

I Pray God Will Curse the Writer

A terrifying journey of self discovery
as the world crumbles

by **Nick Wedig**

The law is only a shadow of the [...] things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.

- Hebrews 10:1-3

“There is a concept that is the corrupter and destroyer of all others. I speak not of Evil, whose limited empire is that of ethics; I speak of the infinite.”

-Jorge Luis Borges

A group of friends has decided to band together to make a zero budget indie horror movie. But when they gather together to read the script, they instead find themselves sucked into a strange other world known as Carcosa. There, they encounter the strange inhabitants of the place and the dangers of such a place. Can they discover its secrets and escape before the oncoming apocalypse arrives?

I Pray God Will Curse the Writer is a live action role playing scenario for 6-18 players and 1-3 GMs. In theory, the game should only take 2-4 hours to play out, including character creation and debriefing.

This scenario owes a huge debt to *The King in Yellow* by Robert Chambers and later expansions of the Hastur mythos by John Tynes, Dennis Detwiller and Robin Laws. Line art is by Harry Clarke, and photos are all taken from Flickr under their Creative Commons licenses.

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Background

Two friends, Cameron Iokannon and the Director, wished to make a horror movie, particularly something with themes out of the Cthulhu Mythos. But they didn't want to get sued by the Derleth estate, so Cthulhu and related characters were to be avoided. They settled on using the *King in Yellow* as the basis of their movie, because it was solidly in the public domain. Cameron Iokannon went into seclusion to write the screenplay, while the Director gathered together a group of friends and acquaintances to be cast and crew of the movie.

Weeks passed, and no one saw Cameron. Eventually, the Director received a typewritten message that Cameron wanted everyone to meet him at an abandoned theater. The message had few details, but made clear that it was significant that the cast members wear a mask when they came. At the bottom of the page was a strange yellow symbol that none of the cast recognized. Everyone assumed that this meeting was for the first read-through of the screenplay. The mask part was inexplicable. Cameron was always overly dramatic when it came to these sorts of things.

When the cast members arrive, they don't find Cameron. But they do find a set of masks, a strange doorway, and instructions to put on the masks and enter the door. The PCs do so, assuming that this is more of Cameron's excessive drama, only to find themselves in a bizarre alien realm.

This place, called Carcosa, was once part of another world. Possible an alternate dimension of some sort. It was visited by the King in Yellow (who may or may not be the worldly avatar of Hastur), and the living god's presence was such that the world shattered into fragments and pieces. Carcosa is one such fragment, which has been spiraling through the multiverse, repeating its last day endlessly. The inhabitants repeat their cycle of fated events each night, until the clock strikes midnight. At midnight, the King in Yellow appears and the world resets itself to several hours before. Then the inhabitants repeat their behavior over again, forever.

Every once in a while, through unknown means, this sliver of reality comes into contact with another universe. In these cases, Carcosa consumes the other world, incorporates some of the new universe into itself, and then moves on. Like an interdimensional virus, Carcosa travels the multiverse, consuming realities and moving on. Now, Carcosa has collided with our reality, perhaps through Cameron Iokannon's efforts. The cast members are trapped inside, and must figure out the secrets of Carcosa if they hope to escape alive.



Structure

Carcosa

Carcosa is trapped in a stable time loop. It is always the evening before the King in Yellow arrives. Each inhabitant has a few fated events which they must ensure happen. When enough of the fated events have occurred, the King arrives and the world resets to the beginning. In the grand ballroom is a great big clock. Whenever a fated event occurs, the character advances the clock one hour. When the clock strikes midnight, the King arrives. Carcosa's stable time loop is a self-defense against the entropic forces of Hastur. If the inhabitants don't repeat their events, their world will crumble away into nothingness. When the cast members are introduced into their world, they must incorporate them into their fates, or else the world will dissolve even faster.

Carcosa follows different rules than our normal world. Secrets and information are the basic currency of the world. When someone performs a service for you, you are magically obligated to truthfully answer one question of theirs, without weaseling out or distorting their meaning or anything like that. Honesty is your reward for service, which is good because otherwise honesty is hard to come by in Carcosa. It is possible to waste a question getting an answer of "I don't know", of course, so you should use your questions wisely.

The cast members each have a set of four questions. If they can locate the answers to these questions, then they will know how they can escape Carcosa. (Or, if they prefer, allow one other person to escape in their place.) The cast members can discover these answers through various means, but primarily they can do so by helping the inhabitants... which hastens on the approach of the King in Yellow.

The inhabitants of Carcosa have an innate magical connection to this place, and so can scry the answers using Tarot-like cards. Each inhabitant is given some answer cards at the start of play. When a cast member asks them a question pointing toward their escape, the inhabitant can choose a card to be the answer to the question. Once the inhabitants run out of cards, they are free to improvise answers in whatever way they feel will be suitably disturbing.

So, in summary: the cast members have questions they need answered in order to escape. The inhabitants have answers they can provide, but only if the cast members perform services for them. The inhabitants want to see that specific events occur, which hurry on the arrival of the King in Yellow. Failing to act will cause the world to crumble, but acting will bring the recurring apocalypse closer.

Casting

For this game, you'll have three types of players. Depending on the size of your group, you will need between one and three gamemasters. Of the regular players, you'll divide them into two groups: inhabitants and cast members. You should aim to have twice as many cast members as inhabitants. Your ideal ratio is 4 cast members to 2 inhabitants to 1 GM. Any extra players should probably be cast as cast members, if you can't evenly divide them.

The inhabitants of Carcosa are native to this strange land, and have a more NPC like role. They should dress in archaic or bizarre fashions, if possible. Queen Cassilda and the Author are the most important inhabitants to have. After that, you're free to have whichever inhabitants you (or your players) prefer. The Princess and Queen are female parts, and the Merchant is male. Naotalba can be either gender. Prince Thale is written as male, but it wouldn't break anything to make it a female role.

People should play an inhabitant if they want to:

- dress in elaborate, unusual costumes
- want to know secrets and manipulate other players
- be creepy.

The Author is a special character: it starts out as an inhabitant, but if it can complete its fated events before the King arrives, the Author reverts to Cameron Iokannon and acts as a cast member. The Author/Cameron can be either gender. The Author can be a frustrating role to play, so make sure you get a player who will enjoy being an invisible force that can't directly communicate.

Cast members are normal people from the real world, independent filmmakers and artists who are sucked into an alien reality. They are a bit closer to conventional player characters. All the cast members are made to be either gender.

People should play cast members if they want to:

- be seeking answers to mysteries,
- not worry much about costuming (cast members are normal folks from the early 21st century, so whatever you wear is fine)
- be scared.

Inhabitants

The job of the inhabitants is to be creepy while trying to entice the cast members into fulfilling their fated events. In this, they are something like standard NPCs, but they also have their own goals. In fact, the inhabitants are constantly dealing with dramatic irony: they know their fate, even

as they try to enact that fate, to avoid a more horrible fate.

The inhabitants are free to adapt their fated events as befits the situation, and each fated event might occur in various different ways. Carcosa's events happen in various permutations, but they always fall into the same patterns.

The inhabitants answer most of the cast member's question, using the answer cards. At the start of play, distribute the answer cards roughly evenly across the inhabitants. If you have extra, you could save them for Spirits or answers from the Whisper Labyrinth. Or simply not worry about them, it's not a big deal.

Cast Members

Each cast member has a bit of background, covering past experiences leading up to the game. Then you have some relationship questions, which are to be answered before the start of the game. Each cast member gets cards for four things that they could sacrifice: their sanity, their health, their self-worth and their very life. In general, these are lost as cards and game mechanics force the character to lose them. A cast member can also sacrifice one to force another character to concede a point. This is called “Pushing” and it is the closest to a conflict resolution system we’re going to get. (Pushing won’t let them answer one of their escape questions, but it can force characters to do other things.)

Gamemaster Duties

The GMs are in charge of:

- staging the game, such as decorating the space
- organizing the players, casting characters, etc.
- introducing the rules
- briefing both groups of players separately
- act as the butler, draw the cast members into the palace, see that each wears a mask
- rules adjudication
- answering questions about the environment and character backgrounds
- watching the clock as it approaches midnight
- coaching the player who transforms into the King in Yellow
- adjudicating the Whisper Labyrinth
- the disappearance of locations, should the King in Yellow not arrive
- doing whatever you can to maintain tone
- explaining to a player what to do when their character dies or escapes
- debriefing the players a whole

In general, the GM role shouldn’t be too difficult. There are no GM characters to play except a butler type at the very start of play, who quickly disappears, never to be seen again.

Timeline

Before play

Recruit one or two other people to act as GMs, if needed. Go over the material herein with them. Print out character sheets and cards and things. Print everything on a distinctive color of paper (I suggest blue) except the *King in Yellow* script, which should be on yellow paper. Locate a larp appropriate place.

Get people to volunteer to play either cast members or inhabitants, so that you have a rough count who will play which role. This count will change, of course, but you want to encourage people to stick to the 4:2:1 ratio mentioned earlier.

You may want to cast specific players as specific characters in your larp, in which case you want to be sure they actually show up. You can always wait until the day of the larp, but then they won't have as much in the way of costuming possibilities. I prefer to just cast some players as inhabitants ahead of time, who will dress up in fancy costumes. Then when everyone gathers for the larp, you can let them choose their characters from the appropriate pool.

If you can, make an analog grandfather clock that goes to 13. You can easily make one by painting and cutting some cardboard. Then attach a clock hand to the face with a bolt and some washers. (If you do this, assume I mean 13 whenever I use the term "midnight" throughout this document.)

