

# CALL of CHAOSIUM LICENSED CTHULHU



## *A Peculiar Pentad*

Jeff Grubb, Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel, Jeff Quick, John D. Rateliff, and Thomas M. Reid

A PECULIAR PENTAD

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A *CALL OF CTHULHU*® Supplement

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# A PECULIAR PENTAD

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## Introduction

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# What is This BOOK?

By Stan!

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Every book has a story, especially books within and about the *Lovecraftian Mythos*. In the case of *A Peculiar Pentad*, that story goes back to the very first brainstorming session we ever had for *Super Genius Games*.

We were talking about how often, in *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios, the investigators run across an obscure shop run by someone with knowledge that is helpful in their current case but, once plundered for this specific treasure, was never heard of or referenced again. Really, we were joking about how plentiful these “obscure shops” are in the composite world created by all these adventures.

It would be useful, we realized, for anyone attempting to run anything longer than a one-off scenario—from a short series of linked adventures to an ongoing campaign—to have a handful of businesses for the investigators to visit. Places that it would be useful to visit more than once, and where there was added benefit to be gained by becoming a regular customer.

From that germ came the idea for the book you now hold—a collection of occult-related businesses and their often mysterious owners.

## It's Not What You Know, It's Who You Know

If, as a Keeper, you're endeavoring to create a setting that feels like it fits into the world created by H.P. Lovecraft and the other architects of the *Cthulhu Mythos*, then it's important for the dark, forgotten corners or your cities to hide a small collection of unassuming, unimpressive shops and businesses that deal in curiosities and services that will be useful to the investigators. They will need places to go to research ancient items, rare texts, long-dead languages, and creatures that no respectable academic sources would deign acknowledge. They will need to know the places where people “like them” go to meet one another, trade or sell information, and occasionally even make pacts to join forces in the fight against the things man was not meant to know.

Within *A Peculiar Pentad*, the Keeper will find five such locales—shops and their proprietors that can be resources for the investigators ... or their adversaries. Each specializes in a broad type of supernatural or Mythos-related material and information, and they can easily be used in place of the generic “occult bookstore” or “herbalist shop,” that a given adventure calls for.

What’s more, these are the kind of places the investigators can come back to in the future—places where they can develop connections with the staff and build relationships they will have confidence in. This not only gives the investigators a place they can feel safe in, within a world where every stranger and every new location is suspect, it also gives the Keeper a way to introduce information and items that the investigators will trust and perhaps even accept at face value.

## **Profit and SAN Loss**

It is important for the Keeper to bear in mind, though, that these shops and their staffs are more than simply aid stations waiting around for the investigators to come in and take advantage of their resources. In order to use them to full advantage and for the investigators to take them seriously, they must feel like places that belong in the world of the Mythos.

Each location’s write-up contains information about the proprietor, the history of the shop, and the general attitude of the people found within. These are merely starting places, however, and the Keeper should feel free to make modifications so that the details meld seamlessly into his or her particular story and setting. When making changes, keep the following things in mind.

These are businesses—Although the reason for including them in a story might be to impart particular bits of information, from their perspective the owner and workers are there to keep themselves gainfully employed and hopefully turn a decent profit. In other words, they will run their businesses like businesses. They have been there for some time before the investigators arrive on the scene and, presumably, they plan to be there long after the investigators leave. Bear this in mind when deciding how the staff reacts to anything the investigators do, particularly if those actions are outlandish.

The owners are knowledgeable—By simple rights of the information they hold, the people running these shops are much more than ordinary citizens. They are people who know some of the truths behind the Mythos. Indeed, they may at one time have been investigators, too. This means they

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• will be more likely to see through hastily concocted cover stories and to figure out what sorts of secrets the investigators may be hiding. This doesn't make them precognitive (necessarily) or grant them access to information they shouldn't have—it simply means that they think the way investigators do and are willing to make leaps of reasoning that mundane citizens aren't.

Trust must be earned—Just because the shop owners may have similar backgrounds to the investigators doesn't mean they are automatically willing to take them into full confidence. As in any area of life, that sort of trust must be earned. It might be a good idea for the Keeper to introduce the shops and their proprietors into the storyline a significant period of time before their true expertise is needed. This will give the investigators time to get to know and build a rapport with the people in the shop that can be used as leverage to gain their help later on. Given time, these shops can become not merely places to find useful merchandise and information, but the homes of trusted friends.

## Find It In The Yellow (Sign) Pages

The shops described in this book are, by their very nature, located off the beaten path. So the first question the Keeper must answer is how the investigators find them in the first place. Many adventures may have specific advice in that regard, but in case no such information is available, here are a few approaches that may lead the investigators to the right doors.

### • Rumors and innuendo

If the investigators have no connections or other leads and are just blindly searching for a shop that will provide the obscure services they need, the Keeper should feel no compunction to let them find immediate success. After all, the point is that these shops are unique, half-forgotten, hard to find places. They're generally located in old buildings along side streets, or perhaps even in shadowy alleyways. Finding any one of them can constitute a mini-investigation all on its own.

The owners of more mainstream shops can begin to point the way, saying things like *"I think there used to be a store on the south side of town"* or *"I heard there's a guy on Aphid Street that has what you're looking for"* or similar suggestions. Of course, they'll also say things like *"but I think he went out of business fifteen years ago"* or *"I heard the shop burned to the ground in '87"* or *"I always thought that was just a rumor."* When added together, these snippets should point the way to the shop (or at least its general location).

## The Shop Around the Corner

If the Keeper wants finding the shop to be easier, it could just happen to be located in the very neighborhood in which the investigators work—a shop that they have walked past on a daily basis but never really noticed before. That could certainly lend the shop a very creepy air, however it might make the investigators more likely to distrust the shop's owner and wares.

Alternatively, the investigators may have been aware of the shop for quite some time, but never known about its connection to the Mythos. (Such things are generally kept under wraps.) It's only when times get especially tough that the store owner takes a risk and reveals his or her secret to the group.

If this stretches credulity too much because of its improbable convenience or unmitigated luck, the section below may be more suitable.

## Recommendations

If the investigators have any reliable allies, acquaintances, or employers, they could get tips about the location and content of these shops from those sources. Given how suspicious they are likely to be of a convenient shop that just happens to have the sorts of things they need, having the source be someone they already trust is a good way to get them past any hesitancy.

## Direct Advertising

If the investigators have garnered any kind of reputation for themselves in the world of occultism—being connected with previous high-profile cases, working for or with big-name “ghost-hunters” or other celebrities, or simply being related to famous occultists from the past—the shops might actively court their patronage. The investigators could receive flyers or newsletters in the mail or calls about newly arrived merchandise.

If that sort of overt commercialism doesn't work, then the shops could instead come to the investigators to ask for their help in a particular matter. Perhaps a customer of the store has gone missing, or a mysterious artifact has inexplicably appeared on the counter and the shop owner wants to hire someone to look deeper into the matter.

Once a direct connection is made, it will be easier for the investigators to consider turning to the shop or its proprietor when related matters crop up in the future.

## Customer Service

Once the investigators find one of the shops detailed in the upcoming pages, the next question is how they are treated. As discussed above, the proprietors are savvy people with their own hard-earned experience with the supernatural. They are not going to simply open up and tell their secrets to every new face that comes in knowing how to pronounce “Nyarlathotep.”

The individual write-ups will discuss how each shop owner deals with customers, but in general the Keeper may want to bear in mind the following general rules of interaction.

### First Time Visitor

The very first time new customers come into the shop, the proprietor is going to put on his or her best “normal” front. That is, the customers will be treated as though there is nothing unusual going on. (Well, nothing more unusual than the store’s stock in trade would require.) None of the private or secret merchandise will be mentioned, let alone available.

Even if the investigators raise the subject or start throwing around broader hints that they are “in the know,” the proprietor will simply say “*I have no idea what you’re talking about*” or “*someone must be having a joke with you*” or “*there is no such thing here.*” And if the investigators press the matter, the proprietor may ask them to leave the premises.

In any case, after that first encounter the proprietor will likely do some small bit of research on the investigators and determine how he or she wants to treat them if they come back a second time.

### Returning Shopper

If the investigators return to the shop, the reception they get will be based a great deal on how well their initial visit went. If they made a good impression on the proprietor, then he or she will make a show of vaguely remembering the investigators from before. This opens the possibility for the two sides to begin to develop closer relations.

Although the “private collection” will still likely be denied, the proprietor may begin to admit some knowledge of at least rumors surrounding such things. This is the real test for the investigators. If they can converse in an appropriate way on the subject and prove themselves to be reliably discreet, the proprietor may consider taking them further into his or her confidence. Presuming that goes well, a single item from the “private collection” may be made available.

## Regular Customer

Once the investigators have come back several times and passed whatever litmus tests the proprietor has for them, they will be considered regular customers. All but the most highly secretive items and services in the shop will be open to them, though these privileges may be withdrawn if a high level of discretion is not respected.

At this point, the proprietor will be a trusted resource for the investigators. He or she now becomes a good source for other, wider-ranging information—including introductions to proprietors of other Mythos-related shops.

## Patron or Partner

If the proprietor and the investigators continue to work more and more closely together, eventually it may be that they cease to be “customers” at all and are invited in to be part of the business. At this stage, there is nothing in the shop, the storeroom, or the accounting ledgers that is off limits to the investigators. Of course, for that access, they now have much greater responsibilities to the shop and its proprietor.

In addition, they no longer are restricted merely to the stock in the store. The investigators can now use the shop and its resources to search out and special order items from suppliers and other related businesses. And, in fact, it is now very likely that other groups of investigators will come to them looking for information or supplies. (This may, in fact, be how the shop’s proprietor got into the business in the first place.)

## Location, Location, Location

The last remaining question is one of location—where are these shops located in the world the Keeper is creating with his or her campaign? Although each entry has a default location for the shop in question, these are easily modified to suit the situation’s needs.

It may be that the Keeper wants to put each shop in a different section of the city, or in different cities entirely. Where they end up may be a function of where the adventure to which they will be most useful takes place, so they end up spread across the region, the country, or even the world.

Alternatively, the Keeper may want to construct an “occult quarter” of a single city—a neighborhood that is known for being home to palm readers, apothecaries, and bookstores specializing in obscure and profane subjects. An example of this kind of area can be found below in Pentagon Place.



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## • Pentagon Place

Less than a quarter or a neighborhood, Pentagon Place is more aptly described as a block or even a glorified alleyway. Although the buildings are among the oldest in the city, none of them appear on any list of historic sites and no tour busses go anywhere near this spot.

Pentagon Place gets its name from the fact that the cul-de-sac is laid out in a roughly pentagonal shape. Four of the sides are the crumbling facades of mid-nineteenth-century buildings that seem to lean in slightly, as though they were bending over to shield the alley with their bodies. The fifth side exits onto Humbolt Avenue, but the arching of the buildings make it so that no vehicles other than motorcycles can get through.

The ground is still paved in the original cobblestones, but growing from what was once the center of the road is a twisted, knobby oak tree—stunted for its species, it still has grown to about twenty-feet in height. The tree's leaves brush against the surrounding buildings, and its canopy acts as a sort of roof for Pentagon Place, keeping the light and the elements out and lending the place an air similar to that of a dark, dank basement.

### History

When it was first built, and long before it acquired the name Pentagon Place, this cul-de-sac was in a well-off part of the city. The buildings were intended as single-family town homes for successful industrialists who spent their weekends and summers at their mansions in the surrounding countryside. Facing all the buildings inward created a sense of privacy and seclusion even in the midst of the city.

The original owners all shared another connection, besides unspeakable wealth—they all belonged to a specific secret society, one whose members took part in blasphemous, profane, and perverted rituals to honor dark gods in hopes of currying favor and even greater riches. To these men, such acts were mere playacting. They no more believed their riches were divinely granted than they did that monsters walked the world. Unfortunately for them, both were true.

