



The Relic

An Alternate S.S. Wallaroo for Beyond the Mountains of Madness

Introduction

This document outlines changes I made to the *Beyond the Mountains of Madness* campaign, written by Charles and Janyce Engan and published by Chaosium. It offers Keepers a variation of the *Wallaroo* encounter, and is designed to be used in conjunction with the 1999 campaign sourcebook. This resource is intended for Keepers only! It contains spoilers, so if you are planning to play *Beyond the Mountains of Madness*, you should immediately turn around your longboat and row back to the *Gabrielle*.

The Relic

The Chapter 6 sequence, “The Relic,” is one of my favorite parts of *Beyond the Mountains of Madness*. The campaign book instructs: “Whichever direction they go they stumble upon misshapen parts of skeletons, flesh stripped bare and frozen bodily fluids encrusted within the wood they lie upon.” Clearly we’re all big fans of John Carpenter’s *The Thing* around here! As much as I love this encounter, I wanted it to be even more creepy and disturbing. So I revised it, borrowing the animiculi from later in the campaign and foreshadowing a possible future for the *Gabrielle*. I also added a strange artifact—the “Cthulhu tupilak,” which gave me the opportunity to use one of my favorite Lovecraftian props from the HPL Historical Society. A full description of the tupilak is included at the end of this document.

The following material is designed to supplement and enhance pages 107–109 of *Beyond the Mountains of Madness*. The original text and illustrations are required to properly run this encounter. The Keeper may note that the *Wallaroo* animiculum is more aggressive than the creatures described in Chapter 16, and behaved more in line with *The Thing*.

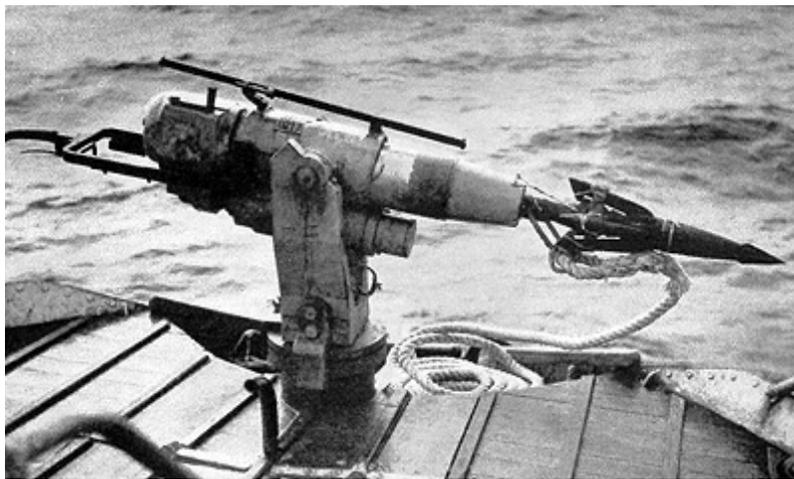
Background

Factory whaling is a deliciously gruesome industry, and knowing more about it may help the Keeper establish a properly horrific atmosphere—in more ways than one, the *Wallaroo* is a slaughterhouse.

Factory Whaling

The S.S. *Wallaroo* is an Australian factory ship designed to operate in Antarctic waters. A floating processing plant, the *Wallaroo* flenses and processes “rorqual,” or baleen whales, which are harpooned by its small fleet of catcher boats. As its name suggests, a factory ship is large, ponderous, and not known for its aromatic delights. Catcher boats are significantly smaller, and contain crews experienced with the actual hunting and killing of whales. Featuring low profiles that invite the frigid water to sweep across their decks, catcher boats are easily distinguished by the harpoon guns jutting from their bows. Catchers may roam leagues away from the mother ship while hunting whales, and are often out of sight for days. Sometimes catcher boats are assisted by airplanes, and some large factory ships feature aerial catapults.

When a whale is discovered and chased down, the gunner aims just behind its ribs and pulls the trigger of the harpoon gun. A six-foot long, 120-pound harpoon is blasted forward by 14 ounces of gunpowder, a length of rope trailing from its shaft as it flies to its target. If aimed accurately, the harpoon sinks deep into the vitals of the beast. Wooden toggles snap free and the barbs spring open, crushing a vial of sulfuric acid which triggers an explosive charge. This explosion rarely kills the whale instantly, which is where the rope comes into play. Often the whale makes a run for the open sea, or “sounds” beneath the waves to escape. Anchored by the mass of the catcher boat, the rope reels from the winch behind the fleeing prey. Eventually the wounded leviathan slows down or resurfaces, only to earn another explosive harpoon to the guts.



An experienced crew may bring down a baleen whale with two or three harpoons. While these hunts are not as harrowing as the nineteenth-century sperm whale hunts depicted in *Moby-Dick*, they are still dangerous, and crewmen risk being washed off the deck, mangled by ropes, or even tossed into the boiler during the fury of the hunt! This is why catcher crews are paid more than the workers on the factory ship, with skilled gunners drawing the highest pay.

Once the whale is dead, the crew pumps the carcass full of compressed air to keep it from sinking. Its tail flukes are hacked off, and the whale is marked by a buoy for later collection. While removing the flukes helps with the eventual retrieval process, there’s also a superstition that unless so maimed, a dead whale may return to life and swim away!

The carcass is eventually dragged to the mother ship for butchering. A crane on the factory ship hauls the whale on deck, where it is flensed by the factory's crew. (Unlike later factory ships, the *Wallaroo* does not contain a stern slipway, where a "tail grab" is used to winch the whale to the flensing deck.) The whale's appendages are cut off, and the blubber is peeled from the corpse in great "blankets" using a crane and a system of toggles. As the leviathan is dismembered, its pieces are lowered into the hold for further rendering, reduced to oil in boilers and pressure cookers in a process known as "trying out." Meanwhile, the jaw is processed for its baleen. A flexible, keratinous substance used to filter plankton, baleen is often—and inaccurately—referred to as "whalebone." Baleen is used in the manufacture of collar-stiffeners, hats, petticoats, corsets, whips, springs, trunk frames, fishing rods, back-scratchers, and parasols. The actual bones of the whale may also be harvested, although this is rare in the 1930s. A few of the smaller bones may be used by sailors to create pieces of scrimshaw, but unlike sperm whales, rorqual have no teeth, so souvenirs are limited.

