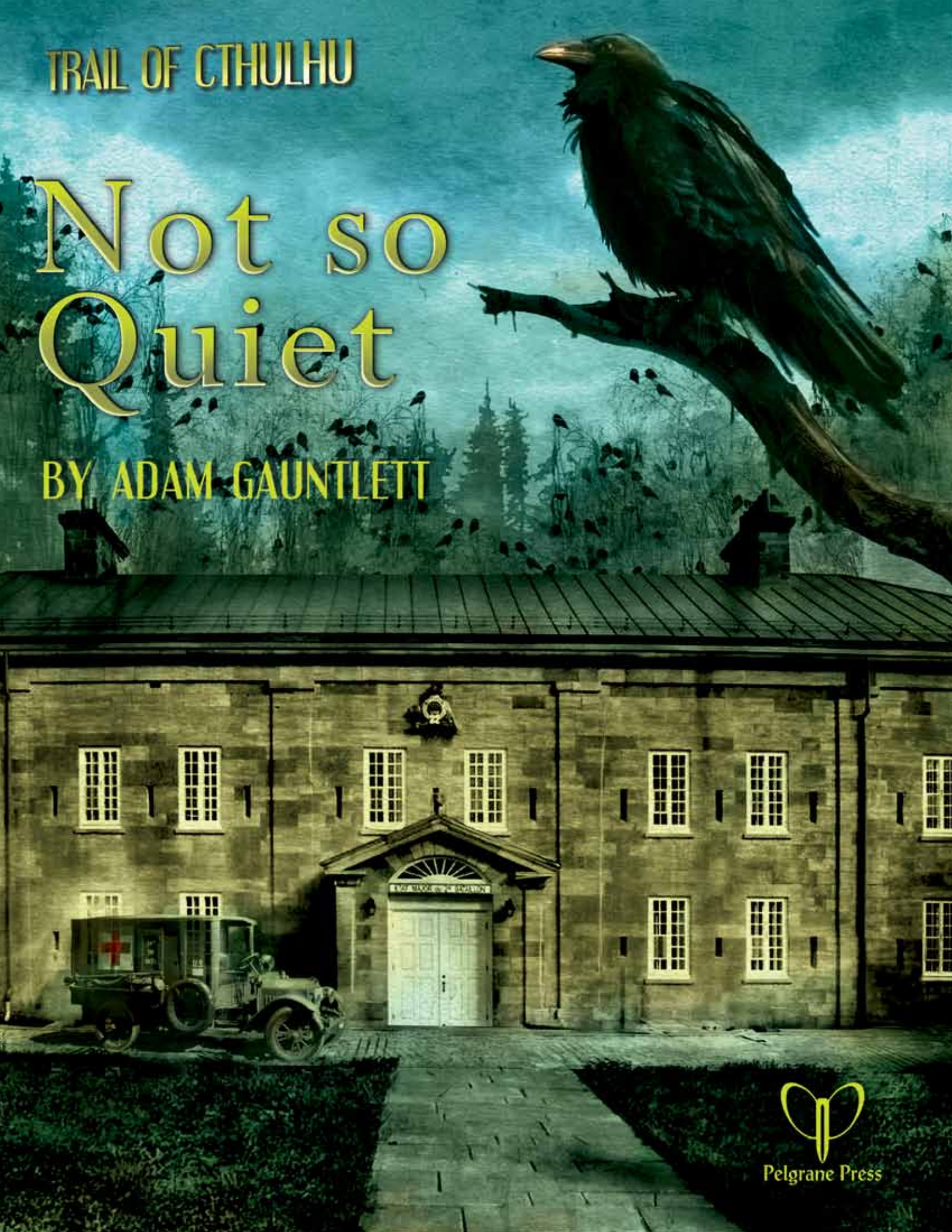


TRAIL OF CTHULHU

# Not so Quiet

BY ADAM GAUNTLETT



Pelgrane Press



# NOT SO QUIET

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## Not So Quiet

*A Purist/Pulp Trail of Cthulhu scenario set at a military hospital during the Great War.*

### SYNOPSIS

The characters are either serving soldiers or on the front line during the War, for whatever reason. They are sent to Military Hospital Number Five, either because they are wounded, or because they have been posted there.

It is spring 1917 and yet another Push is on; broken men are being sent back for medical care every hour of every day. The hospital, being so close to the Front, is not immune to danger. It has been shelled twice in the last two weeks, and gassed once. The staff are shattered, driven to the limits of human endurance by overwork and fatigue. Casualties are high, and the burial parties are constantly busy.

Worse is to come. A group of dedicated people working to further the ends of the Charnel God are attempting to contact that grim entity. Unless stopped, they will start a chain of events that will end with the camp being utterly destroyed, killing everyone in the hospital.

Some characters will be serving in the military, since the scenario takes place at a British military hospital. However any character of any nationality could end up dragged, bleeding and possibly unconscious, to Military Hospital Number Five. Civilians might also end up there, particularly if they have been wounded or if they are working for the military. The characters do not know each other prior to this scenario.

For the purposes of this scenario the

skill **CopTalk** is replaced by the skill **MilitaryTalk**, which has exactly the same intent and works the same way, except that now it is used on military men rather than the police. Players shouldn't assume that they all must have **MilitaryTalk**; many soldiers on the Front were only very recently civilians, and may know little about the army and its rituals. The Keeper should feel free to rule that **MilitaryTalk** has a different function when applied to different armies; French, American or colonial troops may not get quite the same response from a British officer than they would from officers of their own nationality, while German troops caught behind enemy lines can expect a reduced result from using **MilitaryTalk** in a British encampment. Reduced does not mean negligible; serving officers, particularly career military, have a kind of brotherhood that often transcends national barriers, though

a linguistic barrier may be more difficult to deal with.

**Credit Rating** functions normally, except that the medium of exchange (if such is needed) is cigarettes, pots of jam, records, and food packages from the Red Cross, all of which are prized items in the barter economy of the Front. Characters with higher **Credit Rating** can be assumed to have better access to these forms of ersatz currency. This may allow them to buy special favours from those in authority, or just make their own lives a little bit more comfortable. Encourage the player to specify what each point of **Credit Rating** represents, as this may prove useful later. A collection of French pornographic photographs would make excellent bribes in many circumstances, for example, but might not work so well if offered to a nurse. This change in the way **Credit Rating** works has no bearing on class; social differences are just as they were before everyone put on a uniform.

### Purist or Pulp?

As written, the bleak setting and plot favour a Purist game. This is reflected in the damage dealt to the characters at the beginning and in the heavy Stability losses in the final encounters. The protagonists should always feel as though they are on the edge of losing everything.

That said, there's nothing to prevent the game being played Pulp. The wartime setting could favour two-fisted action just as easily as mind-numbing horror; after all, this is the same Great War that spawned Bulldog Drummond, the Saint, and Biggles, and was formative in the development of Lord Peter Wimsey and Hercule Poirot.

Keepers who would prefer a Pulp game should therefore downgrade the damage dealt in the first scenes and the stability checks in the final scene, to give the protagonists a slightly less fraught adventure. **Damage** dealt in the initial **Injured** scene should be a die only, not a die +3; this means that a successful **Athletics/Fleeing** check in that scene reduces the damage to a die -3. The **Stability** checks in the final dream sequences should be reduced to difficulty 3, with Zenna's being difficulty 5.

### The Awful Truth

A nurse, Zenna Borden, has been driven mad both by the horrors she has been exposed to and by her own consciousness of sin. When she last served at Military Hospital Number Five she had an affair with an infantry officer (since killed) and became pregnant. She managed to wangle a leave and went to England to have an illegal back-alley abortion. Since then she has become convinced that what she did was not only wrong but unforgivable, and is determined somehow to make amends. She wants her baby back and will do anything, sacrifice anyone, to make that happen.

She believes that the spirit of her child is talking to her, telling her how to break the bonds of death and get her baby back again. Thanks to her devotions and sacrifices (she has sent over fifty souls to the Charnel God, and has become adept at covert murder) she has gained magical power, and thanks to her 'healing hands' she now has a small group of followers, the terminal cases whose pain is eased by her ability and who hope that she, somehow, can make them whole again. Her goal is to conduct a ritual that will contact Mordiggan directly, and then bargain with that entity for the life of her baby and for the lives of her followers.

Mordiggan will be unwilling to bargain, and his reaction to this suggestion will be enough to destroy the camp and kill everyone in it.

If the characters are to succeed, they must stop Borden from carrying out this ritual.

### The Spine

The action opens with the characters in an ambulance convoy on their way to Military Hospital Number Five. Their first challenge is to avoid being blasted to fragments as their convoy is shelled; this conflict introduces the characters

### The Forbidden Zone

This is a story about loss and the destruction of hope. The antagonists are all people who would never have come into contact with the Mythos had it not been for the War, and who will now commit any atrocity to get back the lives that they used to have. The protagonists are, in a sense, no different from the antagonists; the Mythos would never have touched their lives, had not the War intervened, and now they too have to do what they can to stave off an awful fate.

This is reflected in the land about them. It was once fertile Belgian farmland, with houses and towns much like their own, that have now been almost completely destroyed, the men and women who lived there having been killed or turned out of their homes. There is no reason, in early spring 1917, for those on the front lines to think that the War will ever end; if anything, the March Revolution in Russia is a grim suggestion that the whole world may be about to tear itself apart in a frenzy. Nor are the Russians the only ones on the edge. There are strikers in Britain and the U-Boat menace is wreaking havoc on shipping, the Germans are starving, the French have been bled dry and their army is on the verge of mutiny, the Americans are still too proud to fight (according to Woodrow Wilson, though that will soon change), and the Western Front is one long open wound across the heart of Europe. Not one decisive battle has been fought on the Front, but there have been plenty of bloodbaths. The Somme, both battles of Ypre and Verdun have demonstrated the cost of aggressive action. A British attempt to open things up on another front ended with half a million dead at Gallipoli.

There is every reason to despair. The antagonists in this story have done exactly that, and if asked, would no doubt argue that theirs is the only logical, sensible course of action. If everything they ever believed in is about to be or has already been destroyed, what price sanity?

to each other and to the War. Soon afterward they arrive at the Military Hospital, where they discover (either on their own or because they are told so by the priest, Pombal), that all is not well. Patients are dying by the dozen and Pombal suspects a spiritual corruption. Death is all around them, and death's servants, the ravens, seem unnaturally interested in events at the Hospital. The cult, meanwhile, continues to carry out its daily routine of exchanging their pain, passing the agony that they should be suffering on to other patients. It is this that is increasing the death rate; the extra agony, passed on either through medication or food, is causing the other patients to die before their time. The cult may attempt to subvert the characters, or the characters may try to expose the cult. The priest, Pombal, goes missing, and his corpse is discovered, showing the characters that the cult, for all its protestations,

is willing to do what it takes, murder anyone, to get what it wants. In the final scene the cult tries to expunge all of its pain, appealing to Mordiggan while offering no sacrifice in return. It is this that will destroy the cult, and possibly also the Military Hospital and everyone in it. The characters will have to defeat the cult, breaking down the members' last pillars of sanity, if they are to have a hope of saving the Hospital.



### SCENES

#### The Last Thing You Remember (Injured) Scene Type: Introduction

This is for characters brought into the scenario as injured men. Scenes intended for them will be indicated in the text by the descriptor **Injured**. There is no benefit or detriment to being introduced in this way; it opens up some extra scenes, but the scenario does not depend on them being introduced one way or the other.

Though scenes with the **Injured** tag are intended for these characters, the characters are not limited to these scenes. Their investigations may take them elsewhere; the **Injured** tag merely refers to extra character-specific scenes that the player may uncover.

