

CALL of
CTHULHU



THE HOWL OF THE
CHIMERAS

ALBERT ESTRADA

Shadowlands

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SPOILER ALERT!

This sample contains **spoilers** for the *The Howl of the Chimeras* Scenario. Read at your own discretion.

WARNING:

This product is intended for a mature audience and contains material that may disturb readers or players. It includes content that goes beyond what is typically found in Lovecraft's works, such as sexual violence and abuse (towards both women and men), emasculation, self-harm, necrophagy, and the sacrilegious use of human remains, alongside various manifestations of madness. Very little of this can be justified by the historical setting of the adventure. Most of it consists, quite simply, of atrocities that reflect the horrors hidden within the walls of Dewar Manor.



INTRODUCTION

CHIMERA:

Noun, feminine. From Latin *chimaera*, from Greek *χίμαιρα* *chímaira*.

1. A dream or illusion born of the imagination, pursued or longed for despite being highly unlikely to come true.
2. A mythical creature depicted with the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a dragon.

You're finally awake. Lord Dewar and the others are waiting for you. They need you to breathe life into this story once again. A story that is always the same, yet always different. Some aspects may feel familiar, while others, I trust, will be nothing like what you or your players imagined.

The bitter taste of inevitability is, of course, ever-present.

The fate of the protagonists in this tale is sealed, and there's little they can do to escape it. In this sense, the adventure stays true to the style of the master from Providence. However, that doesn't mean the game is entirely on rails. Like rats trapped on a sinking ship, the characters are free to run about as they please, gnaw through ropes, jump into the sea, or hide deep within the ship's hold. But sooner or later, the water will reach them, and they'll never make it to shore.

References to the Great Old Ones or the Dreamlands are almost entirely absent.

Of course, you could season the tale with the infamous forbidden tomes so typical of Lovecraft's work, hiding them among the books in the manor's library. You could place the remains of a minor Mythos creature in Lord Dewar's private collection of horrors. You could sprinkle the ramblings of the asylum's residents with references to the Dreamlands... but doing so risks spoiling the recipe.

Let me explain why.

As in Lovecraft's work, the descent into madness is an essential part of this story. However, here, the supernatural elements don't threaten the existence of humanity, nor do they drive characters insane at the mere glimpse of their grotesque magnificence. Instead, they are so subtle that one might even question whether they are real at all. Isn't that

what madness is? When horror becomes too tangible, it loses some of its ability to disturb us. It becomes ordinary.

The terror in *The Howl of the Chimeras* is not cosmic, inevitable, colossal, or unfathomable. It hasn't been lying dormant for eons, waiting to unleash an arbitrary catastrophe upon a few unlucky souls. The horror in this story is personal, intimate, contained, insidious, elusive, and mundane... dare I say, vulgar!

The characters won't have the comfort of knowing that all of humanity shares in their fall into the abyss. Their dreadful fate is theirs alone. There is no looming Mythos threat to make the investigators feel insignificant... and, as a result, the horror they experience is far more personal.

You wouldn't try to evoke the creeping terror of a spider crawling under your clothes by using giant spiders, would you? Of course, giant spiders can still make you panic—there's no doubt about that! But that's a different kind of fear. So let Atlach-Nacha keep weaving quietly in the Abyss of Voormithadreth. You can save her for another adventure.

Bigger doesn't always mean better.

One last thing before I open the doors of Dewar Manor to you—something that perhaps doesn't even need to be said... This story is yours: yours and your group's.

Throughout the adventure, I've provided details to create the best possible experience, but this is by no means the only way to run the game. You may have your own approach to the story, so use this version as a framework and shape it into the best experience for you and your players. Don't worry if, to do so, you need to make changes to the guidelines presented here.

And if that means turning Lord Dewar into a deranged priest of the Black Pharaoh to satisfy the purist cravings of a table full of Mythos enthusiasts, then so be it.

INFORMATION FOR THE KEEPER

SYNOPSIS

The protagonists of this story are three scoundrels who've set their sights on stealing an Incan treasure from Lord Amadeus Dewar, a wealthy Scottish nobleman with a mysterious, adventurous past.

Unbeknownst to them, the aristocrat is fully aware of their plans and intends to use their recklessness for his own ends. Lord Dewar seeks to bring his loved ones back from the dead, and these criminals will become the unwitting vessels for their return.

By the time the story begins, the process has already started. The characters have forgotten who they really are and have taken on the identities of the deceased individuals Lord Dewar is trying to retrieve from the underworld. However, the transformation is not yet complete. Part of the characters' original selves still clings to their minds. It is this part that drives them to steal the noble's legendary treasure, creating a conflict between who they believe they are and the feelings stirring inside them. It's also this part that emerges during their dreams, warning them that something is terribly wrong.

Their nightmares, investigations, and the impossibility of finding a treasure that was never really within their grasp will ultimately lead them to confront the nobleman and uncover the horrifying truth. Whether they choose to accept their fate or Lord Dewar forces his will upon them, the cycle will begin again, identical to the last, with no memory of what they experienced at their deranged host's spa.

BACKGROUND

The story is set in 1896, during the final years of Queen Victoria's reign (it's best not to share the exact date with your players), in an unspecified coastal location in Scotland, not far from England.

