

THE UNSPEAKABLE OATH™

ISSUE 23 • AUGUST 2013



A DIGEST OF ARCANE LORE FOR CTHULHU MYTHOS ROLEPLAYING GAMES

THE SENSE OF THE SLEIGHT-OF-HAND MAN

A Call of Cthulhu Campaign of Wonder and Terror in H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands



Written and illustrated
by Dennis Detwiler

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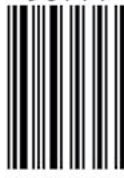
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THE DREAD PAGE OF AZATHOTH

BY SHANE IVEY



“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.”

— H.P. Lovecraft, “*Supernatural Horror in Literature*”

I have a bone to pick with *Call of Cthulhu*. A bloody, broken bone.

Call of Cthulhu is the first and still the greatest roleplaying game dedicated to fear. Its player characters—Investigators—deliberately seek to uncover mysteries that will surely scar or destroy them. They are under constant threat of mortal peril (12 or 13 hit points don’t go very far) and their mental well-being deteriorates in an ever-tightening spiral of crisis and collapse.

More importantly, their personal vulnerability makes explicit the fragile place of humanity itself in a hostile cosmos.

And that’s where *Call of Cthulhu* games too often fail.

Too often the personal horror of violence and madness becomes the goal in itself. We focus so heavily on personal horror that we lose a sense of the cosmic terror that was Lovecraft’s entire purpose. Or maybe it’s better to say that when we struggle to convey true Lovecraftian cosmic terror, we lean too heavily on the mundane horrors of gore and suspense.

And that’s a shame. Only when it reaches beyond personal horror to true cosmic terror does *Call of Cthulhu* reach its greatest heights.

“This type of fear-literature must not be confounded with a type externally similar but psychologically very different; the literature of mere physical fear and the mundanely gruesome.”

(H.P. Lovecraft, “*Supernatural Horror in Literature*”)

I’m borrowing the dichotomy between personal horror and cosmic terror from hoary literary theory going back centuries.

That tradition considers “horror” to be the sense of revulsion at atrocity. It’s a sickening encounter with gore and death. It is the realization and confirmation of physical awfulness. “Terror” is the anticipation of something monstrous and awful that may be nearly present. Terror is portent, possibility and dread.

In that sense, terror, not mere physical horror, is the mood that Lovecraft and so many horror writers before and after him struggled to evoke.

In *Call of Cthulhu* and in fiction it’s easy to rely on the horror of gore and destruction. Wet bones and viscera, a knife in the dark—that kind of dread is easy. It’s certainly easier than instilling terror at the incomprehensibility of the cosmos. But it’s a crutch. Relying on it ultimately leaves the game weaker.

Think of “The Haunting,” the most classic of *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios, featured in the rulebooks from the first edition to the sixth. (If you fear spoilers, skip this paragraph.) Diligent Investigators may find the diaries of wicked old Walter Corbitt. Reading them, we deduce, the Investigators could learn something of his loathsome practices and his transformation to an undead horror. But we have to deduce it because it is never spelled out. The scenario focuses on the violence of Corbitt’s assaults and the gruesomeness of confronting him. The assaults have supernatural elements, sure, but the emphasis is on the personal risks to the Investigators. It starts and ends with personal horror. Cosmic terror—the awfulness into which Corbitt delved—is only implied.

“The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and protentousness becoming the subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular

suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.” (H.P. Lovecraft, “Supernatural Horror in Literature”)

The personal horror of violence and atrocity is useful. I defended it in a recent Dread Page of Azathoth, and Nyarlathotep knows this issue’s Spetsnaz-centered scenario is loaded with it. But always remember that it’s only a tool, not the ultimate goal. The goal of a *Call of Cthulhu* game should be a deeper, more fundamental terror: a sense of the failure of the laws of nature that we think we understand and on which we rely.

In most *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios, that can be as simple as letting the players glimpse what’s behind the horrors. If they survive all the knives and claws and tentacles and spells, make sure they hear something about the eldritch monstrosity, the roiling hungry impossibility, at the root of it all.

If you’re running “The Haunting,” see to it that the Investigators come to understand that Corbitt has bound his existence up with forces that they can barely comprehend—perhaps the aeons-old monster Tsathagghua, hungering in the black pits of the Earth; or maybe a demon-god called Yog-Sothoth that infests, in certain times and circumstances, every point in this cosmos and every cosmos.

Better yet, leave the ultimate source of the evil vague, or give it a new name that the players have never heard. Why go straight to Tsathagghua or Yog-Sothoth (“Quick! The Dismiss spell!”) when you can have Corbitt’s diaries rave about Those Who Hunger In the Void? Push the players’ fear of the unknown. Have you ever suffered from an ailment that defied diagnosis? Putting a name to a threat gives you a sense of understanding it, and understanding helps you confront it. As Keeper, your goal is to *not* let the players recognize and quantify what they’re up against. Don’t give them that much ground to stand on. Give them instead the vertigo of boundless inimical possibilities.

Of course, sometimes purely personal horror can show such a depth of human helplessness that it evokes terror with cosmic implications. That was the genius of “Convergence,” first seen in *The Unspeakable Oath* issue 7 and later in *Delta Green*. (Again, skip this paragraph if you fear spoilers.) The Investigators there come to suspect some unseen influence corrupting and harming a town and they learn it has a physical source or vector in loathsome, unnatural protomatter. Worst of all, they learn that—but no, I won’t give it away even with a spoiler warning. If you’ve read it or played in it, you know. And if you’re like me, you’re shuddering with dread just thinking about it. One or two scenes of the appalling vulnerability of the Investigators said everything about the flickering frailty of humanity itself.

And sometimes, personal horror that’s not supernatural at all can cross the line into cosmic terror. What is more ordinary and mundane than death? There’s no magic in it, no alien powers at play. Mere death defies us to find any meaning at all in life. Is that not our whole reason for reading and creating horror as a genre?

But it takes a skilled hand to evoke existential despair with the power of cosmic terror. My favorite instance has always been the final passage of Thomas Harris’ novel *Red Dragon*. I don’t think a spoiler warning is needed, though you can avoid the following excerpt if you’re worried. It has nothing to do with the plot. A character who has been savaged by violence remembers a long-ago visit to the Tennessee park that memorializes the brutal Battle of Shiloh. He remembers thinking it had been haunted by the ghosts of dead soldiers in their thousands.

“Now, drifting between memory and narcotic sleep, he saw that Shiloh was not sinister; it was indifferent. Beautiful Shiloh could witness anything. Its unforgivable beauty simply underscored the indifference of nature, the Green Machine. The loveliness of Shiloh mocked our plight....”

“Yes, he had been wrong about Shiloh. Shiloh isn’t haunted—men are haunted.”

“Shiloh doesn’t care.”

It’s not enough to make your players fear for their characters’ lives. Knives in the dark, fangs and tentacles, screams and blood, those are only tools to drive the players and their characters to fear for the nature of reality itself.

The truth of cosmic terror is not that humans are victims of alien forces that eye them with cruel intent. In their power and alienness, the Old Ones see nothing in humanity to excite them to cruelty or anything else. Humanity is a shadow flitting for an eyeblink—a few hundred thousand years, maybe even a few million. Soon we’ll die out or become something unrecognizable. Great Cthulhu had slept two hundred million years before the first primates ever emerged. He will still be here long after humanity has guttered out.

The truth of cosmic terror is that our fate will be just as accidental and meaningless as our evolution. We won’t even have the comfort of knowing that Great Cthulhu hated us enough to destroy us. That’s the theme that *Call of Cthulhu* is particularly well built to explore—if we remember to explore it.

You don’t have to hammer it home or spell it out explicitly in every session. But that’s the sense that players ought to get from their glimpses of infinity and all their moments of struggling, abject helplessness.

Cthulhu and all the other Great Old Ones aren’t out to get us.

Cthulhu doesn’t care. ☸

TALE OF TERROR: CODE ADAM

BY PAUL STEFKO

Late at night, modern Investigators are at a big-box store of the sort that offers low-cost, low-quality goods 24 hours a day.

Perhaps they are investigating another mystery, or maybe they find themselves there on mundane business. Play up the purposeful dissociation of this kind of store: endless aisles of half-empty shelves or rows of clothes racks; the high warehouse ceiling with hanging fluorescent lights that buzz at the edge of hearing; tired customers shuffling along, pushing their squeaking carts.

Once the scene is set, there is a crackle of static from the store's PA system. A woman frantically reads the following message:

"Code Adam. White female, seven years old. Brown hair in a ponytail, green eyes. Wearing a denim skirt and purple t-shirt with a unicorn. Last seen in the home entertainment section. Code Adam."

There is a moment as everyone in the store freezes. Customers look around, confused or worried. The few employees around then spring into action. Investigators near an exit see security lock the doors and stand in front of them, arms crossed in front of their bodies. Other employees go aisle by aisle, searching the store.

If asked, the staff explain that Code Adam is a security procedure to locate a missing child. The Investigators may want to help. Employees politely but firmly ask them to remain where they are. However, they are too few to watch everyone, and the characters will soon be left alone.

An Investigator glimpses movement in a far corner of the store. A girl

matching the missing child's description stands there, a sad look on her face. When she sees the investigators, she puts a finger to her lips and whispers, "Don't let it get me." She seems fine, but an Investigator looking closely can see drops of blood on the floor behind her. Anyone who gets behind the girl can see two bloody holes in her t-shirt and the flesh of her back, below the shoulder blades.

If startled, the girl runs. She is agile and quick but cannot hope to outrun an adult. If an Investigator grabs her, they feel pulp under her clothes. She quickly wriggles free, leaving only a handful of blood and flesh.

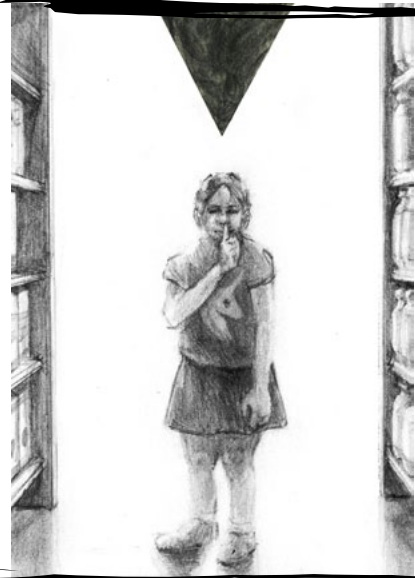
If the Investigators play it cool and don't startle her, the girl quietly turns and walks away. The wounds on her back are clear to everyone then. The characters are free to follow her.

The girl leads the Investigators to a closed fitting room in the men's apparel section. The girl touches the door and her body folds itself through the wooden slots, leaving a smear of blood behind.

Inside the fitting room, Investigators find the little girl curled under the changing bench, asleep, with no sign of injury. Any previous blood or viscera has also disappeared.

A saleswoman arrives quickly and sees the girl. She rushes to a phone and cancels the Code Adam alert. The girl's mother, in tears, thanks the Investigators before bundling the girl up and going home. Store security takes

HANSEN



the Investigators aside and questions them about what happened, but they are content to accept whatever story they are given.

OPTION 1: PREMONITION

If the Investigators are watchful as the girl and her mother leave the store, they notice a man getting into an SUV with a bike rack mounted low on its rear—at the level of the young girl's back, perhaps. If the Investigators do not see or say nothing, the SUV backs into the girl at high speed, impaling her and leaving the wounds they saw earlier.

OPTION 2: PROPAGATION

Combine a child's nightmares with latent telepathic ability and the result is a sentient meme capable of spreading itself to others whose mental defenses are compromised by panic or lack of sleep. Perhaps because of their past exposure to the Mythos, the Investigators are the only ones aware of the experience.

OPTION 3: APPARITION

The girl has telepathic powers, but there is no independent meme at work. Her ability to read minds has warped her, and she happily uses her gifts to terrorize others. She has found her newest targets in the Investigators and may return to plague them in the future.

CTHULHU INVICTUS



A SOURCEBOOK
FOR ANCIENT
ROME



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5E 6
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THE EYE OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

BY VARIOUS CULTISTS

Reviewed items are rated on a scale of one to ten phobias:

1-3: Not worth purchasing.

4-6: An average item with notable flaws;
at 6 it's worth buying.

7-10: Degrees of excellence.

DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEATRE: THE CALL OF CTHULHU

PRODUCED BY THE H.P. LOVECRAFT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

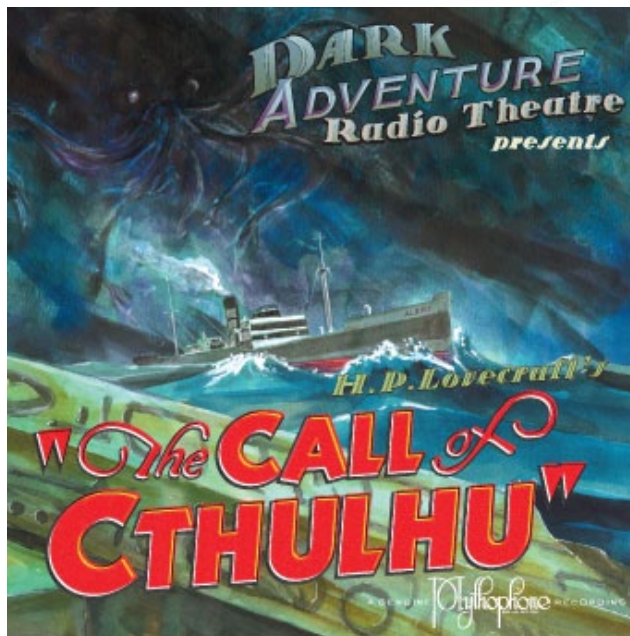
REVIEWED BY BRIAN M. SAMMONS

The mad geniuses at the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society are at it again. By 'it' I mean unleashing a whole new batch of radio Lovecraftian plays, starting with "The *Call of Cthulhu*."

This is a radio play, *not* an audio book. While I've got nothing against books on tape (yep, showing my age with that one), one narrator can't hold a candle to a solid cast of actors with music and sound effects. Such shows are almost completely a thing of the past, considered to be quaint little curiosities in this digital age. Thankfully there are still a few folks keeping this form of entertainment alive, and few, if any, do it better than the HPLHS.

This radio play version remains faithful to Lovecraft's famous story, but it does add a few bits, namely two characters that were not in the original. Some purists may gnash their teeth and wring their hands, but let me save you some high blood pressure; the two new guys only serve as a framing device to make Lovecraft's tale more radio friendly. They also add a little humor. They don't make fun of the source material but provide a few welcome nods and winks for fans of the story.

The quality of the production is top notch. This play wasn't done by a few fans using funny voices in someone's basement. The leads here are honest-to-Cthulhu actors and their quality shows throughout. One or two of the extras sounded a bit hinky, but such missteps were minor and rare.



Troy Sterling Nies great music sets the mood, whether creepy, action-packed, or, dare I say, even whimsical. The sound effects are as good as anything Hollywood uses today. And yes, in this audio production you can hear the actual *Call of Cthulhu*. That alone is almost worth the price of admission.

In the download you get props from the "Call of Cthulhu" story that would be perfect for anyone's *Call of Cthulhu* game. There's a page from Henry Wilcox's dream journal, newspaper clippings, a photo of the strange tupilak artifact, and New Orleans police booking papers of the Cthulhu cultist, Old Castro. The H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society didn't have to include these knickknacks to make the product great. A clearer sign of their devotion to the fans and the Great Old Ones would be hard to come by.

Their Dark Adventure Radio Theatre presentation of "The Call of Cthulhu" is, in a word, wonderful. Every fan of the gentleman from Providence should get it. Download it now at www.cthulhulives.org. Great Cthulhu commands it! Ten phobias.

COLD CITY

PUBLISHED BY CONTESTED GROUND STUDIOS THROUGH CUBICLE SEVEN ENTERTAINMENT
WRITTEN BY MALCOLM CRAIG
REVIEWED BY MATTHEW POOK

Cold City bridges the gap between mainstream commercial RPGs and independent, self-published titles that explore and push at the RPG format's boundaries. Its first theme is both commercial and simple. In post-World War II Berlin, agents from the four occupying powers (France, Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., and the U.S.A.) hunt monsters in an underground war. The second theme asks if formerly great allies can learn to look beyond national stereotypes and learn to trust their colleagues. Indie-style mechanics show in the handling of this "Trust" element and in the degree of narrative control that the players gain during play.

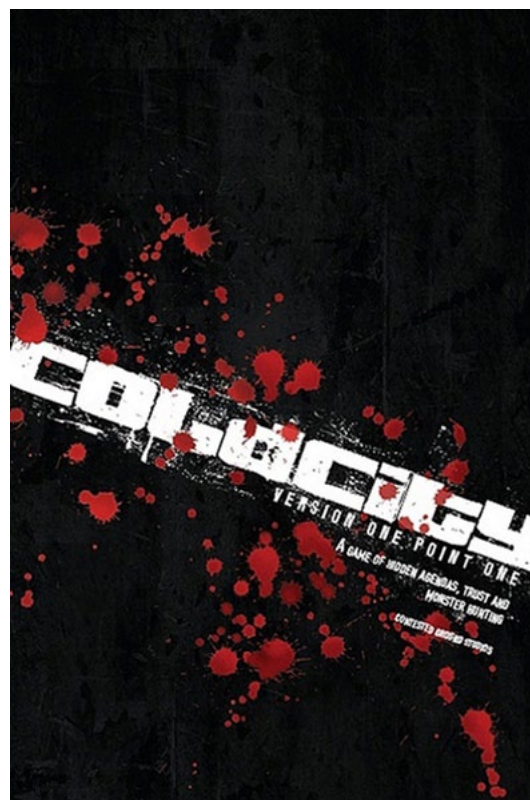
The year is 1950. The Cold War has begun and the former allies must work together again. Abominations born of Nazi science and experimentation, and things not born of this Earth but of occult research, haunt and stalk the ruins, streets, and tunnels of a Berlin still being rebuilt from its wartime aerial pounding. To deal with these threats, the four governing powers have established the highly secret Reserve Police Agency or RPA. Its task is to investigate and eliminate these remnants of twisted science and to prevent them from becoming public knowledge.

The game is best run with four player characters, one from each nationality and each with a reason for having joined the RPA. Spies, soldiers, and scientists predominate, but civilians are perfectly acceptable if their assignment to the RPA can be justified. Characters are lightly defined with three statistics—Action, Reason, and Influence—plus three positive and two negative traits. Traits can serve as advantages, disadvantages, or skills, such as "Hard-Bitten Sarge" or "Affear'd o' the Grave."

Each character has two Agendas. One is national, such as cash-strapped Great Britain's aim of shutting the RPA down, or the desire of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. to turn the bizarre technology to military ends. The other is a personal or Hidden Agenda; for example, "Keep secret the Communist loyalties I have held since my days at Cambridge."

Players set the degree of Trust held between the agents. This determines how an RPA agent regards his or her colleagues and is in return regarded by them. The initial values are based on the stereotypes held by and for each nationality. For example, an American might be regarded brash and gung-ho whereas a Briton is seen as stuffy and having a stiff upper lip. Trust values can change as characters' attitudes towards each other change. During the game the characters can occasionally rely upon this Trust for bonuses in the game's dice-pool mechanics. Trust can also work the other way. An agent who betrays the others in pursuit of an Agenda gets everyone's Trust in him as bonus dice.

Mechanically, *Cold City* is relatively simple. It uses opposed dice pool rolls to determine the outcome of any action, and the winner earns the right to narrate the consequences.



Cold City could be played as a straightforward, pulpy game of monster-hunting. Yet right from the start, it asks players to collaborate in creating the type of game that they want to play. Should character secrets be kept Closed or Open? Do they prefer the game's tone to be pulpy, noir, arthouse, dark horror, or black comedy? What foes do they want to face? Some of these choices can be seen in several pre-generated ideas.

Support for the GM includes ready-to-play agents, a description of post-war Berlin, a list of contemporary weapons, several monsters, and a good bibliography.

There is a depth to *Cold City* that other games of monster-hunting might forego. The multinational nature of the RPA in the outset of the Cold War gives the setting inherent tensions and rivalries, even paranoia. That all comes to the fore with the Trust rules that intentionally start with misunderstood stereotypes. The result is a setting rich in rivalries, action, storytelling and monstrous horrors. Eight trustworthy phobias.

< CONTINUED ON PAGE 74 >

COLD DEAD HAND



A CALL OF CTHULHU SCENARIO FOR DELTA GREEN BY ADAM SCOTT GLANCY

It's Monday, August 19, 1991.
Yesterday, Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev was removed from office in a coup arranged by hard-line communists in his government.

Protests against the coup are breaking out across the Soviet Union. Nationalist insurgents in the various Soviet republics are declaring independence from the illegitimate "State Committee for the State of Emergency."

The Investigators are members of a Soviet Spetsnaz, or Special Purposes Forces, unit. They were selected for this elite military service due to their political reliability and physical fitness. After intense training and as much as two years of service in Afghanistan, they are hardened combat veterans. Many suspect that the coup plotters intend to use Spetsnaz units to bully the opposition into line. However, fate has intervened and the Investigators' Spetsnaz unit has been kicked out of

bed for a less political, but even more pressing, assignment.

Needless to say, anyone hoping to play this scenario rather than run it as Keeper should stop reading right now.

PERIMETER

The political chaos in Moscow led the commanding generals of the Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces to activate Perimeter. Also known as the "Dead Hand," Perimeter is a "fail-deadly" weapon system that can launch one of the U.S.S.R.'s land-based ICBMs even if a U.S. first strike decapitates the leadership of the Communist Party and Soviet military. There are several

secret Dead Hand sites scattered through the Soviet Union. Not fully automatic, Perimeter must be activated by human hands, so it is only armed in times of extreme high alert. Once activated, Perimeter's automated systems initiate an ICBM launch only if specific criteria are met. The first criterion is lack of communication with Strategic Rocket Forces Command. The second is the failure the Perimeter ground crew to reset the countdown or deactivate the system. If a Perimeter facility is out of communication with Strategic Rocket Forces Command for 72 hours and no member of the facility ground crew resets the countdown-to-launch clock, the computers will presume that command has been wiped out and that the ground crew has been killed and will activate an automatic launch.

Now that cascade of events has been set in motion. Just after the coup announcement on the morning of August 19, the commanding generals of the Strategic Rocket Forces ordered the Perimeter system activated to prevent the leadership crisis in Moscow from interfering with the U.S.S.R.'s second-strike capabilities. They intended to deactivate Perimeter once the coup either solidified its control or was overthrown.

Less than twelve hours later, Site 6, a Perimeter facility on the isolated and desolate Taymyr Peninsula of northern Siberia, broadcast that it was under attack. The message was confused and panicked and by 14:45:13 hours on August 19, all communication with Site 6 had ceased. No contact could be made via satellite, microwave, or shortwave transmission.

The generals attempted to approach Site 6 via two Su-27 jet interceptors, but they were unable to make a visual inspection of the site due to an unseasonable and shockingly violent winter storm that has settled over the area.

The next step was to dispatch reinforcements. An Il-76 transport was scrambled from a Strategic Rocket Forces base in Krasnoyarsk, loaded with a company of SRF security troops. It took three hours to get to Site 6. When the Il-76 attempted to land, it crashed into the runway and exploded. There were no signs anyone survived.

Now the generals are starting to panic. The Perimeter system was activated and all communications have been lost. If something has happened to the personnel at Site 6, then there is less than 72 hours before Perimeter initiates a launch of the U.S.S.R.'s silo-based ICBMs. Some generals have argued for sending out orders to deactivate all the ICBMs that could be triggered by Perimeter, which could be done in 72 hours. But that would leave the U.S.S.R. vulnerable to a first strike in the middle of the political chaos in Moscow.

A nuclear weapon could be deployed to destroy Site 6, but that should be a last resort since a missile track or above-ground nuclear detonation might spook the Americans into a first strike. Conventional air-dropped munitions wouldn't be effective, particularly with the blizzard that is currently blanketing the area, and could even provoke the sensors at Site 6 to initiate an immediate launch.

After nearly six hours of argument fueled by vodka and terror, a decision has been made to send a team to Site 6. A team of commandos has to get up there, penetrate the blizzard blanketing

the area, take control of Site 6, find out what is happening, and deactivate the Perimeter System before it accidentally starts World War III. And if they fail? Then the generals will still have enough time to nuke Site 6.

Of course, seeing that this is the Soviet Union, the Investigators won't be told this at the beginning of their mission. But even if they were told what the generals know, it wouldn't help them one bit in the face of the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos.

THE WALKER IN THE WASTES

Merely becoming an acolyte or priest of a Great Old One doesn't give one any special insight into the god's goals or desires. That ignorance is one of the prime reasons that so many human sorcerers and cults self-destruct. Trying to navigate the motives of an alien mind—one that may not regard those trying to contact it as even sentient—can easily lead to those audacious enough to gain the attention of a Great Old One not living long enough to regret it.

One of the most brutally vengeful and wrathful Great Old Ones is Ithaqua, the Wind Walker. Like the winds and storms that it embodies, this capricious entity turns on its worshippers the second they deviate from the prescribed rites of sacrifice. Despite the danger of evoking it, desperate and the vile humans still call to Ithaqua because it acknowledges the worship it receives and it grants power to those ruthless and daring enough to say the words. First among those powers is immunity from freezing temperatures, a critical survival tool for peoples who inhabit the Arctic wastes. As long as that power is offered to those who can satisfy this strange god, there will be those among the Laplanders, the Nenets, and the Inuit peoples who will be seduced. Ithaqua is known by many names among many peoples. The Inuit of the Arctic Circle call him Sila. The Haida Indians of western Canada call him Xeio. The Nenets of Siberia call him Kotura.

But not everyone in the Arctic North is there by dint of long cultural heritage. During the Czarist and Soviet periods, Russian governments marooned criminals, dissidents and those out of favor in the extreme northern expanses of their empire. One such colony is Corrective Labor Camp 234. This facility is a gulag left over from Stalin's regime, secreted away far beyond the reach of civilization on the desolate Taymyr Peninsula, on the northern coast of Siberia. By the 1970s, Camp 234 was reserved only for the most hardened criminals and the most incorrigible political dissidents. In 1977, Camp 234 was officially shut down. In truth, it was moved into the Byrranga Mountains to provide labor for the construction of a top-secret launch facility for the U.S.S.R.'s Perimeter Defense System: Site 6. Hundreds of prisoners died during the construction.

In order to ensure the security of Site 6 the prisoners at Camp 234 were never to be released. Unfortunately, their guards, having witnessed the creation of Site 6, could not be allowed to leave either. To keep their secrets, they became prisoners of Camp 234 as well. It was just as well that the guards sent there had long histories of official reprimands and an inability to play Communist Party politics.

The camp commander was an MVD (ministry of the interior) officer, Maj. Aleksey Vertkov. The hopelessness of his situation and depressing starkness of the land led him to seek comfort and distraction wherever he could. He began to consort with the local tribes of indigenous Siberian peoples who have occupied this land long before the coming of Europeans. Small groups of nomadic Tavgi-Samoyeds, also called the Nganasan, are the only native people to be found on the Taymyr Peninsula, and the only people with whom Camp 234 had any contact. That contact was limited to monthly trips to pick up supplies. Neither the Strategic Rocket Forces personnel nor the MVD troops from the camp were permitted any further interactions.

The Tavgi-Samoyeds taught Maj. Vertkov much about how to survive in the Arctic. Then, five years ago, Vertkov

made the acquaintance of a degenerate and morally bankrupt Nenet tribesman called Nyalku.

Nyalku had travelled far to the east with his small, nomadic family group because his worship of Kotura—the Nenet name for the Great Old One, Ithaqua—caused him to be outcast from other Nenet communities. He was welcome in Camp 234 because he offered the camp guards the favors of his cadre of daughters (and grand-daughters) in exchange for manufactured goods and staples not found in the extreme north. Always interested in proselytizing his faith, Nyalku began to bring Maj. Vertkov into the worship of Kotura by demonstrating the practical benefits. The seduction was effective. Within the year the marooned camp commander and most of his officers and men were swayed to the worship of Kotura. Those who resisted met with “fatal accidents” or “sudden illnesses” arranged by the freshly-minted converts.

With a camp full of prisoners to draw from, the new worshippers could provide their wrathful god with a steady supply of sacrifices. They did not closely contemplate what would happen when the sacrifices ran out. Many of the deeply disturbed staff simply believed that they would be allowed to return home once all the prisoners were gone. Major Vertkov, however, knew that they would need to find another way to please their alien god.

On August 19, 1991, at 7:00 a.m. Moscow Time, the state-controlled media announced that Premier Gorbachev had stepped down and the State Committee for the State of Emergency was now the legitimate government of the U.S.S.R. Major Vertkov picked up the news on Camp 234’s radio set. The fall of Gorbachev meant little to him. The game of musical chairs in the Kremlin hadn’t changed the exile status of him or his men. What he heard was that there was chaos in Moscow. And with chaos comes opportunity.

As news of the rapidly disintegrating situation in Moscow filtered in during the day, Vertkov began preparations to gain the favor of Ithaqua through a mass sacrifice of all the camp’s prisoners. The major intended all his men to become

Thralls of Kotura, favored servants of Ithaqua. Once they were filled with the might of their ravenous god, the next step in his plan was to call down a great windstorm and fall upon the men at Site 6. Vertkov had participated in the construction of Site 6 and for a decade had overheard whispers about the installation’s true purpose, and the major understood that it was part of the Dead Hand defense system. There at his doorstep was the means to unleash Armageddon and wrap the globe in a nuclear winter. As the cold advanced south, he reasoned, so would the realm of Ithaqua. As a new global ice age descended, the great Lord of the Winds would roam across the globe at will.

At least it would if temperature had anything to do with Ithaqua’s confinement to the Northern Hemisphere. Unknown to Vertkov, Ithaqua’s inability to move across the globe has nothing to do with the weather and everything to do with Ithaqua’s inability to travel far from the Temple of the Winds at the North Pole. (See Pagan Publishing’s *Walker in the Wastes* for details.) Major Vertkov has no idea that his plan will not benefit Ithaqua the way he intends.

On the other hand, following a full nuclear exchange between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., the least irradiated areas of the Northern Hemisphere will be in the extreme north. As the temperatures fall, survivors of the nuclear war will

be tempted to pay obeisance to Ithaqua in order to survive. Thousands will flock to the worship of the Lord of the Winds. Those who resist will end up as meat for the faithful or sacrifices for Ithaqua. Since Ithaqua seems to crave those sacrifices, perhaps this insane plan will benefit the Great Old One after all.

Or maybe Ithaqua will crush its presumptuous worshippers regardless.

RUNNING THE SCENARIO

Essentially this is a “survival horror” style scenario. It emphasizes suspense, the horror of supernatural violence, and a dawning sense of cosmic forces and threats beyond the reach of human understanding or reason. There is little in the way of traditional investigation. The Investigators are thrust into the scenario with little warning and almost no information and left to sink or swim virtually on their own.

While the setup, locations, and opposition in this scenario may be complex, the structure of it is not. At the Investigators’ level of authority, decisions about the planning and preparation of their mission have already been made for them and they are expected to execute those plans to the best of their ability. The Investigators move forward through a very linear series of



SHEARER

encounters until they get to a “Mythos landmine” that promptly explodes in their faces. No matter which way you slice it, they Investigators are in for an unpleasant time.

That means establishing mood is more crucial than ever. This is a scenario with a lot of guns and some (very) powerful explosives. Using those human tools can be cathartic, but ultimately they should serve only to drive home the helplessness of humanity in the face of the influence of the Great Old One.

FUCKING MONDAYS

On Monday morning, August 19, 1991, the Investigators were awoken to the news that Premier Gorbachev had been relieved of his duties and a “State Committee for the State of Emergency” had been created to run the country during the transition of power. Their Spetsnaz unit, in Norilsk for Arctic warfare training, is put on alert; but being so far from the centers of power in the U.S.S.R., no one can really imagine them going into action unless they are airlifted back to Moscow or Leningrad.

On Tuesday, August 20, 1991, the Investigators are kicked out of bed at 1 a.m and ordered into full Arctic warfare gear immediately. They pile into the back of several UAZ trucks and are rushed to the nearby Soviet Air Defense Forces Base. Waiting in a hangar are a number of high ranking generals from the Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces, the arm of the military that is responsible for all land-based strategic and theater nuclear missiles. They don’t look happy. One or two look drunk. Successful Psychology rolls reveal everyone is on the verge of panic.

At this point the Investigators are given the basic briefing contained in Player Handout #1. The information is presented by Lt. General Konstantin Pavelovich Suslin of the Strategic Rocket Forces. He is 67-year-old martinet who brooks no other opinions, or even requests for clarification, from the Spetsnaz. Under no circumstances will the Spetsnaz troopers be made aware of the true nature of Site 6. It is enough that they think a missile silo has been

taken over by unknown forces. The danger to the world should be obvious, even moreso at a time when no one is quite sure who is in charge of the Kremlin. The generals see no reason to reveal that the silo is part of the U.S.S.R.’s “doomsday machine.” At all times during the briefing, General Suslin emphasizes that time is critical and the danger is extreme.

The Investigators (fortunately) have been assigned to the team that is going to attempt to approach Site 6 on the ground. Their doomed comrades who are loaded onto the Mi-26 helicopter will never be seen alive again.

The Investigators are loaded onto the Antonov-124 (An-124) military transport jet along with four MT-LBV armored personnel carriers, specially equipped for Arctic service. More details on these vehicles can be found at the end of the scenario.

