

ADVENTURE

Game Design Project #4

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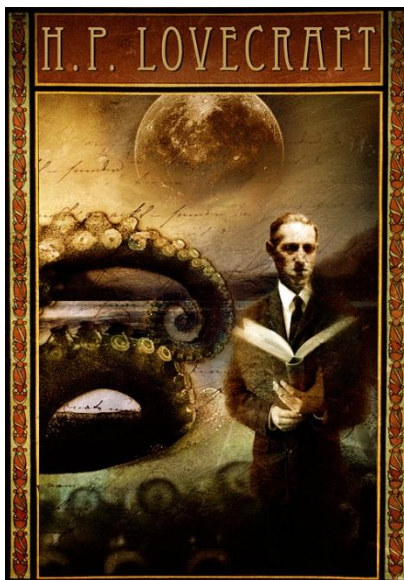
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A. CREATING THE ADVENTURE

Brainstorming

To start making the adventure, I went to a brainstorming process, where I divided the ideas in three areas, Story, Puzzle and Characters. Story contains the ideas for the background of the adventure and what would happen during it. Puzzle has the ideas for events and items the players could find during the game that would help them. The Characters are both playing and non-playing characters that would make sense in the world.



One of the first ideas that came to me about the story was basing the game in the Cthulhu Mythos world. This world was created by H.P. Lovecraft in the early 20th century. It mixes the common world with mysteries, cults and monsters that are almost impossible to understand by people. The players are normally driven to investigate about some of these mysteries, which normally lead the characters to lose their sanity and/or life.

I have played a few adventures in this background, and both new and veteran players enjoy them a lot. I thought that a simple story without all the monsters and fantasy of this world would be good for inexperienced players. The Cthulhu world normally goes on in the early 20th century, which creates a simplified world for the players, without the complexity that technology and current laws. It also leaves the players alone with their creativity to face mysteries that

start looking like everyday cases, to turn out to be engaging as players want to know more and more.

Based on the idea of a Cthulhu-kind world and a simple mystery, these were my brainstorming ideas:

Story

1. Cthulhu story (horror story)
2. Haunted house
3. Haunted town
4. Important person corrupted
5. Characters are volunteers in a disaster area
6. Small village, where farmers believe something weird is happening
7. Someone has disappeared from a house, the adventurers have to find him/her
8. They arrive at the place in the night and have to start investigating right away
9. Monster that needs the blood of the kidnapped person

10. Monster hidden in a shelter with hidden door
11. The security guard offers to help the adventurers that are covering the news
12. The shelter is separated from the house
13. The enemy (gardener?) could be much older than he looks
14. Scared maids that might know rumors
15. Calling the police is useless, as they are very slow
16. Farm adventure (characters are animals)

Puzzle

1. Until the end it is difficult to be willing to enter the shelter
2. The shelter will not be the first thing to visit, but don't leave it for too late
3. A notepad in the library could have notes from the dead owner of the house
4. Footsteps or similar around the shelter, not easy to notice
5. There could be something with strange smell in the kitchen that gives a clue
6. In the kid's (or disappeared person) room there is a belonging from the evil guy (maybe dirt from the shoes)

Characters

1. News writer
2. House security guard
3. Young news assistant
4. The old rich lady
5. The weird gardener
6. The cook that shares a secret with the gardener
7. The hunter, friend of the old lady, who tries to be helpful
8. The young maid, scared

While doing the brainstorming I got the idea of having a mystery in an old house. That would establish a constraint in space to avoid complexity, and would also make players immerse easily, as we all have seen movies based in old haunted houses (although this is not a haunted house, players could think it is).

Designing the adventure

In the story, the house would belong to a rich lady, but in order to simplify in number of non-playing characters, I made the story run in the summer, when some of the staff in the house would be in vacation, so only the necessary people would be there.

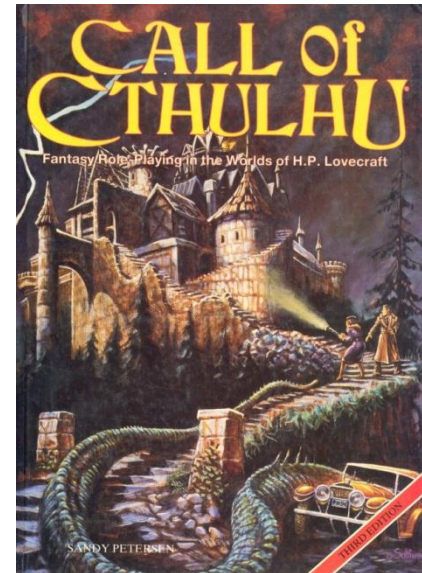
After I had all the ideas about the mystery, I designed the maps of the house. The number of rooms is also the minimum for this kind of houses, so the players could not wander around for too long. The

cottage where the mystery is solved was separated from the house, so the players could not find it just at the beginning of the game, forcing them to explore first the house.

I also set the story to take place in the evening, so players could not investigate as freely as they could have done with sunlight, but not too late as to make no sense of exploring while they could be sleeping, these decisions made to made it even simpler.

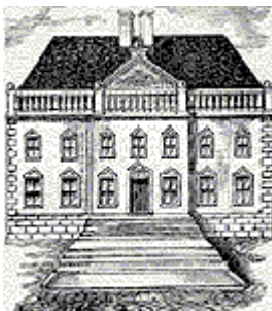
After making the maps, I wrote the script of the adventure. It is not exactly a linear script. It is divided in sections, each section being a place in the map. For each of these places, I wrote a description of that place, the characters that where there, and all the events that were fired when the players got there. I also wrote the difficulty of the most important rolls that the players would have to do in that place. In some cases, I wrote what would happen in that place depending on the moment when the players entered it, as it would be different depending on of the players had already talked to a character or not.

While writing the script, every time a character showed up in the story, I wrote a full description of that character. The most important characters have longer descriptions, as the players would tend to ask more questions about them.



B. ADVENTURE MATERIAL

Script



It is July 17th 1924. Rupert Marwick and Gregor Daniel are working at the Daily Gazette in London when their boss calls Rupert. He had a call from the Clark's house near Belmont from the steward saying that a kid was missing and nobody could find him. The family wanted the help from a newspaper to find the kid so people could get in contact with them if anyone saw the kid. Rupert sees a good story there and calls Gregor to go with him as his assistant. Someone called John Crawley (the Belmont's grocer) would be waiting for them in the Belmont train station.

Once they get to the train station in Belmont it is around 7pm. John receives them and takes them in his old Mercedes. Angus Tuckfield, the policeman, is already with John. While driving he tells them that 3 days ago Leo suddenly disappeared from the house and no one has seen him since then. The police are

looking for him everywhere with no results. So they want the aid of a big newspaper to help them find Leo.

When they get to the house, Jasper Alden, the steward at Clark's house, receives them. He takes them to the house, closing the main gates. He says that Ms. Clark is receiving them in a moment at her room, and offers them drinks. After a short time he guides them to the 2nd floor where Ms. Clark's room is.

