be assigned to find it. The stolen item was a parchment that Kaeso was studying. It was stolen by a woman, a strix in disguise. The parchment contains the way to call Shantak into our world. The strix wants to be Shantak's spouse and rule together with him. It can also be included in a campaign set in Italy during the Roman Empire (the city can be changed but not the country). If the player successfully completes the assignment, the ending has been left open for more adventures.

NEW SKILLS

Being set during a specific era, the characters will have different skills not found in other settings. Information about these new skills can be found at p.10 of the sourcebook "Cthulhu through the ages" published by Chaosium or in the sourcebook "Cthulhu Invictus" by Golden Goblin Press.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ABOUT THE INVESTIGATOR'S OCCUPATION

A finder was someone who would do the dirty work for somebody important. Skillful in spying, investigating and, when needed, in combat.

CARRYING WEAPONS AROUND

People were allowed to carry weapons around for self-defense. Beside Rome, other cities might have had proper local laws for such matter. There was a big difference between city and countryside. For the sake of this scenario, the city has a no weapons law within the city, but it doesn't apply to the countryside. Small weapons like knives are allowed though.



At the villa

Fenius is a finder. His patron, Kaeso Neratius, calls him to his villa.

He will be welcomed by some guards (2), they are standing in front of the gate. When introduced, he will be told that Kaeso is waiting for him in his study. The player knows the way, he has been here before. On his way he will pass through the garden where some slaves are doing some gardening.

When the player gets to the study, the door is open and Kaeso can be seen at his table reading a parchment. When he notices the player he greets him

“Fenius, Fenius, thank you for coming. I have an urgent matter to discuss. Please have a sit”

He explains the problem:

“Two nights ago, I was out looking for some innocent fun, and fun I found indeed. A beautiful woman, the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. You won’t believe how beautiful she was. Her hair brown and long, so long, her skin...man.. her skin was as smooth as silk. Her eyes .. I couldn’t stop staring at them. Blue, as blue as our sea. We spent the night drinking and having sex, best sex I have ever had I must say. But I don’t think you’re interested in this, here’s the problem. The next morning, when I woke up, she was gone and with her a really important parchment. Do you understand? She robbed me! I want you to find her and bring back what belongs to me. And...Fenius...kill that bitch for me please. Her head will suffice.”

If the player wants to ask more questions, Kaeso will tell him the following

- he found her in the slums of the city, she was wondering around
- her name was Aelia
- he feels she wasn’t local even though she spoke a perfect latin
- the guards didn’t see her leaving
- the parchment was the subject of his studies, if the player wants to know more a **persuade** roll is required. If pushed and failed the patron will remind him about the difference in status, even between friends (the player will lose 1d2 status). If the roll is a success Kaeso tells the investigator that the parchment is a really expensive piece of his collection without disclosing more.
- maybe he was too drunk but he can’t recall a lot about that night of wild sex
- if asked why an important person like him would go to the slums for some fun, he will say that sometimes the better goods are found in the worst places

After the player has finished questioning the man, Kaeso will excuse himself and tell the player to see himself out and will add

“Before you go, as soon as you find out something come back here and let me know immediately! Now, go.”

If the player wants to ask around the villa about that night, the player will find only one guard that was also working that night. He is guarding the gate. He’s friendly and tells him that the woman was indeed as spectacular as described and confirms that he didn’t see her leaving the premises of the villa the next morning. If asked about the night, he will say that the sound of an owl was heard in the garden, or at least that’s what a servant told him. The servant, an old man that is tending the garden, will confirm.

The parchment

Kaeso bought this parchment from a merchant during one of his trips in Aegyptus (Egypt). Kaeso has always been interested in the occult and as a collector, he is always looking forward to add something in his collection. The parchment was sold by a merchant (a follower of Nyarlathotep). The parchment is written in a mix of Latin and ancient Egyptian. It contains the way to contact Shantak.

Sanity loss: 1d6

Cthulhu mythos: +2/+7

Mythos rating: 37

Study: 12 weeks

Spell: contact Shantak

The villa

It is located a lit bit outside the city. It has a wall all around its premises. It includes several rooms such as servants’ quarters, a courtyard, a study, a storage room, a garden. The study is where the player will meet Kaeso. The study is in the garden on its own. Kaeso being really interested in occult and such, will own a lot of scrolls of different origins. Including some mythos scrolls and parchment if the keeper wants to (check the Invictus sourcebook by Golden Goblin Press for more info about those).