These characters must make a **Health** check at difficulty 5. Those who succeed awake in the back of an ambulance, probably jolted awake as the truck runs over rough ground. Those who fail may be awake but delirious, unable to fully comprehend what's going on, and will only snap out of it in the next scene. **First Aid** is not an applicable ability at this point; the characters will already have been attended to, before they were put on the ambulance. However non-delirious characters may attempt **First Aid** on delirious friends, in the hope of snapping them out of it. If this is done then no damage is restored, but the character does recover his wits.

Characters should make either an **Athletics** or a **Fleeing** check, difficulty 4, to determine the scale of their injuries. Success means a die of damage only; failure means a die +3. However the consequences of **Fleeing** on a battlefield can be severe, and



characters who attempt it should be warned before they make the check that if their actions are spotted then they could risk a court martial, possibly ending in execution for cowardice in the face of the enemy. Characters who opt to **Flee** in spite of this warning should make an additional check against **Stealth**, **Sense Trouble** or **Preparedness**, either at difficulty 3 (if the **Fleeing** was a success) or 5 (if it wasn't). If the character was spotted, this makes no difference to his

immediate future; he'll still be sent to hospital and healed up, before his trial.

The event that led to the character being injured should be dealt with in a flashback sequence. The character could have been shot, gassed or burnt during an attack; could have been blown up by artillery fire and had to be dug out by his pals; could be suffering from trench foot or other exposure-related diseases; could be a shell-shock victim; could have been shot down in

### Modern Medicine

The treatments available at the time would have been mixed on the spot by the nurses at the hospital, and would be administered as a paint, powder, or liquid. Pills and capsules, though technologically possible, were not commonly available. The mixtures available included such remedies as:

*Sedative Expectorant Mixture*, made from a combination of Camphorated Tincture of Opium, Oxymel of Squill, Syrup of Tolu, Concentrated Infusion of Cascarella, and Water.

*Stimulating Expectorant Mixture*, made from a combination of Potassium Iodide, Ammonium Carbonate, Tincture of Ipecacuanha, Syrup of Tolu, Concentrated Infusion of Senega, and Water.

*Aspirin and Quinine Mixture*, made from Aspirin, Quinine Sulphate, Mucilage of Tragacanth, and Peppermint Water.

*Laxative Iron Mixture*, made from Iron and Ammonium Citrate, Magnesium Sulphate, Tincture of Nux Vomica, Glycerine, and Peppermint Water.

All recipes have been taken from the 1938 edition of the *Pharmacopoeia for use in Military Hospitals*, which has been assumed to be as valid for 1917 as it was twenty one years later. Additives for taste included Cinnamon, Syrup of Orange, Aniseed and Chloroform, among others. Natural remedies (such as valerian) and narcotics (e.g. cocaine, morphine) were also prescribed.

This was also a time in which medical techniques were pioneered or experimented with. Lovecraft sent Herbert West to the front to practice reanimation; the electro-therapeutic device used in this scenario is based on methods proposed by Wilfrid Garton MRCS, temporary Captain RAMC, in 1917, for various nerve-related problems including muscle paralysis, shell-shock, chronic arthritis and trench feet. It was intended to deliver a charge of no more than 350 millamperes straight to the brain and spinal cord of the patient. A shock of 100 mA can be lethal.

an aeroplane; could have tried to shoot himself (this would be a **Fleeing** attempt) in the hope of being sent home with what was called a Blighty wound; could be suffering from a disease such as spotted fever, which is spread by lice bites. The exact nature of the incident is up to the player, and the flashback doesn't have to be played through straight away. The Keeper should feel free to leave this in reserve, to be inflicted on the character when it's dramatically appropriate.

The player should be allowed to decide where the character was injured. This may be important, since wound cases are segregated depending on injury location. All head wounds end up in the same hut, all belly wounds in the same hut, and so on. This rudimentary form of triage helps keep things simple for the doctors and nurses.

Injured characters can make a **Sense Trouble** check at difficulty 4. Those who succeed will have heard a great deal about Military Hospital Number Five from their fellow soldiers. None of it is good; it's supposed to be a real charnel shop, with a high casualty count. Success on the **Sense Trouble** allows them to increase their **Military Talk** by 2 points, to a maximum of 5.

### Seeing France (Posted) Scene Type: Introduction

This is for characters brought into the scenario as doctors or nurses posted to the Hospital. Scenes intended for them will be indicated in the text by the descriptor **Posted**. There is no benefit or detriment to being introduced in this

way; it opens up some extra scenes, but the scenario does not depend on them being introduced one way or the other.

Though scenes with the **Posted** tag are intended for these characters, the characters are not limited to these scenes. Their investigations may take them elsewhere; the **Posted** tag merely refers to extra character-specific scenes that the player may uncover.

They will probably have been in Britain immediately prior to the scenario, either being trained, or recuperating from a previous posting to the Front. Their relocation will have been very sudden; orders issued, a quick trip across the Channel (dodging U-Boats on the way), a day at a depot, and before they have time to take it all in, they're in an ambulance convoy being taken to Military Hospital Number Five.

They should make a **Preparedness** check at difficulty 4 and a **Sense Trouble** at difficulty 3. Success on the **Preparedness** check means that they had the foresight to smuggle in goods from Blighty when they were posted. This can be anything they like – cigars, jam, cheese, books and so on – so long as it's relatively small and portable. It boosts their **Credit Rating** by 2 points, up to a maximum of 5. If the character would prefer to boost **Pharmacy** rather than **Credit Rating**, then the **Preparedness** success means they've brought some supplies with them, increasing **Pharmacy** by 1 point, to a maximum of 4. Success on the **Sense Trouble** means that they've heard a few things about Military Hospital Number Five, and none of it has been good. It's supposed to be a very difficult posting; staff seem to come and go with almost indecent haste, and the casualty list is very high. This boosts their **Military Talk** by 1 point, to a maximum of 4.

They'll be travelling in an ambulance driven by a VAD volunteer, **Emma 'Cheery' Patterson**. Cheery has a role later in the scenario; however she won't

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divulge any significant plot information at this stage. **Flattery** or **Military Talk** can get her to say (core clue):

- **Major Parker**, chief surgeon at the Hospital, is a miserable old stick who likes to grouse, but he hasn't any real authority as he's too easily overruled by the Head Nurse, **Mrs. Ogilvy**. She's a real tyrant, and is best avoided if at all possible.

### Hate

#### Scene Type: Challenge / Introduction

The characters will not know each other prior to the scenario. By setting up a challenge that they all have to face together, this introduction should (hopefully) be accomplished.

The characters will be travelling in a vehicle convoy to Military Hospital Number Five. Vehicles in the convoy can be of almost any type; Ford trucks are the most common, but alternatives include French taxicabs, and British double-decker buses. One bright red vehicle sent to the front was a HP Sauce goods van; its colour would have made a tempting target. Often these vehicles were little changed from their civilian use. Those travelling in the bus may be uncomfortably reminded of home, as even the advertisements are there, just as if they're on a commute to work.

The ground about them is muddy and misshapen. It has been shelled many times, and it would be next to impossible for any heavy vehicle to travel off-road, as there would be a risk it would bog down or get trapped in a shell hole. The few buildings that line the road have been reduced to rubble, and the burnt-out vehicles the convoy passes testify to the dangers of the route.

The convoy is shelled. The first sign of trouble is a whirring noise overhead

like a freight train speeding towards a station, and then a crump and bang as it hits the ground.

The lead vehicle is almost instantly struck and destroyed in the first few seconds of shellfire. This blocks the road, and Cheery, in the second vehicle, goes into shock (fails **Stability**) as her best friend was the driver of the lead vehicle. She stops driving, blocking the vehicles behind hers. The characters need to take action to get the convoy moving again.

A 1 point spend on **Intimidation** or **Military Talk** can get Cheery driving again, but her attack of nerves means that her **Drive** skill is reduced by 2. This is important, as the lead vehicle blocks the road and will need to be shoved aside for the convoy to proceed. A **Drive** test at difficulty 6 is required to push the burning lead vehicle out of the way; this can be an assisted test, with a character either helping Cheery or driving instead of her.

Attempting to **Drive** off-road requires a check at difficulty 8 to avoid being bogged in the mud. If the result is failure then fleeing is the only option, as the truck is stuck for good.

**Fleeing** at difficulty 4 allows a character to get out and run, which may be the best option if the convoy isn't going anywhere. Failure indicates that the character took a die of damage from shrapnel while trying to get under cover.

If a group of people get together they can push the burning vehicle aside so the rest of the convoy can pass, but this wants an **Athletics** check at 7; this can be an assisted check. If this is done each character involved needs to make a **Health** test at difficulty 3 or take half a die worth of damage from the flames. If this is successful then no further **Drive** checks are needed to escape, since the road is not blocked.

As smoke billows up from the lead car, the characters will see a flock (unkindness) of (**Outdoorsman** 1 point spend) ravens, flying eerily out of the greasy black smut. An **Occult** 1 point spend remembers, with a shiver, that ravens in mythology are a form of psychopomp; allegedly they gather up souls of the dead on their way to the afterlife. Nobody can recall seeing the ravens before the blast. It's as if the explosion somehow conjured them up.

**Stability** checks at difficulty 3 for everyone in the convoy undergoing shellfire; the difficulty increases to 4 for **Occult** users who correctly identified the ravens.

### Emma 'Cheery' Patterson

**Skills:** Driving 6, First Aid 4, Fleeing 6, Health 6, Sanity 3, Stability 4

Emma's family are well-to-do, and all her life until now has been a pampered dream. For four months she has endured everything that the War threw at her, and she is at breaking point. Normally ruddy, healthy and happy, these days she's a skin-and-bone ghost of her former self.

### Arrival at the Hospital

#### Scene type: Interlocutory / Introduction

The characters, having escaped the shellfire, get to Military Hospital Number Five. This is a collection of low-lying huts huddled around the remains of a larger building, possibly a farmhouse, that has been shelled and is now little more than four walls with no roof except for a makeshift tarpaulin.

**Architecture** (core clue) deduces that the farmhouse would have been part of a much larger estate, and judging by the remaining building (long, with small loop windows adapted for musket fire), probably dated back to the late medieval period, when sturdy houses



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### Military Hospital Number Five

Hospitals are positioned in scattered clusters as close to the Front as possible. Injured soldiers are first sent to a Clearing Station, where their wounds are dressed and their condition assessed. From the Clearing Station they are then sent to a Hospital, one of several such installations scattered over a several square mile area, each identified with a number. The number is purely an identifier; it has no other significance.

Transport is via ambulance, run from a central depot that services the Clearing Stations and Hospitals, which is operated by a VAD (Volunteer Aid Detachment) unit staffed by civilians, all of them women. The drivers are responsible for the condition and upkeep of their ambulances, and the stress of the job often means that the drivers are worn out very quickly. The term ‘seeing France-rs’ describes a driver who volunteers for VAD duty only to quit as soon as things get too difficult for them.

The hospitals are scattered over a wide area in part because the rear staging area is a tempting target. The ambulances are regularly shelled, the hospitals bombarded by aircraft. Entire hospitals can be wiped out by enemy attack. Even without this the grumble of shellfire is always in the background, and aircraft regularly duel overhead.

Once at a hospital the wounded are segregated by injury. All leg wounds are in the same tent or hut, all arm wounds ditto, and so on. This is for ease of identification. An exhausted doctor doesn’t want to have to guess what’s wrong with a patient.

The hospital is, theoretically, run by the doctors, who have been given temporary military rank for the duration of their service. The chief surgeon will be a Major, with the other doctors typically being Captains. However the day-to-day work of the unit is done by the Nurses, who are under the command of the Head Nurse. The nurses will all be under Military Regulations and will operate in much the same way as a military unit, unlike the doctors who are still civilians at heart. The nurses are a mixed batch; some will have been military or Red Cross before the war, others volunteers, and the volunteers can be anything from newly fledged professionals to Catholic nuns. The doctors have some latitude for experimentation (hence the electro-therapeutic device) and there are new and interesting cases, (eg. shell-shock victims), appearing all the time. The war is a chance for an ambitious surgeon to establish a reputation.

