

A KING IS BORNE

CALL OF
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A MODERN CALL OF
CTHULHU ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION

A King is Borne is a modern *Call of Cthulhu* 7th Edition scenario, set in Arkham Massachusetts in the December of 2014. The scenario has the investigators looking into the causes of a violent attack and death at an art gallery, all while uncovering a series of interconnected conspiracies. It's an open-ended investigation that does not progress along a set path once the narrative events have been set in motion. Investigators are encouraged to roleplay heavily, getting to know the suspects in the investigation, as well as to take the time to untangle the conspiracy. This scenario has many characters, so a slow, thoughtful pace is likely the best approach. Ideally suited for two to four investigators, this scenario can be moved around really any point after the 2008 housing crisis; more important is the timeline of days, leading up to Christmas.

Additionally, running this scenario may require using a map of Arkham, Massachusetts, which is not included in this scenario. However, the placement of different locations will be described, and you can find the corresponding map of Arkham either on page 428 of the *Keeper's Rulebook* or available for download on Chaosium's website.

KEEPER'S INFORMATION

The scenario begins with an exhibition and auction at the Summers Gallery, a fixture in the local art community. Local artist Benjamin Crossley is assaulted by a man named Danny Smith, seemingly without cause; in reality, Danny attempted to kill (or, perhaps successfully killed, depending on a key investigator choice) Benjamin Crossley to destroy both the Crossley's painting, which is a portal to another dimension, as well as the painter himself, to prevent a second portal from being painted. The progression of the investigation is open-ended, but as the investigators gain more information, the scenario moves towards a final conflict to prevent the Cult from summoning the King in Yellow.

While the catalyzing event in the investigation is the attempted murder of Benjamin Crossley, the dueling conspiracies at play in Arkham date back quite a bit further, and making sense of the murder attempt requires digging into a network of complex relationships going on behind the scenes of Arkham's art community. It's worth noting that there are two separate conspiracies: the cult of the Yellow King on one hand, and some servitors of the Great Race of Yith on the other. The second conspiracy exists for two reasons: to observe and study the people of Arkham and to oppose the Cult of the Yellow King in their endeavors.

THE CULT OF THE YELLOW KING

Lead by local community artist David Sanders, the Cult of the Yellow King is comprised of a small group of influential figures. These include David Sanders (the head of the Arkham Community Theatre Company), Bernie Cochran (the owner of Cochran Construction and the Bordighera Foundation, a local program built around sponsoring the Arkham art and performance communities), and Police Chief Eric Atkins. Together, the three and their fellow cultists have been planning a ritual to summon the Yellow King on Christmas Eve. The cult itself is small but active, using each of their platforms to further the cause.

Their plan is fairly straightforward. In order to summon The Yellow King to Earth, they need to create a "gateway" to his plane, one which the King can pass through after a summoning ritual; because of a rare alignment in the cosmos, the ritual is slated for December 24th (though there is some contention in the cult about whether or not the date should be moved up). One cult member, Ethan O'Donnell, tricked a local painter, Benjamin Crossley, into painting the gateway; from there, they intend to quietly acquire the painting before using an abandoned mall on the outskirts of town to perform the ritual. However, the events at the beginning of this scenario put them on the defensive, making them more paranoid than they have been prior.

THE YITH SERVITORS

Meanwhile, there is another group with ties to the Mythos in Arkham, a small group of men and women dedicated to serving the Great Race of Yith in their studies of the twenty-first century. Though a much smaller group, they act as observers without a dramatic agenda other than the continued observation. The group is comprised of two aides and one member who voluntarily switched bodies with one of the Yithians. The leader of this group is aware of the presence of a cult of the Yellow King in Arkham and, having no love of Hastur, is acting against Cult of the Yellow King as discretely as possible.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Below are descriptions of the major characters in *A King is Borne*. Character stats can be found at the end of the document in the "Characters and Monsters" section. The characters in this section are divided into three camps ("Yellow King Cultists," "Yith Servitors," and "Third Parties") for ease of use. Stats for these characters can be found under *Non-Player Characters* on page 15.

A King is Borne has a fairly large number of characters, so it may be wise to pace out meeting them as long as possible. It may also be a wise idea to create handouts or an expanding "Cast List" for players, to help them keep track of all the characters relevant if your players are not already used to keeping track of many NPCs.

YELLOW KING CULTISTS

The cult is small, with no more than maybe a dozen members at most. Their power doesn't come from size but rather influence. On top of members listed here, the Cult has about five to six more members, as the Keeper requires.

David Sanders

Sanders is the acting head of the Cult of the Yellow King, as well as its most fervent member. He is also the head of the Arkham Community Theatre Company. Passionate and driven, Sanders's energy is matched only by his violent mood swings. Rude one minute but complimenting the next, he has a tendency to wear on those around him. His motivations are entirely personal, as he hopes to get the king to inspire him, to be his muse.

Bernie Cochran

Bernie Cochran is the most politically powerful member of the Cult of the Yellow King. A wealthy real-estate tycoon, Cochran is the head of Cochran Construction. After the 2008 housing market crash, his company took advantage of the situation and became the primary construction company in Arkham; most of the buildings built or renovated since 2008 involved him and his company in some way, shape, or form. His influence also stretches into the culture of Arkham, as the Bordighera Foundation, his art-sponsoring program, is integral to the art landscape of the town. He hopes to summon the King to grant him greater wealth and power, but as cultists go, he's the most skeptical of the whole affair. Cochran has not actually read *The King in Yellow* and only knows broad strokes about the Cult itself. Smug and self-assured, he's a snobby socialite through-and-through.

Ethan O'Donnell

O'Donnell is the least influential member of the Cult of the Yellow King, but his knowledge of the Mythos is far deeper. A long-time friend of Crossley from art school, O'Donnell gifted Crossley a copy of *The King in Yellow*. Charming but perhaps uncomfortably friendly, Ethan is a psychopath; outwardly cheery and helpful, he's deliberately calculating and will gladly lead the investigators astray as a mock ally, if given trust. Ethan O'Donnell is a member of the Arkham Community Theatre Company, where he directly collaborates with David Sanders.

Captain Eric Atkins

Eric Atkins is the police captain of the Arkham Police Department. Paid off by Bernie Cochran to not investigate the case, the man is both insanely corrupt and flatly insane. Aggressive, boisterous, and with no degree of subtlety, the captain is the one person involved with the Cult who fails to realize the danger of the Mythos; from his perspective, Captain Atkins believes he is being paid off by a particularly eccentric branch of the mob, and he is too caught up in his own murders to care much.