The investigators are two petty thieves and a cabaret singer turned prostitute, who believe they are Arthur Wiltshire, Lord Dewar's nephew; Sir Jasper Bramley, Arthur's best friend and Dewar's protégé; and Miss Gladys Cosgrove, an up-and-coming opera star engaged to Mr. Wiltshire.

Lord Dewar is, simply put, a retired player character. He holds the title of *laird*, a Scottish rank below that of baron but above gentleman. He's also a doctor, taxidermist, and an expert in anthropology and the occult. In his youth, he was a hunter and explorer, traveling across Africa, South America, and Asia. After the tragic deaths of most of his family, Dewar had a near-death experience that convinced him he could cross the veil between worlds and bring back those now residing in the realm of Hades.

His explorations into this realm led him to surround himself with an eclectic group of collaborators (most of them unwilling) who live at his mansion, which has been partially converted into a spa for the wealthy. With these individuals—and the investigators—Dewar conducts secret experiments designed to help him achieve his ultimate goal. To do this, he induces death in his subjects and then revives them to question them about what they've seen beyond the veil. It's a risky procedure, but Dewar is highly skilled and knows what he's doing.

THE SCENARIO

After a grueling journey from London, where an ill-timed duel forced the group to hasten their trip to Scotland, the investigators will awaken in Dewar Manor and have the chance to dine with the lord and the other guests. They'll meet most of the spa's residents and discover their unsettling peculiarities. From here, their discreet search for the treasure will begin, leading them to uncover disturbing secrets about the estate and, perhaps, sparking conflicts with one another or with other characters. Every time they try to rest, they'll be plagued by increasingly disturbing nightmares, which will become more revealing over time, offering new pieces of the puzzle. These visions will gradually creep into their waking hours, increasing their sense of dread and the urgency of the danger they face.

Depending on how their relationships develop with Lord Dewar and the other characters, the eccentric doctor might invite them to explore the mysterious world that so fascinates him. However, submitting to such experiments is by no means necessary to the progression of the scenario.

As frustration mounts, the investigators may attempt to escape (something they'll soon discover is impossible) or decide to confront Dewar. He will eventually reveal the truth of what's happening and offer them a choice: they can willingly submit to his will, or if they refuse, he will force them into submission.



THE TRUTH

Here's what actually happened at Dewar Manor concerning the real Arthur, Jasper, and Gladys:

Jasper and Arthur arrived at Dewar Manor when they were around fourteen years old. As outlined in their character histories, Jasper experienced his first romance with Lord Dewar, but after Arthur and his mother, Fidelia, arrived three years later, Jasper's affections shifted from the laird to his nephew. Then Gladys arrived, and Arthur fell hopelessly in love with her, sparking jealousy in Jasper.

After recovering financially, Arthur's father, Jonathan, returned to Scotland, reconciled with his wife, and moved his family into the manor, which had been renovated to house the Wiltshires. One night, a fight broke out, resulting in a fire that claimed both Jonathan and Fidelia, despite Amadeus' desperate attempts to save his sister.

Arthur and Jasper didn't leave Dewar Manor to study in London, even after Fidelia's death. Gladys' presence helped Arthur quickly recover from his loss, which in turn helped Lord Dewar heal.

However, tragedy continued to plague the doctor. Consumed with jealousy over Arthur and Gladys' seemingly unbreakable bond, Jasper devised a scheme to break them apart by forging love letters and attributing them to the soprano. The lovers quarreled, and Gladys sought refuge in the stable with her favorite horse. Perhaps they could have reconciled the next day, but when Gladys fled after rejecting unwanted advances from Garrett, she was thrown from her horse and died just a short distance from the estate.

Gladys' brother, who was also staying at Dewar Manor at the time, blamed Arthur for her death. Wracked with guilt and still unable to process his mother's passing, Arthur saw an opportunity to end his life in a duel, which took place the next morning while Gladys' body still lay unburied. Lord Dewar hunted down Arthur's killer and had him sent to rot in prison. He didn't kill him because he was Gladys' brother, though he was tempted.

The laird thought capturing Arthur's killer would bring him some relief, but even executing him wouldn't have soothed his pain when, later that afternoon, he discovered that Jasper had poisoned himself. Dewar's attempts to revive him were too late.

The funeral for the three young friends was held quickly. Lord Dewar retreated to the greenhouse his sister had loved so much, devastated and unable to find solace.

It hadn't been more than a week after the funeral when Lord Dewar, overwhelmed by the weight of these tragedies, decided to hang himself in his study. As the breath left his body, he experienced a near-death vision and came to the conclusion that, in that liminal space between life and death, he could enter the realm of Hades, reunite with his loved ones, and bring them back—snatching them from the hands of Death itself.

Already knowledgeable in the occult, Dewar realized that he might need the bodies of the deceased, so he had Dove dig up the corpses and preserve them for him. Unsurprisingly, this did not sit well with the rest of his household staff, who soon abandoned him en masse.

Lord Dewar couldn't afford to have a group of superstitious servants spreading rumors about him among the noble houses of Scotland, so he ordered Dove to kill them all. After all, who would care about the disappearance of a few servants?

Once that was taken care of, Dewar began his experiments and established the spa, hoping to attract individuals who could serve his scientific inquiries. Finally, when he was ready to embark on the final phase of his project, he devised a plan to lure in the people he had selected to replace his family, with the help of his two trusted accomplices.

