

Sample file

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## Introduction

This adventure is designed for 4-7 investigators of novice to moderate experience, although easily adaptable by boosting or weakening the stats listed within. It has been designed for use with Call of Cthulhu (sixth edition) but could easily be adapted for use with any system in which the context of this adventure would make sense.

Whilst Call of Cthulhu sixth edition contains many of the basics for 1920's play, keepers will almost certainly find 1920's Investigator's Companion useful, as well as The Cairo Guidebook: A Guide to Cairo in the 1920's.

Within this adventure you should use your discretion as to how much of the background information you reveal to each investigator, based upon their familiarity with either background characters or events. Stats for all major characters and entities will be collected at the end of this volume and will include a rough comparison to average human strength and abilities in order to aid conversion to other systems.

An added bonus in this scenario will be notes attached to many of the locations within suggesting suitably atmospheric and sanity-threatening locales from which to play the game itself.

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## Background

Sir Arthur Buchan is currently the British Museum's Curator in Charge of Expeditions, answering directly to the Chief Curator. Although his title of curator may conjure up the image of a dusty and aged academic the addition of the word expeditions might go some way towards forestalling this presumption. Sir Arthur is still a relatively active young man, only recently acquiring his noble title upon the untimely and unexpected death of his father.

In spite of his comparative youth and vigour there is, to those who meet him, a certain haunted look to his eyes, as if forever pursued by troubling memories from his past. His early academic career had been interrupted by the Great War and while he rose to the rank of Captain and survived one might reasonably attribute some of the clouds that hung about him to these experiences. This would in the main prove incorrect. At the war's end Arthur had immediately resumed work on his expedition to uncover the legendary Tomb of the Sphinx, or disprove its existence once and for all.

Barely had he begun work upon what seemed a promising entrance chamber some distance from the Sphinx itself when news arrived of the death of a distant uncle back in the cold damp of Nottinghamshire. So he had at once returned to England for the reading of the will at the old man's sizeable country house. What next occurred Sir Arthur will seldom discuss and never in detail but there was some hint of violence, the involvement of the local police and less savoury operators in legal matters. In his least guarded moments a name, Shoggoth, slipped free. Most assume this is some unconnected name from antiquity and feel a twinge of pity at this sign of absent-mindedness in one so young.

It is also well known that Sir Arthur had suffered no small physical injury during this encounter. And yet, if all this were not enough to account for his dark distraction, more recent events had sought to lend their own unwelcome pressure upon mind and body.

As soon as he was well enough to resume his duties he had rejoined the expedition at the Sphinx in the summer of 1920. For the next six seasons he worked there making slow but he felt sure, steady progress toward his goal. Then he received an urgent telegram from the Museum recalling him to London to discuss his future. He arrived on the fifth of September 1925 in despondent mood and made his way to his father's house to visit his parents before visiting the Museum for what he felt sure would be the last time in a professional capacity. His father had shown little emotion as was his wont but had insisted that Arthur rest there overnight in his old room. He could then face the Chief Curator fully refreshed. Wearily he had agreed and after a supper which he had picked at fretfully he retired for the night.

A scream had torn through the house at three in the morning and the whole household staggered blearily from their respective rooms. All except old Sir Richard Buchan, for he lay upon the cold marble floor of the entrance hall, body and face twisted and contorted as if caught in the wildest paroxysms of fear. Arthur maintains that it was as if his father had witnessed a lifetime's terrors in a single moment, and this revelation had stopped his heart cold. Although it was later found that a kitchen window had been forced, there was no other sign of violence or foul play and so the family's physician was forced to conclude natural causes. This was cold comfort to the new Sir Arthur as was the news later that day from the Museum that he had been promoted to Curator in Charge of Expeditions. Indeed, he reflected later, it seemed a far more fitting culmination to the days events when, just as he was leaving the museum, he was struck by a large black car on Great Russell Street. Luckily it was only a glancing blow, but enough to break his leg – and to add insult to injury the scoundrel did not stop!

