LOVECRAFTESQUE
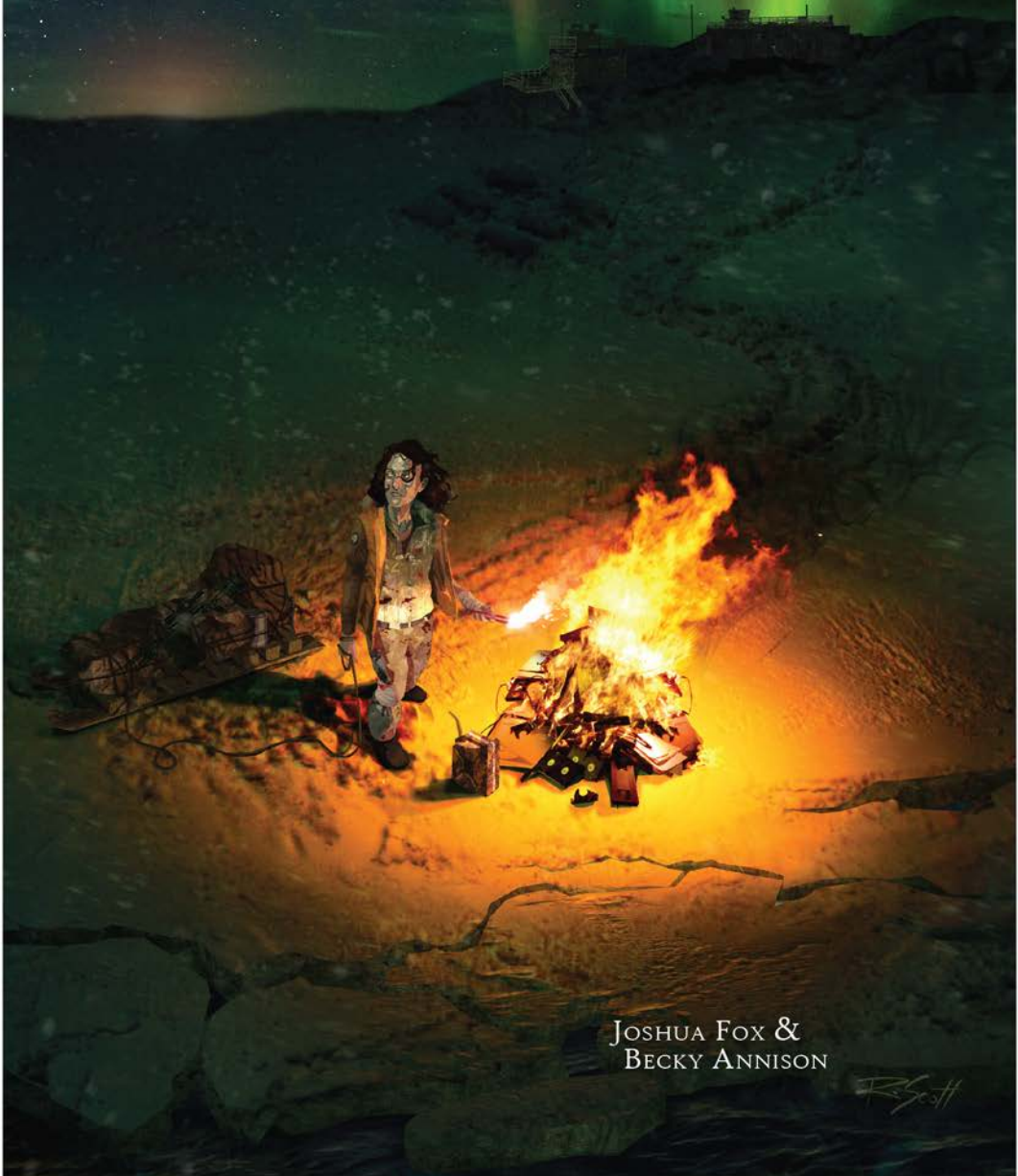
A storytelling game of brooding cosmic horror.

JOSHUA FOX &
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LOVECRAFTESQUE

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Credit where it's due: We created this game after we read Graham Walmsley's book *Stealing Cthulhu*. If you haven't read it, we recommend it – it provides a clear and entertaining look at the structure of Lovecraft's stories for roleplayers to use in their games. And indeed, we have unashamedly used those ideas in this game. Particular credit is due to Graham for the concepts of Narrative Distance, the Descent (which we have reworked into the *Journey into Darkness*), and the *Final Horror*. These are his ideas, which true to the title of his book we have stolen and turned into game mechanics. So if you enjoy this game – you'll probably enjoy *Stealing Cthulhu*.

CREDITS

DEDICATED TO RAPHAEL.

"I don't want these dreams."

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SCENARIOS & OTHER RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME

"He was in the changeless legend-haunted city of Arkham, with its clustering gambrel roofs that sway and sag over attics where witches hid from the King's men in the dark olden days of the Province." H.P. Lovecraft *'Dreams in the Witch House'*

Everyday human life is a fragile bubble, easily pierced by exposure to the truth: a universe that is bleak, inhuman and horrific. Horrors lurk in the darkness of space, beneath the ocean or in remote mountains. The monstrous inhabitants of ancient civilisations wait to return to dominance. Hidden alien influences infect society. Sorcerers call forth abominations with arcane lore. Against such terrors, there is no hope. This is where **Lovecraftesque** begins and ends.

Lovecraftesque is a storytelling game where you create a slow-building tale of cosmic horror. Everyone contributes to the story, sharing the sense of suspense and mystery that comes from no one person knowing what's really going on. You take turns as *Narrator*, introducing *Clues* that hint at the true horror, one per scene. To provide direction and coherence to the story, after each scene you *Leap to Conclusions* based on the *Clues*, theorising about the true horror and using your theories to guide your further contributions to the story. Your friends will also contribute *Clues*, so you'll have to adjust your ideas each scene to take account of what they narrated.

You'll also take turns playing the *Witness*, the character who will provide the human perspective in the story. It is the *Witness* who will uncover the *Clues*, and who will ultimately encounter the true horror at the heart of the story. As well as describing the *Witness's* actions and speaking their words, you'll narrate their fears and rationalisations, helping to frame the horror.

At the end of the story, the *Witness* will make a literal or figurative *Journey into Darkness* that culminates in a direct encounter with the *Final Horror*. All of you have contributed *Clues*, but only one of you will get to narrate the climactic scene and decide what the true horror is.

Confine borings to exposed rock, except where Pabodie's apparatus permits.

WHERE ARE ALL THE MI-GO?

Lovecraftesque gives you the tools you need to tell a story of creeping, cosmic horror in the vein of an H.P. Lovecraft story. But the aim is not to copy Lovecraft's bestiary. There won't be any Mi-Go or Deep Ones. Instead, you'll create your own monsters and other horrors.

THE TEACHING GUIDE

Learning a game for the first time can be hard work. At least one of you will need to have read these rules from cover to cover, but the rest of you probably won't want to do that. To avoid one person explaining all the rules, at the end of this book (page 154) there is a teaching guide. The guide comes with instructions on when to read it out, and who should read it. Use the teaching guide whenever at least one of you is playing for the first time, or when you just want a refresh.

THE CUE CARDS

These are optional components of the game, but very helpful. The *Cue Cards* (page 167) provide quick reference material on each of the three roles, and act as a handy marker of who is currently occupying which role.

Incredible mirages reminiscent of ancient castles seen again today. Result of some sort of atmospheric effect?

Am struggling to sleep. Intermittent piping, almost sentient-seeming, every time I drift off. Sound gives me chills every time I hear it. Impossible to ignore! Evidently a result of wind gusts racing through the peaks.

—the lavas that restlessly roll /
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek /
In the ultimate climes of the pole— /
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek /
In the realms of the boreal pole.

FACILITATOR

You should have one person whose job is to know the rules and make sure they're being followed (both in letter and in spirit). Since you're reading this rulebook, that's probably you.

As facilitator you should take the time to:

- go through the teaching guide, making sure the text is read out by the appropriate person at the right time, and answer any rules questions that come up;
- remind the *Narrator* of what the *Scene Requirements* are at the beginning of each scene (and that they have to make them happen!); and
- as needed, prompt the *Witness* to speak their fears and rationalisations, the *Watchers* to elaborate, and the *Narrator* to make space for those elaborations and ask questions.

YOU WILL NEED

- These rules
- A set of *Special Cards* (or print from this book, or use the optional no-cards rules on page 33)
- Index cards - 12 should be the upper limit on what you need
- Scrap paper and pencils

Also useful:

- A printed copy of the Teaching Guide and inspiration table
- A set of *Cue Cards* (or print them from this book – one for the *Witness*, one for the *Narrator* and as many *Watcher Cards* as you'll need for the remaining players)
- Printed copies of the setup sheet, progress tracker, *Clues* and *Conclusions* sheets and inspiration table available for download at http://blackarmada.com/lovecraftesque-downloads/

First view of Mt Nansen!

Rules of Play

SUMMARY OF THE RULES

SCENES AND *CLUES*

The game is divided into scenes. For most of the game, a scene will focus on a new *Clue* being revealed. New *Clues* shed new light on and/or provide new information about the horror. *Clues* are generally restricted to things which can be rationally explained; though you can use *Special Cards*, which you receive at the start of the game, to break this limitation. After each scene, everybody privately *Leaps to Conclusions* about the *Clues*, creating theories which bring them all together.

For more information about *Clues* and *Special Cards*, see pages 27 and 32.

THE THREE ROLES

There are three role types which are rotated amongst the players. Roles rotate clockwise at the end of a scene: that is, you pass your current role to your left and take on the role previously held by the person to your right. The roles are: *Narrator*, *Witness* and *Watcher*. If there are only two players, there are no *Watchers*.

- ⊙ The *Witness* plays the main character.
- ⊙ The *Narrator* describes the environment and other characters, and ensures the *Scene Requirements* are met – which usually means revealing a new *Clue*.
- ⊙ The *Watchers* support the *Narrator*, especially by embellishing their descriptions to add depth and texture.

The three roles are explained in more detail on pages 19 – 22.

Use of Pabodie's apparatus with dynamite reveals ice only 12 feet deep here. Rock is pre-Cambrian granite and sandstone, consistent with the bulk of the continent to the West.

Fossil deposits highly interesting. Ferns, seaweeds, trilobites, crinoids, molluscs (lingulae, gastropods). Have taken samples.

STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

The game is divided into three *Parts*:

Part One (five scenes long) and *Part Two* (up to three scenes long) work as described above, with one *Clue* introduced in every scene.

Part Three rapidly accelerates the story towards its conclusion. After an extended scene called the *Journey into Darkness*, in which the tension is ramped up, there is a climactic *Final Horror* scene in which the truth is revealed. After that a bleak *Epilogue* wraps things up.

CREEPING HORROR

Until the *Final Horror* scene it is against the rules to introduce:

⊙ anything blatantly supernatural;

⊙ any clear threat to the *Witness*; or

⊙ any direct evidence of violence.

Special Cards (see page 32) allow these rules to be broken.

Lake obsessed with triangular striated area found in the slate, though seems an unremarkable distortion common in metamorphic rock.

SETUP

Before you begin the story you collectively agree some basic things about it, so that you are all on the same page. This is the **only** part of the game where discussion is encouraged; the rest of the time you should leap forward with improvised narration without pausing to consult your fellow players. So use this time wisely!

The first thing you should do is agree on the broad tone of the game you want to play. The default tone of the game is in line with Lovecraft's stories: slow-building, brooding horror, with an emphasis on the *Witness* as a largely helpless observer of the horror. However the game's mechanics will work just as well with the following variants:

- ☉ Investigative horror, where the *Witness* is actively working to uncover the horror.
- ☉ Heroic horror, where the *Witness* may not be doomed, and could overcome the horror.
- ☉ Comedy horror, where the conventions of the genre are deliberately parodied.

Make sure everyone is clear on the tone you're aiming for before you start play, or it is very possible that some of you will be disappointed or frustrated by the others' contributions!

We have found it very helpful to use the **X-Card**, invented by John Stavropoulos, in games of a dark and horrific nature. It is not always possible to predict the material someone may find upsetting in a game. This technique allow players to indicate when some material in play has become overwhelming for them and is no longer fun. The group can then adjust the story and continue to play.

Draw an X on a piece of scrap paper and place it in easy reach of everyone. At any time during the game, someone can touch the paper to indicate that the recently introduced element is upsetting or overwhelming: without any discussion you remove that element from play and continue. There is a more detailed description of the technique here: http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg

While discussing tone, you should decide if there are any elements you wish to ban. Examples you should consider include:

- ⊙ Overt or allegorical racism
  (this is discussed in more detail on pages 60 and 65)
- ⊙ Sexism, ableism, other "isms"
- ⊙ Characters who go "mad" (discussed on pages 62 and 75)
- ⊙ Specific themes that one or more of you find distasteful or triggering, such as torture.
- ⊙ Specific elements that one or more of you are uninspired by, such as cultists.

Discussion of banned elements should be kept to clarification, so that everyone is clear on what is being banned; don't waste time debating whether things should be included. If one of you wants something out, leave it out. We want everyone at the gaming table to feel comfortable.

Next, agree the following and write on an index card:

- ⊙ **What era is the story is set in?** Lovecraftian roleplaying games are traditionally set in the 1890s or 1920s, but other historical periods are possible, as are modern or futuristic games.
- ⊙ **Where is the story set?** Pick a broad setting but also a primary location to focus on.
- ⊙ Each of you should create one **further location** (or two each, in a two-player game). These can be separate places, or more specific places within the main location you have already chosen.

Ideal locations are isolated, old, decaying, dark, unexplored, abandoned, full of strange things or with an unpleasant history – see the inspiration table for examples. Lovecraft often used isolated locations in order to isolate the main character e.g. in 'The Whisperer in Darkness', 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth' and 'The Haunter of the Dark', the actions are focused on small dilapidated towns; in *At the Mountains of Madness* the action is in Antarctica.

Lake remains obsessed with supposed footprint, despite probable pre-Cambrian age of rock. Insists on Northwest detour to look for further samples. Will not waste my time hunting phantoms.

In addition, agree and write on a separate index card:

- ⊙ **Who is the *Witness*?** What is their name and their role? Pick one character to be the focus of the story. You don't need the *Witness* to be particularly heroic (though they can be), but you probably want someone who is at least sympathetic and engaging.

- ⊙ Agree the **reason for the *Witness* being at the location** you have chosen (this could be something extremely simple like "she works there", or might be more involved).

- ⊙ Decide on one **personality trait** to act as an anchor for collectively playing the character.

- ⊙ Decide on a **source of strength** that keeps the *Witness* grounded and forces them to continue against all odds. This could be another personality trait e.g. rationality or optimism, or it could be something external – religion, family, and so on.

Witnesses in Lovecraft's work take on variety of forms, although they are often professionals such as Professor Armitage in 'The Dunwich Horror', Dr William Dyer in *At the Mountains of Madness*, or the Surveyor from Boston in 'The Color Out of Space'. However they can be as simple as the unnamed neighbour in 'Cool Air' or a student on a tour of New England in 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth'. Lovecraft's *Witnesses* are always male and white as a default. When creating your *Witness* consider challenging that default. I promise it will give you access to more ideas and fresh stories.

You'll get to develop the *Witness* further in play, so leave plenty of space to add to this.

The last step of setup is that someone needs to decide on is a situation and starting *Clue* for the first scene. This is not something for group discussion. If one of you has a strong idea for the situation and *Clue*, they should take the *Narrator* role in the first scene. If everyone is struggling for ideas, take a look at the inspiration table at the back of the book, which contains dozens of seeds you can use, or the scenarios, each of which includes many evocative *Clues*.

Lake persists with his foolhardy mission despite hazardous conditions. Claims to have discovered further samples "approximately" like the original. Wishful thinking and dangerous to boot.

Give the *Narrator Cue Card* to the person who will introduce the first *Clue*, hand the *Witness Cue Card* to the person on their left, and give any other players copies of the *Watcher Cue Cards*.

Finally, at http://blackarmada.com/lovecraftesque-downloads/ there is a sheet you can use to track the number of scenes you have played (5 squares for *Part 1*, 3 squares for *Part 2* and 16 squares for the *Journey into Darkness*). Tick them off as you complete the scenes, to help you keep track.

THE THREE ROLES

NARRATOR

In each scene, one person is the *Narrator*. The *Narrator* will do most of the creative work in leading the scene. That person has a number of responsibilities:

- ⊙ Introduce the scene. Say where it's happening, when it's happening, who is there and what is going on at the start.
- ⊙ Each scene has one or more *Requirements* that must be met during the scene (see page 40); the *Narrator* must make sure they are met. Mostly this involves revealing *Clues*.
- ⊙ Describe the environment and play characters other than the *Witness*.
- ⊙ Reinforce the overall tone of a Lovecraftian story – a relentless, sinister atmosphere.
- ⊙ Make space for the *Watchers* to contribute as detailed below.
- ⊙ Whenever the *Witness* wants to do something challenging, the *Narrator* decides what the outcome is. The Conflict Resolution section (page 36) provides guidance on how to handle this.
- ⊙ Declare when the scene ends. Once any *Clues* have been revealed, and the action is over, it's time to end the scene. Make sure to allow time for the *Witness* to narrate their inner fears and rationalisations before closing.

Incredible discovery from Lake expedition! Hitherto unknown mountain range, surpassing Himalayas in height and topping Everest in places.

As *Narrator*, it's your job to drive the scene forward, to make it about something. That doesn't mean you need to dominate every scene with heavy-handed narration: just don't let the scene plod along with nothing in particular going on. There are tools to achieve this throughout this book. In particular check out the guidance on framing scenes and creating clues (page 34).

As detailed below, the *Narrator* should pause frequently to allow opportunities for the *Watchers* to elaborate on their description of the environment, *Clues* and characters. In turn, the *Narrator* is allowed and encouraged to elaborate and build on what the *Watchers* describe.

You should also ask the *Watchers* questions and build on their answers. The *Watchers* will be elaborating on the narration with cool, evocative details. But the *Narrator* should help them do this by asking them direct questions about the scene, e.g. "what is depicted on the painting over the fireplace?", or "describe the strange owner of the local hotel". Do this when you are stuck for inspiration, or to elicit colourful details about the scene: but avoid asking questions which will change the direction of the scene or which would effectively pass the job of *Clue* creation onto the *Watcher*. All that said, if a *Watcher* adds a detail that catches your interest, feel free to weave it into a *Clue*.

This is how Lovecraft builds up his elaboration in 'The Haunter of the Dark':

"Blake stooped over the gleaming bones and noticed their peculiar state. Some of them were badly scattered, and a few seemed oddly dissolved at the ends. Others were strangely yellowed, with vague suggestions of charring. This charring extended to some of the fragments of clothing. The skull was in a very peculiar state – stained yellow and with a charred aperture in the top as if some powerful acid had eaten through the solid bone. What had happened to the skeleton during its four decades of silent entombment here Blake could not imagine." H.P. Lovecraft 'The Haunter of the Dark'

Lake's reports of the local geology compelling, and intend to join him as soon as plane available for the flight.

In addition, the *Narrator* has the option when introducing a character to ask one of the *Watchers* to portray that character. As a general rule, you should not do this to abdicate responsibility for narrating, but rather because you are already playing a character in a scene and it would be awkward to play a second (e.g. where the two characters might want to have a conversation with each other). On no account should you invite someone else to play a character in the hope that they will introduce *Clues* or steer the scene in an interesting direction – leading the scene is your job as *Narrator*!

WITNESS

The person to the *Narrator*'s left plays the *Witness*. That person describes the *Witness*'s actions in the scene and speaks for them, reacting to what the *Narrator* describes and taking pro-active action as appropriate. Most importantly, they speak out loud the *Witness*'s thoughts and fears, providing a human perspective for the story.

Witnesses in **Lovecraftesque** are the focus of the story, but it is not necessary that they be heroic or even curious about the mysterious events of the story – indeed, they can be fearful and meek. You should roleplay them in line with the characteristics written on the *Witness* index card. The structure of the game will make it impossible for the *Witness* to avoid the story, no matter how much they might want to run and hide. Having said that, make sure the *Witness* is sympathetic and engaging, or else they will be dull to play and boring for the *Narrator* and *Watchers* too!

As you would expect, the *Witness* does not reveal *Clues* or describe the environment or other characters. Instead, the *Witness* concentrates on portraying their character in line with the characteristics written on the *Witness* index card: including taking actions, reacting to the *Narrator*'s statements, speaking in-character, asking questions about the environment, and asking questions of the *Narrator* to elicit *Clues*.

> *"You ask me to explain why I am afraid of a draught of cool air; why I shiver more than others upon entering a cold room, and seem nauseated and repelled when the chill of evening creeps through the heat of a mild autumn day."* H.P. Lovecraft 'Cool Air'

As well as describing the *Witness*'s actions, you should narrate their thoughts and feelings. In particular, give voice to their fears and their rationalisations of the things they see. When you say what the *Witness* is thinking or feeling, raise a hand to make it obvious you aren't speaking in character. While your hand is raised, other players should remain silent. You can use this to enter into monologues in which the *Witness*'s reflections take centre stage. Inner monologues are very Lovecraftian. But you should not abuse this to interrupt intense action; and take care not to defuse tense scenes.

You are also encouraged (where appropriate to the situation) to reveal more of the *Witness*'s background and personality through their actions, words and thoughts: elaborating and building on what we already know about them, or introducing new facts about them as appropriate. And of course, the decisions you take as *Witness* will shape how the story is revealed by the *Narrator* and *Watchers*.

Finally, at the end of a scene the group should hold a brief discussion as to what new things we learned about the *Witness*. One new trait or personality trait may be recorded on the *Witness* index card to act as a guide for future scenes and thereby keep the portrayal of the *Witness* reasonably consistent.

WATCHERS

Any players other than the *Witness* and *Narrator* are *Watchers*. That sounds like a passive role, but it isn't. *Watchers* don't take on the main job of narrating a scene, but they can and should elaborate on what the *Narrator* describes, heightening the tension and adding detail. The aim of this is to build a sense of brooding horror – use every opportunity to paint the world in vivid yet indefinably unpleasant hues. As a general rule, elaborate a little more than you personally find comfortable (most people will tend to elaborate too little rather than too much). It is both appropriate and desirable that what the *Narrator* says is layered with additional description from the *Watch-*

Discovery of cavity containing fossils common to Ordovician period through to Comanchian and in between, appears to revolutionise current understanding of evolution. Though undoubtedly a local phenomenon, presence of these life-forms together unprecedented and difficult to explain.

Presence of prints in Comanchian rock implies existence over vast period.

Prints originate from young, hostile earth. Species must have incredible traits to survive. Yet previous evolutionary chain lost.

ers. It is also therefore important that the *Narrator* leaves sufficient pauses in their narration to enable the *Watchers* to elaborate, and to welcome their input to the scene.

> **Narrator: the tap-room of the old pub is wood-panelled in polished oak, and flames crackle in the fireplace.**
>
> **Watcher 1: there are stuffed animal heads mounted on the walls.**
>
> **Watcher 2: their eyes are dark and sinister. They seem to watch you as you walk across the room.**

What the *Watchers* cannot do is introduce new story elements. There's a fine line between elaborating on what the *Narrator* has said, adding in more detail, depth and colour, and taking over from the *Narrator* with your own ideas. The important thing is that as a *Watcher* you aren't steering the story, you're enriching the atmosphere. For instance, in the example above the stuffed animal heads are just there to look creepy, unless the *Narrator* decides to turn them into a *Clue*.

From time to time the *Narrator* will ask you direct questions about a scene: your job is to answer these questions. Don't spend ages worrying about coming up with the coolest possible answer, just go with the first thing that comes to mind.

Similarly, the *Narrator* may ask you to play an NPC. When this happens, your job is to make that NPC feel real and vivid, to fulfil the role the *Narrator* has given you. Don't use them to steer the scene or introduce new plot elements.

PLAYING LOVECRAFTESQUE ONLINE

The folks at the Gauntlet came up with a great way to manage *Watcher* interventions for online play. Because of the slight lag you get with online play, it's hard for *Watchers* to add atmospheric details without interrupting the *Narrator*. So when you're a *Watcher* and you want to add some elaboration, put a finger up and wait for the *Narrator* to stop speaking. That way it's easy for the *Narrator* to know when to pause to allow *Watchers* to add extra description.

Curious wounds to sauropod specimens suggest the existence of hitherto unknown predator. No direct evidence as yet.

The Structure of the Game

The game is divided into three *Parts*, during which tension and horror slowly increase.

Part 1

"…the patient seemed oddly older than his 26 years would warrant… even a large olive birthmark on his right hip had disappeared." H.P. Lovecraft The Case of Charles Dexter Ward

During *Part 1*, the emphasis is on slowly revealing strange *Clues* which hint at the true horror, but can be rationalised away. All scenes are *Investigation* scenes, meaning that the *Narrator* reveals one *Clue* per scene. *Clues* are explained in more detail on page 27.

> **e.g. the strange and pervasive buzzing in the house could be as unnatural and alien in origin as it feels but it could easily be due to a new drilling operation happening nearby.**

Part 1 lasts for exactly five scenes.

Part 2

"A hastily assembled group of armed men trudged out to the Frye place at the head of the glen. It was horrible, yet hardly a surprise. There were more swaths and monstrous prints, but there was no longer any house. It had caved in like an egg-shell and amongst the ruins nothing alive or dead could be discovered. Only a stench and a tarry stickiness. The Fryes had been erased from Dunwich." H.P. Lovecraft 'The Dunwich Horror'

In *Part 2*, scenes continue to be *Investigation*-only, meaning we reveal one *Clue* per scene as before. The chief difference from *Part 1* is that many of the *Special Cards* (see page 32) enable much more blatantly supernatural and/or violent elements during *Part 2*. Despite this, while the *Witness* may increasingly suspect that something supernatural is afoot, no obvious explanation presents itself during *Part 2*.

Soapstone fragment connected somehow to other finds? Extraordinary coincidence if not.

Barrel-shaped specimen. Radiative structure - marine origin?

During *Part 2*, the current player of the *Witness* can initiate the *Journey into Darkness* at the end of any scene. If so, *Part 2* ends and *Part 3* begins. This is covered in more detail under "Initiating the *Journey into Darkness*" on page 40.

Otherwise, *Part 2* ends automatically after the third scene in *Part 2* (i.e. the eighth scene in total).

PART 3

In *Part 3*, the *Witness* makes a *Journey into Darkness*, at the end of which there is a horrifying revelation and/or an encounter with a terrifying monster. We end with an *Epilogue* where we discover the fate of both the *Witness* and the true horror of the story.

> *"Well - that paper wasn't a photograph of any background, after all. What it shewed was simply the monstrous being he was painting on the awful canvas… it was a photograph from life."* H.P. Lovecraft 'Pickman's Model'

Part 3 is divided into four scenes:

⊙ **Force Majeure**. During this scene, events conspire to force the *Witness* to commence the *Journey into Darkness*. (This scene is skipped if *Part 2* ends with the *Witness* voluntarily beginning the *Journey*.)

⊙ **The *Journey into Darkness***, an extended scene in which the *Witness* makes a journey – which could be a literal physical journey, or a journey through dream, a psychological journey, or similar – to the location of the next scene…

⊙ **The *Final Horror***, in which the *Witness* encounters a terrifying monster and/or undergoes a horrifying revelation.

⊙ **The *Epilogue***, in which we discover the *Witness*'s eventual fate, and reveal how the true horror is still at work in the world despite the *Witness*'s best efforts.

More detail on each of these four scenes is provided on pages 42-46.

SPECIAL CARDS

Lovecraftesque uses *Special Cards* to introduce random elements to every game. The details are explained on page 32 but it is worth noting here that in many cases, *Special Cards* can only be used in specific *Parts* of the game, increasing the more overtly supernatural and/or threatening effects as the game progresses. This is made clear on the *Cards* themselves.

CLUES

A *Clue* is something that reveals new information about, or sheds new light on, the horror that is at the centre of the story. *Clues* can usually be explained away rationally, but should always be intriguing, baffling or scary; not something you could easily forget or dismiss.

Examples of *Clues* include:

- ⊙ Inhuman-looking footprints, residue or other marks of the horror's recent or current presence.
- ⊙ A strange object, such as a tome, a sculpture or a corpse. (Lovecraft has the *Necronomicon*, the *Cultes des Goules* and many other tomes. See also the reports of a Mi-Go corpse in 'The Whisperer in Darkness'.)
- ⊙ A strange pattern of behaviour seen in other characters, such as hysterical laughter, furtive behaviour or unexplained aggression.
- ⊙ A strange local phenomenon, such as plants growing to excessive size, the colour being leached away from things or bizarre weather. (See examples of excessive size and the colour being leached away in 'The Colour Out of Space'.)
- ⊙ Strange physical or psychological effects seen in humans (or animals), such as sickness, deformity or visions. (There are lots of visions in 'The Call of Cthulhu'.)
- ⊙ Sensory phenomena, such as an unexplained piping noise, a powerful stench, or strange lights. (In 'The Whisperer in Darkness' the Mi-Go make a buzzing noise when they speak.)
- ⊙ An account of any of the above provided by a third party (for example through a diary, a letter, or drunken ramblings).

Specimen incredibly well preserved - reminiscent of bog bodies or frozen mammoth. But evidently incomplete.

If you are stuck for ideas, you can use the inspiration table at the back of this rules guide (see page 176), which contain dozens of *Clues* you can pilfer or riff off.

When a *Clue* is introduced, write it down where everyone can see it, for example on an index card.

Once a *Clue* has been introduced, it can be endlessly re-used. For example, if in the first scene the *Witness* sees an unpleasant gelatinous slime, more slime can be introduced in future scenes and that wouldn't count as a new *Clue*. When you do this, write the additional occurrence down on that *Clue*'s index card. So the index card might read "Gelatinous slime – found in the engine room" and then later you might add "more slime found in the storage room". Similarly you can add extra sensory details about a *Clue* without that counting as a new *Clue*. For example, "the slime smells faintly of sulphur" could be added to the slime's index card for free.