Ms. Clark room

The room is very simple, with a big bed, a mirror, a couple of chairs and a closet. Ms. Clark is looking through the window. The hunter William Sorin is with her, he is a good friend of the family. When the steward is gone she turns to face the players and greets them. She looks very old and tired. She tells them that 3 days ago, July 14th Leo had breakfast and did some homework. Then had lunch and went out to play, and after that they never saw him again. All the police in Belmont is looking for him, they have looked through all the forest surrounding the house, with no result.

Leo's parents are on a trip to Greece, so they haven't been able to come to England yet. As normally Ms. Clark lives alone, there are not many servants in the house, only the steward, 1 cook and the gardener. William has helped the police with the search, and visits Ms. Clark every day. Ms. Clark gives them permission to look around the house and talk to the people there.

When they leave Ms. Clark's room, or when asked, the hunter tells the players that he used to come during the summer and play with Leo and teach him about hunting. He also mentions that he sometimes brought his dogs, but they behaved in a very strange way when being around the house, scared and crazy. So he stopped bringing them. He also mentions that used to go hunting with Mr. Clark a few years before he died, but he started behaving different, never wanting to get out of the house. After that he leaves the house.

Living room

There is a big table with many chairs. A big lamp is hanging from the ceiling. There is a clock on a wall and two big windows. There are shelves with silverware. Nothing really interesting here.

Kitchen

The cook is here when the players get to the house. She is cleaning and tidying up the utensils. She is very shy and does not talk much. She saw Leo for the last time when he had lunch 3 days before. After that he said he was going to play outside.

If she is asked about Mr. Clark, she will try not to say anything, but it is obvious that there is something she is hiding. If she is applied pressure (**intimidate diff. 15**) she tells that before dying, Mr. Clark behaved weirdly. He sometimes asked her to give him live animals, like rabbits or cats, but forcing her not to tell anything to anyone. She was scared to lose her job, so she did not say anything.

After some time she will be in her room instead of the kitchen.

Cook's room

It's a small room with just a small bed a table and a chair and a small closet. The cook is here after some time has passed since the beginning of the game. Nothing of interest here.

Steward's room

There is a bed a small table and a chair and a closet. There is a carpet under the bed. There is also a window to the back of the house. Jasper Alden is here reading a book on the chair. He looks bothered by the players' questions. He doesn't like the gardener; he does not understand how he has been serving several years the family, because he is an incompetent.

When asked about Leo, he is very cold. He says that the kid was very disobedient, always getting into problems. He is not surprised about the tragedy. He should look guilty in some way.

Leo's room



There is a small bed, a table and a chair, a closet, and a mirror. On the table there are some math and English books. Inside one of the books there are some folded papers that the players can see. These papers have drawings of dogs, made by a kid. Some dogs are kind of normal, but others are very weird and scary.

If the players pass a roll of **investigation 25**, they will see a small mud stain on the floor, close to the table. This mud is from the mud around the gardener's house.

After going out of the room, the gardener comes from downstairs and meets them. A roll of **investigation 20** let them see he has mud on his shoes. He says that Ms. Clark told him to talk with the players. He smells bad and is very cold. He says that he normally did not talk to Leo and he did not see

him the whole day he disappeared. He says that sometimes he talked with Mr. Clark, and he was a nice man, he regrets his death. After finishing talking, he says he is going back to his cottage.

Guest room

There are three beds and a closet. There is nothing of interest here. If the players insist in sleeping a night in the house, this is their room. In this case, they hear a terrible roar from the woods. The door to the office would be open, with some papers on the floor. A roll of **investigation of 15** would make them find a paper written by Mr. Clark saying that the creature is getting bigger and is locked underground.

The roars will continue from the gardener's house, until they are getting closer. The steward and the cook will refuse to go with them, they are too scared.

Mr. Clark's office

The door to the office is locked. Only the steward and Ms. Clark have the key to it. A roll of **intimidation, subterfuge or style of 15** would make them give the key.

There is a big bookshelf on a wall with lots of books. There is a wooden table and a chair, all very elegant. There is also a shelf with a glass door with a rifle and 10 cartridges inside. There is a diary on the table. If a player reads it fast, a roll of **investigation 10** allows reading a note on a side "I cannot wait to go down and see our creation. It is getting bigger every day".

Further investigation through the books in the shelf with an **investigation roll of 18**, would allow finding a very old book with the title "The Dark Essence". In this book it relates how to summon a dark spirit in an animal, offering it sacrifices of bigger live animals every time.

The attic

It is a big open space. It is dark as the windows are closed, so the players will need some source of light to see. There is a table on a corner with some carpentry tools. There is a bed on the opposite corner, covered in dust. On a wall there are lots of old books, none of them of real interest.

There is another table close to a window. There are some old family pictures. There is also a big paper rolled. After unrolling it, the players can see a big drawing of a dog, but different from normal dogs, very scary. It has big teeth going out of the mouth and very little fur. On the side there are some runes and strange symbols that players don't recognize unless they **roll Science 20**. There are also notes written by hand in a language that nobody understands. Those are symbols that are believed to be used to summon spirits and demons by people who believe in occultism. There is a handwritten note saying "Only a couple more years and nothing shall stop us".

The gardener's cottage

It is one minute walking from the house. It is made on wood and is small. The surroundings are covered in mud. There is a table in the middle of the room, over a carpet. There is a chair and a bed on a corner. On another corner there are food leftovers. It smells really bad.

If the players go before seeing the office, the gardener is there, reading a book that he immediately stops reading and stores in a chest locked with a key. When asked he is cold, and he says he didn't talk much with the kid. He also mentions that the steward didn't like the kid, always complaining about him. He says that he sometimes talked with Mr. Clark, and he was a good man.

If the players go after visiting the office, the gardener is not there. If the players don't realize they have to move the carpet, a roll of **investigation 15** would allow them to notice that the sound when walking is different in the center. There are some stairs going down to a secret way. It is completely dark in the stairs, so the player might use torches or some form of light.

The smell when going down gets worse and worse. They can hear something similar to an animal breathing, being louder and louder. After going through a corridor where the players can see some bones on the ground, they get to a small cave. There are a few lights in the cave.

There are more bones scattered on the ground. The gardener is stroking a big animal that looks like a dog. But it is much more terrible, with a very sinister look. Leo is tied on the back of the cave, and does not move. He has blood on his body. The gardener says "This will make things easier. Once it is done with you, my work will be complete". After this, the dog runs towards the closest player and attacks. The gardener is carrying a wooden club, and he also attacks the players.



If the players survive, they might help Leo. He is unconscious, and has lost lots of blood. If they open the chest in the cottage, they will find books with instruction to summon dark creatures and evil spirits. Many of the things written are impossible to read. They relate how the creature needs live animals to grow. He also mentions that now that Mr. Clark is dead, his grandson would be the perfect sacrifice for their creature.

Characters

Non-playing characters

Ms. Clark (Anne Clark) : the old lady

She is a 68 years old lady who is living with the money that her husband, Alfred Clark, left when he died 1 year ago. He was quite rich; he had made a fortune making weapons for the British army. His factory is now in possession of a friend of the family, who gives a percentage of the benefits to Ms. Clark. Thus, she doesn't have to worry about economy.

