

MONRIA

Volume 1

The Kipling Chronicles



Dark Moon Enigma

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INTRODUCTION

Monria was a peaceful Moon colony with minimal interference when it came to the local creatures, but something changed the day an unusual item was found in the West Crater; a parchment paper with a Rudyard Kipling poem on it that set into motion what can only be described as an escalation of dark forces attempting to undermine and destroy our human existence on Monria.

The Moon colony and its allies are bound in strength and numbers but it does not minimize the effort needed to keep the dark forces at bay. It actually encourages the dark forces to use strategies that will catch us off guard. So far, we have managed to keep ourselves one step ahead with intel reports. However, without collecting additional key data, it will get increasingly more difficult to fight in these battles with creatures that seem to be using some type of advanced technology.

This is a path of discoveries that reveal the dark forces even beyond those that are known. Surprising revelations teach and direct the energies that must be employed to keep Monria safe and *sane*. Invading entities deliver challenging trials, and while victory has been ours, it has become increasingly clear that we have just begun.

There has been a progressive uprising in Monria creature activity that is certain to be about more than land encroachment. After the discovery of Monria in November 2010 by the Deep Space Extraction Corporation (DSEC), the current governing body has not found any official records that document their experiences. This is quite strange as there is an established DSEC Military Headquarters, and a DSEC Forensics Lab, but very few archived documents.

The Moon had all but been abandoned when the new governing body arrived in November 2012. Only a few Monria residents were left, seemingly a bit dazed and wandering the craters and caves. However, the community is growing, and the Monria Archives & Research Center (MARC) was established to collect and record artifacts and documents, along with Monria's evolving history. There has also been an expansion in military personnel as a result of the increased activities.

Monria is a mysterious Moon, with dark forces that seem to hover in that vacant space between reality and daydreaming. Strange occurrences keep the colony on alert, and discoveries lead to uncovering the truth about Monria. Life on the Moon isn't always what it seems.

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Ch 1 / Mysteries are Beginning to Surface

Today was just a regular day as I went about my business at the Monria Archives & Research Center (MARC), until I was approached by one of Monria's citizens who said he found something strange in the West Crater. I hadn't seen Core before.

"Ms DM," asked Core, "may I bother you for a minute?"

"Sure," I responded, "how can I help you?"

He shifted his weight from one leg to the other and looked a bit disheveled in his dusty clothing, but many give this appearance after visiting our craters where the dust tends to shift with rising winds. The miners especially seem to be covered in crater dust after a good run, but no one seems to mind so much.

"I found something strange in the West Crater," he stated, "and I thought I should let you know about it because it looks important."

"Show me what you found," I replied, "and come inside the office, there's no need for you to stand out there."

"Oh, I didn't want to get your rug dirty, and I don't actually have the item. I left it in the West Crater because I was afraid to pick it up."

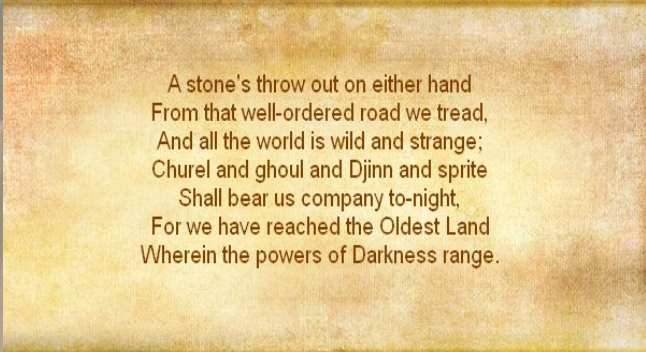
"Ok," I said, "then can you take me to where you found it?"

"Yes Ma'am, I can," he replied.



He was running down the hall and out of the center toward the teleporter before I even got to the office door. He seemed quite anxious to show me what he found, but then I too was quite anxious to see what this was all about. There haven't been any discoveries on Monria since we arrived, but it's only been a couple of months, so I hope this is something worth getting excited about.

As I approached Core in the West Crater he was pointing in the direction of the item. It was difficult to make out at first, and almost looked like a piece of cardboard, but I put on a cloth glove and reached to pick it up. It was parchment paper with printing on it, and after a closer look, I could see it was a poem.



A stone's throw out on either hand
From that well-ordered road we tread,
And all the world is wild and strange;
Churel and ghoul and Djinn and sprite
Shall bear us company to-night,
For we have reached the Oldest Land
Wherein the powers of Darkness range.

A rather curious poem, and definitely strange to be found in the West Crater. I will need to conduct a bit of research to see if I can learn who the author is, but I'm also curious to know if there might be any hidden messages.

"Thank you Core, for bringing this to my attention" I said, "here, let me give you a little something for your effort." I gave Core a few Project Entropia Dollars (PED) and headed back to the Monria Archives & Research Center, but not before seeing Core turn to leave with an unusual grin on his face. Maybe he was just excited about the PED and off to see if he could find other things in the Monria craters.

After getting back to my office, I did a search on the words in the poem and made an interesting discovery. The poem was written by Rudyard Kipling (1865 - 1936), a well-known Earth poet, but how did this parchment end up in the West Crater? Does this poem somehow have a connection to Monria?

I took another look at the poem, and after reading it a couple of times, it seemed dark and somewhat ominous. I recognized the word Ghoul, but I had no idea what a Churel was, so I consulted the ancient Wiki records. I may be off on this one, but I'm beginning to think that this poem might have been intentionally left on Monria for a specific reason; for what, I don't know yet, just a gut feeling.

The description of the Churel from the ancient Wiki records potentially connects a dot for me. The description reads that *"the Churel ghost presents itself either as a hideous creature with long sagging breasts and unkempt hair, or as a beautiful young woman who can charm any man. Often, her feet are backward, and she has an unnaturally long and thick black tongue."*

The long sagging breasts caught my attention, and the first thing I thought of was Shub-Niggurath, one of the four creatures that inhabit a cave area and the Shub Cavern. How likely would it be that Shub-Niggurath and the other Shubs are evolved creatures and a descendant of the Churel?



There is also mention of Djinn, which are akin to genies, but that will have to be something to sort out at another time. Right now, I need to know how that piece of parchment with the poem on it found itself in the dust of a Monrian crater.

Mysteries always intrigue me, like riddles, or mazes filled with twists and turns that only take you back to the beginning where muddled thoughts hold you hostage until you find the correct path. Investigative research is much the same, except you're working with clues, and tips, and what ifs, and dark corners in the recesses of your mind where you know you placed a important thoughts for safe keeping.

Perseverance pays off, even if it only gives you something more to critically think about. In this case, the information was quite intriguing. It seems that Rudyard Kipling had a son named John who wanted to go off to war for fame and fortune. This was during World War I, but he was in ill health and had poor eyesight.

Since his father was both famous and friends with the Commander of the British Army, they let him in and commissioned him a Second Lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion Irish Guards. After his training, he was sent to France in August 1915 to fight in the war. John was seeking his own notoriety and fame, but in September 1915 he came up missing in action and presumed dead.

There are several stories as to how he presumably died, and one such story said that a shell hit in his area and blew his face off causing him to wander away. His body was never recovered, nor identified, and no one knows how or where he had disappeared. Search parties turned up nothing.

However, I discovered that there was UFO activity during WWI, and even those who were so dismissive of such tales were rethinking their positions when it was learned that the infamous ace German fighter pilot known as the Red Baron was said to have been the first pilot in history to shoot down a UFO as told by a witness. My thoughts are all over the map right now.

So where does all of this leave us? I would say with a lot of questions:

- What happened to John Kipling?
- Could he have vanished on an alien spacecraft during WWI?
- If so, were these aliens from Monria's past?
- The poem was written by his father, so what did he know of this activity?
- Did John Kipling arrive on Monria as a result of his disappearance?
- Is the poem a warning of ghostly creatures still roaming Monria?
- *And one very looming thought:* The parchment was found in the West Crater that is inhabited by the Cultists, so I am wondering if they had anything to do with this, and whether we should be considering that there might be more.

"There are horrors beyond life's edge that we do not suspect, and once in a while man's evil prying calls them just within our range." ... *H. P. Lovecraft*



The Monria Cultists are rumored to engage in dark magic and invocation rituals that bring forth ungodly entities, and are driven to do unspeakable things at the hand of their beloved deity Cthulhu. However, these are tales told throughout the colony and we have not been able to verify any such activities to date.

Whatever this Cthulhu deity is that the Cultists worship, we need to either dispel the rumors, or find some kind of proof that it exists. We don't need our community members living in fear that their lives are continually in danger because of it.

It is imperative that we continue to search for answers, set the record straight, and reveal Monria's truth. If there is history here that we need to be aware of in order to keep the Moon vital and evolving, we must persevere.

Ch 2 / West Crater Cultist Battle | Artifact Recovered

As a result of Core's discovery of the parchment paper in the West Crater, there was increased activity by the Cultists that caused concern. It was an indicator to me that we had hit a nerve of some sort with that find. As such, I continued my research for more historical data that might produce clues as to why and how the parchment paper with Kipling's poem on it ended up on Monria.

After spending a few weeks trying to solve the parchment incident, while also uncovering additional interesting data, I am no closer to unraveling the mystery that holds the potential connection between the poem and Monria.

However, the data that I uncovered inspires increased plausibility that a connection between Rudyard Kipling and the Cultists may be behind the disappearance of his son John. There is also cause to consider that it may have been an internal act to preserve what life was left of John after his incident in the war. It's just too bizarre to fathom, but if Kipling's son found his way to Monria through some cosmic force, I think it's something that we should know about.

The more I delve into this mystery, the more I feel I'm running a multicursal path to madness, and I'm getting that feeling I get when all hell is about to break loose.

With only speculation and no hard core evidence of ties into the parchment paper, multi-directional thoughts are crowding every possible opening for some critical thinking. However, I can't help but think that further investigation will reveal even more. I just don't know if learning the truth is going to be a good thing or not.

I began to get word from members in the community that the Cultists were gathering in large numbers. Military officials are now paying closer attention to the elevated activity, and the Monrian community is on heightened alert.

The comm unit going off startled me right out of those multi-directional thoughts.

"Hello, this is Dark Moon."

"Hello DM," a male voice responded, "you don't know me, but I would like to have a brief chat about offering my services."

"May I ask you to please identify yourself before we go any further," I responded.

"Yes, of course," he replied, "but I would rather give that to you in person. I do not trust electronic communication systems."

"Ok," I said, "then tell me what type of service you are offering?"

"It would probably be best to talk in person," he replied, "would you be able to meet me at the Cave 2 teleporter in about 20 minutes?"

"How do I know I can trust you," I asked.

"Fair question," he responded, "perhaps I'll gain a bit of credibility by telling you that I know you received an item today from the West Crater that I'm sure has you curious, and that I also know that the Cultists are gathering in large numbers because they are protecting something of value."

Well *that* raised some red flags, along with the hair on the back of my neck. I think things just got real. Head spinning, check ... pulse racing, check ... flushed skin, check. I'm trying to think as fast as I can so that there's not too much of a pause in responding, but space and time seemed to stop while navigating thoughts.

"Dark Moon," the voice on the other end asked, "you still there? I'm sure this must come as a surprise, but I felt it was the only way I might be able to get your attention enough to talk further."

"I'm here," I responded, "and you're right, what you shared was a surprise, and then some, because it raises a lot of questions."

"I would be happy to answer them," he stated, "but give me a chance to talk with you in person, the information is highly sensitive."

I finally gave in and said that I would meet with him. Maybe it was the sheer curiosity about how he knew I received an item from the West Crater today, so my first question after learning his name is how did he come by that information? My entire day has been turned upside down, and I just couldn't imagine how the rest of it would play out, but yes, I *am* curious.

Upon arriving at the Cave 2 teleporter I was taken aback. The person didn't match the deep, smooth voice I heard on the comm unit, and I wasn't sure that I was facing a human. I must have looked ridiculous with my mouth open.



"It's ok DM," he stated, "I get that a lot."

"Sorry," I offered, "I wasn't expecting ... well, I don't know *what* I was expecting, so this caught me a bit off guard. Will you now tell me who you are and what services you're offering that you think will be of benefit?"

"Of course," he replied, "my name is Gothgorath, Goth for short, and I am offering a covert operations service to keep you informed with intel that will help to prepare against surprise encounters from the local creatures. I don't know how much you know about them at this point, but I assure you that they are not happy you're here, and the Moon as you've known it for a couple of months is about to change into something more dark."

Looks can be deceiving. He seemed nice enough, but the true test will be what happens from this point forward, and whether or not he will continue to cloak his responses with mystery?

"I hope you don't mind if I am direct," I asked, "if I am going to even consider what you are offering, and that's if I believe it's a viable service based on credible data, then there are a few things that I need to know."

"It's perfectly fine," he responded, "I fully expected some direct questions, so ask away when you are ready."

"First, what kind of intel are you offering," I asked, "and how reliable is the source?"

"Well DM," he said, "I can guarantee that the intel is first-hand and not hearsay, and the reason I can guarantee it is because I am on the inside."

I interrupted him before he could answer my second question ...

"The inside of what?" I asked.

"I am a member of the Cult of Shut'thend, but a service member and not an actual Cultist. I can't perform any of the rituals they do, and I don't partake in them. I just assist with duties that are rather menial compared to what they do, but I attend the meetings and take care of their needs while observing and listening. They think I am a Cthulhu worshiper, and I give them every reason to believe that."

If I was comprised of circuits and data links I would certainly be on overload right now. Attempting to assimilate what I am hearing into fragments of syntax that even make sense seems such a daunting task in this moment. I know that if I don't pull myself together, I may lose an important opportunity; not to mention that the name Cthulhu has now been presented in real experience context. I want to ask more, but it's important to learn what the Cultists are up to first.

"I see," I replied, trying desperately to find the next words that should be coming out of my mouth. "My understanding of cults is derived from my experience doing some research on Earth, but we aren't on Earth, so can you explain more about what this cult is about, and their purpose on Monria."

"No, we are not on Earth," Goth responded. "I know you have had experience with other locations in the universe, but Monria is different because there are purveyors of evil and darkness that cause dimensional rifts that are not only dangerous, but can shift experiential dynamics from status quo to *what the hell just happened*."

Evil, darkness, dimensional rifts? I don't need those in this moment for me to have a thought the likes of *what the hell just happened*. I'm not even sure how to make sense of what I just heard because there are so many empty spaces between ... we have evil and darkness on Monria with dimensional rifts, and (paraphrasing) it's all kinda dangerous. Maybe it's the reason humans were in short supply when we arrived on the Moon, and I'm guessing that the missing variables could explain it.

"So how does this covert operations service work, exactly," I asked. At this point, I'm not sure what to expect, but after hearing what he just shared, I'm guessing we may not have too much of a choice in the matter under the circumstances.

"It's really quite simple DM," he stated, "if I get wind of any unusual activity or plans that will disrupt the Moon colony in some way, I will contact you and share the info. We have to be cautious of course, but I think we can manage it."

"And what does this service cost us," I asked.

"There is no fee for the service," he replied.

"I don't understand then," I responded, "what do you get out of this," I asked.

"What I am willing to share with you now," he began, "is that Monria holds a great deal of memories for me, and if you, the rest of the Monria Team, the community and allies are willing to fight for the safety and security of Monria, then that to me is payment enough."

"Are you a native of Monria, is it your home," I asked.

"Perhaps one day I will share my story," he responded, "but for now I would like to ask that my offer be trusted in good faith and that we build on this initial meeting to keep Monria safe and ..."

"Sane," I replied, "is that the word you are looking for?"

"Well," he said, "I didn't want to alarm you."

"My radar isn't *that* fuzzy Goth," I responded. "I've heard rumors about the Cultists and some bizarre behaviors, but we have not witnessed nor seen any evidence to support the rumors as truth or otherwise. Wait, you could probably speak to this as one who is '*on the inside*,' right?"

"I am not at liberty to speak of any cult activity," he responded, "and will not confirm nor deny any of the rumors. I must remain neutral."

"You just answered my question," I said, "I love when that happens."

"Excuse me," he said.

"That's ok Goth," I replied, "I totally understand and won't push any further, but know that I am relentless when it comes to ripping mysteries wide open, like that gift on Christmas morning, hoping it's what you wanted. I know what I want."

"I would actually encourage you DM," he stated, "much is shrouded in obscurity, and the tenacity with which you approach a situation gives me the confidence to know that you will get what you want. It is important for me to be here to help you in your efforts, so are you interested in what I have to offer?"

He may look human-like, but his skin tone and physical features tell me that his DNA is more likely to be found in the *other* category. I'll leave it alone for now, but I can't help but think that there's a mystery to be solved here based on his emphatic caring about Monria. Like he said, perhaps one day he'll tell me his story.

In the meantime, I'm going to accept his offer and take a chance that information he shares will be of benefit to protecting our community and its evolution. Besides, he seems to also know quite a bit about me, and he has more questions to answer.

"Ok Goth," I said, "let's do this and see how it all plays out. How about we start right now and you tell me how you know I received an item from the West Crater today and what the increased activity with the Cultists is all about."

"Both easy to answer," he responded, "I was preparing things for a meeting that the Cultists were going to engage in and heard one of them comment that an item was found in the West Crater and taken to you, and they want to know what it is. As I continued preparations, another said that they must gather their brethren and protect the sacred artifact at all costs."

"I *knew* something was going on in the West Crater," I replied, "did they mention what the artifact was? And by the way, where do these meetings take place?"

"No mention of what the artifact was," he responded, "but there's an anxiousness to their behaviors that I have not seen before. Also, I'm afraid I can't disclose where the meetings take place, sorry."

I didn't think he would readily give up the meeting place, but at least he confirmed that there is indeed something that the Cultists are protecting in the West Crater.

"That's it then?" I asked.

"Yes DM," he said, "if anything further comes up I'll contact you."

"Thank you Goth," I replied while watching him wave and turn to walk further into the cave. I wonder where he is going?

I had to collect myself for a minute because I wasn't quite sure where I wanted to go, the Monria Archives & Research Center, or home to digest what just took place. It feels like I'm caught up in a centrifugal force mind bender. I'm waiting for the gravity to kick in so that it all settles to the bottom and I can pick and choose which thought I want to explore first. So much to think about.

One thing I know for sure, I need to head over to the DSEC Military Headquarters and inform the Commanding General of what just took place. I fear that we are in for a battle with the Cultists, and it will be our first with any creature to date.

I always look forward to meeting with the Commanding General at DSEC's Military Headquarters. General Winslow Anderson, a 4-star General, left his command at the Intergalactic Space Mission Agency (ISMA) on Earth to replace the retiring General and command the military faction that had been established on Monria.

I met General Anderson at ISMA while involved with covert operations for a planet that sits in the back of the universe. Research and investigative journalism has always been my niche, and when I had an opportunity to relocate to Monria and establish an archives and research center, I jumped at the chance, even though I knew of potential dangers.

Arriving at DSEC Military Headquarters I ran into Colonel Mitchell who seems to have an issue with my professional credentials. He makes every effort to minimize my reports to the General with a very dismissive attitude. Dealing with such nonsense would (IMO), be taking away from a more important focus in discovering whether Monria is under any threat by the Cultists in the West Crater.

The General dismissed the Colonel and sent word to his Sergeant in the field to scout the West Crater for any specific indicators that we had an impending battle on our hands. It wasn't long before word came back that indeed the Cultists were rising in numbers and it would be wise to be prepared.

As I sat in the chair in front of General Anderson's desk, I kept thinking about my meeting with Goth, and exactly how much of it I should share with the General. We had worked together in the past and have always been able to trust each other, so it's important to establish that info remains secure, or we risk a reliable source.

"General," I began, "I was approached by someone who claims to be '*on the inside*' and able to share critical information that could be of benefit to us in preserving the safety of our community."

"Safety against what," he asked.

"This may sound strange General," I started, "but it's against what he is calling dark and evil forces capable of creating dimensional rifts that pose far greater dangers than we could even imagine. We may have our challenges with the creatures, but it appears that the Cultists are the ones who wield the dark magic, and my new contact seems to be '*on the inside*' and able to pass along intel of any impending activities that may catch us off guard and dangerous to the community."

"Does this new contact have a name," the General asked.

"His name is Gothgorath," I replied, "Goth for short, but I think I should tell you that while his appearance is human-like, the tone of his skin and other features have me thinking that he might be something else. I did not explore that, as yet."

"What does Goth do on the inside," he asked.

"General," I began, "I think it would probably be best if we don't go into a lot of detail, and you trust me as you always have to deal with these types of situations. Goth gave me enough substance to warrant serious consideration of his services."

"As long as you are at ease with your assessment, I'll leave it to your judgment," he replied, "but if it becomes too complicated, contact me ."

"Well General," I responded, "the information that Goth gave me just a while ago indicates that the Cultists are reacting to the find in the West Crater today that one of our citizens brought to me at the archives and research center. Apparently, it struck a nerve and they have become anxious about some type of sacred artifact that they are protecting. Thing is, I never mentioned the find to anyone."

"What kind of find is that," he asked.

"A parchment paper with a Rudyard Kipling poem printed on it," I replied, "which is rather odd I know, but I have it documented and stored for further research when I can get back to it. In the meantime, I think our focus should be on what's occurring in the West Crater with the Cultists. Goth said that they are definitely planning something, but hasn't been able to determine what as yet. He will get back to me."

