

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

# The Watchers in the Sky

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Rydal is a real town in the Lake District, although it is a beautiful village, not a dilapidated mining community.

Further Purist scenarios will return to the Lake District. The next scenario, “The Dance In The Blood”, will uncover further creatures beneath its soil, before the final scenario reveals the mother of all these creatures.

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# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Contents

Credits.	3	Sidebar: Directed Scenes.	13	The razor and the stone.	26
Thanks and notes.	3	St Mary Bethlehem hospital.	13	The old stables.	27
Contents.	4	Edwards Laboratory, Royal College of Science.	15	The flat stone.	29
Introduction..	5	Dissection Theatre, University of Brichester.	17	Loughrigg Quarry.	29
The Adventure Structure.	5	The Watchers.	19	The chase.	31
The Missing Pieces.	6	Scene Type: Antagonist reaction.	19	Three epilogues.	32
Sidebar: Creating your own Investigators.	7	Old Library, University of Brichester.	19	Handouts.	34
The Investigators.	7	The road to Rydal.	22	Kale's crossword.	34
Clues.	10	Rydal.	22	A scientific paper.	34
Cast of characters.	10	The room on the right.	24	Further observations regarding the Himalayan expedition.	34
Scenes.	13	The moving hand.	25		
Those left behind..	13				



## The Watchers in the Sky

### INTRODUCTION

The Watchers In The Sky is the second Purist adventure for Trail of Cthulhu. As with all Purist adventures, there is no glory in fighting the Mythos, only madness and despair. Your gun will not help you; your fists will not save you; your friends cannot be trusted. The more you discover, the more the Mythos infects your mind, and the minds of those you love.

### THE ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

#### The Hooks

- In a hospital for the mentally ill in South London, Investigators find an inmate who feeds the birds, paranoid that they are watching him.
- In a scientific laboratory, other Investigators find their experiments disrupted by strange, misshapen birds, who stare from the rooftops.
- In Brichester University, more Investigators dissect one of these birds, and find it constructed from human, animal and alien body parts.

#### The Horrible Truth

Under a hill in Rydal, in the English Lake District, roosts an immense flock of misshapen birds. They inhabit a cave system, descending immeasurably deep into the earth, topped with a vast engraved stone.

Much about these creatures is unknown: indeed, it is *deliberately* unknown, as will be explained below. Some say the creatures have existed since prehistoric times; some that they are recent arrivals, aliens who flew across the depths of space. Some believe they have always been there; some argue that they return, each century, before departing for other worlds.

Nevertheless, two things appear certain. Firstly, they infect others. Instead of a brain, the creature have a black gelatinous substance, that is perhaps fungoid, perhaps cancerous, in structure, but more likely alien in origin. This substance is found, in varying quantities, in the brains of those who have died investigating the creatures. The method of infection is unknown: perhaps the substance passes through the air; perhaps it passes by touch; perhaps it transmits telepathically. Whether or not it infects the Investigators is unknown.

Secondly, the creatures are assimilators. They are constructed from an amalgam of human, animal and alien body parts. The wings of one creature, for example, might be constructed from bones resembling a human hand or ribcage. Their eyes might be those of cats or humans, but are certainly not bird eyes. The exact anatomy differs from creature to creature, so that the feet of one may be human, while those of another are unidentifiable metallic claws. This, it appears, is how they evolve, by stealing anatomies from other creatures. Indeed, the floors of the Rydal caves are littered with failed experiments, ill-assembled creatures that did not survive.

A cult has formed around these

creatures. In the old stables in Rydal, various of the farmers sacrifice animals, while the creatures gather, watching from the rooftops. After the ritual, the creatures tear the sacrifice apart, while the cultists descend into frenzied copulation. Suicides have also been known, at the great stone atop the Rydal mine, although it is never clear whether such incidents are motivated by worshipful ecstasy or despair.

That, then, is the Horrible Truth. It is a deliberately incomplete truth, as will be explained under “The Missing Pieces” below. First, however, let us be clear on the structure of the story.

#### The Spine

Before the Investigation begins, the Investigators have opening scenes with their loved ones. Various peculiarities about their bodies are made clear: a bent little finger, a fractured arm, a swelling around a wedding ring.

Thereafter, there are three potential starting points for the Investigators. Some start at St Mary Bethlehem Hospital, in South London, visiting an inmate who raves about creatures watching him. Scientifically-minded Investigators begin at the Royal College of Science, London, where experiments show mysterious results whenever the creatures roost around the building. Other Investigators start at Brichester University, dissecting one of the creatures. All these beginnings lead to the Old Library at Brichester University, where the creatures can be investigated further.

Investigations at Brichester suggest the

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky



creatures come from around Rydal, a village in the English Lake District. The inhabitants of Rydal are unwelcoming, but clues reveal the existence of a cult, apparently based around the creatures. Investigators observe the cultists at a ritual in the stables, where, watched by the creatures, the cultists copulate.

Two other events intrude into the investigation. Firstly, the inmate at St Mary Bethlehem dies, and a black alien liquid is discovered within his brain. Secondly, a young Rydal resident attempts suicide, above the creatures' roosting-place.

Finally, the Investigators descend into the creatures' lair. Some creatures are dead, their bodies showing physical peculiarities identical to those of the Investigators' loved ones. Suddenly, a flock of the creatures rushes at the

Investigators, forcing them to flee, die or mount a futile fight

## THE MISSING PIECES

Many Cthulhu Keepers will have experienced the following situation. While beginning a scenario, they build an air of mystery, creating anticipation and tension. However, all this dissipates when the players realise *what the monster is*. Once they do, the monster becomes familiar, something they have investigated, fought and conquered before. Even when a new monster is used, it can seem dull once the Investigators uncover exactly what it is.

However, Lovecraft took a different approach to monsters, giving glimpses of what they might be, but leaving

much unexplained. The Trail of Cthulhu rulebook follows suit, giving competing explanations for parts of the Mythos, without hinting which is correct. In this scenario, then, neither the mystery nor the monsters are ever quite explained. The Investigators will discover much about the creatures, but how the pieces of the jigsaw fit together is left to the players' imagination.

You should find this gives an unsettling air to the mystery. At the end of the scenario, just like Lovecraft's protagonists, the Investigators will have only a partial solution to the mystery, and more questions than answers.

For clarity, here are the known facts, the pieces of the puzzle:

- There are creatures under the Rydal hills.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Investigators

- Their brains are a black liquid, which is also found in the brains of various corpses in the scenario.
- The creatures are constructed of human, animal and alien body parts. Some of the human parts resemble those of the Investigators' Sources Of Stability.
- A cult follows the creatures.
- Young women have committed suicide near the creatures.
- The creatures are watching the Investigators.
- A mysterious symbol recurs throughout the scenario, sometimes being drawn by the Investigators, as though their hands are controlled.

Additionally, there are many teasing references to other Mythos entities, especially the Mi-Go and Shan.

However, how these pieces fit together is not explained. Particularly, the following is unexplained:

- What are the creatures?
- Where did they come from?
- How does the infection spread?
- Why do the creatures watch?
- Why do they watch the Investigators, in particular?
- What does the cult get from worshipping the creatures?
- Why do the women commit suicide?
- What does the symbol mean?

Avoid answering these questions. Admittedly, sometimes answers may seem unavoidable. If, for example, a player is desperate to know why a Source of Stability has been infected, you might invent an answer: the explanation that the infection spreads "telepathically" should suffice. However, as far as possible, leave questions unanswered.

Should you, then, admit to your players that the mystery cannot be solved? Egalitarian Keepers, who dislike

### Creating your own Investigators

Rather than using the pre-generated Investigators, the players may prefer to create their own. If so, encourage Investigators with a grounding in science or medicine. Any physicists, chemists or other researchers of the physical sciences will be based at the Royal College of Science, beginning in the Edwards Laboratory scene; any medical doctors, zoologists or surgeons will be based at Brichester University, beginning in the Dissection Theatre scene; while non-scientific types should take Abraham Kale as a Source of Stability and, hence, will begin in the St Mary Bethlehem scene. Ensure an even spread between these three types.

In creating Investigators, use the following restrictions:

- Cap Health, Stability and Sanity at 10.
- Cap Credit Rating at 6.
- Reduce General Build points to 50 and Investigative Build points to 16 (for two players), 12 (for three players) or 10 (for four or more players).

Combat abilities are unlikely to be useful, although Firearms gives some benefit, allowing Investigators to shoot the creatures. Fleeing will, unsurprisingly, be beneficial at the end of the scenario.

As with the example characters, each player should describe one Source of Stability for their Investigator in detail. This Source will be the subject of their first scene. Hence, ensure Sources of Stability are accessible (that is, nearby and able to communicate) for that first meeting. Other Sources of Stability may be outlined briefly, but will not feature in detail. Similarly, Pillars of Sanity may be described briefly, but are not a focus of this scenario.

misleading their players, might indeed tell players that answers are missing. Then, since the players know their Investigation will be incomplete, their imaginations can run riot, without your conscience being affected. Admittedly, I have never met an egalitarian Keeper, nor one who dislikes misleading players, but their existence is possible.

A crueller approach is to leave players in the dark. Imply, in your manner, that the mystery is soluble. Perhaps the Investigators missed a clue somewhere? Perhaps everything will be revealed later? Hint that the secrets of the Mythos are a few investigations away. Finally, shrug, suggesting that you would love to tell them the solution, but that the rules forbid it.

In practice, I suggest a combination of the second and third approaches. During

the investigation, imply there is always more to Investigate. At the end, admit that the loose ends were deliberately left. You may want to investigate these loose ends in future investigations and, if you do, you should cheerfully invent solutions to any of the mysteries above.

## THE INVESTIGATORS

Five Investigators, designed especially for *The Watchers In The Sky*, are described on the following pages. Each Investigator has a particular Source of Stability, shown in italics, who will appear in the scenario. Other Sources of Stability are described only briefly and play little part. Occupational abilities are marked with an asterisk.

The first scenes for these Investigators are as follows: Nurse Sally Williams and

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky

Arthur Nott begin in St Mary Bethlehem Hospital; Professor Lucas Wright begins in the Edwards Laboratory of the Royal College of Science; Dr Andrea Parker and Miss Howell begin in the Dissection Theatre at Brichester University. These scenes are described fully below.

### Arthur Nott

**Concept:** Seminary student

**Occupation:** Clergy

**Sex:** Male

**Investigative skills:** History\* 2, Languages\* 2, Bureaucracy 1, Occult 2, Library Use\* 2, Theology\* 2, Credit Rating 4, Oral History\* 2

**General skills:** Athletics 10, Driving 5, Health 10, Sense Trouble 5, Stability 8, Firearms 3, Psychoanalysis\* 10, Sanity 10

**Sources Of Stability:** *Abraham Kale*, former tutor; *Roger Mulgrave*, lover

**Drive:** Revenge

Your father made a decent amount of money in steel and expected you to follow him into the industry. However, you never felt comfortable: you felt no affinity with the blokish, overfriendly steelworkers. Your church, a high Anglican communion called All Saints, become your refuge. Eventually, the Church became your career, when you left the factory to train as a priest. When you visited the seminary in Wales, the man who interviewed you was Abraham Kale.

Although your father did not understand your decision, he did, to his great credit, support it. He would not understand your other decision, which was to take a male lover at the seminary: *Roger Mulgrave*, an older student of the working class. The seminary treated the liaison with

traditional British discretion, never mentioning it providing you kept it hidden. Throughout this, *Abraham Kale* was your tutor. Again, he never acknowledged the affair openly, but you felt he supported it, through oblique advice and unwavering support. You suspect he had similar leanings himself.

You are in your final year at the seminary, now. Your new tutor is more distant and authoritarian. *Abraham Kale* retired, on medical grounds, to St Mary Bethlehem Hospital. Today, you will visit him, the first time you have seen him since he left the seminary. What you see will spark your desire for revenge, against whatever has infected *Abraham Kale's* mind.