She lives in a big house 30 miles away from London, surrounded by woods, very isolated. The closest town is Belmont, which is 3 miles from the house. John Crowley is the owner of a groceries store in Belmont, and every week he brings food and all necessary things to live to her house. Ms. Clark does not go out of the house very often.

She is a strict woman, not used to show emotions to others. She loves punctuality. When she was young she worked as a teacher for young children. When she got married with Alfred Clark they had a boy, Harvey, and she stopped working to raise their child. They didn't have any other kid.

The recent disappearance of her grandson Leo has made her speak even less. Although she does not cry, she looks much older now, and she doesn't normally look in the eyes when talking to people. She now spends most of her time in her room, sitting down looking through the window.

John Crowley : the grocer in Belmont

He is a 40 years old father of 4 children. Hard worker, constantly moving, only stopping when going to sleep at night. He is an old friend of Mr. Clark. When he died, Mr. Crowley kept helping Ms. Clark bringing food and wood to her house.

He has a Mercedes car that seems to be very old. He picks up the adventurers at the train station when the adventure starts and gets them to Ms. Clark house. He doesn't know anything especial about what happened, only that young Leo has disappeared and police is looking for him.

Jasper Alden : the steward

He is a 60 years old man, strict. He has served Ms. Clark for many years now. He loves quietness and doing things they are meant to be done. He does not enjoy the presence of Leo in the house, as the kid is naughty and doesn't usually follow orders.

Leo Clark : the disappeared grandson

He is a 6 years old boy, the grandson of Ms. Clark. He is a naughty boy, like most children at his age. His parents are in a trip to Greece during the summer, and his grandmother is taking care of him at her house.

He has been kidnapped by the house gardener, Ivor Skym.

William Sorin : the hunter

He is a 43 and has been a good friend of Mr. Clark until his death the past year. His family has always been very wealthy and he has not had to worry about working too much. He help his brother to run a the family business, but most of the time he is hunting or going to parties with the other well accommodated friends in London. When he knew about the disappearance of young Leo, he did not doubt to help Ms. Clark to find him.

Alix Wood: the cook

She is 25 and has been serving the family for 7 years. She is quiet and shy, and try not to disturb anybody. Ms. Clark is fond of her, and even if she does not show it, she is happy of having the young cook in the house.

Alix provided Mr. Clark live animals like mice and rabbits. The lord always ordered her not to tell anybody, and she has never done so, as she was scared of losing her job. She preferred not to think about what Mr. Clark did with those animals, but she was afraid of him.

Ivor Skym : the gardener

He is a 30 years old man, not very social. He has never had true friends, and when he has 20 he started reading occultism books. He has been amazed by what can be achieved using rituals and spells. He has never talked about this with anyone, except Mr. Clark. One day Mr. Clark found one of Ivor's books and was very attracted by its content. He asked Ivor to tell him about these rituals and they both shared the dream of summoning a dark power that served them. They never talked to anybody, cause others would think they were crazy.

A couple of years before Mr. Clark's death, they started the summoning ritual using a new born dog. They cast spells on it following the instructions on the old books. They fed it with live mice, rats and rabbits, and sometimes their own blood. Ivor dig a tunnel under his cottage to keep their creature there. Only Mr. Clark and him knew about it existence. After Mr. Clark's death, Ivor saw a great opportunity in young Leo staying during the summer without his parents'. He would be the perfect sacrifice to feed the dog, and finish the ritual.

Playing characters

Rupert Marwick

A 35 years old man, blonde hair, 6 foot tall, handsome. He is good at talking with people but is not the most competent news writer. He works for one of the most read newspapers in London, writing for a not very popular section of it. He dreams to be the main columnist of the paper and ultimately being the owner of the editorial.

Gregor Daniel

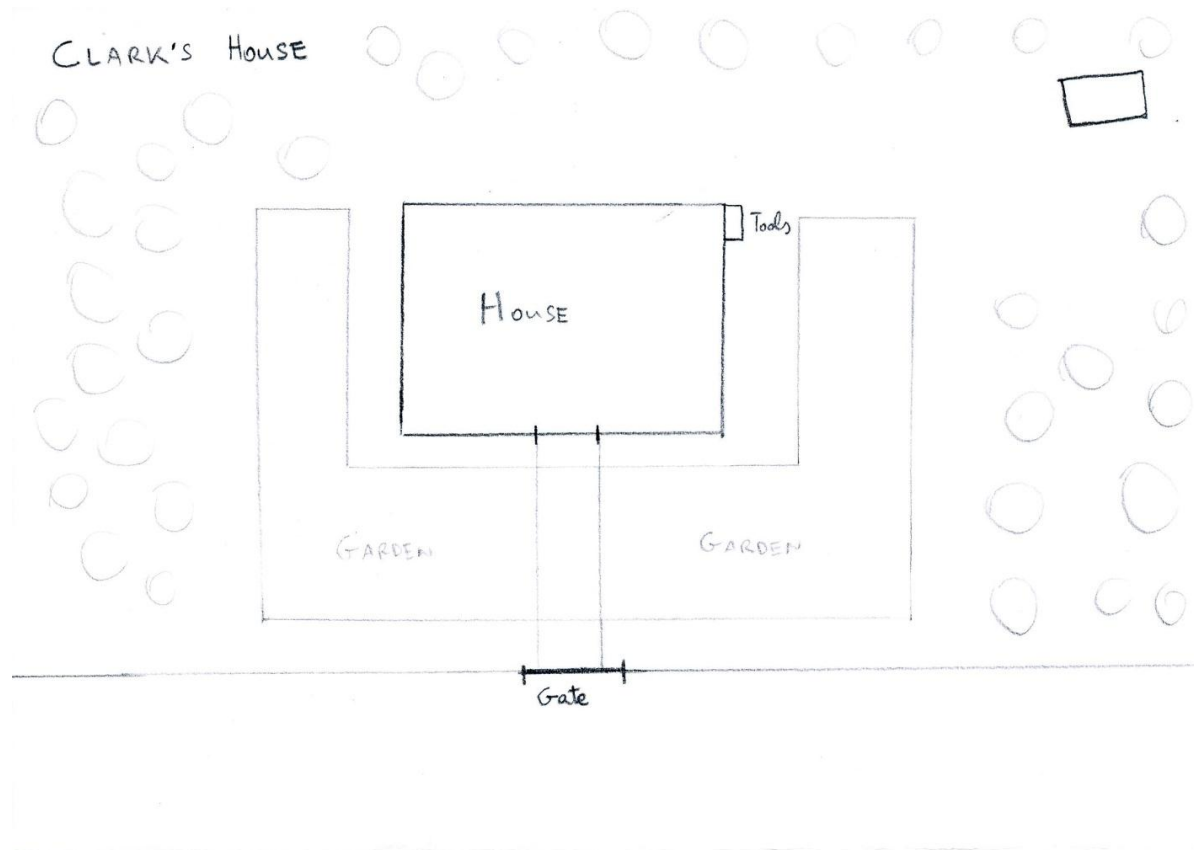
An 18 years old boy, skinny and not too social. His father wanted him to start earning and found him a job at the same newspaper as Rupert Marwick. Gregor works helping Rupert and other senior writers doing paperwork, bringing water and being a messenger. He is smart and curious, and no one complains about him.

