A Green, Unpleasant Land

British Scenario Outlines for Call of Cthulhu
by Graeme Davis

Author’s Note: I wrote these two adventure outlines at about the same time that Games Workshop published the British sourcebook A Green and Pleasant Land for 1st edition Call of Cthulhu. They were part of a batch that also included the three published in White Dwarf #97 (Feb 1988) under the title “Trilogy of Terror.” To the best of my recollection these two have never been published before; in fact, I had forgotten about them myself until I accidentally found them on an old backup disk in the back of a drawer.

THE BLACK DOG

Halethorpe Abbey, sacked during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, is one of many ruined abbeys on the North York Moors. The ruins are shunned by the local people, and are said to be haunted by a spectral black dog. According to tradition, those who dare to trespass in the ruins of the abbey are confronted with a sight of the terrible apparition. There are a great many ruined monasteries in this part of the country, and most have some kind of ghost story or legend attaching to them. In this case, it is more than legend.

After the Dissolution, the cellars of the abbey were secretly occupied by one Edward Danforth, a scholar and alchemist who had fled from persecution elsewhere in the country. While he was working with a scrying device – a polished obsidian mirror which is still in the cellars – Danforth made accidental contact with a Hound of Tindalos 2,000,000,000 years in the past. He died horribly, three weeks later, but the mirror continues to function. From time to time, people who have ventured into the cellars have suffered a similar fate, giving rise to the legend of the Black Dog of Halethorpe.

Starting the Adventure

This outline can be used in a number of ways. For example, the investigators might hear of this local legend while on holiday in the North York Moors, or while investigating another case in the area. A little later, they see or hear of a local or visitor who claims to have seen the Black Dog - three weeks later, his body is found horribly mutilated.

Alternatively, an acquaintance of one of the investigators might find the mirror and contact the Hound while exploring the abbey. This character might be a prominent archaeologist or historian, and might come to the investigators after suffering a nervous breakdown in the abbey. A little research might enable the investigators to realize that something – probably a Mythos creature – is coming, and that they have three weeks to prepare.
A FETE WORSE THAN DEATH

Colonel Melhuish (pronounced 'Mellish') has not long returned to England after a long career in India. He offers to lend a hand at the vicarage fete and garden party. The cake stall, tea tent, tombola and so on have all been organized, but the vicar is delighted to take Col. Melhuish up on his offer to present a pageant of Indian legends in the form of tableaux vivantes.* A stage has been built in the vicarage grounds, and Col. Melhuish has prepared a set of explanatory notes which are to be distributed immediately before the performance begins.

Melhuish became a priest of Y'golonac while in India, and he is planning more than just a diverting sideshow. The 'explanatory notes' include selected passages from The Revelations of Glaaki, and the first two tableaux represent innocuous scenes from Indian legend, allowing the audience time to read (and probably be mystified by) the extracts. When the curtains open for the third tableau, the audience – already unsettled by the notes (SAN roll or lose 1 SAN) – is faced with the dreadful spectacle of Col. Melhuish in the process of being possessed by Y'golonac. Once the horrific process of possession is complete, Y'golonac will rampage through the audience, attacking anyone within reach and feeding on their INT and POW until it is driven off or until no more victims remain.

Starting the Adventure

This outline is a very short one-off incident, and can be used just when the investigators think they are safe: after all, what could be more normal, more everyday, more sacrosanct than a vicarage fete?

Investigators are permitted a Cthulhu Mythos roll to recognize the fragments from The Revelations of Glaaki before the third tableau. If the roll is successful, they should have a shrewd idea of what is about to happen. They might even be able to act in time to prevent it, although they will surely raise a few eyebrows by mounting an unprovoked attack on such a pillar of the local community as Colonel Melhuish. If the good Colonel's plan succeeds, the manifestation of Y'golonac will rampage through the countryside until it is dealt with, growing stronger as it does so.

*This was a popular entertainment at such events, and is probably best described as a waxwork display with real people or a freeze-frame from a theatre production; it was mounted on a small stage, and the curtains opened to reveal a group of people, completely motionless, portraying the subject - generally a dramatic scene from history or literature. The whole production consisted of a number of tableaux, with changes in between just like the scene changes in a stage play.