

ALBION'S RANSOM LITTLE GIRL LOST

BY IAN STURROCK

BLAKE'S PASSAGE



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GM's Introduction

Little Girl Lost is an Esoterrorists scenario set in the UK, particularly Manchester & Derbyshire. It forms the first part of the two-part *Albion's Ransom* sequence, though it is also designed to stand alone. The scenario revolves around a missing 18-year-old student, **Catriona Van Rijn**, the daughter of **Frans "Smokie" Van Rijn**. Van Rijn is a major figure in the Ordo Veritatis who also happens to be a highly ranked member of the FBI – a former field agent now funded to do research into counterterrorism.

The player characters are brought in to find her – partly as a favor to Van Rijn, but also because there is a risk that she's been specifically targeted by the Esoterrorists to put pressure on her father.

The appendices contain source material on the UK in general, and the main adventure locations in particular, so as to enable non-UK-based gaming groups to run the game with confidence. They also include background information on the UK's occult and Esoterrorist scene.

Investigation Trigger

Catriona was in her first term at Manchester University, UK. Frans had been happy for her to attend college in the UK, thinking she would be safer there than in the US. She was based in a Hall of Residence, but hasn't

been seen there for a week at the start of the scenario. Local police haven't turned anything up.

The PCs are sent in at Van Rijn's request. He feels that if there is an Esoterrorist component to Catriona's disappearance, he'd rather have his own team looking into it than locals; in any case, it will probably be understood by the PCs that although he doesn't mention it explicitly, he's fraught with worry over his daughter already, and would rather have the situation investigated by people he knows, than have her just become another "Missing Persons" file gathering dust on a shelf somewhere. By the time the PCs arrive, the trail is somewhat cold, but there are various avenues they can pursue.

Sinister Conspiracy

Evan McLoughlin

Evan McLoughlin, an Esoterrorist double agent working within O.V., orchestrated the kidnapping of Catriona for a variety of reasons, including as an attempt to strike at van Rijn. Using his role as Mr. Verity, he plans to draw the PCs into a trap, either recruiting or sacrificing both them and Catriona. This is all the start of a major Esoterrorist action intended to strike terror across the UK by a combination of extreme, prolonged winter weather, and demonically possessed, cold-resistant Esoterrorist minions.

Drawing Catriona into the plot was just a pleasant side benefit for McLoughlin. Anything that can hurt O.V. – and the psychological damage her loss will cause to Van Rijn can certainly do that – is a bonus to his plans. That she will either be sacrificed to fuel the rituals, or else recruited into one of his neo-Pagan terror groups, is particularly sweet. If he's really lucky, and clever, he may be able to use her disappearance to ensure the player characters, too, are captured by one of his cells, and either turned or ritually slain. Certainly he regards them as woefully underpowered compared to the size and strength of the conspiracy arrayed against them, particularly considering the amount of information he is likely to glean from them while they are regularly dealing with him as a supposed ally.

Isa Kenaz

Isa Kenaz is a cabal of major Esoterrorist personnel. Its name comes from the two Viking runes, Isa (meaning ice, cold, stasis, or winter) and Kenaz (meaning a torch, a flame, a swelling, or cunning), so could be literally translated as "Cold Flame" or "Ice Cunning." In the UK, cabals are the next stage of Esoterrorist organization beyond cells. Each cell leader reports to a cabal member, generally through a series of cut-outs, dead-letter drops, or other covert communications, and each cabal member tends to run one to four cells at a time. McLoughlin is a cabal member himself, running several Manchester- and Derbyshire-based cells, always careful to minimize any trail leading back to him.

Isa Kenaz cabal is predominantly apocalyptic in its aims. Its members have a sincere, religious belief in a coming Ragnarok that will destroy the Earth and the gods alike. They worship the villains from the Norse pantheon: the Rime and Ice Giants, Surtur the Fire Giant, Loki the demon-god, and Loki's three monstrous children Hel, Jormungandr, and Fenris. They believe that the world will end first in ice, then finally in flames; the war of the Gods, the Ragnarok. They consider the

mystical poet William Blake to have been a prophet of this apocalypse; he wrote of the death of Albion, and they hope to bring that death about directly.

Isa Kenaz has a plot to blast the UK with extreme winter weather (blizzards, severe storms, and so on – the Fimbulwinter of Northern European legend). Once the country is locked down with ice and snow, they'll conjure up demonic entities that will possess their human minions to resemble the rime giants and trolls of old Saxon and Viking myth – making them savage, brutal, and resistant to the cold – who will then rove the country and slay folk in their homes. Though they'll only be able to call a small number of such demons, the Esoterrorists plan to capitalize on the inevitable looting & violence that will occur anyway with a "natural" disaster on the scale they envisage. They have also been infiltrating British neo-Pagan groups, and expect to successfully recruit a number of hardcore Satanic and other diabolic sects to their cause to spread further terror. If they can emphasize the apparently supernatural nature of the weather & the accompanying devastation, they'll score a major victory for belief in the occult. They think they will also create the right conditions for Ragnarok, with their Fimbulwinter forming a kind of prelude to apocalypse.

The extremes of weather will be created by a number of blood sacrifices performed at standing stones and other Neolithic sites along the UK's ley-lines. The power of these blood sacrifices will be enhanced massively by a major media campaign by Isa Kenaz to blame a group of scientific researchers for the extreme weather, emphasizing the "Scientists Meddling with Forces Beyond their Ken" angle. One Isa Kenaz-run cell (within Ordo Templi Orientis of Maat, OTOM) has recruited a researcher, **Anton Bennett**, to be their patsy, soon to die as the first blizzard destroys his laboratory. Another cell is in place as the editorial team of a UK tabloid newspaper to push their agenda. (The science



behind this does not hold water, but this is irrelevant to the Esoterrorists; they know that so long as the general public believe in it for a while, later rebuttals by eminent scientists will be too late.)

Once the first blizzard has begun, apparently bursting forth from the lab, the Isa Kenaz cabal plan to provide more power to the storms, both by people's belief in the supernatural and mistrust of science, and by those further blood sacrifices, up and down the Pennine range of mountains and hills, the backbone of Britain.

Most of this will become apparent to the players only with part II of the Albion's Ransom campaign, *The Worms of Sixty Winters*. The backstory is provided here primarily for the benefit of the GM.

Manchester's Esoterrorists

Evan McLoughlin runs the following Esoterrorist cells that are relevant to the adventure. See Known Occult Groups on page 96 for more general information. *OBOD Manchester Leadership:* The Manchester branch of the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids is run by a Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary, all of whom are Esoterrorists, as are a couple of other high-ranking members (notably **Laurence Fairclough**, whose Druidic pupil **Stephen Hodge** has seduced Catriona, and **Andrew Deaver**, Hodge's lawyer; see p. 49). A sixth high-ranking member, Tom Sinclair, is a sleeper, operating the Manchester "Hell Haven" (see p. 10), but is not in direct contact with the main OBOD Esoterrorist cell. These five ensure that the OBOD branch in Manchester is a useful "funnel" for bright young occultists to work for the Esoterrorists even as they believe themselves to be doing more positive, Earth-centered magical work. They meet as the "Black Druid Sanctum;" McLoughlin occasionally attends too, masked, as the "Black Archdruid."

OTOA Leadership: This group is international in scope, but grew out of the Manchester occult scene, and is still very much concentrated in and run from Manchester. It's a limited company in form, owned by Ra-Hoor-Khuit Books, which in turn is wholly owned by Alkahest, a Swiss conglomerate, through a variety of fronts in various countries... Alkahest being owned by McLoughlin (a 2-point **Forensic Accounting** spend could eventually track down Alkahest & McLoughlin, if the characters ever got access to OTOA's financial records & company information). Elspeth McGregor-Mathers, the current Outer Head of OTOA, received a large payment for the ownership of OTOA. She has no idea who the ultimate owner is, but she receives regular instructions via encrypted email from "the shareholder," i.e. McLoughlin again. For the most part she uses OTOA to further her own deviant ends. At present, she has encouraged several OTOA members to become directly involved with the anti-quarrying campaign at the Nine Ladies Stone Circle (where the climax of this adventure takes place), under the leadership of her deputy within OTOA and fellow Esoterrorist, **Francis Kelly**.

OTOM Manchester Leadership: OTOM within Manchester has around 25 members, but only a handful form the Esoterrorist cell that runs the group. Of these, only two need concern us for the moment: **Will Carter**, relatively low-ranking within OTOM, but a significant figure within the Esoterrorists, and Colin Scrimmager, the Grand Master of the Manchester Lodge. Carter reports to Scrimmager directly, and Scrimmager to McLoughlin.

Trail of Clues

The PCs interview Catriona's flat-mates, discover who her friends were, interview them, investigate her apartment, and perhaps investigate a couple of the student societies she joined. Gradually they form a picture of a counter-cultural hippy chick drawn to eco-activism, neo-Paganism, and

mild to moderate drug use. At this point there is no real suggestion that she has been targeted by the Esoterrorists; in fact, the first few chapters, set around the University, are designed to give the characters the impression that there is probably nothing enormously sinister about Catriona's disappearance, other than maybe the drug use.

They are able to ascertain from CCTV and other records that she spent the evening of her disappearance with lecturer Stephen Hodge. Interviewing him, they discover that she spent the night with him too, and planned to head off in the morning on an organized trip by the University's "Earth Action" society to the Nine Ladies Stone Circle in Derbyshire. They may head straight there, or investigate various side clues en route.

This is a 4000-year-old Neolithic monument that's also the site of a protest camp against quarrying. The camp has been partially taken over by the Esoterrorists after a long-term infiltration campaign. Though the hippies & activists there seem fairly typical, most of them are either Esoterrorists, or have been hoodwinked by the Esoterrorists into going along with them (ignorant, of course, of their true goals). The PCs will need to tread carefully if they're to avoid either turning the whole camp against themselves (perhaps violently), or being successfully deceived by the Esoterrorist elements and drugged or otherwise overpowered.

Catriona is in a tunnel, deep in the former quarry that the protest camp is built onto. This section of tunnels is separate from most of those built by the activists. She's with various other potential victims/recruits – McLoughlin has been using psy-ops techniques on them to either recruit them to the Esoterrorists, or torment them prior to sacrifice, depending on which way they end up.

Drugs in The Esoterrorists

Though *The Esoterrorists* rulebook refers to drugs a couple of times, it doesn't include any rules for them. It is suggested, in keeping with the principles of the game, that GMs use the "TV reality" of drug effects as a guide, over and above any rules. This is particularly important when NPCs are on drugs. Any effect you have heard of, through news story, fictional cop show, or anecdote, is possible so long as it is dramatically appropriate.

When characters are drugged, more specific game effects may be useful. This is especially the case for players who dislike the idea of losing control over their character's actions and faculties – giving them a concrete game penalty or other effect may be preferable to them than being told to "act as though you're tripping out for a bit." The following rules can be used for drugging characters, and as a guideline for dramatically interesting drug effects on NPCs.

GAME EFFECTS EXPLAINED

Analgesic: If the character becomes "Hurt" (Health Pool between 0 and -5), he does not suffer increased Difficulty numbers as a penalty.

Depressant, Major: All General skills have their Difficulties increased by +3, except for Health, Scuffling, and Stability; each academic or technical Investigative skill use costs +2 points, and each interpersonal Investigative skill use costs +1 point (even skill uses that would normally be free).

Depressant, Mild: All General skills have their Difficulties increased by +1, except for Health, Scuffling, and Stability; each academic or technical Investigative skill use costs +1 point (even skill uses that would normally be free).

