

Doomhunt

*A campaign framework for Chaosium's **The Stars Are Right**
by Steve Hatherley*

The Stars Are Right contains seven scenarios set in the modern day. Each is independent from each other and can, with a little work, be dropped gently into an existing *Cthulhu Now* campaign.

However, for those keepers without an existing modern-day campaign, the scenarios are almost too independent. Creating a bunch of investigators for one scenario, finishing it, then yanking them into the next is too artificial. Sure, the players will put up with it, but they probably appreciate a little care and effort.

A keeper needs to develop a campaign framework on which to hang the scenarios. Campaign frameworks can be sprawling, grandiose creations with an overall goal and the destruction of mankind at stake. Or they can be simpler, as with *Doombunt*.

(Note – the page references in *Doombunt* refer to the first printing of *The Stars Are Right*. The latest printing of *The Stars Are Right* contains two additional scenarios which are not referred to here but could easily be incorporated within *Doombunt*.)

Preparing for Doomhunt

Ideally, the investigators should have encountered the Cthulhu Mythos in a previous investigation before starting *Doombunt*. They could have done so individually, or as a group. Ideally they will have had an encounter with the charismatic Hector Breach (see below) as well before he died.

Alternatively, if you just want to dive straight into *Doombunt*, then you could try either of the following:

- ◆ Assume that the characters are new to investigating. In this case, although they've caught Hector's eye (which should still be flattering), Peace knows that they are new to the mythos and he won't mention any of the weirdness in his introduction.
- ◆ Ask the player to explain how they have experienced the mythos in the past, and how they know Hector Breach.

Doombunt itself begins, as they so often do, with a letter.

The Doomhunt Papers #1

Peace Investigations

2134 N. 7th Street

Los Angeles

555-7854

Dear -,

I am writing on Dr Hector Breach's recommendation. I have a matter that I believe you can help me with. I would be grateful if you could meet me in my offices at 2 p.m. next Saturday. I will reimburse any necessary expenses.

Please call me if you foresee any difficulties. See you on Saturday.

Joshua Peace

Hector Breach

Hector Breach died two days ago in a fire in San Francisco. Each of the investigators have met him on a number of occasions, and are all saddened by his death. He was a remarkable man.

Hector Breach spent many years in various police departments as a Criminal Psychologist. He retired early, becoming a part-time lecturer at several police schools. Hector was a man of many talents, able to juggle, cook, and play the harmonica (although not all at the same time!). He was a formidable opponent at chess, a dead shot with a revolver, and cracked safes for fun. Widely travelled and respected, Hector spoke at least four languages.

The investigator's exact relationship with Hector Breach is up to the player, but they must be slightly distant. No close friends or immediate family! However the investigator knew Hector, discovering that he had recommended them for something is quite a compliment.

Peace Investigations

The Peace Investigations offices are above a small bookstore. Joshua Peace runs the bookstore as well. Peace is not a native Californian, and has a slight Texas drawl.

When all the investigators have arrived, Peace introduces himself (as an ex-detective, now a private investigator and bookstore owner) and then goes around the room, with a few words on everyone. Although he has not met anyone here before, he seems to know a little about them. From Hector, he answers if asked.

Before he starts he explains that there he was supposed to contact someone else, Rachel Hayward. Unfortunately she seems to have suffered a nervous breakdown in New York. He believes a couple of the investigators may know her. He doesn't know if this is news to them. (See *The Gates of Delirium*, below, if the investigators wish to follow this up.)

Then Joshua begins his story. A few years back he and Hector were working on a missing persons case in Missouri. The trail lead to three students that had killed and eaten 14 children. Hector and Joshua followed a trail leading from the students' basement to a sex shop to a dingy warehouse. There they found more bodies, and a scene like Joshua had never seen before. They burned the warehouse to the ground. It was something that

Hector had seen of before, but that was the first time Joshua had encountered the Cthulhu Mythos.

And it was also the last, although he and Hector began a long-standing friendship. When Joshua retired from the force, Hector suggested he start a private detective agency, and put up half the capital. Joshua gets the ordinary cases, Hector has an input on the weird ones.

Peace tells the investigators that Hector was in San Francisco last week. Four days ago Hector sent Joshua a cryptic parcel, and then three days ago the house he was staying in caught fire. Tragically, Hector Breach died in the blaze.