As the hospitals are in a rear sector, there are people all around. Some Belgians still live in their shattered towns and farms, even going so far as to keep up the tradition of weekly Market Days. Messengers are always going to and from the front, not all of whom would be regular soldiers; the Belgian army used Boy Scouts, not being able to spare an able-bodied man to do the job. Soldiers may try to visit wounded pals. Captured enemy soldiers may shuffle past, being herded to temporary internment camps, later to be shipped to a more permanent home. Military Police are often here, looking out for potential deserters. Though the land roundabout may be blasted to fragments, there are always signs of life.

In theory if a soldier is injured badly enough (a Blighty wound) they can be sent back to England for further treatment or rest. Sometimes this meant special treatment, as with Indian troops who would have been sent to the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, which had been set up to meet their dietary and religious needs; an important consideration for an army that vividly remembered the Indian Mutiny. However though some of the characters may deserve such treatment, they will not get out of Military Hospital Number Five in time.

like this would have to act as miniature fortresses, defending the occupants against a hostile world. However most of the original features have been blasted to atoms, and only part of the long house remains.

The characters will either await aid if **Injured**, or need to report to the ranking officer if **Posted**. The Hospital is always chaotic (see “*Military Hospital Number Five*”) and with the arrival of a new batch of wounded things get no better. The Head Nurse will keep **Posted** characters busy, acting in the name of Major Parker, while **Injured** have slightly more leisure to observe and take independent action. This will be their first taste of what life is like at Military Hospital Number Five.

Gurdip Dal, a colonial volunteer, one of the walking wounded, insists on helping the nurses, marching about like a sergeant-major, and does his best to assist the wounded even though he only has one working arm. He is one of Zenna’s special helpers, which is why the other nurses tolerate him; even Mrs. Ogilvy can’t put a stop to Miss Burton’s helpful initiatives.

**Occult** (1 point) or **Languages** (Hindi) notes:

- Dal is chanting a prayer under his breath. It is an invocation to Kali in her role as the Destroyer, the One who Finishes. He is asking the Goddess to take each of the wounded into Her care.

**Outdoorsman** (core clue) notices several ravens, perched around the encampment, who don’t seem to be disturbed by the flurry of activity. Several of them are making vocalizations, clicks and calls, and a 1 point **Outdoorsman** point spend recalls that ravens are capable of mimicking human speech. A 1 point **Occult** spend notices:

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- Several of the ravens are making sounds that closely resemble the prayer being muttered by Gurdip Dal. It's almost as if the birds are helping him invoke Kali, acting as a Greek chorus to his coryphaeus.

Several nurses, including Zenna Borden, help unload the wounded and send them to their appointed beds. Walking wounded (which should include the **Injured** characters) are allowed some freedom of movement and aren't required to be in bed all of the time, but are encouraged by the nurses to stay in their hut.

The priest, Pombal, is also here, helping unload the wounded, possibly giving last rites to anyone who died along the way. He argues with Zenna Borden, and 1 point of **Languages** (French) or **Theology** guesses that Pombal is upset that Dal is being allowed to practice 'pagan rituals' in connection with the wounded men. Pombal believes that Dal is imperilling the souls of the wounded.

Cheery will be in a state of shock, but functional, working like an automaton. **Medicine** (1 point) spots the shock, and also that Cheery is in the habit of taking stimulants, probably a long-term habit judging by the state of her. She has the shakes badly, and is just about keeping herself under control. Zenna Borden is her supplier, and a further **Medicine** spend sees Borden pass Cheery a bottle that could only have come from the Hospital dispensary. If accused, even under **Interrogation** or **Military Talk** Cheery denies the whole incident, and keeps up her denials even in the face of the most damning evidence. Only **Reassurance** (1 point, due to her terror and loyalty to Borden) can get through to Cheery, and even

then she admits nothing, but begs the character forget the whole thing and tries to swear them to secrecy about her drug habit. She admits to taking stimulants and says that Borden has been very kind to her. She'll never get Borden into trouble if she can help it. However the character who spends the **Reassurance** has gotten through to Cheery, and will be able (in a later scene, see "*Cheery*") to get her to reveal all the cult's secrets without additional point spend.

### Pombal asks for Help

#### Scene Type: Core

Pombal knows that something is wrong and is doing his best to uncover the truth. Characters may attempt to approach him or he may approach them, if he thinks he can either get them to spy for him or tell him useful information.

Pombal is tall, with a spreading belly and thick black beard. He is nearsighted and is never without his glasses. He has the soft, unformed physique of a man who never works if he can help it, and a pale, studious face.

Pombal has some core clues to reveal:

- **Military Talk:** The hospital is effectively run by Mrs. Ogilvy, the Head Nurse. She's a sadistic, officious busybody who runs the Nursing section with a rod of iron. Even the doctors are afraid of her.
- **Medicine:** There have been several suspicious deaths. The death rate at the Hospital is very high, and there have been cases where Pombal has seen men who would surely have recovered, die within days of arrival. Pombal is not sure who is behind the deaths, but thinks it is all being done to

some greater purpose.

- **Theology:** The Indian, Gurdip Dal, is one step away from Satanism, according to Pombal. The Frenchman believes that Dal has some kind of influence over the nurses, and is spreading his heathen practices, possibly even murdering men in some ritualistic sacrificial manner. [Pombal has this mixed in his head with old stories of Thuggee. He has Dal cast in the role of coven leader, which is not the case at all, though he is a cult member.]

- **Occult:** Pombal is convinced that the Hospital is plagued with evil spirits. He blames this on the perverse influence of Dal. He claims that the ravens 'know too much' and that they whisper secrets in the ear of their diabolic master. He claims to have seen them suckling at Dal, in the manner of a Satanic familiar.

He will ask any character to keep watch and tell him about anything unusual they may see. He says that the fate of the entire camp may be at stake, and urges them to be careful. Men have died here before now; the characters could be next.

**Sense Trouble** (difficulty 2) notices that one of the walking wounded at the Hospital is eavesdropping on the conversation. This man is a cult sympathiser, and soon after this incident Pombal will go missing.

### The Cult of Mordiggan

The antagonists believe that they have found a way out of the horror of war, and want to spread that belief. They are always on the lookout for new recruits among the wounded, and while they are not as keen to bring a civilian into their secret, they wouldn't pass up the opportunity if it arose.

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Therefore their attitude towards the characters is first to attempt to subvert them, and only if that fails will they try something more drastic.

Most of the cultists are wounded men. Zenna Borden is the leader and the only uninjured member, but the cult will continue even if Zenna is somehow taken out of the picture. If that should happen then the cult would immediately try to invoke Mordiggan, with results as described in a later scene. See page 22.

### Important members of the cult include:

**Zenna Borden**, acting as high priestess. Zenna seems almost too slight and slender for the work she does, yet she never tires or shows signs of weakness. Though her role is important, the cult will still be able to attempt a summoning of Mordiggan without her.

Skills: Assess Honesty 4, Bureaucracy 6, Credit Rating 2, Filch 2, Fleeing 6, Health 8, Occult 2, Sanity 3, Stability 4, Sense Trouble 2, Scuffling 3, Weapons 1

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

**Gurdip Dal**, former havildar 6th Jat Light Infantry, injured during a gas attack on his dugout. His brother Sunil died in that attack, and Gurdip feels great shame and loss, as Gurdip stole the gas mask that Sunil would have used in order to survive.

Skills: Athletics 4, Credit Rating 1, Firearms 6, Health 5, Intimidation 8, Languages 1 (English), Military Talk 8, Sanity 3, Stability 4, Scuffling 6, Stealth 4, Shadowing 4, Weapons 8

Weapon: Knife gabion, +0

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

**Maurice Parker-Bowles**, Lieutenant in the Artist's Rifles, and a member of the Royal Academy. In the last offensive Parker-Bowles was crumped by an artillery blast that destroyed his eyesight. He'd do anything to be able to see again.

Skills: Athletics 2, Art 5, Art History 4, Credit Rating 5, Firearms 3 (effectively 0 due to blindness), Health 4, Interrogation 5, Military Talk 4, Sanity 3, Stability 3, Scuffling 2 (effectively 0 due to blindness).

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

**Corporal Richard 'Dicky' Fallon**, of King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, who suffers from shellshock. He's terrified of the electro-therapeutic device, as his mother died of an electric shock, and visions of the machine haunt his nightmares.

Skills: Athletics 6, Credit Rating 1, Fleeing 8, Firearms 4, Health 6, Intimidation 3, Sanity 3, Stability 3, Scuffling 10, Weapons 4

Weapon: small knife, -1

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

**Sergeant-Major 'Duff' Carter**, of King's Royal Rifle Corps, whose left leg is gone from just below the knee, and who may be a gangrene case; the doctors are waiting to see if they have to amputate more of his leg. In civilian life Carter is a gamekeeper and cricketer, and dreads being a cripple.

Skills: Athletics 6 (effectively 4 due to injury), Credit Rating 2, Firearms 6, Health 6, Intimidation 6, Military Talk 6, Sanity 3, Stability 4, Scuffling 8, Weapons 6

Spells: Contact Mordiggan

Other cult members should be designed by the Keeper as needed, bearing in mind that the fundamental point behind each of them is that they have been disfigured or injured, and want things to return to normal, which is why they've turned to Zenna Burton for help.

### Night Time Perambulations

#### (Injured)

#### Scene Type: Transition / Antagonist Action

The cult holds a ceremony, which means that several of the wounded members will get out of bed and make their way to the crypt. Not all of the cult are walking wounded; some will have to be helped by their friends.

The characters will first become aware of this when they hear stealthy movement. It's the dead of night, and there are no lights of any kind. The last time a nurse came on inspection was over an hour ago; there shouldn't be anyone moving about. (Military Talk core clue).

Cult members who are Interrogated or subjected to **Military Talk** admit nothing; they say they're cramped and the room is too hot, so they're going out for a smoke. It's against Regulations, but they don't care. They don't try to run away – it's not as if they could get very far in their state – and won't resist if a character tries to intercept them. However unless a character physically restrains the cultist, all night long, the cultist will make repeated attempts to get to the ceremony.

**Reassurance** (core clue) gets better results. A cultist who thinks that the character is on their side will confide that they want to see 'the nurse' because

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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‘she can take the pain away.’ They won’t go any further than that since the character isn’t a fellow cultist, but they will say that the character might benefit from the nurse’s treatment. See further, ‘*Meeting with a Cult Member.*’

If too much noise is made, this alerts the nursing staff, and soon afterward Mrs. Ogilvy turns up breathing fire and slaughter. Patients aren’t supposed to be making a fuss after lights-out; it’s against all the Regulations. Mrs. Ogilvy will tie all offenders down to their beds; this can include characters. **Military Talk** (core clue) knows that this is against Regulations, but nobody seems prepared to stop Mrs. Ogilvy and the other nurses are obviously afraid of her. This will stop cultists from getting to the ceremony, and after this no amount of **Reassurance** will persuade the cultist that the character is sympathetic.

Those tied to their beds won’t be released until the next morning, no matter what; the nurses will be too frightened of Mrs. Ogilvy to listen to any pleas.

Characters who attempt to follow cultists need to make a **Stealth** check at difficulty 3. Success means that the character can follow the cultist to the gathering at the crypt, where a group of them have gathered to make their sacrifices to Mordiggan. See *The Anointed* on page 21.

### Meeting with a Cult Member

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

If the characters come into contact with the cult, either Injured or Posted, the cult will try to sound

them out to see how receptive they are to joining.

Cult members are all allied soldiers who have been badly wounded, shell shocked, or are otherwise physically or mentally scarred. Any of the cult members (see “*The Cult of Mordiggan*”) could be the one to do this, including one of the Keeper’s creation.

