

Let's Learn Aklo

A closed timelike curve ball for Delta Green

*James wishes it noted that an expanded version of this scenario appeared in *The Unspeakable Oath 20*, which can be purchased [here](#).*

The Agents are contacted late one evening on their secure phones and given a crash-priority mission. A multiple-casualty, possibly paranormal event occurred approximately 20 minutes ago in a local community centre; local authorities and media, including Sam Misner, a DG-friendly and fireman, are on the scene. No further details are available.

Agents are to: attend immediately; obtain jurisdiction over the event; secure all evidence, and prevent all reports, of paranormal activity; investigate the event; take whatever steps are necessary.

The community centre is a mid-seventies brick structure with a large hall and some meeting rooms and offices. It belongs to local government and is hired cheaply to community groups, churches, charities, etc for meetings, events and office space.

The street outside the centre is stroboscopically lit by flashing red and blue lights, media spotlights and a flickering streetlamp. As the Agents arrive, a police captain is giving an interview to a camera crew; in the background, two paramedics wearing sealed suits are carrying a closed bodybag through the police-line-taped door to an ambulance, and a fire crew are drinking coffee with a security guard wrapped in a blanket.

The centre's booking schedule is on a noticeboard inside the front door. The only booking this evening is "Inaugural Meeting of the Modern Languages School of America Aklo Speakers Association, [Localville] Chapter". An easy (+20%) Occult or Cthulhu Mythos roll confirms that Aklo is a pre-human occult language (see *Future Perfect* Part 1, page 11).

The Modern Languages School of America (MLSA) is a correspondence college which teaches foreign languages via CD, textbooks and postal examination. There is no mention of Aklo in their catalogue (or anywhere except the forum). They encourage students to meet to practice their language skills, and provide an on-line forum. Forum records reveal that the seven victims became active between 12 and 6 weeks ago, creating a few threads in which they discussed their language skills, personal lives, cats, holiday photos, etc., and arranged to meet. The space was booked and paid for by one of the victims.

The Interview

Police Captain Kerr is a professional, confirming that there have been deaths but refusing to discuss numbers, causes, identities, terrorism, Muslims, gun control, overheated political rhetoric, or any other questions "until a proper investigation has commenced and the next-of-kin have been notified". He will resent anyone attempting to cut him off, seize the camera, etc. Such behaviour may cause him to question (and investigate) the Agents' authority to take over the case. Otherwise, when the interview is concluded, he will be happy to cede "relevant aspects" of the investigation to the Agents "in the short term" if shown proper ID (Kerr has 75% Spot Hidden for identifying faked documents, and will arrest anyone presenting any) and given a reasonable excuse "provided that my office is kept notified of the course and outcomes of the investigation". He won't negotiate on camera.

The Bodies

The paramedics are reluctant to open the body bags, and will absolutely refuse to do so unless the person inspecting the bodies presents official ID and wears a gasmask and gloves. They believe the victims died of a new form of rabies, possibly weaponized, and have notified their hospital dispatcher of this (who will notify the hospital's director, who will notify the CDC, who will then attempt to join the investigation – this chain of events takes about 4 hours before a CDC team boards a plane from Atlanta). Inspecting the bodies (7 in total, 4 in ambulance, 0/1d3 SAN) reveals that all have bulging eyes and tongues, congested complexions, and frothing mouths, suggesting asphyxiation; they are also heavily bruised, cut and scratched. Damage to their hands, teeth and fingernails suggests that they spontaneously attacked each other. The paramedics insist that anyone entering wears a sealed suit; they have one spare.

The Discoverer

Richard Gott, the security guard, is in a state of acute stress, sweating, shivering, mumbling about bodies, and incapable of answering questions coherently. He is being looked after by the firemen (who were summoned by his panicked 911 call) until ambulance space is available to take him to hospital; the firemen will prevent Richard from being interrogated, explaining that this could cause fainting. He is unharmed except for a slight bruise on the upper arm; this was caused by the Paramedics giving him an anti-rabies immunoglobulin shot ("just in case"). Sam Misner, the friendly, can describe the scene.

The Scene

One of the meeting rooms is a vortex of destruction. Three bodies lie on the floor, being outlined and photographed by a police photographer (in a sealed suit). There are numerous blood-splatters and glass shards; it appears that the victims attacked each other with shards from a smashed mirror. Other reflective surfaces, including the screens of seven scattered laptop computers, have also been smashed. There are four desks and some hand-written notebooks scattered around.

A Spot Hidden roll reveals that the reflections in the shards do not match the scene. If the mirror is reassembled, it shows the room as it was in the past, and continues to show, in reverse, the history of the room until the 12 week mark is reached, at which point it becomes a normal mirror. Realising that the mirror is in some way journeying backwards through time costs 1/1d3 SAN. Watching the mirror will not help; by the time it is reassembled, the meeting is in the future, from the mirror's POV, and nothing related occurred in the room.

The laptops are the personal possessions of the victims. The laptops are different, but all have built in CD-burners and microphones. Their screens and cases are smashed. In addition, their circuitry and hard-drives have damage similar to that caused by a low-level electromagnetic pulse.

