

With Blue Uncertain Stumbling

Trail of Cthulhu Conversion notes

“With Blue Uncertain Stumbling” is a *Call of Cthulhu* scenario written by Jeff Moeller and published in *Island of Ignorance—The Third Cthulhu Companion* by Golden Goblin Press in 2013. *Island of Ignorance* is a new collection of articles and scenarios for the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game.

The scenario takes place in Key West, Florida, ideally in the late summer of 1926. Keepers can move it to another island with some effort, and Jeff Moeller outlines options for shifting the year while maintaining historic verisimilitude.

Core clues direct the investigators to the mausoleum and, from there, the safety deposit box. As with other *Trail of Cthulhu* investigations, finding the clues is one thing; interpreting them is another. As Jeff Moeller points out in “A Top Down View On How Things Are Likely To Go, And Keeper Hints,” rash investigators may find their way to the mausoleum but then act foolishly and believe themselves successful. It is up to the Keeper to decide if they realize their error before it is too late.

Note that the print and PDF versions of *Island of Ignorance* each have their own page numbering. For ease of use, this file references the page numbers of both versions, with the pages of the print edition appearing prior to the slash.

Research and Interviews

Interview, Casa Marina Staff & Guests (page *print* 94 / *PDF* 96)

- Investigators attempting to take photographs or light measurements in preparation for photographs should note this, assuming they have **Photography**.

The Photographer and Mabel (page *print* 96 / *PDF* 98)

- Observant investigators (using either **Evidence Collection**, **Photography**, or a **simple search** conducted by looking specifically for the pattern) can notice several things:
- **Medicine** might reveal that it appears to be from a blowfly, suggesting something decaying

nearby, but searches in the vicinity of the resort come up empty.

Occult and Mythos Research, Ghostly Reflections

(page *print* 97 / *PDF* 99)

- **Occult** or appropriate research suggests that such stories transcend particular cultures.
- **Cthulhu Mythos** suggests that the ghosts of wizards might be seen in reflective surfaces for some time after their deaths.

Research, Calusan Lore, & The Isle of Bones

(page *print* 97 / *PDF* 99)

- The fly swarm might later pay Madame LePointe a visit that the investigators hear about, leaving behind a horrible, maggot-ridden corpse that flies just will not leave alone. A potential 3-point Stability loss.

Madame LePointe, Eccentric Folklorist Athletics 4, Health 4

Who's That Lady/Smugglers and Rum Dives (page *print* 99 / *PDF* 101)

- (**Streetwise** realizes that this tale is odd, if and when they make Johnny Johnson's acquaintance, as he is not together enough to swap some valuable package at a midnight rendezvous, let alone carry \$200 around).

Who's That Lady/Property, Tax and Death Records

(page *print* 99 / *PDF* 101)

- However (**Law**, or appropriate inquiry with **Bureaucracy**), all deaths must be attended—especially deaths associated with a communicable disease—so if she died on Key West in any sense, there ought to be at least a corresponding “Jane Doe” death certificate from about a year ago.

Who's That Lady/Sanitarium and a Few Odd Things

(page *print* 100 / *PDF* 102)

- However, the log (directly accessible to Alienists, Doctors, or Nurses with their special abilities, or via a pointed question with a 1-point **Bureaucracy** or **Reassurance** spend) also reflects that Ronald Bloom, the County Sexton, arrived almost immediately to pick up her body, without being called.
- **Reassurance** or **Oral History** at St. Peregrine's or **Cop Talk** at the sheriff's office reveals yet another unsolved murder.

Incident at the Sanitarium?

(page *print* 100 / *PDF* 102)

- Or, the investigators might hear news the next morning of a mysterious death at the sanitarium, and see the dead body of the senior nurse, crawling with maggots and having choked to death on...something...as flies just won't seem to leave the body alone. A potential 3-point Stability loss.

Interview, County Sexton and Gravedigger

(pages *print* 100-101 / *PDF* 102-103)

- (**leveraged core clue**) He will admit (if confronted with evidence) that he picked up a "Jane Doe" from St. Peregrine's, and either way will allow the investigators to inspect the county records showing that a "Jane Doe" was interred in said mausoleum the same day as her body left St. Peregrine's.
- Although he is simple on the surface, a 1-point **Assess Honesty** spend might, if he is engaged in a lengthy conversation, reveal that Johnny is uncomfortable with questions about the mausoleum or his shadow.