**Credit Rating** has a role to play. Cultists who are common soldiers (**Credit Rating** 2 or lower) will not be comfortable talking to anyone of Middle Class or above. On the other hand, someone like Lieutenant Parker-Bowles can deal with both officers and men, though he may inadvertently patronize anyone of less than Middle Class. Therefore

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it makes a difference whether the cultist sought out the character or the character discovered the cultist; if the former then the cultist is probably the same **Credit Rating** as the character, but if the latter then the **Credit Rating** may be very different. Military Talk may be used to overcome **Credit Rating** problems.

The cultist will say:

- That there are people in the camp who are trying to make things right.
- ‘Making things right’ means healing the sick, but it also means putting things as they were before the war started. The cultist is vague on this point, because the cultist doesn’t really know how this will be done. It all seems so clear during the meetings, but it gets a little fuzzy afterward . . .
- The group is led by ‘The Nurse.’ They won’t give Zenna Borden’s name until they can be sure that the character is on their side, but clearly the Nurse is very important, almost beloved.
- The group is united by a hatred of death and war, and a desire to somehow turn the clock back and make it as though the war never happened.
- If the character is interested, the cultist can put them in touch with senior members of the group who can take things further.

**Assess Honesty** (core clue) shows that the cultist is perfectly sincere and does not want the character to come to any harm. If anything, he wants to help the character. Use of **Intimidation** or similar abilities cuts off the conversation; the cultist will shut up and deny all knowledge of the group,

the nurse, or any meetings. Cultists cannot be browbeaten into revealing secrets. Their fear and loathing of death and the war, coupled with their love of Zenna Borden and the relief from pain that she offers, outweigh any threats the characters might bring to bear. **Military Talk** does not count as intimidation.

### Meeting with a Senior

#### Cult Member

#### Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

This happens only if, in a previous scene, the character has sufficiently impressed a cult member, and persuaded the cultist to recommend the character for membership.

Senior members include Gurdip Dal, Lieutenant Parker-Bowles, RSM Carter and Corporal Fallon; see also *The Cult of Mordiggan*, page 10.

The senior member will want to know more about the character: who they are, what regiment they belonged to, what actions they fought in, and, most importantly, how seriously injured they are. The more damaged, the more likely it is that the character will be an enthusiastic convert. A 1 point spend of **Military Talk** ought to convince the senior member that all is well, but this cost may increase to 2 points if the character is of sufficiently different social class (**Credit Rating**) or is not British Army (eg. is Belgian, a civilian, etc); all doctors and nurses count as civilians for the purpose of this point spend. If **Military Talk** is not available **Reassurance** will work, but the minimum spend is 2 points.

If this is unsuccessful, presumably because the character did not want to spend points, or had insufficient points to spend, then the contact

goes nowhere. The senior member passes the whole episode off as ‘talking shop’, just military gossip, and refuses to initiate the character into the deeper cult mysteries.

If this is successful, then the senior member has core clues to offer:

- **Occult:** The senior member belongs to a group of people dedicated to restoring the health of its members, and ‘making things right.’ This means, in some cases, bringing the dead back to life; Gurdip Dal, for example, wants to resurrect his brother Sunil, as well as heal his crippled arm. They do this by appealing to ‘the great God, Death’, in his chosen temple.
- **Military Talk:** The cult members are disenchanted with the war and the military generally. They think the conflict has been a waste of life on a massive scale, and no longer believe in ‘the lies’ told them by their generals and politicians. They intend to desert as soon as possible after the final ceremony.
- **Architecture:** The senior member lets enough slip that the character can deduce the chosen temple is somewhere close by, underground, and probably a cellar of some kind. In fact it must be somewhere in the Hospital. The entrance is marked with a bit of marble, with the inscription VIXANN on it (lit. vixit annus, or lived for [an unknown number] of years), an abbreviation often seen on Roman tomb burials.

If the conversation has gone this far, then the senior member will invite the character to the next cult meeting. See also *The Anointed*.

### One Thing After Another

(Posted)

Scene type: transition / antagonist action

The characters settle in to their first few working days at Military Hospital Number Five. The intent of this section is to show the inner workings of the Hospital to **Posted** characters and to introduce antagonists who will be important to later events. Not all of these things have to happen to each **Posted** character in succession, but all **Posted** characters should get a taste of what life is like at the Hospital, which in turn should give them ideas about where to look for clues later.

**Athletics** or **Preparedness** checks at difficulty 4 avoids total exhaustion, as the surgery is constantly busy and the schedule is brutal. There is never enough time to get everything done, new wounded arrive every hour, and there are not enough staff for the work at hand. Failure means future **Health** checks are at increased difficulty of +2, due to fatigue.

**Military Talk** or **Bureaucracy** (core clue) allows the character to understand the inner workings of the Hospital. Although the doctors are nominally in control it is the nurses who do all the work and who more or less run the Hospital. The nurses are all terrified of Mrs. Ogilvy, who rules with an iron fist and assigns severe punishments for the most minor infractions. Moreover Mrs. Ogilvy has almost total control over Major Parker, which means that, although strictly under the Regulations she shouldn't be able to, she can also issue punishments for the Doctors by getting Major Parker to ratify anything she demands. The only nurse who isn't afraid of her is Zenna Borden, who, because of her near-perfect record and the goodwill of her patients, seems to be able to get through her daily routine

without falling foul of the Head Nurse.

**Medicine** or **Biology** (1 point) realizes that the insanitary and cramped conditions, coupled with the lack of available surgeons, is adding to the casualty list. Malnutrition and vermin infestation is doing its bit to send bodies to the cemetery. The peculiar swamp-smell of gangrene lingers in all of the huts.

Attempting to do something about it (eg. by cleaning a hut, or ordering nurses to do it), invokes the wrath of Mrs. Ogilvy, who will do her best to punish the character with extra duty, provoking a **Health** check at difficulty 3 (or more) to avoid ½ die of damage due to overwork.

Mrs. Ogilvy will also do her best to strip characters of their **Credit Rating**. Technically under the Regulations the Head Nurse is required to confiscate all outside items – e.g. liquor, food, essentially all the barter goods that the character may have brought in – and keep them until the owner leaves the Hospital. This usually only applies to nurses and patients, and is often ignored, but Mrs. Ogilvy sticks to the letter of the Regulations in the hope of getting bribes. **Military Talk** and **Intimidation** won't work on her or her cronies, but **Bureaucracy**, **Flattery** and **Bargain** will. Every point spent on keeping Mrs. Ogilvy at bay saves a point of **Credit Rating**, unless **Bureaucracy** is used, in which case each point spent saves two points **Credit Rating** as the character proves to know the Regulations better than the Head Nurse. Alternatively **Credit Rating** (essentially bribes) will also work, on a one point spent equals one point saved basis.

**Medicine** (core clue) leads to a talk with Captain Watts about his electro-therapeutic device. Captain Watts is very keen on his new treatment, which he believes will lead to a revolution in

nerve therapy. The device is relatively simple, being two batteries attached by a resistor to a metal cap, which is fitted to the patient's head. The current is controlled by two switches, one per battery. Captain Watts has permission from the Major to use his device in controlled studies, and is always looking for new test subjects.

**Mechanical Repair** (1 point) notices that the device is simple and functional, but does have the potential to be lethal.

**Assess Honesty** (1 point) may reveal that there have been two deaths so far among Watts' test subjects, which Watts is reluctant to discuss, but he claims that this was not the fault of the device. He's blinded by his 'successes' and thinks that the deaths were accidental. He has removed any mention of the deaths from his official documentation.

Pombal, the French priest, is always coming and going, working with the sick and administering last rites to the dying. **Bureaucracy** (core clue) notes that he can't get any cooperation from the nursing staff, (as he's fallen foul of Mrs. Ogilvy once too often), and that the doctors pay almost no attention to him. Anyone who treats him kindly – e.g. by speaking to him in his own language (**Linguistics**: French) or by **Reassurance** (1 point) may get him to open up. See further *Pombal asks for Help* page 10.

**Occult** (core clue) notices that the ravens seen earlier don't leave the Hospital, except when there is a burial party. During the day they gather on or near the half-destroyed farmhouse, muttering amongst themselves, but when a truck leaves with shroud-wrapped corpses for the burial ground one or two of their number go with it, following it to the cemetery and back. It's almost as though they are accompanying the dead on their final journey. Moreover more ravens are joining the flock every day; it's as if each death brings another raven to the Hospital.

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**Medicine** (core clue) notices that, shortly after being given a sedative mixture, several of the patients seem to be no better; if anything, the pain is much worse, and the victim is in agony. The medicine was given by Zenna Borden as part of her redistribution of pain (see *The Bell Tolls* page 17) but to find out who gave the patients the medicine requires a **Shadowing** check at difficulty 5. If caught, Zenna claims that she mixed the medicine correctly, so there ought not to be a problem. **Assess Honesty** (1 point) shows that she's not truthful, and in fact seems oddly triumphant or gloating. Mrs. Ogilvy, if brought in, might assign Zenna extra punishment duties but will resent interference from outsiders in her domain, and will look to do them harm in the future.

### Checkmate

#### Scene Type: Alternate / Investigation

Once the characters become aware that there is a cult they may try to tell who's in, and who's out. This means they will need to question staff and patients, an activity that could be combined with *Bribery and Corruption*.

**Oral History, Reassurance, Military Talk** and possibly **Intimidation** could prove useful here. Bribes, as with **Credit Rating**, are less useful, since the cult is tight-knit and resistant to betraying secrets.

Cult members can generally be identified in the following ways:

- They are optimistic about their chances of recovery, even though their wounds are severe; even those who have lost limbs or senses think they'll get everything back just as it was.
- They reject all forms of religion, and will not abide visits from a priest.

- Though their injuries are often crippling, if not life-threatening, they show few symptoms of pain and seem to be in relatively good health, given the circumstances.

- They are regularly visited by the nurse, Zenna Borden, and by Gurdip Dal.

- The ravens show keen interest in them. At least one of the birds seems to be watching each cultist, every hour of the day.

**Shadowing** can be useful once a cult member has been identified, since they all communicate with each other. Following one member can lead to identifying several others, and following Zenna or Gurdip can give the character a very good idea of the total number of cultists.

### Skeletons in the Closet

#### Scene type: Alternate (Physical Evidence)

The character may realize that faulty (tainted) medication is being given to patients.

To find out what was given, they will need to look in the Pharmacist's Supply Closet. This closet is kept locked during the day; only the Head Nurse is supposed to have keys to it. However **Evidence Collection** shows that the lock is simple and has been picked, probably more than once judging by the scratches on the lock plate. The Cupboard is right next to the Head Nurse's office, so characters will need to be careful (**Stealth** may prove useful) not to arouse Mrs. Ogilvy. Unless the characters are prepared to **Filch** the keys (when not in use they are kept in Mrs. Ogilvy's office, in her desk drawer), **Locksmith** will be needed to get into the cupboard, but the lock is so pitifully simple that this is an easy task.

The contents of the closet are kept in fairly good order on the whole, but there are several empty bottles, some of the labels are missing or badly smudged, some of the more uncommon supplies (all the stimulants) are missing altogether, and there are some bottles which don't resemble any of the usual medical supplies, filled with a pale green liquid.

- **Bureaucracy or Military**

**Talk** (1 point): This is clearly unacceptable under the Regulations, and as the Head Nurse is ultimately in charge of the closet, it is her who should be blamed. It's especially serious as it appears that essential supplies have been pilfered, possibly for sale or illicit use.

- Mrs. Ogilvy, if tackled directly, will try bluff first, and if that doesn't work, bribery. She knows full well that the closet is not in good order, but claims to be too busy to deal with it. *'If the doctors won't keep things in good order, I don't see what I can do,'* is her fallback position. However this will cow the Head Nurse, and thereafter make her much easier to deal with.

- Reporting this to authority, in this case Major Parker, will mean trouble for Mrs. Ogilvy. Though Major Parker will be unwilling to believe accusations made against the Head Nurse, the incident is serious enough to bring in the Military Police (see also *"Exposing the Cult"*; the stolen drugs incident will be investigated in the same way as a murder). In this event Mrs. Ogilvy will eventually be taken away, but this may take a day or two to happen while the police carry out their investigation.

