

HORROR LIES AHEAD

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We're continuing our campaign-building exercise, adding to the foundation we made in the One-Page Scenario, "A Night at the Chalet." The campaign is one of cosmic horror, which copies the themes of Lovecraft's work but not his actual creatures. In broad strokes, a secret group of cultists is attempting to summon a monstrous god-like entity, whose motivations are beyond human reasoning and who is so devastating that its appearance will doom the world.

Campaign Background: An evil cult is trying to summon Yagi-Uda, a mythic creature that will shroud the world with monsters, madness, and death. Several steps are involved, including summoning a host of Brethren from Beyond, otherworld creatures that, once mature, combine to form the body of Yagi-Uda. Brethren are created rather than summoned; when a cultist successfully summons some other otherworldly creature, a tiny Brethren materializes in the cultist's brain. Cultists regularly summon Yagi's lesser minion creatures, the Cats of Kynarth, and each time they do the Brethren within the cultist grows, consuming the cultist's brain as it matures. Upon maturity, the Brethren, which looks like a levitating, armored brain with a long whip-like tail, elongates its elastic form and emerges through the cultist's nostril, transforming the cultist into a werewolf-like beast.

Scenario Background: The heroes are in a small town, investigating the source of the occult tome, *The Codex Obscura*. Three Yagi-Uda cultists summon a Cat of Kynarth and release it on the town to wreck limitless misery. The summoning is so successful that they do it again, and again. To stem the tide of catlike creatures, the heroes must find and stop the cultists.

The Beginning: Having (hopefully) stopped the cultist, Blüdstock, at his chalet (see "A Night at the Chalet"), the heroes find a purchase slip in the chalet's study indicating that Blüdstock bought the tome from a bookseller in Laketown, at a shop called "The Nightshade Emporium." After a short journey, they enter the small town and easily find the shop and its owner, Delquoix Fling, a well-known book dealer specializing in arcane tomes. Located on Pike Street, just off High Street, the heroes walk through the town's business district, a busy, bustling place.

In contrast to the noisy street, the atmosphere inside the shop is quiet, almost brooding. Fling is a lanky, stooped character with a long goatee and bushy mustache, and at first denies any involvement with Blüdstock. Suspecting that the man had evil intentions, the bookseller would prefer to remain disconnected from the investigation. But he can't deny

the purchase slip, and reluctantly agrees that he was commissioned to find and deliver *The Codex Obscura*.

"It was not the complete text," Fling admits. "Several of the pages were removed, on the advice of my colleague, the wizard Omalpa. I don't know their contents, but Omalpa still has the pages." With a successful DC 20 **Perception** check, the heroes hear a distant crashing out on the street. Peering out the window, a hero sees an overturned cart and several people rushing from it. Fling continues, "Omalpha lives not far from here, down High Street, across Lynn Lane, and at the far end of Crimson Street. I would be happy to write you a letter of introduction." If the heroes have not heard the commotion yet, a successful DC 10 **Perception** allows the heroes hear to the screams from those fleeing the cats. Looking outside at this point, the heroes see a Cat of Kynarth, a lion-like beast with tentacles instead of a mane, and it sees them. If all fail these rolls, they are surprised when the creature leaps through the window in a shower of shattered glass. Use the stats for a Cat, Lion

(*Pathfinder Playtest Bestiary*, page 37), replacing its **Melee** jaw attack with 2 **Melee** tentacle attacks (**Damage** 1d8 + Grab).

The Middle: The threat is trivial and the battle should go to the heroes. The cats' trail leads to Omalpha's residence, and inside Omalpha's basement laboratory stand 3 cultists of Yagi-Uda and 2 Cats of Kynarth. Omalpha's slain body lies in the corner of the room, and one of the cultists clutches the missing pages of the tome in their bloody fingers. Again, this combat should go to the heroes. The cultists respond violently and refuse to surrender but are not much of a threat. If a cultist is slain, the killing blow bashes open their skull and reveals the immature Brethren lying within. Now would be a good time to check for Sanity damage and Madness, if you are using those optional rules (*Pathfinder Horror Adventures*, pages 12 and 182-87).

And the End? How much do the book and pages reveal? Certainly a summoning spell for the Cats of Kynarth, which when cast implants a small Brethren in the caster's brain. (A kind GM will give the casters a chance to avoid this with a DC 15 **Will Save**.) Perhaps information about Yagi-Uda, the Mother of Monsters and Poisons. More next time . . .