Angus Tuckfield

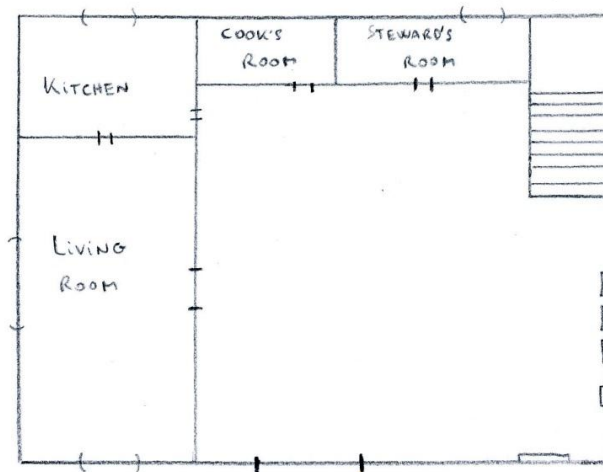
A 37 years old private detective coming from a town near Belmont. The family asked him for help after police did not get any result looking for young Leo. He is 5 feet tall with broad shoulders and dark skin. He is normally goes directly to the point. He has good sense of humor and is very professional.



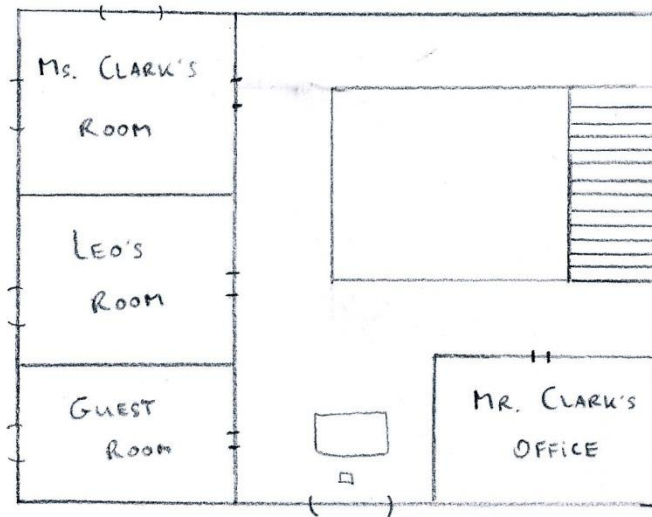
Maps



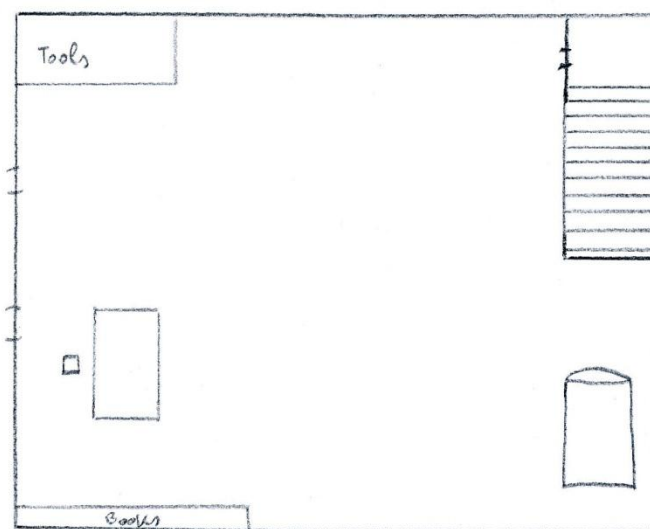
GROUND FLOOR



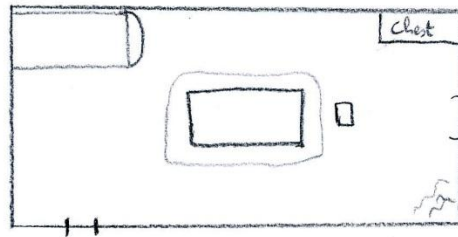
1ST FLOOR



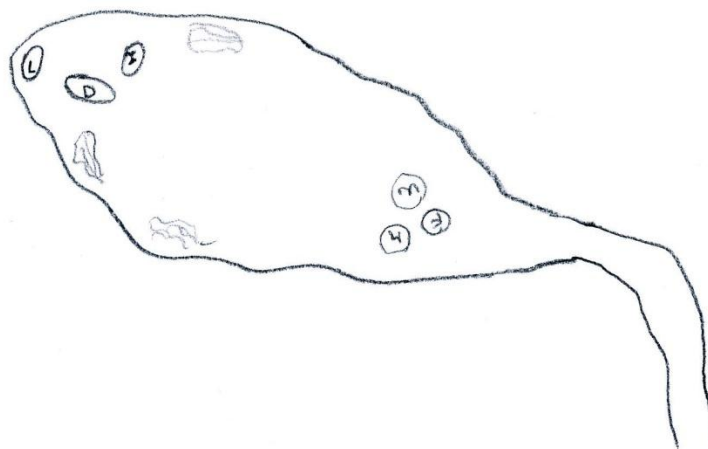
ATTIC



COTTAGE



CAVE



Character sheets

I include the scan of the state of the characters sheets after finishing the game, with the annotations of the players on them.

News writer: Matt Costa

Player:

Name: Rupert Marwick (NEWS WRITER)

Attributes

Physical: 11
Mental: 10
Social: 14

Skills

	Skill Points	Actual Skill
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Physical

Unarmed Combat	0	1
Melee Combat	1	2
Long-Range Combat	1	2
Combat Defense	2	3
Athletics	0	1
Stealth	1	2

Mental

Investigation	3	3
Science	1	1
Medicine	0	0
Machines/Tools	2	2
Repair	0	0

Social Skills

Leadership	1	5
Performance	3	7
Intimidation	0	4
Subterfuge	1	5
Style	4	8

Inventory

Camera, Notepad, pencil, £2, knife, handkerchief, office key, knife (I var)

Writer subordinate: Felix Park

Player:

Name: Gregor Daniel

(NEWS APPRENTICE)

Attributes

Physical: 9

Mental: 15

Social: 10

1 9/6 12



<u>Skills</u>	<u>Skill Points</u>	<u>Actual Skill</u>
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Physical

Unarmed Combat	0	-1
Melee Combat	1	0
Long-Range Combat	1	0
Combat Defense	1	0
Athletics	1	0
Stealth	2	1

Mental

Investigation	2	7
Science	4	9
Medicine	0	5
Machines/Tools	3	8
Repair	2	7

Social Skills

Leadership	0	0
Performance	1	1
Intimidation	0	0
Subterfuge	2	2
Style	0	0

Inventory

Notepad, pencil, sling, yoyo, chewing gum. stage drawings, rifle shell,

book, "The Dark Essence", knife, Ivo's book

Report

knife

Private detective: Wai Kay Kong

Player:

Name: Angus Tuckfield

(PRIVATE DETECTIVE)

Attributes

Physical: 13

Mental: 11

Social: 10

13 10 8/65

Skills **Skill Points** **Actual Skill**

Physical

Unarmed Combat	2	5
Melee Combat	1	4
Long-Range Combat	3	6
Combat Defense	2	5
Athletics	1	4
Stealth	0	3

Mental

Investigation	3	4
Science	0	1
Medicine	1	2
Machines/Tools	1	2
Repair	1	2

Social Skills

Leadership	2	2
Performance	0	0
Intimidation	2	2
Subterfuge	1	1
Style	0	0

Inventory

Notepad, pencil, pistol, 12 bullets, £3, handcuffs, matches, cigarettes.

