

It Opens Doors

by Noah Lloyd

This mythos artifact begins with a seed—the investigators discover an unusual key either early in an adventure, or even sessions before they discover the lock it fits to.

The Key

As Keeper, consider placing the key somewhere relevant to an ongoing investigation: the desk drawer of a murder victim, squeezed between the pages of a mythos tome, or rattling around in the glove box of a “borrowed” car. (Because you can plug this seed in almost anywhere, you can bide your time—there’s no rush.) Alternatively, if you’d like the key to make a more jarring entrance, roll on the following table:

1. An investigator wakes one morning to find the key nailed to the *inside* of their door—still gently swinging, as though the person who placed it there were still nearby.
2. A homeless woman jangles a coffee mug for change. If an investigator gives him any currency, he produces the key from a sleeve, saying, “And *this* is for you.”
3. While the investigators walk down a city street, the key comes rocketing down to the pavement only a few feet in front of them, sounding almost like dropped change.
4. As they wait for their breakfast, a waiter brings them a glass of thick red wine. If the investigator protests that they never ordered it, the waiter insists that they know, but were “instructed to deliver it to you.” The key rests in the wine, clinking against the glass as soon as the investigator takes it.
5. The key arrives in a thick manila envelope that has been covered in tape. A notecard stuck to the envelope, written in tight, uncomfortable lettering, reads, “It Opens Doors.”
6. When you roll this option, you may have to wait some time before revealing the key. The next time an investigator needs healing for a significant injury (whether from a gunshot, stabbing, encounter with Mythos creature, etc.), whoever performs the **First Aid** or **Medicine** roll to stabilize them (even if this person is an NPC), they discover the key embedded in the injured investigator’s flesh. It’s best if this is something like a stomach wound—the key has been floating around between their innards for who knows how long—but the impossibility of a key emerging from someone’s shoulder or thigh meat is just as grotesque (**SAN** 1/1D4).

The key’s appearance, of course, is up to you, but consider the following two opposing models, and how they might fit into your campaign.

- The key appears deliberately diabolic. Its head in the shape of a grinning skull, its serrated teeth finely sharpened to the point that they can leave cuts across fingertips. The metal is a wicked brass.

Or . . .

- The key might be a work of modernist abstraction, all angles and geometric shapes. It is a dull blue of an impossible-to-identify metal (or is it stone?) and it shimmers unnaturally, especially by starlight.

Whatever direction you choose, the key should be recognizably strange, obviously important to keep track of.

The Box

Eventually—whether later in the same adventure or sessions later—the investigators discover a simple, cubicle box. It has no apparent seams, and the only break across any of its six sides is a keyhole. It is made of the same material as the key.

When the key is inserted and turned, the investigator rolls their **POW**. On a failure, nothing happens (though perhaps they draw the attention of something outside). On a success, and after spending 2 magic points, the investigator is taken *between*. The box and key are left behind, so that others may follow.

The Between

The Between is a world of shifting doors and hallways, limitless shafts and ladders that lead to nothing—it is a **Sanity** blasting place (call for **SAN** rolls every fifteen minutes the investigators spend there. For the first hour, the loss is only 1/1D3, but the failed loss increases by a die size every hour, 1D3 to 1D4, to 1D6, 1D8, etc. Successful **SAN** rolls only ever lose 1). It **always** takes *at least* fifteen minutes to find an exit.

Whenever an investigator enters the Between, roll a D10. On a 1, the party has drawn the attention of something from outside—either choose an entity relevant to your campaign, or roll randomly in the “Deities of the Mythos” section of Chapter 14 in the *Keeper Rulebook* (beginning page 310). While this attention may not manifest immediately, this deity will begin to send its agents to investigate the investigators . . .

Investigators can, however, use the Between to their advantage. Anytime the investigators want to exit the Between back into their world, they choose a location *that they have seen* and roll **POW**. On a success, and by spending another 2 magic points, that investigator can exit where they wish. Not all investigators need to succeed their **POW** roll to escape: any who succeeded with a Hard **POW** or better can pay the magic point cost for their friends, but it doubles for each additional investigator taken with them.

Tim succeeds with a Hard POW, whereas none of his other compatriots succeed at all. He must pay 2 MP for himself. He pays another 2 MP for the second investigator, 4 for the third, 8 for the fourth, etc. If Tim had only succeeded with a Regular POW, he would not be able to take anyone with him, but could choose not to spend his MP and remain in the Between.

The investigators might use the Between as an escape route, or to return somewhere they’re not supposed to go—though they do leave the key and the box behind them, risking losing both.

The key and the box could potentially prove game-breaking, but, as with all major artifacts, they bring with them their own hazards. Investigators who overuse these items quickly discover that the increased **Sanity** losses do not reset: if the last time you left the Between **SAN** loss was at 1/1D8, that is how it remains. Anyone who goes permanently insane in the Between becomes trapped there forever, wandering the halls, climbing the shafts, only ever finding locked doors.

Multiple Keys, Multiple Keyholes

As an option, you could seed multiple keys—one per investigator in your party—across several sessions. This drives home the fact that these are important items, and makes them seem more relevant to an ongoing campaign (especially when other mysteries draw to a close, but the mystery of the keys remains). In this case, the box has the same number of keyholes as there are keys, and could even be discovered *before* all the keys are. Once all the investigators have a key, they insert them simultaneously to achieve the usual effect. In this case, only one investigator needs to roll **POW**, but they’re looking for a hard success, and each key turner must then spend 2 MP.