The day of the larp

Decorate the larp space as necessary. Place the location description sheets around in appropriate places. Hide seven pages of the *King in Yellow* script in various locations. Hide 6-9 Wake Up cards around the area as well.

Place the countdown clock in a prominent space in the ballroom and set it to so that most, but not all, inhabitants can fulfill their fates before it strikes midnight. So., if you have four inhabitants, you have twelve total fated events, so you want the clock set 11 increments before midnight (so at 1). If you only had three inhabitants, set it at 4. If you have more than 4 inhabitants, then set it at 1 or midnight. If your clock goes to thirteen, increase the starting value to compensate.

When the players start to arrive

If you haven't already, give them their character sheets to read over. Either choose characters, or let them choose. Don't have the cast members answer their relationship questions until everyone is present.

Give each cast member cards for “Your Sanity”, “Your Health”, “Your Self-worth”, and “Your Very Life”. Give other characters their supplemental cards as appropriate.

Once all players are present

Divide the players into cast members and inhabitants. Have a GM give a rules brief to each group. They each learn different parts of the rules. Cast members, for example, don’t get told what the deal is with the clock, or fated events or the fact that inhabitants can only initiate Pushing in their Place of Power. Inhabitants are told most of the rules, and shown the locations.

Have the cast members take turns introducing themselves and answering their first two relationship questions, publicly so that everyone can hear them. Their characters may or may now know the information described, but the players can know that to build on. Then have each answer their last question secretly. (The cast members don’t know that their last question is the same for everyone. don’t tell them.)

Brief the Castmembers

- They are indie filmmakers, who gathered together to read the script of their new horror movie.
- But the scriptwriter, Cameron, isn’t present, and instead they find their way through a weird doorway into another world. Is Cameron here? How do they get home now that they are here?
- Have each PC read their character blurb to themselves.
- Publicly have each player answer the first question. Provide pencils for these questions, so they can note them down if they wish!
- Publicly have each read aloud and answer the second question
- Have each privately and secretly answer their third question.
- Describe sacrifices. Some effects in the game may make you discard one of these cards. If you don’t have it, you have to discard another one, and justify to those around you why it works as a substitute.
- There’s no conflict in Carcosa. Each player controls their own character and reactions to things. Which means that if I attack you, you get to decide whether I wound you or not.
- The only exception to this rule is Pushing. Explain how Pushing works.
- This world works according to rules different than Earth’s. Explain how performing service to someone means that they are obligated to answer one question honestly.
- Explain escape questions. Each player has to answer their questions, then perform an action described to escape.
- Explain Reassurance, and how it is useful to a player if they receive an answer that is

difficult/impossible/immoral to perform.

- Explain the invisibility markers. Characters with the marker are invisible, but they still may be able to interact with the PCs. In particular, you may be able to get answers from them if you listen to what they whisper to you.

Brief the Inhabitants

- Explain how Carcosa was once another world, visited by the King in Yellow. This destroyed Carcosa, and this is a remnant of that world stuck in a stable loop. As long as that loop is maintained, the world continues to remain. Varying from their ritual actions will cause the world to crumble away.
- explain the Fates of the inhabitants, and advancing the clock when finished.
- explain the coming of the King in Yellow, and that whoever has incomplete Fates when the King comes will be in trouble. Whoever advances the clock to midnight will be the avatar of the King.
- Explain that they must honestly answer one question for each service a character performs.
- Inhabitants use the answer cards to answer the escape questions. They can use each answer card once. Once they are out of answer cards, they can make up answers as they please.
- Inhabitants don't have any sanity, health, life or sense of self-worth, because they're not really alive or sane any more.
- Inhabitants can Push, but only once each cycle. Their ability to Push is restored when the King arrives. Inhabitants can only Push while in their Place of Power.
- Inhabitants cannot see anyone without a mask on, nor can they see anyone with the invisibility marker.

Beginning of Play

All the inhabitants begin play in their place of power.

Have the cast members 'arrive' one by one onto a staging area outside the larp space proper. Let them chat for a moment in character, wondering where Cameron is. Once all are present, open the door into the larp space itself and issue masks. You're playing a faceless servant here, instead of a GM. The servant demands that the PCs wear masks to the masquerade ball, on the queen's orders. Once all are inside and masked, the door closes behind them and cannot be found again.

If a cast member refuses to enter Carcosa

Let them sit and wait, in the abandoned theater, freezing. If they try to leave, describe to them how they turn to the door, to find that it is simple painted onto a canvas backdrop, like you'd find in a stage play. There is no door there at all, or anywhere they can find on stage. If they cut through or

break down the canvas walls, they find themselves on the stage of a play, with the audience full of life-sized, faceless marionettes that turn to watch their actions silently. Searching this bizarre theater brings them into the tunnels of the Whisper Labyrinth.

They don't realize that the doorway isn't the entrance to Carcosa. They were in Carcosa all along.

When the clock reaches midnight

The King in Yellow arrives! The inhabitant with the most completed fate events is transformed into the King's earthly avatar, and distributes fates to each player. Whichever character advances the clock to midnight becomes the avatar of the King in Yellow.. Give them the King in Yellow sheet and mask, then gather the PCs in the central chamber. [[See section about the King in Yellow]]

If time passes without a fated event being performed

If you go more than ten minutes or so without a fated event occurring, then Carcosa begins to crumble. One game location is removed from play. Any inhabitants in the location know instinctively to leave, but any cast members must make a sacrifice to get out before the location is annihilated. Place a "Black Stars Rise" tag over the location description. Close the door or otherwise mark the space off as inaccessible.

This is mainly to put some pressure on the characters to act. A loss of a location should inspire the inhabitants to get their fated events to happen, while it will inspire the cast members to want to escape.

Probably only one or two locations will disappear, but the order should be: the Hidden Shrine, the Torture Chamber, the Whisper Labyrinth, the Empty Grave, the Shores of Lake Hali, and finally the Grand Ballroom. You want to funnel characters back toward the Ballroom, in general.

Supplemental Sign: Black Stars Rise

The space beyond this point no longer exists. When you look to where it once was, you see only a sickly yellow void in which black stars shine. Anything dropped over the edge tumbles into infinity.

When cast members escape

They have succeeded in leaving Carcosa. Their character is no longer part of this story. Hand them

an invisibility marker. Give the player an option of playing one of the Spirit roles for the rest of the game or just observing. Allow the player to pick one of the King in Yellow's fate cards to be their final fate. They keep that card until the end of the game, where they use it to narrate a final epilogue scene. (This means that those that escape early have the pick of the best options, but taking a happy ending will cause suffering for everyone else.)

When cast members die

Cast members only die if they lose the "Your Very Life" card. Cast members who died are out of play for the rest of the game, their character is no longer part of this story. Hand them an invisibility marker. Give the player an option of playing one of the Spirit roles for the rest of the game or just observing.

When an inhabitant dies

Inhabitants die if a fated event says they do, or if they lose a conflict. Hand them an invisibility marker. Inhabitants will be restored to life when the King in Yellow returns.

When the cast members have escaped or died trying or the world has crumbled away entirely

It is time to wrap the larp up. If the game is close to everyone dying or a similar natural conclusion, do what you can to encourage that conclusion.

After the game is done

Each cast member that escaped should have a fate card, which they should use to narrate an epilogue for their character. Inhabitants and those that died don't get epilogues. Then have everybody sit down and describe what was up with their character and one cool thing they saw during the game and such. Let players ask questions of each other and get answers for why and how things happened. Explain any of the lingering questions people had.

Contact me at nickwedig@yahoo.com to tell me how the game went.

Cast Members

Background

Your friend Cameron Iokanaan wanted to make an independent horror film based off of the works of H.P. Lovecraft. But the Cthulhu Mythos has some complex copyright problems, and you didn't want to get sued. So Cameron's great idea was to work from "The King in Yellow" by Robert Chambers. A precursor to Lovecraft, the novel was soundly in the public domain, but it still had some of that Mythos creepiness.

So you assembled a crew of actors and technicians and Cameron went away to write a script. No one heard from him for a week or two. Yesterday, though, each of you received a typewritten letter, with a strange yellow symbol at the bottom of the sheet. The message was unsigned, but it seemed to be from Cameron. It said to meet at an abandoned theatre you knew, and to come wearing a mask. Nobody was really sure what was going on, but you assumed it was about the first readthrough of the script. Attempts to contact Cameron for clarification have gotten no response.

It was weird, but Cameron always played up the mystery when writing. Nobody is sure why the masks, though. Hey, at least you were gonna make a movie, right? So you showed up, to see what Cameron had in store.

That is when everything gets really weird.

Carcosa

When the game begins, you will enter an otherworldly realm. You don't know where you are. You don't know who these creepy inhabitants are. You don't know if Cameron is here or why you were brought here. Most worryingly, you don't know how to get back out of this disturbing place and back to your sane, normal life.

To escape alive, you'll need knowledge. If you can find answers to your four questions then you (or one other of your choosing) can escape alive. Without knowledge, you'll never find your way home.

In Carcosa, secrets and knowledge are the currency. Whenever you perform a service for someone in Carcosa, they owe you one answer. You can ask them any question you wish, and they must

answer truthfully.

(You can't ask two questions in a row from the same inhabitant. Carcosa keeps its secrets better than that.)

Questions

Your character sheet includes several questions. You have three relationship questions to answer before we begin play, and four questions that lead to your escape from Carcosa.

