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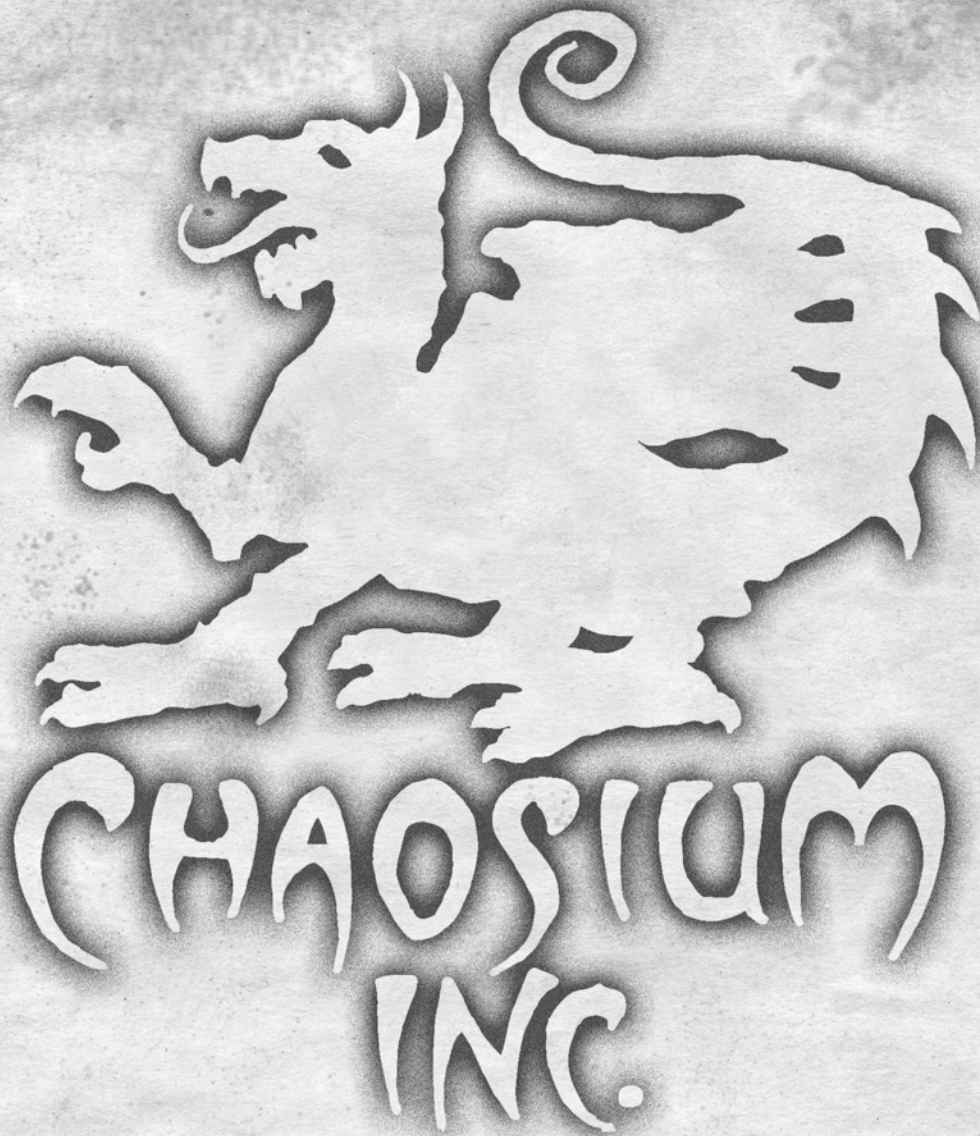


# MYTHOS MAGIC



An Optional Magic System for  
**CALL OF CTHULHU and BASIC ROLEPLAYING**





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# Mythos Magic

An Optional Magic System for  
*Call of Cthulhu* and *Basic Roleplaying*

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# Chapter One

## Wherein the Nature of Magic is Discussed

### Defining Magic

For decades magic has been a backbone and prominent feature of Call of Cthulhu. Whether it is a race to stop the summoning of some god or alien, the need to communicate with things on other worlds by means of arcane scripture, or solving murders done with hexes rather than guns, magic has been inevitably wedded to the game narrative.

Here is, hopefully, a useful breakdown of what magic is, what it can do, how it works and how Investigators can make it work for them. Of course, humans are not the only ones who can use this mysterious force and Mythos specific magic is also examined.

### What is Magic?

Asking *what is magic* is about as useful as asking *what is art*? The debates go on forever and are ultimately subjective and have been had to death. For ease of use, we will define magic as a set of performances that, if used, create effects largely outside empirical or objective established physical law. It is a circumscribed set of behaviors that create effects and results.

Perhaps the best modern definition comes from one of the foremost magicians of the modern era, Aleister Crowley:

*A Magic is the Highest, most Absolute, and most divine Knowledge of natural Philosophy, advanced in the works and wonderful operations by a right understanding of the inward and occult virtue of things; so that true Agents being applied to proper Patients, strange and admirable effects will thereby be produced. Whence magicians are profound and diligent searchers into nature; they, because of their skill, know how to anticipate an effect, the which to the vulgar shall seem to be a miraculous.*

*Magic is emphatically not a science as we understand it. If magic obeys empirical facts, repeatable experiments and working hypotheses, they are beyond human comprehension. Science is a philosophy that claims that truth can be arrived at empirically, using testable, predictive and falsifiable theories. Magic is none of these. A television picks up a signal, converting information to pictures. The process can be explained, replicated, shown to be true over and over again. A crystal ball shows a picture because, ultimately, you said the right spell and you imagined it would work. Magic is an art, a discipline, an act of faith, a tool we can*

*never understand the inner workings of. Like the imagination it comes out of, like consciousness, humans are simply unequipped to categorize and deconstruct sorcery. Because if we did, that wouldn't be magic but rather science. Magic is always supernatural, outside of the nature humans can understand, always transgressive and strange.*

This book will not seek to provide concrete answers concerning either magic, or the nature of it in a Lovecraftian universe. To do so would be to fly directly into the face of the tradition of vagueness and unsystematic plot devices rather than solid answers in Lovecraft and his best followers worked so diligently to create. Instead, it will outline various ways to view the phenomenon of magic within the framework of a Lovecraftian universe.

The rouge physicist who views Yog-Sothoth as an elaborate mathematical code will foolishly see magic as a kind of science. The mad, tooth-sharpened Shaman of the Congo will see his screaming chants as just another, darker part of his rites. The saffron-robed Acolyte of the Order of Silver Twilight will see Azathoth as a kind of Qliphothic Ain Soph, approachable through the Tunnels of Set. These ways of examining magic are called paradigms and are discussed below.

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## Magic in the Mythos

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The Cthulhu Mythos of H.P. Lovecraft use traditional magic only a few times but it is always shown as a frightening, potent force. So much of the Mythos is based upon fabulous

rationalism. The carvings the Elder Things created in their weird stone tapestry beneath the Mountains of Madness tell the story of waves of alien invasion, migration and evolution. Even mighty Cthulhu is revealed as an extraterrestrial and not a hedonistic, hungry god. In The Shunned House, we have a story of flamethrowers and scientific gadgetry.

Yet, there is also the terrible familiar, Brown Jenkin. The vile congress with gods Lavinia Whately is subject to, the strange case of one Charles Dexter Ward and his sorcerous relative. If one reads certain blasphemous books closely enough, it seems even the Great Alien Cthulhu holds a place of religious primacy amongst his star-spawn. Science and magic lie side by side in the Mythos. Is the Shining Trapezohedron a monster summoning gem, or is it some signal device that utilizes geometry utterly alien to the human sensibility? Is the star's rightness an astrological phenomenon, or is it astronomical? Does it matter? Should it?

Lovecraft wound together black magic and mad science, scientifiction and gothic with no regard for or interest in strict genre boundaries. The Mythos makes little internal sense and was never really supposed to. What is clearly a super-science in one story is black magic in another. It is a mistake to do otherwise and while, for convenience and campaign continuity sake, it may be useful for a Keeper to decide on a paradigm, they should also be willing to throw out all established ideas on magic on a case by case basis. Humans, after all, are never more ignorant or vulnerable than when they think they have an answer.

# Paradigms of Lovecraftian Magic

A paradigm is a set of practices and beliefs that view how we look at anything. They represent the basic assumptions we make about knowledge. Magic has several paradigmatic notions attached to it. A Keeper may wish to examine the paradigms not so as to create hard and fast rulings about magic, rather to guide the decisions they make concerning behind the scenes ruling, campaign creation and mood.

## Magic as Superscience

Lovecraft famously described himself as a 'mechanistic materialist'. He had no time for supernatural or religious beliefs. His own voluminous correspondence reveals that while he had an extensive interest in the history and anthropology, mythology and the philosophy of occultism, he himself bore absolutely no belief in the supernatural. Therefore, the 'magic' of the Mythos is not some lore that somehow transcends physics, or rewrites the laws of the universe. Rather it is some hitherto undiscovered science, some alien, perhaps lethal but utterly rational, predictive, reproducible discipline. Human beliefs in the mystical, in the magical are at best an attempt to mimic the thought processes and natural philosophies of creatures many orders of magnitude beyond them. Like monkeys left in control of supercomputers, perhaps results can be had but they will be, at best, largely accidental. More likely, some primate is going to press the wrong button, or type in a very dangerous command.

Quantum theory was new in Lovecraft's lifetime but its bizarre and counter-intuitive demi-logic seems perfectly fitted to be viewed as a cruel kind of mysticism. Its strange dependency upon the observers and superposition, its notions that all human sensibility is utterly fallible and that our most basic notions such as matter, light and time are not only wrong but incapable of ever being correct can, in the some interpretation, be seen as the ultimate expression of the futility at the heart of the Mythos.

In this view of the Mythos, there are neither gods nor monsters, simply entities of differing power, knowledge and states of being. The Elder Gods may indeed be nothing more than metaphors somehow made into being through the pressures of cosmic principles we can never understand. Perhaps they are somehow trapped in the micro-gravitic worlds of branes and superstrings rather than sea and stone. Perhaps they are branes and m-strings, or the expression of entities that live in five dimensions. Or six, or twelve, or twenty two, or a million.

The hand gestures and terrible chants may be nothing more than techniques, when balanced and combined with sentience, affect the nature of the universe. Scream out IA! IA! and it creates a fluctuation in spacetime, sonic keys allowing the Byhakee, Nightgaunt, whatever, to entire into our Process. The ankh, interestingly, is an example of the curious geometric artifact called a Klein bottle. The binding commands that controls the Shoggoth may be a kind of machine-language, a redundancy built into those organic robots. However, as the Elder Things found out, those can be hacked.



Chemistry creates the tools we build our world with and the connections between it and alchemy are well-known and obvious. Building on this idea: is genetic engineering an elaborate, hidden paean to Shub-Niggurath? Perhaps contacting the Sleeper in R'lyeh is not a spell that drags ones astral form deep beneath the ocean ways but rather a barbaric kind of psychological self-conditioning that allows the ancient phantoms from the R-Complex, the limbic region, to interact with the newer, feeble conscious mind of the modern, city-dwelling human. Perhaps Cthulhu is just us, wrapped around our fish-dragon brains, waiting for our bi-cameral house to come down.

Of course, watching Mi-Go telekinetic vivisections at work is one thing, experience in terms of rationality is another. To the Fungi, the forces at work during the grotesque biological experiments are no more mysterious to a human than the closing of a fist or wielding of a scalpel. To a human, there is no frame of reference for these powers and the procedure is explained in terms of the miraculous, the magical.

If we are to view magic as super-science, we must always recall that the nature of the universe, the empirical truths it reveals, are so unfathomably bizarre and grotesque that the human brain, that three pounds of meat shot through with a few amps, can never truly recognize it. It has been said any technology sufficiently advanced is indistinguishable from magic and perhaps that manifests itself in no better way than the endlessly mysterious Mythos.

## Mythos Magic as Human Magic

Magic as it has historically been practiced, is extremely hard to define. The most famous attempt to break magic down into a single, explicable phenomenon comes again from that most brilliant, arrogant of men, Aleister Crowley, who said that magic was changing reality in accordance with one's Will.

The famous grimoire, The Lesser Key of Solomon says "Magic is the Highest, most Absolute, and most Divine Knowledge of Natural Philosophy...Whence magicians are profound and diligent searchers into Nature; they, because of their skill, know how to anticipate an effort, the which to the vulgar shall seem to be a miracle.'

In other words, through the practice and study of certain disciplines, the world becomes both explicable and amenable to our control. The Keeper may decide that there is a secret, mystical power in the universe that transcends or transgresses observable physical phenomenon. There are ways to influence the universe, techniques we have to change the world, approach hidden intelligence and plumb the cosmos for its hidden knowledge. In Western Magic, these intelligences are often called Angels and Devils and they exist on a polar scale between good and evil, God and Satan. In a universe that emphatically rejects religion and the very notion of morality, unless one is trying to recreate the dualism introduced into the Mythos by the well-meaning but misguided August Derleth, this is a poor, unsatisfying way to view Lovecraftian magic.

In other words, all traditional sadly is effective. Although it is a cloaking of the true reality of magic.

While the magical formulae may give us 'contact with unknown spheres and powers', the costs are greater than the Western traditions ever guessed. A Keeper must bear this in mind at all times. By way of example, the great magician and spy, John Dee believed he was taught an alphabet by angels. Within the context of historical magic, this is considered one of the great triumphs of sorcery. A Lovecraftian context leaves Dee a blasted wreck, gibbering at the horrifying new thoughts the Enochian language allows him to express. Even the horrors of Their Infernal Majesties are but masks we place over the Mythos creatures. The Black Man of the Witches is indeed Nyarlathotep. The devil merely wants to drag us down to god's dungeon but the Crawling Chaos wants to make ruin and mockery of our civilization, before opening us up to cosmic vistas that will leave our whole race mentally and spiritually, then perhaps physically, degraded and destroyed.

Of course, the historical tradition of magic is a living one and work continues to this day. Kenneth Grant and O.T.O did the earliest and perhaps the greatest work with Western esoteric thought and the Mythos. In his seminal 'Nightside of Eden' Grant drew connections between the Mythos and the traditions of Kabbalah, creating a Tree of Life that had correlations between the Mythos entities, rather than the traditional Spheres, or planets. This is a safe way to experience, and a useful way to express magic, in a Lovecraftian manner.

For many practitioners of the mantic arts, this provides a way to make explicable the inexplicable and so is in some ways equally as unsatisfying as dualism. The Daemon Sultan is, by its nature, unanswerable, unknowable and the existence of the Others makes a mockery of human mythologies and pantheons.

But the advantage of this viewpoint is that the role of magic in Call of Cthulhu becomes simpler, easier to use and explicate. Magic is explained as magic, a secret power. That is all the explanation one can give. Or that one needs. Light moves in parcels and waves, gravity goes down and spells work.

In using this paradigm, one can ape traditional modes of magic but one has to be prepared that the truths that have been passed down from pontifex to magus, from madman to natural philosopher, are feeble charities. Magic is darker, harder, more vicious than we can know and that Divine Knowledge, instead of being the goal of magic, may be a vicious trap lying in wait for all magicians. Divine Knowledge is that of the Outer Gods...

'Primitive' magic or folk religions such as Nagual, Palo Monte, Santeria, all may be as effective as Western magic. Perhaps more so. These are religions and magical frameworks that are based in the blood, the bone, the world around their practitioners and the spirit world which cannot be seen. The Divine Horsemen of Voudou may be the Lloigor, invisible spirits of the air, of perhaps even cultural memories of the early involvement with the Shan. The Jaguar Cults of East Africa may be a way of partaking of the mind of the Hunting Horrors of the voids. The

old Celts had memories of a silver-handed god that their broken semantics recalls as Nauda but who has another name: Nodens.

Speilwerk, that folk magic of the American Pennsylvanian Dutch pioneers may claim to curse the geese and milk of neighbors but what powers do they really unleash from the dark woods? The Kooris of Australia have an elaborate mythology that differed from tribe to tribe but a major recurring demiurge is the Rainbow Serpent, significantly a great snake. Is this a local manifestation of Father Yig, or a recollection of contact with the Dholes of the Dreamlands? The complicated Koori concept of Dreamtime would seem to suggest the latter.

The specifics differ, yet be it kahuna, or kadaicha, in Lovecraft's world, magic is at worst a parlor trick, at best a discrete fiction we veil over the horrifying truth of the human spiritual experience.

One thing to be strenuously avoided if traditional magic is used in a campaign is the notion that it is human belief that fuels this power. The old idea that it is faith in the rite, rather than the rite itself, that gives it efficacy. That kind of optimistic belief leads us in directions that give credit to human potential at odds with the essential pessimism of Call of Cthulhu. Magic working because it works, outside of humans to give it meaning, is a far more satisfying idea.

## Mythos Magic as an Alien Magic

What does a Mi-go care for the Archangel Metatron? Is Ithaqua

bound by laws of Mercury or Hermes? Is Azathoth a ghost haunting a universal house? Probably not. Indeed, part of the appeal and horror of the Mythos is that they are ultimately Other. To see them as imps that can be called up by any backyard Faust is to mistake their purpose and grandiose horror. As for being bound and limited by anthropomorphic ideals that apply to pathetic primates on a tiny planet, the idea is of course, laughable. Nonetheless, *Al-Azif* and other books of Black Magic seem to be rife with ideas of how to communicate with these tramontane intelligences, which seems to be as good a working definition of magic as any.

If this is true, then magic follows Blake's dictum to create its own system or be enslaved by another's. Alien magic has no significant overlap with any extant human belief system or magical schema and nothing can be relied upon to be a useful metaphor or overlapping guide to the Mythos.

This paradigm stresses that this is the magic of black gods. Hidden from us and beyond us and what sorcery we know is the fraction of a minute fraction. The very essence of forbidden knowledge, the flame handed to a child.

Alien Magic can be adapted at will. For a Keeper, this means that everything is up for grabs as all knowledge is false and what is true magic is totally up to them. If the game uses this kind of magic for its mystical underpinning, Sanity should be at even more risk as any kind of use of sorcery immediately places the participant into psychic territory in which ancient, blasphemous demons dwell.

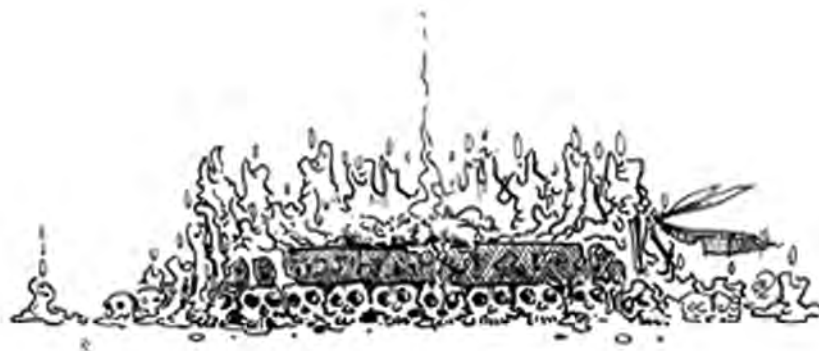
The advantage of this is that the Keeper can pick and choose at will whichever genre of magic they feel is appropriate. The ancient rites of the Bloody Tongue causes a ripple within the processes of the localized space-time grid. Quantum computing begins to activate and ancient curse and the death of a black goat summons up the shadows of ancient Serpent-Men engineers. The Keeper solely decides what works and what doesn't. If two spells from one book are cast and one works, clearly the failed one was human invention. This technique also encourages Keeper-originated magic.

The Mythos were never a unified cosmology in the mind of their creator and work best when they are thematic entities, ideas of mood and metaphor rather than giant monsters. This approach works well for magic in the game because it is forever unsafe, a series of competing

disciplines, a loaded gun in the hands of a child and can never, ever be relied upon. Knowledge of the Mythos itself is sure to bring insanity. What might the cost of using their weapons and secret knowledge be?

The downside of such a process is that magic will have radically different feels at different times. If the Investigators are all members of an occult lodge from the 1890's, then clearly shimmering fractal creatures that emerge from the hyper spatial realms may not be appropriate.

Alien magic should be difficult to learn, impossible to master and extravagantly dangerous. It places emphasis on trying to learn unhuman languages, the mathematics of beings that lurk in other dimensions, mastering emotions felt by beings billions of years old. To those who care to throw away their humanity, this magic is a powerful tool.



# Chapter Two

## Wherein Sanity & Magic is Discussed

### Sanity and Magic

In *Call of Cthulhu*, perhaps the most important statistic of all is Sanity. When coming face to face with both ancient and malign alien beings as well and the more mundane horrors such as a simple human corpse, Sanity measures how well a human being can cope with unreality and yet still function in society.

Sanity is a complicated process and concept. Bi-polar depression is technically a mental illness to be medicated yet millions of people deal with the disease with little effect on their daily lives. Homosexuality and transexuality were once considered serious mental conditions yet now are considered lifestyle choices or socially/genetically determined mindsets. Holy men and visionaries in the past would today be considered schizophrenics and medicated accordingly. Sanity is a concept that easily mutates and fluxes.

However, for ease of use, sanity is a simple gauge that tells society how well adjusted to consensus reality a member of that society is. The above mentioned depressive may occasionally find it hard to get up and go to work but that is not always a particularly debilitating condition considering the extremes of mental illness. The psychotic who happily eats his

neighbor is clearly driven by a mental state that makes him a malfunctioning unit. He cannot live happily or easily within social conventions.

In other words, Sanity is a measure of how closely a human agrees with the narrative a society tells itself is real and unreal.

In a Lovecraftian universe, there are rather more exotic threats to sanity. Coming face to face with Azathoth practically ensures a human cannot go back to the day-to-day functions of the world. Seeing a Deep One may mar the functionality of an investigator without the creation of a half-dozen neuroses. The sudden imposition of the unreal on the real causes a schism between the rational mind and the unconscious mind. A human may be able to process that in fact the highest destiny of the universe is to fall into entropy. To see a god that represents the nihilist idea manifest in front of one is an imposition of a new reality. It makes one mad. Imagine the scientist who struggles daily with a view of the universe which excludes any phenomenon except that which can be measured and observed. Imagine the cognitive dissonance when they discover the fundamental laws of the universe exist because Gods want them to be so... A lifetime of learning, a strong mindset, utterly fractured.

Going insane is therefore mistaking the real and unreal. One goes Insane, in game terms, when one can no longer fend off the notion that objective and subjective, true and false, have no overlap with the bleak reality of the universe. True insanity is understanding that no part of reality can ever be understood.

What then of the magician, that breed who actively seeks out such horrors, with the arrogance, confidence, or naivety to believe they can be confronted and controlled?

Meet a man on the street who runs naked screaming that he is being hunted by a great bat with a tri-lobed eye and the chances are you will think him insane. The investigator of the Mythos knows that while he may be stark raving mad, he may be also telling the very literal truth. This is the slipstream world of magic.

The magician, therefore, has a rather complicated relationship with the notion of insanity because the essential nature of magic is seeking out and commanding the very forces that undermine sanity. A magician of any skill who came into contact with Mythos beings with any frequency will, no matter how powerful their will or Sanity, sooner or later fall into irreparable, Indefinite Insanity. How then can any magician gain powers over the beings magic promises to grant? It seems that no one could ever get good at magic without ending up an unfortunate lunatic.

There are two answers – the first is that they cannot. In this case, magic will almost inevitably lead to severe madness. Below rules can be safely ignored if the Keeper prefers this system.

The second answer is that the act of performing magic in some ways insulates the magician against inevitable madness. No human mind can long survive the true nature of the universe but magic offers perhaps the only viable form of protection. A state called Gnosis.

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## Gnosis

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At the heart of magic is the sensation of being in the presence of Knowledge. Some call this Magical Consciousness, some call it Zazen, no mind meditation, and others call it Samadhi, one-pointed consciousness but we will call it Gnosis: the mental state in which the magician leaves behind the mundane world of teapots and bank drafts and sends their mind into the infinite gulfs of time and space. Magic requires an entry into Non-ordinary reality, a way of thinking that is decidedly at odds with the liminal and process based mentation of humanity. Magic takes place in the heart of mystery and cannot be entered in to simply or easily.

Gnosis is a way to safely, well, more safely, enter into the madness of the Mythos, without being lost forever. It is a sort of psychic inoculation against the raving hysteria so many humans exhibit after a brush with those forces

The Gnostic state is when all attention and focus goes onto the magical Operation being worked. Intense concentration and focus is required. The kind of concentration that requires training and practice to achieve. The mind shuts down all internal chatter, all thoughts of

everything except the magic at hand. Gnosis also makes one more readily prey to the forces of Magic. As one enters into a state where they can examine the hidden forces of the true creation and so too can those hidden forces enter them.

Entering Gnosis requires, at least initially, time and preparation. It is not a matter of simply clicking one's fingers and shutting off the internal chatter of the mind. Many magicians find it one of the great challenges of mastering the art, shocked at how loudly the mind continually shoots

off ideas. So, aids are required. Common tools to enter Gnosis are:

**Meditation**

**Hyperventilation**

**Self-mutilation or flagellation**

**Chanting**

**Exercise to the point of exhaustion**

**Orgasm**

**Drumming**

**Fasting**

**Sensory deprivation or overload**

The methods are unimportant. The magician who chants prayers in Old



Hebrew or the mad witch-doctor scourging himself are both entering into a Gnostic state. The whole point is to change the normal mode of thinking.

Gnosis explains why radically different techniques of magic work. From the sinister black-robed chanters in Latin, to the terrible blasphemous orgies of the Cthulhu cult, to the stately dances of Shamans and the drug-trances of the Chaotians, they all share Gnosis. Many modern occultists argue that it is the act of becoming so involved, so focused, losing oneself using various props and hypnotic-techniques that this magical concentration is the true mechanic of sorcery, rather than actual words and motions used.

From a gaming standpoint, this is a useful mechanism to allow varying styles of magic to co-exist without further explanation. All that matters is Gnosis.

When the Gnostic state is achieved, the magician becomes capable of working with the powers of magic. They are absolutely focused on their work, in a state of deep and transcendental meditation. All thoughts in a Gnostic state are magical thoughts. Feelings, diversions, stray ideas, all impact upon the magic at hand. A great deal of time and effort is made by magicians to prepare a ritual are to ensure Gnosis is more easily kept. It is easy to think thoughts about dragging entities screaming into the world if one is surrounded by black robed monks and screaming whippoorwills than it is waiting for the bus. The magician must be absolutely focused on their Gnostic state as magical thoughts come directly from the dark depth of

unconsciousness. Distractions can easily cause one to fail in magic.

Gnosis can be easily lost. For example, a group of well-armed private investigators opening fire on a crypt is an easy way for the magician within to lose focus. During the strange, intense state of magical consciousness, the magician can believe they can control the terrifying protoplasmic slime in the pentagram. Thrust into reality, sanity intrudes its ugly head and without Gnosis, the reality of a magician's hubris might become apparent. Or they might just go mad.

Gnosis does not provide Sanity buffering benefits outside of the context of magic. The magician suddenly confronted with the corpse of a loved one while preparing dinner still gets shocked and disturbed the same as any other human. It is only after lengthy preparations solely for the purpose to cast magic does Gnosis become effective.

## Rules for Gnosis

Gnosis creates a state wherein, for a short time, Sanity is much harder to lose. This is an incremental process and succeeds due to excess.

While within Gnosis, all sanity loss scores are halved, no matter the cause of the loss. Any loss of Sanity under d10 can be ignored by the magician, who is removed from such mundane assaults upon their minds.

The process to enter into Gnosis is slow and incremental. Firstly, an Occult roll must be made, representing the magician's ability to correctly use the technique. The Keeper may wish to hide this roll from the aspiring spell caster. For each hour that

the magician spend in meditation, they receive +10% to the Occult roll.

Magic Points can be spent to increase ability to enter Gnosis. Each Magic Point further increases the ability to enter Gnosis by +10% to Occult.

Use of other techniques can lead to further increases. Each of the above mentioned techniques, such as self-mutilation, or whatever the magician uses, may add +5% to temporarily to Occult for the purposes only of entering Gnosis. Certain techniques may be combined with each other but it is recommended no more than four techniques be used during one ritual. Some may not be appropriate to a rite. Daoloth, for example, may care nothing for frenzied copulatory rites and therefore such would be inappropriate for summoning of that god. While a Dark Young might find the aesthetics of no-mind meditation pointless.

## An Example

Sarah has served Cthugha for years and wishes to at last summon her god to gaze upon the holocaust fury. She has a SAN of 75, 15 Magic Points and an Occult of 50%

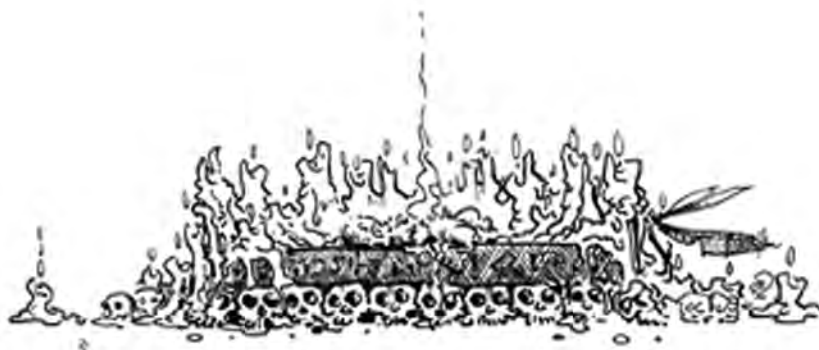
She spends an hour chanting out praises to her mighty lord, thus gain-

ing 10% to her skill, while breathing in strange, mildly narcotic incense and staring into the heart of a fire, overloading her eyes. Both of these actions give +5% to her Occult score. Finally, still uncertain of her capacities, she spends one of her Magic Points, bringing her new Gnostic Occult to 80%. She then spends 10 of her remaining 14 Magic Points and successfully summons Cthugha.

While normally she would have to roll against d3/d20 to view the Fiery King, she now must roll against d2/d10, which allows her to ignore San loss when viewing Cthugha.

## Losing Gnosis

Keeping in Gnosis in the face of distraction is very dangerous. The Keeper is urged to consider context when making a magus roll to stay in Gnosis. The mechanic is simply a SAN check, modified at Keeper discretion. Being riddled by bullets might lower the SAN done by the amount of damage taken. Seeing an unbound Mythos monster lowers the score by the saved SAN they have lost. If this happens, an Occult roll must be made to keep the rite active. If it fails, Magic Points are spent and no further magic can be taken for some hours.



# Chapter Three

## Anatomy of Magic

Magic, at the heart, is a performing art. It must be spoken and acted upon. Some argue that magic can be completed within the imagination but those who do so are often timid, confined to rowing the shallows on the shore of a vast ocean. In addition, 'working in the astral' as it is known is terribly uninteresting in a gaming session. Magic is dramatic, changing and changed, magic is powerful and undeniable. At the heart of this energy, this information is action.

Magic is ritual. Performance. This may be as simple as pointing a figure and muttering a word. It may be a set series of performances, spread out over years, or simply one ceremony. The actual event of magic is called a 'spell'. Roughly speaking, the more complex the spell, the more involved the ritual attending it, is good a rule of thumb. Modern parlance also sees ritual called Operation, or Working, although operation would indicate a series of smaller rites working in sequence. Either way, the terms are interchangeable.

In game terms, the spell is the action that requires Magic Points. No expenditure of POW or MPs are necessary until the terminal moment of the rite.

Formally, Call of Cthulhu places no particular emphasis upon rituals.