Just under a month later, Sir Arthur is now firmly installed in his new accommodation in the west wing of the British Museum, his leg still broken, healing but more slowly than was initially expected. Sir Arthur is still using crutches but has invited several guests to a house warming dinner. You may give the investigators as much or as little of the above background



information as you see fit, or allow it to slip naturally into the dinner party conversation. The investigators can either be invited guests, servants or indeed anybody who could realistically be there. Sir Arthur's ulterior motive is to build a new team to investigate the Sphinx Tomb. The investigators might not necessarily be just archaeologists. Given Sir Arthur's previous experiences and the fate of the original party those with expertise in security or weapons might be there, such as those used on expeditions to less stable areas of the world. Also those with particular academic interests in the occult, ancient religions or even psychiatry may well be invited – Sir Arthur has clearly had some glancing brush with the occult in his past and keepers may wish to make as much or as little of this as they see fit. Finally, it is worthwhile for investigators to remember the rich source material for character inspiration supplied by both the real world setting and writers of the time, the twenties and perhaps a decade either side. As well as Lovecraft himself there are such notables as P.G. Wodehouse, Agatha Christie, H.G. Wells and Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle to name but a few. A truly unusual mixed-bag of characters may well result from such a wealth of inspiration.





**Location Suggestion:**

Although this starts in the private rooms of Sir Arthur at the British Museum, it will probably move quickly to the main building itself. Therefore a good location for this would be any quiet space within your nearest Archaeological Museum. If you are lucky enough to live in London then you could use the Great Court picnic tables in the British Museum.

**The British Museum**

- At Dinner, 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1925 -

Sir Arthur's guests are seated around his dining table as the first course is brought out. Sir Arthur sits with his back to the large fireplace, crutches propped against the table to either side.

"Bon appetite," he says with strained lightness.

General conversation should occur initially, perhaps moving towards Sir Arthur's accident. If so, Sir Arthur struggles to his feet and moves over to a desk by the window and opens a drawer. He takes out a scarab and shows it to everyone.





“I think this object, this scarab beetle of two faces, is in some way responsible for all my ills, and more besides.

“I discovered it during my first dig in search of the Sphinx Tomb back in 1919. The scarab was generally believed to be a symbol of good fortune, as I certainly took it to be. For one, it is unique in all scarabs I know of in that it has two distinct faces, one in onyx and the other in jade. Surely, you might think, the most fortunate of finds.”

At this point it may be suitable for Sir Arthur to recap all his recent misfortunes.

“Now, look at the carvings on both faces. First, I made rubbings – I know the engravings themselves can be hard to read.”

Once it has been examined, Sir Arthur will want it back and will place it on the desk. If difficulties are encountered you should endeavour that anyone with the scarab should lose it to the thief at some point during the meal.

In any event, Sir Arthur will produce yesterday’s newspapers.

“Have you read about this?”

Pass out the newspaper.



“Those are my friends and colleagues. That is my dig. I cannot go out there, much as I would wish to; the Doctors say I’ll not be fit to travel for another fortnight at least. That is why I invited you all here. I’m sorry if I appear rude. You are here of course as my friends but I need to put together a new expedition and you are not only the finest men and women I have the honour of knowing but also the most gifted in your respective fields.”

At this point roll for each investigator to see if they notice anything.

Success: The investigator sees a hand – bandaged? – sneak through the window. It grabs the scarab and withdraws. If the investigator is quick they may get there in time to glimpse a face at the window before it springs over the trench for the lower ground floor windows and onto the balustrade opposite.

Fail: The investigator hears a scrape. Roll to see if they locate it. Success means they notice it is from the direction of the desk. Roll to see if they notice the scarab is gone. By this time when they get to the window they will either catch a glimpse of a ragged figure perched on the far wall - or – they will (hopefully) notice a shadowy figure running across the forecourt of the British Museum toward the main building.

Sir Arthur: “We must get the scarab back. I feel it may be either the cause or the cure of some great disaster. You must go after it!”