YITH SERVITORS

Even smaller than the Cult of the King in Yellow, there are only three Yith servitors active in Arkham at the time of the campaign. Private, academic sorts, they will go out of their way to avoid attracting attention, though they'll gladly help the investigators if the investigators can prove they're savvy to the influence of the Mythos in their town.

Danny Smith

Danny Smith is a small-time accountant who, in an unlikely twist of fate, is one of the servitors of the Great Race of Yith. Danny, in an effort to prevent the Yellow King from being summoned, attempts (or given player choice, perhaps succeeds) to kill Benjamin Crossley and burn the painting. He believes, correctly, that if the painting is destroyed and the painter who created it is killed to prevent him from making another painting, that the ritual cannot take place. If he is kept alive, he will be deliberately unhelpful to protect his other servitors. He is cold, not by nature but out of desperation; in many ways, he'll try to act tougher than he is out of fear, even faking his own insanity to try to throw the Cult and the investigators off his scent.

Dr. Fabian Schaeffer

Dr. Schaeffer is professor of French studies at Miskatonic University, as well as a willing servitor of the Yith given his desire to ethically educate them about earth life in the early twenty-first century. Unlike Danny Smith or Harper Vasquez, Dr. Schaeffer is a pacifist and is therefore unaware of the plans to prevent the Cult's summoning ritual. A mousey and talkative man, he'll keep the presence of the servitors a secret, though he'll do very little to impede the progress of the investigators.

Harper Vasquez/Yormith

Harper Vasquez is a professional copy editor who lives in Arkham Heights, fifteen minutes out of the Arkham metro area. However, her body is currently inhabited by a Yithian named Yormith, a scholar of twenty-first century earth and earth culture. Meticulous but socially oblivious, Yormith is going against protocol in organizing efforts against the Yellow King. They cannot use magic.

THIRD PARTIES

Benjamin Crossley

Crossley is an up and coming expressionistic Arkham painter. Friends with Ethan O'Donnell, he was given a copy of *The King in Yellow* to read, causing him to have visions of Carcosa and go mad. The cult plans on using his painting to summon the Yellow King. He can only be saved by a player in the immediate moments after being stabbed. If Crossley survives, he is clearly paranoid and scared. His ability to help the investigators is limited, but at the promise of ending his nightmares, he'll gladly do what little he can. He is not, however, a very reliable narrator and is suffering delusions in his insanity.

Veronica Summers

Veronica Summers owns and curates of the Summers Gallery, a major fixture in the Arkham art community. Veronica is a social climber, one who involves herself substantially in the lives of the artists in her gallery to grant herself more legitimacy. Prim and concerned with appearances, the assault and (potential) subsequent murder of Benjamin Crossley is enough for her to hire out investigators to handle the matter discretely.

Detective Jodie Sutton

Detective Sutton is investigating the same crime as the investigators, and she's more than willing to give them a hand in their efforts. Like a character out of a noir novel, she's a chain smoker and is disillusioned with the Arkham Police force on the whole; right now, in particular, she's stymied by Captain Atkins, who is stonewalling her efforts to dig into her current case any deeper. However, Detective Sutton can just as easily be an opponent to the investigators, if they show up in the midst of her investigation and she is given no reason to trust them.

Eileen Marlowe (Optional)

Eileen Marlowe is an optional character that Keepers may choose to implement if the investigators don't initially take the plot hook. The nature of her character changes a little depending on the first choice the investigators make. Moreover, if the investigators turn down Veronica Summers's request to look into the attack at the start of the campaign, Eileen Marlowe will reach out in one- or two-days' time, begging the party to help her since the police investigation has crawled to a stop. Eileen is soft-spoken and withdrawn, almost timid.

If Crossley is the character to die, then she and he dated for two years. She'll state that Crossley was growing more distant over the last few weeks, and she suspects that his death is involved; she'll be able to give the party the keys to Crossley's apartment. If Smith dies, then she'll approach the investigators stating that she's unsure what would drive her boyfriend to try to commit murder and arson, and she wants the party to see if he's been coerced; she'll be able to give the party keys to Smith's apartment.

Other NPCs

Depending on the investigator's route through this scenario, there are a number of other NPCs they may meet in their investigation. These characters are largely incidental to the investigation but may come up nonetheless.

- **Bethany Wilkins** – The administrative assistant at Our Lady of Victory, Catholic Church. Cheerful and helpful, if clueless.
- **Steve Freeman** – The pastor at Our Lady of Victory, Catholic Church. Old fashioned and a bit noisy.
- **Ronald Welton** – Middle management at Cochran Construction. Fiercely loyal to the company, though unaware of his boss's true activities.
- **Dr. Susan Mballo** – French professor at Miskatonic University. Upbeat and prone to gallows humor.

PLAYER INFORMATION

The scenario begins at the Summers Gallery on December 13th, 2014. Very little information is given to the players beforehand, but the Keeper should make the following clear:

- While not horribly expensive, the Summers Gallery's Winter 2014 Exhibition is nevertheless a place where both the upper crust and the art community come to mingle and to network.
- One draw of the Winter Exhibition is that it doubles as an auction, where many painters put their works up for sale; the Summers Gallery facilitates the auction to drive traffic and publicity.

- One painter, the up-and-coming Benjamin Crossley, is going to unveil his latest masterpiece. Nobody really knows anything about it yet.

Outside of these few facts, players should know as little as possible before beginning the scenario.

While this is enough to start the scenario, there are some additional requests a Keeper can make of their players to make the scenario run a little more smoothly. To begin, the scenario runs more easily if investigators already know each other, and if investigators have some in-character justification to accept payment to investigate the scenario. Keepers should bear this in mind and adjust this scenario as needed.



The Yellow Kingdom

THE SCENARIO

INTRODUCTION

The scenario begins at the Winter Exhibition in the Summers Gallery on December 23rd, 7:00 PM. **The Summers Gallery is located on North Garrison Street, about five minutes out of town.** investigators are given the opportunity to mill around and get to know the guests present, as well as to get to know each other if the investigators don't already. Several characters who will play a larger role in the investigation are present at the exhibition.