- **Pharmacy** (1 point): The green liquid is unidentifiable. It doesn't resemble anything in the

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### Exposing the Cult

The players may be tempted to reveal all, or at least as much as they know, to the relevant authorities as soon as they discover what's going on.

The relevant authority in this instance is Major Parker. He's the ranking officer, but his reaction will be to put the Head Nurse in charge of any subsequent investigation. This is his default setting; he's intimidated by her, and she knows it.

Mrs. Ogilvy is the camp tyrant. She likes having everyone under her thumb, and will resent outsiders involving themselves in the day-to-day routine of 'her' Hospital. For her, investigating any breach in discipline is less about stamping out a problem and more about punishing anyone she doesn't like, and this may include the characters, particularly if they've been incautious enough to cause a fuss. Any investigation headed by her will go nowhere fast, but there will be a lot of people on latrine duty, ambulance cleaning, tea orderly duty, and so on. If there's a dirty job going, Mrs. Ogilvy can find someone who needs punishment.

The only thing she can't cover up is a death, so things change either after Pombal's corpse is discovered or after antagonist reaction/protagonist action results in an obvious murder.

At that point the MPs are brought in. Captain Parkes and Sergeant Oakham will be the investigative team, and they'll be making discreet inquiries – at least, as discreet as military policemen ever get. Neither of them are stupid but they place no faith in the supernatural; they're looking for a killer, not a death cult. If they are brought in, then the cult reaction will be to offer up a scapegoat. Gurdip Dal, or someone similar, will confess to murdering Pombal, for example. The police will arrest the offender and then leave, which allows the cult to get on with their dark business once more.

If the crypt is discovered this shakes up the camp. The discovery has the makings of a major scandal. All the more reason for the incident to be squashed; Mrs. Ogilvy will be only too pleased to hush things up. Even the military police won't be keen to investigate the crypt. They'll be too worried about what their superiors might say, if they uncover something that can't be hushed up. The contents may be taken out and burned, but that's all. This won't stop the cult; they don't need the altar to carry out their rituals. It's convenient, but not absolutely necessary.

If Zenna Borden is somehow taken out of the picture the Keeper should remember that this does not destroy the cult. The cult numbers perhaps twenty people in the hospital; unless they can somehow all be dealt with, the cult's activities will continue.

Characters should also bear in mind that direct action on their part could have serious consequences. Killing Zenna Borden, for example, eliminates an important cult member, but it also means that the MPs will be called in, and this time it may be the characters who get arrested for murder. Characters should be warned of this possibility should they plan murder.

The chief difficulty that the characters face is not so much the cult as a cult; it's that the members of the cult are on the same side as they are. The characters can't just shoot them. They need to find a more subtle way of dealing with the problem.

#### **Mrs. Ogilvy (Head Nurse)**

Skills: Bargain 6, Bureaucracy 8, First Aid 4, Health 8, Intimidation 9, Sanity 6, Stability 6, Stealth 4

Mrs. Ogilvy is a hard-faced, grasping woman, a career nurse for whom the war has been an excellent chance for rapid promotion. She revels in her new authority and does her best to make sure that everyone knows how important she is. She has a knack for finding out other people's weaknesses and exploiting them, which is how she has such a hold over Major Parker.

#### **Major Parker (Commanding Officer)**

Skills: Athletics 1, Credit Rating 5, First Aid 6, Health 7, Medicine 8, Sanity 5, Stability 7

Major Parker is a diffident, absent-minded man. When not in surgery he seems indecisive, if not entirely without a brain; in surgery, he's an authoritarian, and an absolute master of his craft. Mrs. Ogilvy controls him through a combination of brute force and bribery; she knows his weakness for sweets, particularly Turkish Delight, and keeps him supplied.

#### **Captain Parkes (Military Policeman)**

Skills: Athletics 4, Evidence Collection 4, Forensics 2, Firearms 4, Health 7, Interrogation 6, Scuffling 6, Sanity 8, Stability 6

Weapons: Webley Revolver +0

#### **Sergeant Oakham (Military Policeman)**

Skills: Athletics 8, Evidence Collection 1, Firearms 6, Health 10, Interrogation 4, Intimidation 6, Scuffling 10, Sanity 8, Stability 5

Weapons: Webley Revolver +0

Both Parkes and Oakham were policemen in civilian life. Parkes is a long-limbed, slow-talking Cornishman who thinks slowly but covers every single eventuality, very thoroughly. Oakham is a short, muscular Glaswegian, a bundle of energy whose preferred investigative style is "*You did it! Confess!*" interrogation.



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military pharmacopeia. It might be something brought in from outside, of course, perhaps bought on the black market. It resembles a sedative mixture, and has a pungent, sickly smell not unlike raw Opium.

- **Health** checks at difficulty 4 are required of anyone who drinks/ injects the green liquid. The target suffers strange and vivid hallucinations before sinking into shock. If the **Health** check is failed the target takes 1 die damage; even if successful the target still suffers the hallucinations and falls unconscious for a time. The visions are of someone else's life. Essentially the target is suffering another man's pain, which means they experience the events associated with that pain. The trauma depends on the person who suffered it in the first place, and so the nature of the visions is up to the Keeper. Treat this event in the same way as a flashback, except that the events happened to someone else and not to the character. Examples include: shivering in a flooded shell crater, clinging to a bit of wreckage so as not to drown; blasted by an artillery shell, to discover as the character struggles to his feet that his right arm is missing at the elbow; watching a great greasy cloud of poison gas seep over the battleground, knowing that there is no gas mask to be had.

### The Bell Tolls

Scene Type: Core (Physical Evidence)

Men are dying at the Hospital all the time, but some of them are helped on their way by Nurse Borden. In this scene, characters see what happens as a result of her actions.

A soldier, perhaps a patient if **Posted**, or someone in the next bed if **Injured**, takes a sudden turn for the worse. The chirpy little infantryman seemed all right an hour ago, but now he's sinking fast. His pallor is marked, his breathing is heavy, and very soon after this he'll slip into a coma from which he will not awaken.

Core clues include:

- **Medicine:** The injuries suffered should not have been fatal. Though he was wounded, there was every reason to think this soldier would make a full recovery. It's almost as if the soldier was suffering from severe shock; thready pulse, pale and mottled skin tone, dilated pupils – all the classic symptoms are there, yet there surely was no reason for this condition either to develop suddenly or to slip by unnoticed.
- **Occult:** As soon as the symptoms started to develop, a raven took up position just outside the tent, watching the sufferer. With each worsening symptom the bird seemed to get more and more agitated. When the soldier died, the bird flew up into the air, letting out an almost human shriek. It's as if the creature somehow knew what was happening, and waited for its chance to act – possibly to seize the dead man's soul as it left the body.
- **Pharmacy:** There's a strong smell of Opium, as if the dead man had been given some medication shortly before the incident, possibly a sedative mixture. Yet there's no notation on his chart to show that a sedative was required, or administered.

**Stability** check at difficulty 3, increased to 4 for those who understood the full impact of the **Occult** core clue.

### Where is Pombal?

Scene Type: Core / Physical Evidence

After discovering information, the characters may try to discuss it with Pombal.

The priest is nowhere to be found. He has a little tent set aside for him, but he is not there, and if the characters ask, nobody at the Hospital can recall seeing him in some time.

Pombal's tent is messy, and **Evidence Collection** (core clue) notices that his glasses, broken, have been trodden into the mud just outside the tent opening. There are several footprints here, some of which are of civilian shoes (probably Pombal) while others are military boots. A 1 point **Evidence Collection** spend realizes that the boot marks could not have been made by regular army boots; they're of an unusual type, exactly the kind of boot that colonial soldiers like Gurdip Dal might wear. One boot mark is right over the glasses, indicating that the wearer was the one to crush them.

**Outdoorsman** (1 point) allows the boot marks to be tracked back to the ambulances. Peculiar marks follow the boots, as though something large and heavy was dragged through the mud. Several shrouded corpses are stacked in the back of one of the ambulances, awaiting a burial detail.

One of the shrouded corpses is Pombal. His shroud was hastily wrapped around him, unlike the neater work done on the other dead, which can be noticed with **Evidence Collection** (core clue). Also, unlike the others, Pombal was still bleeding when he was put into the back of the truck, and consequently his shroud became stiffened with dried blood.

Pombal's throat was cut from ear to ear

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### The Role of Mordiggan

The cult have been able to contact Mordiggan in part because the Hospital is located on a spot that was once a place of power for him, but mainly because, thanks to the War, Mordiggan's influence is reaching more people than it ever did before. Similar outbreaks may have occurred at other times in history – during the Black Death, for example – but this is the event that shapes Mordiggan's influence over Man in the twentieth century.

The cult believes that appeals to Mordiggan's better nature will save them. They think that sufficient devotion, coupled with regular sacrifices, will allow them to escape the War with their bodies (though possibly not their souls) intact.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Mordiggan will not be cheated. The God has no real interest in worship; everyone comes to Death in the end. However the cult has stumbled onto a technique that allows them to pass their suffering on to other people, which, from Mordiggan's point of view, is perfectly acceptable. So long as someone suffers the pain, and dies, Mordiggan is indifferent as to who does so.

Where this goes wrong for the cult is in their assumption that Mordiggan will let them go even if they offer up no suffering. Their final ritual will be an appeal to the God to heal them and free them from the War, but this time there will be no transfers of pain to other people. To Mordiggan, this is worse than theft, and it is this which will provoke the God into destroying the Hospital and everyone in it.

The ravens are Mordiggan's eyes and ears. Through them, the God is made aware of the cult's worship and sacrifices. Occult (core clue) may remember the Norse eddas, and the tales of Huginn and Muninn, Thought and Memory, who flew from Odin's shoulders to the hanged and slain. Through their information gathering, Odin became the wisest of the Norse Gods. These creatures at the Hospital are not real birds, but projections, manifestations of the Charnel God, and their growing numbers indicate Mordiggan's increasing interest in events at the Hospital. **Outdoorsman** (core clue) will think this strange. Ravens, like all corvids, are social creatures, but even so, rarely do they gather in such large numbers.

#### Ravens

Abilities: Athletics 6, Health 4, Scuffling 8, Shadowing 8

Hit Threshold: 4 (small) or 3 (man-sized)

Weapon: Claws +1, Beak +0

Armour: none

Stability Loss: +0

**Description:** Though these appear as normal birds at first glance, their inky bodies are mutable, rippling and changing. As this only happens when they are not being directly looked at the effect is only noticed out of the corner of the watcher's eye. Their eyes are near human in their expressiveness. In combat, their talons grow to twice normal size, and their beaks are razor sharp. If 'killed', they dissolve into shadow.

with a sharp, bladed weapon like a bayonet, which probably had a curved blade, and there are markings on the wound which suggest a ragged cutting edge (**Evidence Collection** 1 point spend). Gurdip Dal owns such a weapon, a curved knife gation with a sawback blade.

Discovery of Pombal's corpse will bring the Military Police into the scenario (see "Exposing the Cult") but even if Dal is arrested this does not stop the cult, nor will Dal say anything about accomplices. He claims to have acted alone, provoked by Pombal's insults and religious intolerance.

### Bribery and Corruption

#### Scene Type: Alternate

The character may attempt to gather information from hospital staff or patients. See also "Checkmate"

**Posted** characters will find that they get on best with the doctors and nurses, while **Injured** characters will find the patients more sympathetic. Like calls to like, and any attempt to gather information from a dissimilar group – if a **Posted** tries to talk to a patient, for example – then any point spend is increased by 1.

The best way to get information is by **Credit Rating**; bribing the informant with luxuries, or at any rate putting them at their ease with offer of a cigarette. This is a 0 point spend for similar groups, a 1 point for dissimilar.