On a portentous date their club was performing an actual magical ritual when a group of investigators broke in and disrupted the affair. Many members of the club were killed (some by the investigators, but most by the shapeless horror that they had been summoning), but even those who weren't, found their lives ruined by the scandal when the club's membership roster was made public.

The families in the cul-de-sac found their fortunes crumbling and one by one they put their town homes up for sale. But their very public disgrace, in conjunction with fears about what horrors might lurk in the buildings' basements, resulted in an absolute dearth of buyers. In the end, they abandoned the houses, which stood empty for some decades.

Around the turn of the century, though, those interested in the supernatural discovered the site and began buying up the property. Soon the cul-de-sac was thriving again, but this time with businesses and residents who reveled in the macabre history of the place, and proclaimed the site to be Pentagon Place.

In the intervening years, this place and its denizens have been at the heart of the city's broader occult community, and the surrounding community has suffered for it. No one of any means wants to live within a dozen blocks of Pentagon Place, though few in the city actually remember why—they just know that it is a “bad neighborhood.”

## **Current Day**

Today, Pentagon Place is in the heart of one of the worst sections of the city. That the surrounding blocks are overridden by poverty, pestilence, and violence only makes the eerie calm within the cul-de-sac that much more unnerving. Even the thugs and gangsters want no part of this alley, which is considered by some to be haunted and by others to be cursed. Some even consider it a myth altogether, but there are few among that number who are brave enough to actually go looking for it.

As a result, the denizens of Pentagon Place are left to go about their business unscathed by the urban blight surrounding them. Indeed, when people who live in the cul-de-sac has to go out into the nearby neighborhood, they have taken to wearing plain, woolen robes with the hood pulled up—in effect their “gang colors”—hiding their identities and warning any predators that this person is under the protection of supernatural powers.

## **Game Uses**

Pentagon Place is where the investigators will find shops dealing with authentic occult materials. Finding it may be difficult. Indeed, at first the existence of Pentagon Place may seem more legend than fact. And even once found, the dangers in the surrounding neighborhood will make every trip there something of an adventure.

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Besides the shops detailed in this book, the investigators might find any number of other occult businesses and services. The residents will, to a man, woman, and child, all have some background in the supernatural. And even the sewers below the cul-de-sac may contain things of interest (from a subterranean path into the alley to an ancient shrine to some forgotten god or a thriving community of snake men or deep ones).

Keepers can modify Pentagon Place to suit the needs of their campaigns—making it a marketplace of the supernatural (like a Mythos version of Harry Potter’s “Diagon Alley”) or filling it mostly with charlatans and just one or two individuals or shops that actually have true knowledge of the supernatural and the Cthulhu Mythos.

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## Chapter One

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# The Biblioporium



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Down an alley off Thurwood Avenue (between Jasper and Cornwall Streets), a small wooden sign hangs from a wrought-iron bracket projecting from the brick wall on the right side. The sign reads, “Biblioporium,” and beneath that, “Fine Books and Stationary Supplies — Dr. Alfred Granger, Proprietor.” In smaller letters, the very bottom reads, “Est. 1891.” The sign swings over a narrow set of flagstone steps that run parallel to the wall and descend into an arched vestibule resting below the level of the alley.

The stout wooden door has been painted forest green and sports a single cut glass window with a snowflake design. There is a hasp for a padlock at about chest level, and another keyhole for a deadbolt a bit lower. The curved handle has a thumb latch that no longer works properly. A small wooden sign hangs on a hook screwed into the door. One side reads, “*Open, Please Enter,*” while the reverse says, “*Sorry, We’re Closed.*” Pushing the door open rings a small brass bell anchored to the frame overhead.

Inside, the odor of pipe tobacco, a mixture of cherry and almond scents, fills the place. A plush but worn red carpet covers the floors, stained darker in the doorway. Large bookshelves constructed of rich, dark wood line every wall from floor to ceiling and create rows in the middle. An L-shaped counter sits to the right of the door, resting atop a glass display case containing numerous rare and wondrous writing implements — old pens, inkwells, nib cutters, and so forth.

## Open For Business

The Biblioporium deals in rare books, buying and selling old and valuable tomes. Volumes of every imaginable subject fill the shelves, all meticulously sorted and categorized. The proprietor, Dr. Alfred Granger, takes impeccable care of every book that passes through his doorway, repairing and cleaning them when necessary. He goes to great lengths to preserve

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## Different Eras

It should not be difficult for a Keeper to modify the Biblioporium for use in either a Gaslight or Modern CoC game.

### Gaslight

To utilize this locale in the Gaslight era, not much must be changed. Dr. Granger should simply appear as a younger form of himself, freshly returned from his wanderings throughout the British Empire in order to open his shop. Some of his physical statistics should be altered to reflect a younger man in better health, but otherwise, his skills and knowledge can remain the same. He will, if anything, be even more involved in the activities of the Scrutinors.

### Modern

Conversely, to utilize the Biblioporium in a modern setting, simply make Dr. Alfred Granger the great-nephew of the original founder of the bookstore, apprenticed to the elder Granger at a young age to help run the place. Some details of the current proprietor must be changed (where he went to school, etc.), but otherwise, the statistics and knowledge — as well as the association with The Scrutinors — can remain intact.

Alternatively, the proprietor of the bookstore might only claim to be the grandson of the original Alfred Granger, but could, in fact, be the original owner. Perhaps he discovered some means of elongating his lifespan during his travels. It is possible he stumbled upon some tome that granted him uncanny longevity, or perhaps he vanished for a number of years and returned decades later under mysterious circumstances without having aged at all while he was absent.

In either case, the bookstore itself could (and probably should) have a few more modern conveniences. A high-tech alarm system and better locks are in order, as is a fire extinguishing system that will not damage the books (such as a gaseous suppression system). The contents of the store most likely are stored on a computer, with the files being heavily encrypted.

very old and/or damaged manuscripts and has multiple copies of more than a few prized works in his collection (not including those in his private trove or those he has donated to the local university).

Dr. Granger purchases any books offered to him, even mundane volumes not otherwise worth much, so long as they are in reasonable shape. Some

of these he donates to the local library or to the neighborhood children (but only to those who actually show an interest in reading). He is very careful to authenticate rare tomes, as well as to ascertain that they are not stolen property.

The books available for purchase in his store include volumes in multiple languages and from nearly every period of history. There are rumors that Dr. Granger has even acquired a few scrolls salvaged from the library at Alexandria, though when asked about this, he only chuckles and mutters, “Now *that* would be quite a find!” and will say nothing more. Only the most common books actually sit in the open. He keeps rarer volumes in locked cases (or hidden away in a separate vault — see below). If he does not have a particular title in his collection, he usually has contacts he can use to get it, assuming a customer is willing to pay and have a little patience.

Dr. Granger also deals in fine writing papers and stationary, as well as top-notch writing instruments. He buys and sells all manner of classic pens and accessories, and even deals in a few special writing devices that have historic significance. Much of these wares are available at the counter near the entrance, where he perches upon a high stool, pouring over some book or other.

Dr. Granger himself is a stoop-shouldered fellow with a bit of a limping shuffle to his gait. His round head features a fringe of thin white hair surrounding a shiny bald pate, accompanied by a thicker mutton-chop beard and mustache. His nose is long and somewhat bulbous on the end, where a pair of half-round reading glasses perch, when they are not dangling from their chain around his neck. His eyes fluctuate in color between pale green and sea blue, depending on the light, highlighted with flecks of gold. They peer out from under thick, bushy eyebrows that seem perpetually drawn together in a pensive frown. He regularly dresses in a cardigan sweater and smokes a pipe (though never when he’s examining a book for fear of damaging the tome with cinders or ashes).

## Special Customers

Though the bookstore can certainly be a fascinating locale to visit solely on the merits of its fine collection of rare and valuable antique books and accessories, the real value of the place comes from its catering to special customers. Dr. Granger conducts no advertising of his special services, nor will he ever volunteer such information to strangers whom he has never previously met, but for those who know what they are looking

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for and have a connection or can prove the necessity of their research, the Biblioporium can be a treasure trove of Mythos-related goods.

A second room exists in the back of the store, behind a bookcase that masks a secret entrance. Known as the Vault to Dr. Granger and his closest associates, it contains the truly remarkable—and often dangerous—textual works of the world that he has collected. These volumes include a significant portion of what the Scrutinors (see below) gathered over the years from such far-flung places as Egypt, Turkey, and India.

The chamber is plain, consisting of smooth stone walls and simple, unremarkable furniture. Behind the floor, ceiling, and four walls lies three inches of steel sheeting. The room is neither ventilated nor wired for electricity. The door leading in from behind the bookcase is also made of steel and can be locked like a combination safe. In essence, without the knowledge of the combination, it would take several days of chipping, cutting, and drilling for an intruder to break through into the chamber from the outside.

The tomes and scrolls themselves are housed in special cases that are both hermetically sealed and heat-resistant. The cases are locked, and Dr. Granger has one set of keys. Other sets belong to high-ranking members of the Scrutinors living in other regions of the world. Each case is further protected by a magical seal that resists both magical attacks (compare the attack against **18 MAGIC POINTS** on the **RESISTANCE TABLE**) and physical attacks (ignore the first **20 POINTS OF DAMAGE**). The cases may have other enchantments as the Keeper sees fit (for example, anyone tampering with a case without first uttering a special chant suddenly finds himself lost in the woods of Ontario, Canada with no recollection of the bookstore or his reason for visiting it).

A set of four chairs surround a small circular table in the center of the room. A single lantern encased in a special shade that prevents harmful paper-damaging rays from shining upon very old and delicate pages hangs over the table. There is no ready explanation for what powers the light, for it has no fuel or flame and no wires or battery. In the center of the table sits a box containing thin lambskin gloves. No visitor may handle any of the precious tomes without first shutting the door to the vault and donning a pair of the gloves.

No one visits the vault unaccompanied by Dr. Granger, and such occasions must be scheduled ahead of time, occurring during non-business hours. Granger never even admits to the existence of the vault unless he absolutely trusts those inquiring after information, and such trust may

only be built up over considerable time, through extensive background checks and tests of merit. Most often, new visitors arrive with formal recommendation from other Scrutinors, though on occasion, folk bringing rare tomes as an offering for inclusion in the collection may also be considered for admittance.

## Dr. Alfred Granger

Age 62, Bookstore Owner

STR 7	CON 11	SIZ 12	INT 16	POW 17
DEX 9	APP 10	EDU 23	SAN 85	HP 12

**Damage Bonus:** none

**Weapons:** .32 revolver

**Key Skills:** Anthropology 40%, Arabic 35%, Art 65%, Bargain 45%, Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Dodge 18%, English 99%, Greek 60%, Handgun 25%, Hebrew 50%, History 75%, Latin 70%, Library Use 60%, Occult 45%

**Quote:** *"Ooh, now that is quite the find!"*





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• Alfred Granger was born in the closing days of the American Civil War in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. His father Myron was a cobbler who had served in the Army of the Potomac. His mother Rebecca did hospice work at the military hospital and the prison. Alfred demonstrated a remarkable interest in reading and writing at a young age and came to love books. He attended school at the University of Pennsylvania when he was fifteen, receiving a classical education by eighteen. He then traveled to England and spent some time at Oxford, where he earned his doctorate in multiple languages. He eventually left England to spend several years roaming Africa, the Middle East, and India in search of ancient texts. Granger returned to America in 1891, a well traveled man, and opened his bookstore.