- Veronica Summers is present as the curator of the Gallery; she'll be networking among well-to-do people at the gallery.
- Benjamin Crossley is present to show off his new painting, *The Golden Kingdom*. He's skittish, and it's hard to tell how much is due to nervousness or if there's some other factor.
- Bernie Cochran is present as both the land-owner of the Summers Gallery and as a bidder in the Winter 2014 Exhibition auction. He is openly interested in acquiring *The Golden Kingdom*, and if asked, he'll say he's a big fan of impressionism and expressionism.
- Danny Smith is present at the exhibition, seemingly as a guest. He also seems nervous, but unlike Benjamin Crossley, he is approachable. He'll excuse himself to the bathroom as the Exhibition opens up, which is actually a thinly veiled excuse to get his gun and kerosene.

After a few minutes of mingling, the guests will gather in the Exhibition Hall to bid on some paintings. Veronica Summers hosts, and she begins with *The Golden Kingdom* (**Handout 1**).

From the back of the room Danny Smith moves across the room, steps up on stage, and shoots Benjamin Crossley in the neck; he tucks the gun away as he walks towards the painting. Here, the Keeper should pose the only binary question in this module: **do the players try to stabilize Crossley, or do they subdue Danny Smith?**

Should the players choose to save Crossley, Smith will attempt to burn the painting, but his lighter will malfunction due to some unforeseen interference, and he'll incinerate himself by mistake. (The sight of a burning man requires a **SAN o/1d4** roll.) However, they'll be able to stop Crossley's bleeding long enough to get him safely to a hospital. If the players choose to stop Smith instead, then Crossley will bleed out; Smith will then be taken away to the Arkham Police Department for holding until he is transferred to Boston.

While the bulk of A King Is Borne should be run as a sandbox with multiple approaches and angles to any given situation, this opening choice should be presented as a binary. Keepers should really try to make clear that the investigators don't have time to both stop Smith and save Crossley. While this choice has consequences that ripple out through the scenario, it should be made as a split-second decision in-game.

Once the police have had time to arrive on the scene, the investigators may have to answer a few questions. After that, they are approached by Veronica Summers, who requests that the investigators do her a favor and look into the matter to try to figure out what Danny Smith was after, so that her Gallery might be able to keep negative press out of the limelight. If the investigators turn her request down, they'll be approached in either or two days' time by Eileen Marlowe, the girlfriend of the deceased party; Eileen will then beg the investigators to help her uncover the truth about her dead boyfriend.

Either way, the town of Arkham now opens up to the investigators, and they can choose to begin their investigation in whatever manner is most convenient.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FIRST CHOICE

Depending on who the investigators choose to save, one of two additional venues of investigation opens up. If the investigators save Benjamin Crossley, they'll be able to interview him at Arkham Central Hospital. If the party restrains Danny Smith, they'll have a chance to interrogate him at the Arkham Police Department, providing that they can convince the police to let them.

Saving Crossley

If the party chooses to save Benjamin Crossley, they can speak with him later in the hospital. Still in shock and drifting in and out of consciousness, Crossley is talking incoherently about "that damned land." Investigators can make a **Psychology** roll to see that his current state is not strictly connected with being shot. Investigators can also use their **Occult, Art (Painting)**, or **Fast Talk** to get Ben to explain that he believes the painting is a window to another world, though he won't know how to explain more. Regardless of what happens, Crossley will name-drop Ethan O'Donnell, directing the investigators towards Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church.

Stopping Smith

Once Smith is arrested, investigators will have to convince the police to let them speak to Danny Smith, provided they choose to restrain him in the opening scene. Kept in an empty holding cell, Danny is irritable but obviously sane. He'll comment that he only has limited time to stop "events in motion," as well as that he has nothing personal against Crossley. A successful **Fast Talk, Persuade**, or a hard **Intimidate** roll will convince Smith to namedrop Professor Fabian; a successful **Mythos** roll will actually get him to direct the party towards Yormith, though Smith shouldn't part with much information. In the event that investigators return to the station once they have more information, it may be possible for them to recruit Danny as a companion NPC for the final confrontation.

*While there is a general hierarchy between obviously significant locations and locations that become significant after some investigation, the main investigation in this module is fairly open-ended. Keepers might recommend one of the following locations to the players with an **Idea** roll, but for the most part, encourage players to poke around and dig into the local populace and let them piece together clues on their own. One possible option to prevent impatient players from getting frustrated is to have Victoria Summers offer to discuss payment at the Gallery the next morning; this not only gives the investigators a place to start, but also an opportunity for the Keeper to have Summers suggest some starting locales for the investigation. The locations here have also been given numbers to help Keepers quickly and easily refer to locations.*

1. THE ARKHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Arkham Police Department is a clean, well-lit building that during the day is bustling with detectives, officers, and clerical employees. The linoleum flooring smells of cleaning fluid, and the space has a distinctly mid-1970s aesthetic to it. Here, the investigators can find **Captain Atkins** working in his office, as well as find **Detective Jodie Sutton** either filing paperwork or else smoking outside. It's located at **the intersection of South Peabody Avenue and East Church Street**.

There are only a few clues that can be found at the police station, but what's there should actively indicate that Captain Atkins is involved in something sinister. Without difficulty, the investigators should at least discover that the police aren't actively investigating the crime, instead writing it off as "madness." However, the investigators can discover more by either sneaking into the Captain's office or by talking to the local police.

If the investigators choose to speak to Detective Sutton, some conversation will lead to her admitting that the Captain is hindering her investigation; what's more, he seems to be delaying the coroner's report, and a substantial amount of paperwork has been misfiled. If the investigators successfully **Sneak** into the morgue in the station's basement, they can easily find paperwork about the death at the gallery. (For Smith, they'll find paperwork that his lighter was, in fact, not faulty; for Crossley, they'll find a handwritten note signed "E.A." requesting that Crossley's body be held aside until after Christmas.)

A couple substantial documents can also be found around the office. A **Spot Hidden** roll will reveal an empty envelope in the Captain's waste basket (**Handout 2**), with the same address as Cochran Construction; the letter is personally addressed to the Captain by first name. A separate **Spot Hidden** roll will reveal a document reading that the painting has been moved out of Evidence to an undisclosed location. (The investigators may attempt to trick the Captain in admitting that its location; doing so will make the Captain an actively hostile NPC, though he'll stalk the investigators until they're alone before making a move.)