However, whenever new information is revealed, or new light shed, that's a new *Clue* even if it re-uses aspects of an existing *Clue*. So if the *Witness* encounters slime that has formed the shape of a previously unseen arcane sigil, that's new information and therefore counts as a new *Clue* even though it re-used the slime. Such new *Clues* get their own index card. If you're not sure whether something is a new *Clue* or not, the person narrating the *Clue* decides. It's entirely legitimate to decide it isn't a *Clue* just because you have another idea for a *Clue* that you'd prefer to introduce in this scene.

What makes a *Clue* special is that it tells us something about the true horror that the *Witness* will encounter in *Part 3*. Whoever is *Narrator* at that point has to weave together all the *Clues* into a horrifying finale. If someone describes something that seems strange, but doesn't write it on an index card, then it isn't a *Clue*, it's just a bit of background colour, and it doesn't have to be woven into the *Final Horror*.

Characteristics puzzling blend of animal and vegetable. Could be missing link as per Icthyosaurus?

Thirteen further - and complete - specimens! This presents unparalleled opportunity. Will arrange to fly over immediately.

Every *Clue* suggests a general question "why?" – why did this man die; why are those people behaving furtively; why are these plants so large; why are people having visions; why that piping noise. Don't worry about answering these, as you won't provide the definitive answer to these questions until the *Final Horror* is revealed at the end of the story. But sometimes you might find yourself providing intermediate explanations of a sort – for instance, after revealing some strange, uneven footprints, you might later allow the *Witness* to catch sight of a shadowy figure with a shambling gait. They don't get to see it up close, but later they see that it has left more footprints. This is fine. You've answered the question "what caused those footprints" without dispelling the mystery or providing a final answer.

During *Part 1* and *Part 2* of the game, the *Narrator* may introduce one *Clue* per scene. The only other time that *Clues* can be introduced is by playing *Special Cards* that specifically allow you to introduce an additional *Clue* (see later).

LEAPING TO CONCLUSIONS

After every scene, everybody should take a pause and have a think about the last scene. Now, on a sheet of paper (there's a printable record sheet you can use at http://blackarmada.com/lovecraft-esque-downloads/), write down what you think the *Final Horror* really is. You almost certainly won't have enough information to go on, especially at the start of the game – but don't worry about that. Instead, *Leap to a Conclusion*, based on what you do know. Make an inspired guess. Make it as fully developed and specific as you can. As new *Clues* are revealed, you can either expand your original *Conclusions* to fit, or make up a completely new theory. Don't show each other what you write down.

> *Leaping to Conclusions* is about forming ideas about what the horror is, based on the *Clues*. You are not trying to guess what the other players have in their heads or what they really meant by the *Clues* they revealed. Equally, don't try to be clever or to come up with a deliberately surprising interpretation. Instead, imagine that the *Clues* and the horror are real, and try to imagine the horrific plot that they are pointing to.

Use these ideas to direct your contributions to the game when you are *Narrator*. Create *Clues* that are compatible with, and ideally build on, your speculations. If on your turn as *Narrator* you are stuck for an idea for a scene, look at your latest *Conclusions* and create a scene which would reinforce them. When the *Final Horror* comes around, use your speculations to create a compelling climax to the story.

At the end of the game, take a moment to share all the bizarre guesses you came up with amongst the group.

EXAMPLE OF CLUE CREATION AND LEAPING TO CONCLUSIONS

e.g. The *Narrator* says "Julia's shoes made a gentle crunching noise as she walked along the stoney beach. The morning was cold and crisp, but the mainland was invisible behind the mist that hung over the greyish waters of the loch. She skimmed a stone across the water and watched it skitter along before disappearing, leaving only ripples. On the headland nearby, a movement caught her eye, and she stared as a hunched figure made its way down to the rocks, carrying something heavy on its back. The figure stopped at the water's edge and swung its load into the water."

The *Narrator* writes "hunched figure disposing of something heavy" on an index card and adds it to the other *Clues*.

Once the scene is over, player A writes on their *Conclusions* sheet "The locals are making blood sacrifices to a fish-monster, which eats the victims." Player B writes down "The village is being taken over by pod people. They kill the people they replace and throw the bodies in the bay."

Player B is *Narrator* next, and introduces a *Clue* of a large hollow husk found in the woods.

New specimens possess probable head and eyes and
Lake's description of multi-branch "tentacles" suggest
ability to perform complex
manipulation. More than just
vegetative life.

Gills, along with radiative
structure, further evidence of
marine origin.

Discussing the story (don't)

Unless the rules require it, you should neither discuss the story nor attempt to agree where it is going. You should not discuss scenes or where they are going. Don't try to agree plot with the other players. Don't worry about what the other players are thinking. Instead, pay attention to what is going on in the fiction and respond with what comes to your mind. In scenes, it is the *Narrator*'s job to introduce the scene, fulfil any *Scene Requirements*, and call an end to the scene.

You will find that other *Narrators* surprise you by interpreting your *Clues* in an entirely different way to how you had intended. This is great! Watching how the other players interpret the *Clues* in surprising ways is part of the fun of the game. In this way the story emerges from your individual contributions.

Creeping Horror

Lovecraftian horror is slow-burning, brooding and tense. It lacks the blood and gore of modern horror stories, and it tends to keep the supernatural nature of the true horror obscured or hinted at until the very end of the story. The horror is psychological.

The rule of *Creeping Horror* therefore applies at all times until the *Final Horror*:

- ⊙ Nothing can be narrated that could not be explained rationally. *Clues* may strain reason, especially when the weight of them is combined, but must not be overtly supernatural.

- ⊙ No violence against humans can be narrated, nor direct evidence of violence (a mutilated corpse, for example).

- ⊙ First-hand accounts of blatantly supernatural things and of violence against humans should only be oblique and taken from sources whose reliability is in doubt.

- ⊙ No attacks on the *Witness*; including theft, sabotage or destruction of property.

Crucially though, the game includes *Special Cards* which allow you to break this rule. It also bears repeating that despite the above, a good *Clue* is not the sort of thing you would discount or forget – they are always intriguing, baffling or scary.

Link between specimen foot and archaean footprints demonstrates existence of complex life pre-Cambrian, possibly the result of previous evolutionary cycle. Einstein = underestimate.

SPECIAL CARDS

Lovecraftesque comes with *Special Cards* which make each game slightly different.

At the start of the game, shuffle the *Special Cards* together. Deal one to each player or, in a two-player game, two to each player. You may each look at your *Card(s)* immediately, but don't show them to each other.

The *Special Cards* will tell you when you can play them and what effects they have. Watch for opportunities to enhance the story by playing them. *Special Cards* allow you to break the normal rules of the game by introducing extra *Clues*, revealing more blatantly supernatural effects, narrating direct threats to the *Witness*, and so on. If the text of a *Special Card* contradicts the rules, the *Special Card* always wins.

Some *Special Cards* interrupt the current sequence of play, starting a new scene with the person who played the *Special Card* as *Narrator.* When this happens, move all the other roles too, so the person to the left of the new *Narrator* is the *Witness*, and so on. When the extra scene is concluded, the roles return to whoever was next in line to get them before the *Special Card* was played. Such extra scenes also count towards the scene total for deciding when to move the game on, for example, from *Part 1* to *Part 2*.

By the way, if a *Special Card* interrupts a scene, preventing the *Scene Requirements* from being met (e.g. in *Part 1* or *Part 2*, preventing a *Clue* from being introduced), then that scene is considered unfinished. It therefore doesn't count towards the total number of scenes, and it is still that *Narrator*'s turn once the *Special Card's* effect is completed and the roles return. This is summarised in the table below.

CARD PLAYED...	*NEXT NARRATOR AFTER CARD SCENE COMPLETE IS:*
By Narrator of current scene A	
By Narrator of next scene B, just before scene B starts	
Anyone else, just after scene A but before next scene B	*Person to left of Narrator of scene A*
Anyone else, during scene A, after scene requirements met	
Anyone else, during scene A, before scene requirements met	*Narrator of scene A*

The *Special Cards* add unpredictability to the game, but you can play **Lovecraftesque** without them. To do so, simply suspend the *Creeping Horror* rule in *Part 2*, except that no physical attacks on the *Witness* are permitted. In *Part 3*, even this last restriction is jettisoned.

EXAMPLE SPECIAL CARD

Duration of the effect.

"Ongoing effect" means that once played the Special Card remains in play, and can be used by everyone from the point forward.

"Instant effect" means that the Special Card has its effect when played and is discarded afterwards.

Title of the Special Card ⎯

Examples of what you could use it to introduce. (Note, you are not limited to this list.)

The conditions under which you may place the Special Card

Ongoing effects that can be used by anyone once the Special Card has been played, in the appropriate Part of the game.

SORCERY

(Sorcerer, witch, coven)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this after a scene if something was revealed that seems like it could be sorcery.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Allow the *Witness* to see for themselves bizarre, rationally inexplicable occurrences.

Launch a sorcerous attack on the *Witness*, capturing, weakening or injuring them.

PART 3

The *Final Horror* must be something other than a sorcerer.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

Some Special Cards, like this one, also impose requirements that apply to everyone.

Clearly, will have to admit my error about the Western trip. Lake may not let me live this down!

HOW TO FRAME AND CONCLUDE A SCENE

A scene is nothing more than a discrete part of the story. A scene can and often will follow directly from what happened immediately before it. The *Witness* was following footprints? The next scene we find out what was at the end of the trail. The *Witness* got on a boat to visit an island? The next scene is on the island. However, you're not constrained by that. You can cut directly to something new, skipping out events you're not interested in. You can narrate a montage of events before coming back into sharp focus on the location and time of the new scene. The same applies once the scene has started - a scene doesn't have to be restricted to just one location or time.

So when does a scene end? The answer is, it ends when the *Scene Requirements* (see page 40) have been met. You may also want a bit of wrap-up narration to round out the scene - the horrified looks on the faces of onlookers after a particularly disturbing event, the creak of the *Witness*'s footsteps as they set off into the spooky basement. But other than that - once you've done what you came here to do, move things on as quickly as you can.

HOW TO CREATE CLUES

A *Clue* is something weird. Something that, the moment you see it, you know is part of the story. But it's also something that the *Witness* could rationalise away. At the start of the game, a *Clue* can be almost any weird thing, as long as it inspires intrigue, bafflement or dread rather than (say) amusement. It also needs to be something the *Witness* will notice, even if they brush it off, for now.

If you're stuck for ideas, fall back on your current *Conclusions* you've leaped to. How might the horror make itself felt? Think about what should happen next, and how that might come to the *Witness*'s attention. You can give information indirectly – a newspaper article reporting on a strange occurrence, a rumour overheard, a friend asking for help. Equally, don't overlook the role of coincidence. Feel free to drop the *Witness* in the middle of the horror by sheer bad luck.

High winds foiled my plan to join Lake. We are all frustrated and restless waiting this out.

Lake reports the specimens have been brought to camp and he will conduct a dissection.

HOW TO LEAP TO CONCLUSIONS

When you *Leap to Conclusions* you're trying to decide what's really going on in this story. Do this from your perspective as an audience member, not from the *Witness*'s perspective – so, free of rationalisations and self-deception. You know it's a horror story, so make your theory horrific.

Decide these three things:

- ⊙ Who or what is responsible for the weirdness that's been seen so far? Is it a monstrous spider? The reincarnation of an ancient sorcerer? A race of aliens? A strange and powerful artifact?

- ⊙ What is that thing actually doing? Is the spider eating local children? Is the sorcerer trying to summon a demon and bind it to service? Are the aliens trying to repair their spaceship and return home?

- ⊙ And, optionally, what is going to happen if that person or thing is left to run rampant? Is the spider going to build a nest, hatch eggs and let loose a brood of spider-children? Will the sorcerer take control over the town with the help of her demon-servant? You can get away without answering this question, because the answer "it will just carry on doing what it's doing" is often horrible enough.

The *Clues* alone will not be enough to decide the answers to these questions, so get creative and come up with your own answers. That's why it's called *Leaping to Conclusions*!

Avoid *Conclusions* which will make it difficult to involve the *Witness* in the story. For example, if the *Witness* is on a journey, tie the horror to that journey, or perhaps to the destination. As you write your *Conclusions* down, consider what might happen next. Is it something that the *Witness* can find out about or get mixed up in? If not, rethink.

As new *Clues* are revealed, your *Conclusions* will come under threat. When this happens, you can adjust your existing *Conclusions* to the new *Clues*, or throw them out and replace them with something new. Don't be afraid to throw your existing *Conclusions* out. When you make small changes to your *Conclusions*, it is all too easy to end up with a theory that is contorted beyond reason, and which doesn't help you create new *Clues* or a *Final Horror*.

Dissection a failure! Specimen too tough for incisions to be made with requisite precision and care.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR NARRATORS

Conflicts of the type you see in many roleplaying games are not an important element in **Lovecraftesque**. The game is about a *Witness* gradually uncovering a terrible truth, and ultimately, in most cases, discovering that it is beyond their power to do anything about. As such it's usually obvious what the *Witness* can do, what they can't do, and what they can try but won't succeed at. When it's less obvious, it's up to the *Narrator* to decide what happens. This section provides some guidance on how to do that.

Lake attempting coarse dissection on the damaged specimen.

The general case:

- When the *Witness* says they are doing something that could fail, the *Narrator* should generally reply saying what the results of their actions are. Sometimes you'll just nod or say "ok", indicating the action succeeds. Sometimes you'll spell out the results of the action, describing the extent of their success or failure and the outcome that follows.

- For the most part, you should let the *Witness* succeed, except where it would be implausible or would remove narrative distance too early in the story; especially if the *Witness* has been established as having relevant skills. This isn't a game about success and failure in the face of challenges.

- Look out for actions which break the tension or take the story somewhere dull. For example, if our *Witness* has been trapped in a remote location because their car broke down, having them succeed in fixing the car might not only remove a source of drama, but also potentially remove them from the location where we wanted the story to happen.

- That doesn't mean they have to fail outright – in the example above maybe they need a car part, and they passed an old ramshackle garage a few miles back, it's only a short walk… who knows what they'll encounter on that walk or in that garage.

You should also watch out for things which might break our suspension of disbelief. Lovecraft's stories are mostly about ordinary people – sometimes with specific expert skills, but generally ordinary people, with ordinary human frailties. They shouldn't be popping ninja moves, casting firebolts or whatnot. If someone asks to do something and you think it wouldn't make any sense for them to succeed, tell them they failed.

In deciding the outcome of a conflict, you can base your decision on fictional cues (the *Witness* has a relevant skill, the right tools, or a situational advantage of some kind); on dramatic cues (if the *Witness* wins this fight then the story is essentially over, so they lose); or on pure whim.

Results of dissection baffling and intriguing.
Cell biology revolution will follow.

In all of this, try to ensure you leave avenues for continuing the story. A locked door is interesting. We want to know what's behind it. If it rapidly becomes clear that there is nothing a character can do that would let them see what's behind the door, it stops being interesting. Maybe if they hid in that closet and waited for the woman with the key to come…?

Above all, don't get hung up on it; just make a decision and move on. Conflict resolution does not take centre stage in **Lovecraftesque**, so if you find yourself thinking long enough about a decision that there's a noticeable silence, you're probably overthinking it.

Physical conflict:

- ⊙ It is unusual for physical fights to come up in **Lovecraftesque**.

- ⊙ In such situations, death is a possible outcome. But it isn't a very interesting one, and with rare exception you shouldn't choose it for either side. Other options available to you are – have someone get knocked out, allow one side to restrain or capture the other, have someone offer or request a surrender or truce, or run away.

- ⊙ Of course, physical injury is also something you can narrate. Be restrained: the story may be slowed down if the *Witness* is seriously hurt.

- ⊙ If the *Witness* has put themselves in a situation where they're fighting a losing battle, you can offer them the opportunity to run away. Letting them succeed and get away unscathed is usually appropriate.

- ⊙ The above options apply in both directions – the *Witness* might get knocked out, but so too might the person they are fighting.

- ⊙ If the *Witness* comes up against a monster, the most they can do is to run, to hide, or to fight ineffectively. They might be able to make the creature roar in pain and momentarily hesitate by shooting it or hitting it with a flaming brand or similar (though you would be well within your rights to say that they can't, especially if it's the *Final Horror*), but they certainly can't cause it any more harm than that.

Properties of the tissues astounding and suggest preservation over aeons may be inherent property rather than product of desiccation or similar.

Complex and redundant respiratory system appears to include a primary breathing aperture complemented by gills and a porous system. Clear evidence of amphibious nature.

- ⊙ Against a monster, the *Witness* can still be subject to the usual range of outcomes.
- ⊙ If the *Witness* surrenders or runs away then it's quite permissible to have them get away unscathed – the experience of fleeing is salutary by itself.
- ⊙ When the *Witness*'s opponent is a monster, things are going to be one-sided: none of these options apply to the monster, only to the *Witness*. In such situations you may also wish to have the *Witness* be wounded instead of, or as well as, the above options.

Information:

- ⊙ If the *Witness* tries to do some research, or other investigation activity, let them succeed. This is the perfect opportunity to reveal a *Clue*. Of course, success doesn't necessarily mean getting all the information!

Persuasion and other social conflict:

- ⊙ When a *Witness* tries to persuade someone of something, you are entirely free to adjudicate that like any other conflict. For the most part, no matter how charming or eloquent a *Witness* is, they are unlikely to be able to persuade someone to fundamentally change their position. Just like in real life, people tend not to change their views or betray their own values readily. That doesn't mean persuasion never works – just that you should never feel obliged to allow it to work.

Suspected vocal organs appear insufficient for speech per se. Speculation: communication could take place via piping noises

Lake's description of the specimen's nervous system implies it is highly advanced. Will be of great interest to neurologists.

SCENE REQUIREMENTS

As noted earlier, some scenes have specific *Requirements* that must be realised to move the story on. These *Requirements* are summarised below, but described in more detail in the sections describing individual scene types.

- ⊙ In *Investigation* scenes, at least one *Clue* must be revealed.
- ⊙ In a *Force Majeure* scene, the location of the *Final Horror* must be decided, and the *Witness* must commence the *Journey into Darkness*.
- ⊙ In the *Journey into Darkness*, the *Witness* must move from their current location to the location of the *Final Horror*.
- ⊙ In the *Final Horror*, a confrontation with a monster and/or a horrifying revelation must occur which explains the *Clues* revealed so far.
- ⊙ In the *Epilogue*, the consequences for the *Witness* must be described, including something that shows how the Horror is still out there.

It is the *Narrator*'s responsibility to ensure that the *Scene Requirements* are met.

INVESTIGATION SCENES

Investigation scenes happen in *Part 1* and *Part 2* of the game. Their primary purpose is to reveal *Clues* as to the nature of the *Final Horror*. As such, it is a *Scene Requirement* in every *Investigation* scene that at least one *Clue* is revealed.

INITIATING THE JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS

"…all turned instinctively to the line of horrible prints leading on toward the wrecked Whateley farmhouse and the altar-crowned slopes of Sentinel Hill." H.P. Lovecraft 'The Dunwich Horror'

The *Journey into Darkness* is a scene in which the *Witness* moves from their current location to the location where the *Final Horror* will occur. But before that can happen, that location must be decided and the *Journey* initiated. This can happen in three ways:

Such a highly developed species using sporic reproduction is unprecedented, as far as I am aware.

- ⊙ At the end of any *Part 2* scene, if they feel like it's time, the *Witness* can decide to commence the *Journey into Darkness*, by deciding on the location where the *Final Horror* will happen and declaring they are going there now. If so, the next scene will be the *Journey*, with that location as the end-point.

- ⊙ Alternatively, if after a *Part 2* scene the new *Narrator* wishes to begin the *Journey*, they can do so by deciding where the *Final Horror* will take place, and initiating a *Force Majeure* scene in which events force the *Witness* to that location. The scene after will then be the *Journey into Darkness*.

- ⊙ Finally, if there have been three *Part 2* scenes without either of the above situations taking place, *Part 3* begins automatically with a *Force Majeure* scene. The *Narrator* of that scene will decide the location of the *Final Horror*. The scene after is the *Journey into Darkness*.

Deciding the location of the *Final Horror* is usually fairly straightforward. It will be remote and/or abandoned. It will be dark and/or ancient. That old mansion on the hill? That's probably it. You've already been there? It's probably the basement. Be guided by the *Conclusions* you've leaped to, or just choose somewhere that feels right.

Sometimes the location might turn out not to be a physical place at all. It could be a particular dream that the *Witness* will have. It could be that the *Witness* must make a psychic journey, or even a psychological journey, to get there. You'll usually know from the story so far if that's going to be the case.

Once the relevant scene is concluded with the decision taken to begin the *Journey into Darkness*, the *Journey* begins.

Existence of such an advanced life-form prior to inception of any other known complex life will require entire framework of biology to be re-evaluated.

FORCE MAJEURE

Unless the *Witness* voluntarily begins the *Journey into Darkness* at the end of *Part 2*, there is an additional *Part 3* scene in which the *Narrator* decides the location of the *Final Horror* and the *Witness* is somehow forced to set out towards that location. If the *Witness* has already begun the *Journey*, you skip the *Force Majeure* scene.

A *Force Majeure* scene, as the name suggests, requires the *Narrator* to invoke some external force to compel the *Witness* to the location of the *Final Horror*. Here are some possibilities:

- ⊙ The *Witness* is pursued by someone or something, which drives them towards that location.
- ⊙ The *Witness* is abducted and taken to the vicinity of the location; the *Journey into Darkness* is then the story of their escape from capture, and subsequent encounter with the true horror.
- ⊙ The *Witness* is stranded at the location, e.g. when their car breaks down.
- ⊙ For ephemeral locations, like a location found only in dreams, something sorcerous drags the *Witness* to the location.

e.g "Sir Arthur peered down into the gloom as the golden-robed monk looked on. A sweeping spiral of rough-hewn steps, carved into the cave wall, descended into shadow. And etched onto the wall, a chronicle, one that must have lain here for centuries waiting for him to discover it. A chronicle describing the events of Sir Arthur's own life. Shaking his head in disbelief, he stood on the threshold of those steps, unwilling to proceed, unable to see another way out. He had just made his mind up to turn around and try to find another way out when he felt a sharp push between his shoulder blades. As he plunged into the darkness, he saw the impassive face of the monk, peering down at him serenely."

The important thing to understand is that the whole group should be working to get the *Witness* to start the *Journey into Darkness* at this point. Presumably nobody has been able to come up with a convincing reason for them to do so voluntarily up until now. The *Force Majeure* scene will provide that reason – so it is obviously incumbent on the player of the *Witness* to accept that and roll with it, since otherwise the game cannot continue.

Continued reaction of the dogs problematic. Have asked Lake to ensure they are secured.

THE JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS

The *Journey into Darkness* is a single extended scene. During this scene, the *Witness* undergoes a journey from comparative safety to the location where the *Final Horror* will occur. This is probably a physical journey, and most likely one that leads into a place that is literally dark, such as an underground city, caves, a labyrinth or a dark forest.

The *Journey into Darkness* is divided into *Turns*. On each player's *Turn*, they will narrate a short chunk of the scene – a few sentences. Unlike in the rest of the game, everyone has a free choice on their *Turn* whether to:

- ⊙ Take the role of *Narrator* and describe the environment the *Witness* encounters on the journey.
- ⊙ Take the role of *Witness* and describe in a few sentences the *Witness*'s sense of foreboding and horror.
- ⊙ Take the role of *Watcher*, elaborating on what the previous player narrated.

The *Journey* ends when someone chooses the role of *Narrator* and describes how the *Journey* ends. Anyone can do this, from the 12th *Turn* of the *Journey* onwards. If you reach the 16th *Turn*, you **must** narrate the end of the *Journey*.

Since the *Journey* could be anything from a faltering trip down the creaky basement stairs of a mansion to an epic journey into the depths of a rift valley, the size of the individual steps in each *Journey* will vary wildly. It is the responsibility of each *Narrator* to keep the steps to an appropriate size. The journey down the stairs needs short but excruciatingly-detailed steps, while the three-day journey into the rift valley will need longer and much less detailed steps that cover hours of game time in a few sentences.

It is perfectly permissible to make the *Journey into Darkness* something other than a physical voyage. It could, for instance, be a journey undertaken in a dream; a psychological transformation; the steps of a ritual; or any other strange transition that you can think of. In this case, as *Narrator* you don't describe the "environment" per se, but the transition itself.

THE FINAL HORROR

The *Final Horror* is the scene in which all the *Clues* revealed so far are woven together into a full-blooded depiction of whatever has been causing all this weirdness. There are two main types of *Final Horror* (and in a given game it could be one of them or it could be both at once):

- ⊙ **An encounter with some kind of entity.** "Monster" is a term that leaps to mind, although sometimes it's just something so beyond human understanding that words don't really work. The confrontation could be with a god, an alien creature, a sentient force of nature, or more besides. If there is a confrontation, it should be clear and unblemished by narrative distance – doubt is gone now, and the supernatural is the only explanation.

- ⊙ **A horrifying revelation.** This can be used where the *Clues* don't point to a monster, or where a monster was already revealed earlier in the story, but is not limited to these situations, and can be used alongside a monster. Revelations are things like "those paintings weren't depicting fantastic scenes – they were real" or "I am one of the monsters" or whatever bizarre cosmic truth takes your fancy.

The *Narrator* for the *Final Horror* is whoever has a great idea for it. They will then be responsible for weaving the *Clues* together for the big reveal! As usual, this is not something you should discuss – anyone who has an idea simply says so, without saying what their idea is. If there's more than one such person, then give priority to the person who played the *Witness* in the scene before the *Journey into Darkness*, then the person to their right, and so on anticlockwise around the table. There are ideas for characteristics of monsters, and for revelations that could be used in the *Final Horror*, in the inspiration table.

If nobody has an idea, then you should (reluctantly, for this will doubtless break your momentum and reduce the tension you've built up in the *Journey into Darkness*) hold a brief discussion to see if you can come up with one collectively. Think twice about doing this – if you have an idea but it doesn't quite explain all the *Clues*, or an idea that's only half-formed, then rather than discussing it, instead vol-

unteer to be the *Narrator* and look to your fellow players to help you to fill in any gaps as the scene progresses.

Failing to use all the *Clues* would be a pity, but it's much better than having to break the atmosphere with a lengthy debate over the nature of the *Final Horror*.

The *Final Horror* must explain the *Clues* that have been created thus far, but it could reveal other things which the *Clues* only hinted at or which were not at all apparent in the *Clues*. Be careful not to go too far with this – you've just spent a few hours creating *Clues*, and the *Final Horror* should be the payoff.

As normal, the *Watchers* can elaborate on and add to the scene (see page 21).

For what it's worth, the *Witness* is played, as before, by the person to the *Narrator*'s left. Their role is chiefly to be appropriately horrified and powerless. We may see them flee the scene (though not before the *Narrator* has finished describing the true awfulness of the *Final Horror*!), lose consciousness, or even be devoured or otherwise destroyed. What happens to the *Witness* is, in this scene, of little consequence, for they are no longer centre stage.

Indeed, it is worth considering some of the different ways a *Final Horror* can play out from the *Witness*'s perspective:

- ⊙ **The *Witness* may try to flee or sneak away.** This is probably the most sensible reaction to the kind of things you see in a *Final Horror* scene. Provided that there is somewhere to run (if not, the *Witness* obviously can't escape), it is up to the *Narrator* to decide, on pure whim, whether the *Witness* gets away. Even if the *Narrator* decides they don't, they should give some time over to describing the pursuit, only making it clear at the end whether the *Witness* has escaped.

- ⊙ **The *Witness* may try to fight.** This is almost certainly a foolish idea, for the *Witness* is now placing themselves in direct confrontation with cosmic forces. Once again, it is up to the *Narrator* to decide whether the *Witness* succeeds, but they should strongly consider having them fail. In both cases, go

Howling winds, disturbed sleep, and now unable to raise Lake on the wireless

with what makes sense based on your idea of what the horror is. Unlike when the *Witness* flees, this could be over very quickly indeed. Alternatively, you can toy with them for a bit. Either approach is valid.

⊙ **The *Witness* may well simply look on in horror.** This is a quite normal and human reaction. In this case, you can take great glee in following through with whatever monstrous idea you had for the *Final Horror*. The eldritch powers get to do their worst, unopposed!

THE EPILOGUE

In the *Epilogue*, we find out what happens to the *Witness* (if there is anything left to find out) after the *Final Horror*, and we gain an insight into what has become of the *Final Horror* itself. These can happen in either order, or even be interleaved with each other, so as soon as you have an idea for one or the other, you should begin. In a game with three or more players, as an exception to the normal order of play, pass roles left until the *Narrator* role is held by someone who was a *Watcher* during the *Final Horror*. The person to their left will be the *Witness*. If you're playing with two players there won't have been any *Watchers* so just rotate roles in the usual way.

The fate of the *Witness* is relatively straightforward. Assuming the *Witness* survived the *Final Horror*, they will either:

⊙ escape, returning to a normal life but never forgetting the terrible experience, or;

⊙ escape traumatised and defeated. Unable to cope, their life falls apart. They may withdraw from society, or obsessively but futilely hunt for ways to defeat the horror. Whatever happens, they can no longer live a normal life because of what they have seen.

The *Witness*'s fate is decided by the person playing the *Witness*, and they narrate it from the *Witness*'s perspective. If the *Witness* did not survive the *Final Horror* then none of these apply; but you can still wrap up the *Witness*'s story by describing a letter they left for their niece hinting at the horrors they have been investigating, or similar.

The insight into the *Final Horror* is trickier. No matter what happens, the *Final Horror* must still be out there in some form. Even in the unlikely event that the *Final Horror* was destroyed, it is not gone for good, or there's another one out there, or it can (and will) be brought back using arcane knowledge that hasn't been destroyed. Think of that part of the movie where the alien has been killed and then the camera pulls back to reveal a clutch of eggs.