Though Granger does not speak of it to strangers, his sojourns through the British colonies were not simply the lone wanderings of a book-hunter. While at Oxford, he joined a secretive society known as The Scrutinors. The Scrutinors were highly interested in the research of ancient legends, myths, and fables throughout the world, and several members, including Granger, formed an expedition at the behest of Her Majesty's government to travel to Khartoum to investigate some "strange" archaeological findings reported by General Charles George Gordon. While there, he and the other society members got caught up in the Siege of Khartoum and barely escaped ahead of the Mahdi's army. Granger and the other Scrutinors scoured other parts of the British Empire for several years afterward, investigating additional oddities from local legends and myths.

The good doctor has spent a lifetime investigating all manner of weird phenomena, grim legends, and mysterious occurrences throughout the Middle East and is a virtual walking card catalog of ancient texts, references, and theories related to his studies. This is not to say that he has deciphered every text and put all the pieces together. He has very little true inkling of what his collection *means*. Clearly, such knowledge would have driven him mad long ago. But he knows that the body of knowledge exists, and if convinced, can put anyone on the right path to ferreting out specific bits of that knowledge. This sort of idiot-savant approach to the Mythos is no accident. The Scrutinors at least peripherally understood the dangers of working too closely with such material and laid out specific plans to keep any single member from gleaning too much. In Dr. Granger's case, it became obvious during his time at Oxford that the man loved the concept of books themselves, often even more than their actual contents. He was a perfect choice to become the caretaker and organizer of the volumes while distancing himself from their dangers.

Alfred Granger is still a member of The Scrutinors and uses his bookstore as a front to support the society's activities. He occasionally houses meetings there, stores invaluable documents and pertinent texts relating to their activities, and funnels funds to society expeditions around the world.

Dr. Granger never married and has no family. He remained a bachelor deliberately, as he never wanted the risk of threats against loved ones hanging over his head while serving as the caretaker of the secret library. He does have a few distant cousins, but he has not met them in many years and would not recognize them currently. Threats against said cousins would not unduly sway him to give in to enemies; the necessity of keeping so much dangerous reading material away from villains far outweighs any personal grief he might experience.

## Goods and Services

In addition to the normal array of fine books, stationary, and writing implements available for sale, the Biblioporium can serve as an invaluable resource for knowledge, both mundane and cryptic. Investigators seeking information on a vast variety of topics can visit Dr. Granger. He offers translation services for several languages, can point the way to additional information on literature, customs, and the general mood and feel of numerous foreign countries (particularly those in the Middle East and the subcontinent), and usually has for sale or can find a dealer who possesses just about any edition of any book imaginable.

Dr. Granger also provides insight into those special topics that investigators might be delving into, including strange myths, legends, fables, and unexplained phenomena. He may offer up a few vague tidbits or anecdotal, "I heard or read somewhere . . ." type stories about just about anything, but he rarely volunteers the full knowledge at his disposal without taking thorough precautions, first. For those he trusts (members of the Scrutinors, other valuable allies), Alfred Granger is willing to perform extensive research, or aid those in their own research.

Specifically, Granger can provide access to just about any ancient magical text, including Mythos-related tomes, to the right people. Rather than include an exhaustive list of what the good doctor has stored in his vault, the Keeper can pick and choose titles (or create new ones) to suit the needs of the campaign or adventure. In other words, if you want the players to gain access to something, Granger has it, or he can get it. It's just a question of how persuasive they are, how much he trusts them, and how much they're willing to pay for the privilege.

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• Unless the players are fellow members of the Scrutinors, Granger expects hefty recompense for his services. This can and often does take the form of large sums of money (always cash), but it can also come in the form of new additions to the library, services rendered on his behalf, or both. However it gets tallied, the fees the players accrue should total in the thousands of dollars.

Also, no one gets instant access to the vault, no matter how much Granger may trust them or how precious their payment. He always vets their reasons for seeking the knowledge, performs background checks, and (when necessary) tracks down the needed resource. This delay can take anywhere from several days to several weeks, depending on the veracity of the characters' explanations, their reputations, and the danger-level of the knowledge sought. Granger does some of the legwork himself, but he may also have a couple of "stout young lads" who can discreetly follow prospective customers, deliver messages, telegrams, etc., or just hang about in case there's trouble.

## Adventure Hooks

The following is a brief list of possible ways to use the Biblioporium as a hook in an investigation. Some of these can be mixed and matched with others for more complex mysteries.

- The investigators stumble upon some old book at a crime scene, and either someone with knowledge of the bookstore suggests they visit there for more information, or the book itself in some way guides them there. After some hesitation, Dr. Granger reveals that he sold the book to an NPC investigator who had been researching a mysterious cult.
- The investigators find Dr. Alfred Granger's name and address in the pocket of a murder victim in a distant land and decide to look him up for more information. They eventually discover that the victim is a member of the Scrutinors and was hot on the trail of some tomb raiders when the society lost contact with him.
- A member of the Scrutinors in some distant land hires the investigators to deliver or pick up a very important package from the Biblioporium. Along the way, mysterious assailants attempt to steal the package from them. The package is, of course, a rare, possibly magical book.

- Dr. Granger hires the investigators to track down a missing book dealer. Alternatively, he hires them to track down the man who is to be his successor at running the establishment.
- A fire breaks out in the building where the bookstore is located. Upon further investigation, it becomes clear that the fire was deliberately set as a diversion to aid in breaking into the store. Alternatively, the fire was set by someone intent on destroying the bookstore. Dr. Granger needs help in tracking down the arsonist(s) and in protecting the Biblioporium from future attacks.
- Dr. Granger stops showing up for work one morning and no one seems to know where he is. The investigators must find him in order to continue their own work.

## About the Author

Thomas M. Reid has been designing and editing game material professionally for over fifteen years. He grew up reading ghost stories, Three Investigators, and Hardy Boys mysteries under the covers at night with a flashlight any chance he could. He lives on a quarter-acre cat ranch in the Hill Country of Texas with his lovely wife Teresa and his three sons. Thomas loves books almost as much as Dr. Alfred Granger, and he vows that his next house will have a vault, too.

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## Chapter Two

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# Fixx's Fixxit



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Fixx's Fixxit is a narrow two-story storefront crammed between two larger, more impressive brownstone structures. It has a single large dingy window, turned almost reflective from the outside due to the buildup of grime.

The window reads in impressive gold letters "Fixx's Fixxit", and beneath it "*Fine Watch, Clock, and Mechanical Repair*". In the window's lower right are the store hours (1 PM to 8 PM, Daily except for Sunday)) and the words "Simon Fixx, Prop.". Beneath that, in a looser hand, are the words "Ring for Service" and an arrow pointing to a button next to the door (half-pane glass, similarly dingy).

If the shop is closed the front of the building will be secured with an iron grating that rolls into place from one side.

## Open For Business

Upon ringing, the door unlatches with an electric buzz. Entering Fixx's lair the investigators discovers a tiny front shop with a waist-high counter running almost across the width of the room. The walls are dominated by clocks - pendulum clocks, ship clocks, chime clocks, wall clocks, mission clocks, Willard ("banjo") clocks, and a few cuckoo clocks. Most sound on the hour, some on the fifteen minutes, and others are set to seasons, tides, and astrological bodies. The room is filled with an omnipresent clattering of timepieces.

Most of the space behind the counter is made up of wall of shelving displaying mantle clocks, bracket clocks, carriage clocks, and dial clocks. A fabric curtain at one end of the shelves hides a larger space behind the sales room.

## Different Eras

It should not be difficult for a Keeper to modify Fixx's Fixxit for use in either a Gaslight or Modern CoC game.

### Gaslight

Fixx's Fixxit in the gaslight era is very similar to that of its Roaring Twenties incarnation. Most of the changes are cosmetic only. The door has a mechanical lock and a bell instead of an electric buzzer. The shop itself is equipped with flickering gaslights among the myriad clockworks. His music box plays "*Queen of My Heart*" (Alfred Cellier, 1886, from the comic opera "*Dorothy*").

### Modern

Fixx's Fixxit makes more changes for the Modern Age. Fixx also does computer repair, and the shelves in the front area are filled with relics of the past – TRS-80s ("trash-80s"), Mac SEs, Commodores, Intellivisions, and Atari STs. The back room is similar arrayed with old disk drives, discarded floppies and tape drives, cracked and sputtering monitors, and fractured Dvorak and QWERTY keyboards, as well as those using Cyrillic and Hebrew alphabets. Instead of the Innsbruck clock, there is a collection of 1980s standup video games and Bally pinball machines.

Simon himself keeps a bleeding edge laptop on his workbench, a previous-generation desktop on the front counter, and small micro in his bedroom instead of a music box (this small machine contains his poetry). He maintains all three machines with a secure wi-fi hub. His shop has a website, and though it is rarely updated, he is known and valued among collectors of mechanical and electronic antiques.

Simon believes that the brain canister and electric gun are of extraterrene origins, but has not connected them to the Mi-Go.

Behind the counter the investigators will encounter Mr. Fixx, a smiling dwarf, (3'2") usually dressed in shirtsleeves and pants, wearing a custom-fitted leather smock. He will always be at the counter (to press the button and allow admission). He will be standing on a stool in order to look customers in the eye, and has several other stepping stools in the room to let him reach the clocks.

# A PECULIAR PENTAD

• Fixx is good natured and curious. His clientèle consists of mundane repairs as well as referrals from other repair shops for matters beyond their ken. His reputation is that of an individual who can identify or repair anything, and specializes in “mystery clocks” – those clocks whose function or method of reading are not immediately apparent.

The curtained area leads to a larger area that runs for the rest of the block’s length, backing on an alley behind the storefronts. Fixx will allow others in the “back room” as he calls it, if he trusts them.

Fixx has purchased the space behind a neighboring building and had the walls knocked out, so his warehouse and repair area is about twice the width of his counter area, and two stories high. A locked skylight illuminates the warehouse in the center of the room. The back wall consists of a large roll-up metal door, and a truck or other vehicle can be backed into the warehouse (and from the space made for such a vehicle and the oil stains on the floor, this is a regular occurrence).

The walls of the repair and warehouse area are jammed with shelves, some containing current jobs, others bits and pieces salvaged from other clockwork. Nearest to the front counter is a small workbench for precise watch cleaning and repair, with a set of neat drawers containing tools and lenses. Any precise work will be done at this bench, under powerful lights.

Beneath the workbench is a small safe that contains valuables, such as golden watch chains and fobs, jeweled mechanisms, and other precious materials, along with \$300 in cash. Any fine timepieces he is working on are protected by the haphazard nature of his filling system, which makes it difficult for anyone but Fixx to separate the dross items from the truly valuable.

As in the front counter area, the walls of this area are lined with shelves, with a pair of ladders on rollers allowing the owner to reach the upper shelves. Here are clocks and other items, though none seem to be operating.

The walls are filled with stopped clocks, miscellaneous clock mechanisms, and bins filled with clock and watch making materials. There are astrolabes, orreries, the fragments of a platform clock that had until recently hung at a local train station, a collection of five long case “grandfather” clocks, music boxes, a sundial (used as a work table), and an large inoperative medieval town clock from Innsbruck, completely with knights and dragons that run on small tracks. In one corner is a gypsy fortune telling machine that works intermittently (usually right after Fixx declares that its cogs have seized up) and a partially-assembled chess-playing clockwork (The Maelzel and Walker engines, he will tell you, were frauds, but his design will prove

superior to either's legendary capabilities). He keeps a welding kit and torch by the garage door.

The bins along the walls are filled with all manner of clockworks salvaged from previous projects, including boxes of pendulums, escapements, springs, flywheels, chimes, balances, tourbillons, mainsprings, and dials. They do not seem to have any particular order, but Simon Fixx knows if he has something in stock or not.

Fixx lives in a small apartment directly above the counter area, accessed from the warehouse behind by a narrow staircase. His quarters are spartan, and the only thing of value he keeps here is a music box that has a ballerina spinning to the tune "*Funny Face*" (by Ira Gershwin, 1927, or "A Pretty Girl is like a Melody" by Ziegfeld Follies, 1919).