In order to continue he work, Hector set up a fund some years ago. As a result, Joshua has \$10,000 for each investigator – provided they find out what happened to Hector Breach.

If they agree, Joshua hands the investigators a package with a partially burnt piece of cloth, a hollow cone and a newspaper cutting. The cloth and the cone are described on p. 36 of *The Stars Are Right!*. The cutting is as *The Fire Papers #1* (p. 38) – the name Robert Hardman has been circled in red.

If the investigators are successful, Peace hints that there may be more work for them.

What Joshua Peace doesn't tell them

Hector's letter from San Francisco didn't mention the investigators at all. Instead, it called for two experienced investigators (Jock Carlton and Charlie Byrne, also

'consultants' of Peace Investigations) to join him in San Francisco. Unknown to either of them, Charlie and Jock had both been taken by the Mi-go while investigating an unrelated disturbance in New England.

With both Charlie and Jock unavailable, Joshua had to call upon the player characters. Some time ago, Hector had given Joshua a list of people he thought would make excellent investigator material. It is time to see if he was right.

Joshua Peace

Joshua has an attractive wife and three children. They are everything in his life and under no circumstances will he jeopardise their security. Therefore he doesn't work on mythos cases – Joshua has already witnessed their callous disregard for life and limb. The investigators cannot expect to rely on Peace if they ever get caught in a situation – and violence just causes him to freeze.

He is a useful ally to have when dealing with the police and routine investigations, but when the slime starts flying, Joshua Peace is nowhere to be seen.

The Doomhunt Campaign

Doomhunt leads directly into the *This Fire Shall Burn* scenario in *The Stars Are Right!*. Events following that make the investigators' lives a little more complicated, and lead into other scenarios.

This Fire Shall Kill

The investigators enter the scenario at the section headed *Fire in the Park* (p. 38). They can investigate the dead Wilmont

couple should they wish. If the investigators try to discover who was at the scene of the fire that killed Hector Breach they discover that Hardman and his men were first on the scene.

The scenario otherwise proceeds normally. At its conclusion, the investigators report back to Joshua Peace and he pays them. Depending on their performance (as much as he can judge from their report) he offers them consultant positions. He will be in touch shortly – but first they can check out the two reports in the file (see below).

Consultants

Peace then hands the investigators another file. This has just a few newspaper cuttings. These are things that Hector hadn't had a chance to look into. He was going to, and if the investigators continue the good work well. Joshua may be able to offer them a part-time salary. This will not be full time, instead he calls them 'consultants'.

Consultancy work for Peace Investigations pays about \$25,000 per annum per investigator – which isn't bad for a part-time job. There may be additional funds available, depending on the case. The file contains two clippings – 'The Lonely Children Papers #1 (p. 4) and the Groth Papers #4 (p.120). (This file may also contain other clippings, perhaps from the adventures in *Cthulhu Now* or elsewhere.)

If the investigators become consultants for Peace Investigations, Joshua will eventually ask them to draft a list of potential replacements. This for the day

when the investigators themselves turn one corner too many.

Joshua doesn't come across many investigations with mythos links. Hector used to actively search for mythos cases, and Peace simply made do with the mundane investigation business. As a result, it is only rarely that he contacts his 'consultants' with special cases.

There are several benefits to being a consultant to Peace Investigations:

- ◆ As well as the \$25,000 retainer, additional funds will be made available when necessary. (Peace is quite strict, however, and doesn't easily release additional funds.)
- ◆ Hector made a number of useful contacts which are now available to the investigators: an art dealer, a reporter, a Doctor, a mechanic, an auctioneer and so on.
- ◆ Hector had a collection of occult and minor mythos artefacts (mysterious figurines, sacrificial knives, odd powders – that sort of thing). This collection is now available to the investigators.

After the Fire

Although officials have pulled the cover tight over events in San Francisco, it is not enough. Someone nearby had a video camera, and two days later the investigators find themselves on the evening news. Although the picture is a little fuzzy, the investigators' heroic actions during their climactic battle are captured on video and broadcast across

the country. At least two of the investigators are identifiable.

Slowly, more and more of the investigator's story comes to light. The police become more interested in some of the investigator's more dubious actions, while the newspapers are interested in a story. Then, one of the tabloids offers \$10,000 for their story. A rival paper offers \$15,000, and soon rises to \$20,000. Then Cheshire C. Hunt introduces herself.

