

TEA & CROSSBOW



Buffy

the vampire slayer™

roleplaying game



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Eden Studios

6 Dogwood Lane, Loudonville, NY 12211

Produced and published by Eden Studios, Inc.

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First Printing, May 2003

Stock EDN6005 ISBN 1-891153-94-3

Printed in Canada

*In every generation
there is only one slayer.
Get born before dark.*



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I They Also Serve

Giles: A, a Slayer slays, a Watcher . . .

Buffy: . . . watches?

—Buffy 1.1 *Welcome to the Hellmouth*

Join us, gentle readers, as we consider the Watchers—some of the most heroic characters to be seen in either *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *Angel*.

They aren't, admittedly, the most *popular* heroes in either series. Although they produced two of the most important central characters, the Watchers themselves often appear arrogant, cold-blooded, and fatally out of touch. But remember; these are people who've been fighting supernatural evil for thousands of years. They aren't as tough as vampires, they don't have Slayer strength or speed, and they aren't even especially good at magic (though they know much more about it than most people, which is one reason why they don't use it much). What they do have is tradition, very good libraries, and cool-headed courage. They do what's necessary in order to prevail—they don't compromise and they don't give in.

That said, they have usually been treated as part of the background in both *Buffy* and *Angel*. Individual Watchers may step to the forefront on occasion, but the network, the training system, and the traditions which created them, have largely remained in the shadows. *Tea and Crossbows* turns the spotlight on our favourite bookworms, allowing players of both the *Buffy* and *Angel* roleplaying games to treat them in detail and with the respect which they deserve. This book facilitates an all-Watcher Series, in which Cast Members get the chance to think and analyse their way through problems which brasher, less educated groups would try to solve with fist and stake. Finally, fans of the TV series know that the original Watchers Council took some rather severe damage a little while ago. Never fear; we cover this, and the state of things both before and after.

But what, you may reasonably be asking by now, can you expect to find in this book?





CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter One: They Also Serve begins with some preliminary notes (which you are, in fact, reading at this very moment), and then introduces the Watchers in a way of which they would thoroughly approve—by looking at their history, from the creation of the First Slayer to a near future of hope and chaos.

Chapter Two: Who Are These People? looks at the most important thing about the organisation—the Watchers themselves. This is the chapter for anyone who wants to create a Watcher character. Aside from general discussions of relevant ideas, it comes complete with the ever-popular new Qualities, Drawbacks, and spells. It also includes some new Archetypes, and a couple of characters from the shows who might contrive to appear in your Series.

Chapter Three: Who Watches the Watchers? looks at the Watchers as a group, covering both the Council and the network it controls. Like any big organisation, the Watchers have to deal with tedious but crucial issues such as funding and administration. Tedious yes, but even these can lead to plots. Then there are issues of recruitment and training. The chapter also includes some information on other U.K.-based organisations, whether referenced in passing in the show or invented from scratch.

Chapter Four: Green and Pleasant covers the United Kingdom in the world of *Buffy* and *Angel*—both prosaic facts drawn from reality, and supernatural, paranormal, and plain weird material drawn from mythology, conspiracy theory, and fringe weirdness. This should be useful to gamers whose Watcher-centred games are based in what is, after all, the Council's traditional heartland, and also those whose Cast Members merely have cause to visit the U.K.

Chapter Five: From Observation to Action is about running a Watcher-centred Series. This means, not just a slightly different sort of group, made up mostly or entirely of Watchers of one sort or another, but different sorts of plots, focussing on investigation and analysis over action. The chapter also looks at options such as

Series set in the historical past or in alternate timelines, and includes templates for some appropriate adversaries. (Hence, this is purely Director territory; players whose Director will be using this book should keep out.)

Chapter Six: The Cat in the Box is an adventure for Watcher-centred games, although it could be adapted for others—or at least, for any group which might be asked to do a favour by a Watcher. It's not just *for* Watchers, though; it's *about* Watchers and their work.

The Appendix provides a brief introduction to British slang and colloquialisms. This should help anyone who wants to make British characters' dialogue sound a little more plausible.

STYLE

Willow: Sarcasm accomplishes nothing, Giles.

Giles: It's sort of an end in itself.

—*Buffy 4.8 Pangs*

Alert readers will have notice that this book uses British-English spellings, and aims for a slightly different style to previous supplements for these two games. You will find fewer American pop culture references and the occasional touch of British slang here. Why? Because we're on Giles/Wesley territory here, not Xander's or Gunn's. Anyone focussing on the Watchers should, in general, aim to preserve a sense of wry detachment and irony. You can even sink to sarcasm if you want, but try for a level tone while you're doing so.

You don't have to fake an English accent, though, unless you can make it very convincing. Dignity is more important to Watchers than sounding like a bad imitation of Sir Alec Guinness, and not all Watchers are even British.

One other point to mention here concerns gender. *Buffy* books use "she" as the generic third-person pronoun, *Angel* books use "he." This is a combined *Buffy/Angel* book so even that neat bit of convention is lost. As the Watchers are an old-fashioned and somewhat patriarchal organisation, this book opts for "he."

canon alert

As any good Watcher will tell you, consider the source and status of anything you read.

As we say in the main text—the shows generally push the Watchers, as an organisation, into the background. We know a certain amount about Giles and Wesley, and they in turn have said a little about that which shaped them, though neither is prone to talking about his past at excessive length. We've also been granted a few glimpses of the Watchers Council and its operatives in action. Still, this book has to permit itself a lot of logical guesses and extrapolations. It should be consistent with "canon" as of the time of writing, but please don't assume that you're somehow learning secret truths previously known only to the scriptwriters





WATCHER NOMENCLATURE

Different terms used in these pages reflect different definitions of “the Watchers” as a group. The term “the Watchers Council” (or just “the Council”) describes the fairly small central body which hires, fires, and assigns Watchers, and sets policy for them (or tries to). These are the people we see sitting round a large table in London and eventually getting blown up.

References to, simply, “the Watchers” indicate a rather larger group of people, trained to work as Watchers and *usually* owing some kind of allegiance to the Council. Technically speaking, somebody who resigns from the Council’s service is no longer a Watcher, although of course the word may be used casually to include them.

There is *also* an administrative, training, and communications network, encompassing most of the Watchers plus a small cadre of associated operatives, which is under the control of the Council. This is referred to as “the Watcher network,” “the Council organisation,” or similar terms. We mostly use “network.”

As most readers know, after Season Seven of *Buffy*, the Council is wiped out and the network is in tatters, although remnants remain. However, both may yet be restored. Rebuilding some kind of network would be a relatively straightforward, though large, job; any sort of organisation created by surviving or new Watchers could grow into a network. Recreating the Council would be much harder and more controversial.

TEXT CONVENTIONS

Because this book is intended for use with both the *Buffy* and *Angel* games, it includes quotes from both shows; hence, the citations include show name as well as episode number and title. The book refers to the universe in which both those series were set as the “Slayerverse.”

MEASUREMENTS

Like the two games for which it is a supplement, this book is aimed primarily at American readers, and hence uses “Imperial” measurements. As ever, those seeking approximate but acceptable conversions to the more internationally widespread metric system may multiply miles by 1.5 to get kilometres, equate metres to yards, and halve pounds of weight to get kilograms.

Devotees of trivial irony may also note that the U.K. still uses the *real* Imperial system (not the garbled U.S. version) for many purposes, despite having officially gone metric some years ago. The differences are minor but real; amongst other things, a U.K. pint is 20 fluid ounces rather than 16. It’s a good thing that these games are about story, not measurement, or some people might get quite confused.

But now, back to the past . . .





HISTORY OF THE WATCHERS

Wesley: 'We're talking about laws that have existed longer than civilization.

—Buffy 3.21 Graduation Day - Part One

The Watchers Council has a history as long as that of the Slayers themselves, and—being scholars—they are acutely aware of it. So let us stroll down this historical lane, with a particular view to using it for game purposes.

PREHISTORY: THE FIRST WATCHERS

Travers: Buffy . . . I can sense your resistance, and I don't blame you. But I think your Watcher hasn't reminded you lately of the resolute status of the players in our little game. The Council fights evil. The Slayer is the instrument by which we fight. The Council remains, the Slayers change. It's been that way from the beginning,

—Buffy 5.12 Checkpoint

The first “watchers” were, in fact, the same small but powerful group of prehistoric sorcerers who worked the spell which ensured that, into every age, a Slayer would be born. They must naturally have been interested in the product of their labours, and guided those first Slayers towards the ends that they intended.

Whether the Council can in fact trace an unbroken line of succession back to that sorcerous group is unclear—in the absence of reliable written records from prehistory, it's a matter of faith—but the pattern was set from the

canon alert

The shows haven't told us a *huge* amount about the history of the Watchers. We know that they claim to have originated with the circle of sorcerers who empowered the First Slayer and her successors; on that basis, they really are older than civilisation. (Then again, this information, like much of what we know about the Watchers, comes from records created by the Watchers themselves—and while they probably have too much integrity to lie very often, such records are likely to have a distinct slant.) Other things can be plausibly deduced, given that we know that they are (or were) based in London, that they have an Academy (also in the U.K.), that some of them have a family tradition of Watcher duty, and so on. The rest of what appears in this chapter is defensible guesswork.

Incidentally, several non-canonical *Buffy*-spin-off books and short story collections include some interesting, if occasionally contradictory, ideas about the history of the Slayers and the Watchers. A look may well reward anyone interested in doing more with this subject.





first. Even if the sorcerers and their immediate heirs didn't originally intend to create a tradition, they must soon have realised that one was going to be needed. Most new Slayers must have been confused and under-informed; well-meaning individuals who knew what a Slayer was, and what vampires were, naturally stepped in to advise. Communications between advisors, and decisions about Watcher policy, may have been difficult, but things could have been organised over time.

Certainly, in this period, the lack of reliable long-distance communications, and (at first) the lack of writing, would have prevented the "proto-Watchers" from looking much like the later well-structured network of bookworms. On the other hand, well-informed individuals with an interest in the supernatural often studied magic, and communication spells could help a lot. Meanwhile, the first Watcher "library" took the form of a secret oral tradition—a tradition which had to transcend tribal rivalries and other barriers of distance and geography.

THE FIRST CIVILISATIONS

Buffy: Oh, so you're like . . . What are you?

Guardian: Guardians. Women who want to help and protect you. We forged this centuries ago, halfway around the world.

Buffy: Hence the Luxor Casino theme.

—Buffy 7.21 *End of Days*

Also at some early point, a second, smaller and even more obscure group developed—a direct counterpart to the patriarchal Watchers. These all-female "Guardians" were equally aware of the Slayer and equally committed to fighting evil. They forged the formidable Scythe (it merits the capital letter) to aid in one conflict, although they subsequently hid it against the day when it would *really* be needed again. However, they remained largely hidden even from the Watchers, and smaller numbers and caution kept them very much in the shadows. (See *Welcome to Sunnydale* for more on this.)

In any case, with the rise of literacy and the creation of the first human cities, the Watchers could become something more formal—if only a kind of correspondence circle. They also found themselves needed. As Ur and Egypt, Babylon and Assyria grew, they attracted vampires, who saw their concentrated populations as herds for the devouring. Slayers came after the vampires; behind *them*, priests and scribes offered advice, calling on knowledge older than the cities.

Things must have been laborious back then. Sumeria, Egypt, Assyria, and the first Chinese and Indian cultures had the wheel, but chariots were strictly for the upper classes. Most people got around on foot, even over long distances. (Not that foreign travel was common.) Their writing systems took some mastering—they were mostly designed for record-keeping, and involved *lots* of complicated symbols, while "writing" might mean pressing a stylus into a clay tablet before baking the finished "notes" to preserve them. Papyrus (made from reeds) and the later vellum (prepared animal skins) were expensive; paper would come much later. Many groups with a tradition of knowledge about Slayers and vampires were barely aware of each other; there was no real Watcher organisation. Furthermore, those Bronze Age cultures usually had rigid class structures and harsh laws. People were supposed to know their place, and could be punished severely for forgetting. Bronze Age Slayers often had a hard time getting hold of weapons.

On the other hand, a Slayer who could find a place as a "sacred warrior" of some goddess of war, perhaps with the aid of a Watcher-like scribe-priest, would be accepted as the weird exception to all the rules. Magic, too, was accepted, if not always trusted, and the idea of a blessed warrior working with a priest-scribe to fight demons would have made a kind of sense.

GREECE AND ROME (AND ELSEWHERE)

Spike: That's what conquering nations do. It's what Caesar did, and he's not going around saying, "I came, I conquered, I felt really bad about it."

—Buffy 4.8 *Pangs*

Wheels kept turning—that's why they were invented—and bronze gave way to iron (to the pleasure of Slayers who favoured beheading over staking). Civilisations grew bigger and more complicated; they also invented some new ideas. The Greeks, a cluster of squabbling city-states scattered round a mountain region and the first major civilisation in mainland Europe, not only invented democracy (of a sort—they certainly invented the *word*), they also invented Western philosophy and ideas about logic. Their combination of intellectualism and bloody-minded independence made Greece an excellent base for





a group of occult-minded Watchers, who subsequently expanded across neighbouring lands when Alexander the Great and his successors spread “Hellenic” civilisation. Modern Watchers hold that the first true Watchers Council, claiming authority over Watchers everywhere, met in ancient Athens—but then, things like that are *always* supposed to have started in Greece. Still, the Greeks had the right sort of intellectual arrogance to support such a claim.

Alexander founded several cities named after himself, some of which acquired famous libraries. The one in Egypt became a central Watcher meeting-place—later Watchers would blame the eventual decline of the Alexandria library, and its repeated partial destruction at the hands of various invaders, on demonic or vampiric plots. With the establishment of great libraries, the Watchers transformed from priests and shamans to scholar-librarians.

The Watchers always tried to avoid favouring any one god or cult (the alternative was catastrophic internal arguments). Still, they took a special liking to Apollo, the Greek god of the sun, archery, shepherds (who protect their flocks), and prophecy, and brother to Artemis, the virgin huntress of the moonlight (a Slayer-loaded reference if ever there was one). However, they tried to remain friendly with the cult of Thoth-Hermes, which combined the Egyptian god of scholarship and teaching with the Greek god of messengers, medicine, and rogues, and which claimed authority over magic. Mostly, Watchers in the Hellenic world functioned as a secret “mystery cult” within temples of Apollo. They also forged links with the Magi, the priests of the Zoroastrian faith in Persia dedicated to fire and purity, and made tentative overtures to the strange monotheistic priests of Israel.

When Hellenic civilisation declined, the Watchers moved their headquarters to the capital city of the new power—Rome. Fortunately, some Romans had a taste for foreign gods and Greek philosophy, and they were always quick to believe in secret collections of scrolls which held essential prophecies, and in noble, virtuous duties leading to short but heroic lives of violence and honour. The Watchers insinuated themselves into Rome’s complicated array of temples and cults, and through them, acquired influence within the Imperial bureaucracy. Hence, Watchers were able to travel with the legions and to use the network of official couriers, and to claim shelter in the system of official staging-posts. Whenever Watcher-friendly augurs in Rome detected that a new or potential Slayer might be found within the Empire, one of their number could be on hand within days.

Of course, they also had to face some exotic opponents from the many lands absorbed into the Empire. They referred to most of their opponents as *strix*; the Romans pictured creatures of this name as mortal but blood-sucking witches with the ability to transform into birds. This may have been a confused image, formed from a mixture of garbled accounts of various sorts of vampire, demon, and black magician, or it may have been a type of demon or variant vampire more common in that age than today. (In modern-day games, Cast Members might have to deal with shape-shifting bloodsuckers emerging from archaeological digs or Roman remains in museums.)

Greece and Rome were not the only places where Slayers or Watchers appeared, of course. Given the population numbers, good number of Slayers arose in Persia, China, or India. Where Slayers appeared, someone often acted as aids and advisors. A form of the scholarly, rather arrogant Watcher ethos fit nicely with the Chinese mandarin tradition or the Indian Brahmin caste. (No doubt some Chinese or Indian Watchers presented evidence that they devised the Watcher Council ideal first.) Messages, and the occasional scholar, travelled between Watcher-oriented groups and their colleagues along the Silk Road, and especially bold researchers would sometimes climb to Buddhist monasteries in the Himalayas or plunge into the jungles of the south in search of arcane secrets. In an age when wars were fought using swords and spears, these advisors had little difficulty finding instructors in the weapons that a Slayer would need; many of them had relevant military experience of their own.

Ancient battles

For Directors willing to do a little research, a Roman-era Series could be an interesting option. Watchers can play at temple politics and seek out lost magical lore among the mystery cults, or adopt the manners of austere philosophers. Their Slayer pupils hunt feral vampires in the dark forests of the northern European frontiers—or face more subtle and deadly prey in the even darker night-time streets of Rome. Allies might include dour ex-legionaries, clever slaves with knowledge of foreign mystical secrets, wandering barbarian swordsmen, or eccentric and persecuted cultists, testing the startling power of their faith and its symbol, the cross, against demonic monsters.

THEY ALSO
SERVE





DARK AGES

Giles: I'm, I'm just gonna stay and clean up a little. I'll, uh, I'll be back in the Middle Ages.

Jenny Calendar: Did you ever leave?

—Buffy 1.8 I Robot, You Jane

The fall of Rome triggered a Dark Age for what had been its Empire, which meant a golden age for vampires and demons. Being a Slayer or a Watcher back then was no doubt an unenviable lot. In Europe, scholarship became the province of the church, and the Council must have become a secret society within the monasteries. It found itself living dangerously—it occasionally had to use magic, putting it on very dangerous ground—and it also tried to stay in touch with “heathen” Watchers in Asia or Africa. (The Watchers as a group would appear to have had little or no contact with the New World before Columbus.)

For several centuries, the Watcher headquarters was in Constantinople, capital of the slowly-declining Byzantine Empire. The city was a cosmopolitan place, with some really good libraries, close to both the more cultured parts of Europe and the expanding Muslim domains, and lying on one end of the great trade routes which led into the depths of Asia. Constantinople also had supernatural problems—legend says that at least one Byzantine emperor was actually a demon in disguise, and there were certainly vampires stalking its streets and haunting the mountainous outlying provinces of the Balkans and Anatolia.

Things were sometimes easier for Watcher-counterparts further east, but they suffered their share of barbarian invasions and other problems. Once Muslims borrowed the idea of the harem and the veil from the Persians they'd conquered, life became especially complicated for Slayers in the lands of Islam. Watchers based in the schools of Alexandria and Baghdad resorted to teaching the art of male impersonation. (Not that other lands were much different in that respect for most of history; female warriors have often had to pass as boys.)

As for Western Europeans—the one bonus to living in a world of paranoid, superstitious peasants was that, when a Watcher identified a threat which could be overwhelmed by weight of numbers, he could generally raise a decent mob to deal with it, complete with torches, pitchforks, crosses, and holy water. Many a smug, complacent vampire who knew that the Slayer was on the other side of the continent suddenly found an entire village coming through his front door, directed from the back by some mild-mannered scholar-priest with a couple of good (if vaguely heretical) books tucked away in the vestry. So the Watchers toiled on.

Some also forged links with certain orders of crusading warrior-monks, especially the Knights Hospitaller. (The supposedly similar Knights Templar were probably treated with a great deal of suspicion—too many sketchy reports of dark magical rituals in Templar chapter-houses.) Indeed, some Watchers with a taste for direct action took vows similar to those of the crusading orders, but directed against supernatural evil rather than the Saracens. Wandering in the guise of knights-errant, calling on the knowledge of their more scholarly brethren in the great monasteries and abbeys, these “Watcher-paladins” served as messengers, assistants to the “divinely inspired” Slayers, and quite effective demon-killers in their own right. The famous Watcher attitude of leaving the Slayer to do the fighting was not as rigid throughout history as modern Watchers sometimes imply.

reality check

The idea that the Knights Templar were secretly magicians isn't new, but it *is* controversial. When the Templars were eventually destroyed, charges of demon-worship and heresy were laid against them. In the real world, mainstream historians regard this as a blatant frame-up, arranged by people who wanted to get hold of their vast wealth. Conspiracy theorists and oddballs are more inclined to wonder if there was something in it, and also to claim that the Templars still exist secretly today.

In the Slayerverse, making the Templars heretical wizards would simply be a good plot device. There's no shortage of material on the Templars and magic, for Directors who want to develop this idea.

THE DARKNESS RECEDES

Eventually, things got a little brighter for the Watchers, even in Europe. With the rise of various great universities, the Watchers found a natural home. By about the end of the 14th century, the Council saw itself as an entirely Christian, European organisation, albeit with contacts and allies spread far and wide.

This self-awareness arose because numerous Slayers had appeared in Europe, which in turn was largely because so many vampires and demon-summoners were finding Europe such a hospitable environment. Still, that was *not* what European Watchers thought of as the obvious reason. They saw Europe as the centre of the true faith, and the rest of the world as full of heathen barbarians. Meanwhile, Constantinople was clearly doomed (it fell in 1453), and the great civilisations further





east were suffering badly from the rampaging Mongol hordes. The heavily Christianised Council decided that its best plan was to move west.

For a while, it headquartered in Italy, close to the excellent if too-well-secured Vatican library, and well placed to enjoy the early Renaissance, which made life much more pleasant for scholars. (The new learning also led some scholars to take far too much interest in the hints of dark power they found in various ancient texts, but the Council was often able to do something about *that*.) In time, though, Italy began suffering from endless local wars, and the Council decided that they were a little *too* close to the Vatican and to extremist fanatics such as Savonarola in Florence. They believed that they were good Christians, but they had no wish to explain their activities to inquisitors. Hence, they decamped for a while to the University of Paris, the greatest centre of free-thinking scholarship in Europe.

Some time in the 15th century, though, they moved again, to England. As scholars, they attached themselves to the University of Oxford (the first university in England, and one of only two at this date), although many of them could be found in monastic libraries all across the country. A few attached themselves to the royal court or to leading nobles as clerks or advisors, building important influence with the rulers of the land. This was when the Council first acquired the British “flavour” which survives to this day, and when it established its first London headquarters, then known as a “chapter-house” and located near to St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Why they made this move is unclear. England wasn’t the most sophisticated country in Europe, being stuck out on the edge of the map. A great many Slayers appeared further east, fighting monsters in the forests and mountains of Germany and the Balkans, and communication with their Watchers—let alone with any in Asia or Africa—was extremely hard. On the other hand, Britain was by no means a barbarian wasteland, and had the distinct advantage of being a safe distance from the strongest centres of orthodox church power (it suffered the occasional witch-hunt, but not as bad as some in Europe, and the Inquisition was never strong). Finally, its growing maritime tradition was very useful. The Watchers often had to be great travellers, seeking out Slayers across the far reaches of the world; they apparently saw Britain as a good base for such activities. (They were also active at times in Portugal, and later in Holland.)

A few ancient magical traditions, both black and white, survived on the edge of Europe. The Watchers sometimes studied or allied with these, sometimes monitored them as a potential danger, and sometimes fought them. Then again, perhaps the Council had made

enemies in the church (or elsewhere), and needed to get away from their centres of influence. Actually, there’s some suspicion that the move was inspired by sheer random chance—a string of vampires and demons who happened to be based in Britain dragged Council and Slayer attention that way, and once the Council was settled, it became unwilling to move. Or perhaps there was a nationalistic, homesick British Watcher running the Council at one point, who manipulated policy to suit his convenience. Whatever the cause, after a while, a British orientation became a matter of habit and tradition.

THE LIGHT OF REASON

Xander: You up for a little reconnaissance?

Buffy: You mean where we all sculpt and paint and stuff?

Xander: No, that was the Renaissance.

—Buffy 4.1 *The Freshman*

Not long after this, the Renaissance shifted into a higher gear, reaching even Britain. For a while, the Council hoped that the supernatural would be thrown back by the new light of humanism, but they were disappointed. The vampires and demons adapted, moving into the shadows cast by the new light, enjoying the higher levels of human culture while still finding plenty of prey.

Still, the invention of the printing press made for much bigger libraries, which, the Watchers instinctively felt, was jolly good. There was the problem of trying to stop the *wrong* books—the blasphemous grimoires—from becoming too popular, though. One approach was to place monitoring agents in government and church offices responsible for licensing presses and censoring books, as well as in every great library.

proofreading

As the printing press spread, some Watchers saw what this implied, and responded accordingly. Agents “adjusted” certain texts in the typesetting or proofreading stages, putting a lot of useless mystical material into circulation, and hence undermining faith in supposed “mystic secrets” among the newly literate. Then, they used monitors to prevent more correct texts from reaching the public, and active teams to “secure” any that did.

The opportunity to play a Medieval Watcher game of commando proofreading and rapid-response literary criticism, carrying crossbows and halberds into the new printing-houses of Europe, could prove irresistible.





An even bigger problem was the Reformation, in which the western Christian church split between Catholics and Protestants. Some Watchers believed that this was inspired by demons or vampires, seeking to destroy Christian faith and weaken the strongest defence against evil. If this is true, the tactic arguably backfired, badly; members of both sides became ever fiercer in their faith and quick to look for demons and black magic as signs of their enemies' work. The Council was almost shattered by disputes between Catholic and Protestant members, but it survived; an organisation which predated Christianity, and which had learned to work successfully with "pagans" in Asia and Africa (and in secret places in Europe), could adjust to this new division. In the end, the Watchers had an overarching purpose that could unit them despite issues of doctrinal debate.

In the mid-16th century, the Church of England broke with Rome, becoming officially Protestant and leaving the Council with a problem. They were now based in what much of Europe saw as a land of heretics, sometimes actually at war with major Catholic powers such as Spain. Watcher agents could all too easily find themselves accused of being Protestant English spies (or Catholic spies or plotters, if they came to England from elsewhere). Hence, the Watchers' long-established government connections became very useful; they decided that, if they were going to be taken for spies, they should at least be *good* spies. Watchers were placed within the espionage networks created by Sir Francis Walsingham in England and Cardinal Richelieu in France; life was dangerous for these agents, but they often achieved great results.

Incidentally, this was also the last period when the study of functioning magic was considered fairly natural for respectable European academics. Watchers sometimes worked with "Hermetic philosophers" such as John Dee (who was also involved in espionage) in England, or Giordano Bruno in Italy—at some risk (Bruno was burned at the stake for heresy). Later, Watchers had to keep such studies quiet—but they find that they generally prefer this; they can keep the magical texts to themselves and out of the hand of dabblers.

to slay, or not to slay

Movies such as *Elizabeth* and *Shakespeare in Love* have demonstrated the continuing appeal of Elizabethan settings. Why not add a Slayer (passing as a boy much of the time, in best Shakespearean fashion)? Throw in a Hermetic scholar-poet Watcher, secret politics and brutal espionage, and vampires playing twisted games in the ritualistic royal courts...

NEW WORLDS

Buffy: We don't say "Indian."

Giles: Oh, right. Yes, yes. Um, always behind on the terms. Still trying not to refer to you lot as "bloody colonials."

—*Buffy 4.8 Pangs*

The Age of Exploration, and the discovery and opening up of the Americas (and later, other lands such as Australia) made the Council's job ever more complicated. They had long been sending scouts and scholars to such parts of the world as they could reach, struggling to locate each Slayer in turn for aid and training, and to catalogue every manifestation of the supernatural, but often, decades had passed with them unable to locate the current Slayer. Now, they had no excuse not to send agents everywhere. Junior Watchers could find themselves charged with duties encompassing half a continent, with nothing but minimal training and courageous determination to sustain them. For that matter, dark supernatural forces could get around a little too well, too. There were even cases of weird foreign demons following visitors home and wreaking havoc in Europe.

This was when the Watcher move to England proved amazingly well-judged (or lucky). The English were among the leaders in global exploration—not as far ahead as Spain, but often more inclined to explore and to send odd ships off to new areas. The Watchers sponsored or invested in countless expeditions, investigating new lands, learning about (and occasionally destroying) local supernatural phenomena, and placing agents and allies in new colonies.

They also established or restored communications with numerous groups around the world who also claimed descent from the earliest Watcher-shamans, or who had been established by past wandering Watchers, or who had simply taken on the job of aiding local Slayers because nobody else was doing so. Many such contacts were friendly, as shared traditions and objectives made both sides happy to work together; others were less pleasant, as arrogant European Watchers collided with proud, isolationist, or dangerously weird local factions. Not a few ended in bloody secret battles; sometimes, the locals had corrupted the Watcher mission into a dark blood-cult, but more often, their only real crime was not agreeing with some detail of Council policy.

The need to lay the foundations of a global network while uniting various forces for good, many of them previously unaware of each other, renewed the tradition of adventurer-Watchers, which would survive until the Victorian era (and in a few cases until the 1930s). There were plenty of bookworms back in London, content to leave the fighting to Slayers and hirelings. Yet plenty of





brave (if often also condescending and arrogant) Watcher-explorers knew how to use a weapon, because when the local demons surfaced, the nearest help might be weeks away.

watchers of the caribbean!

The Age of Exploration is a *great* time to set a historical Watcher saga. Travel the world, seek out strange new cultures and strange new magics, and when necessary, chop them to pieces with cold steel or blow them up with gunpowder. Anyone wanting a subtler game can spend the time trying to reunite scattered Watcher groups in the face of huge cultural differences.

For example, a Golden Age of Piracy Series could involve agents working across the vague borders between the colonial powers, voodoo, native magics, adventurers in the guise of privateers (or, if necessary, pirates), ships flying the skull and crossbones for very good (or, rather, evil) reasons, sea monsters, and as much rum as you can drink.

FIRE AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Meanwhile, the Council HQ in London had its own problems. The Watchers endeavoured to remain neutral during the English Civil War, mostly successfully—many Watchers were scowling Puritans, instinctively drawn to Parliament's side, but others were old-fashioned gentleman-scholars or swashbuckling adventurers whose loyalty lay with the Royalists. Also, the Council recognised that a late phase of witch-hunting around this period lacked any basis in the knowledge of true supernatural evil, and indeed saw it as a threat to new Slayers (witch-hunters tending to disapprove of powerful women with uncanny abilities), and were happy to see it eventually die down.

The Great Fire of London, in 1666, was nearly a total disaster for the Council, as the chapter-house near St. Paul's was burned to the ground. A truly heroic effort saved almost all of the library, which then, however, had to be stored in damp underground chambers by the Thames. The Council quickly sold the old site and acquired a new, larger building, constructed of fine red brick (and disguised as the private house of one of the Watchers' secret noble patrons) near Moorfields, an open space on the northern edge of the city.

Many Watchers were friendly with the impressive intellectual community in England at this time and monitored their studies. While magic was becoming discredited, it wasn't entirely forgotten and some research merited supervision. Council legend says that they carefully acquired some of the notes made by Sir Isaac Newton when he was researching alchemy, to prevent their falling into the wrong hands, and also that their new building was reconstructed around 1700 by the architect Nicholas Hawksmoor, using principles of "sacred geometry" to improve its magical security.

The 18th century, remembered later as the age of enlightenment, was a time of cultural ferment for European Watchers. Every clashing intellectual theory of the period had its proponents on the Council, from authoritarian monarchy to radical democracy, from traditional Catholicism to pantheism and even atheism. The Watcher organisation again came close to tearing itself apart. It was (Watcher historians say) saved only by the leadership of a British Council member who had been recruited to the Watchers after encountering hideous demonic activity while serving with the East India Company. This new leader, fabulously wealthy (thanks to the frankly corrupt business practices of the Company), experienced in military command and business administration, with extensive contacts in government, and utterly dedicated to the destruction of the supernatural, reminded the Watchers of their purpose in life . . . and then ruthlessly suppressed anyone who disagreed with his methods. Unity was restored, at the cost of the creation of a tradition of authoritarian (British) leadership which tolerated no dissent.

The two great revolutions which marked the end of the century, in America and then in France, led to more complications. America was a manageable problem; the Council had agents in place who survived the change of government and continued to observe as the new nation grew, if not always quite closely enough. Events in Europe caused greater trouble; not only did the chaos of the French Revolution create opportunities for countless vampires and demons to run riot, it led to further wars and carnage, making international communications hard to maintain. Merely keeping track of the archaeological finds brought back by Napoleon's abortive expedition to Egypt kept one Watcher committee fully occupied for years. It wasn't only patriotism which made British Watchers cheer when Napoleon was defeated.





INDUSTRIES, EMPIRES, AND ATTITUDES

Giles: I've been, uh, indexing the Watcher diaries covering the last couple of centuries. You would be amazed at how numbingly pompous and long-winded some of these Watchers were.

—*Buffy 2.9 'What's My Line?' - Part One*

In time, the Industrial Revolution got fully underway, and Britain carved out a global empire. (Even those colonies which had the bad taste to rebel kept the language and some of the culture.) The Watchers felt increasingly smug about their choice of homeland, often forgetting about their earlier days in other lands. Britain had influence all over the globe, and the Council took full advantage.

While the Council was generally prepared to recruit talented field agents wherever it found them, its leadership was increasingly drawn from the British middle and upper classes. These Watchers were typically dedicated to an old-fashioned sense of duty and righteousness, making them brave and honourable (at least among their own kind), but also old-fashioned, staid, and arrogant. They were typically classically educated, and good at handling problems in well-established ways rather than improvising. Coming from the same social class, and often the same schools, as the rulers of the Empire, they knew how to play the system.

They were also generally financially well off—the Council itself had built a substantial portfolio of investments and property in Britain over the previous centuries. This wealth enabled them to build an increasingly powerful network. Fast sailing ships, and then steam-powered vehicles, allowed them to send agents and couriers to the ends of the Earth in mere months. When the telegraph appeared, they were flexible enough to grasp its usefulness (it was fast, reliable, and easier to use than magic), and for a while late in the century they attempted to manage operations across the entire world from London. This proved infeasible—telegraph lines were never widespread enough—but the idea was typical of Council attitudes.

In other words, around the second half of the 19th century, the Council built the organisational structure which saw it through to the end of the 20th. It now had the resources, influence, and communications which a truly global secret society needed to work properly. The Council as seen on *Buffy* didn't really exist until 1840, but was fully formed by 1880.

Unfortunately, this new strength and imperialist self-assurance led to overconfidence. There were still independent "pseudo-Watchers" in remote areas, some of them with useful knowledge, but they were treated with condescension or contempt. Worse, the mid-19th century

saw some disasters involving careless "gentleman-adventurer" Watchers. The greatest was in Russia in the 1860s, where a group of idealistic Watcher agents, officially assigned to help the Russian peasantry in their struggles with vampires, became involved with liberal movements which supported political reform and freedom of education. They were comprehensively outmanoeuvred by a group of vampires who had infiltrated both the court and the movement, and were all eventually killed or exiled to Siberia by the Russian government. Likewise, Watchers sent to fight the ancient, secretive vampires of Africa found themselves dying of disease as often as not; the vampires barely had to bother helping these infections spread. At the same time, attempts by the Council to suppress resurgent vampire activity in London itself (actually due to the influence of the ancient vampire known as the Master) proved embarrassingly ineffectual.

Thus, the late Victorian era sent the Council into one of its passive phases, with Victorian reticence amplified into outright inaction—and this passivity came to be seen as "the Watcher way." (The great explorer Sir Richard Burton eventually resigned from the Council in disgust over this, but by then he had annoyed so many of his colleagues that they were glad to see him go.) The old Watcher-paladins and Watcher-explorers, the lonely seekers tracking down Slayers (and lost Watchers) in the far corners of the Earth, were forgotten or written off as romantic aberrations. The tradition of courage and self-confidence endured, but the willingness to take action was largely lost.

(This passivity shouldn't be over-emphasised, though. The Watchers never entirely gave up the idea of direct action. They always had a few frock-coated agents with revolvers in their pockets and fixed scowls, ready to do what was necessary to protect the world from darkness. They simply thought that action was better left to other people wherever possible. At best, they were true gentlefolk, high-minded and cautious but deeply honourable; at worst, they treated Slayers and others as servants, employed to do jobs which would dirty the hands of their betters.)

In short, as a Victorian organisation, the Council acquired a full set of Victorian attitudes. Watchers had always been paternalistic, arrogant, detached, and intellectually snobbish; now, they had a whole wealthy, powerful, centrally run organisation telling them that this was *right*. And while the telegraph and the steamship did wonderful things for coordination and the exchange of ideas, they also enabled the central Council to impose those attitudes on everyone they could reach.

Still, the Victorian Watchers were strong—and as better communications, growing interest in archaeology, and heavy-handed industrialisation enabled vampires and





other monsters to emerge from hidden lairs, wander the world, and hide in darker shadows, the Council was able to hit back. Or at least, to guide the Slayers in hitting back.

They also moved their HQ again, having outgrown the old Moorfields-area house. (They'd also noticed that its neighbourhood, Clerkenwell, was starting to go downhill.) In the middle of the century, they took over a new building in Knightsbridge, on the western side of the city, overlooking Hyde Park. This was often taken for a private gentlemen's club by passers-by, and appeared on official records as the property of a geographical research institute. The old Moorfields building was kept for storage, office space, emergency accommodation, and training rooms.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Roger Wyndam-Pryce: In my days, we fought werewolves, vampires, the occasional swamp man. And now we have protohuman cybernetic chain fighters.

Wesley: Yes, well, times are more complicated.

—Angel 5.7 Lineage

The next hundred years went rather badly in what had become the Watcher point of view. Britain went into decline, and wild fashions and social movements (which the stuffy, conservative Watchers found distasteful) all too often led to unhealthy interest in the supernatural (reinforcing that prejudice). Certainly, the two World Wars made things messy. Demons revelled in the bloodshed and chaos, while vampires merely exploited it, prowling battlefields and bomb sites for prey. In WWII, the Council HQ in London found itself in a city under bomber attack; many of the archives were moved to secret shelters, some deep under London, some out in the English countryside. They survived with little more than minor mildew, and the HQ itself, by good fortune, never suffered any damage—but the inconvenience and disruption were severe.

In theory, the Council had a long-established policy of neutrality in mundane affairs, up to and including war; their mission was too important to be compromised. This rule had often been disregarded in the past (as in Russia in the 1860s), but in the 20th century, the Council enforced it strictly. While many of the British Watchers chafed under this constraint in wartime, they were trained to accept the authority of their superiors and most did just that. The Council maintained lines of communication with agents in Germany through neutral Switzerland. It also used deep connections within the British Civil Service to protect members from being drafted into the army, prevent the intelligence services from investigating their activities, and acquire necessary resources despite wartime controls and rationing. They

were even able to exploit those same intelligence systems themselves sometimes.

Eventually, as the tide of war turned, the Council discovered that some members of the Nazi Party were exploring the occult in their search for power. At this point, the neutrality rule could be relaxed, and a few hand-picked Watchers sprang into action, assisting deeply secret British intelligence and commando operations. They also learned that their American allies had their own investigation into the supernatural, the so-called "Demon Initiative." The Watchers, however, decided that this showed dangerous signs of naivety and of trying to exploit things better destroyed, and kept it at arm's length.

blood, toil, tears, and sweat

A WWII-era Series could mix magical and mundane espionage, as Watchers hear hints of secrets as well-kept as any they know—codes are broken in Bletchley Park and invasions planned beneath Whitehall, while Nazi researchers struggle to create super-weapons or probe the supernatural for even deadlier advantages. And when the action starts, will bullets, commando knives, or wooden stakes serve best?

After that war, things continued to go downhill, albeit slowly and in a controllable fashion. Exploration of the last secret places of the Earth occasionally unlocked long-forgotten dangers; worse, science had advanced to the point where it almost seemed to merge with magic, unleashing new monsters. Old-fashioned Watchers held that these things were none of their concern, but the majority were pragmatic enough to hold that an inhuman monster was an inhuman monster, whatever its source. In any case, Slayers often ended up meeting such things.

It was also noted that many of those Slayers were showing up in America, obliging the Council to reinforce its network there, often sending British Watchers to help. The Council discussed why this should be happening, as an abstract question, concluding that Slayers tended to be activated wherever they were most needed, and that a lot of vampires were moving to the U.S.A. to take advantage of a combination of wealth, high population, and rampant materialism (which left humans less able to fight them). It was occasionally mildly inconvenient, but nothing they couldn't handle.

Then, just as the millennium finally came close to its end with the world still intact, things became *seriously* untidy.

THEY ALSO
SERVE





THE SUNNYDALE PROBLEM

Giles: My "attachment" to the Slayer is not a problem. In point of fact, it's been a very . . .

Wesley: The way you've handled this assignment is something of an embarrassment to the council.

—*Buffy 3.14 Bad Girls*

In the late 1990s, the role of Slayer passed to a girl in Los Angeles, California. Buffy Summers had not previously been identified as a "Potential," and she initially displayed predictable disorientation and resistance to her destiny, but she eventually adapted fairly well. Her first major conflict was with a large group of vampires with a powerful leader; she not only survived, but wiped out her opponents. Unfortunately, her first assigned Watcher was killed during these events—but such are the risks of Watcher duty.

More trivially, Summers was obliged to burn down her school's gymnasium to destroy the vampires inside, and her parents' marriage broke up at around the same time. Her mother decided to move from the city to the small Californian town of Sunnydale. The Council assigned her a new Watcher, Rupert Giles, using its connections to acquire him a position as librarian in the girl's new school.

Giles's first reports confirmed that Summers was headstrong and resistant to discipline and (at first) to accepting her duties. However, she soon adapted well enough to destroy a number of vampires and other

problems. Although Sunnydale was hardly a major metropolis, it appeared that the subtle web of destiny woven around the Chosen One had placed her somewhere she could do good. Giles, analysing the history of supernatural affairs in Sunnydale, suggested that it might be the site of a dimensional rift or flaw—a "Hellmouth." The Council concurred.

The *problem* with this Slayer was that she was highly resistant to guidance as to how she should conduct her life. The long-established ideal was that the Slayer should detach herself from mundane friends and family. Many vampires have the wit to use such associations against their opponents, making every friend and relation a weakness, while a social life and ordinary studies would inevitably be a distraction from combat training. Summers simply ignored this, continuing her school career and forming several strong friendships. She even associated with a number of supernatural beings of dubious reliability, such as the ensouled vampire known as Angel. (The Council was interested to learn about this unique being, but their history and doctrine was quite clear that vampires were the enemy, while they could think of plenty of humans with souls who were capable of considerable evil. They were hardly surprised when Angel reverted to his former nature for a while, merely more concerned when he returned, supposedly restrained by a soul once more.)

At first, the Council took Giles's reports at face value, accepting that Summers was simply too stubborn to accept advice. In time, though, they realised that he





lacked the cool head and detached judgment required of a Watcher. Still, there was no arguing with results (try as some of the Council might). Summers' natural skill made her an effective Slayer, and by sheer good fortune (or perhaps that weird destiny showing up once again), some of her friends proved to be useful in their own right. Matters appeared manageable.

Adding to the confusion, though, Summers at one stage suffered life-threatening injuries in combat, and her heart stopped briefly. This was, as it turned out, sufficient to cause the "Slayer destiny" to activate another candidate. Thus, after one of Summers's friends saved her with basic first aid skills, the Council found that there were *two* active Slayers. Unfortunately, the first new Slayer, Kendra Young, was killed in action, and her successor, Faith LeHane, went rogue. (Incidentally, it was never clear why Kendra Young was sent to Sunnydale unsupported. Perhaps some on the Council thought that Giles had actually proved his competence, and that he could look after the new girl for a while. If so, the death of this diligent, obedient Slayer doubtless confirmed the suspicions of the anti-Giles faction.)

canon alert

We never learned Kendra's or Faith's surnames on the TV series. However, we been informed by the highest authorities—yep, the head of all Watchers himself—as to the truth on this issue.

doubled slayers

It's unclear whether anything like Buffy's revival from near death had ever happened before in the history of the Slayers. It's hardly impossible, given that resuscitation techniques aren't a brand new invention, but it did seem to be unexpected. Frankly, most previous Slayers had probably died in much more messy and irretrievable ways, and without competent friends to hand. It's also possible that Buffy came very, very close to death, and the "Slayer Destiny" wouldn't have worked with less.

Still, any historical Series could in theory include two Slayers at a time, due to similar events. They could be unaware of each other, know the facts but operate in different areas, team up (occasionally or habitually), or even become rivals. They might even be enemies, if their attitudes are very different, or if they (or their Watchers) see themselves as in competition for the "Slayer Power" or the "Slayer Soul." Remember that only the death of the *newer* Slayer will activate another "Potential." In theory, if that Slayer suffered another near-death event, there could even be three active at a time—but that would really be straining coincidence. On the other hand, a futuristic Slayer-SF Series could feature advanced medicine capable of restoring very badly injured victims to life and health, increasing the chances of duplication.



THEY ALSO
SERVE





A BREAKDOWN IN RELATIONS

Quentin: That is in direct opposition to the Council's orders.

Giles: Yes. Interestingly, I don't give a rat's ass about the Council's orders.

—*Buffy 3.12 Helpless*

After the Kendra and Faith debacles, the Council decided that Giles had become far too emotionally involved with his charge, as he demonstrated during the traditional “Cruciamentum” test on her 18th birthday. (Ironically, Summers passed the test—as described in *The Slayer's Handbook*—with flying colours, despite a tragic error which led to the deaths of two of the Watchers organising it.) A second Watcher, Wesley Wyndam-Pryce, selected for youthful enthusiasm, proven scholarship, and commitment to Council policies, was assigned to supervise Faith LeHane. Thus, when Giles was fired, Wyndam-Pryce was left as the Council's agent in Sunnydale.

That particular period culminated in LeHane's betrayal and a conflict between Summers and her friends and a powerful sorcerer, in the course of which she directly disobeyed Council instructions, severely endangering herself to save the existence of the *vampire* Angel. Wyndam-Pryce, too, ignored orders to return to England in order to assist with this fight.

By now, the Council regarded the Sunnydale situation as a headache. Their response was to seek a fresh start. They even fired Wyndam-Pryce for disobedience and his failure to control “his” Slayer—a frankly excessive response, many would say, given that his rebellion had hardly been as prolonged or perverse as Giles' (and had involved direct action against a serious supernatural threat), while he had only been LeHane's Watcher for a short time. Frankly, the Council was flailing. They were still operating in a hierarchical, authoritarian, Victorian frame of mind, and even Wesley, who looked tweedy and conservative to Californians, seemed brash and obsessed with novelty by Council standards.

And so the Council stepped back for a year or so, reassessing its policies and wondering whether simply to leave everyone in Sunnydale to their own devices while waiting for another, more compliant Slayer to appear. They sent agents to recapture LeHane when she reappeared in Los Angeles, but when that failed and she went to prison for her actions, they decided to leave that problem, too, alone for a while. (At least they'd know where she was for the next few years.) When Giles and Summers asked for assistance in identifying the hellgod Glory, they took the opportunity to try and reassert control over her and associates, but she called their bluff, suggesting that they needed her to justify their existence more than she needed them. This was debatable—she had asked *them* for help, and they only ever needed a Slayer, and another would appear one day—but she was impressively forceful, there appeared to be a real problem in hand, and the Council could wait while they assessed their new data and made new plans, so they humoured her, even obeying her forceful request (some would call it a demand) to reinstate Rupert Giles.

Then Summers died in the process of defeating Glory. Giles returned to England, and the Council doubtless began thinking about what to do about Faith LeHane. Before they could act, though, some of Summers's associates succeeded in *resurrecting* her—a frankly rash and worrying display of magical power, though the Council never would realise quite how unwise it was or how disastrous it would be for them. She returned to action, monitored on occasion by Giles, who was however largely detached from official duties. He, and members of a coven of witches loosely allied with the Council, helped cure one of Summers's associates of a severe addiction to magic. The Watcher Council, cautious or paralysed depending whose opinion one accepts, continued to watch.

Until matters took a turn very much for the worst.





ANNIHILATION

Travers: Ladies and gentlemen, our fears have been confirmed. The First Evil has declared all-out war on this institution. Their first volleys proved most effective. I, for one, think it's time we struck back. Give me confirmations on all remaining operatives. Visuals and tacticals. Highest alert. Get them here as soon as possible. Begin preparations for mobilization. Once we're accounted for, I want to be ready to move.

Aide #3: Sir?

Travers: We'll be paying a visit to the Hellmouth. My friends, these are the times that define us. Proverbs 24:6; O, by wise council, you shall make your war.

(The Council Headquarters is destroyed in a huge explosion.)