Hallucinations, Major: All General skills have their Difficulties increased by +3, except for Health; each academic or technical Investigative skill use is impossible, and each interpersonal Investigative skill use costs +2 points (even skill uses that would normally be free).

Hallucinations, Mild: All General skills have their Difficulties increased by +1, except for Health; Investigative skill use costs +1 point (even skill uses that would normally be free).

Hallucinations, Overwhelming: All General skills have their Difficulties increased by +4, except for Health; Investigative skill use is impossible.

Stability Loss: Make a Stability Test as normal; if it is failed, the relevant number is lost from the character's Stability Pool.

Stimulant, Major: Surveillance tasks are easier (Difficulty reduced by 1); all other General skills have their Difficulties increased by +1, except for Health and Scuffling; each Investigative skill use costs +2 point (even skill uses that would normally be free).

Stimulant, Minor: Surveillance tasks are easier (Difficulty reduced by 1); each Investigative skill use costs +1 point (even skill uses that would normally be free).

-X Health Pool: The number is subtracted from the character's current Health Pool.

Roleplay Effects

All the Roleplay Effects listed are essentially optional. They're intended as guides for a drugged character's roleplaying, not requirements. Most of the time when drugged, the character should be experiencing one or more of the Roleplay Effects – but it's up to the player which ones to roleplay at any given time.

Speed of Effect

Generally, an injected drug takes effect instantaneously, a snorted or inhaled drug within 5 minutes, and an ingested drug within 30 to 60 minutes.

Combining Drugs

The newspaper reports all seem to mention "a lethal cocktail of alcohol and barbiturates" and so on, so it's likely that characters will at some point be subjected to more than one drug. Handle this situation by deciding whether the two drugs are "Like" (that is, have at least one identical Game Effect, such as Mild Hallucinations), or "Unlike" (that is, have different Game Effects), then checking the following possibilities:

Like Drug + Like Drug (each at a Standard Dose), combined: Equivalent to a High Dose of the one that is most debilitating, and a Standard Dose of the less debilitating drug.

Like Drug + Like Drug (one or both at a High Dose), combined: Equivalent to a High Dose of both drugs.

Unlike Drug + Unlike Drug, combined: All effects are cumulative.

If both drugs are asterisked (*) there is an additional effect of -1 Health Pool (as well as any relevant Health Pool penalties for each individual drug).

Resisting Drugs

A character under the effects of drugs can make a Stability Test to throw off one drug effect for as long as it takes to perform one specific task.

Treating Drug Use

A character with the Medic ability can spend points to treat a drug-addled character with an antidote. This will take around 20 minutes, and removes the Game Effects of a Standard Dose (at a cost of 1 point) or a High Dose (at

a cost of 2 point). The Roleplay Effects still stand, though they are reduced.

Habituation and Tolerance

An experienced drug user will be significantly less effected than one who has never or rarely taken drugs before. For characters, this will usually be represented by the Streetwise skill and an appropriate background. The GM may allow such a player to make a 1-point Streetwise spend to reduce some or all of the effects of a dose of drugs.

Drug Type	Taken By	Duration	Game Effects		Roleplay Effects	
			Standard Dose	High Dose	Standard Dose	High Dose
Alcohol* (Beer, Wine, Liquor)	Ingestion	4 to 8 hours	Mild Depressant; -1 Health Pool	Major Depressant; -4 Health Pool	Relaxation, mild euphoria, breakdown of inhibitions	Slurred speech, drowsiness, stupor, unconsciousness.
Amphetamines*	Ingestion, injection, snorting	4 to 8 hours	Mild Stimulant; Stability Loss 1	Major Stimulant; Stability Loss 3	Excitation, euphoria	Restlessness, hyperactivity, rapid speech, paranoia
Barbiturates* (Phenobarital, Seconal, etc.)	Ingestion	4 to 8 hours	Mild Depressant; -1 Health Pool	Major Depressant; -5 Health Pool	Relaxation, euphoria, drowsiness	Slurred speech, stupor, unconsciousness.
Cannabis	Inhalation, ingestion	2 to 4 hours	Mild Depressant	Major Depressant; Stability Loss 1	Relaxation, mild euphoria, breakdown of inhibitions, altered perceptions	Panic, paranoia, stupor
Cocaine* (including Crack)	Inhalation, ingestion, injection, snorting	20 minutes to several hours	Mild Stimulant; Stability Loss 2	Major Stimulant; Stability Loss 5	Self-confidence, euphoria	Irritability, psychosis, paranoia
Opiates* (Heroin, Opium, Morphine)	Inhalation, ingestion, injection	3 to 5 hours	Mild Depressant; -2 Health Pool; Analgesic	Major Depressant; -6 Health Pool; Analgesic	Relaxation, euphoria	Stupor, unconsciousness.
Psychedelics, Mild (Psilocybin mushrooms, high-THC cannabis such as skunk, DMT)	Inhalation, ingestion	30 minutes to 6 hours	Mild Hallucinations; Stability Loss 1	Major Hallucinations; Stability Loss 3	Altered perceptions, anxiety	Altered perceptions, panic
Psychedelics, Major (LSD, Mescaline, Nutmeg)	Ingestion	8 to 12 hours	Mild Hallucinations; Stability Loss 2	Major Hallucinations; Stability Loss 6	Altered perceptions, anxiety	Altered perceptions, panic, psychosis, paranoia
Psychedelics, Toxic* (Amanita Fungus, Datura, Belladonna)	Ingestion	12 to 72 hours	Major Hallucinations; Stability Loss 6; -1 Health Pool	Overwhelming Hallucinations; Stability Loss 10; -4 Health Pool	Altered perceptions, anxiety, panic, psychosis, paranoia	Disassociation from reality, panic, psychosis, paranoia, stupor, unconsciousness
Solvents (Glue, Ether, Amyl Nitrate, etc.)	Inhalation	1 to 3 hours	Mild Depressant; -1 Health Pool	Major Depressant; -4 Health Pool	Relaxation, euphoria	Stupor, unconsciousness.
Tranquilizers (Librium, Thorazine, etc.)	Ingestion	12 to 24 hours	Suppression of Hallucinations; Mild Depressant; -1 Health Pool	Major Depressant; -5 Health Pool	Relaxation, drowsiness	Slurred speech, drowsiness, stupor, unconsciousness.

* This drug can cause coma or death in very high doses.

Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids: Additional GM Info

As OBOD places no restrictions on members regarding which other groups they can be part of, many of the more important Esoterrorists (including most of those who are involved in the Fimbulwinter Plan, whether they know it or not) have at least an associate membership. This gives them a reason to have an OBOD newsletter or two around... which gives them the "Hell Haven" info they need, in a reasonably well-hidden form (see below).

The Esoterrorist infiltration of OBOD includes several sleeper operatives known collectively as "Hell Haven." These deep cover Esoterrorists are spread around the UK, their purpose being to provide assistance of all kinds to fellow high-ranking Esoterrorists in trouble, particularly trouble with the law or with Ordo Veritatis. Each member of Hell Haven leads an outwardly respectable life, their Druidism regarded as no more noteworthy than involvement with the Freemasons or the local Rotary Club. Each has a well-paying job, usually a family to ensure their cover identity is solid, and a refuge – typically a hidden cellar, a "priest's hole" or similar in an older house, or for the country dwellers, some kind of wilderness-style den on some land they own. The refuge is kept well stocked with a couple of camp beds, a chemical toilet, and at least one month's worth of long-life food and other supplies for two adults.

Each Esoterrorist OBOD member has a "Druid magical name" incorporating the letter sequence "H, E, L, L," for example, "Heliopolis," "Ahimsa Dell," "Hymen LaFay Lynx," etc.; and a "Hotmail" email address that incorporates the number 10 (the number, in qabalistic numerology, of the Hebrew word BCh, meaning "a hidden place, bosom"), for example, <ahimsa10@hotmail.com>, <10lynx@hotmail.com>. These three simple ciphers indicate to any Esoterrorist in the know, browsing an OBOD newsletter or member directory, that the person listed is a Hell Haven operative, ready and available to offer sanctuary at any time. Note that the amount of information each member gives out in the directory is variable, and associate members are not obliged to give any information out at all, so the directory is not particularly useful for tracking down Esoterrorists and their cells within OBOD.

Antagonist Reactions

Throughout most of this scenario, there will be little in the way of an organized reaction from the Esoterrorists, so long as the characters are still inadvertently following the Isa Kenaz plan. Any hardcore Esoterrorists they do somehow manage to rumble (for example, Stephen Hodge's superior in OBOD, Laurence Fairclough, or Anton Bennett's mentor in OTOM, Will Carter), will do their best to go into hiding, probably outside Manchester, using their Hell Haven system (see sidebar). Unless he discovers that the characters are in serious

danger of discovering the full nature of the conspiracy, McLoughlin is likely to just sit back and observe, though he does have a squad of Torture Dogs (see *The Esoterrorists*, p. 59) equal in number to the number of characters, ready to send after them if need be.

One potential reaction for McLoughlin and his minions occurs if the characters arrive at the Nine Ladies Stone Circle after Catriona has been converted to the Esoterrorist cause, and seem likely to defeat the Esoterrorist operation there. In this case, they may leave Catriona to be "rescued" by the characters, so that they can later activate her to attack

This is my case, damn it

The GM should keep at least a mental note of the characters' interactions with local UK police such as Brian Morgan (see p. 20), and the resultant attitudes of those police towards them. If the characters come across as competent, respectful, and serious, they are likely to get more comprehensive and enthusiastic assistance from police when they need it. This is particularly the case if the characters can assist in the solving of crimes and incidents that are not directly related to the Catriona investigation, such as the death of Greg Barton in Chapter 3, or the activities of the various Moss Side criminals in Chapter 5.

On the other hand, if the characters are constantly making demands, waving credentials, calling on O.V. authority to expedite things with the local police, and insisting that their own investigation takes precedence over everything else, any co-operation from the Manchester Police Department will be grudging and slow, at best.

them or otherwise disrupt their activities whenever she will do the most damage.

Timescale

The GM should attempt to keep at least a rough track of the time and date. Several of the alternate scenes of the adventure may be skipped if the characters aggressively hurtle after only the core clues, and if they're clever enough to piece together some of the situation from the less obvious clues. In this case, they may reach Catriona before she has been fully brainwashed, though there can be drawbacks to this approach of course. They may not be so well-informed as if they took their time. Hurried investigations can also be actively counterproductive at times, if haste means alienating the local police, scaring

off potential interview subjects, or missing useful additional clues.

The characters arrive in the UK on the morning of Tuesday 29th January. They have until nightfall on Thursday 31st January to find and rescue Catriona; that's the deadline her kidnappers have set themselves to either have her fully brainwashed and recruited to their cause, or else sacrificed in their Candlemas ceremony, the beginning of their great UK-wide magical ritual to bring about the Fimbulwinter. If the characters find her after sunset that night, she will be fully turned to the Esoterrorist cause, though they may not realize that until it is too late.



Note that this scenario introduces a new use for spending points from investigative abilities, as a logical extension of the concept of impressing other characters and NPCs with a point spend. On several occasions during the adventure, the characters will be given the option to spend a point or two to speed up an otherwise lengthy job. This allows them to say, "Well, it's a two-hour job really... but I know a few shortcuts that other people don't, and I reckon I can do it in 45 minutes" when the team leader points out the urgency of the situation. Of course, as well as impressing onlookers with the character's skills, this will make a difference as to what time the characters rescue Catriona.