The S.S. *Wallaroo*

Based out of Newcastle, New South Wales, the *Wallaroo* started life in 1899 as the passenger steamer *Esmond Roseburrow*. Rebuilt as a whaling factory in 1927, she was rechristened *Wallaroo*, named after a type of kangaroo. The *Wallaroo* is small for a factory ship, and a touch primitive—the heyday of factory whaling is still two decades in the future, and her owners didn't exactly break the bank when they had her refitted. The *Wallaroo* went to sea with a hundred souls onboard, including Captain Stephen Willard, an American from a long line of Kingsport whalers, First Mate Adam Stringer, a Gallipoli veteran from Melbourne, and Chief Engineer Jasper Moss, a Welshman transplanted to Tasmania. The *Wallaroo* left Newcastle accompanied by three diesel-powered catcher boats, the *Hippocamp*, *Wallaby*, and *Quiddity*.

Backstory

On October 18, the *Wallaroo* took on a Sibbald's rorqual, or blue whale, from the catcher *Quiddity*. A few days before it was harpooned, the whale had been infected by an animiculum. The creature broke free of the carcass during the early stages of its flensing, and promptly began infecting the ship. That evening, a sudden squall caught the *Wallaroo* unprepared and damaged her navigation systems. The ship lost contact with her catcher boats, and spent the next few days tossed by rough seas, helplessly driven southward. During this time, the animiculum spread throughout the crew, sowing paranoia and hostility. All the radios were smashed, and the engine room was sabotaged. The night of October 23, the healthy crewmen rounded up the infected and allegedly-infected seamen and trapped them in a cargo hold. Dousing the hold with diesel and gasoline, they burned their shipmates alive, shooting any creature who tried to escape the inferno.

Unfortunately, the animiculum had also infected the *Wallaroo*'s rats, and the cycle quickly began anew, leading to an armed skirmish on deck as the infected crew tried to reach the longboats. Believing that his ship was carrying a plague, Captain Willard decided to scuttle the *Wallaroo* and dispatch the surviving crewmen on the remaining longboat. Jasper Moss was assigned the task of exploding the boiler and sinking the ship. Privately convinced that a better course of action was total annihilation, Moss surprised Willard at his desk and shot his captain in the head with a revolver. He then passed through the ship like an angel

of death, murdering the remaining healthy crewmen. Sabotaging the boiler and laying charges of dynamite around the ship, Moss lit the long fuses and retired to the forward hold. Terrified of being burned alive, he chained himself to the bulkhead and prepared to drown. Although the explosions wrecked the *Wallaroo*, the ship did not sink as expected. Realizing his failure, Moss bit down on a shotgun and pulled the trigger.

Prelude: Radio Chatter

The Keeper may have the *Gabrielle* simply come upon the *Wallaroo* as described in the published text, or she may foreshadow the encounter during the “Hard Seas” section of Chapter 6. Along with the trials and tribulations of the *Gabrielle*, radio chatter from the “Furious Fifties” provides a week-long prelude to “The Relic.” The following chatter from October 19–22 may be role-played, woven into the rhythms of shipboard life, or simply summarized by MacIlvaine when he contacts the investigators the evening of October 25.

October 19

According to the morning weather broadcast, the Ross Sea is being ravaged by a sudden, terrible storm that swept down from the “Shrieking Sixties” during the night. Later that evening, a whaling ship named *Wallaroo* is reported missing, along with its three catcher boats, *Quiddity*, *Hippocamp*, and *Wallaby*. All vessels in the region around Cape Adare are instructed to keep a look-out.

October 20

An insurance company in Sydney announces that the *Hippocamp* has been discovered. With the exception of a gunner swept to sea during the storm, the crew is safe and sound. The catcher boat’s captain reports that their last contact was with the *Quiddity*, which was returning to sea after delivering a Sibbald’s rorqual to the *Wallaroo*.

October 21

The *Wallaby* is discovered the next day, but there are no signs of life onboard—not a single crewman is found! The attendant chatter is confused, with lonely operators offering various conjectures: “Wiped from the deck in the squall! You know those bloody catchers, Christ, they’re barely bloody *seaworthy*...” “Nah, I wager they was all drunk, mate, drunk as lords! What a sorry life those bastards have!” And so on.

October 22

The *Quiddity* is discovered by a German trawler, likewise abandoned and drifting without a crew. Once again, local radio chatter turns to the October 19 storm for an explanation, but one American radioman contends, “I heard from a kraut stoker that we don’t know the whole story, but his English was worse than my German, so...” This attracts replies such as, “The whole story? Right, mate, they was drunk, like I said!” and “No doubt! It was a submarine, mark my words, the krauts are at it again...”

October 25

Just before turning in for the night, MacIlvaine picks up a troubling broadcast, a lone radioman transmitting paranoid ramblings from an unknown source. Stumbling through

the fog enshrouding the *Gabrielle*, MacIlvaine alerts Captain Vredenburgh, Professor Moore, and an appropriate investigator.

Crowding into the radio room, they hear a ghostly voice threading through a hissing cloud of static. The radioman has a thick German accent, and is speaking in a mixture of German and English: “Lies...*alles Lügen*...there was no sign of living men on board, *das ist wahr*...but they were there. This *Quiddity*. *Ich sah sie mit meinen eigenen Augen, ja, tot aber nicht ganz so tot! Mein Gott*... Something happened to them... *Hören sie mich?* Or will these... *Radiostrahlen* sink down, down to...*der Boden der Welt*, and be lost with the others? The men...they must have turned on each other, or turned *into* each other—” With a sudden squelch, the channel goes silent, and cannot be raised again.

It requires a **Language (German) roll** to translate the operator’s German phrases: “Lies...*all lies*...there was no sign of living men on board, *this is true*...but they were there. This *Quiddity*. *I saw them with my own eyes, yes, dead but not quite so dead! My God*... Something happened to them... *Can you hear me?* Or will these... *Radio-beams* sink down, down to...*the bottom of the world*, and be lost with the others?” A successful roll additionally recalls that the proper term for “radio waves” is *Radiowellen*. *Radio-strahlen*, or “radio beams,” is a strange phrase to use in this context. If the investigators interviewed McTighe back in Kingsport, they may recall that he also believed the world’s radio waves were somehow collecting at the “bottom of the world.”

Further Investigation

If an investigator instructs MacIlvaine to dig deeper, he asks other radio operators if they heard the German. All replies are negative—it’s as if the transmission came out of the fog directly to the *Gabrielle*. MacIlvaine suspends his inquiries as soon as he starts getting mocked—“To much single malt, eh laddie? Maybe your man was from Macquarie’s submarine, what?”