Hunt is a professional agent and will negotiate with the newspapers on behalf of the investigators – for 10%, of course. She has already bumped the asking price up to \$40,000 without the investigators knowledge. If they still seem reluctant, Hunt reveals that she knows of a studio interested in producing a mini-series about the disaster – a cross between *Die Hard* and *The Towering Inferno* with perhaps a dash of *Quatermass*. They would like to give the film some basis in reality – but if the investigators aren't interested in selling their story they will make their film anyway.

If the investigators require even more persuading, Hunt tells them that she has access to some excellent lawyers. Given the way the police are circling, the investigators may well need them soon.

If the investigators give in to her pressure, they find Hunt a willing and able ally. They soon find themselves on television chat-shows, and after Hunt has worked her magic on a couple more encounters, they can quit their regular jobs.

Cheshire C Hunt, Opportunist Agent

Cheshire has a knack for identifying people with a commodity to sell. In the investigators she sees profits from their remarkable lives. She knows how the newspapers and studios feed, she knows how to get a paperback deal – and who should write it. If any of the investigators have any talent (perhaps one is an artist or struggling author) then Cheshire will sell their talents mercilessly. She promotes the investigators shamelessly in her quest for fortune.

This might cause the investigators some concern – fame being what it is. But Cheshire has other talents. She knows a number of powerful lawyers, and Edwin R Schneider (see *The Professionals – **The Stars Are Right!***) owes her a couple of favours.

Cheshire enjoys casting actors in the roles of people around her. She imagines herself played by Whoopi Goldberg, and compares the investigators to the likes of Sigourney Weaver, Tom Hanks, Halle Berry and Johnny Depp.

As Time Goes By

Cheshire never participates in the investigation, but constantly quizzes the investigators on anything that might be of value. If the investigators retrieve some strange cult item, Cheshire tries selling it to private collectors. When the investigators go face-to-face with the Great Old Ones, Cheshire thinks about the movie rights. She encourages them to take video cameras – useful for writing the paperback and selling the mini-series.

Other offers trickle in. One of the investigators is offered the position as host for a supernatural/paranormal tv

show. Cheshire can organise paperback contracts, exhibitions of artwork and so on.

Joshua Peace doesn't like Cheshire Hunt at all. He sees her as nothing more than a blood-sucking vampire, feeding from the investigators. Unfortunately, the investigators' association with her has been good for his business. While he grumbles and moans, he does nothing to dissuade the investigators.

After a couple more investigations, Cheshire calls the investigators for a meeting with a producer, Johan Freeman. Freeman is a science-fiction fan, and wants to make a series similar to the old *Quatermass* television shows that the Brits produced many years ago. (He has them all on DVD if the investigators haven't heard of the show.) Simply put, Freeman would like the investigators to work with him on a new series, something called *Doombunt*. Each episode of *Doombunt* would consist of an investigation into the dark and dangerous world of evil. The investigators would be consultants to the series, perhaps even writers – depending on the investigators skills. (If the investigators are unresponsive, then the series goes into production anyway.)

The first three-part series is screened almost a year after the meeting. *Doombunt* surprises everyone. A gritty, modern thriller, it uses top-notch effects, careful pacing and a fine cast to generate chilling horror with good (if not brilliant) ratings. Sequels begin production immediately – and Freeman asks the investigators for more.

Complications

As *Doombunt* progresses, here are a few complications to add to the mix.

Junk Mail: As time passes, complications set in. The investigators start to receive letters – lots of them. Almost all of them are from cranks or fans, but one or two of them are worth a closer look. (See *Fractal Gods*, below.)

Infamy: If the investigators are appearing on tv (even if it's only the weird science shows on cable), then they will start to be recognised as “investigators of the mysterious” wherever they go.

Mercenary instincts: Cheshire Hunt is always looking for an angle to make money – whether it's marketing Liao drug, selling a mythos artefact or book at auction, or whatever. (If she can't turn it into cash, she can't take her 10%.)

Peace on the other hand, insists that any mythos finds are added to the collection for future investigators to use.

New recruits: Before too long, Peace asks the investigators to recommend suitable candidates in the event that the unfortunate happens.

This shouldn't come as a shock – this is how the investigators came to his attention in the first place.