—Buffy 7.9 Never Leave Me

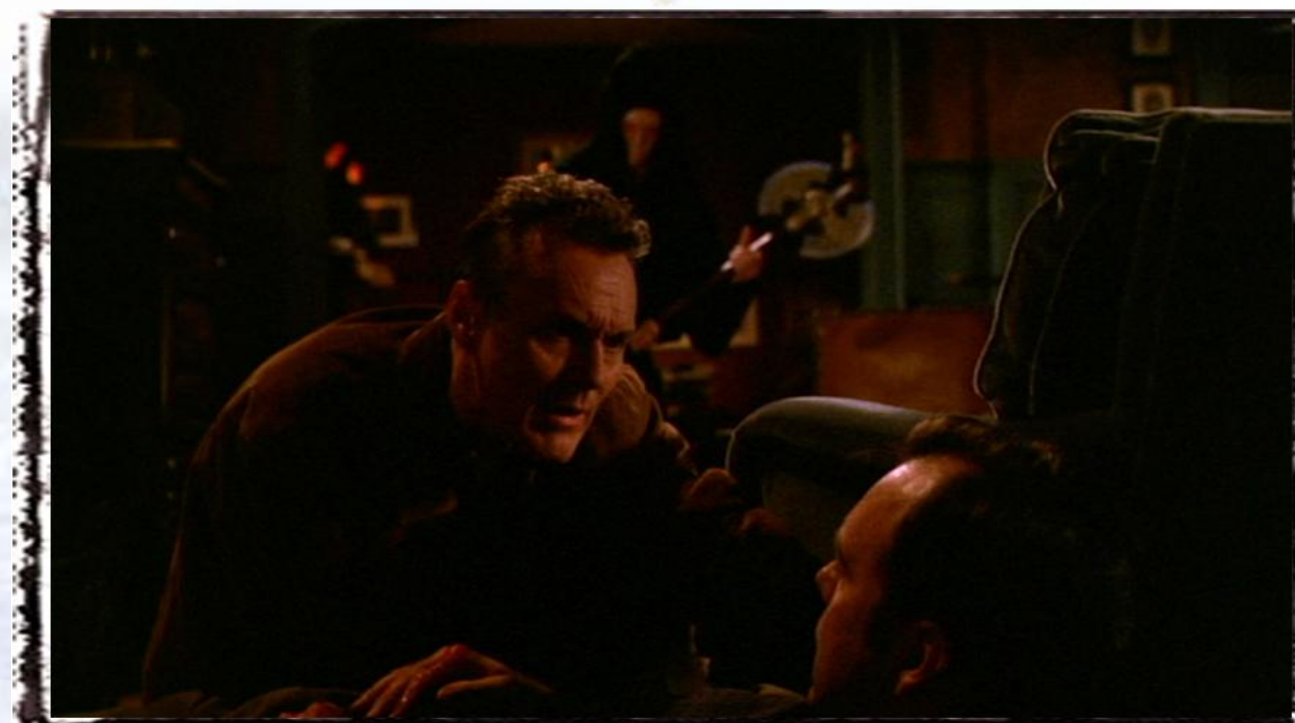
The events depicted in Season Seven of *Buffy* have already been covered in *Welcome to Sunnydale*, but the important thing to note here is that they were, to put it mildly, significant for the Watchers. In brief, what nobody had realised was that, as a result of the earlier magical resurrection of a dead Slayer (Summers, at the start of Season Six), the supernatural balance between good and evil had been disrupted. The overwhelmingly powerful immaterial entity known as the First Evil recognised this as an opportunity. It had always controlled a few minions on Earth; now, thanks to the imbalance, it was apparently able to unleash more and more dangerous agents.

However, the existence of the Slayer—any Slayer—represented some kind of obstruction to its plans, and it also recognised in passing that the Watchers could be a problem. So part of its strategy was to wipe out both. It commanded its “priests,” the Bringers, and a psychopathic human named Caleb to whom it granted superhuman power, to begin slaughtering all the potential Slayers in the world, and also their Watchers. Before the Council could react to this, Caleb somehow planted a powerful bomb inside their London HQ, wiping out both the Council and its library.

(That HQ was of course *supposed* to be defended, and the Watchers would certainly have expected and guarded against supernatural intruders. On the other hand, the First has almost limitless power in some respects, while Caleb was both physically strong and stealthy when he wanted to be. Perhaps he just walked right through any conventional defences and magical wards, killing anyone who challenged him, or he placed a really big, powerful bomb outside any barriers, or the Council’s guards had grown terribly sloppy in recent decades. Alternatively, Caleb may have somehow subverted a lesser Council employee who could carry the bomb in. If that employee died in the blast, the First would have been entirely satisfied.)

Meanwhile, the First had begun an attack on Sunnydale, psychologically destabilising Summers and her allies, brainwashing the newly ensouled vampire Spike, and unleashing the first of its army of “Turok-Han,” super-powerful vampires, on the town through the Hellmouth. However, Rupert Giles had also become partially aware of





the problem, and working with the same coven as before, he sought to aid Summers. Seeing the Council as inefficient and staid, he'd dismissed the idea of calling on them for help, and had actually *stolen* some essential texts from their library before its destruction. How he was able to get away with such an audacious theft, and to remain hidden from the considerable investigative power of the Watchers, is unclear. He was apparently right about the Council's inefficiency, and in any case their defences were never very good at protecting them against insiders (they suffered from the tacit assumption that fellow Watchers were "the right sort of people" and would play by the rules). Also, Giles had various allies who were either fellow junior Watchers or skilled witches.

(A few other supernatural factions had also noticed signs of the First's activity, but either their abilities were limited to providing information and moral support to Giles, they were distracted by other events—a powerful ancient spirit had only recently appeared in Los Angeles and come close to dominating the minds of the entire world—or they too came under attack by Bringers.)

Using the coven and surviving Watchers as agents, Giles began rounding up surviving potential Slayers, and brought them to Sunnydale to aid and be protected by Summers. (While he never said as much, he must also have thought that, if she and LeHane were killed, it would be best if the new Slayer was close to hand.) Events culminated in a battle during which the witch Willow Rosenberg cast a spell which activated every potential

Slayer in the world, bringing them all to full power simultaneously and enabling those in Sunnydale to engage the First's army of Turok-Han. Then, Spike activated a mysterious amulet which Summers had acquired from Angel, destroying the Turok-Han, the Hellmouth, and the town of Sunnydale (whose population had fortunately already fled). Summers and most of her allies, including several new Slayers and Rupert Giles, managed to escape the destruction.

RECONSTRUCTION

Willow: Reconstruction began—when? Buffy?

Buffy: Huh? Oh! Um, reconstruction . . . uh, reconstruction began after the . . . construction, which was . . . shoddy, so they had to reconstruct.

—Buffy 1.7 Angel

Today, the Watchers' Council is destroyed, its network devastated—but the need for *someone* to train new Slayers has never been greater.

Rupert Giles has organised his allies to help, sending agents to locate new Slayers and bring them in for training. There are unconfirmed rumours that other old Watchers, perhaps previously retired from active service, are also attempting to recreate the Council. If this is true, the relationship between these conservative old-timers and Giles and co., with their disrespect for the old, staid, cumbersome Council, could involve friction. Some Watchers will think that having many Slayers to deal with simultaneously *obviously* demands a bigger, more





powerful Council; others may draw different conclusions from recent experience. But there's little time for arguments. Many of the new Slayers are startled, confused, and possibly traumatised, and every shady opportunist in the occult underworld is after them, to eliminate, exploit, or corrupt. (Unfortunately, a rumour among vampires is that Slayer blood tastes wonderful.) One faction has taken over the old Clerkenwell building, which survived a Bringer arson attack largely unscathed; the contents of its storerooms certainly need guarding, and its training facilities and secondary library could be useful. Meanwhile, stray groups of semi-knowledgeable investigators and champions all around the world are becoming involved in this *ad hoc* process.

Unfortunately, there's also evidence that a group with both high-tech and mystical resources has gained access to old Council records, and has used these to program at least one cyborg to impersonate a retired Watcher. There may also have been other dangerous leaks amidst the recent chaos.

Of course, all this reconstruction will have its share of complications. Shortly after the destruction of Sunnydale, it emerged that Angel and his friends had somehow become allied with the demonically-controlled legal firm of Wolfram and Hart, making it impossible for any Watcher to trust them as allies. They subsequently appear to have broken that connection, and possibly all fallen in battle with demonic powers, but that whole situation remains confused. Meanwhile, though most old Watchers are hazy as to the details of the First's attack,

some may eventually realise that it was Summers's friends' insanely rash magical activity which enabled it to become so powerful in the material world. As they lost countless allies and loved ones as a result, some of them may regard Giles's group with suspicion. It's certain that the Watchers will return, but the shape they'll take remains to be decided.

canon alert

We know from episodes of *Angel* that Giles and others are working on reconstructing enough Watcher organisation to assist the new Slayers. There's little reliable evidence beyond this—one relevant report heard on *Angel* turned out to have come from that cyborg impersonator, although his story of retired Watchers returning to the fray is certainly plausible. The Moorfields/ Clerkenwell building is pure invention (but as always, not implausible).



THEY ALSO
SERVE





2 Who Are These People?

Tara: Well, what's so bad about them coming here? Aren't they good guys? I mean, Watchers, that's just like other Gileses, right?

Buffy: Yeah, they're scary and horrible!

Giles: Um, they, well, they can appear a bit . . . well, uh, hard-nosed, but, uh, well, essentially, their agenda is the same as ours; they want to save the world and kill demons.

—Buffy 5.12 Checkpoint

This chapter is intended for both players and Directors. As one might expect, it discusses Watcher characters, as well as some of their close associates.

CONCEPTS

Buffy: Faith, wait. Look, I know this new guy's a dork, but . . . well, I have nothing to follow that. He's pretty much just a dork.

—Buffy 3.14 Bad Girls

As with any other character, the process of creating a Watcher Cast Member should begin with some personal history. As Watchers are more or less formally *employed* as such, this means looking at how and why they got the job. Given that the work is hazardous to health, sanity, and soul, and that the organisation is highly secret, the question deserves close attention.

RECRUITMENT

Some people are born Watchers, some achieve Watcher status, and some have Watching thrust upon them. In other words, there are several sources of Watcher recruitment.





HEREDITARY WATCHERS

Giles: I was ten years old when my father told me I was destined to be a Watcher. He was one, and his, uh, mother before him, and I was to be next.

Buffy: Were you thrilled beyond all measure?

Giles: No, I had very definite plans about my future. I was going to be a fighter pilot. Or possibly a grocer. Well, uh . . . my father gave me a very tiresome speech about, uh, responsibility and sacrifice.

—Buffy 1.5 Never Kill a Boy on the First Date

While the Council might pay lip service to the idea of completely voluntary Watchers who perform their duties free from duress, the fact is that some people are born with heavy Watcher expectations.

This should not be surprising. The Council dates back to an era when the idea of following one's parents into a profession was very much the norm. The Watchers have always promoted ideals of duty and responsibility; duty to family traditions is supposed to be the flipside of inherited privilege. (Indeed, the Watchers take this rather more seriously than most people from their general social background.) Furthermore, the Watchers need lots of people with a long, intensive education in the supernatural—hardly commonplace today. The children of Watchers are at least guaranteed to know that the supernatural exists, and to take it seriously; if they do not rebel against their heritage too much, they'll have had years of grounding in the subject. They can also be indoctrinated with the need for secrecy from the cradle. There's even a special Academy for adolescent trainee Watchers (see p. [?]).

Watchers with family history often have a different set of attitudes than totally new recruits. They may be more aware of Watcher traditions and accomplishments, but they are also more likely to be resentful at heart, feeling that they've never been given any choice about their lives. A "hereditary Watcher" is often defined by this conflict between freedom and duty. Giles spent much of the TV series coming to terms with what his heritage implied; Wesley, forced into the unwanted role of an outcast, worked very hard to fit the part of the rebel loner.

VOLUNTEERS AND OTHER RECRUITS

Willow: I mean, you've been fighting evil here for three years, and I've helped some, and now we're supposed to decide what we want to do with our lives. And I just realized that that's what I want to do. Fight evil, help people. I mean, I . . . I think it's worth doing. And I don't think you do it because you have to. It's a good fight, Buffy, and I want in.

—Buffy 3.19 Choices

But not all children of Watchers become active Watchers themselves. Some prove unsuitable; in other cases, the parents decide not to force a potentially dangerous and limiting responsibility on their offspring. For that matter, quite a few Watchers never marry or become parents; theirs is an obsessive life, and even if they can find partners (from inside or outside the network), it takes a particularly self-sacrificing person to marry someone with such a dangerously arcane job.

Thus, the Council has always had a continuous need for new recruits. Finding such people is not easy; apart from





anything else, they must believe in the supernatural or be convinced of its truth during recruitment. Many have prior personal experience of the subject—the post-Season Seven recruitment of Buffy’s old gang to Giles’s nascent revived network is no doubt far from unprecedented. This “experience” may have been painful and the Council is happy to recruit people who want *revenge*—so long as they can also accept the need for discipline (which isn’t always guaranteed with vengeful types). Others receive a convincing recruitment speech, often including practical demonstrations such as minor spellcasting or confrontations with trapped vampires.

The Council traditionally relied on word-of-mouth recommendations or tracked down individuals who met their specific and unusual requirements. Incidentally, they have never been overwhelmingly prejudiced against female members. Although many have been chauvinistic men who regarded the Slayer as a unique special case, the organization always needed talent too much to refuse it just because it came in the form of the fairer sex. Unfortunately, these days, many intelligent people are convinced materialists who are quicker to believe in hallucinations, stage magic, and clever makeup than in the supernatural. As a result, the Watchers have had to become very careful in their assessment of potential members.

Recruits must also be prepared to accept the risks and requirements of Watcher duty. This often means a high-minded willingness to protect humanity, which is the official Watcher *raison d’être*. Still, some have joined for action and excitement, for the chance to make use of the Council’s unparalleled libraries, for the opportunity to see the world (including parts closed to the general public), or even for the money.

All this means that non-hereditary Watchers can have a wide range of personalities, from curiosity to high-mindedness to a bitter hatred which barely tolerates any kind of supernatural activity. Some are confused about exactly what the Watchers are and what they stand for, at least when they first join, while others steep themselves in Watcher lore. It also means that such people can have a whole range of views of the supernatural, from deep (if sometimes patchy) knowledge to curious or hostile passing experience to startled previous ignorance.

Potentials-Turned-Watchers: In the past, a few, often very good Watchers have actually been former Slayers-in-training who passed the age of possible activation without being called, but after being thoroughly convinced of the virtues of the Watcher cause. This can make for an interesting character twist—a mix of big-sister protectiveness and lingering envy. In the wake of the destruction of Sunnydale, a few examples of the inverse case may exist—Potentials who seemed too old

for activation and who had been accepted as trainee Watchers, but who now find that they’ve received full Slayer powers after all.

More generally, friends and relations of Slayers or Potentials might *occasionally* be recruited. Despite what’s happened to several of Buffy’s old group post-Season Seven, this was probably much rarer in earlier times. Watchers value calm detachment, which would be hard for someone too close to the Slayer or looking for revenge on a dead Slayer’s killer.

HIRED MUSCLE

Holtz: I don't need mercenaries who will kill for anyone willing to pay their price. I need warriors who will die for my cause.

—Angel 3.10 Dad

Previous comments notwithstanding, few people ever join the Watchers for the money, at least in recent years. Even so, some on the edges of the organisation are, essentially, salaried staff, albeit carefully screened for trustworthiness. Certainly, some members of the “special operations” teams (see p. [?]) are more thrill-seekers than dedicated champions. (Of course, someone who originally took a job for pay or thrills may discover a nobler side—and remain as a matter of duty.)

Financially motivated staff are not often used for really dangerous work. This is not a matter of morality—it’s simply that supernatural foes tend to be frightening in ways that few people, even courageous professional fighters, quite understand until they actually face the reality. Confronted by a demon that can soak up a burst from an SMG and still disembowel some unfortunate team-mate, quite a few mercenaries change their minds about whether they want the job. That said, some Watcher groups do make use of tough, capable hired guns.

AFTER RECRUITMENT

Weatherby: Do the sacred oaths you swore as a Watcher mean nothing to you now?

Wesley: As a matter of fact they do. I swore to protect the innocent.

—Angel 1.19 Sanctuary

Whatever the nature of his recruitment, it’s also useful to consider how the character feels about the Watchers *now*. Are they proud to be a member, nervous, confused, or even resentful? Do they think that this is a sacred mission, a job that needs doing, or a misguided system in need of internal reform? Do they regard all those Watcher traditions as a noble inspiration, a bit of an embarrassment, or a drag on progress? Will they see



“field operations” as a chance to serve the cause, a source of excitement, or a criminal diversion from more important duties?

Having been recruited, the new Watcher generally receives some kind of training. Although it's usually academic in nature, it can be quite varied, in both nature and extent. Watchers inevitably learn something about the history of the organisation and about other groups. They also often acquire other skills to fit into cover employment, although this is usually something fitting the general Watcher style . . . say, museum curator—or school librarian.

COMBAT SKILLS

Giles: I—I'm a Watcher, I—I haven't the skill. . .

Buffy: Oh, come on, stake through the heart, a little sunlight . . . it's like falling off a log.

—Buffy 1.1 *Welcome to the Hellmouth*

Many Watchers learn how to fight. True, doctrine dictates that Watchers *watch*, rather than act directly—but they have to be able to educate Slayers. Also, there's no escaping the fact that some opponents aren't so sporting as to treat a Watcher as non-combatant under the Geneva Convention. Thus, it's hardly surprising that, for example, Giles has sometimes proved a pretty useful swordsman, and Wesley rapidly came to display respectable combat ability once his initial naivety wore off.

Watcher combat training tends to focus on melee weapons and crossbows first and unarmed techniques

second—gun skills are generally less valued (firearms are noisy, illegal, and sometimes ineffective). The training is also slightly distorted by a focus on turning the Watcher into a good combat *teacher* rather than a fighter in his own right, though of course it's hard to achieve one without the other. The combat style is pragmatic, focussed on dealing with supernatural opponents; indeed, combat classes often involve a great deal of discussion of specific creatures' weak points and how to exploit them.

While the Watchers may not be the world's greatest fighters, the combat trainer tradition does make for a respectable repository of skill. Indeed, one or two of the most senior Watcher combat experts are highly effective martial artists. Anyone wishing to play a combat-oriented hero/champion-level character in a Watcher-centred game should not have to look far for a rationale.

WATCHER CAREERS

Many Watchers spend years, indeed, their whole adult lives, in the same library or branch office. Others move around wherever they are most needed, gaining increasing authority, and eventually, perhaps, a seat on the Council. Those with an upward career path in front of them are often visible from early on; they are the ones with administrative and social skills, and a tangible sense of motivation.

That's not to say these people are in the job for themselves; for those seeking power and glory, the Watcher network is a poor place to set down roots. Anyone with dreams on those lines probably resigns sooner or later, carving out a career in the more





mundane world or going rogue. The Watchers might even encourage this at times, as a way of increasing their “outer network” of contacts and favours; better to have a friend with talent and determination in the mundane world than a bitter, restless Watcher. But it’s perfectly possible for someone to think that the Watcher cause is best served by putting an ambitious type in charge, and that a little power and glory within this secret network is only a fair reward for their services.

The key point here is that Watchers, while detached from normal society, have lives of their own, including colleagues they’re used to treating as equals. They’re not school-age kids and students, like the majority of *Buffy* Cast Members, or self-isolating city-dwellers, commonplace in *Angel*. They may well also have families—though if they’re sensible, they’ll keep their homes secure and perhaps even keep their relationships secret, lest they become targets for enemies. Those families have to know *something* about the Watcher’s activities, of course, and should be drilled in basic precautions, such as not inviting strangers into the house.

PERSONALITIES

Gwendolyn Post: The fact is, there is talk in the council that you have become a bit too . . . American.

Giles: Me?

Buffy: Him?

—*Buffy 3.7 Revelations*

Those steeped in *Buffy* know exactly how a Watcher character should act—like a slightly pompous, intellectually competent, upper-middle-class Englishman (or woman). The character is permitted to mellow over time, but maintains a stiff upper lip (that which started out as a comic feature becoming a sign of physical courage) and a dry, even sarcastic wit. *Angel* provides a slightly different model, because the main Watcher in that show never manages quite as much wit, gets the mellowing over with fairly quickly, gets dragged through a certain amount of hell, and develops what his American friends might call violence issues.

In a Watcher-focussed roleplaying Series, players should try to modify these stereotypes, if only to keep the characters reasonably distinct. There’s *nothing* fixed or unchangeable about Watcher characters. Admittedly, most are scholarly, which tends to make them seem a little pompous to people used to less structured environments and less analytical ways of thinking—but even a scholar *could* have a relaxed manner and a degree of social adaptability. Anyway, the Council sometimes hired people for other talents, including combat skill—this has become even more necessary since the fall of the old network.

the watcher oath

We can gather that Watchers—as distinct from trainees or hired hands—traditionally swear “oaths of office,” presumably as part of an induction ceremony. The details have never been stated, except that they include an undertaking to protect the innocent and imply undying war against vampires. Hired enforcers might not count as Watchers for this purpose, though long-term employees should at least accept similar ideals. Which of the oaths individual Watchers may choose to emphasise is, in practice, up to them.

Whether Rupert Giles’s reconstructed Watcher organisation preserves this tradition is also unknown. It might strike Giles and others as pompous and archaic, but it *would* remind recruits of the seriousness of the Watcher mission, and some might appreciate it as a rite of passage.

An academic background is associated with higher social class, and the Council had pretty good resources and apparently paid fairly decent salaries, so the upper-class style is logical for Watchers. On the other hand, some recruits work their way up from the bottom. Old-style Watchers might be rather patronising towards people from other social classes, or those lacking in education; this generally leads to resentment in the “lower ranks.” Even so, Watchers of a rougher ilk nonetheless do exist.





It's also a fact that not all Watchers are English, or even British; the HQ may be in London, but it is an international organisation, with diverse peoples running branch offices round the world. Only the most arrogant old-style Watchers would display serious national or racial prejudice, but the old Council was certainly guilty of seeing the HQ staff (mostly British, for practical reasons) as more important than field agents. Then again, this might mean that ambitious non-British Watchers relocated to London, where they would have a choice whether to "go native" in style or to preserve their probably far more varied in this respect, although it will have inherited a number of British members.

The old Council doubtless also suffered from an old-fashioned British attitude towards science and technology (as opposed to more "classical" learning). Although not exactly technophobia; it manifested as a tendency to undervalue new ideas, and as a lack of respect for the people who work with them. Scientists and engineers would be seen as "boffins," hired help in white lab coats who are useful in their place, but who should not be allowed to set policy. The old Watcher network never made heavy use of technology. Its replacement is probably going to be rather more flexible, and may well recruit some technologists—some of them, this being the Slayerverse, more than a little daft.

Finally—for a Cast Member with a fairly typical Watcher background, mellowing with time is possible but optional. The Wesley descent-to-the-depths is as good a model as Giles-style unbending, but one could equally well imagine, say, a Watcher becoming increasingly involved in human society, and building a family and a sense of duty to the community (even if that conflicts with his Watcher duties—conflict is the meat of a storyline). That's what adults do, after all.

COVER STORIES

While most Watchers work for the Council or network full time, some are in effect "deep cover" agents, operating within ordinary society. Even the full-timers need a job to write on their passports and tax forms apart from "demon hunter," not to mention some explanation as to where their salaries come from. Certainly, the couriers and information conduits of the network would need some kind of "regular" jobs.

Freelance work such as journalism or writing is always good for this, and standard Watcher training can fit someone for the library or museum jobs mentioned previously. It's also possible that the old Council had influence with a few large corporations and government departments, enabling them to find sinecures for Watchers who needed such things. This is yet another area where the Watcher network would function much like any normal intelligence organisation.





CHARACTER CREATION

Buffy: New Watcher?

Giles: New Watcher.

(Wesley takes a step towards her and holds out his hand.)

Wesley: Wesley Wyndam-Pryce.

(Buffy makes no move to return the gesture, but continues to eye him critically. A moment later, he steps back again.)

Wesley: It's very nice to meet you.

(Buffy steps over to Giles, never removing her eyes from Wesley.)

Buffy: Is he evil?

—*Buffy 3.14 Bad Girls*

Creating Watcher Cast Members for a regular *Buffy* or *Angel* Series is fairly straightforward—just design a character who fits the general pattern, with some appropriate Qualities and Drawbacks. Creating the Cast for a Watcher-oriented Series is a little more complicated, as players will want varied figures within that framework. This book is, of course, intended to make that easier.

To begin with, the balance of character power levels may be a little different in a Watcher-oriented Series. In short, every Cast Member might be White Hat/Investigator level. The reason is simply to get the *feel* of the thing right. Watchers are basically ordinary humans, albeit smart and well educated, who deal with supernatural horrors by research and planning, not by going for two falls out of three. The Watcher style is to use tactics, resources, stealth, and if necessary, dirty tricks. (Though Watcher doctrine professes that there are *no* dirty tricks when fighting supernatural evil. The end always justifies the means.)

A lower power level is simply a recommendation, not a hard-and-fast rule; if you really want to play someone tougher, it's possible. Certainly, Series involving a fair amount of combat might reasonably include, say, some "enforcers" with a special ops background, to keep the rest of the Cast alive. Then again, even working in teams, Watcher enforcers on *Buffy* and *Angel* regularly get flattened by Slayer-level opposition. Talk to your Director about this, but even if you haggle the group a Champion/Hero or two, don't try too hard—Veteran/Experienced Hero types should be right out. Anyway, low-power-only is the basic assumption from now on.

SKILL POINTS

Willow: Is there anything you don't know everything about?

Giles: Synchronized swimming. Complete mystery to me.

—*Buffy 7.1 Lessons*

When playing a Watcher-based game using *Angel* rules, make the characters Investigators. If using the *Buffy* rulebook, make them White Hats—but give them an extra 10 skill points, to reflect their more mature status as compared to normal *Buffy* Cast Members. (In fact, a game built around significantly older, well-educated characters could give out even more points.) Watchers are primarily adults—and highly-trained ones at that.

One exception to this last guideline might be a Series set in and around the Watcher Academy (see p. [?]), with an actual adolescent Cast. Note that these characters might also lack the Watcher Quality, or any of its component elements; they'd still be learning that stuff.

THE WATCHER QUALITIES EXTENDED

Wesley: I didn't get this job because of my looks.

Buffy: I really, really believe that.

—*Buffy 3.14 Bad Girls*

The Watcher Quality in the *BtVS Corebook* and Ex-Watcher in the *Angel Corebook* are packages combining physical and academic benefits. As a Watcher Series features various types within the same mold, we cut away the straightjacket here and break the mould a bit.

The **Watcher Physical Training Quality** provides +1 level to any one physical Attribute (which still cannot exceed six) and two levels of the Getting Medieval Skill. This is a 3-point Quality. In practise, among Watchers, it's always combined with Watcher Academic Training, as described below. However, if, say, a Watcher helped someone prepare for life as a warrior, but didn't bother with the academic stuff, the pupil might acquire this Quality on its own. (This is exactly what happened to Robin Wood; hence, in *Welcome to Sunnydale*, he gets the identical Raised by a Watcher Quality)

The **Watcher Academic Training Quality** reflects a process of rigorous (and rather dull) memorisation which gives the recipient access to vast amounts of occult lore, and thus +2 to any roll related to learning more about a given demon, vampire, or other supernatural creature. This is a 2-point Quality.

The quick-witted among you no doubt have noticed that combining these two elements gives the 5-point Watcher/Ex-Watcher Quality.

Watcher "HQ staff" who are (or were) employed purely as researchers, with no anticipation of field operations, might well have just Watcher Academic Training. For



that matter, someone who went through full Watcher training without paying attention to half of it—say, a disappointing failed pupil from the Watcher Academy—might have either.

The actual difference between a Watcher and an Ex-Watcher is that the former *also* has some kind of Obligation to the organisation. However, this may well be the zero-point version of that Drawback; even the Slayer's Watcher is arguably not *required* to go out and risk his neck (though risk tends to come to a lot of these people anyway). If he takes some kind of risks in the course of Watcher service that may actually arise from, say, the Honourable drawback (very common among Watchers, but not 100% universal, and not always leading to this behaviour), or even from an Obligation to someone other than the Council. If supernatural beings identify the Watcher as a problem and attack him periodically, that's an Adversary. Note that Watchers who get into combat for these reasons may well be chastised by old-school Watchers, even if they slay vampires and help the helpless. They represent a large investment in training and support, and it's not their job to get themselves killed out of sentiment.

Watchers tend to exhibit other Qualities, such as Occult Library—many of them are compulsive bibliophiles, and the Council traditionally gave the Slayer's Watcher a purchasing budget to support such a collection. Nerves of Steel is another common trait; Watchers get to see a lot of supernatural unpleasantness, and the well-starched upper lip is a carefully cultivated part of the image. Such things aren't mandatory, however. Some interesting Watcher characters manage quite well without.



NEW QUALITIES AND DRAWBACKS

Lilah: You dedicate your life to a cause, and the very people you try to help turn their backs on you.

Wesley: Yes. Tragic. Now get the hell out.

Lilah: Man of your talents, scholar, man of intellect...

—Angel 3.20 *A New World*

The following are some new character features that might be especially useful when creating Watcher Cast Members. Some of them can also be used for non-Watchers.

CONTACTS (FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES)

VARIABLE QUALITY

Wesley: Cordelia, can you get us access?

Cordelia: Am I not the Princess?

—Angel 2.21 *Through the Looking Glass*

This version of the Contacts Quality is all about being able to pull strings with the authorities. Anyone who's a member of an organisation with the right connections and legal status can get things done by invoking its powers, but your character has *personal* links to people who can issue orders (or at least strong hints). Perhaps he made the right friends at university; perhaps it's a family thing; perhaps he's in the right Masonic lodge.

Contacts at this level are definitely in the three to five point level, and possibly *more* if they're really useful—but that's rare, at least in democratic countries where the rule of law is supposed to count for something. Even if you went to university with the Prime Minister, and he owes you, he'd have some difficulty getting you off a criminal charge or arranging the loan of a fighter jet. There are just too many political opponents and pushy journalists watching him, and too many lesser officials who'd query the order. You'd do better to associate yourself with whoever's in charge of law enforcement in your city, or with a senior civil servant who could delay some paperwork for the few days you need. Both would probably cost five points, but might be less depending on how much you are able to use their services.

These sorts of Contacts are *less* use than others as sources of information, however. They deal with the big picture, and don't see many details unless they look specifically, which takes time and effort. Further, a significant Contact looking into something may raise eyebrows in government or the media. Such persons are generally watched at all times. These Contacts are also much less likely than others to do you material favours; they're busy people, and putting them to too much trouble is a quick way to lose their goodwill.





COUNCIL ENFORCER

4-POINT QUALITY

Angel: Why did you bring them here?

Wesley: Couldn't shake them. Had to pretend I was helping them.

Angel: Why aren't you?

Buffy: I know these guys. They're killers.

—Angel 1.19 Sanctuary

You're not strictly a Watcher, but you're employed by the Watchers Council (in one form or another) to provide them with some useful muscle (or sneakiness, or specialised practical skills). The Council is shrewd enough to only hire people who accept most of their ideals and rules. You were also selected for your general physical fitness and combat skills, which you maintain through regular practise. You very likely have a military or law-enforcement background, or come from the fringes of the underworld.

You gain +1 to any two physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution, to the usual human maximum of six) and a +1 bonus to any two combat skills (Getting Medieval, Gun Fu, or Kung Fu). Your employment may qualify as some kind of Obligation, to be taken separately.

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS (COLD AND DISTANT)

1-POINT DRAWBACK

Buffy: Now, you unchain me, very slowly AND politely, or I kill this guy.

(Collins looks at her and lowers his gun.)

Collins: When we go on a job, we always put our affairs in order first, in case of accident.

(Buffy glances down at the frightened Smith.)

Smith (choking): Collins...

Collins: Sorry, Smithy.

—Buffy 4.16 Who Are You?

Your character is so cool and controlled, it's frightening. He isn't entirely emotionless, but he keeps his irrational impulses on a short rein, and has difficulty comprehending other people who "permit themselves to be ruled by their glands." This isn't Cruelty; he takes no pleasure in the suffering of others. (Mind you, some people mutter that it's worse; at least a cruel being is showing an interest.) Nor is it the same as Humourless, although the character's humour is probably sarcastic and heartless. Also, his control may not be as perfect as he thinks; he may have emotional motivations, and even Drawbacks such as Covetous or Love—but he'll tie himself in knots rationalising them.

Your character may well not see this as a drawback; he probably calls it something like "necessary detachment" or "a clear head." Indeed, he may well also have Nerves of Steel, to which this is the dark flipside. However, it is a problem, because other people find him hard to like, and his lack of empathy makes it hard for him to negotiate with people who function more emotionally. He gets a -2 penalty on any roll that depends on understanding or controlling other people's emotional behavior—mostly meaning certain uses of Influence, but trying to analyse someone's psychology using Knowledge would hit the same problem. (He's fine when dealing with calm people who are basically thinking rationally, though, and your Director may permit his *threats* to be just as effective as anyone else's; his lack of understanding of the results is balanced by the calm conviction with which he delivers them.) This penalty does *not* apply when dealing with other people with the same Drawback, who respect it in others as they value it in themselves.

This is a Drawback for people who take the Watcher ethos too far, but it isn't limited to Watchers. Funnily enough, though, it's almost unknown among vampires and most breeds of demon, who are often totally ruled by their emotions.

UNTRAINED SLAYER

16-POINT QUALITY

Angel: She was yelling about being chosen. She's not a demon, Wes. She's a Vampire Slayer.

—Angel 5.11 Damage

This character is a Vampire Slayer, imbued with ancient power—but probably doesn't know it yet. Her first problem (and she's got to be female) is that somebody *else* might. She's probably thoroughly confused by her newfound abilities, and also scared. Unfortunately, there are beings out there who'd like to prevent her from learning any more about what's happened, or who just want a taste of her blood.

She gets most of the automatic, magical benefits of the Slayer power, as with the Slayer Quality in the *BtVS Corebook*, but doesn't have any of the associated training. (She may have a little bit of combat training, but that needs to be a logical part of her back-story; most teenage girls *aren't* very combat-experienced.) Similarly, she's too new to the Slayer life to be totally iron-willed or fearless as yet, and her Slayer ability to sense vampires is untrained and unreliable. On the other hand, the nastier elements of the supernatural world don't necessarily know about *her*—yet.

In practical terms, the Qualities elements are:



* +3 to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution and +1 to Willpower. These bonuses can raise her Attributes above the human maximum of six. Also, none of her physical Attributes can be below four after bonuses are applied.

* Fast Reaction Time and five levels of Hard to Kill (she can purchase another five levels on top of that). Unfortunately, she also gets a Secret worth three points; if word about her gets out in the general supernatural-nasty community, she becomes a target. (Of course, she *might* accidentally let this secret slip very soon—but first, she's not likely to last long enough to be worth playing in that case, and second, people who suddenly acquire superpowers are fairly likely to be quite taciturn about it, by instinct.) Players can add additional Adversaries to taste, reflecting supernaturals (or others) who've discovered something of the truth. Her confusion about the situation, and the inevitable belief that "this can't be happening" or "I'm nothing special and nobody will want to hurt me" are the functionally equivalent to Mental Problems (Mild Delusions).

* +1 to the Getting Medieval and Kung Fu skills. This represents instinctive, reflexive ability granted by the Slayer power; there's no requirement to buy any more.

* Damage regeneration at the rate of one Life Point per Constitution level every hour. Slayers recover from injuries unnaturally fast. (This is equivalent to the 1-point Regeneration Quality in the *Angel Corebook* rules, but without the ability to re-grow limbs—so far as we know. Though nobody's ever said for sure that Slayers can't manage that . . .)

* Unreliable mystical insights, including the ability to sense the presence of vampires nearby, but only if they're close—never beyond 100 feet, and generally much less. This usually goes off by accident, at the Director's whim, and the new Slayer probably doesn't know what the vampire actually is—just that this person looks weird and creepy and somehow nasty. Once she's aware that she has some kind of talent, she can try to trigger it

consciously by concentrating for one Turn and making a Perception (not doubled) roll—the Director makes this roll secretly and may give cryptic or vague hints about the result. She also gets weird and disturbing dreams, which actually consist of visions from the lives of past Slayers. This is no great advantage, and verges on being a Drawback, but it can provide enough vital hints about the truth to keep the character alive a little longer, at the Director's option.

With training and experience, this can be converted to the standard Slayer Quality (of the same value) over time, trading in the Secret and accepting other Drawbacks (Adversaries and Obligations) to balance the Attribute, Quality, and skill improvements that come very rapidly to a Slayer with training. However, the benefits don't necessarily come as fast as one would like, taking weeks or even months (at the Director's option), while the extra problems can be all too immediate. The life of a newly empowered Slayer can be rough.

This Quality can be used to represent any of the hundreds or thousands of girls suddenly activated when Buffy, Willow, and co. worked up their super-spell shortly before destroying the Sunnydale Hellmouth. Similar individual cases likely arose in the past as well.

WATCHER THAUMATURGE

3-POINT QUALITY

Watcher #2: There are some very potent elements here . . . focussing crystals, runic artefacts, an amulet of Cauldis . . . also this statue. Its removal from Burma is a criminal offence . . . and when triggered, it has the power to melt human eyeballs.

Giles: In that case, I severely under-priced it.

—Buffy 5.12 Checkpoint

Your character is a special kind of Watcher—one trained and employed to perform ritual magic. He may have been selected because he showed signs of useful talent, but that's certainly not a requirement. Magic is mostly a matter of careful work and attention to detail; above-average intelligence is enough of a qualification, really. The thaumaturge's edge comes from excellent Watcher libraries and meticulous teaching. Unfortunately, the Watchers' organizational suspicion of magic makes a thaumaturge something of a second-class citizen.

A thaumaturge receives the following:

- * +1 to Willpower. (The Attribute cannot exceed the human maximum of six.)
- * +2 free levels of the Occultism skill.
- * Automatic knowledge of up to ten spells, without





having to do any research and independent of whatever occult library is owned by or accessible to the character. These spells must fit the Watchers' style and must be regarded as *safe*. (They certainly won't teach really dark magic to an untested beginner.) Typically, such spells deal with locating things or people useful to the Watchers, helping manage the Watcher network, or blocking or dispelling hostile powers. Possibilities certainly include Far Converse, Illuminate Potential Slayer, and Seek Slayer (see pp. [?]); others might be Revoke Invitation from the *BtVS Corebook*, Exorcism from the *Angel Corebook*, or Witchfinding, Early Warning, Spell of Location, or Anti-Magic Protection from *The Magic Box*. This is open to negotiation between you and the Director—but he's entitled to think like a stodgy Watcher librarian who doesn't want children playing with fire.

* Problems dealing with the rest of the Watcher network. A thaumaturge is accepted as a Watcher, but not automatically 100% trusted. Any attempt to use the Influence skill on any but the most broad-minded non-thaumaturge Watcher (e.g., Giles) suffers a penalty of between -1 and -3, at the Director's discretion. The character will never be put in charge of a Watcher operation if there's any alternative. If the thaumaturge is ever thought to have gone bad, the rest of the network *will* track him down, probably using lethal force—a rogue thaumaturge is a dangerous embarrassment. Any thaumaturge no longer working for the network is likely to have the Watchers as a major Adversary. Even a minor lapse *will* have consequences ranging from disciplinary hearings to expulsion, plus the acquisition of an Adversary Drawback.

Thaumaturges in good standing generally have the run of Watcher libraries for research purposes, and are traditionally granted *fairly* free access to those owned by fellow Watchers, subject to the aforementioned attitude of suspicion.

This Quality is almost always combined with Watcher Academic Training (p. [?]), unless the thaumaturge is a recent recruit who hasn't had time to go through the background course (yet—the other Quality could be acquired with experience points and a *lot* of time spent in intensive study). It's rather less often combined with Watcher Physical Training (or, hence, the full Watcher/Ex-Watcher package). Thaumaturges are *specialists*, theoretically kept well away from too much dangerous or messy combat. Still, one with a complicated history or a sufficient determination, could have done the gym-and-weapons course.

NEW SPELLS FOR WATCHERS

Giles: Well, that was, um, interesting.

(Buffy helps him up.)

Buffy: You guys okay?

Amy: I'm fine!

Giles: I assume the, uh, all the spells are reversed. It was my first casting, so . . . I may have got it wrong.

Buffy: You saved my life! You were a god!

—Buffy 1.3 *The Witch*

Thanks to their extensive libraries, Watchers who are permitted to pursue the path of magic *might* have use of almost any of the spells detailed in other *Buffy* and *Angel* game books. Even so, most Watchers (apart from the barely-tolerated thaumaturges) prefer to avoid that temptation. Then again, the Watcher do possess a few spells which serve specific purposes, some of them completely unknown to the rest of the world. The following are examples. Each includes an analysis showing how its power level was calculated; see *The Magic Box* for an explanation of this process.

Incidentally, even in a Series using the rules for quick casting by characters with the Sorcery ability, as described in the *BtVS Corebook*, none of these spells can be quick cast. They are all rather long-winded and ritualistic—very much in the Watcher style.

CRUCIAMENTUM PREPARATION

POWER LEVEL: 3

REQUIREMENTS: The caster must prepare a concoction involving some fairly exotic herbs and other rare ingredients, including a small part of a Slayer's physical body—a drop of blood, lock of hair, or fingernail clippings all work fine. The mixture is then "activated" by a verbal enchantment taking about five minutes. It remains effective for exactly one day.

EFFECT: The Cruciamentum ritual (see p. [?] and *The Slayer's Handbook*) has been a Watcher tradition since long before modern medicine provided reliable drugs to weaken the subject exactly as much as required. In the early days, the effect had to be achieved magically. The Watchers were delighted when science enabled them to abandon this approach, but the spell is still in Watcher libraries.

The concoction must be brought into contact with the same Slayer as the "sample" was obtained from—a drop on her skin or in her food or drink is effective. (It tastes mildly unpleasant, though.) A variant can be prepared to be burnt, taking effect if the Slayer breathes its smoke. In all cases, after a few minutes, the Slayer begins to feel weak and dizzy (-3 to all rolls) for about half an hour. After that, she feels normal, but loses all the Attribute



bonuses she receives from the Slayer quality, along with her Fast Reaction Time and five levels of Hard to Kill (unless she had all that before becoming the Slayer). These penalties last for one hour per casting Success Level, after which all Attributes and levels of Hard to Kill return at a rate of one per 12 hours. Fast Reaction Time returns after one day.

The concoction only works on the Slayer for which it was prepared. It's possible that the spell could also be used to remove supernatural powers from other beings with basically mortal bodies, but there's been little field testing of that. Of course, setting it up for use against enemies rather than unsuspecting friends would be quite hard, but if a Cast Member was looking for a crucial advantage and this seemed appropriate, the Director could let it work—at least briefly.

ASPECT ANALYSIS: Ritual (several minutes) (+0), noticeable scope (one being) (+1), limited scope (Slayers, possibly others) (-1), creates magical item (+1), long duration (+1), unusual ingredients (-1), severe effects (+2).

FAR CONVERSE

POWER LEVEL: 5

REQUIREMENTS: The caster and at least two willing assistants must step into a simple magic circle drawn on the ground, with seven pure beeswax candles burning around it, and spend five minutes chanting. (More people can stand in the circle, and hence join in the effects of the spell, but no more than five plus the caster can be involved.) Towards the end, the chant must include the full name of the intended "target"; this must be his full baptismal name or whatever is equivalent in his culture. In addition, the caster must know the target well enough to be able to envisage his face clearly.

EFFECT: This ritual was a necessity before the invention of the telephone. Today, it's mostly a curiosity, which Watchers avoid using if at all possible. If the spell is successful, wherever in the world the target may be, he hears his name spoken by the caster. (This is inaudible to anyone else present, though. Also, the spell can't reach anyone on another planet or dimension.) If he's familiar with the effects of the spell, or if he has the Telepathy Quality, he can recognise it and converse with the caster and anyone else in the circle (though he'll look like he's hearing voices and talking to thin air). Otherwise, he'll probably think that he's hearing things, and only snatches and fragments of anything he says will be audible to the caster. The conversation lasts for one minute per Success Level.

This spell cannot be used to contact someone with the Iron Mind Quality (see the *Angel Corebook* and *The Magic Box*), even if they want to be contacted. They're just too well sealed off.

ASPECT ANALYSIS: Multiple casters (-2), ritual (several minutes) (+0), awesome scope (communicate anywhere on the planet) (+6), medium duration (+0), noticeable effects (mental communications) (+1).

SEEK SLAYER

POWER LEVEL: 4

REQUIREMENTS: This spell requires a collection of rare herbs, some of which have to be collected at specific times from specific places. (Most casters have to work to find these, but large Watcher offices and the Devon coven both keep a store.) They're burnt in a bronze brazier, which must be placed in the centre of a large, complex, mystical design drawn on the floor of a room with no windows but three doors. The caster, who must be blindfolded, chants the spell repeatedly for about an hour, while breathing the fumes of the burning herbs.

EFFECT: If the spell succeeds, the caster receives a vision relating to the current location or activities of a Potential or active Slayer. This is much like the sort of thing experienced by someone with the Psychic Visions Quality, and in the simplest version, is basically random. The vision potentially provides one item of information relating to the girl, plus one more for every two Success Levels after the first (so it provides two clues with three Success Levels, three with five, and so on.) This information may relate to highly probable events in the very near future—one hour ahead per Success Level.

However, the "Slayer destiny" wraps a degree of protection around any Potential—otherwise, few would ever have survived the pre-emptive attacks of smarter vampires and demons—and this spell sometimes triggers these defences. For *each* item of information obtained, the caster must make a Willpower (doubled) roll with a -1 penalty. On a failure, the caster becomes incapable of working magic for a number of days equal to a die roll, and suffers three Life Points of injury from psychic backlash (ignoring all armour and other protections). These effects are cumulative for multiple failures. Furthermore, whenever this spell is cast successfully, the target also receives a brief vision or dream (in some safe situation), equivalent to a one-off occurrence of Psychic Visions, giving them a strong sense that they're being watched, and an indication of the attitude of the caster. Most don't have the faintest idea what this is all about, but it puts the smart ones on their guard.

It's possible to attempt to focus on more specific topics than "any random Slayer." This requires an additional Willpower plus Occultism roll at the start of the casting, and the penalty on the roll to resist problems after achieving success increase to -3. Given one Success Level, the spell could be focussed on the current active Slayer (in the days when there was just one). With two, it could find the nearest Potential (or, these days, the





nearest active Slayer). Three might be enough to limit it to a specific continent; four would narrow it down to a region, and so on. Two extra successes allows for some slightly more specific information, such as hints to the girl's name or appearance, or the likelihood of a Potential being the next Chosen One.

Analysing these visions for useful information can be treated as a roleplaying exercise, but characters often learn more with successful rolls using Intelligence plus Knowledge (to recognise scenery, styles of dress, etc.), Occultism (to pick up mystical hints and references), or Languages (to interpret verbal clues). Deciding what's useful and when is up to the Director.

The old Council traditionally had thaumaturges casting this spell periodically, under carefully controlled conditions, with guards and supervisors close to hand. They would then record and catalogue the visions, and analyse them at leisure. Their preference was to use as little magic as possible, especially given the problems with this spell—just enough to identify Potentials, who could then be located and monitored using mundane means. They kept this spell very secret, for obvious reasons, although the Devon coven appeared to know it, particularly when helping Giles during the First Evil's campaign of terror.

ASPECT ANALYSIS: Lengthy ritual (–1), noticeable scope (finds one Potential or Slayer) (+1), unusual ingredients (–1), awesome effects (finding information about targets worldwide) (+5).

ILLUMINATE POTENTIAL SLAYER

POWER LEVEL: 5

REQUIREMENTS: This spell requires a number of fairly routine (and symbolic) magical ingredients, including (in the version seen on the TV series) the cast-off skin of a snake, butterfly chrysalises, tumbleweed, a rose stem with a thorn, and an egg—nothing really hard for a typical spellcaster to locate, but enough to take most people a little searching. These are all burned in succession on a small fire while the caster chants the words of the spell.

EFFECT: This was the spell used by Willow in *Buffy* 7.12 Potential. It's a simple, relatively short-ranged, slightly flashy, very convenient location spell, suitable for use by a group who are closing in on a Potential Slayer. (To find out whether such a girl exists at all, and to find out roughly where in the world she might be, see the Seek Slayer spell below.) While it was known to the Watchers and the Devon coven, it's the kind of thing which such people keep very secret; too many evil beings would want it. On the other hand, it's only of use if there's a Potential quite nearby, and requires some organisation to use effectively; casting it at random would be a waste of effort.

As the chant proceeds, an orb of crimson light appears in the fire; roll for the casting when it's complete. If the roll succeeds, the fire produces an unpleasant stench of burning egg, and the orb leaps up, bobs around for a few moments, then hurtles off to form an aura around the nearest Potential Slayer (assuming one is within about 20



miles). It exerts a certain amount of physical and mental force on arrival—not enough to cause serious problems, but enough to make someone stagger. The caster can exclude any particular Potentials (who she may already knows about) so the spell can be used to find a new candidate. The light lasts for one minute per Success Level.

Advanced users can also enchant a map of the area in which they'll be searching and link it to the power of the Locate spell (treat this as a separate spell, Power Level 3, which must be performed immediately beforehand). A second, smaller light then appears on the map and indicates the current position of the Potential, moving around as necessary.