October 28

On October 28, the *Wallaroo* is officially declared lost at sea. It is soon forgotten, just another victim of the Shrieking Sixties.

November 6

As soon as the *Gabrielle* spots the *Wallaroo*, Captain Vredenburgh instructs MacIlvaine to notify the authorities. The captain orders First Mate Turlow to assemble a team and search for survivors. It’s certainly unlikely, but maybe they’ll find something worth salvaging?

Exterior of the *Wallaroo*

As described in *Beyond the Mountains of Madness*, the *Wallaroo* has been torn in half by the explosion of its boiler. Aft of the boiler, the stern is sunk beneath the pack ice, and is flooded with near-freezing water. The rest of the ship is trapped in the ice, and is similar to what’s described in the scenario, along with the following alterations:

Above Deck

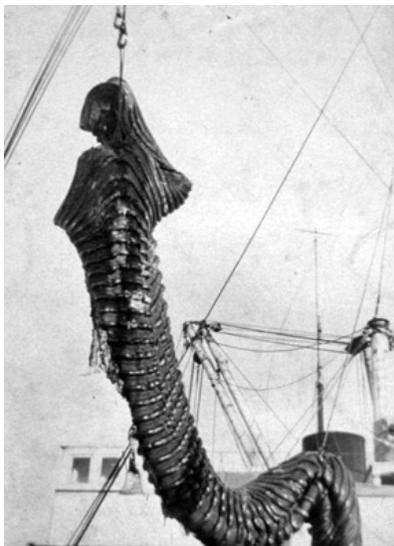
The *Wallaroo's* decks are covered by ice, and show evidence of multiple explosions. The davits are empty of all their longboats, most of which have been burned, except for one blasted by dynamite. The ship's masts and cranes are severely damaged, and the main winch is non-operational. Numerous spent casings are scattered across the deck, their brass glinting beneath the ice. A **Spot Hidden roll** finds a wooden crate covered by a sailor's oilskin jacket. It's labeled, "25 LBS. #5 NOBEL DYNAMITE, J.D. BLENHEIM & SONS, NEWCASTLE. HIGH EXPLOSIVES—DANGEROUS." The crate is empty save a dozen shotgun shells tossed inside.

The Skeletons

As described in the scenario text, the deck is covered by "misshapen parts of skeletons, flesh stripped bare and frozen bodily fluids encrusted within the wood they lie upon." If anyone *misses* their 1/1D4 SAN check at seeing these skeletons, allow them a **Spot Hidden roll**. A success reveals that a few of the fragments are unusual in shape. The bones seem slightly longer, or perhaps there are strange joints where there might not normally be so. A successful **Medicine roll** reveals around 1D4 deformations among the skeletal remains: extra ribs, an abnormally long femur, double rows of teeth. This realization is worth an additional 0/1 SAN loss. Any attempt to take the human remains to the *Gabrielle* for further study is immediately quashed by Turlow.

The Blue Whale

The flensing deck in front of the bridge is dominated by the carcass of an enormous blue whale. Only partially butchered, it lies sprawled on the "plan"—a temporary pinewood deck assembled to protect the permanent deck during the flensing process. The carcass was in the process of having its blubber stripped off, and is encircled by a frosty halo of gore. Before freezing over, its flesh was picked at by terns, and several flensing tools are locked in the carcass by the harsh cold. A twisted blanket of blubber lies suspended from the broken crane to drape over the edge of the ship, its partially-devoured remains sparkling with hoarfrost. It looks weirdly like some terrible sea-creature. Three bent harpoons are stacked along a steam-powered bone saw near the carcass. Pulled from the whale's body, they were intended to be hammered back into shape by the ship's blacksmith.



Examining the Carcass

A successful **Spot Hidden roll** discovers a bundle of dynamite pinned to the whale by a metal spike. A successful **Explosives roll** observes that the dynamite has no fuse; it possibly slipped out before the dynamite could explode? A halved **Spot Hidden roll** or a normal **Biology roll** may be used to discover three curious features about the whale, one feature revealed for each successful attempt. First, the whale seems to have some kind of deformity—there are tentacular appendages nestled into pockets of flesh near its severed flippers. If these are forcibly extracted, each extends to a length of seven feet and terminates in a spiny barb. Second, its eyes are several sizes larger than normal, and seem to be more developed than the eyes of a typical blue whale. A **Spot Hidden roll** made while examining the eyes finds clusters of smaller eyelets arranged around each normal eye. And third, there are seven puckered holes in the whale’s blubber, like several small somethings exploded outwards. Were these caused by harpoons? A successful **Know roll** discounts this theory—there are too many holes, they are too neat, and they are in the wrong places.

Keeper’s Note: If the Keeper wishes, she may charge 0/1 SAN checks for each discovery, but this is a long campaign, and some care must be taken to ensure investigators aren’t completely bonkers by the time they reach the ice!

Blubber Feeds

Spaced evenly across the deck are strange portholes, round hatches known as “blubber feeds.” These feeds allow “blubber boys” to toss squares of blubber directly into the pressure cookers below. These chunks pass through a rotating set of knives called “blubber choppers,” and are subjected to various steam treatments inside the cookers until they are rendered into oil. The *Wallaroo* is equipped with eight pressure boilers and two Hartmann apparatuses. A highly efficient machine designed to completely render slaughtered animals, a Hartmann apparatus uses a rotating boiler drum and a system of conveyor belts.