GM Notes on Play

Player Character Capture: As mentioned in *The Esoterrorists*, many roleplayers hate it when their characters get captured during games. There is a fairly high chance that this will happen during *Little Girl Lost*. It may be worth talking this over with players before you start play; ideally, before you even start your *Esoterrorists* campaign, so as not to tip the players off that capture is likely during this particular scenario. Most players will cope with the prospect of their characters being captured, so long as you make it clear right from the start that this approach emulates genre conventions and is not designed to just frustrate them. If the players still resist the idea, you may need to work ensure that their assailants in Chapter 6 are a little too obvious in their attempts to drug the characters, thus tipping them off before they can be captured.

The Double Agent: Or rather, the quadruple agent. McLoughlin is a real rarity in Ordo Veritatis: most agents are completely committed to the O.V. It's important that the players don't get the impression that the O.V. is riddled with defectors, double agents, and other security holes. Thus, this scenario is best used midway through a campaign, rather than as an introduction. The players should have come to trust Ordo Veritatis before playing through *Little Girl Lost*.

Recovering Points: Point spends can be soon add up during this adventure. A larger group of characters may be able to manage it without needing to recover any points, if they go straight to the heart of the matter. Although *The Esoterrorists* provides for a few extra points for smaller numbers of players, such small groups can sometimes struggle to find sufficient points, particularly if they investigate every sub-plot. The GM should consider inserting "breakpoints" as necessary, for points recovery (see *The Esoterrorists*, p. 48). Most groups of 4 or fewer players will probably need to recover points around the end of Chapter 4.

Information Density: Most RPG scenarios recommend that the GM read & understand them thoroughly before play begins. Well, this time, we mean it. As a GM, you will not be able to absorb all the information you need for play "on the fly". At the very least, you'll need to know the major possibilities of each chapter in some considerable depth before running the events of that chapter.

Occulture: Also regarding the information density, there's quite a lot of info about various occult practices and traditions in this adventure. This is primarily for the benefit of those players who have at least a passing interest in such matters. If your group has more of an interest in the police procedural,

CSI-like aspect of *The Esoterrorists*, you may wish to gloss over some of this detail.

Preparedness and Weapons: As noted in some detail in the Appendices (see p. 92), most weapons are illegal to own, buy, sell, or carry in the United Kingdom. Thus, characters with Preparedness are unlikely to have packed extra firearms, ammunition, or silencers. Getting hold of such items is likely to require a spend of Streetwise and a certain amount of time spent in quite seedy areas. Firearms available, even illegally, are likely to be limited to pistols, single-shot rifles, and single- or two-shot shotguns. Such items as automatic weaponry, grenades, or explosives will be virtually impossible to get (at least 2 points of Streetwise per item, and at least a day or two's wait). Preparedness can be used for the character to be carrying semi-improvised or disguised items, such as a few relatively innocuous-looking items that could be assembled into a primitive silencer, or a knife concealed within a briefcase.

Author's Note

Like the *Esoterrorists* game, this scenario is a work of fiction. Though real occult groups and traditions have been mentioned and implied, these are merely intended to add verisimilitude to this work; neither the author, nor the publisher, believe that the *Esoterrorists* really exist and have infiltrated the groups mentioned, or that the CIA use occult groups to learn about mind control, or that ritual magic can bring about nationwide climate change, or that occult groups are inherently evil and Satanic. In researching these occult groups, the author has deliberately avoided the more rational, factual accounts, and searched out the most paranoid and bizarre conspiracy theories he could find, then embellished those deluded phantasies with new ideas from his own twisted imagination; any description of a

real occult group should no more be taken as the author's belief than the X-Files should be taken as a serious look at the work of the real FBI. Most of the Druids the author has met have been very pleasant English eccentric types without even a hint of supernatural terror about them, as, for that matter, have most of the Satanists. Even the tabloid newspaper journalists, businessmen, academics, and hippies the author has dealt with haven't seemed quite so inherently evil as they're often portrayed in fiction.

The author is himself a practicing neo-pagan and ritual magician of some twenty years' standing. Although life would be very nice if he were being waited upon hand-and-foot by indoctrinated *Esoterrorist* minions, and he is always available for any shadowy US government funding the CIA or others might want to offer him, sadly all that stuff is just made up, and he has to make a living writing roleplaying games instead. Which is still kinda neat, but not really as neat as absolute power.

Chapter I: Albion, our Ancestor

HE IS ALBION, OUR ANCESTOR, PATRIARCH OF THE ATLANTIC CONTINENT, WHOSE HISTORY PRECEDED THAT OF THE HEBREWS & IN WHOSE SLEEP, OR CHAOS, CREATION BEGAN; AT THEIR HEAD THE AGED WOMAN IS BRITANNICA, THE WIFE OF ALBION: JERUSALEM IS THEIR DAUGHTER.

– William Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgement*

Two Briefings, Three Airports, and a Minibus

Scene Type Info

The characters are contacted on the 28th January 2008, while at their day jobs. The contact comes through standard Ordo Veritatis channels and uses O.V. code words to demonstrate its legitimacy. They're asked to make their way to Charlotte airport immediately for a briefing and short layover while awaiting a connecting flight onwards.

Note: It's assumed throughout this adventure that the characters are US-based originally, but it's easy enough to adapt if your group is UK-based, or a mixture of US and UK. In a mixed group, simply insert UK-based characters into the story later, at the formal briefing given by Mr. Verity en route to Manchester from Manchester Airport (see p. 101). If all the characters are from the UK, you may wish to have one of them know Van Rijn through training with him, in which case he'll phone that character via a secured line and give them an informal briefing very similar to that below.

Trivia: The character will know that Charlotte is an airport commonly used for transfer flights onwards to the UK and Europe, most of which countries have far more restrictive laws on weapon carry than the US does, particularly for foreign visitors.

The characters arrive at the airport, via various flights depending on their original locations, in the same order the players arrive at the game. On arrival, they're met one-by-one, by a burly, dark-suited, but otherwise nondescript man bearing a laminated sign printed with "CEREX ENTERPRIZES, INC.," the agreed cover name. He leads each character through a keycard-secured door marked "AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY" to the side of the passenger lounge, then returns and waits for the next arrival. He won't answer questions other than to prove his authenticity via standard O.V. protocols.

The room inside is around 5m by 4m, with several plushly upholstered black leather sofas and armchairs, a water cooler, a couple of jugs and hotplates for making filter coffee, and a small adjoining restroom and shower room. A character who tries the door will find it locked (Difficulty 4 Infiltration to circumvent the magnetic lock, if desired, though doing so will certainly be looked upon unfavorably by the character's O.V. superiors).

A few minutes after all the characters have arrived, a medium-height, leanly muscular man of about 50 years old steps into the room. He has a balding crew-cut, goatee beard, and alert eyes behind frameless spectacles. Some or all of the characters may recognize him as Frans "Smokie" Van Rijn. He works for a sub-division of the FBI tasked

with research into counterterrorist agent performance enhancement. Any character with an FBI background, or a background in US-based counterterrorism of any kind, may well have trained with him at the project codenamed "GRAIL KNIGHT PROGRAM*," where his team draw on a mixture of the latest neuroscience advancements in understanding the programming of particular states and skills into the brain, high-end sports science, and studies into achieving excellence in a variety of fields. He'll introduce himself (notably, by his real name rather than as "Mr. Verity"), mention his work briefly, and apologize for the irregularity of the current situation: this is an informal pre-mission briefing because there is a personal element for him to the mission the characters will be on.

*If your players balk at the idea that the US Government might be funding a project called "Grail Knight Program," they should check out the (daft, but descriptive) names of some similar real-world US military projects, which include the Trojan Warrior Program and the Jedi Project.

Cop Talk: A 1-point spend lets the character know the following information. Van Rijn is said to have been one of the best field agents the FBI ever had, having come from some other, more secretive branch of the U.S. government tasked with special operations against terrorist groups around the world. An unspecified leg injury, believed to have been sustained during a secondment to British special forces in Northern Ireland around 15 years ago, led to him moving from active service to training and research. The "Smokie" nickname doesn't refer to some propensity for "smoking" opponents, or to a hot temper, but to his love of the traditional Dutch delicacy, smoked eels.

Read the rest of Van Rijn's informal briefing out loud:

"I mentioned a personal element. My daughter Catriona has gone missing, from her University in England. Naturally there is concern among the Order that she has been attacked or kidnapped specifically to get at me, so I have been ordered not to travel to England myself to investigate the situation. Gentlemen, you're here because I have personally requested that your team be assigned to this job. I've trained some of you myself, and you all have impeccable records both within Ordo Veritatis and within your mundane careers. Short of going out there myself, and risking playing into the Esoterrorists' hands, if their intent was to draw me out, you are my best hope.

"The work I do for the FBI may have a number of crucial side benefits to Ordo Veritatis, in particular the resistance of both Esoterrorist brainwashing and general occultic effects. The Order has been quietly interested in that work, steering it through me, ensuring its funding is continued, providing some of its best operatives to train with me. If the Esoterrorists have wind of that, or of my own place in Ordo Veritatis, it is certainly possible that Catriona's disappearance is the start of a direct attack on the Order. If that is the case, it indicates a significant intelligence leak within Ordo Veritatis. Of course, it is equally possible that the situation is unrelated to the Esoterrorists, or to my work – but until we are certain one way or another, we must proceed with caution.

"All that said – I appeal to you primarily as a father, a father whose child has vanished – the worst fear of any parent. Gentlemen, if you can bring her back to me, you will have my eternal gratitude and friendship, irrespective of any Esoterrorist involvement. Please, please find my lost little girl."

Van Rijn looks quite heartbroken at this point, his professional demeanor slipping aside for just a moment, then returning as rapidly, as though his face had been made of flint all along. Still, it takes him a few seconds to recover before he speaks again:

ALBION'S RANSOM

MISPER 1

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE MISSING PERSONS REPORT

Case No.: 06022008/0011

Subject: Catriona Van Rijn

Age: 19

Date of Birth: 29th December 1989

Ethnicity: White Other

Nationality: USA

Hair: Light brown, long

Eyes: Blue

Height: 5'6"

Weight: Approx. 60 kg.

Distinctive Tattoos/Scars/Marks/Piercings:

Pierced nose.

Distinctive Clothing/Jewellery: Purple semi-precious stone (type unknown) nose stud. Lime-green parka coat with dark green faux fur trim round hood.

Vehicle: None.

Cellular Phone Number: 07788 275 367

Usual Address: Flat 17, Cornbrook House, Oxford Road, Manchester.

Date: Monday, 28th January 2008

Last Known Location: Subject last seen at home by flatmates Friday, 25th January 2008. Flatmates Mai Lee, Jasmine Walmsley, Talia Barrett, Sophie Tan, Rose Wong interviewed. Flatmate Sophie Tan under interview disclosed that subject said she was "going to a party."

Action Taken

Date

Constable Sheeran visits Flat 17, obtains master key to bedroom. 28/1/08

Brief visual examination of bedroom.

No sign of struggle or injury.

Constable Sheeran calls subject's cellular phone; no answer. 28/1/08

Inspector Morgan assigned as Duty Officer 28/1/08

Risk Factors: No standard risk factors identified. Subject's father works for U.S. government & indicates possible risk of subject's abduction to put pressure on him. This was acknowledged as a possibility but assessed as a low risk.

Classification: Low Risk

Further Action: Case to be reviewed by Supervising Officer every 7 days for 6 weeks, to 10th March 2008.

Investigating Officer: Constable Sheeran.

Supervising Officer: Inspector Morgan.

"You'll be met at Manchester Airport in England by a locally based Mr. Verity, under the Cerex Enterprises cover again. He's been in contact with the English police and will give you an on-the-spot briefing; he'll remain your first point of contact for any assistance you require. Keep him apprised of your progress regularly, and be assured that he will keep me apprised in turn. Your cover story is that of FBI agents assigned to liaise with the UK police force, in case Catriona has been targeted for my more mundane counterterrorism work, which is certainly another possibility.

