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The Gods Hate Me



**Seven Adventures for
Cthulhu Invictus**





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THE GODS HATE ME

*And Six Other Scenarios for
Cthulhu Invictus*

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Our web site www.chaosium.com always contains the latest release information and current prices.

Chaosium publication 0402

ISBN-10: 1-56882-358-4

ISBN-13: 978-1-56882-358-4

Published in October 2011

Printed in the United States

BLOOD AND GLORY

An Original Scenario for Cthulhu Invictus

BY OSCAR RIOS

ONE ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL SONG

Introduction – This scenario takes place during a three-day holiday celebrated with gladiatorial games. Precisely where or when is up to individual Keepers. The scenario can take place anywhere in the empire as long as there is a suitable urban center, market place, slum and amphitheatre. For simplicity sake “Blood and Glory” is written to take place in the city of Rome. The market place is Trajan’s Market on Quirinal Hill and the slum is Rome’s Subura neighborhood. The arena where these games take place is the Flavian Amphitheatre, also known as The Coliseum.

Just why the games are being held is unimportant. They could be to celebrate a holiday, a military victory or sponsored by a politician to gain favor before an election. During the games strange things happen which investigators can become embroiled in if they so choose. Blood and Glory works well as a “drop-in” scenario between longer more involved adventures. It is also suitable for smaller groups of investigators, although Keepers may wish to scale back some of the encounters. It is ideal as an unexpected adventure, something investigators fall into while trying to enjoy a day at the games (“Why does this keep happening to us?”).

Keeper’s Information – During the holiday events unfold over the three days and nights of the celebration. What may confuse investigators is that Blood and Glory is actually two unrelated mysteries, involving completely different mythos adversaries, happening at the same time. Investigators may solve one, both,

or neither of these cases in the allotted time. If either threat remains unresolved on the night after the close of the festival a great massacre occurs. Investigators should be unaware of the time restraints they face. The two investigations are called “Blood” and “Glory”.

Blood – A wealthy woman in attendance at the games is not what she seems. The pale beautiful woman, calling herself Vatina Corvillia, is not human. She is the offspring of the cursed half-serpent creature, called Lamia. Vatina, a daughter of the Lamia, is one of the first vampires. She is exceptional among her kind and has concealed herself within Roman Society. By using her good looks, charm, and money she has so far managed to avoid detection. Vatina makes certain to keep her gaze lowered when speaking to anyone, so that her serpentine eyes do not betray her inhuman nature. She owns a high-end metalworking shop, which produces some of the finest blades in the city.

The trio of smiths she employs also serves her as bodyguards. They are also not what they seem. They are Bouda, shape-changing creatures able to shift between human form and that of an enormous hyena. Such creatures are famed for their metalworking skills and these are no exception, producing weapons of remarkable quality, which are then sold from Vatina’s shop.

Gladiatorial games always bring out the worst in Vatina. Being in large crowds, listening to the screams of the dying and smelling copious amounts of spilled blood send her into a near frenzy of hunger. She has heard that

women of her means, such as herself, sometimes pay to have access to handsome gladiators after the arena closes to sate their sexual urges. For these games the vampire has decided to treat herself and enjoy a “taste” of such pleasures for herself.

Vatina feeds off the gladiators she couples with. Her activities become more reckless each night as she drains the men closer and closer towards the point of death. The gladiators she feeds upon appear tired the following day and deliver lackluster performances. Men famed for vitality and physical prowess take the sands appearing weak and sickly. The promoters and crowds are not pleased. Finally gladiators begin to die, first from accidents Vatina indirectly causes and later by her direct actions. Unless stopped by investigators Vatina completely loses control at a party (Bacchanalia) held after the closing of the games, going on a blood soaked rampage at the hedonistic celebration.

Glory – There are very few old gladiators, which is fortunate because theirs is a sorrowful existence. They remember the roar of the crowds, being a moment from death and never feeling more alive, the admiration of tens of thousands of fans. For one such man, the days of glory are gone and life has become a slow, miserable march to the grave. Once called “The Lion of the Sands”, Hadrianis is long past his prime. At forty-seven years old he is past the age where he can compete in the games, too slow and weak to do more than disgrace himself. He earned his freedom long ago but in his heart remains enslaved to the arena. Desperate for money Hadrianis recently accepted a position as a coach and trainer with Ludus Gallicus (a gladiator training school) owned by Sestius Donicus.

Hadrianis feels his life is barely worth living and would give anything to return to his glory days. He said as much to Didius Asina, his usual apothecary, who referred him to an African potion dealer he’d dealt with in the past. The man, named Ekwueme (meaning

“one who fulfills his promises”), claims to be an alchemist of the Igbo people who dwelt in land south of Regio Deserta (present day Nigeria). He is very dark-skinned, with black eyes and teeth. Ekwueme is The Black Man, Avatar of Nyarlathotep. He offered Hadrianis a very special tonic, which would restore not only his vitality but grant him great strength as well, for the price of a single denarius.

After the aged gladiator purchased the tonic the Black Man delivered a warning, “Drink no more than a few sips. The gods do not like mortals to raise up to rival their might. A few sips and no more”. The bottle contained five full swallows of the enchanted tonic. The stage is set for chaos and tragedy, which is just what Nyarlathotep intended.

Hadrianis takes a few sips, and feels as strong and fit as he did in his prime. He returns to the sands of the arena restored to the full measure of his abilities. But soon he cannot resist drinking more of the elixir, keeping it on his person at all times. With each sip his strength increases, but his self-control and humanity slip away. Hadrianis grows more bloodthirsty and bestial with each dose he imbibes until he becomes an abomination. The main ingredient of the tonic is the tear of a Cyclops, a creature known for its great strength and cannibalistic tendency. In the end Hadrianis gains a hunger for human flesh. Unless investigators stop him the gladiator becomes a monster, a danger to everyone and everything around him.

Mistaken Connections – The two threads of investigation are fairly straightforward. Their opposing natures (an older man gaining vitality while younger men are debilitated), may lead investigators into thinking these are connected events. A careful look at the evidence eventually shows investigators these events are unrelated. Should investigators not realize this one of the threats may reach its ultimate, and tragic, conclusion.

The Non-Player Characters – There are a number of NPC's for the investigators to interact with. Most have nothing to do with the mythos threats disrupting the games but a few do possess information which could be helpful to investigators. Keepers should add whatever other NPC's they feel necessary to further flesh out their particular adventure.

GLADIATORS, OWNERS, TRAINERS AND ORGANIZERS

Mythos Threats

Vatina Corvillia – Daughter of the Lamia and fan of the games.

Badru, Bakari and Baruti – Bouda in the service of Vatina Corvillia.

Hadrianis – Troubled former gladiator currently under the influence of Nyarlathotep.

Ekwueme – African Alchemist and The Black Man, Avatar of Nyarlathotep.

Ludus Gallicus or Gallic School

Sestius Donicus – School official and manager who offered Hadrianis a trainer's position.

Corvus - A well-known gladiator who defeated, yet admires, Hadrianis before his retirement.

Vocula, Tasius, Pantera, Rullus and Pennus - Gladiators of the Ludus Gallicus

Agorix, Docilus, Laena and Fronto - Guards in the employ of Ludus Gallicus

Ludus Dacicus or Dacian School

Junis Noster - School official, manager and veteran trainer.

Flax, Crassus, Aratus, Cenaeus and Sigils - Gladiators of the Ludus Dacicus

Gavrus, Tanicus, Sellic and Leon - Guards in the employ of Ludus Dacicus

Friends

Livia – Landlady and neighbor of Hadrianis.

Didius Asina - Well-known apothecary treating Hadrianis and setting him on a dark path.

Fans of the Games

Nectiva Fadilla - Patrician woman and fan of handsome gladiators, especially after dark.

Fannius Cimber - Patrician man holding a party for the gladiator owners and managers.

A DAY AT THE GAMES

A day of games opens with a parade led by the editor, or organizer, of the games. The games begin with staged mock combat matches followed by displays of exotic animals. Some animals are trained to perform tricks while others were pitted against one another in combat. Just before lunch there might be a wild animal hunt where specialized gladiators, called Bestiarii, would dispatch captured beasts.

At lunchtime come public executions where criminals and prisoners of war are put to deaths in the most degrading, dramatic and painful ways imaginable. The condemned are fed to beasts, pitted against one another in lethal combat or even reenact famous historical deaths and battles. This is thought to be a deterrent to petty crime and insurrection.

Afternoon brings on the main events, the gladiators. These men, well armed and superbly trained, are masters of their art. They are very expensive to own and maintain, possibly only performing a handful of times each year. Gladiators are celebrities and sex symbols who are greatly admired. However they are also despised for being public performers and often slaves.

Ovidius Glycia and Modia - Hedonistic patrician couple hosting a party (Orgy).

Timeline – Blood and Glory is an open-ended scenario. Just how investigators conduct their investigation is up to them. Keepers need only follow the time line of events and react to the actions of the investigators. Investigators who sit back watching and waiting for the keeper to engage, or “hook” them may run out of time as events spiral out of control.

TIMETABLE

The Day and Night before the Games

- ☛ Hadrianis drinks a few sips of the Essence of Vitality tonic, then visits the editor of the games to request a match in the upcoming events. The organizer, stunned by the aged champion’s excellent physical condition, agrees and puts Hadrianis on the schedule.
- ☛ Vatina Corvillia visits the pens of Ludus Gallicus in the arenan. She bribes the guards Agorix and Laena to have access to two gladiators. She couples with Vocula and then Tasius, draining both but restrains her urges and doesn’t seriously harm either.
- ☛ Vatina Corvillia runs into Nectiva Fadilla as she leaves the arena. The women talk and Nectiva boasts of having visited the gladiators of Ludus Davicus. Both agree to switch places the following night, to sample the men of the other training schools.

The First Day

- ☛ Hadrianis meets with Sestius Donicus, of the Ludus Gallicus, at the Flavian Amphitheatre. He informs the manager the he can’t accept the position as a trainer but is instead making a comeback to the arena. Sestius and Corvus desperately try to talk

him out of it fearing he’ll be seriously injured or killed.

- ☛ Newsreaders publicly announce that the legendary Hadrianis is making a return to the arena. He will fight in a re-match against Corvus, the only man who ever beat him.
- ☛ The parade takes place. Hadrianis marches in it to the surprise of many looking very fit. Vatina Corvillia and her bodyguards sit in the un-shaded section of the arena, which gets the most sun. It is an unpopular section but she sits here despite the fact that better seats are available.
- ☛ Staged combat matches take place followed by the animal acts. All proceeds normally.
- ☛ Lunchtime arrives and war captives are executed, possibly from Judea. Some are fed to hungry bears while others are made to duel one another to the death.
- ☛ Afternoon arrives and the gladiatorial matches begin. Vocula and Tasius perform poorly. Both men seem tired, slow and clumsy. They quickly lose their matches, soundly and to the annoyance of the crowd.
- ☛ Hadrianis walks out onto the sands looking as vigorous as a man half his age. He fights Corvus, toying with his opponent before beating him badly. It is a stunning upset and the crowd goes wild with excitement.
- ☛ Corvus is badly hurt. Arena physicians say he’ll likely need a year to recover before he can possibly fight again. Sestius Donicus is furious as the match was not supposed to be to the death.
- ☛ Hadrianis schedules another match with the games editor for the following day. His opponent will be a group of prison-

ers, war captives from a recent revolt (possibly Judea).

- ☛ Vatina Corvillia goes to the baths for an hour after the games and then home.

The First Night

- ☛ Hadrianis walks home. Once there he becomes nervous about his chances against a group of armed men. He contemplates taking another dose of the Tonic, feeling an almost physical urge to do so. Hadrianis tries to eat some dinner but everything tastes wrong. He starts feeling dizzy, anxious and confused.
- ☛ Vatina Corvillia leaves her home at sunset and returns to the Coliseum to feed.
- ☛ Hadrianis takes another swallow of the Tonic of Vitality. He falls deeply asleep as the potion does its insidious work, turning him into something not quite human.
- ☛ Vatina Corvillia and Nectiva Fadilla, along with other wealthy women, visit with the gladiators after the arena closes. The pair switches gladiator teams; Nectiva visiting Ludus Gallicus and Vatina visiting Ludus Dacicus.
- ☛ The vampire bribes the guard Sellic and spends time with the gladiators Crassus and Aratus, feeding from both men.
- ☛ Before heading to their respective homes Vatina and Corvilla share wine and gossip about the experiences that evening.

The Second Day

- ☛ The games progress normally with mock combats followed by animal acts.
- ☛ One of the animal hunt turns into a blood-bath. An odd looking mane less lion with light fur turns the tables on the hunters. The cunning and powerfully built beast

kills two men and badly mauls a third. Additional beastarii enter the arena and corner the animal. The lion is netted, but not killed. The announcer then proclaims that tomorrow a new team of hunters will test their skills against the killer white lion.

- ☛ Lunch break begins and the executions take place.
- ☛ Ten prisoners, armed with pugio, are set against three fully armed gladiators. One of them is Crassus, who is weakened from being fed upon by Vatina the night before. He looks tired, his blows and parries sloppy. It's obvious he is nowhere near peak condition.
- ☛ Suddenly one of the prisoners knocks Crassus off his feet. Several prisoners converge on Crassus, stabbing him several times before other gladiators rescue him. He is carried off the sands in a stretcher. The crowd is stunned; prisoners seldom get the better of "real" trained gladiators.
- ☛ Hadrianis takes the sands appearing larger than yesterday; with rippling muscles, thick flowing hair and a half-crazed look in his eyes. His opponents are seven armed men, rough looking rebel leaders from a recent revolt. The men are war captives, trained soldiers and killers with nothing to lose. The match begins and Hadrianis kills three of the men before being disarmed by a club blow to his hand (which should have crushed it). Hadrianis grabs the club wielder with a roar and beats him to death with his bare hands. The gladiator flies into a rampage, pummeling the remaining three prisoners to death with punches, kicks and head butts. Hadrianis even dislocates one of the prisoner's arms as he tosses him about like a rag doll.
- ☛ The match ends with Hadrianis covered in blood, panting and bare-chested. His armor is discarded and his clothing lies

shredded. Investigators making an Idea roll notice the gladiator is barefoot as well. While not noticeable from a distance the gladiator exits the arena larger than when he entered it. While many cheer wildly some of the crowd, well used to gore, are shocked by the savagery of the display.

- The gladiator matches begin. In a match between Aratus of Ludus Dacicus and Flax of Ludus Gallicus tragedy occurs. Aratus, weakened from his encounter with Vatina, accidentally stumbles and drops his guard too soon. He fails to block a telegraphed blow from his opponent, and the blade sails in opening a deep wound in his throat. Both men appear shocked as Aratus falls to the ground bleeding.
- The spectators are stunned as Aratus is a crowd favorite and this wasn't supposed to be a match to the death. Physicians quickly rush the fallen man into the arena for treatment, but he is done for. The gladiator is dead before he can be removed from the sands.
- In the final match of the day, between Pantera of Ludus Gallicus and Cenaeus of Ludus Dacicus, the match takes an ugly turn. Out of nowhere Cenaeus goes full on for his opponent. What was supposed to be a competitive display turns into a life or death struggle. This is sparked by the earlier accidental death, the gladiator trying to gain vengeance for his fallen brother. With their owners screaming for the men to stop, the gladiators brutally maim one another. Both are near death when as they are carried off the sands*. Many in the crowd enjoy this spectacle, while many others feel its "poor showmanship".
*Note – Both Pantera and Cenaeus are crippled by this incident and never perform again.
- After the games close Hadrianis demands another match from the editor, but is re-

fused. He is told that he might be overexposed and shouldn't overdo it. The editor points out that his hand is injured and that maybe he should "get some rest". Hadrianis's appearance and demeanor frightens the organizers. The gladiator leaves and heads home.

- Vatina, her hunger heightened by the savagery of the day, heads to a bathhouse (The baths of Agrippa). She loses control and feeds on her lovely young male attendant, named Piso. She drains the young man to the point of death rendering him unconscious. Vatina claims to the owner that the boy has fallen asleep, joking that she must have worn him out. The vampire gives the owner, a man named Cerco, an aureus (100 sesterii gold coin), asking that he not be punished and that she found him quite pleasing. Cerco lets the incident pass and thinks nothing more of it. Piso slips into a coma by midnight and dies the following afternoon.
- Hadrianis is rapidly losing control. His hand is broken. He's exhausted and dizzy. Hadrianis is very hungry. He buys various food items on the way home but nothing tries to eat stays down. Hadrianis stumbles home, arriving there just before dark.
- Vatina arrives at her home and remains there for a few hours. Her hunger still not sated, the bathhouse boy's blood only making it more acute. She impatiently awaits nightfall and a third visit to the Coliseum's gladiator pens.

The Second Night

- Hadrianis paces his apartment, in turmoil. He wants to perform at the games tomorrow, but isn't scheduled to appear. Hadrianis cannot think straight or relax enough to sleep. The gladiator feels terrible, from his injuries, hunger and exhaustion.

- ☛ Vatina and her new friend Nectiva meet for a drink before entering the lower level of the Coliseum for a final night of sampling the gladiators. They split up again, Nectiva visiting the pens of Ludus Dacicus and Vatina those of Ludus Gallicus.
- ☛ Vatina and Nectiva are both refused entry by the guards of both schools. They have orders from the game's editor to allow no one into the gladiator pens due to the suspicion of ill or poisoning among the gladiators.
- ☛ Vatnia and Nectiva use their charm and wealth to get past the guards. Nectiva enter the gladiator pens.
- ☛ Hadrianis can stand it no longer; he just wants the pain to end... so he takes another swallow of the tonic. And then another swallow. He feels better, sighs and passes out falling into a deep slumber. His body undergoes further changes.
- ☛ Vatina enters the cell of the Pennus. She grapples him, viciously coupling with him and feeding from him at the same time. The gladiator tries to resist but without an enchanted weapon he is powerless against the Child of the Lamia. His half stifled cries are mistaken for vigorous copulation. Pennus is completely drained of blood and his lifeless corpse left lying in his cell.
- ☛ Vatina meets up with Nectiva on the way out of the gladiator pens. They chat and Nectiva invites Vatina to a special party the next night. She explains that it's a Bacchanalia, a religions celebration dedicated to the god Bacchus (i.e. - a drunken orgy), held by Ovidius Glycia and his wife Modia. The vampire agrees to attend the party and the women depart for their respective homes.
- ☛ Vatina drops the keys to the gladiator pens in a random sewer grate on the way to her home.

KEEPER'S NOTE – With this dose Hadrianis loses any chance of recovery, his humanity hopelessly lost. Investigators hoping to save Hadrianis **MUST** intervene before this point.

- ☛ Vatina gets carried away while applying her "charms" on Laena and Fronto, guards for the Ludus Gallicus. She completely drains both men of blood while coupling with them. By the time the men realize their peril they are too weak to resist or raise an alarm. The vampire takes their keys and orders her guards to dispose of their bodies.
 - ☛ Badru, Bakari and Baruti drag the bodies of the slain guards to an empty, secluded cell within earshot of their mistress. They take turns taking watch while the others transform into hyena form to feast upon the corpses. Nothing but clothing remains by 3am.
- ### Day Three
- ☛ The blood drained corpse of the gladiator Pennus is discovered. A moment later a cell is found with the bloodstained clothing of the missing guards, Laena and Fronto.
 - ☛ Sestius Donicus it outraged and confused. He meets with the editor of the games demanding compensation and causing a huge scene.
 - ☛ A rookie gladiator takes Pennus's place in the day's line up. The show carries on as best it can.
 - ☛ A very bestial looking Hadrianis shows up at the Coliseum. He pushes his way into the editor's office and demand's another match. Guards are summoned but all are stunned and horrified by the man's appearance, barely recognizing him. The edi-

tor tries to calm Hadrianis and calls for a physician to look him over.

- Hadrianis, now a monstrous thing that was once a man, resists. He battles with guards, badly injuring several people before escaping into the tunnels under the arena. Hadrianis hides there while guards make a half-hearted search, having no wish to encounter the monster they were sent into the tunnels to find.
- The morning events proceed normally. The “Legendarye Lion” is then released onto the sands for another wild animal hunt. It is now hunted by three of the most famous beastarii in Rome.
- Drawn by the sound of cheering crowds Hadrianis wanders up from the tunnels to just under the sands.
- The mane less white lion once again proves itself to be intelligent and vicious. It manages to ambush and kill one of the hunters. The other two close on it, working together, to kill the now deadly predator. The crowd roars with excitement and expectation.
- Suddenly, from below the sands, bursts a monster that was once a man. With a howl Hadrianis leaps at the lion, punching at it with his massive, powerful fists. The lion delivers several bites and rakes with its claws, seriously maiming Hadrianis before being killed. The hunters recoil in horror and are stunned with shock.
- The inhuman monster, with huge rippling muscles, crazed eyes and anvil like fists roars in victory, holding the dead lion over its head. It hurls the dead animal into the stands where the carcass kills two people and wounds dozens of others. Hadrianis prances around, waving it’s arms to encourage the fans to cheer, instead they gasp in fear. Meanwhile, the terrible gash-

es the lion inflicted on the monster begin to close and heal before everyone’s eyes.

- The beastarii recover from their shock and charge the monster. They thrust at him with their spears, scoring hits into his thick hide. Guards pour onto the sands with weapons drawn. They quickly surround Hadrianis.
- The creature that was once Hadrianis attacks the beastarii and guards, going into a rampage. He kills nine men with his bare hands with the last of his victims having his left arm torn off at the shoulder. Reflexively the creature lifts the arm to its mouth, takes a hearty bite and swallows it lustily.
- The creature suddenly stops, apparently shocked by his own actions. He dives back below the sands and rushes back into the tunnels from which he came. None dare follow and Hadrianis escapes into the sewers. Those viewing this must make a sanity check for 0/1d3.
- Many in attendance are confused, unsure if what they witnessed was part of the program or not. People begin leaving until about half the seats are empty.
- The spectacle continues, with more matches between exhausted gladiators, supplemented by new mostly unknown fighters.
- Vatina Corvillia stays until the end of day, enjoying the bloody spectacle. The Child of the Lamia has gorged herself for days but it has only whet her appetite for more.
- The games end on a sour note. Many spectators rush to attend various dinner parties being hosted across the city. Vatina, a vampire in the thrall of bloodlust, is among them. She visits a bathhouse before setting out for the home of Ovidius Glycia.

The Third Night

- Vatina Corvillia arrives at the home of Ovidius Glycia. She meets her friend Nectiva outside and enters with her. Nectiva introduces her around and Vatina is welcomed to the celebration (see “The Bacchanalia”).
- The monster that Hadrianis has become is ravenously hungry. He dimly recalls there is a feast at the home of Fannius Cimber tonight. He was invited to it. He feels sick and confused. He must eat... He ate something delicious recently... Was it human flesh? Hadrianis can't think straight. His head won't stop is pounding. He drinks the last bits of the Tonic of Vitality, instantly feels better and passes out for an hour.
- Hadrianis awakens, the pain and confusion is gone, all is suddenly clear. The creature emerges from the sewers into the night. He climbs to a rooftop and crosses the city, heading to the home of Fannius Cimber. The creature leaps easily between buildings, traveling from rooftop to rooftop. The man that was Hadrianis is now an abomination, an enormous slaving brute with a near insatiable hunger for human flesh. His thoughts are “Food there, know what to eat now...must feed” (see “The Feast”).

The Bacchanalia – The villa of Ovidius Glycia is in the Esquiliae neighborhood of Rome, high on the slopes of Esquiline Hill. Investigators attempting to enter the party without an invitation or in the company of someone who does must make a successful Fast Talk roll to get past the door guards. Those failing are refused entry and politely asked to leave the premises. This lavish villa currently hosts about seventy guests, slaves, servants and hired professional.

A statue representing Bacchus is prominently displayed in the main dining area. Everyone here is drinking, smoking hemp, im-

bibing poppy juice (opiates), and engaging in various sexual acts in pairs and groups. About one third of the guests are masked to hide their identity. The celebration spans multiple rooms throughout the villa. In the center of it all are Ovidius Glycia and his wife Modia. The couple is wealthy, beautiful and totally hedonistic. So long as investigators do not cause a disruption they are welcome to stay and participate. Shortly after Vatina Corvillia arrives with her bodyguards the celebration takes a murderous turn.

A Bloody End – Vatina, Child of the Lamia, mingles at the party for about an hour before she loses total control of herself. She orders her bodyguards to lock down the residence. They quietly murder the guards, lock all the doors and kill anyone attempting to leave the villa. Once they have secured the building Vatina begins to feed.

The vampire goes mad with bloodlust, feeling invulnerable due to her innate immunities. Vatina drains those she grapples with, leaving a trail of corpses in her wake. Soon her actions are discovered as the victims are noticed and people begin to panic. As screams fill the air Vatina orders her minions to kill everyone.

The three Bouda take their monstrous hyena form and begin mauling partygoers to death. Vatina joins them, drawing her dagger and laughing maniacally. She dances through the panicked guests, slashing them with her fine blade, biting and draining blood from her victims. The Child of the Lamia has lost all self-control and drops her façade of humanity. She revels in the monster she is. Unless stopped by investigators both she and her minions kill everyone in the villa in an insane killing spree. Should this happen this part of the scenario ends in failure.

The Party of Fannius Cimber – This party, at the villa of Fannius Cimber, is located in the Caelimontium neighborhood of Rome on the Caelian Hill. Fannius Cimber is of senatorial

rank and his residence reflects that, being large and richly appointed. Investigators trying to attend this dinner without an invitation or in the company of someone who does must make a successful Fast Talk and Status roll or will not be admitted by the guards.

This dinner is a formal affair with most of the guests being owners, managers and wealthy fans of gladiatorial games in Rome. There are fifty guests here, mostly wealthy men and their wives. A handful of freed and famous gladiators are in attendance as well, but more as conversation pieces and not as true guests. The gladiators tell stories and answer questions for the star struck partygoers. The guests are spending the night at the villa so the multi-course dinner is scheduled to proceed until sometime after midnight.

Unless stopped beforehand, the Abomination arrives at the villa shortly after dark. Drawn by clouded memories and an all-consuming hunger for human flesh the creature crashes the party, literally. While it may pass thousands of possible victims on the way to the villa, it does not harm them. In the beasts twisted mind the party is where the food is. Once it reaches the villa the Abomination smashes its way inside through a door, window or the roof if need be and begins killing everyone within its reach.

The creature greedily gobbles down bites of its prey's flesh before moving onto its next terrified victim. The Abomination wrecks utter chaos and destruction until Fannius Cimmer's guards and the gladiators in attendance eventually bring it down. In the end fifty-six people, a mix of guests, guards, slaves, servants and gladiators in attendance, lie dead, dying or crippled. If the situation degenerates to this point this section of the adventures, Glory, ends in failure for the investigators.

THE INVESTIGATION

The investigators must interrupt the timeline of events with their actions and prevent the "Blood" and "Glory" storylines from reach-

ing their tragic, murderous endings. There are many NPC's to question and information to be gathered. Just whom investigators speak to, what course of action they follow and how they attempt to resolve the two crises are all in their hands.

People to See - Investigators may attempt to speak with various people during the course of the investigation. Some of these interviews provide investigators information and further leads which allowing them to develop a clearer picture of what's going on. Keepers determine when investigators need to make Fast Talk, Persuade or Status checks while meeting with these various NPC's and when such information is freely shared depending on the specific situation.

Gladiator Managers – Investigators wishing to speak to the gladiator officials of Ludus Gallicus and Ludus Dacicus must find or create a reason to do so. Both men are busy managing their stable of gladiators and dealing with the apparent health issues plaguing some of their performers. The longer the mystery remains unsolved the more men "fall ill" and eventually die. The managers begin to grow desperate and take measure in an effort to protect their teams.

Sestius Donicus of Ludus Gallicus – Sestius is a 27 year-old equestrian man who personally owns a stable of fifteen gladiators and has a position as a manager with Ludus Gallicus. He's inherited this position from his father, who died a year ago, and is beginning to make a name for himself. Sestius has a strategy; he trains and promotes very handsome gladiators who fans adore as much for their looks as for their fighting abilities. Women love his gladiators. It is a strategy that earns him good profit but little respect from his peers.

Sestius is a bit of an upstart, not terribly secure in his position. He fears the older and more established owners might try to squeeze him out of his position within the training school. He hoped to build credibility by hiring the famous former gladiator Hadrianis as

a trainer and when this fails his confidence takes a serious hit.

On Blood - Sestius believes the cause of his men falling ill is poisoning. Although he has no proof of it he suspects this was done on the orders of his rival in the Ludus Dacicus, Junis Noster. He has his Ludus physicians search for signs of poisoning; both in his men and their kitchen, but such efforts prove fruitless. As a precaution on the second day of the games Sestius has the slaves preparing the food for his gladiators questioned/beaten.

On Glory - Sestius tells investigators Hadrianis quit soon after accepting a position within Ludus Gallicus as a trainer. The reason for this being that the retired gladiator intended to make a comeback. Sestius claims to have tried to talk him out of it but Hadrianis refused. He was worried Hadrianis would be crippled or killed as the last time he fought a match he was soundly beaten. After seeing how well Hadrianis performs Sestius comments, "Looks like that potion seller he's been going to might be onto something."

Investigators asking about the potion seller are told, "He's called Didius Asina, makes tonics to reduce swelling, salves to limit scaring, oils to sooth torn muscles, that sort of thing. He has a booth in Trajan's Market. Hadrianis has given him a fortune over the years. But the problem isn't an injury or illness. He's simply past his prime, you can't turn back the seasons."

Junis Noster of Ludus Dacicus- Junis is a 45 year-old former gladiator, now a wealthy freedman. He has been involved with gladiatorial games, in various aspects, for his entire adult life. There are few who could rival his experience or knowledge of this industry, and although his social class is low he's well paid and respected by his peers. Junis is the senior trainer at Ludus Dacicus, the very school he himself attended. The man is fit, serious and professional.

Junis takes a dim view of Sestius Donicus and his tactic of appealing to female fans. However, so long as everyone makes a profit

he isn't overly concerned. Junis disdainfully comments, "Let the young pup have his pretty boys for the ladies. Me? I train champions."

On Blood - When things start to go wrong Junis theorizes that some sort of illness is spreading through the gladiator pens. He calls in physicians, has fresh water brought in and pays a priest of Nike to bless his men's holding area. On the second day of the games he orders all his men's clothing and bedding replaced with the discarded items burned. Should the problem persist Junis has hot food brought in for his men from the Ludus Dacicus School in Rome. Once the first accidental death occurs he orders a lock down on the gladiator pens, instructing the guards not to admit anyone after hours.

Gladiator Guards - The guards of both Ludus Galicus and Ludus Dacicus are loyal, dedicated and professional. They all earn extra money from the bribes of wealthy women seeking to spend time with the gladiators they watch over. It's a perk the men benefit from but try to keep quiet about. If pressed the guards admit to it but try to protect themselves and their positions within the Ludus. It's something everyone knows about but nobody likes talking about. The guards from each school are friendly with one another, sharing a brotherhood and professional courtesy. Should any of them be killed the remaining guards become very wary, attacking first and asking questions later.

On Blood - The guards cooperate with the investigators so long as their respective boss approves it. They are concerned for the gladiator's health and safety. These men are eager to solve this mystery as they suspect they'll somehow be punished because of it. The guards will easily recall the women who visited each gladiator and can describe Vatina Corvillia and her guards.

The guards offer the following information about Vatina, "Lovely and well dressed, wore a hooded cloak. She's maybe twenty winters old with a cold, seductive voice. Kept her eyes lowered, all respectful like, a real lady. I

think this was her first time visiting the pens, as we've never seen her before. The lady had three goons with her, Egyptians I think, as guards. Rough looking chaps, carried hammers on their belts. She was chatting with another one of our regulars on her way out, Nectiva Fadilla, but you didn't hear any of this from me."

Average Guards of Ludus Gallicus and Ludus Dacicus

STR 14 DEX 12 INT 9 CON 14 APP 10
POW 11 SIZ 15 SAN 55% EDU 13 HP 14
MP 11 DB +1d4

Weapons: Fist/Punch 65%, 1d3+db, Grapple 35%, Club 70%, 1d6+1+db.

Armor: Soft Leather (2 Points of protection).

Skills: Insight 40%, Listen 50%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Nectiva Fadilla – This wealthy patrician woman is of senatorial rank, her father being a current senator. She is young, beautiful, shameless in her actions and aware of the power her father can exert on her behalf. Nectiva cannot be intimidated and is well protected by several highly skilled guards.

However, investigators engaging her in open and friendly conversation find her to be quite personable. She is also a natural gossip and if treated with respect, flattered or flirted with, readily shares information. If any investigators catch her interest she may invite them to the Bacchanalia being hosted by Ovidius Glycia at the close of the games.

On Blood - She can identify the cloaked woman described by the guards as "My new friend Vatina Corvilla. She is a merchant, owns a metalworking shop in Piscina Publica. Sells weapons, I think. She doesn't have a husband, like me, not that a husband would stop me. It's her first time enjoying the games after the games if you take my meaning. I was showing her the ropes. Everyone knows me back here; a girl needs hobbies after all."

Blood Location, Vatina Corvilla's Metalworking Shop & Home – This metalworking shop, located in the Piscina Publica neigh-

borhood is fairly new. Although the business opened just three years ago it already has a reputation of producing some of the finest blades in all of Rome. Weapons purchased here cost five to ten times normal market rate (1d6+4), but also have 50% more Hit Points. Customers are seen by appointment only and the shop will be closed for the three-day holiday during the games. It is perhaps the finest smithy shops in the city and has a roomy, quite luxurious apartment above it.

The only times Vatina and her bodyguards are in the shop during the games are between 5pm and 7pm, after visiting the baths on her way home and from 4am until 7am, when she returns to the Coliseum. Investigators attempting to break into the house are required to make a successful Climb and Sneak roll, enabling them to shimmy up and in through a 2nd story window. Investigators failing either roll must make a successful Luck check. Should they fail someone in the neighborhood notices the attempt and summons the local Vigilis, who arrive on the scene to investigate in 10-30 minutes (1d3*10).

Average Vigilis (*1d3+1)

STR 14 DEX 13 INT 12 CON 15 APP 10
POW 12 SIZ 14 SAN 60% EDU 13 HP 14
MP 12 DB +1d4

Weapons: Fist/Punch 65%, 1d3+db; Grapple 35%, Club 70%, 1d6+1+db.

Armor: Soft Leather (2 Points of protection).

Skills: Insight 55%, Listen 50%, Persuade 35%, Spot Hidden 45%.

Blood, Searching Vatina's Shop - Investigators searching here can find four thousand sesterii in coins, objects of art and merchandise. However none of that is out of the ordinary. There is a hidden shrine in Vatina Corvilla's bedroom, which can be found by investigators making a successful Spot Hidden roll.

The shrine contains a four-foot tall marble statue and an offering bowl, stained with dried blood. The statue depicts a beautiful woman with the lower body of an enormous

serpent. Investigators making a successful Occult roll identify this creature as Lamia, the former lover of Zeus who was cursed by his wife, Hera. Coiled at the base of the statue are between two and four deadly King Cobras, depending on the number of investigators. The snakes, pets of Vatina, are trained to attack anyone opening the shrine's door other than their owner.

King Cobra (1d3+1), Guardians of the Lamia's Shrine

STR 11 CON 10 SIZ 13 POW 7 DEX 17
Move 9 HP 11 DB - 0 -

Weapons: Bite 50%, damage 1+ poison POT 16

Armor: None.

Skills: Hide in Cover 80%, Move Quietly 90%

Blood, Encountering Vatina Corvillia – Investigators approaching Vatina openly find her manner to be haughty, cold and evasive. The tone of her voice is condescending. She refuses to answer questions claiming the investigators have no authority over her and denies any wrongdoing even if caught in the act. Her bodyguards, the deadly trio of inhuman Boudra, shadow her wherever she goes. They delight in menacing anyone getting close to their mistress and savagely attack anyone Vatina commands them to.

The Child of the Lamia is foolishly overconfident to the point of recklessness. Most times, unless feeding, her Boudra handle all of her dirty work. The few times she was forced to defend herself were pitifully easy for her. Vatina knows enchanted weapons or spells are the only things that could harm her kind. She has yet to encounter a single human armed with such a weapon or possessing any sort of arcane knowledge whatsoever.

If Vatina should encounter a real threat her demeanor instantly changes. She desperately tries to escape the area, calling on her bodyguards for help. The Child of the Lamia is perfectly willing to sacrifice them to ensure her own safety. Vatina may call out for help, trusting that a “woman” being attacked will

draw some assistance from passersby. If cornered, she attempts to grapple an opponent and drain their blood to the point of death as quickly as possible. It is not possible for investigators to negotiate a non-violent resolution with Vatina. Once she realizes investigators are a threat to her or know her secrets the vampire viciously attacks.

Blood, In Conclusion - If the Child of the Lamia is defeated, her Boudra flee the area. Investigators will be left with Vatina's corpse, and possibly those of her bodyguards, to deal with. Investigators may also have some explaining to do if the combat against Vatina was public or drew attention. While the woman lives as a patrician of high rank all of that was false, she has no connections to any family in Rome. While many notice her absence, especially customers to her shop, there is no serious investigation to her death or disappearance.

Glory Location, Hadrianis's Apartment – Locating Hadrianis's residence is a simple matter for investigators. Investigators can as Sestius Donicus where he lives, make a critical success on a Know roll (if they are residents of Rome) or simply follow the man home from the Coliseum. Investigators trailing Hadrianis are only discovered if they fail a Luck Roll, as the gladiator is preoccupied and not expecting anyone to be following him.

Hadrianis lives in a five-story insula (apartment building) in the Porta Capena neighborhood of Rome. He lives here alone in modest fashion, having wasted his once considerable savings on quacks, potions, charms and other “quick fixes” in an effort to reclaim his former physicality. When home Hadrianis does one of two things; sleep deeply in a trance-like state or pace in confusion, unable to eat or relax. His apartment is on the 4th floor and anyone entering the insula draws the attention of Livia, the landlady living on the 2nd floor.

Livia the Landlady – This forty five year old widow inherited the building from her husband a decade ago. She lives here, man-

aging the property with the help of her three adult sons. Numerous family members live either in the building with her or in the immediate area, allowing her to call on others for assistance if need be. While now on in years it is clear that she was once a lovely woman. Livia is cautious but friendly with a tragic sadness behind her eyes.

For the six years Hadrianis has lived here Livia's cared for him, cooking him meals, cleaning his clothing and generally trying to catch his eye. But the older the gladiator grew the more distant he became. She hoped they could enjoy what's left of their lives together but now fears Hadrianis will never be happy in his twilight years. Livia's dream of them becoming husband and wife is nearly dead yet she still cares for him deeply. His recent behavior alarms her.

She tells investigators he sold his only remaining slave and most of his possessions to pay for potions and salves from "a charlatan apothecary" named Didius Asina. She comments that he is months behind in his rent but still traveled to Trajan's market every week. She feels his is throwing away his money and future to chase the glories of his past.

"Everyone gets old", she explains, "Everyone but the dead. It isn't a curse. It's a reward. I have grandchildren now. I watch the young people move through their lives. I am happy, but him... he wishes he would have died on the sands fifteen years ago. It breaks my heart to say this but maybe it would have been better if he had."

Glory Location, Trajan's Market (or other shopping area) – Trajan's Market boasts some of the best shopping in all of Rome. It consists of five honey-colored bricked terraces sloping 125 feet up the side of Quirinal hill. Each of the five terraces contains narrow arcades facing over forty spacious shops apiece. These shops sell all manner of goods from across the empire. The market also has many bars and restaurants. The public grain dole is distributed on the uppermost terrace of Tra-

jan's Market. It is always a crowded bustling place of commerce.

Glory Location, The Apothecary Shop of Didius Asina – Located on the third terrace of Trajan's Market is the Apothecary shop of Didius Asina. It is a high-end establishment that offers some of the finest potions, medicinal herbs and ointments available anywhere in Rome. Most are brewed on the premises while others are imported from far and wide. The owner is the master apothecary, Didius Asina.

Didius Asina - Asina is quite successful and well off. He is good at what he does (Medicine 80%, Natural World 75%, Potions 95%), his services are in high demand and his steep prices reflect that. He sacrificed much to gain what he now has, having made a pact with The Black Man nine years ago. The avatar of Nyarlathotep gave Asina the knowledge to become one of the greatest apothecaries on earth. However he was told that in return for this gift there would be one patient he could not save. Six months after the bargain was struck that person turned out to be his wife Elisa, who died slowly and painfully of a wasting disease. Asina learned his lesson and never summoned the Outer God again. However, he never forgot the spell to do so.

If questioned about Hadrianis the apothecary explains that the gladiator became more and more demanding for results as the years went on. However Asina could not give him what he wanted. He could not restore Hadrianis to the full measure of his prime. Finally, Hadrianis demanded a lethal poison to take his own life, saying he would not live in his current state. When Asina refused, the former gladiator became violent.

Afraid for his life and desperate the apothecary cast the spell "Contact Nyarlathotep" for the insistent Hadrianis. Knowledge flooded into Asina's mind and he knew that the Black Man, in the guise of Ekwueme, had answered his call and come to Rome. He instructed Hadrianis to seek out Ekwueme the African apothecary, who was currently work-

ing out of a booth in the Templum Pacis area of the Subura, the city's poorest slum.

Asina shares this information with the investigators should they make a successful Persuade check. He may or may not warn the investigators of Ekwueme's true nature, as an Avatar of the Outer God Nyarlathotep, depending on how they've dealt with him up to this point. While he feels badly about setting Hadrianis upon this path, he feels he was given no choice.

Glory Location, The booth of Ekwueme

– To find this booth the investigators must enter the Subura, Rome's poorest region. The area is dirty and crowded, with unwelcoming and rough-looking residents. No one here will give investigators directions to the booth of Ekwueme, requiring them to wander about the neighborhood looking for it. Finding the tiny, ragged looking booth requires the investigators make a successful Spot Hidden check. The booth is located deep in the Subura, set up at the base of an alleyway between two buildings. It is little more than a table covered by a filthy tablecloth, a selection of bottles, apothecary tools, some cords of hanging herbs and a stool.

Ekwueme, The Black Man, Avatar of Nyarlathotep - Ekwueme appears as a black skinned African man possessing black within black eyes. He is thin and dirty, his ready smile showing many missing teeth. The few teeth remaining to him are as black as his skin. Ekwueme greets the investigators as friends, welcoming them to his humble show and asks how he may be of service. He speaks perfect, formal Latin in a strong musical tone completely out of place with his appearance.

If questioned about Hadrianis he admits to selling the gladiator a potion. "Yes, a fine elixir, the Tonic of Vitality, made from the tear of a heartbroken Cyclops" he says with a smile. "The man wanted his body restored to when he was in his prime. No small thing, to reclaim the flower of youth, but he met my considerable price, a golden aurei. I sold him the tonic with the instructions to just drink a few sips, a

few and no more. The gods are jealous and do not look kindly on those who may rival their greatness."

Should investigators ask what would happen if Hadrianis drank more than just a few sips Ekwueme pauses with a wide smile before answering. "Why he would become an Abomination, a near mindless, slaving, bloodthirsty monstrosity with a nigh insatiable hunger for human flesh. It would be an affront to the Gods, nature and mankind. But have no fear; I did warn him, I am sure he'll be fine." If an investigator asks if there is an antidote for the tonic, Ekwueme confesses that there is none.

Gifts and Temptation - Ekwueme does offer some options to investigators, "You could become a match for Hadrianis with great strength of your own. See I have brewed ANOTHER Tonic of Vitality. Or maybe with the wisdom of the gods you could deduct a solution that escapes even me. I have here a Philter of Comprehension, able to raise your intelligence. Just a few sips mind you, no more... Or maybe a great beauty could subdue him, look now, here I hold an Ointment of Comeliness, giving the user a loveliness to rival that of Venus herself..." Each potion comes in a large container, holding at least six uses. It is, of course, a trap. The Outer God Nyarlathotep has no intention of helping anyone, wishing only to spread chaos and destruction through the corruption of mankind (see The Potions of Ekwueme).

Ekwueme insists on giving the investigators a sample of the Tonic of Vitality, glass pendants on leather cords holding three drops of the tonic. He says, "If you are gravely wounded, deathly ill or ever poisoned, drink down the contents of these vials. You will be made instantly healed and made whole." Investigators drinking the contents of these vials are healed to full hit points, cured of any illness and have all toxins purged from their system. However this is also a trap because even this small amount of tonic is enough to trigger an addiction (see The Potions of Ekwueme).

If the investigators do not possess an enchanted weapon, or know a spell able to harm a Child of the Lamia, Ekwueme sees a further opportunity. He offers to sell the investigators enchanted sica (curved daggers), for a mere 15 sesterii. He explains that such daggers can harm creatures immune to natural weapons, "...say, like blood draining daughters of Lamia". Ekwueme explains that the weapons "give what they take and will be true when you need them most". Investigators taking up these weapons are cursed. Once Vatina Corvillia is defeated the weapons turn into clouds of noxious black smoke (Pot 5). Any child produced by investigators after accepting these weapons is always a girl, and always a Child of the Lamia!

Should Ekwueme become convinced investigators are not interested in purchasing his potions, weapons or accepting his samples he departs. The Black Man vanishes in a swirl of shadows and rancid vapors. Thus subjecting everyone in a thirty-foot radius to the effects of a poison POT 5 attack and costs them 1/1d2 sanity points.

