

A Cult on the Couch

This Delta Green Night at the Opera is meant to introduce a potential DG friendly, Dr. Manheim Cornwall, a clinical psychiatrist MD who is one of the United States' foremost experts on cults, human persuasion & influence, and the neurological basis of faith. He has had a long career of corporate consulting and university funded research, and irregularly published in the American Journal of Psychiatry, and other respected academic publications. Unfortunately for him, he tends to engage in headline-grabbing experiments. It is his latest research project that leads him into some Delta Green related territory, and gives A-Cell and the PCs leverage over him that could be usefully exploited in future Operas, should they survive.

The scenario is set for a specific time and date, but Keepers should feel free to modify for the convenience of your campaign.

The Cult

The Holy Science Fellowship is a five year old cult of personality that has accreted, plaque-like, around the magnetic personalities of "Adam" and "Eve" Atvar. Prior to founding the HSF, the Atvars were previously known as Teddy Jallon and Mable Skouras, two grifters and swindlers who decided to get into religion for the tax free status and the potentially lucrative self-help seminar business. Turned out, there was good money in the new age religious racket, but then things took a strange turn for Adam and Eve and their growing core of true believers.

Eve, always imaginative, was the writer, channeling wisdom from astral entities who were trying to help humanity evolve. Really, she just got high and wrote whatever bullshit came into her head, remixing liberally with text from the Internet. Adam was the glad-hander and public speaker, haranguing the faithful at weekly meetings and expensive weekend seminars. A gifted confidence man, Adam found it easy to get the sad sacks and rubes to tithe up to half of their income to the HSF as they became enmeshed in the loopy diatribes on the alien DNA in humanity and the plan that the star-children had laid out for those chosen few who were in the Fellowship.

The Holy Science Fellowship was not doing very well, with only a small number of adherents in and around the city of Santa Barbara. Not well, that is, until Adam and Eve came into possession of the estate of Quinn Wilson Phillips, a wealthy but senile ex-sailor and shipping magnate who the Atvar's had convinced to transfer ownership of his estate to the Fellowship. His death was no accident. Driven by greed, the Atvars poisoned Phillips to accelerate the transfer of the estate. The estate included a number of strange curios from his years at sea, including an antique Victorian calligraphy set. The pens, ink, and nibs of the calligraphy set were well preserved, and still worked, or so Eve Atvar discovered when she experimented with them to write out one of her "channeled" sermons.

Eve blacked out. She remembers nothing of the 100 hours she spent writing out the Holy Science New Gospel of Eve (as she and Adam and the rest of the Fellowship have come to call it). Though Adam was concerned at first at her strange trance-writing state, one look at the first few pages of the New Gospel was enough to convince them to let her be. As the Gospel was written, the sanity of the two leaders of the Fellowship was utterly destroyed. The sheaf of densely hand-lettered and illuminated pages Eve produced became the new scripture that Adam began to preach to the Fellowship.

As it is written in the Gospel, now the twenty current lay members of the Holy Science Fellowship have faith that the universe will end coming at Midnight, January 1, 2010. Using the rest of old man Phillips'

wealth, the Fellowship is now situated in a large, luxurious gated compound in Carpenteria, just south of Santa Barbara, California. As our Night at the Opera begins, the Holy Science Fellowship is waiting for the end of the world from an ocean-view hot tub and drinking bottles of Cristal.

The Research

Dr. Cornwall and two of his research assistants have been living on the compound of the Holy Science Fellowship for six months, conducting a covert study of an apocalyptic cult. He and his graduate student assistants, Jayne Boule and Victor Cottonwood, have done this before, and are all quite good at infiltrating the cult mindset, conducting surreptitious photography and taking secret video footage with spy-store surveillance. The group of three is currently quite worried about the change in personality that has occurred in Eve and Adam after they sequestered the Fellowship for the unannounced "Final Revelation of the New Science Gospel of Eve."

From his initial few months of infiltration into the cult, Dr. Manheim concluded that the founders of the Fellowship were engaging in fraud. He saw a familiar pattern in the systematic breakdown of the new members' willpower, replacing self esteem with faith in the charismatic leader's connection to a higher power that would save the unworthy believer. The financial fleecing would then commence, continuing as long as the cultist's worldly possessions held out.

But now Adam and Eve Atvar were different, exhibiting signs of serious mental instability. Adam is now prone to psychotic ranting, quite out of character from his previous debonair preacher self. Worse, he exhibits increasing signs of sex addiction, as he has used his influence over young female and male members of the Fellowship to engage in sex with each other and himself. These orgies are becoming more frenzied and violent with each passing day. As the Gospels of Eve exhort: "Be ye free and wild, for ye know the End Times are upon us all! And their number is 0000112010 "

Eve, for her part, has withdrawn into a permanent dissociative trance, and needs to be fed and cleaned by Fellowship members. Only Eve's writing hand remains mobile, and then only when using the antique calligraphy set. No one has discovered this yet, but should she be sat before the calligraphy set and the quill pen placed in her hand, she will continue to write out more revelations of a sanity-blasting nature.

The Cry for Help

Dr. Cornwall is caught in a quandary in the Fellowship's last hours. The time is nigh for the culmination of his team's work on the study of this cult, and the greatest value lies in observing the cult members and leadership when the appointed time of Apocalypse arrives, and (as has been the case before) nothing happens. How do they react? What do they do? These questions fascinate Cornwall, and he believes the paper, lectures and non-fiction book that he will produce from this in situ experiment will launch his career into even loftier heights. He can't leave at this late stage!

Moreover, Dr. Cornwall has, in truth, committed acts of questionable ethics, like participating in orgies with Adam and other (possibly underage) cult members, and has advised his research assistants to do the same, so they do not break cover. Even worse, on this very evening of the Fellowship's doomsday date and time his team's observation uncovered a horrible truth: The Atvars are guilty of murder of Quinn Wilson Phillips, as evidenced by a sermon that Adam Atvar gave, caught on micro-video, where Adam boasts of the deed and waves the vial of arsenic they used.

It's all become too much, so Dr. Cornwall has forwarded the video to the FBI via email from the Carpenteria compound. The doctor has actually made sure the call for help is sent by a time delayed

email as a computer savvy PC may discover. Cornwall just cannot bring himself to leave until he observes whatever end the cult meets as their apocalypse draws nigh.

The Curtain Opens

The PCs are contacted by A-Cell and uploaded a copy of Adam Atvar's murder confession video, along with text from Dr. Cornwall outlining the covert, embedded nature of his research effort. Certain Mythos references in the rant, quite apart from the murder confession, tripped A-Cell's flags and caused it to be intercepted. The PCs are ordered to proceed with all haste to the Holy Science Fellowship compound. They may arrive by car to the secure, 12' high gate in the compound wall, or alternatively via boat at the beach fronted by the property, with a winding path to the Fellowship buildings up a steep sandy cliff face.

PCs could arrive about an hour before the "0000112010" time, minutes before, or minutes after. The state of the Fellowship at any given point should vary according to the Keeper's desires. The cult could be suffering from calm disillusionment to angry martyrdom to the actual End Times kicking off. Have fun! Whatever happens, Dr Cornwall can serve as a source of psychological counseling, profiling, cult information, even prescription medication, at least until MJ-12 get wind of his interesting take on anthropological psychiatric research.