Fixx does not leave his shop under normal circumstances. If he needs a large item picked up or delivered, he has a standing relationship with Drud Brothers, a local hauling firm.

All exterior doors and windows are rigged with loud electrical alarms in case of a break-in (**ELECTRICAL REPAIR** to disable).

## Special Customers

Simon Fixx is a genius at mechanical repair with a reputation among other individuals interested in watches, clockwork, and mechanical repair. Individuals who find a mechanical or electrical device that they cannot understand (or worse yet, have broken) may be referred to him after trying more traditional venues.

Simon also has a reputation on the street as willing to pay good money for interesting, unique, or otherwise "previously-owned" merchandise. His morality in hot clocks is flexible, but has a reputation for his honesty – he has never been caught with obviously stolen goods, nor has he ever been pinched for grassing on a confederate.

Simon's good reputation also comes from his willingness to accept non-monetary rewards, which may extend to "keeping the old parts" or having the customer work a simple trade of services. Often this consists of simple tasks such as moving large objects in the warehouse from one side to the other, or accompanying the Drud Brothers on a pickup or delivery. The cost is often minuscule compared to the service Fixx renders, and many believe that he demands such services only in that it allows him to boss around larger people.

Simon is knowledgeable in his field, and knows a great deal about clockwork mechanisms, electrical equipment, and machinery, and can provide that information at reasonable prices.



# A PECULIAR PENTAD

• Simon can and does provide weapons to those he finds trustworthy and whom can pay. After all, he says, a gun is just another mechanism – it just makes a different noise when it operates. Most of his stock is salvaged from earlier wars, but is in excellent condition. He will ask if the buyer has the proper paperwork, but will not demand to see it, feeling that an individual's word is his bond. In particular he will say things like “I cannot sell you this weapon unless you tell me that you are fully qualified and permitted to handle it”, and let the investigators make the correct conclusions.

Simon claims to have no dynamite on the premises, but indicates that arrangements can be made for a small fee (triple normal cost). Under the arrangement, the Drud Brothers will make the delivery in two days (if checked, the Druds have relatives working in construction).

Simon keeps a 12-gauge, double-barreled sawed off shotgun under the front counter and a smaller .32 automatic pistol at his workbench for self-protection. Should he be robbed, his reputation is such that the local police and less savory types (including the ubiquitous Drud Brothers) will be seeking retribution.

Simon's shop does have a basement, but its entrance is a trapdoor concealed beneath the mechanical chess-player. The clockwork chess-player is weighted to pivot out of the way to reveal the trapdoor, which has an iron ladder leading into the depths. This was the original foundation of the structure, and is an unfinished basement that smells of wet earth. It is here that Simon keeps the bulk of his valuables (in another safe), several cases of weapons, and some particularly interesting objects. Simon Fixx will not access the lower level when there are customers in the shop except under the most dire emergency, and during business hours the chess-player keeps the location hidden with an internal locking device that bolts it in place (**SPOT HIDDEN** –20% to locate, **MECHANICAL REPAIR** or **LOCKSMITHING** to disable).

It is here that Simon also keeps his strangest devices. First is a Mi-Go brain canister that was brought to him (empty) several years ago. The device is a shiny cylinder of unknown metal, about a foot high and slightly less in diameter. The front of the device is set with three sockets in a triangle. The top of the device pops open, to reveal a nest of fine wires that would hold an orb about eight inches across.

The device is used by the Mi-Go to carry brains (human and otherwise) with them. The sockets may be hooked up to particular electrical devices that allow the brain to sense and speak. Simon has figured out that it relies on electricity and probably radio, but has not made the discovery that it

would contain a human brain. He believes that it may be some form of esoteric electrical battery.

Simon also has a Mi-Go electric gun, which he refers to as a “carved scarab” and keeps in the basement safe. Designed for use by the Mi-Go, he has managed to jury-rig it to fire, with indifferent odd (1-2 on a d6). The device has a range of 30 feet, inflicts 1d10 damage and immobilizes the victim for the same number of rounds. The target must also match his or her hit points against the damage done on the **RESISTANCE TABLE** or die of heart failure. Simon will use the device only if forced to, worried about its reliability.

## Goods and Services

Fixx's Fixxit deals primarily with the repair and resale of watches, clocks, music boxes, and other mechanical devices. He provides additional services for individuals whom he has worked with before and who can pay.

Typical Items	Price
Men's Wristwatch	\$5.95
Women's Wristwatch	\$7.95
Men's Gold Pocket Watch	\$32.50
Wall Clock	\$15.00
Mantle Clock	\$15.00
Accurate Clock (ship's chronometer)	\$25.90
Guns	As in the CoC Rulebook, takes one day for delivery (He has to bring them up from the basement)
Dynamite and other illegal weapons	Twice normal cost, delivered in to two days to another location.

**Purchases:** Simon Fixx will buy items off the investigators, in particular items of a unique nature or those whose previous owners may be hunting for them. He is particularly interested in Mi-Go items similar to the “Esoteric Battery” and “Carved Scarab”.

Prices vary, but Simon has access to about \$300 in his workbench safe and another \$600 in the basement safe.

**Repairs:** Simon Fixx will repair an item for 10% of its cost. Repairs take about week, though he can be induced to expedite matters to overnight if paid triple asking price.

# A PECULIAR PENTAD

• Unique items (such that would require a skill check to confirm) will cost from between \$10-50, depending on their complexity. Simon is limited by the technological level of his age – he will be confounded by transistors if they suddenly show up in the 1920s, but will be able to understand their basic functions.

**Information:** Simon Fixx is glad to provide the benefits of his knowledge for a price. A good general price would be about \$5 per skill roll, \$10 if you are also buying his silence.

## SIMON FIXX

**Age 43, Repairman**

STR 11      CON 15      SIZ 6      INT 18      POW 16  
DEX 16      APP 9      EDU 12      SAN 40      HP 11

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Shotgun (12-gauge, 2B, sawed off) 50% Pistol (.32 automatic) 40%

**Key Skills:** Accounting 30%, Astronomy 40%, Craft (clockwork) 90%, Dodge 67%, Electrical Repair 78%, Hide 50%, Locksmith 60%, Mechanical Repair 95%, Operate Heavy Machinery 40%, (Modern Version – replace Craft Clockwork with Computer Repair 90% and Electronics 90%)

**Quote:** *“Never seen one quite like that before. Not to say it can’t be repaired.*

*Should take a week.”*

Simon Fixx is the diminutive owner of Fixx’s Fixxit. He is a middle-aged man affected by the genetic condition of skeletal dysplasia (“dwarfism”). He is 3’, 2” tall, with exaggerated facial features. He has dark hair, usually mussed (he runs his fingers through it while he’s thinking), and bright brown eyes.

In manner, Simon is usually good-natured and friendly with customers. If he senses that an individual is uncomfortable with his stature, he will push the matter, often with small jokes (“Perhaps we can see “eye to eye” on this” or “You seem a little low”) to get a rise out of them. If the matter does not come up he is the soul of professionalism.

Simon will also flirt with any female investigators above **APP 15**. He is a romantic at heart, but once presented with a problem, is all business.

Simon rarely leaves his shop, and if pressed, will plead that he suffers from agoraphobia. In reality, he has made a world where he is quite comfortable within the walls of the shop.



## Adventure Hooks

Simon Fixx can be used as a general support character for individuals seeking repairs, understanding, or grey-market weapons. He can also be used more directly in adventures.

## The Full Case

- Simon has learned of the existence of another brain case, this one apparently still sealed.
- It is up for sale at a nearby auction. The investigators may either bid on it, or may seek to acquire it through other means.
- Should Simon acquire the full brain case, he will suffer a serious SAN loss, feeding into what he is building in the basement.

# A PECULIAR PENTAD

## The Thing in the Basement

- In addition to his other secrets in the basement, Simon is building an exoskeleton there and his ultimate goal is to strike back at the tall people who have denied him a full life.
- The suit is too small even for his diminutive size, but if he discovers how the brain canister works, he can make it operate.
- His first victim will be the back-alley doctor who transplants his brain. Then he will go after the investigators who know about the case.

## Mi-Go Hunting

- Mi-Go are usually very good at cleaning up after themselves, but lost track of both the empty brain canister and electric gun in Simon's possession. The underground safe has kept it that way.
- Removing the electric gun has tripped a tracer, and the Mi-Go are investigating.
- Simon needs protection – he feels the shop is being cased for a robbery – a shadowy shape has been up on the roof, peering in through the skylight.

## Looking After Business

- Despite all attempts, Simon has been called away from his shop, perhaps on a matter for the investigators.
- He agrees to go, but only if the investigators will themselves mind the store. He is expecting only a few customers, but wants someone present while he is gone.
- In addition to giving the investigators a chance to look around, a rival (or perhaps the Drud Brothers) see this as a chance to smash and grab.

## About the Author

Jeff Grubb is an author and game designer with numerous credits, including 14 novels and over 30 short stories. He is one of the co-founders of the Dragonlance campaign setting and a co-creator of the Forgotten Realms campaign setting. He currently builds worlds for computer game companies, including Guild Wars. He lives in Seattle with his wife Kate and two cats.

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## Chapter Three

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# Healing Herbs



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If you're looking for the best variety of spices, the freshest herbs, and even a medicinal powder, Healing Herbs is the shop to go to. No out-of-the-way forgotten business, the shop is centrally located and does a thriving business.

## Open For Business

Situated on a busy city street, the shop "*Healing Herbs*" looks inviting. Large tubs of rosemary and lavender flank the entrance, lending their scents to those wafting from the shop. Fresh flowers and dried bunches of herbs decorate the window, masking most of the light, making the shop dim, aromatic, and inviting.

Inside, near the door, culinary herbs abound, bunches hang from hooks on the walls and ceiling. Neat shelves offer herbs and seeds in glass jars and wax paper packets. As one goes deeper into the shop, the herb changes from the familiar to the exotic. The air grows mustier with heavy scents. Behind glass cases displaying less common herbs, essential for Chinese herbal remedies and bear both English and Chinese names: Ginseng, ligusticum walichii, rauwolfia serpentine, rhododendron tsinhaiense, and dozens more. One glass case includes animal bones, fur, and body pieces such as shark fin, tiger penis, rhinoceros horn, and bear bile. The walls are thickly lined with unlabeled apothecary drawers.

The store does a brisk business selling herbs for both culinary and medicinal purposes. Housewives and chefs buy fresh and dried herbs: parsley, oregano, ginger, and more. Many others seek herbal remedies that promote good digestion, flawless skin, or sexual prowess and order tisanes, tonics, or powders for their individual issues. These transactions are handled discretely and regular customers are simply handled neatly wrapped packages of their medicines without any commentary.

# A PECULIAR PENTAD

## Different Eras

Modifying Healing Herbs for different locations and eras is very easy and requires little to no work.

### Gaslight

Add offerings of then-legal, but rather questionable, drugs such as laudanum, morphine, and even opium. You can add some extra depth to Zhang's back story in a British setting by having his family involved in the Opium Wars or in an American setting by giving him contacts among the Chinese workers building the railways.

### Modern

Many of the exotic herbs offered in the back of the shop are restricted or illegal in the modern world. For instance, no shop in the United States will sell rhinoceros horn openly. If you want to keep the shop an open and welcoming place, remove these and replace them with tisanes for weight loss and herbal supplements for the health of pregnant women. If you wish to give the place a more sinister air, you can choose to have the proprietors still sell them, illegally, to customers.

During normal business hours, there are 1d6–2 customers in the shop.