When all the cast members are gathered together, take turns introducing yourselves. Then answer your first two relationship questions publicly. The other characters may not know the answers to these questions, but the other players will. You should answer the third question secretly, after learning about the other characters and their relationships. Note all three of these answers down on your sheet.

Your four escape questions have to be answered in Carcosa, by investigating its secrets. These questions must be answered in order. The inhabitants of Carcosa know many things. There may be other ways of learning your answers as well. As you find each answer, write it down on your sheet. When you have answered all four, you can escape by performing the actions described. If you choose to do so, talk with a GM and then play out the escape as necessary.

Reassurances

The inhabitants of Carcosa may not be trustworthy. If you have received an answer that displeases you or does not make any sense, then you can reject it by getting the backing of another cast member. You approach the other cast member, explain the question and answer and say "This cannot possibly be true, can it?" to show your disbelief. They can respond a few ways:

- If they want, they can say "Indeed, that is crazy talk" or some other reassurance and cross out the answer you received. You're now free to seek other, more desirable answers from some other source in Carcosa.
- If they actually dislike you for some reason, then they can say something insulting such as "Don't be a fool. Of course it is." Then they circle the answer. No amount of reassurance can change that answer now.

Sacrifices

Cast members have four cards that represent things they can lose or sacrifice. These are your health, your sanity, your sense of self-worth and your very life. If you lose or sacrifice one, then you have to roleplay out the consequences of that for the rest of the game (unless you somehow manage to get it back). Some events, cards or activities in the game might cause you to lose one of these specific cards, or to lose one of your choice. (If you're ever forced to sacrifice something you already lost, then discard a different card of your choice.)

Supplemental Cards:

Your Sanity

As long as you hold onto this card, you are more or less sane. Without it, you'll lose more and more touch with reality until you're a danger to yourself and others. Destroy this card to force one other character to concede to your demands.

Your Sense of Self-Worth

As long as you hold onto this card, you still can consider yourself a decent person in some way. Without it, you'll be filled with self-hatred, depression and despair. Destroy this card to force one other character to concede to your demands.

Your Physical Health

As long as you hold onto this card, you are alive and in good health. Without it, you'll be bleeding, broken and you'll have difficulty moving around or accomplishing anything. Destroy this card to force one other character to concede to your demands.

Your Very Life

As long as you hold onto this card, you are still alive. Without it, you are dead (consult a GM). Destroy this card to force one other character to concede to your demands.

Pushing

In general, you have control over your character. You get to say what you do, think and believe, based on background information and the events of the larp so far. You can suggest things to other players, but you can't force another player to act a particular way. So you can attack another player with an eerily glowing dagger, but they get to decide if they are injured in the struggle. You can't trick, injure, imprison or otherwise do anything to another PC without them going along with it. If two players have different ideas for how a situation results, make a compromise or no one gets what they want.

The only way to force someone to do something they don't want to do is by 'pushing'. If you sacrifice one of your four cards, then you can name one thing the other player has to do. At that point, the other player has to choose one of three options: they can **comply**, **flee** or **push back**.

- If they **comply**, they must do as you outlined.
- If they **flee**, they sacrifice one of their own cards and exit the area. You cannot pursue them until you've interacted with someone else first.
- If they **push back**, then they describe and act out fighting back against you in whatever way is appropriate. They sacrifice one of their own cards and then make their own demand on you. At that point, you have the same three options: flee, push back or comply. (If you push back, you could reiterate your first demand or make a new demand based on how the conflict has progressed.)

Masks

All the inhabitants of Carcosa simply wear masks all the time. The castmembers won't be allowed into the palace without one. There is a mask for each castmember plus one more, so that everyone has some choice. Each mask is identified by a keyword it symbolizes: each cast member can choose what mask they would wear, based on ideal properties their character desires.

Each mask gives the wearer the ability to answer one other character's question, but asking has a terrible price. The asker must reveal a secret that they would prefer to keep hidden. Each mask can answer only a single question.

Inhabitants won't even notice anyone not wearing a mask. It is as if maskless people are invisible.

On the other hand, the invisible tiger from the Whisper Labyrinth will begin to hunt anyone without a mask. Any time a GM sees you without a mask, they'll describe the evidence of an invisible tiger about to strike. The sound of its paws lightly stepping across the carpet. The scent of rotting meat from its breath. The way you catch a glimpse of something in the mirror, though it is gone by the time you look. Then the tiger will strike, and the player will have to sacrifice something (sanity, health, courage, etc.) to avoid the tiger eating them. If you spend your life, you die.

Mask of Strength

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"Who did you murder? How did you get away with it?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Mask of Judgment

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"Who did you fail to support in their time of need?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Mask of Cunning

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"Which other PC do you plan on betraying? How?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Mask of Resourcefulness

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"What are you planning on stealing from another PC? Which PC?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Mask of Prophecy

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"Why didn't you tell anyone about the horrible fate that they would find here, even when you knew it was coming?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Mask of Loyalty

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"Which other PC would you sacrifice your life to protect or save?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Mask of Courage

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"What do you fear more than death?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Mask of Pleasure

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"What vice do you take to excess?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Mask of Silence

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"Who have you been spreading malicious rumors about? Why?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Mask of Truth

While wearing this mask, you feel safe from the invisible monster that stalks these halls. Once while wearing this mask, you can answer another cast member's escape question, but first they must truthfully answer this question: **"What horrible secret must you always hide from those around you?"** (Once you ask the question, they cannot evade the truth of the matter by answering 'no one' or similar ways.)

Masks cannot be traded or exchanged between cast members. Once you claim a mask, it is yours alone.

Cast Member Profiles

the Director

You have always wanted to be a real, legitimate filmmaker. This was supposed to be your big shot. Your first full length feature film. You've gathered together a small budget, a few secondhand cameras and a crew of eager amateurs to help you make your movie. Things don't seem to be working out that way.

Well, whatever the hell is going on here, you're going to sort it out. You're supposed to be in charge here. Now is the time to show some real leadership, just like your filmmaker idols did when faced with adversity. Sure, being catapulted into a hideous nightmare realm is different than Francis Ford Coppola's troubles making *Apocalypse Now*. But they are your crew, and you have to do something to make sure they make it out unharmed. Hell, if you get back to real life in one piece, maybe this will make good material for the movie.

Answer these questions yourself, right now:

- Which cast member would I risk my life to protect?
- Which cast member do you owe a huge favor to? What for?
- Which other cast member do I secretly despise?

Seek the answers to these questions during play:

- Who must help me if I am to escape this place?
- What must they destroy to win my freedom?
- Where must the ritual occur for me to escape?
- How do we perform the ritual that lets me escape?

the Star

(does not start with 'my sanity' but starts with 'my certainty')

All your life, you've had an unusual feeling. You felt that you didn't belong in your life. In your ordinary life, you were nobody. But you knew deep in your heart that you were destined for something greater.

You became an actor seeking to become a famous movie star, but you have discovered something

much more important: you are the heir to the Hildred Castaigne, the Last King of the Imperial Dynasty of America. Knowing this, you have been laying plans to seize power and rule as was divinely intended. But you have learned that one of the others on the film crew is also part of the imperial line. You're not sure who it is just yet, but you will find out. Then you can ensure that they meet a messy end, leaving the throne empty for you to claim.

Which cast member would you risk your life to protect? Why?

Which cast member do I blame for holding me back? Why?

Which cast member do you secretly despise? Why?

Where is my crown hidden, so that I may be crowned as true ruler of this land?

Who stands before me in line for the throne?

What item does my rival seek, in order to usurp my kingdom?

How can I claim the glory that is rightfully mine?

the Envious

(Does not start with 'sense of self-worth' but does start with the 'Your Overwhelming Desire to Be Someone Else')

Your Overwhelming Desire to Be Someone Else

As long as you hold onto this card, you are driven to become someone else, someone better than your current pathetic self. Without it, you'll may still hate yourself, but you won't be as motivated to escape the prison of being you. Destroy this card to force one other character to concede to your demands.

All your life, you have been ashamed of yourself. You have always been surrounded by amazing and impressive people, and their greatness only makes clear how worthless you are. You became an actor to hide from yourself, to imagine yourself another person even for a little while.

Now that you're in Carcosa, you know the truth. You don't know how you know, but you do. You know that, if you find a way, you can escape the prison of being you. Find the Mask of True Forms, and you can be whoever you want to be. So who do you want to be?

Which cast member would you risk your life to protect? Why?

Which cast member is so much better than me that I am ashamed of my own weakness?

Which cast member do you secretly despise? Why?

·Whose life could be mine, if only I had the means?

·Where is the Mask of True Forms hidden?

·What must I take from the one I envy to better become them?

·How do I use the mask to replace the one I envy?

the Drowned

You have just returned from several tours in the Navy. When you nearly drowned on an ordinary mission, you chose to desert your post. Back Stateside, you found yourself penniless, jobless, without any support network. You joined this movie's crew because it would hopefully pay the bills, you know?

Somehow, you know that the way out is underneath the Lake outside the palace. You're not certain how you know these things. But you also know that you need answers before you leave the palace to travel beneath the strange, fog filled lake.

Which cast member would you risk your life to protect? Why? (Talk with them about it.)

Which cast member did you see flash before your eyes when you nearly drowned?

Which cast member do you secretly despise? Why?

What is the mystical seal that must be destroyed to pass through the portal beneath Lake Hali?

Where can I find ritual book that includes instructions to activate the portal?