ASPECT ANALYSIS: Ritual (several minutes) (+0), noticeable scope (finds one Slayer) (+1), medium duration (+0), unusual ingredients (–1), awesome effects (finding an unknown Slayer anywhere within 10-20 miles) (+5).

ΠΟΠΗΥΜΑΠ CHARACTERS

Wesley: Weatherby, listen to reason.

Weatherby: Reason. A Watcher working for a vampire.

It's perversion.

—Angel 1.19 Sanctuary

The old Council was a very “humanocentric” organisation and highly unlikely to trust many nonhumans enough to make them part of the network. Indeed, many old-school Watchers were too prejudiced to so much as *talk* to, say, demons, if they could avoid it. On the other hand, Watchers were never actually stupid, understood priorities and wartime allowances very well (for a Watcher, when isn't it wartime?), and were often obsessed with knowledge for its own sake—which could mean pursuing it into dark corners. Some of them were bound to run across non-hostile supernaturals from time to time, and observe or talk to them enough to recognise their true nature. While other Watchers might still have been suspicious, it's more than likely that a few such beings ended up being inducted into the network, at least informally.

The post-Season Seven revived Watchers are, of course, both less bound by the past and more desperate for assistance—odds are that the new network has come to include all sorts of interesting beings. Still, as a general rule, Watcher-based games should focus on human characters, with maybe one or at most two nonhumans, specially approved by the Director. Watchers are primarily brave *humans* confronting strangeness.

CONTACTS

Giles: I'll dig up my sources. Quite literally, actually. There are one or two people I have to speak to who are dead.

—Buffy 7.22 Chosen

Watchers meet all sorts of interesting beings in the course of their work, and aren't actually obliged to try to kill *all* of them. Giles, for example, not only called on experts who were actually dead (other facts about these people were left unstated; most likely they were ghosts, but who knows?), but called in at least one favour from a powerful wizard, and showed no great concern when Buffy allied with friendly demons. He was, admittedly, unusually broad-minded for a Watcher of his generation, but there's no evidence that he saw these contacts as embarrassing.

Any competent Watcher would know enough about supernatural beings to be very careful about acquiring serious obligations, and would assess the source of any knowledge quite carefully. Trading for knowledge with a mild-natured entity who set a fair price would be one thing; darker bargains or open obligations would be quite another. In particular, Watchers were always deeply hostile to vampires, and would never bargain with them for information, except perhaps in the most desperate circumstances. They knew very well that vampires are both deeply untrustworthy and casual killers.

Thus, Watcher Cast Members could have some colourful versions of the Contacts Quality—but Directors should check and approve these. Any really dubious associations might also represent Secrets or even dangerous Obligations—and the Council disliked divided loyalties. A Watcher on a non-urgent mission might make a point of seeking Council approval before having dealings with nonhumans, or might at least check some handbook of Watcher rules.

ARCHETYPES

This section has four Watcher archetypes, ready for use. All are White Hat/Investigator level, for reasons previously discussed, with skill points appropriate to *Angel* Investigators and adult age-range characters (see p. [?]); if you want to use them as White Hats in a standard *Buffy* game, reduce their skills by ten points. They *don't* include a standard Slayer's Watcher; that's covered in the *BtVS Corebook* and by the character sheets for Giles and Wesley found in various places.



Field Organiser

ARCHETYPE

CHARACTER
TYPE

WHITE HAT
INVESTIGATOR

Life Points 26 Drama Points 20

"Tall and suave, with a broad brow and aristocratic looks and manners."

Attributes (15)

Strength 2
Dexterity 2 (1 level from Watcher Quality)
Constitution 2
Intelligence 4
Perception 3
Willpower 3

Qualities (10 + 4 from Drawbacks)

Attractiveness +1 (1)
Contacts (Friends in High Places) (3)
Nerves of Steel (3)
Resources (Middle Class) (2)
Watcher (5)

Drawbacks (6)

Bad Luck (2)
Covetous (Mild Ambition) (1)
Emotional Problems (Cold and Distant) (1)
Honourable (Minimal) (1)
Obligation (Important) (1)

Skills (25 + 2 from Drawbacks)

Acrobatics 1	Knowledge 4
Art 0	Kung Fu 1
Computers 1	Languages 3
Crime 1	Mr. Fix-It 0
Doctor 1	Notice 2
Driving 0	Occultism 2
Getting Medieval 2 (2 levels from Watcher Quality)	Science 0
Gun Fu 1	Sports 2
Influence 4	Wild Card 4 (Administration)

Manœuvres	Bonus	Base Damage	Notes
Dodge	4	—	Defence action
Pistol	3	12	Bullet
Pistol Crossbow	4	10	Slash/stab
(Through the Heart)	1	10	x5 vs. vamps
Punch	3	4	Bash
Swordstick	4	6	Slash/stab

BACKGROUND ON THE FIELD ORGANISER

Second-generation Watcher? Actually, no. Fifth generation, if you must know. Not that I boast about it—we may have this gentlemanly image, but the Council would hardly survive if we weren't a meritocracy at heart, and no, blood does not always tell. But traditions have their uses, and I'm proud of my family.

My education was somewhat pre-ordained, of course. The Watcher Academy, then a degree at Oxford to round me out (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics—I was more interested in that than in anything directly related to the occult, and the Academy had given me all the grounding I anticipated needing) before I went back into the family business. I'd never been top of my class anywhere. I understood instinctively from quite early on that a well-rounded personality could be more useful than excessive specialisation. But I'd captained the second cricket eleven at the Academy, I had a solid 2.1 from Oxford, and if I say so myself, I was moderately popular.

In other words, while I wasn't first choice as a field Watcher, I was leadership material. I spent a stint at Council headquarters, and studied accountancy and business administration in my spare time. I'm happy to say that I was noticed soon enough—and that was when I started receiving field assignments.

Yes, I'm an organiser. A manager, even. This is something that the Council needs. Sometimes we need to build or rebuild field offices; we have employees to recruit, contacts to preserve, and mundane issues to smooth out. I handle all that.

But, of course, many field assignments turn out a little bit messier than one would wish. One cannot organise an office properly if there are vampires or demons trying to interfere. Sometimes, palms must be greased, or unusual supplies acquired. It's not my job to deal with everything, but I have to be sure that everything *has* been dealt with—and sometimes, one has to lead from somewhere near the front.

It's fascinating stuff. I wouldn't give it up for the world.

Quote: "I understand what the demon did to the internal walls. However, that's no reason why we should fall behind schedule. The Swiss account will cover the added cost, but don't waste it."

ROLEPLAYING THE FIELD ORGANISER

Your job is to use connections, social skills, and managerial efficiency to put together Watcher offices, oversight teams, or long-term investigations, anywhere in the world. You're tall and suave, with a broad brow and aristocratic looks and manners; use all this to keep the upper hand in social situations. Don't raise your voice if you can help it; shouting means that you're losing control. While you prefer to leave violence to the specialists, you're not stupid; you carry either a slim pistol or a swordstick (so stylish—treated as a sword, but does 3 x Strength base damage), or both, when you think that they might be needed and you can get away with it.

In a series set after Season Seven of *Buffy*, you have to become a little more flexible and prepared to work without backup—but in the noble cause of rebuilding the Watcher network, your skills have become invaluable. Having survived the slaughter of many of your old friends and colleagues, you don't want your luck to go to waste, and you intend your handiwork to become a memorial to the honoured dead.

Street-Level Operator

ARCHETYPE

CHARACTER
TYPE

WHITE HAT
INVESTIGATOR

Life Points 35 Drama Points 20

"Slightly scruffy street operator – the trenchcoat is essential, as is the lighted cigarette."

Attributes (15)

Strength 2
Dexterity 2
Constitution 2
Intelligence 3 (1 level from Criminal Quality)
Perception 3
Willpower 4

Qualities (10 + 4 from Drawbacks)

Contacts (Criminal stool-pigeon) (1)
Contacts (Useful underworld associate) (2)
Contacts (Weird street-mystic magician) (2)
Criminal (2)
Hard to Kill (3)
Nerves of Steel (3)
Occult Library (Minimal) (1)

Drawbacks (10)

Addiction (Habitual Drinker) (1)
Addiction (Heavy Smoker) (2)
Adversary (Annoyed Demons) (3)
Clown (1)
Obligation (Important) (1)
Resources (Below Average) (2)

Skills (25 + 6 from Drawbacks)

Acrobatics 1	Knowledge 3
Art 0	Kung Fu 2
Computers 1	Languages 2
Crime 5 (1 level from Criminal Quality)	Mr. Fix-It 1
Doctor 0	Notice 4
Driving 1	Occultism 5
Getting Medieval 3	Science 0
Gun Fu 1	Sports 0
Influence 5 (1 level from Criminal Quality)	Wild Card 0

Manoeuvres	Bonus	Base Damage	Notes
Dodge	5	—	Defence action
Knife	5	4	Slash/stab
Punch	4	4	Bash
Stake	5	4	Slash/stab
(Through the Heart)	2	4	x5 vs. vamps

BACKGROUND ON THE STREET-LEVEL OPERATOR

I know what people think—the Watchers Council is a bunch of stuck-up Oxbridge prats in an glorified gentleman's club in London, bossing a string of messed-up foreign teenagers around like a bank manager with a nasty way of looking at the au pair. Well, let me tell you—that's too bloody right. But there's more to it than that. Sometimes.

See, it's not just bubble-headed Yank teenagers who get themselves dumped in it by those overpaid librarians. The trouble is, they've got just enough sense to see that there's a whole world of magical hurt out there, running right down to the nasty, sordid streets. So, they have to employ a few people with a bit more real smarts, to keep an eye on places where their expensive shoes would get dirty.

Which is where I come in. Boring life story—chucked out of three schools for messing about and being smarter than the teachers, a string of technically legal jobs, a long-time taste for some weird and wonderful books that I found in the backs of dusty little shops. But like I said, I'm smart—smarter than the run of hobby magicians. I not only didn't try any rituals where the results weren't guaranteed containable—well, not many, anyhow—but I checked out anybody who wanted to hire my services, and turned down the nastier ones.

But I got unlucky once or twice, and next thing I knew, I had a couple of demons complaining to me, with claws. Which was when a couple of ex-forces types came through the door with shotguns and axes, and dropped the uglies.

Well, I expected that they'd want a favour in exchange, and I was ready to talk—I'm not ungrateful, and anyway, they still had the shooters and the axes—but then they called in their boss. Turned out that Mr Savile-Row-Suit had a long-term job offer for me, complete with a retainer that almost sounded worth taking. I'd heard about the Watchers, of course, but I'd never been interested enough to look them up. Now, my curiosity got on top of me.

So I accepted the job. My mistake.

Quote: "Bloody hell—can't leave you people alone for a minute. Good thing they left the keys to those cell doors lying around, innit? Typical demon goons. You deserve each other"

ROLEPLAYING THE STREET-LEVEL OPERATOR

You're a cool and cynical, with a grubby trenchcoat and a tobacco habit, and you work hard to maintain that image. (Your version of the Clown Drawback runs to the darkly sarcastic.) Actually, you're a kind of hacker at heart, except that the systems you manipulate are magic and occult lore rather than computers, and you have a vestigial morality which means that you prefer making trouble for the bad guys. You don't like violence, because it usually involves you getting hurt; you rely on sneakiness and knowledge. The Watchers have a bit too much on you for you to quit, and anyway, they represent regular money and occasional access to some interesting books. Plus, with you around to put them straight, they sometimes do more good than harm.

In series set after *Buffy* Season Seven, you're one of the surviving fragments of the network, and you're given to blackly humorous remarks about the annihilation of the old order. However, you recognise that *something* needs to be put in place of what's been destroyed; perhaps you can help keep any new Watchers a bit less snobbish and cold-blooded than the old bunch.

For those without access to the Criminal Quality—it gives the bonuses included above, along with a tendency to take any chance of "easy" money, resisted by a Willpower (doubled) roll.

Thaumaturge

ARCHETYPE

CHARACTER TYPE

WHITE HAT INVESTIGATOR

Life Points 32 Drama Points 20

"A plain young woman in glasses and a very austere business-style suit, possibly extracting an occult tome from a briefcase."

Attributes (15)

Strength 2
Dexterity 2
Constitution 2
Intelligence 3
Perception 3
Willpower 4 (1 level from Watcher Thaumaturge Quality)

Qualities (10 + 4 from Drawbacks)

Good Luck (2)
Hard to Kill (2)
Occult Library (Minimal) (1)
Psychometry (4)
Watcher Academic Training (2)
Watcher Thaumaturge (3)

Drawbacks (5)

Bad Luck (2)
Honourable (Minimal) (1)
Impaired Senses (Vision, corrected) (1)
Obligation (Important) (1)

Skills (25 + 1 from Drawbacks)

Acrobatics 1	Knowledge 4
Art 1	Kung Fu 1
Computers 0	Languages 5
Crime 0	Mr. Fix-It 0
Doctor 1	Notice 4
Driving 0	Occultism 6 (2 levels from Watcher Thaumaturge Quality)
Getting Medieval 1	Science 1
Gun Fu 1	Sports 0
Influence 2	Wild Card 0

Manoeuvres	Bonus	Base Damage	Notes
Dodge	3	—	Defence action
Magic	10	Varies	By spell
Pistol Crossbow	3	10	Slash/stab
(Through the Heart)	0	10	x5 vs. vamps
Punch	3	4	Bash

BACKGROUND ON THE THAUMATURGE

It's a cliché, but it was once all quite simple for me. Middle-class family, decent marks at school, red-brick university. The nearest I came to strangeness was a few weird dreams, and I put those down to my fondness for blue cheese.

I'd decided to study anthropology—I'd always enjoyed those TV documentaries—and I turned out to be good at it. I got my degree, then stuck around to do postgrad work. I was looking at comparative studies of ritual procedures among the Ainu and Inuit when things got a little odd.

A supervisor in my department disappeared, and when the police had finished going over his offices, I was asked to catalogue his research material. I was handling a bone spear-point when I suffered what I could only describe as a waking nightmare. The chap in the next office said I'd been screaming gibberish, but I knew what I'd said, because it was the name of a demon in Inuit mythology.

I thought that I was going mad; I certainly didn't know what to do next. Fortunately, the people who showed up after a call from my department head—old friends of his from Cambridge—had more of a clue. They asked me some peculiar questions, went off together, and then came back with our missing colleague stumbling between two of them. The poor chap's still in a mental hospital, I believe, but at least he's alive.

Which was how I came to meet the Watchers. After they'd shown me hard evidence of their claims—including an authentic vampire, no less—they invited me to join. They explained that gifts like mine often indicated an aptitude for useful ritual procedures, and offered me a decent salary. They didn't want to send me out to deal with monsters, they said; I'd be too useful at HQ. It was only later that I discovered that they don't really much like "ritual procedures," but they're willing to train me to use them provided I stay in line. Well, so be it; I've seen snobbery and prejudice before. One just has to work round these things.

Actually, ritual magic is quite straightforward for any disciplined but flexible mind, and I was soon helping to track Potentials, maintain wards, and manage the library. However, I'd always been interested in fieldwork, and HQ began to feel constricting. Fortunately, one of the Council realised how I was feeling—they're not all socially incompetent—and pointed out that my psychometric aptitude could be useful in some investigations. Which is how I've come to get some foreign travel in after all. I'm still *supposed* not to become involved in dangerous operations, but one thing I'm learning is how intentions and reality rarely quite mesh. So I'm also learning how to duck.

Quote: "Yes, this was the sacrificial weapon. When you meet what they summoned, you'll want mandrake and cold iron—and aim for the head."

ROLEPLAYING THE THAUMATURGE

You're an academic who's discovered a new set of tools, and a whole secret field to research; while you recognise that this isn't a game, and some of your new colleagues distrust magic, it's sometimes hard for you to keep your enthusiasm under control. Still, you're determined to be calm and controlled; you often wear a plain, severe business suit, which seems to help people take you more seriously. (You observe that the suit is a key social signifier for contemporary Western culture.)

In a post-Buffy Season Seven series, the organisation needs you to handle a wider and more urgent range of problems than ever before. You also recognise that you're very lucky to have been on leave at the right time not to have been blown up or sliced to ribbons by a supernatural psychopath—not something you really want to dwell on. You get no pleasure from being promoted several levels to fill dead men's shoes, but, well, it'll be interesting to see how things go.

The Psychometry Quality appears in the *Angel Corebook* and *The Magic Box*. If you don't have either of those, replace it with Psychic Visions and a three-point Contact (representing a very helpful, if slightly unpredictable, tutor in magic).

Thoughtful Enforcer

ARCHETYPE

CHARACTER
TYPE

WHITE HAT
INVESTIGATOR

Life Points 41 Drama Points 20

"Fairly rugged but unremarkable-looking fellow with a military hairstyle, wearing a two-piece suit..."

Attributes (15)

Strength 3 (1 level from Council Enforcer Quality)
Dexterity 3
Constitution 4 (1 level from Council Enforcer Quality)
Intelligence 2
Perception 2
Willpower 3

Qualities (10 + 3 from Drawbacks)

Council Enforcer (4)
Fast Reaction Time (2)
Hard to Kill (1)
Nerves of Steel (3)
Resistance (Pain) (1)
Situational Awareness (2)

Drawbacks (6)

Adversary (Beings who get in the Council's way) (2)
Emotional Problems (Fear of Commitment) (1)
Honourable (Minimal) (1)
Obligation (Major) (2)

Skills (25 + 3 from Drawbacks)

Acrobatics 2	Knowledge 1
Art 0	Kung Fu 3 (1 level from Council Enforcer Quality)
Computers 0	Languages 1
Crime 3	Mr. Fix-It 2
Doctor 2	Notice 3
Driving 2	Occultism 1
Getting Medieval 3	Science 0
Gun Fu 5 (1 level from Council Enforcer Quality)	Sports 1
Influence 1	Wild Card 0

Manoeuvres	Bonus	Base	Damage	Notes
Crossbow	6	16		Slash/stab
(Through the Heart)	3	16		x5 vs. vamps
Dodge	6	—		Defence action
Kick	5	8		Bash
Pigsticker	6	4		Slash/stab
Punch	6	6		Bash
Shotgun	8	20		Bullet
Submachine Gun	8	12		Bullet, burst/autofire

BACKGROUND ON THE THOUGHTFUL ENFORCER

Five years in the army—infantry regiment, with my school record, it was that or the dole or nicking cars, really—and then I realised that I was getting nowhere. See, I wasn't stupid, and I certainly knew how to pay attention, but I talked back too much. Kept asking why we did things the way we did, and why bits of it seemed to be designed to be as boring as possible. People had always said I had a bit too much imagination. Looking back, I must have been an aggravating sod.

Before I realised that I was screwing up my promotion chances, every sergeant in the regiment had me down as a troublemaker. So I finished my stint, then went looking for a civvie job. Private security work, maybe . . . but that looked boring, too. And I didn't fancy some of the offers I got, like leg-breaking for the protection rackets. See, that imagination stretched to guessing what it must feel like to have your leg broken.

Then an old mate gave me a call, said he'd heard I was looking for work and that there was a job going that might suit me. Legal—well, not likely to get me arrested, anyway—and I'd be able to use what I knew without having to worry about it being wrong. (So he said, and so the Watchers say, anyway. Sometimes I think they push that, though.) So I came along for the interview.

He warned me it might be a bit weird. So did the people who interviewed me. But, being a mug, I dived in—and when they showed me what they were up against, well, it looked like this was a scrap that really needed to be settled.

Mind you . . . back in the army, we used to call the public-school-and-posh-accent officers "Ruperts" (because that was what a lot of 'em were named), and this Watcher outfit turned out to be run by a bunch of 24-carat Ruperts. On the other hand, they at least have the sense to know that they aren't soldiers, and to leave the soldiering to people who know what they're doing. It'd be great, if the hostiles were just a little bit easier to handle.

Quote: "The trick is to pay attention. Once you know what needs shooting, you open fire."

ROLEPLAYING THE THOUGHTFUL ENFORCER

A hired foot-soldier in the war against evil—that's still largely how you see yourself. However, the job specification doesn't insist that you be stupid—the Watchers need people with a little bit of imagination—and you try to approach tasks in a practical but analytical way. This has given you a bit more of a sense of moral complexity than some of your colleagues. You have no compunction about skewering vampires, but you might end up questioning some other jobs, or at least looking for more ethical solutions. You also avoid emotional entanglements; they're likely to lead to trouble.

In post-Season Seven of Buffy games, your abilities may be even more important to Watcher teams, as they no longer have the power and authority of the Council behind them. If things turn violent, you're probably the *only* thing protecting them.



FROM THE SERIES

The following figures appeared in one or both TV series on the side of good, and are relevant to the topics of this book.

QUENTIN TRAVERS

Travers: Your affection for your charge has rendered you incapable of clear and impartial judgment. You have a father's love for the child, and that is useless to the cause. It would be best if you had no further contact with the Slayer.

—Buffy 3.12 *Helpless*

Quentin Travers was the archetypal old-style Watcher; well-mannered, smartly dressed, and living up to an American's stereotype of Englishness. The first couple of occasions when he appeared on the *Buffy* TV series, he showed up in Sunnydale, first to oversee Buffy's Cruciamentum ritual, then to test her and her friends before passing on what information the Council had on Glory. On those occasions, it was said that the Council had sent him, but he clearly had considerable authority, allowing him to, for example, sack or reinstate Giles. While he may have been relatively junior then, he was clearly working his way up the ladder, not even slowed significantly by the fact that he lost two of his colleagues on the first trip. (He may have qualified for the Covetous (Ambition) Drawback.) When Buffy called his bluff on the second occasion, refusing to play by the Council's rules, he shrugged it off with a wry smile.

By the time of his third significant appearance, he was in charge of the Watcher HQ as the network came under the First's assault. He was doubtless seen as energetic enough to make a useful leader, while mature and conventional enough for the Council to respect him. He and his colleagues were clearly too slow to respond to the

first signs of the coming battle, but he kept his head when the problem became clear, mustering his forces before they could panic and ordering an appropriate response. Unfortunately, it was too late; the HQ and everyone in it was obliterated by a bomb planted by the First's agent Caleb.

In a Series where he can appear at all, Travers is most likely to function as an annoying occasional Guest Star, albeit on the side of good. He's the embodiment of the old-style Council—arrogant, ruthless, and a little smug; he definitely has the Emotional Problems (Cold and Distant) Drawback. On the other hand, he has the full Watcher dry sense of humour, a working grasp of human motivations, and a taste for good whisky. He might even serve in a Watcher-centred Series as a Cast Member, handling administrative problems, directing resources where they're needed, and dropping dry witticisms in the aftermath of each battle.

Travers is highly unlikely to appear in any story set after the old Council was destroyed; it certainly appeared that he was sitting right on top of a massive explosion. On the other hand, we don't know the exact layout and structure of the Watcher HQ, or precisely where anyone was located relative to the explosives. Likewise, Caleb was a brutally effective killer, but there's no reason to believe that he was especially skilled in explosive demolitions. It's just possible that a badly mangled and scarred Quentin Travers has been spending long months recuperating in a London hospital, unidentified or under guard. If so, when he emerges, perhaps in a wheelchair or otherwise maimed, he'll look to become involved in reconstructing the Council and its network. While Cast Members may dismiss him as a symbol of the failed leadership, he's intelligent, skilled, dedicated, and charismatic in his way—and he knows where all sorts of truly weird bodies are buried. It would be foolish to ignore him.

Name: Quentin Travers
Motivation: Accomplish the Watcher mission in the classic Watcher style
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 2, Con 2, Int 4, Per 3, Will 4
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 11, Brains 14
Life Points: 26
Drama Points: 5
Special Abilities: Contacts 2(Government), Contacts 2 (Occult), Nerves of Steel, Resources (Well-off), Watcher Manoeuvres

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	11	—	Defence action
Punch	11	6	Bash
Stake	11	6	Slash/stab
(Through the Heart)	8	4	x5 vs. vamps





ANDREW WELLS, WATCHER EXTRAORDINARY

Andrew: Spike? (Runs to Spike.) It's you. It's really you! (Hugs Spike, sobbing.) My therapist thought I was holding onto false hope, but . . . I knew you'd come back. (Sniffles, releases Spike from the hug, looks him in the eyes.) You're like . . . you're like Gandalf the White, resurrected from the pit of the Balrog, more beautiful than ever. (Hugs Spike round the neck.) Oh . . . he's alive, Frodo. He's alive!

Angel: You two know each other?

Andrew (steps back from Spike, sniffles, straightens his lapels): Uh, yeah. Um . . . we—we saved the world together. I mean, Buffy helped, but . . . it was mostly us.

—Angel 5.11 *Damage*

Andrew Wells, a one-time demon-summoning geek, spent much of his career on *Buffy* as a low-grade villain, and much of the rest (after killing his best friend under the influence of the First) as a rather annoying prisoner. In the end, though, he reached some comprehension of his need for redemption, and went into the final battle with the First prepared to die a hero.

The trouble with Andrew, though, is that he keeps trying to understand life in terms of movies and TV shows, without understanding that the best writers know when to break with cliché to make their plots more like real life—which is complicated and doesn't respect dramatic conventions. Andrew survived, knowing full well that better people had died that day.

He spent some time in therapy, but it's doubtful that psychiatry has many answers to the emotional aftermath of a near-apocalypse—or to simply being someone like Andrew, frankly. Fortunately, another role came along for him to play—another stereotype. Buffy's old gang, especially Giles, realised that the newly-activated Slayers would be needing a lot of help, which suggested that some kind of Watcher organisation would have to be recreated. Unfortunately, thanks to the First, there was a shortage of trained Watchers. On the other hand, there was Andrew—knowledgeable regarding magic, geeky, rather annoying to everyone around him, and looking for a job. Making him a Watcher was probably an easier decision than Giles will ever want to admit.

More details for Andrew, including a full character sheet depicting him at his last-days-of-Sunnydale dubious-hero peak, are given in *Welcome to Sunnydale*. This Quick Sheet brings him further up to date, incorporating the training in Watcher skills which he has received from Giles. He has a good intellectual skill set these days—Computers 2, Crime 3, Knowledge 3, Occultism 5, Science 2, and Wild Card (Geek Trivia) 5. If you don't have any of the books which explain it, just ignore his Sorcery Quality. He also has *all sorts* of identity problems; for example, he may not yet have his sexual proclivities quite settled. (He certainly has a capacity for camp, but he also enjoys female company.) He sometimes carries an array of guns, some of which fire tranquilliser darts.





Name: Andrew Wells
Motivation: Find redemption by living the full set of Watcher clichés
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 2, Con 3, Int 4, Per 2, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 10, Brains 12
Life Points: 30
Drama Points: 20
Special Abilities: Contacts 2 (Occult) , Contacts 5 (New Watchers) 5, Good Luck 1, Sorcery 1



Manoeuvres			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	10	—	Defence action
Punch	10	5	Bash
Sword	10	9	Slash/stab
Stake	10	5	Slash/stab
(Through the Heart)	7	4	x5 vs. vamps
Dart Gun	10	—	Fires tranquilliser darts

Andrew can make an entertaining Guest Star for a post-Buffy Season Seven series; he's a Watcher whose affectations even irritate other Watchers. But he's *trying* to redeem himself and he represents a direct line to the people who best understand recent events. He can also call on a small *army* of Slayers for backup. When last seen, he even showed signs of becoming slightly less annoying and more emotionally perceptive; he may even have shed some of his drawbacks, such as Misfit. He may also have lost the knack of dissuading adversaries from attacking him by looking too useless to worry about.

TYPICAL POTENTIAL

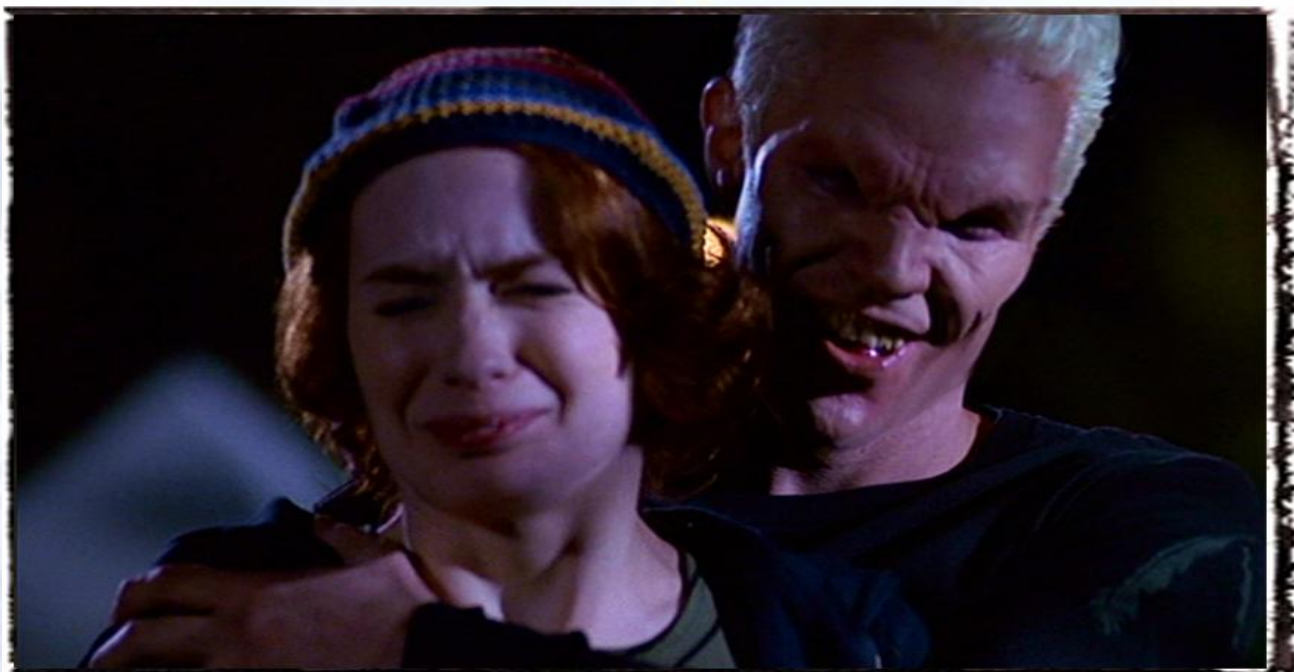
Dawn: They're all Slayers?

Giles: Potential Slayers. Waiting for one to be called.

There were many more like them all over the world, but, um, now there's just a handful, and they're all on their way to Sunnydale.

—Buffy 7.10 *Bring on the Night*





This quick sheet represents a generic Potential, as might be encountered in many games—a teenager, just coming up to the likely age for “activation.” Directors can individualise any girl’s skills and background details as appropriate.

Watchers in a pre-Season Seven game could be assigned to observe or train such a girl, eventually giving her the Slayer-in-Training Quality from *The Slayer’s Handbook*, raising her Attributes and Skills (and hence her Combat Value) accordingly. Similarly, in a story set during the First’s onslaught, surviving Watchers could find themselves struggling to assist and protect such girls from Bringers, and to get them to Sunnydale for better protection and crash training

After the end of the events of Season Seven, a lot of girls along these lines, all around the world, suddenly found that they’d gained superhuman strength and speed. For a “Confused New Slayer,” take this quick sheet and add the Untrained Slayer Quality (p. [?]), raising her Attributes, Skills, and Combat value.

Name: Ms. Puzzled Potential
Motivation: Work out what the heck’s going on before it kills her
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 3, Con 3, Int 2, Per 2, Will 2
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 9, Brains 8
Life Points: 30
Drama Points: 10
Special Abilities: varies
Manoeuvres

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	9	—	Defence action
Punch	9	5	Bash
Kick	8	6	Bash
Stake	9	5	Slash/stab
(Through the Heart)	6	4	x5 vs. vamps





3 Who Watches the Watchers?

Travers: You used to respect us, Giles. You used to be one of us.

Giles: You used to pay me. If you recall, firing me was not my idea.

Travers: Touché. But you were on the inside once. You know what sort of resources we command.

—Buffy 5.12 Checkpoint

The Watchers—whether that word means the Council or its supporting network—aren't just a bunch of scholars and trainers.

They are an *organisation*, with resources, hierarchy, and traditions. This chapter looks at this structure, and suggests some ways in which thinking about these things in greater depth can make for interesting games. Hence, it's intended for Directors; players please steer clear.

The focus here is largely on conditions prior to Season Seven of *Buffy*. That's not to say that things during or after that season aren't interesting; they definitely are. However, they're also less tightly defined, and more dependent on the ways in which Directors choose to structure their own series. How much is left of the old organisation after the onslaught of the First Evil, and what may be rebuilt, can vary a great deal with personal taste, and will dictate the kind of stories to be played out. Indeed, exactly how things *are* rebuilt may be largely up to the Cast.

This chapter also looks at some other occult-related groups which might appear in Watcher-centred games, as allies, rivals, or antagonists. These are mostly non-canonical, but should fit the flavour of *Buffy* and *Angel*. There are also box-out notes throughout the chapter defining groups (including various versions of the Watchers) in terms of two sets of "organisation" rules—the "Magical Group" Quality/Drawback in *The Magic Box*, and the system in chapter 5 of the *Angel Corebook*.





MEMORANDUM

Date: 12th December 1996

From: Edward Merrydown, Secretary to the Council, Knightsbridge.

To: Andrew Nichols, Staff Assignments Office, Moorfields.

Subject: The California Situation

Sandy,

As of this morning, we've received word from the follow-up team out in heathen Los Angeles. As preliminary analysis suggested, the Summers girl survived, and apparently managed to destroy that entire gang of bloodsuckers. Quite a coup for the new girl, really. On the other hand, she evidently got our man on the spot killed first. Not an ideal trade, but better than it might have been, I suppose. She also burned down her school's gym in the process of resolving the situation, but luckily, civilian casualties were generally light, with no serious press attention. No need to scramble the rumour control team this time.

Now, there's an extra complication; it seems that the girl's parents are splitting up—very American—and she'll be staying with her mother, who's probably going to move house. The spotters say that the mother's been looking at some little place up the coast named Sunnydale—doesn't sound like bloodsucker territory, though there are one or two funny flags on the file there.

(This move's not guaranteed yet, but young Brown, the best thaumaturge we can get hold of just now, thinks that it's highly likely. Says she gets a headache if she tries to confirm it, but apparently those prophecies that her sort love seem to agree, so let's assume this is right.)

If the girl's lucky, she'll have a quiet few years, and our man will have time to train her up. But we've got an unstable home background here, and our last man's reports suggest that she's not very amenable to training. That sort aren't usually very lucky, in my experience.

Still, we need to assign some kind of Watcher, win or lose. The Council talked about pulling someone from one of the American offices again, but they're pleading overstretched resources. Typical Yank whingeing, if you ask me, but apparently that situation in Cleveland keeps causing them trouble. They lost three people in the last year, not counting the chap in Los Angeles.

So the Council has decided to send somebody out from HQ. The feeling is that it's a chance to get some authority back out there; the Yank offices have been getting a bit slack lately. On the other hand, no point in wasting any of our best scholars on an unpredictable babysitting assignment out in the sticks. We need capable analysts at home these days. So, after some back-and-forth, the Council plumped for Rupert Giles. He's rather naïve, and Quentin, who's been following his career on the quiet, says that there were some funny rumours from back in his university days. On the other hand, he seems keen as mustard nowadays, and his dad and grandma did us proud in their time, so let's give him the chance to carry on the good name—sink or swim. If the girl somehow makes in to Cruciamentum, we'll reassess him then, and maybe upgrade him.

Now, we'll need to give him a suitable cover, close to the girl. (There wasn't time with her first Watcher, but let's do it right this time.) It turns out that the town has just the one school (small place, evidently), which conveniently enough, is advertising for a new librarian. San Francisco have a couple of agents in place in the state government in Sacramento; get them to tweak a few records and it should all be quite straightforward. Put a call through to Washington to expedite the "green card" nonsense, and make whatever adjustments you need to Giles's official records. Knowing the Yank weakness for Oldie-Worldy accents, even he should be able to walk the interviews.

All the best to Lucinda. We must meet up for another game of chess sometime.

Ted.





THE COUNCIL

Anya: And you blew the Council up! See, this is what happens when you're all stuffy and repressed. You overreact.

Giles: Not—I didn't. Must've been an agent of the First, after my little burglary session. The knowledge contained in these files had to be protected, and there wasn't time for—for bureaucracy or debate. The Council knows no other way.

Andrew: And it cost them their lives!

—Buffy 7.10 *Bring On the Night*

While the Watchers, as individuals, are defined by their function, not by their organisation, the Watchers' Council is very much at the heart of the "Watcher system." In other words, there *could* be Watchers if there wasn't a Council, but for most of history, the Council have been the people who ran the show.

The Council was always a self-perpetuating clique. That isn't specifically an insult—though anyone who disliked the Council could certainly use it as one—it's a neutral description of how things worked from the Neolithic to the end of the 20th century. The Council was made up of Watchers who (amongst other things) found and trained new Watchers, assigned them tasks, and, when there was a gap at the table, invited selected individuals to join themselves. Invitees (who very rarely turned down the honour) would have been monitored for

years, and would be selected for "suitability," meaning that they would usually agree with most of what the existing Council members thought and said. Hence, the Council became very set in its ways. Still, it could adapt when it really had to, taking in new blood and learning new tricks. Watchers were always taught that their mission was more important than *anything* else, and most were smart enough to understand that this meant that they should change when failing to do so would threaten it.

DETERMINING POLICY

Giles: Did you reach the Council?

Wesley: Yes. They, they couldn't help.

Buffy: Couldn't?

Wesley: Wouldn't. It's not Council policy to cure vampires.

—Buffy 3.21 *Graduation Day, Part One*

Watchers in general, and the Council in particular, have a set of policies and standard methods. A lot of these are determined by tradition—which is a polite word for habits so old that they've acquired a coating of respect—but sometimes, a situation needs a new approach, or at least a new interpretation of the traditional ideas. One of the big things which the Council has always existed to do was to set and enforce those policies.

It generally presented itself as a fellowship of equals. That is to say, while there were more and less senior Watchers, and the Council itself could give orders to



"field" Watchers and employees, there was no Council hierarchy and no "Supreme Watcher." It was a *council*, which sat around a table, discussed things, and sought some kind of consensus. Sometimes, it would vote, and then the majority decision would be binding. The chairman was there simply to manage meetings, although he did have a casting vote and a great deal of informal status.

This is *not* to say that the Council was very democratic. It was always a very old-fashioned organisation, where tradition and seniority counted for far more than the suggestions of some junior member with more ideas than experience. But it did have a preference for consensus—for hammering out agreements which everyone eventually accepted. To people who think this way, votes are rather divisive and a little bit unpleasant.

Of course, combining this attitude with a *lot* of tradition and the presence of some senior members with a lot of status makes for organisations that can be old-fashioned, slow to respond, and inflexible. However, Council policies had been established over the centuries because, above all, they worked; if they started causing disasters, most Watchers were smart enough to realise (eventually), and to adapt. The archives of the Council included tales of catastrophe and stupidity, which imperilled Watchers, Slayers, and humanity—but in each case, lessons were learned, and new traditions were established.

It would help, of course, that the Watchers' enemies could be just as tradition-bound and inflexible. If the Council has a group memory, old, powerful vampires and demons have personal memories. Sometimes, the secret war between the two could become quite bogged down in habit.

MEETINGS

Giles: There's a 'Watchers' retreat every year in the Cotswolds. It's a lovely spot. It's very serene. There's horse riding and hiking and punting and lectures and discussions. It-i-it's . . . it's a great honour to be invited. Or so I'm told.

—*Buffy 3.3 Faith, Hope, and Trick*

All this policy-creation and consensus-building and so on requires that Watchers—and especially the Council—get together, at least occasionally. Members of the Watchers' Council itself were traditionally usually based in or very near to London, and would meet for formal meetings every few weeks or even days (and informally even more often). Likewise, the staff of local offices, groups assigned to specific tasks, and suchlike could meet as required. However, there was also a tradition of larger meetings—Watcher "conferences" and "conventions."

firing a watcher

The Council always had the power to fire any Watcher, ejecting him (or her—remember Gwendolyn Post) from the organisation. Some might say that this was a bit meaningless; a Watcher is ultimately defined by what he does and a bit of knowledge, rather than by membership of the secret club. On the other hand, the Council provided bureaucratic support, use of a very good library, and a salary and expenses payments. Taking that away means something. For that matter, the Council could order any Watcher (who didn't choose to rebel) to go wherever they wanted; they could, for example, withdraw the Slayer's Watcher, recalling him to HQ.

Known grounds for loss of Watcher status included gross disobedience (demonstrated by Giles), disobedience compounded by incompetence (the accusation against Wesley), and excessive interest in the dark side of the supernatural (see Ms. Post). Sacking was really supposed to be a last resort—it would lose the network a lengthily-trained agent—but came to be used with rather too much enthusiasm in the old Council's last years.

According to Watcher records, the first substantial "grand conclaves" took place in the days of the Roman Empire, when senior Watchers from all around and even beyond Roman territory gathered, usually in a villa just outside Rome itself, to discuss grand plans for campaigns against the supernatural, argue theology and philosophy, and exchange mystical secrets. The tradition fell away a little during the Dark Ages, but was never entirely forgotten; Watcher historians regard the grand "Watcher synods" as important events. Some meetings took place secretly alongside the great councils of the Christian church.

Frequent, systematic meetings really began in the 18th century, and came to something of a climax in the Victorian age, when Watchers from all around the world would gather, usually in a remote but picturesque spa town somewhere, congratulate each other on their achievements, and have group photographs taken. This new tradition became slightly less popular after a group of vampires infiltrated one such gathering and caused a great deal of carnage before being detected. However, some fairly major meetings continued into the 20th century.





The World Wars caused the tradition to be suspended, and it was restored in a slightly more modest form after WWII. The Council took to calling an invitation-only gathering in the English countryside (within a few hours' travel of London, in case of emergencies). The Council actually acquired a majority shareholding in a large country hotel and some nearby houses (all through proxy businesses and trusts, of course), enabling them to screen all the service staff and hold events undisturbed.

While some cynical junior Watchers saw these meetings as a free holiday for the leadership, they actually came to function primarily as an academic conference. Watcher operations always depended on deep and broad knowledge of arcane lore; the occasional face-to-face meeting for specialist scholars helped to promote the circulation of new research. Unfortunately, this meant that invitations were mostly limited to highly specialised researchers and members of the Council itself; those Watchers who dealt with practical, day-to-day operations were often left out. Those of them who took to referring to the conferences as "holidays" or as some kind of perk for the Council irritated those who were invited, and who thought of them as intensive academic brainstorming sessions with only a little relaxation at the end of each long day.

Since the destruction of the old Council, there have been very few large meetings of surviving or new Watchers. Many people involved in attempts to restore the Watcher system are forward-looking enough to think that modern communications, including the Internet,

should make large gatherings less useful. On the other hand, some kind of face-to-face meetings may yet sometimes prove invaluable. Although the old venues are still controlled by Watcher proxies over which the new organisations should be able to exert authority, managing security at larger events may well be something of a nightmare.

EXERTING INFLUENCE

Travers: I understand you think this is unfair. But there are factors which should motivate you to go along with the review. Now, I don't want to do this, but obviously we could shut this place down permanently.

Buffy: You can't do that. You don't have that kind of power.

Travers: Of course we do, and a great deal more. In fact, if you insist on fighting us, we'll arrange to have Mr. Giles deported within the day. Never set foot in this country again. Now perhaps you're used to idle threats and sloppy discipline, Miss Summers, but you're dealing with grownups now. Am I making myself clear?

—Buffy 5.12 Checkpoint

However they might be controlled and run, the Watchers were always more than paper tigers. They weren't and aren't very physically formidable—and they rarely even tried to be. What they have, traditionally, is social power, meaning primarily the ability to get



mundane institutions and organisations to do what they want. This in turn is supported by a well-developed if specialised intelligence network, and also by a lot of brains and experience.

The key to Watcher power, in short, is knowing people. An effective senior Watcher usually has an array of friends and allies in positions of political or social power, and many such people either know of and respect the Watchers' Council, or much more likely, pay attention to some front organisation or ally. Watcher power diffuses out from Council members, to other Watchers, to associates and agents, to dupes and cat's-paws. Of course, this sort of power sometimes depends on being able to do favours in return, but the Watchers have had centuries of practice in influence-peddling and manipulation. It also helps that they can do genuine good, after their fashion; many a senior law enforcement professional or civil servant knows just enough about the supernatural to be glad that there's somebody willing to take bizarre problems off his hands, and will return the favour.

This system of connections and unofficial power was never completely reliable, even at the Council's height; sometimes, a Watcher would find that the network lacked useful connections in some corner of the world, or would run into problems where a system was too open to public view, or where some official was too officiously fond of going by the book. Such problems could usually be resolved, but it might take time and burn off many favours; the agents on the ground might be forced to adapt or take shortcuts. Still, it's amazing what a senior Watcher could achieve with a 'phone call or a quiet word. This influence could even extend into the supernatural world; many Watchers are owed favours by wizards, spirits, and demons, and the quiet word might sometimes actually be a spell of power.

FINANCE

Weatherby: 'Wouldn't cough up the dosh for the airfare home, would they?

Wesley: No, they wouldn't.

Smith: All those alchemists on the board of directors and they still make us fly coach. Miserly bastards.

—Angel 1.19 Sanctuary

It may sound boring, but this sort of organisation and influence requires a substantial mundane underpinning. Something like the Watcher network costs money to run, and involves prosaic management issues that in turn require specialist staff.

Council operations were traditionally funded by a system of legacies and investments going back centuries,

masked by multiple layers of complex accountancy. This system could if necessary be reinforced and augmented by magic—there are countless ways to raise funds, manage an organisation, or mask strange activities by a simple spell or two—but the system was designed to need this as little as possible. Most of the Watchers themselves regarded routine business as a tedious distraction from their important work.

Of course, it hadn't always been so. In their early days, the Watchers were a group of self-funding magicians and scholars. But donations and legacies from wealthy supporters and recruits, from the high Middle Ages onwards, were carefully managed, and through the power of compound interest, they grew into a sprawling international financial network which made the Council immensely rich. Getting access to those funds could be difficult—potentially, the battle with evil could drain any amount of money, so the Watchers had a habit of controlling expenditure rather carefully—but they were there.

(Incidentally, despite Smith's joke to Wesley, it's unlikely that the Council ever included alchemists capable of turning lead into gold in any significant quantity. No doubt there were some scholars who know a little about the *theory* of alchemy, but transmutation of elements was always notoriously difficult, even back when this was a popular academic study; if it was easy, well, there'd be a lot more gold around by now. In any case, something this disruptive of the mundane economy would count as unlawful magic, which high-minded Watchers avoid. And selling gold that comes from nowhere can be difficult.)

Many of the day-to-day financial concerns were traditionally handled by a set of foundations and trusts whose ordinary employees knew nothing of where the money went—they usually assumed that they were working for some discreet bank or secretive millionaire. The most senior managers knew more, and would occasionally meet with "representatives from head office" (i.e. senior Watchers), but had no reason to pass this information down the line. Their policy was (and is) to engage in safe, sound investments with a view to long-term security and profit; they had some ethical constraints, but not many, in truth.

In the past, these funds very occasionally came under attack from the cleverest supernatural enemies, which could be unpleasant for individual staff members. But they were hard to trace, even magically, and the Watchers could usually act to protect them before the damage became serious. The First didn't bother with such subtlety, going straight for the Watchers themselves, and the funds still exist, a vast potential resource for anyone who can work out how to take control of them. They're also potentially terribly vulnerable to magical attack.





Likewise, the Watchers ran a network of dummy companies and funds to handle their payroll requirements and incidental costs, all fed by the investment trusts. (Their Geneva office looked after a whole stack of numbered accounts.) This required that the Council keep a few accountants on the staff, and often involved some creative bookkeeping to direct the money where it was needed with minimal public visibility. In short, the Council employed experts in money-laundering; anti-racketeering banking laws could be a real nuisance for them, sometimes forcing them to call in numerous favours.

Since the destruction of the old Council, these financial and administrative systems have been in chaos. Most of the people authorised to sign cheques and issue instructions are dead, and establishing who inherits such rights can take years—a process made trebly hard by the fact that several groups are competing for control, and all of them want to keep the whole business quiet. Hence, few of the resurrected Watcher groups have even a small faction of the old Council financial clout. Fortunately, some survivors have authority to draw on some accounts, especially in regional offices which survived the First's onslaught, and hard work behind the scenes is slowly disentangling the knots.

TRAINING

Wesley: Of course, training procedures have been updated quite a bit since your day. Much greater emphasis on field work.

Giles: Really?

Wesley: Oh, yes. Not all books and theory nowadays. I have, in fact, faced two vampires myself. Under controlled circumstances, of course.

Giles: Well, no danger of finding those here.

Wesley: Vampires?

Giles: Controlled circumstances.