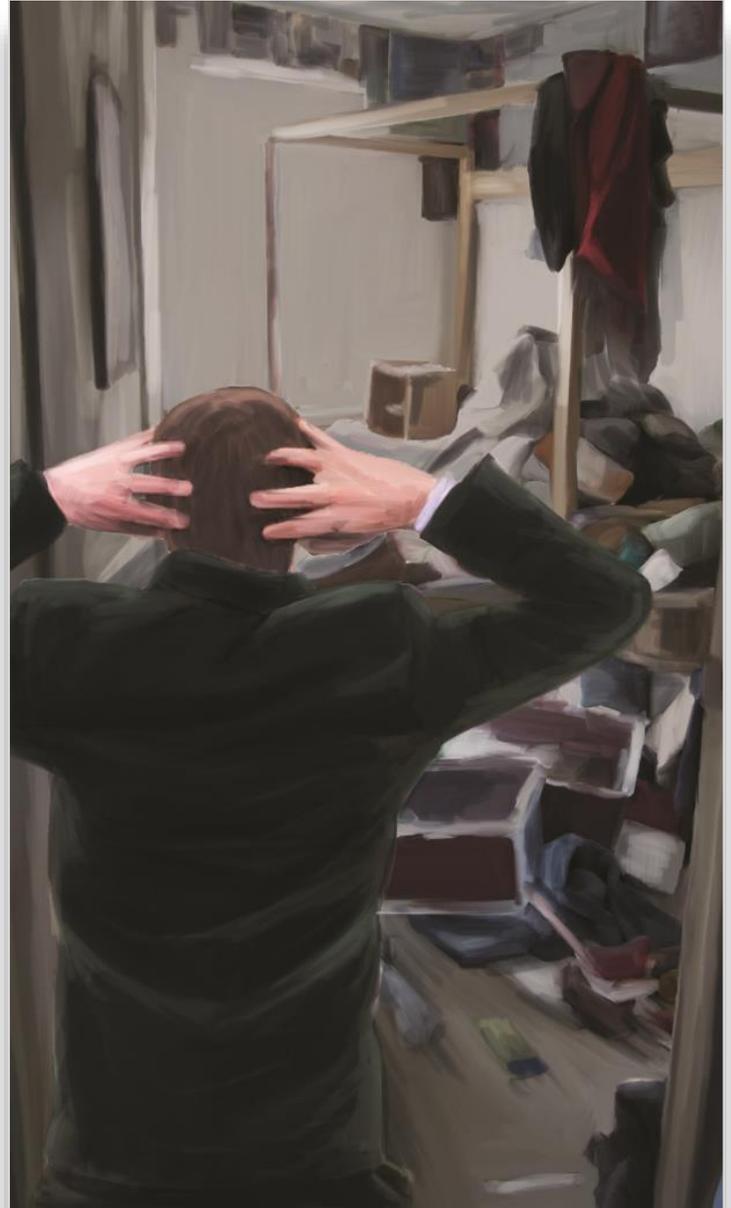


2. BENJAMIN CROSSLEY'S APARTMENT

The apartment is located on **Noyes Street, between East Derby Street and Whateley Street**. Crossley's apartment reflects/reflected his mental state. Dimly lit and dingy from neglect, it looks more like a drug den than someone's living quarters. The windows have been blocked out with newspaper, and the pungent scent of wet paints fills the air, along with the hint of something rotting. A faint whistling fills the air. The apartment is divided up into a kitchen, a living area that's been converted into a studio, a bedroom, and a bathroom. A massive tarp covers the floor and furniture of the living room, and paints, easels, and half-painted canvasses cover the room.

Many major clues can be found here. Without difficulty, the investigators will find a book bound in fine black leather on the kitchen counter, seemingly set aside with great care; the interior of the book is full of notes scribbled in the margins, and the script is written in **French**. This book is a copy of *The King in Yellow*, though it will be impossible to read without a decent translation. However, something can be learned from the notes in the margins, though they are difficult to follow in their seeming madness. A **Psychology** or hard **Spot Hidden** will reveal that there are two separate sets of handwriting in the margins. (They belong, respectively, to Crossley and to Ethan O'Donnell, though the Keeper may wish to keep this information private unless the investigators overtly test O'Donnell's handwriting.)

A hard **Spot Hidden** will also reveal that the tarp is covering some sort of mad scrawling on the floor. If the investigators pull back the tarp, it will reveal Crossley's feverish handwriting, stretching from the floor up the walls in black paint, requiring a **SAN o/1d3** roll. A successful **Mythos** roll will reveal that these scribbles come from someone who has had contact with the Mythos but does not understand it; a hard **Mythos** roll will reveal that the scribbles place great importance on the nature of dreams. Erstwhile, a **Listen** roll reveals a whistling coming from a nearby vent duct. The investigators who remove the grate and peer inside will find several waded-up sketches of what appears to be earlier drafts of *The Golden Kingdom*, though all of them have a lone figure in them. A hard **Spot Hidden** will reveal that the figure seems to grow closer in each given sketch. Finally, a **Spot Hidden** roll will reveal that Crossley's contact book is on the table, open to the entry for Ethan O'Donnell's house phone; a sticky note is plastered beneath, reading "Remember tickets!!!" Ethan's answering machine directs players to Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church, where the Arkham Community Theatre Company is putting on a performance of *We Three Kings*.



3. DANNY SMITH'S APARTMENT

Danny Smith's apartment is located where **High Lane meets West Derby**, and it is the polar opposite of Benjamin Crossley's. Relatively clean with only a bit of clutter from books and DVDs, it's an almost cozy space. There's the vague scent of pine, presumably from a scented candle, and near the windows, it's easy to hear the muffled sound of neighborhood children playing in the snow. At a glance, it's hard to believe that this is the home of a violent killer.

Less openly sinister than Crossley, there are still clues here to find. Most easily, a library book (*The Devil and the Good Lord* by Sartre) from Miskatonic University lies out on the table, due two days ago, with what appear to be some questions written down about the contents of the book. Some investigators may wish to make a **Psychology** roll, which may reveal that Danny clearly wasn't planning the murder for very long, as well as that the questions written down seem to be directed at some third party. If returned to the University, this will put the investigators in direct contact with Dr. Fabian Schaeffer, who will ask the investigators what has become of Danny Smith.

