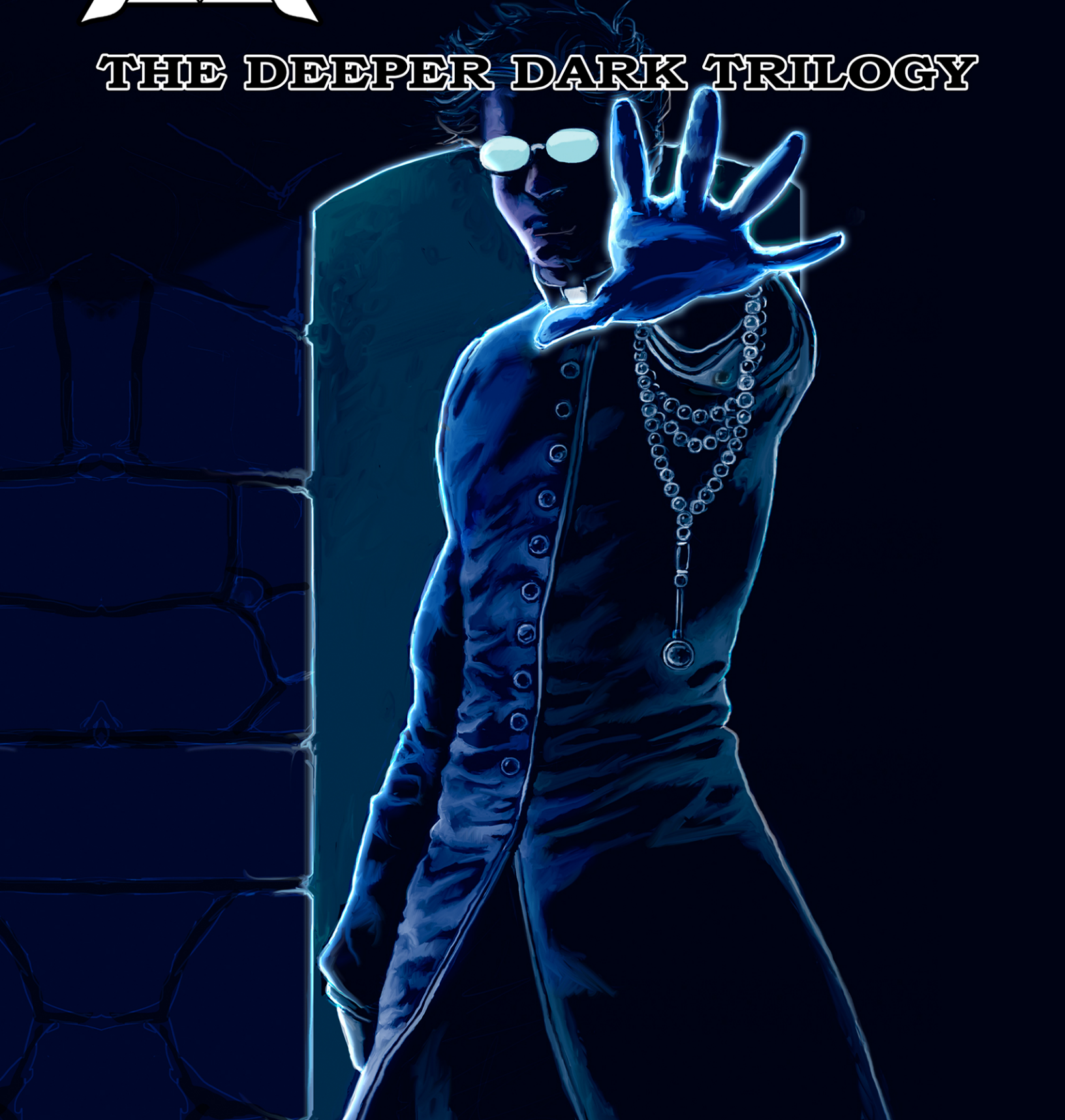




MAZING DVENTURES 5E

THE DEEPER DARK TRILOGY





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THE DEEPER DARK TRILOGY

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Special Thanks: My "Ripper" table at Gen Con 2016—I've sadly forgotten your names, but it was a blast and you caught an important oversight! You know who you are, and you have my gratitude.



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INTRODUCTION

The Deeper Dark Trilogy is a set of three loosely-connected modules which can be run as a sequence, or each in their own. None depends on any other, so you can run them in any order you like. What links them is their use of Lovecraftian horror, popularly known as the Cthulhu Mythos. They are adventure modules in much the same vein as any other in the game, but all have strong elements of deep, unnatural, cosmic horror at their core.

Amazing Adventures takes a somewhat unique approach to such themes, however. Since it is a game about heroes beating back the darkness, it takes an approach to the myths that is more similar to, say, Robert E. Howard than H.P. Lovecraft. Characters in your game have the ability to beat back the forces of darkness, at least for a time. Instead of quietly going mad against forces they cannot fight, they take a sword down and rage against the dying of the light.

That being said, it's entirely up to the GM how to run these adventures. They can be run as pure cosmic horror with a sense of isolation and entropy, or they can be run as heroic, albeit dark, fantasy. It's your game, and it's your choice!

The three adventures in this sequence are as follows:

1. **Don't Fear the Ripper:** The heroes must save an heiress and young witch who is the target, victim, or possibly even pawn, of a demon from beyond the pale.
2. **The Feast of Black Annis:** a cult of new age druids on the local college campus falls under the sway of a priestess of the Great Old One, Shub Niggurath.
3. **The Nightmare Children:** A degenerate cult in the country has been endowing kidnapped children with powerful psychic abilities and turning them into a force of darkness. Can the heroes save the kids and overcome the cult, and the fiendish alien creature at the heart of the conspiracy?

YOG-SOTHOTHERY IN YOUR GAME

What is popularly known as the "Cthulhu Mythos," or "Lovecraft Mythos," was, in fact, referred to by the man himself as "Yog-Sothothery," after the nominal head of his demonic pantheon of Outer Gods, or Great Old Ones (in Lovecraft's own text, the terms were often mixed and matched). There are far better places to go for treatises on the nature of this approach to Cosmic Horror than we have space to provide here.

Suffice it to say, there are a number of different approaches. Often in "pure" Lovecraftian works, the PCs go gradually mad as they unravel the secrets of Things Man Was

Not Meant to Know. Other authors in Lovecraft's circle—namely, people like Robert E. Howard—preferred their PCs to grab a six-shooter, sword or axe from over the fire place and blaze away, going down in a hail of blood, guts, and gunfire as they fought against these dark forces.

The author of this adventure prefers the latter approach, especially in an action-based game like Amazing Adventures. While it is assumed that you will use the basic rules for Madness as presented in the AA core rulebook (p. 242), it's not strictly necessary to run this scenario, though it will greatly change the feel if you don't include it.

If you really want to dive into the effects of madness and the horrific nature of cosmic horror, you can instead use the advanced Sanity rules found in the AA core rulebook (p. 245). If you use the advanced rules, the encounter with the demonic Sisterhood of Black Annis requires a SAN check with SAN losses of 1d6 with a successful check and 1d8 with a failed check. The encounter with Brigit in her demonic form also requires a SAN check with SAN losses of 1d6/1d8. During that same encounter, the lesser spawn of Shub-Niggurath can cause SAN losses of 1/1d4, while the greater spawn can inflict SAN losses of 1d4/1d6.

The key to Yog-Sothothery is the idea that there are ancient and demonic beings of godlike power that exist outside of our own reality. They're not from Heaven or Hell; rather, they're from the Spaces between Spaces. They live in angles and shadows, in a realm we will call the Deeper Dark. They're not strictly evil, but they are as indifferent to humankind as we are to insects, and their very nature is so unnatural that just to be presented with evidence of their existence is a sanity-blasting experience. The horror of these things comes from their sheer unnatural-ness. They are the Things That Should Not Be, antithetical to reality as we know it.

These creatures, called Outer Gods or Old Ones, once ruled our universe, until one day many tens of thousands of years ago, when a great cataclysm changed the very order of the stars in the sky. This sent the Old Ones into an eternal slumber in their other dimensions, until the day when the stars once again change and they can rise and consume all that we mere humans have built.

Until that day comes, the Outer Gods influence their cults through dreams, symbols, and ancient texts of great power that were left behind, and can manifest small slivers of their presence in our world. If too many of these slivers get through, the Old Ones may awaken once more, and it is exactly this that our PCs must strive to prevent...

For more on Yog-Sothothery, check out the fiction of authors such as H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, August Derleth (who put his own spin on "codifying" Lovecraft's mythos), Robert Bloch, and Clark Ashton Smith. There are many others who have taken up the torch since this "original" circle, and once you start reading, you'll find everyone out there has their own opinion about the canon and who is the best of the Lovecraft Circle.

LOVECRAFTIAN HORROR AND MADNESS

Since these are horror-style adventures, the assumption is that Basic Madness rules as found in *Amazing Adventures* are in play (pg 242). Since, however, these are pulp heroes, rather than your typical Lovecraftian investigators, GMs may wish to consider the adventures in the trilogy as Howardian in nature rather than Lovecraftian. There's not enough space here for a treatise on the difference, but at its core, in this game and scenario your heroes have a chance to beat back the darkness, destroy the evil and come out alive and sane against the horrors of the Outer Dark. It's a different approach than most games using the Lovecraft mythos assume.

If you want a deeper dive into the themes of madness and threats to sanity, you can instead use the Advanced Sanity rules in the core rulebook (AA pg 245).

Regardless of which rules for sanity you use, there's a lot of potential for temporary madness to arise in this (and the previous two) scenarios. This particular adventure, as with the other two, debuted at Gen Con 2016, and in every session, all the characters failed their Sanity rolls during the final battle, leading to some pretty wild scenarios!

RESTORING SANITY

For the Advanced Sanity rules, it's important to establish a means by which PCs can restore lost Sanity points, which is not implicit in the core rules for *Amazing Adventures*, aside from rest, recuperation and therapy under the hand of a skilled alienist. Thus, the following options are presented for this and other adventures in this Trilogy:

1. At the GM's option, a "Sanity Award" can be given at the end of every scenario that involves heavy Sanity loss. The exact amount of this award is left to the GM's discretion, and should be based upon the degree of success with which the PCs navigated the scenario and the amount of Sanity lost (but not necessarily restore characters to full Sanity).
2. The lesser restoration and greater restoration spells could, at the GM's option, restore lost Sanity points—1d10 per casting for lesser restoration, and 3d6 for greater restoration. However, characters can benefit from this method of restoring sanity but once per day, and only if they have suffered sanity loss that day.
3. Just by engaging in some good old-fashioned R&R, away from the horrors of the Deeper Dark, characters can recover Sanity. At the end of each week they spend vacationing in peace, with no activity that could cause potential sanity loss, in a way that anchors them to the real world, PCs can make a Sanity check. If successful, they regain 1d8 points of Sanity.

If you are using the Advanced Sanity rules, remember that a character's maximum Sanity score is always limited by their Intelligence (forbidden lore) skill (if any) (see *Amazing Adventures 5E Core Rulebook*).

Here are guidelines for encountering creatures in the adventure that require SAN checks and have the potential for incurring a loss of SAN points. Recall that the number before the slash represents SAN loss with a successful SAN check, while the number after the slash represents SAN loss with a failed SAN check:

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

As with most adventures, this scenario will present supplemental information and clues which will be set off for the Game Master, for easy reference.

BOXED TEXT

Boxed Text will appear in boxes like this and are intended to be read aloud to the PCs, to set flavor and tone of a given scene.

GAME MASTER'S INFORMATION

Text formatted like this presents specific background and supplemental information for the Game Master's eyes only, to help fill in the missing pieces of the puzzle. Such boxes will give insights into events taking place behind the scenes, ways to troubleshoot scenes that the PCs approaches differently than written, rules information such as maps or special, situational rules, etc. Any game-related info that isn't specifically tied into story events will most likely be in these sidebars.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF WILLIAM ST. JOHN

The Brotherhood of William St. John are the "iconic" heroes for the assumed *Amazing Adventures* "meta setting." Information about the Brotherhood itself can be found in the *Amazing Adventures 5E* core rulebook and the *Brotherhood of William St. John* sourcebook. It is recommended that if using the Brotherhood in this adventure, the characters be advanced to levels 6-8; otherwise, the challenges herein may be exceedingly deadly.

MACKIE GLEESON: The leader of the Brotherhood of William St. John; a wealthy socialite with contacts everywhere. Also the pilot and "wheel-woman" of the group.

MADDIE BLACK: a P.I. in New Orleans and direct descendant of the original Medusa of Greek myth.

MARIE LAVEAU: Yes. That Marie Laveau. She looks a lot younger than she is and pretends to be her own granddaughter.

TITANUS WILLIAMS: Another P.I.



DET. JOE KNONAEM

Getting the players involved could theoretically be problematic if you don't use the Brotherhood, especially if you don't have any psychic or arcane characters to have the nightmares that pull it all together. If necessary, introduce an NPC, one Detective Joe Knonaem of the New Orleans Police Department (or whatever city in which the PCs are based). Det. Knonaem is a grizzled, heavysset detective in the homicide or major crimes division who also happens to be a contact of one of the PCs.

When cases arise that are strange and unusual, Joe calls the PCs in for help, always begging them to keep things on the D&L—invariably, their exploits have gotten him in trouble before, so it's generally with reluctance he brings them in.

DETECTIVE JOE KNONAEM (*LG Medium humanoid (human)*) HP 39 (HD 6d8+12), AC 13, Spd 30 ft. Perception 16 (+6), Investigation +4, Insight +6, Stealth +4. Str 12 Dex 15 Con 14 Int 12 Wis 15 Cha 11. .38 special +4 (1d8+2) or nightstick (1d6+1). SA Urban Tracking, Face in the Crowd (can disguise himself to blend into a crowd), Sherlock (all investigation checks made with advantage), Natural Scrapper (if target below hp max, one attack per turn deals an extra 1d6 damage with melee weapon or unarmed). Challenge 1/4 (50 XP). He wears a trench coat and a fedora.

USING OTHER LOCATIONS

Even though the initial adventure in this series is set in New Orleans, there's nothing at all in it requiring NOLA to be the location. The city was simply chosen as it is the base of operations of two of the Brotherhood (Marie Laveau and Maddie Black), and because it has a history and legacy of mystery and magic behind it. There should be no issues whatsoever, however, with transferring the location to whatever city in which you base your campaign. Just swap out locations and have at it!

NATALYA ABRAMOVA: Up-and-coming Hollywood starlet and secretly a former cat-burglar named The Fox.

TENNESSEE O'MALLEY: A scholar and adventuring archaeologist.

BUCKY NEWSOME: An engineer and gadgeteer.

"SAVAGE" STEVE MCPARTLAND (AND BLUTO): An Irish dock worker, pugilist and adventurer whose simple but unshakable sense of right and wrong makes him the moral core of the group. With his faithful Rottweiler Bluto, he's been invaluable in many situations.

USING ANOTHER PC GROUP

Don't Fear the Ripper can easily be run using the group's own characters, rather than the iconics. It will be very helpful if the group in question has at least one Arcanist and one Gumshoe. If the party needs access to some sort of occult library or similar source of research materials, introduce the Café Arcana, a local café and occult shop, as a resource for the PCs. It will also be necessary to introduce an NPC to suffer from the nightmares that give the all-important clues as to what's going on. Mackie and other members of the Brotherhood can function as useful NPCs, providing resources and access to occult research material, as well as the potential to join the Brotherhood if they have not already through past adventures.

DON'T FEAR THE RIPPER

BACK STORY

Dana Green, a 23-year-old inheritress and practicing witch, has been obsessed with fantasy since she was a child. And by fantasy, we're talking swords and sorcery, schools of witchcraft and wizardry, fireballs and lightning bolts, wizened old men with long gray beards, and priestesses filled with wisdom and magic. She got involved with witchcraft at the age of 14, when she entered a local New Age bookstore and was recognized as having the spark of magic within her by the owner.

Dana quickly became wrapped up in the trappings of the Old Faith, but was disenchanted with the lack of real power it afforded the majority of its members. Sure, she understood the benefits of meditation, of the feeling that one could direct energies to control her life, but she wanted something less...subtle. Where were the lightning bolts? The power to strike down those who had wronged her? She began to pray to the Goddess daily for more power and became frustrated when it never came.

Unaware that the forces she was meddling with were growing darker, and more sinister, she began to seek knowledge through ancient tomes of black magic, still praying every day (now to any gods who would listen) for the power she sought, which she still believed would be used to right wrongs and avenge injustices. She became even more frustrated when at the age of 21, she inherited her grandmother's multi-million dollar estate, but the money and material power she held as a result didn't help her to gain any more magical power, though over the past 3 years she has amassed quite an occult library.

Then, one night, she had a dream in which a soothing and fatherly voice told her that it had heard her wishes and prayers, and would grant her the power she was so hungry for. She saw an auction, and at the auction a beautifully carved dagger was up for sale. Within that instrument, the vision told her, resided the power to give her all that she desired and more.

The next day, she purchased the dagger. As soon as her hands touched the instrument, she could feel the power coursing through it. Unfortunately, all she's been rewarded with thus far is recurring nightmares and psychic visions about murders taking place, in which the dagger is involved. She wakes up at night in cold sweats, and feels compelled to check on the weapon. The first night, she awoke with the dagger in hand, and grease on her arms. After that, she locked the dagger up in a case, but still awoke night after night to find it nearby, covered in blood. Finally, she had a special display case commissioned, which she placed the dagger inside and from which it could not be removed. Since then, she no longer wakes to find the dagger nearby, but the nightmares continue.

Dana is at heart a deeply good person who has been led astray by the temptations of power and now realizes all too late the folly of her actions. All she wants is to be rid of the forces aligned against her, but she is too responsible to simply try to get rid of the dagger (not that she could, even if she tried). She has grown desperate and has begun to think there's no one out there who can help her.

DANA'S NIGHTMARES

Dana's recurring nightmares involve a series of ritualistic murders, the victims of which are prostitutes, strippers, and sex workers throughout the city. Unfortunately, she's been waking up to news reports of actual killings that mirror her dreams. What she is not aware is that the spirit within the dagger possesses her each night and sends her for more souls to feed Leviathan. Realization is beginning to dawn, however, and she is researching ways to free herself from the dagger's influence. Still, she is growing more powerful, and this tempts her. Her sanity is dwindling with each passing night, and at this rate it's only a matter of time before she manifests the Mark of Leviathan.

She feels fatigued, as she has been losing sleep as well as time. Further, her staff all provide alibis for her, as the dagger has the ability to place a spell of hypnosis over her house, convincing all within that Dana spent the night quietly inside. They believe that she is under a great deal of stress due to the scrutiny of the police, and would like to find a way to help her, as she treats them very well.

The truth of the matter is that the dagger is infused with a demonic entity from a dark and hellish dimension. This demon escaped almost a century ago and has been on a quest ever since to manifest physically, which in the past has always been thwarted. Recently, however, the demon was contacted by the Mad God Leviathan, who made a deal with it: Leviathan will guide the demon to its awakening, provided that when it arises it uses its power to tear a hole in reality which will bring forth the Mad God into our world.

