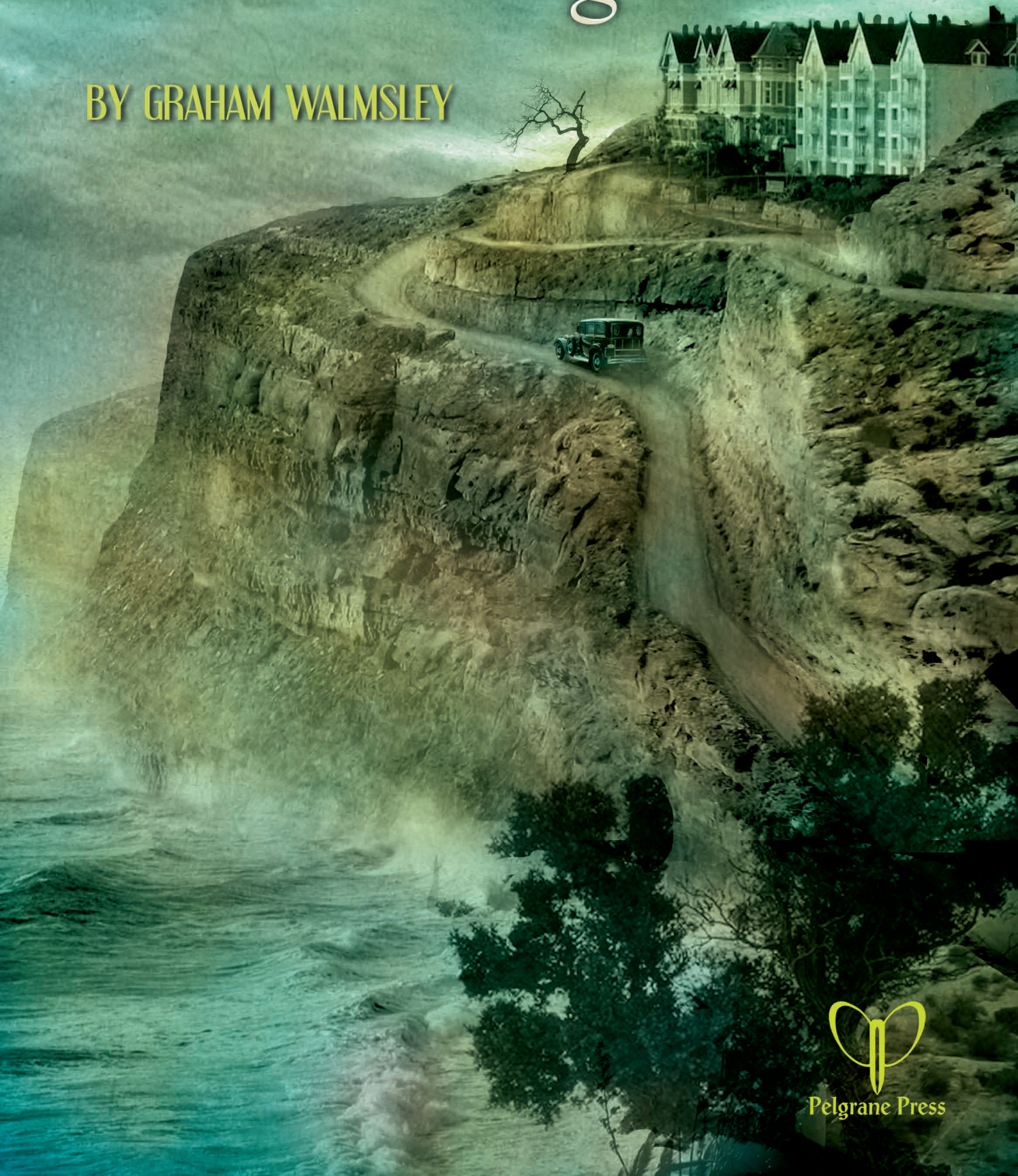


TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Rending Box

BY GRAHAM WALMSLEY



Pelgrane Press



THE RENDING BOX

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The biggest credit goes to Ramsey Campbell, whose story *The Render of the Veils* inspired the description of Daoloth and the reality underlying the universe.

Enjoy the game.

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The Rending Box

In an antiques shop in North London, there is a box. Inside the box is an ancient creature, seeping through into the world. It will show the Investigators the universe as it really is.

The Rending Box is the final Purist adventure for Trail of Cthulhu. The previous scenarios, *The Dying of St Margaret's*, *The Watchers in the Sky* and *The Dance In The Blood* have hinted about an immense, fecund creature, spawning beneath the soil of the Lake District.

In *The Rending Box*, the Investigators see that creature. Indeed, they may discover everything: the patterns behind the universe, the monsters older than time, the secrets that break your mind. And all they need to do is open a box.

HOW THE UNIVERSE IS

The thing in the box will let the Investigators see everything clearly, for the first time. This, then, is how the universe really is.

People are primordial, jelly-like blobs. Surfaces are spongy and wet. Geometry is multi-dimensional, too complex for the human mind to comprehend: objects look bigger from different angles.

Underlying all this is a pattern. When you see the world truly, things align and make sense: stars flow in one direction, trees grow in a significant way, people move in complex, mind-breaking patterns. Within this pattern, mathematics, magic and geometry are all one. When you see it, you see the movement of life and time.

If we knew this, we would go mad. Hence, the parts of the brain that perceive these things go unused in normal humans. Instead, we see comforting illusions: people seem smooth and humanoid, surfaces feel firm and we only see three dimensions.

All of this is represented, in Trail of Cthulhu, by the abilities **Sanity** and **Cthulhu Mythos**.

Sanity represents your ability to perceive the illusory world. When it is high, you see humanoid people, smooth surfaces and no patterns. As it drops lower, you start using parts of the brain that people do not normally use. People become jelly-like, surfaces become spongy. When it reaches zero, you see everything.

Cthulhu Mythos represents your ability to follow the patterns underlying the Universe and make deductions. For example, given an image of Cthulhu, you can follow the pattern to the Pacific Ocean and into dreamspace. You distantly perceive the thing, sleeping beneath the sea. You may even discern that its name is Cthulhu. These deductions can break your mind.

This explains why reading the Pnakotic Manuscripts or seeing Gol-Goroth helps you deduce facts about other Mythos entities. You didn't gain knowledge from what you saw. You gained *insight* into the universe.

This insight is granted by **Daoloth**. He is the Render of the Veils, the banisher of illusion. He shows the underlying patterns and the mind-breaking reality. He enables this insight, gives it and tempts people towards it. He both is the Cthulhu Mythos

ability and grants the Cthulhu Mythos ability. And the Investigators are about to find him in a box.

THE HOOK

The Investigators receive a pPostcard, from an old friend, asking them to bring an antique box to a hotel in the Lake District.

THE HORRIBLE TRUTH

For years, Jakob Tulving, a Cambridge University professor, has researched the folklore of the English Lake District. Behind the legends of strange creatures, he has spotted patterns, indicating something larger, that created all of the Lake District's monsters.

Investigating further, he moved to the Thorndike Hotel, on the remote coast of the Western Lakes, taking his books with him. As he read his literature and listened to folktales, he realized a missing piece of the puzzle: an old, wooden box. He telegraphed to London and, uncannily, discovered it in an antiques shop in Golders Green. He sent a cheque immediately.

At this point, Tulving remembered some contacts who might help him. These are the Investigators. Perhaps, he thought, they might bring the box to him. Indeed, they might be interested in his studies. So he wrote to them.

Then he continued his work. He began to see the patterns behind the universe. The hotel residents appeared less humanoid, its surfaces less solid. He grew convinced that, without his eyes, he would see better, and removed them carefully with a hot knife.

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Now, he sits in the Thorndike Hotel, excited by his insight, but protective of the last threads of his sanity. He does not want to learn more.

If he did, he would discover that he was right. There is, indeed, a larger creature that spawned the monsters of the Lake District. It is **Shub Niggurath**, the Black Goat of the Woods. She grows through the centre of the Earth, reaching out tendrils to the surface. One tendril reaches to the West Coast

of the United States, another to the English Severn Valley, another to the Amazon.

And, of course, a tendril reaches to the Lake District. Tulving, having deduced this, suspects that nearby Horsefalls Wood is the tendril.

In fact, it is rather bigger. The entire Lake District is a tendril of Shub Niggurath. Over many years, this tendril has accumulated soil and rock.

Sometimes, when Shub Niggurath is disturbed in her half-slumber, she writhes and turns at the centre of the Earth. As she does, the Lake District changes subtly: hills move, rivers divert and fields become oddly angled.

So Tulving is right. He is right, too, that the box will grant him insight. For it contains an image of Daoloth, the Render of the Veils, a god who shows the world as it truly is. Perhaps, even, it is something more than an image: an aspect of Daoloth, an avatar; a crack through which Daoloth seeps, a hole through which he peers.

THE SPINE

After receiving Tulving's postcard, the Investigators find the box in an antiques shop in Golders Green.

When they arrive at Thorndike Hotel, it appears deserted. On closer inspection, they find Tulving in his room. He has cut his eyes out with a heated knife, believing it would help him see better. Strangely, Mrs Baddeley, the hotel owner, has disappeared.

Meanwhile, any Investigators who have looked in the box begin to perceive the true universe. To them, other people become amorphous humanoids. Eyes watch from corners of rooms.

Following Tulving's investigations, the Investigators come to Horsefalls Wood. There, they meet the woodlands folk, who abducted Mrs Baddeley and sacrificed her to the creature beneath the forest floor.

At the heart of the forest, the Investigators descend into the creature itself. Inside, they find Mrs Baddeley, half-digested and beyond help. The creature, they find, expects one Investigator as a sacrifice. Finally, they may realize that, given enough gasoline and explosives, the tunnels they are in will burn.

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At the end, the remaining Investigators stand on a hill in the Lake District. There, they see the entire landscape turn, like a creature turning in its sleep. The creature is larger than they could have imagined.