With the right equipment, successful Luck and Electronics/Computer Use rolls resurrect any machine sufficiently to determine that it was running a recording and CD burning program. An additional Luck and Computer Use roll enables the PC to capture some parts of the recording. The recordings are of the victims' voices, reciting words or phrases in English and then following up with a word or phrase in Aklo (SAN cost 1/1d6 to listen for more than 10 minutes; see Moore's *The Courtyard* for a description of listening to Aklo). The English phrases are conventional "learn a foreign language" phrases ("Hello", "How are you?" "Please change the sheets in my room", "The pen of my aunt is in the garden"). Some partial pairs are also written in the notebooks. A Cthulhu Mythos or Other Language (Aklo) roll shows the English has no relationship to the Aklo phrases. The recording spans 3 hours. It seems to get faster and faster (and more and more static-ridden) as the time advances, to the point where the

conversation is a hypersonic squeal indistinguishable from feedback noise. Computer Use, Mathematics or Music skills can slow it down to reveal a) it follows the same pattern of English/Aklo throughout and b) the increase in speed is hyperbolic; if continued, the speaker would be speaking at an infinite speed about 10 minutes after the recording stopped. The computers' clocks reveal that the recording stopped about 20 minutes before Richard Gott dialled 911.

There are no CDs, textbooks or other MLSA materials in the room. They are in sturdy, faded, MLSA-insignia, stamped packages in the building's mail-drop chute, addressed to the victims. If not intercepted by the Agents, they will be delivered to the victims' houses *12 weeks ago*, at which point the curious victims will open the unrequested packages and commence learning Aklo. If they are intercepted, any unattended packages will vanish from the Agents' custody and make their way into the mail. Destroying a package results in the remnants reassembling when unobserved. If the contents are separated, they will spontaneously reassemble in a mundane but entropy-violating manner, e.g. a pile of papers containing the contents falls off a desk and spontaneously slips into the envelope. This is because time is reversing for these packages. Examining the stamps under UV light reveals the acronym **W.A.S.T.E.** Biological analysis reveals that the envelopes were sealed by the victims.

The victim's grieving families can add little. The victims seem random. The only thing they had in common was a desire to learn a foreign language, but none had ever got around to it.

The victims all died of Aklo overexposure, which causes homicidal mania followed by death as the tongue and brain swell catastrophically. The effect of their "lesson recital" was to cast a Timegate spell to 12 weeks ago, into which they posted their recorded lessons for examination; the mirror was caught in the backwash. Anyone attempting to reconstruct the lessons from the recordings and notebooks risks succumbing to Aklo overexposure.

There is no external cause or conspiracy behind the Aklo lessons. They exist in a closed time loop which cannot be broken without major disruption to space-time. Nothing can be done.

SAN Rewards

Successfully containing and removing preternatural evidence (mirror, recordings, etc): +1 SAN.
Containing the story (including satisfying or diverting the police, the media and the CDC, if involved): +1 SAN.

Understanding what happened (the time-loop): Make a SAN Roll.

Pass: Gain 1d3 SAN. Though this case once again brought you up against the unnatural, its self-contained nature means that for once, you can draw a line and declare "Case Closed".

Fail: Lose 1d3 SAN. Because this case happened without cause or effect, it could happen again, anytime, anywhere, without any reason other than the malevolence of the universe. One of those envelopes might be on your doorstep tomorrow. This case isn't closed. It can never be closed.

Victims details

Anthony Hash

Occupation: Military Officer Sex: M Age: 24
Colleges & Degrees: High School Diploma
Birthplace & Nationality: Memphis, TN
STR: 13 DEX: 17 INT: 13 CON: 14 APP: 9 POW: 15 SIZ: 10 EDU: 12
Height: 6'4 Weight: 203 pounds Sex: M
Hair: Dark Brown Eyes: Green Race: White
Build: Average Handedness: Right
Family & Friends: Mother, Father

Anthony Hash was a Navy Seal. Somewhat romantic by nature but currently single, he had developed a plan to take leave from the military and go and fight against the Burmese with the ethnic armies of the Thai/Burma border area. This can easily be deduced from his diary and his assortment of maps, equipment and reading material (Shadow Warrior, Kawthoolei Dreams, Malaria Nights, etc) He believed that Aklo was one of the languages spoken by the hill-tribes of this area.

As he learned Aklo, he developed an irrational fear that the military was spying on him and was going to send him on a suicide mission rather than let him leave.

Charles Skaggs

Occupation: Entertainer Sex: M Age: 32
Colleges & Degrees: High School
Birthplace & Nationality: Washington, DC
STR: 17 DEX: 17 INT: 9 CON: 8 APP: 4 POW: 16 SIZ: 16 EDU: 10
Height: 6'5 Weight: 197 pounds Sex: M
Hair: Brown Eyes: Grey Race: Mixed
Build: Heavy Handedness: Right
Family & Friends: Mother

Charlie Skaggs made the most of his huge size and bad looks by becoming a pro wrestler and circus strongman. He billed as ""The Mighty Skag, Heir of Tarzan, Raised by Killer Apes to be the New Lord of the Jungle". As he gets older he has become curious about what real jungles and their people and animals are like, which led to his interest in learning an exotic language.