The Investigators and the other Spetsnaz are loaded into the 80-person passenger compartment behind the cockpit of the An-124. There they perform equipment checks while awaiting takeoff. Everyone straps in and the massive jet struggles into the air and heads off to the northeast towards their target in the Byrranga Mountains of the desolate Taymyr Peninsula. The aircraft will be wheels up by 3:00 a.m. The 1,200 km flight to the insertion zone takes just over 90 minutes.

THE DOOMED HELICOPTER TEAM

Flesh out the doomed team so as not to obviously telegraph that these men aren’t going to make it. There are 40 men led by Senior Lieutenant Ivan Sergeivtich Poliakov and Junior Lieutenant Dimitri Aleksayavich Samoilenko, the company’s political officer or zampolit. Emphasize that the Investigators have fought and bled with everyone in the company, including the men assigned to the helicopter. There will be Sanity rolls when the Investigators ultimately hear of their fate.

The Strategic Rocket Forces team accompanying the Spetsnaz consists of three men under the command of Junior Lieutenant Anatoly Ivanavich Yaronova. The Spetsnaz troops saw those men and the air crew only during the briefing.

THE LANDING

At this time of the year the sun is well above the horizon by 5:00 a.m., but the An-124 is on-station by approximately 4:30 a.m. The pilots must wait until the sun is fully up in order to see well enough to land. They spend another 20 minutes looking for a landing site that presents a credible chance for a survivable open-field landing just beyond the white-out conditions of the blizzard. Finally the pilots announce that they think they’ve spotted level enough ground. Make the landing as random as you like, perhaps making a Pilot Jet Airliner roll (using the pilot’s skill of 65%) and then describing injuries, casualties or lost equipment depending if the roll fails. It shouldn’t be worse than that. The point of the landing is to get the Investigators to the scenario, so it doesn’t make a great deal of sense to allow an NPC’s fumble to nosedive the Investigators into the turf at 250 kilometers an hour.

This “open-field landing” is actually more of a deliberate crash landing, however, so feel free to dial up the tension. With successful Spot Hidden, Navigation, or Military Science rolls the Investigators realize that the aircraft is about to attempt a landing in a field a least 300 meters too short. That realization costs 0/1 SAN.

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Other events might make the Investigators nervous. The AN-124 is dumping its remaining fuel before attempting the crash landing. They'll have one chance at this. After that, the aircraft will be on fumes. There will be no way to get back if the crash landing is aborted. They are going in whether the Investigators like it or not.

Do not deal out so much damage that the mission is over before it begins, but there could be any number of complications. For example, the front or back ramps of the aircraft could be damaged in the landing and force the Investigators to rig a repair, blow the hatches off, or, if they are feeling particularly ballsy, drive their MT-LBVs right out through the fuselage.

INTO THE BLIZZARD

The AN-124 has delivered them to their debarkation point. No matter how well the pilots performed, the aircraft will never fly again. Anyone injured in the crash landing can wait at the aircraft with the four crewmen for a Red Air Force rescue helicopter

that is already on the way. All the troopers that survived the landing load into the MT-LBVs and head north into the teeth of an ugly Arctic storm. Even 114 km away there are 30 kph winds, temperatures are just under freezing, snow is blowing through the air and a light dusting has settled on the ground.

If the Investigators consult their topographical maps of the area, its obvious on a successful Navigation roll that the terrain will not allow for a direct approach. The convoy of armored vehicles must detour far to the east before turning north. That route will add 50 extra kilometers to their route. That will stretch their fuel supply beyond the point where they would be able to return from Site 6 to the crash-landing site for extraction. Obviously they won't have to do that if the mission succeeds, but it should give the Investigators pause to know they are on a one-way mission now.

If the Investigators fail to consult their maps or make that Navigation roll, they waste at least two hours before finding that their armored vehicles cannot proceed any further, forcing them

to backtrack and make a Navigation roll to plot a new course. Having to backtrack and find the proper route adds an extra 90 km to their original estimate. This leaves their fuel tanks with less than 45 km of range when they arrive at Site 6, assuming they don't fail any other Navigation or Drive Tracked Vehicle rolls.

Over this terrain, the MT-LBVs can make only about 10 kph. Each driver must roll Drive Tracked Vehicle once per hour. If both succeed they can manage 20kph. Any fumbled roll results in an accident or malfunction that delays the convoy until a repair is made with a Mechanical Repair roll. Each attempt in these weather conditions takes one hour, and only one mechanic can make the attempt at a time.

In the blizzard visibility quickly drops to less than 100 meters. Even quite large features are difficult to spot. Visibility inside the MT-LBVs is even worse, with the driver's periscope and windows icing up, forcing them to open the hatches to get a decent look or risk tumbling the vehicle into a ravine or getting it hung up on boulders. The sky is not visible through the storm. The sun barely registers as a smudge of illumination while it is above the horizon.

It's important to stress that the weather conditions are not merely miserable, but actually life-threatening. Anyone outside in the winds would not last very long before suffering hypothermia and frostbite. With sustained winds blowing at nearly 65 kph the summer temperatures outside have been driven down from 4 degrees C (39 F) to -8 degrees C (-21F). Hypothermia and frostbite will begin to affect any exposed skin in less than an hour. Proper Arctic winter clothing will protect a wearer almost indefinitely, so long as they remain dry—but with the winds pushing so much snow and ice around, even the soldiers in their winter gear will get wet and suffer from hypothermia and frostbite within five hours.

On the way, the Investigators come across herds of reindeer in their summer coats that died of exposure. Their tangled bodies are piled together

SPETSNAZ BRIEFING

Operation White 36

Date/Time of Briefing: 08/20/91/0130 hours

OPERATIONAL FORCES TO DEPLOY:

4th Special Purpose Brigade, elements, Red Army

82nd Special Purpose Airborne and Arctic Warfare Company, Red Army

124th Heavy Lift Wing, elements, Red Air Force

1st Platoon, 18th Special Signals Company, elements, Strategic Rocket Forces

STRATEGIC SITUATION: Site 6 is home to the an ICBM silo of the 123rd Strategic Missile Wing, located in the foothills of the Byrranga Mountains of the Taymyr Peninsula at 76° 12' N and 106° 18' E. Strategic Rocket Forces Command lost all telemetry and radio contact with Site 6 six hours ago. Site 6 has not responded to any subsequent attempts at communication. Site 6's last communication, at 18:30:22 Moscow standard time, was that the facility was under attack by forces unknown. We can only assume now that Site 6 is in the hands of terrorists, counter-revolutionary or imperialist forces. No demands or ultimatums have been issued at this time.

Further complicating the strategic and tactical situation is the presence of a violent storm over Site 6. Air reconnaissance of Site 6 is extremely restricted. High winds combined with low visibility and an unknown amount of snowfall over the site mean that a successful air insertion at Site 6's landing field via aircraft landing or para-drop are rated as extremely low-probability. No appropriate military resources are near enough to reach Site 6 by ground within the time constraints.

The final factor arguing against air insertion is that Site 6 is equipped with four SA-12 ground-to-air missile batteries. If Site 6 is in the hands of hostile forces, they may have control of the air-defense system, making an approach by air impossible without extreme casualties.

MISSION OBJECTIVE: Your company must reach Site 6, regain control, assess the technical situation at the facility, and re-establish communications and data exchange with Strategic Rocket Forces command at Sverdlovsk. The objective is time-critical. Communications and data exchange must be achieved by 14:45:13 hours, August 22, 1991.

DEPLOYMENT: The task force will deploy from Soviet Air Defense Forces base at Norilsk.

The task force will be divided into two equal teams consisting of two platoons of Special Purpose Forces. Each team will include three personnel from the Strategic Rocket Forces, who will deal with any technical issues at the silo complex once it is secured by the Special Purpose Forces. The use of two separate teams using two different approaches to Site 6 will ensure the success of the mission.

Team number one will attempt to reach Site 6 via Mi-26 helicopter launched from Norilsk Air Defense Base. Team number one will proceed via nape-of-the-Earth flight in order to avoid the radar systems and air defense batteries at Site 6.

Team number two will be inserted 114 km from objective, beyond the worst of the blizzard conditions, by an Antonov-124 transport aircraft launched from Norilsk Air Defense Forces Base. After performing an open-field landing and disembarking, Team two will proceed overland to the objective using four MT-LBV multi-purpose tracked vehicles.

Whichever team reaches Site 6 first will immediately secure the facility and then re-establish communications with Strategic Rocket Forces Command Sverdlovsk. The second team to arrive will provide support. Task Force will remain in place until the weather permits safe extraction.

SECURITY: All information about, and even the very existence of, White 36 is classified Top Secret.

EXPECTED WEATHER CONDITIONS: The area of Site 6 is experiencing unseasonable weather. A violent blizzard has reduced visibility to less than 100 meters. Sustained winds are estimated at 65kph with gusts over 100kph. Air insertion directly into Site 6 is an extreme hazard.

as the exhausted adults tried to shelter the young that were born in the spring. The Investigators may also discover the corpses of huge, hairy muskoxen, caught unprepared by this unseasonal storm. The closer the convoy gets to Site 6, the fewer animals (dead or alive) will be encountered. The animals were not just trying to flee the cold—they felt and feared the unnatural presence of Ithaqua and its Thralls.

THE HELICOPTER'S DISTRESS SIGNAL

The only contact the platoon has with the outside world at this point are the radios in the MT-LBVs. While not powerful enough to broadcast beyond 50 kilometers, they can listen to messages from Norilsk and other military chatter on their frequency. Roughly two hours after they set out from the AN-124 crash site, the Investigators start to pick up transmissions from the Mi-26 helicopter carrying the other half of their company. At first they hear the pilots arguing with some officers who are clearly safe and snug at the Norilsk Air Defense Base. The pilots of the Mi-26 say they cannot penetrate any further into the blizzard, that conditions are too dangerous to continue. Command demands that they try again, emphasizing the critical threat to the safety of the Soviet Union—but never actually revealing that what is at stake is the full launch of every missile from every silo in the U.S.S.R.

When the flight crew ultimately refuses to continue under the current weather conditions, a new voice comes on the radio. This officer identifies himself as Lt. General Konstantin Pavelovich Suslin of the Strategic Rocket Forces, the same man who ran the mission briefing. He shrieks at the crew that if they abandon their mission they will be treated as deserters and their helicopter will be intercepted and shot down. Furthermore, the wives, parents, siblings and children of the deserters will undoubtedly meet with grave consequences for their “cowardly actions.” The helicopter flight crew questions the sanity of these orders, but ultimately they seem to accept that the



threat is no bluff and they again attempt to penetrate the heart of the storm.

Investigators listening in may make Psychology rolls to determine that something is being withheld from them—and that whatever it is, it has command hysterical with fear.

It's not much longer before the Investigators start hearing a mayday call from the Mi-26 helicopter. The blades have iced up and they've lost both lift and their tail rotor. They're going down. The last thing they broadcast is a combination of estimated crash coordinates and vile profanity aimed at the officers who forced them into taking such a suicidal course of action.

No further communications come from the helicopter. The Investigators hear the Norilsk Air Defense Base vainly attempting to raise the helicopter on the radio for about thirty minutes before they abandon the effort.

The Investigators' convoy then receives a radio message directing them to redouble their efforts to reach Site 6. The future of the U.S.S.R. depends on their success. Again, nothing is said of the actual stakes.

The Investigators know that trying to find the crash site and rescue survivors has a very low probability. If they insist on changing course and trying to find the crash site based on the helicopter's last reported position, they must spend three hours working their way to the general area and make a successful Navigation roll (only one of them can attempt it) to see if they came to the right area. (And yes, they will have to backtrack an equal amount of time to get back on course for Site 6.) For every further hour spent looking for the crash sight, have the party make a single percentile roll. On a roll of 01, they reach the crash site, but even then they must make a Spot Hidden

roll to see the Mi-26 crumpled and smoldering in the snow. Their reward for finding the crashed helicopter is the discovery of the dead, burned bodies of everyone aboard. As these were men the Investigators lived and worked with, and because their deaths seem so senseless, it costs each of them 1/1D6 SAN.

The second RA-115 nuclear device aboard the Mi-26 helicopter has been damaged in the crash. The container for the plutonium has not been cracked, so there is no radiation leak, but the aviation fuel fire irreparably damaged the detonator and the firing mechanism. Only a team of nuclear weapons experts could safely salvage the plutonium from the weapon, and that is beyond the scope of this scenario.

THE MAD MAN ON THE RADIO

At this point—after the Investigators leave the crashed helicopter behind, whether that happens immediately or they spend hours searching for it first—the Soviet paranormal investigation agency, GRU Special Department 8 (GRU SV-8), appears in the scenario. GRU SV-8 got its start in the 1920s in Siberia, when an enterprising Soviet officer unearthed ghoul cultists among the starving peasants. Later he encountered worshippers of a hideous wind god among the Evenki tribesmen north of Yakutsk.

The GRU was brought into this crisis when the Strategic Rocket Forces decided to use Spetsnaz commandos to try to regain control of Site 6. When the information about the anomalous weather over Site 6 reached SV-8 they knew that it was too much of a coincidence. A freak storm over a Dead Hand site right in the middle of the biggest political crisis in the history of the Soviet Union? No. The weather simply couldn't be a coincidence. SV-8's files contain plenty of testimony describing weather manipulation by forces that could only be understood as supernatural. As far



as SV-8 is concerned, if the weather is going haywire, then some intelligence is behind it. Unfortunately, with the compartmentalized way Soviet agencies interact, GRU SV-8 didn't learn of the emergency at Site 6 fast enough to insert an agent into the mission. The only people in the U.S.S.R. who might know what to do are stuck on the sidelines. The best they could do was to get an agent to the Norilsk Air Defense Base.

SV-8 has some extremely important information to impart. Their agency has an institutional memory concerning Kotura, its worshippers and the monsters they can become. They can tell the Investigators some signs to look for, what those signs may indicate about the opposition, where to be watching for an attack and what the enemy's weaknesses are. But the presence of SV-8 in Operation White 36 is not welcome. Their counsel is neither sought nor tolerated by the generals running the mission. So GRU SV-8 is going to have to crash the party.

One of their officers, Maj. Dimitri Grigorovich Kishenko, has just arrived at Norilsk Air Defense Base. He has managed to find an unoccupied radio-room and begun to broadcast a message to the Investigators on their mission's

radio frequency. Major Kishenko is not an expert in communications or electronic warfare, and his transmission is quickly detected. Base security arrests him for making an unauthorized transmission, unencrypted and unencoded for anyone to intercept. See page 17.

Because the Investigators cannot interact with Kishenko, the Keeper could read this prepared statement and feel free to edit it if the Investigators fail Listen or Electronics rolls while attempting to get a clear signal.

About five minutes after the transmission goes dead, a new transmission begins. Lt. General Konstantin Grigoravitch Suslin, the officer who briefed them on White 36, comes of the radio. His voice is so calm and controlled it is actually a bit disconcerting after the passion and energy of the previous broadcast.

"Captain Koslov. This is Lt. General Suslin. You are to disregard the broadcast you just received and proceed with your mission as briefed. The broadcast was a disinformation action by enemies of the Soviet Union. The Motherland is depending on you. Do not fail."

Other than that, no more mention will be made of the madman who seized control of the transmission.

THE (NOT SO) EMPTY CAMP

Ten kilometers before the convoy arrives at Site 6, they encounter Corrective Labor Camp 234. The Keeper should use “game master fiat” to ensure this encounter happens no matter what route the convoy takes. What the Investigators encounter at the gulag will warn them that what the madman said on the radio might not be completely crazy.

Camp 234 stands frozen, literally, at the moment of the Ithaqua/Kotura cultists’ ascension into Thralls of Kotura. Everything in the camp is dead and frozen.

The camp is constructed inside three concentric barbed wire enclosures. In the center, a barbed wire fence cordons off the prisoners’ billets. That fence is surrounded by a second enclosure creating a narrow guard-dog run.

This second fence has guard towers on it. Finally an outer barbed wire wall surrounds everything, including the guards’ barrack, offices and other administrative facilities.

The first thing the convoy encounters is the outer fence, topped with spooled razor-wire angled inward. A Military Science roll suggests that this fence is very unlikely to be the perimeter fence of Site 6, since this one is designed to keep something in while Site 6’s perimeter fence was designed to keep intruders out.

The second thing that stands out about the fence is the multiple articles of clothes that are caught in the barbed wire. Striped shirts and pants have been blown into the fence by the powerful winds (which are a steady 60 kph with gusts over 90 kph).

A Navigation roll determines that this camp is absolutely not where Site 6 is supposed to be. A Spot Hidden roll while examining the map reveals that while

there are a few abandoned facilities and settlements on the Tyrmyr Peninsula, no other man-made construction is this close to Site 6.

Exiting the vehicles is uncomfortable in these weather conditions, but a quick search eventually turns up some rusty metal signs riveted to the fence posts declaring this to be:

**CORRECTIVE LABOR CAMP 234
OFF LIMITS
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY**

If the Investigators choose to explore, finding the front gate is relatively easy and takes only a few minutes. They could, of course, use their wire cutters to slice through the barbed wire and just drive right into the camp. Or they can drive right through the fence if they want to look really cool and don’t mind tangling barbed wire in the tread wheels.

WHY EXPLORE THE GULAG?

The gulag is full of clues and an encounter that will cement the supernatural aspect of the opposition. In playtesting, however, many groups failed to see any reason why they should stop and check out the gulag. After all, there’s a missile silo full of ICBMs that could launch at any second just 10 kilometers away. They should get there as quickly as possible. However, there are a number of good reasons the convoy should stop and check out the gulag.

Intelligence Gathering: Site 6 is just ten kilometers away. Perhaps someone here at the gulag knows something about what happened at Site 6? Any intelligence the Investigators can gather about what happened just down the road would be invaluable. Even if the gulag turns out to have suffered the same fate as Site 6, getting a look at what happened at the gulag could be instructive when they arrive at Site 6.

Reinforcements: If there are surviving personnel at the gulag, the Investigators may want to draft them into helping retake control of Site 6. Prisoners who cooperate in the Motherland’s hour of need could be given a pardon. Of course it won’t take long to realize the gulag is empty.

Refueling: Depending on how well the Investigators have navigated so far, the convoy could be critically low on fuel. The Investigators might want to contact

gulag personnel in order to commandeer their supply of diesel fuel. Finding the gulag abandoned, they may want to search for the fuel.

Repairs: If one of the MTLBVs in the convoy has suffered some mechanical difficulty due to a fumbled Drive Tracked Vehicle roll, the Investigators may want to see if the gulag has any facilities for repairing it. If they don’t, there’s always the chance that the Investigators will get stuck with the vehicle that can only go half-speed or which might throw a tread at any moment.

Radio Contact with Norilsk: The Investigators may be feeling a bit cut off from the rest of the world and may want to contact higher headquarters, if for no other reason than to report their position, situation and their imminent contact with Site 6. Some Investigators might want to speak with the “mad” Maj. Kishenko again. The gulag has a very obvious radio tower that might be used to increase their broadcast range.

New Orders: If none of those factors seems likely, you could have Lt. General Suslin send a sudden order to perform a quick inspection of Corrective Labor Camp 234, perhaps based on preliminary interrogation of Kishenko. Of course Suslin will not explain the reason for the new order.

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RADIO TRANSMISSION TRANSCRIPT
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FIRST VOICE: Hello? Hello? I am broadcasting to the men of the 4th Special Purpose Brigade, 82nd Special Purpose Airborne and Arctic Warfare Company. Captain Koslov, I have supplementary intelligence concerning Operation White 36 that was not included in your briefing. My name is Major Dimitri Grigorovich Kishenko. I am an intelligence officer with the GRU. I am violating orders by contacting you and I will be arrested for having done so. But there are things your team must know. Things your commanders simply do not believe.

There is a strong indication that Site 6 was not compromised by conventional forces. The blizzard is proof of that. A Perimeter Counter-Strike base is attacked and captured just hours after Premier Gorbachev was deposed, and then a storm descends over Site 6 and cuts it off from the rest of the Soviet Union? Not a storm front, comrades. A storm. Out of nowhere. Right on top of your objective. While the rest of the Arctic Theater of War reports fair summer weather, your objective is blanketed in whiteout conditions. This storm is no accident. You need to remember that as you approach Site 6.

You must take special care to observe any signs of the presence of Siberian native peoples. This is critically important to the success of your mission. The Saamdi or Nenets people in particular. They will appear as Asiatic reindeer herders, but the ones you need to concern yourself with will likely exhibit signs of prolonged inbreeding due to their isolation and limited gene pool. They will likely be nomads, with no permanent camps. Do not trust them. Treat them as hostiles.

SOUNDS OF FISTS POUNDING ON A DOOR.

SECOND VOICE: Open the fucking door! Open it right now or we're shooting the lock off!

FIRST VOICE: (Speaking more quickly but trying to speak clearly.) Look for signs of pagan religious offerings. And look to their feet. Make them show you their feet. Any signs of malformation, disfigurement, or extensive amputation are a direct sign that they are compromised and must be killed immediately.

SECOND VOICE: Open the door! This is your last warning!

FIRST VOICE: Do you hear any howling? Anything on the wind. Not wolves. It's not wolves. It's them. They run on the air. Keeps yours eyes up. Watch the skies. Without feet they don't touch the ground any more. They move like lightning. They run on the wind. They serve the wind.

SOUNDS OF WOOD SPLINTERING AND THE DOOR CRASHING OPEN. MULTIPLE VOICES SHOUTING FOR THE COMRADE MAJOR TO PUT THE RADIO DOWN!

FIRST VOICE: Their hearts are frozen. They fear fire. Use it! Use it! Burn their frozen dead hearts!

SOUNDS OF A PHYSICAL SCUFFLE. THE FIRST VOICE IS YELLING ABOUT HEARTS WHILE OTHER VOICES TRY TO SHOUT HIM DOWN.

THIRD VOICE: Comrade Major Kishenko! You are under arrest for treason against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics! Get him out of here! Get him out of here now!

FOURTH VOICE: What the hell was he doing?

THIRD VOICE: Sabotage! He's trying to sabotage the mission! He's an American spy!

FOURTH VOICE: Could they be doing this? To make it look like we fired first? Wait? This is still transmitting!

THIRD VOICE: Turn it off, you fool!

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A few general notes on the camp:

Most of the construction is milled wood brought from the south. Most walls are actually treated logs with sod insulation between the inner and outer walls. All have tall peaked roofs to ensure that snow slides off and does not collapse the structures.

All lighting in the camp is via coal-oil lamps. The limited electricity is used for the radio and a few luxuries for the guards.

Every building has its own heat source, generally some variety of iron stove or central stone fireplace. All of them have been out for days and every building is ice-cold.

Every building has a water collection system using the rain gutters. The water ends up in a barrel inside the building so that (when the interior is heated) it will remain liquid.

Unless otherwise noted, the interiors of all the buildings are in good order and there is no sign of a struggle or violence.

Most structures show signs of recent habitation. All the buildings are now ice-cold due to their heat sources having been extinguished on the afternoon of August 19, but they are not dripping with old ice-crystals like the country home in the movie *Doctor Zhivago*.

Close inspection of the ground (this calls for a Track roll) finds bloody scraps of animal fur scattered here and there across the camp. The fur belonged to the big Caucasian Shepherd guard dogs. It takes a Natural History roll to recognize that, which costs 0/1 SAN.

The various areas are described below:

- **Outer Perimeter Fence:** The eight-foot fence posts are made of rusty metal with multiple strands

of barbed wire hung between them. Signs identifying the camp are still riveted to the posts. Bits and pieces of prisoners' clothing can be found caught in the barbed wire.

- **(#2) The Corpse Mound:** This is one of the first things the Investigators are going to see once they get inside the camp. There are more than 500 corpses piled atop each other in the main exercise yard of the guards' area of the camp. They were killed by extreme blunt-force trauma to their heads. The bodies are naked, frozen solid into grisly contortions and cemented into place by frozen rivers of blood. Two gore-encrusted sledge hammers lie discarded nearby. The sight costs 1D2/1D4+1 SAN even for those inured to the brutality of combat. The area around the mound is littered with several score boots containing mummified feet.

WHAT HAPPENED?

The conditions in the gulag were created by the mass sacrifice to gain Ithaqua's favor. It proceeded like this:

Prisoner barracks were emptied out one at a time.

Prisoners under guard were marched out to the area that crosses the dog run. There, under threat from madly barking dogs, they were ordered to strip naked. Since the blizzard arrived their discarded clothes have blown all over the camp. Many clothing items are hung up in the barbed wire or are bunched up against the chain-link fences and can easily be spotted by Investigators approaching the camp. The prisoners' shoes are piled up by the gates.

The naked prisoners were brought forward one at a time. They were manacled, forced to kneel, and had their heads smashed in with sledgehammers.

The cultist-guards heaved the bodies of the dead prisoners onto the ever-growing mound of corpses.

Major Vertkov cast the spell *Breath of Ithaqua*, which is essentially the spell *Call Haboob* from *Call of Cthulhu* Sixth Edition except that it creates a blizzard instead of a sandstorm. As the mound of corpses grew, it was covered by snow until it had formed the require mound of snow for the spell *Call Ithaqua*. The guards worked until every prisoner was dead.

A few prisoners tried to fight back and were gunned down. Others tried to get over the wire and were shot from the guard towers. Those few who managed to hide from the guards while they were human were found once the guards transformed into Thralls, using their keen sense of smell. Those prisoners were torn to pieces and devoured alive.

Not all the guards were granted the transformation to Thralls of Kotura, deemed unworthy by some alien capriciousness of Ithaqua. Their fate was the same as the prisoners. A few frozen, gnawed bones are all that marks what's left of anything that was alive in the compound after the cultists' transformations.

Some of the guards' weapons are still lying in the snow. A critical success on Spot Hidden (less that one-fifth of the Investigator's Spot Hidden skill) is required to find any of them. Nyalku and his clan have already collected the easy-to-find rifles (see "Nyalku," page 23).

Also abandoned by the transformed guards: their feet. As they became Thralls their feet blackened, withered and dropped off at the ankle.

Besides the transformations, Ithaqua blessed their endeavor with an even larger and more powerful blizzard. It will not disperse until Ithaqua's favor is withdrawn or all the Thralls are dead.

Investigators making Spot Hidden rolls find them buried in the snow and are rewarded with a 1/1D4 SAN loss.

- **Outer Prisoner Fence:** The outer fence stands between the dog run and the guards' areas of the prison. It has several entrances so that the guards and their dogs can enter this area easily. There is only one fenced walkway connecting the inner and outer fences. The outer fence is very sturdy, four meters tall with wooden posts supporting the chain-link fence, buried one meter down into the earth to prevent digging under it, and topped with spools of rusty razor wire. In the winds of the blizzard some of the spools have come loose and are flailing dangerously. Prisoners' clothes can be easily seen stuck to the fence and tangled in the barbed wire.
- **(#3) Guard Towers:** These structures don't look particularly stable, especially in the 60 kph winds that are tearing through the camp. Constructed of wood with only enough room for one guard at a time, they are not electrified and do not have searchlights. They stand eight meters tall and are essentially sniper positions for firing down into the prisoner camp.
- **Inner Prisoner Fence:** This fence is only about two and a half meters tall and is made of metal chain link, wired to steel poles. It's not terribly hard to climb, but the guards weren't concerned about that because doing so puts you in the dog-run with the huge, vicious guard dogs.
- **(#5) Kennels:** Here the Investigators find the grisly remains of well over 40 Caucasian Shepherds. Once the guards became Thralls of Kotura they devoured all the warm meat they could find. This breed of dog is well-known for its size (50 to 100 kg) and ferocity. Every one of them has been torn apart and devoured down to their well-gnawed bones. Scraps of their frozen pelts can be

found hundreds of meters from the kennels. The wood-framed, steel meshed doors of the kennels have been wrenched from their frames, the metal twisted and bent by some extreme force. Witnessing the carnage costs 0/1D4 SAN.

- **(#6) Coal Mounds:** The coal comes from a nearby mine where the prisoners were forced to extract the fuel that would keep them from freezing during the winter. There is nothing in the coal mounds to interest the investigators, unless they want fuel for one of the iron stoves in the camp.
- **(#7) Tool Warehouse:** Just outside the gate to the prisoners' compound, this long building has a front and rear entrance and is designed so that prisoners would walk in the back, pick up a tool, and walk out the front to perform whatever task the guards have for them that day. The process is reversed at the end of the workday. It is filled with picks, shovels, axes, and carpentry tools.
- **(#8) Prisoner Barracks:** The first thing that the Investigators notice here is that not all of the prisoner barracks were occupied. Some have even been dismantled and the construction materials used to repair or expand other structures in the camp. Several barracks are now nothing more than empty lots.
- **(#9) Cultivation Shacks:** A few of the prisoner barracks have been converted into grow-shacks for the cultivation of mushrooms. They have been covered in sod to insulate them from the elements and still have iron stoves in them to provide warmth, and pots of water which were boiled to provide humidity. With no one to tend the fires these hot houses have frozen solid; all the dead mushrooms are now covered with a patina of ice crystals.
- **(#10) Prisoner's Mess:** This building includes a kitchen filled with coal-burning stoves and a mess hall with long tables and bench seats.

There is no pantry or storage for food in this building. There is some sign that preparations were being made for a meal but were abandoned. Dishes are partially scrubbed and huge soup kettles are now frozen solid. There are no signs of a struggle, only calmly abandoned work, with most items put away.

- **(#11) Punishment Cells:** The punishment cells are nothing more than steel cages that expose the unfortunate occupant to the elements. In the winter this would be a death sentence. All of them are empty.
- **(#12) Guard Cabins:** These buildings are well-maintained and appear to have had multiple repairs and upgrades over the years. All were designed to hold ten guards plus their gear and weapons. Over the years, as guards died through accidents, illness and failing to adopt the camp's new god as their own, the cabins have gotten less crowded. All the cabins have iron stoves. Anyone who checks the stoves notices that they have not been used for a long while. They aren't even dirty with coal ash or dust. As worshippers of the wind-walker, the guards are now impervious to the effects of cold. They haven't lit a stove for warmth in years. Most personal effects are still here. Most notably, all the cold-weather gear still hangs from wood pegs or is stored in cedar chests. Some of the packed-away winter gear appears dusty and smells of long-term storage.

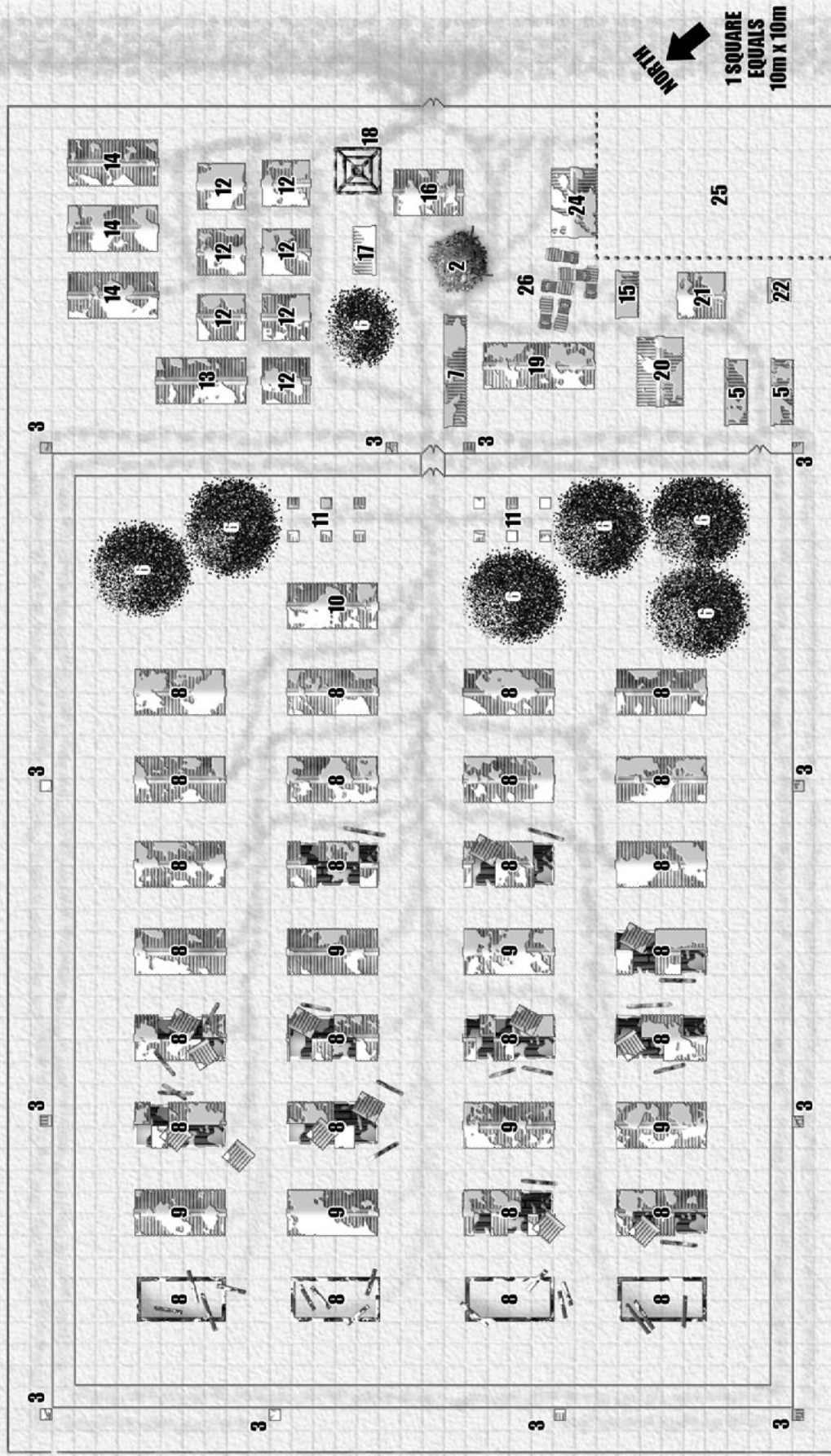
Anyone searching the guards' cabins thoroughly (or who rolls Spot Hidden on a cursory search) finds religious artifacts related to the worship of Kotura, Lord of the Winds. These can be anything from artwork painted on the walls of the cabin to small private shrines next to a guard's bed. Here are three examples:

- **The Wall Carving:** The walls of a cabin are covered in strange and primitive carvings of Ithaqua and his transformed Children (or Thralls) running across the skies

Корректирующий Трудовой лагерь 234

(CORRECTIVE LABOR CAMP 234)

200m to Graveyard
(No. 23)



1 SQUARE
EQUALS
10m x 10m

SHEARER

and wreaking havoc and death upon unbelievers. It looks like it might have been carved with a knife or an awl. The scenes of flying, feasting and freezing death cover every wall in the cabin. This costs 1 SAN point only if the Investigator fumbles the roll.