### Nurse Sally Williams

**Concept:** Precocious nurse

**Occupation:** Nurse

**Sex:** Female

**Investigative skills:** Bureaucracy 1, Reassurance\* 2, Biology\* 2, Library Use 2, Medicine\* 2, Assess Honesty\* 2, Credit Rating 3, Oral History 1, Pharmacy 2

**General skills:** Driving 5, Fleeing 10, Health 10, Sense Trouble 5, Preparedness 6, Stability 10, First Aid 10, Sanity 10

**Sources Of Stability:** *Abraham Kale*, a patient; *Victoria Wayling*, Sally's flatmate; *Father McGovern*, Sally's priest.

**Drive:** Curiosity.

Having worked at *Guy's Hospital* for ten years, you have learned that you generally do know best, and are prepared to tell people so. You have worked in nursing for ten years and are beginning to fit the matron stereotype better than any other. This being the

case, you are prepared to live up to it.

However, nursing can be monotonous, and you compensate with endless curiosity about patients and conditions. Recently, you covered a shift for another nurse, *Victoria*, with whom you share a flat in *Battersea*. For one wonderful day, you worked at St Mary Bethelam hospital, fascinated by the crazies, half-wits and those on the journey to one of those states. Most of all, though, you liked *Abraham Kale*, who reminded you of your late grandfather. His madness seemed tempered with lucidity: indeed, you wondered whether he was genuinely mad, or had merely had strange and disturbing experiences. Under the pretext of fetching *Victoria* from work, you visit *Mr Kale* regularly.

### Professor Lucas Wright

**Concept:** Rationalist academic

**Occupation:** Professor

**Sex:** Male

**Investigative skills:** Library Use\* 2, Bureaucracy\* 2, Intimidation 2, Photography 1, Geology\* 2, Physics\* 2, Assess Honesty 1, Credit Rating 5

**General skills:** Fleeing 5, Health 10, Sense Trouble 5, Preparedness 10, Stability 10, Mechanical Repair 8, Sanity 10

**Sources Of Stability:** *Gertrude Wright*, *Lucas's* wife, *Roberta Barry*, *Lucas's* secretary, *Mike Black*, the pub landlord

**Drive:** Scholarship

If you are honest, you had expected to get further by now. When you started your career in *Physics*, it seemed as though everything of import had been discovered. You turned to *Geology*, instead, just before bloody *Einstein* came along and *Physics* got exciting



again. Now, if you are honest, you dabble in both fields, unsure which is your speciality. You would welcome a clear purpose to your work, but are unsure what it might be.

Indeed, your personal life reflects this lack of direction. Your marriage potters along in a comfortable way: you love your wife in the same way as you do your old slippers, although refrain from expressing your feelings to her in precisely this manner. Your secretary is a friendly ear, although not, as you had hoped, a potential conquest. Overall, life should be good, but does not feel that way. Although your body is growing old, your mind feels sharp, waiting for something to latch on to.

### Dr Andrea Parker

**Concept:** Ambitious academic

**Occupation:** Scientist

**Sex:** Female

**Investigative skills:** Bureaucracy 1, Intimidation 1, Reassurance 1, Streetwise 1, Biology\* 4, Geology 1, Library Use\* 4, Oral History 1, Credit Rating 2

**General skills:** Athletics 5, Driving 5, Health 10, Preparedness 5, Scuffling 5, Stability 10, Electrical Repair\* 6, Mechanical Repair 3, Sanity 10

**Sources Of Stability:** *Lucinda Parker*, daughter; *Andrew Parker*, husband; *Rhys Powell*, mentor

**Drive:** Arrogance

It is difficult enough to be a bloody woman scientist, let alone a biologist, with the Physics and Chemistry Departments sneering about it not being a real science. If that means you need to ruffle a few feathers to get yourself heard, so be it. As a student, others advised you not to pursue an

academic career, and hence you learned not to listen to others. Students see you as harsh, which you like, although you have a soft spot for some of the younger females.

You tend not to mention your husband, *Andrew*, at work. He is a good man,

but you do not want to be seen as an adjunct to him. Your daughter, however, is the centre of your world. You remember her first words, pleased that “mummy” came before “daddy”, although irritated that “nanny” came soon after. Considering she is largely raised by *Andrew’s* mother, however, it

### Sidebar: Drive yourself crazy

One of the pleasures of *Trail of Cthulhu* is going mad. To assist players in this process, the following alternative rules hand the responsibility for Stability checks over to them.

Firstly, as Keeper, give the players a copy of the Stability Loss Chart, from the *Trail of Cthulhu* rulebook or the Keeper’s Resource Screen.

Now, rather than calling for Stability Checks yourself, encourage players to call for them, whenever something happens that disturbs their character. Allow them to set their own potential Stability Losses, using the charts as guides. Remind your group of the mental illness rules, informing them that the first Investigator to reach -6 Stability will get a mental illness. Try to make this sound like a prize: as indeed it should be, since being the subject of the mental illness rules is wonderfully enjoyable. In this scenario, the Epilogue “1953” is intended as a prize for the first Investigator to reach -6 Stability.

Since these rules emphasise the pleasures of going mad, ignore the usual penalties associated with low Stability: that is, continue to allow Investigative Abilities to be used by Investigators who are shaken, and add no additional penalty to General Ability checks.

Throughout the scenario, the players should be looking for opportunities to drive their Stability down. If they argue that the potential Stability loss should be higher than you think, you know they are using these alternative rules correctly. Each time they lose Stability, encourage them to roleplay their growing madness, particularly when they pass the thresholds of 0 Stability (shaken) and -6 (blasted).

These alternative rules will not suit every group. They will seem alien to players used to the traditional, adversarial method of the Keeper demanding Stability Checks. Nevertheless, they work well, and are particularly suitable for *The Watchers In The Sky*.

With this in mind, events that might cause a Stability Check, within this scenario, are marked with the following symbol, showing the potential Stability Loss.



When these symbols occur, ask the players whether they want to check Stability. All such checks are Mythos-related.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky

is not surprising. Lucinda is three now and precocious, taking after you.

You live for science, although, if you are honest, you live for the academic fight rather than the pursuit of knowledge. You know your field well and like nothing better than debunking the latest piece of nonsense.

### Miss Helen Howell

**Concept:** Student

**Occupation:** Scientist

**Sex:** Male

**Investigative skills:** Flattery 1, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2, Photography\* 2, Astronomy 1, Biology 2, Library Use\* 2, Assess Honesty 1, Credit Rating 2, History 1

**General skills:** Athletics 10, Driving 5, Filch 5, Health 10, Sense Trouble 4, Scuffling 4, Stability 8, Sanity 10

**Sources Of Stability:** *Mark Terry*, her fiancé; *Andy*, a tramp

**Drive:** Ennui

Growing up in Wales, in a mining family, was dull. Your future, as a miner's wife, was mapped out and, in rebellion, you studied school subjects unsuitable for a girl. Wanting greater adventure, however, you applied for a charitable scholarship, using a fabricated hard-luck story, and ended up in Brichester.

Although the first year was exciting, the novelty is now beginning to pall. You have little time for the other students, whom you find provincial and dull. Only two people have caught your attention. One is *Andy*, a tramp, who regularly tells you of his travels in return for a slice of a bread-and-butter. The other is *Mark*, another scholarship student, from similarly working-class origins in Halifax. He proposed to you

and, mainly to see what engagement was like, you accepted.

This morning, while waiting for lectures to start, you found a strange-looking bird, lying dead in one of the University quadrangles. Planning to dissect it, you brought it to the Dissection Theatre, where you found *Dr Parker*. Perhaps you should show it to her. She will either be interested or angry. Either will keep you amused.

## 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 those marked as Core Clues. For example:

2. *Kale thinks he is being watched by birds.*

- *Evidence Collection: After a systematic search of Kale's room, you find hundreds of drawings of birds, taped underneath a drawer. All the birds are similar: misshapen and black. Kale himself appears in some drawings, with the birds surrounding him. They appear to be watching him.*
- *Pharmacy: Behind Nurse Rodgers' desk you notice large quantities of insulin, marked with Kale's name. In such quantities, insulin might be used to induce a coma, perhaps as treatment for paranoia. You ask to speak to Dr Bradfield, who confirms your hypothesis: Kale has been raving about being watched by birds and the doctor has recommended insulin coma therapy.*

To be clear: Evidence Collection and Pharmacy are just examples of how the clue might be revealed. Any skill, plausibly used, will reveal the clue.

For example, instead of using Evidence Collection or Pharmacy, an Investigator

might attempt to use Reassurance on *Kale*. You, as Keeper, would then invent a way that Reassurance reveals the clue. Perhaps, instead of finding drawings or insulin, the Investigator takes *Kale* aside, and *Kale* says: "Sometimes, I think the birds are watching me".

Again: **any skill, plausibly used, will reveal any clue.** Sometimes, it is not plausible that a skill would reveal a clue. For example, it is hard to see how Cop Talk or Architecture could reveal that *Kale* thinks the birds are watching him. However, if, as Keeper, you think a skill would work, then give the clue away.

Apart from Investigative Skills, there are two additional ways clues might be revealed. Firstly, a General Skill might be used as an Investigative skill, with a single point spend: the most obvious example is Psychoanalysis, but this scenario also contains examples of Driving and even Explosives being used as Investigative skills.

Secondly, a Simple Search might reveal a clue: in the above example, if an Investigator looked at the underside of *Kale's* drawer, that would reveal the clue. In this scenario, dissection is a special kind of Simple Search. If, while dissecting, an Investigator declares that they will dissect a particular body part, they find any clue contained therein.

Some scenes have many clues. Do not feel you must reveal them all.



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Cast of Characters

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Here are brief descriptions of the major characters in the scenario. Each description contains three things you can do, at the gaming table, to bring the character to life.

You are unlikely to need statistics for these characters. If you do, however, use the following statistics for Abraham Kale, Mr Singh, Nurse Wilkie, Bartholomew Thomson and Father Vincent:

*Abilities: Fleeing 5, Health 5*

*Hit threshold: 3*

*Weapon: -3 (Fists, inexpertly used)*

Use these statistics for all other characters:

*Abilities: Athletics 10, Scuffling 5, Fleeing 10, Health 10*

*Hit threshold: 4*

*Weapon: -2 (Fists) or -1 (Improvised weapon)*

#### Abraham Kale

Abraham Kale is an old and distracted man, with white hair and a beard, both cut immaculately by the nurses. Having been in hospital two years, he is institutionalised, unsure of his own thoughts and obedient to the staff. He shuffles about in slippers and dressing-gown.

Kale's former profession changes according to the Investigator who has selected him as a Source of Stability. If you are using the Investigators above, he was a tutor at a seminary.

To portray him:

- Speak slowly, as if confused, while staring at different parts of the

room.

- Mime filling in The Times crossword.
- Occasionally display a **tic** (see "St Mary Bethlehem Hospital", below).

#### Nurse Rodgers

Nurse Rodgers is capable, although perhaps something of a bully. Like many nurses, she has ceased to see her charges as human beings, viewing them as collections of symptoms and things to be controlled. She appears kindly, although her job's routine has become habitual, rather than a matter of pride. To portray Nurse Rodgers:

- Pause before speaking, to ensure you phrase things correctly.
- Speak directly, with unwavering calm.
- Sit back from the table.

#### Nurse Wilkie

Nurse Wilkie is a fluttery, nervous girl. She is unsure whether she is a good nurse, which, of course, makes her mediocre. Out of her depth and quick to panic, she is someone you would want far away from you in a crisis. To portray Nurse Wilkie:

- Speak in a slightly high, nervous voice.
- Make ineffectual, fluttering gestures with your hands.
- Lean towards the person to whom you are speaking.

