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# CTHULHU PUNK

*Ancient Horror Crawls Into the Dark Future*



BY CHRIS W. MCCUBBIN

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS

# CTHULHUPUNK

*Ancient Horror Crawls into the Dark Future*



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# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the GURPS system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

**Pyramid.** Our bimonthly magazine includes new rules and articles for GURPS, as well as information on our other lines: *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures* and more. It also covers top releases from other game companies — *Traveller*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more.

New *supplements* and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

**Errata.** Everyone makes mistakes, including us — but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all GURPS releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

**Q&A.** We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

**Gamer input.** We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book in later printings!

**Illuminati Online.** For those who have home computers, SJ Games has an online service with discussion areas for many games, including GURPS. Here's where we do a lot of our playtesting! It's up 24 hours per day at 512-448-8950, at up to 28.8K baud (28.8 users should dial directly to 512-448-8988) — or telnet to [io.com](http://io.com). Give us a call! We also have conferences on CompuServe, GENie, and America Online.

CthulhuPunk. The Cthulhu Mythos meets cyberpunk. At first glance, it might seem an unlikely combination. What, exactly, do the gritty future of cyberpunk and the cosmic horror of H.P. Lovecraft have in common? More than you might assume.

The Great Depression was a lot like the fictional near future of the cyberpunk genre. Both the historical and the fictional era were formed by a recent explosion of technology (telephones and automobiles in the Depression, cyberspace and space stations in cyberpunk), together with the rapid expansion of cutthroat industrial corporations. Both eras were marked by a downtrodden, repressed majority, an active, flamboyant organized crime underground and ever-increasing urbanization. Both societies were threatened by the growth of repressive, totalitarian regimes.

The pulp magazines were the mirror of the Depression. Like comic books in the '40s and science-fiction movies in the '50s, the pulps caught the mood of their decade far more accurately than the more refined artforms of the era. Cyberpunk has always taken a large part of its unique mood from the pulps — the mysterious, romantic loner from the streets of "hard-boiled" detective fiction taking a stand against richer, more powerful enemies.

Of course, *Weird Tales*, the magazine that gave us the Cthulhu Mythos, was a far cry from the detective stories, westerns and adventure stories that formed the mainstream of the pulps. It also had little in common with the science fiction magazines that formed the foundation on which all modern science fiction, including cyberpunk, is built. Nonetheless, *Weird Tales* was a product of its time, and the pulp tradition and the cyberpunk genre are linked.

Another way in which cyberpunk and the Mythos come together is that they're both genres dealing with alienation. The heroes of both sorts of story are usually cut off emotionally, socially or both from mainstream society. In their isolation, they become ideal victims for implacable forces that want to corrupt them and use them for their own ends. They fight back, sometimes win-



## OTHER GURPS BOOKS

To play *GURPS CthulhuPunk*, it is only necessary that the player own the *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Cyberpunk*. However, as a fusion of the science fiction, horror and fantasy genres, there are many other *GURPS* world-books which can greatly enhance the effectiveness of a *CthulhuPunk* campaign.

Of course the optional sourcebook most useful to the campaign is not a *GURPS* book at all, but Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu, 5th Edition*. This is the source of all of the Lovecraftian lore presented in *GURPS CthulhuPunk*, and goes into much more detail about the Mythos and all its aspects. A list of other Chaosium *Call of Cthulhu* supplements of interest to the *CthulhuPunk* GM can be found on p. 124.

A close runner-up in the "most useful supplement" category is *GURPS Cyberworld*, a complete near-future cyberpunk setting written by Paul Hume. *Cyberworld* is the best possible source for background details of politics, culture, crime and technology in a plausible dark future. The world of *GURPS CthulhuPunk* uses *Cyberworld* as its base, the external reality which conceals the activities of the Old Ones.

Other sourcebooks of some interest include the following.

***GURPS Bestiary*:** In addition to an exhaustive catalog of real-world creatures, this book also features an in-depth section on the creation and play of lycanthropes and other shape-shifting characters. Such were-characters can be a great asset to any horror campaign, both as NPCs and as PCs.

***GURPS Creatures of the Night*:** This is a comprehensive collection of horrific monsters, many of which are quite alien and sinister enough to qualify as potential servitors of the Great Old Ones. If the GM wants innovative, fully-developed menaces that aren't taken directly from a Mythos story, this is the place to look.

***GURPS Espionage*:** This is an essential roleplayer's guide to the fine arts of infiltration, subversion and sabotage, whether the target of the operation is a death-cult of the Great Old Ones or a multi-national mega-korp.

***GURPS High-Tech*:** If it's firepower that you crave, this is the place to go for a massive compilation of modern and antique firearms. Not that they will do you any good in the long run . . .

*Continued on next page...*



ning a brief respite or personal salvation, although in a larger context the battle remains unwinnable. A Hound of Tindalos and a cyber-ninja are not that far apart when they both want you dead.

Finally, Lovecraft's Mythos is big enough to encompass almost any setting or literary genre, past, present or future. If the Great Old Ones were here in the '30s, then they're still here now and they'll still be here in the next century. We might not, but they will be.

*GURPS CthulhuPunk* is a licensed adaptation of Chaosium's classic horror RPG *Call of Cthulhu*. For this reason, this book has been written, not only to be as true as possible to the original stories (given the difference between the eras of the original stories and the setting of this book), but also to follow as closely as possible the tone of the *Call of Cthulhu* game.

But this book is not *GURPS Call of Cthulhu* — Chaosium graciously granted SJ Games the rights to adapt elements of *CoC* to *GURPS* to create a specific near-future worldbook. This book isn't designed to allow you to adapt all of Chaosium's material to *GURPS* (although if you really want to adapt one system to another, there's a lot here that can help), nor are we trying to present everything that could possibly ever be known about the Mythos. What we are trying to do is present a complete and entertaining game world in its own right.

## OTHER GURPS BOOKS (CONTINUED)

**GURPS Horror:** The original *GURPS* sourcebook on horrific role-playing, including invaluable advice on setting the mood, creating creatures, and simulating a multitude of different horror genres and settings.

**GURPS Illuminati:** The underlying theme of *GURPS CthulhuPunk* is, essentially, the growing awareness of the secret forces that rule the world behind our everyday awareness. *GURPS Illuminati* provides many valuable insights into roleplaying in a world of paranoia and conspiracy, whether the conspirators are the Great Old Ones themselves, some profit-hungry korp, or a small group of crazed cultists.

**GURPS Magic, GURPS Grimoire & GURPS Religion: Magic and Grimoire** compile a wealth of spells and non-Mythos magic for mystically-oriented campaigns. **Religion's** main contribution is its treatment of shamanic mysticism, but those intrigued by the mythological aspects of the Mythos will find many useful concepts in the book's notes on myth and religion.

**GURPS Psionics:** Another indispensable source if the GM wants to run a campaign where the PCs have access to strange powers.

**GURPS Space:** Lots of useful information here if the GM wants to take the campaign to a higher tech level, or expand it into an interplanetary setting.

**GURPS Supporting Cast:** A wealth of fully designed and developed characters either specifically designed for or adaptable to a near future setting.

**GURPS Ultra-Tech:** A compilation of futuristic weapons and equipment, for those who may want to explore the technological side of the milieu.

**GURPS Vehicles:** This book allows the GM to design his own futuristic vehicles.

**GURPS Vampire: The Masquerade, GURPS Vampire Companion, GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse and GURPS Mage: The Ascension:** Based on the bestselling World of Darkness games from White Wolf Game Studios. The personal horror of the World of Darkness can be blended with the cosmic horror of the Mythos to create a dynamic combination of three classic RPGs.

We think that the GM will find enough information in this book to keep his campaign going indefinitely, while at the same time providing him with a solid framework to create or adapt creatures and situations all his own.

Will there ever be another *GURPS/CoC* crossover? Frankly, *I* don't know. *CthulhuPunk* was created under a one-book deal between Chaosium and SJ Games, but if it's a success, and if enough of you say you want more, there might be more deals in the future — maybe more *GURPS CthulhuPunk* (personally, *I* think *GURPS CthulhuPunk Adventures* just cries out to be written, don't you?), or maybe a *GURPS/CoC* crossover set in some other era.

In the meantime, enjoy this excursion into a forbidding future that may be our own.

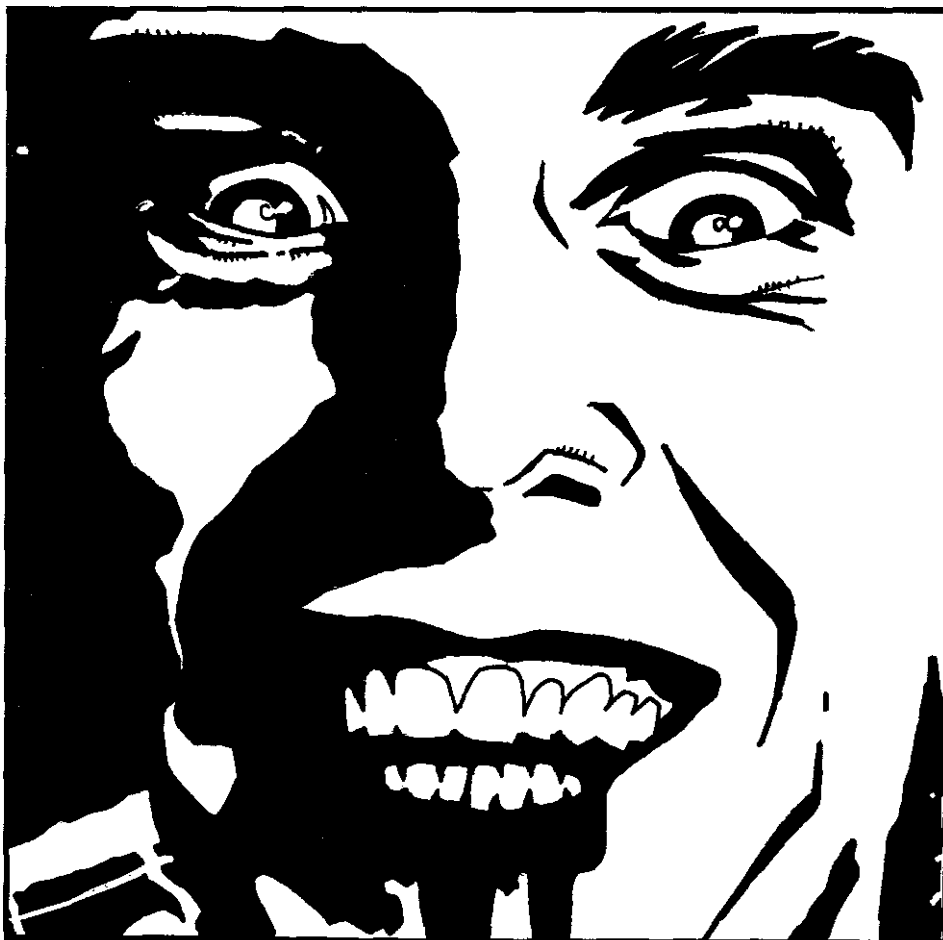
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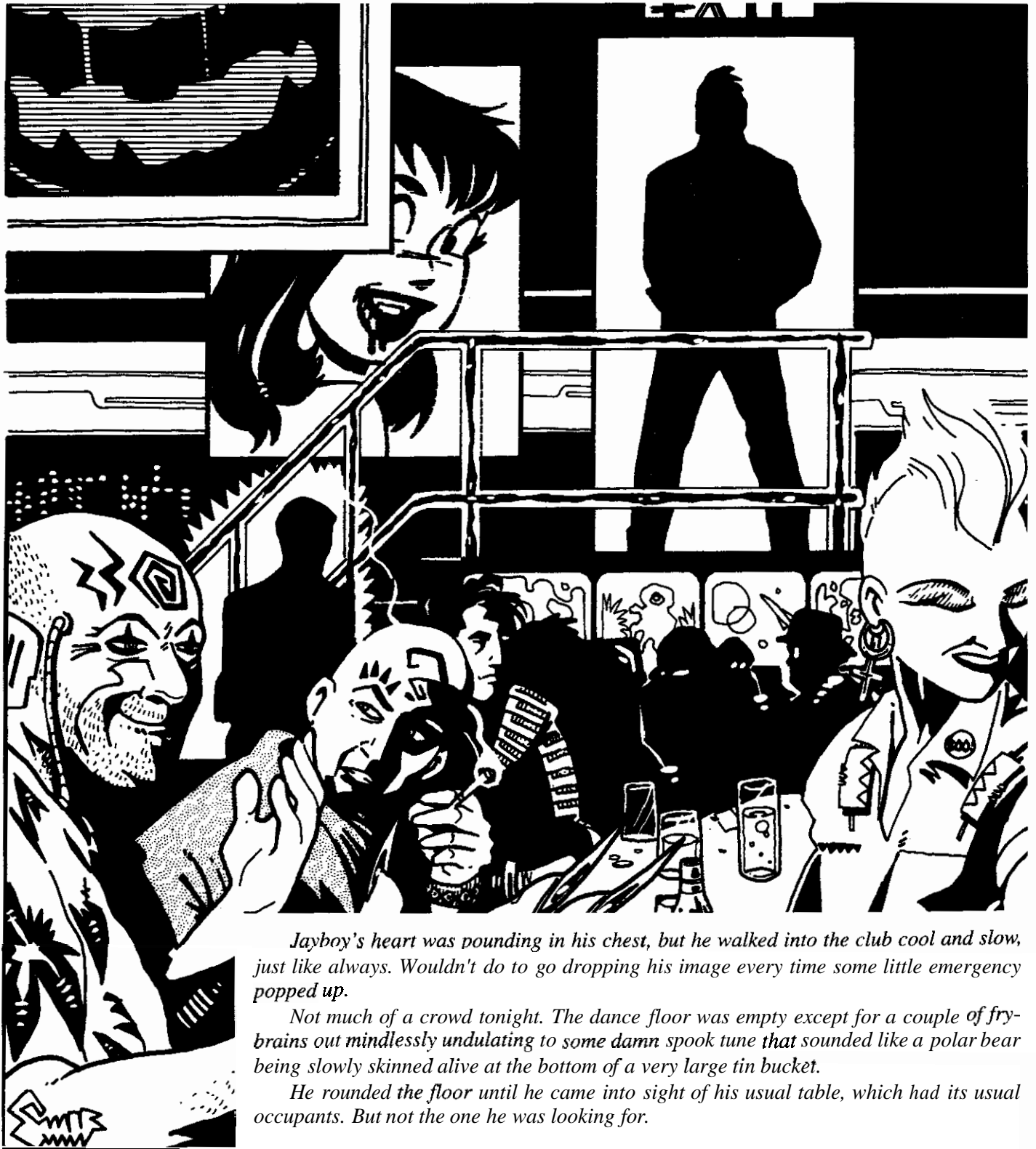
## About the Author

Chris W. McCubbin is a freelance writer and game designer. He lives in Austin, TX with his wife, Lynette Alcorn, and the obligatory two cats, Polychrome and Clipper.

This is his ninth book for the *GURPS* system. His earlier works include the Gamer's Choice Award winner *GURPS Fantasy Folk* and *GURPS Callahan's Crosstime Saloon*, an effort that earned him a cameo appearance in Spider Robinson's novel *The Callahan Touch*. He's the former editor of Fantagraphics Books' much lamented *Amazing Heroes* magazine, and the equally fondly remembered *Autoduel Quarterly*. He reviews games regularly in *Pyramid Magazine* and has a monthly column in *White Wolf Magazine* called "Out of the Parent's Basement," covering popular culture for the gaming community.

E-mail comments to Chris W. McCubbin at [cwm@io.com](mailto:cwm@io.com).



THE  
CTHULHU MYTHOS

Jayboy's heart was pounding in his chest, but he walked into the club cool and slow, just like always. Wouldn't do to go dropping his image every time some little emergency popped up.

Not much of a crowd tonight. The dance floor was empty except for a couple of fry-brains out mindlessly undulating to some damn spook tune that sounded like a polar bear being slowly skinned alive at the bottom of a very large tin bucket.

He rounded the floor until he came into sight of his usual table, which had its usual occupants. But not the one he was looking for.





"*Hayo, paryeni,*" he said, hoping it sounded chill. "Anybody seen Anyadoll 'round?"

"*Hmmm, let's see.*" It was Shash talking, so Jayboy knew it wasn't worth listening to. "I believe she may have mentioned that a platoon of nerks had invited her out for dinner and dancing. Why don't you go ask them about it?"

"*Snort faex, Shash,*" he retorted, scanning the table.

On his second pass he noticed Booshk half-passed-out in a particularly dim corner of the booth. His metallic blue wig had half-slid over his eyes, and his makeup looked like a finger-painting by one of the less gifted members of the retard class.

Jayboy reached across and pushed the wig a few centimeters closer to its intended position. As soon as he touched it he wished he hadn't, but the jar was enough to draw what was left of Booshk's attention. "Hi, Jayboy," he simpered, "Bout time I woke up to yourface. Still respect me?"

"Bag it, Booshk," Jayboy mumbled, hoping the club was dark enough so nobody could see him blush. "I'm looking for Anyadoll. Seen her?"

At the mention of Anya's name, Booshk's face clouded over: "Ain't seen her; Jayboy," he mumbled. "Annie don't talk to me no more. I couldn't teach her what she wanted to know, so she went looking. Forget her; Jayboy. Annie's gone."

"*Krovvy faex, Booshk, don't get like this. . . just tell me where she is.*"

Brighty, sitting beside Booshk and almost as drunk, leaned forward into Jayboy's face. "He's saying she's gone, Jayboy. Everybody goes sooner or later: There's only two things for sure in this bad ol' world, and one's that everything dies, and the other's that we're all alone in the universe. So deal with it, livewire."

Slowly, Booshk's bloodshot eyes wandered over towards Brighty, and his pale, long-nailed hand came up to cradle the pendant with the crooked star design that he always wore. "Oh Brighty, oh my dear," he said, his voice a soft half-moaning sing-song. "Oh, if only that were true. . ."

The Cthulhu Mythos is more than a collection of stories and legends about bizarre monsters. It is a way of looking at the universe. a holistic explanation of the reasons that things are the way they are — a profoundly terrifying explanation for an intrinsically hostile universe.

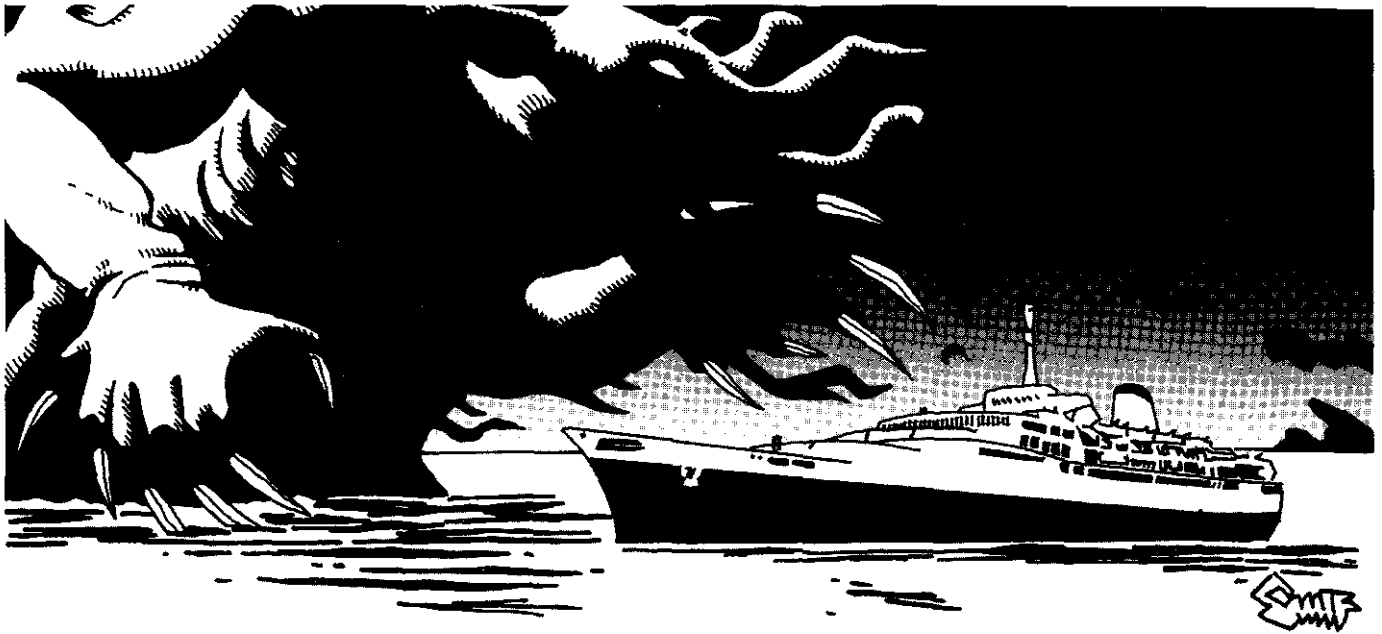


## So What's a Cthulhu?

Great Cthulhu is a gargantuan, immortal, extraterrestrial creature of almost unimaginable power. It lies, and has lain for millennia, entombed in the sunken city of R'lyeh. It is fully described on p. 17.

For all its power, Cthulhu is only one of many extraterrestrial entities that exist just beyond the edges of normal human perception. These beings are collectively referred to as the "Great Old Ones." Naming the collective knowledge of these creatures after Cthulhu is a bit arbitrary — it could have just as easily, and perhaps a bit more logically, been called "The Nyarlathotep Mythos" or the "Yog-Sothoth Mythos." However, Cthulhu is the most powerful of the Great Old Ones actually resident on earth, it has one of the most powerful and active cults of human worshipers, and there is more independent documentary evidence of its existence than any other of the Great Old Ones.

Beyond the Great Old Ones themselves, the Cthulhu Mythos also encompasses certain lesser (but still terrifying by human standards) races of extraterrestrial creatures. Some of these races were created specifically to serve one or



more of the Great Old Ones. Others are, like humanity, more or less free to pursue their own destinies. Most of these races are, at least in part, physical, solid beings, but some consist of "bodies" that are partially or mostly energy, or which extend into a fourth dimension. Few of the creatures of the Mythos, however, are what are normally thought of as immaterial "spirits."

One pervasive characteristic of both the Great Old Ones and the independent races of the Mythos is their incredible ancientness. Non-humans have been on Earth since before terrestrial life learned to breathe oxygen — at least 2 billion years. Great Cthulhu came to earth almost one and a half **billion** years ago, and it was already ancient and powerful then. Many have speculated that the main reason that the powerful entities of the Mythos have not eradicated humanity is simply that in the meager ten or 20 thousand years *Homo sapiens* has been in existence, the Great Old Ones have not yet really had time to notice us.



## The Essential Meaninglessness of Everything

The more that is known about the Great Old Ones, the worse things look for the human race. Humanity likes to fancy itself the lord of creation, able, given sufficient time and effort, to conquer any problem through the application of logic and creativity. Within the context of the Cthulhu Mythos, however, this is revealed as a lie — a comforting delusion of a fundamentally inadequate race.

According to the Mythos, not only are we intrinsically inferior to the older races of the galaxy, we are constitutionally — perhaps neurologically — incapable of even acknowledging our own inferiority. When a human mind is brought forcibly into contact with the realities of the Mythos, the usual response is either death or madness. We are simply unequipped to deal with the reality of the universe.

So what is the final fate of mankind? Are we doomed any day to random annihilation by forces beyond our comprehension? Or perhaps we're destined to become the mindless slaves of some inimical alien race. On the other hand, perhaps even these hopeless scenarios contain an element of vainglory. Why, after all, should the Great Old Ones even care whether our mad and insignificant race lives or dies? Certainly, they seem to have some sort of interest in our

## THE MAKING OF THE MYTHOS

The Cthulhu Mythos is the creation of Howard Phillips Lovecraft (born 1890, died of cancer 1937). Due to his always fragile health, Lovecraft never went to college or even finished high school; however, he was a voracious reader and student of literature. Despite the weird supernatural content of his stories, Lovecraft himself was always a firm materialist, with no tolerance whatsoever for religion or superstition.

At age five, Lovecraft developed a fascination with *The Arabian Nights* and began to play at being an Arab named Abdul Alhazred. This childhood fancy later grew into the character of the Mad Poet who composed the *Necronomicon*, a book which never existed outside of Lovecraft's imagination (any hooks now in print claiming to be the *Necronomicon* were created out of whole cloth since Lovecraft's death). At age six he began having dreams of faceless creatures he called "night-gaunts."

The founding editor of *Weird Tales*, Edwin Baird, bought Lovecraft's first five stories, but Baird's successor, Farnsworth Wright, had no taste for Lovecraft's work, and began to routinely reject submitted stories. Rather than search for other markets for his fiction, Lovecraft gave up almost entirely on the idea of selling his work in commercial markets.

*Continued on next page*



## THE MAKING OF THE MYTHOS (CONTINUED)

Except for a brief attempt at marriage that lasted barely two years (although Lovecraft and his wife parted amicably), Lovecraft spent his entire adult life in Providence, R.I. living with his two elderly aunts. He never held a steady job and lived entirely off ever-dwindling family savings and whatever he could make from selling his stories (a pittance during the Depression). Although he lived a life of constant poverty, Lovecraft always saw himself as a gentleman and an artist, above crass commercial or financial concerns. His single steady work was re-writing (and frequently ghost-writing) supernatural stories for individuals with literary aspirations.

*Continued on next page...*

little green planet for reasons of their own, but it does not necessarily follow that they will find any reason to exterminate, enslave or even notice us as more than a momentary curiosity. Perhaps our little race will be allowed to continue for a few thousand, or a few million years before it finally succumbs to extinction in the natural order of things. And that, perhaps, is the ultimate cosmic insult.



## Cosmic Forces

There is a definite taxonomy to Lovecraft's immortal beings.

The first order of Great Old Ones includes beings like Cthulhu, Hastur and Tsathoggua. These are entities of great power, but they are physical creatures with solid bodies — they are bound, at least to an extent, by time and space. Nonetheless, they are immortal. They **are** completely immune to the ravages of time, and incredibly difficult to destroy through violence or mystical forces. They also represent a repository of supernatural power which can be tapped by anyone who's willing to pay the price. In both these senses, therefore, they can be accurately characterized as "gods." Because they are, like humanity, physical creatures, the Great Old Ones can sometimes be persuaded to aid potentially useful humans, or destroy potentially annoying ones. These Great Old Ones vary greatly in relative power. Compare, for example, the powers of Cthulhu (see p. 101) to those of Rhan-Tegoth (see p. 105).

The next order is often called the "Outer Gods." These entities have their origin outside of our space-time continuum, and are generally not bound to a single physical form. Many of the Outer Gods are quite mindless, though some of the most powerful ones have at least the potential for sentience. Only one, however — Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos — displays anything remotely like a human personality. These entities, too, display a vast range of power, from Azathoth the Demon Sultan, and Yog-Sothoth whose existence permeates all time and space, to the uncounted hordes of unnamed lesser gods who gibber mindlessly and eternally in Azathoth's orbit. With the sole exception of Nyarlathotep, who seems to derive perverse pleasure from tormenting humanity, the Outer Gods seem to be unconcerned with the affairs of our race — many seem to be completely unaware that we even exist. Nonetheless, the power of these creatures permeates all reality, and can be harnessed by those who know how to do so . . . again, not without cost.

Finally, there is a mysterious order of beings called the "Elder Gods." These enigmatic creatures are closest to the usual human definition of a "god" as a spiritual entity corresponding to a specific primal archetype. They include Nodens, Lord of the Great Abyss, Hypnos, God of Sleep, and perhaps many other beings as well that are known to human mythology. Bast, the Egyptian goddess of cats, and Neptune, the sea god, have both been reported to be among the Elder Gods. Elder Gods often appear in human form, but probably this is simply how human minds perceive them, rather than their true appearance. Some believe that the Elder Gods are at war with the Outer Gods, that they **are** "good" entities opposed to the "evil" of the Outer Gods. Others, however, say that the Elder Gods are largely indifferent both to humanity and to the other Great Old Ones, and if any of them ever decides to take action for the good or ill of a human being, they do so for reasons of their own which we cannot comprehend. It is generally held that the power of the Elder Gods cannot be tapped, though they can sometimes be called. They may be capable of giving certain favored individuals potent supernatural powers, but they seldom if ever do so, and when they do, it's for reasons of their own. They seem to be a great deal more active in the Dreamlands (see p. 18) than in the physical world



## Blasphemous Tomes

Certain ancient books represent the most notorious and direct sources of knowledge about the Mythos and the Old Ones. Few of these books have ever been published in mass-market editions. In general, these manuscripts can only be found — if they can be found at all — in the collections of certain museums or the rare books sections of respected institutes of higher learning. They are rarely available on the open market, and when they are they command exorbitant prices from wealthy occultists. To even know of the existence of any of the books below requires a successful roll vs. Occultism or Literature -3 (at best — the GM is free to decrease these chances in the case of exceptionally obscure or semi-mythical tomes).

Each book is given two Mythos Fright Check modifiers (see p. 45). The first is the modifier taken if the book is quickly and casually skimmed (by a reader who is reasonably fluent — Language skill 10+ — in the language of the book), while the second is the modifier if the book is carefully read and studied. Each book is also given a *maximum* amount of increase to Mythos Lore skill which study of that book can yield. This increase is *not* automatic; the reader must still spend character points to increase the skill. If he does increase his Mythos Lore skill through studying the book, he must make normal Mythos Fright Checks as his skill increases, in addition to any Fright Checks made for originally reading through the book (needless to say, Mythos Lore skill cannot be increased by merely skimming a tome).

As noted on p. 49, Mythos Lore cannot be acquired through generalized study (except perhaps as a default from very high levels of Occultism). Each increase in Mythos Lore must come from a specific source mandated by the GM. Each of the books below can provide only so much of an increase in Mythos Lore, and once that maximum has been attained, the scholar must look elsewhere for sources of knowledge.

In the physical descriptions of the books below, traditional printer's jargon is used to give the size of the volume. *Folios* are between 12.5"×20" and 10"×15", *quartos* are between 10"×12.5" and 7.5"×10", and *octavos* range from 6.25"×10" to 5"×7.5".

### THE NECRONOMICON

The *Necronomicon* (literally, the *Book of the Names of the Dead*) is the best-known Mythos tome. Indeed, most fringe-culture people have heard of it, though they think it's a joke. If only it were . . .

The *Necronomicon* was originally penned by an Arab scholar and scribe who used the name Abd al-Azrad (this name translates to "Servant of the Destroyer"). It is written in a number of different styles, all difficult to comprehend. In some sections, the placement of the words on the page and their relationship to various odd diagrams is as meaningful as the words themselves. Riddles, obscure allegories and insane gibberish abound.

Once deciphered, understanding al-Azrad's meaning is no easier. Many disturbing "truths" about humanity's place in the universe are in the *Necronomicon*, as well as formulae for magic spells and powders, descriptions of blasphemous rituals, and at least one complete chant that will open a gate through which Yog-Sothoth can enter this world. This is an incredibly powerful, incredibly dangerous book — GMs should be very careful with it.

### THE MAKING OF THE MYTHOS (CONTINUED)

Lovecraft was a wildly prolific correspondent, writing to individuals all over the country with similar tastes — including such notable fantasists as Robert E. Howard, Frank Belknap Long and Clark Ashton Smith. With Lovecraft's permission, these authors began to use some of his concepts — Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, the Necronomicon — in their own stories, and to create new entities to inhabit the same fictional reality.

When Lovecraft died, his stories, including several unpublished manuscripts, were preserved by one of his correspondents, August Derleth. Although there are those who vehemently disagree with some of the directions Derleth took in his own Mythos stories, there is no doubt that Derleth and his publishing company, Arkham House — created exclusively to preserve Lovecraft's work — bear a great deal of the credit for making Lovecraft the seminal figure in American horror that he has become. Only Edgar Allen Poe has any claim for being as important to the development of the modern horror story as Lovecraft.

Writers who have added to Lovecraft's Mythos since his death include Robert Bloch, Ramsey Campbell, Brian Lumley, David Drake and Stephen King.

In 1981 Chaosium published their first edition of the *Call of Cthulhu* role-playing game, designed by Sandy Petersen, a game as crucial to the development of the horror roleplaying genre as Lovecraft is to the development of the modern horror story.





## THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

One of the challenges of Lovecraftian gaming for the GM is to try to come to grips with the inhuman psyches of the Great Old Ones and other Mythos creatures.

The Old Ones are not the friendly, anthropomorphized aliens and non-human races found in a great deal of popular fantasy and science fiction. There is little that compares to humanity in their physical structure, and still less of human feeling in their minds. They are inimical, often literally incomprehensible creatures.

There are a few isolated points of correspondence. Ghouls, Serpent People and Deep Ones, for example, are at least species which evolved on Earth. As alien races go, the Great Race of Yith has a recognizable intellectual curiosity and rational thought patterns that make it relatively easy for Yithians and humans to communicate. On the other hand, the motivations and thought processes of the Mi-go, Elder Things or Flying Polyps remain deeply mysterious. The enigmas posed by these races, however, pale into insignificance when compared to those presented by a non-material race like the Colours, or poly-dimensional creatures like the Hounds of Tindalos.

*Continued on next page*

Fortunately for humanity, the Necronomicon's reputation as a hoax is well-established and believed by almost everyone who's even heard of the book. There are at least six separate known versions of the Necronomicon:

### *Al Azif*

Abd al-Azrad (aka Abdul Alhazrad), c. 730 A.D.

Arabic

This is the original of the book that would come to be known as the Necronomicon, exactly as written down by the mad seer al-Azrad. There are believed to have been numerous accurate, hand-written copies of the book circulating throughout Arabia and Medieval Europe, but *Al Azif* has been generally regarded as a "lost book" since at least the 12th century, and no Arabic versions of the book are presently known to exist.

Mythos Lore +10

Fright Check -5/-10

### *Necronomicon*

Translation by Theodoras Philetas, 950 A.D.

Greek

Although this translation is known to date from the 10th century, most historical references are to a mass printing of a folio edition in Italy in 1501. This printing led to an active campaign of suppression against the book, during which many early manuscripts in Greek, Latin and possibly even Arabic are believed to have been destroyed. The last known copy from the 1501 printing was burned in Salem in 1692.

Mythos Lore +9

Fright Check -5/-10

### *Necronomicon*

Translation by Olaus Wormius, 1228 A.D.

Latin

All manuscript copies of this version are believed to have perished, but Wormius' translation was printed twice. A black-letter folio edition was published in Germany in the late 15th century, and a nearly identical version emerged from Spain in the early 17th century. One copy of the first printing and four of the second are known to exist.

Mythos Lore +8

Fright Check -5/-10

### *Necronomicon*

Translation by Dr. John Dee, 1586 A.D.

English

This English translation is taken from the Greek. It is extremely accurate as far as it goes, but Dee apparently intentionally left out some of the book's most blasphemous and dangerous passages. Dee's translation was never printed, but three bound manuscript copies are known to exist.

Mythos Lore +6

Fright Check -5/-10

### *The Sussex Manuscript (Cultus Maleficorum)*

Translation by Baron Frederic, 1597 A.D.

English

This is an incomplete and rather amateurish translation printed in Sussex, England, in an octavo edition under the title *Cultus Maleficarum*.

Mythos Lore +3  
Fright Check -21-3

### *The Book of the Dead (The Necronomicon)*

English

This book is the most convincing of the various 20th- and 21st-century mass-market hoaxes. First published in early 2000 to capitalize on millennialist hysteria and hype, the book is now in its 15th printing and widely available in specialty bookstores, through mail order and on the net. This book is a favorite of fringe-culture fans and other hip posers who want to be able to "talk the talk." While a reasonably unsettling read (it's very well written), it contains no true Mythos knowledge (they didn't even translate the title correctly), nor is a Fright Check of any kind required.

What this book *will* do is label anyone mentioning it (or, heaven forbid, quoting from it) as a clueless dork in the eyes of anyone with *real* Mythos knowledge (-3 to reaction), unless the knowledgeable person has a reason to seek out gullible dupes . . .

Mythos Lore 0  
Fright Check 0

## UNAUSPRECHLICHEN KULTEN

Roughly translated as "Unspeakable Cults" or "Nameless Cults," this book is a study of various cults von Juntz encountered in his world travels. Though a few of the cults described are just oddballs, most are worshippers of various Mythos entities. The book is very detailed in the rituals of these cults (many of which von Juntz participated in, apparently). Three versions are known to exist:

### *Unausprechlichen Kulten*

By Friedrich Wilhelm von Junzt, 1839  
German

Also known as "The Black Book," this volume was printed in Germany in a quarto edition. Six copies are presently known to be held by major libraries in Europe and America.

Mythos Lore +7  
Fright Check -4/-8

### *Nameless Cults*

Translator unknown, 1845  
English

This unauthorized translation was published by Bridewell in England in a high-quality octavo edition. The translation is complete, but not without error. At least 20 copies of this edition are known to exist in both private and public collections worldwide.

Mythos Lore +5  
Fright Check -4/-8

### *Nameless Cults*

Translator unknown, 1909  
English

This American edition published by the Golden Goblin Press in New York is both deliberately expurgated and poorly translated. Numerous copies of this cheap octavo edition still exist.

Mythos Lore +3  
Fright Check -4/-8

## THE NATURE OF THE BEAST (CONTINUED)

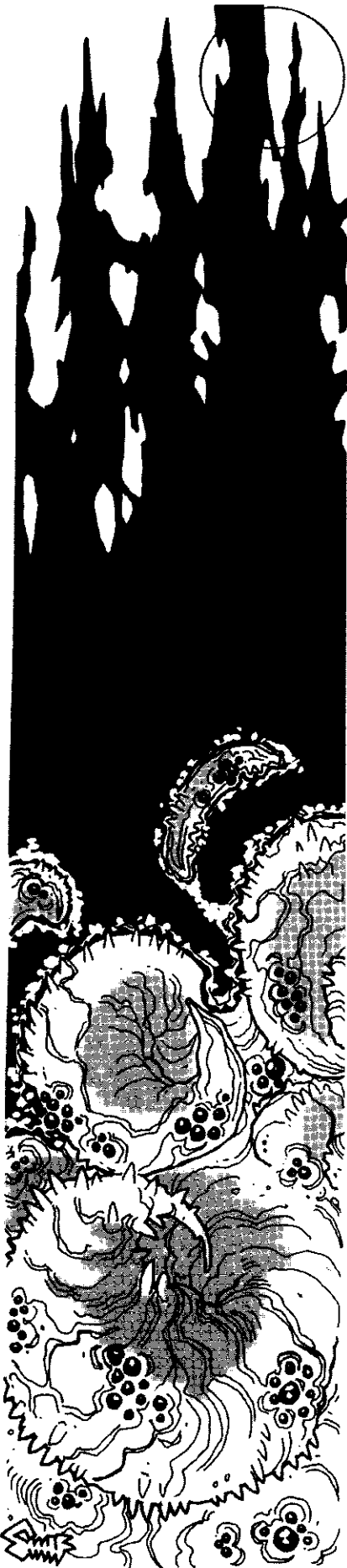
The recognizable motivations of such creatures are often, at best, one per species. We know that Mi-go, Elder Things and Flying Polyps all sought to possess territory and exploit material resources, which is an impulse that humans can relate to. Colours seek to survive, mature and reproduce — and that's all we know about them. The Hounds of Tindalos are compelled to stalk and destroy their prey, even through unimaginable gulfs of space and time. We have no idea why.

All of these races, however, are more comprehensible than the Great Old Ones, many of whom are complete enigmas. Although we can, rather arbitrarily, assign divine aspects to some of them, identifying Shub-Niggurath, for example, as a fertility deity, and Yog-Sothoth as the personification of time and space, it is not at all clear if either of these deities are even sentient in any humanly-comprehensible definition of the term, much less what they want or what they think. Less metaphysical immortals like Cthulhu and Hastur are, if anything, even more mysterious. We know that Shub-Niggurath exists as an embodiment of primal fertility, and that her power comes from being a manifestation of a universal principle, but we have no idea why Cthulhu is here or why he has so much power. Some of the Great Old Ones, like Rhan-Tegoth or Tultscha, seem to exist primarily as mindless appetites, but is that really their only reason for being?

A few entities seem perversely — possibly deliberately — capricious in their nature. Nyarlathotep seems to take an almost recreational delight in tormenting certain humans, but why should he care if humans are serene or agitated, happy or sad, orderly or chaotic?

Nodens is a mysterious, remote entity that most of the time seems completely oblivious to the very existence of humanity. But from time to time, for reasons of his own, he will help a human at the mercy of the powers of another god, particularly if that god is Nyarlathotep. Nobody knows why he does this — whether he and Nyarlathotep are simply enemies, or if they have some sort of deeper and stranger bond that sometimes brings them into conflict.

In the end, the motivations of the Old Ones lie entirely with the GM. The only concrete advice that can be given is *don't answer all the questions*. The gods act as they must, and their reasons — if they have reasons — are not for us to know. Meaninglessness is not something to be avoided in *CthulhuPunk* . . . it is one of the essential principles of the universe.



## THE BOOK OF EIBON

Three editions are known to exist. Although this book is reportedly the work of Eibon, a sorcerer of the prehistoric and semi-mythical Hyperborean civilization, there is no reliable evidence of any edition prior to those listed here.

### *Liber Ivonis*

Translated by Caius Phillipus Faber, 9th century A.D.

Latin

Never printed; six bound manuscript copies of this edition are held in various library collections.

Mythos Lore +5

Fright Check -21-4

### *Livre D'Ivon*

Translated by Gaspard du Nord, c. 13th century A.D.

French

13 hound copies of this manuscript, some incomplete, are known to exist.

Mythos Lore +4

Fright Check -2/-4

### *Book of Eibon*

Translator unknown, c. 15th century A.D.

English

This translation is not regarded as accurate. Eighteen hand-written copies are believed to exist.

Mythos Lore +3

Fright Check -2/-4

## CULTES DES GOULES

By Francois-Honore Balfou, Comte d'Erlette, c. 1702

French

The title means, roughly, "Ghoul Cult." This privately printed book was published in a quarto edition in France in 1703, and immediately denounced and suppressed by the Church. The author claims the existence of a widespread cult of grave-robbers and grave-despoilers active in France at the time of publication, detailing many unpleasant aspects of their activities, including necromancy, necrophilia and cannibalism. Fourteen copies are known to exist today.

Mythos Lore +6

Fright Check -2/-4

## DE VERMIS MYSTERIIS

By Ludvig Prinn, 1542

Latin

Prinn was an infamous sorcerer from Belgium. His "Mysteries of the Worm" discusses everything from ghosts and zombies to his travels in the Arab world and his experiences with efreet, djinn and other demons, to correlations between the ancient gods of Egypt and those of the Cthulhu Mythos. A folio-sized volume published in Cologne, Germany. The book was suppressed by the Church, and only 15 copies are known to have survived into the present.

Mythos Lore +5

Fright Check -3/-6

# PNAKOTIC MANUSCRIPTS

Author unknown, c. 15th century

English

This book exists in five bound manuscript copies held by major libraries in Europe and America and is actually a compilation of a number of fragmentary writings found throughout the world written in the same unknown language. The book's author writes that the text is a translation from a prehistoric, possibly pre-human original. What form this original may have taken, or how the author was able to decipher it, is completely mysterious.

Mythos Lore +4

Fright Check -2/-4

## OTHER TOMES

As life in the 21st century becomes more and more chaotic and unpredictable, man's search for an explanation — any explanation — that makes some sense of things has become more intense and desperate. The number of books that claim to have the answers (most of them completely contradictory, of course) has grown exponentially. Most of these books are complete wastes of time for investigators of **Mythos activity** — but not *all* of them.

In an attic full of old, dusty books, however, the one with useful information is not going to be sitting alone in a pool of eerie light, a flashing sign above it proclaiming, "This is the real stuff here, **paryeni!**". It takes many hours of reading and study to tell mind-bending truths from total gibberish. The GM should have dozens of completely useless books ready to throw at the players, just to confuse the issue; when the players do find a book, you don't want them to know it's the real goods right away...



## Inhuman Artifacts

The Old Ones have been known to imbue their power from time to time into physical objects, and these objects have been known to fall into the hands of humans. Such artifacts hold a great deal of fascination for the scholar, and are a magnificent promise to the seeker-after-power, but they were not crafted for human minds or human hands, and they almost inevitably lead to the destruction of the student or user.

Inhuman relics are usually enigmatic in form, giving no external clue as to their intent or use. They might take the form of a twisted bit of metal, a fragment of strangely-carved crystal, a looming stone monolith, or an ancient vessel full of some unidentifiable powder.

Their powers might include the summoning — but too often, not the control — of a particular form of Mythos creature. Or they might allow the user to see strange alien worlds and other times and dimensions — and allow the creatures that live there to see the user, as well. Or they might actually project the user into some other time, place or reality... though often not one of his choosing.

A few such items might actually give the owner the power to **control** or threaten the creatures of the Mythos or his fellow humans, or offer protection, but there is always a price. Often each use causes strange transformations in the mind **and/or** body of the owner. Often blood sacrifices are required — and for the most desirable effects, the blood of beasts will not suffice.

There are recorded a scant few wholly beneficial items, which have the power to protect the user utterly or wholly destroy some creature of the Mythos

## MYTHOS TERMS

The following terms have rather specialized meanings in the context of a *CthulhuPunk* campaign.

**Cultist:** A human who has yielded his will to the worship or service of the Great Old Ones. In comparison to the worshipers of the Great Old Ones, all other human sects or "cults," regardless of how bloody or bizarre, are considered more-or-less normal religions.

**Elder Gods:** Among those who prefer to sub-classify the Great Old Ones, the Elder Gods are a group of unearthly, metaphysical entities neutral, or perhaps actively opposed to, the Outer Gods. They are, as a general rule, a good deal more anthropomorphic (at least, as they appear to humans) than either the Outer Gods or the Great Old Ones. Elder Gods described in this book include Hypnos and Nodens.

**Great Old Ones:** Those immortal and unique beings whose existence forms the cornerstone of the Mythos. Some scholars consider only inhuman, physically extant beings like Cthulhu and Hastur to be truly "Great Old Ones," classifying more remote and metaphysical entities like Azathoth and Nodens as either "Outer Gods" or "Elder Gods" (see below).

**Mythos:** From "Cthulhu Mythos." This term is used to denote, in the broadest possible terms, anything directly concerned with the Old Ones.

**Old Ones:** As distinguished from "Great Old Ones," this term refers to all prehuman entities or sentient races of the Mythos. Thus, a Mi-go or Elder Thing is an Old One, but not a Great Old One.

**Outer Gods:** According to some scholars, the Outer Gods are a powerful sub-category of Great Old Ones. Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, Tuzscha and Yog-Sothoth are all considered Outer Gods. Of all the Outer Gods, only Nyarlathotep willingly or routinely takes a hand in the affairs of humanity, or is even conscious of its existence.

**Servitor:** Any member of a non-human race in the service of the Great Old Ones, including non-corporeal beings and spirits.



without any unfortunate side effects, but such precious relics are incalculably rare, and tend to provide but a single use at full power.



## FORGOTTEN PLACES

When Lovecraft wrote, humanity was in the midst of an incredible age of discovery. The century previous had seen the opening of the African and Amazon interiors, the Australian Outback, the polar regions . . . During Lovecraft's lifetime, aviation opened the skies and practical submarine technology the depths of the ocean.

For all these exciting breakthroughs, however, there were still frontiers to be opened. Lovecraft knew that there were still places on the earth that no literate, civilized man had ever seen, and those were the places where he put his mysterious ruins and lost civilizations. It was plausible for his readers to believe that at any given time an expedition to the far corners of the earth could report back with news of literally anything.

However, in the years following Lovecraft's death, the age of exploration continued. Today — and all the more so in the high-tech near future of the cyberpunk genre — we have plumbed and mapped the ocean bottoms. We have not only traveled multiple times to virtually every region of the globe, we also have the ability to photograph the few places we can't reach from super-high-focus observation satellites. The impenetrable jungles and rainforests are fast succumbing to deforestation and pollution. In our ongoing quest for fossil fuels, we have drilled deep into the planet's crust and mantle. We have even walked on the moon and sent our mechanical surrogates to other worlds.

It is, in short, no longer credible to think that R'lyeh, N'kai or the city at the Mountains of Madness remain to be discovered. If their existence has not long-since been fully documented, it seems most logical by far to assume that they simply do not exist. In a *CthulhuPunk* campaign, set 50 or 100 years in the future, the possibility will seem even less credible. This is a problem for the *CthulhuPunk* GM.

*Continued on next page*

To the Great Old Ones, Earth is a backwater (though not, it seems, a completely insignificant one). The most important places are, by and large, not of this world. Below are listed some of the most important centers of Mythos activity, including their most significant earthly strongholds, as well as their homes in the stars and beyond.

## The Center of the Univerre

The court of Azathoth, the Demon Sultan, is a place beyond time and place. It has no astronomical coordinates, and is properly not part of this physical universe at all. Nonetheless, it has been dubbed "the Center of the Universe," for it is the seat of Azathoth, the blind, idiot god which is the primal source of all that is or ever will be. There, misshapen gods float in orbit around their colossal master as monstrous servants pipe insanely on inhuman flutes. No human could survive in such an alien place for even an instant, and even if he could the sight of the unholy dances of the Elder Gods would blast his mind instantly. Nonetheless, some humans have glimpsed in visions the Court of Azathoth, though those who survived the vision saw only a cloaked and muted reflection of the reality.

## Hali/Carcosa

This is one of the most mysterious places of the Great Old Ones, but also one of the most important. Hali is a lake (though nobody knows if it is filled with water or some far stranger liquid) on a planet in orbit around the star Aldeberan. Carcosa is a city or citadel said to exist on an island deep in that lake. Hali is the home of the unspeakable Hastur and his servants.

Carcosa is ruled by Nyarlathotep, in his persona as the King in Yellow. It is portrayed in a 19th-century play of mysterious origin, called *The King in Yellow*, as the home of an ancient and decadent humanoid race, but *The King in Yellow* is a work swathed in untold layers of symbolism and allegory, and no one really knows if the inhabitants of Carcosa are anything like humans in form or thought.

## Leng/Tsang

The blasted plateau of Leng is one of the most evil and deadly regions of the Dreamlands (see p. 18), but paradoxically, it is also the place where the boundaries between that world and this are thinnest. Leng borders most closely to the plateau of Tsang, in Tibet. Both are frigid, barren wastes surrounded by impenetrable mountains, and it would be possible to transfer from Tsang to Leng in a single step without even realizing that you had changed worlds. Fortunately, the walls between the worlds are usually strong enough to keep the inhabitants of the plateaus in their proper place, but from time to time there is slippage. It is said that millennia ago a race of dwarfish amphibians slipped through from Leng and interbred with the human tribes they found on Tsang, producing the unspeakable Tcho-Tcho race.

## The Mountains of Madness

These jagged mountains deep in Antarctica are known to guard the last remaining intact surface city of the Elder Things. The city was discovered in 1931, although the loss of most of the discovering expedition slowed further exploration. Although the Elder Things are believed to have abandoned the Antarctic city, there **are** reports that indicate that it may still shelter the horrid **Shogoths**.

## N'Kai

N'Kai is a vast network of caverns that lies beneath the North American Midwest. Some of N'Kai's chambers are the size of an entire surface city, and its total area is equivalent to that of a small country. It is the home of many creatures unknown to surface humanity. The Great Old One Tsathoggua makes his home there, and he may not be the oldest or the mightiest inhabitant of N'Kai. There are few entrances that lead from the surface to N'Kai, and they are well guarded.

## R'lyeh

More than a billion years ago, when Great Cthulhu and his servants came to Earth from the stars, they built a city they named R'lyeh on a smallish proto-continent. More than 800 million years ago, when the moon tore free from the earth, the ensuing cataclysm sunk the city of R'lyeh, deep beneath what's now the southern Pacific Ocean.

The cataclysm did not, however, destroy the city. Cthulhu and most of his Star Spawn were forced to go into a largely dormant state, but the residual power of its sleeping builders was enough to preserve R'lyeh, both from the cataclysm that originally sank it, and from the infinitely more destructive weight of the eons that followed.

Today, R'lyeh lies still beneath the waves, a sealed city of cyclopean stone. Built according to an alien geometry *that* Euclid never dreamed of, its angles look **indefinably** "wrong" to any human being who has the misfortune to see R'lyeh with his own eyes.

From time to time, for mystical reasons that remain obscure even to the worshippers of Cthulhu, R'lyeh will rise again for a few hours or a few days. Sometimes Great Cthulhu will even rouse himself for a while, leaving his ancient tomb to move about under the sun or the moon that sent him into exile, in a half-somnolent state. Such brief awakenings are usually heralded by worldwide disturbance in the minds of the psychically sensitive. Eventually, however, the Great Old One always returns to his bier and the city once more sinks beneath the waves — so far, anyway.

## Yuggoth

Yuggoth is the planet Pluto, as it was known to mystics and cultists for centuries before the astronomers even suspected that there was anything beyond the orbit of Saturn. It is most famous for being the staging area and headquarters for all Mi-go activity in this system. Although the Mi-go (see p. 112) have been called "the Fungi from Yuggoth," their true home is in some unknown and unimaginably remote star system Yuggoth is simply their local headquarters.

## FORGOTTEN PLACES (CONTINUED)

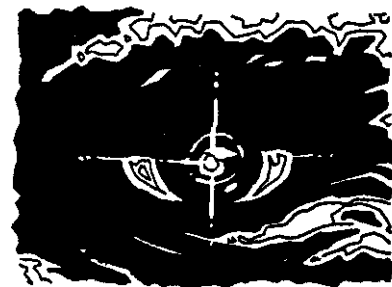
There are basically four possible approaches:

**They have been forgotten:** As previously discussed, the human brain is ill-equipped to deal with the reality of the Mythos, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that our race possesses a deep and instinctive urge to suppress evidence of Mythos activity. However, while this might explain why certain discoveries are not followed up as aggressively as they otherwise might be, and why certain hard data is ignored or misinterpreted, it does not adequately explain the utter ignorance of humanity toward the artifacts of the Mythos.

**They have been explained away:** The GM may elect to have the general public in his campaign aware, in a very general way, that there exist certain relics and ruins which indicate that Earth was occupied by intelligent creatures that predate the evolution of humanity. They should not, however, be aware that some of these ruins might still be inhabited, or the full extent of alien interference on our planet.

They have **been hidden:** The inhabitants of the mysterious place in question have taken action to hide their home from human eyes, through either natural or mystical camouflage. It is easy to believe that the Mi-go base on Yuggoth is hidden from even the most acute Pluto probe by being concealed beneath the crust of that frozen planet, and that the Mi-go mining operations here on Earth are also hidden within the mountains they plunder. The ancient wisdom of the Deep Ones and their king and queen should be easily adequate to the task of hiding their suboceanic dwellings — as well as R'lyeh, their sacred city — from inquisitive humanity. Likewise, N'kai is the home to many mystically-powerful creatures who may have the power to hide its existence from even the most subtle evidence of human science. The initial expedition to the Mountains of Madness may have triggered some kind of ancient defensive system of the Elder Things which now hides it from all but the most determined human investigation.

Continued on next page...



## FORGOTTEN PLACES (CONTINUED)

The chief problem with this approach is that, if used too promiscuously, it suggests an attention to human affairs, and an apprehension of human interference, which is not totally within the character of the Mylhos creatures. Some of the races and creatures of the Mylhos might take extraordinary measures to hide their existence from humanity. Other, more powerful entities would be more likely to simply annihilate intrusive human spies, while many just don't care whether humans know about them or not. It is possible, of course, that some of the hidden sites were hidden not to conceal their existence from humanity, but from other Old Ones.

They have been suppressed: It may be that certain high-powered government or corporate entities do know about some of the centers of Mylhos activity, and that they even have some idea of what the ruins imply. However, they are keeping these sites secret from the general public. This secrecy may be, in part, because of fear that that knowledge might jeopardize the menial welfare of the public. More likely, however, they are simply keeping the discovery confidential in the hopes of discovering and exploiting its secrets before their enemies or their competition.

But with knowledge of the Cthulhu Mylhos comes corruption from that knowledge. It would be safe to assume that corporations and governments alike are home to a significant level of Mylhos cult activity.



The Dreamlands are an alternate reality to which certain gifted humans can travel astrally while their earthly bodies are asleep. Most people visit the Dreamlands from time to time while they sleep, but only the most gifted dreamers can travel there whenever they wish, or impose their own will on the highly psycho-active reality of that place.

The Dreamlands are a distillation of all humanity's grandest dreams and darkest nightmares. They contain unearthly grandeur and beauty, but also unspeakable horror and danger.

Much more than a simple manifestation of the human unconscious, the Dreamlands are at least as "real" as the waking world. Our dreams do not shape the Dreamlands. The Dreamlands shape our dreams (although some of the great dreamers can permanently alter the Dreamlands). The Elder Gods and Other Gods are both more active there than they are in our world, and sometimes, under exceptional circumstances, Dreamland creatures can cross over into waking reality. The Dreamlands, however, operate under a set of natural laws completely alien to waking reality. There, "dream-logic" holds sway, and the most fundamental facts are all subject to change without notice.

