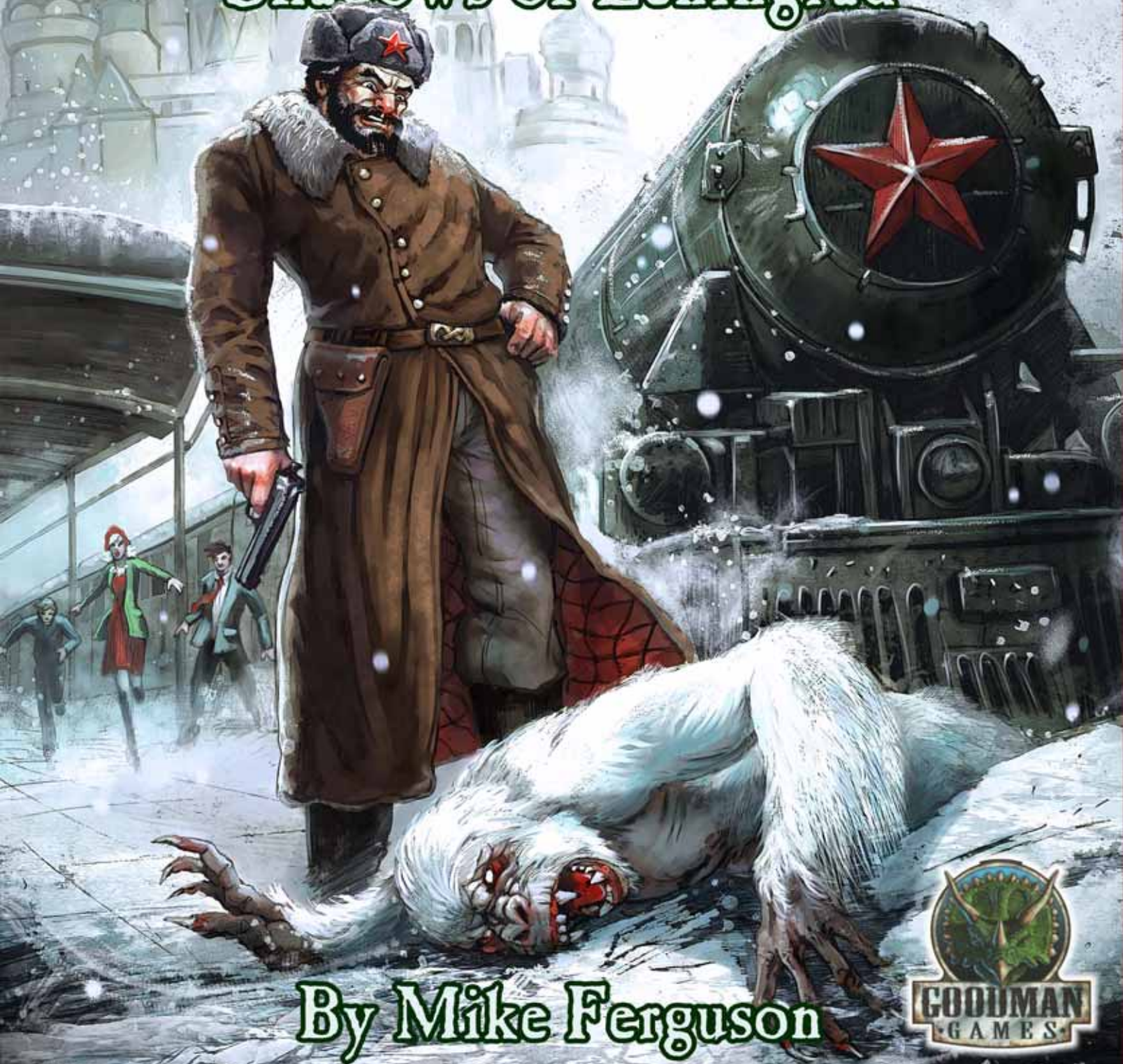


Vol.  
III

# AGE of CTHULHU

## Shadows of Leningrad



By Mike Ferguson





# AGE OF CTHULHU

## Shadows of Leningrad

### Volume III

A 1920's

*Call of Cthulhu*<sup>®</sup>

Adventure

By

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## Introduction

In the months following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, many of the private art collections belonging to former members of Russian royalty were confiscated by the state and placed in the State Museum in St. Petersburg. These collections contained some of the most well-known works of art in Eastern Europe, such as Karl Briullov's *The Last Day of Pompeii* and Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*. Such works of art were put on public display by the new Soviet state, so that all of its people could enjoy their beauty for the first time. Joining these great works of art were pieces by Soviet painters such as Isaak Brodsky, Alexander Deynaka, and Nikolay Katsakin. Exhibited alongside these artists were several works by Charlotte Geoffrey, an American painter married to a rising Soviet politician named Alexei Orkonov.

