



by Craig Schaefer

The Black Book and the Hunters

New items for Chaosium's *CALL OF CTHULHU*® game

Before his untimely death in 1934, the renowned professor and occultist, Howard Brimley, had consulted nearly every tome relevant to the Cthulhu Mythos in his search for a way to destroy the Elder Gods once and for all. Although he never found the solution to his quest, he compiled many notes dealing with nearly every facet of the mythos. Presented here is a portion of his recently rediscovered manuscripts — a fragment dealing with one of the lesser-known works of the mythos, *The Black Book of Shub-Niggurath*. It is hoped that this information will be of use to investigators everywhere.

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RE: *The Black Book of Shub-Niggurath*

I acquired *The Black Book* two years ago, purely by chance. Since then, I feel I have sufficiently analyzed it to give a proper description of its contents.

As every serious student of the occult knows, the deity Shub-Niggurath is a goddess concerned with fertility. *The Black Book* clarifies this, as it seems to be some kind of prayer book for her earthly priests. Not only is it full of prayers to this monstrous goddess, it also contains material relevant to Nyarlathotep. It is yet unknown what kind of connection the two gods have, or if there is any true connection between them at all.

The Black Book is a hardbound tome with a flat black cover; its dimensions are 8" x 11" x 1 1/2". The copy I found is written in archaic Latin, comprising 368 pages and no illustrations of any sort. Nevertheless, this version of *The Black Book* has evidence of a color drawing on the very first page. When I received the volume, however, the page had been torn

out, leaving only the very edge of the picture. It remains to be seen what the picture was and what importance it had.

The first page past the torn sheet holds a popular prayer to Shub-Niggurath. It reads (when translated):

"O friend and companion of night, thou who rejoices in the baying of dogs and spilt blood, who wanderest in the midst of shades among the tombs, who longest for blood and bringest terror to mortals, Gorgo, Mormo, thousand-faced moon, look favorably on our sacrifices!"

The Black Book is filled with doggerel such as this, as well as several sets of instruction for ceremonies to Shub-Niggurath. While the spell Call Shub-Niggurath is well known to many magicians and practitioners of the dark arts, the adaption in *The Black Book* is unusual in that it summons Shub-Niggurath, places her in a form of stasis, and forces her to answer any questions the caster of the spell asks. The spell is apparently used to force the goddess to appear at important cult ceremonies.

The book holds several other spells as well, only two of which are unusual. One of the magical formulas is for the creation of a Knife of Power, a potent weapon used most often by cult priests to slay sacrifices. According to *The Black Book*, the Knife (note that I am judging by extrapolation; I have not taken the time to create one of my own) stores the power of those slain with it. On command, a bolt of energy powered by the souls within the blade spring forth from the dagger's tip. The bolt itself is a very powerful weapon with apparently enough energy to blast a hole through a sheet of metal.

