

# THE OLD ONES

## NYARLAT (NYARLATHOTEP)

The being known as Nyarlathotep was one of the first to Transcend. It achieved immortality and immense personal power through the sacrifice of every other person on its home planet. It journeyed using Bridge magic to the centre of the universe and has influenced and consumed many other civilisations. Its interest in Earth is due to proximity - Earth lies only 190 light years from its home planet, which lies dead orbiting a Methuselah star.

Nyarlat is functionally immortal. There is no wound that it cannot heal and few ways to harm it. As a shape changer, it can form new organs instantly when one is damaged. The form it takes on Earth is a huge humanoid figure - three metres from foot to neck. The head is replaced with a single, undulating tentacle from which other tentacles form and disappear. At the junction where the neck would be is a single tri-lobed great eye in the shape of a round-edged trapezium. It has no discernible mouth and does not seem to eat or breathe. The head-tentacle is prehensile and usually extends to 2-3 body lengths (or 9 metres). It's fully capable of rendering most Earthly life to gore and seems to delight in this.

It seldom appears in person but may be sought out by the most desperate or depraved. It can appear fully human if it wishes. Nyarlat is malign in that it enjoys the prolonged game of physical and mental hardships it places upon others. At times it may seem to be an ally; but this is only part of its longer plan. It is not beyond a machination of sending allies to their doom if it currys favour with someone else. The race of Elder Things trusted Nyarlat for help in destroying their enemies, the Polyps. They received knowledge to create the dread servitor Shoggoths for this battle and were in turn consumed by their belligerent servants - who now serve Nyarlat.

Nyarlat is immensely powerful but it is still only one being. It is immensely old and yet impatient. Nyarlat is an end-game menace whose plans execute over centuries and its domination of Earth is only starting. As it cannot be killed, inventive players (and Referees) will have to find other ways to neutralise it.

## CTHULHU

Cthulhu is a psychic emanation that has survived the death of the body and now exists in a quasi-real state; an undying, self-replicating idea. As such, it cannot ever truly die. The source of the emanation is currently trapped in the sunken city of R'lyeh in the Pacific Ocean. Cthulhu has begun to awaken with the Event, as millions of minds become suddenly more receptive to its call.

Cthulhu's greatest weapon is its oppressive psychic force - anyone within the radius will see a massive tentacled horror with a squid-like head, hundreds of metres tall, which doesn't conform to normal physics (because it is a psychic emanation). They will be blasted with feelings of revulsion and fear - induced by the emanations - which may result in psychosomatic injuries. The heightened terror and confusion felt by its victims provides Cthulhu with pleasure.

As a being of psychic energy, Cthulhu cannot be fought with normal means and must be led back by psionics and magic. Psionic Exotics will suffer greatly and are vulnerable to immediate possession by the emanation.

Cthulhu may reward those who follow it with spells or occult knowledge but the cost of this is to become the Servitor of Cthulhu. These individuals become a booster for the psychic attack from Cthulhu, assaulting anyone within sight. People witnessing it will swear the Servitor is 3 metres tall, with a squid-like head and huge bat wings. Servitors most often have Might, Toughness, Flight powers as well as their Illusory abilities. Servitors can be fought with physical attacks - though it is the human behind the illusion that will feel the effects.

## HASTUR, LORD OF CARCOSA

The "land" of Carcosa used to be part of a planet that orbited Alpha Tauri, around 65 light years from our solar system. During the Transcendence of Hastur, it chose to bring Carcosa, its terrestrial domain, with it. Carcosa was then sealed off in a pocket dimension where Hastur's will was absolute. Over the next hundred millennia, everyone in Carcosa was either dead or irredeemably insane from the excesses of their ruler and it now sits, cold and dark. Hastur's plan, if it can be said to be that, is to bring new life to Carcosa by kidnapping individuals or by opening portals to other worlds so that they can be brought through en

masse. Hastur does this through a subtle mind-control, usually accessed through the aesthetic part of the brain. It's favoured method is through art, poetry, and in the case of modern Earth, film and music.

Hastur is as much part of Carcosa as it is the lord of the domain - its consciousness permeates the whole city. When Hastur appears, it is in the form of a handsome androgynous human, wrapped in a yellow robe. Under the robe it conceals a thousand tentacles tipped with tiny mouths bearing razor sharp teeth that it only reveals if attacked. In this form Hastur is vulnerable to attacks from most weapons but will not hesitate to retaliate. If slain, Hastur reanimates quickly and attempts to escape. It is not beyond using a Bridge to either escape or rapidly exile an enemy to give it a better bargaining position.

Carcosa itself is immense and ancient, it does not comply with Euclidean physics (meaning that sometimes when you approach a building, it gets smaller but the distance to it seems longer). There are no native inhabitants of Carcosa left, save for the poet-philosopher Hali (who may be a useful ally for anyone stuck in Carcosa). Hali was the favoured artist of the time and was bestowed with immortality by Hastur. He has not been driven mad by the experience because, in his own words, he was already there. Hali hates his master but at the same time craves approval. He will be jealous of anyone Hastur brings to Carcosa and will either try to help them return home or murder them, dumping their body in the lake beside his home on the outskirts of the city.