The insight into the *Final Horror*, and how we know about it, is a decision to be made by the *Narrator*. Some options include:

- ⊙ The *Witness* sees the monster leaving, unharmed; or realises that it must have escaped; or otherwise has some revelation that can be narrated from the *Witness*'s perspective.

- ⊙ If the *Witness* is dead, you can instead narrate, as though from the perspective of an unspecified observer, the monster leaving.

- ⊙ Or you could, almost as though starting a new story, reveal a *Clue* or *Clues* that suggest the horror is still out there.

Anyone (not just *Watchers*) may elaborate on the events of the *Epilogue*. This includes elaborating on what happens to the *Witness* as they normally would with the *Narrator*, though the *Witness*'s own thoughts, fears and rationalisations remain for them alone.

> **e.g. "Long after the events of the war are over, Corporal Adams returns home to East London. He sits alone in his apartment, his cooling porridge congealing in the bowl in front of him. He has little interest in it. There is a knock at the door, and the postman hands him a parcel wrapped in brown paper. He fetches a paper-knife and tears at the wrapping, but recoils in horror, the knife clattering to the floor, as his efforts reveal the contents – a shrivelled and dessicated hand, its finger pointing directly at him.**
>
> **High above the apartment block, a dark shape moves through the clouds. It looks down and knows it has found a new hunting ground."**

6pm. Lake radio silence continues. Can no longer wait, and have asked Sherman to come with the last remaining plane. Can only hope they are alright.

SCENARIOS

Between pages 90 and 138 of this book you will find a number
of scenarios. You can use these for quick-start play, or if you feel like
exploring a particular set of themes in your story. When you use a
scenario the game works very slightly differently.

First, the scenario provides a *Witness*, a general location and
era, so there is no need to create these. Instead, read them out so
everyone is on the same page. You should still agree on general tone
and any banned elements, and you will still need to decide on a first
Narrator who sets the initial scene.

In scenarios, you are provided with a list of suggested *Clues*. It is
entirely up to each *Narrator* which of these they use, and whether they
use one from the list or create their own. We encourage you to use a
mix of both – a 50/50 division should ensure your game draws from
the themes in the scenario while remaining fresh and different. You
should *Leap to Conclusions* as normal and, of course, refrain from select-
ing any *Clue* which would be at odds with your leaped-to *Conclusions*.

Each scenario gives you a list of *Special Cards* which must be
among those that are dealt out at the start. Take these out of the
deck, and then - if you need more - shuffle the rest and draw extra
ones as required. Then shuffle the *Special Cards* named in the sce-
nario with any extra ones you may have drawn, and deal them out to
the players. They are then used exactly as normal.

You will notice that no *Journey into Darkness*, *Final Horror* or *Epi-
logue* suggestions are provided. Instead, follow the usual rules. The
scenario and your creative decisions should give you an ample basis
for these parts of the game.

*Midnight. Still no word. Dreadful sense of foreboding.
Another restless night awaits, before we can make the
flight to join them.*

CAMPAIGN PLAY

Lovecraftesque is designed for one-shot play. At the start the *Witness* is typically ignorant of the horror, and by the end, they have met their doom. But with a few tweaks, it is possible to play the game in a campaign style, telling story after story with continuity between them.

CONTINUITY OF THE *WITNESS*

If you want to run multiple sessions of ***Lovecraftesque*** using the same *Witness*, you can do so. This has the advantage of gradually, over time, revealing more and more of the strange universe you're creating, with a single perspective character who learns the terrible truth about the world at the same time we do. But to do this, you need to make some changes to the basic game.

⊙ After the first two scenes of the first session, instead of adding a new personality trait after every scene, do so after every session. That way, the *Witness*'s development arc will be slowed down a little, and we will learn a bit more about them every session, rather than having a fairly complete understanding of them by the end of session 1.

⊙ The possibility of the *Witness* dying should remain, but the *Epilogue* will need to be reduced in severity so that, presuming that the *Witness* survives, they will remain in a good state for future stories. Therefore, instead of narrating the *Witness*'s doom, narrate what they do next and how they come to terms with what they have seen. We don't want to make the ending too pleasant, so say what object, habit or fear they now carry with them.

⊙ You may start with any tone you like, but you are likely to move increasingly towards an investigative or heroic tone as the campaign progresses. After all, the *Witness* has seen a great deal and may well begin to take matters into their own hands. Of course, it is also possible that the *Witness* remains a hapless victim of circumstance, doomed to perpetually encounter horrors despite never seeking them out. Equally, if you don't adopt a heroic tone then it is likely that sooner or later the *Witness* will seek to confront the horror, and meet their end.

CONTINUITY OF THE HORROR

It is not necessary to keep the same central character in every session of a **Lovecraftesque** campaign. Even if you do, you'll want the horror to have some consistency from session to session. Imagine you are writing an anthology of stories set in the same universe (just as Lovecraft did). Over time, you will build of a corpus of ideas, monsters, secret tomes and so forth. And you will leave a trail of ruined lives in your wake.

There are some further changes to reinforce this:

⊙ At the end of a session, don't share your *Conclusions* with each other. Instead, do a separate campaign-level *Leap to Conclusions* phase. Write down what the bigger picture is. Say you encountered a monster. Where did it come from? Does it have brethren, amongst the stars or beneath the waves or buried deep in the earth? Was it part of a great empire? As usual, *Leap to Conclusions* that are consistent with the evidence but go beyond it. And as usual, every time you *Leap to Conclusions*, revise or discard the earlier *Conclusions* as required by the evidence.

⊙ When you *Leap to Conclusions* at the end of a scene, consider whether the current story might relate in some way to previous horrors encountered. More often than not, it won't; but keep this possibility in mind. The horror might be the same, new creatures could be the servitors of the earlier horror (or vice versa, the master of that horror), a rival of the earlier horror, and so on. You should use your campaign-level *Conclusions* to help with this.

⊙ If/when you get a new *Witness*, in the set-up phase of each new session, ask yourselves whether they have heard anything of the horror. They might have read about previous *Witnesses* in the newspaper, or received letters from them. They may start with a greater knowledge of the horror than their predecessors although they will likely dismiss these as meaningless ramblings, until it is too late.

Flight a study in mixed feelings.
Treacherous winds, gargantuan peaks that
inspire awe and dread. And the long wait
to discover what has become of Lake.

I hesitate to record in writing the
view from the plane of cyclopean urban
landscape. Must assuredly be a mirage,
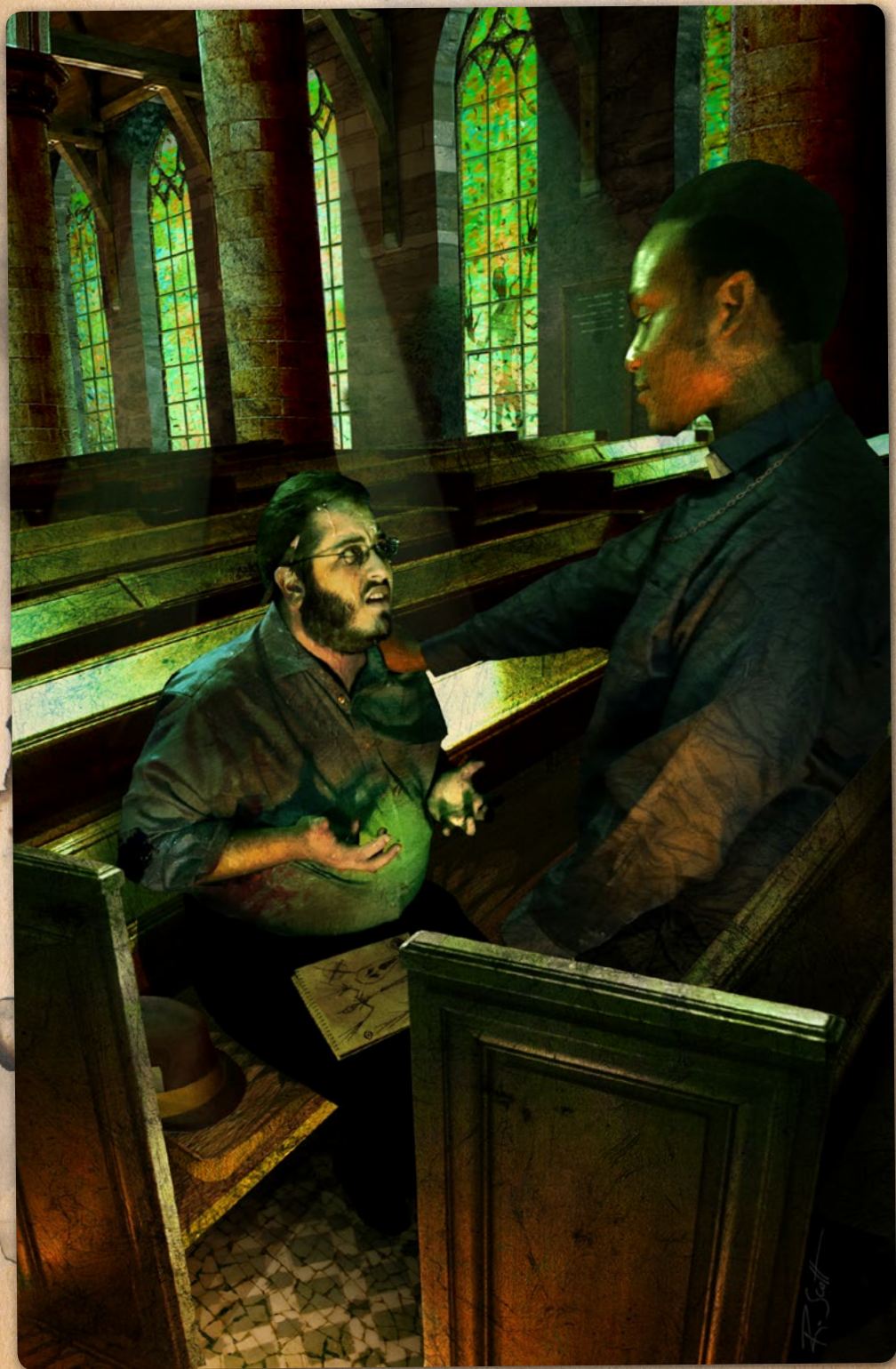reminiscent of Scoresby, yet disturbingly
compelling. All feeling uneasy.

Mountains here extraordinarily sheer, and with
curiously regular rock formations, like a Great
Wall hewn by giants.

LOVECRAFT

LOVECRAFTESQUE STYLE GUIDE

Lovecraft stories have a very distinctive style. Aim to make that style pervade your every word and phrase. Do this especially if you're the Facilitator – others will follow your lead.

1. There is a world beyond our current experience. A world populated with intelligent monstrous aliens, terrifying, incomprehensible, tentacled Elder Gods, and science so strange and advanced that it appears as blasphemous and unnatural magic.

2. Horrors have uncomfortably intimate relationships with humans: e.g. Mi-Go are insect-like but perform successful surgery on humans far in advance of our own.

3. The horror often invades the *Witness*'s own space; filling their sleep with dreams of dark things, mutilating or horrifically changing their loved ones.

4. Protagonists see only glimpses of the horror until the end of the story. There is never enough evidence to convince others. Those who know the truth are treated as liars or unreliable, and are unable to convey the danger they have discovered.

5. Monstrous aliens or Elder Gods harm humans in the way we might step accidentally on an ant, or experiment on a rat.

6. There is a feeling of total isolation and powerlessness in the aftermath of experiencing something horrific and revolting.

For example, a theme of *At the Mountains of Madness* is powerlessness. In that story the first horror is how the alien creatures dissect us like lab rats: we are nothing to them. The second horror is that the terrifying creature which assails the protagonist is merely a servitor of the real horror.

The chapters in this section are not rules. They provide ideas and guidance on how to make your game's atmosphere as Lovecraftian as possible, while avoiding some of the unpleasant bigotry present in Lovecraft's own writing.

The horrific state of affairs at Lake's camp has left us all shaken and distressed. I can hardly bear to think of it – but I must record what we saw while it is fresh in my mind.

Introduce evocative, arcane details to reinforce the theme. Here are some of the things Lovecraft and other writers in the genre used; let them inspire your own inventions.

Ancient Tomes and Magical Paraphernalia: The *Necronomicon*, the *Liber Ivonis*, *Cultes Des Goules*, The *Pnakotic Manuscripts*, the Powder of Ibn Ghazi, the Shining Trapezohedron.

Horrible sensory experiences: buzzing noises, smell of decay, items covered in a greasy film, a strange miasma.

Miscellaneous: A terrible play which obsesses all those who encounter it, a mystical order with three monstrous oaths, furtive and unfriendly locals.

Alien landscapes: Unknown Kadath, Lost Carcosa, the Plateau of Leng, Rl'yeh.

Indulge yourself in elaborate and archaic language. H.P. Lovecraft had favourite words that he used frequently. Don't hold back from layering detail on every scene, using Lovecraftian language to set the tone.

Horrors are: Blasphemous, Abominations, Alien, Daemoniac, Nameless, Unknowable, Eldritch, Star-Spawned, Star-Born, Half-Seen or Unseen, Numberless, Unnatural, Gigantic, Interstellar, Misshapen, Hidden, Membranous, Convoluted, Web-Winged, Fleshless.

Locations are: Decaying, Degenerate, Crumbling, Blackened, Gothic, Mildewed, Disintegrating, Blighted, Forest-Threatened, Anomalous, Outcast, Pitiful, Abandoned, Blasted, Brittle, Greying, Disintegrating, Encrusted, Carrion, Dimly-Lit, Unpleasant.

Architecture and miscellaneous things are: Cyclopean, Vast, Half-Unknown, Labyrinthine, Interplanetary, Intangible, Irregular, Strangely Angled, Limitless, A Piece of Bizarrerie, Horrible, Strange, Malign, Star-Wind, Night-Black, Antiquarian.

The camp is smashed to pieces. Tents flattened, equipment broken and unusable, most written material blown away. Lake's anatomical instruments absent.

Men and dogs - except Gedney and one dog - all dead. All slashed or strangled, and then butchered, or in two cases dissected, with cold precision. Salt scattered around.

Narrative Distance[1]

It's an important characteristic of Lovecraft's stories that they build the horror slowly over time. One doesn't normally see the true horror until right at the end of the story, but as the story progresses the narrative distance between the *Witness* and the *Final Horror* decreases. This helps to gradually ramp up the tension and sense of growing horror.

Decreasing narrative distance

Increasing horror and tension

TIME

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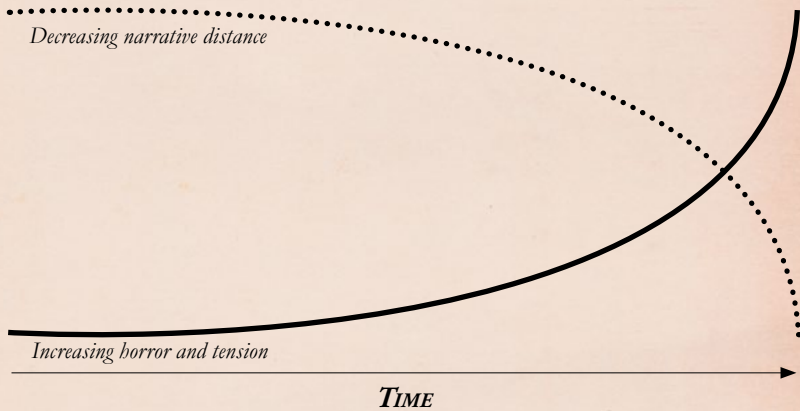
1 *The concept of narrative distance and many of the techniques for achieving it are adapted from* Stealing Cthulhu, *by Graham Walmsley.*

Eight of the specimens absent, but six remain, buried upright in five-pointed heaps of snow. All badly damaged, but clearly match Lake's description.

Aspects of the camp supplies and equipment oddly disordered.
Matches scattered in a heap, certain foods missing. Cans pried
open. Machinery looks to have been tinkered with.

The game recognises this mechanically through the *Creeping Horror* rule (see page 31).

But that's easier said than done – how do you keep narrative distance between the *Witness* (and indeed, the audience) and the supernatural?

There are a lot of different ways to do this:

- ⊙ The *Witness* doesn't see anything obviously supernatural, just the traces it leaves behind. Footprints. Claw-marks. Equipment, ritualistic paraphernalia. The burn marks of its entry into the physical universe.
- ⊙ The *Witness* doesn't see anything obviously supernatural, but senses it in other ways. Sounds. Smells. The sixth sense. The terrifying winds it carries in its wake. The reactions of animals.
- ⊙ The *Witness* doesn't see anything obviously supernatural, but encounters the effects of its presence. People afflicted with a sleeping sickness. Visions. Plants grown to bizarre size.
- ⊙ The *Witness* doesn't see anything obviously supernatural, but hears about it from others, whether described verbally or written in a diary. If so, the source should be someone whose account is readily dismissible – a drunk, an incorrigible gossip, a tabloid journalist, a child; and it should be suitably vague so as to leave plenty to the imagination.
- ⊙ The *Witness* sees something that might be supernatural, but obscured in some way. Perhaps they are dazzled by sunlight, or in the dark, or it is only dimly visible through fog.

Cold logical analysis is
required regardless of how
unpleasant are the conclusions
it yields.

LOVECRAFT AND RACISM

Lovecraft held deeply unpleasant racist beliefs. Those beliefs are evident in his writing spanning many years and many stories. The racism is overt, such as the language he uses to describe African-American people, and also subtle, such as the allegories against mixed marriage seen in 'Facts concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family' and 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth'. ***Lovecraftesque*** enables you to create your own stories of cosmic horror, free from Lovecraft's racist ideas.

Similar concerns apply to the treatment of women and LGBTQ peoples in Lovecraft's work. We have focussed on racism here because his racism was active, pervasive and needs to be more critically challenged in Lovecraftian role-playing games. Furthermore, this section only provides a brief overview of these issues. There are many excellent articles about Lovecraft, role-playing and racism, which provide more detail – and don't forget to check out Walking in the Darkness by Mo Holkar on page 65 for more ideas.

Lovecraftian games are traditionally set in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when overt racism was more prevalent than today. It would be easy to include that racism almost as window dressing. But aside from the inherent distastefulness of treating racism as a bit of background flavour, not everyone will find this fun. Even if you personally are comfortable with it, others in your group may not be. Is someone's fun being sacrificed on the altar of supposed historical accuracy?

'The obvious conclusion - that Gedney is responsible - remains to be confirmed if and when we locate him.

Most of the damage to the camp can be attributed to the storm. However, the dog corral appears to have been broken out of from the inside.

There are two ways to avoid simply regurgitating historical racism:

1. Play your game without any racism in it. Maybe it doesn't exist in your game world, or maybe it does but isn't seen "onscreen". If your Victorian game can have space-faring fungoid aliens that can extract people's brains and place them in jars, then having characters who aren't openly racist isn't much of a stretch.

2. Alternatively, refer to and use racism only to the extent that all the players have **explicitly agreed** to it **and** treat it critically.

Lovecraft relies on certain tropes which were part of his racism and which you can and should avoid. Examples of these tropes include:

1. Allegories about the evils of intermarriage and the resulting children.

2. Use of stereotypical savage/evil native cultures.

3. Every hero is a white man carrying the burden of saving the world, the horrific knowledge, etc.

4. The absence of people of colour except as ethnic stereotypes e.g. African-American gangs, Roma thieves, Chinese opium dens, Indian Thuggee Cultists.

As well as containing damaging stereotypes, these tropes are hackneyed and dull. Getting away from these themes can create *Lovecraftesque* stories and scenarios which are unusual and exciting. Imagine a smart African-American sophomore investigating a sinister frat house as Kira Magrann envisions in the scenario Dark Pledges on page 129, or a determined Egyptian farmer in the 1920s trying prevent a group of thoughtless archeologists from breaking the wards on a Great Old One's tomb, or a resourceful Indian nurse in World War One stumbling over a terrible alien secret.

The key is always an open and honest discussion in your gaming group. Ensure everyone is on the same page from the beginning – no one should have to be confronted by "surprise racism" halfway through a game.

The injuries inflicted on the men and dogs cannot have been delivered by any human hand or mind.

LOVECRAFT AND MENTAL HEALTH

"…the poor woman screamed about things in the air which she could not describe. In her raving there was not a single specific noun, but only verbs and pronouns." H.P. Lovecraft 'The Colour Out of Space'

An essential of the Lovecraft genre is madness. This theme is used in different ways in the source material and in the various Lovecraft-inspired roleplaying games. It is used as flavour and backdrop, as shorthand conveying how frightening a monster is, with casual brutality to discredit witnesses, and in a mechanical sense e.g. sanity points. These approaches are often hurtful and upsetting, and perpetuate harmful stereotypes about mental health. One in four of us has a mental health condition; the reality of mental health is complex and nuanced. Lovecraft's work is not complex and not nuanced here, and has great potential for further stigmatising mental health problems; unfortunately, many RPGs not only duplicate his approach but double down on it.

As with the section on Racism and Lovecraft (page 60), how you approach mental health in ***Lovecraftesque*** should be at the agreement of the players. Discuss openly and honestly your levels of comfort with the use of mental illness in the game. ***Lovecraftesque*** is perfectly playable without any mention of mental illness. If you want to dismiss a witness account as the "ravings of a madman" then ensure everyone agrees to that before the game starts. If even one person objects, don't use it. Encountering such casual bigotry (even fictional casual bigotry) can quickly suck the fun out of a game for some of us, and we want everyone sitting at your gaming table to have a good time! Check out the extended essay on Lovecraft and Mental Health on page 75.

The systematic dissection, the evidence of exploration and experimentation in the camp and the way in which the specimens were buried all point in the same direction.

There is a place in **Lovecraftesque** for themes of mental health. Once a person knows about the Horror, they may take perfectly rational actions for self-preservation which appear bizarre and obsessive to the uninitiated. The important thing to remember in portraying such behaviour is that you are not playing a mental illness, but a person who understands the true nature of the world and behaves accordingly. Such characters should appear very lucid indeed; a far cry from the stereotypes of Lovecraftian fiction.

At the same time, Lovecraft's monsters are frightening, alien, sickening, and often menace and attack ordinary people. Surviving such an attack would be traumatic, and could lead to symptoms similar to posttraumatic stress disorder. This would be a normal and understandable reaction to the trauma they have suffered; a reaction which dramatically affects their life. If a survivor knows the Horror is still out there in the world then some of their symptoms, such as hypervigilance, would be essential survival traits. By drawing on a real analogy for the survival of trauma you can avoid some of the cartoonish exaggerated portrayals which rely on stereotypes. A summary of the symptoms of PTSD can be found on page 79. But again remember you are playing a person, not a collection of symptoms.

Finally, it is worth remembering that the monsters and sorcery found in Lovecraftian stories can exert supernatural effects on humans which could resemble mental illness, such as visions and hallucinations. When this happens, it is important to be clear that it is not mental illness, but a supernatural effect that would disappear if the horror went away. As before, play the character who is affected by strange powers, not just a vehicle for those powers.

We would rather mental health in **Lovecraftesque** was based in reality and used sensitively and respectfully. By ditching the tired old tropes you will make a game which not only is more inclusive but which also feels fresh and different.

Resemblance of the snow-graves to the soapstone fragments, and to the anatomical structure of the specimens, particularly striking.
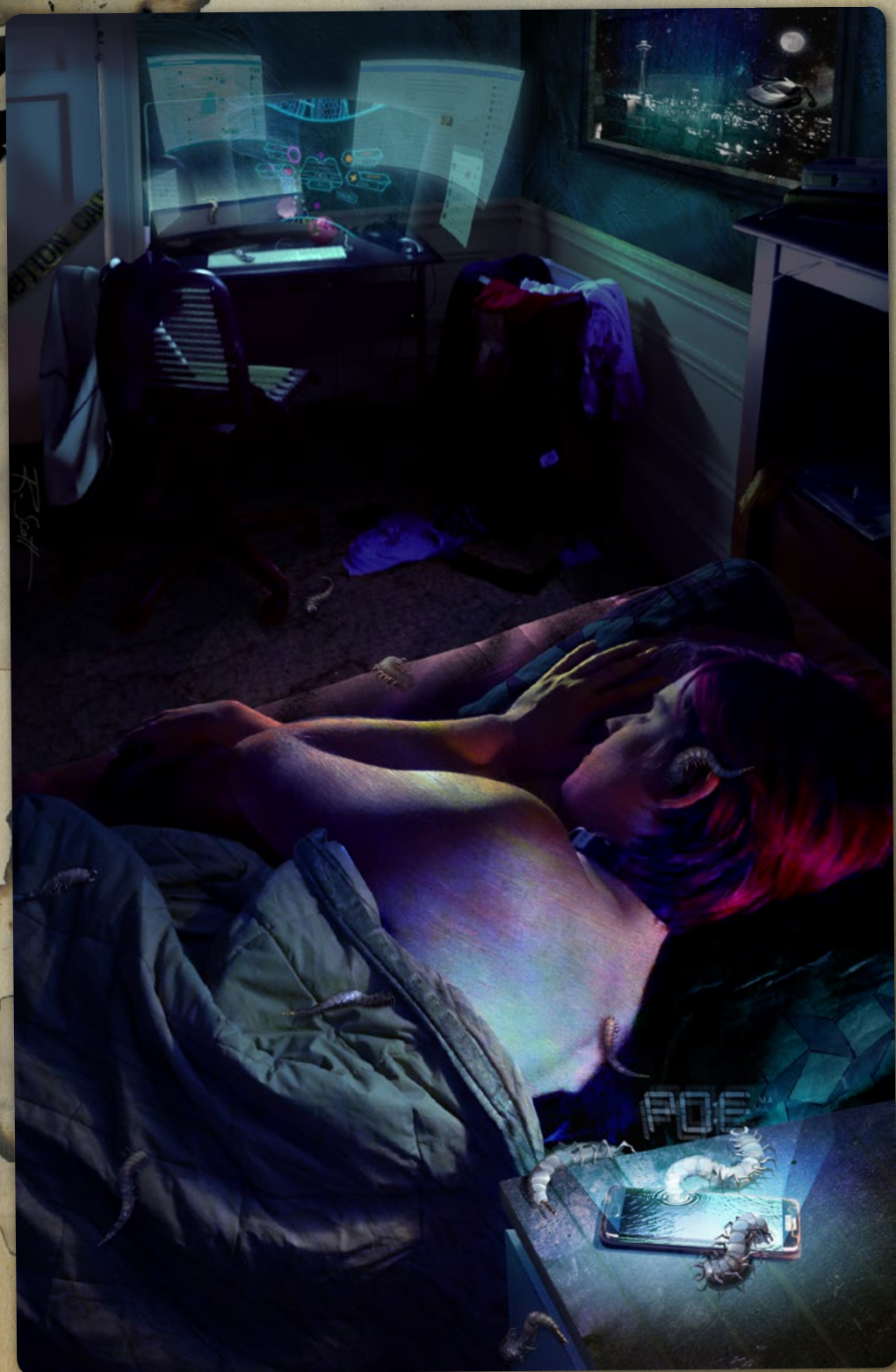
WALKING IN THE DARKNESS

HANDLING RACE IN *LOVECRAFTESQUE*

BY MO HOLKAR

"The population is a hopeless tangle and enigma; Syrian, Spanish, Italian, and negro elements impinging upon one another, and fragments of Scandinavian and American belts lying not far distant. It is a babel of sound and filth, and sends out strange cries to answer the lapping of oily waves at its grimy piers and the monstrous organ litanies of the harbour whistles." H.P. Lovecraft, 'The Horror at Red Hook'[1]

"But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." 1 John[2]

PREJUDICE AND THE PERIOD

When H.P. Lovecraft was writing the stories and novels that make up his chief legacy, in the 1920s and 30s, racial prejudice was commonplace among white Americans. The belief that the darker-skinned races of humanity were inherently savage, intellectually backward, and given to strange and distasteful beliefs and practices; and the related assumption that those from other cultures were untrustworthy, sinister, and generally Not Like Us; these could be found at all levels of society, apart from among the most enlightened.

However, Lovecraft took xenophobic prejudice to great lengths, even among his peers. Donald Tyson reports Lovecraft's wife Sonia as describing how when "walking the streets of New York and encounter[ing] a group of immigrants, Lovecraft would become

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1 *Lovecraft, H P. 1927. 'The Horror at Red Hook', in Weird Tales January 1927. Chicago.*
2 *1 John 2:11, KJV.*

so animated and enraged that she feared for his sanity"[3]; while Lin Carter quotes Sonia as saying "Whenever we found ourselves in the racially mixed crowds which characterize New York, Howard would become livid with rage. He seemed almost to lose his mind."[4]

THE WRITING

These attitudes of Lovecraft's are not absent in his writing. While outright racial slurs are unusual ('The Horror at Red Hook', quoted above, is perhaps the most obviously racist story), the thread of the danger and horror of the Other, and the ill-advisedness of mixing with it, runs strongly throughout his work.

Lovecraft seems to have been particularly concerned about the results of miscegenation – racial mixing. In stories such as 'The Shadow over Innsmouth'[5] and 'The Dunwich Horror'[6], he warns of the dangers of polluting pure blood with that of outsiders – leading to moral and physical decline and degeneracy. This might seem an irrational fear now that we know that all humans are pretty much the same genetically – but this wariness of introducing "inferior" material into one's own race was widespread not so long ago, and still is far from eliminated.

Furthermore, it's noteworthy that Lovecraft's protagonists and heroes are almost exclusively white middle-class American men; while people of other races feature as villains, as comic relief, as dupes, as faceless thugs, as corrupt monstrosities, and in other such generally unflattering roles.

Playing Lovecraftian games in the modern era allows us to take the best elements of his writing – his creative genius for mood and atmosphere, his restless imagination for the disturbingly horrific, his challenging exploration of cosmic and personal alienation – while moving on from those elements that we find reprehensible.

3 Tyson, D. 2010. *The Dream World of H P Lovecraft: His Life, His Demons, His Universe.* Llewellyn Publications.
4 Carter, L. 1972. *Lovecraft: A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos.* Ballantine.
5 Lovecraft, H P. 1936. *The Shadow over Innsmouth.* Visionary Publishing Company.
6 Lovecraft, H P. 1929. 'The Dunwich Horror', in *Weird Tales April 1929.* Chicago.