The demon's name is the Ripper Demon, and its first appearance was to possess the man who became known as Jack the Ripper. The demon feeds upon souls that perish through violence and absorbs their souls to grow more powerful. Three times in the past 150 years has the demon tried to ascend, and three times it has failed. Now its time has come once again. It will raise a new body for itself through the ritual sacrifice of a Chosen One, a woman with a specific birthmark that is reborn every 50 years, who is fated to come into possession of a certain cursed ritual dagger, or athamé, which is tied to the demon's essence. When the Ripper has gained

enough strength, it only needs to complete its awakening through the ritual suicide of Dana and the End Times will begin. This is the PCs' plight, to stop the rising of the Ripper and the return of the Old Ones, and to save a soul in the process.

CUT SCENE 1

The girl hurtled through the city streets she'd walked so many nights before. He was following her, slowly, his steps echoing with an ominous ring through the alleys and avenues. She could almost feel his smug confidence, that he would catch her and that it was only a matter of time. But she wouldn't – no, couldn't – let that happen. She had to live, had to get away to tell someone, her sisters on the streets, that there was a new danger now.

She'd seen Hell hounds, vampires, children that turned into monsters...things that would make most people crazy. Most people, however, didn't live on the streets and didn't eke out a meager living selling their malnourished bodies to anyone who had an extra fifty bucks. She was probably already crazy, truth be told, her and all of her street sisters. Crazy or not, though, she'd seen them all, even had a few as clients, and survived. But this wasn't anything like a vampire feeding off of opium-addled working girls.

This was death incarnate.

She turned down an alley, clutching her chest. Each breath came as a battle, now, but she forced herself to keep moving. It was only fear, now, that kept her going.

The footsteps turned the corner behind her.

The alley was almost pitch black, covered with a coating of black grease that gleamed in the slivers of moonlight that pierced through. She bobbed and weaved under fences, piles of refuse, through narrow gaps into other alleys. She knew this city, even without being able to see clearly. That was why it came as such a shock when she ran face first into a brick wall and fell, dazed, to the ground.

He was on her before she could get up. The knife appeared from the folds of his archaic coat, a flash in the full moon. It rose above the killer's head as he straddled her and squatted down close.

"But wait," she whispered, "You're not even a...!"

The knife came down and across, neatly severing her windpipe and vocal cords. It took seconds for her to lose consciousness, minutes for her to die. The killer basked in the released Essence as it flowed out of the dead body, immersed in the ecstasy of absorbing the power held therein and wished to be like the Master. A sense of bliss and calm washed over the ripper, and a soft, fatherly voice rang out through the alley. "You've done well, Jack. Now return home, and sleep."

Jack stood and walked from the alley, aware that tomorrow would bring the sleep of death once again, but the night would come soon enough, and with it, more service to the master.

Miles away, in the wealthier sections of the city, a red-headed beauty sits bolt upright in bed, soaked with sweat, tears streaming down her face. "Not again," she sobs. "Please, Goddess, not again."

On the other side of town (and halfway across the country), Marie Laveau and Natalya Abramova also sit bolt upright in their beds, knowing that until the murders stop, they will continue to be plagued with these horrible dreams. She wonders for the thousandth time if mystical power is a blessing...or a curse. She reaches for the phone and dials a long-distance number.

"Hello, Mackie? We need to gather the brotherhood...in New Orleans."

SCENE ONE: RETURN OF THE RIPPER

The city is awash with rumors of the recent serial killings. In the past two weeks, six women have been systematically murdered in a form and pattern that matches that of the infamous serial killer Jack the Ripper. All of the women worked in the sex industry as prostitutes, strippers, amateur porn actresses, webcam girls and similar professions. The media, it seems, can talk of nothing else, and television, newspapers, and radio are doing an excellent job of their usual tactic of desensitizing through overexposure. The police are adamant that they are "following several leads," and that people shouldn't panic. Serial killers stick to a pattern, and those not in a high risk group shouldn't fear for their lives. Those who are in the risk group for this killer are advised to remain indoors until the situation is resolved. The general feeling among the populace is that the police are only making token efforts because the killings are so high profile. After all, who cares about the derelicts of society?

As the scenario begins, our PCs have gathered at the Café du Monde with their leader, Mackie Gleeson, having been called together by Natalya Abramova and Marie Laveau due to strange and disturbing dreams about the murders. As they sit around, drinking their coffee and browsing the bookshelves, Marie and/or Natalya are probably preoccupied with her recent string of nightmares, in which she sees the murders as they happen. She hasn't been sleeping well and it's starting to show. While she hasn't yet said anything to her friends, the time has now come. It only takes a quick glance for Mackie to notice (probably with some concern) that the character suffering from nightmares has been looking very fatigued lately.

At some point, a waiflike girl that would probably be attractive if she were better kept wanders into the store. Her clothes are woefully out of date and a bit threadbare, and she wears a little too much cheap makeup. She scans the store with somewhat wild eyes. Allow the PCs to react to this a bit before Maddie, whose back is turned to the

newcomer, sees and recognizes the girl, a prostitute by the name of Nancy. As soon as the two make eye contact, the newcomer begins to sob and collapses to the floor. She has come bearing sad news: a mutual friend of hers and Maddie's, a street kid and prostitute named Elly, was the most recent victim of the Ripper just the night before. Just as she regains her composure, she grabs Maddie by the shirt and insists, "You've got to do something, Maddie. You've got to stop this."

Maddie's most likely response will be one of feigned ignorance, to which Nancy will insist, "I've seen you, Maddie. I know what you can do, and I bet they can do things, too. The cops aren't helping. The cops don't care. Please, this isn't a normal human being. There's something more to it. We all know it. We all feel it."

Upon calming her down, the PCs can question Nancy. If the group pools their resources, they can get a decent amount of information from various contacts and research. With successful skill use, the following information is available for the PCs to find; Game Masters may wish to spread out this information over several rolls or between several characters researching separately. In general, each success gained by the PCs in their research garners one piece of information below. Set the DC for these various checks at a level where the characters can glean some information to keep the story moving, but no so low that they find all the answers they need all at one time, with DCs from 12 to 16 being appropriate for most PCs.

- Intelligence (history): These murders are hauntingly similar to those of the famed serial killer Jack the Ripper, who was never caught. The murders attributed to him simply ceased one night, and no one was ever able to conclusively prove who the Ripper was, or that he had indeed been captured or killed.
- Intelligence (history) and Intelligence (investigation): The current victims don't exactly match the classic profile of the Ripper. While he did slit his victims throats, originally the Ripper was known to remove the parts that constituted a woman's nether region, and these victims don't match that profile. A visit to the crime scene or a successful Urban Tracking roll under the right circumstances (contacts, stealthy investigation, etc.) reveals that the current victims are also marked by the eyes and heart of the victims, with surgical precision. This information is not available to the public and should require some good role playing coupled with skill rolls to glean. Just don't be too stingy with it, as it could lead to further research.
- If the previous information has been revealed, an Intelligence (arcana) or (forbidden lore) check, especially with any sort of appropriate background in the arcane or the occult (e.g., Scholar/Academician) reveals that many primitive cultures believe the eyes and heart to be the window and receptacle for the soul.

- In contrast to the surgical precision of the organ removal, the throats of the victims have been viciously slashed with what appears to be a kris dagger—a type often used in magical rituals that is marked by a wavy blade. Because of the shape of the blade, the cut leaves a different pattern than a straight-edged knife. This has led the police to believe that there are occult implications. Tracking sales of kris blades locally over the past month (using the Urban Tracking feature) generates perhaps a dozen or more possible sales—more than a few of which are from internet sites. However, hidden among the sales records is a mention of a kris blade sold at local auction about a week before the first victims appeared. The auction was sponsored by a pawn shop dealer very near the group of alleys where the first murders took place. Failing their use of contacts or computer skills, a successful DC 10 Intelligence (investigation) roll allows them to recall a news report about the auction and the sale of the dagger.
- The timing of the murders seems to place them during the three nights of the full moon, and occasionally there is more than one victim a night. There's no telling how many more women will die this week if the killer isn't found and stopped.
- Once the PCs locate the potential dagger, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (investigation) or (history) check also reveals that the blade in question was found at the site of one of the last Jack the Ripper murders. Further research using Urban Tracking or any sort of occult or criminal knowledge or background reveals that the blade vanished from Scotland Yard's evidence room soon thereafter and has periodically resurfaced in private collections ever since. The last known owner of the blade was a necromancer in 1906 who sought to achieve something called "Awakening," and used the dagger as his means of sacrificing a "Chosen One." He was stopped by a group of Witches and Rosicrucian mystics and killed. On Friday, the 33rd anniversary of his failed Awakening will occur.

WALDO, THE PAWN SHOP OWNER

Talking to the owner of the pawn shop where the blade was sold can yield a great deal of information. While not the most pleasant man in the world, Waldo doesn't like the idea that an item sold from his store may be implicated in a killing spree. It's bad for business, and he's more than willing to help out. As such, the PCs gain advantage on any Charisma-based skill checks used to get information out of Waldo. He has a photographic inventory of all the items sold at the auction and can provide a picture of the dagger, as well as information on the buyer.

"The chick who bought it? Yeah, I remember her. Pretty girl, red hair, green eyes, but one o' them new age freaks, all into candles and incense, and prob'ly drugs, too. No offense, mind ya. But you know the ones I mean, too much money to know what to do with, so they start playin' pretend with the boojie boojie. Personally, I don't like all that ghosts and goblins crap. If I'd'a known that knife was some sort of magic symbol I never woulda bought it. Why, just the other day I turned away a guy tryin' ta sell a old Ouija [he pronounces it "weejee"] board. But ain't none o' my business, I figure. A customer's a customer, weird or not, and if that thing was full of ghosts or somethin', best I got rid of it, right?"

A NAME AND A LEAD

He's unconcerned overall about the murders and washes his hands of the whole thing, being firmly convinced that he is not at all responsible for what someone does with anything he sells them. After the money changes hands, it's none of his concern. He's just running a business and nothing can convince him otherwise. Persistent efforts may find the characters tossed out on the street. On the other hand, with proper questioning and persuasion, he can be persuaded to turn over the name and address of the woman, one Dana Green. Again, don't be too stingy with this information—it's vital to move the story forward! Bribery works best, but persuasion, trickery, or some believable intimidation can also do the trick.

The dagger itself (from the photo Waldo provides) is a silver blade stretching from a bronze handle, ornately carved into the shape of what appears to be a native of some sort (further research reveals that this "native" is actually an Aztec Indian shaman.) There is very little that is remarkable about it; it appears to be a standard ceremonial dagger, probably designed as an athamé.

Following their talk with Waldo, the characters have enough information to begin their search for the killer and should be fairly convinced that these killings are not the work of a mortal psychopath. There's something darker, more sinister, and probably magical going on here.

CUT SCENE 2

She steps outside, into a beautiful Romanesque garden. She is sad and frustrated. No one in the world understands her; there's no reason left to go on. Everything has fallen apart. There's nothing left, no raison d'être. She may as well just end it here.

She sits upon the stairs and gazes out over the garden. The perfume of lilac soothes her senses, serving only to convince her that peace lies on the horizon. She turns her gaze to the sky, looking at the cold, clear night stars twinkling above. The moon is bright and full, a witches' moon. There's power there, untapped power...and peace.

She's afraid of the future.



A sudden breeze penetrates the bedroom behind her. The curtains blow, the candles flicker and die, leaving only the silver glow of the moonlight as illumination. And suddenly, he is there, face obscured as always beneath a wide-brimmed top hat and high-collared cape. He leans nonchalant upon his silver-headed walking stick and she gets the impression that he is smiling at her. In that moment, all of her fear and resignation leave her. She leaps to her feet and runs to him. He catches her up in his arms and holds her close, leaning to whisper in her ear.

"Not yet, my dear," he says. "Your purpose is not yet served."

"But why, my love? Of all the women in the world, why have you chosen me?"

"Destiny, love. You are destined to be mine, forever."

"And I want nothing else."

"Then have no fear, my bride. Have no fear."

"I cannot fear you. I never could."

She clutches him tightly. Slowly, his left arm, obscured until now beneath his cape, raises high into the air, a Kris-bladed dagger held tightly in his grasp. As she holds him, unaware, the dagger plunges down once, twice, a third time. Blood sprays the scene, which is obscured through a crimson haze. Her lifeless body slumps to the floor, the dagger embedded in her heart. He throws his arms to the air and cries, "AT LAST! I LIVE AGAIN!"

She awakens, screaming, in a cold sweat. Her bedroom window is open, the cold night breeze blowing her curtains about her. The man who has been as a father to her rushes in, soothing her, tucking the blankets about her and laying her back to bed. "It's all a dream, lass. All a dream."

Finally, sleep takes her again. He stands, closes the window, gives one last worried look at her, and leaves her to a fitful slumber.

Across town, Alexis's eyes pop open and she stares into the pitch black night.

SCENE TWO: THE RIPPER STRIKES BACK

The heroes' prime suspect should now be Dana Green. At the very least, they are going to want to talk to her. This won't be an easy task to accomplish surreptitiously, since the police have been scrutinizing every minute of her life since the murders began—the PCs aren't the only ones following up on this particular lead.

Locating Dana is easy enough; they have her address and her house is located in the wealthiest area of the Garden District. Her two-storey mansion features five bedrooms, three bathrooms, a library, study, living room, dining

room, large kitchen, office den, and game room, and a courtyard and garden in back.

A DC 12 Wisdom (perception) check reveals that the house is being staked out by two officers in an unmarked Chevy sedan across the street. Like it or not, our PCs have just implicated themselves in the investigation. What role, if any, this plays in the scenario is up to the Game Master. At very least, however, it makes the PCs realize that they're in and not going back now.

Upon ringing the bell, the PCs are greeted by Dana's butler, a middle-aged Irishman named Peter who is very protective of Dana. He is distressed about the undue amounts of attention inflicted upon his mistress and at first is not willing to let the PCs see her. Some fast talking may be necessary to get past him, or at least keep him at the door for a few minutes, until they catch their first glimpse of Dana. She walks into the foyer, looking disheveled and exhausted, but still quite beautiful, and asks, "What is it, Peter? More Police? I've already told them everything I know." Her voice is strained, but musical. Natalya or Marie, with a successful Intelligence check, may be shocked to learn that this is the woman she dreamed about last night—or more accurately, whose dream she apparently shared.

Regardless, how Peter answers Dana depends upon the PCs's presentation of themselves. If they have managed to convince him that they are police, he will answer in the affirmative, and probably demand that they come back if and when they're prepared to present legal warrants. If, on the other hand, they are not posing as police, he will dismiss them as curiosity seekers, private investigators, or some other such epithet. At this point, the characters have a chance to (quickly) interact with Dana, but they need to convince her quickly that they're here to help and not to harm or harass her. She's not in the mood for games.

Their best bet is to make mention of their special abilities, or even to use magic for some purpose. Dana is a minor Arcanist, and as such will sense the same quality in others. Once she realizes that her visitors are "gifted," as she puts it, she will not hesitate to invite them into her home, believing that perhaps others like her can help her with her problems. She will especially be enamored of Marie, who she recognizes by reputation, and Natalya, whose films she has seen. The moment she detects supernatural energies in her visitors, she will step up to the door, stare intently at the PCs for a moment, then instruct Peter to let them in.

Any conversation the PCs have with Dana will be convincing. As far as the woman is concerned, and as far as she knows and honestly believes, she has done nothing wrong. She hasn't left the house, and her staff can corroborate this. She has been having horrible nightmares, but she doesn't always remember the details of them. Many are about the murders that are happening around the city, but others are darker and more deeply buried.

No prompting by the PCs will bring the details forth; they're too deeply buried in her subconscious. All she remembers is blood, a man in archaic evening clothes, and mixed feelings of peace and of horror. She readily admits to purchasing the dagger, and to her status as a solitary practitioner (she doesn't even know of any local covens, and she's not of the voodoo persuasion). She has an extensive occult library, and will happily give the PCs a tour of it. The dagger itself is hermetically sealed inside a glass display case inside the library. It doesn't look like there's any way the knife could come out of the case without shattering the glass, which Dana claims is bulletproof (characters with appropriate skills can easily confirm that it is). She informs the PCs that the knife has been locked inside the case for the past month.

If (when) the PCs inquire as to why it has been sealed within the case, her answer is honest and forthright. "I told the police it was to protect the value of the knife, and that's part of it. Unfortunately, it's not the whole truth, which I doubt they'd believe anyway. You're Gifted, though. You know there are things out there that conventional science just can't explain." She takes a deep breath before continuing, "There's just something about this knife. It's something magical, dark, and just wrong. I didn't feel it at first. At first I only felt the raw power in it. Then I started having the nightmares, and this knife was there, in all of them. The first three nights, I woke up in a cold sweat, and the knife was there beside me on the bed. I tried to destroy it, but it just wouldn't break, no matter what I did. Finally, I had this display case commissioned and the knife sealed inside. It didn't stop the nightmares, but at least the damn thing stays put, now."

Her reasons for keeping the knife are equally logical. "The thing is evil. What can I do, sell it to someone who might use it for evil purposes? I'm not going to stand here and deny that the knife is connected to the killings; in fact, I'm sure it is. But you have to believe me. I didn't kill anyone, I swear it." She's almost in tears by this point. Any skills, spells, or powers the PCs use to sense her motivation reveal that she is entirely sincere, and terrified, though one or two details might be eluding her.

Dana is aware that the police are watching her house, and for that reason alone doesn't think it's a good idea for the PCs to stick around long (why make themselves accomplices in whatever the police decide to charge her with?), but she is willing to allow one or two of them to stay at the mansion in order to research using her collection, or even to keep an eye on the dagger to see if they can figure out what's going on. It should be noted that Dana's collection may provide information and resources that Mackie's library does not.

STAYING WITH DANA

Characters who do stay in the house that evening will miss the assault by the zombies and hell hounds described

in the next section, but they may have a chance to catch a clue into what's going on. However, doing so requires overcoming the dagger's reality-warping and illusion effects. PCs staying at Dana's must succeed at a DC 20 Wisdom save against the dagger's control abilities. PCs who fail the roll remain convinced that Dana spent the entire night peacefully asleep in her bedroom, and the dagger remained safely tucked away in its case. They may even have memories of checking up on Dana a few times throughout the night, just to make certain everything remained kosher. For story purposes, all of Dana's staff, and the police staking out her house fail this roll automatically.

However, PCs that succeed at the save experience a strange, dreamlike sequence of events. They will find that they are trapped as spectators in the events, and are unable to act to alter what happens, like prisoners dragged along against their will. Their experience begins around midnight, when a figure in archaic evening clothes enters the library and magically removes the dagger from the case, seemingly reaching through a tear in reality to pull the knife forth (this is an advanced effect of the gate spell). The figure tucks the dagger away, hefts his silver-headed cane, and heads out into the night, whistling an old English folk tune. The PC is compelled to follow.