Fighting Ekwueme – Investigators who threaten Ekwueme risk provoking his wrath, while those attacking him are in for a deadly fight. While he has come to Rome primarily to make bargains and tempt people, The Black Man is a dangerous opponent. He may warn investigators against threatening or insulting him, claiming to be nothing more than an honest merchant peddling his wares and offering fair bargains.

Black Man, Ekwueme "He who keeps his promises"

STR 23 CON 35 SIZ 17 INT 86
POW 50 DEX 20 Move 9 HP 26

Damage Bonus: +1d6

Weapons: Touch 90%, damage 1D6 +db or 1d6 POW drain

Armor: none, however he may regenerate hit points at a rate of 1d6 per Magic Point expended.

Spells: Any as the keeper desires, including Dreamland spells, which he may use in the waking world just the same as in the Dreamlands.

Sanity Loss: 0/1d2 Sanity points to see the Black Man

Glory, Encountering Hadrianis – The aged gladiator is a complex man, unable to accept the diminished physical abilities old age inevitably brings. He feels cheated and betrayed by fate, time and his own body. Hadrianis is ashamed at the lack of his former abilities, his current retirement and the defeat he suffered in his last performance in the arena. While he has lived a long life the years have brought him no wisdom, only regret. Investigators trying to talk to him find him to be quite manic in nature, one moment joyous over his return to performing in the arena and the next deeply troubled, sad and unfocused.

Hadrianis is not a bad person, only a desperate one. After being addicted to the potion he becomes deeply afraid and lost. He knows he shouldn't take more of the potion and hates himself for feeling the nearly uncontrollable urge to do so. He feels the draw of the monster he is becoming, something dark, primal and inhuman. However that monster is strong and powerful, everything he once was and that age stole from him. Investigators have two possible ways to deal with Hadrianis; save him or stop him.

Stopping Hadrianis - Investigators set on stopping Hadrianis must either kill him or subdue him. Slaying the man is no small feat, especially after he begins transforming into monstrous or abominable form. He is a skilled fighter and remains in public most of the time. He is also well known, and liked, in the insula where he lives. His neighbors will come to his aid if he calls for help, summing the authorities if need be.

If captured and forcibly separated from the potion, which he carries on his person, the gladiator has no choice but to experience withdrawal. Investigators require a place to house Hadrianis against his will for three days, until the process is complete. Livia, the landlady, can easily supply such a place and would be more than willing to help the investigators in saving Hadrianis, even against his will. The gladiator survives the tortuous withdrawal fol-

THE POTIONS OF EKWUEME

The potions offered by The Black Man, in his guise as Ekwueme, raise a drinker's ability score to its possible maximum. Ekwueme has potions for every ability score but they are dangerous and addictive (see below). Repeated uses destroy a drinker's humanity and physically transform them through three stages in utterly horrific abominations. Statistics for the Abomination created from the Tonic of Vitality, which raises CON, are included in this scenario.

Addiction & Redemption: After ingesting even a few drops of one of Ekwueme's potions a person becomes addicted. They develop a powerful urge to consume more of the potion. Resisting this urge requires an addicted individual to make a daily POW check, POW*2 for a full swallow or POW*4 for the contents of one of Ekwueme's sample vials. An investigator failing two such checks becomes an NPC until they can be forcibly freed of the addiction. This addiction continues until the consumer takes three full doses of the potion, the person is freed from the addiction (see below) or the addicted individual dies. Anyone taking a third dose is irreversibly transformed into an inhuman monstrosity.

To be free of the addiction a person must resist, or be prevented from, drinking the potion for three consecutive days. During this period, addicted persons experience physical pain, dizziness, difficulty drinking and sleeping, the inability to eat and general confusion due to withdrawal. This takes a considerable toll on the individual, who lose 1d3 Sanity points and 4 points of CON per day of withdrawal. Should an addicted individual have a CON of 12 or less the process proves fatal.

Those who survive the effects of withdrawal slowly recover. Any statistics increased from the potion are lost. Lost CON points are recovered at the rate of 1 per week (2 if under medical treatment) to a maximum of 8 points. The remaining 4 points of CON are permanently lost, the person weakened for the remainder of their lives.

lowed by months of slow recovery. His possible reactions to this can be anything from thanking the investigators, attacking or having them arrested or possibly taking his own life, dependent on the nature of the relationship investigators have developed with Hadrianis.

Saving Hadrianis - Investigators can save Hadrianis by helping him save himself. It is possible to talk him into giving the investigators the Tonic of Vitality, although this requires three Persuade rolls. This reflects the deeply troubled state of Hadrianis's mind and the multiple layers of his muddled thinking. Investigators must persuade Hadrianis to (1) accept a life outside of performing, (B) stop taking the Tonic of Vitality, (C) turn over or destroy the remaining Tonic of Vitality. Unless the investigators persuade him to do all three of these things his resolve wavers and he resumes taking the potion. The gladiator is more than willing to lie and tell investigator whatever they want to hear, should their efforts at intervention fail.

If investigators succeed in this course of action, Hadrianis survives with a new outlook on life. He views the pain of withdrawal as the greatest battle of his life. This gives him the wisdom and maturity so lacking in his life until now. Hadrianis may take a job as a trainer, possibly marry Livia and generally accepts that the glory of his past should not destroy his future. He is forever grateful to the investigator who saved him from his greatest enemy, himself.

THE MONSTERS OF BLOOD AND GLORY -

Hadrianis, restored to his full natural vitality (First Day, one dose of Tonic of Vitality)

STR 16 DEX 13 INT 9 CON 15 APP 14
POW 12 SIZ 15 SAN 60% EDU 15 HP 15
MP 12 DB +1d4

Weapons: Fist/Punch 75%, 1d3+db, Grapple 65%, Gladius 85%, 1d6+1+db; Trident 45%, 1d8+db;

Net 45%; Puglio 60%, 1d6+db;

Armor: Hardened Leather and Helmet (3 points of protection).

Small Shield 55%, 20HP

Skills: Conceal 65%, Insight 50%, Sneak 65%, Throw 50%.

Hadrianis, Enhanced beyond a natural state (Second Day, two doses of Tonic of Vitality)

STR 18 DEX 13 INT 8 CON 18 APP 11
POW 12 SIZ 16 SAN 45% EDU 15 HP 17
MP 12 DB +1d6

Weapons: Fist/Punch 80%, 1d3+db; Grapple 70%; Gladius 85%, 1d6+1+db; Trident 45%, 1d8+db; Net 45%; Puglio 60%, 1d6+db.

Armor: Hardened Leather and Helmet (3 points of protection).

Small Shield 55%, 20HP

Skills: Conceal 65%, Insight 50%, Sneak 65%, Throw 50%.

Hadrianis, Once a Man but now a monster, (Third Day, three doses of Tonic of Vitality)

STR 23 DEX 12 INT 6 CON 30 APP 7
POW 12 SIZ 19 SAN 35% EDU 15 HP 24
MP 12 DB +2d6

Weapons: Fist/Punch 85%, 1d4+db, Grapple 75%.

Armor: Thickened Muscular Hide (3 points of protection).

Skills: Conceal 65%, Insight 50%, Sneak 65%, Throw 50%.

Special: Regenerates 2 HP per round.

Sanity Loss: 1/1d4 Sanity points to see Hadrianis, "The Monster".

Hadrianis, an Abomination (Third Night)

STR 28 CON 40 SIZ 22 INT 5 POW 12
DEX 16 Move 12 HP 31

Damage Bonus: +2d6

Weapons: Fist/Punch 85%, 1d4+db, Grapple 75%.

Armor: Thickened Muscular Hide (4 Points of protection)

Special: Regenerates 4 HP per round.

Sanity Loss: d3/1d6 Sanity points to see Hadrianis, "The Abomination".

Vatina Corvillia (Child of Lamia, Blood-sucking Sunbather)

STR 14 CON 16 SIZ 13 INT 13 POW 12
DEX 15 Move 8 HP 14 DB +1d4

Weapons: Grapple 45%, damage blood drain (see below)

Bite 50%, damage 1d3+db

Dagger 45%, damage 1d4+1+db (see below)

Armor: Immune to non-magical attacks*

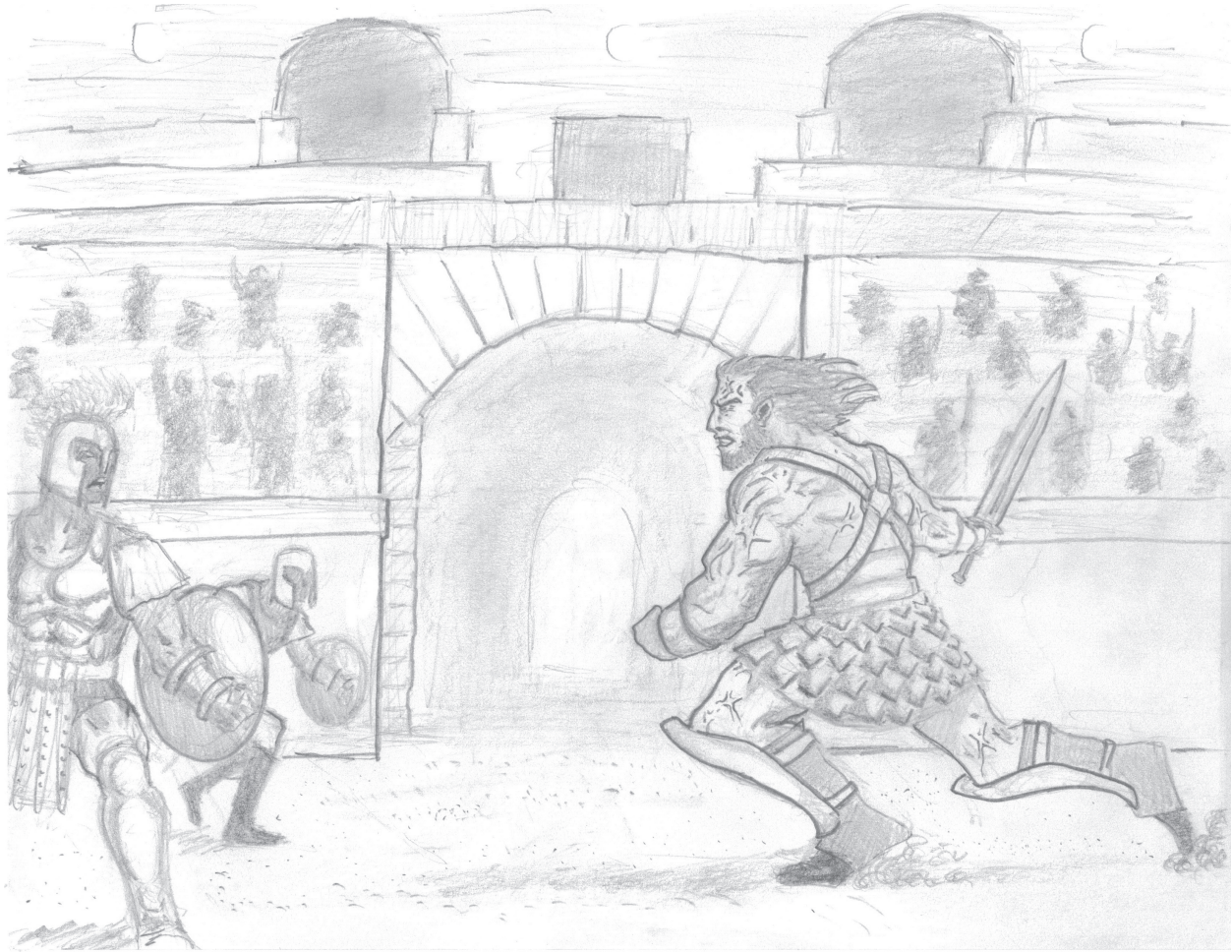
Spells: Bait Humans, Cause/Cure Blindness, Enthrall Victim.

Sanity Loss: 1/1d6 Sanity loss to see a Child of the Lamia

Blood Drain – Upon a successful grapple attack Children of the Lamia drain 1d6 points of STR each round. Once STR reaches 0, the creature drains CON at the same rate. Once CON reaches 0, the victim dies. Drained STR and CON points can be added to the creature's HP or POW, as desired. Should victims survive lost STR and CON points are regained at the rate of 1 per day (victim's choice)

Exceptional Dagger – Vatina Corvillia wields a dagger made by her servants, the Bouda. These creatures are master metal workers and as such crafted a truly exceptional weapon for their mistress. It is quite beautiful with a hilt decorated in a snake motif. The blade is very strong and unnaturally sharp. The weapon has 30 HP, does an additional 1-point of damage per attack and ignores 3 points of an opponent's Armor protection. It does not count as an enchanted weapon. If this weapon is ever carried by anyone other than Vatina Corvillia there is a 5% chance per month that 1d3 Bouda try to recover it from the unauthorized wielder, killing the thief in the process if possible.

* = Investigators require an enchanted weapon or a damage-inflicting spell to harm Vatina Corvillia. If she is attacked in public by a non-magical weapon she may simply feign death. She is usually cold to the touch (unless she's been basking in the sun) and need not breathe to survive (being an unnatural creature). Vatina can maintain this ruse until the threat has passed.



Bouda*3 (Badru, Bakari & Baruti, Bodyguards and Blacksmiths of Vatina Corvillia)

STR 17 DEX 11 INT 17 CON 13 APP 10
 POW 10 SIZ 14 Move 16 HP 15
 DB +1d4

Weapons: Fist / Punch 50%, damage 1d3+db
 Smithy Hammer 52%, damage 1d6+d6

Armor: None inherent, but may wear 6 points of chain armor.

Spells: Any and all spells related to metalworking.

Sanity Loss: N/A.

Bouda*3 (Badru, Bakari & Baruti, Monstrous Hyenas of Vatina Corvillia)

STR 20 CON 16 SIZ 25 (16, 16, 14 in human Form)
 INT 14 POW 12 DEX 14 Move 20 HP 15
 DB +1d4

Weapons: Bite 50%, damage 1d4
 Claw 34%, damage 1d4+db

Armor: 2 points of hide.

Spells: As in human form.

Sanity Loss: 0/1 Sanity loss upon realizing that the creature is not a hyena.

SANITY AWARDS

Stopping / Defeating Vatina Corvillia, Child of Lamia	1d6 Sanity Points
Defeating the Bouda	1 Sanity Point each
Saving Hadrianis before he takes the third dose	1d8 Sanity Points
Defeating Hadrianis, The Monster	1d4 Sanity Points
Defeating Hadrianis, The Abomination	1d6 Sanity Points
For Defeating Ekwueme Aka The Black Man	1d6 Sanity Points

CLOCKWORK ROME

BY LIAM JONES

INTRODUCTION

Clockwork Rome is a Call of Cthulhu adventure written for the *Cthulhu Invictus* rules. It uses the Tic Toc Man, an Avatar of Nyarlathotep, from the *Malleus Monstrorum*, a Chaosium *Call of Cthulhu* publication. The section on the Tic Toc Man at the end of the scenario is a summary of the entry in this publication. Inspiration was also taken from the *Rome* TV series by HBO and BBC. The scenario is set in late winter, 80 CE, with Titus as emperor and it is possible that his sudden controversial death in 81 CE could quite conceivably be written into the scenario.

An Avatar of Nyarlathotep, the Tic Toc Man, has gained a foothold in Rome and is conspiring to take over the leadership of Rome for himself and spread chaos and death throughout the Roman Empire. The discovery of an ancient cache of antiquities from Egypt has been brought back to Rome. Among these ancient artefacts was a golden orb which gained control of a talented Magus of the Himyarite Empire. After studying the orb and the ancient papyrus manuscripts accompanying it the Magus accidentally activated the object bringing the Tic Toc Man into being. The Avatar has been gathering his followers, building a cult and slowly infiltrating the upper strata of Roman society by replacing members of society with cunningly crafted simulacra. Recently a female member of the characters family has disappeared after becoming involved in new religious cult that the Avatar has created.

The players take the part of family members looking for their lost sister. The family is a wealthy, influential family living in Rome and has a wide influence on many aspects of life in Rome and many contacts within the upper levels of Roman society. Due to the importance of honour and the damaging effect of gossip in Rome any hint of a scandal should be avoided and this is a key driver for the GM to motivate the players to deal with family issues.

In order to give the adventure a Roman feel the GM is encouraged to play up two main areas. The first is the intrigue and interaction of family life and the characters have a number of aspects in their background to allow this. Characters should be encouraged take every opportunity to further their own and their families position and to expose any scandals on any competition. Secondly the habit of Romans to adopt and incorporate religious aspects of other cultures into their own religious beliefs, boarding on it become a fad is an important aspect of the adventure and something players should be aware of this as Nyarlathotep is certainly exploiting this characteristic to his own ends.

During play-testing the players sometimes focused significantly on family politics, sometimes with deadly consequences. As such the GM should have ways to deal with this with either reserve characters or having the character turn up again, albeit as a simulacrum, though the players do not need to know this. The dead player would just be told that he had miraculously survived the assassina-

tion attempt somehow. This could make further attempts a lot more interesting.

The scenario makes use of a technologically advanced Avatar of Nyarlathotep in an ancient setting so this needs to be emphasised as a significant horrific aspect of the scenario. To an ancient roman, a mechanical replica of a real person would be a great source for inducing insanity and confusion about their world. It would probably have a greater impact on a roman's sanity to witness such strange and alien things than maybe seeing some other more supernatural type creatures of the mythos. It will also place a challenge on players who will play characters who would find the concepts in the scenario very alien compared with themselves, with a more modern perspective on technology.

BACKGROUND

Raheem Seifeddin is a well travelled Magus. His travels from his home city of Zafar took him through Egypt and eventually to Rome. While in Egypt he acquired some ancient artefacts and manuscripts. On arrival in Rome he spent some time studying the manuscripts and artefacts. These were of Mythos origin and studying them had a severe effect on his sanity and left him vulnerable to the influence of a golden orb, an alien device that had come to house the artificial intelligence that is the Tic Toc Man. The Tic Toc Man used the Magus to build his nest in some manmade tunnels beneath Raheem's residence.

Controlling Raheem became progressively easy and the Tic Toc Man now has complete control over his shattered mind. Using Raheem he quickly developed a cult based on a new religion dedicated to worshipping Nyarlathotep. The Tic Toc Man has been growing in size and strength ever since. He has imparted much knowledge to Raheem who is doing his bidding using the growing cult army to feed the machine god. Many cult members have been sacrificed by Raheem and incorporated into the machine beneath his house, hooked

into the machine like body of the Avatar through a series of electrical wires, tubes and other such devices. Still alive but barely conscious and existing in a living hell, these worshipers are providing power and sustenance to the ever thirsty machine, caught like flies in a spider's web.

In order to gain influence and control of Roman society the Tic Toc Man and Raheem are constructing complex clockwork type Simulacra, exact replicas of the sacrificed worshipers. The process of creating a Simulacrum is long and laborious so only suitably influential people are singled out for these treatment. The rest have just simply disappeared. Initially there was a delay in these replacements so disappearances were for several weeks but now there is sufficient material to quickly replace someone, within 24 hours.

The investigators will be drawn in by a member of the Senate who has become suspicious of the behaviour of some of the members of the senate. The family itself is the next target and a family member has disappearance and become a victim of Raheem and the Tic Toc Man which gives the family further motivation to investigate the disappearance.

TIMELINE

- ☪ 1 Year — Raheem Seifeddin arrives in Rome
- ☪ 10 Months — Raheem falls under the influence of Nyarlathotep
- ☪ 8 Months — Raheem gathers sufficient material to being constructing the Tic Toc Man and slaves and poor from around Rome begin to disappear
- ☪ 7 Months — Worshipers drawn to the power of Nyarlathotep begin to meet regularly with Raheem and first worshipers begin to disappear

- ☛ 6 Months — Cult is established and becomes popular as a new fad religion
- ☛ 5 Months — Driven mad by the Machine God, Raheem limits his public appearances and starts to spend more time with the Machine God. The first Simulacra and key cult worshippers take over day to day running of cult business
- ☛ 4 Months — Simulacra start making appearances around Rome in the guise of worshippers and begin taking strategic positions in Rome society
- ☛ 3 Months — The father of the family, Tiberius Oppius Aquila the elder, is drawn into the cult*
- ☛ 2 Months — Tiberius Oppius Aquila brings his wife, daughter and youngest son into the cult*
- ☛ 1 Month — Tiberius Oppius Aquila is murdered by his wife
- ☛ 3 Weeks — Fluvia and Lucius disappear and a letter is received by Tiberius noting they are away for a few days at the country house (the GM should provide this information to Tiberius if needed). They are sacrificed to the Tic Toc Man*
- ☛ 2 Weeks — Simulacra make an appearance as Fluvia Aquilia and Lucius Oppius Bellus*
- ☛ 3 Days — Oppia disappears (soon to be replaced by a Simulacrum)
- ☛ Start — Family and friends gather to talk to Senator Strabo at dinner
- ☛ Unfolding — The Tic Toc Man will grow in power and continue to consume worshippers and replace prominent ones with simulacrum. People will begin to notice odd behaviour and odd behaviour amongst members of the senate and elected officials

and Rome will be drawn into civil war and corruption as Nyarlathotep spreads chaos and violence.

*These events are removed if the GM wishes to start the scenario without some of the players as simulacra

PLAYERS INFORMATION

The family, along with trusted friends, gathers at the family home and enjoys a sumptuous feast in the courtyard. While this is the opportunity to discuss family business the main topic of discussion is the suspicions of the Senator, Sextus Voluminus Strabo and how his story relates to the disappearance of Oppia. Between the people in attendance the investigators should be able to piece together the story of her disappearance. Oppia has become involved with Raheem Seifeddin's religious cult in Rome worshipping an ancient Egyptian god, Nyarlathotep, known in this case as the New Order of the Golden God. Not much is known about the religion but it appears Oppia had become more and more involved with group until finally she has not made any contact with the family for about three days. This is completely out of character for her and this has caused a significant concern amongst family members.

CHARACTERS

The following characters are provided for convention or one-shot games and are specifically designed for the scenario. The scenario could also be incorporated into an ongoing campaign though the final confrontation could potentially be more deadly without any investigator simulacra.

- ☛ **Fluvia Aquilia** – The family mother (Husband is Tiberius Oppius Aquila). She has recently poisoned her husband and is now scheming to get rid of older brother so younger brother can take over the fami-

ly. She has been recently kidnapped by the cult and is now below the cult house. The player will play a simulacrum of the character. As far as she knows she has been living in the house for about a year. Other characters will know she was missing for about a week.

- ☛ **Tiberius Oppius Aquila** the younger – Older Brother and family head. He is a bit dim and jealous of his mother's attention towards his younger brother. He is now trying to assert himself as head of the household and keep mother in place.
- ☛ **Lucius Oppius Bellus** – Younger Brother. He is a smart but weak individual and his mother's favourite. Jealous of older brother's position in the household and devastated that father was poisoned, he is determined to find out what has happened. He suspects his older brother had something to do with it. He has been recently kidnapped by the cult and is now below the cult house. The player will play a simulacrum of the character. As far as he knows he has been living in the house for about a year. Other characters will know he was missing for about a week.
- ☛ **Titus Lucretius Aper** – Family Friend of older brother and soldier. An opportunistic individual, he is secretly sleeping with mother and will try to use any opportunity to improve his own lot.
- ☛ **Euripides** – Greek Family Teacher. An academic. He hates the mother and dismisses the older brother as a dullard. He thinks the younger brother has potential and encouraging him to have good principles and morals for future leadership roles. He hates the influence the corrupt mother has on her children.
- ☛ **Livianus Oppius Spurius** – Freedman and family guard. A fit and brutal individual. He thinks the older brother has the right

stuff and will back him up. He thinks the younger brother needs toughening up.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- ☛ **Oppia Aquila** – Family sister. She has been sacrificed to the Tic Toc Man and a simulacrum is being manufactured to take her place. It will be ready in a few days time.
- ☛ **Raheem Seifeddin** – Head of the New Order of the Golden God. He is quite mad and totally consumed by the Avatar of Nyarlathotep.
- ☛ **Salvius Firmus** – Praetor. He is a recent escapee of the cult in hiding. There is a simulacrum for him but the cult does not want to risk sending it out so it is being kept deactivated at the cult location pending his recapture.

THE INVESTIGATION/ CLUES

THE DINNER

The dinner will begin with everyone having just arrived and beginning to eat. Tiberius will make sure everyone is settled in and will have Livianus make sure the area is secure. Once he is satisfied he will then bring up the subject of Oppia and the death of their father and his suspicions that the family is being targeted due to political manoeuvring. He should then bring Senator Strabo out from another room in the house.

Senator Strabo will outline his suspicions that there is a faction within the government of Rome that is plotting to take over the government and seize power. He will outline that he has become suspicious of several Senators and their rapid change of behaviour at official senate meetings. He has also seen them meeting secretly with other government officials and soldiers several times. The only oth-

er thing that he can tell them about the people is that they were all members of the New Order of the Golden God, a new religious fad in the city. None of them appear to be active members any more. He can tell them where the Order's residence is.

He further outlines his suspicions given the death of the family head and the disappearance of the sister Oppia. He suspects that the family will be targeted because the change in behaviour of the senators could only have come from black mail pressure and he suspects that Oppia has been kidnapped to apply that same pressure to this family. He will ask the family to investigate and let him know if they find anything out. If he is asked about any other disappearances he will know of Salvius Firmus' disappearance but does not know if this is related in any way though he will know that at one stage Salvius was Firmus was involved with the New Order of the Golden God.

SALVIUS FIRMUS, PRAETOR

Salvius Firmus, a well known Praetor, has witnessed the true horror of the cult and is now in hiding. He was initially drawn to the cult but suspicions led him to investigate late at night only to be set upon by the Simulacra after finding an inactivated Simulacrum if himself. The encounter left him badly wounded and horrified and he is in hiding. Investigators should be able to locate him if they ask around about any prominent citizens who have recently disappeared. They will also be given his name if they ask about for prominent Romans who are also members of the New Order of the Golden God. Bribing the right person and some good investigation should lead them to Salvius Firmus' hiding place in the Aventine Hill area where he has hidden himself in a small flat above some shops. His wife knows where he is and is taking supplies and food to him so if the investigators watch the house and follow her they will be able to find his hiding place.

The encounter with Salvius Firmus will very much depend on the approach made by

the investigators. If the panicked and slightly mad Praetor is approached aggressively he will either flee or fight for his life. Approach in a suitably subtle way he will tell them all he knows. This can be achieved with appropriate rolls such as a fast talk or persuade.

Salvius Firmus knows where the cult is based and can tell the investigators how to get there. If pressed further he can describe the sewers through which he gained access to the house. He suspects that the cult is up to no good and is somehow trying to infiltrate the Roman Government. He also knows that there are superhuman members of the cult who seem distant and detached and he suspects they do not sleep and is very nervous about these people finding him. He will also warn the investigators that he has heard rumours about something hideous in the sewers below the cult's rooms. He is concerned about his credibility and an insight roll will reveal he is hiding something. He is reluctant to tell the investigators but if pressed he will reveal that he found parts of the Tic Toc Man and his own body in the basement area of the cult's rooms under a shroud but he is concerned that revealing this will make him seem quite mad. This was in fact a simulacrum that was destined to replace him once completed.

A particularly persuasive investigator may be able get Salvius Firmus to help. He can lead the way through the tunnels and could also provide some men to aid the group.

RAHEEM SEIFEDDIN

Investigation into Raheem Seifeddin will depend on who the investigators contact. If they ask around the foreign quarters of Rome, particularly the areas where Arabian ethnic groups are congregating they will find that he is a Magus of some repute. Further digging will find that he had access to some rare documents and artefacts, including an amazing glowing ball of gold, and had been studying these for some time. Finding people that have close dealings with Seifeddin (luck roll or careful investiga-

tion) will reveal that he had become increasingly withdrawn and acted strangely up until about five months ago when he disappeared all together.

The truth is that Seifeddin has become so mad from his dealings with the Machine God that he no longer interested in venturing out and remains inside the complex, a hollow husk of his former self and totally under the influence of the Tic Toc Man. Most of the cult business is now conducted by the Simulacra and unsuspecting members of the cult.

Investigators will not get the opportunity to talk with Seifeddin unless they venture into the Cult's rooms or he leaves the cult cellars for some reason.

Investigations into Seifeddin's business goings on will find that he was sourcing rare and unusual materials for some time up until five months or so ago including precious metals and iron. Materials now continue to be sourced by the cult to supply the Machine God with what he needs.

THE ORDER OF THE GOLDEN GOD

Investigations into the cult will indicate that it was relatively new religion worshipping an unknown God called the Golden God, purported to be an Egyptian deity of some description. The New Order of the Golden God is supposedly a order that stands for peace, love and generosity. The group seem to be pleasant with rumours of Raheem Seifeddin's teachings being those of peace and love. The deity obviously is Nyarlathotep but it is in his interests that the cult stays out of the public's eye until he has a firm grip on Rome.

Further investigations will reveal the strange and rare resources being sourced by the cult (to build the Tic Toc Man) and of large quantities of coal being delivered. The sourcing of the fuel and materials is being paid for in gold, lots of gold, but in the form of raw gold, not the common coin of the day. This gold is in fact being produced by the Tic Toc

Man through means of Mythos magic and he has an inexhaustible supply.

Enquiries with family and friends of people who have been part of the cult will bring to light a number of disappearances. Recently (1 or 2 weeks ago) several people who have disappeared (elected officials) and have turned up changed. Talking to these people that are close to them will reveal that they are not quite themselves. cursory investigation will reveal these people are distant and seem to have a lack of emotion. More detailed investigation might reveal such things as unusual behaviour, probably late at night, that they do not seem to sleep much if at all, suffer from nightmares and have become more and more distant along with other behaviour that would indicate that they are in fact a Simulacrum rather than a real person.

RUMOURS

Rumours and gossip are a daily fact of life in Rome. Rumours relating to the Tic Toc Man that might be heard by frequenting the many bath houses and public places of Rome are:

- Some key people in the government of Rome have disappeared then reappeared, some for as long as two to three weeks. In some cases these people have behaved oddly perhaps not recognising a close friend or behaving oddly and out of character or not sleeping late into the night.
- There is plenty of graffiti around Rome. The GM should feel free to invent some imaginative graffiti to give the investigators some clues or lead them in unproductive directions. Samples of graffiti could include references to a coming apocalypse: maybe the coming of another Avatar of Nyarlathotep such as the Black Pharaoh, Nyarlathophis or the Queen in Red.
- A rumour is heard that the New Order of the Golden God is a front hiding a cultus illiciti or forbidden religion. The Order is

rumoured to be the front for worshippers of Bacchus, the Roman God of Wine. The morally corrupt cult of Bacchus had been banned mainly due to the organised criminal nature of the cult and the stories will involve sexual depravities and other evil obscenities.

- A rumour is heard that a dead man had been seen walking. A body of Appius Decius Brocchus, a senator, has been found in the sewers but soon after he was seen to be walking around. The rumour could be that he is some demon from the afterlife or some victim of some evil magic such as shape shifting or necromancy. The body is still there and the investigators could potentially stumble across it or track down the worker that found it and get them to lead them to it.
- There is the rumour of something horrible in the tunnels below Rome. The creature can be described as a snake like creature with wings like a bat. Perhaps a worker barely escaped with his life after his friend was eaten. This rumour refers to the Hunting Horror that is serving as a guardian in the sewers and aqueducts around the Cult's rooms.
- A crone or soothsayer in the streets grabs the investigators as they pass by and talk about the one who is coming to bring doom to Rome. He or she gets more and more desperate as the investigators walk by and attracts the attention of passersby. This may happen several times. Any investigator that is a simulacrum will be accused of being a devil or a demon.
- There are strange lights and sparks occurring near some sewers in the Suburra which have become quite an attraction there (see the section under The Sewers).

SIMULACRA

The Simulacra are technological mythos creatures, created in the image of a living being with their consciousness transferred. Each Simulacrum can act and behave in the same way as the original person but intuitive people (Successful Insight role) will notice there is something not quite right about the person and their behaviour is a bit off. An observant person (successful spot hidden) will notice the body movements are a bit jerky and there is something a bit off about the way the person looks. The Tic Toc Man keeps in contact with his Simulacra via some sort of transmission means. He is able to observe through a Simulacrum at will though he will not necessarily be paying attention or doing this all the time. He is able to observe using all the senses available to the Simulacrum he is using.

Because it contains the replication of the person's mind as its driving force, the Simulacrum itself will believe it is truly the person that it has replaced. Over time the Tic Toc Man will need to assert his influence on the Simulacrum to slowly destroy the will that represents the remnants of the human mind and take over control. Until this happens the Tic Toc Man does not have any direct influence or control of his new creation. If simulacra in this stage are confronted with their own self then there is a percentage chance of breakdown or insanity depending on the power of the person copied.

The Cult itself is now managed by four Simulacra built based on original cult members and of no particular note in Roman Society. To date they have been able to assimilate another four into society including:

- Three Senators
 - Decimus Otacilius Citus
 - Gaius Decius Brocchus
 - Appius Ogulnius Maius
- A prefect
 - Servius Sulpicius Macro

- ☛ A soldier
 - Oppius Adjutor Celsus
- ☛ A Praetor
 - Quintus Papirius Senecio

These will not reveal themselves or come to the aid of others unless the cult is significantly threatened. The original people that were copied have been incorporated into the machine god beneath the cult buildings except for Ap-pius Decius Brocchus, who's body is in the sewers below the city.

If the investigators visit or interview these people they will try to put the investigators off and dismiss Senator Strabo's accusations as ridiculous political infighting and an attempt to discredit them. If the investigators mention Strabo by name then he will likely disappear within a few days, possibly followed by the investigators themselves if they press matters further.

RULES FOR PLAYER SIMULACRA

GMs should have the players continue to play their characters as they are and keep their additional stats (HPs, Str, Dex) a secret. It will take some careful management but every time the player makes a role involving these stats then the GM will need to secretly make adjustments or rolls. This will help to add to the player confusion. The GM should emphasize the confusion by describing these effects as unusual for example describing how what should have been a fatal blow mysteriously bounces off the investigator.

At night each player that has become a simulacrum will have nightmares which will involve things such as:

- ☛ Vague dreams of lying on a table in a room with bright lights, sharp metal knives and other strange instruments and being in pain with dark figures hunched over them.

- ☛ Feelings of something boring into their brains and dark things crawling in their heads.
- ☛ A dream where they walk into a room and stare at themselves snared in a web of pipes and wires.
- ☛ A dream where they wake up and find themselves in great pain, snared in pipes and wires some of which pierce their skin. They begin to scream in horror only to wake up screaming in their own bed.
- ☛ A dream where their skin falls off in chunks to reveal metal or clockwork workings underneath.

After every dream they should do a power vs power with the Tic Toc Man and lose 1d10 San if they fail. The GM can keep this San loss a secret which may take some careful management. Should their sanity reach zero then they are fully under the control of the Tic Toc Man and the GM should take the player aside and explain that their character is now a simulacrum and fully under the influence of the Tic Toc Man. They should continue to play the characters as normal but should be working for the cult now and doing all they can to prevent the investigators bringing the downfall of the New Order of the Golden God. If they leave Rome then the dreams will become less frequent and they should only do a test every week.

If the investigator realises what has happened at any stage they will start to lose sanity automatically each round at a rate of 1d6 until they reach zero when they will become fully aware simulacrum. Investigators will realise this if they become aware of themselves as being physically different (ie a very bad wound reveals their inner workings), they cut themselves open with a deep wound (though this would take quite some significant digging around before they realised they were completely machine), they come face to face with their actual bodies and find themselves as part of the Tic Toc Man or some other event that

triggers realisation. Once they start losing san every round they should not check for temporary or permanent loss of sanity but should be seen as becoming more and more panicked until all of a sudden they will regain their calm (at zero sanity). They will still be capable of free action until they reach zero sanity. This is best timed for the end of the scenario during the final confrontation.

There is potential that players could be kidnapped and replaced with Simulacrum. This will only happen if the cult has one prepared which will take several weeks. The cult will need to kidnap the player then Raheem will need to perform the necessary physical operations and mythos magical rituals to copy the investigators consciousness to the Simulacrum. This will take one to two days at which stage the investigator will reappear not realising they are a Simulacrum. It is suggested the GM keeps the player in the dark as much as they can just playing out the kidnap attempt then have the other investigators find the kidnapped investigator wandering the streets with no recollection as to what happened or how they got away.

STARTING THE GAME WITH SIMULACRA PLAYERS

The game is written with Fluvia and Lucius starting the game as simulacra. Their modified Str, Dex and HP should be determined and kept secret by the GM. Additionally they will experience the nightmares from the beginning of the game. If they visit the New Order of the Gold God then people there will recognise them and treat them as long lost friends as they spent some time there, although they themselves will have no recollection of this. The timeline indicates the events relevant to this course of events to make it easy to remove them. Additionally any reference to Fluvia and Lucius' two week absence will need to be removed from the characters' background text.

If the GM wants to use other characters for the game then the game can be modified as this aspect is not critical but adds to the atmosphere and players' confusion and it may also make the confrontation with the Tic Toc Man and Raheem a bit more deadly.

THE ATTACK

If Raheem gets wind of the characters investigations he will attempt to put them off. Initially this will be by intimidation. If this does not work then the four Simulacra attendants from the Cult will attempt to kidnap one of the players for use as a simulacrum. The idea will be to continue to replace all the investigators and use them as part of the ongoing plot to take over Rome.

The Order of the Golden God

The residence is a multi-story residential house (see GM Map 1) in a street of similar residences in the poorer part of town in the Suburra area.

The cult rooms have a number of people staying in the house attended by four simulacra. The normal members of the order will have no idea that the cult is a cult of Nyarlathotep and believe in the Raheem's teachings of peace and love. Additionally if Fluvia or Lucius turn up they will be welcomed as old order members that had disappeared a few weeks ago even though they have no recollection of ever being there. This will induce some confusion in the minds of these two investigators and suspicions in the minds of the rest.

Careful observation of the four attendants will note that they are odd in their behaviour and manner (see under the section on Simulacra). Any character that has had an attempted kidnap attempt on them may recognise one or more of them but this is unlikely as they will have taken care to disguise themselves during the kidnap attempt. The attendants will be unhelpful and will answer questions briefly and will attempt to get the investigators away from the house as soon as they can. They will not

stop them looking around unless the investigators discover a way to get below the house.

Any investigator that asks questions of other order members about the attendants will be told they have been promoted by Raheem and are senior members of the order. Any questions about Raheem himself will reveal that he hardly appears in public and running of the order is left to the attendants. Further questions will reveal that he is communing with the Golden God. If they are convinced to reveal further secrets (successful fast talk or Persuade) or intimidated or induced to talk in any other way they will reveal that Raheem goes to the holy place below the Orders residence. They are forbidden to go below and anyone that has gone down there has disappeared and Raheem has explained that he had to throw out of the order for disobedience. They were in fact sacrificed to the Tic Toc Man.

THE SEWERS

The Lights

An area of the sewers near to the residence has become quite an attraction in the Suburra. Talking to the residence nearby will reveal that every few weeks there have been lights and sparks leaping up from between the pavements with lots of green and blue glowing light from below. It last for an hour or two and people have taken it to be some sort of witchcraft or the gods having fun. Some people are even starting to set up small shrines and making small sacrifices.

This is caused by part of the magic power from the creation of the simulacra seeping up from the sewers into the streets. Asking the residents how long this has happened will get answers ranging from five to twelve. Similarly asking how long will give a range of between one and four months. The lights started around four months ago (along with the first Simulacra). Each happening relates to the creation of one Simulacrum.

The Body

If the players investigate the sewers then they will come across a small pile of dead bodies. This is one of the dumping grounds for Raheem to get rid of bodies that have been exhausted by the Tic Toc Man. If searched one of the bodies will be that of Appius Decius Brocchus, a prefect who is very much alive and walking around. The body will be decomposed and appear to have been there for some time. None of the other bodies will be recognizable. Sanity loss for finding the dead bodies is 1/1d6.

The Hunting Horror

If the investigators get close to the area under the cult's house then they will encounter a hunting horror summoned by Raheem to protect the lower levels of the cult. It will attack on site. It may also be sent out at night to deal with any troublesome investigators that are getting too close to the cult's real purpose.

The Tic Toc Man's Lair

GM Map 2 shows the layout of the Tic Toc Man's lair. The Tic Toc Man will not attack unless provoked. Raheem will be found at the centre of the machine in a trance like state but once he becomes aware of the investigators he will take all actions necessary to protect himself and his God. The Raheem usually keeps himself covered in public but down in the rooms below he will be stripped naked to the waist and it will be obvious that he has bits of metal protruding from his body as well as strange shapes outlining odd shaped objects below his skin. His body will be crisscrossed with scars and recent wounds held together with rough thick stitches where he has tried to become one with his god.

The Tic Toc Man himself is intertwined into all the rooms with tubes and wires passing through walls and snared in into a jumble that makes it hard to walk through any of the rooms. There is a low unearthly hum and the entire area is lit by artificial light coming from glowing balls suspended from the ceiling. All in all the sight will be quite shocking for a ro-

man with no understanding of technology to see and much of it will be confusing.

In the centre of the main room near Raheem is a suspended glowing golden orb with a number of wires and tubes emanating from it. This is the heart of the machine and the only way to stop the Tic Toc Man.

Scattered around the room with various wires and tubes embedded into them are the bodies of those that have been sacrificed to the Tic Toc Man. They are still alive but barely conscious and in agony, slowly having their life force drained away. Any investigator that has been replaced will recognise this scene from their dreams and will quickly spot their own body. This will of course trigger rapid sanity loss for them. Others witnessing this will lose the regular sanity. Other victims around the room may be recognized including Oppia.

The Tic Toc Man can speak through Raheem or any combination of his victims scattered around the room if he so wishes.

Any person caught in the machine will have to make a Con X 5 roll every day. A fail will result in the loss 1 point of Con and 1 HP until either one reaches zero at which point they will die and be discarded. They are embedded into the machine so any attempt to be torn free will cause significant damage and almost certain death. Someone with medical knowledge could remove a sacrifice over a one to two hour period for a loss of 1d10 hp.

Defeating the machine will require the investigators to disconnect the golden globe from the machine (This may require an idea roll if the players don't realize this). It cannot be destroyed doing 50hp of damage will cause it to be disconnected. Getting a hit will require a successful hit at twice the normal % chance. Raheem and any simulacra that are in the room will try to prevent this. Any investigators that are simulacrum will not be attacked by the machine but will be attacked by other simulacra and by Raheem. Any investigators that are human will be attacked by the machine as well as other simulacra and Raheem.

The simulacra attendants will come fairly quickly at the first sign of trouble. The other simulacra in Rome will only come to the aid of the Tic Toc Man if things are looking dire. It will then summon them but they will take some time to arrive as they will be scattered over various parts of Rome. Their arrival times are left to the GM to determine.

Any simulacra, including investigators will cease to work if the globe is disconnected. All sacrifices will slowly regain consciousness and will suffer 1d10 hp of damage as the tubes and wires fall away from their bodies and the floor becomes covered in their blood.

There are three rooms off the main room. One room contains supplies, materials and machinery for the inner workings of the Tic Toc Man and a route to the surface nearby that the attendants use to bring in material from outside. The second room is Raheem's private quarters that includes his private belongings including other artifacts as the GM sees fit as well as a Egyptian Mythos Scroll similar to the scroll of Thoth-Amon. The third room contains several unfinished Simulacra including one of Oppia if the GM has not brought it into play earlier as well as the one for Salvius Firmus again if it has not been brought into play. There may also be one or two being prepared for one or more investigators.

If the machine is stopped then the investigators have foiled a significant evil and should get 1d10 sanity for doing so. If any of their family members survived they should get a further 1d6 of sanity each. If the investigators report the findings to Senator Strabo then a fire burns down the whole section of houses soon after.

If the machine god is not stopped then slowly any investigators left disappear one by one and replaced by simulacra. Eventually Rome is overtaken by a ruling machine elite who thrust the city into a spiral of debauchery, chaos and ruin.

MYTHOS SCROLL, IN EGYPTIAN, UNTITLED AND UNATTRIBUTED

This scroll appears to be very similar to that of Thoth-Amon and relates similar but less information. It details the power of various artifacts including a glowing golden orb. They detail the power of Nyarlathotep and some of his avatars including the Black Pharaoh, Nyarlathophis and the Queen in Red. Sanity loss 1d4/1d8; Cthulhu Mythos +10; Occult +5; average 15 weeks to study and comprehend. Spells: Augury, Contact Nyarlathotep, Create Simulacrum, Deflect Harm, Dominate, Enthral Victim, Mental Suggestion, Summon/Bind Hunting Horror, With-er Limb, Wrack

VILLAINS AND NPCs

Salvius Firmus

STR 14 DEX 13 INT 16 CON 10 SIZ 10
APP 12 POW 14 EDU 16 SAN 70 Damage
Bonus – None HP 4

Skills: Bargain 25, Civics 71, Empire 55, Fast Talk 40, First Aid 50, Insight 65, Library Use 30, Listen 45, Other Language (Greek) 21, Other Kingdoms (Greece) 21, Persuade 60, Science (Greek Philosophy) 21, Spot Hidden 45, Status 70, Write Language (Latin) 50

Simulacra

STR 2d6+16 DEX 2d6 + 16
INT 2d6 + 6 CON 3d6
SIZ 2d6 + 6 APP 3d6
POW 3d6 HP 2d6+16

Skills: Climb 80%, Ride 40%, Hide 80%, Listen 60%, Sneak 80%, Spot Hidden 60%

Attack: Fists 60% (1d6 + db), Grapple 60%

Sanity loss: 1/1d6 (only if mechanical nature is discovered)

Simulacra in the game:

Fluvia Aquilia
Lucius Oppius Bellus

Decimus Otacilius Citus
Gaius Decius Brocchus
Appius Ogulnius Maius
Servius Sulpicius Macro
Oppius Adjutor Celsus
Quintus Papirius Senecio

Four Attendants of the New Order of the Golden God

Simulacra are exact copies of their originals and believe they have all the original characteristics as their replacements. All the attributes are the same as the original except for Str, Dex and HP which are higher than usual and the damage bonus is adjusted if required due to the increase in Str.