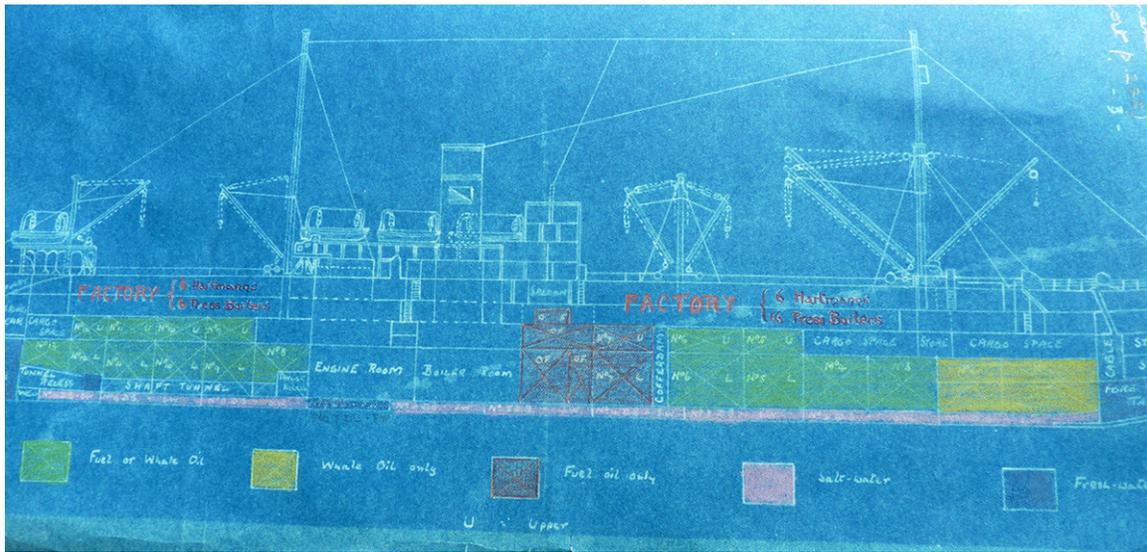
The Sound In the Feed

A successful **Listen roll** detects a sound coming from one of the open blubber feeds—an arrhythmic, periodic clattering. If the feed hole is investigated, it proves to be crammed with the remains of a sailor, frozen in place under a crust of bloody ice. He appears to have been attempting to crawl out of the feed hole, and wears an expression of terrible agony. The lower half of his body has been mangled by the blubber knives, a sight that triggers a 0/1 SAN check. A **Spot Hidden roll** finds additional signs of injury—his left wrist has been shattered by a blubber spade, and his temple is pierced by a bullet hole. The banging sound is coming from beneath him. Perhaps a trapped animal?

The corpse may be pulled from the hole, an act which severs the sailor in half and drops his lower torso into the boiler. This is rewarded by a frantic flapping from below, and perhaps even a squawking—clearly, there is a bird trapped in the boiler; but gosh, it seems big! The blubber feed is too small to enter safely, but the pressure cooker may be accessed from the factory beneath the deck, and is described in “The Factory” below.

Cargo Bays

The three forward cargo bays are found on the *Wallaroo* diagram on page 107 of the published text. I have rewritten them slightly to better reflect a contemporary factory ship, loosely based on the S.S. *Hektoria*. As one can see from the diagram below, the reality is more complex, but our simplified *Wallaroo* will serve fine for the purposes of the game!



S.S. Hektoria (From the collections of the University of St Andrews)

Cargo Bay 1

This bay is the largest hold still above water, and is used to store smaller catches while larger whales are being flensed above deck.

Deck Exterior

The massive hatch to this hold has been cracked by an explosion, the long rent edged by icicle fangs that dagger into the darkness below. The interior may be accessed through the ship proper, by tossing down a rope, or by using a **Strength x5 roll** to force open the frozen personnel hatch.

Upper Hold

A crystalline palace hung with sheets of blubber and stacked with disembodied whale parts, this hold is much as described in the published text. The *Wallaroo*'s catchers were obviously doing quite well, as three or four smaller whales may be construed from the various butchered components, all awaiting their turn to be properly flensed. More refined grades of oil are contained wooden barrels, inserted into ricks lining the starboard bulkhead. Everything is covered with an eerie layer of frost.

The charred remains of a sailor are stretched on a rack of baleen, his wrists and ankles bound by copper wire. Carbon scoring is evident above the rack, and the baleen has been sorely damaged. It appears like the man was deliberately lashed to the rack and burned alive. Several blubber forks on the deck near the corpse suggest he did not die willingly.

Lower Hold

The massive lower hold is occupied by great metal tanks, used to store the processed whale oil. This hold is accessible through a maze of ladders and catwalks, but contains little of interest—although if salvaged, the oil would net a tidy profit were the *Gabrielle* so inclined!

Cargo Bay 2

This medium-sized hold stored much of the *Wallaroo*'s equipment and supplies. It is here that the infected crewmen were gathered and burned alive the night of October 23.

Deck Exterior

The deck around the his hold shows several signs of conflict. The main hatch has been set ajar, lifted by a crane and only partially reset, leaving a long rectangle open to the elements. A canvas firehose dangles into the hold, its snaky form engorged with frozen seawater and a long stalactite of ice tapering from its brass nozzle. Two empty barrels of diesel fuel lay on their sides near the hatch, along with several empty canisters marked "PETROL." A successful **Chemistry roll** suggests that the gasoline was used as an accelerant to ignite the diesel. The cans are surrounded by a number of long blubber spades, a rusting .303 Lee-Enfield, and dozens of spent casings. The personnel hatch has been sealed with a heavy chain and secured with a padlock. Any **Firearms roll** identifies the casings as belonging to a mix of rifles and handguns. Even now, two weeks after the conflagration, a terrible odor rises from the hold, a mixture of burnt flesh and diesel. The interior may be accessed through the ship proper, or by tossing down a rope.

Upper Hold

The interior of the hold is a charnel house. If the hold is explored, a 1/1D4 SAN check is required to witness the result: the entire hold has been gutted, and the deck is littered with the charred bodies of three dozen "humans." Most are clumped in a tangled, central mass, but there are some who reached the bulkhead doors. The remains are covered by a sparkling rime of ice, encrusted over a black, sooty residue from the burning diesel.

Closer examination and a successful **Spot Hidden roll** reveals another horror. It appears that several of the humans were *attached* to each other on a skeletal level. This revelation brings a second 1/1D4 SAN check. One particularly disturbing example suggests that three sailors were standing on each other's shoulders in an effort to reach the hatch; but they seem to share a single long spine! Surely the bones were somehow...*fused* by the fire? (A successful **Medicine roll** disabuses investigators of this this sanity-friendly notion.)

A second **Spot Hidden roll** uncovers more evidence of the massacre. Many of the corpses have bullet damage, broken bones, and smashed skulls. Some had their ankles and wrists bound by copper wire. One man near the bulkhead door was shot at least a dozen times from above; another fell into the hold with a gaffing hook jammed through his throat. An **Idea roll** suggests that some of the corpses seem to have been running away from the

central mass; curiously, a successful **Spot Hidden roll** shows that these bullet-ridden outliers are the most *normal*.

Lower Hold

The lower hold is an extension of the lower hold from Cargo Bay #1, and contains empty metal tanks waiting to be filled with whale oil.