**Winter, 1927:** Three years after St. Petersburg was rechristened Leningrad in honor of the original leader of the Revolution, Josef Stalin, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, expelled Leon Trotsky and his supporters from the Communist party. He then set in motion a number of events that would forever change Soviet society, such as the industrialization of the Soviet Union through his Five-Year Plans, the collectivization of agriculture, and the ruthless purges and deportation of so-called "enemies of the State." As Stalin moved to break up the old Tsarist feudal structure and sweep all before him in a wave of Soviet propaganda, so would be lost the darker aspects of the collective folklore of Russia's peasantry. One of the darker tales to be forgotten from memories long ago were rumors of strange, furry ape-like creatures lurking in the snow-swept shadows of the cities, or ordinary citizens going mad or disappearing. The rumors were considered folly by most, and the disappearances were more likely to mean that someone was an enemy of the State rather than the victim of some creature out of the dark past.

Charlotte Geoffrey, the American expatriate still living in Leningrad, abruptly dies this year. The curator of the State Museum – Yuri Kamzanov – decides that the institution is best rid of her work. Under orders from the Politburo, he invites friends, colleagues, and associates from around the world to Leningrad. His intent is to sell what he can of Geoffrey's works in the Museum, as well as what remains of her private collection, which now belongs to the State.

But Charlotte Geoffrey's secrets did not die with her. They still remain locked away in her art ...

## Keeper Information

Long before the existence of the Soviet Union – or, for that matter, the existence of Russia – the people of the Kievan Rus were invaded by the Mongol hordes from the east. Under the iron rule of Batu Khan, the Mongol yoke took control of, or simply ransacked, much of what we now know of as western Russia. The invaders brought many things with them from their homelands in Mongolia – including, some would say, strange and horrid creatures that followed their trail of death and destruction. Some called these creatures *mirka*.

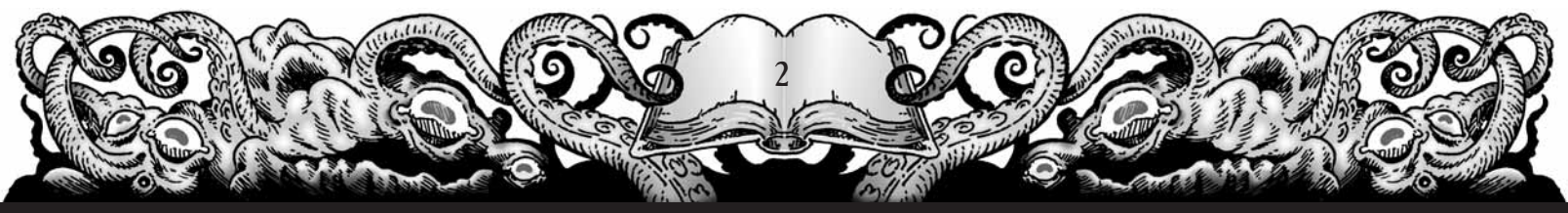
Most called them *yeti*.


Many peasants fought the *yeti*. Many died. The rest learned to live in fear of the creatures. The *yeti*, for the most part, left the peasants alone – as long as the creatures could take what they wanted from the farms and houses of men. However, upon occasion, the *yeti* demanded blood as tribute to Ithaqua, their Lord and Master. And if blood – in the form of sacrifice – was not given willingly, then the *yeti* took it by force.

Amidst these dark times, a priest called Vasilii Orkonov built a church in what was to eventually become St. Petersburg and Leningrad. The Church of Saint Theodosius, built from marble with the gold of nobles and the silver tongue of Orkonov, ostensibly served as a beacon of light for the good people of faith in the area. In the catacombs beneath the Church though, darker secrets lurked. Orkonov's true allegiance lay with Ithaqua, and with the arcane power he hoped to wrest from an arcane tome known only as the **Книга Тёмной Зимы** (Kniga Tyomnoi Zimei) – the *Book of Dark Winter*.

The Cult of Ithaqua, as it became known, grew in secret over the generations, slowly gaining forbidden knowledge and power. Secrets from the *Book of Dark Winter* fell from its pages into the hands of the cult's leaders, who invariably were descendants of Vasilii Orkonov. Though these descendants eventually went mad, they attained great power. Some became archbishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, while others gained power as the Orkonov family eventually became royalty under the rule of Ivan the Terrible in the 16th century.

The heart of the Cult's power – apart from the *Book of Dark Winter* – came from the Inner Sanctum created in the catacombs under the Church. There, the followers of Ithaqua slaughtered hundreds of innocents in bloody, bestial ceremonies, all made in tribute to the Great Old One. Part of these ceremonies included using the blood of their sacrifices





to paint elaborate (and gruesome) murals upon the walls of the catacombs. The high priests conducting the sacrifices often mixed this blood with bright, colorful paints, allowing the murals to be intricately detailed. Many of the murals, in their own horrific way, rivaled works of masters like Da Vinci and Rembrandt. Each successive mural that was created added to the mystical power of the Cult, harnessing eldritch energies from other worlds.