Some spells require particular rituals, some do not. It is suggested that the more effective the spell, the more complex the ritual, especially when dealing with magic used by the Investigators. While it may be effective to have a villain who can kill with a word, giving such powers to players can quickly end in a shift of game emphasis from horror to super-heroics. After all, an Investigator should be wary of having to sacrifice intelligent beings for the power to strike down enemies.

No hard and fast rule can be applied to the application of ritual to spell. As will be discussed below, magic must be introduced carefully to a campaign, with full cognizance of its effect upon the game. Complexity of Workings lies solely with the Keeper. The more Magic Points the spell costs to cast should be a guideline for how intricate and time consuming a spell can be.

### What Does Magic Feel Like?

Performing magic, being in the presence of it, is in some ways the sharp end of the entire thematic structure of Call of Cthulhu. The world, the universe, everything, is far more strange than can ever have been suspected. Indeed, far more foreign,

hostile and uncaring than humans can tolerate. Magic is part of this, a set of rules, a kind of logic and science that has no need to be in any way intuited or understood by the primitive lightning and chemical that is the human mind.

Therefore, magic must always be shown to be an imposition on the world, felt as a strangeness that can in no way be mistaken or ignored.

A Keeper, in relating magic, must therefore be imaginative in their descriptions of magic. Synaesthetic effects are useful, describing colors by way of textures, the weight of scents, the sight of emotions. Localized weather patterns may become microcosmic as barometric pressure sinks incredibly in just one room. Spatial distortions may cause those involved in a ritual to seem to be taller, smaller or further away than could be possible. Causation becomes suspect: a good Keeper might give glimpses of the results of the spell being cast the magician may never have suspected. Flies and cockroaches may gather, displaying the behaviors of bees and ravens and rooks may croak out prophecies in weird nearly manlike tongues. Imagery should be surreal, unpleasant and confronting. The air becomes mephitic and foul, the skin prickles as if insects walk beneath it. Lights turn a cruel blue and it seems as if a snake is loose in the spine.

Whenever there is magic, ensure that there can be no mistaking what has occurred. It's not that the rules are being broken, rather that the real rules are at work, Laws of Physics no simian can glimpse without their breaking.

## Technique

No matter the paradigm the magician works in, the techniques available to the magician are roughly the same. The witch building a clay effigy of an enemy, piercing it with pins and the chilly high-tech cultist using Quantum Entanglement Effect on the subject's DNA are both using an Enchantment.

Magic breaks down into the following techniques

**Evocation** – The art of bringing alien entities into the world

**Invocations** – The art of intimately communicating with entities

**Enchantment** – The art of imposing the magician's will on reality

**Divination** – The art of extending the magician's sensibilities

Be it summoning Dimensional Shambler or putting horrid gypsy curses on transgressors, or riding through space on the back of a Byhakee, all magic techniques fall roughly into those divisions and all rites can be pared back to their essence.

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## Breakdown of A Rite

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As all magic falls into technique so do those techniques fall into broad categories. No matter the spell cast, the process to cast them will fall into these steps.

### 1. Establishment of Intent.

Intent is the very building block of the magician and what separates

them from amateurs. While anyone can read Latin they cannot understand, unleashing curses and monsters, the magician sets out to master forces. A magician plans. Without the confidence and focus of intent, all other planning can go awry. Intent is the first step in entrance to Gnosis. Here, Sacred Tools (discussed below) are chosen and prepared.

## 2. The Ward

Be it the sand-mandalas of the Hopi, the pentagrams of the hermeticist or the jade and the red banners of the Mandarin geomancer, a ward is perhaps the most important aspect of the Evocation. It creates a Sacred Space, a Liminal Area, a Temporary Autonomous Zone between the workaday world the magician inhabits and the area where black mysteries will be plumbed. Most commonly used in Evocation or Invocations, it still finds use in other techniques.

Wards acts as a focusing agent for the Working, and a jail cell for whatever the magician chooses to bring into the world. Prime example of historical Wards may be seen in classical Hermetic texts such as the Sacred Book of Abra-Merlin.

Wards are almost always physical delineations of Sacred Space. Be they circles of salt, pentagrams drawn on the floors, marked with candles, a pattern of menhirs, beams of electro-magnetic force or a simple chalk marking, the important thing is that they physically demonstrate where the thing or spell is allowed to go or function while under the duress of the Operation. Most simply a circle, the being cannot leave the confines of the Ward. It should be noted that modern magicians occasionally

believe that an 'astral', or imaginary Ward is sufficient. However, as the Evoker must continually reaffirm that the astral circle exists, something not easy to do when a creature with a thousand mouths shrieks cosmic blasphemies, this is not recommended.

When constructing Wards it is considered wise to make them as indestructible as possible. Chalks scuffs, a circle of broken glass shifts, but something carved into stone is much harder to accidentally destroy.

Some Mythos entities are affected only by very specific Wards, some of which are quite exotic. A Hunting Horror may be kept at bay with a pentagram and a harsh word but for something like one of the mysterious colors that fall from space, perhaps only electro-magnetic energy is useful. A Chthonian may only respond to the firm threats of a stone or mud ward. Commonly, magicians sit in Wards and Evoke into them. If a Binding spell succeeds, the Ward is functional. Without the correct Ward, which is often built into the spell if necessary, then no Binding can succeed. The key, as ever, is research.

## 3. Banishing

The sacred space is like a workbench and like all working places, should be cleaned before you begin a new job. An area must be cleansed of all impurities before a Working begins, to banish all complications and negativity with sacred tools. One of the simplest reasons for a Banishing is that it serves may serve as part of entering into Gnosis. Banishment is something like a pre-ritual and requires little effort. But Banishings also have a rather more practical use.

If there are existing spiritual entities in an area, their influence may cause magic to go awry. They may strengthen an entity summoned, or weaken it, or cause other elements of the magic to become somehow corrupted.

The magic wand blasts away all hostile magic, the blade cuts them away, the horn sound frightens them. The ward, the magic circles, serves to create a temporal zone wherein the Banishment is the most effective.

More than that, Banishing allows the magician to enter fully into the Sacred Space of magic, aids in reaching Gnosis.

The Banishing rite may be specific to the spell or ritual being performed, or it may be left up to the individual caster to perform one that they are comfortable with.

#### 4. Gnosis

The most vital part of any magical ritual is the full entrance into Gnosis. This may be chanting in Latin, screaming out 'YOG. SOTH. OTH' on a starless night on a hill, dancing madly, intercourse, sacrifice or whatever methods the magician or rite seems appropriate. Evocation requires Gnosis to be appropriate to the entity called up, to be of the right 'flavor', if you will. It's no point giving prayers to the gentle Goddess and dancing around a maypole if you are going to be calling up a shrieking, bestial goat-thing from Antares. If someone is calling up Cthulhu, the alien hedonist with plans to teach our species to dance and revel and kill, orgiastic rites, screaming and codified murder will be on the agenda. Likewise, calling up the still, soft entropy that is Hastur may

require delicate music, poetry and quiet and dignified blood-letting. Yog-Sothoth might desire his supplicant to meditate on some obscure kind of mathematical, or recite a Diophantine equation or some other imponderable piece of formula. The magician must be well and truly in the magical state of mind before they continue with the rites of Evocation as the next step is the most dangerous.

Gnosis is detailed more fully in chapter two.

#### 5. The Spell

The lynchpin of the Working is, of course, the actual spell. This is the picosecond when the last chant is finished, the dagger is thrust downward or the frenzied dance finishes and the change in reality. At that moment, deep in Gnosis, the magician visualizes the actual occurrence of the spell. Be it the healing of flesh, the summoning of demons, the death of an enemy, every rite ends with the magician willing an event to take place. If Gnosis is entered in to properly, if the chants are performed correctly, then the magic will work. If anything has gone wrong along the way, it is at this moment that the full magnitude of the rewards of incompetence are revealed. In game terms, this is where the dice get rolled.

#### 6. Banishing

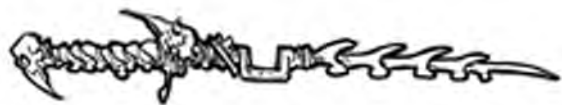
Assuming that the magician and all who may have been a part of the Working are alive and sane after the moment a spell is cast, there is very little to do but end the ceremony. Whatever forces have been at work should be safely spent, bound or

destroyed. Rather, this secondary Banishing removes all traces of occult information from the region. A failure to clean off and wipe up a bench, to push a metaphor, often results in cockroaches. So too can large scale magic attract various spirits and beings. Any form of sensitive, psychic, or even other magician, may become aware of things being awry in the area where magic has been cast. Recurring dreams and feelings of unease in the area may be common, even hauntings and the presence of lesser Mythos beings. For some magicians, this is a desirable event, aiding in finding Gnosis. For others, it is an inexcusable ethical lapse.

## 7. Reclamation

The true magician knows that non-ordinary reality is not something that can be kept permanently in mind. While eventually a magician can more easily capture a state of Gnosis, perhaps even constantly, still, magic is a highly concentrated state and must, sooner or later, be left behind. Closing the Wards, returning the Sacred Tools to their sheaths and pouches, incense must be doused.

For those magicians who have not endured a horrific SAN loss, this is a time of normalcy. With the magic finished, power and devastation become things to be brooded over another time. In game terms, all benefits from Gnosis end at the beginning of the reclamation. If a mage does not 'decompress', as it were, formally ending the rite, they take a SAN roll or lose D2 Sanity from the simple bemusement of readjusting to ordinary reality.



## Magic Tools

The wand, the cup, the pentagram, the sword. The athame and boline, sacred knives of Witchcraft, the staff, the whistle, the amulet. Black Cat hair, John the Conqueror, caduceus staff. No matter what form they come in, magicians require props, sacred tools with which to perform miracles. Because of the importance of visualizing a spell, of willing the immanence of a moment, magical tools work to symbolically aid the magician in such goals. It is easier to enter Gnosis surrounded by physical props that aid a magician in their goal of seeking absolute focus.

Some Workings absolutely require certain Tools. Most Evocations are dependent upon them, for example. Some spells may need very specific reagents, such as the finger bones of enemies, staffs soaked in holy water, eye of newt. A spell will list its needed Tools. Many spells do not wholly require such paraphernalia but magicians use them because it is easier to enter Gnosis with them.

No more than four magical Tools can be used for an individual rite with effect. Only four can aid in game terms. Anything else is a psychological crutch. Traditionalists of the Western tradition often use wands, pentacles, cups and swords. Chinese magicians might have tools that represent the elements of wood, fire, metal, water and earth. Tools can be used appropriately to the intent of the spell. Marital drums, shooting of pistols, screaming war cries might be useful in magic intended to damage

enemies. Healing magic might necessitate soft music, 'healing crystals' or even modern medical equipment.

## Creation of Magical Tools

While it is possible to simply use a cup of water to represent a grail or a butter knife to facilitate a sword, magicians report greater success with magical Tools of long ancestry or those they have created themselves. Personally selecting and making Tools give them a greater bond with the Magician, becoming extensions of their will. Certain tools become respected and admired over years and decades of use. They come to represent the style of the magician who created them. Lavish scepters or cruel blunt bayonets may, for example, work best for magicians who like elaborate ceremonies or sharp, effective rites, respectively.

Magical Tools may give up to +5% success to the overall chance of a Working's success, depending on the Tool and the rite, entirely at the Keeper's discretion. Tools of long pedigree, or those created personally over at least a month by the magician are more likely to yield results. Tools are context-sensitive. A doll made of the hair and nails of a victim will yield great bonuses to magic concerning the subject who donated the materials but will have little effect in summoning the intelligence of Venus, god of love.

Even with full ritual panoply appropriate to the ritual and intent, no more than +20% can be added to the chance of the spell's success. Magical Tools are important but are never a short cut.

## Group Workings

There is a reason why cultists join cults and witches join covens. Magical success is amplified by group work. Indeed, the success of many Workings has been all but assured by this approach. Time and tested for thousands of years, magic is often worked with groups of like minded mages coming together for common cause.

Aside from magical reasons, there are practical ones. Magic, like any human endeavor, does not happen in a void. Economic reasons are a very viable one. A group of loners on the out of town may simply not be able to afford the Gems of Blood or the Staff of the Fish God, a simple fact that Keepers may wish to use to fuel stories. Humans are social animals and enjoy peerage. While there are sorcerers content to do their solitary bidding in remote places, many magicians are happy with the social aspect of their Workings. After all, magic is an unusual and dangerous practice and so the better to do it with some friends. If nothing else, if a Working fail, you only have to out-run the slowest member of the cult.

The social dynamics of such a coven are complex and Keepers are recommended to research human relationships in such a setting for rich story ideas.

From a rules point of view, group workings yield results. Magic does not work to aggregates, rather it adds. There is no upper limit to the amount of magicians who can come together and few limits on what they can do. This is part of the reason cults are ecumenical and why so many of them seek to become shadowy leagues that span the world.

## Rules for Group Work

The head of the ritual is called the Executive. While this role may have ceremonial names, Crow, Grand High Priest, Imperial Wizard or what have you, it is the Executive who leads the rite and it focuses upon them, they who takes the most active part of the working. Most often the Executive is the most accomplished magician of the group, although for simpler rites, magicians in training will be given the lead role.

The mechanism is easy for group work, in that Magic Points from the entire group are added and used. Therefore if five people with 10 Magic Points are present in a rite, they have 50 Magic Points to spend. Moreover, for each person present +1% is given to chance to enter Gnosis. This certainly eliminates many dangers solitary workers face.

Sadly, having fuel does not make a great driver. The Executive makes all rolls for successes in his magic on their own skill after the entrance to Gnosis. Failures they suffer are suffered by all. It is recommended therefore that all cultists thoroughly vet their Executives.

Group Rituals are obviously powerful ways to do magic but they have one potentially very dangerous flaw. If anyone fails, everyone can fail. If any one of the participants suffers SAN losses, loss of Gnosis or any kind of error, the whole group must role again. Be it three or three thousand people, one error from one person can doom a whole Working. If a member of a rite somehow fails penalty of cumulative -1% chance exists to enter or keep Gnosis or roll for the success of the Spell, depending on the stage of the ritual.

**CHAPTER 3: ANATOMY OF MAGIC**

Therefore, if two members fail, everyone in the group must immediately check to see if they can maintain the rite at -2%. Increasing penalties may exist depending on how badly the participant has failed. Going violently insane and running out of a ritual may cause everyone to test at -5%, at the Keeper's discretion. This is one of the reasons huge cults do not always succeed, despite their enormous mystical resources. Small covens of dedicated, skilled magicians are more desirable than unwieldy, vast movements of amateurs.

## Learned Rituals

The casting of a spell is, when one has the correct equipment, a simple thing: A good copy of a spell, sufficient Magic Points, the Tools required. Good to go. Within the game Call of Cthulhu, any spell that is introduced into the game is a learned ritual. It has parameters and Tools already prescribed and outlined and little extra research need be done, assuming the Investigators can correctly learn the spell. Certainly, these are the easiest spells to learn, cast and require little effort on behalf of the magician involved with them.

## When It All Goes Wrong

Monsters break loose from wards and words in Latin are mispronounced and shoes scuff the Warding circles or someone forgets the final banishing. Mistakes are made.

It is a very bad idea to make a mistake in magic.

Some of the failures are obvious. Incorrect Wardings will lead to a creature that is totally free and only a few feet away from the magician. Other mistakes are more subtle and have more subtle effects. As always, the context of the magic will be more important than hard and fast rules.

Merciful Keepers will rule that mistaken Workings are simple no-shows. The monster doesn't come, the spell doesn't work. This is very lucky. More often, magic seems almost malevolently gleeful, looking to punish the amateur. Healing spells gone awry might be entirely too effective and cuts that heal might seal over the nose and mouth. Death spells rebound upon the caster's friends. Divinations might lie or subtly mislead. Evocation and Invocations are particularly dangerous spells to leave unfinished. The Gods may fake being dismissed but stay in the guise of whoever it possessed, waiting a chance for more calamity. The smarter the Summoned being, it will make its revenge the more ruthless and amusing. It may choose to perform the task it is bound to do, then slowly stalk the Investigator.

The greater the foolishness, the more severe is the penalty for making mistakes. The magician who simply fails a roll might be blasted by magical energy gone awry. Those who grab an ancient book and chant, thinking they can control forces from beyond are the ones in truly dire peril. Keepers should punish such infractions horribly, ensuring magic is treated with respect, reverence and caution. There is a reason magic is rare and not lightly entered in to.

## Evocation

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The old priest-kings of Assyria called upon the city-gods to smash their enemies and keep them safe. The Lares of Rome kept check over the household. Solomon wrestled up the terrible Asmodeus. Old Man Whately bought up something terrifying one night in Dunwich. Evocation, the art of summoning, of binding, of dismissing. The magic of monsters. This is perhaps the most common, the most useful and the most dangerous of all magic used in Call of Cthulhu.

Many entities of the Mythos are vulnerable to summoning. Evocation works not only on spirits and gods but also on the alien races such as the Mi-Go. Superscience or nay, this gives humans an edge over the Mythos that they perhaps do not enjoy over us. The Lloigor may be able to mentally dominate us but that is a function of their psionic existence, rather than a magical law of the universe. Mythos races may be able to Evoke each other but it is the one singular blessing our race has, that we are spared from Summons.

The traditional technique of Evocation is well known to any reader of horror, let alone Lovecraft. The ancient grimoire filled with terrible secrets, the room filled with candles, blood sacrifice, lights flickering and the arrival of some homunculus to our world. The clichéd image exists because it is a useful one. It outlines the process of Evocation in simple, if gothic-flavored terms. The pentagram on the floor serves as a ward, the candles create the correct ambience and the horned demon stands for the monster. Most Evocation fol-

lows this pattern in one way or another.

## Elements of Evocation

### The Subject

Evocation is the art of calling forth. It is perhaps the most common magic an Investigator will encounter, be it stopping the last minute summoning of some terrible Goetic Hunter or raising up imps to serve them in the duties.

Usually, Evocation's first step is to identify the creature they need to summon. If one seeks knowledge of the dark between the stars, one summons a Mi-go. A ghoul makes the perfect subject if one seeks answer to questions chthonic. To a man with a hammer, every problem looks like a nail but that is the wrong way for a magician to think. The Mythos are too dangerous to summon wily-nily, bringing up things just to look at them. These creatures are dangerous to even look at, let alone stand next to. If one simply thumbs through a book, finds a pretty picture although unable to read the Talagog scrawlings beneath it, yet still decides to summon it, one has a short career as a magician, and breather, ahead of one.

### The Banishing

Within Evocations, it may be that particular banishments need to be prepared. Any attempt to deal with Nodens, Nightgaunts or other entities hostile to most Mythos creatures may Invoke the wrath of certain beings. Any attempt to work with

time in any fashion is sure to bring the attention of the Hounds of Tindalos, for example, or perhaps the Great Race. Banishing is the only certain way to remove these elements of disaster and is almost always effective. The more powerful the magic, the greater the chance that malign or bored entities can, or may be, interested in, making themselves felt for their own purposes. If a Rite is performed without a banishing a simple Luck roll can be made, subtracting 1% for each magic point spent. The greater the magic, the more potent the expenditure of power, the more attractive the rite will be to invading entities. If the Luck roll fails, the magician has attracted something's attention. Again, the stronger the magic, the more dire the consequences. An attempt to communicate with the Daemon Sultan that goes awry may bring down the mindless anger of the Servitors of the Outer Gods, whereas trying to communicate with a family ghost might involve no more than a minor poltergeist. Unbanished Invocations tend to end with possession.

### Preparation

Certain entities have certain needs. They can only appear upon the earth under specific astrological or astro-nomic conditions. Prayers and sacrifices must be made, or local terrain and topography must be made suitable. This may be a mere whim of the entity before it answers Evocation or a certain contingencies that are necessary for them to exercise their ability to manifest upon the earth. Whatever the reason, not even the great sorcerers can force an entity to

appear when these conditions are not met.

Most Evocations will spell out these conditions, long established by tradition. For example, Shub-Niggurath and her brood will only appear when prayers have been said over a blood soaked altar. Yog-Sothoth requires a great tower made of stone at the site of his arrival. Keepers are encouraged to create more difficult conditions for more powerful creatures. Evoking Sand-Dwellers is a simple enough task as they are little different than humans. Bringing even a fraction of the Daemon Sultan to earth is enormously complicated and so the preparations should reflect this. Spells may have to be cast and operational, sacrifices must be offered, constructions created, all matter of things. Simply having a scroll that tells how to bring an alien deity to earth is one thing. Actually doing it, rather another. After all,

many people may have read the Necronomicon or Nameless Cults throughout the centuries but few gods have treaded our paltry shores.

## The Name

The magical name of the entity summoned is a complex idea, especially in the context of the Cthulhu Mythos. It is highly unlikely something as so utterly undefinable as Azathoth could really be named Azathoth. The nethermost infinite god of the universe, after all, is beyond the meager machineries of the human brain to understand. This is without taking into account basic phenomena such as semantic drifts. Names of gods and monsters change as cultures collide and words are borrowed and shared. Yet, in human magic systems, the true name of the creature being bought to our domain so often

## Evocation

Evocation is, of course, a lengthier look at the mechanics for the Summon/Bind and Call/Dismiss schools of magic in the game's core rules.

In terms of this book, Evocation is both a Calling and a Summoning. Only Greater and Lesser Servitors respond to Summoning for a simple reason. There is no way for a human being, or even many other races, to command an Outer God. Outer Gods and Great Old Ones can be Evoked but they do not respond to Binding. Although, there are ways to, momentarily, keep oneself safe from the Weak Gods no magician in the history of the species can order the Mighty Ones. Certainly, terrestrial spirits and local gods are prey to this power but evoking the Cthulhu Gods is almost suicidal. If an Evocation succeeds, the god is momentarily loose in our reality and unbound.

Some gods may respond to a Call spell, which acts as an Invocation, an entirely different process of magic. Do not view the ideas presented as replacement magic systems for *Call of Cthulhu*. See them rather as expansions upon a sound idea.

plays an important part of the summoning rite.

One answer to the question of how to use these cognomen is that of Barbarous Names. Evocation requires more than simply mumbling in Latin and commanding the devil to arise. As we will see below, emotions and stretches of faith and belief must be undertaken. Calling up Shastiel, Hellish Angel of Shadow is a rather different experience than summoning Bill. Terrifying names are a part of the Evocation.

However, this creates a genuine problem when the magician is met with the sprawling mélange of non-linguistics that is the Mythos. The Arabic word 'ghul' has devolved to the English word 'ghoul'. But has the term Ubbo Sathla, a being named hundred of millions of years ago by a race without a mouth, let alone a tongue, or foreign accent to confuse the issue, been the subject of semantic drift? Thankfully, Evocation is a little more subtle than that. The name of the creature isn't as important as the emotions and empathic connections built up between Evoker and Evoked. Surely the Star-Spawn of Cthulhu do not come at the call of that name but rather to the deep self-willed sensations of dark, undersea prisons, of the endless oceans of space. The barbarous names of the Mythos serve to dislodge the primitive language centers of the primate brain, allowing deep focus to be made on the summoned entity. A name is important but not the True Name as this is an entirely anthropic concept.

The true name, therefore, is anything but the true name. Rather, it is an ideal, a notion for the subjective human mind to hang on an objective

being. The name becomes a very sharp point of the Gnostic state, a place of absolute concentration. If the rite is being performed with others then it works as a unifying syllable the entire group can focus on.

Magic requires the icy clarity of Gnosis. While, yes, a gate can be flung open to invite any entity into the world, this is extraordinarily dangerous. A Barbarous Name focuses the rite and avoids any... problems.

It is of course, possible to view the above notion as completely wrong. If one keeps in mind that magic is a kind of suprascience then perhaps the name of a Mythos entity, chanted or sung or otherwise vocalized, may create some kind of vibration in space-time that causes local conditions and process to be more hospitable to foreign entities.

Or the Barbarous Names of the entities may be somehow immune to the faulty apparatus that is human speech and never change, recognizable to all human cultures in all times. This decision is left up to the Keeper.

It is unlikely that some Mythos entities have individual names as we know them, or they may be unpronounceable. A Mi-Go might not even have an individual name if they are part of a hive-mind, or perhaps it is only correctly rendered as a wave of bioluminescent particles and insect body-language. It may be that to correctly pronounce the name of such an entity, the summoner must go to great lengths. In the above example of a Mi-Go, perhaps elaborate lighting techniques must be used to create a facsimile of the name.

Regardless of the method used, a name is needed before the rite can go on.

## Finding a Name

Keepers may decide simply having a name of a race, or the common name of a god is enough for an Evocation to take place. Most Evocation spells will include the name of the entity within the ritual itself and no further ruling is necessary. Although, cunning magicians may leave grimoires trapped with false names.

Using true names adds another layer of complexity to Evocation. True names are an important concept in magic, such as demons only come at its call, magic affects those whose name you know and other related ideas. If a true name is required to summon a Mythos entity and its true name is a mystery, then mechanisms are needed to locate those names. Obviously, Barbarous Names do not grant any specific hold over the Great Gods, being far beyond the human race no matter what syllables we are armed with.

Depending on how difficult, a Keeper may wish to have a magician roll on their Cthulhu Mythos score. If dealing with non-Mythos beings, Occult scores may be used. If searching for the true name of one very specific being, Library Use, Idea rolls and more must be used. Alternatively, the name may only be recorded in one specific place, require an investigation simply to find.

Trying to Evoke without a true name may lead to simple failure of the spell. Alternatively, the Evocation may completely fail as wards and bindings do nothing at all.

## Summoning With No Name

Perhaps the most foolish, stupid and insane thing a magician can do with an Evocation is to open the doors to any visitor, trawl the nets in unknown seas. Without proper binding agents, one may call down a Dimensional Shambler while you have the wards set up for a Lloigor. Those, of course, will be utterly ineffective and a quick death awaits the foolish magician if they are lucky.

The advantage of this kind of summoning is gaining access to creatures the magician may not have ever encountered otherwise. Amongst students of the Mythos, creatures like the Serpent People and Deep Ones may be common knowledge but the Flying Polyps have been locked in underground cities, loosed once in a thousand millions years. Even the great occult scholars will have very little information on those creatures.

Unfocused summoning is a dangerous, foolish notion and yet magicians are not known for their restraint. These Working are known as Freeform Rituals. Freeform Rituals are largely a construct of imagination and sympathy, consisting of fulfilling a want rather than a precise Operation. A magician may have a great need for guardian being, a hunter, or perhaps a seer. Without access to the correct spell, they must then Evoke and essentially open their door, inviting whoever wishes to come calling. Worse yet, particularly clever creatures, aware of the situation, may decide to pretend to be under compulsions. Perhaps, via some strange magic law, suddenly the human is under domination of the Summoned entity.

## Evocation as Superscience

Of course, Evocation may be considered the completion of an equation, or the closing of a circuit. Two nodes are created, still points in space-time creating a World Line the entity can use to navigate to enter our dimension. Topological symbols, such as the famous Elder Sign will superimpose on one of the nodes, creating an area of hostility for the entity to be summoned yet imprisoned. Then, a charge is created. Where once it was necessary to enter Gnosis and complete the circuit between the two nodes, thus charging them, alternate power sources can be used. Most often in the twentieth century this is electricity but certainly nuclear, geothermic or any other kind of power can be used to charge spell. Instead of the use of Magic Points, the amount of energy used will influence how effective the Evocation is. The use of power and the solution of an equation attracts entities. Specific entities react to specific equations, much like the use of a true name.

## Evocation Rules

An Evocator must have a Science skill, such as geometry, physics or pure mathematics of 20% to use this kind of magic. They must also use this skill instead of Occult. For every 50 Kilowatts of power used, one Magic Point is supplied to power the spell. So long as a basic circuit of energy is created and successfully closed no entrance to Gnosis is required. Although, the Keeper may consider solving of equations sufficient to provide the SAN protections Gnosis offers.

## Bringing it Up

*As I told you long ago, do not call  
up That which you can not put downe  
...*

Once the name is spoken, the act of actually Evoking begins. This may require a formal prayer or command, or simply the saying, out loud, of the name of the being. It may come at the moment of sacrifice or imprecation but the time will come when the magician has to actually call up the beast. This is where all the preparation, all the Gnosis, all the will of the magician is put to the test. Whether the entity materializes out of the air, rips its way out of the ground, steps out of a dark thicket or emerges through shining gates, here is the moment of truth. Any magician must be firm, must be strong and must stand fast at this moment.

Most Mythos entities do not want to be summoned, will chafe under the constraints of magic, will seek to escape the spell used. This necessitates the use of Binding.

If the god or creature is willing to communicate with the supplicant, even so they will chafe at the rite, if for no other reason than to gauge the strength of the magician. Deals are not cut and favors are not granted, to the weak.

## Binding

The mechanism within the main rules stands, although the rules presented herein can be substituted. Simply put, for each Magic Point spent, there is a ten percent chance for the Evocation to succeed.

To Bind the entity for greater than one term of service, the Magician

must expend more Magic Points than triple the creature can maximally possess. For instance, to bind a Lloigor, 48 Magic Points must be expended. Certain artifacts may aid in this cause.

Some beings Bound for a certain period of time will die if not appropriately cared for. Otherwise, entities must be tied to a physical location that it cannot wander from. It must obey any one order from the magician who conjured it or those who the Executive nominates, through whatever means they choose. The creature must be aware of who has permission to rule it. Greater Gods and Great Old Ones cannot be bound, ever, by humans. No magician can ever wield this kind of power.

Some entities can be Bound and questioned over a long period of time. While Invocations is a far more successful technique for gaining information out of magical entities, sometimes this might not be practical. If such a case occurs, the creature must only answer truthfully once, a fact a magician may or may not know.

## Banishing

Once the Working is complete, if there have been no problems, the magician should be able to dismiss the entity without problems. This simply requires the expenditure of one Magic point. If there are no points to spend, the creature stays inside its Warding until either the magician frees it, another magician who knows the Dismiss version of the Evocation releases the entity, or something makes its Binding ineffective. Those who come across mon-

strosities bound to ancient tombs or houses are often dealing with creatures who have never been properly banished.

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## Invocations

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The voodoo bokor, ridden by the Divine Horsemen, the shaman possessed by terrible spirits, the Pagan priestess, channeling the ancient gods into their bodies, even the little vomiting girl, hurling obscenities and possessed by demons, these are all example of Invocations. As are the magician talking through the ball of black crystal and even the lone schizophrenic, receiving orders from voices no one else can hear.

Invocations is the art of talking to the gods and of letting the gods enter into oneself. It is about charging the mortal form with the energy and information of the gods. When Glaaki spears with his spines, when the King in Yellow takes a host and more, this is Invocations. The gods will speak, accept invitations, but their ideas of discussions are not ours.

If one wished to contact Epona, the goddess of horses, it would be appropriate to race, wear a bridle, then dance as a herd. If one needed to speak with the morbid god of death and war, the Morrigan, crow feathers, funeral dirges, shrieking and scourging are the best forms of supplication.

While the Great Old Ones and their masters are beyond being compelled by the likes of humans, there are certain desires and amusements they make with us. Most famous is the Invocations by mad Whately that allowed the birth of the son of Yog-

Sothoth. The darkening of the Shining Trapezohedron is another Invocations, although accidental. Any time we ask the Mythos to come into our world, any time we approach them with humility and no intent to command, we Invoke.