The Dreamlands are the home to an endless variety of monsters and creatures, from tiny flitting things to behemoths able to level a city with a single blow. Most of these creatures are, at least to some extent, inimical to humanity.

Humans in the Dreamlands — at least the more skilled dreamers — seem to possess more mystical authority than waking humanity. The most powerful dreamers are able to face down — or at any rate avoid — even the most terrible Dreamlands monsters. Even the Outer Gods do not lightly meddle in the affairs of the great dreamers (and the great dreamers are usually wise enough not to meddle in the affairs of the Outer Gods).

The geography of the Dreamlands is protean, changing wildly from dreamer to dreamer and from dream to dream, but there are certain places that are always present, though they do not always stand in the same relationship to one another.

The village of **Ulthar** is the first place most dreamers arrive at. Innumerable cats lounge about its cobbled lanes, for cats spend most of their time dreaming, and are among the most illustrious residents of the Dreamlands. The city of **Celephaïs** is the most beautiful place ever imagined by the human mind, for it was built brick-by-brick by King Kuranos, the greatest dreamer ever produced by humanity. More sinister regions include the limitless mountains of Kadeth in the Cold Waste, and the dark subterranean Vale of Pnath, home of Ghouls and countless stranger monsters.

The Dreamlands can be a valuable source of information about the creatures of the Mylhos, and even a place to acquire power to use against them, but it is a treacherous place in its own right, and many who travel there never return to the waking world.



# TIMELINE OF PREHISTORY

Note: Mythos events are in bold italic.

-15 billion

Big bang. Origin of this space/time continuum.

-4.6 Billion

Origin of Earth. For the next several billion years, the Earth is covered by warm, shallow seas from which continents periodically emerge.

-4.1 billion

Origin of life on Earth.

-3.5 billion

Blue-green algae, simple prokaryote bacteria, oxygen enters atmosphere.

-2 billion

The Elder Things arrive on Earth. They **establish** their **first** city undersea in what is now the Antarctic Ocean. Using organic material obtained on the ocean floor they create the primal shoggoth which **the** Book of Eibon names **Ubbo-Sathla**, to generate their shoggoth slaves. Some scholars believe that the creation of **Ubbo-Sathla** triggers the transition of earthly life from simple anaerobic organisms to more complex oxygen-breathing life, thus making **Ubbo-Sathla** in some sense the origin of life on Earth as we know it.

-1.4 billion

Great **Cthulhu** and **his** spawn travel to Earth from the **star** **Xoth**, claiming an entire continent as their own and naming it **R'lyeh**. War with the Elder Things ensues.

Complex eukaryote bacteria evolve.

-1 Billion

The Elder Things make a truce with **Cthulhu** and begin work on a surface city in equatorial Antarctica.

-850 Million

The Moon is torn away from the Earth. The resulting catastrophe plunges **R'lyeh** **beneath** the ocean, sending **Cthulhu** and his people into dormancy. Over **the** next 300 million years the original Elder Thing cities deteriorate, destroyed by tidal forces generated by the new moon.

-800 million

First multicellular organisms.

-750 million

The Flying Polyps **arrive** on Earth from space. Seftling on the land-mass that will eventually become Australia,

they build windowless basalt cities. They find a species of large, **cone-shaped** beings living near their cities and use them for food.

-600 million

Organisms begin to develop parts hard enough to leave fossils. All modern phyla except the chordates (to which man belongs) are in existence.

-570 million

Cambrian: first invertebrates, trilobites.

-550 million

Chordates evolve



-500 million

Ordovician; mollusks, Jawless fishes  
Mountains begin to build in what is now the Eastern U.S., but most of the land masses are still flat and seas are still shallow.

Elder Things build their cities throughout what will eventually be Africa and South America, with outposts as far away as England,

-485 million

The minds of the great race of Yith travel through time and space and inhabit the bodies of the cone-shaped creatures of Australia. The Yithians quickly subjugate the surprised Polyps, and imprison them in subterranean vaults. The Yithians build guard cities above the vaults of the Polyps.

-450 million

The planet's crust has formed a major continent in the northern hemisphere, and another in the southern. The land that will become the Sahara desert is ice-covered at the South Pole. The two continents begin to move towards one another.

-435 million

Silurian; fishes with jaws and first land plants. Central North America is a vast inland sea. Volcanic activity increases as the continents converge.

-410 million

Devonian; insects, amphibians.

-395 million

The two primal continents collide, creating Pangaea, the supercontinent. The collision forms mountains in Scotland and Scandinavia.

-360 million

Mississippian; reptiles appear, giant insects.

-330 million

Pennsylvanian; reptiles continue to develop.

-290 million

Permian; seed plants, Trilobites die out.

-275 million

The serpent-folk civilization arises in **Valusia**, an area of **land** now split between Africa and Europe by the Mediterranean Sea. A parallel race of tailless Serpent Men exists to the East (building the Nameless City). The two ophidian races may or may not be related. Scholars **differ** as to whether one or both of these races is the first sentient race to arise on the Earth, or whether they are originally from another world

-150 million

The shoggoths revolt against the Elder Things. Although the Elder Things eventually win **what** is **virtually** a war of extinction, the loss of their servants triggers the decline of the race.

-240 million

Triassic; First dinosaurs, turtles, crocodiles.

-220 million

First mammals

-205 million

Jurassic; Birds, largest dinosaurs.

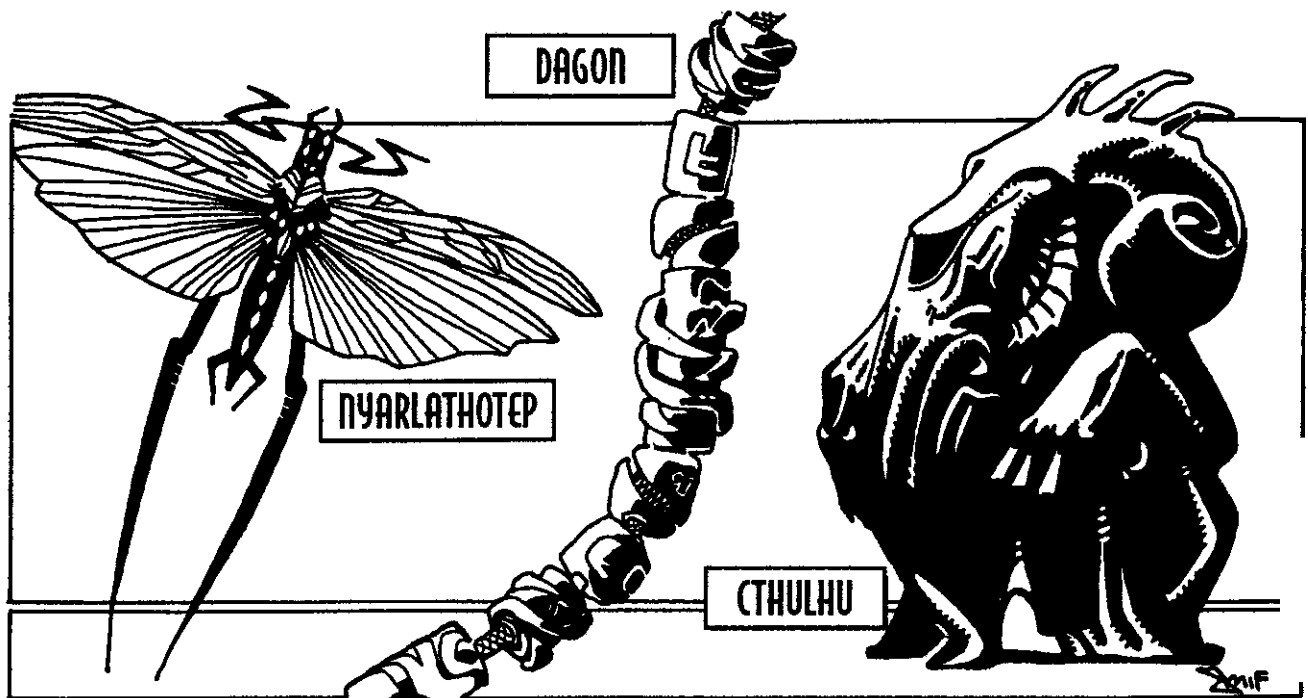
-100 million

Pangaea begins to split into present continents.

-160 million

The **Mi-go**, or fungi from **Yuggoth**, come to Earth and establish their first colony in the Appalachian Mountains. The **Mi-go** war against the Elder Things remaining in South America and Africa, but as the disintegration of





**Pangaea draws** the center of the two cultures further apart, hostilities decline.

-150 million

The Elder Things and the Yithians **fight** a great war on the wide strip of land connecting Africa and Australia.

-138 million

Cretaceous; horned and armored dinosaurs.

-100 million

Placental mammals, who give birth to live, **fully-formed** infants, evolve.

-70 million

The **civilization** of the Serpent Peopk begins to decline (possibly due to the **same** catastrophes and climactic changes that will eventually kill the dinosaurs).

F i t primates.

-63 million

Paleocene; dinosaurs extinct (possibly due to global cooling following a cometary collision), mammals dominate.

-55 million

Eocene; horses, camels.

-50 million

The Yithian minds flee the cone-shaped bodies & inhabit another **terrestrial** species far in the future, long after the extinction of the human race. With the Yithians gone, the Polyps soon break free of their prison and exterminate the cone-shaped creatures.

-40 million

Collision of the Indian sub-continent with Asia raises the Himalayan mountains.

-38 million

Oligocene; **first** monkey-like animals.

-30 million

Tailless anthropoid apes.

-16 million

The continents approach their present configuration.

-24 million

Miocene; mammals continue to diversify.

-17 million

Early great apes.

-12 million

Rarnapithecus diverges from human evolutionary line.

-6 million

Human line diverges from chimp and gorilla lines.

-5 million

**The Elder Things remain in two land cities, in Antarctica and at the tip of South America. As the planet cools, they begin to construct their final city, beneath the Antarctic ocean. If any of the race survives into the present, that is where they remain.**

Pliocene; human-like apes.

-4 million

*Australopithecus afarensis* appears in east Africa.

-3 million

Furry pre-humans in Greenland (referred to in ancient **texts** as **Hyperborea**) form a primitive civilization and worship **Tsathoggua** and his Formless Spawn.

-2.5 million

Australopithecines develop **first** stone tools.

-2 million

Pleistocene; humans evolve; ice ages, *homo habilis* fossils date from this time.

-1.75 million

F i t bone point is made.

-1.7 million

Advancing **glaciation** wipes out the civilization of furry pre-humans in **Greenland**.

-1.65 million

*Homo erectus* appears.

-1.5 million

*Homo habilis* becomes extinct, hand axe invented.

-1 million

Cooperative hunting, spear invented, language begins to develop.

Australopithecines become extinct.

-800,000 to -700,000

Fire domesticated, earliest hearth fires found in China.

-750,000

**Semi-mythical human civilizations of Hyperborea and Mhu-Thulan (in Greenland) destroyed by glaciation.**

-550,000 to -330,000

Man learns to make fire.

Earliest bone tool kit and simple clothing.

-300,000

Early *homo sapiens* (*Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*) appears, *erectus* becomes extinct

**-280,000 to 130,000**

Development of true spoken language and animistic religion.

**-200,000**

"Eve." theoretical female ancestor of all **modern** human beings, lives.  
Burial of the dead begins.

**-163,000**

*The continent of Mu, in the Pacific Ocean, sinks at this time according to some scholars. Others put the sinking much later.*

**-150,000 to 115,000**

Pre-Chellean culture in Europe uses flint tools.

**-100,000**

Chellean culture learns to shape flint.  
Neanderthal **craftsman** makes the earliest known ornament — a decorative amulet made from a piece of mammoth's tooth — in Hungary.

**-81,000**

Simple stone lamps are made.

**-75,000**

Acheulean culture in Europe develops specialized flint tools.  
Heavy clothing and the first spear throwers developed.

**-50,000**

*Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern man) appear.

**-44,000**

Legendary date for the first Sumerian kings.

**-40,000**

Aborigines arrive in Australia.  
**Mousterian** culture in Europe learns to skillfully flake flint to make tools.

**-35,000**

Development of totemism.

**-34,000**

Neanderthal man vanishes.

**-30,000 to -25,000**

"Age of art" begins.  
European peoples carve tallies in bone.  
Fired ceramics appear in Czechoslovakia, although ceramics will not be used to make pots for another 20,000 years.

**-25,000 to -10,000**

Cave paintings portray dancers and musicians.

**Primitive geometric** designs found.  
Venus cult arises.

**Boomerang** invented in Poland, 13,000 years before first Australian boomerangs.  
Aurignacian culture — the first Cro-

Magnon culture in Europe — learns to make tools from bone.

Sewing needle in France, tailored clothing in Soviet Union.

Bow and arrow possibly appears in Spain and northern Sahara (other evidence suggests bow did not appear until as late as 8,000 BC).

**-10,000 to -10,000**

Beginning of agriculture.  
**Solutrean** culture in Europe learns to make very sharp stone and bone tools and weapons.

Bone calendars made in Israel and Jordan.

Rope in use.  
Last ice age begins to retreat.  
Paleolithic culture in Egypt.

*Legendary reign of the human barbarian conqueror King Kull on the Thurian continent, followed by the sinking of Atlantis, Lemuria and the Thurian continent, according to some scholars.*

**-18,000**

Magdalenian culture in Europe develops very fine bone, ivory and horn tools, and creates more sophisticated art.

**-11,000**

Lascaux cave paintings created.  
Dogs domesticated.  
*Mythos-worshipping empires of Acheron and Stygia arise in what is now Western Europe and Africa*

**-14,000 to -12,000**

Humans cross land bridge from Siberia to America (some theories hold that the first immigration of humans was much earlier).  
By -12,000, they have spread from Alaska, to the East Coast, to Chile and Peru.  
Goat domesticated.

**-14,000 to -12,000**

Glaciers recede.  
Jomon people in Japan using pottery — the earliest-known extensive ceramics industry in the world.  
Reindeer, and cattle domesticated.  
*Sinking of Mu, lost continent in the Pacific, according to Colonel James Churchward.*

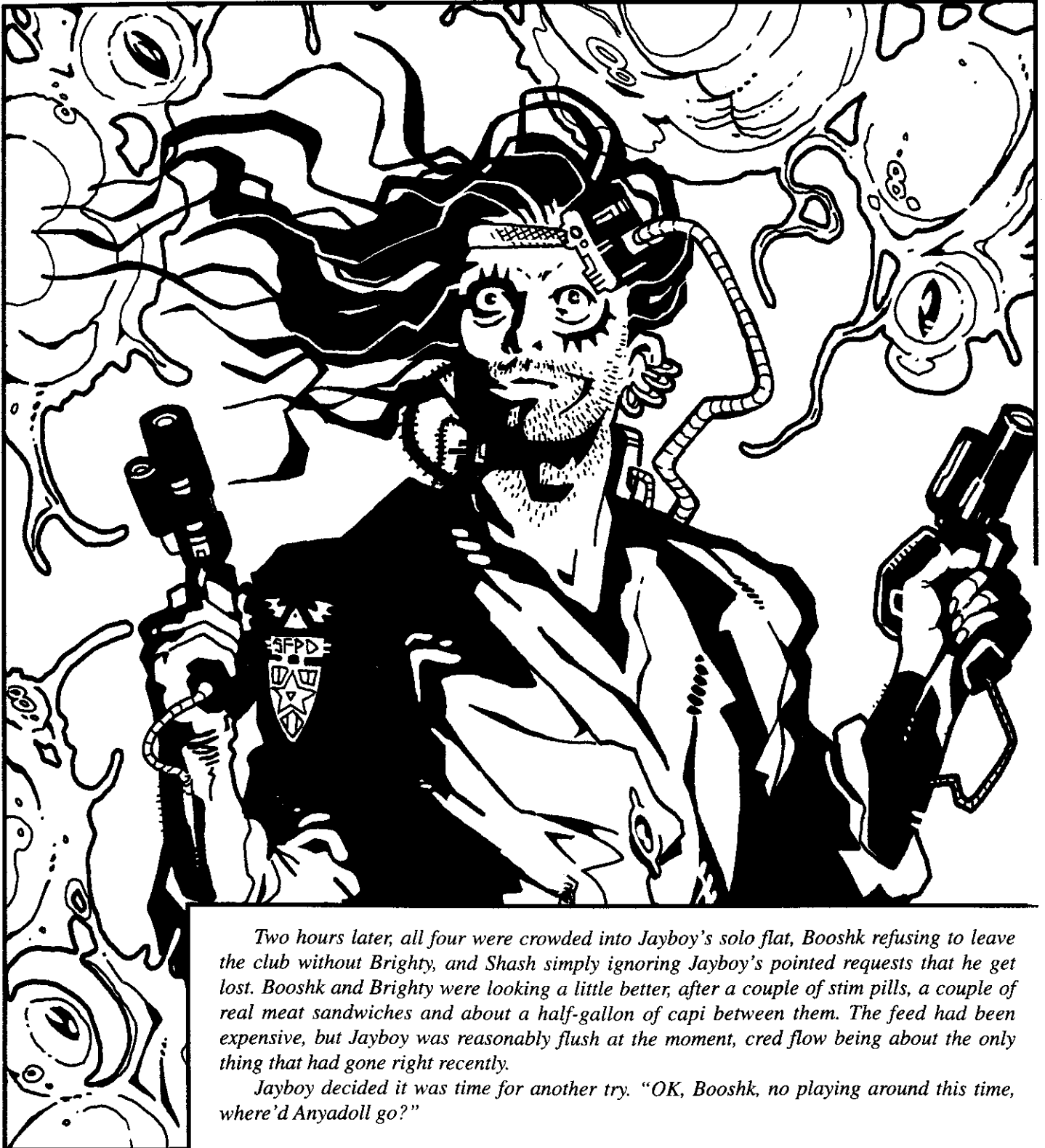
**-12,000 to present**

Holocene, the current geologic era; civilized humanity.  
*Legendary Hyborean civilization flourishes. Reign of King Conan of Aquilonia.*

**-11,500**

Destruction of Atlantis, according to Plato. The Theosophists will later pin the date down to 9564 B.C.



THE  
CTHULHUPUNK WORLD

Two hours later, all four were crowded into Jayboy's solo flat, Booshk refusing to leave the club without Brighty, and Shash simply ignoring Jayboy's pointed requests that he get lost. Booshk and Brighty were looking a little better, after a couple of stim pills, a couple of real meat sandwiches and about a half-gallon of capi between them. The feed had been expensive, but Jayboy was reasonably flush at the moment, cred flow being about the only thing that had gone right recently.

Jayboy decided it was time for another try. "OK, Booshk, no playing around this time, where'd Anyadoll go?"

"I haven't the faintest, lad, really. She told me she was looking for a new teacher; and then she told me she'd found one, and that was the last time I saw he. She never said who she found, or where."

Jayboy angrily paced the length of the flat several times . . . two steps up, two back. Then, since there was nobody else around to explode at, he yelled, "Dammit, Booshk, why'd you have to go filling her head with all that juju faex anyway? You know how much the nerks hate cult stuff. It sets them off worse than a thousand t-byte purge, and you can't even make a profit off of mumbo jumbo."

"No profit?" Booshk asked the capi machine, his eyes starting to glaze over again. "I suppose not. After all, 'what projiteth it a man, if he gain the whole world. . .'" Jayboy brought him back with a rough shake of his elbow.

"I'm sorry, lad," Booshk said, with a gentleness that surprised Jayboy. "I envy you your brain, Jayboy, truly I do. So sharp and straight, never a turn or comer anywhere inside. People like Annie and I aren't like that. Once somebody gets the hunger for knowledge inside them, you can't ever turn it off or satisfy it. You can just try to channel it into the least destructive paths. I suppose I failed poor Annie in that."

Jayboy didn't know what to answer, so he changed the subject. "These breetvas Anyadoll went looking for; you think they're dangerous?"

"Oo'zhas dangerous. No doubt there."

"Then I have to find hex"

For most people, the depressing deterioration of everyday life in *GURPS CthulhuPunk* has so overwhelmed them that they no longer have the capacity to care, much less do anything about it. Fortunately, the PCs are not in this lifeless group.

People who care enough about humanity (like the player characters) to recognize the dangers of the Cthulhu Mythos and dare to fight them are also well-versed in the more mundane dangers of the 21st century. And as their investigations proceed, who's not to say that knowledge of one kind of evil doesn't go hand-in-hand with the other?

Due to space constraints, and to keep the game's setting open-ended, this book concentrates mostly on the ways in which the Mythos interacts with the world at large, giving only the broadest outlines of the more mundane political and social situation.

If the GM desires more detail, any cyberpunk world can become a *CthulhuPunk* world. If the GM wants to base his campaign on the novels of a

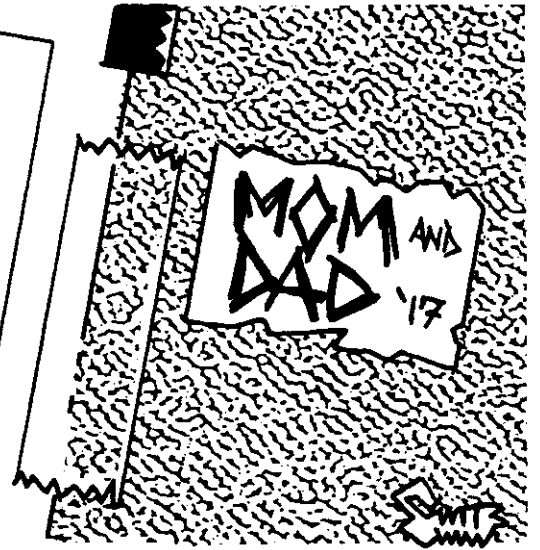
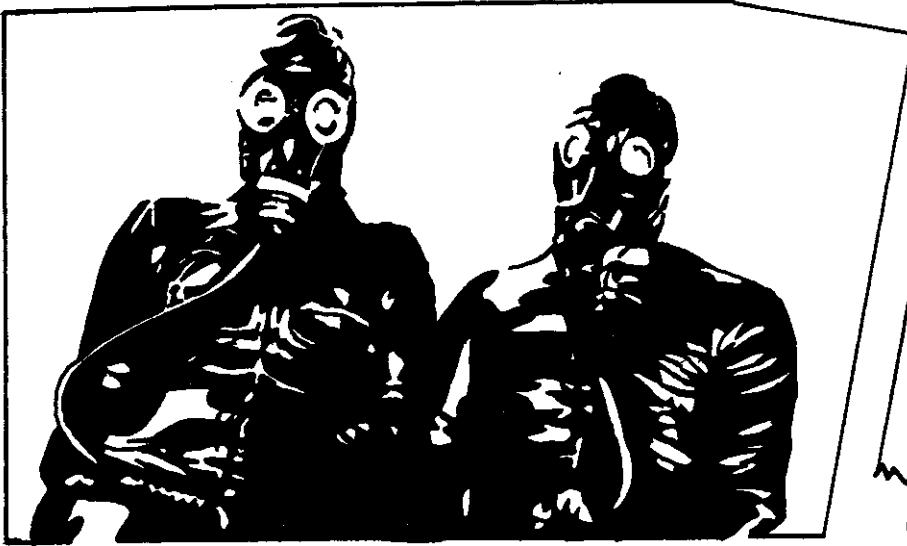
## TECH LEVEL

The default Tech Level for any cyberpunk milieu is TL8, although TLs can range easily between TL7 (or lower in economically disadvantaged areas) and TL9 without straining the genre. Higher TLs can incorporate elements of the cyberpunk genre (repressive corporate governments, virtual reality, cybernetic/genetic/chemical enhancement, information-driven economies).

The Tech Level used for *GURPS Cyberworld* is a very early TL8, and this will be the TL assumed in this book when such an assumption is necessary. Early TL8 means all of the TL8 technology described in the *Basic Set* and *GURPS Cyberpunk* exists, but it's not always available on the market. When it is, it might well be a prototype, larger and more expensive than listed. TL8 equipment will usually be completely unavailable in poor countries or areas. There is little TL9 equipment whatsoever, and where it does exist it is mostly in the form of highly primitive and unreliable individual prototypes — at this point, TL9 equipment is not mass-produced at all.

For a more detailed discussion of early TL8 technology, seep. 30.





## TIMELINE

1996 — Boris Yeltsin assassinated, Russia effectively withdraws from the (ex-Soviet) Commonwealth of Independent States.

1997 — A previously unknown plague strikes. Between 1997 and 2021 it will infect over 30% of the earth's population, and kill more than 1 billion people.

Hong Kong reverts to the Chinese.

Fidel Castro dies of natural causes.

1998 — Hurricane Ahner becomes the most destructive storm in history, devastating Cuba, the Caribbean and the American Southeast from Charlotte to Baltimore.

Japanese scientists produce a sustainable "hot fusion" reaction.

1999 — John Tolliver identifies the retrovirus responsible for the plague, which is named Tolliver's Disease (aka TD).

Commercial vehicles released that run on methanol fuels or electric powerplants.

A liberal government takes control in a bloodless coup in China, initiating seven years of economic development and trade expansion.

2000 — Hurricane Marko equals the destruction caused by Hurricane Abner along the same route, effectively confirming theories that the increased cyclonic storm activity is due to global warming.

2002 — The first practical virtual reality interfaces are introduced for high-end workstations.

After five years of unrest in Cuba, Raul Guzmán establishes a moderate socialist government.

Puerto Rico granted statehood.

2003 — NATO is dissolved.

*Continued on next page*

favorite author, or on source material from some other game company, or simply some setting he creates himself, he will find it entirely possible to do so, using the guidelines found in *GURPS Cyberpunk*.

The specific details found in this chapter, however, are drawn from *GURPS Cyberworld*, by Paul Hume. *Cyberworld* contains a wealth of additional information about 21st-century politics, culture, technology and organized crime. If the GM doesn't already have a specific "mundane" setting for the *CthulhuPunk* campaign in mind, this chapter will present enough background to get him started, with the added advantage of pointing the way to a ready-made resource (*Cyberworld*) when more detail is desired.



## Tolliver's Disease and the Grand Slam

Two events, both of them tragic, define the history of the 21st century so far.

The first is Tolliver's Disease, a retrovirus first observed in 1997 and isolated and named in 1999 by Dr. Justin Tolliver. Called "TD," "Touchdown" or "The Toller," the plague infected up to 70% of the population in crowded urban areas, and 75% of those infected died. All told, TD killed more than one billion people worldwide.

TD could be spread by aerosol droplet infection (sneezing, coughing), intimate contact, or, in the later stages of the disease, contact with the discharge from a victim's lesions.

The plague was especially devastating among the very poor — richer people could afford to isolate themselves in sealed environments. During the two decades of the TD plague, international travel slowed to a trickle, and most nations imposed stem quarantine and screening requirements on anyone seeking to cross their borders.

An effective treatment for the virus was discovered in 2008, but it was extremely expensive. An inexpensive vaccine was developed in 2019, and finally went into global distribution in 2021, effectively ending the Tolliver plague. Under normal circumstances, all PCs can be assumed to have been vaccinated against TD.

Some survivors of TD have hideous scars. No one scarred by TD can have an appearance greater than Average, and most have their appearance reduced all the way to Hideous by the scarring. TD scars are easily recognizable, and those

who suffer from them receive the Social Disease disadvantage (p. CP25), in addition to any reaction penalties from their appearance. Although TD survivors are not infectious, they are still feared and discriminated against by a society still deeply scarred by the plague.

## The Grand Slam

The Grand Slam was a worldwide stock market crash in 2006, which triggered a global depression from which the international economy is still recovering.

Even the strongest economies experienced double-digit inflation following the Grand Slam, and many less-stable economies collapsed utterly. Unemployment averaged 35% in major nations, and approached 50% in developing countries.

The Grand Slam caused the death of millions world-wide from starvation and civil unrest. The Grand Slam came at the height of (and was at least partially triggered by) the TD plague, and the chaos it precipitated certainly delayed development of the TD vaccine by several years.

Economically, the most important legacy of the Grand Slam was a shift from national currencies to economic community or korporate *valuta* (seep. 30).



While Azathoth and his court dance eternally and insanely at the center of the universe, the governments of Earth continue their insane dance as well.

## The Rurro-Japanere

After the fall of Communism, the governments of the former Soviet Union floundered about for several years in search of some semblance of economic stability, before finally reaching out to the Japanese for help. The Japanese, trying to deal with their own troubles of overpopulation and a chronic shortage of natural resources, answered. The combination of Japanese discipline, organization and technology with the human and natural resources of Eastern Europe was almost magic.

Today the Russo-Japanese Economic Union reigns in unquestioned dominance over the rest of the world economically and technologically. The alliance consists of Japan and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), composed of the former Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Latvia, Georgia, Moldavia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The dual capitals of the alliance are Minsk and Tokyo, but the real economic action is in the sprawls of Moscow and St. Petersburg, which together form the financial center of the 21st century, and the center of global culture as well.

In general, the mines, factories, farms and refineries of the alliance are in the CIS, while the corporate headquarters and labs are in Japan. There's a small hut growing undercurrent of racist friction in the alliance — not everybody in the CIS likes dancing while the Japanese call the tune.

## The U.S.A.

The democratic government of the U.S. is a thing of the past. Today the U.S. is under the iron control of the repressive, right-wing "Provisional Government," or ProGov, a name that has come to be strictly ironic — the gov-

## TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

Tensions between the Islamic States and the former Asian Republics of the Soviet Union lead to a disruption in worldwide oil production.

Power cells are invented, but will not become economically practical for almost 20 years.

2004 — Five Asian republics withdraw from the Commonwealth of Independent States.

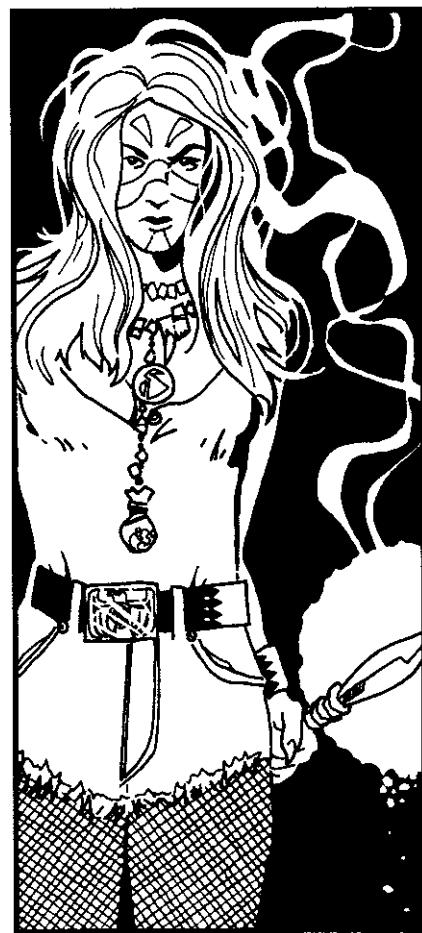
Hardline white Afrikaaners re-establish white rule in the South African cities of Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town. Revolution in South Africa disrupts worldwide markets for gold and other precious metals, producing a global financial crisis.

2006 — The "Grand Slam" — stock markets all over the world crash. Many weak economies collapse completely. Global unemployment ranges between 35% and 50%.

China's economic reforms are halted by the Grand Slam and furious infighting among its leaders.

2007 Record heat waves in August worsen civil unrest. Almost one third of the U.S. is placed under martial law.

*Continued on next page*





## TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

The Canadian national government effectively dissolves, largely due to radical regionalism in Quebec. The provinces become autonomous governments (the dissolution is not formalized until 2010).

2008 — The U.S. political situation splinters — multiple political parties scramble for the presidency. In the end, the office goes to moderate Walter Burris, with the vice-presidency to Archconservative party candidate Martin Patterson.

An effective treatment for Tolliver's Disease is devised, but it is expensive and most poor victims of the plague cannot afford it.

2010 — President Burris assassinated on April 17. President Patterson takes office, and immediately begins a purge of occult and mystical organizations, which his administration alleges are responsible for Bums' death.

2012 — President Patterson re-elected decisively.

2013 — After a short war, Cuba is annexed by the U.S.

*Continued on next page*



ement, it's pretty clear, is permanently "provisional." Provisional President (ProPres) Adam Hammond is dictator for life. The Provisional Congress is a rubber-stamp figurehead with no real power.

The ProGov's enforcement arm is the National Emergency Resource Control Commission, or NERCC (colloquially, the "Nerks"). The NERCC is essentially a paramilitary police organization, with almost unlimited powers in the areas of security and enforcement. The average Nerk is a stupid, vicious brute who'll shoot or swing a club at whatever target he's given — or sometimes just for fun.

The citizenry is also kept in line by the U.S. Citizenship Scale. This assigns every citizen in the U.S. a ranking from 1 to 4. Scale 1 Citizens, or C-1s, are the power elite — the very rich or politically formidable. C-2s are the upper middle class — executives, professionals, and influential bureaucrats. C-3s are the masses, the workers, the majority of the population. C-4s are a catch-all category of incomible criminals, political or religious dissenters, and the chronically unemployed or unemployable (including addicts and the mentally ill). There's a small subclass of "nullos," who've managed to drop out of the citizenship hierarchy altogether. Such renegades, criminals by virtue of their very existence, live a dangerous, hand-to-mouth existence on the fringes of society.

All citizens are required to carry a computerized "citcard" at all times. In addition to being his only legal form of ID, the citcard also holds his medical records, and all his financial transactions are handled through it.

Early in the 21st century, Mexico, faced with imminent catastrophic economic collapse in the wake of the Grand Slam, peacefully annexed itself to the U.S. In general, the U.S. treats its Mexican states like poor relations — Mexico remains mostly a source of cheap labor. A few of the southernmost Mexican states, calling themselves Mexico Libre, still cling stubbornly to a harried and impoverished independence.

Cuba was also annexed by the U.S. in the mid-teens, but at the moment it's in the grip of a small but bloody revolution. Martial law is in force.

### Elsewhere in North America

Canada dissolved in 2010, forming three new countries. The Communaut D'Atlantique Qutbecois is a confederation of former Eastern provinces dominated by Montreal. It's the most fractious and expansionistic division. The United Provinces consist of the former Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan and retains a mode of government basically identical to the old Canadian way, including a nominal fealty to the King of England. The Federated Provinces of Columbia and Alberta ("Col-Bert") declined an invitation to join the United Provinces, but retains a remarkably similar government (although they reject all ties to Britain), and is generally staunchly allied with the U.P. against the Communaut. The Northwest Territories have become a joint protectorate, their abundant natural resources administered by a joint commission made up of all three countries. The commission is organized so that as long as the U.P. and Col-Bert cooperate, they can deadlock the vote, but if they split on any issue, the **Communauté** carries the day.

Next door, the Alaska Free State remains only nominally a part of the U.S. Alaska is a proud preserve for traditional American ideals of freedom. As long as the ProGov leaves Alaska alone and doesn't try to enforce its repressive policies there, the oil and other natural resources keep flowing south. If the lower U.S. gets pushy, the tap goes off. If the ProGov tries to move in in force, the Alaskans have promised to turn the whole state — oilfields included — into a nuclear wasteland. Alaska is

also protected from all enemies foreign and domestic by its Alaskan Special Operations Force (AISOF).

## Central and South America

Chiletina, the country formed by the merger of Chile and Argentina, is the upstart of the 21st-century international scene. Its goal is to become a challenger (or perhaps a successor) to the Russo-Japs' global techno/economic dominance. It's a threat that the Russo-Japanese are taking more and more seriously.

Much of Brazil has been set aside as preserves by the International Rain Forest Protection Pact of 2031. This measure, ramrodded by the Russo-Japanese (who believed their scientists when they said that unless rainforest depletion was stopped, Earth would become uninhabitable in 30 years), makes vast portions of the Amazon Basin absolutely off-limits to settlement or economic development except for a few researchers and surviving indigenous peoples. In return, Brazil receives a regular stipend from the other world governments. Brazil's economy is stable, but stagnant. Outside of the rainforests, its only major industry is tourism.

The remaining South American nations are generally economically stable, but plagued by internal struggles, mostly against the *narcotraficantes* (see p. 34).

In Central America, the various impoverished countries of the region have banded together for survival, to form the Union of Central American States (UCAS).



## The Pacific Rim

Along with Chiletina, the various states of the Asian Pacific Rim are the up-and-comers of the 21st century. They're democratic, progressive, and fiercely capitalistic. Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan are all thriving, selling cheap tech of reasonable quality to those parts of the world that can't afford to do business with the Russo-Japanese, Chiletina or the U.S.

The unofficial capitol of the region is Singapore. To the naked eye, Singapore is still safe, clean and orderly. But behind closed doors it's the black market to the world. Anything can be had there, for a price (although for some of the more unsavory vices, they'll take your money in Singapore and arrange a

## TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

2014 — The Chinese "Third Revolution" government takes control, ending eight years of civil war.

2016 — The Yukon Territory becomes part of the U.S. at its own request.

Patterson re-elected for a second full term.

2017 — Patterson creates the National Emergency Resource Coordinating Commission (NERCC), an extraordinary body with broad powers to suppress dissent at all levels of American society.

2018 — A Moslem radical in the Near East claims the title of Mahdi and calls for a holy war against Israel.

The 22nd Amendment, which limits the number of elective terms a U.S. President can serve, is repealed.

2019 — A cheap vaccine against Tolliver's Disease is perfected.

(continued on next page...)2020 — President Patterson re-elected for a third term.

All industrial regulatory functions in the U.S. are consolidated under the auspices of the NERCC.

2021 — Israel is attacked by a coalition of surrounding Arab nations. When the dust clears, Israel has become the reluctant but undisputed ruler of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and much of Iraq.

The Tolliver's Disease vaccine goes into global distribution.

2023 — Russia and Japan form the Russo-Japanese Economic Union, which over the next 20 years will come to completely dominate world trade.

2024 — The U.S. erupts in flash riots. Martial law is declared. The Patterson administration uses this unrest as an excuse to abolish the constitutional government and establish itself as a dictatorship. Elections are suspended for two years. Twenty years later, elections have still not been held, and nobody seriously expects them.

An attempt to establish ProGov authority in Alaska is repelled by the Alaskan national guard.

*Continued on next page*



## TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

2025 — Chile and Argentina merge to form the nation of Chiletina.

Cuba granted limited statehood.

2026 — The Alaskan Free State is established. Alaska remains a nominal part of the U.S., but is virtually politically autonomous. Alaska booby-traps its mines and oil wells (a vital part of the U.S. economy) with low-yield nuclear devices to forestall ProGov interference in Alaskan affairs.

2027 Most of Mexico is peacefully annexed by the U.S. It is divided into six regions, each with limited statehood status. Only the five southernmost states of Mexico resist annexation.

The U.S. institutes its Citizenship Scale.

The U.S. Virgin Islands are made a part of the state of Puerto Rico.

2028 — The U.S. replaces martial law with its new "uniform code" of criminal justice.

2029 — Bolstered by the development of mutant strains of coca which can produce a whole range of potent designer drugs, the Bolivian drug cartels (*narcotraficantes*) establish themselves as a true independent force. The corrupt ruling regime calls for U.S. help, provoking a literal "drug war" which persists to this day.

Continued on next page

quick and comfortable trip to Bangkok or the Philippines). Singapore is the world headquarters for black market cyberwear of all grades, international arms sales, or any other kind of backdoor high-tech transactions. You can buy anything you want, but you can't chew gum on the street, and even the toughest customers know better than to spit on the sidewalk.

## Europe

The countries of Europe have banded together to form the commonwealth of United Europe. The political center of the U.E. is split between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, usually referred to as the Benelux.

The two dominant factions in the U.E. are a rather militant nationalist faction lead by Germany and Italy, opposed by a more moderate cabal composed of the Iberian Federation (formerly Spain and Portugal), England and the Scandinavian states.

Although by no means dominant on the global scene, United Europe is economically stable and remains a player.

## The near East

The Near East remains a hotbed of national strife. Through no fault of its own, and against its better judgment, Israel came to control Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and a sizable chunk of Iraq. Today Israel needs all the friends it can get internationally, and is aggressively courting the Russo-Japanese (and in the process steadily alienating its traditional ally, the U.S.). The remaining Arab nations continue to snipe at Israel and squabble amongst themselves (Iran now controls what's left of Iraq), although with the rise of fusion power, the international importance of the oil-producing nations is greatly diminished from the glory days of the 1970s.

A more serious threat to world peace is the Central Asian Federation (CAF), made up of the former USSR states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. Although nominally a socialist republic, the CAF is in fact an expansionistic, totalitarian regime much in the tradition of the old USSR. It's a persistent thorn in the side of the CIS, and a constant global troublemaker. Fortunately, its constant internal racial and political struggles keep it from becoming a real threat to any of its neighbors . . . so far.

## China

China liberalized at the turn of the century, becoming a major player in international economics, and the leader in the field of genetic research.

Then, in 2032, the government collapsed and China slammed down the Bamboo Curtain again, cutting off most diplomatic and economic contact with the rest of the world.

China is a big question mark on the map of the 21st century. Nobody has any idea, really, what's going on in there.



## Africa and India

Africa and India were hardest hit by the Grand Slam. Today, Africa is back where it was in the 19th century technologically, socially and politically. Its nations exist in name only. The only exceptions to this rule are Egypt, which enjoys a relative prosperity, and Madagascar, which is poor but economically stable. India is worse off than it has been since before the British came. Famine and disease are common and catastrophic.

Nobody goes to Africa or India by choice — it's just too depressing, and unsafe. However, the extreme conditions in these regions make them excellent candidates for outbreaks of Mythos-related activity.

## Australia

Australia is the great unsolved puzzle of the 21st century. In 2037, over the course of less than six months, every man, woman and child in Australia died. Nobody knows why. The Australian plague never spread beyond the Australian mainland, and this too is a mystery (though one at least partially explained by stringent post-Tolliver immigration and quarantine policies).

Most of the rest of the world believes that Australia was the victim of an experimental Chinese virus that got out of control. The Chinese, of course, deny this categorically, and nobody's pressing the issue out of fear the Chinese might do it again if pushed.

New Guinea, New Zealand and Tasmania were quarantined for several years after the plague, but no sign of the disease ever appeared. A nominal Australian government-in-exile is maintained in Tasmania.

The assembled governments of the world have agreed that nobody would even try to set foot on Australia until 2087, but already some factions are getting sweaty palms. Whoever can claim Australia first — and survive to hold that claim — will take an instant quantum leap forward in international power and wealth.

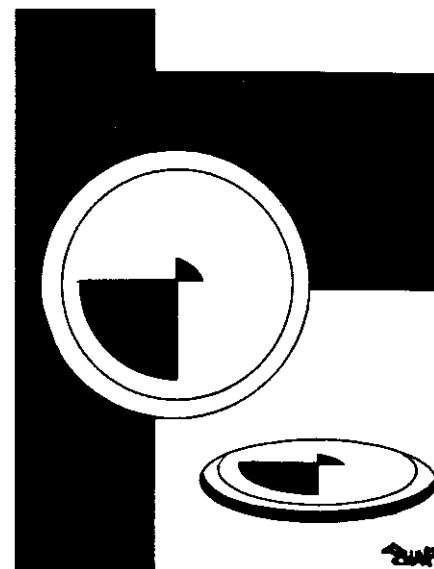
There is a small amount of hotly-contested satellite evidence that seems to indicate low-tech human activity in the deep Australian outback. If somebody (or something) is out there, they must be deliberately trying not to be seen by satellite.

Manned expeditions sent to the continent (usually expendables like convicts or political undesirables) have all had the same result: no survivors found (though the non-primate animals and all plant life are doing just fine, thank you), and loss of contact within a week. When (or if) the plague will die out is anybody's guess.



## Business and Economics

In the 21st century, the multi-national corporations (or "korporations") are just as important to the world economy and way of life as the national governments... maybe more so. There are hundreds of thriving korpors, some comparatively small and specialized, others with their fingers in everything. Most korpors inspire absolute loyalty in their employees by promising and delivering absolute security — lifetime employment, full health care, a safe place to live, an active korp-sponsored social life, guaranteed education for the kids, and eventually a bungalow at the corporate retirement enclave and a nice clean shelf for your family's urns at the corporate mausoleum.



## TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

2030 — After three years of warfare with the U.S., the five southernmost states of Mexico regain independence as Mexico Libre, part of the Union of Central American States (UCAS).

2031 — Patterson dies, apparently of natural causes. NERCC administrator Adam Hammond is appointed to replace him as president of the provisional government.

The Russo/Japanese alliance pushes through the International Rain Forest Protection Pact, which establishes the Brazilian rain forest as an ecological reserve area. The Pact demands that the governments of the world subsidize the government of Brazil, in return for Brazil giving up exploitation of the rain-forest, which provides the globe with a large proportion of its oxygen.

2032 — ProPres Hammond establishes the Provisional Congress of the U.S. This "elected" body has the power to approve presidential executive orders (which have the force of law), and to propose new laws to the ProPres (though they do not have to power to override a presidential veto).

Sinowara develops the first practical neural computer interface, sparking the "data wars" — several years of intense industrial espionage and sabotage.

The "Second Bamboo Curtain" goes up. China cuts off all diplomatic and most economic contact with the rest of the world.

*Continued on next page*



## TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

2037 — A previously unknown disease breaks out in Australia. Between May 16 and September 3, this disease will kill (as far as is known) literally every man, woman and child on the Australian continent. Australia remains completely quarantined to this day. An "Australian" government is established on the island of Tasmania, which is untouched by the plague, as is New Zealand.

2039 — "Data Wars" finally exhaust themselves.

2041 — Cuban guerrillas under the command of Major Rafael Echeveria initiate revolutionary/terrorist activities. The Echeverista revolution continues to the present. The U.S. imposes martial law.

Multi-national korps are virtually small autonomous nations without borders. They have their own currency, their own military, their diplomatic and espionage arms, and their public welfare programs. High-level executives wield an almost feudal power over their subordinates.

The biggest of the big are the "Bolshy Ten," the ten top multi-nats in the world. They are Hiromatsu Power Systems, Ishido Communications, Korsakov-Shimadzu, Kosmozavot Tenno Tanjo Ltd., Shinowara Integrated Industries, Todai Technosystems (all Russo-Japanese), Rio Largo Manufacturing (Chiletina), North American Technologies (U.S.), Han-Rhee Ltd. (Korea), and Fabrique Europa (European Community). All of these corporations are into everything, names notwithstanding. Hiromatsu Power Systems and Ishido Communications are both equally likely to own, say, restaurant chains or bowling-ball manufacturers.

A korp is about as far as you can get from the Mythos. The korps are almost the last bastion of the great consensual illusions of civilization and progress that have shielded humanity from cosmic reality for the last 10,000 years. With the exception of a few specialists and field-agents, korpfolk are the *least* prepared to come face-to-face with the Mythos of any segment of 21st-century society.

## Money Gamer

The world markets of the 21st-century are a swamp. Playing with the currency exchange is like bobbing for apples in a tank full of piranhas — the benefits rarely outweigh the risks.

Most 21st-century money is "cred" — electronic currency that can be traded from one account to another over the net. A tiny fraction of the world's cash is "fold" — real, hardcopy bills. Governments keep trying to make the switch to a cashless society, and they keep failing. There are too many important people who occasionally have to make a transaction that doesn't involve computer records. Of course, in some lastworld countries, you have to have fold if you want to pay for anything outside of the major cities.

Money, either cred or fold, can either be *valuta* — strong, reliable currency hacked by the most stable governments or the top korps — or *dengi*, which on a good day might be worth the paper it was printed on (if it was printed on paper, which it's usually not). It's easy to make a fortune playing with dengi on the international currency exchanges . . . but much, much easier to lose one.

The best and hardest sort of valuta is the *ecu*, or Economic Community Units. The best ecu of all is the Russo-Japanese rubyen, followed, roughly in this order, by the United European eurotaler, the U.S. neodollar, and the Chiletinan peso.



The world of 2045 sits on the cusp between Tech Level 7 and TL8. Most of the innovations associated with TL8 exist, but they haven't really become assimilated into the culture yet. Personal defense still has more to do with bullets than with comic-strip zappers. Cyberwear is rare, and not quite 100% streamlined. Bio-engineering is talked about more than it's seen, and computer "deckers" are one in a million — most people still have to talk to their system through a keyboard. Still, time marches on . . . in the deep bowels of the research laboratories, the first clumsy, oversized prototypes of TL9 are already being hatched.

One of the few indisputable bright spots on the horizon of the 21st century is the development of safe, clean fusion power. Other good news is the development of high-capacity portable "power slugs" and continued development of high-temperature superconductor technology.

Cybenvear is only starting to come into its own. There are basically three grades of the stuff: State of the Art (SOTA), Standard, and Street. You can get just about anything you can pay for at the SOTA or Street grades. The difference is that SOTA is safe, reliable and (if the buyer wants it that way) invisible. Street cybenvear is obvious, ugly and frequently unreliable. SOTA cyber costs the price listed in *Cyberpunk*, but it's usually only available to characters with Social Status, Wealth, a powerful Patron or an appropriate Unusual Background (GM's option). Street cybenvear will have the Reduced Durability disadvantage from *Cyberpunk* and will be Unreliable, Breakdown Prone or both (player's choice), however these disadvantages do not reduce the list price of Street cyber.

Standard cyber is safe, reliable and unobtrusive, but not invisible (it can be spotted on a Vision roll, or automatically detected by touch). It costs the price listed in *GURPS Cyberpunk*, but does not get the listed discount for being detectable (however, it also doesn't have a prerequisite advantage attached). There are also a lot of listed **cybermods** that are just flat unavailable at Standard grades — mostly military and espionage-oriented stuff. Black market cyber is, by definition, either SOTA or street. Very detailed **rules** for cybenvear availability are given on pp. 98 to 100 of *Cyberworld*, but if that hook is unavailable, cyber availability is **determined** entirely by GM's fiat, based on the principle that offensive, defensive or spy modifications are always harder to get than general utility or **information-processing** gear. Also, of course, more advanced, high-tech stuff will be less available than simpler modifications.

As far as weaponry is concerned, the firearms from the *Basic Set* (or *High-Tech*) will be far easier to find than the more advanced arms listed on p. CP60 or in *Ultra-Tech*. Most countries limit weapon ownership strictly to licensed users, and weapons cannot be **carried** or displayed in public. In many countries worldwide, virtually all private ownership of **firearms** is illegal. Of course, that doesn't mean that firearms are in any way unavailable. . .



The net is young, healthy and growing. It's the new frontier. In the 21st century, every literate citizen uses a computer whenever he wants to read something, write something or conduct any business whatsoever.

## POWER SLUGS

High-efficiency Power Storage Cells are an intermediate step between TL7 batteries and mature TL8 power cells. While they provide the same voltages and have the same lifespan as power cells, these units are heavier, clumsier; hence the term "slugs."

Slugs can be used to power any equipment that uses power cells. Such equipment must be built to use the larger slugs. Many devices are designed with the power slug separate from the device, and attached by a cable, with a plug on one end to attach to the device, and a housing on the other that holds the actual power slug.

Heavy slugs can be used to power things like energy weapons, usually with the slug worn in a battery pack on the belt, or in a backpack harness, with a reinforced cable running to the weapon.

**AA** slugs: These are disk-shaped, 11/2" in diameter, 1/4" thick, and weigh 1 ounce each. **AA** slugs cost \$1.

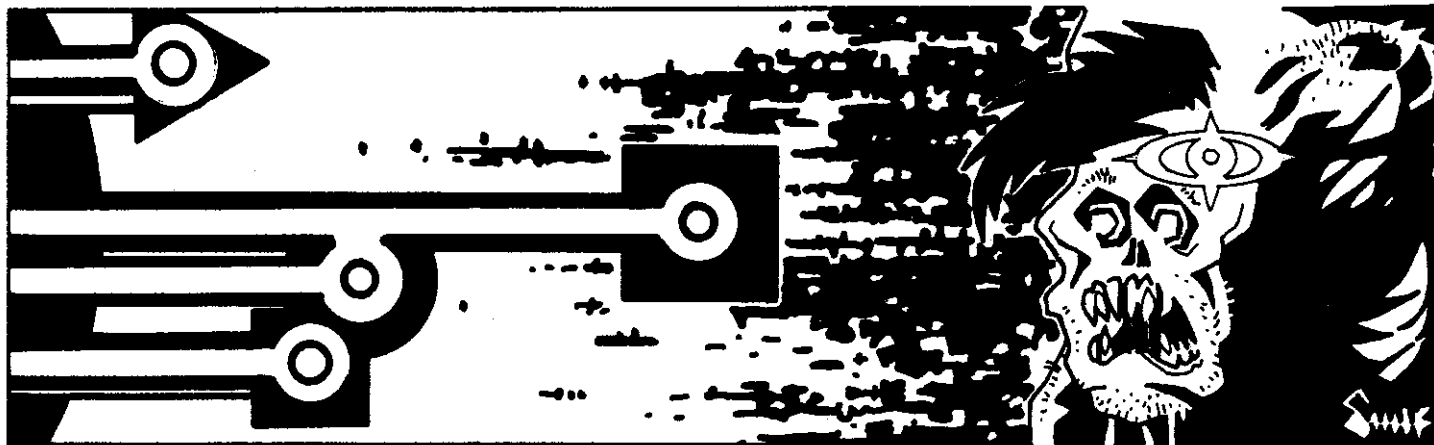
**A** slugs: These cylinders, 2" long by 1" in diameter, cost \$5 and weigh 1/2 lb.

**B** slugs: These are cylinders 6" long and 2" in diameter. They cost \$15 and weigh 7 lbs.

**C** slugs: These are either cylinders 12" high and 4" in diameter, or cubes 6" on a side. A **C** slug costs \$50 and weighs 20 lbs.

**D** slugs: **D** slugs come in cylindrical form (18" high and 6" across) or a 12"×8"×6" block-shape. A **D** slug costs \$250 and weighs 40 lbs.

**E** slugs: **E** slugs are cubical, 18"×12"×8". They cost \$1,000 each and weigh 120 lbs.





## NEURAL INTERFACES

In the early TL7 world described in *GURPS Cyberworld*, cyberdecks are not yet common, off-the-shelf technology. Neural interface technology is reserved for the elite among korporate and government programmers. There is a tiny but growing contingent of outlaw deckers, and within the computer underworld they are nearly gods.

Neural interface technology is barely a decade old. The first workable Marquee interface was developed in 2032 and immediately sparked the Data Wars, a flurry of vicious and unrestrained industrial espionage and sabotage between various multinats that lasted until 2039. For all their viciousness, the Data Wars were probably the reason that neural interface tech is as advanced as it is today, advancing the technology in just seven years to a point that would normally have taken decades to reach.

Cyberdecks — the hardware that makes a computer capable of operating with a neural interface — cannot normally be purchased for any price through normal retail or black-market channels. Independent deckers have to either steal their decks from a government or korp, or make one themselves. Legality Rating for either manufactured or homemade cyberdecks is 4, meaning private ownership is illegal in most countries.

### *Marquee Interface*      \$12,500 (5 points)

Installation requires a major surgical facility and takes two weeks. Marquee can be installed without nanotools, but installation takes two weeks with nanotech, four weeks without.

A Command Phase (see p. C73) for a Marquee Interface takes 4 times longer than normal. Marquee Interfaces have a Legality Rating of 3.

*Continued on next page. . .*



In the 21st century the net has taken on an economic and cultural life of its own, quite independent from any one government or corporation. Repressive regimes, like the ProGov, may not like the net's potential for anonymous free speech, but there's little it can do about it. The ProGov does censor all information disseminated via public data terminals (though it hasn't yet been able to efficiently restrict access to the net via private phone lines), and it actively monitors the more subversive corners of the net for evidence of dissent.

The vast majority of netizens still rely on old-fashioned words to communicate with their machines, sometimes spoken, usually typed. The traditional cyberpunk idea of off-the-shelf, full neural-interface cyberdecks being available in any mall or pawnshop is not yet a reality. Neural-interface computers are less than a decade old, and anybody who wants to become a decker either has to have some serious connections with a government or a major korp, or build it himself.

Most outlaw deckers are renegade korpbabies — kids and teens who've grown up in the korporate enclaves, and who have gotten their environmental interfaces and training at korp expense, so the korp will have a ready-made pool of talent to draw from as neural-interface technology advances. Most "renegades" are just kids being kids — snooping around, playing dumb games. As long as they don't cause too much trouble, the korps tend to look the other way . . . it's good training. A few kids, however, have gone "over the wall," taking their cyberdecks with them. If such a renegade is tough enough to survive, he can write his own ticket. These young rebels form the seed of the true outlaw decker underground. Needless to say, the korps will go to just about any length to get their lost lambs safe back in the fold.

There also exists a medium ground between old fashioned interfaces and true neural interfaces, and that's the "virgonomic" interface. Virgonomics uses virtual reality technology to bring man and machine closer together. For example, with a virgonomic visor and gloves the hacker doesn't need a keyboard or a screen — he just makes the typing motions, and the gloves send the data to the computer, which displays it on the goggles. A virgonomic controller for any PC or workstation costs \$1,000 and consists of two gauntlets, or "v-gloves" for input and "wizzie goggles" for output. The state of the art in virgonomic interfaces is the "hot rig," a full-body suit that provides a complete VR environment. Hot rigs are not normally available on the open market.