Other than that, a **Spot Hidden** roll will reveal a journal containing transcriptions of the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*. A subsequent **History** roll reveals that this is an unprofessional penned version of the text, probably written sometime in the early 20th century. Investigators may also find Smith's computer. Searching through his internet history will reveal that he's done a lot research into the local theatre group. A **Computer Use** roll will get access to Smith's emails. There, it's clear that he's been in regular contact with one Dr. Fabian Schaeffer, as well as one Harper Vasquez. From there, the investigators can make a **Spot Hidden** roll in Smith's address book for Schaeffer's and Vasquez's respective phone numbers.

4. THE SUMMERS GALLERY

Once the excitement of the exhibition has worn down, the gallery is closed to the public until further notice. The white of the linoleum floors seems to be magnified by the cold lighting overhead; with the space quiet save for the hum of the heating system. The paintings lining the walls have a clear cheapness to them; it doesn't take a genius to recognize that most are works derivative of better artists. The only company here is Veronica Summers herself, working even in the midst of a temporary closure.

What the investigators can accomplish in the Gallery is limited, but if they poke around, there are still clues to be found. Without much provocation, Veronica Summers will recommend the investigators look into Ethan O'Donnell, as he would have had extended contact with Crossley prior to the attack. She herself will point out that O'Donnell was one of Crossley's good friends, so he's likely aware of led to Crossley's strange behavior prior to the attack. Depending on how much players roleplay, it may also be easy for them to learn that Veronica doesn't actually own the building, but rather leases the space from Cochran Construction. Finally, if an investigator is able to get into Summers's office (possibly by using their **Credit Rating**), they'll find some documents linking Bernie Cochran to the auction. A successful **Law** or **Accounting** roll will reveal that he purchased a work of art (Unsurprisingly, he bought *The Golden Kingdom*, though the name of the work isn't listed on any of the paperwork.) since the incident. On a failed roll, the documents are clearly significant, but they'll take a day or two to decipher.

5. MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY

Located in the block of land between **West Church Street and West College Street**, Miskatonic University is a focal point of Arkham, and its campus is equally split along classical aesthetic values and the mid-1960s shift towards Modernist architecture. However, the investigators will likely be spending most of their time at the University's library. There, they'll find themselves in a welcoming environment. Light pours in through large windows running alongside the eastern wall, catching motes of dust in the air. Enormous wooden shelves lined with books of all varieties fill the space, and a stairwell stretches to the upper floors through the center of the room. All around is the comforting scent of old books.

It's likely that investigators will find **Dr. Fabian Schaeffer** here, and they'll be able to interact with him for more information. If the investigators bring up the manuscript, they recovered in Benjamin Crossley's apartment, he'll quickly confirm that it is *The King in Yellow*, albeit the original version of the play and not a translation. If pressed, he'll take the party to the Miskatonic's Restricted Collection, where they'll be able to study an English translation. Additionally, if Danny Smith is still alive or is name-dropped by the investigators, Dr. Schaeffer will confirm that he was friends with Smith. He'll volunteer to help them, although will be reticent to get too involved without discretely seeing if the investigators are knowledgeable of the Mythos. In the event that the investigators do not seek out or bump into Dr. Schaeffer, the Keeper can call for a **Knowledge** or **Idea** roll to determine how to contact a French professor at the University.

Of course, the players need not necessarily go through Dr. Schaeffer to get their information. If the investigators skip right to the Miskatonic Library without searching Smith's apartment, they can make a **Library Use** roll to do some digging into the text at hand. Doing so will not grant them access to an English copy of *The King in Yellow*, but it will lead them to an occult text titled *The Golden Bough*, which details the effects of the play on those read it, and the play's subsequent banishment from 19th century France.

Should investigators get their hands on an English copy of *The King in Yellow*, cross-referencing it with the footnotes left in the French text will reveal that the details of the play can be used in a separate ritual which can be used to create a "gateway" to allow the King to travel to Earth. A hard **Occult** or standard **Mythos** roll will reveal that the play itself is not actually important to said ritual. However, discovering more about the ritual will require interacting with either members of the Cult of the Yellow King or speaking with one of the Yith Servitors.



6. OUR LADY OF VICTORY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Our Lady of Victory is located on the corner of **East Main Street and South Parsonage Street** in Southern Arkham, and despite having a history that goes back over a hundred years, it's clearly been recently refurbished. An ornate entrance laden with intricate stonework gives way to a carpeted and well-lit interior done up in modern style. Stained glass sits side-by-side with cork bulletin boards and trays of stale cookies. All around, cheap Christmas decorations hang from the ceiling and walls.

It's here that investigators will meet the Arkham Community Theatre Company, as well as half of the cultists of the Yellow King. Entering into the Fellowship Hall, the investigators will be greeted with a crude stage set-up and rows of fold-out seats arranged into a rough auditorium. A small number of actors shuffle around, responding to orders given by **David Sanders**. **Ethan O'Donnell** is on break, drinking coffee off to one side of the stage. The investigators can have conversations with either of them here, taking time to build a bigger picture of what's going on in the world. David will talk proudly about the play that the Theatre Company is producing, a dramatic retelling of the biblical Magi titled *We Three Kings* (**Handout 3**). Ethan, on the other hand, will act shocked to learn about the attack at the Summers Gallery, and he'll press the investigators for more information. (A **Hard Psychology** roll will see that his remorse is feigned.)

Other information can be gained by snooping around the church. For example the, investigators might use their **Charm** or **Stealth** skills to get access to the administrative assistant's office, where they'll find a printed email describing how the acting troupe has been skipping practices and rehearsing at strange hours (**Handout 4**). They may also choose to ring up conversation with the church's pastor, **Steve Freeman**. He's been looking forward to the performance of *We Three Kings*, thinking the script is a good middle ground between evangelism and earnest theatre. However, he's not happy about how inconsistent the Theatre Company has been in their preparations. He'll remark that the church's secretary has been in contact with the Bordighera Foundation, the troupe's patron organization. Finally, investigators may choose to use their **Stealth** or **Listen** skills to eavesdrop on O'Donnell and Sanders, who can be overheard discussing deadlines about "a performance on Christmas Eve." If either pressed, he will say that he misspoke, since *We Three Kings* is scheduled for December 23rd; however, this will make the cult aware of the investigation.