—Buffy 3.14 *Bad Girls*

Some Watchers may be born to the role, but no one is born knowing everything that is required; all Watchers have to learn the job. Primarily, of course, Watcher education is about the supernatural, especially vampires and demons, and about research skills for situations when the basic education is insufficient—but there's more to it than that. Any Watcher assigned to a current or prospective Slayer has to be able to teach her how to fight—or rather, how to fight *well*. Aside from which, any Watcher may be forced into combat at some point along the line, whatever the theories about that being someone else's job.



THESES AND THEORETICIANS

Watcher #2: Is that what you want? I'd think you'd want to kill her. You've killed Slayers before.

Spike: Heard of me, have you?

Watcher #2: I... wrote my thesis on you.

Spike: Well, well. Isn't that neat. Tell me, pet, now we're such good friends, how's the Slayer doing? Is she okay? High marks in all categories?

—*Buffy 5.12 Checkpoint*

Mostly, though, Watcher training is very academic—albeit involving areas, such as applied occultism, that few modern universities consider respectable. In fact, the old Watcher network incorporated an entire “underground university”; while it couldn’t grant qualifications with any standing in the ordinary academic world, it certainly had hierarchies of accomplishment and status of its own. Some Watchers pursued rather specialised or narrow fields of study, producing theses and dissertations which were subject to peer review and assessment; if they were considered sound, they would then become part of the Watcher central library. For example, some wrote papers on noted individual vampires.

Towards the end of its history, the old Council noticed that the system had perhaps become a little too introverted and scholarly; Watchers who knew all about monsters in theory, but who had never seen one in reality, could freeze up disastrously when theory turned into reality for them. Hence, they made some attempts to “acclimatise” future field Watchers to danger, capturing vampires to show trainees what they really looked like and so on. This was something of a token effort, although it might have developed into something useful given time.

THE WATCHER'S ACADEMY

Wesley: I am from the Watchers' Academy in southern Hampshire. In fact, I happen to be head boy.

Cordelia: Gee, I wonder how you earned that nickname.

Wesley: A lot of effort, I don't mind saying.

—*Angel 4.6 Spin the Bottle*

Given that the children of Watchers might be destined to join the network from an early age, and a few other potential Watchers could also sometimes be recruited very young—say, from among the children of allies of the Council, or of victims of supernatural evil, or from friends of new or Potential Slayers—the Council realised, sometime in the 19th century, that it made sense to establish a school for such youths. A suitable site—a large old country house in Hampshire, in the south of England—was located and acquired, and the “Watchers’ Academy” was founded with the cover name of “Apollonius College for the Sons of Gentlemen.” It

presented itself to the world as simply another part of the British “public” (i.e. private) boarding school system (see p. [?]), which was growing rapidly at this time.

Late in the century, the Council accepted that, as female Watchers were useful on occasion, it would make sense to educate some of them from youth, too, and by then, scholarly female education was an accepted (if still slightly radical) idea in British society. Hence, another site was acquired, as near as possible to the boys’ Academy (so that they could share resources), and opened as “St. Radegund’s College for Young Ladies.” By the end of the 20th century, it was becoming common for boys’ and girls’ public schools to form alliances and even merge, and the two Academies became one (“Apollonius & St. Radegund’s Collegiate School”), although the two sets of buildings were both kept so that there could be separate accommodation for male and female pupils.

The Academy is registered with all appropriate government bodies as an ordinary (if small and evidently exclusive) boarding school, and indeed can pass itself off as such to ignorant casual visitors. After all, it has to provide a solid basic education for its pupils along with the more specialised material. It even has to fend off a few applications per year from ordinary parents impressed by its old-fashioned style and good academic record. Ordinary government officials inspect it periodically, and give it good marks, although some of them comment negatively on its archaic atmosphere and the strikingly serious attitude of its pupils. It does have an increasingly old-fashioned style; for example, older pupils are still appointed as “prefects,” under the leadership of a “head boy” and “head girl,” to help maintain discipline. (The Council was always careful to maintain lines of influence into the U.K. government’s Department of Education, ensuring that they could protect the Academy from official meddling.) It maintains a generally low profile, though it does play other public schools at sports, as not doing so would look odd; it’s rarely very successful in most competitions, but the fencing team is successful enough to cause occasional problems with secrecy.

The Academy always had good facilities, including a library comparable in some respects with that of the Council HQ itself. However, certain books were held in very secure locked shelves, and some titles that a field Watcher would regard as essential were simply missing. The reason was simple; the training in practical occultism which the Academy provided necessarily involved some knowledge of applied magic, and adult Watchers were all too aware that schoolchildren could be impetuous, overconfident, and fascinated by anything that they were told was dangerous. As it was, the Academy suffered at least one magical accident a decade, and despite the staff’s excellent skills and alertness, injuries and even fatalities weren’t unknown.





PLOT OPTIONS

It would be perfectly feasible to set a “school story” series in and around the Academy, at any date from its foundation up to the very recent past. It might be best to expunge all references to the words “Harry” and “Potter” from everyone’s brain while doing so, though. The supernatural in the Slayerverse is dangerous and often sinister, and the Watchers’ Academy exists, not to train wizards, but to support humanity in a battle against evil. Episodes could involve encounters with low-level supernatural threats (including possibly attacks on the Academy), resolving the consequences of unwise dabbling in the occult (hopefully not the fault of Cast Members), and perhaps the odd field trip to observe “safe” sites and phenomena—all interspersed with rivalry between the “houses” into which the Academy is divided, and the usual joys of adolescence.

In any case, the present-day situation is seriously confused. Within hours of the destruction of the Council HQ, the Academy buildings too came under attack by a large group of Bringers. Thanks to the heroic actions of several staff members and older pupils, the majority of occupants survived, but there were a number of casualties, and many of the buildings were burned to the ground. (Several of the staff performed equally heroically in concealing the odder contents of the place from the emergency services.) Realising that the Watcher network was under attack, the surviving staff and pupils scattered in small groups, some following established plans, others in a greater or lesser degree of panic—leading to yet more problems with the authorities. Since then, they’ve gradually been regrouping, while some surviving staff are working to restore the Academy. However, with local and national authorities seriously concerned about whatever happened there, cover stories looking dangerously fragile, and ownership of the Academy’s site and assets unclear, this may take years, or ultimately prove impossible. It may be easier for a “successor Council” to start from scratch somewhere new.

canon alert

We know from the TV series that the Academy exists (and that Wesley was head boy), but not much more about it; the details in this section are our invention. Directors are welcome to adjust details of events at the Academy during *Buffy* Season Seven to taste; the First might simply have ignored the place (though this would be rather sloppy tactics, given its status as a secondary reserve of Watcher lore), or might have wiped it out in a efficient and gruesome splatterpunk massacre.

MAGICAL LORE

Giles: Perhaps a paralysing spell? Only I can’t perform the incantation to this.

Willow: Right, don’t you have to speak it in Sumerian or something?

Giles: I do speak Sumerian. But it’s not that. Only an experienced witch can incant it and you have to be within striking distance of the subject.

Xander (to Buffy): See what you get for taking French instead of Sumerian?

—*Buffy 4.21 Primeval*

Watchers not only know about magic; they very occasionally use it. However, they don’t like it much. Certainly, the Council is **not** a society of wizards and mages. While magic is part of their tradition, it’s very much a secondary, limited part. There are several reasons for this.

Historically, although they trace their origins to a group of powerful wizards, there are hints of magical accidents and catastrophes in stories of their early years, and a strong Christian influence in the medieval era left them with a bias against witchcraft and necromancy. Perhaps more importantly, they have too often seen the horrific results of careless or overconfident attempts at magic use. Furthermore, their belief that their task is to observe and to train, not to act directly, makes them see magic as doubly dangerous; if Watchers were encouraged to use magic, some of them might be tempted to more and more active operations, probably getting into dangerous situations and certainly violating custom. As trainees are often told, the Watchers exist to control supernatural powers, not to exploit them.

In any case, Watchers aren’t recruited for their magical potential, and some are barely capable of casting a simple spell; if Watcher training and tactics depended on magic, then many members of the organisation would be seriously disadvantaged.

All that said, a competent field Watcher should have at least some knowledge of a whole range of rituals and techniques, if only for identification purposes, and some more dynamic Watchers (notably Rupert Giles) have made quite a lot of use of various spells, if only out of desperation (which is one reason why the Council came to distrust Giles). Perhaps the most important spells the Watchers do admit to using are those which locate and identify new and Potential Slayers. Still, even the Watchers who are trained to cast these are seen as a something of a dangerous, unreliable necessity by many of their colleagues, and Watchers who discover a pressing need for magical aid often have to seek aid from trusted outsiders, such as various covens of white witches.



THAUMATURGY

Wesley: The first lesson a Watcher learns is to separate truth from illusion. Because in the world of magics, it's the hardest thing to do.

—Angel 7.22 *Not Fade Away*

Thus, Watcher magical training is treated, not as a separate course of study, but as a component part of their general education in occultism. A trainee Watcher *may* work a spell or two in the course of his studies, but it isn't encouraged. Incidentally, as a matter of style, old-fashioned Watchers sometimes refer to the magic which they do use as "thaumaturgy." The word actually means much the same as "magic," but carries overtones of religious miracle-working, and so permits Watchers who worry about such things to regard themselves as not being involved in "witchcraft."

None of which is to say that the Watcher network, or even the Council, have never included some very competent, even downright powerful, magicians—although the Watcher ethos of restraint and self-control have ensured that they very rarely used dangerous shortcuts to power, and other duties have often kept them from developing their powers to the fullest. But spell-casting isn't ever the *point* of being a Watcher.

In fact, occasionally, when the Watchers discover that a recruit has substantial paranormal powers (unsubtle Qualities such as Pyrokinesis, Telekinesis, or Telepathy), or serious potential (the Sorcery Quality), they call up their contacts in other, more "actively paranormal" groups (such as those friendly covens) and arrange for the recruit to transfer. While this may lose them some power, it ensures that the individual receives training from other people who can understand and control things better, and thus avoids a lot of accidents. It also helps keep the other groups kindly disposed to the Watchers, who they see as "knowing their limitations."

ASSIGNMENTS

Buffy: Arrive? They're coming here? Now? W-why do they have to come here?

Xander: Yeah, don't they have 'phones? (Fake English accent) "Allo, Buffy, here's some stuff we know, pip-pip."

Buffy: Yeah! Phones. See, I'd like them on phones.

—Buffy 5.12 *Checkpoint*

Despite all the comments about passivity which have gone before, an organisation the size and power of the Watcher network *has* to do more than sit around, read books, and harass supernaturally-supercharged teenagers. Watchers can find themselves tackling a range of missions and tasks . . .





ROUTINE ADMIN

Angel: Somebody want to tell me how a Grox'lar Beast got past security? I don't have time for this.

Spike: Of course not. Man's gotta stay focused on profit margins and power lunches.

Harmony: Angel—

Angel: Yeah, Spike? I got a business to run. That means responsibilities, appointments to keep.

Harmony: That was your three o'clock.

—Angel 5.2 Just Rewards

Somebody has to run the show. It may sound boring, and it's probably not suitable as the basis for a whole series, but without a certain amount of paperwork, an organisation the size of the Watcher network could never function.

Administrative tasks range from setting up or tearing down local stations and safe-houses, through managing investments and bureaucratic contacts, to recruiting new staff. Mostly, this is left to faceless second-string staff, but occasionally, things become complicated, and front-line operators have to become involved. Setting up a temporary office in a third-world country which is on the verge of social collapse, or closing one down secretly, for security, in an area which has suddenly plunged into civil war, requires nerve and sometimes combat skill as well as administrative abilities. Even routine attention to financial matters can suddenly reveal a subtle attack on the Watchers' power by some subtle supernatural foe.

RESEARCH

Buffy: So you really think they might be able to help us?

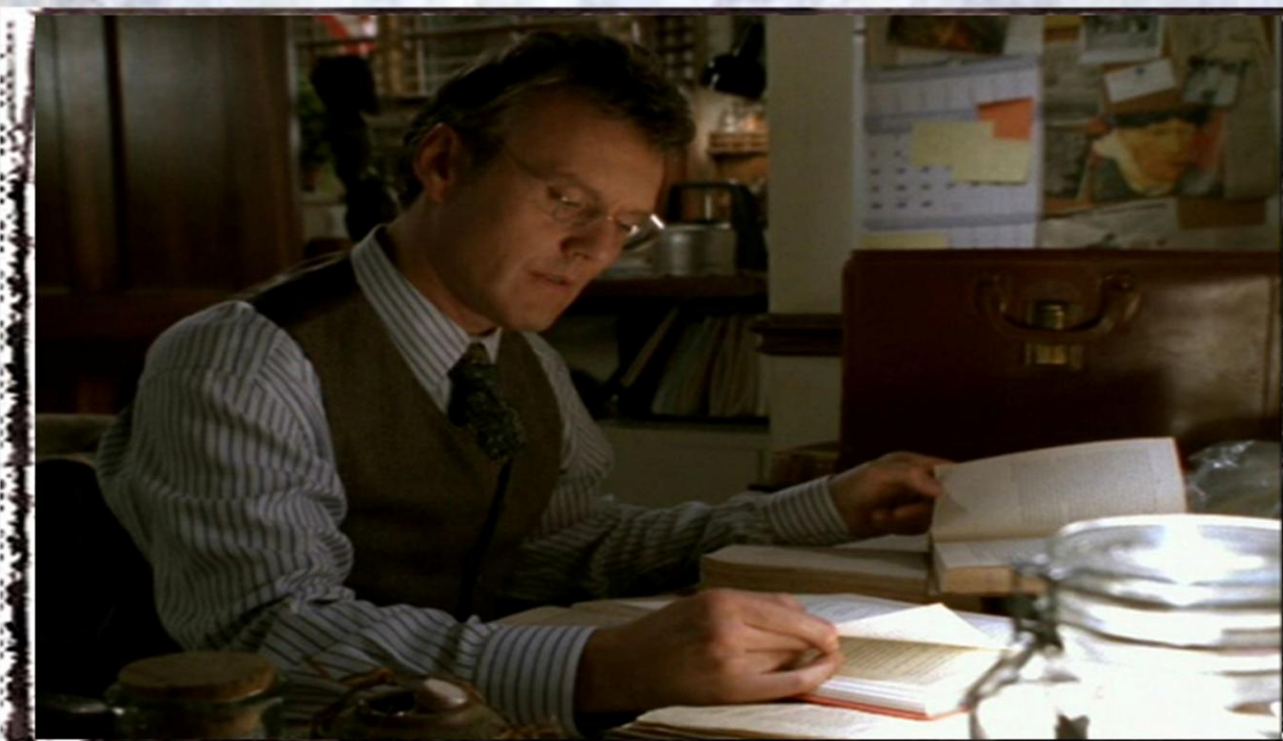
Giles: Ah, if you mean are they gonna help us find out something about Glory... I saw that coming. You're dropping your shoulder. (Buffy looks surprised, continues hitting.) Ah, the resources that the... 'Watchers' Council has at their disposal... I mean, the Central Library alone is just... (Buffy stops hitting.)

Buffy: Don't talk about the books again. You get all... And sometimes there's drool.

—Buffy 5.11 Triangle

The Council always had one of the best collections of occult lore in the world, and a "group memory" which encompassed even more. But its collection was never truly *complete*, which was deeply frustrating for those Watchers who lived for knowledge above anything else. Fortunately, the "Watcher mission" gave them a good excuse to go looking for more. Mostly, research is a quiet, peaceful business which is only slightly dangerous to one's sanity, but among Watchers, it could become more complicated.

"Research assignments" could mean polite visits to great libraries or museums in pursuit of specific references, more complicated trips to private collections, trawls of second-hand bookstores, discreet bidding in auctions of rare volumes, archaeological expeditions to remote sites, attendance at academic conferences—or, in later days, deep trawls of Internet resources. Sometimes,





things could turn complicated; other people after the same information were often exactly the sorts who could not be allowed to get hold of it, and who could turn very nasty when denied. A wise Watcher researcher always knew exactly when to call for backup, and that such assistance is often all too slow arriving.

For that matter, even in the mundane world, archaeology can sometimes involve travel to remote and uncomfortable areas with some local dangers, even if the work itself is notoriously painstaking and dull. Members of the Watcher archaeology department deny that any of them ever used a whip, even in the 1930s, but slouch hats were often a comfortable choice of headgear.

NEUTRALISATION MISSIONS

Buffy: Kill the bad fairy... destroy the bad fairy's power centre, whatever, and all the troubles go away?

Giles: Yeah, well, I'm sure it's not that simple, but...

—*Buffy 3.9 The Wish*

Watchers watch, rather than act—most of the time. But this isn't an absolute rule. Occasionally, research or magical scrying might turn up a problem serious enough to demand fixing, but simple enough that Watcher personnel could deal with it themselves. There's no sense in letting some blood-demon erupt on Earth when a simple ten-minute ritual in the right place will prevent it.

Sometimes, this can be a simple matter of string-pulling; many an archaeological dig has been temporarily halted by a 'phone call to the right bureaucrat, buying time for someone to clean the dangerous stuff out of the site. Other problems require a little more violence, but again, a word in the right place can put some competent agency onto the case. And sometimes, as with the wish-world version of Giles, well, a Watcher simply cannot stand idly by while a situation goes to Hell, and no one else is available to resolve things. Such active measures were relatively rarely pursued in most periods; indeed, the Watchers could too often be accused of criminal inertia. But even at their most passive, they did a lot of minor but useful work.

Also, if a Watcher "went rogue" with Council information or resources that made him a significant danger, the Council would generally attempt to clear up the mess. Unfortunately, it would require specific evidence of immediate danger; something like, say, a mere excessive interest in dark magic could merely lead to expulsion from the Watcher organisation. Stealing Watcher texts, though, would be much more likely to lead to action; many Watchers were librarians to the core, after all. The Watchers were always loath to use lethal violence against their own, even after expulsion, but would do whatever seemed necessary to keep the world safe.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Giles: Watchers' Council. They, ah, sent a retrieval team to capture Faith.

Buffy: Well, yeah, I mean, 'cause it worked so well when Wesley tried it.

Giles: This is a special operations unit. They, uh, handle the council's trickier jobs—smuggling, interrogation, wetworks.

—*Buffy 4.16 Who Are You?*

In theory, the Watchers have never been an aggressive organisation. One might think that they would only need a combat arm to preserve security in their bases. In practice... Well, other eventualities arise.

We've only seen one three-man team (Collins, Smith, and Weatherby) on the TV shows, but there's no reason to believe that there might not be others. Admittedly, the task we saw them attempting—capturing a rogue Slayer—might not arise very often, but as Giles observed, they could also serve other purposes.

The three Functions which he mentioned could certainly keep a combat-oriented group occupied. Watchers deal primarily in information, so **Smuggling** might primarily mean moving rare manuscripts and mystical artefacts across borders despite mundane legal complications. That team also sought ways to move the captured Faith (actually Buffy in Faith's body) out of the U.S.A., but this proved too difficult at that time. On other occasions, it might be necessary to move weapons into a controlled area for a major combat operation, or even to put Watcher experts in place to assist a Slayer or someone else working against some supernatural threat. As the mission to capture Faith illustrated, the network could provide invaluable organisational and legal support, but the special ops team on the ground would be responsible for actually moving the goods or people.

Interrogation missions represent the dark side of information work. In this context, this doesn't just mean asking questions; it means finding individuals who may well be highly unwilling to provide important information (and "finding" can be a euphemism for "kidnapping"), and then making sure that they provide it anyway. The information involved could include the location of various dangers or important people, or newly-important supernatural lore. The Watcher ethos is generally opposed to physical torture on humans, which is in any case rather unreliable (people are prone to saying whatever they think a torturer wants to hear, to stop the pain), but special ops teams are somewhat less ethical than most Watchers and often assigned to very urgent problems, and the beings that they interrogate are not always human; many Watchers think that violence is the only form of communication which vampires and demons understand.





"Wetworks"—assassination—looks like the really dark end of the Watcher business, but may be no less ethical than a lot of what heroic Cast Members get up to. Black magicians and the like can threaten countless innocents, even the whole world, and if the pragmatic Council sometimes reverts to simple, permanent solutions quicker than some people, well, they have fewer alternatives than some. Of course, wiping out someone whose chief crime is being a nuisance to the Council could slip very quickly into moral grey areas, to put it politely. At times in the past, even the definition of a "rogue Slayer" may have been drawn rather broadly; while the Council might generally just withdraw Watcher support from an annoying Slayer and let nature take its course, more active measures to speed the process would often have looked tempting to a rigid, interventionist Council. And, given that some Slayers could genuinely turn bad—who but the Council is in a position to fix the problem?

Lastly, **Protection/Bodyguard** work wasn't on Giles's list, but that makes it no less important. Watchers establishing new offices or investigating supernatural mysteries in dangerous areas need someone to deal with mundane threats, and hired guards would be too likely to panic or get confused when the supernatural appeared. For that matter, some such teams could be as much concerned with the technology of security—locks, burglar alarms, and electronics—as with weaponry.

Quiet defensive missions notwithstanding, much of this is seamy stuff, the underbelly of the idealistic Watcher mission. Dubious, marginal activities which require the

Council to maintain teams of fanatical, well-armed hitmen can drag things into the grey very fast—but Cast Members should understand the problem. In the end, the Council *is* on the side of the angels, and a lot of what these people are sent to do, is stuff that really has to be done. Or, to put it another way, "fanatical" is often hard to distinguish from "idealistic."

The special ops team from the shows illustrated this psychology in different ways; while the cold-blooded Collins regarded Faith, the renegade Slayer, with casual detachment, but was willing to do whatever was necessary to capture her, the idealistic Weatherby despised her as a traitor to the Council's ideals, and despised Wesley for associating with Angel, while Smith seemed simply relatively naive.

WATCHING THE PROSPECTIVES

Fred: In every generation, one is chosen.

Andrew: Yes, attractive slender woman. (Fred rolls her eyes.) There are many Potentials, as we experts call them.

Wesley: Hundreds . . . maybe thousands per generation.

Andrew: Each of them experiencing vivid dreams . . . some say nightmares . . . of the heroics of past slayers. But only one can be chosen.

—Angel 5.11 Damage

Watcher magical techniques have, annoyingly, never been quite good enough to pick out every Potential Slayer, or even those most likely to be activated when the



current incumbent . . . suffers the misfortunes of the role. However, they can and do locate quite a few. Traditionally, Watchers have then been assigned to these girls.

Their job was to track, observe, assess, and if possible, subtly, prepare. Sometimes, a Watcher would make contact with the "Potential," finding a place as, say, a teacher or friend of the family, and might even reveal the nature of the situation to the girl—but that could be tricky, as it tended to be traumatic and confusing, and not all "Potentials" actually became Slayers. Still, it happened. Even without explaining that much, a Watcher could sometimes find an excuse to begin training the girl in combat or other useful skills.

The number of Potentials seen in the last season of *Buffy*, including those who survived, those who were killed by the First's forces, and those who weren't even identified until the very last episode, was far greater than the Slayer power would ever actually need for the line to continue, even given the hideous casualty rate in that career. This suggests that, when one Slayer died, the power "sought out" whichever Potential was currently nearest the peak of her, well, potential, with maybe a small random factor in the equation. The other Potentials would be left "in the queue," but any who eventually passed their peak without being "activated" could go on to live ordinary, mundane lives. Thus, throughout history, there were some mature women who were blessed with the generally good physiques and strong wills of a Potential Slayer, but who never happened to be "activated." Many of these must have been identified by the Watchers and given some training.

The slow realisation that she would never be called upon to take up the role of Slayer must have been strange for such a girl. Some would have felt relief, especially given that they could only have been empowered by the death of other human beings much like themselves, but some would have felt regret or even bitterness at the denial of glory or at all the time wasted in training. Some would have been recruited into the Watcher organisation; others might have been left to drift through life. Such characters could make fascinating Cast Members or Guest Stars.

WORST CASES

Very occasionally, a Watcher's reports were worryingly negative concerning a "Potential's" mental stability or trustworthiness. The magic responsible for empowering a Slayer is selective, and never finds *completely* unreliable candidates, but the Council found that it sometimes seemed . . . imperfect, or perverse. This could be a serious problem.

The idea of *eliminating* a Potential Slayer goes against everything that Watchers officially stand for, so the preferred solution might be for the Watcher to attempt to change the girl, mostly by changing her environment. This would be a delicate task, for which a typically reserved Watcher might be poorly suited, but problems can often be corrected by some simple techniques; helping a girl or her family financially could reduce the temptations of delinquency or crime, while human "bad influences" could be removed by social manipulation, and traumatic experiences could be alleviated. This kind of thing requires administrative ingenuity or a lot of money, but that, the Council used to be able to manage. Today, such problems would be harder to handle, especially as the problem wouldn't be a misguided Potential, but a misguided *Slayer*.

(As to how many "unstable" Potentials were actually *murdered* in the past, on the orders of ruthless Councils—who knows? It's not the sort of thing which the official histories discuss. But some control-obsessed Watchers always felt that Potentials and the Slayer were renewable resources; only the mission endured. This is the organisation which invented Cruciamentum.)

This is also the place to note that, even before the First's great campaign, there may have been the odd supernatural being which took it upon itself to track down "Potentials" and eliminate them, in the hope of wiping out the Slayer tradition. (It would have been a huge task, but some megalomaniac vampires, for example, might take to such ideas, and some might just underestimate the difficulty.) Watchers could fight such attempts themselves, or direct active Slayers or other forces to deal with them.





WATCHING THE ACTIVE SLAYER

Giles: Right. Yes, I was a perfect Watcher. I did what any good Watcher would do. Got my Slayer killed in the line of duty.

Buffypot: Oh, that wasn't your fault.

Giles: Of course not. That's how all Slayer-Watcher relationships end, isn't it?

— *Buffy 6.1 Bargaining, Part 1*

When a Slayer was “activated,” any Watcher previously assigned to that girl became her official Watcher. If she was previously unidentified, she would usually be located, sooner or later, and a Watcher would soon be on the way to the scene. Either way, the Watcher would then have to make contact, explain her destiny, persuade her to accept it, and begin her training.

In theory, the Slayer's Watcher was a very important person in the Watcher network—the ultimate focus of the whole organisation—and should have received appropriate respect. He, and through him the Slayer, was certainly supposed to receive all the assistance and support which the Council could offer. In practice, this didn't always work.

The main problem was one familiar to many organisations; while “field” staff handled the important work, authority and seniority lay at HQ. Compounding this, relatively few members of the network would ever have worked with a Slayer, and so there would be very few truly experienced Watchers suitable and willing to take up HQ assignments. (Imagine an army where it would be impossible for most staff officers to have any command/operational experience.) HQ staff were often dedicated to the Watcher ideal of dispassionate detachment; when Slayers' Watchers learned compromise and flexibility, the higher ranks interpreted this as proving that fieldwork led to weakness and sloppiness.

In any case, while each Slayer and her Watcher were important at the time, the sad fact that every Watcher had to accept was that the Slayer's time—and hence, her Watcher's time of importance—was limited. Most only lasted a few years, if that. In the Council's eyes, a demanding Slayer, in need of too much support, was weak and hence doomed; when she failed, well, there'd be another Slayer, and a new Watcher to support. The Council supported a grand tradition, not any individual's needs.

TRAINING

Kendra: I study because it is required. The Slayer handbook insists on it.

Willow: There's a Slayer handbook?

Buffy: Wait. Handbook? What handbook? How come I don't have a handbook?

Willow: Is there a T-shirt, too? 'Cause that would be cool...

Giles: After meeting you, Buffy, I realized that, uh, the handbook would be of no use in your case.

— *Buffy 2.10 What's My Line? - Part 2*

The education given to Slayers, before and after “activation,” is discussed in *The Slayer's Handbook*. There is a handbook available to the network which is supposed to define an appropriate curriculum, but wiser Watchers learn to treat it purely as a set of guidelines.

From the Watchers' point of view, Slayer training is a matter of intensive one-to-one instruction, primarily concentrating on combat skills. Some Slayers, especially those identified early, also study the academic side of monster-hunting—knowing such stuff can be useful when something unexpected pops up, and Kendra was certainly something of an expert—but that's primarily the Watcher's job; a Slayer who has to consult someone else for information has a lot fewer problems than one who can't fight well enough.

While a Watcher may be handy with weapons, a Slayer will always be stronger, faster, and more naturally talented, even superhuman. Hence, that combat training is mostly based on drills and a large set of defined techniques and sequences, rather than sparring. This could produce a dangerously formulaic fighting style, but most Slayers soon find themselves getting quite enough real combat practice; if they survive their first few fights, the Watchers' training sessions become a matter of maintaining tone and focus, and building on what the “practical work” has taught. In any case, the Watchers have centuries of practical experience of this stuff, augmented by occasional study of martial arts from other sources; their training regimes may look unremarkable, but are probably among the most effective combat skills courses in the world.

(Incidentally, all this tends to make Slayers very *pragmatic* combatants; unused to facing equal opponents in anything but life-and-death situations, they make poor sports fighters.)



CRUCIAMENTUM

Travers: Cruciamantum is not easy . . . for Slayer or Watcher. But it's been done this way for a dozen centuries. Whenever a Slayer turns eighteen. It's a time-honoured rite of passage.

Giles: It's an archaic exercise in cruelty. To lock her in this . . . tomb . . . weakened, defenceless. (Looks at the crate.) And to unleash that on her.

(He stares at the crate for a long moment before turning back.)

Giles: If any one of the Council still had actual contact with a Slayer, they would see. But I'm the one in the thick of it.

Travers: Which is why you're not qualified to make this decision. You're too close.

—*Buffy 3.12 Helpless*

The Cruciamantum ritual is also discussed in *The Slayer's Handbook*. It too is part of the traditional Watcher training and preparation methods—but in this case, the preparation could kill the Slayer.

In brief, for those who've neither read the book nor seen the TV episode—on her 18th birthday, the Slayer's Watcher secretly drugged her in such a way as to temporarily suppress her Slayer abilities. She was then locked in a building along with a captured vampire, and left to fight and kill it, using only her natural cunning and training. The test was intended to ensure that the Slayer

genuinely had the personality and wits that the role demands. (It also tested her Watcher; one who had become too emotionally attached to his Slayer tended to show the fact at this time.)

The ruthless amorality of this tradition is a fair indication of just how far the Council saw each individual Slayer as ultimately disposable, far less important than their own continuing work, and the mere belief that it did more good than harm suggests that the Watchers had the Slayers under their thumbs for much of history. The most surprising thing about Cruciamantum is perhaps that it lasted long enough to become a "time-honoured" tradition; it could almost have been designed to turn any (surviving) Slayer and many Watchers renegade. Of course, some Slayers may never have learned exactly what they had just gone through; the weakness could be explained as temporary illness, the vampire encounter as something engineered by the deranged monster itself. For that matter, how tough the vampire involved actually was could have been controlled by the Watchers under the influence of Council politics; for some Slayers, Cruciamantum may have seemed almost a token test. Arguments within the Council over plans for the latest Slayer's Cruciamantum were doubtless sometimes intense.



WHO WATCHES
THE WATCHERS?





An Alternative

In a different world, a solo Slayer might receive the *full* support of the Watchers, either because the Council is more dynamic and flexible or because the Slayer is more compliant. That would make for a very different type of series—more organisational, less improvisational—than what we saw on *Buffy*; rather more of an intrigue game, with the Watchers investigating and analysing problems, and the Slayer acting as the lethal sharp point of the organisation. Think James Bond, except for the obvious difference in the lead.

This may even have been the actual situation at times in the Slayerverse's history—when there was a more flexible Council, or, more likely, a fully compliant Slayer. (A world where Kendra, a Watcher's dream Slayer, replaced Buffy might have looked like this.) The Council would see such periods as proving the need for obedience from the Slayer; after all, they were times of great victories over evil. Unfortunately, active Watchers would often take heavy casualties, until eventually the Slayer grew overconfident, or was sent against too powerful foes, and died herself (just as Kendra twice went into Sunnydale unsupported)—and the situation collapsed back to the normal state, with a cautious Council and a part-trained, semi-compliant Slayer.

In such a series, the Slayer could be an NPC, a formidable power mostly in the background and off on other continents, with the Cast as investigators and part of the second-line defence against lower-level threats. They would, of course, occasionally run into higher-level problems that they would have to deal with because the Slayer was busy. If things then go badly, they might sometimes be saved by the Slayer; this sort of all-powerful Guest Star usually aggravates players (and for that matter their characters) very badly, but a good Director might be able to keep things interesting nonetheless. The cast could even come to see the Slayer as a sort of Doomsday weapon/force of nature, driven by personal imperatives and mystic visions to behave in unpredictable, scary ways.

THE MULTIPLE SLAYER PROBLEM

Andrew: Six months ago, Buffy, Vampyr Slayer extraordinaire, had her lesbian witch make with the beaucoup de magie. One light show later...

Angel: All the Potentials become Slayers.

Wesley: An army of Slayers. Brilliant stratagem. But with the 'Watchers' Council destroyed, how will these new slayers receive their necessary...

Andrew: Mr. Giles and a few key Sunnydale alum have been tracking down the recently chosen... (Reaches down to grab his lunch-bag.) Uh, guiding them, training them... (Takes a bag of goldfish crackers out of the bag and starts to eat them.) Giving them the full X-Men, minus the crappy third act.

—Angel 5.11 *Damage*

After the destruction of Sunnydale, there are a *lot* of Slayers, making Watcher work horrendously complicated, even without the small problem that the Council and a lot of Watchers have been wiped out.

The consequences and implications of this are covered elsewhere in this book. In brief, what Watcher organisation there is at this time is overstretched and being forced to improvise; many of its members are likely to be recent recruits with minimal training. There's also likely to be a lot of debate between old and new

Watchers, traditionalists and radicals, over how best to handle things. There are no hard-and-fast rules now.

Amongst other things, some new Slayers are likely to be working together in groups—travelling in packs, some might say. Where these are cooperating with a Watcher or similar, they'll represent a formidable strike team for the forces of good, although their generally naivety and inexperience may make them worryingly easy to manipulate; where they lack direction, they could turn into the ultimate girl gang if someone isn't careful. Watching such a group, even with their cooperation, could be a really tough assignment.





BASES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Wesley: You can't turn your back on the Council.

Buffy: They're in England. I don't think they can tell which way my back is facing.

—Buffy 3.21 Graduation Day, Part 1

Among those who know of them, the Watchers have long been associated with their old HQ in Knightsbridge, London. This looked from the outside like a gentleman's club or a research institute; even a casual visitor would have noticed that it had a lot of offices, meeting-rooms, and peculiar libraries, although it did also have some comfortable reading and dining areas. It was something of a maze, albeit well lit and not unpleasant for those who belonged there. It had expensive if slightly out-of-date electronic security, and some slightly *ad hoc* magical protections. Since its destruction (officially ascribed to a gas accident, although some conspiracy theorists talk about terrorist bombs), the site has been carefully secured (all thanks to Home Office Department D—see below), while “insurance problems are resolved.”

The half-forgotten secondary London building in Clerkenwell was and is even more of a maze, with something of the air of a Dickensian warehouse. Many Watchers believe that it was magically *designed* to cause confusion in uninvited visitors. It's long been used to store items and books that the Watchers didn't think should be examined too much, but which they couldn't bring themselves to destroy; in some of the half-forgotten

cellar storage areas, the Gothic atmosphere verges on the nightmarish. However, since the rise and defeat of the First, most of the upper floors have been converted to offices and meeting-rooms and are now about as bright and bustling as ageing offices with peeling brown paint can get. Ironically, over the last few years, Clerkenwell has changed from a run-down inner-city neighbourhood to something downright fashionable; the Watchers now find it a less uncomfortable area in which to work, although they have to fend off periodic offers to buy this “old warehouse” for conversion to trendy apartments.

REGIONAL OFFICES

The Watchers also maintained “outstations” all over the world, some of which survived the First's attacks or have been reconstructed. Most of these are small offices in unremarkable buildings, usually in cheaper commercial districts of major cities. Most had small staffs and a modest occult library, and a very few other resources; some were slightly larger. Most gave a distinct sense of shabby ineffectuality, even to people who knew the truth about the Watchers; they were often under-funded, and the Watchers running them were frequently given to complaining that they were ignored and forgotten by the Council.

Nonetheless, “outstation” Watchers are sometimes surprisingly effective investigators and researchers, with some well-chosen contacts in local government and occult circles. They're notorious for hanging round in the shabby bars favoured by the safer end of the occult





underworld, drinking slightly too much, complaining about the way that HQ ignores both their requirements and their reports, and supposedly picking up gossip. Several were slaughtered by agents of the First in precisely such dives; several others survived when the Bringers showed up by virtue of knowing the back exits and secret escape routes. Tales are now circulating of Prospectives who found sanctuary with some half-forgotten regional office at that time, and who were either passed on to Sunnydale or hidden and protected in some back-street safe house until the defeat of the First, sometimes at terrible cost to their protectors.

COMMUNICATIONS

Buffy: Let me guess—Gwendolyn Post. Not a Watcher.

Giles: Yes, she was. She was, ah, kicked out by the Council a couple of years ago for misuses of dark power. They swear there was a memo.

—*Buffy 3.7 Revelations*

Before the late 19th century, the Watcher network used a combination of couriers, coded letters in the public post, “borrowed” diplomatic and espionage systems, and in very urgent situations, magic, to maintain communications across the world. The sheer complexity of the system of low-level, largely ignorant employees and agents that this involved (in addition to yet more employees maintaining files, accounts, etc.) explains a lot about the bureaucratic complexity of the Watcher organisation, and the sense in much of it that the Slayer was an inconvenient distraction, rather than the point of the whole business.

All of these communication methods survived as options, as did the bureaucracy, but the Watchers of the late Victorian era onwards came to depend increasingly on electronic communications. Many were (and are) notorious for their old-fashioned distrust of the Internet, but some took to it quite joyfully.

The Council didn’t generally build its own telecommunications systems or networks; that would have been far too expensive. Of course, there was some risk in using public systems, so the Watchers employed a system of code-words and ciphers. The latter were rarely good enough to defeat state-of-the-art code-breaking techniques, but were more than enough to deflect casual eavesdroppers; if absolutely necessary, the secrecy could be reinforced by magic. Watcher government connections could also sometimes enable them to borrow other protected systems, from an embassy’s diplomatic bag to a secret military satellite link.

Broad Watcher policy and generalised material went out as memorandums, mostly through the post. Unfortunately, this part of the system suffered badly from

bloat and a rather casual attitude. It isn’t actually true that most were filed (or binned) unread, but many field Watchers missed something important among the revised expenses procedures and requests to watch out for some manuscript of interest to someone at HQ.

(Which said, the renegade ex-Watcher Gwendolyn Post was remarkably confident that Giles would not have heard of her expulsion. She may have called in a favour from a friend in the communications office to suppress that particular memo—or perhaps embarrassment at a Watcher being expelled made the Council flag it as more secret than Giles was permitted to receive. After all, Post hadn’t done anything *seriously* evil at that point, and Giles was seen as rather unreliable.)

ORGANISATION DEFINITIONS

The following notes define various incarnations of the Watchers as a group in game terms.

THE OLD WATCHERS

The pre-Season Seven Watchers were a very diffuse organisation; not every loyal serving Watcher would need to treat the network as part of their character design. A solitary Watcher would have his own library, allies, and so on. However, anyone working at the HQ, as a member or servant of the Council, was very definitely part of a well-defined group.

The HQ—Magic Box Rules: The Watchers’ Council is quintessentially Goal-Based (albeit that the goal is either very long-term or essentially unobtainable, depending how one looks at it), with some resemblance to a Hierarchical Order (in practice if not in theory). The Council and HQ staff number a few dozen in total, although the Watchers are a much larger group overall. Membership is a 5-point Quality—Occult Library (Amazing) (5), Honourable (Minimal) (-1), group is very Rich (but careful with that money) and politically connected (2), must support the Watcher cause (-1), can obtain a broad range of teaching on a need-to-know basis (1), must obey leaders (-1). The Watcher library was in fact far beyond Amazing; members working in the field could have Amazing libraries, while their HQ had one of the two or three finest occult collections in the world (and controlled access with appropriate caution). Note that not all HQ staff were full Watchers, and all would have some level of Obligation, though often at the 0-point level.

Branch Offices—Magic Box Rules: A typical small Watcher “branch office,” before the First’s attacks or perhaps after some rebuilding, can be treated as a group in its own right—Goal-Based, but less Hierarchical than the HQ, given that it probably has no more than ten or a





dozen staff. Membership is a 2-point Quality—Occult Library (Impressive) (3), Honourable (Minimal) (-1), group is Rich (though access to serious funds is very hard for field staff) and has some political connections (1), must support the Watcher cause (-1), can obtain a fair range of teaching on a need-to-know basis (1), must obey leaders (-1).

Angel Corebook Rules:

Total Value: 23 points.

Clout: Financial Clout (Big bucks—the Watchers may have even more money, but they don't *spend* it) (4), Governmental Clout (Major contributor) (3), and Supernatural Clout (Occultists) (2). Total Cost: 9 points.

Quarters: Large (3), Worldwide Locations (6), Good Physical Security (2), and Supernatural Security (Warded) (3). Total Cost: 7 points (reduced by seven from Governmental and Financial Clout).

Gear: Computers (Basic) (1), Basic Laboratories (tucked away somewhere distant from the HQ, but with those funds, even the old-fashioned and tight-fisted Council could see the point of hiring a few basic lab staff) (1), Occult Archives (Amazing) (5), Special Training (2), a Gym/Shooting Range (3), and Weapons (Getting Medieval and Gun Bunnies) (2). Total Cost: 7 points (reduced by seven from Governmental and Financial Clout).

Note that this points total would permit a Cast of three or more to function as Watcher Agents.

THE REBUILDING WATCHERS

The following represent one possible post-Season Seven Watcher group, in the throws of rebuilding. We assume that the leaders of this part of the reorganisation have managed to scrape together a reasonable library, but nothing comparable to the old HQ collection; likewise, they're assumed to have gained access to some old emergency Watcher bank accounts, or acquired some sponsorship from someone clued-in enough to want to see the Watchers back in action—but again, nothing on the old scale. Their base is a single office in a major city, although they may have a few useful Contacts scattered around the world. The leaders don't enforce their authority as sternly as the old Council, but the task of rebuilding means that every member has a lot of work to do.

If these people can convince the right bankers and lawyers that they're entitled to inherit the old Watchers' resources, while building alliances with similar groups around the world, they could grow very fast. On the other hand, there will be a lot of beings out to stop them, and others simply in competition for the same resources.

Magic Box Rules: This group is Goal-Based, with perhaps about twenty members—probably increasing noticeably over time. Membership is a 1-point Quality—Occult Library (Good) (2), Honourable (Minimal) (-1), Obligation (Important) (-1), group is Well-Off and provides reasonable access to its resources for members who make a reasonable case (1), must support the Watcher cause (-1), actively seeks to improve its members' training (1). Quite a few members have a Major Obligation (lowering the cost to 0).

The group run by Giles may well be similar but have acquired most of his old library or something as good (Amazing level), raising its cost by 3.

Angel Corebook Rules:

Total Value: 9 points.

Clout: Financial (Holding its own) (2), Governmental (Connected—mostly through personal connections) (1), Supernatural (Arcane) (1). Total Cost: 4 points.

Quarters: Medium (1), Physical Security (Good) (2), Supernatural Security (Protected) (2). Total Cost: 4 points (reduced by one from Governmental and Financial Clout).

Gear: Computers (Basic) (1), Occult Archives (Good) (2), Weapons (Getting Medieval and Gun Bunnies) (2). Total Cost: 1 point (reduced by four from Governmental and Financial Clout).

A Cast of four or more can thus be In Control of such a group. Giles's group may well have Supernatural Clout (Occultists) (+1), Multiple Locations as Buffy's old group have taken to travelling the world (+1, reduced to 0 by Clout), Supernatural Security (Warded) thanks to Willow (+1), and Amazing-level Archives (+3). This raises the cost to 14; a Cast of four or more could be working for Giles and Buffy as Second Rank group members.





OTHER GROUPS

Lindsey: It's a secret society.

Gunn: Never heard of them.

Lindsey: That's 'cause they're secret.

Spike: There's plenty of these cabals about. They usually spend a lot of time in basements paddling one another's bums to prove their manhood.

—Angel 5.21 Power Play

The following are a selection of other U.K.-based organisations with which Watchers might interact. One, the Devon coven, is taken direct from *Buffy*, and hence is partially canonical; the others are plausible inventions.

THE DEVON COVEN

Giles: The Council haven't a clue. About much of anything, really. No, there's an . . . an extremely powerful coven in Devon. They sensed the rise of a dangerous magical force here in Sunnydale. A dark force, fuelled by grief.

—Buffy 6.22 Grave

This is the coven of witches in Devon, in the southwest of England, with which Giles became friendly after his falling-out with the Watchers, and which enabled him to face Dark Willow on nearly equal terms, then helped in her process of recovery and stabilisation. They were also essential in locating some of the Potential Slayers and protecting them against the First; they include members who can track such individuals across the entire planet. In other words, this is a powerful group.

They're associated with the "High Council of Witches" as discussed in *The Magic Box*, but whereas that group is international in scope and run as a formal hierarchy, this is a single coven with a single base of operations, small enough to be informal. In the past, they've informed the High Council of problems which the latter might be best placed to handle, but recent events have led the coven to act slightly more directly, through allies such as Giles. Before this, they saw themselves as teachers as much as anything, helping talented witches to control their powers and find a place in the world.

Devon is a largely rural county, and the coven, having evolved twenty or thirty years ago from several much older groups, decided to base itself there for the peaceful location where they could work undisturbed—and also because they knew of some places of power in need of watching, and because some of them had personal connections in the area. (These members had also inherited traditions and lore from ancient groups in the same area.) They acquired a fair-sized, run-down country house, restored it over a few years, and settled in.

The coven is a small body whose members rarely leave their home area, and yet they can aid the fight against evil anywhere on Earth (helped somewhat by modern electronic communications—they've recently arranged a high-speed Internet connection). Although they could empower Rupert Giles enough to challenge Dark Willow (see *The Magic Box*), their real strength lies in their psychic and magical scanning abilities, which could determine the location of an individual Potential from



across the planet. Having set themselves up as teachers and observers, they're happy to offer long-term hospitality to talented seers and scryers, providing accommodation and emotional support in exchange for knowledge.

The coven knew and was known by the old Watchers' Council, and was on broadly good terms with them, or at least with individual Watchers. However, although they shared many goals with the Council, they had some doubts about its tactics and efficiency. The Council in turn underestimated the coven, seeing it as a small clique of harmless rustics who could be asked to help track Potentials and to train the odd sorcerer whose powers didn't fit with Watcher philosophies.

organisation definitions: The Devon coven

Magic Box Rules: The coven is broadly Goal-Based (with the low-key goal of making the world a better place, one day at a time) while functioning as an informal Mutual Aid group. There are usually between a dozen and twenty witches in residence at the Devon house, and about as many associated members out and about in the world. Full membership is a 3-point Quality—Occult Library (Impressive) (3), Honourable (Minimal) (-1), must aid fellow members (-1), provides teaching (1), help with spells (1).

Angel Corebook Rules:

Total Value: 13 points.

Clout: Financial (Holding its own—the coven isn't rich, but it's made a few sensible ethical investments over the years, and money to run the big house comes in reliably) (2), Supernatural (Occultists) (2). Total Cost: 4 points.

Quarters: Large (3), Physical Security (Standard) (1), Supernatural Security (Warded) (3). Total Cost: 5 points (reduced by two from Financial Clout).

Gear: Basic Computers (1), Occult Archives (Impressive) (3), a Gym (sometimes it helps to have a healthy body for a healthy mind) (1), Weapons (they may be pacifists, but in the business of being supernaturally good, it's only sensible to keep a few swords around) (1). Total Cost: 4 points (reduced by two from Governmental and Financial Clout).

The coven doesn't actually employ agents as such, but if Cast Members got some kind of staff position, they'd probably be Second Rank, with a direct line to the nice ladies in charge.

THE HERMETIC ORDER OF THE GOLDEN DAWN

Giles: Aleister Crowley Sings? Um, sadly, no, I—I don't carry that, but I do have some very nice whale sounds.

—Buffy 5.8 Shadow

Reality check

The Golden Dawn really existed in our world's past; basically, the things described here as "public knowledge" are historical fact, and some of the other stuff corresponds to things that the historical Golden Dawn *claimed*. However, this modern-day version is entirely fictitious, and bears no relationship to any modern real-world organisation claiming spiritual descent from the original.

Ordinary histories say that the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded in 1888 by a group of British Freemasons and students of the mystical traditions of Rosicrucianism. It was supposedly an offshoot of an older German group (although the documents which support this story were apparently forged). It recruited members including the poet William Butler Yeats and the young Aleister Crowley, who later became infamous as a self-proclaimed black magician. It was primarily intended to be a kind of college of mystical studies, with some religious overtones; its studies focussed on the Western "Hermetic" tradition, with a lot of Ancient Egyptian details. However, some members sought to use their knowledge to produce actual magical effects. It eventually broke up due to internal squabbles, fragmenting in 1901, although some remnants survived for years—the main "temple" closed down in 1914, and Yeats was involved with the occult until 1923.