Whose blood must I spill to soothe the anger of the tentacled horrors that live in the lake? (You need a lot, they must give up their physical health or their life.)

How can I navigate the mists lake of Hali without becoming lost for all eternity?

the Dreamer

You have always dreamed of this place. Not 'you always wanted to come here' dreaming. Rather, you have all your life had recurrent nightmares about a bizarre shadow world, where foggy mists boil out of the lake into a vast decaying palace full of masked revelers. To deal with these terrifying visions, you became an artist. It didn't lessen the terror but it helped you feel more in control of these terrifying nighttime ordeals.

These dreams have spurred on your art. Now you feverishly paint and sculpt every free moment that you can. And yet the dreams grow in strength. Sometimes it seems as if the dream world is more real than your everyday life as a grocery clerk.

Recently your friend the director asked you to do the design work for a zero budget indie horror movie. All the themes of your nightmare fueled artwork would fit perfectly with the movie they had planned. But when you came to the readthrough, your real life and your dream world collided. Now you're trapped in the dream.

It is a dream, isn't it? All you have to do is figure out how to wake up.

Answer these questions yourself, right now.

- Which cast member would I risk my life to protect?
- Which castmember's portrait did I paint, long before I ever met them?
- Which cast member do I secretly despise? (Answer this in secret.)

Seek the answers to these questions during play:

- Who must I convince that this is only a dream?
- Where in Carcosa have I dreamt about?
- What thing must I bring to that place to reveal to the person the dreamworld nature of this place?
- Once I have shown that person that this world is nothing but a nightmare, how can I wake myself up from this dream?

the Unloved

You don't care about this stupid movie, not really. But you have a deep, deep affection for one of the other castmembers. And he or she is involved in this movie making venture, so you joined as well. You figured that way, you would get some more time to be with the one you love. Get to know him or her, maybe find the chance to reveal your feelings.

Of course, things don't seem to be working out the way you expected. Now you're all in a dangerous, strange place. Maybe if you protect your love or show some bravery, then you can be a hero. People like heroes, right? Maybe then you'll be loved back.

- Which cast member would I risk my life to protect?
- Which cast member do I love, though the feeling is not mutual?
- Which cast member do I secretly despise? (Answer this in secret.)

Discover the answers to these questions in play:

- What one thing will be deadly dangerous to my love?
- Where will my beloved be endangered, so that I can rescue him or her?
- Who is my beloved secretly involved with (?) , who must be eliminated before I make my move?
- How can I leave this place once my beloved returns the affection?

the Control Freak

It isn't like you set out to be so demanding. It's just that you know better than everyone else how they should live their lives. You see everyone around you, always making poor choices. None of them doing things the way you would prefer they be done. And you can't help but let them know the proper way of doing things. It's for their own good, really. You know best, and they should listen. You always know how to make every little thing precisely perfect.

Of course, they often don't, and then they come running back to you when things go poorly, and you have to pick up the pieces and reconstruct their lives. Sometimes you're tempted to let them go ahead and ruin their lives. But you can't, because that would be imperfect of you.

Sometimes, you think your life would be a lot easier if all these people around you were out of the picture. Then you wouldn't have to spend all this energy correcting their lives, when they don't even want your advice. Ungrateful, is what that is. Then you could live a life of total control. And that would be perfectly, precisely perfect.

- Which other cast member would I risk my life to protect?
- Which cast member's life am I trying to improve, whether they like it or not?
- Which other cast member do I secretly despise? (Answer this in secret.)

Whose imperfections must be removed, destroyed or eliminated, through lethal means if necessary?
What imperfection mars their existence, which I must eliminate for their own good?
Where must I take them, to perform the final act of improvement?
How must I perform the sacrifice to improve them sufficiently to take my place, so that I can exit this realm and they can continue on the path of perfection?

the Angry One

You try not to be a violent person. It's just that the world around you is filled with stress and frustration. Every day is a struggle to keep from lashing out at those around you.

These people are supposed to be your friends, right? You shouldn't hurt them. But even on the best of days, it takes all your effort to keep from flipping out and screaming in somebody's face. Today doesn't look like the best of days, not by a long shot. Today might just be the day where you break something irreplaceable.

- Which other cast member would I risk my life to protect?
- Which cast member do I always argue with over petty bullshit?
- Which other cast member do I secretly despise? (Answer this in secret.)
- What do the strange flapping monsters that surround the castle desperately seek, that if I held it I might command them?
- Whose continued existence prevents me from commanding the creatures?
- Where must I stand to command the flapping creatures to take me away?
- Once my rival for control is dead, how can I command these creatures to do my bidding and take me away from this place?

the Ephemeral

You've always had a lingering suspicion that you weren't like ordinary people. Your memories of

more than a few months ago are hazy and vague. You have a greater than average tendency to speak in cliché, or to use overly elaborate synonyms for common words. Often it seems like your thoughts and motivations are created after the fact to fit your behavior in a situation. To an outside observer, everything seems mostly normal. You are defined by one or two strong mannerisms, but you lack the landness and subtle complexities of the average person. An outside observer might think that you were relatively normal, but you have come to realize the truth:

You are not a real person. You're some sort of imaginary being that has taken on human form. You haven't told anyone yet, but you are increasingly convinced. This weird stuff with an alien world only confirms what you already suspected: surely this is the next stage of the story you were written for.

You don't know who created you, or how, or why. You know that, as a fictional being, you exist to suffer for the amusement of an author and audience, and that pisses you off. After all, it is conflict that drives a story, and your author apparently created you to go through some trying times ahead. You need to find a way to escape your fictional state. Become a real boy or girl, somehow. Maybe even punish your creator on the way, for making a sentient being who only exists to suffer for the amusement of another.

- Which other cast member would I risk my life to protect?
 - Which cast member has no memories of me until a few months ago, when I showed up in our social circle and everyone else remembered me always having been around?
 - Which other cast member do I secretly despise? (Answer this in secret.)
-
- What do I lack that, if found, would help me become a real person?
 - Who is the one that first created me as a fictional being?
 - Where can I find the original writings that created me (which I must destroy)?
 - How can I become a real human being?

the Watched

For some time now, you have been watched by faceless figures. Everywhere you go, you see them out of the corners of your eyes. Men and women · children, even · watch your every move. You can't see who they are, because they look like they don't have a face. Where they should have eyes

and a nose and such, they just have a smooth stretch of pinkish-yellow skin. You assume that this is a mask of some sort, which they wear along with archaic looking clothing to keep from being identified.

Whenever you turn to confront these spies, you find that they have vanished, presumably gone into hiding to avoid you noticing them. But you are more observant than they expected, so you keep catching glimpses of their surveillance.

Who are these people, and why are they spying on you? What do they want from you? You're not anything special. You work in a crummy retail job, selling overpriced electronics to people. You agreed to help out with a friend's independent movie. You're not a foreign spy or a celebrity or the mystic heir to a long lost kingdom. At least, you don't think you're any one of those things.

You think that they must be agents of a conspiracy, perhaps a satanic cult of some sort. Perhaps they are planning on turning you into a human sacrifice.

You haven't told anyone yet. You have no proof, and you wouldn't want to appear mad. Worse, you don't know who these people are. Anyone you tell about this might be working for the people spying on you. If they suspected that you were on to them, then they might kill you or worse.

- Which other cast member would I risk my life to protect?
- Which cast member do I suspect is working for the conspiracy that is spying on me? Why?
- Which other cast member do I secretly despise? (Answer this in secret.)

- What do the faceless men think that I have which they want?
- Once I have what they want, where can I find them to give it to them?
- Who must I mark to be the next target of the faceless men, once I join them?
- How do I remove my own face to join the faceless men and disappear?

the Traveler

You think that you might be a time traveller.

It's crazy, of course. Time travel is impossible. Even if it were possible, it would involve flying around in a spaceship at the speed of light. But nonetheless, you're doing it... somehow. you don't really understand it.

At first it started small. You would notice blackouts. You'd be doing something, blink your eyes, and suddenly you were somewhere else minutes or hours later. 'Missing time' they call it.

Then you started having moments repeat. Usually it was small, just a few seconds. You would be reaching for a knife and grab the pointy end instead of the handle, cutting your fingers. Suddenly it was a second earlier, and you grabbed the knife safely instead. Or you'd say the wrong thing talking to your boss, rewind, and keep your dumb mouth shut. Never very long. And never reliable. You didn't have any control over whether or if it was going to happen.

Recently, though, it has gotten stronger. When the Director was organizing some people a week ago to discuss this movie, you had to work. But after work, you were suddenly there, hours earlier, participating in the plan like everyone else. No one seemed to notice anything odd.

Today is the worst of all. Some intuition tells you that the movie is a bad idea. So you didn't go with everyone else to the script reading. But when you went to bed, you woke up on the same day. Like *Groundhog Day*. You repeated the same day three times. Eventually, you gave in and went to the script reading. Whatever is causing you to repeat your days must want you to go.

It's crazy. You know this. You haven't told anyone yet, because they'd know you were crazy. But you need to figure out why it is happening. And maybe use your time travel to get out of here.

·Which other cast member would I risk my life to protect?

·Which cast member spoke to me once at a party, while I was miles away busy at work?

·Which other cast member do I secretly despise? (Answer this in secret.)

·Who can help me break the infinitely repeating cycle?

·What keeps me anchored in this time and place?

·Where must I destroy that anchor to escape?