Hali appears as an old human wrapped in a black robe. Rather than arms, he has his feeding tentacles, each tipped with a tiny maw. He is mostly inoffensive unless in a rage and if killed will return to life within a few minutes.

The only way to and from Carcosa is via Bridge or Dimensional Chiasmata as it exists outside of normal space-time. The latter will cause a manifestation of Carcosa on Earth where people and fauna will find themselves drawn to the place. The longer anyone spends in Carcosa, the more they will begin to like the place - after a day there, the individual will be rapt with tales of the gleaming towers and fine art and high conversation. To everyone else Carcosa is deserted and forbidding.

## **SHUB NIGGURATH**

Hailing from a world destroyed by others, the being described as Shub Niggurath is actually several beings linked together. Each of them grew from a spore of the long-dead original. The progenitor sent out billions of spores into space. Each spore sought out organic life, into which it would embed it's own code and reproduce. Some of the spores carried much further than intended because they attached to motile creatures, some with access to faster than light transport or Bridges. Earth has a single colony, grown from a singular spore but comprising millions of what humanity would perceive as life-forms.

The spores are most compatible with Earthly plant life but it is not unknown for them to implant into animals. The main colony will send out spores when it senses danger - senses which are enhanced by a root system that has hyphae extending through the earth for hundreds of kilometres. The main colony is immense and sedentary - shifting only to bud off new spores.

Each spore is a large cocoon-like structure, with a webbed crown of tentacle-like fronds that it uses for photosynthesis. If they are in the ocean they can use the tentacles for motility (much like a jellyfish) but if they are on land, they grow thick trunk-like legs to walk. Fully grown they are perhaps twenty metres tall from tip to tip (including their tree-like fronds). They are not disposed to violence but will react violently if threatened.

Shub Niggurath is best described as an extra-terrestrial organic hegemonising swarm. It will eventually attempt to consume everything else in its way in an inexorable attempt to grow. The spores are often worshipped by primitive tribes due to their physical similarities to trees and the prodigious fecundity they possess. The spores may also be tapped, like a rubber tree, to produce a milk-like sap to be consumed by humans - resulting in powerful and lurid hallucinations and a glimpse into the awareness shared by all spores across the universe. It's also important to note that the Mi-Go also partake of "milking" the spores for their own ends.

## **THE INVOLVED RACES**

## **MI-GO**

The Mi-Go are a recent addition to the solar system. They arrived at the dwarf planet Pluto (which they named Yuggoth) around a thousand years ago and began to build out their cities.

Mi-Go physically resemble lobsters but their exoskeleton is made of closely woven hyphae due to their fungoid nature. Their heads are fleshy and wrinkled, like the surface of a human brain. This region of their body is extremely vulnerable to harm and they often wear helmets as a result. Their other limbs are usually encrusted with technological items. They go through three distinct stages; worker (wingless), drone (winged) and builder (larval). The workers tend to the upkeep of the technology and cities, the drones carry out activities outside of their cities and the larval stage is their old age; their limbs wither away and they spend their time in contemplation and birthing new workers.

Mi-Go technology is far in advance of Earth standards. They are capable of generating Bridges for their spacecraft enabling the expansion of their civilisation across the galaxy. Mi-Go are also able to channel the nuclear chaos of Azathoth to power their mighty machines. They are an insanely curious race but devoid of empathy for anything outside of their own kind.

The Mi-Go are attracted to Earth for several reasons. The first is the increasing chaos in this part of the galaxy, as if there was a mighty swell about to crash on these shores. Their curiosity means they cannot help but be drawn to the potential cataclysm. The second is the presence of a mature Shub Niggurath spore colony; the Mi-Go milk the motile spores for an unguent which gives them immense pleasure though if they take too much, the spore colony may retaliate. The third is the belief that they, isolated on Yuggoth, may have an opportunity to scavenge what is left when the Old Ones move on to their next prey.

The Mi-Go are collectively and individually intelligent. Through their technology, almost any skill is available to them and they learn the languages of Earth with ease (though their speech usually sounds very inhuman). They are incredibly pragmatic, can be reasoned with and keen to find a quid-pro-quo solution rather than resort to violence.

## **THE GREAT RACE**

The self-titled Great Race are psychic cuckoos - they send their consciousness across time and space and occupy the young of other races, eventually supplanting all of them. When they came to Earth millions of years ago, they occupied the soft-tissued conical bodies of a now-extinct mollusc-like creature found near modern day Australia. They were almost wiped out by a carnivorous polyp-like species but can still be encountered due to their advanced use of science. The most common way to encounter the Great Race is when one of their species has occupied the mind of a human. Comparatively benign, the Great Race tend to choose targets who have outlived their usefulness (by Great Race standards). Occupation by the Great Race is commonly noticeable by a sudden increase in mental faculties, a marked change in tastes (for odd foods) and other eccentricities. Their voice may not change but their vocabulary changes and their knowledge of science increases exponentially.