"Ok DM," he responded, "I'll leave this in your capable hands and began sorting out the details of what military personnel to call in from elsewhere to assist if need be. I don't want us to be understaffed should all hell break loose."

As I rose to leave the General's office, his words reminded me of how I was feeling earlier in the day, that *all hell was about to break loose*. As I headed back to the archives and research center I could only wonder when I would hear from Goth again. I hope his alert was just that, and we monitor things instead of having to literally prepare for some kind of battle the likes of which we haven't had yet.

Arriving at my office, I was no sooner in the door when my comm unit went off, it startled me and my pulse began to race. It could be anyone because I talk to so many people in the community. Maybe it was the DSEC Forensics Lab returning my call about having the parchment paper analyzed. Maybe it was ...

"Hello, this is Dark Moon," I said.

"This is Goth, DM."

The moment I heard the tone of his deep, smooth voice I knew that something was up, and that this may not be just a social call.

"Hello Goth," I replied, "I'm assuming you're calling because you have more intel to share regarding the Cultists."

"I do," he said, "and unfortunately, it's not good news. The Cultists are planning an attack on the community on Saturday, Jan 23rd, 3013. It won't be until later in the evening if my calculations are correct. If I may make a suggestion, you might want to do whatever preparations are needed and attack first to catch them off guard."

So there it is, the not-so-official announcement that something is going down and we have an opportunity to be the surprising aggressor. This will be our first battle of this sort, so there's no telling what kind of weaponry or dark magic we'll be facing, and since Saturday is only a few days away, I need to contact the General.

"Thank you Goth," I said, "I will get in touch with the Commanding General as soon as we disconnect. I guess this will be the big test of your covert services and how well they will serve the Monrian community."

"You're welcome DM," he replied, "and I assure you that the information that I have shared with you is first-hand, I overheard it in one of the chambers of the Cultists."

I wanted so badly to ask him about those chambers and where the Cultists operate from but I know that he will decline and say he's *not at liberty to disclose*. Instead, I bid my adieu and contacted General Anderson to alert him of the imminent battle on Saturday and that we need to be prepared. I also shared Goth's suggestion that perhaps we do what is necessary to be the aggressive faction. He's on board.

I managed to get the parchment paper over to the DSEC Forensics Lab to get an analysis, and lab tech Jennifer said that it shouldn't take too long, but to leave it and she would contact me when the results were ready. I wanted to know if there were any latent fingerprints on the parchment, or any other evidence that could be lifted that might give a clue to the age of the document, including possible DNA.

I got word from General Anderson that everything was in place to initiate a surprise attack on the Cultists in the West Crater on Saturday, and he confirmed that indeed they were gathering in larger numbers. Goth has been 100% correct, so maybe this new arrangement may work out after all.

It was battle day, and we had no idea what to expect. I was nervous for those from the community and our allies who stepped up to fight alongside our military to keep the Cultists from disrupting and potentially gaining any control over Monria. I was also nervous about whether we would be able to find the sacred artifact or not.

After teleporting to the West Crater, I found that military and volunteers alike were gathering, and the chatter seemed to be all about the artifact they were supposed to find. They were questioning how they were going to do that while in battle as the rise in number of Cultists would make it a challenge. I knew I had to do something or there would be a chance that we could miss this opportunity. I accessed the public address system through my comm unit and first identified myself.

"May I have your attention please," I asked, "this is Dark Moon, head of the Monria Archives & Research Center, and member of the Monria Management Team. I know you have questions about finding and recovering the presumed artifact, and that it might be challenging with the number of Cultists you will face."

Those gathered were now quiet and listening. The success of this mission was hanging in the balance without an understanding of how important it was. Yes, it was a mission, and one that could potentially give us a tremendous advantage.

"DM," a colonist asked, "do you know what this artifact looks like?"

"I don't, Max," I replied, "so you'll all have to be alert and question anything out of the ordinary, but also make sure you look beyond common terrain. I'm actually not expecting the item to be out in the open, so stay alert."

"What do we do with the artifact if we should find it," asks Max.

"Please bring it to me directly," I responded, "it will need to be taken to the DSEC Forensics Lab for analysis and further research, but I have lab techs standing by to assist with that. I am also offering a reward to the brave soul who makes the discovery. My benefactor left me multiple apartments in the two towers on Monria to house future research staff. Many of you live off Moon, making it a challenge at times to catch a warp to Monria that is timely, so I'm going to make a Monria apartment available to the person who finds the artifact and brings it to me."

There was a cheer and a heightened level of excitement as those gathered started moving around and chatting about the impending battle. It was then that out of the corner of my eye I saw Goth already in armor so as not to draw attention to himself and his unusual appearance. I recognized the part of his coat that covered armor below his waist. Perhaps fighting for Monria is another benefit of his services.

"Listen up everyone," General Anderson shouted, "it's time. For those of you who are less battle-tested, stay close to those who might be able to assist if you run into trouble. We all know that death isn't permanent, so we have healers at the revive to assist in your recovery should you ... well, you know. If one of you finds the artifact, please bring it to Dark Moon immediately, do not wait. Let's go."

Is there a scale that calculates level of excitement, because mine would be totally off the chart right now. The anticipation of possibly recovering an artifact could only be exceeded by the actual event, providing the mission is successful.

The Cultists were now present in greater numbers, and despite calling upon their brethren to join them in whatever their attempts would be today, it did not deter the Monrian forces from making first contact. The fighting was fierce, but the resolve was strong, and two hours into the battle, two individuals were walking toward me with something shiny that kept catching intermittent sun rays and causing glares, so I couldn't tell what it was, but my heart was palpitating, and my pulse racing.

"DM, DM, DM," shouted a voice, "I think we found it, I think we found it."

As they got closer, I could see it was Max helping someone I had not met yet, and they were carrying what looked like a metal rectangular container. It was a decent size, but couldn't tell what it was yet. This had to be the artifact, it just has to.

"Who found it," I asked, "it looks like it's rather heavy considering your struggle in carrying it."

"Eon did, DM," said Max, "Eon Ost Turf, he came from another planet to help."

Many of our allies from other close-by planets joined in our battle against the Cultists today, and we are grateful for their assistance. We would also support them if they were in need, because that's our standing agreement.

"Congratulations Eon," I stated as I reached to shake his hand, "this could be the most important find to date, so I am very grateful for your efforts. You have earned yourself a Monria apartment, and since you live off Moon, this should be of benefit to you when you either visit, or join us in the future should we need your battle services again. Where exactly did you find it?"

"I was fighting the Cultists farther out near a rock formation," he began, "when a bright glare hit my eyes. I moved to the right to get out of the line of the glare to see where it was coming from and I saw something shiny sticking out from the side of the rock. I cautiously moved toward it to see what it was and it appeared to be an actual object. I couldn't move it, nor figure out how to open up the rock to get it out, so I called Max over and asked him for help. It took us a while, but Max hit an indentation at the edge of the rock near the item, and the face of the rock in front of the shiny piece that produced the glare just disintegrated revealing the object"

"Thank you Eon and Max," I said, "I'll take it from here."

I called in the lab techs to see if they could open up the metal casing to reveal what was inside before they take the item to the forensics lab. Probably not the best thing to do in the moment, but I was incredibly curious. The techs always carry their field gear and are prepared for just about anything. I am quite anxious to see what this casing holds. I don't remember last when I was this excited.

In only a few short minutes, there I was, standing in front of what appeared to be an ancient 4-drawer file cabinet with the most curious drawer handles I had ever seen. I wasn't fixated on the drawer handles too long because my thoughts were racing, and the excitement of finding out what was inside all but paralyzed me.

Can you imagine for one moment what these four drawers might contain?



Ch 3 / Parchment Fingerprints | Unusual Cabinet Lettering

Prior to leaving the West Crater after the file cabinet was removed from the outer metal casing, I had taken photos. However, when the lab techs picked up the cabinet off the canvas with the ropes and started walking to the teleporter, the back of the cabinet was facing me. I noticed unusual markings at the top and captured a photo before we headed to the lab. I found it interesting that once the Cultists saw that we had the file cabinet, they retreated, but I don't think this is over.



I met the lab techs at the forensics facility to make sure that the cabinet had been placed in a secure room where only certain personnel had access. Max and Eon, as well as the lab techs had their armor on, so the cabinet would not have been compromised with fingerprints or anything else invasive.

I understood that after the outer area of the cabinet was forensically analyzed, I could come back to start my investigation of the contents. There would be a specific protocol in doing so, but even in all my excitement of the discovery, I somehow gathered enough patience to wait my turn.

In the meantime, I was curious about the unusual lettering found on the back of the cabinet and went to my office to have a closer look at the photo. It was difficult to make out so I enlarged that part of the cabinet to see if I could make any sense of it. However, the closer I looked at it, the more I realized that whatever it was, it was written or inscribed in some form of archaic symbols.

The more I looked at the drawer handles, the more I thought about this supposed deity Cthulhu and what he might look like. Not sure why I was even thinking of a possible connection, but the thought was there and I did a little research.

Instinct is a wonderful asset if you don't dismiss it.

As I sat at my desk looking at the photos, I just knew there had to be some kind of document, or at least an alphabet of some sort that would help decode the lettering on the back of the file cabinet. This would certainly be a priority because it might help to understand other things that may be found in the drawers of the cabinet.



I have been anxious for DSEC's Forensics Lab to produce some sort of results from their analysis of the parchment paper found in the West Crater. It's been almost two weeks since the discovery and you would think that something would have surfaced by now with all of the advanced technology available.

A few times, I had a mind to visit the forensics lab to see if I could inspire quicker results, but if there is one thing I've learned as a researcher, you just can't mess with science and empirical evidence. Maybe I'll give Jennifer a call to see how it's all going, she's pretty accommodating.

"Hey Jenn," I said, "this is DM. How are things going with the parchment analysis?"

"Hello DM," Jenn responded, "did you not get a message yesterday that we found fingerprints on the parchment?"

"No, Jenn," I replied, "I did not. Who was supposed to give me the message?"

"Colonel Mitchell was in the lab yesterday," she stated, "and I thought it would be ok to give him the information to pass on to you."

"That was irresponsible Jennifer," I said while trying not to raise my voice, "there are protocols in place that dictate that analysis reports are to be given directly to the person requesting them, and not passed on through a third party."

"Sorry DM," she offered, "but he was here at the lab and said that he was going to be talking with you so I thought it was ok being he was from military headquarters."

"It doesn't matter where anyone is from, Jenn," I replied, "you broke the rules when it comes to disseminating results of an investigation, and that can't happen again. We have to make sure that results from evidentiary procedures are contained, or there could be potential consequences. So please, stick to the rules, and if you have questions about anything I have submitted to you, or others are asking you questions about any of my investigations in the future, contact me before you share any information whatsoever."

I tried hard not to unleash the full weight of my fury on her because I'm sure that Colonel Mitchell was persuasive enough to get her to give him information. He has tried to undermine me at just about every turn, and with the recovered file cabinet now at the forensics lab we can't have him, or other unauthorized curiosity seekers compromising the analysis of its contents.

"Also, Jenn," I said, "no one other than myself is authorized in that room where the file cabinet is sitting, except you to run forensics when I start examining content. I have to remove each item in that file cabinet carefully and document it before any type of forensic testing. Please make sure that the room remains secure."

"I will DM," Jennifer responded, "and sorry again for the big mistake."

"Ok, thanks," I replied, "have you been able to identify any of the fingerprints yet?"

"Not yet," Jennifer stated, "and there's only one set of fingerprints."

"You will most likely need to expand your data search beyond the normal protocol," I began, "because we may not be dealing with the ordinary here. I'm specifically interested in learning if by chance either of the Kipling's fingerprints are on that parchment, which means consulting Earth records. I'm going to do some research myself to determine when fingerprinting actually began. It's possible neither of them will have theirs on file anywhere. I'll get back to you."

"Ok, DM," Jennifer responded, "and I'll let you know if I come up with anything."

As I disengaged the comm unit, my thoughts went back to Colonel Mitchell being in the forensics lab yesterday. There's no reason for him to be there, and the fact that he was involved in conversation with Jennifer is suspect to me. This is a big red flag, but before I stir things up, I'm going to contact General Anderson.

"Anderson here," the General said, "state your business quickly, I'm heading out the door for a meeting."

"Hello General," I responded, "it's DM and I just have a quick question please, don't want to hold you up."

"Oh hello DM," he replied, "how are things going with the examination of the file cabinet?"

"I haven't started yet," I said, "but will get to it soon. The reason I'm calling is to ask if by chance you had sent Colonel Mitchell over to the forensics lab for something yesterday?"

"Not at all DM," the General responded, "he has no reason to be at the forensics lab, why do you ask?"

"Very interesting," I said, "because the lab tech, Jennifer, told me today that she gave the parchment analysis results to Colonel Mitchell yesterday to pass on to me because he said he was going to be talking to me. You and I both know that he and I don't talk, and that he's always causing me grief when he gets the chance."

"Curious indeed," the General replied, "do you want me to question him about this to see if I can come up with anything? He should not be going to the forensics lab for any reason whatsoever."

"Thanks General," I responded, "but I'd rather look into this myself because I need to question Jennifer further about a few things, and if there's something going on here, then I don't want to tip him off. The file cabinet is secure, and I told Jennifer that no one has access except me for recording and archiving, and her to conduct forensic testing on the content once I start examining it. I'll look into it soon and get back to you. Appreciate the offer General."

"Anytime, DM," he said, "talk soon."

I am now becoming concerned at how many red flags have been raised over the past few days. The discovery of the parchment, the meeting with Gothgorath, the increased activity in the West Crater with the Cultists that led to our first full-on battle, the recovered file cabinet that needs my attention, and now this.

I need to get back down to the forensics lab soon and start documenting the contents of the file cabinet. However, I need more information about the Kiplings to see if they were around after fingerprinting was introduced, and whether they actually have a set of fingerprints on file in any known data bank.

The first known use of fingerprinting was in 1858 when Sir William Herschel, a British Ambassador in a District in India, required fingerprints and signatures on civil contracts. Rudyard Kipling was born in Mumbai, India in 1865, which means that fingerprinting was definitely in existence during both his and his son's lifetime.

Research is time-consuming, but I love making discoveries that are relevant to the uncovering of information that helps fit the pieces of a puzzle together. Now the crucial question is, were either of the Kiplings fingerprinted at any time, and would their fingerprints show up in a data bank that far back in history?

Perseverance paid off, because I learned that the U.S. military adopted the use of fingerprinting in 1905, but I have yet to uncover a reference where the British Army may have used them as well. If they did, then it's highly likely that a set of John Kipling's fingerprints would be on file somewhere. It's also possible that Rudyard's fingerprints might be on file if he was involved in a civil contract of some kind.

However, if their fingerprints are available, and neither show up on the parchment, then whose are they? There's something that keeps nagging me about the meeting with Core; that grin on his face at the West Crater as he turned to leave after I gave him some PED for his efforts in finding and bringing the parchment paper to me. The grin appeared more sinister than one of being happy.

In the meantime, I learned that there was uncertainty as to who was laid to rest in the grave at St Mary's ADS Cemetery in Haisnes, France that was identified as John Kipling's in 1992, because in 2002, the data was disputed by a couple of military historians who suggested that it may in fact be the grave of another soldier named Arthur Jacob of the London Irish Rifles.

However, it was in January 2016 that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) demonstrated that the original identification of the grave was correct. Interesting to note though, that in the evidence presented, no genetic data was included, leaving still the question as to how accurate any presumed evidence might be, without leaving a shadow of doubt.

One of the benefits of heading up the Monria Archives & Research Center is having access to the DSEC Forensics Lab where I can have a closer look at what is discovered on Monria. I don't actually do any of the scientific forensics procedures, but I can lend a careful eye to what is brought to the lab prior to when the technical process begins. It is my job to document all.

Up until now, there have been periodic references to Cthulhu, and stories that filter throughout the community of dark and evil occurrences on Monria, but we have seen no evidence of this so far, nor have we found any documentation that would support such stories. This 4-drawer file cabinet may be a missing link.

However, Goth made reference in our meeting about Cthulhu and that the Cultists needed to believe that he worshiped him too, so this tells me that there has to be something to these stories. Just what is unknown, but in my research of Cthulhu I found a peculiar phrase that seems to be quite common.

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn."

(In his house at R'lyeh, dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.)

The more I dig, the deeper I get, and the smaller the puzzle pieces become, which means that this isn't going to be so easy to solve. It seems a great deal of effort has been put forth to cloak the mysterious and shadow the secrets. I'm beginning to get this eerie feeling that Monria could be facing increased threats from what is perceived to be dark and evil; that's if this Cthulhu deity truly exists and is not just some fantasy God to appease a brotherhood of the Cultists.

I don't think that Goth would mislead me, but then, there have been many strange behaviors that started with Core, then Goth, then Colonel Mitchell and Jennifer that I'm not sure what to believe, but I know that it all somehow fits together.

I wonder where R'lyeh is ...

There are some things I'm sure that the Monria community doesn't know about me, but will eventually learn the more that I engage with them. They are important to me, and one of my official roles is not only to document what is discovered on this glorious Moon, but to keep our community safe by working with the DSEC entities.

Therein lies the dilemma. I am fast learning that all is not what it seems at times, and while I have a history of working with General Anderson at DSEC Military, I am suspicious that there may be others within the ranks who have less than positive thoughts about the new governing body. Close scrutiny is warranted.



I am tolerant and patient to a fault, but not as trusting as some might think. No amount of ignorance will excuse bad behavior, and if I am pushed beyond what I consider to be reasonable exceptions, it's time to talk.

I am dedicated, loyal and protective of the Monrian community, but after arriving, it felt like more than just a new home. There's a sense of urgency in the air that feeds my senses; a drawing of energy outward, pulling me in different directions. It upsets my equilibrium sometimes, weaving in and out of my thoughts as if turning page after page looking for something.

This outward pulling of energy stops me in my tracks at times, but I am not fearful. It's difficult to explain, but I liken it to being drawn into something that reaches beyond reality, and heightens my level of awareness to the degree that there is clarity in vision. Fate is fickle, but sometimes it gets it right. There is no doubt that I am here for a reason.

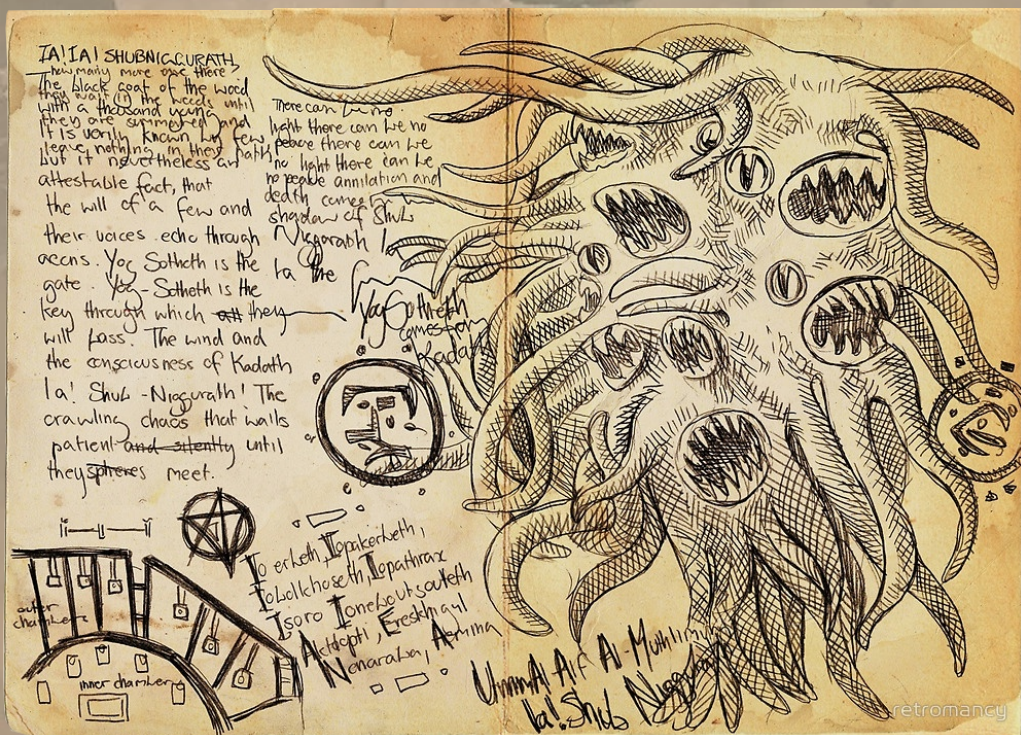
I am not so focused on the destination, as much as I am the journey. Something, or someone, wants my attention, and I am determined to find out what, or who.

Ch 4 / Recovered Artifact Reveals Disturbing News

Ever since the ancient file cabinet was secured at the DSEC Forensics Lab, and forensics analysis of the outer surface was completed, I have spent numerous hours documenting content. You wouldn't think that so much could be contained in one cabinet, but there is an abundance of documents and artifacts that have raised an eyebrow or two, and I'm beginning to believe that this is no fantasy.

Many of the documents contain writing that I'm more than certain belongs to occult phraseology. I did uncover an original scribbling in fairly readable English, along with a sketch of a creature that looks very similar to our Shoggoth. I would consider the message alarming if this were current times, but I'm guessing this is an historical document without significant relevance.

