

“The Bookstore” © 2001
By Michael C. LaBossiere, ontologist@aol.com
Call of Cthulhu

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Introduction

This short adventure is intended to provide the investigators with a minor challenge and to introduce them to a useful NPC. This adventure is intended to lead to a series of adventures, but can be run on its own.

Keeper's Background

A few years ago, the noted scholar Reginald Preston learned of the mythos and began a systematic effort to learn as much as he could. Physically limited by a devastating childhood accident, Preston is limited to gathering information with the aid of others, primarily by ordering unusual texts and engaging in various correspondences.

One of Preston's local contacts, a bookstore owner named Don Wedenberg, located a trove of books that he thought Preston might be interested in. Wedenberg contacted Preston who said he would pick up the books the next day. Unfortunately for Wedenberg, one of the texts contained something of a trap: When he opened one tome, a terrible being was summoned and promptly dispatched him.

Fortunately for the innocents, the first person to arrive at Wedenberg's store was Preston. Shortly after entering the store (Wedenberg had entrusted him with a key) Preston caught a glimpse of the creature and wisely retreated.

Getting the Investigators Involved

Preston will draw the investigators into the adventure. Through a mutual acquaintance, Preston knows of at least one of the investigators (chose the most scholarly of the investigators, if applicable) and is aware that the investigators have taken an active role in combating the mythos. Preston will contact the investigators and convey the following:

"I regret having to trouble you, but a most grave situation has arisen involving factors that are...most unusual. I know from a mutual acquaintance that you and your associates are able and willing to handle...special...situations. I implore your aid in a most dire matter."

If the investigators ask for details, Preston will say that he is wary of conveying too many details over the phone. He will, however, tell the investigators that the matter is one of life and death and that he will gladly bear the expense of their transportation.

If the investigators accept the offer, Preston will gladly provide them with tickets for their transportation as well as suitable lodging.

When the investigators arrive, Preston will brief them on the situation as he sees it:

"My friend Don Wedenberg contacted me, saying he had secured a trove of books I would be interested in. As it was late, I assured him I would visit his store the next day. True to my word, I arrived at his doorstep and entered using a key he had entrusted to me. Upon entering the shop, I saw him sprawled on the floor, his body pale and marked with strange red welts or burns. As I went to render what aid I could, I caught a glimpse of a horrible thing—it seemed to resemble a terrible toothy fish from the lightless abysses of the oceans, only it had a somewhat unreal quality about it. In any case, I retreated from the store and contacted you. Fortunately, Mr. Wedenberg does not have any relatives in town who might check up on him and I have provided the cover story that he is out of town seeking some rare books."

If the investigators ask for additional information or speculation, he will say the following:

"I suspect that the creature is somehow associated with a book or item in the store. I have read, in my studies, that some masters of arcane lore would bind terrible beings to protect their tomes and items. If this is the case, then the being is probably confined to a certain area around the item. I suspect that the item is the tome I saw open on the table in front of my unfortunate friend. Destroying the book or item might banish the creature, but it is just as likely or perhaps even more likely that this would free the being, enabling it to ravage and attack wherever it pleases."

At this point, it is up to the players to decide what to do.

Investigation

Investigating Preston

If the investigators check up on Preston's academic credentials (a wise, but unnecessary precaution), they will be able to learn that he is a noted scholar in the fields of philosophy and religion. They will also gather the impression that some of his colleagues regard him as having some unusual interests, but no more so than many other academics.

If the investigators check on Preston's more esoteric background, they should be able to learn through some effort that he has a reputation as a man who seeks out rare, unusual and even dangerous books.

If the investigators decide to check into his background, they will learn about the tragic accident. If they make inquiries about his personality and such, they will learn that all of his contacts and associates regard him as a very forthright, respectable and amiable man.

Map

The map details the bookstore. The store is located in an old part of town. On one side is an antique store and on the other is a candle shop.

The shop has glass display windows in the front, which are crowded with books. Like most bookstores of this type, the interior smells a bit musty and is a riot of texts and other such items.

Range of the Guardian: The circle marks the limits in which the Guardian can move as long as the seal is intact.

Desk: The checkout counter for the store. The body of Wedenberg lies on the floor behind the desk (relative to the front of the store).

Tome: The source of the trouble, this book rests on the desk. The Guardian cannot, as long as the seal is intact, go more than twenty feet from the book.

Restroom: A restroom.

Storage: A storage area for books. The safe is located here as well. Preston will not permit any looting. There are numerous occult works in the area, but the tome is the only actual mythos work.

Action

The action begins when the investigators attempt to deal with the creature.

The creature patrols the area around the tome diligently. It can travel up to twenty feet from the seal. It will initially observe the investigators for a short while, unless they move right at the tome. It will then strike at the investigator nearest the tome. For dramatic effect, the initial attack should come from the floor or out of a piece of furniture.

If the investigators attempt to destroy the creature with force (which is likely), they will fail. If they create a significant disturbance, it is likely that the police will be called and this will no doubt lead to serious problems. If they ask Preston for advice, he will have the following to say:

"If you could acquire a copy of the seal on the book I might be able to work out a way of dispelling the creature. I have a trinket that might prove useful in keeping the creature away while you copied the symbols and marks."