Aerial search for Gedney and other missing things has so far proved fruitless.

EARLIER GAMES

Whether through lack of awareness or reluctance to talk about a distressing subject, earlier Lovecraftian role-playing games have generally not addressed this problematic aspect of the source material. And the pulpy tendency of many Cthulhoid adventures tends to the same effect: dark-skinned tribes as shrieking cultists, foreigners as sinister schemers or emissaries of evil gods, and a general theme of white Westerners interacting with other peoples from a position of moral superiority.

So, for example, in *Masks of Nyarlathotep*[7] – the *Call of Cthulhu* supplement frequently acclaimed as the best RPG campaign ever written[8] – we see Kenyans, Egyptians and Chinese people presented as basically depraved and evil cultists. The investigator protagonists criss-cross the globe while picking up the white man's burden of saving the world from cult conspiracy, in the face of the ignorance or malice of the various peoples who they meet on their travels.

This tone is very much in keeping with the literature of the period when the game is set. But we're playing now almost a century on, and things have changed. Not all role-players are white: and when creating a game, there's now the opportunity to make fair and satisfying representations of protagonists and the people who they meet, without having to always reach for the racist clichés of old.

LOVECRAFTESQUE

Lovecraftesque provides a wonderful opportunity for creative players to shape their own Lovecraftian experience in ways that the Old Man himself would never have dreamed of.

Because at every stage of the game you're making decisions about what material to introduce – who is the *Witness*, what is the setting, what is the nature of the *Clues*, what *Conclusions* are you leaping to, what is the *Final Horror*? – you have repeated opportunities to make sure that you're not inadvertently drawing on racist tropes, but instead are keeping your game fresh and also respectful in your representation.

7 *DiTillio, L and Willis, L. 1984. Masks of Nyarlathotep. Chaosium.*
8 *Appelcline, S. 2011. Designers & Dragons. Mongoose Publishing.*

It's not like you have to be obsessively self-critical, or turn every play session into an examination of your own and your fellow-players morals and prejudices. We're hoping to show that just a little bit of thought can go a long way.

> *"I have no race prejudices nor caste prejudices nor creed prejudices. All I care to know is that a man is a human being, and that is enough for me; he can't be any worse." Mark Twain, 'Concerning the Jews'*[9]

'DARKNESS VISIBLE'

On page 96 of this book you'll find a scenario called 'Darkness Visible'. It's been prepared to accompany this essay. We're going to walk through it now, looking at how the simple choices that you make can create big differences in the tone and content of the story that you end up telling together.

As this is a pre-written scenario, some of the choices have been given to you – but even so there's plenty of room to put your own spin and shape upon them.

LOCATION AND ERA

The small Alabama town of Deacon Fork, in 1964. Built adjoining a former cotton plantation which has been swallowed by the woods. An inward-looking place, where things stay quiet as long as not too many questions are asked.

The American Deep South in the mid-1960s was the scene of much racial tension, with civil rights activity meeting with oppressive policing as well as widespread racist violence, even lynchings. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was signed into law, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. A game of ***Lovecraftesque*** isn't likely to touch directly on these political developments, but they form the backdrop against which your story will take place.

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9 Twain, M. 1899. 'Concerning the Jews' in Harper's Monthly.

We have made camp for the night. Hard to escape the conclusion that Gedney not responsible for the atrocities we have seen.

The town of Maycomb, in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird[10], is bigger and more civilised than Deacon Fork in this 'Darkness Visible' scenario, but it gives you a good flavour of what the range of inter-racial relations and prejudices are like. A hot, slow and lazy small town; but nonetheless a mass of people can get rapidly stirred up when they feel a grievance. To an outsider, life here seems stagnant and small-minded: the inhabitants seem obsessed with their differences, with minute gradations of class and caste being massively important. Family history is remembered and ancient incidents still considered relevant. Most white people will have been brought up to think of African-Americans[11] as quite unlike them – and vice versa. The few people who socialize across the racial divide will be generally mistrusted – as will people of mixed race.

We've specified that the town is associated with a former plantation. A century previously, before the Civil War, the plantation would have been worked by slaves. The African-American inhabitants of Deacon Fork today are likely descended from those slaves: although some will have left the area after emancipation, many will have settled to become sharecroppers and suchlike trades.

Think about the tensions and resentments that will have built up in the town. Most of the white inhabitants won't be directly descended from slave-owners, so it's not like everyone has a family memory of ordering slaves around. But those of lower income and status may feel even more threatened and undermined by the presence of a free African-American community than do their richer counterparts. They may therefore be resentful of those who seek to improve the lot of African-Americans, fearing that this will be at the expense of poor whites.

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10 Lee, H. 1960. *To Kill a Mockingbird. Philadelphia: J B Lippincott.*

11 *"African-American" wasn't widely used in the 1960s; instead, people would have said Negro or Black. You may or may not wish to reflect that in your game. Anyway, we'll use the modern term here.*

The events of today cast a new light on the visions we saw from the plane of a vast city, which I previously wrote off as mirage.

Witness

Gregory Freeman, would-be writer. Has come to Deacon Fork to research his family history, for a planned book. His strength is *stubborn determination*, and his personality trait is a *charming demeanour*.

So the first important question to answer to yourselves about Gregory, your *Witness*: if his ancestors came from Deacon Fork, were they whites, or were they slaves? Does his surname "Freeman" maybe indicate an emancipated slave forebear? Or is it the fairly-common Anglo-American surname? Or might he be of mixed race?

Your decision is obviously going to make a big difference to how Gregory is received in Deacon Fork, and what kind of experience he has there. Might he have surviving distant relatives among the inhabitants? What sort of lives might they be living now?

If this were an H.P. Lovecraft story, Gregory would probably be a descendant of the plantation-owning family, and we might perhaps expect his degenerate cousins to be secretly living on in their ruined mansion, sunk into perverse and filthy corruption. Imagine his horror when he discovers that he shares their taint! That would be a powerful and interesting story, for sure – it could easily be as good as *The Shadow over Innsmouth* – but just think about the alternatives.

- ⊙ Descended from plantation staff/overseers – who maybe left town when the estate collapsed after the end of the Civil War.
- ⊙ Descended from former slaves – who went North after emancipation.
- ⊙ Descended from ordinary white townsfolk – who left because of the town's descent into poverty.
- ⊙ Descended from a mixed-race couple – who left to avoid racial prejudice and disapproval of their union.

Any of those could make for a fascinating and horrific return to Deacon Fork. The beauty of a setting like this is that it can hold unpleasant encounters and lessons for pretty much anyone.

We have agreed to attempt a flight over the mountain range in the morning. I have already plotted a potential course with Danforth

Heavy winds have delayed our planned departure. The atmosphere here is frustration mixed with determination.

RACISM AGAINST THE WITNESS

If you do decide that Gregory is to be a man of colour in your game, then the chances are that he will encounter racism from some of the inhabitants of Deacon Fork – directed at him personally, or observing racist behaviour and prejudice.

You need then to think about how you're going to handle racism in play. Have a look back at the discussion of Lovecraft and Racism on page 62. You should only include this sort of material if all the players are explicitly in agreement about it, and are prepared to treat it critically. (Hopefully they will be, as otherwise this scenario will lose a lot of its power.)

Curt Thompson coined the term "fun tax" to describe the out-of-game impact of in-game bigotry. Are there players who might be prepared to go along with playing racism and its effects for the benefit of the other players, but who won't enjoy it themselves? If so, that needn't necessarily rule it out – if people want to make that sacrifice for the sake of the group experience, they should be allowed to – but you need to recognize what it is that you're asking of them.

And finally, remember the X-Card (see page 16), which allows any player to remove any recently-introduced element from play. We can't always predict what will upset us (or what other players might come up with), so it's important to have this way of protecting players at short notice, without the need for them to explain or apologise.

The strata of the high peaks verifies Lake's account – these peaks are truly ancient.

LEAPING TO CONCLUSIONS

Part of the fun of **Lovecraftesque**'s mechanism of "*Leaping to Conclusions*" is letting ideas pop freely into your head. We're not going to suggest replacing that freedom with a studied and planned approach – that would suck the spontaneity out of your creation. Instead, how about this: once you've had an idea that works with the *Clues* you've seen so far, just check it over mentally before writing it down. Have you accidentally slipped into a racist cliché? Here's a quick checklist of the sorts of things to consider:

- ⊙ Are the villains (or cultists, etc) people of a different race from the *Witness* – particularly, are they darker-skinned, or "natives", or of another oppressed group such as Inuit or Roma?

- ⊙ Does the plot involve negative or dangerous effects of mixing of different human races, or of humans with aliens or monsters?

- ⊙ Does your idea carry an implication that people who are in some way "not like us" are typically devious or deceitful or not to be trusted, or some other such negative characteristic?

If you realise that any of these are the case, don't beat yourself up about it, but take a moment to think again. Is there a different kind of story that would fit the *Clues*? Or is there a way of undercutting or twisting that clichéd trope, such that it instead carries a non-racist message? For example, suppose that locals suspect that the travelling Roma are up to no good, and the *Clues* seem to point that way. Perhaps the Roma are being framed, and actually they're working against the true evil – a gang of ruthless and corrupt businesspeople?

The short version of the guideline is: punch up, don't punch down[12]. In other words: villainise people who are powerful and established, rather than people who are oppressed or victimised.

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12 *For a clear and detailed explanation of punching up and down, see: Negisa, K. (2012). "Punching Up", in* Reasonable Conversation, *19 July 2012. https://reasonableconversation.wordpress.com/2012/07/19/punching-up/, accessed 22 January 2016.*

Regular formations of archaean quartz, sometimes in separate cyclopean blocks, clearly visible from the plane. Could natural processes possibly explain them?

Processing Clues

Take a look at the example *Clues* given in the 'Darkness Visible' scenario. They include:

> *A set of iron fetters found, carefully placed, in front of a doorway.*
>
> *A burning torch planted in the ground during the night. Blood has been dripped around its base.*
>
> *Evidence of an old crime unexpectedly emerges.*

Suppose those three *Clues* come up in your game of **Lovecraftesque**. How might you string them together?

It seems like maybe some group of conspirators is trying to scare someone, with memories of the bad slave-owning times. And perhaps they're keeping alive old evils that never actually died out? Who might they be? Two simple possibilities:

- ⊙ modern-day white racists are trying to keep the African-American inhabitants from getting "uppity";
- ⊙ modern-day African-Americans are trying to get vengeance for the wrongs done to their ancestors.

Of course in a Lovecraftian investigative scenario, things are rarely what they first seem, so there might be another level of conspiracy which you add to your *Conclusions* when more *Clues* have emerged:

- ⊙ people are trying to prevent the arrival of an old African-based death cult;
- ⊙ people are trying to prevent actual modern-day slavery taking place;
- ⊙ people are trying to spread confusion around some underlying evil plot that isn't related to slavery or to race at all.

And no doubt you'll have thought of further ideas yourself. Each time you develop your theory or add to it, you just need to ask yourself about the story that it's telling.

Peaks appear riddled with curiously regular caves, smooth and lacking stalactites or stalagmites.

So to have the African-American inhabitants of Deacon Fork involved in an evil and savage cult that involves sacrificing white folks to an ancient African deity would be a perfectly good story in the tradition of Lovecraftian gaming, but it would be pretty much falling into the harmful clichés that we're encouraging you to avoid.

Conversely, you probably won't want to make it all black and white (as it were) the other way, either. To cast all the African-American locals as noble victims, and all the white citizens as wicked neo-slavers (apart from maybe one heroic one who rescues the unfortunate slaves), is kind of cheesy too.

You'll want ideally to go for a story where people's race, while informing their history and background, isn't the most important determinant of their morality. In reality – and in the most interesting stories – good and bad can come from any origin.

Other players

One important thing to bear in mind is that other players in your game may not have read this. If you find that the people you're playing with come up with ideas or characters that you think are unintentionally including racist themes in the kinds of ways we've been talking about, of course it's up to you how you want to react to that.

We're not going to suggest that you should alienate your friends by accusing them of racism and generally tearing them a new hole. But if you're thinking that maybe it's better to keep quiet and let it ride, we just want to put forward the idea that often people don't realise that what they've suggested may be ill-considered – and they're glad of someone gently pointing out the potential problems, and that they might like to think again.

The Black Armada team have put this game together partly motivated by a powerful drive towards inclusivity, diversity, better representation, and more general awareness in Lovecraftian gaming. We hope that you'll be able to join us on that journey. Happy *Final Horror*!

Danforth hints darkly that markings around the mouths resemble those on the soapstone fragments.

MENTAL HEALTH AND LOVECRAFT

BY JOSH FOX AND REBECCA ANNISON
*WITH INVALUABLE INPUT FROM SHOSHANA KESSOCK, BRIE SHELDON
AND TOBIAS STRAUSS*

**Content Warning: this essay includes mention of mental
health stigma, stereotyping, and ableist language.**

INTRODUCTION

*"If I am mad, it is mercy! May the gods pity the man who in his callous-
ness can remain sane to the hideous end!" H.P. Lovecraft, 'The Temple"*

Ideas and tropes about madness are inextricably linked with Love-
craft's work and the roleplaying culture around it. "Mad", "crazy",
"insane" and similar are used to dismiss people, turning them into
stereotypes rather than individuals. This contributes to the social
stigma associated with mental health, which can lead to real-world
hurt and harm such as reduced self-esteem, self-value, and con-
fidence; and decreased propensity to seek help for mental health
problems[2]. Playing Lovecraftian games without extending and
continuing this harm is important - but is it even possible? This
essay will look at the ways in which Lovecraft used madness, how
role-playing has contributed to it and what practical things we can
do to step back from that without losing the essence of Lovecraft.

Although modern society understands mental illness better than
in Lovecraft's time, media representation of mental illness remains
two-dimensional and inaccurate. One in four people suffers from
mental illness[3]: yet it is misunderstood, sensationalised, and stigma-
tised[4]. And on a personal level, stereotyping of mental illness can
insult, offend, and harm those around your gaming table.

So how do we tell Lovecraftian stories without repeating the
hurt and harm?

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1 *Lovecraft, H.P. 1925. 'The Temple', in Weird Tales September 1925. Chicago.*
2 *YoungMinds. 2010. Stigma – a review of the evidence.*
3 *The Health and Social Care Information Centre. 2009. Adult psychiatric morbidity in
England, 2007. Results of a household survey. http://www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/psychi-
atricmorbidity07 [accessed 22 July 2016].*
4 *UW School of Social Work, Mental Health Reporting. 2016. 'Facts About Mental
Illness and Violence'. http://depts.washington.edu/mhreport/facts_violence.php [ac-
cessed 22 July 2016].*

HOW DOES LOVECRAFT USE MENTAL HEALTH AND MADNESS IN HIS WORK?

There is a perception that madness dominates Lovecraft's work. He depicts a world where understanding the true horrors of the cosmos could rip back the veil from someone's eyes and send them spiraling into "madness". But this is only a potential threat – not an inevitable journey, as often portrayed in Lovecraftian roleplaying. Near-ubiquitous "sanity" mechanics ensure that mental illness comes up again and again, becoming a focus for play to an extent not present in Lovecraft's work.

Lovecraft did use reductive and hackneyed portrayals of mental illness: but descent into "cackling madness" is neither certain nor universal in his stories – many of his protagonists survive the horror shaken but unharmed.

Lovecraft uses "madness" in five ways in his stories:

1. **As shorthand for unstable, unreliable, hostile, or evil**. Lovecraft routinely uses "mad" and its synonyms to describe objects and the environment. For example, in 'The Music of Erich Zann', houses lean "crazily", music is "frenzied", and the viol is "insane", heightening the tension by making everything hostile. He describes people similarly – "the mad Arab Alhazred" and old Zadok who is "touched in the head". Often these descriptions are meant literally by the narrator, but this also serves as a cheap way to cast individuals as unreliable. This can be harmful during gameplay precisely because it is so thoughtless and casual. It is also the easiest of Lovecraft's usages to ditch, since it doesn't affect the story.

   Quite often the perspective character will say that they have themselves "gone mad": again, this seems intended literally. But the perspective character is almost never portrayed as a stereotypical "madman": they are always lucid, able to describe their experiences dispassionately and in great detail.

"I must be careful how I record my awaking today, for I am unstrung, and much hallucination is necessarily mixed with fact." H.P. Lovecraft, 'The Temple'[5]

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5 See above, note 1.

2. **Bait and switch.** Lovecraft frequently uses narrative distance as a way of creating a "willing suspension of **belief**" – we go along with the idea that there's nothing sinister going on because the horror is plausibly deniable. "Madness" is one way that Lovecraft achieves this. Sometimes he implies characters are "mad" based on bizarre-sounding claims they make – claims which are invariably revealed as true. Other times the implication is based on strange behaviour which later turns out to be entirely reasonable given the horror. Lovecraft plays on our own prejudices about mental illness to put off his final reveal, but the reader knows all along where the story is going.

   For example, Charles Dexter Ward entreats Dr Willett to "shoot Dr Allen on sight and dissolve his body in acid. Don't burn it." Dr Lyman from the "hospital for the insane" takes this as proof of Charles's "well developed case of dementia praecox" (*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*).

   In *The Shadow Out of Time* the "unconscious stupor" of Nathaniel Peaslee, and later the "trend of his expression and language" and other signs, are intended to give the impression of "madness"; when in fact his mind has been taken over by an alien consciousness.

   Of course, by doing this Lovecraft is relying on stereotypes about mental illness and thereby reinforcing them. But the behaviour we see is ultimately revealed to be unrelated to mental illness.

3. **Supernatural effects on the human mind.** There are examples in Lovecraft's work of supernatural effects creating a temporary "madness-like" effect. These are not portrayals of mental illness per se, but psychic or magical influence. There is no attempt to link these to real-world mental illness (even seen through the lens of a 1920s belief system). Although some of these effects (hallucinations, for example) would certainly be classified as mental illness by modern medicine, they clearly aren't the same as real-world mental illness.

Accursed piping again. A most unpleasant noise.

Examples include:

- ⊙ the compulsion of the main character to seek out the undersea temple in 'The Temple', linked to the influence of the ivory statue;
- ⊙ the "madness" of Mrs Gardner, caused by the Colour, in 'The Colour Out of Space';

4. **Short-term loss of control.** Confronted with terrifying and overwhelming horrors, Lovecraft's characters sometimes lose control temporarily, in a hyperbolic version of the fight, flight, or freeze response. The protagonist in 'Dagon' screams and flees, while in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* Dr Willett "screamed and screamed and screamed in a voice whose falsetto panic no acquaintance of his would ever have recognised."

5. **Long-term psychological problems resulting from exposure to the horror**. Lovecraft describes characters whose worldview has been shattered, so the universe no longer makes sense to them. This is a fundamental theory of Lovecraft's:

"The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age."
H.P. Lovecraft, 'The Call of Cthulhu[6]*

Protagonists seem morbidly obsessed with what they have seen, emotionally flat and in some cases suicidal – such as the protagonist in 'Dagon', who opens the story with his intention to "cast myself from this garret window into the squalid street below". Importantly, we do not see stereotyped incoherence or

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6 *Lovecraft, H.P. 1928. 'The Call of Cthulhu', in Weird Tales February 1928. Chicago.*

Spotted Lake's mountaintop rampart. Hard to believe he is gone.

drooling "madmen", but a lucid yet fatalistic condition. This resembles the symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and indeed PTSD is a reasonable real-world model for how a person might respond when exposed to supernatural horror. Equally, though, this could be seen as a rational reaction to discovering your worldview is fundamentally wrong.

These different approaches are sometimes combined: in 'The Call of Cthulhu' we have cultists who are characterised as "mad" (i.e. a literal statement on their mental health), at the same time that their dancing and vocalisations are described as "mad" (i.e. unpleasant and wrong), causing policemen to faint.

PTSD symptoms (summarised from the NHS website[1] and adapted for eldritch horror)

- ⊙ Flashbacks, bad dreams and frightening thoughts
- ⊙ Guilt, depression, self-loathing, worry or emotional numbness
- ⊙ Tense, on edge, easily startled
- ⊙ Difficulty sleeping
- ⊙ Angry outbursts
- ⊙ Incomplete or lost memory of the horror
- ⊙ Avoiding things that are reminders of the horror
- ⊙ Associated problems like substance abuse

1 *http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Post-traumatic-stress-disorder/Pages/Symptoms.aspx [accessed 15 August 2016].*

But there are plenty of examples where Lovecraft's protagonists, having uncovered the true nature of the universe, do not "go mad,".

In 'The Dunwich Horror', Professor Armitage and his team defeat the horror and uncover the final chilling twist without "losing their minds". In *At The Mountains of Madness*, Professor Dyer returns to continue his successful academic career, later joining a similarly horrific expedition in *The Shadow Out of Time*. In *The Case of Charles*

Dexter Ward, while Dr Willett "has not been the same since", there is no indication that this is anything other than a minor effect; and he goes on to defeat Joseph Curwen.

So, to put that in **Lovecraftesque** terms; you can choose to have the *Witness* survive unscathed, as Lovecraft himself often did.

HANDLING "MADNESS" IN LOVECRAFTIAN GAMING

Anyone sitting down to play your game might be dealing with their own mental illness issues, whether they are open about them or not. And they will almost certainly have family or friends who are living with mental illness. Being careful and respectful about representing "madness" in your game ensures that your players have an enjoyable experience while having the stuffing scared out of them. After all, the idea is to traumatize the characters not the players.

Creating a culture of consent at the table is a great way to get started with this. Horror should make us uncomfortable, but that discomfort should be consensual. You should look to do this before, during and after the game. Discuss beforehand whether and how mental illness might come up in your game, and what everyone is comfortable with. If, during play, things drift into poor or offensive representation, or start to breach boundaries set by the group, speak up. And after the session, discuss how things went and any issues that came up – leaving room for earnest feedback, without blame, but with suggestions for improvement and assistance.

Many Lovecraftian roleplaying games include mechanics to "strike characters with madness" at the sight of something unknowable. This is where the greatest risk of stereotyped play arises: if the player is taken by surprise, and forced to ad lib a mental illness. If this happens, don't just rush into it. Take a moment to review what you've agreed about mental health, and to allow the player to think about how best to play through this.

Lovecraft's use of themes of "madness" breaks down into two approaches which you might use in your game: use of language, and use of actual malign influences on the human mind.

Tools for a culture of consent

Lovecraftesque uses explicit bans on specific elements (see page 17) to avoid, which could include portrayal of stereotyped "madness" or specific language. A similar commonly-used approach is to agree at the start "lines" (material to be excluded from the game), and "veils" (material that can be included, but never described in detail). Optionally, such pre-game agreements can be done anonymously, by privately contributing to a list of banned elements which is then anonymised by the facilitator or GM[1].

Other tools are used to handle problematic material in real time. We earlier recommended the X-Card (see page 16) for this purpose. Other commonly used tools are keywords like "cut/brake[2]", and Brie Sheldon's "script change"[3].

1 This approach is used in When the Dark is Gone. See: http://site.pelgranepress.com/index. php/seven-wonders-a-story-games-anthology-2/ [accessed 22 July 2016].
2 Stark, L. 2014. 'A Primer on Safety in Roleplaying Games'. http://leavingmundania. com/2014/02/27/primer-safety-in-roleplaying-games/ [accessed 22 July 2016].
3 Sheldon, B. 2013. 'Script Change in Action'. http://preview.tinyurl.com/nphed7m [accessed 22 July 2016].

Lovecraftian language in your game

Lovecraft's baroque language is a part of what makes his fiction what it is. In practice, narration in roleplaying games tends to take this down a notch anyway, because it's pretty cumbersome when spoken out loud. Even so, elaborate narration adds atmosphere to your game. There's a great collection of Lovecraftian language on page 56 which you can use in place of mental-illness-based slurs. Words like "blasphemous", "abomination", "blasted", and "unnatural" are just as evocative – and just as Lovecraftian.

Hard to know where to begin. First view of ancient city, extending in all directions, instantly shatters all illusions. The world we understood is gone.

Examples:

*"[V]ast angles and stone surfaces—surfaces too great to belong to any thing **right or proper** for this earth, and **impious** with **horrible** images and hieroglyphs"* ('The Call of Cthulhu').

*"[T]he **nightmare** plastic column of **foetid black iridescence oozed** tightly onward through its fifteen-foot sinus; gathering **unholy speed** and driving before it a spiral, re-thickening cloud of the **pallid abyss-vapour"** (At the Mountains of Madness).*

As mentioned earlier, Lovecraft used "mad" as shorthand for "unreliable" or "evil". Instead, try these options:

- ⊙ Use **other words**. Rumours of strange things in Innsmouth can be far-fetched, elaborate, or unbelieveable, rather than "crazy".

- ⊙ Directly describe a person's **behaviour or symptoms**. Have someone report hearing Charles Dexter Ward talking to himself in his room. They may appear uneasy and confused about it – but they needn't also call it "mad".

- ⊙ Use other shortcuts to "unreliable" that **don't denigrate** a whole group of people. Use drunkenness, sleep deprivation, dark nights, ill-defined shapes, and poor eyesight. The tricks of narrative distance set out on page 57 work here.

"In a rational age like the eighteenth century it was unwise for a man of learning to talk about wild sights and strange scenes under a Congo moon; of the gigantic walls and pillars of a forgotten city, crumbling and vine-grown, and of damp, silent, stone steps leading interminably down into the darkness of abysmal treasure-vaults and inconceivable catacombs." H.P. Lovecraft, 'Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family'7

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7 *Lovecraft, H.P. 1921. 'Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family', in The Wolverine March–June 1921.*

Location of the structures implies existence over hundreds of thousands of years, in conditions deadly to humans. Yet despite heavy weathering, incredibly well preserved.

MENTAL ILLNESS IN YOUR GAME

We've discussed already how Lovecraft's characters may have their minds blasted by eldritch effects, temporarily lose control of themselves when confronted by evil, or be traumatised by the revelation of an inhuman universe. You needn't remove these elements from your game; but you should avoid reducing victims to "crazy".

To answer some common misconceptions about mental illness:

- ⊙ **A person is not their mental illness**. To define a person by their mental illness is very damaging. By identifying a character only by their illness, you rob them of the ability to be fleshed out and interacted with as a fully-realised human being. Mental illness is just that: an illness.

- ⊙ **People with mental illnesses are not "mad"**. Contrary to popular stereotype, just because someone has a mental illness doesn't necessarily mean they act "crazy", or can't think straight. Most mental illness is invisible, even on a prolonged interaction: and while it may have far-reaching effects on a person's life, people who have a mental illness are in general as able to hold a conversation, hold down a job, or think through a problem as anyone else.

- ⊙ **Mental illness does not automatically make you more untrustworthy, weak, or violent**. Many people believe there is a causal link between mental illness and violence, or even evil, just as Lovecraft describes the "potentially dangerous madman" in 'The Temple'. But people with mental health problems are far more likely to be the victims of violence than its perpetrators[8]. Games with "crazy mental patients" or "crazy cultists" as antagonists perpetuate this abhorrent stereotype.

- ⊙ **Mental illness is not sexy or cool or funny**. Portraying someone as being sexy or cool because of the symptoms of their mental illness ignores the real trouble those illnesses cause. Suppose a character is affected by bipolar disorder

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8 Phend, C. 2012. *'Mentally Ill Often Targets of Violence'*. *http://www.medpagetoday. com/Psychiatry/GeneralPsychiatry/31383 [accessed 22 July 2016]*.

during your game. You might portray them becoming manic; staying up every night, being quirky, off the wall, and risky. But what about taking medication, having trouble holding down a job, and the bipolar lows? To represent the "cool" parts of mental illness while ignoring the minuses is not respectful. This goes double for creating a character whose mental illness is played for laughs: a particular issue with bit-part characters who come on stage, do something "crazy", and then disappear. Our advice is simply to avoid this.

⊙ **Mental illness can be life-threatening**[9] to a person suffering, depending on their illness. For some people, self-harm is a reality: this subject, and those related, are very dark topics to bring to your game table. Approach them with caution and compassion, and never use them lightly. Always consider who is around your table and how this topic may affect them.

Fortunately, Lovecraft's stories did not focus on mental illness of a sort that reduces characters permanently to a set of symptoms. We've outlined above how Lovecraft's "crazy people" were typically (a) not really "mad" at all, (b) only affected in the short-term, or (c) suffering from symptoms not dissimilar to PTSD. **None of these require you to portray a stereotype**.

Lovecraft's characters who become "mad" have usually encountered something that was too hard for them to comprehend, or else suffered an external supernatural influence. Even so, they are nearly always lucid – clinical, even, in their ability to analyse what has happened and their own mental state – and far from the stereotype of a "madman".

> *"Assuming that I was sane and awake, my experience on that night was such as has befallen no man before. It was, moreover, a frightful confirmation of all I had sought to dismiss as myth and dream."* H.P. *Lovecraft,* The Shadow out of Time[10]

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9 *http://toronto.cmha.ca/mental_health/the-relationship-between-suicide-and-mental-illness/ [accessed 15 August 2016].*
10 *Lovecraft, H.P. 1936. The Shadow out of Time, in Astounding Stories June 1936. New York.*

So by all means, have your characters break down in the face of the horror, but try also to show each person's unique reaction to the horror; what they find terrifying; what they cling to in the face of it; and how their personality continues to show itself. You can display a character's individuality, even when they're affected by trauma or other influence, in a number of ways:

- Through their possessions, their clothes, their home. This is a particularly convenient shortcut to personality, because you can display it even when someone is unable to respond rationally: they may clutch their crucifix for comfort, or a photograph of family.

- Through others. Real people have employers, loved ones and friends. These characters can tell you what a victim is like when they're not terrified by horrors.

- Through the things they say. You can drop in references to friends, or beliefs. You can pepper their language with scientific or religious words as appropriate. Such nuances can even come through in the speech of someone affected by the Colour out of Space.

- Through their behaviour. An ex-soldier might express horror and panic through firing their gun, rather than fleeing. A committed believer in science might, upon having their worldview shattered, become obsessed with the holes in scientific theory.