The biggest business of all is still thriving. If they were counted, the Russki-Yaks and MafInc would be right up at the top of the Bolshy Ten.

Of course, most crime is of the good, old-fashioned disorganized variety, where one or more ambitious freelancers exploit whatever commercial opportunities present themselves. But the big boys are always around, and if a freelancer is successful enough, eventually the organization will come around looking for its cut.

There are, broadly speaking, four distinct varieties of major international criminal syndicates (or five, depending on how you count Il Unione).

### The Rurrki-Yak

The criminal culture of the Japanese *Yakuza* has always been a vital, if shadowy part of that country's politics, economics and customs. The Russian "organized crime" establishment was basically a loose collection of small-time



thugs and local bosses. When the **Yakuza** moved in to organize and mobilize the Russian mobs, something resulted that was greater than the sum of its parts. As the corporations of the Russo-Japanese alliance mse to dominate the world of **commerce**, the national criminal organizations mse in prominence on their coat-tails . . . or maybe it was the other way around.

Whatever the **case**, today the **Ruski-Yakuza** form the absolute, unchallenged world **criminal** elite. They're ubiquitous, with operations all over the world. They're organized, with operations modeled on the most reliable principles of international business. They're strictly state-of-the-art technologically, and with all their money, why shouldn't they be? And, of course, they're completely **ruthless**. With a little bit of discretion, they don't even have to worry about the **PR concerns** that sometimes hobble the profit-making activities of even the most **grasping** korps.

The Ruski-Yak "**zeroman**," or assassin, is the most fearsome killing **machine** ever **created** by man, trained to a razor's edge and loaded with invisible attack **cyber**. Nobody, but nobody messes with the **Ruski-Yak** — not the governments, not the korps, not the other criminal syndicates. It's safe to assume that if there's any project, anywhere, that might possibly some day turn a profit, then the **Ruski-Yak** are watching the situation or they're already secretly **running** it.

### **Il Unione**

**Il Unione** is a loose confederation of **European** criminal syndicates. It stays **strictly** local and it doesn't even **try** to challenge **Ruski-Yak** supremacy in Eurasia. Nonetheless, it **can** be **nasty** if challenged on its own **turf**.

### **MafInc**

For **almost** 200 years, the Mafia has been the dominant force in American organized crime, and today it's stronger than ever. The repressive regime of the U.S. **ProGov** has been good to organized crime — vices and diversions that used to be cheap and publicly available **are** now available only through the mob.

The **Mafia** also took a big step forward organizationally **under** the leadership of Don Merle Alexander, **capo di tutti capi** (boss of all bosses) in the '20s and '30s. (Although Mafia "**Dons**" are still descended **from** Sicilian ancestry, most of them, **like** Don Alexander, have adopted non-Italian-sounding family names as protective coloration.)

Alexander's inspiration was to bring all the legitimate business interests of all the major **Mafia** families together into a single, modern mega-korp, with a strict and absolute separation between the **criminal** and the legal operations. This Mafia-funded consortium is sometimes referred to as "**Familia, Ltd.**" (its real name is left to the GM — and its connection to organized crime is **not** public knowledge).

Unfortunately, Alexander was caught in the Australian plague. His death

## NEURAL INTERFACES (CONTINUED)

**Icon Interface** \$40,000  
(13 points)

Installation requires a major surgical facility and **takes** 10 days. **Nanotools** are **not** absolutely **necessary**, but if not used installation requires a major **medical** facility and **takes** three **weeks**.

A Command Phase takes 2 times the **normal** length. Legality Rating is 4, meaning that in most **countries** an **Icon** Interface must be **licensed**, **registered** or **both**.

**Environmental Interface** \$100,000  
(30 points)

Installation **requires** a major **medical** facility and **takes** **four weeks** — two for the actual **surgery**, and two more to learn to use the **interface**. This **orientation** is **essential**, and **requires** access to a powerful computer and a **cyberdeck**. If the user tries to **skip orientation**, **he** can only use his implant as an **Icon** Interface **until** he **finishes** his training.

Environmental Interfaces **have** normal Command Phase intervals. They have a Legality **Rating** of 4, requiring **licensing** in most **societies**. In **restrictive** societies, possession of an **Environmental Interface** is illegal except to those with specific governmental authorization — either **government** agents or powerful **corporates** **working** on projects **essential** to **government** interests. The most powerful **korps**, of course, **can** get **virtually** any project declared "**essential** to **government** interests."



## THE ARMY OF SATANIC ORDER

President *Burriss* was assassinated in 2010, during a speech in Cincinnati, OH, by an anti-personnel warhead fired from a man-portable rocket launcher. President *Patterson* soon announced that a terrorist "cult" calling itself The Army of Satanic Order had claimed responsibility for the assassination.

*Patterson* immediately moved to purge the nation off all sorts of occult and quasi-mystical organizations, including organized Satanists, Wiccans and other neo-pagans, The Golden Dawn, OTO, Michaeline Order and other hermetic organizations, spiritualists, Rosicrucians, Transcendental Meditation proponents, researchers into psychic phenomenon, the SCA and fantasy roleplaying gamers (the Masons, along with a few other fraternal orders with close ties to the centers of power, were specifically excluded from this purge). A few days later, a block of tenements in downtown Cincinnati was utterly destroyed by bombs and mortars from the U.S. Army and the Ohio National Guard, and *Patterson* announced that the ASO had been trapped and destroyed in its headquarters.

*Continued on next page*

immediately set up a power struggle among the families that still hasn't been resolved. However, while *Alexander's* absolute divorce of the legitimate and criminal sections of the business has wavered a bit since his death, *Familia, Ltd.* continues to flourish, and keep its hands (fairly) clean.

Meanwhile, traditional Mafia operations of crime and vice continue to be run with much the same blunt efficiency as always. Hit men and leg-breakers still ply their art much as they did at the turn of the 20th century, with a few interesting cybernetic enhancements.

## The Triads

The Triads, or tongs, are the traditional Chinese organized crime syndicates. They're over 300 years old, with mythical origins that stretch back almost two millennia. There's

no real central organization to the Triads — they're a collection of gangs, not a single monolithic criminal organization. Their names usually end with the word "society." Along the Pacific Rim — both the Asian and the American sides — the Triads are just as strong as *MafInc* or the *Russki-Yak*, and often stronger (except, of course, in Japan itself, where the *Yakuza* rule unchallenged). They're also a force to be reckoned with in any Western city with a significant population of Far Eastern immigrants (i.e., a "Chinatown").

The Triads are the most mystical and superstitious international criminal organization (making them naturals for involvement with the *Mythos*). They have a street rep for being a little crazy — sometimes suicidal in matters of honor or vengeance. Martial arts training has been a crucial part of Triad life from the beginning, and today they're still masters of unarmed and low-tech combat.

## The 'Traff

'Traff is short for *narcotrajicante*. The 'traffs are the South American drug cartels that handle the production and distribution of most of the world's illegal narcotics. The 'traffs are different from most of the other major criminal organizations. They do only one thing, and they stick mostly to one place. The *Russki-Yaks*, *MafInc*, *Il Unione* and the Triads all come to the 'traffs for their supply of street drugs. The 'traffs are wholesalers. They let the other criminal organizations handle the retail end of the business.

On their own turf, however, the 'traffs are literally feudal enclaves. They have staked out vast tracts of land in their home countries where the drug-crops are grown, where the 'traffs are the only law and the only government. They often go to war against the nominal governments of their territories to preserve their autonomy.

At the moment there are three major 'traff organizations: the *Chavez Cartel* of Bolivia, the *Mordella Syndicate* of Peru, and the *Colombian Group of Three*. In general terms the *Group of Three* is richest, the *Chavez Cartel* is the most

high-tech (specializing in designer drugs derived from their gengineered cocanova plant), and the Mordellas are the most ruthless.



The 21st century is a world of mass-media overload. Entertainment and advertising together (assuming there's any difference between the two any more) make up the majority of the sensory input for any given citizen in any given firstworld country on any given day. And still they cry for more.

Video rules. Joe Average Consumer can choose from literally thousands of video programs at any given moment. There are no more "TV stations," just hundreds of different "programming tracks" that the viewer can tune to — or if he wants to, he can custom-design his own TV schedule from downloadable shows kept on file at the cable company.

Loud, vulgar and excessive are the watchwords of the day. The emerging mediums of virtual reality and 3-D video only add to the overall luridness of it all. The news is frankly sensationalist, with desperate freelance broadcasters all scrambling to catch some lucrative exclusive on the latest disaster or scandal that they can sell to the national news services.

Gladiatorial combat is back. Arena bouts between two human beings (with or without weapons or cyberwear) are among the most popular video fare. Actual fatalities are unusual (though common enough to keep the mob interested), but the blood is real.

On the opposite end of the cultural spectrum, there's the *more-talked-about-than-actually-seen* "snuff art." This is a public performance that climaxes with the suicide of the artist. There's a faction of the artistic anti-establishment that declares snuff art the ultimate aesthetic expression. It's illegal in most countries to plan, sponsor or knowingly attend a snuff art performance. Exits involving self-immolation or high explosives are particularly frowned upon.



## Spookies

One specific corner of the pop culture that Mythos Investigators might be advised to keep an eye on is the music and fashion statement usually called "spook."

The spookies wear stark, loose clothing always colored white, and either grease their hair or shave their heads. They wear heavy make-up and jewelry with a voodoo/black magic theme. Their music is slooow and scary, with a throbbing bass line and incomprehensible, sinister vocals buried way down in the mix. Most "traditional" (if that word can be used for a musical form less than a decade old) spook music is performed by bizarre ensembles of orchestral and acoustic instruments. The signature instrument of spook — what the violin was to classical or the guitar to rock — is the bassoon. There is a technospook fringe that prefers to produce their sonic morass with computers.

## THE ARMY OF SATANIC ORDER (CONTINUED)

Of course, as the Patterson administration rapidly tightened its stranglehold on the nation, it soon became obvious to everybody who was not totally brain-washed by government propaganda that the whole "Satanist conspiracy" angle was just a ruse. Everybody knew (even if they didn't say so out loud) that Patterson had had **Burris** assassinated himself, then trumped up a purge of harmless fruitcakes to take the rap.

That is, this was obvious to everybody, with the possible exception of those who take an interest in the Old Ones and their activities.

Investigators of the Mythos know that there really are powerful occult conspiracies out there, with the ability and motivation to organize a presidential assassination and government coup.

Of course, even those who know about the Old Ones can see that **Patterson** was executing a naked power grab, and that most of the groups he harassed were either benign or harmless, and most of the people he persecuted were completely innocent loyal citizens.

They wonder, however, if it's not possible that the government used this savage pogrom to cover up an assault on a real occult cabal of true Mythos cultists, and if this cult wasn't really out to overthrow the government — maybe even really behind the presidential assassination. They wonder if perhaps it's possible that the whole affair was a ruthless but effective — maybe even **necessary** — preemptive strike against a Mythos cult.

These speculations lead to yet another troubling question — what, exactly, does the government know about the Old Ones, and how long has it known it?

Few even among the students of the Mythos dispute that the **ProGov** is tyrannical, opportunistic, immoral and fundamentally deceptive, but they also have to face the unpleasant possibility that it might be, in the long view, the good guy — an unpleasant solution to an unthinkable alternative.

None of the above, however, changes the fact that due to **ProGov's** ongoing anti-occultist policy, Mythos investigators are, themselves, engaged in illegal activity and subject to government persecution.

## PUZZLING EVIDENCE

There are plenty of other mysteries of life in the 21st century to worry about. Things make a horrible kind of sense if you have some idea about the Old Ones and their nature.

**China:** When the Third Revolution closed off mainland China behind the new Bamboo Curtain, students of the Mythos were forcibly reminded that China had always been a hotbed of Mythos activity (particularly those regions surrounding the Plain of Tsang, p. 16, and the Tcho-Tcho people, p. 98). Was the Bamboo Curtain erected as a random act of political paranoia, or because those who *really* controlled the Third Revolution wished to seal off the country for reasons of their own? And if that is so, *what are they doing in there?*

**Australia:** In a little less than six months, a whole continent is depopulated by a strange "disease," right down to the last man, woman and child, yet somehow this disease never jumps to any other land mass. Microbiologists have no idea what could cause such a thing. Military researchers can't say how something so horrible can exist.

Students of the Old Ones, on the other hand, find it extremely easy to name forces that could cause such a tragedy. They can think of half a dozen possibilities without trying particularly hard. Of course, that in no way proves that extraterrestrial forces either deliberately or accidentally depopulated Australia. But to a Mythos scholar, that's easier to believe than the various plague theories!

Then there are those controversial satellite photos which seem to show signs of low-tech human activity deep in the Australian wilderness. Students of the Mythos find it easy to believe that there may be activity, and it might well be low-tech . . . they're just not so hasty to jump to the conclusion that it's human.

(For that matter, TD is a completely explained scientific phenomenon, but that doesn't stop some from asking if it might not have a supernatural component in its emergence and propagation. After a certain level of Mythos knowledge, it's impossible *not* to wonder about things like that)

**Weather:** Do pollution and global warming really completely explain the strange and destructive weather patterns of recent decades? Perhaps, but students of the Mythos know that there are powerful elemental forces that could easily manifest such mega-storms. Is it really just a coincidence that both Hurricane Abner and Hurricane Marko circled around the known center of global Deep One activity? And furthermore, that they circled *the wrong way* . . . northern hemisphere hurricanes tend to swerve in a clockwise path, but Abner and Marko both swerved counter-clockwise.



The vast majority of spookies are *not* mystically inclined. On the contrary, the whole intent of the movement is ironic and satirical. Spooks dress and act like they do just because their occult trappings freak out the straights.

There is, however, always a lunatic fringe, attracted to the spookies by their macabre image and too out of touch with reality to see the joke. This fringe element will be irresistibly attracted to the Mythos, if they get wind of it. The spookies are an excellent breeding ground for cultists, particularly those of a nihilist bent (see p. 93).

There's even a certain element of Mythos danger in the mainstream spook movement. Spookies often use chants and rituals in their performances, and they don't much care where they come from as long as they look good and sound cool. No self-respecting spookie could resist standing up and chanting *Yog-Sothoth! Ia Shub-Niggurath! Cthulhu Ftaugn!* once somebody taught him the words. To the spookies, it might all be a big joke, but the Thing they're chanting to could miss the humor. A genuine Mythos wizard might use the spookies as an unwitting "congregation" from which to draw energy for a summoning ritual or some other piece of dark magick. It's even possible that the spookies might run across some ritual in an old hook or manuscript, and play it out just for kicks.

## Soothsayers, Gurus and Extremely Alternate Religions

The 21st century exists in a spiritual vacuum, and nature abhors a vacuum. The traditional religions are stagnant, desperately trying to hang on to their ever-declining social power and political influence through stubborn dogma and intolerance.

A lot of people just give up on religion entirely, but others go shopping for spiritual fulfillment . . . elsewhere.

The 21st century religious underground is a morass of tiny and obscure sects, cults, philosophies and societies. They range in attitude from the saccharine sweet to the apocalyptically pessimistic, and in practice from the masochis-

tically rigorous to the libertine. In this atmosphere of thousands of twisty little religions, none alike, the Mythos cults can sometimes stick their noses out of the skeleton closet and go semi-public.

Of course, they don't come right out and say, "Great Cthulhu wants to eat you and Nyarlathotep wants to rape your mind." Instead, they present themselves as a typical occult "mystery religion," perhaps a bit more cynically realistic than most. As initiates persist in the cult, they are gradually introduced to more and more "mysteries," until at last they are thoroughly indoctrinated into the service of the Great Old Ones. Virtually any popular guru or self-proclaimed prophet could be fronting for a Mythos cult.

The personality type these dark missionaries are looking for is the *experience junkie* — someone who isn't really looking for inner peace or fulfillment, but just wants a more and more intense experience. When such a person discovers that even Satanism is usually just an excuse to insult organized religion and have lots of kinky sex, and goes looking for something more "real," that person is ready for the Mythos cults.

Some semi-public Mythos gurus are frankly deceptive towards their flocks. They make up some nice sounding, meaningless religious drivel, use the power they get from the worship of the Old Ones to reinforce their message in the minds of their followers (through "miracles" or just old-fashioned mind control), and eventually get their followers completely devoted, almost addicted, to the leader and his powers. Once that stage is reached, the leader can use his followers as a source of even more power with which to harness even stronger Mythos energies . . . it's a self-feeding, almost vampiric cycle.

## Space Travel

For most of the 21st century, space exploration has been on hold. There's been enough to worry about right here on terra firma. Satellite technology has continued to evolve — every country worth talking about has at least a few communications, weather and spy satellites in orbit, as do all of the multi-nats. Several of the larger nations maintain permanent manned orbital laboratories, which produce nanotools, a staple of the 21st century economy. Not only must nanotech be manufactured in a zero-g environment, but at the current state of the art nanotools have a life span of no more than a few weeks when taken down the gravity well to the Earth's surface.

The largest and most important manned space station is the famous Zurich Orbital data haven, where the very richest countries and corporations can archive their most sensitive data, without fear of compromise by either hackers or spies.

Nobody's even thought about venturing out past the LaGrange points for decades, however. Long-range space probes have been scarce and plagued by

## WILD PLACES

Among opponents of the Old Ones, there are those who consider overpopulation something of a blessing in disguise.

Inhuman races, you see, flourish in the wilderness, far from human civilization. The less wilderness, the theory goes, the better for the interests of humanity.

Although the TD plague and the ravages of the Grand Slam relieved global population pressure a bit, by 2043 the planet is filling up again — population is well over 6 billion and climbing. The wilderness is not, however, shrinking everywhere. There are some regions where civilized humanity is still rare and relatively powerless.

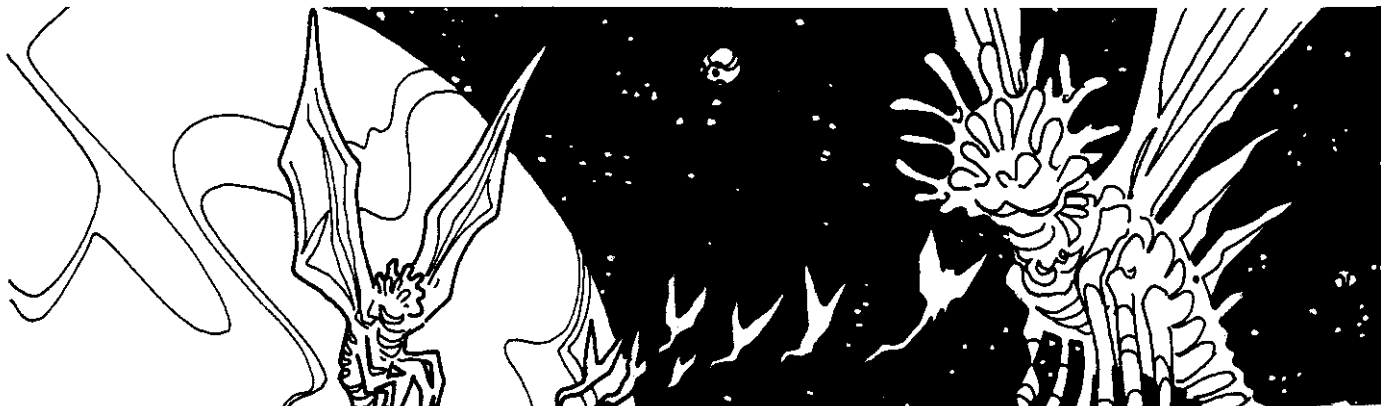
**Arctic regions:** The cold wastes have been the home to inhuman creatures since the world began, and those that remain there today are little troubled by humanity.

**The Rain Forests:** The International Rainforest Protection Pact places stem limits on the number of people who can enter the Brazilian rainforests. The forests have been expanding and restoring themselves at an astonishing pace. Literally anything can hide in their green vastness.

**Australia:** Humanity has been driven from the entire continent of Australia — possibly by accident, possibly not. If unearthly creatures needed a remote base camp, Australia would be ideal.

**China:** Although it is far from being either underpopulated or uncivilized, China does have the advantage of being completely isolated from the rest of the planet. With the sole and debatable exception of the Chinese government itself, China is the single largest blank spot on the map today.

*Continued on next page . . .*





## WILD PLACES (CONTINUED)

India *and* Africa: The TD plague and the Grand Slam hit these two regions harder than any other on Earth, set back at least 100 years economically, socially and culturally. Although neither Africa nor the Indian subcontinent is by any stretch of the imagination underpopulated, civilization presently exists there only in a spotty and corrupt form. India and Africa in the mid-21st century are, for all practical purposes, as savage and mysterious as they were when Lovecraft was alive — and much more savage and mysterious than they were at the end of the 20th century.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

One reason that the influence of the Old Ones on human history is not more widely known in the 21st century is the decline of archaeological fieldwork.

In the 19th and 20th centuries there was a historically unprecedented fascination with digging up the secrets of the past: however, in the 21st century, practical archaeology has declined to a virtual stand-still. The reasons, at the most basic level, are the TD plague and the Grand Slam.

TD brought international archaeological efforts to a complete standstill, as countries all over the world imposed draconian barriers to travel in a futile attempt to stop the spread of the disease. Holdover policies from these days continue to make international scientific investigations a bureaucratic nightmare.

The Grand Slam simply exhausted the funding for most major educational institutions, and expensive archaeological expeditions were an inevitable target when the budget axe descended.

In the present, most archaeological expeditions are korporate funded. Many countries still require archaeological surveys to be conducted **before** permission can be granted to develop a certain area. Needless to say, since a discovery of any archaeological **significance** can indefinitely halt all **korporate** development plans for an area, such surveys are usually no more meticulous or accurate than they absolutely have to be.

For additional guidelines on rationalizing the lack of information about the Mythos in the 21st century, p. 18.

mechanical failures. Talk of a manned mission to Mars is still just talk, and the men who walked on the moon all died years ago.

Today, however, with economies on the rise and resources on the decline, interest in manned space travel is resuming. In fact, the Russo-Japanese and Chiletina (with the U.S. as a dark horse contender) seem to be the verge of an old-fashioned space race. Both countries have plans for a permanent lunar installation in 10 years, with a manned Mars mission to follow shortly thereafter, and permanent research stations on Mars and the Jovian moons by the turn of the century.

The problem, of course, is that the solar system is already quite thoroughly settled. From their system-headquarters on Pluto, the Mi-go have been mining the planets of the solar system for millennia (at least, we know they've been mining Earth, and there's no reason to believe they've neglected the other planets). Will the resumption of space travel be the trigger that pushes humanity and the Mi-go into open confrontation?

And the Mi-go, of course, are by no means the most fearsome or powerful creatures that live between the stars. Eons ago, an advanced race lived on the planet Mars. They left their cyclopean ruins to be found by humanity when it comes, but nothing else remains. Will humanity share the same fate when it dares to reach out past Earth?



## Undersea Exploration

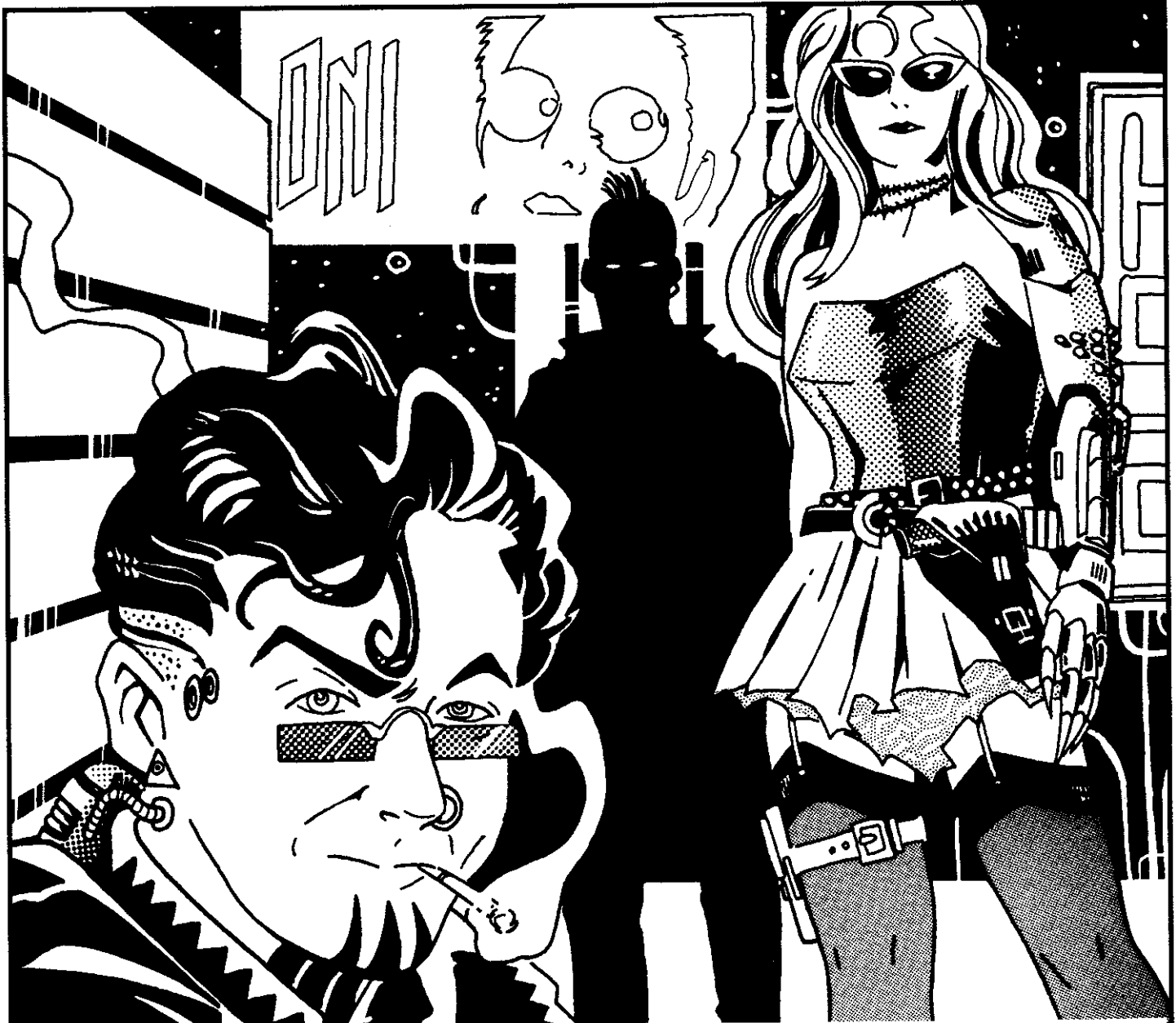
As humanity recovers from the Tolliver Plague, and the globe once again approaches catastrophic overpopulation, more and more governments and corporations are **looking** to the ocean as a source for mineral resources, food, and perhaps even a place for humanity to live.

Of course, this does not take into account the fact that for the last million years or so a powerful, ancient civilization has regarded itself as the sole proprietors of the 2/3 of Earth's surface that lies beneath the waves. Although it seems likely that certain governments have known of aquatic **sentients** for over a century, it's nonetheless highly probable that these governments have no conception of the age or power of the Deep One civilization.

There are still only a few hundred manned, **permanent** sub-surface installations worldwide, and the Deep Ones seem content to simply move away from prying surface dwellers, or to camouflage their homes and shrines, rather than to tangle with encroaching humanity head-on. Already, however, the first **skirmishes** in the inevitable war between humanity and the Deep Ones seem to have begun (see p. 119), and it seems certain that in the future tension will only escalate. Right now, it's a waiting game . . . how long can the Deep Ones wait before rising up in defense of their homes? And how long thereafter before the governments will have to announce to their citizens that they are sharing their planet with a hostile race of immortal amphibians? And what will that do to already shaky public morale?

Even more dangerous, perhaps, are renewed efforts to explore the deep ocean trenches. These cold hells of darkness and pressure are the home to Things even older and more terrible than the Deep Ones. A simple bathyscaphe exploration of the remote trenches seems unlikely to disturb any ancient sleepers (though particularly unfortunate explorers may discover otherwise), but if, as some have suggested, the corporations begin sending down robotic high-pressure mining and drilling operations to rob the trenches of their mineral wealth, who knows what else they might stir up?

## CHARACTERS



"Look, you guys don't have to get involved in this, you know," Jayboy said, again.  
 "Yeah, so what's your point?" Brighty asked, oiling her claws and checking the magazine in the compartment of her right arm.  
 "What about you, Shash? You got no stake in this business."  
 "Well, it's like this, Livewire. See, I've already seen all the viddies on tonight's tracks," Shash grinned and tucked his street-treat .45 in his belt.

"Fine, OK, suit yourselves." Just then, a stranger slipped into the flat. Jayboy reached for his heat, then realized that the intruder was Booshk, with his makeup washed off and wearing ordinary black jeans and a white shirt.

"Nice look. Works for you," Shash piped up, earning himself a withering glance from the deplumed Booshk.

"Find anything?" Jayboy asked as Booshk fished an iced capi out of the fridge and commandeered the rolled futon to sprawl on.

"Maybe. There's a new commune on the East Side. Asian separatists. Supposedly licensed Buddhists practicing Zen. Judging from their security, though, they're not pacifists. Anyway, somebody I know thinks he saw Anyadoll with them."

"Well, nothing wrong with taking care of your own." Shash said. "So Anyadoll decided to get back to her roots."

Booshk made a rude noise. "Annie's about as interested in Zen as she is in joining a convent. Whatever Anyadoll is doing with this crowd, she's not exploring the five-fold path. If Annie went looking for them, that means they're into something nasty. If they went looking for her, it's probably even nastier."

Jayboy slumped into the kitchen chair. "OK, Booshk, so she's into some rough faex. But at least we know that she's OK. I mean, if this is really where she wants to be, we don't really have any business busting that up, do we?"

Booshk got up and laid his hand on Jayboy's shoulder, and this time Jayboy didn't pull away. "It's just not that simple, lad. There are other considerations. This is becoming serious." He paused for a moment. "But I suppose it's my problem now. You three shouldn't risk yourself further."

"Here we go again," said Brighty. "This conversation is getting really boring, boys. Let's go."

## Starting Point

In a *CthulhuPunk* campaign, the starting point total of the PCs is, in a way, quite meaningless. Point totals mean nothing to game balance in a campaign where the ultimate enemies are the Great Old Ones — 100-point characters and 1,000-point characters taste the same to Great Cthulhu.

The primary consideration in determining a starting point total, therefore, should be the desired "feel" of the campaign. In a 100-point (or less) campaign, the characters are "ordinary Joes" — a bit more gifted than most, perhaps, but nothing to write home about. This level of play is best suited to conveying the pure Lovecraftian feel of ordinary people caught up in forces beyond their comprehension. At this level, the team will be able to afford little or no cyberwear.

At 150 points, the characters have a little bit more freedom to explore some of the more exotic options of a near-future milieu, and slightly increased survivability against cultists and low-power creatures. Cyberwear becomes a much more attractive option.

A team of 200-point characters will be an elite unit, probably quite arrogant in their illusion of professional invincibility — at least, until they find out what they're *really* up against. It can be good horror psychology to allow such remarkable characters to breeze through the early encounters with cultists and minions, only to pull the rug out from under them at the climax of the adventure, when they finally get some glimpse of the power of the real enemies. At this level cyberwear will be common and very potent.

Very high point totals — 300 points and above — are not recommended in campaigns where the PCs are gifted "normal" humans. However, they can be appropriate in campaigns where the PCs have certain specific and dramatic supernatural powers. In such a "monster-level" campaign the party might be made up of powerful psionics, mutants, or even werewolves or vampires (or perhaps a diverse mix of such characters). Such a campaign works best when the public at large finds the PCs (should their true nature become known) as terrifying or monstrous as the creatures of the Mythos, regardless of the PCs' true motivations.

An appropriate non-supernatural character option for this sort of campaign is the character who has been cybernetically modified or genetically engineered almost to the point where he's no longer recognizable as human.

In general, however, such inhumanly powerful characters lie beyond the scope of

this book. Superhuman psychics can be created using the rules in the *Basic Set*, but GMs might also find the more detailed and expanded rules in *GURPS Psionics* useful. Guidelines for creating lycanthropes and other supernatural shape-shifters can be found in *GURPS Bestiary*. *GURPS Psionics* and *GURPS Supers* include a number of exotic abilities for mutants.

A plethora of information on creating and roleplaying "monsters" as PCs can be found in *GURPS Vampire: The Masquerade*, *GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse* and *GURPS Mage: The Ascension*, adapted from White Wolf Game Studios' *World of Darkness* games.



## Maximum Disadvantages

For most campaigns, it is strongly recommended that starting characters be limited to no more than 40 points of personal disadvantages (perhaps even fewer). This is because of the strong probability that the characters will acquire more debilitating mental and physical disadvantages during the course of the campaign, due to exposure to Mythos-related creatures and energies (see "Sanity, Terror and You," p. 41).

In a "monster level" campaign, characters might be allowed a certain amount of additional disadvantages directly related to their inhuman nature.



## Character Concepts

The influence of the Great Old Ones is everywhere, and anybody can become enmeshed in it. Consequently, virtually any sort of 21st-century character is suitable for a *CthulhuPunk* campaign.

All of the character types listed in *GURPS Cyberpunk* or *GURPS Cyberworld* are appropriate for use in *CthulhuPunk*. Also, the various Investigator Professions from the *Call of Cthulhu* game can be a useful source of character ideas, all easily modified for 21st-century use.

One of the most important questions in any PC's character background is *how does he know?* How does he know about the Old Ones or their cultists when the rest of the world remains so ignorant? The answer is different for each individual, but each of the descriptions below tries to give a few notes as to how a character of that type might come into possession of enough forbidden knowledge to begin actively opposing or pursuing the Old Ones or their servants.

## Artist

Among those who study such things, it is well-known that persons of artistic temperament are particularly sensitive to the activities of the Great Old Ones and their minions. Artists are often plagued by strange visions and nightmares during times of extraordinary supernatural activity (see *Mythos Awareness*, p. 47). An artist might easily be driven by such visitations to delve further into their meaning and source.

Of course, an artist character need not limit himself entirely to artistic pursuits. Perhaps he was drafted into the military when younger, and came out with some combat skills, or perhaps he's a computer artist with useful technical or programming expertise.

An artist has at least one artistic skill at 13 or better, and often one or more scientific skills developed in the pursuit of his art (Archaeology, Architecture, History, Theology, even Physiology). Gifted artists may purchase the Mythos Awareness advantage (see p. 47) at a reduced cost.

## Bodyguard

This is perhaps the easiest way to inject some "muscle" into a team of investigators — have one of the PCs (or an NPC) be a hired bodyguard to another more affluent or influential party member . . . a dilettante, scholar or doctor. The bodyguard may also serve his employer in another capacity, such as chauffeur or valet.

Bodyguards have high combat skills, particularly in hand-to-hand and small arms. They usually have Alertness and Combat Reflexes, too. Many have combat-related cyber modifications.

## Charlatan

Outwardly, a charlatan seems much like a mystic (see p. 43). The difference is that the mystic truly believes in the arts and forces he seeks to understand and control. The charlatan truly believes only that people will believe *anything*, and if you make the right pitch, you can get paid for getting them to believe it.

Of course, if you spend enough time howling at the moon, eventually you'll draw the attention of the wolves. If a charlatan is lucky, his first introduction to the truth of the Old Ones will come from those seeking to investigate or combat their activities — they'll come to the charlatan hoping he'll turn out to be a source of aid or information (which he may sometimes, unknowingly, actually provide). If he's not so lucky, he'll be introduced to the forbidden secrets by cultists, who'll see him as a useful ally, potential rival or suitable sacrifice.

Despite his fundamental skepticism, a charlatan can make an extremely useful addition to the team. Charlatans are good at manipulating people to get what they want, and at passing themselves off as whatever someone else wants or expects them to be. These gifts can be extremely useful to someone attempting to infiltrate or investigate a cult of paranoid psychopaths.

A charlatan has very high social skills, and usually a strong working knowledge of Psychology. He often has a good grounding in Theology and Occultism, even if they have no personal faith in the things they study. A charlatan is particularly adept at Acting, Fast-Talk, Sex Appeal and Savoir-Faire. He often has some thief/spy skills, particularly Holdout or Sleight of Hand. Common advantages include Charisma, Empathy, Intuition and Luck. Common disadvantages include Greed and Overconfidence.



## Clergyman

Any devout member of a "mainstream" religion who comes to any degree of knowledge about the abominations of the Mythos cultists and those they serve will undoubtedly be profoundly changed by the knowledge. Some will lose their faith, and others their sanity, but some will be moved to take action — to begin personal crusades against the "demons" of the Mythos and their followers.

There is a tendency to think of clerical PCs in terms of highly trained, formally ordained professionals, like a Catholic priest or a Jewish rabbi. However, a PC clergyman could just as easily be a part-time minister with no formal training whatsoever: a fundamentalist Protestant lay-evangelist, or a neo-pagan who acts as the shamaness of her circle in her spare time.

Clergy and religious leaders of non-Western or non-traditional religions are just as liable to take up arms against the creatures of the Mythos as Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Possibilities include Buddhist monks, Islamic mullahs, Hindu gurus and all types of pagans.

Clerical PCs often have high skills in Theology and perhaps related disciplines, like History, Occultism or languages. Those with a public ministry usually have some Bard skill, and perhaps Psychology and Diplomacy as well. Clergy often have some degree of Charisma, and may have their religious organization as a Patron. Of course, virtually all have some degree of Clerical Investment. Many also have significant Codes of Honor or Vows, and Fanaticism is also relatively common.

## Cop

Those who become involved with the affairs of cultists or those they serve tend to vanish, or end up quite messily dead. Over the centuries, the cults have become very, very good at hiding their part in such affairs, but occasionally they will leave behind a crucial clue that will allow a particularly perceptive police investigator to recognize some faint glimmer of the truth.

A PC could easily be such an investigator; one who has discovered, or is about to discover, that some seemingly ordinary (if horrible) crime is actually evidence of something infinitely greater and more terrifying.

The category "cop" here includes all law-enforcement and investigative officers, including local police, corporate security, federal agents or representatives of international security agencies.

Cop PCs have good skills in handguns and hand-to-hand combat skills, Law, Criminology, and all thief/spy skills useful in investigation or surveillance operations (in other words, most of them).

## Criminal

Cultists will naturally turn to the underworld when they need any goods or services that cannot be obtained within the cult itself, or from those the cultists serve. Therefore, criminals are in a unique position to discover the secrets of the Old Ones.

So why would a criminal come to actively oppose the Old Ones? Any number of reasons. Perhaps in self-defense. When dealing with cultists, it's only a **short** step from "business associate" to "victim." Perhaps from simple moral outrage. Even criminals are capable of conscience, and a professional forger or software pirate would probably be just as disgusted as anyone else by the possibility of ritual murder. Even a hit man or pusher might be moved to action if faced with the mass slaughter of innocents.

More organized gangs and criminal syndicates might come to see the cultists as a potential threat to their operations, and send operatives to monitor, infiltrate and sabotage cult operations.

The exact characteristics of a criminal PC depends on his personal specialty. However, most criminals have high skills in at least a few combat and thief/spy skills. Law is a very common skill, and Streetwise is nearly universal. Cybernetic enhancements are fairly common, but are most often of the cheap and low-quality variety.

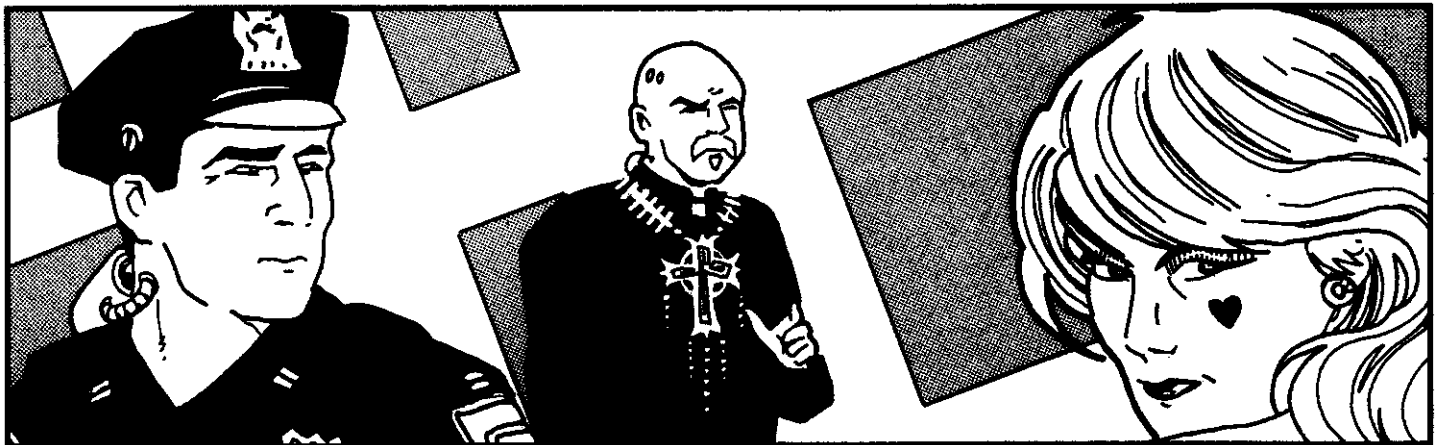
## Dilettante

Dilettantes are independently wealthy. With no need to work to maintain their wealth, they can spend their time as they wish. Some dilettantes choose to devote themselves to studies of esoteric matters, and sometimes these studies can lead to a pursuit of the truth about the Old Ones. Dilettantes are highly useful to the campaign as financial backers, and they make an excellent NPC patron in addition to their role as PCs.

Dilettante characters are mostly defined by their Wealth and Status, but they can be more than money-generating parasites. Some might be sportsmen, with useful hunting and survival skills, some might be highly educated with strong scientific training, and some might have highly refined social skills which can be used avoid entanglements with bureaucrats and other authorities. A dilettante might well have some personal defense or data-processing **cyberwear** of an advanced and unobtrusive nature.

## Ganger

Cultists and creatures seek their prey among the underclass — those who will not be missed when they vanish suddenly.





Although the disappearance of such people might escape the notice of the authorities for a very long time, there are other institutions that are less oblivious to occurrences among the lower classes. One such institution is the street gangs. One reason gangs exist is to protect their turf from predators of all sorts, when the legitimate authorities cannot or will not offer protection.

Therefore, it is entirely reasonable that a gang member might discover something of the activities of the servants, and might he moved to take action. If he survives long enough, he might ally himself with others who share his knowledge and mission.

A ganger or former ganger has high Streetwise and Area Knowledge, and he is often be adept at Fast Talk. He has good combat skills, particularly with small arms, knives and martial arts. He probably has at least a few thieflspsy skills.

## Hacker

In the 21st century, virtually anything can be discovered on the nets, if you know where to look, or if you just get lucky.

Hackers are people who spend their time digging for data that they're not supposed to know, and once they get on the scent of some juicy secret, they stay on it until they wring it dry. There's no secret in the world bigger or juicier than the existence of the Great Old Ones or the mission of their servants. A hacker is, by definition, somebody who could deduce the existence and activities of secret cults from the most scanty of evidence, and follow that evidence hack to discover even stranger and darker secrets. Once he's on the trail, a hacker will be eager to seek out and contact any person or group who can offer him a short cut in his quest to learn about the forbidden.

Hacker characters, of course, specialize almost obsessively in scientific and technical skills. They have all the cyberwear they can afford, and often some that they can't. The farther out on the edge he lives, the more likely a hacker is to have high Streetwise and Law skills. Most have very high Area Knowledge with respect to cyberspace.

## Korporate

In general terms, the end of the world is had for business. Megacorps take an extremely dim view of anything that disrupts their markets or their cash flow. Cultists, on the other hand, have an agenda of their own. In the long run, friction is inevitable.

The typical korporate PC is probably an investigator or trouble-shooter sent out to find out what's causing the slump in a given region. As he begins to see that deep secrets lie behind the problem, the very fact that there *are* secrets there to be unearthed may well be sufficient to cause the company to order him to keep digging. In the information-driven economy of the 21st century, secrets are a precious commodity.

Of course, cultists crave power of all sorts, and they will naturally seek to usurp and wield the power of the international corporations. Furthermore, in the massive bureaucracies of the korps, the left hand usually has no idea what the right is up to. A korporate investigator tracing the activities of some dark cult could find that the trail leads directly back to his own employers.

Korporates have a powerful Patron in their employer and often moderate to high personal Wealth. Some have high scientific skills, especially Economics and Research. Most have high skills in Savoir-Faire, Merchant and Diplomacy, and several Area Knowledges. Charisma, Empathy and Intuition are highly-prized traits. Since troubleshooters are expected to deal with dangerous situations in remote and unstable locales, they often have some combat and outdoor skills.

A variation on this character type is the *failed korporate* — somebody who started out as a loyal korporate *sarariman* but got fed up with the restrictions, or got caught with his hand in the cookie jar, or saw too much, or just attached himself to the *wrong* mid-zec supervisor when a company purge came along. This type has no inconvenient loyalties, lots of free time, a good incentive to take wild chances, and all the benefits of korporate training and experience. Failed korporates might have a Social Stigma, a Vow (make the korp pay for what they did to me), or in extreme cases, even have the korp as an Enemy.

## Mercenary

Mercenaries make their living in places where civilization is on its way out, and chaos is in control — small, low-tech regions where civil authority is in a shambles, slaughter is the norm and even the most temfying atrocities can occur unnoticed by the rest of the world. This is, of course, exactly the sort of environment which the servants of the Great Old Ones prefer. In fact, it's exactly the sort of environment that the servants create, when their plans are successful.

Perhaps a mercenary was the only one left alive after some unnameable horror devoured the rest of his company. When nobody would believe his story, he set out to prove his word and get revenge. Or perhaps he discovered that his employers were pursuing an agenda too evil for even a hardened soldier of fortune to go along with, and turned against them and their masters.

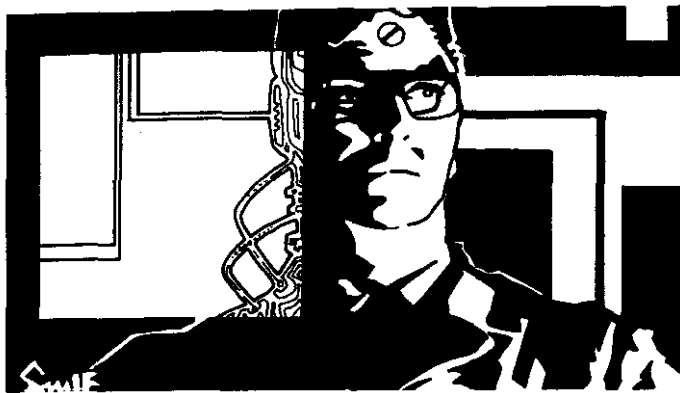
Mercenaries have high combat skills, of course, as well as good outdoor and thief/spy skills, and high physical stats. Many have advanced combat cyberwear.

## Mystic

A mystic is one who devotes his time and energy to seeking out lost or forbidden secrets of the occult. Sometimes, to their misfortune, their quest succeeds.

There are all sorts of mystics. Some are extremely wealthy — particularly focused dilettantes — others are virtually penniless. Some are semi-rational fanatics or crackpots, others serious, painstaking scholars. Some are paranoid recluses, others are glory hounds.





Sometimes the border between a mystic and a charlatan (see p. 41) is fuzzy. The stereotypical Gypsy fortune teller, for example, would have a very real belief in and respect for unearthly powers, but would also not hesitate to pass off some blatant chicanery as a true miracle, if it seemed profitable to do so.

Mystics often have very high IQs. Their primary skill is, of course, Occultism, with similarly high skills in related scientific fields like History, Archaeology, Literature and Theology. If they've done any serious field work in the course of their studies, they might have some outdoor skills, and perhaps even basic combat skills. Although by no means universal, Paranoia and minor Delusions are very common among mystics, as are physical disadvantages of all kinds — their bodily infirmities have caused them to turn to more spiritual pursuits.

In campaigns where magic or psionics are available to PCs (see p. 51), mystics are very likely to have some minor skill with either discipline.

## Phyritian

Exposure to otherworldly forces or creatures often leaves victims (whether alive, dead or in some indeterminate state) strangely changed or mutilated. A casual observer might think this was the result of "ordinary" accidents or violence, but a trained physician is likely to know that something very strange has occurred, and to actively search for the reasons behind the strangeness. What physician could resist a chance to observe, analyze and report a transformation like that undergone by the Ghouls (see p. 115), or the human/Deep One crossbreeds (see p. 115)?

In addition to high medical skills, physicians also have significant training in several other scientific skills of the player's choosing, most but not all of which relate back to his study of medicine. They often have a bit of extra Wealth and Social Status, though this is not as universal as it was among 20th-century doctors.

## Private Eye

As previously noted, those who deal with the Old Ones tend to disappear without explanation. When the law gives up on tracking a vanished victim, a private detective is the next logical choice if the missing person has friends with the will and resources to keep looking. Likewise, cultists may go to any extreme to obtain certain artifacts or relics of power. The former owners of such missing items might turn to a private investigator to try to recover them.

Private eyes have high Alertness and thieflspy skills, as well as good abilities in small-arms and hand-to-hand combat. They might invest in some inexpensive and inconspicuous cyberwear, particularly if it's useful to covert surveillance.

## Reporter

Like hackers, reporters just can't let a secret alone. Once he gets on the scent of the Mythos, a reporter will stay on it like a bloodhound. In the cutthroat, information-driven economy of the 21st century, reporters will be driven to suicidal excesses in pursuit of a story — excesses that would leave their 20th-century predecessors aghast.

An investigative reporter's skills certainly include Writing, Bard, Streetwise, Politics and Detect Lies. Most probably have the Photography (video equipment) skill. Certain thieflspy skills are quite common. Reporters all have at least a few Contacts, and might have some major network or news service as a Patron.

## Scholar

Signs of the Old Ones' presence are everywhere, if you dig deep enough, and nobody digs deeper than professional researchers. Archaeologists, historians and anthropologists are most likely to find direct evidence of the Mythos, but virtually any sort of researcher who doesn't spend every working minute in the lab could potentially uncover something inexplicable. A meteorologist might spot something peculiar in a satellite photo, an experimental physicist might record some strange energy readings which don't conform to any known phenomenon, a biologist might stumble upon some puzzling ruins on a wilderness expedition, or be confronted with a specimen of unearthly origin. . .

Authentic films and videos of Mythos creatures may force the viewer to make a Mythos Fright Check (see p. 45), but the GM has some latitude here. If the video is widely touted as a fake, and the viewer fully believes it is a fake, then a large bonus to the roll should be allowed, and perhaps no Fright Check of any type should be made. But for viewers that know better (say, ones that make a successful Mythos Lore skill roll), a Mythos Fright Check must be made, as usual. There is also room for middle ground here — again, GM flexibility is the key.

Scholars, of course, have very high scientific skills, both in their specialty and in several related fields. Those who specialize in field work could also have useful outdoor and even combat skills. They might have Patrons in their sponsoring organization or institution.

## Terrorist

The only thing that a terrorist hates more than the establishment is another radical who believes in the "wrong" cause. A terrorist organization could easily find out about Mythos cultists, and declare war on them for any number of reasons.

Revolutionaries, as a group, always believe that their tactics are to be preferred over accepting the status quo, and in the repressive yet chaotic political climate of the 21st century, revolutionary "terrorist" organizations could easily be more enlightened, humane and moral than the regimes they're organizing against.

Terrorists have high thieflspy skills, particularly Streetwise, Traps and Demolitions. Specialized data terrorists are extremely skilled programmers and hackers.

## Tribal

A "tribal" is slang for anybody who forsakes 21st-century urban life to return to a pre-civilized social order (not to be confused with "tribes," a completely unrelated slang term for par-

ticularly territorial street gangs). Tribals usually live together in small groups in wilderness areas. Tribal movements have been organized to recreate the cultures of the American Indians and Inuit, African Bushmen or Australian Aborigines, and even pre-Roman Celtic or Germanic tribes — some try to synthesize the best from all these traditions. Some tribes restrict themselves to those of the appropriate ethnic background, but many are open to anyone.

Cultists and nonhumans also prefer to conduct their most important operations far from civilization, which could easily bring them into direct conflicts with the tribals. Tribal societies also tend to emphasize mysticism and spirituality, and a particularly sensitive tribal shaman might sense the psychic turmoil created by the activities of the Old Ones.

Although tribals, as a rule, shun civilization, a mystic warrior or shaman might be lured back if a vision or a need for revenge caused him to take up arms against the Old Ones and their servants.

Tribals have high outdoor and low-tech weapons skills. Artistic skills are often an important part of their ritual life (which can in turn make them susceptible to the Mythos Awareness advantage). They often have high skills in Occultism and Theology, and (with the GM's consent) might even be mages or have shamanistic powers (as found in *GURPS Religion* and other sources).

## Vet

A 21st-century military veteran is often a desperate man. He may feel cut off from his original home and family by his military experience (which can include extensive psychological conditioning and cybernetic enhancement), but he's no longer a part of the military community either — perhaps because some psychological or physical handicap makes him unsuitable for further service, perhaps because he's just unable to face the thought of more carnage. The rest of society tends to avoid him as a psychological time bomb ready to go off.

Cultists find such unstable and dangerous individuals fertile ground for their recruiting efforts. Perhaps the PC veteran was recruited for a Mythos-related cult, but fled when he began to see what was really going on. However he becomes aware of the Old Ones, the struggle against them gives him what he needs — an enemy to fight.

Veterans have high-tech combat skills, Tactics and those thief/spy skills useful for commando-style operations. They

often have serious mental or physical disadvantages (war wounds of one sort or another). They often have powerful and obvious combat-related cyberwear.



## Sanity, Terror and You

Dealing with the Old Ones can have a serious effect on the human psyche. Human minds are simply not equipped to deal with the Cosmic Truths implied by the existence of the Old Ones. Exposure to these truths causes the human brain to, as it were, overload, doing serious damage in the process. Exposure to lesser manifestations of the alien realities — lesser servitors, dark magic or ancient artifacts — has only a minor effect on the human brain, but multiple exposures over long periods of time can have a serious cumulative effect. Even a single direct exposure to the Great Old Ones or their major servants, on the other hand, can catastrophically destroy a human mind.

Even reading books which record the secrets of the Old Ones can be seriously damaging to mental health. Many researchers have been driven mad by their studies of forbidden tomes like the *Necronomicon*, *Unausprechlichen Kulten* or the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*.

## Fright Checks

In *GURPS*, the Fright Check rules (see p. B93-94) are used to represent the deterioration of sanity due to exposure to the Old Ones.

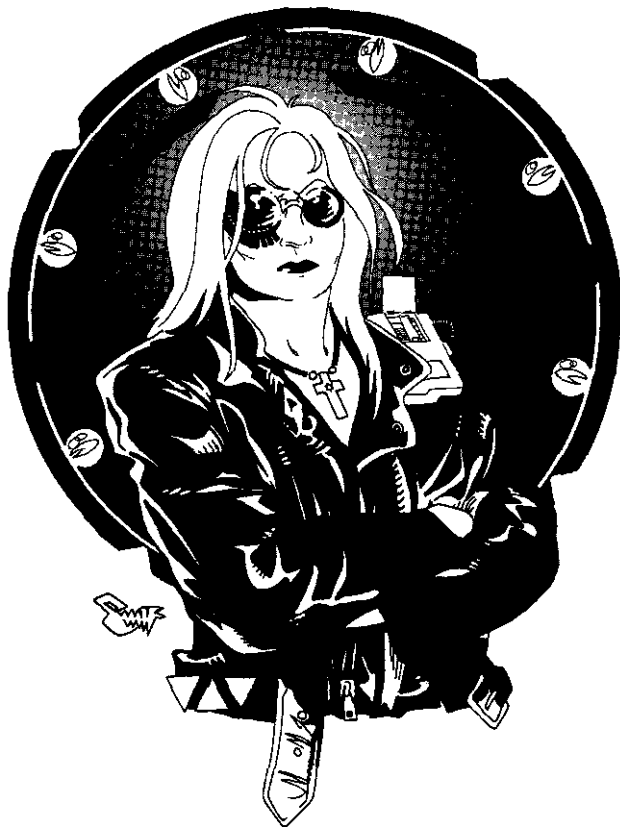
It is important to realize that, although exposure to the Mythos uses the same mechanic as an ordinary scare, on a fundamental level Mythos exposure is something quite different from normal shock. On a pragmatic level, being chased by a Shoggoth is probably no more dangerous than being attacked by a chainsaw-wielding psychopath — both encounters will leave the victim equally dead — yet the Shoggoth's effect on the sanity of its human victim will probably be much more profound. This is because, as noted above, human brains are simply not equipped to deal with the existence of Shoggoths and other ancient creatures. It is not just the threat that the Shoggoth represents that damages the victim's psyche, it is knowledge of the very existence of the Shoggoth and things like it that does the damage.

Because of this fundamental difference between a normal Fright Check and a Mythos Fright Check, there are a few basic differences between the way the two are gamed out.