Dove and Lenora Redding first found Caroline Gates, the cabaret singer, in a seedy theater in Covent Garden. Through her, they arranged a meeting with William Bedford, a small-time thief and one of her regular clients (his lucky penny is, in fact, a token from the brothel where Caroline works).

William and Caroline had originally met through Samuel Gates, her brother and a friend of Henry Bedford, William's brother. Henry Bedford and Samuel Gates were both involved in a revolutionary, anarchist, and criminal workers' conspiracy (the metal token William carries was indeed a gift from Henry, who had received it from Samuel as repayment for a loan).

In any case, posing as disgruntled servants who had "heard things," Mr. Dove and Mrs. Redding charmed William Bedford in a grimy tavern on the banks of the Thames with a story about an Incan treasure, subtly manipulating him into embarking on a mission to steal it—along with his brother Henry and Caroline. Sneaking onto the estate was easy, of course, because the laird and his men were expecting them. They were captured, locked in the catacombs, and that's where the reprogramming began—to transform them into three entirely different people: Jasper, Arthur, and Gladys.



HOW TO RUN THIS ADVENTURE

Much like a game of chess, the main narrative of this story is divided into three parts: the opening, mid-game, and endgame.

The **opening** covers the introduction of the story and has a fairly linear progression. This allows you to prepare it as thoroughly as you like and start the narration strongly, giving the players time to ease into their characters.

The **mid-game** is essentially an open-world scenario, with multiple possible clues, locations, and removable scenes that can be accessed independently and do not follow a specific sequence. There isn't even a set number of puzzle pieces that the investigators need to find to solve the mystery. Like a puzzle on *Wheel of Fortune*, the players can keep adding clues until they think they've figured out the hidden solution and then choose to solve it.

The **endgame** leads inexorably to a stalemate of sorts, with a predetermined outcome that the investigators can't change significantly. However, this doesn't mean, as already mentioned, that the players will feel restricted. That frustration typically arises when players are forced to follow a set course of action that aligns with the Keeper's desires or expectations. In this adventure, the characters should be free to act however they choose. While their choices won't alter their ultimate fate, this is not because they lack freedom of action or because their choices are ignored or manipulated unfairly—it's simply due to the nature of the trap they're caught in.

None of the groups that have played this adventure so far have complained about the ending. Frustration in the mid-game (feeling stuck and unsure where to go next) is a much greater threat to the players' enjoyment than a doomed conclusion. If the players feel stuck, make things happen... even if it inconveniences the laird.

HOW TO HANDLE LORD DEWAR

When running this story, you'll need to balance your needs as the Keeper with those of the main antagonist, Lord Dewar.

Of course, your needs must take priority, but you also can't let Lord Dewar behave like a clueless puppet, as that would break the illusion you're crafting through the narrative. He is your puppet, but the players shouldn't see the strings.

Lord Dewar wants everything to remain calm. He wants the investigators to relax, do nothing, never uncover anything, and stay in the mansion with him forever. The last

thing he wants is to confront them, so he should do his best to keep the peace. You, on the other hand, require the exact opposite. You need Dewar to talk about the world of the dead and even to encourage the investigators to explore it, despite it being a terrible move for him strategically. This contradiction can be explained by assuming that poor Lord Dewar believes that every session with his machine further solidifies the connection between his family's souls and the investigators' bodies, even though you and I know that this isn't the case.

At some point, it is even necessary for Dewar to end up confessing in a fit of anger what's really going on, despite it being in his best interest to stay quiet. After all, if it worked for Jack Nicholson's character in *A Few Good Men*, it can work here too.

REACHING THE CLIMAX

The main challenge in running this scenario is controlling when the final confrontation occurs. The adventure ends when the investigators confront Lord Dewar, but each group's patience and timing may vary significantly. The difficulty isn't just that you don't know what time you'll get home for dinner. The real challenge is managing the pace of revelations, the growing tension, and so on—based on timing you don't fully control.

You do, of course, have ways to try and hasten or delay this confrontation, but don't make the mistake of thinking the investigators need to explore each nook and cranny of the laird's land or find every clue before resolving the adventure. It's more about a feeling, like shifting gears in a car. Thanks to your experience behind the wheel, you know when it's time to change gears. Similarly, you need to ensure the story reaches its climax at the right moment, which might require giving the players a subtle nudge. No one knows your group, their pace, and the levers you can pull with them better than you do.

The truth is, achieving a satisfying ending is much easier than it seems. The players' own frustration will likely push them toward the final confrontation once they have all the necessary pieces of the puzzle, even if they're too tired to piece them together successfully or don't want to spend the time doing so. Everything will fall into place a moment too late, and with a bit of luck, you'll create a memorable moment of surprise and revelation.

However, don't worry if you don't hit that perfect note. It's okay if the climax comes slightly earlier or later than expected, or if a player figures out what's really happening behind the walls of the spa ahead of time. Don't be afraid of the players solving the mystery on their own—this won't

diminish their enjoyment at all. Don't cheat by hiding clues they should have found; that won't lead to a bigger surprise, but to a sense of being cheated.

MANAGING THE CLUES

There is one key piece of information that you must ensure the players come across before they confront the doctor, so that the final revelations don't feel like they're pulled out of thin air. This crucial detail is the **existence of the Bedford siblings and Caroline Gates**, even if the investigators don't learn much else about them.