Giving glimpses of these things, even for walk-on characters, enriches your game far more than using "madness" as shorthand – and makes the impact of the horror more horrifying. For important characters, take the time to weave in details and nuances – and then, if and when they lose control or become jaded by the horror, you can reincorporate and twist those details, to show the influence the horror has had on them.

LOVECRAFTESQUE

The above advice applies to all Lovecraftian games; but ***Lovecraftesque*** provides two further tools.

Lovecraft commonly uses inner monologues, revealing how the protagonist is at first dismissive of the bizarre clues, how this gradually segues into fatalistic doubt, culminating in open expressions of fear. Correspondingly, ***Lovecraftesque*** encourages you to speak out loud the *Witness*'s **fears and rationalisations**. Use this technique liberally, to show how the *Witness* experiencing an increasing sense of distress – but especially in the *Journey into Darkness*, to accelerate the sense of fear and discomfort.

When introducing strange behaviour, remember that, regardless of what you have in mind as the explanation, other players will be **leaping to their own *Conclusions***. By leaving the explanation ambiguous, you enable other players to be creative. You could easily have one player who thinks a character's strange behaviour is explained by trauma and mental illness; a second who thinks they are acting in rational response to the supernatural; and a third who thinks they are acting under a supernatural effect. So try to leave it ambiguous for as long as you can.

Further dots similar to those on the soapstone fragments and, now obvious, the tunnel mouths. All connected, undeniably.

Five-pointed squares link to the fragments, the snow-graves, and – yes, evidently – the specimens.

CONCLUSION

These suggestions are not the only way to present a character with mental illness "correctly" or perfectly. That would be impossible, because mental illness is so complex – after all, professional actors struggle to achieve an authentic portrayal. Your play group may not get everything right, and may run into trouble during play. That's alright, provided you are always working to improve. Nevertheless, if you follow the advice in this essay, you can eliminate offensive stereotypes, and keep your portrayal respectful. And you can do all this while staying true to Lovecraft's dark vision of the world.

Earlier "mirage" must have been reflected off atmospheric ice-dust.

Scenarios
& Other Resources

THE FACE OF EVIL

By Joshua Fox

WITNESS

Sajeeda Rahman, a journalist from the Edinburgh Evening News. She has been sent to Peebles to do a feature on the town as a holiday destination. Her strength is *insatiable curiosity*, and her personality trait is *night owl*.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- *Lady Neidpath,* the reclusive heiress of the Neidpath name and fortune. Her family died in mysterious circumstances a decade ago.
- *Edward "Ted" McCruire,* an antiquarian and tour guide whose rambling stories of the town's history occasionally veer into strange rumour and myth.
- *"Henry Cavill"* (not his real name)*,* a regular visitor to the town who resembles a popular movie star. He never talks to anyone but is often seen walking the nearby countryside late in the evening.
- *Agatha Sangster,* the proprietor of the Wee Dram, as well as a dozen or so local houses which she lets out to visitors. She continues to run a cottage industry distilling and selling whisky, which is renowned for its unusual flavour.

Incredibly complex labyrinthine interior. We would surely be lost if not for our use of paper trail.

Wall sculptures intricate, beautiful and demonstrating undeniable cultural complexity and depth

Significant historical details can be gleaned from the carvings.

The Elder Ones seem to have enjoyed bathing at the bottom of the great river.

LOCATION AND ERA

The Scottish border town of Peebles, a market town once famed for its whisky, on the banks of the river Tweed, in 2015.

OTHER LOCATIONS

- *Neidpath Castle,* a forbidding fortress on a hillside, originating in the 12th century. The castle is accessed via a narrow, winding road through forest. Parts of the castle are open for private visits, while others remain private. There is a dungeon beneath the castle.

- *A disused railway tunnel* runs through the nearby hills. The tunnel is curved so that the centre is completely dark, and is the subject of numerous strange rumours. Supposedly used as a hiding place for the royal family during WWII.

- *Cross Kirk* is an ancient priory dating back to medieval times, since abandoned for a modern replacement. Its shattered remains are overgrown, and its grounds are full of graves whose marker stones have been plundered for building material.

- *The Wee Dram hotel,* a former whisky distillery, containing some of the old equipment which you can visit for a price (free to visitors).

CARDS

- Anachronism
- Dreams/visions
- Eldritch technology
- Spatiotemporal distortion
- Warped bodies

Reference to Necronomicon no longer seems absurd. Facts so far are reminiscent of Plateau of Leng, the Mi-Go, even the abominable snowman.

THE FACE OF EVIL: SAMPLE CLUES

- Eyewitness statements that put someone in two far-apart places at the same time.
- Someone who acts with extreme inconsistency, showing radically different personality at different times.
- A photograph or portrait dating back to the 19th century, whose subject bears an uncanny resemblance to a still-living character.
- A convoluted apparatus containing a strange chamber, coffin-like - just big enough for one person.
- Uncanny sounds echoing from the tunnel at night, and the murmur of what might be voices.
- A highly distinctive birthmark in the shape of a star, recurring over generations of one family.
- Someone has an unusual appetite, consuming bizarre kinds and/or outlandishly large amounts of food.
- Someone who speaks, acts and dresses in a curiously anachronistic way.
- A journal written in a familiar hand. It is ancient and crumbling, and its entries are dated to the 19th century.
- Someone who seems extremely youthful and vigorous turns out to have lived in the town for over 50 years.
- A character is overheard speaking in a completely different voice to the one they normally use.
- A crime is committed, but the apparent perpetrator seems to have amnesia and bewildered as to what happened.
- A cache of rare and illegal chemical substances, carefully concealed.

The Elder One civilisation existed over vast spans of time, surviving geological catastrophe and more.

Maps show shape of the city eerily reminiscent of the mirage we saw on approach to the mountains, including features long since worn away.

ON ILKLA MOOR BAHT'AT

By Becky Annison

WITNESS

Effie Williams is a 12 year old girl from London. Her little brother, David, was killed in the Blitz and 3 months ago she was sent to the village of Ben Rhydding at the edge of Ikley Moor. Effie's source of strength is a *sense of adventure*, her personality trait is "*goes unnoticed*".

OTHER CHARACTERS

- *Miss Phyllida Bailey* is the lady who Effie is billeted with. Phyllida is a private person, often busy with the Land Girls. She takes little interest in what Effie gets up to and is often bad-tempered with her. Lately she has been pre-occupied with some contaminated land up at Oaklands Farm.

- *Corporal Claude Bell* is an African American soldier stationed nearby. He is a kind and gentle man who doesn't seem suited to war, and would rather be back with his family. Since conducting army exercises on Ikley Moor he has become withdrawn and distant.

- *Mr Frederick Hamilton,* former manager of the Hydro, was turned down for the Army for unknown reasons. Recently his health has deteriorated and he is a constant visitor to the Doctor. He covers himself in layers and scarves on even the hottest days.

- *Martha Jones* a maid at the former Hydro, she is still engaged by the Wool Control Board to do a little cleaning. She was a vibrant, young, bright eyed woman; but since the Wool Control Board took over she keeps quiet with a haunted look in her eyes.

Incredible scale. Vast blocks of stone, walls up to 150 feet high and continuous structures in a 30-mile-wide ribbon, at least 100 miles long.

We have seen sculpture, carvings... all evidence (if it were needed) of advanced civilisation.

Location and Era

Ben Rhydding is a picturesque town in West Riding of Yorkshire. It was made famous in the Victorian period for its exceptional Hydropathic Spa Establishment. But it is 1942 and rationing, wartime conditions and the shadow of Hitler are grinding and relentless. The tourists are gone, the men have been conscripted and the town is an empty place.

Other locations

- *The Hydro Hotel* (and golf course) - once the epitome of Victorian Gothic style, the Hydro is crumbling. It closed shortly after the war began and was taken over by the "Wool Control Board". Now, almost deserted, it casts a long and grim shadow over the town.

- *Ikley Moor* - a forbidding place, bleak and exposed. It stretches for miles covered in low shrubs and garlanded in purple heather and hidden treachery. Sticky bogs suck down sheep and blinding fog can descend instantly and last for days.

- *The Twelve Apostles* - a prehistoric stone circle on Ilkley Moor. There are 12 remaining stones which all lie prone on the heather. The circle adjoins a series of barrows, ancient burial sites that dot the surrounding countryside.

- *Oaklands Farm* - the closest farm to the moor. It is lonely and isolated, even the Land Girls refuse to spend the night there. Some of the animals have been suffering a strange infectious skin condition. No-one knows the cause.

Special Cards

- Early Reveal
- A Strange Location
- Warped Bodies
- Strange Writing
- A Bizzarerie

Elder One maps show a Western mountain range even more massive - 40,000 feet - and of accursed reputation.

On Ilkla Moor Baht'at: Sample Clues

- ⊙ Ancient stones on the moor carved with blasphemous designs.
- ⊙ A greenish stain on the fingers that won't come off.
- ⊙ The bilberries on the moor are shrivelled, blistered and foul.
- ⊙ A fog that descends too fast and smells unnatural and fetid.
- ⊙ Strange tales of an odd chemical smell in some rooms at the Hydro.
- ⊙ Person or persons, who have lived on Ikley all their life, is/are missing on the moors.
- ⊙ Locals have contracted an unidentified, pulpy, skin condition.
- ⊙ The Wool Control Board, out-of-towners who have taken over the Hydro, are rarely seen and said to have strange ways.
- ⊙ The Hydro is deserted by day but at night the lights are on and cars are constantly coming and going.
- ⊙ A blasted crater on the moor.
- ⊙ A dead fox/sheep, its limbs withered and its skin covered in boils.
- ⊙ Sickly lights and sounds coming from the Hydro, witnessed by the town drunk.

Antarctic appears to have been the location of the original Elder One colony.

Apparent previous era of existence, on other planets, using manufactured goods and mechanical technology, subsequently abandoned.

Finally reaching out and touching these ancient stones fills with me with excitement – and a faint sense of dread.

Darkness Visible

By Mo Holkar

"No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd onely to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes"
John Milton, Paradise Lost

Witness

Gregory Freeman, would-be writer. Has come to Deacon Fork to research his family history, for a planned book. His strength is *stubborn determination*, and his personality trait is a *charming demeanour.*

Other characters

- ⊙ *Randall Gibbs,* Deacon Fork police chief. An irascible-seeming but good-hearted middle-aged man, fond of drinking and not fond of troublemakers.

- ⊙ *Miss Desiree Lawton,* descendant of the plantation family. A slender, intense woman, treated with respect by the town despite her family's reduced circumstances.

- ⊙ *Joseph Withers,* auto mechanic and smallholder. A tall, taciturn man whose house is a popular gathering-place for the African-American community. Married to Susan Withers.

- ⊙ *Susan Withers,* hairdresser. A cheerful woman who has the reputation of being clever with herbs and healing. Married to Joseph Withers.

- ⊙ *Shell Barnaby,* invalid. A pale face occasionally glimpsed at the windows of the Barnaby house. Rumoured to have been "scared silly" by something she saw in the woods as a child.

- ⊙ *Eric Darge,* farmer and moonshiner. A tough young man who keeps a still in his cowshed and who runs its produce to wherever folks need their whistles wetted. Famed as the fastest driver in the county.

Sculptures clearly show sub-oceanic civilisation.

Clear that the Elder Ones migrated from sea to land over time.

LOCATION AND ERA

The small Alabama town of Deacon Fork, in 1964. Built adjoining a former cotton plantation which has been swallowed by the woods. An inward-looking place, where things stay quiet as long as not too many questions are asked.

- ⊙ *Bellerive,* the former plantation house. Here, before the Civil War, the Lawton family would entertain lavishly while their slaves toiled in the cotton fields. Now a tree-choked ruin.

- ⊙ *Deacon Fork Baptist Church.* A former tabernacle now used almost exclusively by African-Americans. The old church that the whites used was destroyed by lightning storm in 1938, and was not replaced.

- ⊙ *The Hanging Grove.* Place of punishment and execution during the plantation era. Slaves who had transgressed were taken to this clearing in the woods, to suffer a variety of awful fates.

- ⊙ *Hanworth Pond.* A popular fishing spot not far outside of town. Seven teenage children drowned here in a succession of apparently-unrelated incidents during the 1920s.

SPECIAL CARDS

- ⊙ A hostile group
- ⊙ Visions
- ⊙ Sorcery
- ⊙ Specimen
- ⊙ Strange location

Universally closed shutters and absence of any furnishings to the rooms suggests the city may have been deliberately abandoned.

Murals show that creatures keep, slaughter and cook animals.

DARKNESS VISIBLE: SAMPLE CLUES

- ⊙ A snatch of old-timey waltz music, or of a Spiritual song, with no obvious source.
- ⊙ A set of iron fetters found, carefully placed, in front of a doorway.
- ⊙ Unusually vivid dreams of toiling in the fields.
- ⊙ A burning torch planted in the ground during the night. Blood has been dripped around its base.
- ⊙ Someone sickens of a mysterious illness, then makes just as mysterious a recovery.
- ⊙ The woods are maze-like, trees draped eerily in Spanish moss: when you try to pass through them, you emerge in an unexpected and unfamiliar location.
- ⊙ An automobile suddenly stops working. When inspected, engine parts are corroded and perished, as though by extreme age.
- ⊙ Cheap whisky which brings on terrible hallucinations.
- ⊙ An invitation to a cotillion, dated 1860 but seeming freshly printed.
- ⊙ Evidence of an old crime unexpectedly emerges.
- ⊙ Parts of a family history have been systematically concealed.
- ⊙ A conspiracy of silence. Is it simply to preserve order?

Depictions of heating devices and (somewhat comically) warm clothing show change in climate in later years.

Depictions of home life including furniture clearly adapted for their physical construction.

The Chateau of Leng

By Renee Knipe

Witness

Latissha Hall, single black mother of two who just purchased her first home after years of trying and hitting brick walls. Her strength is *perseverance* and her personality trait is *good neighbour*.

Other Characters

- ⊙ *"Lem" Cass,* a Nash Ave. local who did twenty years in Jackson prison thanks to a plea arrangement on a murder charge. He's always maintained his innocence.
- ⊙ *Officer Newhall,* beat cop two years on the job. He patrols Nash Ave. with some regularity, maybe looking for the wrong kind of trouble.
- ⊙ *Geraldine Keening,* the oldest living resident of Nash Ave., predating even the WW2 boom. She's touch and go in the hospital after being found unconscious in her home, having gone several days without heat or electricity. She's very worried about her cat, Sheba...who's going to feed her?
- ⊙ *Victor Lupo,* who goes door-to-door spreading the word of a church no one has ever heard of.

Location and era

Nash Avenue, a primarily black neighbourhood on the outskirts of Ypsilanti, Michigan. Once a WW2-era boomtoom that attracted hundreds of poor southern families thanks to a thriving airplane manufacturing industry, Ypsi's been circling the drain for the last forty years as the factory work slowly dries up, and Nash Ave. has been hit as harder than most. The time is 2004, the height of the US housing bubble.

Devices depicted appear to be weapons, but unclear by what the mechanical or energetic principle they might operate.

OTHER LOCATIONS

- ⊙ *The weird new house* on the block – three cyclopean cubes carved from basalt, stacked one atop the other, but slightly skewed.
- ⊙ *Geraldine's house,* collapsing onto itself, even though she just refinanced to have a new roof put on it this past summer.
- ⊙ *The old airplane factory,* closed now since the 50s. A favorite spot for urban explorers, and also certain illicit activities.
- ⊙ *A playground* dominated by a blacktop basketball court. Once nice, the backboards are now rusted, the nets are long gone, and the court itself is pitted and rough, but you can always find someone for a pick up game.

SPECIAL CARDS

- ⊙ Victims
- ⊙ A bizarrerie
- ⊙ A strange location
- ⊙ Spatiotemporal distortions
- ⊙ A hostile group

Image depicts Elder One apparently flying through space on membraneous wings.

Series of sculptures appear to show the creation of life from protoplasmic masses, reminiscent of Al-Hazred's Shoggoths

Image depicts the construction of the Elder Ones' cities by vast Shoggoths

THE CHATEAU OF LENG: SAMPLE CLUES

- Looking at the weird new house on the block for too long gives people headaches. Its angles seem off somehow.
- A home in the neighbourhood begins to suffer a dry rot-like malady, and things like plumbing and electricity go on the fritz with alarming frequency.
- Neighbourhood pets with the freedom to roam cross Nash Avenue to the south and won't cross back — they just sit on the south side of the street and watch their old homes expectantly, as if waiting for their owners to join them.
- A family moves out of the neighbourhood with no advance warning. One day they're there, the next their driveway and home are empty. Not even a U-haul or moving truck was seen coming or going.
- A cardboard box full of old home movies, circa the 70s and 80s. They depict a neighbourhood that never was — white, solidly middle class people having barbecues, recording their kids' first attempts at bike rides, etc.
- A crawlspace where there shouldn't be one, narrow and confined.
- There's something under the porch.
- A shallow grave hiding skeletal remains.
- Items in a house are rearranged or replaced without explanation.
- A new family on the block, who act as though they've always lived here.
- One day, the school bus stops picking up kids who have been catching that bus for years.
- Someone gets lost on their way home, a drive or walk they've made hundreds of times.
- The residents of Nash Ave. wake up to find their house numbers altered.

Vile Shoggoth servants appear protean in form, changing shape and even creating temporary organs as needed.

RESONATE

BY GRAHAM WALMSLEY

WITNESS

Luis Alvarez, a former soldier of a quasi-military governmental organisation that fought to suppress Mythos threats. After a failed operation, the force was disbanded. To forget the organisation that abandoned him and the fight that is no longer his, Luis is losing himself in the New York disco scene, abandoning himself to drugs, sex and dance.

His strength is *love of men.* Luis is driven by love of the men on the disco scene, drawing strength from them and wanting to keep them safe. He loves the sweat, the masculinity, the community.

His personality trait is *self-destructive.*

OTHER CHARACTERS

- ⊙ *"Ultimate" Nieves,* a former Cold Warrior, sacked after stealing archival files that had not been accessed for decades. Like Luis, he is losing himself in a whirl of dance, drugs and men.

- ⊙ *Tom Pleasance,* party organiser and music enthusiast, whose legendary sound system uses cutting-edge technology to get everyone high.

- ⊙ *House of Takada,* a legendary and exclusive grouping of drag queens, who rule the dancefloor. The formidable, bitchy and beautiful Madrid is the queen of the House.

- ⊙ *William Richards,* the most beautiful man in the scene, who feels he is stuck in a timeloop, an endless and meaningless carousel of dance, drugs and people.

- ⊙ *Joey Antico,* a young Italian-American man, who experiences visions at the peak of his drug-fuelled, dance-filled nights.

Images show a sunless sea below the city, accessed through the tunnel network

LOCATION AND ERA

The underground New York disco scene of 1972. Love is free, sex is everywhere, time has no meaning and everything blurs into one.

OTHER LOCATIONS

- ⊙ *The Attic,* a legendary house party at the top of a warehouse, where people come together to dance and love in peace and togetherness.
- ⊙ *Beneath the ruined piers,* on the bank of the Hudson, where ramps lead to forgotten rooms.
- ⊙ *Pelican,* a club where the music hits you with force, sweat drips from the ceiling and half-naked bodies fuse together on the dance floor.
- ⊙ *A bare and cold apartment,* where the curtains are drawn and the bed unmade.
- ⊙ *The Eleventh,* an exclusive club for Manhattan's gay elite, at which the rich mix with the muscled and beautiful.
- ⊙ *The Baths,* where people come for anonymous and joyful sex, in clouds of steam. Sometimes, the cubicle doors are closed; sometimes, they are left open as an invitation.

SPECIAL CARDS

- ⊙ Victims
- ⊙ Visions
- ⊙ Spatiotemporal distortions
- ⊙ Replace the witness
- ⊙ Objet d'art (which must be music)

Images show burial of dead upright in five-pointed mounds. Disturbing to contemplate. I am reluctant to put the obvious conclusion in writing.

RESONATE: SAMPLE CLUES

- ⊙ Each night, when you visit the club, you find that old friends have disappeared without a trace.
- ⊙ There is a new drug, which opens your mind and lets you see the truth. Once you've taken it, you never quite forget what you have seen.
- ⊙ On the dance floor, there is a new tune, which makes people dance endlessly, as lights and sound blur around them.
- ⊙ A peak of ecstasy, that you've never reached before, which leaves you hollow-eyed, distracted and obsessed with experiencing it again.
- ⊙ Nobody eats or drinks, but they look and feel better than ever. What is their secret?
- ⊙ An unidentifiable disease is spreading throughout the clubs, which drains the life out of people, even as they continue dancing.
- ⊙ A feeling that time is repeating itself, that you have lived this day before, with the same people, the same sights, the same places.
- ⊙ Dreams of flying through space, with shadowy figures moving around you, as you pass unimaginable colours and shapes.
- ⊙ In this club, some are inexplicably beautiful, but others are drawn and withered.
- ⊙ Even in the daytime, even in your sleep, you want to dance wildly and rhythmically.
- ⊙ In the belongings of a dead friend, there is something beautiful yet unexpected.

Initial use of the underwater city as a winter dwelling, as temperatures dropped, seems to have given way to permanent residence.

Doll Baby

by Julia Ellingboe

Witness

Flavia Kingston, PhD candidate and porcelain artist writing her dissertation on dolls of the late 19th and early 20th century. Flavia has accepted an internship to catalog and restore new items in the Greenwich Museum of New England Life's famed Emily L. Greenleaf Collection of Bisque and Porcelain Dolls. Her strength is a *lust for knowledge* and her personality trait is *trusting*.

Other characters

- *Charlie Lirette* designs the doll-sized furniture replicas for the doll collection with his husband Gabriel Coffin. He is obsessed with creating perfect miniature pieces with secret, hidden details

- *Frenchie Barlow,* owner of the Greenwich Goldmine. The Barlows are the one of the oldest families in Greenwich. Although the Greenwich Goldmine Cave-In forever tarnished the Barlow name everyone in town knows Frenchie. An unparalleled chef, Frenchie runs the best restaurant in town and everyone wants the secret to their perfect chiffon cake.

- *Zane Franklin,* outgoing executive director of the Greenwich Museum of New England Life. Zane recently accepted a new position. He can't wait to leave and his attitude is rubbing off on the other staff.

- *Kamala Greenleaf Prince,* Emily L. Greenleaf's beloved granddaughter. Kamala donated several dolls to the doll collection and she is surprisingly involved in the cataloging and restoration of the collection for an amateur.

If anyone discovered these notes they would surely assume it was a work of fiction or based on hallucination. Perhaps it is.

LOCATION AND ERA

In mid-2010s *New England Magazine* described Greenwich, MA as the "Quintessential Quaint New England Town… the lovechild of Norman Rockwell and Currier & Ives." Greenwich is known for idyllic rolling hills, excellent fishing and hiking, and quirky nightlife.

OTHER LOCATIONS

- *Greenwich Goldmine*, a hip farm-to-table restaurant built atop the original Greenwich Copper and Goldmine. The mine closed after a massive cave-in trapped 244 miners. Only a handful escaped and the trapped bodies were never recovered. *Greenwich Goldmine* now stands as the social center of Greenwich, where artists and agronomists rub shoulders and share pints of microbrewed IPA.

- *Greenwich Museum of New England Life*, est. 1917 but popularised in 1996 when the estate of Emily L. Greenleaf bequeathed the Historic Society $17 million to develop a cluster of five 1800s buildings in the center of Greenwich. The development was a tourism success but the locals now avoid those buildings where possible.

- *Idlewilde* was the Greenleaf Summer estate and houses the doll collection. Emily Greenleaf specified that the dolls on exhibit be posed and arranged to appear as lifelike as possible, as if one were, "guests in the doll's house." Two-thirds of the furniture was replaced with doll-sized replicas and visitors must crawl through tiny doorways to view the dolls. Approximately 600 dolls are on display. The rest sit in storage or in the workshop.

We have landed the plane to attempt further exploration on foot.

Location of Lake's specimens would place them in the earlier period of the city's existence.

Special Cards

⊙ Anachronism
⊙ Objet D'Art
⊙ A hostile group
⊙ Reprisals

Doll Baby: Sample Clues

⊙ An exquisite new item appears suddenly in the Museum's "to be catalogued" room.

⊙ A recently restored item breaks again when no one could possibly have touched it.

⊙ Several dolls bear an uncanny resemblance to former town residents, including a number of miners lost in the cave in.

⊙ Greenwich is periodically troubled by detectives seeking former Summer residents who apparently "disappeared without a trace".

⊙ A box of miniature replicas of the furniture of Flavia's entire room in her Greenwich apartment appears in the cataloging room.

⊙ A doll falls off a shelf and shatters, revealing tiny porcelain organs.

⊙ Toy animals made with real animal fur, claws and teeth are found ripped apart and arranged in unwholesome patterns.

⊙ An entire generation of former residents refuse to return to town.

⊙ A rare "Frozen Charlotte" doll disappears and later reappears in Flavia's bathtub.

⊙ Is that the smell of roasted lamb coming from the doll's kitchen exhibit? And are those real tiny vegetables?

⊙ Flavia keeps getting lost while trying to leave town for the weekend.

⊙ Small details on an exhibit keep changing, ever so slightly.

Zemlya Sannikova/
Земля Санникова

By Jason Morningstar

Witness

Baron Eduard Vasilyevich von Toll, expedition leader, member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, geologist and explorer. His mission is to find and claim the northernmost and most elusive polar island, Zemlya Sannikova. He saw it with his own eyes in 1886 but was forced back by weather. His strength is his *persistence*, and his personality trait is *proud*.

Other characters:

- ⊙ *Nicholai Dyakonov,* a Sakha guide experienced in travel in the subarctic but totally unprepared for polar ice. Relied on as a "local expert" nonetheless.

- ⊙ *Dr. Viktor Katin-Yartsev,* Expedition Physician and political exile. An unrepentant Socialist, but a fun one to be around. Has good teeth and a fine moustache.

- ⊙ *Pyotr Strizhev,* Able Seaman and dog handler. Loves his huskies more than his shipmates. Often sleeps in the kennel tormented by violent nightmares.

- ⊙ *Lieutenant Fedor Andreyevich Mathison,* First Officer, surveyor, mineralogist, geologist and photographer. Mathison is cheerfully efficient, occasionally severe, and privately very worried.

Location and era

It is 1902. The Imperial Russian Polar Expedition's steam and sail-powered brig *Zarya* is locked fast in the ice during its second winter. Food and coal are running out and the *Zarya* is being crushed to matchsticks.

Mortarless construction using giant (6' x 8' x 5') blocks strikes me as quite a feat. But I am no engineer. If only Pabodie was with us.

Other locations:

- ⊙ *The wardroom* of the *Zarya* is cramped, humid, and tilted five de-grees to starboard. The 26 man crew congregates here around a roaring stove to smoke, play checkers, and argue.
- ⊙ *The orlop deck* of the *Zarya* is frigid, stinking, dark, and tilted five degrees to starboard. Once crammed with the expedition's supplies, it is now ominously empty.
- ⊙ *The ice* is a living thing - groaning, shifting and hungry. South - a vast open-water polynya between *Zarya* and the continent. East and west - enormous stacked ridges of pressure ice inter-spersed with treacherous open leads. North - Ostrov Bennetta.
- ⊙ *Ostrov Bennetta* is only five kilometers away, visible on a clear day. Beyond that is the tiny Ostrov Zhanetty and beyond *that*, somewhere, is Zemlya Sannikova. Bennetta is a proper island with steep cliffs, glaciers, lichen and no animals other than migratory birds.

Special Cards

- ⊙ Victims
- ⊙ Replace the *Witness*
- ⊙ Specimen
- ⊙ Strange Location
- ⊙ Flashback

NOTE

Sannikov Land does not exist, but it appeared on Soviet maps until the 1930s.

A great resource:

http://pubs.aina.ucalgary.ca/arctic/Arctic34-3-201.pdf

SOME EXPEDITION MEMBERS

- ⊙ Lieutenant Commander Nicholai Kolomeytsev (Captain of the *Zarya*, reclusive drunk)
- ⊙ Lieutenant Aleksandr V. Kolchak (Second Officer, Oceanographer, future warlord)
- ⊙ A. A. Byalynitsky Birulya (Zoologist)
- ⊙ F.G. Seeberg (Astronomer)
- ⊙ O. Tsionglinskogo (Scientific assistant; political exile)
- ⊙ Thomas Yaskevich (Cook)
- ⊙ Vasily Gorokhov (Sakha guide)
- ⊙ Edward Ogryns (Chief engineer)
- ⊙ M. I. Brusnov (Engineer; political exile)
- ⊙ Gabriel Puzyrev (Fireman)
- ⊙ N. A. Begichev (Boatswain)
- ⊙ Simon Evstifeev (Seaman)

Zemlya Sannikova: Sample Clues

- ⊙ A figure on the ice where no figure should or even could be.
- ⊙ A heavy chest kept under lock and key in Captain Kolomeyt-sev's cabin.
- ⊙ The expedition journal entry for the day certain crewmen put ashore on the Fadeyevsky Peninsula, ripped out and missing.
- ⊙ A chunk of Devonian limestone with something unwholesome embedded in it.
- ⊙ The crew divides into paranoid factions, seemingly overnight.
- ⊙ Someone has been leaving the Zarya, alone and at night.
- ⊙ Flashes of light beyond the northern horizon.
- ⊙ Magnetic observations, made in a crabbed hand, that make no sense.
- ⊙ Unexplained injuries among the sailors.
- ⊙ The corpse of a wooly mammoth, torn apart and scattered across the ice amid smears of arterial blood.
- ⊙ Something terrible bobbing in open water.
- ⊙ Expedition food supplies, subtly tampered with.
- ⊙ Objects taken from an old cache on Kotelny Island left by Sannikov's 1811 expedition.
- ⊙ A crumbling cliff face vomiting forth stunningly well-preserved trees, bones, and ivory tusks from the Pleistocene or earlier.

Unable to get a clear look at bas-reliefs. With luck we will find more.