I can't emphasize enough just how urgent this task is. Those of you with law enforcement backgrounds will be aware that in an abduction case, the chances of finding the victim alive decrease with every hour. If Catriona is still alive now, you are my only hope of getting her back at all."

He hands out a folder to each character, each containing passports, return airline tickets to Manchester Airport, United Kingdom, ID cards identifying them as FBI agents, a second ID card each indicating that they've been assigned to liaise with the UK police, and a selection of credit and debit cards, under the following cover identities (to be distributed according to GM whim): Dwayne Lovejoy, Amy Koch, Kyle Everett, Robert Pye, Mary Danton, Dale Swagger, and Cecilia Rees. Each folder also has a pocket-sized Manchester street atlas, a small UK road atlas, a photo of Catriona (she's a slightly hippyish, very attractive young woman), and a copy of the British police report into her disappearance (see sidebar).

Van Rijn gets up to leave, muttering, "Just knock when you're all ready to leave."

The characters have around half-an-hour before check-in starts. If the players don't think to do anything about their guns, the GM should remind any player with Shooting



skill that though they may have transported their firearms perfectly well in locked containers in the hold, this is unlikely to be an option on an international flight. Their best bet is probably to find the FedEx counter and mail their guns back to their homes. Alternatively they can talk to the dark-suited man that first met them at the airport, and he can arrange to have their weapons returned to them by O.V. channels. Knives or other melee weapons can be transported in hold baggage, as can body armor.

The burly, dark-suited man is waiting outside, ready to open the door for them once they knock.

Check-in, boarding, and the flight itself, are all uneventful. If your players have never visited the UK before, you might want to assume most of their characters have not, either, and encourage them to use the flight time to talk in-character about their expectations and thoughts about their trip. Do they base most of their expectations on having watched "Four Weddings and a Funeral"? If so, they may be in for a bit of a surprise... This is a good time to make available some or all of the relevant UK

Evan McLoughlin: Mr. Verity and Quadruple Agent

Evan McLoughlin, a British Army intelligence operative & Ordo Veritatis member, has been leading not just the usual complex double life of any O.V. operative, but an unusually complex (even for O.V.) quadruple life. He's one of the Esoterrorists' few agents within O.V., as well as one of several UDA (Ulster Defence Association*) agents within British Army intelligence. He's English by birth, but of Irish Protestant descent, and was "turned" by the UDA decades ago while serving with the Special Patrol Group in Belfast (co-operation between Loyalist paramilitaries & police having been common then). An Esoterrorist faction within UDA soon realized his value & brainwashed him completely. His O.V. involvement has been relatively recent, and has been orchestrated very carefully by a major UK Esoterrorist cabal, Isa Kenaz.

McLoughlin is a shade under six feet tall, aged in his mid-fifties, balding and graying on top, with a gray handlebar moustache. He has the heavy physique of a weightlifter gone somewhat to seed with age, and tends to wear smart, slightly battered-looking, country clothing – check trousers, with a shirt, tie, and beige V-neck jumper but an informal tweed coat rather than a jacket.

*Ulster Defence Association: a Loyalist paramilitary group dedicated to keeping Northern Ireland under British rule.

Evan McLoughlin

Athletics 5, Health 7, Scuffling 7, Shooting 9, Stability 4, Surveillance 9
Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist), 0 (Pistol)

background material in the Appendices, especially if the players ask for it.

The characters land at 7 am, Tuesday 29th January, UK time.

Ordo Veritatis members within the FBI have ensured that the characters have no problems with UK Customs, even if they're carrying items that are illegal in the UK such as O.C. pepper spray. They're met just after clearing customs by a tubby, dark-haired driver wearing jeans and a denim jacket and sporting a five o'clock shadow. His "CEREX ENTERPRIZES, INC." sign is hand-written with marker pen on a tatty piece of brown cardboard. He leads them out to a minibus with a Salford Van Hire logo on the side. Waiting in the back of the minibus is Mr. Verity (Evan McLoughlin; see sidebar). He

begins briefing them as soon as they're all in the vehicle and it's en route to Manchester center.

McLoughlin is aware that the characters have already been briefed. He offers a small plain grey ABS case to the characters, then gives them their second briefing:

"Smokie Van Rijn is an old friend and colleague of mine. He tells me he's already given you a full briefing. Not really correct procedure, that, but the circumstances here are exceptional.

Keeping Tabs

The Esoterrorists would like to know what the characters are up to, but they are very, very keen not to show their hand too early on. Knowing the characters to be experts in their fields, including surveillance and counter-surveillance, the Esoterrorists will not do anything so obvious as to bug their phones, rental cars, or hotel rooms. However, McLoughlin has used his contacts in British intelligence to have the PCs' supposedly "untraceable" cellular phones kept under observation, just by conventional means without the need for physical bugs. He'll get daily reports (and can request more frequent reports if he feels it necessary) detailing which cellular phone cells the phones have been in and when, which numbers they have called, and which numbers have called them. He will use this information to make decisions as to what action to take, if any. For example, if he feels the characters are getting too much information from a particular source (based on the frequency of their calls), he may arrange for the source to be killed. Of course this could, in itself, give the characters additional clues, but he will do it if he thinks it necessary.

The information concerning the cell phones' locations, based on triangulating their interaction with phone cells, will be accurate to within a couple of hundred meters. Of course, this only works at all if the phones are switched on at the time.

The cellphones all have Vodafone simcards in at present. The UK has several other cellphone networks: Orange, O2, T-Mobile, and 3. These have slightly varying areas of coverage, so smart characters (Preparedness roll) may buy a disposable phone or two using different networks, once they arrive.

Furthermore, one of the characters' mobile phones contains a tiny (1/10" by 1/6" by 1/6") charged talisman, deep within the workings. A 1-point spend of Electronic Surveillance might find it, if the characters strip their phones down for bugs; a 1-point spend of Occult Studies identifies it not as the bug that it first appeared to be, but as a miniature wooden runic talisman, charged with red ochre and calling upon the Fenris Wolf to destroy the bearer (if the characters ask McLoughlin how it got there, he denies all knowledge, but it should alert them to some problems within O.V. if they do spot it). The talisman is used to harass that character; see Dog Town, p. 21.

The GM should choose the character with the highest Occult Studies, and with a strong background in the occult, to receive the magically doctored phone. McLoughlin selected that character for the talisman based on O.V. personnel records. He wanted to start his planned destabilization campaign against them early; if the targeted character dies at the jaws of the Manchester dogs, it's no big deal to declare the death a slightly early sacrifice.

"I'll be your local contact. This suitcase has arms for you. There are eight Makarov pistols in there: one each and a spare or two. Twenty magazines. None of the guns are held legally in the UK. Soviet army surplus. Can't be traced back to me or to Ordo Veritatis. I recommend you keep the gun case in the boot of one of your rental cars when you don't need them."

If anyone asks at this point why he's talking about a boot, he looks surprised for a moment then explains that "you'd call it the trunk."

"If you get caught with them by British police, O.V. can make the problem go away, but it could take time, so one of you should claim ownership of all the guns. The others won't be arrested, or at least, will be released a lot quicker. You don't want to be carrying the shooters unless you're sure you'll need them soon."

"If you ever have to shoot any of them, I strongly recommended wiping them down and dumping them as soon as you can. I can provide more if you need them - you won't be able to buy anything like that legally here. Best not to shoot them at all if you can help it though. You're not running around in the Bronx now, or Miami, or wherever you lot come from."

He hands out a cellphone to each character.

"Here's a mobile for each of you too. Again, they were bought anonymously, no contracts, just plenty of credit. My number's in each one under the name Verity. Call me only if you absolutely need to, or if you have something major to report. The other number in there is for Inspector Morgan at Bootle Street police station - he's dealing with the Van Rijn disappearance and has been instructed to extend full co-operation to you, his FBI counterparts. The police here have given the investigation a low priority - as far as they're concerned there's no evidence of

The Palace Hotel

The Palace Hotel will be the PCs' base. The building is Victorian, red brick, and spectacular, with a distinctive, landmark clock tower rising from the main portion. It's at the northern end of Oxford Road (see Appendix 100), a few minutes' walk away from Oxford Road railway station, the edge of the city center, or Bootle Street Police Station, depending on which direction you go. Heading south down Oxford Road from it will take the characters past the North Campus of Manchester University, through the Manchester Metropolitan University campus, and to the start of the South Campus: the Precinct Center shopping area, which contains the hall of residence Catriona was in, Cornbrook House. It's quicker to walk than drive, since parking in Manchester is tricky at the best of times.

The hotel is 4-Star, with a decent restaurant. The characters have adjacent rooms, each with satellite TV and internet access. They also have the exclusive use of a small conference room, if they want it.

foul play - but we've put a little pressure on them to make sure you lot can do your jobs as quickly and efficiently as possible. They're happy with that because as far as they're concerned it means you'll be out of their hair in a few days, hopefully having found the girl but maybe having concluded that she's chosen to run away herself.

"You have rooms rented in your names at the Palace Hotel. Two rental cars have been parked there for you; keys are with Reception. The driver can either drop you there or at Ms. Van Rijn's flat - just let him know. The flat and the hotel are a fifteen-minute walk away from each other; the police station and the hotel a little less.

"Any questions?"

If there are no questions, McLoughlin leans forward to mutter something to the driver, who drops him off in South Manchester about ten minutes afterwards. McLoughlin nods to the characters and walks swiftly off into a suburban area. If any character wants to check which area it is, a few minutes' work with the Manchester street atlas reveals it to be Didsbury. Another ten minutes, and the minibus gets to the University area. If the characters don't ask to be set down at the flat, the driver will take them to their hotel (see sidebar p.19).

The driver is Eddie Barlow, a sometime Ordo Veritatis field agent. His day job is running a small security and detective agency in Salford (see Appendix 99), but his contacts in Manchester's underworld, nightclub door security industry, and football hooliganism, could make him a valuable asset to anyone doing an investigation in Manchester. A former French Foreign Legion soldier, Barlow has fought and bled in battlefields, bars, streets, and homes all over the world, before returning to his native Salford some years ago. If the characters try to engage him in conversation, a 1-point spend of Streetwise will get him to open up to them, tell them who he is, and give them a business card for his detective agency. He says if they need any help with the dodgier side of life in Manchester, or indeed the dodgier kind of assistance from Ordo Veritatis, they should let him know. If asked about McLoughlin, he doesn't know him too well – he's pretty sure McLoughlin isn't a Manchester boy, though (as a 1-point spend in Linguistics could indicate, McLoughlin was born in Liverpool, though his faint hint of a Scouse accent is overlaid with a good education and several years spent living in the South-East).

If the characters don't try to speak with Barlow, or don't want to spend the point of Streetwise, he'll drop them off, just doing his job without exchanging more than the occasional grunt with them.

Once the characters go to Catriona's flat, go to Chapter 2. If they prefer to liaise with the local police first, go to Meet the Cops (see below).

Meet the Cops

Scene Type Alternate

If the characters want to speak with Inspector Morgan, the duty officer assigned to the Catriona missing persons case, they can contact him via Bootle Street police station. He's out of the station when the first call, but they're given a mobile number for him by the staff there. If they like, Morgan will arrange for a brief meeting at Bootle Street within the hour. Touching base with him like this is optional, but he will appreciate it. Spending a point of Cop Talk on meeting him won't get them any extra information, but will ensure that the Manchester police are well-disposed towards the characters right from the start – Morgan will tell his colleagues they're a good bunch. The GM should bear this in mind in the characters' dealings with the local authorities for the rest of the adventure. The police will still co-operate to some extent even without this scene, but they're likely to be more reticent & less friendly about their co-operation, and less likely to bend the rules for their American counterparts ("Think you're too good for us do you?"). Of course, the characters can certainly be forgiven for wanting to get straight to the heart of the investigation: heading down to Catriona's flat first, and worrying about the niceties later.