In fact, the Golden Dawn was secretly created by a group of magicians and supernatural beings as a way to extend their influence and gain access to the higher levels of British society. Unfortunately, too many of their chosen minions proved egocentric or merely hopelessly incompetent, and in 1903, they decided to withdraw to the shadows again—if only to get away from the deeply annoying and pretentious Crowley. However, they maintained contact with some of the more competent initiates, and the Order survives in secret to this day.

The Watchers know all of this, having often had dealings with the Golden Dawn. However, they regard it with extreme caution. Too many of its "Secret Chiefs" aren't human, and worse, are extremely secretive. The Watchers don't know what the Dawn's ultimate goals are,



and can't find out. For that matter, too many human Dawn initiates have turned out to be interested in magic for power and fun. On the other hand, most of them behave in a civilised fashion, most of the time, and sometimes work for good. Watchers have sometimes cautiously allied with Golden Dawn magicians to fight demons and monsters or when they needed spells cast, and a few on each side are actually friends.

The Order has "temples" scattered around Britain, and a few in the U.S.A. and continental Europe. (The latter mostly recruit from English-speaking expatriates.) Most Golden Dawn members are only part-time students of magic, and are often *terribly* respectable in their

mundane lives; anyone who thinks that Watchers are boring should meet a few small-town Dawn initiates. They include accountants, lawyers (honest provincial solicitors—they avoid Wolfram and Hart like rabid dogs), and even one or two senior policemen. This gives them useful levels of social influence. It also makes the Golden Dawn useful for stories about discovering that one's boring suburban neighbours have really *weird* secret lives.

Golden Dawn magic typically has an Egyptian flavour, and their spell rituals look like religious ceremonies, with numerous invocations of Thoth and Osiris. They also have a fondness for Tarot imagery. Dawn "temples" are occasionally infiltrated by vampires or demons, but their magical defences usually detect these. Their Secret Chiefs—human wizards or nonhuman spirits—remain a subtle mystery and possibly a threat. However, like most of the lesser members, they may just appreciate their privacy.

organisation definitions: The golden dawn

Magic Box Rules: The Dawn is primarily a Hierarchical Order, with some of the trappings of a Religious Group; paranoid Watchers suspect that it's really a well-disguised Demonic Cult. Individual "temples" sometimes temporarily become Personality Cults under the influence of charismatic leaders. There are a few hundred members worldwide. Membership is a 4-point Quality — Occult Library (Impressive) (3), must aid fellow members (-1), provides teaching (1), help with spells (1), must obey (very occasional) commands from the Secret Chiefs (-1), has some useful political/social connections (1).

Angel Corebook Rules:

Total Value: 12 points.

Clout: Financial (Holding its own—the Dawn isn't big on physical assets, but some rich members, and some legacies channelled into secret accounts, count for something) (2), Governmental (Influential) (2), Supernatural (Occultists) (2). Total Cost: 6 points.

Quarters: Medium (1), Multiple Locations (1), Excellent Physical Security (the membership know what a good modern office block has, and make sure that their temples have as much) (3), Supernatural Security (Warded—the Secret Chiefs don't like uninvited visits by rivals) (3). Total Cost: 6 points (reduced by two from Governmental and Financial Clout).

Gear: Occult Archives (Impressive) (3). Total Cost: 0 points (reduced by three from Governmental and Financial Clout).

Cast Members who are also members of the Golden Dawn can easily be Second Rank, though the way this organisation runs, a plausible Cast is likely to be a bit less important than that, at least to begin with.

THE RAVENS OF BRAN

Shopkeeper: Raven feathers tend to breed a little more discontent than canary.

—Buffy 3.8 Lovers Walk

The Ravens of Bran are a small, ancient, compulsively enigmatic group claiming spiritual descent from the ancient Celtic druids. This claim has a bit more credibility than the sort of people who stand around Stonehenge in midsummer in nightshirts. (Think of the difference between Willow and the non-powered Wicca she sometimes met, only even more so.) They're named after a scavenging bird which hangs around battlefields, and a warrior hero whose head is supposed buried under the Tower of London, which rather defines their tone. They have very little respect for any other magical faction; they say that magic is an art of blood and poetry, and that most other magicians are dabblers and weaklings who lack the courage to master it. Their own initiation rites are physically exhausting and painful, and progress through the group requires skill in improvised poetry as well as magic.

On paper, the Ravens have a lot in common with the tougher-minded sort of Wicca, but the two factions just don't get on. Apart from anything else, the Ravens are mostly male, with a somewhat patriarchal air; they sometimes give the impression of regarding women as slightly inferior. They sneer at the Watchers for holding back from battle and letting a "child" do their fighting for them, and are at best cold towards the Golden Dawn; they claim that Yeats was originally one of their initiates, and probably stole some of their secrets. However, they regard vampires and most demons with even greater contempt, frequently dealing with them in a savagely



efficient fashion. They *like* Slayers, calling them “Blessed of the Morrigan”; some Slayers who fought alongside Ravens—the sort who’d already become obsessed with the Slayer mission—liked them in return. But even the most humourless Slayer can find the Ravens dour, with a taste for mind-numbing epic poetry, and most people see them as frighteningly obsessive.

Their primary objective is simply to preserve their ancient Celtic magical religion; they don’t seek to spread it much, but they’re determined that it shouldn’t die out. They sometimes take magical action to protect sacred groves and pools; they have no interest in stone circles, which were nothing to do with the druids. They

sometimes work to protect their communities—usually small villages in Ireland, Scotland, or Wales—and those of them who bother with mundane society are active in protecting local traditions. They’ve occasionally defended all of Britain against magical threats, although they take time to move in such cases. Their attitude towards all sorts of “outsiders” is often downright hostile, and they mostly display a kind of rural conservatism; a few are active in local politics, and one or two are members of racist fringe parties.

Organisationally, the Ravens are a loose network, with no central HQ. They gather temporarily in sacred places on significant dates such as May 1st (“Beltain”), and hold

TATHLUM ENCHANTMENT

This is an ancient Celtic spell, still occasionally used by the Ravens of Bran. Copies can also be found in many Watcher libraries; messy and unpleasant though it is, it may occasionally have its uses. Mostly, it simply produces a powerful one-shot weapon, but, say, demons out of Celtic myth might turn out to be vulnerable only to this form of attack. On the other hand, most people who know what a tathlum is, consider it a little *extreme*, to say the least; Directors should discourage Cast Members from employing it casually, using the rules concerning dark magic in *The Magic Box* if necessary.

POWER LEVEL: 3

REQUIREMENTS: A tathlum is, in fact, a “stone” made from various ingredients, notably including the boiled-down brain of a slain enemy. The enemy must have been of at least low-human intelligence—dumb-muscle demon brains are fine, animal brains, even demon animal brains, aren’t. The brain must be largely complete—one brain can make one and only one tathlum—and must be made into a tathlum within a week of death. Other ingredients can vary with the exact recipe, but are always rare; the blood of specific creatures or sand from a distant location are typical. The mix always includes lime, for hardness. Making the tathlum is a magical procedure taking 6 hours.

EFFECT Once made, the “stone” must be used within a year and a day. It *doesn’t* have to be used by the caster; it’s a deadly weapon for anyone. It can be thrown by hand or hurled from a sling, and makes a powerful one-use missile in either case; the damage it causes (always Bash type) is proportional to the power of the foe who provided the brain, but it shatters after being used, whether or not it hits. If it’s thrown, use a Throw Weapon manoeuvre with a +3 bonus; it does base damage of 1 x Strength plus a bonus equal to one-third of the total Life Points of the creature which supplied the brain (rounded off to the nearest whole number). However, a tathlum is really intended to be hurled from a sling.

A sling is used with a Dexterity and Getting Medieval roll, though even many experts in archaic weapons haven’t used this particular item—Directors can require that they spend a day or so familiarising themselves with the technique or take a penalty. It always uses pistol ranges and needs a Turn to reload after each shot. Used to fire a normal stone, it does 3 x Strength Bash damage. (It’s not the deadliest of weapons, but it’s dirt cheap and easy to transport.) A tathlum fired from a sling gets a +6 bonus to hit and does base damage of 2 x Strength plus a bonus equal to half the total Life Points of the creature which supplied the brain (round halves down).

Example: Kieran O’Byrne, one of the Ravens of Bran, is hunting down a vicious “Fomor,” and has just killed its chief enforcer, a tough demon with 79 Life Points. He reckons that the boss will be even tougher, but he has a couple of days before he can catch it in its lair, and the right ingredients to hand (he believes in being prepared), so he turns the lieutenant’s brains into a tathlum. He’s Strength 4; if he hurls the thing by hand, it will do base damage 30 points, while if he uses a sling (and he’s good with a sling), the base damage will be 47. Some of the texts he’s consulted suggest that the Fomor can only be slain by a magical weapon, but Kieran now feels quite confident of success.





informal policy discussions after their ceremonies. Although they're scattered and often work alone or in small, temporary groups, they have a clear hierarchy; supreme authority lies with a small council of senior druids.

The Watchers have no proof that the Ravens, say, engage in the human sacrifice which may have been practiced by the original druids, but certainly prefer to keep them at arm's length. Still, they make useful allies and frightening opponents; some of their rituals whip up serious power, and they are always willing to do whatever they judge "necessary."

organisation definitions: The Ravens of Bran

Magic Box Rules: The Ravens of Bran are a Religious Group (and also quite Hierarchical), with a few dozen members. Membership is actually a 1-point Drawback—Occult Library (Good) (2), must aid fellow members (-1), shares knowledge (1), must obey the senior druids (-2), must perform somewhat distasteful or marginally criminal acts (e.g. animal sacrifices) (-1).

Angel Corebook Rules:

Total Value: 8 points.

Clout: Financial (Struggling—members are supposed to be self-funding) (1), Supernatural (Occultists) (2). Total Cost: 3 points.

Quarters: Small (a couple of small meeting/storage rooms) (0), Multiple Locations (1), Physical Security (Standard) (1), Supernatural Security (Warded—the Ravens are quite good at protective rituals) (3). Total Cost: 4 points (reduced by one from Financial Clout).

Gear: Occult Archives (Good) (2). Total Cost: 1 point (reduced by one from Financial Clout).

A group of three or more Cast Members could even be part of the leadership of the Ravens, if they're interested in cold nights of blood sacrifice and xenophobia.

HOME OFFICE DEPARTMENT D

Willow: Uh, this may be the dumb question, but shouldn't we call the police?

Giles: And they'd believe us, of course.

—Buffy 1.2 *The Harvest*

DEPARTMENT D INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 5th August, 2000

From: J.F.N., International Section.

To: W.H.R., Policy Advisory.

Subject: Just in from our American friends

Dear Bill,

Sandy over in Washington has finally managed to extract a full summary from the Pentagon regarding their little "Initiative" fiasco. It cost us copies of a stack of files from the Mesopotamian undertakings back in the '20s, but I think that you'll find the attached interesting reading.

I was tempted to say "amusing" there—we could certainly say that if they'd only asked, we would have warned them. But it cost them some good men, so it would be tactless for us to gloat. If there's a lesson for us in that lot, it's that we're right to keep the boffins away from setting policy.

Anyway, you might want to leak a cleaned-up copy of this over to our W friends. From what I've heard, their agent in place in that doolally Californian town went AWOL-and-native a while back, and he seems to have been mixed up in this little incident, so they're bound to be interested. Give Quentin my regards if you see him, and say that I haven't forgotten that '63 Islay malt I owe him.

All the Best,

Jimmy

It's only logical that the U.K. government should have known about the reality of the supernatural for a long time—quite likely a very long time, at least unofficially and intermittently. After all, the U.S. government has a grasp of the subject, and the British have been around longer. But, like a lot of people, Her Majesty's Government mostly prefers to avoid thinking about this. Department D is the branch charged with saving them from the necessity, tidying up problems, and preventing public disquiet.

It comes under the Home Office—the section of the government responsible for law and order—for budgetary purposes, and to help it talk to the police, but so far as most people with some limited need to know are





concerned, it exists mostly to handle especially exotic or bizarre problems which the Intelligence Services (MI5 and MI6) would find too ludicrous. Hence, it has close ties to the Ministry of Defence, and many insiders believe that it traces its origins back to the First World War, when British "Military Intelligence" acquired much of its modern structure.

Better-informed people believe that this is incorrect. Indeed, members of Department D itself occasionally claim that it goes a *lot* further back, far beyond the creation of the Home Office, which they say is just its latest convenient shelter. It certainly reports directly to the Joint Intelligence Committee (when someone feels obliged to report anything); the JIC in turn reports directly to the highest level of government. In other words, Department D doesn't have to worry about oversight from anyone much below the very top—if at all.

However, it's not very large, and it has something of a Watcher-style passive approach. It observes, records, and suggests responses to more active bodies. Its contacts in the police (especially in forensics departments) enable it to identify (and hush up) excessive vampire activity, to which it usually responds by directing freelance or semi-professional hunters. If they fail, it just finds some more.

Nonetheless, caution notwithstanding, Department D occasionally finds a need for direct action which can't be delegated. It's employed many different solutions to this problem over the years, including a number of quasi-freelance "adventurers," but it has since decided that these are too unreliable. Hence, it's arranged for a single troop within the Special Air Service Regiment (see p. [?]) to receive very special security clearance and training. Mostly, this troop continues to perform regular SAS duties—but any group of vampires or demons which gets out of hand may be in for an unpleasant shock involving a lot of well-aimed bullets and incendiary grenades. While generally subtle, this unit will use as much force as a situation demands.

organisation definitions: home office department d

Although theoretically part of the much larger, vastly powerful (if largely supernaturally ignorant) U.K. government apparatus, Department D is a law unto itself, with its own resources, special capabilities, and limitations. It doesn't generally deploy field agents, relying on its connections to more active agencies to handle combat and suchlike unpleasantness, but it's *flexible*.

Magic Box Rules: Department D is essentially Hierarchical, with perhaps twenty people on the inside who know most of its secrets, and ten times as many employees with varying levels of partial information. Membership is a 4-point Quality—Occult Library (Impressive) (3), members must obey routine commands and instructions from their supervisors (-1), group has substantial resources and political influence (2).

Angel Corebook Rules:

Total Value: 19 points.

Clout: Financial (Holding its own—certainly, the government has vast resources, but diverting Treasury funds to secret operations is tricky) (2), Governmental (Major contributor—technically this is an Agency, but it has limited direct authority) (3), Supernatural (Occultists) (2). Total Cost: 7 points.

Quarters: Large (3), Physical Security (Excellent) (3), and Supernatural Security (Protected) (2). Total Cost: 5 points (reduced by three from Governmental and Financial Clout).

Gear: Computers (Top-notch) (3), Laboratories (Top-notch) (3), Medical Facilities (Basic) (1), Occult Archives (Impressive) (3), Vehicle Fleet (2). Total Cost: 7 points (reduced by five from Governmental and Financial Clout).

Cast Members could easily be Agents of Department D, perhaps remnants of the older, less formal days; they'd spend much of their time complaining about being under-supported and under-resourced, as is traditional among U.K. government employees.





4 *Green and Pleasant*

Spike: Back to the mother country. Hey, after we save Fred, we should hit the West End, take in a show.

Angel: I've never seen Les Mis.

Spike: Trust me, half way through the first act, you'll be drinking humans again.

—Angel 5.15 A Hole in the World

There is a traditional association between the Watchers and the United Kingdom—

There is a traditional association between the Watchers and the United Kingdom—primarily because most of the Watchers we've seen on *Buffy* and *Angel* had English accents, but that ties up to the larger fact that the whole Watcher organisation has its headquarters there (prior to *Buffy* Season Seven, at least), and the scene would sometimes switch across the Atlantic for some Watcher-related incidents. Hence, the players and Director in any Watcher-heavy game may need to know something about the country, perhaps as a place from which Cast Members can come, perhaps as somewhere to set stories, whether a full series or just an episode or two.

This chapter is designed to help with that. It contains a description of the country, physically, socially, and as a setting. It doesn't pretend to be a complete guide, though—just a start. It contains enough secret “Slayerverse” facts that Directors should keep it for themselves, although Cast Members may well know *some* of what's presented here. Directors can decide what to mention—and when to engage in a little misinformation. Sorting out truth from illusion and lies is very much part of the Watchers' job, after all.

canon alert

References to Britain in *Buffy* and *Angel* are a little skimpy. Hence, this chapter is a mixture of plain facts, logical extrapolations from what references we do have, and completely invented material. Most of it is real-world history and geography; where we've added Slayerverse speculation, we try to make it clear that we're inventing.



Buffy

the Vampire Slayer



GREEN AND
PLEASANT





SOME BASIC GEOGRAPHY

The British Isles are a chain of islands just off the northwest coast of continental Europe. They encompass two completely separate, independent states: the United Kingdom (U.K.) and the Republic of Ireland (also known as Eire). This chapter is mostly about the former.

The largest island, known simply as Britain, includes the mainland parts of England, Scotland, and Wales (all parts of the U.K.). The second largest, Ireland, includes both Northern Ireland (part of the U.K.) and the Republic of Ireland. There are also a lot of smaller islands, especially off the north and west of Scotland, generally politically tied to the nearest bit of mainland. Britain is a fair way north, on a latitude with Moscow and Newfoundland, but benefits from warm ocean currents, so the climate is pleasantly temperate, if notoriously a little damp. The west is a bit damper than the east, and the south is milder than the north. Extremes of weather are unusual; hurricane-force winds are maybe a once-a-decade rarity on the Atlantic coast of Scotland, a once-in-a-century catastrophe in England. Likewise, *serious* tornadoes are effectively unknown. The idea that global warming might trigger more extreme conditions, perhaps by shutting down the Gulf Stream, makes Britons nervous. (Rising sea levels could flood quite a lot of lowland areas, too.)

Britain is about 600 miles “long,” from Land’s End in the southwest to John o’ Groat’s, at the northern tip of Scotland; some smaller islands run some way further north. The entire U.K. has an area of about 93,000 square miles—slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Oregon. With a population of 60 million, it’s quite densely populated, although there are areas of open country and even wilderness.

The greater part of it is made up of rolling chalk or limestone hills, with fair-sized plains in some parts and windswept moorland in others. Wales to the west and Scotland to the north rise up to granite mountains—nothing very serious compared to the Rockies or the Alps, but substantial enough. All this geology is very stable; any earthquake strong enough to be noticed will make the papers, and one that caused injuries would be front-page news.

The natural environment for all but the higher areas consists of temperate forest, but very little of Britain is in its natural state; much of it has been farmed for millennia, and now consists of open fields, while even the moors and mountains have been extensively grazed by sheep. Any dangerous native animals (wolves, wild boars, etc.) were wiped out centuries ago (although a few wild boars have escaped from farms), and any death or injury to a human that was blamed on a wild animal would make headlines. A werewolf attack, say, might be blamed

on a large dog gone feral, but even that might bring reporters and police marksmen. Rabies has been wiped out in the U.K., and there are quarantine laws to prevent it being brought back in; reports of a “rabid animal” would worry people. There’s one native poisonous snake, the fairly rare and not-very-deadly adder. Likewise, there are no really dangerous fish in the local seas, although one or two swimmers have been bitten by small sharks on occasion.

Geologically, Britain is part of Europe—it wasn’t even an island until sea levels rose around 6,000-5,000 B.C., in the wake of the last Ice Age—and the seas dividing it from France are little more than twenty miles wide at the narrowest point (the Straights of Dover). However, its island status has always given it a distinct identity, even when it has been part of larger political units, whether a province of the Roman Empire, a possession of continentally-based kings, or an independent member of the European Union.

Adventures Abroad

Modern-day RPGs often include side-trips to foreign parts. These can be a lot of fun, but there’s also some work involved in getting them right. It’s possible to just make stuff up, especially if neither the Director nor the players have ever been to the foreign country in question, but that loses some of the point of running such stories in the first place.

Fortunately, a little bit of research really isn’t terribly hard, especially given the Internet. Not only will a search turn up basic facts such as population, climate, and politics, but there are also pages in which people compare and contrast differences in cultures around the world, or just talk about their holidays. Unfortunately, these may be full of clichés and assumptions, but a little care in the reading can handle that.

Travel guidebooks make excellent quick references, including mentions of things which travellers should know, local problems and prices, descriptions of interesting sites, and useful maps. Unfortunately, some get basic facts wrong, and in any case, they mostly focus on tourist stuff, not on important concerns for demon-hunters. Still, something like a Michelin Guide can be invaluable.

Both the Internet and guidebooks can also provide photographs of local buildings and scenery. The CIA World Factbook (online at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>) is another useful resource—a little dry, but invaluable for factual basics.





Administratively, Britain is divided into a number of counties ("regions" in Scotland), although the most significant divisions are between England, Scotland, Wales, and the two parts of Ireland.

The currency of the U.K. is the pound, worth slightly less than two dollars at the time of writing, which is divided into one hundred pence.

LABELS

Americans sometimes get a little confused about the correct use of words such as "British" and "English." This in turn sometimes makes people from the places in question mildly irritated. Watchers will get this sort of thing *right*.

In brief: the British Isles encompass two completely separate states—the U.K. and the Republic of Ireland—the former of which is actually made up of several distinct nations. (There are also a handful of small islands with their own local government systems under the British crown, but we won't confuse things by worrying about them.)

Citizens of "the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" are British ("Britons" if you want to be a little stuffy, "Brits" if you prefer to be slangy); they include the English, Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Irish. Hence, for example, a Scotsman is British (and maybe proud of it) but *not* English. Some non-English Britons get quite irritated at being called "English"; others will merely roll their eyes, or just shrug.

The usual term for people from the Republic of Ireland is "Irish." (Strictly speaking, this can also apply to their neighbours to the north; to avoid confusion, call them "Northern Irish.") They *aren't* British (and certainly aren't English); while the two nations are generally on fairly good terms these days, Ireland did fight a war to gain independence from the U.K. less than a century ago, so getting that wrong is certainly likely to annoy people.

Going by their accents and known histories, Giles, Wesley, and Spike are all English. Angel was originally from Ireland; whether his family came from north or south of the modern border has never been established.

HISTORY

Holtz: 'What of England? Has it survived the years and destruction?

Sahjhan: Yes. It went through a rough patch about sixty years ago, but it's mostly unchanged.

—Angel 3.8 *Quickening*

Talking of the past . . . This section attempts to boil a very large topic down to essentials.

PREHISTORIC BRITAIN

According to archaeologists (whose knowledge may be a little unreliable in the Slayersverse), humans probably first arrived in what is now Britain hundreds of thousands of years ago, when they were first expanding across Europe. However, significant continuous settlement probably begins with the end of the last Ice Age, around 11,000 B.C., when Stone Age tribes moved in to take advantage of the newly-habitable lands. When the area became an island, they were somewhat cut off from the population on the continent, but they apparently had good enough boats to preserve some contact; Neolithic agriculture arrived from the mainland around 4,000 B.C.. These people buried their dead under mounds of stone or earth, some of which still dot the English countryside. Late in the 3rd millennium, they also developed a taste for "henges"—big circular earthworks, presumably for religious purposes. Stories involving very ancient mysteries being dug out of the soil of Britain are not at all hard to set up.

Then, around 2,000 B.C. or so, the Bronze Age arrived from Europe with a bunch of new arrivals known today as the "Beaker People," because of the rather nice pottery mugs that turn up when their sites are excavated. Britain became part of a trade network stretching across Europe (a Bronze Age Watcher series could perfectly plausibly involve a fair amount of foreign travel), and the rulers and priests started putting up some impressive places of worship—avenues and circles of standing stones, of which the most impressive of all was Stonehenge.

This, by the way, is both the archetype for impressive British ancient monuments, and unusual in important ways. The stones are far bigger than most, and many of them were worked and shaped far more neatly. In particular, the horizontal lintel-stones are more or less unique. Directors who want to work Stonehenge into an episode should also note that, today, it's not only a carefully supervised tourist attraction, but it's situated in sight of a major road.





CELTS AND ROMANS

The next big arrival from the continent was iron, around 700 B.C., which made for more efficient farms and also better weapons, including swords. The British were now in contact with the Celts, one of the great Iron Age peoples, who dominated much of northern Europe, although there doesn't seem to have been any massive conquest—at first, anyway. Still, Britain developed a Celtic-style culture, certainly as the Greeks and Romans saw it, and some Celts evidently did come across the Channel.

The Celts are remembered as tough, long-haired, tribal barbarians, but they were talented ironworkers and farmers. They had warrior kings and chiefs, but their priests, judges, and sages were the enigmatic druids. These loremasters had a lengthy training program, a taste for poetry, and a dislike of writing their beliefs down (in case their secrets escaped their control). They believed in reincarnation, exerted authority by excluding offenders from religious sacrifices, and analysed the destinies, curses, and blessings which they said governed human lives.

CELTS AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Neither *Buffy* nor *Angel* have said a huge amount about the Celts or the druids. For that matter, academic historians won't commit themselves to much about the latter; all we really have on the subject is what Caesar has to say about what the Gauls told him, some brief mentions in other Roman writers, and references in much later (Christian-era) Irish epics. The Roman sources are garbled at best, and sometimes blatant propaganda; so far as they were concerned, the druids were a bunch of wild-eyed maniac priests who stirred up resistance and rebellion among conquered Celts, and hence they were doubtless blood-crazed and fond of human sacrifice, making it fine for Romans to wipe them out. There is some archaeological evidence that this human sacrifice was for real, but nothing 100% clear.

It would seem certain that, as wizard-priests with a deep knowledge of secrets and a duty to Celtic society, the druids must have been aware of vampires and demons (calling them *Fomor*), and also of the Slayer line, which they no doubt considered part of the cycle of reincarnation. (Obviously, a Slayer couldn't be a reincarnation of her immediate predecessor, as their lives overlapped; perhaps there were said to be a limited number of mystically linked Slayer souls.) Unfortunately, the druids would certainly have had a poor relationship with the Rome-based Watchers; a Watcher might claim safe passage from a druid, on the basis that they shared enemies, but it would be given grudgingly. Mostly, the druids must have organised *ad hoc* war parties to deal with supernatural menaces.

On *Buffy*, we've seen the Glove of Myhnegon, a powerful, dark-seeming magical artefact whose name and operating spell strongly imply a Celtic origin. (See *The Magic Box* for details.) There've also been brief references to unexplained "druidic rituals" having been performed in woods near Sunnydale in the past. Meanwhile, modern pagans have something of a taste for Celtic stuff, usually depicting it in a positive light. They usually claim the druids as "nature priests," which fits their apparent taste for open air ceremonies, although the historical druids seem to have been much more concerned with the running of human society than with worrying about nature. The idea that the druids had anything to do with the much older Stonehenge, or other standing stones, is unlikely, although no one knows how much Bronze Age religion may have survived down to Roman times.

Extrapolating from this, we get a grim but honourable magical tradition which survived in secret down to recent times and quite possibly the modern day, spreading around the world with Celtic migrants. The Ravens of Bran (p. [?]) represent a manifestation of Celtic magic in a form suitable for *Buffy* or *Angel* stories. They reference the darker side of the stories, and also the fact that some more nationalistic, less broad-minded modern-day people mythologise the Celtic past, too.

CONQUEST

Eventually, the Romans decided to include Britain in their Empire. Julius Caesar had made a couple of raids while he was conquering Gaul, but hadn't tried actual conquest; in 43 A.D., the Emperor Claudius launched a full-scale invasion. The legions did their usual efficient job, while local kings and chiefs were judiciously bribed with positions in the Roman power structure. The druids attempted to organise resistance, but were crushed, their sacred places destroyed. (Hence, anything that was left of the druid tradition had to go underground.) However, Rome never quite conquered all of Britain; the Scottish highlands didn't look worth the trouble, and a border was established across the north, marked by the spectacular Hadrian's Wall from coast to coast. Ireland was never invaded.

The Romans established Britain's first cities, including Londinium (modern London) and Eboracum (modern York—which served as the capital of the empire, briefly, during one civil war). They ruled for centuries, but then, of course, they Declined and Fell.





DARK AND MIDDLE

Spike: And you did it. Fulfilled your mission, found the Holy Grail. . . or the Holy Hand Grenade or whatever the hell that is.

—*Buffy 7.21 'End of Days'*

By the time that they found they had to fend for themselves, the “British” had a Celtic-Roman hybrid culture. They faced Pictish and Irish raiders from unconquered parts of the islands, and Anglo-Saxon invaders from across the North Sea. The old Roman province fell to pieces, with chiefs and war-lords taking over whatever areas they could govern and defend effectively. There is some evidence that one of these leaders, doubtless commanding a combination of peasant militias and remnants of the old Roman provincial forces, was the figure later known as King Arthur.

ONCE AND FUTURE?

Realistically, Arthur is a phantom. Some kind of post-Roman war-leader named something like “Arturus” may have existed, but there’s darn little hard evidence. Most of what people “know” is late medieval fantasy, and it’s quite possible that’s *all* there is. For game purposes, anything about this stuff really requires decisions at Director level.

The problem is, Camelot is a great place to go in a game, but the myth is very, very far from anything that could count as vaguely plausible. Knights in shining plate armour, tall castles, and refined chivalry are out; at best, Arturus could lead a band of dedicated warriors in chainmail on tough ponies, with long spears and a basic sense of Roman-Celtic hybrid honour, based in reclaimed Celtic hill-forts with earth ramparts and wooden palisades. This idea has some respectable academic support, though even those historians who believe that Arthur was more than a myth often disagree about where and when he may have lived; there are cases to be made for putting “Camelot” almost anywhere in Britain, and even in, say, northern France, though the West Country has a fairly good claim. Any Celtic-pagan stuff is even more of a fabrication; there probably were remnants of the old Celtic beliefs still around at this time, insofar as the Romans hadn’t crushed or absorbed them, but not much, while Christianity was catching on, and the medieval stories make Arthur solidly Christian, in keeping with the ethos of their own time.

Still, Arthur and Merlin haven’t received many mentions on *Buffy* or *Angel*, so we’re all free to make stuff up. What follows takes that idea and runs with it, Slayerverse style . . .

There was indeed a 5th century war-leader, the greatest of them all, named Arturus and based in the West Country. Likewise, the old British fortress which he rebuilt as his capital was named Camelot. Arturus mustered a personal force of loyal troops, fighting in the Roman style as heavy cavalry, with chainmail and spears. He also gained a powerful ally, a wizard named Merlinius (who was indeed, as later tales hinted, half demon by birth), who helped him to counter Saxon shamans and the vampires and demons who were trying to reduce Britain to a war-torn wasteland which would provide them with happy hunting.

Arthur was exceptionally tolerant for his time, or at least pragmatic; his kingdom, which at its peak covered much of southern Britain, permitted both Christianity and Celtic paganism to flourish. (Merlinius was a student of druidic magic.) It lasted for a lifetime, but ultimately fell apart, largely due to a combination of magical and demonic plotting, internal conflict, and personal jealousies at Camelot. (Actually, the problems had a lot in common with some of the running plots in *Angel*, what with the twisted passions, sexual jealousies, and father-son conflicts . . .) After Arthur died, the Germanic raiders rolled in and took over. (All this is just one approach to the idea; Directors who want to play Arthur a little differently can find a range of alternatives in any number of fantasy novels in any bookstore.) An Arthurian series might feature grim warriors fighting to save their whole country and culture in the face of overwhelming odds, morally ambiguous demon-wizards, and homesick Watchers come all the way from Constantinople to aid against the vampire warlords of the German forests.

SAXONS AND NORMANS

With the last of the Celtic cultures driven back into the highlands of Wales and Scotland and across the sea to Ireland, the new rulers divided most of the land up into a lot of petty kingdoms which spent the next few centuries fighting amongst themselves. Eventually, the strongest of them managed to conquer the rest, and the Land of the Saxons and Angles became Saxon England, strong enough to fight off a wave of Viking invasions and raids up to the turn of the millennium. (Well, the Vikings ruled a lot of the north of the country for quite some time, actually, but they were driven out in the end.)

The next lot of invaders were more effective, though. The one historical date which *everyone* in England is supposed to remember is 1066. In that year, the Normans, a bunch of Viking descendants who’d settled in northern France, rolled in and took over. This marks the traditional start of the history of medieval England, which subsequently managed to conquer Wales; Scotland and Ireland remained independent, although a number of





Norman lords managed to get a toehold in each, and there was a whole string of Anglo-Scottish border wars.

The Middle Ages were, well, medieval, although Britain wasn't a lot worse off than most other parts of Europe, and even did quite well through trade, as well as launching a few invasions of France. (The kings involved claimed that these were mostly about reclaiming old Norman possessions; eventually, though, the Anglo-Norman kingdom was reduced to just the Anglo- parts.) Being a feudal kingdom, England was prone to dynastic civil wars, and one of the biggest of these, the drawn-out "Wars of the Roses" (familiar to anyone who's seen enough Shakespeare), eventually ended with the Tudor dynasty in charge.

TUDORS AND STUARTS

By now, we're up to the end of the 15th century, and the Renaissance was well underway in Europe. It was perhaps a little slower to reach these damp northern islands, but Britain had become a pretty successful trading nation, and new ideas in philosophy, art, and warfare, made their way across the Channel. This is also the period when the Watchers moved their main HQ from war-torn Italy to England.

One Tudor king, Henry VIII, had some problems producing a male heir, but couldn't persuade the pope to annul his marriage. His solution was to declare the Church of England independent from papal power, aligning it with the radical new Protestant movement and setting the scene for centuries of conflict. One of his daughters, Queen Mary, tried to reverse the change, but ultimately failed, and another, the near-legendary Queen Elizabeth I, confirmed her father's decision.

Elizabeth's reign is often seen as a Golden Age for England. Finding themselves at war with the Catholic superpower of Spain, the English launched privateering raids around the entire globe under the likes of Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh, and ultimately defeated the Spanish Armada, a full-scale (if inept) invasion plan. Meanwhile, a handful of writers invented a whole theatrical tradition almost from scratch, and the greatest of them, William Shakespeare, managed to both flatter the Queen and please the mob, making a comfortable fortune and an eternal reputation. This was an age when one of the Queen's advisors, John Dee, could also be one of Europe's leading scholars of magic, astronomy, and mathematics, and the inventor of the term "the British Empire."

It was also an age of dark plots and secret violence, as hospitable for vampires as for Watchers, especially as political plots boiled around the unmarried and childless Elizabeth. When she died, the best-supported claimant to her throne was in fact James Stuart, a descendent of

Henry VIII who was already king of Scotland. Thus, the two countries came under a single ruler, and as the English had been carving themselves out holdings in Ireland, the United Kingdom took something like its ultimate form.

James wasn't universally popular—Catholic radicals were responsible for, among other things, the infamous Gunpowder Plot, attempting to blow up both the king and Parliament—and his heir, Charles I, proved a political bungler; the country lurched into a Civil War. Charles lost and was executed, and for some years, the country was ruled by a Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell. However, Cromwell failed to create a functioning new system, and Charles I's son, Charles II, was invited to return.

The late 17th century produced more famous Britons, including scientists such as Sir Isaac Newton. When London suffered the catastrophic Great Fire, it was rebuilt in even grander form, with the great dome of St. Paul's cathedral at its heart. When the last Stuart king was expelled by Parliament for trying to restore Catholicism, Britain took something like its modern political shape.

EMPIRE AND INDUSTRY

In the 18th century, the country carved out the basis of its Empire, taking control of most of India amongst other things. (This, incidentally, was also the period which produced Angelus and Daniel Holtz. Life had its harsh and bloody corners.) By the end of the century, the colonies in North America, which dated back to James I's time, had achieved independence, but this didn't hurt Britain as badly as its enemies had hoped. When Napoleon attempted to carve out a European empire, Britain was a key member of the alliance which stopped him, as the 19th century got underway.

By now, Britain was also taking a lead in an even more important development. With mercantile wealth from the Empire, substantial iron and coal deposits, and a tradition of practical inventiveness, Britain took the lead in the Industrial Revolution. This brought vast wealth for some, and also great misery for the inhabitants of the new industrial slums (providing two very different environments which both appealed to vampires—luxurious mansions and darkened urban hunting-grounds). The latter two-thirds of the new century, the reign of Queen Victoria, saw Britain consolidating the largest empire in history, establishing itself as the dominant superpower of the age.

This is the era which sets the tone of the (supposed) "British style" which shows up in so many Watchers—the period when the British ruling classes developed





overwhelming self-confidence, the public school system, and the stiff upper lip. But it was also an age of secret fears and the collapse of old certainties. New sciences suggested that the world was far older than established religion had said (something which wasn't news to some demons, although they'd mock many of the scientific claims), while new philosophies questioned all the old moral assumptions. Intelligent, educated Britons had studied their classical history, and suspected that even their Empire might decline one day. By the end of the century, writers and artists were taking an interest in decadence and cynicism.

Which meant, among other things, that vampires could adopt a new self-image, although some of them had been ahead of the field in this. While they'd long been known to peasants and informed scholars as monsters which lurked in the night, they could now enjoy themselves in the guise of sophisticated, aristocratic villains. The popularity of gothic fiction meant that their own kind were less likely to accuse them of vapid posturing, and the less original among them could plunder those novels for ideas. Late in the century, the powerful eastern European vampire Dracula operated in Britain for a while, and enough of the story of that incident became general knowledge that it formed the basis for Bram Stoker's popular novel—to the annoyance of many other vampires, in fact, as this made effective vampire-slaying methods better known to the public than they had been for decades.

WORLD WARS AND ONWARDS

History from the end of Victoria's reign to the present day hasn't gone entirely Britain's way. Although the country was on the winning side in two World Wars, both were terribly costly. By the middle of the 20th century, the Empire was winding up; the ideology of the time was no longer in favour of colonialism, and the costs often looked to outweigh the benefits. Meanwhile, it seemed that some of the old habits and institutions were showing their age very badly; British industry and government alike sometimes seemed badly out of date.

Still, Britain remained a serious world power, an important member of NATO, able to fight and win a war as far away as the Falklands, with numerous world-class scientists and academics, and still a centre of global trade and banking. For some years, it focussed on its relationships with the Commonwealth (countries which had formerly been part of the Empire), but in the last decades of the century it became a member of what is now known as the European Union, linking it closer to the trade and politics of mainland Europe. There's still enough in the way of wealth, scholarship, and communications links to make the country a suitable base for the Watchers' Council.

getting there and around

If Cast Members based elsewhere in the world need to visit Britain, they shouldn't usually find it too difficult. London has several airports—visitors from America are most likely to fly into Heathrow or Gatwick, both to the south of the city—and some airlines also run international services to other major cities. For those who prefer surface transport, there are countless ports along the coast. In addition, there's a rail tunnel under the English Channel, and high-speed trains link London to Paris and Brussels. Visitors need passports but not visas; however, given current popular concerns about illegal immigrants and dubious asylum-seekers, anyone arriving without a return ticket or obvious means of support while in Britain is likely to face a lot of hard questions from immigration officials. Trying to smuggle weapons into the country could lead to *serious* trouble.

The country also has the usual panoply of internal transport services. Distances are short enough that Britons do *not* automatically think of taking a plane when they travel between cities, but cheap flights are available over some routes. Not all adult Britons drive—it's possible to get by without—but most do. Cars tend to be smaller than American models, partly because fuel prices are much higher than in the U.S.A., but also because distances are shorter and roads are often narrow and winding. Still, there are fairly good, straight motorways (the U.K. equivalent of an American "interstate" or "freeway") linking major population centres.

There's also a fairly extensive railway network, widely considered to be under-funded and imperfect, not as good as most in Western Europe, but far more intact than the U.S. system. Coach and bus services are commonplace (British "double-deckers" are famous), one or two large cities have modern tram services, and several have underground or light rail services; the London Underground, the world's first underground rail system, is a huge network reaching far into the suburbs.





LOCATIONS

Darla: His name would already be legend in his home village—had he left anyone alive there to tell the tale.

Master: Ah, you had a nice trip. I'm so glad.

Darla: On the way back we cut a bloody swath through South Wales and northern England. He was magnificent.

Angelus: Hmm, Yorkshire men—tough as leather.

—Angel 2.7 Darla

Britain has numerous towns and cities (some very old, some genuinely new), along with geography that encompasses lakes, mountains, plains, and forests—some of them with weird histories or legends attached. This section tries to give an impression of the whole, while paying attention to locations that are important from a Watcher, paranormal, or story point of view. This sort of “important” generally means “weird,” of course, but some stories are all the better for finding weirdness in locations that seem prosaic at first glance.

LONDON

Giles: I was twenty-one, studying history at Oxford. And, of course, the occult by night. I hated it. The tedious grind of study, the . . . overwhelming pressure of my destiny. I dropped out, I went to London . . . I fell in with the worst crowd that would have me.

—Buffy 2.8 *The Dark Age*

The capital of the U.K. is one of the world's great cities, with everything which that implies, for good and ill—including a population of over 7 million, making it the largest city in Europe. A couple of centuries ago, Samuel Johnson said that “when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford”—which is just as true today, though anyone who loves open countryside and fresh air might argue. As Rupert Giles discovered, a little searching will turn up plenty of darkness and weirdness in run-down neighbourhoods and upper-floor flats, and plenty of vitality and excitement, too.

London basically goes back to Roman times, although there was doubtless some kind of Celtic settlement in the area before that. Its location is the lowest convenient crossing-point on the River Thames before it flows into the sea, and the Romans built the first bridge across what was then a broad and marshy river. Although their new city was destroyed by Queen Boudica's famous revolt, it was soon rebuilt.

Roman “Londinium” was a fairly compact town, and it may even have shrunk in Saxon times, when it was devastated by Viking raids, but it grew again through the Middle Ages and onwards, eventually absorbing the royal palaces in Westminster further upstream (now the location of the Houses of Parliament, the seat of government) and expanding from its original location on the north bank of the river to include the suburb of Southwark on the south. In the 19th century, it positively exploded, absorbing countless outlying villages and towns.





It's located quite far into the southeast corner of the country, and other parts of Britain sometimes complain that the capital is remote from their concerns. However, this region is generally fertile and densely populated, and London's position makes it not only a crossroads for land travel, but a major seaport. Fair-sized vessels can sail up the Thames to the docks in the east of the city, although as modern cargo ships have grown ever larger, most activity has moved down to the mouth of the river.

London has generally tended to grow outwards rather than upwards; even today, buildings in much of the city are just a few stories high. However, it has its share of tower blocks, and with rents rising ever higher, the city is now the location of some towering exercises in modern architecture. Some of these are located in the redeveloped Docklands area downstream of the old heart of the city, but many are found in the "City of London"—the "Square Mile" which corresponds to the old Roman and Medieval city, now one of the world's great financial centres.

For Watchers and occult researchers, though, other of the city's features may be more interesting. These include:

The Tower of London: The old royal fortress and prison on the eastern edge of the Square Mile (adjacent to Tower Bridge, another famous landmark), once the key to the city's defences, now a tourist hotspot with the British crown jewels on display in a heavily-protected basement, and allegedly haunted by various past prisoners.

The British Museum: One of the world's greatest collections of antiquities, thanks to 250 years of accumulation. Housed in a classical-style building in Bloomsbury, on the northern side of central London, the Museum attracts millions of visitors every year, and houses mummies and sarcophagi from Egypt, marble sculptures from Greece, and archaeological discoveries from every continent.

(However, great paintings are in the National Gallery on Trafalgar Square, while the British Library, the nation's primary official store of knowledge, has moved from its old base in the museum to a new building further north. There are also countless other museums, galleries, and collections around London; the Science and Natural History Museums and the Victoria and Albert Museum, which specialises in art and design, are located in South Kensington, west of the centre. Needless to say, the Watchers will have contacts and even agents scattered throughout these institutions.)

London University: This is actually a federation of over 50 colleges and institutes of widely varying sizes scattered around the city, from the centre to the

outskirts, with connections and associations all around the world. Several of the component institutions, including the library and the main administration centre, are in Bloomsbury, near to both the British Museum and the British Library. Academics such as the typical Watcher will often have contacts here.

THE SOUTHEAST AND EAST ANGLIA

The region around London is one of the most heavily populated and prosperous parts of Britain; almost a third of the population live in London or the southeast. Traditionally an agricultural area, it now has numerous small towns and suburbs; the expansion of London has been stopped by legal planning controls, but a growing population is leading to pressure for new developments. Seaports along the coast handle traffic between Britain and mainland Europe.

To the north, the rolling chalk hills give way to the plains of East Anglia. Much of this area was once marshy fenland, but has been drained over the years. The town of Cambridge is located here; its university is as respected and almost as old as that of Oxford, and has produced plenty of Watcher scholars.

This region has its share of archaeology and occasional weirdness. The coastline of East Anglia has long been subject to severe erosion, and whole towns have been lost to the sea. The greatest of these was Dunwich (the *original* Dunwich, not to be confused with fictional American locations in certain horror stories), once capital of the ancient kingdom of East Anglia. Not very far from there is Sutton Hoo, where a mound was excavated in 1939 to reveal a great Anglo-Saxon royal ship burial; most of the site's treasures are now in the British Museum.

THE HEART OF ENGLAND

Spike: This goes all the way through to the other side. So, I figure, there's a bloke somewhere around New Zealand standing on a bridge like this one, looking back down at us. All the way down. There's a hole in the world. Feels like we ought to have known.

—Angel 5.15 *A Hole in the World*

West of London, down as far as the south coast, lies some of the most lush countryside in England—albeit that there are also some industrial centres. For example, the ancient university town of Oxford, an epicentre of Watcher history, is also a centre of the British motor industry. Two chains of hills, the Chilterns to the east and the Cotswolds to the west, mark the northern edge of the region; south of these is Salisbury Plain, with its scattering of ancient monuments around the great wonder of Stonehenge. (The comparably impressive





Avebury is located off the northern edge of the plain.) The major seaport on the coast is Portsmouth, which has a major Royal Navy base.

The Cotswolds countryside is noted for featuring a lot of villages so pretty it's almost painful. The Watchers' Council used one of them for their periodic retreats, and the region is also known to experts on the supernatural as the location of the Deeper Well—the prison/sepulchre which holds the physical forms of countless ancient, extremely powerful demons.

THE WEST COUNTRY

This term usually means the south-western part of England, from the estuary of the River Severn (south of Wales) and the counties of Somerset and Dorset, through Devon, down to the tip of Cornwall. This is mostly rural and relatively sparsely populated country, with scenery ranging from hills and patches of forest to moorland and wild, rocky seacoast. There are a few fair-sized towns, however, including Bath, which has been a spa since Roman times and which is noted today for its elegant Georgian architecture. Rupert Giles keeps a flat there, within easy reach of Salisbury Plain, the Cotswolds, the Devon base of the coven with which he is allied, and the mystic centre of Glastonbury.

GLASTONBURY

This country town in Somerset is the site of a very old, now-ruined abbey; there may have been a religious foundation here as early as the 5th century, and legend claims that it was founded by Joseph of Arimathea, a follower of Christ. (There used to be a thorn bush in Glastonbury which was supposed to have sprung from Joseph's staff, miraculously showing him where to found a church. This was cut down during the English Civil War, although there is still a bush which is supposed to have been grown from a cutting from the original.) Arthurian legend, which says that Joseph of Arimathea brought the Holy Grail to England, sometimes identifies Glastonbury with the Isle of Avalon, where Arthur's body was taken after his death.

The town is dominated by Glastonbury Tor, a hill which would once have been an island in the middle of marshes before those were drained. The hill is ringed with ridges and ditches, sometimes said to be a Neolithic magical maze. (Other theories suggest that they are fortifications, or—mostly likely—part of a medieval farming system.) It's also said that various natural and man-made landscape features form the image of a huge zodiac encircling the Tor. (Cynics think that these "pictures" are an unconvincing collection of random shapes.) As a result of all this, Glastonbury is a focus of attention for weird theories, neo-pagans, mystics, and casual tourists.





THE BEAST OF EXMOOR (AND FRIENDS)

A recurrent series of stories in Britain in recent decades has concerned large cats possibly living wild in rural areas all around the country, especially (but not solely) in the south-west. This sounds rather implausible (there really isn't much room for a large animal to hide in most of the areas involved), but there are a few blurred but interesting photographs of cat-shaped things that seem to be bigger than most housecats—accounts range from lynx-sized up to puma-sized. There've also been attacks on sheep and other domesticated animals, although these may be blamed on foxes or stray dogs. A relatively rational theory is that creatures kept as "pets" by eccentric owners (in breach of various animal protection laws) may have escaped and perhaps even bred; another suggestion is that these are dimension-hopping visitors, explaining their uncanny ability to evade hunters.

Probably the best known of these cats (alongside the "Surrey Puma" and the "Beast of Bodmin") is the "Beast of Exmoor." Exmoor is a region of wooded hill country in Devon and Somerset, with national park status. Its local uncanny big cat is said to be responsible for the deaths of hundreds of farm animals; at one stage, a unit of Royal Marines was assigned to help hunt for it, and they are supposed to have cornered it in a barn at one point—only to find the building empty when they went in.