Johnny Johnson, Now With 1/3 More Soul

Athletics 9, Health 10, Scuffling 3, Weapons 5

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapons: -2 (fist), +0 (big shovel or other large improvised weapon)

Stability Loss: It is a potential 1-point Stability loss to notice how his shadow does not match his size or movements.

The Mausoleum

(page *print* 102 / *PDF* 104)

- The padlock eventually could be defeated by a crowbar or bolt cutter and a Difficulty 6 **Athletics** test, or a strong effort at lock-picking with a 3-point **Locksmith** spend.
- You should allow **Outdoorsman**, **Biology**, or **Forensics** to conclude that, given how long "Jane Doe" has been buried in there, flies shouldn't still be hanging around in any numbers.
- The window is easily climbed in, although this takes 4 rounds of boosting up and wriggling through; a Difficulty 4 **Athletics** test decreases this to 2 rounds.

Inside the Mausoleum

(pages *print* 102 & 104 / *PDF* 104 & 106)

- This is clearly unnatural (a potential 1-point Stability loss).
- This is quite clearly unnatural (3-point Stability test).
- Unless the investigators happen to have **Languages (Old Hungarian)**, they are totally incomprehensible.
- The Keeper might allow a 1-point **Cthulhu Mythos** spend, resulting in the loss of 3 Stability and 1 Sanity, to recollect certain occult stories that the grave worms who feast on the flesh of a dead wizard are said to partake of some of the wizard's soul and share some of his memories.
- A 2-point **Occult** spend reveals that the runes appear to be a sympathetic magic device, a focus intended to help some sort of magical working succeed.

The Worms Are Fat and Instructed

(page *print* 104 / *PDF* 106)

- Cautious or sharp-eyed investigators may notice, however, that if they start moving the body around, there are always flies nearby, even in the wind and rain. (**Biology**, **Outdoorsman**, or just paying specific attention notices this).

Maggot and Fly Swarm

See p. 156 of *Trail of Cthulhu*. Increase Health by 1 for every effective level, and damage by +1 for every 6 effective levels. Every area attack hit (see Armor) against the swarm kills and disperses 1 effective level (or more, if large enough, at the Keeper's discretion). The stats after the slash are for the full-strength (effective level 18) horde. (See staging notes for the possibility of scaling this up for larger groups of Investigators).

Athletics 12, Health 1/19

Hit Threshold: 3 (individually miniscule, but collectively target-rich; see Armor)

Weapon: -4/-1 (swarming); the swarm automatically hits its targets each round of combat.

Armor: none; cannot be hit by normal attacks, only area attacks (flamethrower, smoke, bug spray, flood of water, or otherwise in the Keeper's discretion).

Stability Loss: +0

Hazards and Perils After The Mausoleum, And Forcing The Issue

Three Dockside Toughs, Not Above Knifing Someone For Money (Or Clubbing Them, For That Matter)

(page *print* 104 / *PDF* 106)

Alfonso & Bob

Athletics 8, Health 8, Weapons 8

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapons: -1 (big knife)

Charlie

Athletics 10, Health 10, Weapons 7

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapons: +0 (big club)

Back in the Ballroom/Experimentation

(page *print* 106 / *PDF* 108)

- This works, and as one or more of the flies flits in front of the mirror, they see her reflection (or multiple reflections, assuming multiple flies). A potential 1-point Stability loss.

The Gravedigger's Room/The Saracenic Rituals

(page *print* 106 / *PDF* 108)

- Searching his room thoroughly, however (**Evidence Collection** or an hour of thorough, top to bottom ransacking via **simple search**, including peeling up floorboards and looking for

hidey holes) turns up something odd: a receipt for a safety deposit box signed by Johnny Johnson (with an oddly passable signature), and a key.