The **police Wanted poster** or the **theater production poster** (see the game aids at the end of the book) should appear early in the story, so that the solution has been right in front of them the whole time. Ideally, the players will even have forgotten about it by the time everything clicks into place. The adventure offers several locations where these clues can be found, but don't feel limited by them. Make sure at least one of the two discoveries happens, even if you have to ignore the dice rolls. If the players haven't found it by the middle of the story, force the clue before it's too late.

That said, remember that not every part of the map needs to be explored. Think of these pages like a pantry full of ingredients or a grand buffet. The idea is to provide everything you need to serve the best possible meal for your group's tastes, but that doesn't mean you should pressure them to eat everything as if they were little children. It's fine if there are leftovers.

In fact, many elements in this story (like Lady Edna Dewar, the mysterious bandaged man, the lascivious shepherdesses, the rumors about the mansion, or the ghostly woman wandering the gardens at night) aren't meant to provide clues to the mystery or mislead the investigators with red herrings. They exist purely to build tension through their eerie and unsettling nature.

Don't be too rigid about where clues are found or which characters deliver key information. The suggested discoveries for each location are merely guidelines. For instance, a book that could be found on the nightstand in the doctor's quarters might just as easily be discovered in his office, on a side table near the fireplace, or even left behind on a lounge in the spa's solarium—especially if it's a clue that helps move the story forward.

As for pacing, you control when the major clues are revealed, as the most significant information comes from the investigators' nightmares. However, the players may be more focused on other aspects of the investigation and might not fully grasp how much insight their dreams offer.

Some groups might even try to avoid sleeping altogether. Luckily, you have plenty of ways to derail such plans—whether through drugged tea, **POW** resistance rolls to resist sleep, hallucinations caused by sleep deprivation, and so on.

If the characters become frustrated or seem like they're ready to give up, you can have them stumble upon a piece of the treasure in the first place they search. I've run this adventure many times, and it's surprising how easily most groups accept finding exactly what they're looking for in the most improbable places. As the saying goes, "don't look a gift horse in the mouth."

However, remember that the same logic applies here as it does with Lord Dewar: there's a difference between what the characters want and what the players want. For example, the investigators may be thrilled to find one of the pre-Columbian masks, but that doesn't necessarily mean the players will be equally excited to continue the treasure hunt. After hours of play, finding one of the six pieces and realizing there are five more to go can leave players feeling discouraged. It all depends on your group. If you sense that this could happen, it's better to frustrate the investigators than the players—make that mask disappear. And if it happens despite your best efforts, channel



An easy way to manage clues is to keep all the handouts in a folder. When the investigators find something at a location, sift through those clues and give them the one you think best fits the story at that moment, regardless of the location they're in—unless, of course, discovering that clue there would create a glaring inconsistency.

the group's frustration toward the final confrontation. If all else fails, have the mask fall and shatter at the first opportunity, revealing that it wasn't gold after all, and use it to drive the story toward its conclusion.

Of course, you don't have to rely solely on the treasure or the consequences of failing to obtain the money the investigators came for. You can also use their personal backstories to keep them invested in the mansion: the looming threat of Scotland Yard, the fear of losing a limb to gangrene without medical attention, a desire for revenge against the laird, or the curiosity to uncover Dewar Manor's many mysteries.

A FEW FINAL TIPS

Beyond that, the tips I can offer for running this adventure are the same as for any horror or mystery story:

- * Play with the symbolism and metaphors in the adventure. Both Lord Dewar and the investigators are desperately chasing chimeras.
- * Create an immersive atmosphere with dim lighting and a fitting soundtrack. Consider using an audio track for the piano and another for Arthur's childhood music box—ideally, they should share the same melody.
- * Leverage the synergy between the players' confusion and the investigators' disorientation. If you can align the mood of the table with the emotions of the characters, you can use one to enhance the other.
- * Pay attention to narrative opportunities that the players create and use them to your advantage. Don't just rely on conjuring nightmares based on their fears—exploit the situations that arise when they split up while exploring

Dewar Manor or when they accidentally reveal critical information to the wrong characters. Don't let the adventure run on autopilot.

- * Take your time with descriptions, and don't rush the pacing. Let the story simmer slowly.
- * Avoid turning the session into a tedious search of every nook and cranny of Dewar Manor, or forcing the investigators to interrogate all the residents for clues. The suggested discoveries for each location are there to ensure the investigators always find something of interest, not to make them feel they need to scrutinize every detail.
- * End a scene when it has run its course. Once a scene has been fully explored and there's nothing left to gain, use a natural interruption to move things along. The sudden appearance of Dove or Lord Dewar, a distant piano melody, a scream in the night, or any similar event can help wrap up a dying scene and keep the story flowing smoothly.

For my part, I'd advise you to play this module in a single session. Even if you have to shorten the game a bit, you'll likely get a more satisfying result from a single four-hour session than from five two-hour ones. This is because the narrative dynamic of this story is precisely about building tension until everything explodes.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The information in this book has been organized to make it easy to reference and serve as a practical tool during the game. Each section's title is designed to convey the core idea of the scene, so you can grasp its essence at a glance without needing to reread the entire passage. Important concepts are repeated in various sections to ensure they're easily accessible whenever relevant. That said, it might be helpful to create your own notes, highlight key sections with colored markers, or even cut out parts you find unnecessary or don't plan to use. Don't worry about trying to memorize every detail of the scenario—this isn't a test. A careful read-through will help the ideas stay in your mind, and when you sit down to play, you'll find that the details you thought you'd forgotten will resurface at just the right moments, adding to the scene you're playing.

