

Partnership of Convenience

by M Todd Gallowlas

Arsène Renard crept into the large chamber. He took a deep breath and prepared to get down to business. Some of his “colleagues” talked about how they feared the horrors and the twisted things – elder gods, alien intelligences, and ancient magics – they sometimes encountered. Renard found it much easier to fear what the O’Bannions would do to him if he ever failed them.

Take, for example, the woman kneeling in the center of this chamber and lifting her face and arms to the ceiling. Well – “woman” was such a loose term. On second thought, calling her human might be pushing it as well. The flowing sleeves of her red, black, and yellow robes had slid down to her shoulders revealing her mummified limbs. The ritual laid out in front of her wasn’t too bad, all things considered. A circle of salt contained black candles burning at each tip of a seven-pointed star drawn in blood – Renard had seen enough blood spilled on floors to recognize it right away. Eldritch energy sputtered and danced on the wicks rather than normal flame. Within the center of the star a massive corpse lay holding a large and tarnished silver key.

Then the woman started speaking. Renard was a well-traveled man, but the words she spoke were in no language he’d ever heard. Her voice grated on his nerves like the scratch of radio static when someone hadn’t tuned the station in all the way. Motes of multi-colored lights appeared in the air above the corpse. These lights danced, swirled, and coalesced, and the air above the corpse began to shimmer and warp like a mirage.

As unnerving as that was, it didn’t hold the same power over Renard as his memory of the last time the O’Bannions had caught an agent trying to infiltrate the organization. Human screams caused by all-too-human monsters haunted the dreams and shadows of the mind as much as any otherworldly source of fear.

Renard felt a presence behind him. That had to be Brette Wulffsen; had it been anyone else, Renard would likely be dead now. Sure enough, the Miskatonic explorer crept up next to Renard. They’d had a deal: Wulffsen would lead Renard here, and Renard would give her the last piece of a puzzle the explorer needed to find some secret bit of lore tucked away in some remote corner of the world.

“What are we waiting for?” Wulffsen hissed.



“For her to start that,” Renard twitched his gun in the crone’s direction.

Wulffsen blinked at Renard. “You’re just going to let her do it?”

“Why not? It’s the perfect distraction. It’s not like she’s going to stop in the middle of her ritual. And even if we stop her, someone else will come along and do it.”

Renard understood occult lunatics and criminals were a lot alike in that respect – no matter how many you tried to stop, someone would always be desperate enough to take their place.

“All right, what’s the plan now?” Wulffsen asked.

“I get what I came for,” Renard said, “And we get out before she finishes that.”

As the ancient once-human creature’s chanting raised in volume, Renard scanned the rest of the room, noting first the two other exits, and then seeking out the object Mister O’Bannion had sent him to fetch. It only took a few moments for Renard to spot it amongst the crates and packages piled against the wall to his left. The long yellow cloak draped over a faceless wooden dressmaker’s mannequin matched the description he had been given exactly. The garment seemed more patchwork than not, so many holes and rips repaired with all manner of materials. The cloak looked even more ancient than the woman conducting the ritual.

“Stay here,” Renard said, and headed off without waiting for a reply from Wulffsen.

As Renard slunk around the edge of room, he shook his head. He couldn't understand all the trouble and effort he was going through for such a ratty old thing. But his place was not to ask. No. People who asked didn't last long in his line of work. He was told to get, and he went and got. Easy arrangement – a profitable arrangement.

As he reached the cloak, a ripping sound echoed through the chamber, drawing Renard's attention back to the ritual.

The air above the corpse seemed to have been torn open. Through it, Renard observed spinning stars and swirling galaxies, though likely none that had ever been observed by even the most powerful human telescope.

The sorceress crone stopped chanting and collapsed to the floor, exhausted.

A ghostly form floated through the rip in the air. The apparition settled into the corpse and the body began to take shape, solidifying from a rotting, festering, and decaying thing. Muscles reknitting onto the bone and skin sliding over the muscles.

At last, the corpse – or, rather, man – sat up. Even as he blinked, eyes formed in his sockets – deep, dark eyes that seemed to look at everything at once with a preternatural intelligence.

Not wasting a moment, Renard reached down and took hold of the first thing his fingers found: a little ceramic vase. He lobbed the thing over toward where Wulffsen was hiding. It shattered, raising a cloud of ash or dust that made Wulffsen cough. The noise drew the attention of the man sitting in the middle of the blood and salt.

Then as soon as those deep, unsettlingly intelligent eyes focused away from him, Renard snatched the cloak, stuffed it into his satchel and began scurrying behind the boxes, keeping low and out of sight as he headed for one of the exits.

Wulffsen would make it or she wouldn't. Renard felt bad about it, but either way, Renard had a package to deliver to his employers.

Cover art by Stephen Somers



New Rules

“**Fated X**” is a new keyword added to the *Call of Cthulhu: The Card Game* with *The Key and the Gate* expansion box. This section explains how the keyword functions and should be treated as an addition to the rulebook in the *Call of Cthulhu: The Card Game Core Set*.

FATED X

When a card with the **Fated X** keyword has X or more success tokens on it, place that card on the bottom of its owner's deck.