Candle

13
10
8
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
£3

The enemies: the gardener and the dog

Name: The Dog

Attributes

Physical: 15
Mental: 5
Social: 3



<u>Skills</u>	<u>Skill Points</u>	<u>Actual Skill</u>
Physical		
Unarmed Combat	5	10
Combat Defense	3	8
Athletics	1	6
Stealth	2	7

Name: Ivor Skym (gardener)



Attributes

Physical: 12
Mental: 10
Social: 6

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Skill Points</u>	<u>Actual Skill</u>
Physical		
Unarmed Combat	1	3
Melee Combat	2	5
Long-Range Combat	1	3
Combat Defense	1	3
Athletics	1	3
Stealth	4	6
Mental		
Investigation	1	1
Science	4	4
Medicine	2	2
Machines/Tools	0	0
Repair	0	0
Social Skills		
Leadership	0	-4
Performance	1	-3
Intimidation	1	-3
Subterfuge	2	-2
Style	0	-4

Inventory

Club, dark dust, a few pence.

C. THE PUZZLE

In this adventure, there is a little kid that is missing. He lived with his old grandmother, a rich lady, in a big house in the forest. Nobody has seen him or any tracks, and three people are called to help the police with the case, a news reporter, his subordinate and a private detective.

The suspects are reduced to the people staying in the house. They are the old lady, the cook, the steward, the lady's friend and a gardener. What actually happened is that the gardener kidnapped the kid, hiding him in a cave that could be only accessed from a whole inside the gardener's small cottage. The kid and the gardener had a good relationship, so the kid followed him to his cottage without opposing resistance.

The gardener was a big fan of occultism books, cults and rituals. He had the dream of summoning a dark spirit in the body of a dog, which would obey his commands. For this purpose he needed the blood of live animals, and ultimately of live people.

The kid's grandfather is dead, but when alive, got to know about the gardener's likes, and he also got into it, both sharing their dreams of creating ghosts and monsters. He had acquired several books about occultism, and had written notes about their progress. These books and notes can be found by the players to guide them through the mystery.

The different clues that the players may find during the adventure are:

- In the beginning the hunter tells them that before dying, Mr. Clark was behaving strangely.
- In the kid's room they easily find drawings made by the kid. These are drawings of a weird dog, with a monstrous look. Talks with the gardener about monsters had inspired the kid to draw this. This is meant to set the players mind into some kind of unnatural mystery.
- In the kid's rooms they might find rests of mud, although it is difficult. Later on, players could relate it to the gardener, as the gardener's house is surrounded by mud.
- The attic of the house has a paper written by dead Mr. Clark with vague notes about their intentions with the dog. This is easy to find, and makes the players think that there is something wrong related to Mr. Clark.
- When players manage to enter Mr. Clark locked office, they easily can find a notebook. Here he talks more about his plans with the gardener. This should make the players want to go and explore the cottage where the gardener lives.
- In the office there is also an occultism book very hard to find, that make the players understand better what could be the plans of Mr. Clark.

- In the office there is also a rifle, which is both for background purposes, as Mr. Clark enjoyed hunting, and also to make players think that the case could be a murder.
- If intimidated, the cook would tell that Mr. Clark asked her for live animals. This is also related to the need of the gardener of fresh blood for their rituals.
- In the gardener's cottage, under the matt there is a secret door that leads to a cave where the gardener and his monster dog are. The kid is also there alive, and if the players defeat the enemies, can save him.

The clues were meant to be found in the order I have stated here, but it does not really affect the game finding them in a different order, as it was seen during the game.

The clues were intended to make the players more and more aware that there was something unnatural in the mystery, and hopefully make them feel more uneasy, as only one of them had a weapon. They were normal people in a normal world, finding something that they had never seen before. As for this, the clues did a decent job, especially the first one found at the kid's bedroom, and the book found in the locked office. The players knew that there was "something" bad out there, but were not really sure what it was.

As also explained in the post-mortem, the relationship between clues does not follow a deep logic. They make players aware of what the monster could be, and in the end they tell them that the gardener is involved in the case. But they do not totally guide the players to solving the mystery or to try to guess why the gardener kidnapped the kid. Because of this, I had to explain the background story once the game was over.

The clues were enough to make the players get to the ending hidden cave, and had a decent difficulty to get them, so it did not feel too easy for them to get the clues. They also got one of the difficult to get clues (the occultism book) which added valuable information and made them feel that their actions were meaningful.

The order in which the players accessed the rooms in the adventure to get the clues was this:

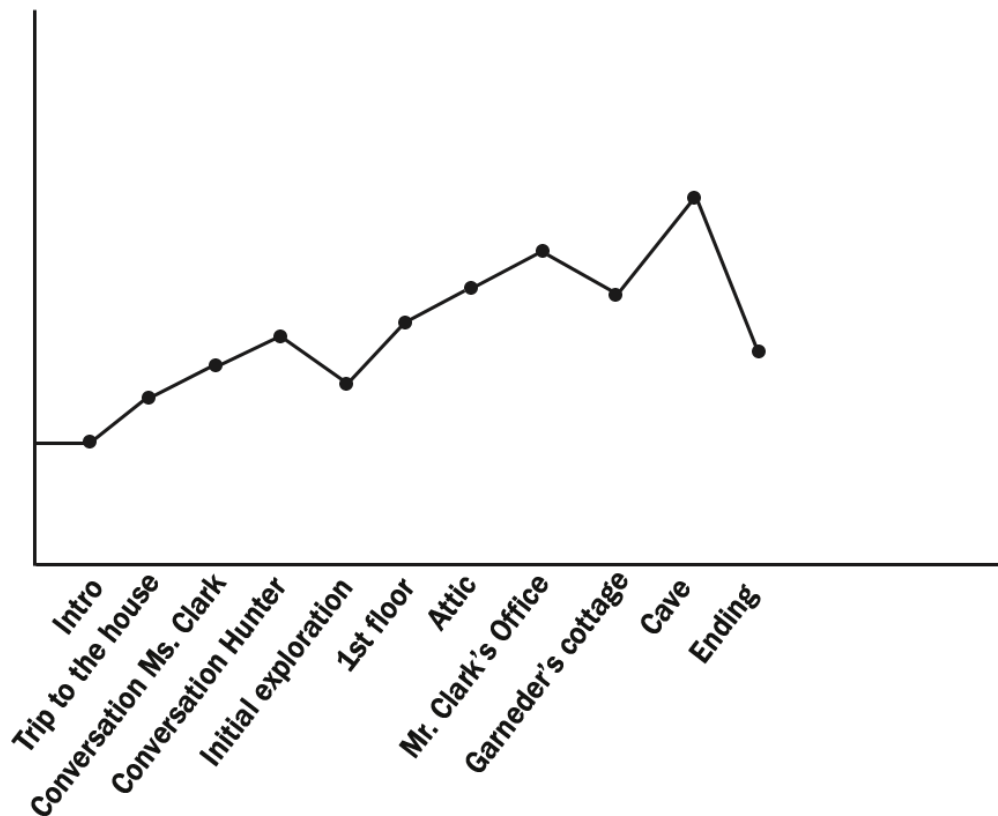
1. Explore Leo's bedroom – found dog drawings.
2. Went to the office, it is locked.
3. Kitchen.
4. They meet Ivor the gardener in the lobby.
5. Went to steward's room to get key from him.
6. Went to the office – found occultism book.
7. Talk to Ms. Clark.
8. Attic – get Mr. Clark's notes about the dog.
9. Cook's room – intimidate to get information about Mr. Clark.