7. COCHRAN CONSTRUCTION

The headquarters for Cochran Construction and the Bordighera Foundation can be found on **North Peabody Street, across from Independence Square**. A dull looking corporate complex, Cochran Construction is the stereotypical face of corporate America. Employees shuffle to-and-fro, while the occasional desk phone rings off somewhere down the beige halls. Florescent lights beat down from overhead.

At first, player options are going to be limited. An employee at the front desk will let the investigators schedule a meeting with **Bernie Cochran** for the next day if they can make their case well enough, but access to the offices is going to be severely limited. A talk with Cochran will reveal his ownership of the Summers Gallery, assuming the investigators haven't discovered that connection yet. Furthermore, he'll go into depth on his desire to foster the arts in Arkham with the Bordighera Foundation, his friendship with Captain Atkins, and/or his *specific* interest in *The Golden Kingdom*.

Players may also choose to infiltrate the offices by a number of other means. It may be possible for investigators to use a **Disguise** roll to pose as office employees to sneak into the building to look at technical documents. Keepers may also wish to employ some fumigator NPCs whom the investigators can impersonate. Sneaking in may also be a viable option. If the investigators can quietly make their way into the building, a simple **Stealth** roll may be enough to get around Cochran's secretary. If another investigator distracts her, the sneaking investigator may add a bonus die. This may not be enough to keep the investigators undetected for the duration of their stay, however.

Should the investigators choose to break and enter into Cochran Construction after hours, they'll find the offices relatively uninhabited. However, they must make a **Spot Hidden** roll to notice the security system cameras, and make a separate **Computer Use** roll to deactivate them. Additionally, a **hard Spot Hidden** is necessary in Cochran's office to catch his silent alarm attached to the door frame. If investigators notice, any player present may make a **DEX** roll to avoid activating the device.

Once inside the office, several clues may be found openly. Sitting out on his desk, Cochran's calendar has the 24th marked, with the words "dining pavilion" underlined multiple times. A **Spot Hidden** roll reveals a post-it under Cochran's desk that mentions "reobtain book from painter - call e" (**Handout 5**). There's also a list of properties around Arkham due inspection, including the Summers Gallery, Our Lady of Victory, and Lawson-Mills Plaza.

Almost every location up to this point in the campaign should lead players to this location, and entry into Cochran Construction is essential for the story to continue with context. In the event players get stuck trying to enter the offices, Keepers may wish to employ the following methods to guide their players:

- Two maintenance workers comment how they're surprised that nobody has tried to burgle the offices yet, given how easy it is to get in after dark.

- One of the investigators overhears how much Cochran's secretary wishes she could take a break to go get some coffee.

- A post-it in one of the cubicles details how a pest control company is scheduled a day after the present day.

8. ATKINS HOUSEHOLD

At different points in the story, investigators may either choose to break into Captain Atkin's home, or else they may be kidnapped by Atkins and smuggled into his home. On the main floor, investigators will find themselves in a modest single-floor house from the early 20th century. The décor is modest and has a quaint charm. There is a basement too, with some various power tools around and basic construction equipment.

Even without locating the Kill Room, investigators can at least get closer to obtaining the location of the final showdown. Captain Atkins's laptop can be found in the house easily, whereupon it will become clear that it requires a password to open; they can bypass the password with a **Computer Use** roll or by rolling a **Spot Hidden** roll to find a post-it with the password written down.

Locating the Kill Room in the basement isn't hard. A good **Spot Hidden** check will reveal a passageway behind a large plastic tarp draped over a shelving unit. A **hard Listen** check will also reveal the faint sound of something dripping. Peeling back the tarp will reveal a haphazard tunnel carved into the dirt, leading to a room lined with plastic sheets. It smells strongly of rotten meat, and there is dried blood everywhere. A **Psychology** check will reveal that Atkins has been dragging people here for a long time. Atkins may attack the party if he detects them in his home.

During the scenario, Atkins can kidnap investigators and drag them into his Kill Room. For each day that investigators are held captive, **Atkins will torture them for 1d3+1 health points**. Investigators can try to break out on their own, or they may be rescued by the rest of their associates.

If possible, make sure the rest of the investigators have quick and easy means to determine the whereabouts of their kidnapped comrades. This will make sure no player is left out of the game for too long, and that the investigation's pacing won't drag. Additionally, Keepers may wish to keep the nature of the torture deliberately vague. Call of Cthulhu is a horror RPG, but there's no reason to upset your players with undue graphic detail or viscerally unpleasant descriptions. Use your best discretion during these sequences, and don't be afraid to dial things back for more sensitive players; remember, everyone is here to have fun.

POSSIBLE GAME COMPLICATIONS

Throughout the scenario, investigators should have the opportunity to make various cultists hostile to them; however, doing so should also open the possibility of learning more about the Cult of the Yellow King.

Making David Sanders Hostile

Attacking Sanders or otherwise making him openly hostile will cause him to summon a dimensional shambler to attack the party. If in an enclosed space, the monster will likely attack Sanders as well. If David is killed, the summoning ritual takes much longer to complete, since the cultists are not as well-versed in the arcane arts as their acting friend. On his corpse, investigators can find documents describing the summoning ritual that do **1/1d6 SAN**, as well as details on how to stop the ritual by interrupting the play and burning the painting.

Making Ethan O'Donnell Hostile

The least powerful of the cultists, Ethan will attempt to flee to another cultist for help if possible. If he makes it, the cult will begin acting against the party more aggressively, their involvement in the goings-on of Arkham more evident. If killed or kidnapped, the cult will begin actively searching for him, likely making the investigators the prime suspects. However, he will slowly unveil information to the party if kept alive. Erstwhile, if the party kills O'Donnell, there is a document on his person details the floor plan of the old mall, Lawson-Mills Plaza, with several areas highlighted; these are stage notes for the summoning ritual which, if studied (**o/1d3 SAN**), can convey how to slow the ceremony.

Making Cochran Hostile

Making Bernie Cochran hostile is slightly more difficult, since getting to him requires either confronting him openly on his own territory or else breaking into his mansion. Cochran has hired security in his home, so it's entirely likely that he will call the police. The party will then be outlaws until the events of the summoning if their names are not cleared by other means. His death will not affect the final summoning, but the police investigating may begin to realize that Captain is corrupt. Investigator's can find paperwork in his study that reveals the reach of his finances and what properties he owns, as well as a 10-Gauge shotgun he keeps in his bedroom beside his bed.