In addition to improved co-operation, and maybe even friendship, Inspector Morgan can offer the characters the use of some of the police station's resources if they want: interview rooms, refills for their CSI equipment, even holding cells for prisoners (though this last will be temporary, unless they have evidence to charge said prisoners).

Inspector Brian Morgan is a short (5'8") broad bull of a man, with graying cropped

hair, a pugilist's face, and hard, suspicious eyes. He's a pleasant, funny bloke when you get to know him, but you really wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of him.

Dog Town

Scene Type floating

Manchester, like many other big cities, has a lot of stray dogs, and even more latchkey dogs. The characters are going to think there are more dogs than people. The character who is carrying the talismanic phone (see p.18) will be singled out by dogs. Almost every time he is outdoors, especially if he is alone, at least one dog will approach him, usually behaving oddly; the GM can select from the following possibilities (in more-or-less ascending order of spookiness):

- An elderly Scottie dog limps after the character, always keeping its distance, constantly sniffing the ground where they've walked.
- A medium-sized Labrador-like mongrel comes close to the character (10' away) and simply sits down, staring at them soulfully. If threatened or shouted at, the dog continues staring; if the characters are violent towards it, it runs off, yelping.
- A pack of three mismatched and mangy strays (a hefty mastiff, a full-sized poodle, and a terrier) stalk the character, sniffing and slouching, like a wolf-pack that is not quite ready to attack.
- A sleek, tail-docked Doberman runs right at the character, barking and slaving threateningly; if the characters shout at it or wave their arms, it runs off. If they don't, it bites its victim once, hard, on the shin, then again runs off as though suddenly spooked.



- A massive, insane, white-colored wolf/Alsatian crossbreed corners the character somewhere, preferably alone, and attacks. It's almost entirely silent, and will fight till the character destroys it.

White Wolf

Athletics 7, Health 7, Scuffling 8
Damage Modifier: 0 (Bite)
Hit Threshold 4

Chapter 2: The Little Girl Lost

SLEEPING LYCA LAY
WHILE THE BEASTS OF PREY,
COME FROM CAVERNS DEEP,
VIEW'D THE GIRL ASLEEP.
- William Blake, *The Little Girl Lost*

Catriona's Flat

Scene Type core

The characters can gain access to Catriona's flat (apartment) easily enough, by presenting their credentials with the Cornbrook House Security Office. This is a small suite of rooms on the 2nd floor, controlling the front door's entryphone, and CCTV cameras in the elevator of Cornbrook House, as well as CCTV cameras around the Precinct Center, a small shopping area owned by the University, located in the same building as the hall of residence. Once they've convinced the security guards of their authenticity (**Cop Talk** to get friendly with them, or **Flattery** to wow them by making it seem like the Feds are grateful to them), a guard (**Powell**) will accompany them to the flat with a master key. He has to go along to ensure the other students in the flat are reassured right from the start that the characters are legitimate. A 1-point spend of either **Cop Talk**, **Flattery**, or **Bureaucracy** could be used to persuade Powell to leave once the characters are in, if they like.

Cornbrook is an 11-storey tower, with the ground floor occupied by the entrance lobby, the first floor (or 2nd floor, in US terminology) having the laundry room & service area, and the security guards being on the second floor (3rd floor for the US). The first floor also has access to the Precinct Center. The remaining 8 floors are student accommodation, divided into maisonettes

(2-storey apartments). The maisonettes have entrances on each odd-numbered floor from 3rd to 9th, with the even-numbered floors just being the upper floors of the maisonettes entered from the floor below.

Catriona's maisonette, number 17, is entered on the 3rd floor. She shared it with five flatmates, all of them first-year students like herself: the aforementioned **Mai Lee**, **Jasmine Walmsley**, **Talia Barrett**, **Sophie Tan**, and **Rose Wong**.

The layout of the maisonette is standard: the ground floor has a small entrance hall and stairway on the right-hand side, a lounge/kitchen/dining room on the left, and one bedroom (in Flat 17's case, Sophie Tan's room) accessed from the lounge, behind the entrance hall. The remaining five bedrooms, the shower room, and the W.C., are all accessed from a landing on the upper floor.

Bureaucracy: A 1-point spend to call or drop in to the University's Accommodation Office (a minute's walk away in the Precinct Center) could help, if the players wondered why such a relatively odd, and potentially explosive, mix of students is sharing a flat. The University's Accommodation Office decides which first-year flatmates to accommodate where, and placed Mai, Sophie, and Rose together on account of their all being Chinese (it's assumed that overseas students will benefit from mutual support, especially in their first year), and the other

three together because two of them (Catriona and Talia) were studying English Language & Literature, and two (Talia and Jasmine) came from the same secondary school in Wigan. The idea was that the four overseas students would integrate quickly with the two British ones, though that failed to take into account the arguments over drugs and religion...

Who's Home?

Whether the characters find any or all of Catriona's flatmates in her apartment at any one time depends very much on what time they arrive. If they get there before 8.30 am (which they certainly will do if they went straight to the flat rather than checking in at the hotel first, or if they checked in and then went immediately to the flat - no showers or snacks or phone calls), then all five will be in, though Jasmine will be asleep. The other four will be eating a variety of breakfasts downstairs in the flat's small kitchen. Rose will answer the door in this case. She, Mai, and Sophie will want to get off to their lessons, but a 1-point spend of **Intimidation**, **Reassurance** or **Negotiation** (roleplayed accordingly) could persuade them to be late for once, or else the characters can arrange to come back in the evening to interview them then (all three will be in from 5 pm).

If they delay at all at the hotel, Mai, Sophie, and Rose will all be out of the flat, en route to their various lectures and tutorials. Jasmine will still be asleep. Talia will be awake and working in her room: she has very few lectures or tutorials, but is expected to work predominantly by herself, and at present she's still conscientious enough to be spending her time immersing herself in England's greatest literature. Talia will answer the door in this case.

Interviewing the Flatmates

1) Mai Lee is studying Physics, but still has only the shakiest grasp of the English language in anything other than purely

scientific and technical terminology. She's highly dedicated to her work, largely uninterested in anything else, and very shy, all of which combines to make her a difficult interview subject. **Languages** (Cantonese) will be required to make any headway with her; otherwise, unless you're asking her about physics, an interview will be an exercise in frustration for the interviewer, and panic and upset for Mai. Mai was originally told to study physics by her family back in China, who wanted the prestige a scientist in the family would bring; now she studies physics in the hope of understanding the true nature of God.

Mai is shorter than average (5'1"), and has her hair in a short bob. Her facial expression alternates between rabbit-caught-in-headlights and intense, animated excitement, mostly depending on whether you're talking to her about physics or not. She wears cheap, plain, baggy clothing from discount stores.

Here's what she knows (**Interrogation** or **Flattery**), if you can speak Cantonese:

- She hasn't seen Catriona since early on Friday evening. She didn't really understand Catriona's approach to life too well; Mai has been influenced by Rose's fervent Chinese Christianity (see below) and regards drug users and neo-pagans as at best deeply misguided, and at worst actively evil. She, Rose, and Sophie have talked the situation over, and decided that Catriona's disappearance is an inevitable consequence of her ungodly lifestyle, and just proves their point.
- Catriona has lots of friends round to visit. Mai doesn't recognize most of them, but if asked specifically about her friends with a 1-point spend of **Interrogation** or **Flattery**, she does remember one who was a bit of a regular: "Mr. Bennett, one of my tutors."

If the PCs pursue the "Mr Bennett" line of enquiry, it will eventually lead them to Anton Bennett; see p. 60. They can most easily find out more about a "Mr. Bennett" in the Physics department by talking to the University's Admin Section; see p. 43.

Alternatively, for a 1-point spend of **Astronomy**, the characters can get her talking about astrophysics and physics (in English, too, potentially), and she remembers a conversation she had last week sometime with Catriona:

- Catriona asked her to explain the Second Law of Thermodynamics – something to do with a play and a poem she was studying. Mai remembers Catriona reacting to the idea of the inevitable destruction of the Universe through entropy with some interest; the American girl talked about how "Byron's eschatology was spot on, then," and asked whether it might be possible to avoid the end of the universe through the right kind of science, or magic. At that point Mai withdrew somewhat from the conversation, telling Catriona that the end of the universe some day was God's will.

2) Rose Wong is a third-generation immigrant, born to a London-based family of Chinese Christians. She's doing a degree in Computer Studies, and is highly intelligent, wise beyond her years, and obsessed with her religion. If she's not working, she's reading the Bible, or painting another lavish, garish, and gory picture of Christ suffering on the Cross; her room is decorated with these on most of the available wall-space. She doesn't drink, or smoke, and was already on the verge of attempting some kind of exorcism on Catriona, fervently believing that Catriona's vague hippy neo-paganism was a threat to the morals of the flat (she may have been right, of course). She speaks

English just fine, as well as Cantonese (so she could potentially interpret for Mai). Rose is the natural spokesperson for the three Chinese students, and the others will tend to defer to her; this may prove a minor obstacle for the characters, if they don't nip it in the bud by asking for separate interviews. She has spent the past five months or so, since the start of the academic year, working on convincing Mai and Sophie to join the Chinese Christian church she worships at, in Fallowfield; both became converts, Mai in December, and Sophie just recently, in the last couple of weeks. The three of them now hold short prayer meetings most nights in Rose's room.

Rose is a little taller than the average Chinese woman (5'5"), with medium-length hair in a ponytail, and a dour, serious expression. She wears equally serious clothing: long plain skirts and blouses from Marks & Spencer.

Here's what she knows (**Interrogation**):

- (Core Clue) She last saw Catriona at about 6 pm on Friday. Rose was eating a meal; she says that Catriona was "making herself some horrible concoction of pot noodles and vegetable burgers and rice, and smoking drugs in the kitchen again. I've asked her not to do so and told her she's destroying her body, but she never listens." Rose finished her meal, went upstairs to her room, and hasn't seen Catriona since.
- (Core Clue) She, Mai, and Sophie wanted to call the police earlier, but Talia and Jasmine were sure that Catriona was just at some weekend-long party somewhere, or had gone away for the weekend without telling them. They convinced the Chinese to wait till Monday morning before contacting the police.

- Catriona got herself a boyfriend early on last term, Jim. He's another student at the University and lived upstairs at Cornbrook in a flat on an upper floor; Rose thinks it was number forty-something. 44? 48? Something like that. Rose thinks Catriona often spent time there.
- Catriona had a very outgoing social life – she was always off somewhere in the evenings, or having friends round to visit; Rose thinks she saw twelve people cramming into Catriona's room for some drug session once. She mentioned being part of several student societies, but Rose doesn't remember which, other than the Pagan Society. Rose tut-tuts, and looks both disapproving and concerned. You could usually tell if Catriona was in and awake, because there was always loud music blaring from her room. (Note: Universities in the UK don't have fraternities and sororities, in the same way US colleges do; students socialize predominantly through the special interest societies they join, as **Trivia** or asking Rose can reveal.)

