

LONDON, ON THE SHORES OF LAKE HALI

a scenario for Trail of Cthulhu
by Simon Crowe (Scrowe)
RPG Geek One Sheet Contest 2015

GUMSHOE, Trail of Cthulhu are a trademarks of Pelgrane Press Ltd and used with permission.

I agree to allow Pelgrane Press, Ltd and to allow anyone to redistribute my submission non-commercially. This submission cannot be distributed commercially

The Hook

London in the 1930s. The investigators are contacted by **Sir Charles Wolfe**, a patron of the brilliant young architect **Matthew Cole**. Matthew has not been seen for several weeks and Sir Wolfe has no trust in the police to do their job. Can the investigators find him?

The Truth

As a boy Cole found some scraps of the strange play *The King in Yellow* and became obsessed with finding its location, the city of Carcosa. Insane insight lead him to understand ways in which architecture can be twisted to open passages to other worlds. He has finally unlocked the way to Carcosa but with unforeseen consequences - the warping of time and space also causes warping of minds.

The Spine

The investigators will explore Cole's first major design, The Imperial Tower, and find an overlay between this world and another, as well as the key to unlocking the secrets of Cole's most recent construction – the rebuild of a former slum district. There they can find the way into Carcosa and must escape with Cole as well as their own lives.

Investigating Matthew Cole

Appropriate skills can be used to find the following:

Matthew studied architectural design at the Royal College of Art. He was known as a troubled pupil who made few friends but impressed his teachers with his twists on modern designs. He graduated with many people trying to commission him for building projects.

(Core Clue) His first major project was **The Imperial Tower** in South London, completed two years ago. Following that he was commissioned to build new housing over demolished slums in the East End. This project, **The Hart Estate**, was completed and residents moved in less than a month ago.

The Imperial Tower

Southwark, South London

Built as offices for The Imperial Insurance Company, the ten story Imperial Tower dominates the local landscape.

Architecture tells the investigator it is built in the Art Deco style. Looking too closely, especially at the clock face that tops the tower, brings a strange feeling of vertigo and a possible 1-pt **Stability** loss.

Use of **Streetwise** can find that a number of the builders involved in the construction committed suicide not long after completion. A 1-pt spend tracks down one still living, **Howard Dunn**, now a shell of a man drinking his life away in a gin house. He mutters about his time working there – of strange angles and catching glimpses of huge winged creatures out of the corner of his eye.

Interpersonal skills can be used to gain a look around. Most of the floors are taken up with office workers sifting through a Sisyphean stack of paperwork. The door that accesses the top floor (the clock tower) is locked and the building manager can't find the key. **Locksmith** or a difficulty 6 **Athletics** test can let the group gain access.

Cole's first experiment, the design of the tower is such that the architecture causes an overlay between the room behind the clock face and another plane of existence entirely - a blasted landscape of twisted rocks and red skies. Anyone entering can see both at once, causing a possible 4-pt **Stability** loss.

The investigators have a few minutes to react to the scene before two black shapes appear in the sky. A pair of faceless gargoyle-like creatures on leathery wings swoop down to claw at the intruders in their world.

Nightgaunt

Abilities: Athletics 12, Health 7, Scuffling 10

Hit Threshold: 4, **Weapon:** +0 Claws, **Armour:** -2,

Stability Loss: +0

Should a Nightgaunt be reduced to 2 or less Health it tries to escape. Alternatively if an investigator heavily damages any part of the surrounding clock mechanisms the overlap between worlds breaks and the other plane (and the Nightgaunts) fade away. This could happen deliberately, or a stray gunshot might cause it at the Keeper's discretion.

The investigators need to break something in the clock tower to stop the overlay in order to search around. If they do they will find a folio of papers full of bizarre mathematical diagrams and calculations, as well as some scrawled notes:

I was wrong to think it was only space that was important and not time as well! The celestial bodies will have their way I suppose. Will make use of that in my next work. A few years and I shall join the revels on the fair city streets by the shores of Lake Hali!

(Core Clue) The use of **Astronomy** or **Library Use** can decipher the diagrams. They refer to a period of time - the hour between 1 and 2 A.M. during a full moon.

The Hart Estate

The East End, former site of St Giles rookery

St Giles was a notorious slum, a centre of crime and poverty in the East End, demolished by the government a few years back. Matthew Cole was employed to design replacement housing. The area has recently reopened and is named The Hart Estate, a circular estate about half a mile in diameter.