10. Guest room.
11. Cottage – talk to Ivor and try to convince to open the chest.
12. Explore back yard.
13. Cottage – force Ivor to leave, and shoot the chest to open it. Get Ivor’s notes about his plans.
14. Steward’s room.
15. Living room.
16. Cottage – find secret door and go down to the cave.
17. Final fight with Ivor and the dog – save Leo.

The players in the adventure were Felix Park (the writer subordinate), Matt Costa (the writer) and Wai Kay Kong (the private detective). We started playing on March 8 at 5:20pm and finished at 8:30pm.

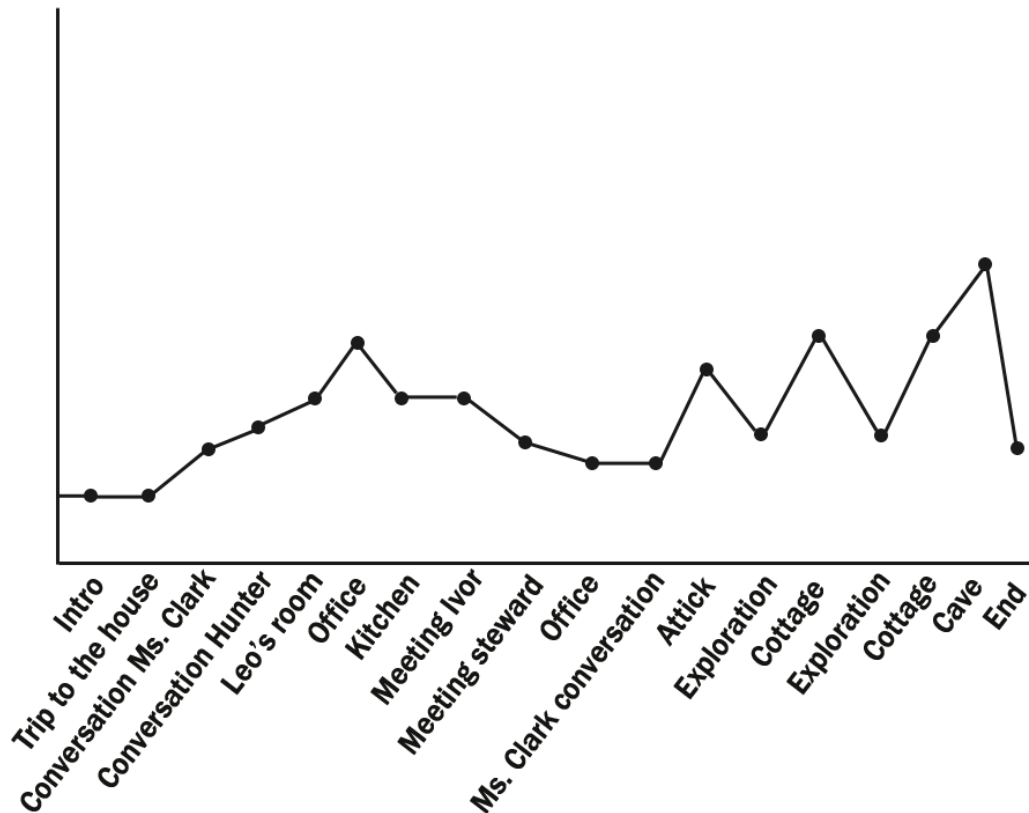
D. INTEREST CURVE – PREDICTION

This first interest curve was drawn before playing the adventure. It is simpler than the next curves, as the events that I placed in this curve are the ones I predicted would happen in a linear way. In the actual curve there are more events.



E. INTEREST CURVE – HOW IT PLAYED OUT

This curve is more precise than the one doing the prediction. Here I have added all the events that took place during the game, adding more resolution to the graphic. The shape is similar to the one made during the prediction, but with more pikes, and not as linear as the initial one.