One of the two shop owners will be in the store (01–75% Zhijian , 76–100% Raimonda). Zhijian is a Chinese man with a shaven head except for a long braided queue down to his waist. He wears garments with a Chinese look to them: a patterned cotton shirt with a Mandarin collar and loose cotton pants. He welcomes visitors with a shy smile and a small bow, leaving them to explore the shop at their leisure. Raimonda is a tall woman who wears clothes to emphasize her generous cleavage. She will loudly welcome all customers and questions them about their needs, but rarely gives them opportunity to answer as she thrusts herbs at them, “Here, smell this?” and “Oh, taste these” while commenting on how she perceives them. For instance, she might say the following to a male customer: “Oh, you're too skinny, you need more pasta! Doesn't your wife feed you? And oregano, lots of oregano. Some garlic will help put color in your cheeks! But if you want to put some color in your wife's cheeks and a smile on her face, I recommend some ginseng in your tea. It's a key ingredient for a happy marriage!”

The shop services an important person in the area. If set in London, “Healing Herbs” provides herbs for the Queen's physician. If set in New

York, a noted rail baron orders “male potency” enhancements from the shop. If in a small town, the shop provides the police chief’s wife with her slimming tonic. Having such a tie to a powerful patron ensure that the shop operates unmolested and any “strange events” that happen around the shop (as they so often do when adventurers are involved.)

### Special Customers

The proprietors are committed to the concept of goodness and desire to thwart all that is evil. If the investigators convince them that their aims are worthy and good, Zhijian and Raimonda will do whatever they can to help them, including providing them with special services and elixirs.

Most of the public knows only the first floor shop. Behind a beaded curtain is a storage room and workshop with even more dried herbs, distilling equipment, and more. A threadbare rug covers a hatch into the cellars which provide more storage, and two additional areas: a mushroom farm and a second hatch that leads down into an old, dry section of the city sewers. If investigators have proven their good intentions to the couple, they will be shown the hatch as an easy way to entry and leave the shop unobserved.

The proprietors live in the two stories above the shop. Thus, they can be available at any hour of the day or night. In addition to a large kitchen perpetually well-stocked and with something always on the stove to eat, generous living areas, the Zhangs have three spare bedrooms that they can offer the sick, injured, or pursued.

## Zhang Zhijian

### Zhang Zhijian, Age 40, Herbalist/Shop Keeper

STR 10	CON 12	SIZ 9	INT 14	POW 13
DEX 10	APP 11	EDU 13	SAN 65	HP 10

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Fist/Punch 90%, Head Butt 30%, Kick 50%, or Grapple 50%

**Key Skills:** Bargain 30%, Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Dodge 25%, Listen 60%, Martial Arts 85%, Medicine 75%, Occult 60%, Other Language (English, Cantonese) 50% each, Own Language (Mandarin) 65%

**Quote:** “How may I serve?”

Zhijian is quiet and self-effacing, preferring to blend into the background and only come forward if a customer has a question or need. He grew up in China and emigrated to make a better life for himself. Here, his life became infinitely more interesting and chaotic.



# A PECULIAR PENTAO



## Raimonda Zinicola Zhang

Raimonda Zinicola Zhang, Age 35, Herbalist/Shop Keeper

STR 13      CON 15      SIZ 14      INT 13      POW 12  
DEX 11      APP 14      EDU 13      SAN 60      HP 15

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Butcher Knife 35%, 1d6

**Key Skills:** Bargain 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Dodge 40%, Medicine 75%, Occult 40%, Other Language (Arabic, English, French, Latin, Spanish) 50% each, Own Language (Italian) 65%, Persuade 50%, Spot Hidden 60%

**Quote:** *"It's a good thing you come here! I got what you need."*

Raimonda is a beautiful, tall, full-figured woman. A few strands of silver make her black hair seem even darker. She dresses in bright, flamboyant clothes. When speaking, she's expressive, both with her voice and with her hands. She grew up in southern Italy, on the mainland near Sicily. She's especially fond of Italians or those who speak her native language.

## The Proprietors Together

The proprietors of the shop are an odd couple. This Chinese man and Italian woman are both immigrants to the country. They met during naturalization/citizenship classes and took English classes together. The instructors organized seating by last names and they found themselves constantly paired up in class work. At first disliking each other, then learning to rely on and respect each other, and finally falling in love and suffering because they knew the other could never love someone so different from themselves.

When their linguistics teacher disappeared under mysterious circumstances, the pair investigated and saved him from a dark cult that kidnapped him to translate a vile tome. Their brush with the Mythos spurred Zhijian and Raimonda to declare their love for one another. Now, ten years later, they run "Healing Herbs" together. Generally, one of them will be in the front of the shop while the other goes to suppliers, prepares tisanes in back, or works in their large herb garden located outside the city.

Individually, they are competent and good at what they do. Together, they share a special bond that makes their herbalism, Mythos, and occult knowledge cumulative. They can act as one. However, such genius does have its price. If a problem requires them to work on it together, the quiet, friendly individuals turn into a wild couple, shouting, contradicting, and name calling. Sparks fly and any bystanders are drawn in and required to take sides. Raimonda slips into speaking Italian and Zhijian speaks rapidly in Mandarin, neither quite understanding each other's words, but both quite willing to carry on the argument!

## The Couple

When working together, certain skills increase and their personalities change.

**Damage Bonus:** If fighting together and to protect each other, each of them gains an additional +1d3. If in their shop, the damage bonus increases to +1d6 as they maneuver around and uses the resources available.

**Key Skills:** Cthulhu Mythos 25%, Dodge 60%, Medicine 99%, Occult 99%

**Quote:** *"What business is it of yours? Only I can talk that way to him/her!"*

# A PECULIAR PENTAD

Together, the couple has gone far beyond the bounds of ordinary herbalism. They can brew poisons targeting specific foes and elixirs giving the imbiber extraordinary powers. All of the special goods and services listed below stem from their joint work.

## Goods and Services

This shop sells many herbs and herbal remedies with no game effects. Any common herb or mild treatment can be purchased at a reasonable cost, ranging from a penny to a dollar. The proprietors are good, reliable people intended to be a resource or even friend to the player characters.

The proprietors are a great source of information on medicine, alternative medicine, Eastern (Zhijian) and European (Raimonda) folklore/occultism, and even Mythos.

Of much greater interest to adventurers are the special services that they can be called upon to offer: Discrete treatment for medical problems (injuries, combat wounds, mundane and eldritch diseases), poisons and weapons against unusual foes such as werewolves and vampires, and magical elixirs that can enhance some skills. These things cost more than money. Often, the cost literally includes blood, sweat, or tears. Their most exotic and useful concoctions delve into how ailments can be drawn from the body or how knowledge or power can be distilled from the body.

**Note:** Herbal creations require fresh ingredients and do not last indefinitely. In addition, often multiple doses of the same tincture have no additional effect.

## General Herbal Weapons and Defenses

Upon special request, Healing Herbs offers some supplies useful to adventurers.

**Forgetfulness Potion:** Similar in effect to the *cloud memory* spell, this brew blocks the drinker's ability to remember a recent event. To successfully use the potion on a target, a successful **PSYCHOLOGY** or **PSYCHOANALYSIS** check must be made. The brew can achieve a lesser effect, diminishing or increasing the importance of the recent event with a **PERSUADE** check. Only one check can be attempted per potion. A drinker can only be effected by one Forgetfulness Potion per day. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$5/\$15/\$100.

**Healing Elixir:** Each day, an investigator can benefit from a single dose. A Healing Elixir restores 1d4+1 hit points. A second dose the same day has no effect. A third dose taken the same day causes 1d4+1 damage instead. **Shelf Life:** 1 month. **Cost by Era:** \$10/\$25/\$100.

**Mind's Ease:** Once per month, an investigator can benefit from a single dose. Mind's Ease restores 1d4+1 SANITY points and has a 5% chance to cure one temporary or permanent insanity (roll randomly if multiple types of insanity affect the drinker). Additional doses the same month have no effect. **Shelf Life:** 1 month. **Cost by Era:** \$20/\$50/\$500.

**Pepper Bomb:** A generally useful weapon made to irritate and burn, a type of natural-ingredient tear gas that affects a 2 yard radius. Each creature in the area takes 1d4 points of damage and must roll a CONSTITUTION check or be incapacitate and able to take no action other than move for 1 round. **Shelf Life:** 6 months. **Cost by Era:** \$10/\$25/\$50.

**Smoke Bomb:** This packet of ingredients must be thrown into a fire to ignite and provide a thick covering of smoke sufficient to fill a 15 ft. by 15 ft. room. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$2/\$5/\$25.

**Space-Mead:** A magical drink that allows a human to journey through space. Upon drinking, the imbiber pays MAGIC POINTS and SANITY points as described in the *brew space-mead* spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$25/\$50/\$250.

### Defense Against Types of Creatures

Brews specifically tailored to creatures have greater effect. If a sample of skin, fur, or blood can be obtained from the specific individual creature and included in the brew, the damage doubles.

**Ghostly Essence Incense:** As a generically useful tool against ghosts, this herb-infused incense grants non-ghosts a +2 bonus to their POW to resist ghosts' attacks. One stick of incense will burn for 1 hour and its scent provides protection in a radius of 10 feet, protecting all within the area. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$5/\$10/\$20.

**Skeleton Splinter:** This paste features flint and shale flakes blessed by a Buddhist monk. Applied to a weapon, it increases the chance for a successful blow to shatter a skeleton by 20%. The weapon coating works for 1d3 successful blows before having to be reapplied. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$1/\$2/\$10.

**Vampire Burn:** This light liquid is dispensed through an atomizer, making a fine mist of the combination of garlic oil, holy water, and other ingredients. The attack is made as a DEX x 5 check. The concoction causes a vampire great discomfort, inflicting 1d8 points of damage with a direct hit and even 1d2 points of damage on a miss. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$2/\$4/\$10.

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• **Werewolf Bane:** An oil made from wolf's bane and silver, a vial of this can be thrown at a werewolf to cause 1d6+1 points of damage the first round and 1d4 points of damage the second. Alternatively, werewolf bane can be imbibed after a werewolf attack, but before transformation to cure lycanthropy. **Shelf Life:** 1 lunar month (28 days). **Cost by Era:** \$2/\$4/\$10.

• **Werewolf Bane Ointment:** A lotion that can be spread on an adventurer's skin and clothing. Any werewolf that scratches or bites the adventure takes 1d6+1 points of damage per successful attack. **Shelf Life:** 1 lunar month (28 days). **Cost by Era:** \$4/\$6/\$10.

• **Wraith Resistance:** This potion grants the imbiber a +2 bonus to the target's CON to oppose a wraith's POW attack for 24 hours. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$5/\$10/\$20.

• **Zombie Salt:** This paste features sea salt blessed by a voodoo priest or priestess. Applied to a weapon, it creates a 20% chance to deactivate a zombie. The weapon coating works for 1d3 successful blows before having to be reapplied. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$1/\$2/\$10.

## Leech Therapy

The Zhangs experimented with specially breed leeches and fed them therapeutic herbs. The creatures have the ability to suck away CTHULHU MYTHOS points and restore 1d6 points of sanity per point of CTHULHU MYTHOS drained. However, the Zhangs do not know that such therapy has a 1% cumulative chance (leeches start at 10%) to transform the leech into a weak Formless Spawn who attacks anyone present.

## Skill Enhancements

Like demands like, and the cost for these potions is beyond money. The buyer must be willing to sacrifice 10 skill points (from 1 skill) for 1 month.

• **Skill Enhancements:** Each of these draughts must be made as a special order, taking one day to prepare. It will increase one skill chosen at the time of creation (except for CTHULHU MYTHOS) by 10% for one full day. Only one Skill Enhancement potion may be active on a person at a time. Drinking a second Skill Enhancement potion replaces the benefits of the first. **Shelf Life:** 1 day. **Cost by Era:** \$5, \$25, \$500 plus 10 skill points (see above).