The streets are dark and silent. There aren't any prostitutes out, even in the areas of the city normally crawling with them. The figure skulks about the shadows for a time, then curses in a very masculine voice. He then turns and heads for a local brothel, where he proceeds to seduce and leave with a stripper (with a little help from charm person). He guides the stripper into a dark alley, where he proceeds to brutally murder the young woman. This vision requires a DC 15 Madness saving throw (GM's option of Wisdom or Charisma), with failure causing a bout of short-term madness. (If using the Advanced Sanity rules, seeing this horrific vision requires a SAN roll at an additional +5% severity to the check, with SAN loss rating of 1d6/1d8.) Any attempts to stop the killing result in the PCs unable to move or interfere, except to cry out. After the murder, a fatherly voice fills the area: "You have done well, Jack. Now go home, and sleep it off. Tomorrow is Dana's final night."

The killer removes his hat and runs his fingers through his hair, then turns towards the PCs (though still obscured in shadow) and screams in a high-pitched, female voice, then gives a little wave, and walks away. The PCs awakens with fuzzy memories of what happened. He or she is still in the alley, standing over a dead body. The character's first clear moment is that of a gun in his or her face and a cop growling, "Don't move, asshole." The character is arrested and taken downtown for questioning. However, the evidence linking them to the crime is nonexistent, and they can only hold the PCs overnight before having to release them.

THE TRUTH

The figure in the black evening clothes was indeed Dana Green, possessed by the spirit within the dagger. She sits up around midnight, goes to her wardrobe and opens a secret panel in back with houses the Ripper's clothes. She dresses, and then performs an invocation to summon the beasts in the next section to deal decisively with the meddling PCs.

Then she walks to the display case and steals the dagger, then proceeds upon the course described above. At first any PCs who sees her won't be able to remember the face of the Ripper, though they will be aware that they saw the killer's face last night. This comes at a dramatic moment, preferably shortly after the rest of the PCs picks up the arrested character, they'll remember that it was Dana, speaking with a hollow, echoing male voice, and her green eyes glowing with a black light.

After killing the stripper, Dana returns home, puts the dagger back in its case, undresses, cleans up, and goes back to bed, where she wakes up ten minutes later, soaked in sweat, from another "nightmare."

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH...

With the information and clues they've already put together, the PCs can hit Marie's library (or Dana's, or other similar resource) and discover the following information with research and investigation. Some of what follows may also be provided by Mackie's contacts in the local occult community, if she thinks to call them for help. This is often best handled with the PCs making a phone call, and the contacts informing him that they will be in touch when they have the information. Now would be a dramatically appropriate time for that call back. A DC 10 Intelligence check could spark a vague familiarity in the mind of one of the P.I.s about the Ripper, which motivates him to investigate further. Regardless of the methods taken, the following information is available:

- The Ripper is an ancient demon who feeds on the souls of murdered women. For centuries it has traveled various worlds, bringing death and mayhem to everywhere it visits. It exists using a dark form of magic known as Sadicas, which is magic colored by the pain and suffering of those tortured or caused to suffer intensely (hence its *modus operandi*). Alternately, another look into Jack the Ripper's history using Dana's library leads to this link about the Ripper demon.
- An Awakening rite is a ritual in which a demon possesses a human being, then gathers unto itself enough souls to manifest physically as an almost godlike creature. This Awakening is completed by the ritual sacrifice of a Chosen One, who bears a specific birthmark on her hip, resembling a circle with two prongs arcing off of it at the top and bottom. When the Chosen

One dies, the human host's body twists and warps into the manifestation of the demon, and the human host is no more. Successful Awakenings are rare, and generally not healthy for the surrounding populace.

- The Ripper demon has the ability to summon undead when its foothold on a dimension is so strong that it is nearly ready to complete its Awakening.
- The *gate* spell is contained in both Marie's and Dana's libraries.

Characters who return home for the evening eventually find themselves in an unpleasant situation. The Ripper doesn't like the PCs meddling in its plans and has decided to deal with them. Through Dana, it summons a small horde of zombies and hell hounds to deal with the PCs decisively. The attack isn't subtle; they simply crash through the windows and doors of anywhere the PCs might be congregating (likely, the Café Arcana for more research) and attack. Generally speaking, there will be one zombie for each PC. Game Masters should feel free to add more attackers if the first batch are dropping too easily, or adjust stats downward if they're too tough. There are three hell hounds involved in the assault.

The zombies fight to the end, and before the last one falls, it croaks out in a raspy, dry voice, "None of this matters! Another soul has been claimed, and the Ripper grows closer to Awakening! When he finally manifests in this world, you will all burn! The Chosen One is claimed and she has been called, and her death on the anniversary will mean his salvation! You will all burn!"

If this doesn't begin to put things together for the PCs, a recollection the next day of Dana's face in that alley, glowing green eyes and male voice and all, certainly will.

TROUBLESHOOTING

This may be the trickiest part of the adventure to run, as it's nigh impossible to predict which path available to them the PCs will take, and the GM needs to be at their best, ready to react and adapt to whatever steps they take.

It is possible that all or none of the PCs stay with Dana in the evening. This can potentially upset the events of the next section of the adventure, and there are several ways to handle the issue. If the entire group of PCs remains with Dana, the fight with the henchmen can take place in the alley immediately after the murder and before the police show up, or even in Dana's house (what better misdirection than for the Ripper to pretend to attack its own vessel?).

Alternately, this encounter can be skipped over, and the events of the next section expedited to cover Dana's capture. If none of the PCs remain with Dana, or if all fall under the hypnotic spell of the dagger, the murder can be handled via another cut scene (a nightmare experienced by Marie or Nat is most likely). The characters can get

details from Dana or one of their own via the nightmares, or from investigation similar to that in Scene 1.

Some PCs may decide to sit in the room and stare at the dagger to make sure nothing happens to it. The solution to this is simple—at some point (preferably in the morning), the dagger is simply gone and they have no memory of anyone taking it. Alternately, they will obviously be subject to the DC 20 Wisdom saving throw.

The PCs may decide to rush to Dana's house in the middle of the night following the zombie / hell hound attack. If this is so, then every PC arriving on Dana's property must make the DC 20 Wisdom save against the invocation effect of the dagger as well; those that succeed have a dreamlike experience of the Ripper, similar to the one described above, but this time involving the murder of the two police staking out the house. They wake up at home in their own beds the next morning. Those that fail simply wake up at home with no recollection of anything after heading to Dana's house.

The real trick here is the dissemination of information to the PCs. What information do you give them and when? There's no easy answer to that, save to be careful not to give too much or too little at any given point. They have to keep on the trail of the murders, gaining enough info to give them new leads, but not enough to answer all their questions until the end. The addition of Dana's library to the mix is a great excuse to give information that wasn't gleaned earlier, as are James's Rosicrucian contacts. A little fast thinking on your part may be required, however, to keep things from getting too far out of hand.

Finally, many PCs may decide to simply spend Inspiration Points to make their saving throw. The results of a successful save are listed in the text, but it's possible to move encounters around as you please—the demon's minions can attack Dana's house just as easily as the PCs' own residence, and Dana can easily be kidnapped or vanish in the confusion. The use of the demon's gating abilities can pop in distractions or minions pretty much anywhere you need them! Keep the PCs on their toes and build the sense of confusion, misdirection and danger, and just run with the chaos!

SCENE THREE: RISE OF THE RIPPER

CUT SCENE 3

The final sacrifice lays upon the table. She squirms, kicks, screams, begs, and threatens, all to no avail. The killer stands over her, looks to the black candles to his right and left. He picks up a knife, traces it across the victim's chest, leaving a thin line of blood in its wake. He can smell the fear upon her, his last victim.

Midnight strikes; it is time.

The killer shrugs off his cloak to stand naked before the victim. He...is a she.

It matters not. Gender means nothing to the Ripper. Soon it shall rise; the body it inhabits is meaningless. It will be transformed into a higher being.

The knife slashes across the girl's throat, cutting her scream off in a sharp gurgling sound. The blade flashes three times and the eyes and heart come out. The creature that was once human devours them in wonton bloodlust.

The blade flashes a fourth time as the killer plunges it down into her own chest. She screams in agony and in ecstasy as she doubles over. Her skin turns a sickly green and scales erupt from beneath it. Spikes plunge through her back as her tailbone extends into a sharp, thrashing appendage. She grows to ten feet in height.

The process takes an eternity of seconds during which she cannot act.

Finally, the Ripper rises, throws its bladelike fingers high into the air and cries out in victory. The world will be torn asunder.

The hero having the dream awakens with a scream of utter horror. Across town, Dana Green also sits bolt upright in bed, screaming herself hoarse. Again, Peter rushes into the room. "Lassie! Are ye all right?"

"I remember!" Dana cries. "I remember everything, and I know!"

"Know what, lassie?"

"It's begun, Peter. His time is at hand, and Goddess help me, I'm the vessel!"

By the next morning, only one or two pieces are left in the puzzle, and the PCs have a slew of problems to deal with. At least one of their number may need bailed out of jail, or at very least a ride home. The police, fortunately, have only circumstantial evidence with which to hold the PCs, and several eyewitnesses at the club can describe the man who left with the stripper, a man who doesn't match the PCs' description, but who does correspond with a description the PCs can give the police regarding the murderer. Combined with the lack of hard evidence, fingerprints, and DNA samples from the PCs(s) on the body, there's little choice but to set them free. Any weapons the PCs possessed legally (with proper permits) are returned; others are confiscated and the appropriate fines levied. In any case, James has enough clout and money to arrange for the release of any incarcerated PCs.

It gets worse. The PCs receive an early phone call from a frantic Dana. She's rambling and almost incoherent, going on about the hour approaching, the Awakening being near, the souls all gathered, and her inability to fight it alone. She begs them to come to her house, insisting that she's put together some new information, but that

the phone isn't secure, and she can't talk like this...then hangs up on them.

Heading over to Dana's house reveals a scene straight out of a horror film. Her entire block is still and unnaturally quiet, the result of a powerful illusion effect to dampen the sound in the surrounding area. Communication is possible, but any loud noises are dampened to the level of quiet conversation. Even yelling does not break the sound barrier; while a screaming PC can hear themselves scream, others still only hear their voice at a moderate volume. There is a lingering amount of power in the area, a sickening combination of corrupt magical energy that requires all PCs to make a DC 15 Madness (Wisdom) saving throw. A creature that fails this save suffers a bout of short-term madness. (For the Advanced Sanity rules, this corrupt energy requires a SAN check at an additional +5% severity, with a SAN loss rating of 2/2d6.)

GAME MASTER'S INFORMATION

The Ripper has now gained control of Dana and PCs the illusion spell over the block. While on first appearance this spells trouble, it was done so that the violence that took place here wouldn't draw undue attention. It means that open gunplay is not out of the question in this situation; the noise will not attract the police.

The car with the two police officers has been removed, again courtesy of the Ripper's Gateway Invocation, leaving no evidence of the murders behind.

The unmarked Chevy and its two police stakeout officers are gone; what happened to them is anyone's guess. The door to Dana's house hangs from one hinge, swinging back and forth with a quiet but ominous creak. The house inside is trashed; tables overturned, carpets torn and bunched up, holes in the walls. The windows are shattered. The whole place looks like a war zone.

There are traces of blood throughout the house. In the kitchen, the PCs find the cook, brutally murdered and parts of her body devoured (a DC 12 Madness saving throw may be in order, failure inducing a bout of short-term madness; if using the Advanced Sanity rules, the SAN loss should be 1/1d6). One of the maids is likewise found murdered in the living room, and another in the Lounge. In the Library, the glass case that held the dagger is undamaged, but empty. There are no visible means by which the knife could've been extracted (though spell research may have already revealed the existence of the gate spell). Peter and Dana are nowhere downstairs, and calling out doesn't yield any useful results (remember that sound dampening effect). However, hidden among the stack of opened books on the table in the Library is a small notebook with handwritten notes. Unless the PCs actively search the table or the room (DC 15 Wisdom (perception) check), these notes won't be immediately noticeable, though Peter will reveal their existence later on. The following information is here:

- The Ripper needs only one more soul before the Chosen One can be sacrificed. Dana has now realized that she possesses the birthmark, and that she is the Chosen One.
- The ritual sacrifice of the Chosen One must be performed at midnight, at a major place of power. Dana suspects that the most likely place is a spot in a local public park that was constructed on the ruins of a dark temple in the 1800's, where a cult dedicated to the Mad God Leviathan was said to gather in worship. It is a center of mystical convergence and the focal point for many supernatural activities. In the passage is a sketch of the Mad God's mark, which matches the birthmark of the Ripper's Chosen One!
- Dana fears that if the ritual is completed, it will tear a small hole in reality that will allow Leviathan to begin the first stages of manifesting itself on the Earth. It could begin the Reckoning.
- Dana has come to realize that the Ripper is inside her, attempting through the dagger to possess her. She feels that an exorcism is the only way to save her soul and defeat the Ripper. A successful exorcism would allow the dagger to be destroyed and end the entire problem. However, it also means that the Ripper's job is easier, for all it has to do is force her to commit suicide at midnight. If Dana can be exorcised, the demon will be banished for a millennium. If she dies before the exorcism is complete, the killings will only be put off for another 33 years.
- Only a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Intelligence (arcana) or Intelligence (forbidden lore) check notices that Dana has misinterpreted the above information. Circled in one of the books is a passage which notes that once the final victim dies, the Ripper may kill the Chosen One at any time after midnight in order to arise.
- If Dana dies, and the Ripper arises, its weakness is the dagger that served as its vessel for so long. While it is vulnerable somewhat to normal attacks, the dagger is the most potent weapon available for battling the monster.
- The last entry in the notes reads, "I can't fight much longer. The dagger calls me. I have to get away from these notes before the Ripper wakes up within me and realizes I've left these clues behind. Have to hide the notes and warn Peter."

Searching upstairs, the PCs can discover a half-alive and savagely beaten Peter partially beneath the bed in the master bedroom. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (perception) check means the PCs hear his quiet moans upon entering the room. Dana's wardrobe is smashed. A DC 10 Wisdom (perception) check reveals the secret compartment in the back, just large enough for a single suit of clothing. The compartment is now empty.

Throughout the house, hiding in various rooms, are zombies left behind by the Ripper to take care of the interlopers (the PCs). All are lying in wait to ambush the PCs at the right moment. There should be three to four zombies per PCs, but again, tailor the number and ease of battle to the individual PCs. This should be a tough battle, but is designed to keep the PCs here and engaged, rather than having them turning to run.

Peter, for his part, has information to share. Anyone who leans down to check on him finds that the old Irishman is still conscious. He grabs whoever is closest and coughs, "Something not of this world came upon her...no is inside of her! It took her, dressed in its own clothes, and left. I tried to stop it, to save her, but she...it...called those demonic things upon us!"

"She knew it was coming. She told me it was coming. Before it took her, she told me that tonight's the night, and that she's the vessel. She said you could help her. Please. She's like a daughter t'me. She said midnight. That's hours away. Said she left notes in the Library."

He then gurgles, coughs, and falls unconscious. PCs with medical abilities can make an Intelligence (medicine) check to note that his injuries are not life-threatening and that if made comfortable he will survive, though he'll need to be watched over for a few hours to ensure he stays stable. The PCs are free to call an ambulance but will most certainly be mired with police questions for hours at least, and possibly charged and implicated in the crimes if they do so. If the players overlook this complication, allow the characters to make a DC 10 Intelligence check to realize the problems inherent with calling the police or an ambulance at this time (any Gumshoe characters don't need to make this check at all). In fact, their best bet is to make the house look as presentable as possible so as not to draw undue attention to the mess. This will take several hours as well, but will most likely be the PCs' best bet to actually make it in time to stop the ritual. In the end, they've got a full day's work ahead of them preparing to stop the ritual and cleaning up the mess so as not to have police hot on their trail when they do. In the end, Marie will be the one to perform the exorcism, but the rest of the PCs must find a way to restrain Dana while it goes on, and fight off the undead retainers she will no doubt have nearby.

SCENE FOUR: THE DEMON RISING

NOTE: There is no Cut Scene for Scene 4

This is your straightforward climactic battle scene, where the PCs must rush to stop the evil from rising and the Mad God Leviathan from entering our reality. By now, the PCs should have all the pieces to the puzzle. They can go to the ritual site at any time, plan, and prepare. As midnight approaches, however, there will be no sign

of Dana, her final victim, or the Ripper. This suspense should be carried on as much as possible.

At 11:50, and hopefully just as the PCs are about to leave, an inky black portal appears right at the center of the park, and Dana steps forth with a group of 6 zombie retainers, 2 hell hounds, and a shoggoth. Dana's hair has turned jet black, her eyes glow an unearthly green color, and dark veins snake their way up her face. On her forehead, a faint mark is beginning to appear, a circle with two horn-like prongs coming off of it...the Mark of the Red God Ornduhl. She tosses the bound, unconscious, naked body of a blonde woman at her feet. This, then, would be the last victim.

The very instant the PCs makes their presence known (a must if they expect to exorcise the demon), the monsters attack, and Dana plunges her knife into the chest of the final victim. Barring an absolutely ingenious plan, there's no way the PCs are going to save the girl. Dana has to be their primary concern. They have to get through the press of monsters, restrain the possessed witch, and perform the Exorcism. On the up side, their meddling has forced the demon to call upon a great many powerful magics, and its Sadicas is dwindled. It cannot afford to call upon its own magic, lest the ritual fail. Optionally, if the PCs have too easy of a time with the existing monsters, the Ripper can call forth from the Gate one of its summoned demons to do battle with the PCs. It can also continue to call forth more zombies as needed.

Unless they scored the requisite DC 20 Intelligence (arcana) or Intelligence (forbidden lore) in Scene 3, the information the PCs have is mistaken in one important area: Dana does not have to die exactly at midnight. Rather, the final victim had to be killed any time before midnight, and the Chosen One sacrificed at or any time after midnight. Once that girl dies, the Ripper's primary goal is to kill Dana, so the PCs will have their hands full. So long as the demon is still in human form, however, it is vulnerable to all the types of attacks a human is and suffers full damage for any attacks against it. Alas, if the PCs kill Dana, it gets worse.

If Dana manages to kill herself, or the PCs kill her, the ripper demon arises. Its transformation is exactly as described in the dream sequence from Scene 3. This transformation takes two rounds, during which the demon is vulnerable to attack (though it can still defend clumsily, attacks against it during these two rounds gain advantage). The PCs can all do their worst in those two rounds. Their best bet is to attack it with the dagger, which does triple normal damage against the demon (and, as a magical weapon, ignores its resistance to normal weapon damage). Otherwise, the demon does not suffer multipliers for damage type. Even with its pool of available magic depleted, if the demon rises, it's very possible that some of the PCs won't survive the encounter.

DENOUEMENT

At the end of the battle, bodies are littered about the scene, and Dana is either saved, or the corpse of the Ripper lays at their feet. Suddenly, a whirlwind whips about the place, swallowing up all the bodies. A disgusting sucking sound erupts from the whirlwind, and lightning arcs about it. At last, a soft voice floats forth. What it says depends upon the outcome of the battle.

IF DANA SURVIVES:

“You think you’ve won? We haven’t even begun, my pets. You may have won the day, and saved one woman’s soul, but she has delivered so many unto me. Mark my words, my friends, one day we shall yet meet again, and these meager victories cannot hope to keep me from my final destiny.”

What’s more, the PCs have gained a valuable ally. Dana’s library is impressive, and she now considers all the PCs friends and compatriots, and wishes to join them in their battle against the darkness as a member of the Brotherhood of William St. John.