- **The Carved Effigy:** Someone has spent some time in the machine shop to create a stone effigy of Kotura. Stylized claws and fangs and an evil countenance have been etched into a smooth, football-sized dark stone. The stone has been used in the past the pound in the heads of sacrifices. Dried blood and hair are still stuck to it. A successful roll of First Aid, Occult, Forensics, or Medicine reveals the blood and hair to be human, which costs 1/1D3 SAN. Otherwise the loss is 0/1 SAN.
- **The Shrine:** A wooden table in this room has been set up as a shrine to Ithaqua. Someone has arranged a series of small dark stones on the table to make the shape of a footless humanoid with white stones for eyes. It is a complex and well-executed mosaic, but is not cemented to the table. It can easily be swept onto the floor. Doing so may, at the Keeper's discretion, later cause the Thrall who made it to pick out that Investigator for special attention. Perhaps, having swept the stones off the table, the Investigator hears the distant and angry howl of a Thrall at a cost of 0/1D2 SAN.

One of the guard barracks stands out. The one directly in front of the guard's mess has a fire burning in it keeping it warm. This is where Nyalku is sheltering his dogs until the blizzard blows over. Investigators who enter this barracks find 45 Samoyed dogs and all their sled tack. Samoyeds are known for their lack of aggression and make poor guard dogs. They pose no threat to the Investigators.

- **(#13) Guards' Mess:** The facilities here are much better than the prisoners' mess. The food is cooked in the same room where it's served,



but the stoves, pots and pans are in better shape. Everything appears to have been put away in good order. Nyalku and his family have taken up residence in this building (with their sleds) and they are gathering all the rifles, ammunition and canned goods they plan to steal.

- **(#14) Storehouses:** These buildings contain the supplies for the camp. There are supposed to be bi-annual restocks sent to Camp 234 via the airfield at Site 6, but in past years resupply has failed, perhaps forgotten, perhaps deliberately shorted. Most of the stocks in the camp are made up of material that the prisoners and guards have created for themselves. Most of the shelves are empty, but there still seem to be plenty of supplies.
- **(#15) Smokehouse:** This small structure was build after it became obvious (following the completion of Site 6) that no one, not even the guards, would be permitted to leave. Here reindeer meat is smoked and

preserved. The meat hanging in the smokehouse is now frozen solid. Dried and preserved, it held no interest for the Thralls of Kotura. Nyalku plans to steal all he can carry.

- **(#16) Camp Headquarters:** In front of this building stands a five-meter flagpole. The red banner of the U.S.S.R. is still flying, though has been torn to ribbons by the 60 kph winds that are tearing through the camp. The headquarters building contains Maj. Vertkov's offices and living quarters. It also contains the radio room and the public address system. When the major was in a good mood he would connect the public address system to the radio so that the guards and sometimes even the prisoners could hear music or even the play-by-play of sports teams. If the Investigators check, they find that it appears as if the irons stoves used to heat the front office and quarters in the rear haven't been used for a very long time. Perhaps even for years.

A number of things in the office demonstrate that Camp 234 has been cut off for over a decade. The office equipment is very antiquated. The manual typewriters are 20 years old. The ribbons appear to have been dyed and re-dyed several times. The 1991 calendar mounted on the wall is clearly hand-made. The last date marked off is August 19, 1991, the day the coup was announced. None of the prisoner or staff files show anyone arriving or leaving after 1979.

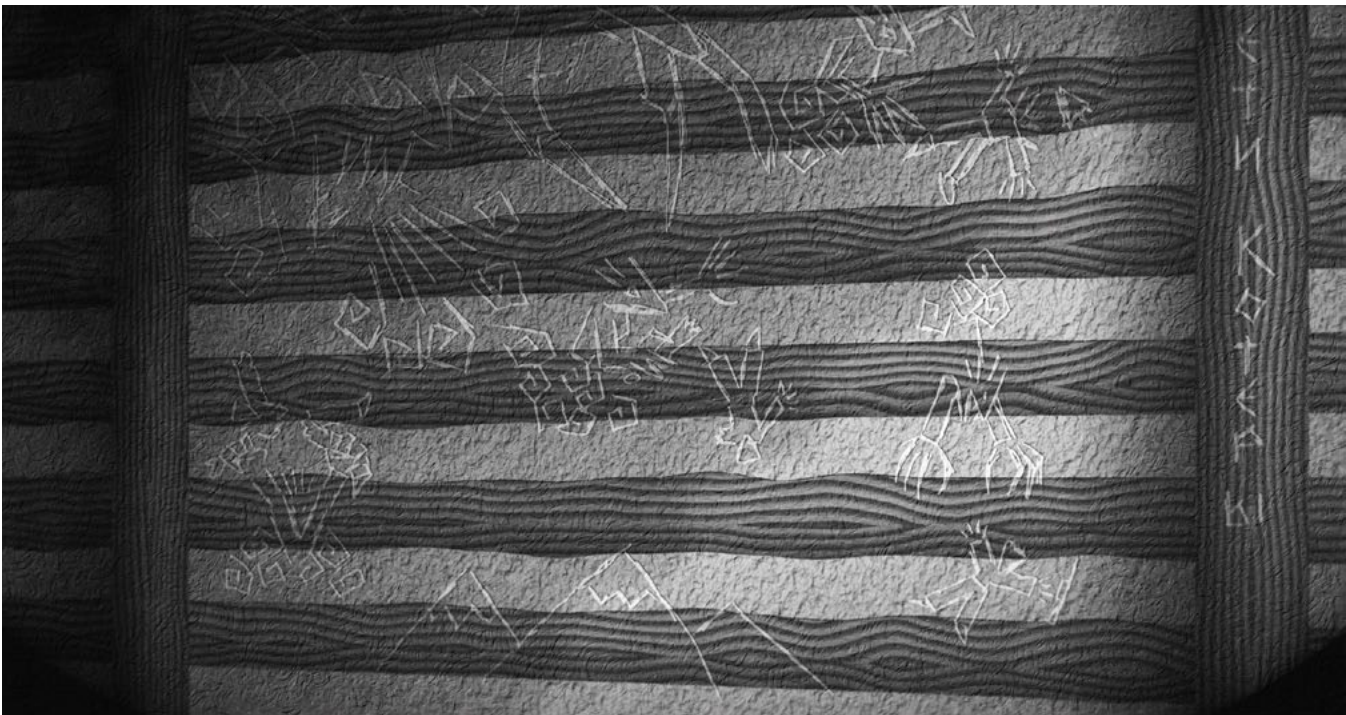
Major Vertkov's personal quarters are sparse, but spotting his personal shrine to Ithaqua requires a Spot Hidden roll unless an Investigator specifically says he is checking the ceiling, in which case no roll is required. The ceiling over the bed is painted with a stylized image of the Wind Walker. In this mural, Kortura appears to be standing astride the onion-topped spires of St. Basil's cathedral and the walls of the Kremlin. Lenin's tomb is crushed underfoot and men and war machines are scattered like leaves before a gale. Here Vertkov would lay in his bed as he contemplated the will of the Kotura. It is his own vanity that saw the Wind Walker's will as complimentary to his dreams of revenge against the men who left him here to die. Seeing the shrine

costs 0/1 SAN only if an Investigator fumbles the roll.

There are no diaries, no written confessions or admissions among the Major's possessions. There are no scrolls, parchments or grimoires.

The radio room is designed to receive long-range transmissions but not to send them. If the Investigators want to boost the power and hook one of their vehicle radios into the system in order to contact Norilsk Air Defense Base, it will take an Electronics roll, an Electrical Repair roll and a Mechanical Repair roll (to get the camp's generator up and running at full speed) to accomplish this task. Each roll takes 15 minutes. Getting the generator up and running takes another 30 minutes. See the boxed text "Getting In Touch With Command," page 33, for the results.

- **(#17) The Power Plant:** Behind the headquarters building, near the radio tower is a large shed that contains the camp's power plant. It is a coal-fired steam turbine for generating electricity. When the Investigators arrive its firebox is cold and the water has frozen inside the steam system. The room would have to be heated up before the plant could be restarted. Fortunately there is a stove.
- **(#18) Radio Tower:** This steel structure is buttressed by steel cabled attached to concrete blocks. At 15 meters tall, it is the tallest man-made structure for hundreds of kilometers in any direction. The wind howling through its steel beams and cables makes the tower wail eerily.
- **(#19) The Machine Shop:** This long building is filled with gear for cutting and shaping wood and metal. There are lathes and welding equipment and even a coal-fired forge. The machine shop was originally used to repair gear used in the creation of Site 6. Since then the guards and prisoners have used it to fabricate replacement parts or jury-rig fixes for the equipment around camp. All of the equipment is at least 20 years old.
- **(#20) Infirmary:** The facilities here are rudimentary in the extreme. Cuts can be stitched and disinfected. Broken bones can be splinted. Bandages can be applied. There are surgery and dental tools but there is no anesthetic; all the chloroform was consumed by the camp doctor before his suicide six years ago. No replacement doctor was ever sent. The camp had been



SHEARER

getting by with the skills of a prisoner who had been a medical student. He was one of the first sacrifices to Kotura. Books on medicine and dentistry can be found here. All of them date to 1979.

- **(#21) Quarantine Barracks:** Guards and prisoners who fell ill must recuperate in the quarantine barracks or die. Some of the beds appear unmade, with the sheets pulled onto the floor. It's as if the invalid occupants of these beds were dragged out of here.
- **(#22) The Charnel House:** During the winter, anyone who dies in the camp is not buried immediately. They are stored away in a separate building until the ground thaws enough to get a spade into it. Burials for the entire winter are conducted at once. There are no frozen bodies in here at the time because it was summer when the blizzard struck and every casualty before that had been promptly buried.
- **Graveyard:** The graveyard is located outside the walls of the camp. Prisoners and guards alike are buried here, although in different sections. No wooden crosses or carved gravestones mark the individual graves, only small piles of stones as cairns. Outside the wire, in the blizzard conditions, the graveyard would be very easy to miss. There are hundreds of graves.
- **(#24) Motor Pool/Reindeer Barn:** The guards took to capturing and domesticating reindeer for their milk and to be used as beasts of burden. Several reindeer sledges made at the camp can be found here. The guards and prisoners converted the motorpool building into a kind of barn where the animals could be milked and kept out of the elements. Nearby are several large, above-ground tanks for storing diesel fuel. They still have some fuel in them since the vehicles all stopped working years ago. With the doors secured, none of the reindeer could

escape. The transformed Thralls of Kotura made short and bloody work of the scores of animals that were kept here. Bones, fragments of hide and a slick sheet of frozen blood cover the concrete floor. Seeing it costs 0/1 SAN.

- **(#25) Reindeer Paddock:** In this area, enclosed by barbed wire, the semi-domesticated reindeer were kept and fed. No live animals can be found here. Driven to flee by the Wind Walker's arrival, few escaped the blizzard before succumbing to hypothermia.
- **(#26) Derelict Vehicles:** The camp started with six Zil trucks and four UAZ jeeps. As they broke down the inoperable vehicles were cannibalized for parts to keep the others running. Now all are stripped derelicts, lined up out behind the motor-pool building.

NYALKU

The principal encounter at Camp 234 is Nyalku and his two daughters and three granddaughters.

Long ago, Nyalku's fellow Nenets drove him and his brood away from their homeland to the west. Kotura, Lord of the Winds, is served with blood, and Nyalku's tribesmen didn't have what it takes to serve true power. Nyalku decided to start his own tribe, seeded with his own powerful blood. It hasn't worked out. He has built his 'tribe' by breeding with his own daughters and later his granddaughters, but none of them has given him a son. He's a bit concerned that any son he produces is likely to grow up to kill him and steal his wives/daughters/granddaughters. Nyalku originally brought the worship of Kotura to Camp 234 because he hoped to make it a base of power for himself.

Being blessed of Kotura, Nyalku sensed the presence of his god during Maj. Vertkov's great sacrifice. Nyalku rushed back to Camp 234 to claim leadership of the cult. Despite being Vertkov's spiritual advisor, Nyalku had no idea what the major was planning.

Their worship of Ithaqua leaves Nyalku and his brood impervious to the cold. They pressed on to Camp 234 in the face of the blizzard. Their sled dogs, however, are not so blessed. They are completely at the mercy of the elements and the blizzard took a toll on them. Once they got to the gulag, hours before the Investigators arrive, they found it ravaged and abandoned. Being utterly without compunction, Nyalku and his brood set about looting the camp for their personal gain. They are resting their dogs and keeping them warm until the weather breaks. They lost three precious dogs getting here and aren't interested in losing any more, especially since they will be loaded down with all kinds of guns, tools, ammunition and canned goods. Nyalku and his brood are not popular among the local tribes, so having a few AK-47s handy might make all the difference the next time they need supplies.

Nyalku, his daughters Anna and Olga, and their daughters Zhanna, Lyudmila and Galina are all holed up in the guards' mess hall. It's a big building with plenty of room for them to spread out. They have gathered all the items worth stealing to the mess hall to sort out and prioritize. With not much else to do, Nyalku is spending his time waiting for the weather to break by eating, sleeping and doing exactly the sort of thing you would expect of an incestuous degenerate.

Nyalku has not assigned anyone to guard duty. With the wind howling outside, the squatters won't hear the approaching vehicles unless the Investigators drive right up to the guard barracks. If the Investigators burst into the barracks they easily achieve surprise unless they have made a truly great racket. Faced with 50 armed men, Nyalku and his brood surrender. Nyalku attempts to talk his way out of the situation. All he needs is for the Investigators to leave him alone long enough to make good his escape.

Nyalku has so brutalized and dominated his daughters and granddaughters that they have little in independent personality. They obey him in all things, acting almost as extensions of his will. For example, there

NYALKU AND HIS BROOD

Nyalku is age 65, Anna is 47, Olga is 35, Zhanna is 30, Lyudmila is 20, and Galina is 15.

	STR	DEX	INT	CON	APP	POW	SIZ	SAN	HP	DB
Nyalku	9	7	15	13	8	19	11	0	14	+0
Anna	10	12	13	18	10	11	10	0	14	+0
Olga	9	12	10	14	14	5	11	0	14	+0
Zhanna	13	16	15	15	11	11	9	15	13	+0
Lyudmila	11	10	14	12	11	15	8	30	13	+0
Galina	12	15	7	14	13	12	7	25	14	+0

Move: 8

Skills: Climb 60%, Drive Dog Sled 45%, First Aid 40%, Hide 45%, Jump 45%, Listen 50%, Navigation 45%, Other Language (Russian) 45%, Own Language (Nenet) 90%, Sneak 40%, Spot Hidden 55%, Throw 45%

Ranged Weapon Skills: Rifle 45%

Melee Weapon Skills: Fist/Punch 65%, Grapple 45%, Kick 45%, Knife 35%, Large Club 35%, Small Club 35%, Spear 35%

Nyalku's Skills: Add +10% to all General, Ranged Weapon and Melee Weapon skills.

Spells (Nyalku Only): Breath of Kotura (Call Haboob), Call/Dismiss Kotura (Ithaqua), Enchant Staff, Enchant Drum, Enchant Rattle, Enchant Flute, Enchant Dagger, Transform Blessed of Kotura, plus a few more rituals for keeping Ithaqua happy.

Armor: Winter clothing, 1 point

Equipment: Knives and spears. Nyalku has a Moisin-Nagant M1944 bolt-action carbine. All of them have access to AK-47 assault rifles, but they have not been trained in their use and none will be carrying one unless they are alerted to the Investigators' presence.

Firearms	Damage	Ammo	ROF	Range
AK-47 Assault Rifle	2D6	30	2/20	100
Moisin-Nagant M1944 Carbine	2D6+4	5	1/2	90

Thrown Weapons	Damage	Ammo	ROF	Range
Hunting Spear	1D8+1	n/a	1/2	See Throw rules
Hunting Knife	1D6	n/a	1/2	See Throw rules

Melee Weapons	Damage	Hit Points
Hunting Spear	1D8+1+db	15
Hunting knife	1D6+db	12
Rifle Butt	1D8+db	12

OLAGA AS A THRALL

STR	DEX	INT	CON	POW	SIZ	HP	DB
27	12	5	42	5	14	28	+2D6

Skills: Climb 75%, Hide 75%, Jump 75%, Listen 75%, Scent by Smell at 30 Meters 90%, Sneak 75%, Spot Hidden 75%, Track 50%

Attacks: Bite 30%, damage 1D4+db
 Claw 50%, damage 1D4+db
 Kick 25%, damage 1D8+db
 Grapple 45%, damage special

Armor: 1 point, but physical attacks do minimum damage. The exception is fire, which does damage as usual.

Move: 8/ 90 flying

should be a great many more children and grandchildren in this brood, but Kotura's need for blood is great and sacrifices cannot always be stolen from the local tribes. He breeds his own.

These women have little personal initiative. They are just smart enough to know that they should pretend not to understand Russian, hide behind their Nenet language and let their patriarch do all the talking. They are utterly broken and devoted cultists of Kotura. On their patriarch's orders they will attack without regard for their lives or safety. They will resist extreme tortures without so much as revealing that they can speak Russian.

For his part, once arrested or detained, Nyalku seeks to cast himself and his family as innocent victims, driven to seek shelter in Camp 234 by the terrible blizzard. He squirms and prevaricates when confronted with the evidence of his looting, but still tries to portray himself as merely a disreputable opportunist. He denies knowing anything about Camp 234 and asserts he has never been there before. If confronted about the pagan religious items found around the camp or the ritualistic killings, he claims to know nothing about them, only that he and his wives were terrified by what they found here and would have left but for the blizzard. This is a transparent lie since the group showed no signs of being on guard or barricading the mess hall when the Investigators encountered them.

The flaws in Nyalku's story are many, but he didn't have a lot of time for thinking. For one thing, he and all the members of his brood wear a small image of Ithaqua on a leather thong around their necks. It is a well-polished stone with a footless running figure etched into it. His sledges contain several ritualistic items related to Kotura: a staff, a drum, a rattle, a flute, and a sacrificial dagger, with similar ritual etchings. All are enchanted and give bonuses to the spell Call/Dismiss Kotura, which is unlikely to be pertinent during this scenario. The stone-bladed sacrificial dagger is enchanted and does normal damage against a Thrall rather than minimum damage.

Other things are likely to stand out concerning Nyalku and his brood. For one thing, they have not lit a stove in the guards' mess. While they have poached some food supplies from the camp, they have not cooked anything or made tea. The interior of the mess hall remains a few degrees below freezing. Any temperature more than a few degrees above freezing causes them to act as if they are overheated; they sweat, remove clothing, and look flushed as if suffering from heat exhaustion. They've warmed the guard barracks only to protect their sled dogs. They can only stand to quickly stoke the coal stove before retreating from it.

Nyalku and his brood do not have warm breath. They do not huff and puff clouds of steam when they talk or breathe. The Investigators and all the soldiers from the convoy do. A Spot Hidden, First Aid, or Medicine roll is required to notice this unless the an Investigator specifically asks, and then it is obvious. Nyalku and his family resist having their temperatures taken, biting any thermometer thrust into their mouths. If the other method of taking their temperature is used, the simple mercury thermometers reveal that all six of the Nenets have a body temperature of around 40 degrees Fahrenheit, or just about 4.5 degrees Celsius. This costs 1/1D4 SAN.

Heating the guard's mess would therefore seem to be an effective way to enhance interrogation of Nyalku and his brood. Exposure to temperatures above 60 degrees Fahrenheit (16 Celsius) will prove fatal to them in a matter of minutes. They temporarily lose a CON point every minute and die at zero CON.

Even faced with this, Nyalku does not tell the truth. Instead he attempts to enact a ritual that will cause his daughter Olga to transform into a Thrall of Kotura. If the chanting of Nyalku and his brood goes uninterrupted for five minutes, Olga transforms into a Thrall of Kotura and attacks the Investigators.

This encounter should give the Investigators a taste of what awaits them at Site 6 without wiping out the entire convoy of troopers. Nyalku will also attempt this transformation if he is left alone long enough and no one stops

him. His goal is to cause enough chaos that he can run out into the blizzard and hide until the Investigators leave. Being impervious to the cold, he can easily get away with this. He is happy to leave his family behind.

Once the Investigators have dealt with Nyalku and his brood, their next stop is Site 6, a mere 10 kilometers away.

SITE 6. ON THE SURFACE

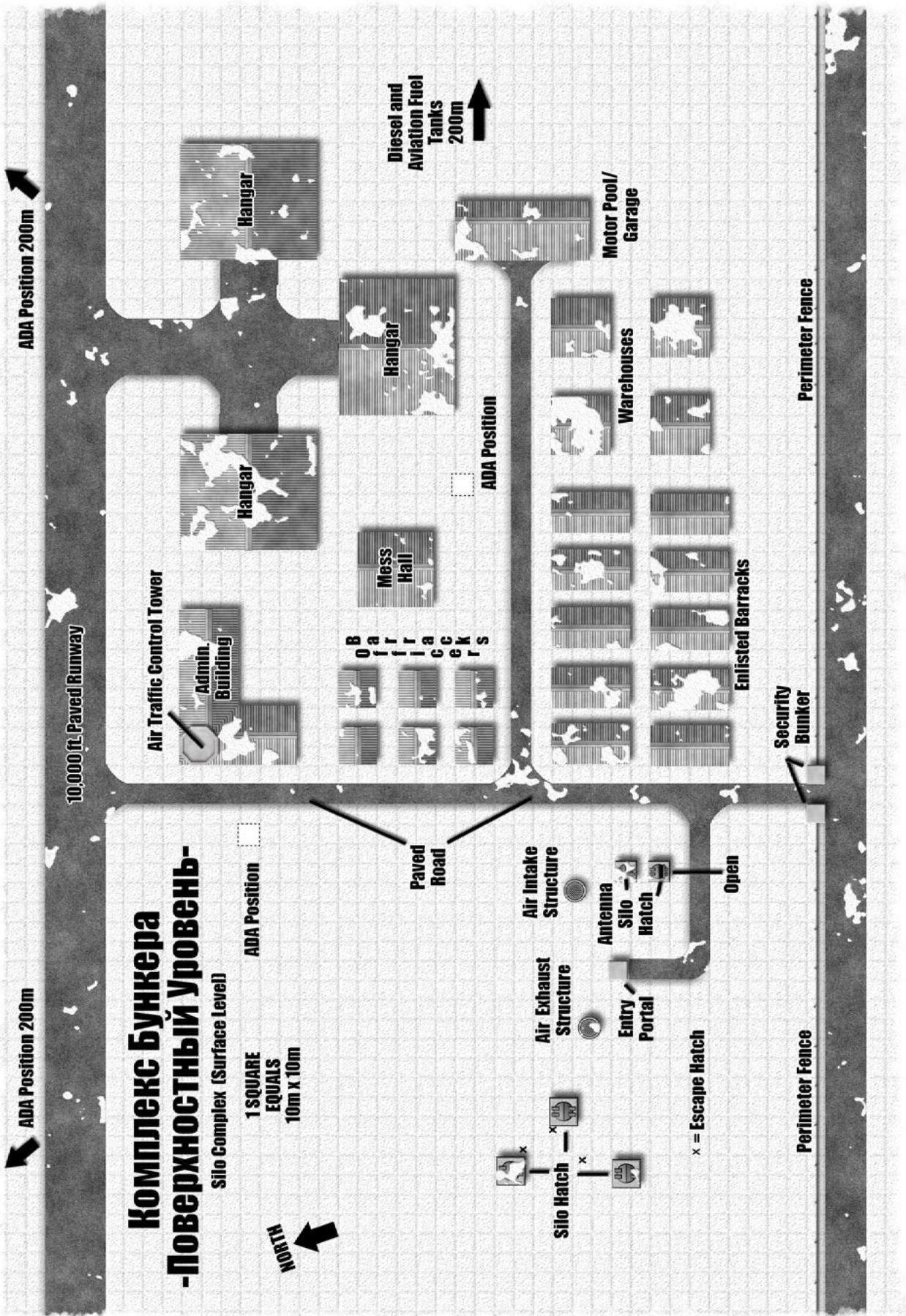
The first thing the Investigators encounter at Site 6 is the perimeter security fence. They cannot see much beyond the fence due to the whiteout conditions of the blizzard. Somewhere beyond the fence lies their objective. How they get to the entrance to the silo is up to them. They can cut through the fence, drive through it or look for the front gate. The more time they take, the more likely it is that the Thralls (which are spread out all over Site 6) will take note and begin to call to each other and converge on the convoy.

If the Investigators just drive through the fence it requires a Navigation roll to find the general area of the silo complex's entrance. If the Investigators go through the main gate, no Navigation roll is required so long as someone still has the map of Site 6. (See "Player Actions and the Clock," page 37.)

The surface buildings of Site 6 are not described in great detail for one very important reason: The Investigators will not have time to explore. If they do not get underground quickly, the Thralls will slaughter them. Swooping out of the sky, under cover of the blizzard, the Thralls will quickly kill anyone they get their claws onto. Hiding inside the surface structures won't work as the Thralls have already breached all the doors and windows to kill the base personnel.

Signs of a firefight are everywhere. Most surfaces are pitted by small arms fire. Walls, doors and windows are smashed in. Bits of uniform, bone and blood are everywhere, along with emptied and sometimes smashed personal weapons.

Hiding inside the vehicles won't save the Investigators either, as some



SHEARER

Место 6 Комплекс Бункера (Site 6 Silo Complex)



- 1: Entry Portal**
- 2: Control Dome**
- 3: Power Dome**
- 4: Fuel Tanks**
- 5: Water Tanks**
- 6: Air Handling / Exhaust**
- 7: Air Intake / Filtration**
- 8: Missile Silos**
- 9: Equipment Terminal**
- 10: Antenna Silo**
- 11: Blast Locks**
- 12: Escape Portals**
- = 3m or 15'**

Thralls are strong enough to pry the doors off. They can jam the tracks of the MT-LBVs with bits and pieces of wreckage they've pried loose from the base. If enough Thralls work together, they can even overturn the MT-LBVs. The Investigators must get inside the base to survive. Out in the open, they are dead men.

The surface structures include:

- **Perimeter Fence:** This is much taller and more robust than the fence surrounding Camp 234. There are no signs identifying the facility but many warning trespassers away from the fence and promising arrest and the use of deadly force against unauthorized persons. Six meters tall and topped with razor wire, the fence surrounds the entire facility. Winterized security cameras top the fence posts. There is only one gate.
- **Security Bunkers:** Two concrete pillboxes flank the front gate. The guards who manned these posts died at the hands of the Thralls. There are plenty of spent shell casings, bones, shredded clothes and frozen pools of blood to mark their passing.
- **Airfield:** This consists of a single 10,000-foot runway (covered with the scattered wreckage of the IL-76 that crashed there), an air traffic control tower, several aircraft hangars (which were mostly used for equipment storage) and a radar installation for monitoring the local airspace. There are fuel bunkers for storage of aviation fuel. The control tower building also includes the administrative offices for running the portion of the facility that's above ground, including the security office. If the Investigators want to be surrounded by blank security camera monitors when they die, they should come here.
- **ADA Positions:** There are four Air-Defense Artillery positions at Site 6 to protect the facility from aerial attack. They have independent radar trailers for tracking incoming targets. The weapons systems are batteries of four SA-12 surface-to-air

missiles (range: 45 km), mounted on tracked MT-T transporters. They are operable, but the crews are dead and they are too cumbersome to fire on the Thralls. As much as the Investigators might want to fire these missiles at Ithaqua itself (should the Great Old One appear) none of them have been trained in the use of this weapons system. They are radar-guided missiles. It would take hours with the operations manual to even understand how to activate the system. However, the missiles are packed with explosives and rocket fuel and could easily detonate if rigged with explosives or struck by a grenade. The burning rocket fuel will be very effective against any Thralls caught in the blast radius.

- **Enlisted Barracks:** There are ten well-constructed Arctic barracks on the post. They are grouped relatively close to the airfield. Each one can house 30 men in common space with bunk beds. The walls and doors have been pulled apart and the interiors are ice palaces of frozen blood and body parts.
- **Officer Barracks:** These six buildings are similar to the enlisted barracks, except that officers get individual rooms and do not have to bunk in a common room. Ten officers live in each barrack. These too are smashed as thoroughly as if someone drove heavy construction equipment through the walls.
- **Mess Hall:** Officers and men eat together in this modern cafeteria. The interior shows signs of meals (now frozen) hastily abandoned as men rushed to their duty stations to defend the facility.
- **Warehouses:** These four buildings store food, medicine, cleaning supplies, spare parts and other consumables. A few (temporary) survivors of the Thralls' initial assault found places to hide here before they were sniffed out and dragged screaming to their deaths.

- **Motor Pool:** This is built much like one of the hangars. Military utility vehicles are maintained and stored here. There is even a tank for the storage of diesel fuel. Trying to refuel while the Thralls are at large is a death sentence. Nevertheless, detonating all that diesel fuel will scare the Thralls away temporarily and roast any caught in the blast.
- **Silo Hatch:** These massive structures currently closed. They weigh over 740 tons. They are mounted on rails but will not move until the locks are removed. When it is time to launch the missiles, explosive bolts blow the locks and a counterweight pulley system opens the door in about 20 seconds.
- **Entrance Portal:** At first this appears to be nothing more than a mound of snow rising slightly higher than the ground around it. But under the snow is a flat concrete pad about 5m x 5m with a steel floor set into it. The steel floor has a large swing-up hatch that conceals a staircase down into the portal. Two steel doors open up like a drawbridge to allow the utility elevator to emerge onto the surface. Both the elevator's doors and the staircase hatch are closed and the control panel to open them has been damaged by the Thralls attempting to get in. The panel can be repaired (see "Getting Inside," page 29). The elevator is not large enough or strong enough to pass a vehicle into the underground facility.
- **Air Intake Structure:** The air intake structure is essentially a concrete pit about 10 meters across and 20 meters deep. The walls of the pit are ringed by circular openings about 1.5 meters in diameter. Each of these are vents that draw air into the silo complex and run it through a series of filters to remove any chance of chemical, biological or radioactive contamination. The Thralls have forced their way inside through these vents, compromising the air filtration system by tearing it apart with their supernatural strength.

A ruthless Keeper seeking to thin out the Spetsnaz might have an MT-LBV driver who misses a Spot Hidden roll and a Drive roll plunge the vehicle into the air intake structure, delivering 2D6 damage to anyone inside who makes a Luck roll or 3D6 to anyone who fails. It's best if this happens to an MT-LBV full of NPCs, since lying injured at the bottom of the Air Intake Structure with the Thralls flying down to devour them might not be interesting for the Investigators. This is likeliest for an MT-LBV cutting through the perimeter fence and rolling across the facility (rather than following the paved path from the front gate).

- **Air Exhaust Structure:** This is a deep concrete pit from which the carbon monoxide fumes from the generators are vented, almost identical to the Air Intake Structure. It could still be a hazard to navigation if a careless vehicle drove into it. The exhaust system was inaccessible to the Thralls because the pipes and tunnels for the exhaust are so much smaller than the air intake pipes.
- **Escape Hatches:** These steel hatches are flush with the concrete pads in which they are set. The Thralls pulled open several of the hatches, which now stick up out of the snow, but the shafts containing the steel ladders are filled with gravel. To use an escape hatch, it must be opened from the bottom and all the gravel blocking the shaft must pour out before it can be used.
- **Antenna Hatches:** These two steel hatches cover a pair of silos where the satellite and long-range radio communications antennas are kept. When the silos are opened, elevators raise the antennas up to receive orders or broadcast situation reports. When the base is under threat, the antenna is withdrawn and the silo is closed. When the storm hit, the base raised an antenna to begin a situation report about the weather. With their unnatural strength, the Thralls forced their way into the antenna silos and got inside the underground portion of the complex.

THE THRALLS ATTACK

The Keeper should time and orchestrate the attack of the Thralls very carefully. The Thralls should attack as soon as they detect the convoy's presence, but when they detect the convoy depends on the Investigators' actions. If the Investigators take more than 10 minutes to figure out what to do, the first Thralls discover them and sound the alarm. The longer the Investigators take to get in, the more time the Thralls have to attack. Decisive action by the Investigators results in the first Thralls howling and attacking at the silo entry portal. Dithering and wasting time allows the Thralls to attack even before the Investigators get through the front gate.