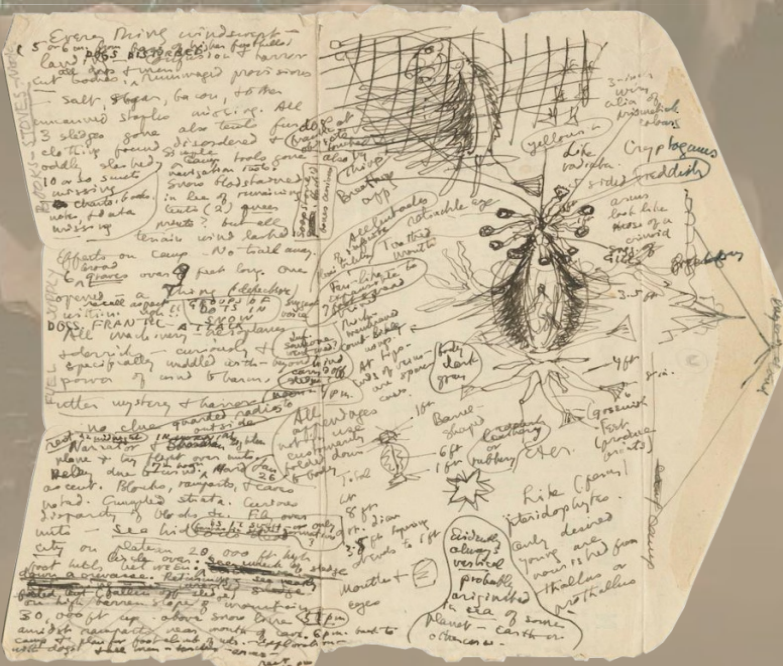
***"There can be no light, there can be no peace.
Annihilation and death come in the shadow of Shub-Niggurath."***



It wasn't long before I started second-guessing my assumptions, and realized that I needed to connect a few more dots to fully understand what I have discovered. This isn't just a cabinet full of old documents and artifacts. This was an unfolding of a story of ritual and rebellion, and it doesn't feel so old anymore. It gives me pause to think that perhaps I should have more visits with Goth.

It seems to be legendary that Cthulhu's sole mission is to control the thoughts of those who rebuke him by causing them to go mad. It also seems the creatures of the Moon have some connection to Cthulhu that drives them to be aggressive against the community at times. I hope Goth will be able to shed light on this.

As I sift through more documents, which I'm sure will require added scrutiny, there's one that seems to be an outline of a plot of madness. It joins others that draw a path from sanity to insanity, and ultimately to control.



The more I uncover, the more unsettling all of this becomes. What if this is real, and what if there are cases of Monrians who have experienced such things, and the information is being kept from us. I'm not naive to think that there aren't other forces at work here. The question is, what is real and what is myth.

Through this process, I have actually learned a great deal about this deity Cthulhu, and I am just about convinced that there is plausibility in a thread of truth. We have for some time faced cosmic horrors across the universe because they *do* exist, but I've only seen something this pervasive in my experiences on Cyrene.

Cthulhu may have fallen into a death-like sleep, but apparently there are powerful telepathic communications that take place between him and the creatures of the Moon that bring forth challenges such as the recent Cultist battle that put the entire colony at risk. We have definitely upset whatever natural order of things was in place by retrieving the ancient file cabinet. I am beginning to understand why.

And I am also beginning to realize that I am actually believing what I just couldn't fathom as something that existed in reality. My thoughts are coming far too quickly, fighting for attention, but they float in the periphery because I can't tear myself from an insatiable and urgent need to know more, so I read, and read, and read.

The realm within which we live considers humans as insignificant, and incapable of understanding the purposeless, mechanical and uncaring universe that we face. As such, they rely on our own cognitive dissonance to break us to the point of total surrender, and into complete madness where Cthulhu gains control.

I felt a sudden sickness to think that perhaps the sparseness of the Moon upon our arrival might have been a result of this invading darkness. My only question at this point is, how is it done? I'm not quite sure I want to know the answer, but if we are to get to the bottom of this mystery, then answers we need.

As I continued examining the contents of the drawers, I found smaller artifacts like a bust of Cthulhu that I recognized from other images I've seen, and a couple of medallions. Whoever this cabinet belonged to definitely had an affinity for Cthulhu, but why were the Cultists protecting it?



I find myself in that space beyond the perception of reality, where you believe what you experience, but not sure it has tangible significance; where the evidence seems to support some sort of existence, but it's circumstantial.

"Hey," I called to Jennifer, "did somebody put this here as a joke?" I used the chart of rune symbols to decode the document which seems to be a declaration.

"Put what where," Jennifer asked.

"These documents I found at the top right of my desk," I said, "this isn't funny."

Jennifer walked over to my desk where I was examining and archiving documents from the cabinet and looked at the documents with a perplexed expression.

"I have no idea how those got there DM," she stated, "I haven't removed anything from that cabinet whatsoever."

"Are you serious," I asked, "do you know what this means? Someone was in this room and removed these documents from the cabinet."



"We need to put additional security measures in place Jennifer, because no one other than you and I, and anyone I authorize are to have access to this room. We cannot have the contents of this file cabinet compromised."

"I'll get on it right away DM," Jennifer replied, "and report back when it's done."

There is an agreement between the governing body of Monria, which includes the archives and research center, that I have complete control over any discoveries and how they are managed, as well as requests for forensic testing. How any of the DSEC facilities run their operations is their business, but certain dictates are in place so that there is a chain of evidence protocol followed that includes security.

I can understand why someone would want to get my attention after deciphering the lettering on the document with the runes chart, but I cannot fathom that this is something to take seriously. This dates back to the era of the Mesoamerican civilization. There's no planet I have visited or know of where this takes place in our sector of the universe, so if this is real, dark on the Moon just got darker.

I thanked Jennifer and took a photo of the document before placing it back into the cabinet and leaving the lab. This one is a mystery because someone wanted me to see that document, but who, and how were they able to get into the lab to actually take it out of the drawer. This was a warning, but also a red alert.

My thoughts are anticyclonic right now. As hyper as I usually am, things aren't moving fast enough. I not only have to get to DSEC Military Headquarters to bring this to the General's attention, but also warn the Monrian community about this.

As I enter military headquarters, I'm also thinking that this would not be a good time to run into Colonel Mitchell and his antagonistic nonsense. However, it might be an opportunity to question him about being at the forensics lab the other day.

"Can I help you with something DM," asked the Desk Sergeant.

"Is the General in his office," I asked.

"He is," said the Desk Sergeant, "I'll let him ..."

"Sorry Sergeant," I responded urgently, "there's no time for that."

The Sergeant stood up from his desk and shouted "But I have to ..." while I was off in a hurried gate to get to the General's office before he could stop me.

I realize that everyone has a job to do, and it's appreciated, but there are times when standing on ceremony has no place, and wasting time with protocol only delays action. When something is urgent, it's damn urgent.

"Sorry General," the Sergeant said, "I tried to announce her."

"It's ok Sergeant," the General responded, "this must be urgent, I'll handle it."

I hadn't yet sat down in the chair in front of the General's desk but I'm sure he could see that I was anxious. He asked the Sergeant to close the door and for me to sit down and explain what this was all about.

"I don't know where to begin General," I said, "I have two issues and both have my head spinning."

"Well, give me the most urgent one first," he replied, "and we can go from there."

I had to look at this from a time perspective because Valentine's Day was only a few days away, and if anything in this document has any truth to it, then we will find ourselves scrambling once again. This is not just the community and allies fighting against a creature uprising this time, we're talking human sacrifice.

"Ok," I responded, "the bad news is, there seems to be an annual human sacrifice to please Cthulhu. It's part of a ritual ceremony conducted by Shub-Niggurath, and it takes place on Valentine's Day. That's if I'm interpreting the contents of this document correctly. It has the same archaic lettering that was found on the back of the file cabinet. This document was found under papers on my desk, along with a set of rune symbols that coincide with letters of the English alphabet. I did not remove these from the file cabinet. This is not good General, this is not good."

"What the HELL," the General replied, "this stuff is getting crazy. Have you spoken with Goth about this yet?"

"No, General," I said, "I haven't, but will when I leave here. Hopefully this is nothing to be concerned about, but I figured I better alert you first because Valentine's Day is only a few days away and I didn't want to wait until the last minute, or do nothing at all. If this annual ritual sacrifice has any truth to it, then crazy just got serious."

"The second issue I have," I began, "is that someone had to somehow get into the lab where the file cabinet is, remove these documents from the drawer and set them on my desk to obviously get my attention. I hadn't noticed them right away because as I said, they were covered until I removed the papers on top of them. I took a photo before I left the lab so I can show you."

I handed the photo of the document to the General and watched his eyebrows raise and his eyes widen. I had translated the lettering so he would know what he was reading. His disbelieving expression said it all.

"This can't be real," the General finally said as he raised his head, "this boggles the mind to even fathom that something like this could happen."

"Well, General," I replied, "I'm not willing to take a chance that it couldn't because I've been researching and reading up on all this Cthulhu stuff that I believed was just a myth, but there's too much evidence now that says it's not."

"So what are you suggesting," he asked.

"That we be prepared just in case General," I responded, "I don't want to risk one of our community members being snatched up for some weird ritual that pleases a sleeping God in a place called R'yleh, wherever that is; it makes no sense."

"Ok then," replied the General, "you see if you can contact Goth to get more info and I'll deal with getting the troops prepared without giving too many specifics."

"Will do, General," I responded, "and I'll get back to you with anything I hear from Goth. Hopefully, he'll be able to give some insight into this bizarre ritual."

"Oh, by the way," the General asked, "did you decipher the lettering on the back of the file cabinet while you were at it?"

"I did," I replied, "The Moon Shall Rise."

I raced out of the General's office and didn't wait for any comment because I wanted to see if I could get in touch with Goth as soon as possible. I also didn't want to engage in a speculative discussion of what those words might mean. I'm sure I will find out soon enough and will be able to give the General expanded info, but that's if sharing it would be beneficial.

I headed back to my office at the research center, and once again while I was deep in thought about this annual sacrifice, my comm unit went off.

"Hello, this is DM."

"Hello DM," replied the deep, smooth voice that I was familiar with, "do you have a moment to chat?"

Ok, I am sufficiently freaked out right now. How does he do that? I'm not sure I can get used to the subtle invites into the curious behaviors exhibited by Goth at times, but perhaps when that day comes that he said he may tell me his story, I'll have my opportunity to revisit these experiences.

"Ok Goth," I said, "is this another one of those *building credibility* moments where you share information about something that I just discovered to be alarming?"

"I'm afraid so DM," he replied, "but it's more alarming than you might think."

I have been vacillating between believing myth or truth, and I have a feeling that this ping pong game is about to end with no clear winner. I can't describe this deep erupting sensation that reality on Monria comes with caveats.

"I think I'm going to let you talk before I mention anything," I began, "to see what you have to say. You seem to have this ability to know that I need to talk with you before I try to make contact."

"That's something I can't talk about right now," he said, "so let's stick with the matter at hand."

Once again, a cloaking of the mysterious keeps me at bay. It makes me question yet again if trusting in Goth is truly beneficial, or will it end up being detrimental to our efforts to establish a peaceful coexistence with Monria's creatures.

"Ok Goth," I responded, "since I'm sure you know what I'm alarmed about, what can you share that can help make sense of all of this bizarre stuff?"

"While you might categorize all of this 'stuff' as bizarre," he began, "I can assure you that what you have stumbled upon was a calculated stumble. In other words, you were meant to discover it, not only because of the time factor, but because it's another key into the realm of Monria's dark side."

"So are you telling me that everything I'm discovering about this deity Cthulhu and his followers is not myth, but truth," I asked?

"That is exactly what I am telling you," Goth replied, "and it's important that you make an effort to reconcile it with the experiences you have had so far, because this is not going away. It can also not be brushed aside as rumor or fantasy."

Ever since Core found that parchment in the West Crater, it seems that whatever semblance of normalcy we enjoyed has taken a back seat to an alternate 'reality' that I am having a difficult time wrapping my mind around. However, something in the pit of my stomach tells me that there might be more stumbling ahead.

Goth is doing his best to keep me centered, but the barrage of what's been unleashed over the past several weeks hasn't given me much time to quietly reflect. I have a naturally-suspicious nature, and a background steeped in science, so blind faith is not something that I take lightly.

"DM, you still there," Goth asks.

My thoughts tend to wander during conversations with Goth. It's a feeling of being pulled in many directions at once. Quieting my thoughts is difficult.

"I'm here, Goth," I replied, "just giving thought to what all of this means."

"I can tell you that it means that Monria will become more disruptive," he said.

I'm sufficiently rattled right now, because I'm afraid he's going to tell me that we are about to be dealing with a potential human sacrifice ritual that we may not be able to stop. I want him to talk, but I don't want him to talk.

"DM," Goth began again, "what you are continuing to learn about Cthulhu and the Cultists is truth, but it also extends beyond that to the other creatures, and none of it should be taken lightly. There's an extensive history here that has fed into the evolution of Monria, but this must be learned over time. I don't have the answers for everything, which is why I am so deep undercover. I can only lead you as things occur and as I become informed of impending dangers."

I knew there was potential for danger, perhaps with a little disruption here and there, but never did I anticipate anything of this magnitude.

"Ok, Goth," I responded, "give me what you've got that I can work with regarding the current state of affairs."

"First," Goth started, "protect the rune decoder because you will need that in the future. Second, there's an individual within your community that you need to warn. Angel of Shadows is the target for the annual human sacrifice ritual. This is due to her relentless pursuit of eliminating as many Shubs as possible. After reducing the population by 100, they paid no mind, but when it continued with 500, then 1000, 5000, and finally 10,000 Shubs, they knew she was a danger to them."

I know Angel, she's a no-nonsense hunter and not intimidated by anything, so I'm sure that she would only laugh in the face of this bizarre declaration and perhaps even be pissed-off enough to go back at it just for spite. I know her well enough to say that she would probably be honored that she was the chosen one, because it would give her an opportunity to elevate her standing even more; they won't like it.

"Wait," I said, "how do you know that I have a rune decoder?"

"Not important right now," he replied, "just keep it safe, we'll talk another time. You need to know that at 17:00 Monria time on Saturday, Feb 13th, 3013, the Shub are planning their assault with a mission to find and capture Angel of Shadows. It might be best to warn her to not engage in order to keep herself safe."

"Sorry, I can only laugh at that suggestion," I responded, "because Angel will want to be right in the thick of it. She will be incensed and won't cower, so that means it's going to make this battle even more intense and challenging to protect her. What can you tell me about this annual sacrifice to Cthulhu?"

"I'll give you a brief summary," he began, "but know that there is extensive history about Cthulhu's family tree that makes it quite complicated, and it's not something that can be divulged in one sitting. You will have to learn this over time, but also know that the more you learn, the more you will be drawn in, and I don't mean that from just a curiosity perspective."

"I'm on the cusp between here and there," I said, "archiving this dimensional data."

"There is an Outer God called Yog-Sothoth," he began, "who knows all and sees all; a contiguous entity with all space and time, embracing the past, the present and the future. Yog-Sothoth mated with Shub-Niggurath, another Outer God, and gave birth to twin deities, Nug and Yeb. Nug sired Cthulhu, but not in the conventional way. It was through parthenogenesis, a natural form of asexual reproduction where the development of embryos occur without fertilization. Cthulhu is considered a Great Old One, but not a God. The sacrifice is actually to please Yog-Sothoth."

I have a feeling that this is the Cliff Notes version of an explanation, and while Goth's deep, smooth voice tells the story, I find myself tranced and unable to move. How is it that I am able to convert his words so easily, and with such calm, without so much as an *OMG, I am not hearing this*. I must be reconciling.

"You still with me DM," asks Goth, "there's just a little more to share."

"I'm totally tuned in Goth," I responded, "I just find it such an incredible story to learn that human sacrifice after so many centuries of supposed non-existence has reared its ugly head once again."

"You will find that Monria is like no other inhabited planet or Moon," Goth replied, "and the darkness that has prevailed for so long is rising."

Ok, here is a *connect the dot* moment; the lettering on the back of the file cabinet translates to *The Moon Shall Rise*, and Goth just said the darkness is rising. I think I will keep this one to myself for now, but I can see that I'm going to have to keep my radar active at all times. This is not a guessing game anymore.

"Just to add to what I have already shared," Goth started, "pleasing Yog-Sothoth has the potential of bringing knowledge of many things, but to learn too much also has the potential for courting disaster. Unfortunately, to favor this God requires the ultimate sacrifice of a human, or eternal servitude. I chose eternal servitude."

"Wait, what," I responded with shock and surprise.

"Sorry DM," Goth replied, "I can't go into details right now because there are more urgent matters at stake here. I would suggest that you continue to coordinate things with General Anderson to make sure that Monria is ready for battle, and to support Angel's efforts if she in fact will confront the Shub once again."

"I assure you," I said, "that once Angel learns of this, she'll be on fire and ready to engage, so supporting her efforts is probably the only thing we can do. Is there anything else you want to enlighten me with?"

I know that at this point my tone might seem a little sharp, or perhaps laced with a bit of sarcasm, but I think in light of everything, I might be a smidge entitled.

"That's it for now," Goth said, "just be prepared. I'll be on the battlefield."

"Ok, thanks Goth," I responded, "I'll make sure we have it sorted in time."

I have many more questions, but I want to know more about this Yog-Sothoth and how he plays into this weirdness on the Moon. That's what I'm calling it, weirdness.

The Yog is one of the creatures on Monria, and one that is quite popular by all standards when it comes to hunters, but all of this information changes it up a bit knowing that there exists an Outer God. More information is needed for sure.



As I reach for my laptop, my comm unit goes off again.

"Hello, this is DM." It was Jennifer calling from the forensics lab trying to tell me something in a loud and fast voice to the point I couldn't understand her. "Slow down Jenn, and speak normal so I can make sense of what you're saying."

"Sorry DM," Jennifer responded, "but I just discovered something that you need to know about. There was a document on the floor just under your desk that I picked up so that it wouldn't get shuffled around. I put it on your desk but noticed that it had something to do with Valentine's Day like the other document did."

"Ok Jenn," I replied, "I'm heading over to forensics and will take a look at it there."

"That's good," she said, "because the only thing I could make out was Valentine's Day. Everything else is in that lettering."

I kind of figured that, which is why I decided to head to the forensics lab. Maybe it's more explanation about this sacrifice ritual.

As I arrived at the forensics lab, I found Jennifer still in hyperactive mode and pacing. It can't be about the document she found on the floor, especially because she wouldn't be able to read it, so something else is going on here.

After picking up the document and realizing that there was definitely some decoding to do, I sat at my desk and took out the runes chart. As I revealed each word, it became apparent that we had more than the Shubs to deal with. This was a plan devised by Shub-Niggurath to engage the Shoggoths as a distraction in keeping the community and our allies busy while they fight to take Angel hostage for their Valentine's Day sacrifice to Yog-Sothoth.

The more revealed, the more I realized that connecting the dots is going to take more time than I anticipated. Every location in the universe has its creatures to deal with, but it seems that Monria has a history deeply seeded in dark elements that have a rhyme and reason. It's not just about creature control.

I have learned that the Shoggoth were created by the Elder Things as a mindless slave race to do their bidding. Despite control by the Elder Things, the Shoggoth eventually gained minds of their own and even rebelled. They are incredibly strong, and when not controlled, they can become very aggressive. They are known for killing their victims by sucking their heads off, and the Elder Things also used them as weapons of war, so it does not surprise me that Shub-Niggurath is employing them in the upcoming battle.



This is interesting; the Elder Things were said to be the first extraterrestrial beings on Earth, and used the Shoggoth to build cities both under the sea and above ground. That little piece of information excites me, because now I'm wondering just what we have to look forward to with future discoveries. I love the ancient Wikis.

In the meantime, I need to get back to the General with this additional information. I hope that we will have enough support to handle both the Shub and Shoggoth. The community and its allies have worked well with DSEC's military forces, so this should be close to routine, aside from the human sacrifice factor. That might freak everyone out a bit, so it will be interesting to see how this unfolds.

After calling the General and filling him in, I had to make one more call.

"Hello Angel, this is DM," I began, "can you meet me in my office for a chat?"

Ch 5 / Monrian Sacrifice Thwarted | Shub-Niggurath Fails

The Shubs gathered in numbers in a show of force for their attempt to take Angel of Shadows hostage for what we learned is an annual Valentine's Day sacrifice to Yog-Sothoth, and it was unsuccessful. As anticipated, after talking with Angel to warn her, there was no way she was going to sit this one out. From the beginning, Angel was dedicated and relentless in her own personal battle with the Shubs, and the first to amass such a reduction in their population.



Monria and her allies joined forces once again with our DSEC Military and took the Shubs and the Shoggoths to task. The Shoggoths were much easier to control than expected, and those who banded together minimized the distraction that the Shubs thought they were going to cause. We made available a supply of weapons that were sufficient for engaging the Shoggs, and gave away other weapons and items to assist in the efforts to keep the Shubs from taking Angel of Shadows hostage.

The Shubs continued to enter the cavern in record numbers. The sound of firepower was deafening, and you could hear the crunch of melee weapons digging into the curved, spider-like tentacles of the Shub as they fought hard in close combat to diminish the threat and to protect Angel.