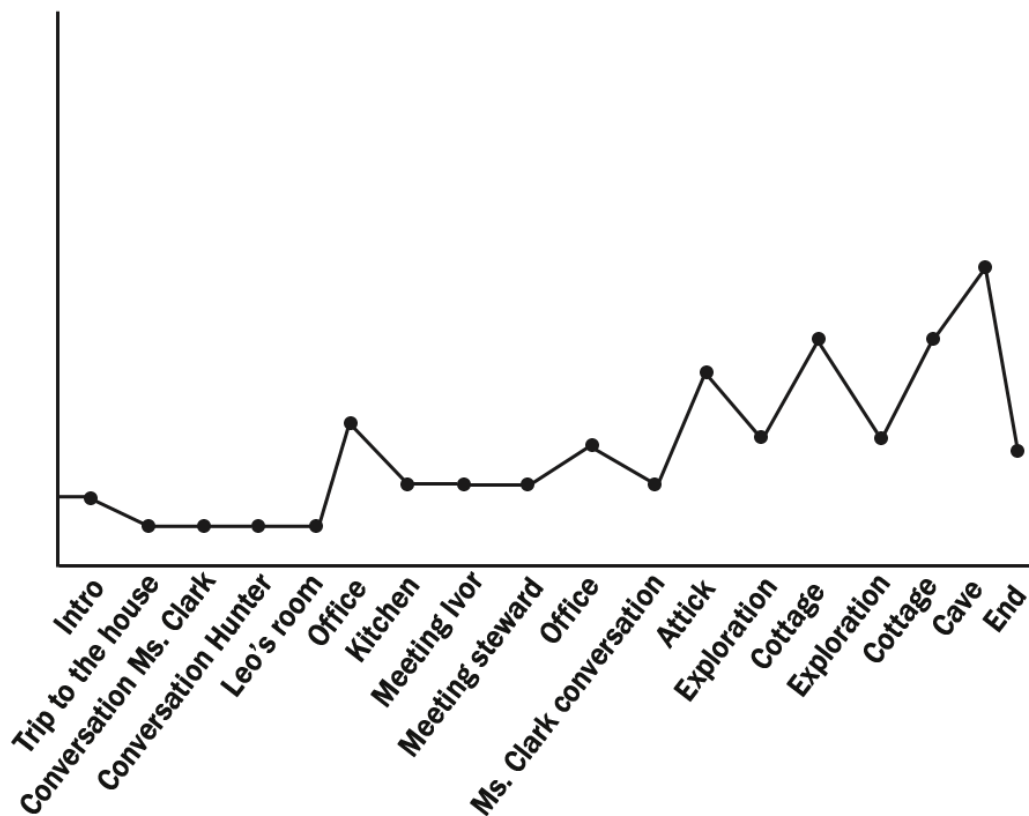


F. INTEREST CURVES – PLAYERS

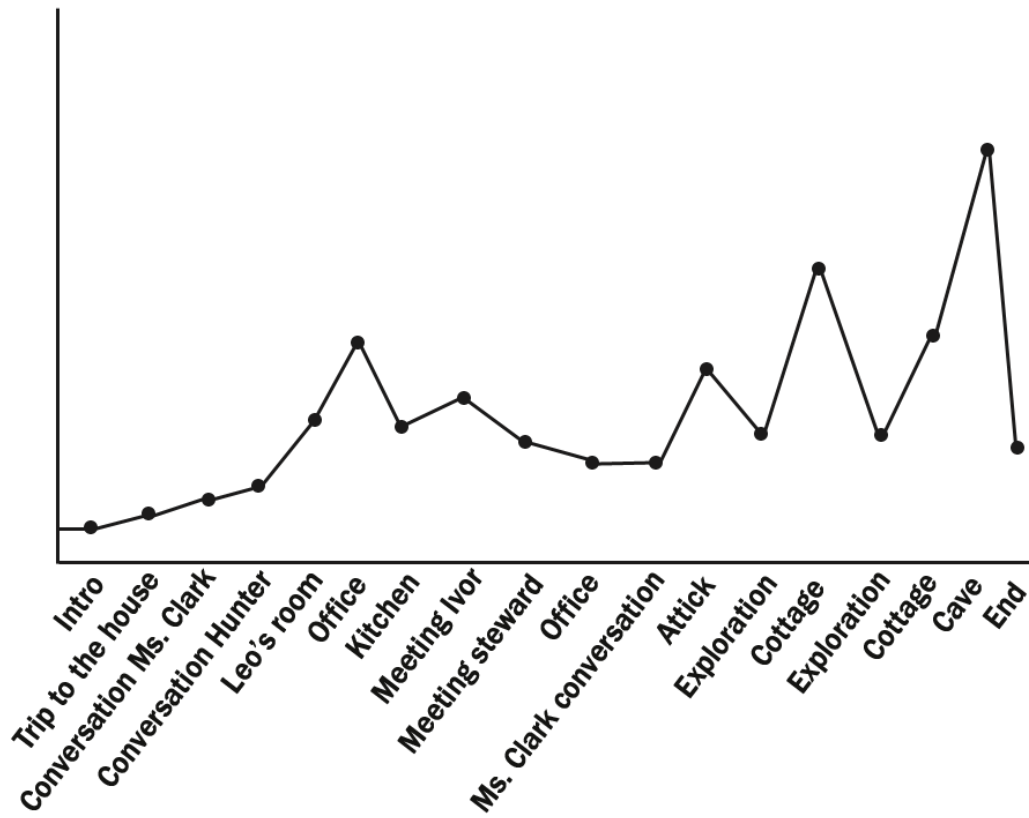
Each of the three players drew a personal interest curve. Each of these curves share similarities, being the most interesting points in the adventure the same for everyone. These interest points are:

- Finding the drawings in Leo's room.
- Getting into the locked office.
- Getting to the attic and finding more notes.
- Going to the cottage and opening the chest.
- Finding the cave and the final fight.

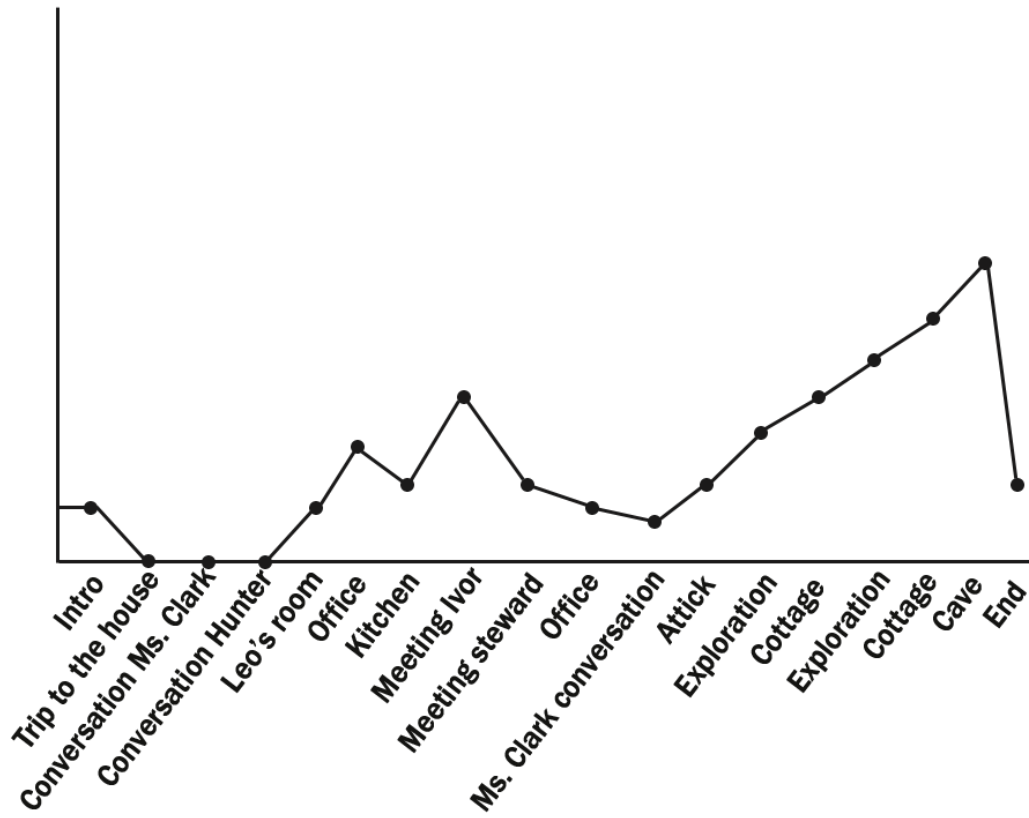
Matt's curve



Felix's curve



Wai Kay's curve



G. POST-MORTEM ANALYSIS

The environment

After the brainstorming session I was very confident that the Cthulhu Mythos was a good and safe environment where to base the adventure. I had played several times in this kind of adventures, and the theme usually attract players, as it is the call of the unknown, a world that is exactly like our real world, but with things happening that escape our understanding.

This environment turned out to work well in this adventure, and the main reasons are:

1. It sets up a simplified world. The adventure is base in the 20's, where the technology is very limited, and the players do not have to think about all the rules and complexity of the current world. That made them focus on the puzzle and the characters, instead of on the rules of the world.
2. The world looks normal, but suddenly something happens that players do not understand. In this adventure, in the beginning everything was inside the limits of understanding. But the players began to find clues about the weird dog, the monster, and at that point they started to feel that the adventure was not only about finding someone to blame of the kid's disappearance. The players liked that they did not know exactly what enemy they were facing until the end.
3. The unknown is always worse than you think. This is a common thing in the adventures based in the Cthulhu Mythos, the monsters are always much more powerful and terrifying than players expect. I wanted to transmit it in the final combat, and it worked out. The players were only a little bit worried about what they would find in the cave in the end. But the enemies were so powerful that their characters were all about to die. That added excitement to the situation, especially because they could see the kid in the cave, and that made them feel very close to success, and at the same time so far.