## Elements of Invocations

### The Subject

Those wishing to Invoke a Power must first understand that entity. While its goals can never truly be understood or served fully, an Invoker will need to understand what they are asking into the world. Firstly, Invocations does not attempt to command entities; it desires to communicate with them. Therefore, it is the only way to approach the Outer Gods, magically speaking. Human spirits, earthly ghosts, certain kinds of monsters, all are able to be Invoked. Creatures without a particularly solid body, such as the Great Race, the Polyps and the Lloigor are particularly easy to Invoke.

As always, context is the key to Invocations. Deep Ones are going to be poor subjects to interrogate on cities in deserts. Mordiggian would be offended by asking advice on how to raise the dead.

### Preparation

Because Invocations is how humans communicate with gods, great care needs be taken to make an area comfortable and fitting for the god. Sacrifices may be prepared and what the god will require is bought to

hand. Often the physical area must represent what the subject is used to. A Fire Vampire will be put at ease where many braziers burn. A Carcossan human, or even the King in Yellow itself, might be pleased by elaborate and formal rituals of welcoming, such as a tea ceremony. An insect from Shaggai will be pleased by total darkness and a psychic environment of torture and degradation. Similarly, human ghosts might be pleased to be Invoked in areas they lived in, or greeted with artifacts of their lives.

### The Name

Finding and using the name of an entity works exactly as it does in Evocation. Finding the name follows exactly the same kinds of protocols.



## Entrance into Gnosis

If the host plans to channel, say, Cthulhu, they will indulge in a period of wild hedonism before the rite. If they want to channel the consciousness of an old Snake Person from the truly distant past, they might indulge in dry, logical, arrogant emotions so as to ease the Invoked into them. Gnosis is prepared slowly and surely.

## Binding

Unlike Evocation, gods can be bound in Invocations. This does not represent the control humans have over the Great Ones, simply it implies that magic makes everyone, for a little while, play by the rules. When Invoked, rarely do Gods and Old Ones appear directly. Calling upon the Dreamer in R'lyeh, does not mean that the magician and the god share a kind of psychic tea and biscuits. Rather, the magician taps in to the enormous surreal mind of the god and may spy out what wisdom they need. Binding does not represent a control in this case, rather it is a protection. It represents the capacity of the magician to use their art in a commanding way.

For creatures below the exalted rank of Great Old One, binding may be interpreted as a command. However, it is rarely used so gauchely. Invocation is a discussion and binding and is used only as a way to keep the guest under control. The Formless Spawn may share their master's passion of manners but they will still chafe under having their rest disturbed and binding magic keeps everyone polite.

If the Invocations takes the form of possession, binding takes on a new

importance. If the magician binds a creature into another living host, that being cannot move from out of the Warding space. Depending on the spell, the host may be able to move about freely but the possessing entity cannot or perhaps neither can. If the magician themselves are possessed, the binding tends to keep them in one place until the spell ends.

## The Invocation

Any time a human is directly in mental or spiritual contact with a Mythos entity, or indeed any entity, under ritual conditions, this is an Invocation. This kind of magic takes many, many forms. Most invocations are in the main book as Contact spells. Invocations may take the forms of dreams, strange voices buzzing and clicking from dark corners of rooms, direct telepathy or simply conversations. Invoked entities are often extremely well informed concerning their areas of interest. Mi-Go are surgeons and explorers. The Formless Spawn know well the deep and dark areas of the world. A nature spirit may have much to teach on the history of a wild place.

The Gods and Great Ones are of an order of magnitude beyond human understanding and likewise is their conversation. Within their spheres they A human asking Yog-Sothoth for information about M-space or mathematics may receive their knowledge but not understand it.

Potentially any information required by the magician can be unearthed by these means. Ancient sorcerers often permanently bound demons and sylphs to have their knowledge to hand. Magicians raid and plunder the

secrets of the universe in this way. Some consider it the ultimate communion with the god, a holy act of unity with a foul godhead or a way to worship directly.

## Banishing

Banishing can be tricky during Invocations. The old tricks are often at use. The possessing entity may pretend to have withdrawn from a conversation, still lurking in the base of the brain of the subject. The dreamer may think they have woken and so terminate the spell prematurely, only to realize they are forever trapped in the mind of god. It is a common claim from intelligent spirits that they could be far more effective if the barriers between the magician and themselves were removed.

If an Invocation is not ended with a proper banishing, true disaster can entail. To forcefully end an Invocation follows the same procedures as the Dismiss Deity spell. An effective Ward and Magical Tools may give +10% bonus to this difficult process.

## Invocation as Superscience

Human psychology is a murky area and there are problems in using the human brain to study the human brain. Theories are thrown up concerning our grey meats yearly. Modular mind, meme machines, pattern recognition devices, bi-cameral consciousness and more beside. For a certain kind of student of the brain, Invocation is a clear example of creating a dialogue with sub-personalities that exist within the mind. After all, the R-Complex represents parts of ourselves that have not signifi-

cantly changed since we swam in warm and primordial seas. Schizophrenics and MPD subjects have displayed shocking physical changes in response to changing personality types.

To some, magic represents a kind of highly culturally-specific mental conditioning that, in certain circumstances, makes bypass of the conscious mind possible. Some therapists, still involved in the hazy and mystical world of Jungian psychology, believe that there are archetypes for more involved and dangerous than Shadow and Manticore. The 'Cthulhu' archetype sees humans interfacing with a terrible kind of infantile personality complex that lives for pleasure and destruction as does a child. The 'Nyarlathotep' archetype represents a far darker and saturnine version of the Trickster personality. There are many others, like the sexually voracious 'Niggurath' archetype and some that have so far defied rational explanation. Often, these psychologists have other names for the archetypes, such as Dragon or Worm.

The kinds of techniques used to put patients in these states is highly unorthodox and controversial. Patients wanting to contact the fierce, patriarchal 'Dagon' archetype may have their faces immersed in water. Those wanting to contact the 'Ithaqua' personality might be fed fresh meat or made extremely cold. Needless to say, ethics committees are interested in those who experiment freely with such ideas.

## Invocation Rules

To perform psychological Invocations, the magician must have a

Psychology or Psychoanalysis skill of at least 85%. Then, they must have specifically trained in areas of personality-construction. Using elaborate hypnosis techniques and a Cthulhu Mythos skill of at least 5%, the psychologist can create a kind of demi-Invocation, if they succeed a check on their psychology roll. For each Madness the patient suffers, the difficulty of the roll decreases by 5%. Unknowingly, the psychologist must expend 1 Magic point for every 10 points of SAN the patient has. If a patient has 40 SAN, the psychologist must therefore expend 4 Magic Points .

The patient takes on some personality traits of the god Invoked and only a very faint amount of their knowledge. Often patients will freely express new personality traits, taking cues from the god or monster-archetype they are expressing. Hastur, for example, may effect disdain for the common workaday world and take on an archly superior personality. The patient may show extremely heightened creative skills, although work that comes from such states will be disturbing in the extreme. Y'Glonac-archetypes will become crude, lecherous and extremely sexually hostile.

To end the fugue state the patient is in, the psychologist must again expend the Magic Points and succeed on a Psychology roll. If they do not, the dismissal fails. The subject may then fake a return to normalcy or perhaps stay as the new personality type. Only years of intense therapy can bring back their old self. Those so possessed may go on to be holy saints of their god.

## Enchantment

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Enchantment is the ability to use magic as a direct imposition of their will upon reality. Enchantment is what is known to the layman as 'spell casting'. Enchantment is a single effect that may be permanent or instant. This broad category is infinite in variety and the techniques used to create spells. Indeed, any magic that does not fit into these other categories is considered an Enchantment by default.

Enchantments are less powerful than other forms of magic. They can never pierce the veils between the worlds, can never provide information about the Beyond, or new futures. Yet they are immensely flexible and, usefully, do not always require Gnosis to be used.

In gaming terms, an Enchantment is any spell that does not require preparation before it is cast and does not require Gnosis. These are magic readily cast by the layman and by the magician alike. Nor do spells instantly mean a SAN loss, as their effects may not be witnessed. Many a foolish person with a spell book has treated ancient secrets as little more than a game, all the while unaware of the terrible harm they are doing.

To cast an Enchantment, one or more elements must be performed. Either the magician must physically speak, they must perform some form of gesture (dance, hand-signals and mime and other such things constitute a gesture) or some elaborate meditation must be used. At least one of these elements must be used and sometimes others are combined, depending on the nature and strength of the spell. The burning of items, the flying of a flag, the ringing

of a bell are all elements of an Enchantment. Magic is, after all, performance.

## Why do Spells Work?

Again, this is ultimately a decision best left to the Keeper. Spells may be kinds of video game cheat codes, certain instruction that are fed to the operating system of reality that allow rewrites and new instructions. They may be sorts of sonic keys that, when spoken aloud, change reality on a quantum level. Reality might be Maya, an illusion and those bold enough may force their will upon it. Spells are no more than disciplines to more easily part that veil. Enchantments may be seen as a completely rational phenomenon that operates outside of scientific research. Or, perhaps, dark forces, attracted to words, gestures and more importantly emotion and intent, hear the spells being cast and change the world to accommodate the will of the caster. The original stories present spells as both ancient and demonic and also strictly rational kinds of natural sciences. More than one competing idea may be true and again, magic is best used as the Keeper sees fit.

## The Principles

There are two doctrines which guide Enchantment:

### The Principle of Sympathy – Like Attracts Like

Sympathy, in an older meaning of the term, indicates an affinity between two things. Quantum physics and

ancient wisdom both describe ideas that indicate all things are one and formed from the same stuff. Enchantment works best when creating channels between physical items.

Sympathy is the idea that magic works like a river and flows downstream. It seeks the simplest solution to the tasks put before it. Spells require fuels for their effectiveness. Magic is a symbolic technology and will work best if there are symbols at hand that will put the magician in mind of the task at hand. Therefore, a healing spell might be best used in the presence of modern medicine, herbs and fungi, the ancient poultices, even magnetic energy. Death spells work if the caster has access to the tools of murder. Guns, knives, nooses might all be effective in beginning the murder as too might be the birth caul of the victim. In this last case, what can be more efficacious in ending life than in the relic of its beginning?

### The Principle of Coincidence – The creation of likelihood

Magic is a powerful, perhaps the most powerful force in the universe. While there a few theoretical limits upon it, the most successful magicians know that magic is best channeled upon paths of likelihood and ease.

A magician may wish to Enchant looking for money. Perhaps the best way will be to join the public lottery. No matter how brilliant the magician, unless they buy a ticket for the lottery ticket, they cannot win the lottery. This is the Principle of Coincidence. Magic works along channels of causality. A magician wanting to cast a love spell upon his

intended might do well to brush his hair and put on a fine suit when meeting her. Similarly, brewing a love potion means nothing if the intended does not drink it. Of course, doubters can always believe it was mere coincidence that led to the completion of the Enchantment and hence the name. The subtlest of sorcerers best work invisibly, getting 'lucky'. Magic works more effectively if it has to work a path of least resistance. These are the conditions of the physical universe that humans operate in.

Of course, not all Enchantments are quiet acts of luck. The barring of gods from places of the earth, the sudden petrification of ones foes, the transformation into animals and more are possible. A Working in this form requires regular entrance into Gnosis and all the similar trappings as the vocations. A spell that telepathically communicates with ones friends will require an image or a strong physical link with the intended recipient and at the very least, extended mediation upon the communicant. If one casts a spell giving oneself a scorpion's tail will require something along the lines of devouring a live arachnid, or surviving its venom.

## Ritualized Enchantments

Like any group working, Enchanting can be done in a group. The rules detailed above are active here.

## Creating Enchantments

A magician creating a spell must be very clear on its effects. If it is a spell to hide the Enchanter from their enemies, the magician must decided if it

is a mental clouding making people unable to concentrate on the caster. Perhaps it physical erases information from databases or keeps the magician physically invisible. Depending on the scope of effect the spell will be more or less difficult to cast and require more POW to sacrifice and Magic Points to cast. A rough rule of thumb to keep in mind is that if a spell will remain permanently in effect, it will cost 1 or more POW as a sacrifice to cast.

Any spell that directly infringes upon a sense of normality for others as well as for the magician will also cost SAN. Commanding a rat and looking through its eyes, for example, will cost no SAN. It is an entirely personal experience and not a particularly jarring one. Spells that deal with traumatic physical change, call for mutilation of the self or others, or directly deal with any supernatural entity, Mythos or not, will all cost SAN. All magic requires Magic Points to run off. Again, the more elaborate and permanent the effect, the more points it will cost. As ever, the Keeper will decide the final requirements of the spell.

## Empty-Handed Magic

Perhaps only for campaigns in which there is fairly high use of magic, empty-handed magic is kind of Enchantment on-the-fly. A very minor kind of Enchantment, sometimes called a cantrip or an eyebite, empty-handed magic is a way of creating a magical effect without any preparation. Very little can be done with this power. A magician may cause a bus to halt for a moment, a door to open or shut, a dog to bark or a torch to dim. Only those with Occult 90% or more and a very high POW might be

able to do empty-handed magic. It is included here as a way to explain magicians capable of performing minor magical effects without stopping for an hour to achieve Gnosis and scream to foul and alien gods. It is recommended players not have access to Empty-handed Magic



### Enchanting an item

A common use for spell craft of this nature is to Enchant items. Lanterns that cause the invisible to become visible, swords that pierce the flesh of the fleshless, drugs that retard aging and the like are all common uses of Enchantments. The Keeper should make the creation of such artifacts beyond the scope of most Investigators. Unless they are following a spell long since writ down, the creation of mighty artifacts is the work of centuries. As when creating spells, the same guidelines of SAN, POW and Magic point loss should be followed.

art of interpreting omens and other supernatural sources of information to be forewarned what actions may come to pass. It is one of the oldest forms of magic, one of the most widespread and popular in human culture. From the ancient I-ching to the Delphic Oracle, who shaped the spread of Greek civilization and so our modern world, to the rune-casting Vikings, King David and the Witch of Endor, they all wanted ways to see what was up ahead. Today we do as they did in ancient Babylon and look to the stars.

Divination works on macro and micro levels, being useful for both prophecies concerning civilization and our own personal fates.

Lovecraft drew on one major Divination for his works, the overarching prophecy that which is dead cannot die and with Strange Eons

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## Divination

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Telling the future is one of the primary tools of magic. Divination is the

even death may die. Indeed, the very notion of the stars coming right and the return of the Old Ones is Divining.

## Games and Fortune-telling

Games are not stories. They cannot be controlled without potentially damaging the player's enjoyment by limiting their freedom. When Divining is used, it must be done carefully, more like foreshadowing than set in stone facts, or players will work tirelessly to defeat the fortune dealt to them. Try and ensure what prophetic visions are used in the game so that players cannot control them. Saying 'you will die when a Deep One eats you on August 9th' is a poor game prophecy. An investigator will go nowhere near the ocean on that day. A vision of the death, a terrible sense of impending doom when looking at the ocean, what have you, might work just as well. Keep things vague and symbolic. 'You will defeat the summons of Zhar by destroying the ruby in flames.' is again a bad Divination. A message that the 'Tentacled King-God can be bought low by the Reddest Cat's Eyes return to the heart of Cthugha' is quite another.

## Forms of Divination

The great psychologist of religious impulse, Julian Jaynes, divided Divination into several categories, which we shall make broad use of.

## Omens and omen texts

Fortean phenomena and interest in it is hardly new. From the Red Heifer of Hebraic myth to the fascination with

unusual stellar activity recorded by the Aztecs and the wide census Imperial China kept of strange children, weird stories and the like, humans have long recorded the anomalous. Often this was written down in books and used to predict the future.

For the sake of Call of Cthulhu, prophecies of strange, end times are often recorded in musty scrolls. The meetings of conditions of the release of certain gods and spirits who are bound in dark corners are met here. This is less prophecy than the ability to riddle out meanings from symbolic and purposefully cryptic dead language. Revealing such truths will require a Linguistics check, a Read/Write check and perhaps an Occult or Cthulhu Mythos check. To properly translate, or even understand, the nature of these prophecies, readers of the work of translation must be undertaken while in Gnosis, otherwise the underlying patterns and hints remain unrecognized.

## Sortilege

This is the traditional casting of the stones, throwing of the dice, I-ching, rolling knuckles or any other kind of randomized method of reading the future. It is the random chance that defines this kind of Divination best used for yes or no answers, or giving only vague hints to the future. Successfully throwing and reading knucklebones, widely used throughout the world, lies in reading the shapes the bones fall in. Patterns may give broad hints for the future, telling of times of joy, change, darkness or death.

There are other forms of sortilege that are less about telling the future and more about finding out specific information about particular events, Inyanga, Zulu traditional healers, throw bones and interpret their fallings to tell more about diseases, a practice known as Amathambo. Other sortilege may involve discovering if curses have been placed on people or areas, who wishes harm upon the caster and other simply answered questions, if the answer can be summarized in a word or less.

Applying sortilege to a game is simply done. Shamans and medicine men may throw the bones for Investigators, hinting at trials to come. Magicians learned in this sort of magic may wish to divine the intentions of entities or learn if some spell is active in a place or on a person. It should be a magical form of the Idea roll. It must be done in Gnosis.

Sortilege may be a discrete skill, a specialization of an Occult roll or perhaps merely an Idea Roll for those who have 10% or more in Occult.

## Augury

Unlike the hints and broad definitions of sortilege, auguries are the answers to specific questions answered in messages from the world around them. Astrology is the most famous augury, reading the patterns of the stars and taking direct messages from them. The entrails-reading Haruspex of ancient Rome, who would divine messages from the gods in the guts of animals and the flights of birds are, augurs. Any kind of random pattern that occurs naturally, from tea leaves to

the fall of rain to the blood spatters of murder can be augured.

The most common form of augury is asking a direct question and then interpreting the auguries in whichever form the magician uses. The more specific the question, the more likely the magician is to find an answer 'Is Tom a Cthulhu cultist?' is a valid question. It is yes or no, with clearly defined parameters. 'Who out of Tom, Dick and Harry are Cthulhu cultists?' is harder to answer but doable. 'Tell me who in town is a Cthulhu cultist' is not a question.

Dowsing is another form of augury, because it has specific parameters to its inquests. Finding water through the use of hazel sticks is the classic form of this technique. Other forms of dowsing may be looking for gold or other precious metals.

Augury is complex and should be learned as a separate skill. It takes time and discipline to learn the enormous variety of patterns and their various interpretations. The higher the skill, the more abstract the questions should be asked. Under 50% and only yes or no questions should be asked. To 75% indicates the augurer can set greater parameters, such as answer to one word questions. Above 90% would indicate the magician can learn considerable information concerning a subject.

## Spontaneous

Some people can simply see the future. These Cassandra's sights are not bound by time or distance. They can channel information clearly and if they are lucky, clearly interpret what they see. This is lonely Michel De Nostrade, writing prophecies in his quite house. The powerful, mad-

eyed Ezekiel talking of the coming of the Man of Sorrows or even three children beholding the Virgin, whispering the fates of a world to come. Even the Mad Arab himself was a prophet, his visions were inspired by the whispering of gods.

Some of the fortune-tellers stare into crystals balls or write elaborate mathematical models that take into account all human history, culture and behavior, finding ways to express the future in numerals and symbols. Some see auras, colors that hover around a person, promising fortune or glory or doom. The Belly Talkers listen to the monsters and flora of the gut and others simply enter trance states, automatic writing whispering back secrets to them.

Spontaneous Divination should not be ruled on. It is not a skill to be learnt, unless perhaps a Keeper wishes to rule it a psychic power, which is outside the scope of this book. It should be used as a plot engine. A young girl has visions of her town devastated by monstrosities. An investigator begins to dream about a friend's demise. During an Invocation to speak with a spirit, it mutters dark hints about the future or a being captures people in a city solely to have prophets to its prophecies. Ancient scrolls recording future events seem to tie into investigations the players have undertaken. And always, always, the gods watch and whisper into the hearts and minds of select men and women, for amusement's sake.

## The Mythos and Divination

Even amongst the Mythos creatures, the gift of prophecy is rare. Some, such as the Great Race, have little

need of it. The superrational Mi-Go have no need for it. Deep Ones may cast the bones and cry out to father Dagon to inspire them but they have no greater skill with this magic than any other race. The Carcosans are fiends for tarot cards and astrology but they are ultimately human. Indeed, bound by time as surely as steel, it might be that humans are the only race that require this power.

Of the gods, many may grant prophecy. The future may be clear as glass to beings of their intelligence. Perhaps the world seems utterly pre-ordained, a slave to causality in the sight of the Great Old Ones, which may explain their malignancy. The Hounds of Tindalos, who work against any breach of linear time, take a special interest in the destruction of prophets. Perhaps it was them who tore apart poor Alhazred. But for true prophecies, two gods are sought after, Yog-Sothoth and Daoloth. Daoloth constantly expands through many dimensions, not merely space. Therefore it is privy to events that happen in distant futures and pasts alike. Divining its will is a job done by priests, specially trained in the bizarre Gnosis-rites of this god. Interpreting the god's second hand information is a grueling, hideous process and requires a SAN check, as well as an Idea roll to even remotely translate the symbolic logic of its answers.

Yog-Sothoth, the all in one, is coterminous with all time and space and therefore directly has knowledge of all futures, everywhere. And all pasts. One of the many reasons he is the god most worshipped by magicians is because of this fact. As always, deals are hard done with Yog-Sothoth but nowhere else can humans gain such uncannily accu-

rate information about the universe. Deaths of presidents, returns of old gods, football results and more are for the having. The price Yog-Sothoth extracts for its services are discussed elsewhere.

For a truly Lovecraftian notion of the future, fate should be long pretermined. Free will should be a joke the tiny monkeys tell themselves to make the future bearable. Hard to pull off in a game but foreshadowing can make the process rather more effective. Let an investigator be granted visions of themselves in an elaborate sacrificial chamber. One of the investigators allies is slitting their throat. During the course of their career they'll be looking out for the chamber and terrified when they finally encounter it. Certainty would indicate that now is the time for their execution but it may be that emergency surgery is needed to free the prophetic investigator of some morbid parasite lodged in the trachea. On the other hand, if done well, the Keeper may simply decide that fate has decreed this is the terminus for the luckless investigator and have them killed. If arranged with a player before hand, this can be a powerful moment in the game.

## Freeform Workings

Magicians are not static and are free to create their own spells. Spells from antiquity are awesome, often handed down from days when gods more freely roamed the earth and magic was not a hidden art but magic is a vital discipline. Magicians like to make their own ways and may not be satisfied with works centuries old.

Ritual magic can be either learned rote or devised. Often, ancient books and evil scrolls will have unfathomable instructions. Take this work for example:

***Hail! Asi! hail, Hoor-Apep! Let***

***The Silence speech beget! Two strokes on Bell.***

***Banishing Spiral Dance.***

***The Words against the Sons of Night***

***Tahuti speaketh in the Light.***

***Knowledge & Power, twin warriors, shake***

***The Invisible; they roll asunder***

***The Darkness; matter shines, a snake.***

***Sebek is smitten by the thunder***

***The Light breaks forth from Under.***

***He goes to the West, in the centre of the base of the Triangle of THOTH (Maim), ASI (Aleph), & HOOR (Shin).***

***O Thou, the Apex of the Plane,***

***With Ibis head & Phoenix Wand***

***And Wings of Night! Whose serpents strain Thou in the Light & in the Night!***

Written only 60 years ago, not only does this initiation rite require knowledge of the gods of Ancient Egypt but also the language is highly symbolic. Yet it is a simple initiation ritual. Imagine then the difficulty of trying to reconstruct the language and mental processes of half-mad scholars from before the time of Christ, let alone decipher the magical workings of schizophrenics, who

have no capacity to separate the symbolic from the actual.

Therefore, magicians with a Cthulhu Mythos or Occult skill may decide to create their own Workings, skipping the process of learning long dead lore. Likewise, magicians may not have the time or resources to discover an appropriate and extant Working. This means creating a ritual.

Successfully creation a rite has a percentage chance equal to the designers POW, so a wizard with 12 POW has a 12% chance to effectively design a rite.

Firstly, the division of the rite must be decided upon. Wanting a kind of slave beast, communing with a god who will advise on the creation of life, a spell to find hidden paths, the effect is what is important. Then the category of magic, spell, and whether it is Evocation, Enchantment, Divination or Invocation is chosen.

Then the sorcerer must design the rite, creating a performance appropriate to the conditions of the spell. A Working to summon a fearsome war beast might involve the offering up of meat. A spell to hypnotize might involve the agency of soothing music.

An Occult roll must be made to see if the magician has the basic understanding of magic theory to successfully create a rite. If this is failed, they simply do not have successful kinds of ideas that lead to the creation of magic. Similarly, a player might have to impress the Keeper that their spell is effective. 'I heard about these things called the Spawn of Cthulhu who live under the ocean and so if I stand in a bathtub, I

reckon it will work,' is probably not going to be enough preparation and research to power a new spell. Ritually drowning a victim, submerging themselves naked in the freezing sea or other such powerful emotional gestures might. This is at Keeper discretion.

Depending on the elaboration of the rite, the Keeper may give up to 20% chance for the spell to function. In the above scenario, conducting the entire Working in a lake on a glacier while drowning animals might give the entire spell +20% bonus. Sitting in the bath may give none. Also, imprecision will give penalties to the spell. Mistaking Atlach-Nacha for a god of spiders, for example, may give -10% chance for the magic to work.

If the spell directly affects Mythos beings, a Cthulhu Mythos check must be made to represent the magician's 'understanding' of the biology and mind-set of the creature.

Spells take 52 weeks, less a week for each point of INT. Therefore a magician with an INT of 10 will take 42 weeks to design a spell. At least an hour a day must be spent at work. Each week the magician chooses to spend designing the ritual over the minimum time required will add 1% success to the Working.

Lastly, the proof lies in the doing. The first time a ritual is cast, no matter how much effort has been put in, a successful Idea roll must be made to ensure there is no last minute slip ups that cannot have been previously predicted. All Workings performed for the first time are at a -10% chance to work. An expenditure of Magic Points may ameliorate this, 1% for each MP. Entry into Gnosis also suffers a -10% penalty as even the most

experienced magicians will find themselves uncertain when creating a new form of magic.

## Example

Sarah wants to Evoke a creature that can fly her through space. The Keeper decides that the spell she is casting is in fact Summon Byhakee. Sarah decides upon an Evocation as she needs it to perform a service rather than share wisdom. Sarah makes her Cthulhu Knowledge roll to understand the existence of such creatures. She can continue her work and has a base chance of her POW, in this case 15%.

Deciding to stare into the heart of a night sky while dressed up as a bat

does not strike the Keeper as particularly hard or inspired but she has at least captured some of the elements of the Byhakee so he give her a discretionary bonus of 5%. She then makes an Occult Roll, which succeeds so she believes her spell is theoretically sound.

Sarah has an INT of 13 which means she has thirty nine weeks worth of work to do. However, she decides to work a full year, so gains 13% to her success.

Realizing that she will only have a 23% chance to cast the spell with the -10% first time penalty, she puts in all her Magic Points into the spell, 15. Now she has 27% chance to cast the spell correctly the first time. Sarah had best find some friends.



# Chapter four

## Shamanism

Perhaps the oldest form of magic known to humanity is Shamanism. Shamans have been with us since at least the era of the Stone Age and perhaps longer. This is the medicine man, the outsider who stands between the tribe and the Outside, the healer and protector. Nearly every culture on earth has a shamanic figure, a primitive priest who serves as a link with the other realms that touch on to ours. It does away with the complexities of the ordered universe of the 'civilized' world and makes magic out of dust and bones, out of the world of flesh and the spirit only those who dwell far from city lights can know.

Shamanism expresses itself throughout the world, through the medium of witch doctors and kaditchas and tang-ki and more. These are the men and women who have forever been with us, healing us, saving us, always there but never at ease with us, or us with them. Shamans, no matter the culture they spring from, are specialized holy people, serving the tribe in matters spiritual. They are respected by the tribe, supported and needed but are rarely a comfortable figure. Tribal peoples often have strict roles for each member of the community and the shaman's is a strange and off-putting one. They are looked upon with a mixture of fear and respect. Shamans walk in different

lands than other men and bring back some of that strangeness with them.

Clearly, shamans conform to the culture they exist in. The Celtic Shamans, druids and Áes Dana, offered up human sacrifice to the gods to keep their tribes safe. They acted as mediators with the fay races and the bloodthirsty gods. In Malaysia, the shamans are figures of dread, interceding with their people against the dangerous animals of the jungles and the terrifying ghosts of ancestors. The shamans of Siberia are respected, keeping the traditions of the tribes alive in song and story, protecting the house and hearth and offering wisdom on all matters.

It is not an actual specific practice that links together shamanism; rather it is one broad technique, known as Ecstasy. It is very similar to Gnosis but demonstrates some differences in practice.

Ecstasy comes from the word Ekstasis, to break outside, to be new places, to go against stasis. In practice, it represents the shamans' capacity to go outside the body, to have the soul migrate into other places, worlds, things. It is in this Ecstatic state that the shaman encounters the spirits of the world, the ancestors, the Outside. Shamans bring back knowledge of the spirit world, prophecy and healing from

their adventures. Shamanic Ecstasy is a way of walking wholly in the realm of the gods. They touch the madness just enough to taste it, without drowning.

Ecstasy is usually accomplished through trance states, through the usual Gnosis-achieving activities of extreme physical and emotional exercise. The key to shamanic Ecstasy, like most magical praxis, is that it takes the participant out of ordinary reality and into the world of spirits. The usual tricks of dance, chanting, pain rites and drugs are variously used. Ecstasy is also known to create emotional disturbances in those who undergo it. Shamans often exhibit anger, fear, joy and depression after such an experience. Ecstasy takes its toll.

Shamanism is not easily entered into by modern practitioners. So much of the dynamics of becoming a shaman revolves around concepts of tribalism, naturalism and animism. Especially for 20's era investigators in the West, there are strong cultural prejudices against the sorts of societies that create shamans. Shamanism is therefore perhaps not a form of magic easily accessible to Westerners before modern times. Even then, many city-dwellers claiming to have access to shamanic techniques must be judged warily. Being a shaman is more than taking natural hallucinogens and dancing, while seeing spirits. The social mechanisms in our societies do not offer a way to truly take up the role.

## The Spirit World

For the shaman, the world is alive with spirits, fraught with imminence. The landscape buzzes with informa-

tion from the worlds beyond. Trees and hills, dales and lakes are inhabited by, create or exist symbiotically with magical creatures. This animistic worldview informs everything the shaman thinks or does. It also adds to the shamanic reputation for strangeness. Winds whisper secrets to the shaman, the birds sing in explicable tongues. A shaman may break off a conversation to speak to an animal, plant or spirit. The more experienced the shaman, the greater their capability to enter into Ecstasy, the more they become aware of the spirit world's effect on the physical world.

What that means for investigations is that shamans can gather information from areas closed to mundane research. Spirits witness all in their domain and can gossip like fishwives. They are aware of magic affecting their world and some may even know when mortals and monsters are even thinking of them.

The spirit world may be a place where humans can even travel. This is a place experienced through the perceptions of beasts. Time does not exist there; things are experienced in the primal forms as food, mates, danger or safety. Spirits are not subtle and their world is stripped of human notions of degree. Things are or aren't.

From the spirit world, the material world is hard to affect although there are certainly ways to do so. Mighty spirits have only to think of a change in their spiritual environment and so it will be done upon the reflective material world. Lesser spirits can only do so in smaller ways. Humans in the spirit world are primarily hopeless without shamanic training in how to survive these changes

because in the spirit world, human perception is irrelevant.