Change Our Vile Bodies

By Scott Dorward

Witness

Constance Young, a trainee journalist from Manchester. Her brother, Lionel, has dropped out from university, cut off contact with his family and joined a hippie commune in Devon. Constance wants to re-establish communications with Lionel. Her strength is that she *enjoys taking risks*, and her personality trait is *perceptiveness*.

Other characters:

- ⊙ *Sylvia Vanstone,* the charismatic leader of the Water of Life Commune. She teaches that human flesh is inherently corrupt and that we should all aspire to purity through spiritual cleansing.

- ⊙ *Alfred Skinner,* a farmer who owns the land next to the commune. He drinks at the local pub, where he often talks about how he'd like to see those bloody hippies gone. There are old rumours that fishermen within Skinner's family had made some sort of pact with the sea, but the family have tried to shake off this superstitious nonsense.

- ⊙ *Father Michael Tope,* the priest of the local Roman Catholic church, Our Lady Star of the Sea. He has a lively interest in local folklore. He also enjoys swimming in the sea, even in cold weather.

- ⊙ *Patricia Dodridge,* a postgraduate marine biologist from the University of Exeter, often seen setting up equipment at odd hours.

Location and era:

The seaside village of *Salcombe*, in Devon, and the farmland surrounding it, in 1970. The village is a fishing and shipbuilding community, with a naturally sheltered harbour, located near the mouth of the Kingsbridge Estuary.

Vast array of architectural forms. Structures haphazardly arranged.

OTHER LOCATIONS:

- *The Water of Life Commune,* located in the grounds of a crumbling 17th Century farmhouse. As well as the remaining farm buildings, the residents live in tents, yurts and other temporary structures.

- *The tidal mudflats* of Batson Creek, a coastal inlet that loops around Salcombe. Despite teeming with life, the flats can be eerily quiet at night and in the early morning, and are often shrouded with mist.

- *Sea Mouth Cavern,* a network of caves, partly flooded with seawater from Batson Creek. Traces of human habitation date back thousands of years. Commune members perform cleansing rituals there.

- *The Harvest Home,* an old pub in town where local farmers drink. The regulars are less welcoming to visitors since the commune opened.

SPECIAL CARDS:

- Warped bodies
- Specimen
- A Hostile Group
- Inhuman Creatures

Petrified shutters identifiable as coming from mesozoic wood or, in a few cases, as late as pliocene.

The Elder Ones seem to have been driven back over time, towards their Antarctic core.

CHANGE OUR VILE BODIES: SAMPLE CLUES

- ⊙ Showers of warm, brackish rain, falling from clear skies.
- ⊙ Salt water dripping down the walls of buildings throughout town, even those nowhere near the sea. This starts slowly, with one or two houses, and spreads gradually.
- ⊙ Stories of unexplained disappearances from the surrounding area, dating back for centuries.
- ⊙ A pool of unidentifiable clear, viscous liquid that looks like water, but is not.
- ⊙ Strange sounds echoing from the caves at night, almost like singing, but not recognisably human.
- ⊙ Following a firelit celebration at the commune, unseasonal flooding at Batson Creek washes the wriggling forms of dozens of unidentifiable jellyfish-like sea creatures to shore.
- ⊙ Photographs of cave paintings, depicting something amorphous yet still recognisably human. Some paintings look prehistoric, others disturbingly modern.
- ⊙ A floatation tank with a padlock, as if designed to seal its user inside. Sounds of movement can be heard from within.
- ⊙ Someone is found walking naked through town in a trance, crying and begging to be cleansed.
- ⊙ An old, sealed glass vessel, containing something impossible and apparently alive.
- ⊙ Vanstone serves her followers a sacrament of a strange, pale fungus, with a repellently fleshy texture, harvested from the caves.
- ⊙ An abandoned set of clothing, soaked through with brine. The seams have been burst and the fabric stretched in places as if pulled out of shape.
- ⊙ A drowned body found in a field, far from any body of water.

Mere incidental details recorded in the background of Elder One histories provide striking confirmation of continental drift theory in general and in the particulars.

The Wreck

By Rachel E.S. Walton

Witness

Tarai Asan - operator of the *Stalwart*, an assist & repair spaceship. She's responded to *Talon*'s distress call, hoping to help while making some money. Tarai's strength is *tenacious*, and her personality trait is *curious*.

Other characters

- ⊙ *Ahmed Hakimi,* Tarai's android companion, capable of piloting the *Stalwart*, applying first aid, assisting in repairs, and sometimes calming an angry customer. Ahmed is forthright and often follows Tarai.

- ⊙ *Narumi Sato,* owner of the *Talon*, and an old hand at asteroid mining. But this job is starting to wear on her. It's been no end of problems, and she's been losing sleep recently. It's starting to show in the redness of her eyes and shortness of her temper.

- ⊙ *Richard Garcia,* once the *Talon* foreman, demoted to driller and waste rock mucker. He finds it difficult to enjoy his job like he used to, so he looks for distractions like playing cards or poking around the wreck.

- ⊙ *Joanna Speed,* mining geologist and number cruncher. It's her first job with Narumi, and she has serious doubts about this crew, but the wreck is an exciting discovery. She always wanted to be an archaeologist.

Location and era

The distant future. Asteroid mining is profitable and critical to planetary colonization efforts. The crew of the mining ship *Talon* sent out a distress call for their location on the asteroid *253 Mathilde*. They discovered the wreck of a strange, unknown ship, and since then, their own ship *Talon* has been stalling out and breaking down.

Prodigiously huge Shoggoths employed to build an underwater city in a vast watery abyss. Same as the sunless sea we saw before?

Other locations

- ⊙ *The mining operation on 253 Mathilde* - an asteroid in the main belt, *253 Mathilde* is 50 km in diameter, irregularly-shaped, with huge craters across its bleak, dark surface. It has been hollowed deeply by the *Talon's* machinery. Around the main shaft are haphazard stacks of support beams, heaps of rubble, and coils of hoses.

- ⊙ *Talon* - a lengthy, segmented ship designed to latch onto asteroids, mine them for precious materials, then process and transport the goods. This ship is clearly aging. Its bulk groans as it works, and seams from repairs are visible everywhere. Replacement parts contrast with original sections, caked in layers of rust and grease. It has a small section for the crew to live in, and is otherwise given over to poorly-lit storage areas and powerful, dangerous mining machinery, built to drill, scoop, grind, and smash.

- ⊙ *The Stalwart* - Tarai's tough little ship designed to carry common repair parts and crew necessities, and to tow broken down ships if needed. It's uncomfortably cramped inside. Built for two and overflowing with barely tied-down odds and ends, tools, hoses, and stacks of paneling.

- ⊙ *The wreck* - a strange unknown ship, old and half-buried, near the main mine, now broken into by the *Talon's* curious mining crew.

Special Cards

- ⊙ Inhuman creature
- ⊙ Reprisals
- ⊙ Flashback

We have finally located a navigable entrance to the sub-glacial parts of the city. What bizarre secrets await us?

THE WRECK: SAMPLE CLUES

- ⊙ High-pitched, metallic screeching. A ground-shaking boom follows. But the mining equipment is switched off.
- ⊙ A ancient stasis pod is found - someone is alive inside it.
- ⊙ Someone researches the wrecked ship and learns disturbing news.
- ⊙ Odd, fresh tracks are discovered in the dust.
- ⊙ The black box from the wreck is recovered. It contains a garbled warning.
- ⊙ Tarai realises she is being stalked.
- ⊙ Crew members speak in hushed, urgent voices and stop abruptly when Tarai nears.
- ⊙ Ringing thumps along the metal grate, too heavy for human footsteps.
- ⊙ Someone is holed up in their bunk, refusing to come out. It smells of piss and rot.
- ⊙ The *Talon's* pantry has been raided. All protein foods are gone.
- ⊙ Something at the edge of vision skitters away, again and again.
- ⊙ A grotesque figure huddles over something and suddenly looks up.

Construction of the underwater city was a
mammoth undertaking, described in great detail
in the murals.

Abandonment of the city appears to have coincided
with the beginnings of the ice age - this far north,
somewhat before the inception of the Pleistocene.

Giant, grotesque penguins only
remaining terrestrial life in
abandoned city.

Under The Mask

By Whitney "Strix" Beltrán

Content Warning: This scenario contains themes of childbirth, death and stillbirth

Witness

Akundyo is a priest of the Dogon people in the village of Sanga. He is the priest of stillborn children and women dying in childbirth. He is an elder and keeper of deep knowledge. He is open, friendly, and sober, but has a hard, unpredictable streak. His source of strength is his *resilience*. His personality trait is *crafty*.

Other Characters

- *Déni* is a woman in her third trimester of pregnancy. She is fierce and proud, but secretly afraid there is something wrong with her baby. She will do anything to ensure its health.
- *Gana* is a 17 year hunter who wishes to gain the esteem of his elders. He recently tried his hand at creating a sacred amulet, which is strung on a leather thong and covered with dried blood.
- *Koguem* is an old and sickly blacksmith. He has not aged well and is sour tempered. He is deeply afraid of women and their power to pollute.
- *Awa* is young and unmarried, but has a scar across the bridge of her nose, earned when she fell into a fire as a child. Many people avoid her, and her parents have struggled to arrange a suitable marriage.

Location and Era

The village of Sanga lies in Dogon territory in West Africa, before European colonization. Life here is materially simple, but spiritually very complex. The Dogon live in a world of rich symbolism and intricate ritual. It is a place of red earth by day, and at night the sky is filled with the tremendous weight of stars.

OTHER LOCATIONS

- *The old men's granary* - The village has a men's granary and a women's granary. Some years ago the men's granary was struck by lightning and heavily damaged. It now stand dilapidated and empty.
- *The moaning cave* - a secret place concealed amongst nearby cliffs. The cave has swallowed up a spirit. The spirit is trapped at its bottom and calls out to be set free. No one goes near it.
- *The strange bushes* - Near the village a new and unfamiliar kind of scrub bush has started growing. Its leaves are a diseased orange, and its sap is a thick, dark ichor. Many dead animals have been found among the thicket's spiny branches.
- *The poisoned water* - Something has polluted the spring and made many people ill. The youngest and the weakest died. Babies born soon after were silent and lifeless. The spiritual leader, the Hogon, has tried to cleanse it, unsuccessfully.

SPECIAL CARDS

- Warped Bodies
- Sorcery
- A hostile group
- A strange location
- Flashback

Quality of the artistry appears to be superior in the older buildings, degenerating in the newer ones.

Progressive decadence of their art led to Constantine-like hoarding of art from earlier periods.

Wars with octopus-headed interlopers, Shoggoth slaves, space fungi... is there no end to this bizarrerie?

Under the Mask: Sample Clues

- ⊙ The blood pouring out of a sacrificed goat is yellow.
- ⊙ An unknown dancer enters the mask ceremony for the dead, with a mask that is familiar and yet no one can name.
- ⊙ All of the sacred amulets in the village disappear.
- ⊙ The hunters return with strange bruises and can't - or won't - explain where they came from.
- ⊙ A child is born with a sickly yellow caul.
- ⊙ A child is born but taken away in a hurry, before anyone - even the mother - can look at it.
- ⊙ Something panics the normally-placid herd, and they flee into the hills.
- ⊙ A secretive gathering of women, held late at night.
- ⊙ Remains of a ceremony not sanctioned by the elders.
- ⊙ A gourd filled with a pungent blue liquid.
- ⊙ Koguem's blacksmith's tools go missing, then are secretly returned with deep gouges in them.
- ⊙ The millet stores are invaded by a purple fungus that nobody has ever seen before.

It seems the Shoggoths began to show independent and malevolent thought, culminating in a rebellion and later re-subjugation.

They appear to have a peculiar dread of the westward mountains, and of something that came down the river from there.

Mural maps show tunnels connecting the city to the underwater city.

With a Brush of the Fingertips

By Elsa S Henry

Witness

Ms. Edith Price is a slight woman who carries a white cane. Her eyes are clouded over with cataracts, ones she was born with. She also happens to be one of the foremost mythos experts in the world, having done significant oral history research into the incidents caused by various Old Ones throughout the last ten years. Ms. Price is called to the location because of her unique talents – she can read braille. Her source of strength is *a firm and unshakeable moral compass*. Her personality trait is *stubbornness*.

Other characters

- ⊙ *Rose Timmons,* the owner of the house, and by extension, the owner of the braille *Necronomicon*. Her family have lived in the area for generations.
- ⊙ *Jane Timmons,* Rose's daughter. She discovered a secret room hidden behind her bed. She is somewhat evasive about what exactly got her to open the secret panel.
- ⊙ *Duane Shine*. Mr. Shine is Ms. Price's assistant. He takes a strong interest in the book, even though he can't read it.
- ⊙ *Monty Welch,* the handyman who keeps coming in to ask if they want him to come in and make repairs to the house, even though no one called him.

Location and era

1930 - a farmhouse on the outskirts of Worcester, MA where a copy of the *Necronomicon* has been discovered, written in braille.

Who knows what strange things might still dwell in the depths.

OTHER LOCATIONS

- ⊙ *The farmhouse* is old, and well maintained by the two women who live there. Unusually for the 1930s, especially for a working farm, the men of the family seem quite absent.

- ⊙ *A secret room* in the basement, which was accessed through a panel hidden behind young Jane Timmons' bed, and contained the braille *Necronomicon*. The room has a bare earth floor and a low ceiling supported by bare beams.

- ⊙ *The barn*, which smells as though something has died there, though the family does not slaughter their livestock.

- ⊙ *A clearing* in the forest on the property, mysteriously absent of trees, grass, any flora whatsoever. A barren circle which seems meant for some purpose, though no human hand has created it.

SPECIAL CARDS

- ⊙ Visions
- ⊙ Inhuman Creature
- ⊙ Victims
- ⊙ Strange Writings
- ⊙ Sorcery

Resolved to attempt a descent towards the underwater city.

It seems this is indeed the fabled Plateau of Leng

Land-adapted Shoggoths used to maintain upper city during sojourns below.

WITH A BRUSH OF THE FINGERTIPS: SAMPLE CLUES

- ⊙ The letters in the Braille *Necronomicon* feel like tiny moving vertebrae underneath Ms. Price's fingertips. They feel as though the words want to crawl into her skin.

- ⊙ The *Necronomicon* opens itself to specific pages, it whispers words that make you want to speak them for yourself.

- ⊙ The cover of the *Necronomicon* feels warm and almost as though it has a pulse.

- ⊙ The *Necronomicon* contains a registry of names. The names are all local to the area, and suggest a relationship with the provenance of the book itself. One of the surnames listed is "Shine".

- ⊙ The sound of footsteps coming from the secret room, though nobody is inside.

- ⊙ The younger Timmons has a teddy bear with realistic fur (and eyes, if anyone is asked). When alone in the room with it, Ms Price can hear the faint sound of someone else breathing.

- ⊙ Though the wind is howling all around, the air is perfectly still in the barren circle in the woods, in the centre of which is the gravestone of the original builder and owner of the farmhouse.

- ⊙ The Timmons women report dreams of blindness, so vivid that upon waking they were shocked to be able to see.

- ⊙ The words "Summon me" carved into a door in braille.

- ⊙ The ground of the clearing is slightly uneven. If you walk around, the bumps spell something in braille.

Cannot put Lake's specimens out of my mind. Dark hypotheses suggest themselves. I must not let irrational fears hold back our study.

Palpable frustration at lack of time for further detailed notes and sketches.

Mr Giggles Comes To Dinner

By Misha Bushyager

Witness

Alex is a devoted single parent struggling to raise their child, Sam. They would do anything for Sam, and draw on their *love for Sam* whenever they need strength. Recently Sam has acquired an imaginary friend they call Mr. Giggles. Mr. Giggles has been the culprit in a series of capers involving Sam and their friend Robin. A chemist at the local chemical plant, Alex relies on their *background as a scientist* to rationalise the strange happenings around them.

Other Characters

- *Sam,* Alex's 5 year old child. Attends kindergarten. Sam is a shy, bookish child and doesn't normally talk much. More a follower than a leader, they usually go along with whatever scheme Robin has concocted.

- *Taylor,* The neighbour, is also a single parent and works at the plant, but on the production floor instead of the lab. Alex sometimes trades babysitting services with them. Taylor is in the middle of a bitter divorce and is constantly fighting with their soon-to-be former spouse.

- *Robin,* Classmate and friendly partner in crime to Sam, Robin is the cheeky ringleader and chief troublemaker of the pair. Their schemes are always wild, and exciting, sometimes reckless but never normally unkind.

- *Morgan,* The Kindergarten teacher. Kind and capable, but a little out of their depth with the arrival of Mr Giggles. Concerned about the children's drawings and what they've been saying.

As we reach the tunnel mouth, an unpleasant and horribly familiar odour.

We cannot go on. We must go on.

Location and Era

Modern day. *Morton's Rock* is a small town known for its chemical plant, where Alex and a good chunk of the town are employed. Everyone knows everyone else and there are few secrets.

Other locations

- *Alex's home,* a small 2-bedroom house. Clean, open, and airy. Normally everything is put away neatly but Alex has been finding things where they don't belong, even when they were definitely put away in the correct place.
- *Morgan's classroom,* a bright well-lit space. Morgan has come in a few times to find all the children staring at the blank computer screen as a strange noise comes out of the speakers.
- *Sam's room,* Typical child's room with a twin bed and toy box and closet. This is where Sam plays most of the time and where Alex hears them having odd conversations.
- *The Tunnel,* A dark hidden passageway that runs from Alex's basement to an unknown location. It's a perfectly smooth corridor with no signs of tool marks. Strange writing and pictures are etched along the surfaces, including the ceiling and floor. The doors that open at either end blend seamlessly into the rough rock wall of the basement, but glide open effortlessly when touched in the correct spot.

Special Cards

- Anachronism
- Strange Writings
- Inhuman Creature
- Spatiotemporal Distortions
- Visions

They have made camp here. Can this be real?

MR GIGGLES COMES TO DINNER: SAMPLE CLUES

- ⊙ An old porcelain doll, faded and with inhuman features; it appears at random even after it is locked away.
- ⊙ A child knowing things they couldn't possibly know.
- ⊙ A child's drawings covered in ancient writing and indecipherable equations.
- ⊙ A child draws Mr. Giggles as a terrifying creature that they aren't afraid of.
- ⊙ A child speaks in voices that aren't their own, in a language no-one understands.
- ⊙ A child has conversations with static on the television or monitor that stop as soon as any adult enters the room.
- ⊙ Drawings of bizarre scenes appear on the walls in crayon while the children aren't home.
- ⊙ A child disappears for several hours, returning with no clue that time has passed.
- ⊙ A child has strange marks on the back of their neck but can't explain how they happened.
- ⊙ Things go missing and appear in a child's closet, arranged in strange configurations.

*We have found sketched maps.
Far beyond the skill of the
decadent ones and superior
to that seen in the carvings.
Conclusion inescapable.*

*We will follow the sketch to the
circular tower. What mysteries await...*

HOUSE-SITTER

By Jason Cordova

WITNESS

Olivia Kirk, a freelance production assistant who has been asked to house-sit by Marvin Tennenbaum, a big-shot movie producer. Her source of strength is *knowing that if she fucks this gig up, she'll be stuck doing post on cheesy celebrity haunting shows for the rest of her career.* Her personality trait is *jaded*.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- ⊙ *Marvin Tennenbaum,* a Hollywood power player going out of town for a week-long film festival; an obvious lie, since there isn't anything on the circuit calendar that week.

- ⊙ *Anthony Rogers,* a private security guard who occasionally stops by the house to see how things are going. Marvin never mentioned him.

- ⊙ *Sir Laurence Olivier,* Marvin's pure-bred Samoyed, who probably cost more than Olivia's car.

- ⊙ *Agnes Moorebank,* Marvin's eccentric great-aunt who lives in a cottage on the property. They say she used to be a minor starlet, but now she is mostly an old recluse; her days occupied with reminiscing on old flames, and re-enacting her favorite scenes from the films she worked on.

LOCATIONS AND ERA

The Gardenia House, a mansion in the Hollywood hills, set on 2 acres of beautifully manicured grounds, with pool and private tennis court. Originally built in the 1920s, the house has passed through several owners over the years. Marvin Tennenbaum purchased the property in 2005.

We have discovered a huge circular chamber, with sweeping spiral ramp to the surface. Incredible feat of engineering. If only we had discovered from the air.

Other locations

- *The Screening Room,* a small movie theater inside the mansion, decorated in a swooping, art deco style. A mannequin dressed as a concession girl holds a tray full of Jujubes, Raisinets, and other treats.
- *The Basement Waxwork,* a series of jewel-tone, *papier mache* corridors interspersed with dioramas featuring scenes from old movies you don't remember, and wax likenesses of actors you've never heard of.
- *The Plum Room,* a salon with furnishings upholstered entirely in dark, plum-colored velvet, and wallpaper and draperies in a heavy damask of the same color. The room is dimly lit by old gas lamps on the walls.
- *The Attic,* which is dusty and dark, and filled with old props and movie memorabilia.

Special Cards

- Objet d'Art
- Visions
- Replace the *Witness*
- Anachronism
- Alien Artifact

This, then, is the location of the prodigious tower.

We have found the bodies of Gedney and the missing dog, packed in the sledge like so much baggage.

Not baggage. Specimens.

House-Sitter: Sample Clues

- A reel of silent, black & white film depicting the same short scene over and over again. With each repetition, the actors become slightly more alien or terrifying in appearance.

- A photo book with the words "Taken Too Soon" embossed on the cover, and filled with head shots of actors who died at a young age, and some from the present day who are very much alive.

- An old phonograph playing a recording of several people doing frenzied, barnyard animal noises. In the background, faintly, can be heard ritualistic chanting.

- A screenplay whose title and text are in an unknowable, alien tongue, but with notes like "Nice dialogue!" and "Should we get Marilyn for this?" written in the margins.

- The unmistakable voices of long-dead movie stars occasionally whisper to the *Witness* on the intercom installed throughout the house.

- An elegant vanity table with mirrored legs and surfaces, its drawers filled with swarming cockroaches.

- Wet footprints leading from the pool to inside the house.

- A stack of unmarked VHS tapes containing home videos of a family who previously occupied the Gardenia House. In each scene, someone has a large, fist-sized insect crawling on them, but no one seems to notice.

- The diary of a star from Hollywood's Golden Age. Several pages are missing, and there are strange symbols scrawled on the back inside cover.

- A slick of gray goo in the kitchen's dumbwaiter.

- A brass and wood telescope fixed on a pulsating red star.

- A row of wig display heads that look eerily similar to the *Witness*, but with hairstyles from different eras.

Penguins! Penguins can only mean one thing.

DARK PLEDGES

By Kira Magrann

WITNESS

Dana Williams, a savvy business major sophomore whose boyfriend Trevor was a member of the Alpha Delta Sigma fraternity on the campus of North Star University. Dana is a young black woman with a very professional style and a penchant for heels. Her strength is *true love* (for Trevor), her personality trait is *dedicated.*

OTHER CHARACTERS

- *Zachary Prescott,* a senior and the current head of the Alpha Delta Sigma. His family has historical and financial ties that run deep into the university, and he's an entitled jerk. The Prescotts are the reason money rules this school. He's white with perfect blond hair and wears perfect vests.

- *Victoria Ward,* the Dean of students who's been in this position for too long. She cares a great deal more about the financial stability of her job than the safety of the students, and is easily bought. She's an older black woman with carefully kept gray hair.

- *Azazel,* the cool tattooed hipster literature major. They seem older than this place, and know an unusual amount about demonology. They're chilling to be around. Of middle eastern descent, identifies as non-binary gender.

- *Andrew Schmidt,* a farm boy freshman who's trying to make sense of all of this. He joined Alpha Delta Sigma for the prestige, but now he's not so sure about all this fraternity stuff. A midwestern white guy with a few second hand pieces of clothing.

Triangular footprints confirm our unspoken conclusions. They are here.

LOCATION AND ERA

North Star is a Midwestern university town amidst sprawling corn-fields, cattle farms and some remains of rust belt industry. It's the home of *North Star University.*

OTHER LOCATIONS

- *Campus Chapel,* a run-down utilitarian place of worship on campus, decorated with white sculptures and simple stained glass.
- *Alpha Delta Sigma* fraternity house, a labyrinthine stone Victorian, leather couches, hidden rooms, and interconnected passages to the rest of the university.
- *The Old Barn* that lies in the cornfields nearby North Star University. Littered with old farm machinery and overgrown with weeds.
- *Blackwell Hall,* the mixed gender dorms. Built in 80s, these things haven't really been updated for years, but it's only two people to a room.

SPECIAL CARDS

- Inhuman Creature
- Sorcery
- Visions
- Strange Writings
- Victims

Should we proceed or desist? This place is indescribably malevolent.

The penguins are enormous, eyeless, and albino. Must have evolved down here.

DARK PLEDGES: SAMPLE CLUES

⊙ Dana's dead Alpha Delta Sigma boyfriend Trevor, his heart removed from his chest and a gold coin in his mouth (the first *Narrator* must use this *Clue*).

⊙ A black and white photo in the Alpha Delta Sigma fraternity of thirteen of its founding fathers. They all look disturbingly similar, like they could be brothers.

⊙ The statues in the chapel cry blood at midnight.

⊙ The fraternity leaders will sometimes give what an unreasonable command to another frat boy always containing the key phrase "bro up". The frat boys respond "yea bro" and follow their command mindlessly.

⊙ A dark ritual written in Latin, with an illustration of a bird headed demon, a gold coin in its mouth, perched on top of the Alpha Delta Sigma fraternity.

⊙ Dark sigils carved into the doors of the dorm rooms.

⊙ Animals won't go near the Alpha Delta Sigma house and birds fall silent in its vicinity.

⊙ Rumors that this isn't the first time young men have gone disappearing from campus.

⊙ Signet rings that bear the mark of Saturn where a brotherly Latin motto would typically be.

⊙ Extraordinarily large flocks of blackbirds swarming the cornfields, turning the sky dark.

⊙ Zachary Prescott's dad died recently of mysterious causes.

⊙ A hidden room beneath the barn covered in sigils.

⊙ A pile of pennies in the first row of the cornfield, sitting in a dish in front of a sculpture that depicts a bird headed man.

They are reminiscent of those in the murals. Cannot be coincidence.

But something has disturbed them.

THE WARDIAN CASE

By Jason Morningstar

HOOKER'S LETTER

October 17, 1844

Dear Mr. Gray,

The Wardian case to which this letter is attached contains a curious lichen for your scientific investigation.

Although the specimens of this plant brought from Cockburn Island, Graham's Land, near the Antarctic Peninsula are very perfect and well developed, they belong to so difficult a group of lichens as to have baffled me in my attempts to reduce it to any known species. I have forwarded a sample on to you with my compliments and the hope that you can definitively unravel this taxonomical mystery. I have named it in your honour with complete confidence in your ultimate triumph.

These specimens were collected with great difficulty from a wave-cut platform of early Pleistocene pecten conglomerate at a height of perhaps 800 feet.

I eagerly await your reply.

Yours truly,
Joseph Dalton Hooker

THE WARDIAN CASE

The case is a portable greenhouse. Thick panes of glass form a canted roof, each piece carefully soldered in place and attached to a metal framework. Within lies a closed environmental loop of evaporation and photosynthesis, allowing plants to survive on journeys of months or even years.

Inside the case sent by Hooker is a thick mass of gunmetal grey lichen. It clings to, and is fused with, what appears to be volcanic tuff.

WITNESS

Jane Lathrop Loring is an ardent natural historian. She is largely self-taught, with a *deep interest in lichen.* Her father persuaded Asa Gray to tutor her privately, and she soon far surpassed him in her narrow sub-field - as well as falling *in love* with the shy Harvard botanist.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- ⊙ *Asa Gray* is a Harvard College Professor. Gray lives in Garden House on the grounds of the botanical garden. He is affianced to Jane Lothrop Loring, who is also his local lichen expert.
- ⊙ *Biddy Whelan* is Gray's housekeeper. A busy woman, she has been pleased to find a position with a gentleman who does not hate the Irish too openly.
- ⊙ *Isaac Sprague* illustrated Gray's magnum opus, *A Flora of North America.* Sprague is a friend of circus impresario Gardner Quincy Colton and a recreational nitrous oxide and ether user.

LOCATION AND ERA

Cambridge, Massachusetts, December 1844. *Garden House* is attached to the plant conservatory, where the Wardian case sits on a bench surrounded by ferns and orchids.

SPECIAL CARDS

- ⊙ A Bizarrerie
- ⊙ Specimen
- ⊙ Visions
- ⊙ Warped Bodies

A sweeping dome, carved with the likeness of the primordial stars. The tunnel continues down - and we can feel warm air rising from it.

Stench of gasoline. What does it mean? Gedney?

THE WARDIAN CASE: SAMPLE CLUES

⊙ Minute cracks in the Wardian case solder, or glass, or both.

⊙ Joseph Dalton Hooker's earlier letter, intercepted and concealed.

⊙ A whispered dream, awakening with a strange compulsion.

⊙ The unnerving sense of being watched in the plant conservatory.

⊙ A cry muffled, as if from between clenched teeth.

⊙ The Wardian case moved to a new location unexpectedly.

⊙ A magnificent *Cyathea acanthophora* tree fern, dead overnight and already decayed.

⊙ A Colt caplock revolver, neatly arranged on a work bench with powder, bullets and caps.

⊙ Evidence of impossible behavior among the Wardian case's *Lecanora grayii*.

⊙ A productive cough with grey-flecked sputum.

⊙ A vicious, inexplicable, and entirely out of character assault.

⊙ The sour smell of fruiting bodies, like an iridescent *Diachea leucopodia* slime mold.

⊙ "His skin was grey, like coal ash. He left his calling card."

⊙ A musical sound, like crystallized exhalations on a very cold night.

⊙ *Lecanora grayii* clinging to the drain of a bathtub.

⊙ A seawater-damaged journal titled *Some Notes From the Journey of the Hero*, N.B. Palmer, 1821.