CLUES

Throughout the scenario, clues are presented as follows. First, the clue itself is given, then examples of how a specific skill might reveal that clue. All clues cost one skill point (except Core Clues). For example:

1. The box appears to have travelled far.

- **Accounting:** To purchase the box, Rabinowitz transferred money to a bank account in Alexandria, Egypt. However, the amount transferred has been calculated as a round figure in South African pounds, suggesting that the seller is from elsewhere in Africa.
- **Flattery:** You compliment Rabinowitz on the contents of his shop, allowing him to explain the history of the theatrical items. Finally, you edge the conversation towards the box. Where did it come from, you ask? He looks puzzled. He bought it from a gentleman in South Africa, he says. But, on the telephone, the gentleman said he had brought it from Australia.

Here, Accounting and Flattery are merely examples of how the clue might be revealed. Any skill, plausibly used, will reveal the clue. An Investigator might, for example, use Reassurance or Intimidation to get the same clue from Rabinowitz. Alternatively, you might invent a way Craft could uncover the clue: perhaps, by examining carvings on the box, an Investigator realises they come from many cultures.

In most cases, then, any skill, plausibly used, will reveal any clue. Sometimes, however, it seems implausible that a skill would reveal a clue. For example, it is hard to see how Medicine or Cop Talk could reveal anything about the box. However, if you think a skill would work, then give the clue away.

There is one exception to this rule. Some clues can only be revealed using the Cthulhu Mythos ability. In fact, the final Core Clue requires Cthulhu Mythos. Without using this ability, the Investigators will never fully understand the mystery.

Thus, to fully understand the horror, the Investigators must spend Cthulhu Mythos. This, of course, will send them mad.

Drive Yourself Crazy

One of the pleasures of Trail of Cthulhu is going mad. To assist players in doing so, use these alternative rules, which hand the responsibility for Stability checks over to the players.

Firstly, give the players the Stability Loss Table. Then, instead of calling for Stability Checks yourself, let players call for them, whenever something happens that disturbs their Investigator. Let them set their own potential Stability Losses, using the charts as guides.

To further encourage madness, ignore the usual penalties associated with low Stability: that is, when Investigators fall below zero Stability, they get no penalty to General Ability checks and can spend Investigative Abilities.

Additionally, let players have the Cthulhu Mythos Stability and Sanity Loss table.

Whenever they discover something using the Cthulhu Mythos ability, ask them to decide their own Stability and Sanity losses, using the table as a guide.

These rules encourage players to enjoy going mad, rather than resisting it. They treat Sanity and Stability loss as a pleasure, not a punishment. In an ideal game, the players will seize on every attempt to lose Stability and Sanity.

To help them, and you, the following symbols indicate a potential Stability or Sanity loss and suggest how much it should be. The symbol on the left shows a Sanity loss, while the one on the right shows a Stability loss.



For particularly nasty Mythos entities, a smaller number appears in brackets. This indicates the loss the Investigator suffers even their Stability check succeeds.

All Stability checks, throughout the scenario, are Mythos related.

Rave On

With luck, the Investigators will go insane. However, by the standard rules, they must leave the game when Sanity reaches zero or Stability reaches -12. Not only is this a disincentive, but it robs the player of the opportunity to play someone truly, utterly mad. This alternative rule, then, allows mad Investigators to continue playing.

When Sanity reaches zero or Stability reaches -12, the Investigator goes incurably mad. Get the player to roleplay this.

Yet, like Danforth in At The Mountains Of Madness, the Investigator can continue to function. They can even use Investigative and General skills. However, the Investigator cannot no longer gain or lose Sanity or Stability.

The Investigator is, effectively, finished. They are an empty shell, barely continuing to function. The player

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should retire the Investigator at the earliest opportunity: perhaps at a break in the action; probably at the end of the game session; certainly, by the end of the Investigation.

Meanwhile, however, the Investigator keeps going, powered by adrenaline and madness.

Keep Your Head

Use this optional rule when Investigators are faced with a huge Stability loss, such as the one at the end of the scenario.

When an Investigator would lose enough Stability to drive them incurably insane, they may instead choose to lose Sanity. For each Sanity point they sacrifice, they keep three Stability points they would otherwise have lost.

They make this decision after their Stability roll, whether they fail or succeed.

Thus, the Investigator retains their peace of mind, because they have seen a greater and more terrible truth.

For example: After escaping from Horsefalls Wood, Dolores Muir has Stability -2 and Sanity 6. Then she sees Shub Niggurath. She fails her Stability roll, meaning she faces a loss of 11 Stability and 4 Sanity. This would take her below -12 Stability, making her incurably insane. Instead, she chooses to sacrifice an extra point of Sanity, but retain three Stability points. Hence, she loses 8 Stability and 5 Sanity, taking her to Stability -10 and Sanity 1.

THE INVESTIGATORS

You can either use the sample Investigators provided or make your own.

If you make your own Investigators, note that Library Use and the Interpersonal abilities are particularly useful within this scenario. Also, in the interests of allowing the Investigators to go mad quickly, try disallowing the Psychoanalysis ability.

Finally, find a way of connecting the Investigators into the scenario, by building connections between them and to Jakob Tulving.

For example, the sample Investigators might connect into the scenario as follows: Rev Bowles, a friend of Jakob Tulving, and Theo Warren, a fellow patient, receive postcards. They meet with Dr Muir, whom they know is Tulving's former doctor. At Rabinowitz's shop, they meet Sister Bertha, who is shopping there and has the Bad Luck drive, and Ella McDonagh, who demands to know what is happening.

Dr Dolores Muir

Concept: Unflappable doctor to the insane

Drive: Scholarship

Occupation: Alienist

Sex: Female

Sources of stability: : Dr Agnes Waite, the other female doctor at the asylum. Patience, my daughter. Mr Manfred, a librarian at the British Museum Library.

Pillars of sanity: : The human mind is susceptible to scientific enquiry. I am older than you and know better. I am perfectly sane.

Investigative skills: Anthropology 1, Art History 1, Biology 2, History

1, Languages 2, Law 1, Library Use 2, Medicine 4, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 1, Intimidation 2, Reassurance 2, Accounting 1, Outdoorsman 1, Pharmacy 2.

General skills: Athletics 2, Driving 5, Fleeing 5, Health 10, Sense Trouble 10, Preparedness 10, Stability 10, Electrical Repair 5, Riding 5, Sanity 10.

As the Deputy Director of Caterham Asylum, you have seen every madness under the sun. Nothing surprises you any more: within minutes of meeting a patient, you have categorized them and know what treatment is best.

Take, for example, Jakob Tulving. Every five years, he relapses into mania and delusion, rambling about occult sects, ancient folklore and God knows what else. His writing, normally composed and exact, sprawls over the page. You know his mind better than you do your own.

As you grow older, your memory worsens. Often, you forget where you have put books. You misspell words that you would never have misspelled in your youth. Sometimes, in speech, you grasp for words: the other day, for example, you could not remember which meat came from a pig. You realize your faculties are declining. In your wilder moments, you fear you are losing your mind. Having always prided yourself on your sanity, this shakes you. Surely you are different from your mentally feeble patients? What would you do if your mind began to go?

Your eyesight, too, is deteriorating. You cannot read without glasses nor recognize people until they are close. You are getting older. This scares you.

These fears emerge in your manner: you are abrupt, dismissive and judgemental. You tell yourself you do not suffer fools gladly, yet wonder whether you are becoming a fool yourself.

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Rev John Bowles

Concept: Bookish theologian

Drive: Antiquarianism

Occupation: Clergy

Sex: Male

Sources of stability: Brother Vincent, a monk. Father Newell, a priest and colleague. Timothy Marr, a drinking companion.

Pillars of sanity: Knowledge leads to God. God has a plan for us. Nature is a gift from God.

Investigative skills: Archaeology 1, Architecture 1, Art History 1, History 2, Languages 2, Library Use 2, Occult Studies 1, Theology 2, Assess Honesty 2, Bureaucracy 1, Oral History 2, Reassurance 2, Evidence Collection 1, Outdoorsman 1.

General skills: Driving 5, Fleeing 10, Health 10, Sense Trouble 5, Preparedness 5, Stability 10, Explosives 5, Firearms 5, First Aid 6, Mechanical Repair 5, Sanity 10.

For you, God lies at the heart of a library. Having passed years reading in quiet rooms, you appear surprised when others speak to you. If you could design heaven, you would fill it with books and enforce silence on other souls.

Hence, when offered the position at Lambeth Palace, you accepted immediately. That was twenty years ago, and since, you have torn through the Palace Library, looking for God in books. You long to find proof of His existence, but an indication, a pointer, would satisfy you.

Like many theologians, you have more correspondents than friends. Some study religion, some do not, but all research fields related to your own. One such is Jakob Tulving, a folklorist. You have, from time to time, spent

pleasant weeks at each other's houses, engaged in intricate conversations over rough red wine. His studies have recently tended towards occultism, which, although naive, livens up the conversations pleasantly.

You look forward to hearing from him again. Above all, however, you want to know what he is studying. Jakob, you felt, was always on the edge of something significant. Perhaps he has now found it. Perhaps, through him, you can find God.

Sister Bertha

Concept: Amiable Nun

Drive: Bad Luck

Occupation: Clergy

Sex: Female

Sources of stability: Agatha, Mother Superior. Rose, my sister. Julia, a nun and a close friend.

Pillars of sanity: It all turns out right in the end. Worse things happen at sea. A bit of dirt never hurt anyone.

Investigative skills: Art History 1, Biology 1, History 2, Languages 2, Library Use 2, Occult Studies 1, Theology 2, Assess Honesty 2, Bargain 1, Credit Rating 4, Flattery 2, Oral History 1, Reassurance 2, Streetwise 1, Evidence Collection 1.

General skills: Athletics 10, Driving 5, Health 10, Scuffling 10, Stability 10, Electrical Repair 5, Firearms 3, First Aid 3, Riding 5, Sanity 10.