The next best is with **Military Talk, Oral History, Flattery** or **Reassurance**. Minimum spend is 1 point.

Information to be had includes:

- The nurse, Zenna Borden, is always very helpful and seems to be everywhere. It's hard to see how she finds time to rest. She was recently on leave in England, and since then her contribution has been above and beyond the call.
- A lot of the injured peg out for no apparent reason and the doctors can't understand it. They've taken to calling it 'Watt's Disease', since it happens without rhyme or reason, much as Watt's electro-therapeutic device works without Watts really understanding why.
- Pombal is 'a worrier' who thinks too much. Still, you have to admire his nerve. He's the only one prepared to stand up to Mrs.

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Ogilvy; if only he didn't waste his time chasing phantoms.

- Gurdip Dal is always around, helping wherever he can. Zenna Borden has made sure he doesn't get bothered by Mrs. Ogilvy, and the nurse and the soldier seem to be close friends.
- The place where the Hospital now is must have been a big estate, before the war. A doctor who's since been posted to another Hospital used to say that some of the bits of stone and pottery found roundabout dated back to the Romans.

### His Enthusiasm is Commendable (Injured) Scene Type: Core

Doctor Watts is on constant lookout for new test subjects for his electrotherapeutic device. An **Injured** character may become his next test subject.

**Sense Trouble** (Difficulty 3) realizes that something's afoot when several nurses are spotted carrying Doctor Watt's equipment to the **Injured** character's tent. Several other injured soldiers eye the device nervously. The nurses set the device

down as carefully as possible and start preparations, hooking up the cables and getting the patient ready.

**Fleeing** might be useful (Difficulty 6), as it will get the character out of harm's way before Doctor Watts arrives. A success means that the character not only left the tent but found somewhere safe to hide. The difficult bit is avoiding the attention of the nurses, hence the high number, but this can be reduced by **Credit Rating** (bribes), with each 1 **Credit Rating** spent reducing the **Fleeing** difficulty by 2.

Doctor Watts arrives soon after the

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device is set up, and from that point on **Fleeing** is impossible.

Doctor Watts is very keen to have his device accepted by the medical profession. He's preparing a paper to prove how useful it can be in cases of nerve damage. He'll take copious notes, all the while assuring the patient, in his dispassionate way, that everything's fine and that the procedure is routine.

**Health** checks at difficulty 4 for anyone undergoing the procedure. Failure means a dice of damage and unconsciousness; success merely means unconsciousness. If the character managed to **Flee** earlier, then this will happen to one of the other patients; the character may learn about it later.

Anyone undergoing the procedure is knocked out for a few minutes, a side effect that Watts will blame on inadequate calibration of the equipment by the nursing staff. However those who are knocked out will, on recovering, see visions. To them, the sky is a greasy red, lit by a scarlet orb, while the mud is a dark, black mass of decayed flesh. A howling noise echoes across the wasteland, which can be traced to a massive crater not far away. Yet this is no crater, for it has teeth, grinding furiously, champing and smashing together as if eager to swallow the world and everything in it. Small black blots fly and wheel in the air, which cry like ravens yet drop tears of blood. **Stability** check, difficulty 5 for undergoing this ordeal; a reduced **Stability** at difficulty 3 for merely having it told to the character by someone else. The hallucination soon fades, leaving the patient bewildered and stunned. This is a vision of Mordiggan, and the crater, if traced to its origin, was in approximately in the same spot as the temple entrance. The

crater reminds **Occult** users (core clue) of the hellmouth, the entrance to damnation envisaged as a gaping maw, never sated, always ready to drag down and engulf sinners, an image that goes back as far as Anglo-Saxon mythology.

### Doctor Watts

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Bureaucracy 4, Electrical Repair 2, First Aid 6, Health 10, Medicine 8, Mechanical Repair 2, Sanity 6, Stability 8

Watts is a busy monomaniac who believes he has found a miracle cure. He's tall, handsome and muscular, the kind of person who's never had a day's sickness in his life. He finds weakness in others strangely repellent. He won't accept responsibility for his actions if things turn out badly; to him, it's always someone else's fault.

### Amateur Archaeology

Scene Type: Core (Location)

The characters may attempt to investigate the Hospital further, looking for the cult's meeting place.

**Architecture** (core clue) realizes that the farmstead the Hospital is based around would have been quite large in its day, probably with several outbuildings, most of which have now been destroyed. There are sufficient remnants to show that the buildings would have been typical late Medieval, but there are also signs – bits of marble and pottery mixed in with the medieval mortar – that Roman ruins may once have stood on the site. Probably those ruins were raided for stone, or the broken pottery mixed up as aggregate in the mortar. If the place hadn't been so thoroughly destroyed, it might have made an interesting archaeological find.

**Architecture** (1 point) realizes that some of the stones are funerary, and probably represent old tombs. The original Roman site could have been a cemetery. There are inscriptions which are characteristic of burial sites, (eg. BM or beni morenti, meaning well deserving) and a bit of digging turns up a rolled-up lead parchment with crude markings on, shoved between the funerary stones, that seems to resemble some kind of prayer. **Occult** (1 point) knows that the parchment is actually an early form of magic sometimes used by the Romans, and the inscription is meant to be a curse. Leaving the curse in a tomb or cemetery would have added to its potency. The parchment's maker intended it as an appeal to a death entity, asking it to strike down the maker's enemy. The death entity is referred to as Mordiggan.

**Outdoorsman** (core clue) notices that while the campground is well travelled, there is one path that is regularly used, judging by the bootmarks, but which doesn't seem to go anywhere. In fact, if followed up, it leads to the temple entrance.

**Outdoorsman** (1 point) notices that the ravens are gathered in knots and clumps around the Hospital, but the largest group is clustered around one particular spot. This spot is directly over the temple entrance, and the ravens will not leave it even if people approach them. This is very unusual, for birds; they ought to be nervous of people, but these ravens behave as though they own the place. If provoked or attacked, they will respond with deadly force. However they will not prevent anyone going into the temple if they so wish. They just watch, silent, sardonic; **Stability** check difficulty 3 for anyone going into the temple, under the raven's gaze.

### The Anointed

#### Scene Type: Core / Location

The temple is based in a cellar close to the Hospital. It would at one time have been a crypt for a large building, and probably (**Architecture**: core clue) dates to the late medieval period at the least. Possibly earlier, as there are decayed wall murals painted in a style consistent with high medieval French church murals.

The images are all of the same theme: Death, as the Destroyer and harvester of men. He accepts kings and princes, paupers and peasants, scholars and merchants, into his wide, skeletal embrace. In one scene he strides among armies with his scythe, while in another he rides in a great chariot with emperors pulling in harness in place of horses. Death shows no mercy, whether to mothers or to children, rich men or poor; all bow to Him, all beg His favor, yet to each his answer is always the same. He drags them down, crushes them under His bony feet, and passes on. In many depictions He is shown eating the corpses of the dead, swallowing them whole in His greedy haste.

In the middle of the chamber is a makeshift altar, set up on what might have once been a raised Roman marble tomb. If so, the covering slab and the contents of the tomb have long since been taken away. In their place wooden planks serve as a table, and offerings have been piled in a heap. The offerings are of all sorts, from a child's toy to a gas mask, but most are bits of military equipment, even unexploded artillery shells and broken rifles, and there are many medals, from all the armies in conflict at the Front. Atop this pyramid is a skull, still barely covered by ragged skin, probably (**Medicine** 1 point) no more than eight months dead. The last jellified remnant of the eyeballs gleam in the sockets. The skull wears a crown,

possibly something scavenged from a theatrical costume, of battered wire covered in threadbare gold. **Stability** check at difficulty 4, as the character's mind makes the connection between the altar and its surroundings; it's as if Mordiggan left his mark here, and the taint lingers.

At the base of the tomb is a banner made of bandages, with these words painted crudely on it: *It is arranged that men should be broken and that they should be mended.*

Lying in front of the tomb is a large basin made of lead, at the bottom of which is a slick, green liquid. This is where the pain is gathered during ceremonies; anyone who has investigated the Dispensary Cupboard (*Skeletons in the Closet*) recognizes this liquid. It smells faintly of opium, but there is not enough of it here to produce the same effect, if drunk.

This is where the cult gathers for its ceremonies. It is possible that a character has been invited to one of those ceremonies, (*Meeting with a Cult Member* and *Meeting with a Senior Cult Member*), and if so, the scene is something like this:

The group gathers after midnight. There are twenty members all told, and the chamber is not large, so the room soon starts to feel hot and enclosed. There is little light, apart from a candle that Zenna carries and a few other candles on the altar. Zenna leads the group in a prayer. At first she speaks English, then French, then another language, until it becomes less a prayer and more a jumble of apparently meaningless words, but no matter what the group follows her in the chant without missing a syllable. The strange thing is, even the meaningless words have some kind of meaning; at any rate the participants are convinced that they do, during the ceremony, though afterwards they'll have no idea what was said. In fact,

Zenna is speaking in the language of Dream, which all humans can understand while they are asleep but cannot remember while they are awake. The name Mordiggan is repeated again and again, as the cult appeals to the God to spare them their pain. As the ceremony progresses, participants feel their injuries ease, (recovering 1 die of damage, though this does not re-grow missing limbs or restore lost senses), and as this happens the basin fills with the green liquid. Zenna and Gurdip will later distribute this among the other injured at the Hospital. **Stability** check at difficulty 3 for undergoing this ritual, with a further **Stability** check at 5 if the participant later realizes that their pain was passed on to another person and caused that person's death.

The ravens will be present during this ritual. They will flutter down amongst the cultists, perching next to them or on their shoulders, and the croaking noises that they make will be very like the chanting prayer.

In the final moments, Zenna claims that Mordiggan has accepted the sacrifice of pain, and is pleased. The cultists will go away content, their hopes buoyed by yet another successful ritual. However a raven turns to the character and mutters: *No hope, no pleasure, no triumph, no bargain. There is nothing you can give that He will accept; He takes what he pleases and will not be cheated.* **Stability** check difficulty 4.

### Cleaning Duty

#### Scene type: Challenge / Antagonist Action

The characters may provoke the cult into taking direct action against them. Potential recruits who fail to impress senior cult members are potential targets, as are nurses or doctors who ask too many questions.

Gurdip Dal is sent to deal with them.

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He'll attempt to ambush the character either when they are on their own, or at night, when everyone else ought to be asleep. **Sense Trouble** difficulty 2 hears Gurdip trip over a cleaning bucket carelessly left out, giving the character a chance to prepare. Otherwise the first sign of trouble is when Gurdip closes with the character, knife in hand. The target of the attack needs to make a **Stability** check difficulty 2.

Gurdip's plan is to slit the character's throat and hide the body with the other corpses being sent for burial. If caught, (and he would rather die than be captured), he refuses to say anything about the cult. He claims that he attacked the character because the character insulted his religion. This attack will be enough to get him arrested by the military police, and he will be taken away.

**Occult** (core clue) notices that when Gurdip was preparing to attack, the ravens began to gather, as if they expected something to happen. If the attack fails, and nobody dies, the ravens fly off, disappointed; if there is a death, they cackle and scream delightedly.

### Cheery

#### Scene Type: Antagonist Action

Ambulances are always coming and going at the Hospital, and Cheery is a regular visitor. If the characters used **Reassurance** in previous scenes she may seek them out, as she needs advice. If this was not done, a **Reassurance**, **Oral History** or **Military Talk** spend (1 point) now will produce the same effect, but the character will have to seek out Cheery first.

Zenna Borden has been trying to persuade Cheery to join the cult. Zenna has plans to expand the cult's influence to other Hospitals, and wants to use Cheery as a distributor of pain. Zenna knows that the death rate at Military

Hospital Number Five is unacceptably high, and she thinks that if she can spread out, giving pain to the other Hospitals, this will take the pressure off of her. She also thinks that there may be other patients in other hospitals who can be 'spared,' if they join in the cult rituals, but that means establishing satellite cults, something that she can't do on her own. Cheery would be the first recruit in a new cultist network.