Even some of our newest members of the community who had not engaged in such battle before joined the effort, but our more seasoned hunters looked after them with great care. That's one thing I've learned about our growing community very quickly, they are helpful and supportive to an ever-increasing degree, and it fosters bonding with our allies as well.

General Anderson kept his military personnel quite entrenched, displaying brute force where needed, and assisting where it was required. Our allies who join the Monrian community in these battles are also increasing in numbers which makes the underlying purpose of protecting our colony even more important.

Everyone was doing their part to keep the Shubs at bay, and away from Angel so that there was no easy access for a group of them to approach her and capture her as a hostage for the annual human sacrifice ritual.

However, Angel was driven in fury against the Shubs and held her own, even in the face of such danger. She antagonized them, called them names, and stood face-to-face in battle to let them know that she wasn't afraid, but also that there was no way they would be taking her hostage for some stupid ritual as a human sacrifice. Many other seasoned hunters fought alongside her, and after an emblazoned fight for hours on end, Shub-Niggurath retreated with her minions.



Once again, our community, DSEC military and its allies stood strong against the rising dark, but I would be remiss if I also didn't give credit to Goth for convincing me that we needed to take all of this more seriously. I will always be questioning, but will accept Goth's guidance as honorable intention to help keep Monria safe. I *do* need to have a chat with him though, because there are too many curious things that he has alluded to without explanation.

My fear is that those that rise from the dark, only to see that we are determined to defend our existence on Monria, will continue to escalate the size and scope of their attacks. This means that stages of preparation to do battle need to be more organized and precise so that the resistance is effective. I think it's more important now than ever to identify the leaders in our community, and look to them to step up their guidance and training of the more newer members of our colony.

There is still much to determine from the multitude of documents that have been discovered in the file cabinet, but I'm beginning to become alarmed at what we have uncovered thus far. Two battles fought and won, but not without immense challenges. The urgency to further decipher data is even more crucial, as there is no telling what we might continue to face.

In the meantime, I can't shake the overpowering presence of consuming thought about all this human sacrifice business. I get that we are seemingly intruding on territory that is presumably claimed by Cthulhu and his worshipers. We can deal with the occasional creature uprising, but human sacrifice begs attention and more historical digging if we are to have an understanding of this egregious ritual.

I'm also curious to learn more about this Yog-Sothoth. What I have been able to uncover thus far is ... it appears that Yog-Sothoth is the Guardian of the Gate, and has some connection with some who are called the mysterious Old Ones. From what I can gather, they are a group of primordial beings who are entombed in the city of R'lyeh where Cthulhu is in his death-like sleep dreaming. It is said that they have the power to keep the Deep Ones in check. I'm not exactly sure what that means, or what Gate they're talking about, but I plan to find out.

I think it's safe to say that the Monrian colony should remain alert and report anything suspicious. I have my sources with their ears to the dust in the craters, but also an informant whose information (albeit clouded in mystery) has kept us prepared and ready to defend the Moon and its community.

Battle is so exhausting, but a good exhaustion, especially when we are the victors and the dark side of the Moon retreats, but we know there will be another day. As I now sit here in my office, there is time to think about all the questions and the increasing mystery that presents itself at the hands of Goth. He continues to drop subtle nuances without explanation, and says now is not the time.

Well, this time it wasn't the Cultists that he serves that attacked us, but the Shubs, so I'm wondering where the connection is, and how did he learn of their attack and the sacrifice? I'm also curious how the runes decoder and human sacrifice declaration made their way to the top of my desk when neither Jennifer nor I put them there. Goth described it as a *calculated stumble* with no other explanation.

I am quite intrigued as well with what he meant by *choosing servitude* that also came with no explanation. He throws these things out there on the fly in the midst of intense discussion about the rising dark, and scrambles my thinking with way too many questions that give me no starting point because the information doesn't fit into any logical thought pattern of critical thinking. It's like dangling participles, modifying what I am sure are unintended subjects ... aka *bomb dropping*.

I will continue to monitor all reports, as well as sort through the contents of the file cabinet for further clues. We should not rest on two victories and become complacent. Discoveries will be shared with DSEC's Military HQs on a need-to-know basis (can't inspire panic), and will urge the community to remain vigilant.

For now, I am grateful to all who were dedicated to thwarting the sacrifice ritual, and for standing strong in the face of what seemed to be an increasingly grave danger to our Moon colony. During the course of battle, I was able to capture the faces of action, including a few strange occurrences, but also those who reveled with us in a post-battle celebration at the Monria Hub.

This was probably the most incongruent of all ... Angel of Shadows after battle.



On the surface, she talks tough with her bad-ass attitude and her *I mean business* persona, but underneath it all, she's a sweet French girl with a style all her own. She's unique, and takes her experiences in our universe for what they're meant to be, and doesn't care that she's a bit out of the ordinary at times.

The question is ... since she was targeted for this bizarre human sacrifice ritual to please Yog-Sothoth, I wonder if the Shub will continue to pursue her next year since they failed so miserably this year. No problem, we'll all be ready.

Right now, I am in search of some answers, but have a looming question after this battle ... since they failed to take Angel of Shadows as hostage for their sacrifice, is it just a loss, or did they have a backup plan? Don't know why I'm thinking this.

Ch 6 / The Dark Rises Again | Yog-Sothoth at the Gate

It's been about a month and all has been pretty quiet, except the usual stirring in the craters and caves, but the locals have that well in hand. I have been spending much of my time sorting through the ancient file cabinet in an effort to determine if there might be some answers to why the dark is rising. An abundance of curious documents have surfaced, as well as further items that appear to have some sort of relevance in what one might assume is ritualistic behavior or worship. There seems to be a definitive theme; Cthulhu rules.

A ring reminiscent of loyalty to Cthulhu.



A stone tablet with inscribed etchings in each corner.



Obviously, my dismissing references to Cthulhu as myth didn't serve me well, and I have come to accept that we are faced with a real threat where not taking it seriously comes with a multitude of consequences. The more I dig, the more I learn just how vulnerable our Moon colony has become. The historical data is quite telling with regard to this culture that transforms into a dark menace at times.

The continuation of intentional Moon colony interruptions are distracting a vigorous effort to maintain a balance of peace. In the course of my digging, I have learned more about Yog-Sothoth that is a bit unsettling. I'm not sure it's information that I should share with the community as yet, but perhaps something I definitely want to speak to Goth about, and maybe even General Anderson at some point.

While Yog-Sothoth is contiguous with all space and time, as previously reported, he is supposedly locked outside of the realm we inhabit, but remains a lurker at the threshold. As the Keeper of the Gate, he knows where the Old Ones will break through (again). I guess the key is, how do we learn this, and where is that Gate. I can't believe I'm buying into all of this, but experience thus far has shown, or at least given clues, that there's a dark, mysterious underworld that exists that is driven by evil. How evil? That's something I'm hoping we don't have to experience.

I think it's time to have a chat with Goth. So far, he has been accurate with reports of creature uprisings, and helpful in ways that I'm sure has prevented us from more devastating results. He's a man (I think) of mystery, and now that I'm thinking about it, even his full name raises another question of his heritage and what his connection to Monria might be ... Zaquahgoth Gothgorath Quahronshogg.

Meeting with Goth has always been initiated by him, so I'm not sure how I'm going to get his attention, but to date, it seems he always knows when I need to talk with him. Maybe I just sit in my office and think about meeting with him because that seems to be the trigger from previous experiences.

"Jennifer," I called over the intercom, "are you available for a minute?"

"Yes DM," she responded, "be right there."

Things have been going well in the lab with archiving documents and artifacts from the file cabinet, and additional security has been put into place to make sure that no one gets in to disturb the process. I still haven't figured out how anyone got into the lab to place the sacrifice declaration and runes code on the top of my desk, and I'm not forgetting about that. It seems that every time I have the inclination to investigate something further, something else comes up.

"How can I help," Jenn asked.

"I'm going to head over to my office at the research center," I began, "and I wanted to check first if you've discovered anything further on those fingerprints that you found on the parchment."

"I was able to make contact with the Bureau of Registered Fingerprints on Earth," she started, "and was able to learn that there are fingerprints for both Rudyard and his son John. I am just waiting for the transmission of them so that I can make a comparison with the fingerprints that are on the parchment."

"Oh, that's great," I replied, "how soon are you expecting those?"

"They said that it would be about another week," she responded, "because it has to go through a protocol clearance first."

"Ok," I said, "then let me know the minute you have them and what you find out."

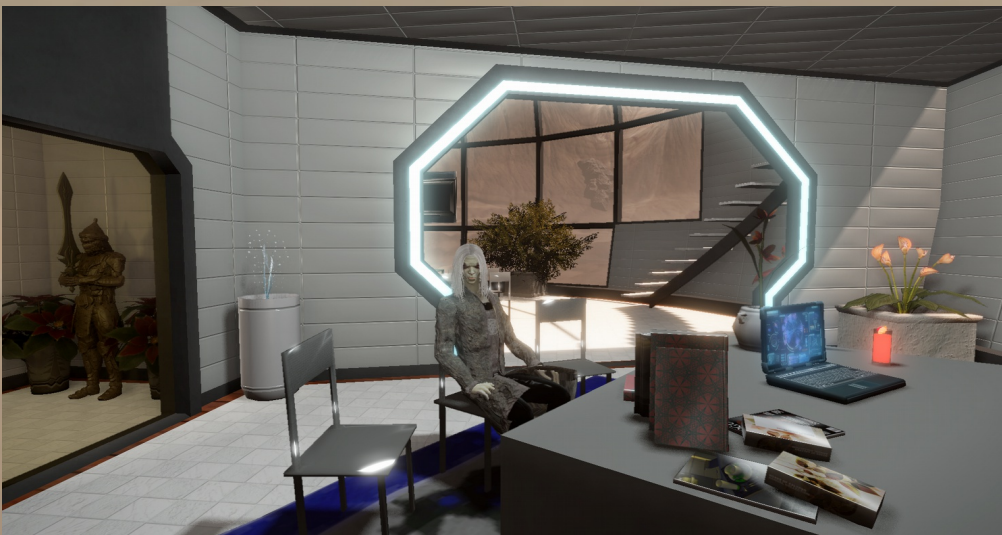
"I will let you know immediately," she said.

I left the forensics lab and headed back to the research center, laughing at myself for thinking I might be able to contact Goth just by having the thought.

When I arrived at the research center, I was completely startled to find that Goth was sitting in my office. I keep the research center locked at all times unless I'm actually on the premises. Only a few people have access because they have been cleared and are members of the research team.



It took me a minute to catch my breath before I was able to actually move into my office from the doorway. I was also now not chastising myself for laughing at my attempt to contact him just by thinking about it, because it seemed to have worked.



Goth stood up and nodded his head in a greeting. My mirrored greeting seemed instinctual and not an action of my own conscious thoughts. This surprised me because it felt more like a meeting of honored ritual, rather than casually saying hello. There was a feel of depth in connectedness that I had not felt in our first face-to-face meeting. This is quite strange, but also eerie.



"Goth, how did you get in here," I asked.

"Hello DM," he replied, "that's not important right now because there are far more urgent matters to discuss."

"Well, it's important to me Goth," I responded, "because this research center stays locked when I am not on the premises, and only a few have access, so give me a bit of consideration here. You always seem to dismiss my inquiries into how you do some of the things you do, and quite frankly, it's beginning to freak me out. I think I at least deserve some explanation if we're going to continue this agreement."

"DM," he began, "I promise that when things are calm and we have an opportunity to share an extended period of time together, I will tell you my story, but right now, there is something far more important that needs your attention."

There's intrigue and a questioning mystery about Goth that seems to draw you in, but then there's that subtle voice in the back of your mind that says *not too close* because the unknown can often be jolting. Despite the overwhelming feeling that we may once again be faced with impending dangers, I find myself replicating the calm that Goth exudes with such ease. Perhaps there is something else for me to learn here; how to corral my intensity so that it doesn't get in my way.

Goth and I sat down before we continued our discussion, but I was still irked.



"Ok, fine," I said, "then what kind of Moon shattering news am I getting today? Wait, did you know I needed to talk to you this time too?"

"Yes," he replied.

He may look it, but he's definitely not human. He has to be of some alien race with highly evolved senses, and whatever else goes with that. One of these days I am going to have my answers, but then, I wonder how it might change things, if at all. For now, I'll continue with this arrangement because it's important to keep Monria and its community safe from any impending dangers.

"Alright," I said, "let me have it, because I have to finish up with the details for our St Patrick's Day celebration that's coming up."

"Ya, about that," he began, "word of that celebration has filtered throughout the creature covens, and they are questioning what it represents. They have gone to Yog-Sothoth for answers."

"This is simply bizarre," I responded, "I can't imagine why they would care. It's just a celebration of Irish heritage. Our Chief Executive Officer's wife is Irish and they came to the Moon from Dublin, Ireland. We thought it would be a nice gesture to honor Kendra's history and provide a bit of fun for the community."

"That's all well and good," he began, "but it's been discovered that there seems to be a connection between the Irish and Cthulhu."

"Are you kidding me right now," I responded, "because this is insane."

Goth seemed to be a little annoyed with my response, and it was in that moment that I realized that I was still questioning the validity of Cthulhu's existence as real.

"Yes DM," he strongly replied as he threw his arms up in the air, "this is real, and before we can effectively move forward, you need to accept it."



Goth's calm became a bit unhinged at my questioning of his information, and I could feel the intensity of his disappointment that I wasn't fully embracing the level of urgency surrounding the rising of the dark elements on the Moon.

"Sorry Goth," I responded, "it's just that what I have learned so far is disturbing to me, and seems unfathomable that there's such a dark and evil culture on Monria intent on doing us harm when we are trying to exist in peace."

"This isn't new," Goth said. "You are the second colony that has tried their best to establish a peaceful environment, and you are seen as intruders. The only way that there will be any continuing success is if you first accept that there *is* a dark and evil culture that exists on Monria, and second, to work with me to combat it the best we can. You have many more resources available to you than the previous governing body and should use them effectively. You can help save my home."

Ok, there it is, the word home. Perhaps an unintended offering in his moment of emotional intensity, but he just confirmed that Monria is home. Even so, there are many questions that need to be answered, but I won't push it right now. I'll wait for the unveiling of *his* story that he promised to tell me when things are calmer.

"So what can you tell me about this Irish/Cthulhu connection," I asked?

"A writing called *Mysteries of Ireland* presents ties to Cthulhu," Goth began. "It is connected to the Miskatonic University Library Association."



"That rings a bell," I said, "because if I recall correctly, *Okamisama* considered calling her society *The Miskatonic University*, but instead decided to choose the name *The Lovecraft Academy*. Now I'm wondering what Lovecraft is, and what relationship there might be with the Miskatonic University."

"I can clear that up for you," Goth said. "Lovecraft refers to H.P. Lovecraft, the American author from Providence, Rhode Island who wrote very influential horror fiction, and is regarded as one of the most significant 20th-century authors of this particular genre. His most notable works evolved around Cthulhu."

My jaw drops, and I'm sure my expression of disbelief and shock was expected by Goth. The puzzle pieces are getting even smaller, and connecting them all has become an increasingly overwhelming task. This is getting more complex, but I'm beginning to realize that not accepting all of this as serious can have an entirely different set of consequences. The weight of responsibility is building.

"With regard to the Miskatonic University," Goth continued, "it's rather famous for its collection of occult books, with one of few genuine copies of the *Necronomicon*, which most believe is just a fictional grimoire of magic that Lovecraft created for his stories. However, it's not fictional at all, but we'll have to get into more of that later, because I came here to give you important information about your event."

Once again, I feel I am on that multicursal path to madness, where thoughts clash on the periphery to make sense of what I *think* I'm hearing, but the questions are mounting at record speed and it's a bit alarming.

"You ok DM," Goth asked.

"With you Goth," I replied, "I am never sure. I am actually glad that you don't give me more information at times than you do, because it takes me a minute to settle my thoughts long enough to consider what you're telling me and how it might all be related to Monria."

"It's more related than you think," Goth responded, "but that is something that you will learn over time, and I assure you, that it will all make more sense."

So many questions, but one thing is becoming increasingly clear. Cthulhu is real, and the dark and evil presence on Monria is real. There, I said it.

"So what is this important news you have for me," I asked. Will we be preparing for battle again? And what about our event?"

"Before I share that information," Goth began, "I just wanted to mention something about the *Mysteries of Ireland* so that you are more clear about the connection to Cthulhu. In Chapter 52, there is a section called *The Mythos in Ireland / Tales of the Mythos* where it refers to the Lovecraft story called *The Moon Bog*, which takes place at Kilderry Castle, Co. Meath. There is a reference made about the *Deep Ones*. What escapes those who have not had direct experiences with Cthulhu, is that Lovecraft's references are not fiction."

I can see now that I am going to have to research Lovecraft, especially knowing that his seemingly fictional books and characterization of Cthulhu and other entities is actually based in truth. How much truth is anyone's guess at this point, but I am going to assume that perhaps in a veiled sort of way, Lovecraft was using this type of medium to give warning of potential dangers. I find it quite ironic that one of his books should be entitled *The Moon Bog*, because the first thing I think of is the lettering on the back of the ancient file cabinet ... *The Moon Shall Rise*.

"With regard to your event DM," Goth continued, "I have learned that there is a big gathering at the Gate where Yog-Sothoth is lurking on the other side, and it seems that the gate portal is somewhere in the Moon's Main Crater. The word is that all creatures have formed ranks and are planning a unified attack on the citizens of Monria during your St Patrick's Day celebration. It was mentioned that Yog-Sothoth himself will attempt to make an appearance."

Great, now there may be a breach in some gate portal in the Main Crater with no clue where it is located. A stunning development, but what are their plans?

"Do you have any other information," I asked, "that would help us to at least be prepared for whatever this is going to turn into?"

"The only other thing I can tell you at this time," Goth began, "is that they're going to try a midnight attack on Friday night March 18th, a minute before your event is scheduled to start on the 19th. The premise behind this maneuver is that the community will be in place at the start of the event and they can catch everyone off guard. They also know that event participants are generally scattered throughout the Moon, and it will give them an opportunity to inflict the most damage to them."

"Wait," I said, "I'm not quite understanding what this means. How are they able to inflict the most damage with event participants scattered on the Moon?"

"All four creatures are assembling at the gate portal to converge on the Main Crater and catch everyone by surprise," he replied. "Monria needs to be ready."

Taking a minute to let this all sink in, my first thought is, if all four creatures are going to converge on the Main Crater, this will have devastating results for the less battle-tested community members and allies. They tend to focus on the Shoggoth because they are easier to handle than the other creatures who possess a greater strength. We're going to have to divert some of our higher level resources to the Main Crater. Perhaps General Anderson can procure additional military personnel.

"This is insane Goth," I said, "how the hell are we supposed to be effective if we don't even know where this gate portal is?"

"I'm keeping my ears open," he replied, "and spending more time in chambers to see if I can catch any of the chatter. Perhaps they're taking a page out of *your* playbook and employing the element of surprise."

"Well," I said, "that was your idea to rush the Cultists before they knew what hit them, which worked out fine, but now we have a so-called Outer God engaging in what looks like *tit for tat*. I suppose if it wasn't for your warnings, we could be in a whole lot more trouble, so thank you for caring and for your wise counsel."

"Yog-Sothoth is not a *so-called* Outer God," he responded, "he is real, and he is the driving force that is connected to Cthulhu, his and Shub-Niggurath's grandson. The fact that the Cultists worship Cthulhu is pleasing to both, and they are very well aware of the dark and evil behaviors of the *Cult of Shut'thend*. There would be no greater victory than for the Cultists, through Cthulhu and his servants, to invade the minds of the colony and drive them all insane, and ultimately to the point of total control, which is why great caution is warranted to avoid potential pitfalls."

My damn head is swimming right now. He unleashes all this doom and gloom that does nothing but create a multitude of questions, with no solid delivery of how we will ever rise above this bizarre culture. And are we now speaking in familial terms with Cthulhu's family tree?

"What are you smiling about Goth," I asked, "this is nuts, and just hearing about this stuff makes me crazy; no Cultist voodoo required."

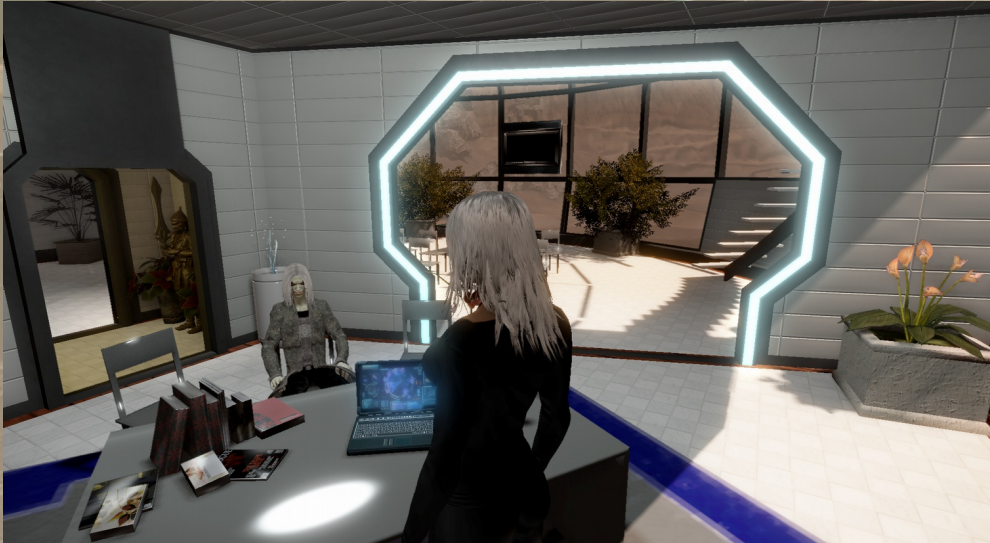


"I'm smiling because I'm amused by your intensity," he began, "but not in a rude way, because I am confident that as we work more together through all of this, you will find your calm in the face of danger, and will be able to quite effectively lead the course of events that will keep this colony on solid ground. Besides, you have innate abilities that you have yet to discover, as well as why you feel such a deep, instinctual draw to the energy of this Moon."