Other Possible Events

Attracting Atkins Attention

If the investigators garner too much attention from the cult, Captain Atkins will begin to stalk the investigators. If he observes them making considerable progress in their investigation, he will attempt to kill or kidnap investigators. If an investigator is kidnapped, he will take them to the Kill Room under his house.

The Yithian Servitors

Unless actively antagonized, the Yithian servitors will not attack the investigators; after all, their goals are more or less in line with each other. The servitors may even be able to give some much-needed context if their trust is gained. However, they will do very little to openly aid the investigators, and they will treat hostile behavior in-kind. Furthermore, merely tracking Harper/Yormith to her home won't yield any major clues, though it may make her hostile. If the investigators rely on the Yithian cult to help solve the mystery, cultists will clear out of Arkham shortly after the adventure, leaving no substantial signs to their presence.

Returning to the Church

Returning to the church after the cult has been hostile will lead to a tense game of cat-and-mouse, where a handful of cultists will attempt to hunt down the investigators. If other innocents are present, they'll be killed in an effort to cover the cult's tracks. If Atkins is still alive at this point, the investigators will be declared outlaws on the spot.

Country Club Outing

For a little more variety in setting, Keepers may opt to have Bernie Cochran drive out of Arkham to the Arkham Country Club, up along High Lane and out of town. In doing this, Keepers may make the world of Arkham, Massachusetts feel more alive and allow the player to engage Cochran in a battle of wits in a neutral environment; however, doing so may also drag out the scenario, so only do so if it fits your game.

FINALE: LAWSON-MILLS PLAZA

The Lawson-Mills Plaza is an abandoned mall on the outskirts of Arkham that was left unfinished after the 2008 housing market crash. Still trussed up with décor for its intended Christmas opening, the interior of the mall is littered with old construction debris, food wrappers, dust, dirt, and the vague scent of smoke and stagnant water. These days, it's mostly the homeless seeking shelter or kids looking to get high hanging out in its walls. The Plaza is owned by Cochran Construction, though they never resumed construction of the complex.

If the investigators are able to determine that the cult intends to summon the Yellow King on Christmas Eve, they may attempt to stop the cult by several means, including but not limited to stealing resources for the ritual or killing cultists. However, while the investigators are able to hinder the ritual, it will still go through on Christmas Eve regardless, carried out by the remaining cultists. They can also get a clearer idea how to stop the ritual by collaborating with the Yithians or by studying both the *King in Yellow* manuscripts. To stop the ritual, the investigators will have to **destroy *The Golden Kingdom***, a task which proves easier said than done.

The ritual itself begins at 10:00 in the evening (though alerting the cult to the investigators' presence may start the ritual early), giving investigators time to make plans and possibly lay an ambush. The cult gathers in what was the old food-court, with the space modified; candles are placed at seemingly random intervals along the floor, with the painting situated in the center of a summoning circle. *The Golden Kingdom* will have a supernatural glow around it, as it is now becoming a gateway to another world. Initially observing the painting will cost **1/1d6 SAN**. Present are 1d6+2 cultists, on top of whichever of the four named cultists NPCs are still alive. The investigators will always arrive to the ceremony being in-progress. Destroying the painting itself will be difficult; the painting has a supernatural presence of its own, with a **HP: 40**. As soon as the investigators are detected, the cultists *will* summon a **dimensional shambler** through the painting to defend them. The ritual takes 20 minutes to complete.

It may be possible to complicate the situation even further depending on how the scenario has played out so far. If the investigators are being pursued as wanted criminals, it's not unreasonable for the police to show up half way through the final confrontation, nor would it be too outlandish for the investigators' fight to go more smoothly with the aid of the Great Race of Yith. As a Keeper, play the ending of the scenario by ear and try to make previous choices in the scenario count for what has happened thus far.



CONCLUSION

Provided that the investigators survive and the ritual is stopped, the scenario is most likely to end with the investigators defeating the cult and preventing them from summoning the Yellow King. If the investigators have been declared criminals, perhaps have the police have discovered Atkins's Kill Room in their search for the investigators, clearing their names (or, at least, incriminating Atkins enough to muddy the waters). With the ritual ended and the painting destroyed, it's not entirely clear to those out-of-the-loop what happened this Christmas Eve. Keepers may choose to use this investigation to springboard future adventures, with the investigators' exploits in the sleepy town of Arkham not going unnoticed by greater forces.

If the ritual goes through successfully, the cult and the investigators may be driven mad by the appearance of the King, though they'll have time to get away. On Christmas morning, the fight in the Lawson-Mills Plaza is reported as gang activity, and over the next several years, the rate of violence and corruption in Arkham grows, with murder rates rising well above the national average. Keepers may use this as a springboard for any number of contemporary adventures, either with other cults, Lovecraftian entities, or simple killers touched by eldritch horrors.

Apply the following Sanity rewards:

- The investigators free an investigator/NPC from Atkins's Kill Room: +1d4 Sanity points.
- The investigators visit every location at least once: +2 Sanity points.
- The players piece together the events of the scenario without using an Idea check: 3 Sanity points.
- The investigators destroy *The Golden Kingdom*: +1d6 Sanity points.
- The investigators fail to destroy *The Golden Kingdom*: -1d3/1d10 Sanity points.
- The investigators kill a named cultist: 1 Sanity point per cultist.
- The investigators kill the dimensional shambler: +1d4 Sanity points.
- The investigators allow the dimensional shambler to escape: -1d4 Sanity points.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

There are many characters in *A King is Borne*; consequently, on the NPCs who may require stats mid-play will have their statistics mentioned here.

DANNY SMITH – *Yithian Cultist*

STR 60 CON 55 SIZ 65 DEX 45 INT 70
APP 50 POW 30 EDU 60 SAN 50 HP 11
DB: 1D4 Build: +1 MP: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 40% (20/5), damage 1D3 + 1d4
.22 Short Automatic 20% (10/2), damage 1D6

Armor: none.

Skills: Charm 35%, Mythos 35%, Psychology 25%, Stealth 35%, Spot Hidden 50%.

ETHAN O'DONNELL – *Actor and Cultist*

STR 40 CON 55 SIZ 40 DEX 65 INT 60
APP 70 POW 30 EDU 60 SAN 40 HP 9
DB: N/A Build: N/A

Attacks per round: 2

Brawl 30% (15/6), damage 1D3
.22 Short Automatic 50% (25/10), damage 1D6
Ingram MAC-11 40% (20/8), damage 1D10

Armor: none.