#### Dr Bradfield

Like many doctors, Dr Bradfield has no real time for others. To be fair, he does indeed have little time, which forces him to cut conversations short. He brooks no argument and expects others to follow instructions. To portray Dr Bradfield:

- Speak sentences with finality, as though attempting to end the

conversation.

- Look mainly at papers, only giving occasional eye contact to the person to whom you are speaking.
- Angle your body to the side, as if you are about to leave.

#### Bartholomew Thomson

Bartholomew Thomson is playing at academia while he awaits his inheritance. He is fashionably and fussily dressed, which does not mean he looks good: his latest affectation, for example, is a purple and gold cravat. Bartholomew much prefers the club to the laboratory. To portray him:

- Speak in an upper-class accent.
- Gesture with a mimed drink or cigarette, held in your right hand.
- Lounge back in your chair.

#### Mr Singh

Mr Singh is the librarian of Brichester University's main library. Like many immigrants of the period, he is more English than the English, dressed precisely in a three-piece suit. His adoption of the mannerisms and fashions of his new home country is, he considers, a matter of respect, not of affectation. To portray him:

- Speak precisely and formally, in a murmur.
- Make a suppressing motion with one hand, as if unconsciously urging your interlocutor to be quiet.
- Lean over the table slightly.

#### Nasmyth

Nasmyth is a farmer and has no time for outsiders. He smells of stale pipe tobacco and unwashed clothes. To portray Nasmyth:

- Imagine the person to whom you are talking smells awful.
- Speak with rasping, suppressed

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Cast of Characters

anger.

- Occasionally glance over the other person's shoulder. If questioned about this, deny you are doing it.

### Dunn

A grossly fat pub landlord, Dunn makes his antipathy clear in his face. If he does not like you, as is probable, he remains stony-faced, speaking in a manner that is technically polite and clearly disrespectful. If his dislike tempers to neutrality, it shows itself in a softening of his face. To portray Dunn:

- Speak bluntly, with a deadpan face.
- Imagine the other person is an idiot, if you dislike them, or pleasant, if you like them.
- Mime pulling a pint of beer, polishing a glass or leaning forward over the bar.

### Father Vincent

Father Vincent's caring nature has

been sorely tested by living in Rydal. He attempts to appear kind, but is no longer sure whether he genuinely feels it. To portray Father Vincent:

- Be overtly welcoming and friendly.
- Furrow your brow when you talk about difficult subjects.
- Sigh occasionally.

### Derrick Rawlings

Derrick Rawlings merely wants a quiet life: to live in his house, farm during the day and sit quietly in the pub in the evening. To some, he is a beaten man, but to himself, he is content in his simplicity. To portray Derrick Rawlings:

- Sit back in your chair, staring into an imaginary whisky glass.
- Speak quietly, as if unused to talking.
- Leave pauses as you gather your thoughts.

### Alice

There is nothing for Alice in Rydal. She is bored, ready to latch on to any deviation from the norm. Accustomed to rejecting the advances of drunk farmers, she is wary of speaking to strange men. To portray Alice:

- Answer distractedly, as though thinking about other things.
- Rarely look at your interlocutor.
- Wring your hands.

### Dr Colfe

Dr Colfe is a pathologist, overformal and easily forgettable. To portray him:

- Speak as though you have taken offence.
- Move stiffly.
- Occasionally tap the table to emphasise a point.

## Scenes

### THOSE LEFT BEHIND

#### Scene Type: Prologue

Begin with a Directed Scene (see sidebar) for each Investigator *except* those connected to Abraham Kale. In these scenes, another player plays the Investigator's Source of Stability. These Directed Scenes are a slice of life, probably upbeat in tone, in which we briefly get to know the Source of Stability.

In these scenes, ensure you mention a minor physical deformity or injury for each Source of Stability. Do this either while setting up the scene (e.g. "You're visiting your fiance in hospital. It's nothing serious, just a cracked rib.") or as an interjection into the scene (e.g. saying "Tell him your wedding ring is too tight and your finger is swollen." to a player portraying an NPC). These physical deformities are noted in bold, both here and later in the scenario.

Here are examples for the three Investigators described above who are not connected with Kale.

- Dr Parker is playing with her daughter, Lucinda, in the nursery. As Lucinda hands her a doll, Dr Parker affectionately notices, as she has noticed before, her hand. **The little finger is slightly bent**, a defect present from birth.
- Professor Wright has breakfast with his wife, tea and toast and marmalade, in their quiet house in Mercy Hill. As he attempts the Times crossword, which today appears particularly fiendish, she tells him her plans for the day. She

#### Directed Scenes

Directed scenes are used in GUMSHOE to flesh out supporting characters. The Keeper introduces the scene (e.g. "You're having breakfast with your wife"), then invites various players to portray supporting characters (for example, the wife). These scenes are fully described in the previous scenario, *The Dying Of St Margaret's*.

You can also invite players to play supporting characters in normal play. This works best when the supporting characters are friendly or neutral to the Investigators: hostile NPCs are best portrayed by the Keeper. The technique is particularly useful at the beginning of *The Watchers In The Sky*, since it gives players a role in each other's scenes, despite the Investigators being separated. For example, in the *St Mary Bethlehem* scene, below, Nurse Rodgers and Nurse Wilkie may be effectively portrayed by players, although Kale, with his many revelations, is better left to the Keeper.

To use this technique, simply introduce the scene as normal, then invite players to play a supporting character, feeding them any information they need. For example, "Would you play Nurse Rodgers in this scene? You've been taking care of Abraham Kale. He's physically well, but thinks he's being watched". During the scene, you may feed additional lines, if necessary: "Say his tic is nothing to worry about".

will go to the hairdressers, then to the jeweller to get her wedding ring loosened. Indeed, the **base of her ring finger is swollen**.

- Miss Howell is visiting her fiance in St Thomas' hospital, after he **cracked his rib** playing polo. He is comfortable, happy and chatty, although one of the nurses is rather too attentive for Miss Howell's liking.

Having met the Sources of Stability, we are unlikely to meet them again until near the end, when the Investigators will discover their role in the horror.

### ST MARY BETHLEHEM HOSPITAL

#### Scene Type: Core

St Mary Bethlehem, a hospital for the mentally ill, lies in a leafy London suburb. Well-heeled Investigators (Credit Rating 4 or higher) will drive there from London; those of more moderate means take the train, which takes 30 minutes from Charing Cross Station to Eden Park, before taking the bus for the remainder of the journey. Either way, the first view of the hospital is from the drive: a newly-constructed brick institution, surrounded by lawns and topped by a clock tower.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky

From the outside, it looks pleasant. On entering, the Investigators will be directed to the Geriatric Ward, in the East Wing of the hospital. As they navigate the corridors, which smell strongly of antiseptic and faintly of urine, it becomes gradually clear that this is a home for the mad. Screams and moans penetrate the doors as they pass. Indeed, this is the new home of Bedlam, the notorious London asylum in which, for centuries, lunatics and moral bankrupts were incarcerated. Although the site has changed, the ghosts of the old building seem to have followed to the new.

At the Geriatric Ward, Nurse Rodgers meets the Investigators. Experienced and capable, she is trailed by Nurse Wilkie, who is inexperienced, incapable and attempting to learn the ropes. Nurse Rodgers is deliberately upbeat, beginning with the good news: physically, Kale is no less healthy than before, eating well and feeding the birds. He is under the care of Dr Bradfield, who is presently doing ward rounds (i.e. visiting all patients in turn), but available for interview if necessary.

Abraham Kale himself is on the lawn, sitting on cast-iron garden furniture, enjoying the weak sunshine and completing the Times crossword. For this he uses his left hand, since his **right hand is deformed**, shattered by a bullet during service in South Africa. Kale is wearing pyjamas and a dressing-gown and appears clean and well-kempt, albeit with a wildness about his hair. Appearing lucid, he greets the Investigators, remembering their names after a mental struggle. At first, he seems forgetful but genial, making polite conversation.

Since being in hospital, Kale has developed a **tic**, which punctuates the conversation. The right side of his face tenses, as his head twists to the right. Simultaneously, he makes a hissing noise, sucking his lips against his teeth.

(If, as Keeper, you can act a different tic better or more disturbingly, use your own instead). Neither he nor the nurses have an explanation for the tic, although Nurse Rodgers will reassuringly explain that such behaviours are neither uncommon nor worrisome.

Gradually, however, Kale's polite conversation segues into raving. This happens subtly, by degrees, his utterances progressing from harmless fantasy to the clues given below. If asked about the birds, for example, he explains first that feeding them gives him pleasure; later, that he feels the birds understand him; and, finally, when the Investigators spend an appropriate point of an Investigative skill, that the birds read his thoughts.

Most disturbing of all is the Times crossword, which Kale continues to complete while conversing. At first, he solves an occasional clue, smiles, and enters the solution. Later, he scribbles more intently and vigorously, looking at the Investigators rather than the crossword, as if his hand was under external control. This frenzied writing becomes more and more obvious, until his entire arm appears disconnected, and the scribbling tears the paper. On closer inspection, he has filled the crossword with bizarre words, perhaps foreign or alien. The words spill over the edge of the grid, forming a strange, spiralling star shape.



On seeing this or having it called to her attention, Nurse Rodgers will forcibly sedate Kale, injecting a syringe into his arm. Rodgers and Wilkie drag the unconscious Kale on to a trolley, before helping him into bed. His room is tidy, almost empty, everything he values being hidden away (see the clues, below). When he revives, shortly, he will be sleepy but capable of conversation.

The following clues are available in St Mary Bethelam, either from Kale, Nurse Rodgers or by searching Kale's room, which Nurse Rodgers will allow. Remember: any plausible skill, not just those listed, will reveal these clues (see "Clues" above). For example, if the Investigators do not use Evidence Collection or Pharmacy, they can use any other skill to find Kale is being watched by birds.

1. Kale believes there is something inside his head.

- **Reassurance:** Kale leans towards you. "It's the oddest thing," he says, "But I can feel it. In here." He points to his temple. "The nurses can't find it but I know it's there. They put it there. I don't know what it is, but it's there. Once, I tried to get it out with a knife, but they stopped me."

- **Medicine:** As well as his tic, Kale has a compulsion to scratch his left temple. Looking closer, the skin there is scabbed and bleeding. The scratching movement is an odd one: he drills a knuckle into his temple, as if trying to scratch an itch deep inside. It reminds you of one of your patients who was convinced an insect was inside his brain.

2. Kale thinks he is being watched by birds.

- **Evidence Collection:** After a systematic search of Kale's room, you find hundreds of drawings of birds, taped underneath a drawer. All the birds are similar: misshapen and black. Kale himself appears in some drawings, with the birds surrounding him. They appear to be watching him.

- **Pharmacy:** Behind Nurse Rodgers' desk you notice large quantities of insulin, marked with

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Edwards Laboratory, Royal College of Science

Kale's name. In such quantities, insulin might be used to induce a coma, perhaps as treatment for paranoia. You ask to speak to Dr Bradfield, who confirms your hypothesis: Kale has been raving about being watched by birds and the doctor has recommended insulin coma therapy.

3. Kale believes that the creatures watching him are nomadic aliens, who progress from planet to planet, observing species.

- **Occult:** As Kale's paranoid ravings continue, you are reminded of a pamphlet, *Otherworldly Observers*, to which you used to subscribe. Under your careful questioning, Kale reveals that the creatures watching him are aliens. You ask him how the aliens came to be here. He replies that they are nomadic, flying through space to spy on other lifeforms. Before he can elaborate, however, Nurse Rodgers approaches, and Kale falls silent.

- **Intimidation:** Leaning close to Kale, you whisper that, if he does not tell you everything, you will recommend him for a frontal lobotomy. Although your threat is empty, he believes it. He explains that the creatures are alien, travelling between planets, gathering information on other species. When he realises his explanation only makes him sound madder, he dissolves in tears.

**Core clue:** These creatures are more fully described in the Old Library at Brichester University.

- **Simple Search:** Under Kale's pillow, you find a stash of correspondence. It is between Kale and Pritam Singh, the librarian at Brichester University.