Cargo Bay 3

The smallest of the three forward holds, this triangular hold was used to store spare equipment, tools, ropes, and various cables. It is accessed through a companionway just past the steam-powered bone saw.

Upper Hold

A successful **Spot Hidden roll** reveals a corpse iced against the starboard bulkhead, situated below a fan of frozen blood. His head has been blown off, and parts of his skull and brain are clumped to the wall in frozen chunks of gristle. A double-barrel shotgun dangles from his right arm, snagged to his cuff by a cocked hammer. The man's ankles have been chained to the deck with crude iron bands. The sight of this grisly suicide requires a 0/1 SAN check for any investigator who has not served in a war.

Examining the Corpse

If the frozen body is disturbed, the investigator must make a **DEX x5 roll**, or the second chamber discharges, sending a blast of buckshot into the frigid deck. A **Luck roll** is required to avoid 1D6 HP damage, but the sudden noise is stunning, and calls for a 0/1 SAN check. A bible tucked into the man's coat reveals his name: JASPER MOSS. A canvas bag slung around his shoulder holds several items, including a second pair of iron bands, a bloodstained galley knife, a half-empty box of .455 Webley cartridges, an IMCO trench lighter, and a coil of dynamite fuse.

Lower Hold

The lower hold just contains rope. Miles and miles of rope.

The Factory

Occupying the top two decks between the bridge and the cargo holds, the *Wallaroo's* factory was severely damaged by the explosion of the boilers, not to mention a few bundles of Blenheim & Sons' #5 dynamite. Accessible through several pathways, the factory is a nightmarish labyrinth of machinery designed for slaughter, much of it twisted by the force of the blast. The factory contains mechanical blubber choppers, eight pressure cookers, two Hartmann rotary cookers, settling tanks, and evaporators, all designed to render the blubber of slaughtered whales into oil. Most of these steam-powered cookers communicate with the flensing deck above through blubber feeds.

The Noisy Cooker

A successful **Listen roll** upon entering this area detects the source of the knocking heard above deck. If the sound is followed, it leads to a large pressure cooker, a steel cylinder ten feet tall and six feet in diameter. Designed to render chunks of blubber into oil using steam, the boiler has been badly damaged by a nearby dynamite blast, its side punctured by

a large hole and its steam pipes torn away in a tangle. The deck around the cooker is filled with gobs of blubber and oil, congealed into grotesque shapes and radiating a foul odor. The deck is quite slippery, and as the investigators approach the damaged cooker, their boots make unpleasant sucking sounds as they crush through the layer of ice and sink into the gelid oil. The sound quickly resolves into a frenzied flapping—perhaps a bird has become trapped? The hole is located halfway up the boiler, and may be accessed by scrambling up the twisted pipes using a **Climb roll**.

Investigating the Noise

Shining an electric torch into the depth of the steel cylinder costs 0/1 SAN. The bottom of the pressure cooker is filled with shredded pieces of blubber, twisted through the metal grates that once fixed them for rendering. However, it seems the last thing tossed into the cooker were living men. The lower half of the sailor glimpsed above deck hangs down from the blubber feed, mangled by the choppers into a bloody, frozen mess. Beneath him are the pulped corpses of three more men, mauled by the rotating knives and blended in with the half-rendered blubber.

Fortunately, these poor wretches are not the cause of the disturbance, and seem to be quite dead. As suspected, the sound comes from an animal—a sooty albatross has found his way into the tank, and has broken his wing. The pathetic bird grows still upon being illuminated, staring up at the investigator with unblinking eyes. The bird's feathers are ragged and covered by half-frozen whale oil, and it's clear the creature has been living on the human remains.

Further Investigation

As the investigator's eyes become accustomed to the gloom, a successful **Spot Hidden roll** costs another 0/1 SAN. It seems unusually difficult to parse out the mangled bodies. True, they've passed through a blubber chopper into a pressure cooker, have been subjected to a week of polar temperatures, and have been pecked at by a starving albatross; but something doesn't seem right—as if that man's face should actually be more *centered* on his head, or this man's arms seem a bit too long, or that fellow's feet look more like...flippers?

The Tupilak

As the electric torch plays across this horrible stew of seamen and blubber, a strange object leaps into focus with a hyperreal clarity—clutched in the hand of a mutilated sailor is a gleaming ivory idol of a demonic octopus, carved from a single walrus tusk. It seems to anchor the entire grisly chamber, jutting up from the slurry like a solitary fang. A halved **Polar Survival roll** or an **Anthropology roll** identifies it as a “tupilak,” a fetish created by Inuit shamans to wreak supernatural vengeance. What it's doing here in the southern climes is anyone's guess!

Claiming the Tupilak

The first investigator to catch sight of the strange tusk must make a SAN check. If he is successful, he may tear himself away from the sight. Failing the SAN roll does not bring a loss of points, but the unfortunate character is suddenly gripped by the need to possess the tupilak. It seems as if the Lady of the Lake is holding Excalibur itself aloft from the

gore of the cooker, a gleaming beacon of hope! Resisting the urge to take the tupilak forces another SAN check. If the investigator is successful, he loses 1 SAN point and may resist. If he fails the roll, he does not lose any SAN, but must climb into the cooker and seize the tupilak. See “Appendix A: Cthulhu Tupilak” for more details on this powerful artifact.

Dealing with the Albatross

A successful **Biology roll** suggests that the sooty albatross is not native to these parts, and must have been blown off course and stranded. The bird has a broken wing, and violently resists any attempts at a rescue. An investigator must make a successful **STR x5 roll** to seize the large bird. A halved **First Aid roll** may treat the wounded animal, but Turlow forbids bringing it back to the *Gabrielle*—“It’s an albatross, man. A fucking *albatross*. An albatross that just had a man’s fucking eyeball in its fucking beak, man! What is wrong with you? Haven’t you read Coleridge, you illiterate lubber?” If the investigator insists, a **Persuasion roll** overcomes the first mate’s objection, but the crew will forever after regard that investigator as a potential Jonah, whether or not the bird survives. Of course, the albatross may be simply shot, a solution that results in a shockingly loud sound that reverberates through the ruined factory like Emmet Otter pounding that fateful nail in Ma’s washtub. Oh, and shooting the albatross? That permanently lowers the character’s Luck score by 10%.

Wallaroo Bridge & Living Quarters

The interior of the *Wallaroo* may be accessed in many ways, from the deck, the holds, or even the giant rent in the middle of the ship. The ship is quite complex, so only the more interesting sections are described below.