There are several things to keep in mind during the fight to get inside the underground complex.

- **The Thralls are not omniscient:** They do not know the Investigators are coming. They do not know how many troops are coming or from what direction.
- **The Thralls are not a hive mind:** Just because one Thrall detects the convoy doesn't mean all the Thralls know instantly. Any Thrall encountering the Investigators unleashes its unearthly howl to get the attention of its brothers and draw them to it.
- **The Thralls are not pre-positioned for a mass attack:** They are spread out across the base. Once the first howl begins, they will start arriving in small waves until all have converged on the convoy. Some are inside the underground facility and will take even longer to realize there is a problem and react.
- **The Thralls are not very smart:** All of them have lost half of their INT since transforming. They nevertheless understand that concentrated gunfire can destroy them. Some of them died massacring the base personnel. They avoid frontal attacks when they can—but being underground forces them into frontal attacks.

HORRIFIC SCALE

Combat should be abstracted for a confrontation this large. There just isn't enough time to roll every SAN roll and attack roll for 57 humans and 37 Thralls. Keepers should concentrate on the action nearest to the Investigators. As for the rest of the combat outside, consult the mass combat table on page 44 to determine what happens each combat round that the Investigators and NPCs are above ground. Unless the Investigators have taken precautions based on what they discovered at Camp 234 and heard on the radio, this is going to be a very one-sided fight.

GETTING INSIDE

The entry portal is the only likely way in for the Investigators. The Thralls got in through the air intake system and through one of the open antenna silos. Getting in through the air intake system won't work for the Investigators because those entries are too precarious. No human could traverse them using ropes before being picked off by the Thralls. The damaged antenna silo is unlikely to be discovered before the Thralls tear everyone in the convoy to pieces.

The entry portal has two access points. One is a heavy steel hatch that lifts up to reveal a staircase down to a landing for a wider steel staircase that winds down around the elevators shaft. The second access point is the utility elevator that emerges out of a pair of steel doors. The control panel for opening the hatch and calling the elevator is damaged and inoperable. Repairing the panel requires an Electrical Repair roll. Each attempt takes one minute, or 20 combat rounds, and only one Investigator can make the attempt at a time. That's something the Keeper should be mindful of if the work is being done while the men are under attack. If the Investigators choose to use the elevator rather than the stairs, it takes even longer to run to the top and open the steel doors, another 20 combat rounds. That would probably be a death sentence for any Investigators or NPCs out in the open.

INSIDE THE SILO COMPLEX

The environment inside the complex is well lit. The generators in the power dome are still on so all the systems are up and running. That won't last long; at some point the generators will start shutting down as the generators fail due to lack of monitoring and maintenance by their engineering crews. There are batteries, but the Investigators don't want them coming on. See "The Power Dome." There are plenty of phones mounted on the walls throughout the complex.

When the Thralls attacked, a full shift of 16 men were on duty in the silo complex. All 16 were killed and devoured. Scraps of meat, bone and clothing (along with a great deal of blood) can be found scattered through the facility, mostly in the power and control domes. A few smears of blood can be found out in the main hallway, where the crew tried to fight their way to the equipment terminals to deactivate the Dead Hand system and return the launch complex to manual firing mode. They failed.

ENTRY PORTAL

This is a combination of a large utility elevator and a staircase that wraps around the shaft. The elevator is a cage and anyone using it can be seen from the staircase. At the bottom is a set of huge blast doors. The elevator shaft/staircase is 12 meters across and 20 meters deep.

CONTROL DOME

The control dome is 30 meters in diameter at its base and 12 meters high. The interior area is inside divided into two floors connected by a spiral staircase.

The lower floor contains:

- A large maintenance area with tools and repair supplies.
- A mechanical equipment room containing air processing equipment

and the monitoring and control apparatus for services in the complex.

- An electrical equipment room for regulating the power needs of the control center.
- A kitchen, pantry and dining room.
- Enlisted men's billet for ten men.
- Officers' billet for six men.
- A latrine.

The upper floor contains:

- The operations room containing the consoles for activating and deactivating the Dead Hand system, the manual launch consoles, guidance computers, and the console for resetting the Dead Hand's countdown clock.
- A communications equipment room, including a communication station and encryption scramblers.
- The launch complex office, which the duty officers have turned into a billet, lounge and entertainment room.
- A latrine and maintenance closet.

The Thralls of Kortura aren't terribly smart, but they've done a pretty good job damaging the control room. They have smashed most of the communications equipment as well as the controls related to the Dead Hand countdown and the other operations in the silos. They haven't damaged much more of the facility because they are not sure what machinery might be critical to ensuring the missile launch. They do not fully understand how the Dead Hand works. If they did, they could provoke a quicker launch countdown by causing damage to the equipment terminals.

POWER DOME

The power dome is a massive concrete and steel-reinforced structure, 40 meters in diameter and 17 meters in height. It contains four diesel generators and switchgears to supply the entire complex with electrical power. The power dome also houses cooling equipment for the generators, a massive water treatment system, and air filtration to supply both the generators and the rest of the complex. With the generators and

compressors and all the other equipment running in chorus (within concrete walls) the power dome is very loud. With that and a dense array of drive shafts and belt assemblies spinning at high speed, absent-minded technicians can easily find themselves injured.

A mezzanine is five meters above the floor, and there is an internal crane system for lifting heavy equipment. Tools and spare parts are stored here as well.

The generators have been running without human supervision for dozens of hours, but this condition won't last long. Without supervision, adjustments and constant monitoring the generators may start shutting down in a few days. By then, of course, the launch clock will have already run down.

If the Dead Hand computers detect an interruption in the generators' output, they will immediately begin the missile ignition and launch sequence before their battery power is exhausted. That leaves no more than 10 minutes before the silo doors are opened and the missiles launch. This situation should come up only if the Investigators sabotage the generators themselves or engage in a firefight in the power dome that damages the generators.

WATER TANKS

A number of large, underground water tanks feed water into the cooling, air-filtration and other services of the base. A sump-pump and filtration system purifies the water, which is gathered from a deep well under the complex.

FUEL TANKS

The underground fuel tanks are filled with enough diesel fuel to power the generators in the Power Dome for 90 days.

AIR INTAKE AND FILTRATION SYSTEM

These tunnels were how the Thralls gained access to the underground complex. On their way in they seriously damaged much of the filtration equipment.

AIR EXHAUST

This tunnel leads out to the surface and is filled with ducts from the exhausts from all the generators. Anyone trying to get out this way would be quickly overcome by carbon monoxide fumes and die. The Thralls are immune to the effects of CO gas.

MISSILE SILOS

Each silo, 47 meters deep and 12 meters across, houses a modified SS-20 ICBM fitted with a communications satellite armed with up-to-date launch command codes for the entire land-based ICBM fleet. A solid rocket fuel booster, the missile is ready to fire in less than ten minutes. Tunnels connect each silo to the main personnel tunnel and to its individual equipment terminal. Each silo is ringed with steel walkways and staircases so that technicians can access all the areas of the silo and the missile. The SS-20 is extremely vulnerable to small arms fire and explosives.

EQUIPMENT TERMINAL

These 18-meter-tall and 12-meter-diameter structures are divided into four levels that are filled with the autonomous automated systems for launching the missiles in the silos. Rung-ladders and a central shaft connect the different floors.

A winch at the top of the central shaft raises and lowers heavy machinery.

The bottom level is the battery room, designed to provide enough power to launch the missile if the generators in the power dome ever shut down.

The second level is where the computers designed to run the ignition and launch sequence are located. This level is connected to the missile silo via a maintenance tunnel.

The third floor is filled with air conditioners that keep the equipment terminal cool. A service tunnel connects level three to the tunnel system.

The top level contains the equipment that regulates and distributes the power needed to complete the ignition and launch sequence. Damage to any one equipment terminal will be detected by the computers in the other equipment terminals and immediately begin a ten-minute countdown to launch in the other two silos.

ANTENNA SILOS

Each contains a hydraulic lift for raising and lowering a long-range communications antenna system capable of both radio and satellite communications. Each silo is eight meters in diameter and 20 meters deep in the earth. The antenna is raised using a 12-meter hydraulic cylinder. The antennas are not flush with the silo,

so it was possible for the Thralls to do enough damage to the raised elevator platform to force their way inside.

TUNNEL SYSTEM

All the tunnels are about 20 meters beneath the earth. Each of the tunnels connecting the various parts of the facility is a 5-meter-diameter tube, with a steel floor covering two km of electrical cable that connect all the parts of the base. The walls of the tunnels connecting the equipment terminals to the silos are filled with exposed racks that hold wiring and electrical buses, making them about one meter narrower. The floor-plates can be lifted and the area underneath is has a crawl space for performing maintenance on all the wiring and conduits. Investigators attempting to crawl around under the floor are very likely to be discovered by the Thralls' incredible sense of smell.

BLAST LOCKS

While most of the tunnels are just steel tubes, the blast locks are specially constructed sections designed to hold blast doors and protect the complex from overpressure. Blast doors seal off the facility from the outside and seal off the silos from the rest of the facility. They are the size of bank vault doors

BUILT FOR ARMAGEDDON

The engineering principal repeated throughout this facility is that all the internal features are actually free-floating within the reinforced concrete shell that surrounds them. The control dome is just that, an empty dome-shaped bunker. Inside this dome, with no contact with the walls or ceiling, a two-story dome-shaped building sits atop massive steel springs. In the clearance between the building and the walls of the dome are more springs that anchor the building. All those springs are designed to absorb the seismic shockwave of a nuclear near-miss and permit the facility to remain operational.

The same principal is employed in the massive power dome and for all the machinery of the air-circulations system. The elevator and staircase are free-floating inside the shaft of the entry portal. Even the massive missile launch silos and the four stories of the equipment terminals sit atop steel springs and are connected to the walls of the bunker by even more steel springs. In theory the facility could survive a 10-megaton detonation 1.4 km away, and even a 20-megaton detonation 1.75 km away.

In theory.



and swing easily on precision-balanced hinges. The blast locks prevent anyone from being able to crawl throughout the base under the floor plates.

ESCAPE HATCH

Located close to important tunnel junctions, the escape hatches are built into the ceiling. Each is essentially a steel tube with steel hand-rungs that lead to the surface. Each escape tunnel—20 meters tall, one meter in diameter—is filled with gravel to prevent anyone from getting in from the outside. Only by throwing a large orange lever on the wall, well clear of the spill area, can you release the hatch at the bottom of the tunnel and allow the gravel to clear by spilling into the underground complex. The resulting pile of gravel also makes reaching the hatch in the ceiling slightly easier. The Keepers should arrange a special reward for any Investigator that manages to open the hatch in time to bury a Thrall in all that gravel.

REGAINING CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Despite trashing the communications room, the Thralls missed the replacement parts and tools that are stored in the maintenance room. If the Investigators can close the blast door that connects the control dome with the main tunnel, they can spend the time to repair the communications gear, using their own radio set to complete the communications console. Two successful rolls in both Electronics and Electrical Repair will repair the communications station if the Investigators still have the RTO officer's man-pack radio (see page 56). If the Investigators have lost their radio, it will take four successes each with both Electronics and Electrical Repair. Each roll takes an hour, successful or not. Each critical success (less than one-fifth of the Investigator's skill) count as two successes. The more skilled people work on the problem, the quicker it will get done—multiple Investigators can work

at one time, but each failure cancels out one success by another worker in that hour. Since one of the antennas is already raised, the Thralls will not know that the investigators are using the radio.

STOPPING THE COUNTDOWN

Because the Thralls have damaged the equipment in the control dome, there remain only six options for deactivating the Dead Hand.

SET OFF THE RA-115 AS PLANNED

If detonated in the epicenter of the tunnels connecting the silos, the concussion from the RA-115 will collapse all three silos and result in a radioactive crater 100 meter meters wide and 40 meters deep. If the Investigators are inside the facility, they won't notice because the explosion will collapse both the control and power domes and even more distant antenna silos. It will also leave the surface of Site 6 lethally irradiated for many decades to come.

Near ground zero, the radiation level will be 5,000 roentgens per hour at one hour after the test, with levels of 1,000 R/hr extending up to 1,200 meters from the burst point. Hazardous levels of 100 R/hr will extend past 5,000 meters in some areas. As a point of comparison, a dose of 500 roentgens within five hours is universally fatal to humans. Naturally, all the Spetsnaz troopers will be secretly awarded the Order of Lenin for their sacrifice for the Motherland.

The only way to survive this plan would be to plant the device on a timer and then get at least two km away before it detonates. This presumes the Thralls do not find the device and move or disable it. Sealing the device on the other side of the blast locks will keep the Thralls from interfering, presuming the haven't locked a Thrall in there with the RA-115.

If the Investigators set off the RA-115 on the surface, the weapon will leave a crater seven meters deep and 30 meters wide. If placed in the epicenter of the three silos, it will cause enough damage to render all three missiles inoperable. Radiation and fallout hazards will be nearly identical to a below-ground blast due to the snow being flash heated into steam and then raining down over the facility in the form of radioactive rain. Heat and concussion will incinerate any Thralls on the surface, and collapse and burn most the structures. If they are above ground, the Investigators need to be at least five kilometers away to avoid the effects of heat, blast and radiation.

If the Investigators take shelter inside the facility when the weapon is detonated on the surface, they stand a very good chance of surviving the initial blast. A two-kiloton direct hit won't collapse the entire facility.

The only problem is the radioactive water vapor and mud created by detonating a two-kiloton weapon in the middle of the blizzard. The Thralls compromised the air-intake system when they invaded the complex. If the Investigators do not take steps to shut down the damaged portions of the air intake system, radioactive steam will be drawn into the facility and circulated through every chamber. If they completely shut off the air intake system, then the generators are either going to eventually exhaust the air supply or have to be shut down. If they Investigators do not think of this (a Military Science roll will bring it to their attention if they know the air intake system is compromised), then their shelter will become their tomb, either by suffocating them or by sucking in irradiated air.

If they manage to shut off the damaged portions of the air intake system and run only one of the generators, they may be able to sit out the long wait for rescue. If one of the radio antennas is still intact (and it would need to be retracted into its silo before the detonation, otherwise it will be sheared

Once back in touch with Norilsk Air Defense Base, the Investigators find their superiors unwilling to believe them if they report the truth about what they have seen. They will simply be ordered to press on and complete the mission. Requests for reinforcements will be met with assurances that they are on the way, but with no estimated time of arrival. Requests for extraction will be met with a flat refusal.

If the Investigators demand to be put back in touch with whomever made the earlier unauthorized broadcast, the officers monitoring the mission refuse, saying, "Major Kishenko is either insane or a traitor. Maybe both. He is spouting gibberish. Nothing he says can be of any use. Continue with your mission."

If the Investigators can make a successful Persuade or Fast Talk roll, however, they can get Kishenko brought to the radio. This will take five minutes. Major Kishenko starts by asking them specific questions about what they observed and how the creatures reacted when attacked. A successful Listen roll reveals that Major Kishenko sounds different than he did in the last transmission, as if he now has a lisp or speech impediment. A successful First Aid or Medicine roll suggests he may be speaking through a mouth full of broken teeth. Ultimately he can offer only the same advice as before: Use fire and go for the heart. He can't offer them any supernatural defenses. Even if he could explain such rituals, they don't have the materials on hand to make the rituals work. "Do you have the afterbirth from pair of identical twins? No? Then stick to burning them. Burn their cold, dead hearts."

The other officers back in the world will demand that the Investigators carry out the mission to render the complex inoperable. The stakes are, after all, the fate of the human race. If the Investigators don't budge, headquarters informs them of the true nature of Site 6; that it is a fail-deadly system where the missiles are on a countdown to launch and require no human intervention. If the Investigators still do not proceed with rendering the silo complex inoperable, the generals inform them of the failsafe option (see "One Last Problem"). They can't simply sit on their hands in the bunker and wait out Armageddon. They have to act or die.



off by the blast), they can make radio contact and someone will eventually come for them. It may take as long as two weeks for the radiation levels to get down to a point safe enough to dig them out, but there will be a rescue attempt as long as anyone knows they are down there.

DESTROY THE MISSILES WITH CONVENTIONAL EXPLOSIVES

This is actually pretty easy. While the solid-rocket-fueled boosters in the silos are not as volatile as liquid rocket fuel, they can be detonated through the

use of conventional explosives. The big problem with this plan is that when all the solid rocket fuel detonates, the heat and blast will have no place to go except back into the underground facility, incinerating or suffocating everyone inside as all the oxygen is consumed in the fireball.

The primary way to fix that problem is to close the blast doors that connect the silos and equipment terminals to the rest of the complex. Of course, that will require the Investigators to go out to the silos and manually close the blast doors. With the control room smashed there's no way to remotely close them.

But since they will have to plant any explosives by hand, they'll have to be out there anyways.

Another way to ensure the blast would be directed out of the complex would be to open the gigantic silo doors. With most of the controls in the command center smashed, the Investigators will have to go to each silo and manually fire the pneumatic system that opens the multi-ton silo doors. On the plus side, the solid fuel explosions will incinerate any Thralls drawn to the silos by the activity.

DESTROY THE EQUIPMENT TERMINALS WITH CONVENTIONAL EXPLOSIVES

The four-story equipment terminals are also vulnerable to explosives. Unfortunately it is unlikely that the Investigators will have enough conventional explosive to reliably render every launch control computer in the terminals inoperable. With the explosives spread thin there's a chance that one equipment terminal could survive. Furthermore, the moment one equipment terminal suffers catastrophic damage, the countdown will be advanced to a ten-minute automatic ignition sequence. That will seriously limit the Investigators' available time.

Also, without some visual cue that demonstrates that the missiles are destroyed, the Thralls will continue to occupy the facility and blanket it with their blizzard until 08/26/91. And without obvious physical proof that the missiles are destroyed and the blizzard is dissipating, the generals are likely to launch their emergency back-up plan. (See "One Last Problem.")

DESTROY THE SILO DOOR MECHANISMS

Using explosives, the Investigators might also be able to sabotage the silo door. They could climb to the top and disarm the explosive bolts that remove the blocks holding the door in place with a Demolitions roll. They could sabotage the counterweight system that draws the door open with a Mechanical Repair, Demolitions or Operate Heavy Machinery roll. If the

silo doors cannot open, the launch computers will abort the firing sequence. This plan has the same problem as destroying the equipment terminals: Without an obvious and observable-from-orbit explosion, the generals may not believe that the danger has passed.

TURN OFF THE DEAD HAND COUNTDOWN AT THE EQUIPMENT TERMINALS

Lt. Fedorenko and the Strategic

Rocket Forces troops accompanying the Spetsnaz all have the skills and knowledge to deactivate the Dead Hand countdown at the equipment terminals. Each terminal must be shut down individually. It's a simple procedure that takes a single man three minutes to accomplish (once they get to the right terminal). Without those instructions, and the proper security codes, a ten-minute countdown will be initiated if someone just starts poking around with the computers. If none of the SRF men have survived, and if they did not take five minutes to write down the procedure and codes, this option is impossible. It also has the same problem as noted above. With no big explosions to signal success, high command may not believe the problem has been solved and may resort to their nuclear option.

ONE LAST PROBLEM

Remember that time limit on the missile launch—14:45:13 hours on August 22, 1991? If for some reason the Investigators fail to destroy the Dead Hand missiles or regain full control of Site 6 by 12:00 hours on August 22, the Strategic Rocket Forces high command will assume that their mission has failed and execute their final option. The Strategic Rocket Forces will launch a nuclear attack on Site 6 with an SS-25 ballistic missile fired from a mobile launcher near Irkutsk, Siberia. They are going to use a specially designed 800-kiloton bunker buster to ensure that Site 6 is utterly destroyed.

Since the SS-25 has a circular error probable of only 200 meters, the option of just sitting tight inside the bunkers will not work out for the Investigators. Making a run for it won't be much good,

either, since the lethal blast radius of the 800-kiloton weapon will be about 16 kilometers.

To survive, the Investigators need to stop the countdown and then contact higher headquarters to make sure they know the problem is solved. Certainly detonating the RA-115 will demonstrate the Dead Hand silo is out of commission. Blowing up the missiles in their silos (with the doors open) will also send up a large enough plume of fire that the nearby aircraft observing the area will notice. Otherwise, if the generals cannot detect the detonation of the RA-115 or the destruction of the missiles, they may launch the nuclear strike on Site 6 just to be sure, even if the Investigators are reporting that the countdown has been stopped.

AFTERMATH

Assuming the scenario did not end the brilliant flash of a nuclear detonation, here is how the events wrap up.

Once the storm disperses, Site 6 is accessible via helicopter. It will take many hours of work with bulldozers before the airstrip will be sufficiently clear to allow fixed-wing aircraft to arrive. Before then, any Spetsnaz survivors will be evacuated and a new crew for Site 6 will be flown in to take over operations.

When the survivors return to Norilsk they discover that the coup in Moscow has collapsed but that the situation is even more in doubt. Just about every republic in the Soviet Union, including Russia, has declared its independence and there doesn't seem to be any hope of putting the jigsaw puzzle back together again. The empire is over.

Injured survivors will be taken for medical treatment. Those severely wounded may find themselves in an infirmary bed, depending on their wounds. Those who are uninjured will be immediately taken to a debriefing. The injured will be interviewed later. The Keeper is encouraged to role play the debriefing.

The survivors will be debriefed by a man in a Red Air Force major's uniform. He is an exhausted-looking man in his late 30s. The most obvious

thing about him is how badly beaten he is. His face is a mass of bruises and cuts. So are his hands. Several of his finger-tips are wrapped in bandages. Holding a pen is clearly uncomfortable. His left eyebrow shows stitches and his eye is swollen shut. His lip is split and a front tooth is missing. If asked, the man gives no name at this time. However, this is Maj. Dimitri Kishenko, the 'mad man' on the radio. If asked about his physical condition, he shrugs it off and only says, "There was some confusion earlier."

Major Kishenko will interrogate the survivors individually about their experience during Operation White 36, carefully probing and trying to get the survivors to admit to anything supernatural they observed or encountered. This will take hours and he is in obvious pain. If asked if maybe someone less brutally beaten might be better suited to do this work, Kishenko shakes his head. "No one qualified will be here for hours and it's better if we get your recollections while they are fresh—before you have enough time to convince yourselves it didn't happen."

In fact, if a survivor lies about the nature of the horrors they witnessed during Operation White 36, the major will likely know. His Psychology skill is 60% and uses it to ferret out lies. If one survivor tells the truth, describing the Thralls, then Kishenko uses that testimony to suggest that the other survivors come clean and tell the truth. Even if the players decided to cook up a story among themselves, it is unlikely that they would have been able to hide the bodies of all the Thralls killed in combat. Unless the base is destroyed by a nuke, there will be plenty of evidence of the Thralls existence and the damage they did to the base.

Having interviewed the survivors separately, Maj. Kishenko brings everyone together in a meeting room. He dismisses all the players who told the truth—they are led out under armed guard. Kishenko then produces a Makarov pistol and places it on the desk before him. He places a box of

ammunition on the desk and counts out a bullet for every man who is continuing to lie, carefully loading one round at a time. Once all the bullets are loaded, he asks if their denials are their final word on the subject. The threat should be obvious.

No, the survivors will not have been permitted to retain their weapons when they were ushered into this meeting. They will have been disarmed when they returned to base in Norisk, even the officers. Yes, there will be a couple of armed guards in the meeting room, although they will be rather nervous-looking, since they are uncertain what the Kishenko has in mind. It is left to individual Keepers whether Kishenko will actually shoot the survivors who continue to lie. One hopes that the survivors will be encouraged to be more forthcoming.

Presuming the liars come clean, the other survivors will be brought back in to the meeting room. Major Kishenko tells the survivors they are dismissed and may return to barracks. The survivors may be surprised that Col. General Suslin and the rest of the Strategic Rocket Forces officers involved in the mission do not debrief them. If asked about this, Kishenko only says, "The events of White 36 are now classified above their security level."

Before the survivors leave, Kishenko tells them that other GRU officers will be in touch very soon. He tells them, "You men have a new assignment. You've seen things no sane man could believe. And there is worse out there, comrade soldiers. Much worse. Now that you've seen it, it has also seen you. You can't close your eyes and go back to your lives, pretending this did not happen. Even if those other things would permit you to do so, the State will not. The State requires your service, comrades. Welcome to Special Department 8."

Whether the surviving Investigators want to join Special Department 8 does not matter. This is the U.S.S.R., at least for the moment. And here in the U.S.S.R., citizens and soldiers can rest safe in the knowledge that they are relieved of the burden of choice.

SANITY REWARDS AND PENALTIES

Stop the launch of the Dead Hand missiles: +1D20

Fail to stop the launch of the Dead Hand missiles: -1D20/1D100 (although the Investigators will have bigger problems on their hands).

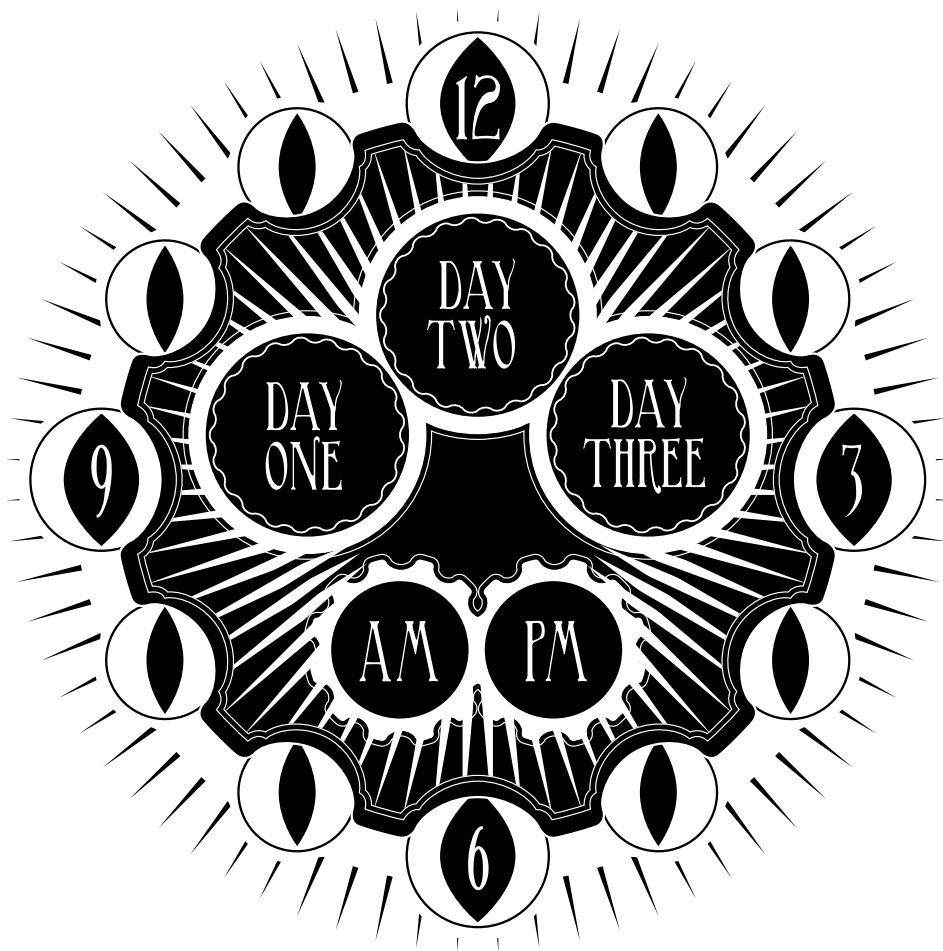
Kill a Thrall of Kotura: +1D6 each, up to a maximum of 6 points of SAN

Lose one or more members of the company after reaching the gulag: -0/1 SAN

Lose more than half the company after reaching the gulag: -1/1D4 SAN

Lose more than 90% of the company after reaching the gulag: -1D2/1D6 SAN

See a member of the company horribly slain by a Thrall: -1/1D4 SAN (this is despite the fact that all members of the company are hardened combat veterans; death by supernatural monster is not part of their previous experience)



MISSION TIMELINE AND THE COUNTDOWN

Use this timeline in conjunction with the “Cold Dead Hand” countdown clock, above. Print or copy it and use coins (preferably rubles) or tokens to mark the day, whether it’s a.m. or p.m., and the hour.

MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 1991

7:00 a.m. Moscow Standard
Time: Gorbachev “resignation” announced.

8:00 a.m.: Major Vertkov hears the news on the radio and begins to form a plan.

10:00 a.m.: Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces activate Perimeter Defense System due to the lack of coherent/legitimate leadership in Moscow.

11:00 a.m.: Major Vertkov and his cult begin the mass sacrifice.

1:11 p.m.: The sacrifices end and the snowstorm is conjured.

1:42 p.m.: Ithaqua manifests and the cultists begin to transform. The blizzard descends over the Byrranga Mountains.

1:42 p.m.: The shaman Nyalku senses the presence of Kortura, Lord of the Winds, and sets out for the site of the ritual at Camp 234.

1:58 p.m.: The Thralls complete their transformations.

2:23 p.m.: The last survivors at Camp 234 are hunted down and killed by the Thralls.

2:30 p.m.: The Thralls begin their assault Site 6 in the midst of the blizzard. They begin forcing their way into the air-intake system.

2:34 p.m.: The alarm at Site 6 is raised.

2:38 p.m.: An emergency message is sent to SSRF HQ warning that an attack on Site 6 is in progress. By raising one of the antennas the silo crew gives the Thralls another entry to force their way through. Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces Command orders that the Perimeter System be deactivated. Attempts by the silo crew to reach the equipment terminals fail as the Thralls gain access to all area of the silo complex.

2:45:13 p.m.: As the Thralls close in, the watch officer stays by the manual reset for the countdown clock and the radio. As the doors to the command center burst in, he radios to SSRF Command that the last time the Perimeter Defense System countdown clock was reset to 72 hours was at 2:45:13 p.m. MST. He dies screaming as his radio is smashed.

3:01 p.m.: A pair of Soviet Air Force Su-27 jets are dispatched to Site 6 from Norilsk.

3:27 p.m.: The Su-27s arrive on scene and report the presence of the blizzard but are unable to deliver any observations of Site 6. All lights are out or are not visible through the storm. There is no radar or radio contact with Site 6. Landing conditions are impossible. No signs of foreign aircraft are detected.

3:46 p.m.: The Thralls control Site 6. All communication with higher headquarters is cut off. All personnel have been hunted down and killed.

4:18 p.m.: Attempts to communicate with Site 6 are abandoned.

4:30 p.m.: A Strategic Rocket Forces security company is scrambled, placed on an IL-76 transport jet and dispatched from Krasnoyarsk to Site-6.

7:50 p.m.: The IL-76 attempts to land at Site 6's airfield in blizzard conditions. Attacked by Thralls as it makes its approach, the aircraft crashes into the runway and explodes, killing all aboard.

8:00 p.m.: SRF and Red Air Force generals spend a great deal of time arguing about what to do next. They eventually bring in the GRU to provide Arctic Spetsnaz for the mission. It takes until after midnight to formulate a plan and ready the logistics.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 1991

1:00 a.m.: The Investigators are kicked out of bed and rolled into full pack.

1:30 a.m.: The briefing begins for Team 1 and Team 2.

3:00 a.m.: Aircraft and chopper are wheels up from Norilsk.

4:30 a.m.: Aircraft is over the proposed landing site, a fairly open, level field.

5:20 a.m.: Landing is attempted just after sunrise. Pilot skill is 65%.

5:30 a.m.: The An-124 is on the ground. This leaves 59 hours and 45 minutes before the official time limit runs out. In reality the Investigators have 57 hours before HQ nukes Site 6.

9:00 a.m.: Team 2 in the Mi-26 helicopter attempts to penetrate the blizzard.

9:34 a.m.: Team 2 radios that they cannot proceed in the current weather conditions. HQ threatens Team 2 with summary execution as deserters.

9:48 a.m.: Team 2 radios a mayday call as the helicopter goes down in the blizzard.

10:25 a.m.: Nyalku and his brood arrive at Camp 234. They settle in to wait out the storm.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 1991

No scheduled events.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 1991

12:00 p.m.: The SSRF fire an SS-25 at the site to ensure that the Perimeter system is destroyed.

12:21 p.m.: The 0.8 megaton SS-25 warhead detonates as a ground-burst and destroys Site 6.

Cue Vera Lynn's recording of "We'll Meet Again."

PLAYER ACTIONS AND THE CLOCK

Use these guidelines for tracking how much time the Investigators have left.

LANDING THE AN-124

A critical success by the NPC pilot (his skill is 65, so a roll of 13 or less) means no injuries and the MT-LBVs can be unloaded in five minutes.

A simple success by the pilot means no injuries but the plane's cargo doors are jammed. The Investigators must cut a hole in the fuselage or cut the cargo door hinges. A successful Mechanical Repair roll is required. Failure means the loss of 15 minutes. Instead, the first MT-LBV can be driven right through the fuselage in five minutes with a successful Drive Tracked Vehicle Roll. After that the remaining three take a minute each to drive out of the same hole. With a failed Drive roll the first MT-LBV is stuck.

If the An-124 pilot fails the landing roll, a crash results in injuries and jammed cargo doors. All Investigators make Luck rolls or take 1D4 damage. For the degree of NPC injuries make a group Luck roll. If it fails, 1D4 men are severely injured and cannot continue on the mission. The rest have minor injuries that are treated with First Aid.

