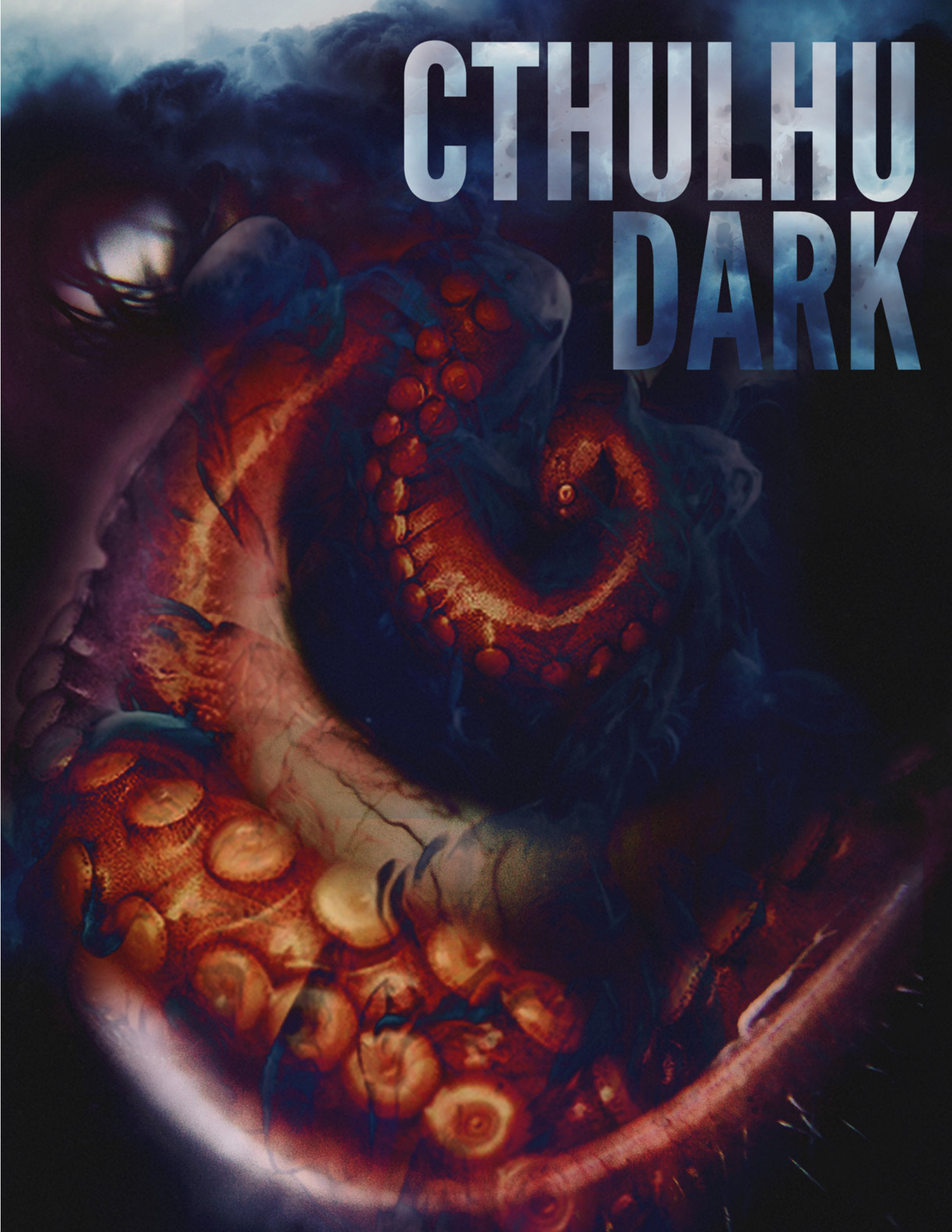
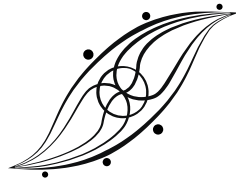


# CTHULHU DARK



# CTHULHU DARK



**GRAHAM WALMSLEY**

**KATHRYN JENKINS**

**HELEN GOULD**

**COVER ART: GEORGE COTRONIS (HARDBACK), NATHAN PAOLETTA (LEATHER)**

**INTERIOR ART: MATTEO BOCCI**

**CARTOGRAPHY: STENTOR DANIELSON**

**TEXT ORNAMENTS: NATHAN PAOLETTA**

Cthulhu Dark is a game based on fiction. Any resemblance to actual persons and creatures, living, dead or dreaming, is purely coincidental.

Kathryn Jenkins is the author of Arkham 1692 and The Doors Beyond Time. Helen Gould is the author of Jaiwo 2017 and The Curse of the Zimba. Graham Walmsley is the author of all other parts of this book. They all assert their moral right to be identified as the authors of their work.

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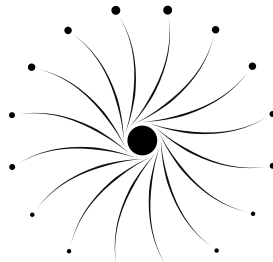
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# PLAYER'S SECTION

Do you ever feel that you're losing control, even though you present a mask of calm to the world? That one push could make you snap, turning you into a screaming, desperate creature?

Welcome to Cthulhu Dark.

This book begins with the Cthulhu Dark rules, which you can use to start playing immediately. You'll then find more detail about how the rules work and how to use them to best effect. There is then a guide to writing horrific mysteries, then a guide to playing them.

Following that, you'll find four settings for Cthulhu Dark — London 1851, Arkham 1692, Jaiwo 2017 and Mumbai 2037 — each of which has a mystery to play through.

Let's start our journey into horror.

# THE RULES

## YOUR INVESTIGATOR

Choose a name and occupation. Describe your Investigator. Take a green Insight Die.

All dice, including your Insight die, are six-sided.

## INSIGHT

Your Insight shows how far you can see into the horror behind the universe. It starts at 1.

When you see something disturbing, roll your Insight Die. If you get higher than your Insight, add 1 to your Insight and roleplay your fear. (This is called an “Insight roll”).

Is your Insight real? Can you really see a deeper truth? Or is it just insanity? Sometimes, it is hard to tell.

## INVESTIGATING

When you investigate something, roll:

- ▶ One die if what you’re doing is within human capabilities (the “Human Die”).
- ▶ One die if it’s within your occupational expertise (the “Occupation Die”).
- ▶ Your Insight Die, if you will risk your mind to succeed.

If your Insight Die rolls higher than any other die, make an Insight roll, as above.

Then your highest die shows how much information you get. On a 1, you get the bare minimum: if you need information to proceed, you get it, but that’s all. On a 4, you get everything a competent investigator would discover.

On a 5, you discover everything a competent investigator would discover, plus something more. For example, you might also remember a related folktale, rumour or scientific experiment.

On a 6, you discover all of that, plus, in some way, you glimpse beyond human knowledge. This probably means you see something horrific and make an Insight Roll.

Here is an example. You’re investigating your great-uncle’s manuscripts. On a 1, you get only enough information to continue with the story: it is an address, “7 Thomas Street.” On a 4, you discover everything a competent investigator would discover: you find that your great-uncle was researching people plagued by dreams and visions, one of whom was Mr Wilcox of 7 Thomas Street.

On a 5, you discover all that, plus something more. So, you find that your great-uncle was researching people plagued by dreams and visions, one of whom was Mr Wilcox of 7 Thomas Street. Plus, when you read the descriptions of the dreams, they remind you of newspaper reports about a Californian theosophist colony, who recently donned robes for a “glorious fulfilment.”

On a 6, you discover all that, plus you glimpse beyond human knowledge. So, you find that your great-uncle was investigating people plagued by dreams and visions, one of whom was Mr Wilcox of 7 Thomas Street, and you recall newspaper reports about a Californian theosophist colony. And you experience one of the visions yourself.

## DOING OTHER THINGS

When you do something other than investigating, roll dice as above. If you roll your Insight Die and it rolls higher than any other die, then, as before, make an Insight Roll.

Again, your highest die shows how well you do. On a 1, you barely succeed. On a 4, you succeed competently. On a 5, you succeed well and may get something extra. On a 6, you succeed brilliantly and get something extra, but maybe more than you wanted.

For example: you’re escaping from the window of a hotel in Innsmouth. On a 1, you crash on an adjoining roof and attract attention. On a 4, you land quietly on the roof.

On a 5, you land quietly and get something extra: you escape your pursuers. On a 6, you land quietly, escape your pursuers and get something extra that is more than you wanted: you get a glimpse of your pursuers, who are twisted and inhuman.

## **FAILING**

If someone thinks the story would be more interesting if you failed, they describe how you might fail, then roll a die (called the “Failure Die”). They can’t do this if you’re investigating and you must succeed for the scenario to proceed.

If their Failure Die rolls higher than your highest die, you fail, just as they described. If not, you succeed as before, with your highest die showing how well you succeed.

Returning to the example above: you’re escaping from the hotel window. This time, someone thinks it would be more interesting if your pursuers caught you. You both roll. Their Failure Die rolls higher than your highest die. You are caught.

## **TRYING AGAIN**

If you included your Insight Die in a roll and you’re not happy with the result, you may reroll (all the dice).

If you didn’t include your Insight Die, you may add it and reroll.

Afterwards, look at the new result. As before, the highest die shows how well you do. And, if your Insight Die is higher than any other die, you must make an Insight roll.

You may reroll as many times as you like.

## **COOPERATING AND COMPETING**

To cooperate: everyone who is cooperating rolls their dice. Take the highest die, rolled by anyone, as the result.

To compete: everyone who is competing rolls their dice. The highest die wins.

On a tie, anyone who wants to reroll may do so, providing they include their Insight Die in the roll. If that doesn’t resolve the tie, then whoever has the highest Insight wins, and if that doesn’t resolve it, everyone rerolls.

## **FIGHTING**

If you try to defeat any supernatural creature by fighting it, you will die. Instead, roll to hide or escape.

If you fight something that is not supernatural or if you fight a supernatural creature but not to defeat it (for example, to fight your way past it), be clear about what you want from the fight, then roll as described under “Doing other things” above.

## **SUPPRESSING KNOWLEDGE**

When your Insight reaches 5, you may now reduce it by suppressing knowledge of what you have discovered: for example, by burning books, defacing carvings or destroying yourself.

Each time you do this, roll your Insight Die. If you get less than your current Insight, decrease your Insight by 1.

You may continue reducing your Insight in this way when your Insight drops below 5.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE FULL HORROR**

When your Insight reaches 6, you understand the full horror behind the Universe and leave everyday life behind. To the outside world, you appear insane. This is a special moment: everyone focusses on your Investigator’s last moments of lucidity.

Go out however you want: fight, scream, run, collapse or go eerily silent. Afterwards, either make a new Investigator or continue playing, but retire your old Investigator as soon as you can.

## **FINAL POINTS**

Cthulhu Dark is a game about doomed Investigators. So don’t play to win. Instead, enjoy losing. Enjoy watching your Investigator’s mind slowly break.

The rules leave certain questions unanswered. Who decides when to roll Insight? Who decides when it’s interesting to know how well you do something? Who decides whether you might fail? Decide the answers to these questions with your group. Make reasonable assumptions.

# THE RULES IN DETAIL

## CHOOSE A NAME AND OCCUPATION. DESCRIBE YOUR INVESTIGATOR.

When you play Cthulhu Dark, most of the group play **Investigators**: ordinary people who investigate a horrific mystery.

One of the group does not play an Investigator, but takes the role of **Director**. They guide everyone else through the mystery, describing what the Investigators discover along the way and playing anyone who the Investigators meet. Before the game, the Director will often plan a mystery for the others to play through.

First, decide who the Investigators are. Do this as a group, talking as you do it. Choose names and occupations for your Investigators and decide any other interesting details.

If you're the Director, tell everyone the setting for your mystery: that is, the time and place where it is set (e.g. "London 1851"). This affects the occupations, names and other things that players will choose for their Investigators. If you have particular requirements for the Investigators, say these too: for example, if you want Investigators who are all soldiers, who all live in London or who all have strong opinions about children, say so now. We'll come back to this in "Who are the Investigators?" on page 29 and again in "Making Investigators" on page 41.

As you create Investigators together, ask each other questions. For example, if someone says their Investigator's name is "McDarryll", ask "Is she Scottish? How long has she lived in this country?". If someone gives their Investigator's occupation as "thief", ask "What do they steal? Where do they sell it?". If someone says their Investigator is shabbily dressed, ask "What do they wear?"

Try asking leading questions: "What is your Investigator's greatest fear?", "What did your uncle tell your Investigator when they were young?" or "What did the letter from Andalusia say?" (For this last question, you just invented the letter from Andalusia, to make things interesting.)

As you do this, create relationships between the Investigators. For example, if there are two thieves in the group, then do they know each other? If there are a hobo and a policeman in the group, then how do they feel about each other? Try asking "What do you two think about each other?": you'll always get an interesting answer.

Think carefully about occupations. They depend heavily on the setting: occupations in London 1851 differ from those in Mumbai 2037. Choose an occupation with little power (see "The setting and the power" on page 26). Often, narrowly-defined occupations are more interesting: "Quantum physicist" is better than "Physicist" or "Academic".

For some mysteries, it won't seem right to give Investigators an occupation. For example, if the Investigators are all children, they might not have occupations. Or, if your Investigators are soldiers in World War I, it wouldn't be interesting to give them all "Soldier" as an occupation. When this happens, replace "Occupation" with something that makes each Investigator interesting and different from the others. For example, if the Investigators are soldiers, use their speciality (e.g. "radio operator", "sapper") instead of occupation. If they are children, try using "the thing they are best at" (e.g. "sports", "mathematics"). In play, roll a die for these things, rather than your Investigator's occupation.

Finally, create Investigators who will be hit hard when the horror comes. Give them relationships with people they care about, especially family members or spouses. Give them strong convictions, which are likely to be undermined when they encounter the supernatural: for example, a deep belief in humanity, rationality or religion. The Director will bring these into the game later.

More generally, create Investigators who are vulnerable. Naive Investigators are better than all-knowing ones; weak Investigators are better than strong ones; uncertain Investigators are better than confident ones. Avoid Investigators who have experienced the supernatural before, since they are less likely to be surprised by it.

Finally, check that you all feel ready to play the Investigators. If not, talk more and ask each other more questions.

## TAKE A GREEN INSIGHT DIE.

Try using your Insight Die to keep track of your Insight, by keeping its highest face turned to your current level of Insight.

## WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING DISTURBING, ROLL YOUR INSIGHT DIE. IF YOU GET HIGHER THAN YOUR INSIGHT, ADD 1 TO YOUR INSIGHT.

When something happens in the game that you find disturbing, make an Insight roll. That means: when something happens that creeps *you* out or that would creep *your Investigator* out, make a roll.

Do this whether or not the thing you saw is supernatural. In *Cthulhu Dark*, anything disturbing can open your mind to the horror, whether supernatural or not.

If you're playing an Investigator, don't wait for the Director to tell you to make an Insight roll. Do it yourself, whenever something creepy happens.

If you're the Director, encourage players to roll their Insight Die when something horrific happens. Ask questions like "Would that creep your Investigator out?", "Do you want to roll Insight?" or simply push their Insight Die towards them.

If, when you make an Insight roll, you roll your Insight or lower, your Insight stays at its current level. When this happens, your Investigator is scared, but keeps it together. As you play your Investigator, show them dealing with their fear.

If you roll higher than your Insight, your Insight increases. Choose how this affects your Investigator. Do they become edgy and nervous? Or quiet and withdrawn? Do they begin to believe the horror they see? Or do they steadfastly deny everything? Whatever you choose, show it in the way you play your Investigator.

## WHEN YOU INVESTIGATE SOMETHING...

You are investigating whenever you are trying to discover something new.

So, if you are examining an object, talking to a witness or reading a book for clues, you are

investigating. If you are breaking a safe, picking a lock or picking a pocket to get information, you are investigating. If you are following a map, sneaking past guards, clearing a path or dynamiting your way into an underground city, you might also be investigating, since you are trying to get somewhere new and discover what is there. For any of these things, roll dice to see what you find.

You can also investigate in less obvious ways. For example, you might roll to remember a childhood memory, to work out what is wrong with a building or to follow an alien vibration to its source. In *Cthulhu Dark*, you can investigate in any way you can think of, without needing a specific skill.

If you are the Director, you might ask players to make investigation rolls, especially when you know there is something to discover. There are two particular times you might do this. One: when something is hidden, ask for a roll to see whether the Investigators notice it. Two: when the Investigators talk to someone who is lying, ask for a roll to see whether they spot the dishonesty.

## ROLL ONE DIE IF WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS WITHIN HUMAN CAPABILITIES...

When you investigate in any normal way, you get the Human Die. Reading a book, understanding how someone feels, remembering dreams, deciphering symbols: these are all within human capabilities.

When you investigate in a weird way, you might not get the Human Die. Casting a spell, controlling your dreams, trying to follow an alien vibration to its source, mystically sensing the pattern behind ancient symbols: all these things stretch beyond human capabilities.

As a rule of thumb: if you are using dark forces, you are edging beyond human capabilities, and are unlikely to get the Human Die. You are also likely to roll your Insight Die shortly.

Don't argue too hard to get the Human Die or any other die! Remember that, in *Cthulhu Dark*, you shouldn't play to win. Failing a roll is often as interesting as succeeding, so don't fight to get every die you can.



## **ONE DIE IF IT'S WITHIN YOUR OCCUPATIONAL EXPERTISE...**

When you investigate in a way related to your occupation, you get the Occupation Die.

You usually get the Occupation Die only for things directly connected to your occupation. For example, if you are a doctor, you get the Occupation Die when examining a patient, but not when trying to calm someone down (even if you are using your bedside manner).

There is one exception: Investigators with highly specific occupations (e.g. “quantum physicist” or “florist”) may sometimes get the Occupation Die for things indirectly related to their occupation.

So, if a quantum physicist tries to sense mystical patterns behind the universe, they might get the Occupation Die, on the grounds that quantum physics might help them. Similarly, if a florist tries to recognise a poisonous plant, they might get the Occupation Die, on the grounds that they might have seen that plant before. This rewards players for choosing specific and interesting occupations, ensuring they are still useful.

## **AND YOUR INSIGHT DIE, IF YOU WILL RISK YOUR MIND TO SUCCEED.**

You can add your Insight Die to any roll. By doing this, you are risking your mind, since if it rolls higher than other dice, you make an Insight Roll.

You can add this die even for tasks that do not obviously risk your mind: for example, reading a book, moving a slab or picking a lock. This represents pushing yourself hard, physically or mentally, which makes you more likely to snap.

Note that, when you try something beyond human capabilities, your Insight Die might be the only die you roll (since you won't get the Human Die and probably won't get the Occupation Die). For example, if you try to cast a spell, control your dreams or sense mystic patterns, you'll probably only roll the Insight Die. This means your Insight Die will automatically be the highest die, which means you will make an Insight Roll immediately afterwards.

Finally, here is an alternative rule for quick play. When you add your Insight Die to a roll, it counts as an immediate Insight roll: that is, if it rolls higher than your current Insight, your Insight increases by 1. This is faster, but it makes Insight increase faster too.

## **THEN YOUR HIGHEST DIE SHOWS HOW MUCH INFORMATION YOU GET.**

When you investigate and roll a low number, you succeed, but only just.

On a 1, you get the minimum amount of information that is still useful. This is probably just a few words. If you need information to continue with the mystery, you get that and nothing more: for example, if you're asking a shopkeeper where a missing child went, they might just say “The docks.” Otherwise, you get what you want but no more: for example, if you are trying to find whether someone is telling the truth, you realise they are lying, but get nothing more.

On a 2, you get the information you want in brief, perhaps a sentence or two. If you need information to proceed, you get it: for example, if you're asking someone where a missing child went, they tell you briefly what they know (“I saw them walking towards the docks, late last night”). In any case, you basically get what you need: for example, if you try to work out whether someone is telling the truth, you realise they are lying because they are terrified.

On a 3, you get most, but not all, of what you want to know. This is probably two or three sentences. For example, if you're asking someone where a missing child went, they tell you most of what they know (“Last night at midnight, I looked out my window and saw her walking to the docks. She was in her nightdress.”). If you try to work out whether someone is lying, you realise they are and why (“She's obviously lying. She looks terrified and keeps looking towards her children, as though she has seen a ghost and is afraid it will come back”).

Sometimes, on 1, 2 or 3, you get what you want, but not in the way you wanted. For example, if you are following someone, you discover where they are going but draw attention to yourself. If you are

picking a lock, you force the lock, making it obvious that it is broken.

However, 1s, 2s and 3s are never failures. On a low roll, you barely succeed, but you basically get what you want. You never get so little information that it is not useful: for example, if you want to know where a missing child went, you will never just get “England.” Only the Failure Die can make you fail.

### **ON A 4, YOU GET EVERYTHING A COMPETENT INVESTIGATOR WOULD DISCOVER.**

On a 4, you find out everything you wanted to know.

So, if you’re asking someone where a missing child went, they tell you everything they saw (“Last night at midnight, I looked out my window and saw her walking to the docks. She was in her nightdress and looked like she was sleepwalking. There was someone ahead of her, a tall man who walked strangely.”). If you’re trying to discover whether someone is telling the truth, you discover that they are lying and why (“You don’t believe her. You realise she saw the creature and is terrified it will come for her children. She acts as though it might be listening now.”).

If you are the Director, don’t hold back on a 4. Tell the Investigators everything they wanted, everything that is there to discover. This makes 5s and 6s even more special: it means that the Investigators get even more.

### **ON A 5, YOU DISCOVER EVERYTHING A COMPETENT INVESTIGATOR WOULD DISCOVER, PLUS SOMETHING MORE.**

On a 5, you find out everything you wanted, plus you get something extra.

For example, if you’re asking where a missing child went, you discover everything described above, plus you remember local legends of monsters who enticed children away. If you want to know

whether someone is lying, you discover that they are and why, plus you recall obscure spiritualist writings, about a creature that haunted families for generations and returned when someone mentioned its name.

If you’re the Director, there are further tips for handling 5s on page 43.

### **ON A 6, YOU DISCOVER ALL OF THAT, PLUS YOU GLIMPSE BEYOND HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.**

On a 6, you get everything that’s there to discover, but you also find out too much. You glimpse the horror.

This means you find something obscure, threatening and mystical. It often won’t make sense. For example, if you’re asking someone where a missing child went, they tell you everything, but you also mystically sense the presence of the creature. If you’re trying to tell whether someone is lying, you realise that they are lying and why, but you also sense a blankness in their eyes, as if their humanity is slowly draining away.

In Cthulhu Dark, rolling a 6 is dangerous. It often leads to an Insight Roll. When someone rolls a six, there should be a collective intake of breath.

Note that if you add your Insight Die to a roll and it is the only die that rolls a 6, you might make two Insight Rolls: one because your Insight Die rolled higher than the other dice, plus one for the thing you discover when you roll a 6.

Finally, note that however high you roll, you never discover something that lets you skip the investigation. For example, if you roll high while tracing a missing child, you don’t immediately find the child. High successes give lots of information, but they don’t end the game by revealing the whole mystery.

If you’re the Director, there are further tips for handling 6s under “On a 6” on page 43. A 6 is an excellent time to use a Creeping Horror (see page 32).

## **WHEN YOU DO SOMETHING OTHER THAN INVESTIGATING, ROLL DICE AS ABOVE.**

When you do something that isn't investigating, you roll in the same way. The Human Die, the Occupation Die and Insight Rolls work exactly as above.

This lets you attempt all kinds of tasks: for example, escaping, hiding, driving a car or detonating explosives to seal the entrance to an underground city. You can also roll for less obvious things: you might roll to stay conscious, convince yourself that there is a rational explanation, resist being possessed by a creature or see whether you remembered to bring a piece of equipment. Again, Cthulhu Dark lets you roll for these things, without needing a specific skill.

Remember that, if you are rolling to discover something, you should roll to investigate instead. For example, if you are driving to get someone to hospital before they die, that's not an investigation roll, but if you are driving to follow another car to find where it is going, you are investigating. Similarly, if you are detonating explosives to destroy the entrance to an underground city, that isn't an investigation roll, but if you are detonating explosives to reveal the entrance to an underground city, you are probably investigating.

## **YOUR HIGHEST DIE SHOWS HOW WELL YOU DO.**

As with investigating: on a 1, you barely do the thing you want to do. On a 2, you do it, although not well. On a 3, you do adequately.

On a 4, you do what you want to do and do it well. On a 5, you do it well and get something extra. On a 6, you do too well and may get a glimpse of the horror.

For example: if you are driving to get someone to hospital before they die, then on a 1, you get there, but you crash the car on the way, skidding to a halt by the hospital as the person's breath is fading. On a 2, you arrive with moments to spare, scraping the car on the way. On a 3, you narrowly avoid a crash, but arrive at the hospital safely. On a 4, you drive well and arrive with time to spare.

On a 5, you drive well and arrive with time to spare, plus your unconscious passenger mutters useful information about what they saw. On a 6, you drive well and arrive with time to spare, but your unconscious passenger mutters dark syllables, which lodge themselves in your brain.

As with investigating, 1s, 2s and 3s are never failures. For example: if you roll a 1 while driving to the hospital, you may crash the car on the way, but you get there in time. A 1 would never mean that you crash the car and the patient dies. Only the Failure Die can make you fail.

If you are the Director, there is again further guidance on handling 5s and 6s on page 43. Again, a 6 is a good time for a Creeping Horror.

## **IF SOMEONE THINKS THE STORY WOULD BE MORE INTERESTING IF YOU FAILED, THEY DESCRIBE HOW YOU MIGHT FAIL AND ROLL A DIE.**

If you think of a specific way that someone could fail, which would make things more interesting, roll the Failure Die to see whether it happens. For example: if someone is trying to destroy an occult manuscript by burning it, it might be interesting if they fail, because then the manuscript survives. Anyone can roll the Failure Die.

Failure won't always be interesting. For example, if you're trying to read an occult manuscript, it'll rarely be interesting if you fail. If you're trying to pick a lock, it won't necessarily be interesting if you get caught. When you aren't sure whether failure is interesting, talk about it as a group. If you decide it isn't, don't roll the Failure Die.

If different people think of different ways to fail, they both roll Failure Dice. The highest die determines what happens.

If more than one Investigator is trying to do the same thing and it might be interesting if they failed, try rolling one Failure Die against all of them. Anyone who gets equal to or higher than the Failure Die succeeds. Anyone who gets lower than the Failure Die fails. This is especially useful when lots of Investigators are fighting (see below).

## **IF YOU INCLUDED YOUR INSIGHT DIE IN A ROLL, YOU MAY REROLL. IF YOU DIDN'T INCLUDE YOUR INSIGHT DIE, YOU MAY ADD IT AND REROLL.**

You can reroll as many times as you like, providing you include your Insight Die.

This is dangerous. It tempts you to roll repeatedly, at the risk of your Insight increasing each time. There are two reasons your Insight might increase: because your Insight Die rolls high, forcing you to make an Insight Roll, or because you roll a 6 and glimpse something horrific.

If, when you reroll, you roll a lower result, that lower result stands. You can, of course, roll again.

If, on your original roll, someone rolled the Failure Die against you, they do not reroll the Failure Die when you reroll. Instead, you must match or exceed their original result to win.

Here is an optional rule: when you reroll, describe your Investigator doing something that enables them to try again.

For example: when you roll to decipher an Indonesian folktale, you get a 3 as your highest die. You want to do better. You describe your Investigator spending the night in the library, painstakingly comparing the folktale to archaeological research. You roll again, adding your Insight Die to the roll. This time, you get a 6. You find out everything. Perhaps more than you wanted.

## **TO COOPERATE: EVERYONE WHO IS COOPERATING ROLLS THEIR DICE.**

## **TO COMPETE: EVERYONE WHO IS COMPETING ROLLS THEIR DICE. THE HIGHEST DIE WINS.**

When Investigators compete or cooperate, the highest die determines the result.

Anyone can reroll their dice, as many times as they like, providing they include their Insight Die in

the roll. For competing rolls, this can lead to both sides rerolling repeatedly, until someone gives up.

After a competing roll, treat the matter as settled, at least for the time being. For example, if two Investigators both try to grab a book and one of them wins, the losing Investigator can't simply roll to grab the book again. That said, it might be interesting to roll again later in the game: for example, if the Investigator with the book begins casting a ritual, someone might try to grab the book again.

Here is an alternative rule: when there is a tie on a competing roll, describe the outcome as a tie. For example, if two Investigators try to grab a book, you might decide that they both end up holding the book, and must choose whether to share it or destroy it. Do this only if it adds to the story: it should be exciting, not frustrating.

## **IF YOU TRY TO DEFEAT ANY SUPERNATURAL CREATURE BY FIGHTING IT, YOU WILL DIE. INSTEAD, ROLL TO HIDE OR ESCAPE.**

In Cthulhu Dark, alien creatures are vastly more intelligent and powerful than you. You cannot beat them in a fight.

This means that, rather than fighting, you'll often run or hide. When this happens, roll for Doing Other Things as above. Someone is likely to roll the Failure Die against you.

Nevertheless, you might fight alien creatures, even though you cannot defeat them. You might fight your way *past* them. You might fight them *back*. You might *temporarily subdue them*, knowing that they will rise again. If there are many creatures, you might even defeat *one or two* of them, knowing there are others to take their place. When this happens, roll for Doing Other Things, as described above.

## **IF YOU FIGHT SOMETHING THAT IS NOT SUPERNATURAL, BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT OUT OF THE FIGHT, THEN ROLL.**

When you fight another Investigator, use the rules for competing rolls above.

Before rolling, be clear what you both want out of the fight. For example, you might want to destroy an ancient statuette, but the other Investigator wants to keep it. Whoever wins gets what they want.

When you fight an opponent who isn't an Investigator and is not supernatural, roll for Doing Other Things. Someone will probably roll the Failure Die against you.

Again, be clear about why you're fighting. What do you want out of this? Fighting is rarely just about hurting your opponent, so what is the fight really about? For example, if you're fighting a guard dog, you might be fighting to escape from it, to get past it or to silence it. If you're fighting a human, you might be fighting to stop what they are doing or to get information from them. Be clear about what you want, then if you succeed, you get it.

How do you tell whether the thing you are fighting is supernatural? For example, if someone is descended from alien creatures, are they supernatural? What about someone who is possessed or infected by a creature?

Use your judgement, but as a rule of thumb: if something is horrific, it is probably supernatural. The only exception is Investigators, who never count as supernatural, no matter what possesses, infects or obsesses them.

If more than one Investigator is fighting, roll one Failure Die against them, as described above. Anyone who rolls equal to or higher than that die succeeds. Anyone who rolls lower fails.

If the Investigators fight more than one opponent, you can handle this in one of two ways: you can treat the opponents as a single opponent, with a

single die roll, or you can fight them one by one. If that seems simple, that's the point. Cthulhu Dark isn't about fighting. It's about investigation and horror. You can't fight your way out of the Mythos.

## **WHEN YOUR INSIGHT REACHES 5, YOU MAY NOW REDUCE IT BY SUPPRESSING KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT YOU HAVE DISCOVERED.**

To reduce your Insight, you must erase all trace of the horrors you have found.

This often creates conflict with other Investigators, who don't want you to burn books or shoot witnesses. It can provide a good ending to the game: everything descends into chaos, as some Investigators try to destroy everything, while other Investigators try to stop them.

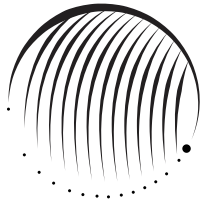
When you suppress knowledge, do something that feels like a big step for your Investigator. Don't just hide a book. Burn it. Don't just ask a witness to be quiet. Shoot them.

You can't suppress knowledge in the same way twice. If you burn one library book, you can't just burn another book for another roll. Do something new. Try burning the library. Or the librarian.

## **WHEN YOUR INSIGHT REACHES 6, YOU UNDERSTAND THE HORROR BEHIND THE UNIVERSE AND LEAVE EVERYDAY LIFE BEHIND.**

Losing your mind is a glorious ending for your Investigator. Make their last scene a good one: they might run away screaming, destroy everything in sight or just stare in wonder at the horror of the universe.

Sometimes, it can work better if the affected Investigator remains with the others, especially near the end of the mystery. If this happens, the Investigator becomes a supporting character. They don't get to make rolls any more. They become part of the scenery.





# DIRECTOR'S SECTION

Welcome, Director. Your job is to guide the Investigators through the horror and help everyone have fun.

You have two jobs. You are a performer: you present something to horrify and inspire the players. And you are a facilitator: you help the players to tell their stories, as their Investigators experience unimaginable horror.

Imagine yourself as an artist, who gives the players a half-finished canvas. You wash it with dark colours, with glowing patches of alien beauty. You give hints of lurking horrors. Then you let them complete the painting.

Most importantly, your job is to creep the players out. Aim, not for full-blown terror, but for a lingering uneasiness. And do this for real: try for a horror that makes everyone, you and them, genuinely uncomfortable.

It isn't about evil monsters with waving tentacles. It isn't about chanting cultists. It's about the things that creep us out, that drive us mad, that make us lose control.





## COSMIC HORROR, MYTHOS AND INSIGHT

Cthulhu Dark tells stories of **cosmic horror**: that is, tales of Investigators who discover that humans are insignificant, because they are powerless against greater forces in the Universe.

These greater forces are **the Mythos**, a vast array of ancient aliens, artifacts and other horrors. Long before humanity existed, the aliens came to Earth, built great cities and left the artifacts behind.

Everything about these creatures is beyond our understanding. They are huge, ancient, hyperintelligent and powerful. Their geometry, mathematics, writing and technology are beyond us. Our science, technology and academic writing does not refer to these creatures: only ancient writings, whispered folktales and crank publications mention the Mythos.

Yet the Mythos is more than a collection of aliens and other entities. On a deeper level, **the Mythos** is the terrifying truth, the underlying horror beneath the universe, beyond human comprehension.

Because of this, everything about the Mythos is repellent to us. When we encounter something from the Mythos, it appears evil, repulsive and inexplicably *wrong*.

These two meanings of the Mythos, “ancient, powerful alien entities” and “the terrifying reality underlying the Universe”, are connected. The more you understand the alien entities, the more you perceive the horror underlying the universe. The more you perceive the underlying horror, the more you see and understand the ancient, alien entities.

This understanding is called **Insight**. When your Insight is low, you see and believe the mundane reality around you. When your Insight is high, you see beyond that reality and comprehend the horror of the universe.

Every time you see something disturbing, your Insight increases, as your mind opens a little more and helps you see the universe as it truly is. Eventually, when your Insight reaches 6, you fully understand the horror behind reality and your mind breaks. Your job, as Director, is to help the Investigators along this journey.

## MYSTERIES AND HUBRIS

To do this, you guide the players through a **mystery**: a horror story, in which the Investigators encounter the Mythos and begin to understand the true nature of reality.

In every mystery, Investigators discover dark and powerful Mythos forces, beyond their understanding or control. These Mythos forces might take the form of an ancient and terrifying creature, a mind-bending artifact, unearthly sorcery or something else. As the mystery unfolds, the Investigators discover that these Mythos forces are vastly more powerful than them. That is, the Investigators experience cosmic horror.

To put this another way: every mystery is ultimately about **hubris**. It is about the Investigators’ overconfidence in their own importance and that of humanity. This is undermined when they encounter the horror, which shows them how insignificant they really are.

At the start of the mystery, the Investigators believe they are powerful, intelligent people who understand the universe. As the mystery unfolds, they realise they have been deceiving themselves.

## THE THEMES AND THE THREAT

Mysteries are not just about cosmic horror. They are also about more human topics: pregnancy, hunger, abduction, fear of the sea, fear of the dark, fear of your body changing. These are the **themes** of the mystery.

Every mystery contains a specific **threat** from the Mythos, such as an alien, artifact or sorcerous spell. This threat is a way of exploring the mystery’s themes. It is the source of the horror, which the Investigators will confront.

Under “Writing a mystery” on page 27, we’ll explore themes and threats in more detail. Under “Threats of the Mythos” on page 52, you’ll find full descriptions of Mythos threats.

## THE HOOK AND THE FINAL HORROR

Every mystery starts with a **hook**, a dramatic event to pull the Investigators into the mystery.

It ends with a **final horror**, which is the reason behind everything that the Investigators have discovered in the mystery. You can write the final horror in a sentence or two: for example, “The Mi-Go have been kidnapping children.”

We’ll discuss these further under “What is the final horror?” on page 28 and “How does it start?” on page 29.

## THE SETTING AND THE POWER

Every mystery has a **setting**, the time and place that provides the backdrop for the story. For example, a mystery might be set in New York at the height of the Great Depression, Spain during the Civil War or modern day Bangkok. Use the example settings in this book or invent your own.

In every setting, someone has **power**. Power is often about money, government or social class, although other factors may be important too. For example, in Victorian London, the gentlemen of the aristocracy have power, along with scientists, traders and the Church. In Mumbai 2037, those with money and those who were born into a high position in society hold the power.

**The Investigators are always people with little power.** They might be thieves, housewives or dockworkers. They might be skilled people, such as teachers, carpenters or nurses. But they won’t be aristocrats, tycoons or those in government.

By contrast, **the horror is close to the power** in some way. For example, in Victorian London, the Investigators might uncover a horror in a university, bank or church. In Mumbai 2037, the horror might be in a technology company or relic of the British Empire.

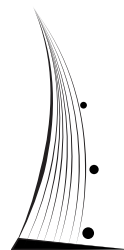
## LOVECRAFT

Cthulhu Dark draws on the writings of H P Lovecraft, together with earlier authors that inspired him and later writers inspired by him.

Lovecraft wrote his stories in the 1920s and 1930s. His standard setting is New England in the United States, especially the fictional city of Arkham, although his stories sometimes venture elsewhere.

While Lovecraft was a superb crafter of horror, he had a blinkered view of humanity. Today, his work often comes across as racist. His protagonists were mostly dull, interchangeable middle-class men.

When you play, try to move beyond this. Tell stories about a wider range of people than Lovecraft did. If you do, you’ll discover you have more stories — and more interesting stories — to tell.



# WRITING A MYSTERY

This chapter tells you how to write a Cthulhu Dark mystery.

You don't need to follow the sections of this chapter in order. Instead, skip back and forth, as you design your mystery. For example, if the first idea you have is for a setting, start at that section, then plan the rest of the mystery around it.

This chapter works in conjunction with "Playing the mystery" below. Use them together. As you write the mystery, think about how it will play. As you play the mystery, use the tips on writing to make it more fun.

## WHAT IS THE MYSTERY ABOUT?

Choose something that inspires you, which you are excited to explore with your players.

Ask yourself: what scares you? What makes you uneasy? Is it a part of your body, a place you have visited, something that has happened in the news? If so, try writing a mystery about a horror that infects the body, lurks in the place you visited or lies behind the news event. Do you worry about your loved ones, your health, your family? Then write about horrors that turn your loved ones against you, leech your health or take people's children away.

Or ask yourself: is there a subject you are interested in? Are you fascinated by history: the Partition of India, the Reconquista, the Opium Wars? Or do you like childhood fairytales: fairies, unicorns, something hiding under the bed? Or are you drawn to an artistic movement: flamenco, minimalism or the early jazz scene in New Orleans? Whatever interests you, try writing a mystery about it.

Or is there simply a story you want to tell? Do you want a tale of body horror, grand conspiracies or human temptation? Do you want a story about European travel, time travel or space travel? Then write a mystery about that.

## WHEN AND WHERE IS IT SET?

If you haven't already, decide the setting for your mystery.

To do this, think of the story you want to tell. If you want to write about a horror that infects the body, try Victorian London as a setting, with its hospitals and public displays of surgery. If your mystery is about people betraying those they love, then why not set the story in modern suburbia? If your mystery is about flamenco, try Seville at the beginning of the 20th Century. For a story about human temptation, what about Las Vegas, in the glamorous 1950s?

You might use Lovecraft's favourite setting of New England, perhaps the city of Arkham or the remote countryside. This is a good setting, blending modern and ancient, familiar and strange, and many players are familiar with it. If you use it, make it your own, drawing inspiration from cities, towns and countryside that you know.

Whichever setting you choose, think of interesting places, people and things the Investigators might find there. For example, in Victorian London, they might find an imposing hospital, a wood-panelled gentleman's club and the twisting alleyways of the East End slums. You'll use these things later in the mystery (see "Locations" on page 30).

For the rest of this chapter, our default setting is London 1851, under the reign of Queen Victoria (referred to as "Victorian London"). This setting is detailed below (see page 64), together with a full scenario, *Screams of the Children*. Many examples in this chapter are similar — although, to avoid spoiling surprises, not identical — to that scenario.

## FINDING THE HORROR

From what you know about your mystery so far, what is the thing that unsettles you or scares you? That thing will become the horror. You'll represent it as an alien threat.

For example, let's say your mystery is set in London 1851. Ask yourself: what unsettles you about Victorian London? Is it hunger, the Church, the destruction of the slums? Whatever it is, make it into a horrific threat. For example, if hunger is

the thing that unsettles you, try writing about a creature stalking London, which starves people as it touches them.

Or let's say your mystery is about people betraying those they love. What unsettles you about that? Is it the idea that you can never fully know those you love? Then turn that into an alien horror. You might write about the Investigators' loved ones being possessed by an alien creature.

As you do this, think about the power in the setting. Wherever the power lies, associate the horror with the power, rather than with people without power. For example, if you are writing a scenario about Victorian London, you might put the horror in the Church of England or the Houses of Parliament. But avoid associating the horror with the slums or the workhouse.

With that in mind, here is another way to think about the horror. Think where the power lies in your setting, ask what unsettles you about that power, then make your horror about that. For example, if your scenario is in Victorian London and you are unsettled by the power of the Church, make your horror about the Church. Perhaps there is a monstrous, charismatic priest or an ancient creature lying beneath a cathedral.

## THEMES

Now, think about the themes of your mystery: the topics you will explore, the types of fear you will play with, the things that your story is really about.

Write them down. You'll probably have between one and three themes. They should be human, emotional topics, which might scare, worry or obsess ordinary people: for example, fear of aging, fear of your body changing, fear of infection, fear of not knowing those you love, hunger, pregnancy, abduction, social class.

Try to avoid specific historical themes, such as "The British Navy", "Slavery" or "The Aristocracy". If you're tempted by a theme like this, ask yourself what deeper human themes you would like to explore. For example, if your theme is "The British Navy", would you like to explore

fear of the sea, fear of military power or fear of confinement on board ship?

There are two themes that appear "by default" in Cthulhu Dark mysteries. First, the fear of losing your mind. Second, hubris: the discovery that you are not powerful, but powerless (see "Mysteries and hubris" on page 25). If you like, explore these themes in your mystery too.

Once you have decided your themes, keep returning to them as you write and play the mystery. Hit them again and again, pushing those buttons, playing on those fears.

## THE THREAT

Once you know your themes, choose a Mythos threat — an alien creature, an ancient artifact or some other horror — that echoes those themes.

For example, if you want a story about loved ones betraying you, what about the Mi-Go (see "Mi-Go" on page 58), who impersonate people, or the Great Race (see page 56), who possess people? If you want a story about hunger, what about a Colour (see page 52), which destroys crops, or Ghouls (see page 55), who feast on humans?

To choose a threat, see the list under "Threats of the Mythos" on page 52, or invent your own.

## WHAT IS THE FINAL HORROR?

At the heart of your mystery, something is very, very wrong. This is your final horror.

Write a first idea for your final horror, based on everything you've done so far, especially your setting, themes and threat. For example, you might write "a serial killer preys on rich gentlemen", "there are creatures in the sewers of Victorian London" or "an alien infection makes people hate those they love."

Once you've written your first idea, revise it, until it is as terrifying as you can make it. Here are some ways to do that.

Firstly, ensure your final horror **harms people**. For example, "there are creatures in the sewers of Victorian London" doesn't necessarily harm people, but "there are creatures in the sewers

who kidnap children” does. Think of unusual ways to cause harm: for example, “there are creatures in the sewers who mesmerise children, making them leave their beds at night and walk to the sea” is even better. So is “there are creatures in the sewers who kidnap children, then return them *changed*.”

Secondly, make your final horror **ancient** and **vast**. For example, let’s say your final horror is “There are creatures in the sewers.” Make it older: “There are ancient creatures in the sewers, who have swarmed beneath the soil since prehistory.” Then make it bigger: “There are ancient creatures in the sewers, who swarm beneath the soil everywhere in the world, and have done so since prehistory.”

Thirdly, whatever your final horror, **the Investigators can’t put it right**. After all, this is cosmic horror, in which the Investigators are powerless against greater forces.

For example, let’s say your final horror is “There are creatures in the sewers who kidnap children.” The Investigators could put that right by rescuing the children. But, if the horror is “There are creatures in the sewers who kidnap children and

alter their minds”, the Investigators cannot put that right.

Your final horror is the core of your mystery. You’ll build your mystery around it.

## WHO ARE THE INVESTIGATORS?

Now think who the Investigators are.

Sometimes, you’ll be happy with any Investigators, providing they fit within the setting. For example, if your mystery is about abducted children in Victorian London, you might decide that anyone from Victorian London could investigate that.

More often, you’ll want to specify things about the Investigators. So, in your mystery about abducted children, you might specify that the Investigators live in London’s East End. In a war mystery, you might decide that all Investigators must be soldiers. In a mystery about a family, you might specify that they should all be family members.

Try providing constraints that ensure Investigators are hit hard by the horror. For example, in your scenario about abducted children, you could specify that Investigators must *have* children or *be* children or *have strong opinions about* children. This ensures that, when they find out that children are disappearing, they care about what is happening.

Finally, remember that Cthulhu Dark’s Investigators are people with little power. So, if you want a family of Investigators, choose a poor or middle-class family, rather than a rich one. If you want them to belong to a club, make it a working men’s club, rather than a gentlemen’s club.

You’ll use all this as the players make Investigators. For more details, see “Making Investigators” on page 41.

## HOW DOES IT START?

Start your mystery with a hook: an event the Investigators can’t ignore, which grabs them and draws them into the mystery.

Make your hook **related to the final horror**: when the Investigators discover the final horror, it should explain the hook. For example, if a

### KEEPING UP THE FIGHT

For some mysteries, especially those with a political focus, there’s a danger in horrors that the Investigators can’t put right.

For example, let’s say your Investigators are Victorian housewives, who discover that alien-infected industrialists are exploiting factory workers. If they can’t do anything about this, you’re essentially suggesting that the might of Victorian industry can’t be challenged. That isn’t exactly an inspiring message.

If you think this is a problem, then write a mystery in which the Investigators score a victory against the horror, but then realise there is more horror to fight. For example, the housewives might close down one factory, but discover there are many more factories and alien-infected industrialists. They have won one battle, but the war will take a lifetime to win.

mystery starts with the hook “Your child has disappeared”, this will be explained when the Investigators discover the final horror “Creatures in the sewers are kidnapping children.” Similarly, if the mystery starts with the hook “You find a severely injured child on your doorstep”, this might also be explained by the final horror “Creatures in the sewers are kidnapping children”, if the Investigators discover that the child was injured when it resisted abduction.

Choose a hook that **makes the Investigators take action**. For example, the hook “Your child has disappeared” makes the Investigators take action: it’s almost impossible to ignore. The hook “You dream about children disappearing” is easier to ignore: the Investigator might simply shake off the bad dream and go to work. The hook “Local children are disappearing” is even easier to ignore. Pick something that forces Investigators to react.

To do this, make the hook **personal**. For example, if your hook is “You find a severely injured child”, give the Investigators a reason to care about the child: perhaps they know the child or have children themselves. You can do this by specifying things about the Investigators, as described above.

Finally, make the hook **immediate**: a sudden event, rather than an ongoing situation. For example, if your hook is “You have disturbing dreams of children living under the ground”, the Investigators are unlikely to take immediate action. If your dream is “You dream that a child is being kidnapped at this moment”, the Investigators are more likely to react.

## PROLOGUE

You can also start your mystery before the hook.

Try starting a mystery with a prologue, in which the Investigators are going about their everyday business. For example, if your hook is “Your child has disappeared”, try starting with the Investigators returning home after work, shortly before they find their child has gone.

This gives the players a chance to play their Investigators together and establish what they are like. Once they’ve done that, you’ll hit them with the hook.

One word of warning: don’t put weird events in the prologue. If you do, Investigators might think that these events are the hook and start investigating. In particular, don’t do any Creeping Horrors (see below) during the Prologue. Save them until after the Hook.

## LOCATIONS

You now know how the mystery starts, with the hook, and ends, with the final horror. Now you must decide what happens in between.

Start by asking yourself: when the Investigators discover the hook, what will they do and where will they go? For example, if the hook is “you discover a body in an alleyway”, the Investigators might go to the police station or investigate the buildings beside the alleyway. If the hook is “your child disappears”, the Investigators might go to the child’s school or a nearby playground.

Then plan these locations in detail. Decide where the police station is, what it looks like, who is there and what the Investigators will find if they visit. Make these locations interesting: for example, a school in a church is more interesting than an ordinary school. And think about the surrounding area: try putting a pub opposite the school, where Investigators can ask if anyone has seen their child.

Now think: after visiting those locations, where will the Investigators go next? For example, if, when the Investigators visit the school, they discover their child went towards the docks, they would go to the docks. Then plan those locations too.

As you do this, think whether there are any iconic or spectacular locations you’d like the Investigators to visit. For example, in Victorian London, you might want the Investigators to see Parliament Square, Covent Garden Market or Hyde Park. If so, put those locations in. For example, you might decide that the schoolteachers saw the child heading towards Hyde Park.

For the end of your mystery, choose a dramatic, climactic location. Try somewhere that is alien, dark or underground (see “The Descent” on page 38). For example, in Victorian London, the

sewers, the cellars of the Houses of Parliament or the basement of a gentleman's club would make good locations for the end of a mystery.

You now have a rough chain of locations for the Investigators to visit. When they play, the Investigators might not visit these places in order, but you've thought about where they'll go and what they'll do. (We'll revisit this under "The Railroad" on page 38).

## PEOPLE

Now fill your locations with interesting people.

When you want the Investigators to discover something, it is often best if they find it by talking to someone. For example, if you want them to find something in a library, let them find it by talking to a librarian.

This has three advantages. Firstly, it lets the players play their Investigators and interact with others. Secondly, it lets you reveal other rumours, tales and clues during the conversation. Thirdly, if the people the Investigators meet have been affected by the horror, they can talk about it.

Give each person a name and two or three character traits. For example, you might name a librarian "Sanjit Singh" and decide he is "overfriendly" and "protective of his books." Avoid stereotypes: an overfriendly librarian is more interesting than a quiet librarian.

Finally, here is an exception: towards the end of the mystery, don't fill your locations with people. Instead, let your Investigators wander through deserted places, for full horrific effect.

## BROADENING THE HORROR

Now think: what else has your final horror done? You've defined the main thing it does, but how else does it affect the world?

Think whether your final horror has had any side-effects. For example, let's say your final horror is "Creatures are abducting children and taking them to the sewers." What else do the creatures do? Do they steal meat from butchers? Do street-

## SIX TIPS ABOUT LOCATIONS

1. Broad locations are often better than narrow ones, because they force Investigators to explore. For example, if the Investigators discover their child went to a specific ship, they will head directly to that ship. But if they discover their child went to the docks, they must explore the docks to find the ship. Try also using locations that contain lots of other locations: for example, if a body is found next to a market, this gives the Investigators many market stalls to visit and many people to talk to.

2. Spectacular locations are often better than mundane ones. If the Investigators need a rare book, try putting it in the British Library, rather than a local library.

3. Locations often form natural progressions. If your final horror is underground, it's natural for the Investigators to descend through a series of locations: they might start in a house, descend to the basement, find a trapdoor into the sewers, descend further into caves, then head deeper to find an alien city. If the Investigators are following someone who has disappeared, it's natural for them to replicate the last journey the person took before they disappeared.

4. To get the Investigators to a particular location, use a clue to point them there. For example, if you want the Investigators to go to Hyde Park, simply have the teachers at the school mention that the child was seen heading towards Hyde Park.

5. Use locations to ensure that the most horrific events happen late, rather than early, in the mystery. For example, in a mystery about a ghost town, don't put dismembered bodies in the houses, because they'll be discovered almost immediately. Instead, put them in a basement, which the Investigators are likely to enter later.

6. If the Investigators don't know that a location exists, they can't go there. Use this to ensure that the final horror isn't discovered accidentally early in the mystery. If your mystery is set in a country house, don't put the final horror in the basement, because the Investigators might simply go there. Instead, try putting the horror in an old well in the woods, then ensure the Investigators don't find out about the well until late in the mystery.

children sing songs about them? Do they play a tune, which gives Londoners strange dreams?

Or ask yourself: what other harm does your final horror cause? We know it harms people, but does it affect them in lesser ways? Or does it do something to plants and animals? You might decide, for example, that a creature causes frostbite when it touches people or leaves half-consumed corpses of small animals behind.

Or ask: what traces does the final horror leave? For example, you might decide that the creature leaves a dark gelatinous trail, which dissolves bricks in alleyways. Or it might leave behind something less tangible: a thickness in the air, a feeling that time passes slowly, a deep sense of malice.

Or, to make your horror feel ancient, ask: has the horror happened before? How long has it been here? Perhaps the creature has lived in London for millennia, since it was woods and fields. Or perhaps it rises every two hundred years. If so, there may be folktales about the creature, medieval records of it or archaeological traces of its presence.

Use these ideas in your mystery. In particular, use them during play when Investigators roll 5s and 6s (see “On a 5” and “On a 6” on page 43). They also make excellent Creeping Horrors.

## CREEPING HORRORS

Creeping Horrors are unexplained, unsettling moments of weirdness, which repeat throughout the mystery.

For example, in your mystery about abducted children, “children singing” might be a Creeping Horror. This means that, throughout the mystery, the idea of children singing will repeat again and again, in different and unexplained ways. So, at the start of the mystery, the Investigators might discover that, as the children were abducted, they sang a song. Later, at the docks, the Investigators might hear child-like singing over the sounds of the waves. At the end, when they find the children, the Investigators might observe them silently mouthing a song.

Or let’s say that “triangles” is a Creeping Horror. This means that “triangles” will repeat throughout

the mystery. So, at the start of the mystery, the Investigators might find drawings, in which the sea is depicted as a dense mass of triangles. Later, the Investigators might find triangles etched into the walls of the East End. Later still, the Investigators might perceive patterns of triangles when they look at the waves.

Choose some Creeping Horrors for your mystery. Here are some tips for doing that.

Some Creeping Horrors can be connected to your **final horror** or your **Mythos threat**. For example, in your mystery about abducted children, try Creeping Horrors connected to the creatures that abduct them: an oily odour, half-dissolved bricks, wet-sounding footsteps. Under “Threats of the Mythos” on page 52, you’ll find suggested Creeping Horrors for each Mythos threat.

Some Creeping Horrors might be connected to your **themes**. For example, if one of your themes is “the aristocracy”, you might decide that aristocrats have a monstrous look (high foreheads, thin mouths, cold eyes), which you use as a Creeping Horror. If “fear of the sea” is a theme, you might decide, as a Creeping Horror, that the Investigators hear the sea talking to them.

And some Creeping Horrors are **inexplicable**: a spiral pattern, an odour of rotten flowers, a set of unpronounceable syllables, a golden haze, a half-heard melody, a grey mould, a woman’s laughter, a feeling of wrongness, a sense of lengthening time, a dream of flying through space, a taste of fat in the back of the mouth.

Make your Creeping Horrors specific. An odour of violets is better than an odour of flowers; an oily smell is better than a bad smell; wet-sounding footsteps are better than footsteps; children singing a particular nursery rhyme is better than children singing.

Having chosen your Creeping Horrors, find ways to repeat them throughout the mystery. For example, if one of your Creeping Horrors is “half-dissolved bricks”, the Investigators should keep finding half-dissolved bricks. If one of your Creeping Horrors is “a spiral pattern”, the Investigators should see this pattern again and again, etched on walls, drawn in books, swirling



## SIX TIPS ON HORROR

1. Horror is about things that shouldn't exist, that offend the natural order. So imagine things that are technically possible, but should never happen: you see your own face on a coin; the stars form words in the sky; a stream flows upwards.

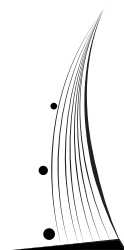
2. Try weird juxtapositions: a man smiles as he is buried alive, a stone emits a low hum, an apple tastes like pork. Be specific: an apple that tastes like overcooked pork is even better.

3. Try impossible juxtapositions: a creature that is sleeping but awake, a darkness that glows, a triangle with four corners.

4. Horror is about unnatural life. So use signs of life that are obviously wrong: the corn oozes blood, a house seems to breathe, the birds laugh as they watch from the trees.

5. Horror is about disgust. Write about things that disgust as well as frighten you: a tunnel that runs with bile, ants running over your body, an eyeball melts and drips down someone's cheek.

6. Horror is about losing control. Try taking control of the Investigators in unexpected ways: describe an emotion that washes over them; narrate them speaking in guttural voices; tell them that their hand starts moving against their will. Do this only for short bursts and allow the Investigator some control: if you say "Your Investigator's hand starts moving", the player must be able to say "I grab it with my other hand."



in their coffee, forming in the clouds. Don't worry about why Creeping Horrors repeat, what they mean or whether they make sense: they are creepy because they are inexplicable.

You'll also use Creeping Horrors when Investigators roll a 6 (see page 43). Sometimes, after an Investigator senses a Creeping Horror (and especially if they roll a 6) they stay aware of it throughout the mystery.

Don't underestimate Creeping Horrors. They're the most important weapon in your horror armoury.

## BUILDING THE HORROR

At the start of the mystery, keep the horror vague and distant. Then, as the mystery proceeds, make it worse and worse. This is how you do that.

Firstly, as the mystery goes on, make the final horror **clearer and clearer**. This means that, at the start of the mystery, you should describe the final horror in broad, vague terms. As the mystery goes on, refer to the final horror more and more directly, until it is completely clear what is happening.

For example, let's say your final horror is "Monsters are enticing children away into the sewers." At the start of the mystery, the Investigators might find a child's sketchbook, which shows the child playing with humanoid monsters. This hints at the final horror, revealing it in a vague, indirect and obfuscated way. Later, the Investigators might find an escaped child, who says she was enticed into the sewers by shadowy figures. This makes the final horror clearer, but not totally clear. Towards the end of the mystery, the Investigators might find children in the sewers, who say they were kidnapped by monsters. This makes it absolutely clear what the final horror is.

Secondly, as the mystery progresses, make things **weirder and weirder**. At the start, ensure that everything the Investigators see has a rational explanation. As the mystery progresses, bring in weird, alien things, until it's clear that the only explanation is a supernatural one.