At night each simulacrum will have nightmares which will involve things such as:

- ☛ Vague dreams of lying on a table in a room with bright lights, sharp metal knives and other strange instruments and being in pain with dark figures hunched over them.
- ☛ Feelings of something boring into their brains and dark things crawling in their heads.
- ☛ A dream where they walk into a room and stare at themselves snared in a web of pipes and wires.
- ☛ A dream where they wake up and find themselves in great pain, snared in pipes and wires some of which pierce their skin. They begin to scream in horror only to wake up screaming in their own bed.
- ☛ A dream where their skin falls off in chunks to reveal metal or clockwork workings underneath.

After every dream they should do a power vs power with the Tic Toc Man and lose 1d10 San if they fail. Should their sanity reach zero then they are fully under the control of the Tic Toc Man. If they move out of proximity of the Tic Toc Man then the dreams will become less

frequent and they should only do a test every week.

If the simulacrum realises what has happened to them at any stage they will start to lose sanity automatically each round at a rate of 1d6 until they reach zero when they will become fully aware simulacrum and a dedicated servant of the Tic Toc Man. Once they start losing san every round they should not check for temporary or permanent loss of sanity but should be seen as becoming more and more panicked until all of a sudden they will regain their calm (at zero sanity). They will still be capable of free action until they reach zero sanity.

Hunting Horror

STR 2d6+16 DEX 2d6 + 16
INT 2d6 + 6 CON 3d6
SIZ 2d6 + 6 APP 3d6
POW 3d6 HP 2d6+16

Attack: Bite 65% (1d6), Tail 90% (Grapple)

Sanity loss: 0/1d10

See Call of Cthulhu rulebook for specifics of the Hunting Horror.

Raheem Seifeddin

STR 12 DEX 8 INT 17 CON 14 SIZ 15
APP 14 POW 14 EDU 13 HP 15

Damage Bonus – None

Skills: Art (Orate) 40, Cthulhu Mythos 30, Dodge 65, Hide 60, Insight 30, Jump 55, Listen 65, Other Kingdom (Rome) 30, Other Language (Latin) 40, Write Language (Egyptian) 50, Write Language (Latin) 40, Persuade 60, Sneak 55, Spot Hidden 35

Weapons: Dagger 30 (1d4), Short Sword 35% (1d6+1)

Spells: Contact Nyarlathotep, Create Simulacrum, Deflect Harm, Dominate, Enthral Victim, Summon/Bind Hunting Horror, Mental Suggestion, Wrack

The Tic Toc Man

STR N/A DEX N/A INT 78 CON 50
SIZ Varies APP N/A POW 95 HP 95

Attack: Tendril (Metal tubes, wires etc) 70% (Grapple)

Sanity loss: 1/1d10

The Tic Toc Man will try to snare a victim with several tendrils made of metal and other materials to hold them immobile while inserting further tendrils into the body. Once tendrils are inserted into the body the victim becomes helpless and part of the machine until otherwise freed by someone else.

The Tic Toc Machine will use tendrils each round to attack a victim. The number is determined by the GM and is dependant on the situation. Each tendril will have its own Str (1d6), Dex (12 + 1d6) and HP (1d8). For the attack the victim can use his normal dodge, parries and attacks for that round to dodge or attack any tendrils. Each tendril that hits the victim will grapple the victim. Once the tendrils combined strength is greater than the victim's size the victim is held immobile and off the ground and needs to break free using strength vs combined tendril strength. One round after the victim is held and if he does not break free he is penetrated by a tendril and is disabled completely with no chance of escape.

THE CHARACTERS

Fluvia Aquilia Age 40

STR 10 DEX 13 INT 13 CON 14 SIZ 10
APP 15 POW 15 EDU 14 SAN 45 Damage
Bonus – None HP 12

Skills: Civics 60 Empire 75 First Aid 55 Insight 30 Other Kingdom (Greece) 21 Other Language (Greek) 21 Persuade 65 Potions 51 Status 75 Sword- Short 25 Write Language (Latin) 40 Art (Painting) 15

Weapons: Dagger 25 (1d6)

You are the mother of the Oppius family and have three children, Tiberius the oldest, Lucius the youngest and Oppia your daughter. Your Husband, Tiberius Oppius Aquila, was recently deceased due to poisoning. Unfortunately you were responsible for the poisoning due to his philandering ways and the high expectations and hopes you have for your youngest son Lucius. You are a bit nervous that Tiberius will find out that you poisoned his father and now

that he is head of the household he could have you exiled, sold into slavery or worse still, executed. You should find a way to eliminate him so that your youngest son can take his rightful place at the head of the family.

You are a spiritual woman and have a good knowledge of potions and poisons and of medicine from your mother. You are also well versed in the politics of Rome and the political goings on of the city. You are well connected with many government and societal figures and can usually find out the right person to ask to get an answer to any questions or to find out what is going on.

You are a lady of Rome first and foremost and your reputation is very important to you. Your family is the most important thing to you and doing the best by them before all else and improving yours and their lot in life is your motivation. You always put yourself first however and having Tiberius in charge just will not do. Lucius is a far better choice for that role.

You have been living at your house in Rome continuously for the last year and miss the country side. You are starting to feel a bit claustrophobic in Rome and you are currently planning a trip to your country house with your youngest son Lucius, once the weather gets better in about a month.

You are not too worried about Oppia disappearing she is probably off with some man for a few days and Tiberius is probably just over reacting. He has, however, called the family to a meeting over dinner to discuss the issue.

Besides your sons other people in the house this evening are:

- Titus Lucretius Aper, a celebrated soldier of Rome and your secret lover,
- Livianus Oppius Spurius, your close friend and body guard who was freed from being a slave by your husband, and
- Euripides, the family's Greek tutor, who you have distinct dislike for as he makes you feel stupid, appears arrogant and should know his place.

Tiberius Oppius Aquila Age 24

STR 14 DEX 16 INT 9 CON 15 SIZ 15
APP 10 POW 10 EDU 12 SAN 50 HP 15
Damage Bonus – 1d4

Skills: Climb 50, Dodge 52, Drive 40, Empire 45, Jump 45, Ride 45, Sneak 30, Spot Hidden 35, Pilum 40, Status 65, Sword-Long 60, Tactics 45, Track 30

Weapons: Long Sword 60 (1d8 + 1d4db), Pilum 40 (1d8 + 1d4db)

You are the oldest Oppius child and your father and namesake was recently found dead of poisoning. You have sworn revenge on whoever killed him and suspect that it was one of your family's enemies, though you are surprised about the blatant way your father was murdered as this is expressly forbidden. You are jealous of your younger brother Lucius getting most of your mother's attention and affection because you are now the family head and she should be respecting you. She keeps usurping your authority and as paterfamilias your word is law in the family. You need to assert yourself as head of the household and keep mother in place. Your younger brother is too smart for his own good and needs to toughen up. The way to get on in Rome is to have a strong arm and the courage and conviction to do the right thing.

You are strong and well schooled at the arts of war and combat. Your skill with the sword grows daily with the teaching of Livianus, the family's trusted man, and you enjoy sparring with Titus, a family friend and accomplished soldier, when he is around the house, which seems to be rather frequent lately.

You have no time for Euripides, the family tutor as he spouts a lot of rubbish that you do not understand and is weak. He does, however, know quite a lot about Greek warfare and every now and again says something useful in this regard.

Your sister Oppia has been missing for several days now and your concern for her safety and welfare is growing. Your mother and brother left the house for a week or so about a month ago but this was explained in a letter

from your mother that they had gone to the country to check the house after your father's death. There has been no such letter from Oppia and you are worried. She has been involved in a new religion recently and has been spouting all sorts of silly notions but it is unusual for her to be away from home for three or four days. Just as things could not have got any worse you now have Senator Strabo telling you a story of political infighting that potentially explains your father's death and your sister's disappearance. You have called the family and some trusted friends to a dinner to discuss Senator Strabo's story, your father's death and your sisters disappearance so you can work out a way forward. You have Senator Strabo waiting in another room and will bring him out once everyone has arrived and you have had Spurius make sure the area is secure.

You have invited the following people to dinner tonight:

- Fluvia Aquilia, your mother,
- Lucius Oppius Bellus, your younger brother,
- Titus Lucretius Aper, a family friend,
- Euripides, the family tutor, and
- Livianus Oppius Spurius, a freed man and, with your father's death you are his patron.

Lucius Oppius Bellus Age 19

STR 11 DEX 12 INT 17 CON 10 SIZ 09
 APP 14 POW 14 EDU 16 SAN 70 HP 9
 Damage Bonus – None

Skills: Bargain 25, Civics 50, Empire 55, Fast Talk 50, First Aid 50, Insight 65, Library Use 30, Listen 45, Other Language (Greek) 21, Other Kingdoms (Greece) 21, Persuade 60, Science (Greek Philosophy) 21, Science (Mathematics) 21, Spot Hidden 45, Status 55, Sword – Short 25, Write Language (Latin) 50

Weapons: Short Sword 25 (1d6)

You are the youngest in the Oppius family with an older sister, Oppia and an older brother Tiberius. Your father, Tiberius Oppius Aquila, was murdered recently by being poisoned. You

are devastated by this as you worshipped your father. You are not sure who was responsible but it is probably one of the many enemies your family has. You also suspect that your older brother had something to do with it as he is now the head of the household and he gains a lot from the death. Since your father's death your mother has been paying you a great deal of attention, to the point of annoyance and you are concerned that she is not showing your older brother the proper respect.

You find combat training a bore and very difficult given your slight stature and Livianus can be cruel and brutal during training. You enjoy your studies with Euripides and you hope one day to move into the world of politics, following in your father's footsteps.

You have been living at your house in Rome continuously for the last year but you love Rome so it has been no hardship. Your mother is currently planning a trip to the family's country villa once the weather gets better in about a month which you feel indifferent about.

Your older brother has called a meeting over dinner as your older sister Oppia has been missing for a few days and he is concerned, as are you.

At the dinner is:

- Fluvia Aquilia, your mother,
- Tiberius Oppius Aquila, your older brother,
- Titus Lucretius Aper, a family friend,
- Euripides, the family tutor, and
- Livianus Oppius Spurius, a freed man and, with your father's death you are his patron.

Titus Lucretius Aper Age 36

STR 16 DEX 15 INT 11 CON 15 SIZ 16
 APP 16 POW 09 EDU 14 SAN 50 HP 16
 Damage Bonus – 1d4

Skills: Climb 61, Empire 65, Fast Talk 25, Jump 45, Pilum 40, Repair/Devise 50, Ride 15, Spot Hidden 65, Status 45, Shield 45, Sword – Short 60, Tactics 75, Throw 45

Weapons: Long Sword 60 (1d8 + 1d4db), Medium Shield 45, Pilum 40 (1d8 + 1d4db)

You are a family friend of the Oppius Family. As a successful warrior you are a proud and successful man of Rome. You were a good friend of Tiberius who was recently murdered and you feel responsible for the security of the family now that he has gone. You are running a bit short of cash currently as you have been enjoying the good life a little too much with lots of wine, women and gambling.

You are having a secret affair with Fluvia and secretly hope to take advantage of the death of her husband after a suitable period of mourning. Fluvia is very well connected and quite wealthy which will improve your standing in Rome significantly. Perhaps if you were to find and expose her husband's murderer she would show her appreciation.

You feel that the boys will need a father figure and you are just the man to provide it. The older boy Tiberius has potential but is maybe a little slow on the uptake sometimes. The younger boy Lucius seems a bit smarter but could do with a bit of toughening up though Livianus seems to be doing the job there.

Tiberius is concerned that his sister has been missing for a few days and has called family and friends together to discuss the issue over dinner. Last you heard she was mixing with some unusual company in Suburra somewhere. At the dinner is:

- Fluvia Aquilia, your lover,
- Tiberius Oppius Aquila, the older brother,
- Lucius Oppius Bellus, the younger brother,
- Euripides, the family tutor, and
- Livianus Oppius Spurius, a freed man and family body guard.

Euripides Age 45

STR 12 DEX 14 INT 16 CON 10 SIZ 10
APP 10 POW 12 EDU 17 SAN 70 HP 10
Damage Bonus – None

Skills: First Aid 40, Insight 65, Knife 25, Library Use 60, Occult 25, Other Kingdom (Rome) 41, Other Language (Latin) 21, Own Kingdom (Greece) 70, Persuade 65, Science (Greek Philosophy) 41, Science (Mathematics) 51, Science (Astrology) 41, Write Language (Latin) 40, Write Language (Greek) 40

Weapons: Knife 25 (1d4)

You are a Greek by birth, an academic and the private tutor for the Oppius family. You are a typical academic, very knowledgeable but not very practical and you much prefer to stay out of the way and let other people do the hard work. You detest the mother, Fluvia as she is totally uncultured and you suspect she has been having an affair with the soldier, Titus. The older brother, Tiberius has no potential what so ever and is a real dullard. The younger brother has much more potential and you have been encouraging him to have good principles and morals for future leadership roles you are sure he is destined for. That is if his mother does not corrupt him and her other children first.

You are worldly and educated having travelled through much of Rome and Greece but you are truly an academic and do not have any significant skills in weapons and warfare. That is better left to harder men than you. You like working for the family, apart from the mother. The money is good, you are looked after for food and have a roof over your head. Life could be worse.

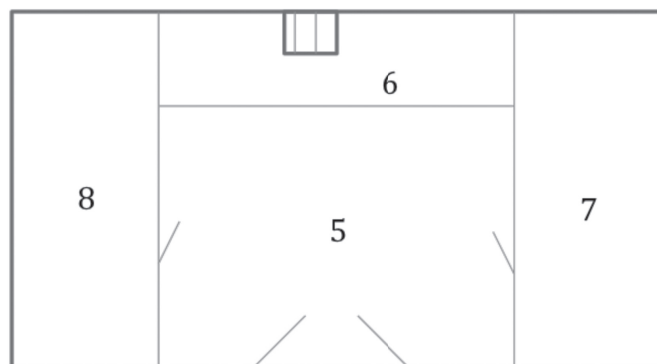
That silly girl Oppia has been missing for a few days and the older brother Tiberius has called a meeting over dinner to discuss the matter as he is obviously concerned. She is so flighty that she has probably taken off to commune with nature for a few days or joined some religious group of some description following the latest fad. She can be so militant and rebellious sometimes.

Besides Lucius and Fluvia were away for a week or so recently and no one made a fuss then.

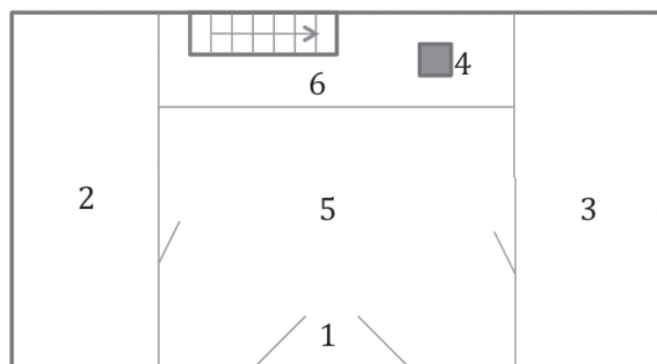
At the dinner is:

- Fluvia Aquilia, the mother,
- Tiberius Oppius Aquila, the older brother,

Residence of the New Order of the Golden God



Top Floor



Ground Floor

1. Double front door
2. Living area
3. Kitchen area
4. Hidden trapdoor under mat
5. Courtyard
6. Open area and stairs under balcony
7. Balcony
8. Living area
9. Living area

- Lucius Oppius Bellus, the younger brother,
- Titus Lucretius Aper, a family friend, and
- Livianus Oppius Spurius, a freed man and family body guard.

Livianus Oppius Spurius Age 39

STR 16 DEX 15 INT 12 CON 14 SIZ 14
 APP 08 POW 12 EDU 14 SAN 70 HP 14
 Damage Bonus – 1d4

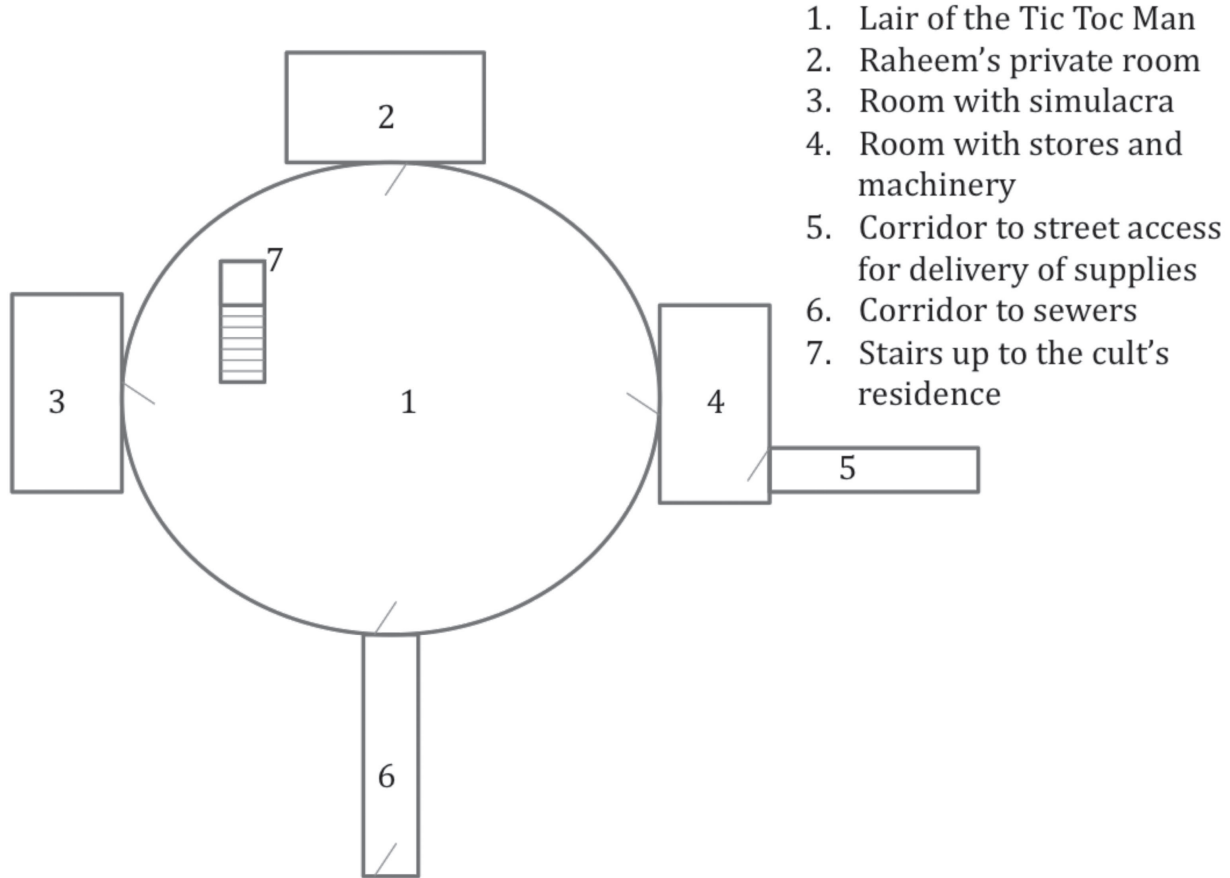
Skills: Climb 60, Empire 40, Fast Talk 50, Jump 45, Pilum 40, Knife 40, Persuade 30, Ride 25, Spot Hidden 65, Status 20, Shield 50, Sword – Short 60, Tactics 75, Throw 45, Track 34

Weapons: Sword 60 (1d8 + 1d4db), Medium Shield 50, Pilum 40 (1d8 + 1d4db), Knife 40 (1d4)

You are a freed man and family guard. You are a fit and brutal man who has done his fair share of hard work, including some undesirable but

essential tasks for you master. You carry the wounds of your past including a savage scare across your face. Your Patron, Tiberius Oppius Aquila, was recently poisoned and security of the remaining family is in your mind. You know that Fluvia is having an affair with Titus so you suspect that she is responsible as she is probably as brutal as you in some ways. The older brother is now your patron and you owe your complete loyalty to him. He is made of the right stuff but could use a few more brains in his head and will need your help going into the future. Thinks younger brother is ok too but needs toughening up before he goes the same way as the Greek, Euripides. You now that your now deceased master, his wife, Fluvia, and Lucius spent a lot of time away from the house sometimes till late at night several months ago but this has stopped more recently. You also know that about three weeks ago Fluvia and

Lair of the Tic Toc Man



Lucius spent some time away from the city, probably to get over the death of your master, the month before. Tiberius has confided in you he has some security matters he needs to attend to but he has not discussed the specifics with you and intends to share the details with you and the family tonight.

At the dinner is:

- Fluvia Aquilia, the mother,
- Tiberius Oppius Aquila, the older brother,
- Lucius Oppius Bellus, the younger brother,
- Titus Lucretius Aper, a family friend, and
- Euripides, family tutor and a Greek.

DEATH AND BANE

BY JASON WILLIAMS

*I will not be afraid of death and bane,
Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.*
-- Macbeth Act V Scene 2

INTRODUCTION

Following the visit of Emperor Hadrian to Britannia he ordered that a wall be constructed across the northern frontier to delineate Rome's territory. Portions of this six year project (122 to 128 CE) can still be seen today and is known as Hadrian's Wall.

Hadrian's Wall had the added advantage of making it difficult for northern tribes to conduct cross border cattle raids and by limiting access through gates, the movement of trade goods could be monitored and taxed. These latter points have not gone unnoticed by the local natives.

This scenario is set during the construction of the wall on the frontier and requires that the investigators interact with some of the locals. It is recommended that at least one of the characters have some skill in Other Language — Gaelic.

Descriptions and statistics for the NPC's appear at the end of the scenario.

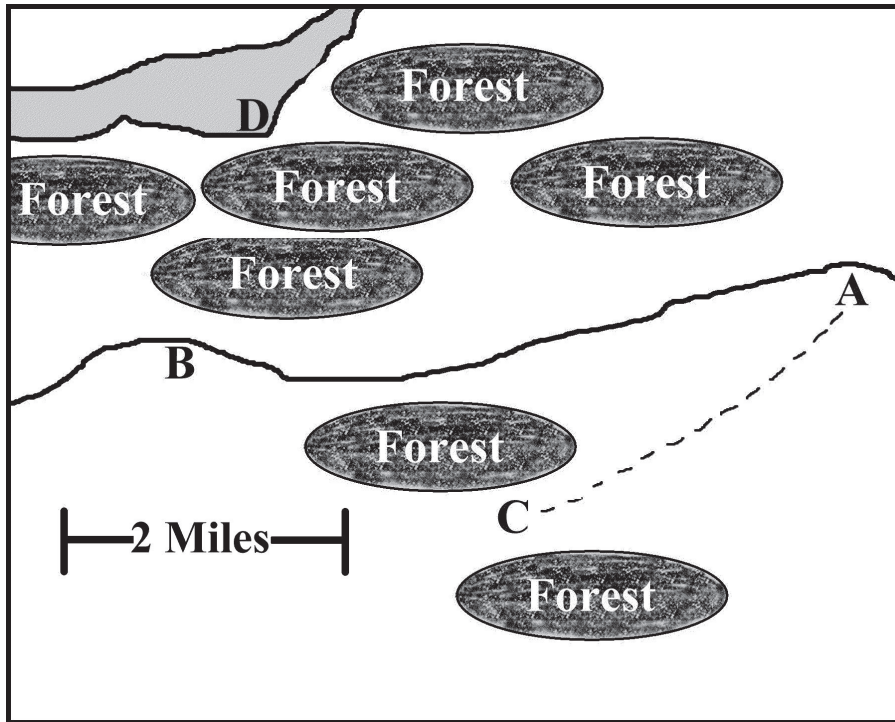
KEEPERS INFORMATION

The *Cthulhu Invictus* source book (Page 31) describes the Picts as living in underground warrens. To protect their own interests some small groups are living on the surface to gather information about the Roman invasion of their an-

cestral lands. The group that the investigators will come into contact with is led by a heavily tattooed war chieftain named Wradd who is advised by a Pictish wizard named Morrbrech.

The Pictish tribes have been watching with growing alarm as Hadrian's Wall has been constructed. They realize that it will place limits on their cross border raiding abilities in regards to stealing cattle and capturing slaves for forced labour and sacrifice. The local band led by Wradd has decided to harass the Roman building crews in an attempt to slow down or deter the construction.

A recent Pictish raid has come to the attention of the authorities since the leader of the Roman Contubernium (eight man unit plus two servants) was the youngest son of a citizen of some importance in Rome. The young Decanus (leader of a squad of 8 legionaries) named Marcus Scibonius Strabo was a junior non-commissioned officer sent to choose a likely spot for a small watchtower called a milecastle. His men had begun work on the earthwork and timber milecastle while also working on the foundations of the stone signal towers. They had regular contact with a weekly supply caravan that visited them to deliver food, tools and building materials. The most recent visit of the caravan revealed a devastated camp and strangely mutilated bodies of the legionnaires. The body of young Marcus was not found amongst the rest of the dead at the camp. The wall construction in the area had not started but was planned to begin after the signal towers and milecastle was completed.



- A - Main Roman fort
- B - Ruined Milecastle
- C - Village of Cirigford
- D - Pictish crannog

The investigators should be free to follow the clues and visit the various sites that are detailed in whatever order they see fit. Obviously a group that charges directly to the Pictish crannog will find themselves in a great deal of trouble. If they do not think of speaking to the caravan leader before departing from the Roman fort then feel free to introduce several of the more obvious clues for them to discover when they arrive at the ruined milecastle.

LIST OF LOCATIONS AND SCENES

- ☛ Main camp of the Legio XX Valeria Victrix where the investigators set out from
- ☛ Milecastle that had been attacked and will be the investigators base of operations
- ☛ Village of Cirigford
- ☛ The Druids Grove
- ☛ The Augury
- ☛ The Pictish Crannog

- ☛ Attacks on the milecastle during the first three days
- ☛ Attack on the fourth day during the night
- ☛ The aftermath

This scenario is set out as a series of scenes so that the investigators can proceed in a non-linear fashion if they so desire. Each scene bears the title of an area or an event to make navigation somewhat easier for the keeper.

Before running this scenario the keeper should read through the section on Britannia in the Cthulhu Invictus book. This will familiarize them with the background of the Roman occupation of the island and provide more detail about the Picts as they should be presented in the scenario. If the keeper requires a list of Gaelic names for NPC's during the scenario there is a list of sample names provided on page 28 of the Cthulhu Invictus book.

THE INVESTIGATORS

The local commander of the Legio XX is Valeria Victrix who has decided to thoroughly investigate the attack on the milecastle. He has se-

lected the investigators based on their mixture of skills and abilities. To this end it is recommended that the keeper ensure that the investigators include at least one or two members of the legion and a few natives of Britannia based on their familiarity with the area.

They should also have good skills with the Gaelic language and perhaps some familiarity with the Pictish language. The latter is not essential since the investigators will be given the opportunity to obtain a translator at Cirigford. All of the investigators are known as accomplished individuals to the local authorities and, if they can solve this mystery, will be richly rewarded. The keeper should decide on any monetary or material rewards based on the investigators background and requirements.

Recommended Occupations for This Scenario

This scenario makes it somewhat desirable that at least one of the player characters be of Roman origin and from a family of some importance. If one of the investigators is assuming the role of a military officer the centurions accompanying them will look to that individual for leadership.

At least one of the investigators should have a decent skill percentage of Other Language Gaelic to make it easier to deal with NPC's (Non Player Characters).

The following suggested occupations are detailed in Cthulhu Invictus starting on page 64.

- Barbarian
- Farmer
- Hunter
- Magus
- Scholar
- Thief

Main Camp of the Legio XX - Investigator Briefing

Titus Livius Canina, the commander of the Legio XX, has ridden north from Deva (Chester)

with a cohort of troops to personally arrange the investigation of the attack on the milecastle.

When the investigators are presented to him he will give them the following information.

- A milecastle which had been under construction has been viciously attacked and there were no Roman survivors. However, there was one individual missing and it was the leader of the contubernium (unit of 8 men plus 2 servants). The man named Marcus Scibonius Strabo is the youngest son of a prominent Roman politician. It is vital that the investigators discover what happened to him.
- The supply caravan that discovered the ruined site returned immediately to the main camp. The caravanners appear to be somewhat nervous over the condition that they found the bodies in. They stated that they buried the bodies in a mass grave near the milecastle.
- In the morning the investigators will depart for the site of the destroyed milecastle. They are to set up a camp and during their investigation the construction of the milecastle is to resume. This is in their best interest since any rebuilt fortifications will help protect them from further attacks.
- It is advisable that the investigators ask questions amongst the Gaelic village, which is located south of the course of the wall to see if they have any useful information. The investigators should also use the opportunity to gauge the loyalty of the villagers and see if they might have attacked the milecastle and made it appear to be done by the Picts.
- If the Picts appear to be involved, the investigators should scout north of the wall to see if they can determine the size of the enemy force.

- ☛ The investigators will be provided with two Contuberniums, or a total of sixteen legionaries with four servants. The men will continue with the construction of the milecastle and signal towers with the priority being on raising a defensive perimeter on the day of arrival.
- ☛ Each of the investigators will be provided with horses and the legionaries will have three wagons, each with a team of four horses.
- ☛ The investigators are not to attack any tribes in the area unless they attack first. The Praefectus castrorum (camp commander) in the area does not want a full scale uprising on his hands until he can assemble more men. He expects to have two additional cohorts that he has requested in two weeks.
- ☛ If the investigators can locate the missing centurion or his body they are requested to return with him so that he can receive a proper military burial. They should exhume the bodies from the mass grave in case the caravan leader made a mistake. The commander of the Legio XX provides information about identifying scars, tattoos, and healed broken bones by which they can identify the young man's body. (Note: Should the investigators choose the exhume the bodies make sure that an appropriate SAN loss is applied to the grisly situation).
- ☛ At the end of one week they are to leave the two Contuberniums at the site of the milecastle and return to the main camp with a report of what they have found out.
- ☛ Although the topic remains unspoken, the investigators leave the briefing with the impression that if they fail in their assigned tasks they will be greatly disgraced.

The primary goals for the investigators that Valeria Victrix clearly outlines for them are:

1. Find the missing legionnaire or his body and return with it.
2. Identify the culprits and eliminate them if necessary.
3. Return and provide a full report.

SPEAKING WITH THE CARAVAN LEADER

The investigators may wish to question the caravan leader and his men before they travel to the milecastle. If they do so they will obtain the following information.

- ☛ The caravan arrived at mid-day and was not challenged, as was the custom, by the sentries standing watch.
- ☛ They were on a routine supply trip bringing food, equipment and two wagons full of cut stone from a nearby quarry.
- ☛ As they approached closer to the site they noticed that much of the outer palisade had been destroyed. There was also a strong smell of decay "like a tomb".
- ☛ The bodies of the Romans were in an awful state. Each of them was beheaded and only their personal possessions recovered from the bodies enabled their identification.
- ☛ The partially constructed signal towers were both pulled down and the stones tumbled down the steep bank to the north of the site.
If the investigators make a successful Insight skill roll they will detect that the caravan leader that they are talking to may be holding back some information. A Persuade skill roll will elicit the following additional details.
- ☛ The bodies and the ruined milecastle were coated with a foul smelling sticky sub-

stance. Those who handled the body's claims that the smell was bad enough that after returning to the main fort even repeated washings has not been enough to eliminate it.

- ☛ Before it rained there were visible hoof prints of some great beast that had trampled the dead victims.
- ☛ The hoof prints came from the north and departed towards the north.
- ☛ Some of the more intact bodies had large pieces carved off of them in a manner similar to how a hunter dresses an animal.

TRAVELING TO THE RUINED MILECASTLE

This section of the wall is very hilly with surrounding dense forest areas and rocky terrain. A rough path for caravan traffic has been created which winds around the worst of the obstacles. The total travel time following the established path is six hours.

It becomes apparent to the investigators towards the end of the journey that there is something unnatural about area. Plant life appears to be somewhat off color and sickly. In the immediate vicinity of the milecastle there are no signs of animal life.

Note: The dotted line in the illustration connecting locations A and C is a rough road used primarily for the transportation of trade goods.

ARRIVAL AT THE MILECASTLE

When the milecastle comes in sight the first thing that the investigators will notice is that the stones have been scattered in all directions, some as far as a hundred feet away. An Idea roll will let the investigators know that it would appear that whoever attacked went to a great deal of trouble to ruin the structure. As they get

within a hundred feet they begin to notice the smell of decay and a quick search of the site reveals an oily coating over much of the area and down the hill towards the north.

The Roman troops immediately unload their wagons, take care of the horses, and begin to construct a defensive perimeter within which they will pitch the tents for the camp.

When the investigators begin to search the ruined milecastle they can discover the following with successful spot hidden rolls (one roll permitted for each ten minutes of searching the area).

- ☛ Indentations in the softer areas of the ground that upon closer examination appears to be hoof prints of some sort. Any investigators who have spent any time in Rome can attempt an idea roll. A success means that they can equate whatever made them as being the size of an elephant.
- ☛ Under a pile of fallen building stones are human remains. Closer examination of the body reveals that the head has been severed and is not present. There are also fleshy areas of the arms and legs that have multiple chunks of flesh and muscle stripped away with evidence of bite marks. A successful First Aid or Medicine skill roll indicates that the bite marks were made by human teeth. (Sanity loss of 0/1D4). Clothing and other items on and around the body indicate that this was one of the servants.
- ☛ If the investigators indicate that they are searching the north side of the wall, allow them another Spot Hidden skill roll at half their normal percentage. If they are successful they will discover concealed by the long grass the body of a child, its throat cut and hands bound behind its back.

The keeper should have the investigators provide details about how the defences of the camp will be set up. How many will be on watch for danger, how long the watches will be at night and which investigators will be awake during

which watch. The keeper can use this information to provide more details about who may be ready for combat during various encounters and which investigators will be available to spot any incursions into the camp. The information can also be used to determine how many investigators are available for patrols and any other activities that the group may engage in. If an investigator has stood watch for most of the night they will not be fully alert if they state that they are going on a patrol the following morning. The keeper should assess penalties of -5% on the investigators skill rolls if they have been active for an amount of time greater than their CON points in hours.

Alternatively, if the keeper wishes, they may make use of the Fatigue Point system found on page 32 in Chaosium's Basic Role-Playing book. The short version of this optional rule is that a character can stay active for a number of hours equal to their CON. Once they have exceeded that number, for each additional hour, all skill rolls suffer a -1% penalty per hour. As an example: character X has a CON of 14 and has been active for 14 hours. In the following hour all skill checks are at a penalty of -1%. The hour after that all skill rolls are at -2% and so on.

VILLAGE OF CIRIGFORD

Located one hour due south of the course of the wall lays a Gaelic farming village of approximately two hundred and fifty men, women and children.

It is located at the bottom of a shallow valley surrounded by forest. The immediate area around the village is cleared and the investigators can see cattle and sheep in pastures with much of the lower and flatter area ploughed for crops. A narrow stream runs through the village with a shallow ford visible near the center where a number of huts are clustered together.

As the investigators and their escort approach the village they can see the women and children run towards their huts. Within moments the village men gather together with various weapons and farm implements. As the investigators draw closer they can see that many of the men appear to be very angry.

The village clan chief will quiet his people and then approach the investigators to speak with them. His name is Fearghas son of Calum and has had many dealings over the years with Roman merchants and legionnaires. He speaks simple Latin but not enough to understand or convey very complex ideas. He is an intelligent leader of men and a mighty warrior but fears the Pictish tribes that roam north of their village.

Fearghas has the following information and how much he cooperates with the investigators depends on how they address him. If they are respectful without insulting him and his village he will readily supply them with the information. If the investigators are haughty and commanding they will have to make successful Persuade or Other Kingdoms (Britannia) skill rolls to elicit cooperation. The keeper should use the latter case as an opportunity for role play. The Other Kingdoms skill role provides the investigators with the information that they have offended the villagers and must make amends. A sincere apology will suffice but gifts will also be gratefully accepted.

- ☛ He welcomes the Roman presence in the area of his village if their goal is to suppress the Pictish tribes north of the wall that is being constructed.
- ☛ His village has been living in fear for several days now since a child was taken from its bed during the night. The villagers all blame the Picts who are rumoured to spill the blood of children during worship of their dark gods.
- ☛ The villagers believe that the Pictish warriors in the area are capable of turning into wolves.

- ☛ If the Romans promise at least a weekly patrol in the area of the village his people are willing to engage in trade of local food for the local milecastles.
- ☛ A woman named Deirdre, from the village, had been captured by the Picts several years ago and held as a slave. She still retains the knowledge that she gained of the foul Pictish language. She has never fully recovered from the ordeal and can be spared to accompany the investigators in case they need an interpreter.
- ☛ If the Romans at the milecastle are hard pressed the village would be willing to come to their aid with a small force of twenty men armed with spear and shield. Fearghas will provide them with a hunting horn to blow if help is required. The sound should carry for several miles.
- ☛ It is also suggested to the Roman group that they may wish to consult with the druid who lives in an oak grove located south of the village.

One of the dynamics that may come into play during the course of this adventure is that one of the younger men in the village has been in contact with the Picts. In exchange for information about their magic he has been supplying them with information about defences and patrols, along with metal arrowheads. At the moment he is somewhat in fear that his dealings with his clan enemies will be discovered but he fears the Picts even more. The younger mans name is Domhnall and if he sees an opportunity to aid the Picts he may betray the investigators or even his fellow villagers. Domhnall is adept at concealing his true thoughts and feelings so that Insight skill rolls used against him are at -15%.

Domhnall, upon meeting the Romans, is sullen and loudly proclaims that they have no business traveling across Gaelic lands. The young man is rebuked for this outburst by

Fearghas who apologizes to the investigators for the inhospitable treatment.

THE DRUIDS GROVE

On a nearby low hill, overlooking the valley that Cirigford is in, sits a small oak grove. This is a sacred druid grove where M̀anas lives and conducts his ceremonies on behalf of the village. He has several young apprentices who assist him but it is unlikely that the investigators will meet them.

M̀anas has no love for the Romans and sees their presence as disruptive to the natural order of things. The elderly man is civil and courteous to the investigators and will assist them at the request of Fearghas son of Calum who is responsible for the protection of the village.

The druid is able to provide the following information:

- ☛ The land has cried out to him that it has been violated by unnatural beings that have emerged from dark places hidden to man.
- ☛ Trees and woodland creatures are living in fear of what now walks amongst them and leaves trails of corruption.
- ☛ The Picts hold many prisoners all of whom have been abused.
- ☛ Picts are like starlings, they do not build anything themselves, instead they steal and dwell in homes built by others.
- ☛ The Picts are allied with powers that came down from the stars when the world was young. The dark gods that they worship are old ones that walked on the earth before man.
- ☛ He is capable of performing an augury to see if there is anything to be foretold about the coming confrontation between the Romans and the Picts. If the investigators in-

dicate that they wish for him to proceed, he will tell them that preparations are required and they should return to the grove at the dying of the next day (sunset).

THE AUGURY

When the investigators return to the oak grove, they are once again met by the elderly druid. He escorts them to the innermost clearing which has a small hut on one side and a small circle of standing stones in the center.

Mànas indicates where the investigators should be seated and as the setting sun continues its descent the grove grows darker.

A small fire is lit in the middle of the group which the druid circles while murmuring unrecognizable phrases, occasionally casting small handfuls of herbs into the fire from a small jar tucked beneath his arm. Slowly clouds of fragrant smoke drift through the area and the investigators are almost lulled to sleep from the scents and sounds.

Just as the final setting of the sun plunges the woodland clearing into darkness, the druid produces a small bird from within a fold of his robes and draws forth a knife. After several ritual movements he kneels down and quickly dispatches the small creature. Any investigators successfully making a Spot Hidden roll sees Mànas skilfully slicing open the bird and spilling the contents of its crop and gizzard. After examining the contents in silence for several minutes Mànas rises to his feet and makes the following pronouncements.

- ☛ Many Picts are nearby with most standing above water.
- ☛ In the dark of the night a great tree shall walk.
- ☛ There are many deaths to come and some blood shed may be that of innocents.
- ☛ They face a dark power that must be stopped or foulness shall spread across the lands of the north.

Having uttered his augury and looking utterly exhausted Mànas leans heavily on his staff and enters his hut. When he returns he presents to the investigators two items. The first is a long spear and the second is a long knife. The druid tells the investigators that both have been enchanted and are capable of harming creatures that are not susceptible to normal weapons. He further informs them that these blades have been in the possession of his people for many generations and when they are done with them, they must be returned to him.

The magical weapons are made out of iron and have been sharpened to razor-like edges. Both have been enchanted with the Bless Blade spell found in the Call of Cthulhu rule book.

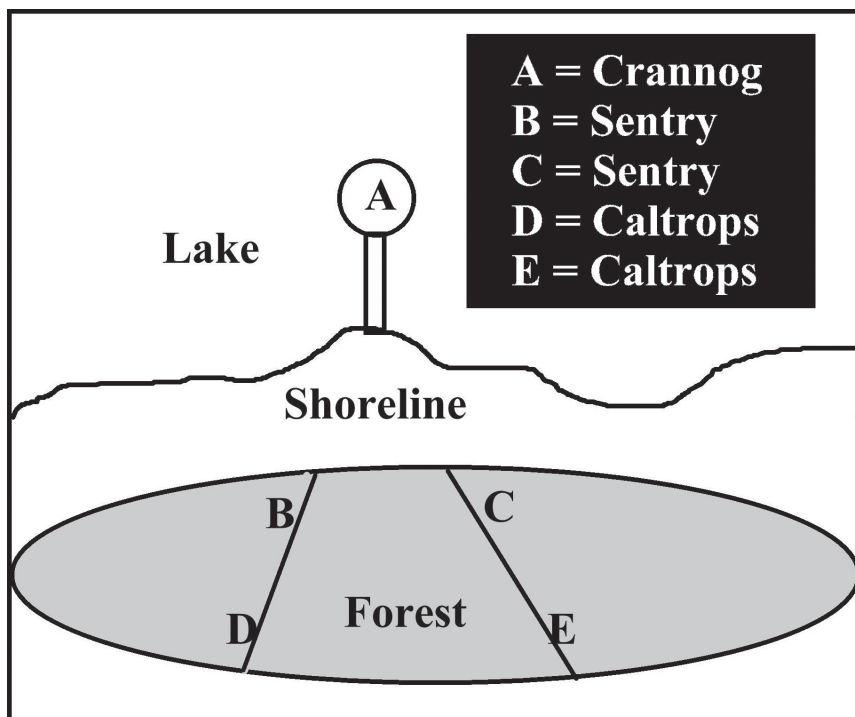
THE PICTISH CRANNOG

The crannog consists of a large wooden structure built upon stilts anchored in the bottom of a shallow lake. The main platform is surrounded by a palisade and connected to the shore of the lake with a narrow and easily defended walkway. There is bare ground running along the shore for nearly three hundred feet in front of the crannog with the width of it being fifty feet from the water to the tree line.

This particular structure has been recently seized by the Pictish war band from a Gaelic clan who had constructed it several years ago. Only six of the original tenants have survived, four women and two young boys. The captives are kept in the central structure of the crannog as chained slaves used to perform menial tasks. They have been cowed by the cruelty of their Pictish captors but are constantly on watch for opportunities to escape.

On the paths to the crannog through the woods the investigators will encounter a spot where many human heads have been impaled on posts. The sanity loss for viewing this unexpected grisly sight is 1/1D4.

The missing Roman, Marcus Scribonius Strabo, is also being held inside the crannog and has been reduced to 5 hit points. He has



and there are a total of four Pictish warriors present.

Detection of approaching groups or individuals is made easier since the Picts have strewn bronze caltrops along the approaching trails. Since the Picts know where they are they can easily avoid them. Investigators approaching along this route will each be exposed to 1D6 caltrops. If they are not specifically looking for traps then roll for attacks against each investigator until one of them (or their horse) takes damage from a caltrop. After that they can only advance at half normal

been beaten almost daily and his morale is at a very low point, but he will try to escape and assist if he detects that the crannog is being attacked by a Roman force. The keeper should decide if his resistance is effective or if he ends up dying a heroic death.

Some of the dead Gaels have been butchered and their limbs smoked to provide the Picts with a readily available source of food. At various spots in the dimly lit crannog there are human arms and legs hanging from the ceiling. The SAN loss for this grisly spectacle is 1/1D3.

The Pictish war band that is occupying the crannog consists of twenty men, fifteen women and ten children. There are always at least five men guarding the crannog and the women present are also skilled in wielding their traditional weapons. There are generic statistics for the Picts at the end of the scenario.

The Pictish warriors are always on alert and their tactics are to position at least two of their men in the trees near the land side of the walkway. Upon approach have the investigators make a party Luck roll. A botched roll of 90-00 means that the sentries are changing

movement while looking for further caltrops. Spotting the small bronze items requires a successful Spot Hidden skill check.