Despite the length of the text, this isn't an especially long adventure. The module offers many paths and choices, but you only need to follow one to reach the intended conclusion, which can easily be done in a single session. One great thing about *The Howl of the Chimeras* is that it can be replayed with different groups. This way, your experience mirrors Lord Dewar's perspective on the story, somewhat like the movie *Groundhog Day*. Imagine that each adventure you run is a continuation of the previous one. You could even incorporate events from earlier groups as clues in future sessions: "Why is there a sword hidden under your bed, Jasper?" However, other events will need to be reset. For example, it wouldn't be fair if a group missed out on Lady Edna just because the last group killed her while trying to steal her ring. Make sure additions enhance the experience, but don't let them detract from it.

Above all, I urge you, please don't push your group toward the suggested resolution come hell or high water.

I'll be honest: I'm extremely proud of the conclusion I present here, and it's worked wonderfully every time I've run it. But if circumstances push against it, let it go. Player agency is more important than any ending someone could come up with, no matter how spectacular it might be.

HOW TO PRESENT THIS ADVENTURE TO THE GROUP

The first thing you need to clarify is that this is a deeply unsettling story, and it may contain elements that some participants find disturbing. If they know the game, they're probably already expecting this, but there are sensitive scenes that

involve sexual abuse, which aren't typically part of Lovecraft's works or a standard *Call of Cthulhu* game.

It's also worth clarifying that, depending on how things go, the investigators might end up turning against each other. This is much more common in adventures of this genre, where the heroes are at serious risk of losing their sanity and becoming a danger to their own allies, but some groups aren't prepared to handle this well or simply do not want that experience.

Set up the mechanisms you think are appropriate and effective as a group to ensure you can enjoy this experience safely, or scrap it altogether if you feel the risks outweigh the benefits.

Once you've agreed to play *The Howl of the Chimeras* and decided how to approach it, you can introduce the story and its characters to the players so they can choose who they want to portray. If you read the background information on the character sheets, you'll notice that the text switches between second and third person, which might seem like a stylistic oversight. In reality, this is intentional, and you can point it out to the players after the game: the sections written in second person refer to the character's true identity, which Lord Dewar is trying to suppress, while the third-person sections correspond to the fictional identity the doctor has tried to impose through his hypnotic techniques.

WHAT TO DO WHEN PLAYERS ASK QUESTIONS

After reading their character sheets, or perhaps later, during the game, players might have questions about aspects of their backstory that, deliberately or not, were left unclear. One common question that tends to come up is whether the duel was fought with swords or pistols. Another frequent question is whether Gladys Cosgrove had been to Lord Dewar's mansion before.

Don't clarify it. Even if they discuss it and directly ask you to settle it, do not explain.

These kinds of inconsistencies do not present a problem. They represent conflicting memories because the investigators' minds are filled with false memories. That's precisely what this adventure is about—experiencing these kinds of situations and being unsettled by them. Correcting these inconsistencies undermines the ultimate goal for which they were introduced: to subconsciously alert the players that nothing is as it seems.

When players ask these types of questions, give different excuses for not answering them. You could simply say you don't know because the book doesn't clarify, or that you don't remember. If they keep pressing, you can tell them



Following the same rule of alternating between second and third person, when introducing the adventure to your group, you can start by saying, “You are three scoundrels who’ve decided to steal a fortune from a Scottish lord,” addressing the players directly. Then, pull out the character sheets from the folder, glance at them, and continue, “Now, I’ll introduce the protagonists of this story, and you can choose who you want to become. First, we have Arthur Wiltshire, a dilettante and political activist, nephew to the lord...” From that point onward, refer to the characters in third person for the rest of the presentation.

their characters don’t recall, but ultimately, does it really matter if the duel was with swords or pistols? You could also throw the question back at them—“Why don’t you tell me?”—and pretend to hand over narrative control.

If, despite everything, the players insist on investigating a particular detail, such as examining Arthur’s hand wound, you’ll be forced to clarify without any ambiguity that the injury was caused by a sword blade, even if you had previously agreed that the duel was fought with firearms. After the game, you can remind the players of all those moments and they will enjoy the revelation that comes from viewing them with the perspective they have now.

Despite your best efforts, it’s possible that your players might decide you’re messing with them and become determined to figure out what’s really going on, rather than seeking answers within the game itself. If you reach a point of undeniable, irretrievable loss of trust from the table, you always have one last desperate option: show them the boxed text below. Seeing in writing the prediction of what they’re feeling may just change their perspective.

You might find yourself playing this story with a group that’s more inclined to let external events dictate the pace of the game. They could be hesitant to take the initiative or too afraid to confront Lord Dewar directly, worrying they might derail the Keeper’s plans. This could result in them getting stuck, unable to make the final move needed to conclude the adventure, leading to frustration, and dragging the game out endlessly. If you think this might happen, it’s a good idea to reassure them from the outset (or even during the game, if needed) that they have complete freedom to play their characters however they see fit. Encourage them to set aside any fear of “ruining the plot”

by acting in ways that feel right for their characters. Assure them they can’t break the game and nudge them to fully engage.