First of all, in any Fright Check involving the Old Ones, their power or their works, the victim rolls against a number equal to half his normal target number for Fright Checks (round down). For example, if an individual had IQ 12, Combat Reflexes (+2 to Fright Checks), Strong Will +1 and Fearlessness +1, he would have a normal Fright Check roll of 16. However, if confronted by a Hound of Tindalos, or if studying the *Necronomicon*, his Fright Check would be rolled against an 8 (this sort of Fright Check will be referred to throughout these rules as a Mythos Fright Check).

Second, he may not add more than 4 points to his IQ from any source before the Fright Check number is halved. For example, if a character had IQ 12, Combat Reflexes, the Meditation skill and was currently in a meditative state (+2 — see p. 49), Strong Will +3 and Fearlessness +2, his normal Fright Check number would be 21. However, if confronted by a Mythos creature, he could not take a bonus higher than +4,





making his Fright Check number 16, which halves to 8. Thus willpower and mental discipline can never enhance a Mythos Fright Check by more than +2 (for the single exception, see Mythos Lore, p. 49).

The GM is free to rule that some Fright Check-enhancing advantages — particularly Fearlessness and Unfazeable (see p. 47) — are inappropriate for a *CthulhuPunk* campaign, and cannot be purchased by PCs at character creation or any other time. If Unfazeable is allowed in the campaign, it does not make the character immune to Mythos Fright Checks; it merely gives him a +4 to such checks taken before the number is halved.

Finally, any time a Mythos Fright Check is critically failed, the victim permanently loses one point of Will . . . that is, permanently loses one level of the Strong Will advantage, or gains one level of the Weak Will disadvantage.

## Recovery

Once a character has acquired a new Quirk or Disadvantage, it becomes a permanent part of his character description, reducing the overall point value of the character. These mental disadvantages can be "bought off" normally, with earned character points, according to the rules given on p. B82. The only caveat is that a character will not totally lose the "bought off" disadvantage until a span of game-time has passed equal to at least one week per each point of the disadvantage's value. For example, if a character acquired a -10 point disadvantage, and immediately spent 10 earned character points he had been saving to "buy off" the new disadvantage, he would still suffer under the effects of that disadvantage for at least 10 game weeks from the time he acquired it.

Mental disadvantages may be "bought off" in their normal increments. That is, someone afflicted with a -10 point Major Delusion can buy it down to a less debilitating -5 point Minor Delusion with 5 earned character points.

## Therapy

A concerted program of competent, professional psychotherapy (under the direction of a counselor with at least Psychology-13) can also help overcome Mythos-related mental disadvantages.

The GM may grant "bonus" character points, which the afflicted individual can use only to "buy off" mental disadvantages. If he is undergoing outpatient therapy (at least two hours per week with the therapist), he may accrue these bonus recovery points at a rate of up to 1 per month. If he is committed full-time to a mental institution he will accrue recovery points of up to 1 per week (always assuming, of course, that the institution is competently and humanely run — otherwise it can be the source of still deeper madness).

However, if, at any time during his therapy the patient fails a Mythos Fright Check of any kind, all unspent bonus recovery points are irretrievably lost. Recovery points are considered "spent" only if they have actually been used to buy off or reduce the severity of a disadvantage. If the character has bought his Severe Delusion down to a Major Delusion, those character points have been spent, and cannot subsequently be lost. However, if a character has 3 recovery points, and is planning on reducing the disadvantage once he gets to 5, those 3 points are unspent, and may be lost.

## The Willpower Trap

In a *CthulhuPunk* campaign, more than perhaps any other *GURPS* campaign, Will becomes one of the most important character traits of all. Not only is it the only effective protection against the debilitating side effects of Mythos Fright Checks, it can also be sacrificed to manipulate the extremely powerful "magicks" of the Old Ones — assuming that the user of these magicks has some extra Will to spare.

A certain amount of tough-mindedness is both reasonable and necessary in a *CthulhuPunk* campaign, if the players are going to have any chance of achieving their goals and surviving more than a few adventures. In fact, the GM would be wise to subtly but actively discourage low-Will starting characters in an ongoing campaign.

However, because of the extraordinary importance and usefulness of Strong Will, players who are inclined to try to abuse the system may be tempted to "hoard" Will, taking unrealistically high starting levels so as to enhance their later survivability. This sort of "min-maxing" is anathema to the horror atmosphere necessary to the milieu, and should not be tolerated.

Perhaps the ideal way to avoid such abusive situations is simply to keep the players unaware of the importance of Will in the campaign until after character creation. If possible, the GM should have his players design characters as though for an ordinary *Cyberpunk* campaign, with no idea that Mythos elements are going to be introduced. Of course, this sort of benign deception will not always work, and should be avoided in situations where it's more likely to provoke bad feelings than good roleplaying.

If players are both aware of the importance of Will in the campaign, and inclined to min-max points, the GM should feel free to place an arbitrary cap on the amount of Strong Will available — perhaps specifying that no character may purchase more than 3 levels of Strong Will, or more than 5 levels of Strong Will and Fearlessness combined. The GM may alternately attach a substantial Unusual Background to excessive levels of either advantage.

The GM should also remember that for the purpose of Mythos Fright Checks, the maximum bonus to Will from all

advantages and disadvantages combined is +4, and it is applied *before* the number is halved, if applicable. Furthermore, any such bonuses are also applied *before* any penalties. For example, if a character had IQ 12 and Weak Will -2 from immoderate use of forbidden magicks, but also had Fearlessness +3, Combat Reflexes for +2, and was in a meditative state for another +2, the formula to figure his Mythos-related Fright check would be  $(12+4-2)12$ , or 7. He couldn't use any of his other Will bonuses to offset his Weak Will before adding the +4.

While it is true that high IQ can also directly contribute to Will (along with its many other uses), a cap on maximum starting IQ is not recommended, **both** because of the relative expense of IQ, and because the brilliant victim using his intellect to cling desperately to the last shards of his reason and sanity is a perfect Lovecraftian archetype.



### Combat Reflexes, Fearlessness, Strong Will

All these advantages offer some degree of protection against Fright Checks. However, against Mythos Fright Checks (see *Sanity, Terror and You*, p. 45) the bonuses from any of these advantages, as well as any other skills (like Meditation, p. 49) or advantages (including Unfazeable, elsewhere on this page) which may modify a Fright Check cannot total more than a *cumulative* +4. Furthermore, any such bonuses are applied *before* the Fright Check score is halved, if applicable.

## New Advantages

### Mythos Awareness

5 or 15 points

You have an instinctive psychic awareness of the activities of the Great Old Ones and their minions. Mythos Awareness is a **rudimentary** psychic ability like Danger Sense or Empathy. In a campaign which emphasizes psychic powers, it can be assumed that **any** character with an ESP power of 5 or more automatically has Mythos Awareness (at no cost).

Mythos Awareness causes you to react psychically to the presence of any Mythos activity in your vicinity. This is an automatic reaction — you cannot choose to not notice Mythos activity.

This awareness takes the form of a general uneasiness and strange and **terrifying** dreams. These nightmares will provide the only clues as to the nature and location of the exact Mythos activity occurring, and even these hints will be extremely ambiguous and frequently incomprehensible.

For some reason, individuals with artistic talent or a creative temperament are known to be more prone to Mythos Sensitivity than the general population. This includes painters, sculptors, poets, musicians or even architects. Therefore, anybody who starts the game with a

skill of 15 or more in any artistic skill may purchase **Mythos Awareness** at the lower point cost. All others must pay the higher cost.

The range and intensity of the sensitivity depends on the relative power of the creature being detected. If Cthulhu awakens or one of the other Great Old Ones manifests itself physically on Earth, every person on the planet with **Mythos Awareness** will be automatically overcome with dread, but lesser manifestations will affect only those in a limited range. In extreme cases, the visions associated with Mythos Awareness may be severe enough to merit a Mythos Fright Check (GM's option, see p. 45), jeopardizing the sanity of the sensitive character.

The table below gives rough guidelines of the relative ranges of various Mythos creatures. However, the GM should feel free to modify these suggested ranges drastically if he feels the situation calls for it. For example, if the sibling or mate of a person with Mythos Awareness is threatened by a Mythos creature, or a Mythos creature invades the childhood home of the character with the advantage, it might well activate Mythos Awareness, even if the actual activity is thousands of miles farther away than indicated below for a manifestation of that kind. In such a case, the character's psychic bond with the person or place being threatened is sufficient to overcome the mere physical distance.

Avatar of Nyarlathotep: 100 miles, or continental range with a successful IQ roll.

Star Spawn of Cthulhu: 50 miles, or 500 miles with a successful IQ roll.

Hound of Tindalos: 1 mile, or 20 miles with a successful IQ roll.

Byakhee/Mi-go: 100 feet, or 1 mile with a successful IQ roll.

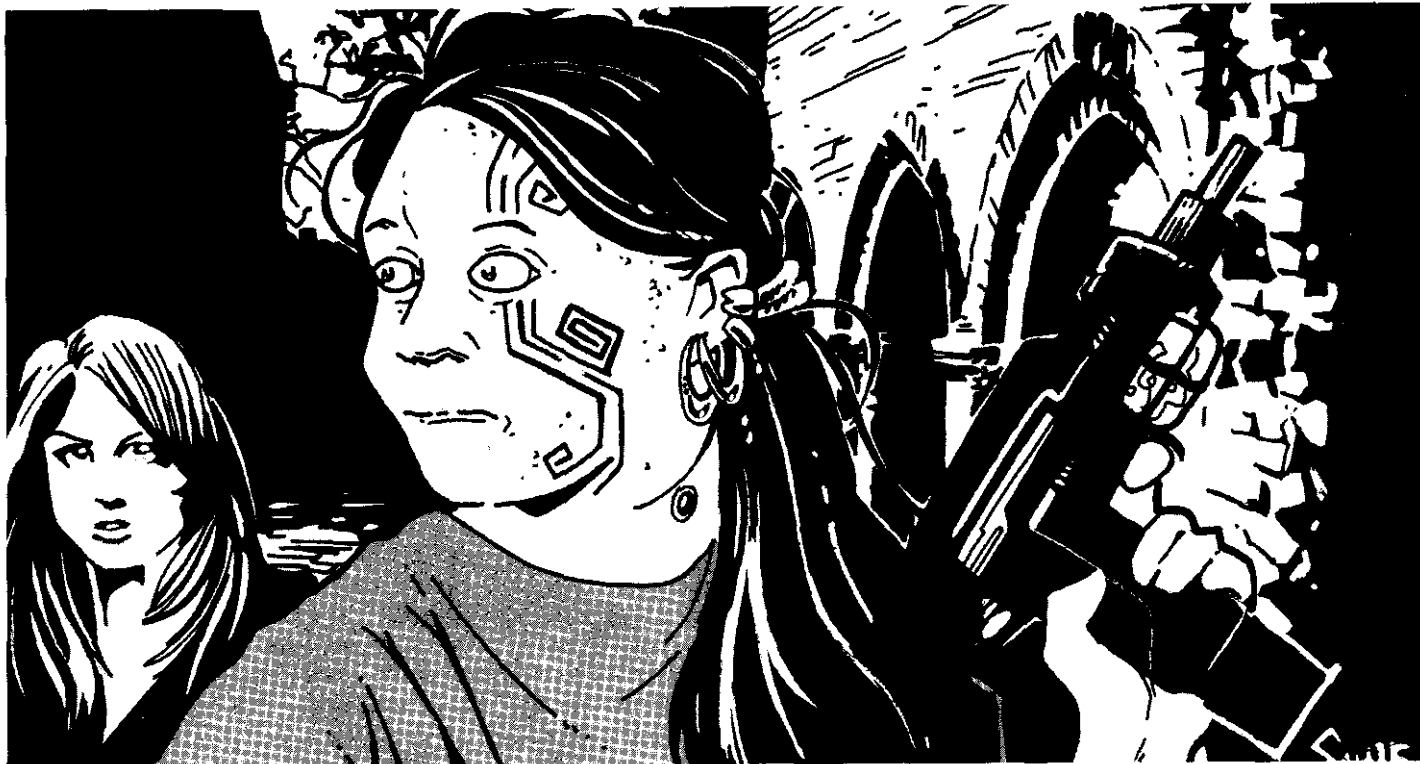
Cultist sorcerer: Touch only with a successful IQ roll.

### Unfazeable

15 points

Nothing surprises you — at least, nothing that's not obviously a threat. The world is full of strange things, and as long as they don't bother you, you don't bother them. You are exempt from **normal** Fright Checks, and almost no reaction modifiers affect you, either way. You treat strangers with distant courtesy,





no matter *how* strange they are, as long as they're well-behaved. You will have the normal reaction penalty toward anyone who does something rude or rowdy, but you will remain civil even if you are forced to violence.

This advantage is incompatible with all phobias. A character with this advantage is not emotionless — he just never displays strong feelings. The stereotypical Maine Yankee or English butler has this advantage.

Against Mythos Fright Checks, however, this advantage offers only a much more limited protection, due to the fact that the "fright" generated in the human mind by Mythos creatures is much more than just an emotional response (see *Sanity, Terror and You*, p. 45). Against Mythos Fright Checks, the Unfazeable advantage offers only +4 to the character's Fright Check score. This bonus is applied *before* the score is halved, if applicable.

The GM is free to unilaterally declare that this advantage is unsuitable for the genre and unavailable to PCs.

## Alien Advantages

Advantages that only apply to various NPC races are listed on p. 114.



## Disadvantages

### Compulsive Behavior

This will be one of the most common disadvantages acquired by individuals who pick up a mental disadvantage by failing a Mythos Fright Check (see p. 45). The most common forms of such a Compulsive Behavior will be "learn more about the Mythos," "seek to harness the power of the Old Ones," or some similar compulsion likely to lead him into a situation requiring more Mythos Fright Checks.

## New Disadvantage

### The Innsmouth Look

-20 points

You are, knowingly or not, a human/Deep One hybrid. At some point in your life you will lose your humanity, become a Deep One and go to live beneath the sea.

There's a definite "fishy" look to individuals with this disadvantage — skin may have a translucent, greenish cast, eyes may be slightly protuberant, fingers or toes may be webbed. Characters with the Innsmouth Look cannot start the game with better than Attractive Appearance. As they mature, their appearance becomes more inhuman — skin becomes scaly, hair starts to fall out, hands and feet start to splay. Characters lose one level of Appearance every 1d years (rolled by the GM).

The change itself occurs when the character is 18+5d years old (the GM may, of course, select the time of the transformation rather than rolling it randomly). The nascent Deep One need *not* have deteriorated all the way to Hideous Appearance — many half-breeds change when their appearance is still predominantly human. The actual change from land-living human to aquatic Deep One is relatively quick — once the change begins, the victim will completely be a Deep One in 2d months. The actual process of the change within this time period is left to the GM.

Some half-breeds do not change all the way, but for the purposes of this disadvantage, such wretches are treated no differently from anybody else with the Innsmouth Look — they will still come to a time of change when they will become something other than human. Some half-breeds never change at all — they do not have this disadvantage.

It can be assumed that after the change, the character's personality also changes. He will *not* become a Deep One Ally of the PCs, much less an amphibious member of their fellowship. He will, at best, no longer care about humanity or his former friends. If they attempt to keep him from joining his undersea relations, he will go to any lengths to escape. In short, barring

extreme acts of GM's fiat, once the change comes a character with the Innsmouth Look is permanently removed from the campaign.

The Innsmouth Look can be recognized by those who know about the **human/Deep One** crossbreeds. Roll against IQ -5 or Physiology skill -3 (these defaults apply only to characters who know that the Deep Ones exist). Characters who have dealt with crossbreeds before can recognize the condition with an IQ roll ("Gee, that guy looks a lot like the guy at the grocery store."). Of course, recognizing the family resemblance doesn't give any information about what family they're dealing with ... The roll is modified by +2 for every level of Appearance that the subject has deteriorated below normal (i.e., an attempt to recognize a half-breed of Hideous Appearance is at +6), and by Vision modifiers and Alertness.



## Artist

See p. B47

Artists are particularly sensitive to the psychic disturbances caused by manifestations of the Old Ones. This is true not only for characters who know the Artist skill proper, but also for practitioners of other arts, like Musical Instrument, Poetry, Sculpting and Writing.

To represent this affinity, individuals with high Artistic skills may purchase the Mythos Awareness advantage at a reduced cost (see Mythos Awareness, p.47).

## Occultism

See p. B61

Occultism is the only skill from which Mythos Lore skill defaults (at -12), and the only way to acquire Mythos Lore apart from direct experience with the Mythos. After many years of dedicated study, an occultist can begin to piece together a picture of the Cosmic Truths represented by the Old Ones through the hints and fragments of their nature that still survive in the mystical traditions of all human cultures.

Once an occultist begins to acquire Mythos Lore through the default, he does need to make normal Mythos Fright Checks as his skill increases (see Mythos Lore, below). Many respected scholars have become disturbed or unhinged as they began to piece together the truths of the Old Ones from their researches.

## New Skills

### Dreamlands Lore (Mental/Hard) Defaults to Dream Travel skill -5

This skill is basically an Area Knowledge skill for the Dreamlands. However, unlike other Area Knowledges, it is **Mental/Hard**, due to the protean and self-contradictory nature of the Dreamlands. The psionic skill **Dream Travel** is described on p. 50

### meditation (Mental/Very Hard)

No default

This is the ability to reach a state of self-induced trance in which the mind is totally relaxed but able to react immediately. To reach this state, a concentration period equal to 18-skill turns (minimum 1) is required. If you're injured, a successful Meditation roll can keep you from falling unconscious, being shocked or stunned. It also allows you to concentrate on the task at hand and ignore outside disturbances — a successful

Meditation roll will give you a +2 to any Mental Skill (excluding spells, psionics, disciplines and other exotic abilities) used in the next turn; however all other IQ rolls on that turn are at -2.

Anyone in a meditative state gets a -2 to all Fright Checks, including Mythos Fright Checks. The act of meditation requires a long course of study and discipline, and the GM may wish to attach an Unusual Background to this skill in some campaigns.

### Mythos Lore (Mental/Very Hard)

Defaults to Occultism -12

This skill represents a direct knowledge of the existence of the Old Ones and their servants, their goals and methods (to whatever extent that the Old Ones can be said to have goals or methods). Mythos Lore provides a general knowledge of the names and natures of the Great Old Ones, their servants and servant races, and the rituals and traditions of various cults. While it does not represent a direct knowledge of Mythos-related spells and rituals, such wisdom is often found in conjunction with Mythos Lore, and Mythos Lore is also the primary skill used in researching new or lost spells and rituals.

The secrets of Mythos Lore are deeply hidden, and this skill cannot be obtained through conventional research channels. Generally speaking, PCs should not be allowed to begin the game with Mythos Lore — it should only be obtained through play. You can only learn Mythos Lore when a source of information (like the Necronomicon) is available. Direct contact with the Old Ones or with cultists is, of course, an acceptable source of Mythos Lore. The GM will determine the maximum potential increase in Mythos Lore possible over the course of a given adventure. Once this theoretical maximum has been determined, the PCs will, of course, still have to pay earned character points for any actual increase in their Mythos Lore skill.

The only way to acquire any semblance of Mythos Lore skill without direct contact with the creatures or objects of the Mythos is through a very extensive study of a wide variety of "conventional" occult traditions. If one devotes years to a study of human mysticism in all its facets, one may begin to get a faint picture of the dark and inhuman cosmic realities which lie behind the traditions. Hence the default to Occultism.

Learning Mythos Lore, however, carries with it a terrible price. Those who study the forbidden secrets of the Old Ones are frequently made mentally unstable — or even driven utterly insane — by their researches.

In game terms, for each additional point of skill one gains in Mythos Lore, one must make a Mythos Fright Check (see p. 45). However, unlike other Mythos Fright Checks, the normal Fright Check number is not halved (though the maximum bonus obtainable through Strong Will and related advantages is still +4). Instead, the Fright Check is rolled at a penalty equal to the skill level of Mythos Lore being purchased. If the researcher buys up his Mythos Lore skill by +3, from 11 to 14, all at one time, he must make three separate Mythos Fright Checks, with penalties of -12, -13 and -14.

For these purposes, any result on the Fright Check Table (see p. B95) below 13 can be ignored. These effects are so transitory as to have no relevance in this situation. Likewise, any transient effects from higher results can also be ignored. Results which cannot be ignored include any physical damage or permanent physical transmutations (i.e., hair turning white), any period of unconsciousness of more than 24 hours, and, of course, any permanent changes in the character description — new quirks or disadvantages.

These Fright Checks do apply to increases in Mythos Lore acquired as a default from Occultism. There are numerous

reported cases of world-renowned anthropologists or other respected scholars (individuals with a Occultism skill of 25 or more) becoming severely disturbed or unbalanced due to their growing implicit understanding of Mythos Lore.

If a Fright Check result calls for a new mental disadvantage of unspecified type, the most common such disadvantage by far is Compulsive Behavior — Obsessed With Gaining More Mythos Lore, thus creating a descending spiral of insanity.

### Thanatology (Mental/Hard) Defaults to Diapnorir, Prythology or Sociology -5, or Professional/Skill: Mortician -3

This is an esoteric study of death in all its aspects. It includes pathology and embalming, as well as the study of death as it figures in history, sociology, psychology, theology and occultism.

Thanatology is often obsessively studied by cultists and those unbalanced by exposure to unearthly forces. However, a dispassionate, scientific study of Thanatology is possible without endangering one's sanity, and an individual who has undertaken such a rigorous exploration of the subject may be able to provide valuable insights into the motives and methods of cultists and their ilk.



In GURPS *Cyberworld*, the average citizen is semi-literate — able to write his name and decipher street signs, but not able to parse complex instructions or enjoy a story with no pictures or lots of big words. This state of semi-literacy is the default value for characters in that *worldbook*. Full Literacy is a 5-point advantage, with Full Illiteracy only a -5-point disadvantage.

The CthulhuPunk GM may use this convention if he desires. However, *Call of Cthulhu* assumes that the typical Mythos investigator will probably be better educated than the average. Therefore, it is also reasonable to assume that the default value in GURPS *CthulhuPunk* is Full Literacy, with Illiteracy and Semi-Literacy being disadvantages of the appropriate point value.

The NPCs described in Chapters 5 and 6 are built on the latter assumption. These NPCs are assumed to be fully literate unless otherwise stated.



With the exception of those spells and rituals related directly to the creatures of the Mythos (see *Forbidden Magicks*, p. 51), the role of magic and psionics in the campaign is entirely up to the GM. He does not have to allow the PCs access to these powers at all, but if he does it is strongly recommended that he limit the power and availability of such powers. Both significant Unusual Background costs and arbitrary power caps are entirely appropriate for a *CthulhuPunk* campaign.

Allowing a PC to know and wield a bit of arcane power can add to the mystery and atmosphere of the campaign, but this power should by no means be allowed to attain the level where the endowed PC can *go* head-to-head with the creatures of the Mythos — not if the campaign is to stay at all true to the spirit of Lovecraft's work. The only possible exception to this

rule is the "monster-level" campaign (300+ points, wide access to exotic powers, seep. 40).

## Psionics

Psionic powers, or something very like them, are definitely a part of the Cthulhu Mythos. Exactly how much of the GURPS psionics system the GM wants to make available to his PCs, however, remains largely up to him.

As a general rule, low levels of purely mental powers like ESP and Telepathy are appropriate, while more physical powers like Telekinesis and Teleportation are less suited to the genre (or at least to PC use). Psionic abilities which affect the physical world should have a much higher unusual background attached (25 points per power is recommended) or not be allowed to PCs at all, except in "monster level" campaigns.

Even ESP and Telepathy should be limited in a normal-point-value campaign. An Unusual Background cost of 5 or 10 points per skill is recommended. Furthermore, it is also recommended that the GM disallow power levels of more than 10, at least at character creation.

### Dream Travel (3 points per level)

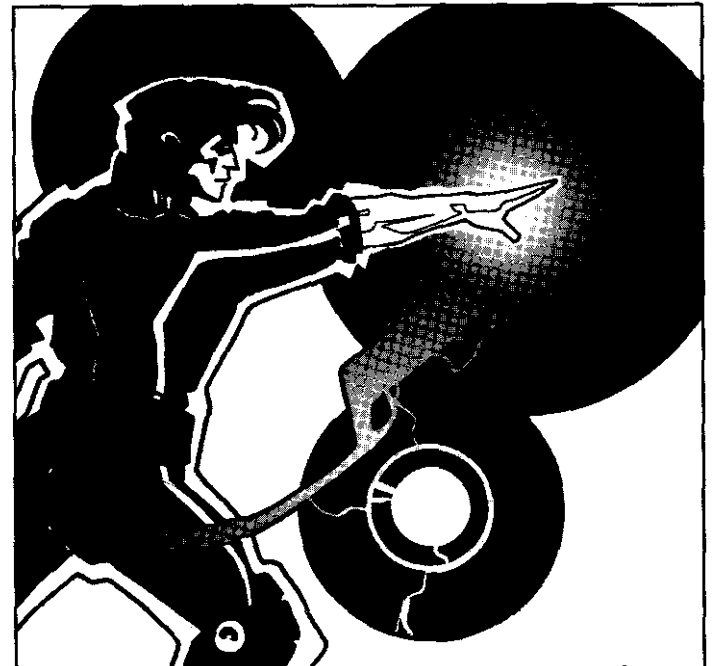
This is a single-skill psionic power unique to the *CthulhuPunk* genre. When the individual is asleep, this power allows his dream self to enter the Dreamlands (see p. 18). It is recommended that Dream Travel *not* be subject to any Unusual Background costs or power caps which may apply to other psionic powers in the campaign (see above).

In many ways Dream Travel is like Astral Projection (see GURPS *Psionics*, p. 10) in that it allows the adept's consciousness to leave his physical body behind, and roam about in a pseudo-body. There are, however, many important differences.

First of all, Dream Travel normally only works while the adept's body is sleeping normally.

Secondly, the dream self always goes to the Dreamlands. It cannot roam about our reality, and is not aware of what happens to its physical body while it is gone.

Finally, the dream self interacts with the Dreamlands as though it were a physical *body*. It cannot fly or vanish under its







own power. (However, some dreamers are said to have unique powers in the Dreamlands that they do not possess in waking life.)

Most inhabitants of the Dreamlands will be able to **tell** on sight roughly how much Dream Travel power the dreamer possesses. As a general **rule**, the greater the Dream Travel power, the more respect the locals will afford the dreamer. This does not mean that the creatures of the Dreamlands will be any more friendly to the character, just that they'll be less eager to provoke him.

The dream self is somehow better equipped to deal with the Old Ones and their minions than the physical mind. Mythos Fright Check numbers in the Dreamlands are not halved before they are rolled (see p. 45).

Dreamtime is different from real time. Several months in the Dreamlands can pass during one night of sleep. Character points earned in the Dreamlands can normally only be spent to enhance one's dream self (and it is not uncommon for a dreamer, after several years of dreaming, to have a dream self that is greatly more competent and powerful than his waking self). Dream selves should be freely allowed to learn and buy magic spells and psionic powers (with the understanding that these gifts will be usable only in the Dreamlands).

The exceptions to the above are Mythos Lore and Dreamlands Lore skill, which can be remembered and used by the waking self. If the dream self buys any increase in either of the above **skills**, he may, upon waking, roll vs. IQ. If the roll succeeds, his waking self's skill is increased by the same amount at no additional cost (note that this does not require that the waking self and dream self **have** identical skill levels). However, while the dream self does not have to make Fright Checks to see if its increasing Mythos Lore skill causes mental imbalance, if the waking self retains an increase in Mythos Lore skill, he does have to make the applicable Mythos Fright Check immediately upon waking.

## Magic

The *CthulhuPunk* world is regarded as a low-mana world. However, it is important to note that the energies behind the Old Ones have **nothing** whatsoever to do with "ordinary" magic, and creatures of the Mythos will be largely indifferent to the local mana level (although the GM may choose to establish certain small areas of "mystic energy" in his campaign world, where the mana level is normal or higher, and where creatures of the Mythos will be reluctant to **intrude**).

It is theoretically possible, therefore, for a character to have some knowledge of "ordinary" **GURPS** magic. Whether or not to make Magery and magic spells available to the **PCs** is a choice left entirely to the GM.

In general, even if the characters are allowed to **learn** a bit of magic, their access to their powers should be sharply limited (except, possibly, in "monster-level" campaigns).

If **PC** mages are allowed, the following limiting factors are recommended at a minimum.

- The world is, overall, low mana, with all the limitations normally associated with that state (see p. B147). Areas of higher mana, if they exist at all, should be small, secret and extremely rare.

- An Unusual Background of no less than 10 points is required to purchase Magery at any level (this Unusual Background may also be as much more expensive as the GM wishes).

- Magic spells are extremely rare and difficult to find and learn. Initial spells can be chosen only from those listed in the **Basic Set**, and all spell choices are subject to GM review and veto. Subsequently, new spells can be learned only if the GM introduces a chance to learn a specific spell during play. For example, if a mage knows Detect Magic, and wishes to **learn** the Aura spell, he cannot do so unless the GM during an adventure specifically provides him with a grimoire containing the spell or a tutor who knows it. He cannot say, between adventures, "I'm going to research and learn the Aura spell." Of course, even if the GM does provide access to a certain spell, the character must still pay earned character points to actually learn it.



To the human mind, "magic" is anything that cannot be explained by known natural laws. Therefore the weak and uncertain **art** of **magery** and the eternal and implacable cosmic energies which animate the Old Ones are both thought of as "magic." In truth, however, the two forces have nothing whatsoever to do with each other.

It is possible (although always extremely dangerous) for humans to tap into the cosmic energies, and manipulate them to give the human some power over the Old Ones — at least in the short term. However, these rituals often exact a terrible price from those who conduct them. In this rulebook, these rituals will be referred to as "magick," to differentiate them from "traditional" magic.

To harness these powers usually requires a ritual, often quite involved and expensive to stage, and frequently bloody. Each such ritual is a separate **Mental/Very Hard** skill which must be bought individually. Mythos ritual skills do not have a 112-point level; they must be purchased with at least one full point. There are no prerequisites. The individual conducting the ritual does not have to be a mage and local mana level is largely irrelevant (although some areas of unusually high "natural" mana might not be suitable for holding Mythos-related rituals).

It is very strongly recommended that **PCs** not be allowed to know any Mythos-related rituals at the time of character creation. These rituals can be learned only if they **are** discovered during the course of the adventure.

There are five general categories of forbidden magickal rituals. The spells listed below are representative samples of forbidden magick. They do not by any means represent more than a minuscule fraction of all possible Mythos-related rituals.

## Summon/Bind Iervitor Spells

These **spells** call a **supernatural** creature to the caster, and bind that creature to prevent him from **harming** the summoner

in any way. They also compel the creature to obey one specific command of finite duration of the caster's choice. For example, "Guard me from all harm" is not specific enough, but "Allow nothing to approach me for the rest of the night," is acceptable. "Hunt down all my enemies" is overly general, but "Destroy this person" is a good command. The servitor will understand the summoner's command in whatever language it is issued.

These spells usually require a ritual chant to be performed. If the skill roll is made, a single creature of the summoned type will arrive 3d minutes after the chant is complete. If the roll is failed, no creature will respond to the attempt. If the roll is critically failed, the creature comes, but is *nor* bound. Such creatures usually destroy their summoner.

The skill roll for these spells is equal to the summoner's skill in the required ritual. The normal Fatigue cost to cast such a spell is 3. However, the skill roll may be increased by +1 for each additional 3 full points of Fatigue the caster puts into the spell. The chant takes 5 minutes for each 3 points of Fatigue invested.

Each attempt to use one of these spells, whether it succeeds or fails, will cause the caster to make an unmodified Mythos Fright Check immediately upon completion of the spell. This is in addition to any Mythos Fright Check that might be required if the creature actually appears.

If a summoner encounters a creature that he did not summon, he may attempt to use the appropriate ritual to bind the creature on the spot, assuming he has all the materials needed. The creature will not interfere with the casting itself, but if the casting fails it will usually try to kill the caster. A caster cannot attempt to begin a binding ritual while he is actually in combat with the creature.

### Summon/Bind Byakhee

This spell must be cast at night, when the star Aldeberan is above the horizon (late autumn through the end of winter is best). It requires at least two individuals, one to do the chanting, and the other to play a slide-whistle. No Musical Instrument skill is required, and only one of the summoners needs to actually know the spell. The whistle may be Consecrated to enhance the chance of success. If the spell is successful, the Byakhee will fly out of the sky, still icy from the cold of interstellar space.



### Summon/Bind Dark Young

The ritual must take place outdoors, in a wooded area, during the dark of the moon. An animal of at least 50 lbs. must be sacrificed. A knife must be used to make certain ritual cuts, but the shape or composition of the knife is irrelevant. If successful, the Dark Young emerges from the surrounding foliage.

### Summon/Bind Dimensional Shambler

May be cast any time. The spell requires a knife made out of any pure elemental metal — silver, gold, iron, copper, lead, but not an alloy like steel or bronze. No sacrifice is required; it's the knife itself that's important. The knife may be Consecrated. If successful, the Shambler materializes out of thin air.

### Summon/Bind Nightgaunt

This spell must be cast at night when there is no moon. It requires a stone emblazoned with the Elder Sign (see p. 55). The stone itself must not be in the shape of a star. If successful, the Nightgaunt flies down from the dark sky, preceded by the flap of its leathery wings.

## Contact Spells

These spells will call a representative of the summoned race to the caster's location. The spells do not bind or constrain the creature in any way. If the summoned creature sees that the caster is in a large crowd, or is otherwise presenting himself in a threatening or hostile manner, it may well attack, or simply go back where it came from without showing itself.

To successfully use a Contact Spell, the caster must meet all required conditions, then make a successful roll vs. his skill in the applicable ritual.

The caster and the creature will be able to understand each other, at least on an empathetic level. The caster would be wise to have some sort of appropriate gift or offering for the creature available, if he wants to negotiate or ask a favor of it. Large creatures typically respond to the spell singly, but creatures of human size or smaller may show up in a small group of 1d individuals.

These spells only take 1d minutes to cast, but it usually takes several hours for the summoned creature to arrive; it is up to the caster to remain until the creature responds. If the GM wishes to randomly determine the response time, he may roll 1d. On a natural 6, roll another die and add the result to 6; if *that* roll is a natural 6, roll *another* die and add that result to 12, etc. The final total is the number of hours until the creature responds.

Attempting a Contact spell, whether it succeeds or not, requires the caster to make an unmodified Mythos Fright Check immediately upon completion of the spell, in addition to any Fright Check that may be required if a creature actually responds.

### Contact Deep One

Must be cast on the ocean shore, within 100 miles of one of the Deep Ones' aquatic cities. The ritual involves throwing specially-inscribed stones into the waves. The spell costs 3 Fatigue.

### Contact Elder Thin?

The spell must be chanted while over an oceanic trench, or near a mystical portal to another world where the Elder Things dwell. It costs 3 Fatigue.

## Contact flying Polyp

This spell must be chanted at one of the rare openings to the underworld where the Polyps live. It costs 9 Fatigue.

## Contact Formless Spawn

Must be cast at a temple of Tsathoggua which still possesses its statue of Tsathoggua, or at a spot near an opening into the abyss of N'Kai, which lies below the mid-western United States. It costs 3 Fatigue.

## Contact Ghoul

Must be cast on a moonlit night near a graveyard or crypt at least 100 years old, or near some other site where Ghouls are known to congregate. It costs 8 Fatigue.

## Contact Hound of Tindalos

Can be cast anywhere at any time at a cost of 7 Fatigue. However, this is an extremely dangerous spell to cast, because it is virtually certain that once a Hound has been called, it will thereafter begin to stalk the summoner as prey.

## Contact mi-go

Must be cast on or at the base of a high mountain in a mountain range where the Mi-go have mines. Costs 8 Fatigue.

## Contact Star-Spawn of Cthulhu

Must be cast near the ocean shore, within 100 miles of a Deep One outpost, or else within 200 miles of a place where the Star-Spawn sleep (for example, over R'lyeh). Costs 6 Fatigue.

## Call/Dismiss Deity

This is the most powerful, most dangerous set of Mythos-related spells. They can actually cause one of the Great Old Ones to manifest physically on planet Earth. These spells give the caster absolutely no control whatsoever over the manifested deity. In general, when a deity is brought to Earth, it wants to stay a while.

The base roll to succeed in calling a deity is the caster's skill in the appropriate ritual, -20. However, this roll can be raised by +1 for every point of Fatigue invested in the casting. In this group of spells, the caster can be assisted by a number of helpers, who may transfer their psychic energy to the caster through chanting. Normally the caster can draw no more than one point of Fatigue from each helper, unless the helper also knows the ritual, in which case he can contribute as much Fatigue as he wishes.

The group must chant for one full minute for each point of Fatigue being expended to raise the caster's roll. At the end of the ritual, whether or not it succeeds, the caster *permanently* loses one point of Will (either losing a level of Strong Will, or gaining a level of Weak Will). This lost Will can only be regained by spending *earned* character points. He also makes a Mythos Fright Check at -10 (his helpers do not need to make a Fright Check. . . yet).

If the ritual was correctly prepared and the skill roll was successful, the deity will appear. The caster and everybody else present must make a Fright Check appropriate to the deity in question. If the roll failed, the deity ignores the summons. If the roll was critically failed, the deity sends some horrible curse or vengeful servitor to destroy those who dared disturb it.

Unless the deity leaves Earth of its own free will (unlikely) it will have to be ritually dismissed. The base roll to dismiss a

called deity is the caster's skill — (10 + the deity's Fright Check modifier). Once again, this base score can be increased by +1 per Fatigue point spent, which can include Fatigue from helpers.

Unlike the calling rituals, the dismissal rituals do not have to be performed at any specific time or place, and do not require any special paraphernalia. It is only necessary that all participants be in the same place, performing the correct chant. Neither the caster nor the helpers need make a Fright Check.

## Call/Dismiss Azathoth

The call must be performed outdoors, at night. Azathoth is one of the most suicidally dangerous deities to summon.

## Call/Dismiss Hartur

The call requires that nine monolithic stones first be prepared with the Consecrate spell, then arranged in a V pattern. The stones do not have to be matched, but each must have a volume of at least 9 cubic yards. Each stone must be Consecrated separately, and each Consecration will require that the caster permanently forfeit one point of Will (either permanently lose 1 level of Strong Will, or permanently gain one level of Weak Will). The Call may only be cast on clear nights when Aldebaran is above the horizon (late autumn through the end of winter).

The stone V also allows the caster to cast Summon Byakhee at +5, and each Byakhee present will add +3 to the attempt to summon Hastur.

## Call/Dismiss Ithaqua

For the call, the caster must stand on a mound of snow or ice at least 10' deep (glaciers work well). The spell must be conducted above 60 degrees north or south latitude, and only at temperatures below freezing.

## Call/Dismiss Shub-Niggurath

This calling requires a large stone altar be prepared by washing it in at least 25 gallons of fresh blood. The altar must rest deep in a densely forested area. Once the altar has been prepared, it may be reused over and over again, but each subsequent call requires the altar be refreshed with at least 5 gallons of blood. The blood does not have to be human. The altar gives a +5 to the summoner's success roll, and each Dark Young present adds another +3. This spell normally works only at the dark of the moon, though a caster particularly favored by Shub-Niggurath (GM's option) can attempt the call at other times, at a skill penalty determined by the GM.

## Call/Dismiss Yog-Sothoth

This spell requires a stone tower at least 10' tall be built in an open area. Each call requires a human sacrifice rendered to Yog-Sothoth, though this requirement can be met as easily as gesturing towards a nearby village, from which Yog-Sothoth will select his own victim. The tower may be Consecrated — for each point of Will permanently sacrificed in the Consecration, the tower forever after grants +1 to all attempts to cast a Call from it.

## Contact Deity

These spells are extremely rare. They are normally attempted only by a priest of the deity in question. These spells attempt to draw the attention of the deity so that the caster may petition it for knowledge or some favor.

Each attempt to contact a deity requires that the caster permanently sacrifice one point of Will, and make a Mythos Fright Check at -5. On a critical failure, the deity will curse the Caster or send some servitor to destroy him. If the attempt succeeds, the deity will contact the caster within the week (GM's option). When contacted, the caster must make another Mythos Fright Check appropriate to the deity in question. The deity will not be overtly hostile, but unless the caster is either a loyal worshiper, or offers it some sort of extremely attractive offering or sacrifice, the deity is not likely to be helpful either.

### Contact Nodens

This spell must be cast while the caster is alone and in some inaccessible place, like a sea-cliff, the top of a mountain or the middle of a barren desert. If the spell succeeds, Nodens will contact the caster only when he is alone and in an inaccessible place.

### Contact Nyarlathotep

This spell may be cast anywhere, but Nyarlathotep will not appear unless a meeting of followers is held within the next week, when new converts are initiated into the service of the elder gods.

### Contact Cthulhu

Once contacted, Cthulhu's response will always be in the form of a dream or a nightmare; however, this dream will provoke a Mythos Fright Check equivalent to that caused by seeing Cthulhu himself.

### Contact Tsathoggua

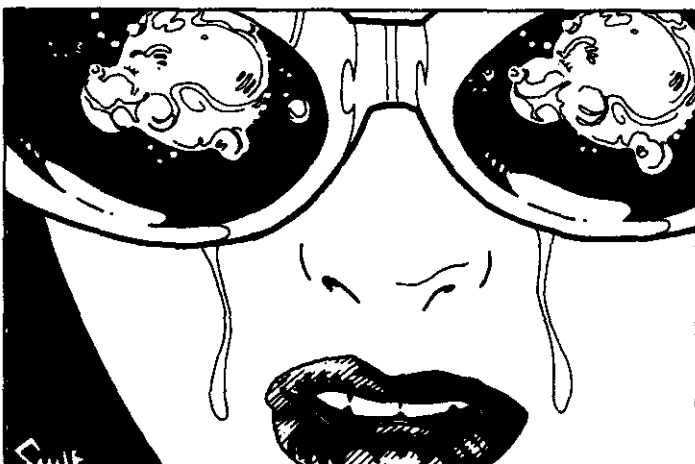
Tsathoggua usually responds in a ghostly spirit form resembling his physical body. Normal Fright Check modifiers apply when seeing this form. The projection will speak audibly to the caster. Tsathoggua usually only appears when the caster is alone.

## Miscellaneous

These spells do not involve specific Old Ones, but concentrate and use their energies.

### Brew Space-Mead

Space-mead is a drink which allows a human being to travel, otherwise unprotected, through interplanetary space. The brew has five distinct ingredients — exactly what they are is left to the GM (there are rumored to be several suitable recipes for space-mead). Once the brew has been correctly mixed, the



caster must expend 20 Fatigue points per dose to activate it! magic. This energy may be expended over a period of time no to exceed three days.

Each dose allows the user to survive one trip through the void of interstellar space. While in space, the user will be in a state of mental and physical stasis, and insensible to his surroundings. Most users of space-mead are carried through the void by a Byakhee or some similar interstellar creature.

Once he has arrived at his destination, the effects of the space-mead wear off, and another dose must be consumed before the user can make a return trip.

The user will arrive at his destination drained of some amount of Fatigue. A trip of up to 100 light years drains 1 Fatigue point, 101 to 1,000 drains 2, 1,001 to 10,000 drains 3 and so on. Upon arrival, the user must also make a Mythos Fright Check at a penalty equal to the amount of Fatigue lost.

### Consecration

This is actually a class of spells which allow the caster to enchant materials to enable or enhance his attempts to use spells from one of the other groups. Items which may be Consecrated include a Byakhee whistle, the knife used to Summon Dimensional Shambler, and the tower used in an attempt to Call Yog-Sothoth. In these spells, using Consecrate items gives bonuses to the spell roll. The stones used to Call Hastur must be Consecrated in order for the spell to work. The Consecration ritual for each separate item is a unique skill which must be bought individually.

The exact details for each individual Consecration spell vary (and are left to the GM), but they usually include a blood sacrifice, the permanent loss of at least one point of Will, Mythos Fright Check at -5, and at least one full day's time.

### Create Gate

This extremely powerful ritual allows the user to create a mystical gate which allows him to step instantly between two separate places, even if they're light-years apart.

Gates can take many different forms. They can use a physical gate or door, or they can be marked by a pattern of lines inscribed on a stone floor, or an arrangement of stones in an open field.

Gates are permanent until deliberately destroyed, and they work both ways. They are static — they have two openings to two different places, and once established cannot be moved. The transition is instantaneous.

To create a gate requires a permanent sacrifice of the caster's Will. A gate which traverses up to 100 miles costs 1 level of Will, one which traverses 100 to 1,000 miles costs 2 levels, one which traverses 1,001 to 10,000 miles 3 levels, and so on. Once the gate has been established, each use drains Fatigue equal to the number of levels of Will originally used to establish the gate. Using a gate also requires an unmodified Mythos Fright Check.

Below are the Will/Fatigue costs for some extraterrestrial gates.

- Moon — 5 points
- Other planets (Mercury to Saturn) — 8 points
- Outer planets (Uranus to Pluto) — 9 points
- Nearby star — 13 points
- Aldebaran or Fomalhaut — 14 points
- Far side of the galaxy — 17 points
- Nearby galaxy — 18 points
- Distant quasar — 25 points

Certain unusual gates with special powers are rumored to exist. Some are said to require a special gesture or word to activate. Others are rumored to actually physically change those using them, to allow them to survive in the hostile environment at the other end.

### Dread Curse of Azathoth

The "Dread Curse" is a secret name of Azathoth. Pronouncing the first part of the name will gain the attention and respect of any creature of the Mythos or individual with a Mythos Lore of 10 or more. Knowing the first part of the name causes them to believe that the user also knows the dreaded last syllable. The game effects of this respect are left to the GM — in general, the affected creatures will be less eager to attack and more willing to talk than they otherwise might have been.

If the name is pronounced with the last syllable, on a successful skill roll it will permanently drain 1d levels of Will from every other person or creature within earshot. If the skill roll is critically failed, the caster permanently loses the Will. Whether the pronouncement succeeds or fails, the caster will lose 4 Fatigue and must make a Mythos Fright Check at -5.

### Elderlipn

This powerful ward is usually described as a star-shape, with an eye with a flaming pupil in the center. It can be carved in rock, set in metal or even drawn in sand.

No creature in the service of one of the Great Old Ones can pass an Elder Sign. It is most effective when set on a doorway, barrier or narrow passageway, because a creature will not be affected by an Elder Sign it can avoid. Wearing an Elder Sign is no protection against the creatures of the Mythos. They can't actually touch the sign, but they can attack any part of their victim not actually in contact with it.

Creating an Elder Sign requires the permanent sacrifice of at least two levels of Will, but does not require a Fright Check.



### Voorirhlipn

The Voorish Sign is a complex gesture made with a single hand. When correctly performed (a successful skill roll) it gives a +3 to any Mythos-related spell or ritual begun within the next 10 minutes. It is also said to have the power to make certain invisible creatures visible (GM's option). An attempt to use the Voorish Sign costs the caster 1 Fatigue, and he must make a Mythos Fright Check.



## Cyberwear and Equipment

By the end of the 21st century, virtually all the cybernetic modifications listed in *GURPS Cyberpunk* will be available to PCs at the listed cost. It is up to the GM to decide when and if a given modification becomes available on the open or black market. Even if a given modification is not yet commonly available, a PC may, with the GM's permission, obtain a research prototype. Of course, prototypes tend to be **both** much more expensive and much less reliable than the final model. It is up to the GM how much cyberwear use and possession may be regulated by local laws, or how much ordinary citizens may be prejudiced against the cybernetically-enhanced.

It is recommended that cyberwear taken during character creation be paid for with character points only, while modifications taken during play cost both money and earned character points. For information on buying cyberwear in the specific milieu of *GURPS Cyberworld*, see p. 30.

### Personal Equipment

All of the TL7 and 8 firearms, armor and equipment listed in the *Basic Set* or in *GURPS Cyberpunk* will be available to the PCs (though not, perhaps, legally). If more extensive or detailed lists are desired, SOTA armament and equipment can be found in *GURPS Ultra-Tech* or *GURPS Cyberworld*, while more antique weapons and equipment are listed in *GURPS High-Tech* and (to a much smaller extent) *GURPS Horror*.



## Weird Science

The objects described below are technological developments that are somehow related to the Mythos, making their users more (or sometimes less) susceptible to the **influence** of the Old Ones. The GM can introduce them to the campaign as adventure objects. In general, these should **not** be available on the open market. Instead, they should either be unique, or clandestinely produced on a very limited level.

### Soul Trap

This is the ultimate Black Ice. A Soul Trap is a **mystically-enhanced** program that actually isolates and imprisons **netrunners** . . . not just their minds, but their souls as well. The soul and intellect are actually removed from the body and transferred into the net, where they're stored in a completely isolated area created by the Soul Trap. The body becomes a mindless husk. It will continue to breathe, and will chew and swallow **if** food is placed in its mouth, and that's **about** it (of course, a body left abandoned by an encounter with a Soul Trap might be a very attractive host for alien spiritual or psychic entities — perhaps Great Race time travelers, perhaps more malign entities). Only those using some form of neural interface can be affected by a Soul Trap.

Because the Soul Trap is partially a magickal construct, there is only one way to destroy the routine through normal technological means . . . that is to completely isolate it from the rest of the net, then physically destroy the hardware it's stored



on (just wiping the memory won't work — it will magickally rebuild itself anytime that memory module is used). Of course, doing so will completely annihilate any individuals imprisoned by the program. It may be possible to construct a magickally-enhanced Icebreaker routine capable of cracking a Soul Trap and releasing those within — this is a GM call.

If a character is released from imprisonment by a Soul Trap, he must immediately make a Mythos Fright Check (at any negative modifiers the GM thinks appropriate) to check for psychic damage that may have occurred during his imprisonment.

A Mythos ritual is necessary to create a Soul Trap program. The details are left to the GM, but they are no doubt unwholesome.

## Mindfry (hip)

The Mindfry Chip is a hardware module for a "cyberaxe" (any musical instrument played with a cybernetic interface — see p. CW86).

Mindfry was developed by a brilliant software engineer who thought he was just making a new kind of effects chip.

Somehow, a Mindfry Chip reproduces the ethereal music played at the Court of Azathoth. This music is dangerous on two levels — first, the music itself can be severely debilitating to the human mind (or worse), and second, it can attract the attention of malign supernatural entities.

If a cyberaxe is played with a Mindfry Chip and the musician makes his skill roll, all the listeners are affected by the chip, but the musician himself remains immune (although his talent will make him especially interesting to any Old Ones that may be attracted by the music). If the musician fails the roll he is affected by the music, but the listeners are merely annoyed.

The affected individual must immediately make a Mythos Fright Check modified by the amount by which the Cyberaxe skill roll was *made/failed* (whichever applies). If the victim fails the Fright Check, he must not only take all normal effects of the failed check, but also roll 2d. On a roll of 10 or 11, the victim is granted a vision of Azathoth and his court and must make any additional Mythos Fright Checks that this vision entails. On a natural 12, the victim is physically translated to the Court of Azathoth, and never seen again (the GM may exempt PCs from this last effect . . . or he may not).

Furthermore, any time the Mindfry Chip is used, regardless of whether the skill roll succeeds or fails, there is a chance that it will attract the attention of some supernatural creature. The creatures summoned are selected by the GM — Servitors of the

Outer Gods, Nightgaunts, Byakhee, Dimensional Shamblers and Hounds of Tindalos are all strong possibilities. The time needed to respond to the call is also determined by the GM, based on the circumstances and the creature's nature (Hounds of Tindalos, for example, will have to travel through time at the rates given on p. 112). Summoned creatures will, generally speaking, wish to destroy the audience and possess the musician.

The base chance of summoning a creature through a Mindfry Chip is a roll of a natural 12 on 2d, but this chance is modified by -1 for each 3 points by which the Cyberaxe roll is made, or by -1 for every 2 points by which it is failed (using this item is a lose/lose proposition).

One particularly scary aspect of the Mindfry Chip is that there seems to be no mystical component involved in creating one. Anyone with a prototype or the original plans for the chip can reproduce it, given the correct manufacturing facilities. It can be assumed that the secret of the Mindfry Chip is being securely held by the chip's inventor, or perhaps by some korp . . . but secrets have a way of escaping.

## Nod

One of the less overtly destructive items discussed in this section, Nod is a fantastically rare and expensive designer drug. Its channels of distribution are mysterious, and there may or may not be a magickal component in its manufacture.

Nod is regarded by its rich and jaded users as the ultimate psychedelic, providing visions of unequaled realism and intensity. What it actually does, however, is send the user's psyche directly to the Dreamlands. The user will remain under the effects of the drug for 5 to 10 hours (Earth time), during which time his physical body will be completely inactive and oblivious to the outside world. One difference between using Nod and actual Dream Travel is that under the influence of Nod the Dreamer cannot be awakened by normal means (loud noises, shaking, etc.). A Nod user can be awakened and his spirit recalled to his body by the injection of a powerful stimulant directly into the bloodstream, but this causes a potentially harmful shock to the system (make a HT roll or take 1d-2 points damage).

While the body is under the effects of Nod, the spirit-body is roaming the Dreamlands just like any Dreamer. Subjective time is expanded so that one eight-hour "trip" can seem like several months in the Dreamlands. As always, with Dream Travel, the Dreamer can be permanently affected by his experience. Mythos Fright Checks are treated as normal Fright Checks, but effects harm both the earthly and the dream-self. If the dream-self is killed, the Dreamer's body dies, too.

Some Nod trips are quite pleasant — the user just spends the time taking in the sights of Celephaïs, or playing with the cats in Ulthar. But one major difference between Dreaming under the influence of Nod and having a natural gift is that natural Dreamers are regarded by the denizens of the Dreamlands as powerful entities to *be* respected and feared. Nod users have no such aura of power or authority. This is not entirely a curse — many entities that would react defensively to the presence of a real Dreamer will simply ignore a Nod-user. But if the Nod-user does *attract* the attention of a hostile creature, he is in infinitely more danger than a real Dreamer.

On the other hand, if a real Dreamer uses Nod, he will find that it enhances his Dream Travel power by +5, but reduces his skill by -3.

Some Nod-users have reported "bad trips" far beyond the worst nightmare or hallucination. These unfortunates may have

simply manifested in one of the less wholesome regions of the Dreamlands . . . or they may have traveled to some wholly inimical eon or reality — R'lyeh, Carcosa, the Center of the Universe. . .

Of course, as always when planar travel is involved, there is the chance that the user of Nod might vanish altogether, never to be seen again. The exact odds of such a catastrophe are left to the GM.

## Screamin' Mimi

Screamin' Mimi is another designer drug — a particularly unpleasant one. It has been speculated by students of the Mythos that Mimi somehow breaks down one's barriers of perception and allows the user to see the universe as it really is. As students of the Mythos know, this is not a desirable state of affairs.

While under the influence of Mimi, the user acquires the Paranoid disadvantage. Much worse, *every* Fright Check is treated as a Mythos Fright Check. Furthermore, Mimi completely nullifies all Fright Check bonuses from Willpower or any other advantage or skill. If the individual actually comes into a situation that would normally call for a Mythos Fright Check while under the influence of Mimi, that roll is at -3, in addition to all other penalties that apply from the drug or for an encounter of that nature.

Mimi makes it possible for the user to make astounding intuitive leaps of insight into the Mythos. Any time an individual sees *anything* directly related to the Mythos (GM's option) while under the drug's influence, he may make an IQ roll, and if that roll succeeds he gains a +1 to his Mythos Lore skill (individuals who do not have Mythos Lore may acquire it at the 1/2-point level by making such a roll). Anyone reading a forbidden tome (see p. 11) while under the influence can get the full maximum Mythos Lore bonus from even a cursory reading . . . even if he's read or even studied the tome before. However, this insight carries a terrible price. Each such increase to the Mythos Lore skill requires a Fright Check normally associated with such increases (see p. 49), and all penalties from Mimi-use *do* apply.

There is nothing mystical required in the making of Mimi, and the method of its manufacture is no particular secret. It is not common, however, due mostly to its extremely limited market. It is difficult to believe there is any market at all for such a substance, other than, perhaps, as a means of torture. In the 21st century, however, there are those jaded individuals who are so desperate for intense experience of any kind that they will actually seek out Mimi and willingly use it.

It is, of course, highly illegal to make, market or use Screamin' Mimi anywhere on Earth.

## Galoot (hip)

This is the least sinister item on this list. It can be made easily with existing technology, and is in fact legal and in production. It was originally designed for infantry troops, to avoid shell-shock under 21st-century battle conditions.

When the chip is slotted, the user gains the Unfazeable advantage. Furthermore, *all Mythos Fright Checks are treated as normal Fright Checks.*

The catch is that the chip dulls the perceptions so that all IQ-related rolls (including skills, perception rolls, and any Will rolls except Fright Checks) are at -2. An individual under the influence of a Galoot Chip may not increase IQ-based skills or study to increase such skills. The GM may, at his own discre-

tion, reduce experience points earned under the influence of the chip, or restrict them so that they can only be spent on non-mental skills or attributes. An individual under the influence of a Galoot Chip cannot enter a Meditative state.