The slums

The slums streets are narrow, on these businesses are plenty. bakers, brothels, cobblers, tailors for example. The player has to pay attention to waste on the ground such as animals' excrements and humans'. Walking down the slums' streets feels like being in a labyrinth where streets intersect with each others. A wrong turn and danger will be waiting. During the day people can be seen wondering around the area, rich and poor alike, during the night though, it is hard to see where to go since only torches light the area and it's much easier to get the attention of ruffians.

Asking around, the player will find that nobody has ever heard of a woman called Aelia but a woman as described seems to live around that area. With an **idea** roll, the player understands that Aelia is just an alias and not her real name. If asked about the house, with a **persuade** roll it will be described as a small house with an owl guarding its door, if fail a youngster will approach him and, for some money, can tell the investigator where the house is. A **navigate** roll will make the player find the house in half an hour, if failed 1d2 hours. The slums is not a good place to just wander around alone (the patron had a guard along with him), the player will be attacked by a thug. He will ask for some money or a fight will begin. The thug will be just a diversion, to spice up the adventure. After two rounds he will leave with or without money.

The house

Her house is very small, the door is locked (a **strength** roll is required to open it) but the window on the back is close but not locked. There is an owl guarding the front door. It only has only two rooms. A bedroom and a common room. The common room has a small cooking area, a table with rotten food on it and a shelf with some spices but with a **listen** roll the player notices some laments coming from the bedroom. The laments will stop once the player enters the room. The bedroom has a trapdoor hidden under the bed. The trapdoor can be found with a **spot hidden** roll when the player investigates the room, if it fails, another lament can be heard from under the bed. Under the trapdoor, a **strength** roll required to open it, a ladder will take the player in her small dungeon. Down there the torches on the wall are not lit, the player must light them or a penalty die will be given for **spot hidden** rolls. In there, the investigator will find corpses and a young man chained to the wall. **SAN** loss 1/1d4. The young man is missing his right arm and his eyes, the sockets are empty. The man will scream "*Who is there? Please stop it! I can't take it anymore*", as soon as he hears the investigator's voice he will say "*Help me! Help me! Please before she comes back!*". With a **medicine** or **first aid** roll, the player can tell that the young man has been here for at least a week according to his wounds.

If asked, the prisoner will say:

- if asked why he's been kept in here , he will say "*she keeps me as food, she's a monster!*"

-If the players describes the woman, he will confirm the similarities

-If asked about how they met, he will tell the player that they met just a little bit further from her house, and she took him somewhere in the forest to have sex.

-If asked about where in the forest, he can't remember, when he tries to remember it's just foggy details about an altar and a statue of a winged deity

-If asked how he got back here, he found himself there the day after without knowing how

-If asked why he didn't resist, he will say that he just couldn't even if he wanted to

The young man doesn't remember anything else, and just begs the player to let him go.

In addition to the bed, there is an open chest with some clothes and next to the bed three torture/sex tools. Inside the house nothing else important is to be found.

When the player goes out of the house he/she will notice that the owl is gone.

Where in the forest?

The player can ask around about the forest but nobody will be of any help.

With an **Idea** roll the player knows that the patron knows an augur that could be helpful in his search. The augur lives a little bit out of the city between the forest and the city, the PC knows the location. The augur will help him in exchange of some money. He will tell him that it is said that deep in the forest, where no animals dwell, some kind of rituals have been taken place some time ago. With a **Know** roll, the player knows that north of the forest there is an area where animals don't dare to go. The augur suggests not to look any further if he wants to come back alive, adding that nobody ever comes back from that place.

