

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

ST. PAUL 1920'S – PREGEN CHARACTERS

Left Hand of Mythos by Justin Alexander
Character Backgrounds by Chris Malone

I originally designed [Left Hand of Mythos](#) as a convention scenario for Gen Con 2017. It rapidly metastasized beyond that purpose and had to be rapidly abridged to fit within the four-hour convention slot.

My compatriot, collaborator, and co-GM at Gen Con that year was Chris Malone. To facilitate convention play, Chris designed four fabulous pregenerated *Trail of Cthulhu* characters. Following the best practices we had learned during the Cthulhu Masters Tournament, these included fully developed backgrounds for each character, including tightly knit relationships with each other to empower the players to seek strong, powerful roleplaying choices.

We ended up using these same characters for several other sessions at our local tables, including an adaptation of the classic “Edge of Darkness” scenario for *Call of Cthulhu*, which was restructured to feature the death of Father Rand.

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JAKE CONNOR, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

Age: 29

Jake was born in Minneapolis to a Protestant family of Irish and English immigrants. The eldest son (his sister Mary is the eldest of the family), expectations were set high for Jake and he constantly struggled to meet the expectations of his parents. While life was never easy for Jake as he was growing up, he never experienced true poverty. Jake left school early to work a pair of jobs to support the family, and found himself struggling with the monotony of toil without the promise of something greater. At the onset of The Great War Jake joined the Army in hopes of making a difference. His parents were furious, and all but disowned him as he headed off to basic training.

Initially trained as an infantryman, Jake showed a flair for writing and photography and was detailed to the press corps where he served primarily as a cameraman, documenting the events of the war. He was frequently detailed to create propaganda images and write messages to encourage the purchase of war bonds, as well as improve enlistment. During one such assignments he was matched with Maxwell Bruener, the son of a wealthy young German industrialist who had "enlisted" to help improve recruitment among German-Americans. A quick friendship was formed, and although they only spent several months together.

Through the detachment of the camera, Jake could distance himself from the horrors of the war and returned home afterwards plagued only by infrequent nightmares and a mild case of claustrophobia. Upon his return to Minneapolis he worked for a short stint at the Minneapolis Tribune as a beat writer and photographer. With the onset of prohibition, Jake wrote several scathingly critical anti-Prohibition articles which ultimately cost him his job, but endeared him to certain elements of the Twin Cities underworld. With these connections beginning to form, Jake found himself able to find work investigating minor offenses in the criminal underworld and solving crimes that people would rather not bring to the police. He now runs a private detective business, making use of his excellent photographic skills to further his business.

Jake's reputation has taken an odd turn after he solved a missing persons case several years ago. Two seemingly separate instances of a young man and a young woman disappearing led Jake and his companions to a secretive cult operating within the Freemasons that was engaging in human sacrifice in the name of some esoteric and foul deity. Jake and company acted quickly and rescue one of those who had disappeared (the other, sadly, was long dead) and bring the perpetrators to justice. Now the local police come to Jake occasionally with queries or leads into strange or occult cases.

RELATIONSHIPS

Maxwell Bruener — Max and Jake have remained close friends after the war, and frequently spend time together. Jake doesn't always understand Max's philosophical ramblings, and often argues with him over Prohibition (Max is a staunch advocate for the Volstead Act and Prohibition), Jake does appreciate Max's enthusiasm and kindness. Max proved himself to Jake during the Freemason investigation, as when the chips were down in the hidden sanctum, Max threw himself into the fray, fighting to stop the murder of an innocent.

Father Gustav Rand — Max introduced Jake to Father Rand some months prior to the Freemason as a good friend. Unlike the clergy Jake had grown up with and met during the war, Rand showed himself to be a friendly, easy-going sort with a great deal of intelligence and wisdom. During the Freemason case, Rand provided valuable insight into several clues linking evidence from the victim's residences to the inner cult at the Masons. Jake has grown to respect Rand's input and value his council, even if he is a Papist.

