**This was an email that I sent to Shaw’s player. He wasn’t going to be able to be at the next game, so I thought I’d come up with a clever way of explaining his absence and moving the story forward. Shaw had wanted to investigate something suspicious at the back of the Magick Shoppe in Arkham, so I wrote the following tale of how he got captured by a magic-using Innsmouth native, had his brain scooped out by a Mi-Go and placed in a jar, and started to have visions of alternate realities culminating in Shaw’s ethereal arrival in Carcosa.**

**I may have gone overboard with this.**

**\*\*\***

Shaw stealthily enters the door at the back of the Magick Shoppe, softly closing it behind him. He sees a short hallway, illuminated by a single bare bulb hanging from the ceiling. There is a door at the end of the hall, and two doors each on either side of the hall. A ratty-looking rug is thrown carelessly on the floor. Apart from that, there are no decorations or other features.

Before Shaw can do anything else, a side door next to him opens and a man steps out. Shaw doesn't get a chance to see what the room behind the door might look like -- he just gets an impression of darkness.

The man is a short, round person, neither young nor old, wearing a cheap, brown suit. At close range, his face strikes Shaw as extraordinary. His head is round and jowly, mostly bald, giving him the appearance of having an enormous face, an impression accentuated by his enormous, protuberant, wide-set eyes. The eyes are pale and watery, with distended pupils -- Shaw has the brief impression that he can see the man's shining retinas, like an animal's at night. His skin has an oily sheen to it, like the skin of a lamprey or eel.

Despite this, Shaw does not feel a rush of fear, for the man's expression is so mild and pleasant. He steels himself nonetheless, for the manner and body language of the man makes it plain that he expected to see Shaw there.

Nothing could prepare Shaw for what happened next. **(Shaw gets a Hero Point -- "benny" in Savage Worlds parlance -- because the GM is putting the man higher in initiative order.)** The man's mouth opens, as if to speak, but instead he sprays Shaw with a fetid liquid! **(Hits Shaw's Defense on a 6 [raise] +3=9.)** Shaw is blown back against the corner of the hall -- it feels like a firehose of body-temperature seawater had been turned on him. The volume and pressure of liquid hitting him is enormous. (In fact, Shaw still has the presence of mind to realize that what's happening is physically impossible. There is no way the man could contain that much fluid, and the pressure should be blowing him back, as well.)

Shaw feels himself slipping into a dream-like stupor, unable to move or focus his eyes. His sense of time begins to distort. He thinks he has slumped to the floor, but he can't be sure.

Seawater streams off Shaw's hair, down his face, dripping from his nose and chin. This seems to take hours. A low, throbbing sound fills his head, like wind moaning in a cave, or blowing over the tops of sand dunes. Shaw realizes it is his heartbeat.

Shaw sees himself standing at the entrance to an excavated tunnel. It's an entrance to a temple, buried in five millenia of drifting sand. Scurrying Arab men work to fill sand bags, trying to keep the dune from reclaiming the ancient find. Shaw turns and sees the rolling dunes behind him. They seem impatient and disturbed somehow, as if annoyed at the works of man. The sky is blue-black, like midnight on a cloudy winter night, but all the stars are out.

"Pick him up." A croaking voice, as if bubbling through water.

"Magnifique, is it not, Dr. Shaw?" Shaw sees Dr. Jean-Pierre Legrasse, the head of Miskatonic's History department, stumbling towards him over the sand. He has a bit of difficulty hearing the man over the wind -- his heartbeat? But it is so slow, so slow -- "We are the first modern men to enter the temple of the first Pharaoh, the first to prove that he was never just a legend!"

Legrasse wraps an arm around Shaw's shoulders in a Gallic embrace and walks him toward the pitch-black portal into the earth. He gestures grandly with the other as he babbles on and on.

Shaw hears a clunk, then a sound of wood scraping. "Easy. Do not damage him. We have great plans for Dr. Shaw." The croaking voice again.

Stillness. Darkness. Somehow Legrasse's voice still comes through from far away. "The Scorpion King...long before the first dynasty of the Old Kingdom...even before the very name of Egypt...a man who beheld the true Sphinx, not the pale imitation we see today outside Cairo...are you all right, my friend? I told you not to drink the water."

The clunk again. Hammering of ... nails? It seems to take hours, days, even weeks.

Legrasse hands Shaw an electric lamp. He stares at it. It feels wrong in his hand, as if he were breaking a law to touch it.

A whisper in Shaw's mind: "Is this the past? The present? The future? Is this you, or just someone that looks like you?"

Legrasse has led Shaw into the temple entrance. The sandy tunnel slopes downward sharply, and he treads carefully. The first hall arches up all around him.