Funny things are always happening to you. The other day, you were in Lambeth Palace Library, talking to the librarian, who to be fair didn't seem all that interested, but you didn't let that stop being friendly, oh no, a friendly word never hurt anyone. Where were you?

Oh yes. You were in Lambeth Palace Library, talking to the librarian and then someone asked you to be quiet! Some people don't like friendly people. Oh well. You keep on smiling.

Now, to be fair, this friendliness does sometimes get you into trouble. You are always in the wrong place at the wrong time! Just the other day you left a book in the vestry and, when you returned to get it, two Sisters were kissing! Naturally, you didn't tell anyone other than a few close friends.

And you meet the most interesting people. Just the other day, in the library again, you met a nice priest called Bowles. What a coincidence, you told him. You play bowls! He did not understand how funny this was and sent you to find books.

Amazingly, one of the books was stolen! From an antique bookseller in Oxford! You recognized the stamp as soon as you opened it! So the Library had to return it and they were not happy. Things like that are always happening to you.

However, nothing funny is going to happen today, because you are only going shopping. In fact, you are off to Golders Green, to poke around antiques shops. And nothing interesting will happen *there*.

(Note: If you use Sister Bertha, she needs to aggressively push herself into the investigation. Choose a player who will do this.)

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Theo Warren

Concept: Synesthetic composer

Drive: In The Blood

Occupation: Artist

Sex: Male

Sources of stability: Jane Dartmouth, a sculptor. Martha Warren, your mother. Louis Armstrong, your idol.

Pillars of sanity: If you see it, you can make it into a tune. Touch is the only sense you can trust. Your reality is the one that counts.

Investigative skills: Architecture 2, Art History 2, Library Use 2, Occult Studies 2, Assess Honesty 2, Bargain 1, Credit Rating 1, Flattery 2, Oral History 2, Streetwise 1, Art 2, Astronomy 1, Craft 2, Outdoorsman 1, Photography 2.

General skills: Athletics 10, Driving 5, Health 10, Sense Trouble 8, Preparedness 8, Scuffling 10, Stability 10, Sanity 10.

Your senses bleed into each other. What you see, you taste. What you smell, you hear. The only way to trust things is to place your hand *sometimes you wake in the middle of the night and don't remember how you got there* on them.

So you write the music you see. You seek bizarre paintings and *sometimes you cannot remember the dream but it pulses in your head* landscapes, then write them into music. Although the London classical music set reject you, you have found refuge in the jazz scene. Their strange, living rhythms are red, purple and beautiful.

Sometimes you wake on a train and *you cannot control your thoughts you cannot control your thoughts* do not remember boarding, although you have a valid ticket. Sometimes you wake and you are standing *you cannot trust your senses* in a field, drenched in the falling *you cannot believe what you see* rain.

Everywhere you go, you carry sheet music, and often *there is a truth* scribble madly to capture a tune *there is a truth beneath it all* that flitted through your head. Often you find you are mumbling *what aren't you seeing* and people look at you in libraries *what is hiding* as though you are mad *what are you not seeing*.

Sometimes you lose control of your train of *there is a truth that you are missing there is a music behind the light where are you where are you this time*

Ella McDonagh

Drive: Adventure

Occupation: Police Detective

Sex: Female

Sources of stability: Dorothy Peto, Commander, A4 Branch. George McDonagh, father. Mrs Parker, housekeeper.

Pillars of sanity: The law. Britain. I can handle this.

Investigative skills: History 1, Languages 1, Law 2, Medicine 1, Assess Honesty 2, Cop Talk 2, Intimidation 1, Reassurance 1, Ballistics 1, Evidence Collection 2, Locksmith 1, Outdoorsman 1, Photography 1.

General skills: Athletics 10, Driving 10, Health 10, Sense Trouble 5, Preparedness 10, Scuffling 6, Stability 10, Firearms 10, First Aid 10, Sanity 10.

You love your job. When the police started taking women police officers, you knew that was the career for you. You'll never get married. If you did, you'd have to resign, and you'll never do that.

Now, if you are honest, you see your present work only as the beginning. Working for the A4 branch (Women Police), you deal mainly with children. You want more. You long for something

juicier, something you can get your teeth into. A murder. A disappearance. Anything you can investigate.

If you did, you'd do it well. Your youth gives you an impenetrable self-assurance, bordering on stupidity, that sees you through most crises. Friends describe you as bullish or pigheaded.

This self-assurance reflects an inflated opinion of your expertise. In any situation, you believe you know best, and frequently order others away so that you can do your job. Nevertheless, you are well-endowed with common sense. You may not know best, but you generally guess right.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Here are brief descriptions of the major characters in the scenario. If you need statistics for these characters, use the following for Rabinowitz and Grappa:

Abilities: Scuffling 10, Health 10

Hit threshold: 4

Weapon: -2 (Fists, expertly used)

And these for Tulving, Tom and Mrs Baddeley:

Abilities: Fleeing 5, Health 5

Hit threshold: 3

Weapon: -3 (Fists, inexpertly used)

David Rabinowitz,

Jeweler

David Rabinowitz is used to being cheated, threatened and sometimes robbed. Having seen many strange objects and stranger people, he is difficult to surprise. A soft-voiced, hard-nosed man, he exudes with an air of professional calm and courtesy.

To portray David:

- Mime picking up an object and looking at it.
- Speak exactly and calmly.
- Raise your eyebrows to punctuate your conversations.

Tulving

Jakob is in late middle-age. His hair, more grey than silver, is neatly brushed back and he dresses conservatively, in a sharply ironed white shirt and pressed trousers. Although he has no eyes, he talks enthusiastically about how well he can see.

To portray Tulving:

- Talk faster than usual and with higher pitch.
- Look intently at the players, turning towards each player as you address them.
- Gesticulate and point to things.

The last two points, of course, indicate that you can see.

Mrs Baddeley

Mrs Baddeley owns the Thorndike Hotel. She has been abducted by the woodland folk and sacrificed to Shub Niggurath. Currently, she is lying within tunnels of vegetation, with roots growing through her, being slowly digested.

To portray Mrs Baddeley:

- Close your eyes frequently, as though trying to block out the pain.
- Breathe deeply and intently.
- Tense your body.

Grappa

Grappa is an elderly member of the woodland folk. Tips for playing him are given later in the scenario.

Tom

Tom is a seven-year-old child, raised by the woodland folk. He worships the creature under the ground as most children go to church: with duty and routine, rather than conviction or passion.

To portray Tom:

- Back away, very slightly, from any player that addresses you.
- Grip your hands together.
- Look directly at whoever speaks to you.



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PART I: LONDON

Introduction

In the winter of 1935, the postcard from Jakob arrives. The writing is scribbled and wild. This, as Investigators who know him realize, is a sign he is sliding into madness, as he does every few years.

Use the postcard to bring the Investigators together. Perhaps they all receive separate postcards and meet at Rabinowitz's shop. Perhaps, alternatively, one Investigator receives a postcard and tells the others.

David Rabinowitz can be rapidly traced to his shop in Golders Green, London.

Finding Rabinowitz

Normally, finding Rabinowitz requires no Investigative abilities.

However, if your players would enjoy hunting an elusive antiques dealer, let them spend abilities to find him.

Credit Rating would locate him through society contacts; **Streetwise** would find him through underworld contacts; other abilities work at your discretion.

If you do this, treat Rabinowitz's location as a **Core Clue**.

Rabinowitz & Goldberg, Golders Green

Rabinowitz owns a small antique shop in North London, his partner, Goldberg, being long deceased. From Golders Green underground station, the Investigators thread through a maze of progressively narrower lanes, until they reach St Andrew's Parade.

The shop is curiously easy to miss. It is unclear why: the sign is no dirtier than those of its neighbours, the façade no more obscured. Yet the Investigators pass the shop without realizing it is there, before returning to find it. This elusiveness, together with the shop's outdated frontage, makes Rabinowitz and Goldberg feel unreal.

The door stands open. The windows are opaque with dirt. When the Investigators enter, a broken bell rings raucously, the tone hanging for longer than it should. It takes time for Investigators to see in the semi-darkness.

The shop is crammed with oddities, mainly theatrical in origin: a distorted Greek mask; a pair of opera glasses; a playbill for a bastardised King Lear, with a happy ending. Towards the back of the shop, however, the artifacts become occult in nature: dusty crystals, blasphemous Tarot and black mirrors of volcanic rock.

At the very rear is a dirty bead curtain, with strands missing, tied aside. In the room beyond, on a table, is a carved wooden box.

Deserted

The shop is deserted for dramatic effect: exploring an empty shop is peculiar, even threatening. There is no particular reason that Rabinowitz is absent.

However, if Investigators become suspicious of his disappearance or are reluctant to take the box without him, bring him in. The discordant bell sounds as he enters the shop. He has been negotiating the sale of props from the Royal Adelphi Theatre. Now he is here, he is happy to talk.

Like the rest of the shop, this back room is deserted. However, the box appears placed for the Investigators to collect: a scrawled note says "Paid – Tulving - To Collect".

The following clues are available from searching the shop or questioning Rabinowitz, if he appears (see Sidebar).

1. The box has travelled far.

- **Accounting:** To purchase the box, Rabinowitz transferred money to a bank account in Alexandria, Egypt. However, the amount transferred has been calculated in South African pounds, suggesting that the seller is from elsewhere in Africa.

- **Flattery:** You compliment Rabinowitz on his shop, allowing him to explain the theatrical items. Finally, you edge the conversation towards the box. Where did it come from, you ask? He looks puzzled. He bought it from a gentleman in South Africa, he says. But that gentleman, on the telephone, claimed he had brought it from Australia.

2. Rabinowitz specializes in unusual items of guaranteed authenticity.

- **Bureaucracy:** Examining Rabinowitz's correspondence, you discover many commissions for hard-to-find items. One correspondent requests a skull held by Henry Irving, presumably while playing Hamlet. Another requests an original manuscript by Isaac Newton. Rabinowitz has gone to remarkable lengths to find these items and, in most cases, has been successful.