"I must leave now," he said as he gestured, "because I am needed in chambers, but if I hear anything further, I will contact you."



"No," I said defiantly as I stood on my chair (not sure why I did that). "You don't get to drop all these bombs that raise so many questions and leave me sitting here without answers. This has to be the most frustrating part of our communication, because you allude to so many things without full and complete information and I am left hanging. It's quite the challenge for me to make any coherent sense out of some of the things you say because there's no point of reference."



As I continued to stand on my chair, Goth seemed to be in deep thought, so I kept quiet for a few minutes. He then began to speak.

"I guess it's unfair of me to drop bits of information that leave you questioning so much DM, and for that I am sorry" he began, "but there's a great deal you will learn in all of this, the least of which will be your purpose on Monria. I was very pleased when I learned that you had made it to the Moon, which was another calculated measure, because it gives me hope that the state of things can be turned around."

I wonder what else was calculated, and I already know my purpose. The questions continue to mount, but I will just add this one to the others when he leaves.

"You will find your strength," Goth continued, "because this is your destination, and I promise you that it will all make better sense as you work through it. I think I can safely say that you will be surprised at what you will learn, but also what you are capable of handling in the face of challenges, and how you will ultimately do that."

I'm hearing promises, but nothing that is settling my thoughts right now, and I'm not even going to guess at what's in store that will help to facilitate this. It's all a bit strange to me. Perhaps a more suitable word might be *alien*, because nowhere else in the universe I have traveled has given me so much reason to pause.

As Goth rose to leave, I could only wonder why he wouldn't just clarify his knowing that I'm going to be fine with everything, and *how* he knows this. I suppose there's a significant lesson to be learned in every experience, but I'm having a difficult time discerning what is a lesson and what is an intrusion on my sanity. How do I deal with impending battles, while also trying to connect the dots in a matrix of such evil complexity the likes of which at times just seems so unfathomable?

First thing I need to do is get in touch with General Anderson at DSEC Military and alert him of the planned assault during our St Patrick's Day event. We have multiple activities lined up, and I don't think the community has it in mind that clashing with the creatures of the Moon is one of them.

Unfortunately, it looks as if we may not have a choice, but perhaps the military can take some of the pressure off so that the event isn't too disrupted. The one thing that probably disturbs me the most is how many people will all be gathered in the Main Crater for the St Patrick's Day Parade and vulnerable as targets, but also the fact that we have no idea where this gate portal is that Yog-Sothoth is guarding.

Before leaving the research center, I wrote down the additional questions I had with hope that Goth will eventually answer them. On my way to DSEC Military, I strained again to fit some of the pieces of the puzzle together in some semblance of understanding, but was interrupted by Colonel Wang. He is a decorated member of DSEC Military Intelligence, and runs a TopOps Division that engages in covert operations across the universe.

"Hello DM," he said, "may I have a minute of your time please?"

"Sure Colonel Wang," I replied, "what's up?"

"Don't go to the General DM," he responded, "I have learned that there is a mole."

"What kind of mole," I asked? "Who is it, and how did you know that I was headed to see General Anderson?"

"Someone within DSEC Military," he began, "who is close to the General, and they are sharing information with Yog-Sothoth, but it would be too dangerous to reveal the mole's name, as the General is unaware of this at this time."

"How in the hell does someone in DSEC Military gain access to Yog-Sothoth," I asked, "and what kind of information we talking about here?"

"Well," Colonel Wang began, "not direct access exactly, but through the Cultists."

Right now, I am thinking to myself, this is information that Goth should have, and if so, then why did he not share it with me? Why am I hearing this from Colonel Wang, and how did *he* learn of this information? I feel that I am now in a mode of constant crisis management, juggling time and energy best spent on far more important things like that ancient file cabinet and solving *that* mystery. I don't know, maybe it's all connected in some way and it's one of those lessons.

"How did you come to learn this information," I asked, "and again, how did you know I was on my way to see General Anderson?"

"I may not be that visible," he stated, "but I've been involved with Monria a long time, even before you and the new governing team came along, so I am very well aware of talk in the colony. However, most think that Cthulhu is a myth."

"I'm guessing then that you don't," I replied.

"No, DM," he responded, "because like you, I have an informant. I know what the Cultists are capable of, and that they and the other creatures are driven by Cthulhu. While I haven't witnessed their actions directly, I saw the results when the previous governing body was in place. People kept coming up missing, while the *Cult of Shut'thend* kept increasing. There were no records of anyone leaving Monria permanently, and we even had inquiries from families still on Earth regarding their whereabouts. The TopOps Team conducted a multitude of covert operations, but we are spread quite thin right now, and after your event, we may be in another sector of the universe for an extended period of time."

"Did your informant tell you I was on my way to see General Anderson," I asked? If he tells me what I think he's going to tell me, then Goth and I need to talk again.

"Not exactly DM," he responded, "you're standing at the base of the road that leads up to the Military Headquarters and I took a wild guess."



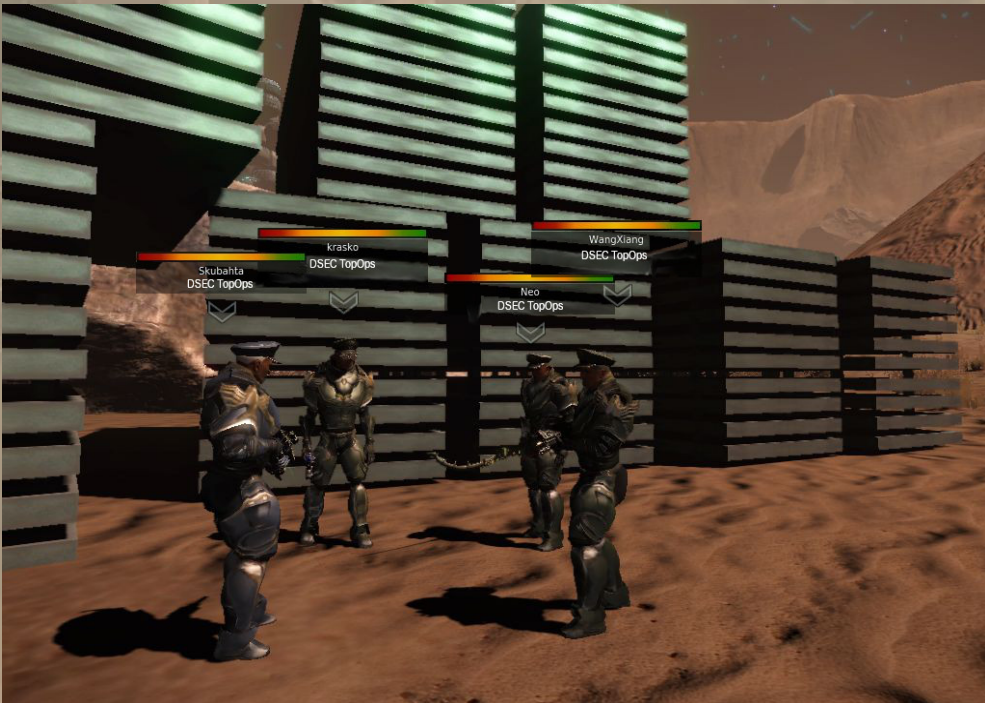
I feel I'm in a fog with dim headlights because I am challenged to link thoughts to critical thinking in the moment. It would have been a no-brainer for me to think that Colonel Wang could have guessed that I was on my way to see General Anderson, because I basically never go to DSEC Military Headquarters for anything else. I need a break from this influx of information that is coming so quickly so that I have some time to sort it all out. However, I don't think that's going to happen soon.

"Fair enough," I said, "so how do we handle this mole?"

"First," Colonel Wang began, "I'm asking you not to talk to General Anderson about the planned assault on the Main Crater during your St Patrick's Day event because I'm fearful that the mole will discover our strategy and get a message through the Cultists to Yog-Sothoth."

"We have a strategy," I asked?

"Well, if you agree to stand down and let the TopOps Division handle this," he said, "I have confidence we can support the efforts to minimize potential damages. The division is large enough with highly skilled operatives beyond basic military training that our assault should be very effective. My TopOps leaders know their business, and I trust they will conduct maneuvers accordingly."



"Wait," I replied, "General Anderson was saying something about conducting some maneuvers off the Moon this weekend, so is that not going to raise an eyebrow if you don't go?"

"That won't be a problem," he responded, "the TopOps Team never join those types of maneuvers because we have our own and more highly specialized skill training, so General Anderson won't think anything of it. Besides, we need the mole off the Moon so that things don't get any more complicated than they are."

This is going to be a challenging decision for me because I have such a loyalty to General Anderson, and while I trust him implicitly, I can see how alerting him might also alert the mole, even though I know very little at this time.

"I'm really torn about this Colonel Wang," I replied. "While General Anderson and I have a trusting relationship, and it goes against my principles not to involve him, I can also see where canceling off-Moon maneuvers and getting ready for battle once again might alert the mole. I certainly don't want to put General Anderson in any danger as a result. Do you know who the mole is?"

"We have our suspicions," he said, "but for now we're keeping it under wraps until we have more evidence. We have undercover operatives conducting surveillance, and as soon as we have the hard core data we need, he will be revealed to the General and appropriate actions will be taken."

"Well, you just revealed that this mole is a male," I responded, "so let me take a wild guess on this one, because I have my own suspicions at this point based on an experience I had recently."

"Anything you can add DM would be helpful," Colonel Wang replied.

"Colonel Jacob Mitchell made an unprecedented visit to the forensics lab," I began, "and somehow talked Jennifer into giving him information about the fingerprints investigation on the parchment found in the West Crater. He had no business in the forensics lab, and Jennifer had no business giving him information about any of the ongoing investigations. She figured that since he was DSEC Military and an adviser to the General it was ok, and gave him the results of the fingerprint tests because he said that he was going to be talking to me. The General will be the first to tell you that Colonel Mitchell and I don't talk because he has an issue with my professional presence on the Moon."

"Interesting," Colonel Wang responded, "because one of my operatives actually saw him enter the forensics lab but we have not learned why as yet. I will have them keep a closer eye on Mitchell, but there is also someone else in our scopes."

"Look," I replied, "I will consider standing down with one condition. That after this is all over and General Anderson is back from maneuvers, I get to debrief him on what happened and bring him into the conversation about the mole. Perhaps since Mitchell is an adviser, the General might even be able to help in some way."

"Fair enough," Colonel Wang said, "and ordinarily, I would be briefing the General myself, but there is very little time to coordinate all of that right now, especially since he has had the off-Moon maneuvers scheduled for some time. He knows he can count on the TopOps Team as backup while he's gone, so I don't think it will be of great disservice that he is not alerted ahead of time. He will understand."

"Then I'll stand down," I said, "but I have one question. What about the community and alerting them that there's a potential we may face an assault during the event? I would hate for everyone to be caught off guard and not prepared. I feel I should at least give them *some* notice so that we have coverage."

"I think you may be underestimating the colony and their allies," he responded, "because Monria always seems to have an influx of able-bodied men and women during your events who are quite cable of shifting into battle mode."

"I don't think I underestimate them Colonel Wang," I replied, "I know that we have an incredible defensive force when we have to engage in battle with the creatures of the Moon. I guess I'm just weary that this time I'm feeling a little bit deceitful in not giving them advance notice."

"If you do that though," he responded, "you take the risk that the information gets to the mole and in turn to Yog-Sothoth who wants to gain an advantage."

"Perhaps you're right," I said, "but I'm going to be a mess until it's all over and I can talk with the General about everything."

"We can handle this DM," he replied, "and I plan on talking to the General myself after he gets back from maneuvers, so he should be well informed."

Leaving the conversation with Colonel Wang I headed back to the research center not quite sure I made the right decision. I hope General Anderson understands that this is in the best interest of not only the colony and our allies, but also himself, especially since the mole could be someone close to him.

One thing I know for sure, heading up the Monria Archives & Research Center is increasingly putting me in a most curious position. When I relocated to the Moon to manage the center, there was no indication that I would be involved with DSEC Military, let alone moles and covert operations. However, discoveries seem to have taken on a life of their own, and ever-evolving mysteries are driving an insatiable desire to solve them. It seems the more I dig into Monria's history, the more I have stirred the silence of the dark.



Ch 7 / Day of Celebration, Danger and Discovery

Entering the research center and heading for my office, I fully anticipated seeing either Goth at my desk, or my comm unit going off with him on the other end, but neither happened. Since Goth seems to be so tuned into my thoughts and knows when to contact me, I fully expected that he would want to clear the air with regard to the whole military mole thing and how someone was able to leak information to the Cultists to pass on to Yog-Sothoth. He *had* to know this information because he's on the inside, so it just makes sense that he would alert me.

"Hey DM, you got a minute?" Standing in my office doorway was the CEO of our management team, Anhithe. In all the distractions surrounding the alert that the creatures of Monria were banding together to invade our St Patrick's Day celebration, I forgot to connect with him to firm up our plans for that day's activities. He will be leading the parade in the Main Crater, and there's no way I'm not going to share what I've learned. Blind faith is one thing, but trust and loyalty are another.



"Hey Ant," I responded, "I'm glad you stopped by because I have something to talk to you about. Good timing because I just got back to my office. What's up?"

"I wanted to check in to see if we're ready to go with the celebration on Saturday," he replied, "or if we need to work out further details."

"We're good as far as the *planned* activities are concerned," I said, "but I need to fill you in on some anticipated *extracurricular* activities."

"Why do I get the feeling that this isn't going to be good," he responded.

"Because it's not," I replied. "We are once again facing dangers, but this time it appears to be more escalated, and we won't know what time of day it's coming."

Ant shook his head, as if to say *here we go again*. I invited him to join me in the conference room across the hall to review Main Crater terrain on the SAT NAV system. We have the conference room system set up to monitor anomalies, and for the research team to map out discoveries. Other than the parchment with the Kipling poem on it, and the ancient file cabinet, which has proven to be invaluable with regard to a Cthulhu connection, nothing else has surfaced.

After sharing what I knew about the intended assault and potential unknown portal breach, we tried to determine the most likely locations where this might occur. The challenge was trying to pinpoint where the portal breach might erupt but there are several possibilities based on surveillance so they need to be covered. There's no telling where Yog-Sothoth hovers as the Gate Keeper.



It took about an hour to determine potential crater locations where there might be a breach and we made a note of the coordinates. The abandoned mine next to the Hub seemed a likely location, but then there's always a chance that there could be an attempt to break through the exterior shield that protects Monria. We pinpointed a few areas where this might happen, and the disturbing thing is, that a couple of them are along the St Patrick's Day Parade route where Ant will be leading a large number of people, so we need to have these areas covered.

I asked Ant if he thought any one location would be more susceptible and he just shrugged his shoulders, but I didn't have any specific guesses either.



I knew it wouldn't be easy, but at least we have some possibilities and can make a determination as to how much coverage we need at each location, but I know that Colonel Wang and his TopOps Team will be on alert.

"Have you alerted General Anderson about all this," Ant asked, "and is the military ready to engage?"

"Ya, about that," I responded, "General Anderson and all military personnel will be off Moon on maneuvers. Colonel Wang caught up with me and there appears to be a mole in the military ranks. He thought it best not to alert General Anderson."

"That's just nuts," he said throwing his hands in the air, "it doesn't make any sense at all. How are we supposed to protect the colony without the military?"

"Well, that's where Colonel Wang comes in," I replied, "he has offered personnel from his DSEC TopOps Division and says the coverage should be enough to handle whatever breach we encounter. They will be undercover as participants."

"Do we know who the military mole is," he asked.

"Colonel Wang said that they have their suspicions," I replied, "but there isn't enough evidence right now to address the situation. There are two individuals under surveillance, and as soon as they know more, I'll know more."

"I have a feeling there is a lot more to this that you're not sharing," he responded, "so should I be nervous about this?"

"No," I said, "I know that you are incredibly busy and I won't interrupt you without having full information, and then will do so only if it requires input."

"Speaking of busy," he replied, "I better get back to my office. Kendra and I are working on St Patrick's Day fashions."

"You have an interesting job," I said with tongue in cheek. He smiled and left.

While my primary responsibilities are tied into the Monria Archives & Research Center, I am also a member of the management/governing team encompassing community management. Decision making on behalf of the Monria Management Team as it relates to the welfare of our colony is part of my responsibilities, but we couldn't be more proud of our program teams and their contributions.

It's critical that we do everything in our power to ensure a high level of safety, but the increased rise of darkness has us scrambling at times and requires an intense scrutiny of possible strategies. Sometimes, we are given very little to work with in that respect, so flexibility is key. Ant handles the heavy stuff behind the scenes.

And that brings me back to the St Patrick's Day celebration. We have no clue where the gate portal is, or when and if it will be breached. One consolation though, is that our community has learned through trial and error to always be on the alert when out in the craters, so reflexive responses should be in play.

The day had come for the big event, and people were gathering at the Main Crater early because Ant generally has giveaway activities, and this day was no exception other than most of the giveaways being green clothing and top hats. He was decked out in his Irish fashion, but there were many others who felt the spirit of the Irish and dressed accordingly. It made for a very festive occasion.



As more people gathered and got ready for the activities to begin, it was evident that many embraced our Irish theme for the day and that the parade was going to be looking quite green. Most brought their pets for the Best in Show pet contest, but we were also giving away our pet Leprechauns to those who had no pet.



We started early and had the pre-event activities, as well as the Best in Show pet contest and there were no disruptions up to that point. It was now time for the parade that Ant would lead out of the Main Crater on a path that covered an area where we thought it was the safest. The large number of people who had now gathered in the main crater were ready to walk the path.

This was not a good time for my comm unit to go off.

"DM, you there," asked Colonel Wang.

"I am here, Colonel Wang," I replied, "and Ant is about to lead the participants on the parade route, so did you need anything specific before this happens?"

"No, DM," he said, "I just wanted to reassure you that TopOps is ready."

"Thanks Colonel Wang," I responded, "it's good to know we have coverage."

There was no aggression on the part of the Shoggoths, other than a couple of them who decided to be a bit playful, but it was all contained.



As Ant continued to lead everyone along the determined path that we thought would be the safest, he remained alert, as did the DSEC TopOps team members who mingled in the parade walk. Reassurance by Colonel Wang helped to calm my nerves a bit, because experience has taught us thus far, that reports from Goth are to be taken quite seriously, as they have all panned out.



We eventually circled around with the parade and stopped on the bridge for a bit of a celebratory dance with fireworks. While we had encountered no issues up to that point, we were on guard and didn't want to alert the participants that there might be a disruption, but they are adept at shifting into battle mode when required.



With all the fireworks noise and the chatter, I was surprised that we heard the rumbling coming from the hill, and when we looked in that direction, the strangest thing was occurring. There were large Pumpkin Head and Count Vamp creatures *literally* falling out of the sky. I was thinking that this had to be a diversion.



Everyone scrambled up the hill to engage in this weird anomaly, but after I took a moment to survey the area, it seemed almost an ideal location to break through some type of undiscovered portal in order to rain chaos on the colony. I am wondering if this is the only one, or if Yog-Sothoth was able to master some other breach that would make it a challenge for us today.

It just all seems strange that he would even do anything of this nature, but rather focus on the banded creature assault that Goth alerted us about. This doesn't make any sense at all, and for the life of me, can't fathom why Yog-Sothoth would rain down Pumpkin Head and Count Vamp creatures on us, even if this was some type of distraction. There has to be more to this craziness.

I called Colonel Wang back to find out if anything was going on in the outer crater areas and he said that it seemed normal with no out of the ordinary activity. Ok, if everything out in the field is normal, then so far, this surely isn't a distraction.

In the meantime, these strange creatures continued to drop out of the sky and we did our best to contain them, but I still couldn't help but think about those who didn't join us on the parade walk, and whether they would eventually be in danger. I had put my faith in Colonel Wang and his TopOps Team to handle things, so I continued to focus on the activities on the hill.



We outlasted the onslaught of these strange creatures, but not without a few of our parade goers succumbing to injuries and requiring attention. As a result of this unexpected battle, we have named this location Massacre Hill, but happy to say that we were not the massacred.

Once everyone was settled down, we began our emeralds treasure hunt. It wasn't long into this event that I got a call from Colonel Wang about the state of things, but our chat channel was also blowing up with lots of chatter about a spawn of all four of our creatures in the Main Crater. It seemed they gathered in the crater from other areas on the Moon and not necessarily from any portal breach.

"DM, you there," asked Colonel Wang, "we need to get everyone to the Main Crater if we can because there is definite chaos."