The Great Race are not confrontational. They are able to rapidly deploy their science in a military effort if attacked; employing laser-guided lighting guns, and conical battlesuits and are pragmatic in their extermination of the enemy, showing little remorse.

All of the Great Race have the equivalent of the Invention power. Their battlesuits are extremely tough but protection of their delicate sensory and manipulation organs has reduced their perception and they can be easily blindsided. It's incredibly rare for the Great Race to be seen in their conical bodies.

## **GHOULS**

Ghouls are a distasteful, ugly humanoid race of cannibals who also represent one evolutionary path for humanity. Through an ill-documented process, humans can turn into a ghoul - gaining immortality and ghoul-telepathy - at the cost of humanity and consisting of a diet of corpse-flesh for the rest of your days.

While humans might see ghouls as a degenerate race, with canine-like fanged snouts and rear legs more reminiscent of a kangaroo than a human, ghouls have a highly evolved society and a reverence for memory. Ghoul telepathy only works with the minds of those they consume - where they place the memories into their own minds to be recounted around their fires. Whereas a human might wonder what happens after death, a ghoul knows that their feasting tables are the first step but that the memories of the deceased will live on forever; for as long as that ghoul still breathes.

Ghouls possess curved needle-like claws on their fingers and their teeth are well suited for a meat diet. Their flesh is grey and rubbery and individuals may be identified by the patterning of thick hair and coloured patches on their skin. Ghoul speech is surprisingly high pitched for a creature of their size and the sounds of them meeping and gibbering amongst their kin can be disquieting, but perhaps not half as worrisome as a lullaby sung to their young. Ghoul sets are untidy caverns, littered with gnawed bones and with the overpowering stench of rotting meat and excrement.

Ghouls also possess a special connection to the Dreamlands, much like humans, but also stronger in ways due to their connection with memory. Humans enter at will, but only during sleep. Ghouls can enter the Dreamlands physically and take objects and people back and forth.

## **SHOGGOTHS**

The Shoggoths were created by the race of Elder Things millions of years ago in their battle against the carnivorous Polyps. In the resulting war, both the Elder Things and the Polyps were consumed by the Shoggoths who then turned to their true master, Nyarlath.

A Shoggoth is a foamy mass of black slime of indeterminate size but usually comprising a volume of 100 cubic metres, weighing over 100 tons. Bubbles appear on the surface of the slime which are rudimentary "camera eyes" formed at will. These are for sight only and do not represent a vulnerable location in the way that vertebrate eyes would. The slime is viscous and corrosive causing irritation on contact with skin but the surface can also be stiffened to a hard, glasslike texture (which the Shoggoth may use as knives or pikes). A Shoggoth can "roll" as fast as a man can run but will seldom give chase when it can skulk off and create an ambush elsewhere (by sticking to a ceiling and dropping on unsuspecting prey).

Shoggoths attack by enveloping their prey, immobilising and suffocating it and then digesting it. They will digest a human sized target in around 20 hours. During this time, the Shoggoth is mostly sessile, and generally unwilling to pursue new prey.

Smaller masses may occur as the Shoggoth has the ability to split into smaller portions and each one can act individually. They do not have control over these "buds" but will share memories when they rejoin. Shoggoths are intelligent enough to use tools but will often form them from their own bodies and they have no true understanding of technology. They will, instinctively flow under a door or break it down rather than using the handle.

Shoggoths can be reasoned with, through telepathy. This is how their log-dead masters, the Elder Things, controlled them. They will refuse to acknowledge any non-telepathic being as intelligent, instead regarding them simply as foodstuffs. Shoggoths will generally obey commands give through telepathy instinctively.

Shoggoths will obey Nyarlath and revere the shapeshifter as if it were a god.

## **USING THE INVOLVED RACES AS PLAYER CHARACTERS**

In theory, any of the Involved races could be a player character though their alien processes would be very different to human ways of thinking. The player and Referee would have to agree on the motivations of one being apart from their race.

The Mi-Go are a hive society with each individual taking on their assigned role. In theory a Winged Drone could work independently and have access to Mi-Go technology - including presumably a holographic generator to give it a more acceptable appearance.

The Great Race probably have more in common than most but as they all died out thousands of years ago, encountering one is tricky. That said, it isn't impossible and they may be found. A Scientist-Explorer from the Great Race in human form may either be an bookish researcher or an eccentric technology-clad explorer. In their conical form, they would mostly likely have their battlesuit which would provide them with armour and an array of weaponry.

Ghouls would be a hard sell for any group as their smell, general aversion to light and their diet of human corpses would be unwelcome in human society. But they're immortal, accrue huge amounts of knowledge and can enter the Dreamlands.

Shoggoths could be entertaining as a powerful but ignorant creature-hero. They have enough personality and power to be equal to any Exotic but their weakness to telepathic suggestion would be of serious concern.