IF DANA DIES:

The PCs are tormented by the sounds of her agonized screams from within the whirlwind. Finally, that terrible, familiar voice speaks to them again. “Oh, she tastes so sweet! My destiny is at hand, and you’ve given it to me! You’re fools if you think you can stop me! In the end, I shall devour the world!”

On a more mundane front, Peter blames the PCs for Dana’s death and looks upon them all with thinly disguised animosity. As the sole named heir to her fortune, Peter now has the resources to become a serious thorn in their side, and may be ripe for recruitment by the Order of the Dragon or any other evil secret society.

NPCs AND MONSTERS: QUICK STATS

DANA GREEN (NG Medium humanoid (human)) HP 18 (HD 4d8), AC 13, Spd 30 ft. Arcana +5, History +5, Perception 12 (+2). Str 9 Dex 15 Con 10 Int 17 Wis 14 Cha 15. SA Spellcasting (+5, spell save DC 13; Cantrips: light, mage hand, prestidigitation; 1st (4 slots): charm person, detect magic, sleep; 2nd (2 slots): detect thoughts, locate object. Challenge 1/2 (100 XP).

DANA GREEN, POSSESSED (CE Medium humanoid (human)) HP 38 (HD 7d8 + 7), AC 15, Spd 30 ft. Perception 12 (+2). Str 16 Dex 15 Con 12 Int 17 Wis 14 Cha 15. Cursed athame +5 (1d6+3). SA Darkvision 60 ft. Immune to charmed, frightened, resistant to cold, fire, lightning and bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from

nonmagical attacks. Innate spellcasting (+6, spell save DC 14), at will: levitate; 3/day: animate dead, confusion, darkness. Summon Hell hounds (summons 1d3 Hell hounds as an action for up to 1 hr). Challenge 3 (700 XP).

SUMMONED SERVITOR DEMON (CE Medium Fiend (demon)) HP 37 (HD 6d8+10), AC 13, Spd 30 ft. Str 14 Dex 15 Con 14 Int 5 Wis 10 Cha 6. Perception 10(+0). Multiattack (1 claw, 1 bite), Claws +4 (2d6+3), Bite +4 (1d4+2 plus DC 12 Con save or target becomes poisoned until end of their next turn). SA Darkvision 120 ft., Immune to poison, resistant to cold, fire, lightning, charmed, frightened, poisoned. Challenge 2 (450 XP).

HELL HOUND (LE Medium fiend) HP 45 (HD 7d8+14), AC 15, Spd 50ft. Str 17 Dex 12 Con 14 Int 6 Wis 13 Cha 6. Perception 15 (+5). Bite +5 (1d8+3), Fire Breath (recharge 6, 15ft. cone, 6d6 fire, Dexterity DC 12 half). SA Darkvision 60ft., Immune to fire, keen hearing and smell (advantage on Perception), pack tactics (advantage if within 5’ of ally). Challenge 3 (700 XP).

THE RIPPER DEMON (Manifest) (CE Large fiend (demon)) HP 90 (HD 12d10 + 24), AC 18, Spd 30 ft, fly 30 ft. Perception 14 (+4). Str 17 Dex 18 Con 14 Int 17 Wis 12 Cha 13. Multiattack (2 claws), Claw +7 (2d6+4, DC 13 Wis save or have hp max reduced by this amount; creature dies at 0 hp). SA Darkvision 60 ft. Immune to charmed, frightened, resistant to cold, fire, lightning and bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-silvered or non-magical weapons; suffers triple damage from the cursed athame and attacks with this weapon have advantage. Innate spellcasting (+6, spell save DC 14; At Will: detect thoughts, hideous laughter; 3/Day each: confusion, create undead, dominate person, thief’s dream; 1/Day each: bestow curse. Magic Resistance (advantage on saves against magical effects). Challenge 6 (2,300 XP).

ZOMBIE (NE Medium Undead) HP 22 (HD 3d8+9), AC 8, Spd 20. Str 13 Dex 6 Con 16 Int 3 Wis 6 Cha 5. Perception 8(-2). Slam +3 (1d6+1). SA Immune to poison, Darkvision 60ft, Relentless Fortitude. Challenge 1/4 (50 XP).

THE FEAST OF BLACK ANNIS

DISCLAIMER: The corrupt sect of druids and their demonic matriarch presented in this module is in no way intended to appropriate, reflect or represent any real-world druidic or other faith, be it ancient or modern reconstructionist. It's meant to reflect specifically what it is—a fictionalized cult of the Old Ones that arose out of a college fraternity playing with dark forces, assigning incorrect meanings, and not understanding what they've gotten themselves into.

However, it's also complete fiction and fantasy in the Lovecraftian horror vein, and should be taken in no other way. The author has formally studied religion and has the utmost respect and admiration for modern pagan religions. He does not wish to display any disrespect whatsoever to practitioners of these faiths. Again, this is pure fiction. Please take it as such.

For an excellent look at how to incorporate a more authentic version of Celtic mythology into your home games, please check out Troll Lord Games' outstanding Codex Celtarum for the Castles & Crusades role playing game, which is 100% compatible with Amazing Adventures.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Volume 2 of our Deeper Dark Trilogy, a series of adventure modules that are thematically linked by their Lovecraftian elements, and serve to introduce the mythos of H.P. Lovecraft (which the author called "Yog-Sothothery") into your Amazing Adventures game.

While the general intent is that you have run your players through Vol. 1 of this series, entitled Don't Fear the Ripper, it's not remotely necessary to do so. Each of the adventures in this series is self-contained and can be run on its own. They should present an interesting challenge for PCs of the Brotherhood of William St. John, as presented in the group's sourcebook for the game, or for any other group of original PCs you choose to run.

The timeframe of these adventures is likewise kept vague; whether you're running in the 1920s or the year 2017, these should translate fairly easily, though the addition of mobile devices and cellular technology does indeed change the tenor of the game somewhat. The GM can compensate for this as needed by having the awful energies of the Deeper Dark interfere with cellular signals when needed.

QUICK SYNOPSIS

In this scenario, the PCs must investigate the disappearances of small children from all over the city, which they eventually trace to a corrupt druidic cult operating within a local park. These "druids" have been misled and tainted and the goddess they worship is not Danu, but actually the Great Old One, Shub-Niggurath. The PCs must save the kidnapped children and defeat the cult's leader, Bri-



git, who may or may not survive to become a recurring nemesis for our heroes...

CUT SCENE 4

It was late when Asura came home, but the lights were still on in the house. In fact, it looked like every light in the house was

on; she made a mental note to have a talk with Violet about that. Money was too tight these days to be running the electric up. Then again, maybe the girl just left the lights on to feel safer. Asura could forgive that. It was the first time Violet had been left alone to babysit.

“Violet? You here, baby? Any troubles with Sammy?” she called out. When there was no answer, she muttered, “Probably sleeping.”

At least, she'd best be sleeping, or else Asura would be handing out a whipping. Violet had thrown a tantrum when she found out she couldn't go to the movies with her friends tonight, but dammit, Asura hadn't been on a date in a couple years, and she deserved one night. It wasn't easy having a daughter only thirteen years younger than you, and Asura had done a pretty good job raising two girls, if she did say so herself.

She climbed the stairs and peeked her head into Violet's room, at the top of the stairs. That was when the first alarm bells sounded in her brain. No Violet. The sobbing from Sam's room was alarm #2, and Asura tore down the hall into Sammy's bedroom, only to hear a half-human wailing that it took her a few seconds to realize was in fact her own screaming.

Violet sat on the floor, crying, staring at the curtains flapping over the broken window...and the bloody lines scrawled upon the wall.

ACT ONE: MURDER MOST UNUSUAL

RUNDOWN

The PCs get a call from their police contact to investigate a crime scene with occult overtones. There have been a rash of kidnappings lately, young children and infants all, and all of the disappearances have similar trappings: strange, runic symbols painted in blood on the walls of the children's bedrooms, and mysterious “thank you” notes left for the parents. Some research reveals that the inscriptions are ogham, the ancient language used by the druids. Further research reveals that there is a druidic “secret society” active in the local park.

HANDOUTS

See the “Handouts” Appendix for the letter left at the crime scenes, the specific ogham writing found at each crime scene, as well as translations of what it means, Brigit's diary entries (found later) and the medieval journal entry (found later).

In reference to the crime scene runes, it's intended that the GM copy, scan or otherwise print these out, then cut them up by crime scene and hand them to the PCs as they visit or gain photos of each crime scene. Do the same thing with the translations as they work out what the ogham means. Allow the players to put the puzzle

together, figuring out the prophecy on their own by ordering the notes (though see the research roll section in Act Two if they need help).

ACTION

Mackie receives a phone call early in the morning from Detective Joe Konaem, a contact of hers within the police force, asking if she has time to come down to look at a crime scene. He won't be specific, except to say that it is in relation to an inordinate number of kidnappings that have occurred lately, and that it has some trappings that are in the wheelhouse of the Brotherhood. The scene is in a small, run-down tenement home in the low-rent district of town.

Upon arrival, the PCs see an ambulance pulling away. The house is taped off with Crime Scene tape, but Det. Konaem has left a uniformed officer waiting for them, who greets and escorts them through the house, upstairs to the child's bedroom. As they walk past the living room, a pretty young black woman looks up at them, tears streaming down her cheeks. She is being questioned by police.

The victim's bedroom is on the second floor of the tiny house, and aside from the broken window, shows no signs of struggle. There are strange, linear symbols painted on the wall in blood. Joe is in the room waiting for the PCs. He has the following information to share:

- The girl in question was Samantha Jackson, 5 years old.
- All the victims (Samantha is the sixth) so far have been between the ages of 3 and 10 years of age, and all girls.
- All have been taken from low-rent areas of the city.
- The blood symbols have been found at all the crime scenes so far. The police have no idea what they mean.
- The blood found at the site is not that of the victim, but is human. Or more specifically, a combination of blood from several humans.
- There have been identical letters left behind at each scene, always addressed to the victim's mother (which enraged one distraught parent—a single father—even further, by the implication that fathers can't be good parents). The letters are not ransom notes, but rather, read as follows:

Honored Mother,

Fear not the safety of your child. She goes to a greater purpose than you can ever imagine. The Mother of Life and Death will honor your great sacrifice when she returns to bless and purify this world. You will receive a place of honor by her holy side in return for the child you lose this night. Thank you, and may the Goddess bless you in all that you do.

(See Appendix: Handouts)

- Naturally, the police suspect a cult of some kind. The trapings aren't indicative of traditional Satanism, however, so exactly what cult may be behind this is still a mystery.
- Forensic psychologists in the police force believe that these kidnapers want to be caught; hence the "thank you" notes which are taunting the authorities. The immediate thought is that it's a power thing, where they are challenging the police much like serial killers do, looking for attention from the police and media.
- The ambulance (if the PCs ask) contained Samantha's sister Violet, aged 13, who was babysitting when the abduction occurred. Violet was found semi-catatonic and largely non-communicative. She's off to the hospital for examination, then possibly to a local sanitarium for evaluation. If they can get her talking, she's the only eyewitness to any of the abductions so far.

The PCs will be permitted to question Samantha's mother (the woman downstairs), named Asura Jackson, if Asura consents to talk to them (a successful DC 12 Charisma (persuasion) check allows the characters to overcome the woman's suspicions). Asura is a single mother (the father abandoned her just after Sam was born) of the two girls, and is only 25 years old (she was 12 when Violet was born). Asura will tell the PCs she was out on a date while the incident happened, and had left Violet at home to babysit her younger sister.

This wasn't the first time Violet had been left to babysit, but the older girl had made it clear she didn't like the responsibility; she would rather be out running the neighborhood with her friends. Asura found Violet sitting on the floor by the doorway of Sam's room, staring at the broken window and quietly crying. She was unable to get Violet to speak coherently, though the girl seemed uninjured. All Violet kept saying was, "my fault," over and over again. Mostly Asura just wants her baby back.

Joe is willing to give copies of the letter and photographs of the crime scene to aid in the PCs' research, so long as they keep it on the D.L. Their involvement is strictly off the books, as the Brotherhood has a somewhat acrimonious relationship with the police. He asks the rest of the police to clear the room so he can talk to the PCs alone.

The department, he explains, has traditionally been somewhat tolerant of his unorthodox methods because he tends to get results, even if those results are the mysterious stoppage of crimes on occasion, rather than an arrest. However, they're starting to get suspicious due to the lack of arrests on a few high profile cases (which the Brotherhood had a hand in), and it seems that his department is facing an audit, with certain higher-ups accusing the police of corruption and stepping outside the law whenever it suited them.

As a result of this, Internal Affairs may be called in. He desperately needs the PCs to handle this delicately and keep him in the loop. Above all, he needs an arrest on this case, not a stack of bodies to explain away.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Not a lot to troubleshoot in this scene; the PCs get a call to investigate a crime scene, have a talk with the witnesses, the detective, and the CSI, and then go off to do their own investigations.

ACT TWO: COMPLICATION

RUNDOWN

In this act, the characters conduct research that leads them to an archaic religion...or at least a modern mockery of a long-dead archaic religion. They question Violet, which turns out mostly to be a dead end, and have a run-in with some cultists.

ACTION

Hitting the Books: Researching the symbols can reveal the following information, based on the level of success of Intelligence checks (be they arcana, forbidden lore, or history) listed below. Thus, the higher the roll, the more specific the information gleaned. Characters with occult knowledge or backgrounds, or those with crypto-linguistics will be especially useful and should gain advantage on their checks or, if the GM wishes, automatic success.

THE SYMBOLS:

DC 5: The symbols are some kind of runes. They don't radiate any power, but it's impossible to translate them or even denote their origin. They must be fairly obscure.

DC 7: The symbols seem to be Gaelic in derivation. The dialect, however, is impossible to determine. A dead language, perhaps?

DC 9: The symbols are ogham, the ancient secret language of the druids. This language has supposedly been dead for well over a thousand years. Either someone has designed a new dialect, or the old one isn't as dead as everyone thought. No translations are available.

DC 12: The runes refer to the coming of something called the "Black Mother." It's difficult to ascertain any more than that.

DC 13: The runes read: "At the birth of the season of life, the Black Mother will rise."

DC 15: The runic inscription appears to be incomplete. Gathering photos of the other 5 crime scenes completes the prophecy: "...her thousand children spring forth from the blood of the Seven." (Crime Scene 1) "...A fortnight hence the Baptism of Blood," (Crime Scene 2) "...the Fire will leap forth from the Second Mouth of the Beast" (Crime Scene 5) "...to cleanse the world," (Crime Scene 4) "...and from the darkened Waters Life shall grow anew." (Crime Scene 3)

See Appendix: Handouts for copies of the prophecy in both ogham and English. These should be cut up and given in-

dividually to the players, to allow them to piece together the prophecy on their own. Putting the prophecy together in proper sequence, then, is a puzzle for the PCs to solve. If they seem incredibly stumped, allow a few DC 10 Intelligence rolls for each clue to place them in the proper order.

If the PCs don't succeed at these Intelligence checks enough to puzzle out this bit, Detective Knonaem can get back to them with information about the runes and their translations from his P.D. contacts, who have managed to translate them, thus allowing the players to gain this information even if they don't glean it on their own. Alternately, as the GM, you can simply feed them the information above either based off of a simple Intelligence check or however you want.

THE DRUIDS

Once the group figures out that the line patterns are Druidic runes, they may want to investigate the history of Druidism, and cross-reference with local occurrences. A DC 12 Intelligence check reveals that there is a "secret society" of druids active at several local colleges, which is more of a fraternity than a genuine secret society. In the past, these Druids have conducted midnight parades through the streets, their faces veiled and robed. No one knows who the members of this cult are, but they've never been implicated in any criminal activities.

Characters with occult, arcane, religious or historical backgrounds will know that historically the druids functioned as the high priests, lawmakers, and teachers of the Celtic peoples. While mostly a peaceful sect (they were as much political as religious-based) they did engage in sacrifice of both animals and, it is rumored, human beings. It is likely, however, that traditionally such sacrifices were voluntary. The druids were mostly a peaceful sect, and this prophecy and these abductions don't seem to fit with the traditional ideology of druidism.

THE PROPHECY

Obviously, the PCs need to figure this out, fast. The prophecy indicates "the blood of the Seven," and if the PCs haven't realized that six children have been kidnapped, well...maybe they're a little slow to be doing battle with the Forces of Darkness. This leaves one victim left. The "Fortnight hence the baptism of blood" would seem to imply a sacrifice to precede the end of the prophecy. Again, characters with arcane backgrounds will piece together that two weeks from this Sunday is the Vernal Equinox: the birth of the season of life and a time of power.

That would seem to indicate that the PCs have three days' time to solve this mystery and save the children. But what about the "Second Mouth of the Beast?" It would seem to indicate the location of the sacrifice and "Cleansing," but where is it? For that matter, what is it? Obtaining the answer to this question is difficult at best, requiring a DC 20 Intelligence (arcana or forbidden lore) check and ac-

cess to an occult library to find an obscure reference in the Codex întuneric, an ancient Romanian journal of a group of vampire and demon hunters from the mid-1500's.

The book discusses a center of mystical convergence (that's a Hellmouth, to the uneducated out there) located in the Black Forests of Wallachia, and a group of Knights Templar and a druidic pilgrim were allied with a young demon hunter and her Watcher to defend the portal. They fought many battles and obtained great victories. Unfortunately, the entire group met a tragic end from a massive demonic assault they never saw coming, after they believed they had sealed the portal. The last entry is in the hand of the druid, and reads as follows (See Appendix: Handouts):

Soon shall the forces of the Outer Dark be upon me. I am all that remains of my intrepid band of warriors, for in our shortsightedness we became complacent, convinced that the gates to the Beyond had been forever shackled and barred. Even when we sensed a new rise of mystical energy did we fail to take proper precautions. So long as we guarded the portal, we knew that our safety, and the safety of the region, would be secured.

What fools we were not to see.

The black-hearted Prince of Wallachia, the dark Impaler, called together the blackest magicians in Europe to drive us from his forests. In their black visions, they uncovered something none of us in our wildest nightmares would've imagined, but that makes perfect, terrifying sense.

The convergence is not limited to one spot. Hell springs forth from elsewhere, now; the Beast has a second mouth.

The demons came at us in the night, an army that even the chosen one and her intrepid band of Knights Templar could not ward away. They came from the rear, having spilled forth from the second Mouth of the Beast even as we guarded the seal upon the first.

The battle quickly became a slaughter.

I am all that remains.

But not for long. I hide this tome in the walls of a ruined castle in the hope that some future generation will find and remember our valiant struggle, and that our experiences may save others from the same fate.

Adair, Keeper of Law and Wisdom

Month of Cuiithe

1532, Gregorian Calendar

Finally, it seems that the most logical place for a druidic sect to be operating would be in the midst of the local park, a stretch of land comprising several hundred acres, much of which is wooded. At the heart of the park, deep within the woods, is an area known as The Hollow, which is a large natural pond fed by an underground spring. Surrounding it, artisans have crafted traditional statuary,

columns and the like, intending it to be a place of peace where picnics could occur, hikers could take refuge, and the like. It is also, occult-oriented characters will know, the nexus of several ley lines that pass through the city.