The player can find more information (**Idea** roll) about disappearances with a newsreader. The player knows one already, his name is Mallius Castus. He usually can be found around the market during the day, and in the evening he can be found having fun at their usual brothel (The house of pleasure). When asked about the disappearances he will tell the player that it is in fact true, some people disappeared sometime ago and were never found. The authorities tried to find them, but without success. If asked about the forest, he tells him that there was a lead there but without any results. All of them came from poor families. He doesn't know anything else. (Continues in p.7)

If the Idea roll fails, an old man will approach the man outside her house saying “*Young man , you shouldn’t be here but you are and now she knows*”. If asked about her, the old man , with a **persuasion/intimidate** roll, will tell him that she’s not good. He saw her taking young boys to the forest and they never came back. If asked why he was following her, he will just say that she was too beautiful. An **insight roll** will tell the player that this man is sincere, if failed, he might be just a loony.

In the unlucky case that every roll fails, the player knows that Kaeso is expecting news daily and if the forest is mentioned he remembers that the woman wanted to go there but then changed her mind (he will not say more than that) and will tell the player to go there and check it for himself. Time is money and he wants results as soon as possible.

The forest

With some **Navigate** rolls the player will find the supposed area in about 1 hour. If the roll is failed, it will take the player 1d3 hours to find it. If the player goes there in the evening a torch is needed to be able to see anything. There is an aura of dread, the branches of the trees seems to move on their own (there is no wind), only the sound of the moving branches and the owls can be heard. A **Know** roll will tell the player that no animals were supposed to be living here. The owls are seen on the branches and they follow the player. **SAN** loss 0/1d3. With a **listen roll** the player will hear the moaning of a man coming from somewhere in the forest, a **navigate** roll will make him find the place in no time, with a pushed failed roll the player will start hearing moaning from different directions. If all failed a luck roll will be needed to find the right one, if also this roll is failed, then he will stumbled across the ritual area while wondering around (the moaning will be finished by then, and the sex act will be over with the strix eating the young man).

If no failed rolls, the player will find an open area with an altar in front of a statue of a mysterious winged deity. The statue shows a creature with wings, talons and claws, the head resembles the one of a nightmarish owl. On the altar there is a young man and a humanoid strix having sex. There is blood coming out from the man orifices, but he seems not to care and keeps going with the act. The strix is on top of the man moaning and scratching the poor man. **SAN** loss 1d4/1d10.

A parchment lies near the statue, along with the clothes of the young man. If the player wants to attack the monster with a **stealth** roll , the player will get the element of surprise on the strix. If the roll is failed, she will notice the player and stop having sex and will focus on the player. The parchment can be taken with a successful **stealth** roll, if failed same as above. If the parchment is taken , without her noticing so, the player will encounter her anyway in the middle of his escape. While running away with a **spot hidden** roll, the player will notice that the owls are following him, the strix is following as well. A chase will start, if she catches up and the fight will start. If the player manages to get away from the creature , she will not follow outside the forest.

If the player successfully kills the strix, he will need the head as proof for the patron. If the player goes back to check up on the poor young man, he will be dead but with a smile on his face.

Once back at the villa, he will be asked to hand over the parchment and the head. He will be given his reward (money). With an **Insight roll**, the player feels that the patron is maybe hiding something, if asked he will just said that he will take care from here and tell the player to see himself out. This is a red herring that can be developed in another adventure. The patron wants to summon the creature Shantak, and on the parchment there is a way to do so.

If the player succeeded in getting away with the parchment from the creature, and come back to the villa without the head, Kaeso will be disappointed with the result but will still give some monetary reward to the investigator, after all the parchment is back in his hands. Kaeso will not believe a word the investigator will say. The investigator will be asked to leave the premises of the villa.

In the unfortunate event that the investigator comes back to the villa empty handed, Kaeso will show disappointment and tell the investigator that he will not be needed anymore. No monetary rewards in this case.

Rewards

+1d8 san if the strix is slain

+1d4 status if parchment and head have been delivered to the patron

+1d2 status if the head of the strix hasn’t been delivered to the patron but the parchment has

-1d4 status if neither the parchment nor the head have been delivered

+ monetary reward of 100 sestertii (for the head and parchment)

NPC Stat Blocks and Skills

Strix (The foul-winged woman)



STR 55 CON 35 SIZ 55 INT 60 POW 50 DEX 55 MOVE 12 (flying) HP 11

Dmg Bonus: 0 Dodge 40%

Armor: none

Attacks:

Grapple 45%, after grappling the character the strix will drain the character's blood. Each round 1D6 STR, then if the foe's strength gets to 0, the strix will drain his CON for 1d6 each round. If the CON gets to 0 the player is dead. Each point of STR and CON can be added to its POW or HP (if any was lost already). The PC will have to do a **strength** roll to get free from the grapple

Rend 45% 1d6+db

Call 45% 1d3 SAN.