- **Credit Rating:** Perhaps, you suggest to Rabinowitz, he could find a particular Schubert



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manuscript for you. He draws himself up. Of course, he says, obscure items are his speciality. Often, he has spent weeks in the British Museum Library, scouring periodicals to trace a particular item.

There is no Core Clue for this scene. The Investigators should either travel to the Thorndike Hotel or open the box. Alternatively, diligent Investigators might visit their correspondent's house.

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The box, fashioned ornately from dark wood, is about one foot high. Carvings cover its surface. Its design is curious: the upper section of the box lifts, like a bell jar, from a flat base.

Even before the Investigators open it, they sense that the box is calling them. It attracts their attention, like a flashlight: even when they face away, they remain conscious of it, in the corner of their eye.

They can open the box at any time. Indeed, whenever they are uncertain about something, they will know the box holds the answer. Let the Investigators open it whenever and wherever they want: on a train, in the Thorndike Hotel, in a sealed room in the British Museum Library.

Inside is a bizarre sculpture of rods and hemispheres, approximately eighteen inches high. Its shape wavers, as if it were breathing. Its geometry appears to fluctuate: the rods appear simultaneously straight and curved; the angles are too acute for the eye to follow.

Sometimes, the rods and hemispheres are dull; sometimes, they appear to gleam. Always, it is unclear which are closer and which are further away. Indeed, the sculpture appears to rearrange itself, just beyond the

Investigators' field of view. They imagine that eyes are peering at them, from between the rods, but disappear when looked at directly.

There are also illusions of size. When an Investigator looks away, the sculpture appears to flood outwards, filling the room. When they look back, it is eighteen inches tall again.

This is Daoloth, the Render of the Veils. Fortunately for Investigators, it is not fully Daoloth, but an image, projection or aspect of him. Nevertheless, it is enough to shake their Stability and Sanity. It also, instantly, gives them a point of **Cthulhu Mythos**.



After this initial loss, seeing Daoloth's image gives no penalty. Instead, Investigators have a recurring hunch that, whatever problem they are pondering, studying Daoloth will reveal the answer.

Their hunch is correct. The Investigators can examine Daoloth's image, tracing its contours, becoming lost in its geometry. This study is addictive: Investigators can spend hours, even days, discovering more and more.

Studying Daoloth grants points of **Cthulhu Mythos**, only limited by the time the Investigator spends studying. An hour's study grants one point, three hours grants two, a day grants three. Additional study, for weeks and years, is unlikely in this adventure, but would eventually grant the student limitless understanding.

And, of course, limitless madness. Remember to deduct **Sanity** when Cthulhu Mythos is learned: Sanity remains capped at 10 minus the Cthulhu Mythos rating.

Alternatively, Investigators may study the box using more conventional methods. If so, the following clues are available.

1. The box is immeasurably old.

- **Archaeology:** In the shop, you had assumed the box was of Victorian neo-Gothic design. Now, in better light, you wonder whether it is *Gothic* and therefore older. Yet even the Gothic designs are carved over others. This box is ancient.

- **Library Use:** After two days in the British Museum Library, your findings are peculiar. There are records of this box in Egypt and the Cape of Good Hope. Confusingly, however, there are earlier records of a similar box in Bavaria. You cannot trace the box's origins. It could be very, very old.

2. **Cthulhu Mythos:** This is Daoloth, the Render of the Veils.

- The sculpture portrays Daoloth, the Render of the Veils, who tears aside illusions and lets us see truly. He shows the patterns behind the universe, the geometry behind light. This is his image, his protrusion, an aspect of him. All knowledge is hidden inside.

Bigger On The Inside

A player may challenge you about the sculpture's size: did you say that the sculpture was eighteen inches high, but the box was a foot high?

Tell the player that, yes, that is what you said.



The Rending Box

Opening The Box

Do not railroad the Investigators into opening the box. They may open it wherever and whenever they like or they may leave it closed.

If they do not open it before leaving the Thorndike Hotel (below), invoke their Drives. All Drives apart from Follower apply here:

- **Adventure:** Perhaps there is something exciting in that box.
- **Antiquarianism:** That box is ancient. You would love to see the interior.
- **Arrogance:** Why are you so afraid of opening that box?
- **Artistic Sensitivity:** The box is unsettling and beautiful. What could the interior be like?
- **Bad Luck:** Damn. You have lost a shilling. Perhaps it fell inside that box.
- **Curiosity:** You are dying to know what is in that box.
- **Duty:** If that box contains something dangerous, you owe it to God / The British Empire / Science to find out.
- **Ennui:** This is tedious. Let's open the box.
- **In the Blood:** Were you sleepwalking again? Here you are, at three in the morning, standing in front of the box.
- **Scholarship:** Whatever is in that box, it is of considerable academic interest. You could make your name with this.

- **Sudden Shock:** You can't go back now. You're going to wrench that box open.
- **Thirst for Knowledge:** That box contains secrets. You must know what they are.

These are Hard Drivers to open the box: resisting costs Investigators 4 Stability points or one third of their Stability pool, whichever is greater.

But do not use these Hard Drivers too soon. First, give the Investigators the chance to open the box of their own volition. And, again, do not railroad: they may, if they wish, take the Stability penalty and leave the box closed.

All that said, the Investigators almost always open the box without prompting.

When You Look Away

Here is a trick to illustrate the size-changing interior of the box.

First, explain what is in the box, using the description opposite.

Then wait for the player to look away, probably at another player. Say suddenly and urgently: "As you look away, there is something huge in the corner of your eye". Simultaneously, put your open hand close to their face (but not close enough to make them flinch), representing the thing that has expanded into their visual field.

When they look back, tell them everything is normal size again.

Finally, as their Investigators realizes what is happening, tell them the truth: the box's contents change size when you look away.

It's pure showmanship, but for the right players, it works well.

Following

Sometimes, Investigators throw the box away. If so, it should turn up again, in a series of increasingly unlikely coincidences.

For example, if they throw the box from the train, it arrives at the Thorndike Hotel, apparently posted there. If they throw it in the sea, it washes up on shore. Sometimes, its appearance is inexplicable: perhaps, for example, the Investigators suddenly find it in a clearing.

In short, if Investigators try to lose the box, it follows them. Do not use this trick more than two or three times.

Investigators can destroy the box, but the sculpture inside cannot be destroyed.

The Suckling Pig

Once an Investigator has looked inside the box, the world begins to turn alien and unpleasant. If possible, use this scene when an Investigator is somewhere that food might be found.

On a shelf, the Investigator notices an amorphous globule, about a foot long. Oozing slightly, it is of indescribable colour: sometimes green, sometimes orange. Eyes seem to lurk inside it. To the touch, it is resilient, almost spongy.

It is a suckling pig. To anyone else, including the other Investigators, it is a perfectly normal and delicious suckling pig, with crisp skin and a rosemary stuffing. To this Investigator, it is an amorphous mass.

This scene may last a while, as the Investigators argue about the pig/blob. (For added complexity, other Investigators who have looked into the box may see something different again. For example, they may see a *rotten* pig.)

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If another Investigator eats the pig to prove it is real, let them glimpse the pig in its amorphous form afterwards. The glimpse lasts a moment: just long enough to turn their stomach.

If the Investigators do not venture near food, replace the suckling pig with a barking dog. One Investigator encounters an amorphous globule, making an indescribable gurgling noise. Other Investigators see a small barking dog.

However, if possible, use the suckling pig, because of the amusing possibility that an Investigator eats it.



Tulving's House

The white façade of Tulving's house looks on to the leafy private garden of Carlyle Square, Kensington.

To enter, Investigators must spend an appropriate ability: perhaps **Locksmith** to open the door, **Reassurance** to get a spare key from neighbors or **Evidence Collection** to find a key beneath a flowerpot. Treat this as a **Core Clue**.

The house's décor is modernqwaaaa and oppressive, with Cubist and Surrealist prints, by minor artists, jostling for attention. Scribbled notes line all surfaces and much of the floor.

This scene isn't essential: it exists only for Investigators who want to find out about Tulving before leaving London. Fill it with elements from later scenes, particularly:

- The Suckling Pig (or the alternative version, with the barking dog).
- If the players open the box, the scenes *Opening The Box* and perhaps *Spongy* or *Spongier*.
- One of the books from the Library in the Thorndike Hotel.

After investigating for a while, Investigators realize that Tulving has gone, with his books, to the Lake District. That is where the Investigators must go.



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PART II: RAVENGLASS

The Thorndike Hotel

The journey to the Thorndike Hotel is grueling. By car, it takes seven hours from London. By train, it takes ten: the Investigators change at Barrow-in-Furness, as the light is fading, then ride through the darkening Lake District to Ravenglass. In the half-light, sleet falls on the hills, which curve like folds of flesh on a sleeping animal.

Like Folds Of Flesh

The phrase “like folds of flesh on a sleeping animal” is significant because that is what they are. They are wrinkles on the surface of Shub Niggurath, whose tendril is the northern Lake District. Later, this “sleeping animal” will turn in its sleep.

Try saying this line without the players guessing its significance. It helps that, in the real Lake District, the hills do look strange and forbidding, not unlike folds of flesh. Make it sound like a throwaway description.

Ravenglass is a bleak coastal village. Five miles north, via a narrow cliff-top road, is the Thorndike Hotel. Although the surrounding landscape is desolate, it blooms with life. Even in this deep winter, birds sing. Ivy engulfs the hotel, whose pale façade seems almost to glow.

Inside, however, the hotel seems deserted. Gas lamps, on the walls, are doused. The reception seems deserted, with papers filed away. Behind the reception desk is a photograph of the owner, Mrs Baddeley, but no sign of the lady herself. If the Investigators ring for attention, the reception bell echoes through the empty building.

On a board behind reception hang room keys. Only one, that of Tulving’s room, is missing: all other guests have checked out. His room, on the top floor of the hotel, faces northward along the coast.

When the Investigators find the room, the door is open. Weak moonlight illuminates Tulving, who sits motionless at a desk, facing the window. Beside him is a cup of tea, stone cold. In the saucer are tea leaves, as though the tea had made been made carelessly and (stranger still) in the cup.