While you’re addressing these preliminary matters, it’s also helpful to clarify what it really means to rob Lord Dewar and the magnitude of the wealth they need.



A TRICK

There are many ways to handle your players’ questions. For instance, if the player portraying Arthur asks, “How did I get the wound on my hand?” a surprisingly effective response is: “You were bitten by a snake.” If used at the right moment, this answer can throw the players off so much that they lose the urge to keep asking. Later, during the final confrontation of the adventure, you can call back to this moment, creating a powerful sense of predestination and delivering a truly impactful conclusion.

Dewar Manor isn't a dungeon to be looted. Robbing Lord Dewar isn't about pocketing silverware, grabbing a few candlesticks, a salad bowl, a gold clock, or a painting from the first-floor landing. That won't get them anywhere close to their goal. Explain that when you describe a necklace, an old book, or a piece of furniture as valuable, it just means it's



**DEAR PLAYER OF
THE HOWL OF THE CHIMERAS,**

**DURING THIS GAME, YOU
MIGHT FEEL LIKE THE KEEPER
IS PULLING YOUR LEG,
DELIBERATELY IGNORING
THE RULES, OR THAT NEITHER
THE ADVENTURE NOR YOUR
CHARACTER QUITE MAKES
SENSE. IT MAY SEEM THAT WAY,
BUT I ASSURE YOU, IT'S NOT.**

**I ENCOURAGE YOU TO TRUST
BOTH THE MODULE AND THE
PERSON RUNNING IT. DIVE INTO
THE STORY WITH AN OPEN
MIND AND TRY TO ENJOY THE
EXPERIENCE TO THE FULLEST.**

**WHO KNOWS? BY THE END, YOU
MIGHT JUST REALIZE IT ALL
MADE SENSE.**

not a cheap trinket—it's expensive and luxurious, but it's not something that will actually help them. Reassure them that you'll be very clear when they come across something truly worth stealing, and invite them to ignore everything else: after all, they're wealthy people, not petty thieves from the docks. To escape the mess they're in, they need real money, not pocket change.

Well, actually, they *are* starving thieves—they just haven't realized it yet.

HOW TO APPLY THE RULES

This adventure was designed with the 7th edition rules of *Call of Cthulhu* in mind, though it's not difficult to adapt it to earlier editions or even other game systems. After all, the core of this story lies in the plot, not in the mechanics behind the rolls.

That said, it's important to keep a few key aspects of the module's game mechanics in mind:

The investigators' unusual situation doesn't fit neatly into the standard sanity rules of *Call of Cthulhu*. The closest equivalent in the official mechanics would be indefinite insanity during a period of underlying madness, which involves distorting the characters' backstories and allowing the Keeper to introduce hallucinations. However, it also triggers insanity episodes with even minor sanity loss, which doesn't quite suit the overall scenario. After all, the investigators are, in a sense, patients in an asylum, though the doctor who is treating them isn't interested in curing them—or in driving them insane for that matter. Instead, his goal is to turn them into entirely different people. So, the typical rules for indefinite insanity don't directly apply here.

To keep things simple, the best approach is to use the Sanity rules as though the investigators were fully lucid. This way, you won't tip off the players about what's really going on. Their characters' minds aren't healthy, but they're unaware of it.

That said, if a player asks to make a Sanity roll to "become aware" of some illusion that's distorting their perception, you should allow it. Depending on the outcome, Lord Dewar or Dove may notice and try to reverse the situation quickly, putting the investigator back into a hypnotic trance. Whether they succeed automatically, perhaps through conditioning embedded in the character's psyche, or whether the investigator resists and forces them to resort to drugs, is up to you.

Additionally, the skill percentages on the character sheets don't accurately reflect the investigators' actual abilities—sometimes they're higher, sometimes lower.

The hypnotic process they've undergone prevents them from noticing these discrepancies. Their minds find rational explanations for why they can't ride a horse properly, even though they've done so since childhood, or why they seem to have a knack for lockpicking despite never having tried it before. As the Keeper, you'll need to provide explanations to cover the truth ("It seems Lord Dewar's horses are particularly wild"), but let these inconsistencies peek through at times, only to quickly cover them up again when the investigators' actions reveal them.

Since you won't be comparing dice rolls to the skill percentages on the investigator sheets, feel free to disregard the results and decide whether they succeed or fail based on the story's needs. To help you with this approach, the real skill percentages haven't been included. Did Gladys manage to swipe the letter from Dove with a 58? If it suits the story, then she did. If not, then 58 wasn't enough.

Don't hesitate to take this approach—it's not dishonest. Keep in mind that most of the rolls the investigators make won't be genuine skill checks anyway. Everything happening in the asylum is part of an elaborate illusion. Miss Cosgrove has likely picked that lock many times before, and while her conscious self doesn't remember, her muscle memory does, making it easy for her—unless Lord Dewar has swapped it out for a newer, more secure lock that she can't pick. Dove might already know they're going to try to steal the letter because it's happened before, but he'll either let it happen or prevent it, depending on what Lord Dewar needs at the time.