### Spell Elixirs

Useful as a one-time spell casting alternative, an elixir must be special ordered at Healing Herbs at least one day in advance. The drinker must pay the casting cost upon imbibing. Each of these spell elixirs carry with it a special cost paid to Healing Herbs upon purchase: A vial of blood from the buyer and the loss of 10 skill points for 1 month.

**Bind Loup-Garou:** As the spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 lunar month. **Cost by Era:** \$25, \$50, \$500 plus special.

**Bless Blade:** As the spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$25, \$50, \$500 plus special.

**Bless Crop:** As the spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$5, \$10, \$100 plus special.

**Cure Blindness:** As the spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 week. **Cost by Era:** \$5, \$10, \$100 plus special.

**Dream Vision:** As the spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 week. **Cost by Era:** \$5, \$10, \$100 plus special.

**Elder Sign:** As the spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 month. **Cost by Era:** \$25, \$50, \$500 plus special.

**Find Gate:** As the spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 month. **Cost by Era:** \$25, \$50, \$500 plus special.

**Healing:** As the spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$5, \$10, \$100 plus special.

**Ward the Eye:** As the spell. **Shelf Life:** 1 year. **Cost by Era:** \$25, \$50, \$500 plus special.

### Spells - Permanent Knowledge

More power, more risk, and a higher cost. The price of these potions is the permanent loss of 10 skill points (may be distributed among multiple skills), 2 points of CTHULHU MYTHOS, or one spell. In return, the client can permanently learn one spell listed above in Spell Elixir. Casting spells learned in this manner cost one less SANITY point than usual.

## Adventure Hooks

Many adventures can originate with the Healing Herb shop.

- The proprietors notice a strange illness among many of their customers. The symptoms point to living people slowly being turned into zombies. All of the remedies attempted thus far have been unsuccessful. The Zhangs want the investigators to determine the cause and put a stop to it.
- Cultists have broken into the shop and stolen a *Find the Gate* spell elixir being prepared for Dr. Thomas Hardcastle who has disappeared.
- A rash of werewolf attacks happened at last month's full moon. The proprietors fear a recurrence. Their supplies of remedies have dwindled and they need werewolf blood to create more.
- A strange old man bought an assortment of ingredients from the shop on two different days, from each of the proprietors. Over dinner, the couple talks about the week's events and what needs to be restocked. Comparing notes, they discover that the man purchased supplies needed for a Summon/Bind Nightgaunt spell. The Zhangs want the investigators to trace the old man and stop him.

## About the Author

- Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel lives near Seattle, Washington with her husband, Andy Collins, and cats, Elvis and Puck. She recently left her job of nine years at Wizards of the Coast where she was an Events Manager, Editor, Managing Editor, Game Designer, and Freelance Manager. Her recent publication credits include Expedition to the Demonweb Pits, Scourge of the Howling Horde, Races of the Dragon, and even a few entries in the Wizards Presents: Classes and Races preview book for Forth Edition D&D. Currently, she's seeking the perfect-for-her job.

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## Chapter Four

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# Húbert's Fine Arts



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A fashionable establishment on a quiet street, Húbert's Fine Arts stands out from its surroundings and unobtrusively draws attention to itself, bestowing a touch of elegance upon its more reserved neighbors. The three-story brownstone has a blocked-off half-flight of steps down (leading to a bricked-up basement entry) and an inviting half-flight up with elegant Art Deco wrought-iron rails. Behind the carved and polished wooden door with its diamond pane of cut glass the hallway opens out into small galleries on either side. The lighting is bright but indirect, the decor simple but effective, the overall effect soothing and welcoming. You feel an impulse to speak in a hushed voice as you step forward to meet the owner and view the exhibits.

## Open For Business

Húbert's Fine Arts is well known throughout the city and beyond as purveyors of specialty items, both paintings and sculptures, mainly focusing on artists of the last century or so. Húbert specializes in the work of artists with local or regional ties, especially those with rather outré reputations shunned by more staid establishments, such as Richard Upton Pickman and Robert Harrison Blake (and their British counterparts, such as S. H. Sime). Húbert also has a thriving sideline in post-Columbian primitives, and currently has items on display ranging from a Polynesian rongo-rongo stick brought back by an Innsmouth whaler to small stones bearing Native American petroglyphs, including a wide variety of small idols from around the world.

Roauld Húbert (he pronounces it 'Roe-all'd HOO-bear') the proprietor is suavity itself, never at a loss, ever ready to put a prospective client at his or her ease with a bon mot or little story about his Harvard days, or



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time in London or Paris. Many who have stopped by “just to have a look” have found themselves giving their delivery address on the way out for some little something they decided they just had to pick up. His assistant, Claire, is acknowledged to be “a pretty little thing” and “smart as a button” but “too quiet” for most. There are vague reports that some kind of janitor or general factotum hangs about the place, but no one specifically recalls seeing him.

Húbert has a genius for locating hard-to-find items for private collectors, and conversely is rumored to have helped some hard-up distinguished families quietly dispose of rather disreputable collections inherited from family patriarchs. One wag even dubbed him an ‘asylum chaser’, since a commitment by someone of good family to a private sanitarium is often followed by a discreet inquiry from Húbert as to whether the unfortunate’s executor or next-of-kin might have just inherited any art objects he or she might need help disposing of.

## Special Customers

Húbert’s offers an excellent place for Investigators who find themselves at a loss how to interpret some clue relating to a Mythos painting or *object d’art* that has fallen into their hands to find out more about the artist or artifact. While Húbert himself actually knows relatively little about art (his role is to run the gallery and please clients, both of which he does with considerable flair), his silent partner, Claire Fordham, is very knowledgeable on the subject. Claire can usually identify the painter at a glance, as well as the school of art to which the piece belongs, the period of composition (to within a few years), any unique features of the painting itself, and whatever other facts about the art and artist the Keeper cares to convey to the players.

Behind the facade of the gallery’s respectability, Húbert’s also acts as a sort of high-class fence (Claire knows nothing about this side of the business, although it would not shock her to learn of it). Húbert asks few questions regarding the provenance of items offered to him for purchase, and cares nothing about the uses to which they might be put once they have left his hands. He has, over the years, cultivated a list of private collectors who specialize in Mythos-related art and keep him on retainer to snatch up such items as soon as (or, if possible, before) they come onto the market. And while he will not go so far as to commission the theft of a particular item, he has cultivated excellent sources of information in both high and low society and quickly learns of any such burglaries. He can

## Different Eras

Húbert's Fine Arts is easily adaptable to different eras, since in every age there are Mythos paintings and carvings, and the transfer of them from one aficionado to another will be a lucrative if potentially risky business.

### Gaslight

The chief adaptation required for using Húbert's Fine Arts in a late nineteenth century setting is that the names of artists the studio carries will need to be changed. Pre-Raphaelites rather than Post-Impressionists will dominate the main gallery, with Beardsley and Sime serving as the daring contemporaries in place of Pickman and Blake. Biographical details of the gallery's residents will also need adjusting: Húbert and Claire's liaison is much more scandalous in a Victorian era, and he will accordingly take more precautions against exposure. Claire's husband will have been injured (probably with a personality-changing head wound) in one of the many colonial wars of the era, and Old Charlie's traumatic experiences will have come from an early military experiment with powered balloons rather than a fully-developed dirigible.

### Modern

In the modern era, Húbert's will be self-consciously retro, in a newly-renovated building in a transitional neighborhood. Some sculptural items (for example, the fantastically rare rongo-rongo stick) will be labeled as replicas in order to circumvent laws banning the sale of cultural artifacts. One of the prize displays will be a full-size First Emperor terra cotta figure of an ancient Chinese cultist.

The second gallery will feature carvings by Clark Ashton Smith, miniature 'pre-Tang' statuary by Lord Dunsany, paintings by Sime, and the like. A prized Pickton (the only one still on public display anywhere) and a set of five Blakes still daunt those who enter the third gallery, which has now frankly become a Grand Guignol of horrors. Claire and Húbert will make no attempt to hide their liaison; both Claire's husband and Old Charlie are the scarated survivors of a black ops military mission that ran afoul of Mythos entities.

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thus, for a consideration, offer a shrewd guess to Investigators about such an item's current whereabouts, although he will not betray one of his long-term clients in this manner.

If the Investigators themselves are the thieves in question, their first contact with Húbert might be a discreetly worded offer to help them dispose of any little trifles such as might have recently come into their possession.

## The Lay of the Land

The ground floor of Húbert's Fine Arts, and the only area open to the public, consists of four galleries: the main gallery running along the front of the house, the smaller second and third galleries towards the back, and the 'Solid Objects' display room on the left side of the entry hall. The main gallery is filled with a wide and ever-changing variety of paintings, mainly Post-Impressionists, talented regional artists of the preceding generation whose stock is just now beginning to rise, and an eclectic array of others. The second gallery is devoted to stranger fare, including many experimental paintings by artists such as Roger Fry and C. Lavin, naïf Shaker art, and pieces which simply took Hubert's fancy for one reason or another. The third gallery features gruesome but brilliant work by Pickman and others, some of which include Mythos themes (-1d2 SAN on a failed SAN check to anyone who gives them more than a cursory glance). The 'Solid Objects' room is devoted to small statuary, carvings of all kinds, modern-day primitives, and the like; a few of these items can also have Mythos significance, at the Keeper's discretion (-1d3 SAN on a failed SAN check; the maximum loss is automatic for anyone who touches or picks up such a piece, who also gains +1 CTHULHU MYTHOS in the process).

The floor above is purportedly divided into two apartments, one for Húbert himself and the other for Miss Fordham, his associate. In fact, both Claire and Roauld live together in his rooms (as is evident from anyone examining the area in question), while what would have been her room is an artist's studio. Anyone knowledgeable in contemporary art will recognize at once that both the finished pieces on its walls and the canvas currently in progress on the easel are the distinctive work of the highly collectable artist 'C. Lavin', about whom nothing is known aside from the work itself. The mysterious Lavin is in fact Claire herself (Lavin being her maiden name); Húbert feels the paintings would be taken less seriously if they were known to be the work of a female artist. The hallmark of C.

Lavin's work is the combination of two artists' styles into a single piece—for example, a Picasso painted by Van Gogh, or a Sargent by Sime, or a Pickman subject given a Seurat pointillist treatment. The results is both unsettling and, often, weirdly beautiful.

The basement is dark and claustrophobic, since all the basement windows have been bricked up; the only natural light entering is a faint purple glimmer from little bits of thick, opaque manganese glass set in the sidewalk above. It is accessible only by a system of two doors, one at the top and the other at the bottom of the stairs leading down from the main level, only one of which can open at a time (that is, opening one door automatically locks the other, which will unlock once the first door is closed. This unusual arrangement was rigged up by this area's only resident/occupant, Old Charlie, an extreme agoraphobic who serves as Húbert's art restorer. Charlie's workshop is dimly lit by a single overhanging bulb directly above the worktable or easel upon which rests his current project. Charlie has an uncanny knack of being able to piece back together torn canvas, reassemble shattered artifacts, and in general turn badly damaged items into much more saleable fully restored works of art. His den appears at first both entirely chaotic and a fire hazard of the first order, since glue pots and mugs of old coffee often simmer on hot-plates not far from open cans of turpentine, but Charlie always knows exactly where everything in his room is and can lay his hands on anything in the clutter at once.