Kale asks for information on the creatures, to which Singh suggests various booktitles in the Folklore Archives of the Old Library. The correspondence ends with Kale asking increasingly specific questions and Singh replying that Kale must visit the Library personally.

- **Flattery:** You listen to Kale's stories of alien creatures with exaggerated respect. You praise his erudition and insight. Clearly, he is delighted, and explains that his theories are vindicated by documents in the Old Library at Brichester University. Sadly, he cannot travel there, but if he could, he would prove everything.

## EDWARDS LABORATORY, ROYAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

### Scene Type: Core

The Royal College of Science's imposing redbrick and terracotta facade emphasises the college's academic stature, facing the Imperial Institute across Exhibition Road. It is easily accessible to Londoners, being minutes from South Kensington tube station.

Like the building, its research is modern and well-funded. Today, the Investigators are in the well-equipped Edwards Laboratory. Their research, which normally progresses with monotonous smoothness, is showing an unexpected result. This anomaly depends on the nature of the experiment, which, in turn, depends on the field of the Investigators' study.

- **Physics:** Before you bring the sample to the cloud chamber, unexpected tracks begin to appear in the cloud. At first, you think

they are simply background radiation, but they are persistent, and unusual in length. Moreover, they appear at regular intervals, in pulses just over a second apart, a result inexplicable in terms of radioactive decay.

- **Chemistry or Pharmacy:** Before you add the sample to the test tube, a reaction begins. Naturally, you suspect a contaminant, but after using several test tubes, the reaction still occurs. Something appears to be acting as a catalyst, but you cannot think what. Moreover, and inexplicably, there appears to be a rhythm to the effect, the intensity of the reaction increasing suddenly every second, before immediately decreasing.

- **Geology:** This morning's experiment is mundane, testing a locally-obtained graphite sample for hardness. Oddly, however, you notice a phosphorescence, which seems physically impossible in this rock. You check for contaminants, but there appear to be none. Mostly unsettling of all, the phosphorescence pulses slightly, becoming brighter, for a moment, every second or so.



The anomaly lasts approximately two minutes, then vanishes. If, during that time, the Investigators have behaved like good experimenters, attempting to eliminate whatever is causing the anomaly, they will assume their attempts have been successful. However, after an hour, the anomaly returns. This pattern, with the anomaly vanishing then reappearing, continues throughout the day.

In investigating the anomaly, the Investigators have various options.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky

They might consult the library, in the basement, for reports of similar anomalies. They might ask colleagues. Investigators of Credit Rating 4 or higher may contact colleagues through the 22 Club, a mysterious and secretive gentlemen's club for members of the College. If the Investigators require a colleague, suggest Bartholomew Thomson, who is described under "Cast of Characters", above. He agrees to meet Investigators in the exotic rooftop gardens of a newly-opened department store, Derry and Toms.

The following clues are available. There are two core clues for this scene. Firstly, the Investigators discover that the anomaly is caused by creatures perched on the Institute roof. Secondly, when they investigate these creatures, they find references to the Old Library at Brichester University.

1. Similar anomalies have been seen by scientists working in various fields throughout the College.

- **Credit Rating:** Bartholomew Thomson is waiting in the garden atop Derry and Toms. When you explain your experimental anomaly, he does not appear surprised. "It's a frightful bore", he says, as you walk through the Japanese section of the garden. "I've heard it from a few chaps. A chum of mine in Astronomy says something similar happens at night. His telescope blurs, every second or so."
- **Bureaucracy:** You catch the departmental secretary before she leaves for the day, mentioning difficulties with experiments. She shows you the agenda for the departmental meeting, which is considering complaints from two Professors over laboratory conditions. Although they work in different fields, both mention similar anomalies, with pulses

occurring just over a second apart.

2. The anomaly resembles results from studies of cosmic rays and particles.

- **Physics:** In the College library, you look through experimental journals for matching cloud chamber results. At first, you draw a blank, until you find a particularly obscure journal, the *New Journal Of Experimental Cosmic Physics*, which contains a paper on a similar phenomenon. The cloud chamber tracks, judging from the diagrams in the paper, resemble yours, and a similar pulsing effect is described. However, these tracks came from emissions from meteoric rock.

- **Chemistry:** The standard journals contain no direct reference to the anomaly. The closest reference you find is a letter in the *New Journal Of Inorganic Chemistry*, describing a remarkably similar effect, of a reaction that "pulsed" in frequency. The letter concerns the possibility of using cosmic rays as catalysts.

**Core:** The anomaly occurs when strange, birdlike creatures roost on roofs nearby.

- **Reassurance:** A gin-and-tonic loosens Bartholomew Thomson's tongue. After joking for a while, he suddenly becomes more serious: "I'll tell you what the chaps are saying, but it'll sound fanciful. Have a look out of the window." You do, but can see nothing unusual, save for some large birds on the roof of the Institute. "It's those birds. The anomaly happens when they're there. If you don't believe me, look for yourself". You do not, of course, believe him. However, the next day, the anomaly recurs. When you look, the creatures are perched on the roof. Five minutes later, you hear

a flutter of wings, and the anomaly stops.

- **Physics:** Something must be causing the cloud chamber tracks. Whatever it is, it appears, from the direction of the tracks, to be on the side of the laboratory facing the road. You clear everything on that side of the laboratory, but the anomaly persists. Idly, you wonder whether something outside is causing the effect. Across the road, you notice the Institute, with birds perched on the roof. As you watch, the birds fly off, and the anomaly stops. At first, you think it is a coincidence. However, when the birds return later, the anomaly returns. When they go, the anomaly appears to go with them.



**Core:** The creatures are described in more detail in the Old Library at Brichester University.

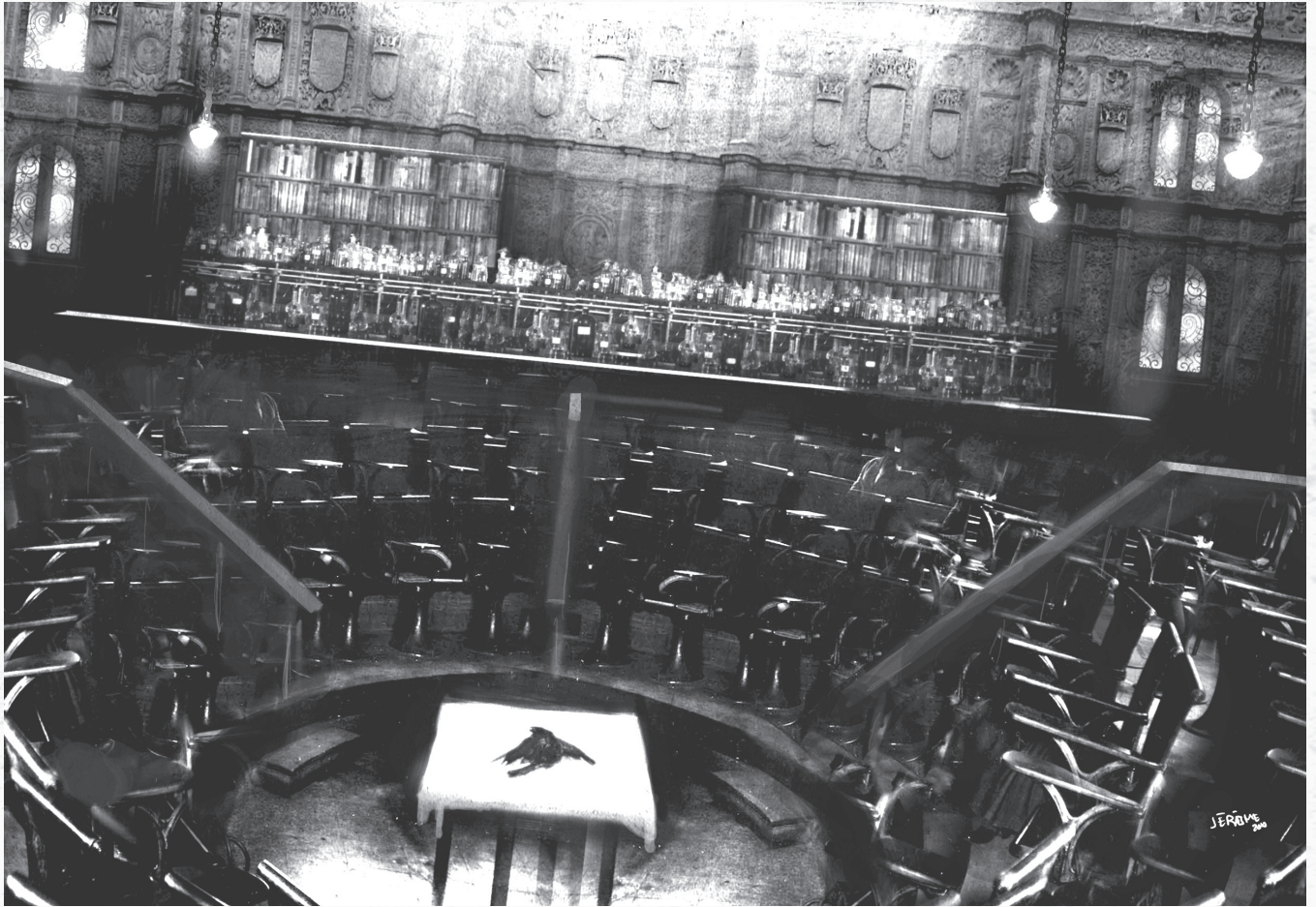
- **Credit Rating:** You ask a colleague in Biology to investigate the birds, but all he can find is obscure references to documents in the Old Library at Brichester University.
- **Streetwise:** Crossing the road, you ask the Institute doorman what the birds are. He has little idea, but calls a colleague, who explains that they are something of a puzzle. They once corresponded with the Old Library at Brichester University to investigate. There may be more details there.





# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Dissection Theatre, University of Brichester



## DISSECTION THEATRE, UNIVERSITY OF BRICHESTER

### Scene Type: Core

In the basement of the Temple Building, one of the more hideously Gothic of the University buildings, is the Dissection Theatre. It is pentagonal, five tiers of narrow wooden seating surrounding a central dissection table. It is also dim, the light from the filthy stained glass windows barely illuminating the dark and stained wood.

When not packed with students, it is also a useful dissection room, if one does not mind the jars of pickled organs, animal, human and unidentifiable, that line the walls. There

is no formal booking procedure for this room, which is hence the subject of abuses of seniority and hideous turf wars between the Schools of Medicine, Biology and Zoology. Any member of the University may theoretically use the room, although senior Professors often occupy it merely to prove they can.

Today, the room is empty save for the Investigators, although, as Keeper, you should emphasise that a senior staff member may enter at any moment. The subject of dissection is a strangely misshapen bird, found by a student lying in one of the University quadrangles. For game purposes, this student may either be an Investigator or an NPC (if an NPC, use the description of Miss Howell, above, for inspiration). If the Investigators are biologists or zoologists, the creature is a useful and exciting find; if their field is Medicine,

it is merely a curiosity.

As the dissection proceeds, it becomes stranger. The bird is of no known species. Once opened, its structure does not appear alien: indeed, it appears *assembled*, roughly, from ill-fitting parts. The eye resembles a dog's eye, not that of a bird. The organs are not where they should be and some are missing. The bones of the wing resemble, unmistakably, the bones of a human hand.



Some Investigators will think this exciting; some will find it disturbing; some will consider it a prank. The last group, however, soon have cause for doubt. On leaving the Temple Building, the Investigators find themselves

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky

watched, by similar misshapen birds, sitting motionless on the rooftops.



1. There is strange matter in the brain.

- **Simple Search (Dissection):** As you push the scalpel into the brain, a black, viscous liquid oozes out. It reeks of mould, although there is an odd underlying sweetness to the smell.
- **Biology:** Some instinct, perhaps the unnatural bulging skull, draws you to begin your dissection with the head. When you do, a black substance oozes out. It resembles caviar, partly solid, partly liquid. The Dissection Theatre fills with its unnatural, sweet scent and with the stench of mould.