"I'm here," I replied, "and I just alerted everyone on Massacre Hill that we need to move out into the open crater areas because we are being attacked."

"Massacre Hill," he asked, "what and where is that?"

"I'll have to explain later," I responded, "but just for general information, it seemed there was some sort of breach over the hill by the bridge, but not your normal creatures. It's quite the strange anomaly and we'll have to look into this as soon as possible, but right now, I'm getting everyone out into the field."

I couldn't help but think that this breach was anything but a simple distraction, and that we should have someone standing watch. There was talk that Yog-Sothoth might even make an appearance, and since he's the Gate Keeper, I'm thinking that perhaps this breach might actually be the portal where he will break through.

Several volunteered to stay behind at Massacre Hill and watch for any strange activity. I'm learning that Yog-Sothoth is shrewd, and it wouldn't surprise me that all that is happening today is quite calculated, so it would also not surprise me that while we are busy out in the main areas of the crater, that he would attempt to show up at either Massacre Hill, or through some other means.

The more I learn about the dark culture on the Moon, the more I realize that we need to step up and be prepared. It seems at any moment we could be in a state of chaos and have to defend ourselves. Goth said that we are not welcome on Monria, and that the previous governing team and colony were hard-pressed to survive. That tells me that we need solid strategies for all these trials, and we should be able to accomplish that providing that Goth keeps us informed.

My comm unit went off and it startled me. I imagined it was Colonel Wang with a report from the field, but I was wrong.

"Hello DM," said that deep, smooth voice that I am so familiar with now, "I wanted to check in with you to see how everything is going."

I was silent for a minute because the call seemed so nonchalant, but then Goth is usually a rather calm person without a level of intensity like I seem to display at times when I'm riled up. I also realized the call came right after my thought of him.

"Hello Goth," I responded, "things seem to be going just fine so far. You were right about all Moon creatures banding together to conduct an assault on the community but you never mentioned to me that there was a mole in the DSEC Military ranks that was feeding intel to Yog-Sothoth through the Cultists. Colonel Wang with his DSEC TopOps Team are handling this assault to support our colony's efforts, but it would have been helpful to be fully informed prior to this event."

"I put my faith in Colonel Wang to inform you," he replied, "and it seems that he did just that."

I *knew* it. My suspicions about Goth being Colonel Wang's informant was spot on, and this could present awkward moments if the information flow isn't controlled. We don't want to cause a colony panic with strange activities that don't go public.

"So who *else* in the community you feeding information to," I asked a bit annoyed, "because this might make it a challenge for us to stay on top of things."

"You can relax," Goth said, "Colonel Wang is the only other person I have talked to regarding anything related to escalation of creature activities, but that was because DSEC Military HQs personnel were going to be off Moon on maneuvers, and also learning that there is a mole in their ranks through observance of Cultist activities."

"I see," I responded, "and did you know about this weird anomaly on the hill by the bridge that we just experienced?"

"You'll have to explain that one to me DM," he replied. "I have no knowledge of any anomalies occurring in that area of the Main Crater, and I'm inclined to say that the Cultists, and/or Yog-Sothoth had nothing to do with it with certainty."

"Well Goth," I said, "we just went through a very strange battle at the top of the hill by the bridge during the parade with Pumpkin Head and Count Vamp creatures falling out of the sky, and while I myself thought it a bit weird that Yog-Sothoth would conduct such a diversion, it baffles me still, and we'll have to sort it out."

For the first time ever, I heard Goth laughing, and while it was sort of refreshing due to his always calm and reserved nature, it was also irritating. It's also drawing thoughts of *what the hell just happened at that hill* if in fact it wasn't a part of the plan that Yog-Sothoth seemingly had in place.

"You're right DM," Goth responded while still chuckling, "you'll have to sort this one out because I'm afraid I won't be able to help you there. Aside from that, it seems everything is going well with the assault in the Main Crater despite it being quite the challenge with all four Moon creatures attacking in large numbers. I'm going to go scout the area and see where I can help, so I'll catch up with you later."

The comm unit went silent and I stood there looking at it while shaking my head. I can see that this relationship with Goth is going to be ... well, I'm not quite sure how to define it, because it always seems to surprise me in some way. I'll have to get back to those thoughts because there is a battle to win here and we need to make sure that everyone is covered.

The assault and battle continued, but the community and its allies stood strong not knowing that many of them were members of the DSEC TopOps Military Division that Colonel Wang led into this fight. This time, they didn't wear their military uniforms, but rather remained undercover. It was a most effective strategy because with the regular DSEC Military off Moon on maneuvers, the community and its allies gained a great deal of confidence in their efforts to be able to handle these types of assaults seemingly on their own without the military.

Hours into the battle after the Massacre Hill incident, I got word that in fact, Yog-Sothoth had broken through the gate portal, wherever that was, but no one saw the actual place where he entered the main crater. Apparently, he also brought clones (I don't put anything past him at this point), and those in battle were fierce in their attempts to find the actual Yog-Sothoth. However, he remained elusive as the clones continued to spawn, which I'm sure were designed to keep everyone away from this Outer God who must be reveling in how well his plan is playing out.

Now when my comm unit goes off, I don't know if it's Goth, Colonel Wang, or even someone else, but while in the thick of this situation, it startled me again.

"Hello DM," Colonel Wang said, "I am pleased to tell you that Yog-Sothoth himself, not a clone, was killed. It was Sophia Angel Heart from The Knights of Entropia society who spotted him off on the side, and his death caused an unexpected reward. However, I think you and I know that this isn't the last that we will see of him because the dark just doesn't work that way."



Colonel Wang is right, and as much as I hate to admit it, I've learned enough about the Cthulhu culture to know that no matter what, the dark forces will persevere in their attempt to eradicate us from the Moon, and death is not final.

I don't want to attribute our victories thus far to luck, but rather a well-defined and persistent alertness that keeps us ready, as well as well thought-out strategies that seem to give us at least a bit of an advantage.

Once Yog-Sothoth had been killed, the battle started to fade over time, and the creatures of the Moon retreated into their respective locations. The numbers were back to normal, and the community could begin to relax again.

It proved to be of massive benefit to take Colonel Wang's advice and not go to DSEC Military's General about this escalation of creature activity. His TopsOps Team who participated undercover did a righteous job of covertly guiding our community to yet another victory. For that we are very grateful.

However, it seems that Colonel Wang is also concerned that DSEC's Military has become more complacent, losing critical levels of seemingly standard procedures that keep Monrian citizens protected. In hindsight, my meetings with the General make more sense because he was rather non-committal at times while some of his Colonels were dismissive of the well-informed data I was able to share. Data that should have been readily available to the General long before my informing him for determining any military operation deployment.

I know General Anderson very well, and I just chalked up his behavior as a result of stress. He has a lot to deal with because he has operations elsewhere, and still has connections on Earth that are key in these operations, so I know it can't be easy. However, Colonel Wang's mention of things being a bit off kilter has me thinking more about the increased complacency.

I'm beginning to think that we need to pay closer attention to the questionable behaviors that occur with some of our community members. I was attributing it to their acclimating to an unfamiliar environment and the increased activity with the creatures of the Moon that is occurring more frequently. Now I'm not so sure, and while the creatures might have something to do with it, I'm thinking there's a great deal more to this than we are currently aware of, and this causes me concern.

It also brings to mind that during a previous visit to DSEC Military HQs, I heard a strange sound, or at least I thought I did. It was almost music, but not, and before I left the facility, it was a bit difficult to easily sort out my thoughts. Come to think of it, others had mentioned hearing something similar throughout the caves and Shub cavern, but I attributed that to being an underground environment that generally produces strange sounds.

After the battle ended, many of us gathered in the Monria Hub for a celebration of once again rising to the challenge. It was an exhausting day, but even during the celebration, I couldn't help thinking about Massacre Hill and how strange all of that was. It just didn't make sense that Yog-Sothoth would do something like that.

Goth is very well aware of planned activities as a result of being on the inside with the Cultists, because it seems that all the crap that happens on the Moon is a result of something that *they* initiate. I needed to get out of my head.

"Hey everyone," I said as I addressed the party goers, "it's been a long day and it's time for me to call it a night. Thank you again for yet another well-fought battle, and for helping to keep our colony safe."

"Ya," someone shouted out, "and we did it without the military too."

I was too tired to learn who shouted that comment, but everyone chimed in and started clapping and whistling and shouting *right-on*, and I just let them enjoy their victory. There's no way I could tell them that DSEC's TopOps fought with them.

Now home, I fell back on my sofa and closed my eyes to rest them, but I couldn't get the Massacre Hill images out of my mind. I had forgotten about the flames that were shooting out from inside the hill, it was insane.



However, just as I was falling into sleep, something dawned on me ... I wonder if the SAT NAV system caught where Yog-Sothoth broke through the gate portal.

Ch 8 / A Dimensional Storm is Brewing

Mornings used to be so quiet, so leisurely. I would wake with a level of excitement that maybe this was the day that there would be a discovery. That day has come and gone with the finding of the parchment by Core, and the ripple effect seems to have a course that is leading us deeper into the dark.

I continue to feel this pull of energy that is growing in strength, but it doesn't instill fear. What I find strange about it is that it's not a weighted physical feeling. It's more cerebral and seemingly exploring. Maybe it's just me straining to be more critical in my thinking to sort out these mysteries and gain some answers.

Ever since Goth revealed himself I have become more frustrated. His information has definitely been beneficial. However, he continues to make comments that are not only extraordinary, but tells me he'll enlighten me when he has time to tell his story. I'm logging my questions because that day will come, and I will be ready.

In the meantime, there are other mysteries that need to be solved, like whether or not there is a Kipling connection to Monria. Figuring out whose fingerprints are on the parchment paper. Who owned that ancient file cabinet, and what deep, dark secrets will it reveal? So far, I can't see the urgency in why the Cultists were so set on protecting it based on what I have seen. There has to be something else that I'm *not* seeing. With the escalation of creature activity, I keep thinking about what Goth said about us not being welcome here, and the more I'm reminded of that, the more I am determined to persevere to get answers.

There are times when I just don't feel like getting out of bed, but there is so much that needs my attention. Days are longer and sleep is becoming a rare commodity. It's nice to have flexibility with my time, especially when our colony seems to run day and night. Best I get this day started, I feel more awake now.

As I walk down the stairs to grab a coffee and some breakfast, I am reminded of what a great view I have of the Main Crater, but before I reach the final step, I am also reminded of a thought I had before I went to bed last night. That perhaps the SAT NAV system was able to catch where Yog-Sothoth breached an unknown gate portal. None of the locations Ant and I sorted out as possibilities proved to have any significance, so there's something that we're not seeing.

Just as I reached the snack bar to grab a coffee and something for breakfast, my comm unit goes off. Perhaps General Anderson is back from weekend maneuvers and we can get together so I can fill him in, hoping that he won't be upset that I didn't alert him about what we were facing with the assault on Saturday.

"Good morning, this is DM."

"Hello DM," the all too familiar deep and smooth voice said on the other end, "I hope I am not disturbing your morning."

"Hello Goth," I responded, "when you call, I am prepared to be disturbed."

"That wasn't nice," he replied.

"Well Goth," I said, "nothing personal, but it seems that each time you contact me, it's always when least expected, and generally means the news isn't so good. It's the messages that follow your hellos that define my thinking."

"I understand," he responded, "but the arrangement we have is that I contact you when I have news to share, especially news that could have negative effects on the colony. I just learned of something that I think you should know."

"Ok, Goth," I said, "what doom and gloom are we sporting today?"

"I don't know how to tell when you're being sarcastic or humorous," he replied, "but I guess I will learn that in time. For now, I need to alert you about Tru'nembra."

"What, or who is Tru'nembra," I asked.

"Both are appropriate questions," he replied, "because Tru'nembra can take many forms; male, female, creature, or no form at all, delivering a haunting sound that captures your mind with an unsuspecting subtle invasion. If not shaken, it has the potential to render you complacent and yielding for more."

This is a strange Moon with mysteries, secrets, anomalies and a dark side that keeps us on our toes, so I'm not surprised anymore when something new pops up. The more I learn about the Cthulhu culture and the Cultists, the more I sense that there is an even darker evil that we have yet to experience.

"So what is the ultimate result here," I asked, "and is there a way to avoid it?"

"There's no way to avoid it because of its subtle and luring tones," he began, "but if one becomes aware of what the beginning sound is, there is a chance to refocus attention elsewhere and block the elevated intrusion that becomes the most horrid and shrieking sound that can drive one mad. There's more."

Once again, my thoughts are racing to connect dots, because recent behaviors by some have given me pause to question if something out of the ordinary was going on. This may be the answer, but if it is, how do we control it?

"To the *who* part of your question," Goth started, "Tru'nembra is Cthulhu's *Angel of Music*, and a weapon that the Cultists use to render pliable minds into a form of complacency so that the real work can begin."

I think I should be feeling some level of fear right now because I'm thinking back to what we found when we took over the Moon. Several people wandering around a bit dazed, and seemingly not plugged in, but I didn't pay it too much mind at the time. The colony was coming together nicely, and I had a lot of responsibilities to attend to with research and organizing a few teams to assist in our efforts.

"Goth," I asked, "can you tell me how the Cultists use Tru'nembra as a weapon, and what kind of result that produces please? There has to be something beyond just hearing subtle and then elevated sounds that could drive one mad. What happens after that to the point of making this so seemingly egregious?"

"Sorry DM," Goth replied, "I have to leave it there because I can't be late. I'll share more when we can get together again."

"GOTH," I shouted, and I'm sure loud enough to do injury to his ear drums if he has any, "why do you DO this to me? Give me just enough information to know a little about what you're sharing, then leave me hanging with so many questions."

"My apologies DM," he responded, "I underestimated my time. I wanted to at least let you know that the Cultists have re-engaged Tru'nembra and you should alert the colony so that they know what to look out for, and make every effort possible not to be drawn into the subtle tones should they hear them. Some are far more susceptible than others and the Cultists seek them out. Also keep in mind you're dealing with a shapeshifter; in form one minute and a disappearing wisp the next into nothing but a haunting sound. I must go now, we'll talk soon."

"Wait, late for what?"

The comm unit goes silent and I'm left standing there once again with my thoughts all over the place struggling to make some sense of this new information. I get that the subtle invasion of these musical tones could draw one in, but what is the full purpose, or end result of this invasion. I would think that this information would be most important to know, but I'm also thinking that this might have something to do with the disappearance of so many people from the colony before us.

All I wanted was a peaceful morning after the day we had yesterday with the battle in the main crater. While everything turned out ok, it still leaves us with questions as to why we are seen as such intruders on Monria, and what is it that we can't see or haven't discovered yet that makes us constant targets?

I always have a full agenda, and try to get to as many things as possible, but the most crucial engagement today is getting in touch with General Anderson to fill him in on what happened over the weekend while he and his military personnel were off Moon on maneuvers. I think he will understand and not be put off too much by it, and should be quite interested in pursuing the mole factor to flush that out.

Colonel Wang said that they already had someone under surveillance when I told him about Colonel Mitchell and his visit to the forensics lab, but didn't mention who that was, so I'm quite curious. If Mitchell is the mole, then he's about as close to the General as anyone could be, and this is not good.

And speaking of the forensics lab, before I call General Anderson, I need to check in with Jennifer to see if she got the transmission of the fingerprints from Earth on the Kiplings. I want to somehow at least put this mystery to bed so I can focus on other things that need my attention. However, there's just something gnawing at the back of my mind about this whole Kipling thing and Core. It needs to be sorted.

"Hello, this is Jennifer, may I help you?"

"Hi Jenn," I said, "this is DM and I'm checking up on whether you got the info from Earth on the Kipling fingerprints yet."

"I did," Jenn replied, "and was going to call today after I finished comparing them to what we lifted from the parchment. You're timing is great because I just completed the comparison and can tell you that the fingerprints from the parchment do not match either of those from the Kiplings."

"Damn," I responded, "I was so hoping that at least John Kipling's fingerprints might match, which would drive this investigation in a different direction, but now I have to shift gears. I have something to consider Jenn, so I'll get back to you when I have more information."

"Ok DM," Jenn said, "let me know if I can help any further."

It was time for me to put my theory into play and get to the bottom of this. I called Core to meet me at the DSEC Forensics Lab for further questioning. When he brought the item he had found in the West Crater to my attention, he said that he hadn't touched it because he was afraid to, and being hesitant to be accusatory, I gave him the benefit of the doubt.

When Core arrived at the lab, he thought it was just for further questioning. I greeted him in the outer reception area and brought us both a small bottle of chilled water to enjoy while we chatted. I had carried his bottle by the cap at the top, careful not to touch the bottle itself after I had wiped it clean. As we sat talking and exploring more of how he found the parchment paper in the West Crater, he mirrored my drinking of the water. When I had seen that he had finished his, I thanked him for accommodating the request for further questioning, which I did most carefully in an effort not to raise any suspicion. I even gave him a few more PED for his time.

As he got up to leave, I told him I would dispose of his water bottle and contact him if there was anything further that I needed. After waving to him as he walked out the door, I picked up his water bottle once again by the cap and walked it back to the testing lab. All who visit or live on the Moon have their fingerprints on file, but Core's were missing from the database, and that raised a red flag for me too. Jenn got to work on the fingerprint comparison while I waited.

My suspicions were correct. The only fingerprints found on the parchment paper were indeed Core's, but I'm curious as to why he would hide this information. However, at the time, he had only been on the Moon for a period of two days, so not much was known about him. Is he an innocent just afraid to admit that he had touched the parchment paper, or is there something more sinister at play here? I'll have to chase this later, I need to call the General to see if he's available.

"Hello Sergeant," I said, "this is DM, is the General available please?"

"Hi DM," the Sergeant responded, "I'm afraid not, he's in conference with military leaders from the other planets right now and won't be available for a few hours."

"Ok, thanks Sergeant," I replied, "would you please ask the General to give me a call the first moment he has, I have something important to discuss with him."

"Will do DM," the Sergeant said, "I'm putting a note on his desk now."

As long as I was at the forensics lab, I decided to have a look at more of the file cabinet content to see if it would reveal any further clues. However, I found it difficult to focus because there seemed to be an unusual sound coming from further back in the lab. I attributed it to perhaps a piece of equipment a lab assistant was using during some testing.

As I reached to open drawer 3 of the file cabinet, my comm unit went off. It was my good friend E8ty2nd asking me if I could meet him out by the closed mine at the mountainside next to the Monria Hub. He said that he would explain once I got there. I was curious though, because that mine has been shut down for some time now, and there were no current plans in place to pick up on the continued reconstruction.

When I arrived mountainside near the Monria Hub, E8ty2nd was staring at a barricade horse outside of the mine with the message *Closed for Repairs*, but didn't acknowledge my presence even after I had said hello. He moved forward in front of the barricade horse almost to the very edge of the cliff, now with rifle in hand and looked up at the Monria Hub. It seemed many moments that he stood there just staring, but then raised his weapon arm to wave toward the Hub.



He did this a couple of times before walking toward the entrance of the closed mine. He continued past the additional barricade horses and further into the opening until he stopped and waved his rifle once again toward the darkness.



It was at this point that he asked me to follow him because he had something of importance to show me. It all seemed very strange, but E8ty2nd and I quickly became friends soon after his arrival on the Moon. He was part of the new DSEC military troops being transferred to Monria. I had no reason not to trust him, so I moved forward to where he was standing.

I began to feel strange as electrical impulses traveled throughout my body. My eyes became unfocused, making everything around me seem oddly distorted. Vibrant, pulsating colors in spiral shapes were finding their way past me, illuminating a figure that I was not familiar with and challenged to make out.

There was a heaviness in the air as my body began to move forward toward the figure in front of me. Sounds were amplified, and colors became more brilliant. There seemed to be ghostly elements that appeared floating on air in a cloaked skeletal form around the figure. The heaviness grew as I moved closer, yet I felt no fear. I was deeply drawn to the energy that seemed increasingly elevated in thunderous waves.

In the next moment, I was one with the energy. I felt strength, I felt power, I felt a fervent desire to challenge and be challenged, but never defeated. I sensed that there was no room for defeat, only victory. As my vision became more clear, everything around me seemed to be in turmoil, as if a storm was brewing.



Fictional character created by Ivan Sevic | Freelance Character Artist - Belgrade, Serbia

I wanted to battle, I wanted to move, I wanted more of the energy that was flowing through me, but my thoughts were interrupted by incredibly strange and eerie music. I remember it now. It was in a dream I had where the most ungodly music in the background was painfully tearing at my eardrums while I was standing in front of a reflective glass of some sort not looking like myself. The decibel level of the music increased, and I began to feel strange again. My strength and power were being diminished by some force that had surrounded me. It enveloped me, consumed me, gave me a headache that would rival the worst hangover ever, but then there was calm.

The music stopped, the vibrant colors were gone, and somehow, I was no longer mountainside at the mine entrance. I was standing in my penthouse livingroom in front of a female dressed in all black, shoulder-length white hair and barefoot. She stared at me with blood red eyes and introduced herself as Tru'nembra, Cthulhu's Angel of Music. I knew in an instant that this wasn't going to be good. I still couldn't move, nor could I speak, I could only listen. However, I remembered that Goth had told me that Tru'nembra could shapeshift into many forms. There must be a reason for mirroring my image.