Bureaucracy can find maps of the estate, which show curved streets crossing each other whilst spiralling towards the centre. Anyone trying to use these maps whilst in the estate will find them hopelessly inaccurate and inadequate.

All streets in the estate are narrow and curved, the buildings tall and the sun cannot be glimpsed above the roofs. Anyone moving through gets quickly lost. A feeling of dizziness and claustrophobia often overcomes the investigators as they look around.

The streets are busy. Talking to anyone prompts a range of answers but in general people seem happy in a manic way. Despite living there only a few weeks they seem to have lost their sense of time, or of any life outside the estate. Blank looks occur should investigators press the issue.

The keeper is free to make up a number of strange events on the streets of the estate. As a slow mania takes over the inhabitants. Many of the events should prompt **Stability** losses. Here are a few suggestions:

- The investigators enter a triangular courtyard. Each street leading off looks identical, and soon the group cannot even work out through which passage they entered.
- A wild party is taking place in one of the homes and spilling out into the streets. The revellers drink wine out of huge goblets and drunkenly play a game they refer to as “The Tattered King”, the rules of which seem impossible to understand.
- A peddler attempts to sell the investigators masks, comparing each person to an animal or bird. “You sir, I see a red-beaked heron in your bearing.” They pass him multiple times, though the peddler never seems to remember them.
- A group of toughs (1 per investigator) dressed in togas and horned masks accost the investigators. They don't speak English, instead shouting in an unknown tongue. If the investigators cannot placate them somehow they use their crude clubs. Their objective is not to kill, only to show their superiority.

Robed Thug

Abilities: Athletics 5, Fleeing 4, Health 7, Intimidation 4, Scuffling 4, Weapons 5

Weapon: -1 (club)

Eventually after wandering for seemingly hours the investigators will find themselves back on the streets of the rest of London. The only way to penetrate the secrets of the estate is to journey towards the centre between 1 and 2 A.M during a full moon, which the investigators can learn at The Imperial Tower.

Should they do this they find marble statues of horned hunters amongst the London courtyards, and glistening arches in the centre of narrow streets. Eventually moonlit red brick gives way to gleaming sunlit white stone. The investigators have passed from London to Carcosa.

Carcosa

The city they now find themselves in is one of impressive architecture. Marble domes rise high above them and elaborate fountains sit in tiled courtyards. Balconies look over a placid lake that shimmers in the sunlight. **History** or **Architecture** suggest a classical style, but not one of a specific time period on Earth.

Sadly for what could be a beautiful, peaceful city, Carcosa is in uproar. A violent insanity has gripped the robed citizens. They seem focussed on inflicting violence on each other and destroying their surroundings, and the investigators can pass relatively unnoticed for now.

Play up the chaos and threat of violence as the investigators wander the streets. Eventually after half an hour they come across someone dressed very differently. A dishevelled London gentleman in his twenties, this is Matthew Cole at last.

Matthew Cole

Abilities: Athletics 4, Conceal 6, Firearms 3, Fleeing 5, Health 6, Scuffling 5, Stealth 5, Weapons 2

Matthew is bruised and battered, limping towards the investigators who will no doubt have questions. Matthew is happy to see them, as it means a way back to London is open. He will explain everything, but insists they all keep moving towards the palace, the only way to return. On the way he will relate his obsession with the city of Carcosa since his youth, and that he worked out a way to pass through different worlds using strange architecture. But his entry into the city appears to have sparked a spreading violent madness.

To the Palace!

The investigators must hurry through the burning city, for as Matthew will explain the way between worlds is only open an hour at a time and as the Carcosans are becoming more and more insane he fears the group would not survive waiting till the next full moon on Earth.

At the bridge to the central palace the investigators are met by members of the palace guard in their antlered masks who violently attempt to stop the escape. (They number equal to half the number of investigators, rounded up)

Carcosa Palace Guard

Abilities: Athletics 6, Health 8, Scuffling 6, Weapons 9
Weapon: +1 (Ornate Halberd)

Matthew tries to avoid the fight and save his own skin. In fact now he is close to escaping he realises that he would be better off if the investigators didn't make it out with him and ruin his reputation. Should the opportunity arise in the scuffle he will attempt to steal a gun or other weapon and keep the investigators from escaping before time runs out.

In the palace lobby is an archway, visible beyond is a street back in the Hart Estate. Will the investigators make it back through before time is up or will they join the mad citizens of Carcosa?