3) Sophie Tan is doing Business Studies at Manchester Business School (part of the University). She's from Hong Kong, speaks good English, and spent most of her first term going out partying with her fellow Business students, till Rose convinced her that staying in, reading the Bible, and praying was far more productive. Still, she tries to stay fashionable in her clothing, makeup, and hairstyle, and she still drinks socially once or twice a week with her classmates. As far as she's concerned, you can integrate religion and work best if you also socialize with your colleagues. Inevitably, she gets on a lot better with Talia, Catriona, and Jasmine than Mai and Rose do.

An **Interrogation** of her gleans the following:

Completely busted

If Powell (the security guard) is still with the characters when Catriona's flatmates talk about drug use, or are caught in possession of drugs, he will want to inform the University authorities and the local police. A 1-point spend of **Intimidation**, **Negotiation**, or **Cop Talk** can convince him that the characters will deal with the situation accordingly, or that the need to find the missing girl must take precedence over relatively minor drug crimes, or just that he's sufficiently scared of the characters to do what they want. If they persuade him to leave them to it, he'll also leave them with the master key to the various flats of Cornbrook House (though he'll certainly get into trouble with his superiors for doing so).

- (Core Clue) She last saw Catriona on Friday night. Catriona had just finished eating in the kitchen and was hunched over the table with a bottomless bottle and tub of water, heating the top of the bottle up with a cigarette lighter (a **Streetwise** character will recognize this as a description of paraphernalia for smoking cannabis, known as a "bucket" or "bucket-bong"), at about 7pm. Sophie was in the lounge area, and asked Catriona if she was doing anything interesting tonight. After inhaling a load of smoke from the bottle, Catriona gave a big grin and said she was going to a party.

4) Talia Barrett went to the same school as Jasmine (below), but they weren't particularly close at that point; she always felt Jasmine was too wild and rebellious, and was sure that Jasmine thought her to be too staid, naïve, and innocent. Still, they've become reasonably friendly since moving in together here. They've had to, to some extent. Talia is typically British in her religious attitudes; she was Christened, and some day she wants a big Church wedding, but as far as she's concerned you should just try to do good most of the time, rather than worrying about all that God business. She

finds Rose's zeal somewhat distasteful, and is a bit sad that she's managed to convert the other two Chinese girls. Talia is studying English, like Catriona. She works hard at her degree; she's never been especially bright or quick-minded, so she has to work hard to make up for that.

Talia is 5'5" and a little plump, with an attractive if slightly vacant, rather bovine face. She smiles and laughs a lot, especially at herself and her own naivety. She has mid-length light brown hair, brushed back from her forehead, and wears Levi's jeans, Doc Marten boots, and incongruously floral tops.

Here's what she knows (**Interrogation**):

- (Core Clue) She, Catriona, and Jasmine all spent a bit of time at Flat 42, on the 7th floor, with Jim and his flatmates. It's a really fun flat they've got up there; they're a really wacky bunch, mostly 3rd year students. (Note that she genuinely barely realized that Jim and his flatmates were all taking fairly significant quantities of drugs to get so "wacky," and it doesn't really occur to her that the characters might want to arrest Jim and company for the drugs anyway; that naivety coming into play again.)
- (Core Clue) Catriona mentioned something about a trip away over the weekend, anyway. She only brought it up in passing, a couple of days before she disappeared, and she didn't sound sure about going. Catriona doesn't remember if she mentioned who with, or whether it was a University or Student Union thing or not.
- (Core Clue) She knows that Catriona mentioned having lost her appointments diary recently. Catriona thought she'd left it up at Jim's last week.

- A 1-point spend of **Flirting** or **Flattery** will get Talia excited enough to remember one more thing. Catriona hinted a couple of weeks back at having dumped Jim and gotten herself a new boyfriend recently. Talia's not sure she believes that though, because as far as she's concerned, Catriona's such an outrageous character that she probably has two or three boyfriends at a time, and was just trying not to shock Talia too much. She's certainly been spending as much time at Jim's flat as ever.

5) Jasmine Walmsley soon became one of Catriona's closest friends and allies in the flat. She's another hippy, like Catriona, and very much into her drugs, her partying, and her dance music. She's studying Fine Art, but treats the whole University thing as a good way to get a bit of cash out of her parents, move out of Wigan, and throw herself into Manchester's social scene. She rarely goes to more than a token lecture or two each week, and will in all probability be thrown off her course by the end of her first year, stay in Manchester, and become either a drug dealer or a drug dealer's girlfriend.

Jasmine has long blonde dreadlocks and a face full of stainless steel body piercings. She's tall (5'8") and very pretty, with a somewhat arrogant, vaguely Scandinavian look about her - she could be a post-punk Valkyrie, an ultramodern shield-maiden. She dresses to accentuate that: black jeans, big stompy New Rock boots for an extra couple of inches of height, and a black leather jacket covered in fluorescent painted designs.

She will panic the moment she realizes the authorities (i.e. the player characters) have entered the flat: she has drugs in her room. She'd been careful to clear up everything before the lone police officer called round the morning before, but she became lax again last night, and has an eight of an ounce of cannabis resin in a tobacco tin on the table in



her room. Also on the table, more blatantly, is an ashtray containing the roaches (butts) of three cannabis joints. Knocking at her door won't rouse her; she was out partying till just a few hours earlier, and is still in something of a drunken stupor. If the characters use the master key to enter her room, they'll probably spot the drugs while she's still unconscious.

A character with **Evidence Collection**, **Streetwise**, or **Chemistry** will spot the roaches right away, and know to look in the tobacco tin for the drugs. Almost any interpersonal skill will get Jasmine talking now (no spend required), so long as there is a clear understanding that she will be in significant trouble if she does not cooperate, but won't be charged if she does; in particular, **Negotiation**, **Reassurance**, **Interrogate**, or **Intimidation** should do the trick.

- Jasmine didn't see Catriona at all last weekend; she was out nightclubbing herself on Friday night.

- She didn't see much point in involving the police. As far as she's concerned, "Catriona's probably just found herself a new bloke, hasn't she? Prob'ly just shagging his brains out even as we speak. We'll not see 'er till she gets bored of 'im, or 'e runs out of juice."

- **Intimidation**. A 1-point spend will get her to tell the characters where she and Catriona bought their drugs - from Chris, one of the 3rd year students in Flat 42 (and thus a flatmate of Jim's). She really doesn't want to admit this, as she doesn't want to get her friends into trouble.

Catriona's Room

Catriona's room can be opened easily enough with the master key, like the flat's front door and the other bedrooms.

It's a mess in there, which may give the characters the impression of a struggle or robbery. If asked, though, any of her flatmates can confirm that Catriona's room has always looked like this.

The following details are apparent immediately apparent on entry:

- A small bed with a purple duvet decorated with orange-yellow stars.
- A desk covered in papers, a printer, and a desktop computer, with an office chair in front of it and a dented, green steel wastepaper bin in the corner next to the desk.
- A bookcase next to the desk.
- A large armchair with a few clothes scattered over it.
- More clothes, papers, flyers, and books all over the floor.

- A small wardrobe, one door half-open, a large, bright green Swiss Exercise Ball and several pair of shoes and boots on the top.
- Another table, this one low, wooden, and square, the corners visible and battered-looking, the centre and most of the edges covered in a green and white, tie-dyed cloth, bearing a variety of small statues, pictures, and other objects.

Occult Studies: It will be obvious to anyone with the faintest smattering of occult knowledge that the small wooden table is a neo-pagan altar. If none of the players mention this, the character with the highest level of **Occult Studies** spots it. The significance of such an altar is likely to be highly personal to the owner; even they may be unable to explain exactly why each object is there, other than that they "were drawn to it." The essentially patternless assortment of objects – a fat, grinning Chinese God of Laughter made from resin, a six-armed brass figure of the Hindu Goddess Durga, a wooden, sleekly beautiful figure of the Egyptian Goddess Bast in cat form, a set of Tibetan ritual bells, a small pottery dragon, four slightly dissimilar brass candlesticks holding pink candles, a joss-stick holder – suggests that the owner is probably either an eclectic neo-pagan, or just a vaguely mystical, vaguely spiritual person with non-specific neo-pagan tendencies.

Evidence Collection: A thorough trawling of the room's contents will find the following:

- Under the altar table is a black, leatherbound book, marked with the phrase "Book of Shadows" in gold lettering on the front cover. The book is tied closed with a red cord.
- The bin contains several more roaches (cannabis joint butts), as well as

ash, suggesting an ashtray has been emptied into it recently. (The empty but unwashed ashtray turns up among the debris on the floor.)

- The papers scattered around are mostly printouts of early drafts of her essays, and handouts from her lecturers. Well buried is an official letter to her from the University, noting that the Administration Department has received a full payment for this term's fees at Cornbrook House; this includes Catriona's full address and her identification number on the University's computer systems.
- The books on the bookcase and scattered around are a mixture of the following: (1) poetry & literature books (notably Complete Works of Auden, Byron, Coleridge, Eliot, Jonson, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Yeats, as well as a few modern poets such as Seamus Heaney and Roger McGeogh, and several Tom Stoppard plays); (2) Anglo-Saxon text books (notably *Beowulf* and *An Anglo-Saxon Reader*); (3) occult books: a mixture of general introductions such as Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon* and Vivianne Crowley's *The Old Religion for the New Age*, feminist witchcraft books by Z. Budapest and Starhawk, and a few hardcore occult tomes: Aleister Crowley's *Magick in Theory and Practice* (**Occult Lore** will recognize it as the cheap, incomplete, badly edited edition with the pink cover), *Liber Null* and *Psychonaut* by Pete Carroll, and A. E. Waite's *Book of Black Magic and of Pacts*; (4) political texts (notably less well-thumbed than the others) on everything from veganism & animal welfare, to radical approaches to transport, to polemics against genetically modified crops and nanotechnology.

Evidence Collection: A 1-point spend, and twenty minutes or so to examine the books in greater detail, will find that both the Waite and the Crowley books have the following text handwritten on the flyleaf: "Property of Manchester University Pagan Society. NOT TO BE STOLEN!!!" The Crowley one also has several smears of ash and small puddles of candle wax on some of the pages

in the back – the ones giving the texts and stage directions of specific rituals (anyone with **Occult Lore** will realize at once that this means the book has been used to perform those rituals). One of the Starhawk books, *Spiral Dance*, has a few barely legible pencilled notes in the margins, and several sections underlined, as do many of the poetry books; a 1-point spend on **Document**

Examining the Book of Shadows

Document Analysis: The Book of Shadows and the marginalia in the various books were not written by the same person; Catriona's handwriting is scrawled and careless, whereas the Book of Shadows is written in immaculate, if occasionally slightly florid, copperplate calligraphy. A 1-point spend indicates that the Book of Shadows was written by the same person who wrote the Pagan Society inscription on the two occult books (see above), though those are written far more casually.

Textual Analysis: A 1-point spend confirms that the Book of Shadows was not written by the same person who wrote the essays on Catriona's computer.

Occult Lore: "Book of Shadows" is a standard name for the book of spells used in Wicca, a neo-pagan tradition begun in the 1950s by Gerald Gardner and continued today in a variety of forms. Wiccans are always expected to write their own Book of Shadows, copying every word from their teacher then later adding their own spells and researches to it. This one is inscribed on the flyleaf: "Property of Fr. Nyarlathotep, 1st Degree Witch, Blackest Night Coven; Any Unauthorised Personne who Takkes or Reades this Bokke shalle be Blasted with a Thousand Lightning-Bolts and Curses most Vile and Terrible." The name "Fr. Nyarlathotep" is a magical name, with Fr. being the standard abbreviation for Frater, or Brother, a male initiate in a magical group (a female would be Sr., short for Soror, i.e. Sister). "Nyarlathotep" is a powerful demonic god in the Cthulhu mythos; to choose such a magical name for oneself is the height of hubris, and probably indicates no more than that "Fr. Nyarlathotep" is more arrogant than he is knowledgeable. A 1st Degree witch is the lowest-ranking initiated witch in the Wiccan traditions (with a 3rd Degree being the highest); the Blackest Night Coven is not one that any characters have heard of. A 1-point spend reveals this Book of Shadows to be very close to the standard Book of Shadows used by 1st Degree Witches in Alexandrian Wicca, with just a few additions and copying errors. **Textual Analysis** of the text of the curse, or a character with **Linguistics** reading it, indicates that it's very much a modern English attempt to sound suitably old-fashioned.