Strong emotions in the either world can warp its counterpart. Murders and crimes committed in the physical world may make its spiritual counterpart take on a violent flavor. Spirits warring in their place might reflect upon the physical world, making a place suddenly restless, creating a sense of unease and making humans in it more belligerent. Shamans in Ecstasy can see into the spirit world and diagnose such things.

## Spirits

Throughout the world, there are creatures that touch both the higher, lower and our world. They have no bodies, are beings of immaterial state and they exist outside of the bonds of mass and gravity. They are called spirits and they are everywhere. If the Keeper wants them to be.

Spirits come from a multitude of places with a plethora of purpose. They are ancestors, animating intelligences of areas, specific and regional; they are protectors, predators and ghosts. It is hard to link together such amorphous groups such as spiritual beings but they all share certain traits.

Spirits are first and foremost immaterial. They are not physical beings in the world and cannot normally be touched, or touch. They are invisible, although many have the capacity to be seen and heard under certain circumstances.

What makes spirits so useful and germane to shamans is that they are often of the wild places. Spirits are personifications of grass and woods, of caves and rocks and sands. They have their own agendas and their own desires and can be malevolent but usually respect shamans. They are also amenable to control and enslavement. What makes a spirit is context. They are not abstractions, they are reflections of the real. There is no spirit of existential doubt, or wanting to go home early on Friday because these are not real, primal things that dwell in the minds of primitive cultures.

## Totems

Another area of commonality between shamanic figures is the use of Totems. Various called Dreamings, guardian spirits or power animals, many shamans create bonds with spiritual entities. These are not gods, rather allies, beings who share wisdom and strength with the shaman in return for obedience.

## Ecstasy is Dangerous

Entering Ecstatic states seems very similar process to entering Gnosis. Superficially, it is, with one considerable exception. Ecstasy is not a passive state. Gnosis is relaxing the mind while Ecstasy is exciting it. Investigators should quickly figure out that entering into pagan orgies, while perhaps pretty fun, are dangerous. Spirit possession, madness, hallucinations are all side effects of Ecstasy.

Often, these are animals but other forms of Totem can exist. Sky, Rock, Tree are common and less so are mythological figures or revered ancestors.

Totems bring with them a specific set of attributes, often culturally constructed. Bear is a spirit known to communicate ideals of patience and skills at healing. Raven is a trickster, teaching the shaman guile and stealth. Bear in mind that these Totems may have different connotations from shaman to shaman, culture to culture. The relationships is not that of priest to worshipper. Totems are found in an area where flora and fauna of that kind abound. It would be foolish to call on Shark in

a desert or tree spirits on an ocean voyage. Totems do not answer prayers, do not set down rules. Instead, they work with the shaman to achieve the shaman's goals, so long as it coincides with the Totem's own. This is the most essential role of the Totem, to aid humans and promote their own agenda.

It would be wrong to call the Totem-human bond symbiotic. It seems more big and little brother, junior and senior partner. The Totem communicates empathically, but faintly, continually with the shaman. This is not a constant stream of information and commands but simply an awareness of the needs of the Totem. Totem spirits are not as aware of



their supplicants and only those shamans in truly diabolical need, or held in deep regard by these spirits, are aided on the Totems own initiative. This is simply because spirits see the world only dimly, as we see theirs.

Totems often choose the shaman, rather than it being the other way around. Finding a Totem varies from shaman to shaman, although it is always an extended rite, focusing around an extended period of Ecstasy. Fasting, solitary hunting and communion are all means of opening communication with a Totem. It is not something that can be done in a hurry when an Investigator needs some spiritual heavy fire power. It is a holy rite that will start a spiritual relationship that will evolve over the rest of the shaman's life.

There are two ways a Totem will start a relationship with a shaman. The first is that the shaman looks for a Totem that suits his need. If one needs the power to hunt, to battle, the shaman may seek out a ferocious Totem like Lion or Wolf. If he desires to protect his people or a place, he may wish to work with Turtle, who is patient and armored. If he needs stealth and to be at one with dark places, Bat may be his choice.

Conversely, a Totem may decide the shaman needs them. The quick tempered and fiery young woman may be chosen by Stone and the icy killer may be contacted by the friendly, loyal Dog. If an investigator seeks a Totem, the Keeper may wish to award one based on role-playing criteria, rather than need. An investigator who sees magic as just a weapon might find herself paired with Owl, the wise hunter, who will attempt to teach caution and respect, for example.

A shaman, or anyone who manages to enter Ecstasy, may work with another Totem not their own. A shaman sworn to ferocious, implacable Shark may need information from Sequoia. Though the relentless nature of Shark may seem at odds with the majestic, senescent mood of Sequoia, the tree Totem will work with a foreign shaman only if the shaman is working absolutely in the strange interest of trees. Totems are not human and do not bow to things like necessity. If the shaman is in any way offensive to a Totem, they will not work with said Shaman, despite clear and present dangers. Humans may find this logic counterproductive or even foolish but this is what separates shamans from their fellows.

## The Geas

The Geas is a symbol of the bonds between Totem and shaman. It is an oath that curtails the behavior of the shaman in some way. Dog may ask that the shaman never, ever go against the wishes of his tribe, or pack. Spider might ask that no spider ever be killed and that the shaman's house is never cleaned of cobwebs. They are often simple tasks that become complex in the actual practice. If the shaman breaks the Geas, the Totem may cut off all aid or even work to keep the shaman out of the spirit world. If the breaking of the Geas is accidental or could absolutely not have been helped, the Totem may relent but only after insisting the shaman place themselves at the Totem's disposal utterly. If the shaman consciously broke the Geas, it is doubtful the Totem will ever reforge the relationship. Other Totems will view the shaman with suspicion and perhaps

seek to harm the shaman in a bodily way. The conscious betrayer will probably never be chosen by a Totem spirit ever again.

## Influence

Totems wield limited influence on their own kind. Stone could cause minor earthquakes, Snake might cause his children to seek out and bite those who she takes a dislike to. It would be a mistake to think of Totems as gods or masters of their own kind though. Rather, Totems are ideas, accessible, intelligent and animate. They can communicate with the physical world, either in language or with empathetic telepathy. For example, a healer could quite easily convince Bear to aid with magic to cure disease or mend a broken leg or even with something along the lines of forest rejuvenation. Asking Bear for an intercession for murder would be pointless and would perhaps lead to retaliation.

They can certainly make their wishes and warnings known but they are not all seeing oracles or super beings who can come to earth and battle their opposition. Totems are things to be talked to, points of view, not active creatures. These aren't those white hat Elder Gods

## Totems vs. Gods

Totems aren't gods in any sense. They are abstracted ideals, spirits of great magnitude, or perhaps mental constructs, ways for humans to create avenues to deal with certain occult phenomenon. They are not present in the world the way gods are. They are ideas and points of

view as much as they are divine beings.

Totems therefore cannot be Evoked, though they can be Invoked. They do not offer the same services or require the same loyalties as gods. Nor do shamans actively worship or serve to propitiate their Totems. The priest of Odin may offer up the torturous Blood-Eagle to the gallows god and other magicians may burn sacred oils and offer up souls for Hastur but a shaman has no need to bind or bribe his Totem. The bond is far more intimate than that, alliance more than service. A Totem will seek to aid its friend, even if it cannot manifest itself as a great force for violence.

## Shamans and Spells

Shamans most commonly guide their people by interacting with the spirit world. Spirits can tell of where to hunt and fish, what people are friendly and hurtful, all the other things their culture may be concerned with. Yet shamans also are spell-casters. They point the bones at enemies of tribes, bringing death. They cast out evil spirits and cleanse the tainted spirit world, they heal and they initiate the young men and women. They stand between our world and the others.

Shamans therefore have access to sorcery, the same as any other magician. They can certainly Invoke and Evoke minor spirits and may even be able to do so with certain Mythos beings. Those shamans whose tribes live nearby ghoulish boneyards may have ways to contact the cannibals. Australian indigenes who might have reason to pass near certain basalt towers might know spells to speak with the Great Race of Yith,

who can teach them of the Flying Polyps. Not all communication with the Mythos is instantly corruptive, after all.

The key element of learning magic in a shamanic context is that everything is shared verbally. Pre-literate cultures have remarkable abilities of memorization and so they have little need for writings. Those who wish to study with shamans must be prepared to throw away notepads and dictation machines. This also ensures that wisdom is considered a precious commodity and shamans remain revered figures. Those who somehow manage to learn the magic of shamans may learn spells that have never left the hands of their tribes and so are rare wonders.

## What's in it for the Shaman?

Shamans are essentially a religious figure. They serve spirits not because they are handing out powers and the shaman wants to throw a fireball. Shamans serve out of a sense of duty to both the spirit world and to the tribe. They are the ultimate bridges between the people they live with and the ancestors who have gone before. Many shamans don't even have a choice and are selected from an early age, never being given chance to question, let alone shirk, these duties. Always separate from the tribe, never a figure of welcome, shamans are lonely and strange men and women. In return, they are given wonders to see, knowledge and conversation of worlds very few will ever be aware of, let alone visit and have alliance with marvelous, canny and holy creatures. Shamans are called,

not employed and treat their office with the religious respect it is due.

## Shamans and the Mythos

In a Lovecraftian worldview, the shaman becomes a figure of considerable interest. Walking with the spirits takes on an entirely sinister new meaning. Shamans, therefore, access the beings of the Mythos in ways other humans, even other magicians, cannot. They are trained to encounter weird creatures, protected by their own capacity to enter into Ecstatic states. Because of their own long standing habits of touching madness, dealing with strange beings, they are better capable of dealing with Mythos entities than even other magicians. This makes them both potent allies and fearsome enemies.

The traditional image of the Cthulhu cultist is the very image of the shaman. In tribal communities, from the bayous of Louisiana to the isolated communities of Tora Tora, the rites of He Who Sleeps are frighteningly similar. Indeed, those witnessed by Inspector LeGrasse mirror precisely the states of Ecstasy. Primitive yelling, orgiastic bacchanals, screams to pagan beings, these are all shamanic practices.

What makes them so dangerous, so much more appalling than other shamanic states, is the presence of alien Totems. Mythos Totems.

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## Mythos Totems

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Lovecraft describes the activities of cults and rites as primitive, blasphemous and bordering on the obscene.

One can either view this as an example of cultural bias against rituals of shamanic Ecstasy or one can imagine it as the literal truth. To a sheltered Westerner, a 'normal' shamanic rite may be considered as such and certainly, Lovecraft held views about race and culture that would foster such a view. Alternatively, one can accept that sometimes, when it borders the unspeakable malice of the Mythos, shamanic magic is blasphemous, destructive and wholly terrifying.

Direct contact with the Mythos is obviously psychically offensive and creates total insanity in those unfortunate to suffer it. Shamanism, like all magic, is a way to interact more safely with the servants of the Old Ones. Unfortunately, shamanic contact is a great deal more intense and intimate than that of other forms of magic. There is no way to completely insulate oneself from the soul-blasting entities. Worse besides, the Mythos damage humanity even by standing close to us. Mythos shamans often have terrifying disfigurements and elaborate mental illnesses and perversions. The bad part is, they are often all the more effective servants to their masters because of it.

The Mythos shaman is, therefore, perhaps the most terrifying mortal creature on earth. Because they have, consciously or unconsciously sought out close bonds with utterly inhuman gods and spirits. They can control and interact with the uncontrollable. They can use magic and rites no sane magician would even think of. In addition, they are the most utterly doomed of all humans. The Mythos beings know nothing of reciprocity and grant no favors. Their goals are too unhuman to ever overlap with

the shamans and so they are ultimately tools, puppets and worse. No matter how grandiose or strange a Mythos shaman might see themselves, they can never truly partake of the macrocosmic malevolence of their kings. A normal Totem spirit always views the shaman as an ally, a partner. Robbed of that support, at the end, the Mythos shaman is always going to be used up and spat out.

Mythos Totems, unsurprisingly, are not as easily defined and bordered as others of their kind. They Mythos smashes all sanity, offers no salvation, demands no alliance. The kinds of relationships that are built up with terrene Totem spirits are simply not possible with Mythos entities. Nor are the creatures of the Mythos common, part of the physical and cultural landscape of the shaman who would work with them.

Nonetheless, there are always methods to approach power.

Shamans enter the upper world and it is there alien powers abide. When the initiation begins, when the first attempt to contact supernal powers are made, it's not always something friendly that responds. Shamans can be as much trapped by the Mythos as much as sought out. Alternatively, if a Shaman has knowledge of such creatures, they can turn their back upon their human heritage and look for a power creature of a darker stripe.

Like all Totems, Mythos specific Totems have specific purlieus and domains in which they dwell and communicate. One doesn't seek answers concerning the secrets of quantum computing from a Dark Young. And as always, the Totems

have their own agendas, concerning their spheres of influence.

## Totem Entities

Byhakee – When dealing with the Byhakee once must think of their three fold appearance, bat, corpse and insect. They teach transformations and a melding. They are many foul things, wrapped into one and teach a shaman how to accept contradictions and transfigure oneself into something new. Byhakee teaches magic that allows mutations and changes. Byhakee also operates as a symbol of mobility. Capable of moving through the vast gulfs of the void, it gives the magic and knowledge of how to move throughout the universe.

Byakhee's geas is that of a terrible curse. The shaman begins to take on the physical aspects of the Totem itself. The skull begins to lose flesh, the hands become claw like and a fine black layer of hair appears over the body. These shamans often hunger to leave the earth far behind them.

Nightgaunt - Unlike many other Mythos beings, Nightgaunts are not wholly malicious towards human beings. Of course, does this not make either the beings or the Totem particularly charitable, either. Nightgaunt teaches the art of silence, of darkness. Shamans sworn to Nightgaunt gain magical prowess over both shadows and silence. They move invisibly, undetectably, controlling the stuff of darkness. Nightgaunt shamans might not be actively cruel or insane but they are still utterly chilling to be around. The geas of a nightgaunt shaman is silence. They become laconic to

muteness, eventually losing an ability to speak at all. In time, they lose all capacity or desire to communicate in any way, even with body language, making them even eerier.

Hunting Horror – Of all the beasts that make up the Mythos, the Hunting Horrors are perhaps the most consciously cruel. As such, the shamans who serve Hunter are sadistic, given over entirely to the chase, the kill. Hunter demands his servants emulate his chosen beings, the Horrors and so his shaman are devoted to tracking, to hunting and butchering. These shamans are given magic that allows them to track, to see prey no matter where they might hide. Their senses are greater than animals, their eyes see into higher and lower spectrums of light, given spells of murder and they can endure great hardships on this hunt. They are sadistic killers and for them, death is the thing, hunting merely prelude. The geas they accept is that of mutation. Their eyes take on bestial form, their ears shift on their heads and their noses elongate into muzzles. They stink of meat, that all but themselves gag at.

Dagon – Father Dagon is not a god, yet he is clearly something more than simple gigantic example of his species. Dagon might be a kind of Totemic spirit for the entire Deep One race who is, tragically, capable of dealings with humans. Father Dagon seeks mates for his breed and so his Shamans, male and female are often seekers after unnatural congress. They believe in extreme loyalty to tribe and to community, so long as this protectorate serves the goals of Dagon. Many of the more primitive shamans of the dark places of the earth serve Dagon in this ideal. His shamans are also adept in the

magic of water and darkness and storm. The sea beasts are their servants. Not only do many Dagonic shamans have the famous "Innsmouth look" but their geas accentuate this. After only a few years of service, regardless of their bloodlines, these shamans bear the typical ichthyic marks. If they have Deep One ancestry, they may also take on more extreme examples of change. Great size, tentacles, bioluminescent lures and even less savory images.

**Fire Vampire** – Normally, intelligent creatures make poor Totems but the alien nature of the Fire Vampire makes it appropriate to the human psyche. Fire, or Flame, or however it is called, is a creature of profligate love of destruction. Its shamans are geased to always have fire around them and to take any excuse to burn or at least destroy precious things. These shamans are bound by a religious need to consume, to use things up. They may then become enormously fat, needlessly addicted to substances, unable to not expend their resources. Their magic is not only that of fire but of any kind of consuming, entropic style.

**Gnoph-Keh** – Cold, ice, hunting, the Gnoph-Keh are on the surface a remarkably terrene creature of the Mythos. Indeed, aside from the unusual number of limbs, they are little different than polar bears. The Gnoph-Keh are ancient beasts, as much as cold as of it. They are wanderers amongst all manner of wastes and see ancient secrets. The shamans of the Gnoph-Keh are therefore equally cold, loners, happily schizoid in their detachment from the world. While their magic is certainly useful in mastering the cold and the ice, it is also used for prying

ancient secrets out of the old ices that have destroyed the world in the past. The Geas of Gnoph-Keh takes two shapes. The first is a very serious aversion to any warmth. The other is a pathological need for privacy in which to search out secrets.

**Hounds of Tindalos** – There are no shamans of these Totems. Any who could enter into the mathematical upper worlds they exist in would earn a quick death.

## Fallen Totems

Areas of the world are corrupted by the Mythos. The whippoorwill cries mark where beasts have walked throughout the natural world. Dogs may cry and cats shriek in the night. The Mythos leave a spoor, corrupt all that they come across. Some spirits may be touched by the Old Ones and changed forever.

Totem spirits in areas that have seen Mythos activity may change, may fall. Not even the strongest of these beings has the power to stand before a god.

Boar may no longer be a welcoming creature that teaches fierceness and strength. Instead, it might become a ravaging entity that brings lessons of stunning ferocity. Dog may take on the nature of the rabid betrayer, the biter of a feeding hand. Those Totems who have fallen retain vestiges of their original personality. Snake is still a figure of healing but now it may emphasize a perverse pleasure in the examination of the sick, the bodies of the dead. Shark may forget that it hunts only for food and begin to take perverse pleasure in murder.

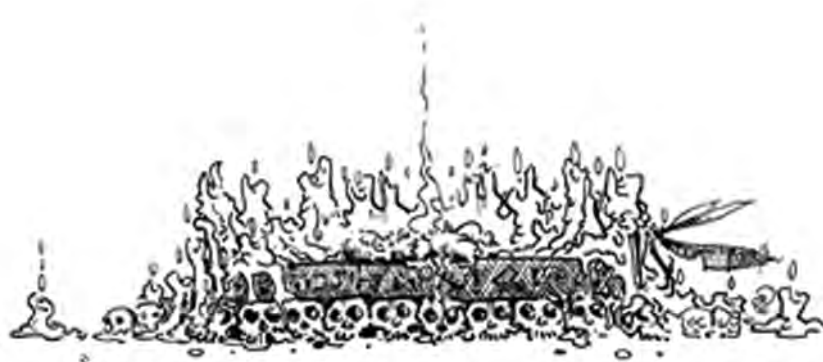
Places of considerable Mythos activities are often shunned by spirits and native tribes alike and this is part of the reason. The strange altar at Sentinel Hill, the weird ruins of Cambodia, the eerie Severn Valley, more besides are a host to many, many fallen spirits who now serve the gods who have overwhelmed them. Shaman who try to contact their Totems in this are may find them suddenly changed. If the Totem stays long, they may never be able to manifest to that shaman without a Mythos taint again.

Shamans who spend too long in the places where their Totems are potential victims for the Great Ones are in a very great danger of falling themselves, no matter their intentions. This is not a process of one night or even one week's work. Shamans can enter into the black world of the enemy to fight. Those who stay on, or fail to perceive the Mythos at work, will find their sanity slowly but surely under attack, their bodies prone to changes until they are their

Totem become committed to the goals of alien things.

## Other Spirits

The Keeper should feel free to expand beyond the scope of extant Mythos creatures when creating Totems. Not all of the Mythos creatures appropriately fit in to the basic patterns of human shamanism, after all. An Inuit clearly has a link with the polar bears of his region. He watches them, learns from them, coexist with them and then finally create mystic bonds with them, forging communication on a deep level where none was possible before. That is a part of the mysteries of this form of magic. Whereas many Mythos races are intelligent and sentient. Therefore, spirits of truly alien motivation, from far realms, trapped or foreign to earth, are very appropriate to Mythos shamans. Spirits with diseases, madness or just given over to man-hunting may work equally as well as the patrons to these terrible foes.



# Chapter five

## Lovecraftian Magic

There is a long standing debate as to what precisely constitutes real magic in the Mythos. Many believe magic is simply an alien science and that philosophy of rationalism Lovecraft ascribed to does not permit mystical forces. No matter what the writer believed personally, he certainly included obviously supernatural elements in his stories.

There can be no systematic decision concerning what is inherently Lovecraftian, Mythos-specific magic. The Dunwich Horror contains spells and powers that seem to come from the folklore so beloved by Lovecraft. Dreams of the Witch House suggests that magic is a form of higher, perhaps the highest mathematics. The Dreamlands stories see magic as far less threatening, far more in the nature of folklore and fairy tale. True magic might be an intrusion of 'stronger' physical principles from higher or lower dimensions. It may be that the Dreamlands and their own anarchic physics can be, be the trained human mind, used to isolate and supersede our own Newtonian worldview.

In keeping with the central themes of Call of Cthulhu, we will define the 'pure' magic of the Mythos as that which increases the true knowledge of the universe i.e., if it causes a SAN loss, it is valid as magic. Otherwise, any other 'true' magic is at the dis-

cretion of the Keeper, with this proviso: Lovecraft invented magic to be used as he wished, without giving a tinker's cuss to validity or historical existence. No matter the decisions taken by the Keeper, Lovecraft himself had more magic than simply summoning the great beasts down to our frangible world.

There are many elements of magic within the original stories, overt or otherwise, that bear especial examination as they are cornerstones of the feel of the Cthulhu Mythos. These are the kinds of ideas, themes and elements that were the primary interest of Lovecraft and so are of especial interest to the game.

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## The Magic of Language

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The links between magic and language are ancient and old. The first recorded definition of 'spell' with magic overtones is 1579, in the Glossary to Spencer's Shepherd's Calendar, The anonymous writer records Spell is a kinde of verse or charme, that in eldre tymes they vsed often to say ouer evry thing that they would haue preserved, as the Nightspel for theeves, and the wood-spell.



Old High German, Old Norse, French, all have words like *spel*, *spiel* and *spell*, meaning story or discourse. Words like *glamour* and *charm* have long associations in their early incarnations with magic. Grammar and Grimoire share long etymological history.

Magicians often study etymology, the understanding of the history of words. It gives great insights into our way of thinking. Lovecraft most certainly understood the power of words and the effect it has upon our thinking. Certainly, he used complex etymologies to hint at the nature of his own monsters and phantasms. Tcho means 'black magician'. Mi-go was the original word for the Yeti, or abominable snow-man. Magic is a puzzle box, hinting at the truths our monkey-language cloaks and a good Keeper can hide in plain sight.

An example: An old ancient sorcerer has been unleashed and is causing the usual havoc as livestock and eventually children sicken and die. Local doctors believe it is a new disease. Investigators, doing their thing, discover the truth and that the malefactor is an old Viking wizard called Erik the Forsworn. At first glance, this would seem to suggest that he was named the Forsworn, someone who has broken an oath or given false testimony. Further research gives us an even earlier meaning of that word: Forswerian, to rob of power by a spell. It may be that the plagues draining the surrounding countryside of its strength is a spell Erik is using to return himself to life, draining souls for his own purpose.

## Goetia

More pertinent to Lovecraftian magic is the notion of the Barbarous Names.

Magic as we know it in the West, came down from antique traditions of Persian, Egyptian, Hebrew, Babylonian and other long ago civilizations. From there, it was interpreted by the Greeks and Roman scholars and translated to Latin and other classical tongues. Those names of angels, demons, monsters and spirits were unorthodox even in the original language. Passed down through four or five languages and over thousands of years, the names, words and terminologies became utterly lost even as the entities were still Evoked and Worked with. Spirits like Asanexhexeton and Sesengenbarpharanges became a part of the magical lexicon.

They are linguistic mongrels and so it was that a whole school of magical thought dealt with the Barbarous Names, magic words divorced from their original meaning, yet still effective.

Even classical scholars agreed that the meaning of the words were no longer important, it was the sound, the feelings that chanting them gave us. In modern occult terminology, we could say that the Barbarous Names by their own insensibility lend themselves to entrance to Gnosis. The process is known as Goetic magic, the using of garbled, barbaric language to more easily work magic.

Lovecraft himself used a very similar principle in naming his gods and monsters. Although with gods like Hzioulquoigmnzah and Cxaxukluth, his contemporary Clark Ashton Smith rather outdid even the

master for obscurity of pronunciation. The principle is the same, of course. Words like Cthulhu and Nyarlathotep are even today debatable as to pronunciation and are still nonsensical in the strict definition. In his letters, Lovecraft suggests that the word Cthulhu cannot be pronounced by human tongues and that we only have the faintest approximation.

The Mythos uses the notion of Barbaric Tongues often. Time and again we see words like Ia and F'htagh and we are given smatterings of the dread language Aklo.

A Keeper may wish to capitalize on the language of Aklo. In the story *Haunter of the Dark* there are hints that it may be the tongue that the Great Old Ones speak to each other in. It may be that certain Workings are only possible with the use of this language and so it be a Skill that occultists seek to learn. Perhaps using this language is a way to quickly enter Gnostic states or earn command of the Mythos.

An example: On trying to Evoke a Byhakee, a magician believes she knows the proper pronunciation of the creature's name. An Occult or Linguistics, or perhaps even Speak Aklo role succeeds and she gains a percentage bonus to the overall role.

As language plays a part in defining the characteristics of mind, learning the magical dialect of the Gods may shape Sanity. Even hearing one of the words of Aklo, pronounced properly, may require small Sanity checks. Fully translating the concepts of the Old Ones into human terms may be impossible for the sane but give magicians tremendous spells and rites.

**Skill – Speak Aklo:** The dread tongue of Aklo is perhaps the language of the gods themselves. Simply speaking it involves taking on their thoughts and ideas, their values. It may allow very primitive communication with some creatures and from more rational races, such as the Serpent People, bestow grudging respect towards the speaker. However, the alien concepts that are communicated by Aklo has a slow and steady effect on Sanity. For each three points the character has in Aklo, one point is permanently lost from maximum Sanity. For each three points the character has in Aklo, they gain one bonus Magic Point in regards to magic dealing only with Mythos beings.

E.g. A magician has a 45 Sanity and 9 power. Learning Aklo to 6% would take maximum Sanity down to 43 but grant the magician 10 Magic Points for the purposes of Evocation or Invocations.

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## Necromancy

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*'The essential Saltes of Animals may be so prepared and preserved, that an ingenious Man may have the whole Ark of Noah in his own Studie, and raise the fine Shape of an Animal out of its Ashes at his Pleasure; and by the lyke Method from the essential Saltes of humane Dust, a Philosopher may, without any criminal Necromancy, call up the Shape of any dead Ancestour from the Dust whereinto his Bodie has been incinerated.'*

- Borellus

Joseph Curwen and Herbert West, perhaps even mysterious Al Hazred

himself are all part of a long tradition of those who have passed back and forth beyond the walls of death. Necromancy, either mystical or scientific, are both conscious themes Lovecraft works with several examples being presented in his stories. Death, resurrection and undeath are recurring mystical motifs returned to, perhaps exemplified in the couplet 'That is not dead which eternal lies and with strange eons even death may die.' Traffic between the living and the dead is absolutely the work of the sorcerer.

There are two ways to look at Mythos necromancy and the first is strictly materialist. Death is simply a medical state, an illness that we have not yet dealt with. Mankind has the Promethean duty to conquer death and become godlike in our capacity to create life. The second is the grey and grim magic of souls and the resurrection of the flesh.

There are many reasons sorcerers may wish to resurrect the dead. Simply wanting a return of their beloved, refusing to allow an enemy to surcease of oblivion, the desire to

know what lurks beyond death or to gain spies in heaven or hell.

## The Taxa of Death

For necromancers, the biological world can be divided into the Dead, the Living and the Undead. The living are creatures who have a soul and a body. The Dead have had their souls removed from their bodies. The Undead are any creature that does not fit with this definition. Soulless bodies are zombies and vampires for instance and ghosts are souls without bodies. No matter what manifestation or name, that is the basic breakdown.

## Creating Undead

Undead are created through many methods. The Voudou houngans trap the souls of the deceased with sorcery. Some Native American witch-doctors have been known to bury bodies in grounds touched by awful Manitou spirits. Others still use weird blends of magic and technology,

## The Soul

Lovecraft had no need of heaven or hell or resurrections, so his murky cosmology remains silent on the final disposition of the dead. Those who did return from death were seen as transgressors of the natural order. The Keeper must therefore decide, when dealing with necromancy, if souls exist as more than ghosts in the machine and where we go when we die. It is suggested that Elysian Fields and Brimstone Prisons be discouraged. The idea of a judgment based upon our moral deeds flies against the chilling philosophies of Call of Cthulhu. It is curiously inappropriate to think of the human soul, with a Mythos context, as being a heavenly body that escapes after death to find a final judgment. It is perhaps better to think of the soul as a kind of essential intelligence, an animating energy.

bringing the dead back to life through the application of electricity and surgery, carving runes upon corpses which act as topological maps for the dead to sight their bodies from the dark universes their dying has thrust them in to. Others recite spells that draw forth souls, some realize that the dying human mind may be unable to transition properly if killed in particularly brutal circumstances. Others believe the soul is an electric field that must be stored and expressed in the movements of particles. No matter the method, bringing the dead to undeath is surprisingly easy.

## Rules for Creating the Undead

In *Call of Cthulhu*, the spell *Raise Zombie* is a useful guide to the creation of undead. It requires one point of POW and 1D10 sanity points to cast. Creating a ghost should be similarly simple. Drawing the soul out of a living human might be only be a little harder. Those with more ambition than one undead servitor may wish to use arcane machinery or human sacrifice, draw POW from others and so prevent their own depletion. The creation of monstrosities from various body parts is simply a matter of more time, material and POW.

## The Undead

The Undead are often biddable, the magician will create redundancy systems to ensure this is so. Ghosts may be controlled by relics of their bodies. Corpses may have collops of their flesh behind them that influence them. Magicians learning spells to create undead will need to be thorough in their understanding of such

conditions or their Workings may go wrong on them.

The Undead, being creatures wholly reliant on magic for their existence, are relatively easy to work against with the same techniques. Spells like *Bad Corpse Dust* and various other hoodoos are common and simple to use. Those who know spells to create undead may be able to use them, their POW contested against the POW of those who raised the dead in the first place, allowing the opposing magician to destroy the undead.

## Intelligence

Summoning undead with their original personality or intelligence is an entirely different process than creating corpse and spirit soldiers. Those who want to know what lies beyond death and converse with the plain-speaking undead have a far more difficult path in front of them. Even if the Keeper wishes to allow the *Ouija* boards and channeller of grandmothers, truly cognizant undead are an altogether different process to create. Time, considerable amounts of body parts, at least ten Magic Points are all elements needed. Then, when created or summoned, the Undead creature returns to the earth aware of its past. Even the hardiest of souls may find inhabiting its ancient mummy or bereft of its flesh hard to deal with. SAN checks for the Undead must be made at 1D10/1D50. Giving the Undead back their minds is a far cry from making them docile and willing to discuss the antique past of far shores of death calmly. Most come back with only murder in their shriveled hearts, eager to ameliorate their pain by sharing it.

## Surviving Death

Many magicians take up the practice of the mantic arts with just such a goal in mind. Some create alchemical elixirs that retard aging and some bind their minds in objects, waiting to possess new flesh. Others hide from the reaper by ensuring their souls are easily channeled back to the earth and some make their bodies useable long after their natural spans are done. Some magicians may have elaborate ways to fool death. One traditional way is hiding the heart. Another may be curses from gods. However, there are two very practical and fittingly Lovecraftian methods we will examine.