If the party elect not to go after the thief they will be at a considerable disadvantage inasmuch as they will be playing catch up with Doctor Nyugati who will be in possession of the Scarab and heading straight for the Sphinx Tomb. Once there he will use the scarab to unlock a portal-beacon to the sunken city of R’lyeh and Set - another name for Cthulhu - and precipitate his release from the death sleep. This would lead to either partial “consumption” of



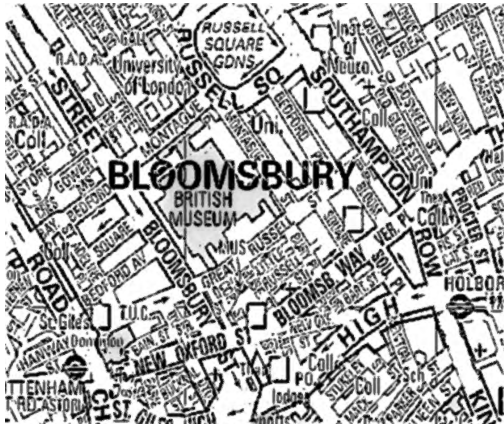
the Earth and its energy (world shattering disasters will unfold) or total absorption and annihilation of the Earth and everything upon it, as Cthulhu and his kind return to the stars.

If the party do elect to chase the thief then, unbeknownst to the party, it will be heading for the Egyptian Funerary exhibition. As a freshly reanimated mummy the thief was quite agile and strong (see stats at the back of this book) but as time progresses he will weaken somewhat. In addition the mummy is not particularly bright and will take some time to reach his destination. This should allow the party time to catch him in the funerary exhibit, unless they have been particularly slow and disorganised. If the mummy gets clean away then the same disadvantages as listed above apply. The party may well still notice the disturbance around the sarcophagus.

Sample file



## The British Museum Forecourt



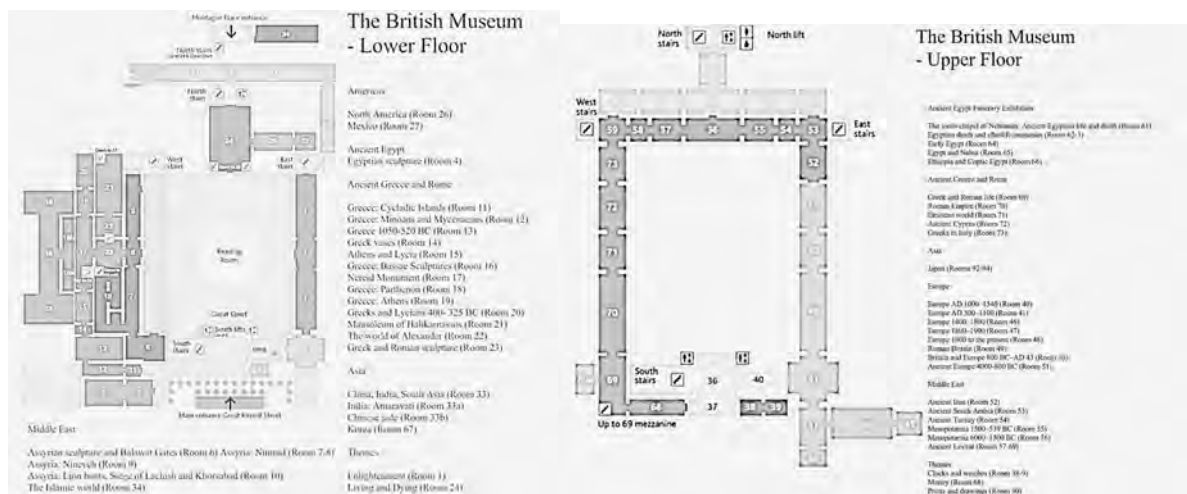
It is night and the forecourt is lit partially by the street lights on Great Russell Street and partly by spotlights set up to illuminate the British Museum's great façade. This lighting, whilst dramatic, does leave large portions of the building's frontage in deep and forbidding shadow.

As they try to gain entrance they may well search along the front of the British Museum (see map of British Museum at back of book) the party may well not go straight for the front entrance. If this is the case they will find locked doors in both the western and eastern columned sections. These are both locked and will have to be attacked by what ever means necessary (see stats for enemies at back of book). If they defeat these they will gain access to antechambers for the Assyrian and Ancient Egypt or The Enlightenment displays respectively.