Aside from critical successes, fumbles, or extreme rolls where the dice results are too important to ignore, you have plenty of room to maneuver. However, if Gladys knocks over a porcelain vase while sneaking into Dove's room, and it shatters, Dove will have no choice but to turn and catch her, even if it ruins his master's plans.

Remember, you can always award bonus or penalty dice depending on the situation, and you can even use this to mislead the players about their true chances of success. You could also ask them to roll behind the screen.

The 7th edition of *Call of Cthulhu* includes the optional "Secret Damage" rule, which wisely acknowledges that people usually can't determine (at least not with mathematical precision) the severity of their injuries or how many Hit Points they have left. The Keeper is even encouraged to call for fake **CON** rolls to confuse players about the true extent of the damage they've taken.

If this logic applies to physical injuries, it's even more relevant when it comes to Sanity points. After all, while someone might have a rough sense of their physical injuries, it's much harder to gauge their mental health accurately.

We also rarely know exactly how skilled we are in various areas. You've probably heard of the Dunning-Kruger effect, which demonstrates that people who lack competence in a particular field are often unaware of it, because the skills required to assess their ability are the very ones they lack. If players aren't sure exactly how many Hit Points their investigators have, it stands to reason that they also shouldn't be sure of the exact percentage of success for any of their skills.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Below is a quick-reference guide to all the characters in this story. You can use this summary as a handy reference while running the adventure or to keep track of the names mentioned throughout.

INVESTIGATORS

Mr. Arthur Wilthshire

23 years old. A dilettante and political activist with radical views. Son of the late Mr. Jonathan and Mrs. Fidelia Wilthshire. Nephew of Lord Amadeus Dewar and grandson of Lady Edna Dewar. Engaged to Miss Gladys Cosgrove and childhood friend of Sir Jasper Bramley. Upper class (wealthy).

Miss Gladys Cosgrove

20 years old. An up-and-coming actress, soprano, and playwright. Sister of Mr. Samuel Cosgrove and engaged to Mr. Arthur Wilthshire. Upper class (wealthy).

Sir Jasper Bramley

26 years old. An aristocrat with a passion for gambling. Son of Sir Edmund Bramley. Protégé of Lord Amadeus Dewar and childhood friend of Mr. Arthur Wilthshire. Upper class (wealthy).

Their character sheets can be found at the end of this book.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Lord Amadeus Dewar

69 years old. A retired doctor, hunter, explorer, and taxidermist. The lord of Dewar Manor and its surrounding lands, and a Scottish laird. Son of Lord Owen and Lady Edna Dewar, and half-brother (on his mother's side) to Mrs. Fidelia Wilthshire. Uncle of Mr. Arthur Wilthshire. Friend of Sir Edmund Bramley and mentor to his son, Sir Jasper Bramley. He walks with a limp and uses a cane topped with the dried head of a snake. Prone to exaggeration, he enjoys regaling others with tales of his quest for the Fountain of Youth, his

many expeditions, exotic meals he's eaten, and the injuries he's suffered. He can also discuss his family history, Dewar Manor, the spa project, or any rumors the investigators may have heard (including pre-Roman druidic cults and their "seeds of vigor"). He's eager to talk about the mysteries of the mind, near-death experiences, and the role of natural remedies and leeches in medicine. Upper class (wealthy).

Lady Edna (Felton) Dewar

87 years old. An elderly woman in a catatonic state. Once an exceptional pianist, her career ended when arthritis ruined her hands. She is the mother of Lord Amadeus Dewar (from her marriage to Lord Owen Dewar) and Mrs. Fidelia Wilthshire (from an affair with Columbus Tweddle after she was widowed). Grandmother of Arthur Wilthshire. She breathes noisily, does not speak, and does not respond to stimuli. She wears a valuable ring, and her cat, Eurydice, is always nearby. Upper class (wealthy).

Mr. Eldon Dove

47 years old. A mysterious, reserved Black butler, and Lord Dewar's trusted companion. Dewar brought him to Britain after meeting him on one of his travels, and they have shared many adventures together. Dove wears a large key around his neck, and his dog, Orpheus, always appears when needed. He speaks with a deep voice and exudes British composure. He arches an eyebrow and remains silent when spoken to, making it impossible to draw anything out of him. Working class (poor).

Orpheus

A black Great Dane owned by Eldon Dove.

Mrs. Lenora Redding

53 years old. A plump, devout nurse, she wears a conspicu-

ous crucifix around her neck and displays sickeningly sweet courtesy. She eagerly extols Christianity and criticizes the local pagan customs. She can also share rumors that Lord Dewar was bitten by a demonic creature during one of his travels. Middle class (middle class).

Miss Elisabeth Milford

19 years old. A timid, quiet maid who seems to be in a constant state of sleepwalking. She's pale, with dark circles under her eyes, keeps her gaze down, and moves mechanically, in a daze. Easily startled, she can only provide basic information about the spa's guests. Working class (destitute).

Horace O'Connell

41 years old. The Irish foreman of the crew repairing the estate wall. His crew includes Arnold O'Meara, Bennet O'Toole, and Calvin O'Sullivan, among others. He constantly chews tobacco and spits it out defiantly. Speaks with a thick Irish accent and gives curt responses. Quick to complain about the investigators' haughty attitude, he may also warn them about the dangers of the grounds, the hunting reserve, and the flirtatious shepherdesses. Working class (poor).

