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The Gatherer of Nightmares

"RPG Geek One Sheet Contest 2015"

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The Gatherer of Nightmares: a short scenario for *Trail of Cthulhu*

Setting: London, and environs, fall of 1911.

Style: Either, but most likely *Pulp*.

Non-Player Characters (in order of appearance):

- Lord Geoff Wharton. A patron of the Player Characters.
- Lord Peter DuCaine. A friend of Lord Wharton, who is suffering a mysterious malady.
- Saul Tillingsham. Lord DuCaine's faithful valet.
- Aubrey Cawthorn. Dissolute Black Magician

A new creature: “The Gatherer of Nightmares”, a kind of psychic vampire that first induces habitual night-terrors in its victims; and then it feeds off the fear that the chronic nightmares produces.

The Hook: The player Characters are asked by Lord Wharton to determine the source of young Lord DuCaine's sudden physical and mental dissolution.

The Spine: DuCaine has aroused the ire of Aubrey Cawthorn, an amoral sorcerer, who has unleashed a fiendish creature from some hellish other-world upon the hapless aristocrat.

Scenes:

1. Luncheon at the club. The Player Characters are invited to have lunch with Lord Wharton at the 'Knights of Midian' private club. This exclusive club is known to have a clientele keenly interested in esoteric and theosophical matters. It is likely that the Player Characters are known to Lord Wharton for just this reason. Lord Wharton explains to them that he is worried about the precipitous decline in the health of friend and fellow club-member, Lord Peter DuCaine. Discreet inquiries have revealed to Lord Wharton that his friend has, for the last three weeks, been plagued by the most appalling nightmares; his nocturnal screams driving all his servants from his Croydon mansion except for faithful valet, Tillingsham. Currently, Lord DuCaine is only able to sleep with the aid of dangerous quantities of morphine. Lord Wharton, suspecting some supernatural threat, wants the Player Characters to investigate further for him.

2. The DuCaine House. The Player Characters can visit DuCaine's residence. He is 'indisposed', but the the Player Characters can speak with his worried valet, Saul Tillingsham. Tillingsham initially does not want to discuss his master's private affairs, but by showing Lord Wharton's card, and using **Reassurance**, Tillingsham can be induced to reveal the following: the nightmares began with Lord DuCaine seeing 'some beast, with wings like ropy nets and eyes like flame' in the limbs of the yew tree outside his bed-room windows.
3. The Knight's Of Midian Reading Room. Lord Wharton's patronage grants them access to the club's library of occult and theosophical works. Use of either **Library Use** or **Occult** reveals that over that last eight months Lord DuCaine, and an occultist named Aubrey Cawthorn had, through the letters column of the journal 'Bright Eye of Thoth', fought a fierce and savage war of words. Cawthorn had, in one issue of the journal, described how he could, by use of ritual detailed in a Tibetan scroll summon a fiend called the 'The Gatherer of Nightmares'. He then went on to state that he could use the creature to terrorize a victim of his choice, by drawing up a special horoscope of the intended victim. DuCaine felt that Cawthorn was debasing the scholarly and noble traditions of hermeticism with his concentration on the powers of 'The Left-Handed Path.'
4. The Grounds of the DuCaine Mansion. A nocturnal vigil brings the Player Characters face to face with the horrible 'Gatherer'. **Sense Trouble** alerts the Player Characters to its awful presence amidst the boughs of the yew trees that shadow the DuCaine manse. If they attack the thing as it basks in the nectar of Lord DuCaine's terrible fear, it flees, winging its way to the tomb of a 17th century cavalier in a nearby cemetery (requiring 3 successful tests of the **Athletics** skill to follow it to its hiding place). Alternately, they can stay out of sight, and follow the creature when it leaves, sated (requiring a single test of the skill **Shadowing**.)
5. The old Cemetery. A old cemetery, with some graves going back to The War of the Roses. 'The Gatherer' sleeps during the day inside the mausoleum of a 17th century cavalier. If they track 'The Gatherer' to here, it is effectively trapped, and will fight to the death, having no where else to go.
6. Any metropolitan location. **Streetwise** reveals the address of Cawthorn's Lambeth townhouse.
7. Cawthorn's Lambeth townhouse. Cawthorn when confronted is surprisingly gracious; the whole point of the exercise, was, to him, was to display his superior magical abilities. He will cheerfully dispose of the Horoscope in his fire-place, which, he tells the Player Characters will free Lord DuCaine of the night-time visitations of 'The Gatherer.' Of course the Player Characters are still left with the problem of an amoral sorcerer who has shown that he possesses dangerous powers.

The Gatherer of Nightmares

A stunted and bandy-legged biped. Its head is dominated by its huge, deeply-sunken crimson eyes. Its upper limbs form a kind of shroud-wing, the membranes of which it uses to absorb the maddening fear of the nightmares it induces in its victims.

Abilities (On land/on wing): Athletics 6/12, Health 6, Scuffling 5/10.

Hit Threshold (non-phased/phased) 4/8*

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapon: +0 (Bite) and Plant Nightmare Seed**

Armor: -1 for warty hide.

*Can make itself incorporeal for three rounds.

This ability then requires six rounds of non-use to recharge.

**If it takes no other action, and it can catch the gaze of any sentient being, it can attempt to plant the Seed of Nightmare: the intended victim must make a -2 Stability test, or on the subsequent night, and each night after, they suffer horrible, debilitating nightmares.