For example, at the start of your mystery about abducted children, you might refer to the abductors

as “tall gentlemen, with hidden faces.” This makes them sound odd, but human. Later, describe them as unnaturally tall, with twisted faces. This makes them sound weirder, but not totally monstrous. Later still, describe them as humanoid creatures with monstrous faces, emphasising how repellent they are. This makes it clear they are entirely supernatural. Do this with other descriptions too: at the start of the mystery, you might say that brickwork seems “worn away”; later, say that it is “half-dissolved.”

Thirdly, as the mystery goes on, make the horror **more and more harmful**. Let the Investigators discover that more and more people have been harmed, in worse and worse ways, until the danger becomes unimaginably vast.

For example, at the start of the mystery, the Investigators might discover that one child has disappeared. This is worrying, but not too dangerous. Later, let the Investigators discover that several children have been abducted. This makes it clear that the horror is harmful. Towards the end of the mystery, show the Investigators that, over the course of centuries, thousands of children have been killed, imprisoned, infected or worse. This makes the horror vast.

Fourth, give the sense that the Investigators are getting **deeper and deeper** into an alien, dark world. Do this by making your locations stranger, darker and further away from everyday life. You might also make them literally deeper: that is, further and further below ground level.

For example, when the Investigators enter the docks, describe them as dark and threatening, with huge dark hulls of ships, which creak eerily. Later, when they enter the sewers, describe the passageways as black and unnavigable, twisting unnaturally. As they go onward, describe them descending deeper into sewers that become unimaginably warped. This means that, as the mystery goes on, the locations become darker, weirder and deeper.

Finally, bring the horror **closer and closer**. Give the sense that the Investigators are getting nearer to the horror. Imply also that the horror is getting closer to them.

For example, at the start of the mystery, the Investigators might find half-dissolved bricks, a faint oily smell and dried footprints. Towards the end, they might find bricks that are still dissolving, a strong odour and wet footprints. This gives the sense that the horror is very close.

Do all this especially with Creeping Horrors. As they repeat throughout the mystery, make them clearer and clearer, weirder and weirder and more and more harmful, bringing them closer and closer.

For example, if your Creeping Horror is an oily odour, then the first time you describe it, mention a faint, indistinct and distant smell of oil. From then on, every time the Investigators smell it — and especially when they roll a 6 — make it stronger, weirder and more dangerous, until it becomes an overwhelming, unnatural and toxic stench.

## TRAVEL, SLEEP AND FOOD

As you fill in the details of your mystery, use the practical constraints of time and space to get the Investigators to explore.

For example, try putting your hook in London, but the final horror in Edinburgh. This forces the Investigators to travel: they must go to a railway station, take the train through the countryside, arrive at the station in Edinburgh and make their way through the streets. They might stay overnight at a lodging house, inn or cheap hotel. So, by thinking about the geography of your mystery, you’ve created new things to see and locations to visit.

Think, too, about the time of day. If you start your mystery in the afternoon or evening, then after some initial investigation, the Investigators must find somewhere to sleep, either in their own bed or elsewhere. So, by thinking about timing, you’ve again created places to go and things to do.

Use food to bring Investigators together, especially when they are travelling. They might, for example, have an evening meal together, then assemble for breakfast before catching a train.

All these practicalities give the Investigators places to see, people to meet, opportunities to talk and chances to experience the horror. For example,

as the Investigators travel from London to Edinburgh, they might hear rumours from fellow passengers, stay at an old inn, dream of curious horrors, then discuss what they have learned over breakfast. By planning these practicalities into your mystery, you make it richer.

You'll come back to this when you play the mystery (see "Practicalities" on page 49).

## THE HORROR PUSHES BACK

As the Investigators follow the mystery, does anything happen to them? Does the horror affect them in any way? Does it push back?

Some horrors affect **minds**: the Investigators experience dreams, visions, hallucinations or obsessive thoughts.

Some affect **bodies**: the Investigators find their face changing, a blankness in their eyes or things growing beneath their skin.

Some horrors **take direct action**. Be careful here: don't let your horror get too close too early. You don't necessarily want your alien creature to attack the Investigators as they explore. Save that confrontation until the end.

Instead, try letting the Investigators find signs they are being followed: footprints outside a window, severed telephone wires, belongings being moved, a feeling of being watched. These work especially well when Investigators eat or sleep (see Travel, Sleep and Food, above).

All these things make excellent Creeping Horrors.

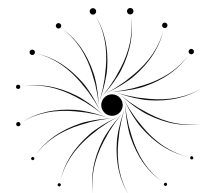
## SCENES OF HORROR

Instead of building tension slowly, you might sometimes hit the Investigators hard with the full horror.

To do this, use something connected to your final horror. For example, in your mystery about children being abducted, let the Investigators find a half-dissolved but living child. Or, for a psychological horror, let them meet a brainwashed child who refuses to stop walking to his death.

During these scenes of horror, let your Creeping Horrors intensify. So, when the Investigators find the half-dissolved victim, they should smell the oily odour strongly and hear wet footsteps pacing around them.

When you play, be ready to adapt your scenes of horror and use them in different locations. For example, you may expect the Investigators to find the half-dissolved child in the docks, but, in play, you might use him in the sewers instead.



# REWRITING THE MYSTERY

You have the basics of your mystery. Now, take some time to think about it, tweaking and polishing until your mystery is as good as you can make it.

Here are ten different ways to look at a mystery. Think about your mystery from each perspective, going back and forth between them.

## THE DIRECTOR

First, imagine playing the mystery with your players. Think it through from start to finish.

Start by imagining yourself describing the Hook. Think what the players will say and what their Investigators will do (as you did under “Locations” on page 30). Imagine describing whatever comes next, then think how they will respond to that. Keep thinking through your mystery like this, until you reach the final horror.

For example, if your hook is “You find a body in an alley”, imagine yourself describing the murder scene. Think how the players will respond. Will their Investigators search the body, look for witnesses or something else? And keep thinking through your mystery from there.

As you do this, you’ll naturally invent extra details. For example, as you imagine describing the murder scene, you’ll think about what the location is like, what is around and who is there. Add this detail into your mystery.

Consider what happens if the Investigators do something unexpected. For example, at the murder scene, what happens if the Investigators follow the murderer or find the murder weapon? As you find problems like this, try to fix them. For example, you might decide that the murder happened hours ago, so the murderer cannot be found. (See “The Technician” below for more about fixing problems.)

Now switch to one of the other perspectives below. But this perspective is important, so keep returning to it.

## THE TECHNICIAN

Now think of ways the Investigators could break your mystery. Are there any shortcuts, which could let them skip parts of the story? Is there anything that could throw them off track? Are there any distractions, which could stop them from investigating?

When there is a **shortcut**, the Investigators find a quick route to the end of the mystery, which you didn’t plan.

For example, let’s say you write a mystery that starts with a murder scene and ends with the Investigators discovering the killer. If, when the Investigators find the murder scene, they discover the killer lurking nearby, they have found a shortcut. Shortcuts spoil a mystery, by making it too short and skipping interesting events.

When there is a **red herring**, the Investigators find something that looks like a clue, but isn’t, and waste time pursuing it.

For example, imagine you put a street singer in your mystery, to add atmosphere by singing tales about murder. However, when the Investigators encounter the singer, they get suspicious and question him. Red herrings throw the mystery off track.

When there is a **distraction**, the Investigators discover something that makes them feel they must stop investigating.

For example, let’s say that, in your mystery, a creature is killing an Investigator’s family. That Investigator decides to stay with her family to protect them, which stops her pursuing the mystery. Distractions are disconcerting for players: they make them feel that, to continue with the game, they must ignore something important to their Investigator.

If you find shortcuts, red herrings or distractions, fix them in a realistic and satisfying way. So, to fix the three problems above, you could: put the killer far away from the murder scene; ensure the ballad-singer is not overly suspicious; and ensure someone is present to take care of the Investigator’s family members. See “Some Technical Issues” for more issues and suggestions of how to fix them.

## SOME TECHNICAL ISSUES

Here are common **shortcuts**:

- ▶ The location of the hook is close to the location of the final horror. When the Investigators discover the hook, they immediately explore the surrounding area and find the final horror.
- ▶ Someone in the mystery knows the final horror. When the Investigators meet this person, they force them to reveal the truth (often by rolling dice) and discover the final horror.
- ▶ You've planned a sequence of locations, with the final horror at the end. For example, you've set your mystery in a tower, with the final horror at the top. The Investigators ignore everything else and go straight there.

You can fix these shortcuts as follows:

- ▶ Place the final horror far away from the hook.
- ▶ Only let the Investigators discover the location of the final horror near the end of the mystery.
- ▶ Only let the Investigators meet anyone who understands the final horror near the end of the mystery.
- ▶ Only use sequences of locations towards the end of the mystery.

As these solutions suggest, shortcuts matter most at the start of the mystery. Later, they can actually be helpful.

Here are some common **red herrings**:

- ▶ You put something in the mystery, which isn't important, but looks as though it is. For example, the Investigators meet a carnival showman. They find him suspicious, so they go to the carnival to investigate.
- ▶ You put something before the hook, which isn't important, but looks as though it is, and Investigators investigate that instead. For example, at the start of the game, you describe the London fog so weirdly that the Investigators start investigating it.
- ▶ The Investigators investigate a Creeping Horror for so long that it distracts them from the mystery. For example, one of your Creeping Horrors is "mysterious carvings on walls." The Investigators try to discover who carved them, by visiting a local university.

You can fix red herrings as follows:

- ▶ Assume the Investigators will investigate anything interesting and horrific.
- ▶ Avoid things that look important, but aren't.
- ▶ Avoid introducing weird or interesting things before the hook.

When the Investigators investigate red herrings, their investigation of them should end quickly and mysteriously. For example, you might say that nobody saw who made the carvings or that they disappeared before they could be challenged.

Ensure your answers to red herrings are reasonable and satisfying. It's reasonable to say the Investigators cannot find who carved the symbols. It's unreasonable to say they cannot enter a carnival to ask questions.

Here are some common **distractions**:

- ▶ Your mystery includes a threat to the Investigators' loved ones. The Investigators stay with them to protect them.
- ▶ Your mystery includes a threat to a large area, where the Investigators' loved ones live. The Investigators leave with their loved ones.
- ▶ Your mystery includes a threat to a limited area: for example, a school or an area of London. When they find the horror, the Investigators try to evacuate the area.
- ▶ Your mystery includes someone injured or dying. The Investigators stay with them or take them to a doctor.

You can fix these as follows:

- ▶ When loved ones are threatened, ensure there is someone present to take care of them.
- ▶ When an area is threatened, ensure the Investigators' loved ones live outside it.
- ▶ When an area is threatened, ensure it is either impractical to evacuate (it's impractical to evacuate all of London) or easy to evacuate (it's easy for staff to evacuate a school, leaving the Investigators free to investigate).
- ▶ When someone is injured or dying, ensure there is medical attention nearby, leaving the Investigators free to investigate. Alternatively, ensure they cannot be moved or have minutes to live, so that there is no point getting them to a doctor.

## THE FEARMONGER

Now, think through your horrific moments. Imagine describing them to the players. Do they still creep you out? Are you excited by the things you have to reveal?

If not, go back and make them creepier. Use the tips under “Broadening the horror” on page 31. Dig deep into what scares you.

It’s easy to write a mechanical, functional mystery, which technically works but isn’t scary. Check you’re still excited and horrified by what you have written.

## THE RAILROAD

Imagine your mystery as a chain of scenes, leading mechanically from one to another. It starts with the hook and ends with the final horror.

Now imagine your players follow this chain of scenes exactly, focussing purely on solving the mystery. In every scene, all they do is search for clues, find out where to go next, move on to the next scene and repeat.

When you think about your mystery like this, does it still work? Is it always clear where the Investigators need to go next? For example, you may find that, after discovering a body in an alleyway or finding their child has disappeared, it simply isn’t clear where the Investigators should go or what they should do to locate their child.

If this happens, add clearer links between scenes. For example, you might add an explicit clue on the body, such as a railway ticket, which directs the Investigators to the next location. Or you could add a witness, who saw the child going to the docks.

And, when you proceed mechanically from scene to scene, do you still show the Investigators horror? If not, rewrite the mystery, so the Investigators still encounter horrific things.

By adopting this perspective, you clarify the logic of your mystery and the path you expect the Investigators to take. It also ensures that, if your players focus only on solving the mystery, they still enjoy it.

## THE DESCENT

Imagine your mystery as a descent into darkness. As the Investigators explore, they go deeper and deeper, until they reach the final horror.

Does your mystery have this sense of descending into a netherworld? If not, can you adapt it, so that the Investigators descend into chaos, darkness, madness and horror?

This is a classic story structure. It is easy to implement. Simply describe your locations as getting progressively more deep, dark, confusing or chaotic, especially towards the end of the mystery. For example, if your mystery ends in a cave system, describe it as a dark, disorienting maze of rocky caverns.

This is especially easy if your mystery ends underground. But, even it doesn’t, try to give the impression of descending into a dark, twisted underworld. For example, if your mystery ends in the alleyways of Victorian London, describe them getting darker, narrower and unnaturally twisted.

## THE MONSTER

Now, imagine your scenario is just a story about a monster.

At the beginning, the Investigators find traces of the creature. As they dig deeper, the Investigators seem to get closer to it: the signs of the monster get more obvious, frequent and weird. At the end, they enter the monster’s lair and see it.

Does your mystery have this sense of drawing closer to a monster? If not, scatter signs of the creature throughout your mystery. Find ways to show the Investigators are getting closer and closer to it.

## THE TEMPTER

Now, think about your mystery as a personal story. It is about the Investigators, as their heartstrings are pulled, their fears are realised and their hopes are raised then dashed.

Does your mystery affect the Investigators personally? Does it play on their personal

ambitions, fears and feelings? Do your themes echo their personal themes? Does your final horror affect them individually?

You can do all this even before the players have created Investigators. Simply set constraints on the types of Investigators you want (see “Who are the Investigators?” on page 29): for example, in your mystery about abducted children, ask for Investigators who have strong feelings about children.

All this ensures the Investigators cannot simply ignore the mystery. If you think they might, make it more personal until they cannot.

## THE GUIDE

Imagine there isn’t a mystery. Instead, you are simply giving the Investigators things to see and places to explore.

Do you have interesting locations for the Investigators to see? Do they have choices of where to go? Do the locations contain beautiful and horrific things? For example, in your mystery about abducted children, you have the East End, the docks and the crumbling sewers, all of which are interesting to explore.

If not, make your locations better. You can do this by using iconic locations: for example, instead of the sewers, you could set the finale in the cellars of the Houses of Parliament. Or you can add detail to your existing locations: for example, you might flesh out the docks, adding crowds of porters, sailors’ inns and customs officials.

## THE HOST

Again, imagine there isn’t a mystery. Instead, you are giving the players a chance to play their Investigators and talk to each other.

Have you given the Investigators enough chances to meet, discuss and reflect? If not, put more in. Give them more people to encounter, more meals to eat together and more chances to discuss where to go next.

When writing a mystery, it’s easy to fall into the trap of planning things for you, as Director, to do: clues for you to reveal, descriptions to read out, scenes of horror to describe. But this means you do all the work. Instead, plan times when you can set back and let the Investigators talk.

## THE STORYTELLER

Finally, go back to your themes. Do they feature prominently in your mystery? If not, rewrite, so you hit them harder.

## FINALLY

Go through all of the perspectives above, thinking about your mystery from each one.

Switch back and forth between perspectives, returning especially to The Director, The Fearmonger and The Storyteller. Keep tweaking and improving your mystery.

When you think it’s as good as it can get, you’re ready to play.



# PLAYING THE MYSTERY

It's time to play. This chapter guides you through being the Director for a Cthulhu Dark mystery.

Use it alongside "Writing a Mystery", bringing that chapter's tricks into your game. For example, as you play, try using the ideas from "Building the horror" on page 33 to describe your horror getting weirder and weirder, deeper and deeper and closer and closer.

Remember your two jobs: give the players a horror that creeps them out and give them space to tell their own stories. You provide the framework. The players tell the story.

## GETTING READY TO PLAY

Before you play, take time to think through your mystery.

Think through the mystery's locations. What do they look like? How do they smell? What will the Investigators see as they enter?

Imagine yourself describing this to the players. For example, if your mystery contains a market, imagine the brightly-lit crowds, the yells of the stallholders, the watching gangs of ragged pickpockets and the mackerel shining on the fishmonger's stall. The more detailed the picture in your mind, the richer it will be when you describe it in play.

Think about the horror, especially your Creeping Horrors and any scenes of horror. Imagine yourself describing them. Make them as vivid as you can.

Think through the rules and how you'll use them in play. Decide when each rule is likely to come up: in particular, think when you expect the first investigation roll and the first Insight Roll. Imagine yourself describing key concepts, such as explaining which dice to roll or how a competing roll works.

All this ensures you know Cthulhu Dark and your mystery from back to front. Do whatever you need to get it in your head: take notes, sketch flowcharts, draw pictures.

Collect everything you need to run the game. Get dice, paper and something to write with.

Print maps of the locations in your mystery or be ready to draw them. Print any letters, books and newspaper articles that the Investigators will encounter.

Just before play, remind yourself what's important about the mystery. What are your themes? What are you excited about? What are the main things you want to do?

You're ready to play.

## HOSTING THE GAME

Whether the game takes place in your home or somewhere else, you act as the host. You set the tone from the moment the players arrive.

Welcome the players as they sit down. Take a moment to talk before starting play.

If you don't know the players, introduce yourself, ask their names and make small talk. Ask what they have played before: have they played roleplaying games, have they played Lovecraftian games, have they played Cthulhu Dark?

Ask whether anyone has disabilities, impairments, things they want to avoid in the game or anything else you should know about. Give them the chance to tell you privately, if they prefer. This can make a big difference to some people: for example, if you know that someone has a hearing impairment, you can arrange the seating so they can understand what you are saying.

Explain that Cthulhu Dark is a game about horrors you cannot fight. The Investigators are doomed from the start and the players should enjoy the journey as they slowly lose their minds. This isn't a game about winning, but about having fun with losing. That's the point.

Don't underestimate the importance of all this. By establishing a creative, friendly and welcoming atmosphere and by telling players what to expect, you help them understand how they can add to the game and have fun doing it.



## MAKING INVESTIGATORS

It is time to make Investigators. You'll guide the group through this, taking the lead in asking questions and bringing everyone into the discussion.

Start by telling everyone the setting for your mystery. Tell them that, in *Cthulhu Dark*, Investigators are people with little power and explain what that means within your setting. And tell them any constraints on the Investigators they should create: for example, if you want the Investigators to be soldiers, children or members of the same family, say that now.

Ask whether anyone has an initial idea for an Investigator. If they seem unsure, suggest they start by picking an occupation: "You could be a pickpocket, an artist, a trader..."

When someone mentions an idea, ask questions to help them flesh it out. For example, if someone wants their Investigator to be a trader, ask "What do you trade in?", "Do you sell in a market or somewhere else?" or "How is business?" Invite other players to ask questions too.

Do this with all the players, until everyone has a starting point for their Investigator. Encourage players to get ideas from other Investigators: "If you're a housebreaker, I'll be your accomplice."

Keep asking questions: for example, if an Investigator is a teacher, you might ask "Where do you teach?", "What kind of school is that?" or "What are the children like?". Build on other people's ideas and encourage others to do so too: so, someone might suggest "Could it be a charity school for very poor children?"

Ask questions about your mystery's themes too. If your themes are "children" and "the aristocracy", ask questions related to those topics: "Does your Investigator have any children? Do they want any?" or "Does your Investigator think of themselves as middle class? What did their parents do for a living? How do they feel about the upper classes?". This helps get the Investigators invested in the mystery from the start.

And ask questions to create relationships between Investigators. For example, try asking "How do you feel about living in the same house as a pickpocket?" or "Have you two ever met?"

When the Investigators are nearly finished, ask players to choose names for them. They'll often find this easier once they know something about who their Investigators are. Try having a list of example names ready, especially for less familiar settings.

If, while making Investigators, the players mention other people connected to them, ask for these people's names too and note them down. For example, if someone mentions their Investigator is married, ask for the spouse's name.

### THREE WAYS TO HANDLE CONSTRAINTS

If you have specific constraints for the Investigators, you can handle this in various ways.

Firstly, you can state the requirements directly: "I'd like you all to have strong opinions about children."

Secondly, you can ask leading questions that guide the players towards your requirement: "What does your Investigator think about children?". Whatever the answer, the question ensures the Investigator has an opinion about children. If necessary, challenge the players' replies: for example, if a player suggests their Investigator does not care about children, say "I'd really like them to feel something about children, even if it's negative. How can we do that?"

Thirdly, you can build on the players' ideas. For example, let's say one of your requirements is that someone has a family member, who will be abducted later in the mystery. Try waiting until someone mentions a family member, then decide (without telling the players) that that's the person who will be abducted. If nobody mentions a family member, ask explicitly for one.

## EXPLAINING THE RULES

To start, give everyone an Insight Die and say something like:

- ▶ “This is your Insight Die.”
- ▶ “Your Insight shows how far you can see into the horror behind the universe. It starts at 1. When it gets to 6, you lose your mind.”
- ▶ “Whenever something creeps you out, roll that die. If you get higher than your current Insight, it goes up by 1.”

If you want to explain how to roll dice for investigating and other tasks, say something like:

- ▶ “When you do something, roll one die if it’s within human capabilities and one die if it’s within your occupational expertise.”
- ▶ “You can also add your Insight Die, if you will risk your mind to succeed.”
- ▶ “Then the highest die says how well you do. On a 4, you succeed completely. On a 5, you get something extra. On a 6, you get more than you wanted and glimpse the horror.”
- ▶ “If your Insight Die rolls higher than the other dice, you make an Insight roll.”
- ▶ “If someone thinks you might fail, they can roll a die against you.”

You can also leave this second explanation until someone rolls dice in the game.

After explaining these basics, answer any questions. But keep it short. You can explain anything further as you play.

## STARTING PLAY

When planning your mystery, you’ll have decided how it starts and what the first location is.

Describe that first location. Say where the Investigators are and what is around them. Then ask what they do.

*You: “You’re in the lodging house. It’s early evening and you’re just returning from work. There is a fire in the grate and fish cooking above it. What are you all doing?”*

When the players say what their Investigators are doing, respond naturally.

*Player: “I’m sitting by the fire, trying to dry my boots.”*

*You: “Okay. As the mud dries on your boots, you smell the rotten stink of the Thames. [You turn to another player] And what are you doing?”*

*Player: “I’m just coming in after a day at work.”*

If the Investigators meet someone else, play that character:

*You: “Your landlady comes in and turns the fish over the fire. She says: ‘Get those dirty boots away from my rug.’”*

Encourage the Investigators to interact, by introducing them to each other and giving them chances to talk:

*You: “As you enter, you see Violet by the fire.”*

And keep going like this. Describe what is around the Investigators, play any characters they meet, ask what they do and respond naturally.

## ROLLING INSIGHT

When the Investigators discover something that creeps them out, it’s time for an Insight Roll.

Don’t roll Insight straight away. Lead up to the horror. For example, don’t just say: “There’s a child’s drawing with monsters in it”, then ask for an Insight roll. Instead, lead up to it: “In Danny’s bedroom, you find a sketch, which he must have drawn before he disappeared. It shows Danny and some kind of creature. It doesn’t look human. There’s something...twisted and...malevolent about it.” Then ask whether they want to roll.

At first, you may need to remind the players to roll Insight. To do this, ask “Does that creep you out?” or “Do you want to roll Insight?”. After the roll, remind them that it’s better if they roll without prompting.

Following an Insight roll, ask the player to describe how their Investigator reacts, either by keeping it together (if they succeeded) or showing their fear (if they failed).

Finally, remember that the player, not you, decides whether to roll Insight. If they aren’t creeped out, they don’t need to roll.

## ROLLING TO INVESTIGATE

When the Investigators investigate something, roll dice to see what they find out.

Again, don't always roll immediately. Lead up to it, especially if the Investigator is doing something interesting or that needs further explanation.

For example, if an Investigator searches a room, then, before rolling, ask exactly what they are doing and where they search. Similarly, if an Investigator tries to get information by talking to someone, play out the conversation for a while. Bring it to a point where the person might or might not reveal the information, then roll dice.

Before a player rolls, ask about each of the dice they might roll. Is the Investigator doing something within human capabilities? Are they using their occupational expertise? Will they risk their mind to succeed?

Then tell them to roll. Look at the roll and explain what the highest die means.

Now, tell the player they may reroll, if they add their Insight Die to the roll. However, if the Insight Die rolls higher than the other dice, they must make an Insight Roll. In doing this, try to tempt them to reroll. If they do reroll, remind them afterwards that they can reroll again.

When they've finished rerolling — or chosen not to — it's time to tell them what they discover.

### ON A 1, 2, 3 OR 4

When the highest die is 1 to 4, the Investigator basically gets the information they need. See the descriptions on page 13.

### ON A 5

On a 5, give the Investigator an extra piece of information, related to what they discover. This is easier than it sounds.

Often, you'll have some information from your mystery to give them. For example, let's say that the Investigators find a child's drawing, which depicts the child being abducted by a creature. Let's also say that, when planning your mystery,

you've decided that the creatures devour small animals. On a 5, say that the drawing shows a child being abducted, but mention the animals too: "In the corner of the drawing, you see a pile of small animals, as though they've been eaten by the creature."

If you don't have any information to give them, make something up. Try saying that, whatever the Investigator discovered, it reminds them of something else: for example, local folktales, a half-remembered rumour, a story whispered among older locals, the work of an obscure scientist, a book with a dark reputation.

For example, let's say the Investigators roll a 5 while examining the child's painting. You might say: "This reminds you of an obscure article in the Social Review, about children disappearing in the East End, apparently enticed away" or "This reminds you of sailors' stories, about sea-monsters enticing children away at night."

### ON A 6

On a 6, give the Investigators a glimpse of the horror. This, too, is easier than it sounds.

Sometimes, you can introduce a Creeping Horror (see page 32). For example, if one of your Creeping Horrors is "hearing children's laughter", then tell the Investigator that, as they examine the drawing, they mysteriously hear a child's laughter.

Sometimes, you'll think of new horrors. For example, as the Investigators look at the child's drawing, you might say: "As you look at the drawing, you get an inexplicable urge to follow the creature" or "As you look at the drawing, you get the feeling that the drawing is looking back at you."

Sometimes, you can use a description connected with the Mythos (see "Cosmic horror, Mythos and Insight" on page 25). Describe the thing they are investigating as repulsive, unnatural, ancient, vast or some other Mythos word. For example, when an Investigator examines the child's drawing, say: "You feel deeply repulsed by the drawing", "Although the drawing is new, there is something unspeakably ancient about it", "The angles in the drawing seem curiously wrong" or "You can't

explain why, but the drawing gives you a sense of malice and evil.”

Don't worry whether what you are saying makes sense. It is more horrifying if it doesn't.

## ROLLING FOR OTHER THINGS

When the Investigators roll for other things, explain how to roll in a similar way.

Ask about each die in turn: are they doing something within human capabilities (the Human Die)? Is it within their occupational expertise (the Occupation Die)? Will they risk their mind to succeed (their Insight Die)?

Then ask them to roll. Explain what the highest die means. And tempt them to reroll.

On 1 to 4, the Investigator basically gets what they want.

On a 5, give them something extra: they might discover a new location, overhear a useful conversation or discover a new piece of information.

On a 6, give them a glimpse of the horror, exactly as above.

## ROLLING THE FAILURE DIE

When an Investigator tries something that might fail in an interesting way, explain how the Failure Die works.

Say something like: “I think it might be interesting if that failed, so I'll roll this die against you. Anyone can do this, when they think that it might be interesting if someone failed.”

And describe how they might fail: for example, “When you try to hide, I think it'd be interesting if the creatures found you.”

Then roll the Failure Die, at the same time as they roll their dice.

If it rolls higher, tell them the consequences and ask whether they want to reroll. For example: “I've rolled higher, which means the creatures catch you. Do you want to add your Insight Die and reroll?”

## COOPERATIVE AND COMPETITIVE ROLLS

When the Investigators try to cooperate or compete, explain these rolls too.

For cooperative rolls, say something like: “When you cooperate, you both roll your dice. We take the highest die as the result.”

For competitive rolls, say something like: “When you compete against each other, you both roll dice and the highest die wins.”

After a competitive roll, turn to whoever is losing and ask whether they want to reroll, by adding their Insight Die to the roll.

Keep doing this until someone refuses to reroll. Again, tempt the players to reroll, pitting them against each other.

This might lead to a lot of rerolls and rapidly increasing Insight. That's the idea.

### “TO DO THIS, ROLL 5 OR HIGHER”

In other roleplaying games, you often need to roll above a certain number to do something.

That doesn't happen in Cthulhu Dark. You never need to roll 5 or higher, for example, to decipher a document, break open a door or persuade someone.

That is because you only fail when someone rolls the Failure Die against you. You never fail because you rolled too low. Even if you roll a small number, you succeed, provided nobody has rolled the Failure Die and got a higher number.

And, so, there's no such thing as a clue that you need to roll 4 or higher to find. And there's no such thing as an action you need to roll 5 or higher to do.

Cthulhu Dark wants you to find clues. It wants you to succeed when you do things. The only time you fail is when it's more interesting that way. That's what the Failure Die is for.

## ASKING FOR ROLLS

In Cthulhu Dark, you can roll for almost anything, using the rules for “Doing things”. Think of interesting ways to use this.

Ask for a roll **when there’s something to discover, which you know about, but the Investigators don’t**. Do this especially when something is hidden or someone is lying. When you do this, roll the Failure Die against the Investigators. If they win, they notice it. If not, they don’t.

This builds tension. When you ask for the roll, the players immediately know something is wrong. Whether the roll succeeds or fails, it is unsettling: if it succeeds, the Investigator finds something horrific; if it fails, they know something is wrong but don’t know what.

For example, let’s say the Investigators are in a child’s bedroom. You know there is an unnatural ichor beneath the child’s bed, so you ask for a roll to see whether they notice. If the roll succeeds, the Investigators find the ichor. If they don’t, they are left in suspense, knowing there is something they have not found.

Try asking for rolls **when the Investigators try to resist something**. For example, if the Investigators hear an ancient song that lures humans, ask for a roll, rolling the Failure Die against them. If they succeed, they resist the lure of the song. If they fail, they are lured away.

Best of all, ask for rolls **to challenge things the players say**. This helps you create tension, by emphasising the Investigators aren’t in control.

For example, let’s say that, when the Investigators find the ichor in the child’s bedroom, one player says “I avoid looking at it.” Ask for a roll, rolling the Failure Die, to see whether the Investigator successfully avoids looking at the ichor. If they succeed, they keep themselves from looking at it. If they fail, their eye is unavoidably drawn to it (and they may make an Insight Roll).

Similarly, if an Investigator tries to rationalise the horror (“I tell myself it’s just the wind howling”), ask for a roll to see whether they convince themselves. If they succeed, they rationalise the horror (“Yes, it’s just the wind”), although we

know they are fooling themselves. If they fail, they cannot rationalise the horror (“That’s not the wind blowing. It’s something else.”) and probably make an Insight roll.

Find other ways to use this trick. When someone says “I don’t believe my child would do that”, ask for a roll to see whether they do; when someone says “I fall asleep”, ask for a roll to see whether they can; when they say “I hate the jewellery”, ask for a roll to see whether, deep inside, they find it curiously beautiful.

Use these rolls to get inside the Investigators’ heads and mess with them.

## THEMES

As your mystery unfolds, keep returning to your themes (“Themes” on page 28), hitting them as often as you can.

For example, let’s say your mystery about abduction has the theme “Children.” Keep finding ways to refer to this theme: mention folktales of disappearing children; describe children peering from doorways; describe the Investigators hearing distant childish laughter.

Or let’s say your mystery has the theme “the aristocracy.” As the Investigators explore London, keep mentioning social class. Describe gentlemen looking down at the poorly-dressed investigators. Make wealthy areas sound austere and unwelcoming.

## HOW TO DESCRIBE HORROR

When you describe something horrific, focus intensely on what you are saying and communicating it to the players.

Make eye contact. Don’t allow them to look away. Keep still and speak slowly. Imagine you are saying something very, very important.

Don’t try to sound scary or creepy. When you say something horrible (“You find a half-dissolved body”), don’t shout or growl or change your voice. Just say it, directly and clearly.

## FIVE TIPS TO DESCRIBE HORROR

1. Try drip feeding: that is, revealing the horror piece by piece to build dramatic tension. For example, if creatures are about to converge on an Investigator, don't just say "Suddenly, creatures come towards you." Build up to it gradually.

*You: You think you hear something behind you.*

*Player: I look around.*

*You: One of the doors is opening.*

*Player: Which one?*

*You: In fact, all the doors are opening, all at once. Behind every door is a dark shape.*

*Player: What kind of shapes?*

*You: They have top hats. Cravats. They're tall. Too tall to be human. They are all around you now.*

2. Say things that don't make sense. Leave things half-explained or unexplained.

*Player: I run down the stairs.*

*You: It feels like you're running underwater. Your feet feel lazy. One of the creatures reaches out for you. It's as though a wave of cruelty is coming towards you.*

*Player: I look at its face.*

*You: It's like staring into watery depths. As he reaches, you smell the stink of the river.*

Here, it isn't clear why the Investigator's feet "feel lazy", what a "wave of cruelty" is or how the creature is linked with the river. This makes the scene creepier.

3. Describe things that happen only in the Investigators' minds. Try suggesting that the Investigators inexplicably know something ("Even before you enter the house, you know the wallpaper is yellow"), feel something ("The river feels welcoming, like coming home") or sense something ("This house is full of deep sorrow").

4. Take your time. Imagine a slow-motion camera, which reveals the horror gradually, in loving detail.

5. Alternatively, go fast. Imagine a hand-held camera held by an Investigator, which shows disjointed glimpses of the horror.

Use words and descriptions connected with the Mythos (see "Cosmic horror, Mythos and Insight" on page 25), especially:

- ▶ Ancient, powerful and hyper-intelligent.
- ▶ Beyond our science, technology and academic understanding.
- ▶ Mentioned only in ancient writings, folktales and rumours.
- ▶ Associated with strange mathematics, writing and/or technology.
- ▶ Having strange angles, geometries or symmetries.
- ▶ Beyond our reality.
- ▶ Alien, unnatural and not of this earth.
- ▶ Evil, repulsive and wrong.

Fit these descriptions to whatever you are describing. For example, if the Investigators find a sculpture, describe it as "made of an unknown material" and "fitting into no known archaeological period." If they find a painting, describe it as "twisted", "surreal" and "reminiscent of prehistoric paintings." And so on.

## SCENES

Imagine yourself as a film director, taking the Investigators through the mystery scene by scene.

At the start of each scene, describe what the Investigators can see and what is happening. This is called **framing a scene**.

*You: "As you approach the brothel, it looks like a respectable house, but all the blinds are closed. There are lights in every bedroom. As you watch, a cab pulls up to the front door and a gentleman gets out, hiding his face. What do you do?"*

When it feels as though everything important has happened, end the scene and start a new one. This is called **cutting a scene**.

*Player: So I sit with Lily, wiping her brow and trying to reassure her.*

*You: That's good. Shall we cut that scene there?*

*Player: Sure.*

*You: Okay. So, the next morning, you all come down to breakfast...*

When there is no obvious chance to cut a scene, but nothing new is happening, try **fading the scene** instead:

*Player: So I sit with Lily. "How are you?"*

*You: Lily looks doubtful. "I don't know. Getting better."*

*Player: "Is it good to be back?"*

*You: Lily smiles. "Yes, it is."*

*Player: "I'm so glad to see you."*

*You: Great. And let's slowly fade that scene there, as you talk with Lily and catch up with her.*

Be brave about cutting and fading scenes. Cut when nothing new or interesting is happening, even if the Investigators are doing things. When a scene rambles on, it takes the life out of the game.

If the Investigators decide to split up and do different things, you can **cut between scenes**. Play part of one scene, with some of the Investigators, then part of another scene, with the others. Keep cutting between them until both scenes are finished. If you can, end both scenes at the same time, especially at a dramatic moment.

You'll often play one scene per location: for example, there might be one scene in the church, then one scene in the docks, then one scene in the sewers. However, this isn't always the case: you might do two scenes in a hotel, one in the evening and one the next morning, or two scenes in different parts of the hotel.

## USE THE PLAYERS' IDEAS

When a player asks for something, try to say yes:

*Player: "Is there a large stone nearby, which I can throw through a window?"*

*You: "Sure!"*

*Player: "Can we say the pub is beside the church?"*

*You: "Okay!"*

Alternatively, ask them to roll dice to find out.

*Player: "Can I find something in the room to start a fire?"*

*You: "I don't know! Make a roll."*

When a player's idea is vague, ask for more details:

*Player: "Can I break into the church?"*

*You: "Maybe. How?"*

*Player: "Can I find out who owns the warehouse?"*

*You: "How would you do that?"*

You might sometimes say no, for realism, horror or to keep the tone serious:

*Player: "Can I jump off the church and slide down the roof?"*

*You: "No, you'll just fall."*

*Player: "Can I chase after the creature?"*

*You: "No, it's inhumanly fast."*

*Player: "Can I find the creatures just by following their smell, like a dog?"*

*You: "No, that sounds silly."*

But don't take this too far: it's more important that the game be interesting than realistic. Work with the players' ideas, even if it means adapting your mystery. For example, if the players really want to capture a monstrous creature, find a way to make that work.

## ADAPT THE MYSTERY

As you play, adapt the mystery, so that wherever the Investigators go, they find horror.

Let's say you've planned a mystery about child abduction, in which you expect the Investigators to ask local families about their children. Instead, when you play, the Investigators investigate the local orphanage. Change your mystery so that the Investigators find horror in the orphanage. For example, they might find children's drawings there, which you had planned to be found in the homes of the local families.

Or let's say that, when an Investigator discovers children are being abducted, they go home to check on their own children. You hadn't planned this, but make sure they find horror there too. So, the Investigator may find their own children gone, with black ichor on the floor.

Look for unexpected chances to add horror. For example, if an Investigator goes to the docks and stares in the water, she might see dark shapes moving beneath the waves or hear the voice of a child.

Whatever the Investigators do and wherever they go, they get deeper into the horror. Make it inescapable.

## **TAILOR THE MYSTERY TO THE GROUP**

Adapt your mystery to the Investigators. If an Investigator works on the railway, find a way to bring trains into the mystery. If an Investigator owns a pub, put a pub into the game.

Adapt your horror, too, so it hits the Investigators harder. If an Investigator has a family, find ways to bring them into the game: for example, you might decide the Investigator's children have been abducted or simply hint the horror could happen to them (by saying things like "The child that's been abducted is the same age as your son").

If an Investigator has strong beliefs, find ways to question those beliefs. So, if an Investigator believes in Darwinian evolution, show them evidence of ancient aliens that disproves it. If they believe in their family, hint that their bloodline has been tainted. If they believe in humanity, show them the dark side of human behaviour.

During the game itself, watch what the players do and respond. If they like breaking into buildings, give them chances to do that; if they are interested in libraries, give them libraries; if they enjoy conversation, give them people to talk with.

Use all this to bring players into the game, especially those who haven't participated much. For example, if a player hasn't contributed much and their Investigator is a flower-seller, bring plants and flowers into the game: perhaps the Investigators start finding twisted, dark flowers, as a new Creeping Horror.

Finally, give everyone a turn. If someone hasn't spoken for a while, bring them into the game: try simply asking "What is your Investigator doing?". If one Investigator takes the spotlight in a scene, give someone else the spotlight in the next.

## **SETTING THE TONE**

Tell the players what kind of game you want. If your mystery is about psychological horror, but the Investigators are preparing for a fight, tell them "There isn't much fighting in this mystery." If they're playing overcautiously and avoiding the horror, say "Don't worry about dying. That's the point of the game."

Similarly, if a player wants their Investigator to do something that doesn't fit with what others are doing, tell them. For example, if one player wants their Investigator to start a fight in a pub, but the other Investigators are talking to the pubgoers, postpone the fight until the conversation has finished. If one player always wants to go off alone, explain that it works better if they stay with the others.

## **TAKE NOTES**

While you play, write things down. Do this in whatever way you want: scribble, doodle, draw diagrams, sketch maps.

As the players create Investigators, write down their names and occupations, for later reference. Also note any beliefs, relationships or other things you might want to bring into the game.

Then, as the mystery plays, keep notes of anything you may need to remember. When you introduce a new character, name them and write the name down. When you describe a location, draw a map.

## **MONEY AND EQUIPMENT**

Don't keep track of what Investigators are carrying. Assume Investigators have any equipment that seems reasonable: a nurse might have bandages, a photographer probably has a camera, anyone might have a cigarette lighter.

Assume too that Investigators have money to do anything that seems reasonable. Hence, most Investigators have enough money to get a bus, buy a newspaper or stay in a cheap lodging-house.

Never let money or equipment be a barrier. If the Investigators must travel across the country, find a way to let them do that. If they must stay



somewhere overnight, let them find somewhere. If they must go somewhere dark, let them find a light. It's more important to keep things moving than to be realistic.

Sometimes, it'll be interesting for Investigators to lack a piece of equipment. For example, if the Investigators want to force open a door as they are fleeing, it might be interesting if they need a tool to do this. Ask for a roll to see whether they have anything — or can find anything — that might work. The higher the roll, the more suitable the thing they find.

It can sometimes add atmosphere to mention exact amounts of money. For example, in London 1851 (see “Money” on page 77), you might talk about stealing a pound note or giving a beggar a ha'penny for information. Nevertheless, don't keep track of money: just assume the Investigators have whatever they need.

## PRACTICALITIES

As you play, remember the practicalities of time and space, as you did when writing the mystery (see “Travel, sleep and food” on page 34).

Keep reminding the players **what time it is**: for example, “When you arrive at the docks, it's late afternoon and the sun is low in the sky.” This adds both atmosphere and time pressure.

As you do this, describe **what the light is like**. If it is morning, describe the early sun through a shifting mist. If it is twilight, describe shadows and half-light. If it is night, describe pools of darkness beyond the streetlamps. In the dark, think about how the Investigators light their way: a cigarette lighter makes flickering shadows, a candle creates a dim half-light, while a flashlight creates a sharp bright circle, beyond which is darkness.

Think also about **how the Investigators travel**. If they are travelling across London, you might describe them paying a penny to take the bus, then sitting on the top in the stinking summer heat as they pass the Houses of Parliament and glimpse the Thames in the distance.

As with money and equipment, don't let time, travel or light become a barrier. Let the Investigators get

where they want to go. Feel free to cheat timings: for example, if it's interesting for an Investigator to suddenly arrive in a scene, let them, without worrying how long it would take them to get there.

Finally, for most of the mystery, try to keep the Investigators together. It's easier and it makes things less fragmented. If Investigators want to split up, let them, but bring them back together as soon as you can.

Be honest about this: say “I'd like to bring you back together.” And, again, don't let travel times get in the way: just assume that everyone arrives when you want them to arrive.

## WHEN AN INVESTIGATOR DIES

Dying is an important part of Cthulhu Dark. But, when an Investigator dies, it often means a player leaves the game. So don't kill Investigators lightly. Make it count.

It's often best if the player, rather than you, decides that their Investigator will die. Encourage them to embrace this: after all, Investigators' stories are expected to end tragically. Players often enjoy their Investigators meeting glorious — or even pointless — ends.

In particular, when one Investigator tries to kill another, check to see whether the other player is happy for their Investigator to die. If not, find a way to let them survive.

When an Investigator attempts something that might kill them, warn them first. For example, if an Investigator tries to attack a supernatural creature, tell them “You might die if you try this.” Give them a chance to back out. If they want to continue, roll as normal, rolling the Failure Die against them. If the Failure Die rolls high, the Investigator dies.

Similarly, always let players roll to avoid dying. For example, if an Investigator starts reading a book whose contents will kill them, suggest they roll to stop reading, rolling the Failure Die.

For the first two-thirds of the mystery, Investigators usually shouldn't die. Find a way to keep them playing: if an Investigator is attacked,

they might be scarred, traumatised or knocked unconscious, rather than killed.

In the final third of the mystery, when the horror intensifies, death becomes more likely. In particular, if the Investigators encounter supernatural creatures or descend into a horrific underworld, that's a cue that someone might die.

When an Investigator does die, provide a glorious ending for them. Give them a moment in the spotlight and — unless they try to kill another Investigator or otherwise disrupt things — let them go out however they want.

## HOW A MYSTERY RUNS

At the start of a mystery, Investigators often explore gradually, as they slowly get to know the world and each other. You might find there is not much work for you to do. Just sit back and react to whatever the Investigators do, playing people they meet and describing the world.

At this stage, the Investigators will have low Insight, but it increases quickly, since most Insight rolls roll above the Investigator's Insight.

Towards the middle of the game, Investigators often focus on finding clues and solving the mystery.

This stage can feel like a lot of work for you, as you answer questions, describe locations and ensure the players are on track. You may wonder whether the players are having fun: don't worry, they probably are. Now, Insight is likely to be around 3 or 4, and it increases slower than before.

Later still, there is a sense of reaching a climax. Now, there is again less work for you to do. Simply let things unfold and look for a good ending (as described below).

At this stage, some Investigators are likely to have Insight 5. These Investigators are on a knife-edge: every time they roll Insight, they will lose their minds if they roll a 6.

Try to give each Investigator about ten Insight rolls over the course of the mystery. This means that, on average, one or two Investigators lose their minds at the end.

## FINDING AN ENDING

When it feels as though the mystery is approaching a climax, start looking for a place to end. It might not be where you planned.

If any of these happen, start looking for a moment to end the mystery:

- ▶ Most Investigators have Insight of 4 or 5.
- ▶ An Investigator loses their mind.
- ▶ The Investigators discover the full horror or something very horrific.
- ▶ The Investigators see an alien creature.
- ▶ They descend into a dark or alien place.
- ▶ They turn on each other.
- ▶ An Investigator dies.

What makes a good ending? Try a **moment of extreme terror**: when creatures swarm the Investigators, forcing them to run or die. Or try a **moment of bleak realisation**: as the Investigators discover tunnels filled with unconscious children and realise they can never stop the abductions. Or try a **moment of violence**, especially if Investigators attack each other.

When you sense an ending approaching, start building towards a finale. Get all the Investigators together: if one Investigator is somewhere else, bring them back if you can. Dissuade Investigators from minor actions: this isn't the time for one Investigator to pick another's pocket.

Now focus on the horror. Bring it to a peak. Try drip-feeding the horror (see page 46). Emphasise anything that might hit particular Investigators hard: if an Investigator is a teacher, they might find some of their pupils in the tunnels.

Turn to each player in turn, asking what their Investigator does, giving them one last moment in the spotlight. One Investigator might look for their child; another might run aimlessly into the tunnels; a third might frantically begin rescuing children.

Make any final rolls, but keep them short. Don't be afraid to leave things unresolved: it doesn't necessarily matter whether an Investigator succeeds in rescuing children, just that they try to do so.

Then end the story.

## EPILOGUES

After the mystery is over, go around each player in turn. Ask them to narrate an epilogue for their Investigator, describing a short scene that happens after the mystery.

So, one player might describe their Investigator in an obscure library trying to understand what they saw. Another might portray their Investigator having breakfast with their family, while watching nervously over their child's shoulder.

Don't let players influence the epilogues of other Investigators. In particular, don't allow an epilogue where one Investigator kills another (unless the players of those Investigators agree).

Include epilogues for Investigators who died or lost their minds. For example, a player might describe their Investigator's funeral or a scene with their loved ones.

Once the epilogues are complete, the game is over.

## AND BEYOND

You may want to continue the story into another mystery, especially if some Investigators survived without losing their minds.

**When you use existing Investigators in a new mystery, reset their Insight to 1.** This represents them exploring a new horror they know nothing about: whatever they learned before, it will not help them now. It also has a practical reason: it helps ensure a slow build of tension in the next game, as Insight starts low and slowly increases.

If you like, describe what the Investigators do between the mysteries. Perhaps they recover in hospital, spend time with their loved ones or write letters they will never send. But don't overthink this. Describe it if it is interesting, then carry on.

To start the next mystery, go around the table and ask everyone what happened in the previous mystery. As they do so, remind them of anything important they forget, especially things they might need to know in the coming mystery.

As you play the new mystery, try inserting references to the previous mystery. For example,

if the Investigators board a train that passes the location of a previous mystery, tell them so. If you describe an otherworldly creature, say how it resembles or differs from previous creatures they have seen. Try bringing Creeping Horrors from previous mysteries into the new mystery: if there was a violet light in one mystery, use it occasionally in the next. This adds a sense of dreadful continuity, suggesting the horror is connected in a deep and universal way.

You can also play mysteries that are connected, but that do not feature the same Investigators. To do this, find ways to link the mysteries together, scattering references to previous mysteries in later ones. For an example, see "The campaign" on page 127, which lets you play all the mysteries in this book as one interconnected campaign.

## STRANGE INSIGHTS

Here is an optional rule, which helps you take existing Investigators into a new mystery.

If your Investigator's Insight reached 5 in the previous mystery, then if their Insight reaches 5 again in this mystery, they get a sudden moment of clarity, as follows. You may ask the Director one question about what is happening: for example, "Where are the children who disappeared?", "How do we stop this?" or "Who are these creatures?". You must do this immediately when Insight reaches 5, otherwise you lose the chance.

The Director must answer your question briefly and horrifyingly ("In the river", "You can't", "An ancient race who have lived here since the dawn of time and will remain long after humans are extinct"). In being brief, try to be as horrifying and mysterious as you can.

The question should be about the horror, rather than an investigative question (such as "What is the address of the gentleman with the silk scarf?"). As a rule of thumb, if the answer is useful, you can't ask the question.

As Director, use this to give tantalising glimpses into the horror. Give replies that raise more questions than they answer.

# THREATS OF THE MYTHOS

Your mystery is a horror story, about fears, obsessions and other things that might occupy a human mind: fear of abduction, fear of the ocean, fear of your own body, aristocracy, isolation, hunger. These are your themes (see page 28).

The threats of the Mythos are your tools to explore these themes. They are horrific creatures, artifacts and other entities, that embody the fears you want to explore.

Choose a Mythos threat that works with your themes. For example, if “fear of abduction” is one of your themes, try the Great Race or the Mi-Go, who fit well with themes of abduction. If “the ocean” is a theme, try Cthulhu or the Deep Ones, who work well in stories about the sea. If your mystery is about “fear of your own body”, try the Deep Ones. And if your mystery is about “fear of science”, try Nyarlathotep or the Mi-Go.

In the rest of this chapter, you’ll find outlines of various Mythos threats. Each begins with a short description of what the threat is and what it does. There is then a list of themes that the threat represents well.

After that is a description of the Creeping Horrors commonly associated each thing: you can either use these or invent your own. You’ll then find the location where the threat is commonly found: you can either set your mystery here or somewhere else. Finally, there are suggestions of how to use the threat in two of Cthulhu Dark’s settings, London 1851 and Mumbai 2037.

Don’t feel constrained by this! All this detail is here to inspire you, not restrict you, so change whatever you like.

Try using different themes than those listed: for example, try using the Mi-Go to tell a story about fear of infection. Try swapping Creeping Horrors between creatures: so, if your Mythos threat is the Mi-Go, try using Creeping Horrors associated with the Deep Ones, such as a repugnant smell. Try

switching locations too: set a mystery about the Mi-Go by the sea, where the Deep Ones are more commonly found. Or use the information given for each creature, but give it a twist: for example, try giving the Mi-Go monotonous rather than buzzing voices or a glow rather than a vibration.

Some themes apply to multiple Mythos threats. For example, dreams are associated with both Cthulhu and Keziah Mason, art is associated with Cthulhu and Erich Zann and technology is associated with the Mi-Go and Nyarlathotep. But notice that each theme is used in different ways: Cthulhu does dreams-as-premonitions, but Keziah Mason does dreams-as-travel. Choose the creature that best embodies the theme in the way you want to use it.

In your mystery, always change the name of the creature. It is much better to say “Winged Ones” than “The Mi-Go.” If in doubt, pick a general and mysterious label, based on an evocative adjective and noun: the Ancient One, the Dark God, the Shining Things. Where you choose a specific person as your threat, such as Erich Zann or Keziah Mason, try replacing them someone who is essentially the same character but with a different name.

## COLOUR OUT OF SPACE

Colours are amorphous, intangible creatures, which fall from the stars, sink into the earth and drain life from everything around them. This makes anything living in the area above them mutate unnaturally or crumble into dust. Everything about Colours is inexplicable by known science. Years after falling to Earth, they launch back into space, in a blaze.

### THEMES

**Life and death.** Colours make living things grow monstrously, with unnatural speed and size. Use Colours to tell stories about life and death, in which creatures, plants and people grow and mutate, then have the life sucked out of them.

**Food.** Use Colours to tell stories about food and those who produce it. For example, write a mystery about farmers, whose animals become

mutated, and whose fruit and crops grow huge and glossy, but taste vile.

**Science.** Use Colours to tell stories about the failure of science, in which scientists try to analyse the Colour, but fail, before meeting a horrific end.

### CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Living things, which are horribly mutated or which crumble to dust.
- ▶ A colour, unlike any in the known spectrum, which infects the world around it.
- ▶ An unnatural feeling of lethargy and listlessness, which makes you unwilling or unable to leave.

*Location: The rural countryside.*

### SETTINGS

**London 1851:** In Victorian London, science is at its height. Use Colours to show how little the scientists and scholars know, as they discover something they cannot explain. Try stories about archaeologists who find a coloured globule, engineers who find a glowing rock or astronomers who study a fallen meteorite.

**Mumbai 2037:** Use Colours to tell stories about unnatural life, such as artificial intelligence, food hacking, nanobots or cyborgs. Write a mystery about a form of life that seems too good to be true, which gradually kills everything around it.

### CTHULHU

Cthulhu is an immense organic mass. It lies under the Pacific, sleeping, dreaming and half-dead, where it sends dreams to those who are psychically sensitive. Those that encounter Cthulhu see mostly flashes of vastness, flabbiness and blackness, with suggestions of something squid-like or crab-like.

When, in the words of ancient texts, “the stars are right”, Cthulhu will rise, with the help of a sect that worships it, and rule the Earth.

### THEMES

**Dreams and the unconscious.** Use Cthulhu to tell stories of hallucinations, visions and voices. Get the Investigators to fear their own minds, making them wonder what is real. Try using Cthulhu in mysteries about Surrealism, Freudian psychology or clairvoyants.

**Art.** Tell stories about art, in which something monstrous lurks beneath the surface. Put a monstrous work of art in your mystery, such as a book, symphony, sculpture or piece of architecture, whose artist is inspired by Cthulhu’s dreams.

**The sea.** When you want to tell a story set on the ocean, use Cthulhu as the threat beneath the waves. In this guise, Cthulhu becomes a sea monster, like the legendary Kraken or Leviathan.

**The end of the world.** If you want an apocalypse in your story, Cthulhu can provide it, by rising from the water and stalking the Earth. If you want to tell a postapocalyptic story, try a mystery in which Cthulhu has already risen.

### CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Dreams of underground voices, chanting monotonously.
- ▶ Dreams of vast, alien stone architecture.
- ▶ Signs of Cthulhu’s sect getting closer to the Investigators (for some suggestions, see “The horror pushes back” on page 35), as they try to protect knowledge of the ancient gods.

*Location: At sea.*

### SETTINGS

**London 1851:** In Victorian times, people who showed disturbed behaviour were detained in asylums. Use Cthulhu to tell stories about these places, as inmates (who might be Investigators) have visions of how the world ends. Or use Cthulhu to tell stories about the London floods (see “The river” on page 78).

**Mumbai 2037:** Mumbai is a city of dreams. Take this literally, as Mumbaikars dream of horrific architectural visions and the end of the world.

## JOSEPH CURWEN

Joseph Curwen is a sorcerer, who lived centuries ago, but uses magic to force his descendants to resurrect him from his “essential saltes.” Once resurrected, he murders the descendant who resurrected him, impersonates that descendant and continues his sorcerous projects, although his anachronistic language and habits betray who he truly is.

### THEMES

**Naïveté.** Use Joseph Curwen to tell stories about naive dabblers in the occult: that is, Curwen’s descendants. Searching for knowledge, power or excitement, they attempt sorcery they cannot control, which then destroys them. Write mysteries in which the Investigators deal with the aftermath.

**Fighting fire with fire.** The only way to destroy Joseph Curwen was by learning the dark sorcery he practiced. Try writing a mystery in which the Investigators can only fight the horror by becoming part of it: by doing unspeakable deeds, infecting their bodies or learning dark secrets they can never forget. (Compare with Erich Zann’s vigil, below, which similarly requires Investigators to abandon their lives to combat the horror.)

### CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Oddly archaic mannerisms and speech.
- ▶ Howling animals.

*Location: Anywhere.*

### SETTINGS

London 1851: Write a mystery about Victorian spiritualists, who contact one of their ancestors in a seance. The ancestor then persuades the spiritualists to resurrect him.

Mumbai 2037: Use Joseph Curwen to explore the dangers of meddling with the past. Write a mystery about Mumbaikars who become obsessed with a figure from Mumbai’s colonial past, but who then takes over their bodies and minds.

## DEEP ONES

The Deep Ones live under the sea, where they encounter humans who live on the coast, making deals and breeding with them. They are immortal.

Sometimes, people discover they are descended from these creatures. As these people age, they change, developing a distinctive look with staring eyes and flaking skin. They dream of returning to the sea and swimming there forever.

### THEMES

**Family.** The Deep Ones let you tell stories about ancestry, heredity and children. Try tales of monstrous pregnancies, alien ancestors or the fear of your children turning out wrong.

**The body.** Use the Deep Ones to explore the fear of the body, especially your own body. Try a mystery in which Investigators feel their own bodies changing or see the faces of those they love mutate.

**Immortality.** Use the Deep Ones to tell stories about living forever. Try mysteries in which someone makes a deal to become immortal and discovers the horrific consequences of that choice.

**Bargains.** When you want to tell a story of a deal gone wrong, whether it is a lover’s pact, a fulfilled wish or a commercial contract, make it a pact with the Deep Ones or their descendants. Try a story about someone who must fulfil a pact made by their ancestors.

### CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ The stink of the sea, which lingers everywhere, getting stronger in areas where the creatures have been or when they are close.
- ▶ The Look, which descendants of the Deep Ones develop as they age. This is often described as unblinking eyes, scabby skin and gill-like folds around the neck, but pick something that suits your mystery. Try making the Look more pronounced as your mystery goes on, in people the Investigators meet (or the Investigators themselves).

*Location: By the sea.*

## SETTINGS

**London 1851:** Use the Deep Ones for mysteries about the British love of the sea. Try a story about horrors lurking in a seaside resort or monstrous deals made by the British Navy.

**Mumbai 2037:** Tell stories about monstrous ancestors and family members. Try a mystery about genehacking, in which the Investigators discover the imprint of something monstrous on their own DNA. Or write a mystery about new medical technology, which offers the promise of immortality.