2. The creatures are composed of human, animal and alien matter.

- **Credit Rating:** You hand the student a scalpel, ordering her to dissect the creature. She begins, nervously, by opening the rib cage. When she looks inside, she retches, and runs from the room. You look at the creature. It appears oddly assembled from human

and animal parts: the rib-cage appears constructed from human finger bones, surrounding lungs resembling those of a small dog. Other parts are unfamiliar and you are unable to shake the idea that they are alien.

- **Simple Search (Dissection):** You examine the rib cage. It is strangely assembled from both human and animal parts: human finger bones surrounding a dog's lungs. Still other parts are like nothing you have seen before.

3. The structure of the interconnecting tissue itself is strange, perhaps fungal, perhaps cancerous.

- **Medicine:** Although zoology is not your field, you know something is wrong here. The creature appears stuck together, like grapes held together with mould. Indeed, the connecting substance appears fungal, although it also reminds you of cancerous growths in your patients.
- **Flattery:** Having dissected the creature, you decide to get a second opinion from an acquaintance in Biology. You explain that only he has the required expertise, which makes

him willing to help. At first, he thinks the animal is a prank. On closer examination, he becomes more unsettled, and lifts some of the connecting tissue on the end of a pencil. To you, it appears to be a sort of fungus; to him, it resembles cancerous tissue. Unsettled, he throws away the pencil and returns to his office.

**Core clue:** These creatures are more fully described in the Old Library.

- **Biology:** You are not surprised that the literature in the Biology Library makes little reference to the creature. Curiously, however, a “hybrid creature” containing “fungal matter” is briefly mentioned in one paper. Although the mention is only sentence long, there is a reference to a book called *Creatures Of Hypothesis And Fact*, which, you discover, is held in the Old Library.
- **Bureaucracy:** You recall that you are ostensibly entitled to 15% of the Departmental Secretary's time, a privilege you rarely use. Insisting on this time now, you set her to work researching the creature. By the end of the day, she turns up a reference to *Creatures Of Hypothesis And Fact*, a book held in the Old Library.



## The Watchers

### Scene Type: Antagonist reaction

From now on, the Investigators are watched: not constantly, but with increasing frequency. Birds perch on rooftops and trees, still, silent and staring, surrounding the Investigators. When the Investigators move, the birds behind them fly to take new positions in front, so that the encasement remains complete.



Occasionally, the birds stop watching. They appear to make this decision simultaneously, all flying upwards at the same time. As they fly away, they form a starry, spiralling pattern, which rotates as they move through the sky. For a while, the Investigator is free from the watchers, until later, when they return.

Such behaviour may, quite naturally, provoke hostility from Investigators. If an Investigator raises a weapon, the creature targeted flies directly and silently at the potential attacker. If using a gun, the Investigator gets one free shot before the combat rules kick in. In such combat, use the following statistics for the creature:

**Abilities:** Weapons 3, Health 3

**Hit threshold:** 3

**Weapon:** +0 (beak)

Hence, the creatures may be dispatched with relative ease. If the carcass is examined, any of the clues from the Dissection Theatre scene, above,

are available. There are always more creatures, however, and they always come back.

### OLD LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF BRICHESTER

#### Scene Type: Core

In this scene, the Investigators meet. This requires coordination: cheat arrival times and locations to make the meeting possible. Perhaps the Investigators arrive together at the station; perhaps one Investigator overhears another asking for a specific archive; perhaps, while staying in Brichester, they are accommodated in adjacent rooms. By some coincidence or happenstance, the Investigators must be brought together. If in doubt, ask the Investigators to decide how they meet.

However they meet, the Investigators will have had a pleasant journey: travelling from London to Brichester, by train or car, is direct and easy. For accommodation, those of Credit Rating 4 or higher are provided with a furnished flat, intended for visiting scholars, and invited to dine at High Table, an elaborate ceremony with mediocre food and excellent port. Those of Credit Rating 2 or 3 are, if scholars, offered student rooms. These are functional, but have the enormous disadvantage of proximity to students, many of whom possess gramophones, jazz records and a liking for late night parties. Another option for such Investigators is a local bed-and-breakfast establishment, The

Swan. Those of Credit Rating 0 or 1 will be delighted to discover the library is warm and open throughout the night.

The Investigators find the Old Library centrally located within the University, inside the bleached-white main building. While researching, the Investigators spend most of their time in the reading room, which is airy, pleasant and silent. Less commonly used archives, including the Folklore Archive, are stored in filing cabinets in the basement. The librarian, Mr Singh, is formal, helpful and used to dealing with scholars of various social backgrounds. He is, however, quick to silence any readers who talk too loudly or for too long: murmurs are the correct way to converse within the library. Other readers, too, will cut short prolonged conversations, with a polite and disapproving “Please” or simply “Ssh!”.

Over two or three days of research, the following clues are available to the Investigators, either through the library or through conversing with those who know how to use the library.

1. Similar phenomena have been reported in Tibet.

- **Library Use:** A chance reference to the Institute Of Geography leads you to an article, “Further observations made during a Himalayan expedition”, in their 1816 Journal. The author, James Bradbury-Finch, reports discovering a creature “assembled of diverse parts from man and beast and from those I know not... seemingly bound by fungus”. This creature, however, is not avian, but ape-like.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky

2. Carcasses resembling those of the creatures have also been found close to Brichester, in the Severn Valley.

- **Biology:** A letter in this year's *Proceedings Of The Royal Biological Society*, from Dr Julius Bailey, discusses a specimen found dead within the Severn Valley, approximately 15 miles from Brichester. Externally resembling a large insect, the specimen proved to be a "strange contraption of bones and sinew, apparently from many animals. Had I not observed, from my window, another such creature in flight, I would have assumed the specimen a contrivance, yet I do believe it real."

3. The experimental anomaly, observed in the Royal College of Science, is strongly connected with cosmic phenomena.

- **Geology:** The geological reference section is small and contains odd cross-references to the Folklore Archive. At first you find these irritating, but later find them useful. One local legend, for example, recounts a meteorite with a similar pulsing phosphorescence. By cross-referencing with astronomical reports, you are able to date the meteor shower to within a few months in the year 1598.

4. Wherever these creatures are reported, cults have formed around them.

- **History:** In researching the creatures, you come across a book, *Creatures of Hypothesis and Fact*, which describes cults forming around flocks of birds. Several such have been reported: in the Lake District, one such cult was documented, through letters from the local priest, in 1598.

Reportedly, the cult sacrificed their daughters to the birds, who afterwards ate the offered corpse.

5. Myths regarding ravens and crows may be attributable to such creatures.

- **Library Use:** *Creatures of Hypothesis and Fact* has an extensive, if ill-organised, collection of legends on crows and ravens. Since medieval times, ravens have been reputed to guard the Tower of London. On the death of a raven, the others gather round in a "raven funeral", squawking as it is buried. A diary entry from 1816, referred to but not held in the archive, notes an instance of the ravens tearing each other apart.

6. Medieval literature, from the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries, reports similar assembled creatures.

- **History:** References to assembled creatures occur throughout medieval literature, although such creatures appear to resemble snakes rather than birds. One such creature is a cockatrice; another a basilisk; and reports differ about from which other creatures they are assembled. The books describing such creatures appear at intervals of just over a century: *De Naturis Rerum* in the 12th century; *De Proprietatibus Rerum* in the 13th; John Trevisa's translation of *De Proprietatibus Rerum* in the 14th.

7. These creatures return with a regular cycle, known as the Great Cosmic Cycle.

- **Occult:** Your research of cosmic entities is fascinating but inconclusive. However, there is one constant in your research: a reference to a 19th Century Bavarian poem, "The Great Cycle".

Written in a spiral, as a single German word, it translates roughly as follows: "They travel to the pulse of the wheel and music that turns at the heart of space as they leave and return and leave and return to the beat of the wheel as it turns as they travel". Interpretations of this poem vary, but most agree it concerns a regular cycle of visits to the Earth.

The Core Clue, for this scene, is the location of the creatures themselves. If the Investigators have a plausible idea for tracing the creatures, whether it stems from the library or not, allow it to work, giving them a suitably adapted version of this clue.

The following example clues, then, explain how various methods might successively locate the creatures. Firstly, and most simply, the Investigators might use Library Use to locate the creatures from within Brichester Library. Secondly, Geology might similarly be used to locate the creatures. The wording for these first clues is similar and can be adapted to various skills.

The third and fourth examples show how other methods might locate the creatures. The third example assumes the Investigator uses a cloud chamber, and their Physics skill, to locate them. The fourth example assumes that an Investigator is trying to drive after the creatures and, exceptionally unusually, uses Driving as an Investigation skill.

It is even possible that the Investigators find a plausible way of locating the creatures without going to the Old Library: that is, skipping this scene. If this happens, proceed directly to The Road To Rydal, below, but hint that a return to the Old Library may be useful later.

**Core clue:** The creatures come from near Rydal, in the English Lake District.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Old Library, University of Brichester



- **Library Use:** Beside the main body of the Folklore Archive are new documents, waiting to be filed. One of them is a small badly-printed journal, the *Minutes Of The Penrith Convocation*, from earlier this year. It contains a recent report on “black birds of unknown species” in Rydal, in the Lake District.
- **Geology:** Beside the Geology Section of the library are new documents, waiting to be filed. One of them is a small badly-printed journal, the *Minutes Of The Penrith Geology Society*, from earlier this year. It contains a recent report on “rock samples showing pulsating phosphorescence”, which were taken from Rydal, in the Lake District.
- **Physics:** You negotiate the

occasional use of a cloud chamber from the Physics department. As predicted, you see the strange tracks when the creatures are present. However, after much observation, you see similar but weaker tracks when they are absent. By comparing your results from those obtained in London, you are able to triangulate the origin of these weaker tracks. They appear to centre around Rydal, in the Lake District.

- **Driving:** The next time the creatures fly away, you jump in the car and follow, at top speed. You reach the countryside before they disappear over the horizon. Sure enough, they return within hours, and you follow again as they depart. They depart to the northwest: accordingly, you drive

a few hours in that direction, arriving at Preston when they return to watch again. Your chase continues for the rest of the day and most of the night, until eventually, you track them to the Lake District, in the hills near Rydal.



### THE ROAD TO RYDAL

#### Scene Type: Travel

In these winter months, the Lake District seems unnaturally dark, a state of twilight persisting throughout the day. The rain seems neverending, relentlessly beating down, while the sun is only occasionally glimpsed, weak and low in the sky. The hills are dark and alien, while the lakes appear unnaturally deep and silent.

The Lake District is remote. Remind the Investigators, before they leave, to tell someone (probably a Source of Stability) where they are going. Those of Credit Rating 4 or higher will likely drive, taking five hours from London or four from Brichester. Other will take the train, perhaps attempting to dodge payment if their funds are not sufficient. This rail journey takes approximately one hour longer, includes cold waits on the platforms of Birmingham and Oxenholme stations, and brings the Investigators to Windermere station, leaving a 15-minute bus ride to Rydal. On this bus ride, they are the only passengers.

As the Investigators approach Rydal, they are observed, the bird-like creatures staring from every tree they pass. When in sight of Rydal, a dilapidated farming community on the edge of Rydal Water, they round a corner, and drive into a flock of sheep. Investigators who are driving must make a Sense Trouble or Drive check (Difficulty 5) to avoid hitting a sheep, while bus passengers may make a Sense Trouble check to warn the driver in time. If the Investigators arrive separately, only the first must roll: all others arrive on the scene shortly afterwards, by which time the sheep's fate will have been decided. Here, assume that cars arrive before buses: if there is more than one car, the Investigator with the highest Drive pool is the one to roll.