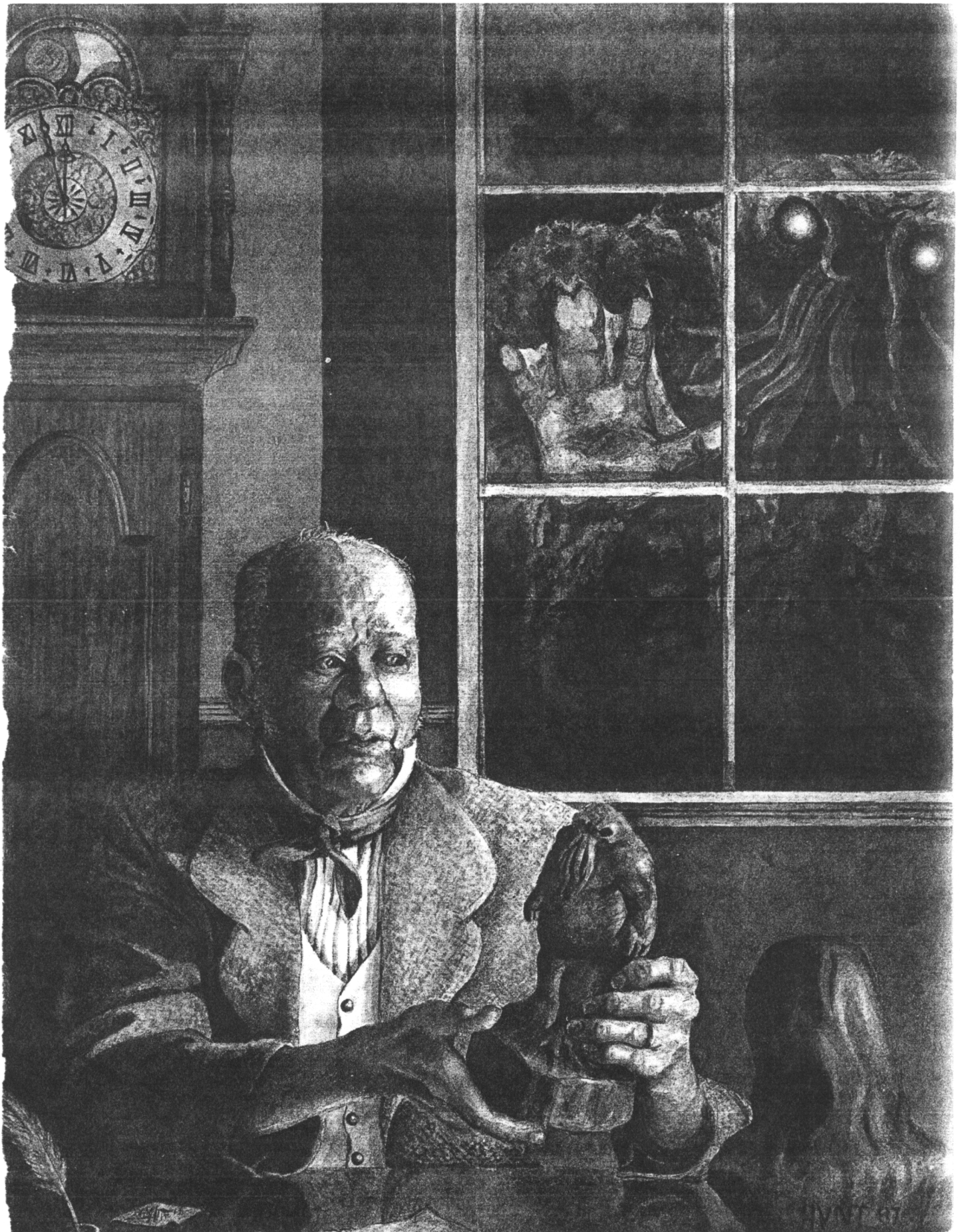
The other unusual spell is used to summon a creature not previously described in the other books of occult lore I have perused. Called the Hunter of Shub-Niggurath, this entity appears to belong to a powerful servitor race, not unlike the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. Recently, I set about to conjure and study one of those servitors, and I was able to learn something about it.

The Hunters of Shub-Niggurath are fortunately seldom encountered. Unlike their "brothers," the Dark Young, the Hunters are never called to preside over cult ceremonies or to perform similar functions. They are called into service and controlled only by high priests or by Shub-Niggurath herself.

The Hunters are called from their home world for one purpose only — to hunt. When summoned and given the description of a victim, a Hunter tracks down the target and will not stop until either it or the target is dead. The Hunter has a special sense which allows it to home in on a person when provided with something the person has recently touched (such as a nail clipping or a lock of hair).

The Hunter that I conjured was about 8' tall; it stood on two legs and walked erect. The Hunter was massive and vaguely humanoid in appearance, being covered in filthy brownish-gray fur. Its head was merged with its torso so that it had no neck whatsoever and no true face, except for its yellow, pupilless eyes and a mass of tentacles between and below them. Its hands were humanlike, except for the merging of two fingers and the presence of webbing between the other digits. Short, tronlike talons projected from each finger. Despite its bloated appearance, the Hunter seemed quite agile and restless, and paced back and forth on its rootlike feet, its facial tentacles writhing and curl-

Illustration by Jonathan Hunt



ing like serpents. In certain ways, it resembled one of the Star-Spawn of Cthulhu, though it lacked wings.

The Hunter did not speak except in grunts and low squeals (perhaps its native language), though it is capable of a crude communication through a rough form of empathy, which transmits the Hunter's intentions and emotions to nearby beings. Apparently, Hunters are unable to control this ability; thus, they project their mental conditions (such as they are) constantly. From the one Hunter I summoned, I received very powerful feelings of impatience and anticipation; it doubtless desired to go on a hunt.

The Hunters' point of origin is as yet unknown. They could be from an entirely different dimension, or they could be the spawn from a nearby planet in our own solar system.

All in all, *The Black Book of Shub-Niggurath* is quite valuable, especially to devotees of that deity. Otherwise, its value depends on the individual investigator. Probably the best use of this tome is to study the spell knowledge it contains, though I have faithful copied the summoning ritual for Shub-Niggurath; if indeed this creature is summoned in a helpless condition, more the better to destroy it in a relatively safe fashion. One can only hope for the best. . . .

Game notes

For Keepers who wish to use *The Black Book*, the Hunters of Shub-Niggurath, and any of the new spells in this article, the following statistics are included.