A fumbled landing roll by the pilot (96-00) results in a serious crash where everyone takes 1D4 damage if they make a Luck roll or 1D6+1 if they fail the roll. A group Luck roll must be made for each vehicle. Failure results in mechanical damage to the MT-LBV. Also, the cargo doors are jammed so badly the only option is to drive an MT-LBV out through the side of the fuselage.

A Mechanical Repair roll is required to get a damaged MT-LBV rolling again. Each roll takes one hour. Between the Strategic Rocket Forces NPCs and the An-124's flight crew, there are eight NPCs with Mechanical Repair skills of 50%. One mechanic can make a roll on one vehicle at one time, but others can assist. Add +5% to the chance per assistant with a 50% skill.

First Aid rolls require five minutes for each attempt. There are four medics with the team.

TRAVELLING TO SITE 6

The best route to Site 6 covers 164 km. That can be covered in 16 hours at 10 kph.

Every four hours, the convoy should make one Navigation roll, and it must make one Drive Tracked Vehicle roll for each MT-LBV. If all rolls succeed the convoy covers 80 km in four hours, essentially double speed.

If the Navigation roll succeeds and at least one Drive Tracked Vehicle roll fails, the convoy must either let that vehicle fall behind or slow the whole convoy to cover only 40 km in four hours. Leaving vehicles behind means they will have to roll separately for Navigation and could get separated or lost in the blizzard.

Each fumbled Drive Tracked Vehicle roll means that the vehicle is hung up or stuck and will require 30 minutes, a second successful Drive Tracked Vehicle roll, and a second vehicle to pull it free. Abandoning the vehicle would seriously deplete the Investigators' force.

A failed Navigation roll means the convoy goes off course. A successful Navigation roll is required to get back on course. Each failed roll burns an extra hour without closing the distance until they are back on course.

With a fumbled Navigation roll, the convoy is completely lost. The commander has no idea where on the map he actually is. The convoy cannot proceed further until the course is recalculated. That requires a successful Navigation roll. Each roll takes 30 minutes of calculations.

The earliest time the convoy could arrive at Camp 234 is (roughly) 3:00 p.m. If they only manage the normal speed of 10 kph, the convoy would arrive at Camp 234 at 8:30 p.m.

It will likely take another 30 minutes to arrive at Site 6 at double speed, one hour and normal speed.

The sun will hardly go down since it's summer in the Arctic, but there will be less light after 9 p.m., that gives yet another advantage to the Thralls.

With unlucky rolls, the convoy could easily take as long as a day to reach Site 6. Troopers who have not slept in 24 hours will start taking temporary losses in attributes and skills. (Give each a CON x 5% roll to avoid taking a -10% penalty to all rolls due to fatigue.)

After 12 hours of driving without rest, the MT-LBV drivers' skills are reduced by half. The same is true if a single character is doing all the Navigation rolls the whole time.

ENCOUNTERING LABOR CAMP 234

Whichever officer or trooper is directing the search of the camp must make a single Spot Hidden roll to direct the searchers efficiently. If it succeeds, the Investigators discover Nyalku and his daughters within 10 minutes. If it fails, they take 30 minutes.

Each building requires five minutes to thoroughly search. It takes only one minute to confirm no one is inside a building.

Keep track of the actual time taken in roleplaying of any interrogation of Nyalku and his daughters. If around the table the players converse with the family for 20 minutes, mark 20 minutes on the scenario clock.

SITE 6

Cutting the perimeter fence takes one minute.

Driving through the fence takes no time but requires a Drive Tracked Vehicle roll for each MT-LBV to avoid tangling the tracks or (with a failed Luck roll) the barrel of the turret-mounted PK machine gun in the fence.

Finding the front gate takes five minutes with a successful Navigation roll, or 10 minutes if the roll fails.

Crossing to the silo entry portal by foot takes three minutes with a successful Navigation roll, five minutes if the roll fails.

Getting from one point to another above ground in an MT-LBV takes one minute.

Finding the hatch and the control panel takes one minute with a successful Spot Hidden roll. Up to ten troopers can look at once. If all rolls fail, another minute of looking is required.

Getting inside Site 6's main entrance takes one minute but requires an Electronics roll. Each Failed Electronics roll burns another minute.

Repairing the communications system to contact higher headquarters requires two successful rolls in Electronics and two in Electrical Repair if the Investigators have the RTO officer's man-pack radio. If the Investigators have lost the radio it takes four successes each of both Electronics and Electrical Repair to repair the communications station. Each roll takes an hour, whether successful or not. Critical successes (less than 20% of the Investigator's skill) are equal to two successes. The more people working on the problem, the quicker it will get done.

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THRALLS OF KOTURA

For this scenario I am modifying

the Wendigo as defined by Chaosium in *Malleus Monstrorum* and the Child of the Wendigo found Pagan Publishing's campaign *Walker in the Wastes* by John H. Crowe III. I call them "Thralls of Kotura" to distinguish them from previous takes on those poor souls who have been altered to become more like their alien god. These creatures are formidable in the extreme. They combine the worst aspects of both versions of the Wendigo and Children of the Wendigo.

These horrors are created when devout and favored worshippers of Ithaqua beseech their god for immortality and near indestructibility in order to better serve their master. Sometimes it works. Sometimes Ithaqua slays those presumptuous enough to ask.

Thralls of Kotura retain a bilaterally symmetrical human form, but their skin becomes hard as frozen meat, grey or almost bluish in color. As they change, they grow taller so that their arms will appear disproportionately longer as they protrude from their tattered sleeves. Their shoulders become very wide, pulling their shirts open, but their rib cages flatten and they lose all their body fat, with ribs and collarbones clearly visible.

Their jaws become distended and the muscles that control their lower mandibles bulge on the sides of otherwise emaciated skulls. Facial features become bestial, with eyes sunk deep into their sockets and teeth growing large enough to protrude from between their stretched lips. Their mouths are often so over-loaded with teeth that the Thralls simply let them hang open, slack-jawed. Their necks seem thin and

weak and their heads hang low, leaving their chins almost resting on their chests.

Finally, the cultists' feet blacken as if they are suffering from extreme frostbite, and they soon wither and fall off. At this point the Thrall no longer touches the ground. They walk on invisible feet that do not disturb the ground. They leave no footprints. The stumps of their legs protrude from the flapping tatters of their trousers. Many Arctic people view the Thralls' lack of contact with the earth as one more sign of their unnatural and irredeemably tainted nature.

Ravenous hunger is their most obvious and driving motivation. The Thralls eat and eat and eat but never seem to fill up. They always remain as cadaverous as famine victims. There is no natural explanation for where all the meat they consume goes. It simply could not fit inside their bodies. A Thrall may be distracted enough consuming a victim that a companion might make an escape—or at least get a head start.

The MT-LBVs offer good protection at first. The vehicle is lightly armored against small arms and shell splinters. The armor provides full protection against the Thralls' fangs and claws. Still, hiding inside an MT-LBV will work only until the Thralls pry the doors off with their bare hands. The doors have a STR of 30. The vehicle armor value is 16. The Thralls can get in eventually.

If things do not appear to be going well for the Thralls—if the Spetsnaz have inflicted a lot of casualties or appear close to driving the Thralls out of the complex—the Major, if he is not yet destroyed, will attempt to call on Ithaqua again. If his spell fails, the call is not answered. If the call is fumbled then

Ithaqua appears, draws all his Thralls to him, and devours them for having the gall to disturb him. The Great Old One vanishes and takes his blizzard with him.

If Ithaqua does appear, it knows nothing more about how the missile base works than do the transformed guards. It stomps around the base, flattening anything it can see and causing SAN checks of 1D3/1D10 for anyone who makes a Military Science roll to realize that the booming sound is not artillery but the tread of some incomprehensibly large creature. Eventually Ithaqua blows his sub-zero breath into the air intake structure. The air drops to -50°F and the generators begin to freeze up and stall. Once that happens, the automated ignition and launch procedures begin. It will take 20 combat rounds for the generators to stall. Throughout that time Ithaqua's maddening howl reverberates through the complex. Every five combat rounds anyone inside the underground complex must make a 1/1D6 SAN check. Plugging their ears like Ulysses at the sirens simply won't stop the supernatural effect. And Ithaqua will not cease its howl until its Thralls report that all the unbelievers are dead or start raving mad. Anyone who goes insane from the howling becomes a devotee of Ithaqua.

All of the Ithaqua cultists in Camp 234 participated in the mass sacrifice of the prisoners, but only 47 of the cultists became Thralls of Kotura. The rest of them were torn apart and eaten by their transformed companions. Ten died seizing control of the Site 6 underground complex, leaving 37 to trouble the Investigators. Re-use the ten Thralls below as needed.

BODY ARMOR

The body armor and helmets worn by the Spetsnaz offer excellent protection against shrapnel and small arms fire. However, this armor was not designed to stop the kind of attacks they will be subjected to in this scenario. A high-speed projectile doesn't do the same kind of damage as a massive claw or set of teeth backed by the equivalent force of a speeding car. The body armor and helmet offer only half protection against claws, fangs, and knives.

Furthermore, body armor and helmets do not cover 100% of the wearer's body. Their arms, legs, pelvis and face are all exposed. Thralls' claws and teeth can and will shred those exposed areas. Arms and legs (and heads) could easily be wrenched clean off by the Thralls' unnatural strength. Keepers should use a standard Basic Roleplaying hit location table to determine where the Thralls' attacks land, or roll 1D12: 1 = foot, 2-3 = leg, 4-7 = arm, 8-11 = body, 12 = head.

	STR	CON	SIZ	INT	POW	DEX	HP	DB	
The Major	36	42	42	18	8	18	15	30	+2D6
Thrall 1	36	45	45	15	4	9	15	30	+2D6
Thrall 2	45	48	48	11	4	15	14	30	+2D6
Thrall 3	39	42	42	16	5	18	13	30	+2D6
Thrall 4	42	39	39	15	6	6	12	27	+3D6
Thrall 5	45	36	36	15	6	9	11	26	+3D6
Thrall 6	33	42	42	14	8	8	11	28	+2D6
Thrall 7	45	39	39	13	6	10	11	26	+3D6
Thrall 8	39	42	42	14	4	10	8	28	+2D6
Thrall 9	36	36	36	15	5	11	8	26	+2D6
Thrall 10	51	54	54	13	7	7	6	34	+3D6

Skills: Climb 75%, Hide 75%, Jump 75%, Listen 75%, Sneak 75%, Spot Hidden 75%, Track 50%, Sense by Smell at 30 Meters 90%

Attacks: Bite 30%, damage 1D4+db
 Claw 50%, damage 1D4+db
 Kick 25% damage 1D8+db

Armor: 1 point, but physical attacks do minimum damage. The exception is fire, which does damage as normal.

Move: 8/90 flying

Spells: Breath of Ithaqua, Contact Ithaqua, other spells which are related to Ithaqua worship but are not used in this scenario. (Only the Major has spells.)

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6. If it was once a companion or friend, the loss is 1/1D8. Hearing the eerie howl of these creatures costs 0/1D2.

Special: A Thrall of Kotura is not particularly impressed when it is struck by a weapon or gunfire. However, if a firearm inflicts an impaling wound, the creature will be temporarily driven away due to

the danger that its icy heart could be melted by the scalding hot projectile.

Deliberately shooting a Thrall in the heart requires a special called shot. The attack is at 1/5 chance. If it fails, it misses altogether. If it succeeds, it counts as an impale and the Thrall takes full damage after its armor. This cannot be attempted with a fully automatic weapon.

The Thralls fear fire when it is used as a weapon. While they are not intimidated by campfires, oil lanterns or the like, a desperate Investigator wielding a flaming brand (or a flame thrower) could force it to retreat at least for a time.

The lowest Strength listed for the Thralls is 36. That gives the Thrall the power to lift over 500 kg. The one with STR 51 can lift more than two tons. That's twice the weight of compact automobile.

The Thralls are incredibly durable—any one of them can withstand dozens of grenade blasts and shots from the troopers' rifles—and outside in the open they can swoop down and snatch men up into the air to be torn to pieces

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU NUKE ITHAQUA?

When you give players an equipment list that includes the line “RA-115 man-portable nuclear demolition device,” you know somebody’s going to nuke something.

The nuclear fireball is about 200 meters in diameter and the pressure from the blast demolishes the reinforced concrete buildings on the surface of Site 6. But that’s just the start of the Investigators’ trouble. The extent of damage depends on their nearness to Ground Zero.

600 meters: The blast pressure alone is deadly. Some trees are knocked over even this far out; if there were residential buildings here they would collapse.

800 meters: The blast pressure is far less, but each Investigator takes 4D6 damage from third-degree burns and suffers radiation poisoning (see page 32) at POT 60.

900 meters: High chance of second-degree burns. Each Investigator must make a Luck roll. If it fails, he takes 2D6 burn damage; if it succeeds he takes 1D6. Radiation poisoning is POT 45.

1,250 meters: First-degree burns inflict 1D6 damage. Radiation poisoning is POT 30.

1,600 meters: No direct harm. Radiation poisoning is POT 15.

What about Ithaqua? If the Great Old One is anywhere near Ground Zero, the blast vaporizes its body—which is to say, the portion of Ithaqua’s reality that extrudes into the dimensions that we see. At least, no sign of it is found afterward. The Wind-Walker slowly reforms elsewhere in the Arctic North, wailing at the endless agony, hunger and rage of its existence. Farther out, the bomb won’t do Ithaqua much harm. The Great Old One dislikes heat, but the sorts of radiation that are poisonous to human life don’t much worry a creature that has traversed the ghastly wastes between stars.

Of course, Ithaqua is a vengeful Great Old One. It will seek revenge if it can identify who hurt it, but it is not omniscient. If any of Nyalku’s family survived they will be compelled to seek out other Ithaqua cultists and begin the long, slow search for any survivors of Operation White 36. The Investigators won’t know they are being pursued by a Great Old One until the various survivors start dying of frostbite in their well-heated apartments, or plummeting to earth when their commercial airline flight’s wings ice up in warm weather. Joining GRU SV-8 and going completely underground might not be such a bad option.



SHEARER

MASS COMBAT ABOVE GROUND

The combat above ground at Site 6 must be abstracted because there are too many combatants in too many locations. Instead, use the table on page 44 to determine casualties each combat round.

Once the alarm is raised, 1D4-1 Thralls arrive every combat round for the first 10 combat rounds. After that, Thralls arrive at the rate of 1D6 per round until all 37 have arrived on the scene.

Each combat round the Keeper should calculate the number of Thralls attacking the troopers. As long as soldiers are outside the MT-LBVs but not under cover inside the underground silo complex, take the number of Thralls currently on the scene and divide by two. That is the number of rolls on 1D20 the Keeper should make to determine casualties that combat round. Determine each victim randomly.

NPC FIREPOWER

Now the NPC soldiers get their turn. They have it rough. The NPC soldiers have not been trained to fire on flying targets like the Thralls. The damage is being spread out among many targets. The blizzard reduces their vision. But they have a chance.

Each combat round, determine the number and type weapons being fired by NPCs. Each weapon is worth a number of Firepower points.

Each AK-74 assault rifle: 1 point

Each PK machine gun: 6 points

Each SVD sniper rifle: 2 points

The total is the NPC Firepower number. Don't count the PK machine guns mounted on the MT-LBVs towards

NPC Firepower. They cannot traverse fast enough or elevate high enough to hit the flying Thralls. Don't count the Investigators themselves in this number or any NPCs assigned to tasks other than combat (medics tending to injured, technicians trying to get the entry portal open, etc.).

Each combat round, roll percentile dice. If the roll is less than or equal to the Firepower number, the NPCs manage to kill one Thrall.

Keepers should feel free to have Thralls appear later showing damage from earlier encounters.

OTHER EFFECTS

Reduce the Investigators' ranged weapon attack and Spot Hidden skills by half while they are outside in the blizzard.

The armored vehicles: The Thralls have a hard time attacking the vehicles if the Investigators move their convoy in a close group and use their turret-mounted machine guns to cover each other. The turret guns don't traverse high enough to shoot Thralls out of the sky, but they can shoot Thralls off the other vehicles. The Thralls don't stand up as well under fully automatic weapons fire from those more powerful bullets and will keep their distance.

If the convoy doesn't move together and cover each other, the Thralls will land on the MT-LBVs and start using their superhuman strength to attack the turret mounted PK machine guns and bend the barrels until they are useless. Once the machine guns are out of commission they will force the hatches and start pulling soldiers out or clawing their way inside. Firing AK-74s inside an armored vehicle will do as much if not more damage to the passengers and crew than a Thrall. For every attack like that, the shooter must attempt a Luck roll, halved if firing on full automatic. If it fails, a random soldier inside the vehicle is hit by a bullet from the burst.

The flamethrower: This weapon does not have a reload option. Once the nitrogen propellant and the jellied gasoline fuel are exhausted, it is just a cumbersome backpack. With short sprays, that's only five shots. Every time it is fired, however, even if no Thrall is hit, the Thralls retreat for 1D3 combat rounds. Surrounding the group with a ring of burning gasoline will exhaust the fuel and keep the Thralls back until the fuel burns off in three combat rounds plus another 1D3 combat rounds while they get up the nerve to brave the flames again. After all, the Thralls don't know how many shots are in the flamethrower.

Lit torches or flares: Thralls prefer not to attack a soldier carrying a lit torch or flare. The Thralls will simply attack those who fail to carry one. When the Thralls run out of "torchless" soldier to attack, they will go after the ones bearing torches. Their first attacks will be called shots (at half chance) aimed at knocking the torches away. Once they've done that they attack the soldier normally. The same will hold true during underground combat.

Shoot their Cold Dead Hearts: If the Investigators listened to the "Mad Man on the Radio" and give orders for the men to fire at the Thralls' hearts, they will have an advantage in massed combat. But in the chaos and madness of the battle that kind of order can easily be overlooked. The leader giving the command must make a POW x 5% roll for it to be heeded each round.

All the AK-47 and SVD firepower points can be segregated to make a second percentage die roll. If the Investigators roll under that number, 1D6 Thralls are driven away and do not count towards the total Thralls attacking next round. They will come back the following combat round. A roll of 01 means another Thrall is killed.

UNDERGROUND COMBAT EFFECTS

Fighting the Thralls inside the complex is easier than fighting them on the surface. For one thing, there's no blizzard to mask the Thralls' movement or attacks. For another, the Thralls can't fly at full speed inside the complex. They simply don't have the room to maneuver inside these tunnels. There is plenty of illumination, unless the Thralls start smashing out the lights. Even then the Spetsnaz have IR lights and goggles.

The tunnels are five meters in diameter but are cylindrical, so the ceiling slopes downward, providing less room. The walls are lined with steel racks filled with wiring and cables, further restricting the space. At most, three men can stand abreast: one rank

prone, one rank kneeling and the last rank standing. That can provide a lot of firepower. The trick is to reload fast enough to kill enough Thralls and drive them back before the monsters are in among them slashing and crushing their fragile human bodies. If everyone is blazing away at full auto, they will exhaust a magazine ever two combat rounds.

The Thralls, being taller than humans, can only squeeze in two abreast in the tunnels.

The interior space in the silo tunnels is very close and the walls are made of concrete, so there will be a problem with ricochets as fully automatic weapons fire goes astray and grenades fall short of their targets. The Keeper should be sure to keep track of any friendly-fire

casualties caused by fumbled attack rolls. A screw-up might cause more damage to the Investigators and their team than the Thralls do.

Using the team's flame thrower inside the complex could quickly become more of a hazard to the Investigators than to the Thralls. In this enclosed space the stream of jellied napalm could bounce off a wall and douse Investigators and NPCs alike with a fumbled attack roll. Furthermore for five rounds after the weapon is fired in this enclosed and poorly ventilated space, the Keeper should apply the rules for suffocation to anyone near the target, as the flames consume the oxygen and fill the space with smoke.

Of course, that heat and smoke may be better than what waits outside.



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1D20: Effect

1: A soldier is snatched off the ground and pulled into the sky by a Thrall. Blood, viscera and equipment rain down as he is pulled apart. All Investigators lose 1/1D4 SAN.

2: A soldier is decapitated as a Thrall flies past at full speed and tears off his head. All Investigators lose 1/1D4 SAN.

3: A soldier blows a Sanity roll and runs off in panic. He is never seen again.

4: A soldier blows a Sanity roll and sprays his weapon wildly. 1D2 other soldiers are hit somewhere not covered by armor and take 2D6 damage (or 2D6+4, depending on the weapon). He will fire again next combat round unless something is done. Let's hope this isn't the soldier with the flamethrower.

5: A Thrall tackles a soldier in the middle of the group and begins the bite and claw at him. The soldier takes 1D6 damage this round; armor offers no protection. The Investigators have a chance to attack the Thrall, and if it takes any hits it flies back up into the blizzard. If the Investigators accidentally shoot and kill their comrade they lose 1/1D6 SAN.

6-7: A soldier takes 1D4+2D6 damage to an unarmored limb as a swooping Thrall rakes him with its claws. He cannot count towards NPC Firepower next round and may require medical attention to even escape.

8: A soldier is raked across the face for 8 points of damage and permanently blinded. He stumbles around screaming and holding the remains of his ruined face. He is out of the fight and will be killed at leisure. The Investigators lose 1/1D4 SAN.

9: A soldier's lower jaw is torn off for 10 points of damage. He stumbles around gurgling and spraying blood for 1D6 combat rounds before collapsing in shock. The Investigators lose 1/1D4 SAN. The victim will be dead in 1D6 more combat rounds without a successful First Aid roll. For the First Aid roll to be effective beyond the first round, a medic must spend 10 combat rounds (30 seconds) to stop the bleeding and stabilize the patient.

10: A soldier dives to the ground to avoid a Thrall's fly-by attack. He cannot count towards NPC Firepower next round.

11-13: A soldier is knocked off his feet by a Thrall's fly-by attack. He takes 1D6 damage and cannot count towards NPC Firepower next round.

14: A soldier loses his weapon as it is knocked from his hands by a Thrall's fly-by attack. He cannot count towards NPC Firepower for the next 1D3 rounds.

15: A soldier is struck by a piece of a dismembered comrade (a head, a limb, a torso) and knocked to the ground. He cannot count towards NPC Firepower for the next 1D3 round.

16: A soldier takes 11 points of damage when a Thrall knocks him to the ground and tears his arm off at the shoulder. All Investigators lose 1/1D4 SAN, but the Investigators have a chance to attack the Thrall before it escapes back up into the blizzard. The soldier will be dead in 1D3 combat rounds without a successful First Aid roll. For the First Aid roll to be effective beyond the first round, a medic must spend 10 combat rounds (30 seconds) to stop the bleeding and stabilize the patient.

17: A soldier takes 8 points of damage as a Thrall flies past at full speed and slashes a major artery. All Investigators lose 1/1D4 SAN. He'll be dead in six combat rounds without a successful First Aid roll. For the First Aid roll to be effective beyond the first round, a medic must spend 10 combat rounds (30 seconds) to stop the bleeding and stabilize the patient.

18: A soldier blows his SAN roll and continues to fight the Thralls even when ordered to retreat. He will have to be torn away from the fight or left behind.

19: A soldier is snatched off the ground but struggles free. He takes 2D6 damage and cannot count towards NPC Firepower next round.

20: A soldier is snatched off the ground and pulled into the sky by a Thrall. Blood, viscera and equipment rain down. If more than one Thrall is available, two soldiers are snatched into the sky instead. All Investigators lose 1/1D4 SAN.

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

The Keeper can either have the players create their own Investigators using these character creation guidelines or they can use the pre-generated characters that follow. Pre-gens not selected by players can be run as NPCs by the Keeper. The character descriptions provided should give the Keeper some guidelines as to how to play them as NPCs.

SPETSNAZ CHARACTER CREATION

If your players do not want to use the pre-generated characters, they can create their own Spetsnaz troopers using these guidelines.

ATTRIBUTE MINIMUMS:

STR 13

CON 14

SIZ must be less than or equal to STR

INT 11

DEX 10

Occupational Skills and Special Training: In addition to EDU x 20, the character starts with 100 bonus skill points to be spent on occupational skills. Those skills include: Bayonet, Climb, Fist/Punch, Grapple, Head Butt, Hide, Jump, Kick, Large Club, Navigation, Listen, Martial Arts, Parachute, Rifle, Small Club, Sneak, Spot Hidden, Submachine Gun, Swim, Throw, and any two of the following skills: Demolitions, Electronics, Electrical Repair, First Aid, Garrotte, Handgun, Knife, Machine Gun.

Combat Experience: For each year of combat experience, add 20 more bonus skill points. The skill points must be assigned to occupational skills. For each year in combat, subtract 1D4 from the character's SAN. Characters with combat experience do not have to make SAN rolls when confronted with conventional violence or its aftermath.

SOVIET-ERA GRU SPETSNAZ

Soviet-era Special Purpose Forces, or Spetsnaz, differ from our expectations of special forces in several ways. For one thing the Spetsnaz troops were not in the chain of command of the Red Army or Soviet Theatre of War commanders. They were subordinate to the U.S.S.R.'s top military intelligence agency, the GRU (Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff). This would be akin to American special forces being subordinated to the Defense

Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency or some other Department of Defense organ, rather than to the chain of command of the theatre in which they would be operating.

Secondly, Red Army conscripts are selected for Spetsnaz training before attending boot camp, unlike U.S. soldiers who qualify only if they demonstrate exceptional ability during boot camp. Candidates for Spetsnaz training are scouted out while they are still in high school, selected for a combination of physical fitness and political reliability. They are immediately inducted into Spetsnaz training upon beginning their term of conscription. Those who wash out of Spetsnaz training serve out their term of conscription in the regular army.

Unlike American special forces, where high-ranking NCOs make up the bulk of the troopers, career Spetsnaz do not remain enlisted soldiers. As a conscript force, the Soviet Army uses officers to perform tasks requiring specialized skills or training. A conscript trooper with the Spetsnaz typically ends his two-year term of conscription as a Praporshchik or warrant officer, a position somewhere above the rank-and-file conscript enlisted men but below the career officers. If he remains with the Spetsnaz any longer, he will likely be put on a career track to become an officer, obtaining a university degree and completing officer training. There are no careers as an NCO in the Spetsnaz.

Despite some Cold War myths, the result is that the rank-and-file Spetsnaz trooper is about as effective as a U.S. Army Ranger. A Spetsnaz trooper will have been in the Spetsnaz from day one of his service, while a starting U.S. Army Ranger will have had to complete basic training, gained a military occupational specialty (MOS), and undergone airborne training even before Ranger School. A Ranger's training and experience is deeper than that of their Spetsnaz counterpart, although (in 1991) the average Soviet Spetsnaz has nearly two years of actual combat experience in Afghanistan.



KAPITAN (CAPTAIN) SERGEI BORISOVICH KOZLOV

Captain Kozlov is married (to Svetlana) and has two daughters (Aleksandra and Marija). He keeps his family well insulated from the man he became after three combat tours in Afghanistan. He has a reputation for utter ruthlessness. During Operation Magistral his company did not take any prisoners in two months of fighting. While he will risk the lives of his men to complete the mission, he will not risk their lives to help the recover the wounded. Too many times in Afghanistan he learned that the wounded are used as bait to lure more men into a killing box. The best way to protect his men is to defeat the enemy and complete the mission.

His is proud of his military service and his personal distinction as a decorated officer. He has a reputation as a man who can navigate the chaos of war and produce the results his superiors want.

Captain Kozlov is not sure he's opposed to the coup against Gorbachev. The U.S.S.R. is falling apart and it needs a strong hand to hold it together. He's not a communist fanatic. He's a Russian, and the U.S.S.R. is just the latest version of the Russian Empire. He will defend it with his life and the lives of his command.

KAPITAN(CAPTAIN) SERGEI BORISOVICH KOZLOV

Ruthless leader, age 30

STR 14	CON 16	SIZ 12	INT 15	POW 13
DEX 13	APP 12	EDU 16	SAN 60	HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Suvorov Military Academy; Frunze Military Academy

Military Background: Soviet Airborne Forces Training; Soviet Spetsnaz Training; Served in Afghanistan 1987-1989

Occupation: Officer in the 11th Detached Special Operations Brigade

Nationality/Ethnicity: U.S.S.R./Russian

Skills: Climb 76%, Conceal 33%, Demolitions 30%, Dodge 26%, Drive Auto. 36%, Drive Tracked Vehicle 25%, Electrical Repair 21%, Fast Talk 25%, First Aid 44%, Hide 69%, Jump 58%, Listen 62%, Martial Arts 51%, Mechanical Repair 25%, Military Science 63%, Navigation 72%, Parachuting 66%, Persuade 49%, Psychology 57%, Sneak 64%, Spot Hidden 65%, Swim 54%, Throw 52%

Languages: English 31%, Pashtun 26%, Russian (Own) 80%

Ranged Attacks: Grenade Launcher 45%, Handgun 51%, Machine Gun 25%, Rifle 65%, Submachine Gun 35%

Melee Attacks: Bayonet 45%, Fist/Punch 70%, Grapple 48%, Head Butt 22%, Kick 40%, Knife 52%, Large Club 40%, Small Club 35%

Equipment: Basic Spetsnaz load and commanding officer kit

STARSHIY LEYTENANT (SENIOR LIEUTENANT) IVAN PAVLOVICH BABENKO

Senior Lieutenant Babenko came out of his three tours of Afghanistan with more than the expected amount of loathing for Muslims. Not just Afghans, but also those who are Soviet citizens. He's sure all Muslims are really enemies of the state, only biding their time before they turn on their Russian masters. In his last tour he didn't take prisoners unless ordered to, and wasn't overly concerned about sorting mujahedeen warriors from innocent villagers. Male and between the ages of 16 and 64 was good enough for Babenko.

Being a bigot doesn't mean that Babenko is bad at his job. He's a very good RTO and forward artillery spotter, is personally courageous and has more initiative than the average Soviet officer.

Babenko served with Captain Kozlov during Operation Magistral and knows the captain is a man who succeeds at his assignments. Babenko knows that it's good for his career to stick close to a man who is on an upward trajectory. Babenko intends to make a career of the Red Army.

News of the Coup in Moscow has Babenko on edge. What the devil are those old men in the Kremlin doing? Russia needs order, not chaos!

STARSHIY LEYTENANT (SENIOR LIEUTENANT) IVAN PAVLOVICH BABENKO

Bigoted Radio Man, age 29

STR 13	CON 15	SIZ 12	INT 14	POW 12
DEX 14	APP 11	EDU 15	SAN 56	HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Suvorov Military Academy; Orenburg Technical Electric Institute; Frunze Military Academy

Military Background: Soviet Airborne Training; Soviet Spetsnaz Training; Radio Operators School

Occupation: Communications Officer and Artillery Spotter w/ 11th Detached Special Operations Brigade

Nationality/Ethnicity: U.S.S.R./Russian

Skills: Cartography 37%, Climb 71%, Conceal 38%, Dodge 28%, Drive Auto 25%, Drive Tracked Vehicle 35%, Electrical Repair 52%, Electronic Repair 50%, Fast Talk 12%, First Aid 41%, Hide 52%, Jump 53%, Listen 71%, Martial Arts 45%, Mechanical Repair 50%, Military Science 38%, Navigation 60%, Parachuting 41%, Persuade 21%, Psychology 16%, Sneak 47%, Spot Hidden 71%, Swim 46%, Throw 44%

Languages: Russian (Own) 75%

Ranged Attacks: Grenade Launcher 30%, Handgun 41%, Machine Gun 25%, Rifle 58%, Submachine Gun 35%

Melee Attacks: Bayonet 30%, Fist/Punch 53%, Grapple 32%, Head Butt 20%, Kick 34%, Knife 35%, Large Club 36%, Small Club 34%

Equipment: Basic Spetsnaz load and RTO kit

PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) VLADIMIR OLEGOVICH KRIPTOSHENKO

Praporshchik Kriptoshenko is the man you want coming out to get you when you are wounded and pinned down. He actually gives a shit about his fellow troopers. He's smart, he can read the terrain, knows his first aid, and he can throw the average trooper over his shoulder like a student's book bag and run at a full sprint. He's saved scores of men and has the combat decorations to show for it; that and the gratitude and respect of his fellow Spetsnaz.

Captain Koslov has unofficially reprimanded Kriptoshenko for risking his live to retrieve wounded soldiers. The captain thinks he's reckless. Kriptoshenko knows he's doing his duty to the men he serves with, which matters more to him than the success or failure of some abstract mission. Nevertheless, he loves serving with the Spetsnaz and intends to become an officer.

The other men often joke that Kriptoshenko, the battalion's SAMBO champion, can disable a man almost as fast as he can put him back together. There have been plenty of incidents where Kriptoshenko has stitched up the injuries he inflicted in off-duty bar fights.

PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) VLADIMIR OLEGOVICH KRIPTOSHENKO

Dangerous Medic, age 24

STR 18	CON 17	SIZ 15	INT 13	POW 15
DEX 12	APP 10	EDU 16	SAN 71	HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Education: Kazan Technical Institute

Military Background: Soviet Airborne Training, Soviet Spetsnaz Training, Combat Medic Training

Occupation: Combat Medic, 11th Detached Special Operations Brigade

Nationality: U.S.S.R./Belarusian

Skills: Biology 10%, Climb 65%, Conceal 22%, Dodge 36%, Drive Auto 42%, Drive Tracked Vehicle 25%, First Aid 77%, Hide 69%, Jump 66%, Listen 61%, Martial Arts 72%, Medicine 43%, Military Science 29%, Navigation 32%, Parachuting 51%, Pharmacy 36%, Sneak 64%, Spot Hidden 67%, Surgery 38%, Swim 47%, Throw 57%

Languages: Russian (Own) 80%

Ranged Attacks: Grenade Launcher 30%, Handgun 44%, Machine Gun 37%, Rifle 52%, Submachine Gun 33%

Melee Attacks: Bayonet 41%, Fist/Punch 83%, Grapple 71%, Head Butt 32%, Kick 48%, Knife 61%, Large Club 55%, Small Club 43%

Equipment: Basic Spetsnaz load and combat medic kit

WHAT DO YOU FEAR!



MONSTERS!

UNDEAD!

MYSTERIOUS HAUNTINGS!

AAAAAAAUUUGH!

**BUMPS
IN THE
NIGHT** from
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PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) NIKOLAY VLADIMIROVICH KOROVIN

Praporshchik Korovin is a very careful man, precise and methodical. His physical prowess marked him for the airborne, his intelligence for the Spetsnaz and his temperament made him a perfect candidate for Pioneer Training. Korovin's hands are so steady that his instructors wonder if he shouldn't return to school and become a surgeon. Korovin finds the idea preposterous. He never had the aptitude for the classroom. Besides, how could being a surgeon ever be as rewarding as blowing things up?

Korovin earned a sterling reputation as the man who could be counted on to booby-trap the most unexpected items. He could spot a booby trap just as well. Disarming traps was something he managed to do several times in his career while some poor Red Army conscript still had his foot on the pressure-plate fuse. He even managed to disarm a demolition charge that threatened to cut a strategically important bridge—although it certainly helped that the Mujahedeen bomber had bollixed the radio detonator.

Korovin's next stop is a promotion to sub-lieutenant and a job teaching a new crop of combat engineers how not to blow themselves up.

The coup in Moscow has him worried. If people take to the streets like it's 1917 all over again. Should he be helping them make bombs or helping the authorities disarm them?

PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) NIKOLAY VLADIMIROVICH KOROVIN

Demolition Man, age 24

STR 13	CON 14	SIZ 13	INT 13	POW 14
DEX 17	APP 14	EDU 16	SAN 66	HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Secondary School

Occupation: Combat Engineer, 11th Detached Special Operations Brigade

Military Background: Soviet Airborne Training, Soviet Spetsnaz Training, Soviet Pioneer (Combat Engineering) Training

Nationality/Ethnicity: U.S.S.R./Russian

Skills: Climb 70%, Conceal 59%, Demolitions 75%, Dodge 36%, Drive Auto 40%, Drive Tracked Vehicle 25%, Electrical Repair 41%, Electronic Repair 46%, First Aid 35%, Hide 67%, Jump 53%, Listen 69%, Martial Arts 48%, Mechanical Repair 44%, Military Science 43%, Navigation 22%, Operate Heavy Machinery 47%, Parachuting 49%, Sneak 62%, Spot Hidden 69%, Swim 48%, Throw 68%

Languages: Russian (Own) 80%

Ranged Weapon Attacks: Grenade Launcher 30%, Handgun 43%, Machine Gun 33% Rifle 67%, Submachine Gun 37%,

Melee Weapon Attacks: Bayonet 48%, Fist/Punch 65%, Grapple 49%, Head Butt 17%, Kick 41%, Knife 63%, Large Club 42%, Small Club 43%

Equipment: Basic Spetsnaz load and sapper/combat engineer kit

PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) VITALY VASILYEVICH SIRKO

Praporshchik Sirko is very proud to have been assigned to a Spetsnaz unit. After two tours in Afghanistan he still thinks highly of himself and his comrades. As for the rest of the Red Army? Nothing but borderline mental deficients and drunks, demoralized and undisciplined. Being in the Spetsnaz means not having to hang your head in shame. It means you did your duty and won all your battles. His father's side of the family was made up of Cossacks who fought for the Reds during the Great Patriotic War. His time with the Spetsnaz fit right in with his family's military traditions. Like many Cossacks he is a devout member of the Russian Orthodox Church, and an anti-Semite: hardly out of step with Russian society.

Sirko is happy to be back in Russia where his service record and elite assignment will undoubtedly aid him as he searches for new opportunities. He has plans to marry, perhaps obtain an officer's commission, or gain a position with one of the more select elite units with the GRU, KGB or MVD. As much as he loves being in the Spetsnaz, he knows he can go higher. Better pay, better perks. Sirko intends to make the most out of having been Spetsnaz.

The coup in Moscow doesn't frighten him. One way or another Russia will emerge, and whatever government is running things will always need men like Sirko to clean up its messes.

PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) VITALY VASILYEVICH SIRKO

Soldier With a Plan, age 23

STR 15	CON 16	SIZ 15	INT 13	POW 14
DEX 12	APP 13	EDU 17	SAN 67	HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Secondary School

Occupation: Grenadier, 11th Detached Special Operations Brigade

Military Background: Soviet Airborne Training, Soviet Spetsnaz Training

Nationality/Ethnicity: U.S.S.R./Russian-Cossack

Skills: Climb 67%, Conceal 25%, Demolitions 22%, Dodge 24%, Drive Auto 38%, Drive Tracked Vehicle 38%, First Aid 47%, Hide 53%, Jump 69%, Listen 74%, Martial Arts 50%, Mechanical Repair 25%, Military Science 34%, Natural History 34%, Navigation 35%, Parachuting 51%, Ride Horse 45%, Sneak 48%, Spot Hidden 69%, Swim 47%, Throw 56%, Track 38%

Languages: Russian (Own) 85%

Ranged Weapon Attacks: Grenade Launcher 74%, Handgun 36%, Machine Gun 32%, Rifle 67%, Submachine Gun 34%

Melee Weapon Attacks: Bayonet 56%, Fist/Punch 62%, Grapple 59%, Head Butt 21%, Kick 32%, Knife 67%, Large Club 53%, Small Club 37%

Equipment: Basic Spetsnaz load and grenadier kit

PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) ANDREY ALEXANDROVICH MELNIKOV

Praporshchik Melnikov has killed a lot of people. As squad machine gunner he is the trooper that lays down the most firepower. He stopped keeping track after the 30th enemy flopped over like a rag-doll in his sights. And as the man dishing out the most firepower, he is the enemies' number one target. He and Kriptoshenko, the squad medic, are well acquainted due to Melnikov's five combat injuries. Despite nearly dying, Melnikov knows he's in the Spetsnaz for life. Only in combat, drenched in adrenaline, does he feel truly alive. If he could have stayed behind in Afghanistan he would have.

The boredom of his reassignment to the Arctic Theatre of War has Melnikov on edge. His sparring partners in the battalion's SAMBO matches say he's not pulling his punches. The men he's disabled in Leningrad drinking holes would say he's maniac, if they could speak with broken teeth and jawbones.

Melnikov doesn't drink, smoke hash, or shoot smack like many Afghanistan vets. Nothing compares to the raw high of combat. The only thing that worries him about the coup in Moscow is that he might miss out on the action. Storming the White House or storming the Kremlin, Melnikov isn't overly worried about whose side he ends up on, only that he get to do what he does best.

PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) ANDREY ALEXANDROVICH MELNIKOV

Machine Gun Junkie, age 23

STR 15	CON 15	SIZ 13	INT 12	POW 11
DEX 14	APP 12	EDU 13	SAN 50	HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Secondary School

Occupation: Machine gunner, 11th Detached Special Operations Brigade

Military Background: Soviet Airborne Training; Soviet Spetsnaz Training

Nationality/Ethnicity: U.S.S.R./Ukrainian

Skills: Climb 70%, Conceal 25%, Dodge 28%, Drive Auto 30%, Drive Tracked Vehicle 25%, First Aid 37%, Hide 56%, Jump 59%, Listen 49%, Martial Arts 58%, Military Science 25%, Natural History 20%, Navigation 37%, Parachuting 50%, Sneak 51%, Spot Hidden 63%, Swim 40%, Throw 52%, Track 24%

Languages: Russian 55%, Ukrainian (Own) 65%

Ranged Weapon Attacks: Grenade Launcher 30%, Handgun 39%, Machine Gun 68%, Rifle 57%, Submachine Gun 54%

Melee Weapon Attacks: Bayonet 37%, Fist/Punch 66%, Grapple 52%, Head Butt 31%, Kick 44%, Knife 52%, Large Club 38%, Small Club 39%

Equipment: Basic Spetsnaz load and PK gunner kit

PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) VIKTOR SERGEYEVICH MURADOV

Praporshchik Muradov comes from a family of hunters. Even though his father is a hydro-electric worker, Viktor Muradov was taught the skills of a Siberian hunter by his grandfather, who honed his hunting skills in the Great Patriotic War. Muradov didn't learn much from his marksmanship instructors in sniper school. He came to the party knowing all the dance steps. The one thing the Red Army did teach him to do was lose his compunction about shooting humans. After two years of combat in Afghanistan Muradov is utterly clear of any compunction about shooting anyone he considers a combatant; even women and children who were bringing ammunition to Mujahedeen fighters.

Muradov is a relatively well-adjusted combat veteran, a good sniper and good mountain fighter—though his comrades tell him he thinks too much for a sniper. Off duty Muradov is quiet and religious; open devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church is less of a bar to success than it was a decade ago. Muradov prefers the slower, quieter life he had in Siberia. He does not enjoy barracks life or postings far from home. He plans to use his status as a former Spetsnaz to land a job closer to home when he musters out, perhaps with a Siberian MVD police unit.

Muradov would be less worried about the coup in Moscow if he were back in Siberia with the Ural Mountains shielding him from Moscow's scrutiny and chaos.

PRAPORSHCHIK (WARRANT OFFICER) VIKTOR SERGEYEVICH MURADOV

Faithful Marksman, age 24

STR 13	CON 14	SIZ 13	INT 15	POW 14
DEX 15	APP 11	EDU 13	SAN 65	HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Secondary School

Occupation: Squad marksman, 11th Detached Special Operations Brigade

Military Background: Soviet Airborne Training; Soviet Spetsnaz Training

Nationality/Ethnicity: U.S.S.R./Russian

Skills: Climb 67%, Conceal 57%, Demolitions 10%, Dodge 30%, Drive Auto 30%, Drive Tracked Vehicle 25%, First Aid 35%, Hide 67%, Listen 64%, Martial Arts 38%, Mechanical Repair 35%, Military Science 20%, Natural History 55%, Navigation 43%, Parachuting 55%, Sneak 62%, Spot Hidden 68%, Swim 42%, Throw 44%, Track 48%

Languages: Russian (Own) 65%

Ranged Weapon Attacks: Grenade Launcher 30%, Handgun 38%, Machine Gun 38%, Rifle 79%, Submachine Gun 42%

Melee Weapon Attacks: Bayonet 36%, Fist/Punch 57%, Kick 33%, Head Butt 14%, Grapple 40%, Knife 45%, Large Club 33%, Small Club 36%

Equipment: Basic Spetsnaz load and marksman kit

NPCs

The extra Spetsnaz troopers can fill in as replacement player characters. The men from the Strategic Rocket Forces should remain NPCs.

STANDARD SPETSNAZ TROOPERS

Reuse as needed, age 23 to 28

	STR	CON	SIZ	INT	POW	DEX	APP	SAN	HP	DB
Medic	16	14	13	14	13	10	11	61	14	+1D4
Marksman	13	14	13	11	13	14	10	58	14	+1D4
Sapper	17	14	12	13	12	10	11	54	14	+1D4
PK Gunner	13	14	12	11	12	11	10	55	13	+1D4
Anti-Tank	14	14	11	11	12	10	10	50	13	+1D4
Trooper	13	16	12	16	10	12	9	55	14	+1D4
Trooper	13	14	12	11	11	16	13	50	13	none
Trooper	15	14	12	12	9	10	13	48	13	+1D4
Trooper	13	14	12	11	12	14	8	56	13	+1D4
Trooper	14	15	9	15	11	16	12	51	12	none

Skills: Climb 60%, Conceal 30%, Demolitions 25%, Drive Tracked Vehicle 25%, First Aid 40%, Hide 45%, Jump 45%, Listen 50%, Martial Arts 45%, Military Science 20%, Navigation 25%, Parachute 40%, Sneak 40%, Spot Hidden 55%, Swim 45%, Throw 45%

Languages: Russian (Own) 80%

Ranged Weapon Attacks: Handgun 40%, Flame Thrower 10%, Grenade Launcher 35%, Machine Gun 35%, Rifle 55%, RPG-18 25%, Submachine Gun 40%, Throw 45%

Melee Weapon Attacks: Bayonet 35%, Fist/Punch 65%, Grapple 45%, Head Butt 25%, Kick 45%, Large Club 35%, Small Club 35%

Specialty Skills: Anti-Tank/RPG-18: +25%, Flame Thrower +35%, Marksman/Rifle: +20%, Medic/First Aid: +25%, PK Gunner/Machine Gun: +25%, Sapper/Demolitions: +35%

Equipment: Basic Spetsnaz load; specialty kit if appropriate

COMPANY MUSTER

Total Men Available: 54	4 grenadiers	4 anti-tank
1 commanding officer	4 sappers	1 flame thrower operator
1 RTO/artillery spotter/executive officer	4 squad machine gunners	17 basic-load troopers
4 squad marksmen	4 assistant machine gunners	3 Strategic Rocket Forces technical advisors
	4 medics	

LT. FEDORENKO AND THE STRATEGIC ROCKET FORCES TROOPERS

	STR	CON	SIZ	INT	POW	DEX	APP	SAN	HP	DB
Lt. Fedorenko	14	17	13	12	11	14	13	65	14	+1D4
Trooper	13	12	12	14	8	14	14	60	13	+1D4
Trooper	14	13	11	13	12	13	15	55	12	none

Skills: Climb 55%, Computer Use 40%, Computer Program 35%, Demolitions 35%, Drive Auto 30%, Drive Tracked Vehicle 45%, Electrical Repair 65%, Electronics 65%, First Aid 35%, Hide 35%, Jump 40%, Listen 50%, Mechanical Repair 50%, Military Science 30%, Navigation 45%, Nuclear Warhead 50%, Operate Heavy Machinery 55%, Psychology 35%, Sneak 30%, Spot Hidden 55%, Swim 35%, Throw 35%

Languages: Russian (Own) 90%

Ranged Weapon Attacks: Grenade Launcher 25%, Handgun 30%, Rifle 35%, Submachine Gun 25%, Machine Gun 25%

Melee Weapon Attacks: Bayonet 25%, Knife 30%, Large Club 30%

Equipment: Basic Spetsnaz load and Strategic Rocket Forces kit

STARSHIY LEYTENANT (SENIOR LIEUTENANT) ANATOLY YURYEVICH FEDORENKO

Senior Lieutenant Fedorenko sought a position with the Strategic Rocket Forces because it was sure to keep him out of Afghanistan. He would have gone with the Navy but he gets terribly sea-sick. Fedorenko spent several tours at various ICBM complexes in the U.S.S.R. and as crew for medium-range mobile launchers based in Eastern Europe. He worked on all the systems at the silo complexes, including the warheads. Fedorenko excelled at technical instruction and could regurgitate his communist political texts verbatim.

Considered "politically reliable," Fedorenko was tasked with even more sensitive training. He has been trained in the use of the RA-115 man-portable nuclear device, a so-called backpack nuke. Fedorenko was never sure why the Strategic Rocket Forces, which can deliver thousands of megatons of nuclear death anywhere on the globe, would need something as paltry as a two-kiloton weapon delivered by way of worn boot-leather. Isn't this the sort of thing they train those Spetsnaz maniacs to do? He figured it was just typical inter-service one-upmanship. Until now.

Fedorenko has been fully briefed on the situation and has been told that Site 6 is part of the 'Dead Hand' automatic response system. He understands fully that failure to destroy Site 6 will mean a global thermonuclear exchange with the U.S., U.K., France and the People's Republic of China. He also knows that if Site 6 cannot be retaken or if the countdown cannot be stopped, the generals will undoubtedly nuke the site in order to destroy it. The only problem is that he doesn't know when the generals are going to lose their nerve, launch a nuclear missile at Site 6 and hope the Americans don't panic when they see the booster break atmosphere. Fedorenko wants to get in, plant the RA-115, set the timer and run like hell.

Neither Fedorenko nor his men are so fanatical that they will detonate the RA-115 manually unless there is clearly no way out of the situation and death seems certain. If Fedorenko is killed, one of his two men can take over and perform those tasks necessary to the plot to advance the scenario. Assume they have the needed skills.

STARSHIY LEYTENANT (SENIOR LIEUTENANT) ANATOLY YURYEVICH FEDORENKO

Politically Reliable, age 30

Education: Secondary school; officers candidacy through Magadan Technical Institute; technical training through Strategic Rocket Forces Schools

Occupation: Nuclear Weapons Officer, Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces

Military Background: Career with Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces; several years of duty at the Perm and Teykovo ICBM complexes

Nationality/Ethnicity: U.S.S.R./Russian

MISSION EQUIPMENT

Every character has the Spetsnaz basic load, including the officers and Strategic Rocket Forces advisors. Certain characters also have the specialist kits. You may wish to copy or print these pages and cut these kits out like cards for the players.

SPETSNAZ BASIC LOAD

AK-74 assault rifle
30-round magazines x 9
45-round magazine x 1
Makarov pistol w/silencer
8-round magazines x 3
RDG-5 anti-personnel hand grenades x 4
1 AKM Type II Bayonet (wire-cutter scabbard)
Saperka (entrenching tool)
Military kevlar body armor (12 points protection)
Kevlar helmet (5 points protection)
Heavy Arctic cold-weather gear and winter camouflage (1 point protection)
Winter combat boots (2 points protection)
Snow shoes
Wristwatch, windable
Compass
Radio headset
Chemical light sticks x 5
Flashlight with IR lens, mountable to AKS-74 top rail
LI/IR scope mounted to helmet
Personal medical kit
64 oz. water bladder inside clothing with drinking tube
Rations, 2 days
Soviet equipment harness and backpack

COMMANDING OFFICER KIT

AKS-74 assault rifle with GP-25 grenade launcher (replaces AK-74)
5 illumination flare grenades
5 red signal flare grenades
5 yellow signal flare grenades
5 green signal flare grenades
6 VOG-25 fragmentation grenades
1 RDG-5 anti-personnel hand grenade (not 4)
Map case with maps of the target facility and surrounding area
Codebook for base entry
Binoculars

RTO COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER KIT

Binoculars
Small mechanical tool kit
Small electrical tool kit
Small electronics tool kit
Backpack portable radio with satellite burst transmitter and encryption software (50km transmission range via radio, unlimited range via satellite)

Note: To use the satellite communications option, a satellite dish would need to be set up outside. This is not possible with the 60 kph winds currently blowing. It will not be able to transmit from inside the armored vehicles or any structures, particularly the underground complex at Site 6.

COMBAT MEDIC KIT

Soviet military-issue medic pack/trauma kit
Field surgery kit

MARKSMAN KIT

SVD sniper rifle with x4 power scope (replaces AK-74)
10-round magazines x 10
Stechkin machine pistol (replaces Makarov and silencer)
20-round magazines x 3

PK GUNNER KIT

PK machine gun with ammo box and bipod (replaces AK-74)
200-round belts x 5
Stechkin machine pistol (replaces Makarov and silencer)
20-round magazines x 3

GRENADIER KIT

AKS-74 assault rifle with GP-25 grenade launcher (replaces AK-74)
10 VOG-25 fragmentation grenades
5 VOG-25P "bouncing" fragmentation grenades
5 00-buckshot case rounds
3 baton rounds
2 GRD-50 smoke grenades
1 CS gas grenades (tear gas)

SAPPER/COMBAT ENGINEER KIT

2 MON-50 directional mines with manual and trip-wire inducers
10 PFM-1 anti-personnel mines
2 satchel charges, each with 2 kg of PVV-5A plastic explosive
12 fuse detonators
4 radio-detonated fuses and 1 radio detonator

ANTI-TANK KIT

1 RPG-18 disposable rocket launcher
1 RDG-5 anti-personnel hand grenade (not 4)

FLAME THROWER KIT

RTO-50 flame thrower (replaces AK-74 and 4 RDG-5 grenades)

STRATEGIC ROCKET FORCES ADVISOR KIT

Binoculars
Small mechanical tool kit
Small electrical tool kit
Small electronics tool kit
RA-115 man-portable nuclear demolition device (approx. yield 2 KT; it is approximately 45 kg, equivalent to SIZ 7, in a massive locked backpack; only one RA-115 is assigned—other SRF troopers carry only the tool kits)

MT-LBV ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER

Weight	11.9 tons (13.1 short tons; 11.7 long tons)
Length	6.45 m
Width	2.86 m
Height	1.86 m
Crew	2 (plus 11 passengers)
Armor	14 mm (16 points protection)
Armament	7.62mm PK machine gun; 2,500 ammunition 2,500 shots
Engine	YaMZ 238, V-8 diesel, 240 hp at 2,100 rpm
Operational Range	500 km road, 250 km offroad
Speed	61 kph road 30 kph off-road 5 to 6 kph in the water

The crew, a driver and a commander/gunner sit in a compartment at the front of the vehicle, with the engine behind them. A compartment at the rear enables up to 11 infantry to be carried or cargo of up to 2,000 kg. A load of 6,500 kg can be towed. The vehicle is fully amphibious, being propelled by its tracks in the water.

A small turret at the front of the vehicle fits a 7.62 mm PKT machine gun with 360-degree manual traverse and an elevation of -5 to +30 degrees.

The infantry compartment has two hatches over the top which open forwards. There are four firing ports:

two in the both sides of the hull, the other two in the rear twin doors of the infantry compartment.

The driver is provided with a TVN-2 infra-red periscope, which in combination with the OU-3GK infra-red/white light search light provides a range of about 40 meters. The vehicle has an NBC system. The V variant is equipped for arctic service and has an internal heater and extra-wide treads for crossing snow and tundra.

The MT-LBV's operational range off-road does not give these vehicles a wide margin of error for getting to Site 6.



BITS AND MORTAR

If you bought *The Unspeakable Oath* in print, anywhere, you can get the PDF free.
www.theunspeakableoath.com

FIREARMS	DAMAGE	AMMO	ROF	RANGE
Makarov pistol	1D10	8	2	15
Stechkin machine pistol	1D10	20	2/20	15
AKS-74 assault rifle	2D6	30	2/20	110
SVD sniper rifle	2D6+4	10	1	110
PK machine gun	2D6+4	200	20	110
VOG-25 30mm grenade	4D6/ 3 m	1	½	300
VOG-25P bouncing grenade	5D6/ 3 m	1	½	300
00 buckshot round	6D6/3D6/1D6	1	½	10/20/50
Baton round	2D6*		1	1/2 10/20/50

* A baton round is made of rubber. If the target makes a Luck roll it does knockout damage.

THROWN WEAPONS	DAMAGE	ROF	RANGE
RGD-5 hand grenade	3D6/ 3 m	1/2	(STR-1) x 3
Saperka (entrenching tool)	1D6	1	(STR-1) x 3
AKM-11 bayonet	1D4+2	1	(STR-1) x 3

PLACED EXPLOSIVES	DAMAGE
MON50 directional mine	6D6+6 (10 m)/3D6+2 (25 m)/1D6 (50 m)
PFM-1 anti-personnel mine	4D6/5 m
Satchel charge, 2 kg	10D6/ 6 m
RA-115 nuclear demolition device	Special; see pages 32-33 and 41

HEAVY WEAPONS (BASE)	DAMAGE	AMMO	ROF	RANGE
RPG-18 disposable anti-tank weapon (15%)	10D6/1 m	1 use	1	150
LPO-50 flame thrower (5%)	2D6*	5	2	25

* Special: +1D6 damage per round for three rounds

MELEE WEAPONS	DAMAGE	HIT POINTS
AKM-II bayonet	1D4+2+db	15
AKM-II fixed on rifle	1D8+1+db	15
Rifle butt	1D8+db	12
Pistol butt	1D4+db	8
Saperka (entrenching tool)	1D6+db	22

BUILDING AN ELDER GOD: A GAME OF LOVECRAFTIAN CONSTRUCTION

EXCLUSIVE CARDS FOR THE UNSPEAKABLE OATH

BY JAMIE CHAMBERS AND BEN MUND

Building an Elder God is a casual card game for two to five players ages 10 and up. By tapping into the hidden secrets of the universe, you can grow your very own incarnation of a tentacled horror from beyond the veils of space and time. Sure, some would call you “insane,” but who will be laughing when your new pet devours the whole town?

Problem is, some of your research buddies have acquired the same dark knowledge and are growing their own monstrosities. No way do they get to steal your glory! You must ensure your beast is complete first—which is why you brought your trusty shotgun. And just in case your own precious, slimy baby is injured, you have brought your travel copy of the Necronomicon with its black rituals as a little healing insurance. Do whatever it takes. If your Elder God grows to completion first, you win—everything!

A typical game takes from 15 to 30 minutes. Build a Cthulhu-esque tentacled monstrosity to completion before the other players, using damage cards to blast your opponents’ creatures to slow down their progress.

These alternate head and body cards were made exclusively by Signal Fire Studios for *The Unspeakable Oath*. Copy them from this page or print them in color from the PDF. Now you have even more options for a horrid abomination to spring on your friends. Enjoy! ☹



A relative has died unexpectedly.

The Investigators put on their Sunday best and go to the Second Home Funeral Parlor to pay their respects. They are sitting quietly in a corner when they hear a loud knocking from inside the casket lid. The lid shoots open and up sits the deceased, smiling and waving to the assembled mourners!

OPTION 1: PATIENT ZERO

The body is the host of an intelligent prion infection, introduced to when the Earth passed through the tail of a comet several days ago. The deceased is now patient zero for the alien threat.

The prion has restructured large sections of the brain for its own use, but it retains some memories and all the skills of its host. The immediate family believes this is a miracle—or a travesty of medicine—and takes their loved one home.

The host has only one goal: to go unnoticed long enough to spread the infection among the humans of earth. The corpse occasionally vomits up large chunks of a waxy, cheese-like substance. This is of course a vector for further infection. It contaminates food with it and perhaps shapes it into handmade candles for friends.

Over time the body suffers the ill effects of putrefaction or embalming, but the family cannot believe that the father who seems to remember every one of their vacations is now a xenobiological menace. The Investigators must take action.

OPTION 2: DADDY DADDY

The funeral director, Mr. Candor, is a self-taught wizard. A widower whose only son died years ago in a bicycle accident, he has been trying to resurrect the boy using wicked tomes and rituals. One of them has finally worked.

Inside the corpse is the consciousness of Candor's deceased son, Tommy. The body creates pandemonium at the funeral parlor by striking his the dead man's

wife. The police are summoned and the corpse is put in the nearest mental hospital. He tells visiting Investigators that his name is Tommy Candor, that he misses his "daddy," and that the last thing he remembers before waking up in the coffin in this big, hairy body is a car shooting his bicycle into a brick wall.

A little breaking and entering at the funeral parlor reveals a chamber of horrors. Candor has performed foul experiments for years. His embalming room resembles a butcher shop. He keeps the mummified body of his son in an open casket, beside a slimy pile of rotting corpses. He will be displeased to come home and find his sanctum violated.

When confronted, he has no memory of the event. Furthermore, his life is falling apart. His wife has left him and taken the kids. "She was so frightened that she screamed when I held her," he confides.

The dead man was returned to life by an extra-dimensional intelligence of the sort revealed by the vibrations of the Tillinghast Resonator. This entity, wishing to luxuriate in the strange angles of our dimension as long as possible, is using the dead man as a cover. During the day the man's body is his own, and he can even access the entity's magic points and spells. When he goes to sleep the entity takes control. In what it considers an amusing experiment, it is meticulously annihilating every



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OPTION 3: CAN I BORROW JUST ONE THING?

The dead man has returned to life and his family sees it as a joyful miracle. Beyond a second chance at life, the dead man has returned with paranormal powers, such as the spell Create Scrying Window or whatever spells the Keeper desires. These powers are of great use to the Investigators.

Strangely, whenever the Investigators invite their returned relative to help in an investigation, it always goes sideways. Witnesses disappear. Evidence vanishes. Survivors of an attempted murder end up dead after all with bizarre, geometric shapes cut into their flesh. It is only a matter of time until a witness identifies the Investigators' revived friend at the scene of one of these outrages.

aspect of its host's life. A night spent hiding from a telekinetic assault was the last straw for the wife. Derailing the Investigators' investigations is part of the alien's project.

A Cthulhu Mythos roll or appropriate research after a night spent observing their friend can diagnose the trouble. (The alien's actions, and the cost in SAN and HP, are up to the Keeper.) A kind Keeper may rule that an exorcism with the Elder Sign sends the intelligence screaming back into the alien angles whence it came, allowing the shattered man to reassemble the pieces of his life. That's worth 1D6 SAN for the Investigators. But perhaps the only way to get rid of the the entity is to destroying its link to this reality—the still-living body of their friend. ☸

Someone is after the Investigators.

Cars follow them. Pairs of men shadow their steps across the street. Items at home have been moved and put back in almost the same place as before. The phone clicks strangely. At night, someone smokes alone in a car a block away. Footsteps are found in the mud around an Investigator's home.

OPTION 1: UNDER INVESTIGATION

One of the side effects of Mythos

investigation is that bodies tend to stack up like firewood. A local detective has linked numerous unsolved homicides together, and the one common thread is the Investigators. Convinced that they are at heart of some criminal enterprise, the detective has convinced the police department to devote its resources to surveilling the Investigators. The police plan to acquire evidence incriminating one Investigator and then flip his testimony on the others. Investigators who customarily shotgun cultists and leave cleanup to the authorities may find themselves in dire straits when said shotgun is found to still be in their possession. Investigators who attack the police quickly find themselves in jail, dead, or on the wrong side of a standoff. The Investigators' most graceful way out may be to simply expose some of the police to the horrors of the Mythos, explaining their deeds and perhaps gaining allies—and interlopers at risk of terrible fates—in one fell swoop.

OPTION 2: SUB-PROJECT METROPOL

This is a option for modern-day Investigators in Delta Green.

All that shadowing and stalking suddenly gets more complicated. An Investigator wakes up one morning not in his or her own bed—nor even in his or her own body! A cursory search of the room reveals that the Investigator's mind has been transferred into the body of another Investigator. (Sanity loss: 1D4/1D10. Physical stats switch but mental stats and skills remain the same.)

Medical experimentation on U.S. citizens without their consent has a long and storied history. The need of the apparatus of the security state to cleanly dispose of dangerous citizens who cannot be arrested met the need of the medical establishment for “volunteers” in Project METROPOL, an above-top-secret branch of Project PLUTO. The Investigators' suspicious activities have gotten them selected as test subjects.

It began when a metal pod was discovered under 20,000-year-old ice in Antarctica. When this device was activated in the lab, it switched the minds of all the scientists and technicians. Project head Dr. Lindsey MacHenry believes she has developed a way to control the effect. The Investigators are her guinea pigs.

Surveillance equipment has been hidden in their homes and effects. Dr. MacHenry runs the transferences from a

black van containing the Antarctic device. The scientists observe the Investigators' reactions to the change, and then begin switching their minds again, soon with strangers and later with animals.

Unfortunately, creases made in the psychic fabric of humanity—the medium of the exchange—are not easily unfolded. Soon the transfers grow uncontrolled and begin to spread, affecting the researchers monitoring the experiments, one of whose minds is switched with that of a spider. The Investigators must discover the nature of the experiment, use Antactic device and METROPOL's technology to reverse the transfers, and destroy the device to uncrease the psychic fabric.

But who or what will METROPOL's owners dispatch to “sanitize” this experiment grown out of control?

OPTION 3: THE REINCARNATION

Custists of Yibb-Tstll believe

one of the Investigators to be the reincarnation of their high priest and are watching the Investigators carefully and reverently.

The cultists have journeyed far to find their priest, all the way from the Jungle of Kled in the Dreamlands. The cultists are bewildered by the Earth and its technology, yet they know they must try to go unnoticed. The Keeper may make this humorous (a cultist attempts to use a newspaper to open a locked car) or terrifying (a cultist uses the Blood of Yibb-Tstll to murder a man who stopped to help him change a tire).

Before the high priest's death, he wrote a prophecy to identify his reincarnation. It was not precise. Hence the surveillance. When the cultists are certain of the signs, they will kidnap the unfortunate Investigator and take him back to the Dreamlands. The Investigators must rescue their comrade before the cultists can reach the Jungle of Kled, where the Touch of Yibb-Tstll will transform the abducted one forever. Whether the Investigator is actually a reincarnation of the high priest is up to the Keeper.



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UNCONVENTIONAL FIREARMS

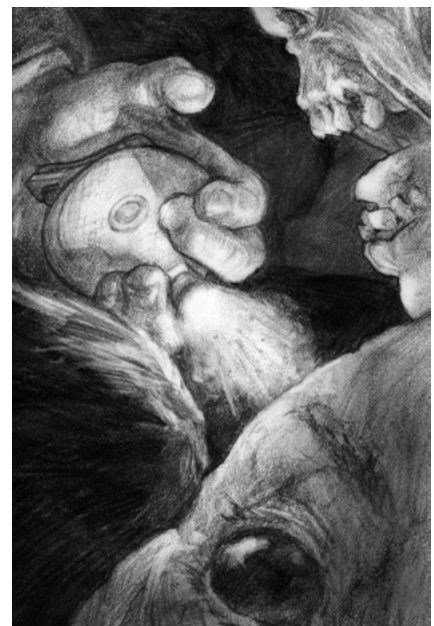
BY CHASE W. BECK

Many veteran *Call of Cthulhu* Investigators develop a deep, sometimes unhealthy, usually Quixotic fondness for firearms. They see cultists in every shadow and knives in every window. They want to be armed at all times. They become devotees of the fine art of concealing weapons. They think it will help.