·Once I'm free of time's constraints, how can I find my way through the infinity of time and space back to where I belong?

the Visionary

You've always been an artist, known for strong, creative ideas and bold visions. Now you're thinking that maybe that creative vision was just a manifestation of some hidden psychic potential, or something. You're not normally a person to believe in astral projection or New Age-y stuff like that. At least, you weren't until recently. Now you're rethinking that. You're thinking that you might be some sort of prophet. Whatever is happening, you know for sure that something terrible is

going to happen.

One week ago, you had a vision. You don't know where it came from or why. You were hanging out with some other cast members. The Director was talking about the plans for the movie and stuff, when all of a sudden the room shifted into something else.

Everything changed into an ornate, archaic looking ballroom, with red carpet and a throne on a raised platform. Black banners hung from the walls, marked with a weird yellow symbol you've never seen before. Your friends were dressed in fancy clothing that looked like something out of the Renaissance. Though not in the room before, Cameron was there, sitting on the throne, speaking in gibberish to rest of them. Everyone else seemed deferential to Cameron, as would befit loyal courtiers to nobility. You couldn't understand what anyone was saying, but the Director seemed to be petitioning Cameron for some boon. Cameron was uninterested, and concluded the discussion by pointing at you, glaring sternly. The other reluctantly pulled knives out of their tunics and began to advance toward you. Their eyes seemed reluctant, but their stance suggested murderous intent. As the first knife - the Director's - pierced your side, your vision blurred. Looking around, you were back to your normal life once more. The others had not noticed anything odd, except that you drifted off to a brief daydream.

You are pretty sure that this was a warning. A bad omen. A prophecy of something horrible to come. You came here to try to stop whatever was going to happen from happening. You're not really sure how to do that, but you know that you'd have to be present to help.

- Which other cast member would I risk my life to protect?
- Which cast member did I try to warn, but they wouldn't listen to me?
- Which other cast member do I secretly despise? (Answer this in secret.)

- Where can I cause another prophetic vision to occur?
- Who must I make sure behaves just as the vision describes?
- What must that person destroy, just as the vision showed?
- How do I leave this place once the vision has come true?

the Invited

You're not really even supposed to be here. You barely even know these people, really. Your friend invited you to join the cast of the movie, so that you could get to know everyone a little better. But you never were super excited about making a movie or anything. These guys aren't even you friends, just casual acquaintances, really. When you were first told about the plan, you gave it a pass. Until a week ago, you weren't planning on attending at all.

A week ago, you found a pale yellow envelope in your coat pocket, addressed to you in a smooth, calligraphic handwriting. You never had seen the letter before, and it bore no postmark or stamps. It was sealed with an archaic wax seal, like it might be a high end wedding invitation or something. Inside, the letter had your name, followed by “YOU ARE INVITED TO A MASQUERADE BALL AT THE PALACE, ONE WEEK HENCE. WE SHALL CELEBRATE THE BIRTHDAY OF ALDONES, KING OF THE ROYAL COURT OF YHTILL. COME IN COSTUME. COME TO DANCE. COME TO DINE. COME.”

You came this evening, mainly to figure out who played this prank on you. Somebody must have slipped the letter into your pocket, and you want to find out who and why. You’re a bit angry at this intrusion of your privacy, and you don’t know why they’d want you here anyway.

You don’t know what happened to the letter. It was in your pocket a moment ago. (You checked.) But now it is gone. Funny that.

- Which other cast member would I risk my life to protect?
- Which cast member convinced me to join you in this mess, even though I was reluctant to come along?
- Which other cast member do I secretly despise? (Answer this in secret.)

- Who sent me the invitation to the party at Carcosa?
- What can I bring them to break the magical pull they have over me?
- Where can I find the invitation that I lost?
- How can I destroy the invitation, sending me back to my home?

INHABITANT OF CARCOSA

You are an inhabitant of the alien city of Carcosa. Once, on some distant planet or perhaps a different dimension, the city of Carcosa was visited by the malevolent living god known as the King in Yellow. Your world was unable to handle the stress of the King's presence, and it shattered into pieces. Ever since, the tattered remnants of your world are stuck in a loop. Across the eons, each inhabitant of the world has played through the events of your final night, over and over. In time, the city of Carcosa settled into a stable loop: you each play out your part and, at the end of each night, the King in Yellow arrives. Then the world resets to the beginning of the evening, and you repeat.

But now something has happened. Somehow, your fragment of a world has come into contact with our world. Now our world's inhabitants are throwing your stable loop off balance. If these earthly intruders aren't incorporated into the cycle, then your world will crumble. The tattered world of Carcosa is already a shred. Any further strain on it and it will fall apart altogether.

You need to save yourselves. You need to restore order. You need to make these newcomers part of your story. This will lessen the strain on reality. Only when the intruders have become part of your story can Carcosa stabilize and survive.

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As a player, your job has several parts:

1. to cause these events to happen in the most surprising and dramatic way possible. This requires convincing an intruder to assist you.
2. to be creepy, mysterious and tempting toward the intruders.
3. when another character performs a service for you, you are obligated to answer one question of theirs honestly, as best you can. If that question is from an intruder trying to find a way out of Carcosa, you use your divination cards to answer.

Fated Events

You have a part to play in this story. You have two or three events that are fated to happen. These define your role. You need to make an intruder involved in each event. This will help make them part of the story, and help keep the world together.

In the central ballroom, you will find the grand clock. Each time you complete one of your fated events, move the hand one hour later, closer toward midnight. When the clock finally hits midnight, your reality will reset itself and become a bit more stable. If you have failed to complete your fates by midnight, then you will suffer great agony as you become an avatar of the living god. It is imperative that you complete your fates and keep the story on track.

Conflict and combat are meaningless, here. You've endlessly played out the conflicts with your fellow citizens of Carcosa. Fighting them won't accomplish anything. If two inhabitants of Carcosa disagree on what should happen, then you should come to some sort of compromise or, more likely, simply state that you have had this conflict a thousand times before and both leave the area, with neither getting what they want.

Answering questions

These intruders are looking for a way out. They each have questions that they want answered. You can promise them answers to their questions in exchange for an act of service to you. Once they have completed a task for you, then you must reveal the truth to them. This exchange of service for secrets is the core of how Carcosa operates.

For most questions, answer simply based on your knowledge and your character background. When a cast member asks you a question related to their escape, though, that question is special. As an inhabitant of Carcosa, you have a mystical, intuitive knowledge that allows you to answer these questions (using the answer cards). When asked an escape question, you should find out what answers they already have answered and what is going on with their character. This will help give you context for your answer. Then you give the cast member the answer card that you find most interesting, dramatic or applicable to their question. If necessary, make up an explanation of how the card fits with the question. If you have no more answer cards remaining, then you can give any answer you want, just as with the How questions. (This is a good time to make the answer particularly nasty or troubling or to tie it into the events of the game so far.)

If the question is a How question, you're free to make up any answer that fits with the previous answers. If possible, you want to force them into difficult personal decisions or dealing with personal demons.

You can't answer two questions in a row from the same intruder. Carcosa keeps its secrets better than that.

One last thing: don't tell the intruders any of this unless you have to to answer a question or to fulfill your task. If they understand the rules, they may not want to play your little game.

Your Place of Power

There is no conflict in Carcosa. Over countless centuries, you've played out every possible fight, deception and disagreement. You can't force another PC to do something that they don't want to do.

Cast members can "Push" you into performing one deed as they describe, but they have to make a sacrifice to do so. Then they can specify one task you have to perform for their payment.

You can only push while in your Place of Power. There, you have more connection to Carcosa, allowing you to force others to bend to your will.

You can only Push once each cycle. You get one push, then you have to wait until the King in Yellow arrives. When the King comes, everything resets to the start, and you get another Push that you can use.

Answers:

The Demiurge

Who The Author
What The Yellow Sign
Where Off the balcony

The Devil

Who The Merchant
What Your hand
Where On the foggy shores of Lake Hali

The Hierophant

Who Head Priest Naotalba
What Your health
Where In the torture chamber

The Past

Who The one who has wronged you most
What Your memory
Where The gateway through which you entered this world

The Fallen King

Who Dead King Aldones
What King Aldones's preserved corpse
Where King Aldones's empty grave

The Lover

Who The one you most love
What Your courage
Where The main ballroom

The Hermit

Who Yourself

What Your sanity
Where Where none can see you

The Watching Eye

Who The Director
What Your eye
Where Where all can see you

The Sacrifice

Who Yourself
What Your very life
Where Where innocent blood has been spilt

The Prophet

Who The Phantom of Truth
What A secret carefully kept
Where Where secrets have been revealed

Judgment

Who The one you secretly hate
What Righteous anger
Where In the presence of the one you despise

The Empress

Who Queen Cassilda
What The Throne of Yhtill
Where Upon the throne of Yhtill

The Heretic

Who Princess Camilla
What The text of the play "The King in Yellow"
Where The hidden shrine to the King in Yellow

The Lurking Terror

Who The one you fear most
What The creature in the Whisper Labyrinth
Where The Whisper Labyrinth

The Unworthy

Who Prince Thale
What The crown of dead King Aldones
Where In the presence of the heir to the throne

The Mist

Who The one you have wronged
What Terrible thing in the lake of Hali
Where In the presence of one who despises you

Inhabitants

Queen Cassilda

(Place of Power: The Grand Ballroom)

Your husband, King Aldones, has been poisoned. Even now he lays dead in the crypt beneath the palace, and his murderer still stalks the city. With no ruler, the city has fallen into chaos. A plague has befallen the city. The heretical cult of the King in Yellow spreads through dissidents in the city. Already, they incite the various factions into violent conflict and riots. If you look out the tower window, you can see the city burning in the distance.