Important Rules

PROPHECIES

When a player plays a **Prophecy** event card from his hand, triggering its **Action** effect, the card is placed face up on top of his deck. Each **Prophecy** event then has a triggering condition, which, when met, allows an effect to be triggered from the top of its owner's deck. If an effect would cause the **Prophecy** event card to move from the top of a player's deck before its Response effect is triggered, the Prophecy card is turned face down before resolving the effect.

For example, Darrin has a **Prophecy** card face up on his deck. He was unable to trigger its response before his draw phase, and must now draw a card. The **Prophecy** card is turned face down, and as such, is no longer able to be triggered, as he draws it into his hand.



Deck Lists

Using only the contents of this box and the Core Set, a number of different decks can be built. As an introduction to the art of customizing a deck, two exciting decks have been put together from this card pool.

Decks designed by David Boeren

THE GREAT RACE OF YITH

“The Great Race of Yith” refers not only to the Yithians themselves, who are able to reach across time and space to swap minds with other races - but also to the race against time your opponents will find themselves in. This deck seeks to build up your discard pile with *Yithian* cards where they can use their special abilities to interfere with the opponent, while also building up tokens on Nikola Tesla. Early Terror/Combat characters and self-recycling Yithian Scouts help you control or bog down the stories to buy you time, while you either run your opponent out of cards or have enough tokens on Nikola Tesla to grab entire stories out from under your opponent’s nose. If he or she is shy about killing Tesla, you can use cards like Temporal Slip or Living Mummy to finish the job for them.

This deck puts characters out very quickly, so you should be able to grab some early tokens on your own and be in a good position to possibly win one or more stories with Nikola Tesla if your opponent cannot respond to your inexpensive characters in the early game. Beware though that Tesla can lose his tokens through insanity or effects that remove him from play without destroying him, so it’s often worthwhile to destroy him and replay a new copy rather than risk losing a large number of potential success tokens. Don’t forget, because a story which is won does not resolve further struggles, he can also be used to disable a story where bad things would happen to your characters before the icon struggles can begin.

Characters

Cannibal Ghast x1 (Core)
Dabbler in the Unknown x1 (Core)
Hungry Star Vampire x2
Jeanne D`Ys x2
Keeper of the Great Library x3
Living Mummy x1 (Core)
Lost Oracle x3
Professor Nathaniel Peaslee x3
Nikola Tesla x3
Scholar from Yith x3
Servant of Nodens x1 (Core)
Wentshukumishiteu x3
Yithian Scout x3

Supports

Elder Chasm x3
Blackmoor Estate x1 (Core)
Displaced x2
Forbidden Shrine x1 (Core)
Lost City of Pnakotus x2
Rite of the Silver Key x2

Events

Interstellar Migration x3
Return to Yith x2
Studying the Void x2
Temporal Slip x3
Vortex of Time x2

THE AFFAIRS OF WIZARDS

“The Affairs of Wizards” is built around Wilbur Whateley and the summoning of Yog-Sothoth. The deck is packed with *Sorcerer* characters to reduce the cost of playing Yog and with Spells which can be played for a discount with Wilbur or discarded to power his Action. Keep in mind that with Wilbur you can get one discount on your own turn and another on your opponent’s; most of the spells work well either way, and the deck is very spell-heavy, with all fifteen Event cards being low-cost Spells that you can play off a one resource domain whenever needed. You’ll want to build up one domain quickly to play Wilbur and potentially leverage Professor Nathaniel Peaslee into another strong character while using your small domains for discounted spells.

To protect your key characters, use cards like Ys, Decrepit Wizard, and Andrew Chapman, who despite being a Miskatonic character can be played using Yog resources if Quantum Theorist is in play - giving you strong Investigation and a fantastic character ability. Rite of the Silver Gate should be used to name your opponent’s strongest cards and attempt to discard them from play, and destroyed characters on either side can be fed to Fthaggua to power him up and prevent them from recurring. Use cards like Frozen Time or Calling the Williwaw to deal with troublesome Character or Support card abilities.

Finally, don’t forget to get a few *Sorcerer* characters killed to help pay for Yog-and don’t attach them to Fthaggua too early, as they need to be in the discard pile to count. Let the Lost Oracles take the early hits to build up your discount and turn on their “from discard” ability to discard success tokens.

Characters

Andrew Chapman x2
Cannibal Ghast x1 (Core)
Claude Owen x2
Decrepit Wizard x2
Disciple of the Gate x1 (Core)
Fishers from Outside x1 (Core)
Fthaggua x2
Lost Oracle x3
Nadine Eskiy x2
Professor Nathaniel Peaslee x3
Quantum Theorist x2
Servant of Nodens x1 (Core)
Spell-bound Shoggoth x1 (Core)
Wentshukumishiteu x2
Wilbur Whately, Scion of Yog-Sothoth x3
Yog-Sothoth, All-in-One x2

Supports

Frozen Time x2
Rite of the Silver Gate x2
Ys x2

Events

A Single Glimpse x1 (Core)
Calling the Williwaw x2
Dampen Light x1 (Core)
Journey to the Other Side x1 (Core)
Mists of Lethe x2
Song of the Spheres x2
Temporal Slip x3
Vortex of Time x2

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