Whether or not the sheep was hit, the way is temporarily blocked. The sheep are driven by Nasmyth, a surly and malodorous farmer. Banging on vehicle windows, he berates the drivers for their driving and the Investigators for being strangers to the area. After a minute or so of his growling, it becomes clear that **he has the same tic as Kale**. When he is angriest, his head twists to the side, and he makes an involuntary hissing noise with lips and teeth. Naturally, he becomes particularly angry if Investigators call this to his attention.

Those in a hurry will miss the following clues, although assiduous Investigators may linger to find them.

1. Any dead sheep have anatomical peculiarities similar to those of the dissected creatures, although not as exaggerated.

- **Biology:** There is something wrong with these sheep. Although their bodies are generally as they should be, pieces of their anatomy are not: one, for example, has a large bird's claw instead of a foot; another has distinctly avian eyes. You again find signs of the fungal matter binding pieces of the anatomy together.

- **Simple Search (Dissection):** As you slice into the sheep's brain, the black half-liquid matter oozes out, and the stench of mould fills the air.



2. Nasmyth's tic has developed within the past year. Others in the village share this tic.

- **Intimidation:** Nasmyth glowers at you. "T'ain't none of your business," he says, "You ask the other folk. I'm not the only one.

Came on in the past year, it did."

- **Medicine:** "I don't need no doctor," growls Nasmyth, "It ain't a disease. Some of the folk in the village have it. Started in the past year."

There is no core clue for this scene. When Nasmyth has finished talking, he continues to drive his sheep. After several minutes, he takes them into a field, and the road is again clear. The Investigators may proceed to Rydal.



### RYDAL

#### Scene Type: Core

Rydal itself is a dilapidated farming community, its buildings grey with dirty whitewash. It consists of little more than an inn, a church and a collection of houses.

The inn is named The Green Man, as illustrated by a faded sign outside. Inside, it is dark, the locals secluded in corners and barely visible. It is run by Dunn, a former miner, who initially refuses to serve anyone of Credit Rating 3 or higher. To these Investigators, a point of an appropriate skill gains the dubious benefit of being able to buy a beer for sixpence. Suitable skills, here, include Geology, to converse about mining; Streetwise to get Dunn's attention; or Intimidation to get his respect. Dunn also rents rooms, for six shillings per night, even to those to whom he will not serve drinks.

All the men in the village will, at some point during the evening, visit the pub. Father Vincent, the vicar of

St Paul's Church, habitually drinks a half of bitter at the bar each evening, holding it in his left hand, since **his right hand is deformed**. Derrick Rawlings, a farmer, sits staring into the fire, making each whisky last an hour. Nasmyth enters later and skulks at the end of the bar with a pint.

The following clues are available, either from the inn's denizens or whatever other means the Investigators invent.

1. Strange chanting has been heard, late at night.

- **Oral History:** You buy Derrick Rawlings a whisky, making your offer seem casual, and timing it carefully to coincide with his finishing the last. After a few minutes, you ask if you can join him by the fire. You leave a period of silence, then reminisce. He responds in kind, with childhood memories of climbing in the nearby hills. After an hour or so, he mentions something interesting: he is often woken, around midnight, by a strange chanting, although he cannot pinpoint the source.

- **Streetwise:** Once you use suitably foul language, Dunn becomes a little warmer, even laughing the first time you swear: "Thought you was one of them posh buggers". Over the course of the evening, he talks to you occasionally, although you learn little. Indeed, his most telling comment comes before he gives Last Orders: "Right, I'd better get this lot out and me off to bed. Not that I'll get any sleep if them buggers are doing that chanting all night".

2. Ravens have been tearing each other apart in the streets.

- **Theology:** You engage Father Vincent in conversation, debating some of the finer points of Biblical interpretation. When you reach the subject of animals, he mentions the local birds, wondering whether they are entirely natural. Suddenly, he breaks off, and looks out of the window. "Now there you are", he says, and points to two ravens fighting. As you watch, one tears the other apart, eviscerating it completely.

- **Reassurance:** Derrick Rawlings is reticent at first, but later opens up. He talks, for a while, about the local birds, agreeing there is "something wrong" about them. "You watch how they fight", he says, and points at you. Later, in your room, you observe such a fight from your window. The birds fight mercilessly, until one rips the other to shreds, eating the remains.



3. Father Vincent's wife committed suicide, two years ago, by slashing her wrists in the woods. There have been other such suicides in the town's history.

- **Oral History:** During his third whiskey, Derrick Rawlings becomes loquacious, explaining the local history. Much of his story is inconsequential, although a story of a young woman committing suicide at the turn of the 18th Century is interesting. Slightly tipsy, Rawlings leans in close. "And exactly the same thing happened to the Father's wife," he says. It emerges that Father Vincent's wife died by slashing her wrists in the nearby woods.

- **Credit Rating:** Assuming a

more refined voice than usual, you bully Dunn for information. Eventually, he warns you against inquisitiveness. "And don't you go bothering the Father," he says, "He's had enough trouble, what with his wife doing herself in. Took a razor to her wrists in the woods."

4. Some nights, an ochre-yellow light bathes the sky above the woods.

- **Oral History:** You swap farming stories with Derrick Rawlings. By the time you quote the old rhyme of "Red sky at night, shepherd's delight", however, he frowns. "What about a yellow light, though?" he says, "Don't say nothing about that, do they? You watch. A darkish yellow light, late at night."

- **Flattery:** Buying Father Vincent another drink, you affect being impressed by his intelligence. Keeping your flattery subtle, he eventually succumbs. "Ah, there are limits to what even a man of the cloth knows," he laughs, "There's a yellow light at night, a dark yellow, like ochre. Now, that doesn't look godly to me, nor man-made, and I can't explain it."

5. Derrick Rawlings is growing a beard. This is because he has mislaid his razor, which was left to him by his grandfather.

- **Reassurance:** Questioning Derrick Rawlings is not a success. He looks blank when you mention the creatures, giving only monosyllabic answers. Finally, in an attempt to tell you something of interest, he mentions he has lost his razor. It was bone-handled and monogrammed, given to him by his grandfather. He is sad about this and, with two days' growth of beard, feels scruffy. Later, Dunn

tells you to ignore this: “He’s always losing it”.

- **Credit Rating:** Although Dunn is suspicious of “posh folks”, he appreciates your money, especially when you buy an old bottle of wine from behind the bar and tell him to keep the change. He introduces you briefly to the pub’s regulars, apologising for Derrick Rawlings’ appearance. “He’s lost his razor again,” he says, “His grandfather gave it him. He’s not happy about it.”

6. The creatures return every four generations.

- **Biology:** You ask Derrick Rawlings about the creatures. Agreeing that they are unnatural, he mentions that they arrived within the last few months. Strangely, he mentions that an old family story, that his great-grandfather had seen similar creatures, “cobbled together” from parts of others, although they appeared crustacean rather than avian. There were rumours, too, of creatures four generations previously.
- **Reassurance:** At the mention of the creatures, Father Vincent looks confused. He mentions something about the parish records and, after some persuasion, agrees to show you them. Indeed, in 1816, the incumbent priest writes of “strange creatures, unnatural in the sight of God”. The records do not go back much further, although Father Vincent shows you graffiti at the back of the church, dating from many generations before, depicting strangely assembled creatures.

7. Many gravestones in the St Paul’s churchyard are dated 1697 and are of young women.

- **Oral History:** Dunn leans conspiratorially towards you. “And I’ll tell you another thing. See that church? Look at the gravestones. 1697. That’s all I’m saying. And all young women”. Later, you wander out of the pub to check the stones with your flashlight. Indeed, many young women died in the year 1697.

**Core clue:** People have been seen in the old stables at midnight.

- **Reassurance:** Derrick Rawlings looks nervous and you wonder if there is a subject he is avoiding. You ease off the questioning, then casually reassure him that the conversation is between yourselves. Later, you question him gently. “The stables”, he says, “They go to the old stables at midnight. You’ll see”. He downs the last of his whisky and leaves the pub.
- **Streetwise:** Dunn eventually acquiesces and joins you in a drink. He tells you little about the village, but mentions the stables, on which you question him. “I’m not one to tell stories,” he says, “But you go there and you see for yourself. Midnight. You’ll see them there. That’s all I’m saying”.



## THE ROOM ON THE RIGHT

### Scene Type: Floating

In the small hours of the morning, before dawn, the inn’s telephone rings. It is loud enough to wake those sleeping, although Dunn ignores it. If answered, the voice on the other end is Nurse Rodgers, of St Mary Bethlem Hospital. Kale, she says, is dying, and has an important message for those that know him.

The journey back to St Mary Bethlehem takes several hours. Neither Nurse Rodgers nor Dr Bateman are not on duty, but Nurse Wilkie is: she is busy and flustered, however, and hastily directs the Investigators to the basement, to the first room on the right. Stone steps lead to this basement, which is dimly lit. The room on the right is unmarked and, again, dimly lit.

In the room, Kale lies on a bed. Investigators whose Stability is less than zero will hear him call, almost inaudibly, or see him beckon. As the Investigators draw closer, they see his chest is open, exposing his rib cage. An overhead lamp, still warm from earlier use, can be turned on to illuminate the scene. Kale is, of course, dead. It is clearly him, since **his shattered hand is visible**, and this is his post-mortem. If Kale is a Source of Stability, this leads to a 5-point Stability check; if not, a 3-point Stability check.



The pathologist, Dr Jeremy Colfe, interrupts the investigators. Initially, he tells them to get out; quickly, however, he calms down, and is willing to discuss Kale. A point spend from an appropriate skill (perhaps Medicine, Intimidation or Credit Rating) may be used to access the body directly. Nurse Wilkie, too, is



## The Moving Hand

willing to talk and let the Investigators inspect Kale's room. If asked why she directed the Investigators to the post-mortem room, she explains she had thought they were undertakers or doctors.

Note, of course, that this scene may play out rather differently. If Investigators covered their tracks, so they could not be traced to The Green Man, there will be no telephone call. Similarly, if the Investigators stay elsewhere, there may be unable to receive a telephone call. If the telephone call is not received, the Investigators merely see Kale's obituary in *The Times*. They may still visit the post-mortem room, but his death will not be a surprise.

From various sources, the following clues are available.

1. There is a black substance in Kale's brain, identical to that in the brains of the creatures.

- **Medicine:** As you cut into the superolateral orbital craniotomy incision line, the black liquid bubbles out, more of it than you have ever seen before, spurting over your hand. The pathology room fills with its sweet, mouldy smell.
- **Credit Rating:** You direct Dr Colfe to cut into the brain. He does so, then stands frozen. You ask him what is wrong, but he does not respond. The room fills with the smell of sweet mould. Edging around him, you see he is staring at his hands, now covered in the black liquid.

2. Kale believed the creatures have lived under the earth since prehistoric times.

- **Geology:** Strangely, Kale's room contains a book you recognise, *Variiegated Strata of the Cretaceous*

*Era*, a textbook of dubious merit. Kale has annotated it extensively and madly, adding drawings of the creatures. In his interpretation of the fossil record, the creatures have been present on the Earth since prehistoric times.

- **Reassurance:** Nurse Wilkie is pale and distracted. Sitting her down with a cup of tea, you ask about Kale's final moments in the hospital. She appears frightened, and explains he had become obsessed with the birds, explaining that the "creatures" had been here "since before the Dawn of Man, since before the Dinosaurs, since the Sun was dark and lifeless". Again, there is no core clue, and the Investigators are expected simply to return to Rydal.



## THE MOVING HAND

### Scene Type: Antagonist reaction:

Against their will, the Investigators' hands begin to draw the spiralling star symbol. As Keeper, you may choose when this phenomenon shows itself, but it is particularly appropriate if an Investigator is alone, and especially if they write something.



Here are some examples of how this might occur in the game. In the first two examples, a player has told the Keeper that they are writing something: in the first example, a chalk mark, to prevent getting lost;

in the second, a journal entry. In both cases, the Keeper uses the opportunity to take control of their hands. In the third example, the Keeper announces the drawing of the symbol when the Investigator is alone, although they have not chosen to write.