By ancient tradition, you must choose one of your children to be the new ruler of Carcosa before the night is through. Only thus can you restore order to your doomed city. Yet neither child is acceptable as ruler. Camilla is flighty, too easily swayed, while Thale is overly ambitious and not as crafty as he believes. Yet without someone to sit on the throne of Yhtill, the city will fall into chaos and the wicked worshippers of the King in Yellow will come to rule this land.

And still your husband's murderer roams free. The killer must be found and put to justice, through any means possible.

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Fated Events:

- At my request, an outsider chooses a new heir to take the throne of the kingdom.
- An outsider must bear witness against a heretic or murderer, so that I may sentence the criminal to death.
- I and one other must make a terrible sacrifice to bring my dead husband back from the dead. (They choose what to sacrifice. I must roleplay loss of the same thing they sacrifice, until the clock next strikes midnight. They receive the “Possessed by the King Ghost” card.)

Supplemental card: Possessed by the King's Ghost.

Having made the sacrifice, you are overcome with the spirit of the dead king. Your old personality is submerged, and the dead monarch makes your decisions until midnight next strikes. Dead King Aldones wishes only to see the King in Yellow stopped. He knows that stopping the King in Yellow will doom Carcosa, but it is the only way his wife, children and kingdom can escape an endless cycle of pain. He will do whatever he can to see that no inhabitants fulfill their fated events, so that all the kingdom falls into endless void where black stars rise. (When midnight strikes, you are back to your ordinary self. Give this card back to Cassilda.)

Princess Camilla

(Place of Power: The hidden shrine to the King in Yellow)

Your father, King Aldones, died recently under mysterious circumstances. Overcome with grief, you withdrew from ordinary court politics. In seclusion, you came to discover the forbidden text *The King In Yellow*. This play foretells the coming of a living god who will remake the world in his own image. The heretical worship of the King in Yellow is forbidden by the old priests of the city. Even now the temple's inquisitors search the city for worshippers of the King in Yellow to execute. Yet the teachings of the cult give you comfort and hope for the future of the city.

Based on your readings of the omen in the book, the time of the King is at hand. Soon the Phantom of Truth, herald of the King in Yellow, shall appear before the court to utter prophecies. When those prophecies have been fulfilled, then the time has come for the living god to take the entire kingdom of Carcosa into his being. You wish to gain as many converts to the King's religion, without your mother or High Priest Naotalba discovering your new faith.

- Camilla asks a stranger if they are the Phantom of Truth, and they answer affirmatively.

Camilla asks another to unmask and they identify that they wear no mask. (This becomes true: their mask melds to their face permanently.) You: "You, sir; should unmask." Them: "I wear no mask." You: (Terrified.) "No mask? No mask?"

The prophecies of the Phantom of Truth must be made to come true.

Princess Camilla has several copies of this card:

Supplemental Card: No Mask

Your mask has fused to your face. You can no longer remove it, for that is simply what your face looks like now. You must sacrifice either your sanity or your self-worth now. The mask's question is expended, whether you have used it or not.

The Author

(*Place of Power: none*)

Special Rule: Barely There

Until your fates are accomplished, you are mute, intangible and invisible. The only thing you can directly interact with is the written word. You have a stack of blue pages containing a lot of written words, and a red pen. You can use the red pen to mark on these pages and leave them for the other players to find. You can't write out words, but you can circle, underline, cross out or otherwise pick out individual words and phrases on each page. If you locate pages of the play *The King in Yellow* (printed on yellow paper), then you can use the red pen on those as well.

Once, you were a regular person, a writer named Cameron Iokannnon. Once, you had hopes and dreams and a regular life. That seems very long ago now. You read a play called *The King in Yellow*.

Or maybe you lived those events. Maybe you wrote it. Your memories are confused now. You've faded away until you're almost nothing at all.

Writing.

You were definitely writing... something. It is important that you finish the story. Your story must be told. The story traps you, though. As long as you continue the story, you remain a prisoner here as much as the characters themselves. Only someone from outside your story could rescue you from the narrative prison of your own construction.

But who are these new characters who enter, stage left?

- Someone must gather together seven of the scattered pages of *The King in Yellow* and burn them.
- Someone must say my name three times.
- Another must willingly cut off the hand that they use to write with. (i.e., Sacrifice their physical well-being.)

Once you have accomplished those acts, you will have your memory restored and attain tangible human form. Thereafter, you follow the rules for cast members instead of inhabitants. You only have your life available to sacrifice.

Cameron Lokannon

You were writing a screenplay about the King In Yellow coming to an unsuspecting kingdom, driving everyone there mad and then destroying the entire kingdom. Somehow, you seem to have torn open a hole in reality and gotten yourself and your friends sucked into the fiction that you were writing. You have to answer these questions to find a way for yourself and one other person to escape.

- ? What earthly object has my soul been hidden in?
- ? Where did I create a gateway between this world and my own?
- ? How did I make connection between this world and my own? How might I open the door between worlds once more?

The Merchant

(*Place of Power: By the shores of Lake Hali*)

Once, you may have been an ordinary man, a travelling salesman and aspiring author named Mark Roark. Following the German occupation of Virginia, you came across a curious book entitled *The King in Yellow*. After reading it, the events of the play began to intrude into your life, until the King in Yellow himself arrived in New York and your world dissolved into madness and chaos.

When you try to think of your past, you experience sudden discomfort. Your world was destroyed, and any connection to it, even a hint of memory, threatens to undo you as well. It's better for you to ignore your past as a mortal man. Instead, you focus on your existence here in Carcosa.

You are a Merchant, one that specializes in intangible goods. Inhabitants of Carcosa sometimes approach you looking to purchase some courage or hope and in exchange they give you their abilities or dreams. Sometimes the royal family purchases fear and regret and the like for use in their torture chambers. So you always have a use for nearly any emotion or aspect of humanity. But the natives are stuck in their ways, unlikely to make any purchases from you. These newcomers to the city, though, they seem like they will be easy marks. Loads of profit to be made there.

At the beginning of play, you have a variety of abstract goods in stock. Your inventory will shift and change over the game. It does not reset when the King comes. Of course, you don't give away merchandise. Even a simple answer comes at a price.

You can accept any intangible as payment, provided that you make an arrangement with the seller. But you must make an exchange of goods to transfer intangibles. And you are working to fulfill your destiny points, wherein three people sell you three specific intangibles:

- Someone sells their sense of self worth
- Someone sells their courage
- Someone sell their sanity

Supplemental cards:

Memories of Another World

You can recall an entire other lifetime that you spent as a cultist, in a world bizarrely alien called Yhtill. You worshipped a dead god called the Feaster from Afar. All your life, you labored to bring the unwholesome deity back to life. On the eve of your final reanimation ritual, your world was invaded by an alien reality. Your world was consumed by this one, and you were trapped forever in Carcosa.. (You can answer one question from another castmember. Answer however you feel is most unsettling.)

Righteous Anger

You're pissed off. And for good reason, too. (You can discard this card during a conflict as you

would with sanity, health, etc. and win the conflict. Use it to get what you really deserve.)

Faith in God

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God.” - Hebrews 10:31

You have a deep and powerful belief in Hastur, the living god. His avatar is coming, and soon. He will make sacrifices of you all, to save this disappearing land through pain and spilt blood. All must know about the oncoming apocalypse. all must prepare for his glorious and terrifying avatar, the King In Yellow.

An evening of dreamless sleep

The next time you sleep, your rest is completely undisturbed. But time passes strangely here. Do you even need to sleep in Carcosa?

Chessmaster

Suddenly, your mind is filled with clever stratagems and cunning maneuvers. (You automatically win any game of chess that you play.)

Coward

You have lost all your ability to fight. Roleplay out how you are afraid of anything and everything. (You cannot initiate a violent conflict, and must flee from violence against cast members at you first chance.)

Naotalba, the High Priest

(Place of Power: The Torture Chamber)

“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” - Hebrews 10:11

You are the blind high priest of the Old Gods, the moral center of the city. You stand as the bulwark against sin and wickedness that would otherwise overwhelm the city. In these decadent times, the people have abandoned the sacrifices to to the insect gods that preserved our kingdom for centuries. The heretical cult of the King in Yellow spreads across the city. Your inquisitors attempt

to hunt down these forbidden beliefs. Nonetheless, the heathens still spread their gospel of a prophet called the Phantom of Truth who will mark the way for their living god. Few things anger you more than this cult of unorthodox beliefs, undermining the temple's authority in the kingdom. You have gone to great lengths to stop them, and many times you have stepped over moral lines that others might refuse to cross.

You present a pious front, arguing that your actions are necessary to defeat the heathens. But the truth is that you have long since abandoned your faith in the Old Gods. You don't believe that your prayers are being heard by anything. You only maintain the rituals because your role as head priest gives you political power. As the lead religious figure in the city, you have access to the royal family. The high priest of the Old Gods has always had the ear of the ruler of Carcosa.. If the cult of the King in Yellow continues to spread like a disease across the kingdom, then you might lose your prestige.

·Rebuke and argue with a nonbeliever or outsider who violates one of our many and unpredictable taboos. (Feel free to make up new taboos as you need.)

·Someone shows me the hidden shrine to the King in Yellow, which spurs me to doubt my behavior.