Margaret Pearson — Maggie is Jake's cousin, come over from Boston to get her doctorate in the Sciences from the University of Minnesota. Looking to reconnect with his family and get back into their good graces, Jake has taken it upon himself to protect Maggie and ensure that she is not abused. Against better judgement, Jake asked Maggie to help with examining some of the evidence during the Freemason case. She was able to identify a unique sedative used during the abductions, and link it to a crucial suspect with access to it. You find her forensic skills and apt mind invaluable in difficult cases.

MAXWELL BRUENER, DILETTANTE

Age: 35

The son of a rich German manufacturing magnate, Maxwell Bruener grew up in Minneapolis in relative ease and luxury. His father, Jurig, was an overbearing and demanding man. He detested Maxwell's adventurous spirit and gentle heart, and was a strict disciplinarian, often resorting to physical punishment, especially when he was drunk. Maxwell thrived despite his father's frequent beatings and denouncements, and spent most of his youth and early adulthood exploring literature, the arts, and sports.

When America formally joined the War Jurig forced Maxwell son to enlist, hoping to either toughen him up and turn his mind to more serious matters or kill him off. This idea was not kept a secret to Maxwell, as the last letter from his father during training read "come back a man in my own mold, or as a corpse to be buried". Despite his father's insistence to Max's commanders of fair treatment, Max was seen by elements in his command as a recruitment opportunity. He had a member of the press corps, Jake Connor, assigned to him to document his time in the Army to drive recruitment of the somewhat reticent German-American population, as well as facilitate war bonds. Jake and Max became fast friends, and spent many evenings sharing stories and ideas in good company.

Max avoided significant action in the War until he took part in the Third Battle of the Aisne in defense against the German Spring Offensive. Ten days of shelling, gas attacks, mud, and death almost broke Max's spirit. Without Jake's reassurance and strength, Max is certain he would have either died or come out of the war a much different man. Max survived the Battle physically untouched, but was scarred by the experience.

In an ironic twist of fate, Max was called back home mid-May following the battle due to the death of his father, whose days of drinking had finally caught up to him. With the affairs of the estate quickly put into order and business well-managed with little demand from Max, he found himself melancholic and desperate. Max began filling his time with philanthropy and personal growth. Home in time for the political machinations around the Volstead act, Max strong supported the temperance movement and the outlaw of liquor, pledging money, support and influence to the cause. In addition to his altruistic and political engagements, Max began to participate in theosophical societies and delved into philosophical texts, even dabbling into the occult. These explorations brought him into contact with Father Gustav Rand, a catholic priest who talked of religion in a way that encouraged Max's exploration, without condemnation or proselytization.

At times Max helps Jake out with his private investigation work as a diversion into more exciting occupation. Several years ago, you, Jake, Father Rand, and Jake's cousin Maggie helped him clear a case that was most unusual. Two seemingly separate instances of a young man and a young woman disappearing led Jake and his companions to a secretive cult operating within the Freemasons that was engaging in human sacrifice in the name of some esoteric and foul deity. Jake and company acted quickly and rescue one of those who had disappeared (the other, sadly, was long dead) and bring the perpetrators to justice. During the fray, Max found strength and purpose, charging into the fray and fighting the cultists with vigor. Now the local police come to Jake occasionally with queries or leads into strange or occult cases.

RELATIONSHIPS

Jake Connor — Jake is Max's closest friend and confidant. While Jake is disinterested in Max's spiritual and philosophical musings, and they disagree vehemently on the matter of Prohibition, Max cannot imagine a better ally. Max rarely feels more useful or competent than when he is working a case with Jake.

Father Gustav Rand — Father Rand is Max's intellectual and spiritual mentor, allowing Max to explore the world of the unseen without prescribing his Catholic dogma or suggesting a right way of things, merely saying "I know you'll come around to the right way of it sooner or later, they all do..."