A Galoot Chip will not protect an individual under the effects of Screamin' Mimi. Furthermore, combining the two effects could well result in severe and permanent psychological damage, at the GM's option.

## The R'lyeh Interface

This semi-legendary piece of software may never have existed at all. Most of the people who tell stories about it tell about "a friend" who once had it, or tried it. Few netrunners have ever come forward and said, "I rode R'lyeh," and those who have made such a claim can offer little evidence to back it up. (The name of the interface is usually spelled R'lyeh or Ryleh, but sometimes is referred to as R'lyeh — which spelling is the original cannot, of course, be determined unless an actual copy of the software is isolated and examined.)

R'lyeh is an Environmental Interface Module (see p. CP88), designed to create a virtual reality that allows the user to move through the net via direct cortical interface.

In R'lyeh, the Net is represented as an endless labyrinth of glowing green tunnels, along which the netrunner drifts. Nodes are represented as crumbling buildings, ancient temples or open sewer-mouths. Deckers are shown as alien entities, no two alike, and particularly sophisticated systems are huge, flickering monsters. The decker may see himself as a glowing face, a distorted human shape, or a wholly alien creature. Data appears in the form of feeble, hissing creatures which the decker must catch and eat.

Time differences are exaggerated; systems and deckers with a Phase slower than the netrunners' seem to crawl, while faster ones move with an inhuman, threatening jerkiness. The EM (Environmental Module program) itself is represented as hook or talisman with makes dry, somewhat obscure comments to guide its user.

So far the description of the Interface seems reasonable enough — a remarkably imaginative but somewhat unpleasant EM. There are, however, other, stranger stories.

R'lyeh has a reputation as a "brain buster." Deckers are said to have tried it once, then sworn never to touch it again. Others are said to have become unhealthily fascinated with it, refusing to use anything else, and spending dangerous amounts of time in the net (even by already-excessive netrunner standards). Some are said to have experienced chronic nightmares or acquired severe psychological trauma (including delusions, paranoia and psychotic compulsions) after exposure to the interface. The most outrageous legends about R'lyeh tell of users who have gone brain-dead while online, or whose bodies have spontaneously combusted or simply vanished, either while actually using the Interface, or a few hours or days later.

More subtle, yet perhaps even more disquieting, is the claim that R'lyeh has the power to take its users out of the net — through the data stream to some completely alien reality that lies *beyond*. It is suggested that those individuals who are said to have perished while within the EM may have found this way out, and been unable to find their way back.

The similarity of this alleged experience to that reported by those mystics who claim to be able to enter alternate realities through their lucid dreams (see p. 18) has not escaped the attention of those who take an interest in such matters.



THE  
CTHULHUPUNK CAMPAIGN

The room was very dark, and thick with the smell of years of incense. The walls were lined with thick screens of carved wood and lacquer, and behind one of those screens something stirred.

A small and ancient man of Asian descent sat behind the flat's one table, pouring steaming hot green tea from a painted tea pot into eggshell-thin china cups. Jayboy accepted his cup with an almost prescient certainty that he'd stupidly shatter it, but it somehow remained intact in his shaking hands.

Booshk waited until they'd all taken several slow sips of the strong, aromatic tea before speaking.

"Master Chiang, you've found something which pertains to the matter of which we spoke?"

"Not I, friend," the old man said in cultured and unaccented English. "But my other guest has information that you may find useful." Behind the screen, something rustled dryly.

"Perhaps he'll share it with us then," Booshk said coolly, taking another delicate sip from the cup.

From behind the screen, it spoke in a rough and low voice. "You know who I am?" Jayboy thought his nostrils detected a faint odor of corruption enter the room from whatever throat uttered those words, detectable even over the incense and the aromatic tea.

"I know what you are," Booshk replied. "Are we here to play 20 Questions?"

"No. Nor are we here to listen to your sparkling wit. You seek the Tcho-Tcho master?"

"Is it he, then?" Booshk almost whispered. "So I had feared."

"Of course. Try not to be denser than you can help, human."

At the word "human," Jayboy's hands tightened convulsively on the cup, and for the rest of his life he never understood why it didn't shatter

"So what have you come here to tell me, then?"

"The Tcho-Tcho came to our house, they found our secret ways and made their way to our lowest vaults. Those who stood in their way they killed with fire and bullets. They stole from us, things we had kept for long, long years."

"Very sad," Booshk said dryly. "What do you want me to do about it?"

"They stole our secrets, so we stole theirs. We know all about them now. We know the name of their master; and the name of those he serves. We know where they hold their ceremonies. We know where they keep the woman you want."

"And what do you ask in return for this information?" Booshk asked, still ice-smooth.

The thing behind the screen laughed, and of everything Jayboy saw or heard that night that barking laugh was the worst. "What could you have, human, that we might want? We'll get all the parts that matter, anyway, all in good time. No, I'll give you this information, human, because the thieves would not wish you to have it."

Booshk gracefully set down the cup and leaned towards the mysterious speaker: "Well then," he said, "say on."

Bringing together the literary genres of cyberpunk and Lovecraftian horror in an RPG presents the GM with a number of interesting and unusual challenges.

The universe of the Mythos is both like and unlike the worlds presented in cyberpunk fiction. The differences are mostly technological, but they are also important. When Lovecraft devised his Mythos, there were no satellite photos, or even regular long-range air flights. If he put an inhuman city at the South Pole, there was no way to check and say, "That's just not there." Lovecraft wrote before moon shots, bathyscaphes and interplanetary probes. When Lovecraft identified the planet Pluto as Yuggoth, the home of the Mi-go, Pluto was still a nebulous, almost mythical scientific theory deduced from a couple of blurry dots of light in a telescope photograph. Today we have close-up pictures of Pluto and its satellite.

However, not all modern knowledge is so hostile to the Mythos. In the '30s, Lovecraft's fictional metaphysics were an audacious contrast to the logical positivism of his time, a philosophy which said that the universe was rigidly logical, and all reality was, given enough data, subject to complete analysis through mathematical or scientific formulae. Although in real life Lovecraft subscribed to many of the assumptions of logical positivism, his fiction raised the possibility that logic was not sufficient to quantify the universe — that all our mathematical theorems and logical deductions were just a comforting illu-

## THREE KINDS OF FEAR

Stephen King, in *Danse Macabre*, his critical exploration of the horror genre, identifies three different levels at which horror operates.

The most basic level is *the gross out*. This is the physical revulsion we feel when a severed head goes rolling down the hall, or the possessed child projectile-vomits over the ministering priest. **Leatherface**, from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, with his human-skin mask and bloody power tools is the avatar of the gross out. The gross out is what happens when the lights go out and something slimy and foul splatters in your face.

The next level is *horror*, the emotion we feel when confronted with something that should not exist. When the dead get up and walk around, or a man turns into a wolf, or a spider is the size of a large dog, that's when we feel horror. Horror is also being brought face to face with our most primal fears, as we hang over the *abyss*, feeling our grip slowly slipping away, or watch, **helplessly** bound, as the swinging blade moves slowly, inch by inch, closer to our throats. Horror happens when the lights go out and something with claws grabs you by the arm.

Finally, the highest level is *terror*, the thrill of the unseen and the unknowable. It's the feeling of unseen eyes watching you walk past. Terror is (to paraphrase Stephen Wright) what you feel when you come home and discover everything you own has been taken away **and replaced by an exact duplicate**. When the lights go out and something **starts** breathing in your ear — you can hear it breathe, and feel its breath, and even smell it, but whenever you reach out for it your fingertips feel nothing — that's terror.

A good *CthulhuPunk* campaign will make use of all three levels. There's a tendency to belittle the "lower" levels of horror as unworthy, largely because they characterize the most mindless and offensive kind of horror movies, books and comics. The problem with such works however, is not that they indulge in the gross out, but that they do so without imagination or originality, and that they never rise above it. A satisfying campaign cannot function exclusively in the realm of terror any more than it can subsist solely on gross-outs. Eventually, there has to be a pay-off in the **form** of a physical threat that can be squarely faced and at least potentially defeated.

## COWARDLY PLAYERS/ COWARDLY PCs

A healthy respect for the Old Ones is a trait to be encouraged in the PCs, but it can easily be carried too far. Some players will devise arbitrary strategies to decrease the lethality of the campaign which are antithetical to the spirit of the campaign. On the surface, it seems that policies like "never read from ancient books," or "never open a sealed artifact" would be only good sense, but such methods can bring the adventure to a screeching halt. Therefore, it is the GM's job to see that the PCs are always forced to "go back into the basement," even when they know there's a monster under the stairs.

When the players resort to do-nothing tactics like those above, the GM should be, frankly, merciless. Do any PCs have any quirks or disadvantages which imply a general inquisitiveness or a deep personal fascination with the Mythos? If so, the GM should have the forsaken object prey upon their minds constantly. Eventually, the fascinated PC will have to start making Will Rolls to avoid indulging his curiosity about the object. This fascination might grow even if the PC has no particular relevant disadvantages — the artifacts of the Mythos have a strange effect on human reason.

*Continued on next page...*

mask the fact that reality has at its core a seething chaos which is unknowable and fundamentally hostile. Today we have quantum mechanics and chaos theory, and such assumptions seem not only possible, but almost necessarily true.

The one thing that brings the Mythos and cyberpunk together most overtly is that both genres depict societies in transition and in a state of denial. In cyberpunk, the problem is one of future-shock — technological innovation has outpaced social evolution, and the stress thereby created threatens to rip civilization apart at the seams. In the Mythos stories, the problem is culture-shock — the knowledge of the Old Ones and their works is becoming more and more inescapable, yet the humans simply are not able to acknowledge that knowledge; our minds can't encompass it. In both genres the problem is essentially the same — one of forbidden knowledge which the human mind can neither ignore nor cope with.

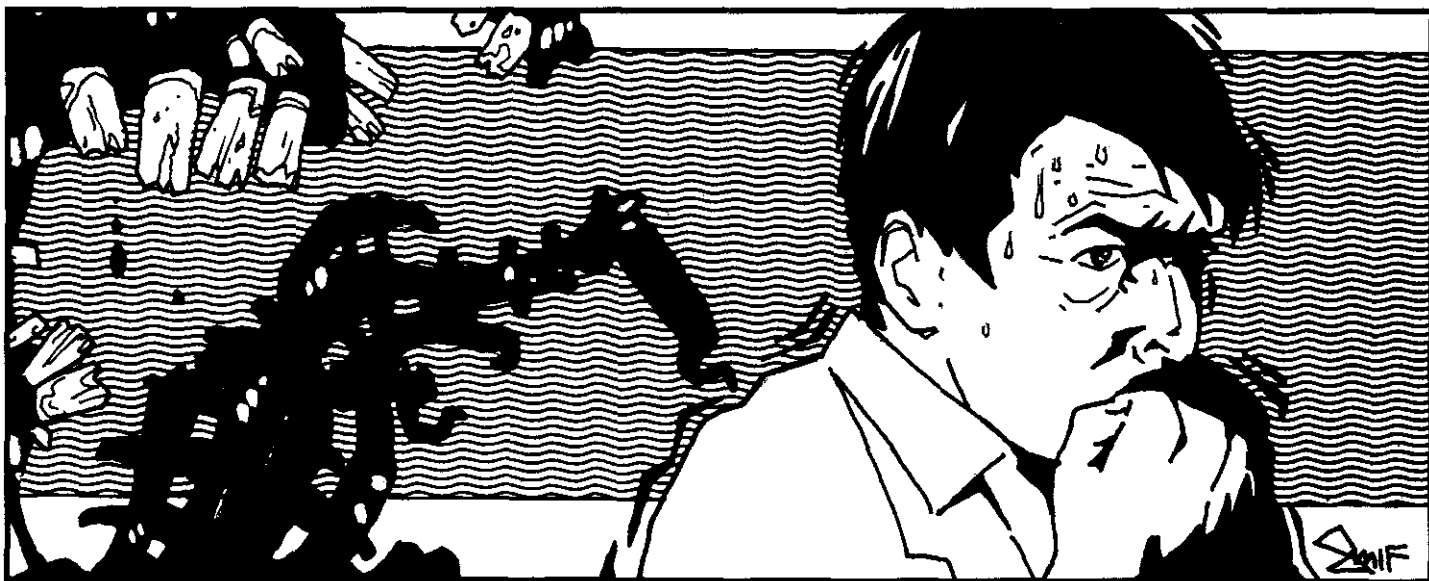


## Gaming in the Mythos

As anyone who's ever played Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* knows, the experience of roleplaying in Lovecraft's world is fundamentally different from that of other RPG adventures. In most games, the PCs' goal is to survive, get ahead, succeed and eventually come to dominate the campaign. In a Mythos game, most of those goals are not only unreachable, they're logically impossible. The only (dubious) exception is "survive," and even that leaves open the question of whether survival is really such a desirable thing in such a hopeless and hostile universe. These questions are dealt with in the section on *The Essential Meaninglessness of Everything*, (p. 9). This section is devoted to what the appeal of the Mythos *is*, not what it isn't.

## The Uphill Fight

Just because the war between humanity and the Old Ones is hopeless doesn't mean it can't be glorious. The overwhelming power of the Great Old Ones makes every minor victory against them that much more exciting and rewarding. The high stakes of the game make it worth playing. Each time they're repulsed, the Old Ones will always return, in a week, a year or a millennium. But that doesn't change the fact that for today, the world has been saved.



There is some satisfaction to be taken in saving the world, even if the salvation is strictly temporary and conditional, and even at ultimate personal cost.

## Dircovery and Revelation

The universe of the Mythos is, if nothing else, big. Really, really, *really* big. It's not only big, it's crowded with strange creatures all interacting with one another in some kind of grand cosmic dance that rarely makes sense to outside observers.

Part of the fun of adventuring among the creatures of the Mythos is the very act of discovering their secret laws and natures. This need to know is the impulse that so many of the protagonists of the original stories pursued to their own destruction, and a *CthulhuPunk* player can, vicariously through his PC, feel some echo of the same fascination.

This is the primary reason why, for the *CthulhuPunk* campaign to work, it is absolutely essential that the GM control the player's access to campaign information — to keep that sense of unfolding mystery and dark grandeur that gives the stories so much of their appeal.

## Thrills and Chills

The final reason to play in a horror campaign is because horror itself can be entertaining. Everybody loves a good scare.

Everybody who's ever been to a horror movie knows the thrill when the heroine (it's usually a heroine) goes back into the basement, even though *we* know there's a monster under the stairs, and *she* knows there's a monster under the stairs, but there's always some reason for her to turn right around and *go back into the basement*. This is a sensation a *CthulhuPunk* player should come to know well — the GM's job, to a large extent, is thinking of reasons why the PCs *have to go back into the basement* again... and again...and again...until *whack!* The monster's claw darts out from under the stairs of literary inevitability, and some hapless PC's head is left rolling on the concrete.

A well-run *CthulhuPunk* campaign can offer all the vicarious thrills of Russian Roulette, without any of the mess to clean up afterwards.



## The Purpose of the Campaign

There are basically two possible focuses for a *CthulhuPunk* campaign: the *investigative* campaign, and the *activist* campaign.

The initial focus of the investigative campaign is scholarly. The PCs have come to suspect that the universe operates in a fundamentally different way than they have been taught to believe, and they are seeking to explore and understand this difference. Their researches lead them to the Old Ones, and from there they become enmeshed in the perils of the Mythos. Only gradually will the investigators realize how truly strange and fundamentally dangerous their researches are.

The activist campaign, on the other hand, sees the Mythos as a clear and present danger to humanity, and seeks right from the start to undermine and oppose any inhuman incursion on Earth. Such a campaign will probably begin with a single abhorrent act committed by cultists or other lesser servitors, which the PCs feel called upon to respond to, and lead from there to reveal other dark and threatening forces. It may be a long time before the PCs begin to realize the true scope of the Old Ones' operations, and how powerful and pervasive their ultimate foes really are.



## COWARDLY PLAYERS/ COWARDLY PCs (CONTINUED)

Probably the best tactic, however, for dealing with cowardly roleplaying is to demonstrate within the campaign itself why a "know nothing" attitude is by no means the safest course. In the *CthulhuPunk* world, knowledge is dangerous, but it is also power — and powerlessness is far more dangerous than knowledge. If the PCs refuse to make use of an offered clue, that choice should come back to haunt them later on in the adventure. In general, it should always be assumed that the creatures of the Mythos *never* "just go away." The PCs should learn that they basically have two choices — deal with the menace now, or deal with it later, when it's *stronger*.

If they refuse to read the book and put it away, have an NPC become obsessed with it and read it in secret, and have him become strangely transformed by the experience. If they refuse to open the box, have it stolen by cultists, who will use it against the team at the very worst possible moment, instead of allowing the PCs to pick the time and place of the opening.

If this lesson can be learned only at the cost of some PC lives, so much the better.

## LETHALITY

**CthulhuPunk** is a synthesis of two genres where life is cheap. Good guys — including PCs — *will* die during the course of the campaign, some of them quite horribly. Even if he does survive, a PC is very likely to find himself reduced eventually to a gibbering, unplayable husk of his **former** self, due to **repeated** exposure to the **mind-warping** influence of the Mythos. If a player has difficulty dealing with this reality, then that player is well advised to stay away from cyber-horror campaigns in the future.

Even in a **CthulhuPunk** campaign, however, the GM is well advised to avoid killing a PC randomly or casually (random, senseless death definitely *does* have its place in this genre, but in general NPCs make better victims of such certain dooms).

**Meaningful** death, on the other hand, is something that should be accepted as an **important part** of the campaign. If the PC sacrifices himself to close the dimensional gate, or stop the summoning ritual, then that PC's player has no reason to **complain** or feel like a failure. If they **knowingly** go to face a more powerful enemy, they should feel relieved if a few members of the team make it out alive, rather than annoyed if some **members** of the team don't.

This is also a campaign where the GM need not and should not cut any slack for foolish roleplaying. If a PC is playing too aggressively and thoughtlessly, he should count himself lucky if he gets even one warning before paying the ultimate price for his foolishness. Likewise overly cautious or cowardly behavior should be a normally fatal mistake (see *Cowardly Players/Cowardly PCs*, p. 60).

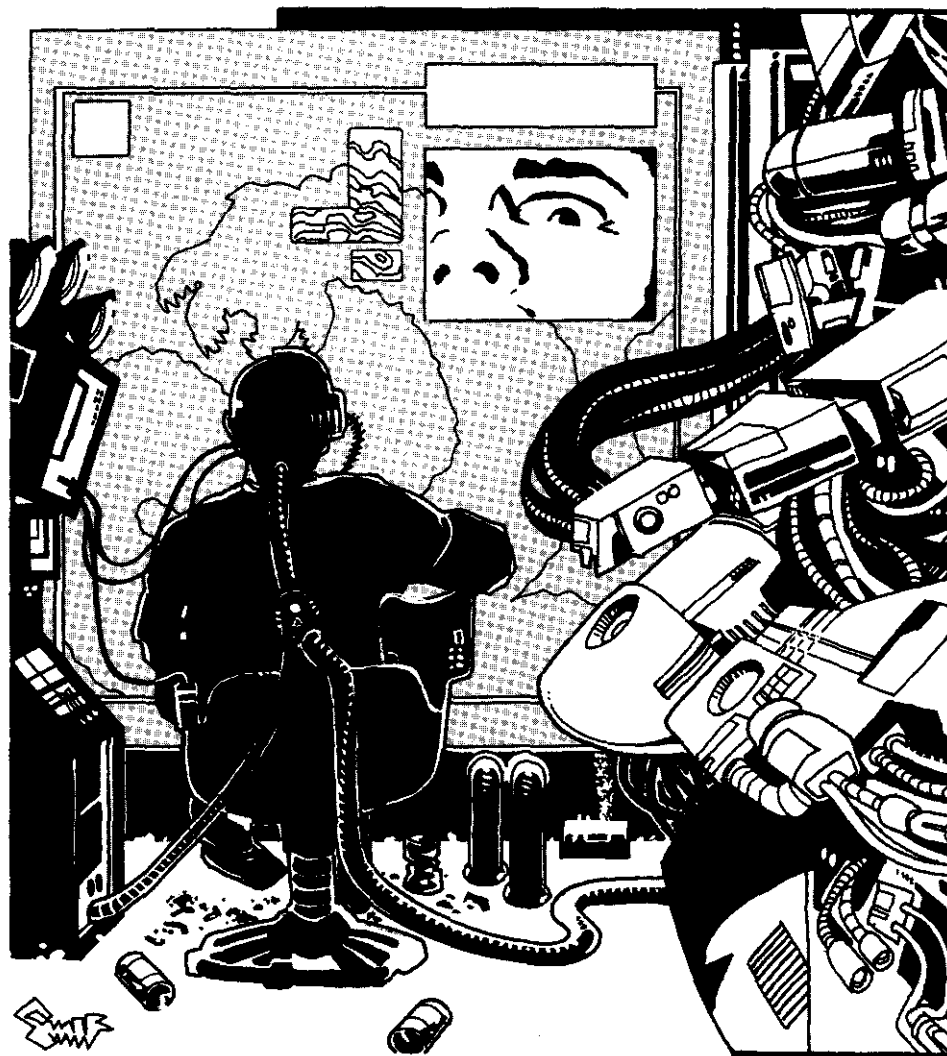
Of course, designing a complete and well-rounded **GURPS** character is not a trivial task. The high death rate in a **CthulhuPunk** campaign is a reasonable argument in favor of low-point-value starting characters — to streamline the process of character replacement by limiting the number of variables involved in character design. Another possibility is for each player to design an **exua** character early on in the campaign, which the GM can **bring** in if their original "goes nuts" or "buys the **farm**" (of course, if the back-up character becomes the primary, the player will need to begin work on a new backup). A player left bereft of a PC in the middle of an adventure can also be allowed to step into the role of a significant NPC, and be given the option of staying with that character or designing an original one at adventure's end.

These two motivations are by no means mutually exclusive. Even a starting campaign might well partake of elements of **both** (a famous scholar engaged in a mysterious research project is found dead under bizarre circumstances; the PCs come together to recover his lost research notes and discover who or what is responsible for his death). A starting campaign could even incorporate different PCs with both motivations (one party member wants revenge on the cultists who killed her father, another just wants to understand the meaning behind certain passages in an ancient tome).

As an ongoing campaign progresses, it will swing back and forth between the two foci. Investigators, as they gain a deepening understanding of the Mythos, will be forced to take action to protect themselves, or to prevent horrible atrocities against innocents. Activists, for their part, will pursue more purely investigative activities, hoping to discover information which may prove useful against the Old Ones.



Splatterpunk is cyberpunk with the chrome stripped off. Forget about technology, politics and social evolution — splatterpunk is about what happens when humanity hits bottom. When future-shock, repression and alienation have completely dehumanized humanity, what's left is splatterpunk.



Splatterpunk is characterized by over-the-top excess in the senseless violence department. The whole point of the genre is to push the player/reader/viewer just as far as he can be pushed before shocking images lose their power to shock. It's not for the faint of heart.

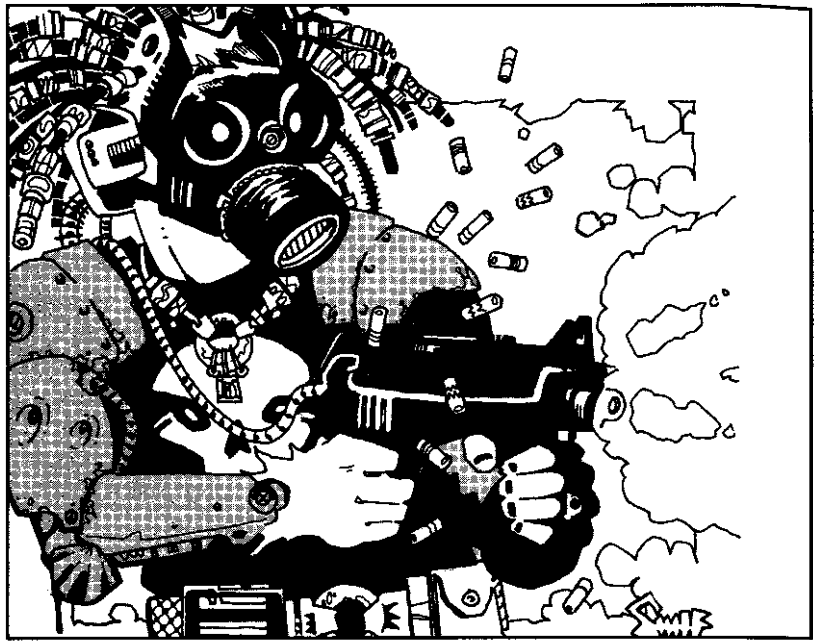
As the name implies, it's a quintessentially *messy* genre — people don't bleed, they *squirt*, bystanders don't get crushed, they get *squished*, and victims don't just explode, they *splatter*.

Overkill is important to splatterpunk. Never shoot somebody with a pistol when they can be blasted with a LAW rocket. Never stab someone with a switchblade when they can be subdivided with a chainsaw. The more exotic the violence, the better — *outré*, exotic implements of destruction are to be favored, be they supernatural or the creations of sinister technology. Another favored splatterpunk technique is to take commonplace or *comforting* objects and suddenly make them grotesquely deadly — the warm, relaxing bubble bath that suddenly starts to boil, or carry a electrical current, or turn to acid . . . the inviting easy-chair that suddenly protrudes 18" spikes . . . the light fixture that fires random laser blasts when it's turned on . . .

A *CthulhuPunk* campaign could be run completely in splatterpunk mode, where 90% of the action is the PCs pureeing other-dimensional horrors until they themselves are liquefied by the Old Ones, and the remaining 10% is the PCs either doing in NPCs in various horrible and unsanitary ways, or being themselves done in with equal vigor.

As the guiding principle behind a whole campaign, splatterpunk is a distinctly limited concept. It's probably better used (particularly in campaigns that want to preserve some of the more restrained atmosphere of Lovecraft's tales) as a mode which the campaign can slip into when warranted. When the PCs decide that the only way to deal with the terrorist cultists is to drive a heavily-armed APC through the wall just as they're opening the gate for the Old Ones to come through . . . then at that point the adventure has already become splatterpunk. The only question remaining to the GM is whether to try to minimize the mayhem, or to go with it. The splatterpunk sensibility says, "go with it."

Of course, it is entirely possible to go too far. How much splatterpunk a GM can insert into the campaign is largely a function of how much his players can tolerate. No GM should deliberately insert any element into his campaign that would egregiously offend or drive off a player.



## ONLINE GAMING

One innovative and effective way to play *CthulhuPunk* is online, through e-mail, a BBS or an online service like Illuminati Online (see p. 4), CompuServe or America Online. In online roleplaying the GM posts a situation for the player(s), who answer with a post describing their characters' response to the situation. The game can be played either publicly (on a message base or newsgroup) or privately in e-mail. Online gaming works especially well with the cyberpunk elements of *CthulhuPunk*, as the computer environment is a natural milieu for characters in the genre.

Both e-mail and message-based games have their advantages and disadvantages.

Message-based games are easier for the GM to run, and provide the players with a public forum to display their creativity and roleplaying talents. However, organizing a message-based game requires a sysop who's willing to coordinate with the GM to provide the game with a permanent, public home on the system. Most private, recreational BBS sysops will be only too happy to help a GM organize an online game, but large commercial services usually have room for only a limited number of public games, while some services — particularly those devoted to business or an academic institutions — may be prohibited by policy from allowing public gaming at all.

*Continued on next page*

## Bringing Teams Together

Both Lovecraftian horror and cyberpunk are genres that focus on loners — protagonists who live outside the mainstream of society, with few friends and no peer group. The classic Lovecraft protagonist is the reclusive scholar, while cyberpunk tends to focus on the hard-bitten loner.

Unfortunately, this point of agreement between the genres is rather unfriendly to an RPG. Roleplaying is, traditionally, a cooperative activity, where aggressively solitary individuals are neither particularly encouraged nor particularly useful.



## ONLINE GAMING (CONTINUED)

E-mail games are particularly suited to this genre, because they offer a natural "double-blind" situation — the players don't necessarily know what the other characters are doing, or even that the other characters exist, at least at the start. This eliminates many of the problems described under "bringing teams together" (p. 63). It also gives the GM a great deal of freedom to expand the campaign, taking one character off in a certain direction, while others engage in radically different activities. On the downside, this kind of game is more work for the GM — instead of sending a move off to all the players at once, he has to respond individually to each move by each player. Also, the players don't have one another to feed off of creatively — they're on their own most of the time.

If the GM wants to run the campaign with the PCs in a traditional team or "party," it is his responsibility to give them a good reason to get together. He can only hope that once the party is brought together, the players will take it upon themselves to keep it together.

There are several appropriate ways to bring a diversified team of characters together.

**The right place at the right time:** The PCs all happen to be together in one place when something strange happens. This occurrence leads them to meet one another and begin investigations. The place in question might be an archaeological dig or an occultist's convention; they might even all be taken captive by the same cult and held as future sacrifices. This is one of the most natural and logical ways to bring a party together, its drawback being that after the current situation has been dealt with, the PCs really have no compelling in-character reason to stay together, short of more arbitrary GM manipulation.

**A common interest:** This is similar to the situation above, except that it's a bit more realistic, but also a bit more work for the GM. The PCs are all brought together by the same event, even though they were not necessarily present when it occurred. It might take several days or even weeks of game-time before the entire party is assembled in one place and actively co-operating. Recall the example of the famous scholar found murdered under very odd circumstances. The PCs might consist of a close relative seeking revenge, a professional colleague or student interested in pursuing the victim's research, the owner of the house where the victim was found, and a reporter who smells a story. In the days or weeks following the murder, these individuals will converge on the location of the crime, and (if they have any common sense at all) gradually draw together and begin operating as a team. As bizarre events continue, the danger mounts and they become more and more aware of what they're really up against. This situation has the same drawback as the previous possibility once the introductory scenario is done, and it requires a certain amount of patience early on in the campaign, as each player waits for the GM to draw the others together one-by-one.

**A mutual friend:** The PCs can be drawn together by a mutual friend, acquaintance or employer. In this case, the shared acquaintance is the one who becomes aware of the Mythos, and he brings the rest up to speed when they're







## RACE IN GURPS CTHULHUPUNK

H.P. Lovecraft was a racist. He was not, as far as can be told from extant evidence, a bigot. It is sometimes difficult for modern persons to see that there was a time when the two terms were not synonymous. A racist is a person who holds certain arbitrary stereotypes of individuals of a given race — who believes that one race is intrinsically better or worse than another. A bigot is one who allows his racist theories to serve as an excuse for the persecution or exclusion of individuals of a given group. For example, although Lovecraft often expressed his low opinion of the Jewish race, he married a dynamic, intelligent Jewish woman, and although the marriage did not last, the two remained on good terms and Lovecraft's racial views appear to have had little effect on the relationship one way or the other.

However, like many educated men of his time, Lovecraft did subscribe to many racial opinions which modern people generally consider both false and hurtful. His secluded lifestyle gave him few chances to test and correct these views in the real world.

Lovecraft's racism left a marked effect on his stories. Throughout Lovecraft's work, Anglo-Saxons are portrayed as intelligent, dynamic and dominant, while virtually everybody else is portrayed as ignorant, gullible and generally inferior. The non-white races in particular are portrayed as barely-human, virtually mindless savages. Not only are all of Lovecraft's heroes European, but all of his villains as well — non-whites lack the intelligence and moral focus to even be effectively evil.

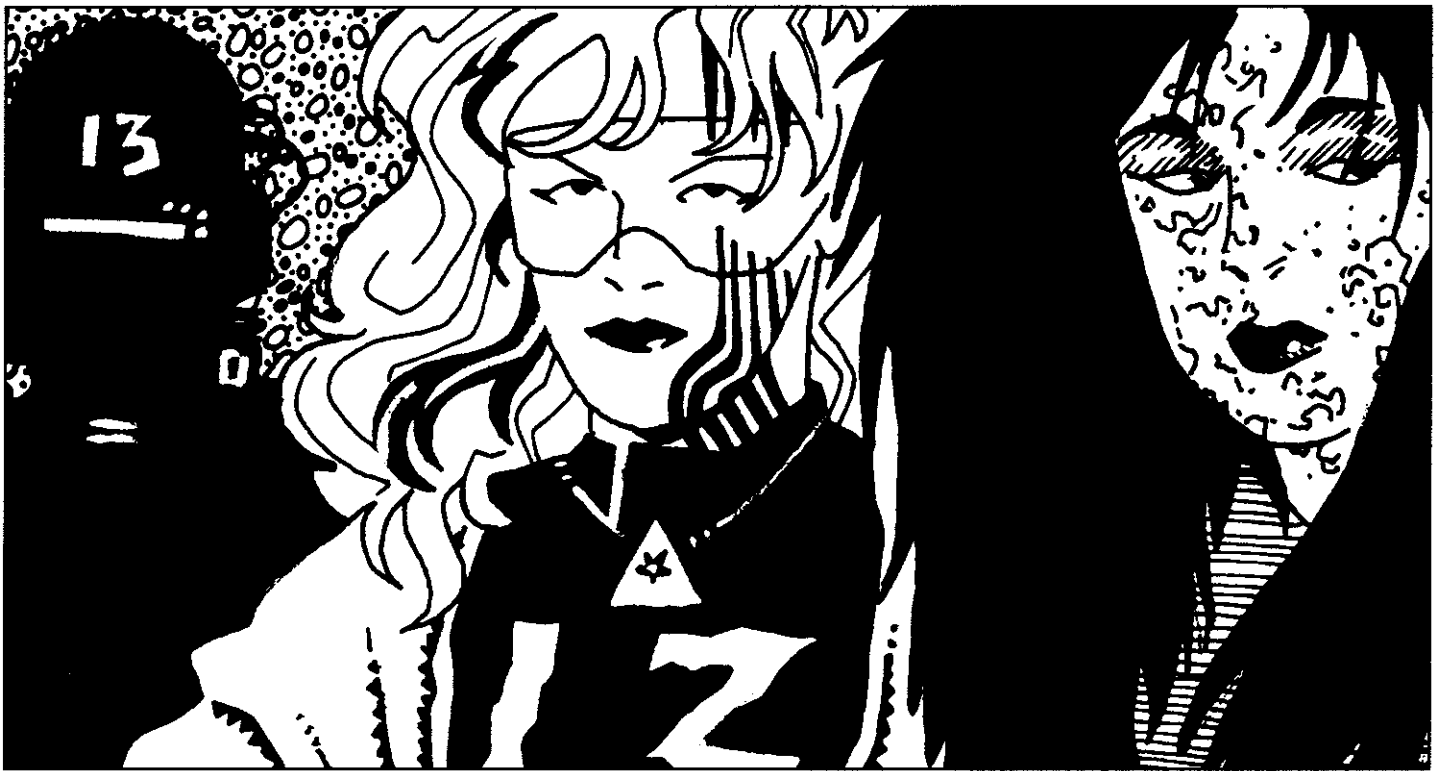
In attempting to transpose Lovecraft's work into the 21st century, we have put aside most of his racial prejudice. This was not done merely to keep from offending anyone's sensibilities.

*Continued on next page*

all together. It is up to the GM to define the relationship between the organizing character and each member of the party. The organizing character will probably be an NPC, but could also be a PC, with a bit of forethought and pre-planning between the GM and the player. The advantage of this method is that it gets the PCs all together and on the case in a very concise and efficient manner. It also has the potential of allowing the organizing NPC to remain in the campaign as a Patron or Contact, allowing the GM to use him as an active force to keep the PCs together and lead them from one adventure to the next. On the other hand, if the GM wants an organizing character who can get the party together quickly, then drop out of the campaign forever, leaving the PCs entirely on their own, he might want to use the old trick of assembling a group of strangers for the reading of the will of a mutual acquaintance — where the party is assembled and given the information needed for their first adventure by the hand of a dead man.

**Membership:** The PCs all belong to a formal or informal organization with an interest in investigating or opposing Mythos-related activity. (Several such organizations are described in the next chapter.) This organization may or may not function as a Patron for the party. Although this method is extremely efficient in terms of getting the party together and keeping them together, GMs may find that this sort of external organization clashes with both the cyberpunk and Lovecraftian atmospheres of the campaign. If the GM finds it important to keep the PCs standing absolutely alone in the face of great cosmic truths which the rest of society has blinded itself to, he may want to think twice about allowing them access to an organized and basically friendly source of support and knowledge about the Mythos.

The pulps which spawned the Cthulhu Mythos did not thrive on originality. They made their money by reliably providing familiar, predictable, entertaining thrills to their readers. Although *Weird Tales* and the tradition of Lovecraftian horror had a unique flavor unlike anything else in or out of the pulps, the individual stories of the Mythos were just as prone to formula as any other pulp genre. The authors devoted much more energy to producing original monsters with interesting effects on their victims than on setting those monsters in original plots.



## RACE IN GURPS CthulhuPunk (CONTINUED)

A pervasive theme in the cyberpunk genre is the decline and fall of the white race, as the cultural empire of the European Americans topples and the third-world countries take up the baton of cultural progress. This view of races and cultures as transitory phenomena that grow, thrive and die according to an arbitrary and inflexible historical timetable seems to mesh much better with the cosmology of the Cthulhu Mythos — where the entire human race is nothing more than a brief aberration in an ancient, hostile and chaotic universe — than do Lovecraft's rather simplistic and romantic racial prejudices.

Therefore, not only is it not assumed that the wisdom and vigilance of Anglo-Saxon white males is the only feeble defense mankind possesses against the forces from *outside*, it is also assumed that older, non-Western cultures (even those that are technologically "primitive" or philosophically "heathen") might occasionally offer some valuable insight into the nature of the alien creatures of the Mythos that would never even occur to an educated Westerner.



## Adventure Archetypes

Below are six broad plot outlines which encompass most of the stories in the Mythos. The boundaries between these plots are not cut and dried. Lovecraft and many of the best Mythos writers liked to mix-and-match elements from several different plot-types, and these hybrids often became the most memorable entries in the series.

For example, the story "The Call of Cthulhu" combines elements of Fatal Attraction, the Lost Expedition and the Site, while "The Dunwich Horror" is a synthesis of The Ceremony, Forbidden Knowledge and Outbreak.

### The Ceremony

This plot is basically PCs against cultists. Some vile cult (or perhaps just a single demented wizard) is planning some sort of operation that will either drastically increase its supernatural power or unleash the Great Old Ones or their powerful inhuman servants directly on the people of Earth. The PCs discover the cult's intention, and make it their business to foil its goals.

This can either be the most straightforward, action-packed plot, or the most subtle and convoluted. On the one hand, the PCs can simply come charging in, guns blazing, hoping to kill or disable all the cultists before they can finish their plot. When it is possible, such a head-on assault is actually quite a good tactic to use against the creatures of the Mythos, and it's one well supported in the source material — several classic Mythos tales end with a full-scale armed assault against the menace.

On the other hand, if the GM prefers to focus less on the action of stopping the ceremony, and more on the process of discovering that the ceremony is planned, and learning about what it means, who is involved and where the final scene will be played, it can be a complex exercise in investigation and deduction. Even the actual process of stopping the ceremony can be much more sub-

tle than a frontal assault. The PCs might be forced by circumstances to try to stop the ceremony before it even begins, keeping the cultists from acquiring something they must have to finish the ceremony, or seeing that some crucial prerequisite to the ceremony never happens at all. At this level the adventure can turn into an intricate, deadly dance between the cultists and the PCs.

The victim (see sidebar, p. 68) is less important to this plot type than he is in many of the others. A victim might be completely absent, unless he is being manipulated by the Old Ones to organize and conduct the ceremony. It is also possible that the cultists might be holding victims to serve as sacrifices at the ceremony. If so, these unfortunates represent a rarity — innocent victims of the Old Ones who can, with timely intervention, be saved and possibly even return to some semblance of normal life.

## Forbidden Knowledge

In this plotline, the victim begins to toy with the knowledge and powers of the Old Ones, and is changed by them, eventually becoming a mere pawn of the forces he first tried to control. Even if he doesn't come completely under the sway of the forces he disturbed, he is likely to attract their attention, and become their target.

The PCs may come into this plot while investigating the crimes or excesses the victim may have committed under the influence of supernatural forces, or because the victim, sensing he's bitten off more than he can chew, calls for their help and protection. But most traditionally they are called in by the victim, seeking to enmesh them in his insane schemes, or wanting somebody to hear and validate his irrational theories and justification, or just somebody to boast to about his "amazing discoveries."



## SCI-FI VS. FANTASY

There is some debate as to whether the stories of Lovecraft and the other creators of the Cthulhu Mythos are science fiction or fantasy. In truth, they are both.

They are science fiction in that they deal with a world that could be our own world, only expanded to consider distant worlds and alien lifeforms. They are fantasy in that they deal with concepts, creatures and powers that lie completely outside the realm of even the most unrestrained extrapolations of contemporary scientific thought.

The central truth of the Mythos, essentially, is that *everything humanity thinks it knows about the universe is wrong*. Physics, mathematics, logic, perception are all, essentially, lies that the human race has created to preserve its fragile sanity against an intrinsically hostile universe. In a real sense, the creatures of the Mythos are not "supernatural" at all — they just operate according to the *real* laws of the universe, which humanity has chosen to ignore. In a *CthulhuPunk* world, humans are the ones living in the fantasy — our delicate little illusion of consistency and security is the "magic." The powers of the Old Ones are the science — the unavoidable realities of existence.

For this reason, the *CthulhuPunk* campaign is advised to play down the more technically-oriented science fiction aspects typical to most cyberpunk campaigns. A new cybernetic interface or an advance in bio-engineering might be a big deal in most cyberpunk campaigns, but in a *CthulhuPunk* campaign it's more of a distraction than anything else — another meaningless human toy to distract us from facing *true* reality. If technology does become more than a minor background detail in the campaign, it should probably be more of the "weird science" variety, like the device from Lovecraft's "From Beyond" that allowed humans to look into other dimensions . . . and the creatures within the other dimensions to look back.

## THE VICTIM

Most of the adventure types listed refer to "The Victim." This is the person who serves as the catalyst of the whole adventure — the person to whom something horrible happens, that serves to alert the outside world (in the person of the PCs) that the Old Ones are afoot.

Usually, the victim is beyond saving. The corruption spread by the Old Ones is fatal at first touch, even if death (or a literally worse fate) is not instantaneous. The best that the PCs can hope for is that the corruption can be contained before it spreads to consume more innocents. Often this will involve the deliberate destruction of the original victim, or whatever he has become. For this reason, PCs are not, normally, good victims.

Although referred to above as an individual, the victim could just as easily be a family or a whole community.

## fatal Attraction

This is the most tragic plotline. The victim does not become enmeshed in the Mythos because he toys with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, or because he seeks to gain power over others. The victim simply has something the Old Ones want, and they come and take. This could be anything from an arcane artifact to some unique inborn genetic potential. In several stories by Lovecraft, notably "Pickman's Model" and "The Music of Erich Zahn," the otherworldly creatures are drawn to a human with a unique and perverse artistic genius.

In this sort of adventure, the PCs' role is straightforward. They are seeking to either protect the victim, or to release him from alien torment — by death, if necessary. Another important consideration might be to prevent the Old Ones from gaining or using whatever they originally sought out the victim to acquire. The PCs will probably enter the scenario when the victim or somebody close to him requests their help and protection.

## Outbreak

This is simply a random outbreak of Mythos activity. An alien force crashes to Earth within a meteorite, and begins to change those who come in contact with it, or an ancient portal opens and creatures from the other side begin to haunt the night.

In this plot type, the actions and effects of the Mythos creatures are usually quite obvious, and the PCs find out about them when they come to the attention of the authorities or the media (though if they're particularly unlucky, they may



be present at the very earliest manifestations of the phenomenon). Their role in this plot is to: 1) determine what's going on, 2) contain the spread of the menace, and 3) eradicate it.

One advantage that the PCs have in this type of plot is that because the supernatural incursion is so dramatic and obvious, it is sometimes possible to convince the authorities that something strange and dangerous really is going on, and something dramatic must be done to deal with it. It is quite permissible in an Outbreak plot (particularly one that involves especially powerful or numerous creatures) for the GM to confine the PCs' actual participation in the adventure to investigation, and to leave containment and eradication to heavily armed squads of police or military. Although it may seem like somewhat of a cop-out, several important Lovecraft stories (notably "The Shadow Over Innsmouth") ended exactly this way.

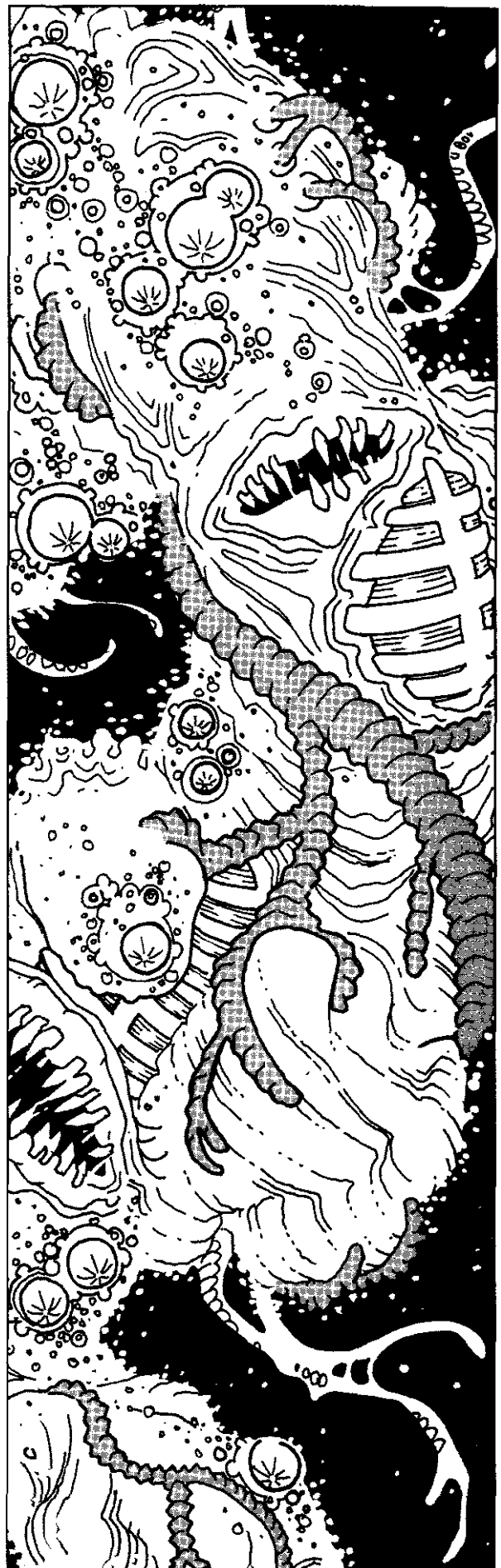
## The Lost Expedition

"The Lost Expedition" is a generic name for any plot where the PCs have to discover the fate of earlier investigators who have disappeared mysteriously. The "expedition" can be anything from a couple of acquaintances who go off to spend the night in a "haunted house" and are found dead in the morning, to a multi-million dollar international expedition to the South Pole that vanishes without a trace. Often, the act of finding the lost (dead, alive or otherwise) will lead the investigating team to discover other dangers which must be dealt with — i.e., keeping whatever got the first team from also getting the PCs or other innocent victims.

To get the PCs involved in this plot type, there usually needs to be some clue that the disappearances or "accidents" were Mythos-related (unless one of the victims has some sort of relationship or connection with one of the PCs which is itself enough to justify further investigation). Sometimes, this crucial hint can be implicit in the lost expedition's purpose — they knew the house was "haunted," or they expressed an interest in tracking down rumors of cult activity, inhuman creatures or pre-human ruins or artifacts before they left. Other times, the clue can be more dramatic — a single junior member of the expedition survives, utterly mad and unable to speak, grasping a strangely-carved stone in his hand. There's also the famous "recovered diary," which describes the unusual events which preceded the final doom of the expedition.

## The Site

This plot-type is much like "The Lost Expedition," except that the PCs get to be part of the expedition in peril. The PCs become involved in the discovery of some Mythos-related artifact, perhaps of prehuman origin. The find can be anything from a whole subterranean civilization to an inexplicable museum piece which had been kept in storage for years until the characters or an acquaintance begin to suspect its true nature and powers. Word of the discovery may leak out, drawing the attention of cultists, or the investigations of the PCs may activate some gate or signal which causes inhuman forces to begin to gather near the site, creating a potential Outbreak situation. The PCs' job is to figure out what they've found before the danger becomes irreversible.



## INVESTIGATORS



The other three huddled around Booshk as he worked at the keyboard. "Anything yet?" Jayboy asked. Again.

"No, dear," Booshk replied patiently. "I'm afraid not. It's not just a matter of changing the password – they do that daily. They've changed the whole security protocol two, maybe three times since I was with them."

"So that's it."

"Well, maybe not. There's one route I haven't tried yet. I rather doubt they've changed it, since I think there's no way they can know I put it there."

"You got a back door?" Jayboy exploded. "And you're just now getting around to trying it?"

"Now, now, lad, not so hot. It's not that easy. I don't think they know about my little emergency entrance now, but after I actually use it, they most certainly will. You see, it's rather like the old classic says, 'It's a great trick, but I can only do it once.' Nonetheless, it seems the time has come."

*Booshk's fingers danced again over the keyboard. After a few moments, the screen filled with text. Jayboy read, "Good evening, doctor, welcome to WHATELEYNET Your last connection was. . . " then Booshk suddenly blanked the screen. Pulling a set of wizzie goggles out of the drawer; he quickly pulled them over his face. "Sorry, lad, but it's better you don't see any more of this than necessary."*

*As if to make up for his secrecy, he kept up a running commentary as the session progressed. "Like coming home, eh, lad? Tsk, tsk, don't they ever clean house around here? Ah well, at least everything's still in the same place . . . ah yes, here we go. Right around the corner now. There they are, our little friends. Oh my, they have been busy, haven't they? Here we go. This must be the bunch that got to dear Annie. My, they just have all sorts of interesting little facts here, not that they'd ever actually do anything about any of them. That's just not their style, is it? Lies to Starry Wisdom, of course . . . they have their fingers in everything these days. Several subversive and anarchist organizations; Anyadoll should feel right at home. Known to practice rituals dedicated to Shub-Niggurath, Tsathoggua, Cthulhu of course, the Unspeakable, even Azathoth himself. Our friends don't play favorites. Several extremely provocative reports of possible direct extraterrestrial contact. Oh dear, here come the watchdogs. Time to say goodnight."*

*Booshk quickly removed the goggles and powered down the computer, folding it up and replacing it in its pouch.*

*When he looked up, the bantering tone from his trip to the archives was gone. "This is very, very bad, friends. It cannot be allowed to continue."*

In general, mankind has a frankly amazing ability to ignore the existence of the Old Ones. Nonetheless, there are a few special individuals who are capable of facing cosmic reality, at least for a time, without sacrificing their wills or their sanities. The PCs are just such people, and they are not alone (although it might often seem that way).

This chapter discusses those organizations and institutions which have the incentive and the wherewithal to mount an organized effort to unearth the truth about the Mythos, and perhaps take steps to protect humanity from cosmic dangers.

This is, of course, a highly dangerous activity, where the worst casualties are not necessarily fatalities. Investigators can all-too-easily be transformed by the mind-warping power of the Mythos into the very thing they fight against (see "Rogue Investigators," p. 95).

Although all the organizations in this chapter operate more or less out of the public eye, the GM may find it does not mesh with his vision of the campaign to have this many relatively powerful or knowledgeable organizations all actively researching and opposing the Mythos. That's fine. This chapter should be used as a smorgasbord from which the GM can pick and choose those organizations which will enhance his campaign, introducing new potential allies and potential complications as they're needed.

There is one all-important principle which the GM should keep in mind throughout this chapter — just because the PCs and the organiza-

## JAMES R. DESIATO

Age 57; 5' 9", 140 lbs.; receding blond hair and brown eyes.

ST 10, DX 8, IQ 14, HT 9

Basic Speed 4.25, Move 4

Dodge 4

No armor or encumbrance.

**Advantages:** Common Sense, Reputation +2 (archaeological community).

**Disadvantages:** Age, Bad Sight (wears glasses), Minor Delusion: "There's nothing supernatural about the things I study."

**Skills:** Anthropology-14, Archaeology-17, Computer Operation-14, Geology-13, History-16, Linguistics-14, Literature-15, Mythos Lore-11, Occultism-12, Professional Skill: Editor/Publisher-16, Research-14, Savoir-Faire-14, Swimming-9, Teaching-15, Theology-15, Writing-15.

James R. Desiato of Providence, RI, is the editor and publisher of *Paleoarcheological Review*, a magazine he founded more than a decade ago. Desiato has no advanced degrees, but he has earned B.A.s in Archaeology, History and Journalism.

Desiato has never done any archaeological fieldwork — in his early teens he was preparing for a major expedition to the Near East when the TD plague closed off most international travel, and uncertain health has kept him from any subsequent hands-on research. However, his fascination with archaeology is profound and his knowledge of current theory and research is encyclopedic.

*Continued on next page*





## JAMES R. DESIATO (CONTINUED)

Desiato started his career as a popular science writer, doing articles for national newspapers and magazines on developments in archaeology, anthropology and linguistics for the layman. He has published two books: a critical evaluation of *The Golden Bough*, written in collaboration with a Harvard anthropology professor, and a similar work based on the books of Charles Fort, written solo.

Over the years, Desiato became increasingly convinced that certain finds could only be explained as the remnants of pre-human — possibly extraterrestrial — civilization. Well aware that his theories were taking him into a realm traditionally reserved for mystics, crackpots and charlatans, Desiato began to carefully and meticulously accumulate the evidence for his theories, studiously avoiding any suggestion of dogmatism or intuition in his arguments. Although most professional scholars of prehistory consider Desiato's theories unproven and possibly unprovable (an evaluation Desiato does not dispute), they have gradually gained acceptance, until today many archaeologists are quite willing to at least consider pre-human civilization as a viable hypothesis worthy of further exploration.

In person, Desiato strikes most people as a fatherly presence, quiet but cheerful. If given the chance, he sometimes tends to chatter on about his pet projects, but since he has a gift for making archaeological arcana both comprehensible and interesting to the layman, people seldom mind his impromptu dissertations.

Desiato has no interest in speculations that his theories may suggest powerful supernatural forces at work on earth. He will not come out and say that he does not believe such things are possible, he simply professes to have no interest whatsoever in the possibility — if supernatural arguments become particularly insistent, Desiato will sometimes simply "tune out" the conversation, becoming preoccupied with something else entirely and losing all track of the subject at hand (odd behavior, since he is not at all prone to absent-mindedness normally). He is quite adamant, however, in insisting that there is no evidence whatsoever that any prehuman races or entities are still active or extant on modern-day Earth. Persistent arguments in that direction can provoke Desiato to visible irritation.

tions below are technically on the same side, it *does not follow that they will all become allies*. The world, unfortunately, doesn't work that way. Most of the organizations below will view the PCs with suspicion until they've thoroughly proven themselves. Other organizations will probably view the PCs as either nuisances, threats, or as potential decoys or stooges, regardless of what they do.

Many of the groups detailed in this chapter draw specifically on the world background found in Chapter 2 and in *GURPS Cyberworld*; however, they can easily be adapted to many other cyberpunk milieus.



### Independent Investigators

This is the class to which most PCs will belong, at least initially. This is a catch-all category of those who have stumbled on to some degree of knowledge about the Old Ones or their servants, and decided to pursue the evidence on their own initiative. Numerous possible backgrounds for independent investigators are found beginning on p. 41, but anyone can become an independent investigator, if he has suspicions regarding the Mythos and choose to pursue those suspicions.

You don't have to be paranoid to be an independent investigator, but it helps. Even before they begin to expose themselves to otherworldly forces, many independent investigators are none too stable. This is a category that lends itself to the fanatic, the paranoid, the obsessive and the delusional conspiracy theorist. Even if the PCs are not themselves subject to any of the above afflictions, they will have to deal with those who are.

### Paleoarcheological Review

One of the few public and relatively respectable forums for speculation about the Old Ones and the Mythos is a small American magazine called *Paleoarcheological Review*, published by the Voynich Press, and edited by Mr. James R. Desiato of Providence, R.I. (see sidebar, p. 71).



Desiato has published his private scientific journal for more than a decade, and it has acquired a respectable international following. The magazine is dedicated to the premise that Earth was the home to civilized sentients – possibly from another world – before the evolution of Homo sapiens. This is, of course, not a new idea – it reflects the 19th-century mysticism of Blavatsky, as well as the 20th-century pseudo-science of von Daniken – but unlike those predecessors, Desiato has earned a reputation for careful research and rigorous, if unorthodox, logical argument. Many scientists and scholars world-wide admire the Review as an example of audacious but scrupulous scientific thinking, even while they hotly contest many of the editor's conclusions.

Of course, the Review does attract a fair number of crackpots as well, but they tend to be a better class of crackpot than the norm. Desiato's rigorous editorial policy against conspiracy theory, metaphysical speculation, political criticism or personal characterizations of any kind in the publication tend to filter out the more inarticulate, mystical or strident dabblers in the unknown.