## ELDER THINGS

The Elder Things built vast underground cities in remote places. They are civilised and human-like, enjoying the pursuit of knowledge. Specifically, they like to learn about other creatures (including humans) by dissecting them.

The Elder Things became extinct when one of their creations, the Shoggoths, turned on them. Shoggoths themselves are black masses, covered in eyes, and they are natural imitators, mimicking both the carvings and voices of the Elder Things. They evolve over time.

## THEMES

**Doomed civilisation.** Write a mystery that shows how the Elder Things destroyed themselves, through hubris and pursuit of knowledge, and imply the same will happen to the human race. Let the Investigators discover the story of how the Elder Things gathered knowledge, built cities and invented life, then show how this led to their extinction.

**Imitation.** Use the Shoggoths for horror of the “uncanny valley”: that is, something that is nearly, but not quite, life-like. Let the Investigators encounter badly-imitated writing, voices, documents or people. Try using Shoggoths that imitate so well they can replace human beings.

## CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Signs of a detailed and complex prehistoric civilisation.
- ▶ Prehistoric carvings.
- ▶ The piping, whistling voices of the Elder Things, imitated by the Shoggoths.

*Location: The Antarctic.*

## SETTINGS

**London 1851:** Show the hubris of Victorian civilisation and how it will lead to its own downfall, by drawing parallels with the Elder Things. Try taking aim at Victorian science, by showing how the Elder Things’ science led to unimaginable horrors. Or take aim at the British Empire, by showing that, when the Elder Things attempted to control other creatures, these creatures turned on them.

**Mumbai 2037:** Use the Shoggoths as a biotechnological, chemical or medical experiment. Write a mystery in which the Investigators are factory workers, investigating mysterious deaths in the experimental tanks. Tell a story in which the Shoggoths turn on the humans that created them. Or reveal that the Shoggoths have already taken control.

## GHOULS

Ghouls are near-humans, who swarm beneath the earth. They lurk in underground places, waiting to overpower humans and gnaw their bones. Sometimes, while exploring dark places, you find curious covered shafts, which lead vertically down to where the creatures are.

## THEMES

**Underground.** Use Ghouls to explore the horror of underground places, where demonic things lurk. Try cellars, sewers, caves and subway systems.

**The dark.** Similarly, use Ghouls to explore the horror of dark places, especially in the city. Try hidden alleyways, abandoned buildings and locked rooms in old houses.

**Other civilisations.** Ghouls are an intelligent, humanoid species. Write a mystery about an encounter between peoples, as Investigators discover they share the Earth with another civilisation.

### CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Bones, scraps and other unidentifiable human remnants, found in corners.
- ▶ Scuffling sounds from behind the walls and beneath the floor, getting closer.

*Location: The city.*

### SETTINGS

**London 1851:** Beneath the ground, Victorian workers build great feats of engineering. Tell tales about sewers, tunnels and the London Underground, as the construction of these projects disturbs creatures who inhabit the soil.

**Mumbai 2037:** Try telling a story about encountering a new civilisation, living in the crumbling architecture of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mumbai.

## THE GREAT RACE OF YITH

To learn about the universe, the Great Race transfer their minds through time and space. When they transfer their minds into the bodies of humans, the human minds find themselves in the bodies of the Great Race, in a prehistoric library where they are forced to write about their lives. Years later, the minds swap back: the human mind finds itself back in its original body, with no memory of what happened during the missing years.

### THEMES

**Loss of control.** Use the Great Race to explore the horror of losing control of mind and body. Tell stories about amnesia, abduction, sleepwalking, possession and more, with the Great Race as the cause. (Don't be strict about the way the Great Race operate: they could control minds and bodies in many different ways.)

**Time travel.** Use the Great Race to let your Investigators travel throughout time. Play tricks with time: for example, try a mystery in which Investigators find letters from the future, experience a time loop or discover when they will die.

### CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Dreams of aliens and architecture, as your memories, from the time your mind spent trapped in prehistory, start coming back.
- ▶ Memory loss, for moments, days, years or decades.
- ▶ Writing, sculptures and carvings, apparently and inexplicably made by humans in prehistoric times.

*Location: Anywhere.*

### SETTINGS

**London 1851:** Use the Great Race to show the dark side of knowledge: for example, try a mystery about a librarian who archives memories by capturing people's minds. And, taking inspiration from H G Wells' *The Time Machine*, try a mystery about Investigators who travel to the future and see what humanity becomes.

**Mumbai 2037:** Try mysteries about technology that affects memory: it might wipe unpleasant memories, provide artificial experiences or give people a whole new identity. Or try a time-warping technology, which lets Investigators find relics or meet people from India's colonial past.

## THE KING IN YELLOW

The King in Yellow is many things. It is a man, wearing tattered golden robes, seen in visions and hallucinations. It is a book, which spreads like a virus, appearing where it should not: once read, its madness infects you. And it is a looser collection of horrors: the Yellow Sign, a sigil that corrupts your mind; Carcosa, a mythical and beautiful land; Hastur, a thing that may be an alien creature or a god; a malevolent man that follows you in the street.



What is horrifying about the King In Yellow — or Hastur, or the Yellow Sign, or whatever name you choose — is that it is unexplained. It is not just an alien creature or monstrous race, but a series of horrific occurrences you cannot understand.

## THEMES

**Crazes.** Use *The King In Yellow* (in book form) or the Yellow Sign to tell stories of crazes that sweep a city or nation: a new artwork, dance or show. Once the Investigators have witnessed it, they experience malevolent visions and become convinced someone is following them.

**Doubting your sanity.** Write mysteries about Investigators who fear their own minds, using the collection of inexplicable events above. Try stories about hallucinations, as Investigators see and hear things that are not real; delusions, as the Investigators believe they are immensely powerful; or paranoia, as Investigators find themselves inexplicably stalked by malevolent things.

## CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Hallucinations.
- ▶ Someone following you.
- ▶ Visions of Carcosa, a beautiful city with twin moons rising over a lake.

*Location: The city.*

## SETTINGS

London 1851: Tell stories about a malevolent man, stalking people through the dark alleys of Victorian London. Or write about *The King In Yellow* (in book form) in a gentleman's club, which infects the upper classes, leaving the Investigators to discover what is happening.

Mumbai 2037: In a city that dreams of impossible beauty, show the Mumbaikars the beautiful land of Carcosa. Tempt them with visions of power, wealth and decadence.

## KEZIAH MASON

The witch Keziah Mason died centuries ago, along with Brown Jenkin, her companion, a scuttling rat-thing with a human face. Yet, by whatever means, their spirits linger. They haunt present-day occupants of the house where they lived, especially those who seek occult secrets.

These occupants are plagued with dreams of flying through an alternate cosmos, passing living things of impossible geometry. As the dreams continue, night after night, Mason and Brown Jenkin begin to appear in them, getting closer and closer.

Eventually, dreams and reality blur. Mason and Jenkin start following the dreamers in their waking hours. In the end, the victims are found partially consumed.

## THEMES

**Forbidden knowledge.** Write mysteries where Investigators stumble on forbidden knowledge, then cannot escape what they have discovered. The Investigators realise they have unwittingly agreed to something horrific: to dedicate their lives to darkness, to transform their bodies, to fill their minds with dark knowledge or something worse. As the Investigators dig deeper, they find themselves pursued by monstrous things and cannot escape.

**Dreams.** Write mysteries in which the Investigators dream, alternating scenes during the day with dream-scenes during the night. During the day, the Investigators investigate mysterious occurrences. During the night, they dream of the horrors behind those occurrences. As the mystery continues, the Investigators perceive the horrors from their dreams in the real world.

**Haunting.** Use Mason and Brown Jenkin for stories about haunted buildings. When the Investigators move into a new home, they discover legends of previous occupants, then find the remains of these occupants. Each night, the Investigators dream. Gradually, the creatures in the dream begin to haunt the house.

## CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Dreams, which gradually intrude into reality.
- ▶ Signs that Mason and Jenkin have entered the real world: for example, scratches, hairs and movements in the corner of the eye.

*Location: The city.*

## SETTINGS

London 1851: Londoners were obsessed with ghosts and the supernatural. Bring Keziah Mason back as a ghost, then let her gradually become real and infect the Investigators' lives.

Mumbai 2037: Use Mason and Jenkin for stories about Mumbai's colonial past haunting its present. Try setting a mystery in an old British colonial building or a new construction built on its ruins. Let the Investigators discover its horrific past: perhaps there might have been a disease, massacre or execution there. Gradually, bring that horror back into the present.

## MI-GO

The Mi-Go flew through space to Earth, where they built mines in remote hills and high mountains. They appear insect-like or crab-like, but prefer to remain hidden, leaving only footprints or other traces. The Mi-Go are defensive, taking reprisals against those who discover their operations.

Sometimes, they use human agents or attempt to disguise themselves as human. They are also deceivers, spies and tempters, making offers and bargains at impossible prices. They offer humans the chance to see space, by taking their brains and placing them into cylinders.

## THEMES

**Science.** The Mi-Go take humans to see other worlds, by removing their brains. Use them to tell stories of science pushed too far. Invent technology that promises immortality, happiness or power, but which destroys the Investigators in the process.

**Bargains.** Create Investigators who have dreams they want to fulfil: for example, saving a loved one, gaining political power or being young again.

Start the mystery with a rumour of something that fulfils those dreams. Let them investigate, then end the mystery with the Mi-Go offering a deal, which gives Investigators their dreams at a horrific price.

**Impersonation.** Write mysteries in which the Mi-Go impersonate humans, especially the Investigators' loved ones.

**Space travel.** If you want to take the Investigators into space, use the Mi-Go. Make this space travel dangerous: it comes with a price.

## CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Signs of sabotage and surveillance: packages going missing, telephone wires being cut, footprints outside the door.
- ▶ People speaking in buzzing, cracked voices.
- ▶ An inexplicable, alien vibration, which lingers where the creatures have been.

*Location: Rural hills and mountains.*

## SETTINGS

London 1851: Use the Mi-Go to explore the Victorian obsessions of technology, exploration and commerce. When Mi-Go agents come to London, they offer demonstrations of scientific marvels and the promise of space travel. Let the Investigators discover the price of this.

Mumbai 2037: Make the Mi-Go into powerful and malevolent traders, offering impossible deals and wild technology. Once a deal has been suggested, it cannot be refused. Tell stories of innocent Mumbaikars, who have made promises they regret and who now face monstrous consequences.

## NYARLATHOTEP

Nyarlathotep is a charismatic bringer of doom. He is a showman, arriving in cities to offer marvellous technological demonstrations. Yet those who see his show emerge changed, seeing signs of a destroyed, apocalyptic world everywhere.

## THEMES

**Charisma.** Use Nyarlathotep if you want a central charismatic figure in your mystery. Try telling stories of the dangers of charisma: like the Pied Piper, who leads children away with his music, Nyarlathotep lures people with the promise of beauty and knowledge, but shows them only chaos. Try making Nyarlathotep into a preacher, demagogue or salesperson.

**The apocalypse.** To give premonitions of a destroyed world, use Nyarlathotep in your mystery. Make him an agent of chaos, showing the Investigators how things will be, then returning them to the present day. (Note the difference with Cthulhu's apocalypse: Nyarlathotep gives hazy visions of a disturbing future, while Cthulhu promises an imminent disaster.)

## CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Unnatural weather.
- ▶ Dreams haunting the city.
- ▶ Sleepless nights.

*Location: The city.*

## SETTINGS

**London 1851:** Victorian London was a place of fairgrounds, performers and shows. Use Nyarlathotep to give a demonstration of a scientific, supernatural or natural wonder, in a public lecture, a séance or a booth at the carnival. He might even show the future, demonstrating how Victorian dreams will lead to the inhumanity of the Great War.

**Mumbai 2037:** Make Nyarlathotep into a purveyor of riches, offering visions of impossible beauty and luxury. Perhaps the Investigators want to achieve their dreams or perhaps they know someone that has fallen under his spell. Show the underside of these dreams, as the beauty turns to dust, the promises are seen to be hollow and the rich become ever distant from the poor.

## THE RATS IN THE WALLS

On returning to your ancestral roots, you hear rats swarming downwards through the walls. They are a hallucination, but they are also a sign of evil in your bloodline. On following the rats, you find traces of ancient occult rituals performed by your ancestors, involving cannibalism and human sacrifice. Eventually, instinct takes over and you find yourself performing the same acts.

## THEMES

**Family secrets.** When you want to tell a story about discovering the evil that your family did, use the rats. Try writing a mystery about discovering a history of murder, abduction, torture or other acts in your family tree. (Note the difference with the Deep Ones: use the Deep Ones to tell stories about being descended from monsters, but use the Rats to tell stories about evil human acts that run in the family.)

**Architecture.** Try writing a mystery about a malevolent building. In Lovecraft's original story *The Rats In The Walls*, the ancestral home dates from the 1600s, but is built on Saxon ruins, which rest on Roman foundations, which are themselves built on older buildings. This means that, as the Investigators go deeper beneath the house, they descend through layers of history, tracing the ancestry further and further back in time. Use this idea of descending through architecture and through history.

## CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Hallucinations of rats, running through the walls and floor.
- ▶ Signs of ancient evil deeds, including carvings and ritual paraphernalia.
- ▶ Skeletons, who died in horrific poses, suggesting torture, murder and cannibalism.

*Location: A house.*

## SETTINGS

**London 1851:** Use the rats to undermine the Victorian aristocracy. Write a mystery in which

the Investigators descend beneath the ancestral home of a great aristocratic family, then discover the evil acts that made their fortune.

**Mumbai 2037:** Mumbai is a hotbed of new construction. Try writing a mystery about a new building, whose residents commit evil acts. As the Investigators investigate, they descend deeper and deeper beneath the building and into history.

## REANIMATION SOLUTION

This chemical solution, when injected into a freshly-deceased corpse — or part of the corpse — brings it back to life. The owner of the solution is driven to use it again and again, even if this requires murder, subterfuge or graverobbing. Eventually, the owner may face bloody revenge from the things that the solution has reanimated.

### THEMES

**Life and Death.** The solution lets you explore the boundary between life and death. Use it in a mystery to ask questions about life and humanity. Can a reassembled corpse be brought back to life? If so, is it truly human? Should the Investigators murder it or protect its unnatural life?

**Medicine.** The solution represents a great advance in medicine: it brings the dead to life. Write a mystery about a medical breakthrough with a horrific edge. Try writing about a medical technique that saves an Investigator's loved one from dying, but leaves them changed. Then let the Investigators investigate the horror behind the medical miracle. Again, use this to pose questions: would you keep someone you loved alive, if unnatural means were the only way to do it? Would you murder to save someone you love?

### CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Corpses that flicker despairingly into life, then die again.
- ▶ A feeling of being followed, by the things that were brought back to life.
- ▶ Parts of corpses — disembodied heads, intestines, eyes — showing signs of life.

*Location: Anywhere.*

## SETTINGS

**London 1851:** Use the solution to show the power of the medical establishment and the horrors of medicine. Make the Investigators or their loved ones into patients, under the care of well-meaning but firm doctors, who kill and reanimate patients.

**Mumbai 2037:** Try using the solution to reanimate corpses from Mumbai's colonial past. Perhaps corpses are revived as a cheap source of labour, although they remember the horrors they saw long ago.

## SHINING TRAPEZOHEDRON

The Shining Trapezohedron is an ancient, glassy prism, containing shifting visions of other times and places. Anyone who looks into it finds themselves with new knowledge, but is hunted by an immense creature that is repelled by light. Once you have looked into the Shining Trapezohedron, your doom is inevitable.

Try asking Investigators to make a roll when they look into the Shining Trapezohedron. If they succeed, they gain its hidden knowledge and experience the Creeping Horror of being hunted. If they fail, they see nothing. Whether or not they remain safe is up to you.

### THEMES

**The dark.** Use the Shining Trapezohedron to explore the fear of the dark. Since the creature hunts only when there is no light, the Investigators should fear any darkness. Sources of light, whether candles, streetlamps or cigarette lighters, become life-saving. As the mystery progresses, use sudden darkness as a Creeping Horror: describe sputtering candles, power blackouts and flames that flicker and die.

**Desire.** The Shining Trapezohedron is an object of desire. It obsesses people, who seek it despite the danger. They find themselves fantasising about it and sleepwalking towards it. Afterwards, they must deal with the consequences of their desire. Eventually, their desire destroys them.

## CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ The sounds of something moving in the darkness.
- ▶ Traces of previous victims, with charred bones, dissolved at the ends.
- ▶ Unreliable light and sudden darkness.

*Location: The city.*

## SETTINGS

London 1851: At night, Victorian London divides into light and dark. The great streets blaze with gaslight, creating pools of impossible brightness, with threatening blackness beyond. Alleys and slums are darker, lit dimly by sputtering oil lamps or candles. Tell stories about this light and dark city, where something hunts in the shadows.

Mumbai 2037: Tell tales of desire in hypermodern Mumbai. Use the Shining Trapezohedron as a glossy, modern object of desire, either in the real world or in cyberspace, which tempts the Investigators. When the Investigators look into it, they see shimmering visions of the future, but these visions later come to kill them.

## ASENATH WAITE

Asenath Waite is a sorceress, with the power to place her mind in someone else's body, while they find themselves in hers. She gains power over those close to her: she can stop them speaking, prevent them travelling or swap bodies from a distance.

Her powers persist past death. If someone kills her, they may later find themselves in her decaying, buried corpse, while she takes their body. While Asenath appears young, she may herself be possessed by someone or something much older.

## THEMES

**Relationships.** Explore trust and love in relationships. Can you ever truly know someone you love, even someone you are married to? Can you trust them not to harm you? How much power do your loved ones have over you? Try a mystery in which someone the Investigators know behaves

strangely, under the influence of a Waite-like figure, perhaps their spouse, child or parent.

**Gender.** Asenath Waite steals the bodies of men, becoming a woman in a man's body. She may herself be something older and less describable, inhabiting both male and female bodies. Use her to tell stories about gender, as women gain power through men and people inhabit other bodies.

## CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Objects with impossible curves, textures and colours, which come "from outside."
- ▶ "Tugging" at your mind, as she tries to get in.
- ▶ Finding yourself in another body, which is doing something horrific.
- ▶ Finding yourself back in your own body, which is somewhere horrific.
- ▶ Being buried alive.
- ▶ Talking to someone, who suddenly changes their posture, voice and personality.

*Location: Anywhere.*

## SETTINGS

London 1851: Victorians loved extraordinary people, including women, but had strict ideas of gender roles. Try a mystery in which women Investigators discover a Waite-like figure transgressing these roles and achieving power, by possessing the bodies of men and the dead. Will they stop this figure, even though it is achieving things they have always wanted to achieve?

Mumbai 2037: Write a mystery about marriage, in which the Investigators are family members, welcoming a new member, such as a spouse or child. Gradually, the new addition takes control of people close to them.

## YOG-SOTHOTH

Through ancient sorcery, certain families can summon the interdimensional god Yog-Sothoth to create an unnatural pregnancy. This creates a child of Yog-Sothoth, which, when it grows up, can take many forms: from a creature that appears superficially human, but with concealed tentacles, to a huge, invisible and ravenous monster.

## THEMES

**Small towns.** Use a child of Yog-Sothoth to explore the secrets that small towns hide. One of the town's families has created the child, keeping it hidden as it grows up.

**Family secrets.** Similarly, use a child of Yog-Sothoth to explore family secrets. Try a mystery in which an Investigator discovers their family has access to ancient sorcery. Perhaps, somewhere in their family tree, there is an unnatural pregnancy or child.

## CREEPING HORRORS

- ▶ Dogs barking uncontrollably.
- ▶ Birds surrounding those who are about to die, chirping in time with their dying breaths.
- ▶ Unnatural noises from a house where a child of Yog-Sothoth is imprisoned, together with regular deliveries of meat to feed it.

*Location: A small town.*

## SETTINGS

**London 1851:** British aristocrats prize their ancestry. Use a child of Yog-Sothoth to explore the dark side of this, as Investigators discover that an aristocratic family has created a monster.

**Mumbai 2037:** Use children of Yog-Sothoth to tell stories about families. Try a story about Indians who move to Mumbai, dreaming of great things, then find they are unable to escape their village roots and family secrets.

## ERICH ZANN

Erich Zann sits in an attic room, playing music to ward off the dark creatures outside his window. The tunes are eerie and unfamiliar, with notes that have never been heard. If he stopped, something unspeakable would happen, so he keeps playing.

## THEMES

**Vigils.** Erich Zann keeps an endless vigil against the darkness. Tell stories about others who keep watch for Mythos threats, such as soldiers, sailors

and sorcerers. Here is a possible ending: when the person keeping the vigil dies, the Investigators must take over their task to stop the evil coming.

**Art.** Use Erich Zann for mysteries about otherworldly art and the artists that make it. Try telling stories about a sculptor, writer or jazz musician whose creations keep evil at bay.

## CREEPING HORRORS

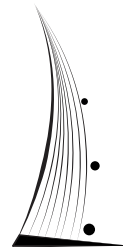
- ▶ Alien, atonal music, which gets louder and more frantic.
- ▶ Sounds from outside the window, as the darkness outside tries to get in.

*Location: The city.*

## SETTINGS

**London 1851:** Great artists were feted in Victorian London. Write a mystery about one of these heroes, whose art becomes twisted, leading them to become a recluse.

**Mumbai 2037:** What is the equivalent of a vigil in near-future Mumbai? Is it a programmer, typing through the night to fight against mutating code? Or an underground DJ, playing music nobody understands in deep caverns to ward off an evil under the city?





# LONDON 1851



The city is twisted, dirty and threatening. And it evolves. Day by day, it grows, spreading further into the fields and rivers around. Each day, new factories appear, sucking in workers and breathing out smoke, hiding the city within a shifting, toxic fog.

The sewers clog, spilling foul water into the street. Candles and oil lamps sputter, casting pools of yellow light, with dancing shadows beyond. Gaslight, harsh and unnatural, floods the grand streets and bridges. Beyond those streets, London is a twilight city of narrow alleys and tiny courts. Through all this runs the Thames, London's great stinking river.

This city is the corrupt heart of the British Empire, whose tentacles slither across the globe. These tentacles seize one nation, even as another evades them: India falls into the Empire's clutches even

as America escapes. Further beyond, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the Empire maintains a slippery grasp.

How does London control the Empire? By a web of shipping, commerce and military force, an explosive fist in a velvet glove that shakes your hand and smiles. And how does it power the Empire? By forced labour. Even though slavery has been abolished, the Empire has found subtler ways to make its subjects work.

This is London under Queen Victoria, Victorian London. In London 1851, the power lies in the monarchy, aristocracy and the British Empire. It lies in the Church, the corporations and in commercial enterprise. It lies in banks, country houses and the affluent West End of London. This is where the Mythos lurks. This is where the Investigators find the horror.



# THE INVESTIGATORS

In London 1851, the Investigators are ordinary people in the heart of the metropolis. They might be workers, struggling to survive in an uncaring city, or thieves, prostitutes and others, feeding on the city's corruption.

## NAMES

Choose old-fashioned names for the Investigators, especially nicknames: Spuddy, Curly, Foreigner, Taffy, Pineapple John, Dirty Sal, Dancing Sue, Lanky Bill, One-Eyed George, Short-Armed Jill.

## OCCUPATIONS

Below are suggested occupations for an Investigator in London 1851. Use them or invent your own.

For each occupation, you'll find suggestions of when to roll the Occupation Die. These are just examples: you might roll the Occupation Die for other reasons, not just the ones listed. For example, if your Investigator is a burglar, you might roll the Occupation Die for climbing a drainpipe, even though that isn't mentioned below.

All occupations are open to both women and men. While there wasn't equality in Victorian London, Victorians accepted both women and men in most lines of work.

## ARTISTS

Artists make their living through creativity. Some work in studios, where they paint portraits, write novels or compose ballads. Some work on the streets, cutting strangers' silhouettes in paper, taking photographs for sixpence or chalking wistful landscapes that fade in the rain.

Some street artists have a caravan or booth from which to ply their trade. These people are salespeople as well as artists, enticing the public to buy portraits, lithographs or caricatures. Others sell their art in travelling fairs or London's parks. Some are little more than beggars, scratching a living by selling trinkets in the East End streets.

As an artist's Insight increases, their art becomes more twisted, as they channel dark patterns beyond reality. Their warped creations may contain clues to the horrors they are investigating.

When one of the Investigators is an artist, include other artists in your mystery for them to talk to and horrific works of art for them to investigate. Try basing a mystery around a maddening artwork.

Artists might roll the Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Making an artwork.
- ▶ Studying art.
- ▶ Remembering something about the history of art.

## BEGGARS

Beggars earn money through pity. Many are honest. Many are not. Most are somewhere in between: even if their story is true, they have learned the right clothes, words and expressions to provoke sympathy.

There are all kinds of beggars on London's streets. Some write their piteous tale on a sign, then sit beside it, giving anguished looks to passers by. Some have deformities, either genuine, exaggerated or fake: for example, a beggar might create blisters by rubbing soap and vinegar on their skin. Some wear costumes, especially a uniform to indicate their former profession: an apron for a ruined tradesman, a helmet for an injured miner, a naval costume for a wounded sailor.

Beggars must choose the right story. If a factory worker loses a limb and turns to begging, they might pretend to be a wounded soldier, posing by a picture of a great battle. If a family turns to begging, they may pose as a "clean family", wearing clean but ragged clothes to show their humility and godliness.

Most beggars frequent poorer and busier streets. Some carry something to sell, such as matches, buttons or bootlaces. Unscrupulous ones knock into passers-by, drop their wares, then ask to be paid for them.

If one of the Investigators is a beggar, fill your mystery with other beggars, from whom they can get information. Try starting a mystery with a beggar Investigator observing something amiss in the street or being given something curious by a stranger.

Beggars might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Asking for money.
- ▶ Discerning whether someone is rich, from the way they are dressed.
- ▶ Knowing the layout of local streets.

## BURGLARS

Burglars make their living by breaking into buildings and stealing. It is a skilled profession, involving charm, subterfuge and technical expertise.

Most burglars work in teams, targeting the houses of the middle and upper classes. Their work begins at midnight, when they start watching the house. They then enter the property in the early hours and leave before dawn.

The police are the burglar's enemy. Yet, since policemen often walk the streets alone, they can often be overpowered or outrun, especially in London's twisting backstreets.

An angry crowd is a greater danger: if a mob catches a housebreaker, they may parade them through the streets before beating them. For this reason, clever burglars target unpopular people.

Burglars are especially suited to mysteries that include buildings to break into, locks to pick or which otherwise reward a stealthy approach. To adapt a mystery to suit a burglar, provide opportunities for housebreaking, lockpicking and hiding. Try starting a mystery with a burglar stealing something horrific and strange.

Burglars might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Guessing the layout of a house.
- ▶ Breaking into a house.
- ▶ Moving silently through a building.

For more on burglars and their methods, see "The Thieves of London" on page 80.

## CLEANERS

Cleaners keep London running by clearing the detritus of the living city. Without them, sewers would clog, chimneys would block and roads would be impassable, filling with animal manure, coal dust and discarded debris.

They are the invisible people of London, unnoticed by rich and poor alike. They clean the aristocracy's wide streets and grassy squares until they are white and beautiful. They clear the roads between the docks and markets, sweeping dust and shovelling dirt, but never quite making them clean.

There are many types of cleaners. Flushermen clean the sewers, clearing blockages and sometimes finding unimaginable half-living things. Waterers use a watering cart to hose the streets and damp the dust down. Chimney sweeps do exactly what their job title says: if they are adults, they use brushes for the sweeping; if they are children, they climb up from the fireplace, risking burial in soot.

Cleaners are never rich, but neither are they poor. Since few ordinary people want a dirty job, there is always work.

There are benefits too: cleaners often find interesting things as they work. Some are things they can use, such as tools, boxes or bottles. Some are things they can sell, such as glass, iron, tobacco or a lost silk handkerchief. And some things, especially in dark or hidden corners, are horrific.

When you have a cleaner in a mystery, expect them to find useful information from dust and debris. Fill your mystery with dirty rooms, detritus and discarded items.

Cleaners might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Finding a useful object in the streets.
- ▶ Discovering clues in the dirt or grease of a room.

## CLERKS

Clerks work in offices, either for public services such as the Post Office or for commercial interests such as railways, factories and shipping companies. They are proficient in shorthand and typing, using

the latest technology in their work: the typewriter, the filing cabinet and index cards.

They belong to the new middle classes. Clerks are literate and educated, although probably at a local school rather than the boarding schools attended by the aristocracy. Despite their low salaries, their jobs require them to wear respectable clothes. To save money, many live near work or commute on the cheap trains that run before 8 o'clock in the morning.

With any remaining money, clerks live a modern urban lifestyle. They might go to the theatre, sitting in one of the lower circles, or read popular literature. They might meet in tea houses or eat at supper clubs.

Clerks are especially suited for mysteries where the horror lies within a corporation or other large institution. When one of the Investigators is a clerk, put books and bureaucratic records into your mystery, in which they can find information.

Clerks might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Searching files or bureaucratic records.
- ▶ Knowing something about popular places of entertainment.
- ▶ Passing among the middle or upper classes without attracting attention.

## **COSTERMONGERS**

Costermongers sell their wares in London's markets and streets, specialising in one product, such as fish, tonics or cloth.

Many sell from a wooden barrow, which they wheel around the streets, following their "round": the regular route along which they sell their goods. These costermongers know London's hidden places: the mews behind gentlemen's houses, where coachmen buy luxuries; the courts and alleys of the poorer neighbourhoods, where people buy bargains; the crowded and loud markets, where shoppers haggle over prices.

Other costermongers sell food and drink, ready to eat: the ham sandwich seller outside a theatre, the fried fish vendor near the docks, the coffee cart owner near the parks. Poorer costermongers, especially the young and old, sell from baskets in

markets. For some, there is a thin and hazy line between selling and begging: take the watercress girl, who buys watercress in bunches before dawn in Farringdon Market, then scrapes a living by selling them all day for four a penny.

All are experts at persuading people to buy. Some use charm, some use pity. Some illuminate their stalls brightly. Others shout loudly: many costermongers have hoarse voices from years of selling.

Not all costermongers are honest. Some mix sweet apples with sour ones or living fish with dead. Some boil their oranges to make them bigger: these fruit have little taste and go black within a day. Even an honest fishmonger knows that herrings look fresher when sprayed with water and lit by candlelight.

Costermongers might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Selling something.
- ▶ Knowing about the thing they sell.
- ▶ Knowing about the locations on their round.

## **FACTORY WORKERS**

London's factories are multiplying rapidly. They stand several storeys high, powered by steam, belching smoke, producing silk in Spitalfields, textiles in King's Cross and matches in Bow.

For the employees, the work is always dangerous and often unhealthy: workers in textile factories, for example, are constantly wet, sprayed by the water that soaks the cotton. Hours are long and work is seasonal: in winter, workers often find themselves without jobs.

Women, in particular, fight constantly for work. When heavier machinery is introduced, requiring greater physical force, factory foremen often prefer male employees. Trade unions frequently close ranks to exclude women.

For many, though, factory work is modern and exciting. Workers receive good wages and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow workers. Many enjoy their independence, spending their earnings on trinkets and city life.

When an Investigator is a factory worker, put factories or machinery in your mystery. Try a mystery set in a factory, in which the workers investigate the factory owners and the horror at the heart of what they do.

Factory workers might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Understanding the workings of a factory.
- ▶ Understanding what machinery does.
- ▶ Working machinery.

## FARM WORKERS

Farm workers learned their trade outside London. Some came to the city to sell their goods, others for a new life.

Most grew up on a family farm. If the farm grew vegetables, such as potatoes and turnips, the workers ploughed, planted and harvested. If the farm contained a dairy, they milked cows and made cheese and butter.

Farm workers understand nature, weather and the changing of seasons. Their honesty, strength and reputation for hard work makes them popular with employers in London: indeed, farm girls have a reputation of being the best domestic servants.

Farm workers are especially suited for mysteries set in the countryside, especially, of course, those that include a farm. When they take part in mysteries in London, it helps if they encounter things they might encounter in the countryside, such as crops, animals or bad weather.

Farm workers might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Understanding the weather.
- ▶ Knowing about the workings of a farm.
- ▶ Examining agricultural crops.

## HOUSEWIVES

Housewives keep houses running, whether that house is a farmhouse, townhouse or slum dwelling.

Keeping house is hard work. Housewives shop, clean and launder. They lift heavy loads, cook food and economise so that the money lasts until the end of the week. They know their house and their

neighbourhood better than anyone: they know the smells, the sounds and the location of everything. They especially know if something is wrong.

Many housewives are mothers: they nurse babies, raise children and try to instil values into young people as they grow. These Investigators understand children better than anyone else.

On top of this, many housewives support themselves by working from home. Some take in laundry or mend clothes, while others make toys, pegs or trinkets (see also “Outworkers” on page 69).

Mysteries with housewives work especially well if they are located in the housewife’s neighbourhood or even their house itself. If they have children, ensure they are threatened by the horror. You can also ensure your mystery contains houses, which are obviously lived in, with laundry, dirt and provisions from which housewives can deduce information about the occupants.

Housewives might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Understanding something about a house’s occupants, by looking around the house.
- ▶ Knowing the layout of their local neighbourhood.
- ▶ Deducing whether their child is lying to them.

## MUDLARKS

Mudlarks wade through the stinking mud of the Thames, searching for anything they can sell. They are young boys, old women and anything in between.

Their work begins when the tide goes out. As the Thames recedes, mudlarks venture into the silt, collecting whatever they find in hats or tin kettles. They wade waist- or chest-deep, risking death if the mud gives way into a sudden hole.

The greatest prize is copper, especially copper nails dropped by sailors repairing boats. Iron, brass and other metals are equally prized, as are rope, bones and cloth. Chips of wood or coal are valuable, too: a mudlark collects these until they have enough to sell. When the tide comes in, the mudlarks’ work finishes, and they sell what have gathered to rag-and-bone collectors, shopkeepers, pawnbrokers or whoever else will buy.

Mudlarks are often drawn into mysteries when they find something peculiar in the mud. They are especially suited for mysteries involving the Thames: when there is a Mudlark in the game, put your locations near the river.

Mudlarks might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Finding something buried in the river mud.
- ▶ Finding a safe path through the river.
- ▶ Understanding something about the river.

## NURSES

Nurses care for the sick, providing compassion, care and basic remedies. At a time when medicine has few answers, nursing is the best hope for the injured and sick.

Most nurses work in the great London hospitals, especially St Thomas's, Guys or the Royal Free. They dispense tea, sympathy and prescriptions of bedrest. Perhaps most importantly, in a world where medicine barely understands the benefits of sanitation, they clean.

Nurses often find their work rewarding, but their lives are constrained. They live within the hospital, where they are provided with meals and rooms. They have little freedom, being closely supervised at all times.

If one of the Investigators is a nurse, put an injured or diseased person in your mystery. Nurses are particularly suited to mysteries involving diseases, deformities or other peculiarities of the human body.

Nurses might roll their Occupation Die when:

- ▶ Examining someone with a medical condition.
- ▶ Trying to keep a patient calm.
- ▶ Administering medical aid.

## OUTWORKERS

Many Londoners take their work home. In the streets, you often pass people carrying stacks of hats to re-silk, bundles of umbrellas to re-cover or baskets to repair. These are London's outworkers.

Laundry is the most common kind of outwork. Women support themselves by taking in washing

and doing simple repairs, such as mending tears or sewing on buttons. Needlework is also popular: clothesmakers often outsource tasks to women who work from home.

Some outworkers are makers and menders. They might make wooden spoons, toasting forks or clothes pegs, selling to whoever will buy. They might mend china, glass or kettles. Some are exceptionally skilled, such as printers, furniture-makers and toymakers.

Yet outwork is rarely lucrative. Most outworkers find another way to support themselves, whether legal (selling pies from their window) or less so (selling their body).

Since outworkers collect from all over London, they know London's geography better than most. They are skilled at communicating with the middle- and upper-classes without causing offence.

If you have an outworker in your mystery, give them the chance to travel about London, setting different scenes in disparate parts of the city.

Try incorporating things connected to the Outworker's trade: for example, if an Investigator is an outworker who does needlework, let them get information from the state of someone's clothes.

Outworkers might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Finding their way about an area of London they have visited.
- ▶ Getting information related to their particular trade: for example, working out someone's social status from their hat.

## PERFORMERS

Performers put on shows in London's streets and fairs, making money by drawing crowds. Some have a skill, some look unusual, while others have something to display.

Skilled performers are often musicians, playing an unusual instrument such as bagpipes, harp or dulcimer. Others sing, especially psalms or popular ballads. Still others dance. Then there are performers with specific skills: those who eat fire, put on puppet shows or train a bear to perform tricks.

There are performers with an unusual appearance: giants, albinos, dwarfs and people with tattoos. In a city which loves exceptional people, these performers can make an excellent living, even passing into high society as their fame grows.

Other performers exhibit something to draw crowds, such as a peep show, wax work or flea circus. Victorians especially loved science, making telescopes, microscopes and other technological marvels especially popular.

When one of the Investigators is a performer, try putting something relevant to their act in the mystery. For example, if an Investigator is a glass-blower, put a piece of peculiar glassware in the story, which they can investigate to get information. If an Investigator owns a microscope, put a microscopic clue in the mystery. If they have a dog, ensure there are places only a dog can go.

Performers might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Drawing the attention of a crowd.
- ▶ Using their particular skill, such as dancing, glass-blowing or operating their scientific instrument.

## PICKPOCKET

Pickpockets steal wallets, handkerchiefs, watches and anything else they can get, before selling them onwards.

Pickpockets, like burglars, possess specialist skills. Some silently cut trouser pockets with a knife, then rifle its contents. Some cut watch chains or use hooks to steal bags. Pickpockets are adept at distractions: when pickpockets work in gangs, one may cause a disturbance, while the others steal.

After the crime, pickpockets sell their stolen goods, often to pawnbrokers or patrons of coffee houses. They may sell some items to shopkeepers: for example, silk handkerchiefs might be sold to less scrupulous tailors.

As pickpockets gain experience, they graduate to more expensive items. A young pickpocket may begin by snatching from market stalls and grabbing handkerchiefs, progress to stealing watches and scarf pins, then finally take gentlemen's wallets.

Pickpockets often live together in a lodging house. They may be trained by an experienced thief, in extensive and technical lessons. They might learn to steal handkerchiefs from their trainer, who walks around with one in his pocket. Or a coat may be hung with a bell attached, from which boys must steal without making a sound.

When an Investigator is a pickpocket, provide opportunities for them to use their skills: that is, put interesting things in other people's pockets for them to retrieve.

Pickpockets might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Causing a distraction.
- ▶ Spotting a potential mark.
- ▶ Picking pockets.

For more on pickpockets and their methods, see "The Thieves of London" on page 80.

## PICKERS

Pickers make their living by finding things in London's streets. Some specialise in a particular item, while others take whatever they can find.

There is much to discover. Some collect cigar stubs, which they combine until they have enough tobacco to sell. Some collect dog excrement, called "pure", which they sell in buckets to leatherworkers. Others, known as "rag and bone men", explore backstreets with a bag and stick, poking through dust piles to find metal, bones and cloth.

Few pickers have a home. Instead, they roam London's streets endlessly, rising early to follow a known route. At the end of the day, they sort what they have found into piles, which they take to shopkeepers, pawnbrokers and other buyers.

When you have a picker in your game, let them find information by discovering things in the streets. If you can, set the mystery in streets they know well.

Pickers might roll the Occupation Die when:

- ▶ Searching London's back streets for something.
- ▶ Examining an item with which they are familiar.
- ▶ Exploring an area they know well.

## PROSTITUTES

London is home to many prostitutes, young and old, high and low class, some men but lots of women. Some choose their profession, while others find it is the only work available.

Some prostitutes work in brothels, which range from respectable-looking houses to run-down shacks, giving a share of their earnings to the owner. These prostitutes benefit from the protection of the house, including thugs employed to keep order, but have little freedom.

Others ply their trade in parks, streets and coffee houses. The Haymarket is a notorious street for prostitution and London's parks become lively centres of solicitation as night approaches. These ladies wear the finest dresses they can afford, although the dark makes this easier, making a shabby, lacy garment look rich.

Some prostitutes even make a good living, especially those who romance rich men or members of the aristocracy. These men may set the prostitute up as their mistress, with a house or apartment, and jewellery, carriages and other luxuries. These women have much freedom in their choice of men. One day, they may even marry.

Prostitutes are sometimes coerced into their work. Country girls tell tales of visiting London, often at the invitation of a man, then being seduced in a brothel under the influence of alcohol.

Afterwards, they are given clothes and asked to sign papers of dubious legality. If these prostitutes try to leave the brothel, they are followed and even arrested, on the grounds they are stealing the clothes they were given.

When one of the Investigators is a prostitute, try putting a brothel or a fellow prostitute in the mystery.

Prostitutes might roll the Occupation Die when:

- ▶ Getting information from another prostitute.
- ▶ Remembering a story they heard once from a client.
- ▶ Knowing the workings of a brothel.

## SERVANTS

Servants work in other people's homes, cleaning, cooking and running the household. They work hard, rising before dawn and retiring late at night.

Most work for middle-class families in small townhouses. Often, they are the only servant (a "maid of all work"), performing all household tasks: blacking grates, making fires, cleaning boots, making beds, washing windows, sweeping floors and cooking and serving meals. If a visitor calls, they change into a smarter uniform to answer the door. Such servants have a solitary life, rarely leaving the house.

Others work in country houses, as part of the staff that serves an aristocratic family. These servants work within a strict hierarchy: the scullery maid below the housemaid, the housemaid below the chambermaid and the housekeeper highest of all.

For their work, servants receive food and a small wage. They have little time off and are not allowed to marry: admittedly, this situation is welcome to some women, since it relieves them of the need to find a husband to support them. Especially in townhouses, servants are often in sight or sound of their employer. These servants are closely watched and their habits scrutinised: for example, spending money on luxuries is often met with disapproval.

To involve servants in a mystery, put middle- or upper-class houses into it, together with staff from whom the Investigators can get information. Try setting a mystery entirely in a country house, with servants as the Investigators.

Servants might roll the Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Getting information from other servants.
- ▶ Passing among servants without being noticed.
- ▶ Understanding something about how a house works: for example, who would serve dinner.

## SHOPGIRLS

Shopgirls work in London's new and glamorous department stores. Most are educated young women, with genteel accents, good grammar and manners to please the customers they serve.

Like clerks, shopgirls must balance low income with the need to fit into high-class surroundings. Most shop girls live in the store, sleeping in dormitories. On their small wage, they must clothe and groom themselves to impress their customers.

For those that achieve this balance, the bright lights of London are there to enjoy. They may visit restaurants, cafes and the theatre. Some dream of meeting a husband, while others plan to make it on their own.

To tailor a mystery to a shopgirl, try including clothes, perfume or other things the shopgirl can investigate. Try setting a mystery within a department store.

Shopgirls might roll the Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Recognising a perfume, understanding something about clothes or otherwise using knowledge of the things they sell.
- ▶ Selling something to a middle- or upper-class customer.
- ▶ Knowing how a department store works.

## TEACHERS

Teachers educate children, working at an elementary school (for younger children) or grammar school (for older children).

Most have never left school. They come from the lower middle-classes: their parents might be clerks, salespeople or shopkeepers. When they attended school as pupils, they became an unofficial apprentice to their teacher, before attending a religious teacher training college.

Teachers' days are long, with the school day beginning at nine in the morning and ending at half-past four. Afterwards, they have paperwork and other duties to perform. Most live cheaply, perhaps in lodgings or with their parents.

Teachers are experts at understanding children, so when one of the Investigators is a teacher, it is best if the mystery features a child.

Teachers might roll the Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Questioning a child to get information.
- ▶ Controlling a group of children.
- ▶ Understanding the workings of a school.

## TOSHERS

Toshers risk their lives in the crumbling netherworld of the sewers. Like Pickers, they make their living from the lost, discarded and dropped items of London.

Toshers enter the sewers at huge brick outlets, where the effluent discharges into the river. Once inside, the sewers are disorientating and twisting, constantly crossing each other. Many passageways are blocked.

The work is dangerous. Brickwork may crumble when disturbed, burying the tosher. A fall could kill, trap or disable them. A tide, flood or sudden discharge could drown the tosher.

The tool of the tosher's trade is a long pole. With this, they can rake through mud, break apart detritus and push aside barriers. It can even save the tosher's life: if a tosher suddenly sinks into an unexpected hole, their pole may be the only thing to stop their descent. Along with the pole, toshers carry small lamps, which they dim when passing beneath street grates, to avoid attracting attention.

For those that survive, the rewards are large. Copper and iron are plentiful, stuck in indentations and cracks in brickwork. Since detritus collects together, any find is likely to be large: toshers may find great collections of metal, bones and other valuables. Toshers tell tales of rusted masses of nails, built up over years, valuable beyond belief but stuck in place.

To adapt a mystery for a tosher, put part of it in a sewer. This is especially easy if your mystery ends underground: simply ensure the final location is accessed via the sewers.

Remember that sewers make excellent conduits, especially between inaccessible, forbidden and forgotten areas. Use the tosher's skills in navigating sewers to help the Investigators access new places.

Toshers might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Finding a way through London's sewers.
- ▶ Knowing whether something they find in a sewer is valuable.
- ▶ Discovering something useful in the sewers.



# A GUIDE TO LONDON

To understand the geography of London, you must understand what divides it. London is divided North to South by the river Thames, with the dense streets of North London holding most locations of importance. And it is divided West to East by money: the rich live to the West, the poor to the East.

Mysteries often start in London's East End, where many Investigators live. There, luckier Investigators might live in rented rooms, while poorer Investigators rent beds in lodging houses. Many live in twisting mazes of alleys and courts called rookeries.

Here too are the docks, where the world's goods arrive for London to consume. They are surrounded by shops and workshops, including tanners, silkworkers and blacksmiths. There are also pubs, theatres and other places of entertainment.

From there, most mysteries take the Investigators westwards. West of the docks and rookeries is the most ancient part of London, known as the City. Here are London's great banks, in monolithic stone buildings among winding streets.

Further west is Covent Garden, one of London's biggest and busiest markets, selling fruit and vegetables. Then comes Leicester Square, a tawdry place full of cheap amusements, then Trafalgar Square, a newly-built monument to British victories.

Next comes the home of British government, Westminster, which in 1851 is curiously derelict. 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's official residence, is crumbling and rat-infested, while most other houses in Downing Street have been demolished. The Houses of Parliament are being rebuilt in Gothic splendour following a fire, although the old scorched buildings still stand.

Further west, London becomes richer. Here are the great squares, including Berkeley, Belgrave and Grosvenor Square. Each is surrounded by white mansions, where the aristocracy and others with money live. Behind the mansions are cobbled

alleys and courtyards, through which servants reach the backs of the houses. This area also holds many of London's great parks, including Green Park, St James Park and the huge Hyde Park, site of the Great Exhibition.

Here, in the richest part of London, is where Investigators are likely to find the horror.

## THE ROOKERIES

Rookeries are slums, inhabited by thieves, prostitutes and other poor Londoners. They are dirty, overcrowded and noisy, but to many, they are home.

Finding your way through a rookery takes skill. You must navigate a writhing mass of alleys and courtyards, along passageways that pass through basements, up stairways and across rooftops. To reach your destination, you may need to climb, duck or squeeze between buildings.

Shops line the streets. There are bakers' shops with illuminated fronts, selling fat loaves and buns. There are stores selling old clothes and shoes. Costermongers wheel barrows through the streets, while housewives sell pies, pasties and sandwiches from their windows.

And the streets are full of people. Some lean against walls and smoke pipes. Some sit outside houses, talking with neighbours. Crowds form around doorways and corners to meet and talk, while children play in dust heaps.

Although a rookery's residents are poor, they often take pride in their houses. On entering a well-kept house, you might find an airy living room, warmed by a coke fire, with crockery displayed on a dresser. Over the fire might hang a saucepan for cooking or a boiler for making tea, with candles or gas lamps for light.

Upstairs, there would be small rooms, each containing a flock bed, stuffed with scraps of wool or cotton. There are blinds at the window, clothes kept in baskets and jugs of water for washing.

In less well-kept houses, wallpaper peels from the wall, roofs bulge with water and windows are broken. Cracks in the wall are stuffed with rags. In

these houses, chimneys are often blocked, so that heating the room fills it with smoke.

People are often neighbourly and compassionate. When someone is dying, neighbours visit them. When someone is in financial trouble, a purse is passed around friends, who each contribute a penny. People in rookeries take care of each other.

Rookeries are friendly neighbourhoods to those that live there. To those that do not, especially of the middle classes, rookeries are suspicious, confusing and dangerous, with the St Giles and Old Nichol rookeries being particularly notorious.

## ENTERTAINMENT

London is filled with cheap entertainment, with pubs, theatres and other diversions competing for attention. All make excellent locations for a mystery.

For the price of a beer, the pub provides conversation, warmth and merriment. In the thick tobacco smoke, all types of person mingle, with thieves, prostitutes and thugs alongside ordinary working folk. Market traders are here, too, talking about the day's trade.

Pub games are popular. In "shove ha'penny", players throw halfpennies against a wall, winning if the coins fall all heads-up or all tails-up. In "skittles", players roll a ball and win if they knock wooden pins down. Card games such as cribbage and whist are popular, often played with stained cards for a bet of money or beer.

And all these games are popular with conmen. Card sharks fix the deck; regulars collude to fleece newcomers; and skilled ha'penny players throw coins so they land the right way up.

Bloodier games are even more popular. For a penny, drinkers can rent boxing gloves from behind the bar: fighters play to a bloody nose, with the loser buying the winner beer. Pubs may have dog pits in the back yard, at which drinkers bet on fights between dogs and rats.

When not in the pub, Londoners love to dance. For two pence, Londoners can attend a "tuppenny hop", dancing the hornpipe, jig or polka to a fiddle or harp, late into the night. Novelty dances are

especially popular: for example, in a "pipe dance", tobacco pipes are laid along the floor, between which dancers tiptoe, trying not to break them.

And then there is the theatre. For three pence, Londoners can join the crowd at the Royal Victorian Theatre ("The Vic"). Watching from an upstairs gallery, the crowd participates noisily, shouting at actors, joining in songs and throwing nuts and orange peel.

At theatres, dances and comic songs are popular, with audience favourites often being repeated. For those hungry after the show, traders sell ham sandwiches, pig trotters and porter outside the theatre.

Those who cannot afford the Vic might pay a penny to see theatre in a pub. These homespun productions consist of several short entertainments, which often include patriotic songs and tales of murder and tragedy.

Parks are even more popular. Being free, they fill quickly with those who cannot afford to go elsewhere. By day, they are places to sit, relax and watch. By night, they are prime locations for romantic — and less romantic — liaisons.

For those who can spare a few pennies, the spectacular pleasure gardens of Vauxhall and Cremorne contain many diversions: ponds with imitation Greek statues, lit by gas; aerial spectacles, such as fireworks and balloon ascents; and the chance to meet a partner or prostitute while promenading among the trees.

Finally, Londoners often make their own entertainment. Rat killing is a common pastime: rats are turned out of a stable or yard, then chased by dogs. Discussion groups and political assemblies meet in back rooms of pubs.

But the most popular free pastime is fighting. It often starts with an argument, around which forms a ring of spectators, who chant for a fight. For the young, beating policemen is common sport: they wait in a dark alley for a policeman to pass, throw a stone, then, when he comes to investigate, leap on him.

## MARKETS

On entering one of London's markets, the noise and light hits you. Market sellers shout their wares, trying to be heard above each other: some traders hire extra men to shout for them. Housewives bargain for meat and vegetables. The market stalls are brightly lit, especially in the evening: grease lamps hang above them; fires glow from stoves; candles burn inside huge turnips and swedes.

The market stalls themselves are varied and colourful. On one, you might see a shining pile of tin saucepans. On another, red handkerchiefs clash with blue shirts. On the greengrocer's stall, there are red apples, yellow onions and purple cabbages. On the butcher's stall, meat glistens in bloody piles. At the cutler's stall, knives glint in the sun. All this is accompanied by a barrage of smells: oranges, walnuts, onions, the bitter odour of herbal remedies.

All kinds of traders come here. Farmers' boys bring carts, heaped with greens. Old women squat beside baskets of potatoes. Young flower girls thread through the crowds, selling posies of violets. If any Investigators make their living by selling, they probably come to a market to do so.

There are markets throughout London, each focussing on particular goods. Covent Garden specialises in fruit and vegetables. Smithfield specialises in meat. Then there are smaller local markets, and beyond those, a myriad of roadside stalls and street sellers. Wherever you go in London, someone is buying and someone is selling.

## WESTMINSTER

Further west is Westminster, a tiny block of grand buildings, from which Britain and its Empire is governed.

Here is how the government of Victorian Britain works. Parliament consists of two legislative chambers: the House of Lords, comprised of aristocrats, bishops and judges; and the House of Commons, comprised of representatives from across Britain, elected by men who own land. These representatives of the two Houses, known as Members of Parliament, fall mostly into two

parties, the conservative Tories and the slightly-less-conservative Whigs.

From this collection of men — and they are all men, even if they are not gentlemen — the monarch, Queen Victoria, chooses a Prime Minister. She cannot, in practice, choose whoever she wants: she requires someone with enough allies to pass legislation, for which only a few candidates fit the bill.

As such, Victorian Prime Ministers are largely undistinguished. In 1851, the Prime Minister is Lord Russell: if you are wondering why you haven't heard of him, it is because, like other Victorian Prime Ministers, he is forgettable.

Whoever the Prime Minister is, he leads the Government and appoints Ministers, each with a particular area of responsibility. These Ministers are supported by the Civil Service, an unelected, apolitical institution which remains unchanged between Prime Ministers and governments.

All this happens around Parliament Square, a maddening tangle of traffic and pedestrians. On the west side is the imposing Westminster Abbey. On the south side, the new Houses of Parliament are being constructed, with a Gothic clock tower overlooking the Thames. The old, burned-out building also remains: in the less-damaged parts, the Members of Parliament continue their business.

Heading east from Parliament Square is Whitehall. Here are the grand buildings of the Civil Service: the Treasury, which administers finances; the Colonial Office, which deals with the Empire; the Foreign Office, which deals with the rest of the world.

On the left is Downing Street, a narrow, dark road containing the Prime Minister's official home and office, currently rat-infested and crumbling. At the end of Whitehall is Trafalgar Square, a newly-built memorial where the war hero Admiral Nelson stands atop a column.

Yet, in an important sense, all this grandeur is an illusion. For, in reality, the business of government is not done here, but in the houses, clubs and other haunts of the aristocracy.

## THE SQUARES

Towards the west of London, the crowd subsides and an eerie hush pervades. This is where the richest, most powerful Londoners live.

Here are wide streets, walled gardens and white mansions. There are few signs of life: an elderly lady climbing into a waiting carriage, a powdered butler on a doorstep, horses riding through the streets. Mostly, however, the rich live their lives behind the closed doors of their great houses.

What are those lives like? There are great balls, with attendees in silks and diamonds. There are opulent dinners, served on silver and gold plate. The guests are aristocrats and perhaps royalty, although not the unsociable Queen Victoria, nor her unpopular husband Prince Albert (although his popularity soared after the Great Exhibition, see below). But a minor royal, a cousin or niece of the Queen, might come.

And then there is business. For the aristocracy, this is conducted in gentlemen's clubs around London's parks, such as The Reform, the Travellers and the Athenaeum. On the outside, these clubs are discreet, only a brass plaque announcing their presence. Inside, they are luxurious, with statues, portraits and extensive libraries. While Parliament is under repair, much government business is conducted here.

This, then, is where London's power lies. Here are the rich, here is the aristocracy, here is where Britain and the Empire are governed.

## TRAVEL AND LIGHT

If the Investigators started walking from the East End in the morning, they might arrive at Hyde Park by evening. This is because the streets are crammed, with pedestrians, coaches, horses, bicycles, omnibuses, carts pulled by donkeys, farmers driving cattle to market and many more, sharing the road in a chaotic swarm.

Similarly, the buildings of central London are chaotically jammed together. Walking down a single street, the Investigators might pass a dairy, an abattoir, a church and several pubs, in close proximity. This means that milkmaids with

pails of milk, animals driven to slaughter, pious churchgoers and raucous drinkers all jostle past each other in the street.

By evening, the city is mostly dark. Flickering, sooty oil lamps light the streets, with major bridges and thoroughfares lit with astonishing brightness by modern gas lamps. Beyond these streets are unlit alleys and courtyards, black and threatening. Blazing in the darkness are the lights of commercial premises, especially pubs, to welcome customers.

Other than walking, how might the Investigators travel? For a penny, they might take the omnibus: a horse-drawn carriage, with passengers crammed both inside and on the roof. It is a favourite haunt of pickpockets.

Or they might travel along the river. Investigators could hire a waterman in his rowboat or join middle-class commuters on the steamers. These steamers were not always safe. Sometimes, they pulled away from the bank suddenly, dropping boarding passengers to their deaths in the filthy water. Sometimes, as the pilot tried to wring extra speed from the ship, the boiler would explode, destroying the ship and killing many passengers.

Richer Investigators might take a coach. In London and beyond, roads are lined with services for coaches, including coach houses, where travellers can stop for the night, and pubs, where owner and driver can drink in separate bars. Most bridges have a pub beside them, where the coach owner waits while his driver weaves through the crowd. Roads are lined with turnpikes and toll-booths to extract money from road-users.

If Investigators travel outside London, they might take the train. In 1851, railway mania is at its height, with new stations constantly being built. Fenchurch Street and Waterloo stations have just opened, for those travelling east and south respectively. For those travelling north, Euston and Kings Cross are under construction.

Train passengers can relax in the cushioned carriages of First Class, sit on the hard benches of Second Class or stand like cattle in the box-like carts of Third Class, open to wind and rain. Wherever you sit or stand, train travel is dirty

and sooty, with steam, grease and coal smoke everywhere. Yet it is also affordable. Indeed, by Parliamentary decree, cheap trains ferry workers into London first thing in the morning, at a cost of a penny per passenger.

## COMMUNICATIONS

In Victorian London, letters were the best way to communicate. There were several postal deliveries a day, each for the price of a penny stamp. For many, letter-writing was not just a convenience, but a hobby.

Newspapers were also popular, ranging from the upmarket Times to the popular Weekly Dispatch, with a range of specialist and humorous magazines in between. Those who could not afford their own copy could read one — or have it read to them — in a coffee house, for the price of a drink.

Books, too, were popular, with booksellers on major streets and at railway stations. Ballad-sellers were also a familiar sight, selling popular songs on flimsy sheets for a penny.

Finally, there was the telegraph. This technological marvel, although not yet in common use, sent electric messages instantly over long distances. It was one of many wonders at the Great Exhibition (see page 79).

## POLICE, FIRE AND HEALTH

In 1851, London has a new, small police force. It is well-regarded, but not always in control. Police-baiting is popular sport for children and adults alike. When criminals are caught by a policeman, they often fight back and win.