Although Tulving is cold, he is, as the Investigators gradually realize, alive. Then they see him fully, when they switch the gas lamp on or as their eyes grow used to the dimness, and realize he has no eyes.

He has cut them out. On the table lies a sooty, bloody penknife and a candle, with which he heated the knife. The sockets are cauterized, the incisions precise and his fingers bloody. The eyes themselves lie discarded on the floor.



Jakob Tulving is conscious and willing to talk: he explains, excitedly, that he removed his eyes so he could see better. Gesturing accurately towards to the library downstairs, he explains that the books persuaded him to do it.

Indeed, he can see. When he speaks to the Investigators, he turns to face them. When he moves, he navigates accurately between furniture and doorways. He points at things outside: look, he says, how the growth of the trees aligns with the slope of the hillside. Look, he urges the Investigators, at the patterns in the world.

He is absolutely insistent that the Investigators must continue his research. They must read the books! They must trace the patterns! They

must find the thing beneath the soil! Yet, whenever he begins to explain, he looks fearful, as if his mind will break if he thinks further (see *The Knowledge*). He knows the Investigators must complete his research, but cannot explain why.

Clearly, he is clinging to the last scraps of sanity: if he were a player character, he would have one Sanity point left. If the Investigators push him too far – if, indeed, they push him at all – he will lose his mind (see *The Knowledge*, below).

The Investigators may spend days in the Thorndike Hotel. They may easily discover Tulving’s books, in the hotel library, as described below. They may also discover the following.

1. The other hotel residents left while Tulving was staying.

- **Bureaucracy:** You spend a happy hour behind the reception desk, cross-referencing the guest book against the receipts. There were guests in the hotel when Tulving arrived, but they checked out rapidly. Those guests who arrived when he was here left after one night, although they were booked for longer. There are complaints of odd behavior: howls of triumph from the library, late at night.

- **Reassurance:** You make Tulving a cup of tea. He cups his hands around it, warming himself. Speaking soothingly, you ask what happened to the other hotel guests. They left, he said. There were some when he arrived, but they left quickly. They disliked his late nights and his excitement at his studies.



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2. The hotel owner, Mrs Baddeley, disappeared more suddenly.

• **Evidence Collection:**

You check the rooms of the hotel guests, but find nothing suspicious. These people packed up neatly and left. However, you find it curious that the rooms have not been cleaned. Investigating this, you find the room of the hotel's owner, Mrs Baddeley. Her suitcase remains beneath her bed, her clothes in the wardrobe. Clearly, she left without packing. Her disappearance makes you more suspicious.

• **Intimidation:** You seize Tulving by his collar. Where is Mrs Baddeley, you demand? He moans. You repeat yourself calmly. He does not know, he says. She disappeared one night. She did not say why.

3. Tulving has collected vast stores of explosives and gasoline, which he intended to use to destroy something underground.

• **Explosives:** When the morning comes, you explore the hotel grounds. At first, nothing seems greatly suspicious, until you pass the garage, where the stink of gasoline attracts your attention. Inside is Tulving's car and a stockpile of explosives, dynamite and gelignite, and drums of gasoline. When you ask what it is for, he only mumbles about destroying something beneath the soil.

• **Simple Search:** Looking for Baddeley's car, you enter the garage. Within is a huge supply of explosives and gasoline.

4. Tulving can see.

• **Medicine:** It is, of course, anatomically impossible that Tulving can see. After all, he has no eyes. Yet he faces you when he speaks. When you ask him to follow the tip of your pencil, he turns his head to do so. However impossible, you believe this man can see.

• **Assess Honesty:** You are convinced Tulving is not lying. His descriptions of the view from the window are perfect and without hesitation. He can see.



5. **Cthulhu Mythos:** Tulving can see patterns that normal humans cannot.

• You watch Tulving as he stares from the window. This man is not mad, you realize, but one step from complete sanity. His eyes trace patterns that you can only half-perceive. There is meaning to the movement of his fingers as he taps on the desk. He sees more clearly now than he ever did before.

6. **Core Clue:** The evil stems from Horsefalls Wood. (The Investigators can find Horsefalls Wood in three ways: discovering Tulving's suspicions about the wood; tracing Mrs Baddeley's captors there; or, using Cthulhu Mythos, simply following patterns to the wood.)

• **Outdoorsman:** You examine the hotel's surroundings, hoping for a sign of whatever took Mrs Baddeley. After an hour, you find flattened grass, which makes you suspicious. Following its direction, you find a clearer sign: a dead bush, the twigs

broken by someone passing. Mrs Baddeley's captors were human and several. As the trees grow thicker, the trail becomes clearer, and you enter Horsefalls Wood.

• **Library Use:** At first, you are frustrated by the lack of focus in Tulving's research. What was his objective? What was he trying to find? The books are bought with a purpose, but what purpose? Then, in a crumpled note, you find a clue. Whatever he was investigating, he believes he found it in a local wood. This wood was to the north-west, overlooked by a rocky crop. You find a map. Horsefalls Wood, you wonder?

• **Cthulhu Mythos:** There are patterns in the ground, patterns of life, like ley lines, running through the Lakes. You see it clearly now! How did you survive without such insight? The lines lead clearly away from the hotel. Obsessed, now, you follow them, gazing at the ground. Eventually, the lines become bloated and distorted, but perhaps you have followed them far enough. When the other Investigators find you, you are in Horsefalls Wood.

Library

The hotel library is a secluded room, which at one time was pleasant and welcoming. The floral wallpaper is fading, the leather on the sofa beginning to crack.

Now, however, an atmosphere of oppression and tension hangs over the room. The air seems to vibrate, like the wind before a storm. The sources of the tension are the bookcases, which Tulving has filled with his books.

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Clearly, the hotel owners allowed him to work here. Equally clearly, he took advantage of their hospitality. Scribbled papers cover every surface. Empty inkwells lie discarded. His pen lies on a coffee table, ready to be picked up again.

The books, however, are stacked neatly, almost reverentially, as though Tulving had tried vainly to impose order on them. They are tales of myth, history and folklore, dog-eared and torn, some without covers. Taken separately, they are unassuming, cheaply-printed books of local interest. Taken together, they exude power. This, then, is a library of Mythos tomes.

Now, have your players played the other Purist scenarios? If so, there is one book in the library for each scenario they played: *The Dying Of St Margaret's*, *The Watchers In The Sky* and *The Dance In The Blood*. There is a handout for each book can be found on page 28. Each has a Cthulhu Mythos clue associated with it.

Add details to make the books specific to the games you played. For example, if when you played *The Dying of St Margaret's*, an Investigator dropped a lantern in the caves, put that into the story. Perhaps, even, one book is written by a former Investigator from a Purist scenario (only use this trick once and don't let the author be traced).

If, on the other hand, you have not played the other Purist scenarios, use instead the handout for Tulving's Folklore Bestiary. This also has a Cthulhu Mythos clue associated with it.

The Knowledge

Tulving is one step from complete insanity. He can answer the Investigator's questions, but it will break him.

When they first ask, he shows extreme anxiety: perhaps his hand closes on his teacup, cracking it. Tell the Investigators

Untraceable Authors

Don't let the Investigators waste time tracing the authors, printers or publishers of these books. That is, don't let them follow the mystery in the wrong direction.

One way or another, these people are untraceable or uninteresting. Perhaps the book cover, where the author's name would be, is missing. Perhaps the author is anonymous. Best of all, perhaps the person is dead.

However you do it, keep the Investigators away from authors and publishers. (This will help your game in other ways. Authors and publishers are remarkably dull).

that their questions are pushing him closer to the edge.

If the Investigators persist, Tulving reveals any one clue above that normally requires Cthulhu Mythos or two that do not.

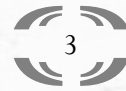
Immediately afterwards, his mind breaks. First, he drives a fist into the something fragile: a window, a teacup, perhaps a wall. Thereafter, he constantly emits a high-pitched whine, audible throughout the hotel, occasionally broken by guttural mumbling. The Investigators have sent him mad.

Spongy

Pick an Investigator who has looked inside the antique box. At an unexpected moment, perhaps when they wake or enter a room, that Investigator glimpses reality.

They see an alien world. Surfaces are slippery, rubbery and angled strangely. Thick mist half-obscures everything. Object edges align in strange, swirling

patterns, with a dreadful significance the Investigator cannot grasp. As they move through this world, there is no gravity, no sense of orientation, yet they cling to surfaces by an unknown force.



They are, of course, precisely where they were before. They are merely seeing things differently.

Turn to the other Investigators. Explain that the affected Investigator is making strange noises, sometimes a guttural hum, sometimes a keening whine. Do they investigate? If so, the affected Investigator is awake and stumbling about their room.

Then tell the affected Investigator that something new is there. Spongy, alien lifeforms are approaching, closing in on them. What do they do? (These spongy lifeforms are, of course, the other Investigators).

Now, do the other Investigators touch the affected Investigator? If so, tell the affected Investigator that they are being attacked.



If the affected Investigator fights these spongy lifeforms, run it as a fight between Investigators.

The Investigator's strange vision continues until any conflict has been resolved (for example, until the fight ends or the afflicted Investigator is restrained). Thereafter, that Investigator sees the world normally again.

Tailor this scene to the events that occur around the Investigator. For example, if the other Investigators restrain the afflicted Investigator, tell the afflicted one that spongy lifeforms

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are surrounding and attack her. If the Investigator wakes with someone nearby, they see that person as a spongy alien. And so on, to the limits of your devious imagination.

Spongier

As the scenario goes on, let Investigators who have looked inside the box occasionally glimpse the true universe. They may see another Investigator as a spongy humanoid figure. They may perceive strange angles or orientations.

Improvise these glimpses of true reality around the Investigators' actions, using the descriptions of horrific reality given above.