Spells: mind control, transform into a woman

Sanity loss: 1d4/1d10

This version of the strix is a little bit different from the one described in the Invictus sourcebook. It has ability to change back into a human (in this case, a woman) and when in creature form the strix looks like a woman but with owl traits such as wings, claws and talons. Her body is partially covered with feathers as well. In creature form she can still speak as a human. When the player encounters the strix, it is already in creature form. She's looking for the parchment to summon Shantak and be his spouse.

Kaeso Neratius

STR 45 CON 55 SIZ 65 INT 60 POW 30 DEX 35 APP 30
EDU 65 MOVE 7 HP 9

Skills: Fighting (Brawl) 35% / Civics 40% / Empire 50% / Spot Hidden 35% / Other Kingdoms 15% / Occult 50% / Other language (Ancient Egyptian) 15%

An important merchant in the city of Brundisium. A shipping magnate. He is interested in myths and legends from different parts of the world.

Average guard

STR 55 CON 65 SIZ 55 INT 40 POW 40 DEX 55 APP 35
EDU 45 MOVE 8 HP 10

Skills: Fighting (Brawl) 35% / Gladius (Sword) 45% / Shield 35% / Civics 25% / Empire 30% / Spot Hidden 45% / Listen 40% / Stealth 30% / Intimidate 35%

Armor: 1d2

Thug

STR 35 CON 45 SIZ 50 INT 40 POW 40 DEX 40 APP 25
EDU 35 MOVE 7 HP 6

Skills: Fighting (Brawl) 35% / Dagger 35% / Spot Hidden 35% / Listen 40% / Stealth 50% / Intimidate 35%

Mallius Castus (Newsreader)

STR 35 CON 40 SIZ 45 INT 50 POW 55 DEX 50 APP 55
EDU 50 MOVE 8 HP 10

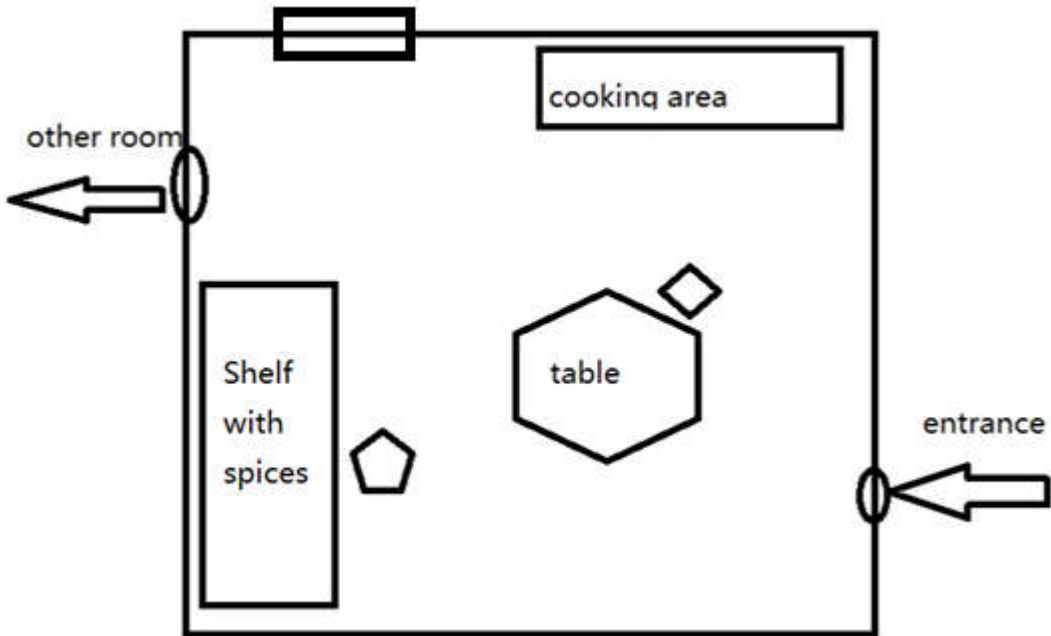
Skills: Fighting (Brawl) 25% / Ranged Weapons (Sling) 35% / Fighting (Sword) 35% / Civics 10% / Empire 20% / Spot Hidden 45% / Listen 45% / Stealth 40% / Persuade 35% / Fast Talk 35% / Occult 25% / Status 15% / Insight 20%