As the power of the Cult grew, however, it could not continue to remain hidden from the notice of the Grand Princes and the Tsars of Russia. Recognizing its malevolent nature, Tsar Peter I (“Peter the Great”) had members of his secret police discreetly assassinate most of the highest-ranking members of the Cult. The rest were shipped off to Siberia, never to be seen again. The church in which the rituals of Ithaqua had been conducted was razed to the ground, and the Cult was thought destroyed forever.


Descendants of the Orkonov family survived, though, and kept the unholy dreams of their ancestors alive, slowly rebuilding the power of their cult. One of these descendants, Alexei Orkonov, became a prominent figure in the Communist party in the early twentieth century. He

managed to reacquire the ruins of the church once built by his family, and built a grand *dacha* over its remains. Shortly thereafter, he married a talented American painter whom he had met in London.

Charlotte Geoffrey fell in love with the new home built for her by her new, mysterious husband. In particular, she fell in love with the ruins it stood over. By chance, she discovered a cache of paints while exploring the ruins beneath the basement, and began to use them in her own works. The ancient paints, infused with the primal energies of Ithaqua and the horrors unleashed in the Great Old One’s name, allowed Charlotte to create some of the greatest works of her artistic career. Her finished works also eventually drove her – and her husband Alexei – utterly mad, as many of her disturbing paintings became gateways to other worlds.

By the time the investigators make their way to Leningrad, it is already too late. Charlotte Geoffrey is dead by her own hand, having escaped her descent into madness by finding the cold embrace of death. Alexei Orkonov and Charlotte’s young daughter Katarina have both apparently become raving lunatics, committed by the State to the sanitarium known as the Revolution Hospital.





But the slumbering evil of Ithaqua, awoken by the works of Charlotte Geoffrey, grows in power with each passing moment, waiting to announce its presence in the mortal realms. It will be up to the investigators to learn the secrets lurking within her paintings, and to stop the growing power of Ithaqua before it is too late.

## Investigation Summary

*Shadows of Leningrad* is designed as a free-form investigation, where the player characters can take any number of paths (indeed, even doubling back on their trail) in their quest to learn the truth about the death of Charlotte Geoffrey and the secrets of her sinister paintings. The adventure is organized into scenes, so that a keeper can move easily from one to the next as necessary, without requiring a strict linear order of events.

**Player Beginning, page 5:** In which the investigators attend a memorial service, and learn of the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Charlotte Geoffrey.

**Scene 1 – The Orkonov Estate, page 9:** In which the investigators go to the *dacha* of Charlotte Geoffrey, meet a strange fellow, and learn some disturbing things about her paintings and her home.

**Scene 2 – The Revolution Hospital, page 15:** In which the investigators track down Charlotte’s youngest daughter Katarina, encounter members of the secret police that have their own agenda, and begin to learn the dark legacy of the Orkonov family.

**Scene 3 – The State Museum, page 20:** In which the investigators see first-hand the full beauty – and the horrors – of Charlotte’s paintings. They also encounter the servants of Ithaqua for the first time, and learn of the ruins beneath the Orkonov estate, as well as a member of that cursed family who might be there still.

**Scene 4 – Return To The Orkonov Estate, page 25:** The investigators meet up again with the strange fellow, albeit under more dire circumstances. They explore ruins of an unholy church, and find a book that may contain the secrets to stopping an unholy evil – or unleashing it upon the world.

**Scene 5 – The Mariinsky Theatre, page 29:** In which the investigators uncover the mastermind behind the return of Ithaqua, watch a performance of beauty transform into unspeakable horror, and head into the cold Russian wilderness to avert catastrophe.

**Scene 6 – The Frozen Temple Of The Khanate, page 32:** In which the investigators journey outside the city and find the ruins of an ancient temple and the remains of a massacre. There, they discover an unspeakable horror attempting to cross through a mystical gateway into the realms of mortal man.

**Investigations in Leningrad:** The adventure focuses heavily on investigation. While the streets of Leningrad are fraught with danger, investigators can make their way through the city – and the frozen wilderness beyond it – without the need to fight.

Each clue offers several leads that move the investigation forward. The investigators can decide which path the story should take by which lead they choose to follow. The adventure is designed to offer investigators redundant options, decreasing the odds that they might exhaust all their leads. Each encounter offers a number of skill solutions to the investigators that should help them in their efforts, but the keeper is always the final arbiter for each scene, and should encourage the imaginative efforts of the players.