Rustling

Late at night, when everything is dark, the Investigators hear a rustling from the box. This rustling is Daoloth oozing into the world. An Investigator hears the rustling approaching, then feels

it creeping over them, like metallic feathers. Something crawls inside their mouth, samples their blood, then retreats.




If the Investigators interrupt this process, the thing retreats. If they try to fight, they feel only stringy featheriness, which quickly disappears. If they light the gas lamps, the Investigators glimpse a metallic collection of rods and hemispheres, receding with impossible speed.



Eyes

Investigators who have looked inside the box may also see eyes, lurking in darkness and the corners of rooms, watching them. Yet these appear only in the periphery of the Investigators' vision. When the Investigators look directly, the eyes disappear.



No Eyes

When Investigators get particularly low on Sanity, encourage them to remove their eyes. Insist that, if they remove them, they will see better. If they do remove their eyes, tell them they can, indeed, see better now, and give them a point of **Cthulhu Mythos**.



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PART III: HORSEFALLS WOOD

Horsefalls Wood

Horsefalls Wood lies three miles northeast of Ravenglass. The Investigators may walk from the hotel or take a small train, which runs from Ravenglass station to Murthwaite Halt.

At its edges, the wood is typically English and pleasant. The weak sun breaks through the trees, leaving dappled, blurred patterns on the grass. As the Investigators penetrate further, however, the trees become denser and the overhead canopy thicker.

In the heart of the wood, the trees become improbably dense. They grow close beside each other, sometimes into each other. Animals are everywhere: mice swarm underfoot, birds scream from treetops in impossible numbers. The wood bursts with life, as a goose fed for foie gras bursts with grain.

Through the wood run twisting corridors, in spaces between the trees, as though the forest were a creature and the corridors its veins. Deep within the wood, these corridors are the only way to progress. They are dark: Investigators will need artificial light.

As they penetrate deeper, the Investigators discover a crude lean-to shelter. Inside is a filthy blanket and carved jewellery (from which the Investigators may get one of the clues below). It is not a temporary shelter: it is someone's home.

Now, overhead, the Investigators hear creaking, as though a beast high above were following them. As they venture further, they hear human voices. There are people, in the trees and on the ground, following the Investigators.

Then the Investigators see a child, raggedly dressed and dark with mud, staring through the trees. If chased, the child will run, but can easily be caught.

This is Tom, a distracted, staring child of approximately eight years. He is soon joined by his grandfather, a wiry, elderly man known as Grappa. Others cluster overhead and behind trees to eavesdrop. All are wary, but all will talk.

These are woodlands folk. They are dirtily and simply dressed, with a wild, staring aspect. As they talk, their minds appear occupied with something greater, their eyes darting to the trees and forest floor. As they talk, they drool slightly, without noticing.

They speak English with a thick, guttural accent that is difficult for the Investigators to understand. It is partly Cumbrian (that is, from the local area), partly from foreign parts.

If an Investigator attempts to climb the trees, make an **Athletics** check, Difficulty 6. On a success, the Investigator reaches an ancient network of half-rotten planks, leading from tree to tree. Up here, the Investigators find trinkets and objects of worship.

Within Horsefalls Wood are many clues, which may be gleaned by questioning the woodlands folk, examining their jewellery or studying the wood itself.

1. The woodlands folk stem from far afield, perhaps Egypt or Syria.

- **Languages:** As Grappa speaks, you listen to his accent and dialect. There are, indeed, Cumbrian influences, bordering on Scottish. But there are other peculiarities: the voice is far back in the mouth; the 't's and 'd's are overemphasized; there is a greater variation in pitch than is common in English dialects. There are, you believe, Egyptian influences to his speech.

- **Art History:** Scratched into the tree bark is a hideous picture of a goat. Ignoring the content, you look at the style. There are influences from African art and perhaps Islamic art.

2. They worship something, a goat or a mother, beneath the ground in the forest.

- **Reassurance:** Keeping your voice low and your open palms visible, you assure Grappa that you had no intention of hurting the child. You were merely worried, seeing him alone. With subsiding anger, he explains that the child does not need your protection. The child is protected by its mother. As his words take a religious turn, you realize this "mother" is a creature: an all-mother, beneath the forest floor.

- **Theology:** Within a hollow tree you find a shrine. There is a scratched image of a composite animal, a bull with the head of a goat and snake-like appendages, surrounded by patterns of twigs. The focal point of the shrine is a hole in the earth. It reminds you of burial rituals you saw on an African missionary. The woodlands folk, you believe, worship something within the soil.

3. Their religion has been kept secret since ancient times.

- **Anthropology:** You cannot fathom where this religion originated. Neither Grappa's language nor the shrine's twig patterns resemble any known religion. The only similarity is with prehistoric rites, known through cave drawings in Africa. How have they kept their beliefs secret for so long?

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6. Mrs Baddeley was kidnapped by the woodland folk as a sacrifice.

- **Intimidation:** Tred of Grappa's rictus smile and insane rambling, you raise your gun ostentatiously. Where is Mrs Baddeley, you demand? He smiles widely. Oh, we took her, she says. We sacrificed her. She was a sacrifice to our god.

- **Occult:** Although the pieces are fitting together, you cannot understand where Mrs Baddeley comes into this. The answer comes as you are looking at a woodland shrine. You have encountered other religions that revere fertility, life and nature. All demanded sacrifices. That is what Mrs Baddeley was.

7. **Cthulhu Mythos:** The creature beneath is Shub-Niggurath.

- These are worshippers of Shub-Niggurath, the Black Goat of the Woods. This is where her tendrils emerges, breaking through the soil. Here, they worship her. She imbues the forest with life, greater than nature can provide, more unearthly, more fecund, more fruitful. Soon, she will grow so great that the Earth will burst apart.

8. **Core Clue:** The evil is below the heart of the forest.

- **Outdoorsman:** You follow the corridors between the trees, going where the trees seem densest. You follow the birds, judging where their song is loudest, rising almost to a scream. You follow the path of the insects. The three together, with some educated guesswork, lead you to the heart of the

wood. There, the forest floor curves downwards into four great tunnels.

- **Oral History:** You sit with Grappa, as he tells you about the forest. As he grows more excited, he spits as he talks, his language becoming less comprehensible. Indeed, some words do not sound English, but ancient and guttural. With venom and pride, he rises and leads you into the heart of the forest, where four great tunnels lead downwards.

Grappa

Grappa wears simple, handwoven clothes, filthy and stinking, and has matted, earthy hair. When he smiles, the white teeth split his dirty face like a razor slash. At first, he appears passionate; later, it becomes clear he is mad.

He willingly talks about his religion. When the Investigators use Interpersonal abilities, he reveals clues. When they uncover clues by other means, such as investigating shrines or the forest, he confirms these clues, with a half-sane religious rant.

For example, if the Investigators discover the milk in the soil using Geology, Grappa rants about it. It is her milk! It is her milk that she secretes into the soil, her gift for us, her unnatural and twisted life! The stink of milk is our reminder that one day, and so on, and so on.

Have fun with this. Rant at your players. Refer frequently to "the mother" or "the goat". Sound as insane as you can. Speak fast, almost too fast to think what you are saying, letting your pitch swing from high to low, as though you are hysterical. Focus on one player when you speak. Make Grappa's ranting sound genuinely strange and unsettling.

- **Intimidation:** You fire your gun at Grappa's feet. Shaken, he stares you directly in the eyes. You come closer, standing face-to-face. What is your heathen religion, you ask? You would not know, he says. It has been kept from you since the dawn of time.

4. The forest is impossibly full of life.

- **Biology:** The growth of these trees is impossible: they are too close together to survive. Their roots systems must intermingle, but you cannot see how they get their nutrients.

- **Outdoorsman:** This is not right. You have never heard so many birds overhead: their collective song is a discordant, continuous warble. The ground runs, like water, with insects. The creatures and plants in this wood are unnaturally charged with life.



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5. There is a sticky, unnatural substance in the soil, which smells of warm milk.

- **Geology:** You rub the soil between your fingers. It feels sticky, like clay, but moister. There is an odour of warm milk. This is not natural.

- **Flattery:** The forest is beautiful, you tell Grappa, so full of life. The song of the birds, the twisting of the trees: you are surrounded by life wherever you turn. He grins broadly and his voice rises to a shout. It is the mother, he says. She secretes her milk into the soil. You smell the soil warily. You smell warm milk.

The Rending Box

(Do not mention Shub-Niggurath, however. The Investigators need **Cthulhu Mythos** to discover that name. Admittedly, experienced players will quickly realize who “the goat” is, but they must pay an ability point for the satisfaction of hearing the name.)

The Tendril Of Shub-Niggurath

It is difficult to tell where the forest ends and the descent begins. At first, the pathways lead through the forest, then gradually descend, darkly enclosed by the canopy above. They then slope downwards more sharply, yet it is unclear whether the Investigators are descending into a dell or beneath the soil.

Slowly, however, the Investigators realize they are below ground. Birdsong, which had crescendoed to a maddening howl above, becomes more distant. Corridors become passageways, lined with moss, roots and unidentifiable vegetation.

Now, which Investigators looked in the box? From now on, those that did see everything as *horrific* and *monstrous*. Those who did not see everything as merely inexplicable: they see underground tunnels and a dying woman, but nothing definitively supernatural.

In the tunnels run rivulets of a familiar-smelling clear liquid. Its odour catches the Investigators at the backs of their throats. For Investigators looked inside the box, this is bile. For others, it is merely sap.

Ask in which order the Investigators descend: the tunnel is wide enough only for two Investigators to walk side by side. Give those leading a **Sense Trouble** roll, difficulty 5. If they succeed, they notice the passageway

twisting sharply down into a vertical drop. If not, they do not notice, and give them an **Athletics** roll, difficulty 5, to prevent their fall. If they fail, they take damage as below.

The Investigators must climb down. If they use a rope, ask where they secure it. A safe descent requires an **Athletics** roll, difficulty 6: after all, the Investigators are descending into an unknown blackness. Furthermore, everything is slippery with bile: it is difficult to find footholds or handholds.