There is also a fire brigade, which employs watchmen to stand on rooftops. If they spot a fire, a fire engine is despatched through the crowded streets. When it arrives at the burning building, bystanders are engaged for a few pennies to work the engine. All this activity stops fires spreading, but does not stop them destroying property and killing people.

For the sick, there are doctors, hospitals and nurses. Victorian medicine focusses on relief and recovery, rather than cure. For any malady,

doctors and nurses commonly prescribe bedrest and nourishing food.

Nevertheless, there are medical innovations. The most important is sanitation: nurses and doctors are beginning to recognise the importance of cleanliness, especially washing hands regularly. There is also pain relief, especially from laudanum, a milky-white opium drink often given to pacify children.

Diseases flourish, especially pneumonia, diphtheria, smallpox, cholera and consumption (tuberculosis), and epidemics are common. They are often blamed on “miasma theory”, a widely-believed idea that “bad air” causes disease. In a city where the Thames stank of sewage, it was an understandable assumption. Once contracted, diseases are often fatal.

The poor lead short lives, with many children not surviving to adulthood. This is partly because of lack of medicines, but also because of poor public health. Water is often polluted, whether it comes from pumps, wells or (in better homes) is piped directly into homes. Nutrition is poor, with many Londoners starving or filling themselves with poor-quality bread.

One practical effect of this is that the poor are physically shorter than the upper and middle classes. In mysteries, Investigators will discover that the aristocracy literally looks down on them.

## MONEY

Three coins matter in Victorian London: the penny, the shilling and the pound, made of copper, silver and gold respectively. Twelve pennies make a shilling, twenty shillings make a pound.

Alongside those three coins, there is a bewildering array of others. The smallest is a farthing (a quarter of a penny), followed by a half-penny (pronounced “hay-penny”). Then comes the penny, followed by a silver three-penny (a “thrupenny bit”) and a sixpence (“tanner”). After that is the shilling (known as a “bob”), the florin (two shillings), the half-crown (2s 6d) and the crown (5s). The gold pound coin is a “sovereign” and, although it isn’t a coin, a guinea is one pound and one shilling, with higher prices often being quoted

in guineas. For higher denominations, starting with £5, there were large banknotes from the Bank of England.

Pounds, shillings and pence were denoted '£', 's' and 'd'. Hence, prices were written "£1 2s", "1s 1d" and "½d". Alternatively, a slash might separate shillings and pence: "1/1".

In practice, Investigators deal mostly in pennies. When you play, assume that one penny buys a cheap version of anything essential: a meal (either from a street stall or to cook), a cold bath in the public baths, a piece of string, a stamp for a letter. Two or three pennies buys most other basics: a night's lodging, a night's entertainment, a ride on an omnibus or steamer, a loaf of bread.

Poor Investigators, such as mudlarks and outworkers, make about sixpence a day. Most Investigators, such as costermongers and nurses, make one or two shillings a day. Any Investigators who are heading towards the middle classes, such as clerks and shopgirls, might make nearly a pound a week. Additionally, poorer Investigators might receive money from the parish or a charity, amounting to 1-3 shillings per week.

With all that said, don't worry about exact amounts of money and don't keep track of how much money Investigators have. Assume that Investigators have a few pennies, enough to pay for basic things. Skilled investigators, such as nurses and clerks, may have the occasional sixpence or shilling to spare. Anything higher is beyond their reach.

## THE RIVER

Old Father Thames, as the river is affectionately called, is loved and feared. It is, after all, beautiful and deadly.

Every imaginable waste pours into the river: soot from factories, animal remains from abattoirs, faeces from sewers, ooze from graveyards. All this makes the water dark, stinking and slimy. When the surface is disturbed, foul gases bubble up. As the river flows, it leaves black deposits on its banks, sometimes several feet deep.

There are many stories about the Thames. Huge animals are rumoured to live in its depths. Sailors

## SOME PRICES

- 1/2d: Slice of pineapple.
- 1d: A penny gaff (an evening of cheap theatre) in the back room of a pub.
- 1d: Send a letter.
- 1d: Ride on a steamer.
- 1d: A sparrow to play with, a string tied to its leg.
- 1d: Two oranges, half pint of nuts, a plate of sprats or a pint of plums.
- 1d: Hire boxing gloves at a pub.
- 1d: A pair of soles (fish).
- 1d: A public bath (cold).
- 2d: Attend a tuppenny hop.
- 2d: A pound of ripe cherries.
- 2d: A public bath (warm).
- 2d: A night in a bed in a cheap lodging house.
- 2d: Mackerel, six for a shilling.
- 2d: A pound of cod.
- 3d: Attend a performance at the Threepenny Gallery of the Vic.
- 3d: A threepenny newspaper.
- 3d: Tobacco.
- 3-6d: A ride on the omnibus.
- 4d: Clean bedding in a lodging house per night.
- 6d: A pound of salmon.
- 6d: Fuel, per week.
- 6d: A loaf of best wheaten bread.
- 6d: A night at the music-hall.
- 1s: Three pounds of live eels.
- 1s: Entrance into the pleasure gardens at Vauxhall or Cremorne.
- 1-3s: A week's supply of meat, coffee, vegetables.
- 4s: A week's supply of bread.
- 1-3s per week: A standard grant for a poor person "on the parish".
- 4s: Rent rooms per week.
- 5s: Entry into the Great Exhibition.
- 3d an hour: Work at the docks.
- 7s/week: Crossing-sweepers salary, seasonal.
- 6-8s/week: A trader's earnings.
- 9s/ week: A milkmaid's earnings.
- £1/ week: A food seller's earnings.
- £1 10s/week: A carpenter's earnings.
- £2/week: A tosher's earnings.
- £1: A singing nightingale.
- £1-2: A labourer's weekly salary.
- £1-3: A donkey.
- 3 guineas: A season ticket to the Great Exhibition.

take casks of Thames water to sea: it is foul for the first weeks, but, after the sediment settles, it never goes bad. Animal corpses sometimes bob in the river: they return every day with the tide, growing larger, until they sink.

People have tried to clean the Thames. They have poured buckets of lime into it, leaving the river banks seething with dying red worms. For the poor, for whom the river is their only source of water, the Thames is poison.

Floods are especially deadly. When the Thames bursts its banks, a torrent of water races into London's low-lying, poorer areas. The water's weight destroys doors, windows and entire buildings, whose debris becomes part of the onrush.

There is little warning. Sometimes, if they think the Thames will flood, a family member keeps watch: if the river rises, they run home, shouting "The tide, the tide!" Yet, even if they get back in time, they can only grab the children and hope.

Floods leave streets chest-deep in water, houses filled to within inches of the ceiling. When the water recedes, clothing and bedding is foul, slimy and unusable. Fireplaces are sodden, so that victims cannot heat or dry their homes. In the weeks following a flood, furniture warps, wallpaper peels, mould grows and disease, especially bronchitis, spreads.

Sometimes, residents try to fight back. They barricade streets with planks and seal windows with mud and paper. As the water rises, they hope they have done enough: will the defences hold or suddenly burst?

There is, in fact, a reason why floods afflict Victorian London. It is profit. Mill owners like to keep the water high, since it keeps their mills running longer, and built locks and weirs to do so. The high waters mean that low-lying areas flood regularly.

## THE DOCKS

Looking east from the Tower of London, the docks seem endless. Ships are packed together, bow to stern, with smaller boats weaving between them.

The docks are new. Only fifty years ago, ships unloaded their cargo on to barges, one crate at a time, which then took the goods ashore. Unloading a ship could take a month, with much lost to thieves and corrupt officials. In these new docks, unloading takes only a day, as steam-powered and hydraulic cranes hoist cargo upwards from the ships, then swing it to the shore.

The docks are a riot of colour: white flour, black coal, brown tobacco, red wine, the deep blue of indigo dye. The goods come from all over the Empire: feathers, mahogany, spices, tea, corn, timber, marble, wool, with each dock specialising in particular items. The people are equally diverse: sailors, labourers, porters with carts, clerks with pens and books, Customs officials and newly-arrived emigrants, all jostling with each other, carrying barrels, bushels and baskets.

Once the crates are ashore, vans take them to warehouses, where they are unpacked and checked for damage under the gaze of Customs officers. The goods then await the inspection of brokers, who sell the goods onwards.

Around the warehouses are other buildings. There are Customs offices and storage sheds. There are shopfronts with carpenters, wheelwrights, chain-sellers, painters and blacksmiths. And, of course, there are taverns.

## THE GREAT EXHIBITION

One event dominated London in 1851: the Great Exhibition. It is a perfect setting for many mysteries.

Organised by Prince Albert, the Queen's husband, the Great Exhibition was designed as an international celebration of art, technology and other marvels, in which Britain's exhibits would lead the way. It was intended to showcase Britain's greatness. Nobody expected it to work.

London's Hyde Park was chosen as the venue. Since the park's trees could not be disturbed, a great glass palace was built to enclose them and host the Exhibition.

When the Investigators visit, the Great Exhibition is extraordinary. The glass structure is draped in

red, white and blue, the colours of Britain's flag. Stalls sell tea and lemonade to crowds. At the centre, a 27-foot fountain made of pink crystal shoots water into the air. Statues line the halls, including — as a commentary on American affairs — an intricately carved Greek slave girl, her face's contours perfectly visible under a veil.

The exhibits are more extraordinary still. There is cutting-edge technology: the telegraph, the railway, photography and a working model of Liverpool's new docks. The United States pavilion displays a Colt revolver, agricultural equipment and an artificial leg. France displays textiles, china and tapestry, while the Indian pavilion shows a golden throne, a stuffed elephant and the astonishing Koh-i-Noor diamond, suspended above the exhibition floor.

By the time it ends, there is no doubt that the Great Exhibition has been a success. It has drawn tourists from all around the country, paying five shillings to travel on "Exhibition trains." In all, over six million people visit the Great Exhibition.

## THE THIEVES OF LONDON

Theft is at the heart of Victorian London. Sooner or later, Investigators will meet thieves or use their methods: if, indeed, they are not already thieves themselves.

There are **sneak thieves**, who simply snatch goods and run. Shops and markets are a favourite target, especially those with items displayed in open windows or old women selling fruit from baskets.

Sneak thieves often work together: one causes a distraction, while another snatches the item. Others watch for policemen or trip anyone who tries to pursue the thief. After stealing, the thief passes the stolen goods to an accomplice, and, if caught, will protest their innocence.

Sneak thieves have many tricks. One may throw a cap into a shop, then create chaos as they retrieve it, while an accomplice steals cash from the till. A subtler technique is "star-glazing", in which the thief forces the point of a knife into the edge of a window pane, then twists until cracks spread through the glass. Beforehand, the thief has placed sticking paper over the pane, which they then peel

away, taking the glass with it. They then steal the goods inside, with sweets and tobacco especially popular.

Children make excellent sneak thieves, being fast and hard to catch. So do women, who often escape suspicion: they often steal rolls of cotton or carpet, which they carry away with accomplices. Butchers are another target: a woman may ask a butcher to prepare meat, then, as their back is turned, steal another piece, which they later sell in a poorer part of town.

**Pickpockets** flourish whenever people are close together, especially at markets, on omnibuses and in crowds. They steal wallets, watches and silk handkerchiefs, which they remove unnoticed.

Pickpockets use sophisticated techniques: on an omnibus, a pickpocket may wear a false arm, to suggest they have their hands in their lap, while their real hand picks their neighbour's pocket. They often carry knives, to slash through trouser pockets.

**Burglars** make their living by robbing buildings. There are many ways in. To get in through a window, a burglar might slide a leather strip through a gap to open the catch. Alternatively, they might simply stand on the shoulders of a comrade to reach an unlocked higher window.

To enter through a door, the burglar might use brute force or cut through a padlock. They might even replace the cut padlock with their own padlock, to avoid suspicion from passers-by. Burglars know which doors are likely to be less secure, with back doors and cellar flaps especially vulnerable.

Or they may access the roof, by climbing a waterspout or balancing along the roofs of neighbouring buildings. From there, the burglar might break open an attic window or remove roof tiles to create a hole.

There are subtler ways in. One way is to gain the confidence of a servant. Some burglars pretend to fall in love, then ask where the valuables are. Others conspire with the servant, who, for a cut of the profits, provides impressions of keys in wax blocks.



When robbing a warehouse, the burglar might enter during the day and hide. After dark, they emerge and let accomplices in, with a cart waiting to remove heavy goods. Warehouse porters are notoriously open to bribes.

Once inside a building, the burglar searches silently for valuables. Gold, silver and jewellery are favourites, but clothing is also valuable. The burglar listens at doors, to find whether occupants are asleep. They climb staircases by treading on the outside of the steps, which are less likely to creak.

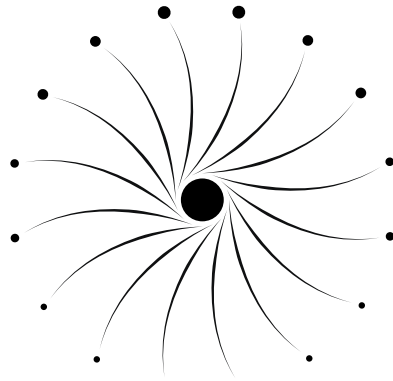
Burglars often use equipment. To muffle footsteps, they may wear India rubber on their feet. To pick locks, they carry skeleton keys. Carpentry equipment is especially useful: a chisel can force a locked drawer, a crowbar can wrench a door open and a hacksaw can cut through doors, partitions or floorboards.

This equipment can be used in ingenious ways. Using a jack, a burglar can force iron bars apart. Using an auger, the burglar can displace a brick in a wall, then use a crowbar to remove the mortar until a hole appears. Using a specially-made cutter, with two knives revolving around a centre bit, a burglar can cut a hole in a wooden shutter or door.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

For more details on London in 1851, I recommend the following sources, which I used while writing everything above:

- ▶ Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, a readable and contemporary account. There are several editions available and I recommend reading more than one.
- ▶ Lee Jackson's *Victorian London* website, <http://www.victorianlondon.org/>, an excellent source that points you towards other texts.
- ▶ Matthew Sweet's *Inventing the Victorians*, a history that digs beneath the popular stereotype of Victorians as stuffy moralists.
- ▶ Lisa Picard's *Victorian London*, which gives detail on what everyday life in London might have been like.
- ▶ Susie Steinbach's *Women in England 1760 - 1914: A Social History*, a scholarly and comprehensive guide, which is especially useful in finding out about women's work.
- ▶ Roy Porter's *Blood and Guts: A Short History of Medicine*, an eye-opening and concise guide to a time when medicine was in its infancy.





# SCREAMS OF THE CHILDREN

A CTHULHU DARK MYSTERY IN LONDON 1851



In Victorian London, a woman's baby is taken by faceless gentlemen. When the Investigators search for the child, their journey takes them from the crowds of the East End to the homes of the aristocracy. What they find is not just a child, but thousands of children, snatched at birth and carefully stored away.

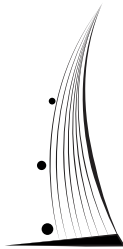
*Screams Of The Children* is a Cthulhu Dark mystery about pregnancy, childbirth and monstrous offspring. It is set in London 1851, where ancient evil hides in the dark and the stink.

# THE HOOK

One night, in an East End lodging house, a former resident returns. She has just given birth, but her baby was forcibly taken by the father. She wants it back.

# THE FINAL HORROR

For centuries, ancient creatures have bred with humans, then taken the children away. Those children are stored beneath the Thames river, silently screaming and waiting to rise.



# THE STORY

At the end of their working day, the Investigators return to the East End lodging house where they all live. There, they find Lily, a well-liked former resident who had left to get married, asleep in her old room.

Lily is weak and bleeding. She has recently given birth, but the husband took the child and turned Lily on to the streets. She wants the child back.

The Investigators head to Pimlico. There, they may visit The Duck and Feathers, a middle-class pub full of rumours about the house nearby where Lily stayed. This house is a brothel and, after talking to the prostitutes who work there, the Investigators find the room where Lily's gentleman kept her as a mistress. The Investigators hear strange tales about Lily's pregnancy, during which the child grew with unnatural speed, and rumours of baby snatching throughout London. (The gentlemen in this mystery are based on the "Deep Ones" on page 54.)

Eventually, the Investigators track Lily's gentleman to the moneyed district of Grosvenor Square. Here, they may visit The Church Of St John the Baptist, where a broken Father Little presides over a twisted religion. The Investigators may read The Book of Life, a book with the power to enforce oaths on the Investigators, and visit Ebba Abendroth, a mother whose baby cannot die.

Finally, they enter The Richard House, the family home of Lily's gentleman. The house itself is empty, but there is a cellar beneath. There, they find stacked cradles and a network of tunnels leading under London. Eventually, the tunnels lead to the Thames, where, from a silt bank, the Investigators see the faces of babies gleaming under the water.

# THE INVESTIGATORS

The Investigators live in a lodging house in London's East End. They are thieves, prostitutes, street-sellers and others of the working or criminal classes. They should mostly be women, although one or two men might fit into the mystery too.

As the players make their Investigators, make sure they have:

- ▶ A relationship to Lily, who used to live in the lodging house until she left to be with her gentleman friend.
- ▶ A connection to children. For example, **they may have children, they may want to have children or perhaps they cannot have children.**

Do this by asking the players questions such as "What is your relationship to Lily?", reminding them to keep the answers positive, and "How does your character feel about children?". You can also simply say "I'd like to give your Investigator some kind of relationship to children. What should that be?".

Here are some example Investigators. Some of the occupations are based on those listed under "Occupations" above, while others are new.

## MAGS

*Occupation: Pickpocket*

Mags taught herself how to steal at an early age, wandering through the parks, colliding with gentlemen and relieving them of their handkerchiefs. When the market for silk deteriorated, she moved on to wallets.

Sometimes, she stares at the white buildings surrounding the parks and wonders who lives there. They must, she thinks, be great people to have earned so much.

Men have proposed to Mags, but she has never felt any attraction in that direction and the idea of having children fills her with a fear that is not quite rational. Indeed, she has always enjoyed female companionship more, especially Lily. When Lily left the lodging house, Mags felt she was throwing her life away for a man.

## ROSE

*Occupation: Costermonger / Flower girl*

Rose sells flowers in the streets surrounding the markets. Early every morning, she goes to Covent Garden Market to buy her flowers. Because she is pretty and girlish, she gets a good deal from the stallholders, but is clever enough not to let them overcharge her. After making the flowers into posies, she sells them to passers-by in the surrounding streets. She looks younger than her fourteen years, which often attracts a sympathetic coin.

In the evenings, she goes back to the lodging house, where she used to enjoy talking to Lily. She thought of Lily as her best friend, respecting her and looking up to her. One day, Rose always thought, she would be like Lily: she would marry a nice gentleman and have children. She wonders where Lily is now.

## FLO

*Occupation: Barmaid*

Flo has worked in the East End all her life, first selling fruit from a barrow, then moving to a market stall. Now, she is a barmaid, minding a tiny pub that serves beer through a hatch to drinkers in the street. She hopes to save enough to buy a coffee stall.

Despite having two husbands, both of whom died, she has never had children. This, if she is honest, is a hole in her life: she has always wanted a daughter. For a long while, she thought of Lily as her daughter and was lonely when she moved on. Nevertheless, she is happy for Lily finding a husband. One day, she thinks, Lily will make a great mother.

## MAEVE

*Occupation: Abortinist*

When Maeve was young, she was a prostitute, but lost that job when she became pregnant. Although she didn't want the baby, she didn't trust anyone to get rid of it. She had the child and tried to bring it up herself, but it died within a year. Following

that, she decided to become someone that young women could turn to with their trouble.

By talking to doctors and learning folk remedies, Maeve learned everything she could about abortion. She earned the trust of prostitutes, gaining a reputation for sympathy and safety. Today, her clients are not just prostitutes, but ordinary young women of the East End.

Once, Maeve helped Lily, when a young officer got her pregnant. Maeve had felt almost maternal towards Lily. She hopes she has found someone better than that young officer.

## ANNE

*Occupation: Prostitute*

Anne grew up on a farm, where she always wanted to see the city lights. One day, a young gentleman offered to take her to London. Once there, she stayed in rented rooms as his mistress. She learned manners, grace and beauty, which, when that relationship ended, ensured a succession of others.

Although Anne currently has no gentleman to take care of her, she expects to find one soon and eventually marry. She envied Lily, who found such a gentleman. In the meantime, Anne spends evenings in the cafes of the West End, plying her trade and hoping to meet someone more permanent.



# ROLLING FOR INFORMATION

Throughout this mystery, when information appears in italics, it's a clue that Investigators might need to roll to discover it. For example, when you read about the Duck and Feathers pub below, you'll read this:

*The house is a brothel:* gentlemen arrive at all hours of the day and night, hiding their faces. No-one in the bar has heard of Lily, but if told her story, they are sympathetic.

This suggests that, when the Investigators ask the pubgoers for information, they might need to roll to discover that the house is a brothel. When the Investigators get the information in italics, they also get anything that follows (which, for ease of reading, is not in italics): so, when they discover that the house is a brothel, they also find that gentleman arrive there hiding their faces.

These italics are only a guide. You can reveal information in italics without a roll, if it seems right: for example, while the Investigators are talking to people in the pub, you might simply reveal that the house is a brothel. You might also ask for a roll for information that isn't in italics.

# ON A 5, ON A 6

When a player rolls a 5 when investigating, the Investigator gets everything they wanted, plus something extra.

Here are some things that might happen on a 5. Use these or invent your own.

- ▶ The Investigators remember stories of unnatural pregnancies in the East End, with babies that grew with unnatural speed.
- ▶ They remember rumours of baby-snatching, in which mothers left their babies outside to breathe the morning air, but found them gone when they returned.

- ▶ They remember the folktale of Gentleman Jack, who takes babies and keeps them in his cellar.
- ▶ They remember newspaper reports of deformed babies being thrown in the river.

When a player rolls a 6 when investigating, their Investigator may glimpse beyond human knowledge. Here are some things that might happen on a 6. Again, use them or invent your own.

- ▶ You see the terror in someone's eyes, as though they have seen something unearthly.
- ▶ You glimpse a monster's face, twisted and alien.
- ▶ You are physically repulsed.
- ▶ You discover a horrific detail of a pregnancy: for example, that it lasted only four months or that the baby came out wrong.

Alternatively, a 6 might make an Investigator aware of one of the Creeping Horrors (see below).

Later in the mystery, a 6 might give a sudden realisation of the final horror:

- ▶ Suddenly, it all makes sense. You can't explain it, but you just know that children are being taken and stored in the river.

Throughout the mystery, you'll find specific suggestions of what might happen when someone rolls a 5 or 6. These are just suggestions: use them, use the ideas above or, as always, invent your own ways to glimpse beyond human knowledge.

## CREEPING HORRORS

There are three Creeping Horrors in this mystery.

- ▶ **The stink of the Thames**, ancient, rotting and repulsive, especially in places where the horror is greatest or something bad has happened.
- ▶ **The way the monsters look**, high-browed and twisted, pale and aquiline. As the Investigators travel west during the mystery, they notice this look in people more and more, until eventually they see traces of it in everyone.
- ▶ **Monstrous children**. When the Investigators meet Lily, they are aware of something repulsive inside her. Later, when they meet other women with unnatural pregnancies, they are repelled too.

Try to introduce these Creeping Horrors subtly near the start of the mystery. Then, as the mystery goes on, build them gradually, until they become unreal and terrifying.

Invent your own Creeping Horrors too: for example, you might decide that Investigators hear faint church-like singing whenever the creatures are near.

When an Investigator rolls a 6, they may notice one of these Creeping Horrors, then remain aware of it throughout the mystery. For example, they may suddenly smell the stink of the Thames, then keep noticing it. Or they may notice the way the monsters look, then see that look in more and more people (including other Investigators).

In this mystery only, when a Creeping Horror appears in the text below, it is preceded by an \*asterisk. These asterisks are only a guide: you can, and should, introduce Creeping Horrors even when they are not mentioned in the text.

## THEMES

There are four main themes in this mystery. Refer to them when you can.

- ▶ **The river**. Refer frequently to the River Thames. When you describe things, use water-related descriptions whenever you can: for example, you might describe something "flowing" within Lilly's belly.
- ▶ **Children**. Keep mentioning children in the streets of London. Keep referring to the Investigators' individual relationships to children.
- ▶ **The aristocracy**. Throughout the mystery, be clear about the social class of anyone the Investigators meet: are they working-class, middle-class or upper-class? Describe upper-class people ignoring the Investigators. Describe middle-class people looking down on them.
- ▶ **Immortality**. Refer to the idea of living forever, especially in a religious context and especially when the Investigators are in the Church of St John the Baptist.



# PROLOGUE

It is summer and London stinks. As the sun shines down, the river Thames gets warmer, and its mix of mud, sewage and rotting fish spreads its odour throughout the city. Every street has a layer of filth, which coats boots and clothing. \*It is as if the Thames has infected London, spreading its stink everywhere.

Nevertheless, this is a working day and the Investigators must earn their living. Ask each Investigator how they spend their day. Where do they go? What do they do? For example, a flower-seller might head to Covent Garden before dawn, buy flowers, then spend the day wandering around London's streets. A prostitute might ply her trade in London's coffee shops. An abortionist might ply her trade in a crumbling East End backroom.

Take a moment to play out each Investigator's day. As you do, mention the hot sun, the mud on the streets and the \*smell of the Thames. Describe the people that each Investigator sees. If the opportunity arises, play a short scene: for example, try playing a rich customer buying flowers or a young woman visiting the abortionist.

If two Investigators might meet during the day, bring them together and let them play a scene: for example, play a scene where the pickpocket sees the prostitute in the park or steals from her clients. Don't get them into trouble, though: this isn't the time for anyone to get caught by the police. If they try something illegal, simply let them escape.

This is a chance to introduce the Investigators to 1850s London. If you have a map, then point out where each Investigator works. Explain the geography of London, especially the difference between East and West. Say that, in the East, people are friendly and the streets are crowded. In the West, people are cold and the streets vast and unwelcoming.

If you like, introduce the Creeping Horrors of the mystery, but don't make them seem too strange. Describe the \*stink of the Thames as vile, rotting and everywhere. Say that, in the West End of London, the \*people look different. Mention the sellers of scandal-sheets, standing on

street corners, shouting about \*rumours of baby-snatching. But keep this low-key. Don't make anything sound unnatural or out of place. It isn't time to investigate yet.

When the working day is over, it's time to return home. That is where the story — and the horror — starts.

## THE LODGING HOUSE

The Investigators' home is the Old Nichol Rookery, a winding mass of streets and passageways. As they return after work, the Investigators pass bars that open on to the street and hear craftsmen working in the surrounding houses. The crowd buzzes around them.

Their lodging house is crumbling but welcoming. In the downstairs room, a fire is coming to life, with fish hanging over it to cook. Rush matting covers the floor and long wooden benches surround a long table. The light comes from tallow candles, sputtering and fatty.

Let the Investigators greet each other and prepare for dinner. Ensure that, in addition to the Investigators, there is one more person in the lodging house, who might be the landlady or another lodger. This ensures that, when the Investigators leave to investigate later, there is someone to take care of Lily.

Then ask an Investigator to roll to notice something wrong, without rolling the Failure Die. Tell them that, for some reason, *they feel they have gone back in time*. The house feels like it did a year ago. (Depending on how high they roll, give them more or less of this information.)

*Something moves upstairs*. As the Investigators follow the noise, they find it is coming from the attic.

When they get closer, they realise something is moving in Lily's old room. If they look inside, the room is dark.

When they enter, they find Lily there, in her old bed. That is why the house feels as it did a year ago. It is because Lily is home.

Yet, even in candlelight, the Investigators realise something is wrong. Lily is huddled as close to the wall as she can get. If touched, she shrinks away. If the Investigators get close or examine the bed, *they find blood on the sheets.*

If one of the Investigators has medical knowledge, they surmise *she is recovering from a traumatic childbirth.* Alternatively, an Investigator might ask Lily what has happened: if so, she tells them that *she gave birth and the father took the baby away.* If, while discovering this information, anyone rolls a 5, they remember the folktales of snatched babies. If they roll a 6, they inexplicably smell *\*the river's stink in Lily's room.*

As the evening goes on, Lily tells the Investigators the full story. When she moved out of the lodging house, she went to live with Jack, her husband: as she says this, an Investigator might notice that Lily hesitates on the word "husband", since *they were not really married.* Thereafter, *she lived in a house in Gloucester Street, Pimlico.* Depending on how much the Investigators ask, Lily might or might not reveal that, in fact, *Jack did not live there, but kept her as a mistress.*

Shortly afterwards, Lily became pregnant and gave birth. Lily explains that the baby was premature, then hesitates as though something is wrong. In fact, *Lily's pregnancy lasted four months,* after which *\*the baby emerged fully grown.* Immediately after the birth, Jack took the baby. A few hours afterwards, Lily was evicted from the flat and returned here.

Lily tells the Investigators she wants the baby back. She asks repeatedly where the baby is. She asks the Investigators to find it.

Remember that it is late at night. Unless the Investigators go immediately to the house where Lily lived in Pimlico, they must retire for the night. The next morning, a breakfast of bread and dripping is waiting for them. As they eat, they must decide how to proceed.

Note that Lily does not need an Investigator to stay with her. She will not be alone in the house (because someone else is there, as described above). She asks to be left to rest, while the Investigators find her baby. The first place to look is Pimlico.

## PIMLICO

As the Investigators head westwards to Pimlico, the city changes. They leave behind the welcoming crowds of the East End for the braying gentlemen of the west. Buildings become monolithic, pale and austere. People are tall and unwelcoming, with *\*high brows, aquiline looks and cold glances.*

On arriving in Pimlico, the Investigators find a shabby genteel neighbourhood for the aspiring middle classes. There is no welcome for the Investigators here. The people of Pimlico want to rise in society, not mix with those at the bottom. They also want to keep their secrets hidden.

In Gloucester Street, the Investigators find Number 24, the house where Lily stayed. They may also visit the pub opposite, The Duck And Feathers.

## PASSING

Unless you have good reason to think otherwise, assume the Investigators stand out once they have left the East End. Even if they cut their hair, wash their faces and mend their clothes, something gives away their true origins: their voices, their vocabulary, their lack of knowledge of how to behave.

If the Investigators try to fit in with the middle or upper classes, ask them what exactly they do, then ask them to roll, rolling the Failure Die against them. If they succeed, they are accepted by people, at least for long enough to ask their questions or do whatever they want to do.

Be sensible about this: a prostitute might fit in with polite society, if she wears her best dress, but a beggar with matted beard would need to shave first. A match-seller might pretend to be a maid or milliner, but not the Lady of the Manor.

Finally, don't take too much pleasure in this. Remind the players of the class system, but don't glorify it.

Remember that the Investigators are the heroes: the people putting them down are the villains of the mystery.

## THE DUCK AND FEATHERS

When the Investigators enter The Duck and Feathers, they find themselves facing a wall, with doors to the left and right.

Through the right door is the saloon bar, with engraved glass and leather chairs. It is home to clerks, doctors and other professionals, who look at the Investigators, draw in their breath, then pointedly look away. If the Investigators want to stay, they must pass as middle class (see *Passing*, above). Otherwise, the barman eventually jerks his thumb, indicating they should go through the other door.

Through the left door is the public bar, where traders, labourers and other working people cluster around a sparse wooden room. Even here, the Investigators are not entirely welcome, since the customers consider themselves a class above them. The drink of choice is beer, although brandy and gin are also common.

In either bar, the Investigators can ask about 24 Gloucester Street. At first, people seem reluctant to talk: the most likely reply is “The less said about that place the better.”

It emerges that *the house is a brothel*: gentlemen arrive at all hours of the day and night, hiding their faces. No-one in the bar has heard of Lily, but if told her story, they are sympathetic. If pressed, the drinkers may admit to hearing *peculiar chanting, like a twisted hymn*, from the house, although they seem unsure of their own senses.

If, while investigating, anyone rolls a 5, they remember urban tales of a secret aristocratic society, who venture forth at night to brothels before diving in the Thames.

If anyone rolls a 6, they see a deep terror in the speaker’s eyes when they talk about the gentlemen’s masked faces, as if they caught a glimpse of something horrific, but have blotted it from their minds.

## 24 GLOUCESTER STREET

Like other houses on Gloucester Street, Number 24 is made of off-white stone, with classical dimensions that make it look like a small, polite Roman temple. Candles flicker in the windows, flaring occasionally to reveal neat interior rooms.

How do the Investigators get in? Unless they can think of a better way, there are three entrances: the front door, the back door and illicitly through a window. If they try the window — which they can reach by climbing the drainpipes of the neighbouring house, then balancing across the roof — it opens easily and they find themselves on the upper floor (which is described below).

If the Investigators try the front door, a thick-set man with a boxer’s broken face answers. His first reaction to the Investigators is embarrassment, telling them either to “Go round the back” (if they look respectable enough to be delivering something) or “Clear off” (if they don’t). After that, he will shut the door in their faces, unless they make a roll to stop him. On a successful “Passing” roll (see above), the Investigators may stop him long enough to ask questions, although it’s unlikely they’ll convince him to let them in.

At the back entrance, a girlish woman of about twenty opens the door. Whatever the time of day, she wears evening dress and make-up. This is Victoria, whose inexperience with the world makes her more likely to believe the Investigators’ stories. If asked about Lily, she freezes: her first answer is “I can’t tell you here”, before retreating into the kitchen and waiting for the Investigators to follow.

As Victoria explains, *Lily stayed here, in an upstairs room, as the mistress of a man called Jack*. Like the other gentlemen visitors, Jack arrived at odd hours, his face covered, and rarely stayed the night. Lily became pregnant. *After she gave birth, a few days ago, Jack left the house with the baby, driving off in a carriage*. Victoria is not sure where he went or where he came from.

If pressed — or if someone rolls a 6 while investigating — Victoria might reveal that the *pregnancy lasted only four months*, the baby growing with unnatural speed. She also caught

a glimpse of the baby as Jack took him away. Although she cannot explain why, there was *\*something unnatural about it, which filled her with horror.*

As the Investigators explore, they realise, if they haven't already, that *the house is a "meeting house": the polite term for a brothel.* Indeed, for a brothel, this is an exceptionally polite and middle-class one. The ground floor is comfortably furnished, like a family home. There is a hallway, with nondescript portraits lining the wall, and a drawing room lit by candles. Both are excessively tidy, as though nobody lived in them.

In the living room is Mrs Bowerby, a matriarchal redhead who owns and runs the brothel. If she meets a lone Investigator, she asks whether they are looking for work. If so, she offers them a drink, and explains delicately that she employs women to keep men company.

When the Investigators go upstairs, they find the bedroom doors closed. Beyond them, the Investigators can hear murmuring voices and an indistinct shuffling. At the end of the landing is Lily's room.

At first sight, Lily's room has the studied middle-class look of the rest of the house. The bed is made precisely, with starched white sheets tucked at every corner. On the window, beside thick red curtains, there is a wilted tulip in a tiny vase.

On investigation, though, something is badly wrong. *The mattress is apparently soaked in blood:* this is, in fact, Lily's afterbirth. *The door panel is cracked,* as if someone had beaten against it to get out: this was Lily, who was locked into the room by the gentleman who took her baby. To anyone who has smelt the *\*stink of the river* (see above), this room reeks of that same smell. If anyone rolls a 6 while investigating here, they smell the stink now.

*There is a curious gold ring beneath the bed:* it is intricately woven of threads of gold, in a way that seems impossible to manufacture. If the Investigators look closer, then deep within the threads, there appear to be miniature sculptures of humanoid couples, in inexplicable poses. The ring is both captivating and repellent.

On a small bedside table is a letter from Lily to Jack, filled with love and anxiety. On closer inspection, *the ink is blurred with tears.*

It is now clear that, to find the baby, the Investigators must find Lily's gentleman. He is, in fact, in Grosvenor Square, a fact which the Investigators can discover in various ways. If they search the room, they may find *a gentleman's silk cravat tucked under the pillow:* the label identifies a tailor in Grosvenor Square. If they ask Mrs Bowerby or another worker, they may remember *the gentleman ordering a cab to Grosvenor Square.* Alternatively, the cab drivers who arrive at the brothel may say that *the gentleman lives in Grosvenor Square.* Lily's letter mentions the same location. Follow the Investigators' lead. Reward any method of investigation with the right location. But don't tell them exactly where to go. Just tell them to go to Grosvenor Square.

Now, it is time for the Investigators to leave. If their investigations have been quiet, then the occupants of the house may let them leave quietly.

If there has been a disturbance, then as the Investigators are leaving, the doors to the bedrooms open. A gentleman stands in each doorway, his face half-hidden by a top hat and cravat. The gentlemen step forward. Time and space seem to distort, as if the Investigators are underwater. The gentlemen seem impossibly tall. If anyone has smelled the *\*stink of the river*, they smell it again now, more threatening and oppressive than ever. The men approach slowly. Or perhaps time is running slowly. It is hard to tell.

What do the Investigators do? If they flee, they find themselves running slowly, as if in a nightmare: ask them to roll to escape, rolling the Failure Die. If they fail, a gentleman grabs them. For any Investigator who falls into the gentlemen's grasp, allow one roll to escape, warning that they will die if they fail. Remind the players that they can reroll by adding their Insight Die.

If, during this, anyone rolls a 5, they remember news reports of men, including a Member of Parliament, disappearing from brothels. If anyone rolls a 6, they may catch a glimpse of a gentleman's face, alien and twisted and incomprehensible, and make an Insight Roll.

# GROSVENOR SQUARE

The journey to Grosvenor Square feels like a descent into evil. Buildings become bleached white monoliths. Faces are \*high-browed and unwelcoming. And, for those that can smell it, the \*stink of the river is everywhere, filling the Investigators' mouths and lungs.

Grosvenor Square itself is dominated by the Church of St John the Baptist, a twisted Gothic monstrosity that fills the west side of the Square. The remainder is dominated by the houses of the rich. These houses can also be reached from the back, where stable yards lead on to the servant quarters.

From here, the Investigators can head in a few directions. They might gravitate towards the Church of St John the Baptist. They might, perhaps by asking around, find their way to the Richard House, where the baby was taken. Wherever they head, they might encounter the Book of Life or Ebba Abendroth, both of which are described below.

## THE CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

As the Investigators approach the Church of St John the Baptist, they get a strong sense that *this is the heart of the evil*. The Church is brown, damp and glistening, as if the \*river has seeped up into the bricks. A sodden wooden door leads inwards.

Inside, the Church is dark, lit by a mouldy brown light through the windows. These windows contain twisted stained-glass images which, on prolonged inspection, show *armies of children rising from the water*, although \*the children look strangely lengthened.

Although there is no one singing in the church, there is a sense of echoing hymns, as though the bricks are resonating with centuries of music. If the Investigators listen carefully, they *understand the songs are about finding new life in the water*, but the words are not English. If they touch the church's walls, they *hear the screams of children in their heads*, hundreds and thousands of children from throughout history. It is as though

the children have been carefully preserved, like butterflies in vinegar.

In fact, the Church isn't empty. As the Investigators' eyes become used to the darkness, they see the short figure of Father Little, drifting around the altar. Little is a crushed, broken figure, with a songlike Liverpool accent and a look of haunting in his eyes. He does not have the high-browed aquiline look of the monstrous gentlemen.

Little is a font of information on Grosvenor Square. If asked about rumours of baby-snatching, he reluctantly suggests *the Investigators ask at the Richard House*. If pressed, he may suggest that *the babies are baptised in the river*, but he cannot explain what this means or even how he knows. He may also tell the Investigators about *Ebba Abendroth, a former maid at the Richard House who left when pregnant*, and who now stays in a nearby workhouse.

Yet, as the Investigators question Little, it is clear something is wrong. If they roll a 6, they see an unearthly terror in his eyes: it reminds the Investigators of a man in quicksand, who knows both that he will drown and that fighting will make his death sooner.

If pressed, Little explained that *he wants to leave, but is forced to stay in the Church* by the Grosvenor Square residents. There is something wrong with them, but he cannot explain what. The residents have even forced changes to the Church services, with atonal hymns and readings from unfamiliar books.

Little shows the Book of Life (see below) to any Investigators that are curious. Alternatively, they might find it resting on a pew. Finally, he seems exhausted of information and repeats that they should ask at the Richard House.

## THE BOOK OF LIFE

The Book of Life is a soft, battered leather book with gold-edged pages. Investigators might find it anywhere in the mystery, but especially in the Church of St John the Baptist or the Richard House. It might also be dropped by one of the gentlemen at 24 Gloucester Street. The book

appears suddenly, often in drawers or on shelves, nudging against an Investigator's hand.

To anyone who looks inside, the lettering is unfamiliar and appears to move in the corner of the eye. Nevertheless, the viewer feels they understand it. They know instinctively that this is an ancient language of power and compulsion (even if they are not sure what a language of power and compulsion might be).

If an Investigator begins reading the book, tell them that they realise that the book is describing an oath. Ask again whether they want to continue reading.

The first oath in the book is **to live forever**. Any Investigator who reads this oath realises that, by reading, they have already taken the oath: they have promised to live forever. Moreover, they feel they have the power to live forever. What all this means is not clear, but at least, the Investigators should be starting to understand what a language of power and compulsion might be.

Next in the book is another oath. Ask the Investigator whether they want to read it.

The second oath in the book is **to rise when called**. Again, by reading this oath, it is clear that the Investigators have promised to rise when called. They also feel they have the power to do so. It is not clear what this means, although the Investigator may experience a taste of blood and dirty water.

There is one final oath in the book. Even before reading it, it feels immense, final and apocalyptic. Ask the Investigator whether they want to read it.

The third oath in the book is **grinding and flowing and screeching**. It is inexpressible in words. Yet it is clear that, like the other two oaths, the Investigator has promised to keep it.

What these oaths actually mean is up to you. For example, if an Investigator takes the first oath, are they immortal thereafter? Does that mean they cannot be killed?

Whatever you decide, make sure the oaths are very, very bad.

## EBBA ABENDROTH

Ebba Abendroth is golden-haired, painfully thin and looks older than her twenty-five years. The Investigators might meet her in the Church of St John the Baptist, the Richard House or anywhere else appropriate. They might also be told about her by Father Little or others.

When Ebba was a kitchen maid at the Richard House, *she had a child with Lord Richard*. She then heard that the child would be stolen, so she fled and had the child nearby, in St George's Union Workhouse. That is where she lives now.

From time to time, *she was visited in the workhouse by gentlemen strangers*. When they asked about the baby, she told them it had died. This was true. What she did not tell them was that *every time the baby died, \*it came back to life within minutes*.

To see the baby, the Investigators must visit the workhouse where Ebba lives. It is a huge institutional building, crammed with the poor and elderly, who huddle in corners for warmth and talk with merriment.

The baby lives in the chapel, which is cold and damp, even in the height of summer. The child breathes irregularly, gasping for air. As the Investigators watch, it breathes a final breath and lies immobile. It is dead: if the Investigators check, it has no pulse. If Ebba is there, she motions to wait. Minutes later, the baby gasps for breath and begins its ragged breathing again.

As Ebba explains, this happens several times a day. Once the Investigators have seen this, she asks them to leave. After all, there is nothing they can do. Even if they killed the baby, it would come back to life.

## THE RICHARD HOUSE

If the Investigators knock at the Richard House, nobody answers. The front door is locked. The back door, which opens on to a stable yard, is open.

Inside, the house looks white and empty. The Investigators' footsteps echo through the hallways and rooms. Curtains are half-drawn. On the

window sills are vases, picture-frames and candles, which curiously are lit. It seems that *someone wants to pretend the house is occupied*. At your discretion, the Investigators might find the Book of Life (see above).

As the Investigators explore, they sometimes hear shuffling, as though someone is moving on the other side of a wall or beneath the floor, but they can never locate the source of the movements. There are trails of mud, as though *visitors have walked through the house after wading through the river*. These trails lead to a cellar door.

The stair downwards is dark: the Investigators need a source of light to get down. When they reach the cellar floor, it is caked in mud, like the banks of the Thames. Everyone can now smell *the stink of the river*. It is so strong that it seems to follow the Investigators around, like an alien spirit.

As they explore the cellar, the Investigators find *stacks of what appear to be baskets*. On closer inspection, they are cradles of all different shapes and sizes. Deeper into the cellar, they find more and more cradles, some modern, some old and rotting.

It becomes clear that the cellar has no wall separating it from the neighbour's cellar. Indeed, all the cellars are connected in a long, continuous tunnel, packed with cradles. As the Investigators venture deeper, they occasionally find an opening to another underground tunnel. This is an underground network, connecting the aristocratic districts of London.

Eventually, the tunnel ends at a door, which opens on to a silt bank of the Thames. Above them, the Investigators can hear the buzz of horses and pedestrians, but on the bank, they are unseen and alone. *The stinking Thames washes against the bank, lapping at the Investigators feet*.

The Investigators realise that *this is where the babies were taken. They must be deep under the water*. If the Investigators look carefully, they may see a submerged baby, although there must be many more beyond. They could rescue one, but they cannot rescue them all. They will never find Lily's baby. *If they listen carefully, they can hear the children screaming*.

## EPILOGUE

If it seems right, you can end the mystery there, with the Investigators staring bleakly into the Thames.

If you want something more dramatic, then reintroduce the faceless gentlemen, who rise from the water or the darkness, then converge on the Investigators. If the Investigators want to fight their way past or run, they must roll. If they fail, then they themselves are dragged into the Thames.

If any of the Investigators are alive, ask for a short epilogue from their player, then end the game.

# HANDOUTS

## LILY'S LETTER TO JACK

My dear Jack,

Since you left, time has passed so slowly that I feel I am dreaming. Indeed, I find that time runs so strangely in this house. A day can pass in a moment or feel like a year.

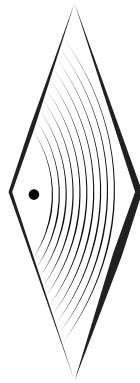
Is it wrong, my dear, that I am scared about the birth of our child? It has grown so large and so quickly. Yet I must remember that it is normal for a mother to be anxious. Let me try to quiet my fears and remember the things I promised to you.

On your last visit, you left your cravat. Sometimes, I touch the silk to remind me of you. I wonder how you are, in Grosvenor Square, and what you do. I wonder if you ever think of me.

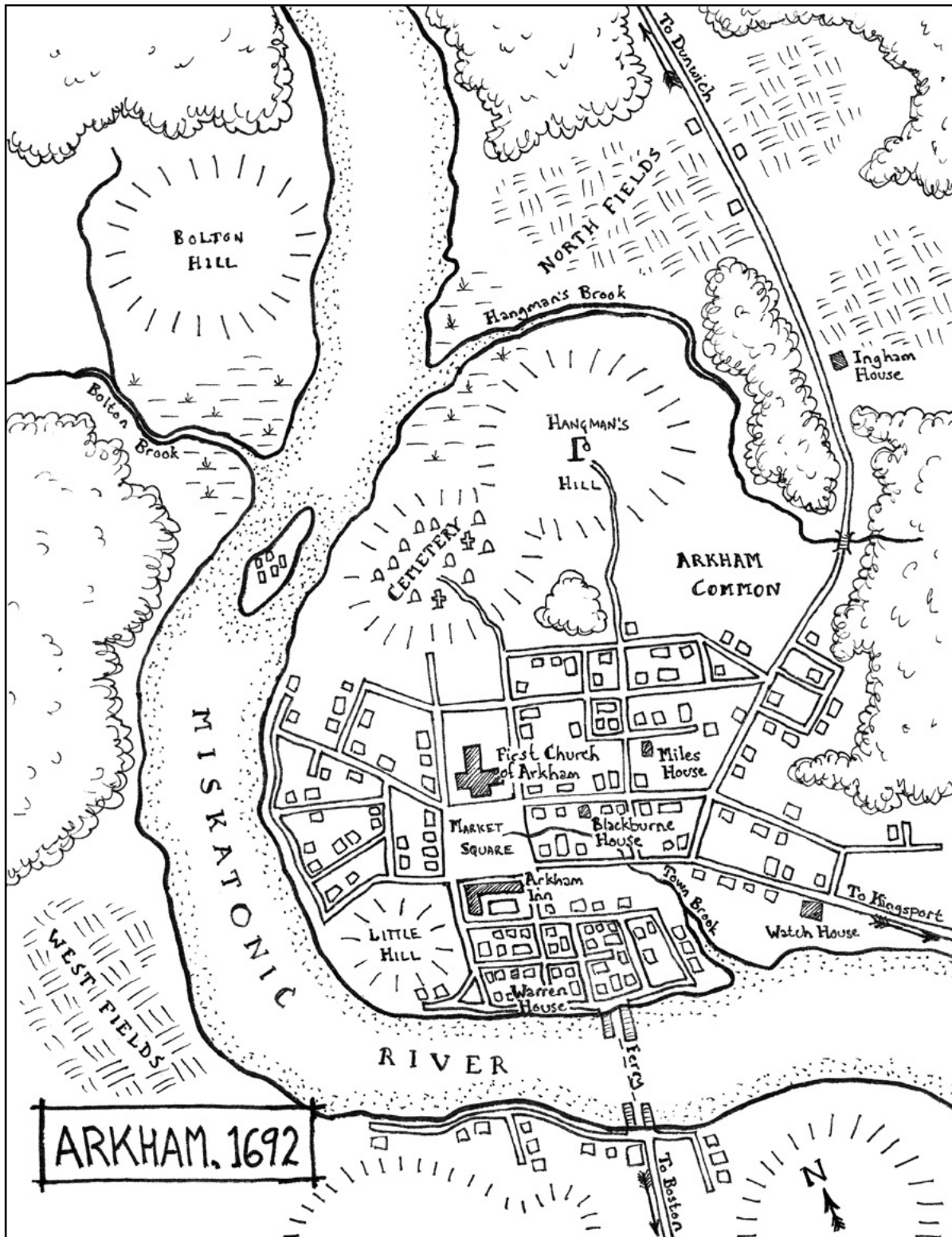
There is nothing I must go and do, other than wait for you. Yet, my writing is at an end, and I will sign my name and resume my wait.

I am, forever, your own

Lily







# ARKHAM 1692

KATHRYN JENKINS

Arkham has always existed, in and out of time. Many have settled there: first the Nordic travellers, then the Americans, now the Puritans. All marked Arkham with their history. All believed they built it. They did not. Ancient things built Arkham: the mortals of the world merely changed its shape.

Each morning, the townsfolk wake with dread, wondering what new horror has marked their town. Children go missing, dancing into the wilderness. Violet lights pulse in the attics of abandoned homes, glowing brightly in the witching hour. Rats, with half-glimpsed human faces, scurry in the shadows.

Fog stretches its fingers through the narrow streets, gabled roofs hiding the whisperings of ancient magic. Shadows of terrible creatures tread along mud roads, whispering vengeance into people's minds.

And Arkham is alone. The things that haunt it take advantage of solitude.

# INVESTIGATORS

## NAMES

Try biblical names or old-fashioned American and English ones. Here are some examples.

*Surnames: Gardener, Corey, Warren, Wilde, Bishop, Carter, Bridges, Elwell, Frye, Inson, Wardwell.*

*Female Names: Mary, Tituba, Elizabeth, Susanna, Joan, Margaret, Abigail, Rebecca.*

*Male Names: Thomas, Edward, William, Daniel, Roger, Bartholomew, Giles.*

Although Arkham is a British colony, Investigators need not have British heritage: the people of Arkham have all kinds of backgrounds, including different ethnic backgrounds.

## OCCUPATIONS

Here are some suggested occupations. Avoid Investigators who are prominent landowners or otherwise wealthy.

### APOTHECARY

In a city where life is cheap, apothecaries work to hold death at bay. They do this through tonics, potions and poultices, which use herbs, animal parts and anything else nature has to offer.

Apothecaries often rely on folk remedies, handed down by word of mouth. Leeches are a favoured cure, used to draw out an excess of blood. Some apothecaries genuinely understand how to cure diseases and injuries, while others are simply experts at putting patients at ease.

Poor, desperate and superstitious citizens flock to apothecaries, while wealthier citizens often prefer to be treated by a doctor (see below). Some apothecaries try to heal the mind as well as the body, curing mental disturbances with salves and herbal compounds.

If one of the Investigators is an apothecary, find a way to include herbs, tinctures or potions in the

mystery. Put poisons into the story, which they can identify and counter. Try a mystery in which the apothecary supplies ingredients for dark magic, becoming drawn into the schemes of witches or sorcerers.

An apothecary might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Knowledge of herbs and natural ingredients.
- ▶ Stopping bleeding.
- ▶ Relieving pain.

### BLACKSMITH

In a small and isolated community, the blacksmith's forge is essential to everyday life.

Blacksmiths craft farm tools, fit horseshoes and make household items from pokers to door hinges. They make saws and axes for woodcutters, forge swords and daggers for soldiers and repair vehicles for travellers. Hence, they meet people from every level of Arkham's social hierarchy.

All blacksmiths have a forge and workshop, which is usually attached to their house. Some are experienced, while others are apprenticed to another blacksmith to learn their craft.

When you have a blacksmith in a mystery, let them find things made of iron — a bent knife, a well-used axe, a broken hinge — which they can find clues from. Try mysteries in which a blacksmith discovers things that they cannot explain, such as alien metals or tools that pre-date humanity.

Blacksmiths might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Identifying and understanding metals, tools and machinery.
- ▶ Using unfamiliar tools or items.
- ▶ Repairing vehicles.

### CARPENTER

Carpenters are the builders of Arkham. They craft furniture, offer repairs and build houses, fashioning doors, window frames and beams.

Carpenters understand the architecture and structure of Arkham's houses. By looking at a building, they can understand its internal layout. They are aware of houses that are constructed in

an odd way: they can spot secret rooms, hidden cellars or walls that are constructed *wrong*.

Like blacksmiths, carpenters meet people from all walks of life, dealing especially with woodcutters, traders and travellers. Because they work within and repair people's homes, they know about the lives of those around them.

When you have a carpenter in your mystery, be ready to describe buildings in detail. Prepare things for them to discover, such as false walls, trapdoors and curious corners. Try a mystery in which a carpenter finds hidden rooms, recesses or spaces while working on someone else's house.

Carpenters might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Knowing the layout of buildings.
- ▶ Repairing or constructing something made of wood.
- ▶ Forcing open a door or window.

## DOCTOR

If you are seriously ill in Arkham, you are unlikely to live. For everything else, doctors give you a hope of survival.

Doctors perform basic surgery, which normally means amputations: indeed, doctors often work as barbers too, since they have the necessary sharp tools. They treat patients in their houses, often in a back room or attic, where the screams are less audible.

Some doctors understand the theory of medicine, as it was in 1692: that is, they believe that good health depends on a balance of bodily fluids. As such, a common cure involves cutting an artery to relieve a patient of excess blood. Sanitation is not a priority and pharmaceuticals, as we know them today, do not exist.

For these skills, doctors are in high demand and short supply. A doctor in Arkham is likely to be the only one for miles around.

If you have a doctor in a mystery, give them sick people and dead bodies to examine. Doctors might also try to comprehend strange marks on a patient's body or supernatural changes in a person's health or mentality.

When a doctor performs surgery, consider rolling the Failure Die against them: after all, their efforts are likely to fail, and it's usually interesting if they do.

A doctor might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Applying first aid and medical treatment.
- ▶ Knowing about medical conditions.
- ▶ Investigating how someone has died.

## ENGRAVERS

Engravers create intricate images through cutting or scratching. Some work on wooden blocks, while others engrave doors, ornaments and jewellery.

They live by selling their work. Carvings that depict current events are especially popular, which means that engravers must keep themselves informed of what is happening in the world. In a time of religious superstition, engravers were especially in demand for pious imagery to repel witches and other creatures.

When one of the Investigators is an engraver, fill your mystery with carvings and scratchings for them to get clues from. Try runes, hieroglyphs and alien languages, as well as engraved statues, doors and walls.

Engravers might roll their Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Making an engraving.
- ▶ Investigating drawn markings and symbols.

## FARMERS

Farmers rise early to work the rocky soil and graze livestock. Their lives depend on what they raise from the ground.

Farming families combine their labour to survive, working huge tracts of meagre land together. A failed crop means a hungry winter and a chance of death. Many are at the mercy of landlords, needing to grow enough food both to eat and pay rent.

Some farmers live within Arkham, travelling out to their land each day. Others live on the land they work, on the outskirts of the town. These farmers are distant from the townsfolk, which is both lonely and dangerous: after all, an outsider is the first

to be suspected of crime or witchcraft. Richer townfolk look down on those who “toil in the dirt.”

Although their lives are hard, farmers are exceptionally skilled. They know the seasons, the temperamental cycles of the moon and the best time to sow and reap the harvest. They are hardy people, skilled at bartering, negotiating and selling. And they know the land around Arkham better than anyone.

When you have a farmer in your mystery, try to set parts of your mystery outside Arkham, so they can use their knowledge of the land. Try giving them a location to find in Arkham’s wilds, especially near the end of the mystery.

Farmers might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Knowledge of surrounding land and farmland.
- ▶ Predicting weather and seasonal changes.
- ▶ Understanding crops.

## FISHING

For as long as those that fish the Miskatonic River can remember, the fish have been gruesome, sickly and misshapen.

Fishing is dangerous. The winding waters are never still or predictable, with twisting currents that sweep the unwary away. Falling into the river, whether from the river bank or a boat, is a death sentence, and drowning is only one way to die.

Those who fish are often poor, but rarely hungry: even if their catch cannot be sold, it can usually be eaten. Fishing families often eat insects, seaweed and less identifiable things when nothing else is available.

When your mystery contains an Investigator who fishes, set part of your mystery in or near the Miskatonic river. Try a mystery in which all the Investigators fish for a living: you can start it by having them dredge something from the river. Try the Deep Ones (see page 54) as a threat.

Fishers might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Knowledge of the Miskatonic river.
- ▶ Remembering rumours and sightings around the river.
- ▶ Sailing.

## HOUSEWIVES

Arkham’s housewives have many skills. They care for children, manage the household and keep the house clean. Many wives also work, either alongside their husbands or through a trade of their own.

When you have a housewife in your mystery, talk with the player to decide exactly what their role is. This tells them when to roll their Occupation Die.

Some housewives manage the house, cleaning it and ensuring a regular stock of supplies. For these housewives, try setting parts of the mystery in Arkham’s houses. Give them clues to find in the dust, grime and cobwebs, in the kitchen, larder and laundry.

Some housewives work alongside their families or their husband. A housewife in a farming family works the fields, mucking out animals and selling produce at the market. A hunter or a trapper’s wife might skin and joint animals, understanding the wilds of Arkham as well as anyone.

Some housewives attend mainly to their children. They are especially skilled with their own children, knowing when something is wrong and when they are telling the truth. When you have one of these housewives in your mystery, put children in it, who have information the Investigators need.

Depending on the particular housewife, then, a housewife may get the Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Communicating with children.
- ▶ Knowing something about the family profession.
- ▶ Finding clues in the dirt or dust of a home.