The Review does not overtly discuss the Great Old Ones as a present, physical danger to humanity. It might do a series on the various manifestations of the Cthulhu cult throughout history, but would never suggest that Great Cthulhu is a real creature of incredible power that presently lies sleeping in R'lyeh. It might tentatively suggest that archaeological evidence points to the possibility of extraterrestrial mining operations on Earth, perhaps continuing even into historical eras, but it would never propose that the Fungi from Yuggoth are stealing the brains of inconvenient humans.

The magazine is a bit looser in its classified advertising section (although there is a definite line of paranoia which Desiato will not cross), and these ads can lead to valuable contacts with other independent investigators. Of course, the ad might also lead to cultists, rogue investigators, mad scientists and other dangerous types.

Each issue of the Review runs about 500 kilobytes (like most 21st-century magazines, it is available only in computer-readable format). A one-year, 10-issue subscription costs \$110 for download access, or \$170 for CD-ROM (the price is rather high, but not exorbitant for a journal of that size and frequency). Individual issues (including all back issues) are available for \$20 for download or \$30 for CD-ROM; current subscribers get a \$5 discount on back issue orders. All payments must be electronic credit transfers based on internationally-recognized valuta (dollar values are in absolute GURPS cash, which may or may not correspond to the current value of the U.S. dollar). The Review currently has an international circulation of about 30,000.

Careful study of any year's worth of Paleoaerchological Review can give the reader access to +1 Mythos Lore skill, one time only, and the skill cannot be raised above 15 by this method (of course, the +1 must still be paid for with character points, and the appropriate Mythos Fright Checks).

## The Homo Sapiens League

This is a loose confederation of cyberpunks, occult aficionados, Forteanes, conspiracy theorists and fringe-religious types. It exists primarily on the information nets, although it does occasionally sponsor a convention, seminar or similar live activity (in Europe or South America – the North American ProGov would not tolerate such activities). There is no real organization or central authority to the group. The league has existed for nine years, and as is always the case with such organizations, has spawned several distinct factions and splinter groups.

The Homo-Saps (a nickname they use profusely among themselves, although they resent it when used by others) don't really have a unified agenda.



## KAPTAN ARKANE

(Real name, Andrew Kim)  
Age 33: 5' 7". 125 lbs.: black hair and brown eyes.

ST 11, DX 12, IQ 12, HT 10

Basic Speed 5.5, Move 7

Dodge 5

No armor or encumbrance.

*Advantages:* Mathematical Ability, Strong Will +1, Wealth: Comfortable.

*Cyberwear:* Two Chip Slots.

*Disadvantages:* Addiction (see below), Phobia (minor: Fear of Bright Lights), Secret: Kaptan Arkane, net pirate.

*Quirks:* Always wears sunglasses.

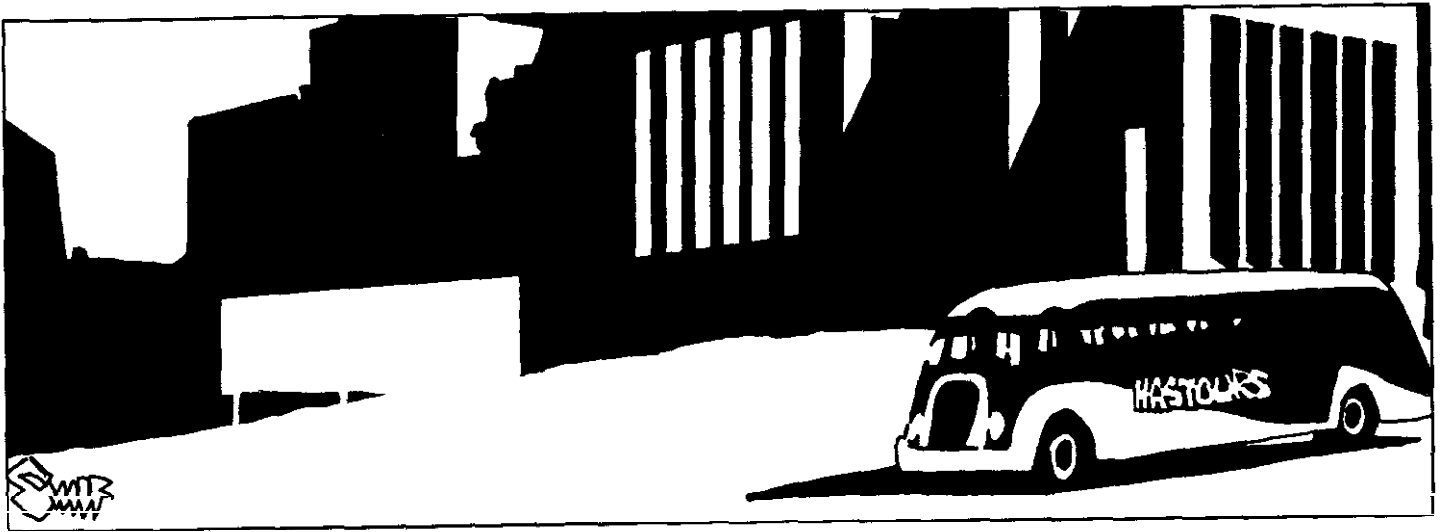
*Skills:* Administration-12, Computer Hacking-14, Computer Operation-17, Computer Programming-21, Electronics-15, Mathematics-14, Mythos Lore-14, Occultism-15, Running-14, Savoir-Faire (corporate)-13, Sports (racquetball)-14, Swimming-13.

*Languages:* Japanese-11, Russian-12.

Andrew Kim is a 4th-generation Korean American. He is employed as a data analyst in a corporate enclave in Omaha, where he specializes in data management for the agricultural futures trade.

However, Kim has a secret identity. For more than 15 years he has been Kaptan Arkane, phantom of the net. As Arkane, Kim is a charter member of the Homo-Saps. Kim has always been careful about his identity, and so far as he knows, nobody is aware that Kaptan Arkane and Andrew Kim are the same person.

*Continued on next page.*



## KAPTAN ARKANE (CONTINUED)

If someone could read a continuous log of Arkane's posts for the last decade and a half, they would see a definite progression in his involvement with Homo-Sap inquiry.

Phase 1 — skeptical hut eager student of forbidden lore.

Phase 2 — growing fascination with the occult, sometimes bordering on obsession.

Phase 3 — a long period where Kaptan Arkane dropped off the net entirely. Some Homo-Saps speculated that he was institutionalized. Or dead.

Phase 4 — an unexpected return to the nets. The new Kaptan Arkane is not on nearly as often as he was formerly, and most of his recent communications consist of cryptic warnings to eager dilettantes not to follow certain lines of inquiry too enthusiastically.

When Kim was 25, he had some sort of traumatizing online experience (the exact nature of the fright is left to the GM). About that time he acquired a profound fear of sudden bright lights, and took to wearing sunglasses almost compulsively (he's talked about getting enhanced eyes with polarization, but hasn't, so far). He also began to suffer from radical insomnia. Kim is now thoroughly addicted to a prescription tranquilizer. As long as he has a supply of the drug on hand he's fine, but if he's deprived of his prescription he will not only go through the normal process of withdrawal, but he'll also start to suffer from the effects of sleep deprivation after a couple of days.

*Continued on next page.*

Their ideas are a chaotic, often contradictory mixture of various metaphysical speculations and political agendas incorporating elements of UFOlogy, the New Age movement, historical revisionism, chaos theory . . . and the Mythos. Some Homo-Saps believe implicitly in their particular worldview, others regard the whole thing as an elaborate joke or intellectual exercise.

One thing that virtually everybody in the League agrees on, and the one thing the League has unquestionably got right, is the idea that there are powerful extra-terrestrial forces present and active on Earth right now.

At one time or another, virtually every detail of the Mythos that humanity could possibly suspect (and a couple that it couldn't) has been tossed out and debated by the League — the Great Old Ones, the Elder Gods, Deep Ones and Ghouls, pre-human civilizations — however, these tidbits of truth are mixed in with so much random speculation and outright nonsense that it's impossible to son out the truth from the chaff unless you already have a good fundamental grounding in the facts of the Mythos.

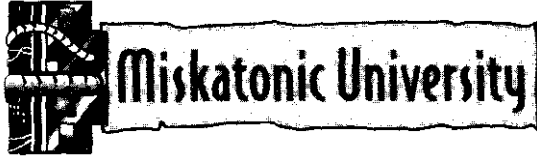
If all other avenues of inquiry fail, a desperate investigator can always post a question to the League, in the hopes that they might get back something useful. But the primary use of the League to serious investigators is their public archive, Netromicon (a coinage apparently based equally on intentional and accidental misspellings). This archive consists of a large quantity of propaganda, wild speculation, personal paranormal experience and general-interest texts.

The centerpiece of the archive is the only online transcription of the *Necronomicon*. It is, however, an even more fractured version of the *Sussex Manuscript* (see p. 13), and is considered laughable by serious Mythos researchers like those of the Miskatonic Society (Mythos Lore +2, Fright Check none/-2 — see p. 45). A long-promised text file of *Unaussprechlichen Kulturen* (both in the original and in an English translation) has never materialized. Some of the personal accounts, however, are strongly suggestive to those who know a bit about the Mythos. There is also a remarkable archive of image files, including hundreds of still photographs of apparently-genuine pre-human artifacts, cultic paraphernalia and bizarre creatures, as well as several dozen video files of remarkable quality. (The downside of these archives, from a true believer's point of view, is that even the best quality video and photographic evidence of Mythos creatures and activity is no match for what a talented Hollywood special effects wizard can create at a common graphics workstation. Every single one of these videos and photos has, at one time or another, been denounced as a hoax — even the authentic ones.)

Authentic films and videos of Mythos creatures may force the viewer to make a Mythos Fright Check (see p. 45), but the GM has some latitude here. If

the video is widely touted as a fake, and the viewer fully believes it is a fake, then a large bonus to the roll should be allowed, and perhaps no Fright Check of any type should be made. But for viewers who know better (say, those who make a successful Mythos Lore skill roll), a Mythos Fright Check must be made, as usual. There is also room for middle ground here – again, GM flexibility is the key.

But for dedicated searchers, a careful, systematic study of the Netromicon archives can yield up to +5 Mythos Lore (not counting the potential +2 from the *Necronomicon* text file), but each +1 requires not less than 150 hours of online time to glean.



For the last 100 years and more, Miskatonic University – a small, private university in Arkham, Massachusetts – has been the international center for academic research into the Mythos.

These researches are *not* undertaken publicly. Ever since certain strange and terrifying events occurred in the early 20th century, the faculty of Miskatonic has been acutely aware that there is good reason to withhold certain facts and theories from the general public.

There exists at Miskatonic what is essentially a secret society of academics dedicated to unearthing the secrets of the Mythos. Not all the professors at Miskatonic belong to the group – in fact, barely 25 percent of the total faculty belongs (about 100 men and women), with particularly strong representation from the Classics, History, Archaeology and Physics departments. Nor are all Society members professors at Miskatonic. They come from all over the world – there are actually more members outside the university than in it, although Miskatonic has by far the largest congregation of members in any one place. Most of the members are academics, but they also have a few members at any one time capable of offering substantial political or financial support.

The university's copy of the *Necronomicon* and other Mythos-related books and manuscripts, as well as extensive notes by Society members on their researches, have been moved to a sealed vault in the Miskatonic library, and their existence expunged from all publicly-available library catalogs. Every head librarian at Miskatonic has been a member since 1928.

There are normally between 200 and 300 Society members worldwide at any given time. Most members are scrupulous about not letting their activities interfere with their performance or productivity in regards to their more orthodox academic activities. Often a Mythos-related investigation will be carefully camouflaged by a more orthodox project. Over the decades, they have become quite adept at avoiding the more mind-warping manifestations of the Mythos. Those who do succumb are usually isolated and humanely cared for at secluded "retreats" maintained by the group.

Members keep in touch via a private net node called, for reasons rooted in the depths of *their* history, "whateley.net." Although whateley.net is accessed through normal telecommunications channels, it is protected by a unique encryption algorithm devised by their top computer programmer.

The Society takes its secrecy seriously. Although they normally avoid violence, they have been known to be quite ruthless in using disinformation and political pressure to protect their secrets. They certainly possess the technical ability to mindwipe a potential security risk through cybertech, although they would no doubt reserve this as an absolute last resort.

## KAPTAN ARKANE (CONTINUED)

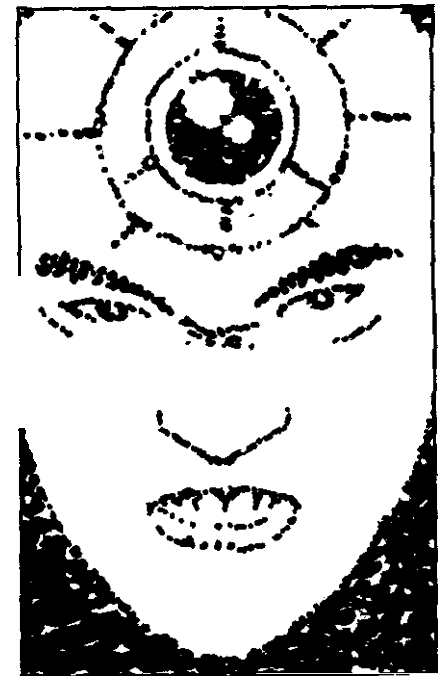
Whatever it might have been, Kim's experience kept Kaptan Arkane off the net entirely for almost five years.

If Kaptan Arkane is contacted by the PCs, he'll prove to be an excellent source of information about the dangers of Mythos research. He'll refuse to answer any specific questions about Mythos creatures or rituals that seem to stem from idle curiosity or obsessive fascination, but might provide some information on such matters if he can be persuaded that the knowledge is necessary to prevent some greater evil.

If Kim is met in person, he is a friendly, intelligent man in excellent physical condition (he's a dedicated amateur athlete). He won't show any knowledge or interest in the occult or the Mythos unless some sort of emergency makes it absolutely necessary for him to reveal his expertise.

Kim lives in korporate quarters with his "roommate," a man named Levy. Although ProGov sanctions against homosexuals require Andrew and Levy to maintain a certain degree of discretion regarding the nature of the relationship, they are completely devoted to one another and consider themselves permanently espoused.

Levy, a sales rep, has no particular interest in computers and no knowledge of Andrew's career as Kaptan Arkane. Kim would do almost anything to protect Levy from danger.



## THE MISKATONIC SOCIETY

All members of the Miskatonic Society must have, at the time they join the organization, a skill of 17 or better in a relevant scientific or academic discipline (GM's option), and IQ and Will of 13 or better. Potential members are also screened for general mental health and stability. Individuals with too many psychological disadvantages will not be considered for membership.

Membership is the equivalent of a 12-point Contact to the member-character. The Society is considered to have an effective Mythos Lore skill of 15, with an availability of "almost always" (15 or less) and a reliability of "usually reliable." The Society will never deliberately lie to a member, but due to the highly suspect nature of some of their sources of data, it can provide incorrect information on a critical failure of the Mythos Lore skill. Membership is also a -5 point Secret, with the consequence of betrayal being absolute professional ruin.

Membership in the Society can provide information adequate to raise a character's Mythos Lore skill up to a maximum of 21 (more, if the student is allowed access to the books in MU's "confidential collection"). However, the members are well aware of the dangers posed by too much knowledge of the Great Old Ones. Most will actively avoid learning more about the Mythos once their Mythos Lore skill reaches 12 or 13, unless further research is absolutely necessary for some essential operation.

New members must be recommended by at least three members in good standing before they can even be told of the Society's existence. Once they have been told, in the most general possible terms, that the organization exists to protect humanity from inimical alien races, the new recruit is watched carefully for another five years. If he maintains for that span of time absolute confidentiality and support regarding Society operations, he is granted full membership privileges, including access to the whateley.net archives and the MU confidential collection, and access to information on operations that he is not directly involved in.

*Continued on nextpage.*



The Miskatonic Society represents probably the strongest potential allies the PCs could possibly have in the campaign, *if* they can discover the Society's existence, and *if* they can persuade the membership to trust and support them – both goals are, at best, nearly impossible to achieve (see sidebar, this page).

### The Society and Corbidden Text

The last mass print run of any of the texts listed on p. 13 was the edition of the Nameless Cults (*Unausprechlichen Kulturen*) of Von Juntz, published by Golden Goblin Press in 1909.

This is not because every printer who's tried to publish a Mythos book has gone insane. Rather, it's because since the 1930s, the Miskatonic Society has been systematically suppressing the publication and distribution of these books. The group maintains extensive contacts in the publishing industry – particularly the academic presses which are most likely to publish translations of ancient texts – and these contacts keep Mythos-related works out of the public eye.

Furthermore, over the course of the last century, the Society has established control over public access to virtually all manuscript copies of the books kept by museums and educational institutions, making it almost impossible for a casual occultist to find a volume to translate from. It may safely be assumed that any forbidden tomes which are not under the direct control of the Society either remain undiscovered, or are in the possession of serious cultists (who are no more interested in seeing their secrets published than is the Society).

It is this control of the original texts that explains the almost complete absence of forbidden texts from the net. The Society had established control over most of the original manuscripts several decades before electronic reproduction became practical or widespread. The sole exception to this rule so far is the inferior transcription of the Necronomicon in the Homo-Sap archives (its appearance took the Society by surprise, and it was decided that given the poor quality of the translation, trying to eliminate it from the net would be likely to

cause more problems than leaving it alone). The Society has no problems with the continued success of *The Book of the Dead (The Necronomicon)* (see p. 13), since it contains no true Mythos knowledge and helps confirm the public notion of the *Necronomicon* as pop-culture hoax.

This lack of electronic access, however, applies solely to the public nets. Transcriptions of passages, or even entire books of forbidden lore, may exist in secret archives kept by cultists (and certainly do exist on the secret archives kept on whateley.net). It's entirely within the realm of possibility that a particularly skilled or lucky hacker might some day manage to release an accurate transcription of some eldritch text to the public net. The possible results of such an outbreak are left to the GM.

## Governments

The U.S. government has had at least a limited knowledge of Mythos activity at least since 1928, when U.S. military forces occupied Innsmouth, Massachusetts, and dropped depth charges at the nearby Devil's Reef. It can be assumed that most European and Asian governments have, if anything, known about the Mythos even longer.

### U.S.A.

Because of its conservative origins, the U.S. ProGov has always had a policy of actively and aggressively prosecuting occult activities. The National Emergency Resource Control Commission (NERCC) has always maintained a strong Taskforce Against Satanic Cults (TASC).

Actually, the TASC predated NERCC. It was originally formed immediately after the assassination of President Burris in 2010, with the explicit purpose of ferreting out Burris' assassins, who were publicly identified as a group of "occult terrorists." The TASC continued activities even after Burris' "assassins" were declared destroyed, and it was placed under NERCC auspices when that organization was formed in 2017.

The TASC normally has about 50 NERCC investigators permanently assigned to it, with the authority to conscript as many troopers as it needs for specific operations.

Early in its existence, the TASC spent most of its energy prosecuting fringe religions, spiritualists, UFO theorists and casual students of magic. It has infiltrated and cracked down on Homo-Saps in the U.S. several times. In recent years, however, it has turned increasingly to more mysterious, more heavily-armed operations in the wilderness or rural areas. There are those in the Miskatonic Society who see this as evidence that somebody in the TASC is starting to see the real picture, and take steps to find and eliminate actual Mythos-related activity.

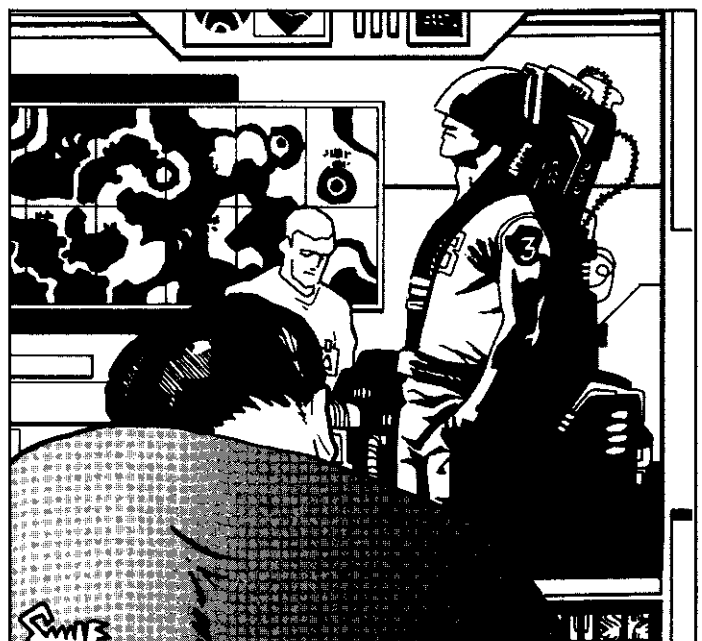
### The Russo-Japanese

The Russians have long had an intense scientific fascination for the paranormal. The Soviet Union began conducting systematic research into ESP and "magic" within a few years of the revolution. Today, with the prosperity brought on by the Russo-Japanese alliance, that fascination continues.

## THE MISKATONIC SOCIETY (CONTINUED)

The Society normally takes a very dim view of all Mythos investigations except its own. If the PCs encounter a member, he or she will *not* be helpful to their current activities, and may even take action to undermine them and discourage the PCs. It will take a great number of notable successes on the part of the PCs before they are even considered for unofficial support, and a great deal more success (and the requisite academic qualifications) before they are admitted to the organization.

It is not recommended that PCs be allowed to start the game as Society members, but if they are they should be charged an Unusual Background of no less than 20 points. There is no Unusual Background cost to characters who join the Society in the course of the campaign, but as noted above there are other difficulties involved. It is entirely possible that one and only one of the PCs might be invited to join the Society. In such a case he would be expected to keep the organization as secret from his companions as he would from anyone else. However, the presence of a member in the party will protect the entire group from all Society harassment.





## DR. ALTHEA M. WASHINGTON

Age 48; 5' 3", 190 lbs.; black hair and brown eyes.

ST 11, DX 8, IQ 13, HT 11

Basic Speed 4.75, Move 4

Dodge 4

No armor, medium encumbrance from Fat.

*Advantages:* Charisma +2, Social Status +1, Strong Will +3, Voice.

*Cyberwear:* Chip Slot.

*Disadvantages:* Fat, Secret: Miskatonic Society, Sense of Duty: Miskatonic Society.

*Quirks:* Speaks with perfect grammar.

*Skills:* Administration-14, Anthropology-11, Archaeology-10, Bard-14, Computer Operation-18, Guns-10, History-12, Leadership-12, Linguistics-15, Literature-14, Mythos Lore-10, Occultism-12, Poetry-14, Research-17, Savoir-Faire-14, Singing-15, Teaching-13, Theology-12, Writing-13.

*Languages:* French-12, Greek-10, Italian-13, Latin-12, Old English-12, Russian-11.

Althea Minerva Washington has only been the chief librarian at Miskatonic University for four years, since the death of her predecessor. Before that, she had been assistant librarian for almost two decades, and came to the chief's position fully prepared to assume both its public duties, and the secret responsibility as the *de facto* chief of the Miskatonic Society.

*Continued on next page.*

The Russo-Jap alliance sponsors the Bioinformation Institute ("bioinformation" is an old Soviet euphemism for ESP), with major headquarters in Moskva and Osaka, a handsomely-funded research project with a broad-based mandate to investigate paranormal claims of all kinds.

Although many facets of B.I. research are open to the public, there has been no publicly-released data relating directly to the Mythos. Rumors have, however, reached the Miskatonic Society, and even the *Paleoarcheological Review*,

about a secret B.I. project to investigate Mythos-related occurrences. So far that operation, if it exists at all, seems to be mostly research-oriented. However, the rumors also hint at recent disasters and tragedies at B.I. which may be related to their Mythos investigations, and which may eventually lead to the B.I., and through it the Russo-Jap alliance, taking a more proactive stance against Mythos forces.

Another rumored B.I. secret project is a program to enhance psionic abilities through bio-engineering. If the GM wishes to incorporate psionics into the campaign, the Bioinformation Institute would be an excellent place to start looking for them.

## United Europe

Like the ProGov, the European Assembly also has a special unit devoted to the investigation of occult crimes. This organization is called, for purely administrative reasons, Department D-11, popularly referred to as "Delf."

The Delf unit is not nearly as well-funded nor as aggressive as the TASC. It has fewer than a dozen permanent investigators at any one time. It also differs from the TASC in that it confines its operations strictly to the hunting of violent criminals, and does not persecute random fringe elements – in fact, several European metaphysical organizations with aspirations towards public acceptance openly praise Delf and actively co-operate in its investigations. In general, Delf has an excellent international reputation as manhunters.

Publicly, Delf portrays itself as an organization devoted to hunting and stopping a certain kind of delusional criminal. It forcefully (some say a bit *too* forcefully) denies any real supernatural element in their investigations. However, mystics who have actually worked with Delf as expert advisers hint that Delf operatives may be more open to the possibility of real paranormal activity than their public stance suggests.

Actual evidence connecting Delf to the Mythos is largely circumstantial. The reasoning goes; if a Mythos-related crime were committed anywhere in United Europe, Delf would logically be called in to investigate, and if it investigated, it is skilled and objective enough to form at least a general idea of what really happened. Since it is virtually certain that Mythos-related crimes *have* occurred in Europe (why should it be different from any other part of the world?) then it is likely that Delf has some knowledge of the Mythos.



## Chiletina

In its ongoing quest to challenge the Russo-Japs at virtually every economic and scientific level, the Chiletinan government has sponsored a national research project into the paranormal, the *Instituto Nacional por el Investigación Psíquico* (National Institute for Psychic Research).

INIP is smaller than the B.I., but much more aggressive. Rumor among the Miskatonic Society is that INIP is much more likely to "play with fire" than the B.I., and accidentally stir up things which are better left unstirred. So far, however, they haven't been burned.

Those interested in the Mythos are especially curious about certain INIP activities conducted deep in the Antarctic. There is speculation, particularly among the Miskatonic Society, that this project may have some connection to the notorious Lake Expedition of the early 20th century.



The vast, feudal web of the multinational korporations is the true driving force behind 21st-century civilization, much more so than the tottering federal governments.

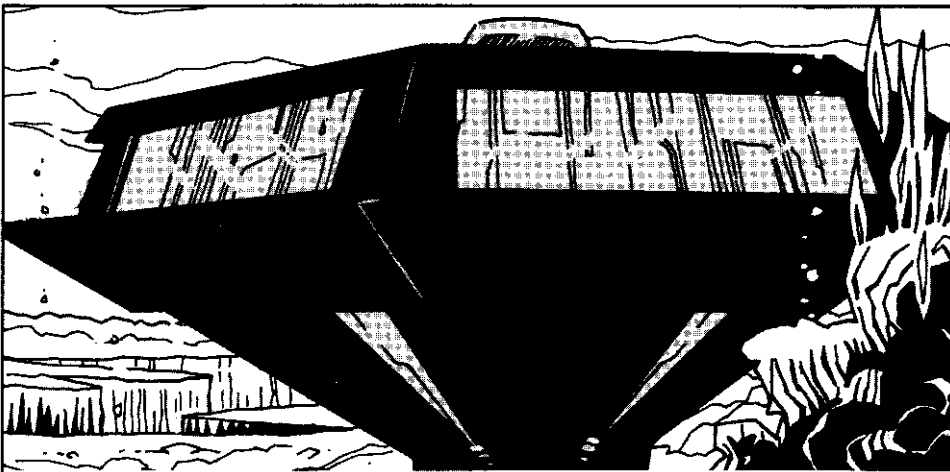
Each korporation is in a very real sense a law unto itself, and all are fanatical about protecting their secrets. The multinats are therefore uniquely poised, due to their resources and pervasive influence, to stumble upon secrets of the Mythos, but they are also much better positioned to keep Mythos-related secrets or disasters out of the public eye.

Below are two situations which may have placed korps in contact with Mythos entities.

## Well 25

In the last century or so, certain places have become uniquely associated with paranormal activity – New Mexico, Gulf Breeze, Florida, Loch Ness, Scotland, to name just a few. The most recent entry in this sweepstakes is Well 25, an undersea oil drilling platform about 400 miles northwest of New Zealand.

Well 25 was owned and operated by Global Petroleum, a major division of Hiromatsu Power Systems, one of the great mega-korps that make up the "Bolshy Ten." Well 25 was actually a complex of 17 distinct wells, all main-



## DR. ALTHEA M. WASHINGTON (CONTINUED)

Dr. Washington has a Ph.D. in linguistics and an M.A. in library science from Yale, and another M.A. from Miskatonic in history. She has remained active in all three fields, in addition to being a published poet.

Although Washington has a profound personal distaste for the forbidden knowledge given to her charge (she is a devout Congregationalist Christian, and sings in the church choir every Sunday), she nonetheless takes her Society responsibilities very seriously.

Although she keeps the group's research material in perfect order and condition, she is not herself a student of the Mythos. Everything she knows about the subject comes from the catalogs of whateynet and the private collection, or casual contact with other members of the Society. Society legend has it that Washington once personally conducted a meticulous, page-by-page cleaning and restoration of the collection's oldest copy of the *Necronomicon* without reading a single word. If the story is an exaggeration, it's only a slight one.

In person, Washington is a compelling presence. She tends to dominate any room she's in with her resonant orator's voice, her perfect composure and her penetrating gaze. It is very nearly impossible to get any information out of Dr. Washington that she does not willingly choose to reveal. For all that, she can be a fascinating conversationalist, and remarkably charming, when she chooses to be.

She is *not* a fan of James Desiato or his *Paleoarcheological Review*, considering him a dangerous dilettante (fortunately, the two have never met). She regards the Homo-Saps as a dangerous collection of hooligans and sociopaths. She has a cold and passionate hatred for Mythos cultists of all types, considering them the absolute antithesis of everything she believes and stands for.

## SIR PATRICK TIMOTHY JOYCE

Age 38; 6' 3", 220 lbs.; red hair and blue eyes.

ST 13, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 11

Basic Speed 5.5, Move 5 Dodge 5

+2 PD +8 DR from light monocryc vest, no encumbrance.

Advantages: Alertness +2, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Legal Enforcement Powers. Military Rank (Delf) 6, Status +2.

Cyberwear: Chip Slot, Cellular Link.

Disadvantages: Addiction: Tobacco, Duty: international police officer.

Quirks: Hates to wear a tie or uniform; tells vulgar jokes about Irishmen.

Skills: Administration-11, Armoury (handguns)-10, Boating-12, Computer Operation-12, Criminology-14, Diplomacy-12, Disguise-11, Driving (Groundcar)-12, Fast-Draw-12, First Aid-11, Fishing-11, Forensics-13, Guns-15, Interrogation-12, Karate-13, Knife-13, Law-12, Leadership-14, Occultism-13, Pilot (Helicopter)-12, Politics-11, Psychology (specialization, abnormal)-14, Research-12, Savoir-Faire-12, Shadowing-13, Sport (Golo)-12, Stealth-12, Streetwise-10, Swimming-12, Tactics-11.

Languages: French-12, German-13, Japanese-11, Russian-12.

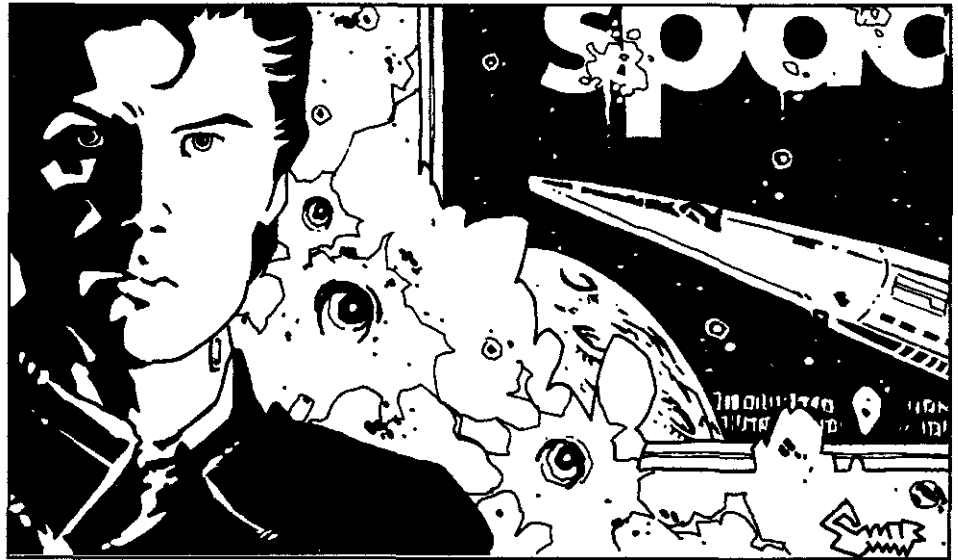
Sir Patrick Timothy Joyce ("Paddy," to his intimates) is the commander of Delf, the European Commonwealth's special task force for the investigation of occult-related crimes.

A middle child from a large, working-class Irish family, Joyce got his early training in urban survival growing up on the streets of Ulster in the chaotic years following the Grand Slam. By the age of 15, he was already a veteran guerrilla fighter.

In his late teens, however, something within him rebelled against the violence and desperation of the streets. He focused his energies on completing an education, and when he finally did manage, against all odds, to obtain his degree he became an investigator for Interpol, for the express reason that he wanted to do his part to restore the Rule of Law to a shattered and anarchic Europe. He also applied for and was granted British citizenship.

Joyce rose rapidly through the ranks. His success was more due to his remarkable dedication and almost-obsessive thoroughness than to any particular brilliance on his part, but whatever the source, he soon acquired the deserved reputation as one of Interpol's best investigators. He also stepped on a few toes on his way up, due to his low tolerance for corruption or political infighting, especially when they threatened to interfere with the department's legitimate duties as he saw them.

Continued on *next* page.



tained from a central base. It was a completely aquatic operation. A permanent staff of more than 75 men and women lived in sealed, modular domes about 250 feet under the Pacific Ocean. Using mini-sub and high-pressure diving equipment they tended the wells, which were as much as 20 miles away from base and over 1,000 feet deep.

Nobody's really sure what happened at Well 25 – the few survivors are being well paid to keep their mouths shut. According to second- and third-hand accounts, some of the deeper wells started to be plagued by "gremlins." Minor, inexplicable problems were keeping some of the deeper wells out of production more often than they were operational. Ongoing investigation of the problems began to point more and more to deliberate sabotage . . . an incredible possibility, since any deliberate, ongoing sabotage operation against those sites by a rival korp, hostile government or random terrorists would have required so much surface-based support as to be completely un concealable. Incessant internal investigation ruled out an inside job.

The korp beefed up security, augmenting the base's normal complement of engineers and technicians with a security force of at least 40 scuba-trained troops. Unexplained sabotage continued, however, and began to include casualties amongst both support and security personnel. The korp moved two "research ships" into the area. Some have claimed these were actually vaguely disguised small, state-of-the-art warships. Satellite photos and passing commercial vessels reported what may have been missile fire and depth charge detonations from those ships.

The only certain thing about the whole matter, however, is that one fine morning Well 25 ceased to exist. The number of survivors who escaped via mini-sub has been estimated at anywhere from six to 25. Reports also vary as to whether or not one or both of the "research ships" were destroyed the same day.

Hiromatsu will only say that Well 25 was closed due to seismic activity, that the station was evacuated with minimal casualties, and that the research ships in the area were on a mission completely unrelated to Well 25, although they did assist in the evacuation. Since the closing of Well 25, however, Hiromatsu has closed down almost 40% of its undersea operations, and significantly beefed up security at the rest. They claim this is a response to "eco-terrorist threats," although there is no documentable increase in terroristic threats or attacks against undersea installations.

Investigators of the Mythos are left to draw their own conclusions.

## Victoria Environmental Systems

Not all multinationals are completely dedicated to the profit motive. Some have a social agenda of their own. One such company is Victoria Environmental Systems, of Alberta.

VES was founded by a consortium of Col-Bertan businessmen and liberal academics from the U.S. fleeing ProGov repression. The korp's agenda is openly "green," and it takes a progressive, experimental approach towards its employees (or "associates," as they're called within VES). All VES personnel, no matter how low-ranking, get profit-sharing and stock options. The company has been a pioneer in the field of korporate communal living, operating company arcologies in Alberta, Spain and Brazil. On the list of the largest korporations worldwide, VES ranks around 300.

VES is exceptionally tolerant of alternate lifestyles among its employees, particularly on questions of religion and philosophy. VES associates are encouraged to creatively question everything, including the most fundamental assumptions about how people think and the universe works. While most korps would look askance at an executive or employee who became a regular on the portions of the net devoted to the paranormal, Homo-Sap activities have become practically an organizational pastime at VES. The company is known to have sponsored several research projects having to do with psychic and unexplained phenomenon.

The functional niche which VES has carved out for itself also puts it in a unique position to encounter Mythos-related phenomenon. VES's primary mission is the monitoring, preservation and restoration of natural eco-systems. Its single largest contract is as one of the major players in the international effort to preserve the Brazilian rainforest. It has also undertaken projects in Malaysia, Southwest Asia and Alaska, and is developing an undersea program. In short, it spends most of its time in exactly the kind of wild and remote places where cultists and Mythos activity are most likely.

VES also has a profitable sideline evaluating, excavating and preserving archaeological sites that may be in the way of some nation's or other korporation's development plans - this activity could easily bring it into direct contact with pre-human artifacts.

So far, any connection between Victoria Environmental Systems and the Mythos is completely conjectural. But as a company, VES is perhaps the most likely of any of the multinationals to both encounter Mythos-phenomenon, and to have some idea what it is dealing with when it does.



It's said that the devil you know is better than the devil you don't. In the struggle against the Old Ones, investigators are well advised to take their allies where they can find them.

## Ruski-Yakuza

The Ruski-Yakuza did not become the unquestioned pre-eminent criminal organization on the globe by being careless about their secrets. If the Ruski-Yak are actively engaged in anything having to do with the Mythos, that has not been reflected in even the most vaguely credible rumors (at least, not once you discount those who believe that the Ruski-Yak is behind *everything*).

However, the Ruski-Yak are ubiquitous. Any of the situations outlined in this chapter could very well be only the tip of some Ruski-Yak iceberg. In gen-

## SIR PATRICK TIMOTHY JOYCE (CONTINUED)

When Delf was created, Joyce was tapped to lead the new organization. Departmental lore has it that he originally fought the transfer, seeing it (probably correctly) as an attempt by his departmental enemies to "kick him upstairs" where he could no longer interfere with their shady dealings.

Once Joyce was ensconced in the leadership of Delf, however, the agency soon proved its worth. Delf quickly solved several showcase crimes - in its first year alone it captured two hitherto-unknown serial killers (with a combined body count well in excess of 100 victims) and rounded up one bona-fide sacrificial cult which had already kidnapped and killed six wealthy Europeans, including a board member of Fabrique Europa and an Italian minister of finance.

After these successes, the European Assembly increased Delf's funding dramatically and doubled its size (to its current roster of about a dozen permanent investigators). Joyce also became convinced of the necessity of Delf's mission, and today he's the force's most outspoken proponent.

Joyce is a large, powerfully-built man with a square jaw, penetrating blue eyes and short, unkempt red hair. He speaks with a detectable lower-class Irish brogue. He has a rough sense of humor, and knows hundreds of jokes about drunken, lazy or dishonest Irishmen that range from the risqué to the unspeakably disgusting.

On the case, he brooks no nonsense or interference of any kind. Delf's charter gives him broad investigative powers throughout the U.E., and he doesn't hesitate to use those powers to the fullest. This has earned him yet another crop of political enemies, but so far they are insignificant compared to the allies Delf has won through its notable successes.

Joyce lives in a flat in Berne, near Delf headquarters. He also owns a country home in Scotland, which he visits whenever he can (which is rarely) to relax with some hunting, fishing and golf. He acquired his knighthood several years ago, under rather mysterious circumstances. Rumors say that it had to do with a successfully-completed classified Delf investigation into a matter directly concerning the British royal family.

Joyce's weapon of choice is an S&W 9mm Urban Defender (damage 2d cr, SS 9, Acc 5, 1/2 D 100, max 1,500, 1.25 lbs., RoF 3, shots 20, ST 8, Rcl -1).

## REV. ANDREW G. CRUMLEY

Age 61; 5' 11", 175 lbs.; graying brown hair and green eyes.

ST 10, DX 9, IQ 13, HT 11

Basic Speed 5, Move 5

Dodge 5

No armor or encumbrance.

**Advantages:** Charisma +2, Mythos Awareness, Voice, Wealth: Wealthy.

**Disadvantages:** Fanaticism, Paranoia.

**Quirks:** Passionate fan of bluegrass music.

**Skills:** Bard-17, Riding (Horse)-11, Musical Instrument (Banjo)-14, Singing-17, Writing-13, Brawling-12, Guns-14, History-12, Theology (Christian)-18, Computer Operation-10, Administration-12, Diplomacy-12, Fast-Talk-13, Leadership-13, Mythos Lore-12, Savoir-Faire-14, Teaching-15, Detect Lies-12.

**Languages:** Hebrew-12, Greek-13, Spanish-12.

Andrew Crumley started out as an old-fashioned revival preacher, and to hear him tell it that's all he still is. If his flock behaves rather like they're under an armed siege, well, times are troubled all over — the faithful have to stick together.

Crumley was born late in the 20th century to a farm family. His gift for preaching soon manifested itself — he was preaching revival sermons and conducting healing services by the age of 10. He went to Bible college and later seminary on academic scholarships, and was ordained a minister in his mid-20s. His powerful gift for preaching soon led him to the mass media.

When the ProGov came to power, Crumley, like many traditional fundamentalists, at first enjoyed overt governmental support and even patronage. However, he soon turned against the ProGov, comparing it to the Biblical Pharisees, who used religious laws to enhance their political power without any real spiritual commitment. In return, Crumley saw his video program banned from the national cable services.

*Continued on next page. . .*

eral, it's safe for the GM to assume that at any time some Mythos-related event even threatens to become public or semi-public knowledge, the Russki-Yak will be aware of and monitoring the system, and that they will step in if the situation threatens to involve their interests in any way . . . and they have a *lot* of interests.

Gossip links the Russki-Yak and the Bioinformation Institute (see p. 77), but virtually every bureau and project of the Russo-Japanese government has been, at one time or another, linked to the Russki-Yak in gossip. Still, it seems likely that the Russki-Yak would take a strong interest in any B.I. projects involving alien entities or the creation of "super-opsis," if such projects in fact exist.



## Mafinc

Despite recent modernizations, the Cosa Nostra remains an essentially old-fashioned institution devoted to traditional "family" values. Mafia leadership clings to a rather romantic view of the world where the people, the government, the Church and the organization all know their proper place and co-exist in harmony and respect. When this harmony and respect is broken, say by a crusading judge or an inconvenient witness, things can get messy.

Therefore, the traditional *Mafioso* has little patience with the kind of (to him) pointless and random violence represented by Mythos-related cultists. To him, such people are debased and dangerous, a constant threat to the orderly existence his organization strives for. Even the more modern corporate mob-boss, with no romantic notions, just a profound respect for the bottom line, has nothing good to say about cultists. They're willful and unreliable — hikers or street gangs can be brought into the fold, made into useful street-level operatives. They can be trusted to stay bought as long as the Organization is offering them the best deal. But cultists have their own agenda, and money is not enough to keep them in line. Even when they seem to be cooperating, they're still a threat.

There have been several published reports of "gang wars" between various local Mafia families and "Satanic terrorist gangs" which may, if the published evidence is to be believed, have actually been urban Mythos cults. Although it's difficult to know for sure, it would seem that the Mafia has not always come out on top in such struggles.

The Mafia is especially hard on cultists in the "sin cities" it controls — Acapulco, Miami and the major cities of Nevada. It would not do for tourists

to be scared off by media reports of ritualistic crimes. There are also rumors that the Mafia has made deals with the U.S. government, agreeing to eliminate certain cults (real or accused) in its territory, in exchange for keeping the NERCC (through the TASC) out of the area.

## Narcotraficantes

Off all the major crime organizations worldwide, the 'traffs are by far the most remote from civilization. Most of their effort and personnel is concentrated out in the wilderness, where they guard the plantations, warehouses, factories and airfields that allow them to produce, process and deliver their product.

For several years, the vicious Mordella Syndicate of Peru was known to be at war with a small but seemingly-unstoppable force of native guerrillas. It was reported (always at second or third hand) that the natives were practitioners of a strange, ritualistic religion who objected to Syndicate attempts to draft members of the cult into drug operations. Wilder rumors circulated of strange plagues, unexplainable savage murders, bizarre accidents and even attacks by monsters against Mordella operations. For example, one former Mordella soldier who escaped to Chiletina reported that he personally witnessed nine heavily-armed Mordella men killed by black, walking "trees."

For the last year or more, there have been no further reports of native unrest in Mordella-occupied territory, indicating that the Syndicate has negotiated a truce with the cultists. It has also been suggested that the Syndicate has made an alliance with the cult, to use its putative powers against their enemies. As yet, however, there is absolutely no solid evidence of such an alliance.

## Triadr

The Triads are by far the most superstitious international criminal organization, due to their origin 2,000 years ago as mystical/fraternal revolutionary organizations. Few Triad members would have any problem with the reality of monsters or malign wizards.

The Red Sleeve Society is the most powerful Tong, or Triad Gang, in Singapore, and its influence is felt all the way around the Pacific Rim. The *Shan Chu*, or Lodgemaster, of the Red Sleeves goes by the *nom du guerre* of "The Red Leopard."

The Leopard is said to have worked his way up through the ranks to his present exalted station. He is not descended from ethnic Chinese, but is said to be from some outlying region, somewhere in the mountains – Tibet, perhaps, or Mongolia. To Westerners, this distinction may seem trivial, but Triad society is extremely racist, and for a non-Chinese to attain the rank of *Shan Chu* is highly unusual, and a testament to the skills of the individual so honored. Nothing is known about the background of the Leopard, hut he is rumored to have studied as an acolyte at a Buddhist temple before turning away from religion to become an extremely successful Triad assassin. Some say that he has been extensively but skillfully modified with deadly cyberwear, others say that he has always completely refused cyher-modification, and that his amazing feats as an assassin are due entirely to his own skill.

The Leopard is a compact, powerfully-built man somewhere between 40 and 60 years old. He's rather tall for an Asian, standing about 5' 10". His personal life is as mysterious as his origin.

The Leopard has little patience with traditional Triad superstition, and has actively worked to remodel his Society along more pragmatic, businesslike lines. There are reports, however, that the Leopard himself is highly superstitious, in a very specific and evocative way.

## REV. ANDREW G. CRUMLEY (CONTINUED)

Despite this parting of ways, Crumley retains an unusual status as a tolerated dissident against the government. He is allowed to continue to operate his enclave and produce his short-wave broadcasts for several reasons. First, his anti-government sentiments are not the most heavily emphasized elements of his theology, nor are they especially radical. Second, the ProGov recognizes the propaganda value of allowing a few select voices to speak out against the status quo without overt repression. Finally, there are powerful religious supporters of the ProGov who gladly encourage the persecution of "alternate" religions and lifestyles, but who would not sit still for government action against a Christian fundamentalist – even a radical one.

Crumley continues to broadcast his sermons from his Maranatha Ranch, a small community (which really does include a working and profitable cattle operation) in rural Montana. He does not give his followers or his doctrines a name, calling his flock "my congregation," or "the folks out here on the ranch," and insisting that his theology is just traditional Biblical Christianity. The ranch church is simply called "Maranatha Ranch Gospel Fellowship" and does not attach itself to any particular denomination.

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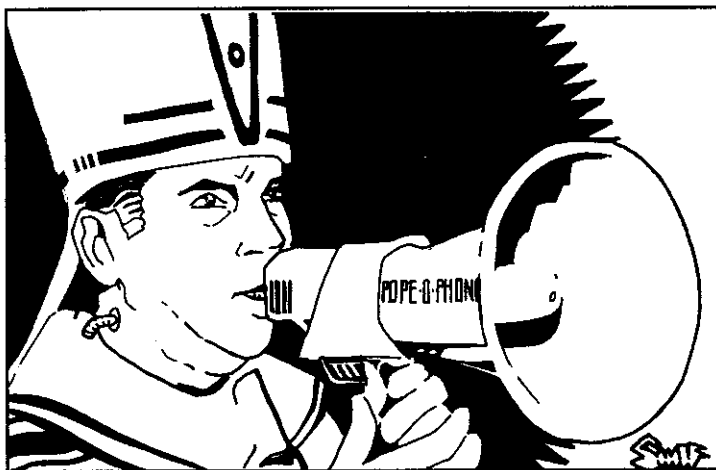
## REV. ANDREW G. CRUMLEY (CONTINUED)

People who know Crumley only from his fire-and-brimstone preaching are often stunned, on meeting him in person, to discover how charming and reasonable he seems. When not actually in the pulpit, Crumley is a smiling, grandfatherly presence. He likes to ride horseback around the ranch for recreation (during such occasions he usually carries a pistol or small-caliber rifle). He's also a dedicated musician, playing in several ensembles at the ranch, dedicated both to sacred music and to traditional bluegrass.

Crumley loves to debate philosophy and theology with others, even when those theologies or philosophies are far from his own. Although the threat of hell is an integral part of his sermons, Crumley avoids such tactics one-on-one. Instead, he will support his opinions with erudition, cogency and wit. (Of course, not all of his followers are so tolerant or circumspect with those holding contrasting beliefs.) If the person he is talking to starts to become hostile or angry, Crumley will usually break off the discussion, with a chuckle and a Biblical quotation about the sin of pride or the futility of vain dispute.

However, if the discussion remains civil, some of Crumley's stranger beliefs will start to surface. He is quite certain that he has been targeted for death by demonic forces, and that only divine power stands between him and these supernatural killers. He will calmly assert that he fully expects his divine protection to be withdrawn at any moment, and his diabolic enemies to strike him down instantly. If his listener expresses incredulity about this idea, Crumley will sympathetically agree that he knows how preposterous it sounds.

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Specifically, the Leopard is said to have a deadly fear of dwarfs, particularly Asian dwarfs. His bodyguards are all over 6', and nobody below the height of 5' (not an unusually short stature, by regional standards) is allowed to enter the presence of the Leopard. He has been known to drive particularly short small-businessmen entirely out of his areas of Singapore, particularly those engaged in quasi-mystical trades, like herbalist or fortune-teller. He is also said to constantly surround himself with talismans of good luck and wards against dark magic.

He is said to have promised death to any Society member who allows any member of the Tcho-Tcho mbe (see p. 98) into his sight, and some have suggested that this is the real root of the fear. At some time in the past, they say, the Leopard must have offended the Tcho-Tchos, and now he fears retribution, either through dark magic or from more conventional assassination techniques.



## Organized Religion

The Cthulhu Mythos is a maltheism. That is, it is a religion that teaches that the supreme being (or, in this case, beings) is essentially hostile to humanity, and human life is meaningless. This is, of course, an idea which is fundamentally abhorrent to all major organized religions, which teach that the supreme being is, generally speaking, benign, and that humanity can attain perfection and eternal bliss, either through self-discipline or through divine grace.

It seems virtually certain that all the major organized religions – particularly those more than a few hundred years old – know more about the Mythos than they admit publicly. There is also little doubt that they would take extreme action if confronted with direct evidence of Mythos-related occult activity.

## The Catholic Church

Make no mistake about it, the Roman Catholic Church knows all about the Cthulhu Mythos. The Church has been banning Mythos-related books and persecuting cultists of the Old Ones for more than 1,200 years. Every time a new grimoire was seized and burned, a copy was saved and sent to a secret room in the Vatican Library, where it was intently studied by some of the Church's best minds.

Of course, the Church believes that Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth and the rest are demonic beings, and not the divinely powerful entities that most sources claim them to be. But nonetheless the Church possesses a wealth of secret knowledge about the Old Ones, and has no doubts whatsoever that these beings do exist.

In 1001 A.D., Pope Sylvester created a new order to deal with direct supernatural threats like that posed by the Mythos. This order was simply called the "Special Office." Members were drawn from all ranks and factions of the Catholic clergy (even nuns were occasionally admitted) and given special training in recognizing and coping with inhuman threats against the Church. Over the centuries, the Special Office has usually had between 100 and 400 members worldwide, and other than the members itself, nobody under the rank of Cardinal has known for certain that it exists. Only the vaguest rumors of the Special Office's existence have ever leaked out of the Vatican, although it is rumored that every Pope since the 12th century has been a member of the Special Office.



The Special Office still exists, but its precise importance to the Church is left to the GM. It could be anything from an almost forgotten relic of another time, consisting of a few old men and considered purely ceremonial and largely irrelevant by the Vatican, to a high-tech, ultra-efficient network of a few meticulously-trained, extremely competent and completely dedicated specialists in supernatural warfare.

An even more nebulous rumor is circulated among conspiracy buffs that the Catholic martial order of the Knights Templar, supposedly destroyed in the early 14th century, in fact continues to exist underground, with the avowed purpose of fighting Mythos-related cults in secret. For more on this theory, see "Islam," p. 86.

## Protestantism

Reverend Andrew G. Crumley has been called "the last of the great radio preachers." When the ProGov pulled his video program from the national services, Crumley switched his ministry to shortwave radio. His sermons go out daily from his Montana ranch/compound.

Crumley has more in common with the Puritan clergy of the 17th century than with the slick media preachers of the late 20th. He does not accept donations from private citizens, instead supporting himself with sales of books and tracts, and with the income from his working cattle operation. He has about 30 people living and working on his property, with another 100 or so who commute in every Sunday for services, some from as far away as Butte (over 250 miles).

In most respects Crumley's theology is straightforward hellfire-and-brimstone Fundamentalist Christianity. His only controversial, non-orthodox position is that the Second Coming has already occurred, and that the world is now in the "Tribulation" prophesied in the Book of Revelations. Crumley believes that the world is presently in the exclusive control of Satan, and will remain so until the Judgment Day (he steadfastly refuses to assign a specific date for that event).

Crumley has developed a following among non-Christian students of the occult that at least equals his fundamentalist listeners. The mystics say that Crumley's apocalyptic mysticism shows an understanding of the supernatural far more sophisticated than usually found among traditional religion.

Some specific claims by Crumley which students of the Mythos will find particularly evocative:

- The devil has been imprisoned beneath the ocean, but on the approaching Day of Judgment he will awaken and wreak havoc on humanity.
- A false prophet is abroad in the world in the guise of a dark-skinned man with an Egyptian name. This false prophet is really a devil in human form.
- Satanic cults exist which worship and sacrifice to "the Black Goat of the Woods."

## REV. ANDREW G. CRUMLEY (CONTINUED)

He will be interested in any theories or accounts of Mythos activity his visitors might have, but will of course only accept those tellings which he can reconcile with his Christian theology (an intellectual exercise at which he is remarkably adroit – he can produce a Bible verse which has at least a surface correlation to almost any hit of Mythos Lore).

If asked specifically about any of his apparently Mythos-related statements from his sermons, Crumley will first quote the Bible, "The old men will dream dreams, and the young men will see visions." If pressed, he will admit that most of the images he uses come to him in his sleep, or as vivid impressions that impose themselves on his consciousness during times of meditation. He will profess that he does not know whether his visions are literal or symbolic (though he obviously has an instinctive sympathy for the "literal" side of the question), but remains quite certain that his visions are in some sense true, and that they are sent from God.

Crumley believes that the forces of the Mythos are the judgment of God against a corrupt world, and will not take steps against them, either as an individual or as the leader of his flock. He will offer any individual in fear of his life from supernatural threats refuge at his ranch. Whether or not the ranch in fact offers any sort of refuge is, of course, up to the GM. If nothing else, the fugitive from the supernatural will be surrounded by people who believe in the occult, and who are prepared to take well-armed action against any apparent unnatural danger.







## RAIN-ON-WINGS

(Born Cyndy-Anne Davis)

Age 24; 5' 7", 135 lbs.; blonde hair and blue eyes.

ST 11, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 12

Basic Speed 6, Move 7

Dodge 8, Block 9

Shield (+I PD), no encumbrance.

**Advantages:** Appearance: Beautiful, Combat Reflexes, Mythos Awareness.

**Disadvantages:** Poverty: Struggling, Secret: Undocumented Alien, Social Stigma: Tribal.

**Quirks:** Never goes anywhere without her knife or talismans.

**Skills:** Artist-13, Bard-12, Boating-12, Climbing-13, Computer Operation-13, Cooking-11, First Aid-12, Fishing-12, Judo-13, Knife-13, Knife Throwing-12, Naturalist-13, Pottery-14, Running-13, Sculpting-17, Shield-14, Spear-13, Spear Throwing-12, Stealth-12, Survival (Woodland)-12, Swimming-13, Tracking-11.

Rain-on-Wings was born in Hollywood, CA to parents in what was then still called the movie business. Her father was a film editor, her mother a minor actress. When the ProGov instituted the C-scale (see p. 00) the Davis family, fearing persecution for their liberal politics, took their daughter and fled to Col-bera.

Cyndy-Anne grew up happily in the Federated Provinces. Eventually, she became interested in one of the new tribal movements that were growing in the region, and with her parents' approval, joined the society. Soon she had her name-vision and took the name Rain-on-Wings ("Rain," to her friends).