Make it clear, before the players roll, that failure means certain injury and possible broken limbs. The first Investigator to fall breaks a leg. After their fall, this Investigator can drag themselves along to pursue the Investigation, but takes +3 to the difficulty of future **Athletics** rolls. That, of course, includes the difficulty of getting back up.

Having descended, the Investigators land on a mat of slippery vegetation. As they follow tunnels downward, they sometimes find a dead badger or fox, decomposing within the vegetation, caught in the roots.

Suddenly, the Investigators hear an animalistic cry, like a puppy whimpering. As they approach, the noise sounds more human, as if someone has just stopped crying, and is breathing shakily through the tears. Finally, in a widening of the tunnel, they see a woman.

This is Mrs Baddeley. She seems, at first, to be lying on the tunnel floor. She appears to be impaled on a root: although Investigators who looked in the box see the root *growing through her*. She appears partially decomposed but is conscious. She begs to be killed.



for seeing her for killing her

Break A Leg

Normally, Trail of Cthulhu avoids injuries like broken legs, since they slow investigations down. Here, however, they add spice to the investigation. In particular, they create an interesting decision later: if the injured Investigator fails to climb out, will they have to stay inside, to be digested by Shub-Niggurath? Will others help or abandon that Investigator?

Assistance

For the descent into the shaft, use the following rules for Assistance. They are related to the Piggybacking and Cooperation rules, from the main rulebook, but not identical.

To assist an Investigator to make a General Ability roll, other Investigators may contribute points from that General Ability. First, they must spend one point to allow them to assist. Then they may contribute ability points directly.

For this particular descent, only one other Investigator may assist and they may only contribute two Athletics points.

After all, there is a limit to how much help you can give: once someone is on the rope, they are on their own. Even if you truss someone up and lower them down, they may smash against a wall or entangle themselves on a root.

The tunnels continue indefinitely downwards. The following clues are available, although 2 and 4 are only available to Investigators who have looked inside the box.

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1. Mrs Baddeley cannot be saved. If she is not killed, she will die a slow, painful death.

- **Medicine:** Taking your lantern closer, you examine Mrs Baddeley. Perhaps, if you amputate the leg in which roots are embedded, you could free her. Then you see the thick root growing through her stomach. There is no hope. She will die slowly unless you intervene.
- **Outdoorsman:** Mrs Baddeley reminds you of a horse you once saw, trapped in barbed wire. The more it struggled, the more it tore itself apart. It made a similar noise to Mrs Baddeley, seemingly trapped and desperate for the relief of death. There is nothing you can do for Mrs Baddeley. Unless you kill her, she will die a painful death.

2. Mrs Baddeley and the dead animals are being slowly digested. Anything that remains here for more than a few hours will be similarly digested.

- **Medicine:** Although Mrs Baddeley remains alive, she strangely appears to be decomposing. Yet as you examine her injuries more carefully, you realize the decay is not in decomposition: rather, it reminds you of an acid burn you once saw. It resembles *repeated* acid damage. Perhaps it is stomach acid. Perhaps Mrs Baddeley and the creatures are being digested. If so, anything that stayed down here would meet the same fate.
- **Biology:** Mrs Baddeley reminds you a half-digested mouse you once saw, while dissecting a large rat. Mrs Baddeley and these creatures are slowly being digested.



3. **Core Clue:** Despite the dampness, this structure would burn, given a sufficient quantity of gasoline and explosives. Clearly, that is what Tulving intended.

- **Explosives:** Despite being deep underground, this place would burn well. It is not particularly damp, especially deeper down. If you placed explosives carefully near the top, then added a huge quantity of gasoline, the fire could spread deep inside. Clearly, Tulving knew what he was doing.
- **Physics:** When you stub a cigarette out, the vegetation smoulders briefly. Of course: the deeper you get, the less dampness penetrates. Your mind races. Given enough gasoline, you could start a fire that would penetrate deep into these tunnels. Given enough explosives, you could open the top of the structure, allowing air to rush in. The fire would burn deeper and deeper, drawing in air from above. You could destroy it all.

4. **Cthulhu Mythos, Core Clue:** Shub Niggurath wants one Investigator as a sacrifice. If she does not get one, she will take all of them.

- You must satisfy Shub Niggurath's thirst. If one of you is sacrificed, the others may leave. If not, she will take all of you. Thereafter, she will hunger again, but that is not your concern: the woodland folk will find others to be sacrifices.

When the Investigators have got the Core Clue, plus any others they want, the vegetation creeps towards them.

Roots pluck at their feet, as if trying to encircle them. One sharp root digs through the sole of a boot, as if trying to impale the foot. The bile runs, not in streams, but in rivers. The vegetation is trying to digest the Investigators.



(Investigators who avoided looking inside the box need not make a **Stability** roll: they merely think the tunnels are collapsing. Note, also, that these losses are less those listed in the rulebook for seeing Shub Niggurath. After all, the Investigators have not seen her in her full glory. Yet.)

If they leave one Investigator behind, the attack will stop. Otherwise, they must run.

The Climb

As the Investigators ascend, the tunnels constrict and roots curl towards them. Soon, they reach the vertical shaft.

Did they leave a rope? If so, it has fallen, now lying coiled at the bottom of the shaft. (Remember that the forest is Shub Niggurath. If they tied the rope around a tree, something has cut it; if they tied it around a root, the root has released the rope.)

The Difficulty Number to climb back up is 7. If anyone has a broken leg, their Difficulty Number is increased by 3. Use the Assistance rules, above, if you need to.

Did the Investigators leave one of their own behind? If not, the shaft begins closing. For any Investigators that climb immediately, the Difficulty Number is 7. For any that delay, perhaps to assist others, the Difficulty Number is 8. After that, the shaft closes completely and escape is impossible.

The Rending Box

If the players have clever ideas about escaping from the shaft, be flexible. For example, if they decide to hold the shaft open using a lantern pole, give them a roll to do this. This might, for example, allow Investigators a second climbing attempt before the shaft closes. Eventually, however, the time for ideas is over and the shaft shuts.

If they escape, they are free to leave Horsefalls Wood. If not, they remain inside, as bile builds around their feet and roots creep towards them.

If This Is A Tendril...

Try using the following phrase: "If these tunnels are a tendril of Shub Niggurath, burning them would seriously harm her".

This is significant because, in fact, this is not a full tendril of Shub Niggurath. It is a tiny part of it. Burning these tunnels will barely damage her at all.

Forest Fire

Once free of the forest, the Investigators look back. Will they walk away? Or will they destroy Horsefalls Wood?

If the Investigators want to destroy the forest and the thing inside, let them. The easiest way to do this is to use Tulving's gas and explosives. However, if the Investigators have a better way, let them use it.

This is the time for epic set-pieces, normally out of place in the Purist style of Trail of Cthulhu. For example, a Military character might spend Credit Rating to call in an a bomber plane. A Criminal might use underworld connections to burn the forest. A Pilot might drop a bomb from a hired plane.

Doing this will kill the woodland folk: they will not willingly leave their god, no matter what the Investigators do. Let the Investigators destroy Horsefalls Wood, but they will destroy the woodland folk, too.



Be Flexible

Throughout this final section, be open to clever ideas. If they can think of a way to evacuate the woodland folk and destroy the forest, let them do it.



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EPILOGUE: THE TURNING OF SHUB-NIGGURATH

In the end, the Investigators stand on a Lake District hillside.

Did they leave the forest intact? If so, describe a somber ending. The creature below is insatiable. More sacrifices will come.

Or did they destroy Horsefalls Wood? If so, describe an ending that, at first, is upbeat. The Investigators have made the world safer. Did they believe the wood was a tendril of Shub Niggurath? If so, perhaps they have done the impossible: they have struck a blow against the Mythos.

Ask the Investigators where they go from here. Let them think the scenario has ended.

And then Shub Niggurath turns. The hills of the Lake District, so reminiscent of an animal's flesh, are revealed as exactly that. They move, as a sleeping animal shifts in its sleep. The ground on which the Investigators stand moves too, tilting and pulling to the side. Where once the Investigators stood on a plateau, they now stand on a hillside. And everyone sees this: whether or not they looked in the box.



Whatever the creature is, it is vast. The entire landscape moves, as far as the horizon: every tree, building and hill twists and writhes. Whatever damage the Investigators did, it is nothing. It has only caused Shub Niggurath to turn in her sleep.

Finally, everything is still. The Investigators stand on Shub Niggurath, the ancient creature whose tendril is the Lake District.

No Damage

If the Investigators do not damage Shub Niggurath, she still turns. It's too good an ending to waste.



HANDOUTS

Tulving's Folklore Bestiary

The books are a curious amalgam of Lake District folklore, amounting to a bestiary. One book details bird-like creatures, which watch from the rooftops, made of body parts of other animals. Another details a monstrous, wormlike race, swimming through the soil.

The stories are bleakly hopeless. In many, the protagonists are driven mad or chased by the monsters. In one, they emerge as monsters themselves.

Cthulhu Mythos: The creatures are spawn of something greater, Shub Niggurath, who sleeps at the centre of the Earth, saturating the soil with her milk. Her tendrils grow upwards, one reaching into the Lake District.

The Watchers In The Sky

As the story opens, the protagonist is watched by birds, who stare from the rooftops. When she dissects this animal, it appears assembled from parts of other animals. Investigations lead her to a Lake District village, where the locals have facial tics, identical in every villager.

Eventually, she traces the creatures to an abandoned mine. She finds thousands of the things, all misshapen, all assembled from parts of other animals. As she descends, the creatures wake and she flees.

At the end, the protagonist returns home. She finds her husband with the same facial tic as the villagers. In some unexplained way, he has been "infected" by the creatures.

Cthulhu Mythos: The bird creatures are creatures of no name and little intelligence. They are the spawn of a greater being, that sleeps beneath the earth, its tendrils reaching upwards. One tendril reaches into the Lake District. The bird creatures are its runts, the offshoots of its endless fecundity.

