

## *Banish with Laughcraft*

My oldest finished and published roleplaying fiction story. inspired by (not a slave to) the Cthulhu myth written by H.P. Lovecraft & August Derleth.

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To roleplayers, and fans of the original cosmic horror concept, there are some rules you might appreciate being informed about:

Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion of the participants aka the players are seen as equalitarian until it violates the story playing out, as intended.

Lovecraft's original notion is that the investigators, be it by job profession, or wildcard of life, end up insane, or dead. Cosmic Horror has no happy ending for humanity. Ever.

Lovecraftian warning, and reminder, on the Cthulhu myth: Neither science, nor religion, nor any occultism, grant the slightest direct benefit, when it comes to the forbidden lore of his Cthulhu universe. And neither is violence able to off any of the real cosmic players. It makes sense, as not all of us are superficial jerks.

### **The Arkham Instigator, a world-famous newspaper, summary:**

Today, 01.06.1923, the investigations of the police ended. The last months were filled with a nearly incomparable effort to illuminate the disappearance of the well-known persons struggling versus preternatural incursions. The small town, by the name of Dunseith, became the stage for an unsolved crime. The central persons: Adriano Putana, Sebastian Crowley, and J.T Pryce remain missing. Few hours after the local police were alarmed the government ordered that Dunseith was to be secured by forces of the US army. The scarce evidence comes down to a torn, bloodstained coat, blood, and two bullet holes of handgun caliber. Police declared that the assumption of a cult crime might be realistic. With the end of the investigations, the flags were lowered to half-mast. To us, the protection of our American way of life, even in the wake of the supposedly racist serial killer H.P Lovecraft, remains of paramount importance. Arkham's greatest newspaper willingly covers all expenses of the investigation and further search for evidence.

### *The story begins:*

For years, the occultist and small-time actor Sebastian Crowley, the business lawyer J.T. Pryce and the ex-monk and pulp writer Adriano Putana got drawn into situations, which would shatter the mind of the average citizen. The activities of obscured cults and alien entities left tracks to a horrifying truth that is confronted by inspired people. Sanity-threatening discoveries of forbidden lore hint at the possibility that earth is suffering the dark plots of the maniac, chthonic deities who undermined humanity for eons. The myth was detected in multiple places and again and again, the survivors faced the problem of knowing the truth, while being surrounded by oblivious neighbors, tellurium energy, insane entities, and their bloodthirsty minions. Anxiety and pressure of ignoring the unacceptable facts take their toll. Yet some myth-sleuths gained special insights, which proved beneficial. One of those valiant groups operated in the light of publicity and scored admirable successes in series. They became a symbol of inspiration and prudence for the entire humanity. Of course, the tentacled conspirators flayed them alive before this story started. The survivor of this bunch was Adriano Putana.

After the death of his fiance, he was trying to compensate for trauma by indulging in masculine fallacies. The Old Ones had other plans in mind though. In 1918 he was dismissed from the Corpo di Armato and realized the gain of the initiative.

Confronted by overwhelming forces he decided to deal crucial damage as long as he could. His journey on the fruitless road of retribution. He was seen gazing at a burning tarot card. The desperate assault of a single brave soldier. Illusions of heroism and glory were not for him anymore. A long-termed and painful struggle against forces one couldn't defeat was his more realistic answer. Yet he was aware of how many times outgunned individuals stood forthright against cults, criminals, and crazed scientists. Where they succeeded they were called heroes, where they faltered they were labeled fools. The necessity of introspection was not to be overseen. In the battle with horrors from beyond, there was no reason to grant them further advantages due to one's mental instability. Of course, such insights came the hard way in a man's younger years.

The three protagonists had their first meeting in 1922, in Calcutta, India as they were drawn into a revival of the thug activities and the masterminding influence behind it. Through a lack of subterfuge in the thuggish actions, they found out about the occult meaning of their vile crimes. Supposed accidents and sicknesses could be proven ritual murders of this heretic, abstract local cult of hierophants.

Deluded that the goddess Chalice asked to re-establish the cosmic balance with Shiva, there was assassinated whoever stood in the way of the vicious hierophants and their deranged plans. Crowley valiantly stepped up to face the blood magick, Putana welcomed the escape from boredom, and Pryce wouldn't allow a bunch of crazy, strangle-cord, and knife-wielding wackos to spoil his investments in this region.

When they discovered the first signs that a surprising outbreak of the disease was the dirty work of these religious madmen, even the British advisors could no longer hesitate. Need of circumstance and Pryce's political influence allowed them to join forces with the responsible military of the Commonwealth. Weeks passed in the draining heat and short of the breaking point they eavesdropped on information about a ritual gathering and even managed to identify some thugs. They followed those cultists and discovered their hideout. Caverns in derelict parts of the country and minor camps along the roads. Duty on side of the British soldiers and the grim resolve of the three made them charge into the caverns. During the first phase of infiltration, they managed to rescue Doctor Derek Nail from the fangs of a dark courtesan who planned to ritually feed upon him in service to that which lurked in the darkness.