Caltrops – Base Chance 25%, Damage 1D3, Impale Yes

Those traveling on foot have a chance to see the caltrops with a successful Spot Hidden roll at -20%. Those traveling on horseback can spot them at -30%.

Horses or persons wounded by a caltrop can only move at half of their regular rate until it has healed. Moreover, horses or persons wounded in such an unexpected manner will cry out in pain drawing the attention of anybody that is nearby, in this case the Pictish sentries.

The keeper should make note of any caltrops that the investigators gather up in the event that they wish to use them later in defense of the milecastle.

If the guards detect anybody approaching they will warn the others with a series of bird calls. Investigators can attempt a Natural World skill roll to detect these calls. If the alarm is sounded everybody that is currently in the crannog will be armed and ready if the structure is attacked. Otherwise only four will

be prepared and guarding the walkway to the shore. The concealed watchers will wait until the intruders have passed by them and will descend to the ground and silently attack from the rear with bows.

If the crannog is attacked directly the Picts will fight to the death taking as many Romans with them as they can. There is a possibility that some will use their prisoners as human shields and will threaten to kill them unless they are permitted to escape. Even then they may decide to kill their hostages while escaping to avoid being hindered.

The last eight feet of the walkway to the shore have been loosened and wrapped with rope so that they can be quickly withdrawn to the crannog side. A successful Jump roll must be made to cross the gap with a failure indicating that the jumper has landed short and has fallen into the lake. Those that make it across can be attacked from left and right by the Pictish defenders. Only one jumper can attempt the crossing per combat round.

The Picts will defend their wizard so that he may attempt to use his magical spells against the attackers. The wizard will initially cast the Wrack spell at any identifiable leaders amongst the attackers. Witnesses of the effect of the spell will suffer a 1/1D3 SAN loss.

If things appear to be going badly for the Picts one of them will jump from the crannog and swim across the lake to a nearby cove. Only those remaining on the shore will have a chance to spot the escaping Pict with a successful Spot Hidden skill roll. He will be at long range for any missile weapons and if fired upon will swim underwater until he is out of range. In two hours he will return with another Pictish force consisting of twice the initial number of the investigators party. If the investigators have withdrawn by that point they will be hunted and harried by random sneak attacks in the woods. These attacks will concentrate on picking off stragglers and rear-guards. The Picts will fall back if faced with a direct and organized attack and seek to hide in the thick underbrush.

ATTACKS ON THE MILECASTLE

On the first day the group arrives to investigate and continue with the construction, one of the legionaries will be wounded by an arrow while gathering firewood. If a patrol is sent out immediately they find a trail heading towards the north but it disappears after a few hundred yards.

At dawn on the morning of the second day, one of the sentries watching the camp will be discovered dead with his throat cut sometime during the night. Both calves of his legs have been carved off (SAN loss of 0/1D3).

On the third day one of the investigators at random will awaken in their tent during the night. A successful Listen skill roll indicates that they hear another person breathing in the tent and that the sound is coming from the floor near the tent opening. A successful Spot Hidden skill roll in the dim light of pre-dawn reveals that there is a human shaped fur covered creature crawling across the floor towards the bed (Sanity loss of 1/1D4). If both rolls are failed the Pictish warrior that has entered the tent will get one combat round of surprise attack with a dagger.

On the fourth day, even if the investigators have confronted the Picts at the crannog, the milecastle will be attacked by a full war party with their wizard shortly after midnight. See the details below for how this will unfold.

Attack on the Milecastle on the Fourth Day

The Roman soldiers at the milecastle, who are standing watch, report near midnight that they have spotted some furtive movement to their north along the tree line of the forest. It is a new moon but there are several large torches around the perimeter of the Roman encampment that dimly illuminate the surrounding area.

The sentry's best estimate is that there are approximately two dozen figures moving through the woods and perhaps more.

They will have time to alert those that are sleeping so that the camp will be fully awake and equipped with their arms and armor before anything occurs.

Keeper note: four of the more elite Pictish warriors have crept past the Roman camp and are concealed in the long grass one hundred yards south of the milecastle. They have been instructed to wait for fleeing Romans and attack them before they manage to get away.

After half an hour of tense waiting the following sequence will occur. It is presented in a linear manner but the keeper should be prepared to improvise based on the actions of the investigators.

- ☛ Sounds are heard coming from the woods to the north that gradually resolves into chanting in a foul and vulgar sounding language.
- ☛ Within minutes several torches can be seen moving through the woods as a small group departs from the tree line.
- ☛ Investigators can see that two of the Picts are forcibly dragging a child that appears to be struggling with its hands bound behind its back.
- ☛ An individual amongst the Picts moves forward and they immediately pause in a respectful silence. It appears that this is a priest, shaman or wizard of some kind who produces a knife and, while chanting, cuts the child's throat, spilling the boy's blood upon the ground (SAN loss of 0/1D3).
- ☛ There is a moment of absolute silence, as if the world is holding its breath, and then a cold wind comes rushing from the north. The treetops toward the north begin to sway back and forth and then to thrash strongly as the wind begins to howl.
- ☛ A successful Spot Hidden roll allows an investigator to spot what appears to be a

very large tree moving through the forest towards them.

- ☛ As the tree moves into the open the investigators can see that it is some dark creature with flailing tentacles instead of branches. SAN loss of 1D3/1D10.
- ☛ The creature moves towards the milecastle at a movement rate of 8. This is of course a Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath that has been summoned and directed to attack the Roman encampment. The statistics for this creature appears at the end of the scenario.

What happens next depends on the course of action that the investigators choose to take in the face of this monstrous creature. A number of likely options are listed below but the keeper should remain flexible to react to alternatives offered by the investigators.

Although combat in Call of Cthulhu generally does not require miniatures, this battle may be large enough to make use of them to keep track of the positions of the characters and NPC's .

- ☛ They may choose to make a stand inside the partially reconstructed milecastle. In this event the keeper should determine how many of the NPC's fail their SAN checks. Some that fail will attempt to flee to the south in a direction away from the advancing creature. Others will run and hide in their tents, becoming useless in any ensuing combat. For the investigators themselves the keeper should determine, in the normal manner, what effects a failed SAN roll will have. Whoever remains effective will be harder pressed to defend their position but they have partial cover from Pictish attacks (reduce Pictish missile attacks by 30%).
- ☛ If any of the investigators take a prominent leadership position, the Pictish wizard will attempt to target them with spells to remove them from the battle. The most

likely spells for him to use are Mindblast and Wrack.

- The attacking Dark Young will initially climb the hill towards the milecastle and use its strength to push aside stones in the wall to create an entrance for itself and its Pictish allies. If the Dark Young is attacked directly and injured it will use its tentacle attacks against the attackers. It will require three combat rounds to move enough stones to create an entrance into the milecastle.
- Once the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath is inside the milecastle it will use its tentacle and stomp attacks against the Roman defenders. If the Dark Young takes more damage than half of its total hit points, it will retreat directly to the north. If any Pictish warriors are in its course it will stomp on them to clear a path for its retreat.
- The Picts will fight until their wizard has taken over half of his total hit points in damage at which time they will rally around him and begin to retreat.
- If the Pictish wizard is killed, the control over the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath will be lost and it will be free to attack the Picts that are closest to it. This will result in a rout. The investigators may seize this opportunity to flee from the scene, but will be subject to surprise attacks from the four Picts concealed south of the milecastle.

AFTERMATH

There are many possible outcomes of this scenario and the keeper should allow things to play out based on the choices of the investigators.

If the investigators are very aggressive they may directly march on the Pictish force at their crannog before the fourth day (when the assault takes place against the milecastle). Should this happen, the Picts will still gather

enough forces together for the assault, including another wizard with the same or similar skills.

The keeper may wish to bolster the Roman forces with some of the Gaelic warriors from Cirigford if they had amicable relations during their initial contact. If the Romans and investigators were abusive towards the Gaelic villagers, the keeper may wish to hamper any retreat from the milecastle with a small force led by the young warrior named Domhnall, who is mentioned in the description of the village. If he had been insulted by any of the investigators he may challenge them to single combat to revenge his honor.

If the Pictish wizard was killed during the battle at the milecastle his followers will abandon the area, returning to their underground cave complex. They will not be seen in large numbers for many years.

Upon returning to the main Roman camp they must report to Titus Livius Canina. He will not accept any explanation of a monster that attacked them and will see that they are disgraced and banished from the northern areas of Britannia (Status loss of -5%). If he is presented with a story of large Pictish forces in the area, he will personally take command of an assault force consisting of a full cohort of 800 hardened veterans. They will march on the area of the milecastle, killing everything that they find within several miles north of the wall. This mission could last for several weeks, or even several months, and can provide the keeper with further campaign hooks. If the investigators had a fight with Domhnall and reported it to the Roman leader he will ruthlessly order that the entire village be destroyed as an example to others in the area (SAN loss of 1/1D3).

Sanity Rewards/Penalties

- Killing the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath +1D10 SAN
- Killing the Pictish Wizard +1D3 SAN

- Freeing any of the prisoners at the crannog +1D3 SAN
- Winning a battle at the crannog +1D3 SAN
- Returning the enchanted weapons to the druid and earning his gratitude +1 SAN
- Returning to the main Roman camp with Marcus Scibonius Strabo (either alive or with his body) +1D3 SAN
- Fleeing during the battle while leaving fellow soldiers behind -1D6 SAN
- For each investigator killed during the adventure -1D3 SAN

NPC'S

Titus Livius Canina – Commander of the Legio XX – Age 40

STR 13 CON 13 INT 15 SIZ 13 POW 12
DEX 14 APP 12 EDU 14 SAN 60 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Sword – Short 65%, damage 1D6 + db, Shield – Medium 60%

Skills: Civics 60%, Empire 55%, Insight 55%, Other Kingdoms (Britannia) 45%, Ride 50%, Status 50%, Tactics 75%

Description: A tall grey haired man with several visible combat scars and a steely eyed gaze that makes people meeting him somewhat uncomfortable. He has no patience for people that do not get to the point. If he detects that somebody is not being forthright he will immediately confront them until he has been satisfied by their answers. He is quick to anger and slow to forgive. Canina has grown weary of being posted so far from Rome at this outpost on the edge of the known world and wants the area pacified so that he can retire to his family's villa overlooking the Bay of Naples.

Marcus Scibonius Strabo – Young Roman soldier – captive of the Picts – Age 23

STR 17 CON 14 INT 13 SIZ 16 POW 12
DEX 16 APP 12 EDU 12 SAN 60 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Sword - gladius 50%, 1D6 +1 + db, Long Spear 40%, 1D10 + db

Skills: Dodge 50%, Empire 35%, Insight 35%, Navigate 30%, Own Kingdom 50%, Ride Horse 50%, Tactics 50%

Description: If found by the investigators his hit points have been reduced to 7 and his sanity is down to 45. He will not have access to armor that will fit him but if he manages to escape during the attack on the crannog he will be able to pick up a weapon and shield.

Fearghas son of Calum – Clan chief of the village of Cirigford – Age 42

STR 13 CON 12 INT 12 SIZ 14 POW 12
DEX 13 APP 13 EDU 13 SAN 60 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Great Axe 70%, 2D6 + db, Long Spear 50%, 1D10 + db

Skills: Insight 35%, Natural World 50%, Other Language – Latin 20%, Own Kingdom 40%, Tactics 50%

Description: A gruff and plain spoken village chief who has no love for the Romans but is willing to put aside his differences in the matters of trade and negotiation. His first priority is to protecting his people but he is an honest man who will not put up with any guile or treachery from his own people. Young upstart warriors, like Domhnall, are quickly put in their place by Fearghas or banished. He believes in treating travelers with respect unless they prove that they do not deserve it at which point he will rebuke them with sharp words and tell them that they are no longer welcome. He is a fierce foe or a strong ally with a sense of honour and integrity. Fearghas views the Picts as scavengers and bandits but has some fears, which he will not voice, about the rumours of their wizards and dark worship.

Domhnall – Hot-headed young Gaelic warrior – Age 20

STR 17 CON 13 INT 11 SIZ 16 POW 14
DEX 11 APP 13 EDU 10 SAN 30 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Spear – long 55%, damage 1D10 + db, Sword – short 40%, damage 1D6 + db

Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Dodge 45%, Hide 60%, Other Language – Pictish 15%, Sneak 50%, Track 65%

Spells: Fleshward

Description: This young man is the best hunter in the village. Domhnall is quite handsome but is constantly at odds with his elders. Other young villagers follow him, more out of fear than respect. He resents

having to follow orders from his elders and thinks that his prowess should place him in charge. In the last two years he has been in contact with and had dealings with one of the dark Pictish tribes. He has learned that they are in possession of some powerful magical abilities and has been seduced by the thoughts of learning their secrets. In turn, the Picts have been making use of this brash young man to gather information and get access to metal arrowheads. He perceives that the Romans in the area is a threat to his future potential of becoming a leader of his people.

Deirdre – Gaelic woman who had been held by Picts – Age 32

STR 11 CON 9 INT 10 SIZ 9 POW 13
DEX 11 APP 10 EDU 9 SAN 25 HP 9

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Knife - Small 40%, 1D4 + db

Skills: Craft – Cooking 60%, Natural World 30%, Other Language – Pictish 20%, Own Kingdom 30%

Description: A drab looking woman with haunted eyes and an appearance of listlessness. When she was in her late teens she was taken captive by the Picts while foraging in the surrounding forest. Having been missing for nearly three years the villagers were startled by her reappearance. She has not said much about what happened to her, other than that she had been taken by the Picts. She will not speak to the investigators about her experience. If she is ordered to do so by the clan leader, she will accompany them as a translator, in the event that they come in contact with the Picts. The amount of work that she is capable of doing is minimal so the villagers will not miss her.

Mànas – Elderly Druid – Age 82

STR 7 CON 8 INT 16 SIZ 9 POW 20
DEX 8 APP 9 EDU 15 SAN 30 HP 9

Damage Bonus: -1D4

Weapons: Knife - Small 80%, 1D4 + db

Skills: Craft – Herbalism 75%, First Aid 75%, Natural World 75%, Own Kingdom 65%, Persuade 60%

Spells: Augur, Bless Blade, Blight/Bless Crop, Charm Animal, Detect Enchantment, Heal, Wandering Soul. (The keeper might wish to augment this list with spells found in Cthulhu Dark Ages).

Description: An elderly man who leans heavily on his staff dressed in a simple coarse woven robe. He has a long grey beard and is nearly bald. He is of good humour and does not seem very impressed by power or

authority. Over his lifetime he has seen many great warriors rise from the ranks and fall and views death as just another stage in a person's life.

Wurgast – Pictish Wizard – Age 68

STR 10 CON 14 INT 16 SIZ 13 POW 21
DEX 16 APP 10 EDU 12 SAN N/A HP 14

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Knife – Large 65%, damage 1D6

Skills: Craft – ritual implements 70%, Insight 50%, Natural World 45%, Potions 50%

Spells: Fleshward, Lame Animal, Mindblast, Shrivelling, Summon/Bind Dark Young, Wither Limb, Wrack

Description: This individual is a sharp eyed hunchback who has a murderous temper. The Pictish warriors around him are obsequious and very loyal and obedient. They have all witnessed his wrath at one time or another and know that missteps on their part could make them victims of the wizard's power. He openly carries a very large ceremonial knife that he uses to dispatch sacrifices. Wurgast sees the Romans as a threat to the survival of his people and will show no mercy.

Sanity Loss: For seeing this twisted creature casting his dark spells 0/1D4.

Wradd – Leader of Pictish War Band – Age 29

STR 17 CON 16 INT 13 SIZ 17 POW 17
DEX 17 APP 8 EDU 12 SAN N/A HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Bow 75%, damage 1D8, Sword – Long 75%, damage 1D8 + db,

Skills: Art – Torture prisoner 60%, Insight 50%, Natural World 35%, Other Language - Gaelic 30%, Tactics 45%

Spells: Fleshward

Description: Wradd is a leader through force and intimidation. He is short tempered and will lash out at even a perceived slight. He hates being on the surface of the world and thinks that they are on a fool's errand but he will not speak of this openly because the only person that he fears is Wurgast. The members of his war band fear him but respect his power and combat prowess. Investigators can expect no mercy from this individual. When he meets the gaze of a non-Pict they instantly get the impression that there is nothing more that he would like to do than rip out their heart and eat it.

Sanity Loss: For seeing this monstrosly large tattooed evil warrior is 1/1D4.

Sample Roman Soldiers

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
STR	13	11	12	17	16
CON	16	14	11	13	10
SIZ	12	17	11	12	14
INT	12	9	13	11	14
POW	9	9	10	11	12
DEX	12	9	12	16	15
APP	11	14	12	10	9
EDU	9	12	12	9	11
SAN	45	45	50	55	60
HP	14	16	11	13	12
DB	+1D4	+1D4	+0	+1D4	+1D4

Weapons: Pilum* 30%, damage 1D8 + db, Sword – gladius 40%, damage 1D6+1 + db, Shield – large 30%

Armor: The generic Roman soldier in this scenario is wearing leather and scales armor which provides 6 points of protection. In addition they may use their large shield to block missile weapons (see details on page 85 of the Cthulhu Invictus book).

* – to keep things simple the skill percentage for a thrust pilum is the same as when it is thrown. The damage bonus (db) does not apply when it is thrown.

Sample Gaelic Warriors

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
STR	13	12	15	15	13
CON	13	14	13	12	11
SIZ	17	10	15	12	11
INT	11	12	14	11	9
POW	16	9	13	16	12
DEX	15	10	12	15	11
APP	12	10	9	12	14
EDU	15	9	11	8	9
SAN	80	45	65	80	60
HP	15	12	14	12	11
DB	+1D4	+0	+1D4	+1D4	+0

Weapons: Ax, Great 30%, damage 2D6 + db, Spear – short 30%, damage 1D6 + db, Sword – short, damage 35%, damage 1D6 + db, Shield – small 25%

Armor: Roughly half of the Gaelic warriors wear armor and those who do wear soft leather which provides 2 points of protection. Those who use a one handed weapon, such as a short sword, usually use a small shield.

Sample Pictish Warriors

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
STR	15	12	12	17	16
CON	9	10	12	11	14
SIZ	12	9	13	14	10
INT	10	9	11	9	9
POW	11	10	15	13	13
DEX	12	9	13	9	13
APP	9	8	7	9	6
EDU	10	8	12	10	9
SAN	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
HP	11	10	13	13	12
DB	+1D4	+0	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4

Weapons: Club 30%, damage 1D6 + db, Knife – large 30%, damage 1D4 + db, Spear* – long 40%, damage 1D10 + db, Bow** – Pictish 40%, damage 1D8.

Sanity Loss: For hearing the war cries and seeing a mass of these crazed warriors viewers suffer a loss of 1/1D6.

Armor: Roughly half of the Pictish warriors wear soft leather armor which offers 2 points of protection.

* – to keep things simple the skill percentage for a thrust pilum is the same as when it is thrown. The damage bonus (db) does not apply when it is thrown.

** – Pictish bow – use the bow statistics on page 86 of Cthulhu Invictus.

Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath

STR 48 CON 20 SIZ 47 INT 20 POW 28
DEX 22 HP: 34 Move: 8

Damage Bonus: +5D6

Weapon: Tentacle 80%, damage db + STR drain

Trample 40%, damage 2D6 + db

Armor: firearms (bows and spears) attack does only 1 point of damage. A firearms impale does 2 points of damage. Shotguns are exceptions, and do minimum possible damage, whatever that is. Hand-to-hand weapons do normal damage; attacks dependent on heat, blast, corrosion, electrical charge, or poisoning have no effect.

Spells: Call/Dismiss Shub-Niggurath, Cause Disease, Circle of Nausea, Cloud Memory, Dominate, Enthral Victim, Mindblast, Summon/Bind Dark Young, Wither Limb, Wrack.

Skills: Sneak 60%, Hide in Woods 80%.

Sanity Loss: 1D3/1D10 Sanity points to see a dark young.

LIGHTS ON THE VESUVIUS

BY JEAN-PHILIPPE 'JP' CHAPLEAU

Playtesters: Christian Boucher, Nathan Coit, Alexandre Foisy-Geoffroy, Alain Grenier,
Stephane "Steve" Hamel, Yves Lefevre, Mike Mead, Johnny Pate,

Born and raised in Montréal, Québec, Canada. JP got hooked into role-playing by his cousin at the age of 10. JP has settled in Colorado Springs, CO with his wife Julie and kids (Josiane, Marie-Katherine "Kitty" and Jean-Patrick). Now he spends his – few – free moments writing, and painting miniatures.

TIMELINE

The adventure is set in 46AD, but it can easily be set at any time between 27BC (Augustus becomes emperor) and 79AD (the Vesuvius erupts, burying Herculaneum and Pompeii).

It is important to note that prior to the 79AD eruption, no one knew the Vesuvius was a volcano. It was covered in olive groves and its flanks were extremely fertile and sought-after.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 73BC, Spartacus led a rebellion of slaves and gladiators throughout Italy, facing and defeating many Roman armies sent against him. At its height Spartacus's army is estimated at seventy thousand.

In the spring of 72BC, the slave army moved north towards Gaul. Spartacus's army then turned back south and wintered at Rhegium.

Crassus blockaded him but Spartacus and his army broke the siege. Spartacus tried to destroy Crassus's army but was surrounded, and crushed. Spartacus' body was never found.

Pompey was acclaimed in Rome as a hero while Crassus (who actually defeated Spartacus) was not. Both men would later form the first triumvirate with Caesar.

ABOUT ROMAN WEDDINGS

Roman weddings were often informal affairs, requiring both spouses and their family to publicly announce their intentions. The approval of the fathers was solicited, but not required.

Weddings could be as private or as public as the spouses and their families wanted it (or could afford). The presence of a public or religious official was not necessary and no licenses were required.

Many of our modern western customs date back to the Romans. The bride wore a white dress, her hair elaborately done. She threw a bouquet. The two exchanged rings, etc. The details of the wedding are left up to the Keeper.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

SSSSRESHHTKESS

Born in the last days of the second empire of Valusia, Ssssreshhtkess went into hibernation as the empire fell to man. He was roused from his sleep in 7 BC by a crew of miners in Egypt. Taking over the body of a slave, he changed his

name to Aspiamus and went to Rome, looking to take advantage of the world.

Captured by Spartacus's army, he pretended to be Aspiamus and became one of the important members of the slave army, a friend and confidant of Spartacus.

Ssssreshhtkess' plans to open a portal to his revered Valusia and bring his brethren through. With them, he would create a new kingdom, with human slaves.

During the winter of 73-72BC, Spartacus befriended Aspiamus. He counseled Spartacus on everything. It was him who "convinced" Spartacus to head south when the way to Gaul was open.

Before the final showdown with Marcus Crassus, Aspiamus taught Spartacus words of power to save himself and the core of his forces. Seriously wounded, Spartacus uttered the words of power and opened a door through time. Thus, Spartacus and his closest allies disappeared.

SPARTACUS IN VALUSIA

In Valusia, Aspiamus convinced both Spartacus and his men that they were chosen to destroy Rome and that the serpent people were agents of the gods of Egypt. The uneducated gladiators went along.

Ssssreshhtkess spent his time creating growth juice to grow his slave army. He gave Spartacus and his men growth serum in large doses making them bigger, stronger and more aggressive but also made them dimmer and easier to manipulate. Ssssreshhtkess sent Spartacus back to gather others, to create an army of slave-soldiers.

For the last few nights, Spartacus has been leading slave-gathering operations. They open portals at night and return before daybreak when the portals disappear. His first raids targeted isolated travelers and thus went unnoticed by the authorities. Spartacus now attacks villas, "freeing" the slaves by taking them back to the gate where they are sent to the serpent people to re-open the gate every night.

From the slaves that are brought back the Serpent People use Consume Likeness on important people to impersonate them.

DOMITUS CASSIUS VARRO

Domitius Cassius Varro (Cassius Varro for short) is an elegant man in his 50s who has administered the family fortune very well. Something of an ascetic, he takes his position in the Senate very seriously. Not a member of any party, Cassius Varro is seen by the people and by the Emperor as a level-headed and competent man, his popularity is high with the Imperial family and the people of Rome.

Cassius Varro is a friend, patron or relation of the PCs. He is a good man seeking the best for his family, himself and the Empire (in that order).

He has two sons: Tiberius and Agrippa.

Tiberius is a tribune on the Danube (Pannonia). Once married, his wife passed away giving birth to Domitius Cassius Varro (or Varro Minor). Varro Minor lives with his grandfather.

Agrippa is an upcoming senator. But where the father is level-headed, young Agrippa strongly support the war party and endless expansion of the empire. He has yet to serve in the army. Cassius Varro found a suitable bride for Agrippa. The marriage will increase Cassius Varro's influence in northern Italy.

DOMITUS CASSIUS VARRO, 52, Senator

Weapons: Dagger 65%, damage 1d4

Skills: Accounting 45%, Aramaic 40%, Civics 85%, Empire 75%, Greek 45%, Iberian 30%, Insight 50%, Persuade 65%, Status 45%, Tactics 35%

AGRIPPA CASSIUS VARRO, 22, Young Senator

Weapons: Dagger 45%, damage 1d4

Skills: Accounting 45%, Civics 55%, Empire 60%, Greek 45%, Insight 40%, Speak passionately about imperial expansion 65%,

THE BRIDE

Clodius Popus is a rich equestrian whose family made its fortune in the wool industry. They own horse stables in northern Italy. Clodius Popus is a nondescript man in his late thirties. Not particularly bright or educated, he is overjoyed to give his only daughter such an advantageous marriage.

Clodia Poppia strongly dislikes Agrippa and plans to become a widow very soon. She has taken a liking to Varro Minor and her future father-in-law.

CLODIA POPPIA, 17, Fiancée of Agrippa Cassius Varro

Skills: Greek 35%, Latin 55%, Plot how to become a widow 55%

THE PREFECT OF HERCULANEUM

The prefect of Herculaneum, Appius Fabius Scipio is a qualified and efficient public servant. However, he is paranoid about assassins and plots against him. He wishes to be elected consul turning forty.

Reports of strange lights and missing people have reached him. Not wanting to cause panic, the prefect needs to end those reports and rumors without worrying the populace of his prefecture. Sending soldiers or worrying the locals could mean his dismissal, something he does not want.

The wedding of Cassius Varro's son in Herculaneum brings extra visitors to the area and thus increases Fabius Scipio's paranoia.

APPIUS FABIUS SCIPIO, 26, prefect of Herculaneum

Weapons: Dagger 45%, damage 1d4

Skills: Accounting 85%, Civics 85%, Empire 65%, Insight 50%, Worry for his own life 85%

CHAPTER 1: THE GUESTS ARRIVE

Invited by Cassius Varro to spend time at his estate in Herculaneum for Agrippa's wedding, the PCs arrive a week before the wedding. The wedding is beneficial to both families.

The week before the wedding, other friends, guests, musicians, entertainers, philosophers and gladiators arrive from across the empire. The house is full of people at all times.

The PCs are the first guests to arrive, giving them a chance to interact with Cassius Varro and his family. Make sure the PCs feel the gratitude and friendship of Cassius Varro.

The other guests arrive gradually conveniently allowing the PCs to meet them as they arrive. Do not be afraid of give the PCs "too much to do, too many people to meet", a comment heard all too often at weddings.

Here are a number of activities to keep the PCs busy. None of those are Mythos related.

Other Guests

The guests present at the wedding are members of Cassius Varro's extensive network of friends, clients and relations. This is a good opportunity for the Keeper to introduce NPC who will appear in future adventures, or re-introduce others. None of the NPCs present at the wedding have anything to do with the adventure.

Unmarried PC

Cassius Varro decides to find a bride (or a husband) for one of the PCs. He presents the PCs with charming ladies from across the empire. Cassius Varro's interest is genuine, if interested.

Military PC

Varro Minor hounds a PC with a military or warrior background. The boy asks an endless stream of questions about life in the army, wars, fighting and anything of interest. Varro Minor

is a curious and intelligent boy, he is also extremely persistent.

Scholar PC

A PC of scholarly pursuit is approached by Gaius Rufus and asked about the PC's knowledge of history, poetry and philosophy. Gaius Rufus is very interested in all of those together and an intelligent talker. Gaius Rufus is a kindred spirit in the gathering of knowledge. At the Keeper's discretion Gaius Rufus may know about the Mythos.

Ten years ago, he wrote the poem *De Romulus ad Quirinus*, a long poem about the deification of Romulus into the god Quirinus and he made a fortune. His works was acclaimed by Caligula (before he became emperor) as being "masterful and explicit".

After this short bout of fame and wealth, he lost his fortune to orgies, women, expensive gifts and gambling. Gaius Rufus ended up with nothing, but managed to buy himself a position working for Cassius Varro. Gaius Rufus spent the last three years in Cyrene where he worked as an able administrator of the senator's horse stables and is esteemed by him. He secures a good marriage to a Libyan princess, Gaia Sabina (see below).

Gaius Rufus is the brother of Quintus Curtius Rufus, another famous historian who wrote a biography of Alexander the Great (around 45AD).

Female PC

Gaia Sabina (Gaius Rufus's wife, see above) is an exotic beauty with caramel skin and dark curly hair. An Empire check reveals her Libyan heritage. She dresses in a mixture of Roman and Libyan style. Her hair is arranged in the latest styles and she wears a lot of jewelry. She is an intense and passionate woman with fire in her eyes. She loves her husband dearly, but hates his interest in history and the occult.

She approaches a female PC and asks her if her husband (she assumes the female PC is married to one of the male PCs) constantly

dabbles in ancient history and strange scrolls and papyri. She expresses her displeasure with such things.

If the PC shares (or pretends to share) her view, Gaia reveals that her husband is involved in more of those "crazy research" back home and that she does not like it. If pressed on the subject, she adds that he researches ancient history of the Libyan tribes, things that are "better left undisturbed, under the sands".

If the PC admits to also being involved in "crazy research", she is shocked and disturbed by females doing such "manly research". She does her best to convince the PC that such things are not for women and that "men should be allowed to play their silly games."

Civil Servant PC

A civil servant PC (this can be a military, a senator or someone in public works such as engineers or the vigils) is approached by the prefect of Herculaneum, Fabius Scipio. The prefect inquires about the PCs' previous investigations and current activities.

A successful Insight check leads the PC to think the prefect is holding something back. He reveals nothing at this time. Though a successful Fast Talk check can make him slip that he is "looking for people."

FOR THE DEVIOUS KEEPER

Clodia Poppia falls in love with a male PC and try to spend "private time" with that PC. All sorts of complications can happen. Clodia might even plot with the PC to get rid of her husband.

CHAPTER 2: THE PREFECT'S PROBLEM

Three days before the wedding, the PCs are invited to a midday meal at the prefect's house. If the PCs ask Cassius Varro about it, he encourages the PCs to meet with the prefect. He won't

say, but he recommended the PCs to the prefect.

The prefect's house is well-kept and clean. The PCs are asked to leave any weapons outside (daggers are not weapons). The slaves are polite, the musicians are good, the food is exquisite and the wine is plentiful. After the meal, Scipio order out the musicians, servants and dancers. Only Scipio, his guards and the PCs remain in the room.

Fabius Scipio asks to see the PCs' hands, which he inspects meticulously. Once satisfied, he visibly relaxed and waves the PCs closer while sending his guard to "wait outside". This is one of his many eccentricities, but let the PCs read more into it.

Once alone, Scipio asks from them a vow of silence on what he is about to tell them. This vow must be kept until he releases them of it. Assuming the PCs agree, he tells the PCs the following.

- ☛ Cassius Varro has lauded the exploits and the resourcefulness of the PCs to the prefect many times.
- ☛ For the past three weeks a number of people have disappeared around Herculaneum. This is nothing new as people go missing all the time. He did not worry about it.
- ☛ Starting last week, distant, strange lights have been seen on the Vesuvius at night. In the morning, he sent men to investigate but they found nothing. (If the PCs want, he can direct them to the men).
- ☛ Last night, a merchant named Publio heard screams as he was hurrying back from Pompeii after dark. He hid in the bushes and saw many large men pull about twenty men, women and children in chains upwards on the Vesuvius.
- ☛ He sent a patrol of soldiers this morning to check on Publio's story. They found a local land owner, Cyrus the Greek, cruci-

fied to the doorway of his villa. (The men did not tell Scipio what was written next to the body as they cannot read).

- ☛ He wants the PCs to investigate this affair, unofficially – of course – since his own soldiers draw excessive attention. (Plus he does not trust them).
- ☛ Scipio is worried that such events may be an ill-omen for Agrippa's wedding and he would like the whole affair to be resolved quickly and quietly before the wedding.
- ☛ He can lend the PCs some of his own horses and/or chariot if they do not have any. If they have any reasonable requests for items and equipment, he will lend them what they need.
- ☛ The prefect does not promise any money.
- ☛ Scipio wants the PCs to act like nothing is going on, and that they should attend any important social event in addition to looking into the affair.

When the PCs agree, the prefect relaxes. He has his servants bring in wine and the musician returns. If they ever need to speak with him, they are ushered in with all haste at any point in the adventure.

CHAPTER 3: THE TIMELINE

This part of the adventure presents a timeline of event assuming the PCs do nothing.

Additional information about the owners and their villas after Spartacus' attack appear in Chapter 4: The investigation. The PCs should not catch Spartacus on the first night. When they catch up with him and his gang, proceed to Chapter 6: Spartacus. If and when the PCs encounter the gate, proceed to Chapter 7: Through the gate.

At the time of the adventure, the Vesuvius is not known to be a volcano. Its sides are

extremely fertile and covered with trees, vineyards and orchards.

The first day is the day when the PCs meet with the prefect.

The first night

Spartacus and his men head to a vineyard and order the slaves and all the women to follow them. He nails the former owner, Lotarius, to the doors and leaves.

The second day

During the second day, more guests arrive at Cassius Varro's house.

In Herculaneum, word spreads about something going on in the countryside. Details are sketchy. Fabius Scipio increases the guard around town.

The second night is rainy. The PCs come across the gate unless they are doing something that keeps them away (such as watching an older gate site, sleeping or staying in town). This time, the gate is open by the side of the road. The Keeper can set this encounter at any time he or she wishes, but if set later in the night, Spartacus and his men could be coming back from their latest raid. See Chapter 7: Through the gate.

Spartacus and his men attack a farm owned by Publius Varus. This time, the PCs arrive after the man's death. However, his daughter avoided the gladiators by hiding in the well.

The third day

By now all of Herculaneum is abuzz with the news that someone is killing the rich landowners and taking all their women, slaves and children. The situation in town becomes extremely tense and people begin to worry.

News that someone is trying to start a new servile war has every rich citizen worried for their lives. Citizens arm themselves. Men with military or combat experience are hired as extra muscle. The Prefect's office is flooded with petitions and request for help.

Cassius Varro is oddly calm, putting up a brave facade and feigning ignorance of what is happening around him. His demeanor goes a long way to keeping his guests calm.

Citizens demand the prefect send his militia to take care of the problem. The protests worsen as the day goes on. If the PCs did not tell Fabius Scipio about the inscription, he hears about it and contacts the PCs immediately.

Lentulus Batiatus stays at home all day. When he hears of the attack on Lotarius' farm, he send his wife and children to a friend in Pompeii, staying behind with a few men to defend his estate.

The third night

Spartacus and his men attack Lentulus Batiatus's farm. This time, Spartacus is not interested in taking prisoners, this one is about revenge. He and his men put everyone to the sword. Again, he nails the mutilated body of Lentulus to the front door. The scene is quite shocking and costs 1/1d6 Sanity to behold.

The fourth day

The fourth day is the day of the wedding between Agrippa and Clodia Poppia. What happens next depends on what the PCs have done so far. If the PCs have not defeated the Serpent People, proceed to Part 8: Invasion. Otherwise, proceed to Chapter 9: The Wedding.

FABIUS SCIPIO AND THE INSCRIPTION

Bringing the information about what was written on the doors to Fabius Scipio has him turn deathly pale. He orders one of his servants to fetch "his new papyrus". He tells the PCs the following.

- ☛ He bought the book a year ago from a travelling bookseller.

- ☛ The seller told him it was a book of prophecies from the oracle at Delphi. The book, he said, contains information that could save his and many others' lives.
- ☛ The prefect bought the book and began to study it, but stopped because the many prophecies therein are overly complex and undecipherable. He thought it was just gibberish.
- ☛ He gives the PCs Player Handout 1: The Undefeated Spartan if they have not received it already.
- ☛ After that, Fabius Scipio refuses to leave his home until the PCs have stopped Spartacus

From this point on, Fabius Scipio becomes extremely worried. He increases the guard around his home. People in town begin to comment on his strange behavior.

CHAPTER 4: THE INVESTIGATION

LOCATING SPARTACUS

Spartacus and his men never open a gate the same location twice, so watching a previously used location does not help the investigation.

Sanity costs

The following sanity costs apply to all of the locations.

- ☛ Allowing a raid to happen when the PCs are in a position to try and stop it: 1/1d6
- ☛ Finding the owner nailed to the doors: 1/1d3
- ☛ Seeing the carnage at Lentulus' home: 1/1d6

Cyrus' Villa (night "zero")

The PCs may wish to investigate the villa that was raided on the night before Scipio involved the PCs. The former owner was taken down from the doorway and some efforts to clean the place have been taken.

- ☛ A successful Spot Hidden reveals that something was written in blood underneath the body but that it has been cleaned. Some letters cannot be read but a successful Read Latin reads "Spartaci Liberat" (possible "Freed by Spartacus" or "Spartacus the Liberator"). While an unsuccessful Read Latin reads "Sparta Liber" (possible "Free Sparta").
- ☛ A successful Track check reveals to the PCs that the raiders did a thorough search of the estate.
- ☛ A successful Spot Hidden check reveals specks of blood here and there, proof that the household did put up a fight
- ☛ A successful Insight check gives but that they were quickly subdued, and no one was killed. The natural deduction is to assume that the attackers were far superior in combat ability.
- ☛ A successful Spot Hidden by a different PC reveals a small drawing on the inside of a clothes chest depicts a gladiator. This clue can only be found once.
- ☛ No tracking checks are required to follow the tracks due to the large number of people all marching in a single file (because they were chained). There are a number of tracks, leading up the Vesuvius. Those tracks stop in the center of a clearing. Of the many tracks that enter the clearing, none seem to be leaving.

Cyrus the Greek (before the adventure)

Cyrus is a Greek who purchased his orchards from thirty years ago. Cyrus married a local

freed slave woman. He was a rather private person. People generally liked him as he was pleasant and charming. He has no known enemies.

The previous owners of his orchard were a now-defunct family murdered in their sleep by parties unknown, but it is generally assumed to be some of their slaves for their brutal ways. They had financial troubles dating back to the days of the Third Servile Wars when a lot of their slaves fled and joined Spartacus's army.

Lotarius (first night)

Lotarius comes from a well-known local family. He was hated and most people see his death as a blessing. He was known as a brute and a bully. He rarely allowed his wife outside his estate. His family has owned the land for over 5 generations.

Rumor is that he killed his two brothers to inherit the family fortune. Then he kept his sisters-in-laws as his mistresses locked up in the house. Even his father's death was accidental but people think he did it too. There is no proof of Lotarius' involvement in any of those rumors, but everyone believes them. People think his staff rebelled against him and gave him "what he deserved". They marvel that it has not happened earlier.

The PCs find him nailed to the door as he is about to die.

- ☛ Under him is the (still-fresh) "Spartacus Liberator", which anyone who can read Latin can decipher as "Spartacus the Liberator" or "Spartacus Bringer-of-Freedom".
- ☛ All of the clues the PCs have not found in Cyrus' villa are also present here, thus giving the PCs a second chance to find them.
- ☛ When the PCs reach him, Lotarius is dying. He tells the PCs the following before dying. Allow Medicine or Potion checks to give him a little more time.
- ☛ The men who attacked his complex were expert warriors. They fell upon the peo-

ple swiftly and rounded up everyone before any organized resistance could be arranged.

- ☛ They had scaly skins.
- ☛ He fought them with his sons, but they were quickly defeated. Their men's fighting prowess was significantly. (Lotarius and his family have no military training)
- ☛ The men called their leader Spartacus. It was "Spartacus" who nailed him to the doors.
- ☛ "Spartacus" asked him if he knew where Lentulus Batiatus lived. Lotarius refused to tell him unless his children were released. They were not so he said nothing.
- ☛ Spartacus laughed saying that this time he would topple Rome and there was "nothing Pompey or Crassus could do". A successful Empire (at +20%) check reminds the PCs that those two men were very successful generals about a century ago and that they were the ones who crushed Spartacus' rebellion.
- ☛ As a dying wish he asks the PCs to kill the men responsible and to leave them out for the beasts to feed upon their corpses.

Publius Varus (second night)

Publius Varus was an equestrian man of average means who grows the best olives in the area. In his staff, he had a master oil maker (currently missing). He was known as a stern but fair man.

His wife Servia was the biggest gossip in the area. Other women have a love/hate relation with her: they loved hearing the dirt on others while hating her for talking about them.

His death starts the rumors and gets people talking about something happening in the countryside.

- All of the clues the PCs have not found in Cyrus and Lotarius' villa are also present here, thus giving the PCs another chance to find them.

Publius Varus's daughter, Publia Variana is ten years old. She was hiding in the well prior to Spartacus' arrival. Rescuing her is not very difficult and requires some rope.

Publia made a dare with her friend Lentilia. It is said that if a girl hides in a well and sees the moon from the bottom, she will forever be beautiful and have the blessing of Diana. No matter what the PCs say, she believes that.

After going to bed, she slipped out and climbed down the well. While she was down there, a group of demons came and the screaming started.

She heard demons ask about Batiatus to her father. Her best friend is Lentilia Batiatilla, daughter of Lentulus Batiatus. She can tell the PCs where they live.

She is now an orphan. The PCs have to decide her ultimate fate. She is also the sole heiress to her father's possessions.

Lentulus Batiatus (third night)

Lentulus Batiatus's ancestor owned a gladiator school and Spartacus at the time of the rebellion. Both men have the same name.

The current Batiatus is a simple man who owns a small farm. He owns two female slaves (they belong to his wife) and the rest of his household is made up of freemen he pays well, but has them work hard. Everyone likes him and people only have good things to say about him. His death is seen as a tragedy.

The farm he owns has been in his family "since the days of Marius" (early 1st century BC).

Paulus and his boys

The Roman world had a number of gangs who did some "patrolling" of the streets. Some vigils (from whom we get the word "vigilantes") formed tight organizations that would hire

their members out to rich individuals to protect homes and businesses.

The vigils were a mix of modern-day mob, private security, street gang and constabulary force. The peoples' view of them was equally vary, depending on a given groups' actions and reputation. Vigils would usually fight unarmed, but knife fights are not unknown. Gang on gang action rarely result in death, but broken limbs and bruises are common.

As a young man, (future emperor) Nero is believed to have gone out into the dark streets of Rome and engage in vigilantism.

PAULUS'S GANG IS ONE SUCH GROUP.

VIGILS OF THE CAMPANIA, local toughs

	1	2	3	4	Paulus
STR	9	13	15	10	13
CON	10	11	16	8	15
SIZ	15	11	17	9	14
INT	10	8	9	6	10
POW	4	13	12	15	10
DEX	12	15	13	9	12
APP	13	14	10	10	13
SAN	20	65	60	75	50
HP	13	11	17	9	15
DB	-	-	+1d6	-	+1d4

Weapons: Fist/Punch 75%, damage 1d3+db
 Club 50%, damage 1d6+db
 Dagger 45%, damage 1d4+db
 Gladius (Paulus only) 65%, damage 1d6+1+db
 Grapple 45%, damage special
 Kick 45%, damage 1d6+db

Armor: 1 point of thick clothes

Skills: Climb 45%, Dodge 30%, Hide 35%, Jump 35%, Listen 35%, Sneak 60%, Latin 50% Spot Hidden 45%, Throw 45%

CHAPTER 5: THE VIGILS

At any point during the adventure, a landowner hires a gang of vigils from Pompeii to watch the

area close to his homestead. If the PCs are out at night, they meet Paulus and his gang.

Paulus, the leader, is an ugly man whose nose was broken many times with a strong, square jaw and a thick skull. Paulus believes another gang is trying to earn a reputation. He intends to stop them and become famous.

The vigils go about a torch in hand and explore the area making noise and threatening people. They are the typical bull in the china shop. The good news is, they are easy to hear, spot, follow and trick.

The first encounter between the PCs and the vigils may result in a fight or at least a short brawl between the two. The men are not out to kill, they only intimidate and beat up.

Paulus knows very little He know some landowners were killed at their villas. He ignores about that anyone else has gone missing and has not investigate very hard himself. Unless shown clear evidence, Paulus and his boys do not believe anything supernatural is happening. With undeniable proof, Paulus and his men become very worried and agree to work with the PCs. Stopping a rival gang is one thing, the supernatural is another.

The vigils can serve as extra muscle, opponents, bait, as guinea pigs or replacement characters.

CHAPTER 6: SPARTACUS

When and how the PCs meet with Spartacus will vary heavily from group to group. This encounter can take place in a number of locations at a number of sites.

Spartacus and his men are competent fighters (their statistics appear in below). Confronting them without preparation will result in a number of deaths.

One of the gladiators holds a torch. He stays out of combat unless challenged. They all carry a water skin each, filed with sweetened water. The water contains small quantities of

PAULUS AND HIS BOYS

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As a young man, (future emperor) Nero is believed to have gone out into the dark streets of Rome and engage in vigilantism.

