

A COLD FIRE WITHIN

A MIND-BENDING CAMPAIGN FOR PULP CTHULHU

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INTRODUCTION

A *Cold Fire Within* is a campaign for *Pulp Cthulhu* set in 1935, wherein a missing persons case uncovers a plot by time travelers to re-establish their lost empire. Worse yet, the villains, in attempting to increase their power, have made the awakening of the Great Old Ones imminent. To stop the premature end of the world, our heroes must follow a trail from New York City to the Catskill Mountains, to the subterranean world of K'n-yan, and to Yian-Ho at the very center of the earth. Along the way, they may cast their own minds back in time to the night of Lomar's fall.

The campaign is largely linear, though the rescue mission in Lomar (**Chapter 6**) may take place whenever the heroes decide to attempt it (which could be as early as **Chapter 1**). The campaign's plot type is primarily discovery. Mystery certainly plays a part, though it's mostly a vehicle to transport the heroes into more and more perilous action in exotic environments.

During the course of the campaign, the players discover that the real challenge isn't so much finding the clues but navigating through the many factions they'll encounter. While there are clear villains to thwart, the other groups, each with their own agendas and goals, will not provide easy decisions—the heroes may find themselves negotiating with dubious characters for information or assistance. The various factions include militant populists lashing out at foreigners and the political establishment, villagers under the mental control of one of their own, a psychic intent on manipulating others as a means to becoming a new power in K'n-yan, and the K'n-yanians themselves: civilized but decadent or willfully primitive worshippers of blasphemous gods.

CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND AND SET UP

Brendan Sterling and five others have been duped by an expert in past-life regression techniques named Ferdinand Argus. Over time, Argus broke down their wills through hypnosis and psychic prowess. Now, their bodies are inhabited by psyches from the distant past. Ferdinand Argus is really Thetnoris, a noble from ancient Lomar, who took over the body of a comatose construction worker before seeking out other candidates to host more Lomarians by swapping their minds. The victims' own psyches were imprisoned in a tower in Lomar—right before it was destroyed.

That task accomplished, Thetnoris and his fellow Lomarians, along with his agent—a racist occultist named Leopold Fontanelle—and members of the League of Forgotten Men, left in search of an entrance to the subterranean Inner World, hidden in the Catskill Mountains. Having reached Saugerties, they were assisted by more members of the League in acquiring supplies and transportation. In the valley of Mink Hollow, they tracked down Zeke Groth, a descendant of K'n-yan and a powerful psychic in his own right, forcing him to show them the entrance to the Inner World. Access gained, the group then marched to a temple of Nug and Yeb—twin monstrosities born of Shub-Niggurath and Yog-Sothoth and destined to begin the end of the world. Using the ritual contained within the temple, the group then traveled to Yian-Ho at the center of the Earth where they commenced absorbing power from Nug and Yeb. Unfortunately, doing so upsets the balance of the two entities, whose uncontained energies pour forth, threatening the world. Thetnoris commands Fontanelle and his five assistants to seek a remedy in K'n-yan. Finding the temple destroyed in Nug and Yeb's backlash, Fontanelle must learn elsewhere how to stabilize the dark twins' powers. While Thetnoris makes his bid for power, other events are unfolding...

Opposite: A cold fire within

INTRODUCTION

The Slater Institute for Parapsychological Studies has experienced a number of mysterious disappearances, and Director Dr. Yvonne Callisham seeks help, gladly accepting it from capable friends or strangers. Unbeknownst to the doctor, her subjects are being targeted by Esmeralda Ashe, a psychic who followed her dreams to K'n-yan. Ashe hopes to restore K'n-yan's faded glory and claim what she sees as her heritage. Ashe's group has attracted the attention of the city-dwelling K'n-yanians, who are fascinated by the surface dwellers' powers and intrigued by the possibility of K'n-yan's rebirth, although Ashe is wary of outsiders who threaten to upset her plans.

Northeastern K'n-yan has been divided for centuries between those who maintain some semblance of their advanced civilization and those who reject it entirely. The former are decadent in the extreme, engaging in disturbing pursuits to battle their *ennui*. The latter have redeveloped a connection with their religion that the city-dwellers only play at. The two factions keep an uneasy truce formed long ago.

The original director of the Slater Institute for Parapsychological Studies, Dr. Walter Nesbitt, has been enslaved for years by K'n-yanian plantation owner and body artist R'ga-lil, who delights in torturing him. If rescued, Dr. Nesbitt may provide the heroes with useful information before returning home.

Meanwhile, the dreaming shaman of the K'n-yanian T'lhya tribe, N'x-Yhaa-Wil, has sensed the disturbance to Nug and Yeb and what it means for the world. He sends warriors to find heroes who might restore the cosmic balance; however, Zeke Groth, shamed in front of his people by Thetnoris and anxious to maintain his power in Mink Hollow, has ordered patrols to deal with any further interlopers. Heroes brought before him are in grave danger, but those who exercise diplomacy with the egotistical Groth may be set on the right course if they don't choose to end his psychic exploitation.

Melody Sterling, deeply concerned for her missing husband's safety, sets in motion a plan to find and bring him home. Our heroes' initial search for the absent Brendan Sterling leads them to the home of Ferdinand Argus in New Jersey. There, they learn that Argus and his agents have traveled to Upstate New York. They can also uncover how to contact the trapped psyches of Brendan and the other victims, as well as rescue them by mentally traveling into prehistory.

In addition, the heroes can travel to Saugerties to learn more about their quarry's movements or to investigate yet more disappearances and ghostly visitations at the parapsychology center in Woodstock. Their inquiries point to the Catskill Mountains, where the heroes may encounter the petty tyrant Groth, who uses his inherited powers to enslave his fellow villagers. A hidden entrance to K'n-yan lies nearby, hastily sealed off by Argus. As the heroes search the ruins of K'n-yan—inhabited by warring cultures, Esmeralda Ashe and her disciples, and sundry terrible monsters—they learn that Argus has traveled to the center of the Earth. A desperate bid to follow Argus and stop his plans there might save not only his victims but also the world.

LOMAR

Lomar rose from the Arctic sea in the distant past and is home to the city of Olathoë with its ghastly marble walls and towers. Its people were tall in stature and all had characteristic gray eyes. They devoted their time to studies of the cosmos, the psychic arts, and the worship of strange gods. Lomar was destroyed by the invasion of the war-like Voormi, although some scholars dispute the Voormi incursion, citing the assault of the mysterious Gnophkeh tribe as Lomar's doom (who some say take their name from the terrible six-legged creatures known as gnoph-keh). Either way, it is believed that Lomar was destroyed around 24,000 BCE and its remains were buried beneath glacial ice.

With the doom of Lomar nigh, a few Lomarians survived destruction by traveling to the Dreamlands. One such individual, named Araphis, shamed by the role he had played in his land's destruction, went on to fashion a recreation of Lomar in dream, which can be traveled to today.

Perhaps due to their psychic mastery, a handful of Lomarians foresaw their end and took steps to avoid annihilation. Led by Thetnoris (now assuming the name of Ferdinand Argus), these Lomarians sought another way to escape destruction by sending their minds forward in time to the Twentieth Century in a bid to access and draw power from the entities known as Nug and Yeb. Thetnoris believes such power will enable him to restore Lomar and thereby conquer the world.