Spirits may linger after death, looking for new vessels. Often the terms of the magic involved might dictate the possessor have something in living with the possessed. A family connection and the sharing of DNA traits, a strong physical resemblance, having read the same obscure books, all are a part way to become a victim of some long dead magician's ghost. Obvious plot devices will follow these attempts at a magician seeking to maintain their life. Investigators may find their friends acting strangely or may suffer blackouts themselves. A long family curse may be activated when a possessing spirit is released from a bottle or vase or portrait that bound it. Magic is often effective against these beings as their hold on reality is tenuous. Of course, they might exist outside their vessels but then they are mere ghosts, forever locked away from the world of the senses.

A more vulgar but no less effective means of surviving is to resist the transmigration of souls and simply remake the body as an undead one.

This may require pacts with god or unholy necromantic surgery. Mummification might be one such black technology we have fatally misunderstood. Often, fresh blood, souls or even body parts may be needed to fuel such a state and the zombie sorcerers who have found themselves in such a state may need a large amount of fresh victims to continue their works. These kinds of undead make worthy adversaries for Investigators. They may be stopped with violence but never killed as they are inoculated to death. Shot, stabbed or burnt, so long as they have life to feed on they might never die again. Archaeological expeditions might unearth long catatonic undead or the Investigator might simply stumble upon their plans. Not all the undead are shambling corpses after all and that beautiful client with the thrilling blue eyes may have their own plans. The servants of Mordiggian have a particular hatred for such creatures and endlessly pursue them, looking to take them to the Charnel God for their overdue rest.

Investigators might decide upon such a course, feeling the urge to become undead. The makings of an unusual campaign might be found in these motivations. A powerful Mythos entity like a Serpent Folk can live forever. From the Neolithic past of the high days of Cimmeria, a group of primitive investigators may have made a pact to hunt the beast down through eternity.

## Rules

Turning oneself into the Undead is a drastic step and requires a terrible will and considerable magical resources. Only those with a POW of

18 can even attempt such a state. Then they must voluntarily end their own lives by suicide. Keeping the intelligence intact after death requires the immediate expenditure of 25 Magic Points and a resisted POW roll against 30 POW. There are many individual techniques for these Workings but all are morbid and require the sacrifice of souls. The Keeper is encouraged to think morbid thoughts when designing such Workings.

Possessing ghosts must have made an already agreed upon condition as to which bodies it can inhabit, as suggested above. They may also have a place in which their soul is stored between possessions. Corporeal undead must have some living humor as fuel. The corporeal undead will lose 5 POW per week. When they have 0 POW they will fall into a catatonic state. A living being can be drained of its POW for by these creatures in the medium of blood, meat or magical energy. This can be done all at once or at the rate of 1 POW a day.

A possessing spirit can be unhoused for one second for each point of POW. If it has failed to find a new host by that time, it will be destroyed permanently.

## True Resurrection

Some magicians desire more than the half life of the undead or are too smart to risk those they need returned to a state of insanity and vicious hunger. These magicians require a true resurrection, giving a full life to the dead.

Such a thing is impossible. There is no full return from death.

The closest that humans have to fully transcending death is the spell 'Resurrection'. This will return its target to full biological life but even then, the spell can be easily reversed and no power can prevent that second death. There may be other methods of returning to life. Abhoth and maybe Chaugnur Faugn might have the capacity to return a body to full function, even after massive trauma but they cannot return the soul. Mordiggian may conceivably have the knowledge of how to wed body and soul but this would be against its precepts. Perhaps the Mighty Messenger knows the secrets of how to resurrect the body but it shares nothing without a price.

Perhaps the truly glorious return from death is a thing no magic can achieve clean and clear. Even if the Keeper did rule such magic was available, death would cling to the unfortunate creature like a shroud. Agents of death would send forth hounds and harriers. The living would tremble in the presence of this traveler. Something in the resurectee's gaze, having looked upon oblivion and returned, would be too terrible to bear.

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## Geometry

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In Call of Cthulhu, the island of R'lyeh is said to be constructed of non-Euclidean angles. In Dreams of the Witch House, the witch Keziah has made for herself an escape from this dimension out of mathematics and geometry. Often we find descriptions of wrong or obscene angles.

As is usual, Lovecraft has worked with ideas that are millennia old.

Religion and magic both have often dealt with the world of mathematics and especially the discipline of Sacred Geometry. The basic belief is that all possible shapes that can exist in both space and time are organized according to the absolute rules of God. In studying geometry, one studies the underlying codes and blueprints of the universe. Perhaps the most common use of Sacred Geometry is in the Golden Ratio. Two quantities are said to be in the golden ratio if the whole (that is, the sum of the two parts) is to the larger part as the larger part is to the smaller part. Most great works of architecture, such as the Parthenon, the Pyramids and many, many other buildings exist in the Golden Ratio, as does the pentagram.

Mathematics has also been used for 4000 years as an aid to astrology and Divination, especially on amulets, periapts and diadems. They are simply squares which are divided into row and columns. A number or letter with magical properties, is assigned to each square within the square, and when read horizontally, vertically or diagonally the same sums or words are produced. They were used as protection against demons in China, India and Arabia, later moving throughout the world.

An example of a magic square

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

As Mythos magic is wholly unreliable on human perception, this gives the Keeper a chance to introduce many forms of strange mathematical magery to play with. Numbers and mathematics are the keys to human understanding of the universe and,

as ever, in the game we are ignorant and wrong. The number theories that the Great Ones use are utterly incomprehensible to the human mind and the confusions and obfuscations of quantum physics is simply the very tip of a huge and frightening iceberg. Especially when one realizes that numbers themselves have a bleak kind of sentience. Mathematicians speak of the beauty of theorems but what of ugliness?

Magicians who choose Working with numbers may discover entities that only exist as complex and abstract mathematical equations. There may be gods whose name can only be used in Evocations as equations that must be solved. Architects who have some knowledge in the Mythos may try to construct buildings that are built to numeric scales that please the Old Gods. They may act as attractors, or places in which beings can enter the world without many of the complexities of traditional summonings. Constructing a building that is based on the ratios of a god's body and the god may come to live in that place. The converse may be true and only mathematical equations are capable of trapping certain beings. Byhakee and Hunting Horrors, who roam the universe freely might be frightened by the mathematical implications of zero. Famously, the Hounds of Tindalos are unable to work in curving spaces. Other simple tricks of space and perception may be equally repugnant or attractive to Mythos beings. Imagine a monster summoned by the complex mathematics implicit in simple soap suds, quite by accident, or the unique crystalline properties of a snowflake. What if the linear properties of cracks in the plaster of an old warehouse have somehow formed the most powerful Ward in human history.

Generating enough fractals might pierce the universe in a way that information leaks through from the membranes between realities. The priests of Daoloth are said to be able to see objects too large or strange to exist in only four dimensions. Therefore, they can bend space around those objects and so reach alternate realities. It may be that certain magicians, trained in the arts of Dho-Na geometry, can find entry points to other worlds in non-ordinary expression of physical space. Strange optical illusions and visual tricks might represent terrible paths to hell. The Yellow Sign and the Elder Sign might be topologically attractive or repellent to certain Mythos beings; creating conditions in spacetime whereby the Great Ones themselves are made uncomfortable. Certain strings of prime or irrational numbers might be effective Wards against some entities.

Clearly, this kind of magical thought lends itself best to the game where magic is a kind of alien superscience. This is magic done in labs and on blackboards and in calculating engines.

## Rules

Magicians who choose to work in a mathematical model of numbers had best be skilled mathematicians. A mathematics or general Science skill might take the place of Occult in deterring successes of certain spells cast. Generally speaking, if a spell can be expressed as a mathematic equation, then allow these technological magicians the same chances as an occultist. The creation of sacred or unhallowed geometry must of course be accompanied by Geometry skills.

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## Gates

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The most common example of the Supergeometry of the Old Ones is the creation of Gates, spatial distortions that link regions, theoretically infinitely distant in both time and space. The ancients, Plato and Plotinus, in their ignorant droning about intersecting solids and Five Forms, had the faintest notion that the universe was simpler than what humans experienced and they were wrong. Infinitely complex, it takes the

## Non-Euclidean

Lovecraft used the phrase non-Euclidean geometry to try and express the notion that angles and curves used by the Xothians and witches were somehow alien to human understanding. This type of geometry is in fact a way to graph parallel lines that join, itself a paradoxical notion that was ground-breaking in its day as M-Theory is in ours. The notion is extremely counter intuitive to any but the highly trained. Seeing non-Euclidean geometry does not drive one mad. Seeing the abstract, the foreign, the total alienation and anti-intuitive Godly numerical principle put to work, is a powerful way to illustrate the idea that the universe is always a foreign, foreign country.

arcane science of the Mythos to remove the false burdens of process and motion from physicality. With certain designs, certain tessellations and equations, gravity and dimensionality can be transcended. Time and space, at least to human senses, are like a river flowing with a fast current. The swimmer can only move one way along it. A Gate is like the river bank and those who stand on it can transcend the flow of water, moving forward, backwards, even skipping from bank to bank. Gates are not simply tame wormholes or things that use the suspected physical principles of black or white holes. They utterly contravene four dimensions.

Surprisingly, Gates are a form of magic not known to all Mythos races.

The Xothians and Mi-Go both fly through space and therefore have little use for them. Cthulhu and his kind may use hypergeometry as ways to deliver sacrifices to the Ultimate Throne of Azathoth, however, or perhaps simple as forms of grotesque alien aesthetics. The Great Race transmigrates time at will. Indeed, the only times in Mythos fiction we truly see Gates are those worked by humans, Carter and Mason. It may be that Gates are a kind of magic that humans have created for themselves. Such a reading could indicate that Gates are the only effective, native tool humans have. This possibility hints that Gates are a wretched, weak means of traversing the cosmos.

With enough time and Power at the disposal of a magician, Gates could





conceivably lead anywhere or anywhen. Alternate universes where history has changed, completely foreign dimensions, into the picoseconds after the Big Bang when time itself was being hastily rigged, the Red Shift future, areas where the expansion of the universe has not yet reached, the Big Crunch, or even the jagged, shift-torn reaches where the Daemon Sultan itself endlessly writhes.

Gates are not consistent. There are one, two and more way Gates, Gates that only operate at certain times, keyed to certain species or individuals, Gates that are sentient and Gates that are random. The entity that creates a Gate may choose the particulars during construction. Unless they fail...

## Failed Gates

Gates that have been imperfectly created are imminently hostile. They attract the attention of such beings as the Hounds of Tindalos, can deposit travelers into any number of hostile environments or simply refuse to spit out those who walk their paths. Faulty gates may create perfect or imperfect copies of those who walk them, merge together different entities who have walked them, creating terrific collisions of flesh, collapse down into a black hole, be inhabited by the forlorn and mad lost men and monsters or, at best case, simply waylay the traveler, losing them in time and space.

Some Gates achieve a weird and dim sentience. Like Dholes of infinite length, they roam the four dimensions, looking to feed on life, excreting it, digested, into other realms. Invisible to the eye, they are the

great enemies of the Hounds and only the Great Ones have seen those epic wars. To travel through such a Predator Gate is to be venesected in time, stripped and strewn across the universe, looking forever to reconnect with their various selves...

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## Arcane Tomes

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Books, tractates, exordiums, tomes, no matter the names, Lovecraft inextricably linked the written word with horror. Knowledge brings terrible costs with it and there is no more effective a symbol for the horror of awareness than the ancient book.

There are many famous books in the Mythos, none more famous than the Necronomicon. Nameless Cults, the Book of Eibon, the Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan, the Shrewsbury Codex and many more are all recurring themes in the stories.

Books are precious to the magician because for unnumbered centuries they remained symbols of the art, available only to a highly trained few, hiding rare and terrible secrets in plain sight only for the lettered. With books, magicians could find a kind of immortality beyond that of their physical existence, share thoughts and theories and record spells, allowing them to grow in power in exponential leaps. Magicians crave knowledge and books are nothing but records of such.

Books have remained the primary method of magical communication for millennium but are not the only one. In the modern day, occultists are often eager to create websites with their findings. Indeed, many magicians also have an interest in

computing, the two both being arcane knowledge manipulated by symbols and ordered logic of weird languages.

Voice recordings are also useful to magicians, who may imprint their chants on wax or in digital formats. Video diaries are often made of rites with commentaries explaining technicalities. Pamphlets have been made and for five hundred or more years have been a cheap way to print small amounts of paper very quickly. Nevertheless, the book, the primal symbol of knowledge, will always remain.

No matter how a magician gains forbidden knowledge, the results are the same. Casual perusal means nothing and there is no amelioration to Sanity loss if the terrible spells are read by candlelight in ancient castles or under fluorescent lights in the office.

Books might not be a particularly important part of the actual technical processes of magic. They are not the only way to learn how to Work. Despite their lack of ubiquity they are the focus of dark forces, simmering with secrets. Books are traps, forever snaring knowledge. They remain items of talismanic force for magicians, almost fetish objects. No magician worth his salt has else but a rich library, often well protected.

## Books and Life

Magicians and investigators alike tend to love collections of old manuscripts, notes, case files, magical diaries, what have you. Books have their own agenda and own lives and whisper each other secrets that not even the most careful reader will ever hear.

## Books Can Find Their Own Life

Any book that can impart their Cthulhu Mythos Knowledge can come alive, given the right conditions. There may be several ways for this to come to pass but the most common is simply contact with its own kind. Only the most powerful libraries are likely to undergo this eerie phenomenon. If books whose total Mythos Knowledge skill is greater than 100% are kept in the same library, there is a chance they will stir to life. This is left to the Keeper's discretion.

The books cannot move or talk. They will not flap as bats or read themselves out loud. Instead, when handled and read they will disclose what they want the reader to know. They will lead their readers to the most perilous and dangerous sections. They will attempt to control the tastes and philosophies of their keepers. Many a librarian of dismal occult tomes has found themselves mad, unable to resist picking up the book bound in weird leather, reading of how to torture, of how to talk with the Others. Magicians whose libraries come to life are prone to never leave their precious books. As they are proud and envious of their books, so are their books jealous of them. Books do not loan out their readers.

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## Artifacts

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The eerie crowns of the Deep Ones, the Shining Trapezohedron and more beside are important to Lovecraftian fiction. The inventive Keeper will be sure to add their own weird items. Sinister music boxes that call bad

things to wake. Cell phones that call the wrong rooms and vases painted in Grecian themes that on closer inspection display appalling themes and more are all fair game.

Artifacts should be disturbing in more than one way. The music box might cause curtains in the rooms to flutter and lights to dim and candles to waver. The black Faberge egg might feel sickly slick and warm to touch. It may oh so gently pulse. They may have strange scientific effects, such as distorting gravity or sending out regular radio pulses. The fetish mask may have demonstrated effects at treating psychosis.

Finally, artifacts are created with a purpose in mind. They might be Magical Tools that are designed specifically in use for the Invocations of certain gods. The music box might be required if one wishes to contact the King in Yellow. The weeping violin might be of immense use in contacting Servitors of the Outer Gods.

Other artifacts may have only one purpose. The Trapezohedron called the Haunter of the Dark. An old lamp might create visions of the past that are in fact a two-way window. A small and ugly statue may be an incubating god.

When designing artifacts that will have some significance, it is best to create a double-bluff. The mundane history of the item may be known.

The cigarette holder of the Maquis of Ds was known to be carried by the ruthless nobleman until his peasants rose up against him. Made of onyx and gold, it was said to be an item of rare and precious craft.

Then the common occult history of the item, easily found out by any pre-

pared to do the legwork in the correct circles and libraries of ill-repute.

The Maquis would claim that smoke filtered by the black holder gave him potent hallucinogenic visions of the future, the past and the 'secret chiefs' of the earth.

Then there is the personal worth to either the Investigators, or the adversarial groups, often cult, who long for the item. This tussle back and forth for the artifact, each trying to find it, then the losing and gaining of it, might make up an adventure or even the bulk of the campaign.

Catherine Ds, the last living heir of the mad Maquis, believes he left behind writings on how to contact the chiefs, who gave him much of his legendary political and mystical strength. To gain the long hidden papers, she must smoke through the holder and so gain revelations.

Finally, there is the truth of the artifact, known to none, or at least to the principle players seeking the item. Only the ragged and frightening experts, who have delved too far into the hidden history of the world know these things. This information may come out near the endgame, or never.

The holder was in fact a tiny god and it was its breath, not the cigarette smoke, the Maquis inhaled. It sends men mad and makes butchers of them. But more importantly than that, it does not simply provide visions of other times; it slowly strips away sections of the soul, throwing them far and wide throughout space and time. The holder is currently haunted by the flayed ghost of the Maquis, who will use his considerable power and sadism to gain the holder back. And he is getting closer.

Lovecraftian artifacts can be beautiful or ugly, rare or surprisingly common items somehow touched by sorcery but they are always remarkable in their effect. They cannot be mistaken for an ordinary gem, crown, pen or pot. And they are always exceedingly dangerous. They are designed to interact with the Old Gods, or serve functions for fathomlessly outré alien beings whose every day thoughts we can scarcely conceive. What then would these creatures consider a miracle? What would cause awe in a Flying Polyp. We might recognise some of the functions of these artifacts but they are always truly beyond us. They go one for centuries, secure in power and legend, snuffing out the lives of humans like candles in a void. Those

who do not treat such items with the utmost respect and caution are doomed. They are not monkeys with bombs because in the end, the worst a monkey can do is cause its own death by explosion. No, a human with a Lovecraftian artifact is a bear, poking its nose into a trap, all the while unaware of the rusty iron jaws aching to spring.



# Chapter Six

## Magic and the Gods

Magic is, ultimately, a way to enter into different realities, different states and to do so sanely and safely. On the other side, on the farness of all other possible worlds, live the gods. One of the ultimate goals of the magician is to walk with these entities, to discover their secrets, to walk in their worlds, to deal directly with the ultimate men behind the curtain. It is gods who define the universe, who shape it and who understand it better than any other being. Magic is the way to the gods and to the mysteries of everything.



### What Are the Gods?

Modern magicians have been clear to point out that gods tend to conform to archetypes of human thoughts,

### What Kind of God?

The division between Great Old Ones and Outer Gods is not a satisfying one to the magician. Cthulhu himself may be no more than an alien king-priest but is he not prophesied to reward his people at the end times? Does he not award his faithful with dreams and power? The problem, of course, is that Lovecraft had no use for systemic mythologies and elaborate taxonomies of divinity are anathema to a truly bleak vision of the Mythos. For the purposes of the discussion below, little distinction is made between Outer Gods and Great Old Ones. If it is vaster than you, if it can be served, if it can give wisdom, it is god enough.

personalities and roles. Loki, Prometheus, Raven are obvious ones, Tricksters who steal fire from gods, refuse to be bound by any rules. Zeus, Odin, Yahweh are judge gods from the sky who make stern rules for human and god alike. Father figures and bosses. Other gods deal with the intricacies of human knowledge. Thoth, the Ibis-headed god of the Egyptians was the sacred scribe, the teacher of spells and writing, as was Saraswati. Artemis taught the secrets of the hunt. T'shai-Shen was the god of money-making, of working with bureaucrats. Ixtab, the suicide goddess shows the way to heaven through self-extermination. All of these are things that can be related to human endeavors, to the day to day existence of people. Even gods concerned with cosmic, the universal gods, such as Brahma or Organza are still concerned with recognizably human curiosities. As humans wonder what creates the universe, what powers it, so we create gods to give us answers.

Modern occultists of particular schools freely admit that gods are not objective beings but rather complex matrices of thought, ideas, inherited wisdom and archetypal thinking that humans can access and deal with in Gnostic states. This, for the purposes of Call of Cthulhu, at the first glance, seems to be rather unsatisfying yet it is actually a very useful idea for the Keeper. For starters, it avoids questions along the lines of "if Bast is real, does that mean that the Egyptian creation myth is really real?" The Gods are conceptual entities who we approach as living fictions.

It also removes any ideas that there are gods as supernal creatures who love human kind. It seems rather dra-

matically inappropriate to have Thor show up and fight off a rampaging Howler in the Darkness, after all. Indeed, for humanity, the best and brightest that we can hope from our protectors, our rulers, our beloved friends, the gods is that they are in fact no more than a reflection of ourselves.

All human prayer and worship, every atrocity committed from the Stone Age onwards has been in the name of nothing more than our primal minds. Indeed, the more mechanistically minded Keeper could determine that magic is in fact no more than the hallucinations of the ill-aligned bicameral mind. There are no boss-spirits on mountains or under the sea, just our ancestor minds, still wet from the water we pulled ourselves out of, poorly evolved.

Of course, even if the gods are only parts of us, magic is still a good way to answer and question them. Invocations may be no more than an elaborate trance but there is much evidence that under extreme states, the human mind is indeed an odd thing.

If the Keeper decides to view gods in this form, then of course they have very little power. The magician can confront them, can control them and can question them. They all have their own specialties of information. For example, one does not ask Mars the War Lord about ancient writings or how to be beloved. The gods are not just experts, they are entire areas of the human experience and that is all they are.

The gods know many things and the source of their wisdom is ultimately human. Yet, no matter if it is they are unconscious self or not, the gods know things ordinary humans can-

not. Within their sphere of influence, there is little a god cannot advise on or clarify. Be that a strategy in times of war or simply animal husbandry or engineering, the gods exist to give humans insight. If it is conceivably within the grounds of human knowledge, the gods can tell of it.

Of course, much knowledge of the Mythos beings is simply beyond human ken. Before the Pabodie Expedition, it could be argued men had no knowledge that Shoggoths were still on earth and so the gods may not know them. Certainly, secrets concerning the Dreamlands and extraterrestrial locations such as the Great Library of Celano may be beyond even what the gods know.

The gods have wants – the human word for the meeting of these wants is worship. Gods want to be recognized, to be treated with respect. Perhaps this is a conceit of the human mind's eagerness for supplication to higher powers but the fact remains, gods reward those who reward them. Worshippers of the gods often bring acceptable offerings. Pluto may require rare metals; Sutehk may appreciate sacrifices of red-headed children. Gods, no matter how merciful or loving they may be, are venal creatures. Nothing is for free.

Human gods may not fit readily into a Lovecraftian framework. With Bast and Nodens being the only 'real' gods introduced into the Mythos, it seems that historical gods had little fictional use for Lovecraft. Certainly, the God of Abraham is conspicuous by his absence and so we must ask if other gods, long since consigned to curiosities in history books would serve much purpose to a magician in the game. They remain a constant in

the life of a magician, who often must swear by them, serve them and create bargains and the like. Below is a list of what the human gods may be and how to fit them into a game.

## Weak Gods of the Dreamlands

There is evidence that the gods of our world are simply dwellers and dreamers of that alternate universe, the Dreamlands. What humans have worshipped on earth may be spirits of that realm, some of whom are forgotten or remembered poorly by cultures from the Stone Age to the present

A way to view traditional human gods is to perhaps see them as Great Ones. Beings that dwell outside but can come inside. They may indeed have an active presence in the world. They can be contacted and dealt with but are forever merely shadows of their terrifying keeper.

In this imaginal realm are the Great Ones, who are derisively, called the "weak gods of earth" by Mythos beings. Few are named, such as Oukranous. This hints that perhaps the Greek God Uranus is only a reflection of a real being that exists in another world. It may be that all gods of earth are misremembered, poorly understood Great Ones.

If the Gods are the Great Ones, some echo of them the waking human mind recalls from Sleep, then there is good news and bad news. The good news is that the gods are objective beings, either spirits or somehow powerful, perhaps awesomely so Dreamers. They have an affect upon the world and can be called upon to act in the names of their common humanity and the Dreaming. The bad news is that they are utterly subject

to the Outer Gods, who view them with the contempt the wolf shows the lapdog. Sinisterly, the Mighty Messenger, Nyarlathotep sneeringly shepherds Great Ones, part keeper, part protector in their Dreamlands home.

The Weak Gods, therefore, can be summoned, controlled, can be used as weapons and oracles against the forces of the Mythos. They will command and influence much of their chosen realm. Hypnos, the god of sleep, captain of the Great Ones, can control who sleeps, who dreams, what they dream, for example. He can visit madness upon humans in their vision, or remove their ability to dream at all. The Great Ones are just that: Great. They might not be the universal gods such as Yog-Sothoth or the planet conquering aliens like Cthulhu but they are gods and they are worthy of all respect by humans.

Because the Great Ones are close to earth, the Dreamlands being, after all, only a nap away, they are easy to contact. The extravagant rites to summon the Old Ones are not as necessary. Simple Invocations and Evocations will contact them. Sometimes, perhaps even prayer may reach them. Impossibly arrogant, disdainful, well aware of their power over humans, the weak gods require worship. However, because of their closeness to humans, they are actually quite well composed towards our race. They will act in the best interests of humans when they can. And that's the key, when they can.

Luxurious though it might be, they remain slaves, however pampered, of Nyarlathotep, who remains aware of all their movements. To make deals with, request boons from, the Great Ones, is to ultimately be snared in

the machination of the Crawling Chaos. If a god manifests to do battle with some monster or alien, or grants a jug of Space Mead or some other favor, easily and readily, the chances are good that you are working in the interests of the Mighty Messenger, who knows your name.

## Gods as Spirits

Gods may be no more than local spirits who have somehow made good, as it were. They are merely simple intelligences, without flesh, who exist in the physical world. There is no real difference between the meanest spirit of loch and dale and the August Jade Emperor except perhaps scales of power. A god may have risen in prominence due to its strength, its particular skills with persuasion, or simply because it fulfilled a role that resonated with earthly worshippers.

Such gods are arrogant, bombastic but are hardly powerful. The old tricks of burning bush and such other miracles might have had tremendous affects four thousand years ago but seem less impressive to the modern mind. Today, gods are clever, powerless things, hunting down whatever worship they can. Any magician who knows the correct Rites can contact and deal with spirit gods.

## Gods as Avatars of the Old Ones

There is, of course, the terrifying notion that everything that mankind has ever aspired and hoped to, every thing we have bowed down in love and slavish certitude to is in fact no more than a mask, an avatar, that the outer gods wear. Indeed, if one views

the Outer Gods as kind of cosmic forces, it makes sense. Behind the mask of Frigga, Tzlatotl, Arianrhod, Gaia, Demeter and the other goddesses of fertility and love, perhaps we can see the Black Goat with a Thousand Young, staring back at us. In the stern patriarchs of Zeus, Odin and the other sky gods who can see and judge through space, is that not Yog-Sothoth? Or worse, Azathoth or a garbled mix of both. The trickster, every satyr, rogue fire god and joker is in fact no more than a comforting lie we tell about the naked, sick truth of Nyarlathotep's contempt.

If this is the view of the gods, the humanity is truly a doomed species. The gods are spectacularly malign but almost as unconcerned. They do not grant boons, give visions or wisdom, answer or even hear prayers. If this is the truth of the gods then there is no justification ever, in any way, for religious art or crusade or genocide or fevered prayer. All we have is a faulty brain, misfiring religious impulses at us.

One of the true goals of any magician is to have the power and the will to converse with the gods. They are the holders of truth of the universe and the ultimate symbols of power. In any form of magic that has a godhead, a supreme god, it is uniting with this archetype that is the final action of magic. There, perfect knowledge and contentment can be found. Indeed, this unification with the gods is a perfect and holy state, almost indivisible from apotheosis, the act of becoming a god.

In a Lovecraftian universe, joining with god means something rather different than wisdom. It means becoming wholly subsumed into the chaos of Azathoth and giving up per-

sonal identity totally. After all, the Nuclear Chaos refers not to the splitting of atoms but rather to that of the nucleus in the cast of the Daemon Sultan. Perhaps the highest human spiritual destiny can offer us is absolute fraternity with Chaos. Perhaps those Servitor Gods who pipe madly at the gates of infinity have a terrestrial origin amongst brave magicians.

The truth of what the gods are should be decided on early in a Call of Cthulhu campaign that features magic heavily because it will forever reflect on how magic and faith is viewed and used. If terrene gods are no more than little spirits writ large, then the magician will be a figure of great power. If there are no gods but the Outer, then magic will be a terrifying supplication. A barking in the dark.

## Magic and Worship of the Outer Gods

What separates the worshipper from the magician, then, is that while anyone foolish enough can venerate the Great Ones, the magician seeks power from the gods. A worshipper may be a magician but a magician is not necessarily a worshipper. Mages are Promethean figures, stealing fire from the gods, walking amongst them, courting their favor, daring to bargain with eld Powers. For the magician, gods are not only holy beings, they are allies.

The magician bargains with gods for knowledge, for power, for things unavailable to them in their mortal life or for skills and abilities, for holy experience. No two magicians are alike. Some may lust after sensual experiences, others for arcane schol-

arly knowledge, some for sadistic power over their other men. They may seek to know the ways to defeat death, end life, travel through the cosmos, bind terrible entities to do their will, or simply to know.

What the gods gain is mostly a matter of guesswork. Very few of the Old Ones have motives that significantly overlap with that of the human mind. It has been guessed that the Mighty Messenger delights in the damage his gifts cause but to what purposes do Yibb-Tsill and Glaaki grant supplicants gifts?

Perhaps magic is the ultimate bargaining chip. The ancient rites of sorcery may perhaps in some ways bind the gods. After all, there are spells that prevent them from entering our world unfettered, working their terrible will. Perhaps the stars are wrong for the Gods because of some truly ancient magic eons old. A kind of universal binding. This is a comforting thought to the mage who approaches the Old Ones. Of course, for some gods, entrance into this world is conditional and they require the co-operation of magicians and other traitors to their kind to enter. Yog-Sothoth, the highest of the sorcerer gods, forever seeks to enter into our ordinary reality to dwell amongst a low three-dimension. Hastur seeks out those who wish to experience the slow decay of the spirit and needs those prepared to indulge in grim arts. Cthulhu himself, trapped under the sea, delights in the worship of humans and Deep Ones. Y'golonac is pleased at the sacred ruttings of humankind and longs to see the performance of his black tantra.

No matter how clever, powerful or competent the magician may be, in

the ends, the gods get their due and receive the greatest benefit from any relationship they may enter into with humans. As basic law of cosmology is at work in the Lovecraftian universe, never truer than in the context of magic: the House always wins.

## Sacrifice and Prayers

Even the Outer Gods have areas of specialty and purlieus that interest or define them. Shub-Niggurath is the fertility goddess and Cthulhu seems linked with creativity and hedonism. Magicians have long since discovered when approaching the Old Ones that aid for specific goals is more forthcoming if it involves that god's particular domain. While none of these beings are easily approachable by human magicians, those Invoked may be less inclined to malignancy if the sorcerer can offer agency in an area that pleases the god.

## Abhoth

Dealing with the god Abhoth is an unusual choice for the magician. After all, fertility is the demesne of infinitely stronger Shub-Niggurath. It is precisely this lack of power that makes the Unclean Source attractive to the sorcerer. It is not as risky to contact Abhoth, lurking forever in its lair beneath Mt. Voormithadreth, as to Evoke the Black Goat. In fact, since the god is in the Dreamlands, it requires little preparation to do so, merely sleep. Abhoth is knowledgeable in many of the same areas as Shug-Niggurath and understands too well the mysteries of fecundity and growth. Magicians seeking to experiment in the creation of biological life go to the god. Abhoth accepts sacri-

fice of living tissue, regardless of sentience and specializes in cloning, the creation of homunculi and magic regarding one's own offspring.