Lucky for them, they aren't alone. Over the centuries gunsmiths have come up with all manner of devices designed to fire gunpowder-propelled projectiles. Our fellow players ought to appreciate this sampling.

For all the variety, there are really only three main types of non-conventional firearms. First there are disguised firearms such as a pillbox or a briefcase fixed to fire. Then we have improved weapons, usually knives or other weapons redesigned to fire bullets. Finally there are what we'll refer to as pocket firearms, undisguised guns that have been specially made for concealability.

Very few of these weapons were manufactured in great numbers. Many of them have unique designs that just never caught on. In most cases they were awkward or quickly replaced by superior versions. In fact, one might come to the conclusion that "Inferior Firearms" might be a better title for this article. However, while these weapons may not be especially deadly, they do allow the user the element of surprise. Most attackers are scared off by the sound of gunfire where a gun was not expected to be, whether the shot hurt anyone or not. Unfortunately for *Call of Cthulhu* Investigators, they don't often contend with enemies that are easily frightened. Don't rely on these gadgets too heavily.



Many of these items are miniaturized, specialized, and disguised. Some were cobbled together from spare parts in a tinker's garage. Most have a distressingly high chance of malfunction.

This list is in no way all-encompassing. No doubt you can find stats for many models and designs elsewhere. Our friends at Sixtystone Press are currently releasing a series of volumes titled *Investigator Weapons*. For more detailed guides on various models and makes of weapons, start there.

DISGUISED FIREARMS

Many disguised firearms originated in Victorian times. Quite often they required extra steps and tools to disengage the safety lock, load a round, or fire the gun. But when you find yourself walking down a dark ally or meeting with shady characters at a speakeasy, sometimes it's nice to have a weapon that nobody expects. Typically a shot with one of these is unaimed (1/5 chance) unless the shooter manages to take aim with the device.

Belt Buckle: This buckle packs a wallop. It can fire two cartridges. An SS version in World War II could fire a total of four shots simultaneously, or individually in some cases. Unfortunately, the challenge of aiming and firing from your crotch makes this firearm tricky to operate. A wise operator would remove the belt buckle before attempting to use it. Attempting to reload during combat is unwise if not downright dangerous.

Briefcase: This CIA-designed device has a silenced Ruger .22 pistol securely concealed inside. The firing trigger is in the briefcase handle. Since briefcases are carried down at hip level, aiming is tricky. Newer designs use higher powered firearms with faster rates of fire.

Cane (pepperbox): The wooden length of this cane detaches to expose a rather large pepperbox pistol. Without the benefit of a barrel, its range is quite short. However, with six rounds it can do a fantastic amount of damage for a disguised firearm. Usually it is designed to fire all rounds simultaneously, but some versions fire each shot individually.

Cane (rifle): The body of the cane serves as a barrel for the concealed rifle. While it holds only a single cartridge, it possesses better range than all other disguised weapons. Remington produced models with dog-head and duck-head handles. A compressed-air-propelled version exists but its inefficient pump requires 250 or more strokes to be fully charged.

Cane (shotgun): Originally made in the Philippines, this shotgun cane became popular in guerrilla warfare during World War II. It fires a single shotgun shell to devastating effect. It

is reloaded by unscrewing the handle and replacing the shell. A shotgun cane was used as recently as a 2008 bank robbery.

Cigarette: Devised in the mid-20th century, this single-shot tube fires a .22 caliber short cartridge. The advantage here is obviously surprise. The device is simple enough to be reloaded quickly in combat.

Cigarette lighter: This looks like a cigarette lighter, either a disposable one or a Zippo. It fires one .22 caliber short cartridge. It requires one round of combat to prepare before it can be fired. It cannot be reloaded in combat.



Eyeglasses: Some wise engineer managed to fit a single shot of specially made ammo into a pair of black, wide-rimmed glasses. They are also available in tortoiseshell. Aiming is as simple as lining-up your head with the target. A button on the glasses arm serves as trigger. The bullet might not do significant damage but if you're at close range and eye level it might result in temporary if not permanent blindness. (We recommend double the usual chance of an impale under those conditions, and perhaps a Luck roll by the victim to avoid blinding in one eye.) Reloading is tricky and is impossible in combat.

Flashlight: A flashlight with a long handle modifies into a firearm quite nicely. Models exist for several calibers. It can carry only two rounds before needing to be reloaded, but size and space allow for quick and easy reloading during combat.

Fountain pen: It's been said that the pen is mightier than the sword—and in this case it might be literally true. This rather large fountain pen holds a single small cartridge and still functions as a writing utensil. It is undetectable as a firearm unless dismantled. Barring that, one might notice that it has a poor balance for a writing tool. It takes a full combat round to ready it to fire.

Glove Pistol: The OSS designed this for use by agents in World War II, but reports suggest that it was all but useless. The idea seemed sound: the act of punching would fire it. However, most hand-to-hand combat strays far from the pugilism of the boxing ring. Unless it were properly secured, use during combat could just as easily result in permanent damage to the wielder. It cannot be reloaded in combat. If an Investigator tries to use it, it calls for both a successful Punch roll and a Luck roll. If both succeeds, the target takes no punch damage but is shot by the bullet. If both fail, the wielder is shot by the bullet by accident.



Key: One shot is all that can be concealed within this large brass key. Both pass key and cut key models exist and function nearly identically. Readyng the weapon to fire takes a round of combat unless it's prepared before combat. Reloading is impossible while fighting continues.

Machine bolt: Machine bolts come in many sizes. The larger ones, hollowed out and fitted with the proper hardware, make lousy tools but excellent inconspicuous firearms—if you can explain why you're walking around with a large machine bolt and not using it to do any work.

Nightstick: The nightstick gun comes in several calibers, and its shape makes it useful for melee combat as well. Capacity is quite limited but reloading is quick and easy—simply unscrew the cap and replace the cartridge.

Pill box: This cleverly disguised pill box is capable of firing a single lead pellet. Because of its diminutive size it cannot be reloaded in combat. Additionally, it requires a full round to ready before it can be shot unless it is prepared before combat.

Pocket watch: While this pocket watch no longer manages to tell time, it does fire a single tiny pellet. In combat it requires one round to engage unless prepared beforehand. It is useless outside of point-blank range. Special tools are required to load and fire it. It cannot be reloaded during combat.

Purse: A miniaturized pistol is sewn into a special pocket of this clutch purse. While not terribly fashionable, it might just save your life. It holds four cartridges. Due to the folds of fabric, you can't reload it during combat.

Ring ("le petit guardian"): This unfashionably large ring is unique in design and function. The head of the ring is a fully functioning, diminutive six-shot cylinder containing specially designed percussion-cap rounds. Before combat, or during the first round, the pistol can be readied by releasing the trigger. After that the pistol can be fired. Due to its small size it requires special tools to reload.

Salt shaker: This looks like a little salt shaker, or pepper shaker if you prefer. It fires a single .357 cartridge, but without a barrel its range is reduced to touch. With a token amount of spice in the shortened reservoir, its true use is nearly undetectable. It requires a round to ready unless prepared before combat begins. It cannot be reloaded in combat.

Sleeve gun: The sleeve gun is attached to the forearm and meant to be fired during hand-to-hand combat. However, it would seem as if this one actually worked. Its attack replaces an ordinary hand-to-hand attack. It cannot be reloaded in combat.

Tire iron: Such a solid, everyday item makes a perfect frame for a firearm. It fires a .22 cartridge and must be

reloaded after each shot. Reloading during combat is simple and quick—unscrew the cap and replace the cartridge.

Umbrella: The long tube makes for an effective rifle but umbrellas are notoriously delicate. There is little room for ammo and the likelihood of a round jamming or the barrel splitting is quite high. A model that actually opens and functions as an umbrella costs extra.

IMPROVED ITEMS

Smiths have been building guns into hand weapons since the earliest days of firearms. Here are a few favorites. In most cases shooting is considered unaimed (1/5 chance) unless the shooter goes out of her or her way to aim properly or the weapon is at hand-to-hand range.

Bowie knife, double-shot: Almost as old as the Bowie knife itself, this innovation comes equipped with a pistol barrel on each side of the blade. The triggers can be pulled separately or simultaneously.

Breastplate: Sources say that this breastplate hails from France in 1917. It includes nineteen foldable barrels, all welded to a single molded steel breastplate. Each barrel holds a single round. Because the barrels fold up, it might be feasible to hide this breastplate under a sufficiently heavy coat. It takes a full five rounds of combat to safely ready this contraption to fire. Additionally, deciphering how to load, wear, and fire this armor requires a successful Mechanical Repair or History roll. Failure results in some of the barrels not firing or firing when unexpected. Four to five barrels can fire per round. Like most of these weapons it's useless beyond a few feet away.

Hard hat: This is a worker's hard hat with a modified pistol mounted on top. A schematic exists and a patent for it was granted, but as far as anyone knows it was never actually made.

Katara: A gift from our Indian friends (and likely a British innovation), this punching dagger functions much like the modified bowie knife above. It can open into three scissored blades, but the most useful tactic is to keep it closed, hope for an impaling melee attack, and then fire.

Knuckle duster: The barrel of a firearm runs in line with the fingers of these brass knuckles, coming out between the middle and ring fingers. With a Luck roll, the punch and firing can be accomplished in the same round. It includes a rather flimsy blade that extends past the barrel of the gun. It holds a single shot and takes a full round to reload.

Knuckle duster with trench knife: This solid-built knuckleduster includes a foldout knife and a built-in firearm. It cannot be reloaded in combat. The barrel actually runs the length of the brass knuckles as does the blade, creating the appearance of a trench spike when extended. Stab your enemy, hold on, and fire.

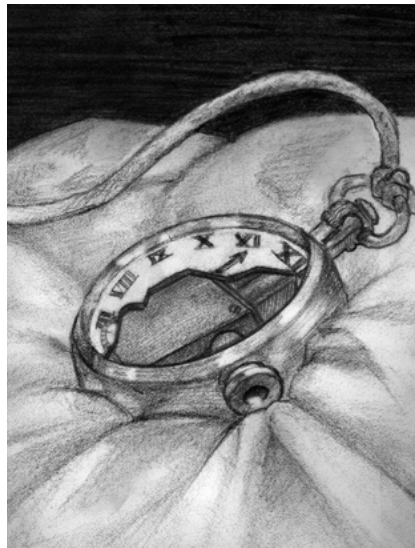
Pocket knife: Resembling a pocket knife with a deer antler handle, this firearm includes a foldout trigger and a foldout knife. With a little extra money you can get a deluxe model with a fold-out corkscrew, leather punch, and can opener. It holds a single .22 caliber round and can be reloaded during combat.

Shield gun: Invented in Italy in the 1540s but heavily exported to England, this antique is from a time when shields were reliable and guns were new and exciting. Someone combined the two and development stopped there. A shield gun may have been handy during the waning days of knights and chivalry but who can get away with walking around carrying a shield today? Its design is likely a flintlock or a wheellock so don't expect a quick reload. At least you'll be protected while preparing your charge, wadding, and lead ball.

SELECT POCKET FIREARMS

These pocket firearms are all pistols, which are all far easier to hide than even the most sawed-down of shotgun and rifle mechanisms.

Cobray Pocket Pal: The Pocket Pal uses a top break design to hot swap between two insertable cylinders. One holds five .22 caliber rounds and the other holds three .38 rounds. Switching between two loaded cylinders takes a



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single round but reloading an empty cylinder takes two rounds, regardless of caliber.

COP .357: This four-barreled derringer-type pistol can chamber .357 magnum or .38 rounds. The combination of small size and high caliber makes this a popular backup pistol.

Deer gun: A spiritual successor to the FP-45 Liberator, the Deer gun was developed by the CIA to be distributed to the South Vietnamese to aid them in fighting the North Vietnamese Army. It held and fired one round and was meant to be discarded once better firearms were made available. The grip holds three additional rounds and a rod for removing spent casings.

Derringer, multi-barreled: The *Call of Cthulhu* sourcebook contains stats for a single-barreled derringer but versions exist with two to five barrels. There are about as many designs as there are manufacturers. Each barrel holds a single round. Some fire a single round per trigger pull and some fire every barrel at once. Certain models include foldout daggers. All can easily be fired and reloaded during combat.

Derringer, quarter-sized: While the decrease in size makes it far easier to conceal, this diminutive firearm can be a hassle to operate and with a loss in size comes a decrease on stopping power. It requires special ammunition but it can be reloaded during combat.

Liberator, FP-45: Designed and cheaply manufactured in World War II America to be used by the French Resistance, this single-shot pistol was never widely distributed until the Chinese Resistance and Philippine commonwealth military put it to use. Inaccurate, and some reports say painful to fire, it must be reloaded after each shot. There is storage for ten rounds in the handle. The purpose of this gun was to kill an enemy soldier and take his (far more effective) weapon.

Mossberg Brownie: Similar to the COP .357 but smaller, this holdout holds four .22 caliber rounds.

CONCEALING AND DETECTING FIREARMS

If a character is actively attempting to hide the presence of a weapon while another actively searches for it, use the Resistance Table. Compare 1/5 of the concealer's Conceal skill with 1/5 of the searcher's Spot Hidden skill. This rule comes from Hans-Christian Vortisch's Investigator Weapons series from Sixtystone Press. Greater detail on the use of Conceal and Spot Hidden skills can be found there.

Of course, *Call of Cthulhu* is at heart a roleplaying game. Ask players to roleplay the ways they conceal their weapons, and use the Conceal skill only when you're not certain if it would work.

To detect a disguised firearm typically calls for a standard Spot Hidden roll ("Why is that man carrying an umbrella on such a dry day?") A concealed item requires a physical search of the person. Even then, detecting that an everyday item like a pillbox or a key is secretly a weapon typically requires a separate Spot Hidden roll after looking the object over specifically.

In some cases you might call for an alternate skill roll. For example, an Investigator might use Craft (Carpentry/Woodcraft) to detect a modified cane gun, Mechanical Repair to detect a modified pocketwatch, or Military Science/Tradecraft (from Delta Green) for a weapon developed by the CIA, such as the pistol concealed in a briefcase.

DISGUISED ITEMS	BASE CHANCE	DAMAGE	BASE RANGE	ATTACKS/ROUND	HP CAPACITY	RESIST-ANCE	MALFU-NCTION	INVENTED IN ERA	CALIBER
Pocketwatch	20	1D4	touch	1	1**	1	80-00	1890s	Proprietary
Cigarette	15	1D6	3 yds	1/2	1	2	90-00	1920s	.22 Short
Zippo	15	1D6	touch	1	1**	5	90-00	1930s	.22 Short
Lighter	15	1D6	touch	1	1**	3	90-00	1950s	.22 Short
Belt buckle, 2-shot	20	1D6+1	4 yds	1	2**	5	90-00	1930s	.22LR
Belt buckle, 4-shot	20	1D6+1	4 yds	2	4**	5	90-00	1930s	.22LR
Purse	15	1D10	touch	1	4**	5	90-00	1890s	9mm
Pill box	15	1D2	touch	1	1**	1	80-00	1920s	Proprietary
Salt shaker	25	1D8+1D4	touch	1	1**	2	90-00	1920s	.357
Fountain pen	25	1D6+1	5 yds	1	1	4	90-00	1920s	.22LR
Ring (le petit guardian)*	15	1D2	touch	2	6**	3	90-00	1800s	Proprietary pinfire
Cane (rifle)	15	1D6+2	15 yds	1/2	1	8	90-00	1800s	.22LR
Cane (pepperbox)*	20	1D2 / shell or 1D10+1 all at once	2 yds	1	6**	8	90-00	Late 1800s	2mm pinfire
Cane (shotgun)*	25	2D6/1D6/1D3	2/4/8 yds	1/2	1	10	90-00	1950s	16 gauge, buckshot
Tire iron	20	1D6+1	6 yds	1	1	10	90-00	1950s	.22LR
Glove pistol	25	1D10	touch	1	1	8	70-00	1930s	.38 Special
Sleeve gun	25	1D6	3 yds	1	6	8	90-00	1930s	.22 Short
Flashlight	25	1D6	6 yds	1	2	10	90-00	1940s	.22 Short
Nightstick	25/20	1D6	8 yds	1/2	1	10	90-00	1920s	.22 Short
Umbrella	25	1D6+1	8 yds	1	6	6	85-00	1930s	.22LR
Key	15	1D2	touch	1	1**	5	80-00	1800s	Proprietary
Machine bolt	20	1D6+1	3 yds	1/2	1	8	85-00	1950s	.22 LR
Eyeglasses	15	1D2	face to face	1	1**	5	80-00	1950s	Proprietary
Briefcase	25	1D6+1	10 yds	2	8	10	90-00	1950s	.22 LR

IMPROVED ITEMS

Kuckleduster, trench knife***	20/35	1D6	3 yds	1	1	12	90-00	1890s	9mm pinfire
Knuckleduster***	20/35	1D6+1	3 yds	1	2	12	90-00	1930s	.22LR
Bowie knife, double-shot***	20/25	1D6+1	3 yds	1 or 2	2	12	90-00	1890s	.22LR
Shield gun	20/25	1D6	6 yds	1/4	1	20	80-00	1540s	Musket ball
Katara***	15/20	1D6+1	3 yds	1	2	12	90-00	Late 1800s	.22LR
Pocket knife***	20/25	1D6+1	3 yds	1	1	10	80-00	1920s	.22LR
Breastplate	30	1D6+1	3 yds	4-5	19**	12	80-00	1910s	.22LR
Hard hat	15	1D6+1	est. 3 yds	1	4	10	80-00	1940s	.22LR

SELECT POCKET PISTOLS

Derringer, multi-barreled	20	1D6	3 yds	Varies	Varies	5	95-00	1920s	See description
Derringer, quarter-sized	20	1D4	touch	1	2	3	90-00	1930s	Proprietary
Liberator, FP-45	20	1D10+2	5 yds	1/2	1	4	85-00	1940s	.45 ACP
Deer Gun	20	1D10	7.5 yds	1/2	1	4	90-00	1960s	9mm
COP .357	20	1D8+1D4 or 1D10	10 yds	1	4	5	95-00	1970s	.357 magnum, .38 special
Cobray Pocket Pal	20	1D6+1	10 yds	1	2	5	95-00	1970s	.22LR
Mossberg Brownie	20	1D6+1	7 yds	1	4	5	95-00	1920s	.22LR

When two numbers are listed for "Base Chance" the second number is always for melee.

* Cannot impale.

** Cannot be reloaded during combat.

*** With a Luck roll, allows a melee attack and a firearm attack in the same round. Only one attack can impale. (Keeper's choice.)

DIRECTIVES FROM A-CELL

DIRECTIVE 110: THE BEAR IS BACK

By ADAM SCOTT GLANCY

When I wrote about GRU Spetsialni Viedotstvo 8 for *Delta Green: Countdown*, the world was a different place. In 1999 Russia was still governed by the drunken and inconsistent Boris Yeltsin. Between 1994 and 1996 the Red Army was utterly humiliated by rag-tag Chechen rebels who fought them to a standstill.

Russia was still reeling from the 1998 financial crisis that saw inflation at 84%, doubled food prices from the previous year, and caused the Russian government to default on its international loans. Russia's oligarchs, those insiders who had made billions during the rush to privatize the state industries of the former USSR, dominated the nation's economy and politics. Everything seemed to have a price tag, from state art treasures to mail-order brides and nuclear weapons. Our great adversary was now an object of pity rather than fear.

That is not the Russia of today.

In the time since 1998, Russia's GDP has increased eight hundred percent. Russia has emerged as an international energy giant with designs on developing and exploiting their Arctic frontier. Russian has once again prioritized military spending. The Second Chechen War resulted in a Russian victory and the establishment of a brutally effective pro-Moscow Chechen government. The regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were wrested away from the Georgian Republic using a combination of ethnic insurgents backed up by Russian "peacekeepers."

Political dissent is no longer tolerated. Even billionaire oligarchs must either support the regime or face being systematically crushed by the organs of state power. Dissidents, political opponents and enemies of the state have been brazenly assassinated on foreign soil in ways that harken back to the days of the Cheka and Smersh. The Russian Orthodox Church is being courted by the state as another pillar of the regime's power. At the top of this corrupt and unaccountable government is one man who runs the show like the Politburo was never dissolved, a former Chekist himself: Vladimir Putin.

Even with the massive fraud associated with the latest elections, Putin remains popular in Russia. It's said that the only thing American voters will not forgive is a leader who looks bad on television. In Russia, the citizens will forgive anything except weakness. Yeltsin and Putin represent the extremes of that aphorism: Yeltsin having the best intentions but failing, and Putin... well, he certainly seems to be succeeding.

How have these changes affected GRU-SV8?

MISPLACED PITY

Part of the mood of GRU-SV8 was built on finding allies among old enemies. Ruined as they were by the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire, you can still respect the men and women of GRU-SV8 as they battle the Mythos despite the fact that there's no heat in their apartments and they haven't been paid for two months. American Delta Green agents who cut their teeth during the Cold War might find common cause with their country's oldest enemy against an even older one. GRU-SV8 was meant to evoke both respect and pity from Investigators who encountered their opposite numbers from behind the Iron Curtain.

But pity from foreigners is not something Russians seek. Their songs and folklore may be filled with misery and hardship, but they do not want your pity. Russians tell you their woes so you will know what hasn't killed them yet.

If there ever was a chance that former rivals could find common cause together in the late 1990s, what are the chances of that in the 21st century? Based on the way Russia comports itself these days, I'd say the chances

for cooperation are pretty slim. Today Russian foreign policy seems built around regaining its lost empire or throwing its weight around like it's already done so. Though Russia has not regained anything near the power held by the Soviet Union, and perhaps cannot make its will felt outside the boundaries of its former empire, it can be obstructive. Its power comes from the ability to say "nyet," frustrating American attempts to gain any traction in the U.N. for dealing with things like Iran's nuclear weapons program or Syria's bloody protracted civil war. It's not much, but they revel in it.

Islamic terrorism seems to be the one area where there's a fair amount of cooperation between Russia and the United States. Both nations are primary targets for religiously-fueled Islamic terrorists. But even when the Russians cooperate on Islamic terrorism, it's only out of pragmatism. After all, the Russian security services weren't interested in the Boston Marathon bombers just because they were worried about an attack on America. Even where interests overlap, the Russians always look to their interests first. And getting their assistance, even in matters where they might benefit, always seems to come at a price.

And as Russia has changed, so has the GRU itself. Once a monolithic survivor of the breakup of both the Soviet Union and the KGB, the GRU has been forced to change in recent years. Between 2008 and 2010, Russia began a series of military reforms. One of the most important was removal of the Russian Spetsnaz, or Special Forces, from the GRU's direct control. Spetsnaz units are now assigned to the chain of command of the Army theater commanders, so that

the generals can deploy them without having to go through the GRU's chain of command. This makes a great deal of operational sense, but it signifies a loss of bureaucratic, operational and budgetary turf.

In the midst of these reforms the leadership of the GRU changed for the first time since the SV-8 material was published in *Delta Green: Countdown*. From 1997 until 2009 General Valentin Vladimirovich Korabelnikov, a career GRU officer, ran the GRU. Korabelnikov

managed to deliver a number of successes to the Putin regime, including the 2nd Chechen War, the Georgian War and the assassinations of many Chechen rebel leaders. After leading the GRU for 12 years, he was forced out in 2009 due to his resistance to the reforms pushed by then Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov. Those historical changes to the real-life GRU make a good backdrop for changes to the fictional GRU SV-8.

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POWER AND MONEY

In my very first Directive from A-Cell (available at Delta-Green.com), I suggested that when creating a new investigative group for your Delta Green campaign you needed to define its scope, mission, history and theme. Scope defines the agency's budget, manpower, jurisdiction, official sanction and chain of command. Mission defines how the agency will come into contact with the DG universe, how it will relate to the world of the Cthulhu Mythos. History defines how it came into being and how its scope and mission changed since it was founded. Theme defines what concepts you hope to represent through this fictional group. Of all of these, defining the theme is most important because once the theme is understood the other factors will be easier to define. The same tools should be applied to updating an old adversary or ally.

Thematically, any update of GRU-SV8 should mirror the themes evident in Russia's ascendant power and political corruption. Today's Russia runs on the personal relationships of the powerful. Everyone wants to be part of that power elite and plenty are willing to do anything to advance their station. That may have a lot to do with how the Kremlin has actually gotten wind of the existence of GRU-SV8. Back in 1999, GRU-SV8 was so bureaucratically invisible it was only funded at 1976 levels. They operated as the Foreign Space Object Evaluation Unit, the Soviet's version of MJ-12—only with no budget, facilities, personnel or very much alien technology to examine. No one outside GRU-SV8 had any idea about the cache of dangerous and potent Mythos tomes

locked away in their vaults. The 1999 leadership of GRU-SV8 might have been comfortable with that situation, but they, just like real-life General Korabelnikov, won't be around forever. Rather than the Kremlin sniffing out GRU-SV8, it's more likely that someone inside the organization made the Kremlin's leadership aware of the potential locked away inside Special Department 8's vaults.

But why? Why would someone deliberately bring the existence of the Cthulhu Mythos to the attention of the Kremlin? What advantage is there in it? Well, if they can show the efficacy of hyper-geometrical technology and medieval metaphysics, demonstrating tactical and strategic advantages that can be gained through their study and application, then the Kremlin is going to get a basket the size of Siberia, fill it with hard currency and pour it all over GRU SV-8. That kind of money is going to be a motive with a universal adapter. Once upon a time we were worried about unemployed Soviet-era experts in nuclear, chemical and biological weapons getting work with any dangerous and irresponsible tin-pot dictatorship who can pay them a living wage. Now, with Russia's economy booming, maybe the dangerous regime that's going to hire GRU SV-8's experts will be the one in the Kremlin.

THE NEW REGIME


The next question is who in GRU SV-8 would be so reckless and arrogant as to think that they could weaponize hyper-geometry into an instrument of state power? Most of the old guard would either be dead, transferred, or forced

out by 2009-2010. General Alexander Zimyanin, the leader of GRU SV-8 in 1999, would have been 79 by the time of the historic shakeup of the GRU. SV-8's bureaucratic invisibility may have shielded him from mandatory retirement until the Kremlin took notice of the agency. Since it seems extremely unlikely that he would support any use of the forbidden knowledge in the vaults, I imagine he'd be forced out in 2009 and probably dead by now. No doubt he left behind a secret memoir in an attempt to warn those who would listen.

Major Ekaterina Pokrovsky, GRU SV-8's archivist, would be 67 years old in 2013. If she was willing to go along with the change in mission she might still have a job, but given her history it seems doubtful that she'd adapt to the new conditions. Pensioned off but kept under surveillance by the FSB, Pokrovsky would be hell of a catch if Delta Green could arrange her defection.

Neil and Francis Cooper, GRU SV-8's last assets in North America, would likely be dead or in nursing homes by 2013 at 88 and 87 years old. Retired GRU major-general and international arms merchant Anatoli Semenovitch Ogarkov would be an octogenarian by the 2010s. At that age he'd either be dead, incarcerated or retired from any business that the Kremlin, the GRU or SV-8 might find useful. Likely he died from the kind of excesses that ill-gotten fortunes provide. Or, at least, that would be the official story.

Far slyer is SV-8 stringer and freelance assassin Yuri Nikolevich Krylov. Following his mission to track down Reinhard Galt and the remnants of the Karotechia, his criminal and military background would recommend



him for a place in Ogarkov's armaments empire. But just because the Karotechia is old history in 2013 doesn't mean that Krylov will live see his 50th birthday. Life expectancy for an ex-Spetsnaz assassin doing piecework for the Russian Mafia is pretty short. Furthermore, without orders (and a hefty paycheck), he doesn't have the initiative or temperament to pursue anything related to the Mythos. He'd be happy to retire to some condo in Dubai or Monaco.

Colonel Viktor Adamovich Sterlikov would only be 52 in 2013, and may even have found his way up to the rank of general. He would, however, no longer be in the GRU following the 2009 transfer of the GRU's Spetsnaz assets to the control of the army. Isolated by new duties, with a new chain of command, and no access to SV-8's new agenda, the only hints Sterlikov might get about what's going would be when old SV-8 comrades want access to Sterlikov's registry of "retired" Spetsnaz operators. I doubt he'd accept that tolerating the obscenities against which he fought for decades is simply the price of Russia's return to greatness, but what are his options?

When last we left Colonel Gennadi Grigorevich Silkin, he was head of SV-8's only overt department, the Foreign Space Object Evaluation Unit. He was frustrated and bitter, toiling away in obscurity, and believed his superiors were deliberately suppressing his work. He's just the sort of man who might bring the Foreign Space Object Evaluation Unit to the attention of the Kremlin in an attempt to gain the recognition he believed he deserved. Of course, it would be brutally ironic if having

done so he was once again ignored as someone else stole the spotlight.


And who better to steal Col. Silkin's thunder than Captain Vladimir Arbatov, Major Pokrovsky's assistant archivist? The guy mentioned only once in the book, who didn't even get any stats, should clearly be the reckless, arrogant usurper of SV-8's mission. An overworked and under-appreciated minion emerging at the top of heap because he's willing to dare what his superiors will not—that idea does have appeal. That personal recklessness mirrors the recklessness of the Russian state these days. As an undefined quantity, Captain Arbatov can be shaped into exactly what's needed to change GRU SV-8 into something like what Stalin's Smersh was on its way to becoming decades ago: another Karotechia.

FRIENDS LIKE THESE

Undoubtedly promoted well beyond the rank of captain, Vladimir Arbatov promises his masters in the Kremlin miracles that will tilt the balance of global power back to Russia. But the reality is that he doesn't know what he's doing. Trying to weaponize the contents of SV-8's vault of tomes and artifacts is about as safe as groping blindly in a closet full of nitroglycerine. Much like M-EPIC, and certain modern elements of what used to be Majestic-12, GRU SV-8 may end up serving as an example for Delta Green. It can demonstrate that Mythos magic is a power that uses you even more than you use it. Very few seekers of forbidden knowledge set out to become slaves of the Outer Gods; not even the mad sorcerers of the Karotechia wanted that. All they

wanted was to win the war and maybe prove the superiority of the Aryan race. Everyone knows where they ended up. That lesson may be lost on Arbatov and his new cronies.

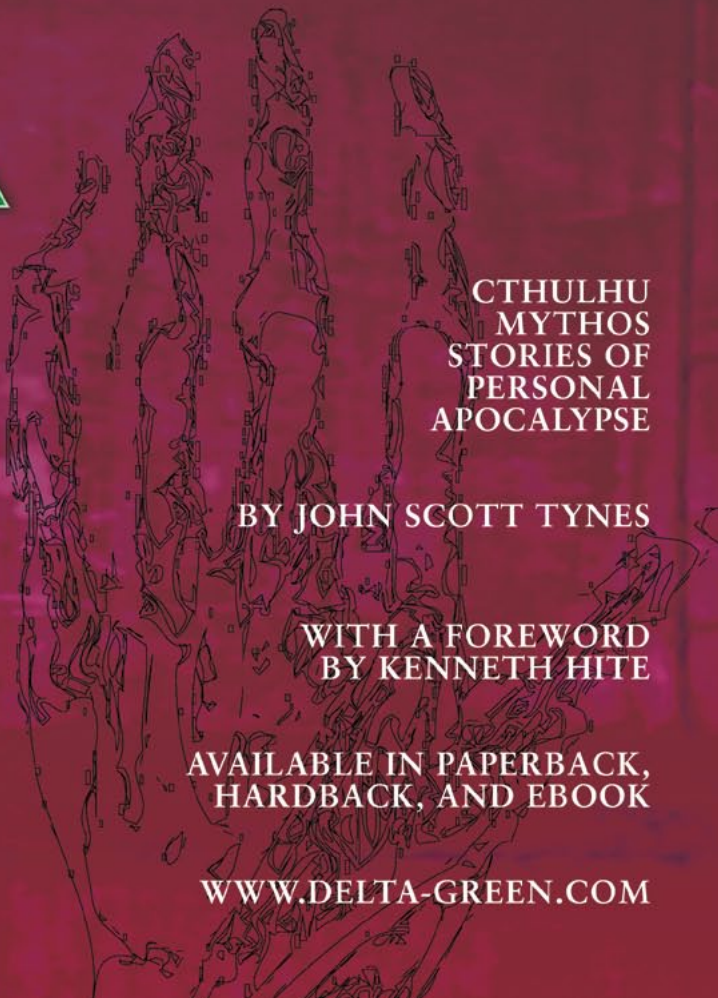
At first, GRU SV-8 will resurface better equipped and staffed than ever before. Their treasure trove of occult intelligence will be a resource that Delta Green might still want to access. After all, if Delta Green wants to get at those Nestorian Cthugha cultists in Afghanistan, they may have to cut a deal with SV-8 to make it happen. But soon, Delta Green agents will realize that the Russians aren't using their usual scorched-earth tactics. Sorcerers are captured for interrogation rather than liquidated on the spot. Secret libraries are being boxed up and shipped back to Moscow, rather than burned. Perhaps extra-planar entities have been contained, rather than dismissed. How long before such entities are entreated rather than banished? Delta Green may find itself becoming just another asset to be used and tapped for information and resources in the new regime's thirsty quest for power.