- As the mining tunnel deepens, you mark the wall with chalk, so that you can find your way back. However, something feels wrong, and your eyes are drawn back to the mark you have made. Without thinking, you have drawn a strange spiralling star shape: the same shape as the birds formed as they flew overhead.
- In your cramped room in the Green Man, you take out your journal. You lose yourself in writing the day's events, the words flowing without thinking. After an hour, you turn back the pages to read back what you have written. On the third page is a symbol, which you have no memory of drawing. It is the spiralling star symbol, the same shape as the birds made when they flew overhead.
- Derrick Rawlings rises, leaving you alone by the fire in the Green Man. You look first into the flames, then at the last of your whisky. The glass is moving. Indeed, your hand is moving, and you are scratching the table with the glass. As you watch, your scratching forms a pattern: a spiralling star shape, exactly like the pattern formed by the birds as they flew overhead.

A Scuffling check, against a Difficulty Number of 6, allows an Investigator to restrain themselves from writing. Other Investigators may assist, using the normal rules for assisting. The urge to write lasts approximately a minute, before fading.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky



Use this episode twice or three times: if repeated more, it will start to lose its effect.

## THE RAZOR AND THE STONE

### Scene Type: Antagonist reaction

Father Vincent lives in a small house adjacent to St Paul's church, with his sixteen-year-old daughter, Alice. She has stolen Derrick Rawlings' cut-throat razor, which she now keeps under her bed. One midnight, she dresses in her best clothes, which she normally only wears on Sundays. Taking the razor, she walks into the woods. Serendipitously,

an Investigator will see her leaving, perhaps from the inn window.

What happens next depends on the Investigators. If they do not interfere, she walks to the flat stone in the woods and cuts her wrists. As she bleeds to death, her blood runs along the carvings on the stone. It soon disappears, the stone absorbing the blood as if porous.

A point of a suitable skill, such as Reassurance, will make Alice stop and talk, revealing one of the clues below. She **has the same tic as Kale and Nasmyth**. After talking, she will promise to return to bed, although Assess Honesty reveals she is lying. She intends simply to return to her room, wait an hour, then go to the woods and kill herself. Another skill point stops her plans of suicide entirely.

Alternatively, the Investigators might chase her: run this as a Contest, her Fleeing against the Investigators' Athletics. Use the generic statistics given under "Cast of Characters", above. Additionally or instead, they might physically restrain her: for this, run a Contest of her Scuffling against the Investigators' Scuffling). Alice will not attack. If the Investigators lose either Contest, Alice runs ahead and commits suicide.

Most of the following clues are available either from Alice directly or, after her suicide, from her father or her diaries, which she keeps hidden inside her pillow. The last clue, of course, is only available by dissecting Alice.

1. Alice believes that the creatures can, at will, control her actions.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Old Stables

- **Reassurance:** Alice stares at you blankly, her voice shaking as she speaks. "I can't help it. They're making me go. The creatures. I can't stop them."

- **Evidence Collection:** Your systematic search of Alice's room reveals a diary, hidden inside her pillow. It is filled with drawings of the now-familiar spiralling star shape. In the diary, she writes of an unhappy life, believing she is controlled by the creatures: "They can make me do what they want."

2. She believes they came to the Earth, first from elsewhere in the Solar System, and previously from the depths of space. They will soon leave. They visit according to the "Great Cosmic Cycle".

- **Simple Search:** You search inside Alice's pillow, finding a diary hidden inside the pillowcase. One entry particularly intrigues you: inside a large spiral shape, she writes of the creatures' journey from the depths of space, to the outer Solar System, and finally to Earth. They will leave soon, but return according to the "Great Cosmic Cycle".

- **Reassurance:** Father Vincent sits on the sofa, nearly motionless, his words coming out without feeling. "She talked about such strange things, things I didn't understand," he says. "There were creatures, travelling through space. First they arrived elsewhere in the Solar System, then they came here. She kept talking about a cycle: a Cosmic Cycle? They visit the Earth and leave again."

3. There is a black substance in Alice's brain, identical to that in the brains of the creatures.

- **Biology:** As you cut into Alice's

skull, the familiar black liquid flows out, dripping on to the flat stone. It lingers a while, then soaks away into the stone.

Again, there is no core clue for this scene.

## THE OLD STABLES

### Scene Type: Core

At midnight - not every midnight, but on the midnight the Investigators happen to be there - the cultists meet in the old stables. The stables are overgrown, the grass growing through the paving slabs, the buildings crumbling as tree roots push them apart. If the Investigators wish to hide and observe, they may do so without fear of being noticed.

There are eight cultists, including Nasmyth. They form a circle in the courtyard, their faces covered. They chant, in Latin, while an animal is spreadeagled and restrained. Using kitchen knives, they slit the animal's throat, and watch as it bleeds to death. By now, their chanting has turned into singing, their thin voices carrying in the night air. An ochre light begins to bathe the sky, emanating from the surrounding area, but without an exact source.

The birdlike creatures now begin to gather on the stable roofs: if the Investigators are there also, the creatures ignore them, but do not perch near them. As the creatures watch, each cultist slices a piece from the dying animal and eats it. They take a second slice, feeding it to another cultist. A third slice is thrown upwards, to be consumed by the creatures. The cultists remove their bloody clothes and copulate as the creatures watch. When this is over, the creatures simultaneously take to the sky, while

the cultists depart in silence, returning to their homes.

If the Investigators approach the cultists, at any time, their reaction resembles that of someone woken while sleepwalking. Hence, if approached before the ritual, they do not know why they are walking in the woods. If approached during the ritual, they realise, with horror, what they are doing: they may flee, scream or cry. If approached afterwards, they do not remember walking in the woods, and are secretly appalled at waking covered in blood: although, of course, it has happened before.

The following clues are available:

1. The ritual is not occult in nature, but a strange amalgam of half-remembered church services, nursery rhymes and football chants. It has no discernible purpose.

- **Occult:** This ritual is like no occult ritual you have encountered. In fact, you are gradually sure that it is simply not occult. It is something far stranger: an incoherent mix of church rituals, nursery rhymes and dance steps. At one point, the cultists dance in a circle, holding hands, before falling down, as in the nursery rhyme "Ring-a-ring-a-roses". Later, they cross themselves. It is a meaningless jumble of other rituals.

- **Theology:** The rituals remind you of Church rituals, but from various denominations, and jumbled together, without any sense. At one point, the cultists genuflect, before dancing around in a circle. Later, they chant the Nicene Creed while stamping. It is blasphemous and meaningless. More oddly still, it contains elements of nursery rhymes and football chants.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky

- **Anthropology:** This ritual is not a local one, but a jumble of misunderstood nursery rhymes and Church rituals. Indeed, as you watch, you cannot understand how it could have developed. You can explain it best with an analogy: if a uncomprehending watcher took elements from group activities and threw them together blindly, you might get this ritual.

2. The ochre light is an unexplained astronomical event, seen occasionally for a few months, at intervals of just over a century.

- **Astronomy:** When you return to The Green Man, a call to a colleague confirms your suspicion. This ochre light is a known astronomical oddity, normally

reported by amateur astronomers in remote areas. In every recent century but the 18th, it appears occasionally for a few weeks, always at midnight.

- **Occult:** You remember mention of an ochre light in one of the more obscure publications to which you subscribe. It is mentioned in letters at the beginning of the 19th Century, assumed to be a manifestation of a ghost. There are mentions of similar phenomena, always in remote areas, occurring for a few consecutive weeks in every recent century (except, for some reason, the 18th).

**Core clue:** The birds roost under a strange, flat, engraved stone in the woods.

- **Reassurance:** Calming the cultist down, you ask where the creatures came from. She points, wordlessly, into the woods, before fleeing. Following the direction of her hand, you find a clearing. At the centre of the clearing is a stone.

- **Outdoorsman:** As the birds fly off, you follow. Although you do not know the woods, you are quick to move through them, almost keeping up with the birds. You lose sight of them as you enter a clearing. The birds have disappeared. In front of you is a strange, flat stone.



## The Flat Stone

### Scene Type: Core

The stone lies in a clearing in the woods south of Rydal. Approximately ten feet in diameter, it is silver-grey, almost metallic. It is engraved with drawings, with Aramaic script around the outside. It is deeply embedded, too heavy to lift and impervious to any damage the Investigators can wreak. Tunnelling around the stone is impractical.

Whenever the Investigators are near the stone, the creatures alight on the trees surrounding the clearing, silently staring.

The following clues are available.

1. The type of stone is unknown. It is heavy, hard and porous.

- **Geology:** Whatever this thing is, it is hard, heavy and strangely porous. However, you are certain it is not a stone. It resembles no stone you have ever seen. It is not metal, either. You cannot explain what this substance is.
- **Explosives** (used as an Investigative skill): No rock could have withstood the amount of gelignite you just detonated. Indeed, the stone appears unharmed, even completely unmarked. This stone is not natural.



2. The drawings show a race, looking more like wasps than birds, arriving in our Solar System from the stars.

- **Astronomy:** You recognise the drawings in the stone as a map of the stars, although some of the stars are oddly positioned, as if the drawings were made when the stars were differently placed. A journey is depicted: misshapen creatures, looking more wasp-like than avian, arrive from the stars. First they come to another planet in the Solar System, although it is difficult to tell which, before coming to Earth.
- **Anthropology:** The drawings are not dissimilar to cave paintings, although intricate and intelligently drawn. They depict a journey. A race of misshapen creatures, more like wasps than birds, arrive from the stars. They arrive in the Solar System: not on Earth, but on another planet, although the drawings do not identify which. Finally, they come to Earth.

3. Although it shows little wear, the stone has existed for hundreds of years, perhaps longer.

- **Oral History:** Back at The Green Man, Derrick Rawlings is glad to talk about the stone. It has been there for years, he says. His grandfather said that it had been there in *his* grandfather's time. The rumours are that it has been there for hundreds of years.
- **Locksmith:** In the vestry of St Paul's, you find the Parish Records. You find a mention of the stone in the earliest records, around the beginning of the 19th Century, referring to it as the "old stone". Another entry suggests it has been

there for centuries.

**Core clue:** The area beneath the stone can be reached through the abandoned quarry in Loughrigg Fell.

- **Outdoorsman:** You look at the outline of the hills, noticing a man-made cut to the south. It is probably a quarry. If they have tunnelled into the hill, there might be a way to get to the area beneath the stone.
- **Geology:** The stone is embedded in the slate hillside. A thought occurs to you. Slate is mined heavily in this area: perhaps the area beneath the stone is accessible through mining tunnels. Indeed, looking around, there appears to be a quarry to the south.

## LOUGHRIGG QUARRY

### Scene Type: Core

In the side of Loughrigg Fell, the hill overlooking Rydal Water, is an abandoned quarry. Mining tunnels lead into the rock, towards and under the flat stone. They are dark, scattered with abandoned mining carts and rusty pieces of track. What are the Investigators using to light their way? How likely are they to drop it if startled? Ask the players the first question; keep the second question for yourself.

Soon, the tunnels interact with a cave system. Here, the air smells of rotting meat, and gusts rhythmically back and forth, as if pumped through the tunnels. In the first cave is one of the creatures,

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky



dead and rotten. Instead of claws, it has miniature human hands, and **the right hand is deformed**, like that of Father Vincent in Rydal village. It is assumed, here, that the Investigators notice these deformities: if they do not, you should state that it draws their attention.



The caves lead deeper. In these deeper caves, the air smells more rotten and the Investigators pass an occasional creature, live and asleep. here, the floor is littered with discarded corpses of malformed creatures, rotted and torn apart. They are sickening in their unnaturalness: many have multiple heads, many the wrong number of wings. The wings and rib cages are based on human hands: yet strangely, these duplicated hands appear

to be those of Kale, for **the bones are clearly shattered**. As above, the amount of Stability at risk depends on whether Kale is a Source of Stability.