Margaret "Maggie" Pearson — Maggie, Jake's cousin, is like no other woman that Max has met. Her high-spirited nature, quick wit, and vast knowledge have intimidated Max at times, and she seems to enjoy stumping Max. Regardless, Max is thoroughly taken with her, and has been spending time perfecting a poem that he plans to deliver to her to begin courting her.

FATHER GUSTAV RAND, CLERGY

Age: 60

Gustav Rand was born in Austria in 1865, the youngest boy in a large Catholic Family. With little opportunity to distinguish himself above his brothers and sisters, he went to Seminary more as an eventuality as a passion. It wasn't until he joined the Jesuit order that he found some semblance of a calling, travelling the world as a missionary. Helping those in need and facing dangers with strength and faith connected him more to God than any scripture or devotional did. His diligence and fortitude recommended him for some of the most extreme places in the world, as he traveled to Ethiopia, Brazil, Guatemala, Australia, and other remote places.

As he aged and his body began to tire, he began to seek other opportunities to explore and express his faith. Father Rand's exposure to numerous cultures granted him a degree of prestige within his order, and he could transition out of his missionary role and began a more scholarly calling. In 1913 Father Rand took a teaching position at Boston College, teaching archaeology and anthropology while undertaking various expeditions.

In 1919 he traveled with several students and faculty on one such expedition to Libya and the ancient city of Cyrene near modern Benghazi. It was here that Rand had his first encounter with obvious supernatural evil, as the unearthing of an ancient chamber resulted in release of an obviously violent entity that caused members of the dig to become violent and blasphemous. Only with the assistance of Maggie Pearson, a prodigal student, and the strength of will were you able to successfully perform an ancient rite uncovered in scrolls at the site and banish the foul creature. While many might have found these events a challenge to the faith, Rand found them affirming; he had always known supernatural evil exists. What ended up shaking his faith was the response of his Order. Upon filing a report and wishing to further examine the site and document the event, The Jesuit Order terminated the expedition and commanded Rand to destroy all evidence of what had happened, and commanded him to remain silent.

Rand did mostly as ordered, only retaining private notes and few of the scrolls that helped him bind and banish the creature. Shortly thereafter Father Rand left the Jesuit Order and petitioned to become a diocese priest. The Archdiocese of St. Paul had recently suffered significant attrition, and so he was assigned there. Father Rand quickly insinuated himself into several philosophical circles and serves as an occasional guest lecturer at local colleges. To his surprise, Maggie Pearson arrived in the Twin Cities several years after he did.

Through his connections to Max Bruener, a recent friend and lay student, Rand has found himself the most curious assistant in a private investigation firm run by Jake Connor. Several years ago you were approached by Max to help parse out some writings that were found at the scene of several disappearances. You helped identify the texts and continued with the case, surprised to find yourself again in the company of Maggie Pearson, who happened to be Jake's cousin. The case was most unusual; two seemingly separate instances of a young man and a young woman disappearing led Jake and his companions to a secretive cult operating within the Freemasons that was engaging in human sacrifice in the name of some esoteric and foul deity. Jake and company acted quickly and rescue one of those who had disappeared (the other, sadly, was long dead) and bring the perpetrators to justice. Now the local police come to Jake and company with queries or leads into strange or occult cases.

RELATIONSHIPS

Jake Connor — Jake's a veteran and a private investigator. Father Rand finds Jake's passion and energy refreshing, but sometimes finds himself frustrated with Jake's lack of introspection and philosophical inquiry. Regardless, Rand knows that Jake is courageous and respects his strength.

Maxwell Bruenner — Max is a wealthy young man in charge of a manufacturing business left to him by his father. Max came to Father Rand during a spiritual crisis, seeking answers to the things he saw during the War and trying to understand his place in a seemingly cruel world. Father Rand has helped to guide Max's inquiry, encouraging exploration of the spiritual and the unseen, as opposed to coercing or suggesting that he become a Catholic. This has formed a strong bond between the two. The only real point of contention is Max's vocal agreement and support of Prohibition, a point which you two disagree upon, but you feel much less passionate about. You took on vows of poverty and celibacy, not sobriety.