*Continued on next page.*

● Devil worshippers live in burrows beneath cemeteries and eat the flesh of the dead. They have become so corrupted by sin that they are no longer even biologically human.

● "Devil-worshipping" creatures ruled the Earth before the creation of man, and the Earth will be returned to them after the Day of Judgment.

● More than 1,000 years ago, the Devil dictated a false "Bible" to an Arab. This book contains "the names of the dead."

Some of the above is stated right-out, as established, concrete fact. Other times Crumley is more oblique, and unless the listener is already somewhat familiar with the Mythos his statements could easily be taken for parable or metaphor.

In the last year or two, Crumley's sermons have been getting ever more wild and paranoid. Sometimes he misses several scheduled broadcasts in a row, then returns to the air with no explanation. He seems to believe that the Day of Judgment is only a matter of months – perhaps days – away.

There are many who would take a great interest in discovering exactly how much Crumley knows about the Old Ones, and how he knows it.

## Islam

The Islamic world has a long familiarity with the Old Ones and their works. It should not be forgotten that al-Azrad wrote the *Necronomicon* almost exactly a century after the foundation of Islam. (There are those Moslems who say that al-Azrad receiving the *Necronomicon* from dark supernatural forces is a cruel and Satanic parody of Muhammed receiving the *Qu'ran* from the Angel Gibreel.)

Another hit of revisionist history popular among certain mystically-inclined individuals is that Hasan e-Sabah established the sect of the *Hashashin* or Assassins (more properly known as the *Nizari Isma'iliyah*) at least in part to combat the rise of Mythos-related cults, by turning the cultic tactics of murder and terror against them. There are also those who say that when the Assassins were supposedly destroyed in the 13th century, they only suspended their political operations, going underground and continuing their campaign against cultists in secret. Today, these conspiracy theories suggest, the Assassins survive as a top-secret, high-tech, extravagantly funded secret society.

(An almost identical rumor is circulated about the Christian Order of the Knights Templar. Skeptics point out the similarities between these two rumors – and sometimes the Buddhist legend of 'Bri-Gung, see p. 87 – as evidence that all these rumors are simply the same legend sifted through different cultures. Of course, there are also those who solemnly believe that the Assassins, the Knights Templar and the 'Bri-Gung monks are all real, active, and possibly even at war with each other, in addition to any even stranger foes they may contend against.)

A more concrete and verifiable event in the Moslem world, which has aroused the interest of Mythos scholars, is the recent military shutdown of an archaeological dig in Saudi Arabia. Preliminary reports from the site had indicated that it was an entire ancient city, perhaps the legendary Irem of the Pillars, a city dreaded in Islamic legend, and notorious in the chronicles of the Old Ones.

Shortly after the site was associated with Irem, the Saudi government, which had previously been fully cooperative with the operation, moved at least a battalion of armed troops into the area and ordered the whole expedition to leave the area immediately, giving no explanation. There are unsubstantiated rumors that the government then called in engineer units to *re-bury the excavated buildings*. Was the government's action a simple incident of random authori-

tarianism, or did the Islamic leaders of the Saudi government fear that the dig might disturb something better left alone?

## Buddhism

It seems virtually certain that no civilized country has existed for as long in as close proximity to the forces of the Mythos as Tibet, which lies amid the Mi-go mines of the Himalayas and near the Plain of Tsang and the Tcho-Tcho. It seems likely that the intensely spiritual and disciplined culture of that country evolved at least partially as a defense against such malign forces.

There are rumors among several occult groups, including the Homo-Sap nets and in Trimegistian literature (see p. 88), about a secret monastery in Tibet, called 'Bri-Gung, where a select few of the most spiritually advanced students are taught to recognize and oppose certain dark supernatural forces. Although the rumors are not specific, these spiritual foes could well be the Old Ones.

Some say that a few exceptional Westerners have been accepted to study at 'Bri Gung. Others counter that the monastery has never even been seen by a non-Tibetan. Most serious scholars of Buddhism and the occult dismiss 'Bri-Gung as a myth.

If the GM allows special powers in his campaign, a 'Bri-Gung trained monk might be a mage, psionic or cinematic martial artist. He would have the requisite Unusual Background to begin the campaign with some degree of Mythos Lore. The GM is discouraged from allowing 'Bri-Gung PCs, except perhaps in a "monster-level" campaign.



Not everybody who takes an interest in the supernatural falls under the sway of the powers of the Mythos. There are other powers, more natural, perhaps even benevolent and just as ancient (though perhaps not so strong). Those who follow such paths are by definition foes of the Old Ones and all their works.

## Tribal & Neo-Pagans

Tribals are groups of individuals who are attempting to re-create the lifestyle of pre-civilized cultures – in other words, they are a social experiment. Neo-pagans are groups of individuals who are attempting to revive the spiritual practices and beliefs of pre-civilized cultures. They are religions.

A tribal is not necessarily a neo-pagan, nor vice versa. There are tribal societies that welcome any religion (or none), and neo-pagans who live in the inner

## RAIN-ON-WINGS (CONTINUED)

Rain's tribal society practiced a lifestyle based mostly on American Indian traditions, combined with certain elements of oriental philosophy. They spent much of the year living in the forest. As part of the society, Rain learned survival skills and developed her talent for art (she specializes in multi-media sculptures made from natural materials). She also began to study the path of a shaman.

About two years ago, Rain had a profound and disturbing vision. She saw herself fighting alone against some sort of horrible alien entity. After the vision, Rain became convinced that it was her destiny to return to the land of her birth and seek out the creature from her vision.

She crossed the border and settled in San Francisco (a city which the ProGov has set aside as a sort of unofficial "reservation" for tribals and other non-conformist types), going down to LA whenever she could to seek the creature from her vision. She has encountered several strange things since her return to the States, but believes that the encounter from her vision still lies ahead of her.

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## RAIN-ON-WINGS (CONTINUED)

The supernatural threat is not the only danger Rain faces. She's in the U.S. using the identity of a Jean Drummond, a C-2 expatriate who fled the U.S. and joined Rain's community shortly before Rain left on her quest. Rain's forged CitCard identifying her as Drummond will pass a visual or local check, but fail either level of network check (see p. CW36). If Rain is caught by the ProGov and identified she could be reassigned as a C-4 and sentenced to forced labor.

Rain supports herself by selling her pottery and artwork, and by the little bit of money she sometimes receives from her tribal society. She lives with various tribals and tribal-sympathizers in San Francisco, moving every few weeks. She's a naturally beautiful, remarkably earnest young woman with very little sense of humor. Though gentle and trusting by nature, if threatened her tribal training allows her to defend herself efficiently.

She always carries her large knife (often strapped to her calf under her jeans, or strapped to her back under a loose cotton top) and several sacred talismans of her tribe (GM's option as to whether or not these talismans offer any degree of protection against "ordinary" magic or supernatural creatures - they will not affect creatures or powers of the Mythos at all). She does not go about the streets carrying her shield and spear, but will go to great lengths to have them at hand if she suspects she might be approaching the battle from her vision. The shield is mostly ceremonial, made of wood and painted leather. It will protect normally against hand-to-hand attacks or low-tech weapons or missiles, but will be completely ineffective against bullets or most other high-tech assaults.



city and work in corporate offices or factories. Nonetheless, despite their fundamental differences, there is an undeniable connection between the two. Both are movements to bring their followers closer to nature and a natural, more spiritual existence.

Because of their affinity for spirituality and the wilderness, tribals and neo-pagans are somewhat more sensitive and exposed to the Old Ones than the bulk of humanity. Some, indeed, have succumbed to this influence, becoming ensnared by the powers of the Mythos and eventually corrupted or destroyed. However, their spiritual discipline also provides a strong defense against otherworldly powers, and often they can stand firm against otherworldly assaults that would mangle the psyche of more urbanized humans.

Tribals and neo-pagans are generally insular by nature, and especially secretive when it comes to "mysteries" of the supernatural or the spiritual. It is extremely unlikely that a pagan or tribal would recount his experiences (tragic or victorious) with the Old Ones to an outsider.

## The Trimepirtianr

The Trimegistians are an informal order of practitioners of ritual "white" magic with a specific agenda to oppose "dark forces" like those of the Mythos.

The origins of the order go back to the mid-1960s when a group of students of the occult began to gather around Roger "Rozz" Amberlin and his common-law wife, Andrea "Starflower" Risotto, in Berkeley, California. Eventually, Rozz, Starflower and an ever-changing group of followers and hangers-on moved to a ranch in northern California, near Mt. Shasta.

In 1997 Rozz, now in his late '50s, published his book, *Thrice-Great Hermes*, a combination of autobiography, philosophy and gramerye that became the foundations of the Trimegistian order (the name comes from Hermes Trimegistes, or "Thrice-Great Hermes," a primal magician figure that stands at the core of Rozz's teachings).

Rozz's book recounted how Starflower began to dabble in dark rituals found in certain ancient texts (*De Vermis Mysteriis* is mentioned by name) and eventually came to a macabre and tragic end in the late '70s. After Starflower's demise, Rozz began work on a new system of magic, one insulated from the corrupting influences which lead to Starflower's destruction. Rozz specifically and vehemently rejects the hedonistic magical philosophies of Crowley, Le Vey, et. al., and instead constructs a model of the magician as an individual of iron discipline, asceticism and unwavering moral purpose, dedicated to the service of others and rejecting all temptation to use his powers for personal advancement. Rozz takes as his models Nostradamus and Dr. John Dee (though Dee is criticized for exposing himself to the corrupting influence of the *Necronomicon*), and constructs a moral system that borrows liberally from classical Gnosticism and Rosicrucianism.

Today the Trimegistians are a small sect but highly respected by the worldwide magical community. Rozz died shortly after the turn of the century, and his ranch was sold by his heirs, but the Trimegistians maintain a retreat and headquarters on a beautiful Greek island, donated to them by a film star who was an admirer of the group's philosophy. The Trimegistian order is illegal in the U.S., the Islamic League and the CAF. It is technically illegal in the Israeli Empire, but the law is unenforced. Even in countries where it is outlawed, however, the Trimegistians continue to exist underground, and to maintain a presence on the worldwide information nets.

If the GM wishes to allow "normal" *GURPS* magic in his *CthulhuPunk* campaign, high-ranking Trimegistians would certainly possess such powers.

## The Techno-Mystics

The 21st century has seen the rise of a whole new kind of shaman. He does not seek enlightenment through the traditional paths of introspection or oneness with nature. Instead he seeks to forge a new path to inner peace or inner power on the virtual byways of the information nets. Freed from the prison of his physical body, he seeks the place where the mental activity of **netrunning** becomes a purely spiritual experience.

It is a metaphysical system in its infancy, and there are as yet no real established doctrines, dogmas or formal ontologies. Each seeker is, basically, making it up as he goes along.

Even at this early stage of the game, however, there are at least two identifiable camps among the seekers. Most techno-mystics are spiritual, caring people who are seeking only to perfect themselves and aid others who are striving for the same goals.

There are also, however, those who look to net-magick from darker motivations – seeking vulgar power for purposes of revenge or domination. It is this sort that has always been drawn to the cults of the Mythos, and many of the dark shamans of the net have already dabbled in Mythos-related ritual. If there exists any way to call Cthulhu or Nyarlathotep into the net, they will someday find a way to do so . . . if they haven't already.

### IOIOIO

101010 (usually pronounced eeYOeeYOeeYO) is a literal "ghost in the machine." It is represented as a powerful supernatural entity that "haunts" the nets, sometimes causing misfortune, sometimes manifesting itself to techno-mystics. Most net-denizens regard it as a completely mythical "bogey-man," or an abstraction to blame technical malfunctions on, like the "gremlins" of World War II. The name is usually either explained as a phonetic representation of the ones and zeros that make up binary code, or as a variant of the name of the node where the entity is rumored to have first manifested itself.

Despite skepticism, many techno-mystics take IOIOIO's existence very seriously. It is said to have crashed nodes and "fried" whole hardware systems, sometimes in response to a "curse" laid by some techno-shaman, sometimes of its own initiative. It is also said to have attacked individual deckers, bringing about death or permanent psychological damage. As is customary in such matters, hard evidence for such supernatural attacks is virtually nonexistent.

How IOIOIO appears to a decker unfortunate enough to encounter it depends on the EM used (curiously, there are no reports of encountering IOIOIO through the R'yleh interface – it has been suggested that this may not be due to the fact that such encounters don't occur, but rather due to the fact that they leave no survivors). One recurring description of the entity is as a regular pattern of interference consisting of a progression of opaque lines and spaces infinitely large – sort of a giant, malevolent UPC code.

Mystics have made various attempts to explain the nature of IOIOIO. It has been compared to the *Loa* of Voodoo tradition, the animistic spirits of Native American traditions, and even Christian demons. Some have tried to put IOIOIO in the context of the Mythos, suggesting that it's a Lesser Other God that cannot physically touch our material reality, but that can manifest itself within the more abstract reality of the net. Others have theorized that it's an Avatar of Yog-Sothoth as that entity exists on the net.



## THE OLD ONES AND THE NET

The computer age has, particularly since the advent of virtual reality, given humanity a whole new frame of reference. **Cybernetically-aware** individuals are rapidly learning to live outside of physical reality, in a whole new mode of existence that is almost completely mutable according to the individual's desires.

In a world that includes the Cthulhu Mythos this is not, necessarily, a blessing. It could, in fact, be a profound danger to all humanity.

Authorities differ on exactly how the Great Old Ones and Elder Gods can influence the virtual reality of the net. Some say that the rigidly logical, binary world of the **datastream** is fundamentally hostile to the chaotic, **pan-dimensional** entities that are the Great Old Ones. Others counter that if the Elder Gods can manifest themselves to our tiny, three-dimensional human minds, they can **certainly** manifest themselves in our cyberspace. Furthermore, they add, computer reality is nowhere near as simply logical and rigidly **binary** as once it was. Chaos theory and "fuzzy" logic open the way for far less linear modes of cybernetic cogitation.

There are rumors floating around the nets that seem to suggest the possibility that the Old Ones are already there. These might just be **net.legends** c a m p - fire spook stories for the cybernetic generation. But legends tend to have at least a root in reality.

## CULTISTS



The room was big, like a church, but there were no seats. Just the big black altar standing at the end of the room, with an ugly squiggle carved into its front. Two big black iron doors stood shut behind the altar, barred from their side. In the back of the room was some kind of loft or gallery, with unrailed stone steps leading up to it.

There were no stained-glass windows either, but there were the carvings. A couple were in English. "That is not Dead which can Eternal Lie, and with Strange Aeons even Death may Die." Jayboy thought he'd heard that one somewhere before. Maybe in a dance song. Some of the other inscriptions were in what looked like French or Latin. Jayboy pointed to an collection of what looked like pigeon-scratches on one of the walls. "What's that?" he asked Booshk.

"Old Babylonian," Booshk replied, shortly.

"How about those?" Jayboy pointed to the squiggles right over the altar, that looked like germs on a microscope slide . . . and almost seemed to squirm like them.

Booshk glanced up, then quickly looked away. "That's . . . a language I don't read." Jayboy let it drop, though it occurred to him that there was more than one way to interpret the remark.

Just then, there was a faint buzzing hum and the left half of Brighty's head disintegrated into a fine red mist. "That's not right," Jayboy thought inanely. "Somebody's head is going to explode, it should make more noise than that."

Jayboy threw himself prone behind the only cover available, the big black altar. His shoulder butted up against Shash, crouched beside him. "He's faster than he looks," some part of Jayboy's brain observed, quite calmly. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Booshk slip off in some other direction, but he had other things on his mind.

The sniper had fired from somewhere up in the gallery. It was dark up there – the floor-level lightstrips didn't even begin to reach. All he and Shash could do was lay down a sporadic covering fire to try to keep whoever was up there from standing up. The buzzing hum didn't come again.

Suddenly something came arcing over the rail of the gallery, something soft and limp. It hit the stone floor with a dull thud. At first, Jayboy thought it was a Chinese kid, then he realized it was some sort of midget. There was a thin trickle of red coming out of the midget's left eyesocket.

From the gallery a familiar chirping voice sang out, "All clear, boys," and Booshk stood up at the edge of the gallery, brandishing some shiny piece of *bolshy bangbang* that looked about the same size as its former owner.

Shash wandered over and examined the midget's body. "How'd you get him?" he asked Booshk as he descended from the gallery. "Hair pin," Booshk replied shortly, as he checked the doors at the back of the room. "Sealed in," he concluded.

Jayboy looked up from where he'd been standing, queasily regarding the corpse of Brighty. "So where do we go now?"

Booshk shrugged. "Where else? Further in."

Before the PCs ever encounter any of the inhuman Old Ones, they will probably have to deal with their human servants.

The cultists of the Mythos are in no possible sense of the word an organized religion. They rarely congregate – often a cultist or wizard will not even know anyone who shares his beliefs . . . at least, anyone human. When they do gather in groups it will almost always be less than a score of individuals.



"Do you really believe that your pathetic trinkets of an imaginary faith can save you from those I serve? They have given me powers that you have never thought of, even in your dead, pallid dreams. **Ia! Ia Shub-Niggurath! Cthulhu fhtagn!**"

This is the cultist who really worships the Great Old Ones, in a literal, religious sense. He prays to them for power and protection, and he conducts rituals and makes sacrifice to draw their favorable attention.

Why do such people believe as they do? Do they believe that Shub-Niggurath or Cthulhu will reward them, or even spare them, because of their

## VIRGILIA DUCHAMPS: TRUE BELIEVER

Age 29; 5' 10", 140 lbs.; black hair and dark brown eyes.

ST 10, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 13

Basic Speed 6, Move 6

Dodge 6

No armor or encumbrance.

**Advantages:** Appearance: Very Beautiful, Clerical Investment (Starry Wisdom), Fashion Sense, Magery 3, Social Status +1, Wealth: Wealthy.

**Disadvantages:** Cowardice, Fanaticism, Jealousy.

**Cyberwear:** Chip slot.

**Quirks:** Usually wears furs, leather or both.

**Skills:** Acting-13, Alchemy-12, Carousing-15, Computer Operation-12, Dancing-13, Guns-12, Hypnotism-14, Literature-11, Mythos Lore-14, Occultism-15, Riding-11, Savoir-Faire-14, Sex Appeal-16, Swimming-12.

**Languages:** English-14, Italian-12, Japanese-13, Russian-14, Spanish-11.

**Spells:** Duchamps has at least 20 to 50 points in various conventional and Mythos-related spells. However, the exact contents of her grimoire are left to the GM.

Virgilia "Virgie" Duchamps is a high priestess of the **Starry Wisdom** sect, and a prime example of the very highest strata of contemporary cultist.

Virgilia's father was a broker who made millions trading stocks in the 1980s. Her mother was a model who married her father after he divorced his first wife. Daddy died in the early years of the family fortune was lost in the Grand Slam. Virginia's mother became a professional social butterfly, living off the generosity of a series of well-off corporate patrons.

Virgilia's mother had a definite mystical streak. Mummy's spiritual inquiries were strictly benign – channeling, white magick and various other "New Age" disciplines. Mummy always claimed to be psychic, and sometimes she did show an insight into future events that could not be easily explained.

Virgilia grew to share her mother's gifts and fascination with the mystical, but the daughter was infinitely more ruthless in her application of those gifts.

She was initiated into **Starry Wisdom** at age 19, by a wealthy older man she met in **Chiletina**. Two years later her original sponsor died under mysterious and rather grisly circumstances, and Virgilia assumed his position of authority in the sect.

*Continued on next page.*

## VIRGILIA DUCHAMPS: TRUE BELIEVER (CONTINUED)

Today, she lives the life of the consummate 20th-century jet-setter. She's a world traveler, seldom staying more than a month or two in the same country. She knows all the richest, most famous and most influential people. Anything – or anyone – she wants, she can get. No, she isn't really rich enough to support such a lifestyle, but that doesn't worry Virgie . . . for the simple reason that she never pays her own bills.

She knows Starry Wisdom adepts ail over the globe; far more than most other members of the cult. She enjoys cult plots and rituals for their own sake, and will eagerly lend her support to any scheme that the local cultists *have* underway. At least some of her globe trotting is a cover for visiting various cells of the cult to act as an advisor, or a sort of itinerant high priestess.

In person she is charming and breathtakingly beautiful, but there is an air of callous arrogance and general contempt for everybody else around her. She is capable of astonishingly petty acts of vindictiveness. She has a particular concern for her personal safety, and will refuse to engage in any activity she finds dangerous in the slightest degree (she does not, however, consider Mythos magick dangerous . . . not to her, anyway). She is utterly amoral, with almost no identifiable human emotion. Although she gets no particular pleasure from the suffering of others, she is capable of sitting through protracted displays of the most inhuman torture with the same air of detached interest with which she might greet a juggling exhibition, or any other unique diversion.



devotion? Some do, perhaps, absurd as such a belief may be. Other **true** believers are more pragmatic, thinking that if they can prove useful enough slaves of the Great Old Ones, they may learn to prolong their lives centuries beyond the normal span. They may perhaps be kept around even after the rest of humanity is destroyed – or at least they may be devoured last. There is some evidence that the Great Old Ones do sometimes empower their most evil and devout worshipers with a greatly – perhaps infinitely – extended lifespan.

For others, the very thought of power may be enough. Such worshipers aren't like the opportunists (see below) who may desire power in order to accomplish some overriding goal. They just want the power for its own intoxicating sake. There are even a few true believers who serve simply because they have found the Great Old Ones to be real. Such a cultist finds nothing behind the faith and ritual of organized religion, but when he calls out to the Great Old Ones, something answers. He cares nothing for his own empowerment – he simply feels that it is his proper place as a mortal to live or die at the whim of the gods, no matter how horrible they may be.

True believers are generally the most malevolent of the cultists, hut paradoxically they also tend to be among the most mentally stable. It would seem that the mental imbalance that results from exposure to the Mythos is, at least in part, caused by the strain of trying to retain one's own free will in opposition to the will of the Old Ones. Those who yield themselves freely and willingly to alien command seem to be less afflicted by the process of surrender.

### Starry Wisdom

The Starry Wisdom sect is unusual in being a formal organization of Mythos cultists. It originated in early America, and was thought destroyed in 1877. It is difficult, however, to banish a belief system utterly, and in recent decades a revived Starry Wisdom has reappeared.

On the surface, it seems no different from countless other systems of "black magic" and "secret" fraternal societies. Members come together in secret and conduct elaborate rituals, often culminating in wild sex-and-drug orgies. It is only as the initiate begins to advance in the organization that he becomes exposed to the deeper, darker truths of the order. Each successive revelation requires some proportional demonstration of fidelity, using involving some sort of ritual crime. At the early stages the initiate might only be required to watch the atrocity and say nothing of it, while at higher levels the student must com-



mit the act with his own hands. It is said that human sacrifice is used for the medium levels of initiation – what might be involved at the highest levels is only whispered. It seems likely, however, that in return for such demonstrations the initiate is rewarded with a very complete knowledge of the Old Ones, and probably the formulae for certain Mythos-related spells as well.

Starry Wisdom has no headquarters and no central authority. It is spread by word of mouth, and consists of cells of no more than 20 sect members. How many adherents there are world-wide is unknown. The order is secretive as a matter of doctrine. Furthermore, the order has been specifically outlawed in the U.S., and members are wanted for questioning in several other countries in regard to certain unsolved crimes and atrocities.



## Mad Scientists

*"I know what I'm suggesting may seem impossible, but it was really quite easy, in the end. Indeed I have accomplished it. Several times, in fact. It's really rather obvious, once you get past all the nonsense that people are "supposed" to believe. Oh yes, yes, of course I still need your help. No, you misunderstand ...I didn't call you here for your **advice**. No, I'm afraid I need you to provide something quite different. . ."*

"Mad scientists" is used here to refer to those researchers who succumb to the influence of Mythos in the course of their studies. They are not so much servants of the Old Ones as their unwilling, unknowing slaves. Leading this category is the historian or literary scholar whose mind crumbles beneath his perusal of the *Necronomicon* or some other forbidden text. But also included are the sub-atomic physicist who designs a device to access other space/time continua, the mathematician who devises the formula his work is based upon, the psychologist who discovers that there are certain data the human mind simply refuses to process, and why, or even the musician or artist whose work becomes ever more strange and other-worldly.

Often, the mad scientist will not consciously know that he's tapped into the power of the Great Old Ones, or even that there *are* Great Old Ones. He will continue to insist that his work is simple applied science that any open-minded researcher should be able to see and reproduce (although he will often also be stricken with a psychotic paranoid fear of other colleagues "stealing his work"), and that he himself is a man of science and cool, objective reason – even as the supernatural occurrences mount around him, and his own actions become ever more irrational and depraved. In fact, the simple suggestion that he might be under some sort of external influence is often enough to send him into a homicidal rage.

As his name suggests, the mad scientist is among the most profoundly insane cultists. Nonetheless, because of his powerful intellect and his ability to channel the energies that made him what he is, he's a dangerous foe.



## Nihilists

*"Life's meaningless anyway, right? There's no future for anything or anybody. Suicide? Sure, that's an option, but why stop there? Why not wipe the whole damn mess clean? It's easy, you know. Easier than you'd ever imagine. All you really need to do is just. . . open the right door."*





## LAWRENCE BIGELOW: REVOLUTIONARY

Age 46; 5' 8", 145 lbs.; sandy hair and blue eyes.

ST 10, DX 10, IQ 11, HT 11

Basic Speed 5.25, Move 5

Dodge 5

No armor or encumbrance.

**Advantages:** Danger Sense, Intuition, Luck.

**Disadvantages:** Bad Temper, Enemy: (NERCC, 11 or less), Fanatic, Social Stigma: Wanted Criminal.

**Quirks:** None – he has almost no personality apart from his radical politics.

**Skills:** Armory (Guns)-11, Brawling-12, Camouflage-11, Computer Operation-11, Demolition-14, Disguise-10, Driving (Car)-11, First Aid-10, Guns-13, Intelligence Analysis-11, Interrogation-12, Leadership-12, Mythos Lore-13, Photography-10, Pilot (Helicopter)-12, Poisons-13, Politics-13, Scrounging-13, Stealth-11, Strategy-10, Streetwise-12, Swimming-11, Tactics-12, Traps-14.

**Spells:** 10 to 20 points in Mythos-related spells selected by the GM.

*Continued on next page*

This particular breed of cultist would have been unthinkable in the 20th century, but in the modern era they're becoming more and more common.

The nihilist finds life completely meaningless and worthless. Pleasure and pain, love and hate, life and death are all equally futile. He seeks to wreak as much havoc and destruction as he can, by any means he can. Why? Why not? Maybe he gets his kicks from suffering and destruction. Maybe he's just doing it because he can.

Nihilists are jaded by nature. Having divorced themselves from all the ordinary pleasures of humanity, they are constantly looking for some experience intense enough to stimulate their atrophied emotional responses. To such an individual, the Mythos and the Old Ones represent the ultimate high – the final kick.

Nihilists are, individually, perhaps the most dangerous breed of cultists, since they care nothing whatsoever for themselves, others, or even the power they serve – their only goal is destruction and corruption for its own sake. Fortunately, they are by nature disinclined to organize groups, and they have little patience for long, drawn-out plots – they live in the moment and are liable to drop a plan at any moment if they decide it's "boring." Of course, some nihilists are obsessive/compulsive types who will go to any lengths to satisfy their obsession, even if it takes years.

Nihilists start out as sociopaths. Once they start playing around with the Mythos those tendencies will deepen, but they're not particularly likely to acquire new forms of insanity.



## Revolutionaries & Opportunists

*"It's all a question of power; see? The man, he's got the political power; he's got the economic power; he's got the firepower: What we need, if we're going to win this thing, is a new kind of power. . . some kind of power that he ain't got and can't get. Some power big enough to wipe out all the man's power all at once. Yeah? Well, maybe I do know a power like that. Maybe I do."*

This is, to put it bluntly, the stupidest form of cultist. Nonetheless, they can be extremely dangerous. They think they can harness the power of the Old Ones to accomplish some kind of temporal goal – unseat a government, overthrow a corporation, make themselves rich or powerful, whatever. Eventually, inevitably, their grand plans come to a tragic end – the powers of the Mythos cannot be controlled with anywhere near the precision required for such specific goals – but along the way the cultist can create a truly amazing amount of suffering and chaos.

The main difference between revolutionaries and opportunists, other than the former want to promote some ideology while the latter are after personal power, is that the revolutionaries tend to come in groups, while opportunists are more often solo. Opportunists might have flunkies, but they don't have allies. Of course, the leader of a revolutionary cult might be an opportunist in disguise, manipulating his comrades in the hopes of coming out on top come the day.

Revolutionaries and opportunists are both prone to progressive insanity as they get further and further into the worship of the Old Ones. Like mad scientists, they may start out with what seems a solid, rational plan, but as they expose themselves more and more to dark forces, their theories become ever more irrational and gratuitously destructive.



## Rogue Investigators

*"Don't you see? It may look like we won last night, but we never really won anything at all. They're still out there, you know, and now they're watching us. You know they are. And it's only a matter of time before they find us. That's why I have to do this. There's really no other possible choice. I'm sorry, but it will be over quickly"*

The power of the Old Ones is, essentially, a power of conuption. It tends to overwhelm those who come into contact with it, regardless of how good their original intentions are. Only the most fortunate, strong-willed and morally steadfast investigators can hope to keep their souls intact over long exposure to the powers of the Old Ones, and sometimes that isn't enough.

Rogue investigators are those individuals who begin by opposing the Mythos, or simply researching it objectively, and succumb to its power, being drawn into psychotic insanity and falling under the will of the Old Ones despite themselves. This is a tragically common fate for those who confront the Mythos head on.

In fact, rogue investigators are at the heart of one of the central principles of any *CthulhuPunk* campaign . . . *Any ally can turn into an enemy at any time.* The PCs should never be completely sure if their comrade in the crusade against the Old Ones hasn't become an enemy saboteur over night. Any . . . absolutely *any* . . . of the investigator organizations described in Chapter 5 could turn out to be a cult front.

Rogue investigators are usually encountered in the very midst of a full-blown nervous breakdown. They are completely unpredictable and insane, although their insanity may not become obvious until it is too late to do anything about it.



## Inhuman Cults

The Great Old Ones have far more worshipers of other races than they do human cultists. Several of these races are resident here on earth, and can and do interact with mankind.

## LAWRENCE BIGELOW: REVOLUTIONARY (CONTINUED)

Larry Bigelow started out as a good citizen. He paid his taxes on time, he always waved at policemen, and he volunteered enthusiastically for the Burris campaign . . . not so much because he was a rabid Burris supporter (though he was) but because he really wanted to be part of the democratic process. He never just went along with the status quo – he really **believed** in America. Sure, times were rough, but wasn't this the greatest country in the history of the world? American democracy could pull us through the hard times, all we had to do was tough them out.

But America **didn't** tough it out. Instead we got the ProGov. Democracy was suspended indefinitely. Civil rights became a quaint historical notion. The Constitution was folded into a paper airplane and sailed right out the window.

Larry felt betrayed . . . and inflamed. Maybe everybody else would follow the ProGov and the Nerks like pathetic little sheep, but not Larry. He would do anything – anything – to restore democracy to this country. No patriotic American could do less. And if some innocent bystanders had to be killed or maimed in the process, that was too bad . . . but wasn't tyranny already a fate worse than death?

So Larry became a revolutionary. His courage and eagerness were exemplary, but he wanted to do more. Some of his fellow conspirators were soldiers, programmers, chemists, engineers . . . people with the knowledge to really hit the ProGov where it hurt. Larry wanted to bring something like that to the movement. . . something **special**.

Continued on next page.



## LAWRENCE BIGELOW: REVOLUTIONARY (CONTINUED)

He thought it over long and hard, then he remembered some crazy acquaintances from his college days. They were in to some weird stuff. Stuff they claimed had *serious* power. It sounded crazy, but didn't Larry owe it to America to try?

So he looked up his old chums. They were even weirder than before, and the stuff they were into was even farther out than Larry remembered . . . but it worked! It worked better than Larry could have possibly dreamed. The Old Ones offered power that the ProGov couldn't even conceive, and all you had to do was just return them a few . . . favors.

Eventually Larry's old college chums had to be eliminated. They weren't really committed to the movement. But by then they were superfluous anyway . . . Larry had gone far, far beyond any point they'd ever dared try.

Now Larry's gearing up for the big one. The one that will wipe the blasphemous ProGov off the face of the earth forever. The one that will make everything A-OK again.

God bless America.



The physical and psychological character of these races is described in Chapter 7. This chapter deals with how they interact with humanity.

Non-human cultists do not have the human genetic debility that causes mental deterioration under the influence of Mythos forces. They remain coldly, amorally, inhumanly sane regardless of whatever abominations they may be required to commit in the course of their monstrous devotions.

### Deep Ones

The Deep Ones are ancient, powerful and wise. They are known to interbreed with humanity and to use those cross-breeds to interact with society.

The GM can make of these facts what he will. Perhaps the Deep Ones want only to be alone; perhaps Innsmouth was simply an experiment that failed.

On the other hand . . .

Perhaps the Deep Ones have been monitoring and subtly influencing humanity throughout its evolution. Perhaps Innsmouth was only one small, local, insignificant cog in the vast Deep One organization that secretly holds humanity in its thrall. Do the presidents of all the major nations and the chairmen of the multi-national korps all consult with the same Deep One superior before making a move?

Or perhaps the truth lies somewhere between these extremes.

One thing that humanity does know about the Deep Ones . . . at Innsmouth, the Deep Ones sought out human worshipers of Cthulhu as allies and breeding stock. If they did it once, they may some day do it again – they may be doing it at this moment.

While it cannot be said that the Deep Ones are devout in any human sense of the world, they seem to be constant in their worship and obedience to Cthulhu, Dagon and Hydra. If any of these ancient entities decided they wanted more human followers or sacrifice for any reason, the Deep Ones would certainly be faithful in carrying out that command.

### Ghouls

Ghouls are not, by nature, pious creatures. They are mockers, with no regard for any power higher than themselves. Nonetheless, they have no doubts about the reality of the Great Old Ones, and will take whatever steps may be required to propitiate those entities and keep them from turning on the ghouls in wrath. A foolish human who stumbles upon a Ghoul lair could easily end up a sacrifice to some dark power.

Ghouls are also known to recruit humans into their tribes. A logical place to look for such recruits is among Mythos cultists, although the Ghouls would probably have a greater affinity for those individuals on the outskirts of the cults than the true believers of the inner circle.

### Serpent Men

There are few Serpent Men left, and those that still survive are degenerate, frightened creatures – little more than animals. However, occasionally Yig or another of the Great Old Ones puts forth its power on the race, and a Serpent Man is born with the intelligence and power of his ancient ancestors.

Since his own people are of little use in the service of his masters, such a one will naturally turn to human cultists for allies and followers. For their part, the cultists will regard the Serpent Man as a prophet, perhaps even a messiah.

Atavistic Serpent Men often have the power, through magickal art, to pass as a human among humans. Any time a group of cultists have a particularly potent or charismatic leader, there exists the possibility that that leader is a disguised Serpent Man.



## Mi-go

For uncounted eons, the Fungi from Yuggoth have been mining the mountain peaks of Earth. Since humans evolved enough to be trainable, the Mi-go have been using them in their mining operations.

Since the emergence of civilized, technological humanity has forced them to take their operations underground, both literally and figuratively, they have been seeking out cultists to serve as their spies and liaisons among the human race.

The relationship between the Mi-go and their human allies is strictly pragmatic. The humans deliver certain simple but necessary services, and the Mi-go reward them with tidbits of their alien knowledge and insight into the ways of the Great Old Ones.



*"You shut up! We got you now, so you no make no fuss, hear? You just stay here awhile all nice, quiet. You come 'round to see what we up to here? OK, tonight we come, rake you out, show you what we up to here."*

All over the world, there are small pockets of cultists who have devoted themselves to the service of the Great Old Ones for dozens, hundreds, perhaps thousands of generations. Such ancient pockets of Mythos cultists are known to exist in Africa and China, among the Indians of both North and South America and the Eskimos, and among the Cajuns of Louisiana. There is evidence that in the past numerous such pockets existed in Europe, where they were hunted and destroyed by the Christians (and the Romans before them), and in Arabia where they met a similar fate at the hands of the Moslems.

Cultures do not flourish under the sway of the Great Old Ones. A social and a genetic malaise sets in when a community turns to the Mythos over the course of generations. Members of such communities tend to be stupid, vicious, physically stunted and sociopathic. Many of them cannot function at all in normal human civilization. They can only continue to exist by isolating their debased and inbred communities from the rest of the world. (It should be noted that this debasement seems not to apply to communities of human/Deep One crossbreeds - these hybrids do lose a great deal of humanity, but do not seem to

## OLIVER OPHIS

Age 24; 6' 3". 140 lbs.: black hair (in human form) and green eyes.

ST 15, DX 12, IQ 17, HT 14

Basic Speed 6.5, Move 6

Dodge 6

Natural DR 1, no encumbrance.

Advantages: Handsome, Charisma +2, Clerical Investment (cult of Yig), Follower of Yig (see p. 106), Magery 3, Serpent Man (see p. 116), Social Status +3, Wealth: Filthy Rich

Disadvantages: Secret: nonhuman, Sense of Duty (Yig).

Quirks: Will not tolerate cigarette smoke in his presence; quotes poetry in casual conversation.

Skills: Acting-17, Computer Operation-17, Computer Programming-16, Dancing-11, Economics-18, Guns-16, Hypnotism-21, Intelligence Analysis-17, Karate-16, Leadership-18, Literature-19, Mythos Lore-23, Occultism-16, Poetry-15, Politics-18, Psychology-19, Savoir-Faire-18, Sex Appeal-17.

Languages: Chinese-15, French-16, Japanese-17, Russian-15, Spanish-17.

Spells: Ophis has at least 50 points in conventional and Mythos-related spells, including the unique spell described below.

Ophis is a serpent man. By the grace of Yig, he was born with all the gifts of his exalted ancestors. When Ophis was hatched, Yig, in a vision, led one of his human followers to the infant, and the human raised the infant as his own child.

Ophis educated himself in both the ways of humanity and the ancient secrets of Yig. He went to the best schools. Because of the serpent-god's patronage, he never lacked for material things.

To the world at large, Ophis is seen as an up-and-coming mover-and-shaker on the world financial scene. He is being aggressively courted by several major korps, but so far has remained an independent player.

*Continued on next page...*

## OLIVER OPHIS (CONTINUED)

To the small but fanatical cult of Yig, Ophis is their leader, almost a messiah. The followers of Yig will eagerly give up their lives at a single word from Ophis. He usually keeps two or three cultists around to act as bodyguards and errand boys (though for serious business he prefers less fanatical human professionals, who are ignorant of his true nature).

Ophis' goals are simply to increase the power and influence of the cult of Yig as much as he can. He believes that Lord Yig has some sort of great destiny planned for him, but he's not sure of its exact nature yet. So for the time being he keeps busy extending his wealth and influence as far as possible.

He knows Virgilia Duchamps and Chang K'tsi. He is aware of their true nature, and they of his. He dislikes Duchamps personally (and she him) and considers K'tsi unstable, but would consider cooperating with either one if the arrangement seemed profitable.

Ophis' identity is protected by a unique spell, a gift of Yig, which is basically an ultra-powerful but specialized variant of the Illusion Disguise spell. It makes him seem like a normal human to all five senses. It can be activated instantly at any time by Ophis with a thought, and remains in effect until Ophis wills his true form to be revealed. It takes no Fatigue to establish or maintain. Even if Ophis is asleep or unconscious the spell remains in effect. It cannot be altered – the spell can only make Ophis-the-serpent look like Ophis-the-human – but it does age naturally as Ophis matures.

He has no cyberwear, as any attempt to install it would make his inhuman heritage obvious, despite his spells, and because no cyberwear has been designed that will work with his alien physiology or neurology.



suffer in terms of intellect or physical vigor. If anything, the hybridization appears to enhance the physical prowess and intellectual capacity of the hybrids.)

Nonetheless, they are dangerous. Although they lack education, they possess a deadly low cunning, and they often have a skill at tracking, woodlore and killing that is almost super-human. There is also usually at least one individual in any community who does have normal-level intelligence or better, and can mingle with undegenerate humanity, at least in the short term. This individual usually functions as the leader of the community and the high priest of the cult. And cult communities are likely to receive direct, overt supernatural help from the Old Ones or their servitors.

These communities are true fanatics. Virtually the only shred of human resolution they retain is the unquestioning willingness to do anything demanded by their shaman or their god. They gather frequently to perform unspeakable rituals and sacrifices, and some actually call alien entities, including Great Old Ones, to physically manifest on Earth.

Individuals from community/cults are quite insane, but it is a cunning, functional insanity. They are not likely to slip up and expose themselves to enemies through irrational behavior.

### Ttho-Ttho

The Tcho-Tcho tribe of the Tibetan plateau of Tsang is certainly the most feared and notorious community of Mythos cultists.

The Tcho-Tcho are not genetically Tibetan. It is said that in the remote past, dwarfish creatures from the Dreamlands somehow crossed over from the Plain of Leng to the Earthly plain of Tsang. There they crossbred with human nomads. The result was the Tcho-Tcho.

The Tcho-Tcho are a stunted people averaging around 4' in height (though a few individuals are of average height or taller, while others are much tinier). Many are of subnormal intelligence, though even the most stupid Tcho-Tcho is still dangerous, due to his native cunning and sheer savagery. Their leaders, however, are quick-witted, and sometimes brilliant.

Tcho-Tcho characters are designed just like any others. Although Dwarfism and subnormal IQ are very common, they are not universal enough to qualify as racial disadvantages. The main difference between Tcho-Tcho and the rest of humanity, in game terms, is that the Tcho-Tcho will have at *least* 20 to 60 points of mental disadvantages relating to their debased natures (especially appropriate disadvantages include Sadism, Bully, Berserk, Paranoia and Odious Personal Habits).

They have been feared and loathed for centuries, until their name has become almost a by-word in the Orient for mindless savage malice. History records them as a bloody scourge descending on travelers and civilized settlements anywhere near their territory, pillaging, looting and killing indiscriminately. It is no secret that they worship dark gods and conduct unspeakable rituals that include human sacrifice. The Tcho-Tcho wizards were at one time feared all across the Chinese Empire and by its neighbors and environs as far away as India and Arabia.

The 20th century was not kind to the Tcho-Tcho. They discovered that their black magick and savagery were no match for the automatic weapons, explosives and air power of the Communists. Several times the Communist government attempted to purge Tsang of the whole Tcho-Tcho race. Their arts allowed them to survive these purges, but only at great cost.

So they adapted. When China liberalized in 1999, and Tibet was restored to independence, the Tcho-Tcho showed a new face to the world. For the first time particularly bright young Tcho-Tcho were sent out for a modern education, some even traveling to Western universities in Europe and the Americas. The Tcho-Tchos even allowed anthropologists to visit their camps and – even more amazingly – to leave again. They even let some of the visitors observe and tape some of their quaint "native rituals" to demonstrate that all that talk of cannibalism, ritual sacrifice and "black magic" was nothing more than libelous, bigoted superstition.

Today, Tcho-Tcho are working for major multinats, teaching at universities, and even setting themselves up as astrologers and "psychic counselors" to individuals with an excess of disposable personal income.

Although their methods have become more sophisticated, the Tcho-Tcho's goals haven't changed. They still serve the Great Old Ones, and they still seek to create as much havoc as possible among civilized society. Although those Tcho-Tcho who have moved away from Tsang may play the part of emissaries of good will, their real goal is to spread corruption all around them.

Most of the Tcho-Tcho who are allowed to go abroad are wizards, and will know several Mythos-related spells. They will usually be accompanied by two or three "companions" – less gifted kinsmen who act as bodyguards and general flunkies. These companions are usually armed with several small blades concealed about their persons, each coated with poison of a particularly unpleasant deadliness.



## CHANG K'TSI

Age 53; 5' 5", 100 lbs.; black hair and brown eyes.

ST 12, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 14

Basic Speed 6.75, Move 6

Dodge 7 No armor or encumbrance.

*Advantages:* Alertness +3, Ally Group: Guards, Charisma +3, Combat Reflexes, Longevity, Magety 3.

*Disadvantages:* Appearance: Ugly, Bloodlust, Gluttony, Laziness, Lecherousness.

*Quirks:* Likes rock music; Choc-o-holic; always wears Chinese clogs.

*Skills:* Acting-12, Bard-14, Blowpipe-12, Carousing-17, Detect Lies-14, Diplomacy-15, Fast Talk-13, Holdout-13, Hypnotism-16, Karate-14, Leadership-12, Mythos Lore-18, Poisons-15, Psychology-16, Savoir-Faire-14, Sleight of Hand-15, Staff-15, Stealth-13, Theology-15.

*Languages:* Chinese-13, English-11, Japanese-13, Russian-12.

*Spells:* 20 to 30 points in conventional and Mythos-related spells.

Chang is a Tcho-Tcho wizard. He's also a graduate of the Sorbonne with a doctorate in clinical psychology. He's currently employed as a "spiritual counselor" to the affluent. He works mostly in Russia, though he has traveled throughout Europe and in North and South America. Chang claims to be a "prince" of his people, and the claim is not far off, although his status within the tribe is due to his intelligence, not his parentage.

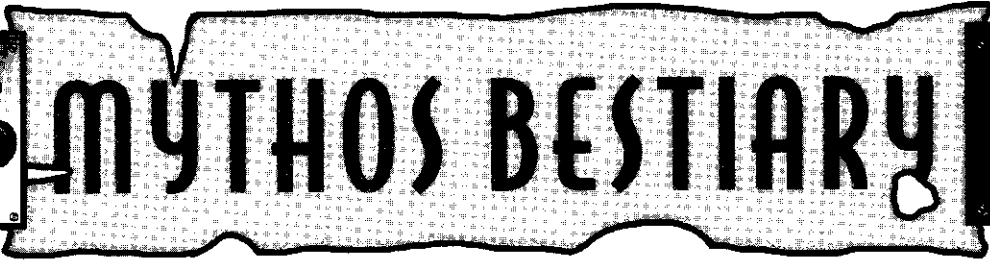
Chang's *modus operandi* is to feed his clients what they think they want to hear, while subtly sewing the seeds of chaos and corruption as widely as possible throughout occidental society. It's amazing what can be accomplished by simply giving the right hit of perfectly reasonable-seeming advice to the right 'zek or the husband of the right politician.

In person, Chang is witty, solicitous and self-effacing. He's a good listener, offering counsel only when it's asked (and paid for). He seems genuinely sympathetic and not at all pushy.

He dresses fashionably, except that he refuses to wear any footwear other than the traditional sandals of a Chinese peasant (most people he meets take this as a sign of discipline and humility). For the rest of his ensemble, he prefers bright colors in situations where they're appropriate.

Chang is accompanied everywhere he goes by three Tcho-Tcho servant/bodyguards. The bodyguards speak only in their own dialect (though they each understand at least one occidental language). They're sudy and suspicious, but not stupid or undisciplined. They are completely loyal to Chang and will follow his commands without question. Their stats are left to the GM – they are vety good with hand-to-hand combat, blowpipe, and at least one or two other low-tech weapons





# MYTHOS BESTIARY



Jayboy walked slowly to the edge of the hole, where something shiny glinted in the spluttering light of the high and feeble neon tubes. The hole was lined with bricks, and the bricks looked old. Maybe a hundred years, maybe more. There was no ladder or stairs or rope leading down the hole. Jayboy reached out with the toe of a boot and nudged a brick chip over the edge. He didn't hear it land, even though he listened for a long time.

Booshk came up and stood by Jayboy, leaving Shash by the entrance. As soon as Booshk's hand left his arm, Shash sunk down into a half-crouch, his arms tightly crossed over his chest, his eyes squeezed shut, still singing the same damn song he'd been singing since he saw whatever he saw. "Starry eyes, how can I get to you, doo doo dah dah dah. Starry eyes. . . "

Jayboy held out the shiny thing to Booshk. It was a little kromekore cap with a bill, like all the girls had been wearing a couple months ago.

"Annie's?" Booshk asked.

"I gave it to her," he answered.

They stood together for a long time on the lip of the hole. There was no sound except the hiss and crackle of the old lighting tubes and Shash's starry eyes. Finally, Jayboy asked, "How far down do you think it goes?" He didn't know why he asked it.

"Don't you know, dear?" Booshk replied gently. "All the way. It goes *all the way down*."

Just then, before Booshk's words could really sink in, a musical sound came up out of the hole. Jayboy kneeled at the lip of the abyss, waiting for the sound to come again. It did. And again.

"Tekeli-li," it sounded like. "Tekeli-li."

The heart of the Cthulhu Mythos is the host of inimical, ancient and non-terrestrial creatures with which humanity shares the universe. This chapter is a small sampler of the inhuman creatures which exist beyond the veil of day-to-day existence.

## Great Old Ones

This is a listing of singular beings of great power. See p. 10 for an explanation of the differences between, for example, "Elder Gods," "Outer Gods" and the "Great Old Ones" proper.

The entities below must expend Fatigue to use spells and certain spell-like powers, just as human sorcerers must. However, because of their supernatural nature, they recover this lost Fatigue at a rate of 1 point per **turn**, regardless of whether or not they are resting.

If a listing includes an asterisk (\*) it indicates that there are certain special conditions pertaining to that attribute, which are explained in the text of the description.

### Azathoth

<b>ST:</b> 100*	<b>Move/Dodge:</b> n/a	<b>Size:</b> 50*
<b>DX:</b> 20	<b>PD/DR:</b> none	<b>Weight:</b> n/a
<b>IQ:</b> n/a	<b>Damage:</b> 13d cr.*	<b>Habitat:</b> the center of the universe
<b>HT:</b> 301300	<b>Reach:</b> n/a	<b>Fright Check:</b> -20

Azathoth is the chief of the outer gods. Blind and mindless, it exists at the center of the universe, in a space beyond our space-time continuum. Formless and chaotic, Azathoth writhes eternally to the music of inhuman drums and pipes, which attend it wherever it goes. It is surrounded by a cloud of musicians and servitors who orbit it unceasingly.. *Its chief servant* is Nyarlathotep, who instantly acts to fulfill Azathoth's every mindless impulse.

Since it is completely incapable of even becoming aware of the human race, Azathoth is worshipped among humans only by the violently insane. Nonetheless, some who worship



Azathoth have acquired strange powers and insights into the inner workings of the universe through their contemplation of the eternal insanity that is Azathoth, which lies at the very core of reality.

It is claimed by some that it is possible to call Azathoth away from its extra-cosmic lair for a time. The stats above are for Azathoth in his summoned form – if somehow encountered in his normal state Azathoth is the size of a star and his physical abilities are literally infinite.

Azathoth appears to human eyes as an incomprehensible chaotic mass. This mass constantly coalesces into wildly thrashing tentacles which strike out to crush and rend anything in their path. Azathoth will manifest with 1d musicians and 2d Lesser Outer Gods in attendance.

When Azathoth is called away from its seat at the center of reality, it grows ever more enraged, and as its rage grows, so does Azathoth itself. Every 1d seconds after Azathoth is summoned, the GM should roll 2d. On a 2 through 7, Azathoth doubles in size, doubling its ST and damage in the process. On an 11 or 12, Azathoth removes itself entirely from our reality and returns to its place of origin. If Azathoth takes more than 300 points of damage while it is summoned, that will also cause it to remove itself from our reality.

### Cthulhu

<b>ST:</b> 140	<b>Move/Dodge:</b> 24*/n/a	<b>Size:</b> 40
<b>DX:</b> 21	<b>PD/DR:</b> 6/21	<b>Weight:</b> 1000 tons
<b>IQ:</b> 42	<b>Damage:</b> 17d cut	<b>Habitat:</b> R'lyeh
<b>HT:</b> 201160	<b>Reach:</b> 20	<b>Fright Check:</b> -15

Great Cthulhu is the *father/king/priest/god* of an interstellar race that came to Earth eons before the rise of man. At some point in the primordial past, Cthulhu, along with many of his offspring (see *Star-Spawn of Cthulhu*, p. 114) were entombed in the cyclopean city of R'lyeh, where they entered a state of millennial hibernation.

Cthulhu's body form is somewhat amorphous. He can, for example, shift most of his mass into his wings, greatly extending his wingspan and making his body much more slender, in order to fly, or narrowing and elongating a single limb or tentacle to send it after a victim hiding in a small hole or nook. However, all of his forms will, in general, retain the same defining features – all will have claws, wings, and tentacles visible in the correct places. In any form Cthulhu is recognizable as Cthulhu.

More than perhaps any other of the Great Old Ones, Cthulhu is worshipped as a god by human cultists. This is because, even in his somnolent state, Cthulhu sends dreams and visions to sensitive humans across the globe. Over the centuries of human cultural evolution, these half-understood glimpses into the mind of Cthulhu have spawned cults from Greenland to Africa to China. His cult tends to be strongest among uncivilized cultures (or in decadent backwaters of civilized society), and is particularly pervasive among those who make their living from the sea. Most cults teach that there will come a day when R'lyeh will rise, Cthulhu's human servants will be called to come and open the megalithic black door behind which the creature sleeps, and then Cthulhu will awaken and his servants (both original and human) will rampage across the globe, sweeping aside all that try to oppose them. To his worshipers Cthulhu is known by many names, but most of these names (Thu-thu, Tulu) are recognizable variants of the original.

It is reported that R'lyeh *does* rise periodically, and that Cthulhu himself has been known to leave his lair and move about for a time. Whether this activity represents a true – although brief – awakening, or is just a form of "sleepwalking" is a matter of some debate among authorities. However, even such transient uprisings are known to occasion a marked rise in worldwide cult and psychic activity. A rising of R'lyeh in the early years of the 20th century is particularly well documented.

Cthulhu may attack with both claws each round at no penalty, doing the indicated damage. He may also stoop over to allow him to attack with his tentacles, doing 11d crushing damage. He may make a tentacle attack each round (again, at no penalties, even if he's also using his claws) and may hold up to four victims simultaneously in his tentacles.

It can be safely assumed, as well, that a fully-conscious Cthulhu would be able to effortlessly command vast Mythos-related magical forces (although he does not have any power to Contact Nodens, or Summon/Bind Nightgaunt). He may be able

to impart knowledge of the Contact Deep One or Contact Cthulhu rituals to humans via dreams.

Cthulhu can fly at a speed of up to 16, or swim at a speed of up to 20.

Cthulhu regenerates 1 bit point each round. If reduced to -100 or fewer hit points he will burst and dissolve into a cloud of disgusting greenish vapor. He will gather his essence and reform in 2d+8 minutes. There is no known force which can permanently destroy Cthulhu – even if he is caught at ground zero of an H-bomb explosion, he will reform in 10 to 20 minutes, only he'll be *radioactive*.

### Dagon & Hydra

ST: 50	Move/Dodge: 10	Size: 7
DX: 20	PD/DR: 316	Weight: 2 tons
IQ: 20	Damage: 8d-1 cut.	Habitat: undersea
HT: 20/55	Reach: 4	Fright Check: -3

Dagon and Hydra (their game stats are identical) are respectively the king and queen of the Deep Ones race. They are much larger (over 20' tall) and more powerful than any other known Deep Ones, and they are incredibly ancient – perhaps millions of years old. Their titles Father Dagon and Mother Hydra may not be merely honorific. Although they are seldom encountered by humans, they are the active and absolute rulers of their race.

They attack with their claws, and they also know all the Summon/Bind Servitor spells.

### Ghatanothoa

ST: 90	Move/Dodge: 918	Size: 50
DX: 8	PD/DR: 4110	Weight: 240 tons
IQ: 20	Damage: 7d	Habitat: undersea
HT: 201120	Reach: 50	Fright Check: -15

Ghatanothoa is a hideous mass of tentacles, maws and sensory organs. Although its form is indescribable, it does have a definite outline which can be recognized and reproduced.

In the remote past, Ghatanothoa lived beneath a city in an extinct volcano on the continent of Mu. Originally built by the Mi-go, the city came to be occupied by a lost human civilization, and the priests of that country unwillingly offered Ghatanothoa human sacrifice, to keep it from rising up and devouring the whole city. When Mu sank, Ghatanothoa was imprisoned in its lair beneath the waves.









4-6, he's hungry.) If Tsathoggua is hungry he will grab a random individual and pull him into a bear hug, whereupon the victim begins to lose 1 point from *each* of ST, DX, IQ and HT per turn. If any characteristic reaches 0, the victim is dead. This draining will continue until the victim is dead or Tsathoggua is driven off. If Tsathoggua leaves his victim alive, the unhappy individual will be in horrible agony, covered by acid burns and gaping tears in his flesh, with a sensation like acid running through his veins. If the victim is hospitalized, he will regain one point to each of his characteristics per month.

Tsathoggua knows most Mythos-related spells.

## Tulzscha

**ST:** 60      **Move/Dodge:** 0      **Size:** 10  
**DX:** 12      **PD/DR:** \*      **Weight:** n/a  
**IQ:** 15      **Damage:** \*      **Habitat:** Earth's core

**HT:** 20157      **Reach:** 0      **Fright Check:** -5

This minor Outer God is an embodiment of death and decay. It is sometimes worshipped by human cultists, particularly at the solstices and during certain astrological conjunctions.