As he learned Aklo, he formed the (insane?) belief that he himself really was part-gorilla and has been quizzing his aging (black) mother about their family tree; as her common-law (white) partner was killed in a mugging some 20 years ago and his family never accepted her, and her own family fled the south for the north after the civil war and don't know their roots before that, she has been unable to answer. His effects include copies of Darwin's "The Descent of Man", Lovecraft's "Facts concerning the late Arthur Jermyn and his family", and various racist tracts emphasizing the resemblance between blacks and gorillas, marked up in Charlie's unreadable scrawl.

Lois Huang-tu

Occupation: Teenager Sex: F Age: 15
Colleges & Degrees: Some College Years
Birthplace & Nationality: Fall River, MA

STR: 9 DEX: 14 INT: 15 CON: 12 APP: 12 POW: 6 SIZ: 10 EDU: 14

Height: 5'6 Weight: 141 pounds Sex: F

Hair: Black Eyes: Brown Race: Asian (Hmong)

Build: Average Handedness: Right

Family & Friends: Mother, father, uncles, aunts, older and younger siblings

Lois was a typical first generation immigrant teenager in that she constantly clashed with her parents, who had been sponsored over to the US for their tribe's support in the Indochina war. Her parents decided that they would only thrive if their children became 100% american, so they have never talked to their kids about the war or encouraged them to learn their original language (Hmong) - as a result, Lois feels she has no idea who she really is. She has been learning Aklo under the (mistaken?) belief that it is her ancestral language.

As she has learned, she has become increasingly sullen and withdrawn from her family, but it's difficult to tell if this was Aklo induced insanity or just normal teenage behaviour.

Mabel Lively

Occupation: Professor of Linguistics Sex: F Age: 54

Colleges & Degrees: Doctorate

Birthplace & Nationality: Baltimore, MD

STR: 7 DEX: 14 INT: 18 CON: 9 APP: 10 POW: 11 SIZ: 16 EDU: 21

Height: 5'6 Weight: 167 pounds Sex: F

Hair: Light Brown Eyes: Brown Race: White

Build: Average Handedness: Right

Family & Friends: Father, 1 Brother

Professor Lively studies linguistics, and has been learning Aklo out of professional interest at a language she had never heard of. Her notes record her puzzlement at a language which seemed to break many of the standard grammatical rules.

Her exposure to Aklo has induced the insanity that her colleagues were stealing her work. To fool them, she has destroyed many of her files, and booby-trapped her office.

Georgia Ratcliffe

Occupation: Trustafarian Sex: F Age: 24

Colleges & Degrees: BA

Birthplace & Nationality: Boston, MA

STR: 8 DEX: 12 INT: 13 CON: 6 APP: 14 POW: 8 SIZ: 13

Height: 5'0 Weight: 149 pounds Sex: F

Hair: Black Eyes: Hazel Race: White

Build: Stocky Handedness: Right

Family & Friends: None

Georgia Ratcliffe is a perpetual student who has never applied herself to anything. This is the first time she has seriously made an effort to learn a language, as opposed to thinking about how cool it would be to do so.

Exposure to Aklo has induced the insanity that her house is full of hyperintelligent and malevolent rats, mice, ants, and other vermin. The house is covered with rat-traps, pesticides, baits, etc.

Theresa Hornback

Occupation: Tribal Lawyer Sex: F Age: 29

Colleges & Degrees: LLB

Birthplace & Nationality: American Indian

STR: 14 DEX: 16 INT: 14 CON: 10 APP: 12 POW: 16 SIZ: 12 EDU: 17

Height: 5'4 Weight: 114 pounds Sex: F

Hair: Black Eyes: Hazel Race: American Indian

Build: Thin Handedness: Right

Family & Friends: Not close to her family, but many tribal friends and allies.

Theresa is an overworking, high-achieving lawyer who is burning herself out in the cause of supporting her tribe against racism, exploitation, inequality, etc. She plans to take a long holiday to Southeast Asia, but being the person she is, she couldn't do so without learning at least one language of the oppressed ethnic minorities of the area first.

Aklo has induced in her the belief that the US federal government is planning to "finish the job" and wipe out all the American Indians. She has shared aspects of this belief with her friends and allies, encouraging them to stockpile weapons and distrust any federal agents who might be looking for her.

Willie Caulk

Occupation: Retired businessman Sex: M Age: 66

Colleges & Degrees: Some College Years

Birthplace & Nationality: Detroit, MI

STR: 7 DEX: 6 INT: 13 CON: 6 APP: 8 POW: 17 SIZ: 11 EDU: 14

Height: 6'3 Weight: 204 pounds Sex: M

Hair: Brown Eyes: Brown Race: White

Build: Average Handedness: Left

Family & Friends: Son, daughter

Willie served in the Air Force in the early stages of the Indochina war before returning to found a successful business making accessories for various cars. Now retired, widowed, and in poor health, he is thinking of retiring to Thailand, having fond memories of his wartime R&R there.