Fingerprinting or Document Analysis: There are prints on every page, given that the book is hand-written, but almost all of them are so faint or partial as to be almost useless. A 1-point spend will get enough information, by analyzing a number of different prints and using computer software to piece them together, to determine that Catriona has read part of the book, and that the author is one of the people who has left prints in the room (Anton Bennett, as it happens, though again the characters won't know that till they take his prints).



Analysis reveals these to be in the same handwriting as each other, but not the same as the “Pagan Society” inscriptions on the occult books.

Occult Lore: A 1-point spend will suggest to the characters that the occult book collection (above) indicates an eclectic neo-pagan, a dabbler, or an interested outsider, rather than an initiate or someone who has started upon a specific occult path; perhaps it is not too late to save Catriona, if she can at least be found. It is, however, a particularly impressive cross-section of books for a relative newcomer to the occult; either Catriona has had someone helping her separate the wheat from the chaff, or she has been interested in this for far longer than she

has been living in the UK (unlikely, since her father would certainly have come down hard upon her if he’d known about it), or she is just unusually perspicacious in working out for herself which books are useful to the serious student of the occult.

Fingerprinting: There are prints all over the room. Thirty minutes of effort will find a large number of Catriona’s prints (it will be obvious that they’re hers, given the quantity), and distinct prints from another 17 people. These include (in order of frequency) Jasmine and Talia from this flat; Jim, Chris, Alan, and H from Flat 42 (see p. 32); and Anton Bennett from the University’s Pagan Society. Of course, the characters won’t know that yet, until they take prints from

those characters; none of the prints from this room match any that are on police or Ordo Veritatis databases.

Forensic Psychology: Just in case there was any doubt, any character with Forensic Psychology has a fairly strong hunch that this is not a crime scene. Such a character examining the room and its contents will begin to form a mental picture of its occupant as a counter-cultural hippy chick drawn to radical politics, neo-Paganism, and mild to moderate drug use. Given that the bookcase appears to have been in order (by subject matter, and alphabetical order of author within subject matter) at some point, it's apparent that Catriona isn't untidy by preference or quirkiness, but out of laziness or lack of time. She seems to belong to that category of people who rarely tidies up or cleans at all, but when she does, she does so obsessively and completely.

Evidence Collection: (1-point Spend)
If the alphabetic order of the books on the bookcase has been spotted (either by **Forensic Psychology**, or just by a player asking whether the books are in order), a 1-point spend of Evidence Collection allows a character to spot that among several gaps in the bookcase, there is one that is not present; a thick book (around 2 1/2" wide) that should go at the start of the poetry & literature section, between Auden and Byron. This is Catriona's copy of the Complete Works of William Blake; she has it with her.

Data Retrieval: It won't take too long to determine that there's very little, if any, useful info on Catriona's computer. She only bought it on her arrival in the UK last October (since UK and US power sources are incompatible), which is why the search can be so quick. There's three essays in "My Documents": one on Byron, one on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and a half-finished one on Blake. She has Outlook Express installed, but seems to have used it only for occasionally emailing her friends and family

in the US (the characters may correctly draw the conclusion that she does most of her networking with her UK friends by mobile phone). None of her emails indicate anything other than that work and life were both going well. The History folder on her internet browser doesn't have much in it other than research sites connected with her English degree. The Desktop has a shortcut called "Shortcut to Removable Drive (E)", suggesting that Catriona has regularly made use of a pen drive or similar small removable hard disk drive with the computer; such a drive does not appear to be present in the room.

Chapter 3: Hours of Folly

THE HOURS OF FOLLY ARE MEASUR'D BY THE CLOCK; BUT OF WISDOM, NO CLOCK CAN MEASURE.

– William Blake, *Proverbs of Hell*

Flat 42, Cornbrook House

Scene Type CORE

The characters head over to Flat 42, since they're in Cornbrook House already, and they know Catriona left her diary up here. It's the next logical clue.

When they do, they're in for something of a surprise, and a big, corpse-shaped distraction from their main investigations. Thirty seconds after they either knock at the door, or loudly wake up one of the sleeping residents, another one of the residents is going to explode. The GM should ensure he's read the section on Greg Barton (see p. 34) thoroughly before running this scene.

Who's Home?

As with Flat 17, the occupants of Flat 42 have other stuff to do in their lives... but fortunately for the characters, most of the relevant ones are slackers, and will be in or around Cornbrook House even though they should probably be studying in class. Chris, Jim, and Mark were all out at the Ritz nightclub last night (Monday being Student Night). They didn't get to sleep till 4 am, and won't be awake much before midday, with the exception of Chris (the speed freak) who didn't go to sleep at all, and is still out partying, in his own way; he'll be back around 2 pm, but is unlikely to be very

useful at that point (see below). Harry (who tries to insist on being called simply "H") is studying Medicine, and though he loves drugs and partying as much as the rest of them, he's determined to pass his exams without a fuss and someday become a doctor – so he's in lectures today, and not back till 5.20 pm. Alan has so far avoided being drawn into the others' world of drugs and booze – he works hard and keeps himself to himself. He's in the University today, working hard for his Biology degree, though the characters can interview him at home (if they wish) any time after 5.30 pm. The flat's 6th occupant, Greg, is in, but he's also dead, or about to be; see below / p. 34.

The Lounge

The lounge/kitchen area of Flat 42 is a mess, with empty spirits bottles, tins of beer, old pizza boxes, and all sorts of junk scattered all over it. **Evidence Collection** will find the following:

- (Core Clue) Catriona's pocket appointments diary is under a hefty medical textbook, on the table. A few minutes of flicking through it gleans the following information: (1) Catriona went to a lot of parties and nightclubs – often up to about five nights a week; (2) through most of last term she had a lot of dates with someone identified with the initial "J", but the last one was in mid-December; (3) the one page that

deals with the four days from Thursday 24th January to Sunday 27th January has been torn out, as has half of the preceding page which covers Monday 21st to Wednesday 23rd (the torn-out half-page is the upper part, which includes all of the section for Monday and the upper part of Tuesday; the other half of Tuesday, and all of Wednesday, are still intact); (4) on Wednesday 23rd January there's a "Dinner w. A 6.30" entry, but a different pen has been used to scribble "WANKER!" next to it (**Document Analysis** recognizes this to be in different handwriting, too).

- About 12 cannabis joint ends (roaches) are in the room's two ashtrays, with another 30 or 40 in the bin.
- (1-point spend) Most of the roaches are made from the usual torn-up Rizla cigarette paper packets, but three of them are made from torn sections from Catriona's diary. Though these are charred and smoke-stained, a 1-point spend of **Document Analysis** can make out enough to decipher the following: (1) the Friday 25th January entry reads "Meet S. @ lib, 8" (the same hand & pen as wrote the "WANKER!" on the 23rd has written "WHO THE FUCK?!?" under this entry); (2) there's also an entry for Saturday 26th January: "8am bus 9L." A character with **Cryptography** will soon make a probable deciphering of Catriona's shorthand: she was meeting someone called "S" at the library at 8 pm on the 1st, and taking a bus number 9L at 8 am on the 2nd; the GM might like the players to have a go at working that stuff out for themselves though. Enquiries at the Manchester Bus Station reveal that there is no Number 9L Bus in Manchester. (GM Note: "9L" is Catriona's shorthand for the Nine Ladies Stone Circle, but there's no way the characters will deduce that at this point.) If a character with **Document**

Analysis examines the diary, the handwriting is found to be the same as that in the marginalia in the books in Catriona's room (see p. 27), and not the same as that in the "Book of Shadows" found there.

Fingerprint Collection (or even **Document Analysis**) will find prints from all the flatmates, except Alan, on the cigarette paper of the roaches.

Mark Atherton

Mark's an ordinary kind of hippy/metaller from Blackburn in Lancashire. His room will be the first one the characters try, if they just enter the flat with the master key; alternatively, if they knock at the door loudly enough to wake someone, he'll be the one they wake up.

Mark has long, curly dark hair and brown eyes. He's average-looking other than that, and slightly below average height (5'8"). He wears a Led Zeppelin T-shirt and will pull on a pair of jogging bottoms to answer the door or talk to the characters. He's a 1st year student, studying Geography.

He's flustered and paranoid right from the start, shouting in panic: "Oh my God we're busted, oh fuck, it wasn't me. Oh no I'm going to go to prison aren't I? Oh fuck oh fuck oh fuck." This is what wakes Greg up, with fatal consequences. The GM should deal with the aftermath of the Ether-Fried Greg section (see p. 36) before giving the characters a chance to interview Mark much further.

Mark will rapidly crack under any **Interrogation**, particularly given how serious the situation is given Greg's death. He'll reveal:

- He does have some drugs in his room, but it's just a little bit of cannabis, and he doesn't want any trouble. He

seems keen to admit this, as though it's a weight off his mind, even if the characters don't question him about drugs specifically.

- Catriona did used to date Jim, but as far as he knows she's single now. Mark looks quite hopeful as he says this. She was into "all that pagan stuff" which he doesn't like much.
- He's not seen her since, he thinks, last Thursday. Yeah, she was out at Rockworld (nightclub) that night, and she came round to Flat 42 for a vodka and a spliff beforehand. He reckons she spent a fair bit of time talking to "this tall gothy bloke – Adam or Adrian or something," (actually Anton Bennett; see p. 60) but she did her usual thing of flitting round the nightclub, talking with everybody, dancing alone.
- (1-point spend) He admits that everyone else in 42 except Alan is a drug user, and that they all smoke hash and snort whizz (amphetamine; see Glossary, p. 9) at least occasionally. Chris, Jim, and H take Ecstasy and LSD too.
- If asked about ether, he says they did take it for a bit, a week or so ago, but he thinks Greg couldn't get any more after that. Otherwise it just doesn't occur to him to mention the ether; he didn't really think of it as a drug, since it's not illegal.

Greg Barton

Greg is in his room; he was up early for once, went into the University's Materials Science lab (where he was a student), and stole a pint of ether. Greg is a 1st year student, and spent the first term working fairly hard, drinking fairly hard with the friends he'd met on the course, and following Alan's advice not to have too much to do with the

others in the flat. This term, though, things changed; he tried a bit of cannabis, decided that seeing as that hadn't killed him the other drugs probably wouldn't either, and within a couple of weeks threw himself wholeheartedly into the lifestyle advocated by Chris and H.

A week or so back he happened to mention to the others that there were all sorts of strange and wonderful chemicals in his lab. When he said "ether," H's eyes lit up. He knew from his medical training that it used to be used as an anesthetic... and had effects similar to nitrous oxide, laughing gas. He and Chris persuaded Greg to steal some from the lab the next day. He did, and the three of them tried it out, loving its immediate euphoriant effects and tolerating the unconsciousness that followed overindulging in it. H was always very insistent that no-one smoked during an ether session, well knowing how flammable it is. What he didn't realize is quite how addictive it is, like most solvents.