- This is an important **core clue**, so it will be found given time, but unless a **2-point Evidence Collection** spend is made to conduct it safely and quickly, a lengthy search will result in some negative collateral consequence (e.g., being discovered and having to deal with legal consequences).
- (**core clue**) Appropriate Interpersonal ability use (**Bureaucracy** or **Reassurance**) with the bank staff can get the investigators the story.
- This chapter takes eight hours to read (a 1-point **Library Use** or **Languages (English)** spend halves this time; a 2-point spend automatically finds the information in *With Blue Uncertain Papers* #3). The chapter contains the ritual *Reintegration of the Soul*.
- Studying the entire grimoire should be a major undertaking. It requires **Languages: Old Hungarian**. Skimming it provides 1 dedicated pool point for any Investigative ability involving transmigration of the soul and magical life extension. Poring over it provides +1 to your Cthulhu Mythos rating. It contains spells and leads to other adventures at the Keeper's discretion. Suggestions for spells would include *Enchant Blade*, *Contact Narlato* (Nyarlathotep), and a variant *Food of Life* spell that requires bathing in the victim's blood rather than eating the victim.

Endgames

(page *print* 109 / *PDF* 111)

- The aftermath finds the mausoleum door left open, the fly swarm finally dispersing, and Johnny Johnson dead and crawling with maggots, having, to all appearances, slit his own wrists with a gardening implement. A potential 3-point Stability loss.

If Your Investigators Tend To Shoot First, Ask Questions Later, And Murder Raps Be Damned

(page *print* 108 / *PDF* 110, boxed text)

Undead, Flyblown Johnny Johnson, Now With 2/3 More Soul (But Not His Own)

Fly Swarm: Johnny is now accompanied by 10 effectiveness levels of the fly swarm, which can separate from his body without impairing its functionality. See page 104 in the print edition or page 106 in the PDF edition for the capabilities of the fly swarm.

Abilities: Athletics 6, Health 11, Scuffling 8

Hit Threshold: 3

Weapons: +0 (clubbing blow)

Armor: none, but physical attacks do only 1 point of damage. Fire or magic works normally.

Stability Loss: +0

If Your Investigators Tend To Shoot First, Ask Questions Later, And Murder Raps Be Damned, Continued

(page *print* 109 / *PDF* 111, boxed text)

- The things that she has seen and done, plus the horror of the psychic infestation, should give the investigators a point in Cthulhu Mythos, cause a 6-point Stability test, and give them 1 dedicated pool point in Language: Old Hungarian.

Ye Liveliest Awfulness, With Less Soul Than Would Be Normally Appropriate

Abilities: Athletics 10, Health 9, Scuffling 8

Hit Threshold: 4

Weapons: -1 (rending, gnashing, and flailing)

Armor: none, but physical attacks do half damage due to sheer berserk rage and disinterest in pain.

Stability Loss: +0

Spot Rules For Being Out In A Hurricane

(page *print* 110 / *PDF* 112)

A smallish hurricane such as will be encountered either in the precursor storm of 1926 or the remnants of the Great Miami Hurricane increases the Difficulty Number of any General ability that the wind might affect by 2. Investigative abilities that might be affected may require an additional spend of 1 or 2 points. An Investigator blown by a direct gust of wind must make a Difficulty 4 Athletics or Fleeing test to remain standing. Movement on foot is hampered, taking twice as long. Sense Trouble or other abilities involving spotting or hearing things at a distance have their effective range to do so halved.

A Top Down View On How Things Are Likely To Go, And Keeper Hints

(page *print* 110 / *PDF* 112)

- If not, nudge them with a reminder or have an NPC suggest going to talk to the over-the-top Madame LePointe.
- They should also be teased with random glimpses of Eva in windows, rain puddles, and their shaving and compact mirrors (a 1-point Stability test).

Rewards and Repercussions

(page *print* 110 / *PDF* 112)

In a Pulp game, foiling the resurrection of Eva Esterhazy refreshes 1 pool point of Sanity. Assuming that one or more of them are not the target of her reintegration scheme, they probably never hear of any negative consequences from failure. But should they encounter Eva Esterhazy in the future (her new guise gradually shifts to resemble a mix between her current form and her natural one), give them a 4-point Stability test if they make the connection.

Eva Esterhazy, Now in One Spiritual Piece

Athletics 6, Health 7, Magic 8, Riding 7, Weapons 12

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapons: -1 (butcher knife)

Spells: Augur, Blight/Bless Crop, Candle Communication, Contact Narlato (Nyarlathotep), Enchant Item (Blade), Evil Eye, Flesh Ward, Food of Life (variant, requires bathing in the victim's blood rather than eating the victim), Heal, Levitate, Powder of Ibn-Ghazi, Wrack.