"You are treading far too close," she said, "the sounds of silence will no longer remain silent."

I couldn't respond, and in an instant, she seemed to transform into a cloud-like wisp of nothingness and drifted toward the windows, easily passing through until there was nothing to see. I could finally move and walked to the windows in the chance that I could catch a glimpse of something, anything, but the only glimpse I caught was my image in the window.

As my vision came into focus, I realized that my eyes were blood red, just like Tru'nembra's. I felt disconnected from reality. Was this yet another dream, or have I encountered a bizarre and strange transformation at the hands of Cthulhu. Why do I continue to feel an overpowering presence of the figure I had embodied at the abandoned mine by the Hub? Why was my logo on her clothing?

I need to sit down and collect myself because I have no idea what just happened or why. Goth said I would discover my purpose for being on Monria, but I already thought I had that established. Apparently not, but why subject me to something so temporary without some explanation. Goth also said that everything was calculated and meant to happen for me to discover, but pulling me into and out of dimensions, if that's what it is, without explanation, serves what purpose.

I haven't mentioned the dreams I've been having to anyone because they just seemed to be insignificant. Perhaps a result of reading too much about Cthulhu and the Cultists with their strange behaviors. However, after this incident, I am more inclined to think about dimensional rifts and mind control. This experience felt real, and I'm just not sure what to do about it. Perhaps Goth would know.

I don't think I will ever get used to being startled out of deep thinking by my comm unit, because rarely is the news good anymore.

"Hello, this is DM."

"Hello DM, Winslow here," came the reply, "heard you needed to speak?"

"Hey General," I responded, "nice to hear back from you, and yes, I need to have a chat with you if you can spare a little time."

"Sure thing," he said, "we just got back from the off-Moon maneuvers."

"Would you be able to meet at the research center," I asked, "I don't want to have the conversation at DSEC Military HQs. I'll explain when we can get together."

"I'm free now," replied the General, "I can be there in about 20 minutes."

"Sounds good General," I responded, "see you there."

I have a feeling I'm going to need more grounding in order to carry out what needs to be done. Goth said that I would find my strength, but if it's anything like what I just experienced in the abandoned mine, then that might need to be harnessed in some way for it to be of any benefit, because that was a wild trip.

General Anderson arrived at the research center shortly after I did, still in his field gear. I was just coming out of the debriefing and training room heading to the office when he came up behind me. He must have gone around through the conference room and into the briefing room instead of directly to my office.



"Hello General," I said, "thanks for agreeing to meet here instead of DSEC HQs."

"No problem at all," he replied, "but I am curious about it though."

"Then let's go into the office and have a chat," I responded.

As we sat, I was a bit nervous about letting the General know what happened over the weekend and why he and his military troops weren't alerted. I'm hoping that once he realizes that there are issues within the ranks, he'll be more amenable to work with us to flush out the mole. We also need to explore why some have been experiencing a level of complacency with decreased focus on duties.

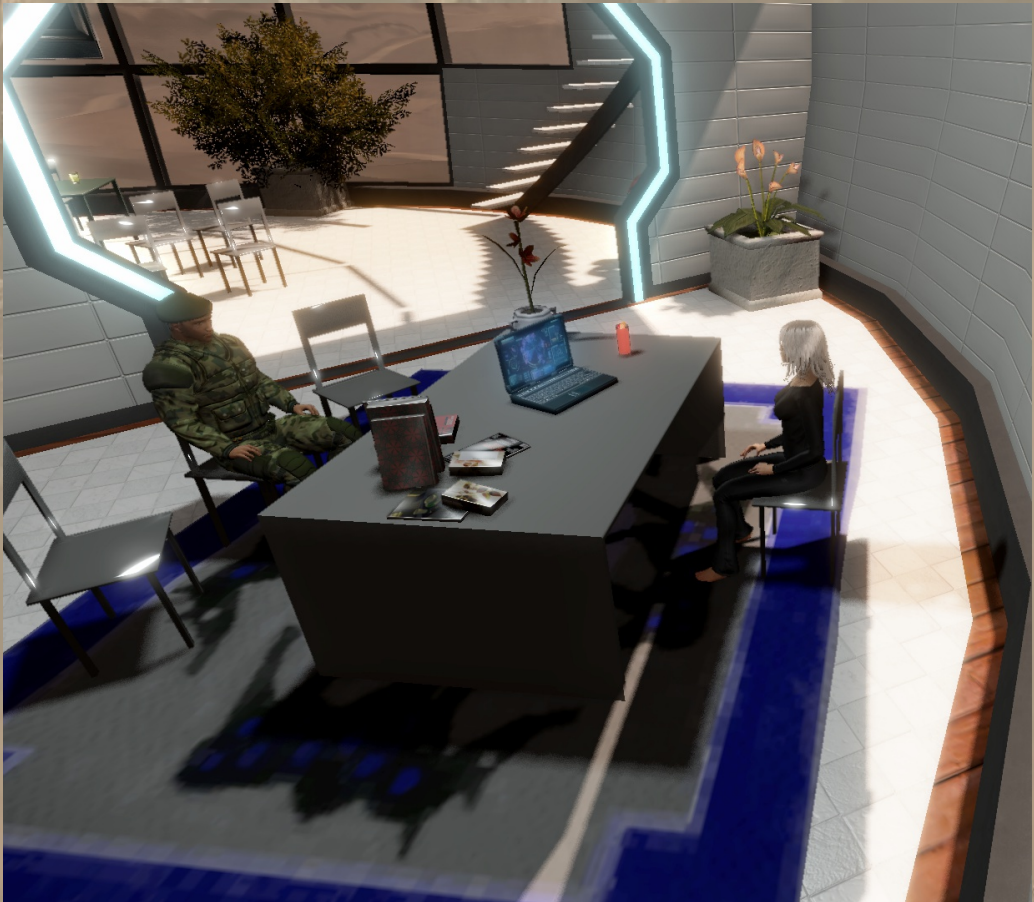
"So what's so important that I had to come here DM," the General asked.

"This past weekend," I began, "there was a full-on assault of all creatures banding together to invade the main crater. There was talk of Yog-Sothoth breaching some kind of gate portal to gain entrance to the Moon himself, which actually did happen, but more on that in a minute."

"Why didn't you alert me to this," the General asked, "so that we could help."

"That's why I asked you to come here," I continued, "because Colonel Wang has discovered that there is a mole in your ranks. Someone with a connection to the Cultists who shared information with Yog-Sothoth about our St Patrick's Day event. Colonel Wang actually stopped me on the path to your office to warn me about the mole, and that it might be too risky to alert you and your personnel."

The General sat there quiet for a minute or two, and I could tell that he wasn't quite sure what to make of what I was sharing. He gets that look on his face.



"I know you can put two and two together General," I said, "which is why I'm hoping that you will understand the decision not to alert you. There was too much risk in the mole finding out the plan to have the military engage in battle over the weekend, and felt best to allow the off-Moon maneuvers to take place to keep the mole away. Colonel Wang and his DSEC TopOps Team covered successfully."

"That's a fine team there," the General replied, "and I'm glad they were available to take care of the colony in our absence. So what about this mole thing?"

"Colonel Wang and his team have someone under surveillance," I started, "but I informed him that there was an unusual incident that raised a red flag for me as well. It was Colonel Mitchell visiting the forensics lab and gaining access to the parchment fingerprint report that he said he would pass on to me. I had words with Jennifer because she broke protocol, and Colonel Mitchell never contacted me."

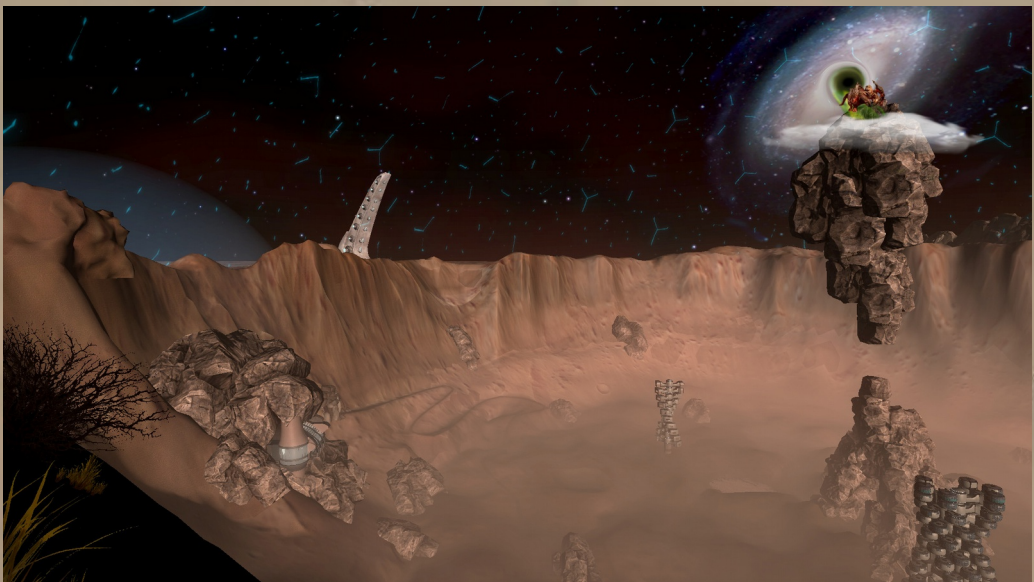
"Do you think that Mitchell could be a mole," the General asked, "because I haven't witnessed anything out of the ordinary, other than the forensics lab incident that you brought to my attention."

"There's always a possibility General," I replied, "which is why we're being cautious right now. I don't know who the other person is that Colonel Wang is surveilling, but he has now added Mitchell. He actually said that his guys saw Mitchell going in and out of the forensics lab, but didn't make anything of it. That has changed."

"I'll stay alert at HQs," the General responded, "without raising eyebrows, and let you know if I discover anything out of the ordinary. In the meantime, please let me know if Colonel Wang comes up with anything as well."

"Will do General," I said, "and thanks for taking the time to stop by. I'm glad that you understood the reasoning for the decision. It's best we don't alert the mole."

The General stood and took his leave, and as I sat back down to give thought to all of this, it dawned on me that I wanted to review SAT NAV images to see if there was anything that would show where Yog-Sothoth breached a portal. There was.



This changes everything, but there's also the case of Massacre Hill to resolve, and if Goth is saying that neither Yog-Sothoth nor the Cultists had anything to do with it, then something incredibly strange is going on.

I'm mentally exhausted right now, and while it's still morning I'm going to head back to the penthouse for a break before pursuing this day any further. Mornings have become increasingly more fragmented. I'll just take a short nap and rest my eyes a bit before I head back to the forensics lab.

I almost fear closing my eyes, because dream and wake states sometimes feel blurred between a realm of consciousness that teeters at the edge of darkness, and silent lucidity. Reality escapes me during long moments of disorientation until my eyes become more focused. Last I recall, I was in a face-off with Tru'nembra, even though I couldn't move, and my eyes turned red. I haven't felt myself since that encounter, and I have tried to make sense of it all to no avail.

There's a lingering sense of this presence that confuses me, because on one hand, it feels inviting, and on the other, haunting and mysterious. It feels dream-like in one moment, and frightening in the next. When I first came to Monria, I had this feeling that the Moon was more than just a new home, but couldn't put my finger on it. Perhaps what I am experiencing now will bring forth some answers.

I've been trying to unravel the mysteries that continue to come forth as a result of the antique 4-drawer file cabinet that was recovered from the West Crater. With what we have discovered thus far, along with reports from my undercover operative Goth, defending Monria from dark forces seems to have become a way of life, but our perseverance has found us victorious.

What concerns me is the continued escalation of attempts by Cthulhu's minions to challenge our existence. I can't help but think that there's a distinct connection to the past, and that there are those who inhabit the Moon who know more than they are perhaps willing to share. I also can't help but think that somewhere in that cabinet there's something that will be more revealing, more telling about some of the strange goings on that continue to give us reason to question what it is we're actually experiencing.

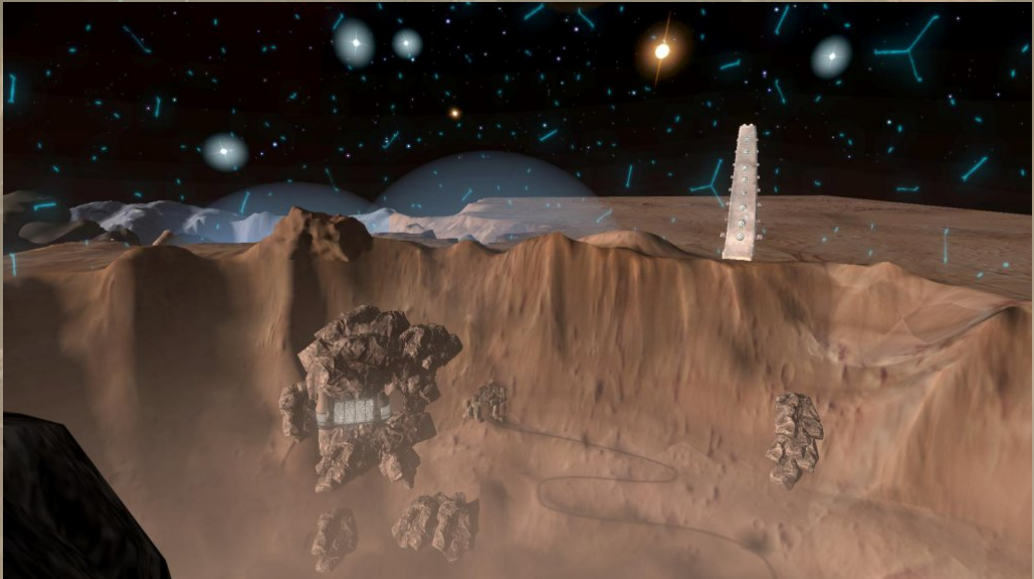
Sifting through the contents of the cabinet has been painstakingly slow, with challenges and frustrations as a result of trying to decipher the meaning of some of it. However, we have learned enough along the way to keep ourselves on alert and ready to defend Monria and its community from the evil that continues to test our resolve. I have no doubt that there is more to come, and we will be ready.

So many things to think about. So many mysteries to solve. So many secrets yet to be revealed, but time is not being kind right now, and as I sit here on my sofa, I find myself drifting off to sleep. I need more rest. I need more ...

... wait, what just happened?

Ch 9 / Darkness Will Surface From Unsuspecting Sources

The sky looks so alien. Part of the mountain plateau above the Hub and closed mine is eclipsed in darkness with a faint glow that seems to be getting brighter. It's all hidden from normal view by the peaks that shield the plateau from below but why am I seeing this at this level? I feel suspended but have no sense of body.



The arcing blue-hued lights have become brighter. I can't move but feel an intensity in my surroundings. The stars appear enormously energized, and that golden pulsating orb in any other circumstance might be inviting, but I have a strong sense that this is more ominous than innocent.

Someone please tell me what this is, or let me wake. This is terrifying to feel in limbo with no answers. I sense a presence but see no one. There is now a slight thundering in the distance with swells of rumbling I am not familiar with. And now silence. A peacefulness envelops me. My mind drifts with more calm, but I feel I am not alone. I am floating in a form of encapsulated darkness but no longer afraid. I want to wake but my efforts are futile.

"Dark Moon, there is much to learn. The Monria colony will face further danger, but there are agents of support that walk among you. They are the Old Ones, once thought to be a dark force. That's what those in the deep abyss would have you believe, but the Old Ones have fought alongside Monria's community and its allies in the battles against evil. They are the protectors who keep the Deep Ones in check, preventing them from rising out of darkness and controlling the Moon.

The Old Ones are men and women alike. Not Gods, but nonetheless immortal in solidarity to fight the dark forces that haunt and periodically invade Monria. Their abilities allow them to transform into shapes that give them freedom to roam and infiltrate areas of the Moon that are hidden and dangerous. They are quite powerful against evil, but are not completely immune to Cthulhu's effects."

The voice is soft and almost melodic but still vibrates with urgency. I knew when I took the research position that I might be facing challenges, but never would have imagined the depth of involvement the likes of which has consumed so much of my time. A simple discover this, discover that, and document it for the archives would have sufficed. Creature wars, dark forces, mysterious goings on, none of this was expected, and none of this invaded our daily lives until Core found that parchment paper with Rudyard Kipling's poem on it.

"Dark Moon, there is more to learn, please stay with me and let not your thoughts wander. Your encounter with Tru'nembra was an attempt to draw you more into the dark side. It's a form of veiled telepathic transference with a delusory remote influence that is not set in permanence. However, undiscovered, it could lead to a form of gradual bending of thought and perception to the point of madness. Tru'nembra haunts unsuspecting victims with ungodly music, but is a shape-shifter and can take many forms, or no form at all. There is subtlety in nuances that are drawing and inviting, but beware, they are evil."

I feel I should be afraid but I'm not. I'm also beginning to feel the energy I felt at the closed mine entrance not that long ago, a feeling of strength and power that gives me hope. Hope that whatever this is, it will be more revealing and help me guide the others in an effort to prepare for any further rise of evil.

"Dark Moon, there is something else you should know. The appearance of the Green Leprechauns on Monria is not accidental. They were mighty warriors in their own right, and ruled in another planetary system long ago, until they were outnumbered by their most evil adversary, a race of elves. The battles were hard fought, but they found themselves captured and forced to work in underground mines. Many escaped in hidden space pods searching for inhabitable locations in another galaxy where they might have a chance at survival.

The Green Leprechauns on Monria and elsewhere are refugees. They know of dark forces, but struggled far too long from famine and no resources not to use what remaining will they had to survive. They are an angry race, but not averse to being tamed as pets, because it's a means to an end. They possess talents and can be highly skilled, but we are not to be blinded by amusement. They are familiar with the dark and the underground world. Their chatter is indecipherable, but an intentional act on their part. Let this be a warning."

"What about the glowing light above the Hub and closed mine beyond the mountain ridge? Why do I have a visual of this location? What is its significance, if any, in what you are telling me?"

"Dark Moon, I fear that I have shared too much at once."

"There are far too many unanswered questions, please don't leave. Can you tell me who you are? What about the Old Ones, will I ever meet any of them? Really, is there something going on that has the Hub and the closed mine connected in some way with what appears to be a massive energy field behind the upper mountain ridge above them? Give me something to work with so I don't feel so helpless in what's to come."

"Dark Moon, one more thing, as I must not overtax your thoughts. I want to spare you the intense pull of gravity back to wakefulness because in circumstances like this it's potentially dangerous to be in such a suspended state of mind too long.

Darkness will continue to rise from the deep. The forces of evil have been stirred by the ever-growing Moon colony. They fear extinction if Monria's military, volunteers and allies become too powerful. The community's resolve will be tested, and more attempts at mind control will be unleashed. It is best to resist at all costs, but then there will be times when effects are subtle and difficult to notice immediately.

The closed mine and the Hub are connected through a secret passageway to a location deep behind the Hub where electromagnetic energy is being harnessed. The tower at the upper ridge of the mountain is being used as a transmitter for EM radio wave activity."

I am losing the vision. My energy is weak. I am struggling to stay connected.

"STOP ... don't leave, who are you, where is this secret passageway, you didn't answer my other questions.

And what about Core and Kipling ... ?"

Ch 10 / A Reprieve From Chaos

The plan was to have a bit of a nap before getting back to the forensics lab and the contents of the file cabinet, but waking from what I couldn't even categorize as a dream, left me disoriented with strained thoughts that gave me no answers.

It was too real, and too invading to ignore. Strange things have been happening to me lately, and it's freaking me out. This must be what Goth meant when he was talking about the dimensional rifts, but I still don't get what all this has to do with what I am told my intended purpose is on Monria.

This episode only added more questions, and an urgent need to somehow connect with Goth to see if he can shed some light on this stuff, but as I regain focus of my surroundings, I realize I am not alone.



"That must have been some dream DM," Ant said, "I didn't want to wake you and was about to leave."

"Hey Ant," I responded, "I was just trying to catch a bit of a nap before heading back to the forensics lab. Did I talk in my sleep?"

"It all sounded a bit mumbly," he replied, "but you looked as if you were struggling with something. Do you remember what it was?"

"Don't remember a thing," I said, "but if I looked like I was struggling, then maybe it's a good thing that I'm awake. What's up? It's unusual for you to be out and about this time of day with all of the development work on your plate."

I didn't want to alarm Ant unnecessarily until I have all of this sorted with Goth.

"I wanted to check in with you on the Obie event," he replied, "and how far along you are, but also if he needs anything to complete his project."

Oberon NightSeer is Monria's Wizard, and he is capable of a unique kind of magic that blows everyone's minds at times. He has something quite special planned for us, and it will be nice to enjoy some downtime after our chaotic encounters.

"I've been so wrapped up with all that's been going on," I began, "that it slipped my mind, but I'll get in touch with Obie to see how things are progressing. I was told that it's going to be quite something to behold, but I'm sure the community will be appreciative for the experience. I'll get back to you if he needs anything, thanks."

"Sounds good," he said, "can't wait to see what he has up his sleeve because it's always an OMG experience."

"Indeed," I replied, "and now that I think of it, he proposed an idea to me that he wants to test out to see if it works. If it does, then it will definitely be an OMG kind of experience for sure. I think he has a special theme in mind and wants to host this event in July, but I will confirm that with him."