## HUNTERS

Hunters, trappers and leather workers brave the wilderness surrounding Arkham, hunting for food and goods to trade.

They typically spend days away from Arkham, making the forest their home. When they return — and if they do not return empty-handed — they make their living by selling meat and skins to traders and townfolk.

Like all outsiders, they are often mistrusted, since they seem more in tune with the outside world than

human beings. Many townsfolk avoid “those who spend their time with animals.”

To survive in the wilds, hunters must know the terrain and how to capture their prey, using traps or weapons. They must be healthy, strong and smart. They must often fight, flee or hide: wolves, stags, bears, mountain lions and other creatures that roam the wilderness are formidable foes.

Hunters might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Finding a way through the forest and mountains.
- ▶ Controlling animals, such as dogs and horses.
- ▶ Knowing about dark rumours or strange events in the forests.

## SERVANTS AND SLAVES

Servants, slaves and those who are indentured work in Arkham’s richest houses. Servants work for a wage, slaves because they are forced to and indentured servants because they signed their lives away.

They rise early to clean, make breakfast and dress their masters. Throughout the day, they answer messages, organise the larders and keep the house clean. Unless they are sent into Arkham with a message or for supplies, they rarely leave the house.

Their masters might be aristocrats, looking to make their name in a new world; merchants, who have settled in Arkham with their wealth; landlords, living off the rent of farmers; or anyone else with money. The wealthiest masters employ many servants or own many slaves, but even middle-class masters may have one or two.

Although masters depend on those that serve them, they often treat servants and slaves as invisible. This means that, since their masters talk as though they are not there, servants and slaves know every rumour, intrigue and scandal in the house.

When you have a servant in the mystery, ensure they are free to leave their master’s house to pursue the mystery. You might decide, for example, that their master is away travelling. Try to set

part of the mystery in a large house, preferably one with a staff.

Servants may get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Understanding the workings of a house.
- ▶ Knowing information and gossip about the household.

## TAVERN STAFF

Those who work in Arkham’s taverns act as waiters, bouncers, cleaners and confidantes. They are charismatic, patient or forceful as required.

Inns and taverns, especially the Arkham Inn, are the centre of town life. They are not just for drinking, but places to eat, live, socialise and hear the news. Public meetings happen here, with townsfolk enthusiastically participating.

Some customers are travellers, resting on their way. Some are poor, staying until they are back on their feet. Some are rich, demanding the best of rooms and catering. Tavern staff serve them all and know how to handle each type.

Their reward is knowing what happens in Arkham. Tavern staff hear every rumour, folktale and piece of news from the larger cities. They also know about the lives of their many guests.

When tavern staff are in a mystery, it’s best if their place of work appears in the game. Let them roll to remember rumours they have heard or connections they have made. When the Investigator meets someone during the mystery, try stating that the Investigator knows them from the tavern.

Tavern staff might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Remembering an anecdote or gossip told by those staying in the tavern.
- ▶ Knowing who is rich and who is poor from their appearance.
- ▶ Charming someone to get information.

## VAGABONDS

In the New World, there are opportunities for everyone, and not all are legitimate. Vagabonds know this, bending, breaking or evading the law to make their living.

Some are wanderers without profession, occasionally stealing a loaf or breaking into a barn to sleep. Some are hardened criminals, especially thieves, burglars and smugglers, trying their luck somewhere new. All have some knowledge of crime.

By their nature, vagabonds pass through Arkham rather than settling there, staying only until wanderlust takes them or they have aroused the attention of the Watch. Yet some become familiar faces, stopping in regularly on their travels and developing connections to the townsfolk.

If you have a vagabond in your mystery, ensure they have a reason to care about Arkham and the people in it. If someone seems detached (“I don’t care about these people, I’m just passing through”), ask them questions to get them invested (“What do you like about the town?” or “I’d like to find a reason for you to care about Arkham. What would that be?”). In the mystery itself, give them pockets to pick and houses to break into.

Vagabonds might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Picking locks, opening windows and other methods of housebreaking.
- ▶ Knowledge of the roads and places around Arkham.
- ▶ Finding a place to hide.

## THE WATCH

These are times of war. Only fifty miles to the north, battle is raging, and other towns have fallen. Against such threats, the Watch is Arkham’s defence, protecting the townsfolk, keeping the law and ensuring they are ready to fight.

The Watch are alert, strong and disciplined, trained in combat and physically fit. Many have seen the horrors of war. Some have retired from military service, supporting themselves with casual work, but put their knowledge and skills at the disposal of the town.

Each member of the Watch approaches their job differently. Some enforce the laws of Arkham strictly, while others bend them for those who pay. Some protect the peace, while others use their power to exploit others.

Since the Watch’s task is to stop anything that threatens Arkham, they make excellent Investigators. Try to ensure that, in some way, the Investigators care about their work: if they seem cynical, ask questions to get them invested (“Why do you think keeping order is important?” or “What does Arkham mean to you?”).

The Watch may get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Questioning criminals.
- ▶ Knowing the law.
- ▶ Combat.

## WOODCUTTERS

Woodcutters provide fuel for Arkham, giving heat in the coldest winter and light in the darkest night.

Woodcutters work in groups, venturing into the forest to fell trees and cart them back to Arkham. Each team is led by a foreman, who arranges to sell the wood onwards to landowners and merchants.

Woodcutters understand forestry, knowing how to fell trees, where to chop to keep the forest productive and how to transport and store lumber. They are strong, lifting heavy objects with ease, and healthy, so they can survive the cold and travel.

They also know the forest, regarding it with respect, reverence and fear. They can navigate it better than anyone, finding their way in darkness, fog or terror. They know animals, birds, plants and fungi, knowing what can be eaten and what is poisonous. And they know the forest tales, having seen or sensed the dark things that lurk there.

If there is a woodcutter in your mystery, try to set part of the mystery in the forest. Try moving one of your locations there and letting the Investigator find their way to it.

A woodcutter might get an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Identifying the uses of plants and fungi.
- ▶ Navigating the forests of Arkham.

# A GUIDE TO ARKHAM

Arkham lies in the wilderness, surrounded by rolling hills, dense forests and cloud-covered mountains. It is a few days travel through the Miskatonic valley from Boston.

It is home to a thousand people, in wooden houses with steep gabled roofs. These people arrived about fifty years ago, fleeing from England, looking for a haven to keep their simple Puritan faith.

In the summer, it rains. In the long, harsh winter, deep snow covers the land. These extremes of weather affect the buildings: the damp warps the wood in summer, the snow cracks it in winter. This makes Arkham's houses appear twisted, the walls strangely slanted, the angles subtly wrong. Roofs sag, doors gape like mouths and windows curve like eyes, watching knowingly as people pass.

The streets, too, lie at peculiar and deliberate angles. Arkham appears *planned*, laid out on a twisted grid. Yet nobody knows who planned it. Perhaps the settlers followed the lines of earlier settlements. Or perhaps they were guided, in a way they cannot explain.

These are troubled times for Arkham. Crops are failing, war is near and the faith on which Arkham was founded seems threatened. It feels like the end of times, as though God has forsaken his people. Arkham stands alone against the dark, the supernatural and the horror.

## THE WILDERNESS

Arkham stands in a forest, which surrounds it like a wall. The townsfolk fight the trees back, leaving stumps among the hills and livestock grazing anxiously on newly-created grassland. Soon afterwards, the forest always seems to creep back.

Getting lost in the forest is easy. Paths are obscured by fog, especially in the early morning, and often covered with snow. Children are told not to stray too far: there are tales of misshapen horrors skulking between the trees, watching humans as they pass.

Beyond the forest is a vast, untamed wilderness. As travellers pass through, they find the land seems to shift subtly, especially in the mist or ice: landmarks change position, distances lengthen and compasses twist wildly. It is a harsh, exposed landscape, with little vegetation, which can kill the lost or unprepared.

Beasts are an even greater danger. Fed on the unnaturally rich earth of the Miskatonic valley, bears are huge, wolves are fast and wild dogs ferocious. Bats, rats and other vermin carry disease, swarming around travellers without warning.

Sometimes, the wild returns to Arkham. When the cats leave the city, when pigs become sick and dogs turn feral, Arkham folk know that evil is near. Then, the rats swarm back out of the woods and dogs turn up dead, mauled by a thousand tiny teeth.

## TRAVEL

Three dirt roads lead into Arkham: one from Boston, one from Dunwich and one from Kingsport.

Investigators normally travel on foot, braving the dangers of the wilderness. Any journey takes days, requiring the travellers to camp overnight. In unfavourable weather, it can take weeks, especially if they lose their way.

There are faster ways to travel. A passenger wagon runs between Boston, Kingsport and Dunwich, offering transport for a price, usually paid in goods. Traders, too, might take a passenger. For those with a horse, the journey is even faster.

For those willing to brave it, there is also the river. Boats run regularly from Dunwich and Kingsport. Even a fishing boat might take a passenger.

## LAND AND FARMING

For the past few years, Arkham has been unnaturally cold, with ice lasting long into the spring. Crops either fail or give too little to eat. Is it a punishment from God? Or the work of ungodly things?



Farming is backbreaking work. In the winter, the soil freezes and must be broken. The forest laces the earth with twisting, interconnected roots. Even near the coast, where the land is slower to freeze, crops often emerge hard and crooked.

Some farmers turn to livestock, filling their farms with fowl, goats, sheep and cows, which they graze on the rough common pasture around Arkham. Yet, year by year, this pasture shrinks in size, as the forest creeps forward to reclaim it.

Brave farmers employ shepherds to take cattle into the hills, where the land is greener. Not all come back. Some are taken by wild beasts. Some fall victim to the rocky terrain.

And some are found years later, their bodies mangled or dissected, having encountered the things that live in the hills.

## THE MISKATONIC RIVER

The Miskatonic river curves its great mass around Arkham. It runs down from Dunwich, eventually reaching the sea in Kingsport.

It is the lifeblood of Arkham, bringing supplies and allowing the city to trade. Both for legitimate traders and smugglers, it is the only viable way to transport goods to and from Arkham.

Yet the Miskatonic has an evil reputation. It runs fast, blackened by mud, and is turbulent. It ensnares boats with tough vegetation or punctures them with submerged rocks. Boats often vanish or, less explicable, reappear without their crew.

Those who fall into the Miskatonic rarely survive. Even the best of swimmers are dragged out to sea or — if the folktales are true — somewhere below the water. Children are told to avoid the river: there are too many stories of children who went to play, whose empty shoes were found abandoned in the mud.

Even the fish, which fed Arkham's founders, have become lifeless, grey and few in number. For those with faith, it seems like punishment from above. What evil lurks within Arkham, that God would treat them so harshly?

## TRADE

In Arkham's market square, the wheels of commerce grind. Wool, fish, tools, livestock and cloth come into the town. Leathers, furs, timber, metals, grain and cheese go out.

Each morning, traders, townsfolk and travellers meet to barter and haggle. Craftsmen sell furniture, ironwork and carpentry. Miners sell iron, silver and gold ore from distant hills, along with less identifiable minerals. Travellers offer curiosities they found on their journeys, such as old books, unusual carvings or intricate jewellery.

This is the place to find information. Traders bring news from Boston and Kingsport and rumours from further afield. Refugees tell stories of the war to the north and hope for help. Pamphleteers sell religious propaganda, prophesying the end times.

## MONEY

For all the frantic trade, money in Arkham is unreliable. Townsfolk distrust coins and notes, preferring the solidity of goods.

In theory, the currency is the English pound. Yet its value fluctuates wildly, paper notes being especially worthless. Many prefer the silver Spanish dollar, although it is easy to trim the precious metal from the edges of the coins. Whatever the currency, prices change every day, soaring ever higher as the war grows closer, making cash worthless.

Hence, townsfolk often prefer barter, asking for payment in firewood, food or whatever else they need. Those with religious beliefs find this especially appealing: after all, if these are the end times, then only the ungodly would trust in gold and silver.

When you play, treat barter in a similar way to Money and Equipment (see page 48) in other settings. Assume that, when the Investigators need something, they have something they can barter for it. For example, if the Investigators need horses, tell them they can trade their remaining firewood for one. If they need information, let them give a loaf of bread for it.

## HOUSES

If Investigators own a house, it consists of a single, circular room, with a wood or dirt floor. In the centre is a fire, for heat, light and cooking. It fills the room with smoke.

In the day, a green-tinged light, from small glass windows, illuminates the room dimly. After dark, the only light is firelight. When that dies, all is dark, and there is nothing to do but sleep in the loft above.

In larger houses, there are two ground floor rooms, a hall and a parlour, with a fire positioned between them. Upstairs, there are two rooms, which, depending on the owner, might be bedrooms, a study or storage space. Rich families own larger houses or even estates.

Not everyone in Arkham lives in a house. As the war rages closer, refugees flood into Arkham, hoping for a charitable welcome. If they are lucky, they sleep in the Inn or with relatives. If not, they sleep as best they can in barns, stables or the wilds, fending off the cold.

## ENTERTAINMENT

As the world around descends into darkness, the people of Arkham find joy in togetherness. Over food, drink and other pleasures, they bond together against the world outside.

In the evening, the townsfolk head to the Inn, where they share stories, hear news and exchange folktales. Dice and board games are popular, although gambling is frowned upon. Children play outside, inventing their own games, which often involve dares, danger and bloody re-enactments.

There is always music. While working, the townsfolk sing folk songs, and in the evening, they sing hymns with their family. Fishermen sing about the Miskatonic river, the cheerful melodies obscuring the grisly lyrics. Travellers bring ballads from other towns, containing news of the war or the government.

And, when there is music, there is dancing. Poor families dance spontaneously when they gather, singing old songs as they clap and skip. Rich

families dance elegantly, using balls to show their wealth, grace and position in society.

There are many festivals, with feasts, drinking and idiosyncratic traditions. Among the most popular are Harvest Festival and Thanksgiving, at which the whole town brings and shares food. Other festivals, such as All Hallows Day, are more ominous, celebrated not for joy but to keep the dark at bay. Rarely does All Hallows Eve pass without a family missing a child by morning.

Some pleasures are solitary ones. Whittling, carving and weaving are popular. Most townsfolk are literate, having been schooled to read Biblical stories, and enjoy letters, newspapers and the Bible itself.

## LAW AND THE COUNCIL

In these chaotic times, even the rule of law is unclear. Arkham is nominally a British colony, with a Governor ruling in the name of the Crown. Yet, far away in Britain, a new King and Queen have just seized power. No new Governor has yet arrived.

This means that nobody is sure which laws to follow. Should the Watch apply the laws that have governed Arkham since its foundation? Or do new laws now apply? Who decides on property disputes, death sentences and accusations of witchcraft?

In the absence of government, a Council of notables attempts to rule. Yet, wracked by self-interest, it is fractious and erratic. Indeed, not all Arkham folk acknowledge the Council's authority.

This means that, when a decision is needed, a town meeting is called in the Inn. These meetings are popular and rowdy, with townsfolk participating over their drinks. Many a cruel, unwise or hasty decision is taken late at night by such meetings.

Trials, too, are held in this way, with eminent citizens and churchmen playing the role of judge. Punishment is decided on a whim, often on the basis of prejudice, vengeance or the desire to please God.

After all, the failing crops, long winter and nearby war show that God is angry. What better way to appease him than to punish sinners?

## THE FIRST CHURCH OF ARKHAM

At the centre of Arkham lies its church. It is a vast monolith, out of place amongst its surroundings.

When Arkham was founded sixty years ago, the Church was reputedly the first building built. There are curious tales of its construction. Some say that a trance-like fever gripped the builders, who did not sleep or eat until the whole building was erected. Others suggest that everyone who touched the great stone altar later committed suicide. Some even claim that the bones of the builders are buried beneath the Church.

Despite being recently built, the church appears ancient, as if it was constructed centuries or millennia ago. Indeed, this is common to many buildings in Arkham: once built, they age rapidly, until they appear older than they are. Some believe the Church was there long before Arkham's foundation, although they cannot explain how they know.

Despite its reputation, the church is the centre of life in Arkham. Anyone who misses the weekly service risks becoming a social pariah or falling under suspicion of devilry. If Arkham has a haven, a bulwark against the darkness, it is the church.

Its Minister is Reverend Lewis Harris, who is devout, suspicious and superstitious. As Arkham falls further into uncertainty and darkness, his sermons have become angry to the point of bloodthirstiness. In a time of ungodliness, he urges the townsfolk to fight back.

## RELIGION

Arkham was founded as a "city on a hill", a beacon of piety in a New World.

The city is diverse in its faith. Its townsfolk originate from throughout England, Scotland and Wales, bringing their own ways of worship with them. There is even a small community of Quakers, who live on the eastern outskirts.

Yet this diversity causes dissent, especially when many believe God is punishing Arkham. Those who are not Puritans, especially Baptists and the Quaker community, fall easily under suspicion.

Even more vilified are Catholics, whose worship is seen as devilry.

Arkham's townsfolk are literal in their religious beliefs. They believe that good and evil actually exist, as do heaven and hell. They think that the Devil and his demons are real, physical beings, who tempt men and women into debauchery and heresy.

In a time of failing crops, endless winters and supernatural sightings, the townsfolk know that God is angry. The Second Coming seems near, the judge is at the door. The only way to save their city on the hill is to hunt supernatural things and wipe them from the earth, to cleanse the city with fire.

## THE FINGER OF SUSPICION

In a town where all outsiders are suspect, who does Arkham hate most? The answer is, undoubtedly, Catholics, who are associated directly with the Devil. Others who question the Puritan faith, especially Quakers, are also suspect.

Outsiders are next in line for suspicion. These include people from other parts of Massachusetts, those not of English descent and people who live apart from others. Those who are a drain on resources, especially refugees from the war, are also an easy target.

Finally, those who look odd or are disliked might be suspected of consorting with witchery or the devil.

Don't automatically assume that modern prejudices apply in Arkham 1692. For example, there are people with darker skin and those from far-off lands in Arkham, but they do not necessarily suffer racial prejudice as we know it today. Others, especially those who worship differently, will feel the finger of suspicion first.

## SUPERSTITION AND WITCHCRAFT

Arkham folk are suspicious and superstitious. They believe in hauntings, spirits and corpses walking the earth. They tell their children tales of rats with human faces and things lurking beneath the Miskatonic river.

Their superstition is fed by stories from outside. Travellers and merchants bring tales of plagues, covens and people being possessed. Old folks remember tales of James I, former king of England and Scotland, who hunted witches himself. Pamphlets, books and sermons tell tales of black magics, blood rituals and consorting with the devil.

Against these threats, townsfolk often use magic and countermagic to defend themselves. Some hang horseshoes above doors, together with an eel's spear, a fork-like symbol to keep the devil away. Some bake "witch cakes", which allow the eater to identify witches. Fortune-telling is popular, as is making "poppets", dolls made of rags, wax or wood. Yet these things are risky, since, if found, they indisputably identify the owner as a witch.

Superstition feeds superstition and fear feeds fear. The people of Arkham turn on each other, putting each other to the flame. God is angry. Horrors wait nearby. Arkham is alone in the dark. These are surely the end times, the last days of Arkham and of the world.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arkham 1692 is based on Salem, Massachusetts, at the time of the witchcraft trials.

For background on Salem and witchcraft, try the following:

- ▶ Dale Taylor's *Everyday Life in Colonial America from 1607-1783*.
- ▶ Emerson Baker's *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience*.
- ▶ Marilyanne Roach's *The Salem Witch Trials: A day by day chronicle of a community under siege*.
- ▶ Susanne Saville's *Hidden History of Salem*.
- ▶ Maurice Bessy's *A Pictorial History of Magic and the Supernatural*.
- ▶ Ernst and Johanna Lehner's *Devils, Demons and Witchcraft*.





# THE DOORS BEYOND TIME

## A CTHULHU DARK MYSTERY IN ARKHAM 1692

In a time of fear and zealotry, the Ingham family are executed for witchcraft. Afterwards, those who gave evidence against them are found dead.

As the Investigators dig deeper, they discover a long and dark history of vengeance. In the end, they must make a choice: do they sacrifice their lives or become a tool of revenge?

*The Doors Beyond Time* is a mystery about vengeance, injustice and forces beyond time and imagination.

# THE HOOK

After the Investigators give evidence at a trial, they have disturbing dreams, then discover that a friend who gave evidence has been murdered.

# THE FINAL HORROR

The Investigators share the bloodline of witches, who exist outside of time, and are using the people of Arkham to exact horrific justice.

# THE STORY

In the Arkham Inn, a family are tried for witchcraft. During a series of flashbacks, the Investigators revisit the trial, where they give evidence for or against the Ingham family. The family is found guilty and prosecuted and hanged.

Afterwards, the Investigators dream about the death of a family friend, Christopher Miles, who also gave evidence. At his house, they find his corpse, together with evidence to implicate the head of the guard, Jonathan Blackburne, and a local woman, Diana Cotterill.

If the Investigators visit Blackburne, he reveals that similar events have happened before. They may also visit the Arkham Inn, where they meet Diana Cotterill, and the Church, where they discover that they belong to a bloodline of witches.

Meanwhile, witches begin to whisper supernaturally to the Investigators. They ask for vengeance against those involved with the trial.

Each night after the trial, the witches claim a new victim. On the first night, it is Christopher Miles; on the second, Jonathan Blackburne; on the third, a woman named Rose Mercer. Indeed, if the Investigators agree to exact vengeance for the witches, they may themselves be the murderers: if so, the victims named may die earlier than stated above. You may shift the times and victims around for dramatic effect: for example, if the Investigators visit the Arkham Inn early in the

mystery, you might decide that Rose Mercer, who lives there, is the first to die.

Finally, the Investigators are led to a trial of their own, at a stone circle known as the Screaming Circle. There, they must make a choice. They can either join their witch family, sacrificing their identity to become a tool of vengeance, or deny their heritage, which inevitably leads to death.

# THE INVESTIGATORS

The Investigators are a poor family who live together. Ask the players to invent a history for their family, reminding them that they have been connected to Arkham since it was first settled. Ask also about relationships with each other: is there rivalry, love, frustration?

When they choose occupations, encourage ones where the Investigators are looked down upon or unjustly treated. These give a natural reason to take vengeance against others.

Additionally, ensure that all Investigators have:

- ▶ A close relationship with Christopher Miles, an Arkham citizen.
- ▶ A relationship with one of the Ingham family, either the father or one of the daughters.

Here are some example Investigators.

## ANDREW WARREN

*Occupation: Carpenter*

Andrew Warren is a grizzled man in middle age. Having learned his trade from his father, he is teaching his son to be a carpenter too.

He has always felt a strong connection to Arkham: the idea of leaving fills him with great dread. Although god-fearing, he has always felt uncomfortable in the church, but cannot explain why. His wife is Elaine. He married her for love.

He is friends with Christopher Miles, whom he regularly meets at the inn, and who helped Andrew when he was ill. In return, Andrew has arranged a marriage with his daughter, Sarah.

## ELAINE WARREN

*Occupation: Mother*

Elaine Warren grew up in a tiny village just outside Arkham. She married Andrew when she was young and moved to Arkham itself. Now in her thirties, she has two children whom she adores.

Although she has never told her husband, her childhood was unhappy, since her family were shunned in their village for their strange beliefs. Her mother and sister regularly worshipped at a shrine in their basement, singing songs that Elaine did not understand.

She helped raise the two Ingham girls after their mother died. She likes Christopher Miles, whom she sees as a second son.

## SARAH WARREN

*Occupation: Maid*

Sarah works as a maid, in a wealthy merchant's home near the outskirts of Arkham. For the past week, fever dreams have kept her from working.

Sarah was best friends with Eliza, the Ingham's eldest daughter. Although Eliza is strange, Sarah is convinced she is innocent and has always felt a strong connection to her. Sarah is unwillingly engaged to Christopher Miles and unhappy about being married off to a much older man.

## PETER WARREN

*Occupation: Apprentice Carpenter*

Although Peter loves his family, he has always wanted to be more than an apprentice carpenter. He wants to travel, hoping that there is something greater outside Arkham. This both terrifies and excites him.

Peter is fiercely protective of his sister, although he thinks that Christopher Miles is a good man. Indeed, he hopes that, when Christopher Miles marries his sister, that might be his ticket out of Arkham.

## NATHAN WARREN

*Occupation: Discharged soldier*

Andrew's brother, Nathan, is a notorious drunk who has suffered from fever dreams since he was a boy. Originally part of the militia, he joined the town guard, but never felt welcome and was discharged for disorderly conduct.

His dreams haunt him. He is often found drinking, which has given him a poor reputation in Arkham, especially with the Watch.

Once, when Nathan was arrested, Christopher Miles helped him, and since then the two have been firm friends.

# ON A 5, ON A 6

If the player rolls a 5 they might:

- ▶ Remember a piece of evidence from the trial and who gave it.
- ▶ Recall something from their childhood in Arkham.
- ▶ Remember that, when witches were hung before, similar events happened.

On a 6, the Investigator glimpses beyond human knowledge, and might:

- ▶ Hear the witches whispering, in an alien language, which they somehow understand.
- ▶ Feel emotions they know are not their own, especially vengefulness or glee.
- ▶ Feel agony and anger at the Ingham's deaths, as if a family member has been unjustly killed.
- ▶ Perceive someone as a puppet-like monster.

Some of these are Creeping Horrors, as described below.

Finally, on a 6, an Investigator might gain a spell (see below) or be asked by a witch to kill someone.



# CREEPING HORRORS

Here are the Creeping Horrors for this mystery.

As with other mysteries, feel free to invent your own: for example, you might decide that the Investigators occasionally hear the Ingham girls singing nursery rhymes.

You will also find other repeating horrors throughout this mystery, such as the ghosts of the Ingham girls and anachronistic objects. Feel free to use these as full-blown Creeping Horrors.

## DOORS

When the Investigators look through or pass through doors and windows, reality may change in a disturbing way.

An Investigator may see something through a door or window, which changes as they enter. For example, an Investigator might see only blackness through a door, but, when they step through, see an ordinary room. They might see someone talking in a room, then enter and find the person's day-old corpse slumped behind a desk.

Or an Investigator may step through a door and emerge somewhere different. Use this both to creep the Investigators out and control where they go, especially the end of the mystery, when all the Investigators must arrive at the Screaming Circle (as described below).

Here is an example of how doors might work.

*Director: The stairs lead to a door. It's slightly ajar. When you look through, you stare into a darkness that your lantern light doesn't penetrate. It's consuming and unnatural.*

*Ewan (playing Andrew Warren): Well, that's not creepy at all. Well, my friend's most likely dead in there so.... I'm not going to look too closely and yell "Christopher?" as I run in.*

*Ryan (playing Peter Warren): I'm staying back. I do not like the look of that blackness.*

*Director: Okay, Andrew you step into the blackness and find yourself in a bedroom lit*

*faintly with violet light. Peter, you see your father swallowed by the blackness.*

*Ryan: Damn it. Okay, I roll Insight and get a 3. I'm fine, barely. I call out to my dad "Dad! Dad! It's Peter, can you hear me?"*

*Director: Your voice is swallowed by the darkness. Andrew, you can't hear him. When you look back at the door, you see the same blackness. You're alone.*

## WHISPERING WITCHES

Throughout the mystery, the witches whisper in the Investigators' heads, urging vengeance against anyone who helped bring the Inghams to justice.

These whispers get louder and clearer as the mystery goes on. At first, the Investigators simply hear incomprehensible murmurs in their head. Later, they can make out words, then full instructions.

Try handing notes to players, telling them what they hear in their mind. The Investigator can respond either by thinking silently or speaking aloud. If they think silently, the player should write a note back to you. If they speak aloud, the player should speak so that other players can hear.

Often, the witches ask the Investigators to kill those who have wronged them. If they agree, the witches may grant the Investigators a spell to assist (see Spells opposite). If they refuse, someone else will perform the murder. In any case, a new victim dies every night, as described above.

Witches may also communicate through vessels such as animals and corpses, which, to the Investigators, suddenly begin speaking with unnatural voices.

*Director: Sarah, as the barman mentions his daughter, you feel a deep hatred in your chest. You are distinctly aware that it is not your own feeling, but you cannot comprehend where it is coming from.*

*[Director hands Amy, the player playing Sarah Warren, a folded note. It says: You hear whispering, which sounds like several people speaking at once, some in an alien dialect, others*

in words you understand. “Avenge us. Will you avenge us? We need you to teach her a lesson.”]

[Amy hands a note back to the Director, which says: I try to think “Yes, I will help you” and see what happens.]

[The Director rewards Sarah with a spell.]

## THE PUPPETS

When the witches think someone has wronged them, they make that person appear puppet-like, with jerky and unnatural movements. Throughout the mystery, the Watch appear like this, as does anyone who gave evidence against the Inghams. This is an illusion, which becomes stronger as the mystery goes on, to show the Investigators who is worthy of vengeance.

To be clear: as the Investigators investigate, they meet people who look and move like puppets. The Investigators might naturally assume these are monsters. They are not. They are normal people, but the witches are making them look like monsters.

Here is an example, which also includes the Creeping Horror “Doors”, as above.

*Director: You approach Jonathan Blackburne’s office. Andrew and Sarah, you’re approaching the window and looking in. Elaine and Peter, you’re looking through his office doorway from the main room?*

*Clare (playing Elaine Warren): Yes, what do we see?*

*Director: You see Jonathan Blackburne, standing with his back to you leaning over the desk. He is searching through papers and speaking to someone through the door, but you can’t see who.*

*Clare: Do I notice anything else?*

*Director: He’s moving rigidly, mechanically, like his bones aren’t his own and he’s being controlled. It’s unnerving. You don’t remember him moving like that before.*

*Ewan: Me and Sarah are looking through his office door.*

*Director: All right, you see Jonathan Blackburne. He’s sitting at his desk and he has his head in his hands. He looks like he’s distressed.*

*Clare: Wait, you said he was standing.*

*Director: Yes, to you, he’s standing and looking at papers. To Andrew and Sarah, he’s sitting.*

## THEMES

The themes of this mystery are:

- ▶ **Vengeance and injustice.** Try to persuade the Investigators to take revenge, whether justified or not.
- ▶ **Discovering something monstrous in your family tree,** as the Investigators discover they are related to the witches and must decide how to respond.

## SPELLS

When someone responds positively to the witches’ whispers, you may “reward” them with a spell.

To do this, choose a spell from the table overleaf. Tell the Investigator the Power Word. Explain that the word, when spoken, will cause something to happen, but the Investigator doesn’t know exactly what or who it will affect.

Using a spell is beyond human capability, which means that, when an Investigator rolls to use it, they do not use their Human Die and only roll their Insight Die. On a 6, the spell has horrific effects of your choice.

If an Investigator uses a spell in a way detrimental to the witches’ goals, the spell may affect them rather than their intended victim. Each spell can only be used once.

Number	Power Word	Effect
1	Burn	The victim feels their skin redden, then burn. Scorch marks riddle their flesh and wet blisters bloom on their face. Eventually they burn alive, their eyes boiling in their heads, and are reduced to a smouldering blackened husk.
2	Starve	The victim gradually withers. Their lips dry and crack and their skin tightens. If they try drinking or eating, they cannot swallow. They then shrivel up and die.
3	Prick	The victim feels thousands of tiny stabs. Tiny red dots cover their body, each wound feeling like a burning hot needle. The victim bleeds from every wound and eventually succumbs to the pain, either dying or driven insane.
4	Press	The victim is forced to the floor, as if wooden logs have been laid across their body. The pressure builds and builds until eventually their bones are crushed, their skin splits and fluids leak from every pore and orifice.
5	Hang	The marks of a noose appear around the victim's neck, vivid and red. Vicious welts appear. The victim chokes.
6	Drown	Water and thick sea foam bubbles on the victim's lips. Grasping their chest in agony, they flounder and collapse, water spilling from their nose, mouth and eyes.
7	Infect	The victim slowly loses colour and keels over. Green and yellow blotches appear on their skin. Their skin rots away and pus-filled gashes split their skin, leaving weeping wounds. Eventually, they bleed to death.
8	Elsewhere	The Investigator, for a brief moment, has an absolute understanding of non-Euclidean geometry and the truths of space and time. The witches use this to reach through the veil and drag their victim kicking and screaming into their dark realm. Any Investigators who witness this spell are likely to roll Insight.
9	Boil	The victim writhes on the spot and scratches at their skin. Their blood bubbles in their veins and their body is boiled. Their skin melts away from their muscles, which slides off their bones like tender-cooked meat.
10	Fear	The victim feels the fear of every witch who has ever been hung, burned or hunted at once. The sheer volume and horror of this fear drives the victim out of their mind.

# PROLOGUE: AFTER THE TRIAL

On the morning after the Inghams' trial, the Investigators sit down for breakfast together. They talk about what has happened.

This prologue takes place in a series of flashbacks. You'll start the mystery with the Investigators sitting around the breakfast table. You'll then flash back to play three scenes: The Trial, The Hanging and The Night After The Trial. After each flashback, return to the scene at the breakfast table briefly and let the Investigators discuss what happened. After all the flashbacks, return to the breakfast table and continue with the scene The Morning After below.

If this sounds too complex, you can simply run the flashbacks in order (The Trial, The Hanging, The Night After The Trial), then do the breakfast table scene, without cutting back and forth.

In the flashback scenes, the Investigators cannot change the key events: the trial always ends with a guilty verdict and the Inghams always die. However, their actions affect how exactly the scenes play out and what information they learn.

## FLASHBACK 1: THE TRIAL

The Arkham Inn is arranged for a trial, with benches and chairs crammed into the central space. Witnesses sit on the first few rows. Right at the front, for all to see, is the dock.

Ask the Investigators where they are in the room and how they feel about the trial. They may remember that, after previous trials, *people who gave evidence disappeared*, having apparently left Arkham or died of natural causes.

The Watch brings the Ingham family forward. Tell the players that the Watch walk stiffly, as if they are on strings. The father, Peter Ingham, a widower, is gaunt and lethargic, his voice hoarse from protesting. He avoids looking at the crowd. His two daughters, Eliza and Lucy, stand without expression.

As the trial begins, the witnesses line up to give evidence. First, Rose Mercer, the innkeeper's daughter, states that Eliza and Lucy cursed them when they played together. Her sister, Amelia Mercer, meekly confirms the story. An older gentleman accuses the girls of hexing him, so he would commit adultery.

Ask the players to suggest other evidence that the townsfolk might give. Whenever someone gives evidence against the Inghams, say that the Investigators feel a deep sense of injustice.

Throughout, Father Lewis, the church minister, acts as prosecutor. He questions the witnesses, enjoying it when a piece of evidence is given against the Inghams. Like the Watch, he appears to move stiffly, as if he is made of wood.

Ask whether the Investigators give evidence. If they do, play Minister Lewis questioning the witness. If an Investigator gives evidence in favour of the Inghams, he attacks their character and integrity: for example, if Nathan Warren defends Peter Ingham, Minister Lewis might denounce him as an unreliable drunk. If an Investigator gives evidence against the Inghams, Lucy Ingham fixes them with an unsettling stare.

Towards the end of the trial, Christopher Miles approaches the stand. He states that he saw a curious purple light from the Ingham house. He also says that he saw the girls walking with dead rats towards the Miskatonic river. He does not sound convinced by his own testimony.

As Christopher Miles speaks, *he often looks between Diana Cotterill and Jonathan Blackburne*, looking at Diana with terror and Blackburne with uncertainty. Afterwards, he sits next to the Investigators, agitated and nervous. He mentions that he will attend the hanging, but, if pressed for information, he leaves the room.

When all evidence is given — and regardless of what the Investigators have said or done — the Inghams are found guilty. They are sentenced to be hanged.

After this flashback, return to the breakfast table, where the Investigators should discuss the trial and the verdict. After a short conversation, continue with the second flashback.

## FLASHBACK 2: THE HANGING

Beside the Miskatonic river, a makeshift gallows stands. A crowd gathers. The Inghams are brought forward, the father protesting, the girls silent.

Ask the Investigators where they stand and what they do. Mention that, despite saying he will attend the hanging, *Christopher Miles is not there*.

Jonathan Blackburne, the head of the Watch, reads the charges. Tell the players that he appears unnaturally pale, with jerky movements and a wooden complexion.

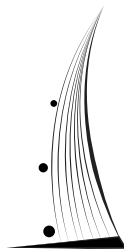
Then the cracks of the Inghams' necks rings out. Their feet twitch. Thick white fog crawls across the river.

Ask the Investigators how they feel as the Inghams are hung. What do they do? What do they say?

When the bodies have stopped moving, the Watch builds a fire beneath them. As the flames catch the corpses, the fog envelops the scene and the crowd disperses.

Ask the Investigators whether they look at the burning bodies. If they do, ask for a roll, rolling the Failure Die against them. Anyone who succeeds notices a shadowy figure standing behind Lucy Ingham's hanging body. It reaches out in the fog and smoke, strokes Lucy's cheek, and is gone. Lucy's dead eyes fix on the Investigators, accusing them.

Now return again to the breakfast table, where the Investigators should discuss the hanging.



## FLASHBACK 3: THE NIGHT AFTER THE TRIAL

After the hanging, night draws in quickly. A foggy darkness falls over Arkham.

Ask the Investigators where they go: do they return home or head to the tavern? Tell them that, ever since they heard the bones in the Inghams' necks crack, they feel disconnected, as if they are outside the world looking in.

Then it is time to retire. Discourage the Investigators from investigating at this stage: in particular, if the Investigators try to locate Christopher Miles, he cannot be found.

Once asleep, the Investigators have feverish dreams, which you should choose from the table opposite. Since these are vivid dreams, Investigators should roll Insight as usual and any increases in Insight remain when they wake.

When they wake in the morning, the Investigators find they have been marked with scratches or slashes. These marks remain for the rest of the mystery.

Now continue directly with the next scene, with the players at the breakfast table.

## THE MORNING AFTER

After their night of dreaming, the Investigators sit around the breakfast table. Encourage them to discuss their dreams and the marks on their skin. Do they show them to their family or hide them? After they have talked, ask what they do.

If they are having trouble deciding what to do, introduce a member of the Watch, who arrives to tell the Investigators that Christopher Miles was found dead at his home. He asks whether they have seen or heard anything during the night.

Throughout, the Watch soldier seems vacant, as if he has seen something horrifying. Tell the players he moves jerkily, as if he is on strings.

Since everything points to Christopher Miles, it is likely the Investigators will go to his house. If they go somewhere else, follow their lead and improvise: they can always find their way to Christopher's house later.

	Dream
1	You see yourself standing beside the bed of Christopher Miles, who is covered by a plain white sheet. Soft purple light filters in from the window and illuminates his sleeping form. His shifting torso is heaving too high and too low. In terror, you reach out and drag away the sheet. A thousand rats with human faces form a writhing mass on the bed. They spill out over the bed and crawl up your legs, biting at your skin and tearing out your eyes. You wake in a cold sweat. You have faint red scratches on your forearms.
2	You see the body of Christopher Miles lying in bed, sleeping. You have the overwhelming urge to reach down and strangle him. You can't stop yourself. It feels right. You struggle with yourself as your long, sharp claws close over his pale throat and strangle him. He screams, chokes and his eyes bulge out of his bulging skull. They burst. The dream repeats until you wake at dawn. You have red scratches on your neck.
3	You are Christopher Miles, standing in a dark clearing. You can hear rushing water hidden by fog all around you. Great stones erupt from the ground and straddling each stone is a starved naked creature. Their heads resemble goats and their bodies are withered hags. They raise their bony claws and descend on you, screaming in fury. You wake up screaming. You have a red slash on your cheek.
4	You walk down a narrow road. The houses either side of you stretch up towards black swirling clouds. Each step becomes quicker. A hunger wracks your body, a yearning for justice. You look down and see that you are not yourself, but a woman with a bony body and sharp fingers. The word "justice" spins in your head and a fever takes hold of you. You wake in the morning, in a cold sweat. You have purple bruising on your wrists.
5	You are in a dark place. Behind you, you hear gnashing teeth. When you look down, rats swarm on the ground. Your boots belong to a member of the Watch. Your legs are bloody. You run frantically down a tunnel with your hand on the wall. It stretches on and on. You feel long sharp fingers on your shoulders just as you see a glimmer of purple light in the distance and you are dragged back into darkness. You wake up with faint red bites on your legs.
6	Monsters with bulging eyes, needle-like teeth and swollen heads force you to walk along a wooden platform to a noose. Your heart beats hard in your chest and the chilling laughter of women and men deafens you. The noose is slipped over your neck and you see the crowd jeering at you. You see Christopher Miles' face swimming between crowd members contorted in painful laughter. You are pushed from the platform and your neck snaps. You wake with a faint red ring around your neck.

# THE MILES HOUSE

As the Investigators walk through Arkham, the dirt roads are silent. White fog fills the air, smelling faintly of smoke and burning flesh. It swirls as if shapes are walking through it.

The Investigators eventually reach the Miles house. It is a rotted timber building, two storeys high, larger than other Arkham houses.

Two members of the Watch stand outside, twitching like puppets trying to stand still. Both look as if they have seen something horrifying. If persuaded to talk, *they mention that they have seen Christopher's body. They tried to move it, but anyone who touched the body experienced curious afflictions, like needles piercing their flesh. Unless persuaded, evaded or subdued, the Watch will not let the Investigators in. Throughout this conversation, remind the players that the Watch move like puppets, their jaws flapping out of time with their words.*

On the front door is an ornate brass knocker, shaped like a fish with two massive eyes, its lips clutching an iron ring. If an Investigator knocks, no-one answers, but the knock echoes in the Investigator's mind and the witches start to whisper thoughts of vengeance to them. The Investigators may enter either through this door, the back door or a window, none of which are locked.

When they enter, the Investigators feel as they have been transported to another place and time. There is a sensation of walking through a wall of ice. Inside, the house is lit dimly with a violet glow, with no apparent source.

Throughout the Investigators' time in the house, use the Creeping Horrors. Have the witches whisper to the Investigators, their words incomprehensible at first and clearer later. Use doors to play tricks with reality: what the Investigators see through a door or window may not match what they see when they enter.

In the hallway, the stench of mould and moisture hits the Investigators. Tiny weeds grow through the floorboards. The Investigators tread through

a heavy blanket of dust, too thick to have settled since Christopher's death.

All in all, the hallway appears to have been abandoned for years, although Investigators who have visited Christopher recently remember that *a few days earlier, the hallway was in good condition. In the dust, there are two sets of faint footprints: a large set of prints from the Watch, but also a smaller set of prints, probably from a woman.*

To the left of the hallway is the kitchen. It is damp and unclean, with a nauseating, rotten stench, from food left decaying in the cupboards for months. It is unnaturally cold here: the Investigators' breath comes out like mist. They have the unnerving feeling that they are standing in snow, the floorboards seeming to crunch under their feet.

To the right of the hallway is a living space, dwarfed by a large fireplace. Unlike the hallway and kitchen, it appears as though Christopher lived here recently.

In the fire's ashes are charred pieces of paper, one fragment of which reads *"-they will come for you, your puni-"*, in a scrawl which Investigators may recognise as Diana Cotterill's handwriting. On the ceiling, there is a black stain in the shape of a large rectangle. Investigators who know the house might remember that the room above is the bedroom.

If the Investigators spend much time in this room, they might start to see shadows shifting behind doors. There is a growing feeling that *something ancient and familiar is watching them.*

From the hallway, a rotting staircase leads to a cramped landing. As the Investigators climb the stairs, the witches whisper, asking the Investigators to "help them", explaining that what they did was "justified". Don't explain what this means and don't let the Investigators engage the witches in conversation: it is creepier if the players do not understand what is happening.

At the top of the stairs is a single door, which stands ajar, only a sliver of darkness visible through it. When the door is pushed open, the darkness fills the entire doorway. No light penetrates it and nothing can be seen beyond.

If someone steps through, they are momentarily enveloped by the darkness, before finding themselves in a bedroom. If they look back, the darkness still lingers in the doorway. They cannot see or hear anyone on the landing and people on the landing cannot see or hear them.

Ask them to roll to understand what has occurred, rolling the Failure Die against them. If they succeed, they understand they are, in some indefinable way, somewhere different from they were before. On a 5, they remember how, at the Inghams' hanging, the figures appeared out of the fog and understand that they have materialised in a similar way. On a 6, they understand that the door acts as a gateway, leading between realms, times, places, dimensions, realities.

This is Christopher's bedroom, a large and airy attic. The first thing that hits the Investigators is a putrid stench of decaying flesh and stagnant body fluid.

In the centre is a double bed, its headboard smashed and its legs splintered, as if a great force has crushed it. The bed slats and mattress are crushed into the floor, leaving holes through which the Investigators can see the living room below, although they may recall that, in the living room, *there was no hole in the ceiling*. There is no sign of what crushed the bed: *both the roof and the beams above the bed are intact. No human could have pressed down with enough force to cause the damage*.

As the Investigators look closer, they see a figure on the bed, covered with a white sheet. It is motionless. When they pull back the sheet, they see the body of Christopher Miles.

The body has been crushed into a mangled mess. Bodily fluids leak from his pores and orifices. The smell is overwhelming. Every bone in his body has been crushed, his skin the only thing keeping the viscera inside. *On his wrists and neck are claw marks*: it looks as though the claws were driven through his skin, like nails, holding him in place as he was crushed.

From now onwards, the witches whisper clearly to the Investigators, asking them to avenge the Inghams. Pass a note to a player saying that

“Christopher deserved it” or “He was guilty”, explaining that they hear these words in their head. If any respond positively, give them a spell.

On a desk is a blood-splattered letter from Christopher to Jonathan Blackburne, the Constable of the Watch, stating his intention to flee. It also implicates Diana Cotterill, who lives at the Arkham Inn.

When someone reads the letter, ask for a roll, rolling the Failure Die against them. If they succeed, they notice *something written faintly on the paper*, which they can read if they hold the letter up to the light. It is a floor plan of the Ingham's house, with a wall on the upper floor circled.

The rest of Christopher's bedroom is in disarray, with cupboards flung open and a hastily-packed satchel. Clearly, *Christopher was fleeing*.

If, while they are in the room, an Investigator looks at the window, they see something unnatural of your choice. It might be shadows moving in the darkness. It might be a woman standing by the bed. Or it might be Christopher's body, sat upright in bed, staring at them, although if they turn back, his body is lying where it had been.

When the Investigators leave, you have a choice: you can end with an eerie moment or a full-blown Scene of Horror (see page 35).

If you want to end with an eerie moment, tell the Investigators, as they leave through the bedroom door, that they feel as if the corpse is watching. If they look back through the door, the room is engulfed in darkness. Whispers emerge from the dark.

If you want to end with a Scene of Horror — which is especially effective later in the investigation — mention, as the Investigators are leaving, that they hear the bed creak. Their breath forms mist, as the room becomes unnaturally cold. When they look back, Christopher's body is sat upright under the sheet.

The sheet falls away, revealing Christopher's animated corpse. Blood and gore ooze from every orifice. As he tries to speak, his head rolls grotesquely on his broken neck. Then his shattered



jaw moves, commanding the Investigators to kill “those that harm their kin.” The Investigators may realise that *something is speaking through Christopher’s body*.

If any of the Investigators gave evidence against the Inghams, the voice tells them they are traitors, and instructs them to “redeem themselves and take vengeance.” It tells the Investigators to take revenge on Jonathan Blackburne or Rose Mercer. If anyone agrees, reward them with a spell.

When the conversation is over, the body slumps back down and the Investigators may leave.

## THE FIRST CHURCH OF ARKHAM

The Church is a menacing stone building with pale windows. Engraved double doors, ominous and warped, lead into the dark interior. As they push them open, the Investigators feel both unwelcome and, curiously, at home.

Inside are rows of plain pews, facing a stone altar covered with a white sheet. There are candles throughout, but *the darkness seems to swallow their light*.

As the Investigators approach the altar, they feel an inviting but unnatural energy. Carved into the stone are *faint runic carvings in an unknown language*, although, if the Investigators lift the sheet, they see *these have been aggressively scratched out*. Anyone who translates the runes understands that they describe the *malleability of time and space*.

On the altar sits a goblet of wine and two dim candles. There is also a pamphlet entitled “Witchcraft, a most holy enquiry: How persons most guilty of consorting with Him and His Ilk may be convicted.” Anyone reading this pamphlet understands, instinctively and instantly, that *witchery exists, but that something far darker and stranger than the devil is responsible for it*. If anyone rolls a 6 while investigating, they feel intense, uncontrolled feelings of vengeance,

together with an unshakeable certainty that all accusations of consorting with the devil are fiction.

Lurking at the back of the church is Father Lewis, who acted as the prosecutor at the trial. When he sees the Investigators, he demands they leave the church immediately, even if they attend services regularly.

This is because he remembers that, following previous trials, *those giving evidence against witches have died without explanation*. He will reveal this if questioned, along with the fact that *he is terrified the Investigators will kill him*.

If asked who the witches are, he knows that Christopher Miles believed that *Diana Cotterill was involved in witchery with the Inghams*. And, indeed, as the Investigators talk to Father Lewis, the witches begin whispering to them that he must die.

At the rear of the church are Father Lewis’ tiny quarters. Beside his bed lies an old and forbidding book, containing a family tree of Arkham’s founders. From this, the Investigators can trace their lineage back to those who were long ago accused of witchery and discover that *they are directly related to the Ingham’s family through blood*.

## THE WATCH HOUSE

Towards the east of Arkham is a converted stable, where the Watch receive orders, restock supplies and keep their records of the town.

When the Investigators enter, they see a hall with tables and benches, on which cloaks, boots, armour, lanterns and oil are laid out. Tell the Investigators that *they find these items revolting and unwelcome*.

Unless the Investigators entered stealthily or waited until the building was unoccupied, several members of the Watch jerk to life as the Investigators enter. They lurch woodenly towards the Investigators, with empty and lifeless eyes, and the witches whisper to the Investigators to kill them. If the Investigators attack, ask for a roll,

but do not roll the Failure Die against them: after all, it is much more interesting if the guards die.

Once the Watch are dispatched, persuaded or otherwise dealt with, the Investigators find a rota and list of assignments on a table.

From these, they learn that *the Watch have orders to guard Christopher Miles' house, follow Diana Cotterill and watch certain families* — including the Investigators — for occult activity. There is also a record of a guard disappearing at the Ingham house.

At the back of the Watch House is Jonathan Blackburne's office. It contains a large table and an unlit fireplace. Papers and ledgers are scattered over the table and piled untidily on the floor.

If the Investigators search the office, they find *a letter to Blackburne from Father Lewis*, which explains that unnatural events are plaguing Arkham and suggests watching those “tainted by their ancestry.” Lewis names several such tainted families, including the Investigators.

In one of the piles of documents is a list of those who testified against the Inghams. The Investigators may realise that *Blackburne encouraged many of these people, including Christopher Miles, to lie*. As the Investigators read, the witches whisper to them, urging them to wreak justice on the people on the list.

The Investigators may also find confessions from Christopher Miles and Rose and Amelia Mercer, together with an account from Blackburne of the supernatural events that have occurred.

If the Investigators arrive after Blackburne's murder, they find a somewhat different scene.

First, as they approach the office, the Investigators see Blackburne alive and standing at the window. However, when they pass through the door, they see his body, contorted over his desk.

His bones and his skin are stretched, making him appear inhuman. The body is blackened and charred, his teeth melted together and his eyes boiled in their sockets.

## JONATHAN BLACKBURNE

Blackburne is a stoic, stubborn and God-fearing man. After years of work, his passion for justice is tarnished, leaving him barely concerned about the truth.

The Investigators may meet Blackburne anywhere in Arkham, but especially in the Watch House or about the streets. Mention that he moves mechanically, with empty wooden eyes, a puppet rather than human.

If asked about Christopher Miles' death, Blackburne accuses the Investigators of conspiring to kill Christopher. In fact, the Investigators may sense that *he is deeply frightened, since he knows there is something supernatural about the death*. He believes that Christopher was murdered by witches — although he believes the witches are human rather than supernatural — and knows that *this has happened repeatedly since Arkham's records began*. Throughout this conversation, the witches whisper that Blackburne must die.

If the Investigators question further — or if they roll a 5 while asking about other things — they discover that Blackburne has a personal reason for hating the witches. *His daughter, Mary, is under their influence*. After Blackburne found her wandering the streets with a knife, he locked her in the cellar of his house.

Having discovered this, the Investigators may go to Blackburne's home. There, they find Gillian Blackburne, whom Jonathan has forbidden from leaving the house. Indeed, many in Arkham believe she and her daughter are weak from illness.

Gillian admits that *she is plagued by whispers from the witches*, who constantly entreat her to join them and take vengeance.

In the cellar is Mary, who repeatedly draws chalk doorways to the witch realm, but, to her tearful frustration, is unable to open them. If asked, she readily admits that, following previous witch trials, *she helped to murder townsfolk who gave evidence against the witches*.

# THE ARKHAM INN

The old timber inn looks perpetually out of place, as though it does not fully belong to Arkham. It is crooked, its walls standing at odd angles, and there is a sense that *the beams should not support the building in the way they do*.

As the Investigators enter, they feel a *burning sense of injustice*. The witches whisper, suggesting they take the life of Rose Mercer, who stays in one of the upstairs rooms. While the Investigators are at the inn, describe Creeping Horrors frequently: have the witches whisper often and describe people as if they were puppets.

In the inn's main room, where the trial took place, are stools and benches which face a great fireplace, where a fire burns with an oppressive heat.

Here, Arkham locals drink, talk and eat. The Watch are conspicuously absent: indeed, they only come here for trials, and the Investigators may sense that *the building rejects them*.

If they do so discreetly, the Investigators may question the customers, and indeed they may know many of them. It emerges that *many have had fever dreams since the trial*, like those of the Investigators. If asked about Christopher Miles, *some remember him drinking with Diana Cotterill*, although he later seemed afraid and avoided her.

Some customers are those who gave evidence against the Inghams. If asked, most repeat what they said at the trial, telling *stories of faint purple lights shining from buildings, rats with human faces scurrying through the streets and the Ingham girls hexing members of the Watch* so that they had accidents. Some, however, admit they embellished their stories or lied outright, because *Blackburne urged them to do so*.

While talking to those who gave evidence — and especially if they roll a 6 while investigating — the Investigators may notice red scratches or rope marks on these people's bodies. Throughout the conversations, the witches whisper, commenting on what the customers say (“That is a lie”).

The barkeep is Adam Mercer, a jovial gentleman in his forties, whose daughters Rose and Amelia act as barmaids. He appears happy and welcoming, but the Investigators may sense that *this is a facade*.

He reveals that *those staying at the inn have complained of nightmares*, and that the doors behave strangely, with *pools of blackness behind them*. In the rooms, he has found *various instruments whose purpose he does not understand*.

If asked about Diana Cotterill, Mercer relates that *she visited Christopher Miles on the night of the trial* and returned looking flustered and terrified. He also remembers *Diana talking to the Inghams* before their hanging. More recently, *he has heard voices at night from her room* upstairs, speaking words he cannot understand. If asked about his daughters, his eyes fill with terror, although he admits that he does not believe everything they say.

The Investigators may also question Rose and Amelia. They are twins and nearly twenty. Rose is spiteful and Amelia timid.

*Rose bullied Amelia into testifying against the Inghams at the trial*. Since then, Amelia has *felt crushing guilt*, while Rose has become *embroiled in defending and expanding on the lies*. Both have been marked by the witches, Amelia with a noose and Rose with boils on her hands, and both *suffer dreams of blood and vengeance*.

If asked about the Inn, they have noticed that *things fall from the tables without being touched, purple lights glow from under doors and the shadows seem to be watching*. If the Investigators linger long enough, describe some of these effects happening.

A stone staircase leads through a doorway to the upper landing. The floor is covered in dust, as though no-one has been in the inn for years. This floor is where the inn's residents live, including Diana Cotterill and the Mercer family.

The door to Diana Cotterill's room is closed. A violet light creeps from beneath. As the Investigators enter, the witches whisper that Diana is a friend.

Diana is a tall, aging and gaunt woman, with thinning steely grey hair. When the Investigators enter, she sits neatly on her small bed. She smiles fondly at any Investigators who gave evidence to support the Inghams and stares malevolently at others. Diana does not talk or prevent the Investigators searching her room: she is, as the Investigators may realise, *an empty vessel being used by dark forces*.

On the bed, Diana's clothes are neatly folded. If the Investigators look closely, they notice *the hems of the sleeves are stained with blood*. If anyone rolls a 6 while investigating this, they understand, without knowing how, that *the blood is that of Christopher Miles*.

There is also a tiny cupboard, which hides *a bizarre collection of objects from throughout time*: a square of impossibly fine cloth, a bag of bitter herbs and a piece of unidentifiable stone. These are, although the Investigators do not know it, a gentleman's cravat, a teabag and a twisted lump of concrete. If anyone rolls a 6, they sense that both these objects and the witches are from beyond time.

On the wall, a door is drawn in chalk, in unintelligible but oddly familiar runes. If the mystery seems to be drawing to a close — and especially if Rose Mercer has died — you might decide this leads to the Screaming Circle (see below). If Diana is present, she may guide the Investigators through this door.

In another room on this floor, the Investigators may find Rose Mercer's room, which adjoins that of her sister and father.

As the Investigators approach, the witches whisper, asking the Investigators to punish Rose. If anyone agrees, they grant the spell "Boil".

Shortly afterwards, Rose argues with her sister in whispers behind the bar. She retreats upstairs, her movements jerky and wooden, then enters her room and goes to sleep.

When the Investigators enter, Rose is asleep on the bed. If they cast "Boil", Rose thrashes and writhes, trying to scream but with no sound coming out. Her skin blisters and bubbles until she is a husk of melted flesh and bone. Afterwards,

the witches praise the Investigators, invite them to the Screaming Circle and show them the door in Diana's room.

If the Investigators refuse to kill Rose, Diana emerges from her room to do so. She casts "Boil" on Rose, as above. Throughout, she acts as a vacant puppet, not responding to the Investigators.

If the Investigators enter after Rose has been killed, they find her body on the bed. She appears to have been boiled in hot water, although the bed and sheets are dry. On the ground is *a woman's hairpin*, made of an unidentifiable material and clearly out of time. As the Investigators examine the scene, they feel a strong sense that Rose's death is justified and right.

## THE INGHAM HOUSE

The Ingham House stands on the outskirts of Arkham, curved and warped. The doors and windows flow slowly like running water. As the Investigators approach, they feel as though they are coming home.

Throughout the Investigators' time in the house, use the Creeping Horrors obviously and often. Play tricks with time, as you did in the Miles House, especially when the Investigators step through doors or are in separate rooms. Have the witches whisper frequently. Additionally, the Investigators should frequently glimpse the Ingham girls, in the corner of their eye and in reflective surfaces.

The hallway is derelict, as if the house has been abandoned for decades. Floorboards are rotten, rain drips through holes in the roof and rats scurry around the Investigators' feet.