The Bridge

The command center of the *Wallaroo* has been modernized since it was constructed in 1899, but all of its instruments have been smashed, and the rudder controls sabotaged. A mobile made from dead rats hangs from the ceiling near the windows, and somebody has scrawled “Fuck you!” in blood above a stick of dynamite wired to the bridge telephone.

Officer’s Head

The metal sink in this toilet has been severely dented; a tuft of red hair is stuck to the dent by a frozen gob of blood. The mirrors have been broken. All of the *Wallaroo*’s maps, charts, and log books have been piled into the toilets and burned.

Radio Room

The ship’s radio equipment has been smashed by a crowbar, and most of the broken pieces have been reorganized into bizarre patterns on the floor. A successful **Radio Operator roll** suggests that someone was trying to arrange the electronics according to some intelligible configuration; but nothing recognizable, and certainly not technically viable.

Crew’s Quarters

The crew’s cabins are marked by the violence that spread through the ship as the men tried to contain the animiculum—bloodstains, makeshift weapons, doors barred with planks of wood, etc. A few apparently healthy crewmen may be found gunned down by a large caliber

firearm, some of them shot in the back. The rooms are much as described in *Beyond the Mountains of Madness*, with the following additions.

Suicide Pact

One of the cabins contains a pair of naked corpses, locked in a frozen embrace. An empty bottle of rat poison lies on the deck. If the lovers are disturbed, it costs 0/1 SAN to discover they seem fused together, as if they kept growing into each other after death! They are blackened by frostbite, so surely this is just an illusion created by their bodies rotting into each other and freezing?

As with all the remains, any attempt to transfer them to the *Gabrielle* for an autopsy is strictly forbidden by Turlow, who has been growing increasingly nervous about the possibility of contagious disease. In fact, at one point he mutters, “Leprosy?” While a **Medicine roll** immediately rejects this possibility, the L-word alone is enough to unnerve any investigator with an Education below 8.

The First Mate

First Mate Adam Stringer is found face-down on his bunk, a bloody pillow covering his head. He has been shot through the back of the skull with a single round. A bible has fallen to the floor, and a scrimshaw rosary is clenched in his stiffened fingers. In the bible are several photographs of the first mate with his family in Melbourne, and one photo of a younger, uniformed Stringer with his unit at Gallipoli. Next to the bible is a .455 caliber Webley Mark VI service revolver, all six of its chambers containing spent casings.

Mess

The ship’s mess was once a cheerful place, and still features the usual pin-up calendars, shipboard announcements, and public notices, along with a dartboard and a framed watercolor of a wallaroo painted by Dee Hussey, the captain of the *Hippocamp*. (“It’s a bloody *kangaroo*, Captain. You fuckin’ Yanks, I tell you.”) Unfortunately, the bloodstained mess is now in a state of disarray, and appears to have hosted a gunfight. The wall bears a message, carefully lettered in black paint visible through a fine layer of frost: “And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another.” Beneath this message, a tabby cat has been crucified on a makeshift wooden cross.

Captain’s Cabin

Willard’s cabin is described in *Beyond the Mountains of Madness*, complete with its relative luxuries and secret stash of Lincoln Inn “Old Rye” Whiskey. Two framed prints adorn the cabin’s wall—Richard Upton Pickman’s *Kingsport Head In the Fog*, and George Washington Lambert’s *Newcastle*.



Newcastle, George Washington Lambert, 1925

Captain Willard, I Presume?

The captain's cabin contains two corpses. The first is the captain himself, shot in the back of the head while sitting at his desk. His head rests upon a sheaf of papers—unfortunately, his blood has ruined everything but the last two pages, which fluttered to the deck when he was shot. A handsome man with wild red hair and a bushy reddish beard, the captain is missing his left hand, sawn off at the wrist and covered by a soiled bandage. A bottle of Lincoln Inn lies on its side, possibly knocked over when the captain fell forward. There is still some amber liquid trapped inside the bottle. Next to the Canadian rye is a photograph of a middle-aged woman and a young boy, dried blood spattering their faces.

Keeper's Note: Because the fate of this alternate *Wallaroo* is different than that described in the campaign text, be sure to skip the excerpts from the captain's logbook printed in *Beyond the Mountains of Madness*. Also, Captain Willard's letter is different as well, and is provided at the end of this document as Appendix B.

The Second Corpse

A second corpse lies on Willard's bed, badly burned but arranged in a position of repose. Despite its disfiguring burns, a successful **Spot Hidden roll** observes a resemblance to Captain Willard himself—both figures have the same build, the same reddish hair and beard, and sport a prominent snaggletooth. However, the corpse on the bed has an intact left hand, and a second **Spot Hidden roll** notices a left clubfoot. A chair has been pulled up beside the bed, and a half-empty bottle of Lincoln Inn sits on the adjacent nightstand. Numerous cigarette stubs litter the cold metal floor around the chair, along with two empty bottles of rye. One gets the impression that the captain spent several hours sitting by the corpse, drinking whiskey and chain-smoking cigarettes. Was the dead man possibly his brother? If so, why was that not mentioned in his letter?

If any investigator returns to the desk and pulls the boot from the captain's left foot, a clubfoot is revealed.

Appendix A: The Cthulhu Tupilak

For the most part, Appendix A replicates the generic “Cthulhu Tupilak” document found in the “Relics” section of Shipwreck Library. The version below, however, offers particular suggestions for using it in *Beyond the Mountains of Madness*.



Professor Webb had been engaged, forty-eight years before, in a tour of Greenland and Iceland in search of some Runic inscriptions which he failed to unearth; and whilst high up on the West Greenland coast had encountered a singular tribe or cult of degenerate Esquimaux whose religion, a curious form of devil-worship, chilled him with its deliberate bloodthirstiness and repulsiveness. It was a faith of which other Esquimaux knew little, and which they mentioned only with shudders, saying that it had come down from horribly ancient aeons before ever the world was made. Besides nameless rites and human sacrifices there were certain queer hereditary rituals addressed to a supreme elder devil or *tornasuk*; and of this Professor Webb had taken a careful phonetic copy from an aged *angekok* or wizard-priest, expressing the sounds in Roman letters as best he knew how. But just now of prime significance was the fetish which this cult had cherished, and around which they danced when the aurora leaped high over the ice cliffs. It was, the professor stated, a very crude bas-relief of stone, comprising a hideous picture and some cryptic writing. And so far as he could tell, it was a rough parallel in all essential features of the bestial thing now lying before the meeting.