Augur

Stability Test Difficulty: 4 (3 with Occult spend and the caster's preferred divinatory materials)

Opposition: Interpreting an augury is a contest against time's Inertia of 4.

Cost: 2 Stability or Magic

Time: 10 minutes

Blight/Bless Crop

Stability Test Difficulty: 4

Cost: 2 Stability or Magic to cast. Blighting crops is a potential 2-point Stability loss.

Time: The spell requires one hour of chanting.

Candle Communication

The spell works clearly at up to ten miles; distances greater than that require each participant to make a Stability or Magic test to understand the other, with the Difficulty starting at 2 and increasing by 1 for each additional hundred miles or fraction thereof.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4

Cost: 2 Stability or Magic for communication at up to ten miles; an additional 1 for each additional hundred miles or fraction thereof.

Time: The time it takes to light a candle.

Evil Eye

This spell can be cast at any visible target at long or closer range. After the spell is cast, the Difficulty Numbers of all General ability tests are increased by 2 for the victim, and the Difficulty Number the victim faces in contests increases by 1.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4

Cost: 3 Stability or Magic

Time: 1 round

Flesh Ward

The spell costs 1 Stability or Magic to cast. Each point of Stability or Magic spent in addition to that gives the caster (or a target within close range) a pool of 2 additional Health points against nonmagical attacks. This pool is depleted as damage is taken. It lasts 24 hours or until the pool is reduced to 0.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4

Cost: 1 Stability or Magic to cast, and 1 or more to create ward pool.

Time: 5 rounds.

Food of Life (variant)

It requires bathing in the blood of a sacrificial victim. After the procedure is complete, the caster's life is extended by a year, during which time no aging will occur. The spell can then be cast each year to maintain its effects. After casting the spell the first time, the caster may appear and feel slightly more youthful; this also occurs if casting of the spell is resumed after an annual bath has been missed.

Stability Test Difficulty: 5 (4 with Biology or Medicine).

Cost: 5 Stability or Magic to cast the spell itself. Sacrificing and draining the blood of a victim, and then bathing in that blood, is a potential 7-point Stability loss.

Time: The ritual exsanguination of the victim takes 12 hours. The caster must remain in the blood for one week while fasting from food and liquids.

Heal

This spell doubles the healing rate for the target, who must be touched by the caster. **Hurt** characters refresh 4 Health pool points per day of restful activity. Hospitalized characters spend half the time convalescing. So if the character was reduced to -8 Health, he or she will be hospitalized for 4 days. The spell lasts for one week, but can be reapplied if need be.

Stability Test Difficulty: 5 (4 with Medicine)

Cost: 2 Stability or Magic

Time: 5 minutes

Levitate

This spell allows the caster to levitate any target within close range that the caster can see. The spell costs 1 Stability or Magic point for every 20 pounds that the target weighs; the Keeper should estimate the cost and may increase or decrease it if the target's shape or size seems to warrant it. The target levitates 3-5 feet above the ground. If the spell is cast on a falling target, its fall slows, and it halts several feet off the ground. For each additional Stability or Magic point spent, the caster can move the target 2 yards horizontally or vertically.

If the target is unwilling to be levitated, then the caster must make a Stability or Magic test against the target's Stability or Magic pool.

A floating target might be able to grab a hold of some sort of support. Then, the target can make an Athletics test against the caster's Stability or Magic pool. If successful, the spell is negated, and the target falls.

Stability Test Difficulty: 5

Cost: Varies (see above)

Time: One round

Wrack

The target must be within point-blank or close range. The caster must make a Stability or Magic test against the target's current Stability. If the caster wins, the victim is treated as **hurt** (though a Consciousness roll is not required) and is also blind (making many abilities unusable). Sight returns in 3 rounds, plus 1 round for every point by which the

caster succeeds at the test. The victim is treated as hurt for 15 minutes, plus 2 for every point by which the caster succeeds at the test.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4

Cost: 2 Stability or Magic

Time: 1 round of confusing hand gestures

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