

Hatsmass Eve.

...an unusual Holiday by B.Murray

History

Many many (more manies than that even) years ago there was a great wizard whose name has been deliberately forgotten. As was the way with wizards then, her magic was intimately tied to local religion and ceremonies. Specifically, her power was at its peak during Candlemass, the winter celebration of hope and darkness. She was an enthusiastic participant in all of the village celebrations and was loved and revered by the people.

But, as with all wizards, she reached too far and fabricated a complex ritual to take place on the Candlemass in which the stars of her gods lined up with the great star, The Eye of Azathoth. This was a grave error.

The idea was good—she would create a guardian for the village that would ensure that none would come to harm. No external forces of evil would be able to affect the village and they would live in peace and harmony forever. The alignment with the Eye would give the ritual the most power possible.

Unfortunately it also gave power to Azathoth, the Insane God at The Center of the Universe and this is rarely a good idea.

The result seems arbitrary but only because Azathoth is, after all, the Insane God. The village is now completely isolated (and therefore safe) because there is nothing outside it. Past the trees is simply nothing, the void, a mind searing emptiness, patrolled by the bizarre avatar of Azathoth known only as The Hat. Azathoth picked the most interesting (to it) feature of the wizard and reformed her in its image to save the village from harm forever. Now she is The Hat and she is as insane as her new patron deity.



Celebration

Every year at what would have been Candlemass the villagers celebrate Hatsmass instead. They must determine what will please The Hat for another year and this is difficult since The Hat, like her patron, is insane. Over the millennia (the village has been here a long time now since it is so very safe) the villagers have found what they believe to be patterns in the needs of The Hat, but these complex diagrams and calculations and machines that do the image-crunching and star-mapping are all wrong. The villagers believe in them but they are wrong.

The villagers have encoded all of this guesswork and intuition into a single terrifying machine. Lubricated with blood and fabricated from wood, metal, bones, and sinew, The Hate Machine is cranked until a vague answer emerges that is interpreted by the village elders. There are weeks of debate with the village elders and finally the celebration is crafted and executed. And hopefully The Hat is pleased.

For every celebration, consult the Hate Machine to decide what will appease The Hat this year:

The Hate Machine

The Hate Machine assumes malevolence. The outcome of the Hate Machine will be one of:

1. Human sacrifice. An oldy but a goody. A random type of individual will be selected, anointed, and tied to the Hatstake outside the village. The Hat will consume them in a horrible fashion.
2. The machine must eat. The machine demands blood. If possible, the villagers prefer an outsider but those are rare. But someone has to be fed to the machine.
3. Ostracize! A category of person is now anathema and must be exiled from the village. Who this is is open to interpretation and naturally the village elders avoid categories that would end the village. But someone has to be chased into the void with pitchforks and guisarme-voulges.
4. Bacchanalia! The Hat demands (apparently) an orgy of consumption, sex, and general hedonism. Anyone refusing to participate must be prepared as an outrageous dish and eaten by all.
5. Communion. The village must approach The Hat and commune with it. The Hat is lonely, perhaps. This doesn't always end well, but if The Hat gets crazy, fleeing through the woods to the village is safe. The woods aren't, but the village is. Provided you haven't pissed off the villagers.
6. Quiet prayer. This year everyone spends Hatsmass alone at home praying next year will be like this one. The villagers will not talk to anyone during this period because if anyone does anything but pray silently the Hat will go on a rampage.

Violations

Anyone violating the edicts of the Hate Machine need to talk to The Hat. If they refused they are shunned by the village, which means living in the woods, which pretty much means talking to The Hat anyway. Outsiders are not exempt.

Talking to The Hat

So you're face-to-eye with The Hat, either by choice or by exile or because the whole village is here in communion. This is always uncomfortable: The Hat is a looming pyramid of wet flesh with a single eye and that alone is hard to deal with.

First you need to reduce your sanity. You are going to be less stable from now on. This thing is not just terrifying, it's an avatar of an insane god.

If you lose your shit, The Hat is done with you. You have communed. You can communicate with it if you like, but this costs more sanity. The Hat will then answer any questions it can. It's happy to talk to a kindred spirit. It won't do your bidding of course.

If you do not lose your shit, The Hat will try to kill you. The Hat is immensely hard to kill and does horrendous harm, shooting beams of congealed insanity from the folds of its flesh and firing neurosis bolts from its eye. But it's not that fast and you can always enter the village to be safe. Assuming the villagers like you.

Arriving in time for Hatsmass

Arriving at the village is usually an accident—a Gate gone wrong, a mis-teleportation, or some other way to wind up in a random pocket universe. It also sometimes happens when the stars align with the Eye of Azathoth in your home plane and you try a little transportation magic.

Give everyone some time to talk to the villagers and come to appreciate the place before springing Hatsmass on them.

Whenever an outsider arrives, it's just before Hatsmass.



Brad Murray, December 2017
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