The distinctive smell whose identity is now so clear is pervasive down here, and the heat is rising.

The tunnel network is more complex here. Our trail is all that would prevent us becoming lost.

The Centre Cannot Hold

By Becky Annison

Witness

Professor Anushri Davy is the diligent and charismatic head of the new Bioinformatics Cross-Infection Division at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Anushri is an expert in medical wetware which requires medical and computing skills. Her strength is a *sense of duty* to her patients and her personal trait is a *quirky sense of humour.*

Other Characters

- *Nakanya Mannivongsa* is a Lao poet with an interest in ancient folklore, studying the hidden connections between the serpent traditions of the Naga, Coatlicue and the White Snake, among others. She is conducting research in the School's library but has suffered an onslaught of strange and troubling dreams since her arrival.

- *James Thorogood,* an office worker pursuing conspiracies in the deep web. He dug too far and ended up as patient zero for the Dock virus. Since James woke from his coma he's been upbeat and cheerful but with troubling memories.

- *Rowan Sanderson* has been a nurse at the School for nearly 50 years and knows all its secrets. Currently they look after the Dock patients' day to day needs and provide regular doses of gossip and tea to the junior staff.

- *Nuit* is a hacker in the deep web providing information about the dock virus to Anushri. Nuit has revealed they are a former student of Anushri's (though she isn't sure which). They have nerves of steel, but where are they getting their intel? It can't be legal!

A new scent, earthy and redolent of decay. It is pungent and altogether repulsive.

LOCATION AND ERA

In 2132 the London School of Tropical Medicine is the first line of defence in the latest potential pandemic. One year ago the first computer virus appeared to jump the machine/human barrier. It was named the Dock Virus and since then it has claimed 50 known patients most of whom are being cared for in the London School of Tropical Medicine.

The School occupies a large and extensive premises on Euston Road above an abandoned tubeline; the perfect quarantine storage facility for viral and bacterial samples. It is the world's leading epidemiological and multi-disciplinary research centre.

OTHER LOCATIONS

- ⊙ *Dark Gate* - this node in cyberspace is frequented largely by teenage hackers daring each other after too much caffeine and too little sleep. It is the last location James visited before falling sick.
- ⊙ *Research Labs* - The labs are underground, hot and stuffy. The latest technology rubs up against ancient and jury rigged equipment as funding comes and goes.
- ⊙ *School Canteen* - everyone eats here; students, staff and the more mobile patients. It is buzzing with life especially on Fish Wednesdays.

SPECIAL CARDS

- ⊙ Sorcery
- ⊙ Warped Bodies
- ⊙ Visions
- ⊙ A Bizzarerie
- ⊙ Eldritch technology

The debris which has littered the floor since we began our descent is suddenly gone. No dust, ever. How can this be?

THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD: SAMPLE CLUES

- There have been 7 false quarantine breach alarms in 3 days, but the system shows no faults.
- Dock patients are presenting rashes uncannily similar to binary code.
- An oily black slick appears every night under bed 3 in Keppel Ward.
- Pieces of apparently orphaned code in the web match the brainwaves of recently recovered Dock victims.
- All Dock patients sit up and open their eyes in unison at 3.24am.
- The food in the canteen has lost all taste and texture but no-one else seems to notice.
- The viral and bacterial samples stored nearest the Dock samples grow in strange and unnatural ways.
- Anushri's research notes on the Dock virus are found vandalised/stolen/destroyed.
- Books in the school's own library have appeared with strange annotations; like computer code written using biological viral notations.
- Anushri receives anonymous messages through cyberspace warning her to stop her research.
- Anushri has the fleeting but overwhelming impression that all electronic devices, implants and wetware are watching her.

The quality of workmanship here represents a precipitous decline from that in the city. Shoddy, barbaric, even.

These new, debased carvings are overlaid on the originals, as though they were deliberately defaced. The work seems almost a parody of the Elder Ones' distinctive style.

THROUGH THE WATERS, DARKLY

By Joshua Fox

WITNESS

Vicente "Tàsi" Fuentes, a Guamanian marine biologist, trained in California. He is driven by a *burning need to know what's out there.* He is an avid consumer of science fiction books and movies, and has a *vivid imagination.*

OTHER CHARACTERS

- *Maria Irshad,* an Irish medical doctor and anatomist. Earnest and dedicated to her work, she often works late into the night powered by the magic of caffeine.
- *Yoshi Ota,* a Japanese submariner. Obsessed with a vast thing he once saw swimming in the depths.
- *Ursula Easton,* Russian engineer. She is an avid collector of specimens taken from the ocean floor, which festoon her bunk like christmas decorations.
- *Jay Brooks,* a young and enthusiastic American postdoc funded by a well-known oil exploration company.

LOCATION AND ERA

The *Challenger* United Nations research expedition, at the bottom of the Mariana oceanic trench, 10km beneath the surface. The year is 2025. The characters are a team of experts seconded to the UN from their home institutions.

We have found the Elder Ones. Dead
- heads torn from their bodies - and
covered in an unpleasant slime. The
stench is atrocious.

Other locations

- *The Challenger base,* an undersea research station named after the first sub to reach the bottom of the trench. It consists of six modular units: the hab unit, the laboratory, storage, the generator room (powered by a geothermal probe) and two Explorator launch bays. Each unit can be independently sealed off.

- *Explorator 1 and 2,* two deep-sea submersibles equipped for exploration and investigation of the ocean floor. They are powered by an array of batteries, with an 8-hour operational life (though can last 16 hours on life support alone).

- *The lower ground* of the trench is covered in a thick, grey diatomaceous (i.e. fine silicate) ooze. Some flatfish, as well as cuttlefish, may be observed here. Otherwise life-forms are limited to formenifera (tiny soft-shelled life) and bacteria.

- *A valley* to the Northwest of the research station contains numerous hydrothermal vents. Here there are worms, a vast variety of bacteria and invertebrate creatures such as shrimp and the odd squid that feed on them.

Special Cards

- A bizzarerie
- Ancient civilisation
- An inhuman creature
- Specimen
- Strange location

Through the Waters, Darkly: Sample Clues

- Someone disappears from the *Challenger*. Both Explorators are still in their bays.
- An earthquake rips through the trench, damaging the base's systems.
- A massive form, knifing through the water, not quite out of sight.
- An enormous, regular structure protruding from the ocean floor.
- Silty footprints on the floor of the *Challenger*.
- Dreams of a deep, regular breathing, close by and all around.
- Encounters with deep sea creatures familiar from previous undersea expeditions, but gargantuan in size.
- Samples taken from the sea floor contain a black, viscous, foul-smelling substance of unknown origin.
- Sensors detect a faint signal which sounds like speech, but of no known language.
- An Explorator's battery suddenly drains away to nothing while out of the base.
- An Explorator scoops up fragments of metal, with regular markings on them.
- Vital supplies disappear from the *Challenger's* storage unit.

I can barely stand to commit to paper our final experience in the loathsome darkness of that ancient abyss. I must do so, before my fear-addled memory betrays me.

WRITING YOUR OWN SCENARIOS

General disclaimer: Everything in your scenario is for inspiration and to enable quick-start play. The players are encouraged to create their own material either building on or supplementing what you write. Moreover, they will be building their own mystery using the components you supply. It is therefore undesirable for what you provide to represent a complete story waiting to happen. Instead, it should be ripe with potential and hooks which could be used or discarded, and arranged in many different ways to produce interesting and unique stories.

THEME

Give your scenario a theme. This isn't part of the scenario, but helps to ensure it has a coherent feel. Try to think of a theme that has more than one possible spin on it, to give the players ample opportunity to put their own stamp on the game.

WITNESS

Give the *Witness* a name, a role, a reason for being at the location of the scenario, a source of strength that will keep them going in difficult circumstances, and a personality trait. Try to make sure that these characteristics will give the *Witness* reasons to do interesting things. While the game's system will mean it doesn't matter overly if the *Witness* tries to avoid the horror, it's best not to give them traits which will encourage this behaviour.

OTHER CHARACTERS

Create a handful of other characters - four is the recommended number. Each character should have a name, a role of some kind, and additional details as required. The ideal character is someone who has something slightly intriguing or suspicious about them, to act as a hook for the players to hang clues off, and to allow plenty of flexibility in how the scenario is interpreted.

We fled for our lives, pursued by the piping horror we assumed to be the last of the Elder Ones.

LOCATION AND ERA

Choose a single broad location for the story, and a handful of individual sites within that location - four is the recommended number. Each location should have a name (or at least, a title), and a small amount of evocative detail. The ideal location is isolated, old, decaying, dark, unexplored, abandoned, full of strange things and/ or with an unpleasant history, and like the characters should have something slightly intriguing or suspicious about it.

CARDS

Choose up to five *Special Cards* which will be in play for this scenario, replacing the normal random draw.

SAMPLE CLUES

You should provide about a dozen sample *Clues*. The ideal *Clue* is something that could be picked up and used in a variety of situations, so "a trail of slimy footprints" not "a trail of slimy footprints leading from the church to the grave of Albert Smith". Note that players will be free to (and encourage to) create their own clues as well; and not all of the clues will be used in a given game.

NOTES ON RACISM AND MENTAL HEALTH

When writing your scenario, you have an ideal opportunity to build in respectful treatment of race and mental health. There's also the potential pitfall that, since other people will play your scenario without you, they could interpret it in ways you don't expect or intend. Mostly that's a good thing, but it's worth watching out for elements which could easily slip into racist or ableist stereotypes. You may find the essays in this book (pages 65 and 75) helpful for guiding your thinking.

The terrifying, piping cry:
'Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li! Will
forever be emblazoned on
my mind.

If only we had not looked back.
Ignorance would be sweet.

LOVECRAFTESQUE POETRY

BY ANIL GODI

CRAFTING FORMS

Due to the ongoing popularity of his Cthulhu mythos writings, it's often overlooked that Lovecraft was a poet as well as a prose writer. Indeed, much like Poe, he started off writing much more poetry and between 1896 and 1937 amassed a significant canon of works – over 300 pieces. His work crosses many themes, from his pacifist views on the First World War to somewhat overblown musings on classical subjects and various denouncements of his peers.

A look at his "phantasy" works draws out several key thematic points that are echoed in his prose and which I have attempted to capture in the pieces here. Most notably:

- ⊙ There are worlds beyond current human comprehension;
- ⊙ Invasion of personal space;
- ⊙ Horror is often approached tangentially and unreliably;
- ⊙ The eldritch sees us as inconsequential;
- ⊙ Experiences of isolation and powerlessness.

Style-wise, Lovecraft was very keen on tight poetic structures – it's very clear that he was a keen proponent of the classical both in form and subject. Many of his pieces include highfalutin' allusions of or appeals to classical figures (often the Roman gods). Sonnets (solo and in sequence), fairly strict metre and classical rhyme schemes all feature heavily as well.

THE PISCEAN PROBLEM

In this piece, I drew primary inspiration from The Nightmare Lake (1919)*, which describes an otherworldly body of water populated with strange horrors and home to a sunken city. Mirroring the rhyming couplets and iambic tetrameter that Lovecraft used, I sought to evoke the same sense of eldritch geography and twisted landscape, through imagery involving distance, decay and the mysticism of nature (particularly*

in the confluence of earth, air and water). It also uses the conceit of an investigator (in a similar manner to The Outpost (1929)*) wandering the countryside near Glastonbury whereupon their exploration leads to horrified discoveries. Somerset is a prominent location in English myth, not least for its connections with Arthurian legend and the kaers (royal citadels) of the* Preiddeu Annwn.

> I sought a lake of distant Time
> From which to scale a peak sublime,
> Whose shores 'gainst which a barque did beach
> For noble berthing place to reach
> And lay the golden Grail to rest
> With guardians by all Heaven blessed.
> I walked "Leviathan's" long "tail"
> Supposèd pinned by Bride's travail;
> Along the Brue, on eastern route
> Where mystics trod, I followed suit
> In pathing steps with leyline sense
> And yet ignoring mists intense
> Which rippled airborne memories
> And stirred some ancient boundaries.
> So, fixèd by my journey's end
> Up Wearyall Hill my path did wend
> Though what I'd find I was not cert
> I would no more remain inert –
> Some crownward spirit issued call
> And beckoned me to come install
> Myself as curious knight-errant,
> A new world order adherent;
> It wished me claim a blissful draught
> Distilled of holy chalice-craft.
> Each onward foot was heavy stepped
> But I'd not from the light be kept
> 'Til nearly spent, I crested 'fore
> The lofty goal of Kaer Rigor.

But passing unseen gates in haste
Revealed my fears now all unlaced…
As shadow bled o'er fancied grace
Fac'simile of a night's embrace
And where I thought seraphs regaled,
Convulsèd chitt'rings now assailed.
I realised I'd a veil transgressed
Was party now to dreads repressed
And facts erased from almanac –
Deep locks in landscape zodiac.
Dark waters now surrounded me
Not halcyon lake but foetid sea
Where screeching, oozing, sable things,
Our nightmare dark imaginings
Swooped arcane patterns overhead
For rituals that new horrors bred.
A vermeil moon ope'd baleful eye
Unhallowed light to sanctify
Proceedings foul of eldritch rite
Revoking sanity in blight.
My grip was growing e'er more weak
When rose a head all sickly sleek
With reeking ichor of the deep,
Vile Serpent unpinned from its sleep.
Aghast I watched its wake in roil,
Churn grasping masses raised by coil;
  These bloated nameless now astir
Evoking drownèd sepulchre
All given slick viridian birth.
They slithered, slime-wreathed, tainting earth;
Transfixèd, I could only stare
While squelching forms licked old bones bare.
I wondered if they held my fate
For stumbling through this nether gate.

On Receiving Individuals
Touched From Beyond
or
Ode to Asklepios

A recurrent theme, particularly in Lovecraft's early works, is that of classical mythology whereby he will call upon a deity or heroic figure, often in deference to an ideal he is appealing to. In Poemata Minora (1902)*, he calls upon Selene/Diana, and in* On Receiving a Picture of Swans (1915)*, he cites "luckless Phaeton". Here I show the prayer of a physician, imploring Asklepios (Greek god of medicine), Epione (goddess of soothing of pain and Asklepios' wife) and their daughters (minor medicinal powers) for aid in treating some of his patients. The idea behind this is that he seeks palliation for the souls in his care who are lost to the horrors inside their head. This piece also employs his convention of double-titling pieces, one of which is invariably over-wordy.*

> Thy ministrations here I do beseech!
> Please guide my care and show me how to reach
> These star-crossed souls with minds most gravely wrack'd
> And eyes that fractured landscapes do refract.
> By snake and staff I offer up this prayer
> In hopes of therapeutic charms to share.
> O Sun-blest scion! O fair Chiron's ward!
> Thy remedies antique can soothe discord,
> Benisons that from your daughters flow
> Infused with Epione's quieting glow –
> Asklepios, please heed this humble plea
> And from their inner torments set them free.

What we saw almost indescribable – a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and unforming as pustules of greenish light.

COLD MIRROR

Longform pieces comprised of quatrains (four-line stanzas) or sonnets feature heavily in his works, particularly in Fungi from Yuggoth (1930)*, which is ostensibly his best-known poem. Drawing upon the stylistic features in that,* Nemesis (1917) *and* The Wood (1929)*, in Cold Mirror I wanted to present a story in three cantos (playing on the three act structure as presented here in* **Lovecraftesque***) where the hubris of the protagonist as well as the somewhat uncaring nature of spirits acted in concert to bring about misadventure. The idea was to draw upon themes of isolation, being lost and separated from what you know, situations that unknowingly draw you in and trap you all bound within a framework of Norse mythology, again echoing Lovecraft's classical predilections.*

I

Stout-heartedly and long of limb,
Slain caribou to sled well-tied
The hunter Viðarr's realm did stride
With haste to keep from storm apart.

'Tween cold-stripp'd trunks they deftly slipped
Considered wise of forest ways
And knowing how to stay malaise
As Skadi's tears all landmarks stripped.

None usually braved these sacred lands
Afeared the old concords to breach
With tales of shadow, skalds would preach
Of tricks play'd out by wildling bands.

The hunter stumbled unknown trails
To seek some rest 'til winds recede
Since idle fant'sy they'd not heed,
As boots slipp'd slick through snow travails

With time drowned out in wintry cloud,
Uncertain breaths called Ullr's aid
With little hope for cold allayed
When suddenly – a boon endowed!

II

Their snowblind eyes resolved escape -
A cabin 'gainst unearthly chill
No piping smoke, eyes dark, but still
An offer of most welcome shape.

The door was ope' with mute invite
So crossed they in with frosty haste
And to the hearth already placed,
To banish fears with stoked light

The room lit up by blazing eye
Showed every ledge with wealth was laid,
All silver, gems and glass arrayed
And tempting common sense awry.

The back room brought yet more to view;
A centrepiece to dragon's hoard
That under gilt-thread cloth was stored…
Revealed to be a mirror true.

O'er-clouded avaricious sight
Considered all their newfound gains
Not seeing rime-touched cabinet panes
Or hoary breaths now given flight.

The terrible, panic-inducing
speed and size, bearing down
on us out of that frightful
mist. A miracle we escaped.

III

The hunter took on crafty guise,
Did grin a grin of plight made right,
Deemed this reward for tracking might
As they stretched out to claim their prize.

With grasping reach now mirrored they
Made contact with their glassy twin;
The smile without turned sneer within,
Reflecting on incipient prey.

A sudden shock of gelid pain
Accompanied an icy crack
That essence and the ears did wrack
And dawning fear now took the rein.

Around them lay fresh deep-drift snow
No cabin there to scorn the cold.
They realised then that they'd been sold
A fateful downfall grand tableau.

Since staring back 'cross tricksy lens
Stood smirking double, lacking grace.
For scorning myth had booked their place
In Viðarr's vengeful hunting glens.

Of course: the voice of the
Elder Ones is the voice of their
creations.

It can only have been one
thing. The dread servants of
the Elder Ones, which still
remain in the dark: a Shoggoth.

THE BOOK

In departure from a strict emulation of form, I wanted to present a more modern piece, more akin to my usual style, that blended the themes of **Lovecraftesque** *with the feelings and essence of Lovecraft's poetry. Clues are a fundamental part of the game and the idea of a dread tome, holding dark mysteries and arcane writings, is definitely a classic trope. Indeed, Lovecraft himself added* The King in Yellow *to the library of dark texts. Drawing from pieces like* Festival (1925) *and* Waste Paper (1923)*, The Book presents an item using language designed to be uncomfortable and a 'broken' form that hints at other mysteries within.*

There's a room.
It's less a store and more a cage.
The walls aren't just lined with lead,
   they're made of it.
But one door.
Five physical locks
   where no one person holds all the keys;
At least one other
   crafted of an arcane lore.
Rune-scarred woods line all the sides.
They're deeply burned, inscribed with scripts
   from ancient crypts retrieved.
Wards in words now long-forgotten.
Yet its occupant still memories stir.

The smell of leprous marshes
Underlined by brimstone ink
   is said to waft around
The prisoner on its lectern
   rising from a nightingale floor.
It's tuned so anyone therein
Might ignore surreptitious whispers
Of scratching quills
   that on the edge of hearing gnaw.

The diamond steel that forms its berth
   was shiny once.
Though it holds, strength unimpeached,
The lustre's leached away
And in its wake
   a gritty, greasy, grey patina.
A similar chain weights it down
wrapped thickly; well-bound tome.
Doing so helps obfuscate
scrawling, writhing serifs of
A sanguine title
   glistening red
'Gainst a mottled cover
scarred in places
Of unspeculated vellum in patches
   Of hues including dusky rose.

Even sliding view
most momentary
Down its bleached ivory spine or gilt-edged pages
Could open esoteric cracks not easily sealed
   or so the legends go.

It sits.
It waits.
Its presence ripples in the aether.
Its time was once.
It might again.

With those mountains of madness safely
behind us, I have time to reflect.

The horrors we saw must have lurked
there for millions of years, and will
perhaps remain there for millions more.

We must ensure that no-one else ventures into that
terrible place - or worse, the vast peak we spied as we
left, and which the Elder Ones feared so much.

We have
sworn each
other to
secrecy.

Poor Danforth is scarcely
coherent. His final, shrieking
terror as we passed over
the peaks seems now but
a harbinger of complete
withdrawal.

When he speaks, the
things Danforth says
fill me with dread.
What did he glimpse
as we fled the
nightmare city?

TEACHING GUIDE

This guide is intended as an accessible summary of the rules. If someone new is playing, or if the group needs a refresh, read each section out loud at the relevant stage of the game. This doesn't describe every rule or procedure, and is not a substitute for at least one person reading the rules in full. The Facilitator will sometimes need to jump in and explain a rule or make sure it's followed. As you read it out, offer everyone opportunities to ask questions. We recommend that the guide is passed from player to player, and so it includes instructions for who reads what. Alternatively, the Facilitator can read it out, following the instructions for when to read but ignoring the instructions on who should read it.

FACILITATOR, READ OUT THIS TEXT AT THE START:

We're going to use this teaching guide to help us learn the game. We'll read it out section by section as we play, so that we're not trying to learn all the rules in one go. If you've got questions, feel free to ask me, but don't worry if in the early scenes you aren't sure how later stuff is going to work – we'll come to it in due course.

THE PLAYER TO YOUR LEFT READS OUT THIS TEXT NEXT:

This is a story-telling game to recreate the slow-building, cosmic horror of H.P. Lovecraft. We're going to take turns to reveal strange *Clues*, one scene at a time. We won't discuss where the story is going, but after each scene we'll privately *Leap to Conclusions* about what the *Clues* mean, and then use those speculations to steer our contributions to the story. In the end, one of us will weave it all together into a terrifying finale.

The player to your left reads out this text next:

Each scene, we'll take turns to play the *Witness*, the *Narrator*, and the *Watchers*:

- ⊙ The *Witness* is the main character, who gradually uncovers a terrible, inhuman secret. They may struggle to overcome that secret, but are doomed to fail and perhaps to meet a terrible end.
- ⊙ The *Narrator* frames scenes, reveals strange *Clues*, describes the people, places and events the *Witness* is caught up in, and plays walk-on parts.
- ⊙ The *Watchers* help the *Narrator*, by adding layers of atmosphere and horrifying details and by playing secondary characters if required by the *Narrator*.

The player to your left reads out this text next:

Before we start, we all have to have a clear picture of the kind of story we want to tell. Lovecraftian horror stories are about a vast, uncaring universe full of lurking monsters, alien civilisations and terrifying gods that make human concerns seem meaningless. They don't include ghosts, or werewolves, or any of the monsters you see in classic gothic horror stories, folk tales, or Hollywood horror movies.

The player to your left reads out this text next:

Lovecraft describes alien monsters, like those found in science fiction, and presents them as the denizens of an arcane horror story. The stars and space are vast and terrifying, not wondrous or inspiring. Lovecraft supports this with ancient tomes full of blasphemous secrets, and sorcerers conducting sinister rituals to summon abominations from beyond.

All of this is supported by a tone reminiscent of gothic horror: elaborate, arcane language, forbidding and unfriendly locations, people hideous on the inside and out who serve these alien masters and layer upon layer of relentless detail to heighten the tense atmosphere.

Teaching Guide Continues...

THE FACILITATOR NOW READS THIS OUT:

Before we start, I'd like your help to make this game fun for every-
one. Horror can touch on dark themes and uncomfortable material.
But we want any discomfort we feel to be consensual. Right now,
we've got an opportunity to ban any material from the game that
we don't want to be included. Anyone who wishes to should name
elements or themes that they are uncomfortable with or would find
offensive. Good examples of issues to consider include overt or
allegorical racism, cartoonish depictions of mental illness. Banned
items are not up for debate!

Even for elements that have not been banned, there's still the
option to veto it during play. If anything makes anyone uncomfort-
able in any way... [draw an X on an index card] ...you can just lift this
card up, or simply tap it. [Place the card at the centre of the table.]
You don't have to explain why. It doesn't matter why. When we lift
or tap this card, we simply edit out anything X-Carded. And if there
is ever an issue, anyone can call for a break and we can talk pri-
vately. It might sound funny but it will help us play amazing games
together and usually I'm the one who uses the X-Card to protect
myself from all of you! Please help make this game fun for everyone.
Thank you!

We start by agreeing the general tone of the game, who our *Witness* will be, and the setting for the story. We'll agree one thing at a time, and everyone should throw in suggestions and discuss them until we're all happy. If we get stuck, there is an inspiration table in the rulebook that we can look at for ideas.

For ease of reference, here are the things you need to decide at this point:

- ⊙ *The tone (default is creeping horror)*
- ⊙ *The era and general setting for the story*
- ⊙ *The main location*
- ⊙ *One other location per player (or two per player, in two-player games)*
- ⊙ *The name and role of the Witness*
- ⊙ *Why they are at the main location*
- ⊙ *One personality trait*
- ⊙ *Their source of strength*

IF YOU ARE USING A SCENARIO,
THE FACILITATOR SHOULD READ THIS OUT INSTEAD:

We start by going through the setting for our story, which has been established in the Scenario we're using. We should also agree the general tone of the game.

Agree the tone (default is creeping horror) and read out the Witness, Other Characters, Location and Era, and Other Locations sections of the Scenario you are using.

WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED SET UP, THE FACILITATOR READS THIS OUT:

We're nearly ready to start our story. Our first scene has to contain a strange *Clue* that hints at the horror to come. If anyone has an idea for the first *Clue* – don't tell us! – but you can be be the *Narrator* for the first scene. At the end of each scene we'll pass our roles (*Narrator*, *Witness*, *Watcher*) to the person on our left, so everyone gets a go at every role.

**ONCE SOMEONE HAS VOLUNTEERED TO BE NARRATOR, PASS OUT THE
CUE CARDS AND ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO READ THEM.
THEN THE NARRATOR READS THIS OUT:**

The *Narrator* is like the author of a book, except that they don't
get to control the actions, thoughts or feelings of the *Witness*. The
Narrator says where the scene is set, and who is there apart from
the *Witness*. They describe the world, and anyone the *Witness* meets.
They say what other characters do, and play them the way an actor
plays a character in a movie. The *Narrator* should bring the *Watchers*
in by pausing often to allow them to contribute details and elabora-
tions, and asking them questions about the scene and building on
their answers. Finally, they get to choose when to end the scene.

NOW THE FIRST WITNESS READS THIS OUT:

The *Witness* is the main character, and is in every scene. When it's
your turn to play the *Witness*, you speak for them, again just like
an actor in a movie. You also say what the *Witness* is doing; but it's
the *Narrator*'s job to tell you the results of your actions. The *Narra-
tor* is always free to interrupt and tell you that the straightforward
action that you're describing is going to be harder than you thought.
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you describe the *Witness*'s
thoughts and feelings: especially their fears, and their attempts to
rationalise the things they see.

**FINALLY, IF THERE'S AT LEAST ONE WATCHER,
THE PERSON TO THE WITNESS'S LEFT READS THIS OUT:**

Everyone else plays the *Watchers*. The *Watchers* support the *Narrator* in
a number of ways. Lovecraft's stories are full of rich, detailed, creepy
descriptions. *Watchers* bring every scene to life by adding sensory de-
scriptions and elaborating on what the *Narrator* describes. They won't
ever take over the scene, introduce *Clues*, or do anything that would
change the direction of the story. But they will try to intensify and
heighten what the *Narrator* says. In addition, when the *Narrator* asks us
questions, the *Watchers* provide an answer. They should respond with
the first thing that comes to mind, never overthinking their contri-
butions. Finally, if the *Witness* ends up in a conversation with several
characters at once, to avoid the *Narrator* having to talk to themselves
they can ask *Watchers* to step in and play secondary characters.

During the first two *Parts* of the game, scenes are focused on re-vealing *Clues*. During every scene the *Narrator* has to reveal at least one *Clue*! *Clues* are the signs that something sinister is going on – anything that reveals new information about the horror or sheds new light on it is a *Clue*. *Clues* can be anything from an eerie noise or inhuman-looking footprint to an alien artifact or terrifying vision.

When we introduce a *Clue*, we write the details down on an index card. Whatever we write on those index cards will be used to weave the *Final Horror* at the end of the game.

We can add in bits of atmospheric detail without making them *Clues*, but nothing really weird. And we can re-use old *Clues* without them counting as new *Clues*, as long as by doing so we don't reveal anything new.

Lovecraft's stories are slow-building and, until the very end, low-key and leaving room for doubt as to what is going on. Everything we narrate must be possible to explain rationally, even if it strains reason a little. We can't introduce tangible evidence of the supernat-ural, and we're encouraged to leave plenty of room for doubt. We should also refrain from narrating violence against humans (includ-ing the *Witness*), or direct evidence of this. First-hand accounts of any of these things should always be from unreliable sources, always subject to doubt.

Even so, *Clues* should always be intriguing, baffling or scary, not something you could easily forget or dismiss.

So, to recap, nobody can narrate violence against humans or clear evidence of the supernatural. However, each of us gets one *Special Card* that allows us to break these limitations or go beyond our normal roles. [In a two-player game, you get two *Special Cards*.]

Whenever a *Special Card* contradicts the rules, the *Special Card* wins. Some *Special Cards* have an instant effect and are then discarded, others are permanent – you play them and then anyone can use the special effects on the *Special Card* for the rest of the game. Your *Special Card* will tell you when you can use it and what it does, so watch for opportunities to use it.

**WHEN THE FIRST SCENE IS OVER,
THE FACILITATOR READS THIS OUT:**

After each new scene, we can add one new trait to the *Witness*'s index card, based on how they were portrayed in that scene.

**ONCE YOU'VE DISCUSSED THIS AND ADDED A TRAIT IF DESIRED,
THE FACILITATOR READS THIS OUT:**

Now it's time to consider what we think the true horror might be. We're going to be making some pretty wild guesses, especially at this early stage! But we shouldn't let this hold us back. Instead, *Leap to a Conclusion*, as fully developed and specific as you can make it, and write it down in a couple of sentences. Don't show anyone else! We'll update our ideas at the end of every scene. When we're narrating, we should base our *Clues* and other contributions to the story on these *Conclusions*. At the end, we'll use them to give us a strong idea of what the *Final Horror* could be.