## Roauld Hubert

**ROAULD HÚBERT (Ronnie Hubert). Age 34. Art Dealer**

STR 9      CON 8      SIZ 13      INT 14      POW 16  
DEX 13      APP 13      EDU 14      SAN 50      HP 11

**Damage Bonus:** none

**Weapons:** Handgun 50% (9mm automatic, d10 damage, 2 shots per round)

**Key Skills:** Bargain 80%, Conceal 30%, Credit Rating 70%, Dodge 76%, Fast Talk 80%, Law 40%, Other Language (French) 5%, Psychology 70%

**Mental Afflictions:** Prone to occasional acute fits of obsessive possessiveness (see 'Adventure Hooks' below), mild megalomania

**Quotes:** *"Although naïve in technique, this artist's application of swirling swaths of black is undeniably effective" (to a patron) and "I'd be only too pleased to assist in any little way I can—but, of course, it's going to cost you" (to an Investigator).*

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• A slight, dapper little man with elegant manners, always willing to welcome new potential customers to his gallery, Húbert extrudes a cosmopolitan polish. A shrewd businessman with enormous self-confidence, he is never at a loss with a ready answer to any awkward question, all in a pleasant voice with an unplaceable accent (he created it himself).

Only the gallery's two other residents know that Húbert's real name is Ronald Hubert [pronounced 'HEW-ber't'], a self-made man who never attended an Ivy League school but who vastly enjoys the persona he has invented for himself. Hubert is a master of creating a mood and getting people to do what he wants—which usually means buying his wares, but also buying into the version of himself that he chooses to present to the world. Even if confronted with evidence of his true background, he will not break character, insisting grandly that that might be who he *was*, but not who he now is.

## Claire Fordham

**Claire Fordham ('C. Lavin'). Age 31. Artist and Silent Partner**

STR 8      CON 9      SIZ 11      INT 15      POW 14  
DEX 13      APP 15      EDU 13      SAN 70      HP 10

**Damage Bonus:** none

**Weapons:** none

**Key Skills:** Art (painting) 95%, Credit Rating 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Drive Auto 40%, History (art history) 70%, Other Language (French) 30%,

• Psychoanalysis 90%

**Mental Affliction:** Periodic depression

**Quote:** *"You know, when you goggle like that, your jowls make you look exactly like a pelican."*

Claire has the unusual gift of never speaking unless she has something to say, whereupon she speaks her mind with devastating bluntness. Most visitors treat her as a sort of shop girl, never realizing that she's Húbert's full partner, co-owner of the store, and the artistic expertise behind the gallery. Fewer still know that she is not 'Miss Fordham' but *Mrs.* Fordham; although she and Húbert have a de facto common law marriage, Claire's husband (Lt. Archie Fordham III) is still alive, committed to a private sanitarium since his permanent breakdown following The Great War. Claire visits him weekly. Although he never speaks and only rarely acknowledges her presence, she is (correctly) convinced by her extensive reading on the subject that only continued contact with her keeps him from sliding into full catatonia.

Claire's second secret is that she is a talented artist, whose work (under the name 'C. Lavin') is highly sought after. Well-educated (she has a degree from Bryn Mawr), she met her husband through volunteer work during the War. Since his mental collapse, she has read all the literature available on the subject, and developed an ability, more often than not, to say just the right thing to calm someone suffering acute mental distress (**PSYCHOANALYSIS 90%**)—for example, her husband, or Old Charlie. Or, if she so chooses,



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just the wrong thing—for example, to upset an Investigator with a phobia. Finally, diligent research by Investigators with excellent **LIBRARY USE** results might uncover the fact that she is from Fall River, Massachusetts, the home of Lizzie Borden, who is in fact a distant cousin; this is a red herring of no significance.

## Old Charlie

**Old Charlie (Charles Ruston). Age 43 (looks sixtyish). Art Restorer (Former Airman)**

STR 12      CON 11      SIZ 17      INT 10      POW 9      DEX 17  
APP 9      EDU 10      SAN 20      HP 14

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** improvised weapon 75% (two-by-four, crate, pallet knife; 1d6+db damage), throw turpentine 70% (temporarily blinds target who fails to Dodge) and set it alight 75%.

**Key Skills:** Craft (art restoration) 65%, Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Electrical Repair 40%, Martial Arts (brawling; doubles damage from improvised weapon) 75%, Mechanical Repair 40%, Operate Heavy Machinery (airship engine) 40%, Other Language (French) 10%, Other Language (German) 20%, Throw 70%

**Mental Afflictions:** Alcoholic, extreme agoraphobia

**Quote:** “Uhn.”

Hulking but emaciated, Old Charlie is a broken wreck of a man. Once a proud member of America’s fledgling airship corps, he was aboard the U.S.S. *Shenandoah* when it broke in two in tornado-strength winds over Ohio. Although fourteen men plummeted to their deaths, amazingly enough twenty-nine others survived by clinging to the remnants of the sundered dirigible. Charlie was one of the seven survivors from the bow section, which shot up to 10,000 feet. He insists to this day that the ship was actually torn apart by tentacular air-beasts, which then pulled the crew one by one from the perches to which they were so desperately clinging. Since then he has a horror of being in contact with the open air, claiming that having once been cheated of their prey they are now ever-searching for him to pull him to a nameless doom in the sky. Any attempt to extract him from his lair, or expose him to the outside, provokes a manic burst of violent resistance like unto that of a drowning man.

Other than that, Charlie is harmless. A man of few words, he is completely loyal to Claire, whose husband was an old friend during the War; he knows that without her providing him shelter (and a steady supply of illicit alcohol) he would be long dead—or worse.

Charlie is withdrawn to the extent of not being able to deal with daily life, but he can still walk, eat what is set before him, and dress himself if prompted. If anything happens to Claire, he will immediately become aware of it and wander away like a sleepwalker from his high-class private sanitarium seeking her. If she is dead, he will hunt down and silently strangle those responsible one by one, never attacking until an intended victim is alone (and, preferably, helpless). Fordham's strength and constitution are effectively doubled while he is in the grip of this revenge mania.

### Pater the Cat, Age 4. Resident Cat

STR 4

CON 11

SIZ 2

POW 8

## Adventure Hooks

Many adventures can originate at the shop.

- In a Cthulhoid universe, it is entirely possible that Old Charlie's ravings are nothing less than the awful truth. Curious Investigators researching tentacular airbeasts will soon come across collaboration of Old Charlie's account in the Joyce-Armstrong Fragment, an account dropped from the sky over Sussex by an intrepid pilot who had gone hunting such horrors and fallen prey to them. It was Joyce-Armstrong's theory that such monsters inhabited localized areas and never descended to ground level; the accuracy or otherwise of these guesses is the Keeper's to decide (for more on these malign creatures, see 'The Horror of the Heights' by Conan Doyle [1913]).
- While touring the gallery, one unlucky Investigator who fails a **POW** check begins to imagine that there is someone in the next room. The other person is only glimpsed out of the corner of the eye, and no other Investigator notices it. This shadowy presence seems to follow the Investigator home, and over the next few days seems to become more substantial than the Investigator himself (doormen open the door for the figure, not the character; fellow Investigators find themselves forgetting to include the affected character in their plans). Revisiting the gallery shows that the figure in one painting has come to bear a marked resemblance to the Investigator. If the link is not broken, the Investigator is eventually absorbed into the painting and his place in the real world taken by the painted image.



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- The painting Old Charlie is currently restoring, a Dreamland scene by an unknown pupil of Pickman's, when properly restored will actually form a *gate*, allowing a ZOOG to slip over into the Waking World. The murderous little beast slits the sleeping Charlie's throat but, before it can cause more mischief, is killed and partially eaten by Pater the Cat. Both Claire and Húbert recognize that Charlie's death has a Mythos element and summon the Investigators to deal with it. If they delay, or fail to resolve the problem promptly, 1d12 zoogs emerge the following night to wreak mayhem upon the premises.

## About the Author

John D. Rateliff has edited or co-edited such titles as *Night Below*, *Return to the Tomb of Horror*, the Third Edition *Player's Handbook*, and *d20 Call of Cthulhu*. An independent scholar, he recently published *The History of The Hobbit*, the complete manuscript of one of J. R. R. Tolkien's most famous works. Only one of his three cats shares its name with a Great Old One.

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## Chapter Five

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# The Sleipnir Club



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In the fashionable part of New York City, this metropolitan social club provides its members a respite from the busy city life. Formally considered a “second-tier” social club due to its recent founding and poor pedigree, the Sleipnir Club has nonetheless become a hobnob spot for celebrities and social climbers, particularly those with ties to the occultic world. Perhaps its outre status increases its appeal to the jaded socialite.

Despite the club’s increasingly renowned clientele, it was founded as a club for expatriates from the “old country,” generally consisting of Russian and European immigrants. Most of the original members are artists and dancers who meet at the club to discuss life in the new world. European occult practitioners in the city meet here as well, and discuss more than cuisine and genealogy.

The building is a four-story Italianate brownstone, a mere 20 feet wide but very deep, wedged between two taller tower buildings. The overhanging eaves from its flat roof bear uncharacteristic gargoyles in shapes of equines and fire.

Naturally, a club member must accompany guests, and formalwear is required for entry. The doorman typically opens only one of the 3-foot wide oaken double doors to admit patrons into a tall foyer so often described as “elegant,” the word begins to lose meaning. Dark oak paneling, marbled pillars, chandeliers, and a plush red carpet greet guests, sometimes along with a thin, balding man in his 50s, impeccably dressed, checking coats and greeting guests personally.

Inside, the place smells of leather and faint spices. Conversation is respectfully quiet in most areas, and the accoutrements of the club muffle conversations, particularly in the sitting room, although outbursts of passion are common enough to be unsurprising. The sitting room contains a radio, though most members frown on its use.

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• The dining room runs the width of the first floor, and is twice as long. The chef specializes in flavorful, but little-requested eastern European fare. The sitting room smells faintly of liquor and scotch.

The club offers a small variety of amenities for gentlemen, and scandalously, select memberships to ladies of “repute and character.”

The establishment’s name is meant to be a bit of a dodge. Although the mythological name indicates the presence of occult information, the Norse mythos are rarely associated with the club’s central in-group. Anyone who arrives with Wotan on the lips quickly marks himself as an outsider. Of course, Germanic and Scandinavian pagan practitioners can be found among the high-backed leather chairs, but are dutifully circumspect.

Still, assuming investigators can locate a member to vouch for them and avoid brazenly gauche behavior, they can find a wealth of occult sources and personalities who meet on neutral ground to dine and talk shop.

## Open For Business

Although its existence is no secret, the Sleipnir Club does not advertise, and remains invisible to the majority of the public. Most in the know think of it as a place for the eccentric upper class to meet privately. Other suspicious types (and some who have been denied membership) believe that bizarre rituals occur within the walls, everything ranging from seances to human sacrifices.

• Though an aura of mystery is good for business, this last assertion is quite false. For the most part, the Sleipnir Club is almost disappointingly “normal.”

Despite unsavory rumors, it is an unspoken club rule that no ceremonies or practices are held on premises, and that facilities are maintained in as ecumenical a manner as possible. This is partly to keep the area spiritually untainted, but pragmatically, it keeps small cults from setting up camp, allows rival groups to be civil in the same location, and deflects governmental intervention in the case of some members’ less socially acceptable practices. This rule keeps the location free for socialization rather than business.

Instead, members and their guests may find a number of mundane, useful services. Amenities at the club include a four-star dining room, a steam room, an on-site barber shop, a sizeable library of classics and some popular books of the day, a well-stocked bar in the sitting room, meeting facilities, and 24 guestrooms for members and guests to stay overnight.

## Different Eras

The Sleipnir Club is easily adaptable to different eras.

### Gaslight

In the gaslight setting, the Sleipnir Club is located in London, and has only just opened, or is in the process of opening as the investigators learn of it. Everything is new, and none of the regulars have cemented relationships. Lonek is in the process of calling in favors to establish the organization, and is looking for investors.