One other area the Abhoth has knowledge to spare is in the undoing of one's own handiwork. After all, Abhoth continually, saturninely, eats its own offspring. Curses upon one's own bloodline, the death of one's children or perhaps one's inheritors and any other magic that consumes the genetic material the magician may have spawned.

## Atlach-Nacha

The spider-god is uninterested in the doings outside of the cavern in which he perpetually spins across the vast gap. Indeed, his doings are mysterious even to the other Old Gods. However, his role as a spider, if viewed through human mythology, would make him either a god of wisdom or a trickster. That latter role seems to befit the grim, obsessive god not at all. Indeed, it may be a common mistake magicians make, looking to overlap human cultural concerns with the spinner of apocalypse. Sorcerers who go looking for Aunt Nancy may quickly be destroyed for their temerity by a god who shares at least the digestive habits of its look-alike.

Those who do the research will find Atlach-Nacha willing to discuss enormous disasters, the time of the Right Stars and the nature of the death of time. And little else.

## Azathoth

There is perhaps no greater stupid, no more foolish a thing a magician

can do but approach Azathoth. There are several reasons for this but chief amongst them is that most magicians are temperamentally unsuited to understanding that the Godhead of the Universe is an idiot. Many magicians come to the Mythos through complex magical systems. Even shamans of the most primitive type are used to working with and sacrificing to spirits with certain kinds of cunning. Of course, the fact that the Daemon Sultan is mad or stupid is not widely known. Indeed, his name seems to reflect that of the most civilized of gods, Thoth, the ibis-headed scribe god.

Discovering that the single greatest being in this or any universe is mindless and grotesque tends to mentally derange magicians. Sadly, the best way to learn the truth of Azathoth is to have seen it, with your own eyes. Retaining Gnosis in the face of massive existential crisis is, of course, a tad difficult.

This mindlessness is another reason that Azathoth is a poor choice of patron god. It cannot hear, understand or answer supplications. Its idiocy is not a joke or a sham. One might as well beg might favor from a fungus, clam or lightning storm. It has no gifts to give. All it can do is whirl and writhe in greater or lesser states of agitation. Some say that Nodens, the Elder God, somehow stripped this great evil of its sanity and capacity for reason. Other Mythos scholars, including those of prehuman origin such as the Serpent People, are coldly amused by such nonsense.

The primary use for contacting Azathoth is, therefore, mad, unpurposed destruction. The Daemon Sultan is like an idiot child who

breaks its toys in mad abandon. It is a sad thing, that the greatest of all gods truly only has one purpose.

Modern interpretations see the Nuclear Chaos as precisely that, being in some way a being of nuclear radiation, or modern phenomena such as a 'sentient' black hole. In which case, those modern wizards swear by the name of Azathoth when they endeavor to work magic that relies upon the stars, or the unseen forces of the universe. When gravity no longer pulls, when particles stop their restless dance, when fire no longer ignites, the Idiot God is there. Science-mages often use the name of Azathoth in dangerous experiments.

Others seek out Azathoth as a source of pure power. If the premiere scholar Sadowsky is correct and the being 'mercifully cloaked under the name of Azathoth' is in fact a human term that semantically indicates the Daemon Sultan is in fact little else than the engine that fuels the cruel efforts of Nyarlathotep, then Azathoth exists to increase the puissance of other's magic. It is difficult to see the circumstances under which a magician could summon the god for greater power and then continue other endeavors but it is from such miracles that apocalypses are made.

It is possible to see Azathoth as endlessly manipulated by his lessers in might but superiors in lore, such as Nyarlathotep. He is therefore popular amongst madmen who see themselves as persecuted. Vengeance against ones nemeses is sworn upon its name. A common mistake made is to view Azathoth as a ruling god, a kind of king of kings, lord of cosmic lords. A fatal error, as it is antithetical to the cosmic irony that sees the greatest actually the least. Those

who seek rulership under the Daemon Sultan quickly see their magic horribly failing, with all due fatal consequence.

## Chaugnur Faugn

To those who would worship the god with an elephant's head, there must be a warning. Chaugnur Faugn is cruel and capricious, living only to feed off sentients. He is approached by magicians who seek to manipulate human life, especially in controlling evolution, using magic to make choices over which traits to select for. Faugn is particularly pleased to raise up life for its own worship. Magicians can appeal to the god's vanity. It is also a god for whom blood is delicacy and can be offered the red humor as a sacrifice and gift. Human blood may do but blood from other Mythos creatures is perhaps more acceptable, the more outré and dangerous, the better. The Tcho-Tcho magicians, whom ultimately owe their existence to this god, serve it in hopes of being evolved into higher life forms.

Chaugnur Faugn is a god to whom predation and worship are givens of existence. Those who seek dominance over their fellows, who seek to pervert natural forces biological creation best seek him out. Rousing this senescent god from his slumber requires fabulous sacrifice and elaborate ritual pleading, including self-mutilation.

The rewards are worthwhile, as he is a powerful, active being who enjoys watching little conquerors about their work.

## Cthulhu

Of all the dread powers who lurk in the hidden places of the earth, there is no single one closer to us in spirit to us than Great Cthulhu. Nor are there any closer to coming amongst us in all glory. Cthulhu has a special plan for this world and as a magician and priest of the Outer Gods, his distant cousins, he is close to magicians. Not for Cthulhu the antiseptic high magic of the refined magi. No, the Great Lord is a shamanic, theriomorphic figure who plans to bring to humans a Paradise in which we shall laugh and revel and kill. Latin chanting and passes with magic wands avail not the magician seeking the attention of Cthulhu. The magic of blood and bone, orgy and psychotropics, unbound hedonism and algonaic dancing are how one walks with this god, who plans an eschaton of pure spiritual agony and Ecstasy

Cthulhu manifests himself on the earth through dreams and perhaps, therefore, has ties to the Dreamlands. However, artists, poets, fringe scientists, psychics and other 'sensitive' kinds of humans are receptive to his touch. Indeed, many a magician has been set on their course by the Sleeper in R'lyeh. Magicians seeking inspiration may Invoke Cthulhu for techniques involving Dreamlands magic. Cthulhu might be a common figure of worship amongst Dreamlands magicians, who see the way he effortlessly shapes the stuff of that dimension.

Pleasure seekers, sensates and those who want magic to create extraordinary mental states in themselves and others work with the Great Old Ones. Any primitive, almost infantile need in humans is served by the Sleeper. Cthulhu, who has winged his way between galaxies, is a patron of those who go their dark way in safety, and magic concerning traveling can also be made in his name.

## Cthugha

Those who approach Cthugha have one and only goal – destruction. The

Lord of Fire Vampires is so utterly alien as to be unapproachable on any psychic or communicative level. The god seethes with the forces of suns and even the most minor of his manifestations is enough to scar the world. Magicians who seek after fire do so for power, for the desire to make anew, destroying what has come

before. Drastic acts of healing may be possible under the annealing, destructive power of Cthugha. This is a desperate action as fire heals in violent fashions. Cthugha delights in its capacity to destroy, to burn and he is most easily persuaded to undertake such actions. When it is about its work it cares not for any higher loyalty or goal and so has been used as a weapon of last resort for those seeking to defeat the Mythos, although the god is, of course, indiscriminate.



Those who seek various kinds of rebirth also seek out Cthugha and in his name ritually destroy all that was their own life.

A curious side-effect of summoning the god is that, if it goes wrong, the shadow-god Yomagn'tho may appear. While seemingly sharing the fiery nature of its twin or nemesis, Yomagn'tho takes the shape of a flower. Why this should be is unknown but it is taken as a sign by some magicians of a symbol of randomness and therefore some gamblers also approach Cthugha.

## **Dagon and Hydra**

Neither god nor mortal, the immortal rulers of the Deep Ones represent something new and potent from the point of view of the thaumaturgist. Some believe they are on the point of ascending into a new thing, Great Young Ones, if you will. Others suspect that some mystery of faith, shared and acted upon by their species across millions of years, is forcing upon them an apotheosis. Others think they are simply big Deep Ones. In the world of magic, the symbol is often as important as the reality and many sorcerers have begun to pray to and work with these beings seeing results. This is an isolated occurrence, almost entirely confined to Deep One crossbreeds and the organizations that rally around them, such as the famed Esoteric Order of Dagon.

Magic worked in their name is that of the ocean, brutal and chilling. Secrets uncovered, mysteries plumbed. The sea, the ancient hidden world, the ultimate threshold, is their place of power and so those seeking to cross over into new

worlds curry their favor. Those seeking power over other mortals also do well to deal with the crowned heads of the seas. Simple magic such as safe travel is also in their power to give, a sign that the lords of the Deeps are not yet beyond mundane concerns.

Dagon and Hydra are easy gods to Evoke and will come in person easily to deal and barter with mortals. They are strange and ancient but not imponderable. However, to create favorable alliance, terrible costs must be paid. The Deep Ones forever need healthy humans of breeding age for their terrible program of miscegenation.

## **Daoloth**

Surely there are few gods as strange as the Render of the Veils. Daoloth exists outwith entirely the very notion of three-dimensional space, vanishing upwards into areas of conceptual space the human mind is mechanically unequipped to imagine, yet alone understand. Its lack of concern with any biological concern means it is only approached in certain circumstances. Those who are interested in cosmogony and cosmology are foremost as Daoloth holds many secrets about the formation of the universe. Daoloth's capacity to expand infinitely means it can outrace time effortlessly and so seers and prophets might also attend the God.

## **Eihort**

There are few gods more active than the alien god Eihort. Locked away in the Severn Valley, the god ceaseless roils, cursing its imprisonment and



longing for sacrifice. Eihort is a sadistic god and best not approached at all in the flesh. It has no use for humans except as receptacles for its brood. Cunning magicians who can contact the god find that it will grant certain favors in return for sacrifices of humans who will bear its young. Those desperate to bear young or reproduce in any form are best serviced by the god. Those imprisoned, longing for freedom might also pray to this trapped god, of course, how they will sacrifice is another matter. Curiously, despite the famous 'Eihort's Bargain', the god is utterly uninterested in any form of barter except that which allows it to breed. Eihort grants much power, much knowledge of the bearing of children to those who bring it lives.

## Glaaki

Glaaki, amongst the least of the Great Old Ones, is a god that approachable by minor sorcerers and those who have no time or leisure to approach the greater gods. Glaaki has no interests except in spreading its cult and being freed from its durance. Those budding necromancers attempting to create undead are often aided by Glaaki, who has long had the dead perform its work. Indeed, his expertise in creating zombies and such like cause many practitioners to seek out the inhabitant of the lake. Otherwise, Glaaki has little truck with magicians.

## Ghroth

There are few beings in the universe that inspire such awe as the Nemesis Star, Ghroth. Madmen prophecy it's

coming, species die under its gaze and where it goes, Old Ones wake joyously, the stars made right at last.

Sorcerers love Ghroth. He is vastly powerful with a consciousness the size of a planet, utterly unable to focus on something as miniscule as a human. Or even in some cases, other Old Ones. However Ghroth's every action, thought and motion is one of cosmic significance and therefore is of severe magical potency. While Ghroth cannot be approached in any sense of the word, Invoking his name adds considerable power in any rite. His existence is a secret even other races of the Mythos know nothing about, so any human aware of the Nemesis Star has a source of great occult power. This translates in gaming terms to a simple boost in success to any magic, simply by mentioning the name of the god. Great astrologies are predicted by these magicians, especially those that deal with colossal devastation. Other rites associated with Ghroth include initiation of the magician and he is Invoked at the beginning of truly great works.

Working with Ghroth gives great powers but also risks great danger. The Harbinger is not as unaware as he may seem of those who use his name. His great eye, big as continents, sees through interstellar space. Those marked by him are marked also by other agents of the Old Ones, who will instantly note the magician as something to be swatted aside. Not all the Mythos races desire the End Times and those who work with Ghroth are their enemies.

## Hastur

One of the most mysterious of all the Gods, Hastur is nonetheless a popular god to work with. Hastur has popularly become known as the god of entropy but has also been closely identified with concepts surrounding decadent and transgressive art. Due to Hastur's love of using powerful symbols and metaphors to drive humanity deeper into black mental states and his usage of books and complex virtual theatre, many magicians feel Hastur is a fine patron. Hastur, in his little understood role as both King in Yellow, universal decay, and the Dweller in Hali, also serves as a god of mystery. When things need hiding, or revealing, it is Hastur who is Invoked.

Magicians who believe Hastur a useful god are of course right and terribly wrong both. Hastur will give power to magicians who seek to influence the mind and hearts of other humans. Wizards who create Workings that destabilize the human heart of, even better, educate society about the nihilistic truth of the universe will receive his support. Those magicians who seek to create grimoires or complex spells that exist within art (hidden symbols in paintings, strange phrasings with poems, that sort of thing) are quickly rewarded by Hastur. Unfortunately, the god's idea of reward is damaging: Hastur feels that magicians are amongst his preferred worshippers and enjoys teaching them personally, often in Carcosa, his bleak surreal home. Many a time has the King In Yellow, Hastur's avatar, manifested to magicians, whispered secrets to them, only to have a broken servant beg to be taken back to that strange world Hastur calls his domain.

Sooner or later, even the strongest of wills breaks down while in contact with the King. It is, after all, his nature.

The Yellow Sign is Hastur's personal seal and magicians Invoke it when they need to focus his attention, or marshal magical forces. Magicians use it in rites often as it magnifies the strange entropic energies of the god.

It would be wrong to summon Hastur for the purposes of devastation. The God acts slowly and with a lethiferous, subtle grace. The King In Yellow serves to sever bonds and break hearts and open minds, not kill and maim. Those who do call upon Hastur for such action may find the god taking offence at such crudities.

## Ithaqua

Fear, ice, the hunt. Ithaqua is the god of those magicians who turn their art into a weapon. Few sorcerers are crueler, or more dangerous, than those who turn to the Windwalker for their magic. If one is dealing with the magic of ice, what is in it, creating it, destroying it, Ithaqua is the logical patron. But this god's true love is to hunt and to destroy living things. There is no subtlety to the god, no compassion. It has no interest in deals, in occult knowledge or the complex degradation of the soul. It wants to kill things and it wants things killed. When the magician requires the strength for murder, here is the god that will grant such power. A warning: Ithaqua has no tolerance for patience, elaborate plots and such like will only see him angered. None of which will disgust him as much a failure.

Ithaqua is known to be linked with the Wendigo, a myth of anthropomorphized cannibalism. When human flesh must be eaten and the ghoul gods are not approachable, Ithaqua makes a useful substitute. He grants the memories of skills of the eaten to the eater.

## Magnum Innominandum

The Great Unnamable is a being about which much is written but little is known. Some scholars link it with Hastur, some nominate it as the husband of Shub-Niggurath. Others go so far as to say it is the lost mind and soul of Azathoth and should body and corpus be reunited, the Stars will come right for always. Others still name it the heir of Azathoth, a Daemon Prince. The only thing truly known about the Magnum is that it cannot be named. Whatever conditions govern its birth, it suffers the singular curse or blessing that no being, god or mortal, has found what to call it and so it exists only hidden by titles. For magicians, it is therefore the ultimately dangerous entity and should never, under any circumstance, be Evoked.

Sorcerers are not known for their obedience to rules and for those mad or brave enough to attempt that Working, singular power may be their reward. While this being cannot be mastered by normal Summoning, those who somehow had the Power to bind it to their will could conceivably gain access to spells and knowledge that no other being in the cosmos can lay claim to. For some mad mages, here is the holy grail of Evocation.

## Mordiggian

For the magician, Mordiggian is a complex god. The lord of the ghouls, the eater of the dead, the destroyer of undead, the Plague King is a master of many domains the magician is conceivably interested in. Death magic, immortality, gaining memories through anthrophagous practice, knowledge, strength, these and all other necromancies are all in the domain of Mordiggian. Yet the ancient god is a fierce protector of his charges and refuses to allow simple blood feasting. For Mordiggian, death is a complex, morbidly beautiful affair. Therefore, while the necromancer wishing to tamper with death must approach this god for power, any blasphemy will be met with swift punishment. Ghouls work Mordiggian's will with a zealot's pride. Approaching the Ghoul God too often bears a unique curse, a slow transformation into a ghoul. Many a necromancer has the canine features of that race.

Mordiggian has a personal distaste for the corporeal undead. If he encounters those who wander the wrong side of the grave, Mordiggian attempts to feast upon them.

Magicians who have a reason to face off against Glaaki and its servitors and allies are often rewarded by the Ghoul God.

It is also important to note the Mordiggian is not interested in spiritual matters. Those who seek to contact the dead, if such a thing is possible, must seek out an altogether darker god.

Entering Mordiggian's good graces requires the internment of corpses. A simple funeral might not suffice, but the grim rites of the Air Burial per-

haps will. As would, say, mass cremation and the like. Mordiggian has no use for murder.

## Nodens

The universe is filled with malignant, puissant beings. Many of these are dangerous to even think of, let alone approach or swear by. Nodens is perhaps the only one who has goals and needs that are remotely beneficial to humanity. Many claim that Nuadda Silver Hand, the great Faerie King is a remembrance of or mask of Nodens. It is a mistake to view Nodens as a friend to humans but his great rivalry with Nyarlathotep means the magicians who choose to work against the agencies of the Mythos, especially the Crawling Chaos, will receive generous rewards. The Lord of the Nightgaunts freely distributes his silent host to magicians who serve him. Part of the reason Nodens is a popular god for magicians is the ease of his summons. The clarion call of a hunting horn is often all he requires.

Nodens is often referred to by the ancients as Snarer or Catcher. Nodens aids all magicians who hunt or seek out lost things. Those who seek out barbaric war with lesser minions of the Old Ones may also gain power if they approach Nodens.

A warning: many assume that Nodens title, Lord of the Great Abyss is actually that of Da'at, or Daath, a complex cabbalistic notion meaning 'Reason'. This would indicate that Nodens is in fact devoted to snaring more than monsters. Modern magicians, noting that Daath sits upon a Great Abyss, a rift on the Tree of Life, believe Nodens may be more sinister than noted. Daath is guarded by the

great demon Choronzon, who destroys the ego of those magicians unready for enlightenment. It may be that Nodens is only a face of some great evil, joyfully presenting an easy mask to dissuade magicians from drawing on the full power of the Dweller in the Abyss.

## Nyarlathotep

There is no god more complex, motivated and hard to fathom as Nyarlathotep. Contemptuous of the masters he utterly serves, bringing power and secrets to a humanity he sneers at, the Crawling Chaos is unbound by human cognition. Yet, he is also the cornerstone to the magician concerned with the Great Ones.

There is one key to keep in mind when dealing with Nyarlathotep and it is that he delights in giving power and secrets. Magicians can Invoke, perhaps Evoke (although this is a trick the god plays) Nyarlathotep with surprising ease. The Crawling Chaos is inclined to swap what it considers baubles of power in return for wholly personal sacrifices. Mothers slitting the throats of their children, wizards throwing spell books onto fires, politicians insulting the base, businessmen burning monies, all of these things will buy his favor. Then, yes, he will give you what you want. Nevertheless, Nyarlathotep is the proverbial monkey's paw, the Djinn out of the bottle and he is why the magician is careful with what they wish for. The Mighty Messenger is delighted by failure, strife and more than anything, wasted effort. When the scientist's research is co-opted by the military, when the five years sober woman goes on a binge, the god is there. Magicians are granted

Evocations without bindings, the keys to resurrecting loved ones but only as ghouls, the power to slay monsters but only if those monsters have mothers who come looking for the slayers of their children. Nyarlathotep often laughs but never smiles and lives in the heart of black irony.

Those who Invoke Nyarlathotep are seldom in a position to do so twice. Magicians who view him as a patron are few. Accomplished magicians few the summoning of the Mighty Messenger as a thing left only to the relentlessly amateurish and stupid. Only the desperate and ignorant do so. Yet all magicians are wise to praise the name of Nyarlathotep.

## Nyogtha

In the deep caverns, miles below the surface of our planet crawls Nyogtha. The Dark god is useful for assassin sorcerers, who know that Nyogtha favors those who walk silently, about the doings of their own cruel will. Appeased with screams of pain over dark gulfs, Nyogtha rewards any undertaking which is done in darkness, which requires secrecy. The black oozing god will also aid those who seek out the truly ancient secrets in the honeycombed crust and mantle of the world.

## Shub-Niggurath

Except for Cthulhu, the Black Goat enjoys perhaps the most widespread worship on earth. Mother-goddess figure, since the days of the Stone Age humans have looked to her fecund mysteries as sources of awe and wonder. Contemporary cultists have come to link Shub-Niggurath

with the principles behind biological life, the mystery of cell division and osmosis. Where life exists on any scale, the womb of Shub-Niggurath is at work.

Many cults have prayed and Invoked in the Black Goat's name and often are ignorant to the truth behind the matron they think they serve. Shub-Niggurath is notable as a god that will often seek out worship, not because she requires it for the sake of vanity but rather she is evangelical in her desire to create life. Her Dark Young, special children and emissaries are, often sworn over to her worshippers. Rites of the Black Goat centre around sex and fertility.

Those magicians who Work with the goddess look to her for the creation of life. While many gods are eager to work changes upon biological organisms, only Shub-Niggurath can create life spontaneously and in enormous abundance. What she comes in contact with enjoys massive growth as Shub-Niggurath promotes permanent growth and expansion. She acts with a completely practical nature, devoid of sentimentality, to protect creatures that are pregnant. Those who seek to protect their own life will also call on the Goddess as she detests killing. She will not retard old age and she will not act to protect her magicians except against murder. The work of entities that advocate only destruction and death will tempt her intervention.

Sorcerers who work with Shub-Niggurath tend to mutate as the god's luxurious bounty is given to all. These magicians might grow to great height, well over seven feet, put on tremendous weight or even grow extra limbs or organs.

## Shudde M'ell

Like Dagon, there may be some controversy over the deific status of this being and like Dagon, it is ultimately irrelevant. Giant Chthonian or god, it matters not. Shudde M'ell is potent enough to provide power to those willing to seek it. Those who seek to shake the earth and who long for breaking may also approach this sadistic being.

The Great Worm is often confused with Crom Cruach, the Earthdog and shares similar concerns. Those who seek out things buried, geological mysteries and suchlike would be wise to call upon M'ell. However, the god is fond of destruction and it is often the only thing that will attract his attention.

## Tsathoggua

There is a difference between malignity and apathy and Tsathoggua fits clearly into the latter division. This god, long sort out by sorcerers is only rarely concerned with the doings of the world beyond his lair in Voormidraeth and then, it is only when magicians seek him out. It is because of his disinterest in little beside rest and sleep and his willingness to let petitioners and visitors live that he is often worked with by magicians. A renowned interstellar traveler, Tsathoggua is sought out by diviners who want his knowledge of the stars, those who seek to travel through the great voids of space and those who wonder at the ancient histories of things. This god is old and from a family even older and has seen much. Tsathoggua, despite his own laziness and sloth, is something of a scholar of the true history of the universe and those seeking out

occult lore of the gods and races and secret histories had best swear by him. Like many of the gods, he also knows much about the creation of life.

A note about this strange god is that he prizes politeness, etiquette and manners. Sorcerers either swearing by his name or invoking him had best do so with respect and consideration. Sacrifices of rare gems, oils and such like will find his rewards worthwhile.

## Yig

Of all the Great Ones, Yig is perhaps the closest to normal earthly life. Ancient, even by the reckoning of other Gods, Yig is served by reptiles, some of the oldest extant biological life forms on the planet. By extension, birds too are his domain. Yig represents power over the world of animals, especially any which is scaled or feathered. More than this, Yig is perhaps the being which has existed on earth for the longest unbroken period of time. Some see this as indicative that Yig is in some way protective of his ancient brood and would work against the more macrocosmically destructive Powers. Yig grants his rewards to those who therefore seek to prevent the extinction of life. He enjoys control over some of the most dangerous natural animals on the earth. Due to his close association with longevity, those who seek to extend their own life, as well as those who require access to titanically ancient recollection come to Yig. In return, the Snake Father demands the magician care for and defend his own.

## Yog-Sothoth

‘Yog-Sothoth knows the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the key and the guardian to the gate. Past, present, and future are one in Yog-Sothoth.’

Yog-Sothoth is the God of Sorcerers. Supreme deity amongst those who crave plundering the secrets of all time and space, opening up the hidden like it was butcher’s work. Yog-Sothoth exists in all places, immune to trickery and treachery. Forever outside of the universe, forever inextricably linked to it by pale avatars, Yog-Sothoth and its million spheres are the ultimate devil, willing to make pacts with humans in return for knowledge.

Long rumored to be, in terms we understand, a king or Archduke to the Court of the Daemon Sultan, Yog-Sothoth is considered, with Shug-Niggurath and Azathoth, to be the mightiest of beings the universe has ever seen. Not Yibb-Tsill or Daoloth or any other god has the minute and magnificent understanding of all process this god does.

Human magicians have long linked Yog-Sothoth with the Yuga, the time of great change. Perhaps the very notion of time and change, especially on cosmic, aeonic levels, are the faint traces of the God left from before it barring from the universe. Yog-Sothoth cannot ever bring his full power to bear as he seems to suffer from some Great Old One-like ban from action and can only wear faint masks to act in four dimensional space.

These avatars are one of the reasons why the All-in-One is considered the greatest of patrons for magicians. If one can travel to the Dreamlands and

survive its dangers, there Umr at-Tawil, the veiled and almost human face of the Outer God can be approached and bargained with. The Ancient Ones, who attend the avatar, may be those magicians lucky enough to take service with the God. No other god, with the possible exception of Nyarlathotep, is so approachable and all skilled magicians know the Crawling Chaos has agendas no mortal can long tolerate. The fact that Yog-Sothoth is approachable, perhaps even reasonable and sensible makes it unique amongst all the Outer Gods.

Of course, the benefits are weighed by risk. Yog-Sothoth has two agendas that it pursues with geological patience. The first is the desire to somehow enter fully back into the four-dimensional universe. Some believe it seeks to consume all life, all energy, all fission, all expansion, all, until void remains. Some believe Yog-Sothoth simply wished to effect enormous changes in the ordering of that universe, ushering a new era upon all of creation. Of course, few would believe that this could be perceived by anything less than apocalypse. Magicians dealing with the All-in-One will eventually be called to act upon this agenda in daring, ultimately sickeningly insane, missions that fracture all understanding of reality.

The second of the God’s agendas is a simple curiosity concerning the laws of the four dimensions. Yog-Sothoth invests part of the worlds with its essence, breeding children if only to see what a fragment of an infinite-dimensional entity can achieve in four. The Dunwich Horror was such an experiment. Those sorcerers who aid the god may find themselves called upon to act contrary to the

most basic human morality as the god toys with the physics of our universe.

Those sorcerers who do approach and swear by Yog-Sothoth are perhaps the greatest of their kind. Physical laws of the universe, time and space, life and death and all manner of vast secrets belong to the All-in-One. Travel to times and dimensions, worlds and galaxies, the stuff of stars and black holes and more can be given to these brave magicians. All for the cost of betraying the space-time we know.

he should receive the required help. In mechanics terms, this will mean temporary boosts to skills, SAN, POW, whatever the investigator requires will the Operation is taking place. The gods are not limited in what they can offer a magician. They will reward service as they see fit, after the service has been performed. They may grant a magician power at the outset of a mission for the god, making the magician an agent of inhuman powers. Remember, always, that the Old Gods version of rewards tend to vary considerably from what humans might expect.

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## Rules for Rewards

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The gods reward what they find pleasing. There is of course no hard and fast mechanism for deciding this. The Keeper must decide on what would appeal to their own imagined version to the god. Sometimes this is easy. ("We want to Contact Cthugha to help us drown the valley!" "It says no") but other times might be complex. Ultimately, if a magician keeps in mind the ultimate attributes and goals of the god, plus makes all his rolls and keeps his sanity together,



# Chapter Seven

## Mythos Races and Magic

Lovecraft used magic sparingly, keeping it as a force expressed only in times of great need, powerful and strange. Often it is a corrupting presence. The sorcerer Waite possesses bodies and destroys lives in his quest for immortality. In common with Noah Whateley, even his own family is unsafe from his machinations. Whateley, of course, gave up even his daughter to Yog-Sothoth, in a particularly horrid manifestation. Curwen killed magically at whim.

Yet Henry Armitage used his own few sorcerous abilities to stand against a demi-god. This is perhaps the only example in Lovecraft's work wherein magic is a force for 'good'. Magic is almost always a tool of ruthless men and women who have goals that are antithetical to a sane human. Immortality, congress with demons, knowledge and the conversation of titanic gods beyond the scope of spacetime are all goals of the magician.

Even magicians who manage to keep a hold of their sanity, strictly speaking, rarely maintain ideals and values congruent with civilisation after too much contact with god and monsters. A game based strictly on Lovecraftian principles should, therefore, have little to no direct contact with magic except as a threatening force.

Of course, traditionally, Call of Cthulhu games rely heavily upon spells and artifacts, allowing the Investigators to use magic of their own to defeat the Mythos and their human pawns. Nor do games traditionally have to include cosmic horrors. A haunted house betimes works as well as a reality incursion from beyond Venus or a giant space lobster prepared to eat Paris. In these more subdued cases, it is not unreasonable for a gentle ritual of exorcism, persuading rather than forcing a ghost to move on, may be the goal of a game session. It's not always squid gods.

Of course, games are games and not novels and rare is it to find the player who does not long after occult secrets. Especially in a game like Cthulhu in which the odds are long and the rewards slight, the notion of getting their hands on real power, a real weapon against the malign gods seems to be one hard to resist. Plus, the role of occult investigator is a popular one amongst the latter writers in the Lovecraft circle. From Shrewsbury to Crow, figures armed with mystic forces standing against the dark gods is the order of the day.

## Magic & the Investigator

Magic, from the point of view of the Investigator, is often a constant source of harassment and a last ditch weapon against the forces of the Mythos. Any brave soldier in the war against the Old Gods can tell of winged horrors sent against them in the night or last minute Operations that sent companions mad, all to keep some nameless thing asleep. Some investigators may have even learned a spell or two, an ace in the sleeve or a constantly primed grenade. After all, most Investigators are sooner or later going to find an ancient tome or the scrawled notes of a madman or a strange code on a compact disc or mimeograph. Yet, magic is often denied Investigators and Keepers are suggested to keep its appearance and utility sparing. It is the tool of the villain. Yet in a world where all victory is only meaningful subjectively, perhaps the Keeper can be encouraged to let magic out and into the world, now and again.

## Magic as a Weapon

For an investigator, there can be few joys more visceral than summoning up something terrible and having it obey. After a career in which monsters are dodged, people implode without warning, weird chants are heard in cemeteries and rites are foiled at the last second, the thrill of gaining power is a heady rush. Perhaps it should be.

It is something of a cliché that a Call of Cthulhu adventure ends with the creation of a magic sword/whistle/amulet or perhaps the last minute performance of a rite, or its destruction. This

is fine, of course but it is unreasonable to expect that Investigators, who keep seeing this kind of thing in action, never preempt their enemies and come with spells blazing. So let them. The game isn't about constantly losing, after all. It's about only winning the small battles, only being able to salvage a little bit of hope while the stars shift ever righter. Giving the players a weapon every now and again is a good change of pace and, of course, no matter how powerful the magic they will never enable them to blast Cthulhu with a D20 fireball. Allow them the chance to wield strange forces now and again and let them be satisfied. Occult detective is a popular archetype and an Investigator who has chosen to devote their life to the magical and funerary customs of, say, the Tibetan Book of the Dead is going to be well disposed to the practice of Bon Magic anyway. It's not a stretch that sooner or later, this fellow will take the book down off the shelf and begin to sketch out some sigils... Lovecraft himself gives us the perfect antecedent for this in *The Dunwich Horror*. Professor Armitage cracks the books, finds the Powder of Ibn Ghazi and does away with the beast. An ancient sorcerer has his spell reversed and so he falls into salt in another tale. If it was good enough for the master, it's good enough for us.