In this decade, GRU SV-8 will transform from being the former adversaries with whom we could find common cause to the allies we can never trust again. 



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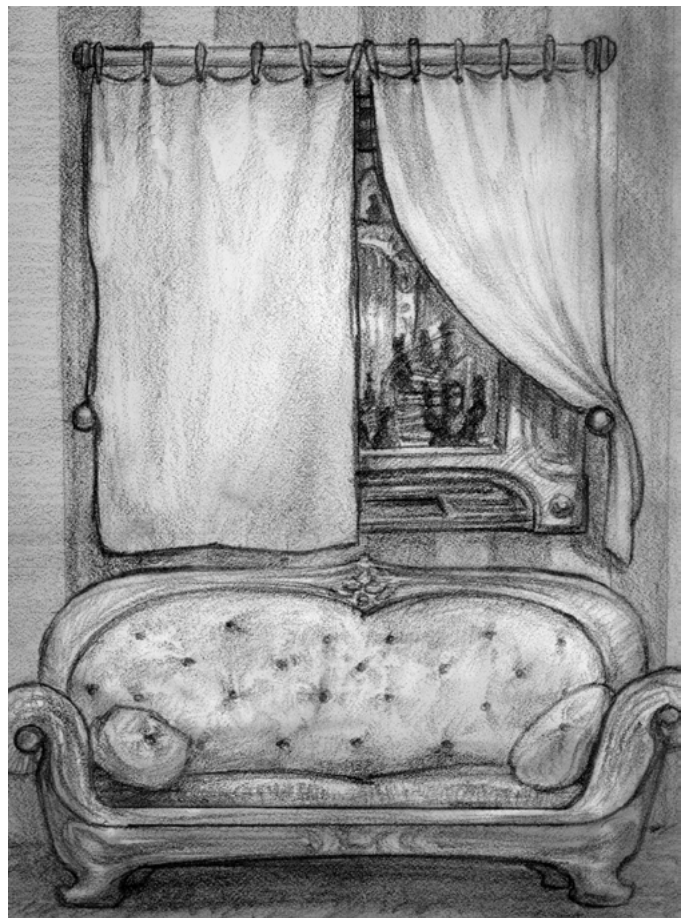
A PAINTING THAT COLLECTS PEOPLE

BY BEN RIGGS

The painting is large, but not so large a single person cannot carry it. It depicts a riotous ball. Carved mahogany columns and packed balconies frame a dance floor that swings with revelers in helter-skelter outfits. Most would have been in vogue at the turn of the 20th century, but a canny observer notices that some men wear suits that would not look out of place on politicians currently in office, and some women wear the most fashion-forward of dresses. The painting was composed in in 1919. The painter, a minor figure on the Russian art scene, appears in the painting's background. She stands on a balcony, arms and legs crossed to hide her nakedness. Her eyes are thick with fear and she appears about to weep. She is menaced by figures wearing obscene masks. The depiction is vivid. Her fear is real and she is under eternal threat.

The Last Self-Portrait of Larissa Dolokhov is a sentient painting that collects and experiments on people in order to better understand our space-time.

Larissa Dolokhov was a hedonistic child of Russian nobility. She rejected the aristocratic life for all the sex, dissolution, and alcohol she could acquire on her intelligence, good looks, and the 10,000 rubles a year her father provided to keep her out of the gutter. The 1917 revolution sent Dolokhov to exile in England, where she became engaged to the Baron Balivanich. In the moldering tomes of the baron's ancestral library she found a stash of occult texts; one of the baron's forefathers fancied himself a wizard. The sigils he used in his rituals were fascinating, and strangely modern considering their antiquity. Dolokhov found herself so intrigued that she incorporated the sigils into her latest work, *Last Soiree in Petersburg*.



HANSEN

Dolokhov put the sigils in a circle within a square, the preferred shape of a gate. She hid them on the costumes of the revelers and inscribed them as graffiti on the walls or floor and the ballroom. The night she finished the painting she disappeared.

The sigils had led an incorporeal alien sentience to the painting from beyond our space-time. It nested within it. The newly aware painting, fascinated by the woman who brought it into our world, folded her into itself that it might examine her further.

Disturbed by the painting after his fiancée's disappearance, the baron sold it. His agent titled it *The Last Self-Portrait of Larissa Dolokhov*. Since then, the painting has passed from collector to collector, often under mysterious circumstances. One owner claimed it was a window to Hell. Another said it ate his son. In a strange coincidence, a boy in the painting strongly resembles the missing child. Men dressed as ravens are forcing him to bob for apples.

fascinating, stares at it intently, and then suddenly seems to be falling as if from a great height—and finds himself or herself in the painting.

The Investigator finds is at the riotous ball. He or she may be asked to help take part in a murder, and if the Investigator refuses then he or she becomes the target. Seductive figures speaking incomprehensible languages try to lure the Investigator into isolated rooms. A man accuses the Investigator of lifting his pocket watch and demands its return. A desperate woman begs to meet the Investigator in the privacy of the balcony to impart information of extreme necessity to his or her safety, but the woman is never seen again. Dolokhov screams, naked, chased by perilous figures, and begs the Investigator for help so that she can draw in peace.

At some point the Investigator is dragged into a private chamber and forced to undergo a vivisection while a small crowd watches, fascinated. The Investigator survives and heals immediately. Sanity loss: 1D6/1D10.



In a strange coincidence, a boy in the painting strongly resembles the missing child. Men dressed as ravens are forcing him to bob for apples.



The painting is absorbing. Hundreds of detailed figures crowd the work. The more one looks at it, the more there is to see. Investigators versed in the art world notice figures in the painting that look strikingly like previous owners of the painting. That realization costs 1D3/1D6 SAN.

Stranger yet, the figures appear to change. What was in the morning a tangle of dancers spinning may by night be a nest of serpents. An Art roll reveals that Dolokhov, a master of shape and color, included innumerable optical illusions in the painting so that depending on the light, figures in the painting appear to change. If photographs of the painting are compared to the painting itself, however, the painting will be shown to have actually changed over time. (Sanity loss: 0/1.) A Spot Hidden roll reveals the mysterious sigils hidden in the painting by Dolokhov. A Cthulhu Mythos roll reveals that they open a gate to another reality. (Sanity loss: 1/1D4.)

The painting is not a threat to casual observers unless it takes a particular interest in one. It may well do so with the Investigators. After an Investigator examines the painting for a month—and thus allowing it to examine him or her in return—the painting may attempt to consume the Investigator. This happens when the Investigator is alone with the painting. The victim must roll POW against a resistance of 12. If the roll fails, the Investigator finds the painting unusually

Afterward the Investigator is allowed back into the ball.

The painting will never allow its victims to die because that would mean a loss of test subjects. The torment is immortal. Even a gunshot to the head would heal in a day.

The only escape is through a dark, high-hedged labyrinth barely visible through the windows. An Investigator who enters the labyrinth hears something terrible howling inside it, but always ends up back where he or she started—unless the Investigator has a map. Unfortunately, the only map exists in the mind of Larissa Dolokhov. An Investigator who aids her so that she can work unabated discovers that she draws a picture of the labyrinth which reveals a way through the maze. Larissa refuses to go with them. Something about the real world outside terrifies her even more than eternal torment in her own painting. At the heart of the labyrinth, perhaps the Investigator finds that the howling is Larissa herself, or something that stole the form of Larissa. As soon as the Investigator exits the labyrinth, he or she is back in the same room where the painting currently hangs.

Destroying the painting kills everyone inside it, but not the alien sentience itself. It is too intrigued by our reality to leave now. It will soon nest in another form of media, be it a novel, a DVD, a cassette tape—or the next letter the Investigator writes to a friend across the globe. ☸

A SEASON IN CARCOSA

PUBLISHED BY MISKATONIC RIVER PRESS

EDITED BY JOSEPH S. PULVER, SR.

REVIEWED BY BRIAN M. SAMMONS

If you don't know Robert W. Chambers, stop right now and go read up. *A Season in Carcosa* is a loving homage to his dark, eerie, surreal world, and it would do you good to know the landscape before spending a season in the haunted city. If you find that Chambers just isn't your cup of tea, well, then I pity you—and advise you that *A Season in Carcosa* will do nothing to change your opinion. However, if you're already well acquainted with the tawny monarch—if you give a twitchy grin and a nod when someone should ask, “Have you seen the Yellow Sign?”—then this is the book for you.

Editor Joseph S. Pulver, Sr., is well known for his love of Robert W. Chambers and his own yellowish prose. Here you will find 21 dark and disturbing tenants of the cursed and far-off city of Carcosa. Some of these citizens have long tales to tell and others only speak in poetic prose. All have something worthwhile to say.

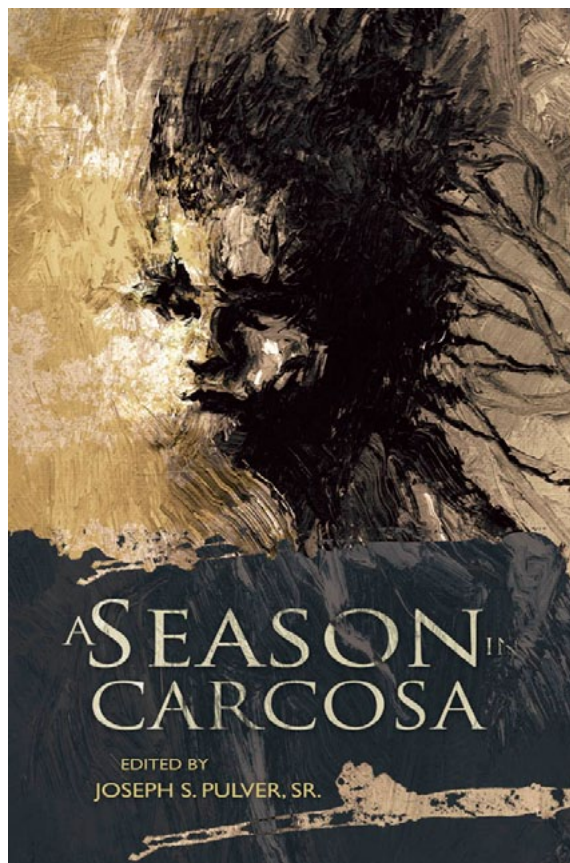
None of the stories here fall completely flat, which is a rare and refreshing thing in an anthology. But some of them feel sort of samey, almost as if the same central theme were utilized too often. That doesn't mean that those stories weren't good, only that some feel like you've just read them only moments before. A bit more variety would have made this a truly stellar book. Also, one or two of the authors presented here try to ape Chamber's unique voice a bit too closely.

Still those are relatively mild criticisms for an otherwise grand collection. I won't detail all 21 stories, but I will point out those that soared higher than the rest for me on their tattered wings.

First and foremost is “Wishing Well” by Cody Goodfellow. When talking about Mr. Goodfellow's work I always feel a bit like Will Rodgers insofar that I've never met a story of his that I didn't like. This one is a serious contender for my coveted “Best of the Book” award. I won't say that it alone is worth the cover price, as there is a bunch of great stuff here, but damn is it a good one.

Goodfellow has stiff competition for that award from Gemma Files' “Slick Black Bones and Soft Black Stars.” I liked the story that it told and the very way in which it was written.

Simon Strantzas perhaps best evokes Chamber's style with his more traditional King in Yellow story, “Beyond the Banks of the River Seine.” I say it's traditional, but that's a far cry from



pastiche; and when I say style, I do not mean trying to copy the author's voice. That's a huge distinction.

Don Webb's “Movie Night at Phil's” is far from traditional but it is wonderful. It's about a Roger Corman-directed movie adaptation of *The King in Yellow* and that idea alone put a smile on my face. When I had finished reading, the smile was still there.

In “it sees me when I'm not looking,” Gary McMahon combines Chambers' ideas with a gritty noir flavor for fantastic results.

“D. T.” by Laird Barron shows why that author is getting so much good press over the last few years. It is a unique tale concerning a writer and his doppelganger. I loved it.

There are plenty of amber gems to be mined from this book, but I'll leave their discovery to you. After all, that's half the fun. The other half is dread. *A Season in Carcosa* delivers ample supplies of both. For fans of the *King in Yellow*, this book is a must-have. For everyone else, brush up on your Chambers 101—and then if you want to take a graduate class on all things yellow, give this book a spin. Seven phobias.

MISKATONIC, PART 1: THE INHUMAN STAIN

PUBLISHED BY JACKSLAWED
REVIEWED BY BRIAN M. SAMMONS

Miskatonic is an old-school point-and-click adventure videogame, the kind made famous by LucasArts and Sierra. This type of game has made a comeback over the last few years thanks to the emerging downloadable game market, which allows small companies to make inexpensive games and sell them directly to the fans. This is nothing but a good thing in my opinion. So grab your books, pencils, and Elder Signs. We've got a late-night class of Medieval Metaphysics 101.

In the first (and only, it turns out) episode of *Miskatonic*, called "The Inhuman Stain," you play as Aurinda, a young new professor at the creepy titular university. Aurinda gets wrapped up in a mystery involving strange animal attacks in the nearby woods that leave limbless corpses, her predecessor's madness and incarceration in the nearby asylum, diaries full of mystical ravings, creepy artifacts, and more trappings that would be right at home in a Lovecraft tale or a game of *Call of Cthulhu*.

That said, the game isn't scary in the least. It's very hard for videogames to properly evoke fear; most of the time the best they can do is the occasional jump-scare. I can only imagine that has to go double for point-and-click adventures. But what the game lacks in horror it more than makes up for with humor. Not "whack you upside the head" slapstick, or dirty locker-room humor, but subtle, sly, and clever references and nods that fans of Lovecraft and of classic videogames will both enjoy. If you're a fan of both, this game is sure to hit your funny bone again and again.

The gameplay is typical point-and-click fare. You move Aurinda over largely static but good-looking backgrounds, using your mouse's cursor to look for hidden hotspots. Once you find such an item, person, or area you can examine it, try to talk to it, or sometimes pick it up and take it with you. Sometimes you can use an item in some obscure, sometimes very random way to further your game. Case in point, you find a garden trowel and pick it up. Later you come across a freshly tarred road, so you try all your items on the tar until you find you can get some of it onto your trowel. Later



on you have to cross a lake, but the only boat around has a hole in it. Using the garden trowel with the tar fixes the hole in the boat and off you go. That is probably the most straightforward puzzle, so if thinking outside the box is not your strong point, you should probably avoid this game. The puzzles here can get fiendishly clever.

Perhaps the only drawback is the sometimes ridiculously hard-to-find hotspots. Some are very tiny and can be found only by slowly dragging the mouse cursor over the entire screen. That's just tedious. By all means, keep the clever writing and the devious puzzles, but let the players find the things they need to find in order to progress the story without having to closely inspect every pixel on the screen.

Otherwise, *Miskatonic* is an old-school joy filled with funny and offbeat characters, well-written dialog and jokes, nods to various Lovecraft stories, and some dastardly puzzles. It has everything a good point-and-click adventure should have.

The developer has, sadly, abandoned developing the line further, but you can download it free for Windows computers at www.miskatonicgame.com. Seven phobias.

HOUSE OF BLACK WINGS

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY DAVID SCHMIDT

REVIEWED BY BRIAN M. SAMMONS

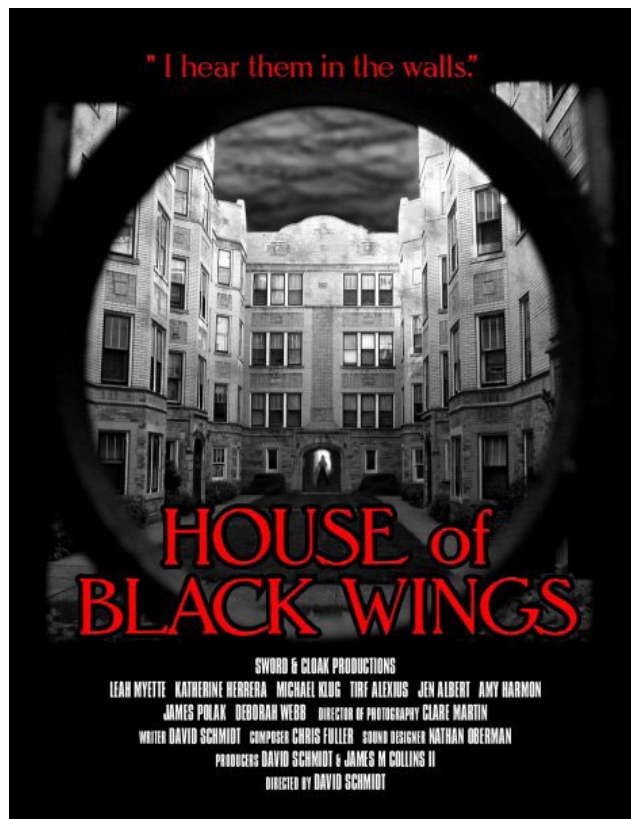
The House of Black Wings might have slipped under your radar; I know it almost did mine. And that's a shame. Independent, well-made horror movies, especially those featuring cosmic horror that would be at home in any Lovecraft story, should not be allowed to go unwatched.

Those that rightfully say that there are no good female characters in Lovecraft's stories can rejoice, for our protagonists here are Kate and Robyn, young artists. Kate is the lead singer of a punk band who recently suffered a shocking tragedy that sent her spinning. Desperate to find a safe place to land where she can sort her life out, she turns to her old friend, Robyn, who has a passion for making dollhouse-like dioramas as works of art. Robyn lets Kate crash at her apartment in a building with the somewhat foreboding name of Blackwood. Hmm, people with sensitive, artistic sensibilities, suffering from past tragedies and living in a creepy location? I can all but see HPL nodding with approval.

Kate starts picking up weird vibes about one of the building's previous tenants, a lonely musician with a past eerily similar to her own, who might not have come to the best of all endings. Dreams turn into nightmares which become waking visions and hallucinations—or do they? Could the ghostly images Kate keeps seeing be real? What about the skittering sounds of rats in the walls? If your Lovecraft alarm starts going off at the sound of that, don't worry; that's not the only thing that will trip it.

Naturally Kate starts to think that she's going a bit bonkers. But that doesn't even begin to explain the strange events her friend Robyn is now witnessing, or her obsessive focus on her work, which has taken a disturbing twist. And did I mention their odd writer neighbor, who seems to be losing more and more of his marbles as his "deadline" draws closer? All the weirdness is, more often than not, genuinely effective and creepy.

Kate starts to investigate matters like any good *Call of Cthulhu* player. An old journal is discovered, some arcane words are found painted on a wall underneath the wallpaper, and other clues are discovered and examined. I can practically hear the dice rolling now. He investigations bear fruit that helps explain both the



strange happenings and the overall mystery. Unfortunately not all questions are answered, and that includes the ones about the titular black wings. I'm all for keeping some parts of a mystery mysterious, but some things do need at least a little explanation. When you name your film after a specific thing, you're going to have to back that up with something a little more substantial than what we're given here.

But that's my only gripe. *The House of Black Wings* is an enjoyable film, and surprisingly well made when you consider how terrible many low-budget horror films turn out. The unknown actors play their parts well. The story is moody and atmospheric, if a tad bit slow at times; the characters are well developed and the direction is more than competent. Special effects are used sparingly, but when they show up they are well done.

Mostly importantly, *The House of Black Wings* succeeds at melding psychological horror, ghostly hauntings, and cosmic dread with enough human drama to make the audience care about characters. It's Lovecraftian without namedropping Lovecraft's well-known Great Old Ones, dreaded tomes and shunned locations. Writer-director David Schmidt obviously gets what makes the world of HPL so compelling. Seven phobias.



YELLOW DAWN: THE AGE OF HASTUR (EDITION 2.5)

DAVID J. RODGER


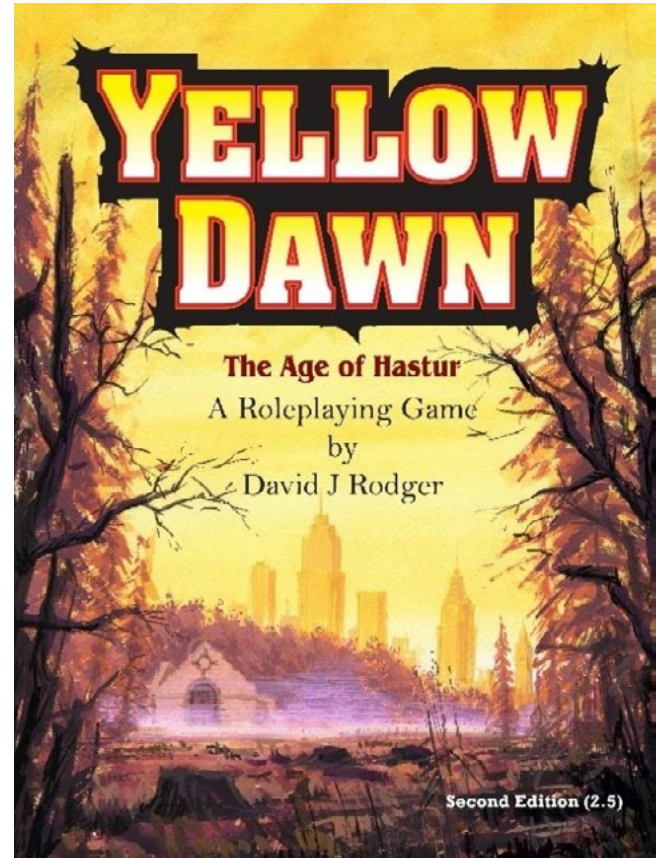
REVIEWED BY BOBBY DERIE

In his house at Bristol, David J. Rodger waits dreaming for you to discover *Yellow Dawn: The Age of Hastur*, his homebrewed RPG and the setting for his novels *Dog Eat Dog* and *The Black Lake*. *Yellow Dawn* has been flitting about the edges of Cthulhu Mythos roleplaying community's consciousness ever since its first edition was released in 2006, but it never seemed to find a lot of exposure. A handful of scenarios and two major revisions later, *Yellow Dawn* edition 2.5 still lurks in moderate obscurity.


The setting is a genre collision. In a cyberpunk future the *Yellow Dawn* rises, a global pandemic of catastrophic proportions that pushes society to the breaking point. Following on its heels a Mythos-fueled zombie outbreak tips the scales. Yet all is not lost. Ten years on, humanity clings to tenuous survival in dozens of small Living Cities built outside the zombie-infested urban cores, as well as in orbital habitats where the bulk of mankind's technology and knowledge is retained, served by a clone slave-caste of genetically modified Carbons. Hastur has been partially but irreversibly embedded in this reality, which has begun to warp under its presence. Some survived the plague only to change into new forms; the occult experiences a resurgence as humanity's dormant senses begin to awaken to strange energies; and in deep space, arterial wormholes bring humanity into contact with alien intelligences.

The basic system is a unique blend of familiar elements from old-school RPGs, easy to pick up for anyone familiar with *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, *Call of Cthulhu*, or *Cyberpunk*. Particularly notable are extensive rules on travel, survival, scavenging, building and repairing, the occult and Mythos magic, cyberware, bioware, and hacking, all of which can be lifted and converted to *Call of Cthulhu* with minimal effort. Even if the setting isn't a Keeper's cup of tea, *Yellow Dawn* is a gold mine of material to port into your home campaign. Some Keepers might even toss the setting entirely and use the system to run their own *Cthulhupunk* or Mythos-flavored *Fallout* campaigns.

Available at Lulu.com, *Yellow Dawn: The Age of Hastur* is solid in terms of print quality, though presentation is a bit lacking. David J. Rodger is a one-man shop and does all the writing, proofing, editing, and layout himself, so the interior is sparingly decorated and the organization idiosyncratic. Six phobias.



Ten years on, humanity clings to tenuous survival in dozens of small Living Cities built outside the zombie-infested urban cores....



DEADBEATS

PUBLISHED BY SELFMADEHERO

WRITTEN BY CHAD FIFER AND CHRIS LACKEY

ILLUSTRATED BY I.N.J. CULBARD

REVIEWED BY CHASE W. BECK

Deadbeats is a graphic novel written by Chad Fifer and Chris Lackey of the H.P. Lovecraft Literary Podcast and illustrated by I.N.J. Culbard, a comic artist known for frequently adapting the work of Lovecraft. In issue 21 of *The Unspeakable Oath*, I reviewed his terrific adaptation of Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of Madness."

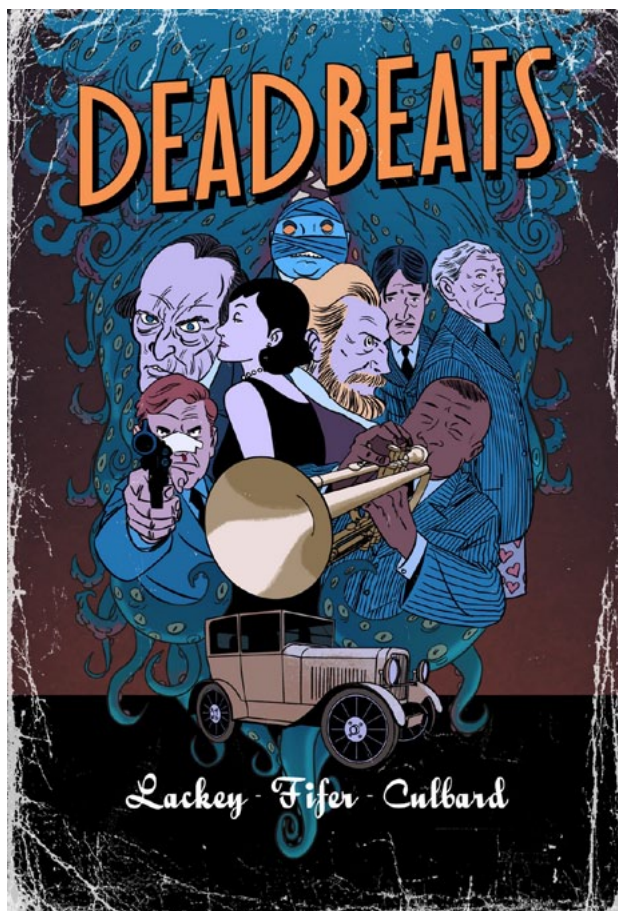
Deadbeats revolves around three 1920s Chicago musicians who flee the city to avoid a mobster. They pick up a gig in Riverside, a small town in the middle of nowhere. It's a funeral of sorts, but nothing is as expected or as it seems. Before long, events are barreling out of control as the guys are left just trying to escape Riverside with their lives and, er, their trousers.

I love the blend of humor and intelligence that Fifer and Lackey bring to every episode of their podcast. On the surface, the book would seem to be a perfect pairing of such Lovecraft fans, coming together to create an homage that is part tribute and and part satire. But I found much of that lacking in *Deadbeats*.

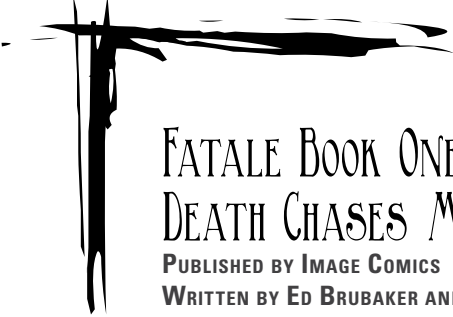
For some time after finishing the story, I wasn't immediately certain what about the story had left me unimpressed. The fault does not rest upon Culbard's head. He renders the scenes to near perfection, each artfully depicted with a delicious blend of humor and terror. There were however a few times where the art left me lost as to what was happening; whether this was the fault of Culbard's artwork or Fifer and Lackey's storytelling is difficult to tell.

The story itself is entertaining. It feels much like a fun *Call of Cthulhu* scenario. Like some scenarios, though, the terror feels tongue-in-cheek, as if there were no real danger to the main characters. It doesn't inspire that cosmic horror which runs through Lovecraft's own work. It has all of the hallmarks of a great Lovecraft tale, all of the requisite elements, but the heart, the spirit of Lovecraft's work is entirely absent. It's difficult enough to invoke terror in a graphic novel. In my opinion comedy is even harder. This book attempts both and delivers neither.

I wanted to love *Deadbeats* as I loved Culbard's adaptation of "At the Mountains of Madness" and Fifer's and Lackey's podcast. It gets six phobias and a hearty encouragement to keep trying.



It feels much like a fun 'Call of Cthulhu' scenario. Like some scenarios, though, the terror feels tongue-in-cheek.



FATALE BOOK ONE: DEATH CHASES ME

PUBLISHED BY IMAGE COMICS

WRITTEN BY ED BRUBAKER AND ILLUSTRATED BY SEAN PHILLIPS

REVIEWED BY MATTHEW POOK

In any good horror story, an inheritance damns you. Nicholas Lash is damned upon inheriting the estate of his late godfather, the pulp detective novelist Dominic Haines. It comes in halves. One is an unpublished manuscript that all-too-neat men are prepared to kill for. The other is Jo, a woman whose allure might be enough to save Lash, but not before embracing him in a luridly dark and dread mystery to which the manuscript might just have the answers.

This is the setup for *Fatale*, a comic book series from the creators of the highly-regarded *Criminal*, *Incognito*, and *Sleeper* series. It combines classic hardboiled fiction and Lovecraftian horror, the first six issues being collected in *Fatale Book One: Death Chases Me*. Unnaturally, this is a perfect fit, the hardboiled crime genre redolent with shadows from which the horror steps. These shadows swirl about Jo as the story flashes back to Haines' first encounter and then enthrallment with her just as Lash becomes enthralled in the present. Jo is in transition, moving on from one "victim" to the next. As we see Haines falling for her, we also follow Booker, a San Francisco police detective both worn out by and desperate for her, attempting find his own way to redemption. If we see both Lash and his godfather fall for Josephine's charms at the beginning of their relationships with her, then Booker is at the end. As to what or who Josephine is, *Death Chases Me* gives hints.

Death Chases Me is pleasingly Lovecraftian in the sense of detachment and helplessness that its characters come to feel as their orbit around Josephine oscillates; and in, if not her questionable parentage, then at least in her uncertain origins. The story's more traditional horror delivers some entertaining shocks, though the

ED BRUBAKER SEAN PHILLIPS



author never overflails the tentacles, letting its horror keep a deceivingly human face. The Mythos entities here are prepared to bargain with mankind, suggesting at an intelligent, aware identity in control here—but then no actual Mythos creature is named, so the reader is left to guess.

Sadly lacking the informative essays of the individual comics, *Death Chases Me* is rife with vibrant action portrayed through deep colours that alternately set the mood and shock the eye. On the strength of this first collection, it almost does not matter if its final denouement—whenever that comes—lives up to the journey. Taking that journey in the company of our mystery femme *Fatale*, Josephine, is by itself a satisfying and salacious six gynophobias. ☞

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

BEASTS

BY DANIEL HARMS

When I turned, two popsicles in my hand, I couldn't see her sunflower print dress. I looked up and down the length of the curved green railing. On one side, toddlers running from harried soccer moms with strollers; on the other, a moat, and tigers pacing restlessly.

I called her name once, and again. The ice cream girl hadn't seen her, and neither had the strangers I asked nearby. I could feel my stomach twist. I ran back and forth between the exhibits. I even leaned most of the way over the railing to look into the tiger moat. Nothing but dry concrete.

When her two teeth had come out, I promised her she could visit the zoo. The teeth sat in a little plastic cup at home, safe. She was never safe. I should have remembered.

The agency had told me to be careful with her. She had spent the first four years of her life with the Divine Collective. Everyone saw the images: police surrounding a courthouse, the high-speed chase viewed by helicopter, teargas canisters hurtling over the walls of the compound, bare warehouse walls covered in blood and semen, the wild-haired man in an orange jumpsuit against oak paneled walls. I lived a different story: washing burn scars on the delicate flesh of a child's back in the tub, nightly screams that turned into sobs in my arms, constant reminders that a caressing hand would not become a fist. She could not speak, and the psychiatrists said she never would.

They were still out there. Oh, the wizened pervert who led them was in for two consecutive life sentences, but the others had not forgotten. They scrabbled on the edge of

society, awaiting the collapse of civilization, still working to "improve" humanity. She was theirs. They wanted her back.

Now they had her.

Two security officers in white shirts stood in front of me. Someone must have called them. One tried to reassure me, asking for a description. I wanted to speak, but I caught the words. They didn't know what these maniacs were capable of. It was a hard lesson for me to learn, and it took years. These morons didn't even have guns.

My stomach was sick with unspoken words. The officers glanced at each other. One asked if I was all right. My hand was cold—the popsicles had half-melted off the sticks. I shook my head.

A gunshot, and a screech like a tea kettle. Visitors streamed out of a low, dark building, shoving each other aside. One little boy lost his father's hand. The man ran; the boy lay in the grass, crying. The officers tried to channel the crowd while they called for backup. I swallowed and ran inside.

Blackness punctured with blocks of light. Captured inside the glow, creatures slithered, leapt, and scuttled. Ahead in the dark, I heard a scream, and the ripping of flesh. I ran toward it.

Red rain on sunflowers. Blood flying. A chunk of viscera struck my shirt and I fell over in shock on top of the gun. The barrel burned my thigh.

With one dainty hand, she brushed the remnants of the man's windpipe off her lips. She smiled, the gap in the blood-stained enamel blacker than night.

"Daddy?"

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