Garret Wilton

28 years old. A dirty, alcoholic stable hand with psychotic tendencies and an obsessive compulsion toward women. He's always scratching himself and touching his groin. He can warn the investigators about the dangers of the hunting reserve and might let slip information about the poacher, Peter Helm. Working class (destitute).

Hank and Patsy Sherman

62 and 50 years old. A pair of shepherders working for Lord Dewar. Parents of Esther, Amelia, and Flora. Uneducated, superstitious, and cunning. Patsy is the more dominant of the two. They'll apologize for their daughters if necessary, though they seem to be hiding something. They spread baseless rumors, claiming the mansion is cursed, that Lord Dewar's father hunted human prey, or that Dove is a warlock. Working class (poor).

Esther, Amelia, and Flora Sherman

26, 23, and 17 years old. The Shermans' provocative daughters, who alternate between seductive teasing and shy, feigned submission. They may share their views on the connection between life and death, their hatred for Nurse Redding, or the recent cattle attacks, which they blame on either Lord Dewar transforming into a monstrous

creature, demons from a portal to hell, or victims of the doctor's experiments, depending on which sister you ask. Working class (poor).

Selina Bainbridge

33 years old. A wild, mute woman held captive by the Shermans. She's terrified of being returned to the mansion. Working class (destitute).

Julius Collingwood

36 years old. A flamboyant painter with a loud, confident manner and trembling hands. He loves talking about his work, his inspirations, his talent as a sommelier, and the dangers posed by the shepherdesses. If the investigators gain his trust, he might share details about Lord Dewar's experiments. He's also prone to spinning extravagant tales on any subject he's asked about. Upper class (wealthy).

Henrietta "Ettie" Younis

71 years old. A tubercular fortune teller and medium. She's hunched and furtive, with a disturbing giggle that ends in coughing fits. She can talk to the investigators about India, the world of the dead, dream realms, divination, poisons, cursed treasure, the druidic cult, the laird's experiments, the kelpie the doctor has captured, or his incestuous relationship with his sister, Fidelia. Middle class (middle class).

Victor Burdett

11 years old. A blind child prodigy pianist with a distant gaze and a monotone voice, using affected phrases and pretentious vocabulary. He will talk about a piano competition, his musical kinesthesia, and his long-lost family. Upper class (wealthy).

Ralph Laverik

55 years old. A patient. Heavily bandaged and confined to a wheelchair. He can't talk properly and can only moan pitifully. Middle class (middle class).



Barnabas “Barney” Gauntlett

47 years old. A Scotland Yard inspector tasked with capturing the Bedford brothers, whom he will recognize immediately if he sees them. Serious and uptight, he is suspicious but polite. Middle class (middle class).

Peter Helm

44 years old, though he looks well into his fifties. A crab poacher who is constantly licking crab residue off his fingers. He’s extremely distrustful and will flee if he sees unfamiliar people approaching. From the first encounter, his hostility toward the laird should be made clear to prevent the investigators from introducing themselves—if they do, he’ll dismiss them as impostors. He can speak about his family’s long history of poaching, the wicked deeds attributed to Lord Owen (who was said to have hunted men), his unfaithful wife, and her lover (a smuggler). Helm believes Dewar Manor is cursed, either by the ghost of Lord Owen, an Incan treasure, or a bite from a demonic creature that Lord Amadeus suffered. He’ll also warn about the presence of Scotland Yard in the village, the dangers of the coast (filled with hidden coves), and the seductive shepherdesses. Working class (destitute).

You’ll find their game stats in the “Non-Player Characters” chapter.



Mrs. Fidelia (Tweddle) Wiltshire

Daughter of Lady Edna Dewar and Columbus Tweddle, born after Lady Edna was widowed, though the two never married. She died in a fire nearly four years ago. She would be 48 years old today.

Mr. Jonathan Wiltshire

A failed merchant who redeemed himself before his death. Husband of Fidelia and father of Arthur. He died alongside his wife. He would be 53 years old today.

Mr. Samuel Cosgrove (actually Samuel Gates)

27 years old. Brother of Gladys Cosgrove (actually Caroline Gates), currently imprisoned.

Buford Glen, Luther Avery, Perry Gilmore, and Stephen Deakin

Along with Samuel Gates, they are the other members of The Cause, the subversive group Arthur Wiltshire belongs to (though in reality, Henry Bedford is the one involved with the group).

Sir Edmund Bramley

61 years old. Father of Jasper Bramley. A brash, chauvinistic military man and adventurer, currently married to a woman as young as his son.

Eurydice

Lady Edna Dewar’s sphynx cat.

Lornell Bainbridge

The deceased husband of Selina Bainbridge, appearing only (if at all) in a photograph frame.

OTHER CHARACTERS MENTIONED IN THE STORY

Mr. Henry Bedford

A thief who believes he is Arthur Wiltshire.

Mr. William Bedford

A thief who believes he is Jasper Bramley.

Miss Caroline Gates

A cabaret dancer and prostitute who believes she is Gladys Cosgrove.

Lord Owen Dewar

A decorated military officer and father of Dr. Amadeus Dewar. Died when Amadeus was just thirteen.

Captain Columbus Tweddle

A high-ranking military officer and smuggler, best friend and comrade-in-arms of Lord Owen Dewar. He is the father of Fidelia Wiltshire. Deceased.