"Good," Ant responded, "and on that note I'll head back to my office and keep going on the development stuff. It's always a slow process, but it pays off in the end, and the community gets to benefit, which is first and foremost."

"If you need me," I said, "I'll be at the forensics lab sifting through that file cabinet to see if I can find any more clues that might be helpful. There *has* to be something there that I'm not seeing, and it's driving me nuts. That's pretty much where I'll be, other than working with Obie on his surprise event over the next several weeks."

"Good luck with that and catch up later then," Ant replied as he left the penthouse.

We always like to add something special to any of our events that we present to the community to elevate the experience, but sometimes in between, the Wizard likes to catch everyone off guard and give them something to think about. What he does is always a head shaker, and I think for many of us, we have stopped asking questions and just go with the flow.

Obie creates magnificent aerial platforms out of view so that you can't see them from the ground, and you never know where they are until you experience them. He has a special way of accessing these aerial platforms and everyone wants to have the experience. Best I connect to see what's up. I'll get back to the forensics lab later. It's not like the file cabinet is going anywhere.

"Hi Obie, I'm checking in to see how things are going with your aerial platform and if you're on schedule for sometime in July."

"Hey DM," he responded, "things are going well, and I should be done with it all sometime the beginning of July in order to make this event happen, but I could use your help to test that idea I told you about for the grand finale experience."

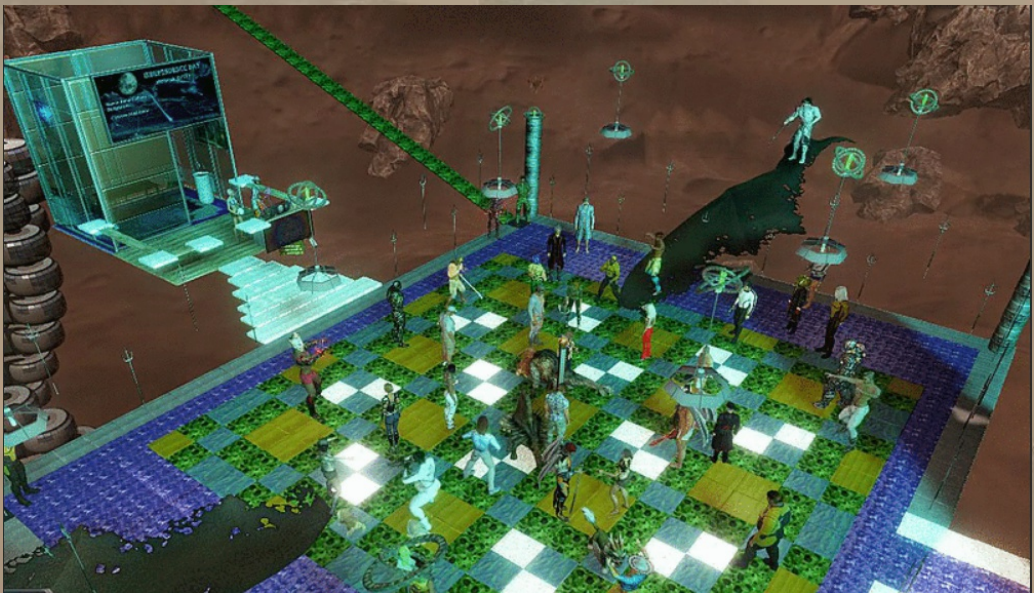
"Sure, I can meet up with you now if it's convenient," I replied, "just tell me where I need to be to do this."

I met up with Obie and we tested his idea for the grand finale of the event. He has to make a few tweaks, but this should definitely work and people are going to freak out because they won't know what to expect.

Over the course of the next couple of months, I continued to document contents of the file cabinet, but still have not found anything of significance that would lead me in the direction of solving some of these mysteries. However, I *am* learning more about the Cthulhu culture, and I will confess that I am incredibly concerned that our future on Monria will continue to hang in the balance if we aren't able to gain better control of the Cultists. They are the instigators of chaos, no matter who else is involved, and the end result always leaves damage in its wake, even in victory.

However, things have been pretty quiet since the St Patrick's Day event when it comes to creature activity. It's been rather normal, and the community has been able to handle it on their own. Obie's event is coming up soon, so hopefully there won't be any disruptions and we can all enjoy ourselves.

The day finally arrived for Obie's event, and he was able to get all the kinks out of the grand finale so that it would work properly. I met up with him to get the final tour, but did not run through the end experience because certain things were in place that shouldn't be disturbed. I was absolutely amazed with his creation, as were those who were able to experience this phenomenal aerial platform.



From the intricate design of the dance floor, to the walkway (out of view) that led to the dance floor, to the DJ booth where Rosa and Drifter did their tune spinning, it was all a sight to behold. However, the long walk to the end experience was not only scary, but caught several hesitating to take that last step.

The long green track of tiles leading up from the dance floor was a challenge.

The only true way to get a feel for what this experience was for those who were unable to join us, is to view it on the video tour I created. [Over the Moon](#).

The participants enjoyed themselves and it was a nice downtime experience after all of the chaos we encountered a couple of months ago, and I was glad that Goth didn't come forth with any bad news about having to deal with creature escalation.

When the participants discovered what was waiting for them after the last step, the fun continued. There were 5 Count Vamps waiting in my penthouse pool at the end of that last slide drop. I'm sure they weren't expecting *that*. The Count Vamps were killed quite quickly, and by the time I dropped down the slide into the pool, there was only one left that some were already attacking.



I think we all needed this downtime and some fun. We actually *do* create a lot of fun for the community, but this was something really special.

OMG ... I think I just connected a dot, and if my assumptions are correct, then Obie has some explaining to do.

I pulled him aside to have a private chat, because I only had one question to ask him, and I am highly anticipating that I know the answer.

"Did you create that chaos at Massacre Hill during the St Patrick's Day event," I asked, "and if so, why didn't you let me know you were going to do that?"

"I *did*," he responded, "and I didn't tell you because I wanted at least that part of the event to be an unknown even to you. The element of surprise, ya know?"

I have to admit, as bizarre as it seemed at the time, it *did* add an element of the unexpected that we're known for, but it also added to the confusion of so many things going on with Monria right now, and I need to get back to it.

Ch 11 / The Dark Forces of Monria are Fully Engaged

Morning light filters through my bedroom window, but I am wary what to trust. A waking state seems not as stable. Strange thoughts have encumbered more than nighttime dreams. Dreams come no matter what time of day. At least I *think* they are dreams, and I am challenged to discern the validity of substance, while also experiencing a true fear of the messages they bring. Messages that clearly put Monria at risk. However, there have been no major distractions in a while.

More so now than ever, I find an urgency in unanswered questions. A dire need to escalate my research, but also in some way to fracture the veil of secrecy that binds the Moon to darkness with continued dangers that present themselves in mysterious manners. Experiences with no rhyme nor reason are found to be with more frequency. Reported anomalies seem to have become the norm rather than the exception.

As I sit at the edge of my bed feeling my feet firmly planted on the floor, I once again revisit the invasions of my thoughts that I desperately want to attribute to nightmarish intrusions upon my sleep. However, my senses continue to tell me otherwise, and I am still faced with making the decision as to how to proceed.

Perhaps my first course of action is to gather a team and explore the plateau above the main crater that was presented to me to confirm, or not, what is said to be the harvesting of electromagnetic energy from deep behind Monria's Hub. The shared vision showed arcs of blue light rising beyond the ridge above the Hub, and talk of a known passageway connected between the Hub and the closed mine whose entrance sits in darkness.

I knew without hesitation that I would need the assistance of Oberon in order to navigate the ridge at the upper most part of the main crater that rises above the Hub. His bending of time and space allows even the most novice of explorers an opportunity beyond standard geological endeavors to experience the physics of space. One rule remains steadfast ... do not question, for there will be no answers.

I contacted Rosa and Raine to join this expedition as secondary witnesses to anything that is found, and to help document any discoveries that need to be researched further. They have been a dedicated team toward guiding our Monrian Born, but have also been on other missions and are familiar with protocol. I briefed them before we met up with Oberon to head for the ridge above the Hub in the main crater. He had already prepared our transport from the base of the ridge to the surface, and beyond.

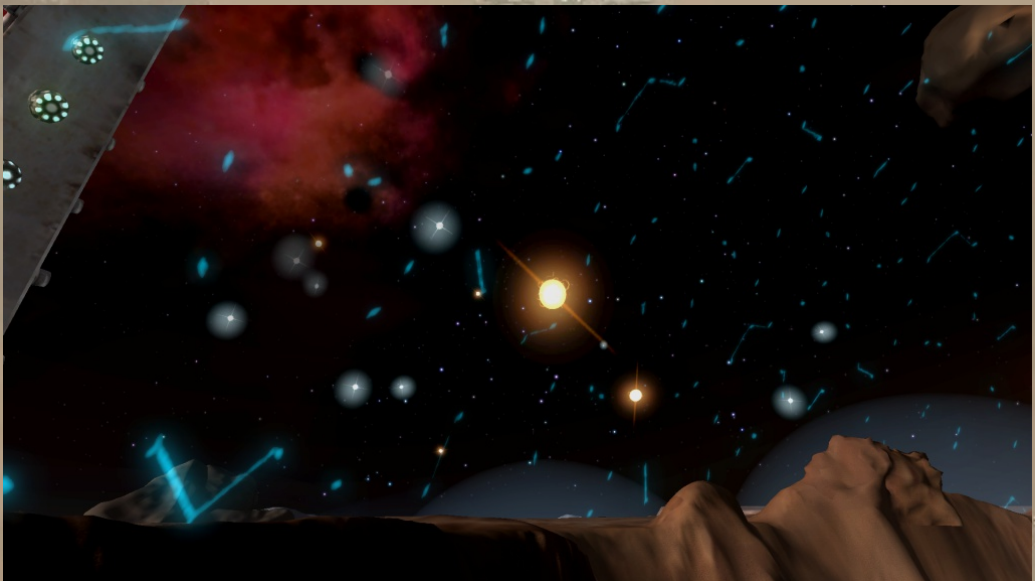
The trip to the base of the ridge was uneventful, but once we had traversed the ridge, a new dimension had revealed itself. The arcing blue lights were real, rising in unison from beneath the surface, but not revealing a distinguishing source. The vision in my dream was there, in front of me, eliciting an instant body rush that found me flush with the same terrifying fear that enveloped me in the dream.

It took a moment to stabilize my thoughts before engaging my camera to capture this body of evidence that surely solidified the substance of my dream. I moved more toward the arcing blue lights while Oberon, Rosa and Raine covered other terrain. Oberon said to be cautious as there may be traps. The increased brightness of the stars was blinding, and the solar flares seemed quite ominous.

The arcing blue lights seemed to be beyond the Moon's protective shield, which I found to be incredibly curious, but also frustrating that I wouldn't see the source. I also didn't want to risk discovering any potential traps that might put me or the rest of the team in danger. I was however able to get close to the tower that was said to be emitting electromagnetic radio waves, but not successful in uncovering a method to access any type of data.

Something else that we all noticed was how much closer the nearby galaxy and asteroids seemed to be to Monria, even to the space station. As far as we know, these are unexplored asteroids, but given the nature of recent discoveries, it would not be beyond reason to give thought to the potential of a connected source.

After an hour or so of exploring, we ended the expedition and departed back to the base of the crater. I took my leave and went to the research center to develop the film to examine the photos more extensively. With each photo, intrigue grew into intensity, and I knew what I had to do in hopes of getting more answers.



No one should be at the DSEC Forensics Lab this time of night, and hopefully, security will be kind without much fanfare in allowing me into the facility. I need to find *something* that helps to connect the dots, or we're going to be in trouble. There may be a time when Goth can't get to me soon enough, although he's good at that.

Security was in great spirits, and entry into the facility was a breeze. Now to move as quickly as possible before they do their rounds and discover that I may be fishing around in places I shouldn't be. Being highly trusted comes with responsibility, which is why it is imperative that I find something of value that would help in some way to protect the citizens of Monria.

I head directly to the ancient file cabinet retrieved from the West Crater and start cycling through each drawer in hopes of finding something, *anything* that would shed some light on this sudden barrage of confusion, not to mention a myriad of unanswered questions that have had us all on edge for so long.

Wait, what was that? I heard a noise beyond the cabinet in an adjoining lab. I closed the drawer and began walking along the wall toward the lab to the edge of the window. As I got closer, I could hear voices. Careful not to call attention to myself, I peered around the corner through the window and was surprised to see Core talking to the lab assistant Jennifer. This was a highly restricted area, and monitored closely, so I was completely taken aback by what I was witnessing. I wanted to make a discovery, but did not anticipate *this*.

Core handed Jennifer an expandable folder, which she quickly placed into a desk drawer and locked. They both then headed to the exit door on the other side of the lab. I had no clue whatsoever why Core would have any kind of business at the lab, nor what could possibly be in the folder, but I was going to find out.

When I saw it was safe to enter the lab, I moved with an urgency to the desk. My thoughts were all over the place and difficult to corral into one string of coherent action beyond moving at a fast pace. After a deep breath, I looked in places where Jennifer might have hidden the key code. There are plans to switch to fingerprint security in some areas, but that has not been put into place as yet.

Fifteen minutes later, I noticed the product label on the lamp of her desk. What are the chances that this set of numbers would be the abracadabra that opened the drawer. One pass using the numbers from left to right, didn't work, second pass using the numbers from right to left, didn't work.

Frustration set in as I sat in the chair, straining at any possibility that might reveal the contents of that drawer. It then dawned on me. I remembered the strange lettering on the back of the file cabinet that once unencrypted with the rune decoder spelled out *The Moon Shall Rise*. I was ready to try anything at this point. There are no numbers in the strange lettering, so I'll have to figure something out since the keypad on the drawer uses only numbers. I was losing a bit of hope that this was another idea that wasn't going to work.

As I got back to the desk, I didn't even bother to sit down, but took the number of letters in each word and entered them on the keypad ... 3 4 5 4. Pass one, and voila! It was instant adrenaline, and my pulse was racing so fast I thought I would lose my breath. I removed the folder from the drawer and then sat down to examine the contents. I was both excited and fearful at what I might find, but also oblivious to everything else.

Upon pulling the contents from the folder, the first thing I see is a document with a stamp that said ...

~~MISSION:~~ ACCOMPLISHED

I couldn't believe what I was reading, but so much began making sense to me now. Kipling was a ruse, and seemingly the most feasible of opportunities to employ a distraction. Core's mission was to send me on a wild goose chase while I'm sure the *real* mission was being played out at a secret location deep in the Shub cavern somewhere. The harvesting of electromagnetic energy, and the tower radio waves are real, and a threat. It also makes sense that I caught Core in a most awkward moment at the Hub.



My mind was racing, and the only thoughts available were all questions ...

- who is Core *really*
- what is his connection to Jennifer
- are they aligned with some secret organization or maybe even a cult
- is the harvesting of the electromagnetic energy causing the anomalies
- who are the others, and do any of them walk among our community
- is there any connection with this operation and the escalation of battles with Moon creatures; and
- what was Core looking for in the Hub

It took a moment to assemble my thoughts away from this whirlwind. That's when I noticed a handwritten message from Jennifer to Core which seemed to be a copy. I'm quite sure that Core would have the original. It clearly mentioned that there was still a journal to be found. It is thought that this journal is somewhere hidden within the antique cabinet found in the West Crater, but efforts in finding it have been unsuccessful. That explains the mess I found.

I have to find that journal before anyone else does. I put the contents back into the folder and into the desk drawer. There wasn't much else of significance other than periodic communication between Jennifer and Core with regard to keeping me distracted. There's one consolation. The file cabinet is real, and belonged to (I will assume) an unknown at this point since Kipling is out of the picture.

As I sat staring at the file cabinet, wondering where in the hell this journal could be hidden, my eye caught the drawer handles shaped in the likeness of Cthulhu. I have only used them to pull the drawers out, but never thought of manipulating them to any other degree.



Why do we always start with the top and work our way down? After trying to twist and turn the handle on three drawers, the bottom drawer handle gave way and the front panel of the drawer dropped down revealing a secret compartment. It was there I found the hardbound journal filled with page upon page of recorded history that seemed to document extensive journal entries about the activities of the Cultists on Earth before their exodus to Monria, but also immense determination to awaken the one in a death-like sleep whom they worship ... Cthulhu.

I couldn't waste any more time at the lab, so I removed the journal, tucked it into my jacket, and closed the front panel of the drawer putting it back into place. No one would miss it because no one knew it was there. It hadn't been discovered yet, at least not by Core or Jennifer, but who knows who else might be involved in this operation. If anyone else knows it's here and discovers it gone, then that will surely raise a red flag and present other issues.

For now, I'm heading back to the research center to start reviewing this journal for any further information that might lead us to what the hell is going on with Monria, and why there is such an urgent search for this documentation. I needed to settle myself so that security wouldn't become suspicious. Calming my thoughts at this point is not an easy undertaking because the unknown is driving me mad. Deep breath, exhale, deep breath, exhale.

I made it past security and to the research center, and despite the late hour, there was no way I wasn't going to open the pages of this journal. However, I'm going to find it difficult to read it like a book, because I want to know the last recorded moment before it ended.

As I began reading the journal and the evolution of the Cultists and Monria's beginning history, I couldn't restrain myself any longer. I turned to the back of the journal to the last page where my eyes focused on the last entry ...

"Her first and foremost thoughts were on survival from all of this attempted brainwashing. The last thing she remembered that seemed real was lying down in the pool of green fluid and entering a dreamlike state trying to stay focused on maintaining herself at all costs. Now, she was not sure any of this was real, and was having a difficult time separating dream from reality. It was a feeling that was unsettling to her core."

This is going to be a long night ...

Ch 12 / Deceit & Discovery | Shameful Manipulations



Oh the deceit. As I stand here in the debriefing room of the Monria Archives and Research Center, I am challenged to wrap my mind around what just happened at the DSEC Forensics Lab. I can't decide whether I am angry or ecstatic about the discoveries that were made. For the past year we were deceptively led into an investigation that engaged us in an ongoing community stress test. What provokes my ire more than all else is that the manipulation of information was so damn plausible based on findings, it's shameful.

It was all very cleverly orchestrated. I hate and love that hindsight is 20/20 because it reveals flaws, but also presents a tapestry of truth, however frayed it may be. As I stand here looking at the extracted journal from the ancient file cabinet, I am anxious to learn what else it will reveal, but thoughts of Core and Jennifer, and what the hell happened, leave me practically paralyzed. I *did* alert Ant as Monria's Chief Executive Officer of operations of my discoveries and he has made additional resources available to conduct further investigations.

I have to give considerable thought to how I will handle Core and Jennifer. I don't want to tip my hand without gaining more intel, but just how to do that is the question. Perhaps I'll call Core in to see how he's doing with his exploring, or if he's even continuing his exploring to find other items like the parchment paper with the Kipling poem on it. Maybe I'll ask him to do some official exploring for me to see what he turns up.

With regard to Jennifer, I might need to employ a covert ops team to install surveillance equipment at the DSEC Forensics Lab. It wouldn't surprise me to learn that she was the one who delayed the results on the analysis of fingerprints found on the parchment paper. I'm getting ahead of myself though, because there are more questions than answers right now, and speculation won't help me much. I'm still staring at the journal with some trepidation as to how the contents might affect the current state of Monria and how we move forward.

I had better write all these questions down that are coming one after another so that I don't forget them. I find that for myself, thoughts can become muddled if I don't get them out of my head and organized in print. It's a method that works well for me to prevent things from falling through the cracks, but even that method has its flaws if the information isn't contained in one place. Tomorrow, I order a journal or two of my own.


What do we need to know?

- whose big-ass idea was it to throw Kipling into the mix (cleverly plausible though, based on findings)
- are Core and Jennifer working on their own, or part of a larger operation
- where did they come from, and what is their mission
- who is leading this operation
- the ancient file cabinet is real, but who did it belong to
- were the Cultists really protecting it, or was it all a smoke screen to bring it out into the open
- what does the message engraved on the back of the file cabinet mean
- is this operation associated with the rise in creature activities where we find ourselves in battle
- perhaps most importantly ... has anyone else discovered the journal and will now find it missing

Despite the wild goose chase and the escalated creature activities that have led us into many battles over the course of the last year, there was much learned, and much more that we need to learn. Continuing to explore the effects of Cthulhu on Monria has opened up further understanding of how we need to fortify our defenses against the evils of the dark forces.

For now, I will focus on the contents of this journal that seems to be unfinished. It would only be a hope that the author of this journal would still be among us, but the thought that follows this one is ...

What if he or she is one of the Old Ones who have fought alongside us against evil and the dark forces of the Moon?



The human behind DME is a 13 year veteran of Entropia Universe, an MMORPG online virtual universe with a Real Cash Economy. She is a member of the Monria Management Team and serves as their Community Manager, CFO (Chief Fun Officer), a Forum Administrator, and manages the Writing and Media Teams, as well as the Community Initiative Programs (CIP). Her extensive virtual background in writing and media lends itself to bringing Monria to life.

Monria is a Horror 3D MMORPG within the Entropia Universe expanding upon the Cthulhu Mythos and set in the distant future where an evil exists so stealth that one is unaware of how subtle and pervasive the Cthulhu effects can be on one's mind until it is too late. The Cultists are driving the dark forces that leave this Moon community on constant alert, and facing dangers that could cause them to lose control of Monria.