Cheery is conscience-stricken. She hero-worships Zenna and would do almost anything Zenna asked, but this cult worship is more than Cheery bargained for. Cheery doesn't know what to do, and will be grateful for any advice the characters can give.

According to Cheery:

- Borden has been acting strangely ever since she went on leave. Cheery knows Borden had an abortion, and thinks that the stress of that and her time at the Hospital has driven Borden almost to breaking point.
- Cheery knows most of the senior cult members by sight (if not by name) and can show the character where the crypt is, if they don't already know.
- Cheery has a sample of the drug that Borden uses (see also "*Skeletons in the Closet*") and can show it to characters, if asked.

The protagonists may be tempted to use Cheery's evidence to expose the cult. She knows enough to seriously harm the cultists, but her loyalty to Borden is such that she would never tell anyone in authority what she knows; she only talks to the characters because she thinks that they're sympathetic. If Cheery thinks that her information is about to be used to hurt Borden, she immediately attempts suicide, either by taking the drug herself or by some other

means. If prevented, she refuses to say another word about Borden or the cult. If she takes the drug, then she dies, but before she does so she whispers:

*The pain . . . o God, I never thought it would be like this . . . the ravens, don't let them get me, keep them away . . . Mordiggan . . .*

**Stability** check difficulty 4 if Cheery commits suicide as a result of the protagonists' actions.

### God's Away on Business

#### Scene Type: Resolution

The cult will eventually attempt their final ritual: an appeal to Mordiggan to heal them completely, and in some cases resurrect their dead (eg. Borden's baby, Gurdip's brother).

This may be provoked by protagonist action. If Borden is eliminated, for example, then the cult's reaction will be to hold this ritual as soon as possible. However the need for secrecy means that they may have to wait until nightfall. This may change if there is some event that draws people's attention away from the cult; if, for example, there is an air raid, and everyone is ordered to take cover, then while the rest of the encampment is running for the protection of the trenches the cult will be moving to the crypt.

The cult can still hold ceremonies even if their altar and the crypt are destroyed. The ceremony would still be a failure no matter where it was held; cutting them off from their temple does not cut them off from Mordiggan, as Death is all around them. Alternatives to the crypt include the surgery tent (possibly using Watt's electro-therapeutic device as a makeshift altar), an air raid bunker, an ambulance (eg. one of the buses, a vehicle big enough to accommodate them all).

**Sense Trouble** difficulty 3 realizes that the ravens, normally a noisy,

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cackling bunch, have gone quiet. It's as if all of them, at the same time, heard a noise, and are waiting for that noise to be repeated. Just at that moment, they all take wing, flying in one great black mass, circling the Hospital.

Characters who joined the cult will be ordered to attend this final meeting. *"It's our last chance! Hurry, or you'll be too late!"*

**Shadowing** or **Stealth** may also be effective, as the cultists will be too eager to get to the ritual chamber to worry too much about being followed. They think that this will be the last ceremony; after today, all of their worries will be over.

The protagonists may already know where the crypt is, but if they do not, someone with **Occult** (core clue) feels a shiver down the spine, as a skeletal figure now stands over the crypt entrance. No person other than the occult user sees this creature, a wizened, bent thing dressed in the dark cloak of a *poilu*, with a rifle-bayonet in its hands, as it enters the crypt after all the cultists have gone inside. **Stability** check difficulty 3.

The cult begins its ritual. They offer up fervent prayers to Mordiggan, pleading that they be spared their pain, that their bodies be healed, that their loved ones return to life. Their hysteria grows stronger as the air in the crypt goes stale and hot; the pain, which before became a liquid and was siphoned off into a basin, is now a great green mist that covers them all, billowing like poison gas in the close confines of the temple. Though they plead, a lone hollow voice is heard to answer:

*One may not escape the angel of death, nor say to him, 'Wait until I put my affairs in order,' or 'There is my son, my slave: take him in my stead.' Where the angel of death appears there is no remedy.*

Yet this does not dishearten the cult, and instead they redouble their prayers.

However as the pain is now all around them, the cult is spreading a kind of mass hallucination, each member sharing his experiences with all the others. This is the means by which the protagonists can put a stop to them once and for all. If the protagonists enter into the cult's delusions, by using the pain to see into the souls of individual cultists, then the protagonists can break each cultist by destroying their delusions (and their last **Pillars of Sanity**), and if they do that then the ceremony's effect is much reduced. Mordiggan will be summoned; in fact, thanks to the cult He has already been summoned, hence the ravens and the skeletal figure. However if the ceremony's effect is reduced then Mordiggan will just destroy the cult; not the cult, the Hospital, and everything else within a few hundred square meters.

In each of these delusions the ravens are present, no matter how incongruous this may be. In some scenes they are ordinary birds. In others they may be bird-men, behaving in all ways like men, except that they do not speak, except amongst themselves. In other scenes they may be shadows, the only signal of their presence, a fluttering of wings and the gleam of eyes in the dark. In these scenes they represent the anger of Mordiggan, and will react accordingly, with growls and screams of rage. They may attack, if they are attacked, but will not initiate combat.

These delusions include:

- **Gurdip Dal.** In this vision, he and a man from his Regiment, whose face is covered by a gas mask, are in a dugout. The bunker is warm and cozy, and there is a meal cooking on the fire. Gurdip is laughing, chattering away. He offers the protagonists hospitality, tells them to make themselves comfortable. He says he will be going home soon, he and his brother. The War is over; there is no more need to

fear. The quickest way to break this delusion is to remove the gas mask that the other man wears. When this is done, the bloated, greenish face of a man long-dead is revealed, and Gurdip breaks down. **Stability** check at difficulty 5, as the protagonist realizes that he has destroyed a man's sanity.

- **Lieutenant Maurice Parker-Bowles.** The scene changes to the Royal Academy, Burlington House, Picadilly, London. Everyone is standing in the courtyard. It is a beautiful spring day; hardly a cloud in the sky. It is a few minutes before the Academy is due to open to the public. Parker-Bowles stands under the statue of Sir Joshua Reynolds, holding court, talking to his public and members of the press. This is his day of triumph; his work will be exhibited at the Academy, and any minute now the doors will open. The War is over, he says, and thankfully he was spared. The quickest way to break this delusion is to open the Academy doors, revealing, instead of the galleries, a shattered battlefield behind them. **Stability** check at difficulty 5.
- **'Dicky' Fallon.** The scene changes to a small, neat suburban house, somewhere in England. In this delusion Dicky is a young boy again, no more than ten years old. He is playing soldiers up in his room, and invites the characters to join him. He has a brilliant set of toys, with brightly painted uniforms, gallant castles, and cannons that fire matchsticks. Though there are some odd noises coming from downstairs, bumps and crashes, Dicky takes no notice. There's no such thing as War, really, he tells the protagonists; Mummy wouldn't let it happen. The quickest way to break this delusion is to take Dicky to the head of

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the stairs, so he can see what's happening down on the ground floor. A woman is twitching in agony, her body alive with sparks, sizzling with electrical discharge. **Stability** check at difficulty 5.

- **'Duff' Carter.** The scene changes to a quiet country lane. Off in the distance, a church bell is tolling. There's not a cloud in the sky. It's a day almost made for doing nothing at all, and Carter is determined

to do just that, strolling aimlessly along the path. He's happy to chat with the protagonists. He's glad the War's over, and even more glad that he was spared. He's off to play cricket soon; the village team needs him. However he doesn't seem to be in any hurry to get there. The quickest way to destroy this delusion is to drag Carter off to the cricket field, for there's nobody there waiting for him — just a single, empty wheelchair.

**Stability** check at difficulty 5.

- **Zenna Borden.** In this vision, Zenna is in the kitchen of a pleasant suburban cottage. She's busy preparing a chicken casserole, and though she's got plenty of work to do she's pleased to see the protagonists. Isn't it wonderful, she says, that they all came though without a scratch. They should all be thankful that the War is over, and pray that nothing like it ever happens again. Now she can raise a family. She offers them a cup of tea, and asks them to sit down. Her husband will be home soon; why don't the protagonists stay for supper? While this is going on, the protagonists can hear a baby crying, somewhere in the house, but Zenna doesn't seem to be worried about it. She doesn't go to comfort the child, and claims that there's nothing wrong. The quickest way to destroy this delusion is to go to the baby, for there's nothing in the crib at all, except a battered and slimy wire coat hanger. **Stability** check at difficulty 6, as Zenna's delusion is the core which holds the group together. If the characters manage to destroy her and at least two other key cultists, then the cult's ceremony is disrupted.

If the protagonists manage to shatter enough of these delusions, then the pain illusions fade. The protagonists find themselves returned to the crypt. The cult members are crushed, writhing in agony; the pain that they deferred has redoubled upon them, and their minds have broken.

Mordiggan then manifests. If the altar is still present then he grows from it, expanding its form and taking its essence into his own, corrupt frame. If not, then the murals on the wall melt and change, at first



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as if the skeletal forms of Death are breaking free, and then as though the whole wall is one solid mass of rotten, pallid flesh, rushing forward to engulf everything in its path. If the action is not taking place in the crypt then Mordiggan possesses a cultist or an item (eg. the electro-therapeutic device), adding the bodies of the slain to this core. **Stability** check at difficulty 7 (including the additional pool for encountering Mordiggan), with an additional **Sanity** pool loss of 2 points as the protagonists are in the presence of one of the greater Mythos entities.

The few candles that the cult had lit will be extinguished; if the protagonists did not bring light sources of their own, then the room goes dark. Mordiggan starts taking his vengeance, destroying each person in the room, one by one. There is only one exit from the crypt; if the

protagonists want to escape, they'll need to be quick.

Treat it as a **Fleeing** test, difficulty 6, that may be attempted multiple times. A successful check means that the protagonist managed to put someone else, perhaps a cultist or another protagonist, in Mordiggan's path, thus avoiding the doom that would otherwise have been their lot. Whoever is attacked by Mordiggan, whether cultist or character, dies instantly; **Scuffling** is no defence, though the Keeper may choose to allow a contested **Scuffling** roll, with success meaning that the protagonist flung someone else in harm's way. Once this is dealt with, the protagonists then have to get out, but the entrance is so small that only one person at a time can get away. **Athletics** difficulty 6 means that the character managed to get out, but only one character can be successful per round.

All this assumes that the ceremony was interrupted, which means that Mordiggan will just kill the cultists, and anyone in the same room as the cultists. If this was not done, then as soon as the cult is dealt with Mordiggan emerges from the crypt and begins slaughtering everyone in the Hospital, growing ever larger with each death until the entity towers over the terrain. The ravens fly overhead, and when the slaughter reaches its peak they dive down upon the God-entity, snatching Him up as small gobbets of dead flesh in their claws, before flying away. The devastation will be passed off as a German attack, possibly an aerial bombardment or shelling. There will be nothing left; all buildings will have been smashed flat, and not a soul escapes alive.

This event may trigger Anagorisis in characters with the following **Drives: Arrogance, Curiosity, Ennui.**



### PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

Should the Keeper and players prefer, they can create their own characters for this scenario.

The pre-generated characters have been assigned skills assuming a six-player group; if this should not be the case, the Keeper might consider allowing skill swapping, if, in the Keeper's judgement, the group lacks useful skills (eg. **Military Talk**) or has too much of the same kind of skills.

Three of the pre-gens are **Posted** while three are **Injured**.