A TRIP TO THE HOLLOW

A trip to The Hollow during the daytime yields what it usually does: not a whole lot. Aside from a distinct sense of mystical power that any mystically-oriented character will sense, it's peaceful and pretty to look at: a small lake, a nearby pond with a memorial, woods, a walking path. But here is where it gets interesting, nevertheless.

As the PCs explore the area, looking for clues, a voice rings out of the forest, saying, "You won't find anything."

At this point, a young man of about nineteen emerges from the forest. He's got tousled, sandy brown hair, blue eyes, and wears a red hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans, and hiking boots. He looks like any normal college student: handsome, but not drop-dead gorgeous; somewhat preppy, and casual. His hands are stuffed into his pocket. He walks up to the PCs, attempting to maintain an air of casualness, but a DC 10 Wisdom (insight) check picks up the fact that he's nervous. His eyes keep darting around, as though he expects to be assaulted at any moment.

When he reaches the PCs, he extends his hand to whoever the most approachable member seems to be and says, "Hi, I'm Greg. I think I know what you're looking for...and I think I can help. But not here. They could be anywhere."

He's willing to talk, and in fact is willing to spill his entire story without any sort of coercion, but wants the PCs to take him somewhere safe. If they ask who he's running from, he replies, "from my brothers."

The young man is Greg Stoltz, and the brothers he's talking about aren't blood relatives. Greg is a (now former) member of the Tao Delta Delta fraternity, a newish organization on campus, having only been chartered in the past two years. Some basic research reveals that there are no other chapters of Tao Delta Delta anywhere in the United States.

The kicker is this: Tao Delta Delta is a druidic fraternity, with all members required to be baptized into the druidic religion. It's also co-ed, with both male and female members, something that is practically unheard of. Only the male members live in the frat house for the organization - at least, formally or as far as anyone outside the fraternity knows. Certainly the female members keep enough of their stuff there, just in case they need to crash after a kegger...or a ritual. Regardless of gender, all members of the fraternity are called "brother."

Greg joined the fraternity on a whim as a freshman (he's currently a sophomore) and at first was quite taken in by the rituals and rites they performed. He found the secret meetings and magical ceremonies exciting, and the whole "magick" thing was fun and mysterious.

But then, about six months ago, a girl named Brigit Cleary was elected president of the fraternity (High Priestess inside the frat house walls), the first time a woman had reached that height. Almost right away, Brigit began talking prophecies and cleansing. She claimed that the Earth Mother, Black Annis, was angry at the complacency of the druids, and that it was time for them to take back the world. She claimed that she had seen Annis in her dreams, and had been promised wealth and power to all who followed her teachings. She claimed that she had been granted power over life and death...and then proved it by performing bizarre rituals in which she created grotesque, new life forms.

Such a promise of power instantly lured many of the brothers to Brigit's call, but even more disturbing was the fact that those who spoke out against her simply vanished. Greg believes they were subject to dark, late night experiments. After the first few disappearances, Greg decided to keep quiet until he saw a chance to get out.

Then the kidnappings started. Brigit was ranting about a great "Cleansing," and a prophecy about Black Annis being made flesh. Suddenly this wasn't the peaceful mother deity that Greg had come to know as Danu, but something much darker and more sinister. He knew that he couldn't stand against Brigit, but he had to get out and find someone who could. He's been in hiding ever since, and when he saw the PCs here, it didn't take much to put two and two together, that they were some sort of investigative team.

Then Greg drops the real bombshells. The first is that he knows where Brigit works; she's a secretary at an accounting firm in the downtown area. The second is that he knows where the children are being held! They're in the basement of the Tao Delta Delta fraternity house. He is willing to testify against his fraternity brothers, but will not come forward until after they're arrested and in prison without bail.

The PCs now have a few choices: call the police, check out the Tao Delt house themselves, or talk to Brigit. Any choice will lead to the demon attack that night. Brigit doesn't take kindly to her plans being interrupted.

GREG STOLTZ (*Medium Neutral humanoid (human) HP 4 (1d8 HD), AC 10, Spd 30 ft. Perception 10 (+0). Str 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 13. Challenge 0 (10 XP). He has no attacks and carries no special equipment.*)

TALKING TO BRIGIT

Brigit is a pretty girl of Irish descent, with curly, flaming orange hair, gray eyes, freckles, and glasses. She works at the accounting firm of Katstag & Byrd downtown as a secretary, helping to maintain the company's records and support the president, who she has successfully seduced. This also means she has access to all of their resources, and she has pulled off a fairly brilliant money laundering scheme. She's got more than enough resources to disappear for a couple of weeks until her ritual is complete and Black Annis comes forth.

If the PCs decide to question her, Brigit will take an early lunch and accompany them. Her story is that Greg is a liar, jealous because she spurned his advancements and angry because he was, in fact, rejected for admission into Tao Delta Delta.

The very idea that the fraternity are some kind of druidic cult is ludicrous; they're a service fraternity, and she can provide numerous examples of the different community service projects the frat has undertaken, from cleaning up parks in the poverty stricken areas of the city, to repairing low-rent housing to litter cleanup projects to time spent working in homeless shelters. All of these claims will check out; Tao Delta Delta has indeed done a great deal of community service work.

If the PCs mention the kidnapped children in connection with Tao Delta Delta, Brigit will begin talking lawsuits for slander, and Katstag & Byrd will happily bring in their legal team to help. In any case, Brigit will always seem genuine and friendly to the PCs; if she needs to, she'll cast her suggestion spell or charm person, though she'll only resort to using such magic if the PCs seems suspicious (she's also a naturally convincing liar).

However, the moment the kidnappings are mentioned, Brigit will make every effort to end the conversation; she has realized that there's now a real danger of discovery and wants to expedite her plans. If unable to end the conversation, Brigit will excuse herself to go to the bathroom; if a character accompanies her, she uses her magic to deal with the hero. In any case, Brigit vanishes shortly after the PCs speak to her.

Stats for Brigit, the Spawn of Black Annis, and the demonic assassins can be found in Act Three.

THE TRUTH ABOUT BRIDGIT

The truth is that Brigit is a half-demon; her father was human and her mother is a succubus assassin who was lured from the pits of hell into the service of the Great Old Ones, and founded a sect of half-demon assassins comprised of her own children, known as the Sisters of Black Annis. Brigit began receiving visions from her "goddess" at an early age; these visions slowly corrupted her and drove her quite insane.

Her mother, in turn, recognized Brigit as something special and instead of training her as an assassin, had her trained in the dark arts by a demonic ally from the pits of Hell itself. Brigit was abused by this tutor even as she absorbed his knowledge and combined with her feeling that her father abandoned her (not true; her mother consumed her father's soul) has grown to blame men for all the world's evils.

She is obsessed with bringing Black Annis into the world at any cost. Her eventual plan is to destroy all the men in the world (including those who have helped her achieve her goals) and believes that Annis has the same goal. She has spent much of her life cultivating the worship of Annis

among anyone she could, and eventually found a path to execute her plans when she fell in with a girl from the Tao Delts.

It wasn't difficult to twist their goddess Danu into Brigit's ideal of Black Annis and she used her emotional influence to work her way up to president of the Fraternity. Now the time has come to finalize her plans.

SEARCHING THE FRAT HOUSE

The PCs may decide to check out the Tao Delta Delta frat house. This is not necessarily an easy prospect, as the brothers certainly aren't going to let strangers in to just wander around. If the PCs pull the "working for the police" routine, the members will be happy to comply...the moment they have a search warrant.

Breaking in is certainly an option if the PCs have the skills to do so. However, they will find no evidence of the children in the basement of the frat house—Brigit is already onto Greg and expected him to squeal, and she's made arrangements to deal with him and his betrayal. With a successful DC 14 Wisdom (perception) check, however, the PCs find a discarded doll and a baby blanket half-hidden under a shelving unit.

This is plenty to go on, to call the police, though of course they'll want to leave the evidence exactly where they found it and call in an anonymous tip. Any other effort will ruin the important evidence—it's up to the GM whether you want to allow a DC 10 Intelligence check to consider this fact.

In Brigit's room (assuming the PCs can get there without problems) is the girl's "Book of Shadows," her diary which contains several entries talking about her rise to control the fraternity and her plans for the ritual. See Appendix: Hand-outs for the important contents of the diary. If the GM wishes, it's also possible to have the diary also be in the basement, having been accidentally dropped by Brigit earlier.

If the PCs choose to call the police after investigating the frat house, see the next section.

CALLING THE COPS

If the PCs call the police, Detective Knonaem gets a search warrant and a team invades the Tao Delta Delta frat house. The children are gone by the time they get there, however (see "Searching the Frat House," above). Even still, the police find left behind a Barbie doll and a baby blanket. They arrest all of the occupants of the house based on the evidence, and send in a crime scene team to sweep for evidence (which is plentiful; the Tao Delts haven't had time to properly clear the scene.)

Det. Knonaem calls the PCs and gives them the report, that the children have been moved. Brigit is nowhere to be found, but they have her book of shadows, which the detective will turn over to the PCs. The book contains

valuable information, including a description of the ritual that Brigit plans to use to baptize the Hollow, and the ritual she plans to use to call forth her goddess. He'll go to work on the Tao Delts, but wants the PCs to keep their investigation going. If this kidnapping ring is broken up, he'll see to it that they get their proper accolades.

For the notable contents of Brigit's Book of Shadows, see Appendix: Handouts.

BLACK ANNIS

It's possible that the PCs will wish to research Black Annis. Intelligence rolls using arcana and history provide the following information, based the roll for the check:

DC 8: Black Annis is one of the many names for the Celtic Goddess Danu. Other names include Gentle Annis, Anu, and Anna.

DC 10: Black Annis in Celtic legend is a crone who lives on the Scottish moors and is said to eat children.

DC 12: Black Annis is said to turn to stone in the sunlight.

DC 15: Black Annis can be held at bay by certain combinations of common herbs, which act towards her like crosses do to vampires.

DC 15: Throughout the years, bizarre cults worshipping perverted, tentacled demons have claimed to be children of Black Annis. These cults often refer to themselves as Tuatha De Dannan, after the mythical god figures of ancient Ireland. Many cults have tried to bring forth an ancient prophecy that the goddess will come forth from her realm beyond the world to cleanse the earth of the filth of man, and restore the planet to a pure form.

Characters who have the Intelligence (forbidden lore) skill have access to additional information that regular research cannot reveal:

DC 8: Black Annis is the name by which some obscure cults refer to the Great Old One, Shub-Niggurath.

DC 10: Most Great Old Ones, and servitors of the Great Old Ones, can be repelled or held at bay by the Elder Sign.

DC 15: Black Annis is not Shub Niggurath itself, but an avatar of the Old One who represents the corruption of life. As with many avatars of the Old Ones, she could be considered to be a herald of the coming of the true Old One, which would be catastrophic for humankind.

THE DEMON ATTACK

By now the PCs are just itching for some action, and Brigit doesn't like having her plans interrupted. That night, the PCs come under assault by a group of elite demonic assassins hired by Brigit. Their orders are simple: kill them all, then find and kill the cop leading the investigation.



The number of assassins should vary based on the number of PCs, and the average power level; figure one per character, depending on the average party level.

The demons are vicious, but not stupid or suicidal. If they're badly overpowered, or it looks like they're going to lose, they'll make good their escape. It's not outside the realm of possibility for the PCs to get a prisoner. What happens in this case is entirely up to the Game Master. How much does she know? What's she willing to tell? A prisoner scene could very nicely send the PCs running to Detective Knonaem's rescue just as another group of assassins attack him.

SISTERHOOD OF THE BLACK ANNIS ASSASSIN (CE Medium Fiend (demon)) HP 45 (HD 7d8+14), AC 14, Spd 40 ft. Deception +3, Perception 14 (+4), Stealth +5. Str 13 Dex 17 Con 14 Int 11 Wis 14 Cha 13. Multiattack (2 sword strikes), Scimitar +5 (1d8+3). SA Darkvision 90 ft, life sense 60 ft. Resistant to cold, fire, lightning, poison and bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical or nonsilvered attacks. Sneak Attack (1/turn, deals an extra 4d6 damage against target when it has advantage on the roll or when an ally is within 5 ft. of the assassin demon), Evasion (takes no damage if it succeeds on DEX save to take half damage, only takes half damage if fails save). Innate Spellcasting (spell save DC 11; At Will: darkness, suggestion, charm person, magic missile; 1/Day each: hold person, mirror image. Teleport (teleports, including its equipment, up to 60 ft. to unoccupied space it can see). Challenge 3 (700 XP).

AFTERMATH

The following morning, another kidnapping will be reported. Brigit has vanished, and all seven victims have been obtained. The inscription on the seventh victim's wall reads, "Today is born the seventh one; the circle is complete."

If the PCs have not yet brought Detective Knonaem into the game, then Greg (if he survived the battle) can inform them that the ritual to sacrifice the children must be performed at midnight; the blood of the children is to be used to baptize the Hellmouth so that it might open a gateway to Black Annis' dimension. Brigit plans to call forth her goddess to cleanse the world of the filth of humanity; she believes that Annis' chosen, the druids, will be raised up to rule as gods amongst men.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The key to this scene is getting Greg involved, and that's not all that difficult. If the PCs fail to translate the runes, Greg knows the prophecy. If the PCs fail to determine that there is a second Hellmouth in town, Greg knows that The Hollow is a "center of mystical convergence." Greg can be used to fill in any vital information the Game Master wishes to convey that the PCs fail to gain through their research. He's the plot device lucky break.

So what if the PCs don't go to The Hollow? The easiest solution is to have Greg approach them somewhere else. Choose somewhere that the PCs are largely alone and away from prying eyes: a parking garage, a knock on a character's back door (assuming they live in a house) or apartment door. If the PCs run a private investigations agency, Greg can simply show up there looking for help.

What if the PCs don't trust Greg? That's a bit more difficult. In this case, Greg will make good his escape (particularly if the PCs act outright hostile to him) and phone in an anonymous tip about the Tao Delts to the police. Detective Knonaem will then call the PCs and inform them about the tip, after the cops raid the Tao Delts' house. Greg will still be hanging around and will later come forward again to admit to having phoned in the tip, to prove he was telling the truth.

ACT THREE: CLIMAX

RUNDOWN

The PCs arrive at The Hollow to defeat Brigit's ritual, only to discover that she is not there; some quick thinking (and possibly a few appropriate Intelligence (arcana) and Wisdom (perception) checks) reveals that she has opened a portal through which she can conduct the ritual. The PCs face Brigit in her basement temple and do battle with her servants from the Outer Dark as she attempts to affect the ritual murder of the innocents. Hopefully, in the end they save the day.

ACTION

The police are frantically attempting to find Brigit before midnight, thanks to the evidence in her journal and the information provided by Greg and the other cultists. The next morning, Brigit's photo is all over every newspaper, telephone pole, and in every shop window in the city. She

is the subject of one of the largest manhunts in history. On the PCs' recommendation, the police will close off the park for the night; Detective Knonaem will manage to clear the PCs through as "special consultants," and see to it that they make their way to The Hollow.

11:00 comes and goes, with no sign of Brigit or the children. By 11:20, the PCs should be getting worried; after all, Brigit has seven children to secure and a rather complicated ritual to set up, which must be started at exactly midnight.

At 11:30, they get their answer, and it's not the answer they were hoping for. PCs with a mystic orientation are the first ones to notice the strange ripple in the air, a disturbance that generally means a portal of some kind is opening. Moments later, the portal is visible to the naked eye, its edges glowing red, though it is only a fraction of an inch in diameter and never seems to widen. Those same mystically-oriented PCs will soon detect a flow of tainted mystical energy flowing through the portal from The Hollow. Brigit is drawing energy from the place through the portal to conduct her ritual!

Peeking through the pinhole is possible; PCs who do will see what appears to be a basement filled with discarded crosses, an old, tarnished golden tabernacle, and various religious odds and ends. They can see the edge of an altar, upon which a statue of the Virgin Mary has been set up and cleaned off...and painted black. A couple of the children are clearly visible, tied down and gagged, tears streaming down their faces. Quiet chanting sounds from within.

Now the PCs are in a bind; they have several options. Obviously, they need to get to Brigit. But where is she? If the PCs don't figure it out on their own, a successful DC 12 Intelligence (history) or (religion) check reveals that the contents of the room include dusty and broken-down religious iconography as well as old furniture, everything covered with dust. The whole would seem to indicate the basement of an abandoned, or at least old and unkempt, church.

A DC 15 Intelligence (arcana) check by anyone with any sort of arcane knowledge or background reveals that the spell Brigit used to create this portal is powerful ritual magic and would need to be relatively nearby to work (it's not long-range mojo). It's also extraordinarily dangerous—the kind of spell that responsible casters never use as it threatens to tear a hole in reality itself.

For each point by which the highest Intelligence (arcana) check exceeds DC 15 reduces the area by 1 mile, starting at 5 miles. Thus, succeeding at the base DC 15 check reveals that she is within five miles of the PCs, while succeeding at a DC 20 check reveals that she is within a mile. Detective Knonaem can quickly call up all the abandoned churches in the area; there are three within four miles, two within two miles, and only one within a mile of the PCs' location.

Arcanists or Occultists can attempt to close the portal via attempting a counter ritual. Doing so requires spending

a total of at least 10 spell slot levels combined, followed by a successful DC 25 Intelligence (arcana) or (religion) check. If one of the other ritual participants first succeeds at a DC 10 check, this grants advantage to the primary ritualist. A successful counter-ritual buys the PCs some time since Brigit must tear open the portal again.

The church Brigit is using is in a run-down area of town, the windows boarded up and the door barred from the inside. A successful DC 20 Strength check batters the door down. Up to two other creatures can aid this attempt; a successful DC 10 Strength check grants advantage on the overall check. Brigit is in the basement, the children all chained to the ground in a 3/4 circle around the base of the altar. Brigit sits on the altar, covered in blood. A sheep lies dead on the altar, its throat cut. She smiles at the PCs as they walk in.

"Hello there. I've been expecting you," she says. "But not alone." She waves her hands, and shadowy portals open up around her. From the shadows step more demonic assassins. The fight is on.

Brigit is seriously juiced up with dark magic. Her statistics in the abbreviated stat block have been adjusted for her defensive preparations for this encounter, including casting mage armor. On the downside, she is subject to all the weaknesses of Black Annis (if the PCs researched the demon); this means if they have made the appropriate talismans, they are treated as if protected by the protection from good and evil spell. The Elder Sign has the same effect. Likewise, Brigit suffers sensitivity to sunlight, taking disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (perception) checks that rely on sight.

The demonic assassins are well under Brigit's control; unlike those that assaulted the PCs earlier, these ones are fanatics and are in love with Brigit. They will fight to the bitter end.

The PCs have played right into Brigit's hands. It's true they've foiled her plan to summon Black Annis into the world physically; but for her backup plan she's already gotten what she needed from the children; later examination of the kids reveals that while they are largely unharmed, each has a pinprick on their inner elbow, just as one would expect to find when blood had been drawn at a blood bank. The blood is hidden inside the pond at The Hollow. Now all Brigit needs is the blood from the assassins.