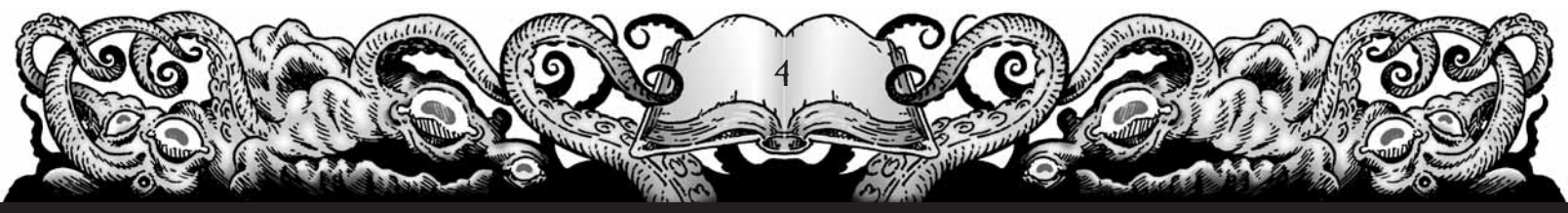
If the investigators find themselves completely at a loss as to what to do, the keeper should allow the investigators


### But I Don’t Speak Russian! What Are They Saying???

This adventure is designed to evoke the atmosphere and intrigue of adventuring in the Soviet Union of the 1920s. However, unless the investigators are Russian, odds are that they don’t speak the Russian language.

Rather than bog down the adventure with endless Other Language rolls, it is recommended that the investigators simply be given a base percentage of 50% in **Other Languages (Russian)**, thus allowing them to read and speak the language. They might not be able to understand complex words, or follow multiple ongoing conversations (as per the keeper’s discretion), but it should ease game play by assuming the investigators can engage in ordinary conversation with non-player characters. The pregenerated investigators that can be found in this adventure all have **Other Language (Russian)** for this reason.

As always, it is ultimately up to the keeper to decide how languages – and all other rules – should be handled in the adventure.





to struggle for a brief while before assisting them with an opportune Idea roll. The keeper should also feel free to utilize some of the minor NPCs presented in the various scenes at any point in the adventure (where reasonable) as a method of kickstarting the adventure if things are headed nowhere, and if someone is needed to provide a little guidance to the investigators.

**A Note on Skills:** The fifth edition of the *Call of Cthulhu* rules does not call for differentiated skill checks. In practice, all uncontested tasks are equally difficult, and it is only the character's skill that comes into question. *Shadows of Leningrad* runs against canon by noting instances in which the task attempted might be more difficult than another – comprehending a coded post-Atlantean spell for instance, as opposed to simply translating the Latin works of occult magician Johannes Trithemius. The keeper is encouraged to disregard or employ this rule, as he sees fit.

When skill checks are listed in the text, they are followed by a percentile figure. For example, **Cthulhu Mythos** (-25%). In this case, the investigator would reduce his chance of success by 25%, making it a challenging task indeed! In some instances, the skill is followed by a bonus, for example, **Archaeology** (+10%), in which case the character would increase his skill by 10%, increasing his odds of success.

In some instances, a skill chance might be elevated above 100%, or reduced to less than 0%. If the skill check is important to the game, the investigator should still make the attempt, given that rolls of 01% or 100% are always a success or a failure, respectively.

**Weather:** During the course of the investigators' stay in the area, the skies are cloudy, with snow falling intermittently. Thanks to the thick cloud cover, Katarina suffers no serious effects if she leaves the hospital (see **Scene 2**) during daytime.

## Player Beginning

Before the adventure begins, give the players **Handouts A & B**, and ask each player to describe his background and relationship with Charlotte Geoffrey, with Yuri Kamzanov, or with the State Museum. Sample stories are provided with the pregenerated characters. If using original characters, the following reasons are suggested as to why the investigators would be headed to Leningrad. Use whatever reason seems appropriate for each investigator.

**We're Here For The Paintings:** The paintings of Charlotte Geoffrey, while considered macabre by most, are

quite valuable in the art world. Museum owners, antiquarians, and collectors would love to get their hands on her works, especially considering that the strange circumstances of her death have only added to the value of her art.

**We're Here For The Book:** Any investigator familiar with Cthulhu Mythos knows that there is some connection between the Orkonov family and the *Book of Dark Winter*. Almost anything that was written about the *Book* during the past three centuries was invariably penned by someone named Orkonov. Charlotte's death represents a golden opportunity to track down the *Book*.

**We're Here For The Girl:** Personal friends or acquaintances of Charlotte might be concerned for the welfare of her young daughter Katarina, particularly as she has been committed to an asylum run by the Soviet state. Concerned investigators from places such as the United States or Great Britain would have an interest in bringing young Katarina back to their own countries, where she could be given the best medical attention of the time.

**We're Here For Justice:** Although the circumstances of her death are not well known by the general public, rumor already abounds that Charlotte met her tragic fate