(Suitable candidates ought to be npcs and the like that the investigators encounter. They may also serve as replacement characters should any of our heroes die.)

The Scenarios

Three of the scenarios from *The Stars Are Right!* can take place quite quickly after one another – *This Fire Shall Kill* (as above), *The Gates of Delirium* and *Love's Lonely Children* (see below for these two).

After that, things begin to settle down. One investigation every five or six months (of character time) is probably about right.

The Gates of Delirium

If any investigators react to Peace's initial comments about Rachel Hayward, Peace promises to see if he can find out more. Within a few days he comes back with two newspaper cuttings – The Delirium Papers #1 and #2 (p. 84 and 85 of *The Stars Are Right!*).

Love's Lonely Children

The newspaper cutting in Hector's file leads directly into this scenario.

The Professionals

When the investigators need a lawyer, Cheshire Hunt puts them in touch with Edwin R Schneider (he owes her a couple of favours).

And when Edwin R Schneider needs someone with skills in uncovering secrets, Cheshire Hunt puts him in touch with the investigators...

Nemos Solas Sapit

This scenario takes place when an investigator first needs therapy. It can start at any time – even in the middle of another scenario.

Fractal Gods

Jon Lathan writes to the investigators (the Fractal Papers #2, p.73) after one of their television appearances. However, his is just one of many letters – and most of them from cranks.

Jon Lathan's letter stands out, however, due to the peculiar sensation that anyone gets when they read the chant in his letter.

If the investigators don't react quickly to the letter, then many of the events of *Fractal Gods* happen off-stage, and they should hear about them in passing via the media.

The Music of the Spheres

Peace contacts the investigators to tell them that he needs them to meet at his office, immediately. There is urgency in his voice – he doesn't sound happy.

When the investigators get there, they discover a metal canister sitting on his desk. It is wired to a simple amplifier and speaker. A buzzing voice welcomes the investigators, and introduces itself as Charlie, one of Hector's associates.

Charlie explains that there is trouble brewing in Nebraska, and that he has been *allowed* to contact Hector Breach's associates and direct them to Hayden in Nebraska.

With that rather blunt announcement, Charlie asks if they have any questions.

Charlie is happy to help where he can, and can tell the investigators any of the following:

- ◆ The creatures that did this to him are known as the mi-go. (But more than that he will not say.)
- ◆ He does not know what the problem in Nebraska is, but the mi-go are particularly agitated by events that are taking place in Nebraska.
- ◆ He suggests that they start by checking local media before moving to investigate in person.

In general Charlie is as helpful as he can be, but ultimately his mi-go masters have given him very limited information.

Charlie will not travel with the investigators, and before too long Charlie's "minder" (a large, heavily built gentleman in a black suit) comes to take Charlie away.

The Media: When the investigators check for stories about Hayden, Nebraska, the only newsworthy story concerns the arrest of Stan Arnold for the murder of his girlfriend Carrie Osbourne...

The Doomhunt Papers #2

CHARACTER WITNESSES SOUGHT

Character witnesses are being sought by lawyers acting on behalf of Stanley Arnold who murdered his live-in girlfriend Carrie Osbourne last week.

Mr Arnold, who works as a computer technician at the GPCA, is currently held at the Sheriff's office in the courthouse.

Character witnesses are being sought by lawyers representing Mr Arnold's parents, Brad and Tammy Arnold.

Mr Arnold, who apparently strangled Miss Osbourne in the course of an argument, turned himself in to Sheriff Kaufman.

Friends and colleagues of Mr Arnold have expressed shock and disbelief at his actions, describing them as "uncharacteristic".

Mr Arnold's trial is due to start next month.

Further adventures

Through their connections with Peace Investigations and the Doomhunt programme, the investigators can become involved in all sorts of further investigations.

Finally, Cheshire Hunt can get them involved in the *At Your Door* campaign. After everything they have been through so far, *At Your Door* should make a pleasant change of pace, and a fitting finale.

Notes

Doomhunt grew out of a way to create a situation in which a series of unrelated *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios could be linked together, without suspending too much belief.

The Author

Steve Hatherley is also the creator of *Tales of Terror*, a collection of adventure seeds for *Call of Cthulhu* and other

roleplaying games. For more details visit
www.talesoferror.net

The Doomhunt Papers Reprinted

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