Paulus’s gang is one such group.

VIGILS OF THE CAMPANIA, local toughs

	1	2	3	4	Paulus
STR	9	13	15	10	13
CON	10	11	16	8	15
SIZ	15	11	17	9	14
INT	10	8	9	6	10
POW	4	13	12	15	10
DEX	12	15	13	9	12
APP	13	14	10	10	13
SAN	20	65	60	75	50
HP	13	11	17	9	15
DB	-	-	+1d6	-	+1d4

Weapons: Fist/Punch 75%, damage 1d3+db
 Club 50%, damage 1d6+db
 Dagger 45%, damage 1d4+db
 Gladius (Paulus only) 65%, damage 1d6+1+db
 Grapple 45%, damage special
 Kick 45%, damage 1d6+db

Armor: 1 point of thick clothes

Skills: Climb 45%, Dodge 30%, Hide 35%, Jump 35%, Listen 35%, Sneak 60%, Latin 50% Spot Hidden 45%, Throw 45%

growth juice. This increases their aggressiveness (-1 sanity) for short periods of time.

If the PCs encounter Spartacus's force before a raid some of them are carrying chains and manacles. They spend the first round dropping them and pulling out their weapons while the others move forward to attack.

During a raid, they leave their chains nearby. All take part in the fighting and capture of prisoners. Taking the chains would definitely create chaos among them as they try to find them.

If the PCs meet Spartacus after a raid, half of his men are pulling their captives by the chains and do not let go of them, fighting only one-handed.

Spartacus himself never encumbers himself with chains, slaves or a torch. His weapons are always in hand and ready. It very easy to identify the leader.

How many?

The number of gladiators with Spartacus depends on the PCs, their combat abilities and the mood of the Keeper. There should be at LEAST one gladiator for every two PCs, plus Spartacus.

By the third night, Spartacus has additional recruits for his army. Those recently "freed" slaves increase the army. They are armed with low-quality spears. There are at least two slave-soldiers per PC in addition to the gladiators.

PC tactics

Here are a few tactics the PCs could use against the gladiator. Though the PCs have no way of knowing this, the men they are going against are very dim-witted, acting more on instinct than reason.

Think of the gladiators as animals: they are not very intelligent, but their instincts and ability to fight puts them at the top of the food chain.

When their numbers have been whittled down significantly, Spartacus goes on the hunt

himself, taking with him all of his remaining men. At this point, they abandon everything: their prisoners, extra chains and anything they do not need to fight (they do need a torch).

Ambush: This tactics involves the PCs hiding then attack one or many of them at the same time before leaving the area. Ranged weapons are ideal for this type of attack. If the PCs don't think about it, the place is full of rocks that can be thrown easily.

Disguise: Trying to pass off as one of the slaves to create chaos can be done. The gladiators and the soldiers do not know each other too well, granting a +20% bonus to Fast Talk and similar checks as long as the PC does not act overly intelligent.

Summoning animals: Summoning and controlling animals is a good way to get help and not to have the prisoners panic too much.

Summoning Mythos creatures: Summoning mythos creatures can help the PCs. The gladiators are already completely insane and thus will not be afraid of such creatures. However, the poor prisoners do not have the same resistance. With the appearance of a creature, ALL of the gladiators abandon anything they are doing to focus on it, each wanting the glory of the kill.

Use bait: Draw a few gladiators away from the rest. Such tactics work every time. One gladiator and two slave-soldiers are sent away from the pack whenever a pursuit happens. The type of gladiator following the PCs is random (refer to the section titled Spartacus's men, below).

SPARTACUS

No longer the strong-willed, bright man who led a rebellion against Rome, Spartacus it now a hulking brute intend on revenge and serving his serpent people masters. The stats below represent him as he appears in this adventure, a murderous hulking brute.

SPARTACUS, Degenerated legend

STR 20 CON 18 SIZ 15 INT 8 POW 4
DEX 18 APP 10 EDU 13 SAN 0 HP 18

Damage Bonus: +1d6

Weapons: Short khopesh 90%, damage 1d8+db
Fist 65%, damage 1d3+db
Improvised Weapon** 75%, damage 1d4+db
Large Shield 70%, damage 1d4+db

** Improvised weapon is anything the gladiator might pick up and use in the heat of battle that is not his weapon of choice. This is to represent the men's

Armor: 2 points of gladiator armor and 1 point of scales

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 65%, First Aid 55%, Jump 35%, Listen*** 25%, Sneak 55%, Speak Greek 35%, Speak Latin 40%, Speak Serpent men 15%, Spot Hidden*** 45%, Tactics 75%

*** Includes a penalty for the helmet worn.

Spells Known: Gates of Valusia

SPARTACUS'S MEN

Not quite as intelligent to start with, these men devolved much quicker. At the start of the adventure, they can barely talk, instead grunting like Neanderthals. Their increased bulk makes them particularly dangerous. They serve Spartacus without question.

Each gladiator has a different fighting style and is equipped as follows. A gladiator only has equipment that suits his fighting style and nothing else. Thus a dimachaerus does not have any weapon beyond his two short swords. The armor is a mixture of greaves, padded armor, leather straps and stacks with the scales the men have grown through use of the growth juice. The armor points include the men's scales.

1d6	Type	Equipment
1	Dimachaerus	2 short swords, 1 point of armor.
2	Hoplomachus (or Samnite)	Short sword, round shield, 3 points of armor.
3	Laquerarius	Lasso, spear, 1 point of armor.
4	Murmillio (or Secutor)	Short sword, large shield, 3 points of armor.

5	Retiarius	Net, trident, 1 point of armor.
6	Thracian	Buckler, khopesh, 3 points of armor.

FORMER GLADIATORS, Degenerated warriors

STR 20 CON 18 SIZ 15 INT 4 POW 2
DEX 14 APP 10 EDU 11 SAN 0 HP 18

Damage Bonus: +1d6

Weapons*: Fist 65%, damage 1d3+db
Kick 50%, damage 1d6+db
Improvised Weapon** 55%, damage 1d4+db
Lasso 65%, target is grappled
Net 65%, target is grappled
Short spear 85%, damage 1d6+db
Short sword 85%, damage 1d6+db
Trident 85%, damage 1d6+db
Shield 60%, damage 1d4+db

** Improvised weapon is anything the gladiator might pick up and use in the heat of battle that is not his weapon of choice. This is to represent the men's

Armor: see above

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 65%, First Aid 55%, Jump 35%, Listen*** 65%, Sneak 55%, Speak Greek 15%, Speak Latin 20%, Speak Serpent men 5%, Spot Hidden*** 65%

*** Any gladiator with more than 1 point of armor takes a -30% penalty to those skills (for the helmet).

Spells Known: Gates of Valusia

THE SLAVE ARMY

Made of captive from Spartacus's raids, then subjected to growth juice and a view of horrors that made them go mad, these recruits are of both gender and equally mad and dangerous. This "slave" army is composed of former free-men, slaves and anyone the serpent people did not chose to impersonate.

They are barely trained in the weapons they are equipped with. They retain more intelligence than the gladiators.

SLAVE ARMY SOLDIER, insane prisoner

STR 17 CON 15 SIZ 13 INT 4 POW 5
DEX 11 APP 10 EDU 8 SAN 0 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Fist 55%, damage 1d3+db
Kick 30%, damage 1d6+db
Short spear 20%, damage 1d6+db

Skills: Listen 35%, Obey the gladiators 99%, Speak Latin 30%, Speak Serpent men 5%, Scream Insanely 89%, Spot Hidden 35%

CHAPTER 7: THROUGH THE GATE

The time gate emits a dull green light, bright enough to betray its presence. It has a strange rippling effect as though one was looking into a pond or a pool of water.

Through the gate is a city of ancient basaltic stones covered with moss and lichen. Anyone looking at the city has the impression that it is sinking under the weight of the vegetation that covers it.

A successful Spot Hidden check reveals humans. Men, women and children are tied to strong wooden posts the plaza beyond. Some move groggily as though drugged or asleep. Many are completely still.

A few people go about their business dressed in strange, long robes (those are actually serpent people who have used the Consume Likeness spell). Serpent-headed men also go about the streets, mingling with humans and talking with them. The scene costs 1/1d6 sanity points to watch because of the alien nature of the vision.

THROUGH THE GATE

The PCs can go through the gate if they wish. Crossing costs 1 magic point and 1 sanity point. The PCs can cross to and fro any number of times, but each time, he must pay the cost above.

On the other side, the weather is tropical-ly warm (about 120F (50C)) and the humidity is crushing (100%). Though there is no way for the PCs to know, the atmosphere at this time is thinner thus harder to breathe for extended periods. The air smells strongly earth and animal.

After 5 minutes, every PC must test his CON against a 5. This roll increases by 1 every five minutes the PCs do not simply sit and rest, due to fatigue – so after 10 minutes the PCs must roll CON vs. 6, vs. 7 after 15 minutes, etc. In combat, a PC may only fight for a number of rounds equal to his CON. After that, he must win against a 5. The roll increases by one every round. A PC who fails must spend three minutes resting during which he or she is at -30% to all physical skills.

As long as the PCs do not draw attention to themselves, nothing happens. Because of the large number of Consume Likeness spells used, most serpent people think nothing of a few humans walking around speaking Latin, since they assume they are other serpent people.

If the PCs draw attention to themselves such as freeing prisoners, taking prisoners through the gate, attacking a serpent person or whatever the Keeper thinks attracts attention. When this happens, proceed to Drawing attention, below.

The serpent people consider the tied prisoners as a dog in a neighbor's yard. They bark, moan, beg or scratch on the fence, but they are just minor annoyances.

Exploring the city

Long exploration is effectively impossible due to the atmosphere here (see above). However, the PCs should be able to discover a few things about the serpent people. There seem to be two distinct groups, who do not mingle with each other too much. The stone used to make the statues is similar to soap stone but feels slimy to the touch.

The first group worships a large serpent or crocodile headed creature. A successful Occult check identifies him as an aspect of the Egyptian god Sobek while a successful Cthulhu Mythos identifies him as a very archaic version of Yig. This check also tells the PCs that Yig is known to have cursed the serpent people in the past with a powerful curse because they

turned away from his worship. If the PCs have some way of contacting Yig (either Yig or the children of Yig), the chance of success is automatic, without chance of failure. Upon appearing Yig or his Children go on a rampage, attacking the serpent people from the other side of town (not the PCs). Summoning Yig draws attention (see Drawing attention, below).

The second deity looks like a fat and bloated humanoid creature with a lion's mane, large ears and a dull, lazy smile. A successful Occult check identifies this as a representation of the Egyptian god Bes, but from a special cult from high up the Nile while a successful Cthulhu Mythos identifies Tsathoggua. Its followers are fewer and seem less intelligent. They spend their time in orgies with large snakes and do very little. Few of the Tsathoggua worshippers have taken human form.

For either of the statues, a successful Other Kingdom (Far upper Egypt/Kush/Ethiopia) check tells the PCs that those statues resemble those of the depth of Africa, but that they seem older and more primitive. Seeing both statues cost each PC 1/1d4 Sanity points.

If the Keeper wishes, some horrible ceremony could take place as the PCs watch, costing them even more sanity.

Talking to the prisoners

Some of the prisoners are conscious but all of them are exhausted. All of them beg for mercy, assuming the PCs are serpent people. Once calmed, the PCs can get information from the prisoners.

They were captured by the gladiators.

- ☛ The leader is called Spartacus, like the slave of old. He has big goons with him dressed as gladiators. They opened the magical gates.
- ☛ Spartacus works closely with an Egyptian wizard living in a house nearby (they show the PCs to Aspiamus' laboratory).

- ☛ The gladiators keep talking about “getting revenge on Crassus or Pompey” and “destroying the Republic”.
- ☛ One of the now-dead prisoners told them that the emperor would send troops to stop them. They laughed and replied that Rome was a republic.
- ☛ The gladiators sometimes use prisoners to practice fighting, a spectacle which always ended with the death of the prisoner.
- ☛ The serpent people love games and often hold games between gladiators and “creatures of the gods.” The creatures can be whatever Mythos creature you desire.
- ☛ The gladiators spend most of their time grunting and wrestling each other. Only Spartacus refrains from doing so.
- ☛ The serpent people turn into people they eat. Some are learning how to speak Latin and have been conversing with prisoners to perfect their mastery of the language.
- ☛ All of the freed humans are serpent people.
- ☛ The gate remains open for one night and disappears at sunrise (time passes the same here as it does in Rome). The gladiators go through the gate and return with new prisoners.
- ☛ The serpent people are divided in two groups. One worship some crocodile-thing and the others a fat dwarf-thing. Both groups take prisoners and sacrifice them to their vile and uncaring deities.
- ☛ With every arrival of prisoners, a few are taken away by Aspiamus. Usually those who seem to be larger and bulkier. None were ever seen again.
- ☛ (On the third night only) Some of the people that were taken away returned and

joined Spartacus and his gladiators. They looked bigger, wilder and wielded spear-like weapons.

- ☛ The prisoners can give the PCs idea of the number of gladiators and slave-soldiers.
- ☛ All beg to be freed and returned home.

FREEING THE PRISONERS

Freeing the prisoners does not draw attention as long as they do not free more than one or two at a time. Freeing a large number of prisoners (more than one per PC) draws attention, see Drawing attention, below.

What the PCs do with that prisoner is up to them. None can fight. All are exhausted from the climate and lack of food. Left to their own devices, a prisoner makes a run for the portal, if it is open. If more than one prisoner runs through the gate, this attracts the attention of the serpent people.

The PCs may escort up to one prisoner per PC through the gate without issue. Beyond that the serpent people notice, drawing attention.

Examining the bodies

The dead bodies are covered with symbols. There are men and women of every nationality as would normally be found near Herculaneum.

- ☛ Anyone with the Consume Likeness spell immediately recognizes the symbols as that spell.
- ☛ A successful Medicine or Natural World check reveals that the bodies were all poisoned injected by long and very thin instruments (a viper's bite).
- ☛ A successful Occult confirms that those symbols are arcane in nature. The PC also has a feeling that they are from an archaic or primitive form of magic, as found in the tribal areas of Africa or Germania.

- ☛ A successful Cthulhu Mythos recognizes the runes carved on some of the bodies as symbols for a magical spell. The body parts have been neatly cut off the body, preserving the skin as intact as possible.

If the PCs spend any time near the bodies, one of the serpent people approaches one of the victims, neatly cuts part of the body with a very sharp knife then intones arcane words. The serpent person does nothing unless the PCs are so careless as to go and talk to him. Disturbing the ritual draws attention.

Talking to the Serpent people

Should a PC be so bold as to try and talk to a "freed" human or a serpent person, it initially assumes the PC(s) are serpent people trying to practice their Latin. The serpent people tells the where to find Ssssreshhtkess and go on their business. Insisting on talking draws attention.

FINDING ASPIANUS

Aspianus-Ssssreshhtkess is in small hut near the gate. He only leaves when Spartacus and his men are about to open the gate and when they return with prisoners. He remains in his human form at all times. Aspianus speaks good Latin and understands the world (of 70BC).

Any PC who speaks to him draws attention. However, if the PCs fight with him in his house behind closed doors, they can avoid drawing attention.

Ssssreshhtkess is creating additional growth juice with the help of other serpent people. Bulkier men and women (STR, CON or SIZ 12+) are chained to the walls of his house and force-fed with growth juice. These people are now completely insane and, if freed, attack whoever is near them.

If the PCs defeat him quickly, they can find Aspianus' notes on augury and magic. This book, calls Aspianus' Notes appears in Appendix 1: New Books, Items and Spells.

After fighting with Aspianus, the PCs draw attention shortly thereafter as a serpent people realizes what happens.

The PCs do not go through the gate

Allow the PCs to watch the gate for a while (at least a few minutes) before anything happens beyond. If the PCs hide and observe the gate, nothing happens.

However after a moment, someone beyond notices them. That person walks forward, closer to the gate and waves the PCs to come through.

If the PCs go through the gate, the serpent person greets the PC on the other side with a “You should that know Ssssreshhtkess does not want us to go through there.” The person then leaves. Proceed to Through the gate, above.

If the PCs stay on their side of the gate and do not come through the serpent people calls the others come out and try to drag the PCs through the gates. Proceed to Drawing attention, but this time, Ssssreshhtkess arrives once the PCs have defeated one serpent person per PC.

SERPENT PEOPLE

The serpent people presented here are all slightly degenerate.

SERPENT PEOPLE, slightly degenerated

	1	2	3	4	5	6
STR	11	13	9	10	14	6
CON	13	9	10	8	12	14
SIZ	8	11	10	11	13	13
INT	18	14	13	17	16	17
POW	10	11	10	12	13	16
DEX	13	14	12	15	11	13
HP	11	10	10	9	13	14
DB	-	-	-	-	+1d4	-

Weapons: Bite 35%, damage 1d8+poison (POT = CON)
Dagger, 25%, damage 1d4+db (during invasion only)

Armor: 1 point of scales

Sanity Loss: 0/1d6 to see a serpent person

DRAWING ATTENTION

Whatever the cause, the PCs attracted the attention of the serpent people. A group of them approach and begin speaking in the tongue of the serpent people. Unless the PCs can quickly reply in their tongue with a valid explanation (and backing it with a successful Fast Talk check), the serpent people attack en masse. Many are initially in human form, but revert to their original form after taking damage. For a number of serpent people statistics, see the nearby box entitled Serpent People.

Starting with 1d6 and add one or two serpent person every round. Ssssreshhtkess arrives once the PCs have defeated one serpent people for every two PCs. At that point no more Serpent People join the battle. Once Ssssreshhtkess arrives, he uses his spells to attempt to destroy the most powerful PC.

If the PCs kill him, the other serpent people begin to fight amongst themselves with the Yig-worshippers and the Tsathoggua-worshippers coming to blows. This is the PCs’ opportunity to flee.

CHAPTER 8: INVASION

If Spartacus and Ssssreshhtkess are defeated, the wedding is not interrupted, proceed to Chapter 9: The Wedding.

If the PCs fail to stop Ssssreshhtkess and his serpent people allies, he launches an invasion from across time. On the day of the wedding (see for details Chapter 9: The Wedding), things go normally until nightfall. At that point Ssssreshhtkess and his army fall upon the revelers.

THE INVASION

There are three slave-soldiers (see Chapter 6: Spartacus) and two serpent people in human guise (see Chapter 7: Through the gate) for each PC. There are more slave-soldiers and serpent people, but those take on the

NPCs presents. If Spartacus and his men have not been defeated, they are present as well.

Alternatively, if the PCs did not defeat Spartacus, he shows up with the remains of his gladiators.

Running the battle

Do not have all of those forces come it at the same time, they arrive gradually, but in quick succession. The battle grows in intensity as more enemies enter the villa. If the PCs wish to know how things are going, they must succeed at a Tactics checks. The battle mirrors how the PCs are faring. Thus if the PCs are having a rough time, the security personnel and the retired soldiers are getting pushed back. There is no definite system for this, the Keeper should make this into something epic.

To end up here, the PCs took some bad decision (or they chickened out during the adventure). Initially, the PCs do not have their weapons (other than daggers), shields or armor, though they should be able to obtain shields and other weapons quickly, from the decorations and fallen soldiers.

Once the PCs have defeated “their share” of the army, the prefect shows up with the militia and comes in as a savior. Do not save the PCs with Fabius Scipio, they must earn this rescue.

Fleeing

It is possible that the PCs flee and abandon their friends and allies. This reflects very poorly on male PCs in Rome where courage and honor are virtues. Fleeing female PCs are not affected by this stigma.

CHAPTER 9: THE WEDDING

The wedding of Agrippa and Clodia Poppia is a public affair. Both Cassius Varro and Clodius Popus use the wedding to further their influence and to display their status and wealth. A

well-known priestess of Juno came from Rome to celebrate the wedding.

The ceremony complete, the real party begins. Food and drink are served until morning and the entertainment is of the highest quality. In the morning, everyone sleeps off the orgy, and people begin to return home shortly thereafter.

There are over five hundred guests, a hundred entertainers (dancers, jugglers, musicians, philosophers and tumblers) and a horde of servants offering wines, food and catering to the guests’ “other” needs and wants.

CONCLUSION

If, at the end of the adventure, Ssssreshhtkess and Spartacus are dead, the PCs have gathered a great success.

If one of the villains is still out there, they have accomplished a partial success. Both vil-

SERPENT PEOPLE

The serpent people presented here are all slightly degenerate.

SERPENT PEOPLE, slightly degenerated

	1	2	3	4	5	6
STR	11	13	9	10	14	6
CON	13	9	10	8	12	14
SIZ	8	11	10	11	13	13
INT	18	14	13	17	16	17
POW	10	11	10	12	13	16
DEX	13	14	12	15	11	13
HP	11	10	10	9	13	14
DB	-	-	-	-	+1d4	-

Weapons: Bite 35%, damage 1d8+poison (POT = CON)

Dagger, 25%, damage 1d4+db (during invasion only)

Armor: 1 point of scales

Sanity Loss: 0/1d6 to see a serpent person

lains will begin to hunt down the PCs and try to get revenge upon them.

If the PCs killed neither villain, the adventure is failure. What happens to them next is entirely up to the Keeper.

Male PCs who fled during Chapter 8: Invasion is branded a coward. This stigma remains with the PCs for a long time.

PUBLIA VARIANA'S FATE

The fate of Publia Variana is left to the PCs. As long as she is given a good home, the PCs earn her friendship and gratitude. Adventuring with the PCs is not considered as "good home". Later in life, she may opt for that way of life and serve as a replacement character.

Adoption: This was quite popular in imperial times. A PC (ideally one who is married) could adopt her as his daughter.

- ☛ Have her live with Cassius Varro: Varro is not opposed to this idea, and she would make a friend for Varro Minor.
- ☛ Marriage: One PC could wish to marry her. She is too young (Roman law allows marriage starting at 12 for girls and 14 for boys, but marriage is usually much later for both, with late teens/ early twenties being the norm).
- ☛ Relatives: The PCs can send her to a relative. This takes a little time, but the PCs can find an uncle who would take her in.
- ☛ Slavery: This includes straight slavery or selling her to a brothel or any place where a young girl could not grow up to become a "proper" young woman. Doing so costs the PCs some Sanity points.

Fabius Scipio

The prefect keeps his word and offers the PCs any property not claimed by descendants of the murdered victims in a month (the other homes revert to the state and will be sold again). If the

PCs are not present, Cassius Varro claims and administers the estates for them.

Only Publius Varus's house is claimed by his daughter, provided she is still in the area, Scipio offers the Predictions of the Delphic Oracle to the PCs. This book makes him "uneasy" so he prefers to get rid of it.

Sanity gains

If the adventure ends up being a partial success, half any Sanity rewards.

- ☛ Finding Publia Variana a good home: 1d3
- ☛ Selling Publia Variana into slavery: 1d3 loss
- ☛ Paulus survives and befriended: 1d2
- ☛ Getting an advantageous marriage: 1d2
- ☛ Per freed prisoner: 1 (up to 5)
- ☛ Stopping Spartacus: 1d4
- ☛ Stopping Ssssreshhtkess: 1d4

APPENDIX 1: NEW BOOKS, ITEMS AND SPELLS

New Books: Mythos Tomes

Aspianus' Notes – In Latin, around 75-71BC, Written by Aspianus the Augur. This papyrus details a series of prophetic rites by Aspianus during the years 75-71BC and presents an extended system for divination with additional theories and possible interpretations of signs and omen. The presence of some divine curse upon the city of Athens is mentioned and expanded upon by a series of divination. Sanity loss 1/1d4; Cthulhu Mythos +1%, Empire +1%, Science (Augury) +2%; average 1 weeks to study and comprehend. Spells: Augury, Gates of Valusia

New Items

Growth Juice: This ancient version of the growth serum found in Day of the Beast and Keeper Companion II, is ingested.

The juice is derived from the blood of serpent men. The resulting juice is not as potent as the serum developed from un-degenerated blood. The juice is still potent and induces growth and partial mutation in humans.

Ingested in large doses, the drinker increases the subjects CON, SIZ and STR by 1d4 and increases the natural aggressiveness of the recipient. The side effect costs 1/1d4 Sanity point loss and the APP, INT and POW suffer a permanent 1d6 loss. Repeated use of the drug costs cost additional sanity, but the effects are not cumulative. If used often and in large quantities, human begin to form scales that serve as armor.

New Spells

Gates of Valusia: This spell opens a gate to the Serpent People kingdom of Valusia, in the Permian era (about 250 million years ago). The exact time varies from person to person, but is always the same for a given caster. The gate opens to one of the Serpent Peoples' laboratory in their first empire of Valusia. There is a cost of 7 Magic Points per casting and a permanent POW point.

Gates opened with this spell are identical to a Create Time Gate spell.

PLAYER HANDOUT 1: THE UNDEFEATED SPARTAN

Next to this poem the words "Beware the man from the past" was written in clear letters. The author of these words is unknown.

The One Who is of Sparta
will rise again

Destiny unfinished Hatred
unquenched Blood un-
avenged

Twice will he will lay waste
to Campania

Twice will he return

The snake-Masked-Man
seeks Faded valusia

The eyes of Kronos search
for the man from the past

URSINUS' ANIMAL SHOW

BY H. JESSEMAN

INTRODUCTION

It is April 68AD and the Roman province of Britannia is recovering well from the damage caused by the rebellion of Boudica despite the storms which have ravaged the south of the province over the last few months. Londinium has undergone much rebuilding after the damage caused by the Boudica. With work & expansion continuing, Londinium is becoming the hub of Roman administration and commerce. The Roman Procurator (tax collector) is now based in the city further increasing its importance.

KEEPER'S INFORMATION

There is a Republican plot afoot. Following the failure of the Pisonian Conspiracy to overthrow Nero and restore the Republic, the Emperor is becoming increasingly unpopular. There are a number of plots brewing to overthrow Nero. In Britain a group of officers in the IX Legion are planning on sending the Emperor Nero a present of two nightmarish beasts, captured from the druids, in the hope that the Emperor will be butchered by them and with no obvious heir, the Legion will march to Rome, joining other discontented soldiers and politicians on route. Once there, they plan for the Republic to be restored like a phoenix rising from the ashes of the death throes of Nero's empire.

THE GAMES

Ursinus, a wealthy aspiring politician and the patron of the PCs, is sponsoring the animal fights at the arena, as part of the Ludi Cereales celebrations in April. Most notably he has entered a noted venatore (a gladiator who specialises in animal fights) he backs, to fight against a specially imported bear from Caledonia.

Little is known of the land of Caledonia except that it is a wild, inhospitable mist shrouded land, filled with blood thirsty savages and ferocious beasts. Therefore the news that the main event at the games will be a fight between a much admired venatore and a terrible Caledonian bear has got the city very excited. So much so that when the crate containing the bear arrived at the carrier's depot, a mob of eager sports fans converged there and caused much commotion in their eagerness to see the monstrous bear.

The main consequence of this over-exuberance was that a number of consignment dockets got knocked off a number of neighbouring crates. The haulier's illiterate slave later re-attached the dockets and seals as best he could. Unfortunately some of the crates were mis-addressed, including the bear destined for the arena.

The second consequence was that amongst the gambling fraternity the bear became such a firm favourite and the venatore became regarded as no hoper that a criminal fraternity decided to bribe the bestiarii (keepers) at the arena, to tranquilise the bear and give the venatore an unfair advantage.

The Arena

The PCs are invited by their patron, Servius Ulpinus Ursinus to the arena to support his bid to be elected as an aedile in the Londinium curia (council) and to share his largesse.

Their patron is a wealthy Roman merchant who made a fortune from the slave trade following the native revolt.

Ursinus is in a buoyant mood and his slaves have brought plenty of refreshments along to make the day a most enjoyable one.

The arena is a wooden structure, which has been here since the Iceni uprising and their patron whispers to them that the first building he'll commission when he's elected is a new arena.

The PCs enjoy good views of various events: music, dancing troupes, wolves being hunted, a couple of bull fights (one where the venatore was gored) and there is even a lion on show, although he does look rather mangy. But all of these displays are merely the warm up to the eagerly awaited bout between the bear and Ibor, the venatore.

The PCs will have an opportunity to place wagers on any events they care to make. However following the problems at the haulier's depot nobody is allowed into the animal pens to see the bear.

As the avid audience watch, Ibor enters the arena and to the cheers of the crowd he poses and practises a few spear thrusts. A small portion of the crowd starts chanting that the bear is going to eat his liver. Then everybody falls silent as the arena slaves slowly crank up the gate to the animal pens. In the silence the PCs can hear the growling and panting of some large creature as it pads up the ramp.

The first sign that something is amiss is when Ibor screams in terror. However he gamely recovers and sets his spear as a nightmare erupts from the tunnel and barrels towards him.

The crowd are stunned as the awful creature tears the unfortunate man apart and then starts on a couple of the bestiarii who had

foolishly rushed to the defence of the venatore and then the arena slaves who are desperately trying to force their way through a side gate.

Shaking blood from its maw, the creature then turns its baleful gaze on the audience. Seeing his dream of public office starting to slip from his grasp, Ursinus orders the PCs to kill the creature and save the rest of the crowd.

The seating is set seven feet above the arena floor, so the PCs shouldn't take any damage from jumping down unless they fumble.

A number of spears have been abandoned by the bestiarii in the arena. It is unlikely that the PCs would have taken any weapons to the games apart from daggers.

If the PCs do leap down to confront the beast, it will turn to face them but their display will encourage some of the braver members of the audience and after three rounds of combat D6 men will come to help the PCs.

Not much can be discovered from the body of the beast, although a Natural World roll will reveal that it certainly isn't the body of any known bear.

Someone from the audience will reveal that it doesn't look like the creature he saw at the depot the day before. If the man is spoken to quietly he'll reveal what happened at the depot and that he saw a great bear growling and slaving at them. It was certainly not this creature. The man has spent time serving as a huntsman for local nobles and has seen bears, boars & wolves in the wild.

Following their successful defeat of the beast, the PCs will find their patron staring ruefully at the corpse of his venatore. He will thank the PCs for their efforts but then ask them to do another job for him. He wants them to find out how such a thing could have happened and if possible bring someone to book for the debacle. Ursinus feels that if he can prosecute someone for the deaths, he might still manage to win the popular vote in the election.

THE PALUG EAGLE

It is a gigantic chimera of a monster. It looks mostly like a huge cat that has been crossed with a wild boar and an eagle.

STR 20 CON 16 SIZ 20 INT 5
POW 11 DEX 21 MOVE 15 HP 18

Damage Bonus +1D6

Armor: 3 points of fur & gristle

Weapons: Claw 65% damage 1D8 +db
Beak 40% damage 1D8

THE ANIMAL PEN

The PCs can either enter to the animal pens via the tunnel into the arena, via the bestiarii's gate behind some screens or by going all the way outside and in through the delivery gates.

The stench of a carnivore's den crossed with a midden wafts up from the cages as the PCs go in to the animal pens.

The holding cage at the back of the tunnel is covered with the body parts of one of the handlers. The gate to the cage is bolted from the bestiarii's room.

The room comprises of a large cage connected to the bottom of the ramp into which a travelling cage can be attached and the beast destined for the arena can be encouraged out and along the ramp. The rest of the room is filled with the paraphernalia of the bestiarii: whips, goads, spears, chains, leads, spears and protective clothing.

The remains of a keeper can easily be seen scattered around the inside of the pen. He has been torn apart by the creature. Why he was in the pen remains a mystery at this point because it certainly wouldn't have been a normal technique.

A travelling cage, tightly covered with a tarpaulin is attached to the holding pen. Only the tarpaulin at the gate to the cage has been undone and none of the other ties around the travelling cage have been disturbed. Clay seals have been attached to each side and these are unbroken apart from the gate end. A spot hidden roll will reveal the broken remains of an-

other seal which has been crushed underfoot by the gate.

A Cthulhu mythos roll will reveal that the sign imprinted in the seals is an elder sign. An occult roll will merely reveal that it is a magical symbol.

Attached at the rear of the cage is a slate consignment chart, which tells that the "Bear" has been shipped from Eburacum to Londinium and the depot for onward delivery to the arena. A spot hidden roll will reveal that this slate is loose and has been dis-attached at some point on the cage's journey.

Another spot hidden roll will allow the PCs to unearth from the cage a rather fine gilded sandal.

Other rolls will reveal a wooden spoon dropped in the pen, which still bears a residue of a white powder. More of the powder is scattered around the floor.

Animal training or Potions rolls will be necessary to identify the powder as an animal tranquiliser.

Attached to the keeper's torn belt is a bulging purse, stuffed with 50 sesterces, a fortune for such a slave.

Finally the PCs can discover the keeper's assistant, Lewy who is cowering in a chest.

Both the keeper, Argo and Lewy are slaves belonging to the arena.

Lewy is in shock and the PCs need to handle him correctly to calm him down. He can tell the PCs that Agro, his boss tried to get the bear out by poking it out with a goad to no avail but then went into the pen in order to try and drag it out. Then the horrible monster had appeared and torn Argo apart.

The assistant is leaving some important information out. The creature only killed Argo when he tried to force the tranquiliser down it's throat. Lewy's purse also contains 10 sesterces and if mentioned he'll say he got it from a grateful venatore for preparing an auroch well. Lewy does not lie well.

Lewy is not happy to give out the details of the criminal gang and only under intense pressure or actual torture will he reveal their

details. If the PCs are reticent about undertaking torture, the arena manager will countenance the act if the PCs provide evidence of the slave's guilt.

The rest of the animal pens seem well run and while the animals are not treated well, there is no obvious cruelty. Though there is a big cage of foxes, which will be set alight later in the celebrations.

THE ARENA STAFF

Oppius Bonus, the arena manager is dismayed by the events, not through any sadness at the loss of a promising young venatore but through the ignominy of having to have members of the audience leap in to the rescue.

He doesn't know how the creature got into the cage and he doesn't know where it came from, all of those details are handled by the beast master. He'll summon a slave to take them and dismisses them quickly.

The slave leads them to a shed behind the arena where the creature has been taken. The Beast Master is examining the teeth and claws of the monster and seems rather excited, he's exclaiming with delight under his breath. By the look of him Herius, the Beast Master has been bitten or scratched by just about everything you are likely to see in the arena.

As the PCs enter he'll use them as a ready audience to enthuse about the terrible qualities of the monster and says that he must try to get another one. He considers that it can be pitted against a team of venatores and it'll be quite a spectacle. He goes on to expound his dream of taking some to Rome itself.

The Beast Master will be initially suspicious of any requests for information as to the origin of the beast. He doesn't want anyone else stealing a march on his star attraction. However if the PCs can ease his suspicions, Herius will reveal that the "bear" came from his contact in Eburacum. The contact provides all of his bears since the remaining bears in the south of the province are too small to put into the arena. The contact has always provided

good quality specimens but this time he has outdone himself. The Beast Master had only asked for a normal Caledonian bear.

The boars and the wolves he gets from the forests around Londinium but especially the forests past Pontes.

The Beast Master starts to skin the creature before the PCs even leave. He's going to preserve as much as he can of the wonderful animal.

THE DEPOT

The depot handles military supplies and imperial goods mostly but operates a lucrative sideline in private commissions. The depot is down by the docks and porters & carts are bustling in and out with a multitude of goods.

The operator is Titus Lampronius and he and his clerks are busy men overseeing the army's supply chain. The PCs will have to be very persuasive to get Lampronius to take the time to see them, although dropping Ursinus' name will help.

Once he is focussed on the subject however his anger will erupt. The mob caused untold delay and muddle in the smooth operation of the depot and the clerks are still sorting out some of the mess. Lampronius will explain that the mob surged in through the gates while they were taking delivery of a consignment of olives and couldn't be shifted until they'd all had a look at the blasted bear. Lampronius had to call out a squad of soldiers from the fort in order to finally clear them out.

He can introduce them to a depot slave by the name of Molaise, he's an old stooped man but still burly from a life time of hauling cargo.

Molaise can take the PCs to where the bear's cage was, the space is now filled with a score of amphora filled with garum. Molaise can explain that there were a few similar sized cages and other crates around and that all of the cages were tightly covered with tarpaulins and sealed. The mob broke all of the seals off the bear's cage and pulled the tarpau-

lin off. When they were gone Molaise replaced the tarpaulin as best he could and put the consignment docket back on. If he is pressed Molaise will reveal that a number of the slates from the surrounding crates and cages were also knocked off but since he has an eye for these things they all went back onto their correct cage.

Molaise will confirm that the animal was most definitely a bear and the biggest bear he's ever seen in his life. He has however never been out into the countryside in his life.

When the PCs return to the office they will find a well dressed lady haranguing Lampronius, while her slaves behind her have carried in a large crate. Some judicious eavesdropping (Listen rolls) will reveal that the depot was supposed to deliver her best dinner service not a hundred pairs of legionnaire's boots. Justia Remusa, the lady makes Lampronius' life a misery for a full thirty minutes and she will not be interrupted. Lampronius grovels and fawns and promises to find her dinner service and delivery it to her personally.

Lampronius will then turn the lash on his clerks to find out which consignment the lady's goods have got mixed up with. It soon transpires that the dinner service was near to the bear's cage when the mob broke in. The PCs can assist the clerks with successful Library Use rolls, if they wish to discover which other crates and cages were nearby (with so much uproar neither Lampronius or his clerks will object). The paperwork reveals the following crates:

- ☛ Two bears in individual cages for the Emperor Nero's personal menagerie.
- ☛ One bear for the Londinium arena.
- ☛ Five crates of army boots for the fort.
- ☛ Three crates of the personal affects of Justia Remusa

- ☛ One crate of hunting dogs for Augustus Herius, a buyer in Gesoriacum (Boulogne)
- ☛ Two crates of thick cloaks for a buyer in Gesoriacum.

Further Library Use rolls will reveal that the Emperor's bears, the dogs and the cloaks have been delivered to The Triton, a merchant ship, yesterday evening for shipment across the Oceanus Britannicus.

Lampronius will quickly send a couple of slaves to the fort in the hope that if the dinner service did go there and that the soldiers haven't started using it as target practise.

The Quay

Enquiries at the quay among the sailors, porters and idlers will reveal that The Triton left for Gesoriacum on the morning tide. Some of the porters can cheerfully tell the PCs that one of the animals in a covered cage was roaring so loudly that it was sure to wake Neptune and raise a storm, so they don't hold out much hope of the ship reaching the other side of the channel.

With a bit of hunting around, the PCs will be able to discover a merchant ship due to sail on the evening tide or another one in the morning. Both are willing, with some haggling, to take passengers. With a favourable wind, the trip over the channel is likely to take a day and a half and cost about forty sesterces.

Ursinus will pay for their passage and will grant them a bag of coins to cover their expenses.

There is also an imperial post galley from the Classis Britannica (British fleet), leaving in the evening to carry dispatches and it will be considerably quicker than a merchant vessel, as long as there isn't a storm. However the PCs will need official permission to travel on the ship and the only ones in Londinium with sufficient clout to get them on board the ship are the Procurator or the commander of the fort.

The Procurator's house is up near to the fort, although he is apparently having a much bigger villa built near to where the new Forum is being laid out.

A Civics roll will remind the PCs that unless their social status is of sufficiently high standing that they won't even get an interview, let alone a travel permit. They'll also have to present a good argument with supporting evidence.

The Procurator is Gaius Julius Alpinus Classicianus, a small man for such a big name, but an accountant through and through and determined to scrape as much tax out of Britannia as possible. Though everybody says he's a slightly nicer man than Catus, the procurator at the time of the Boudican revolt. He's a busy man and his wife is hosting a dinner party this evening so he won't have long to be convinced. Patience is not one of his qualities.

Divination

If the PCs decide to consult an augury or conduct it themselves, successful results will see "blood spilt on a purple toga". Astute PCs should be able to realise that the Emperor wears purple and that they are dealing with a threat to the Emperor himself.

The obvious place to commission an augury would be the Temple to Jupiter, although other temples or soothsayers can be found, with a bit of local knowledge, depending on the PCs tastes. A divination at the Temple of Jupiter will cost about ten sesterces plus an appropriate animal as a sacrifice. A divination will be cheaper elsewhere but it will be less of a spectacle.

Criminal Gang

The gang are simply known as The Firmus and their headquarters is in a wineshop upstream of the bridge, near to the wharfs and behind the public baths. From here they run all sorts of nefarious activities, of which gambling is but one.

The gang's boss is on the premises, along with D6 of his henchmen. They will eagerly meet violence with violence and all of them are well armed with knives, short swords, cudgels and brass knuckles.

If they decide not to fight, the PCs will have to do a lot of Fast talking in order to see the boss, Silo, and even faster talking to not end up floating face down out to sea. Like most of the gang, Silo is from Gaul and he's a pug-nosed, ugly looking fellow who has probably committed every sin under the sun.

The gang will not want to give away any of their secrets and hold no loyalty to the Emperor or even the Empire, only their pockets.

It is extremely unlikely that the PCs or their patron will be able to organise a sufficiently large enough gang of their own to take on the crooks in such a short timescale.

If he is offered a large enough inducement, Silo will happily confess to arranging for the animal keepers to tranquilise the bear. After the odds started to go through the roof the gang had to do something to safeguard their money. Silo will know nothing about a monster.

RESEARCH

The city & province records are going to be stored in the Basilica. However since they've only just started the foundations of the Basilica and forum, the records are currently held in a store room at the Procurator's villa. The PCs will need the Procurator's or his personal secretary's permission to read through these records. They will not be allowed access to any financial records.

Some hard digging through these scrolls will be needed to uncover a useful report of the Mons campaign, which mentions a monster tamed by the druids, which slew many soldiers before it was despatched. The scroll is damaged from this point onwards. Less usefully the only description offered says that it was somewhat like a bear and sadly no tips on an easy way to kill the monster are offered. The

PCs can also find that a vexilation (detachment) from the IX Hispana legion fought in the north Wales campaign, although this fact should only be revealed after they have established a link to the IX Hispana.

A description of the monster and its name can be gleaned through talking to a Bard, although since most bards love the sound of their own voice, the PCs will end up being talked at by a bard. There are a number of bards in the city of differing quality. Some have taken to the new Roman ways with aplomb and are likely to remember few if any of the old songs. They will have a large repertoire of Roman songs & legends and can recount the legends of the manticore, griffin, hippogriff, minotaur and more. Descriptions can be found in the Cthulhu Invictus book. However in some of the more salubrious pubs, where the Britons or Gauls drink beer, the PCs are more likely to find a traditional bard and can request a song featuring the Palug Cat.

From the song, the PCs can glean the following: the Cath Palug was a monstrous clawing cat from the Isle of Mons. It killed and ate nine score warriors from the finest tribes of Britain. The cat was born to the terrible sow, Hen Wen when her owner had to chase her across the whole of Britain. Disgusted by her offspring, Col lap Collfrewy, the owner threw the kittens into the sea. The cat and its siblings, a wolf and an eagle swam ashore to Mons, where they were adopted by Palug's sons and raised to cause mayhem, though the cat was always the worst among them. A great warrior and druid, Cei is said to have fought the beast for nine days and nine nights before casting it down and freeing the island from the oppression of the monsters.

If the PCs seek to question members of the city's garrison, they should roll on Luck to see if any of the Londinium garrison fought at Mons and saw what the IX Hispana caught.

They'll have to get Cluntius Naso, the soldier drunk in order to tease the information out. Although if any of the PCs are ex-military

they should have an easier time in coaxing the information out.

Cluntius can spill the following tale out to the PCs. His auxiliary unit was attached to the XIV Gemina legion and together with a vexilation from IX they were tasked with holding a cordon to the south of the Menai Straits, to sweep up any escaping druids or Britons from the main assault on Mons. His unit was soon engaged with boatloads of fleeing warriors leaving the IX relatively unengaged until a few boats tried to slip around the flank. Cluntius was sent by his centurion to warn Herius, the centurion of the IX. Cluntius then saw the soldiers attack the boats as they landed but instead of a dispirited beaten foe they were attacked by three frightful nightmarish creatures and a horde of fanatic druids. Herius luckily was made of stern stuff and held his men together and they managed to trap the beasts in nets. The druids were mostly slaughtered and the rest together with the monsters were dragged away. Cluntius never saw them again.

Voyage

Sailors and travellers regularly sacrifice to the gods before a voyage. If the PCs decide to sacrifice to Neptune before they go, this appeasement will grant them a reasonable voyage. However if the PCs do not offer a sacrifice, the party should roll on the lowest Luck of the PCs to see if they encounter a storm.

The ship will use the ebbing tide to take the ship down the river and out into the Oceanus Britannicus. The ship will keep as close to the coast as possible, then dash across the channel near to Dubris (Dover).

PCs who haven't been on the sea before need to check to see if they suffer from sea sickness – Con * 5 or they are incapacitated for a few hours even when ashore.

In a storm, the sea sickness roll should be reduced to Con * 3

If the PCs are lucky a pod of dolphins will play with the boat, leaping in and out of the

bow wave. An augury roll will reveal that this is good luck.

If there is a storm, the captain of the imperial post galley has a pilot skill is 67 while the merchant captain has a skill of 55. A success means that the ship docks without much delay. With a failure, every five percentiles the roll is over the skill means that the ship is delayed an hour getting into port. A roll of 100 means that the ship is wrecked.

GESORIANUM - BOULOGNE

It's a busy port with lots of ships coming in regularly. Enquiries with the harbour master will tell the PCs when the ship arrived.

The PCs will then have to trace the route of the cages out of the port. There are two roads; the southerly Via Claudius and the south-easterly Via Nero.