Skills: Charm 50%, Drive Auto 30%, Mythos 40%, Listen 30%, Psychology 35%.

DAVID SANDERS – *Actor and Cultist*

STR 50 CON 50 SIZ 60 DEX 50 INT 60
APP 80 POW 30 EDU 50 SAN 70 HP 11
DB: N/A Build: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 50% (25/5), damage 1D3
.22 Short Automatic 45% (22/9), damage 1D6

Armor: none.

Skills: Charm 60%, Disguise 45%, Listen 50%, Mythos 50%, Persuade 30%.

Suggested Spells:

Cause Blindness, Create Mist of R'lyeh, Evil Eye, Song of Hastur

CHIEF ERIC ATKINS – *Police Chief and Cultist*

STR 65 CON 75 SIZ 75 DEX 50 INT 60
APP 45 POW 40 EDU 60 SAN 20 HP 11
DB: 1D4 Build: +1

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 45% (22/9), damage 1D3 + 1d4
Machete 30% (15/6), damage 1D8 + 1d4
.22 Short Automatic 60% (30/12), damage 1D6
12 Gauge Shotgun 40% (20/8), damage 4D6 / 2D6 / 1D6

Armor: none.

Skills: Drive Auto 45%, Intimidate 60%, Mythos 15%, Psychology 30%, Track 60%.

BERNIE COCHRAN – *Real Estate Mogul and Cultist*

STR 40 CON 60 SIZ 45 DEX 65 INT 70
APP 65 POW 50 EDU 70 SAN 60 HP 10
DB: N/A Build: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 10% (5/2), damage 1D3
.22 Short Automatic 40% (20/8), damage 1D6
12 Gauge Shotgun 50% (25/10), damage 4D6 / 2D6 / 1D6

Armor: Kevlar Vest (5 points).

Skills: Accounting 50%, Drive Auto 65%, Fast Talk 35%, Listen 50%, Psychology 70%, Stealth 35%

HARPER VASQUEZ/YORMITH – *Yithian Scholar*

STR 40 CON 70 SIZ 45 DEX 75 INT 70
APP 55 POW 45 EDU 70 SAN N/A HP 11
DB: N/A Build: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 30% (15/6), damage 1D3
Lightning Gun 55% (22/11), damage 1D10, 5%+ chance of burnout with each shot

Armor: N/A.

Skills: Computer Use 90%, Electronics 65%, Listen 45%, Occult 60%, Mythos 75%, Spot Hidden 45%.

JODIE SUTTON – *Arkham Police Detective*

STR 65 CON 70 SIZ 50 DEX 65 INT 60

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APP 60 POW 70 EDU 70 SAN 70 HP 12

DB: 1D4 Build: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 60% (30/12), damage 1D3

.357 Revolver 50% (25/5), damage 1D8+1d4

Armor: N/A.

Skills: Climb 40%, Computer Use 50%, Intimidate 60%, Law 50%, Listen 30%, Psychology 40%, Spot Hidden 45%.

HANDOUTS

HANDOUT 1



HANDOUT 2

Cochran Construction
473 N. Peabody Ave.
Arkham MA, 01914



Eric Atkins
PO Box 940
Arkham MA, 01914

HANDOUT 3

THE KING IS COMING!
**ARKHAM COMMUNITY
THEATRE COMPANY**
AND
**OUR LADY OF VICTORY
CATHOLIC CHURCH**
PRESENT

WE THREE KINGS



**DEC. 23, 2014
5 PM AND 8 PM**

The poster features a blue gradient background. At the top, the text 'THE KING IS COMING!' is written in yellow with a black outline. Below it, 'ARKHAM COMMUNITY THEATRE COMPANY' is in red with a black outline, followed by 'AND' in green. 'OUR LADY OF VICTORY CATHOLIC CHURCH' is in red with a black outline, and 'PRESENT' is in green. The title 'WE THREE KINGS' is in yellow with a black outline. The central illustration shows three camels with riders in silhouette, moving from left to right against a dark blue sky. A white star with eight points is positioned in the upper right of the illustration. At the bottom, the date and times 'DEC. 23, 2014 5 PM AND 8 PM' are written in green.

HANDOUT 4

http://pltt56e4.ronalw.mail.service.com/mail/Print_mes...

RE: Update

From: ronaldwelton74@pmail.com
Sent: Wed 12/10/14 3:55 PM
To: bethany.wilkins@speedmail.com

Ms. Wilkins,

I'm very sorry for the complications you've been having with Arkham Community Theatre group, and we appreciate you taking the time to reach out to us!

While it's not strictly within Brodighera Foundation guidelines for the foundation to have direct impact on the groups we sponsor over non-violations of our terms of agreement, it's entirely possible that some external factors are impacting how the group is performing, which may reflect back on the Foundation writ large. It might take some time, but we'll see if our administrators can't have a word with Mr. David Sanders about his tardy behavior and lack of courtesy for the local community. This might take some time though, so you may wish to have another word with Mr. Sanders about his behavior.

We're sorry for any complications this has caused, though we also hope that it doesn't reflect poorly on the Foundation. If problems continue or the situation worsens, please, don't hesitate to reach out to us again on this matter.

Ronald Welton, Arkham Community Contact Assistant
 ronaldwelton74@gmail.com
 (617) 555-8392-12

The Brodighera Foundation
 473 N. Peabody Avenue
 Arkham MA, 01914
 (617) 555-8392
 Hours: Monday through Friday, 8 A.M. to 6 P.M.

"For the arts, for the world."

Date: Wed 12/09/14 4:35 PM
From: bethany.wilkins@speedmail.com
To: ronaldwelton74@pmail.com
Subject: Update

Hello there!

I'm sorry to inconvenience you, but we're still having trouble coordinating with the Arkham Community Theatre Company on when they're organizing their rehearsals. While Our Lady of Victory is more than happy to host their performance of "We Three Kings," we need them to keep to more orderly hours. We can't keep opening up the church at all hours of night, let alone keeping the other church volunteers waiting on cancelled rehearsals.

Paster Steve has already talked to Mr. Sanders about this, but it doesn't seem to be having any impact. Would it be possible for someone from the Brodighera Foundation to have a word with him?

Thanks!

Bethany Wilkins
 Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church, Administrative Assistant

Through God, all things are possible!

HANDOUT 5