The GM should describe the blood flying everywhere as the PCs do battle with the assassins; the PCs and Brigit are all soaked in the stuff. When half the assassins are dead, Brigit laughs maniacally, throws her hand forth, and a portal appears behind her...back to The Hollow. Brigit jumps through. Each character that succeeds at a DC 10 Dexterity check is able to follow through before the portal closes.

It's going to be tough to take down Brigit; no villain worth her salt goes in without a backup plan; if Brigit failed to sacrifice the children and open the gateway in a literal sense,



she can still draw forth her goddess' essence from it, into herself, making her a living embodiment of Black Annis.

When she arrives back at The Hollow, Brigit leaps into the pond. A few minutes later, she bursts forth from the water, floating in the air and covered with weeds and muck. Her eyes are coal black, and her hair hangs in strings around her face. She holds a sealed bottle filled with blood aloft and upends it, drinking the blood she drew from the children. If she succeeds in this task, she becomes Black Annis, though it will take several weeks for her powers to manifest fully; until then, she needs to lay low.

Even still, the fight isn't close to over when the PCs follow Brigit through the portal; once in natural surroundings, she has the power to create spawn of her goddess. She holds her hands out and calls to the forest to rise, and all around the PCs, mounds of muck, ichor, and rotted plant life ooze together to form grotesque horrors, covered with twisted mockeries of undulating mouths that make horrific sucking and smacking sounds as the things move forward.

There should be at least one lesser spawn per character and one greater spawn for the entire party. To make matters worse, any character who dies from battling these monstrosities is absorbed into the mass, which grows larger and more powerful, gaining 3d6 hit points and having its hit point maximum increased by an equal amount.

If the PCs manage to stop Brigit from drinking the blood (say with a well-placed gunshot at disadvantage on the roll) she's been beaten, but she's still got enough magic left to summon a few spawn and open up one last portal,

through which she disappears (this one opened well out of reach of the PCs). Likely she'll be back to cause trouble in the future.

Brigit is set up to be a recurring villain. For Game Masters who want this to be more of a one-shot, the PCs can defeat her with something as simple as a gunshot to the bottle; this ends her magic powers, leaving her a pumped-up combatant, but without unlimited access to demonic powers.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The biggest potential problem here arises if the PCs fail to look through the Portal to the church; in this case, the police can receive an anonymous tip. If the PCs choose not to pursue Brigit to the Church, the police certainly will; unfortunately, the demonic assassins make short work of the police. Still, the interruption proves enough to save the children. Brigit will still leap through the portal to face the PCs at the Hollow, likely with several assassins in tow. Whether the children are rescued in this case, or whether the assassins decide that the girls make good recruits is up to the GM.

BRIGIT, HALF-DEMON (CE Medium fiend) HP 60 (HD 11d8+11), AC 20 (mage armor), Spd 30 ft. Deception +6, Insight +7, Perception 17 (+7), Stealth +6. Str 11 Dex 16 Con 12 Int 17 Wis 18 Cha 16. SV INT +6, WIS +7. Multi-attack (2 claws). Claw +6 (1d6+3); SA Darkvision 60 ft, truesight 60 ft. Immune poisoned; Resistant to cold, fire, lightning, poison and bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical or nonsilvered attacks. Magic Resistance (advantage on saves vs. magical effects), Spell Specialization (cast charm person without spell slot, 1/Day), Spellcaster (spell save DC 13, +6 with spell attacks; Cantrips: darkness, hold person, minor illusion, poison spray; 1st (4 slots): charm person, mage armor, magic missile; 2nd (3 slots): darkness, hold person, suggestion; 3rd (3 slots): animate dead, bestow curse; 4th (2 slots): black tentacles), Summon Spawn of Shub-Niggurath, Sunlight Sensitivity (disadvantage on attacks and Perception checks in sunlight). Challenge 5 (1,800 XP).

SPAWN OF SHUB-NIGGURATH (Greater) (Unaligned Large plant) HP 136 (HD 16d10+48), AC 16, Spd 20 ft, swim 20 ft. Perception 10 (0), Stealth +2. Str 18 Dex 8 Con 16 Int 5 Wis 10 Cha 5. Multiattack (2 slams; if both hit, target grappled (escape DC 14) and target engulfed). Slam +6 (1d8+4); Engulf (one grappled target is blinded, grappled, restrained and unable to breathe; DC 14 CON save at start of each of its turns or 1d8+4). SA Blindsight 60 ft, Immune lightning, blinded, deafened, exhaustion, resist cold, fire, lightning absorption (lightning damage heals), Challenge 5 (1,800 XP).

SPAWN OF SHUB-NIGGURATH (Lesser) (N Medium aberration) HP 67 HD (9d8+27), AC 9, Spd 10 ft. swim 10 ft. Perception 10. Str 10 Dex 8 Con 16 Int 3 Wis 10 Cha 6. Multiattack one bite and one blinding spittle), Bite +2 (5d6, and if the target is M or smaller, it must make a

DC 10 STR save or be knocked prone. If the target is killed by this damage, it is absorbed into the spawn's mass), and Blinding spittle (recharge 5-6; range 15ft., 5ft. radius, DC 13 DEX save or blinded until end of the moulder's next turn). Darkvision 60 ft. Aberrant ground (10-ft. radius, difficult terrain, creature that starts its turn in that area must make DC 10 STR save or have its speed reduced to 0 until start of its next turn), Gibbering (20-ft. radius, creature starting its turn in this area DC 10 WIS save or become confused). Challenge 2 (450 XP).

ACT FOUR: RESOLUTION

RUNDOWN

Brigit makes good her escape, the park is cleansed, the PCs get some ominous news and some long overdue accolades.

ACTION

Following the battle at The Hollow, there are still the children to deal with. The PCs can return to the abandoned Church, to find Detective Knaonem already there with a team; if the assassins haven't decided to kidnap and raise the girls, all are safe. Though for some of the older ones, it will take therapy to get over what they've been through.

Another journal is found at the site, this one the beginnings of a Book of Shadows, detailing the 2-part ritual to summon forth Black Annis and the backup ritual that enabled Brigit to summon the goddess' power into herself. The PCs should be left wondering if Brigit succeeded (even if she did not); the final part of the notes discusses an Ascension rite that will allow Annis to rise through Brigit if the original ritual fails. Brigit could be out there somewhere, still...

The next morning, the PCs get a call from Det. Knaonem asking if they can meet him at City Hall at noon. When they arrive, they discover to their surprise that the mayor, the media, and a crowd of people are waiting for them. They are to be presented the keys to the city and given Civilian Awards for heroism.

In addition, the police department wants to keep the PCs on retainer as independent consultants for unusual and occult-related cases such as these. At least in this city, for any characters involved with the Brotherhood of William St. John, this soothes any bad relationship the party may have had with law enforcement from previous encounters.

TROUBLESHOOTING

There's no handout for the second ritual; it is included simply as a dangling plot thread, should the GM wish to bring Brigit back as a recurring villain, the details are left to you and your campaign to work out as you like!

THE NIGHTMARE CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Volume 3 of **The Deeper Dark Trilogy** for the Amazing Adventures Role Playing Game! As with *Don't Fear the Ripper* and *The Feast of Black Annis*, this scenario is part of a loose (which is to say, thematic) trilogy of horror adventures, which can be played in any order, though it is generally assumed that *Ripper* is the first one to be played. These adventures are loosely interconnected and are designed to introduce the mythos of H.P. Lovecraft (with a few additions of our own) into your world in a big way.

To that end, GMs will find that this adventure is much less linear than some other published modules—particularly *Ripper*, which is very much structured as a four-act serial, though with lots of room for player and GM improvisation. This scenario, on the other hand, while still structured in “Acts” similar to our other adventure modules, is very open-ended and heavily investigative in nature, and how fast or slowly the PCs get to the final battle depends on how the GM decides to disseminate information as they explore their options.

This also plays into how short the module itself is—it's more an adventure framework than a fully-fleshed-out scenario, though it can very easily be played from front to back in one session, exactly as written. As a designer, I like to give players a range of options in their adventures. This can be a fast, one-night session that is playable in a few hours, or you can choose to expand it and even combine it with the other adventures in the series if you're driven and have the gumption to do so. How exactly it all fits together is entirely up to you, but this adventure sets the potential stage for a worldwide cult of the Deeper Dark.

Do you slowly build encounters with the Nightmare Children until the PCs stumble upon their lair, or do you do an “info dump” after the first encounter? It's entirely up to you, and with a bit of imagination and creativity this adventure could become a mini-campaign unto itself as more and more children fall prey to the horrors of the Deeper Dark before the final confrontation with the Nightmare Man and the Keepers.

THE NIGHTMARE CHILDREN AND SANITY

As with the other scenarios in **The Deeper Dark Trilogy**, The Nightmare Children assumes the use of sanity and madness rules are in play. As such, the various creatures in this scenario have the following Sanity ratings:

NIGHTMARE CHILDREN: 1/1d6

MUTANT BADGER, MUTANT WEASEL: 0/1d4

CARETAKERS: 1/1d8

ABOLETH: 2/1d10+1

SENSITIVE TOPICS

This scenario involves young children being kidnapped, psychically manipulated, endowed with terrible powers by a malevolent alien entity, and controlled into behaving like horrific monsters. The stated intent is to be disturbing, but there may be gaming groups for whom such a thing is a step too far. It's important, as the GM, that you know your group, what they can handle, and what is too much. If using children is too disturbing and hits too close to home for your group, it is suggested that the Nightmare Children be substituted to be teenagers, runaways, even derelict adults and the homeless, the dredges of society that nobody cares about...except for the PCs, that is.

In the end, the key to a successful horror game is to know how to push your group, but not push them so far that they become genuinely uncomfortable. After all, *Amazing Adventures* is a game. It's supposed to be fun, and everyone has different limits when it comes to horror and the lengths to which it is appropriate to go, to scare them.

BACKGROUND

The adventure involves the rise of a cult of Cthulhu originating in an abandoned farm outside of the city. It can be placed in any city the GM likes, wherever the PCs are based. About a year ago, an aboleth—a creature of the Deeper Dark—was accidentally summoned to this world by a teen playing with a dark grimoire. The aboleth, enraged, immediately enslaved the teen and sent her to explore the surrounding area, at first looking for a way to allow it to return home. It quickly realized, however, that there was an opportunity here, and used the teen to begin gathering its resources together. It had the teen bring her family to it, and feasted upon them, growing in strength.

Over time it made contact with a small group of Cthulhu-Spawn, creatures also of the Outer Dark who haunt the deep places of the earth and who, like the aboleth, are powerful psychics. Together, they set about changing the world to bring about the return of the Old Ones to the world. Their first step was to corrupt and enslave the local rural population, creating a degenerate cult of Cthulhu around the farm, which quickly fell into disrepair. Its cultists began to worship it as a god, and it spoke to them in dreams.

It then created a psychic web among its servants, spreading it further to infiltrate the dreams of local children, appearing to them as a Nightmare Man who promised rewards for obedience and pain for disloyalty. One by one it corrupted and controlled the children, attracting them to the farm house under the care of the Cthulhu-im, who the children came to know as the Caretakers. It also sought out men of science and learning, using their unique knowledge to craft chemicals that could mutate

and enhance humans and beasts to better do its bidding. One of these serums was used on the children to help create and bolster their psychic abilities, building a psychic web and hive mind that grows stronger with each new addition.

Now, a year later, the aboleth is prepared to begin its diabolical plan, which is where our story begins. Of course, the aboleth didn't count on heroes such as the PCs, who may be all that stands between the city and an eternity of darkness....

GETTING THE PCS INVOLVED

Getting the PCs involved is always the trick. Presumably you're running a game where they'll be inclined to investigate this sort of oddity on their own. If not, they can be ordered to look into events by a superior in their organization, they can be hired by police as consultants who are known as experts in the strange and unusual, or even a concerned parent whose child has been kidnapped might approach them for help after hearing reports that their missing child was seen in one of the area's Red Light districts.

DET. JOE KNONAEM

Detective Joe Knonaem of the New Orleans Police Department (or whatever city in which the PCs are based) can yet again be a good way to bring the heroes into the adventure. The grizzled, heavysset detective in the homicide or major crimes division by this time has probably become an important ally and contact of one of the PCs, calling them in when cases arise that are strange and unusual, though it their exploits have gotten him in trouble before, he may be quite reluctant.

DETECTIVE JOE KNONAEM (LG Medium humanoid (human)) HP 39 (HD 6d8+12), AC 13, Spd 30 ft. Perception 16 (+6), Investigation +4, Insight +6, Stealth +4. Str 12 Dex 15 Con 14 Int 12 Wis 15 Cha 11. .38 special +4 (1d8+2) or Nightstick (1d6+1). SA Urban Tracking, Face in the Crowd (can disguise himself to blend into a crowd), Sherlock (all investigation checks made with advantage), Natural Scrapper (if target below hp max, one attack per turn deals an extra 1d6 damage with melee weapon or unarmed). Challenge 1/4 (50 XP). He wears a trench coat and a fedora.

PROLOGUE

READ OR PARAPHRASE THE FOLLOWING TEXT TO THE PLAYERS:

In a typical department store, in the dead of night in the city, an average nighttime security guard strolled the aisles, whistling to himself, shining his flashlight up and down. It was a pretty quiet night, not that that was any surprise. Most nights were quiet. Sometimes he longed for something to happen...just

something to break up the monotony.

He should've been careful what he wished for.

First, he heard a giggle, like that of a small child. It rose and ended in a second. He spun, shone his light around, but saw nothing. Then it came again, this time longer – definitely a child's laugh.

"Hello?" He called out. "Who's there? You shouldn't be here! We're closed!"

More giggling.

"Did you get left here? Where's your parents? Where are you?"

He moved towards the laughter, which was coming from the children's department. As he turned the corner to enter the toy aisles, what he came face to face with would haunt his nightmares forever. His flashlight clattered to the ground, and his screams pierced the night, mingling with a chorus of lilting laughter, a scene that repeated itself all over town...

ACT ONE: CRIME SPREE AND KIDNAPPINGS

It starts with a series of strange robberies—a wave that plagues the city practically overnight. There are two strange things about the robberies: the places that have been hit, and the reports of eyewitnesses to the crimes.

The places that have been hit are odd in their wild divergence. First, several banks were robbed across the city to the tune of a few hundred thousand dollars. Second, meat packing plants and seafood warehouses at the wharfs were hit. Third, toy stores and department store toy departments were robbed bare.

There were deaths involved; the few witnesses that did survive are stark, raving mad, ranting about living nightmares, imps, boogymen under the bed and eyes as black as the pits of hell...at least between predicting death and doom for those questioning them, and alternating between laughter, sobbing, and hysterical, semi-violent fits. There are two things in common: every victim will say, "You're all gonna die out there!" and "They said the whole city will pay!"

Whatever choice the PCs make will lead them to their first confrontation with the Nightmare Children—powerful psychics who have the ability to control minds and emotions and impart waking nightmares. They are gaunt, horrific-looking, with pallid skin and eyes that are entirely black.

The children themselves work via a hive mind and are controlled by a single, powerful source which any psychic in the party will sense, but attempting to track it to its source is, in modern terms, like trying to track an expert hacker bouncing a computer signal around between

thousands of servers. In the end, the psychic gets lost in the stream of consciousness and suffers 2d6 psychic damage as well as being knocked unconscious for 1d4 hours from the psychic backlash. If the psychic succeeds at a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw, they suffer only half damage and gain two levels of exhaustion for 1d4 hours instead.

Magic users may also sense the presence of supernatural energy, but won't be able to track it as a psychic would.

There are two options to delve deeper: capture one of the children alive, or let one escape and trail them.

THE NIGHTMARE CHILDREN

The nightmare children are being controlled via a psychic web by the "god" of their cult—a horrific, otherworldly creature from another dimension called an aboleth, who has become trapped on this world, and seeks to extend its influence as far as possible. It works via the children and its agents, horrible creatures from beyond the Deeper Dark known as the Cthulhuim. Their goal, quite simply, is to enslave enough of the world to awaken their dark master from the depths of the ocean, but they believe in starting small and building on a foundation. Being open to fantasy and imagination, children were the natural choice to begin to build their insidious invasion. The truth is, humans can't fathom the depth or scope of their intellect and their overall plan cannot be conceived. But they must be stopped, or chaos and darkness will spread across the land.

It is important to remember, however, that these Nightmare Children are just that: children. They are not corrupted, not mutated. They're being controlled by an otherworldly force. If a child is removed from the psychic network—that is, removed from the presence of at least two other Nightmare Children or their "god," their abilities fade such that they lose access to one of their psionic powers per minute until they fully disconnect from the network and become normal, frightened children again.

Psychics, arcanists, occultists or the like can make a DC 20 Intelligence (arcana) check to determine that the psychic web connecting these kids to a hive mind likely based on proximity to others, and removing them might break the connection. A character with Intelligence (forbidden lore) can divine this information with a DC 12 check instead.

NIGHTMARE CHILDREN (NE Small humanoid (human) HP 3 (HD 1d6), AC 11, Spd 30 ft. Perception 13 (+3). Str 8 Dex 12 Con 10 Int 14 Wis 12 Cha 10. No physical attacks. SA Psionic Powers (psionic save DC 13): Mental Stun (+3, 1d4 psychic, DC 11 Wis save or stunned and incapacitated 1d4 rd), Empathic Transmission (full round to activate), Mesmerism, Telepathic Communication, Mind Control, Telemagry. Challenge 1 (100 XP).

INTERROGATING A NIGHTMARE CHILD

Interrogating a Nightmare Child is easier than it would at first seem. The child lashes out with its psychic powers, but is, in the end, a child. Threatening them, punishing them, countering or resisting their powers, or even tricking them into revealing information are all possible tactics. If a child is captured, the psychic web releases them so that it cannot eventually be tracked back. The child, now feeling alone and abandoned, naturally seeks comfort and solace, but may also react by lashing out and throwing a tantrum. Regardless, their powers become substantially reduced and then fade within hours. The formerly all-black pupils return to normal and the child has only vague, dreamlike memories of what happened while they were "in the other place," as they'll call it. The only thing they can tell about the person who controlled them was that he was The Nightmare Man. He was very scary, and if they did good he rewarded them with toys and gifts, but if they did bad, he made them hurt.

TRACKING THE NIGHTMARE CHILDREN

If one or more children get away, tailing or tracking them to their location is definitely possible, especially if there are Gumshoes or Hooligans in the party. Alternately, given enough time, a Gumshoe using Urban Tracking can track down sightings and signs of the wayward children, turning over the following pieces of information at the GM's discretion with a series of increasingly difficult checks:

- **DC 10:** There have over the past six months been a rash of kidnappings, runaways and disappearances of children aged eight to ten throughout the city, amounting to several dozen kids missing.
- **DC 12:** There have been sightings of a lot of "street rats" and "waifs" in the low-rent and red light districts of the city recently, combined with strange goings-on, robberies, people waking up in compromising situations with no memory of how they got there. Sometimes they're dressed up in bizarre outfits. Sometimes left with broken toys. Sometimes they're injured. If pressed, people are hard-pressed to remember exactly where they saw the children, where they came from, what they were doing, or where they were going. Thinking about it is uncomfortable, causes serious headaches, and people become insistent (frighteningly so) that there's nothing to remember, but there are whispers of strange, barely-remembered happenings and these "Nightmare Children" are becoming the boogymen of the districts where they appear.
- **DC 14:** Interviews with victims of the above may turn up similar reports of nightmares involving monstrous, red-eyed creatures like giant wolves or coyotes, impish or gremlin-like demons and a huge, shadowy figure lording over all of them, stretching his arm out to cover "everything."