—H.P. Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu”

History

A tupilak is a fetish made by the Inuit shamans of Greenland for a variety of purposes, most frequently to enact supernatural vengeance upon an enemy. Meaning “ancestral spirit,” a tupilak is created during a private ritual that may take several days, and is hand-crafted from a variety of organic substances—human bones, walrus tusks, caribou antlers, the tooth of a sperm whale or narwhal, possibly even wood. As part of this ritual, the shaman—or *angakok*—dons his anorak backwards, with his face covered by the hood. It is customary to use his own body fluids for the tupilak, such as blood and semen, and sexual relations with the bones and other materials are believed to bind them closer to his will. Other body parts are slowly grafted onto the tupilak, usually hair, sinew, and nails, sometimes taken from the bodies of dead children. Once the tupilak is ready, the shaman invests it with a spirit by chanting the proper magical formulae. It is then released into the sea to begin its quest for vengeance.

Dangers

The creation of a tupilak is intensely private and often dangerous. If the subject of the shaman's fury becomes aware of the tupilak, he may turn it upon the angakok who created it. In some traditions, the only way to negate its usurped power is through an act of public confession—the angakok must admit that he created a tupilak. This in itself has negative consequences, as it diffuses the returning spirit into the body of the community.

Forms

The magical form of the tupilak, and the powers it might have over its target, vary from culture to culture. It may be a ghost, the spirit of an animal, a doppelgänger of the angakok himself, or an invisible monster formed from the body parts of different animals. Of course, the “degenerate Esquimaux” who produced the Cthulhu tupilak have their own blasphemous beliefs, but sadly Professor Webb is still translating that particular bas-relief.

Gaming Systems

Finding a Tupilak

If the Cthulhu tupilak is found, it exerts an immediate attraction upon its discoverer. The first investigator to catch sight of the tupilak must make a SAN check. If she is successful, she may tear herself away from the sight. Failing the SAN roll does not bring a loss of points, but the unfortunate character is suddenly gripped by the need to possess the tupilak. Resisting the urge to take the tupilak forces another SAN check. If the investigator is successful, she loses 1 SAN point and may resist. If she fails the roll, she does not lose any SAN, but must take possession of the tupilak.

Touching the ivory tusk brings an immediate 1/1D3 SAN loss, and triggers a dreamy flash of sensations and images in the investigator's mind. The artifact seems to *want* a new owner! In fact, it appears *warm* to the touch, almost *alive*, like it's made from some bizarre amalgam of morse, bone, flesh, teeth, and even more unspeakable things, all fused together into one, *yes, and isn't the aurora so beautiful tonight...*

Keeping the Tupilak

If the investigator decides to keep the tupilak, it has three unusual effects.

Power 1: Esoteric Apophenia

First, the tupilak gradually produces a sense of *connectivity* in the investigator's imagination. As the campaign progresses, this investigator begins to perceive linkages that may or may not be there. The howling wind is muttering in a dead language, the aurora is painting intelligible signs in the sky, and even the squawking of albino penguins begins to make sense. As he encounters the artifacts of the Elder Things, this investigator believes he detects decipherable patterns, and may even start translating their alien language.

Keeper's Note: This power is entirely at the discretion and whim of the Keeper! The Keeper may grant the affected character some genuine insights; perhaps getting a few bonuses on his rolls to decode Elder Thing glyphs. Or, she can cheerfully lead him down the path of delusion, feeding him spurious or unreliable information at her whim. The Keeper may even allow the investigator to trade SAN points for scraps of potentially nonsensical

information: “So, Clark, as you lie in the tent listening to the howling of your sled-dogs, you begin to hear a dialogue of sorts, like they are...communicating? With the wind? You feel that by allowing yourself to slip into a less lucid frame of mind—you know, a bottle of Canadian rye and a SAN point?—you could even *understand what they are saying...*”

Power 2: Sympathetic Embrace

As the tupilak grows more *fond* of its possessor, it begins to structure reality in a way that binds it even closer. Once per gaming session, the owner of the tupilak may trade 1D4 SAN points to receive a “do-over” of a failed roll. (SAN checks are exempt from this.)

Keeper’s Note: This functions like a *Savage Worlds* “benny” or *Deadlands* “Fate Chip.” Say MacReady blows an important Pilot Aircraft roll in the middle of an iceblink. Did that really happen? No, of course not! He strokes the tupilak warmly and rolls again. Sure, he just lost 1D4 points of SAN, but that was because of that terrible vision he just had of crashing into the nunatak, right?

Power 3: Wrecker of Vengeance

Once the possessor of the tupilak has lost 5 SAN points using its powers, he begins to feel bonded to it. Yes, in fact, the only thing it’s missing is a part of himself! From now on, every tupilak-related SAN loss comes with a corresponding loss of self—literally. Maybe some hair and nail clippings, a chunk of flesh, a broken tooth; all bound to the tusk with blood, saliva, menses, or semen. The next time the owner loses 10% of his SAN for any reason, he begins to hallucinate that the tupilak is alive, that its spirit is helping to avenge him. From this point on, he cannot be without it. During any combat scenario, he may trade 1 SAN point to get an extra 1D6 Damage Bonus on any single attack. In his mind, he sees the spirit of the tupilak coming to his aid, steeling the dagger in his hand or guiding his bullets to their mark. This spirit may take on many forms, but is usually cobbled together from human body parts and animal remains, like a crazy taxidermist’s puppet with a human head. Invisible to anyone but the possessor of the tupilak, the monster’s head is invariably that of its owner.

Keeper’s Note: The Keeper and the player character may work together to invent various horrific scenarios, but having sexual relations with a tupilak was not unknown! If the Keeper is using the Gedney Thing as described in the *Beyond the Mountains of Madness* Campaign Notes, there are obvious parallels between the imaginary spirit of the tupilak and the transmogrified graduate student, and a wise Keeper should ensure the tupilak’s owner and George Gedney get along—get along *real well*.

Losing the Tupilak

Once the owner of the tupilak has lost 10 SAN points to it, he is bound to the tusk, and will not part with it willingly. Any attempt to remove the tupilak by force is met with violence, and losing it inflicts an immediate 1D6 SAN loss. However, if the possessor loses all of his Sanity—through the tupilak or not—the time has come to release its spirit into the world. After some form of disgusting ritual best left unprinted, he lowers the tupilak into the sea, freeing it to wreak vengeance on the madman’s enemies. Or, perhaps it’s just washed out to sea until the next poor devil finds it?