·Someone writes for me a missive that confesses my sins, then sees that it gets into the hands of the queen. Then I can commit suicide by leaping from the balcony, my sins having been exposed.

(Invent a litany of sins as you confess.)

Prince Thale

(*Place of Power: the Empty Grave*)

You are the ambitious, young prince, rightful heir to the throne of Yhtill. You like to think that you are a ruthless and cunning manipulator willing to do anything to get what you want. In reality, you're not as smart as you would like to think, and it is impossible to manipulate the others whom you've deceived thousands of times before. The newcomers to Carcosa, though, might be easy marks to con into fulfilling your goals.

What you want most is to be named heir to the throne. Your father, King Aldones, died some months ago. The kingdom has been in chaos, with no monarch on the throne. Yet your mother, Queen Cassilda, continues to mourn her husband's death and refuses to name a new heir to the throne. It is her sacred duty to choose a competent, capable leader such as yourself to take the crown. Yet Princess Camilla, your sister, is in line for the throne as well, and your mother has yet to decide which of you will be ruler of Carcosa. Your father's death is your chance to seize the power you've always craved. you can't let this opportunity go to waste. Someone must sit on the

throne before the night is through, and that someone is going to be **you**.

Fated events:

- Lose to someone at chess (requires buying the chessmaster, or else solving a difficult chess puzzle or making a sacrifice, if they can justify it)
- Deliver this forged letter to the queen, which purports to be a confession of treason from Princess Camilla
- Someone accepts thirty silver from me as payment to assassinate the queen. (They don't actually have to assassinate the queen. Only making the contract is sufficient for you to owe them their answer. But you needn't tell them that.)

Play these once you have escaped or died:

Spirit of Doubt

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings.

When the King in Yellow comes, you stand to the side, invisible and unaffected. But when someone does you a favor and you answer a question, you still advance the clock.

You don't have any ability to directly influence the world, except by whispering promises to people. You can answer people's questions truthfully, if they first perform a service for you. Which mostly means doing one of the following three things:

- Convince someone they cannot trust their ally.
- Convince someone what they thought was true is not.
- Make someone hesitate to act when the path should be clear.

Spirit of Fear

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings. You don't have any ability to directly influence the world, except by whispering promises to people.

You can answer people's questions truthfully, if they first perform a service for you. Which mostly means doing one of the following three things:

- Make someone run from a threat they should face.
- Make someone freeze in place while danger approaches
- Convince someone that something harmless is a threat to them

Spirit of Suspicion

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings. You don't have any ability to directly influence the world, except by whispering promises to people. You can answer people's questions truthfully, if they first perform a service for you. Which mostly means doing one of the following three things:

- Convince someone they cannot trust their ally.
- Convince someone to spread malicious rumors about a third party.
- Make someone denounce and attack the traitor in their midst.

Spirit of Sacrifice

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings. You don't have any ability to directly influence the world, except by whispering promises to people. You can answer people's questions truthfully, if they first perform a service for you. Which mostly means doing one of the following three things:

- Convince someone to harm themselves, physically or mentally (make a sacrifice)
- Convince someone to sacrifice one of their own resources in place of another person's
- Convince someone to make a human sacrifice out of another character

Spirit of Doom

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings. You don't have any ability to directly influence the world, except by whispering promises to people. You can answer people's questions truthfully, if they first perform a service for you. Which mostly means doing one of the following three things:

- Convince someone that their quest is hopeless and futile
- Convince someone that they are incapable of facing the challenges ahead (sacrifice their self-worth)
- Make someone stare into the yellow void where black stars rise, until they go mad (sacrifice their sanity)

Spirit of Hate

You might be an actual spirit, or you might just be stray thoughts in people's heads. If at all possible, leave it ambiguous. You flutter through the game, invisible and intangible, merely making suggestions and comments to one player at a time, trying to advance your goals of negative feelings. You don't have any ability to directly influence the world, except by whispering promises to people. You can answer people's questions truthfully, if they first perform a service for you. Which mostly means doing one of the following three things:

- Convince someone that they should despise the one that they wish to protect
- Convince someone to reveal their hatred to the one that they despise.
- Convince someone to strike out against one that they despise.

The King in Yellow

You have been chosen as the worldly vessel of the King in Yellow, this dimension's avatar of Hastur. Your old personality is temporarily subsumed into that of an insane alien entity hiding in humanoid form.

Tell the assembled characters of the glorious madness and beautiful destruction you bring into this world. Countless violent revolutionaries and insane revelers stand beyond the palace gates. They pour into the court, bringing destruction and chaos in the wake of the King himself.

All cast members must sacrifice a card to survive the coming of the King in Yellow. Have each narrate how they survive the chaos by making the sacrifice. Any who cannot make the sacrifice perish gruesomely.

Give each surviving player character (cast member and inhabitant alike) a fate card. You can choose who gets which card or distribute them randomly.

Tell all the PCs that everything fades into chaos and a great flash of yellow washes across Carcosa. Have all the PCs close their eyes, and tell the inhabitants to return to their place of power. Tell the cast members that they should count down from one hundred before they reopen their eyes and resume play. Return the crown to the GMs and return to your place of power and resume playing your PC.

If a cast member manages to replace each of the questions on a character's sheet, then they are trapped permanently. Characters have to give the cards back after the King leaves. All fated events are unchecked once more, so that they must be fulfilled.

Fated Event

You are fated to perform this action before the King in Yellow next returns. This fated event replaces your first question or event not given to you by the King in Yellow. Cross out that line and write this fate in its place. Inhabitants of Carcosa should treat this new fate just the same as the ones they have. Cast members must fulfill this fate before they can escape. As with all fated events, this fate becomes unchecked after the King in Yellow departs.

Fates

- Cause yourself great pain and injury. (If you have something to sacrifice, you must do so.)
- Suffer greatly at the hands of another. (If you have something to sacrifice, you must do so.)
- Be betrayed by one you trust
- Reveal a terrible secret to one who will use it against you
- Make a deal with a metaphorical devil.
- Fight a duel to the death
- Harm one who means you no harm
- Destroy something of great value to someone close to you
- Have something you value stolen or taken from you
- Forgive someone who did a terrible misdeed to you
- Assist a plan that doesn't benefit you in any way
- Apologize to those that you have wronged
- Find an object that brings you simple, pure joy.
- Suffer and sacrifice to save another from harm
- Die in a horrific, gruesome way
- Become metaphorically or literally lost, unable to find your way without assistance
- Have your schemes or strategies turned against you.
- Go into hiding to avoid physical or emotional harm
- Make a terrifying discovery
- Become trapped, unable to escape a situation without outside assistance
- Find the thing that you have been looking for

WAKE UP

Scattered throughout the game in various ways are cards that represent listening to whispers that are trying to wake you from a fantasy land. If you find 5 of the cards, then you can escape without asking the inhabitants for help. But only one person can wake up in this way. Distribute between 5 and 9 of the cards, depending on how easy you want that escape to be.

WAKE UP

you hear a distant voice, like the sound of a loved one's voice attempting to rouse you from a deep slumber. If a cast member finds five of these cards, then they can give them all to a GM to immediately escape this nightmare land, awaking in their real life to discover that they have been trapped in a coma for several months, along with all the other cast members still in Carcosa. It was all some horrible dream... or was it?

Locations:

Descriptions of rooms are all written in the voice of Mark Roark, an overbearing, self-important traveling salesman of the 1930s that wanted to be a pulp writer but couldn't cut it. Pages of his autobiography are scattered across the palace. They describe each location, if anyone cares to read them.

The Whisper Labyrinth

The further your intrepid narrator explored Carcosa, the stranger the environments he discovered. I discovered, that is. Beyond the ballroom itself, the palace's halls grew increasingly labyrinthine. No passageway seemed to lead in a straight path toward any particular goal. The chambers, once brightly lit and spacious, grew dark and dusty and cramped. After a short time, I realized that I had no idea how to return to the curious party I had witnessed previously.

As I came to this unfortunate realization, I noticed that the walls of this maze came to be covered in shelves. Each shelf had a glass bottle upon it, no two of which were alike in shape or design. Examining a few, I found that each bore a name of a specific individual. somehow I knew that this

place was an oracle of sorts: if I could find the vessel that bore my name, then I would learn of my own future. I attempted to unstopper several of the bottles with other individual's names, but the corks would not comply.

After several such attempts, I became aware of the presence of an enormous lurking beast approaching in the labyrinth. I could not see any threat, yet I could hear its low, echoing growl and feel its hot breath on the wind. I quickly moved on, not wishing to remain in the Whisper Labyrinth long enough for the beast's stealthy tread reached my location.

Dear reader, I suggest that you should do likewise, before the unseen predator reaches you as well.

Important: If you wish to explore the Whisper Labyrinth, consult a GM.

Navigating the Labyrinth

- The Labyrinth is haunted by an invisible monster. Something vaguely tiger like, though larger, stealthy and more terrifying.
- You can draw from the deck, but if you draw two Lurking Horror cards, everyone in the room has to discard one of your cards (you health, your sense of self worth, your sanity, or your life.)
- Once you start drawing from the deck, you can't stop drawing until you get an Exit card.
- Each bottle contains a secret, and has a name on it. If you find your own name, then you can answer one of the questions on your sheet. (Then remove your card from the deck, making it more likely the tiger attacks someone else)

Cards:

Lurking Horror (several copies, equal to the number of players) · If there is only one Lurking Horror cards out right now, you notice signs of an enormous, invisible beast preparing to strike. You hear its stealthy tread. You feel its hot breath nearby. Yet you do not see the creature itself. If there are two Lurking Horror cards out, the monster attacks, and all present must sacrifice a card or die. Then reshuffle the deck.