Switching on her lantern, she descended into the mine. At first, there was little of note. Then she saw a creature in front of her, sleeping. The same one that had watched her? Or a different one? As she moved the lantern's pool of light, she saw many of the things, all identical, all roosting. It could have been any of them. ...

Suddenly, the air was still. What had changed, she wondered? Instantly, suspiciously, she looked at the nearest creature. Its stolen eyes were open, watching her. She looked at the others. They were all awake. They were all watching.

They flew at her. She ran, trying not to scream, trying to remember the way she had come. She felt the air rush behind her, but did not look back.

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The Dying Of St Margaret's

This first-person account begins conventionally, with the protagonist journeying to a remote island, off the Lake District's coast, searching for a lost acquaintance. This person takes a job at a girl's boarding school, the eponymous St Margaret's.

At first, the tale resembles a ghost story. It deviates, however, when the protagonist discovers an old workshop beneath the school, where their acquaintance researched ancient monsters.

Following their trail, the protagonist ventures into the caves beneath the school. There, the lost acquaintance lies crumbling but alive. The ending is curiously unsatisfying: deep underground, the protagonist sees a gaseous monster and goes quietly mad.

Cthulhu Mythos: The creature is a Colour, which fell from the stars to feed on the Earth. Textual patterns indicate the Lake District soil is particularly fertile and attractive to the Colour: it is saturated with the milk of Shub-Niggurath, who lies sleeping beneath the hills.

Turning on my torch, I descended into the workshop. It was littered with notes, books, sketches and maps. And there he was! There was his desk. I recognized his handwriting at once.

Yet, as I turned the pages, I did not understand what I was reading. Had he gone mad? He wrote of a creature, lying beneath the school, drawing the life out of the bricks and people. A chill, alien and unnatural, descended...

As I descended into the caves, the damp sand slid beneath my feet. Tunnels twisted, deeper and deeper, but I was driven to unearth the secrets below. Rounding a corner, I saw him.

He lay, moaning weakly, and his hand twitched as if trying to reach me. He was surrounded by dust and seemed insubstantial. When he lifted his hand, it crumbled. As I moved closer, I disturbed the air, and the hand collapsed completely. I knelt, looking in his eyes, not daring to move, nor daring to touch.

The Dance In The Blood

In this tale, a man travels to Keswick, a Lake District resort, where he discovers he is adopted. His natural parents are from the nearby village of Manesty. For reasons that are unclear, he also meets his siblings in Keswick.

At first, the story is a touching tale of family reunion and self-discovery. There is, in fact, self-discovery, but of an unconventional sort: the protagonist and his siblings discover themselves to be monsters under the skin.

At the end of the book, there is a ritual, in which the protagonist buries his brother. By doing this, the book explains (with rather too much expository text), the brother will join similar monsters beneath the soil.

Cthulhu Mythos: These are the Dancers, the spawn and servitors of the fertile creature under the Earth. They are her deliberate spawn, her favoured children. Their fortunes rise and fall with her heartbeat: every 119 years, they grow strong and rise to the surface.

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At first, I tried to deny what I saw. There I was, in the photograph, as a child. Yet the family surrounding me was not mine. Was I, indeed, the child of strangers? If so, who were my new family? I resolved to discover more, if only to disprove my suspicions...

I ran my knife through my brother's skin. It was surprisingly easy, like cutting cloth, and soon I discovered why: under the loose skin was a wormlike torso. As I remembered from my dream, I sliced his neck and the backs of his legs. I pushed him into the grave and heaped soil on top of him.

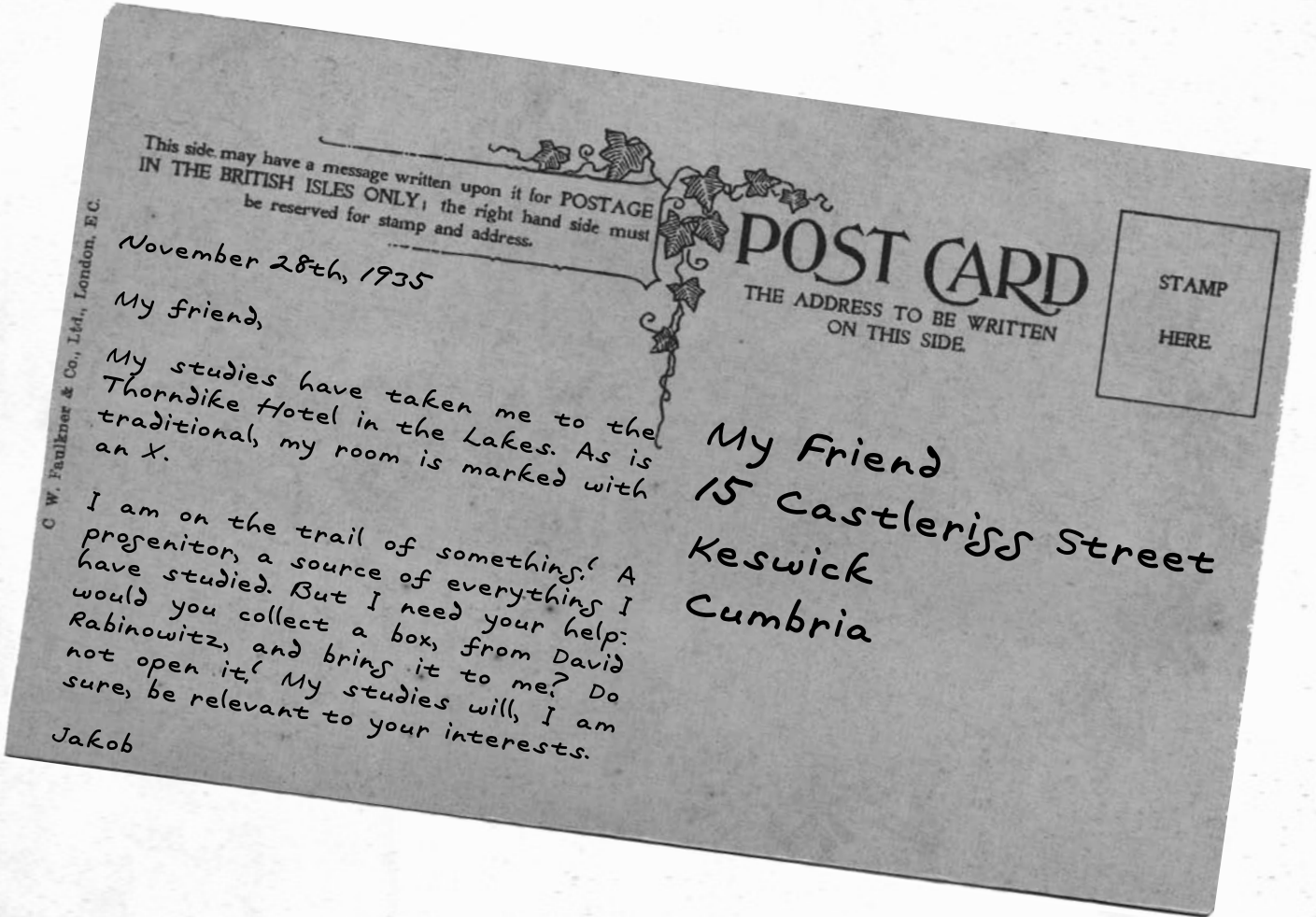
When the dancing had finished and the sun was rising, I put my hand into the soil. My brother was gone. I can only imagine he has gone to the land of my dreams. He swims beneath the soil, worshipping the thing beneath. One day, I will join him, and worship her too.

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A Postcard

This postcard arrives from Jakob Tulving.



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GM's Handy Table Reference

Stability Loss Table

Incident	Stability Loss
You see a fresh corpse; you witness a killing	1
A human opponent attacks you with evident intent to do serious harm	2
You are in a car or other vehicle accident serious enough to pose a risk of injury	2
You experience a strong unnatural sensation such as intense déjà vu, "missing time", or hallucinations	2
You witness acts of torture	2
A human opponent attacks you with evident intent to kill	3
You kill someone in a fight	3
You see a particularly grisly murder or accident scene	3
You see a supernatural creature from a distance	3
You witness an obviously unnatural, but not necessarily threatening, omen or magical effect – a wall covered in horrible insects, a talking cat, or a bleeding window	3
You see hundreds of corpses; you witness a large battle	4
You see a supernatural creature up close	4
You spend a week in solitary confinement	4
You learn that a friend, loved one, or Source of Stability has been violently killed	4
You discover the corpse of a friend, loved one, or Source of Stability	5
You are attacked by a supernatural creature, or by a friend, loved one, or Source of Stability	5
You witness a clearly supernatural or impossible killing	5
You witness or experience an obviously unnatural, and threatening, omen or magical effect – a cold hand clutches your heart, a swarm of bees pours out of your mouth	5
You kill someone in cold blood; you torture someone	5
You see a friend, loved one, or Source of Stability killed	6
You are tortured for an hour or longer	6
You discover that you have committed cannibalism	6
You are possessed by some outside force, but conscious while it operates your body unspeakably	7
You speak with someone you know well who you know to be dead	7
You are attacked by a single gigantic supernatural creature or by a horde of supernatural creatures	7
You see a friend, loved one, or Source of Stability killed in a particularly gruesome manner or in a way you are helpless to avert	8
You kill a friend, loved one, or Source of Stability	8

Cthulhu Mythos Stability and Sanity Loss Table

Revelation or Intuition	Stability Pool Loss	Sanity Pool Loss
Some aspect of the Mythos is behind this mystery; any specifics are either comfortably distant in space or time, or not immediately relevant to your larger concerns	2	0
This Mythos truth poses a clear and present danger to innocents; this truth goes deeper, reaches back farther, or has wider implications, than you previously believed	3	1
This Mythos truth poses a clear and present danger to you or your loved ones; this truth is global or epochal in scope	4	1
This Mythos truth shatters one of your Pillars of sanity :	6	2
This Mythos truth could destroy the world or is doing so right now, probably inevitably; this truth proves your Drive to be meaningless or doomed	8	3