A Tupilak of Your Own

The above guidelines are for finding and possessing a Cthulhu tupilak. Less stable Keepers and investigators are welcome to explore the creation of a personal tupilak, one designed to fulfill its actual shamanic purpose. Of course, such investigators should probably be Inuit shamans, or at least have very high ratings in Anthropology and Occult. Otherwise, they must be crazy enough to enact an extremely powerful and dangerous shamanistic ritual with no appropriate cultural background and little magical training. And certainly *that* would never happen in a *Call of Cthulhu* game!

Appendix B: The *Wallaroo* Letter

Appendix B offers an alternate version of Captain Willard's letter, published in *Beyond the Mountains of Madness* as "Beyond Papers 6.1" on page 108. Keepers may simply print out the following two pages and use them as a handout. I suggest splattering some red food coloring on the pages, then sticking them in the freezer the day before the gaming session. Everyone loves a good prop!

days since Glavin sawed off my hand. I can still feel it there, invisible. When I think of what it became, when I think of what needed to be done? Last night I imagined, or dreamt, I could feel the flames, the terrible consumption. Is that just a phantom of pain, an trick of deceitful nerves, or was there still some connection in the end?

The operation was a success, but the gangrene cannot be denied, and the red lines of infection have spread past the tourniquet and up my arm. There is nothing to be done. My own stench disgusts me. However, I shall not have to bear the stink for much longer. Nor for that matter the pain. I shall miss Glavin, nonetheless. Before he succumbed, he was a good man. I cannot fault him for what he became. I cannot fault any of them, and may God forgive what we have done. They were men once.

Let us never forget that.

I am no Shackleton, no Mawson, to face the odds and overcome them. I am merely a tired soul who will soon die alone upon the ice. The horrible endless ice. It is beautiful, but heartless. In these past few days I have come to hate its cruelty. It cries, and whispers, and moans to me in the still air, grinding hopes and prayers away in mindless hostile fury. There is nothing for anyone here. Even the whales are gone, fallen prey to, to what? That disease? That thing?

Dear reader, if you exist, there in the blissful hopeful expectation of futurity, dear reader, dear judge, dear keeper of my good name, put aside your prejudices and understand that I am a man, like you, and fully in control of my faculties. So listen.

I fully understand that the narrative you have just read will appear as the ravings of a lunatic. But I swear upon the head of my boy, my Jacob, what I have placed here on paper is the honest truth, every word of it. Hear that. Listen to me. Listen to my men, if they survive, if the boat you find is not empty. They will confirm these awful words.

The time has finally come. This is the conclusion, this is the finale, the bitter end of it. Within the hour, Jasper will carry out my fatal order, and our dear Wally will be no more. She will sink into her watery grave, and this madness will be entombed by the unforgiving sea.

No Shackleton am I, but I am a captain, and I shall go down with my ship.

I no longer believe in God. But if He remains in heaven, and has not vacated His throne, I implore him to watch over and protect my men. Their journey will be terrible, and I do not envy their survival. Let me praise once again the excellence and skill of my officers and crew. Their loyalty and stout hearts are without peer. I wish them well and pray that they are swiftly rescued and are soon homeward bound.

I would like to say one last thing before I seal this letter and place it in the capable hands of my first mate.

My wife is named Nancy. She lives in Kingsport, at 235 Sleet Lane. She is now a widow, raising Jacob alone, a task that cannot be easy for her. Do not show her this letter. Do not tell her I died afraid and godless and stinking of gangrene. Please tell her that my death was easy. Please tell her that my last thoughts were of her and Jacob. Tell her that I love her. Tell her that she has kept me company these last few days, these terrible days of decay and madness and "peril on the sea."

Tell her that she is my life.

Nancy, forgive me.

Cpt. Stephen Willard, S. S. Wallaroo

Sources and Notes

This expansion is for [Beyond the Mountains of Madness](#), an epic campaign written by Charles and Janyce Engan and published by Chaosium in 1999. The campaign book credits Rob Montanaro with the creation of the *Wallaroo*. Thank you, Chaosium, for publishing the finest role-playing campaigns available!

The main inspiration for my version of “The Relic” is the scene in John Carpenter’s [The Thing](#) where the Americans visit Thule Station, the Norwegian outpost frozen in bloody ice. You know—that classic horror trope where the heroes discover what happened to the Keeper’s previous gaming group, right? “Hey, what is all this weird and terrible stuff? Surely that won’t happen to us...!”

My revised *Wallaroo* is loosely based the historical whaling ship [S.S. Hektor](#), torpedoed by a German U-Boat during World War II. I had to fudge a few spatial details in order to accommodate the published illustrations and “official” layout of the *Wallaroo*, but I should point out that as a factory ship, the *Wallaroo* would probably not have a harpoon gun as depicted in the illustration on page 106.

The main source for my background information on factory whaling is [The History of Modern Whaling](#), written by Johan Nicolay Tønnessen and Arne Odd Johnsen and published by the University of California Press in 1982. I also made use of Paul Ward’s excellent [Cool Antarctica](#) site, which has dozens of photographs of factory ships, catcher boats, harpoon guns, and the flensing process. Most of my images have been borrowed from this site. Another useful resource was [Echoes from the Vault](#), a blog about the special collections of the University of St Andrews. For the truly devoted, YouTube contains an [actual video from the 1940s of a factory ship at work](#). It’s silent and blotchy, but suitably disgusting. And it shows an aerial catapult launching a seaplane from deck. That’s cool.

The Cthulhu tupilak was inspired by the [HPL Historical Society](#). The actual [Cthulhu tupilak prop](#) may be purchased from their site for \$75. Surely, if you are devoting the incredible amount of time and effort required to organize and run a *Beyond the Mountains of Madness* campaign, this expense can be worked into the pizza and beer budget? An interesting use of a non-Mythos tupilak was explored in the second season of *Fortitude*, a delightfully weird show that comes across like a British *X-Files* set in a Norwegian *Twin Peaks* located near the Mountains of Madness. The plot makes little sense, but I recommend it anyway, and the death count is pleasantly high.

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Online Version: <http://www.shipwrecklibrary.com/call-of-cthulhu/wallaroo>

Cthulhu Tupilak: <http://www.shipwrecklibrary.com/call-of-cthulhu/tupilak>