As an alternative, the Keeper might like to use this scenario as a springboard for other games set in the Great War. In those circumstances this scenario could be considered the start of a longer-running campaign game. Possible story ideas for a game of this type include:

- The cult encountered in this scenario spread further before being destroyed. The characters have to track the satellite cults in the other hospitals down and deal with them as well.
- The influence of Mordiggan is spreading. There are rumours of strange, savage creatures that hide in the shell craters of No-Man's Land, things that feed on human flesh. The characters discover that these creatures were once soldiers who have turned to cannibalism, and who have been converted by Death's influence into something beyond death itself.
- There's talk in the trenches of a new kind of medicine, a drug that is very difficult to get hold of. Those who take it claim that it eases their pain, and according to rumour some of those who do fall asleep

and never wake up. These dreamers, who have been feasting on pain, are creating their own reality in the Dreamlands, escaping the War, but in the process they're allowing Mordiggan a foothold in the waking world, effectively sacrificing their fellow soldiers in exchange for safe haven in dreams. Where is this drug coming from? Is it somehow connected with the sleeping sickness that's engulfing the world, claiming the lives of millions? Will Mordiggan stretch out the war for years or decades to come, engulfing the world in bloody ruin?

If the Keeper chooses to extend these ideas into a longer campaign with the players creating their own characters then the pre-gens given here could be used as replacements, as needed.

#### Paul Remi

Belgian Boy Scout and military runner (treat as **Posted**).

**Drive:** Curiosity

**Occupational Skills:** Assess Honesty 2, Bargain 2, Credit Rating 2, Disguise 1, Evidence Collection 2, Languages 2, Military Talk 2, Oral History 2, Photography 1, Reassurance 3, Shadowing 3

**General Skills:** Art 3, Fleeing 8, Filch 2, History 4, Health 8, Locksmith 2, Occult 1, Sanity 7, Sense Trouble 4, Stability 7, Streetwise 5, Stealth 4, Theology 2

Until the War broke out, your greatest ambition was to be a newspaper reporter. Your parents were of the petit bourgeois, and strict Catholics. You were the third brother; the eldest, Georges, was to follow in your father's footsteps and join the family firm, while Prosper, the second son, was to be a soldier. There was not enough money in the family for you to have much ambition, but your mother

intended you for the priesthood. Your daily routine as a news vendor gave you some independence, and just enough money of your own to make you think there could be more to life. You had plans, and were about to leave home to make your fortune when the Germans invaded.

Now your family is dead, except for your mother and your brother Georges, but he was conscripted into the army and you haven't seen him in months. Your father and Prosper were both shot early on for resisting the occupation forces. You do what you can for your country and your family, and work as a volunteer courier for the army. You have two medals to your credit for meritorious service, despite being only fourteen, and are not short of courage.

Recently you've begun to wonder whether there isn't something badly wrong at Military Hospital Number Five. One of your best friends, Paul LaFarge, was sent there during the last Push, and while there was no reason to think his wounds were that serious, he died very suddenly. You think it might be a good idea to investigate this further; partly to avenge Paul, but partly also to understand what's going on at the hospital.

#### Francis Patterson

Doctor, temporary Captain RAMC **Posted**

**Drive:** Duty

**Occupational Skills:** Accounting 1, Assess Honesty 2, Biology 3, Credit Rating 4, First Aid 3, Forensics 1, Medicine 5, Languages 5, Pharmacy 3, Reassurance 1

**General Skills:** Athletics 2, Art History 4, Architecture 3, Bureaucracy 2, Fleeing 6, History 3, Health 9, Drive 5, Occult 1, Preparedness 2, Psychoanalysis 5, Sanity 6, Stability 7, Sense Trouble 2, Stealth 4, Scuffling 2

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## Not So Quiet

Your family is very well off. Your father was a colonial administrator who rose very high in the ranks in India, eventually becoming aide-de-camp to the Viceroy. You spent your boyhood years in India, and still have an affection for the place and its colourful history. As the only son, your parents wanted the best for you, and put you through medical school with the idea that you'd become a world famous surgeon.

You fell in with this idea as you have all their other ideas for you. It's not that you lack a will of your own, but you feel it's very important that you justify the faith that they have in you, to be the very best. Your war service is part of that overriding ambition, to show them that you really are as good as they think you are. You'd never let them down.

You have one secret that you've been hiding from them. On your last leave, you fell in love with a young girl from a very disadvantaged family. You had a whirlwind romance, but it all ended with a shock when she announced she was pregnant. Now you don't know what to do; you can't marry her, your parents would be devastated, but there's a child to consider. She's been writing very nasty letters, demanding money for her silence. The baby must be due any day; you don't know what will happen after it's born.

**Evelyn Ryce**

Nurse **Posted**

**Drive:** Follower

**Occupational Skills:** Assess Honesty 3, Biology 2, Bureaucracy 3, Credit Rating 2, Flattery 1, First Aid 4, Medicine 1, Pharmacy 4, Reassurance 2

**General Skills:** Athletics 3, Art History 2, Fleeing 6, Health 10, Locksmith 1, Languages 3, Military Talk 2, Occult 1, Oral History 4, Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis 1, Stealth 3, Sense Trouble 4, Sanity 6, Stability 8, Theology 4

You come from a very Catholic family. Your entire life has been dominated by the Church, and until now you have been very devout. It has been generally accepted, from a very early age, that one day you'd become a bride of Christ and enter the nunnery, possibly thereafter to carry the Word of God to the darkest corners of the earth.

The war changed all that. The first few months were much as you expected; hard, but ultimately your faith prevailed. However like many others you expected the war to be over quickly, and when it did not end, you began to wonder what God's plan was. When the devastation continued, and broken bodies came your way on a very regular basis, your faith was tested. Your first flamethrower victim was the worst; a poor shrivelled thing, like some kind of monkey, barely alive. You kept him going for two days, and then he expired; all the while you wondered what you were doing, trying to save the life of a man whose life, for all intents and purposes, was over.

Now you've taken to drink on the quiet. You don't think you have a life outside the War. You keep tending the wounded because you can't imagine what life would be like if you stopped; secretly, you wonder whether, if the war ended, you wouldn't just go mad.

**Sergeant Terry Randall**

Soldier **Injured**

**Drive:** Arrogance

**Occupational Skills:** Athletics 2, Conceal 1, Credit Rating 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Intimidate 4, Outdoorsman 1, Scuffling 5, Stealth 1

**General Skills:** Fleeing 6, Filch 1, History 2, Health 10, Languages 1, Military Talk 10, Preparedness 8, Sanity 8, Stability 9, Sense Trouble 8, Shadowing 4

You are the very best soldier in the

Regiment. Everything about you, from the polish on your boots to the edge on your bayonet, shows it. You are a killer of men, and have several medals to prove it. You think you have what it takes to go to the very top; Colonel, one day.

It wasn't always thus. You started as a raw private; before that, you were an unemployed navy on the Liverpool docks. Your outspoken Union activities got you the sack. Typical, really; you gave the best of yourself to help your fellow working man, and when push came to shove they made sure they kept their cushy jobs while you lost yours. Well, things have changed since then. You've lost a lot of your naivety. You don't care much about the Union or your fellow man. If they weren't all scum, they'd have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, same as you did.

That said, there's nothing on this earth that you'd back away from. You have guts and the will to win, and that's why you're the best. Backing down from a fight isn't in your nature. You'd sooner die than surrender.

**Hauptmann Ranulf Keppel**

German Soldier **Injured**

**Drive:** Ennui

**Occupational Skills:** Astronomy 1, Credit Rating 2, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 3, Mechanical Repair 1, Sense Trouble 4, Pilot 2

**General Skills:** Architecture 1, Assess Honesty 3, Athletics 5, Bargain 4, Conceal 5, Disguise 3, Flattery 4, Filch 1, Health 9, Languages 2, Locksmith 1, Military Talk 1, Reassurance 1, Sanity 7, Stability 8, Stealth 7

You never wanted any of this. Before the War you worked as a maitre 'd on the Hamburg Line, from New York to South America. You picked up good English (albeit with an American accent) and hoped for promotion. Or perhaps you would emigrate to America; you had cousins there, and with

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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your skills picking up a job would be easy.

Fate had other plans for you. When the War broke out, you considered it your patriotic duty to return to the Fatherland and volunteer. Soon afterward you were posted to the *Luftstreitkräfte*, on account of your (almost nonexistent) mechanical expertise; such is the logic of the military. You trained as a pilot but ended up as an observer on a two-seater. Your combat history has been one long series of disasters, and you've become convinced (having seen several burning aircraft) that you'll die in a flamer, screaming in agony as your flying coffin spirals to the ground. Oddly, you're beginning to find the prospect comforting. At least you know how it will end.

This latest development is the final straw. In the last attack, you got shot down and found yourself on the wrong side of the Lines. Thankfully your uniform was so covered in mud and oil that it didn't immediately give you away, and your English is good enough to pass muster. You've stolen some kit (a cap, a coat) and pretended to be a Canadian volunteer. The problem is, if anyone suspects your true allegiance, you're likely to be shot as a spy. The best plan you've come up with is to lie low and claim ignorance. Maybe you'll make it to New York yet, but you'll have to be clever about it. Even as a fake Canadian, you can't just walk away; desertion is a death sentence on this side of the Line as well as your own.

### Private Benjamin Morel

Soldier **Injured**

**Drive:** In the Blood

**Occupational Skills:** Athletics 1, Credit Rating 2, Firearms 2, First Aid 3, Intimidation 1, Medicine 1, Outdoorsman 4, Reassurance 4, Weapons 2

**General Skills:** Art 1, Fleeing 8, Health 10, Languages 1, Military Talk 6, Oral History 4, Occult 3, Sanity 6, Stability 7, Sense Trouble 8, Shadowing 8

Your mother was French, and you spent

many summers in the South of France with your cousins and uncles. You enjoy the quiet, simple rural life, and like nothing better than to laze around in the sun on a summer's day.

Soldiering was never your ambition, but when the War broke out it seemed as though everyone was joining up. All your older brothers had already volunteered by 1916, while you were still in school, and when you finally lied about your age and joined up it was less out of conviction than a desire not to be left out.

Ever since your twelfth birthday you've had what could best be described as visions. They're never very clear, but your mother's side of the family allegedly had the second

sight; perhaps you too can see ghosts, as your grandfather supposedly can. If so, it's a very frightening gift, particularly now when half the world seems intent on killing the other half. You wonder whether you haven't made a very big mistake in joining up, but it's too late now to change your mind.

You keep a war diary and sketches of your fellow soldiers and their battles. You think one day you might make something of this talent, perhaps even become an artist. That way you could try to make sense of your dreams and visions, perhaps even control them. Right now, they're more of a burden than a help to you, and at night, in your dreams, you can't escape them, much as you wish you could.

### Playtest Issues

During testing, one issue came up which Keepers should be aware of: it may not be easy to get the group to function as a team, in part because of the natural split between Injured and Posted. The Hate scene was scripted with this problem in mind. This may want some gentle Keeper nudging, but it's worth bearing in mind that the group does not have to work as a team. In a long-running campaign, of course, teamwork is essential, but a one-shot can be more fluid. An alternative would be to create different characters, possibly making all the wounded members of the same regiment so at least the Injured characters will have a predefined reason to work together. One playtest group redefined the characters and made them all Canadians injured during the Battle of Arras, which worked well for them.

Bear in mind if your group forgo the pregens then either someone needs to have the Architecture skill or the clues marked Architecture should be switched to Evidence Collection. This may mean that Evidence Collection is used in combination with other abilities, eg. Languages (Latin) to translate VIXANN (as seen in "Meeting with a Senior Cult Member").

The heavy Stability losses towards the end of the scenario were also commented on. In part this is addressed in the Purist or Pulp? sidebar. The Keeper should feel free to downplay the Stability losses in later scenes, if necessary.

Scenario length is designed for one evening's play. If all the players are Injured this may foreshorten the game, as it may skip some of the Posted scenes.

Finally, several playtesters found themselves more in sympathy with the cultists than the hospital. Good! That can only make the game more interesting. If the players are desperately brainstorming for a means by which they can save the 'bad' guys – who are just the same as the 'good' guys really – then you know the game is going well.

*Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal and bon chance mes amis!* I hope your group enjoys Not So Quiet.