In the Slayerverse, of course, the Beasts may well be extra-dimensional or demonic creatures, or perhaps shapeshifters. Given that even a perfectly ordinary puma can be seriously dangerous in a fight, Cast Members seeking to deal with them could have quite a problem on their hands.

WALES

Wales is a land of mountains and valleys. It's not especially fertile, but it is defensible; the older peoples of Britain withdrew there in the face of invaders from the east. When coal was discovered in southern parts of the region, a substantial mining industry developed, now much declined, and Cardiff, the capital, on the south coast, is a significant seaport. However, most of Wales remains rural. The biggest tourist attractions are a chain of medieval castles, mostly along the coast, built by English conquerors to hold the country down.

Wales has its own language, of Celtic origins, but today, only about a quarter of Welsh people speak it, mostly in rural areas; there may even be a few thousand left who speak little or no English. It was actively suppressed in schools at one point, although there has

been a significant cultural revival in recent years. While there's no serious movement for full independence, the Welsh National Assembly has some local political power, a Welsh Nationalist party is active in elections, and there is a fair amount of Welsh national pride, with some resentment of, for instance, English holidaymakers moving in and buying up rural housing.

Celtic-flavoured Welsh pride also drives the tradition of "eisteddfods"—festivals of music and poetry. However, although these feature references to the bardic tradition, which would link them to druidism, there's not much paganism involved; if Wales has a real national religion, it's either Methodism or rugby.

THE ENGLISH MIDLANDS

North of the rural "heart" of England lies the Midlands. While there are rural, even wild parts here, this is a region which has been industrialised since the early days of the Industrial Revolution, and parts show the scars. Birmingham, England's second city with a population of around a million, was a centre of iron-working even in medieval times, and today is the sort of city which produces heavy metal music. It also has art galleries, theatres, universities, and a world-class symphony orchestra, but episodes set here are still likely to tend towards the "urban gothic," with leather-clad vampires prowling the grimy streets, or the ghosts of past slum-dwellers seeking vengeance for oppression.

Other industrial towns include Coventry (which was badly bombed in WWII, and extensively rebuilt afterwards), Leicester, and Nottingham (much changed since the days of Robin Hood, if he was ever more than a legend). Tourists might come to the area to visit the smaller Stratford-upon-Avon, thanks to its status as the birthplace of William Shakespeare. Supernatural creatures who date back to the area's early times might find the changes confusing, and need to be dissuaded from reacting badly.

THE NORTH OF ENGLAND

Further north again, the scenery changes to something often starker, although it also includes the Lake District, picturesque enough to inspire classic poetry. Northern England is divided by the Pennines, the best England can do for a mountain chain, which separate Lancashire and Cumbria on the west from Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland on the east.

Lancashire has the great manufacturing city of Manchester and the port of Liverpool, while Yorkshire has the likewise-industrial Leeds and Sheffield; further north, Newcastle, in Northumberland, is another product of the Industrial Revolution—but there is also a great deal of open moorland, and small fishing villages along the





coasts. This is, after all, scenery which produced the Bronte sisters. The most historic city in the area is probably York, which dates back to Roman times, was once ruled by the Vikings, and retains numerous medieval buildings, including the great Minster church. Whitby, a fishing town in North Yorkshire, has a very important place in vampire lore, as it was (according to Bram Stoker's novel) the scene of Count Dracula's first arrival in England, while Watchers might gravitate more to Durham, with its major university (as well as its medieval castle and cathedral).

THE SCOTS BORDERS AND LOWLANDS

While Scotland is generally and with good reason thought of as a mountainous country, the southern part is more a region of moors and hills. The Border Country was real bandit territory for much of history, until the two countries were united and law enforcement no longer had to stop at the frontier; it also has its full share of supernatural tales. Abandoned "peel-towers" (heavily fortified houses) and fortresses in this area are said to be haunted by "redcaps"—vicious goblins or ogres who like to dye their hats with the blood of their human victims. (In the Slayerverse, these are doubtless demons.)

Scotland's two greatest cities are situated opposite each other, on river estuaries in the lowlands. To the east, Edinburgh, the capital, is built around an old castle, sited atop a highly defensible hill of volcanic rock; the city also has the old royal palace of Holyrood House, the elegant Georgian "New Town," and a modern building for the Scots Assembly (required since political changes of a few years ago); it sprawls down to the sea-front docks of Leith. With its long rich history, full of sieges, royal murders, and body-snatchers, Edinburgh is a natural setting for supernatural weirdness. Nearby Rosslyn Castle has associations with the Knights Templar, and perhaps with the Holy Grail.

By contrast, the larger Glasgow, on the west coast, is a modern industrial city, grown up around its dockyards. However, in the Middle Ages, it was a centre of Christianity and learning; it still has a medieval cathedral, and a university which dates back to 1451, with an attached museum with a fine collection of antiquities. The Watchers naturally have an established outpost here, periodically locked in conflict with vampires who seek to hunt on the great city's streets.

THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

From the Borders, Scotland rises into a land of windswept granite mountains, with valleys that are often filled by lochs (lakes) or sea-lochs (long, narrow inlets). Where this scenery descends into the sea, to the west and north, it forms whole chains of islands. This is very picturesque and thinly-populated land, with a handful of towns mostly along the coast, but it's been inhabited for as long as most of Britain, and it has its full share of ancient monuments. Amongst these are the Iron Age Pictish "brochs"—circular towers, with thick, windowless stone walls, mostly found on the coast of western and northern Scotland. Archaeologists wonder why such heavy-duty fortifications were required in their place and time; perhaps obscure Watcher records tell of an infestation of demons or vampires, driven north from Roman-controlled Britain.

In recent decades, the discovery of oil in the North Sea, to the east of Scotland, has brought some prosperity to the region; the deposits aren't large enough to stop Britain being a net importer of oil, and conditions in these stormy northern waters make work on the rigs hard, but oil is still oil. This is one reason, aside from tourism, which might bring foreign visitors to the old fishing port of Aberdeen, Scotland's third city on the northeast coast.

IRELAND

They don't call Ireland the "Emerald Isle" for nothing. Facing out into the Atlantic and warm Gulf Stream, it combines an exceptionally mild climate with high rainfall. It's lush farming country; being also the western extremity of Europe, it's sometimes been seen as rather rustic.

While some of it was ruled by the English crown from quite early on, it was never entirely integrated into the kingdom; while England mostly converted to Protestantism under the Tudors, most of Ireland remained staunchly Catholic. This led to bloody conflict a century later, and the deliberate cultivation of Protestant communities in the north. Relatively poor and under-regarded, Ireland suffered terrible famines in the 19th century, and in the early decades of the 20th, the long-standing independence movement flared up into outright revolt.

However, while much of the island sought independence, the Protestant majority in the north was equally intent on remaining part of the U.K.. Hence, Ireland was eventually divided in two.





THE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION

The grievances of the northern Catholic minority were never assuaged—this was and largely remains a divided society—and they famously exploded in rioting and terrorist activity in the second half of the century, making the northern city of Belfast into a notoriously violent place (although its murder rate was, ironically, only a *tenth* of that of many U.S. cities). Violent groups also emerged from the Protestant community, retaliating for “Republican” attacks. The factions often turned to crime to raise funds, sometimes becoming virtually indistinguishable from straightforward gangsters.

However, in the last few years, the more sophisticated terrorist leaders have come to accept that they can’t achieve their goals purely through violence, and much of the population has come to accept carefully worked-out political compromises and arrangements. While the situation remains fragile, and ultra-violent fringe elements and gangsters still commit occasional killings, the situation is a lot better than it used to be. It would be a relatively tricky place to run a *Buffy/Angel*-style adventuring group, though; not only do law enforcers more regularly carry firearms than elsewhere in the U.K., but armed factions like to see themselves as protectors of their segments of the population. On the other hand, cunning, ruthless factions looking to stir up trouble might well find ways . . .

EIRE

For most of the time since it achieved independence, the Republic of Ireland remained something of a backwater. Many of the population would travel abroad to find work, and while they were notorious for their sentimental view of their homeland, some complained that it was dominated by the Catholic church and an obsession with the past. However, since it became a member of the European Union, Ireland has enjoyed something of an economic boom. High-tech industries have expanded, and agriculture is no longer the main sector of the economy.

Ireland is often seen as a centre of Celtic tradition, with associated mysticism. It’s certainly reasonable to have beings out of Celtic myth emerge from this land—and perhaps to be carried round the world by the Irish Diaspora. However, modern Irishmen might point out that this is a rather old-fashioned view, and even conscious attempts to keep Ireland locked in the past have failed. For example, although Gaelic, the ancient Celtic language, is regarded as a symbol of national identity, the vast majority of the population speak English; Gaelic is mostly limited to the rural west coast.

PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT

Tara: ‘Why doesn’t Mr. Giles put them all out of here?’

Xander: ‘Because if they deport him, they’re not just

destroying his career, they’re . . . condemning the man to a lifetime diet of blood sausage, bangers, and mash.

—Buffy 5.12 Checkpoint

The following is a brief overview of British society, with some focus on how it differs from American society. As people are products of their societies, it’s important to understand what sort of background a British character—such as a typical Watcher—will come from.

DISTRIBUTIONS AND ORIGINS

To begin with, some basics. As we said, the U.K. has a population of around 60 million, of whom about 50 million live in England, 5 million in Scotland, 3 million in Wales, and 2 million in Northern Ireland. The majority of these people are English-speakers of European ancestry—although the Scots, Welsh, and Irish are often referred to as “Celts,” and the stereotype of the red-haired Scotsman has some basis in reality, the actual genetics are pretty mixed. In recent decades, the country has received immigrants from all over the world, especially from parts of the former empire, and there are substantial ethnic minority populations, especially in large cities, notably those whose ancestors came from the Indian subcontinent and West Indians (of black African descent). There are also smaller immigrant groups from virtually everywhere, especially in port cities. There has sometimes been friction between ethnic groups—Britain has its share of racism—and some groups are somewhat disadvantaged, but it’s certainly *possible* for Britons of any ancestry to succeed in business, politics, or the professions. Intermarriage is also fairly common these days.





CHARACTER AND ATTITUDES

Giles: Rugged. American football. (Laughs.)

Jenny: And that's funny because?

Giles: No! (Laughs.) I just think it's rather odd that a nation that prides itself on its virility should feel compelled to strap on forty pounds of protective gear just in order to play rugby.

—*Buffy 2.2 Some Assembly Required*

It's never safe to talk in stereotypes about 60 million people, but that rarely stops anyone, including the British. While the rest of the world seems to see the English as stuffy, sometimes pompous, reserved, and fairly polite (except for the football hooligans, who somehow manage to be the opposite of all this), with no great talent for cookery but the ability to produce the odd rock musician, fashion designer, or character actor, the English like to think of themselves as cool, calm, and witty, with a talent for understatement. Likewise, the rest of the world stereotypes the Scots as kilt-wearing tight-fisted brawlers, while the Scots see themselves as energetic, less stuffy than the English, and shrewd, and rarely wear kilts.

Like most stereotypes, this stuff has *just* enough truth in it to keep it going despite all the counter-examples. British (especially English) culture traditionally puts some emphasis on emotional control, and while this has faded in recent years, many Britons are still relatively undemonstrative. The British can also seem rather arrogant; this is, perhaps, partly a legacy of the Empire, which would have made anyone arrogant. An aspect of

this is the British failure to learn foreign languages very well, which has survived partly because the English language, no longer the tongue of a mighty British Empire, is now the language of Hollywood and American cultural hegemony. This is sometimes a problem for Britons seeking to do business with fellow members of the European Union. In fact, many Britons are suspicious of or even hostile towards "Europe" for various reasons, despite the fact that millions of them regularly travel there on holiday.

(The British also have a reputation for talking about the weather a lot. This is of course partly a way to avoid talking about anything more personal, but the British climate is unstable enough, within a narrow range, to make it a subject worth talking about.)

The British do like to think that they are especially good at dry, straight-faced irony, and sometimes say or assume that Americans just don't *get* this. Actually, the example of various popular television series (some of them familiar to readers of this book) shows that many Americans are perfectly capable of delivering and understanding irony, while British irony sometimes turns into mere sarcasm. Still, the straight-faced joke *is* a distinct British tradition.

Thus, while Britons would see Giles and the early-model Wesley as stereotypes, they're not characters of which Britain would be ashamed. They're not very representative of Britain as a whole, but they are fairly typical of a certain type of rather old-fashioned, well-educated, upper-middle-class Briton. As such, though, they are actually members of a distinct minority.





food and drink

As Xander Harris and others have illustrated, some foreigners have a slightly out-of-date idea about British cookery. In the past, it's certainly tended to be stodgy and low on flavour—large populations living in industrial towns tend to value cheapness and quantity over quality—but blood sausage (always known as “black pudding”) is a northern regional delicacy at most, and “bangers and mash” is simply sausages and mashed potato. Anyway, an Oxbridge-educated intellectual like Giles would have far more varied tastes.

More to the point, though, large-scale immigration in the 20th century has left the British with a much greater variety of cheap fast food. Virtually every town has several Indian restaurants and a couple of Chinese takeaways, and supermarkets follow the ensuing tastes with their ready-meal lines. The most popular meal in Britain today is in fact said to be chicken korma—a mild curry. (Hotter curries are also popular; one way for an archetypal British slob to prove his manhood after the pubs shut is to order the hottest curry on the menu and eat it without acknowledging the pain.)

It's also said that the British like “warm beer.” Actually, the majority of British beer sales these days are probably chilled lagers with American or Continental names (mostly brewed in the U.K.), but there is a minority old-fashioned taste for “bitter” with distinctive flavours that happen to work best at cool room temperature. The best of these are consciously old-style “real ales.”

The legal age to be served alcohol in a British bar is 18, and the British are often somewhat more relaxed about young people tasting the stuff than Americans—though far less so than most Europeans. Unfortunately, heavy binge drinking, especially on weekend evenings, has become a growing social problem in British towns in recent years, and is one of the socio-political issues of the day.



SOCIAL CLASS

As a broad generalisation, it's safe to say that Britain is a class-conscious society. It's often possible to determine an Englishman's social class from his accent (it's slightly harder with the Scots, Welsh, and Irish), and private education serves to reinforce the divisions. People from different classes read different newspapers, watch different TV programmes, and holiday in different places. While there are certainly, for example, social divisions based on racial background, class frequently trumps race.

Which said, the divisions are *much* weaker than they were a hundred years ago, and social mobility is most certainly possible. For that matter, some Britons would say that other countries have class systems that are just as strong; the foreigners just refuse to admit it. Still, old habits die hard, and have side-effects; some people

Languages and Accents

The vast majority of people in the U.K (and for that matter in the Republic of Ireland) speak English; even the minorities who use other languages almost invariably learn it as a second choice. A quarter of the population of Wales speak Welsh, but only 60,000 Scots still speak Scots Gaelic, mostly in the western Highlands and Islands. Also, immigrants from the Indian subcontinent (and elsewhere) often preserve their original languages in their urban communities.

What there is, however, is a huge diversity of accents, ranging from minor local and class variations to full-scale dialects, of which the strongest is Lowland Scots, which has a substantial vocabulary of its own and even some grammatical variations. (For examples, see the poetry of Robbie Burns.) The Tyneside accent of the northeast of England can also be very dense, and some immigrants from Jamaica still speak something verging on patois.

Americans may be surprised that a country the size of Britain has such a diversity of regional accents, but the fact is that such differences evolve when people can't easily move from one region to another, and regional English accents go back to the days before modern travel and communications. Motor cars and TV have simply not been around long enough to homogenise everything, and anyway, regional variations are sometimes treated as a badge of local pride. Furthermore, this being Britain, accent can also indicate social class. For reference, Giles and Wesley both have upper-middle-class southern accents, while Spike's is broadly generic working-class London.





consider that one of the biggest problems in Britain is that people trying to rise in society receive little respect; the people who they grew up with resent them, and the people they're joining sneer at them. None of which has stopped Britain from producing a fair few former-working-class millionaires.

Also, race actually interacts with class in complicated ways; while many immigrants arrived to fill blue-collar jobs and have remained working class, another stereotype with some basis in reality is the Indian-born corner-shop owner who works every hour of the day to send his children to university, whence they move on to become doctors and accountants. Meanwhile, racist groups find their support among the white working class, who resent immigrants and outsiders; the upper classes includes some racists, but rarely consider the subject a major issue.

GOVERNMENT

To get technical for a moment, the U.K. is a representative parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy. The Queen, as head of state, has considerable theoretical powers, but is prevented from actually using them by precedent and convention; most real power rests with the Prime Minister, who is head of the government. The whole system is the product of generations of precedent and compromise, which gives it some weird features; for example, there is no written U.K. constitution—just a set of traditions and rules.

The centre of government is Parliament, which meets in London, and which consists of two “houses.” The country is divided into 659 constituencies, each of which elects one MP (Member of Parliament) to the House of Commons. General elections must be held every five years, but the government can and often does choose to call them before the five-year mark. (If an MP quits or dies, a “by-election” is held to elect a replacement.) After the election, the leader of the party with the most MPs is formally invited by the monarch to form the next government. (If there was a “hung parliament” with no overall majority, the monarch could end up acting as a referee in the ensuing negotiations to form a coalition.) The largest parties are Labour (now also known as “New Labour”) and the Conservatives (or Tories); the Liberal Democrats also have a fair number of MPs, and there are different parties in Northern Ireland, and a few MPs belonging to Scottish and Welsh Nationalist parties.

The House of Lords originally consisted of the hereditary aristocracy of Britain, plus some senior judges (the House of Lords is officially the highest court in the land, although that function is now largely separate, and may be removed by the creation of a British Supreme

Court in the near future) and senior bishops of the Church of England (“lords spiritual”). It had similar powers to the Commons. However, the system has been heavily revised at various points over the years as the country became more democratic; the Lords lost any powers over taxation or finance, and much of the House came to be occupied by non-hereditary “life peers,” largely appointed on the recommendation of the leaders of the main political parties. The Lords’ job came to be seen as mainly reviewing and revising new laws; they still had veto powers, but these could eventually be overridden by the Commons. The latest and largest round of reforms are still in progress (amidst much debate), but changes so far mean that only 92 hereditary peers (selected by the others) remain in the House, and they are likely to disappear in time. (There will still be aristocrats with titles in Britain, but they won’t have any special political powers.)

The government is divided into various ministries and departments; ministers are MPs or, sometimes, members of the House of Lords. For example, the Ministry of Defence supervises the armed forces, the Home Office deals with police, prisons, and law and order, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office handles international relations, HM Treasury manages the tax system, and the Department for Education and Skills looks after schools and university. The most important ministers form the cabinet, under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

SCOTLAND, WALES, AND

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parts of the U.K. have their own elected political bodies, giving them partial internal self-government. The Scottish Parliament has a moderate amount of effective power—Scotland has always had a separate legal system to England—although its position is still somewhat controversial. The National Assembly for Wales is a smaller body with less substantial powers.

The Northern Ireland Assembly was established as part of the ongoing attempts to resolve the political problems of the province, replacing older bodies. Unfortunately, due to problems and controversies, it is currently suspended, with administrative power reverting to London, although it still has elected members, and may return to action in time.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Britain has local councils organised at various levels, from counties and cities down to parishes. These have less power than their American counterparts; they look after roads, schools, and so on, but have, for example, limited authority to set budgets. British city mayors have





The Aristocracy

Britain has six ranks of nobility, of which the top five used to be able to sit in the House of Lords; Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount, and Baron. Below that is Baronet ("Lord" in Scotland). All have titles, which may be a family name, a place name, or something else going back into family history. Life peers quite often select titles from foreign locations with which they are associated; for example, ex-soldiers may take the name of a battle which they won. A few peers still live in or near places from which they take their titles; many do not. Inherited titles pass in the male line, from father to eldest son, but female "life peers" can have titles in their own right. Knights (and dames, the female equivalent) come one rank below Baronets in traditional precedence; knighthoods are always awarded as public honours, usually to people with distinguished public careers, never inherited. Some members of the royal family also have noble titles.

There are a few hundred "peers" in Britain, plus some heirs or younger sons who are permitted to use secondary family titles for courtesy, a few more hundred baronets, and rather more knights and dames. Some don't choose to use their titles (one or two specifically disclaim them in order to stand for election as MPs, which is otherwise prohibited), and many landed aristocrats spend their time looking after family estates, while life peers given a title in order to conduct business in the House of Lords are likely to be busy with that, much of the time. Hence, the odds are against Cast Members who visit Britain *happening* to bump into someone with a title. It's not impossible to find a peer, say, involved in some organisation, but the odds are against it. The Watchers may possibly have some aristocratic families among their traditional supporters and associates, maybe going back to the days when the aristocracy really did run the country, but there's no specific evidence of this.

If a non-British visitor does somehow encounter someone with a title, they'll very likely get the forms of address wrong, but aristocrats are used to that. A Duke or Duchess is formally addressed as "Your Grace," informally as "Duke" or "Duchess"; other peers are formally "My Lord" or "My Lady," or "Lord/Lady (title)" informally. (Life peeresses, who are usually of baroness rank, may prefer "Baroness (title)"). All peers sign with simply their title. A baronet or knight named John Smith is addressed as "Sir John," NOT "Sir Smith."





rather less prestige than the American version, although the Mayor of London has a fair amount of power over that large city. (He's distinct from the Lord Mayor of the City of London, whose old-established office is mostly ceremonial these days.) Local elections largely take the form of contests between political parties, though there are rather more "independents" and members of fringe parties on local councils.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

As a member of the European Union, a political and economic alliance encompassing most of Europe, Britain sends elected representatives ("MEPs") to the European Parliament, which deals with budgets and Europe-wide legislation. The country also has appointed representatives on other EU bodies, such as the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. While the EU is somewhat politically controversial in Britain—critics say that it's bureaucratic, expensive, and badly managed—the U.K. has been a member for some years now, and EU decisions, controversial or not, ultimately affect aspects of British life.

LAW AND ORDER

The legal system in the U.K. is, very broadly speaking, similar to that in the U.S.A.; they both descend from the same traditions, after all. Much of it is based on "common law" and precedent, modified by Acts of Parliament. Having evolved over a thousand years or so, it can seem somewhat chaotic—*no one* knows every law which might apply in every situation. There is no Constitution or Bill of Rights, although Britain has signed the European Convention on Human Rights, with provides some similar effects. There is certainly no "constitutional right to bear arms"; Britain is used to strong weapons controls (which tend to be tightened up even further every now and again in the wake of well-publicised cases of armed violence), and characters caught owning unlicensed firearms (and it's hard to get a license for anything apart from a shotgun), or carrying any sort of weapon with apparent criminal intent, will be in serious trouble. Tear gas, tasers, etc., definitely count as weapons, and are in fact quite heavily restricted. The law permits people to use violence in self-defence, but there are fairly strict definitions of "reasonable force"; while the public may sympathise with those who claim to be defending themselves, people can be prosecuted for, say, killing burglars.

Prosecutions are managed by the Crown Prosecution Service, an agency of the Home Office, or in Scotland by the Procurator Fiscal (who also supervises the police investigation). Once the CPS has decided, on the basis of evidence gathered by the police, to prosecute a serious

crime, the accused will first be brought before a magistrates' court (a low-level court with three lay magistrates, who also deal directly with a lot of minor offences), which will send them on to a crown court, where the case will be tried by a judge and a 12-person jury. Appeals against conviction (or by the prosecution against a too-lenient sentence) can go from there to the Court of Appeal, sometimes from there to the Law Lords, and occasionally, at great length and expense, from there to the European Court of Human Rights. (Details can vary somewhat in Scotland, but the general pattern is similar. Terrorist cases in Northern Ireland have sometimes been subject to special rules.)

British lawyers come in two varieties. *Solicitors* deal with routine legal matters, and act as the first point of contact in any case; a suspect will call for a solicitor when first arrested. Most working solicitors are members or employees of large partnerships. *Barristers* represent the two sides in cases when they come to the higher courts, having been contacted via the solicitor; they're the ones in black robes and wigs in British courtroom dramas. They are all self-employed, but group together in "chambers" for convenience. The most respected barristers become "Queen's Counsels" (QCs), nicknamed "silks"; some go on to become judges.

Three other features are worth mentioning; Scottish juries can return a verdict of "not proven," allowing the case to be re-tried later if more evidence turns up, though this is rarely used; Britain doesn't have capital punishment—the heaviest possible sentence is life imprisonment; and in the period between a charge being brought and the jury returning a verdict, the case is "sub judice," and reporters are severely restricted in what they can report about it (in Britain). The last is designed to ensure a fair trial by preventing juries from being biased by sensational reporting, and prevents major trials from becoming circuses as they do in the U.S.A.; however, it may deter some investigative reporting, and leads to some rather ludicrous struggles to protect secrecy.

THE POLICE

The British invented the idea of the modern police force in the 19th century. Today, there are a number of forces, mostly organised by county, and also including the Metropolitan Police ("the Met," responsible for most of London, run from New Scotland Yard), the City of London Police (a small force responsible for the "Square Mile" at the centre of the city), the British Transport Police (who police the railway system), and the Royal Parks Constabulary (responsible for patrolling various large parks in London). The Ministry of Defence and the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority also have their own police forces. There are also a few bodies which handle problems which cross force boundaries, several of which





are soon to be merged into a new "Serious Organised Crime Agency," and various specialist forensics organisations and fraud investigators. Like many arrangements in Britain, this weird-looking structure is the product of history and tradition, and has never failed badly enough for anyone to go to the trouble of changing it much. Some of it may, however, be reformed in the near future.

Police ranks are Constable, Sergeant, Inspector, Chief Inspector, Superintendent, and Chief Superintendent; each has a "Police" (uniformed) and "Detective" (plain-clothes) version. There are higher ranks, but these vary slightly from force to force; most county forces have a Chief Constable with a number of Assistants, while the Met has a Commissioner and various deputies, assistants, and Commanders. All policemen start as uniformed constables, possibly eventually moving over into other duties.

As is often pointed out, British police don't routinely carry guns, except in Northern Ireland and when defending some VIPs and locations such as airports or nuclear power stations. They do carry side-handled collapsible batons, and in some forces, pepper sprays. Tasers are being introduced experimentally in some places, but are considered controversial. However, all forces organise and train some officers with firearms, and have arrangements to deploy them promptly if dealing with suspects who are thought to be armed. Some forces, including the Met, have "armed response vehicles" with secure armouries on patrol at all times.

British cop characters

For practical game purposes, current and former British police will look much the same as those from American forces. (They don't usually have the stereotype donut addiction, though.) The various sorts of Cop Quality found in other books work just fine here—except that, for reasons explained in the main text, British characters with this Quality don't get any automatic skill in Gun Fu. Put those levels into Getting Medieval or Kung Fu instead. However, it's perfectly *possible* for them to have picked up some firearms training, officially or otherwise.

Britain is a member of Interpol, the international organisation which coordinates information between national police forces. Hence, if a criminal suspect or fugitive is known to have come to Britain from another Interpol member (such as the U.S.A.), information about him should and probably will reach the British police.



UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Each British police force has a "Special Branch" to deal with national security issues. These work closely with each other and with MI5; they operate in plain clothes, and are often armed. Because MI5 avoids public attention to a large extent, if any of their work leads to arrests and trials, it will often be Special Branch who handle the public side of this. Weird, violent incidents in the U.K. that don't look like "simple" organised crime are likely to come to Special Branch's attention.

Occasionally, very violent terrorist incidents or the like may lead to the police asking for help from military special forces. This sort of decision is likely to go all the way up to the government for confirmation, and will make a lot of people very nervous.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS

Private detectives do exist in Britain, but there is no concept of a "licensed investigator," and such people are extremely unlikely to carry weapons. Realistically, they're most likely to find themselves dealing with divorce cases and other such domestic matters. Private security companies move money and valuable items around in armoured vans, and there are a few professional bodyguards and similar protection specialists, but they're subject to the same weapons laws as any other civilian. If someone thought that they were at serious risk of armed assault, the police would expect to be involved, and would assign their own specialists to the matter.

BRITISH EDUCATION

School education is mandatory in Britain between the ages of 5 to 16. (Many children spend some time at "nursery schools" from the age of 3 or 4.) After that, two optional years at school or a college will carry those pupils who wish through to the age of 18, after which, some go on to university.





Private education is fairly widespread in Britain; the institutions concerned are ironically known as “public schools,” because when they first started, they were the only schools open to any members of the public who could afford to pay, as opposed to private education for the children of a single house or family. These were traditionally boarding schools, and many still have a substantial boarding element. (The “Harry Potter” books are based on a stylised image of old-fashioned boarding-school education.) The system is divided into preparatory (“prep”) schools, usually covering ages 5-13, and secondary schools for pupils up to the age of 18.

A sporting chance

The British are as obsessed with sport—or at least with watching it—as any other nation, but they aren’t excessively successful at it, with some notable exceptions. Whatever the cause, the country’s medal count in the Olympics is disproportionately low, and the national soccer teams’ relative failure in international competition (ever since England won the World Cup in 1966) is a persistent source of grief for those who care. The country hosts one of the world’s major tennis tournaments, at Wimbledon, and dreams every year that a Briton might reach the final. Still, the English rugby team has done fairly well recently, the cricket team has its moments, and at least the country hasn’t adopted major sports which no other country bothers playing. Some world-class British athletes train in the U.S.A. for the better facilities.

The big national professional sport is soccer (definitely seen as a man’s game—women’s teams gets little attention), and some British clubs (often including players from several nations) are highly rated internationally. (The infamous hooligan problem is now much diminished, though fan passions do still sometimes run too high.) Cricket is the traditional summer sport, and is popular throughout much of the old Empire; major matches are multi-day affairs, and fans insist that they’re full of strategic subtlety. Rugby (also popular in some former colonies, and in France) may vaguely resemble American football, but an emphasis on playing the ball rather than the man means that body armour isn’t required (and there’s little or no switching of players on and off the pitch); it’s traditionally popular in some working-class areas (such as Yorkshire and Wales) and in the public schools, though some are switching away from it in the face of modern compensation insurance costs.

The large majority of children, however, attend non-fee-paying schools, which are primarily organised by local government bodies, and also by a mixture of churches and other groups, under rules set by the government. “Primary” schools generally take pupils up to the age of 11, after which they go on to “secondary” schools. Some of these only take pupils up to 16, after which they have to transfer to further education colleges.

British schools in general are far less central to local community identity than American schools; a town may be proud of a successful school, but people who don’t happen to have school-age children will largely ignore its existence. School sports, in particular, aren’t regarded as being of interest to anyone much outside the school, and in fact British schools are sometimes said to have cut back too hard on sport, selling off playing fields to raise money, at the expense of pupils’ health. Still, the “Jock” stereotype is certainly recognisable in British schools, although the word, and the whole idea of the adolescent local sports hero, is very much an American thing.

UNIVERSITIES

The British universities which American readers are most likely to have heard of are the two oldest; Oxford and Cambridge, which date back to the 13th century, and which still retain a lot of prestige and impressive records for research. A few more were founded over the centuries, but it was during the 19th and 20th centuries that Britain made a concerted effort to extend university education to much more of the population. Those universities founded between 1800 and WWI are often known as “red bricks” (contrasting their typical buildings with the old stone colleges of “Oxbridge”), and the term is sometimes also extended to the next generation of foundations. Many more universities were founded in the decades after WWII.

Oxford and Cambridge are “collegiate” universities. Every member of the university is also a member of a college, which organises accommodation and personal tuition, while the university organises lectures and examinations (through subject-based departments). Hence, members of these universities may sometimes talk about the college which they attended, rather than the university as a whole. Famous colleges include Balliol College and University College at Oxford, and King’s and St John’s Colleges at Cambridge, while both universities have colleges named Corpus Christi, Trinity, and Jesus, among many others. (The names mostly reflect either medieval religious origins or the names of the founders.) Some of the oldest of the new foundations follow the same pattern, but most have a more straightforward subject-oriented structure.



Fraternity houses are *not* a feature of British universities; Britons only know about the idea from American movies. British university courses tend to be more focused on a single subject than the American approach; while there are some cross-disciplinary courses, British students don't generally pursue multiple unrelated "minors."

ARMED FORCES

The U.K. armed forces are divided into three services; the Army (*not* the "Royal Army"—although the monarch is officially commander-in-chief, the traditional position is that the army serves the country, and is not a tool of the crown to use against the people), the Royal Navy (which includes the Royal Marines), and the Royal Air Force. All are volunteer services, with generally high morale and a typically British emphasis on tradition and on pride in the service and unit. The British armed forces are relatively large for a democratic country of this size, partly so that they can meet global commitments, some of them dating back to the days of the Empire.

The nearest equivalent to the U.S. National Guard is the Territorial Army—part-time soldiers who train at weekends, and who would be incorporated into the regular army in time of war. Although some specialists have been called into service from the Territorials during the Iraq crisis, and the TA as a whole acts as a "home reserve" when the regular army is stretched to meet requirements, they aren't generally likely to be deployed abroad in anything short of a full-scale global conflict. Also, the Territorials are *not* routinely available to civilian authorities for law enforcement. If a situation arose which needed serious military response, it's *much* more likely that regular army units would be called in.

SPECIAL FORCES

The most famous special forces unit within the British Army is the Special Air Service Regiment, which has earned a name for effectiveness in reconnaissance and counter-terrorist work. However, it's not the only such body; the Royal Marines include the Special Boat Service, which cross-trains with the SAS and sometimes works with them, providing expertise in maritime operations, and the Comacchio Group, who are trained to protect British oil rigs and Navy nuclear installations from terrorists or saboteurs. Indeed, all Royal Marines are intensively trained for commando work, making them a "special forces" unit by some definitions.

INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

British intelligence is a famously and deliberately murky subject; with little in the way of freedom of information laws until recently, the government long preferred to keep such things obscure. Indeed, the official position used to be that MI5 (the Security Service, responsible for counter-espionage, counter-terrorism, and these days, some work against international organised crime) and MI6 (the information-gathering Secret Intelligence Service) didn't exist; although this was transparently untrue, it permitted ministers to refuse to talk about the subject in Parliament. This habitual deep secrecy helped build a useful mystique for these organisations, although it probably also enabled a number of Soviet moles to operate unhindered for too long. Today, however, both have become rather more public, with highly visible modern HQ buildings in London.

Both those bodies were originally military intelligence offshoots (hence the "MI" prefix), but have long since shed that connection, and the Ministry of Defence now has its own intelligence staff. The third major element in the U.K. intelligence world is the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), details of whose work on codes and communications systems are often very secret. All these organisations report to the Joint Intelligence Committee, which in turn reports direct to the Prime Minister.





5 *From Observation to Action*

Andrew: That's all right, boys. I'll take it from here.

Angel: What?

Andrew: Totally 'preciate your help on this one, big guy. Never could've found her without you, but you got enough problems of your own to worry about.

Angel: Get outta the way, Andrew.

Andrew: (Steps in Angel's path.) She's a Slayer. That means she's ours.

—Angel 5.11 *Damage*

Watchers make interesting Cast Members, Guest Stars, and even opponents—

But they and their organisation can also be even more central to a series. This chapter is for Directors; it's about Watcher-centred games, how to organise and run them, and how they differ from other series.

THE NATURE OF PLAY

Travers: We're not in the business of fair, Miss Summers—we're fighting a war.

Giles: You're waging a war. She's fighting it. There is a difference.

—Buffy 3.12 *Helpless*

Setting up a Watcher-based campaign means making a number of decisions—about when and where, certainly, but perhaps most importantly about *style*.



While some Watchers are capable of supplying their share of, in the picturesque phrase, butt-kicking, that's not generally the *point* of Watcher-centred games. In most series, the (present and former) Watchers are the ones who perform research, call on contacts, and look after libraries; in one where everyone in the Cast is a Watcher, investigation should be the main theme, not just something to punctuate the fight scenes. After all, with fewer, generally less powerful combat experts, Watcher groups are likely to find the front line in the war against evil to be an especially dangerous place. A Watcher





series can definitely have a slightly more horrific flavour than one with more robust Cast Members, but if it isn't going to be depressingly short, the Cast should be prepared to use their (non-combat) advantages to the full, and the plots should permit this. There'll still be world-threatening demonic menaces, but if they can sometimes be defeated by a three-minute ritual or a tip-off to the cops about some drug-addled cultists, then that's definitely the Watcher style.

The other point about some Watcher games is that the Cast Members may come to rely on a large and powerful organisation which protects them from the consequences of their actions and supplies them with resources and information on request. (This is less of a problem after Season Seven—a subject to which we'll come back.) There are ways to plot around this, but the Director should refrain from overusing them; this sort of thing—and the associated duties and lack of freedom—are very much part of the point of being a Watcher.

THEMES

Giles: You know what gets me? This is what gets me.

Twenty years I've been fighting demons. Maggie Walsh and her Nancy-ninja boys come in and six months later, demons are pissing themselves with fear. They never even noticed me.

Ethan: Who's Maggie Walsh?

Giles: Oh, she's awful. She said I was an absent male role model. Absent my ass. I'm twice the man she is.

—Buffy 4.12 A New Man

If *Buffy* games are about children growing up, learning to deal with responsibility, and acquiring the confidence that leads to personal empowerment, then Watcher games should approach the same theme from the adult—the parental—point of view. They're about *knowing* how the world works, and accepting the responsibility to pass on that knowledge to people who need it, while also giving other people credit for their own abilities. They're also, though, about being prepared to step in and exert some serious (if refined) force when it's needed—not just sitting back and letting the ungrateful kids go to hell because that's all they deserve.

Watcher-oriented stories might actually come closer to the feel of a typical *Angel* series. After all, the Watchers have been fighting the good fight in the face of overwhelming odds for thousands of years. If, though, *Angel* series are about dealing with adulthood, taking responsibility for past actions and present circumstances, then Watcher characters are in the business of redeeming several *thousand* years of imperfectly-spent adulthood. Those millennia weren't the Cast Members' fault, of course, but becoming a Watcher means taking on the

mantle of countless previous Watchers, and enjoying the benefits of their research and accumulation of resources. Well, it so happens that there is rough to go with the smooth. The Watchers have always been terribly clever and educated and smug; now, it would seem to be time to *do* something with all that cleverness.

VERBAL STYLE

Watcher games are also about dry humour and straight-faced wit. Another job for Watcher characters, in dramatic terms, is to undercut a lot of tantrum-throwing teenagers and moping drama queens with the occasional acidic one-liner. Parental figures have an ancient right to be exasperated and ironic, and should never be afraid to exert that right to the full.

Directors should be ready with Drama Point awards for Watchers whose Quotable Quotes demonstrate the traditional dry sarcasm, or who "support" more powerful characters by undercutting their self-indulgent emotional posturing. Sometimes, what a champion/hero needs isn't a shoulder to cry on, but a verbal kick to the backside—and Watchers are trained to provide that.

playing it straight

Watcher-oriented series are good candidates for playing without Drama Points (as discussed in both the *Corebooks*). They tend to be about fairly ordinary humans of moderate power, pitching up against formidable supernatural opposition, and they emphasise thought and planning over flamboyance. Fights should be infrequent, short, and brutal, and bad stuff definitely happens to people. In the *Buffy* TV series, a huge number of Watchers were ultimately slaughtered by superior foes; they evidently didn't have Drama Points to save them.

Of course, this isn't mandatory. Many players would find this approach a little too gritty, and will want some of the cinematic relief from the forces of probability and inevitability which Drama Points provide. Cast Members can be some of the luckier, more heroic Watchers who *do* get the benefit of cinematically appropriate lucky breaks (and whose opponents are likewise cinematic). But then again, *real* heroism is about fighting on even when survival looks distinctly chancy—and as we keep saying, the Watchers are heroes at the core. A gritty, Drama Point-free series might well give them just the right feel.





TIME FRAMES

In addition to matters of style, a major question for a Watcher-based series is *when* it's to be set—including whether to consider an alternate timeline.

DESTRUCTION: BEFORE, AFTER, OR INSTEAD

Willow: We changed the world. I can feel them, Buffy.

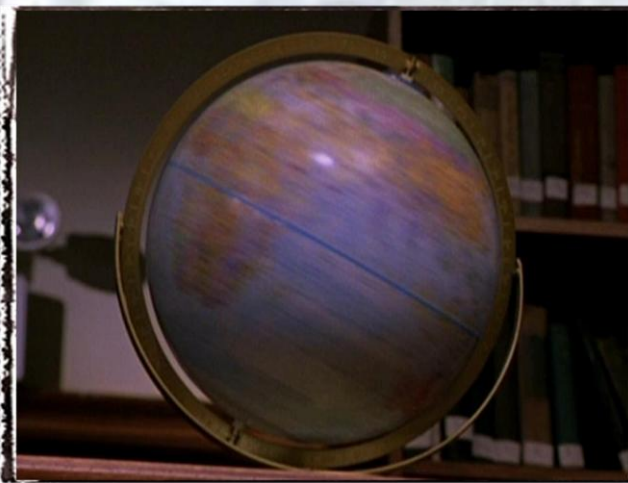
All over. Slayers are awakening everywhere.

Dawn: We'll have to find them.

—*Buffy 7.22 Chosen*

The biggest decision to make is whether the series is set before the old Council was destroyed by the minions of the First Evil (in Season Seven of *Buffy*), afterwards, in an alternate timeline where that attack never happened or went very differently, or even during the attack. The different options make for substantially different games. Consider the contrast.

In a “before” or “alternate history” series, or in one set in the historic past, the Council is a powerful, rather complacent, global organisation, proud of its ancient history and working efficiently (by its own lights) to deal with the threat of the supernatural and to assist the Slayers. Watcher Cast Members will have to obey orders from the hierarchy, work to convince others of their ideas, and defend or hide any disobedience or digressions. On the other hand, they'll have the resources of the Council and network to call on, at least when they can make a case for it. Actually, a series set *far* back in history might be rather different; the Watchers have changed and evolved over time, and less efficient communications very likely made for a less rigid structure and more independent local forces.



THE HISTORICAL SERIES

In fact, Watcher-based games lend themselves particularly well to being set in the historic past. Whether manipulating the temple hierarchies of Egypt or Rome, sailing the Seven Seas as the struggle with evil finds new battlegrounds, building networks of scholarship and idealism throughout the British Empire, or aiding in battles with Nazi black magicians—the Watchers have been there, observing, advising, and occasionally delivering a well-judged sword thrust. Let's look at a few sample possibilities.

SWORD TO THE SERPENT AND THE BULL

The first may need some explanation. The Bronze Age Minoan civilisation was based on Crete, a large eastern Mediterranean island. According to archaeologists, it arose around 2500-2000 B.C., and went into decline around 1450, possibly as a result of a vast volcanic eruption on the nearby island of Santorini—although there's evidence that many Minoans survived that, but were then conquered by invaders from Greece before their culture finally collapsed around 1380. At their height, the Minoans were a successful people; their great “palaces”—possibly actually temples—were unfortified, suggesting that the commoners didn't hate their rulers too much, and they created impressive art, some of it showing male and female acrobats somersaulting over charging bulls, but not much of it showing warfare or bloodshed. There's evidence of one or two human sacrifices in underground shrines, but that seems to date to late in their history, when the Minoans were doubtless becoming desperate and crazy.

However, although the ruins of several Minoan towns have been excavated, not much is actually *known* about these people. Apart from anything else, their writing system and language remain complete mysteries. Even their modern name comes from Greek legends about a “King Minos”; we have no idea what they called themselves.

But Directors shouldn't see this as ignorance; they should think of it as an opportunity. In the Slayerverse, much about the Minoans, including the collapse and the human sacrifices, can have very *interesting* explanations. Most likely the Minoans studied magic, and perhaps some of them went too far, either bringing about the volcanic eruption directly or obliging someone else to raise it to purge the world of their evil. (And think how big an evil it'd be to justify raising a major volcano to wipe it out.) Before that, though, you've got a whole culture to play with. Watchers could be Minoan priest-scholars, visitors from the temples of Thoth and Isis in Egypt, far to the



south, seeking the hidden lore of this island nation, or perhaps strange priests of the One God of Israel to the east. (The Egyptian ankh might serve in place of the cross to drive off vampires.) There's plenty of scope for Bronze Age sword and sorcery here, too, with "Ekwesh" (Greek) barbarian swordsmen sailing in to trade and to gawp at the mighty cities of Crete—and dreaming of plundering the place.

Incidentally, a lot of Minoan art shows female figures apparently in positions of authority, and one of their main religious symbols was a double-bladed axe, the "labrys." The sometimes-popular idea that Crete was a feminist matriarchy is a stretch—plenty of chauvinist patriarchies worshipped goddesses—but it certainly sounds like Slayer territory. Watchers could find themselves training an axe-wielding bull-dancer/Slayer while they infiltrate the "palace" hierarchies and struggle to deal with the weird and numerous demons of the Bronze Age.

Modern Uses: Like any big topic in archaeology, Minoan Crete can make important appearances in a modern-day Watcher game, too. Archaeologists might, say, disturb the sealed tomb of the evil Minoan sorcerer who roused the great volcano through human sacrifice, and you can't keep a good villain down; he rises as an undead monster (perhaps incorporeal, perhaps as a vampire or whatever), slaughters a few unfortunate researchers, and goes back to his old tricks. Thus, a group of Watchers (who naturally know more about this stuff than mundane scholars) must fight to prevent a repeat of the Santorini disaster.

"FROM THE FURY OF THE NORSEMEN..."

"... oh Lord, deliver us!"

It's the ninth century since the birth of Christ, and while Western Europe is still far from the most civilised region in the known world, it's recovered something of the strength which it had in Roman times. Still, it's far from united or invulnerable; now is not a good time for a new threat to descend upon the peoples of Christendom from out of the pagan north.

The Norsemen are not only formidable warriors but superlative sailors, whose well-built longships carry them all along the coasts of Europe, striking at ungarded villages and towns for plunder. Natural adventurers, with limited land at home, and not averse to trade when raiding looks too difficult, they'll eventually look to settle more permanently. They're also said to know strange magics, though many of them distrust these uncanny arts.

The Cast are Watchers and their allies or associates, sent into the West to assess the state of things there and to track incursions of supernatural evil. The series begins in Northumbria, in the northeast of England,

where a remarkable intellectual culture has developed; Watchers might well have cause to visit the monastic libraries of Lindisfarne and Whitby, exchanging knowledge with the monks and seeking out old and perhaps forbidden books. Unfortunately, many of these same monasteries, with their ceremonial treasures and unarmed occupants, are tempting targets for the raiders. (Indeed, the first recorded Viking raid of all, in 793 A.D., was on the sacred island-monastery of Lindisfarne, which will eventually have to be evacuated for fear of further attacks.) Our heroes are sure to become caught up in at least one Viking raid, and to run across the aftermath of others.

And somewhere along the way, it becomes clear to them that the Vikings represent more than merely human evil and violence. Some of the raiders aren't entirely human—legends that the infamous "berserks" are immune to normal weapons, or that they can transform into beasts, may be literally true—and *something* even worse and much more subtle seems to be exploiting the Vikings' activities for its own ends. The Watchers can't fight such menaces alone; they'll have to ally with local kings and bishops, offering subtle advice and perhaps very careful magical aid in exchange for protection and access to prisoners and knowledge. They may even have to try and establish relations with some of the (human) Norsemen; not all of them are minions of whatever demonic force is loose in the North, and some despise it as foul and dishonourable.

Then, as the tide turns against the evil power, a message arrives from the Watchers' Council far to the east. It seems that some powerful spells or great prophecies have determined that the next Slayer is most likely to be found in this part of the world—and our heroes would appear to be best placed to locate and train her. Locating and protecting such a "Heaven-touched maiden" in the midst of superstition and ignorance is hard work at the best of times; doing so when the dark powers out of the north are seeking to destroy her is going to be a real challenge.

PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

Queen Victoria, now Empress of India, rules an empire on which the sun never sets—and the Watchers have a secret share in that power and glory. From the South African veldt to the icy wastes of Canada, from the forests of New Zealand to the back alleys of London, civilisation marches on, driving back ignorance and evil with the twin powers of British pluck and the Maxim gun.

Not that things seem *quite* so glorious from where you find yourselves. Some of you are Watchers born and bred, or scholars recruited from Oxford or Cambridge by the Council; the rest are assistants and allies, perhaps with





army experience that seems relevant to this task, or perhaps even Indian *pundits*, local scholars who seem trustworthy enough for the Council to authorise provisional recruitment. The Watchers among you have been sent out from London by the Council with a most curious instruction, which is carrying you high into the remote hills of India.

It appears that, according to some of the most ancient records in the archives, the Watchers have worked in these parts before. Well, that's only to be expected; the Watchers have been almost everywhere. But records from before the fall of Rome suggest that *something* deep in India was considered among the most important of Watcher concerns in those days—something which needed to be tended, perhaps guarded, for the sake of all humanity. Now, modern linguistic, historical, and geographical scholarship has determined the most likely location for this secret, and the Council is most anxious to discover what's been lost.