Part 1 of the game has just ended. Starting with this next scene, at the end of any scene the *Witness* can begin the *Journey into Darkness* that will lead us to the climax of our story, the *Final Horror*. The *Final Horror* will happen somewhere dark, ancient, remote or abandoned. This can happen in three ways:

- ⊙ If at the end of a scene, the *Witness* decides to go somewhere that looks like a likely candidate for the location of the *Final Horror*, and if it feels like it's time, the player of the *Witness* can initiate the *Journey*, with that location as the end-point. If so, the next scene is the *Journey into Darkness*.

- ⊙ Alternatively, if after a *Part 2* scene the new *Narrator* wishes to begin the *Journey*, they can do so by deciding where the *Final Horror* will take place, and initiating a *Force Majeure* scene in which events conspire to force the *Witness* to head for that location.

- ⊙ Finally, if after three *Part 2* scenes neither of the above has happened, *Part 3* begins automatically with a *Force Majeure* scene. The *Narrator* of that scene will decide the location of the *Final Horror*.

***IF THE WITNESS DIDN'T INITIATE THE JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS
BEFORE THE END OF PART 2, OR IF THE NARRATOR DECIDES TO INITI-
ATE IT EARLY, THERE WILL BE A FORCE MAJEURE SCENE.
IF SO, THE NEW NARRATOR READS THIS PART OUT:***

We're now going to have a special *Force Majeure* scene. The *Narrator* decides where the *Final Horror* will take place, and narrates events that will force the *Witness* to go there, whether they like it or not. When the scene ends, the *Journey into Darkness* begins.

BEFORE THE JOURNEY INTO THE DARKNESS, THE NEW NARRATOR READS THIS PART OUT:

We're about to start a new part of the game called the *Journey into Darkness*. This part is a single extended scene, and during this scene we're all going to take *Turns* describing the journey to the location of the *Final Horror*. A *Turn* doesn't involve a lot of talking – just a few sentences. On your *Turn*, unlike the rest of the game, you have a free choice over what role to take. If you choose to be *Narrator*, you describe the environment and move the journey on. If you choose to be *Witness*, you describe their inner thoughts and fears. If you choose to be *Watcher*, you elaborate on whatever the previous player described.

    We play through at least 12 *Turns*. Starting with the 12th *Turn*, if we choose to be *Narrator* then we can describe the *Witness*'s arrival at the location of the *Final Horror* and end the *Journey*. On the 16th step, if we get that far, we must do this.

WHEN THE WITNESS ARRIVES AT THE LOCATION OF THE FINAL HORROR, THE PLAYER TO THE LEFT OF THE LAST NARRATOR READS THIS PART OUT:

We're about to reach the final scene of the game. The *Witness* is going to see the true horror that so far has only been hinted at. This scene will either involve a direct encounter with a monster, or a revelation of worldview-shattering proportions. Or maybe both! One of us has to volunteer to decide what that true horror is and be the *Narrator* for this scene. We've all been writing our ideas down as we go, so this shouldn't be too hard. The *Narrator* should aim to weave a horror that explains all of the *Clues* we've seen so far – but they needn't explain it all to us during the scene itself.

***PASS THIS TEACHING GUIDE TO YOUR LEFT,
AND THE NEXT PLAYER READS THIS OUT:***

To help give an idea of the sort of thing that might happen at the climax of a *Final Horror* scene, here are some examples from Lovecraft himself. In one story, the *Witness* discovers they are descended from the monster. In another, the *Witness* discovers that what they had assumed to be paintings of imagined grotesqueries are based on photographs of real-life subjects. In a third, after devastating and tainting the location of the story, the monster simply leaves, demonstrating the irrelevance of the *Witness*.

***CHECK IF THERE'S AT LEAST ONE IDEA FOR THE FINAL HORROR.
IF NOT, READ THIS OUT:***

If someone has an idea which will explain most of the *Clues*, even if it doesn't quite cover them all, we'll go with that. Otherwise, we're going to have to discuss our ideas and see if we can come up with a good one between us.

***WHOEVER VOLUNTEERS TO BE NARRATOR FOR THE FINAL HORROR
READS THIS PART OUT:***

In this final scene, we go back to our normal roles. One *Narrator*, one *Witness* [plus *Watchers* if you've been using them]. But in this scene, the *Witness* will come face to face with the true horror. There won't be any more need for *Clues*. We get to abandon all those pesky rules about rational explanations: we will describe things that nobody can deny are supernatural in nature.

The *Witness* will have even less control over their destiny in this scene than usual. They might try to run or hide, or if they're really foolish they might try to fight the horror. They may even just look on in horror as the scene unfolds. So *Witness*, you may find yourself mostly narrating your terrified mental state. Enjoy the ride.

In a game with 3+ players, after the Final Horror pass roles left twice, in an exception to the normal sequence.

TEACHING GUIDE CONTINUES...

BEFORE THE EPILOGUE, THE NEW NARRATOR READS THIS PART OUT:

Our story has concluded, but we're going to have an *Epilogue* to reveal a little of what happens next, both to the *Witness* and also to the horror they encountered. We don't play this out, but just narrate it, either as a scene, or a series of short scenes; or perhaps through another medium, like a newspaper article that we read out loud.

The *Narrator*'s role is to decide what happens to the horror. They have to show how the horror is still out there in the world in some form. Even if our *Witness* somehow managed to defeat the horror, the *Narrator*'s job is to show that this was a hollow victory with no real long-term impact.

PASS THIS TEACHING GUIDE TO THE WITNESS,
WHO READS THIS PART OUT:

The player of the *Witness* says what has become of our central character. They have to show how the *Witness*'s life has been destroyed by the things they have seen. Even if the *Witness* died, they will show how the effects of their encounter with the horror ripple out after their death.

By the way, we can narrate these two segments – the fate of the *Witness* and the fate of the horror – in either order, or interweave the two.

PASS THE TEACHING GUIDE LEFT TO THE FIRST WATCHER,
IF THERE IS ONE: OTHERWISE, TO THE NARRATOR.
THEY READ THIS PART OUT:

During the *Epilogue*, anyone who wants to can add elaborations and details on to what the others narrate; including the *Narrator* and the *Witness* themselves. We want to spin a doom-laden ending and really lay it on thick, so don't hold back!

The one exception to this is that only the *Witness* themselves can narrate their thoughts, fears and rationalisations: do not elaborate on these.

END OF TEACHING GUIDE.

Lovecraftesque Rules Summary

Things to agree during setup

- General tone, and any banned elements
- Era and setting; the main location; and one other location per player (two per player in a two-player game).
- The *Witness*'s name and role; why they are at the main location; one personality trait; and one source of strength.
- One person to be the first *Narrator* – whoever has an idea for the first *Clue*.

Roles

- *Narrator* decides when, where the scene happens, who is there, what is happening.
- *Witness* says what they do and say, and narrates their inner fears and rationalisations.
- *Watchers* add extra detail and elaboration to the *Narrator*'s descriptions.
- At the end of each scene, **everyone** *Leaps to Conclusions* about what is going on.
- Roles pass left after every scene.

The rule of Creeping Horror

Everything must be rationally explicable, and there may not be any overt attacks – including theft, sabotage or other destruction – or any kind of violence (including discovering bodies), until the *Final Horror.*

Special Cards allow you to break this rule, and provide inspiration for *Clues.* Instant effect *Cards* have an effect when played. Continuous effect *Cards* remain in play and enable new options for the whole of the game.

PART 1 AND PART 2 SCENES

During *Part 1* and *Part 2*:

- ⊙ The *Narrator* reveals exactly one *Clue* every scene.
- ⊙ *Part 1* ends after the fifth scene.
- ⊙ In *Part 2* the *Witness* can begin the *Journey into Darkness* at the end of any scene, or the *Narrator* of the next scene can make it a *Force Majeure* scene.
- ⊙ Otherwise, *Part 2* ends after the scene in which the 8th *Clue* is revealed.

PART 3 SCENES

- ⊙ *Force Majeure* scene (if needed). The *Narrator* forces the *Witness* to begin the *Journey into Darkness*.
- ⊙ The *Journey into Darkness*. Players take *Turns* to narrate a few sentences, either describing the environment, describing the *Witness*'s inner thoughts, or elaborating on the previous narration. The final step of the *Journey* may be described from the 12th *Turn*, and must be by the 16th.
- ⊙ The *Final Horror*. One player volunteers to be *Narrator* and weaves the *Clues* together. The player on their left plays the *Witness* once more.
- ⊙ In the *Epilogue*, the players narrate an ending that reveals the fate of the horror and of the *Witness*. If there are 3+ players, pass roles left twice before this scene.

Cue Cards

Print or copy for a table reference

Narrator

YOUR ROLE: Shape the Horror through evocative and intriguing contributions.

Introduce the scene (where, when, who, what).

Ensure *Scene Requirements* are met.

Describe the environment and characters other than the *Witness*.

Adjudicate any conflicts.

Decide when the scene is over.

Do:

Bring a sense of sinister atmosphere.

Reuse and build on existing *Clues*, characters, locations and other details.

Pause often to allow the *Watchers* to contribute.

Ask the *Watchers* questions; build on their answers.

Optional:

Give a *Watcher* an incidental NPC to play, if needed to avoid talking to yourself.

Don't:

Tell the *Witness* what they're thinking or feeling.

Lovecraftesque Cue Card

Witness

YOUR ROLE: Play the Witness as though they were a real person.

Say what the *Witness* says and does.

Speak the *Witness*'s thoughts and feelings, especially their fears and rationalisations.

Introduce new details about the *Witness* through their actions, words and thoughts.

Do:

Portray the traits on the *Witness*'s index card.

React to events as you think the *Witness* would – heroic and curious or fearful and meek.

Don't:

Narrate details about the environment, *Clues*, or other characters.

Lovecraftesque Cue Card

Scene Requirements

Investigation scene

Reveal a *Clue*.

Force Majeure scene

Declare where the *Final Horror* will take place and force the *Witness* to begin the *Journey into Darkness* that will take them there.

The Journey into Darkness

Move the *Witness* to the location of the *Final Horror* on the final step of the Journey.

The Final Horror

Reveal a terrifying monster or worldview-shattering revelation.

Epilogue

Reveal the fate of the *Witness* and of the horror.

Lovecraftesque Cue Card

Watcher

YOUR ROLE: Add atmosphere without taking over.

Elaborate on the *Narrator's* descriptions, providing detail, texture and atmosphere.

Answer any questions that the *Narrator* asks you.

Play NPCs if asked to by the *Narrator*.

Do:

Follow the *Narrator's* lead; let them set the direction for the scene.

Elaborate a bit more than you personally find comfortable.

Answer questions impulsively, with the first idea that comes to mind.

Don't:

Initiate narration of anything new, or introduce *Clues*, without using a *Special Card*.

Push the scene in a new direction, or take over from the *Narrator*, without using a *Special Card*.

Lovecraftesque Cue Card

Special Cards

A Hostile Group

(Gang, cult, secret society, family, etc)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this after a scene that involved a group of people who seemed unfriendly, hostile or oddly friendly.

PART 1 ONWARDS

Threaten or warn off the *Witness*.

Steal, sabotage, destroy.

Attack someone other than the *Witness*.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Make a direct physical attack on the *Witness*.

Pursue the *Witness* en masse.

***LOVECRAFTESQUE* SPECIAL CARD**

Sorcery

(Sorcerer, witch, coven)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this after a scene if something was revealed that seems like it could be sorcery.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Allow the *Witness* to see for themselves bizarre, rationally inexplicable occurrences.

Launch a sorcerous attack on the *Witness*, capturing, weakening or injuring them.

PART 3

The *Final Horror* must be something other than a sorcerer.

***LOVECRAFTESQUE* SPECIAL CARD**

Inhuman Creature

(Servant or enemy of the true horror)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this after a scene if evidence of an inhuman creature was revealed (footprints, spoor, a sighting).

PART 2 ONWARDS

Allow the *Witness* to see something that could not be human.

Reveal victims of the creature – terrified, warped, injured or killed.

PART 3

Have the creature attack or pursue the *Witness*.

The *Final Horror* must be something other than the creature.

***LOVECRAFTESQUE* SPECIAL CARD**

An Ancient Civilisation

(Ruins, relics)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this after a scene that included ruins, ancient objects or other archaeology.

PART 1 ONWARDS

Reveal clear signs of pre-human life.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Introduce clear evidence of pre-human civilisation and technology.

PART 3 ONWARDS

Reveal the still-living creatures from the ancient civilisation.

***LOVECRAFTESQUE* SPECIAL CARD**

Special Cards

Objet d'art

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this after a scene that included a mysterious or unpleasant sculpture, painting or other piece of art.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Reveal inexplicable occurrences that only happen when the object is present.

Reveal clear evidence that the blasphemous thing the object depicts is quite real.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

Victims

(Terrible harm caused by the horror)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this after a scene which included an injured and/or dead person, without a clear explanation for how the injury/death happened.

PART 1 ONWARDS

Reveal terrible effects on a victim – injury, mutilation and/or death.

PART 2 ONWARDS

The *Witness* may see a victim coming under attack.

PART 3 ONWARDS

The *Witness* may become a victim.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

Visions

(Dreams, hallucinations)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this after a scene that mentioned or included dreams, visions or hallucinations.

PART 1 ONWARDS

Reveal *Clues* well beyond rational explanation, but only seen in visions.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Begin making elements of the vision real, whether rationally explicable or not.

PART 3 ONWARDS

The *Journey into Darkness* may take place in a vision.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

Spatiotemporal Distortions

(Non-Euclidian space, time travel)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this after a scene where someone shows up somewhere unexpected or is absent from their presumed location.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Have characters appear in places that they have no way to get to.

Have characters disappear when there is no possible way out.

PART 3 ONWARDS

Allow the *Witness* to breach the normal rules of space or time.

The *Witness* sees someone appear from nowhere or vanish.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

Special Cards

Reprisals
INSTANT EFFECT

When you are *Narrator* you may play this card to introduce reprisals against the *Witness* for their meddling. This could take several forms:

- ⊙ Threaten the *Witness* or deliver a warning.
- ⊙ Steal, sabotage or destroy something.
- ⊙ Attack or pursue someone (including the *Witness*).

When you play this card you may breach the rules against directly showing violence against the *Witness* or someone else.

Lovecraftesque *Special Card*

Replace the Witness
INSTANT EFFECT

Play this card during *Part 1 or 2* to:

1. Take over as *Narrator* if you weren't already.
2. Gain the *Scene Requirement*: "Take the *Witness* out of play."
3. You can do this by killing them, capturing them, rendering them helpless, moving the story forward in time or to a distant location.
4. Create a new *Witness* using the normal setup rules.
5. Optionally, give the new *Witness* information known by the previous *Witness* (e.g. through an exchange of letters).
6. Start a new scene using your existing *Clues* and a new *Witness* who stumbles on the same horror.

Lovecraftesque *Special Card*

Flashback
INSTANT EFFECT

Play this card during *Part 1 or 2* to:

1. Take over as *Narrator* if you weren't already.
2. Initiate a new flashback scene to a time before the current story started. This is an *Investigation* scene.
3. Reveal a *Clue* that is relevant to the current situation.

Lovecraftesque *Special Card*

Early Reveal
INSTANT EFFECT

Play this card during *Part 1 or 2* to:

1. Take over as *Narrator* if you weren't already.
2. Reveal a *Clue* that cannot be explained rationally.
3. Return the role of *Narrator* to its original owner.
4. This *Clue* is in addition to the *Clue* that would normally be revealed in an *Investigation* scene.

Lovecraftesque *Special Card*

Special Cards

A Bizzarerie

(Stange, inexplicable effects)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this card after a scene that included phenomena of interest to science, or which appeared to defy conventional scientific theory.

PART 1 ONWARDS

Introduce strange effects not explicable by science, targeted on objects, plants or animals.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Extend the strange effects to humans other than the *Witness*.

PART 3

Extend the strange effects to the *Witness*.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

Strange Writings

(Book, scroll, carvings)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this card after a scene that included mysterious, possibly incomprehensible writings.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Reveal inexplicable effects that happen when the writings are read or their instructions followed.

Reveal that the things that the writings described were not fictional after all.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

Specimen

(Fossil, bones, preserved body)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this card after a scene that included the complete or partial remains of an unknown creature.

PART 1 ONWARDS

Reveal clear but indirect evidence of a creature unknown to science.

PART 2 ONWARDS

The *Witness* sees something that could be the creature, but obscured.

Reveal terrible effects on a victim – injury, mutilation and/or death.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

Eldritch Technology

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this card after a scene that included an object of unknown function.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Reveal inexplicable occurrences that only happen when the object is present.

Reveal inexplicable effects that the object can cause when activated.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

SPECIAL CARDS

WARPED BODIES

(Monstrous traits, deformities or disease)

ONGOING EFFECT

You may play this card after a scene that included people who look unusual, move strangely, or appear to be concealing something.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Reveal inhuman physiological traits.

Reveal deformity, mutilation or debilitating effects.

PART 3

Extend deformity, mutilation or debilitating effects to the *Witness*.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

A STRANGE LOCATION

(An inaccessible place, other dimension, or hidden location)

INSTANT EFFECT

Play at any time to:

1. Take over as *Narrator* if you weren't already.

2. Reveal a previously unknown location.

3. Shift the action there.

4. Start a new *Investigation* scene with you as *Narrator*.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

ANACHRONISM

ONGOING EFFECT

Play this card after any scene that included someone with strangely old-fashioned behaviour or possessions.

PART 2 ONWARDS

Reveal implausibly detailed knowledge of times long past.

Reveal ancient writings that appear to refer to a present-day person.

Reveal ancient images that appear to depict a present-day person.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

DEFEAT THE EVIL

INSTANT EFFECT

Play this card during the *Final Horror* to name a mysterious thing that has been narrated during the game and the meaning of which has not yet been revealed. The *Witness* realises that this thing is the key to defeating the *Final Horror*.

The mysterious thing must be appropriate to the task. A strange ritual could banish an elder god, for instance.

Only include this card in games with a tone of **heroic horror**.

LOVECRAFTESQUE SPECIAL CARD

INSPIRATION TABLE

SETTINGS

Antarctica
Deep in the Sahara
Out on the Mongolian steppe
High in the Himalayas
In the belly of a rift valley
In the remote Amazon
On a small island far from
the mainland
On the Moon
In an asteroid field
Deep in space
Beneath the ocean

WHAT'S STRANGE ABOUT THIS PLACE?

That door leads to nowhere
Strange geometry
Massive dimensions
Impossibly ancient

LOCATIONS

A blasted heath
An uncharted cave network
An isolated village
A nomad camp
A settlement unseen by modern eyes
An almost-abandoned town
A crumbling castle
An abandoned mine
An old dungeon
A ghost town
In a rusting hulk
At the site of a shipwreck
Ancient catacombs
A disused metro station
A former asylum
A former prison
An archaeological dig
The base camp of an expedition
An oil rig
An isolated space station
A highly restricted research installation
The British Museum
An art gallery

STRANGE ART

Statue
Mask
Musical instrument
Board game
Mirror
Clock
Jewellry
Painting

WRITINGS

Scroll
Tome
Hieroglyphs
Carvings
Poem
Sheet music
Journal
Play

SPECIMENS

A bloom
Preserved insects
A fossil
A mummified
body part
Bones
Footprints
Meteor fragments

ARCANE ITEMS

Candles and incense
A knife or dagger
Oil, potion or powder
A crystal or gemstone

WHAT'S STRANGE ABOUT THIS OBJECT?

Clearly not made for humans
Made of an unknown material
Crafted from bone, obsidian, crystal
Unpleasant hue
Unusual smell
Gigantic or tiny
Hideous

Inspiration Table

Suspicious behaviour
Concealing something
Excessively friendly
Wears oddly concealing clothing
Unusual appetites
Someone is followed or watched
Aggressive or violent
Secretive
Turns up in expected places
Unexplained gathering

Violent or criminal
Spate of thefts
Rash of vandalism
Series of arson attacks
Kidnappings/disappearances
Mutilations
Dissections

Mental influences
Sudden change of personality
Partial or full amnesia
Vivid or eerie dreams
Visions or hallucinations
Vacant stare, silent and unresponsive
Comatose

Arcane behaviour
A strange superstition
Wears strange items e.g. jewellery
Incoherent or cryptic utterances
Chanting
Ritual sacrifice
Ritual mortification

Animal behaviour
Predators behave like prey/vice versa
Animals lose instinctive behaviour -
e.g. birds unable to fly straight
Animals lose fear of humans
Animals terrified by something
Animals avoid a specific location

Physiological effects
Strange sleep patterns
Extreme body temperature
Sickness
Minor but ubiquitous physical
characteristic e.g. everyone has six fingers
Strange physique or gait

Sinister sounds
The sound of hysterical laughter
The sound of a sudden scream
High pitched whistling or piping
A grinding or juddering noise
Whispering voices just out of earshot
An eerily familiar melody

Weird visuals
The angles are wrong
The world's palette seems wrong - too
bright/dark/colourful/muted
Something moving just out of sight
Something that's uncomfortable to look at

Strange smells and tastes
Rotting meat
Burnt plastic
Cloying perfume
Moist, earthy smell
Metallic tang
Ammoniac stink
This really shouldn't taste so good
Food tastes foul

Somatic
Something thrumming in the earth
Texture is wrong - glass feels dry and paper
thin, metal feels soft and moist
Sudden and powerful heat or chill
Air feels charged, electric
Sensation of being watched
Feeling of someone walking on your grave
Sudden wave of melancholia
Feeling of fatalism / inevitable doom

INSPIRATION TABLE

MONSTERS

MONSTROUS FORMS

Chitinous (insectoid, arachnid, hairy, feelers, multifaceted eyes)
Crustacean (exoskeleton, claws)
Cephalopod (squid-like, octopoid, tentacles)
Gastropod (mucous, oozing)
Deep sea creature (gelatinous, polypous, fronds, pulsating)
Xenoform (odd number of limbs, weird anatomy, radial symmetry)
Fungoid (anatomically homogeneous, soft, musty-smelling)
Choking plant-like growth (vines, vast, pervasive)
Formless (amorphous, bubbling, liquid, vaporous)
Immaterial (intangible, living shadow, exists in angles, a thought-form)
Almost human (simulacrum, monstrous hybrid)

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

Massive
Flying
Voracious
Carnivorous
Insensate
Mindless

TYPES OF MONSTER

An intelligent race (a bloodline, a star-spanning empire, ancient forbears)
A beast, predator or other monstrous species
A unique entity (god, demon, alien intellect)

SIGHTINGS

A distant or obscured view of the creature
An account from another, readily discountable
Rumours and stories

TERRIBLE TRUTHS

You are one of them
You shall become one of them
The person you trusted is one of them
People you trusted are colluding with them
The authorities have known all along
They live among us
There are many more like this one
The change is irreversible
You can never go back
You are going to die here
The rumours are true
That story is not a work of fiction
The dreams are real
Everything has been a dream - one you will never wake up from
The coming doom cannot be prevented
Your actions meant nothing
Your actions have only made things worse

INSPIRATION TABLE

LANGUAGE

HORRORS ARE:

Blasphemous
Abominations
Alien
Daemoniac
Nameless
Unknowable
Eldritch
Star-Spawned
Star-Born
Half-Seen or Unseen
Numberless
Unnatural
Gigantic
Interstellar
Misshapen
Hidden
Membranous
Convoluted
Web-Winged
Fleshless

LOCATIONS ARE:

Decaying
Degenerate
Crumbling
Blackened
Gothic
Mildewed
Disintegrating
Blighted
Forest-Threatened
Anomalous
Outcast
Pitiful
Abandoned
Blasted
Brittle
Greying
Disintegrating
Encrusted
Carrion
Dimly-Lit
Unpleasant

ARCHITECTURE AND MISCELLANEOUS THINGS ARE:

Cyclopean
Vast
Half-Unknown
Labyrinthine
Interplanetary
Intangible
Irregular
Strangely Angled

Limitless
A Piece of Bizarrerie
Horrible
Strange
Malign
Star-Wind
Night-Black
Antiquarian

Biographies

Josh and Becky have been roleplaying together for over 15 years. We came up through D&D, Shadowrun, and Amber Diceless, stopping for a sojourn in homebrew LARPs. In recent years we've spent most of our time on indie rpgs and freeform. We spend an alarming amount of our time playing and designing roleplaying games.

Outside of gaming, we live in a market town in Derbyshire with our children Raphael and Athena. We keep pigs and chickens, grow our own fruit and veg and love cooking and eating, especially using our own produce.

Our previous work includes When the Dark is Gone, Disaster Strikes! and a wide range of smaller titles. You can find links to all of our games, many of which you can download for free, for free and read our thoughts about gaming and game design on our website http://www.blackarmada.com.

You can also follow us on social media:

- ⊙ The Black Armada Google Plus community: https://plus.google.com/u/0 communities/108001811452632644231
- ⊙ The Black Armada Facebook community: https://www.facebook.com/blackarmadagames/
- ⊙ On Twitter: @Blackarmada1

If you play *Lovecraftesque*, get in touch and let us know how it went. We love to hear about people playing our games.

A Bizarrerie of Backers

The Black Goat of the Woods: Ash Burgum, Daniel Ley, Matthew Sanderson, Morgan Hazel, Simon J Rogers, Tracy Bose.

Pickman's Model: Andrew Cain.

The King in Yellow: Bryan Thao Worra, Dave Barrett, James Joyce, Ultimate Nieves.

The Witch House: Adam T Alexander, Ed Butler, Jon Pam, Stephen Joseph Ellis.

Nameless Cults: Bruce ES Warner.

Mi-Go: (((Fred Herman))), Aaron and Paula Kiser, Abe, Achab, Adam L, Aidan Kirk, Al & Kate Halsby, Alan Morton, Alasdair Watson, Alastair Christie, Alexander Stojanovic, Amadan, Amanda Henriques, Amberly Lynott, Andrea Brin, Andrew Craker, Andrew G. Harter, Andrew Keith, Andy Evans, Andy Grant, Anil Godigamuwe, Anita, Ant O'Reilly, Anthony Straine, Antoine Drouart, Antoine Pempie, Arkady Netto, Arne Handt, Bas Smeets, Bradley Hawkins, Brian Allred, Chiara Pasquini, Chris Bourne, Chris Loeffler, Christina Le Galloudec, Corinne Sheriff, Cthulhu Reborn, D. Cardillo, Damon Gregory, Daniel Fowler, Daniel Gebel, Daniel Jacobsson, Daniel Lewis, Darren Buckley, David Leslie, Dawid "Dievas" Wojcieszynski, Derek Grimm, Dr Nick Gibson, Ed Kowalczewski, Edgar Gonzalez, Elizabeth Lovegrove, Eric Farmer, Eric Mersmann, Eric Priehs, Espen Kummeneje, Eva S., Fenric Cayne, Fergus Hadley, Frank "PurpleTentacle" B., Frédéri "Volk Kommissar Friedrich" POCHARD, Frederick Foulds, Gareth Dunstan, Glen E. Ivey, Graeme W, Gregory Faber, Hugh Fox and Anita Franklin, Iain Smedley, Ian Fabry, Jan McManus, Jarno Deroeck, Jason Cordova, Jason Reynolds, Jemrys J. Rueff, Jeremy M. Fay, Jeremy Rodriguez, Jill & Christopher Amherst, Joerg Sterner, Johannes Oppermann, John Q Driveway, Jon Green, Jon Harrison, Jonathan "Munch" Keim, Jonathan Westhaven, Jose M. Nieto, Julia B. Ellingboe, Karri Kejonen, Katerina Holm, Kristofer Kalmark, Kuenga Lhaden, Laurie Webb, Liam Murray, Liz Denys, LordTentacle, Louise Sutherland, Luke Spook, Lynnea Glasser, Mark Hood, Markus Plötz, Martin Lloyd, Matt "Matteoke" Jenkins, Matthew House, Matthew Nielsen, Michael C. Sweeney, Mr C Moses, Nadia "Atarun" Cerezo, Newt Newport, Nicholas Burke, Nick Golding, Nick Hopkins, Nick Townsend, Nimrod Jones, Pascal Ronghi, Patrick Leo, Paul Milne, Paul Popernack, Paul W Woods, Peter R Brooks, Phil Lewis, Philippe "Sildoenfein" D., Pookie, Rachelle Shelkey, Ralph Kelleners, Ray Otus, Ric Baines, Richard Hunt, Rob Alexander, Rob Harper, Robert Carnel, Robin Brushes, Scott Williamson, Sebastian, Shervyn, ShimmerGeek, ShoutyBadger, Simon Brunning, Spooky Mizu, Staffan Andersson, Stephanie Wagner510-471-4075, Stephen Crawford, Steve Dempsey, Talljoe, Ted S., Thalji, Thomas "Panda" Wheeler, Thomas Varga, Wanhope, Zandev.

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Victim: Alessandro "Hasimir" Piroddi, Arlene J. Medder, Ben Sheriff, Lee Scolin, Mark Annison, Nathan D. Paoletta, Neko_cam, Ralph Lovegrove.

Lovecraftesque is the GMless storytelling game of brooding cosmic horror you've been waiting for. You tell the story of a lone Witness at the mercy of strange and terrifying events. The game helps you create a slow-building mystery, culminating in a climactic scene of horror.

You create your own monsters and mystery that feel like something out of Lovecraft's notebook.

All the players contribute clues to surprise and creep each other out.

The rules ensure that the story flows seamlessly, as if an invisible GM were guiding it.

There won't be any Mi-Go or Deep Ones—you'll get a completely fresh take on the genre.

"Lovecraftesque is one of my favorite games from the last few years. Highly recommended!"

–Jason Cordova, *The Gauntlet Podcast.*

This book includes everything you need to play, as well as scenarios and other material to inspire you.

LOVECRAFTESQUE IS A GAME FOR 2-5 PEOPLE AND TAKES 3-4 HOURS TO PLAY

GOLDEN GEEK
2015
NOMINEE

BLACK ARMADA