

Bad Time to Die

It's coming up to the days of the dead in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, a quick hop over the border from El Paso, Texas. Every day is a day of the dead in Juárez. In the last 10 years, over 400 women meeting certain physical criteria have been abducted, raped, and tortured to death. And that's just the ones whose bodies have been found. According to the prestigious magazine *América Economía*, this border metropolis has also been ranked as one of the best major cities to do business in Latin America. The *New York Times* has commented on the exquisite restaurants of Ciudad Juárez, describing them as places that serve "the old-school bon-vivant elegant of Mexico as well as some excellent culinary innovation." In August 2008, a *GQ* article, wrote that "multiple factors, including drug violence, government corruption, and poverty have unleashed a near- anarchic violence that now permeates the city". No-one seems to find any internal contradictions here.

Who's doing it? Who knows. Crooked cops. Drug-crazed gangs. Satanic cults. Snuff brothels. American serial killers on vacation. Drug smugglers. Sweatshop (Maquiladora) owners gone insane with the power they wield over their workforce. Organ thieves. All of the above.

Delta Green doesn't care about serial killers. But when witnesses report that the most recent murder was committed by the animated corpse of the most recent but one, before it was laid by a brujo wearing a mask – then Delta Green cares.

Go and find out what's going on.

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Deep background

(DG relevance: this scenario draws on material from p.133 of DG:EO, the discussion of Carl Allen and Tillinghast Energy, and "The New Age").

The Selenite crystals of the Naica mine, also in Chihuahua, are in fact a spiritual power (MP) repository for the degenerating underground K'n-yan civilization, possibly intended as a "supply dump" for a re-invasion of the surface. "Excess" MPs emitted by the K'n-yan caused the crystals to crystallize out of the mineral-soaked water, and stored the MPs for future use. Accidental leakages of magical potential were prevented by two factors; the water, which acted as a damper, and the careful arrangement of the crystals, which ensured that their emissions counter-resonated and neutralized each other.

The problem: When the caves were opened by the miners in 2000, they drained the water. Slight shifts in the structures of crystal caused by the miners blasting their way in, the absence of water and human contacts have also meant that the magical power emanating from the crystals is no longer self-

damping. The power has been projected in one direction, and concentrated in area of focus around Ciudad Juárez. There, it has interacted with the malignant psychic energies of those committing the killings. The Tillinghast-like, time- distorting qualities of the energy, given purpose by madness, murder and despair, have caused victims of the crimes to rise from their graves and re-enact what was done to them – upon others.

The Brujo: Juan Banderas (I'm not from the Americas, ok? I don't know what is/isn't a plausible native Mexican name) was an everyday miner at the Naica mines, pulling shifts, trying to stay alive and put tortillas on the table. He was also a descendant, like Carl Allen, of experimental victims of the K'n-yan. When he came close to the cave after it was opened, his K'n-yan genes triggered a massive release of power from the crystals, which were constructed to supply power to any visiting K'n-yan who might need it. This also triggered a rockfall, which saw him scarred and invalidated out.

The combination of disfigurement, unemployment, and sudden supernatural power was too much for Banderas' sanity. He has become an infamous brujo, now believing himself to be an Orixá, a combination of catholic saint and voodoo god, empowered by the Virgin Mary and destined to bring about the Second Coming. He wears a cheap Mexican wrestler mask to disguise his scars from the rockfall and impress those who come to him.

Banderas was instinctively drawn to the power focus around Ciudad Juárez (as long as he stays there, he gains an MP per hour, with no upper limit). His residual humanity also led him to take pity on the walking corpses of the femicide victims, and drain the animating power from them. However, he is coming to the realization that perhaps, by doing so, he is delaying the second coming, when all the dead should rise from their tombs. The day of the dead, he thinks, would be an appropriate date to encourage this to occur.

Investigating

Anyone investigating the femicides is likely to tread on some powerful toes; past investigations have shown that the police are, if not committing the crimes, at least colluding and covering them up. Still, the walking corpse problem may rattle them into some form of cooperation.

Banderas is known by reputation, though not name, among the slums of Juárez. He acts as a Brujo to the populace, helping solve their problems, cure their illnesses, petition the saints on their behalf, etc. Due to his immense power reservoir, he is a very effective brujo. The population are very protective of this precious resource and potential leader, and will not take anyone to see him who they think might hurt him, at least, not without massive bribes. He sometimes gives incoherent (but inspiring) public speeches about the Virgin Mary, the full moon, the crystalline nature of time, the Second Coming, and the return of the dead.

Banderas has a file in the US, where he worked as an illegal labourer in a mine before being found and deported by immigration. If investigators can get his name or fingerprints, they can find the file, which mentions that he was born near Naica.

Combatting

The walking corpses of the dead women have the usual near-immunity to gunshots, impaling weapons and other forms of violence not inflicting gross damage. All they are concerned to do is re-enact their final, terrified hours. Unfortunately, they do this upon other people.

Banderas has a tPOW of about 25, and several hundred MPs. Use the guidelines for Valiant as a guide to what he can do, if pressed. In addition, he can, if he touches a person, reawaken their Tillinghast organs (automatic tPOW vs POW of victim) hurl them into N-space (1 mp/SIZ point) or through time (1 MP/SIZ/century) if really pissed. Cells which have interacted with Tiger Transit and the Reverb/Hound case may recognize (CM rolls) that Banderas and the corpses possess some form of temporal energy. Taking a dose of reverb will enable a person to track the movement of the corpses, and resist any attempt by Banderas to hurl them through space/time. It also risks calling a Hound of Tindalos.

Resolving

If Banderas is killed, his plan to bring about a mass rising from the grave will be stopped, but the corpses will continue to walk, and murder. Only by reflooding the mine and/or rebalancing the crystals can the power focus be dispelled. If Banderas can be persuaded to cooperate, he can explain how to rebalance the crystals (but he would have to be present, to sense the shifts in magical power); otherwise, a combination of occult, maths/physics, and luck rolls would be needed to do this. Flooding the caves is simpler, but will shut down the mine.

Blowing up the crystals risks causing an uncontrolled release of power equivalent to an underground nuclear test at the site. Smashing or bashing them around will disrupt the power focus at Juarez, but another focus will form somewhere else.

If the players haven't been through "The New Age" (or are just slow), Cell A can draw some analogies to the case of Valiant, and suggest that Banderas may be "powered" by storage crystals somewhere.

Alzis is, as always, just a phone call away. He will assure investigators he knows just the trick and instruct them on how to deal with the problem with a spell (Contact Hound of Tindalos), almost free of charge. The Hound will indeed go after Banderas and the corpses first, as they possess much more temporal energy. It will then go after whoever summoned it (a fact which will be obvious to the summoner as soon as they have cast the spell, but not mentioned by Alzis at the time...) and then hang around, basking in the focus and killing more people. Naturally, Alzis will charge a lot more for instructing the investigator on how to get the hound off their back.

Shutting down the power focus will not stop the murders. The original murderers, no longer vicariously gratified by their psychic animation of the corpses, will soon pick up their knives again.

Suggested reading

- [Madonna of the Maquiladora](#) (external link) by Gregory Frost.
- [Cave of Crystal Giants](#) (external link) in the National Geographic.

There are numerous books, documentaries, articles, etc about the femicides of Juarez. They're still happening.