Closing in upon the spot, you begin to believe that the ancient secrets must be long gone. This is hardly an important region—the nearest British officials and the nearest telegraph office are three days' travel away, with what passes for government in these parts being performed by agents of a minor local prince. Then, you stumble upon an ancient temple, where a very old Indian “holy man” greets you with courtesy of a sort but curiously little surprise, addressing you as brothers.

He says that he is dying, which looks plausible enough, and claims that ancient magic ensures that this place will always be watched; the Council's rediscovery of those ancient records was no accident, but the operation of *dharma*, the cosmic law, shaped by transcendent powers in ages past. For if this temple was ever to fall into the hands of evil powers, it could be transformed into a gateway to the realms of the demons, and darkness and devastation would spread across the Earth.

If all this is true, it requires attention from the Council itself, of course. Unfortunately, before you can send word back to London, other factions appear. The passing of the last of the old guardians, or perhaps your own ignorant quest for this place, have drawn the attention of precisely the wrong powers. Its agents are “Baitals,” hideous (if subtle and deceptively mild-mannered) local vampires. The temple may soon come under siege.

TWENTIETH CENTURY BOYS

But “history” for a Watcher needn't mean anything that remote. The Council, as we know it so well from the TV series, was a feature of the 20th century. Anyone who wants to play it that way, without complications, could run a series set some time between, say, the 1960s and the

'90s, with the Watchers at their peak of (over)confidence and a series of Slayers appearing (and dying), until the day that the thaumaturges speak the name “Buffy Summers.”

However, most people will probably feel that it's simplest to play within the timeframe of recent TV shows—that is, during or after the great conflict with the First Evil.

that monster

A plot possibility that Directors may not be able to resist in a U.K.-based series is located in the Scottish Highlands . . .

Loch Ness lies in the Great Glen, a geological fault which slashes across the map of Scotland. 24 miles long, less than a mile wide, and 750 feet deep in places, its waters are made murky by peat washed down from the surrounding hills.

It is said that, in the 5th century, the visiting Saint Columba encountered a water-monster in the loch, and successfully commanded it to begone in the name of God. The good saint would appear to have frightened the creature pretty badly, as after that, specific sightings are rare, although Scotland has legends of various water-monsters—until a road was built along the shore in the 1930s. Since then, there have been numerous reports of *something* in the water, or even emerging onto the land, but details are vague and contradictory, and any photographs are blurred or debatable.

Rationally speaking, the loch really isn't big enough to support a breeding colony of monstrous creatures which could keep hidden from observers most of the time—although it might just support some unusually large fish. In the demon-haunted Slayerverse, though, “Nessie” could be something more uncanny.

Scottish legends mention the *Each Uisge*, or “Water Horse,” and the horrific *Nuckelavee*, which resembles a horse and rider combined, but both flayed, with muscles and inner organs exposed. (The latter, though, is a sea-based monster, with a dread of fresh water.) Such creatures are traditionally said to use illusions or shapeshifting powers to appear as ordinary but fine horses, tempting humans to ride them and then running off to drown their victims. Nessie may be an ancient demonic creature, grown huge and faded; if it ever regained its powers and aggression, it could become a real menace. Alternatively, one may note that Aleister Crowley (see p. [?]) lived near to Loch Ness for a few years before the First World War; the monster may be the result of one of his botched attempts at magic.





THE FALL

Giles: We always feared that this day would come, when there'd be an attack against not just an individual Slayer, but against the whole line.

—*Buffy 7.10 Bring On the Night*

A season set *during* the events of *Buffy* Season Seven may be tricky to run, but could be intensely atmospheric, with a certain downbeat appeal. While the players may know how things will work out in Sunnydale (assuming that the Director doesn't switch them into an alternate timeline), what happens to and around them could look much less certain—and very frightening.

The Cast could represent an outlying part of the Watcher network, suddenly coming under brutal assault by Bringers or other minions of the First—and then, after a few bruising stories, hearing that the Council itself has been wiped out. They would then have to scramble to survive, and, assuming that they could achieve some kind of temporarily secure position, to retrench and build new alliances and connections, all the while holding off those attackers.

While raw survival would be the first concern, Watchers worth their salt would want to do more. They might become a kind of paranormal underground railroad, locating Potentials by magic (their own or cast by allies), protecting them from Bringers, and then directing them towards Sunnydale to be protected by the Slayer and her allies, and to aid the eventual fight back.

They might also contemplate keeping some Potentials around under their own protection, which isn't an entirely bad idea—but if they aren't as strong as Buffy and the Season Seven Scoobies, well, they'd better hope that the First doesn't send too many Bringers after them. They might also try to protect and preserve elements of the Watcher network from the First or from opportunistic scavengers; the power of the Watchers, which the First so hated or feared, lies in knowledge, which is terribly vulnerable. Books especially can burn or be stolen.

Eventually (hopefully) the First is defeated, and then the series will shift again. Suddenly, the network structure which the Cast have been protecting and repairing becomes useful in other ways, perhaps as the nucleus of a new Watcher network. Of course, the more successful the Cast have been, the more attention they'll have drawn, much of it unfriendly . . .

For details of the forces of the First and other aspects of these events, see *Welcome to Sunnydale*.

ALTERNATE HISTORIES

Then again, a Director who wants to try something slightly different could set up an "alternate history" series in which the First Evil never attacks the Council. The logical change point for this would come during the final battle between Buffy and co. and Glory the Hellgod. If Buffy never died then, her friends would never have to bring her back from the dead, and so the universal



balance of good and evil would remain undisturbed, and the First wouldn't be able to attempt to conquer the world. Buffy would be left defending Sunnydale, and many of the events of Season 6 might well play themselves out similarly—albeit with markedly less trauma and angst, so that things might not get so dangerous with Willow by the end. Meanwhile, however, the Council would be left with an active Slayer under the supervision of a Watcher who, while technically part of the organisation, is less than respectful of its procedures.

Brutally, the simplest effective Council response to such a problem is to wait. Slayers come and go; the Watchers endure. If Buffy lasts longer than most Slayers, well, she's mortal nonetheless. The snag is that her successor is already active—Faith, who's stuck in a Californian prison somewhere. The Council can debate whether to have Faith eliminated, before or after anything happens to Buffy, as had already been authorised at least once, or to wait and see there, too. But that need not necessarily concern the Cast, who can be played as hard-working agents of the Council. If they eventually become aware of some ruthless scheme to remove Faith, well, that's an interesting plot.

An alternative alternate would arise if Buffy did die as before, but Willow and the rest of her friends never tried to bring her back, or never succeeded. Again, the cosmic balance would be undisturbed, though matters in Sunnydale would probably be messy and unpleasant, with rampaging demon gangs and distressed but powerful witches. The Faith Problem would be more urgent in such a timeline; if something terminal happened to her (thanks to the Council or not), another Slayer would be activated (see *The Slayer's Handbook* for some ideas on that), and the Watchers might need to direct her against the numerous problems brewing in California (with the traumatised original-series Scoobies probably featuring as Guest Stars). Alternatively, the Council might decide to give Faith a second chance (they *might* believe in her quest for redemption, and losing a Slayer of proven skill really isn't something they like); a team of Cast Member Watchers could be directed to get her out of prison, and perhaps to point her at Sunnydale—where she and they might even come into direct conflict with Buffy's old friends, who'd have little reason to like this plan. They might even find themselves in combat with a magic-addicted and horrifically powerful Willow; see *The Magic Box* for appropriate reference material.



O, BY WISE COUNCIL

Another possibility would be an "Alternate Season Seven," in which the Watchers—Council and network—play a larger role. At the point when the Council was wiped out, it was about to launch a counter-attack against the First, moving to Sunnydale to assist Buffy. Caleb, who planted the bomb which destroyed them, doubtless had the full support of the First to make sure that he succeeded completely, but it's not too implausible to imagine that his efforts might have been detected, by protective spells or sheer luck, and partly or entirely prevented.

In such a setting, the Director might wish to increase the effective power of the First's forces, unleashing multiple Turok-Han, possibly including several of the "champion-level" monsters which Buffy first encountered, along with lots of Bringers. Such a series would have something of the atmosphere of a war movie; the Cast might be leaders or foot-soldiers in a series of increasingly desperate battles. Final victory might still depend on activating every Potential in the world, but the ensuing battle might take place above ground, maybe obliterating Sunnydale in a more piecemeal fashion than by use of amulets acquired from dubious sources. For a *real* war-movie showdown, get the post-Initiative anti-demon forces of the U.S. government involved as well (borrowing material from *Military Monster Squad*) . . .

Other alternate histories are discussed in other game supplements; Watcher groups can be dropped into many of them quite effectively. Watchers could find themselves working with a whole range of different Slayers, or different versions of Buffy.



AFTERMATH

Faith: Looks like the Hellmouth is officially closed for business.

Giles: There's another one in Cleveland. Not to spoil the moment.

—*Buffy 7.22 Chosen*

A Watcher series could also be set in the period *after* the end of Season Seven—either as a continuation of one set during that period, or starting in the days immediately after the destruction of Sunnydale. Remnants of a shattered and traumatised Council are likely struggling to pull themselves back together and redefine their ancient duty in a radically changed world (i.e. one with multiple Slayers). The series must be about patching together a new organisation from the remains of the old, while making efforts not to repeat old mistakes along the way. Normal Cast Members have a very good chance to become movers and shakers in the new Council and network, and to influence its policies and attitudes.

FABLES OF THE RECONSTRUCTION

This would represent a quintessential “construction work” plot (see p. [?]) on an epic scale, with the construction involved being the rebuilding of the entire Watcher system from battered fragments. The core of the group would almost certainly be Watchers from the old organisation, who survived the First’s onslaught by virtue of luck, skill, geography, or not being very important. However, they’d need to recruit extra help, so Cast Members could also include formerly independent operators and allies, hastily drawn in to help with this task, perhaps including formerly failed candidates for Watcher status, people who actively disliked the old Council for personal reasons, and nonhuman beings who the old Watchers would have regarded with distrust or distaste. Welding such a mixture into a cohesive organisation with some kind of coherent policy could be a Herculean task.

The “Rebuilders” might start with access to varying resources, according to the Director’s taste and generosity and the character details. Some of them might have the keys and deeds to old Watcher properties, or be authorised to sign cheques on Watcher bank accounts. They might also know and be known to Watcher allies, who might be anxious to assist their mission, or at least persuadable. On the other hand, they might find that they’re starting with virtually nothing, rebuilding completely from scratch—in which case, acquiring assets, by tracking down Watcher resources or perhaps using magic or special knowledge (very, very carefully) would be part of their mission.

We know from later episodes of *Angel* that Rupert Giles and others of Buffy’s old gang are engaged in precisely this sort of rebuilding project, and the Cast could be allied with them, working in parallel and eventually coming to cooperate, or even in a somewhat competitive position thanks to disagreements about policy. After all, some people might believe that a group run by Giles would perpetuate too many old Watcher habits, while more traditional surviving Watchers might see him as too radical. Still, all such factions are ultimately on the same side.

If “building an international bureaucracy” sounds like a dull theme for a game, there are plenty of ways to spice it up. Plenty of supernatural factions and human operators will surely see the Watchers’ fall as a great opportunity, and seek to plunder financial assets, raid their libraries and stores of artefacts, or prey on the newly-awakened multiple Slayers. Many episodes can involve conflicts with foes; they can also involve some moral complexity and serious dilemmas, if it should prove that the rivals aren’t entirely evil, but have their own legitimate concerns and objectives. The Cast will probably also find themselves dealing with those new Slayers (see p. [?] for more on that). However, the Cast shouldn’t lose track of their main goal, of rebuilding the Watchers—or elevate it above the high ideals which the Watchers were created to serve.

Breaking a “Rebuilding” series into its component seasons, the first is likely to consist of picking up the pieces, deciding on a goal, and finding a place to start. Individual Cast Members may be traumatised by recent experiences, or suffering “survivor guilt”; they’ll also be vulnerable to attacks by minor but opportunistic enemies, and defeating them can help forge the Cast into a team. (Treat this as a metaphor for, say, graduating from university and finding a job and new friends in the wide world, if you like.) Season Two can be about building a secure base, creating a network of local contacts, and establishing team tactics and the subtleties of policy. (The likely metaphors here are “buying a house” and “getting married”; it could be amusing if two of the Cast were married to each other.) Season Three could be about fighting off a fairly serious Big Bad, or establishing wider alliances, while testing the team’s loyalties and ideals against larger challenges. (A metaphor for getting on in a career, finding out that old college friendships may or may not be worth preserving, and having to compromise with reality a little.) Season Four might involve working with one or more of the new Slayers—the true test of a recreated Watcher system (and a blatantly obvious parenthood metaphor). After that, well, the players should have set the tone of things and identified their own goals pretty well.





The fate of the deeper well

Another concern for Watchers—especially groups based in Britain—might be the condition of the Deeper Well, in the Cotswolds (see p. [?]). The Well, which is entered through a gate which appears to be a large tree, and guarded by a force of beings in the form of armoured men, takes the form of a vast pit which is said to go all the way through the Earth. Until recently, it was supervised by Drogyn, an ancient, supernaturally powerful figure who was, amongst other things, known to, and possibly officially a member of, the Watchers' Council. Unfortunately, Drogyn was killed in the events of the final episodes of *Angel*.

Thus, soon, whichever power is responsible for such things will have to find a new guardian. This role will doubtless be granted to some powerful, reliable, and preferably already unageing champion. Note that this won't necessarily be a champion of *good*, although Drogyn was that; the ancient "pure demons" are potentially a threat to the currently-active powers of darkness as well as of light, and keeping them contained is one of those subjects on which arch-enemies could easily agree. For that matter, there's something to be said for giving this task to someone with a capacity for ruthlessness (and Drogyn was rather grim). The guardian is granted authority over the guards, and also the supernatural ability to locate anyone who's ever entered the Well, anywhere in the world.

In the meantime, the Well may need defending against some of the deranged cults who think that the ancient pure demons are worth worshipping, and probably against various curious or meddling sorcerers and demons. Any number of heroes and champions might be asked to help with this, or become involved by chance; given their knowledge of ancient lore, association with Drogyn, and British base of operations, surviving Watchers might very well become entangled with this situation, and perhaps allied with whoever becomes the new guardian. For that matter, the responsible powers might appoint a group rather than a single guardian, at least as a temporary measure lasting a few months or decades; this might seem a rather *static* job for Cast Members, but given periodic raids by the flakiest elements of the supernatural underworld (which is some way beyond normally imaginable flakiness), not exactly boring.

BACK ON THE CHAIN GANG

Wesley: (Reading the report) Hmm. Group of them took out a demon cabal in Jakarta. Another group destroyed the Tanmar Death Chamber. Sounds like they're doing our work for us.

Angel: These are good guys?

Wesley: I don't know. I should reference this with the markings we found, find some clues as to their origin.

Angel: Get on it. If these guys are on our side, then somebody should tell them before they start trying to kill us again.

—*Angel 5.7 Lineage*

One of the loose ends left hanging after the final season of *Angel* concerned the group of magically-augmented chain-wielding super-cyborgs who attacked Wolfram & Hart (in 5.7 Lineage). Their objective in that case proved to be to kidnap Angel, using magic to control his mind, but at the same time, they were also attacking several centres of supernatural evil around the world. One of their agents claimed that all of their actions served some kind of good purpose, but given their proven taste for deception and illusion, nothing any of them said should be taken at face value.

This group could be a major concern—perhaps the effective Big Bad—of a Watcher-oriented series. The cyborgs and their secret controllers are clearly formidable opponents; they use technology far beyond what's currently available to the public, and also highly effective magic. They also seem to have access to very detailed information on some Watcher personnel. (Then again, in the chaos after the First's attack, that information may have turned up on the open black market—a thought which should have any Watcher sweating.) They're also ruthless, efficient, and clever.

Their motives remain obscure, to say the least; taking Angel away and controlling his mind could have been an attempt to manipulate his ambiguous place in prophecy, a strike against the plans of Wolfram & Hart which would also have acquired them a powerful weapon, or part of some much larger scheme. Their assaults on evil targets could have been signs of actual high-mindedness, an attempt to eliminate competition, or pure smoke and mirrors.

As to what exactly they might be—possibilities include another supernatural faction which, like Wolfram & Hart, engages in very long-term plans while happily exploiting technology alongside magic, a deeply secret government operation (originally run alongside the Initiative, assuming that it was *American* government, but now become a law unto itself), or a "fallback" operation by some old group of Watcher boffins and researchers,



using “confiscated” weird science to strike back at evil in a more active way now that the old Council supervision is gone.

Tracking them down and foiling their plans—or, not inconceivably, allying with them, at least temporarily—should be a full-time job for any group, and a dangerous distraction from attempts to aid new Slayers and rebuild the Watcher network. For that matter, they might turn out to be *recruiting* some of the new Slayers themselves; they clearly know about supernatural power, and can at the very least put on a good façade of virtue to cover darker motives.

CASTING THE WATCHERS

Spike: ‘What are you doin’ out here, Andrew?’

Andrew: This is where the action is, bro. On the mean streets. Can you dig it?

Spike: Go back to Wolfram & Hart. Don’t have time for games.

Andrew: That’s good, ‘cause Andy ain’t playin’. (Opens his overcoat to reveal several guns.) You’re not the only one who’s changed. Mr. Giles has been training me. I’m faster, stronger, and 82% more manly than the last time we— (Trips over something and falls to the ground. Looks to see that he tripped over a man’s body. The man’s throat has been slit. Andrew screams.)

—Angel 5.11 Damage

Watchers are *not* all the same. Even the two major protagonist Watchers we’ve seen in the TV shows differ quite markedly in personality, and secondary Council agents have displayed an even wider range of talents and attitudes. Hence, a Watcher-centred series—even one where all the Cast are Watchers—can involve a good range of characters. They can also feature Watcher allies and associates, broadening the range still further.

Most of this has been discussed at length in Chapter 2. From the Director’s point of view, the main thing is to encourage players to come up with characters who they find interesting, and who come with all the abilities and plot hooks required in the series which the Director intends to run. The Cast should *not*, in most cases, consist of nothing but a string of Rupert Giles clones.

Apart from anything else, while the Council is (or used to be) British-based and British-dominated, there’s *nothing* that requires that every Watcher character be British. While a group of American Watchers might seem to lose some of the point of this international, somewhat old-world organisation, it might well be fun to throw in some local recruits and local knowledge for wherever the series is to be set—whether that’s America, or some distant corner of the world in need of protection against supernatural evil.

MOTIVATIONS

Buffy: You’re Watchers. Without a Slayer, you’re pretty much just watching Masterpiece Theatre. You can’t stop Glory. You can’t do anything with the information you have except maybe publish it in the “Everyone Thinks We’re Insane-O’s Home Journal.”

—Buffy 5.12 Checkpoint

One big question when setting up a Watcher-oriented series is what could cause a Watcher to act like, well, a Cast Member. As the much-repeated saying goes, Watchers are supposed just to watch . . . But actually, life is rarely that simple.

One simple possibility for the series set-up is to have a group of Watchers working together to battle lesser evils than those faced by the Slayer; even the old, passive Council might quite easily be convinced that this would be a good idea in some circumstances. Another could be a group of Watchers (or a single Watcher) who break with the hierarchy to work with, say, a very capable Potential Slayer, or a benevolent supernatural being or other “champion,” in actively fighting evil. A Watcher, even one in good standing with the old Council, might well end up working with all sorts of allies if the situation is urgent enough—and once the team has come together and found friendships or shared enemies, they’ll be likely to stay together. This sort of thing could eventually mean that the Watcher is going far outside regular Watcher channels (and has a rather blatant Buddy Cop Movie air to it), but that could add a nice tension to the game.

Then again, even old-school Watchers had their share of active missions, whether capturing vampires for training purposes or chasing down important texts. (A Cast could even be Librarians With Attitude, tracking down overdue books and punishing people who write evil spells in the margins.) And once they’ve got involved with anything beyond pure neutral observation once, it’s rarely hard to drag them back for more or the same.





SLAYERS (AND SIMILAR)

Giles: Yes. No! He, he trains her, he, he, he prepares her ...

Buffy: Prepares me for what? For getting kicked out of school? For losing all of my friends? For having to spend all of my time fighting for my life and never getting to tell anyone because I might endanger them? Go ahead! Prepare me.

—Buffy 1.1 *Welcome to the Hellmouth*

There are various ways in which a Watcher-centred game could not only feature Slayer Guest Stars (or similarly powerful heroes passing through), but a Slayer as a long-term Cast Member. For example, in a post-Season Seven game, a group of Watchers attempting to rebuild something of the old network could find a confused, frightened, but superhumanly strong and fast teenage girl in their neighbourhood—one of the numerous newly-empowered Slayers—and take her in as a ally. After all, they'll likely need some fighting skills as they go to work, and she'll *certainly* need help. In an alternate history, the Council might determine that a cluster of prophecies and threats imply that the current Slayer will need a great deal of assistance and support, and send not just one Watcher, but a small team. For that matter, such a group could come together almost by accident, if, say, a new Chosen One happened to have a Watcher already in place who was on the verge of retirement while being romantically entangled with another, semi-retired Watcher; throw in his future replacement, sent to take over the job with an extended

hand-off period, and an independent Watcher monitoring some supposedly unrelated supernatural activity in the same area, and you have a loose team-by-default.

The problem with this or any other "Watcher team plus one champion" set-up is, in the long term, the Slayer (or whatever) will dominate completely in fight scenes. This is generally true of any "one Hero plus White Hats" arrangement, and the game system is designed to compensate, mostly through the Drama Point rules, but most groups have at least a few lower-power combat-oriented types. Watchers, by contrast, tend to be very cerebral. This could leave the game see-sawing between extended analytical work by most of the group, and outbursts of violence by the single "junior" member. It'd be like having a family composed of a group of parents and one hyperactive child.

Fortunately, there are ways around this. Some Watchers *are* fairly good in fights, either because they were recruited as enforcement team members or because they've spent a lot of time studying fencing. For that matter, the high-power character could be designed to be relatively thoughtful and subtle, or some of the Watchers could be built on the Hero/Champion level, having picked up a lot of power somehow. Watchers could certainly sometimes have *non-physical* power, whether in the form of psychic talents or Sorcery (using the *Buffy* rules for that). Still, the Director should think hard from the start about the intended ratio of combat to cerebral investigation in the series, and make sure that the Cast will be balanced for the purpose, by limiting them to lower-powered characters if necessary.



PLOTTING THE OBSERVATIONS

Giles: I have volumes of lore, of prophecies, of predictions. But I don't have an instruction manual. We feel our way as we go along.

—Buffy 1.5 Never Kill a Boy on the First Date

Watcher-based games should usually be subtly different from the run of *Buffy* or *Angel* games. Very simply and briefly, the difference is—less stake, more talk. But even more importantly, a preponderance of Watchers *should* mean more *thought*.

Watcher stories can feature combat, but even that should preferably involve careful tactical analysis and ingenuity, and ideally come after a lot of research. Watcher groups will do best if they try to make sure that every fight takes place on *their* terms. Remember, this is an organisation which has been fighting vampires and demons for thousands of years, with little more than human levels of skill and a lot of books—and the right choice of friends, admittedly, but only so many of them. History tells Watchers that they can be intelligent, or they can be dead.

Watcher stories can also feature complications such as internal politics. Not all Watchers agree about everything, and sometimes, these disagreements become somewhat heated (though outright violence between members of the Council is rare to unknown). Experts in intelligence and manipulation can use these skills on each

other if they wish. Many groups will probably prefer to avoid this sort of thing, most of the time—*Buffy* and *Angel* stories are supposed to be about fighting diabolical evil, not getting stabbed in the back by your friends—but the odd policy disagreement or squabble for resources is inevitable. And anyway, learning to deal with social complications and disagreements over priorities is part of being an adult, too.

LAYERS OF MYSTERY

Angel: (sighs) OK, fine. I think I liked you better when you just wanted to hit people.

Gunn: Rational thought—it's an acquired taste.

—Angel 5.11 Damage

Hence, a Watcher game season might well have something of an “onion skin” structure, with multiple layers of secrets and mysteries to be peeled away until the Cast reach the heart of the problem. This isn't just a Big Bad to understand, assess, and eventually blow up, but a series of problems, each leading to the next—and quite likely questions of philosophy, of *why* and *whether* as well as *how* specific things should be dealt with.

BIG AND LITTLE BADS

Angel: Now as far as us versus the big bad is concerned... there's only one smart way to play it. We see it, we run like hell.

—Angel 4.8 Habeas Corpus





In fact, the monstrous Big Bad is likely to be far less of a feature of Watcher-based games than of *Buffy* stories; they're more like a typical *Angel* season in that respect. There *may* be a powerful foe behind the problems which a group of Watchers tackle, but even if there is, it may not be identified until late in the season. It doesn't have to be very powerful to threaten the typical Watcher group, but even if it's weak, fighting it might lead to secondary problems or moral dilemmas; Watchers might, say, find themselves trying to prevent a legitimate government agency from finding out about their activities, and realise that stopping them will also disrupt some effective crime-fighting measures, or they might have to use soul-warpingly dark magics to dispel even worse powers in the hands of their enemies. For that matter, the Cast Members may be able to take the Big Bad down *relatively* easily, once they just know what it *is* (after all, why do you think it was hiding from them?), but if they fail to identify it and track it down soon enough, it may grow dangerously stronger, giving the series the atmosphere of a race against time.

"Little Bads," on the other hand, may be numerous, overt—and quite tough enough to threaten a group of Watchers. A couple of run-of-the-mill vampires, easily overwhelmed by an "action hero" cast, can make life very hard for a band of quiet scholars—although the scholars will at least know *all* the effective anti-vampire tactics. Watchers are well suited to "ghost-busting" missions against incorporeal problems, but some ghosts may put up a lot of resistance to being exorcised. Other Watcher-foes may be quite like the Watchers themselves, mortal scholars and minor magicians, the difference being a touch more selfishness, or just dangerous carelessness. Others may be equally mortal, but dangerous in other ways—investigators probing the Watchers' financial affairs, say, or agents of ruthless governments seeking to subvert the Watcher network for their own purposes.

CONSTRUCTION WORK

One excellent season structure for Watcher-based games would be a focus on *building*. Watchers are individually weak; they become powerful when they have a Council leading them, a network of allies and information sources assisting them, and really big libraries to bury themselves in. But this sort of thing doesn't just happen; it has to be *constructed*, possibly in the face of opposition, and sometimes rebuilt after destructive battles or accidents.

The specific thing to be built over the course of the season could be a Watcher "branch office" somewhere in the world, in a new or under-Watched city or country, or a collection of information (a library, in other words). New technologies could require that Watchers acquire new resources; the Cast might be assigned to construct a

sample little bad: The mowing devils

Demons of the Agr'Kerrk Clan (known to a few folklorists as "Mowing Devils") feed on human emotions, greatly enjoying confusion and dissension. (Outright fear, they say, has too strong a flavour, although it nourishes them very well.) They are little superior to humans physically, but they do have one useful supernatural power; a form of telekinesis. This is relatively weak, usually able to exert only the equivalent of Strength 1 or 2, but they're capable of very fine control over fairly large areas—up to as much as a hundred feet across. They are also competent with magic. Some have mastered illusions well enough to pass in human society; others remain in hiding near small human communities, becoming skilled at stealth and camouflage. The Clan is mostly based in Britain, although members have been encountered all round the world; they prefer temperate regions.

Periodically, Agr'Kerrk demons set out to transform human communities into feeding-grounds. Being rather unimaginative, they mostly employ an old-established trick, vandalising and flattening crops in the fields—always guaranteed to irritate a farmer. Some have refined this, marking the ground with arcane sigils which can influence the behaviour of humans nearby or produce other magical effects. At the very least, weird designs on the ground cause puzzlement in humans, which can provide an Agr'Kerrk with minimal nutrition. A few, who like to think of themselves as artistic, work up especially ornate but magically meaningless designs.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of Agr'Kerrk activity. Conscientious British Watchers sometimes set out to exorcise "crop circle" infestations, tracking down and driving off the demons responsible.

secure high-speed electronic communications system, or to organise a mobile enforcement team armed with a new generation of anti-vampire weapons. If the job is one of rebuilding, they could find themselves trying to re-establish Watcher operations in the wake of an earthquake or civil war—perhaps before the last aftershocks or fighting have ended. Then again, the "building" work might involve infiltrating a new university, to ensure that supernatural problems are spotted in good time, or making friends in a newly-independent state's government.





Such a season could see lots of policy discussion, with some moral dilemmas as the Cast seek to preserve secrecy from a lot of innocent but curious humans, and multiple threats overcome (including the odd incidental vampire extermination or demon-dismissal; plenty of vampires and demons know about the Watchers, and many will try to disrupt their operations), and a climax with the new “branch office” or subsidiary network taking the fight to someone who was trying to stop them.

See “Fables of the Reconstruction” (p. [?]) for a slightly different sort of “construction” story, albeit one with much in common with this type.

chaos worship

Many legends claim that the universe originally arose out of the ocean of primal Chaos, and that one day, Chaos will consume it once more. Whatever the truth, Chaos is a key metaphysical concept; some formidable demons embody its power, and others simply speak of it with respect. In addition, some human magicians actually worship Chaos; the example we’ve seen on the TV series is Giles’s old friend and enemy, Ethan Rayne.

Rayne is an amoral, vicious prankster and mercenary, whose actions certainly tend to involve chaos with a small “c”, but how far they are really acts of religious devotion is hard to say. Equally, Rayne is an effective magician, but whether his religion somehow grants him additional power is also unknown. It may ultimately just be a symptom of his personality. Chaos is essentially a mindless force, or rather an abstract principle; it seems unlikely to be “listening” to anyone, or granting favours. Still, Rayne proves that Chaos worshippers can be a menace.

They might not actually be any more *powerful* than other black magicians, but they do make natural, philosophical opponents for Watchers. Both are students of the nature of things, but while Watchers are orderly by nature, aiding humanity in its attempts to organise against inhuman threats, Chaos worshippers despise the idea of strength in unity, revelling in anarchy. Directors might even confuse the issue by occasionally inverting the clash, pitching individualistic, liberty-loving Chaos worshippers against control-freak Watchers.

Incidentally, Chaos worship by the likes of Rayne shouldn’t be confused with the (real world) “chaos magic” movement. These “chaos magicians” deliberately mix and match rituals and magical techniques from every possible source—whatever seems to work best for the individual involved. They don’t specifically worship chaos as such.

THREATS AND TRAITORS

Ethan: The world that denies thee, thou inhabit. The peace that ignores thee, thou corrupt. Chaos, I remain, as ever, thy faithful, degenerate son.

—*Buffy 2.6 Halloween*

This section provides a few new antagonists who would fit especially well in Watcher-based games. Of course, all sorts of other monsters from other *Buffy* or *Angel* books could also work; these are just some especially appropriate additions.

ROGUE WATCHER

Sirk: The template you’re holding provides access to anything stored in the firm’s locked archives relating to prophecies, omens, revelations and so on.

Wesley: Impressive. And does the Watcher’s Council know you stole the only known copy of the Codex when you left?

Sirk: There is no Council.

Wesley: Not anymore, no. So you opted to what? Play for the other side . . . Cross the line?

Sirk: These are complicated times. Lines become blurry.

—*Angel 4.22 Home*

Occasionally, Watchers quit, or are sacked from the Watcher organisation. This may be for legitimate reasons, such as wanting to spend more time with their families, or over honest differences of opinion, such as disagreements about Council policy. Some are expelled for incompetence or insubordination, with greater or lesser degrees of justification (see p. [?]). Whether any members of a new, “post Season Seven” organisation have yet been expelled, and indeed, whether it’s formal enough for expulsion to mean anything, is of course up to the Director (and the Cast, if they’re helping run that group).

Anyway, once they find themselves outside the network, some Watchers retire to fairly quiet lives, only using their knowledge and any magical abilities they may possess in fairly innocuous ways. Others continue fighting the good fight on their own terms. At worst, the Council might see these sorts of ex-Watchers as a minor nuisance and occasional obstruction—nothing to actually worry about as a matter of policy. The *Rogue Watcher* is something worse.

Broadly speaking, there are two main reasons why a Watcher might go bad. On the one hand, some just want personal power. Having learned about the supernatural from the Watchers’ excellent training, they decide that they wouldn’t mind some of the benefits for themselves.



While this is primarily a matter of greed, sheer boredom with the passive Watcher lifestyle may well play a large part. Such selfish individuals may actually remain within the network for years, ferreting out useful secrets, but sooner or later, someone will catch them summoning dark powers, or an alert librarian will spot a pattern of borrowing of more questionable grimoires, and the Council will start asking questions. Unless the individual has a very glib tongue, good friends on the Council, or dirt on some of his superiors, he'll then be out. Perhaps unfortunately, the old Council, being a passive sort of body, tended to limit itself to expelling problem cases, so this system sent a small but steady stream of well-educated black magicians into the occult underworld over the years. Gwendolyn Post is the archetype here.

The second type is slightly more subtle, being interested, like any true Watcher, in *knowledge*, and extending the classic Watcher cool detachment into amorality. The Council provides a comfortable home for born scholars, but it does have its ethical limits, and the pay is merely good, not as vast as some organisations can offer—and it refuses to use magic for some purposes which an amoral scholar might consider worth the cost. Thus, some Watchers leave for jobs which, by definition, make them renegades. They aren't generally directly responsible for much evil themselves, but they offer their services and knowledge to some very dangerous factions—and they may well steal things from the Watchers on their way out of the door. The known example here is Rutherford Sirk, who took material from the Council library when he joined Wolfram & Hart.

Of course, much about a Rogue Watcher will depend on his personal history and the exact role that he played in the network before defecting. While a rogue librarian will mostly be formidable for his depth of knowledge, a former network team member will probably be a ruthless killer with a twisted interest in the stuff he used to fight,

a globe-trotting administrator could turn into an amoral consultant occultist whose high fees pay for a jet-set lifestyle, and a former Slayer's Watcher who went bad after seeing his charge killed could have become a vicious nihilist, wielding the darkest magics and denying with a sneer that "dark" and "light" really mean anything, to cover up his sense of loss and personal helplessness.

Rogue Watchers can make great villains, especially for a Watcher-oriented campaign, where they could even qualify as a season's Big Bad. They aren't as personally powerful as demon lords or master vampires, of course, but their knowledge and magical skill can make them deadly behind-the-scenes manipulators, or dangerous meddlers with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. More to the point, their background and likely personalities make them psychologically effective antagonists for Watcher Cast Members. There's little more profoundly disturbing than an enemy who could be your evil twin.

The Quick Sheet represents a *subtly* formidable opponent—a Watcher turned master villain, with a respectable brain and some talent for surviving dangerous situations and coming back to annoy the Cast again. He probably has a clutch of spells ready to hand and some idea of the Cast's weaknesses; if your game includes the Sorcery Quality, he *may* have a point or two of that. Even so, he's not much of a combatant; if the Cast can fight him frontally, he's finished. So he *won't* let that happen; he'll find minions to engage in physical violence while he remains in the shadows.

Name: Dark Librarian

Motivation: Actually use all this ancient lore for something interesting

Critter Type: Human

Attributes: Str 2, Dex 3, Con 2, Int 5, Per 4, Will 5

Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 12, Brains 15

Life Points: 32

Drama Points: 15

Special Abilities: Ex-Watcher, Hard to Kill 2, Occult Library 3

Manoeuvres

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	12	—	Defence action
Punch	12	4	Bash
Switchblade	12	4	Slash/stab
Popgun	12	9	Bullet
Magic	15	Varies	By spell



Name: Ms. Suddenly-Scary
Motivation: Scores to settle, fun to be had . . .
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 5, Dex 6, Con 6, Int 2, Per 3, Will 3
Ability Scores: Muscle 16, Combat 15, Brains 11
Life Points: 69
Drama Points: 7
Special Abilities: Untrained Slayer

Name	Manoeuvres		Notes
	Score	Damage	
Dodge	15	—	Defence action
Punch	15	10	Bash
Kick	14	12	Bash
Groin Kick	11	12	Bash, May stun
Head Butt	13	10	Bash
Baseball Bat	15	24	Bash
Knife	15	10	Slash/stab
Axe	15	25	Slash/stab



ROGUE SLAYER

Wesley: 'Well, I for one protest. You pitted Slayer against Slayer in a dangerous charade that could've gotten them both killed, without informing me! I'm telling the Council!

Giles: I think you should. We have a rogue Slayer on our hands. I can't think of anything more dangerous.

—Buffy 3.17 *Enemies*

Faith (before her redemption) is the classic Rogue Slayer figure, but the events of the last season of *Buffy* introduce a whole range of new possibilities. While "Slayer potential" mostly seems to be limited to girls with at least a basic capacity for morality, the filter clearly isn't perfect—and a bad environment can damage the best of natures. Anyway, Slayer power is power first of all, and we all know what *that* tends to do to people. The Quick Sheet represents a fairly naïve but slightly hardened kid who's suddenly been "activated"; experience and training can make for something even tougher, up to the Faith level.

A Rogue Slayer is by definition a very tough opponent for a typical group of Watchers, although their knowledge and resources may give them a crucial edge if they're *smart*. A young, newly-activated girl may be a manageable problem, especially if she doesn't have much previous experience of combat, but then, the Cast may feel that their hands are partly tied; she may well be more confused than evil, and given the possibility of bringing her onto the side of good, it'd be wasteful to kill or cripple her, and hurting or humiliating her too badly will just make her harder to handle later.

SEMI-INFORMED INVESTIGATOR

Kendrick: You mind telling me why you're here examining a crime scene that wasn't assigned to you?

Kate: It looked interesting.

Kendrick: Right. You've heard the rumours, haven't you?

Kate: What rumours?

Kendrick: You know what I'm talking about. This girl supposedly has some kind of supernatural powers.

Kate: Really.

Kendrick: Come on, Kate. Everybody knows you've gone all Scully. Any time one of these weird cases crosses anyone's desk, you're always there. What's going on with you?

—Angel 1.19 *Sanctuary*

The Watchers run on secrecy. Even a very ordinary human can worry them quite badly, if he simply threatens that. Unfortunately, some ordinary humans have both unfortunate levels of curiosity and some talent for investigation.

Mind you, even the most competent of snoopers may need some kind of social protection, to shield him from standard Watcher responses to unwanted attention—persuading the target's employers to reassign or take away their job, making them the subject of a pointless but detailed tax audit, things like that. Other stock tactics include buying the investigator off (perhaps subtly, by having them offered them a well-paid job investigating a completely different puzzle), or in the worst case, good old-fashioned blackmail or threats. Unfortunately again, really obsessive snoopers are immune to a lot of this, not having much in the way of social connections anyway, and will ignore all of it. Then again, that sort can usually be written off as cranks.





Name: Wannabe Insider
Motivation: The truth *is* out there
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 2, Dex 2, Con 3, Int 4, Per 4, Will 5
Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 9, Brains 13
Life Points: 33
Drama Points: 10
Special Abilities: Contacts (various), Hard to Kill 1

Manoeuvres			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	9	—	Defence action
Punch	9	4	Bash
Fast Talk	13	—	Distract and misdirect

But there are still too many with the smarts, interest, and friends in high places to cause trouble. Which is annoying for the Watchers, who don't usually have the heart to use serious violence against the basically innocent. Sometimes, in the last resort, they even have to *recruit* problem cases.

The Quick Sheet represents a determined and fairly competent independent operator. A detective may have the relevant Quality (found in various other books) and thus slightly better Attributes and Combat Score; others may have Rank in some agency (similar to Military Rank, for *Buffy* players who don't have the *Angel* rules), the Nosy Reporter Quality from the *Slayer's Handbook*, or whatever.

INFILTRATOR DEMON

Tara: She's not your friend.

Willow: I may have overestimated the "you liking her" factor.

Tara: No, no. I mean, I don't... (Sighs.) I don't think she's... her.

—*Buffy* 4.16 'Who Are You?'

While the Watchers are used to fighting powerful supernatural foes—they may take casualties, but they can usually deploy enough weapons, hired guns, or allies to deal with most problems—there are certain subtler dangers which can be rather more devastating. This Quick Sheet represents a Watcher station chief's worst nightmare; a demon which can infiltrate an installation, ferret out secrets or sabotage operations, and then walk away unsuspected. It may have its own agenda, or have been conjured or hired by another being; either way, it's trouble.

It's actually physically unremarkable as demons go—a match for most human fighters, but not much more—but it has a number of magical powers. It can change shape to any roughly human-sized, humanoid form (taking one Turn to do so), and can pass well enough as any human being who it's had the chance to study to fool even their friends. (Roll and add Intelligence and Notice minus three, resisted by the demon's Brains; with one or two Success Levels, the observer will think that there's something odd about their friend today, but it takes up to five or six to be fairly sure that there's something badly wrong here. Of course, characters who suspect the truth can try asking trick questions or making obscure references to past events to catch the demon out; these

Name: Sneaky Devil
Motivation: If I tell you, I'll have to kill you. So listen...
Critter Type: Demon
Attributes: Str 4, Dex 4, Con 4, Int 3, Per 4, Will 5
Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 13, Brains 13
Life Points: 42
Drama Points: 5
Special Abilities: Shapeshifting, Mental Mask, Retractable Claws

Manoeuvres			
Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	13	—	Defence action
Grapple	15	—	Resisted by Dodge
Choke	14	3	Bash; must Grapple first
Claw	13	12	Slash/stab



creatures aren't infallible.) Infiltrator demons are smart enough to study people who they may have to impersonate at length beforehand, so they don't usually make silly mistakes; you can apply a bonus of between +1 and +4 to the demon's Brains score roll if it's made an extended study of the target, at the Director's option. If they can touch a person, they can even imitate their fingerprints and retina.

The demon also has a mental "mask." It can create a "screen" of surface thoughts which look, to most casual uses of Telepathy or similar spells, like the ordinary, trivial functions of a human mind. The demon also gets a +5 bonus to its attempts to resist any sort of mind-reading powers. Also, The Sight Quality doesn't detect infiltrator demons in casual use, and someone attempting a close examination of the being's aura needs four Success Levels to spot its nonhuman nature. Lastly, if it does get into a fight, an infiltrator demon can use its shape-changing talent to give itself a wicked set of claws.

Note: Magical impersonations of this sort can be quite hard to run, as *players* are quite likely to realise that there's something up, and react accordingly, even when the *characters* would have no way to guess. Directors should work on their straight-facing. It's especially a problem when it's a Cast Member who's been replaced; one trick to use there is to get the regular player to carry on a while with their character, without telling them yet that they've been waylaid somewhere and they're actually playing the demon.

THE WATCHERS AND WOLFRAM & HART

Wesley: You have the wrong idea about this place.

*Roger Wyndam-Pryce: Do I? The atrocities committed by
Wolfram & Hart are quite well documented.*

—*Angel 5.7 Lineage*

If their claims are to be believed, Wolfram & Hart, the international law firm which is really the earthly agency of ancient demonic evil (and the main antagonist for the *Angel* TV series), have been around even longer than the Watchers. Indeed, the two organisations have a certain amount in common—they both seek to influence the conflict between human and demonic powers, often using knowledge and social skills rather than raw magical power—while being, of course, utterly opposed in the most important ways.

Naturally, they've each been aware of the other since prehistoric times. Oddly, though, they haven't actually come into conflict very often.

The fact is, their normal operations aren't usually actually *directly* opposed. The Watchers have always focussed on the Slayer, and through her, the battle against vampires and occasionally other beings who prey on humanity. To them, the struggle with evil is fought from the ground up, eliminating one threat at a time to contain the problem. They may prioritise, and they're certainly in favour of preventing the end of the world, given the chance, but they take the fact of good and evil, and the teetering balance, as given.

From Giuseppe D'Aracio, Scholar, of Milan, on the
Second day of April in the Year of Our Lord 1459.

To My Brethren in the Fellowship of Those Who
Watch in the City of Florence, Greetings.

My work here in Milan has encountered a difficulty. I have succeeded in locating the copy of the Seventh Codex of Aramasirus in the hands of the heretic priest Marcus, and I have been preparing to acquire it from him in the manner which we discussed, after which I would denounce him to the church authorities through an anonymous letter. However, the man I had employed, a competent house-breaker who could be trusted when paid enough, was yesterday arrested for some past crimes which had unexpectedly come to light.

I ascribed this to ill fortune, and prepared to locate some other person of similar skills. However, this morning, I received a letter, informing me that my attention to "certain matters" had been noted, and threatening me in a subtle but unmistakeable fashion. It is implied that, if I do not depart this city forthwith, I myself will be denounced to both the church and the Ducal Guards. Given that my duties in the Fellowship require me to hold certain books in my own library, this is no idle threat. Worse, the letter made passing reference to the *girls* of whom we are aware in both Mantua and Trieste.

The letter was written under the seal of what I have determined to be a fellowship of lawyers of this city. Normally, I would take this as a declaration of war, and muster forces to remove such interference. However, the seal in question bore images of a *wolf*, a *ram*, and a *hart*.

I do not need to tell another scholar of the Fellowship what this implies. We have all read the pertinent texts. I am therefore packing my belongings for at least a temporary departure from the city, until we can take counsel and determine an appropriate course of action. I fear that the Seventh Codex of Aramasirus must, for the moment, remain in inappropriate hands.





By contrast, Wolfram & Hart work eternally, steadily, patiently, to shift that balance—to keep the world sliding smoothly towards apocalypse and ultimate damnation. The “Senior Partners” who control the firm even make something of a fetish of this gradualism; they have a timetable for the apocalypse, and regard grandstanding world-destroyers as nuisances and buffoons. It’s certain that they’ll have known of, for example, Buffy’s defeat of the Master, Glory, and the First—and actually, they would have been very happy in each case. (Remember that they even helped, subtly, against the First Evil.) Evil isn’t noted for mutual loyalty (even the ultimate source of evil can’t trust mere demons), and the Senior Partners want there to be a human world for themselves to enslave.

In other cases, Wolfram & Hart may have been on good terms with a Slayer’s opponents, but not lost much sleep when the Slayer won. Losing the odd client in battle is an occupational hazard in their line of work, and there’s always more along soon. For example, Mayor Wilkins of Sunnydale surely had Wolfram & Hart on retainer for when he needed legal matters handled in the big city, and they’d have helped him with many of his schemes, if he’d asked (for their going rate), but whether he achieved his Ascension or died in the attempt would just have been a minor factor in their calculations. Similarly, the firm often takes on vampire clients; if one of them came under attack by a Slayer, they might have provided advice, or assistance in moving somewhere else, or help hiring guards or setting traps, and they’d have been happy enough if that Slayer died in the fight—but a vampire who couldn’t survive, even with that assistance, really wasn’t much of an asset to the cause of evil.

(It’s true that the very existence of the Slayer lineage represents a large weight on the good and human sides of the cosmic balance, which is why the First wanted to exterminate it. However, the Senior Partners evidently consider that a manageable aspect of the system which they seek to control.)

Thus, Watchers generally see Wolfram & Hart as one of the world’s evils which can’t be destroyed and so must simply be acknowledged, and Wolfram & Hart see the Watchers and the Slayer as just another band of rather futile do-gooders, occasionally a nuisance but even, sometimes, *useful* for their ability to deal with incompetent, rash, or unreliable beings who might otherwise have competed with the Senior Partners. Not that there would be any love lost, of course; Wolfram & Hart were happy to recruit renegade Watchers, while Rupert Giles and his associates regarded Angel and his allies as extremely unreliable after they took over the Los Angeles branch of the firm.