The kitchen is clean and well-dusted, as if the Inghams still live here, although the window always shows darkness and mist outside, regardless of the time of day. It contains a table, set with one place for each Investigator, plus two more. If an Investigator looks in the window, they glimpse the reflection of the Ingham girls sitting upright at the table, their skin white and their eyes empty. When the Investigators look back, there is no-one sitting there.

In a cupboard is a headscarf and simple jewellery. *These belonged to Victoria Ingham, Peter's reclusive wife.* The Investigators may remember that, *even when she was alive, they only saw her occasionally,* staring blankly out of the kitchen window.

The living room is in disarray, as if there has been a struggle. *This is where the Watch arrested the Ingham family.* From time to time, a piece of furniture breaks or collapses, as if the struggle is still happening. The Investigators feel overwhelming injustice and anger.

In the corner, a spinning wheel lies on its side. If anyone sits at the wheel or touches it, give them the spell "Prick", together with an urging for vengeance.

There is a door under the stairs, behind which a shaft drops directly down. If the Investigators are foolhardy enough to brave the twenty-foot drop, they find a slimy, dark and stinking tunnel at the bottom. If they follow it, they eventually see a soft violet light at the end, then find themselves in the Screaming Circle (below).

At the top of the stairs, there is a small landing with two doors. One leads to Peter Ingham's room, the other to the Ingham girls' bedroom.

In Peter Ingham's room is a large, neatly-made bed. Beside it, a candle burns on a small table, although there is no-one here who could have lit it. It does not get any smaller as it burns. At a suitably dramatic moment, have the candle blow out.

There is also a chest of drawers, containing a tattered book whose title is too faded to read. It details the ancestry of the Inghams and demonstrates *a direct link between the Inghams and the Investigators' family.* Curiously, *several generations of the ancestors are listed as living in Arkham,* although the town was founded only two generations ago.

While reading the book — and especially if they roll a 6 — the Investigators sense that *they are connected to the witches by blood.* They also realise that, *although the witches are their ancestors, they also exist outside of time.* The Investigators understand that the witches *both settled in*

*Arkham in the early 1600s and existed there long before humans arrived.*

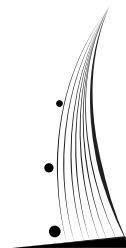
On a dusty dresser, the Investigators find a woman's belongings. They also find objects they do not recognise: these are, in fact, make-up from the mid-twenty-first century and Tarot cards from nineteenth-century London. Describe these as if the Investigators have never seen them before: for example, "An impossibly smooth golden tube with an engraved line around the middle, which, when pulled apart, contains an unidentifiable moist red substance."

When the Investigators look into the girls' room, they see a dim, neat bedroom, with two single beds.

However, when they cross the threshold, this suddenly changes. The beds are untidy and slashed. Blood-stained footprints, from one of the Watch, lead towards the wall opposite and then suddenly stop.

*A wooden doll, abandoned underneath one of the beds, is carved to look like Jonathan Blackburne and has ash-covered pins stuck into it.* As the Investigators search, they hear the voice of Lucy Ingham whispering about revenge.

On one wall, where the footprints stop, a chalk door is inscribed, surrounded by runes. A piece of snapped white chalk lies beside it. This is the gateway to the Screaming Circle.



# THE SCREAMING CIRCLE

On an island in the Miskatonic River is a circle of monolithic white stones. They have stood since long before Arkham was founded and will stand after it has gone. This is the Screaming Circle.

When you feel like the mystery is building to a climax, have the Investigators step through a door and arrive here. This might be the chalk door in the Arkham Inn, the similar door in the Ingham House or any other door. Try using the witches or Diana Cotterill to direct the Investigators to one of the chalk doors.

Once through the door, the Investigators find themselves among the stones. Behind them is a doorway, standing on its own without supporting walls. There is no way to get back. At the Investigators' feet is a spatter of blood, tattered pieces of guard uniform and a pair of discarded boots, scattered with human viscera.

On each stone, a doorway is drawn in ancient runes. Between each pair of stones stands a witch, naked and pale. Among them are the Inghams and Diana Cotterill. They do not speak.

Behind the stones, scenes from the past and the future roll past, emerging from the mist, then sinking back into it. One scene shows dreamlike white buildings, in orderly squares, with a stinking river beside them. Another shows a village of tiny round houses, standing around a single tree, in a desert of red sand. A third scene shows spiralling, gleaming towers, rising into the sky. All this is accompanied by the screams of dying witches, rising and falling on the wind, sometimes whispering and sometimes deafening.

In the centre of the circle is an altar, which resembles the altar from the First Church of Arkham. On it rests an open leather book with an infinite number of parchment pages. If an Investigator looks closer, they see their own names, alongside the names of other villagers. Next to some of the villagers' names are signatures.

Lucy Ingham approaches the Investigators. She takes someone's hand, leads them to the book and gestures for them to sign against their name.

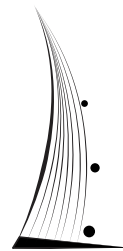
What do the Investigators do? Ask each of the players in turn. Don't tell them what happens if they sign.

If one of the Investigators refuses to sign, the witches take instant revenge. Have the witches ask one of the other Investigators to kill them, giving a spell if needed. If no Investigators are willing to kill, Lucy Ingham casts a spell herself, which kills the disobedient Investigator.

If an Investigator attempts to flee, they may try to dodge past the witches. Make them roll for this, rolling the Failure Die against them, and tell them that failure means death. They may either run through one of the doors or leap into the timeless void beyond. Either way, they find themselves in a different place and time. One day, they might find their way back to their own reality.

If they sign, they are welcomed into their new family. From now on, they only feel two emotions: a driving desire for vengeance and a calm peace after they kill. They have no memory and feel no pain.

One day, they will be hung or burned for their actions. When this happens, their souls will join the witches, becoming part of something greater and more terrifying.



## THE CAMPAIGN

If you want to play the four Cthulhu Dark mysteries in this book as a mini-campaign, start with this mystery and play until you get to the Screaming Circle.

When Lucy Ingham approaches the Investigators, that's where you change things. Rather than taking the Investigators to sign the book, she offers to show them who the witches are and the reality behind the universe.

She leads the Investigators towards a door in a stone. Behind the door are images of another time and place, depending on the mystery you want to happen next: dreamlike white buildings beside a stinking river for London 1851, tiny round houses in a desert of red sand for Jaiwo 2017 or spiralling towers for Mumbai 2037. She invites them to step through the door.

When they do, they experience a sensation of flying at terrifying speed. They then find themselves in another body. They quickly forget their Arkham Investigator and become someone else.

Then start *Screams of the Children*, *The Curse of the Zimba* or *Consume*. In these mysteries, the players play new Investigators, with no memory of what happened in Arkham.

When that mystery completes, the Investigators find themselves back in the Screaming Circle, as their Arkham Investigators. Lucy smiles, then takes them to another door, which leads to the next mystery.

When all the other mysteries are complete, conclude *The Doors Beyond Time* as described in the main text, with Lucy Ingham taking the Investigators to the book to sign their names.

You can, of course, use other short mysteries rather than the ones in this book. Whatever mystery you want to use, the Investigators start it when they walk through the door. When the mystery is over, they find themselves back in the Screaming Circle.

# HANDOUTS

## A LETTER TO JONATHAN BLACKBURNE FROM CHRISTOPHER MILES

Sir,

We are united in our opinion of the spirits that torment our neighbors. They are a most unholy affront to the Almighty God and our vigilance against them must be unceasing.

Yet the devil has power and, in your battle against these things, I fear you empower him more, most especially by your use of lies as a weapon. I entreat you to reconsider your management of this affair. When so many souls are lost and so much blood is shed, we must come humbly before God and ask whether our efforts against this extraordinary power are vain.

For myself, I doubt my strength, and I choose to flee rather than fall under the power of the darkness that sweeps Arkham, in the hope that the great God will grant forgiveness. Indeed, I have felt the eye of Diana Cotterill, who I fear is under their power. I throw myself unto the mercy of God and hope to sail from Boston tomorrow.

I entreat, nay implore, you again to consider whether this is a battle you can win. In this and in all else, I come to you as a friend, a man of God and, Sir, your servant

Christopher Miles



## **A LETTER TO JONATHAN BLACKBURNE FROM FATHER LEWIS**

Sir,

Given the unnatural events plaguing our fair settlement, you would know whether I believe we should hold our course. I humbly submit that we should.

The Devil tempts us to turn aside from the road that the great God had laid for us. We have begun to cleanse this land from witchcraft and, God willing, we shall succeed.

Within the church, I have discovered that many Arkham families are tainted by their ancestry. The Ingham family have the most disastrous link through their female line to those in consortium with the demonic. The girls have been partaking in the most heinous of acts. I implore you to take action against them first, before their youth disappears and they are able to harness their true power with an adult's cunning mind.

Other families, too, are tied to the Inghams by blood, including the Warrens, the Cotterills, the Williams, the Masons and Coreys. It seems right that we begin with the Warrens.

Sir, in this matter which threatens our very souls and the heart of Arkham, I am, your servant

Father Lewis



## **CONFESSIONS OF CHRISTOPHER MILES REGARDING THE INGHAM WITCHES**

“In the early evening, on my usual walk just after dusk, I have glimpsed from the topmost room of their house a most peculiar source of light. It is a purple iridescence I cannot quite describe. Although only a light, it is offensive in a way that makes no clear sense. In the days, I have seen the girls walk hand in hand in complete silence towards the river.”

## **CONFESSION OF ROSE MERCER REGARDING THE INGHAM CURSE**

“Myself and my sister have always been good to little Lucy and Eliza. After their mother died we took them bread and tried to include them in our games. They spoke to us in strange tongues and stared. Then when I was alone with Eliza, she pointed at me and I had a fit. She was very devious as she did it where no one could see. Then my sister and I suffered from terrible fevers and sicknesses. They cursed us.”

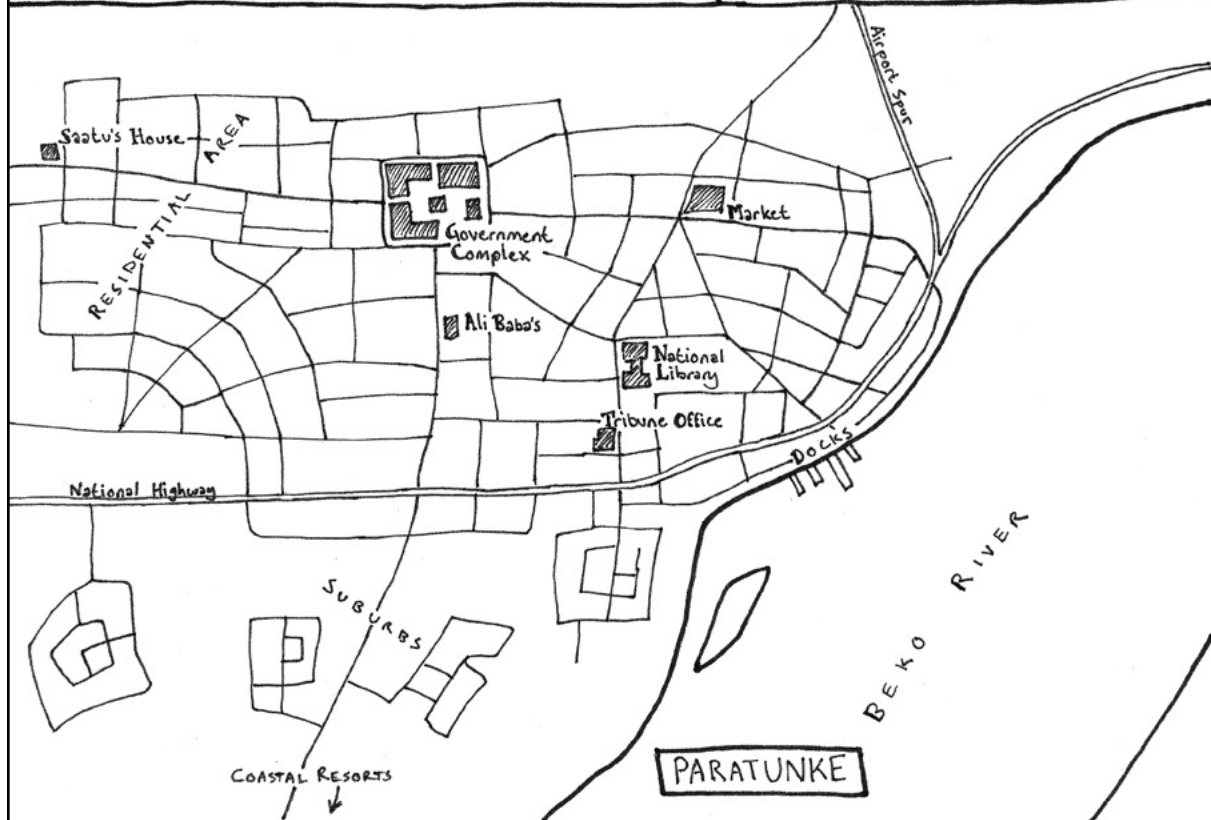
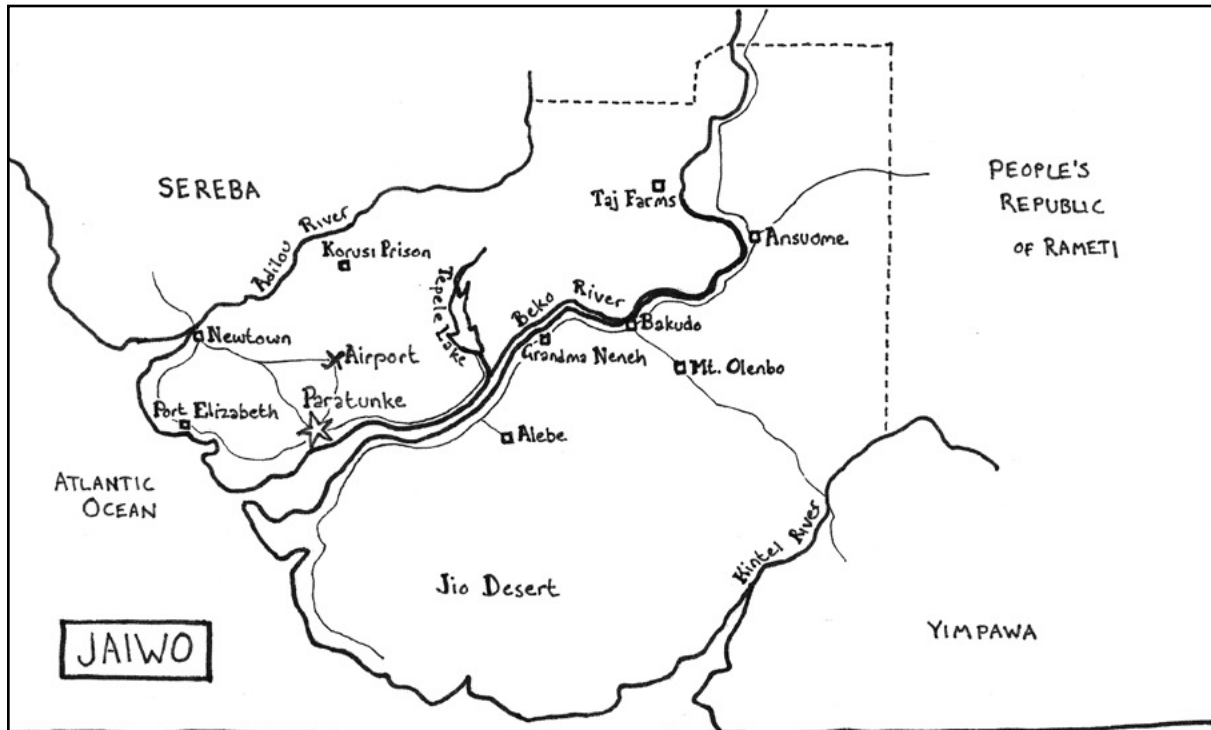
## **CONFESSION OF AMELIA MERCER REGARDING THE INGHAM CURSE**

“I agree with my sister. What she says is true. They cursed us. I have no more to say.”

## **ACCOUNT OF JONATHAN BLACKBURNE**

“Several accounts from the public and my men, all good men, have brought forward claims of vile behaviour on the part of the father and young girls remaining in the Ingham family. Some state that their witchery was the cause of the mother's death. I have had reports of man-faced rats skulking in the early morning mists by their home. I have had reports of strange colours in the windows of the house and of dogs refusing to pass by the house, their tails between their legs. I, myself, having prosecuted witches before, feel the same unsettled feeling when I look at them as I did with the others found guilty.”





# JAIWO 2017

HELEN GOULD



The heat is like a prison, suffocating, smothering and inescapable. Even if you have air conditioning, the electricity keeps failing and the heat rushes in, pushing the air out of your lungs. But you deal with it, because everyone else does.

Wildlife is everywhere: stray dogs and cats, geckos and lizards, insects in the air and underfoot. They are wild and hostile, attacking without provocation.

The roads are black tarmac, which end abruptly at the sides. Sometimes, as you travel, the road dissolves into a patch of red sand with market stalls or a post office. Alongside the road are rubbish heaps, on which people walk, as if they were strolling on grassy hills.

The red sand gets everywhere. It stains white clothes, creeps into your shoes and gets stuck in your eyes and ears.

Night falls quickly. You stare into blackness, listening to everything around you that is still awake.

The dark is alive with the sound of insects: crickets outside, mosquitoes inside, buzzing beside your ear. In the morning, whether or not you used a mosquito net, you find you have been bitten.

This is Jaiwo, a small country on the West coast of Africa. In its capital city, Paratunke, the Investigators will be found.

# THE INVESTIGATORS

Investigators in Jaiwo are middle-class: that is, they are lucky enough to have a good job. They may have lived in Jaiwo all their lives or they may have returned, permanently or temporarily, to find everything just as they left it.

Make sure the Investigators are from Jaiwo and black. Avoid the temptation to play visitors from other parts of the world.

## NAMES

Choose names that are biblical, old-fashioned or recognisably West African.

Simple names are John, Mary, Noah, Ola, Agoy, Femi, Joshua, Kofi, Eku, Kwesi, Nyima, Esther, Moses, Ruth and Samuel.

More complex names are Zachariah, Barnabas, Tabitha, Oladimeji, Sisifanny, Abiodun and Mamkumba.

Older characters might have “Uncle” or “Aunt” in front of their name: for example, Uncle Billy, Auntie Tabitha.

# OCCUPATIONS

## JOURNALIST

There are two newspapers in the country. One is the mouthpiece of the government, while the other, the Jaiwo Tribune, reports the real news.

Journalists who work for the government-owned paper earn more and get valuable perks. This makes them either cynical or devoted to the status quo. They know they have a good deal, even if it means being a little corrupt.

Those who work for the free paper are poorer, more honest and better at their jobs. Despite this, they rarely report anything overtly critical of the president, since people who do so have been known to disappear. These journalists tend to be bitter.

Journalists know how things work in Jaiwo and whom to talk to in order to get information. They are adept at getting people to speak, using bribery if necessary.

When you have a journalist among your Investigators, put people in your mysteries who are reluctant to speak the truth and must be persuaded. Try having a journalist from the other paper involved in the mystery.

Journalists might get the Occupation die when:

- ▶ Interviewing someone in authority.
- ▶ Figuring out the truth about a cover-up.
- ▶ Understanding how the government maintains power.

## TEACHER

Not all children in Jaiwo attend school. Many families have higher priorities, such as getting food on the table. Nevertheless, education is still seen as a route out of poverty, especially by the middle classes.

Investigators work at the public schools, rather than the well-funded private academies. They earn less than teachers at those academies, leading some to moonlight as tutors for wealthy citizens. Public schools are underfunded, with few materials and resources.

Most schools are religious — either Muslim or Christian — with strict codes of discipline. Teachers must either belong to one of these religions or outwardly conform to it.

When you have a teacher among your Investigators, try to involve children or schools in your mystery. Try a mystery that is entirely set within a private or public school.

Teachers might roll the Occupation die when:

- ▶ Speaking to a child.
- ▶ Using skills related to whatever their subject area is.
- ▶ Knowing how schools are run.

## PRIEST

Priests are a familiar sight in Jaiwo, wearing vestments and dog-collars. They are always well-known, often well-respected and sometimes well-liked.

They seem friendly and wise, whether or not they actually are. Most engage in faith healing, laying hands upon the sick and blessing water and food. Some believe this works, while others find ways to justify it to themselves.

All priests are attached to a church. If the church has money, it has stained glass, incense, hymns, pews and choirboys in robes. If it does not, it is likely to be an open building where people sit on the floor to listen to songs and the sermon. Most priests belong to the Church of England, although there are some Catholics.

When there is a priest in the mystery, try to involve issues of faith and religion. Challenge their belief in a benevolent deity by presenting them with the hyperpowerful, uncaring creatures of the Mythos.

Priests may roll the Occupation die for:

- ▶ Knowing something about Christianity or other religions.
- ▶ Instinctively understanding whether someone is spiritual or not.

## STORYTELLER

Storytellers remember family histories and major events. At weddings, christenings, baptisms and funerals, they are paid to recite the history of those involved.

When a baby is named, the storyteller recites the story of its heritage. They say whom the baby is named after and what is important about that person's life; who the baby's parents are and how they came to be married; who their grandparents are and how they came to be married: and so on. Afterwards, the storyteller is showered in money, amongst dancing and singing.

Storytellers are rare and highly valued, their skills passed down through generations. Despite this,

storytelling is not a lucrative profession, and most storytellers have a mundane day job.

When there is a storyteller in the game, include the history of the local area and its people in your mystery. Try especially introducing an unhappy family. When a storyteller encounters someone, they might roll to recall a fact about their history.

Storytellers may roll the Occupation die for:

- ▶ Knowing the history of a person, place or object.
- ▶ Knowing important landmarks and events.
- ▶ Knowing about traditions.

## HAIRDRESSER

Those who “do hair” are always in demand. Hairdressers can braid, twist, loc, straighten and perm and, as importantly, know how to handle their customers.

Their clientele are mostly women and children: men usually shave their heads instead, although some visit a hairdresser for cornrows. Whatever the style, a hairdresser knows how to do it, and may suggest improvements: a longer cut to suit someone's face or a style that is easier to manage. They also advise on make-up and styling.

Hairdressers advertise their work through word-of-mouth. Most have their own shop, selling hair extensions, wigs and weaves, although some are “on call”, travelling to clients' houses. Talk and gossip is part of the job and hairdressers have a well-deserved reputation for bluntness.

When you have a hairdresser as an Investigator, it is helpful if some of the people they meet in the mystery are their clients or people they have heard their clients speak about. If you find it hard to give hairdressers opportunities to use their occupational skill, let them use their Occupation Die for putting people at ease, making judgements based on someone's appearance and other things indirectly related to hairdressing.

Hairdressers may roll the Occupation die for:

- ▶ Getting people to trust them.
- ▶ Recognising the work of another hairdresser.
- ▶ Understanding something about a person from their appearance.

## SHOPKEEPER

Shopkeepers are savvy business-people with a keen eye for prices. Whatever they sell — food, clothes, school supplies or other goods — competition is fierce.

Shopkeepers are essentially middle class: after all, they have invested in a business which provides them with an income. Their shops are usually based in residential neighbourhoods, which they know well.

Their businesses are always under threat from Western-style supermarkets, offering convenience at low cost. To survive, shopkeepers must find ways to compete. Some offer cheaper goods, legal or illegal, safe or unsafe. Some offer higher quality goods, imported from abroad.

To include a shopkeeper in your mystery, put a shop in it or set part of the mystery in the shopkeeper's neighbourhood. Try mysteries based around smuggling, contaminated goods or a new supermarket.

Shopkeepers might roll the Occupation die for:

- ▶ Knowing the price of things.
- ▶ Recognising good and bad quality products.
- ▶ Identifying business scams.

## CIVIL SERVANT

Jaiwo is corrupt. Civil servants who want to keep their job either ignore the corruption or become part of it.

Civil servants work in government, whether in housing, finance, health, military, transport, domestic affairs or foreign affairs. They come in two flavours: smug and wealthy (which usually means they are corrupt), or shy and scraping by (which usually means they keep quiet and avoid corruption).

Working in the heart of Paratunke, civil servants get close to — although they are unlikely to speak to — the richest and most powerful people in Jaiwo. Their relations are proud to have a civil servant in the family. After all, once a family is known in government, positions can be invented for other family members.

When you have a civil servant in your mystery, try to connect the government into the horror. Try basing a whole mystery around a horror at the heart of government, in which people are corrupted, not just by money, but by the Mythos.

Civil servants might roll an Occupation die for:

- ▶ Getting into government buildings.
- ▶ Accessing sensitive documents.
- ▶ Convincing authority figures to back down.

## SEX WORKER

Nobody talks about sex workers, but everybody knows they exist. They frequent Jaiwo's coast, gathering wherever the tourists are, in hotels, restaurants and bars. Visitors, especially older white men and women, get swept up in the charms of these "exotic" people, often returning for more.

Sex workers usually work alone, but know each other well. It is a small and supportive community. If someone goes missing, everyone knows.

Female sex workers usually entered their profession through necessity. Many have young children and an absentee husband: these workers hate what they do but put a brave face on it. Others enjoy their work, taking delight in fleecing tourists, then going home to their boyfriends.

Male sex workers convince white women that they are in love. The women, who pay for sex by buying gifts, may not even realise they are with a sex worker. When the women leave, they think it was simply an expensive holiday fling. The men promise to keep in touch. They never do.

There are also, of course, male sex workers who cater for men and women who cater for women. But these sex workers are much more secretive, since homosexuality in Jaiwo is illegal and heavily punished.

To involve sex workers in a mystery, include other sex workers and their clients in the story. Try setting your mystery around Jaiwo's coast, especially in the tourist areas.

Sex workers may roll an Occupation die for:

- ▶ Flirting with a potential client.
- ▶ Identifying other sex workers.

## TAXI DRIVER

Everyone, both tourists and locals, takes taxis in Jaiwo. The cars are in varying stages of collapse, some rattling, some covered in rust, some with holes in the floor.

When it comes to driving, nothing fazes a taxi driver. They drive fast and irresponsibly, slowing down only when they see the police, taking potholes, intersections and animals in their stride and at speed. Taxi drivers happily take more passengers than legal or safe.

Taxi drivers are notorious gossips, making small talk with their various customers. They are experts at getting passengers to talk, especially tourists, in hope of a tip.

Many taxi drivers live close to the poverty line, often struggling to feed their family. Those with children use them to find passengers: after all, the whole family must work together to keep food on the table.

When you have a taxi driver as an Investigator, give them opportunities to drive. Try locating parts of your mystery far from each other, which forces the Investigators to travel between them. You might even try a car chase.

Taxi drivers might roll the Occupation die for:

- ▶ Driving.
- ▶ Knowing the layout of Paratunke.
- ▶ Understanding what caused a crash.

## FISHING

Paratunke, being on the coast and beside a river, is ideal for fishing. Here, in vessels ranging from tiny canoes to large ships, fishermen and women ply their trade.

They rise before dawn or late at night, depending on tides and the type of fish they want to catch. The waters contain catfish, tilapia, barracuda, halibut, shrimp and many others. All of these appear unusually large to western tourists: barracuda, especially, grow up to a metre-and-a-half long, and hauling them on board takes great strength.

When the crew returns to shore, some take their catch directly to the market, where both fresh and dried fish stalls are popular. Others sell to store owners, who sell the fish onwards.

Like other trades in Jaiwo, fishing is a vocation that runs in families. Boats, skills and equipment are passed down from parent to child. When the parents are too old to work, the children take over and provide for them. Fishing families are rarely rich, but never go hungry: even if they catch nothing of value, there is always something that can be eaten.

To involve Investigators who fish for a living in your mystery, try setting it along the coast or including boats within it. Try a mystery in which, in some way, the fish become tainted. The Deep Ones (see page 54) are, again, an excellent Threat to use for fishing mysteries: try a mystery in which they make a deal with Paratunke's fishing families.

Fishermen and women might roll the Occupation die for:

- ▶ Knowing about the seas and rivers.
- ▶ Knowing about boats.
- ▶ Catching fish.

## BARTENDER

In bars throughout Jaiwo, bartenders serve alcohol, smile and keep the peace. They listen more than they speak and keep on good terms with everybody. When things get tough, their practiced, professional calm quickly defuses an escalating situation.

Bartenders see people at their worst, especially if their bar is near the beach. They are used to the violence and lewdness of tourists, knowing when to turn a blind eye, when to step in and when they can profit from stupidity. They get a lot of tips, especially from visitors who are both generous and forgetful about exactly how much 1,000 takare is worth.

To include a bartender in your mystery, try including a bar in it or at least somewhere where people drink alcohol. Try a mystery that starts with an incident in the bartender's bar.

Bartenders may roll the Occupation die for:

- ▶ Calming someone down.
- ▶ Getting information out of someone who has been drinking.
- ▶ Remembering something they have heard in their bar.

## DOCTOR

Jaiwo is not a place to get sick. There are two types of hospital: the main publicly-funded hospital, run directly by the government and widely distrusted, and the independent clinics, where most doctors are employed, overworked and underpaid.

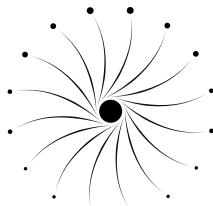
The most common illness is malaria, which almost everyone has had at least twice. It is rarely fatal, provided the patient gets the medicine. People in rural areas are less likely to do so, which means they are more likely to die. Doctors also attend births, especially home births.

Patients are often superstitious. Many believe they have been cursed, rather than accepting they are unwell. Others would rather visit a faith healer than a doctor.

If you have a doctor as an Investigator, include illnesses or mysterious deaths in your mystery. Try setting a mystery within a hospital, especially the government-run hospital.

Doctors might roll the Occupation die for:

- ▶ Identifying illnesses and medication.
- ▶ Knowing the medical histories of local families.
- ▶ Recognising cause of death.



# A GUIDE TO JAIWO

Lying on the west coast of Africa, Jaiwo is a narrow, flat country of red sand, which sits uneasily between larger and more powerful states.

After landing at Jaiwo's only airport, you drive for thirty minutes, past two roadblocks, to get to the capital city of Paratunke. There is little public transport: the only travel options are car, taxi or a small and unreliable bus.

When you reach Paratunke, you see dramatic contrasts of wealth and poverty, with well-tended public areas only five minutes' walk from the slums.

In bars and corner shops, old men gather, watching a television made in the nineties. They use chewing sticks and have never lost a tooth. Old women tend fruit stalls or watch grandchildren, shouting shrilly from chairs in the shade. Some people are dressed in business wear, some in traditional Jaiwoan prints, some in hand-me-down branded clothing. Shoes are optional for kids and the unemployed.

As you travel south, you come to the richer suburbs. Here, the houses have high walls, sturdy gates and are guarded: by night watchmen for those who have the money, by guard dogs for those who don't. You see occasional half-built houses, constructed for people living abroad. If you travelled inland from here, driving for an hour or more through the bush, you would come to the villages of rural Jaiwo.

Continuing south, you reach the coast. As you drive, large and elaborate buildings rise from the sand: these are hotel complexes for tourists, all within twenty minutes of the sea and the mouth of the river. They are surrounded by cafes, nightclubs, bars and local restaurant chains, all aimed at tourists.

When you reach the sea, you find an unexpectedly narrow beach, which is being eroded, centimetre by centimetre. The water is warm, though the sand will burn delicate feet. Locals walk up and down selling fruit and drinks, while tourists swim or work on their tans.

## PARATUNKE

Paratunke is a sprawling mass of streets, roads and alleys, which is notoriously hard to navigate. You might take a wrong turning on a tree-lined avenue and wander into the quieter sections of the market. Or you might duck into a narrow alleyway and find yourself on a busy street.

Under the previous President, the city was well-kept, but it has gone downhill since the 1990s. Older generations remember more streetlights, more pavements, fewer potholes. Now, the only areas that seem prosperous are a few streets around the central government buildings.

In the centre of Paratunke are the government buildings, surrounded by palm trees, with great arches along the main road. There are parks here, both small and large, constantly watered by sprinklers to keep them green. You can also find the mosque and churches, both Catholic and Anglican, along with the library, the university, the national museum, a cluster of banks and the occasional school. Here, in the centre, the police are most evident, patrolling in pairs to keep thieves, beggars and vandals away.

West is the market, a sprawling mass of indoor and outdoor shops and stalls. Tourists and locals peruse the wares, which include food, clothing, fabrics, pottery, cutlery, crockery, furniture and technology (mostly mobile phones and CD players).

The market is roughly divided into sections, each with its own shouts and smells. There is one street for fish, another for meat, another for spices, two for fruit and vegetables and three for fabric and clothing. Only tourists pay the prices they are told. Jaiwoans prefer to haggle amicably.

As you travel east, the roads change from tarmac to Jaiwo's natural red sand. These are the residential areas, where there are few street names and fewer streetlights. Open sewers run alongside the street, with planks placed across them as entrances to houses. Scruffy trees grow where they can and dogs and cats roam where they like. Bakeries stand on corners — people in Jaiwo eat fresh bread in the mornings — along with tiny cafes and corner shops.

In these areas, people live in compounds: squares of houses squashed together, with a communal space in the middle. Those who live in the same compound know each other like family. There is always a game of football going on, the children running around barefoot in their siblings' clothes. These children rarely go to school: they are needed at home or to help with their parents' businesses.

Although Paratunke's streets are full of traffic, few people own a car. Many Jaiwoans live their whole lives in one area, without needing to travel. For those who must travel, it is cheaper to take taxis than buy a vehicle. Those who do drive are constantly approached by vendors, offering fruit, nuts and drinks.

## COLONIALISM

Jaiwo was previously a British colony, before becoming independent in the 1960s. The scars of invasion and colonialism still remain.

Until the nineteenth century, Jaiwo was a major source of slaves, who were captured and transported to the Americas. Many died on the journey. Only a few found their way back to Jaiwo.

Soon afterwards, Jaiwo and the surrounding countries became British colonies. For over a century, the British tried to remake Jaiwo in their image, rejecting or outlawing Jaiwoan traditions.

When Jaiwo finally gained independence, the British abandoned the country. But there was a problem: the Jaiwoans struggled to remember how they had done things before. Ethnic groups, whom the British had treated as identical, had to rediscover their differing traditions and practices.

Today, the British influence still shows. Many Jaiwoans are Christian. Many older Jaiwoans were taught by British teachers on exchange programmes. The national language remains English, rather than one of the local languages.

Half a century after independence, Jaiwo is trying to make its way in the world. But the legacy of colonisation, which plundered its wealth and people, remains.



## GOVERNMENT

When the British left Jaiwo to its independence, they set up a President. Despite being unelected and supported by a corrupt government, he was fair and well-respected. He began building infrastructure for Jaiwo, with a focus on roads and education.

After a coup, he was ejected from power and replaced with the current President. This President, seemingly only interested in his own enrichment, let the economy slip, unemployment rise, education fail and medical facilities decay.

Along the way, he has alienated Jaiwo's neighbours and is accused of several human rights violations, including torture and executing prisoners. It is commonly acknowledged that his dictatorship relies on intimidation, the military and the complicity of corrupt officials.

## POLICE

The police are not to be trusted. They are the tools of the government, used when and where the President requires.

Most police are found in the centre of Paratunke, either guarding and patrolling state buildings, working at the prison or directing traffic at busy intersections. They wear brown uniforms with a green beret and can be of any gender.

Since they are not well paid, they supplement their income by stopping cars for spurious reasons, then demanding payment in exchange for the drivers' freedom. They might, for example, tell you that your light is broken, then demand payment for informing you of this. The better your car, the more likely you are to be stopped.

If the police ask for money, it is always best to pay them. If you do not, they will not hesitate to take you to the police station until someone you know comes to pay for you.

Despite the corruption of the police, there is little visible crime in Jaiwo. Aside from domestic violence, which is rarely reported, the main threats are scams, drugs, and thievery.

## ENTERTAINMENT

If one thing brings Jaiwoans together, it is football. Bars, cafes and corner shops have televisions and radios, around which customers gather to listen to matches. For boys and young men, the most common item of clothing is a football shirt.

Wrestling is popular too, with wrestlers fighting bare-handed in traditional clothing and body paint. Matches are fast and brutal, with no thought for safety.

Jaiwoans also love movies, especially those of Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry that produces many West African films. Despite their flaws — poor sound quality, mediocre acting, convoluted plots — these films are wildly popular.

Food and drink also brings people together. Most Jaiwoans can cook and social occasions are often based around eating and drinking in large amounts. Whenever you enter someone's home, expect to be offered far too much food and drink: if you refuse anything, expect your host's pointed surprise at how little you have eaten. There are also shisha bars, where people spend hours smoking and chatting.

## TOURISM

For Western tourists, Jaiwo is a cheap destination for sun, sea, and sand. Jaiwo makes most of its money from tourists, with hotels, nightclubs and souvenir shops catering for them.

When tourists arrive at the airport, they are often fleeced of their money by "porters", who overcharge or disappear with the suitcases. At the hotel, there are many ways to pass the time: bars, restaurants, nature reserves and boat rides down the river. There is the beach, full of sunbathers in one direction, fisherwomen and men in the other. That said, many tourists spend their entire holiday within their hotel complex, enjoying pools, gardens and pathways to private beaches.

For most tourists, Jaiwo exists for their enjoyment. This isn't the real world, where people live, die and raise families, but a holiday destination. Local people sense this and keep their bitterness behind their teeth.

## **FAMILY AND HOSPITALITY**

Family is central to Jaiwoan life. Jaiwoans often have huge extended families, with many “aunts”, “uncles”, “nanas” and “grandpas”, only some of whom are blood-related.

Within the family, it is expected that people respect their elders, where “disrespect” might mean anything from wearing the wrong clothing to answering back. Even adults can expect a stern reprimand if they embarrass their parents in private or in public.

Jaiwoan parents are strict disciplinarians and physical punishment is common. Sometimes, Jaiwoans who have moved abroad are sent back to learn “proper manners.” These children almost always return quieter and more obedient.

Family members know each other’s business intimately, which has both advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is that you can expect help with anything, especially financial difficulties. The main disadvantage is that, if you do something wrong, everyone reminds you of it incessantly.

When Jaiwoans marry, they often choose someone from a different ethnic group or religion. This has the effect of increasing tolerance between Jaiwoans, since, if you scratch the surface of your family tree, you find someone whose ethnicity or religion is different from yours.

Richer families have relatives abroad, where they have moved to try to find better lives. When these relatives return for visits, they are often expected to bring gifts and pay for everything.

## **MARKETS**

Wherever you go in Jaiwo, you find a market, whether it is the vast market of Paratunke or a tiny market in a suburb or village.

The biggest section of every market sells food. Here, there are spices, rice, nuts, bread, biscuits, fruit and vegetables and fish and meat. Jaiwoans make most of their food from scratch: many spend a full day here getting ingredients.

Elsewhere in the market, you find clothes and fabrics, in sturdy, breathable cloth. For women, clothing consists of patterned fabric worn in various styles, while for men, it consists of a long top, trousers in block colours and a hat. Rather than buying ready-made clothes, many Jaiwoans buy fabric, then take it to a tailor to sew. Western-style shirts and jackets are sold for work or church. For those who do not get their hair from the hairdressers, the market also sells extensions, weaves and wigs, in various colours and styles.

Finally, there are stalls selling jewellery. Gold jewellery is plentiful, but copper, silver and gemstones are also common. Hair ornaments are popular too.

## **MONEY**

The Jaiwoan currency is the takare, pronounced “tah-kar-eh” and denoted “t” (e.g. “100t”). One takare is a coin, while ten, twenty, fifty, hundred and two hundred takare are all notes.

As a rough guide, anything basic (soft drink, a snack) costs around 100t, while a luxury item (a taxi ride to the airport, a restaurant meal of chicken yassa and rice) costs about 1000t.

## **RELIGION**

Jaiwo is no place for an atheist. Nobody minds which God you believe in, provided you believe in one of them.

Islam is now Jaiwo’s main religion and 80% of Jaiwoans are Muslim. As such, hijabs are commonly seen in the street, although it is hard to tell a woman who wears a hijab from one who simply wraps her hair to take care of it. Most of the remaining Jaiwoans are Christian.

Jaiwoans are relaxed about religion. There is no firm obligation to attend the mosque or church, although it looks better if you do. There is rarely conflict between those who follow different religions.

Regardless of religion, almost everyone in Jaiwo is superstitious. Witches and curses are a common subject of conversation. Many things, especially inconsequential things, are held to be “bad luck”.



# THE CURSE OF THE ZIMBA

**A CTHULHU DARK MYSTERY IN JAIWO 2017**

In the tiny West African country of Jaiwo, villagers are taken from their home.

When the Investigators visit the village, they discover a horror beneath a church, where a wild supernatural creature has been awakened by a meddling outsider.

*The Curse of the Zimba* is a Cthulhu Dark scenario about colonialism, religion and monsters waiting to break into the daylight.

# THE HOOK

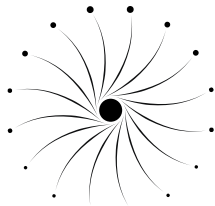
People are disappearing from Bakudo, a village in rural Jaiwo, leaving only a few behind to tell their tales.

# THE FINAL HORROR

The Zimba, a lion spirit, has been summoned by a missionary priest who was dabbling in magic that should have been left alone — or at least left to those who know how to wield it. Once the spirit was summoned, the priest was unable to control it.

It has been feeding off the people of Bakudo, increasing its influence over the village until eventually people simply accepted their doom. When the Investigators arrive, there are still villagers left, but they will soon succumb. The Zimba is coming for them all.

Yet even the villagers' deaths aren't enough to fully free the Zimba from the spirit realm. It only needs a few more lives to fully come into our world. The Investigators might just be the souls that it needs.



# THE STORY

While eating dinner in Paratunke, the Investigators discover a story in one of the city's newspapers, headlined "Mass Disappearance in Village; Investigation Continues." The article mentions sceptically that the disappearances have the hallmarks of witchcraft. It mentions a possible witch who lives near Bakudo, the village where the disappearances took place.

If the Investigators visit the Jaiwo Tribune offices, they discover that the author of the article, Saatu King, is absent from work. Her colleagues are worried about her. If they go to her home, they find her clutching a knife in the dark, afraid that something is pursuing her.

On the road to Bakudo, the Investigators find the house of the witch, Grandma Neneh. They meet children outside the house, who eagerly explain how they torment her. But, when they meet Grandma Neneh, it is clear that she is not responsible for the villagers disappearing. Instead, she blames a priest in Bakudo, Father Reynolds, for meddling with things he does not understand.

When the Investigators reach Bakudo, they find it almost completely deserted. The houses seem abandoned, with discarded toys and half-finished letters. The Investigators also meet Father Reynolds, who acts superficially friendly but is deeply frightened.

Beneath a trapdoor, the Investigators discover an underground tunnel, where they find body parts and dismembered villagers. Deeper still, they encounter a great lion spirit, the Zimba. It asks to be fed. The Investigators must decide whether to feed it and, if so, who to sacrifice.

# THE INVESTIGATORS

All the Investigators live in Paratunke, Jaiwo's capital city. They should have respectable professions, such as professors, mediums, journalists and scientists.

Ensure all the Investigators are from Jaiwo, although they may have moved away and then returned recently. They should all be black.

Additionally, make sure the Investigators all have:

- ▶ A relationship to the village of Bakudo. It is especially powerful if they were brought up there.
- ▶ A connection to religion or the paranormal, whether they are believers or not. They might be extremely religious, extremely sceptical or simply superstitious.

Here are some example Investigators. For each, there is an archetype (e.g. "The Sceptic"), followed by options for their occupation, the way they look, the clothes they wear and items they might carry. There is then a brief description. All grew up in Bakudo and have a relationship to spirituality, religion or the paranormal.

## THE SCEPTIC

*Occupation: Teacher, professor or academic specialising in the sciences*

*Look: Intelligent / Dishevelled / Studious*

*Outfit: An impractical suit / Faux-casual academic attire / Traditional Jaiwoan clothing*

*Items: A cane / A scientific textbook / An engraved letter-opener*

The Sceptic is the black sheep of their family, having rejected their Christian faith when they went to study at a Western university. They are now an anti-theist: they have gone beyond disbelief to being opposed, in principle, to religion. They totally reject spiritualism and the paranormal.

They have a good heart, but it is buried beneath several layers of righteous conviction in the superiority of the scientific method and resentment towards their heavily Christian upbringing.

## THE SPIRITUALIST

*Occupation: Medium, homeopath, physical therapist*

*Look: Spooky / Hippy / Peaceful*

*Outfit: Beads and scarves / Black everything / Traditional Jaiwoan clothing*

*Items: Scrying dish / Incense / Small statue of a deity*

When they were young, the Spiritualist had an experience that shaped their beliefs for the rest of their life. Ask the player what this experience was.

Since then, they have known that the paranormal exists and affects human life every day, sometimes in good ways, sometimes in bad ways. Anyone who doesn't believe simply hasn't seen the right evidence yet.

## THE CONSPIRACY THEORIST

*Occupation: Unemployed or in a remarkably ordinary job, e.g. bank teller, taxi driver, librarian*

*Look: Suspicious / Aloof / Ordinary*

*Outfit: T-shirt, with a slogan, and jeans / Ill-fitting clothes / Traditional Jaiwoan clothing*

*Items: Untraceable phone / Good luck charm / A disguise*

The Conspiracy Theorist has had a bad life. But they know this isn't their fault. It's something bigger than them, something terrible happening in the upper echelons of society. Only a few have seen past the lies to the truth.

The Conspiracy Theorist is one of these chosen few. They must hide in plain sight, communicating with other theorists in secret. Whether they choose to tell the rest of the Investigators or not is up to them.

## THE POLITICO

*Occupation: Lobbyist / Journalist / Author*

*Look: Sophisticated / Intimidating / Aloof*

*Outfit: Business formal / An outstanding hat / Traditional Jaiwoan clothing*

*Items: Recording device / Lots of money / Prestige*

The Politico knows the right people in the right places, which may go some way to explaining their success. They're doing well and they know it. To some, they come across as charming; to others, they seem insincere; to others still, they are both at the same time.

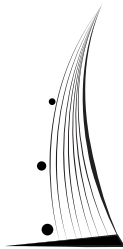
They are proud of where they've managed to get to. They started from the bottom. Now they have arrived. Their beliefs are as malleable as their face.

## ON A 5

When a player rolls a 5 when investigating, they may recall moments from their childhood. If they were raised in Bakudo, they might recall something from their time there.

Here are some example memories.

- ▶ An annual celebration, in which children gave money to a performer dressed as a lion, who would chase them.
- ▶ Gruesome, detailed legends of what happened when someone was cursed by a witch.
- ▶ Telltale signs of angered spirits, such as animals behaving oddly, changes in temperature, vivid hallucinations and nightmares.
- ▶ Stories of a woman possessed by an animal spirit, which ate her from the inside.



## ON A 6

When a player rolls a 6 when investigating, they sense something beyond human knowledge.

- ▶ When speaking to someone, you get a sense that their words are not entirely their own, as if something is speaking through them.
- ▶ You feel threatened: the hairs on your arms rise and the back of your neck itches.

Later in the scenario, a 6 might also give a realisation of the final horror.

- ▶ You realise that the witch was never the threat and she never cursed anyone. The claw marks, the vicious animals and the heat all speak of an angered, powerful spirit.

## CREEPING HORRORS

There are three Creeping Horrors in this scenario.

- ▶ **Oppressive heat**, even hotter than you thought it would be, even for an African country. Objects become burning to the touch. The closer the Investigators are to the Zimba or people touched by the Zimba, the hotter it gets.
- ▶ **Dreams, sounds and glimpses of roaring beasts**, although there is nothing there when you look. Even street cats seem more and more hostile to you. You begin to see shadows and reflections of a huge, deformed lion, with claws reaching out for you.
- ▶ **Unexpected accidents and changes to your body**. You lose little pieces of memory. Your hair comes out, in strands and then clumps. Your nails loosen and crack. Your teeth wobble and fall out, sometimes with the root attached. You notice blood in your eyes. You bump into things and are scratched by items that shouldn't cause as much damage as they do.

When an Investigator rolls a 6, they may become aware of a Creeping Horror. For example, they may see reflections of the lion spirit in windows, mirrors, and water. They may begin losing hair, begin having nosebleeds or start losing their teeth.

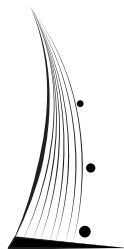
# THEMES

There are two main themes in this mystery.

- ▶ **Colonialism.** Father Reynolds' attempts to fit into the village, by dabbling in their culture and magic, has caused its destruction. As you play, highlight his cluelessness and his attempts to hijack their culture. When in the city, explore the ways that western culture has taken root there. Someone came where they weren't invited, dabbled in things they didn't understand and falsely assumed that they were capable when they weren't. This is about arrogance and entitlement.
- ▶ **Religion and spirituality.** Although many Jaiwoans are Christians, this does not mean that they have left their old beliefs behind. They see no contradiction between a belief in Jesus and a belief in curses. Encourage the Investigators to explore the tension between their beliefs in play, talking about what they believe.

Finally, here is a tip about running the mystery. For the first part of the mystery, find ways to suggest that Grandma Neneh has caused the disappearances with her witchcraft. Make her seem suspicious.

But, when the Investigators meet Grandma Neneh, make her seem normal and vulnerable, implying she is not the culprit. From then onwards, point the finger of suspicion at Father Reynolds.



# PARATUNKE

Autumn has arrived in Paratunke, along with the start of the rainy season. Nine days out of ten, the heat is suffocating, but on that tenth day, the heavens open. People clear the streets as torrents of rain come down.

The air is filled with horns and chatter. Giant billboards show hair straightening products, English football teams, and western films. There are adverts for skin-lightening cream: the occasional woman passes by with lighter blotches on her face and hands, where she has tried to melt away her blackness. The dark-skinned people of Paratunke walk past with barely a glance.

Amidst all this, the Investigators meet in a restaurant near the city centre, Ali Baba's. It has a dark wood decor, with heavy chairs and tables. Its panelled walls are covered in paintings of the coast, the markets and the people of Jaiwo.

The windows are all wide open and the restaurant spills out on to the road, where customers try to catch any breeze. Some people passing by have seen friends inside the restaurant and are hanging over the windowsills to chat to them.

Ali Baba's serves grilled meat and rice dishes, served by easy-going waiters. The waits for food are long — nothing is hurried here — and many people get a shisha pipe to while away the time. The interior is hazy with sweet-smelling smoke.

Ask which of the Investigators suggested the meal and who gets there first. Play out a short scene as they arrive and greet each other. If anyone has been out of the country and is returning to Jaiwo, bring that into the conversation: perhaps the meal was organised to welcome them back.

As the Investigators talk, get them to turn the conversation to the village of Bakudo.

Remember that they haven't yet heard of trouble in the village. You might either remind them of a shared connection to the village ("Didn't you two both grow up in Bakudo?") or by asking directly ("Talk about your memories of Bakudo"). Get them to discuss how they feel about the village now: is it



a fond memory, a place they think about often or somewhere they would rather forget?

Once they have talked for a while, let the Investigators find out that *people are disappearing from Bakudo*. Perhaps one of them sees a copy of the Jaiwo Tribune, at a neighbouring table, with the headline “Mass Disappearance in Village; Investigation Continues.” Or perhaps, when the Investigators mention Bakudo, someone tells them *it is bad luck to speak of that village*.

Once the Investigators begin talking about it, everyone in the restaurant has an opinion about the village, which they express openly and bluntly. Some cross themselves and express their sorrow and horror. Others refuse to speak about it, as it is *bad luck to speak of those cursed by witches*. Still others spit on the ground: if the villagers were taken by witches, they deserved it.

If the Investigators read the newspaper article, it mentions an alleged witch, although it does not give a name. Nobody in the restaurant will give her name either, since mentioning a witch’s name is the worst of luck. The Investigators can work out her identity, either from their memories of Bakudo or by talking to people in the restaurant: it is *Neneh Fulana, known as Grandma Neneh*. Ask the Investigators whether they knew her and what their memories of her were. If the Investigators say her name in the restaurant, it will provoke an argument and they will be asked to leave.

As the Investigators talk about the village, introduce the Creeping Horrors subtly. Tell someone that the heat is unbearable, even hotter than usual, and it seems worse when they talk about the village. Mention small accidents and bodily changes: an Investigator might inexplicably taste blood when they mention Grandma Neneh’s name or scratch their head and find that a few strands of hair come out.

At one point, break the conversation by introducing a clueless tourist, shiny with sun lotion and smiling too widely. When the Investigators first notice him, he seems out of place, gawking at his surroundings as though he is in a zoo. Making his way over to the Investigators uninvited, he explains that, although most tourists prefer the sprawl of hotels and restaurants around the coast, he came to

Paratunke in search of the “real culture” and got lost in the back streets. He speaks slowly and patronisingly to the Investigators in English, then moves on, not noticing people swear in their native language as he does so.

As the Investigators ask around the restaurant, they find friends of the journalists who wrote the article. These friends suggest that, *if the Investigators want to know more, they should go to the office of the Jaiwo Tribune*.

## THE JAIWO TRIBUNE

The office of the Jaiwo Tribune is a crumbling, modest building, down a side-street from the national library. Inside, the humming of many fans fills the air. Even so, the air remains too hot for comfort, unnaturally hot even for Paratunke.

Inside the entrance is a reception desk. The receptionist, Joy, has impeccably painted nails that extend half an inch past her fingertips, yet still manages to type. She asks the Investigators whether she can help them.

How do the Investigators persuade Joy to let them go upstairs to the main office? Don’t make this too hard, but make the players think of something convincing. Bribing Joy will work, as will persuading her that the Investigators are important people. Ask for a roll to get past her, but don’t roll the Failure Die: after all, it isn’t interesting if the Investigators remain stuck at the reception desk.

There is no lift that leads to the upper floor, so the Investigators must take the stairs, passing old framed copies of the Tribune’s front pages. The headlines are mostly about coups and uprisings, telling the story of Jaiwo over the last decade: although the country is ostensibly a democracy, the president always wins elections with disturbingly large majorities. His opponents often disappear.

At the top of the stairs are double doors, which lead into an open office, where journalists sit in front of old beige monitors and answer phones. At the back of the room is a small office, with a faded brass nameplate saying “A. Forster, Editor.”

Annapi Forster is a self-assured middle-aged woman. She takes no nonsense and will not hesitate to call Security to throw the Investigators out if she doesn't like their attitude, especially if they swear. She fought her way to her position, through many layers of patriarchal hostility, but now she's here, and she's determined to stay.

In fact, Annapi knows little about Bakudo. *She thought the article was good: it certainly sold a lot of papers. She thinks the author, Saatu, is a good journalist* and hopes she'll be back at work soon. If the Investigators ask further, she points them back to the open office and suggests they ask the journalists.

In the office, one desk is conspicuously empty. The young man who sits next to it keeps glancing over anxiously. If the Investigators ask about Saatu or Bakudo, the other journalists point to him.

This is Francis, a young teenage intern who has lived in the city all his life. *He hopes one day to work at the BBC World Service*, perhaps as a researcher, since his stammer would stop him being a presenter. As the Investigators talk to him, they may notice that *he brushes at his scalp without thinking* and curls of his hair keep falling out.

If they ask about Bakudo, he says *he has never been there*, although he has heard the rumours of disappearances. He believes in both Satan and witches — *five of his aunt's brothers and sisters died of tuberculosis within a month* after they were cursed — and thinks *witchcraft lies behind Bakudo's disappearances*.

If the Investigators ask about Saatu, he says that she was always kind to him and he would do any favour for her. He is worried about her. She didn't seem herself when she was writing the story: *she was twitchy and kept looking around as though someone was calling her name*.

After she submitted the story for editing, she went home with a migraine and hasn't come back since. He obviously admires Saatu and, as the Investigators may realise, *has a crush on her*.

Although Francis is protective of Saatu, he can be persuaded to let the Investigators search her desk, especially if he thinks they want to help her. Here, they may find her notes (see sidebar). As they search, bring in the Creeping Horrors: perhaps the Investigators feel hot breath on their neck or a nail sticking out from the wood scratches them too deeply.

Seeing their interest, Francis suggests that the Investigators speak to Saatu. He *directs them to her house*.

## SAATU'S NOTEBOOK

The notebook is old, with a cracked cover and pages falling out. There is a dead mosquito squashed in one of the pages. From reading it, the Investigators get a description of what happened in Bakudo, which is similar to what Saatu might tell them herself in person (see "Saatu's House").

Tucked inside the notebook is a handwritten note, in handwriting that is different from the rest of the book.

"...spirits must be told what they will receive and when, as well as how long the summoner will need them. Respect must be shown at all times, and the right gifts offered. Otherwise, the spirit will not be fully under your control.

It is dangerous not to set parameters, as spirits will take this as leave to remain on the earth. However, they will need to take corporeal form to do so; and this means they will demand many more sacrifices than the initial one.

They will enthrall the summoner to do their will, and then those surrounding it until they have been fed enough to step forth onto the ground.

One specific spirit is of particular worry.

[The diary ends with a zig-zag mark, which might be the letter Z]"

## SAATU'S HOUSE

On the outskirts of Paratunke, the Investigators find Saatu's small, neat house. From the outside, all looks well, except that *all the lights are out*.

When the Investigators approach, they notice the front door is ajar, although this is not unusual in Paratunke if someone is at home. Yet nobody answers if they knock or call. If they venture inside, they notice *a smashed glass in the hallway, as if someone dropped it when they saw something shocking. They sense fear*.

Saatu is in her bedroom with a kitchen knife. She *doesn't seem to be in her right mind and there are scratches on her*: it is possible that Investigators will think she has rabies. If they call to announce their entrance, she holds the knife but does not attack. If they enter unannounced, she attacks wildly: ask an Investigator to roll to avoid the attack, rolling the Failure Die, and if they fail, the knife leaves a surprisingly deep gash. She calms down immediately thereafter.

Staring at the Investigators, with eyes wide and sleep-deprived, Saatu tells them that *she visited Bakudo and became scared thereafter*. She had a *nightmare about a wild animal, which attacked her, its claws dissolving her flesh. When she woke, there were burns where the creature had struck, and although they faded within hours, she was too scared to go to work*.

Now, Saatu feels as though someone or something is watching her. *She often hears a loud beast pacing outside, breathing, growling*.

Saatu tells the Investigators that *Grandma Neneh is responsible for the villagers disappearing*. She didn't believe that when she wrote the story. She does now.

If asked, she might also explain about Bakudo's history, which she knows from her grandfather. *It was an ordinary place and the people, mostly farmers growing groundnuts, were happy*. Around fifty years ago, a Christian missionary family arrived. The family were treated with the usual hospitality and courtesy and nobody was converted for some time. Nevertheless, that was the time when things started to feel different.

As the Investigators speak to Saatu, they feel her fear. *The house feels hot, as if it is being baked; the walls feel as though they are closing in; and they feel watched by a predator*. One of the Investigators may notice footsteps and breathing outside, but when they look, there is nothing there.