As the Investigators explore, the following clues are available.

1. The caves lead unimaginably deep.

- **Occult:** You have met with Hollow Earth Theorists and, up until now, had dismissed them as cranks. However, these caves make you wonder. They lead astonishingly deep. Every now and then, there is a gust of a mouldy subterranean stench, especially from the vertical shafts, that seems not quite natural.

- **Geology:** The structure of the cave system worries you. Normally, you would expect some degree of levelling out, as the caves get deeper. However, these caves seem only to go deeper. Occasionally, you pass a vertical shaft, heading straight downwards, not man-made but yet not natural. You wonder how much further these caves go down.

2. The reason the air moves rhythmically is because the birds breathe in unison.

- **Biology:** Beyond the nature of the creatures themselves, there is something unnatural about them. Eventually it dawns on you: they are breathing, but they are all breathing in unison. Indeed, that would explain the wind, that gusts rhythmically, back and forth,

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Chase

through the caves.

- **Physics:** To keep your mind from dwelling on the horrors, you focus on the wind. How could wind gust back and forth, as it does, to such a strict rhythm? It would suggest a pair of huge bellows, somewhere deep, or perhaps a large creature breathing. The answer eventually comes to you: it is not one creature breathing, but the misshapen bird creatures. Without exception, they breathe in unison.



**Core clue:** In the discarded corpses, the Investigators see the physical deformities of their Sources of Stability. Use the same deformities you referenced in the Prologue, *Those Left Behind*, described above.

- **Simple Search:** One of the corpses comes apart, under your feet, the rotten flesh sliding apart like butter. The rib cage catches your eye. It is made of human fingers: indeed, on closer examination, it is made of little fingers. Disturbingly, just like those of Lucinda, every one of **the little fingers is slightly bent**.
- **Biology:** The corpse hardly needs dissecting. As you try to pick it up, the stinking flesh slides away from the bone, like overcooked chicken. You look at the flesh, steeling yourself. You have picked up the claw, which appears to be made of human fingers. They are all human ring fingers and, like those of your wife, **the base of each ring finger is swollen**. The more you look, the more you are convinced that the fingers are precise clones of your wife's ring finger.
- **Simple Search:** The pile of corpses reeks of rotten flesh.

Indeed, some are so rotten that the skeleton is visible. In one particular old corpse, the wing is rotted through, revealing it to be made of human ribs. You wonder, for a moment, why you are sure they are ribs. Then you realise: **each rib is cracked**, precisely like those of your fiancée.



Ask the players how their Investigators react to this. Do they run? Do they fight the creatures? Do they drop to the floor and despair? Even now, they do not know the whole truth: have they infected their loved ones? Are they doomed?

After a brief moment of reaction, the Investigators notice something different about the caves. Something is wrong. Something sounds wrong. Ask them for a Sense Trouble roll, difficulty level 4. If they succeed, the Investigators notice that the air has stopped moving. The creatures have stopped breathing in unison. Their eyes are open. They are awake.

## THE CHASE

Scene Type: Antagonist

### Reaction:

All around the caves, the creatures awake. There are hundreds of them, thousands, an unimaginable number. They fly directly at the Investigators.



Now, how did the Investigators light their way? Whatever they used to do so, they may drop it. Ask for a Sense Trouble roll, difficulty 5, allowing the Investigators to substitute any other

plausible skill (perhaps Preparedness, ensuring they remembered to wind the strap of the lantern around their wrist). At your discretion, a point spend of a suitable Investigative skill, such as Outdoorsman, may negate the need for the roll. If they fail, they drop their source of light. A kerosene lantern will shatter immediately. A flashlight will roll on the floor and may be grabbed with a successful Athletics roll, difficulty 5, although a failure means the flashlight falls deeper into the caves and is irrecoverable. If the Investigators are left in the dark, a point spend of a suitable skill (Outdoorsman, Geology) will allow them to navigate blindly.

If the Investigators made the Sense Trouble roll, above, to notice the air stopping moving, they act first in any contested roll that follows. Otherwise, the creatures act first.

From now on, think about stories rather than mechanics: if you or a player see a good moment to end the story for an Investigator, end it, without worrying about the rules. For example, if a player is content to leave her Investigator fighting hopelessly against the creatures, end her story there, without rolling dice for combat. In particular, if you are using the 1953 epilogue (below), the Investigator concerned must end the scene unconscious and separated from the others.

Indeed, fighting is probably futile. If you need to roll dice for this, allow the creatures to fight as a group, numbering ten creatures *for each Investigator*, each with the statistics above:

**Abilities:** Weapons 3, Health 3

**Hit threshold:** 3

**Weapon:** +0 (beak)

If the Investigators succeed in the fight, they end the scenario deep within the caves, hearing other creatures awake in

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Watchers in the Sky

caves deeper still. Do the Investigators run for the surface? Do they plunge deeper into the caves, in a last and doomed fight?

However, it is preferable for the Investigators to flee: after all, this is the classic Lovecraftian ending, the protagonist chased by an unimaginably powerful force. If they do this, treat the flurry of creatures as a group, in a contest of the creatures' Athletics versus the Investigators' Fleeing.

**Abilities:** Athletics 10

**Hit threshold:** Not applicable (use alternative statistics above for combat)

If any Investigator fails, they remain in the caves, surrounded by the creatures: ask them to briefly describe how this happens. After five rounds of the contest or when the creatures fail, the Investigators reach the surface. Shortly afterwards, the creatures fly into the trees, where they watch the Investigators retreating or, perhaps, quietly going mad.

## THREE EPILOGUES

To end the adventure, set up one Directed Scene per investigator. For each scene, use one of the following epilogues, although you need not use them all.

The first, Returning Home, sees the Investigators returning home to their loved ones: if in doubt, use this for everyone. The second, 1953, was referred to in "Drive yourself crazy" above: it is the reward for the first Investigator to go mad, but it requires a particular sort of player, as will be explained below. The third, Bedlam, is suitable for one Investigator only, to be used at the player's discretion: it sees that Investigator taking Kale's place at St Mary Bethlehem hospital.

Use these epilogues in order. That is, complete all the Returning Home epilogues first, noting the special instructions for the last of these epilogues. If you are using the 1953 epilogue, do that next. Finally, if you are using the Bedlam epilogue, that comes last.

### Returning home

The Investigators return to their loved ones. This Directed Scene is an echo of the first scene with the Source of Stability: whoever played the Source of Stability in that scene plays them again. They might refer to their physical deformity.

How do the Investigators react? Can they return to their loved ones? These scenes may be short: either a happy reunion or a troubled one.

For the final Returning Home epilogue, add one additional complication, which you should whisper to the player portraying the Source of Stability. The complication is this: the Source of Stability now has **the same tic as Kale**.

Here are examples of these scenes.

- Dr Parker is in the nursery again, looking at her daughter. As Lucinda grasps Dr Parker's hand, the bent little finger touches hers for a moment. Dr Parker looks closely at her daughter. Is it her imagination or is there something strange behind Lucinda's eyes?
- It is breakfast time again and Professor Wright's wife is already seated at the table. This morning, she complains of a headache, and rubs her temple absently, as if trying to reach the source of the pain. As she describes her plans for the day, she seems distracted, as if her thinking is slower than usual.

- The nurses in St Thomas' hospital are surprised by the lack of progress of Miss Howell's fiancée, Mark. His broken rib, according to X-rays, is still broken. Nevertheless, Miss Howell sits, and tries to be supportive. Yet something is wrong with Mark's speech. As he talks, his head jerks to the side, and he makes a strange hissing noise with his teeth.

### 1953

This epilogue requires a player who enjoys being manipulated, whom you think will suspend disbelief and play along. With the wrong player, this epilogue will appear a cheap trick; with the right player, it works beautifully.

This Investigator ended the previous scene unconscious and alone: perhaps in the caves, while fighting off the creatures; perhaps in the woods, while running from them; perhaps somewhere else. When they wake, after an indeterminate time, the creatures are gone. The caves are empty. Perhaps they glimpse themselves in a puddle: they are bruised but otherwise appear unchanged and unharmed.

When the Investigator returns to Rydal, there is no sign of the other Investigators. Oddly, there is also no sign of anyone the Investigators met. The landlord of the The Green Man is not Dunn; the vicar of St Paul's Church is not Father Vincent; Derrick Rawlings no longer sits by the fire. Similarly, there is no sign of the Investigators' belongings or vehicles.

Ask the Investigator what they want to do next. If they choose to leave Rydal, they might catch the bus or demand someone take them by car. Whichever vehicle they take, it is oddly futuristic, almost like a spacecraft, although everyone but the Investigator thinks it normal. Strangest of all, if the



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Three Epilogues

Investigator takes it, is the train from Windermere Station, which emits no steam.

If the Investigator returns home, their home is occupied by strangers. If they return to their place of work, their office is similarly occupied by a stranger. Everywhere, things appear strangely futuristic, and eventually the truth dawns.

It is 1953, as proven by a copy of The Times newspaper. Nearly twenty years have passed, yet the Investigator appears no older. If they ask, they discover they have been missing for years, since disappearing in the Lake District. The

survival of Sources of Stability and the other Investigators is at your discretion as Keeper.

Use discretion in deciding when to reveal the truth. Probably, the player will quickly realise what is happening, perhaps when you mention futuristic vehicles. If they then attempt to confirm their suspicions, perhaps by asking someone what year it is, draw the epilogue to a close. If the player plays along, feigning ignorance as their character returns home, choose an appropriate moment for the truth to dawn. When you think it right, let the Investigator see the copy of The Times, whose date acts as final proof. Give the

player a moment to react, then end the epilogue.

### Bedlam

One Investigator may end the scenario at St Mary Bethlehem Hospital. As Kale did, the Investigator sits on cast-iron furniture on the lawn, surrounded by birds hoping for food.

Keep this epilogue short. Ask a player to reprise their portrayal of Nurse Rodgers or Nurse Wilkie, offering the Investigator a cup of tea. Let the Investigator's player act out their madness, before ending the scenario.



## A SCIENTIFIC PAPER

which, although not proven by the results observed, is consistent with them. Other points may be briefly considered. The results showed an unexplained and erratic variation in amplitude at intervals, their amplitude varying rapidly for a period of one to two minutes before again assuming stability. Such periods of variation were excluded from the results and calculations shown above. Nevertheless, it is important to note that they occurred after controlling for all known external factors that might affect the amplitude in such a way. Indeed, no known factors would affect the amplitude in the "pulsating" pattern observed. Although this study does not attempt to explain this phenomenon, it is noted here for the benefit of future researchers and may merit further investigation.

To conclude, then, no evidence was found of the observations that Walker's theory suggests, leading us to

25

## FURTHER OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION

JOURNAL OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL INSTITUTE 115

I should like to add some observations to the interesting discussion of "Himalayan zoological discoveries" that occurred in the January number of this journal.

In 1909, Barratt reported finding a cadaver resembling that of a monkey, which he noted incorporated known parts of other anatomies, including the spine of a fish and the use of moss in binding the limb joints. He suggests that this creature was at least partly constructed by human hand, formed a part of some religious ritual as yet unknown.

Although I would not question that the addition of certain parts of the specimen's anatomy could only have been the result of human construction, an observation from our own recent expedition suggests the matter may be more complex than it at first appears. We observed a warm, and hence recently-deceased, ape, larger than others we had observed and with an appearance of deformity in its skull. Although a full internal examination was not possible, a brief study confirmed Barratt's observation of the use of moss in limb joints and the incorporation of other creatures' anatomy, including those of fish. The recent death of the specimen suggests it had not been constructed.

I would hence tentatively suggest that the creature in some way assumes aspects of other anatomies. The mechanism by which this takes place is as yet unknown but may be worthy of further investigation.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Handouts

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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