Nail's natural gift of seduction had blinded him, overconfidence for the price of seeing women only as sex toys. For the three myth-snuffers, it didn't matter, the cult had to be stopped and if Nail was foolish enough, he would continue to reap forbidden fruits until the consequences tore him apart. After their first case was solved they were honored by the British embassy and the society of early human culture. They had by chance not only fought the cultists but by their raw courage alone cast a minor banishment versus the dreaded influence from beyond. Now such villains had to expect repercussions if they dared to stomp on law and humanity. Doctor Nail was brought forth to the best asylum in the western world, to purify his shredded self from the torment of his recent experiences. While the media entitled them heroes it was Colonel Fleming who earned this.

It was his tenacity and disciplined leadership that made them prevail, even when body and soul were at stake. The memories were clear enough to still shake all of them. In those dark and dreaded caverns, they suffered the sight of a lower servitor, whose stench and insane chanting, full of soul pain and sorrow, haunted their minds for a long, long time. In midst of those stone-carved cavern walls full of ceremonial symbols, a strangling feeling hit their guts.

They would never know if some incense or the alien atmosphere shocked them more. As they entered they had still believed to fight down some thugs, arrest the cult's guru and go home. A notch from the truth they were.

As they charged on they encountered the abomination, which the cult worshiped. For instance, insanity kicked God himself from the throne and seemed all-consuming. A second later they had to fight for their very souls. The handful of soldiers prepared for battle while Crowley studied the painted walls. Putana, who was pretty shaken by this intense situation, realized this was no problem solved by simple firepower.

Pryce, influenced by this thing, was drowning in a wave of horrid self-pity and soul trash. Unable to fire his reliable handgun again, he stared like a drunken peasant who realized he just kissed his cow. Crowley focused on countering the strange ritual formula and achieved some form of banishing power.

The German-Sicilian Bastard guarded the occupied occultist, but couldn't shake free from the grasp of shock completely. As the magical effort overstretched Crowley's mental balance and the first soldiers got seriously wounded, Putana focused his mind. Mistaken to be the effect of Crowley's ritual incantation, the banishment of the horrid creature came completely surprising to all of the shocked eyes. The creature faded from flesh to ethereal, much like an overcome nightmare. In this moment of triumph, it was Adriano's realism that shocked his companions. He explained that the creature was neither destroyed nor arrested, capable of returning after a short phase of recovery. While their psyches were marked by this night, they fell into a cheerful victory mood, everyone busy rationalizing these haunting moments.

The look in the eyes of Colonel Fleming was all which spoke of this chapter ever after. After they had withdrawn from the caves, short after the first full night of sleep, the next setback awaited.

Embittered they had to swallow that further investigation was impossible, cause the British army decided to detonate caves in this area to secure the local villages and avoid further spread of this wicked disease. They had saved hundreds of people and given their very best, yet they felt like beaten dogs as they left India. Pryce rapidly ventured back to the United States. An old acquaintance, by then a high-ranking diplomat had asked him to interfere with a political crisis. Gunter von Gotha had manipulated the economy to revive his dream of the German Kaiser Reich. Pryce coordinated and led several executives to deal with this mundane danger. This time there were no signs of mysterious influence to be found. Aiding the USA shortly after the Great War proved valuable nonetheless.

The public was pleased and the media celebrated Pryce as a defender of western culture. The Arkham Instigator entitled Pryce as „a Star shining brightest“. Crowley compared this with his astrological data and made some divination concerning the destiny of JT. Putana was less euphoric and remained silent.

After they had left India some months of recovery and calmer life took place. In February 1923 the three met again, as they dared to intercept some uncommon occurrences in Japan. Work on a planned road brought forth a discovery of some strange relic, which seemingly summoned a group of spooky, pale cultists out of nowhere.

The chanting and dancing of these people irritated the workers and when the heart of a workgroup leader was found on some savage altar, it was no longer prejudice that spoiled the climate here. The real horror started when a small mountainside monastery was discovered to be the headquarters of some weird Asian sect.

Far from the shores, there was just one village close by and so the monastery was still filed as deserted in the official Japanese reports. An illusion that was falling apart, as Sergeant Koromiko arrived with a squad of soldiers.

Patient information gathering and his cunning made Koromiko realize a sense of weirdness about this mission. Maybe support from Iteki was seen as more appropriate than risking more Japanese soldiers. Officially the honor that Iteki like Pryce were allowed to join up on this investigation is nearly inexpressible to western barbarians. Adriano was somewhat uncertain about the usefulness of Japanese infantry equipment for securing a building. This insight should prove real. Koromiko's decision made them clash with the lunacy of a culture that was nearly as strange to them as the vile web of the Old Ones.

While the first monk cells still somehow resembled something human, every step towards the center made the foreboding sense of danger more intense. Dirty, degenerate, and hideously desecrated was this scene.

The acumen of Crowley would be the only chance of escape for the trio, yet this was unknown to them at this point. Anyway, without the glorious sacrifice of the Japanese soldiers, they would have been condemned to a painfully slow death. Confronted with an abomination of myth horror and battle-ready thugs of this entity it should come to a tunnel fight which equaled the German- French trenches from 1914-1916 in all bitter aspects which fighting wreaks upon human existence. The scene turned into utmost torment for the flesh, Ki and Do which was hard to top. A gory skirmish through the narrow corridors of the monastery was about to begin. As the first wave ended in those tunnels, the adventurers split to support some soldiers.