The Black Book of Shub-Niggurath gives 5% Cthulhu Mythos knowledge, with a spell multiplier of 2. *The Black Book* may be found in several different languages, most commonly English or Spanish. The SAN loss for reading *The Black Book* is 1d6. Since this book is fairly low-powered (in terms of knowledge gained), it may be one of the first Mythos works the adven-

turers find. Consequently, nearly every powerful priest of Shub-Niggurath possesses a copy.

Spells are gained from *The Black Book* in the following order:

1. Summon Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath
2. Bind Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath
3. Call Shub-Niggurath
4. Bind Shub-Niggurath (new spell)
5. Contact Nyarlathotep
6. Enchant Power Knife (new spell)
7. Summon Hunter of Shub-Niggurath (new spell)
8. Voorish Sign

The majority of these spells are described in the CALL OF CTHULHU game rule book. The three new spells follow:

Bind Shub-Niggurath: This powerful spell summons Shub-Niggurath, who appears at the caster's location in a form of stasis from which she cannot escape until the caster frees her. she makes a roll of 10 or less on 1d100 (made every minute), or she is attacked. In the case of being allowed to leave, there is a 20% chance Shub-Niggurath will kill the caster before she goes. In any other case, Shub-Niggurath automatically attacks anyone in sight before disappearing. This spell is commonly used by cultists to bring Shub-Niggurath to preside over certain special ceremonies. Her displeasure is hopefully eased by placing many sacrificial victims around her summoning point.

This spell has another use, however — one that is of potential interest to wizards. When Shub-Niggurath is held in stasis, the caster may ask any questions of the deity. Under the influence of the spell, Shub-Niggurath is compelled to answer them (unfortunately for the caster, she is under no obligation to answer truthfully). Also, every question asked adds 5% to Shub-Niggurath's chance of escape (calculated every minute). Of course, when freed, the deity will not hesitate in slaying the mage, even to the extent of sending a Dark Young or a Hunter if her prey escapes. Only the most powerful or foolish wizards use this spell for this purpose.

This spell costs three permanent POW points to cast, with another POW lost upon the word to release Shub-Niggurath from her prison. The spell requires special candles, a pentagram, and several other ceremonial items that cost at least \$200 to procure.

Enchant Power Knife: This is one of the Enchant Item spells described in the CALL OF CTHULHU game rule book, pages 76-77. To create a Power Knife requires a silver knife worth no less than \$350, a sacrifice to Shub-Niggurath of at least 10 SIZ worth of victims, the permanent loss of 3 POW, and a sanity loss of 1d10. It takes two days to cast this spell, and the result is a very formidable weapon.

When the Power Knife is completed and is used to kill a being while a prayer to Shub-Niggurath is spoken, the dagger literally absorbs the POW that the victim

had at the time of its death. That, however, is just half of the special power of the knife. Upon command, a beam of energy is emitted from the tip of the knife, automatically hitting the chosen target. Before firing, though, the user must specify how many POW points he is expending. The POW used in the attack is gone from the knife forever, having changed into energy to fuel the beam. The effective length of the energy beam is 10 meters per point of POW used.

Next, the victim matches his POW against the POW used in the beam's attack. If the beam is overcome by the victim's POW, the attack has no effect and the POW used by the knife is wasted. On the other hand, if the victim is overcome, he must roll the result of his CON × 3 or lower on 1d100. If the victim succeeds, he takes 1d10 damage from the beam. If he fails the roll, he is instantly blasted to ashes. Because of this weapon's evil nature, it is seldom used by investigators but can often be found in the hands of a high priest of Shub-Niggurath. The knife is only usable by its creator.

Summon Hunter of Shub-Niggurath: This spell is identical to the other Summon spells, and it requires an idol of either Shub-Niggurath or a Hunter to work. As described in the text given earlier, this spell summons a single Hunter.

Hunter of Shub-Niggurath (Greater Servitor Race)

Description: A full description of this creature is provided in the manuscript supplied by Howard Brimley, given earlier in this article.

Notes: A Hunter, as stated earlier, is only summoned to hunt down beings who have somehow offended Shub-Niggurath or her representatives. It has a sense that allows it to home in on its target. Once its mission is complete, it disintegrates automatically.

Characteristics		Average
STR	5D6 + 20	37-38
CON	5D6 + 10	27-28
SIZ	5D6	17-18
INT	2D6	7
POW	1D6	3-5
DEX	4D6	14
Hit points		30
Move		10

Weapon	Attk%	Damage
Claw (2)	60	2d6
Facial tentacles	90	5d6

Armor: A Hunter has thick hide worth 4 points.

Spells: A Hunter has no spells, but it has the homing ability described previously.

Skills: Sneak 95%, Hide 55%, Climb 80%, Swim 50%.

SAN: Seeing a Hunter of Shub-Niggurath costs 1d10 points of SAN. A successful SAN roll still costs 1d6 points of SAN. ☉

HUTZERER

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