Maggie Pearson — You first met Maggie in 1917 when she was a student in your Early Religions course at BC. An apt student with energy and passion, you quickly became fond of the young girl distinguishing herself in a place that only just started allowing women to attend. On the Libya expedition, she handled herself smartly, helping you eradicate the entity before it could cause serious harm. Since your reintroduction to her in St. Paul you see her regularly, either when working cases with her cousin or on your regular Wednesday luncheons.

MARGARET “MAGGIE” PEARSON, SCIENTIST

Age: 26

Maggie grew up in Boston, the eldest of four daughters, in a middle-class family, her father a dentist with her mother at home. Showing a strong mind with an aptitude for critical thought and quick wits, she claimed a place among the first class of female students at Boston College. Despite the hostile environment, oppressive curfews, and constant scrutiny from the administration, Maggie thrived in an environment that rewarded her intellect and provided her new experiences. Virtually all her professors were inimical towards her, save for one notable exception.

Her freshman year met Father Gustav Rand, a Jesuit who was teaching archaeology and anthropology. He treated her fairly and with praise and encouragement, showing her respect and deference that few others would. Even when not studying under Father Rand, Maggie would regularly meet with Father Rand and discuss her studies.

In 1919 Rand invited Maggie on an expedition to Libya. With much cajoling, pleading, and threatening Maggie convinced her father to allow her to go, and it was there that she faced a life-changing event. During the dig at Cyrene, near modern Benghazi, strange things began to happen. Workers and other students acted violently, and several people became hurt. After a horrifying experience where she felt the alien presence of some foul thing pressing into her mind, Maggie convinced Father Rand that a supernatural threat was present. Working together, Maggie and Rand used some ancient scrolls and a bit of alchemical knowledge to destroy the entity. Maggie returned to BC shaken, but confident in her strength and ability.

Shortly afterward, Father Rand left the Jesuit Order and Boston College. While upsetting, this event only spurred Maggie on to finish her bachelor's degree and leave that place. Following her graduation from BC, she managed to land a graduate position at the University of Minnesota, where she teaches and studies today in pursuit of her doctorate in the Sciences. Her decision to move to Minnesota was partly prompted by the fact that her father refused to let her go somewhere without family, especially without a strong male presence to guide her to make sure she remains virtuous. To this end, her cousin Jake Connor serves as a chaperone and confidant. A larger part of her decision was informed by her correspondences with Father Rand, and her desire to reconnect with him.

About two years ago Maggie began helping her cousin Jake with the private investigation business that he owns and runs. During an odd case involving the disappearance of a couple of seemingly unconnected people, Maggie identified a rare sedative used on both victims, and used her resources to find the supplier (and purchaser) of that sedative. The case turned strange, as the two people who disappeared were involved with an inner sect of the Freemasons, which turned out to be pursuing occult ritual and human sacrifice. You and the others were able to disrupt the ritual and stop them, but only after one of the kidnapped victims were killed. Since then you have been learning how to handle yourself in a fight and have helped Jake from time to time.

RELATIONSHIPS

Jake Connor — Your cousin Jake is a veteran of the War and a private eye. He is protective of you and at times seems to regret his decision to involve you in his line of work. You love him, but he can sometimes frustrate you with his superficial thinking. His vehement anti-Prohibition rhetoric can sometimes get tiresome as well, as you find that the need to drink is a silly diversion from rationality.

Maxwell Bruener — Max is Jake's friend and helps on cases sometimes. While he seems kind and gentle, you have seen his strength and courage during the Freemason case when he charged into a room full of cultists and fought them off with his bare hands. His philosophical inquiries are engaging, and overall you find him a pleasant enough fellow to spend time with.

Father Rand — Father Rand is more than a mentor or a professor to you, he is your confidant and guide. At times you have wondered if you might have more than a reasonable amount of affection towards him, but you quickly squash these thoughts with study and diversion.