### Modern

Thanks to the traditional nature of metropolitan clubs, the Sleipnir Club's appearance changes little in modern times. The club will also have added modern exercise amenities for members only, including two squash courts. They also have an enviable wine selection built up. Although the club provides free wireless access, cell phones and sundry impolite technological behavior are not permitted inside.

Guests must be accompanied by a member for the first four visits. Afterward, guests who act responsibly may visit the dining room and stay in the guest rooms on a member's good graces. Prices are markedly higher for guests, so anyone frequenting the club may wish to find references and attempt to join.

The dining room contains large round tables that seat 12. Meals are cordial affairs. Private seating is not available, a deliberate mix of members and guests, although the staff takes pains to separate those with obvious grievances.

During other times of the day the sitting room is an enjoyable place for conversation. This lush room, stocked with high-backed leather chairs, elegant chaise lounges, and low benches, is served by a well-stocked bar and light fare from a short-order kitchen. Smoking is not only permitted, but encouraged. The room continually emits the low hum of quiet conversation, and many secrets pass beneath the dim chandeliers. Though the club may be normal, its patrons are anything but.

Several times a year, the club invites a prominent historian or theologian with various occult ties to speak at the club, and the question-and-answer sessions afterward are typically lively.

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• Perhaps the single atypical offering of the club is gracious amenities for sanity restoration. The club is not an asylum – the permanently insane are shuffled off to appropriate venues. However, a handful of longer-term residents at the club are under the care of Lonek Rosenbluth, the club's majordomo, who also serves as an onsite psychologist. Those who can afford the extended stay and demonstrate need of his services may use the Sleipnir Club as a safe place to recover sanity for weeks or months. However, continued interaction with club members could threaten nearly anyone's sanity, so these unfortunates usually remain in their guest rooms, except for meals.

Club regulars include:

- **Tadeas Bialy** is the Czech head chef, responsible for the kitchen and devising the daily menu. He is an excellent chef, and good natured, though easily offended if his food is criticized.
- **Vasiliy Kozlov** tends bar in the evenings in the sitting room. He would prefer his customers drink vodka, a refined drink for writers and thinkers
- **Nick Dimitriou** is a Greek kid whose father was a renowned painter, and founding member before recently passing away. Nick works as a busboy in the dining room. He doesn't know what to make of this place.
- **Arnold Grantham** is a recent convert to theosophy, and will steer any conversation toward a religion's or mythology's common roots, and their roles as evolutions toward consciousness.
- **Doctor Archibald Kane** is a practicing pagan, but feels his medical practice would be ruined if this were revealed to his high society patients. Nonetheless, he does like the pagan society, and fits in well at the club.

## Special Customers

In a building full of people devoted to secret knowledge, there is surprisingly little mystery to the place itself. Newcomers are sometimes disappointed to learn there are no secret passages, sacrificial altars, or "real" libraries sequestered within the walls. Members are welcome to examine the layout of the building, and any interested party can find the building's floor plan properly registered at city hall.

The people inside the club are the main attraction. If the club regulars don't know about occult happenings in the region, then they know who does. Information on occult individuals and groups, who is genuine and who is a charlatan, where to find precious or unorthodox commodities, all these answers may be found here. The trick is finding the right person to ask.

In most cases, that right person is Lonek Rosenbluth.

**Lonek Rosenbluth****Lonek Rosenbluth, Age 54, majordomo of the Sleipnir Club**

STR 9	CON 14	SIZ 10	INT 17	POW 10
DEX 15	APP 10	EDU 17	SAN 37	HP 12

**Damage Bonus:** +0**Weapons:** none.

**Key Skills:** Accounting 32%, Art: Sculpting 35%, Bargain 47%, Credit Rating 55%, Cthulhu Mythos 62%, Fast Talk 45%, Handgun 40%, Library Use 47%, Polish 80%, English 75%, Russian 25%, French 25%, Persuade 72%, Psychoanalysis 64%

**Phobia:** Agoraphobia

**Quote:** *“Some of us came here because our art brought us here. More of us because our art was the reason we were driven out from the old country.”*



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• A Polish Jewish immigrant, Lonek has been with the club from the beginning, eleven years ago. Jovial and accomodating, Lonek still has a faint Polish accent, but an excellent command of English. Evidence exists that Lonek technically started the Sleipnir Club, Ronald Kamen has been recognized as its founder and president, and is recognized as such on all official documents and popular report. Kamen is rarely seen on premises, and Lonek brushes off questions about it. Their relationship is professional, but the men are not commonly seen together.

Lonek seems undisturbed by lack of recognition as a founder. He maintains a proprietary role at the club, lives onsite, and refers to himself as the club's majordomo. He seems to enjoy a life of conversation, philosophy, and tending to members' needs in the comfort of his surroundings. He thinks of the Sleipnir Club as his home.

A sculptor in his youth, Lonek traveled extensively, and often unofficially. Most of his witty, breezy travel stories involve stowing away or talking his way onto conveyances to exotic locales around the globe, and wistful reminiscences of women he romanced along the way.

In truth, Lonek was an investigator for several years, much like the player characters. He witnessed many horrors and gained a considerable body of occult tomes and artifacts, some stored in the club's library. In conversation, he glosses over darker experiences and brutal truths, instead telling stories of colorful escapades and beautiful women.

• Only the persistent can batter through Lonek's pleasant defenses. Investigators must impress on him that they are not merely curious, but in need of information. Lonek is quite cagey, sizing up potential inquirers with offhanded questions about their parents, professions, and travels. He well knows the most dangerous investigators frequent certain hotspots around the globe.

Once an honest investigator has gained his trust, Lonek becomes a wealth of knowledge about occultism and practitioners in the area. However, he has his price: information. Lonek (generally) equates information with safety and so he collects and trades it. Investigators who want information from him must give Lonek things he doesn't already know... a tricky propostion for one so well versed. Thus, investigators come to Lonek for information, and usually find themselves leaving to uncover some unrelated mystery to trade for Lonek's.

This is because, although genuinely pleasant and helpful, Lonek is trapped inside the club. Lonek is as sane as a man can be with a terrifying wealth of Cthulhu knowledge in his head, which is to say, not very. He maintains

a veneer of well-being by regimenting his day, focusing on helping others, meditating, and never leaving the Sleipnir Club due to a crippling case of agoraphobia. Although a few people know this odd fact about him, no one suspects its severity. When asked, he waves away concerns, claiming to be too busy to “go traipsing about with all the work to be done here.”

To compensate, he has an impressive network of friends, contacts, and business associates to bring him the things he needs. By shrewd design, his life at the Sleipnir Club is predictable and safe. In fact, the club is a cage of sanity Lonek has built for himself, to protect his tortured mind.

This requires him to send others to collect new information for him, a task he gladly presses upon investigators who show themselves trustworthy. On their return, he shares his knowledge as he sees fit. However, if Lonek is cagey in revealing normal occult information, he is parsimonious about sharing **CTHULHU MYTHOS**, loathe to share the madness with others, and partly in denial. At all costs, he is committed to providing a sane resting place for others, and chiefly, himself.

Lonek has one secret he has kept from everyone, except Ronald. Soon after establishing the Sleipnir Club, with Ronald's help, Lonek smuggled a genuine old country golem out of Prague to New York. The machinations required to extract the golem from its resting place in Prague were extraordinary. Though they were friends for many years before, Lonek strained Ronald's finances and patience with the exploit, and their interactions have been strained since

The golem is now housed inside a hollow column in the club's foyer, ready to be activated in dire emergency. Lonek knows that a golem would be small help against a return of the Old Ones, but in his travels, he has witnessed the impressive power of a true golem in protection against unspeakable creatures. He swore that when he settled down, he would take pains to keep one near him should his sanctuary suffer incursion. He does not visit it, but he knows how to quickly activate it with a command word if he needs it.

Yet there is another secret Lonek keeps even from himself. His long acquaintance with horror plagues him in nightmares. He rarely remembers them, but they drive his subconscious mind. On any given night, there is a 10% chance that Lonek will sleepwalk around the club. As though guided by unseen forces, when the club is most silent, he approaches the column where the golem is kept. With closed eyes and unerring hands, he carves the clay of the golem, reshaping it with the tentacles of a sea creature on its face and dragon-like wings folded over its back. No one knows that his fevered dreams compel him to sculpt the likeness of his nightmares, even as his conscious mind works furiously to repress it.



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## Goods and Services

The Sleipnir Club provides excellent dining and lively company to members and their guests in a fashionable part of town. It can be, literally, a safe house to Investigators, or just a place to meet an informant. Because of the constant traffic and notoriety, it is difficult to be secretive, providing the anonymity of a public space. As with most clubs, rooms are available to members and their guests.

Membership is by invitation only, and potential members must be sponsored by at least three current members. Yearly dues for membership are \$400, which provides free access to all of the club's amenities, two free weeks of guest stay, and a discount on other expenses at the club.

Although not a licensed psychotherapist, Lonek has a fair amount of practice through time spent under other psychologists' care, helping others, and self-therapy. He will gladly use his psychoanalysis skill to assist an investigator teetering on madness, assuming the investigator can pay for the stay at club prices.

Prices listed are for members/guests. If there is no slash, then the listed price is the only price.

Item	Price
Breakfast and Lunch	up to \$1
Dinner	typically between \$1 and \$2.
Towel fees for steam room	free/.05
Haircut	.30/.50
Shave	.15/.25
Rooms	\$1 night, \$5 week/\$2 night, \$10 week
Drinks	range from .25 to \$1

## Adventure Hooks

The Sleipnir club can provide any number of “meet a stranger in a tavern” jumping off points for investigations. Once investigators become more acquainted with the staff and regulars, they can get drawn into other occurrences:

- The collection of old country artists who meet at the Sleipnir Club begin to have disturbing dreams of strange hieroglyphs carved onto the walls of the club, a green slime trickling in under the doors, and a hulking giant with a tentacled face and dragon wings emerging from the foyer, trapping everyone inside. Though versed in the mystic arts, none of them knows what these symbols mean -- except Lonek, who is curiously quiet on the topic.
- A hunched old rabbi asks the investigators for help in recovering a stolen golem from Prague. He fingers the respectable Lonek as the thief.
- The library contains a collection of “popular” occult books. More rarified tomes may also lie among the stacks. Perhaps they are hidden there, or perhaps they have been placed there by others who wish them to be found.
- Lonek makes a point of knowing everyone who comes through the club. But when a mysterious stranger appears, his normal sources are no help. He needs trustworthy outsiders, with plausible deniability, to research this new person, and discover his or her agenda. He’s willing to trade precious knowledge in exchange for information about this person.
- The police got a tip that a child was abducted by “some crazy cultist down at the Sleeper Club” and now they’re nosing around, asking uncomfortable questions. In fact, there is a child, a runaway, hiding out inside the club. Who the child is running away from is more troubling than either of these other facts.

## About the Author

Jeff Quick lives in Philadelphia of all places. He writes for a living, but also runs a nonprofit bottled water company, Unda Water, giving proceeds to water-starved areas of the world. Find out more at [undawater.com](http://undawater.com).

# *A Peculiar Pentad*

## Help Is Here ... For A Price

It's a lonely life investigating grisly affairs and confronting unnameable horrors, and it requires all sorts of materials that can't be bought at the corner store as well as information that isn't found in mass-market publications. *A Particular Pentad* presents five shops that every investigator may need, to visit — a rare book store where the proprietor quotes from texts that were supposedly lost to the ages; a repair shop whose owner can get any mechanical device, no matter where or when it was made, functioning as good as new probably better; a private social club that caters to those who have seen things no human ever should, and more. Written by a quintet of fan-favorite and award-winning game designers including Jeff Grubb, Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel, Jeff Quick, John D. Rateliff, and Thomas M. Reid, *A Peculiar Pentad* is the first in a series of sourcebooks designed to provide resources and inspiration to *Call of Cthulhu* players and Keepers alike.