One of the great problems with magic is that it is unpredictable. Cthulhu is first and foremost a game of investigation. Finding the scribbled telephone number, realizing she wore a wig all along, gauging the depths of the footprints, digging up local town ordinances to see why the church was rezoned. Magic can have a dangerous impact on the progression of an Investigation and can take all the real mystery out of the game. The simple answer is, don't include spells that can

damage this. No X-ray eyes or telepathy. No psychometry or spells that basically stuff up the flow or information players can access. This is relatively easy. Evocation and Invocations are the two main forms of magic every Cthulhu game should be based on. Both of which are likely to aid an investigator in dodging the police or questioning the small man with the bowl haircut and sharpened teeth.

If you do want spells in your campaign with the potential to unbalance game play, simply cheat. Investigators are meant to get the clues anyway and ultimately solve the riddle so let them. In the end, machine gunning the master of the Hastur worshippers or smashing him to bits with the Grasp of Nyogtha makes little difference. Sending a Spectral Hunter into a museum to steal the stellae is not going to truly disrupt the flow of the game if they would otherwise burgle the joint.

If the Investigators grow too reliant on magic, they may seek out more and more of it, taking more risks, crossing lines they previously dared not. Perhaps an interesting twist to a campaign may be the realization that, all of a sudden, Investigators are investigating them.

The Keeper may also wish to elevate his game, ramp it up, as it were, with the use of magic. While this can be hazardous to the overall theme of Call of Cthulhu, magic is a way of interacting with the gods and monsters of the universe. Don't be afraid of its power. It is of course foolish and contrary to have an Investigator face of Cthulhu on a bridge with a sword and staff but magic may allow a game to go places it normally wouldn't. An investigation of the Isle of R'lyeh, or an extended vacation in Leng for example. Allow a group to face down a freed Star Spawn

threatening a small Welsh town with an old rite. Blast that cult with a lightning storm they control. However, never let magic overshadow the fact that there is no victory to be had. That Star Spawn may be utterly defeated but allow a denouement wherein the jubilant, victorious investigators realize it was simply the first of a colony just off shore and the weakest of its kind were buried most shallowly.

## Magic as Trap

Having troubles bringing down the prominent local Senator who you know but can never prove is in the Cthulhu Cult? Curse him. Want to break into the local university library but know the security guard has been briefed about you? Hire a Dimensional Shambler and steal it. Or why not just go the whole way and have a Shoggoth tear a hole through the wall, kill the guard and take what you want? After all, you're Investigators and mages and the end justifies the means.

## Magic Can Be a Slippery Slope

If you want to examine themes in your game regarding power and its corrupting presence, introduce magic. Allow your players some 'easy' wins. Let them hypnotize the local police, mayor, drug dealer, whoever. Let them blast a Sand Dweller or ghoul into powder. Give them a bound servitor. Magic is power and let it be powerful.

Plan it out, though. Throwing magic in randomly because you want your players to win some is a fast track to a less than Lovecraftian fantasy

game. Setting things up for a tragic fall, however, is fine storytelling. Hubris and Nemesis are old ways to tell a tale.

An example: Using a few spells, the investigators have shut down the local ring of decadents who are using drugs from Carcosa, so bringing terrible things into the world during their fugues. Banishing spells, summoning lesser monsters to fight the figments, even going so far as to destroy a chapter house of a cult with magic. Locally, the forces of the Mythos are dealt a resounding defeat. The investigators feel confident in their abilities as sorcerers. Later, Deep Ones are haunting a local fishing village. A Deep One sorcerer is present who is able to counter the Investigator magic. The Keeper then cleverly allows a Deep One fetish to fall into Investigator hands. Renewed, relying once again on magic, the Deep Ones are soundly thrashed.

But our old friends, the Hastur-worshippers are back and hungry for revenge. Their god has changed them, given them power and influence. All through the city, the King in Yellow corrupts officials. The Investigators are under siege both legally and supernaturally. Something must be done as not even the new Deep One magic is going to get them out of this. Research leads the Investigators to be aware of the feud between Hastur and Cthulhu. Already reliant on magic, it shouldn't be hard for the Investigators to make the leap to looking for the magic of the Sleeper. Of course, making sacrifices and looking for the favors of Cthulhu have their own dangers. Hedonistic orgies, even ritual human sacrifice might be the only way to gain the power to survive this.

Magic corrupts on a less than spectacular scale. It can change the magician. If you've passed through a gate to a far world, if you've screamed out words in perverse tongues that forced ancient colors to do your bidding, if you've forged a sword that cuts through reality, sometimes it becomes easy to view people without your skills as complete lessers. Joseph Curwen, the mad mage of *The Strange Case of Charles Dexter Ward* was certainly of this breed of wizard.

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## Alien Magic

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Humans are, of course, not the only ones capable of performing miracles. There are many, many races throughout the vast universe and other domains. Some are rationalists, like the Great Race, dealing with the predictable certainties of cause and effect. While their skills and dominance over time may seem miraculous, they view them as natural a reflex as we view clenching our fists. Others, such as the Mi-Go, may have concepts of rationality that are unfathomable to the scientific laws of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Sand Dwellers might have a primitive folk magic belief system. Others still, like the Serpent Folk, are aware that there are powers in the universe that only approach those who use the old ways, the luring of blood and suffering. The following section tries to capture the mood and feel of some of the races of the Mythos who would use powers that they would consider existing outwith the four dimensions of measurable reality.

When designing magic used by Mythos races, more important than lists of spells and rites and loot the

Investigator can take from the bodies, is a theme. A kind of unifying series of images, moods, motifs and sensations. The Deep Ones, masters of the oceans, are hardly likely to be worshipping flames. The technologically advanced, utterly moral Yithians are not about to be screaming out to Shub-Niggurath. Again, take a leaf from Lovecraft's book and view the cultural, racial magic of the Mythos as a series of plot devices and thematic elements, rather than trying to make up spell lists and modifiers for race. What feels right will be right.

## Deep One Magic

In a civilization where there is no fire, no electricity, all physical interaction takes place in three dimensions and proof of horrible gods exist all around, magic tends to be rather more readily available. The Deep Ones, ancient servants to Cthulhu and their own lord, Dagon, are inured in magic and a particularly brutal magic it is. The 'palaeogean magic of the forgotten Old Ones'.

The Deep Ones deal with their physical environment in a way humans never truly have to be concerned about. Rising too high leaves them in the upper air, where they are more vulnerable to exposure. Sinking too low and they have to deal with the crushing pressures and even more dangerous predators than they. The Deep Ones also have an urge to miscegenation, which would indicate that the reproductive habits of the Deep Ones are unstable or that they are working to some grand unification between their species and humanity. With all this to consider, it is no wonder that the Deep Ones

magic is based around their own survival and continuance of their religious goals.

Deep One sorcery is a reflection of these racial strivings. It places an emphasis on control of the environment, on stealth and on the commandment and seduction of the human race. Their spells include creating currents, creating waves, creating storms. Their priests and shamans use their powers to delve down into the dark places beneath the sea where even monsters fear to swim and emerge with dark treasure. Seventy percent of the earth is theirs, in realms inaccessible to humanity. More, the Deep Ones have knowledge not their own, access to the ruins of civilizations ancient, predating the Age of Reptiles and the ear of the Great Old Ones.

Deep Ones do not often use a written language. Clearly, paper and ink are not suitable tools with which to record information. Our one glimpse at the Deep One city of Y'ha-Nthlei refers to a place of phosphorescent many-terraced mansions with gardens of strange leprous corals and grotesque brachiated efflorescence. Stone is the medium by which the Deep Ones build and as such communicate literally with hieroglyphs and other permanent writing. Because of the difficulty of physically creating such scribing, the Deep Ones also have a strong tradition of oral history. Rites are remembered rote down the millennia of the Deep One's lives and do not change. Deep Ones who wish to learn magic must contact another powerful sorcerer and be tutored over time. This is a process that takes hundreds of years as the Deep Ones are leisurely beings. With a lifespan of many hundreds of thousands of years, there is

no need to rush. Private tutoring is the only way to learn in this culture and then all information is passed on orally, from master to student.

Younger Deep Ones might turn their attention to the strangely primitive yet advanced biotechnology of the race, or volunteer for the breeding schemes rather than be attracted to the occult arts. Deep One society places strong emphasis on family tradition and so it may be that only those firstborn or some other property of birth may be allowed to study magic. The others have roles to fill as required by the family need and propriety.

## Deep One Rites

The most important part of Deep One magic is propitiating Father Dagon and Mother Hydra and Cthulhu himself. The masters of the Deep Ones are alien even to them and must be served perfectly. Because the Deep Ones live so much closer to these mighty beings, they must serve them with care and perfection. Indeed, there is hints in Lovecraft that the Great Old Ones sometimes 'check' the Deep Ones. However, there is much to gain from this service.

Deep Ones are a sardonic race, immortal, surrounded by beauty, waging a silent war upon humankind for their own reasons, willing to wait hundreds of years for their sadistic breeding programs to subvert local populations. As such, the rituals of the Deep Ones are slow and beautiful things. Elaborate dances that can only take place in all the dimensions of the ocean, decorations of coral and fabulous gems, ancient songs of transcendental purity are only a few

of the elements the Deep One occultism take. Often great beasts of the seas are summoned both as watchers and participants in these events. Sharks wheel and dive with military precision, eager for bloodshed. Whales are tortured into providing haunting music with which Deep Ones enter their fine Gnosis. Giant squids link tentacles to provide summoning circles and demark ritual spaces. Slowly and surely these rituals take place over hours, days moving leisurely and ponderously to a climax.

The most common form of Deep One magic is summoning up the true beasts of the seas. Krakens from the hadal plains, breeds of sharks thought long extinct to the surface dwellers and other horrifying sea creatures no marine biologist has fever dreamt. Even the dreaded Shoggoths serve the great magicians of this race. The Deep Ones use the beings for many tasks and services. Defense is just one, as the USS Thresher discovered to its dismay. The batrachian ones also Evoke the Star Spawn frequently, from their dark beds and restless imprisonment. Through dealing with such malign beings, the Deep Ones better serve the will of the Gods. There are no finer sorcerers than the Deep Ones at binding these leviathans.

Because of the importance placed on race, hereditary and breeding by the Deep Ones much of their magic is focused on biological concerns. Although the Deep Ones have no concept of DNA as we know it, they maintain uncanny powers over it. Sorcerers in possession of a fragment of human skin, hair, teeth or any other DNA-bearing sample can cast Call Human, which works precisely in the same way as Call Deep

One, only reversed. This spell works on even fragmentary or diluted family heritage and may affect the distant ancestors of the sample's donor. They might be able to diagnose or cure diseases medical science cannot touch. In their roles as cuckoos and cuckolded the Deep Ones have developed magic for seduction, for fertility amongst their own kind as well as in humans. Deep Ones have a gift for telepathic communication, especially with those humans who bear some of their own blood.

An aspect of the racial magic of these beings is their immortality. A Deep One does not age and may in fact never die except through violence or possibly disease. This allows a fabulously long period in which to study magic. They understand truths about plate tectonics, marine biology and the nature of the hydrosphere humanity has yet to guess at. If a Keeper decides to include Platonic notions such as elemental beings and folkloric ideas such as spirits, the Deep Ones are known and well-feared by such beings.

If the Deep Ones are indeed kept in check by the Great Old Ones, it may also be that, from time to time, they have had to work against the gods and their servants. It is conceivable the Deep Ones have access to magic that works similarly to the Elder Sign and other prophylactic measures.

## Deep One Enchantments

The Deep Ones do not often use spells. They are creatures of slow and subtle thought and motion, taking all the time in the world to perfect their magic. The sudden crash and bang of Enchantments run counter to their viscous psychology.

What spells the Deep Ones do cast are practical in nature. Divining water currents, bringing lights to the dark depths, or temporary control of water are all spells used commonly. Deep Ones rarely use magic for combat, which they disdain anyway. Those ancient living fossils, the elderly Ones, have little use for fighting or are often physically capable enough to not need them.

## Deep One Artifacts

The Deep Ones create fantastic jewelry, most famously crowns, often for religious and magical purposes. For all their alien ways, one thing that they share with the human species is a sense of aesthetic and this shows in their construction of Magical Tools. With a lack of writing equipment, ceremonies become of more pronounced importance, as does the regalia used within it. With a lack of anything resembling industry, each one of these items is hand crafted over years, being selectively eroded by sea pressure and manual labor and shaped by the heat from smoker vents. They are forged from hematite, diamond, silver and other beautiful materials that are easily available under the water. The techniques for the creation of these devices can only be handed down from one master wizard to another. No records for the creation of these Tools exist, except perhaps to favored students of the maker. The forging of these items is a significant investment of time and effort.

This is balanced by the Deep Ones having some of the most powerful Magical Tools on earth. Often used over dozens of millennia, they absorb the powers and personalities

of those who use them. Human wielders of Deep One Tools often gain a feeling of cold cruel amusement. They work explicitly to strengthen the spells and rites of the Deep Ones, especially those which act upon the upper-air men. Having full ceremonial panoply also works in rites of Evocation. Bringing up a Xothian for a human involves locating a sleeper, sacrifices and hours of rites. A Deep One can do the same thing, with its Tools, in less time and with less effort. Many servants and agents of the Great Ones will respect the Deep Ones who have possession of these items. Humans may be dimly perceived as playthings or infestations to those beings but the Deep Ones, through many billions of years service to the High Priest Cthulhu, are known and noted, their magicians most of all.

## Humans and Deep One Magic

The Esoteric Order of Dagon represents a collection of the most capable of all the human magicians practicing Deep One magic. This Lodge often confers with their patrons, learning the ways of Dagon, being given the occult equivalent of crumbs from a rich man's table. Senior lodge members, almost always of Deep One blood, are given private training in the proper ways to worship Dagon and sometimes Cthulhu. The most senior, most capable and most ruthless of all Dagonites are given spells to bind Shoggoths, though this is rare. The most common magic taught is, of course, Summon Deep One. A few braver lodges may be granted access to the Star Spawn.

For all its alliance with the undersea race, the Esoteric Order is not a training school for magicians. It mainly serves as an intermediary for the Deep Ones. Magic given to the Lodge works only to the advantage of the Ones and is carefully prescribed as needed. Still, it remains one of the easiest and surest ways to gain magic concerning the beings of the abyssal ocean.

More rarely, humans come across the magical tools of the Deep Ones. Mainly the items humans gain are simply decorative but under rare circumstance, items of real power end up in mortal hands.

These artifacts work just as they do for the Deep Ones. They aid Evocations significantly and give humans power over tides and storm. Any cultist or sorcerer lucky enough to have come into possession of one of these precious things will no doubt be in contact with, or have mastery over, many aquatic horrors.

The downside to the possession of Deep One magical tools is that their creators will stop at nothing to get them back. These are not trifles but genuine expressions of Deep One power and pride. A human so much as gazing upon, let alone using these beautiful, fetishised things is repugnant and blasphemous to the Deep Ones. They are also dangerous in the wrong hands. Sooner or later, overconfident, the human magician will try to summon something no one could ever hope to control. The death of the human is, of course, not the problem but it is the Deep Ones who will have to live in an ocean with unbound horrors awake and agitated.

Finally, Deep One magic corrupts. Slowly, the alphabet of any human



DNA can be written over, reparsed. The exact mechanics of the Change from homo sapien to Deep One is complex and little understood but anyone with even a touch Deep One DNA will undergo an accelerated mutation into a monster if they use this magic. If no cross-breeding is a part of the magician's genetic inheritance, perhaps something worse lies in wait. Any dementia that develops as a part of using magic will manifest as a desire to become part sea-creature. A madness that might see radical surgery used to fuse ocean animal parts to the magician's own body. The Deep Ones tell with arch joy about a magician who had the temerity to master their magic, who now swims in eternal agony, sea urchins and starfish nailed to his skin, rough gill slits cut into his neck, dorsal fins sewed to his back...

## Serpent Folk Magic

Of all the Mythos races, the serpent men stand supreme as sorcerers. For three hundred million years, the Serpents have been known as magicians and scientists, often disregarding any difference between the two professions and philosophies. They have known the favors of two of the Great Ones themselves, Yig and Tsathoggua and known their curses as well. They have haunted every human civilization that has ever existed, as shadow puppeteers, as enemies, as wary allies, as hostile foes. Throughout the enormous span of geological time the Serpent Folk have existed, they have forever been studying magic.

Because of the extreme age of the race, it is important to note that the

style and capacity of magic of the average Serpent Folk changes. There are thought to be four kinds of Serpent.

**Degenerates** – Fallen Serpent Folk, devolved to primordial ways. They have no capacity with magic.

**Lurkers** – Modern Serpents, unwilling to retreat to their old fastnesses and holds. They are young and vital components of their culture but often too young to be grand powers.

**Dreamers** – Many millions of years ago, some of the race located and begun to worship Tsathoggua. Yig cursed the race but some moved to the Dreamlands to continue service to their new Lord. The Dreamers, due to their advanced age, patronage and location are great sorcerers.

**Sleepers** – Modern day Greenland is all that exists of the once vast empire of Hyperborea, long since destroyed by the restless float of continents. The First and Second Empires of the Serpent Folk are long destroyed but buried throughout the earth are Serpent Folk who hid themselves, sleeping like a snake in winter, waiting for a time to rise. Those Serpents who have risen in our age are Sleepers. Some are shocked by the new world; some see it as a challenge to be taken up and conquered. The Sleepers, some of whom have rested for 250 million years, are amongst the greatest magicians the world has ever seen.

Many of the Mythos races are unfathomably alien: the star vampires are blood seeking bags of plasma. The Dimensional Shamblers walk through superstrings like a man walks through rain and the Star-Spawn are magnificent monsters from truly distant planets. Next to these species,

the Snake Men are like brothers in our heads. They are another species, slow and deliberate, almost emotionless but they display cognition that at least overlaps with human notions and as such, Serpent Folk and human magic are freely interchangeable. Although their magic is much more widespread, much more elaborate and generally much stronger and deadlier than our own. The cool, refined intelligence of the race sees them working towards goals for centuries, gaining power and knowledge over aeons.

The Serpent People have several thematic components to their magic. First and foremost, the Ophidian ones work on long and complex ritae. The image of bubbling cauldrons, obscure languages and elaborate temple-laboratories is very much that of Serpent magic. They are obsessed with the creation of new life, refining old life, cross-breeding, studying and cataloguing biological phenomena. Unlike the Deep Ones, the Serpent Men have little truck with the Old Ones aside from polite religion and alliance, from a studied distance. Alchemy is another specialist area of the magicians of the race, who are forever looking for new poisons, new philters of transformation, targeted hallucinogenics and opiates and potions of immortality. The key to understanding the magic of these cold beings is that they seek to dominate and manipulate, wanting not to subvert or destroy as other races but rather to be in a position where no other race can ever damage them. They do not seek rulership or political power, merely a kind of splendid isolation where they cannot be interfered with, ever. Well do they remember the Vault of Zin and the Curse of Yig which saw them fall as a people.

Most Serpent Men of any rank, throughout their career and chilliad lifespan learn magic. It is considered the high point of academia for the species, the noble state that all learned and sophisticated beings move towards. Unlike the Deep Ones, who all strive towards a racial and theological purpose, the Serpent Folk coexist in a state of harmonious anarchy. Theirs is a society of individuals. Emperors and Priest Kings are deviations in their history and most of them therefore are free to study at their own pace and their own inclinations. Serpent wizardry is eclectic and done at the whim of each individual practitioner.

## Serpent Folk Rituals

To understand Serpent Folk Working, one must understand the religious schisms that have taken place over their ancient history. The Serpents were risen up over the rude beasts and given sentience and will by the Old God Yig. For what purpose this was done, we can never know but speculation by both rare human scholars and the Snake People themselves leans towards notions that Yig wished for himself a race of worshipers. For some two hundred and fifty million years, the Serpent Folk walked the earth, studying, watching, manipulating... and all the while, Father Yig watched over them. The relationship between Yig and his Children is one that is lost to time. Was he an active god? An indifferent one? Who can know? The centre of his cult was located in the enormous underground cavern complex known as Yoth. There, the Serpent people experimented with the stuff of life itself. They engineered the destruction of their terrible enemies, the

dinosaurs and saw the rise and fall of whole taxa of species. They cast great astrologies and spoke with spirits of the past and future.

Around five million years ago, they delved in N’Kai, the ancient pit where Tsathoggua dwelt and many formed a cult based around the new found god. Tsathoggua, of course, was amused that these creatures who would immediately see him as a patron and source of the race’s great addiction, information. The toad-god accepted the new cult, who approached him with impeccable respect and formality and granted them power. Soon the ancient worship of Yig was on the wane. Of course, the Father took this dimly, cursing his children with devolution. As a species, only a fragment of the Serpent Folk kept intelligence, as well as arms and legs. It was the destruction of the race as a power on the planet.

Knowledge is what the Serpent Folk crave and all their magic is directed towards that end. Their rites involve creating prophecies, which in this case, amount to guesses Yig and other gods are preternaturally gifted at making, based on their knowledge of history and stochastic phenomenon. Serpents are researchers, tracking spirits and powers from the high realms and low. Under conditions that seem half prayer, half vivisection, they take apart and reassemble life. Ancient metals and gems are ground down to create new philters and potions with radical effects upon consciousness and biology.

This last is a specialty of the snake people and their necromantic creations are bleakly fabulous abominations. Any collation of animal and plant, any size or shape, the snake

people have created it, ever inching closer to the power to magically dominate even the tiniest secrets of life. Many Ophidians also seek out power to use against the Great Ones, coldly determined to never allow themselves to be so casually destroyed as when Yig destroyed them.

For the Serpent people, all rites are done with the purpose of knowing more, understanding the world and beyond the world, rooting through the guts of death and life, time and space. Having been made fearful of the Curse of Yig, which destroyed their species, the Serpent Folk are amongst the most cautious of magicians and their capacity to bind and banish Mythos entities are the most advanced of any creature. Many are also fabulously devoted to Yig, seeing reptiles and the gods’ other chosen creatures as holy animals, taking elaborate geases to protect and worship that kind.

The Dreamers, who fled the Curse and went to the Dreamlands, never learnt the caution of the earthly Snake people. Instead, they seek to expose all secrets recklessly, yearn for ever greater perfection. Those who seek to stand against them are snuffed out by magic of Biblical proportions. They wield powers to rival the seven plagues the assaulted Egypt and have command of the strangest of beasts.

## Serpent Folk Spells

Perhaps more than any other Mythos race, the Ophidians excel at empty-handed magic. Individually, they have an almost eidetic memory allowing them to have thousands of spells on hand. It is not inappropriate

for a Keeper to rule that a Serpent may have any kind of minor magic on them at need. These spells will include personal defenses and ways to assault enemies as well as magical diagnostic tools. These enchantments perform as security for the Serpent Folk's personal lair. All Sleepers have access to magics which will allow them to transform into the semblance of other races and move undetected in their cultures. Researchers will often and frequently use spells such as Consume Memory and other information gathering techniques. They are the masters of a kind of magical surveillance technology and feats such as telepathy and psychometry are not beyond them.

Serpent folk spells tend to reflect their personalities. While at some points in their history the Ophidians have tended towards decadence and luxury, at their hearts they remain reptiles, passionless and patient, moving between frenzied action and senescent conservation of effort.

Long ago self-exiled to the Dreamlands, Dreamers are capable of the kinds of magic long since lost to humanity. The feats ascribed to Eibon and Haan-Dor, the control of weather, the summoning of demons and the undead by the legion, the eldritch bolts of power and cursing of kingdoms are all part of their repertoire.

Due to their own long history of involvement and sometimes hostility with Mythos creatures, the Serpent Men have also involvement in the creation of mystical weaponry. Swords and spears that can wound ghosts, arrows that do not miss their mark, wands spitting fire and more beside are often part of the personal

armament of a Snake mage. It could be that Serpent folk magicians are close to creating firearms and missiles of magic. It is also probable that these magicians are the most adept at creating wards against the Mythos. The Elder Sign is a spell most magicians will know, especially the Dreamers, who have reason to fear the attention of Father Yig.

## Humans and Serpent Folk Magic

Ophidian sorcery is the only Mythos magic that humans can genuinely use and understand. If nothing else, biology dictates much of this commonality. Serpent folk have a pathology roughly consistent with humans and similar anatomy. Thumbs, lungs, the need to eat and excrete and so on. Thinking patterns also roughly overlap, although the Ophidians are far more logical, long term 'right brain' in their thinking than are the emotion-soaked Homo sapiens.

The prototypical wizard from human fictions serves very well as an idea for what the Serpent Folk magician is like. Their fascination with toxins their bodies produce has lead to a rigorous study of alchemy and so philters, unguents and ointments with spectacular effect are often a part of their magic. Rare and fabulous reagents are found in the laboratory/sanctums of their magicians. Elaborate banishing circles, sacred spaces decorated with gold, onyx and sapphires please their aesthetic eyes and here ancient spirits of serpents are summoned. The undead are often guardians of the race who are so morbidly fascinated by their own ancestors. Ancient weapons, scrolls of antiquity, death curses,

reptilian gods and immortality potions are the order of the day. If the Keeper wished to introduce a more flashy magic into their game, the Serpents are a good way of doing so. After all, they have been alive long enough to plague humans since the ancient days of iron and might before the rise of the sons of Aryas.

And so it is that humans are capable of recognizing and using Serpent Folk sorcery. While the Ophidians are more than capable of summoning up and dealing with the titanic races, they are, like us, aware of their own insignificance. Not even their ties with Father Yig or Tsathoggua change this. Unlike humanity, they have long experience with this nihilistic fact and no capacity for self-doubt, therefore the Serpent folk are masters of anti-Mythos magic. Assuming that humans could learn the sibilant tongues and elaborate hieroglyphs of these people, humans could learn much in the ways of a more traditional magic and have access to powers like the Elder Sign. Of course, Serpent People have watched humans evolve from fish, let alone apes, and find the notion of sharing their magic faintly ludicrous at best.

In the Dreamlands, the exiled Serpent Folk are magicians of legendary status. Great balls of fire explode at their reckoning, towers and castles rise in one night and plagues destroy nations at their whims. Magic used commonly by these creatures has virtually no expression on earth and never may have. While this kind of power is inappropriate to horror gaming, if a Keeper chose to interpolate obviously fantastic elements to their game, it is these mighty sorcerers

who are considered the greatest of their kind.

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## Carcosan Magic

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Of all the various entities, plenipotentiaries, powers and principalities in the cosmos, few are as misunderstood, obscure and ignored as the King in Yellow. When there is corruption of the spirit, a slow sink to decadence, a collapse of families, a lover's quarrel, the arsonists torch, the slow heat-death of a universe, there is the court of the Xanthic Lord.

Very little can be said of Carcosa that is factual and indeed the truth may be so subjective as to be non-existent, yet several suppositions hold up. There is a planet, or realm, or a dimension, a place and it is lit by two suns during the day, strange moons and black stars by night. A magnificent lake, Hali has two cities upon it, Yhtill and Carcosa. There, dressed in ancient fineries, a slow, stately, Machiavellian war takes place between the nobles of those cities. Sometimes, a figure known as the Phantom of Truth walks this place, or another, more dreadful thing known as the King in Yellow seeks to make itself known. Sometimes, rarely, does Carcosa spread to other worlds, creating zones of collapse, soft reality. The citizens of Carcosa walk our earth and sometimes, rarely, do they bring their own magic.

This magic is based upon entropy, upon the art of undoing, science that seeks to break down bonds and ties. It is not grand, it is not violent but is rather subtle, slow, corrosive rather than flagrantly destructive. It moves quietly and surely. Using the strange

arts of Carcosa, a sorcerer could not destroy buildings or rip the hearts from men's chest or summon down shrieking horrors. However it can cripple with self-doubt, work to weaken foundations of buildings and institutions alike and most importantly, create fine madness. Not for this magic the ways of bloodshed and horror but rather a slow awareness that all things die and things not only tend, rather they absolutely work towards, falling apart.

## Carcosan Ritual

The Carcosans are a people given to grand spectacle. Balls and feasts, salons and operas, showy and lavish displays of ostentation. It is said that it is a way for that doomed folk to forestall awareness of the awaiting, inevitable worm. So it is that their rare magicians are fond of high rites. Incense, pentacles drawn with rare inks, cloth-of-gold robes, candles drawn from tallow of exotic animals, liturgies in strange and dread tongues, there is no excess too great for these folk. The simplest of rituals take hours to achieve but might be extended into different Operations that take months of even years to complete.

Carcosans, given their intimate knowledge of mighty Tools such as the Pallid Mask, are well aware of the power of panoply. Scepters and wands of platinum, encrusted in gems, crowns of exceedingly precise workmanship, goblets of ancient lineage and more are a part of this magic. Indeed, even if a human was aware of the rituals of Hastur, it is conceivable that they may simply be unable to afford such luxuries and so Carcosan magic is rare. Even by this

is Carcosan magic served, as despair and awareness of fault and paucity are made apparent to the aspiring magician. Those who use these Sacred Tools find themselves capable of greater magic than they ever suspected of themselves. This leads to a terrible dependency on ever more elaborate and rare Tools.

Aspiring to create them is a hazardous undertaking. Not only is it costly and dangerous, at all times seeking to make something to wield the power of entropy risks the attentions of the mysterious King in Yellow. Most of these devices have a terrible purpose, all of which seeks low, slow uncreation.

The rituals are, as is all Carcosan magic, designed to bring about dismay and disintegration. Political figures acting recklessly, popes and exarches who seek to bring their faiths into the modern world, elaborate ritual suicides that damage psyches, clashes of culture and more are the end result of these lengthy undertakings.

One use of rituals often undertaken by those who practice this strange magic is, oddly, that of art. Sometimes through a Mephistophelian pact with dark powers, sometimes simply through simply painting the wrong thing, a magician finds themselves blessed with great creative powers given to them by the King. These may be in the written arts, sculpture, painting, dance or increasingly, modern conceptual art. No artist who has undertaken these rites has done anything less than become at least a renowned cult figure in their field. It may be strange that magic so devoted to corruption would grant this power yet, always, no matter the intent of the author of

such works, the art itself is always nihilistic, consuming and leaves the viewer with a lingering sense of malaise. Suicides and murders break out after a new work is released from an artist with the King as his patron.

## Carcosan Spells

These magicians have elaborate names for their spells: suite, suit, tricks, dandies, spiels, feints, chords and other beside. There is rarely destructive powers attached to them but rather a rapid ability to create dissension, madness, slow rotting. These are spells to cheat at cards, to befuddle followers, to introduce randomness into machines, sing white noise not smite enemies or bind creatures. It is done with a whisper in old tongues, a movement of the hand, a straightening of the tie. Carcosan Enchantments are easy to learn but not strong.

## Humans and Carcosan Magic

There is no difficulty in learning magic of that strange demesne. The rich and difficult to procure materials of the Sacred Tools and the procurement of grimoires from Carcosa are the only impediment. Otherwise, Carcosan magic is a human magic.

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## Xothian Magic

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Great Cthulhu is Their cousin, yet can he spy Them only dimly.

There is no figure more contentious in the annals of the mighty occult

scholars than Cthulhu. High priest of the Outer Gods, yet perhaps sealed in his ancient city by Them, widely considered the greatest of the alien Great Old Ones and yet a prisoner for a million years, his status as magician and god is questioned and puzzled over by human and monster alike.