If they go straight for the main entrance they will find the corpse of a security guard. Those of a sensitive disposition should make a 0/1D3 sanity roll at this point. His neck is twisted round at a wholly unnatural angle his hands still clutching at his now departed assailant. His electric torch has been dropped nearby and is still on, casting its beam uselessly across the grey stone floor. If the party are ghoulish enough to search the body they should only find those things a working class middle aged man of the twenties might reasonably be carrying and yes, that would include his wallet.



## Inside the British Museum



Firstly, here are some general points about wandering through the British Museum at night. There will be security lights through most of the main exhibition rooms throughout the museum, but they are sparse and at a very low intensity. This means that all rooms will be in heavy shadow or near darkness. As such any of the party creeping through the looming ancient artefacts will feel decidedly nervous. In addition there are supernatural forces at work here of an unspeakable evil. Although distant and weakened it will pray upon the minds of our adventurers, for it is at night that the minds of even waking men most closely touch the realm of dreams and nightmares. Half heard sounds, a movement at the corner of the eye, an uneasy feeling at the back of their necks all these things will toy with their minds, and again may induce a need to make a roll of 0/1D3 for sanity if you see fit. With ominous portent, all such apparitions will cease when the party members reach the Egyptian Funerary exhibition on the upper floors.

The description of most of the rooms I leave to the imagination of the keeper. The maps above have the exhibits for each room marked and this should act as a useful guide. Some of the key atmospheric rooms are described below. It may be possible that the party can obtain a copy of a visitor map from somewhere, and there will certainly be a large version of display in the main entrance hall of the Museum.

## Antechamber at South End of the Assyrian and Ancient Egypt Rooms



“Perhaps unsurprisingly the area is even more poorly lit than usual and vast statues loom over you from out of the shadows. More disturbingly the shadows themselves seem to take on a life of their own, shifting and moving at the edges of your vision, though when fixed directly in your sight they are as dark and constant as ever.”

West and north from here lies the Assyrian exhibition rooms, whilst due north lies the long room of Ancient Egypt.

## South End of The Ancient Egypt Long Room



“Everywhere lies the ancient writing of the Pharaohs, those sorcerer kings who had claimed godhood and who, it was said, knew the words of power which could summon or constrain

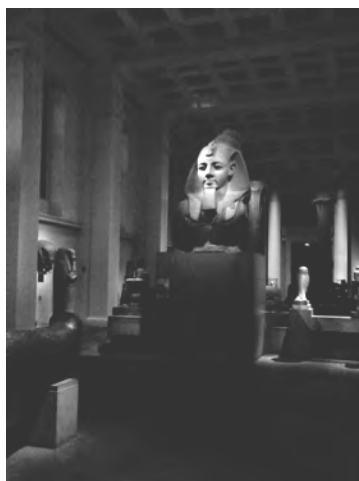
the mightiest denizens of the underworld. Even now it seemed as though sibilant tongues whispered those spells, just at the limits of human hearing, just beyond the intelligible.” This room continues north for a quite some distance and will take the party a little time to walk through. As per the map there are exits to other locations spaced upon its length.

### **Middle of The Ancient Egypt Long Room**



A particularly perceptive investigator might spot a fragment of old rag. Exits to the Great court, the Assyrians and Classical Greece lie here. The long room itself continues north.

### **The North end of The Ancient Egypt Long Room**



At the far northern end of the room the doors to the western staircase can be seen. Throughout all sections of this room are writings which might attract the attention of certain members of

the party, if their occupation or interests make them so inclined. In any event, if in the future research is to be undertaken then these rooms and the Funerary Exhibit on the upper floors will provide most of the first hand written sources. See the section at the end of the book for the Hieroglyphics fragments.

### **Antechamber to the Enlightenment Exhibition Room**

“The only light here trickles feebly from the scarcely illuminated exhibition rooms beyond. The shadows rule here and seem to crouch in every corner and angle to fill the room with their coiled presence. You cannot shake the feeling that, if you were to enter this room, they would leap at once from the extremities to consume everything and everyone therein.”

This room is simply an entrance hall, albeit a dark and forbidding one, leading to the Exhibition room itself.

### **South end of the Enlightenment Exhibition Room**



“Within their musty alcoves and display cases lie the artefacts gleaned by the empires early collectors. Yet, somewhere in recesses of your mind you think you hear the click of port