If the investigators accept his aid, he will provide them with a small Elder Sign (about the size of a half-dollar) on a chain. The Sign can be used to block the creature and keep it at bay. In game terms, an investigator can use it to block the creature's attacks using his Fist attack % as a parry roll. The Keeper might also call for Luck rolls to permit a blocking attempt if the creature attacks from an unusual place, such as through the floor or furniture. If the parry roll succeeds, the creature is thwarted on that attempt.

If the investigators think to bring along something capable of making a fast copy, such as a camera, they should be able to get a copy of the seal quickly and escape. If they attempt to draw the seal it will take at least three minutes to copy it (have the player roll the investigator's drawing skill to make an accurate and useful copy) and they will be under attack the whole time.

If the investigators take the tome, the creature will follow along with the book. If they destroy the tome and the seal, the creature is free. It will terrorize the area, attacking everything it encounters until someone deals with it. In this situation, the investigators will have to track it down, which will prove quite difficult.

If the investigators get an accurate copy of the seal on the tome to Preston, he will set to work finding a spell to counter it. It will take him 1D4+2 days to track down the spell, less time if some of the investigators can aid him (Keeper's discretion, but the investigators would need some Cthulhu Mythos to know what to look for).

When Preston acquires the spell he will accompany the investigators to the store. He will need to be within the creature's range for the completion of the spell (this will take four combat rounds). During this time he must be protected-if he is incapacitated the spell will be ruined. If the spell succeeds, the seal will be "wiped" clean and the creature will shatter into fragments and vanish.

Conclusion

The adventure comes to a conclusion when either the Guardian of the Tome or the investigators are defeated. If the Keeper intends to run the adventures in the series, it is imperative that Preston survives (find a plausible, but not obvious, way of doing this).

If the investigators are defeated or give up, Preston will call in others to deal with the problem. The Keeper might wish to bring it about that deaths are involved and, upon hearing of these consequences, the investigators might suffer a 1D3 Sanity Point loss.

If the investigators defeat the Guardian, they should receive a 1D6 Sanity Point Reward. Preston will be suitably impressed with their abilities and will serve as a useful aid to them in future adventures. Finally, if the Keeper has elected to run this adventure as part of the series, then part of the stage will have been set.

New Mythos Being

Guardian

Char	Rolls	Averages
STR	n/a	n/a
CON	n/a	n/a
SIZ	n/a	n/a
INT	1D6	3
POW	2D6+6	13
DEX	1D6+12	15

Move: 10

Average Damage Bonus: n/a

Weapons: Strike 60% 1D8.

Armor: None, but not affected by material weapons.

Spells: None

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8

Description: Guardians are strange beings and vary greatly in appearance, although most appear like abstract, distorted and translucent three-dimension images of terrestrial creatures. It is not known whether Guardians are summoned or created, but in any case they have only appeared in conjunction with mythos magic.

Guardians exist on a plane that only intersects the mundane plane in a very limited manner—they can sense and be sensed by mundane creatures and can attack them. They themselves, however, are all but invulnerable to attack by material means. They can, however, be assailed by magic, repelled by the Elder Sign and could be harmed by suitable energies producible by human science.

Guardians are always bound to a particular area or item. When the area or item is disturbed, the Guardian is released or summoned and attacks everyone within the area, with the exception of its master (the one who cast the spell).

Guardians attack by intersecting the body of their target and altering their state every so slightly. This creates a disruptive effect that leaves welts and burns on the target's body. This attack bypasses armor and damages the flesh and organs directly.

Guardians can move through most material objects with ease, although certain energy fields (such as strong electrical fields) prevent their passing and actual harm them. Guardians often use this ability to launch surprise attacks on their targets.

Guardians are limited to remaining within a certain specified distance of the seal they are bound to.

New Spells

Seal Guardian

This spell is used to create an enchanted seal which either creates or summons (no one is sure which) a magical Guardian. The Guardian remains bound into the seal until the seal is disturbed (this is defined by the caster and can be as simple as approaching a certain distance from the seal). When the seal is created, the caster must specify the range of the Guardian. The maximum range is a number of feet equal to the caster's POW. The Guardian will seek to slay all that enter the area except the creator of the seal. Once freed, the Guardian can only be returned to the seal by the caster, who must command it to return.

Creating the seal requires the material from which the seal is to be constructed (this could be a book clasp, a lock or even an engraving on a wall) and one point of POW from the creator. The seal must be bathed in two handfuls of the caster's blood. When the ritual is finished, the Guardian will appear and enter the seal.

Destroying the seal (it is no tougher to destroy than the material it is made from) releases the Guardian. Freed Guardians typically set out attacking all living things around them until they are destroyed or one month passes. After one month, they lose the ability to interact with the mundane world.

Dispel Guardian

This spell is used to disrupt the seal that binds a Guardian. The disruption wipes the seal clean of the magical marks and banishes the Guardian. To cast the spell, the caster must have been able to study the signs and marks of the seal (or an accurate copy). If the caster has not studied the seal or an accurate copy, the spell simply fails. The first part of the spell takes ten minutes to complete and the final part takes four combat rounds to finish. Unfortunately, the final part of the spell must be cast within the area in which the Guardian can range (the extent of the range is revealed by studying the seal).