If one views Cthulhu as the champion or king of an alien race, he can be viewed as perhaps the single greatest sorcerer to ever live.

Great Cthulhu and his people came down to earth more than three hundred and fifty million years ago, fleeing the planet Xoth. His people, called the Star-Spawn, warred upon the Elder Things, and presumably other races. Then their capital, the wicked city R'lyeh was sunk beneath the waves. Some claim that it was the benevolent Elder Gods who sealed away Cthulhu, although some scholars see no proof that it was not the Outer Gods.

Cthulhu might then be viewed as a kind of Satan figure in the Miltonian sense. Perhaps Cthulhu, priest and wanderer, is a great figure in the war against the Outer Gods. After all, while his role of priest would be considered one of submission, possibly the first scholars to interpret his actions saw Invocations as worship, not understanding that Cthulhu wars upon the Outer Gods, trying to force them into magical slavery. Or perhaps this is wishful thinking and Great Cthulhu is indeed the favored child of an indifferent cosmos.

Thematically, the powers of the Xothians seem to be an extravagant capacity for migration and comfort in desolation. From the impossible radiation of the binary star of their home planet, through to the infinite black-

ness of space and the crushing depth of the ocean, the Xothians have thrived. They are also linked ineluctably with grand buildings of black basalt. Indeed, the living cities of the Deep Ones are only the



faintest mockery of R'lyeh and the other colossal civilizations of these beings. The Xothians are also masters of occult geometry. It is appropriate for such mighty beings that scale is also often linked to their powers. The Xothians are perhaps the most defiant beings in the universe, or the most blessed by malign gods and therefore whatever their powers achieve must be Herculean. These are puissant creatures and their magic is equally great.

## Xothian Rituals

Luciferian rebels or worshipper of the fellest powers, the title of 'High Priest' suggest several things about Cthulhu and his relationship with the Outer Gods. Whether or not he worships them or Evokes them, Cthulhu has access to unique rituals dealing with the Outer Powers. A being of

unearthly but ultimately physical composure, Cthulhu is not linked with the Outside the way Yog-Sothoth and the other true gods are. He must rely on rites and rituals just as much as a human when dealing with them.

However, due to his dubious kinship with the Outer Gods, they may choose, or have no choice but to, obey and serve their high priest. It may be that Cthulhu has access to Summons and Evocations that cannot ever be dismissed or unbound. Perhaps Cthulhu is even working towards an Evocation of the Daemon Sultan itself.

Assuming the other Xothians are similarly inclined, they and their master may have access to the Outer Gods and their might in ways no other beings in creation are capable of having. Xothian rites would be incomprehensibly alien, involving transformations only their plastic bodies are capable of and precise mastery of their ancient and sickening language. They may command spirits and gods even more dreadful than themselves, a thought which has driven sages to suicide. Due to Cthulhu's predicted role as being a messiah of hedonistic pleasure ('to laugh and revel and kill') Xothian rites may involve Gnostic states revolving around joy and sensual delight. One can only imagine for a moment what must arouse or inspire such beings....

It may be that the Xothians do not have the capacity for interstellar travel under their own power. It is known that Cthulhu bought his children to earth from other planets and perhaps this was done by magic, rather than under their own motive effort. Perhaps truly stupendous

Gates were required, or a kind of physical translocation.

Xothians, with their penchant for the Titanic, may take days, years, perhaps even centuries to complete Workings. The grand cities in which these peoples live may be infused with magic. R'lyeh, their capital, is far beyond limited human capacity to see, let alone bounded by our laughable notions of geometry and engineering. Capable of surviving in abysmal depth, architected with powers that drive humans mad to even contemplate, the ancient dwellings of Cthulhu bespeak a power that sculpts terrestrial matter into shapes of incomprehensible strangeness, that accesses dimensions and realms only Cthulhu and his Star-Spawn can describe.

## Xothian Spells

Cthulhu and his kind are not a subtle race. Given to war, eager to lead others into their own barbarism and decadence, hungry for violence, the Xothians do not have the strange powers of their servants the Deep Ones, or the queer slow madness of the Carcosans. Xothian Enchantment is destructive, cruel and simple. It is war magic. The one moment of human contact between Cthulhu and mankind saw Cthulhu react violently and vindictively and so it should be no surprise that their spell craft is this same. What they achieve with devastation, they may also achieve with sybaritic capabilities. The human nervous system and brain can be shutdown, overwhelmed or destroyed by pleasure as equally as pain. Xothians have also displayed enormous telepathic power and can

easily influence the human dream-scape.

## Humans and Xothian Magic

It is perhaps utterly impossible for humans to learn the magic of the Xothians, whose minds are immeasurably remote. Only the most dedicated of cultists would even try to open their minds to such outré learning and even the faintest touch of the consciousness of the children of Cthulhu could ruin the strongest human in an instant. Their spells are unusable by humans, who are not biologically equipped to cast them. Nonetheless, if one could read the language of R'lyeh or Aklo, perhaps they could gain insights into the building techniques or transportation powers of this race. A kind of retro-engineering of magic might be possible, as magicians ape the wonders of the Star-Spawn. Despite possibilities, the secret arcana of the Xothians should come at the highest price, leaving even the smartest, the most devoted human hollowly and irrevocably insane.

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## Tcho-Tcho Magic

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But the evil ones left seeds on the plateau, on the island in the Lake of Dread which the Old Ones caused to be put there. And from these seeds have sprung the Tcho-Tcho people, the spawn of elder evil, and now these people await the day when Lloigor and Zhar will rise again and sweep over all Earth.



## Lair of the Star Spawn

The Tcho-Tcho are a dreadfully near-human race of tiny people, superficially resembling Asians, who have long been connected with Mythos races. While conjecture runs amok over whether or not it is correct to call them humans, mutants, or something else all together, the Tcho-Tchos live mainly human lives, walk in human societies, forever tainted on a genetic level by their progenitors.

They were formerly native to Tibet, a plateau of great horror known as Tsang. The folk religion of the region was Bon, a faith that placed great emphasis upon magical action. Indeed, it was a deeply shamanistic and animistic culture the Tcho-Tcho came from, that extensively interacted with a world of spirits and gods. When the Tibetans accepted Buddhism in the 14th century, they created their own brand of that venerable philosophy strong enough so that today Tibetan Buddhism is a vibrant wing of the religion. Tibetan Buddhism embraces the central idea that the world is an illusion. It espouses a belief in reincarnation and elaborate rituals to propitiate spirits and ancestors. A strong Bon tradition has survived, almost at odds with Buddhism, allowing worship of such beings as Mahakala, the Great Black One and Yama King of Death. The end result is a stately, hierarchical faith which openly acknowledges magic belief to this day.

Unwilling to be culturally singled out, Tcho-Tchos similarly accepted the syncretism Buddhism placed upon them and created a religion similar to that of Tibet's. The key difference was that the Tcho-Tcho had certain

knowledge that beneath Maya, the illusion of the world, lurked a terrifying reality of monstrosity and malevolence. The Tcho-Tcho path of magic was as dark and cruel as they saw the true world is. Indeed, the Tibetan word for black magician is Tcho.

Even amongst this corrupt race, the magicians are feared by their own kind. Though not always leaders, these magicians are always respected and listened to in policy.

Thematically, Tcho-Tcho magic emphasizes shamanic behavior. Guardian spirits, ancestor worship and a direct experience with cruel and benign supernatural beings, a knowledge of the spirit world and other typical elements of shamanism are present. It stresses the unimportance of human ego and importance of supplication to the Mythos. Even Tibetan magic shows a distinct dark side, with such rites as biting the tongue out of a zombie to gain magical Tools, so Tcho-Tcho magic should be even more brutish and vile. The essence of Tcho-Tcho magic is ugly strangeness, an experience and intimacy with Otherness.

## Tcho-Tcho Rituals

The Tcho-Tchos have an elaborate system of belief, many hundreds of holy books and scrolls and parables and dizzying array of religious figures and gods. Many of these are simple human constructions, fictions at worst, weak Other Gods at best. Core amongst the magic works of these folk are the Black Bodhisattvas. The great work of these magicians is to gain enough power to become a kind of minor god and stay on as a sort of saint to the living Tcho-Tchos.

Every magician from this culture ultimately strives to this blessed state.

All Tcho-Tchos raised in the orthodox culture serve the gods zealously. They believe, and may not be wrong, that they Great Ones themselves mated with their ancestors in the dim past. Therefore, they possess the holy words and truths of the Gods themselves, the very essence of them flows in Tcho-Tcho blood. This has led to a deeply arrogant and xenophobic culture.

Tcho-Tchos believe in as much possible interaction with the beings they worship, making pacts and alliances with them. Through human sacrifice, torture, cannibalism, sexual assault, self-mutilation and other sadistic acts, Tcho-Tcho shamans gain favor with alien monstrosities and do their will. Tcho-Tcho Evocation is effective and horrible. The priest-magicians often utilize gory forms of panoply, such as robes made of human skin, Tools made from body parts, drinking of blood and copulation with animals or even aliens.

Terrible curses are placed upon transgressors and enemies of the gods and the Tcho-Tcho in these rites. So too are blessings. Tcho-Tcho magic is amongst the most effective sorcery in the world for torture and killing. Sympathetic magic, requiring the fluids, skin, hair and bones of the victim are taken, danced around and chanted over in the weird language of this folk and results are usually spectacular and horrible.

Not all Tcho-Tcho magical rites are as visceral. Due to their belief in the bleak notion that becoming entirely non-human is a blessing, the Tcho-Tcho have many grim practices to break down the ego and create

cultists. Forced cannibalism, exposure to Mythos beasts, prolonged torture and other rites have long been used to recruit for their cult. As has showing a gentler side of their magic, slowly luring other peoples down their dark path.

Necromancy is another feature of Tcho-Tcho religious life. Elaborate rituals to create zombies and ghosts are known to almost all of these wizards, who use them as sentinels and servants to hold command and respect over their own people, as well as intimidate rivals. Possessing spirits are also routinely used, often Binding powerful, hateful beings into innocents, allowing intelligences to roam the world cloaked in flesh.

## Tcho-Tcho Spells

Most of the more horrible spells available in Call of Cthulhu are known to the Tcho-Tcho magicians. The Death Spell and Clutch of Nyogtha are classical examples. Enchantments to warp the mind, create confusion and terror, as well as hurt and maim are all a part of their repertoire. Centuries of battle and feuds with their neighboring tribes in the old country, being drafted into wars in the 20th century, now fighting for territory on the streets of the First World, all have made the Tcho-Tchos masters of war magic. All of their spells are quite brutal in nature.

## Humans and Tcho-Tcho Magic

Humans can easily learn Tcho-Tcho magic. It is, after all, significantly human magic in and of itself. However, these sorceries are vicious

and hateful, powered by the suffering and death of people, the more innocent the better. Few investigators will meet a more sadistic creature than a Tcho-Tcho wizard bent of making account of his enemies or more foul and hateful than a Tcho-Tcho shaman given completely over to a Mythos Totem. The difficulty in become tutored in Tcho-Tcho powers is that these magicians are xenophobic and unwilling to share their abilities with others of their own kind, let alone an outsider. To these shamans, humans are batteries of agony who exist only to serve their ambitions towards becoming one with their dark masters. Even other Tcho-Tcho are barely noticed by the arrogant magicians.

Any who do manage to ingratiate themselves with the culture and learn the difficult, linguistically remote Tcho-Tcho tongue, soon become aware of the overarching desire to become a Black Bodhisattva. Those who cannot commit to this ideal will soon run afoul of some ancient spirit who can see the truth of them and viciously punish their lack of temer-

ity. Adepts in Tcho-Tcho magic serve the racial goal, or die.

Another problem is the sheer horror of this magic. Gnostic states certainly insulate a magician against madness but the Tcho-Tcho sorcerer spends a life hip deep in atrocity. Sanctums filled with body part, ritual murder, study of torture techniques and acting in service of beings who wish nothing but comic malevolence upon humanity sends most non-Tcho-Tchos stark raving mad quickly. Even a determined sociopath does not have the cultural conditioning and legacy of service to evil of a child of this race. The truly, gibbering mad are of no use to the Mythos and are often culled by their practice.

Tcho-Tcho magic should rarely, if ever, be practiced by Investigators. It is a cruel and hateful sorcery, marked by suffering and genuine sadism. Unless a Keeper wishes to introduce certain moral quandaries, or play a particularly dark Cultist campaign, Tcho-Tcho magic serves as a warning as to how corrupted humans can be by the Outer Gods, rather than a weapon to use against them.



# Chapter Eight

## Magic in the Campaign

Part of the creation of a strong game is giving players what they want. While having five shadowy loners chain smoking in trench coats, loaded down with hexes and a map to the ghoulish temple under Times Square, each refusing to work hacks and amateurs is a quick way to rather dramatically dull campaign, there are several ways to interpolate magic in relatively large doses a game, depending on period and goals of the players.

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### Mystical Group

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Every few decades in the West, a new form of spirituality emerges. The reasons for this are complex. Some believe it is a response to changing technology, some to mere faddism some to solar winds and the complex tides of magic itself. Regardless, in the 1880s, the like of Madame Blavatsky and Spiritualism rose. A mania for trance mediums and spirit photography swept the parlours of the rich, winning adherents throughout the world. In the 1920s many Lodges and Temples arose, pre-eminent amongst them being the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, bringing together poet and politician alike to experiment in the black arts. The 50s saw the US, LA in particular

embrace Thelema, new Buddhas and Scientology. The 1960s saw the West become enraptured in the Tantras, Yogas and Sutras from the East and presently, Wicca and other forms of connections with magical practice have grown popular enough to almost be called chic.

Basing a group of Investigators in some sort of coven or lodge is therefore simple and expedient no matter the time period. Before present day, these groups worked as social salons as much as magical temple. They were places for the quality to meet and perhaps share gossip about other members of Society and chat about events of the day. Often with luminaries of the government and leading cultural figures who were often drawn to occultism. The histories of these Lodges are hotbeds of internal politics, genuinely groundbreaking magical work and saucy stories of historical notables. Using them as a basis for games suggests that such campaigns should revolve around internal politics, rogue members delving into black magic, rare invitations to work with the authorities as expert investigators in bizarre crimes and of course, the great works of the group itself.

The Keeper should decide what the overall group goal of the Lodge is before the campaign starts. Magicians may seek to contact the

dead, transmute lead to gold, share knowledge, immanetise the eschaton, or contact or worship a god. Of course, not everyone in the group may seek the same deity.... Then, of course, there is the true goal of the high ups, which have used such groups as dupes since time immemorial. Suggestions include the obvious role of hidden Cthulhu cultists but also the Lodge may in fact be zealous minions of Nodens, unprepared for the true nature and power of the Black Lodges they intend to battle.

The Lodge game allows non-Mythos magic to take a larger role. Christian mysticism, Jewish arcana and the hermetic secrets of Egypt have played large roles in Western magic for centuries and more. It is appropriate to introduce traditional gods, research historic magic and rites. More familiar elements of magic can be used here, such as curses, mummies, voodoo dolls and what have you.

A classic theme of horror fiction is of the keeping of secrets. The group who comes together to work magic in the name of the great Mother may be formed with all good intentions. One day, a member of the Temple asks an innocent question... 'Have you ever heard of the Old Ones?' Sooner or later, human curiosity leads down dark places. Within months heterodoxy may form within the cult, searching to serve the Gods beyond Gods. Words like Shug-Niggurath are whispered... Sooner or later, a Black Man is called upon, offering his hind parts to be kissed.

Some groups have a kind of magical code of ethics, Intent magically agreed upon at its formation. This may be useful for a Keeper to introduce. It firmly creates the character

of the organisation. A proscription over the moral character of the kinds of magic used by the group immediately creates plots for a Keeper to use. Contravention of those ethics may be undertaken by magicians desiring greater power, in disputes over authority or simply by mistake. Of course, the Intent of the group may be a front for sinister leaders in service to terrific Secret Chiefs. Rival groups may decide the goals of the Investigator's organisation threatens or disrespects their own. Once, magical battles raged fiercely throughout Europe as Mason warred on Rosicrucian and the Church warred on everyone. Later, these became known as Psychic Wars and may play a useful role in the Keeper's plans for a game based around an occult Lodge.

One of the advantages of this kind of group is that it lends itself to a wide variety of characters. The Golden Dawn included Peers, doctors, political agitators, explorers and influential poets amongst its ranks. Modern day occultists tend to come from the arts, from the world of computing and even scientists looking for access to new forms of study. Not only are occult interests fostered by this campaign structure but so are traditional Call of Cthulhu Investigator professions.

Modern day ritual groups tend to be rather different from ones of the past. The great societies of yesterday tended to be focussed very specifically on formal goals such as reenactment of the magic of antiquity, experimenting on one form of magical discipline, such as Tantra or alchemy or Invocations. Whereas modern day groups, while still often being specifically tradition oriented, are much more willing to bring



together disparate magicians. A chaotician, a follower of Astratu, an Alexandrian Wiccan and an eclectic mage working with the Thothian Current might all find reason to come together, even Work together. There are also many hundreds of well organised groups available to the curious. Many, many organisations are prominent online, even evangelical and as simple to contact as sending an email.

If the Keeper decides to use the traditional model of, say, the witches' covens, then decisions need to be made. What the name of the group is can be an important one. Clearly Worshipers of the Severed Eyeball brings up imagery that Servants of the Pacific Moon does not. The goals of the group should be well-defined. Worship of the Goddess, communication with outer worlds, cursing enemies, exploration of other states of consciousness or any other goal imaginable that can be achieved with magic. Basic guidelines of who can be involved with the coven, who can assume positions of authority and the genuine commitment of followers, must all be decided upon as well as who is genuinely skilled and who is there to make friends and meet girls.

Mundane plots may involve trouble with the police not understanding the nature of the organisation, drama within the group itself as egos and interests clash, as well as simple money troubles. More supernatural elements include rituals going spectacularly right, infiltration from Mythos cultists or perhaps occult-aware police and the ever popular role as consulting detectives to the authorities. Ambitious but misguided members of the Coven may wish to steer it in darker directions or per-

haps something is called up that cannot be put down and is killing the coven members one at a time, eager for release from a Summoning spell, unbound.

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## The Cult

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It's always fun to be the bad guys and not every Cthulhu Cultist is a half-breed degenerate lurking in the swamps. Indeed, the stereotype might amuse the powerful, who owe prominent positions and lucrative employment to their allegiance with grimmer gods than the world sees. The Cult game works, in set up, very similarly as the Lodge game, except that the goal is rather darker. Maturity of the players and the intent to which they will happily play the villains is obviously the benchmark of this game. Don't try and force a game of human sacrifice and murderous infighting upon people who want to foil the bad guy's evil plot.

Worship of a central figure is what ties these groups together. Magicians seeking powers will turn to gods such as Tsathoggua or Yig or even Yog-Sothoth, who are willing to trade powers for service. The doing of these deeds will make up the campaign. A large sacrifice, the elimination of a rival cult, the summoning of certain monsters into the world and more are the demands made upon these characters. Due to the nature of people who willingly collude with the forces of annihilation, these deeds could indeed be dark. As such, be sure to amplify the vicious nature of backstabbing and double-dealing in a Cult. Those who fall out of favour with the Cult, or simply cannot protect themselves, may end up

as lunch for something hungry. Rival worshippers of other gods should be a constant threat as should cults of the same god, eager to destroy any who would rob prestige, unaware this discord fuels the laughter of the Mighty Messenger.

Of course, SAN losses may be prominent in these games and should not be shied away from. One may become used to the Formless Spawn in the basement but sooner or later, the ritual murders, the drugs from other galaxies, the simple lack of ability to relate to human beings will turn to Cultist from person willing to serve evil for power into a genuine figure of madness. It may be interesting to explore the effects such a life has on a character's family and friends. While they are still around. Nyarlathotep, for one, demands sacrifices that cost.

As a game like this promises to be short-lived, feel free to hand out the gifts from the gods. Spells can be awarded readily and Cultists should be free to examine and use those powers. Of course, this will attract the attention of Investigators and, if the Keeper is of a mind, the Elder Gods themselves. The gifts of the god are more than just magic, however and if they do not please their recipient, it is doubtful the Great Ones are concerned. Mutations, intense psychological conditions and complexes and other nefarious illnesses may plague the Cultist.

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## Dreamlands

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Beyond the Walls of Sleep lies another place, where miracles exist that can be worked only by the unfet-

tered will of humanity. The Dreamlands are a place where magic works as if, well, in a dream. Here magic shifts moons in their courses, brings down ice ages and causes the dead to rise in the numbers of nations.

While it is possible to set a heroic fantasy in the Dreamlands, there are perhaps games that better service the needs of such a campaign. While the Dreamlands are certainly a place to give people access to power unavailable to their day lit selves, make no mistake, it is not a place where omnipotence is there for the taking. The Dreamlands are a place of escape for the human mind where hope can be grasped at as it cannot in the real world.

A Dreamlands game works well if it is also presented as a dream, with the slight surrealism of dream logic and so too should its magic. While it may be nice to have your janitor by day be a grand magus to the tenth degree in his dreams, it is perhaps more effective to give player particular skills that have their inspirations in the peculiar narratives of dream. 'It was you but not really you', a common statement dreamers make might indicate a power to shift bodily forms. Flying is clearly a well-beloved fantasy, as is the ability to move over great spaces and times with ease. These powers might be charms or spells or an inherited power.

Don't shy away from great feats of magic, though. Allowing characters powers they should never have in the Waking World is encouraged in the Dreamlands, where our optimal self image may be presented. Villains, gods and monster have the same access to these powers too. If games move between Dreamlands and

Waking World, be sure to play up the sharp differences in powers and potency the players experience in either world.

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## Deus Vult

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With magic being presented as a threat, it may be entirely possible that the Investigators base their activities around destroying magic and magicians. They may be agents of a church, victim of magic or simply concerned citizens out to stop meddlers with powers best left undisturbed. The kinds of threats presented by this sort of campaign subtly differ from the regular monsters and cults. Magic can be dabbled in by innocents as well as devoted devil-worshippers and aiding victims of this sinister force as well as punishing the wicked might be one of the goals of the Investigations.

Incursions of magic may come from unusual sources. Use of number theory in a university lab might somehow re-enact an ancient spell. Neighbourhood children might learn an obscure rhyme that conjures what should not be remembered. A local history teacher, returned from a holiday to Egypt with a new secret may bring troubles with him. Old folk stories of the things in the woods, the glow in the caves outside of town and the young men who tried to talk to them with ouija boards are all sources for threats. The old widow who feeds the thing in the woods, the alchemist putting something into the beer at the pub he owns, the nerdy kid casting spells she found on the wrong website and more. This style of game may also support a

kind of 'On the Road' feels as players drift, forever drawn towards powers, moving from town to town, cleansing a country one petrol station and roach motel at a time.

Of course, one of the most effective weapons against the Mythos is magic. As Investigators are forced into more extreme stances against sorcery, or perhaps less extreme, will they be tempted to use magic? Is this defensible to people who have killed magicians? Can magic ever be a positive moral force? And what happens when seemingly good people use magic for good purposes?

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## Tinker Tailor Soldier Sorcerer

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In games in which espionage and military service play a part, there is certainly a place for Beaurux of Paranormal Investigation and Occult Special Forces. It is not inconceivable that agents are trained specifically in magical techniques. While this kind of play leads more to action games than terror, military horror is a perfectly valid expression of Call of Cthulhu. It is one thing to lead a group of mercenaries in to a forgotten plateau in a war-torn hell and deal with rebels who have forgotten their political beliefs in the service of a new power. It is another when trained combat-magicians have the capacity to hunt and kill those powers. One true example from the early days of Operation: Phoenix is useful.

In the Fillipines just after WWII, soldiers were having problems containing local rebels, who were skilled guerrilla fighters. CIA operatives, on

researching legends of the area, discovered stories of a vampire who haunted the lands around the insurgent's lair. They captured one of the guerrillas, drained his blood and left his body to be discovered by his compatriots, who cleared out on learning a monster operated in the area. Later, in the Belgian Congo, the Operation raised support for a backed revolt by convincing shamans to make 'magic armour' for tribesmen. The rebels were confident of a victory because of their new Enchanted flack jackets and went back to war with raised morale. If a Keeper simply decides to substitute the fake for a real thing, adventure possibilities open up. And there are few villains more classic or despicable than Nazi sorcerers.

Game adventures are easy to plot out. Undead enemy platoons, mad wizards castles that need to be assaulted, now populated with fiends, remote areas of bush where guerrillas are trained in unspeakable powers, Shoggoths being used as tanks, arms deals with Mi-Go and many more beside. Feel free to create complex dynamics between the squad members as lives are saved, friends are killed and grudges kept. Sub plots may involve platoon commanders becoming too involved in the dark side of magic, being sold out by corrupt leaders and missions going terribly wrong. More down-to-earth plots may involve offers to become mercenaries, time away from families or simple friction over the levels of force required in missions.

## Everyone Uses Magic—Not Me!

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Keepers wishing something different and prepared to do the work might imagine worlds where magic is known to everyone. Perhaps this is the alternate history of Robert W. Chambers' *Repairer of Reputations*, in which America is given over to monarchists and prey to a certain book. Or a post-WWII America, where magic is a trendy new consumable product and demon-labour fuels a thriving primary industry. Here, Investigators may be specialist magicians, necromancers and seers, policemen working pathology labs consulting astrology for clues to murderer patterns or even robbers stealing souls. Criminals war on each other with curses and death spells and even modern technology is changing. This can be effective in any time period, as transom cabs may be pulled by nightmares and El Caminos are fuelled by blood. New churches, once condemned as crackpot cults gain thousands of adherents the world over. Pope Crowley reaches détente with President LaVey...

As magic becomes more widespread, perhaps even taught in schools, what was once a frightening change of the way of life becomes increasingly familiar. And familiarity leads to contempt. This is when a few brave souls become aware that there is a higher order to magic, a truth beyond the prosaic world of spell and paperback grimoire. One of those new lodges goes by the name of the Starry Wisdom and there is more to their beliefs than most know. There is an order of beings, known to magic but beyond all but the strongest, rarest

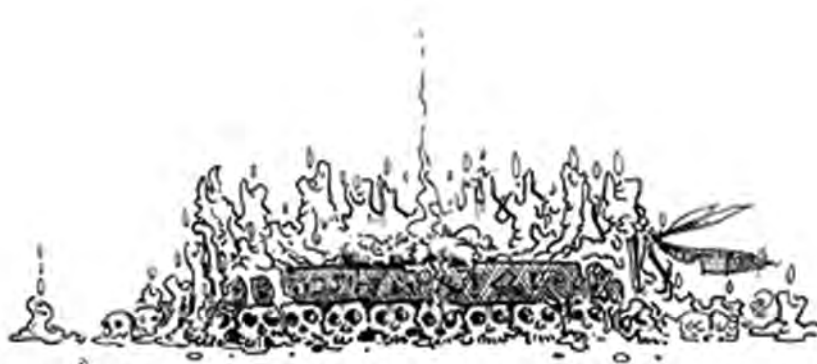
of it. Older than sorcery. The Great Old Ones are being disturbed by the new, constant shift of power around the world and astronomers declare weird new findings in the stars.

The scope for adventures in this world is enormous. Working as Investigators in this world is in many ways far easier. There is no need to convince the local police that a Mummy is on the rampage when they have a Mummy on staff, after all and the Mayor courts the vampire vote. Working as government agents of powers might make a nice change in this respect.

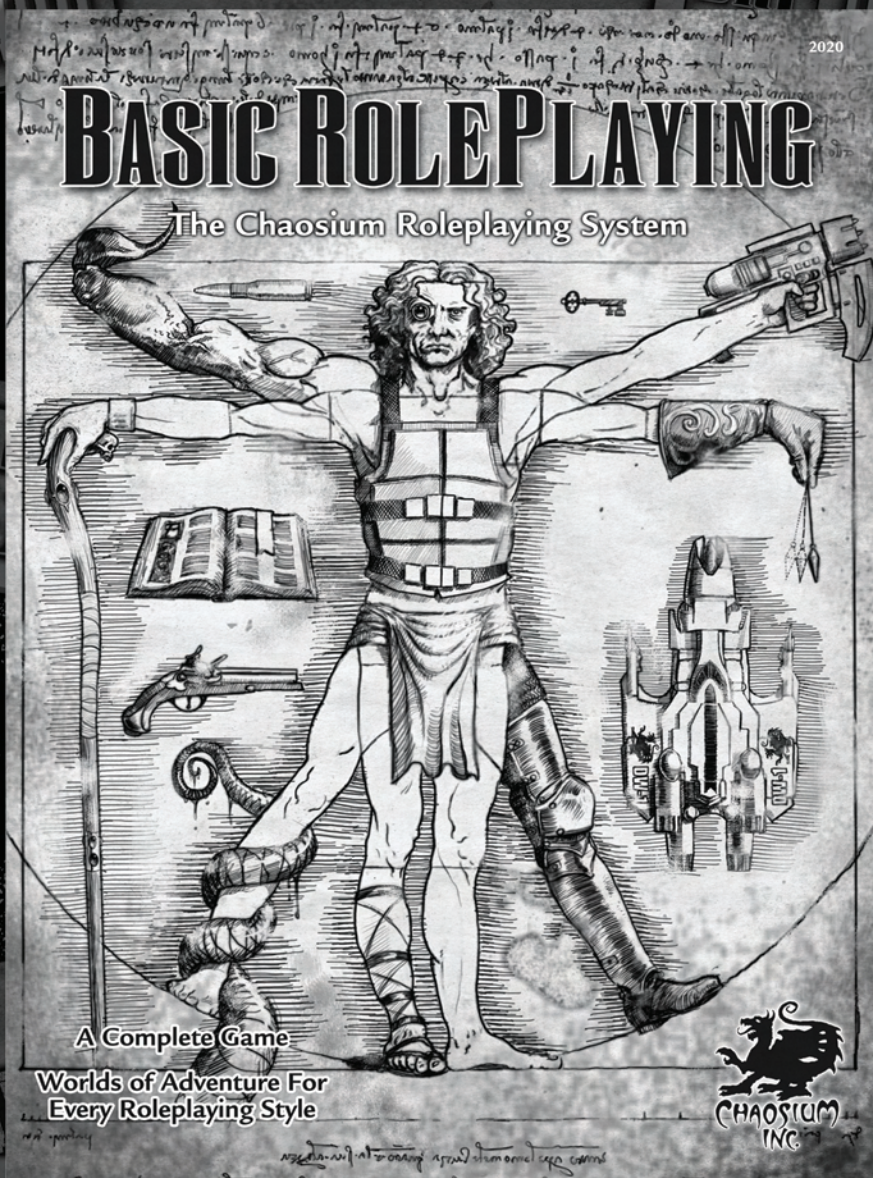
Ness' Untouchables might war upon the illegal alchemy labs of Capone and his army of Maldanti and Strega. A door-to-door salesman may be offering bored housewives more than

simple housecleaning glammers. The local werewolf tribe might be agitating for civil rights as rednecks prepare to clean up their town, the newly created information super-highway might be interfacing with conceptual spaces inherently hostile to humans. David Hanging, the famous director who has cast angels in soap operas may be planning to do a new television mini-series called the *King in Yellow*. The Reader's Digest version of *Nameless Cults* goes to press.

Perhaps a new world of magic is a mistake, or part of a plan by Nyarlathotep to play even with time and all must be set right, reality itself written over. Perhaps this time of unrestrained power is a time where the stars grow righter.



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