- **DC 15:** After enough interviews, if the PCs think of it, it may be possible to track a central location from where the incidents seem to be occurring, and thereby find the entrance to the children's hideout.
- **DC 17:** A homeless man has seen kids coming and going from the entrances to the local sewers, steam tunnels or access tunnels. He's also in the know about a series of disappearances that have gone unreported to the authorities. Homeless people all around town have been vanishing for weeks. He's seen some of them walking off with the strange kids. With the right motivation, he could be convinced to show the heroes just where they are...

APPROACHING THE HIDEOUT

The Nightmare Children are hiding under the streets of the city, in a network of abandoned tunnels, be it steam tunnels, access tunnels, old Underground Railroad tunnels, or what-have you. Once the general location of ingress and egress is discovered, it's not hard to track their location—they're largely unsupervised children, and children are messy. They leave signs: broken toys, paper bags, candy wrappers, you name it. Eventually, the trail leads to a large central chamber, full of garbage, where the children make their home. The room is full of toys, some new, some old, some partially broken, some entirely unusable. It's also strewn with junk food and candy wrappers. There are a bunch of old mattresses on the floor, most of which have stuffed animals thrown carelessly upon them.

How many children are here when the PCs arrive depends on when they decide to approach. If they come during the day, the place is full, and they'll have quite the battle on their hands—they may even be forced to flee and return. During the day, some of the children may be sleeping. Whether it's possible to move stealthily through them is at the discretion of the GM. If, however, they come late at night, the place will be largely empty, with perhaps one or two children left behind. These may be guards, they may possibly be sickly and in need of care. Regardless, a psychic alarm draws the rest of the kids to the place within several minutes.

The key to this encounter is to lead into the next stage. A clue found in the room will direct the Gumshoes to Manny's Meat Packing, an old, abandoned slaughterhouse on the outskirts of town. Perhaps they find an old set of overalls among the kids' junk emblazoned with the company logo. Possibly they find a notepad printed with the logo, or a mechanical pencil stamped with it. Perhaps a number of these things are present, drawing a strong connection. Either way, there's some connection between these children and the old Manny's Meat Packing abattoir.

ACT TWO: MANNY'S MEAT PACKING

Manny's Meat Packing is an old abattoir located several miles outside of town in the middle of nowhere. It was shut down years ago after a scandal involving tainted meat coming out of the facility. GM's can feel free to invent details of the scandal if they like, but in the end it's a red herring—the current use of the packing plant has nothing to do with the reason it shut down. It's just a convenience for the villain of the piece.

The Meat Packing plant is the scene of a large battle. The PCs, as they approach, note a number of huge, hairy monstrosities in the fenced-in yard where cattle would've once been kept. Any sort of background or proficiency in Wisdom (animal handling) or Intelligence (nature) allows a DC 10 to denote that not only are these not natural creatures (that much is evident just from seeing them) but that they appear to be gigantic, mutated weasels and wolverines. The monstrosities have slavering fangs, nasty claws and eyes that actually glow red. As the PCs get near, the gates are inexplicably flung open and the monsters attack!

MUTANT WEASEL (*Unaligned Medium beast*) HP 9 (HD 2d8), AC 13, Spd 40 ft. Perception 13 (+3), Stealth +5. Str 11 Dex 16 Con 10 Int 4 Wis 12 Cha 5. Bite +5 (1d4+3). SA Darkvision 60ft, Keen Hearing and Smell (advantage on perception with smell and sound). Challenge 1/8 (25 XP).

MUTANT WOLVERINE (*Unaligned Medium beast*) HP 13 (HD 2d8+4), AC 12, Spd 30 ft., 10 ft. (burrow). Perception 11 (+1). Str 17 Dex 10 Con 16 Int 3 Wis 7 Cha 5. Multiattack (bite and claws), Bite +5 (1d6+3), Claws +5 (2d4+3). SA Darkvision 30ft, Keen Smell (advantage on perception with smell), Wounded Rage (1/long rest; when reduced to 0 hp, regain 1d8 hp and gains advantage on all attacks and +2 damage). Challenge 1/2 (100 XP).

It is likely the PCs will go for their guns when the beasts attack; if they do so, they will certainly announce their presence—then again, the fact that these creatures were unleashed upon them would seem to indicate that whoever is inside is already aware.

Inside, the PCs will find themselves once more beset, this time by 4 guards tasked with defending the work done within. These guards are armed and the remote location ensures that no authorities will come running when a fire-fight erupts. Even worse, however, there are Nightmare Children present who are being used to aid and augment the defenses, and the gunmen aren't above using them as human shields.

GUARDS (*NE Medium humanoid (human)*) HP 16 (HD 3d8 + 3), AC 12, Spd 30 ft. Perception 10 (+0), Stealth +3. Str 11 Dex 12 Con 12 Int 10 Wis 10 Cha 10. Luger pistol +3 (1d10+1, ROF 3) or Knife +3 (1d4+1). Challenge 1/8 (25 XP).

Besides the guards, there are a number of scientists working hard on the serums being used to mutate and control the children and the animals. The scientists are not given combat statistics as they're not fighters and they're more likely to run or surrender than they are to battle. Startlingly, though, if the characters try to question them, the scientists scream in agony, drop to their knees, clutch their heads, and die with blood running from their eyes, ears, nose and mouth as the veins bulge across their faces. The Nightmare Man has forced them to inject a modified version of the psychic serum into themselves, which enables it to "punish" those who are disloyal.

THE CHIMERA CONNECTION

Players who have been through the Ashton and the Augments scenario will be familiar with the concept of mutant animals as well as the augment serum. If the characters examine the serum they find within the slaughterhouse and succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (medicine) check, they determine the chemicals used are designed to accelerate rapid growth and mutation, but will appear to be a derivative of the same chemicals used in that scenario, only further enhanced by supernatural manipulation and highly refined. This could indicate either that Chimera is still active, or someone else has gotten hold of their work. Are they somehow in league with the Aboleth? Has the Aboleth kidnapped one of their scientists and divined the secrets of the augment serum as a result?

The details are left to the GM to determine. Regardless, it is intended that this is a further refinement of the same serum, details of which are covered in the Ashton and the Augments adventure. Those GMs who don't own that scenario can simply invent the effects of the serum, which grants enhanced size, strength, natural weapons and possibly supernatural abilities, and can ignore the connections to Chimera.

ONTO THE FINAL STAGE...

Within the abattoir is evidence of horrific experiments in various stages, as well as a quantity of the mutagen serum that turned the animals into giant, raving monsters. There seems to be several different varieties of the serum there, and PCs may theorize that some of it is intended for animals, and some for humans, though the various different kinds would have to be tested to divine their exact effects, and testing it could be quite dangerous.

They may also theorize that the serum could have been used to alter the children, and they would be right—one of the varieties, a purplish fluid, is used to dose children who are kidnapped or guided to the "god", which opens up their psychic capabilities, allowing them to join the network, boost their powers and control them. The only way to tell this, however, would be to test it, or a Mentalist or Occultist with the Psychometry (i.e., Object Reading) ability (**Amazing Adventures 5E** core Rulebook) could use their power to work it out.

There are important discoveries to be made here, either by interrogating surviving gunmen or searching their bodies. The characters can discover the existence of a "safe word" that when spoken, severs the connection between the children and the Web, rendering them harmless.

The second is the location of the "Dark God" worshipped by the cult. The gunmen here are hired hands—not true believers—and while they are doing their jobs, they're not looking to die. They won't fight to the death, and at least one may have overheard the scientists or children mention rumors of an old farm out on Route 50 where this whole thing began. None of the guards has been to the farm, and they don't know what's there, save that there's some sort of "god" that the scientists and children have been trained to worship. The children have also talked about (and threatened the gunmen with) "The Caretakers," but nobody has seen one of these and lived to talk about it.

If the players wonder or ask why the gunmen haven't died like the scientists, they will reveal that the serum used on the scientists was rare and experimental, and there were only limited quantities. As hired guns, the guards weren't considered necessary to the operation at this stage.

ACT THREE: THE FARM

The climax of the adventure takes place at an abandoned farm on Route 50, several miles outside the city. It is here that the horrific "Nightmare Man," the aboleth, holds court and makes its plans. In addition to the remainder of the Nightmare Children (at least a dozen beyond those that the PCs have already faced, the aboleth has driven mad and enslaved a number of degenerate country folk, who will defend it to the death using items like shotguns, pitchforks, big knives and the like.

Finally, in order to get to the aboleth, who resides in a deep, small lake in the forest behind the farmhouse, the characters will need to face the Caretakers, the four Cthulhuim that act as its agents on the surface world.

THE FARMHOUSE

The farmhouse itself is ramshackle and in disrepair, but solidly constructed of stone and dating back about 60 years to the early Victorian era. The lower level of the old farmhouse consists of a sitting room/parlor, a kitchen, dining room, formal living room and office. Upstairs, the home consists of six bedrooms—a master bedroom approximately 15 x 10 in size, and five other bedrooms all about 10 x 10. Toiletries would be handled via chamber pots and an outhouse. The basement (if there is one; depending on where exactly the GM decides to set this scenario, homes may not have basements) is a plain coal room and root cellar. The attic, likewise, is a fully-realized floor, but unfinished. The roof has partially caved in,



leaving it open to the sky and elements, but once the floor was subdivided into what could've been four rooms, or three rooms and an attic cistern for what may have been the beginnings of a running water system that was never completed.

The PCs could encounter any sort of monstrosities here, from the remaining Nightmare Children (who share bedrooms—2 to 4 per room) to giant rodents (use the stats for weasels and vary the descriptions from rabbits to rats to raccoons) which the children treat as pets but which will attack anyone not in the psychic web, to any number of degenerate insane locals acting as cooks and babysitters for the children. One or two of the Caretakers may be found here—only a truly cruel GM would have the heroes battle all four Spawn and the aboleth at once.

THE GOAL

The key to this adventure is to free the children (preferably using the trigger phrase the PCs learned in Act Two) and destroy the aboleth and the threat it presents to the world at large. The trick for the characters is finding the aboleth, which isn't in the house. It's possible to get this information from the children or from one of the deranged locals, who may rant and rave about the Nightmare Man in the lake. The locals, for their part, are completely mad and beyond saving, and could make for convenient scapegoats on which to hang the entire kidnapping conspiracy. The children, once released from the web, are confused and terrified and don't remember anything but awful nightmare images of indescribable monsters.

PSYCHICS AND THE WEB

The psychic web of control is at its strongest here and will have a distinct and negative effect on psychic characters, who feel disoriented and confused the entire time. A character with psionic powers must succeed at a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or suffer disadvantage to activate psionic powers and to psychic attack rolls because of the draw of the web. A character that fails this save can repeat it every hour, ending the effect on themselves with a success. If a psychic character rolls a natural "1" on their initial saving throw, they are temporarily overcome by the web. Roll a d6; on a 1-3, they are stunned and unable to act, and on a 4-6 they become charmed and fall under the control of the Nightmare Man; each round thereafter they can attempt a DC 15 Charisma saving throw to break free and regain their own free will, though they remain stunned for 1 minute.

Each time the party eliminates one of the Caretakers, any character with psionic powers can attempt the DC 15 Charisma saving throw again, removing the disadvantage to using their powers with a success.

SEEKING THE NIGHTMARE MAN

As the heroes travel into the darkened forest towards the lake, they will be set upon by more deranged villagers and the rest of the Caretakers, pulling out all the stops to prevent them from posing a danger to the god.

CRAZED TOWNSFOLK (CE Medium humanoid (human) HP 5 (HD 1d8 + 1), AC 10, Spd 30 ft. Perception 9 (-1), Stealth +3. Str 12 Dex 11 Con 13 Int 10 Wis 9 Cha 10. Shotgun +3 (1d8 +1) or Knife (or other improvised weapon) +3 (1d4+1). Immune to charmed and frightened. Challenge 1/8 (25 XP).

CTHULHUIM, "CARETAKERS" (CE Medium aberration) HP 44 (HD 8d8+8), AC 14, Spd 30 ft. Perception 14 (+4). Str 16 Dex 13 Con 13 Int 17 Wis 14 Cha 4. Multiattack (2 tentacles, 1 ceremonial knife), Tentacle +5 (1d6+3 bludgeon plus 1d4 piercing; target grappled, escape DC 11, grappled creature must make DC 11 Con save or suffer disadvantage on escape rolls until free), Ceremonial Knife +5 (1d4+3). SA Darkvision 60 ft., Telepathy 120 ft., Immune to charmed, frightened, poisoned, Resistant to poison. Consume (grappled creature takes 2d4 piercing at start of each round, reduce hp max by equal amount, dead and animated as zombie at 0 hp), Psionics, Basic: Empathic Transmission (CHA), Obfuscation (CHA), Psychic Defense (WIS), Advanced: Mind Control (CHA), Biokinetic Harm (WIS). Challenge 4 (1,100 XP).

Eventually, the heroes arrive at a deep, murky pond where the sense of power and madness hangs heavy in the air. Within the murky waters, they may be able to just barely see a hulking monstrosity shimmering at the bottom of the pool. A voice rings out in their minds, overwhelming their senses.

“Welcome, travelers,” it says. “You have done well, breaking down my network, small and new as it was. I congratulate you and offer a choice. Open your minds to me and become my agents in this world. Together you will help me usher in a new age of enlightenment and truth. Your other option is oblivion.”

The voice itself is sanity-blasting. If you are using the Basic Madness rules, each character must succeed at a DC 17 Wisdom or Charisma saving throw (character’s choice). A character that fails this save suffers an immediate bout of short-term madness. If you use the Advanced Sanity rules, each character must make a SAN check with disadvantage to the tens die. The SAN loss incurred is 1d8 with a successful check or 1d10 with a failed check. When the characters inevitably refuse the offer, let the final battle begin. The problem is that the aboleth, despite its size, is deep in a murky pool, making it almost impossible to target with physical attacks; gunfire attacks suffer disadvantage, while other physical attacks are impossible without diving into the pool...which carries its own challenges.

In the end, however, the only way to resolve this scenario is to destroy the aboleth. Players may come up with all sorts of clever means to do so, and GMs are encouraged to allow them to try out any unique and original strategy they might have. Whatever the outcome, just make it dramatic and deadly. The aboleth is well and truly trapped on this plane of existence and thus will go to great lengths to ensure its own survival, targeting PCs to control them and turn them against their companions, even trying to transfer its own consciousness from its body to another.

If the players prove adept at damaging it in the water, the aboleth pulls itself out of the lake and attacks from land, combining its formidable psionic abilities with its physical attacks.

ABOLETH (LE Large aberration) HP 135 (18d10+36), AC 17, Spd 10 ft., 40 ft. (swim). Perception 20 (+10). Str 21 Dex 9 Con 15 Int 18 Wis 15 Cha 18. SV Con +6, Int +8, Wis +6. Multiattack (3 tentacles), Tentacle +9 (10 ft. reach, 2d6+5 plus DC 14 Con save or creature becomes unable to heal unless underwater after 1 minute and can only be healed by 6th-level healing magic or better), Tail +6 (10 ft. reach, 3d6+5), Enslave (3/day) (DC 14 Wis save or charmed until aboleth dies. Charmed targets communicate telepathically and obey commands. New save with damage or 1 mile away). SA Amphibious; Mucous Cloud (DC 14 Con save or can only breathe underwater for 1d4 hours); Probing Telepathy (knows creature’s greatest desires if communicates telepathically). Psionic Powers: Combat Awareness, Empathic Transmission, Mesmerism, Psychic Defense, Telekinesis, Biokinetic Harm, Telekinetic Defense and Telemagry. Legendary Actions (3): Wisdom (Perception) check, Tail attack, Psychic drain (costs 2 actions; one charmed creature, 3d6 psychic and aboleth heals the same). Challenge 10 (5,900 XP).



THE PSIONIC ABOLETH

The aboleth presented here is subtly different from the one presented in the *Amazing Adventures* core rulebook. It is designed to take advantage of the Mentalist and Psionics rules in *Amazing Adventures*, delivering a psionic version of this iconic monster, which has always been conceived as such.

The psionic aboleth has access to 5 Basic and 3 Advanced powers. They do not need to meet the normal prerequisites for advanced powers. The exact powers vary by individual but a typical aboleth might have Combat Awareness, Empathic Transmission, Mesmerism, Psychic Defense, Telekinesis, Biokinetic Harm, and Telekinetic Defense and Telemagry. They are also, of course, proficient with the Psionics skill and gain advantage on all Psionics checks.

ACT FOUR: RESOLUTION

After the defeat of the aboleth, all that is left to do is deliver the children home and let the authorities clean up the mess. For once, the PCs are hailed as heroes and appear to get their just desserts, possibly even being awarded the key to the city for uncovering the degenerate cult and rescuing the kids.

Of course, if any of the children die in the process, the PCs have to determine their next step, as the city won’t look kindly upon the slaughter of innocents by their hand.

Either way, as the PCs go to sleep, they are plagued by dreams of tentacled horrors from beyond the pale in the back alleys and dark places of the world, and a darkness spreading over all the Earth, as voices whisper to them in strange and alien tongues...

NEW MONSTERS

BRIGIT, HALF-DEMON

Medium fiend, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS: 16

HIT POINTS: 60 (11d8 + 11)

SPEED: 30 ft.

STR:	DEX:	CON:	INT:	WIS:	CHA:
11	16	12	17	18	16

SKILLS: Deception +6, Insight +7, Perception +7, Stealth +6

SAVES: INT +6, WIS +7

CONDITION IMMUNITIES: Poisoned

DAMAGE RESISTANCE: Cold, Fire, Lightning, Poison; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical or Nonsilvered Attacks

SENSES: Truesight 60 ft., Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 17

LANGUAGES: Abyssal, Common

CHALLENGE: 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Qualities

- **Fiendish Blessing:** Bridget's AC includes her Charisma bonus.
- **Magic Resistance:** Brigit has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
- **Spell Specialization:** Brigit can cast charm person once per day without expending a spell slot. This ability recharges after a long rest.
- **Spellcasting:** Brigit is an 8th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following Arcanist spells prepared:
 - **Cantrips (At Will):** chill touch, mage hand, minor illusion, poison spray
 - 1st level (4 slots): charm person, mage armor, magic missile
 - 2nd level (3 slots): darkness, hold person, suggestion
 - 3rd level (3 slots): animate dead, bestow curse
 - 4th level (2 slots): black tentacles
- **Summon Spawn Of Shub-Niggurath (1/Day):** Brigit can summon up to six lesser spawn of Shub-Niggurath and one greater spawn of Shub-Niggurath. These summoned creatures remain for up to 1 hour, after which they devolve back into the decayed matter from which they arose. The spawn obey Brigit's commands.
- **Sunlight Sensitivity:** While in sunlight, Brigit has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

- **Multiattack:** Brigit makes two claw attacks.
- **Claw:** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

NEW MONSTER: CTHULHUIM

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS: 14 (Natural Armor)

HIT POINTS: 44 (8d8 + 8)

SPEED: 30 ft.