The Exit: (several copies, equal to the number of players) If you wish, you can leave the Whisper Labyrinth now.

The Director

The Star

The Drowned

The Envious

The Unloved

The Dreamer

The Control Freak

The Ephemeral

The Angry One

The Watched

The Wounded Warrior

The Traveler

The Visionary

The Invited

The Mad (If you **do not** have your sanity, then you can use this bottle.)

The Wounded (If you **do not** have your health , then you can use this bottle.)

The Self-Loathing(If you **do not** have your sense of self-worth, then you can use this bottle.)

No One - This bottle is empty, perhaps having already been used by some other person.

Dead End - This tunnel leads nowhere, and you will have to turn back. Reshuffle the discard pile into the deck. Lurking Horror cards drawn stay out.

The Grand Ballroom

(Place of power: Queen Cassilda)

The central chamber of Carcosa's palace was an enormous ballroom, where a curious party seemed to occur. The ballroom, indeed the palace as a whole, was decorated in an archaic and unusual style. It seemed to evoke the architecture of prior centuries while never quite falling into any school of design of which I was aware.

Dominated by a enormous balcony, the Grand Ballroom was the first confirmation that I had that I was no longer on our humble planet Earth. The night sky beyond appears to be permanently twilit and, stranger still, two moons hang in the sky. Even as the hours passed, the moons never seemed to dip any closer to the horizon.

I could hear the music and chatter of party guests coming from throughout the palace. Yet everywhere that I turned, no guests were in evidence. At first it seemed as if I had accidentally wandered into a room empty by pure chance, and that the real party was going on in the room beyond. But as I pursued the sounds of laughter from the guests, I continued to find rooms devoid of guests. Each room was filled with the evidence of a party underway. Drinks and half-eaten snacks scattered throughout. Personal effects were laid aside casually, as if the owners had stepped away for merely a moment. Music echoed from nearby halls, but never from the room I was present in. At times it seemed almost as if the elusive guests were right behind me, that simply turning my head would bring them into view. Yet try as I may, my searches for the revelers were fruitless. Or nearly fruitless, anyway.

The Shores of Lake Hali

(Place of power: The Merchant)

Though I always wished to be a brave and resolute investigative reporter, the truth is that I have never been a brave man. Fear of failure is, perhaps, the reason why I chose the safe and easy path of the traveling salesman over the uncertain, dangerous path of the war correspondent. My attempts to seek solace in mundanity have utterly failed, though, as I now find myself in a land comprised primarily of the eldritch and the unsettling. Each corner in which I look is filled with the bizarre, the dangerous and the unholy.

This strange beach is no exception. The lake's waves change in composition when one isn't looking. Sometimes the lake is deep black water, too dark for eyes to penetrate. At other times, though, the waters are replaced with a sickly yellow mist that crashes upon the shore just as waves of water would. The lake itself is similarly transitory: sometimes the opposite shore is distant, too distant to see. Other times it seems almost close enough that you could speak clearly to those on the opposite shore. The far shore is most often desolate, devoid of signs of life. On occasion, though, a palace can be seen on the opposite shore, a near perfect mirror image of the Palace of Yhtill. Yet this palace looks abandoned. No people or lights can be seen within. Its gates have fallen from their hinges. Its flags are ragged yellow tatters. Whose palace is this? Could it be the Palace of Yhtill in the future, and omen of things to come?

These changes are worrying and impossible, as are so many of the events I have witnessed since entering Carcosa. And yet, for some reason, I feel more at home here than elsewhere. If I were to settle down I would, I believe, choose to set up shop here, on the beach and sell my wares to any citizens that passed on their way to the palace. In my spare moments, I could watch the cloud waves break on the shore and spy upon the empty palace, seeking any sign of life.

The Torture Chamber

(Place of power: Naotalba)

At one time, I had dreamt of becoming Mark Roark, intrepid war correspondent. I wished like so many of my generation to make my fortune covering the atrocities of the great Franco-Prussian War, perhaps following the American Federation troops as they marched into battle in the People's

Republic of Uqbar. But before your humble narrator could land a job, Tlon surrendered and the War ended as suddenly as it had began. No heroic globetrotting journalist, I. And so I settled for a life as a novelty goods broker, never expecting to see the atrocities of war firsthand.

Once I arrived in Carcosa, though, this belief was proven mistaken. Here, on an alien world, I saw torture chambers most terrifying. These chambers included machines and devices of disconcerting purpose. Chief among these were the creation of pain and suffering, and by my estimation these devices received a good amount of use in their time. Lucky was I to not have been the target of their villainous craft. Merely an observer as the chamber lay idle, I nonetheless was overcome with fear at the thought of the myriad needles, knives, clamps and screws being applied to the human form.

Stranger devices than these also occupied the torture pit. A thoroughly modern traveler of the 1930s, I was unable to identify many of the more technological devices herein. It was said in whispers that Queen Cassilda or the High Priest Naotalba had utilized this vile chamber to modify the mind of entrapped men and women. With the proper application, it was said, the devices could remove men's memories and/or implant new memories or beliefs. I found these stories quite implausible. Surely, if I had seen any evidence of memory erasure, I would remember such a thing.

The Hidden Shrine to the King in Yellow

(Place of power: Princess Camilla)

SPECIAL: The Yellow Sign

Place a prop for The yellow Sign prominently in this location. Any who look upon the Yellow Sign discard their snaity, if they have it. If they don't have it, they don't have to discard anything.

I am a simple traveling salesman, imprisoned through unknowable means within an otherworldly dream-palace. I do not fully understand this place's politics, its religion or its culture. From my brief sojourns into this place, I have learned that the kingdom is currently experiencing some political troubles. As I understand it, the official state religion worships the "Great old ones", apparently a pantheon of some sort of pagan gods. But an illegal cult was spreading like a virus through the city, despite the efforts of the state sanctions religion. This new group worshipped a being called "The King in Yellow" and his gospel was a banned book - apparently the same obscure play that I read shortly before finding myself in this strange place. The government has gone to great lengths to wipe out this underground cult, yet its numbers seem to grow ever more. Personally, I have little

time for religious disputes (having myself found and lost religion once already), so these conflicts, though deadly serious to the inhabitants, mattered little to myself.

In a forgotten, obscure corner of the palace itself, I discovered something most unexpected. A chamber - apparently a shrine of sorts - devoted to these forbidden practices sat unknown beneath the very nose of Carcosa's ruling party. Within, one saw icons and statues of this prophesied King in Yellow's arrival, banners bedecked in the living god's Yellow Sign, and a single page of their forbidden holy book. Clearly, some person or persons within Carcosa's royal palace was secretly devoted to the outlaw religion. By the last decree of the late King Aldones, any discovered to worship the King in Yellow must be tortured unto death. Who would risk such a punishment to construct this secret chapel? It must be one of the palace's unseen staff. Unless, that is, the heretic is one of the royal family itself...

The Empty Grave

(Place of power: Prince Thale)

"While investigating Carcosa's many secrets, I - your intrepid reporter Mark Roark - stumbled upon one more mystery. Deep beneath the palace floors lies an ancient crypt, dedicated to the fallen kings of this disappearing land. It is a solemn, desolate place, filled to the brim with fluttering shadows and gruesome statuary. I'm sure that Poe or Lovecraft or one of that lot would have loved it. For my part, it gave me the 'heebie-jeebies', as they say. If I wasn't a rational citizen of the New American Imperium, I would have believed that the eyes of the dead kings still watched as I sought ever elusive answers in this funereal setting. Unfortunately for your ever humble (also, handsome) narrator, all that the crypt held in store for him was additional questions.

Conscientious readers of these pages will recall that King Aldones of Carcosa had recently perished, throwing the kingdom's politics into shambles. But curiously, his tomb inside these passages contained no body. It was sealed as with the others, but this brave journalist was not deterred by mere bricks and mortar. As I write this, the crypt's walls have been sundered and their opening showed the tomb to be unoccupied. Now, the King clearly has died. (Poisoned, they say, though I shall not trust the hearsay and gossip of this place's natives). Yet no corpse is to be evidenced here. I ask you, gentle reader, if the king's corpse lay not here, then where does it reside?

Props

- Masks for everyone, preferably two distinct types of masks for the inhabitants and the castmembers.
- crown or skull mask for King in Yellow
- the author pages PDF printed out
- script from the King in Yellow. James Blish published one version of the play, and Lin Carter another. Both are available in *The Hastur Cycle* from Chaosium Inc. You probably want 7-10 pages of the script scattered around the area.
- prominent analog clock, like a grandfather clock. You want this to not be a working clock, as the players will be pushing the hands around throughout the game. I made a clock out of cardboard, a bolt and some washers which worked great. Making your own clock means that you can make it go up to 13 and have that be when the King arrives.
- big chair for a throne
- blindfold for Naotalba. This should obscure the eyes, but be thin enough that Naotalb's player can see through it.
- chess puzzles for Thale. You can find books of chess puzzles where the player has to mate in some specified number of moves.
- markers for invisible/intangible beings. I suggest lengths of yellow cloth that can be worn as a scarf or headband.
- lots of cards printed out
- a prop for the Yellow Sign. Ideally, a carved or stone item that could be a disturbing heathen altar. Or simply the Yellow Sign glyph printed out on a large sheet of paper would work.