If the Investigators want to know more, Saatu suggests they visit the witch. *She tells them where her house is, on the road to Bakudo*.

After they have left, ask what the Investigators think about what Saatu has told them. Do they believe that Saatu has been attacked by something supernatural? Or is it simply her imagination?

After they have spoken to Saatu, the Investigators occasionally sense a predator pursuing them. As they walk through Paratunke, dogs and cats in the backstreets snap at them.

## SAATU KING, JOURNALIST

Saatu always wanted to be a journalist. Her grandfather was the editor of the main paper, and there were books everywhere when she was growing up. She's confident in her job and has a strong streak of curiosity, which is why she's good at it. This time, though, it seems to have gotten her into trouble.

Her grandfather left his old notebooks to her in his will, knowing that she was interested in writing. Sure enough, she went for it. She had a rough time getting into the industry, as everyone assumed she was only there because of her grandfather's influence.

Saatu is more interested in her career than in a partner, which causes some tension in the family, and is one reason why she moved away. She has distant family in Bakudo. She doesn't know them, but her parents do and are frantic with worry. They haven't heard from those relatives in a while, and now with the disappearance of villagers, they fear the worst.

# GRANDMA NENEH

As the Investigators leave Paratunke and head into rural Jaiwo, the land becomes more and more deserted. Houses and shops appear more sparsely. The roads get worse, with potholes appearing more regularly.

Ask how the Investigators make the journey. Does one of them have a car or do they hire a taxi? Taxi drivers will prefer to leave the Investigators some distance from Grandma Neneh's house, given her reputation as a witch. Ask, too, how the Investigators feel about leaving familiar surroundings behind and heading back to the country. If any of the Investigators come from Bakudo, ask how the journey towards home feels.

The house is set back from the road down a dirt track. As they walk up the track, the Investigators see and smell decay. Trees are dying. The only birds are vultures and harriers.

Halfway along, the Investigators find children playing. If asked, the children say they are from a nearby village, although not Bakudo. They stare at the Investigators at first, then ask why they are going to visit the witch. With a degree of pride, the children explain that *they used to throw things at her house until she came out to shout at them*. Now she never comes out. Their new favourite game is daring each other to throw eggs or do other damage to the house and garden.

As they talk, the children become more eager to share what they know, competing with each other to tell the Investigators first. They believe, without doubt, that *Grandma Neneh is a witch* and that witches are real. She has *dozens of bodies in her basement*. *It is her fault that the people of Bakudo are dead*: and, indeed, the children are convinced that they are dead, not just missing.

One of the older children remembers that Grandma Neneh used to live in Bakudo, but *the townspeople shunned her when she refused to convert to Christianity*, preferring to practice her magic.

Once they have told everything they think they know, the children offer to show the Investigators the way to her house.

Grandma Neneh's house is built in the traditional way, small, round and whitewashed. It is essentially a single round room with a thatched roof. *Outside lies a dog's skeleton. The chicken coop is empty.*

Inside, there is a sense of disuse and abandonment: the air is stale, the shutters are closed and the heat makes it hard to breathe. A drawn curtain divides a sleeping area from the main living space.

In the middle of the living space is a burnt-out hearth. Small piles of bones are placed at regular intervals around the walls and herbs dangle from the ceiling. As the Investigators explore, flies buzz around and insects scurry into corners. The Investigators get a strong feeling both that *something has gone drastically wrong* and that *the house doesn't want them there* — or, perhaps, that *a strong presence within the house is trying to push them out*.

In the sleeping space is an empty bed, surrounded by a circle of charms and bowls of water and herbs. Ask for a roll for any Investigators that enter this area, rolling the Failure Die against them: if they fail, they either step on a charm, whose claws and teeth dig deep into their flesh, or they upset a bowl of water, whose contents are unexpectedly boiling and scald the Investigator.

Amongst the clutter is Grandma Neneh's pestle and mortar. It contains *scorched animal hairs*, half disintegrated, a large blackened predator's tooth and a variety of cleansing herbs. Investigators who understand witchcraft realise that *she was trying to ward off some kind of animal spirit*, but also sense that *it did not work*.

Here, too, is Grandma Neneh's diary (see overleaf). It talks of an animal spirit, the Zimba, that was imperfectly summoned and now haunts her. If the Investigators read Saatu's notebook, they recognise that the *handwriting in the diary matches that of the note tucked inside Saatu's notebook*.

Another door leads to the back yard, where the Investigators find Grandma Neneh. She is weak, thin, wrinkled and full of resentment and bitterness. From watching the way she talks and moves, the Investigators, especially any with

medical experience, realise that *she is nearly blind. She is dying and will not survive much longer.*

*She invites them to sit with her* on a piece of carpet under a tree. She seems to have been expecting them. Ask whether the Investigators are comfortable sitting close to someone who might be a witch.

Here is where you, as Director, must start turning the players' suspicions around. Until now, everything has pointed towards Grandma Neneh as the culprit. Now, stop making her sound suspicious, and make her sound like a weak and vulnerable woman, the victim of other people's hate. Make the players realise that the horror is more complex than they thought.

Grandma Neneh tells the Investigators that she knows why they have come, because bad things are happening in her village. She tells them a sad story.

*Once, the people of Bakudo trusted, loved, and respected her.* She healed the sick and advised the lost. She saw children grow up, become adults, marry and find happiness. She was invited to all the weddings and presided over all the funerals. Then it all turned to dust, when a white man arrived in Bakudo.

*The man tricked the village into turning away from the old ways,* from things proved and seen, to a white man's god in a book. Instead of healer, wise woman, mother of the village, they started to call her "witch." If asked the name of the man, Grandma Neneh waves her hand: it is unclear whether she cannot remember the name or cannot speak it.

Now, all her years of knowledge help no-one, not even herself. She has, she tells the Investigators, been dying ever since, dying for so long that the children have forgotten her. Instead of coming to see her, they taunt her from outside the walls. They even killed her dog.

With intense seriousness, she tells the Investigators that *there is a great evil in the village, one she cannot fight.* It rattles her door every night. It lurks behind her all day. She's tired

now, so tired. She's not going to hold on for much longer.

If the Investigators want to know whether all this is true, ask for a roll but don't roll the Failure Die against them, then confirm that *every word is true.* If they try to get her to leave, she refuses, and if they call her a witch, she reacts angrily. If they ask more about the great evil, she directs them towards the village.

It is clear that Grandma Neneh has not stolen the people of Bakudo. For answers, the Investigators must head into the heart of the village.



### GRANDMA NENEH'S DIARY

"It is coming for me. I feel its hot breath on me at all times, burning my skin. It should never have been awakened; not by one who did not understand how to put it back again.

The proper sacrifices were not made. The summoner did not assert their control. This zimba is loose and wild, instead of tamed and bound to the summoner. It will swallow everything. It will begin its eternal hunt. I have resisted so far, but I know that it wants me: I am the most powerful being for miles around.

May the gods protect me."

# BAKUDO

Bakudo consists of a long road, with houses on either side. The ground is red sand, which stains everything and is burning hot: it would be impossible to walk on without shoes.

In the middle of the road is a huge, leafless baobab tree, which cars must edge around carefully to pass. Its branches look eerily like fingers and the knots in its trunk like faces.

If an Investigator passes close by, ask for a roll, rolling the Failure Die against them: if they fail, the tree scratches them viciously or entangles their hair so deeply that they must either cut it away or pull it from their scalp.

The village is nearly deserted, apart from a few people lounging around. Despite the burning sand, they wear no shoes and do not seem to be harmed by the heat. These villagers stare into space with empty eyes, barely speaking or looking at each other. *It is as if their spirits have been removed.*

If the Investigators talk to them, the villagers attempt to smile. The effect is awful, like a puppet smiling, as though something is stretching their lips. If the Investigators touch the villagers, they burn their hands, although the villager does not notice anything is wrong.

When asked where everyone else is, the villagers say simply that *people have been taken* and that *soon it will be their turn*. They mention *their families, who disappeared in the night*, but don't show any strong feelings about this. "One by one," they say, "One by one."

If asked for an explanation, some villagers point wordlessly towards the church. Others simply begin screaming and do not stop. Their screams are like their smiles: wrong, as if someone or something else is making them do it.

When the Investigators finish talking, *the village is silent*. All the birds have disappeared, except for vultures circling overhead. There are no animals, either, only broken chicken coops and torn leashes.

The Investigators may explore the empty houses, which are unlocked. They look as though *the*

*occupants simply left without warning*. Food is burned onto pots, toys abandoned, books left on the floor.

As the Investigators explore, they notice that *one of the villagers is sinking into the red sand*. The Investigators cannot help this villager: if they talk, the villager does not respond; if they pull, the villager stops sinking for a while, but begins to descend again soon afterwards. When they next look back, the villager has disappeared. Thereafter, every time the Investigators enter and exit a building, another villager is gone.

There are two buildings of interest, both of which look out of place. One is Father Reynolds' house, a quintessentially English cottage, and the other is St Sebastian's church.

## FATHER REYNOLDS' HOUSE

If it wasn't for the unearthly heat, this could be any vicar's cottage in middle England. It is whitewashed and the door is unlocked.

Whether the Investigators knock or simply enter, Father Reynolds greets them warmly. He is tall, silver-haired and sweaty, dressed uncomfortably in a formal shirt with an open collar.

He smiles at them, showing bleeding gaps between his teeth, and extends his hand. If anyone shakes it, his skin burns them, although Father Reynolds does not notice them snatching back their hand.

Ask how the Investigators feel about priests. Do they show respect? Do they call him "Father", "Mr" or something else? And do they find his presence comforting or threatening? Tell one of the Investigators that they notice something warm and wet falling on their shirt: that Investigator has suffered a sudden and intense nosebleed.

Father Reynolds offers them tea, which he retreats into the kitchen to make, gesturing for the Investigators to sit on the lumpy sofas. The Investigators notice that the floor is carpeted: a foolhardy extravagance, since it encourages insects and mice. *An unearthly heat comes through the carpet*, as though there is a fire beneath the floor, which the Investigators can feel through the soles of their shoes.

If the Investigators peek into the adjoining rooms, they find a normal-looking bedroom and bathroom, although *all the mirrors have been removed or smashed*. There are crucifixes over each window. *The reflections in the window appear distorted, elongating and twisting the face of anyone who looks into them.*

Father Reynolds reappears with two cups of tea, an imported English brand. He remarks amiably that he has been here for a long time. How long? Oh, you know, decades. His family travelled over a long time ago and he's been here ever since. He's practically African now! The people here are so welcoming he feels like he's part of every family.

As he talks, it becomes clear that *he is racist in the way missionaries can be*: he mentions "educating" the Africans in proper "civilised" ways. Other than that, he seems harmless, although somewhat twitchy. Often, he seems not to hear the Investigators or be listening to something else.

When asked about the disappearing villagers, Father Reynolds' voice *tightens and rises in pitch*. He says that he doesn't know where everybody has gone. He returned from a trip one day and they had vanished. As the Investigators may perceive, *he is both lying and deeply scared*.

During this conversation, tell someone that they feel their head itching. When they scratch, a clump of hair comes away in their hand.

Father Reynolds' voice rises. He suggests that *Grandma Neneh, with her old-fashioned, unnatural ways, must be connected with the disappearances*. He believes this, but is clearly concealing a deeper truth. If the Investigators mention visiting her, he suggests they visit the church to cleanse themselves of her influence.

If pressed further, Father Reynolds' facade collapses. He cowers away from the Investigators, incoherent words pouring out of his mouth: *it made him do it, it's in the church*, they don't understand, it's monstrous, it's not his fault. He then apologises repeatedly, kneeling on the floor, until his jaw snaps shut, *as if something is closing it for him*. A drop of blood runs slowly from the corner of his eye and drips on to the carpet.

To investigate further, the Investigators must find their way into the church basement. There are two trapdoors leading there. One is in Father Reynolds' house, its presence betrayed only by a lump in the carpet: if the mystery seems to be drawing to an end, ask one of the Investigators to roll to see whether they notice it. The other trapdoor is in St Sebastian's church.

## THE CHURCH

St Sebastian's church is too big for the town, dwarfing all the other buildings. It gleams white, its stone bleached by the sun.

When the Investigators push open the great door, they see dusty pews, hymn books and bibles. Nobody has been here for a while.

Light pours through stained glass windows, the colours warping on the floor to create abstract and indefinably threatening shapes. There are electrical fans, but it is unnaturally, stiflingly hot, *as if the church is emitting its own heat*.

If the Investigators look closer, they find *dark stains on some of the books*, which on closer examination are human blood. The altar cloth has parallel rips in it, as if *an immense clawed limb had lashed out at it*.

If Father Reynolds is present, he reassures them about these things: the stains are wine, the rips are from clumsy altar boys. *He is lying*. He takes the Investigators on a tour, ending at the vestry, where he offers them refreshments. If the Investigators eat anything, tell someone that they feel a tooth crack.

Here, in the vestry, is another trapdoor. If Father Reynolds is here, he asks the Investigators to open it, if they wish to find what they have been searching for. If they refuse, he expresses disappointment, then urges more and more insistently, until eventually his face turns blank and a half-growling, half-screaming voice comes from his mouth, roaring at the Investigators to descend below.

## THE ZIMBA

Beneath both trapdoors, a rough tunnel descends. It is roughly cut from the rock, with jagged edges jutting from the walls, full of centipedes, scorpions and the smell of blood.

As they descend, the Investigators find human remains: first, fingers, toes and ears, then full torsos and heads. These do not look as though they have been torn or cut off: *it appears as though the rest of the body has melted*. Indeed, *there are tiny gobbets of melted flesh*, dripped on the floor like wax from a candle.

The Investigators hear moaning and gurgling ahead. As they draw closer, they find villagers, still alive and partially melted. One is missing both legs, another the right-hand side of her body and a third has no body below the ribcage, her intestines spilling out. All lie in a pool of congealing melted flesh. If the Investigators try to talk to these people, they say that *Father Reynolds meddled with things he should not have touched*.

Further down is a cavern. The heat hits the Investigators like a wall. On the floor are clumsily drawn symbols, drawn in shaky chalk lines, with *a mixture of recognisable traditional West African shapes and Christian symbols*.

Placed around the circle are offerings of human organs, along with a jug of communion wine and an incense burner. In the corner are a modern Bible and a book on West African spiritual practices by a British author, *based on faulty assumptions and bad translations*. Both are annotated with yellow sticky notes, on which Father Reynolds has composed *an oversimplified list of steps to summon the Zimba*.

Above the circle, the Zimba begins to form, then explodes into existence: half-lion, half-human, reaching towards the Investigators with elongated hands. It struggles to form, its bones and muscles distorting as they struggle to come together.

*It is in pain*. One eye is yellow, with a slit pupil, and shows the anger of a trapped animal. The other is brown, recognisably human, and appears deeply sad and tired. "I hunger," it screams. "Which of you is the priest's sacrifice?"

The Investigators understand that *they can stop the Zimba's pain, but only if they sacrifice someone*. It is unclear what will happen after the sacrifice. Will it satisfy the Zimba's hunger? Will it stop the villagers disappearing? Or will it simply feed the Zimba's power?

If the Investigators attempt to flee, the Zimba lurches after them. Ask for a roll: anyone who rolls equal or higher to the Failure Die escapes, while anyone who rolls lower is devoured.

There are various potential candidates for a sacrifice, including Father Reynolds, a villager or one of the Investigators. If sacrificed, the villagers accept their fate with an eerie calm. Don't make this an easy way out for the Investigators: if sacrificing a villager seems too easy, the Zimba demands another sacrifice.

When someone is sacrificed or eaten, there is a last look of vacant terror, before their body implodes in a crackle of bones. Melted flesh spatters the wall, then begins to drip and harden.

The Zimba grows firmer and more graceful, its bones shifting into better alignment. It steps out of the circle. Its pain is gone. It is stronger now.

## EPILOGUE

If any Investigators escaped, don't describe their departure from the cave and Bakudo. Instead, cut directly forward to an epilogue.

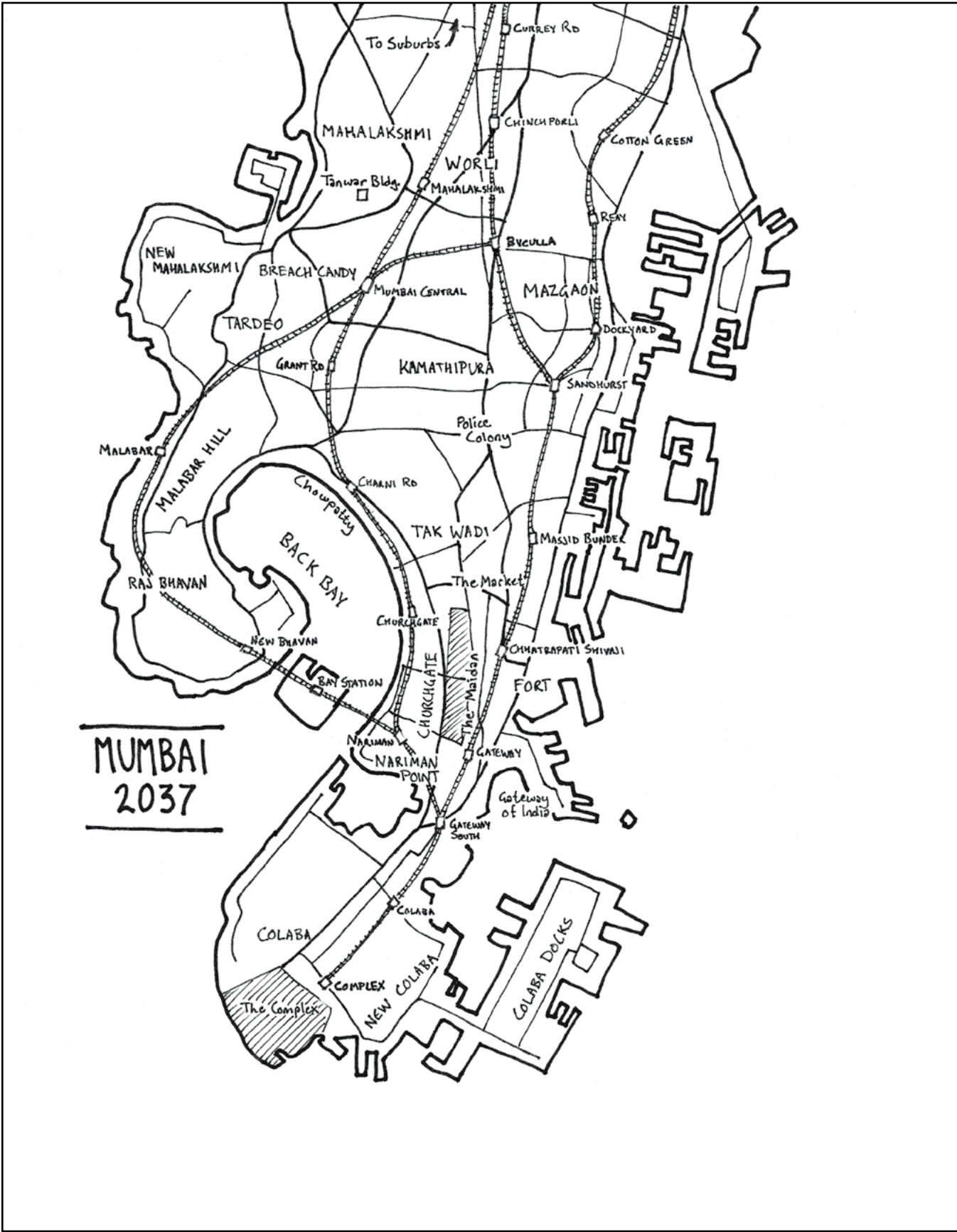
Ask what the Investigators do next. Do they return to their everyday lives? Have their beliefs about religion and spirituality changed? How do they feel about Westerners who come to their country and dabble in their culture?

If Father Reynolds survived, describe him taking a post in another African country, where he becomes fascinated with the people and their beliefs.

Finally, say that, in the following years, the legend of the Zimba grows in the villages around Bakudo. There are tales of half-buried bodies and villagers disappearing.

Some say the Zimba is weak with hunger. Others say it grows stronger every day.





# MUMBAI 2037

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In Mumbai, a thousand stories intersect. People come dreaming of the penthouses, the wealth, the electronics. Some make it to the top, some sleep on the streets, some lose their minds in virtual worlds. Everyone dreams.

Concrete towers rise into the sky, shedding dust that chokes the people below. Stockbrokers sell trillions in electronic space, while street traders sell chai in the underways. Billboards promise wealth and beauty and, behind them, people live in ancient, crumbling tenements.

And everything glows. Soft colours flow over electronic screens, embedded in wrists, eyes, clothes, objects, buildings. All this is connected to the Othernets, a twisted mass of connections too deep to fathom, sucking in information and pumping it out. Stare into the Othernets too long and it captures your mind, feeding your obsessions with everchanging data, never letting you go.

Mumbai 2037 is the final setting for Cthulhu Dark. It is deliberately incomplete, leaving you to fill in the blanks.

To do this, it often asks questions for you or the players to answer. It also contains ambiguous terms (“watercar”, “skyway”, “Othernets”), for you and the players to define. Work together with your group to take everything that follows and make it your own.

As you play, keep asking players for their own ideas about the city. How does money work? What is transport like? How do you access the Othernets and what does it look like inside?

In Mumbai 2037, the power lies in wealth and class. The Investigators find horror in luxurious skyscrapers, corporate headquarters and the homes of the ultrarich. And they find it in the glowing, tempting virtual space of the Othernets.

# THE INVESTIGATORS

## NAMES

In Mumbai, your name says everything about you: it tells people your religion, your place of origin, your place in society and much more.

Try the following names or find your own: Keshav Bhonsle, Sagarika Pawar, Shubham Bhagat, Siri Goradia, Parwez Chandiwala, Benaifer Umrigar, Lakshmi Karunakaran, Shobana Menon.

Whatever your name, decide what it tells people about you.

## OCCUPATIONS

The Investigators are ordinary Mumbai residents (“Mumbaikars”), working to survive.

They might have occupations we would recognise in today’s cities, such as accountant, cook or software engineer. They might have occupations common to Mumbai, such as a rickshaw driver (who drives one of the city’s iconic small taxis) or chaiwalla (who sells sweet, spiced and milky tea).

Or they might have occupations related to the Othernet. Ask your players for ideas of what these occupations might be: try Virtual Engineers, Firewall Repairers, Data Divers or whatever their imagination produces.

As they choose occupations, ask the players: who is above you in society? Who is below you?

Invent subtle microhierarchies: for example, software engineers might look down on hardware engineers, while electronic hardware engineers look down on mechanical hardware engineers.

Here is a small selection of occupations for Mumbai 2037. Use these as starting points, adapting them and inviting players to invent their own.

## ACCOUNTANT

Accountants keep Mumbai’s money moving. Employed by corporations, organisations or family firms, they are experts in moving, analysing and transforming money.

Working in the lower reaches of the Othernet, an accountant’s work is often mundane. Although they work with unimaginable sums of money, they see none of it and take few major decisions. Anything important is automated, leaving accountants to check the work of hyperpowerful artificial intelligences and implement the whims of Mumbai’s elite.

Occasionally, an accountant spots something amiss in the Othernet: a chink in the glowing walls of finance, a rogue digit in a scrolling column, a pattern in a web of company ownership. They must decide: do they dig deeper, covering their tracks, working quickly before the security kicks in? Or do they back off, wondering whether they have already been spotted? This is the stuff of accountancy legend, shared with peers at bars and chai-stands.

Accountants work best in mysteries with multinational conglomerates and financial conspiracies. When you have an accountant Investigator, give them financial records to explore. Let them find information by tracing share ownership, outwitting electronic regulators and finding anomalies in matrices of figures.

If a player creates an accountant Investigator, ask them: who do they work for? How do they access the lower parts of the Othernet? What does their work physically look like: do they scroll through columns, construct electronic webs, move virtual blocks or something else?

Accountants might get an Occupation die for:

- ▶ Discovering who owns a company.
- ▶ Finding a way into an institution’s financial records.
- ▶ Spotting an anomaly in a set of accounts.

## HARDWARE ENGINEER

Hardware engineers keep the Othernet working, repairing the mess of electronics on which it runs. They find a fault, improvise a fix and hope it does not break too soon.

A typical job starts with a tiny error, but one which has vast consequences. When a vital file in an airport's software is renamed, a plane tries to land beneath the runway. When a digit is transposed, trillions of rupees disappear. When a fibre-optic cable cracks, a badly-engineered bridge crumbles and hundreds die.

To find the error, the hardware engineer must trace it in Mumbai's vast and ancient data network: a tangle of rusting cables, forgotten servers and bodged connectors, sprawled throughout the city.

Has a cable, which has served as a washing line for decades, finally snapped? Has a server room, long buried in concrete, been crushed beneath a new tower block? Has a city official revoked a data protocol permit, hoping for a bribe? Or is something more sinister going on?

When there is a hardware engineer in your game, give them data networks to explore, old electronics to test and anomalies to trace.

When a player creates a hardware engineer, ask them: what does Mumbai's data network consist of? What illicit skills must a hardware engineer have: bribing officials, hacking computers, infiltrating buildings? Do they access the Othernet and, if so, how?

Hardware engineers might get an Occupation die for:

- ▶ Tracing an error within a data network.
- ▶ Discovering what is wrong with a piece of hardware.
- ▶ Knowing the function of a piece of outdated equipment.

## DHOBBI

Dhobis wash clothes. This takes expertise, learned through a lifetime and passed through generations.

The dhobi's work starts when they collect dirty clothes. This might take them anywhere in Mumbai, from a clerk's humble flat to the elevated mansion of a wealthy foreigner.

Once they have the clothes, they return home. Dhobis live with other dhobis, in self-sufficient villages nestled between Mumbai's tower blocks, all sharing the cost of water, soap and everything else they use in their work. Finally, the dhobi washes the clothes, with technique, muscle and pride acquired over years.

Dhobis are experts on dirt, wear and damage, knowing exactly what causes a given blemish. If you have a dhobi in your mystery, let them use this skill, discovering information about people by examining their clothes. Dhobis are also likely to be drawn into a mystery when they visit the wealthier areas of Mumbai.

When an Investigator plays a dhobi, ask how they wash clothes: do they use traditional techniques or new technology? How do they compete with washing machines, which let people wash clothes themselves? Where is their village and what problems is it facing?

Dhobis might get an Occupation die for:

- ▶ Knowing where someone has been, by looking at their clothes.
- ▶ Understanding what has caused a particular blemish.

## POLICE OFFICER

Police officers uphold the law, using intimidation, threats and physical force to extract information and keep order.

When a police officer spots something out of place — a tremor in someone's voice, an over-expensive luxury in someone's home, a face that does not fit — they pursue it relentlessly. They accuse, confront and explode with anger, hoping to prompt a confession. They sift doggedly through

people's letters, accounts and lives, until they find something they can use.

Corruption is rife. Some officers rely on it, harassing street traders, shop owners and entertainers until they pay. Others, even if they do not extort money, rarely refuse a gift, a discount, an opportunity.

When there is a police officer in the mystery, ask how they enforce their power. Do they carry a stick, make veiled threats, tower over people or something else?

Ask, too, how they feel about their work. Do they do it for the money, the power or the love of the law? What do they care about: the city, their family, the village they came from? And emphasise that there are people more powerful than them, by asking: who are they afraid of? What stops them doing exactly what they want? Who is above them?

When there is a police officer in your mystery, give them crimes to investigate and people to bully for information. Find ways to emphasise that they are not in charge and that others hold the true power.

When a police officer investigates and rolls a 5, they might remember one of their old cases, which gives them an insight into whatever is happening in the current mystery.

Police officers might get an Occupation die for:

- ▶ Getting information through threats or intimidation.
- ▶ Knowing the law.

## VIRTUAL ENGINEER

Virtual engineers work at the vanguard of Mumbai's technological boom. In the glowing expanse of the Othernet, they construct virtual structures to control Mumbai's data.

From the outside, virtual engineering seems glamorous. Virtual engineers work in sleek, high towers, looking out over Mumbai. Their employers often supply beer, pizza and Othernet games to entice the best employees and persuade them to work until late at night.

Yet, in their daily lives, virtual engineers work in cramped spaces for long hours. They are constantly

monitored: a virtual engineer who spends too much time outside the Othernet is prompted to get back in.

And they are easily replaced. Virtual engineers are regularly fired and must hope to be rehired somewhere else, if their skills are still current, their face still fits and they are not too old.

When you have a virtual engineer in your mystery, ask where they work and how they access the Othernet. Get them to describe their working days. In the mystery itself, let them explore virtual spaces to find information.

Virtual engineers might roll an Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Finding anomalies, information or anything else in the Othernet.
- ▶ Accessing secure Othernet spaces.

## SOFTWARE ENGINEER

Software engineers write the code that keeps Mumbai running, which lies behind every financial centre, transport system and air conditioning unit.

These days, software engineers rarely write new code. Instead, they tinker with Mumbai's vast accumulation of software, built over decades and crumbling around the edges. In obscure corners of the Othernet, they hunt bugs, implement workarounds, insert new functionality and hope nothing breaks.

Some seem to be born to their profession: they think in code, their fingers flickering over keyboards as their ideas become reality. Some are dull but reliable plodders, who build solid code slowly, testing every step. And some are brilliant and unreliable, assembling intricate structures that nobody understands.

It is a dying profession. Software engineers find themselves squeezed between virtual engineers, who exploit existing code, and hardware engineers, who maintain the infrastructure. Many fear they are not needed. Perhaps, they think, there is no new code to write.

When a player creates a software engineer as an Investigator, ask how they do their work, what equipment they use and which software they work

on. If there are also hardware engineers or virtual engineers as Investigators, ask how the software engineer feels about them.

In a mystery, let a software engineer find patterns, bugs and hidden messages in software. Try building a mystery around hunting for a bug, which turns out to be symptomatic of a greater horror. Remember that, when a bug is first identified, it may be unclear whether it is a software or hardware problem.

Software engineers roll the Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Understanding existing software.
- ▶ Finding a bug.
- ▶ Finding information buried within software.

## CLEANERS

Cleaners work in the homes of richer Mumbai residents, removing dust, dirt and other detritus.

A cleaner visits many homes per day. These range from modest, tiny flats, which look out over the underways or into the windows of other buildings, to grand mansions and penthouses, standing high above Mumbai, filled with curiosities and treasures.

Some cleaners clean everything, from dishes to bathrooms. Others specialise, cleaning one particular surface or part of the house. Hence, homes are often visited by several cleaners: perhaps a floor-cleaner, kitchen-cleaner and window-cleaner, who guard their domains jealously and refuse to do each other's work.

Cleaners often find that their employers treat them as invisible. These cleaners keep their eyes down and listen to the conversations that happen around them. Other cleaners form bonds of respect and trust with their employer, even enough to ask for small favours. All are experts on the lives of those that hire them, finding secrets and stories within their dirty homes.

When you have a cleaner in the game, ask which houses they work in and how their employers treat them. In the mystery, give them houses to explore, letting them discover things about the occupants from smears and garbage. Try giving them a connection to other characters in the mystery: for

example, when the cleaner meets someone, they may realise that they once cleaned their home.

Cleaners might roll the Occupation Die for:

- ▶ Understanding something about a home's owner from their dirt.
- ▶ Asking a favour from their employer.
- ▶ Passing unnoticed in a home they could conceivably be cleaning.

## RAGPICKERS

Every city has a way of disposing of garbage. In Mumbai, it is the ragpickers, who make their living collecting and selling what others throw away.

Ragpickers search the underways for plastic, paper and other waste fallen from above. They know, at a glance, what is valuable and what is not. They learn the best times of day and places to find the best material.

There are communities of ragpickers, organised into specific roles. There are collectors, who find refuse and bring it to a central point. There are sorters, who divide everything into piles, sorting cardboard from paper, cheap plastic from valuable plastic and valuables from everything else. Finally, there are sellers, who sell everything onwards for recycling or repurposing.

Ragpickers dream of finding deposits of waste that nobody has found before, perhaps on a hidden ledge or in an unknown hole. Sometimes, they find a genuine treasure — a circuit board, a washing machine, an Othernet connector — and must explore Mumbai to get the best price they can.

When a player creates a ragpicker, ask where they get their trash and who they work with. What is the best piece of trash they have found? What do they dream of finding? What would they do if they found it?

If you have a ragpicker in your mystery, give them opportunities to sort through trash and find clues there. You can base a whole mystery around finding a discarded artifact and finding its source.

Ragpickers might roll the Occupation die for:

- ▶ Finding a clue in the trash.
- ▶ Telling what material something is made of.

# A GUIDE TO MUMBAI 2037

Mumbai 2037 exists in layers, with the rich living on top and the poor in their shadow.

It happened over years. New buildings were built on the ruins of the old, new highways soared over the twisting old alleys. Now the ultrarich inhabit an airy world of skyhouses and enclosed green spaces, while others make their living in the crowded streets below.

As you approach Mumbai from the sea, you see these two worlds, a beautiful, glowing rich city atop a bustling, shadowed metropolis. You see hotels towering over the clustering boats; penthouses looking down on the welcoming crowd; lights glistening on the streets below.

At the southern tip of Mumbai is Colaba, where the ultrarich look down on the sea from beautiful, elevated private estates. Here are vast mansions, trimmed lawns, ostentatious hotels and air yacht clubs. None of this is open to the Investigators, who pass instead through Colaba's underpass, packed with hawkers of cheap and tacky trinkets. They may glimpse the Complex, a military base and nuclear research institute, off-limits to all.

Further north is Churchgate, where municipal buildings stand beside public spaces. In these blocky redbrick structures, the Investigators may question, bribe or flatter city officials. The buildings overlook Oval Maidan, a public park, where the middle and lower classes (but not the extreme rich or poor) meet for impromptu cricket and heated discussion. On a fine day, cricket matches cover every inch of the Maidan, overlapping and blending into each other.

Then comes the Market. On the higher levels, gleaming screens in mirrored towers show ever-changing prices, while servers tick away in sterile rooms. In these towers, there are few humans, and all intelligence is artificial. On the lower levels, in tunnels and alleys, traders haggle and barter as they have done for decades.

Chowpatty curves off to the west, a beach that is an impossible mix of glamour and seediness, where rich and poor are as close as they ever get. Along the seafront runs Marine Drive, where beggars sit among the fake palms, watching as immaculate vehicles glide past. To many Mumbaikars, Marine Drive is the essence of Mumbai, which they have seen in many movies.

Even further north, old Mumbai gives way to new Mumbai, a conglomeration of suburban towers that crams millions of people into the creaking city. In the penthouses, the rich look into the air. Lower down, the poor look into each other's windows, dreaming of the heights above.

Go further north and you find more tower blocks. It goes on, and on, and on.

## FLATS AND SLUMS

The Investigators' homes are in the lower levels of Mumbai. They live in the shadows and the reflected glow of the world above.

Poor Investigators live in makeshift villages, constructed from whatever they can find: advertising hoardings, stretched tarpaulins, repurposed bricks. Some live in abandoned, crumbling or half-demolished buildings. In these areas, children play around open sewers and diseases run rampant.

Yet there is a sense of community. People share their time and what little they have. There is pride of ownership, too: once someone has constructed a home, they value what they have built. Even though the whole community could be moved or evicted without notice, people make it their home.

Better-off Investigators rent a room or an apartment. Nobody lives alone: Investigators share with families, co-workers or acquaintances, their living quarters doubling as sleeping space. Many of these living spaces are on the lower floors of tower blocks, with more luxurious accommodation above.

When the Investigators live in a makeshift village, ask where it is, what their house is constructed of and what the community is like. When they rent accommodation, ask who they share with

and where everyone sleeps. Wherever the Investigators live, try drawing a map of it.

Everyone dreams of something better. Everybody wants to live higher in the city. One day, if their luck is extraordinary, they might own their home.

## TRAVEL

To travel in Mumbai, you plunge into a chaotic crowd, which carries you to your destination. Like much else about Mumbai, travel is both frenetic and slow.

You might walk through the underways of the city, enduring crumbling pavement, thick fumes and direct sun. While this is arduous, it is the best way to see the city, meet people and discover information. For poorer Investigators, it is often the only transport available.

When Investigators walk to a destination, show them the map of Mumbai at the start of this chapter and ask them to show you their route. Think of things for them to see and people for them to meet on the way.

If Investigators drive, they must navigate the crowded highways that flow through the city. All kinds of vehicles join the throng — cars, motorcycles, rickshaws and many others — jostling their way around and past each other, in a disorganised mass and a chorus of horns.

When Investigators drive in Mumbai, ask: what are cars like in 2037? Do they fly, hover or remain earthbound? What powers them? Is Mumbai's air full of petrol fumes, electric sparks, radioactive gas or something else?

For longer distances, there is the train, an institution of which Mumbaikars are proud. As it travels through Mumbai, it is crammed with bodies, the brave clinging to the outside and the foolhardy riding on the roof. As the train leaves the city, the journey becomes more peaceful: a slow chug through grassy fields, punctuated by tiny stations. On such journeys, it is customary for strangers to share food, pleasantries and stories.

Again, when Investigators take the train, ask what it is like in 2037. Does it hover, fly or run on rails? Does it pass high above the city, keep to the

underways or go through the water? Invent things for them to see from the train and strangers for them to meet.

To travel across the sea, Investigators must take one of the boats that crowd the bay. Ask what boats are like: are they rickshaw-like dinghies, rusting speedboats or ancient wooden craft? Is there a cluster of tiny craft or are there huge container ships too?

As you play, invent other ways to travel about Mumbai. Are there hovercraft, drones, public moving walkways? What do they look like and how people ride on them? Only one thing is certain: however you travel in Mumbai, it is anarchic, crowded and unreliable.

## MONEY

When a wealthy Mumbaikar has lunch, it costs what a middle-class Investigator earns in a year and what a poor Investigator could never hope to earn. This is how money divides Mumbai: what seems normal to the rich is a fortune to the poor.

Mumbai's main unit of currency is the rupee (denoted "r"). A lakh ("L") equals 100,000r. For middle-class Investigators, essential items are priced in thousands of rupees, while luxury items are priced in lakhs. Hence, a train ride might cost 10,000r, while a cruise costs 10L. For poorer Investigators, 100 rupees buys a basic item, such as a meal, or they might beg, steal or barter for it.

Ask the players how money works in Mumbai. Are there banknotes and coins? Is your bank account linked to your fingerprint, face or voice? Do poor Investigators have bank accounts or are they excluded from them?

As always, assume Investigators can afford whatever they need to pursue the mystery. If they need to take a train, they can either afford it or jump on board without paying; if they must enter a bar, they can afford a drink or slip in unnoticed.

Try quoting sums of money to emphasise how exclusive Mumbai is. Describe a wealthy official's meal costing 100 lakhs or a new apartment being 100,000 lakhs. Use this to remind the Investigators of luxuries they can never afford.



## WEATHER

Throughout the winter, Mumbai is cool and bright. Then, as the city emerges into spring, the temperature begins to rise. The sun beats down, until walking becomes exhausting. Dust and fumes rise, enveloping the lower levels of the city.

When summer comes, the humidity rises, making the air thick and wet. The heat becomes deadly, leaving many Mumbaikars to choose between dehydration or dirty water. Meanwhile, in apartments and hotels high above the city, air conditioning churns relentlessly.

Finally, blessedly, the monsoon comes. For weeks, water pours from the sky, hitting first the upper roads, then cascading to Mumbai's lower alleys. Sheets of water run from rooftops, torrents eddy in the gutters. Everything is wet. Everything is muddy. The Investigators find themselves perpetually damp, with clothes that never dry.

Ask Investigators how they deal with the heat. Do they linger for longer at chai stalls to recover from walking? Do they retreat to darkened rooms and a creaky fan? Or do they simply bear it and trudge on?

In monsoon season, ask how the monsoon affects the city. Do electric vehicles suddenly halt in the streets, as water gets into their wiring? Do poorer areas flood, forcing everyone to crowd into higher levels? Are there plastic tubes high above the city, allowing the ultrarich to avoid the rain?

## THE OTHERNET

The Othernet is many things. It is a twisted mess of ever-flowing data. It is a virtual world that lures you inside. It is an endless pipeline of information, entertainment and lies. It is information, money, friendship, anger, power, horror.

Like the rest of Mumbai, the Othernet is divided by class, with exclusive spaces for the rich and crowded forums for the rest. And, like the rest of Mumbai, it is makeshift, unreliable and corrupt: if your Othernet connection fails, you must bribe an official, call in a favour or improvise a fix to restore it.

Before you play, ask the players about the Othernet. How do the Investigators access it: with ancient laptops, behind-the-ear implants, visors with heads-up displays? And what does it look like inside: a virtual city, a luminous network, an endless space of flying geometric shapes? Is it the same for everyone or different for each Investigator?

Ask, especially, how the Investigators use the Othernet in their work. Does a software engineer work with green-glowing text, interlocking cubes or intricate virtual pipework? Do rickshaw drivers, chaiwallas and cleaners use the Othernet or are they excluded?

Whatever the answers, keep reminding the Investigators that other people have better access. If the Investigators access the Othernet using a visor, others have cybernetic implants. If Investigators see the Othernet as interlocking cubes, others see those cubes sharper, brighter and in greater detail.

Keep reminding the Investigators that there are places in the Othernet they cannot go. Talk about the "lower levels", "public spaces" or "outer layers" of the Othernet, implying that there are deeper, better, more exclusive areas that they cannot access.

Finally, as you describe the Othernet, make it threatening. Describe it as twisting, unknowable, vast. Perhaps it is built on ancient code, using half-understood mathematics. Perhaps vast artificial intelligences hide within it. Describe the Othernet as you would describe the Mythos.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Mumbai is an entertainment factory, pumping out films, music and fantasies. These fictions are the things people dream about.

The Mumbai film industry tells stories that celebrate family, love and wealth. These films appear on millions of screens throughout Mumbai, on televisions, watches, clothes and cinema screens. Mumbaikars watch as beautiful people dance, sing and fall in love, against a backdrop of exotic and expensive locations.

Even when people are not watching, the films fill their lives. Throughout Mumbai, you hear songs from the films, known as “filmi” music. It plays on cheap radios. People dance to it in makeshift discos. Children sing the songs on the streets.

Most of all, Mumbaikars dream of movie stars. They want to be them, be with them, go where they go. There are dynasties of film stars, passing on their beauty, skin, bodies and voices to the next generation.

When you play, keep referring to Mumbai’s films. Describe songs playing across crowded streets, people discussing their favourite film and rumours of visiting movie stars.

Ask questions about the movies too. What are the Investigators’ favourite films? Which movie stars do they want to be like? Encourage the players to invent films and movie stars when they answer.

In Mumbai, the movies are everywhere. They change the way Mumbai thinks, feels and dreams.

## GETTING THINGS DONE

Whatever you want in Mumbai, there is someone to persuade. If you want to enter a building, talk to the security office for a visitor’s permit. If you want to see your sister’s body in the morgue, talk to the police officer with the key. If you want to connect to the Othernet, talk to the crime lord who controls the data network.

You can try sympathy. Try telling the security officer that your dying mother is in the building. Try telling the police officer how much you love your sister. Plead poverty to the crime lord. Smile. Cry. It sometimes works.

Or you can try friendly bribery: a gift, a gratuity, baksheesh. When you visit the security office, place an envelope of rupees casually on the desk and ask whether anything can be done. When you enter the morgue, bring a meal for the officer, saying how hungry he must be.

There is always a way around any rule. To enter the building, don’t join the waiting list for a visitor’s pass, but buy a tradesman’s permit instead. To enter the morgue, register online as a medical student. To connect to the Othernet, buy

a repeater station, then leech off the penthouse connection.

As you play, fill Mumbai with gatekeepers to negotiate with. Whenever the investigators try persuasion, bribery or begging, ask them to roll. You usually won’t roll the Failure Die against them.

Use this as a way to add layers to your mystery and fill Mumbai with characters to talk to. Don’t do it too much: don’t make every action a chore. Do it just enough to add interest and colour to the game.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND THANKS

Cyberpunk takes the world of today and adds a futuristic gloss. Mumbai 2037 draws on this tradition.

For cyberpunk, start with William Gibson’s classic *Neuromancer* and explore from there, taking in the better modern novels set in non-Western countries, such as Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl* and Ian McDonald’s *The Dervish House*.

For more about Mumbai, try the following:

- ▶ Vikram Chandra’s *Love and Longing In Bombay* and *Sacred Games*.
- ▶ Suketu Mehta’s *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*.
- ▶ Murzban F. Shroff’s *Breathless in Bombay*.
- ▶ Katherine Boo’s *Behind The Beautiful Forevers* and David Hare’s theatrical adaptation of that book.

I was also inspired by the game *80 Days*, especially its unique and critical take on steampunk. I thoroughly recommend reading interviews with and articles by the writer, Meg Jayanth, about her creative process in writing the game.

Thanks to Ajit George, Strix, Mo Holkar, Sanchit Sharma and Sandi and Michael Crenshaw for (as appropriate) advice, corrections, encouragement and hosting me in Mumbai.



# CONSUME

## A CTHULHU DARK MYSTERY IN MUMBAI 2037

Something is rising in Mumbai. It is the Tanwar building, a twisted skyscraper that grows and expands and breeds.

As it rises, it consumes the lives of workers. Eventually, it will consume everyone.

*Consume* is a Cthulhu Dark mystery set in Mumbai 2037, fuelled by class, construction and consumerism.

# THE HOOK

While working on the Tanwar building, a member of the Investigators' family, Ranjit, disappears. There are rumours that Ranjit leapt from the top of the building.

# THE FINAL HORROR

As the Tanwar building rises, it consumes the lives of its workers, instilling feelings of envy, greed and despair that eventually lead them to suicide.

Whatever the Investigators do, the Tanwar building will keep growing, spawning new buildings as it does so. Eventually, it will consume Mumbai, the world and everyone in it.

# THE STORY

The Investigators are a family, working on the vast Tanwar building and living in its foundations. After curious dreams, they wake in the morning to find their brother or cousin Ranjit has gone. On arriving at work, the Investigators hear rumours that someone leapt to their death.

Throughout their working day, the Investigators discover signs that the building is growing. It even appears alive. Those who use the Othernet discover curious, spiralling geometries surrounding the building.

The Investigators discover that Ranjit did indeed leap to his death. Yet they feel a curious sense of rightness about this, as though his death fulfilled a greater pattern. They may even sense this pattern themselves, feeling that their own deaths would fulfil a greater purpose.

They find Ranjit's body where it has fallen into an abandoned colonial building. There, the Investigators may meet the residents of the building, who say they regularly remove the bodies of workers who have jumped.

Eventually, the Investigators find their way to the highest and more luxurious level of the building,

the 70th Floor. They may meet the building's owner, Mo Tanwar, or other rich Mumbaikars. All are aware that workers are sacrificing themselves and happy for this to continue.

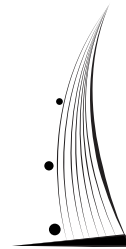
# THE TANWAR BUILDING

The Tanwar building has a gravity-defying spiral-like shape. It is immense yet unmeasurable, several miles wide at its base and expanding as it is constructed. Although not all the upper levels are built, richer Mumbaikars are already living on the highest constructed levels, in airy and spacious luxury. The highest level, the 70th Floor, is truly vast, with swathes of parkland and mansion-like apartments.

In the building's foundations, the Investigators live in workers' quarters, with concrete walls and no natural light. One day, as the building grows, their quarters will be filled with concrete to provide a stronger base.

Before you play, sketch a map of the Tanwar building for the players, giving it a vague spiral shape. Indicate where the Investigators live, where the luxurious upper levels are and where the still-to-be constructed levels will be. Keep the map out and refer to it throughout the game.

As you play, you may invent things about the Tanwar building. For example, you might decide that the building has security cameras melded into its windows, intelligent air conditioning units or balconies on the highest floors.



# THE INVESTIGATORS

The Investigators are family: siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, living and working in the Tanwar building.

Whatever their occupation, it describes the work they do on the Tanwar building. They might be hardware engineers, labourers, crane operators or in other lines of work. Ensure none of them are in positions of power: for example, an Investigator might be an architect, but not the chief architect. Decide Ranjit's occupation too.

Ask what each Investigator does on a day-to-day basis. A hardware engineer might inspect the installation of cables and routers as new levels are constructed. A crane operator might listen to filmi music through the Othernet as their crane crawls up the edges of the building. If they use the Othernet, ask how they access it.

Encourage work that requires the Investigator to physically move about the building: for example, if a virtual engineer's day-to-day work involves inspecting virtual structures, it's better if they do this on a visor as they wander about the building than sitting in the basement with a laptop.

Ask, too, about their family connections. Draw a family tree. Ask who is older and younger, especially when characters are siblings. Include Ranjit in this.

Now, look again at the occupations and ask which Investigators are the most successful. If an older sibling is more successful, does the younger one feel overlooked? If a younger sibling has achieved more, does the older one think they have failed? What about cousins? Keep these feelings broadly positive, but allow simmering feelings of envy and resentment.

You may want an older figure, perhaps a mother or father, who lives with the Investigators but is not an Investigator themselves. If so, ask how the Investigators relate to this person. Do they pressure the Investigators to succeed? What do they think of the Investigators' occupations? Alternatively, if the Investigators' parents are

elsewhere, then where are they and how do the Investigators keep in touch with them?

Ensure that the Investigators' livelihoods are invested in the Tanwar building. Perhaps they bribed an official for a contact that gives the family their work; perhaps they have been promised a mid-level apartment in the building; perhaps this is their only hope of work. In any case, ensure they cannot simply leave for another job.

Draw a map of the Investigators' small apartment, with two or three rooms, and ask where everyone sleeps, including Ranjit. Some Investigators will share rooms and someone will sleep in the living area.

Finally, ask what each Investigator dreams about or desires. Perhaps they long for the riches or romance depicted in films. Perhaps they dream about owning an apartment. Perhaps they desire expensive clothes, by famous designers or impregnated with technology. Encourage everyone to choose a dream that money can buy: for example, dreaming of world peace won't work well in this mystery, but dreaming of living in America will work perfectly.

By the end, everyone should know:

- ▶ What their Investigator does within the Tanwar building on a day-to-day basis.
- ▶ How their Investigator is related to the other Investigators — and Ranjit — and how they feel about them.
- ▶ What their Investigator dreams about.

Here is an example family of Investigators, the Jaswants. They live with the family's patriarch, Hiranya, who is not an Investigator. Hiranya is a retired bureaucrat, who has used connections and bribes to gain contracts for his family to work on the Tanwar building.

## PRAVIN

*Occupation: Hardware engineer*

From an early age, Pravin's father, Hiranya, had high expectations of him. Yet Pravin never had his father's sharp intelligence, preferring a plodding, methodological approach. With his father's grudging approval, he became a hardware

engineer, as his siblings (including Ranjit) rushed past him into richer, faster jobs.

While Pravin feels envious of his siblings' success, he is good at his job, with an instinctive understanding of hardware. His work on the Tanwar building comprises installing servers, cables and switches, while tracing an ever-growing constellation of corruptions in the data network. He mistrusts the Othernet, but cannot always avoid it, since its measurement and diagnostic tools are invaluable.

Pravin has simple dreams. Unmoved by luxuries, he wishes for a steady salary, a good marriage and (most importantly) a home of his own. Indeed, his father tells him that, as part of the remuneration for his work, he will one day own a mid-level apartment in the Tanwar building.

## NARAYANI

*Occupation: Virtual engineer*

When Narayani discovered the Othernet, she dived in and stayed there. Today, she spends more time in its virtual spaces than the real world. She accesses it via a visor, which superimposes the Othernet's data and diagrams over the real world, allowing her to live in both realities at once.

Her job is to plan the virtual spaces of the Tanwar building. She wanders around the floors, shaping, placing and connecting blocks of glowing light. These blocks represent software to run elevators, lighting, air conditioning and other everyday technology.

While Narayani loves her family, she feels increasingly disconnected from them. When she talks to them, she feels her mind running ahead, wanting to retreat into the Othernet. Her closest confidant in childhood was Ranjit, but she now feels closer to Tilak, whose technical expertise she respects.

More and more, Narayani dreams of the Othernet. She wants to see it in greater clarity, brighter colours, higher resolution. When she sees people with more advanced visors than hers, she feels a deep sense of envy. She wants to see what they see.

## MANDAVI

*Occupation: Secretary*

People always notice Mandavi's beauty. But only a few notice her ability to get what she wants: her tenacity and resolve, her understanding of people and ability to influence them.

When Hiranya asked her to work at the Tanwar building, she agreed instantly. Her role is ostensibly lowly, working just below the 70th floor as a receptionist and typist. Her job could be accomplished by a robotic intelligence, but her bosses prefer the status of having a personal assistant.

What she gets in return is access. Using her bosses' status, she reads business plans, financial accounts and project briefs, in a high but restricted stratum of the Othernet. This is not always easy, since the Tanwar building's records are complex and her activities are monitored.

Pravin, Narayani, Ranjit and Kanika are Mandavi's cousins. She is pleasant and guarded around them, knowing that her livelihood depends on this family.

She dreams of climbing Mumbai's social pyramid, learning the manners, speech and dress of her social superiors so she can emulate and surpass them. If she ever married, her husband would need to be an asset in that climb.

## KANIKA

*Occupation: Crane operator*

Hiranya rarely expected much from Kanika, his youngest daughter. She responded by pursuing her own interests, flitting from one to the other.

She loves music, which she streams through the Othernet. Her current obsession is Bitwave, a style of sound assembled electronically by gathering data from the surroundings. Thus, Kanika spends her days in her crane, listening to dance music made of data from the air conditioning systems and garbage disposal chutes around her.

Kanika loves her siblings, although she does not understand Pravin's obsession with owning

property. Her own obsession is movies, which she watched endlessly as a child and whose manufactured dreams still have a hold on her.

## TILAK

*Occupation: Accountancy engineer*

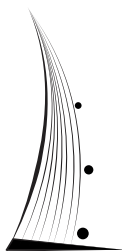
When Hiranya gained the contract for the family to work on the Tanwar building, he needed an accountant. Asking around the family, he found Tilak, a second cousin newly qualified as an accountancy engineer.

Tilak manages the Tanwar building's flow of money, by connecting virtual pipelines together in the Othernet. He works alongside twenty fellow engineers: in virtual space, they work in an infinite grey-and-white of wireframes and floating numbers; in physical space, they sit in pods just beneath the Tanwar's 70th floor, surrounded by screens that allow them entry into the virtual world.

Tilak's work is closely monitored. Yet he knows tricks to avoid attention: for brief periods, he can escape the wireframe space to wander other areas of the Tanwar's Othernet. He wonders whether anyone has noticed.

At heart, Tilak is a village boy, excited and unnerved by the city. He longs to emulate his city cousins, who seem more worldly than him. Deep down, he longs for home, but suppresses those longings.

Instead, he dreams of money and all it can bring: wealth, champagne, bright lights. One day, he tells himself, he will live at the top of the Tanwar building.



## ON A 5, ON A 6

When a player rolls a 5 when investigating, use the following ideas or invent your own.

- ▶ They remember a newspaper report in the Times of India, about a building in Delhi where similar events happened.
- ▶ They once read an article on the Othernet about workers disappearing, although they thought it was invented.
- ▶ This reminds them of an office rumour, which they heard six months ago but didn't believe.

When a player rolls a 6, they are likely to perceive one of the Creeping Horrors below.

## CREEPING HORRORS

There are four Creeping Horrors in this mystery, with the first two closely linked. Keep referring to them throughout the mystery, building them slowly in intensity.

- ▶ **The spiral pattern** of the Tanwar building recurs everywhere. Keep referring to it. If a witness describes Ranjit's fall, say he fell in a spiral, rather than straight downwards. If the Investigators inspect cables, mention they have curled themselves into a spiral pattern, like the building. If the Investigators view the Othernet, describe spirals in its virtual spaces. And so on.
- ▶ **The pattern of death.** The Investigators experience a growing sensation that the workers' deaths are part of an inevitable pattern. They feel this first about Ranjit's death, then other workers' deaths and finally their own deaths. Inexplicably, they perceive this pattern as a spiral, like that of the Tanwar building.
- ▶ **The building growing.** Throughout the mystery, describe signs that the building is growing. A crane operator may notice their view over the city is higher than yesterday. A surveyor's instruments might state that the building has grown by six inches. A virtual image in the Othernet might perceptibly grow. Sometimes, the Investigators might experience dreams or



hallucinations of standing on floors yet to be constructed.

- ▶ **Desire.** Play on the Investigators' desires. When an Investigator who likes designer clothes meets someone who wears them, say that the thought occurs to them that they could take the clothes by force. When an Investigator who loves movies stands on the edge of the building, describe the view downwards as colourful and welcoming, like jumping into a movie. Do the same with other desires.

The first three Creeping Horrors are especially useful when someone rolls a 6. For example, an Investigator might inexplicably sense mystical spirals within the Tanwar building's accounts, wiring or software. They might, while investigating Ranjit's death, feel a calm certainty that his suicide was part of a pattern. Or, while looking over the edge to see where Ranjit fell, they might feel the building growing.

Once an Investigator has experienced a Creeping Horror, keep referring to it. If someone perceives a spiral pattern, they should start seeing it everywhere. If someone is tempted to steal jeans, tempt them to steal other clothing too.

## THEMES

There are two closely-linked themes in this mystery.

- ▶ **Consumerism.** The Tanwar building revolves around money. Remind Investigators of the wealth and luxury on the upper levels. Use expensive or exclusive products to tempt them.
- ▶ **Class.** Remind the Investigators of their lowly social position, which shows in their voice, their skin, their clothes, the way they act. When someone of higher class meets an Investigator, describe them looking the Investigators up and down, examining their worth and subtly rejecting them. When the Investigators venture to the higher levels, keep reminding them they are not meant to be here.

## PROLOGUE

On a humid Mumbai night, the Investigators sleep fitfully in the Tanwar building's foundations. They dream.

Give each Investigator an individual prologue from the list opposite, either by rolling randomly or by choosing one that best fits each Investigator. For example, if an Investigator works within the Othernets as part of their occupation, give them prologue 3. If they have a strong desire for clothing and jewellery, give them prologue 6. Try inventing your own prologues too.

The first four prologues are dreams. The fifth is a dream too, although, when it starts, it is deliberately unclear whether the Investigator is dreaming or waking. The sixth is not a dream, but it is again deliberately unclear whether the Investigator is dreaming or not. Try to do the prologues in rough numerical order, so that the last prologues are about waking.

Take these prologues slowly, revealing what is happening bit by bit. Give the Investigator a chance to react, making a roll if necessary, then move quickly to the next prologue.

Once the prologues are over, it is time to wake and get ready for work.

## THE QUARTERS

In the bowels of the Tanwar building, the Investigators awake.

They live in a concrete basement, painted in bright colours to disguise its lack of comfort. Pallets of padding serve both as beds and seating. Despite the discomfort, it has basic sanitation and running water, and it is home.