At the court of Azathoth, the creature takes the form of a ball of green flame. When called to earth, Tulzscha penetrates to the core of the planet in non-solid form, then erupts to the surface as a pillar of heatless green flame. Once it manifests, it cannot move until it is dismissed.

Although it cannot move, Tulzscha can cast goutts of green flame up to 17 hexes away. Anyone struck by the flame is not burned, but instead ages 3d years and must make rolls against ST, DX, HT and Will. Failure on any of the rolls is as follows: ST – permanently lose 1 point of ST, DX – permanently lose 1 point of DX, HT – permanently lose 1d HT, Will – permanently lose 1d Will (that is, lose 1d levels of Strong Will or gain 1d levels of Weak Will). Tulzscha knows all the Mythos-related spells.



Tulzscha is immune to impaling damage, heat, cold, acid and electricity. All other attacks do minimum damage (treat all dice as though they rolled a 1). Magic affects Tulzscha normally. It will not vanish unless formally dismissed, or reduced to 0 hit points.

## Yig

**ST:** 30      **Move/Dodge:** 10/12      **Size:** 1  
**DX:** 18      **PD/DR:** 216      **Weight:** 320 lbs.  
**IQ:** 20      **Damage:** 2d cr./ven.      **Habitat:** plains  
**HT:** 201120      **Reach:** 1      **Fright Check:** -3

Yig, the "Father of Serpents," is never clearly described. Some say he resembles a strong man with scaly, hairless skin. Sometimes he is said to have the head of a serpent, sometimes a normal human head. He is often accompanied by dozens of snakes. He is known to afflict certain areas with madness and malformed children, the dreaded "Curse of Yig."

Yig has been worshipped by plains Indian tribes, and by certain evil practitioners of Voodoo. He is also the patron of the Serpent People race. Some have suggested a connection between Yig and the Mesoamerican deity *Quetzalcoatl*.

Followers of Yig become immune to ordinary snake poisons and gain the ability to talk to snakes (these advantages are worth a cumulative 25 points, if the GM is keeping track of point totals). They may also learn certain spells (both Mythos-related and "normal") from the deity.

An enemy or traitor to Yig's cult will often be slain by one of Yig's sacred snakes. A sacred snake is always a poisonous viper of some type native to the region, of the largest possible size and with a white crescent mark on its head. In North America, the snake would probably be a rattlesnake at least 6' long. Sacred snakes strike so swiftly and silently that their victim must make a Vision roll at -5 to even notice the serpent in time to defend against its first strike. If the snake injects its venom, death is automatic after a few minutes of agony.

Yig himself, in combat, will always grab his victim in the first round, doing 2d crushing damage with his grip, then drag the victim into close combat, biting him to inject his venom. Yig's bite is always fatal, and does 1d impaling damage for purposes of determining penetration.

Due to his armored scales, Yig has PD 6 against impaling attacks, PD 2 against all other attacks.

## Yog-Sothoth

**ST:** n/a      **Move/Dodge:** 10010      **Size:** varies  
**DX:** 1      **PD/DR:** 0/0      **Weight:** n/a  
**IQ:** 40      **Damage:** \*      **Habitat:** extradimensional space  
**HT:** 201400      **Reach:** 0      **Fright Check:** -20

This often-invoked Outer God is called "the Key and the Gate," or the "all-in-one." It dwells in the interstices between the various realities which compose the multiversal all, and in some sense Yog-Sothoth is coterminous with all of time and space.

Yog-Sothoth wishes to enter material reality to feast on the life that exists here, but it can only do so at certain times. When it does manifest visibly, it takes the form of a conglomeration of shimmering globes, constantly shifting in shape and size, anywhere from 100 hexes to more than a mile across. It can fly through Earth's atmosphere at thousands of miles per hour, and may be responsible for certain UFO phenomena.

Yog-Sothoth is usually worshipped by sorcerers, who seek it out to acquire the power to see into other realities, or even



travel there physically. In return, they arrange for Yog-Sothoth to enter our reality and slake its hunger. In its aspect as Tawil at'Umr (sometimes corrupted as Umr at'Tawil), or "the Opener of the Way," Yog-Sothoth can be approached and bargained with in relative safety by those who wish to travel through space or time (no Fright Check required). Even in this relatively neutral guise, however, the god will sometimes reveal itself totally to the petitioner, blasting any mortal mind into utter and permanent madness.

If it attacks a foe, Yog-Sothoth can touch one individual per turn with its spheres (no to-hit roll is necessary, no defense is possible), causing the immediate, permanent loss of 1d HT. It can also, with a touch, send anything or anybody to any time, place or reality of its choosing. However, this attack can sometimes be resisted if the victim rolls **Will-5** or better. Finally, Yog-Sothoth can unleash fluid bolts of silvery fire, with a range of more than half a mile, which have the power to slay any person or destroy any thing that they strike within 5 hexes of. Yog-Sothoth knows all the Mythos-related spells. It can only be damaged with magical weapons.



## The Great Old Oner In Combat

The Great Old Ones have physical bodies, and these physical bodies can be destroyed by physical violence.

One of the problems of the *CthulhuPunk* campaign, however, is that massive physical violence is sometimes disarmingly accessible to the PCs. In 1925 the physical form of great Cthulhu was destroyed, temporarily, by a collision with a heavy freighter. In the 21st century it's possible to pack that much damage in a shoulder holster. A *CthulhuPunk* adventure isn't very scary if a Great Old One can be banished with one shot from the right piece of contraband hardware.

Below are some ideas for making sure that the Great Old Ones are sufficiently defended from gun-crazy PCs.

*Surprise!* Certainly the best way to prevent the PCs from bringing overwhelming firepower to bear on the entities is not to allow the firepower and the Old Ones to come into close proximity. If the party is waiting for the entity to manifest from a concrete machine gun emplacement with TOW missiles at the ready, the entity should not manifest at that time. Save the big encounter for later, when they think the danger has passed.

Of course, a certain breed of gamer will try to can around their **LAWs** and heavy assault weapons all the time. In this case the GM's best friend is the reality check. If an occult investigator tries to walk into the site of a corporate operation with his portable artillery, he's lucky if he just gets the hardware taken away and a week or so under corporate detention. If he shows up packing at a **NERCC** checkpoint, he's liable to find his inquiries into the supernatural curtailed for several years, while he languishes in a government gulag. He'll also acquire a select assortment of broken limbs in the process.

There will be times, however, where it will be neither fair nor reasonable to arbitrarily deprive the PCs of their weaponry. In such circumstances the GM still has several options. The first is to let the PCs win – let them use their equipment to preempt the present emergency, wrap up the current adventure and move on. This is not, however, always the most satisfying end for a horror adventure. If not, the GM should keep in mind some of the points below.

*They come back.* Great Old Ones don't stay dead. If the physical body of the entity is destroyed in combat, it will only be a temporary setback. For some entities, "death" will involve transition to another plane of existence, from which it cannot

return until summoned. Others, like Great Cthulhu, are able to return in their physical bodies in a matter of minutes after they are destroyed. Lesser Great Old Ones, like Tsathoggua or Rhan-Tegoth, might only be able to revive themselves after an extended period of deathlike dormancy, or by growing a new body from scratch . . . but eventually they will return.

*They get tougher.* When a Great Old One does return after destruction, it would be foolish to expect the same tactics to work against it again. Cthulhu may have simply never before needed to have massive resistance to firearms, but after his first unfortunate encounter with a tripod-mounted M-60 he may routinely start manifesting with a DR of 200.

Of course, if the GM knows that his PCs are prone to firepower overkill, he's under no obligation to give them a freebie against any given Old One before taking corrective measures. Great Old Ones *do not play by the rules*.

The most obvious way to cook the stats of potentially-vulnerable cosmic entities is to simply multiply their hit points or DR by some arbitrary number. However, this is perhaps not the most desirable option, since it can also serve to make the entities immune to more dramatically suitable attacks, like collapsing temples, kamikaze plane crashes or avalanche. The purpose of the rules modifiers should not be to make the Great Old Ones invulnerable – they're not – but to make them less vulnerable to man-portable firearms.

A better way to limit firearms damage is to rule that bullets just don't work that well on Great Old Ones – their metabolisms are too decentralized and their nervous systems not as subject to shock. The net result is that bullets do no more than *1 point* of damage for each *die* of damage that weapon normally does. So, for example, an M16, with a normal damage of 5d per round, will do no more than 5 points per round if it hits. As always, damage is computed *before* DR is applied, so any Great Old One with DR 5 or more is effectively immune to M16 fire. Any modifiers to normal bullet damage (i.e. -1, +2, etc.) are ignored for purpose of computing modified damage. So a Glock 17 with a normal per-round damage of 2d+2 would do a flat 2 points damage to a Great Old One, as would a Colt Texas revolver, with a normal damage of 2d-1.

Similarly, if the party is overly fond of incendiaries, the GM may want to cap explosive damage at 1 or 2 points maximum per die.







The Flying Polyps are an intelligent, spacefaring race that came to Earth (and at least three other planets in the solar system) from some unknowable world or reality about 700 million years ago. They built basalt cities with high, windowless towers and fought devastating wars with the Great Race of Yith. Eventually, the Great Race prevailed and imprisoned them underground, but when the Yithian intelligences left their conical bodies, some of the Flying Polyps escaped their prisons and destroyed the remnants of the conical creatures.

However, rather than attempting to retake the Earth with the Great Race gone, the Polyps instead returned underground, where some still remain to this day.

The Polyps are only partially material and float without any apparent means of buoyancy or locomotion, making a characteristic whistling noise as they fly. When they do land, they leave strange marks like footprints made up of five circular "toe prints." They are shapeless and difficult to describe in human terms. Because of their partially immaterial nature, any physical attack against a Flying Polyp will automatically do the minimum possible damage. For example, an attack doing 2d+3 damage will automatically do only 5 points against a Flying Polyp. They take normal damage from magical weapons and energy attacks.

Parts of a Polyp's anatomy are constantly phasing in and out of the visual spectrum, accounting for its indescribable appearance and a portion of its high PD. A Polyp can will itself into a state of complete invisibility, at a Fatigue cost of 1 point per 1d turns.



Flying Polyps can attack physically, manifesting 2d tentacles to attack with on any given turn. Each tentacle that hits does 2d damage. These tentacle attacks do not take the form of normal contusions or abrasions, but instead desiccate the flesh where they hit, much like a windburn. Because of the semi-solid nature of the Flying Polyps, tentacle attacks bypass all artificial body armor, but Toughness and natural DR protect normally.

The Flying Polyp's preferred attacks, however, are a series of wind-based attacks which human beings can only regard as supernatural (these are in addition to any "normal" Mythos-based spells, which any given Polyp may know at the GM's discretion). Each of these attacks cost the Polyp 1 point of Fatigue per turn the power is maintained.

The most direct of the Polyp's air attacks is a simple cylinder of air 10 hexes in diameter which does 6d damage up to 20 hexes out from the Polyp's body, and loses 1d damage each 20 hexes thereafter (i.e., 6d damage at 18 hexes, 5d at 35 hexes, and 1d at 105 hexes). The damage is a combination of windburns (desiccation) and the sheer buffeting force of the blast. Armor protects normally, but active defenses are impossible – the only possible defense is to get out of the area of attack, or behind some cover sturdy enough to withstand the onslaught. This attack does *twice* normal knockback. The Polyp may direct this attack as it wishes, rotating the base of the cylinder at a rate of up to 10 hexes per turn.

A stranger attack is the Polyp's binding winds. These are currents of air which the Polyp can send out to immobilize a foe. They have a range of up to 1,000 hexes out from the Polyp's body, and they can move around corners or up through winding corridors (although in such cases range is measured along the most direct open route to the target, not as the crow flies). The Polyp takes only normal distance range penalties to hit with this attack, regardless of whether it has a line of sight to the target (perhaps it can sense its target's position through disturbances in the atmosphere). In order to move or attack against the binding winds, the target must win a Quick Contest against his ST and the Polyp's Will each round. If the target is within 200 hexes of the Polyp, the creature gets a +5 to its Will roll. This attack may be used to affect more than one target at once, but all targets must be within 30 hexes of one another, and the Polyp is at -2 to Will for each target after the first.

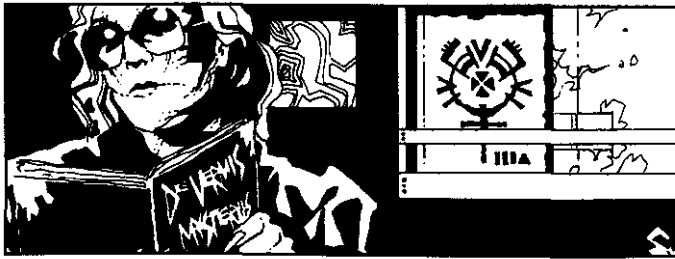
Finally, a group of Polyps can generate a devastating windstorm by acting in concert. This storm has a wind speed of 112 mph for each point of Will of every Polyp participating in the attack, diminishing by 5 mph every 200 hexes out from the epicenter of the massed Polyps. The exact effect of this windstorm on structures and exposed victims is left to the GM. For reference, any wind faster than 75 mph is considered hurricane force.

### Formless Spawn

ST: 10 to 25      **Move/Dodge:** 12/14      **Size:** 1 to 3  
 DX: 18            **PD/DR:** 210                      **Weight:** 250-1,000 lbs.  
 IQ: 12            **Damage:** \*                        **Habitat:** underground  
 HT: 10112 to 22      **Reach:** 15 to 35                **Fright Check:** -3

These creatures serve Tsathoggua, and often guard his temples. They live deep underground in absolute darkness.

The Formless Spawn are almost completely protean, able to take a nearly infinite number of forms, from a squat, toad-like blob to a snake-like strand dozens of yards long. They can ooze through tiny cracks and openings, and extend pseudopods at will.



They can attack with their pseudopods once per round. These attacks usually take one of two distinct forms.

**Whip:** This attack does 1d crushing damage per hex of size. It can be used to entangle as per the Whip skill, or to grapple. It can attack up to three exposed victims in a single round.

**Bludgeon:** This attack does 2d crushing damage per hex of size against a single opponent.

A Formless Spawn can also swallow a victim. It simply flows over its prey, completely engulfing him. The victim takes 1 point crushing damage from constriction the first turn, 2 additional points the next turn, 3 points the next, and so on. A Formless Spawn can swallow one human-sized victim per hex of size, but can only swallow once per round (it couldn't swallow two or more humans in the same round unless they were all clinging together). The Formless Spawn can fight while it is digesting a victim, but cannot move. If it is forced to move before the prey is reduced to  $-HT \times 10$  hit points, the victim (or his remains) will be disgorged.

## Ghasts

**ST:** 22      **Move/Dodge:** 10/18      **Size:** 1  
**DX:** 14      **PD/DR:** 113      **Weight:** 500 lbs.  
**IQ:** 7      **Damage:** 1d+1 cut      **Habitat:** underground  
    bite, 2d+2 cr kick  
**HT:** 14/20      **Reach:** 1      **Fright Check:**  
    normal

Ghasts are large, scabrous, roughly humanoid troglodytes. They are pale with long limbs. Although about the height of a man, they are more massive (they would be taller if their legs weren't bent like a dog's haunches). Their eyes are yellowish-red and they have no noses or foreheads. Ghasts are native to the Dreamlands, but some have been brought to Earth, to serve as slaves and mounts for lost or secret underground cultures. They have a primitive, coughing, guttural language.

All Ghasts have a natural Stealth skill of 14. Their noses are very keen – they have a smell perception roll of 13, and on a successful roll they can track like a hound. They usually attack by biting or kicking, and they don't use weapons. A Ghast can both bite and kick a single target in the same round, at normal odds for both attacks.

## Gnoph-Keh

**ST:** 30      **Move/Dodge:** 9/13      **Size:** 2  
**DX:** 14      **PD/DR:** 419      **Weight:** 800 lbs.  
**IQ:** 15      **Damage:** 5d imp.\*      **Habitat:** arctic  
**HT:** 20127      **Reach:** 1      **Fright Check:** -1

The Gnoph-Keh are a sentient, mystically potent six-legged race of creatures native to arctic wastelands. They are associated with Ithaqua. The name Gnoph-Keh has also been associated with a single powerful being (perhaps the king or god of the race, either real or mythical) and with a tribe of savage humans (perhaps a tribe of decadent cultists who have adopted the Gnoph-Keh as their totem). The Gnoph-Keh generally live farther north than even the heartiest human tribesmen, but during

especially savage winters they sometimes descend on the northernmost human outposts.

The Gnoph-Keh have certain potent mystical powers over snow, wind and cold. A Gnoph-Keh can create a miniature blizzard around it at any time, at a cost of only 1 Fatigue per hour. This blizzard has a radius of 100 hexes out from the Gnoph-Keh, and can be extended by an additional 100 hexes for each extra point of Fatigue expended.

Gnoph-Keh can also lower the temperature in a given area. For each point of Fatigue expended, the Gnoph-Keh can lower the temperature in a given area by 20 degrees. Range and duration are as for a blizzard, above.

Humans exposed to a Gnoph-Keh's weather-control powers will take damage as described on p. B130.

The Gnoph-Keh is terrible in combat. In a single turn it can use its horn and up to four of its claws. Each claw does 3d cutting damage, and the horn does a base 5d impaling damage. However, if the Gnoph-Keh is using four claws the horn's damage is reduced by 2d, and if the horn is the only attack being used that turn it's increased by 2d (if not attacking with its paws, the Gnoph-Keh is able to use them to increase its traction for a more efficient horn attack).

## Great Race of Yith

**ST:** 40      **Move/Dodge:** 7/5      **Size:** 7  
**DX:** 10      **PD/DR:** 2/8      **Weight:** 7.5 tons  
**IQ:** 20      **Damage:** 7d cut      **Habitat:** primeval  
    Earth  
**HT:** 20145      **Reach:** 3      **Fright Check:**  
    unmodified

The Great Race of Yith, strictly speaking, is a race of disembodied, time-traveling intelligences from some other world. When their own world was destroyed, they came to Earth in its primeval infancy and took up residence in the bodies of a strange iridescent conical creature they found here (the conical bodies are native to Earth, and represent some strange phylum so far unknown to paleontology).

In this form, the Great Race was about 10 feet tall and 10 feet around at the base. They moved by undulation, and had four extensible tentacles. Two of the tentacles ended in claws, a third in trumpet-like organs of ingestion and respiration, and the final one terminated in a globe with the creatures' three eyes and other sensory organs. The cones reproduced by means of spores, but they did so only seldom since they naturally live up to 5,000 years. They ingested only liquid nutrients.

The Great Race came to Earth about 500 million years ago, and about 50 million years ago they migrated to the far future, abandoning their conical bodies to extinction.

The Great Race are dedicated temporal explorers. They have perfected the art of psychic time travel. They can send their minds to any era, taking over the body of a local and sending his mind back to inhabit one of the cones. There are several Great Race researchers on Earth at any given time. They have established a human cult to help them in their impersonations and researches. The ability of the Great Race to impersonate modern humans is imperfect, and close friends and loved ones of the possessed individual can notice small personality changes on a successful IQ roll. Great Race researchers typically stay in the guest body for a span of about 1d years.

When a Great Race researcher is in possession of a guest body, the original mind of that body is passing an equivalent amount of time as a cone-creature in the remote past. If the captive mind is capable of rational thought, like a modern human, he is set to work writing down everything that comes to mind







*Unaging:* The race does not age. If they are not killed by violence, disease or some other outside agency, they are immortal.

*Venom:* The race has a poison attack, doing the stated damage.

## Deep Ones

The Deep Ones are an immortal, amphibious race living far below the surface of the ocean. They are squat, powerful creatures a bit larger than a human being (normal height for their ST, but +100 pounds weight), with pale, shiny, hairless skin, huge bulbous eyes, long arms, stubby legs and clawed and webbed hands and feet. Their skin and eyes are a pale greenish-gray, though their bellies are white. They have scaly ridges on their backs.

## Advantages and Disadvantages

Deep Ones have a racial +3 to ST (30 points) and IQ (30 points). They have the racial advantages Amphibious (20 points), Claws (15 points), Damage Resistance 1 (5 points), Extra Hit Points +3 (15 points), Nictating Membrane (15 points), Peripheral Vision (15 points), Pressure Support (15 points), Temperature Tolerance (15 points) and Unaging (15 points).

They have the racial disadvantage Secret (-30 points) (they keep their existence hidden from humanity), and a Dependency (-15 points) – they must spend at least one hour a day underwater.

The racial cost for Deep One NPCs is 145 points.

## Character and Culture

The prehuman civilization of the Deep Ones lives beneath the oceans, where they worship Cthulhu and are ruled by Dagon and Hydra (see p. 102).

Immortal and unchanging, they have no concept of the human values of love, pity or compassion. Although they may come together to breed, to make war or to worship Cthulhu, they completely lack the human compulsion to seek out the company of others, or to make physical contact for its own sake.

When they come ashore, Deep Ones move on land with a hopping/waddling motion, sometimes going on two limbs, sometimes on four. Although they can survive on as little as one hour underwater each day, Deep Ones prefer to spend most of their time beneath the surface, and if they cannot they will be uncomfortable and annoyed. Likewise, they can survive in fresh water, but are only completely comfortable in salt.

Their cities are said to possess a cold, inhuman beauty. Deep Ones live all over the world's oceans, but one important city is known to lie off the coast of Massachusetts.

Deep Ones have been known to interbreed with humans. Their reason for this proclivity is unknown – whether they do so for reasons of eugenics, magick, or strange inhuman lust. These human/Deep One crossbreeds generally start out completely human, but sometime in their life they change, becoming Deep Ones over the course of several months (see *The Innsmouth Look*, p. 48). The Deep Ones have been known to set up their half-human kinsfolk in remote seaside villages, using these communities as fronts to obtain anything they may want from humanity.

Besides their breeding activities, the Deep Ones seem to prefer to have nothing whatsoever to do with humanity – but they are an ancient, wise and subtle race and who knows?; per-

haps they are the secret masters of humanity, controlling our governments, organizations and institutions from beneath the waves.

## Ghouls

Ghouls are a quasi-humanoid race that lives primarily on human carrion. They have hoof-like feet, strong, rubbery limbs and an overall canine cast to their features. They are often encrusted with grave-mold which they acquire as they feed. They are roughly the same size as humans (figure height and weight from the Ghoul's ST before the racial bonus is applied; i.e., a Ghoul with ST 15 is the size of a ST 11 human).

## Advantages and Disadvantages

Ghouls have ST +4 (45 points), DX +3 (30 points), IQ +3 (30 points), HT +3 (30 points), Acute Smell/Taste +2 (4 points), Alertness +3 (15 points), Claws (15 points), DR +4 vs. firearms and other projectile attacks (8 points), Sharp Teeth (8 points).

They have the racial disadvantages Secret (-30 points), Odious Racial Habit: Eat Dead Humans (-15 points), Odious Racial Habit: Foul and Unwholesome Appearance and Odor (-10 points).

All Ghouls know the following skills at the indicated level at the *minimum*:

Camouflage at IQ (2 points), Climbing at DX (2 points), Jumping at DX +2 (4 points), Stealth at DX (2 points).

The racial cost for a Ghoul NPC is 140 points.

## Character and Culture

Ghouls live beneath virtually all human cities, where they feed on the dead. Although their knowledge of the Great Old Ones surpasses that of humanity, they do not worship or willingly serve them. Ghouls are not an evil race – they want only to be left alone to feed in peace but they are utterly without pity or any other human feeling, and they will gleefully add to their larder any human who threatens them or stumbles upon their secrets.

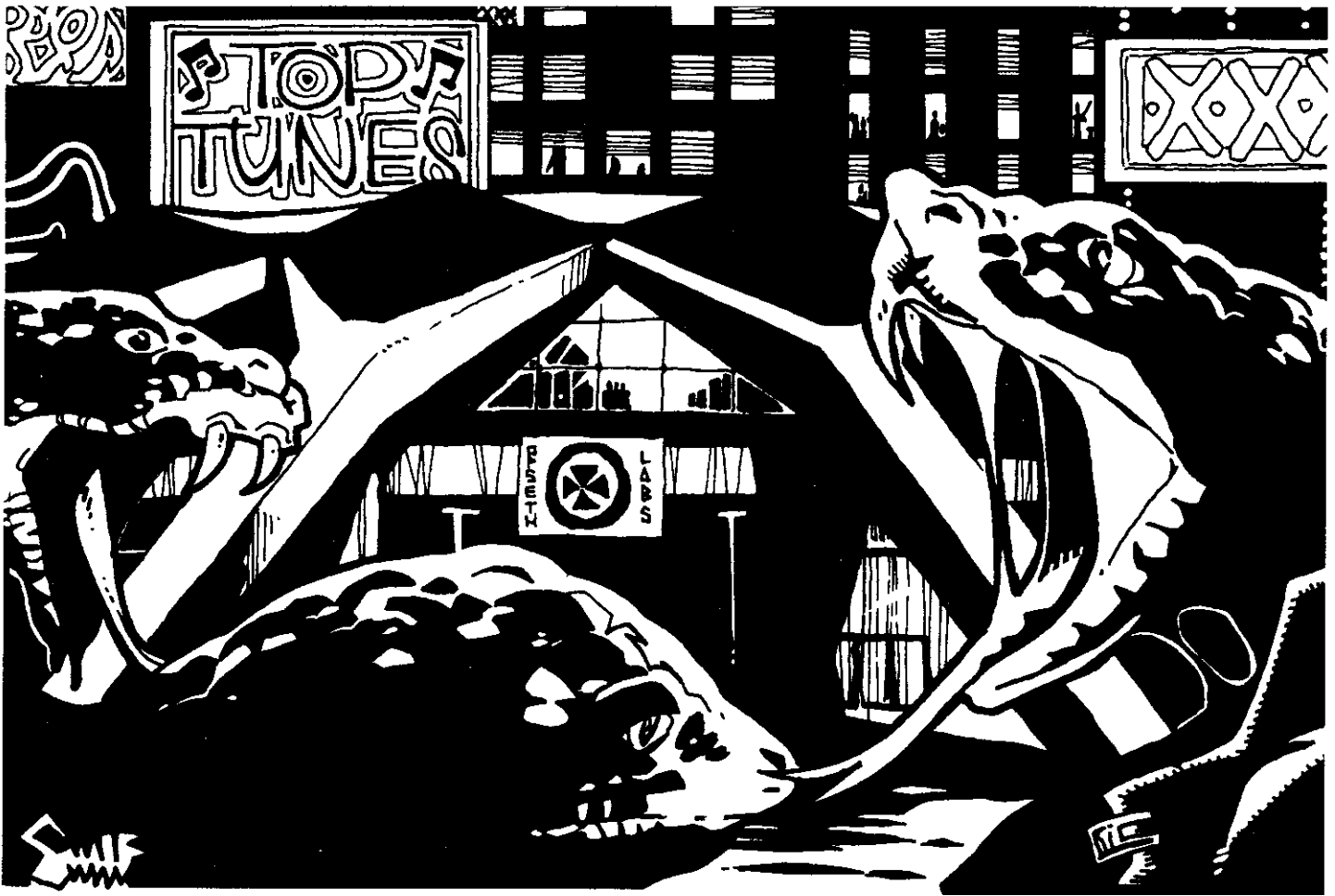
Ghouls construct elaborate tunnel systems beneath human cities, leading from cemetery to cemetery. In the Dreamlands they are much more common, and they have constructed virtual underground nations. The customs and culture of Ghouls are unknown to humanity.

Ghouls have their own meeping, gibbering tongue. At least some Ghouls are literate in human languages. They sometimes make contacts among humanity with witches and students of forbidden knowledge. They have a great respect for humans who can demonstrate a profound knowledge of the secrets of the Mythos. A few exceptional Ghouls may know certain Mythos-related spells.

Humans who associate with Ghouls for a long time have been known to become Ghouls themselves. Whether this is the race's sole means of propagating itself, or whether they can also reproduce through more natural means, is unknown.

In combat, Ghouls have a unique bite attack. Once they successfully hit with a bite, doing normal cutting damage for their ST, they can remain attached to their victim, worrying the wound each subsequent turn for normal damage -2. This worry attack is *automatic* as long as the Ghoul remains attached – the Ghoul does not need to make a to-hit roll, and the victim cannot defend. The only way to detach a worrying Ghoul is to kill it, knock it unconscious or win a Quick Contest of ST. A Ghoul cannot worry a wound and make a bite attack on the same turn.





## Serpent People

The Serpent People resemble upright snakes with two arms and legs. They are scaled and hairless, their limbs end in taloned hands and feet, and they have tails. Their civilization flourished before even the dinosaurs evolved. They are a bit larger than humanity – figure height and weight as though the Serpent Man's ST is 4 greater than its actual value.

### Advantages and Disadvantages

Serpent People have IQ +5 (60 points), DX +3 (30 points), DR +1 (5 points), Claws (15 points), Sharp Teeth (10 points) and Venom (45 points). As followers of Yig, they have the ability to talk to other serpents, and are immune to all snake venoms.

They have no racial disadvantages.

Racial cost for a Serpent Man NPC is 190 points.

### Character and Culture

The civilization of the Serpent People arose during the Permian Epoch and flourished for about 200 million years, fighting wars and building cities of black basalt. There are known to have been at least two distinct sub-races of Serpent People, one with tails and one without (all surviving Serpent People seem to be descended from the tailed variety). By about 70 million years ago the Serpent Man civilization was largely extinct, though at least one city survived into human prehistory. They were a race of scholars and sorcerers, and their rulers were powerful wizards in terms of both Mythos-related and more "normal" magical arts. They worshipped Yig.

The Serpent People are not extinct in the present, but they are by and large a degenerate race, devoid of anything that

could be called a civilization or either a culture (degenerate Serpent People have an average IQ of 8, in contrast to the average IQ of 15 possessed by their primeval ancestors, and their height and weight are figured as though their ST is 3 less than its actual value). They live in small bands, using the remnants of their sentience to keep hidden from humanity.

Even today, however, there is the occasional Serpent Person who has the full mental capacity of his ancestors. These atavisms often wear robes as their forbearers did, and even appear to have some of the knowledge of the ancient Serpent People, particularly in the magical arts. This may be because the atavisms are favored by Yig and receive their knowledge direct from the god, or because they possess a form of racial memory unknown to humans. Some gifted Serpent People may be the reincarnation of ancient sorcerers, or even the sorcerers themselves, made immortal through their arts and awakened into the present. Serpent People atavisms will almost always know a spell which allows them to wear the illusion of a human form.

Serpent People are sufficiently humanoid to use all human weapons normally. Due to their exceptional flexibility, they are able to stretch out their heads and bite victims in the next hex (this is why their Sharp Teeth advantage is more expensive than the Ghouls', who can only bite in close combat). Their bite is poisonous to humans. This venom does 3d damage when injected. After one hour the victim must make a roll vs. HT -3. If he fails the HT roll he takes another 3d damage and must roll again in one hour. This continues until the victim makes the roll or dies; if he makes the HT roll he takes no more damage and does not need to roll again.

# ADVENTURE SEEDS



DMT3  
XIVV



## Rosenkrantz's Baby

Europe isn't known for its state-of-the art cybernetic tech, so the whole world was more than a bit surprised when it emerged as a player in the race for a fully operational vatrain AI. (For more on vatbrains, seep. CW92.)

Of course, the Europeans did have Dr. Theresa Rosenkrantz, one of the most innovative bioware designers in the world. And they did have the fantastically rich Zurich Orbital data haven, which was willing to co-fund the project along with the European governments.

Early development on the project, codenamed simply Bébé, was extremely encouraging. Capacity and speed records seemed to be dropping every day, and it looked like Bébé was standing right at the sentience threshold.

Then Bébé started to go unstable. There were unexpected failures to perform certain routine tasks. There was no detectable technical explanation for the failures. Some on the team even suggested that it looked like Bébé was refusing to perform the tasks, and took this as a hopeful sign.

The situation continued to deteriorate, however. A set of Bébé-controlled waldoes went berserk, resulting in an assistant programmer losing his left arm in a messy fashion. Even stranger, a senior engineer one night took a fire-axe to Bébé's processing core housing, and had to be subdued by force and eventually institutionalized. Of course, she didn't do more than scratch the outer casing of the core. Later, she'd only say that Bébé was molesting her in her dreams. People started talking about the "Rosenkrantz Curse."

Dr. Rosenkrantz herself was working almost round the clock trying to isolate the problem. Finally, one morning the normal day-shift arrived to find an exhausted Rosenkrantz slumped asleep over a break table. Over night she'd detached all of Bébé's input and output devices and disabled the ports, completely isolating the system. She left only one CD-ROM drive going in, and one text-only screen going out, both of which had been locked off from anybody except somebody with Rosenkrantz's personal security code.



In her top secret report to the ZO board, Rosenkrantz wrote of a "non-reproduceable virus or program template" that had corrupted Bébé's systems, and warned of "possible contamination of the global nets" if the system was not kept completely isolated.

In the section that raised the most eyebrows among the ZO brass, Rosenkrantz wrote that the corruption in Bébé did not conform to any known virus technology, and suggested that an extra-terrestrial origin should be considered. She also referred to demonic possession in a way that led some hoard members to question whether she really meant it as a metaphor.

While the ZO hoard and the European Congress was debating what to do about Bébé, the question was taken out of their hands when Bébé's central processing core — the actual "vat" with Bébé's pseudo-organic "brain" growing in it — vanished overnight. The theft was inexplicable, since the core weighed 4 tons, and since Bébé could not "survive" if the core spent more than a minute or so at temperatures above 75 degrees Kelvin.

What "got into" Bébé? And who stole it? And what, if anything, are they using it for now? These are questions that are left to the GM and players to answer. Perhaps whatever contaminated Bébé has discovered, and is now after, the even more sophisticated Memnon-12 vatbraiu (see p. CW92). Perhaps Memnon himself will be the one to call in the PCs for help against this unknown threat.



## Ghoulie Boys

There's a new gang down among the low-C slums. They call themselves the Ghoulie Boys, and their colors are white leather jackets with a big yellow squiggle painted on the back. They're into tattoos and ritual scarification.

They are bad. They don't just break legs and heads... they've been known to take proles who won't pay their fees and leave little pieces of them on every doorstep in their building. The word on the street is even scarier. They say that some folks who cross the Ghoulies end up messy dead or vanished, when there couldn't possibly be a Ghoulie soldier anywhere near the victim. Ghoulie enemies buy it when they're in other territories or even other towns, or when they're in security-sealed rooms locked from the inside.

When it comes to the local drug trade, the Ghoulies got some wild, wild stuff. Stuff you just can't get anywhere else in town . . . maybe anywhere else, period. If you're looking for a new high, it's guaranteed. If you're planning to come hack down sane and alive, that's maybe not so guaranteed.

The Ghoulie's leader calls himself Wilbur, and rumor has it that he stands almost 8' feet tall and is uglier than Frankenstein. Not that Wilbur gets out on the street much, but all the Ghoulies know him.

Now, Wilbur is starting to elbow into the local racket's territory. Not just the traditional ganger reserves of street level retail drug traffic and neighborhood protection operations, but big time stuff like wholesale drug smuggling and korporate extortion. He's also been holding out on the rackets' traditional cut of gang profits. Amazingly, so far none of the established local mobs have raised a finger against a single Ghoulie.

Obviously, Wilbur has something going for him besides willing soldiers and a street-treat arsenal. It's just a matter of somebody who knows what to look for fitting all the pieces together. Then, of course, the question is what to do about it.



## The Rig Monsters

According to the crews on the Alaskan offshore drilling rigs, there's a growing problem with "critters." There's big critters, like the one that supposedly reached up out of a calm ocean and pulled a packed 12-man launch under, never to be seen again. Or the one that seems to have climbed up to the top of a 300-foot steel derrick, apparently snapping the top 100 feet of the tower off clean by its sheer weight.

There's also smaller critters, like the ones who've been seen circling the platforms on moonlit nights, or the ones who have been stealing equipment and weapons from locked magazines and engine rooms.

It all started when that crazy eco-commune moved out to the coast. Most of the rig workers believe that the critters are eco-terrorists, wearing bizarre wet suits to scare their victims (at least, most of the workers who haven't actually seen a critter yet believe that).

But the Alaskan Special Operations Force has been watching the commune like a hawk ever since the accidents and thefts began, conducting hourly surveillances by air and surprise raids and searches. So far the AISOF has come up with exactly no freaky wet suits, no stolen property, no contraband equipment of any kind. They've never even observed a single commune member sailing out in the direction of the rigs. The eco-freaks just sit around in their quonset hut homes, and every night they hold their spooky meetings in the big hut in the center, and they chant their spooky gibberish.

The AISOF is not the NERCC. Their police powers are limited, and they've leaned just about as hard as they can without getting the government's butt sued off.

In the meantime, the critter problem just gets worse. Fires and explosions are starting to happen. Just little ones, so far, but some of the fires and explosions are happening *under water*.

Meanwhile, the AISOF is talking about sending gunships to protect the rigs. There's even a rumor going around that the AISOF, which would sooner eat worms than go to the ProGov for help, has requested that Washington forward certain classified documents relating to a mysterious military operation that took place off the New England coast early in the 20th century.



## Testament

Rufus Edgerton of Toronto, Ontario, kept a diary. He recorded his daily thoughts on video and audio and kept it digitally stored on his computer.

One night Rufus packed up the last year of his diary into a single file and mailed it off to an unknown number of people worldwide. By the time most of the message's recipients got around to checking their mail the next day, Rufus Edgerton was dead.

One of the recipients of Edgerton's diary was one of the PCs. Once the (32-hour) document is unarchived and viewed, it tells the story of Edgerton's researches into certain ancient and obscure metaphysical theories. It tells of his attempts to make contact with certain alien entities, and it tells of the apparent success of those attempts and Rufus Edgerton's subsequent descent into despair and looming madness. A horrible story, but familiar enough to those who study such things.



It's the last 20 minutes of the Edgerton file that are really interesting, in the old Chinese curse sense of the word. There is no video, just audio. And the voice is not Edgerton, it's a clicking, buzzing sound that sounds like some kind of cross between a cheap voice synthesizer and insect noises. After a few minutes of random buzzing, the noise starts to resolve into recognizable English words. The mysterious "voice" begins describing what seems to be a ritual of some sort – easy enough to do, if you don't mind getting your hands a little dirty, and you can spare a bum, enemy or defenseless young relative or two. The voice does not say what, exactly, the ritual is supposed to accomplish.

As should be obvious to the PCs, it is necessary that they find out who else Edgerton may have sent his last file to, before some stupid hacker can stumble on it and put it out on the international net. To trace down the other copies of the file, they'll have to find out exactly what entities Edgerton thought he'd contacted, and exactly what he hoped to accomplish by doing so – facts that were only hinted at in the diary, though Edgerton was chillingly clear that he had some kind of grand purpose in mind, and was not simply acting out of academic curiosity.



## Cassilda's Dance

The latest sensation on the spook scene (see p. 35) is a three-piece ensemble from Belgrade called Cassilda's Dance. With a lighter sound than most spook groups (their instrumentation is concert harp, oboe and cello), the Dance has been described as "the most sinister musical presence since Nero." Their lyrics are mundane, even pastoral (hit songs have titles like "Day in the Park," "Rain on Leaf" and "Diving Undersea") but their music has been known to give adults recurring nightmares that last for months (one of the highest recommendations among spookies).

The reason for Cassilda's Dance musical power is that they're all true believer cultists. They have had dealings with

the Mi-go and routinely invoke Nyarlathotep for visions of the dance at Azathoth's court, and the piping which accompanies it.

Using the money from their six international hit CDs, the Dance is currently financing and scoring the first-ever mass media production of *The King In Yellow*, the 19th-century play from which they take their name. Up until the present, there are no reliable reports of the play actually being staged. In fact, for a century it was regarded as completely unproduceable. Cassilda's Dance claims that with the advent of new video-imaging technologies that's changed.

*The King in Yellow* is well known among Mythos investigators for its ability to trigger psychotic behavior in people who just read the script. If the play was actually produced and made available to the general public, with its mystical threat enhanced by Cassilda's Dance's Mythos-charged music, the social upheaval could make the Grand Slam look like a Sunday picnic. And that's just the psychological effects – who knows what supernatural forces such a performance might stir up?

Stopping the production will not be easy. Most cultists are secretive, isolated loonies. The Dance, however, is not only a group of powerful Mythos sorcerers, they're also very rich and very, very public.

The Miskatonic Society (see p. 76) would certainly take an interest in stopping the production. but whether they'd help or hinder others with the same objective is very much an open question. Anyway, even with all their influence and subtlety, the Society is simply not able to bring the kind of money and resources into the struggle that the Dance can muster.

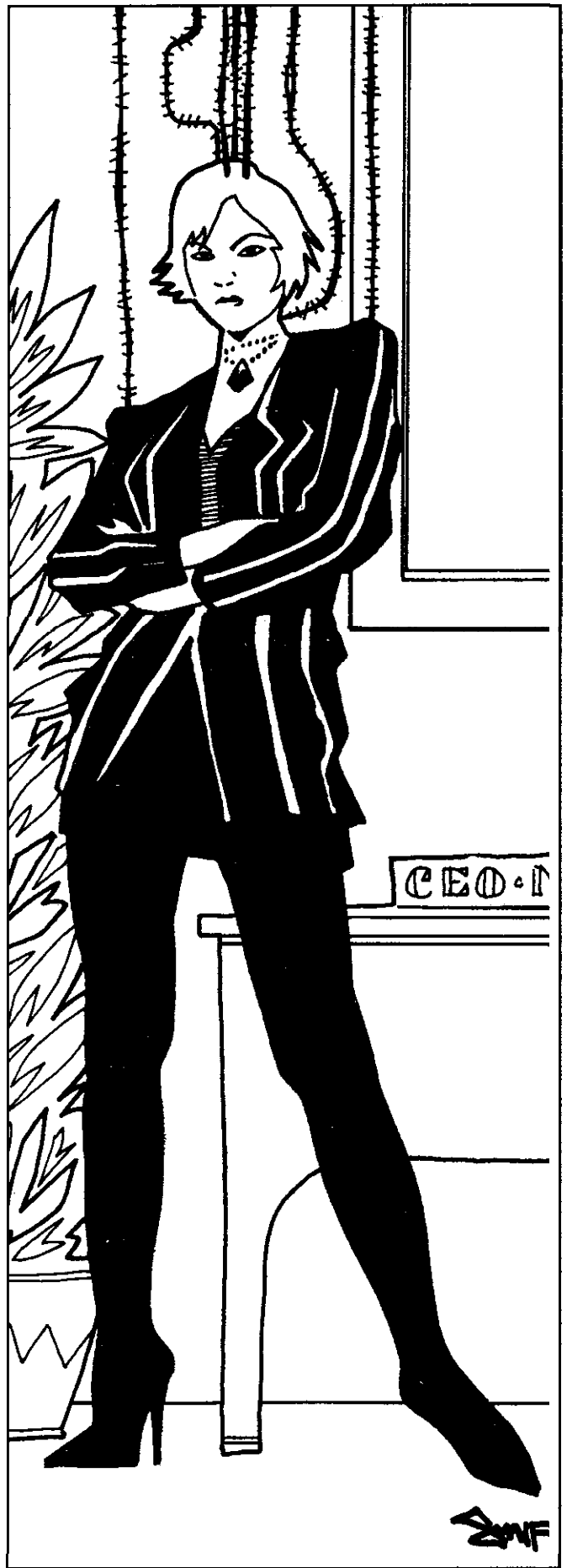
## Trees Walking

The return of the Brazilian rainforests is one of the few success stories of the 21st century (see p. 27). However, there is such a thing as too much of a good thing.

In the last few months, certain outlying sections of the rainforest have been surging forward at a frightening rate. Pact eco-monitors have reported millions of acres of heavy jungle springing up apparently in a matter of weeks. Plantations and ranches near the border of the protected area have been overrun by the fecund growth – sometimes the growth has been so fast and thick that it leaves no trace of the human habitation it destroyed. . . or of the humans who lived there. Ecologists project that if the hyper-growth continues to accelerate at the present rate, the jungle will begin to overtake major metropolitan areas in less than 18 months.

The few indigenous tribes that still live in the interior, who act as sort of a semi-official ranger force for the Pact, have started to tell strange stories to eco-monitors and even to the press. Stories of strange inhuman lights and sounds in the forest. Stories of men who have been born and raised in the jungle vanishing without a trace. Stories of trees walking along the riverbank. Aerial and satellite reconnaissance reveals nothing except unseasonably thick clouds and mists.

Now that humanity has moved out of the rainforest, it seems that somebody else has decided to move in. The exact nature of this influence is left to the GM; we mention only the worst possibility. If Shub-Niggurath should choose to manifest itself physically on the earth, where else would it appear but in the most isolated and fecund part of the planet?



## CONVERSIONS



Based on the original *Roleplayer* article by David Ellis Dickerson

This chapter will allow players and GMs to transfer characters between *GURPS* and *Call of Cthulhu*, and to convert monsters not found in this book from Chaosium products for use in *GURPS CthulhuPunk*.

With just a little word-juggling, you'll be ready to transfer your *CoC* Investigators to the mean streets of the one-and-twenty.



## Characteristics

There are a lot of characteristics in *Call of Cthulhu*, and some of them – such as Power – have many uses, but don't translate between systems very seamlessly. Here are the basics:

**GURPS ST:** CoC STR  
**GURPS DX:** CoC DEX  
**GURPS IQ:** CoC INT  
**GURPS HT:** CoC CON

If you're translating investigators, subtract 2 from INT to determine **GURPS IQ**. Investigators tend to start with extremely high INT, which costs more than an average 150-point character can afford.

Use the **CoC Appearance** characteristic (APP) to find the character's Appearance in **GURPS**:

CoC Appearance	GURPS Appearance
3-4	Hideous (-4)
5-6	Ugly (-2)
7-8	Unattractive (-1)
9-12	Average
13-14	Attractive (+1)
15-16	Handsome/Beautiful (+2/+4)
17-18	Very Handsome/Beautiful (+2/+6)

A character's **CoC Power** is equal to **GURPS Will**, so compare Power with Intelligence, and modify it up or down with Strong Will or Weak Will, in order to get the correct score. (Example: A **CoC** character has INT of 13 and POW of 10. In **GURPS**, he has IQ 13 and -3 Weak Will.)

**CoC Power** also determines **GURPS Magical Aptitude**. Power of 12-14 gives Magery 1; Power of 15-17 gives Magery 2, and Power 18-20 gives Magery 3.

In order to reflect the **CoC** rules, you may wish to give characters with Power of 15 or better the Luck advantage (15 points). 30 points of Luck does not exist in any Lovecraft story!

Movement should be figured from **GURPS** characteristics. Where the mode of movement is different (such as flying), translate the number directly: **CoC Move:** **GURPS Move**.



## Converting Creatures

These rules are all right for the average investigator, but the monsters – particularly the tougher ones – may have characteristics which go much higher than normal. Here's how to deal with it.

**High STR:** High ST. Use the ST chart from **GURPS Supers** (also found on p. B248 in recent printings of the **Basic Set**) to determine Thrust and Swing damage. (For your convenience, this is reproduced on p. 123.)

**High CON:** Give the creature HT 20, and as many hits as are listed under Hit Points after a slash, just as is done for animals. (Example: Zhar the Twin Obscenity has 100 CON and 100 Hit Points. In **GURPS**, he has HT 20/100.) If the final hit point total seems too low for that particular creature, see p. 107



for advice on beefing up creatures in combat.

**High SIZ:** divide SIZ by 10 to determine the creature's size in hexes.

**Low SIZ:** some beings (e.g., the Insects from Shaggai and the Fire Vampires) have SIZ of 1. Treat them as swarms (p. B143) with the given hits and doing the described damage.

**High INT:** INT higher than 20 is either IQ 20 or IQ (INT/2), whichever is higher.

High POW: For every full 10 levels of Power above 20, give the creature another level of Magic Aptitude. (So 30-39 gets +4, 40-49 gets +5, etc.) Non-human, Mythos-related creatures *may* use their Magical Aptitude to modify their Mythos spell skill rolls. Aside from this, most creatures have enough Fatigue from their increased ST to fuel their magick. In the rare case that a being's POW exceeds its ST, use the POW rating as if it were extra Fatigue, bought for spell-casting purposes.

Damage: Determine damage based on the creature's ST. Tentacles and appendages do swing/crushing damage. Bites do thrust/cutting damage (for regular teeth) or thrust/impaling damage (for fangs). Claws and pincers do swing/cutting, and spines and horns do thrust/impaling. Use weapons as they are described in the Weapons Chart. All other attacks (including blood drain, teleport, engulf, and so on) are considered Special; just take the damage straight from *CoC*. *CoC* armor, by the way, is exactly the same as *GURPS* DR. Mythos creatures have the same Passive Defense as a *GURPS* creature with equivalent hide.

## Skills

Many skills have exactly the same name in the two systems. Unfortunately, *CoC* operates on a percentile rather than a three-die system.

While it's tempting to take the skill percentages and translate them into die rolls (based on the chart on B45), don't do it. Most investigators have terribly low success chances with their skills, and your translated investigators (who are professionals, remember) will have most of their skills at rolls of about 8 to 10 (25% to 50%). Instead, consider any skill of 50% to have been bought at IQ or DX level. For every full ten points above or below 50% (which means 45% and 55% are considered 50%), reduce or increase the IQ or DX roll by one.

Example: Festus Curtis, private eye, is a *Call of Cthulhu* character with INT 14, DEX 11, Handgun Attack 50%, Psychology 35%, Driving 20% and Latin 75%. In *GURPS CthulhuPunk*, he'll have IQ 14, DX 11, and Guns (Pistol)-13 (bought at DX level, with a +2 IQ bonus), Psychology-13 (IQ-1, since 35 is only one full multiple of ten below 50), Driving (Automobile)-8 (at DX-3 level) and Latin-16 (IQ+1, since 75 is two full multiples of ten above 50).

As mentioned before, most skills have the same name (or at least very similar ones) in both systems. Here are the exceptions:

- Bargain – use *GURPS* Merchant
- Credit Rating – see below



Cthulhu Mythos – use Mythos Lore skill, seep. 49

Debate – use *GURPS* Oratory

Dodge – no parallel; ignore it. Figure the character's *GURPS* Dodge normally.

Handgun Attack – use Gun; characters without this skill fire all their weapons at default level!

Hide – use *GURPS* Camouflage

Listen – For every full 10% over the base (25%) chance, give the character one level of Acute Hearing

Make Maps – use *GURPS* Cartography.

Mechanical Repair – use *GURPS* Mechanic; translated characters must specialize, as per the *GURPS* rules

Operate Heavy Machine – *GURPS* Driving skill

Pharmacy – buy as Professional Skill: Pharmacist

Psychoanalysis – use *GURPS* Psychology

Sneak – use *GURPS* Stealth

Spot Hidden – as for Listen, above, but using Acute Vision

Treat Disease – use *GURPS* Physician

Treat Poison – if the skill level is below 50%, use *GURPS* First Aid. If above 50% the character also has *GURPS* Poisons skill.

*Credit Rating*, in *CoC*, is supposed to represent impressive credentials and the ability to bluff through red tape. In *GURPS*, this might be Social Status or Military Rank, or a good personal Reputation, depending on the character background. Allow an appropriate status-type advantage worth +1 on reaction for every full 10% above the original Credit Rating score (15%). In addition, any character with Status of 3 or higher automatically has *Savoir-Faire* at IQ level.

In addition, certain skills which are unavailable in *CoC* should be given to investigator characters. Journalists should get Journalism at IQ level. Dilettantes should have *Savoir-Faire*. And the GM should consider giving private investigators Shadowing, and police officers Criminology or Forensics (at TL6, of course).



## Monstrous Strength

Here's the strength chart for strengths higher than 20:

ST	Thrust	Swing	ST	Thrust	Swing
21	2d	4d-1	45	5d	7d+1
22	2d	4d	50	5d+2	8d-1
23	2d+1	4d+1	55	6d	8d+1
24	2d+1	4d+2	60	7d-1	9d
25	2d+2	5d-1	65	7d+1	9d+2
26	2d+2	5d	70	8d	10d
27	3d-1	5d+1	75	8d+2	10d+
28	3d-1	5d+1	80	9d	11d
29	3d	5d+2	85	9d+2	11d+2
30	3d	5d+2	90	10d	12d
31	3d+1	6d-1	95	10d+2	12d+2
32	3d+1	6d-1	100	11d	13d
33	3d+2	6d	110	12d	14d
34	3d+2	6d	120	13d	15d
35	4d-1	6d+1			
36	4d-1	6d+1			
37	4d	6d+2			
38	4d	6d+2			
39	4d+1	7d-1			
40	4d+1	7d			

...and so on: +1d for each full  
...10 points of added ST.



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Of all the editions of Lovecraft's fiction currently available, these mass-market paperbacks are, by far, the most inexpensive and easiest to find, and should be available at most large bookstores.

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## Arkham House Hardcoverr

Arkham House was formed after Lovecraft's death with the express intention of keeping his work in print and his influence alive. In addition to providing definitive hardcover editions of all of Lovecraft's works (including the multi-volume *Selected Letters of H.P. Lovecraft*),

Arkham House is also the best single source for Mythos fiction by other authors. For more information on Arkham House publications, write Arkham House, PO Box 546, Sauk City, WI, 53583.

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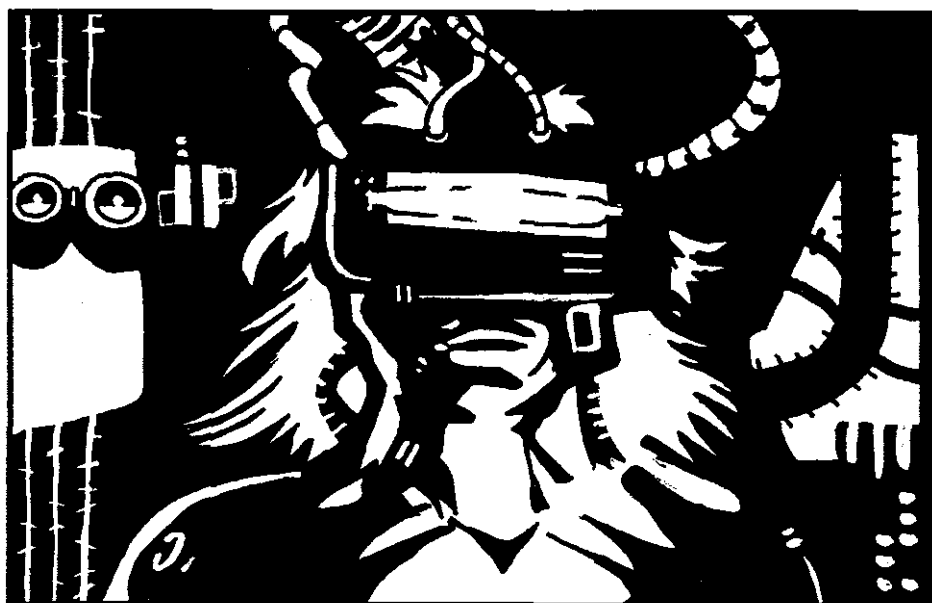


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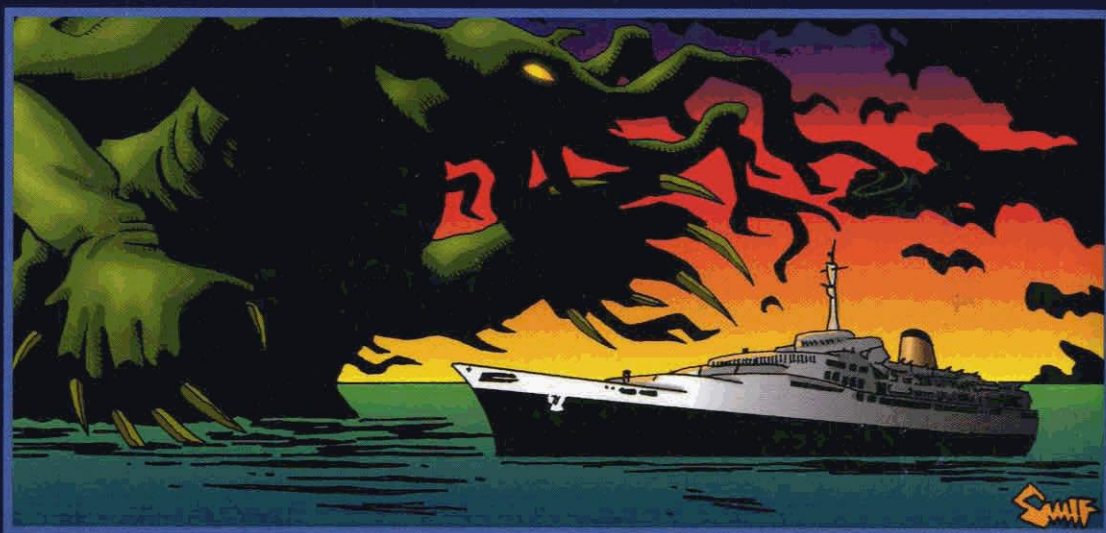
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