Questioning the sailors or a Know roll will reveal that due to the unseasonably late storms, no ships are daring the long voyage south.

One rumour which will rapidly come to the attention of the PCs is the revolt of Vindex, the Governor of Gallia Lugdunensis in southern Gaul, over the Emperor's usurious tax policies.

The carts are heading south east and how far they get depends on how long the PCs took to get over the channel. The laden carts are pulled by mules and they can normally make about eighteen to twenty miles a day over the good roads of northern Gaul. However due to the revolt the carts are being pushed hard and are making about twenty five miles a day.

The carts' itinerary after leaving Gesorianum is to make for Taruenna (30 miles to the south-east), then to Nemetacum (35 miles to the south-east) and then Camaracum (25 miles to south-east) and then the long stretch to Noviodunum (60 miles due south). From here the carts will head east through the Germania provinces in an effort to outflank Vindex's revolt.

The drivers will try to stop at mansios each night if they are available, else they will commandeer a roadside village or farm.

The PCs can hire horses in Gesorianum or if they have a warrant from the Procurator they can requisition horses and have them replaced at Imperial wayside stations positioned regularly along the road or in the mansios.

On horseback the PCs can make up to 40 miles a day or if they push their horses to exhaustion and continually swap them they can make an average speed of 20mph. Of course the faster they go the more Riding rolls are required.

There is also the possibility of getting lost. They can make regular navigate rolls or hire a guide at the port.

Mansios are taverns for official use mostly, with stables, baths, dining hall and beds.

While cavalry regularly patrols the roads there are still opportunities for bandits to make a living. If the PCs flaunt their wealth in a mansio common room there is likely to be an ambush attempt at a suitable spot along the lonely road. A tree trunk will be placed across the road in a lonely spot and the bandits will attack when the PCs reach it. Undergrowth is cut well back from the roads, so alert PCs should be able to prepare for a fight.

The convoy consists of five wagons, two carrying animal cages and the others carrying official documents & goods and one carriage. There are two men per wagon and an additional five mounted guards. Afranius Trifer is the Imperial agent accompanying the wagons from Gesorianum, he travels in the carriage with his personal bodyguard slave.

Trifer is loyal to the Emperor despite Nero's foibles, but he is not given to flights of fancy. The PCs will have to give a good account of themselves to him before he'll even countenance taking the tarpaulins of the cages.

If it comes to a fight the wagon drivers will try to keep out of it unless they're attacked. They all have clubs and whips. The guards on the other hand are willing to get stuck in.

Guards

STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 10 INT 12 POW 2
DEX 12 HP 11 Damage bonus +0

Weapons: Short spear 40% long sword
45% medium shield 40% Ride
50%

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE BEAST?

The creature has been as good as gold for the whole trip apart from when it left Londinium, when it roared so loudly it made one of the sailor's ears bleed. So far food and water has just been shoved in through a flap at the back of each cage to the animals.

The PCs can tear off the tarp and kill it while it's still in the cage. They will be lucky to avoid breaking some of the seals though. Or release it to give it a fair chance. Or they can take it back to Londinium

Another sandal will be found in the monster's cage. Trifer can identify it as Nero's.

The Palug Wolf

This one is a cross between a huge cat, a wild boar and a wolf.

STR 25 CON 16 SIZ 22 INT 5 POW 11
DEX 22 MOVE 15 HP 19

Damage Bonus +2D6

Armor: 3 points of fur & gristle

Weapons: Claw 70% damage 1D8 +db

Beak 45% damage 1D8

The other cage contains a very a large bear.

Eburacum (York)

The transport docket for the monsters can be traced to the IX Hispania legion, based in Eburacum. The docket for the real bear can also be traced to a seedy address on the outskirts of the city, which is filled with cages of many types of animals.

All of the legions stationed in the Province are directly under the control of the Governor. So the PCs will need the written permis-

sion from the Governor in order to investigate a legion – Civics roll.

The Governor, Marco Trebellius Maximus, is currently in Lindum Colonia (Lincoln): He's an even busier man than the Procurator and the PCs will have to ease their way through several official layers to reach him with successful Civics rolls and suitable bribes. They will be granted five minutes in which they will have to present their evidence quickly and succinctly. If they state their argument well the Governor will provide authorisation to investigate the matter further. Else they will be shown out an awful lot quicker than they got in.

Lindum is 156 Roman miles from Londinium. Eburacum is a further 71 Roman miles north of Lindum. However the roads are of a good military standard and the PCs will be able to make good time along them. The PCs can also get a military itinerary to provide them with the route:

Vervlamium, Durocbrivus, Magiovinium, Bannaventa, Venonis, Ratae, Vernemetum, Margidunum, Crococalana, Lindum, Segelocum, Danum, Lagentium & Eburacum.

When the IX Hispana vexillation captured druids & their beasts at the battle of Mons, Herius turned his prisoners over to his tribune, Horatius Vitellius Publicus. Publicus then had the druids tortured & learnt to control the beasts. The legion's officers had and have strong republican feelings and sensing an opportunity they have been keeping the monsters in reserve for the right moment.

Publicus went back to Rome to a successful political career and now he has returned and is in charge of the legion as the legate.

Publicus will be happy to see the PCs; once they show the Governor's writ. Otherwise they won't even get through the main gate of the fortress. Publicus will be a charming and gracious host but will send a messenger to the tribune in charge of the Palug cat warning him of the investigation. Publicus will of course deny all knowledge of a plot against the Emperor and stress the legion's loyalty to Nero.

Publicus will bring the legion's quartermaster, Plinius and explain that a group of natives stole a batch of forms and dockets a couple of months ago. At the time the Romans laughed at the thought that the dumb Britons had stolen some worthless documents, but the PCs terrible discovery shows that it was part of a heinous plot all along. The quartermaster will back up Publicus.

Herius, the centurion, unfortunately died in a skirmish with the Brigante last year. Publicus will ask his clerks to try and trace the other soldiers who formed the vexilation. But after a long search the clerks will come up empty handed. Apparently many of the legion's records were destroyed during the Boudican rebellion.

The legate will keep the PCs in his office for as long as possible with refreshments and small talk once the official investigations are exhausted.

Meanwhile the tribune, Caius Fabius Glabrio and his men will be burning incriminating documents, sending the last Palug Cat away in a covered wagon and the druid will have his throat slit – unless the PCs stop him in time. Else there will be insufficient evidence to prosecute the tribune, let alone the legate.

The Palug Cat

The last monster is the biggest of all and is mostly cat, with giant sabre like teeth.

STR 28 CON 20 SIZ 25 INT 10 POW 13
DEX 26 MOVE 19 HP 22

Damage Bonus +2D6

Armor: 3 points of fur & gristle

Weapons: Claw 70% damage 1D10 +db

Bite 52% damage 1D10

Ripping 80% Damage 2D8 + db.

AFTERMATH

If he isn't mauled to death by the Palug Wolf, Nero will commit suicide in June after being abandoned by his Praetorian guards. So whilst it is likely that Fabius will manage to destroy

the evidence of his treason and stash the Cat in a remote fort, the legion will be in action in the brief civil war which follows Nero's death, fighting for Aulus Vitellius, who briefly becomes Emperor in April AD69. After the war, Rome ends up with a far stronger Emperor in Vespasian than it's had for a long time. But with a slight horrifying twist to events, the Republicans could easily come out on top.

SANITY AWARD

Preventing the delivery of the monsters to Nero – D6

For the destruction of each monster – D3

For apprehension of the plot ring-leaders.- D3

THE GODS HATE ME

BY SIMON YEE
Cthulhu Invictus Adventure

INTRODUCTION

There is a small cottage with a good patch of land far off in the countryside. An old man sits on the porch thinking about the problems he just can't seem to escape. The difficulty seems to be his ability to get along with other people. All he wants is to co-exist and live in peace with others. But people seem to find something new about him not to like. A black cloud of hate hangs over his head like big bad omen. "Maybe the Gods hate me?" He thinks to himself. Maybe they do, and then maybe they don't? What players will find from this alienated Roman citizen is beyond poor social skills or life choices, instead a secret universal truth that lies in the dark shadows of the land.

KEEPERS INFORMATION

Publius Niger recently moved from Asis to Epiru after retiring from his job as a city tax collector of Asis. The house and land that he purchased sits on top of an old barbaric temple site called Iksithl, where Hastur was worshiped before the time of Rome. Publius uncovered remnants of the temple when he was cultivating the land for his garden. The stone tiles on the ground had a wavy design that Publius found aesthetically pleasing. He carefully cleared the remnants from the dirt and planted his vegetable garden around the ancient tile tablets.

Unknown to Publius was the horrifying nature of the temple stones. The worshippers of the long forgotten temple (amphitheater) were actually successful in opening a gateway

to the Lake of Hali and walked through to the terror that lay beyond. The village and temple (amphitheater) fell into ruin when no one was left behind to take care of the structures. Romans repopulated the area after finding the place deserted. Soon after, there were periodic tales of people going missing in the misty fog that seems to always roll over the fields at night and rumors began of strange music that played at night. The previous owner of the property had murdered his family as well as a local musician who played the Kithara. It is believed the man thought his wife was being unfaithful with the musician and that he was not the actual father of his children.

Publius is not aware of the past history of his real estate or the significance of the ornamental stone tiles in his garden. He had moved to Epiru for retirement because, as a tax collector, he was so unpopular in Asis and he wanted to live the rest of his life where people did not hate him, or even better, did not know him at all. Within a year strange things started to happen. Strange music was being played late at night in the fog. One of his new neighbors began complaining that Publius was having loud music playing at night by women of ill repute. A neighbor blamed him for walking outside their home windows at night when the fog was thick and alluded that he had some perversion with stalking some of the women in the area. Before the investigators come into contact with Publius, the cursed owner finds his neighbor's baby goat slaughtered in his garden. He is afraid his neighbors will become more upset with him and make it im-

possible for him to live in Epiru. In reality, the goat is the prized pet of his neighbor's daughter, named Cassia, and was sacrificed by her to the voice beyond the Lake of Hali. Cassia had been having bizarre dreams of the fabled city of Carcosa and the cities of Alar where the King in Yellow rules. Drawn to the music in a dream-like state, she trespassed onto Publius' property with her goat. At the request of the spectral voice, she killed her goat and saw the manifestation of the Lake of Hali waters from the tile stones on the ground. She sat and talked with the mysterious voice but refused to jump into the water because she was afraid to leave her parents. Her plan is to get her parents to the ruins at night and have them jump in with her, or if that fails, she plans to have them jump after her into the waters of Hali manifestation. She trusts her parents will go after her if she jumps into the water.

PLAYERS INTRODUCTION

Investigators are approached by a new citizen of Epiru who lives at the outskirts of the city. His name is Publius Niger. You know he was originally from the city of Asis but moved here after he had retired from a government position. Other than that you do not know him very well. He asks the investigators for help in finding out the origins of strange music coming from his neighborhood. Publius claims that a strange music starts to play at night after the fog rolls in. He adds that his two neighbors have blamed him for the music and are upset with him. He doesn't want to be forced to move and likes the Epiru community. Publius was told by the priestess Accia at the Temple of Jupiter in Epiru, and Gnaeus, a local Roman centurion that the investigators were well-respected in the community and were open to helping citizens of Epiru. He would like the players to investigate the mysterious music and help him establish with his neighbors that he is not the source of the problem. He will pay the investigators in the form of favors or 40 Sesterces each but not both. His form of favors comes from contacts

he has in Asis that could help the characters with bypassing bureaucratic government procedures in future events, which could be advantages for players in later investigations.

Publius suggests the players meet at his home before sundown with whatever they feel will help with the investigation. He will encourage characters to talk with his two neighbors Sextus Fannius Afer, a retired statesman, and Cassius Libo, middle-man merchant. Publius hopes that investigators will talk with them and put their complaints to rest. If investigators ask to see his house, then Publius will oblige and show his house and garden, but will otherwise expect to see players before sundown when the fog has not yet rolled over the fields. Publius will insist that players talk with Accia at the Temple of Jupiter because she had recommended them and she could vouch for Publius' need of help.

INFORMATION AND CONTACTS IN EPIRU

The Temple of Jupiter: This is a grand old-style T-shaped building structure with various statues of minor gods between the pillars. At the crossroads in the temple wings is a huge bas relief of Jupiter with a cloth draped over his shoulder and a quiver of lightning bolts laying on his thigh. A concave depression in front of the statue marks the pit where offerings are sacrificed and burned. The players visit the Temple to talk with the priestess Accia about Publius. She will be easily found by the other priests and acolytes if her name is given or if Publius' name is mentioned. Accia appears in religious attire and holds a chain dangling a bronze incense ball diffuser that billows the bitter sweet vanilla tinge smell of myrrh. She is of medium height and walks with a sense of confidence that seems to have a sense of majestic allure. Her curly brown hair is bundled in the custom of her position. She serves as the local Auger and confidant of Publius' problems. She will also know the investigators and their reputations in the city. She has seen the paths of the

investigators crossing the life-path of Publius and feels they may be able to shed light onto his problems with his neighbors. Accia will express that it is the Gods' will that they should help him and that they are the only blessing the Gods will offer to Publius. She believes that Publius is cursed and that the Gods do not like him, but she feels pity for him and hopes the investigators will help. The priestess will also add that he was chased out of his homeland of Asis by the 'Furies' to what she believes is a cursed area of Epiru. If asked what she means about 'cursed,' she will explain that the area is always obscured by fog that comes from nowhere at night and that people have gone missing from that area. She will add that people do not seem to stay on his plot of land for long. She does not know the full history, but will suggest that the city civil hall will have records or they can talk with the Roman Centurion Gnaeus, if they like, who most likely will know more. Note: Accia uses the metaphor of 'Furies' to denote that most of the citizens in the city of Asis hated him because he was not well liked as a tax collector. When he retired some people would harass him or call him names as he walked through the streets, and some even threatened great bodily harm.



Accia: Priestess of Jupiter and City Auger

STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 11 INT 14 POW 14
 DEX 10 APP 15 EDU 13 SAN 70
 Idea 70
 Luck 70
 Know 65

HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Skills: Fast Talk 34%; Insight 67%; Library Use 73%;
 Medicine 66%; Natural World 35%; Occult 80%; Po-
 tions 70%; Science (Augury-Ex Caelo) 88%

Spells: Augury --“The Sky and clouds show me what I
 need to see. Nothing more and nothing less”

Meeting Roman Centurion Gnaeus: His area of patrol covers the outskirts of Epiru, think of him as the local sheriff. Publius went to him when the complaints started to roll in. Gnaeus also knows Publius from his past when he lived in Asis for three years before coming to Epiru for his permanent station. He knows that Publius has a knack for being tactless and insulting, but respects him because he did his job well as a tax collector...sometimes too well. He also knows that Publius is well-connected with Asis senators and government, despite his poor social interactions with the majority of the local Asis populace. Much like the priestess Accia, he pities Publius. Gnaeus, though, has an ulterior motive since Publius' connections make him a good person to know if he wishes to get out of the backcountry of Epiru and into a better station in life. So Gnaeus is trying his best to keep in Publius' good favor. At the same time, he is trying to squash complaints by Publius' neighbors, primarily Cassius Libo and Sextus Fannius Afer. He hasn't gone out of his way to verify the complaints and refuses to work at night when the fog rolls in because he figures you can't see anything to verify whatever the complaint may be. "I'm not going to run around in a blanket of clouds to see nothing. Neither are any of my men. So give it a rest!" Deep down Gnaeus is afraid and believes some of the rumors of the area being haunted at night. He knows that people have gone missing since the area was settled by the Romans. One of his motivations for recommending the investigators to help Publius is to avoid working at night in the fog. He knows the players and hopes they can help out. He will explain to investigators that he can't get involved in petty issues, but hopes that they can help out poor old Publius. A successful Insight Roll will reveal that he is holding back and is

deeply scared when talking about the nights and the fog rolling into his patrol area.

If asked about the area being cursed, missing people, or the many residents that tried to live on the land before Publius, then he will say some thing to the rational effect of:

“The fair citizens of these parts have a fog that rolls in at the break of night that makes it hard to see your hand in front of you. Sure your gonna hear stories of things that go bump in the night and people missing but let me tell you what the official report on all this says...nothing. Yes, nothing. Just the conjuring of the peoples’ mind, my superiors would say. Probably why people find it hard to stay and keep leaving. You get neighbors like that old crazy senator (Sextus Fannius) Afer spouting out spooky yarns about your house and the strange noises that haunt the place you might think twice about being a citizen of our area. Or worse you get some one like that other neighbor, Cassius Libo, who thinks you’re having loud nightly Bacchanalia orgies with strange wanton women or peeping into his house at night when you can’t get enough... So ... Yeah living here might be difficult.”

A successful Insight Roll will reveal that he does not believe what he is telling the investigators. If pressed or confronted about his opinion about missing people and the strange happenings:

“What I’m going to tell cannot leave this room or my career is dashed against the rock of Sisyphus. Do you hear me?! (wait to see if player promises secrecy, if not stop here or have them roll a persuade)...I don’t consider myself a religious man or a superstitious one at that. I just think that my superiors don’t know what I’m dealing with down here. For years I was willing to tell myself that this stuff was nonsense and that unhappy people were using the fog to get away from whatever it was that was making them unhappy. Over 16 people have gone missing since I took this post eight years ago. Men, women and children, you name it...Just vanished, ‘poof’ into the fog. The house that Publius owns has had 5 own-

ers during that time. Most leave complaining of the fog and the strange things they hear at night. Some just leave without anyone seeing them go. Oddly it looks like they just got up and left and didn’t care to take their belongings. The last owner was a nice citizen, named Felix Caeso Maccius Sura, who was an advisor to the Prefect back then. I would never believe he could hurt a fly but he went mad and killed his wife, children and a local musician named Varro. When I talked with him before his crucifixion, he kept telling me that the house was haunted and that he had heard music at night and thought his wife was sleeping with the local musician in the fog. He added that his children were also the product of the musician... but that was madness, since Varro was a eunuch...and Felix knew that! I just don’t get it. I just don’t. Its utter madness as I see



it. I hope for Publius’ sake this does not end anything like before with Felix. So my opinion is that Publius is going to need your help because I’ve done all I can and I cannot risk going

back to my superiors with these stories anymore.”

Gnaeus will offer help until night falls and the fog rolls in to the land. He would need some physical proof or extreme convincing to help at night. Even so he will want to have 2 of his men come with him which would take an hour to round up.

Gnaeus: Fearful Roman Centurion

STR 15 CON 14 SIZ 17 INT 10 POW 9
DEX 15 APP 11 EDU 13 SAN 45

Idea 50

Luck 45

Know 65

HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Gladius 77%, damage 1D6+db; Spear 50%, damage 1D8+db

Armor: 8 points scale + Large Shield

Skills: Civics 54%, Climb 43%, Empire 70%, Jump 50%, Spot Hidden 47%, Tactics 66%, Shield (large) 45%,

Legionaries: Gnaeus' Men

STR 12 CON 11 SIZ 12 INT 10 POW 13
DEX 14 APP 11 EDU 10 SAN 65

Idea 50

Luck 65

Know 55

HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Gladius 50%, damage 1D6+db; Spear 50%, damage 1D8+db

Armor: 8 points scale + Large Shield

Skills: Climb 40%, Empire 45%, Jump 50%, Spot Hidden 40%, Shield (large) 40%

Civil Hall of Epiru: Investigators will need to make a successful Civics roll to figure out how to negotiate the large Civil Hall complex to get information they are interested in from the various records departments. Once they have found their way around, then a successful Fast Talk, Persuade or a Status roll should do the trick to get access from the civil servants working the department. If these rolls fail for some reason then an enticement of 5-20 sesterces to one of the workers in the building will do just as well. A successful Library Use roll or Accountancy roll will produce the following information depending on what the investigators research:

1. There have been a total of 23 people who have resided at Publius' house since the area had come under the control of Rome. Most of the owners left within two year or less. Longer periods of ownership are recorded but there are indications that the owners had abandoned the property long

before the property was relinquished back to the state. A list of the previous owners leads to many dead ends--the owners are either dead, missing or not within the country anymore. The last owner, before Publius, was Felix Caeso Maccius Sura, advisor to ex-Prefect Decimus Fabius Mus. Records indicate that he was convicted of murder of his wife, 3 children and a eunuch musician, named Varro, who specialized in the Kithara. He had been crucified a year before Publius' arrival to Epiru. Centurion Gnaeus' name is on most of the reports and so is ex-senator's Sextus Fannius Afer name as a witness who found the bodies. News information indicates that Varro was a local musician favored by Felix Caeso Maccius Sura and Prefect Decimus Fabius Mus for a whole decade before his death. Varro even played at Decimus Fabius Mus' funeral five months before his murder. Some of the reports conclude that stress from the Prefect's death lead to Caeso's killing rampage.

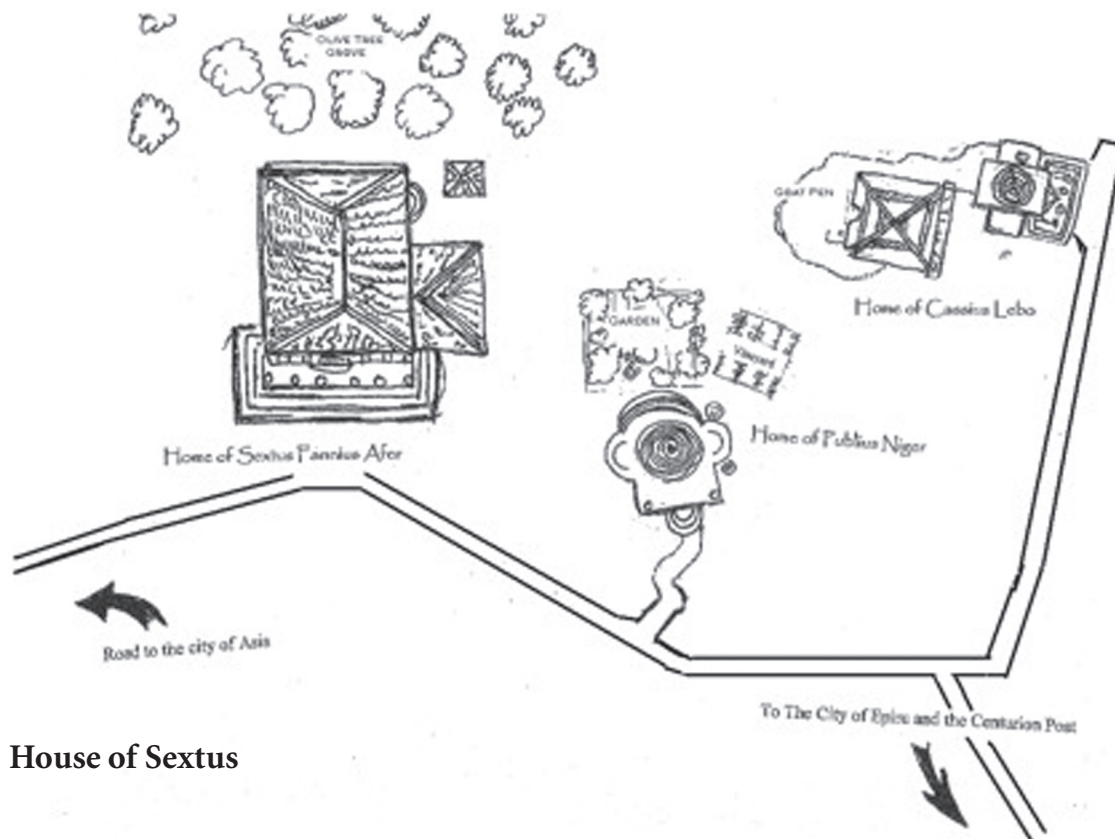
2. Cassius Libo has filed 7 complaints on Publius in the past 6 months, mostly for disturbing the peace and stalking his wife. Reports by Centurion Gnaeus conclude that most complaints were unsubstantiated. There are 3 separate reports by local people who complained anonymously about the music being played at night within the area of Publius' home.
3. Sextus Fannius Afer has made 5 complaints to local authorities and the Temple of Jupiter about Publius being possessed by strange spirits and that he can hear the strange music being played late at night coming from his property. They will also find that he had retired his position as Senator after the deaths of his three daughters and wife from consumption five years ago.

4. Historical records indicate that there was a small village of around 700-800 people that lived in the area before Roman occupation. Old military scouting reports indicate that the villagers were barbaric and had some unsavory practices that included human sacrifice and orgiastic rituals. Observational accounts suggest the people were possibly hermaphrodites because gender could not be discriminated and some reconnaissance reports indicated both genders on one person. The reports also make mention of a large stone amphitheater-like temple in the center of the village. When the Roman military moved into the village the following morning they found it abandoned and the amphitheater gone. The soldiers only found one old man, or shall we say woman, still in the village drawing pictures in the sand with a stick. The report goes on to say that the soldiers questioned him or her about the other villagers and the amphitheater. The person is quoted, talking in a confusing dialect common for the area (translator was present), "I'm a Pilgrim of the abomination. Un-speakable. Horrible. We cannot name he that walks behind the row of pallid dancers and the ripples in the mist. I wait. Tonight. The last pieces and I go." The soldiers report the person going back to drawing in the sand, much to their frustration, and not being compliant to their request to speak or move. One of the soldiers kicked sand over the odd drawings to get a response, but was met with a disturbing gurgling sound as the cloaked man or woman lurched forward. Reports of what happened next varied among the soldiers that were there, but what is known is that the person was struck down by one or more soldiers. The lifeless body was described as being a husk of flesh, with no bones or innards. Green gelatinous

ichors were the only indication of possible body fluids. (Collection and reading of this information cost 1/1D4 SAN loss)

5. A cursory count of missing persons reports in the area of Publius' home indicate somewhere between 75 and 80 people have been reported missing since Rome occupied the area. Only 5 of the missing people resurfaced, but came back dazed in a catatonic-like condition. Two of the five people were able to snap out of the condition, but were noted as having lapses in memory and had no recall of events that led to their disappearance. One of these two eventually committed suicide after a long bout with insomnia. None of these people are currently alive.

Home of Sextus Fannius Afer: The house is a regal display of old wealth in decay. Fancy Athenian marble pillars and statuettes fill the house. Closer inspection reveals they are now chipped and tainted with a yellow hue from exposure to heavy incense and a poorly ventilated bread oven. When investigators meet with Sextus he will be naked, covered in olive oil, sitting with his feet resting on a yellowish-colored alabaster statue of a somber grieving woman in a prone pose. Once the investigators walk in to his house, his only slave, named affectionately Gibbly, will quickly cover the old portly bodice of the statesman with a worn tunic that has seen better days. The magenta trim has faded to an earthy brown and the once white cloth has turned the color of parchment. Sextus is clearly not in his right mind but people consider him more eccentric than mad. A successful Empire roll or local knowledge roll will let the player remember that he used to be a senator of Epiru and that he had resigned several years ago to retire. Players will be reminded that he might be an odd person but he still has a lot of political pull in the government and needs to be treated with tact or characters may find themselves visited by the authorities (Centu-



House of Sextus

tion Gnaeus or his men) and asked to leave the city proper. He will appreciate the investigators following up with his complaints about Publius and his property. He will not like characters that point out his odd behavior or try to rationalize with him about the strange happenings with Publius. For example, if players ask why he is naked and covered in oil then he will say that he is preparing to die like all great Romans and that the character is an idiot for asking, unlike his faithful daughter at his feet (the statue), named Fannia, who always holds her tongue with great wisdom. Continued discussion will lead to Gibbly escorting characters off the property and a complaint filed with Gnaeus. "Ungrateful plebeian! You are not a citizen of Epiru to treat me like this. You are like my other two ungrateful daughters who tried to strip me of all my wealth. Do you not know who I am?! I am Sextus Fannius Afer!" If the players engage Sextus with respect and honor then he will talk about the strange music and the recent chant-

ing he heard a couple of night before today. Sextus will also explain that he glimpsed a small person walking in the fog and that he thinks Publius shape-changes into a small Kobalos or sprite at night to spin his evil ways. Sextus will add that Publius' voice became child-like and that he was talking or chanting to himself. He will suggest that Publius needs to be burned at the stake and his house with him. "It's the only way to be sure." He will also add that Publius has seduced his two daughters and that he has turned them against him, save Fannia. He will also say that Publius had cast a spell on his wife and caused her to die of consumption. At this point Sextus will have a spark of recollection and remember that all of his daughters are dead as a result of consumption. He will begin to cry and collapse on the floor in a fetal position. Gibbly will come to Sextus and wrap him up in a towel. Since Gibbly is mute he will wave players away and tend to Sextus. Players will not be able to engage Sextus for the rest of the day.

Sextus' mental stability was shaken by the death of his family, finding his previous neighbors' dead bodies and by the long exposure of living in proximity to the stone tiles in Publius' yard. If Sextus is asked about the murders of the previous owners of Publius' property, then he will say it was horrible and look away. He will mutter to himself for a few minutes saying over and over, "He killed the children. Butchered them into pieces. Tiny little pieces."

Sextus Fannius Afer: Emotionally Disturbed Ex-Senator of Epiru

STR 10 CON 13 SIZ 15 INT 14 POW 15
DEX 12 APP 11 EDU 16 SAN 34 (He is indefinitely insane)

Idea 70
Luck 75
Know 80
HP 14

Damage Bonus:
+1D4

Skills: Civics 78%; Empire 92%; Fast Talk 54%; Library Use 33%; Other Kingdoms 50%; Other Languages (Egyptian) 65%; Persuade 66%; Write Language (Egyptian) 55%; Cthulhu Mythos 22%



Gibbly: Mute Slave

STR 17 CON 11 SIZ 16 INT 12 POW 13
DEX 16 APP 8 EDU 9 SAN 65

Idea 60
Luck 65 Know 45
HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Skills: Civics 37%; Craft (stone cutting) 78%, Empire 45%; Insight 50%; Natural World 42%; Listen 50%; Spot Hidden 72%; Sneak 35%

Gibbly cannot speak or hear and is illiterate. He knows that the figure in the fog was a little girl and that the night before he had seen her with a goat. He is also aware that Sextus has lost his

mind, but tries to go along with his delusional behavior the best he can. Sextus does various hand gestures to communicate to Gibbly, but that is rudimentary at best. When the public comes he tries to perform damage control the best he can. Investigators may try to communicate with him, but will find it hard. Probably the best way is through drawing pictures in the sand. Gibbly can be convinced to help the investigators if they can get beyond this communication barrier.

Home of Cassius Libo: The house is split into two parts. One holds the family atrium and the major living quarters of the family. This part is fairly small compared to the second part of the house which is a storage warehouse for Cassius' spice business (He negotiates between buyers and sellers of spice from Asia and Rome, keeping some of the stock in his warehouse). Cassius Libo is a lean man with nondescript features. His wife Minerva is short, but beautiful by local standards. Their daughter, Cassia, is 8 years old and seems very inquisitive. When investigators meet with Cassius he will be in the front of his house loading sacks of spice onto his one horse cart. Cassius will be pleasant enough until the discussion goes toward Publius. Cassius will go on a rant about how he can hear Publius in the fog with women and music. "It sounds unnatural." He thinks he can see lights and shadows in the fog. He will accuse Publius of trespassing onto his property and peeping into his windows to see his wife. Cassius states that he believes this because his wife complains of hearing noises outside her window at night. Cassius will eventually punctuate his concerns with finding his daughter's favorite goat, Juko, missing this morning and claim Publius is behind the disappearance. Cassius may be willing to go with investigators to Publius, but that will probably turn out to be an exchange of verbal threats. Cassius will want the investigators involved and encourage them to keep an eye on Publius. Players may have access to the farm animals behind storage portion of the house if Cassius is probed more about the missing goat, which would prompt him to show his kennel

area. A successful Track roll will indicate child size footprints with the goat prints leading away from the kennel toward Publius' property. If Cassia is asked about the goat or her footprints she will acknowledge that she sometimes takes the goat for walks to the edge of the property because there is more grass growing there since Publius has no animals. An Insight roll will reveal that she does not seem too upset about her goat's disappearance. If the players decide to engage with Cassia then she will seem to talk with an invisible friend about the investigators comments. When asked about the invisible friend she will say he is a boy from the 'wall of sleep' in her dreams. She will add that the voice talks to her when she is awake now because they're the best of friends. The invisible boy does not have a name but is called 'My Best Friend.' If Cassius' wife, Minerva, is questioned about the nighttime experiences of Publius stalking her, she will state that she could never see in the fog, but heard footsteps and the crackling of branches outside her window. In reality, this is Cassia sneaking out of the house during the night.



Cassius Libo:
Angry neighbor and spice merchant

STR 10 CON 14 SIZ 9 INT 15 POW 14
 DEX 12 APP 10 EDU 13 SAN 70

Idea 75
 Luck 70
 Know 65
 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0
Weapons: Hand Ax 50%, damage 1D6+db;
Armor: none
Skills: Accounting 68%; Bargain 88%; Drive 35%; Empire 42%; Fast Talk 45%; Natural World 33%; Other Kingdoms (Asia)61%; Other Kingdoms (Egypt) 50%; Other Languages (Chinese)46%; Other Lan-

guages (Egyptian) 40%; Write Languages (Chinese) 67%;

Minerva: Beautiful Wife to Cassius

STR 12 CON 11 SIZ 8 INT 11 POW 10
 DEX 15 APP 17 EDU 10 SAN 50

Idea 55
 Luck 50
 Know 50
 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +0
Weapons: Kitchen Knife 41%, damage 1D4+db
Armor: None
Skills: Art 32%; Empire 35%; Jump 50%; Listen 34%; Spot Hidden 40%,

Cassia: Daughter who dreams about the Lake of Hali

STR 7 CON 9 SIZ 6 INT 10 POW 14
 DEX 10 APP 13 EDU 5 SAN 47

Idea 50
 Luck 70
 Know 25
 HP 8

Damage Bonus: -1D4
Weapons: Dagger 30%, damage 1D4 +db
Armor: None
Skills: Animal Training 55%; Cthulhu Muthos 32%; Dodge 69%; Hide 80%; Jump 75%; Listen 45%; Sneak 52%



Cassia made friends with the voice she hears from the stone tablet in the ground that leads to the Lake of Hali. She will try to get to Publius' garden if she can at night and lure one or both parents to the stone. She will jump in if there is any resistance. If investigators figure out that she is behind her goat being gone and the nightly noises, then she will tell investigators that she knows where the music comes from, but tell them that it can only happen at night. She will show them with hopes of all of them jumping into the manifestation of Hali. If she is completely looked over then she will try to

convince her parents to follow her into the fog to Publius' garden because she has something she wants to show them. Both parents will refuse her request. She will then sneak away at night when they are not looking. The parents will then find her missing and attempt to have the investigators help them search for her in Publius' garden.

Other Residents: Other neighbors close to Publius will report hearing strange noises at night and add that the music happened before Publius moved in, but got worse after he arrived. They will also add that Publius tends to isolate in his home and not talk with anyone, which has made him unpopular. Some may report that Cassius has it out for Publius and has made it known that he would like him to leave.

Inn of Caprica: Players may decide to hole up for one night or more at the local Inn to get extra amount of time to investigate or to see whether the sounds happen when Publius is not home. The Inn of Caprica will be that place. Players may have Publius stay at this nice inn and be watched by the Innkeeper, Baliaricus. The Inn is within the city proper and costs 1-2 sesterces a night. Extra charge of 2 sesterces will be added if Baliaricus is expected to watch over Publius. Baliaricus will not join the investigation because his presence is needed at the Inn.

The Home of Publius Niger: The home is a typical Roman home with a small atrium in the center to entertain guests and a garden in the back. The interior is sparsely decorated and there seems to be few memorabilia from his time in Asis, except a scroll hanging on the Atrium wall from the Asis Perfect giving accolades for a long and successful career as a tax collector. The house is surrounded by braziers of various sizes through out the side of the house.

Publius Niger: The Cursed Retired Tax Collector of Asis

STR 11 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 15 POW 12
DEX 12 APP 6 (he has an unfriendly air about him)
EDU 15 SAN 54 (he has lost some from hearing the strange music)

Idea 75

Luck 60

Know 75

HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: None

Armor: none

Skills: Accounting 95%; Civics 65%; Empire 57%; Other Kingdom (Asis); Persuade 13%; Status 71%; Write Language(Latin) 77%; Awkward conversation 67%

Publius appears with his shoulders curved inwards and his head held stooped. His eyes are beady and he gives off an air of perpetual disdain because he avoids eye contact. It has been a hard career being a tax collector for the state of Asis and it shows on his face. He has learned to live alone and in seclusion from others. Unfortunately, the major side-effect from his alienation has been the deterioration of his social skills. To the investigators he will try to be pleasant but will eventually, without a doubt, make some off-colored remark that will be awkward. He hopes that investigators will help him, but will not talk about the dead goat he found on his property this morning unless it is discovered. When bad events happen to him or people he knows then he will usually express "The Gods hate me!" (In reality they just don't care). He will help investigators the best he can. He does not have any slaves working his yard and tends to it on his own preferring the solitude.

Cursed Garden on Publius' property: The garden is plush with grape vines and some tomato bushes. A wicker chair is by a bare spot on the ground where a white cloudy opaque stone which almost resembles alabaster protrudes from the ground. Successful Spot Hidden roll will reveal two things. First,

closer inspection will reveal wave designs and inscriptions of various pictographs on the side of the stone tile. Style and design seem unknown in origin. A successful Cthulhu Mythos roll will reveal that the writing is not of this world as we know it and that it bodes doom to those who step on its path. Second, with the previous successful Spot Hidden roll, investigators observe dried blood marks and a trail leading to a compost mound at the edge of the garden (no track roll needed). If investigators dig through the compost pile they will find the dead remains of Cassia's favorite goat, Juko, in relatively fresh condition. It is small and a young goat. The neck had been slashed. Publius will confess that he found the body in the morning and did not know what to do because he knew he would be blamed. He will be sorry for not telling investigators up front but he felt too much pressure from the blame that was already directed at him by his neighbors. If for some reason Cassia is here to see the dead body, then investigators can roll Insight and if successful, then they will notice that she is not disturbed to see her goat in this condition, as if she had expected it to be so. She shows no tears or distress.

If players destroy the tablet tiles on the garden floor, then this ends the fog at night and the strange music....thus solving the Publius problem.



Cursed Garden at Night: Various things can happen at this point but what will be a constant is the fog rolling in at the first sign of darkness. The fog will seem overly thick and have a musty swamp smell about it. Investigators will note that no swamp had been observed in the neighboring areas. As the night passes a strange music will begin to play, ac-

cented by a soft high pitch rumbling or moan which may lead some listeners to believe it is female in tone. Hearing the sounds cost 0/1D3 SAN. Going into the garden to follow the noise will require some light source and a Luck roll. If successful, then players will walk to the stone tile on the floor. If unsuccessful, then players will find themselves lost on the property or in the neighbor's yard. The stones on the floor will seem to have movement and appear to be a watery mist lapping on a shore. Any players wading into the misty pool will find themselves transported to the Lake of Hali and forever lost. The last thing they will see is two moons radiating above through the fog and the unnatural feeling that they are in a place far away from Epiru surrounded by horrors beyond their imagination. The investigator will be considered gone from play. Note: if you wish to give the players a chance to get back or if the situation becomes one where they are trying to rescue Cassia, then please go the section called the Lake of Hali.

*Along the shore the cloud waves break
The twin suns sink behind the lake
The shadows lengthen
In Carcosa*

"Cassilda's Song" in *The King in Yellow* Act 1, Scene 2

-Robert W. Chambers "The Repairer of Reputations";
The King in Yellow

THE LAKE OF HALI

This part of the scenario assumes that the players have stepped through the stone tiles on the garden floor and entered the misty vaporous waters to the Lake of Hali. It is up to the Keeper's discretion that this part of the investigation be carried on for one reason or another, such as Cassia has jumped through the stone and the players are chasing after her. As a result of stepping into the Lake of Hali have them make a SAN check at 1D6/1D20 cost for the immediate shock and initial realization that they are in a place not meant for human understanding. For



understanding of the foreign cosmos. Characters may feel an awakening or regression to a more primal thought of consciousness when all these sights and sounds were familiar to a forgotten corrupted heritage. A black basalt shore lies ahead with floating boulders hovering ten or more feet above the ground. Further inland, the investigators can make out a monstrous large pale wall surrounding a massive collection of bubble-shaped castles (One of the cities of Alar). If investigators look behind them then they will see the shore's line across lake and a towering city of black Obsidian stone (The City of Carcosa) surrounded by a halo of iridescent mist. The surface of the lake behind the investigators breaks to reveal watery gelatinous tendrils or what seems to be a collection of tiny pus-filled globules that take on a slender gestalt shape of something ropey and wicked heading towards them with intense malignancy.

each hour spent in either the Lake of Hali or on the shores of Alar or Demhe, have the characters roll SAN at 1/1D3 because of the sounds and rhythm of the misty waters.

The wind blows and whistles to the shimmering water creating the so-called strange music that the characters had heard at night. The fog will thin out to reveal two moons in the far horizon. Bright large stars twinkle around the moons (Aldebaran and Hyades) and players may feel that they have an idea of the name of these heavenly bodies without any

intense malignancy. SAN Check 1/ 1D8. If players do not move forward toward the shores of Alar then they will be confronted by the creatures heading toward them, but the creatures will not be overtly aggressive and will probably just linger around the player(s). The semipale gelatinous and amorphous shape of the horror makes it hard for the eyes to comprehend but it has an undulating frame that shifts back and forth from three to six connected sections of opaque-colored vapors with the tendrils sprouting and collapsing between the

sections. On random parts of the beast's surface had shiny black honey-combed sensor or eyes, if you will, that shifted to the movement of the investigators. Hideous gurgling sounds can be heard as the creature makes progress forward.

Horrors in the Lake of Hali

STR 38 CON 22 SIZ 28 INT 10 POW 15
DEX 12 HP 25

Move 6

Damage Bonus: +3D6

Weapons: Tendrils 40%, damage 3D6 +1D6 permanent damage to CON



Armor: Impaling weapons do minimum damage as a result of its physical properties.

Spells: Knows 1D4 spells to keepers discretion

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8

SHORES OF ALAR

Characters that make it to the volcanic shores of Alar will find the rocks jagged and sharp. Players must make a DEX roll x5 or incur a 1 point of incidental damage. The floating rocks appear to be defying gravity and levitate about ten feet above the ground. Sitting on some of the rocks are Byakhee. Make SAN check at 1/1D6 SAN. These creatures will not actively engage characters unless they appear to have passed out or have lost their minds. In these cases the Byakhee will swoop down and drop the players off in the abysmal depths of Demhe. If the Byakhee are attacked then they will fly out of reach of the offending character and continue to watch unless the characters are climbing the boulders to breach the wall. In this case, they will attack the characters till they are back on the ground or dead.

Byakhee

STR 18 CON 12 SIZ 18 INT 10 POW 11
DEX 14 HP 15

Move 5/20flying

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Claw 35%, damage 1D6+db;
Bite 35%, damage 1D6+blood drain

Armor: 2 points of fur and tough hide

Spells: None

Skills: Listen 50%,
Spot Hidden 50%

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6



WALLS OF ALAR

Should the players be chasing Cassia through the Lake of Hali then they will find her here, mentally spent and lying on the ground before the Wall of Alar. Various hideous statues stand broken about the base of the Wall with semi-human shapes malformed and distorted. Some of the statues do not appear human at all, but grotesque beasts with seemingly cruel chitin hide. The wall itself is a huge bas relief of tortured people and humanoids in overstated regal clothing in various positions of agony. SAN check 1/1D3. The Wall's surface appears porous and if touched, the player must make a STR resistance check versus the STR of the wall, which is 15, or be pulled into the bas relief by the various animated tortured beings in the wall. Failure means immediate death and the horror of being an image of pain on the Wall. Players witnessing the incident must make SAN 1/1D6. If Cassia is found and players attempt to bring her back to consciousness, then one of the images in the bas relief of the Wall will separate itself from the wall and speak. He will appear to be a boy (gender is only suggested by the clothing) around the same age of Cassia in an oversized yellow tunic with purple trim. A yellow amber stone brooch hangs on his torso. His face is covered by a pale distressed-looking mask. He will say "She was not meant for this place. She is not one of us (skip this if Cassia is not present and start with the next part)..."

(pointing at investigators) You do not belong. You must close the entry and break the tether to Alar. I beseech you to close your eyes and let the winged foul beings of Hastur take you away to the place of returning. The tether was meant only for our people and our people only... The damned ones of Iksithl.” The boy will step back into the Wall. If he is prevented in doing so, then he will become a distorted and broken statue like the ones at the base of the Wall. SAN check 1/1D8 for any part of this experience. The Byakhee will swoop down at this moment to carry off Cassia and the investigators and deposit them in Demhe.

THE DEEP ABYSS, KNOWN AS DEMHE

For the purpose of this scenario, Demhe is being used as an exit conduit for the player to return back to Epiru. Demhe is a lake located on the other side of the City of Alar. Players will hopefully be flown by the Byakhee over the City of Alar and then dropped into Demhe. The sight of the lake parting the cloud-like waters to reveal the gaping abyss below will cause any conscious character to feel they have lost their mind. The lake is alive. SAN 1D8/1D20 for flying over the City and seeing the Demhe. Players may roll an Idea check as they are falling into the black chasm to realize that they are witnessing a huge tower or castle that was built inverted. Instead of rising above ground this kingdom was built downwards into the base. If players have not lost consciousness at this point, then they will now. By falling into the Abyss players will be transported back to Epiru and appear on the grassy fields close by Publius’ home.