Ask the Investigators who wakes first, then ask that Investigator what they do when they get up. Do they eat breakfast, wash themselves, plug into the Othernets or something else? As you do this, refer to the map of the apartment, showing who sleeps where.

	Prologue
1	You are standing high above the Tanwar building. When you look down, you see that you are standing on nothing, or perhaps standing on floors that have yet to be built. As you look over Mumbai, you see dozens of similar buildings rising from the ground, growing taller as you watch.
2	<p>You are on top of the Tanwar building with Ranjit. As you look over the edge, you see the building's walls, lights and windows, falling away below you in a spiral pattern. It is a beautiful pattern and you want to be part of it. Ranjit smiles and steps towards the edge.</p> <p>At this point in the dream, give the Investigator a chance to react. If they grab Ranjit, they save him from falling, although they do not stop his death in real life. If not, he steps off the building, spiralling down gracefully, becoming part of the spiral.</p>
3	<p>You wake in the Othernet, looking at a representation of the Tanwar building. Yet, as you look, something is wrong. Inexplicably, the building is stretching upwards and uncurling.</p> <p>Throughout this prologue, describe the Othernet as the Investigator normally sees it: for example, as glowing lines, scrolling numbers or pixelated frames. When you describe the building growing upwards, describe this as it would appear within the Investigator's Othernet: as lines stretching, numbers increasing or pixels moving.</p>
4	You are falling, with the Tanwar building's walls flashing past you. You are not falling downwards, but in a gentle curve, following the shape of the building. Although you should be frightened, you have a deep feeling that this is right, that you are completing an inevitable pattern.
5	<p>You wake in an apartment. It is not your family's apartment, but one which you own, halfway up the Tanwar building.</p> <p>Looking around, you see everything you dream of: here, name some things the Investigator desires, such as designer clothes, glittering jewellery or a loving spouse and children. Looking outside, you are high above Mumbai's smog-filled underways, and it is a beautiful day.</p>
6	<p>You wake on a stairway in the upper part of the Tanwar building. This is odd, because you went to sleep in your apartment as usual. You must have been sleepwalking.</p> <p>As you open your eyes, you see the building's beautiful interior, clean and glossy and glittering. People are starting to go to work. They skirt around you, refusing to meet your eye as you slump against the wall.</p> <p>They are dressed beautifully, with subtle but expensive suits, jewellery and wearable technology (and, here, tailor your description to include anything the Investigator desires). You suddenly realise that, if you wanted, you could simply take these things from them.</p> <p>Ask whether the Investigator is tempted to do this. If they try to do so, ask them to roll but don't roll the Failure Die against them. Describe the office worker freezing in disbelief — even, if the Investigator steals their clothes, undressing in terror — as the Investigator takes their property from them. If they do not, describe how the missed opportunity haunts the Investigator, as they continually fantasise about the things they could have taken.</p>

Then ask who wakes next and take them through their morning routine in a similar way. Repeat until everyone is awake.

If any Investigators started with prologue 6, ask whether they return to the apartment: if they do, they arrive while everyone is waking; if not, they meet the other Investigators in the underways (see below).

During this activity, someone notices that Ranjit has gone. If an Investigator normally sleeps in the same room as Ranjit, they notice immediately, without a roll. If an Investigator passes through the room where Ranjit sleeps, ask them to roll, rolling the Failure Die against them, in order to notice.

The Investigators may discover — by accessing security cameras through the Othernet, by trying to remember what happened while they were sleeping or in some other way — that during the night, *Ranjit woke, dressed and left, as if he was going to work.*

If they search Ranjit's things, they find signs that *he was becoming obsessed with the Tanwar building, especially the idea of flying around it:* his Othernet history contains thousands of searches about the building, while his sleeping area contains obsessive sketches. If anyone rolls a 6 while searching, the Investigators discover diagrams depicting spirals, like the shape of the Tanwar building, which Ranjit said he wanted to “become part of.”

Once everyone has talked for a few minutes, tell them that it is nearly 8am. They must head to work.

## THE UNDERWAYS

Each morning, workers gather in the underways, outside the employee entrance to the Tanwar building. In this dark, noisy space, a friendly crowd lines the road and spills into the traffic. They stand on the crumbling pavement, choke on the pollution and avoid the vehicles that manoeuvre around them.

Everyone comes to socialise and exchange news. The crowd is so large that traders arrive to service it, selling food, gadgetry and, most important of all, chai.

As ever, there is a hierarchy. High status workers, such as architects and accountants, cluster close to the building's entrance. Those of lower status, such as hardware engineers and surveyors, stand further away. Those at the bottom of the hierarchy, including crane operators and ragpickers, find themselves edged into the road. Even then, there are subtle microhierarchies and groupings: architects stand apart from accountants and surveyors think themselves superior to hardware engineers. This is enforced by a subtle code of glances, gestures and movements: if you stand in the wrong group, they talk over you, drift away or turn to exclude you.

As you describe this hierarchy, make the higher-status groups sound attractive, tailoring your description to the Investigators' individual desires. For example, if an Investigator likes fine jewellery, perfume or designer clothes, mention that a nearby group is wearing these things. If a software engineer wants a better visor to access the Othernet, mention that a group of virtual engineers have these visors.

If an Investigator tries to join a higher-status group, ask for a roll, rolling the Failure Die against them (see “Passing” on page 90). If they succeed, they are admitted for a short time. If they fail, they are ignominiously excluded.

As the Investigators talk to their colleagues, they learn today's rumour, which is that *someone jumped off the building last night.* The person stood on the upper level, looking down, then leapt to their death. There is even a rumour that, *as the person fell, they laughed joyfully.* The body has not yet been found.

If the Investigators probe further or roll a 5, they discover that *other workers have also recently leapt to their deaths,* always in the early hours of the morning. If they roll a 6, they may find an eyewitness, who, to their confusion, explains that *the person fell in a spiral, following the shape of the building.*

If the Investigators find other ways to investigate, let them do so. They discover essentially the same information. For example, if they use the Othernet to trace security breaches in the Tanwar building, they discover that *someone accessed the roof in the early hours of the morning* and did not return. Let the players find imaginative ways to investigate: for example, if someone accesses the air conditioning systems and performs computations on its airflow data, they might plausibly discover that a body fell in a spiral from the upper floors of the building.

Try to leave some uncertainty about the identity of the person who jumped. If the Investigators are intent on discovering who it was, let them do so: it was, of course, Ranjit. But, if you can, postpone this discovery until later.

All too soon, the talk fades, the chai is finished and the crowds drift through the entrance. It is time to go to work.

## AT WORK

As the Investigators enter, the Tanwar building swallows them in its winding corridors. Even to those who have worked here for months, its spiralling geometry is disorienting. The Investigators feel that, if they became lost, they would be lost forever.

Ask each Investigator, in turn, how they start their working day. Where do they go? What do they need to do today?

Do a short scene with each player, taking them through the start of their Investigators' day. A hardware engineer might install air conditioning units on soon-to-be-inhabited upper floors. A crane operator might manoeuvre their crane along the outside of the building, putting new windows into place. An accountancy engineer might inspect glowing matrices of figures in the Othernet.

Interrupt each of these scenes with something unexpected. You might interrupt with a Creeping Horror: an Investigator might notice spiral patterns or that the building is growing. The hardware engineer might find that wires in the

walls have inexplicably curled into spirals like the shape of the building. The crane operator might discover, from their instrument panel, that their crane gets progressively higher every hour, even when it stays at the same place on the building.

Or you might interrupt with an indication that Ranjit fell from the building: the hardware engineer might find Ranjit's clothing neatly folded beside the edge of the building; the crane operator might notice smeared blood and hair on the outside of a window; the accountancy engineer might notice Ranjit's pay has automatically stopped.

When these scenes are complete, it is time for the Investigators to locate Ranjit's body. They can do this in various ways, so be open to suggestions. An Investigator might hack into last night's security camera records and watch him falling; follow smears on the windows downwards until they find his corpse; or scan the ground using enhanced visual technology. Allow creative options too: for example, if someone suggests that the building's intruder detection system can be hacked to trace Ranjit's fall, let them find the body this way.

If, while investigating, someone rolls a 5, they might discover that *other workers have fallen from the building* and that *more and more fall every year*. Alternatively, if someone rolls a 5, they might find further evidence that *the building has grown*. For example, they might discover that the view from a security camera changes every day, as though the camera is creeping upwards.

If someone rolls a 6 while investigating Ranjit's fall, they perceive something about the spiral pattern that surrounds the building. Reveal a little more about the pattern each time a 6 is rolled. On the first 6, say that *Ranjit fell in a spiral*, following a pattern which *emanates from the building*. On the next 6, say that the Investigator suddenly understands that *Ranjit's death was part of this spiral pattern*, that *it was inevitable and somehow right*. On the next, say that the Investigator realises *their own part in the pattern*, that *their fall is inevitable too*. And keep going like this, throughout the game, revealing more each time.

Eventually, the Investigators locate Ranjit's body in a slum beneath the underways. This is where they must descend.

# BENEATH THE TANWAR BUILDING

Deep beneath the surrounding underways, there is a crumbling complex of Colonial offices. It is used as cheap warehousing for the Tanwar building and slum housing for its workers, the inhabitants providing labour in return for being allowed to stay.

Ranjit's body lies within this complex. There are two ways to get to the complex: through a maze of service corridors or through old colonial buildings.

If the Investigators try to get there via the service corridors, they take the elevator to the Tanwar building's basement. There, they find a complex of dusty white service corridors, leading between anonymous battered store rooms. Here, unlike the rest of the Tanwar building, there is no pretence of luxury.

As the Investigators enter these corridors, ask them to roll to notice something amiss, rolling the Failure Die against them. If they succeed, they notice that the corridors are warped and stretched, as if *they have grown rather than being built. They resemble the roots of a plant.*

How do the Investigators find their way to Ranjit's body? They might ask a passing worker, if they can persuade them to talk. Or they might use the Othernet or try their luck at navigating without aid. However they find the location of the body, ask for a roll and don't roll the Failure Die.

If you want to tempt the Investigators, let them find a changing room on the way, containing clothes, jewellery and other valuables. Use this to remind Investigators of their desires: for example, if an Investigator dreams of designer clothes, tell them they see expensive jeans in the room, theirs for the taking.

As the corridors go deeper, they seem older, constructed of crumbling bricks and plaster. Eventually, the Investigators find an antique wooden door of British design. It leads to the old colonial offices where Ranjit lies.

If the Investigators try to get to Ranjit's body via the colonial buildings, they must leave the Tanwar building and descend into the underways. On a forgotten, crumbled street, they find a half-buried Colonial house, through which they must pass.

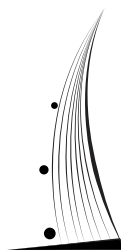
The house feels desolate inside, as if *inhabited by spirits of the past*. Splinters litter the floor, from furniture long since broken for firewood. *An old British flag lies in a corner*, used recently as bedding.

To get to Ranjit's corpse, the Investigators must exit through the back of this house. When they do, they find themselves in a forgotten, twilight world of old British architecture. High above, they see a ceiling of fallen billboards, with shafts of light penetrating where the billboards have cracked.

Ask for a roll to see whether the Investigators notice anything, rolling the Failure Die. If they succeed, they notice that *the architecture follows a spiral pattern*, like that of the Tanwar building. The rooms, doorways and streets are faintly curved, as if warped. Did the Tanwar building grow from these old houses? Or did it warp the old houses into its pattern? It is not clear.

As the Investigators explore, they find signs that *the buildings are inhabited*: there are makeshift beds, fires and toilets. The residents are not present: they are, in fact, in the old Colonial offices (as described opposite). If it feels right, put objects of desire around the buildings — tattered sneakers, torn jeans, tarnished jewellery — and tempt the Investigators to steal them.

Eventually, the Investigators find a mass of fallen billboards at floor level. A hole is smashed through them, where Ranjit fell. When they look through the hole, they see Ranjit's body, lying in a colonial office building.



# THE OLD OFFICES

The colonial offices lie in a grandiose mansion of dirty yellow stone. Years ago, the mansion was at ground level, but it now lies underground, beneath a roof of accumulated debris. There are two ways in: through the great front doorway and through the roof.

If the Investigators enter through the front doorway, they find there is no door, only rusty hinges where the door used to be. It leads to an entrance hall with a grand staircase, with scraps of golden wallpaper on the walls. In the walls are alcoves, holding decapitated statues of long-forgotten men. *There are sounds of movement deeper in the building.*

If they enter through the roof, they climb through the mass of fallen billboards described above, in which Ranjit's falling body has smashed a hole. There is a twenty-foot drop to the body, which, in some way, the Investigators must negotiate.

The Investigators find Ranjit's body in an old ballroom. Once, it was luxurious, but all the furniture, curtains and valuables have been removed over the years. A great chandelier, now a stripped iron skeleton, hangs above. Large, flat fungi grow outwards from the damp walls. *The British owners obviously used the room for storage, since the space is filled with thousands of wooden filing cabinets.*

Ranjit has fallen among the filing cabinets, in a mess of bloody papers, splinters and scraps of his flesh. There is little left of him, except for a silver ring and tattered jeans *which Investigators recognise as his.*

If any Investigators have previously felt the Tanwar building's pattern, they feel it again when they see Ranjit's body. Tell them that they feel a strong sense of rightness and completion, as though Ranjit's death makes perfect sense.

This is a good time to tempt the Investigators. If any Investigators have been previously tempted by material items, such as jewellery or clothing, describe those items on Ranjit's body. Tell them that, against all decency, they find themselves

tempted to take these items. Let them decide whether they actually take them.

Gradually, the Investigators realise they are not alone. In the dark room, the building's occupants have gathered to watch. Unless the Investigators intervene, these people begin to clean up the mess that is Ranjit's body, moving any remains to a disused office on the lower level. As they do this, they avoid the Investigators' gaze. If asked to stop, they stop.

These are the Warehouseurs. They live here, work here and maintain the building.

If asked what they are doing, they tell the Investigators that *they frequently remove workers who leap from the Tanwar building*, placing their remains in offices on the lower floor. They have noticed that the workers *fall according to a regular pattern*, three or four a night, always at the same times, although more and more have fallen over time.

If the Investigators examine the files, they find records of a long-dead British outpost. Many files are missing, either rotted or burned for firewood, but much is preserved in the sturdy oak cabinets. If the Investigators search intently, they find *architectural plans for a spiral-shaped building*. This building was proposed to the British authorities over a century ago, by someone called Mr Tanwar, an apparent ancestor of Mo Tanwar. On a 6, the Investigators sense strongly that *the Tanwar building grew from these files.*

If the Investigators explore the building, they find the Warehouseurs' living space. They sleep under tattered curtains, cook over fires made from files and relieve themselves in a hole in the floor, the toilets long since having been blocked. In the basement offices, the Investigators find *hundreds of smashed bodies*, including workers they remember.

You may find the mystery reaches a natural end here, when the Investigators find Ranjit's body or the smashed bodies below. Some Investigators may flee Mumbai, while others may accept their fate. There might even be a struggle, as some try to leap off the Tanwar building and others try to restrain them.

For Investigators who want to explore further, make it clear that, *if there are any answers, they lie on the 70th floor*. You can do this in various ways, depending on what currently interests the Investigators. For example, if the Investigators are angry about Ranjit or the workers' deaths, the Warehouseurs should mention that *everyone on the 70th floor knows that workers are dying, but they do nothing* because they want the building finished. If the Investigators are obsessed with the spiral pattern, the files might reveal that *the pattern centres on the 70th floor*. If they think the answer lies in the Othernet, send them to *the Tanwar building's server room on the 70th floor*. And so on.

If you think a specific focus is needed, point the Investigators towards Mo Tanwar, the building's owner, whose office is on the 70th floor. For example, if the Investigators want to know who is responsible for Ranjit's death, the Warehouseurs should mention that *Mo Tanwar wants workers to die so that the building grows*. If the Investigators decide that British colonialism is ultimately responsible for the Tanwar building, suggest that *Mo Tanwar wants to complete the building planned by his ancestors*.

One way or another, if the Investigators want answers, they must go to the highest levels of the Tanwar building, where the richest people in Mumbai live.

## THE 70TH FLOOR

It shines out across Mumbai, a beacon of prosperity and dreams. In the day, the 70th floor is a mirrored arc in the sky. At night, it is a luminous curve, soaring against the darkness, like a twisted moon.

To get here, the Investigators must take the moving stairways that criss-cross the outside of the building. These stairways start at the bottom, where they are utilitarian in appearance, made of scuffed plastic. As they ascend the building and leave the workers' levels, the stairways change suddenly in appearance, becoming translucent cylinders of marble and gold.

As the Investigators rise above the smog, they see Mumbai stretching away below to a glittering sea. If any of the Investigators have felt the pull of the Tanwar building's spiral pattern and the inevitability of Ranjit's death, they feel it again now, together with the temptation to throw themselves into the abyss and fulfil the pattern. This, to them, feels right and inevitable.

Finally, they reach the vast 70th floor, entering through soaring arches. They are not stopped by security: as workers, they are theoretically allowed here, even if their presence is not welcomed.

The 70th floor is a vision of wealth and dreams. It stretches for miles around the Investigators, with lakes, trees and hills forming part of it. Far above, marble balconies look down, with darkened glass hiding the apartments behind.

All this is linked by stairways and walkways, on which beautiful people wander, dressed in silks and gold. There is a feeling of peace, space and impossible elegance. Yet this is a place of work too: *concealed artfully behind landscaping are the Tanwar building's offices and servers*, glossy and austere.

Once the Investigators arrive, follow their lead. Pay attention to what brought them to the 70th floor and what they think is important. If they think the spiral pattern is important, guide them towards the server room in the office suite. If they think Mo Tanwar is important, let them find his office. If they came here to confront the wealthier residents, let them do so.

Wherever they are going, remind each Investigator one last time of their dreams. If an Investigator dreams of clothes or jewellery, describe a resident who wears the most beautiful apparel imaginable. If an Investigator dreams of better access to the Othernet, let them glimpse technology that provides that. If they dream of a penthouse apartment, describe one. Tell the Investigators that they feel they could simply take what they want. After all, that is what these richer residents did.

From now on, watch for chances to bring the action to a head and end the game. Wherever the Investigators go, describe it dramatically: try

setting scenes by large windows, overlooking a dizzying drop to Mumbai below, or on top of the Tanwar building. Confront them over and over with the truth: *workers are dying, as part of a mystical pattern to make the Tanwar building rise and the Investigators are fated to die too. The building's rich residents know about this and do not care, because the dead are only workers.*

There are various places the mystery might end. It might end in Mo Tanwar's office, sleek, dark and spacious, overlooking the lights of Mumbai and the drop to the streets below. When the Investigators enter, Tanwar stands beside the window, bald, light-skinned and precisely dressed, with the money to make himself look like a movie star.

Tanwar treats the Investigators as invisible, as though cleaners have entered his room. If they persist, he looks at them with distaste, taking in their clothes, hair and skin, his eyes sliding off their faces. "What?" he says.

Whatever the Investigators ask, Tanwar answers, truthfully and sharply. Yes, *he knows workers are dying*. No, he does not remember Ranjit, why would he remember a worker? No, he knows nothing about the Tanwar building's pattern, but if it helps build his building, *he is glad about it*. Yes, he could stop the workers dying, but why would he? They are only workers. Nobody cares.

If the Investigators take violent action, let them do so, without rolling the Failure Die against them. Try describing Mo Tanwar standing with his back against the window and see if anyone pushes him through. If they take no action, he eventually asks them to leave.

Or the mystery might end in another office, perhaps that of the Chief Architect or one of the Investigator's managers. Or it might end with the Investigators confronting the rich residents in their life of leisure. Play these scenes similarly to the scene with Mo Tanwar described above. The Investigators discover the same information: *everyone knows that workers are dying and nobody cares*, providing the building gets higher. After all, they are only workers.

Or the mystery might end in the server room, a vast, windowless space, where polished dark slabs

purr and glow. With a little work, the Investigators can jack directly into the servers, bypassing security to access the deepest levels of the Tanwar building's system within the Othernet. Describe these levels as you have described the Othernet before, but even more intensely: for example, as impossibly complex blocks sliding around each other; as beautifully intricate wireframes interlinking subtly; as vast fields of scrolling numbers with beauty lurking inside them.

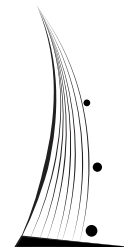
Once in the system, the Investigators see the spiral pattern in all its glory. They see all of Mumbai, past, present and future. They understand the inevitability of the pattern: *workers will die, the Investigators will die, the Tanwar building and others like it will rise*. The Tanwar building will breed like a fungus, spawning other buildings across Mumbai and the world. Indeed, it has already started to breed.

Or the mystery might end on top of the Tanwar building, with the Investigators looking down at the drop swirling away beneath them, wondering whether to jump.

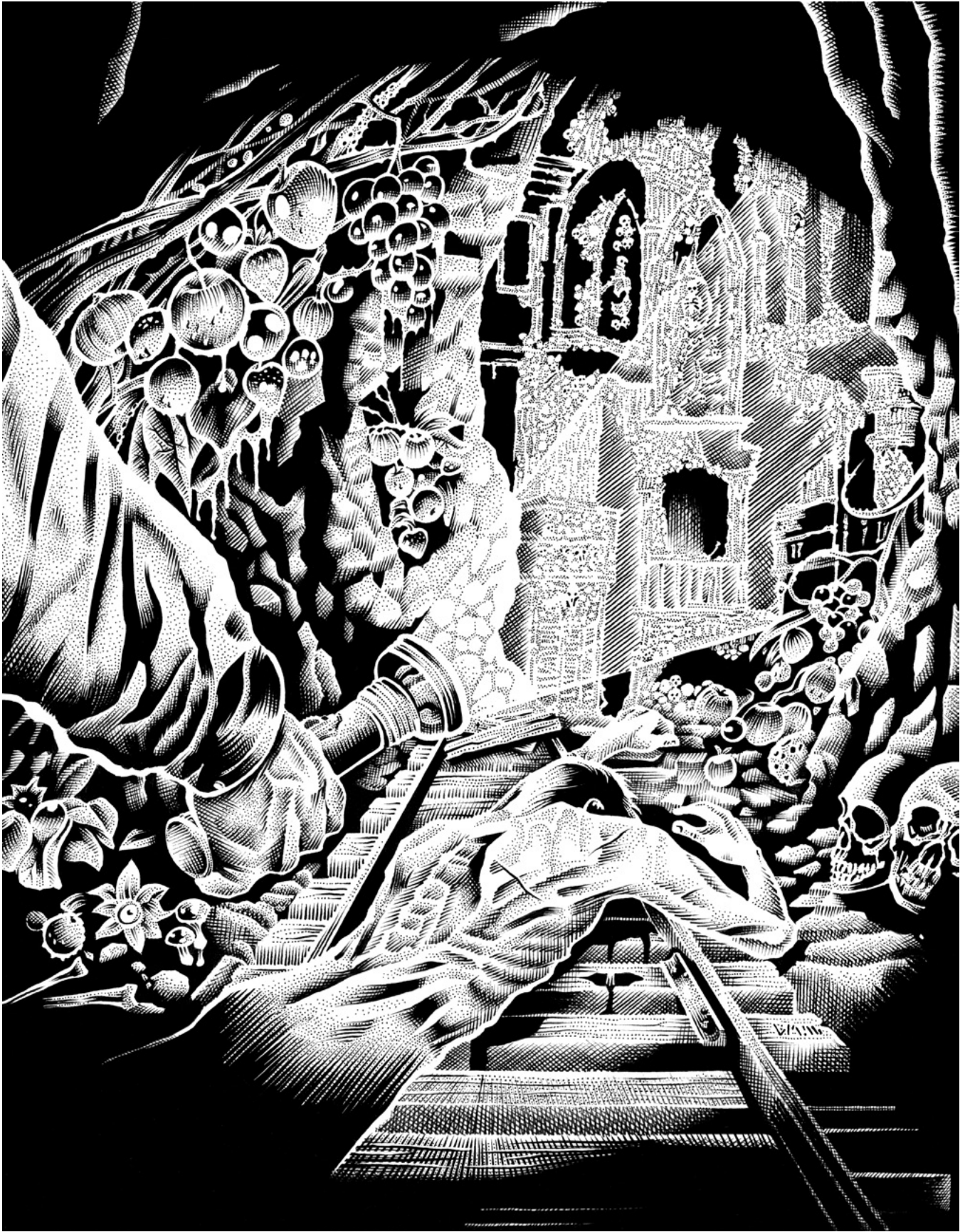
## EPILOGUE

If it seems right, ask each player to narrate a short epilogue for their Investigator. Where do they go now? What do they do? What is their life like afterwards?

Once these epilogues are over, describe one of the Investigators looking over Mumbai. There, they see more spiral-shaped buildings rising from the ground, as if the Tanwar building has infected the city. They know that, one day, these buildings will consume Mumbai and the whole world.







# APPENDICES

# HACKING CTHULHU DARK

If you want to add rules to Cthulhu Dark or design your own game based on it, you need to understand how the mechanics work. Here are some principles for hacking Cthulhu Dark.

## 1. KEEP IT SIMPLE

This is the golden rule. Cthulhu Dark is deliberately minimal: it uses as few rules as it can, as few dice as it can and as few words as it can.

Keep your rules simple too. Don't roll two dice when you can roll one. Don't write two sentences when you can write one. Don't write two rules when you can write one.

For example, let's say you want a rule for "Sorcery Dice", which Investigators add to rolls when they do magic. Don't overcomplicate this new rule. Don't have different spells that add different numbers of dice. Just make all spells add one Sorcery Die.

## 2. TRY THE ORIGINAL RULES FIRST

Before adding a new rule, try using the existing rules to do whatever you want to do.

For example, let's say you think Cthulhu Dark needs combat rules. First, try using the existing rules to handle combat. After that, decide whether you need more rules.

Think twice before adding extra rules for combat, weapons, health or skills. Cthulhu Dark has deliberately few combat rules, because, if you have them, fighting becomes the solution to every problem. It doesn't have rules for specific skills because, when I tested these rules, players didn't think they were necessary.

Often, the best "new rules" are extensions of the original rules. For example, Passing (on page 89) feels like a new rule, but it just uses the rules for Doing Something Other Than Investigating (see page 18). Similarly, the spells in The Doors Beyond Time feel new, but don't use any extra rules.

## 3. FORGET REALITY. USE THE RULES TO TELL A STORY.

Cthulhu Dark doesn't try to simulate the way things really are. It focusses on telling a story.

For example, Insight isn't meant to be a realistic portrayal of occult knowledge or mental health. It's just a device to add tension. Insight is designed to increase rapidly at first, then leave everyone teetering on a knife-edge later.

When you write rules, don't try to make them "realistic." Don't, for example, add a rule that lets Investigators reduce their Insight by taking time away from the investigation and relaxing. That'd be dull.

Instead, write rules that make the story fun. For example, try a rule that lets Investigators reduce their Insight by taking opium or drinking whisky, as they slowly numb themselves to the horror. That's interesting to play.

## 4. DON'T ADD TO OR SUBTRACT FROM ROLLS.

Cthulhu Dark's mathematics are precisely calibrated, so that you roll a 4 often, a 5 sometimes and a 6 rarely. This means that, when you roll, you only occasionally roll a 6 and glimpse the horror. After all, it wouldn't be fun if, every time you saw the horror every time you rolled.

Don't write rules that add to the number rolled. Take, for example, the following rule: "When you think of someone you love, add 1 to your roll." This rule would produce too many 5s and 6s. It would also mean you could roll a 7, so you would need to explain what rolling a 7 means.

Instead, try a rule that adds extra dice: "When you think of someone you love, add an extra die to your roll." This rule also produces more 5 and 6s, but not as many, and you can't roll a 7.

Don't add more than one — or, exceptionally, two — dice to a roll.

Similarly, don't write rules that subtract from a roll. Instead, find ways to remove dice from rolls: "When you are forsaken by those you love, you may not use your Human Die when you roll."

## 5. IF YOU WANT A NUMBER THAT INCREASES AND DECREASES, MAKE IT WORK LIKE INSIGHT.

Let's say that, in a postapocalyptic hack of Cthulhu Dark, you want a Mutation score, which shows how much Investigators are mutated.

First, fit it on a scale from 1 to 6, like Insight. So, 1 would mean "not mutated" and 6 would mean "dying from mutations."

Then, make it increase and decrease only when you roll a die. Hence, you might have a "Mutation roll": when an Investigator is exposed to radiation, they roll their Mutation Die and, if they get over their current Mutation, their Mutation increases by 1.

This helps your new rule fit with Cthulhu Dark's other rules. For example, it lets you write a rule to add the Mutation Die to rolls. Perhaps you can add your Mutation Die to a roll when there is radiation present, but, if it rolls high, you must make a Mutation Roll.

## 6. NEVER GIVE AN ADVANTAGE WITHOUT A CORRESPONDING DISADVANTAGE.

Whenever you write a rule that gives an advantage, make sure it has a downside too.

This is how the Insight Die works when you add it to a roll. You get an advantage: by adding the die, you might roll higher. But there is a downside: if your Insight Die rolls high, you must make an Insight roll.

This is also how Suppressing Knowledge works. You get an advantage: you can decrease your Insight. But there is a downside: you must destroy things, which is likely to create conflict with the other Investigators.

Don't write a rule that gives an advantage without a corresponding disadvantage. Don't, for example, write a rule that lets an Investigator reduce Insight if they talk to a therapist. There's no downside there.

But you could try a rule that lets Investigators reduce Insight when they reveal a deep secret

to someone else. Or try a rule that lets someone reduce Insight temporarily by taking powerful drugs, especially those that help them lose touch with reality. Both of those have a downside, because they are likely to create trouble.

This tempts players to gain a temporary advantage, but one which creates future trouble for themselves.

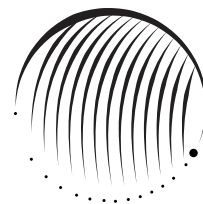
By doing this, you are luring players to create trouble. Do this as much as you can.

## 7. PLAYTEST YOUR NEW RULE

This is the other golden rule. Whenever you write a rule, test it in play. Do this whether you are adding a new rule to Cthulhu Dark or writing a whole new game.

When you play, notice how your new rules work. Do they feel awkward? If so, fix them. Do you forget to use certain rules? If so, assume you don't need them. Be ruthless. If a rule doesn't work, cut it out.

Test your new rules a few times with different groups of players. Tweak the rules each time, making small changes until they do exactly what you want them to do.



# DESIGN NOTES

In writing the history of a game, you can write a short history, which covers the time it took to write the game. Or you can write a long history, which covers everything that inspired the game and the work that led up to it. This is the long, rambling and personal history of how I designed Cthulhu Dark and the books I wrote before it.

In 2000, the game *Vampire: The Masquerade* brought me back into my childhood hobby of roleplaying games. I started with the live-action roleplay (LARP) version of Vampire, then the tabletop version. Soon afterwards, when a new edition of an old favourite game, Paranoia, was released, I bought it and read it cover-to-cover. This was Allen Varney's excellent and witty *Paranoia XP*.

This led me to explore in two directions. First, it inspired me to design "Will All Elder Gods Report for Termination?", a Paranoia/Cthulhu crossover LARP. I'd discovered the delights of CthulhuLARPs through Alex and Johanna Mead's wonderfully bleak games in San Francisco and liked the idea of mixing Lovecraft with Paranoia. Before running the game, I thought I'd better actually read some Lovecraft, and so I read the short story Dagon in a London bookshop. The story unsettled me, staying with me for the rest of the day. I've tried to recapture that feeling ever since.

Second, the new edition of Paranoia mentioned The Forge, an online game design community. It highlighted one game that the Forge had produced, Paul Czege's *My Life With Master*. I bought this game and was amazed: at its beauty and professionalism; at the detailed GM advice (which I tried to match later, when I wrote GM advice for my games); at the fact that one guy had written and published all this; and, most especially, at the innovative game design.

Soon after, the British RPG veteran Steve Dempsey ran another Forge game for me. This was Vincent Baker's *Dogs In The Vineyard*, a game about faith and judgement.

These two games were revelations. I hadn't realised you could write roleplaying games without

hit points. I didn't know you could have Weariness as a stat. I hadn't understood you could use game mechanics to drive the story. And, most of all, I didn't realise I could do all this myself.

So I signed up for the Forge. This website encouraged game mechanics that directly influenced the story (a viewpoint encapsulated by Ron Edwards' essay System Matters, still available, still worth reading). And it encouraged you to publish those games, giving you the resources, information and support to do so. It called these games "indie games". There was an inspiring attitude that anyone could publish them: you could write a game, hire artists, commission a print run, even hire a booth at GenCon.

For me, the beating heart of the Forge was Indie RPG Design, a subsection where people helped each other design games. There was a constructive, welcoming and focused atmosphere. I posted an initial idea, a comedy game about an advertising agency, and got encouraging feedback from Jason Morningstar, who later designed the game Fiasco.

That started me writing games. I wrote prototype after prototype, posting them on The Forge for feedback, learning as I went. I entered game competitions such as *Game Chef*, which let me experiment with quick, throwaway game drafts. When the Forge crowd moved to a new website, Story Games, I kept writing and posting. It was the start of my lengthy obsession with game design and engagement with game designers across the world.

In the following months and years, I started to meet the people I was corresponding with online. First, I met a bunch of designers in the UK, whom I joined in playing and selling our games at UK conventions. As the Collective Endeavour, we rented and staffed booths together. I discovered a love of talking to customers and selling directly to them.

I also travelled to the States, where, on a long road-trip, I met the American designers I knew through The Forge and Story Games. This culminated in my first Gencon, where, to my delight, the online culture spilt over into real life, with games played through the day at Games on Demand, followed by playtests and discussions

after hours at the Embassy Suites. There was a freedom of discussion and interaction that was deeply inspiring.

There was always a focus on publication. This led to my first book, *Play Unsafe*, a guide to improvising and storytelling in games. It started as a blog, which proved popular enough that I decided to compile and expand it.

My main difficulty was layout. After getting advice from Story Games and The Forge, I downloaded Scribus, a free layout tool, and laid the book out myself. I didn't know much about layout or typography (as you'll see if you read *Play Unsafe*). My best decision was the cover: a simple, striking photograph of a stack of dice.

For both art and layout, I deliberately chose options that looked good, cost little and were unusual for roleplaying games. I'd noticed other designers making similar choices: Jason Morningstar used old photographs, Vincent Baker drew his own art and both did their own layout. This idea of making unusual, inexpensive aesthetic choices was one that stayed with me.

After much work, *Play Unsafe* was released on Lulu, an online printing service, and I posted on Story Games to let people know. I decided I'd be happy if it sold 20 copies. It sold 100 within the first week and continues selling today.

Meanwhile, the Forge crowd continued to spread to new websites. One was Knife Fight, which took a feminist stance and encouraged personal stories. While I didn't agree with everything that was said, Knife Fight had a lasting effect on me, prompting me to read feminist and other critical literature that would eventually feed into *Cthulhu Dark*. It also introduced me to Simon Rogers, a London gamer and publisher.

Simon invited me to playtest *Trail of Cthulhu*, a game by Kenneth Hite and Robin Laws, which he planned to publish. I liked *Trail*, which I found produced focused, intense and personal horror. Its central feature was spending skill points, rather than rolling dice, which meant you never failed to find out a clue.

*Trail* had two modes of play: Pulp, for a combat-oriented adventure, and Purist, for a bleaker

horror. We played mostly Pulp. But I wanted the unsettling creepiness I'd felt when I first read *Dagon*. I offered to run a Purist scenario.

I wrote *The Dying of St Margaret's*, a deliberately hopeless horror, featuring my favourite Lovecraftian creature, the Colour Out Of Space. In a deliberate reaction to other Cthulhu games I'd played, it had no combat and no way of winning. It went well and Simon asked me to write it for potential publication.

This made me nervous. I knew that Cthulhu games had a long publication history: that is, they had a "canon", which people would expect me to know. They would read what I'd written about a Colour and compare it to what had gone before.

That wasn't how I wanted to write. I wanted to write mysterious creatures, not monsters that everybody knew. So I deliberately decided to ignore the canon. My Colour would be my own interpretation, inspired directly from my memory of Lovecraft's story.

In doing this, I had a curious inspiration: the British science fiction series *Doctor Who*, which had recently returned to television. It had shown a willingness to reinvent its monsters, which had both reinvigorated them and made them scarier. I wanted to do the same for Lovecraft.

Over the next few years, I wrote more Purist adventures. With each one, I tried to undermine a key trope of other Cthulhu scenarios I'd played: *The Dying of St Margaret's* was a scenario you couldn't win; *The Watchers In The Sky* presented a mystery you could never fully know; and *The Dance In The Blood* made the players into the monsters. A final scenario, *The Rending Box*, brought the sequence to a close, with a horror too vast to conquer.

Alongside my writing for *Trail of Cthulhu*, I kept writing indie games. One of my games, *A Taste For Murder*, was a murder mystery. It used six-sided dice, which you rolled then looked at the highest die: a simple mechanic I'd reuse in *Cthulhu Dark*.

After writing *A Taste For Murder*, I promptly forgot about it. But the Collective Endeavour crowd did me a favour and played it for me. To

my amazement, they had fun. It was a lesson I remembered: testing other people's games is a wonderful thing to do.

Clearly, I needed to publish *A Taste For Murder*. But, when I wrote the rules, they weren't long enough to fill a book. So I added a description of the 1930s setting, together with some recipes (to fit in with the "after dinner" atmosphere of murder mystery games).

This time, I bought a better layout package, Serif Page Plus. I was lucky to get advice from a professional typographer, Brennen Reece, who had liked *Play Unsafe*. I sent him layouts, he told me where I was wrong and I made corrections, until we got something that worked.

To fit with the 1930s setting, I chose an Art Deco style for the layout. This instantly gave me a classic typeface to use, Gill Sans. I found art deco posters, menus and books online, especially on Google Images, and mimicked their style. In doing so, I'd found a useful layout trick: pick a period, look at old books from that period, then do something similar. To complement this style, I bought text ornaments online. These looked so good that I didn't need to commission art.

For the cover, I drew a pastiche of a 1930s book cover. A friend from the Collective Endeavour, Iain, persuaded me to print it in matt rather than gloss. This time, I used a printer, Publishers Graphics, to do a print run.

Meanwhile, the online crowd were obsessed by short games. One particularly influential game was John Harper's *Lady Blackbird*, combining beautiful layout, catchy fiction and simple but workable mechanics, which drew on previous indie games. I wondered whether I could write a short game of my own.

Shortly afterwards, I stood at a booth at a UK convention, selling my games. I had special editions of my Pelgrane scenarios, printed on my home printer and enhanced by nail varnish: again, I'd enjoyed exploring that aesthetic intersection between inexpensive, unusual and beautiful. The special editions sold well, but you needed *Trail of Cthulhu* to play them, which stopped some customers from buying. And I thought: how hard

would it be to write a short Cthulhu system, which I could put in the back of these scenarios?

The basics of this system came to me quickly. To do something, you'd roll one base die, plus one or two extra dice if you had the right skills. I remembered *Trail of Cthulhu*'s selling point, that you never failed to find a clue, and thought: what if you always succeeded, but the number on the die showed you how well you succeeded?

Around this time, indie games were doing clever things with dice. Vincent Baker was especially influential, writing about dice mechanics that influenced the story in a way nobody expected or wanted. He showed how to do this in his game *Poison'd*, with combat mechanics that tempted players to escalate to higher forms of violence, and often caused characters to die even though nobody had intended that to happen. This gave me an idea for my Cthulhu game: what if you could succeed *too well*, finding out more than you wanted to know?

From all this, the Cthulhu Dark mechanics came together. You rolled six-sided dice and took the highest roll, like in *A Taste For Murder*. The higher you rolled, the more successful you were. But, if you rolled a 6, you found out more than you wanted. This tempted you to add more dice to the roll, so that you rolled higher, but it also made you more likely to roll a 6 and glimpse the horror.

Alongside this, I wanted a way to represent Investigators losing their minds. First, I tried a score that started at 6 and gradually decreased to 1, but this felt wrong, given that, in the dice mechanics I'd just designed, a 6 meant seeing the horror. So I swapped it around, with a score that increased from 1 to 6, which I called *Insanity*. From there, it was a short step to allowing players to add their *Insanity Die* to a roll.

I added a rule that let people reduce their *Insanity*, but only if they destroyed evidence. This was a combination of endgame and mischief-making, designed to provoke conflict among Investigators and potentially end the game. Here, I was guided by games like *My Life With Master*, whose mechanics included an endgame.

From then on, everything was tweaking and calibration. When you made an *Insanity* roll, did

your Insanity *increase by 1* or did it *increase to the number you rolled*? When you added your Insanity Die to a roll, did it need to roll *higher* or *equal or higher* than the other dice to prompt an Insanity roll? I spent hours rolling dice and calculating probabilities on spreadsheets.

Then I playtested obsessively, running my Trail of Cthulhu scenarios with Cthulhu Dark. The rules worked well, including, to my surprise, the lack of combat. There was only one major change: in my first draft of the game, Investigators had three Skills, which let them add Skill Dice to rolls. In play, these seemed superfluous alongside the Occupation Die, so I took them out.

I released Cthulhu Dark for free online. At the time, I'd intended that it would be supplemented by additional and optional rules, which I called "Globules." I released two myself, Dark Tales and Dark Depths, which attempted to mechanise the process of creating a mystery.

But I quickly realised that these additional rules didn't work as well as Cthulhu Dark. Rather than creating mysteries through game mechanics, I decided it was better to show people how to write their own mysteries.

Taking a break from Cthulhu Dark, I decided to distil what I'd learned from writing my Trail of Cthulhu adventures into a book. It would be a guide to writing mysteries by adapting Lovecraft's stories.

I wrote a first draft called The Lazy Keeper's Guide, but, when I read it back, it didn't work: I'd aimed for a comic tone, but it came across as sarcastic. I rewrote it in a plainer, instructional style and found a new title, *Stealing Cthulhu*.

It was a lot of work. Where my previous books had been 10 to 20,000 words, this was over 40,000. The ideas came easily, but getting the words down was hard and editing them was even harder. I read and reread, often finding that a whole section needed rewriting.

Aesthetically, I wanted *Stealing Cthulhu* to resemble an old book, like an ancient Lovecraftian tome. Looking through my parents' old books, I found a 19th Century prayer book and copied its

style. Brennen helped me find a beautiful typeface, Bodoni, which worked perfectly.

In fact, I didn't just want *Stealing Cthulhu* to look like an old book, but an old book that people had scribbled on. This meant that I wanted people to write in the margins, adding their own thoughts to what I'd written. Jason Morningstar, Gareth Hanrahan and Ken Hite kindly agreed: in Ken's case, I think it helped that I sent him the manuscript before a transatlantic flight, so he could write on it during the journey.

This book needed art. Still fascinated by that aesthetic intersection between good, cheap and unusual, I chose black-and-white illustrations and I wanted something striking. I found Jenn Rodgers through online contacts and she was perfect: I'd give her a broad idea of what I wanted and she'd fill in the details. Often, I'd open my email just before I went to bed and find something horrific from her.

I'd hoped to use one of Jenn's pieces for the cover, thinking that a black-and-white cover would look classical and smart. I gradually realised I was wrong: I needed something colourful, and black-and-white would fade into the background. (Even *Play Unsafe*, which has a largely black-and-white cover, has a bright red title).

Then someone shared a picture of Cthulhu online, which was both beautiful and disturbing. I found the creator and contacted him through DeviantArt, a website for artists. He agreed to do the *Stealing Cthulhu* cover.

By now, crowdfunding was becoming the way to sell your game. Since Kickstarter didn't allow UK publishers at the time, I used IndieGoGo. My campaign offered different versions of the book, including softcover, hardcover, unannotated (that is, a version without the scribbled comments) and a special edition which looked like a library book.

The special edition was both fun for me and popular. I bought stickers from a library supply website and did a mock-up of a library front paper, complete with date stamps. The unannotated edition was a mistake: it forced me to do a second print run for something that people probably didn't read.



After several false starts with printers — including a scary moment of asking for my money back, when I realised the printer wasn't delivering the hardback I'd thought they were — I went with a UK printer, who produced *Stealing Cthulhu* as a beautiful hardback book.

Meanwhile, I was writing sourcebooks for other games, including *Doctor Who: Adventures In Time And Space* and *The Laundry*.

This was a different kind of writing. When I wrote my own books, I'd produce a short text, then polish it obsessively. For these sourcebooks, I needed to produce thousands of words a day. It took coffee, discipline and long evening walks to think what I'd write the next day. And it made me think: could I make a big rulebook myself, commissioning sections from other writers?

My Pelgrane work continued, with a new campaign called *Cthulhu Apocalypse*, which I intended to be 12 scenarios long. I even planned another set of scenarios to come afterwards, which would be set in Victorian London. But I'd overcommitted.

The problem was: my heart belonged to Cthulhu Dark. It was easy to run at conventions and elegant in play. When I playtested new things, I used Cthulhu Dark.

I did this with my new scenario, set in Victorian London, called *Screams of the Children*. It was a mystery about a woman who became pregnant with a monster, although, unlike the current version, the Investigators were members of a gentleman's club, investigating a horror in the slums.

So, with a degree of sadness, my Trail of Cthulhu scenarios came to an end. This meant that *Cthulhu Apocalypse* ended after 6, rather than 12, scenarios, with the campaign ending in Britain. Part of me still wants to write the remaining 6 scenarios, in which the Investigators travel across the United States, through Savannah, New Orleans and ending in California.

There was another problem. It worried me that, when I wrote a scenario that started in a gentlemen's club, players would play snobbish aristocrats, who hated the poor, talked down women and ranted about the British Empire. I felt

I was giving people the tools to play unpleasant characters.

There were wider issues with Cthulhu sourcebooks and scenarios. They could be overtly racist: I remember one that divided "natives" into "racial types." They often presented a rosy view of history, omitting many of the bloodier details of colonial history. And there was tone-deaf writing: I found Ganesh, an Indian deity, in a list of monsters, which seemed deeply wrong once I'd travelled to India and seen people's shrines to him.

There was also a trope that repeated across many scenarios. It went as follows: American or British Investigators arrived in a foreign country, where they discovered a horror lurking beneath the soil. There was usually a hint that the country's people were primitive and that the horror was, in some way, associated with those people. Then the heroic Investigators would vanquish the horror and go home. Hence, Americans and Brits were always the heroes, and the horror was always linked with the native people.

More subtly, Cthulhu games focussed on middle-to-upper class people. Lists of occupations tended to focus on middle- and upper-class work, with only a few references to menial work. There was also an emphasis on stereotypically male occupations: you'd always find a doctor in a setting, but rarely a housewife.

All this led to a power dynamic in Cthulhu games. They were about people with power, usually middle-to-upper-class men, who were implicitly the good guys. And the horror was always associated with people with little power, often people from foreign countries, who were implicitly the bad guys. This felt wrong. I wanted to find another way.

What would happen, I wondered, if I inverted the power in my scenario *Screams of the Children*? Could I start it in the slums and end it in the richest part of London? Could I make it about poor Londoners investigating rich Londoners?

To test this, I ran *Screams of the Children* in reverse: instead of starting in a gentleman's club, the Investigators started in the East End, as beggars, thieves and prostitutes. Instead of

finding the horror in a slum, they found it beneath an aristocrat's house.

It worked perfectly. In fact, it worked better, because the Investigators were more human: instead of braying aristocrats, they were normal people, fighting for those they cared about.

And so it became a rule. In *Cthulhu Dark*, the Investigators are people with little power, investigating a horror at the heart of the power. This had subtle implications: it meant that, in a mystery in a colonial country, the Investigators would automatically be the people from that country rather than the colonists.

This affected Occupations too. There wouldn't be an Aristocrat or a Stockbroker, but there would be Mudlarks and Costermongers, which I thought were much more interesting. I also ensured that women's occupations were fully represented — Nurses, Outworkers, Shopgirls — and chose to include Housewife, since it's a form of work too.

I thought a lot about naming Occupations. For stereotypically male occupations, I tended to use a gender-neutral form, to avoid the implication that these jobs must be done by men: for example, "Police officer" rather than "Policeman." This was particularly difficult with "Fisherman." For stereotypically female occupations, I tended to use the gendered form ("Housewife"), as a reminder that this work had historically been done by women.

There was a harder decision to make around *Insanity*. I'd heard criticism of the way mental health was handled in Lovecraft and *Cthulhu* games, especially the stereotype of the screaming lunatic. One suggested solution was to give a more "realistic" picture of mental health in games, but I found this could actually make things worse: you wouldn't want to encourage players to mimic real-life PTSD symptoms after seeing a monster.

I also suspected that there was something positive in the way *Cthulhu* games handled mental health. After all, most games ignore mental health completely: in fantasy games, you'd never play fighters who wake up screaming after battling a dragon. *Cthulhu* games were one of the few genres that made mental health visible.

After asking around, I changed "Insanity" to "Insight." This did two things: it helped avoid any stereotypical association with madness and it brought the concept closer to what I wanted it to be. Insight wasn't just about "losing your mind", but about seeing a deeper and more terrible side to reality.

I started writing the *Cthulhu Dark* rulebook, tapping away on my tablet every morning on the train. It took over a year. With some parts, I knew where I was going from the start, and with others, I worked it out as I wrote. At one point, I nearly abandoned *Cthulhu Dark*, then a friend offered to edit it and reminded me of the good stuff I'd forgotten.

When I commissioned other settings for the book, I wanted to ensure that *Cthulhu Dark* wasn't a book written entirely by men. Around this time, most major tabletop RPGs, even those from publishers who were doing other things around gender equality, were written by a small group of dudes. I wanted to prove a point: that you could publish a big roleplaying game book which wasn't written mostly by men. And I wanted some of those writers to be relatively new to RPG writing.

And so, when I put out the call for writers, I asked people for their ideas of settings and scenarios that featured people with little power, investigating a horror at the heart of the power. I gave the "gentleman's club" example: if there is a gentleman's club in the mystery, it should be the source of the horror, not the starting point for the Investigators. I mentioned that new writers were welcome to apply, especially women and non-white writers. Finally, I mentioned that they could just send me some initial ideas rather than a formal pitch.

When I got responses, there was a curious split between the things men and women proposed. Men seemed to miss the point about the power and proposed traditional *Cthulhu* scenarios: for example, they might suggest a scenario featuring horrors in an aristocrat's basement. Women tended to send more tentative ideas, but totally got the idea about the power.

The first setting came from Kathryn Jenkins, who proposed an idea about witch-hunting in the time

of Charles I. She linked me to her blog, which had some wonderfully horrific writing on it. We had a long discussion, firming up ideas, and switched the setting to Arkham 1692.

Two more settings came from Chris Spivey and Mo Holkar. Chris proposed a mystery about black soldiers in World War I, while Mo proposed a Dust Bowl scenario. Both became stand-alone scenarios, which were released as part of the Kickstarter for this book.

These were great settings, but they were all Western. I hadn't really shown that we could reinvent that trope of English/American Investigators finding horrors under foreign soil.

My first non-Western scenario came from Helen Gould, with whom I'd played tabletop games in London. When I explained what I was trying to do, she proposed Jaiwo, a fictional African country. It sounded perfect. We talked through ideas and developed *The Curse Of The Zimba* into a genuinely horrifying story.

Still, I couldn't just have one non-Western setting. I needed one more.

Everything was drawing me towards Mumbai. My friend Ajit George had run a historical scenario set there, which I desperately wanted him to write, but I gradually accepted he didn't have the time. I also saw David Hare's theatrical adaptation of *Behind The Beautiful Forevers*, an extraordinary story about Mumbai ragpickers. And I visited friends in Mumbai, staying in the suburbs of newly-constructed buildings, while I immersed myself in books by Mumbai authors.

Simultaneously, I was on a cyberpunk kick: I started with William Gibson, then moved on to *The Windup Girl*. I was also inspired by *80 Days*, a game that reimaged steampunk in a way that tackled colonialism, and wondered whether I could do the same.

Slowly, the idea of a cyberpunk Mumbai took shape, with construction at its heart.

I wondered whether I was the right person to write it. There wasn't a clear answer. If I did, I'd inevitably get things wrong. If I didn't, I perpetuated the problem of most RPG settings

being Western. I chose to write about it, knowing I'd get things wrong, to show that Western writers shouldn't avoid non-Western settings.

That said, I chose not to tackle some topics directly, knowing that I couldn't do them justice. Hence, *Mumbai 2037* doesn't mention caste, although it talks about class and social standing. It also rarely mentions religion, which sadly means that I don't mention Mumbai's many temples.

*Mumbai 2037* was a joy to write. The words flowed on to the page and I've edited very little from my first draft. I got feedback from as many people as I could, including people who had lived in Mumbai and those with Indian heritage. This wasn't easy: I often found that people were reluctant to tell me if I'd done something wrong. Some things, such as finding names for Investigators in Mumbai, were very hard to get feedback on.

Gradually, the *Cthulhu Dark* rulebook came together. As with my previous books, I did the layout myself, drawing on Brennen Reece's layout for the original two-page version. For the cover, I wanted a modern look, to contrast with the historical style used by other Lovecraftian games. George Cotronis, who I'd worked with on other projects, was a perfect choice. For the interior art, I wanted a distinctive black-and-white style, and found Matteo Bocci's amazing Lovecraftian drawings on DeviantArt. For maps, I worked with the talented cartographer Stentor Danielson. Thanks to Anna Kreider, Lewis Kirby and Steve Blackwell for help with editing.

There have been difficult decisions in producing *Cthulhu Dark*, especially the way I handled mental health and my writing of *Mumbai 2037*. I may not always have made the right decision. Where I haven't, I'm happy to hear feedback.

I hope you've enjoyed *Cthulhu Dark* as much as I've enjoyed creating it. Thank you to everyone who has helped, inspired and supported me, both with *Cthulhu Dark* itself and with my other projects over the years.

If you'd like to use *Cthulhu Dark* for publishing your own mysteries or if you'd like to release a game based on *Cthulhu Dark*, I'd like to help you. Contact me at [graham@thievesoftime.com](mailto:graham@thievesoftime.com).

# HANDOUTS

My dear Jack,

Since you left, the time has passed so slowly that I feel I am dreaming. Time is strange here: a day can pass in a moment or feel like a year.

Is it wrong, my dear, that I am scared about the birth of our child? It has grown so large and so quickly. Yet I must quiet my fears and remember what I promised.

On your last visit, you left your cravat. Sometimes, I touch the silk to remind me of you. I wonder how you are, as you look over Grosvenor Square. I wonder what you do. I wonder if you ever think of me.

There is nothing for me to do here, so I cannot claim that I must finish this letter. Yet, my writing is at an end and I will sign my name and resume my wait.

I am, forever, your own

Lily

Mr Blackburne,

We are united in our opinion of the spirits that torment our neighbors. They are a most holy affront to the Almighty God and our vigilance against them must be unceasing.

Yet the devil has power and, in your battle against these things, I fear you empower him further, most especially in your use of lies as a weapon. I entreat you to reconsider your management of this affair. When so many souls are lost and so much blood is shed, we must, I believe, come humbly before God and ask whether our efforts against this extraordinary power are in vain.

For myself, I doubt my strength, and I choose to flee rather than fall to the darkness that sweeps Arkham, in the hope that the great God will grant forgiveness. Indeed, I have felt the eye of Diana Catterill, who I fear is under their power. I throw myself into the mercy of God and hope to sail from Boston tomorrow.

I entreat, nay implore, you to consider whether this is a battle you can win. In this and in all else, I come to you as a friend, a man of God and,

Sir, your servant,

Christopher Miles.

Sir,

Given the unnatural events plaguing our fair settlement, you would know whether I believe we should hold our course. I humbly submit that we should.

The Devil tempts us to turn aside from the road that the great God has laid for us. We have begun to cleanse this land from witchcraft and, God willing, we shall succeed.

Within the church, I have discovered that many Arkham families are tainted by their ancestry. The Ingham family have the most disastrous link through their female line to those in consortium with the demonic. The girls have been partaking in the most heinous of acts. I implore you to take action against them first, before their youth disappears and they are able to harness their true power with an adult's cunning mind.

Other families, too, are tied to the Inghams by blood, including the Warrens, the Cotterills, the Williams, the Masons and Coreys. It seems right that we begin with the Warrens.

Sir, in this matter which threatens our very souls and the heart of Arkham, I am, your servant,

Father Lewis

**LETTER FROM FATHER LEWIS**

In the early evening, on my usual walk just after dusk, I have glimpsed from the topmost room of their house a most peculiar source of light. It is a purple iridescence I cannot quite describe. Although only a light, it is offensive in a way that makes no clear sense. In the daytime, I have seen the girls walk hand in hand, in complete silence, towards the river.



Myself and my sister have always been good to little Lucy and Eliza. After their mother died we took them bread and tried to include them in our games. They spoke to us in strange tongues and stared. Then when I was alone with Eliza, she pointed at me and I had a fit. She was very devious as she did it where no one could see. Then my sister and I suffered from terrible fevers and sicknesses they cursed us.

Rose Mercer

What my sister says is true. They cursed us.  
I have nothing more to say. Amelia.

Several accounts from the public and my men, all good men, have brought forward claims of vile behaviour on the part of the father and young girls remaining in the Ingham family. Some state that their witchery was the cause of the mother's death. I have had reports of man-faced rats skulking in the early morning mists by their home. I have had reports of strange colours in the windows of the house and of dogs refusing to pass the house, their tails between their legs. I, myself, having prosecuted witches before, feel the same unsettled feeling when I look at them as I did with the others found guilty.

Jonathan Blackburne

**NOTE FROM JONATHAN BLACKBURNE**

## **Mass Disappearance in Village; Investigation Continues**

By Saatu King

People are disappearing from the rural village of Bakudo, with villagers blaming a witch.

Since last month, people have disappeared without notifying relatives or leaving a trace of their departure. Some say they simply disappeared into the soil, blaming the magic of a local woman alleged to be a witch.

"I have nothing but respect for the people of Bakudo," said missionary Father Reynolds, "But these stories do

(cont page 14)

Spirits must be told what they will receive and when, as well as how long the summoner will need them. Respect must be shown at all times and the right gifts offered. Otherwise, the spirit will not be fully under your control.

It is dangerous to not set parameters, as spirits will take this as leave to remain on the Earth. However, they will need to take corporeal form to do so - and this means they will demand many more sacrifices than the initial one. They will enthrall the summoner to do their will and then those surrounding it until they have been fed enough to step forth onto the ground.

One specific spirit is of particular worry.

It is coming for me, I feel its hot breath on me at all times, burning my skin. It should never have been awakened - not by one who did not understand how to put it back again.

The proper sacrifices were not made, the summoner did not assert their control. This Zimba is loose and wild, instead of tamed and bound to the summoner. It will swallow everything, it will begin its eternal hunt. I have resisted so far but I know that it wants me. I am the most powerful being for miles around.

May the gods protect me.