STR:	DEX:	CON:	INT:	WIS:	CHA:
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)

SKILLS: Perception +4

CONDITION IMMUNITIES: Charmed, Frightened, Poisoned

DAMAGE RESISTANCE: Poison

SENSES: Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES: Common, Deep Speech, Telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE: 4 (1,100 XP)

Special Qualities

- **Consume:** A creature that starts its turn grappled by one or more of the cthulhuim's tentacles automatically takes 5 (2d4) piercing damage and has their hit point maximum reduced by an equal amount. If a creature falls to 0 hit points as a result of this damage, it dies and immediately rises as a zombie controlled by the cthulhuim.
- **Psionics:** The cthulhuim is an 11th-level Mentalist. The cthulhuim has the following psionic powers, including three basic and two advanced powers:
 - **Basic:** Empathic Transmission (CHA), Obfuscation (CHA), Psychic Defense (WIS)
 - **Advanced:** Mind Control (CHA), Biokinetic Harm (WIS)

Actions

- **Multiattack:** The cthulhuim makes two burrowing tentacle attacks and one ceremonial knife attack.
- **Burrowing Tentacle:** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) piercing damage. In addition, the target becomes grappled (escape DC 11). The grappled creature must succeed at a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become wracked with pain. A creature that fails this saving throw suffers disadvantage on its escape checks. A grappled creature can attempt another Constitution save at the start of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a success.
- **Ceremonial Knife:** Melee Weapon Attack: +5, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Description

These foul creatures are the servants and children of the high priest of the Old Ones, the slumbering Cthulhu. Their numbers, thankfully, are small with fewer than 100 left in the world. They generally inhabit the dark and dank places of the earth, where moisture is plentiful, and only emerge when the opportunity arises to move the world towards a new age of darkness when their father and master rules over the world once more with chaos and madness. They sometimes pledge their service to very powerful creatures of the Deeper Dark, so long as it serves their greater goal. They love nothing more than to consume minds and spread madness and the worship of their dark gods across the world.

In appearance the Cthulhuim resemble tall, slender and vaguely humanoid creatures with clawed hands and a head which appears to be a gigantic brain with two enormous, glowing, pupil-less green eyes and eight writhing squid-like tentacles hanging from the bottom. They dress in robes of purple, green and sickly yellow covered with arcane symbols which seem to constantly shift and undulate, unidentifiable in nature and sanity-blasting to behold.

The Cthulhuim prefer not to engage in direct hand-to-hand combat, instead choosing to attack with their formidable psionic abilities. When the creatures are forced into melee combat, they attack with large ceremonial knives and their tentacles.

THE RIPPER DEMON (FULL STATS)

THE RIPPER DEMON

Large fiend, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 90 (12d10 + 24)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

SKILLS Perception +4

SENSES Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

DAMAGE RESISTANCES Cold, Fire, Lighting; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonsilvered or Nonmagical Attacks

CONDITION IMMUNITIES Charmed, Frightened

LANGUAGES Abyssal, Common

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Special Qualities

- **Magic Resistance:** The ripper demon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
- **Athamé Vulnerability:** The ripper demon is vulnerable to the cursed athamé that holds its essence. This magic blade, a long, kris-bladed ceremonial dagger, is exceptionally sharp and well balanced and normal-

ly inflicts 1d6 slashing damage. When used against the demon (while it is in corporeal form), the dagger deals 2d6 weapon damage (plus any ability bonus of the wielder), and in addition, the ripper demon suffers triple damage. Finally, attacks against the demon with this athame gain advantage.

Killing the ripper demon with the athamé while in its manifest form banishes it for at least 100 years and the athamé itself becomes inert for the ensuing century, displaying no magical properties other than remaining indestructible.

- **Innate Spellcasting:** The ripper demon's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:
 - **AT WILL:** detect thoughts, hideous laughter
 - **3/Day Each:** confusion, create undead, dominate person, thief's dream
 - **1/Day Each:** bestow curse

Actions

- **Multiattack:** The Ripper demon makes two claw attacks.
- **Claw:** Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage. In addition, the target creature must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or have its hit point maximum reduced by an equal amount. The hit point maximum reduction can be restored after a long rest or by means of a greater restoration spell.

If the target creature's hit points fall to 0, it immediately dies and the ripper demon steals the victim's soul to fuel its unholy powers. The corpse animates 1 hour later as a zombie fully under the ripper demon's control. The victim can thereafter only be restored to life by means of a wish or similar powerful magic. If the cursed athame is used to slay the ripper demon, however, all stolen souls are released. This does not restore the dead to life, but it does allow them to be returned to life with spells such as raise dead or revivify.

- **Summoning (1/Day):** The ripper demon summons 1d3 Hell hounds or 1d2 servitor demons (see above for the servitor demon's statistics). Summoned creatures remain for up to 1 hour and the ripper demon can dismiss them as a bonus action.

The ripper demon's only goal, when manifest, is to conduct wholesale slaughter and destruction. It will summon hell hounds, raise the dead and even manifest demons to do its bidding, while wading into battle with wanton glee.

Description

A servant of the Great Old Ones who reside in the Deeper Dark, in the Spaces Between Spaces, and a manifes-

tation of the Red God Ornduhl, the Ripper Demon is a herald of their coming return. Its goal is to spread pain and suffering, and it has a special hatred for women. It has appeared many times throughout history, possessing a host and engaging in serial murders, usually driven towards those that its host has some sort of bias towards or against. This has changed recently, however, as the Ripper's previous host, Jack the Ripper, willingly accepted it and openly relished his work. The Ripper, as such, drew Jack into itself when it was defeated by a secret cabal of Rosicrucian sorcerers, and now is driven by Jack's own desires—to punish ladies of the night.

The ripper demon possesses its host through the cursed athamé dagger that has been around since time immemorial. Constructed of mysterious "Star Metal," the original forging of the dagger is unknown and it is indestructible by any means known to man. Thus, it passes down from age to age, cropping up when the time is right, and the demon sets about its grisly work. Prophecy states that when it has collected enough souls, the end times will begin. Of course, it is best able to do this through wholesale mass slaughter, so its usual goal is to manifest physically, which it must do through a complex ritual of serial murders followed by the sacrificing of its host.

The ripper demon's appearance is that of a 12' tall, vaguely humanoid creature which appears to be made largely of shadow. Its general shape suggests archaic evening dress—a top hat, traveling cape and the like, though its limbs are long, gangly and skeletal, its clawed, multi-jointed fingers nearly as long as its very forearms. Its eyes are two pits with two pinpoints of sickly yellow light radiating from deep within, and its mouth hangs low, its jaw unhinged so as to swallow the world whole.

The ripper demon can possess the current owner of the cursed athamé, provided that she is a Chosen One, born every 50 years with a certain birthmark. It begins at any time after the victim comes into ownership of the dagger, with a series of horrible nightmares from which the victim cannot awaken. Each night the victim must make a Charisma-based saving throw to ward off the psychic attacks; each night that the victim fails, they take the athamé and go out to kill in the ripper's name. The next morning, they awaken remembering only shadowy nightmarish images. When the victim has committed enough murders, the demon can cause them to perform the ritual to sacrifice themselves and manifest. The exact number of murders required varies by victim and no occultist has been able to establish a hard pattern.

NEW SPELLS AND ABILITIES

NEW SPELLS

THIEF'S DREAM (ARCANIST 3)

3rd level Transmutation

CASTING TIME: 1 action

RANGE: 120 feet

COMPONENTS: V,S,M

DURATION: Instantaneous

With this spell you can move a small object that you can see in range, transforming it into a beam of light that projects into your hands and then re-forms. The object must weigh less than one pound and be small enough to hold in one hand. You can cast this spell on an item viewed remotely through a device such as a security camera as long as the item remains within range. You can cast this spell on an item viewed remotely through a device, such as a security camera, but doing so requires you to first succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (arcana) check because you are working off of a reproduced image rather than the item itself. A photograph or drawing is insufficient for this spell to function. You can use this spell to retrieve an item contained within an enclosure, but you must be able to see the item in its entirety (such as within a glass display case).

You can also use this spell to project an item from your hands and have it reappear in a location you can see, including inside a see-through container. Thus, you can replace an item within its housing when you've finished with it.

BANISH THE RIPPER (SPECIAL RITUAL)

This special ritual exorcises the ripper demon, driving it from a victim it has possessed. It is special in that any Arcanist or Occultist of any level can attempt the ritual, though obviously the more powerful the caster, the more effective the spell will be. The spell requires the burning of incense and the scattering of rare herbs while you chant, facing the demon in a battle of wills. You can only perform free actions each round while conducting this ritual.

Over a series of rounds, you expend spells slots and focus your energy, making DC 20 Intelligence (arcana) check. Each level of spell slot expended adds +1 to this check, to a maximum of +9 for a 9th-level spell slot. The ripper demon must then succeed at a Charisma save against your spell save DC.

The results each round depend on the results:

- If you both fail your rolls, nothing changes and the contest continues unchanged.
- If you succeed at your roll and the demon fails, the DC of the next Arcana checks decreases by 2.

- If you both succeed at your checks, the DC of the next check decreases by 1 and you suffer 7 (2d6) psychic damage from the demon's dark energy.
- If you fail and the demon succeeds, you suffer 14 (4d6) psychic damage.

To win the contest and exorcise the demon, you must whittle the DC of the check down to zero. Failure usually means your death.

It is possible for multiple casters to engage in battle together, pooling their resources to combat the demon. In this case, one caster is chosen as the "lead," and makes the check, while others contribute spell slots to the cause. Victory reduces the DC by only 1 per successful check rather than 2, and failure means all casters suffer the

damage equally. However, with multiple casters contributing spell slots to the check, victory is also more likely.

OCCULT LIBRARY

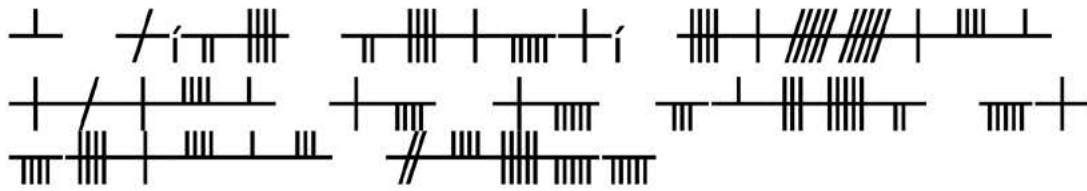
Note: Should the characters acquire regular, unrestricted access to a good occult library, they gain benefits when doing arcane or occult research. Having access to an occult library provides +1 to any checks related to esoteric, mystical, or occult lore and research, such as with Intelligence (arcana) or (forbidden lore) checks. As the character improves in experience, they find new information and add new books to the library, increasing this bonus. At 5th level the research bonus increases to +2, and at 10th level, grants advantage on all such checks when the library's resources are used.

APPENDIX: HANDOUTS FOR THE FEAST OF BLACK ANNIS

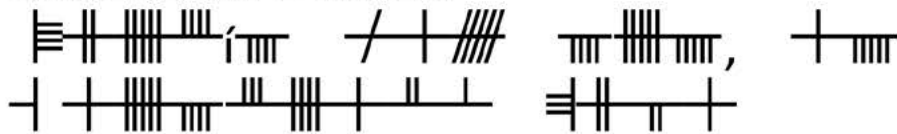
Honored Mother,

Fear not the safety of your child. She goes to a greater purpose than you can ever imagine. The Mother of Life and Death will honor your great sacrifice when she returns to bless and purify this world. You will receive a place of honor by her holy side in return for the child you lose this night. Thank you, and may the Goddess bless you in all that you do.

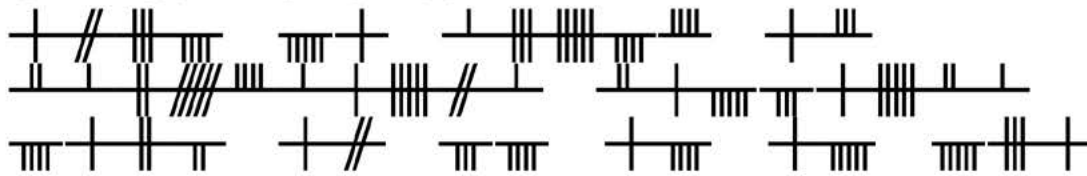
CRIME SCENE 1 RUNES:



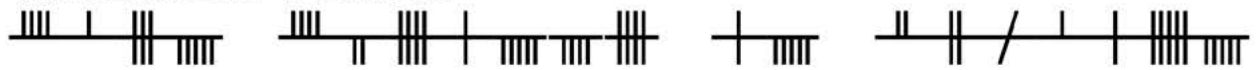
CRIME SCENE 2 RUNES:



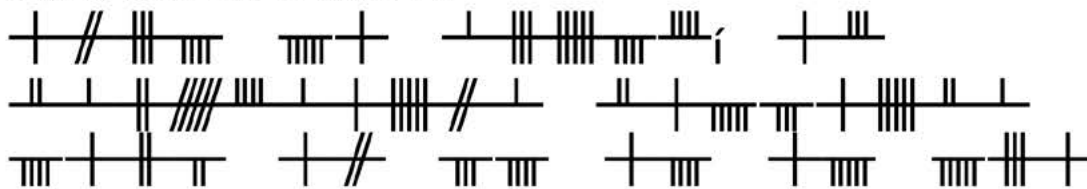
CRIME SCENE 3 RUNES:



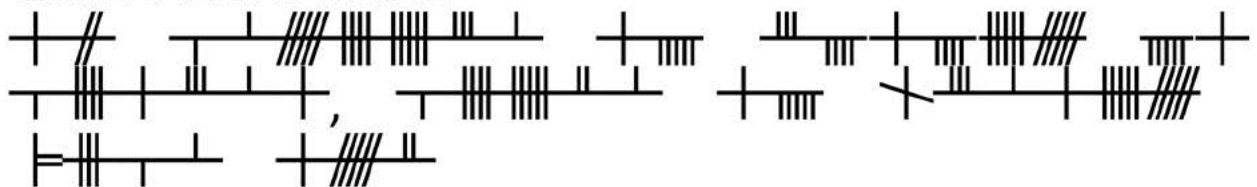
CRIME SCENE 4 RUNES:



CRIME SCENE 5 RUNES:



CRIME SCENE 6 RUNES:



CRIME SCENE 1 RUNES:

Her thousand children spring forth
From the blood of the Seven.

CRIME SCENE 2 RUNES:

A fortnight hence the Baptism of Blood

CRIME SCENE 3 RUNES:

And from the darkened Waters
Life shall grow anew.

CRIME SCENE 4 RUNES:

To cleanse the world

CRIME SCENE 5 RUNES:

The Fire will leap forth
From the Second Mouth of the Beast

CRIME SCENE 6 RUNES:

At the birth of the season of life
The Black Mother will rise

Soon shall the forces of the Outer Dark be upon me. I am all that remains of my intrepid band of warriors, for in our shortsightedness we became complacent, convinced that the gates to the Beyond had been forever shackled and barred. Even when we sensed a new rise of mystical energy did we fail to take proper precautions. So long as we guarded the portal, we knew that our safety, and the safety of the region, would be secured.

What fools we were not to see.

The black-hearted Prince of Wallachia, the dark Impaler, called together the blackest magicians in Europe to drive us from his forests. In their black visions, they uncovered something none of us in our wildest nightmares would've imagined, but that makes perfect, terrifying sense.

The convergence is not limited to one spot. Hell springs forth from elsewhere, now; the Beast has a second mouth.

The demons came at us in the night, an army that even the chosen one and her intrepid band of Knights Templar could not ward away. They came from the rear, having spilled forth from the second Mouth of the Beast even as we guarded the seal upon the first.

The battle quickly became a slaughter.

I am all that remains.

But not for long. I hide this tome in the walls of a ruined castle in the hope that some future generation will find and remember our valiant struggle, and that our experiences may save others from the same fate.

Adair, Keeper of Law and Wisdom
Month of Cuithe
1532, Gregorian Calendar

October 20

I swear, it's so easy it's criminal. That's funny when I think about it because, you know, it kind of is criminal. But they all just bow to my every whim. Soon I'll run this organization, and then they'll all see the glory of Annis.

Mother be praised,

Brigit

November 30

It's happened. I'm the High Priestess, now, and all the boys in the fraternity are falling over themselves for my attention.

I own them.

They'll make wonderful food for the Goddess when she arises.

But first, the ritual. I'll need seven children. Convincing the dupes to kidnap them for me won't be a problem. A few sexual favors should do the trick.

Goddess be praised

Brigit

January 18

The police are involved. I guess I should've expected that would happen, what with bits of the prophecy needing to be left at each site. The boys were so nice to hand over pints of their blood every few weeks to make that happen.

It's no matter. Soon we'll have the seven we need, and their blood will baptize the Bower so that Black Annis can be free to cleanse this world of the filth of men.

February 15

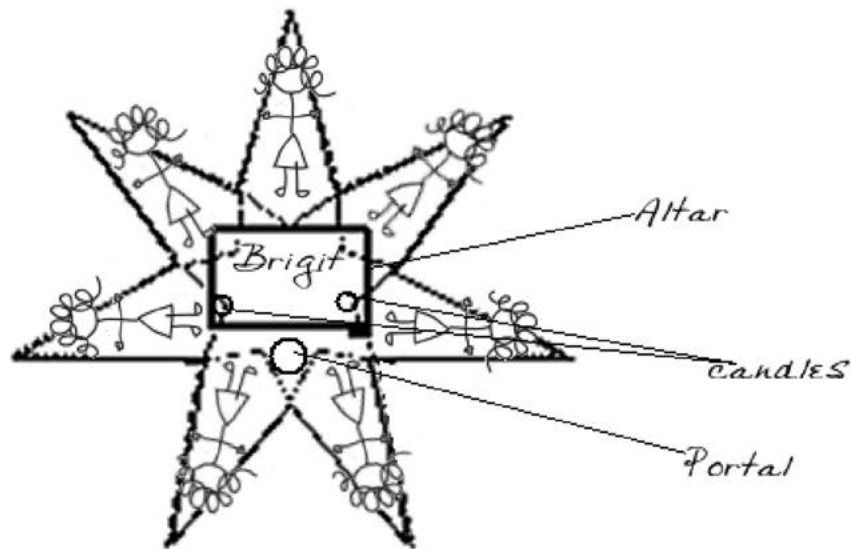
Police are covered. I've managed to use my special gifts to seduce some of the Sisterhood assassins to assist me. With enough conditioning, they'll be as devout as I myself am.

And I've been working on the backup plan. If this falls through, Annis can always rise through me.

It has to be me. No one else is worthy. I am worthy. The Goddess is in me already.

I will be the Goddess.

Ritual notes:



1. Draw strength from the Mother through the portal.
2. Kill the goat and bathe in blood. Begin the recitation of the Rites of Annis.
3. Sacrifice the offerings, one by one.
4. Collect their blood in the sacred vessel.
5. Backup: If ritual interrupted, summon Sisters from Assassins. Their blood will baptize me that I can begin the Ascension when the time is right. Then, enlarge portal and leap through to the Sacred Place, where the children's blood I have already harvested hides beneath the water. Drink blood to sanctify the baptism.

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