Sebastian concentrated, forming an astral blade, resembling the dagger he wielded. Thereby he gained the chance to hurt the essence of ethereal beings as well. Joined by two soldiers he entered a corridor, advancing in flickering light and surrounded by nerve ripping sounds.

Close to the end of the passage, he recognized an arcane symbol and while the soldiers thought of a dead-end, Sebastian chanted versus the walls. Due to his talent with Magick, he was able to energize the symbol and opened a secret door. The soldiers were struck by surprise due to his innate abilities. Crowley expected the natural, an attack of a dark adept. The bloody dance of blades would demand toll from them. The toll that Crowley was more than willing to pay. The soldiers could fire once before it became close quarters. Meanwhile, Pryce led another two soldiers and marched on. The dirty gibberish on the walls left him unimpressed. Instinct was, what made him survive such situations. The slot-eyed cultists felt so superior in their ambush, that the massive counterstrike of JT caught them unprepared.

As he had expected those degenerates never before encountered resistance. His automatic clip pistol brought death to some of them and another one was smashed down by a powerful punch even before the soldiers could fully react. Boxing, bleeding, shivering, and blocking they survived this altercation. For a while, the illusion of a glorious victory would offer itself. Putana stood close to Koromiko, watching. Giri and Courage couldn't make the confusion go away. This was no typical mission for soldiers. The men sensed that they wouldn't survive such a place much longer. Adriano sneaked into a corridor. Fear tried to strangle his confidence and it demanded an act of willpower. Two times his intuition made him throw grenades into sections he felt to be dreadful. The following death cries made his doubts vanish. In his guts cramps started, this was not only fear.

This place was not part of their *via fatum*, whatever lurked here, his awareness failed to reveal anything about the deeper levels. Surprised by his skill he perceived himself blocking the knife of a cultist and countering by a deflection he had adapted from the few months of Wong Chen Kung Fu he once decided to practice. Calm but dedicated did he cut his gratitude into the flesh of this cultist. While Putana expressed his allergy to vice, the tables began to turn. The minions launched an organized assault and the pure strength of numbers drove them backward. When defeat became obvious the remaining soldiers grouped, giving evidence that mere mortals are as heroic, to allow Crowley the chance to grasp through a breach of reality and save his companions.

Weeks later Crowley honored the sacrifice of the Japanese squad with a play in the Noh theater. Adriano chose silence as a suiting honor and never mentioned anything about this, except that Wakino, who translated for them in the village, escaped her shame via traditional suicide.

The survivors took care that the few captured scripts and warding symbols were handed to proper instances. When the evacuation of the village was coordinated they found some weeks to flow with their true personalities. They met a Miko and even found an ancient Kitsune scroll, which they copied and handed to a museum. While Adriano had nothing more to offer he found some emotional link to the female side of Japan. Here he learned that not all women taste like rotting fish. Crowley studied the scripts and practiced some Tantojutsu. Again their interference had cost them much and they spend a month for recovery. Adriano chose to visit his place of birth, Giardini and enjoyed the Italian monastery close to Monte Casino.

Time went by and the memories were no longer so haunting to them. When Putana met tourists he couldn't ignore the self-righteous ignorance that transformed so many humans into a twisted bunch of swine. Crowley told them at the departure he would visit Egypt and indeed, Adriano received two letters. The first covered Crowley's first week in Memphis and described his attempts to teach the basics of the real myth to his adepts. Unknown to Putana his brother-in-arms Crowley was busy countering the spreading of a cult of Apophis. From the moment that he stepped out of the plane, Sebastian was sure that something was lurking for him here.

The atmosphere and bustling streets could no longer delude a skilled occultist from sensing the telltale signs. Sebastian asked subtle questions, observed, and bribed his way to get more detailed information right away. When he finally investigated the poorer districts, he learned to translate the lore. It was Anuthotep who had decrypted the necromantic Lore from the books of the dead in a distorted way. Unsurprisingly, even in Egypt people got angry, when some deranged fanatics dug out their ancestors, had sexual intercourse with them, and finally swallowed the remnants of their brains. By the sheer stupidity of the brain eaters, one could discard the idea of gaining the wisdom of the dead through such depravity.

Fallacy became dangerous by the latent criminal potential of this psychopathic brotherhood. Being on his home turf Crowley made the police do their job and launched a guerrilla war on the Apophis cult. Falcon and Sphinx would become the fundamentals of his later works.

To Putana's surprise, the second letter arrived from the Hürtgenwald, where Germany meets France. Crowley sent some greetings and wrote he played sheep dumb tourist. Mentioning his plans to visit the US of A by the way. Sebastian's physical vessel, a tool of the higher self he constantly dabbled about, needed further recovery. At that moment Adriano sensed a vague menace between those lines. Rovinato C. needed his aid, although he seemed to be yet unaware of this himself.

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