THE END

The players gain 1D12 SAN back if they destroy the tablets

Add 1D6 SAN if they save Cassia from the Lake of Hali

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my wife, Danielle Yee for editing, and my play testers for this scenario from www.RPG-SanDiego.org : Sam Carter, Erik Richardson and Derek Shackleton.

Map by Derek Shackleton and Simon Yee
Design of stone tile by Derek Shackleton
Art by Simon Yee

Material draws from writings by Robert W. Chambers’ “The King and Yellow” and from Chad Bowser, Deane P. Goodwin and Andi Newton “Cthulhu Invictus: Horror Role-Playing in Ancient Rome” monograph.

THE GOD UNKNOWN

BY MAX NELSON

“There stood a grove which from the earliest time no hand of man had dared to violate; hidden from the sun its chill recesses; matted boughs entwined, prisoned the air within. No sylvan nymphs here found a home, nor Pan, but savage rites and barbarous worship, altars horrible on massive stones upreared; sacred with blood of men was every tree. If faith be given to ancient myth, no fowl has ever dared to rest upon those branches, and no beast has made his lair beneath: no tempest falls, nor lightnings flash upon it from the cloud. Stagnant the air, unmoving, yet the leaves filled with mysterious trembling; dripped the streams from coal-black fountains; effigies of gods rude, scarcely fashioned from some fallen trunk held the mid space: and, pallid with decay, their rotting shapes struck terror. Thus do men dread most the god unknown.”

**Lucan, The Civil War
(trans. Sir Edward Ridley)**

*“O giant stars, born of eternal light,
O winged flames wherewith the void is
sown,
As dreadful prophets of the god unknown,
Ye speak the law in light!”*

**Clark Ashton Smith,
The Ancient Quest**

KEEPER'S INTRODUCTION

It is November, A.D. 55. Since A.D. 43 the Romans have been slowly conquering the island of Britannia (Britain), defeating revolting tribes and expanding their territorial dominance. Most notably, the chieftain Caratacus, son of Cunobelinus, of the Catuvellauni tribe in the east of Britannia, has been captured and taken to Rome. Though some other tribes remain rebellious, others have accepted Roman rule, and a number had even taken on Roman ways, such as drinking wine and minting coins, long before having become part of the Empire.

Unknown to the general populace, the Roman soldiers of the Legio XX Valeria, in the course of carefully surveying all conquered territory, have encountered not only the Celtic tribes in Britannia (well-known since the time of Julius Caesar's visit) but far older denizens who have been in the island long before the Celts arrived a few hundred years ago, and who have been for the most part forgotten. These are the Very Old Folk.

THE VERY OLD FOLK (VETERRIMI):

“...the very old folk... dwelt higher up in the hills and spoke a choppy language... a few times a year they sent down little yellow squint-eyed messengers (who looked like Scythians) to trade with the merchants by means of gestures, and every spring and

autumn they held the infamous rites on the peaks, their howlings and altar-fires throwing terror into the villages.”

**H. P. Lovecraft, “The Very Old Folk” in
Miscellaneous Writings**

“... a hideous cult of nocturnal worshippers whose strange customs—descended from pre-Aryan and pre-agricultural times when a squat race of Mongoloids roved over Europe with their flocks and herds—were rooted in the most revolting fertility-rites of immemorial antiquity. This secret religion, stealthily handed down amongst peasants for thousands of years despite the outward reign of the Druidic, Graeco-Roman, and Christian faiths in the regions involved, was marked by wild “Witches’ Sabbaths” in lonely woods and atop distant hills ...”

**H. P. Lovecraft, Supernatural Horror in
Literature**

The Very Old Folk (known in Latin as the *Veterrimi*) are a people who settled throughout Europe long before the Italic, Hellenic, Celtic, Germanic and other groups migrated there thousands of years ago. Their territories have gradually been taken over and their numbers depleted until the few scattered groups of them remaining have moved to higher elevations. Some were known to inhabit the Pyrenees until they clashed with Roman troops around the mid-first century B.C. Others remain in remote enclaves in the Alps and Carpathians as well as more modest hilltop homes such as on the Cotswold range in Britain, only now being expanded into by the Romans. Knowledge of them has almost completely disappeared except in half-forgotten fairy tales.

The Very Old Folk are stunted humanoids, most the size of human children, who live amid dark groves in small, mud hut villages, each ruled by its own tribal leader. They hunt and gather and only practice agriculture and animal husbandry on very a meagre scale, and do not have horses. They were once known oc-

asionally to trade goods with outsiders (seeking to buy clay vessels and metal tools, which they do not make) but in recent years seem to prefer to keep only to themselves. Their language is unlike any other known in Europe. Long ago they set up standing stones, sometimes in circles and alignments for mysterious reasons. They do not worship the gods of the pantheons of the other European peoples but an enigmatic entity (“the god unknown”), to whom they sacrifice human beings twice a year in the anxious periods of seasonal transition, from winter to summer and summer to winter, when the prosperity of the community is particularly in question (the Very Old Folk have no calendar and thus they do not sacrifice on specific days of the year, such as April 31 and October 31, as their inheritors would). The sages of the Celtic tribes, the druids, have long been thought guilty of these sacrifices by the Romans and therefore their religion has been abolished. Little do the Romans know that there are forces much darker and more dangerous than those of nature-loving druidism.

While the Celts respect and worship all that is positive which nature provides for them, such as springs, living trees, and horses, the Very Old Folk ally themselves with dark forces in nature, including marshy morasses, dead trees, and snakes. Long ago, after generations of fighting, the Celts and the Very Old Folk decided upon a territorial truce of sorts. The Very Old Folk were left in peace to live in their own secluded, noxious haunts, while the Celts thrived in their villages in wide open glades. Most Celts have forgotten the hidden Very Old Folk, who have not been seen in decades, but the bards (tribal loremasters) still recount tales of these little peoples, and the druids too maintain remembrances of them and, often without the knowledge of their own people, bless amulets for protection against them.

The Druids:

A druid (druis) is the priest, diviner, and judge of a Celtic tribe. While druids have been called by Romans wise in their knowledge of the gods and the natural world, they have also been said to supervise ghastly human sacrifices. Various stories circulate about these sacrifices. Sometimes it is said that they are done only at times of danger from disease, famine, or violence, while sometimes it is said that they are conducted at regular intervals for the sake of fertility and the general well-being of the community. Some say that their victims are criminals or prisoners of war, while others say that they are the unwanted or deformed or that they are even innocent people, randomly chosen. Some say that the victim is slaughtered like an animal on an altar and his or her innards examined to predict the future before the whole is burned, while others say that the way the victim falls, the writhing of the body, and the manner in which the blood pours out, provide signs of things to come. Others say that human victims, sometimes with animals, are placed in a large wicker man which is then set ablaze, so that all within die by being burned alive. Still others believe that victims are impaled, shot with arrows, crucified, or even ripped apart with teeth. It is also claimed that the victim's blood is drunk and the flesh eaten.

The investigators may know some or even all of these stories (or hear of them at the roadhouse during the adventure), but for the purposes of this game they are all considered false rumors. The druidic faith is actually much more mainstream than such tales would have it.

Note that no druid characters may be involved in this adventure.

The Confrontation:

The Roman army is at present involved in conquering Celtic tribes in the southwest (in what is now Wales) and in the north of Britannia. Behind the main detachments, forts (such as at Corinium, modern Cirencester in Gloucestershire in the Cotswold district) have been set

up, as well as a network of military roads. The westward road has almost reached the Sabrina (modern Severn) river, the longest in Britannia, but in the course of surveying and building the military road crew has approached the territory of the Very Old Folk.

Late one night, under cover of darkness, the Very Old Folk sent their serpents to the road crew camp. All were killed in horrific ways and their bodies taken into the woods except for one soldier, who, though bitten, was able to hide, quickly write a coded message which he bandaged around his arm, and then walk his way eastward on the road toward the fort at Corinium. As the investigators will find out, he never made it all the way. Meanwhile, the Very Old Folk, no longer feeling as protected in their secluded forest homes, are preparing to invoke the mysterious being Abrasax if needed to keep intruders out for good.

INVESTIGATORS' INTRODUCTION

It is November in the 808th year since the founding of Rome, and a young new Emperor is on the throne, the nearly eighteen year old Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, better known as Nero. Over a year ago, his uncle and adopted father, the unpopular, stuttering Claudius, died, officially of fever, though it is widely rumored that it was actually by poison at the hands of Nero's mother, Claudius's niece, Agrippina the Younger. Claudius's son, Britannicus, whose name reflects Claudius's most famous feat, the capture of Britannia, and who was only fourteen, was to be co-emperor with Nero when he came of age.

Britannia has been made a province just over a decade ago, but much of the west and north remains unconquered and in the hands of fierce Celtic tribes. Moreover rebellions simmer even in the occupied territories. Druidism, the pernicious faith of the locals, has been abolished but is far from being eradicated.

ed. The governor Aulus Didius Gallus watches uneasily from the newly formed capital of Londinium and troops are stationed in various forts throughout the land.

Although somewhat dangerous, the promise of new adventure and business opportunities has brought the investigators to Britain. Wealthy natives are anxious to adopt Roman ways and merchants of various wares have come to fulfil their needs and desires. Furthermore, moneylenders are investing in the new budding urban centres and construction companies lease out their slaves for new building projects. The most suitable occupations for investigators would be artisans, bankers, and merchants coming to do business, or else apothecaries, physicians, or surgeons introducing their much needed skills, or perhaps scholars wishing to research and write about the new province.

The investigators have gathered supplies in Londinium and have been making their way westward to the frontier regions on horseback. The road, newly paved and perfectly straight (in the manner for which the Romans are famous) is little travelled. The last substantial settlement the group passes is Corinium, about 100 (Roman) miles from Londinium, where there is a fort surrounded by a village of artisans, contractors, and suppliers for the army (including smiths, potters, launderers, and even prostitutes). From then on the investigators will continue into almost uncharted territories, taking advantage of the *cursus publicus*.

The Cursus Publicus:

The *cursus publicus* (or “public course”) was established by the first Emperor Augustus as a system of swift communication for important messages throughout the empire. Along a network of military roads through the Empire there are stations paid for by the local populations which include roadhouses (known as *mansiones* or *mansio* in the singular) where food and lodging are available as well as stage

posts (known as *mutationes* or *mutatio* in the singular) where fresh, swift horses as well as carriages can be found. Such transport can be used as needed for couriers, soldiers, and government officials and those on state business (as proved by a warrant or diploma written on a folded tablet), who rent at a fixed fee. Lodging is free for such individuals but can also be paid for by private travellers. Simple itineraries (*itineraria*), listing roads and stops, exist for travellers, but detailed maps of territory (particularly newly conquered, as in Britannia) are found only in the hands of government officials; indeed it is considered a capital crime of treason for anyone else to own such plans.

The Mansio:

The investigators begin the game by staying at an isolated roadhouse or inn (*mansio*), about 10 miles northwest of Corinium. The two-story wooden building was erected only a few years ago. In front of the place a number of braziers burn. The innkeeper, Marcus Vinius Lurco, explains: “This is a liminal time of year, friends. A dangerous time. Our fire keeps the darkness at bay as well as those predators hunting by cover of darkness.”

The roadhouse includes on the ground floor a dining room with tables and stools and a bar for plebeian travellers. Two back rooms are set up as *triclinia* with couches for upper class dining. The ground floor also includes stables and workshops. The upper floor consists of a number of rooms to be let for the night, which, the innkeeper Lurco swears, have no bedbugs.

Working at the inn there is also Bitucus the cook, Caradoc the wainwright, Vindica the waitress (who, for the right price, doubles as a prostitute), and the stable boy Senecio. Bitucus and Vindica are a married couple from the local Dobunni tribe. Caradoc and the stable boy are Celtic slaves of Lurco, captives from the wars of conquest.

There are also three other guests at the inn: a Roman couple, Gaius Calidius and his

wife Paulla, and Comux, another member of the Dobunni tribe. Calidius and his wife will eat in one of the triclinia and will welcome any of the group to dine with them as long as they are willing to help defray the cost for the privilege of doing so. Calidius is an entrepreneur, who, perhaps like the investigators, is on a trip to determine the viability of trade with local tribes. Calidius, out of earshot of any Celt, will confide to the group (to frighten them off from any potential business) the falsehood that all the Celtic tribes to the west are savage and that their druids are involved in human sacrifices and cannibalism. Lurco the innkeeper if asked will rather say more truthfully: “Both the sheep and the Dobunni are well tamed around here.”

Comux, who has dinner in the main room, is quiet, but if bought some wine will become friendly and speak to the group in good but accented Latin, revealing himself to be no barbaric savage. He is travelling east to make find employment in the new metropolis of Londinium as a goldsmith. If asked about his craft, he will show the group a golden brooch engraved with a horse with three tails, the symbol of the Dobunni, which he made. He will be willing to sell it or even give it away under the right circumstances (the brooch, unbeknownst to the investigators, is a magical amulet; see below). If asked about the land westward, he says that his people, the Dobunni, are quite open to trading with the Romans, but he warns that the group should not wander far outside of the Celtic villages. “There are things in the ancient woods that no man ought to see.” He will be reticent to say anything more.

The Bonfire and the Lone Steed:

After dinner, Lurco the innkeeper and some of the others from the inn huddle around a bonfire set up outside on this cold, late autumn night. The investigators will be invited to join them. The investigators may be suspicious of

the motives of the innkeeper and the others at the mansio, but they mean no harm.

A few hours after dusk, the clip-clopping of a horse is heard approaching the roadhouse. Soon a black riderless steed is seen to have stopped at the roadhouse, having known its destination on its own. If any investigator looks closely he might see fresh sweat and blood on the saddle; a successful Spot Hidden roll will further reveal that mixed in is also a strange, unidentifiable sticky black liquid.

The horse is recognized by the innkeeper Lurco as Velox (“Swiftly”), which runs between the local stations, and through his homing sense has made it to the roadhouse on its own. It must have come from the next changing station (mutatio) up the road, the very last one on this unfinished westward road. Lurco might further explain that the stop is not too far, about 12 miles; stations have been quickly set up at close intervals here because of the ongoing conquest and need for fast military messages to reach Londinium. Normally the same messenger brings the message the whole way (in case he needs to be questioned about it) but will take up different horses as needed. Perhaps, suggests Lurco, the rider has been thrown off on the way and needs help.

The investigators may be willing to mount an immediate search (or they may wait for daybreak). Lurco will beg off from accompanying them since he has to watch over the inn, but will he be willing to have his slave, the stable boy Senecio, accompany them. He will also pray to Epona, protector of horses, for their safe travel. Bitucus the cook and Comux the goldsmith should either volunteer or be persuaded to come too. The group will wish to use lanterns or torches as they make their way through the dark, foggy night, illuminated only by the twinkling stars above, which seem somehow different than the stars as seen from mainland Europe. The cold wind often whips up and goes right through the clothing. As they travel the investigators should roll for Sanity with 0/1 Sanity loss for the dread of the unknown in the cold, dark autumn night.

The Bloated Corpse and the Message:

About two miles west of the mansio a strange-looking fleshy mass may be spotted by the side of the road. At first the investigators may not realize what they are seeing until they understand that it is a huge bloated human being (0/1D4 Sanity loss). The clothes have been ripped from the body, but a careful examination will show that they are military issue. Furthermore a satchel slung over the shoulder holds an official warrant (diploma) for use of the *cur-sus publicus*. There are also bandages on one arm; beneath are two bite marks, and wrapped within the bandages (as a Spot Hidden roll will reveal) is a papyrus strip with ink markings on it, which cannot be deciphered as belonging to any known language. In fact the strip needs to be wrapped slantwise around a baton (known as a *skutale*) of predetermined girth to read the message which has been written onto it lengthwise in Latin letters. An investigator might remember this old Spartan means of encoding a message and by experimenting with different size sticks may finally be able to read the hastily scribbled message: “Ilices, Veterimmi, Prester”. Anyone with a Latin skill of 40% or more will be able to understand the first word “holm oaks” and the second word as “very old men”. Anyone with a Greek skill of 40% or more will know that the third word is a transcription of the Greek word for “burning”. Only someone with a Latin skill of 70% or more will know that this third word can also refer to a type of serpent. The message was made as a shorthand means of explaining to the garrison in Corinium that the work camp situated by the holm oaks grove was attacked by the Very Old Folk and a type of serpent.

Suddenly, a gasp will be heard from the body; the thrown military rider is still barely alive (Sanity loss 0/1 for viewing this). Within a minute, without be able to say anything understandable, he will die. The investigators may wish to bury the body since the unburied are often thought to haunt a place. If Bitucus the cook has accompanied the group he will

volunteer to bring news of the body and also the coded message to the fort at Corinium (the keeper should convince willing investigators not to do so as this would take them out of the rest of the adventure).

The Mutatio:

This staging post, the last on the westward road, is a small, one-story building with an office, stables, smithy, and storeroom. All seems empty. In the office are some documents; most of them are of little importance, but one seems to be a military survey of neighbouring territory, including the road crew camp and Dobunni village (see below), with a large circled area in the woods southwest from the mutatio (ownership of such a sensitive map by an investigator could be considered treason). The stables are empty but reek of the cloying scent of blood. In the back of the station is a smouldering pyre on which dead horses have been placed.

The station's two workers, the attendant Strabo and the stable boy Sulinus, may eventually be found hiding, huddled together in fear, under some hay in the stables. Having heard the group arrive and unsure of the investigators' identity and motives they thought it most prudent to hide. After being appeased, they will explain that yesterday a soldier walked to the station from the west, in great pain, his body horribly deformed by bulges. This soldier quickly showed his warrant and rode off east on the horse Velox, but not before having slit the throats of the three other horses, to ensure that no one could use them to follow him. Out of earshot of the Celtic goldsmith Comux, the workers may confide their suspicion that the road crew was assailed by a savage Celtic warband in the night. If they find out the fate of the soldier, both of the workers will be insistent that someone with a horse must go to Corinium and alert the garrison there of trouble. If asked about the words on the message, the workers will say that they have heard the term “Veterimmi” having been used by some of the soldiers and messengers in the

region concerning some of the inhabitants of the neighboring woods. They will also explain that “Ilices” probably refers to the large grove of holm oaks not far from the Sabrina River and only a few miles west; it is there that the road ends at the road crew camp.

If the Celtic goldsmith Comux is with the group he will tell the investigators that not far a path through the woods towards the north leads to the Dobunni village from which he comes which is located in a clearing only a couple miles away. He may try to convince the investigators to go to the village for aid and perhaps information too. They may be understandably suspicious of his intentions. Instead the group may continue straight west to the road work camp (see below); once they find it abandoned in odd circumstances they may then reconsider and make their way to the Dobunni village.

THE VILLAGE:

The Dobunni village is a group of two dozen or so large huts strewn about a large clearing. There are a number of animal enclosures for horses, pigs, and chickens. At one end there is a sacred area with altars and piles of skulls of dead enemies (an observant investigator might notice that a few of the old skulls seem to be quite small, though they are clearly not the immature heads of children; they are remnants from wars with the Very Old Folk generations ago). Young men of the tribe, well-built and tattooed, train their horses or practice combat. Women with children work small farm plots.

The entrance of the group will cause a bit of a stir among the villagers. The investigators will be quickly led to the chieftain, Mandubracius. Although, as he says, he is unhappy by the newly imposed Roman taxes he wishes to be a good ally of Rome and he embraces the investigators as friends. The investigators will be invited to feast and stay the night and they may well have some unwarranted anxieties about being the victims of a sacrifice. They may be especially uneasy at the sight of

the white-clad druid Senicianus, who stands watching quietly at a distance, since druidism is considered a dangerous, outlawed religion. An intrepid investigator may question the druid, who, if he feels comfortable, may reveal some details about the Very Old Folk. He, or someone else in the village, will warn the group not to venture outside of the village at night.

After dusk, torches are lit all around the village and sentries posted. For the feast, all will be seated on the ground in a circle around low tables. The group will be around the chieftain, as his guests. They will be served beer, mead, or wine as desired and a little bread as well as fish on spits and some modest greens. Any investigator who impresses the Dobunni, through tales or acts of bravery, or friendly advances, may be given a broach with a horse with three tails (a magical amulet, as seen below).

Through some coaxing, Bodurix the bard may be asked to sing of the old inhabitants of the woods. He will tell tales of the little people who fought with the Dobunni ancestors when they first arrived in this land. One story will involve the attack of serpents, the “children of the ancient peoples, doing their bidding”, on the noble steed belonging to an ancient chieftain. The horse fought them off valiantly and killed them all, but not before he was bit in the rump. He sweated for days and days but survived the bite and from out of the the bite marks arose two tails, which remained his who life as a testament of his valiant struggle. It is this three-tailed steed which is depicted on Dobunni coinage and jewelry.

Suddenly, near the end of the feast, a war horn blast by a sentry on the perimeter of the village is heard. Then the horses (including those of the investigators), which have been kept together in a paddock, are seen to spook and run off out of camp, their tails on fire. The sentry explains that a wind blew out the torches on his side and then he heard scurrying in the underbrush. A search will find that nothing was taken from the camp except

chickens on the other side of the sentry's post (the incident with the horses having acted as a distraction). Young men from a neighboring Celtic village are blamed for this tomfoolery by many in the village.

The Forest:

Some of the young Dobunni warriors will be willing to accompany the group and track the horses and chicken thieves in the morning. The horses have scattered in various directions; for each hour of searching roll percentile dice: 01-20: three horses found; 21-50: two horses found; 51-80: one horse found; 81-00: no horses found. Randomly determine if a Dobunni horse or an investigator's horse has been found; half of the recovered horses will be too injured from burning wounds to ride for a prolonged period. On the other hand, the trail of the chicken thieves leads south through the forest and is made up of small, child-like bare footprints (smaller than those of teenagers pulling a prank). Eventually the trail leads back towards the road and beyond into the forest. At this stage the group may wish to follow the road west to get help from the road work crew.

The Road Work Camp:

The road work camp is in a clearing by a large holm oaks grove. The crew, made up of soldiers and a few civilian helpers, has been in the process of cutting down trees, digging the path for the road, and constructing the road in various layers of soil and gravel then cobbled stone. The camp is comprised of a dozen sleeping tents, sheltered work areas, and piles of stone, lumber, and tools. No person or animal is to be seen. A careful examination of the tents will reveal traces of blood and a sticky black liquid; it will be obvious that the crew was attacked at night (two nights before) while many were asleep. A successful Spot Hidden roll will reveal that many snakes left trails in the clearing. A successful Track skill roll will uncover evidence that bodies were dragged into the dark grove of holm oaks to the south.

The Holm Oaks Grove:

As the group goes further into the woods they find that the trees become more gnarled and deformed, with bulging burls and large twisted branches. Although leafless, the top branches, interlinked, still form a dark and dense canopy overhead, letting through virtually no sunlight. The air is stagnant too and though there is no wind the trees seem to sway, as if of their own volition. No animals are seen or heard and any of the rescued horses brought into the grove will whiny and neigh, stamping their hooves and looking about crazily, and eventually will run off. The eerie atmosphere will cause a 1/1D4 Sanity loss. Anyone who has failed this Sanity roll may inadvertently wander off and be divided from the group. Finding themselves alone will cost yet another Sanity roll of 1/1D4 Sanity loss.

The Vipers' Nest:

Soon, the grove will be suffused with an eerie phosphorescence; it is the "foxfire" which emanates from decaying wood. On each dead tree there is seen a rude carving of a face with a three peaked crown (in fact a cockscomb), a "god unknown". Underfoot the soil is soft and wet, and soon the trail of small feet will be completely lost. Black liquid gurgles and bubbles from the ground, while ebony ichor drips down from the branches above. Dark coiled lianas twine around the rotten tree trunks. Soon it will be realized that the trees' crooked roots writhe on the ground and slap against the investigators' feet (1/1D4 Sanity loss). Then suddenly the roots turn into vicious serpents who attack the investigators. Any investigator or other member of the tracking party wearing or carrying a Dobunni amulet (which all the Celts have) will be protected from attack (though they may not understand why they are not being attacked). For all others roll a 1D6 for the serpent attack (+1 if armed with a torch, which helps keep the serpents at bay): 1: Dipsas; 2: Haemorrhoids; 3: Chelydrus; 4: Prester; 5: Seps; 6: No Attack.

Statistics for the serpents can be found at the end of this adventure.

The Hill of the Very Old Folk:

If the investigators continue further, having survived the serpent attack, they will find the ground rising. Ahead is the hill on which the last of the area's Very Old Folk dwell amidst their ancient standing stones. In the centre of their mud hut village is a large cauldron of black liquid in which Roman soldiers from the road work crew, roosters from the Dobunni village, and serpents from the dark holm oaks grove have been thrown together in a ghastly black liquid stew.

Before the investigators will be able to approach the hilltop, the Very Old Folk, apprised of their coming, will invoke Abrasax from the stew. The different parts thrown into it form the composite being Abrasax, who has the torso of a Roman soldier, snake legs, and a rooster's head, and is armed with whip and shield (1/1D6 Sanity loss to view Abrasax). Once out of the cauldron, Abrasax will rush down the hill toward the group, using his whip and snake legs against all who have trespassed into the grove. The Dobunni broaches are of no help against Abrasax.

CONCLUSION:

In all likelihood, the investigators will turn back after the serpent attack, as the Very Old Folk want, or at the very least after facing Abrasax. If they make it to the Very Old Folk village, they will find that without their minions to control, these diminutive people are pathetic and scared. They will try their best to hide in trees or shrubs and if cornered will bite, punch, and kick. The Very Old Folk have little of interest in their village except for some stolen pots, tools, and weapons. If the Very Old Folk somehow manage to capture the investigators they will sacrifice them to their "god unknown" on an altar by the ancient standing stones.

The survivors of the group should try to send word to the advance Roman troops to the west or at least the fort of Corinium in the east concerning the trouble lurking in the woods of Britannia (if Bitucus or someone else was already sent, a vexillation will be awaiting the group at the road crew camp). The investigators will be rewarded for such information and for bringing back or burying the body of the snake-bitten messenger soldier. Finally, their names may be long sung by future Dobunni bards if they actually manage to capture and bring back to civilization with them some of the Very Old Folk themselves.

STATISTICS

AT THE MANSIO

Marcus Vinius Lurco, Age 43, Innkeeper

STR 12 CON 14 SIZ 13 INT 14 POW 11
DEX 14 APP 11 EDU 12 SAN 55 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Languages: Latin 80%, Celtic 70%

Skills: Accounting 60%, Bargain 50%, Civics 42%,
Empire 44%, Fast Talk 33%, Other Kingdom (Celtic)
59%, Ride Horse 56%

Bitucus, Age 26, Cook

STR 15 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 11 POW 12
DEX 14 APP 13 EDU 9 SAN 60 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Languages: Celtic 60%, Latin 39%

Skills: Cooking 60%, First Aid 45%, Fist/Punch 70%,
Small Knife 60%, Repair/Devise 42%

Caradoc, Age 52, Wainwright

STR 13 CON 11 SIZ 13 INT 12 POW 14
DEX 15 APP 10 EDU 11 SAN 70 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Languages: Celtic 68%, Latin 49%

Skills: Animal Training 34%, Bargain 29%, Craft (Car-
pentry) 76%, Craft (Metalworking) 68%, Drive 57%,
Repair/Devise 55%, Ride Horse 45%

Vindica, Age 24, Waitress/Prostitute

STR 11 CON 14 SIZ 10 INT 14 POW 11
DEX 14 APP 15 EDU 9 SAN 55 HP 12

Damage Bonus: -

Languages: Celtic 45%, Latin 33%

Skills: Bargain 40%, Conceal 44%, Occult 20%, Persuade 88%, Potions 26%

Senecio, Age 12, Stable Boy

STR 8 CON 10 SIZ 9 INT 12 POW 11
DEX 14 APP 11 EDU 10 SAN 55 HP 10

Damage Bonus: -

Languages: Celtic 60%, Latin 41%

Skills: Animal Training 55%, Drive 20%, Ride Horse 51%, Swim 24%

Gaius Calidius, Age 55, Entrepreneur

STR 12 CON 14 SIZ 11 INT 16 POW 12
DEX 12 APP 14 EDU 14 SAN 60 HP 13

Damage Bonus: -

Languages: Latin 75%, Greek 60%, Celtic 45%

Skills: Accounting 40%, Bargain 34%, Civics 45%, Empire 66%, Fast Talk 35%, Library Use 20%, Other Kingdom (Celtic) 35%, Ride Horse 50%, Status 67%, Write Greek 40%, Write Latin 65%

Paulla, Age 48, Calidius's Wife

STR 10 CON 13 SIZ 9 INT 14 POW 11
DEX 14 APP 13 EDU 14 SAN 55 HP 11

Damage Bonus: -

Languages: Latin 70%, Greek 20%

Skills: Civics 16%, Persuade 45%, Ride Horse 38%, Status 60%, Swim 75%, Write Latin 44%

Comux, Age 36, Goldsmith

STR 13 CON 12 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 11
DEX 15 APP 13 EDU 12 SAN 55 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Languages: Celtic 65%, Latin 55%

Skills: Animal Training 20%, Bargain 40%, Craft (Metalwork) 70%, Listen 20%, Natural World 35%, Ride Horse 71%, Sneak 35%, Swim 35%, Track 30%

AT THE MUTATIO

Strabo, Age 46, Station Attendant

STR 11 CON 14 SIZ 13 INT 12 POW 13
DEX 12 APP 11 EDU 12 SAN 65 HP 14

Damage Bonus: -

Languages: Latin 60%, Celtic 10%

Skills: Civics 56%, Conceal 40%, Drive 67%, Empire 45%, Hide 24%, Other Kingdom (Celtic) 14%, Own Kingdom 40%, Ride Horse 45%, Write Latin 50%

Sulinus, Age 14, Stable Boy

STR 11 CON 11 SIZ 12 INT 13 POW 12
DEX 13 APP 13 EDU 12 SAN 60 HP 12

Damage Bonus: -

Languages: Celtic 60%, Latin 50%

Skills: Animal Training 55%, Conceal 33%, Drive 20%, Own Kingdom 34%, Hide 24%, Ride Horse 51%
At the Village

Mandubracius, Age 40, Chieftain

STR 12 CON 14 SIZ 13 INT 14 POW 11
DEX 14 APP 11 EDU 12 SAN 55 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Languages: Celtic 70%, Latin 60%

Skills: Dodge 44%, First Aid 45%, Long Sword 55%, Natural World 47%, Own Kingdom 50%, Ride Horse 78%, Persuade 50%, Tactics 39%, Track 40%

Senicianus, Age 60, Druid

STR 10 CON 14 SIZ 11 INT 16 POW 16
DEX 12 APP 10 EDU 14 SAN 80 HP 13

Damage Bonus: -

Languages: Celtic 76%, Latin 45%

Skills: Art (Orate) 45%, Insight 72%, Natural World 65%, Navigate 44%, Occult 52%, Own Kingdom 80%, Persuade 43%, Short Sword 36%

Spell: Create Amulet

Bodurix, Age 48, Bard

STR 11 CON 13 SIZ 13 INT 14 POW 12
DEX 13 APP 12 EDU 14 SAN 60 HP 13

Damage Bonus: -

Languages: Celtic 82%, Latin 23%

Skills: Art 35%, Bargain 32%, Insight 30%, Own Kingdom 61%, Persuade 76%, Sing 54%

Typical Young Dobunni Warrior

STR 13 CON 14 SIZ 13 INT 12 POW 13
DEX 13 APP 14 EDU 12 SAN 65 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Languages: Celtic 60%, Latin 24%

Skills: Agriculture 25%, Animal Training 36%, Conceal 29%, Dodge 38%, First Aid 40%, Fishing 44%, Hide 21%, Long Sword 45%, Natural World 30%, Own Kingdom 25%, Ride Horse 75%, Sneak 35%, Swim 35%, Track 30%

BEYOND THE HOLM OAKS GROVE

The Serpents

The poison of any of the serpents may be sucked out with a successful First Aid roll. If done within 10 minutes of the bite the victim will no longer suffer any damage. Otherwise, amputation may be the only means of saving the victim before the poison spreads.

1. **The Dipsas:** Its bite is painless but as its venom courses through the body, a feeling of fire spreads. Moisture soon leaves the body, including sweat, tears, and saliva. This leads to an obsessive need to drink, though no liquid will satisfy this thirst.

Weapon: Bite 50% (no damage)

Dehydration Damage: 1D6 every 10 minutes or 1D4 every 10 minutes if drinking any liquid

Armor: 1 point scales

Sanity Loss: 1/1D4 Sanity loss to suffer the bite; 0/1 Sanity loss to watch someone else suffer the bite

2. **The Haemorrhois:** The bite of this huge snake causes bleeding from every orifice in the body, including sweating blood.

Weapon: Bite 35%, damage 1D6 + POT 20 poison every 10 minutes

Armor: 1 point scales

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6 Sanity loss to watch someone else suffer the bite

3. **The Chelydrus:** This amphibious serpent has an attractive silvery sheen. As it slithers it leaves a smoking trail and when it wraps itself around a victim it sears it.

Weapon: Contact 60%, damage 1D6 + 2 while in contact

Armor: 4 point scales

Sanity Loss: none

4. **The Prester:** Its bite causes first redness and then swelling around the wound. Soon, however the whole body will bloat until it is a huge, featureless mass. Eventually the heart will fail under all its new weight.

Weapon: Bite 44%

Bloating Damage: 1D4 + 1 every 30 minutes

Armor: 1 point scales

Sanity Loss: 0/1 Sanity loss when bloating; 1/1D6 Sanity loss to watch someone else bloating

5. **The Seps:** This small snake's bite causes skin, then muscle and sinew, then bone to dissolve, until all that is left of a person is a sickening pool.

Weapon: Bite 30%

Dissolving Damage: 1D6 + 2 every 15 minutes

Armor: 1 point scales

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity loss while dissolving; 1/1D6 Sanity loss to watch someone else dissolving

Abrasax (Unique Entity)

Abrasax is the name given by the Greeks to a powerful and mysterious deity, and this name is numerically equivalent to 365, the number of days in the year. This entity is recognized by different sects in various ways (such as a creator deity by Gnostics or as an angel by Jews or simply a powerful entity by pagan magicians). Abrasax has the torso of a Roman soldier, snake legs, and a rooster's head, and is armed with whip and shield. Abrasax can be summoned, or rather called into being, through a ritual in which soldiers, serpents, and roosters, are combined in a cauldron over which the spell Invoke Abrasax is spoken. If defeated, Abrasax will collapse into his dead component parts.

STR 60 CON 45 SIZ 65 INT 5 POW 20
DEX 15 HP 55

Damage Bonus: +6D6

Weapons: Snake Leg Bites (one at a time) 40%, damage 1D6 +db, Whip 65%, damage 3D6 +db

Armor: Breastplate 20, Shield 35

Spells: N/A

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6 Sanity loss to see Abrasax

Typical Member of the Very Old Folk

STR 8 CON 10 SIZ 7 INT 11 POW 16
DEX 13 APP 7 EDU 55 SAN 70 HP 9

Damage Bonus: -1D4

Languages: Very Old Folk Tongue 55%, Celtic 10%

Skills: Bite 34%, Climb 45%, Conceal 88%, Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Dodge 50%, Fist/Punch 40%, Hide 80%, Hunting 41%, Insight 25%, Kick 15%, Listen 40%, Natural World 52%, Own Kingdom 50%, Sneak 70%, Spot Hidden 45%

Spells: Control Serpents, Invoke Abrasax

NEW SPELLS

CONTROL SERPENTS

Range: 1 mile from serpents

Duration: 10 minutes

Cost: 3 MP

Sanity: 1

Resistance: those with a Dobunni amulet may not be attacked by controlled serpents

With a successful casting of this spell, serpents of the five types listed above found in the forest can be controlled.

INVOKE ABRASAX

Range: Sight

Duration: 4 hours preparation and then 10 minute spell

Cost: 1D10 +2 MP

Sanity: 1D6

Resistance: No

In a cauldron filled with the black liquid of the dark grove serpents, roosters, and human soldiers must be stewed for 4 hours. Then after a 10 minute vocal invocation, Abrasax will arise

to attack any trespassers. Abrasax will continue to attack until trespassers are killed or are outside of his domain of protection (in this case the forest).

I would like to thank the playtesters Jay Cottrell, Jason Demars, Rich Limoges, Andrew Rodgers, and Dean Valentino.

“DEFEAT STARTS ALWAYS WITH THE EYES: SEXTUS CALPURNIUS AGRICOLA AND THE ECHIDNA”

JOSEPH M. ISENBERG

As for the Harii, not only are they superior in strength to the other peoples I have just mentioned, but they minister to their savage instincts by trickery and clever timing. They black their shields and dye their bodies, and choose pitch-black nights for their battles. The shadowy, awe inspiring appearance of such a ghoulish army inspires mortal panic; for no enemy can endure a sight so strange and hellish. Defeat in battle starts always with the eyes.

Tacitus, *Germania*,
43 (Penguin Classics
edition, translated by
H.W. Mattingly)

KEEPER'S BACKGROUND:

“Defeat Starts Always with the Eyes” is designed as a short introductory scenario that can be played as a stand-alone adventure, or expanded into a campaign by the Keeper for a group of four to six investigators. The material presented should not prove overwhelmingly complicated for inexperienced players, and provides a partial introduction to various aspects of the Mythos, as well as an opportunity for more traditional forms of combat. The scenario is set in the year AD 158, late in the reign of the Emperor Antoninus Pius, in the province of Germania Superior. Germania Superior is a region which runs, roughly, from just north of the modern city of Mainz, to the modern city of Strasbourg. This province was frequently subjected to raids

for much of the period of Roman settlement, as well as the occasional revolt. A Keeper with an established campaign can therefore change the time of the setting quite easily, and simply rename the historical characters, and locate the setting within whichever imperial reign he desires. The action revolves around the raids of a pernicious Germanic tribe, the Harii, and so the location is fixed.

The scenario as written supposes that the investigators find themselves attached as the staff of the new governor of Germania Superior, Sextus Calpurnius Agricola. Sextus Calpurnius is an historic character, who really did govern Germania Superior in AD 158, late in the reign of Antoninus Pius. If the investigators already have a patron, it would be no complex matter simply to substitute him. If the investigators have some other reason to be wandering around the nether regions of the empire, then the Keeper can simply begin the action as stated, on a hill overlooking the mansio of Titus Adevinus. If, on the other hand, the opening seems somewhat forced, the Keeper can play out a brief introductory scene in Rome in which the investigators are brought into play, before beginning a long, but utterly uneventful, trudge northwards.

The action begins with the investigators travelling with the new governor of the province from the provincial town of Argentoratum (Strasbourg in France), north to the provincial capital, Moguntiacum (Mainz in Germany). This distance, perhaps 100 miles today, would take a Roman riding in ox-drawn carts perhaps as long as five days. Though histori-

cally, several sites are recorded along the route as possible stopping places, the scenario provides only one of any substance, a mansio operated by a wealthy equestrian contractor, Titus Adevinus Germanicus, at about the halfway point. When the investigators arrive, however, they find the mansio a plundered ruin, with most of its occupants massacred. From the sole immediate survivor, Adevina, the daughter of Titus Adevinus, the investigators can learn that many of the guests cannot be accounted for, nor can her father. Since mansio guests are, as a rule, travelling on official business, the capture of so many important hostages is not an auspicious start to the governorship of Sextus Calpurnius, who will eventually encourage the investigators to follow the raiders while he returns to Argenteratum to organize a more vigorous pursuit with the forces of the legion stationed there. A cursory investigation of the site will reveal that far more than a quick raid by a group of smelly, soot-covered barbarians is underway here. Eventually, the investigators will have to set off in pursuit of the Harii raiders, who have a fair head start, but who are impeded by loot and prisoners. The Harii are not without their own advantages, and if the investigators make poor tactical choices, they will quickly find that they have taken on more than they have bargained for.

The Harii are described in the *Cthulhu Invictus* source book at pp. 138 and 139. Superficially, the Harii appear only to have sent a raiding party farther from home than usual. This party has, nevertheless, some significant strength in the form of a small hunting horror bound to its service through an artifact supplied by Nyarlathotep. (A naughty keep-

Historical Note:

Sextus Calpurnius Agricola is a historic character. He first appears on the consular list for AD 154, as a suffect consul, serving, probably, for the latter part of that year. This would place his birth date as no later than the 110's and possibly earlier. Therefore, he will be in his late forties or early fifties at the start of this adventure. In AD 158, historically, Sextus Calpurnius is attested as the governor of Germania Superior. This was an unusually very peaceful time for that province, but this adventure is going to tinker with that fact. If he enjoyed an average term length, he would have remained in Germania Superior for three years, until AD 161. From AD 163 for an uncertain length of time, he was governor of Britannia. Sources suggest a variety of dates down to and including AD 168, with AD 166 seeming most likely. In that time, he confronted some sort of rebellion or invasion, which led to the burning of two towns. During his governorship, the Antonine Wall was abandoned, and the Hadrianic Wall again became the frontier. In AD 168 and 169, he was governor of Lower Moesia, where he died, perhaps in the fighting of the Marcomannic War, or from the plague then decimating the population of the Empire.

This individual is not the same as Cnaeus Julius Agricola, the subject of Tacitus' biography. Cnaeus Julius Agricola was born over a century before the adventure starts, and lived from AD 40-93.

The author is aware of no surviving images of Sextus Calpurnius Agricola, though several surviving inscriptions mentioning him have been found in Britain.

er may wish to substitute the full-sized version found in the core rules, but bear in mind that only one hand weapon available in the *Cthulhu Invictus* rules is able to actually damage the beast.) The Harii raid is really a cover for a treasonable plot coordinated by servants of Nyarlathotep on both sides of the limes, or border. The Harii, like all Germanic tribes, are chronically short of iron, and therefore are busy raiding iron production dedicated to the use of the legions garrisoning Germania Supe-

rior; Titus Adevinus' mansio was located next to a major forge. Significant numbers of weapons were stored in the mansio by Titus Adevinus who was on the Roman side of the conspiracy. While this seems trivial enough, the Germans have a further agenda of their own, and are seeking artifacts revealed to them by the Pool of Shadows, the avatar of Nyarlathotep worshipped by the Harii. The Roman part of the conspiracy and the nature of the artifacts are left as hooks for the Keeper to base a campaign on if he wishes. Clearly, the Roman side of the conspiracy extends well into the provincial government at least, and perhaps stretches as far back as Rome itself. The artifacts are found on the site of the mansio by the investigators, exactly where they have been dropped by a particularly ham-handed Harii. (His fate, when the failure is discovered, doesn't bear thinking about.) To succeed in unraveling the immediate mystery, the investigators need 'merely' to thwart the Harii raiding party, while protecting their patron, Sextus Calpurnius.

SCENE I: ON THE ROAD:

The Keeper should read the following to the players, or convey its general ideas:

"Roman roads are perfectly straight, perfectly paved, and, it seems, perfectly endless. You have for weeks been travelling as part of the official retinue of Sextus Calpurnius Agricola, the new governor of the province of Germania Superior, just embarking on a three-year term, in the spring of the year of the consulships of Sextus Sulpicius Tertullus and Quintus Tineius Sacerdos Clemens, the twenty-first year of the reign of Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, and the 911th year ab urbe condita (vulga dicta "the year AD 158"). Three years away from Rome. Three years away from Rome in a hellish hole of a place. Italy was a warm and sunny place. The Alpine mountains were cold, and sparsely

settled, and impoverished, but they were not sinister. In other words, they were not like this Germania Superior. The place is called Germania Superior, because it is upstream from Germania Inferior, not because there is anything decent about it. These German lands brood with malevolence and ill-health. Cornelius Tacitus described the place, about fifty years earlier, as "in general, covered by either bristling forests or foul swamps." Certainly, Tacitus was not lying about this. Dark, forbidding, primeval forests stretch along both sides of the road, and block out any direct view of the sun, most of the time, for hours on end. At best a filtered light glimmers faintly through dreary, gnarled, half-dead ancient trees. Looking directly above the road, on most days, the party sees only a grey, featureless overcast. No sign of human habitation can be seen in these parts. Occasionally, the road breaks out into a clearing, or takes a sharp 90-degree turn to reveal a trackless, bottomless bog in the path. Such a fetid damp spot is even more uninviting than the dismal forests it supplants. Fogs of water vapor, or marsh gas, or something worse and even more unwholesome rise from the viscous brown surface. The air around the stagnant pool reeks of the slow, offensive, decay of dead and dying plant matter.

Rarely, the travelers will glimpse the local inhabitants, foul, dirty, degenerate looking creatures tending cattle. Even the cattle appear unwholesome; hopelessly puny, with scraggly heads and insignificant horns compared to those found on their southern cousins. Every thing, and every being and every person in the place looks contaminated, derelict, and unhealthy. This will be home for the next three years for the Governor, and his supporters, the investigators. 'Go along with the new governor as one of his clients,' that was your thought. Sextus Calpurnius is a man on the rise in Rome. He is sent out when the Emperor himself, Antoninus Pius, has a problem. A one-man vigiles' fire brigade, putting out the fires of the Roman Empire. Sounded like a good idea at the time. Of course, fires rare-

ly erupt in fashionable, well-managed properties. They erupt in hovels. So also with the fires of Empire. Crises never seem to erupt in fashionable, wealthy provinces, like Egypt, but only in festering, disease-ridden pestholes, like Germania Superior. And that is very unfortunate, because the pay accorded to the staff of a provincial governor, as with any other bureaucratic salary in Rome, is laughably small, officially. However, in most respectable provinces, there are abundant opportunities for ambitious followers to make money opportunistically, outside of the official salary; to gain a certain amount of fame; to rise in the world, and to pocket the occasional piece of loot through extra-curricular activities. Here, in Germania Superior, there is quite literally nothing to be opportunistic about; nothing to gain, except illness; nothing rising, except rheumatism; no one to notice anything to become famous about, and finally, nothing, absolutely nothing, worth stealing. There isn't even any decent wine, and the mediocre swill served in the provincial town of Argentoratum was expensive enough, though there are a few straggling vineyards here and there introduced by settled veterans. The locals seem to make do with a wretched fermented grain sludge called 'beer.' Three years of this wet, miserable dump.