The spell costs 3 magic points and 1 Sanity point to cast. The caster must match his POW against the POW of the seal's creator (the creator of this seal had a POW of 20). The caster can keep trying until he runs out of Magic Points or the spell succeeds.

New Mythos Tome

Notes on Magic: This handwritten 1762 work in English, by Jonathan Salter, contains a unusually lucid discussion of the mythos as well as clear descriptions of several spells. *Sanity loss 1D3/1D6+1; Cthulhu Mythos +3 percentiles; average 5 weeks to study and comprehend/10 hours to skim.* Contains several non-mythos "spells" (sound interesting, but do nothing) as well as Call up Dwellers of the Charnel Yard (Contact Ghoul), Symbol

of Power (Voorish Sign), Binding of the Ethereal Protector (Bind Guardian) and Virtue Against the Horrors of Beyond (Elder Sign).

The book discusses Salters dealings with ghouls and his acquisition of knowledge. The book ends with a warning against meddling in things "beyond the ken of men" and a statement that the author intends to protect his secrets from "those not worthy of the magical knowledge that cost me much to gain." When first found, the book's elaborate clasp and lock contains a seal that binds a Guardian. Opening the lock frees the guardian.

NPCs

Reginald Preston, Scholar

STR: 4 CON: 7 SIZ: 8 INT: 15 POW: 18 DEX: 6
APP: 9 EDU: 20 SAN: 72 HP: 8 DB: -1D6

Important Skills: Astronomy 11%, Bargain 65%, Credit Rating 35%, Cthulhu Mythos 11%, Library Use 85%, Natural History 20%, Persuade 55%, Psychology 25%, Occult 60%, Philosophy & Religion 80%

Languages: French 41%, Latin 60%, German 41%, Spanish 16%, Japanese 11%, Russian 15%, Chinese 12%

Weapons: Fist 50% 1D3-1D6

Spells: Elder Sign

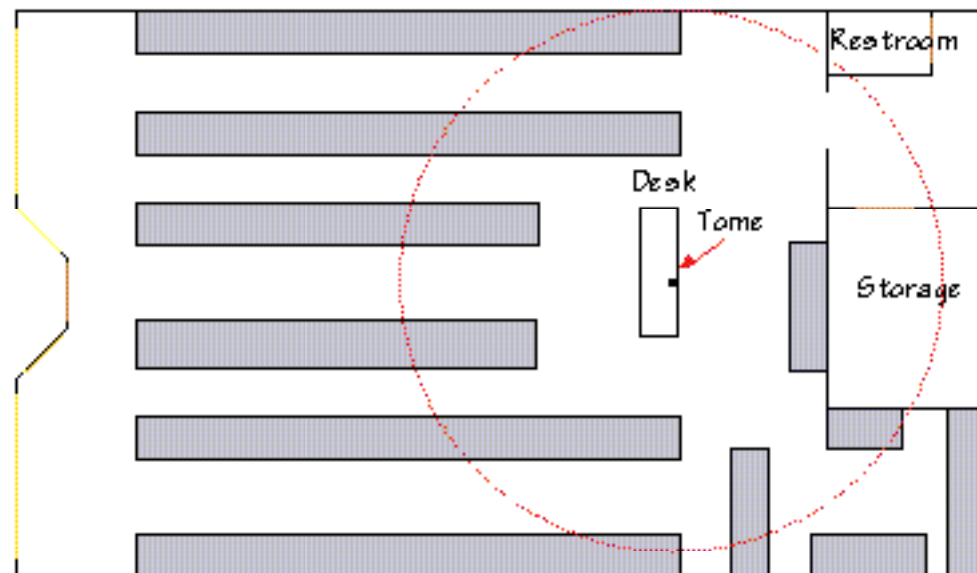
Description: At the age of eight, Preston was in terrible automobile accident that killed his parents and left him physically crippled. Fortunately, even at that young age, Preston had an indomitable will that prevented him from giving in to despair. Taken in by his uncle, a noted professor of religion, Preston was set upon a path of learning. By the time he was twenty-three, he held two doctorates and was considered one of the foremost scholars in the fields of philosophy and religion. His scholarly pursuits would have led him to a notable, if mundane, career if not for his chance discovery of a strange text at an old bookstore. This book, a minor mythos text, started him on a path of strange research into the occult and the mythos itself. Since that time Preston has been diligently pursuing clues to the true nature of the world.

Physically, Preston is a very thin man who is missing both legs and half of one arm. He has scars across his face and is confined to a wheel chair most of the time. He has prosthetic legs and a prosthetic arm, but the severity of his injuries and later illnesses prevents him from being very active physically. Mentally, Preston is extremely sharp and displays a powerful and influential personality.

Preston recognizes the mythos as a grave threat to humanity and is dedicated to doing all he can to protect the world from this menace. Preston's one weakness is that he hopes to find some magic which will cure his body.

The bookstore Keeper's Map

Range of the Guardian



The bookstore