Surprises while directing

I had previously directed two role playing games, one based in Dungeon and Dragons, and the other in the Call of Cthulhu, and I had also played many others, so I was aware that improvisation is always required in this kind of games. But it is also impossible to predict what the players are going to think, and sometimes some of the actions they consider to do may change the script that the director had designed.

During this adventure I thought that the players would advance linearly, following the order of the rooms in the house, unveiling this way the puzzle piece by piece. But that was not exactly the case, and these were a few surprises I found during the game:

1. During the beginning of the game, I was not really sure what to expect, and maybe not many questions, with the players starting to investigate soon. But during the conversation with Ms. Clark they went in high detail about the death of Mr. Clark, and about his friends and his business.

I have not thought about all those details while preparing the adventure. I had only written a couple of lines about the death of Mr. Clark and what business he did in life, which had no relationship with the story. However, the players first thought that an enemy of Mr. Clark could have kidnapped his grandson. This especially came into their train of thoughts when it was mentioned that Mr. Clark owned a weapon factory, which opened new questions.

During the conversation I improvised answers to their questions, but take importance out of them by giving vague details that seemed not interesting, so players decided that was not so important after a while. So this was not a problem after all.

2. The players did not follow the order of the floors and rooms in the house. Instead they focused first on the rooms that looked more promising to find clues. Those rooms were Leo's room and Mr. Clark's office. Leo's room was expected to be the first room to explore, as he was the missing kid. However I had thought that as Clark's office was locked, they would take more time to try to enter there. The effect was completely the opposite, and now it makes a lot of sense.

First of all, the players asked many questions about the dead Mr. Clark during the initial conversation with Ms. Clark, and that made them think there was something wrong with Mr. Clark. Making the door locked only made them suspect even more, and all their efforts were focused on opening that door. Even though while directing this seemed to be bad, as all the interest would be focused on the beginning, actually was not so bad. They found important evidence in the office, and that made them want to keep exploring and knowing more, so turned out to work well.

3. The players knew that there was something going on with the gardener as soon as they met him. In the beginning they were not sure if it was something very important, but they suspected even more when going to the Cottage the first time. The bad smell in the cottage, and the fact that he was separated from the rest of the house, made them suspect. This was good for the adventure. Also seeing the chest in the cottage made them immediately want to open it, as chest normally have important clues.

Setting the chest in the room was not such a good idea after all, as players were too focused on it. They kept trying to force the gardener to open it, and to distract him to go away of the cottage. I did not want the players to see the content of the chest so soon, so I made the

gardener impossible to convince to open it. This was also difficult, as one of the players rolled a 20 to intimidate him. This made the gardener leave the cottage, allowing the players to force the chest. This gave them the last piece of the puzzle to be sure that the gardener was related to the mystery, but I did not allow them to interact more with the gardener until they got to the cave.

To summarize, there were unexpected events in the game, but they did not affected the experience. Sometimes they got some clues before it was intended, but that made them be more focused on keeping finding more clues, so the result was positive.

The puzzle

After completing the adventure, there are some things about the puzzle that worked well, and other that not so well.

Good things

1. Even though the players did not go in the order that I had planned, they found all the necessary information. It was especially fortunate the exploration part in Mr. Clark's office. That room was one of the most important in terms of clues, and they entered there very early in the adventure. At first I was worried because no player was looking at the table, where one of the mandatory clues was. But one player got a very high roll investigating the book self, finding an optional clue that I did not hope them to find, and that was a substitute of the clue they did not find. And even more, it raised the interest as the book they found was especially weird and clashed with what they had in mind at that time.
2. At the beginning I was worried about the puzzle being too simple, with the players being able to finish the game in a very short time. But in the end the exploration and conversation made the game be almost 3 hours longs exactly, so the complexity level was fine.
3. The ending to the story after defeating the enemies was simple. I explained the players how the mystery was solved, and a little bit about their futures. They were successful. That simplicity at first seemed too meaningless, but the players appreciated beating the game and achieving their goal, so I think there was no need for a complex ending.

Not so good things

1. The clues were not very connected one to each other. Due to the simplicity of the puzzle the players figured out what they should do to solve the adventure, but there was not a connection of some clues with others which made them know what happened in advance.

The players knew that Mr. Clark had some weird business going on, as they found books about occultism. They also knew that he asked for life animals to the cook, and they knew that the gardener also did similar things, but there was no way they could know how both of them were related or why the kid was missing. Sometimes it is good that the players find out (or think that they know) what is the solution to the mystery in advance, but that was not totally the case here.

2. The number of characters in the adventure was fine, as there were few of them, just the essential to make sense in the house. However some of them like the hunter, the steward or the cook for the most part, did not play almost any role in the puzzle, only the cook in the end.

This added simplicity, which made the adventure not go too long, but could have been a way to add actions to these non-playing characters to make them more meaningful and play a bigger role in the puzzle.

The interest curves

There have been some differences between the intended interest curve and the resulting one. As it can be seen on the charts, before playing I thought that the interest would slowly but continuously increase during the game. The only exceptions would be during the exploration part at the beginning, which normally tends to be more tedious in most role playing games. The other down part in the expected curve was when reaching the cottage, where the players would not find anything at first, until they find the cave.

The real curve is more detailed as it contains all the events that happened during the game, and essentially is similar to the intended. The differences are:

- The interest went lower than expected during the exploration part. The players seemed lost for some time, with not many interesting events happening.
- During the last part of the exploration, before finding the cave, instead of a slope up of interest, it is more like several hills, as players thought they had found something to later get stuck again. There are several high interest points followed by low interest points.

The players' interest curves are also similar to the resulting curve I draw after the game. They have low interest values during the investigation parts and several increases for the moments where they found clues, having the highest value in the end during the combat.

These curves start at a low value, although for some players the investigation has a different meaning than for others. For example, for Felix, the investigation has low interest, but always increasing. For Matt it goes slightly down in the beginning and then constantly growing. And for Wai Kay, the investigation has values under zero, constantly increasing later.

In the end, the curves are increasing in interest, although with several pikes, which is good, as it does not go down in time, but higher in average.

Lessons learnt

After examining the good and not so good things of this adventure, these are the conclusions that would have to apply for future games:

1. The story has to be very simple, and the number of clues limited. Even though while designing the adventure it might seem too simple, there are always inherent difficulties and things that the players will not realize until the end.
2. Make every clue meaningful. Players should be able to establish a relationship between all the clues found, and find them useful to get to the end of the puzzle. They should at least feel that they know what is going on when approaching the end.
3. Maps help the players a lot to plan their actions and make the adventure more agile.
4. It is not necessary to script every detail of the background of the characters. Improvising some answers will make the players know that they should not keep exploring in the wrong direction.
5. Placing common objects through the world to pick up and interact is very valuable. Players will think of creative ways of using them to solve problems. Even if they try to do things that the director does not expect, it will give players the feeling of agency and freedom, making their role more meaningful.