RECENT SHIFTS

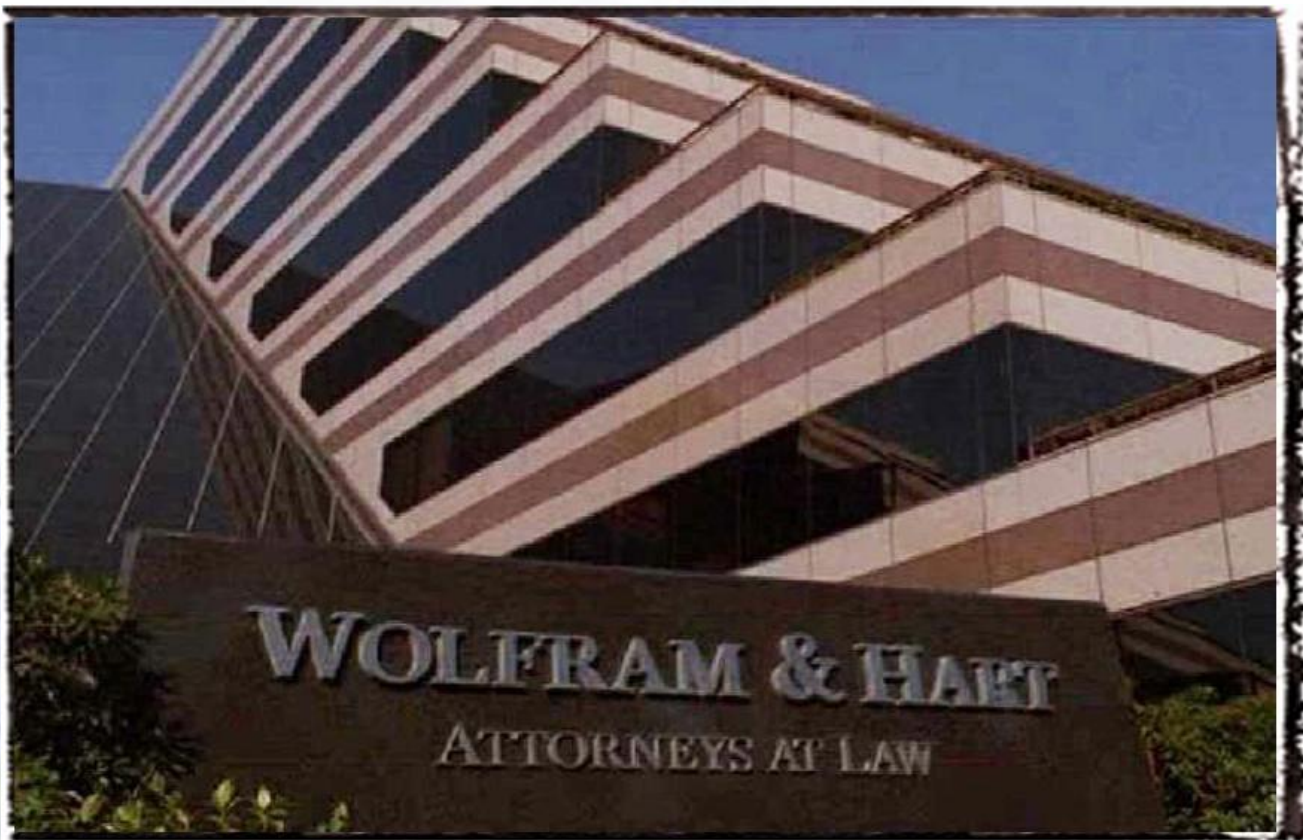
Of course, Wolfram & Hart in general would see the fall of the old Council and the activation of multiple Slayers as interesting. They’d also, typically, attempt to analyse it as an opportunity. They might well start trying to recruit some of the new girls, either corrupting them with wealth and power or operating under false colours, and they’d probably try and disrupt attempts to rebuild the Watcher network, on general principles. It’s not impossible that they’d seek to corrupt a rebuilding Watcher group by offering it help, secretly or overtly, or perhaps alliances against “common enemies.” Some of these alliances would indeed even help both sides—but the Watchers should consider the source of this help, or suffer the consequences.

WOLFRAM & HART IN THE U.K.

Wolfram & Hart have offices all over the world. In the U.K., they would most likely take the form of a large, long-established partnership of solicitors, known to be about 200 years old (having in fact carefully obscured its even older roots).

All U.K. solicitors’ firms are legally jointly-owned partnerships of the senior staff, with all the partners sharing unlimited liability (i.e. they are all personally responsible for all of the firm’s debts). The partners can’t include anyone who isn’t qualified as a solicitor in England. Hence, the fact that this firm is in fact part of a larger international organisation would be carefully hidden from the uninformed. When anyone noted that they share a name with an international body based elsewhere, U.K. Wolfram & Hart employees would laugh, then launch into a lengthy and boring story about the early days of the firm and younger sons going abroad to make their fortunes. The fact that the U.K. partnership still has business associations with the foreign firm (or firms—it’s unclear), exchanging legal expertise and administrative support, could be dismissed as a coincidence, or perhaps as proof of the virtues of tradition.

It’s a standing joke among British solicitors that partnership policy meetings are vicious and bloodthirsty affairs in which senior partners terrorise their juniors, and that senior partners have often been with the company for a very long time, so little about this one need look odd to outsiders. The thing which would cause the most raised eyebrows would be the firm handling criminal cases at all; while some U.K. solicitors obviously work in this field, the largest generally consider the financial returns too low to justify the trouble, and stick to commercial and financial business. Wolfram & Hart staff would tell other solicitors that their senior partners



like to give their employees a broad range of experiences, and find such work interesting. The firm's apparent taste for deeply questionable clients would be something of an open secret in the higher levels of the U.K. legal world, but discussing such facts somehow always seems to be in poor taste.

While the British Wolfram & Hart would have the organisation's usual range of exotic resources and the sort of support staff who one doesn't normally find in court (except in the dock), they'd be rather more subtle and discreet than their counterparts in some other places. In a country where weapons are mostly highly illegal, gun-toting commandoes should serve very much as a last resort; necessary violence is more likely to be performed by underworld thugs with sawn-off shotguns, hired through several levels of deniability. If this seems limiting, having several of the U.K. firm's senior human staff be highly skilled black magicians could compensate.

Wolfram & Hart would doubtless have a close working relationship with several barristers' chambers, displaying their usual uncanny (and supernatural) discernment in finding those whose members are ruthless, amoral, and reliable. In fact, much of the secret would lie in careful cultivation of the right senior clerks—the people who organise chambers, negotiating with the solicitors and matching barristers to cases. (Outsiders would think that they were joking when they said that the clerks of these particular chambers were inhuman hellspawn who could destroy an uncooperative junior barrister with a single word.) Given that barristers are basically highly-qualified legal advisors and courtroom representatives, there's a limit to how much they can do to twist a case directly; what they could do for Wolfram & Hart is point out weaknesses in a case, and advise politely on ways to dispose of them—by, say, forging documents, silencing witnesses, or intimidating the opposition.





6 *The Cat in the Box*

Giles: It's no act. It's who I am.

Ethan: Who you are? The Watcher, snivelling, tweed-clad guardian of the Slayer and her kin? I think not.

—*Buffy 2.6 Halloween*

And so we come to this book's sample episode, suitable for use in a range of more or less Watcher-oriented games.

It's very much an investigative story, in four acts; it's also about the nature of watching, the Watcher mission, and how that which is observed may be changed by the observation.

This episode is designed to be suitable for almost any group of moderate power who can research as well as to fight, but it's particularly suited for a group of Watchers or Council agents. It's primarily an investigation, but as so often in such matters, there's a likelihood of violence along the way, as supernatural forces run out of control.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

The Cast Members are contacted by a Watcher of their acquaintance—possibly an independent, possibly a member of the Council (old or new)—and asked to investigate a disappearance. Doing so, they eventually discover that, thirty years ago, a Watcher assigned to assess a Potential Slayer went just a little beyond standard procedures. Now, that past choice has caught up with him—and the Cast will have to help clear up the ensuing mess.

Specifically, the old Watcher attempted to use magic to provide extra protection for a Potential Slayer who he had been assigned to observe. The girl in question never became a Slayer, the spell remained inactive, and eventually the Watcher retired and almost forgot what he'd done. Now, though, it's reactivated in a twisted form. The former Watcher has gone into hiding as he struggles to control it, while supernatural forces swirl around people he knew—and endanger anyone trying to find out what's going on.





Sometimes, bad things happen to people because they're careless. Walking down a dark alley in a bad part of town at two in the morning, for example, tends to lead to unpleasant consequences. We might wish that the world was otherwise, but that's how it is.

On the other hand, sometimes, people are just unlucky. Walking down a fairly well-lit street in what you think is an ordinary part of town at ten in the evening should usually be safe. Unfortunately, well, sometimes people misjudge the lighting, or the neighbourhood.

On this particular street, there were a couple of people who thought that they were the sort of bad things that could happen to other people. They were slouched in the shadows, talking in whispers; when a single figure came into sight round the corner, they stopped talking and smiled unpleasantly. Then, they stepped out and prepared to be bad.

The woman they'd chosen as their victim thought she heard something, and glanced back, but missed seeing them. Still, she quickened her pace. The pair quickened theirs, too. Then one of them heard something else. He glanced round, just in time to see what was happening, but not in time to scream.

The woman certainly heard something now, and looked back, and then she gasped in shock. But she didn't scream; some instinct made her feel that it was better simply to run. Strangely, though, while what she had glimpsed was a nightmare made real, she found that she wasn't afraid.

Behind her, two unlucky people were dying. But she had always been luckier than she ever knew.

Act One: Introduction

Riley: So, you're retired?

Giles: I'm sorry?

Riley: Or . . . you're working somewhere else now?

Giles: Well, not, uh . . . Sort of between projects, uh, right now, uh, it's a personal—

—Buffy 4.12 A New Man

THE BRIEFING

An older Watcher, one Montgomery Downs, who's been in semi-retirement and living in a small town a moderate distance from the Cast's base of operations for the last ten or fifteen years, has recently been reported missing, having suddenly dropped out of contact with his friends and colleagues. This may be nothing to do with the supernatural, of course, though somehow the betting runs otherwise, given his long and faithful service to the Council. Anyway, his old friends among the Watchers feel that it'd be nice to *know*.

The Cast will be given basic details about Downs; he's 63, and has been in semi-retirement from Watcher duties for a couple of decades, having operated as a low-level observer and occasional agent in this general area for some years before that. If anyone can and does check, he doesn't seem to be showing up to any sort of location spells or relevant psychic powers. Admittedly, the Cast probably lack the information on him which they'd need to get such spells to work reliably—but yes, this might still seem suspicious.

Cast Members can research some more background before they even travel to the small town involved; a lot of relevant public information is available on the Internet, or can be obtained by 'phone calls to the press or police, given a reasonably plausible story. (A successful Intelligence plus Computers or Influence roll might be required, but one Success Level will be enough to get

RUN DOWN

In this sort of investigative episode, the sense of danger and wrongness should generally build slowly. Hence, this story can begin with the Cast going about their routine business—until they get a call from one of their acquaintances. Specifically, they're contacted by a fairly senior Watcher and asked to investigate a problem. If they're Watchers themselves, and there's a Council of some sort around in the game's timeframe, this is probably a plain order, or at least a strong request from someone who they respect. If not, it may be more in the nature of a favour requested by someone whose goodwill they value. If they aren't Watchers themselves, and they don't know any Watchers, or don't respect those they do know, this may be in the nature of a favour traded for a favour; perhaps the Watcher asking for their help has some information which they need to resolve another problem. For that matter, if they're, say, working as private investigators, this might be a straightforward paying job offer. Anyway, they're given some background.





most or all of what's available, given an hour or two. *Relevant Contacts* will come through with the answers automatically.) Alternatively, they can wait until they reach his home area and ask his neighbours, but that will be less efficient.

What they can discover is that, since he retired from full-time Watcher duty, Downs had been living alone and working in the music business, as a manager/agent—moderately successfully, as it appears. (Recent photos show a greying figure doing a passable job of looking cool in a leather jacket.) His latest protégé, a young singer named Dave Hardy, has been making something of a name for himself as a consciously retro but charismatic rock and roll performer. Downs actually disappeared on a day he was due to visit Hardy to discuss his new record deal, and Hardy was the first person to report him missing.

ON LOCATION

When they reach the scene, the Cast will probably want to take a look at Downs's house. Unfortunately, they'll discover that it's inaccessible at this point. The police are investigating Downs as a missing person, and have sealed the place, and may be keeping an eye on it. Cast Members with Crime skill could doubtless break in if they tried hard enough, but the Director can suggest that it'll seem simpler and safer to use some Watcher influence to deal with this, or at least to get a duplicate key from somewhere. This will take a day or so, but there are other leads to follow in the meantime.

There may be some red herrings at this point, which the Director can improvise to taste. For example, a little old lady living next door to Downs might claim that there have been some "rough types hanging around"; unfortunately, these turn out to be middle-aged pals of Downs who are going through midlife crises and riding large, expensive motorbikes. Cast Members who promptly descend into the local supernatural underworld and start banging heads will discover a very few, rather quiet demons-gone-native, who don't know a thing. If the Director wants to let the Cast vent a few violent impulses, there *might* be one or two vampires to dust, which is

always good, but they're irrelevant to the main plot. This is a small town which *isn't* Sunnydale.

There are also some frustratingly uncertain trails. For example, the police have witness sightings that put Downs on his way to Hardy's home, but he apparently disappeared *en route*—along with his car (for which Cast Members can fairly easily acquire details). Still, the Cast can take some time to build up a picture of the situation, and also to talk to some people who *are* relevant.

KEY WITNESS

The obvious important person to locate is Dave Hardy, Downs's client and possible last contact. Investigators can locate him via people in the local music business who know him and Downs, or by making friends with, say, local press reporters with some sort of related interest. (Local cops could help, too, but of course they'd be breaking regulations by giving away personal information, so that'd be more complicated at best.) Or they could look in the 'phone book—but then, they won't find a *David* Hardy, though the address is in there. The simple fact is that Dave Hardy still lives at home with his parents.

Contacting the family will again require some kind of plausible cover story, which must be coherent and presented convincingly enough (probably using a few Intelligence plus Influence rolls) to convince them that the Cast are worth talking to. (The Director shouldn't make this too hard—the plot does rather depend on the Cast establishing contact with the family—but a poor approach should make dealings that much harder.) Claiming to be old friends of Downs, worried about what may have happened to him, is of course a good line, but may hit one small snag, because the Hardy family are *genuine* old friends of his, and will be puzzled and worried by people who claim the same thing while clearly not knowing much about him. Claiming to be, say, reporters, might be safer, and the family won't be hostile in that case, but they're sensible enough to ask to see some ID, and will be cautious about nosy, sensation-seeking snoopers.

Name: Mrs. Karen Hardy

Motivation: Live a normal life, look after her friends and family

Critter Type: Human

Attributes: Str 2, Dex 3, Con 3, Int 3, Per 4, Will 4

Ability Scores: Muscle 10, Combat 10, Brains 12

Life Points: 36

Drama Points: 8

Special Abilities: Fast Reaction Time, Hard to Kill 2

Manoeuvres

Name
Dodge

Score
10

Damage
—

Notes
Defence action



Name: "Cat Demon"

Motivation: Obey the terms of its binding spell to the letter, preserve its own existence

Critter Type: Conjured entity

Attributes: Str 4, Dex 6, Con 5, Int 1, Per 6, Will 4

Ability Scores: Muscle 14, Combat 15, Brains 12

Life Points: 46

Drama Points: 3

Special Abilities: Attractiveness -2, Nerves of Steel, Natural Armour 3, Natural Weapons (medium teeth and retractable claws)

Obligation (to the letter of the binding spell), Regeneration

(Recover Life Points equal to Constitution every hour),

Special Dematerialisation ability

Manoeuvres

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	15	—	Defence action
Claw/Bite	15	12	Slash/stab

Dave Hardy himself proves to be an amiable enough teenager, notable primarily for his passionate interest in old-fashioned rock'n'roll. He dresses in a leather-jacketed style that would have made him look like a hoodlum fifty years ago, but which now just looks retro. He's basically a normal human being, though he does have a few levels in Art skill and the Artist Quality. He'll be anxious to help—he sees Downs as a friend and someone who understands his interests—but he doesn't actually know anything significant that isn't already public knowledge.

Dave is an only child. Both his parents may be around; his father is even more unremarkable, though no fool, and may simply say that he's known Monty Downs for years, and that of course he wants to see him found. His opinion is that something must have happened to Downs—Monty's a reliable sort, if a bit quiet and private, and it's not like him to just wander off—but he can't think what; he guesses an accident, or some kind of blackout. He'll be mildly hostile if anyone suggests that Downs might have been involved in anything illegal; despite the record business connections, he doesn't think that was Monty's style at all. (Of course, he doesn't know that Downs was a Watcher either.)

Mrs. Hardy takes a very similar line, but the cast may well sense something more complex there. (Anyone with the Empathy Quality will say that she's by far the most worried of the family.) While she has the manner of a level-headed wife and mother, she'll say two or three times how much she hopes that Downs isn't hurt or in trouble. If she can catch any of the Cast alone (say, seeing them out the front door at the end of the visit), she'll ask them if they have any idea—any idea at all—what may have happened to him.

Faced with this, the Cast may wonder if there was some kind of secret relationship between Downs and Mrs. Hardy, and if this could be important to the mystery. She certainly seems like a handsome, vital sort of woman, she's in her mid 40s, and while her husband is about the same age and doesn't seem unpleasant, and Downs was rather older, well, there are signs of mid-life crisis and searches for lost youth in all this. However, the truth is actually rather more complex.

A CALLER IN THE NIGHT

Anyway, late that evening, Mrs. Hardy locates where the Cast Members are staying ('phoning round local hotels and motels if necessary—assume that she manages somehow), and visits them secretly. She knocks on someone's door, seeming worried but determined; she evidently has something on her mind. She suggests calling the rest of the Cast together, as she'd like to talk to all of them. She says that she's not sure if she knows enough, but she may be able to help find Montgomery Downs.

Once any other Cast Members are present, she draws a deep breath, and says "As you may have heard somehow, Monty and I . . ."

At which point, one of the windows or doors to the room explodes inwards, as a large demonic beast crashes through, lands on its feet, and looks round, growling with obvious menace. It looks like a large cat, but with a leathery hide with a sickly greenish cast, glowing yellow eyes, and jagged claws and fangs.

This is of course unexpected, though the creature needs a moment to get its bearings and pick a first target. Fear Tests are indicated all round (except for Mrs. Hardy—see below), at -2 for surprise and -1 for the



thing's negative Attractiveness, and then go straight into combat. Fortunately, the creature is smart enough to attack the most dangerous-looking foe first, which means that it'll go for someone armed and on their feet rather than anyone who can't defend themselves at this point.

(If the Cast are paranoid enough to cast magical defences around their rooms before they go to sleep, these may help protect them or even stop the creature entirely—but ideally, there should be some sort of conflict. If it's held off the PCs, it might just attack any innocent bystanders who come to investigate the noise.)

The Cast should win this fight, but not too easily—they may well take a few wounds or have to burn a Drama Point or two. Directors should feel free to upgrade or down-power the creature to suit their combat abilities.

The thing is in fact a magical construct, able to materialise and dematerialise at will in one Turn; when it realises that it's in danger of defeat, it simply fades into thin air. (If the Cast think that they've destroyed it completely, don't disillusion them.) It will rip into opponents hard and fast, but its combat style is instinctive rather than trained, and it's fairly easy to distract; Cast Members may save each others' necks several times during the fight. It can't talk, and it isn't especially bright; its actual objective here is to scare off the Cast, but it doesn't understand the situation or human motivations in any depth, and it thinks that roaring a bit and drawing some blood should be enough. We'll get back to its origins and motives later. It probably shouldn't burn any Drama Points at this stage; it can dematerialise to save its own neck and then regenerate any damage, and it may well need those Points later.

If they're alert, the Cast may realise that Mrs. Hardy seems surprisingly unflustered by this incident, though she's plausibly surprised and concerned. (They can get the impression of someone who, at the very least, must have rolled well on her Fear Test.) She might even help them in the fight, albeit probably only by passing a weapon at an appropriate moment, or just possibly by pushing someone out of the creature's path. It doesn't attack her at any stage, but it pretty clear has enough tactical sense to deal with stronger opponents first, so that's not obviously strange. Still, anyone looking at her in the middle of the carnage will note that, if anything, she seems *interested*.

After the fight is over, however, she'll frown for a moment, and then try to slip away. She's acting scared at this point, but not especially convincingly (roll and add Perception and Notice, resisted by her Brains score, to realise). If Cast Members try to speak with her, she'll say that she doesn't feel safe talking now; she'll hint, rather vaguely, that she might explain later, but insist on returning home at this point. She'll accept an escort for the trip, but won't ask for one.

Unfortunately, though, the Cast will have a certain amount else to worry about. Hotel staff, other guests, passers-by, and eventually cops are likely to show up and ask questions. With no body to show for their efforts, but very likely a damaged room, the Cast will have problems answering these. They may have to resort to polite bribery ("covering costs"), or they may just find themselves ejected from where they're staying in the middle of the night.

Subsequently, they may also try to research what attacked them—albeit with the disadvantage of being away from their library. The Director should apply appropriate penalties to this Intelligence plus Occultism roll, and make sure that the researchers take enough time for the task. Downs's library would be some use here, if the Cast get into his house before starting work, but he's tucked some of the relevant texts away in his cellar and disposed of his personal notes, and his filing system is personal and idiosyncratic, to put it politely. (Reduce any penalties by one if the Cast use only the upstairs section, and treat it as an Impressive Occult Library if they have access to the full collection.)

One Success Level will determine that this *wasn't* a commonly encountered species of demon, and two or three will merely add that there are a number of known demons with feline characteristics and "demon animals," but this doesn't quite fit the documentation on any of those, either. With four Levels, the researcher will guess that this may have been a summoned entity—perhaps more of a construct of magical forces than a member of a demon race, and five will add the unpleasant conviction that such an entity might well be able to fade in and out of corporeal existence; eliminating it entirely could be rather hard.

With six full Success Levels, the researcher will find a reference to "the Sentinel of Bast"—a rather obscure Egyptian spell which conjures a feline being to serve the caster's will. It can be used for quite long-term service, but the snag is that the spell uses a little of the caster's personal life energy, and binds the creature to the caster in some subtle but inconvenient way. Another research exercise, taking as long again, may then turn up the spells described later in this text, one per Success Level.

TROUBLESHOOTING

This is a pretty straightforward opening; while the Cast may pick up more or less information, so long as they eventually get in touch with the Hardy family, things are working well enough. They may chase after a lot of red herrings; this is fine up to a point, but if things get too digressive and boring, the Director will just have to drop increasingly heavy hints that they aren't achieving anything. If they have too much trouble with the cat



demon, remember that it's mostly interested in scaring them off, not in mass slaughter; if most of the Cast are down, it might just depart with a final blood-curdling roar.

If this is the first Episode of the Series, the initial request/order could even be used to bring the characters together. Collaborating on a routine investigation, and then working together to fight a demon, is a fairly good way to build friendships, trust, and respect.

Act Two: Complication

Buffy: My diary? You read my diary? That is NOT okay! A diary is like a person's most private place! I... You don't even know what I was writing about!

—Buffy 1.7 Angel

RUN DOWN

The Cast Members may be bloody, bemused, and even out on the street. Still, at least they have evidence that the problem is supernatural and serious, and some hints to follow up.

In fact, balancing the unpleasant events of the night, the Cast will find that a few more channels of investigation open up for them the next day. Up until now, they've been unable to gain access to Downs's home or office, but now, Watcher influence or whatever else they might have attempted will come through (or the police may remove their guard from the house, or one of the Cast may simply decide to try a break-in and to heck with it). This may leave the Cast with a choice of options: go to the house, follow up the Mrs. Hardy mystery, or split their forces.

HOUSE CALLS

Assuming that they do choose to go into the house, a brief inspection discovers that the old Watcher has an extensive (if slightly nostalgia-heavy) CD and vinyl LP collection, a nicely stocked larder, a computer full of stuff relating to his music business work, and the predictable small but good selection of occult reference works. What it doesn't appear to have, if anyone thinks to check, is anything related to Downs's *personal* career as a Watcher—no journals, no diaries, whatever. Eventually, though, somebody *may* locate the well-concealed entrance to the hidden cellar, if they think to look and make enough effort.

Unfortunately, the cellar proves to have some clever protections; getting in will take more work. (There's an option to include some fancy occult stuff here; mishandled, magical wards might even conjure up another "cat demon"—which would be a big clue for the Cast, if it happens, or if they're skilled enough to analyse the details of the spell without triggering it.) If and when the Cast succeed, they'll discover some basic occult paraphernalia (just enough to enable someone to work

some simple spells), and shelf after shelf of leather-bound journals/scrapbooks—the extremely detailed records of a long-serving Watcher. The catch is that they're too detailed, and not indexed. Getting clues out of them looks to be a large job.

ABOUT LAST NIGHT

If anyone tries to follow up the other big lead, Mrs. Hardy will continue to be evasive and difficult to pin down, refusing to talk to Cast Members at home and maybe even denying outright that she visited them the night before if her family is present. (The Cast might well be getting an even stronger misleading sense of "illicit affair" here.) Eventually, however, they should be able to catch her alone, away from home, for a conversation—during which she remains evasive.

Roleplay this conversation out with some care; it's a chance for the players to get clever and the Director to get them thinking. However, somewhere along the line, Mrs. Hardy should let slip two things. The first is the word "Watcher," which the Cast Members will probably *not* have used in her presence if they have any sense. If they ask her what she knows about Watchers, she'll shrug, saying "What's a Watcher?" and then, if pressed, "I think Montgomery used the word once or twice." She's clearly trying to cover something, but she refuses to be pressurised. The second is the fact that Montgomery Downs was a very old friend of hers (but, if they ask outright, "good grief—no more than a friend") who she first met over thirty years ago—"exactly thirty-two years next month, now I think"—when he visited her parents over some kind of business matters.

In the end, she'll say that she regards the previous night's visit as a mistake. She *will* deliver one more significant-sounding comment, though: "Everything that I might have talked about is past, I'm sure. And what's past is gone. Montgomery would agree with that, I think, though he can be a nostalgic old fool at times—keeping his memories in his cellar, as if they would mature with age."

(The last line should direct the Cast to look for that cellar, if they haven't found it already.)

If anyone suggests that Mrs. Hardy may be at further risk from cat demons or whatever, she'll smile slightly and shake her head. "I don't think so. That's your field





of expertise, I suspect. I imagine that it's you that thing was after." She seems strangely certain about this.

By now, some Cast Members might also be pursuing other lines of research, into, say, local news archives, or the cat demon. There's only a limited amount to find, although Directors can drop whatever extra clues or red herrings they wish. But there is one thing in local news or police records; the deaths, a few weeks ago, of two young males in the town late at night, with hints that the injuries were unusual. There are even references to police following up suggestions of a dangerous animal on the loose. Deeper research, perhaps into less public sources (somehow getting information from police or forensic sources, say) may discover that the injuries were consistent with claws or teeth, and that the victims were less than likeable characters, with criminal records for assaults and muggings.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The Cast have to find the cellar, and have to pick up a few clues as to where to look in Downs's journals. The Director may have to get subtly but forcefully manipulative here. In the worst case, Mrs. Hardy might have to act a little more proactively, giving the Cast just enough information to put them on the trail of her old friend, while hoping (futilely) that whatever they find will save her family from further involvement in the matter.

Contacts with the Watcher hierarchy might represent an alternative source of hints here, mentioning snippets of information that Downs mentioned in passing over the years, or that her was especially active thirty-two years ago.

Act Three: Climax

Buffy: Why didn't the Watchers keep fuller accounts of it? The journals just stop.

Giles: Well, I suppose if they're anything like me, they just find the whole subject too—

Buffy: Unseemly? Damn. Love ya, but you Watchers are such prigs sometimes.

Giles: Painful. . . I was going to say.

—Buffy 5.7 Fool for Love

RUN DOWN

The Cast Members should have a good idea where best to go next, if they've had that conversation with Mrs. Hardy and found that cellar, and if they were paying attention: Downs's journals for a date exactly thirty-two years ago next month. Once they start looking, they'll find the key to much of the mystery easily enough. Hence, this Act is largely about explanations.

(Yes, it's rather less violent than many climactic acts. That's because this is an investigative episode, where the logical climax comes with the revelation of the truth. Violence is deferred until the resolution of the problem, in Act Four.)

SECRETS AND LIES

Downs kept a photo from that period, taken through a telephoto lens, stuck in the pages of his journal (like many others), and although it's a little blurred and faded, the pretty child-face it shows is still recognisable; Mrs. Hardy—or rather, Karen Jones, as she then was—at age 13. The accompanying journal entries show that Downs

was assigned at that time by the Council to assess a potential future Slayer who had recently been magically identified—Karen Jones, of course. He returned a favourable report—if Jones became the Slayer, he said, she'd likely be as good as any—but he didn't think that her parents would be amenable to him training her. They were just too protective and disinclined to believe "wild stories." He was instructed to monitor her occasionally from then on. All this was routine stuff. However, Downs's personal journal shows that he didn't tell the Council everything.

Downs was a conscientious Watcher, but like many others, he couldn't always suppress the feeling that the Council didn't do quite enough to help the Slayers. He was also more tolerant of magic than many Watchers, and fully willing to cast the odd spell in a good cause. The text of his journals is full of comments that show his strong feelings, and there are two which are sure to catch readers' eyes:

"The girl is immensely likeable—bright and talented, taking a natural joy in life. The knowledge that this child could, in a few short years, be doomed to a lonely and short existence, in combat with a series of supernatural abominations, is deeply unpleasant. I've long been aware that the mission imposed on her kind is essentially tragic, but I must confess that, until I was assigned to this task, I did not fully grasp the sadness of it"

"I can only hope and pray that, if Karen is selected by fate to take up the mantle of the Slayer, I and my fellows can and will provide her with all the support that she will need to make her career long as well as honourable."



What is less obvious, though Cast Members may guess if they dig deep enough into his notes, is that he researched a spell which could give her a small extra protection—something which might help her survive those perilous first few months as a Slayer—and cast it, even at the cost of some strain on his own life force. (A semi-permanent spell like this has to draw its permanent power from somewhere.) Anyway, the point evidently proved moot; Karen Jones was never “activated,” grew past the dangerous age, and went on to life as a fairly ordinary woman and eventually a wife and mother.

(If this Episode is being run as at a point after the activation of multiple Slayers round the world, note that Karen Hardy is now simply way too old to be activated. All the evidence is that even Willow’s spell would only activate Potentials who were reasonably young.)

It’s certainly clear that Downs became a friend of the Jones family, and remained in touch with Karen. What the journals *don’t* say, although lengthy reading may find hints, is that, at one point, he even told her about his work as a Watcher (but not her connection to it), leaving her bemused and just a little curious about this

supernatural world which she otherwise never encountered. Recently, after a chance meeting, he was also able to help her (genuinely talented) son in his musical career. He’d almost forgotten about the protection spell.

PAST TO PRESENT

The most recent entries—which the Cast Members may well have found already, in fact—show Downs worrying about *something* which happened in the area, but *what* is unclear. Brief research may tie this up to that assault on the two men. The Cast Members may well decide about now to go back to Mrs. Hardy and press for more information. Alternatively, they may receive a call from her son, asking for help. (Hopefully, they’ve given *somebody* a ‘phone number which he could use, by subterfuge if necessary.) Either way, they arrive at the Hardy house to find Dave Hardy looking scared stiff.

Mrs. Hardy is increasingly uncooperative and clearly in denial at this point, but her son will grab the CastMembers and hustle them off for a conversation. He

SPELL: BINDING THE SENTINEL OF BAST

POWER LEVEL: 7

REQUIREMENTS: This ritual spell takes most of a day to cast, and leaves the caster totally exhausted and incapable of anything except lying down and recovering for several hours afterwards. (No, it can’t be quick cast.) It also requires a supply of exotic spices (including catnip), a good physical image of the intended beneficiary (a photograph will do fine), and candles made from the fat of ritually slain lambs. When it’s successfully completed, the caster loses one point of Constitution *permanently*, and one point of Strength which returns after 1-10 weeks (roll a die). No caster can have more than one guardian created and active at a time.

EFFECT: An immaterial “cat demon” (see p. [?]) is created from magical forces and the will and life energy of the caster, and bound to the “beneficiary.” The guardian watches over its charge night and day, using its superhuman perceptions to detect any serious physical or magical threats to that person. When it detects such a threat, the creature materialises and attacks with utter fearlessness. It will never harm the beneficiary, but no one else is entirely safe. It’s psychically linked to the beneficiary, and won’t usually materialise to deal with, say, a friend engaging in harmless horseplay, or a parent disciplining a child, but any tension between the beneficiary’s view of the situation and the guardian’s mission will have to be resolved sooner or later. If the beneficiary is aware of the creature’s nature, he can *try* and call it off, needing two successes on a Willpower (doubled) roll.

Most occult texts refer to the cat demon as a mindless magical servant, but over decades of existence, it can develop a certain animalistic self-awareness and an instinct for self-preservation. It also has a weak psychic link to the spell-caster, as they share some life-force, and can locate him by an effort of concentration, sense some of his surface thoughts, and so on. If the beneficiary dies, it dissipates immediately; if the caster dies, it loses two points from each of its physical Attributes, permanently. If it somehow succeeds in draining all of the caster’s life-force into itself, however, he dies and it not only retains all of its physical abilities, but can survive the death of the beneficiary thereafter.

ASPECT ANALYSIS: Very lengthy ritual (–2), major scope (binds the summoned creature to one being in the same neighbourhood) (+4), unusual ingredients (–1), permanent duration (binds creature to protected being) (+3), major summoning (+3).





says that he's worried—his mother has been acting a little weird, but more to the point . . . He switches on a tape player and sticks in a cassette, saying that it was something he was working on recently.

At first, the tape just has Dave Hardy singing over an acoustic guitar, but very soon, something else become audible in the mix. Audible beneath Dave's voice are a series of animalistic roars, punctuated with a voice gasping weakly in some strange language—a voice that Dave Hardy can identify, positively, as Montgomery Downs.

Act Four: Resolution

Woman: You sound just like him! You guys with your missions, and ancient laws, and medieval codes of honour! Well, I'm not interested. I'm just trying to protect my baby.

Angel: I understand.

Woman: How could you? I don't even understand it!

—Angel 2.1 Judgement

RUN DOWN

In this climactic part of the story, the Cast finally determine *all* of what is going on—hopefully in such a way that they are able to do something about it. They will, however, have to piece the details together by deduction or guesswork. But Watchers are supposed to be good at this sort of thing.

THE LAST PIECES OF THE JIGSAW

Some important background details: a short time ago, the protection spell which Downs placed on Karen Hardy activated to save her from a pair of would-be muggers. It proved efficient and sensitive enough to deal with assailants while they were still some distance off, so Mrs. Hardy only glimpsed what happened, and fled the scene, confused and fearful. Guessing that this was supernatural matter, she told Downs the story. He in turn guessed the truth, and realised that he'd been careless.

The problem was, he was unsure what would happen if he tried to cancel the spell—or if he failed to do so. He swore Karen Hardy to secrecy, and then simply told her that he had reason to believe that something was protecting her, while swearing that he was sure that it wouldn't harm her. Then, he began some research, and told her that she wasn't to be surprised if he had to go away for a while, or if a few small oddities appeared in the neighbourhood in the near future.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Assuming that the Cast have come this far and are acting like any sort of Watchers, they should acquire the essential information around this point. Dave Hardy should do whatever is necessary to carry them over to the next Act; he's worried, and they look like the people best equipped to help. Perhaps the biggest danger is that some Cast Members will wander off on wild goose chases while others read those journals, but hopefully, they'll be carrying mobile 'phones.

When he studied the problem closely, it turned out that the only way he could find to safely remove the spell was to draw its energies back into himself. So, he began the lengthy rituals to accomplish this. The problem was, he didn't realise that in thirty years, the magically-created creature had acquired a degree of independent will—a sense of selfhood which makes it unwilling to simply fade away. It began to fight back.

SPELL: UNWEAVING BAST'S COMMAND

POWER LEVEL: 1

REQUIREMENTS: The basic ritual for this spell takes two or three hours to work, and requires several animal bones and some camel dung which is burnt in a copper bowl engraved with ritual markings. (A suitable bowl and bones are in Downs's cellar; he used up all his camel dung.) It can't be quick cast. The caster also must perform a small "reinforcing" ritual once a day until the spell effect is complete.

EFFECT: This spell can only be cast by someone who's conjured up a guardian "cat demon" in the past, and if that creature is still active. Over the next seven days, it reclaims the life-energies bound up in the creature, causing it to fade away completely and the caster to regain his lost Constitution point.

ASPECT ANALYSIS: Lengthy ritual (–1), noticeable scope (affects one summoned creature) (+1), unusual ingredients (–1), severe effects (dispelling a powerful creature) (+2).

SPELL: CIRCLE OF MAGICAL NULLITY

POWER LEVEL: 7

REQUIREMENTS: The caster must first draw a circle, usually in chalk or something similar, between 3' and 12' in diameter, marked with various magical symbols. (This usually takes about five minutes.) Then, he must cast the spell itself to "activate" the circle, using a ritual which takes about the same amount of time. If the game includes witches with the ability to quick cast magic, they can activate the circle with a few words and an effort of will—but they still have to draw it first.

EFFECT: This spell creates a barrier to some subtler magics, magical beings, and related psychic powers. The circle prevents anything within it from being detected by any magical method or sense; in effect, the space within the circle becomes a "dead zone" which simply doesn't exist from the magical point of view. Because an immaterial being such as a ghost, or a living construct of magical forces, perceives by magic, anything within the circle is utterly undetectable to such a being. The entity will even walk around the circle while convinced that it's walking in a straight line. If somehow forced into the circle, the creature will think that it's suddenly gone deaf and blind.

The snag is, the circle is a rather delicate magical construct. It can be scuffed or broken by quite trivial physical effects, instantly breaking the spell. Also, of course, some magical beings may deduce that there's a "wrongness" (from their point of view) in the area, even if they can't locate it precisely. The circle is no use against vampires or demons with physical bodies; their senses have a partly physical aspect, whatever their supernatural powers.

ASPECT ANALYSIS: Ritual (+0), major scope (stops a wide range of effects and beings) (+3), limited target selection (only affects magical detection and immaterial beings' senses) (-1), permanent duration (until broken) (+3), severe effects (totally prevents detection) (+2).

He was on his way to that meeting when the creature began to reclaim its power once more. It couldn't at that point manifest physically this far from Karen Hardy, but it could drain life energy from Downs. He quickly turned off the main road onto some rural lanes, found a spot that he hoped would be secluded enough, and began a desperate duel with his own creation. He realised that he was dealing with an active, hostile intelligence, but being a long-time scholar of occult lore, he knew a defensive ritual which stopped the creature locating him properly—

but because it was linked to him psychically, it could still slowly drain off his life force, despite his continuous attempts to prevent it by sheer effort of trained will.

Eventually, it gained enough power to start appearing physically, but it still couldn't locate him, though it had a rough idea where he was. Unfortunately, his defensive spell is somewhat broad in nature—he was improvising, not developing a finely-tuned ritual—and also makes it impossible for friends to find him by magic. He's been engaged in his contest of wills ever since, as the creature prowls around him. Unfortunately, being mortal, he'll not be able to last forever.

When the Cast Members appeared, Mrs. Hardy, worried about her friend's disappearance, guessed that they might know enough to believe her story and to help, and decided to break her promise of silence in the hope of helping Downs. However, the cat demon, still bound to her, sensed this threat. It couldn't harm her, but it could surely drive off these other problems. So, it manifested and attacked. She wasn't sure what to make of it, but decided not to risk saying any more; she believes that it proved that disobeying Downs's injunction to remain silent was a terrible mistake.

FINDING THE ANSWERS

Thus, even if the Watchers somehow get her to tell everything she knows (which would take some effort, though Dave Hardy might help), Mrs. Hardy can't tell anyone much more. Analysis of the tape will be more useful.

Careful, repeated listening can pick up something of Downs's speech, and four or more Success Levels with a roll adding Linguistics and the lower of the character's Intelligence or Perception will determine that he's probably speaking ritualistic Ancient Egyptian. After that, analysing the words with a roll adding Intelligence and Occultism, one success will confirm that this is a spell, two will suggest that it's some kind of summoning or controlling magic, and three or more will say that it's probably a binding and protective invocation extracted from a summoning spell. No roll is required to realise that Downs is (or was) very weak.

The next step might be to try and get some more information out of the tape by technological means. Dave Hardy will suggest this if none of the Cast do; he has a professional interest in recording technology. It requires some equipment which Hardy has available and a roll on Intelligence and Mr. Fix-It skill; if the character doesn't have at least one level in Science, or a background in the recording industry, apply a -2 penalty. If none of the Cast have can manage the trick, Hardy might get a friend in to help; the friend will succeed automatically, but will take time to arrive. At first, the



results will seem disappointing—just woodland noises, such as birdsong and wind blowing through trees. However, somebody should eventually think to ask Hardy about these, or perhaps wonder aloud where Downs might have gone for privacy.

At this question, Hardy will frown and say that there was this scenic area—just a few miles away but very secluded—which Downs was talking about using as the setting for a promo video recording. Alternatively, characters with magical abilities might use the tape as a “sympathetic” connection, which would in fact link conveniently to Downs, going “under” the wards which currently surround him.

Thus, one way or another, the Cast should now have some idea where to go next. Judging by Downs’s state on that tape, they really ought to hurry. They might or might not take various members of the Hardy family along; Dave wants to help Downs, and will probably offer, but can be fairly easily dissuaded—this weird stuff is freaking him out, to tell the truth. Karen Hardy *won’t* offer, as she’s become confused with worry about whether she’s been doing the right thing, but if the Cast ask her to come, she can be persuaded, especially if her son is going—she wants to protect him.

Incidentally, the question of how those noises ended up on the tape is a mystery for later analysis. Famously, “spectral” noises (such as the voices of the dead) are supposed to show up on sound recordings on occasion, and this could just be a side-effect of all the mystical energy swirling round the Hardy family. What with Karen’s latent Slayer potential, the mystic link between her and the creature which has been running for three decades, and the friendship between Downs and her son, some kind of psychic “spill-over” might be possible. Alternatively, perhaps Downs managed to cast an additional spell of some kind, transmitting a weak, uncertain call for help which took this peculiar form. Or perhaps Dave Hardy, brought up in the vicinity of hidden

mystical forces, possesses an unconscious, highly unreliable psychic talent which expresses itself in this way.

COMBAT AND CONSEQUENCES

If the Cast have been reasonably efficient about the preceding scene, they can reach the wooded area in daylight; the more delays they’ve let slow them down (waiting for professional assistance, calling Contacts, etc.), the more likely it is to be evening or night. They follow Dave Hardy’s directions along a series of increasingly minor roads, and eventually turn down what’s basically a dirt track. After a couple of hundred yards, they round a corner to find an ordinary car parked by the side of the track. (It is of course Downs’s.) There’s nobody inside, and the driver’s door is swinging open. A brief inspection shows that the glove compartment is also open, and the key is in the ignition. Dave Hardy can say that there was an abandoned shack in the woods near here, and anyway, a glance around will notice some kind of structure a little way off, and catch a sense of movement.

Montgomery Downs is sitting in the middle of a 6’ diameter chalked circle, surrounded by wrappers from snack food and bottles of mineral water which he fortuitously had in his car. That he’s kept going this long is a miracle, and may have involved mystical techniques; he’s now critically weak (especially if the Cast have been at all slow about locating him), nearly comatose, and not sure if anyone he sees might not be dangerous hallucinations. The creature isn’t in sight at first, but it’ll flicker into existence soon enough.

This might seem like the same fight as before, with the Cast better prepared, but the creature is fighting for its life this time; it’ll materialise and dematerialise to catch opponents unawares, spend its Drama Points freely, and never actually retreat. Cast Members who step inside the magic circle can become invisible to it, but if they’re at

Name: Montgomery Downs
Motivation: Help good friends and repair past mistakes
Critter Type: Human
Attributes: Str 0/2 Dex 0/3 Con 1/2 Int 2/4 Per 1/4 Will 2/4
Ability Scores: Muscle 6 (10), Combat 8 (11), Brains 12 (14)
Life Points: 12 (30)
Drama Points: 1 (5)
Special Abilities: Ex-Watcher, Honourable, Occult Library

Manoeuvres

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Dodge	8 (11)	—	Defence action

Where two numbers are given, the first represents Downs in his current debilitated state; the values in parentheses would be used if he was at his normal, active best



all careless and scuff the chalk lines, that spell will be broken. In that case, or if Downs is brought out of the circle, it can start draining the last of his energy; each Turn where it concentrates on this, it can drain him of 3 Life Points. If he dies this way, it becomes a completely autonomous being. (If he dies any other way, the creature might be destroyed, or it might be able to snatch the fading life-force and survive—Director's option.)

Anyway, the showdown should be some blend of bloody combat, improvised ritual, and chaotic revelations. The Cast may have one secret weapon here; so long as Downs survives, Karen Hardy can try and command it (see the notes on the summoning spell), though it'll only obey for a Turn or two each time, and it can't hurt her at all, even if she attacks it (though it can dodge). Dave Hardy has no such immunity, but if his mother is present, she'll do whatever seems necessary to protect him. If the creature gains its freedom, it becomes a completely independent being, with the savagery of a wild animal and no inclination to refrain from harming *anyone*; it will also be quite vengeful, although if it's hurt, it may retreat for a while to regenerate. Whether it subsequently comes after the Cast or Mrs. Hardy (the symbol of its slavery) is up to the Director.

If the creature is destroyed and Montgomery Downs survives, he'll need weeks in hospital to recover, though within a day or two, he'll be able to explain things and apologise to the Cast and the Hardy family, filling in any

gaps in their deductions. He could subsequently become a useful Contact for the Cast, as his knowledge of magic and practical Occultism is fairly good, but he'll always tend to advise caution—especially after this experience. Dave Hardy's career in the music business . . . can become a whole different running story.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the Cast have reached the beginning of this Act, they can be channelled through to the final fight scene, although the more that Dave or Karen Hardy have to do to get them there, the more stupid they'll look. (Their eventual Drama Point awards can reflect this.) If they totally mess up the fight with the cat demon, they may end up with Montgomery Downs (and possibly others) dead, and a free-willed, savage, fairly powerful demon loose in the world. This isn't an apocalypse, but it's certainly a bad thing; they'll be subject to savage sarcasm from any senior Watchers to whom they report, after which they can set about hunting the thing down—with the knowledge that every disembowelled corpse they find along the way is a mark of their failure. Karen Hardy may still be around to help them, but a fully free-willed cat demon may have lost the magical restriction which prevented it from harming her.





Appendix: British Slang

Spike: Oh, listen to Mary Poppins. He's got his crust all stiff and upper with that nancy-boy accent. You Englishmen are always so . . . (Pauses.) Bloody hell! (Ticks off on his fingers.) Sodding, blimey, shagging, knickers, bollocks, oh God! I'm English!

—*Buffy 6.8 Tabula Rasa*

Like British English generally, British slang varies both by region and by social class.

However, television and modern “classless” fashions are eliminating a lot of these differences; along with Hollywood movies, they also ensure that most Britons will understand, and likely even use, a lot of American slang. (The peculiar upper-class slang familiar to readers of P.G. Wodehouse is more or less entirely defunct, although members of that class may still demonstrate a specific accent—a kind of braying drawl.) However, substantial differences remain between British and American speech, and can cause confusion.

Incidentally, quite a lot of British colloquialisms—especially terms used in London and by the underworld—are rhyming slang. For example, “tea-leaf” = thief, “Sweeney [Todd]” = Flying Squad (although that was actually also founded by someone called John Sweeney), “porkies” = pork pies = lies, “plates [of meat]” = feet, or “boat race” = face.

Angel: You don't speak the language.

Spike: I'll get a book.

—*Angel 5.20 The Girl In Question*

Note that many (though not all) of the following terms are more or less vulgar. Someone like Giles might use them, especially when annoyed—but probably not in front of his mother. Much of this slang is more or less working class in origin; many terms have been picked up by other classes, but some, especially those from the underworld, remain less widely used.





Arse: The backside (same as the American "ass," but slightly more vulgar).

Berk: A foolish person.

Bill, Old Bill: The police.

Blimey: An expression of surprise or amazement.

Blake: A man.

Bloody: A mildly vulgar term of emphasis.

Bollocks: Originally, testicles; now often used to indicate that something is nonsensically untrue.

Bonking: Having sex.

Brummie: A person from Birmingham.

Bum: The backside.

Bung: Bribe.

Bin: Lunatic asylum (short for "loony bin").

Boffin: Scientist (slightly dated).

Chuffed: Pleased.

Fag: Cigarette.

Fagged, Fagged Out: Very tired.

Geordie: A person from Newcastle.

Guv, Guv'ner: Moderately respectful term of address to men (short for "Governor").

Jock: Scotsman.

Knackered: Exhausted or broken down. (Exhausted horses were once taken to the "knacker's yard" for slaughter; the term also carries some suggestion of castration.)

Knickers: Female underpants. Can also be used as an expression of scorn ("Knickers to that!").

Maths: Mathematics (never "Math").

Nancy-boy: Slightly archaic term for an effeminate male homosexual.

Nick: Arrest or steal.

Pissed: Drunk.

Pissed off: Annoyed, angry.

Porkies: Lies.

Prat: A foolish person.

Quid: A pound sterling (currency).

Scouse, Scouser: Liverpudlian (a person from Liverpool).

Shag, Shagging: The act of having sex.

Sloane, Sloane Ranger: A young upper-class female, probably a fashion victim and not overly bright, possibly living near Sloane Square in London.

Slope off: Leave surreptitiously.

The Smoke: London.

Sod: A generic, fairly mild insult (most often used of men), usually implying that the subject is simply annoying.

Sodding: An emphasising term, indicating that something is bad or annoying.

Squaddy: A soldier, usually a private or low-ranking NCO.

Squire: General term of address to men (similar to "Guv").

The Sweeney: The police Flying Squad (who investigate violent crimes).

Taffy: Welshman.

Tube: London underground railway.

Wank: Masturbate.

Wanker: Used as a general term of abuse, sometimes implying that the subject is arrogant or pretentious.

Yank: Any citizen of the U.S.A.



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