Armor: none

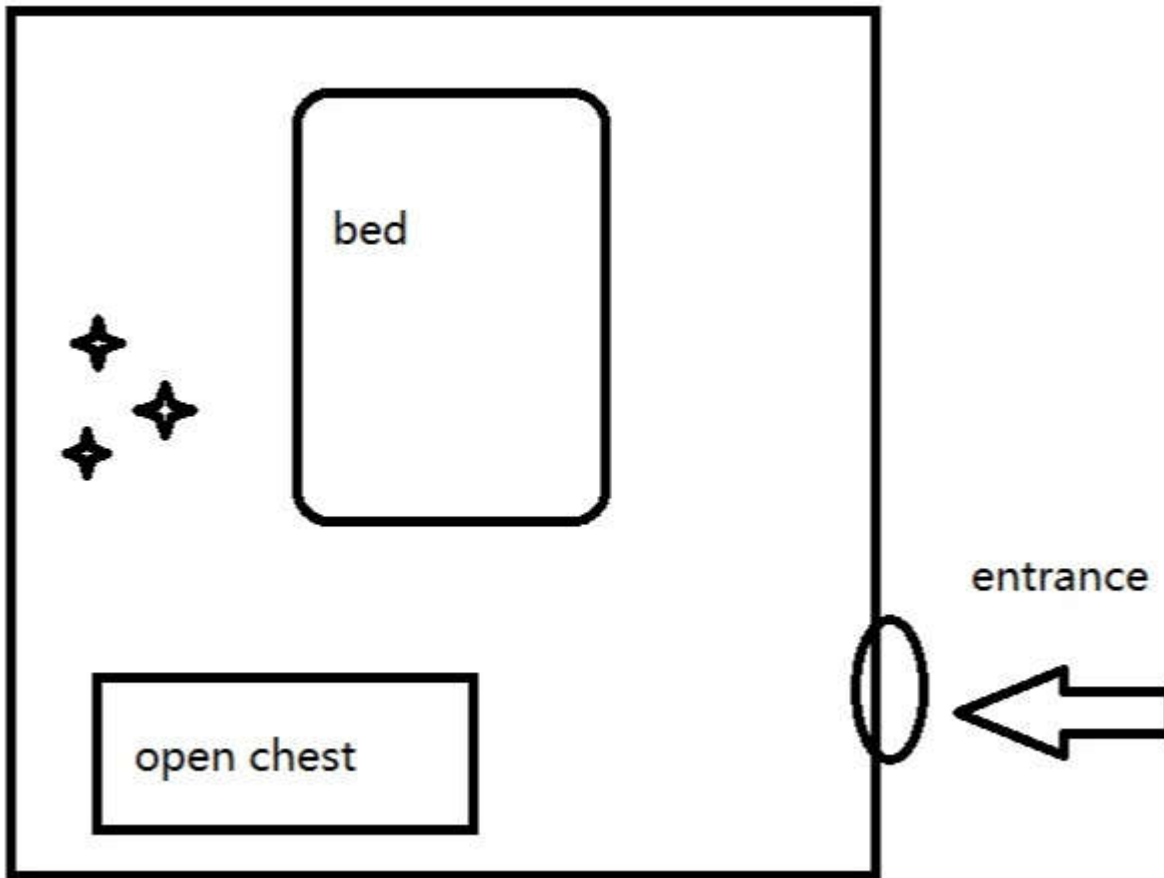
Close friend to the investigator. They grew up together and sometimes worked together as well. He likes good wine and good looking people. He is always in search for news to spread.

PLAYER HANDOUTS

Map 1



Map 2



Torture tools (found in the bedroom, the three stars in the second map)