On the positive side, travelling on official business has its advantages. Sextus Calpurnius has, very efficiently, obtained official passports for all of his retinue, entitling everyone to free lodging at the mansios along the route. These villas, stationed every twenty miles or so, provide official travelers with more or less honest and more or less decent accommodations. Of course, like every scheme concocted by the Roman government, these are run by contractors, and, like every government contract, a fair amount of diddling goes on with payment and books. No one, so far, has had the courage to attempt to cheat a former consul with the ear of the Emperor, like Sextus Calpurnius, and so, that, at least, has been a pretty fair situation.

Until you arrived in Germania Superior, it was a fair situation. The distance between Argentoratum, the dreary provincial town at the southern end of the province, and Moguntiacum, the dreary provincial town that serves as the provincial capital, is a five day journey. No mansio at any point along the road, except one, and that only because its contractor, Titus Adevinus Germanicus, had another contract, to smelt iron and make weapons for the legions, set up his works at the site, and found that he could make money and fill another contract by adding lodging. Sextus Calpurnius knew his business, and made sure that everyone in his official party was well provided for, with big, heavy, travelling wagons pulled by four oxen, and a separate one for his own use. In addition, he took along a detachment of the legion stationed at Argentoratum—the VII Legio, Augusta. One can sleep in these dreadful squeaking, creaking raedae, supposedly, and last night, for the first time in over a month on the road, you have, or at least you tried to. Now, you look forward to breaking your journey for a day or two at the mansio and workshops of Titus Adevinus, a prosperous equestrian contractor.”

The investigators and others trudge along the road, and up a hill. As they emerge on the crest of the hill, they break out of the forest for a bit. It has been cleared away to reveal a valley running east and west. The main road, the road they are on, runs north and south. A second road, less important and less well maintained, runs off to the west along the valley, off towards some hills further away. At the intersection of the two roads lies the mansio, villa, and forges of Titus Adevinus. The mansio itself is a massive structure, nearly three hundred feet long, and two stories tall. The lower story is built out of thick blocks of local limestone. The upper story is also solidly built, out of massive timbers, hewn from the rough primeval forest. The whole is roofed over by substantial red brick tiles. Off to one side stands a bath house, modest, but serviceable, and constructed from the same local stone and red

brick tile. It looks large enough to contain, as a Roman bath ought, both cold and hot bathing rooms, and a plunge bath, and perhaps a couple of other rooms as well. Near the bath house stands a modest rural villa, again of the local stone and the red brick tile. This must be the house of Titus Adevinus, the contractor operating the mansio. The main structure itself will contain room for both travelers, and their livestock, so there is no separate barn. The whole is surrounded by a sturdy fence.

On the other side of the main road, to the east, stands the other enterprise of Titus Adevinus, an iron smelting and forging workshop. This is clearly designed for large scale operations, and sited in such a way as not to disturb the comfort of the mansio guests. Four buildings, perhaps twenty-five feet wide and fifty feet long, serve as forges, and have substantial chimney structures. Another building of the same size, must serve as a workshop. Off to one side lies a heap of rust-colored iron ore. Charcoal sits in piles nearby as well. A barracks, a warehouse and a stable complete the picture. Clearly, the whole is a manifest symbol of Roman might and civilization in an otherwise uncivilized place, the barbaric wilderness of Germania Superior. It ought to deter all thought that the Romans are anything other than the permanent masters of the place. But there is just one detail—the whole site, which ought to be a hive of activity at mid-day, is as still as death, and flocks of crows have begun to move in. A light drizzle has also begun to blanket the area with dismal wetness.

SCENE II: THE PROPERTY OF TITUS ADEVINUS:

The mansio of Titus Adevinus is a charnel house. Here and there throughout the properties, an occasional resident tried to make a fight of it, and was cut down with the stab of a sword or the thrust of a spear. Most of the inhabitants, free and slave, guest and resident, male

and female, seem to have been herded out into the area between the villa, the mansio, and the bath house, and systematically slaughtered and dumped face down in the dirt. The cost for seeing this without further inspection on the part of an investigator is 0/1d3, for the Romans are quite used to death wholesale as well as retail. At the same time, each investigator should be asked to make a Spot Hidden roll. Those who pass the roll take a closer look at the corpses, and discover that all of the corpses found in this outdoor area have been savagely rent by the teeth or claws of some ferocious beast, NOT killed by any human weapon. Additionally, in each case, and in every case, some appendage of the body has been severed and carried off; severed with sharp, surgical precision, but with neither system nor method. Rather, here a hand is gone, there a foot, somewhere else an entire leg, yet elsewhere a whole arm. A still closer examination and some thought reveals that in no case is the head gone. A second Spot Hidden roll, or an investigator turning over corpses, shows that in each case, and in every case, the eyes have been systematically cut from their sockets with talon or razor-like precision, so that instead of laying face down in the dirt, the unfortunate victim stares up, eyeless, at the investigator with vacant, bloodied, lid-less sockets. The penalty for this realization is 1/1d4+1, and is in addition to the foregoing penalty. Should the investigators examine the few scattered corpses, they will find them in same condition. Players may be understandably shy about making a third Spot Hidden roll; nevertheless, the Keeper should call for one, and, if passed, inform the players that at least one of the male victims has a gold ring on his hand, which has not been stolen, indicative of senatorial or equestrian rank.

The bath house, not surprisingly, is quite empty. Some odds and ends, like bath oils, scents, and bathing tools remain, waiting for use. The place has been neither looted nor damaged, it seems. The water, like the residents, has assumed room temperature.

The mansio is a substantial two story structure, built around a courtyard. It has been

systematically plundered and pillaged, and literally nothing of value remains here, though the investigators will undoubtedly wish to see this for themselves. Neither the bathhouse nor the mansio have plans provided, as there is nothing to find or describe in them. Should Keepers wish to devise such plans to supply them to players, a good starting place can be found by researching the Godmanchester mansio, at:

<http://www.godmanchester.net/history/roman%20mansio.htm>.

This structure was over 300 feet long, and something over 80 feet wide. It had at least 27 rooms on the ground floor, and presumably, a like number above in a second story. The mansio of Titus Adevinus, at an intersection of two important roads, is scarcely less important, and is similarly sized. In addition to lodging, a mansio would have been equipped to provide official travelers with supplies, spare horses, wagons, and repairs to wagons. Investigation will show that the stables are quite empty, though the wagons are still there.

Should the players think to investigate the iron works of Titus Adevinus nearby, they will find similar charnel wreckage. The bodies of over fifty men, slaves, show that they have been systematically killed and mutilated. None of the output of the foundry remains, it having been taken by the raiders, along with the horses and mules of the establishment.

The villa of Titus Adevinus is a different matter. Should the investigators approach the building, they see the door standing wide open. In the middle of the doorway, no Spot Hidden roll required, is a plain wooden box, with a hinged lid. The corner of a piece of parchment or papyrus is sticking out from underneath the lid, which is closed.

Keeper's note: Of course, the box is simply a distraction. In other role-playing games, the players will rightly or wrongly suspect the box to be a trap, and the characters will fondle it or prod it for hours, as they seek to avoid the danger inherent in opening the box. If they wish to do so, let them, as anything that wastes

time ultimately costs lives, though the players do not know this yet. Sometimes, to borrow a concept from Freud, a box is just a box. In this scenario, it is what is in the box that causes all the trouble to begin with.

Inside the box are a slip of papyrus with some writing on it, and two black stone objects. The paper contains a one sentence message: "T: You are correct. Our friends will be very interested in acquiring these objects. M." The two stone objects turn out to be grotesque idols, carved from some black, greasy soapstone, unfamiliar to the investigators. The first, crudely carved, about the size of two fists held together side by side, depicts a weird and sinister creature. The top half depicts an enormous human female, grossly overweight, with massive folds of flesh, and half a dozen pendulous breasts of disproportionate size, and wild, flowing hair. Below, where legs should be, there is a serpentine body with two tails. It has some detail representing, perhaps, scales. Little bits of yellow ochre or paint remain in the carved crevasses of the scales.

The second idol, made of the same black, oily, material, has no human attributes at all. Rather, it is some winged, clawed, reptilian thing, with a single wing, and an oval face. Its carved mouth reveals a row of irregular, jagged, fangs. A successful Cthulhu Mythos roll will reveal it to be a primitive depiction of a hunting horror, but failing that, the investigators can deduce only that it is some unpleasant mythic creature. To see these objects induces a sense of unease at their repulsive appearance, and calls for a sanity roll of 0/1d2.

Keeper's Note: The Harii wanted these objects, for purposes which are left vague in this scenario. This was the main reason for their raid, though, of course, the opportunity of securing a large number of weapons made in Titus Adevinus' foundry was not to be passed up either. In the confusion surrounding the raid, they were left behind by the warrior entrusted with the task of securing them. His embarrassment after the discovery of this omission was profound, but extremely short-

lived. What these objects do, and why the Harii wanted them is left entirely to the Keeper's discretion.

In addition to the box, a trail of blood can be seen to lead into the villa and across its otherwise well-kept floors. Strangely enough, nothing seems to have been taken from this building, though all of the doors have been opened, and the contents of the rooms tossed about as though they were searched. The trail of blood leads to one of the back rooms of the villa. There, the investigators find a door that is closed, and barred from the inside. The door does not fit perfectly, and a thin gleam of light shines from behind it, indicating that the trail of blood continues into this room. If the investigators choose to force the door, it gives way readily. The Harii simply didn't bother to inspect this room, for some reason. It proves to be the library of Titus Adevinus. A rather small table has scrolls and wax tablets untidily stacked and scattered about. All the walls are lined with scrolls and scroll cases, with small tags hanging from each scroll, indicating the material within. Most are accounts and business records, but Titus also had a fair eye for literature, it seems, and a wide range of works are contained within.

In the middle of the desk, one scroll lies partly unrolled, and is held down by two weights, a box for grinding ink, and a pen. One of the weights is the bust of a severe-looking Roman. He is clean-shaven in the style of the old Republic, and the bust is made of the same black, greasy stone as the two idols. A Civics or Empire roll will reveal the information that the bust represents Marcus Junius Brutus, the assassin of Julius Caesar. Titus Adevinus has obviously chosen to make some dangerous political associations if he chooses to keep a bust like this on the property, since Brutus is a beloved figure of those of republican sentiments. An investigator will need to investigate the scroll more closely in order to find out what it says. The investigators may well be drawn to look around the back of the desk, for this is where the trail of blood leads.

In the process of investigating the desk and the scroll, or the trail of blood, the investigators will find the body of a handsome young man, dressed in the garb of a slave. He has suffered a terrible abdominal wound, from a spear or arrow; whatever has pierced his body has fallen out or been pulled out and left behind somewhere. By the body, a flickering oil lamp gutters and gives off a thin wisp of smoke. The slave, in his early or mid twenties, is well-groomed. His hands are fouled with his own gore, obviously, but they also have ink stains. Unlike all of the bodies in the mansion grounds and in the foundry grounds, this individual was neither mutilated nor was his eyes gouged out.

To initial appearances, the poor unfortunate is quite dead. Should an investigator think to check, or should an investigator pass a Spot Hidden roll, the body actually displays the faintest signs of life. Perhaps a very shallow breath can be detected, or a very irregular and weak pulse.

This, however, is scant consolation, for the wound should be mortal, and no sort of medical skill roll is needed to deduce this.

The victim has a very unusual looking amulet made from iron hanging around his neck. It depicts a crude figure of a human being, with two claw-like appendages for hands, and a curving, scythe-like blade in place of a head and face. A single cheap gem, perhaps a small garnet, fills a spot on the scythe blade where an eye might be placed. The whole thing is held on the victim's neck by an inexpensive twist of thread or cord. A Cthulhu Mythos roll will suggest that this might be a representation of an avatar of Nyarlathotep; otherwise the investigators will decide that it is simply extremely ugly and barbaric.

As the investigators explore the room, or stand around debating what to do next, the little oil flame near the body begins to flicker and build, and to give off more smoke. As the flame builds and gutters, the smoke is drawn into a swirling vortex around the body of the slave. After a few minutes of this, the smoke

and mist resolves itself into the visage of the dead slave. The sanity cost to see this is 1/1d6, for as a rule, Romans do not care to be exposed to the lemurs, the spirits, of the dead.

The legs of the ghost seem to be moving towards the investigators, or towards the closest one, however, the feet of the ghost remain firmly rooted in his body, and he makes no progress. This particular ghost seems to have a pleasant enough demeanor, and in no way seems angry or threatening. After a few moments of moving, and making no progress, the ghost will beckon the investigators to approach him. Whether one eventually approaches or not, the ghost will eventually beckon to the scroll lying on the desk, and will make no move to interfere with anyone reading it. Should the investigators prove reluctant, the ghost will gesture more frantically, and eventually begin to look impatient and exasperated.

The scroll is nothing more than a copy of Tacitus' Germania, unrolled to the section on the Harii, reprinted above at the start of the scenario. A different hand, which will turn out to be that of Titus Adevinus, has added a few remarks in the margins, however. The whole text reads:

As for the Harii, not only are they superior in strength to the other peoples I have just mentioned, but they minister to their savage instincts by trickery and clever timing. They black their shields and dye their bodies, and choose pitch-black nights for their battles. The shadowy, awe inspiring appearance of such a ghoulish army inspires mortal panic; for no enemy can endure a sight so strange and hellish. Defeat in battle starts always with the eyes.

The Harii have a standard, in the form of a dragon, like many of the Germanic tribes, made of a bronze head, and black and yellow painted cloth to provide a tail. This standard,

they say, was a gift to them from their god, who resides in a pool in the center of their lands. The Harii also claim that this standard is the home of their protecting spirit, a hunting wolf, though this seems barbaric superstition. The Harii also claim that they have another gift from their god, a curved horn, in shape like the horns used by Roman legions, which they can use to communicate with the hunting wolf and to bring them to them in times of need. A survivor who claims to have seen these from a distance one day thinks that the standard is just a standard, and the horn is just a Roman horn, perhaps taken from the legions lost by Augustus many years ago. The survivor did not see the wolf of the Harii, and I can find no one who has.

An Occult roll will call to mind that the Harii do worship some unwholesome entity through a fetid pool somewhere in Germania Magna, though no more details will be forthcoming. A successful Cthulhu Mythos roll may at the Keeper's discretion allow the investigators to associate this fell deity with Nyarlathotep.

As the investigators work through the scroll, they are interrupted by a young lady, dirty, disheveled, but clearly of some rank, bursting through the door, trailed by two guards from Sextus Calpurnius' entourage. The guards are ineffectually trying to slow or stop her. One guard begins apologizing: "Sorry, tribune. The young lady says she is Adevina Persephone, daughter of the owner. We figured you didn't want to be interrupted, but we couldn't just stop her, either...." At this point, the guards see the ghostly form and back away from the room, rapidly.

Adevina, at this point, notices the ghost as well, and collapses on the floor, wailing and screaming. "No, not Ahab as well, no, not him!" This goes on for some time. The ghost also looks genuinely distressed, and begins to

beckon one of the investigators, opening his arms for an embrace and attempting to move towards the investigator. The ghost, Ahab, also tries to speak, but no sound comes out.

Should an investigator take Ahab up on his offer, the smoke comprising the 'body' of the ghost will flow into the nose and mouth of the investigator, and Ahab will spend some time communicating with him; possessions by ghosts are usually bad ideas, but Ahab has spent most of the night and all day clinging to life in the hope that he might be able to tell his story and warn others. The investigator can be taken off into a separate room, and given the hand out "Ahab's story," to read. While the investigator is communicating with Ahab, he slumps heavily against the desk and cannot react to events.

Meanwhile, Adevina is quite overcome at seeing Ahab dead, and has begun to babble on her own, singing a song, in a clear, pretty voice, in Greek. The lyrics are not particularly poetic, and neither rhyme nor scan well by the standard of the day. They are clearly based upon some pre-existing poem, but Adevina is, in her misery, improvising as well:

*"I have seen the terrible monster,
The monster Ceto mother of monsters
bore, in a hollow cave
Bore in a hollow cave, and I have seen
the monster in a hollow cave
Echidna the monster, fierce and
heartless, and nothing like
Any mortal man and nothing like any
immortal god.
They say that Echidna is unlike man
because half of her
Is a fair-cheeked maiden, so they say,
but they lie
And half is a huge and loathsome
snake, so they say, and say truly.
They say Echidna eats living flesh.
That is true, but not
As they say in the recess of the holy
Earth, far below the sight of gods and*

men

No, there they lie.

*Echidna walks the face of holy Earth
itself, in darkest nights*

*For I have seen Echidna. I have seen
her feed, not in her cave of hollow earth*

*But here, among the mortal men,
unimpeded by the immortal gods*

*Among the mortal men and far from
the deathless gods*

*Leaving behind the famous home the
deathless gods gave her*

*She brings death to mortal men,
leaving her watch, gloomy Echidna*

*She comes above the ground, among
the Hariimoi,*

Immortal, ageless nymph, so they say.

*So they say, but I have seen Echidna
and I say they lie,*

No fair maiden she, like I,

*Foul snake, writhing, shifting black
and ochre in the night*

*Black as night but with scales flecked
in gold*

*One foul wing and one foul face very
old*

*A snake through and through, like all
of Ceto's spawn*

*Curse of mortal men and immortal
gods alike.*

At this point, the young lady subsides into largely incoherent babbling, though she will occasionally ask, "I wonder where my father could have got to." "Also, the staff is here, where are the guests?" This is interspersed with occasional tuneless singing from time to time. Any character who can make a Greek language roll, or an Edux5, roll will realize that the roots of her diatribe lie in Hesiod's Theogony, but deviate rapidly from the text. If no character can recognize this, then Ahab will tell the character with whom he is communicating which scroll on the scroll case contains

the relevant work. In the course of her babbling, Adevina begins to fiddle with a small amulet around her neck. It is an identical copy of the one worn by Ahab.

Keeper's Note: The original text of the Theogony is: *She bore another monster, terrible, in a hollow cave, Echidna, fierce of heart, nothing like any mortal man, unlike any immortal God, for half of her is a fair-cheeked girl with glancing eyes, but half is a huge and frightening speckled snake; she eats raw flesh in a recess of the holy earth. Down there she has a cave of hollow rock far from the deathless gods and mortal men; there the gods gave a famous home to her, and gloomy Echidna keeps her watch down there under the ground among the Arimoï, a nymph immortal and ageless all her days.*

Hesiod, Theogony (Penguin Classics ed., tr. Dorothea Wender)

Rather helpfully, Hesiod lists two Cetos. This one was a rather unpleasant sea goddess, who bore numerous revolting offspring including the Gorgons, as well as Echidna. Echidna, following in the family tradition, is also credited with a number of unpleasant descendants, most of whom had to be cleared out by Hercules or some other hero. Echidna is usually depicted as having a human upper half, sometimes with wings, sometimes not, and a serpentine lower half, sometimes with one tail, sometimes two. Investigators making a successful Cthulhu Mythos roll may, at the Keeper's discretion, decide that the description fits a hunting horror well, but it also fits any number of other creatures as well.

Meanwhile, Ahab may have been busy communicating with an investigator, slumped over the desk. The player with this investigator should be given the handout "Ahab's story," and removed from the rest of the group to study it. He may be given other information by the Keeper as coming from Ahab as well. The Keeper will have to make some decisions about this interaction, and about Ahab's ulti-

mate fate. The first decision is whether Ahab will answer questions, or whether he will stick to the information provided. The second decision is whether Ahab is helpful in any other way to the investigator trusting, or foolish, enough to embrace him. The Keeper may decide to allow this investigator to have the benefit of Ahab's knowledge by allowing the investigator to have a skill check in one of: Occult, Natural World, or Science, Judaism

After Ahab has finished his communication with the investigator, if any, the process reverses itself, and smoke proceeds to erupt from the investigator's mouth and nose, and to reform itself into the shape of Ahab. The Keeper is going to have to make a further decision about Ahab's fate, for Adevina has enough of a grip on herself to intervene in matters again.

Adevina has recovered somewhat, and begins to beg the investigators to help her to tend to Ahab, who needs treatment, "so he can get better." She refuses to accept any arguments on this score, and suggesting that he is mortally wounded or dead will only enrage her. She wishes to have two things done. First, she wishes to have the body moved to the small cave, which is nearby, so that the cool water may help soothe Ahab. Second, she seems to think that a poultice of ash, mud, and pomegranates will somehow help stabilize the injury. This is a variant of the spell Elysian Grace found in the Cthulhu Invictus sourcebook, and whether it works or not is entirely a matter for the Keeper. The important point here is that Adevina wishes to do this.

What happens next depends on the nature of the Keeper and his players. A merciful Keeper, or one who can think of a use for Ahab in a future campaign, may wish to keep him around. In this case, Adevina's effort to apply a poultice will work, and the investigators and Adevina can each make attempts at First Aid and Medicine rolls. If someone can successfully treat Ahab and raise him to one hit point, he has a normal chance of recovery should the Keeper will it. The smoke of Ahab's lemur will dissolve into a shapeless cloud and dissipate,

the soul having reconnected to the body. The investigators will presumably humor Adevina by carting the body where ever she dictates, and smearing it with whatever she requires of them.

More neutral Keepers may wish to finish Ahab off. His lemur can simply fly off, or disappear, or the smoke cloud can become formless and disperse. Perhaps the body manages one more sigh, or groan or some such. A truly clichéd scene would be to have the ghost embrace Adevina for a last, passionate kiss before Ahab's final departure. While some may find this excessively sentimental, the author can only point out that NPC Ahab has been kept on life support for at least twelve hours in contravention of every known rule on damage and combat in the Call of Cthulhu system; in addition to owing Ahab at least this much for his inconvenience, anything a Keeper can do to distract sharp players from asking awkward rules questions is perfectly fine.

A harder edged Keeper can use this cliché to better effect. Certainly, one can paint the image of Adevina and Ahab enjoying their last, passionate embrace, and describe it fully. Allow the players to believe that some cloying, romantic syrup is being served for some reason. At the same time, perhaps with some romantic soundtrack being played in the background for added effect, the Keeper can pass to the player whose investigator communicated with Ahab a note which reads: "You can now hear thoughts from Ahab in your head, he can now 'speak' to you. He is saying: 'I am having trouble leaving. I do not want to die, but I think I cannot live any longer. Please kill me.'" This will, of course, place the player in something of a dilemma. One of the NPC's, Adevina, thinks she can heal her lover. Maybe she can, and maybe she can't; this is still for the Keeper to decide. The other half of the pair wants to be done in. Hopefully, someone will think to separate the pair, but should Adevina witness her lover being done in, she undergoes an immediate 2d10/3d10 Sanity loss; she will prevent burial of Ahab, insisting that

he be moved off to the cave, but will take no other part in the scenario.

At this point, the investigators will undoubtedly have a number of ideas on how to proceed. Sooner or later, they will report to their patron, Sextus Calpurnius Agricola, who is busy dictating a stream of orders and correspondence to deal with the situation. He is preparing to return to Argentoratum to organize a punitive expedition to confront the Harii. If the investigators do not suggest it, Sextus Calpurnius points out that the weapons production of the foundry is completely missing for an uncertain period of time. It is important that this either be recovered, or at least that scouts try to figure out where it is going, so that the punitive expedition to follow can recover it.

Adevina will, if she is able, wish to have help in providing a decent funeral for the dead, and for help for Ahab, whom she insists be taken off to the spring cave whether alive or dead. If the investigators wish to do this, Sextus Calpurnius will not disagree, it being an essentially pious act. However, immediately such observances are finished, the investigators should follow up after the Harii.

If the investigators wish, Sextus Calpurnius will bundle up all of the accounts and papers. He is mildly interested in the bust of Brutus, and takes note of it. These will be available for review later, but there are more urgent issues to attend to perhaps, and there is no time to inspect everything now. By this time, it is getting on towards evening, and given everything the investigators now know, this may not be a wise time to pursue the Harii. The only question remains as to whether they pursue the Harii first thing in the morning, or with a day's delay to provide decent funeral pyres for the dead. Adevina will in no circumstances allow Ahab to be burnt if he is dead.

SCENE III: PURSUIT OF THE HARII:

Should the players choose to pursue the Harii, it will be laughably easy to follow their trail. It will also be very simple to catch up as the Harii are travelling very slowly, at night, with lots of prisoners to herd, and lots of pack animals. The investigators quickly discover that the Harii raiders have split into three groups. The first is a small group of two or three individuals. The second group consists of four or five individuals leading an enormous number of horses and mules. The third group consists of a large number of individuals. The tracking shows the Harii split, and then regroup and camp, splitting again the next day. At each campsite, the pursuers find one, but only one victim, mutilated in a fashion similar to those at the mansio. On the first day they will also find a Harii warrior dead, with both of his hands missing, as well as his eyes. This is the only individual they will find with two limbs mutilated, rather than just one. (This is, of course, the fool who dropped the box back at the mansio.) The fact that each day the Harii are not brought to justice is a day that some innocent Roman dies ought to be sufficient to motivate the players to continue to do something.

The Harii are moving at night, and camping during the day. Each night, they move off all of the prisoners, and the loot, leaving one victim together with their leaders. The leaders release the hunting horror, which takes the victim as a sacrifice, and otherwise follows the commands of the leaders. Each dawn the process reverses itself, with the groups gathering to camp in a forest clearing at a predetermined location. The Harii do not expect an attack during the day, and should the investigators attempt to do this, they will see two or three alert guards, and a dozen or so sleeping barbarians. About fifty huddled, probably insane, prisoners are tied together and sitting. About thirty pack horses and mules are waiting for the night's work, with packs of iron arrow heads and bundles of iron javelin heads

scattered around the site. Though the Harii have been denied the main purpose of their raid, this secondary prize is to their way of thinking no mean one, for, as Tacitus points out, the Germans are chronically short of iron, and the Harii are no exception. In the middle of the encampment, the dragon standard of the Harii is planted firmly in the ground. It has a bronze dragon's head, and a black and gold flecked body. Though the air is absolutely still, it seems to writhe and flap as though blown in the breeze. A Listen roll will reveal the screaming of an enraged something within, very faint, like the cry of an eagle, and like the roar of a lion, and yet like neither of those. The Sanity cost to hear this is 1/1d4. Leaning up against the standard is a curved horn, perhaps four feet in height, designed to fit around a human body. The bell of the horn is a dragon, similar in shape to that of the standard, but made of a dull grey metal, perhaps tin or nickel. The balance of the horn is a tube made of similar metal. A leather strap from the top of the horn to its middle allows it to be worn by the horn player, the tube curves up to allow the horn player to blow easily through a mouthpiece.

Keeper's note: These are indeed two Mythos artifacts presented to the Harii by Nyarlathotep. The first, the standard, serves to house a hunting horror during daylight hours. The creature has to be released nightly. The penalty for failure to do so is left to the Keeper. The second, the horn, is able to cast the spell "Summon Hunting Horror." The spell conforms to the Call of Cthulhu rules as printed. It cannot effectively be cast during daylight hours, for the beast cannot endure those circumstances. The nearest beast responds, and, since that is the beast in the standard, the beast comes roaring out of the mouth of the dragon standard ready for action. The summoner also has to provide a sacrifice, hence the need for a large supply of captives for the beast. Both of these objects can be destroyed by burning in daylight. Burning the standard at night will simply release the hunting hor-

ror, which is perfectly free to come and go, but conditioned to wait for the blast on the horn before doing so.

The investigators may decide to attack in broad daylight, in which case they need only defeat the two or three guards, and, if the Keeper wishes, the two leaders. The leaders are unable to call on the hunting horror within, for it cannot appear in the daylight. Other barbarians may wake and attempt to join the battle, but the odds are very much in favor of the players under these circumstances, as most of the raiders are sleeping, and are not wearing their armor. The prisoners will do nothing to help either the barbarians or the investigators.

As an alternative, the players may decide to ambush groups of the Harii as they move at night. The players have more than enough evidence before them to suggest that the Harii prefer this, and that a night battle may not unfold to their advantage. Should they attack the group leading the pack horses, they will find five Harii warriors. This is a fair fight. Should they attack the group with the prisoners, they will find ten Harii warriors. This is a fight against long odds. In either case, there is a five percent chance per round that the Hunting Horror will notice the noise and fly in to investigate. This will be a very bad outcome for the investigators. Should the investigators choose to attack the smallest group, they will find the two leaders, Harwulf and Har-doric and the hunting horror. Since the hunting horror has six points of armor, and most weapons do either 1d6 or 1d8 damage, together with damage bonus, this is likely to be a very brutal awakening for the investigators.

If the investigators set out at once, they will catch the Harii after two days. If they wait to bury bodies, they will catch the Harii after three days. Only if they dawdle longer than that for some reason will they be unable to catch them at all, as the Harii slip into the comparative safety of Germania Magna. One loose end will remain. Titus Adevinus has slipped away in the confusion. He is not among the

dead, neither is he with the Harii. The Keeper will have to decide what becomes of him if play continues into a campaign.

Sanity and other rewards:

Should the investigators manage to defeat the Harii by cunning or guile, they can return with the pack horses and prisoners to Sextus Calpurnius, who is at Argentoratum. The recovery of the javelins and arrow heads is especially important, but it is quite possible that many of the prisoners are important individuals from whom rewards may reasonably be expected, if they ever recover their composure.

If the players defeat the Harii and rescue the prisoners, allow them 1d6 sanity.

If they destroy the horn and the standard, allow them 1d10 sanity. If they only destroy one, allow 1d6.

If the investigators assisted Adevina with Ahab's body, allow 1d3 for their kind act.

If they assisted with burying the remainder of the victims, allow another 1d3.

If they failed to pursue the Harii at all and allowed their escape, the horror at what happens to the prisoners gradually dawns on them, as reports filter in of a trail of bodies between the road and the frontier. This justifies a penalty of 1d6.

If the investigators pursued the Harii and brought them to justice, there are more tangible rewards as well. If they failed to pursue, Sextus will send them back to Rome in disgrace as the penalty for allowing a group of important officials to be massacred.

Sextus Calpurnius will point out that, though the evidence against Titus Adevinus is strong, the man has powerful political friends, and the principal witness against him is dead (more likely than not.) Should the investigators wish to pursue the matter, Sextus will supply them with many crates of records to examine and suggest that they begin examining them.

He will also point out that someone will need to escort Adevina back to Rome, to place her in the keeping of her aunt, at the House of the Vestals, and that this should be done at

an early day. One or more of the investigators may undertake this task if desired. While Sextus is by no means averse to terminating Titus' contracts and handing them over to his own supporters, given the mental trauma experienced by Adevina, it may be just as well to allow her to 'manage' them, under the supervision of one of his clients until the matter is sorted through. If the investigators wish to undertake this, he is happy to allow them to do so. They will have to figure out how to restore the place to functionality as soon as possible, at their own expense, but if they choose to do so, they may divide the income of the place, of 7500 sesterces per year as long as Sextus holds the governorship.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Ahab ben Menachem, age 26, handsomest corpse in the mansio, and a not unfriendly ghost

STR 11/0 CON 13/0 SIZ 10 INT 14
 POW 18/18 DEX 10/0 APP 17/17
 EDU 18/18 SAN 90/1 HP 12/0+

Note 1: Numbers with slashes indicate Ahab's stat while alive/Ahab's stat while a ghost.

Note 2: The HP value 0+ indicates that Ahab should be dead, but isn't quite. The Keeper can decide whether Ahab lives or dies, as outlined in the scenario.

Damage Bonus +0

Weapons: None for purpose of this scenario; he can do no harm unless someone trips over him.

Languages: Aramaic, 95%; Latin, 75%; Greek, 50%; German, 35%, can read and write the first three.

Skills: Science (Judaism) 60% ; Science (Augury) 50%; Library Use 60%; Occult 40%; Persuade 50%; Natural World 40%; Accounting 60%.

Ahab has been fairly well explained in the scenario. He is a domestic slave, the correspondence and accounts clerk of Titus Adevinus. Ahab has made several bad guesses over the last year, and has not quite been killed as a result.

His ghost is waiting contentedly for the investigators to find his body, and for the Keeper to decide whether he lives or dies. Ahab has been conducting an illicit romance with his master's daughter, Adevina, who is firmly convinced that she can heal him. Whether this is correct or not, she is determined to do so, and will not take no for an answer. In the scenario, Ahab has had a good evening to think over his situation, and is not so sure he can survive his wounds, but, he is determined to warn the investigators about what they face.

Adevina Persephone, age 18, Young Roman Heiress with a fixation

STR 6 CON 11 SIZ 11 INT 15 POW 15
 DEX 11 APP 14 EDU 15 SAN 25 HP 11

Damage Bonus +0

Weapons: Small Knife, 40%

Languages: Latin, 90%; Greek, 70%; Aramaic, 30%; German, 35%, Oscan, 15%; Etruscan, 15% can read and write the first two.

Skills: First Aid, 50%; Medicine, 30%; Sing, 80%; Make Potion, 80%; Occult, 40%; Status, 40%

Spells: Create Bulla, Create Potion; Create Amulet; Create Love Philter; Create Curse Tablet; Modified Elysian Grace.

Adevina is the only child of Titus Adevinus, a wealthy equestrian with powerful patrons. For much of her life, she was raised in the House of the Vestals in Rome, as a favor to her maternal aunt. She was not destined to become a Vestal herself, but learned much of their lore and something about their ceremonies. She is dearly in love with Ahab, and insists that he can make a full recovery. She believes that the spell Elysian Grace can stabilize his medical situation. Whether this is correct or not is for the Keeper to determine, and utterly irrelevant—she will insist on trying the experiment. The spell functions like that of the Cthulhu Invictus sourcebook. If it works, the poultice not only paralyzes the recipient, but also stabilizes a character with zero hit points for twelve hours, if it is applied within a reasonable time after death. What constitutes a reasonable time is

left for the Keeper to determine. If the poultice is effective, the character being treated can receive medical or first aid rolls within that twelve hour period. If the character can be raised to one hit point, he can then make a normal recovery per the damage rules. The poultice itself does not confer any benefit in terms of hit point recovery, it only gains time for subsequent efforts to be made. The characters involved must still make a POW vs. POW roll on the Resistance Table, but the recipient of the spell uses 1/2 POW in making this roll. The caster will sense whether it has been successful or not.

Sextus Calpurnius Agricola, Age 56, Governor of Germania Superior

STR 13 CON 17 SIZ 16 INT 10 POW 14
DEX 13 APP 12 EDU 16 SAN 70 HP 17

Damage Bonus +1d4

Weapons: Gladius, 60%; Pilum, 70%; Pugio, 50%

Languages: Latin, 90%; Greek, 70%; can read and write.

Skills: Many, but for the purposes of this scenario, none useful: Speak at length about the painfully obvious, 90%; Quibble over legalities, 90%; Dither indecisively, 80%; Babble diplomatically, 80%; Issue definitive orders, 10%; Issue useful definitive orders, 01%, Tactics, 50%; Status, 75%; Kick, 50%

Like most Roman bureaucrats of high rank, Sextus Calpurnius Agricola is from an impeccably noble family, and utterly reliant on lower ranking retainers or clients to be of any use whatsoever. He did begin his career in the military, rose through it, and is effective in a fight, or in directing a fight as a military commander. He has held a consulship, and is now being sent to a province as governor on the sudden death of the previous incumbent. He is a close confidant of the Emperor, Antoninus Pius, and, deservedly or not, has a reputation as man able to solve difficult problems. His method is quite simple. He surrounds himself with young, talented individuals serving as his subordinates. He then turns over to these subordinates any problems which do not admit of a good swift kick as the solution. He can then smile benevolently and take credit for any successes, or scowl thoughtfully and allocate the blame for any failures. To

his credit, he also shares good fortune with his subordinates, and sees that the successful ones are advanced in their own careers.

Harwulf, Age 35, Warband leader and standard bearer of the Harii

STR 13 CON 08 SIZ 16 INT 16 POW 09
DEX 17 APP 09 EDU 09 SAN 0 HP 12

Damage Bonus +1d4

Armor: 5 point leather armor

Weapons: Spatha, longsword, 50%; Great Axe. 30%

Languages: German, 90%.

Skills: Climb 50%; Hide 60%; Jump 40%; Other Kingdom (Rome) 40%; Ride 30%; Sneak 40%; Tactics 50%; Pilot Boat 25%

Harwulf is an important leader among the Harii, entrusted with the keeping of the dragon standard of the tribe, a most sacred gift from the tribal god. He has had a vision from that god recently, telling him to raid, not among the neighboring tribes, the Marcomanni and the Quadi, but to strike deep within the Roman Empire itself, and to retrieve two objects from a large building which Nyarlathotep has shown him. Nyarlathotep also showed him that the Romans were manufacturing lots of iron weapons at this place, and that those weapons were stored there, available for the taking. This alone would be well worth a raid, even if it were not commanded by the deity. Using these weapons, the Harii will be well able to thoroughly destroy their neighbors.

Hardoric, Age 30, Horn bearer of the Harii

STR 12 CON 7 SIZ 13 INT 15 POW 9
DEX 10 APP 10 EDU 09 SAN 0 HP 10

Damage Bonus +1d4

Armor: 5 point leather armor

Weapons: Spatha/longsword, 60%

Languages: German, 90%;

Skills: Climb 45%; Hide 55%; Jump 40%; Other Kingdom (Rome) 40%; Ride 30%; Sneak 35%; Occult 50%; Track 50%

Hardoric is the inseparable companion of Harwulf. As Harwulf has been entrusted with the banner of the tribe, Hardoric has been entrusted with the horn necessary to summon the protective spirit of the tribe. The two together make a dangerous pair.

Five Brutal Harii, covered in soot, and hauling off loot. (There are 15 Harii. The Keeper can simply recycle this group as needed.)

Char.	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
STR	14	14	08	10	10
CON	16	12	12	13	09
SIZ	12	10	12	14	09
INT	10	08	07	05	12
POW	09	10	06	10	07
DEX	12	09	11	09	16
APP	05	03	08	10	07
HP	14	11	12	14	09

DB +1d4

Weapons: Great Axe 30%, Longsword, 40%

Armor: 5 point leather armor

“Echidna” The Hunting Horror of the Harii

STR 29 CON 10 SIZ 41 INT 15 POW 21
DEX 13

MOV 7/11 flying **HP** 20

Weapons: Bite 65% 1d6, Tail 90% damage Grapple

Armor: 6 point skin, cannot be impaled

Spells: none

Sanity Point loss: 0/1d10 to see

The great object of policy for the investigators ought to be never to meet this creature man to mythos being. If, however, they miscalculate, the Keeper can describe the Echidna as having a thirty-foot long, serpent-like body, with two tails that seem to shift and change with no solid form to them, winking in and out of existence at the edges. A single large wing manages somehow against all rules of nature to keep the horror aloft. Within, an incredibly wrinkled oval face projects a series of razorine teeth or fangs in

irregular places in the mouth. Though smaller than the standard Hunting Horror, the creature functions exactly like the one described in the main Call of Cthulhu rule book. Keepers wishing to substitute the full sized version should bear in mind that it comes with 9-point hide armor, which means that virtually none of the weapons in the Cthulhu Invictus rulebook have any chance of doing damage. By reducing this to 6 point armor, we merely reflect the fact that a couple more of the weapons in the Cthulhu Invictus book might be able to harm the thing, if the stars are right for the investigators.

AHAB'S STORY:

“I am, or I was, or maybe I shortly will have been, I’m not really sure how to describe myself at the moment. Anyway, I am Ahab ben Menachem, from Judea. I have been a slave almost all my life, a slave to the Romans. When I was an infant, my father and I were captured and enslaved at the end of the reign of the previous Emperor. My mother must have been captured as well, but she died shortly afterwards, for I don’t remember her. My father was a learned religious leader among the Jews, and he spoke not only his language, and my language, but also the language of the Greeks, and that of the Romans, and could read and write all of these. Because of this, he became a slave in the house of an important man, keeping accounts and correspondence in all of these languages for his master. I stayed with my father, and was taught by him to read and write, and to keep accounts, and other things as well, including the religion of my people, and about the false religions of the peoples around us. I had a fair education from my father, and in my turn, I was put to work on correspondence and on accounts.

I was eventually sold by my father’s old master to one of his clients, Titus Adevinus, who needed someone to handle record-keeping for him here in Germania. So off I went, and came here, about five years ago. Because Titus Adevinus was not always a wealthy man, he was always very cautious of spending mon-

ey. Because he could not afford a second slave to tutor his only child, his daughter Adevena Persephone. That is the name of the poor child in there. Her father called her that, because she was a great beauty, worthy of the gods. So anyway, I kept the accounts for Titus here, and I tutored his daughter, and taught her many things. She had early on been raised by Titus' wife's sister, after his wife died. This aunt is the only surviving relative Adevena has; I think she is a Vestal in Rome. There were lots of books and records to keep, for the man-sio, and for the iron works, and also for correspondence. Titus also handled lots of his correspondence himself, and would never let me see much of what he was doing.

Strange events began happening about a year ago. Titus took over the iron foundry accounts. He didn't seem unhappy with my work; he just took them over, and took them away from me. I don't think they would withstand examination. I was never brave enough to sneak in here and look at them, but I suspect that something was going on. Perhaps Titus was overbilling the legions for goods received or weapons shipped to them.

Other strange events began happening a year ago. Over time, I am afraid to say, Adevena and I became somewhat romantically involved. I knew that nothing would ever come of it, but I was too weak to say so, and she was persistent, poor child. That was my first folly. I kept it from becoming too physical, afraid that her father would find out. So, we met in a small cave in a hill near here, with a cool spring that flows out. About the time Titus started keeping the iron records for himself Adevena and I found two old stone idols in a cave. Repulsive things. We agreed that we must show them to Titus, and that I would show them, and leave her out of the matter entirely. So I did, and Titus was fascinated with them. He sent me out of the library at once, and spent an entire evening in this room with them. He called for paper and ink occasionally, and the next morning, there was an enormous stack of correspondence to be sent out.

I never did find out who the recipients were. Off and on over the course of the year, a flow of visitors came to see the beastly things, and to look at the cave. About a week ago, one of those visitors came back, with a wooden box. He was a rather dark looking man, and spoke with an Egyptian accent. He left Titus with the wooden box, after they talked a long time. Yesterday afternoon, just after sunset, Titus called me and Adevena into this library. He showed us the wooden box, and opened it. Inside there were three amulets. Titus put one around his neck, and gave one to each of us, and told us to put them on, and to keep them on no matter what happened. He also said that he knew that we had been sneaking off to the cave, and that he wanted us to go there tomorrow, and not to return until he sent for us. We started to argue with him, denying that we had ever been to the cave—to try to convince him that it wasn't true. I realize now that he wasn't scolding us, or judging us, or disapproving us. He might have done those things in other circumstances, but I know now he was trying to warn us, and to protect us, or at least to protect Adevena. I don't think he really cares about me, or about anyone else, but I if he cares about anyone, he cares about her. That was my second folly.

So we stood there quarrelling foolishly. The sun went further down, and all of a sudden an enormous clamoring was heard. They had come. Titus jumped up and shouted two things that I remember. He yelled "This is a day too soon." I am not certain what that means. He also said, "Take Adevena NOW, and go to the cave." By the time we got to the gate, the blackened German barbarians were already inside. There weren't many of them, laughably few of them, perhaps, but they had that monster with them, winged and scaled, and fanged, and it was beginning to rend people. Horrible scenes of carnage unfolded before us. So Adevena and I ran. Some of the Germans ran after us, but not for very long. I looked back, and I saw Titus with two of the Germans. One was holding a horn, and one

was holding a curved standard. He was with them. I told Adevina to keep running and to go to the cave, and I would meet her. I went back to see if I could rescue Titus from the Germans. That was my third folly and it cost me my life, I think. He was with them. As I was going back one of the Germans threw a spear at me, and hit me. I managed to stagger back here, into this room, where I bolted the door, and collapsed. I think I am dead, or dying, but I am here, I don't know why. Perhaps I am left here to warn you. I think while I waited here I heard many screams, but I also heard wailing—perhaps they took prisoners away. Oh yes, one more thing. I have had a vision of the distant future. I see a future in which Argenteratum is the capital of the known world, in which each tribe, and each republic and each king in Europa sends his wisest ambassadors to Argenteratum, together with all their wealth. And these wise men argue about many things, and decide about nothing important, though they spend lots of money and steal the rest, although, after great effort, they are able to decide how to describe what a Lucanian sausage is, and how it should be made. On this they spend huge amounts of money and call for the rest from all the peoples of the known world. I do not understand this vision of the future, because I already know how to describe a Lucanian sausage and how it should be made, though I can never ever eat one myself since it is pork, and unclean, and I do not see the need to spend money on this. Perhaps you would be well advised to remove this city to a different place, so this does not come to pass. I have no more to say to you, friend. Hail and farewell.”

THE GODS HATE ME

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