The hammering again. Nails into wood, all around him. It's a coffin. He is inside a coffin.

"Deliver this to Darby at the hotel. Back entrance." A pause. "Immediately."

"Davis wants him, eh?"

"He is not for Davis. He has the mark of the King in Yellow on him, and he will not be wasted for Davis's ... cravings."

"No, we're gonna take him to Davis now, eh?"

"My friend?" Legrasse has taken Shaw's arm again, leading him deeper into the darkness. Nothing can be seen of the way out any more. Only glimpses of carven walls are visible in the shimmering lamplight. Shaw stumbles slightly as he is pulled. Legrasse runs his hand lovingly against a wall, symbols chiseled into every square inch. "You see?"

*Yog-sothoth...azzirath... metrone....*

Shaw realizes Legrasse was right ... this place was not Egyptian at all. These people were what came before the Egyptians. This was the kingdom Al-Hazred described ... a beacon in the desert that drew a dreaming throng to worship and die at the feet of...

"Who's that, eh? Why'd you bring him here?"

"You left me little choice."

"My friend? What is wrong?"

Shaw scuttled back from the blasphemous wall, dropping his lamp. A buzzing sounded all around him, like a plague of locusts, but the buzzing seemed to make syllables.

*...Nyar...la...tho...tep....*

A great gust of wind ... the terror of the desert ... or the breath of tortured souls escaping into death.

The lamps went out, leaving fading red spots in his vision.

"My friend! What are you doing?!"

*"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn."*

In another age, in another life, Shaw is still drenched in warm seawater. This does not bother him as much as it used to. Sometimes, when they remember to activate his eye, he even enjoys watching the shimmering bubbles rise along the glass of his tank. The fungoid drone with the buzzing voice is a continual source of amusement, however. Look how he hovers and twitches, with his insect wings and crablike legs!

He wishes the drone would adjust his hearing. Every time his ear is activated, he still hears the faraway screams from the tomb in the desert.

What is this funny fellow doing now? He's got a friend he's working on! Why, that man sitting in the chair across the room looks like Shaw himself! At least, that's how he looked long ago. Well, perhaps not quite. Shaw had more skull above his eyebrows. Oh, there it is. The top of the skull, with Shaw's brown hair, sat on a silver plate on the table next to the chair. Ha ha! Look at the drone now! Looks like he's chewing gum!

The Arab workers stared at him in terror as he came out. He stood and roared at them, his gaze so fierce that they fell to the ground trembling. Eventually, with sweeps of his hands and bellowed curses, he made them understand what he required of them. Cover it! Back into the sand with it! Nyarlathotep! In his towering rage, he did not care that his arms were red with blood, his chest and legs splashed with blood. He did not care about the fear of the workers, only their obedience.

*Nyarlathotep!*

Shaw watched his fungoid keeper work. It gave him satisfaction to see the creature toil with such diligence and precision, like a worker ant, or a web-spinning spider. He had most of the brain cavity full now, and was lovingly patting the pinkish substance -- the chewing gum -- into place. If Shaw could have nodded in approval, he would have. It's a good job, he thought. He'll be up on his feet in no time.

Another time, another place. Mina's hand brushed lightly against his cheek. "Is this the past? The present? The future? Is this you, or just someone that looks like you?" He grasped her hand in his, kissed it, but did not answer.

"Dr. Shaw? Is ... is that you, Dr. Shaw?" The man's voice seemed somehow familiar. Youthful, nervous. Yes, he definitely knew him from somewhere.

"It's me, Dr. Shaw. It's Harvey Walters."

Shaw looks around, the haze in his mind slowly clearing. He realizes the throbbing in his head is no longer his own heartbeat, but the reverberations of celebratory music. He is in a city, a city in the midst of a great carnival. He seems to be laying on a flimsy chaise lounge on a small, tiled deck. A low stone wall ringing the deck hides his view of the street, but he could see many other buildings around him, lit against the night with garish lanterns and gleaming metallic banners. He sees people on many other decks and balconies, dressed in costumes and masks, like a hallucination of Venice. The music made it difficult to hear. He looks at Harvey. The student appeared as he always did: rumpled suit, wilted collar, earnest face. He holds a white mask on a stick in his right hand. In the other is a wine bottle. Shaw looks down at himself. He is dressed in a black inquisitor's costume, trimmed with gold and crimson. On his lap lay a black mask and a great, feathered hat.

Shaw knows where he is. He has been here before, although it did not look like this. This is Carcosa, the city of the Lord of Madness, the King in Yellow.

Hastur the Unspeakable.

What does Shaw do now?