Within a few days, Chris, H, Mark, Jim, and Greg were all wanting more ether every day. H had the sense and the willpower to stop, and get back to work. The others didn't; every day they bullied Greg into going out to steal some more, every day he did, but he didn't always come back. After all, he knew how rapidly it gave him a high, and how much more there would be for him if he did it all in as soon as possible, instead of taking it back to share with the others. Quite often, he'd end up lying in a hedge somewhere between his lab and his flat, etherized into unconscious. The others had never really stopped taking their preferred cannabis, vodka, and speed, but they soon turned back to those drugs, realizing how unreliable a supplier Greg was.

Yesterday he missed the trip to the Ritz because he was unconscious again, in one of the University's car parks, having made a real effort of will to go back to the lab for

a full day and get on with some work. He succeeded – almost – but he couldn't quite bring himself to leave the place at the end of the academic day without more drugs. When he woke up, he staggered home from the car park and slept properly till morning, waking up again wanting more ether.

That's where he was first thing in the morning: while the characters were still in their minibus en route from the airport, Greg was already stealing ether two 500ml bottles of ether. What he didn't realize was that the lab technician, having noticed that the lab was short of ether (without working out that it was being stolen) had only just distilled a new batch. Freshly distilled ether is at its most flammable.

He made it back to his room, figuring that at that time of day he'd be undisturbed. He sniffed half of the first 500ml ether bottle, having built up quite a tolerance by now. He fell over unconscious, leaving the bung out of the bottle. When he wakes up – which he will when the players knock on the flat door, or open it with the master key and cause something of a fuss by waking the others – he's still addled and half-asleep. The first thing he does, without thinking about the consequences, is fumble for his packet of cigarettes, light one up, and blow himself and most of the contents of his room into smithereens. The mix of vaporized ether, air, and unstable peroxides (caused by the ether reacting with oxygen) in the confined space of the small room ignites instantly, burning so rapidly as to be in effect an explosion. Death comes rapidly, Greg's inhalation of burning gas destroying his lungs.

Thus, Greg can't tell them anything, though his corpse (see sidebar) might indicate just what a mess these people are in, and how far Catriona may have fallen, if she was so closely associated with them as she seems to have been. Of course, it's also quite likely that the characters will (erroneously) connect his death with Catriona's disappearance.

Jim Farrell

Jim is Catriona's ex, of course, and probably the characters' first priority. He's a slim, good-looking 2nd year Philosophy student with short, spiky bleached hair. He's canny enough to insist that he not be charged with any drug offences before he'll co-operate; if the characters agree to that (**Negotiation**), he'll tell all he knows, otherwise it's 1-point spend of **Intimidation** to get him to speak. He's a Londoner, from a middle-class background.

- He was in love with Catriona, he says. They dated for two months, the whole of last term. In theory they were still an item over the Christmas holiday, but Catriona was back in the US with her family then; a couple of days after she came back she ended it.
- The two of them went along to a few of the University Pagan Society meetings together at the start of last term. He was willing to go to start with because he'd heard it was the group that all the potheads joined and he wanted to find a supplier for himself. After he realized that wasn't really the case, and after he found a supplier elsewhere (Chris, but he won't admit this without another 1-point spend of **Intimidation**, **Interrogation**, or **Negotiation**), he wasn't that keen on continuing, but Catriona did.
- If asked more about the Pagan Society, he says he didn't much care for Anton Bennett, the society's President. He thought that Anton was pretentious and lecherous – he seemed to be coming on to Catriona in a big way.
- As far as he knows, there isn't anyone else in Catriona's life yet, and the two of them have stayed friends. **Bullshit Detector** will catch an undercurrent of tension in his voice, and note that he looks away slightly as he says this.

Ether-Fried Greg

There is a loud, dull, "CRUMP" noise, about a minute after the characters first disturb one of the flatmates (which will be Mark; see p. 33). It emanates from one of the upstairs bedrooms (Greg's, of course). The walls seem to vibrate slightly for a moment. There is a roaring sound, as the explosion starts a secondary fire when the second bottle of ether is ignited.

The characters will need to act fast to contain the fire. There is a fire blanket and fire extinguisher in the kitchen; the character with the highest **Preparedness** score will know exactly where to find them in this flat, having spotted the corresponding ones on the wall of Flat 17 and made a mental note about them for future reference.

Greg is trying to sit up as they enter, and screaming, but he dies within seconds of the characters' arrival. Anyone who sees him die must make a Stability test at Difficulty 4, or lose 4 Stability. At the GM's discretion, a character with both **Explosive Devices** and **Forensic Anthropology** can make the test at Difficulty 3, if her background suggests she's dealt with burnt corpses often enough to no longer be so frequently affected.

The fire can be put out easily, but the room is somewhat damaged, and of course there's no saving Greg.

Of course, the characters should at this point inform the legitimate authorities, i.e. the UK police, fire brigade, and ambulance service, as well as the University's authorities. If Powell the security guard (see p. 22) is still with them, they'll need a 2-point spend of either **Cop Talk**, **Intimidation**, or **Negotiation** to persuade him not to do exactly that, immediately. It will take the authorities around fifteen minutes to arrive, once they've been called; a 1-point spend of either **Bureaucracy** or **Cop Talk** will let the characters continue their own investigation here even after that point, by convincing the

attending police officers that the explosion and death are part of an ongoing case.

Once the fire is out, the following details are immediately apparent:

- There is a burned adult corpse, curled up in the remnants of the bed.
- There is discoloration, indicating charring, of the entire contents of the room, including the furniture, walls, and ceiling.
- The window is shattered.

An examination of the remnants of Greg's room with **Explosive Devices** will glean the following information:

- The plasterboard walls have been pushed outwards in all directions, just above floor level, with stress fractures and crumbling portions visible. This indicates that the source for the ignition was heavier than air, such as gasoline, kerosene, etc. (In this case, of course, it was ether, but that's hardly the first fuel that springs to mind outside of a laboratory situation; if ether is mentioned by someone else, though, such as during an interview with one of Greg's flatmates, the character with **Explosive Devices** will know that ether is another heavier than air fuel.)
- There seem to be no visible remains of components from a bomb or incendiary device, suggesting that the fire and explosion were either accidental, or were set by experts. In either case, it appears that virtually all the fuel ignited very rapidly. The only potential components are some shards of thin, curved glass scattered around the room. **Chemistry** reveals these to be familiar as reagent bottles from a laboratory.
- The smoke from the fire was black, indicating the combustion of either petrochemical products or solvents.

- There is no obvious point of origin of the fire, suggesting that the flammable substance was spread evenly throughout the room prior to its ignition. This would indicate the substance to be a flammable vapor.

An examination of the corpse with **Forensic Anthropology** yields the following:

- The victim is a young adult male, aged around 18 to 20 years old. The pattern of burns over his head and body suggests he had long hair and was lying fully clothed on top of the bedclothes, rather than under them. The fingers were not badly burned (a character with **Fingerprinting** could get viable prints from them if desired).
- The victim has not been burnt completely beyond recognition (and in fact any of the flatmates, if asked, could identify the corpse as Greg's).
- The victim's upper body clothing, apparently a hooded top, has partially melted onto his skin. The logo of the band Korn can still be made out. The baggy jeans on his lower body seem to have better resisted the heat and explosion, being charred in places but still clearly recognizable.
- The curled position of the victim, with hands over face, is known as the "pugilist position." It's common in burn victims, as a natural consequence of the muscle fibers tautening as they heat up.
- The victim has several shards of thin, curved glass embedded in his body, as from a bottle. Once this has been spotted, a 1-point spend reveals these to be embedded in a pattern that indicates shrapnel wounds from the bottle exploding, rather than from an attack with the bottle as a weapon.

- There are several further injuries to the victim, including partial evisceration, with a portion of the intestines lying outside of the body, next to the torso but still attached, and a number of wounds or lacerations to the arms and legs. A 1-point spend, and a more detailed examination, finds these to be consistent with fire injuries, and rules out the possibility of their being pre-mortem injuries: intestinal gases heating up in the intestines burst the stomach wall, and the wounds to the arms and legs are actually tears, and are only found along fatty areas, indicating that the dried-out skin and fat split open. (This process of ruling out pre-mortem injuries is crucial, of course, as many fires are started in an attempt to destroy evidence of another crime, particularly a homicide.)

- There's no indication of significant movement on the part of the victim once the fire started, indicating either that he was incapacitated in some way or that he died very rapidly (a little of both, in fact).

- (1-point spend) There is severe charring around the mouth and nose, as well as the tongue (which is protruding). Cause of death was almost certainly pulmonary failure resulting from the inhalation of burning gases.

Chemistry: A 1-point spend will note a faint scent of solvents in the flat. The odor is strongest inside the flat's small W.C. (from when Greg heeded a call of nature early in the morning, and took his bottle of ether in with him so he didn't have to stop sniffing). A chemical test there finds traces of ether and ether byproducts (such as peroxides) – not enough to cause another explosion, but enough to point to the presence of ether in larger quantities in the flat within the previous few hours.

Further questioning (**Intimidation**, **Interrogation**, or **Negotiation**) reveals that he suspects her of having started another relationship, or maybe more than one – perhaps one with Anton and one with this “S.” mentioned in the diary. He read the diary, of course, in a somewhat paranoid state of mind, before his flatmates got to it and started roaching it.

- If they ask him about Catriona’s diary, he says she left it here last Thursday. H and Chris thought it would be funny to roach it, figuring that anyone leaving paper or cardboard around at Flat 42 obviously didn’t mind if it ended up as part of a spliff. He and Mark tried to persuade them not to do it, but they just laughed about it and went ahead anyway. They went straight for the pages of the then current week because they thought it’d wind her up to not know what she was supposed to be doing. They were a bit disappointed when she didn’t come back.

A search through his room with **Evidence Collection** will turn up just under a quarter of an ounce of cannabis resin.

Harry H. Smith

“H, please. Never Harry, or Henry, or Harold, or any of that crap. Just H.” H went to a good private school in Merseyside, near Liverpool, giving him that combination of coarseness and arrogance that all educated Scousers tend to have (this author included). He’s ambitious and driven when it comes to his planned medical career, and very careful not to ever take the risk of being caught in possession of drugs (and thus thrown off his course): he makes sure he always has vodka and tequila and beer around to keep the party going for everyone, so the others don’t much mind passing him joints and sharing the odd wrap of speed or acid tab with him.

H is careful to look as conventional as possible. Unlike most of the others, he’s not really that bothered about pulling girls – he can concentrate on that in the real world, once he qualifies as a doctor, without any need for preening about like a peacock and pretending to be a goth or punk or something. Till then, the drugs and booze make a good substitute. So, he has short blonde hair, no piercings or tattoos, and a bit of a beer-gut. He dresses and looks more like a rugby player than a serious drug user – polo shirts, jeans, and trainers. He’s quite tall (6’1”).

Having been brought up to “never grass,” H would really prefer not to tell the authorities anything about what goes on in the house... but he learned in private school that the phrase, “it wasn’t me, Sir, it was him,” could be used to get himself out of most trouble with his teachers. If the alternative is getting thrown off his course, sent to prison, or both, he’ll talk, at the expense of the others. Of course, some of what he says will be lies, or at least misdirecting, misleading perversions of the truth, designed to get him off the hook while implicating as few of the others as possible (but as many as he thinks are necessary). **Interrogation** or **Negotiation** reveals the following:

- As far as he’s concerned, he’s never taken any drugs in his life, and always tried to talk the others out of it. **Bullshit Detector** will reveal this to be a lie, if the characters are bothered about trying to get the lads here arrested for drugs offences. A 1-point spend of **Interrogation** or **Intimidation**, or else the use of **Negotiation** (no spend, but they’ll need to offer to keep him out of trouble) will get H to admit to taking drugs provided by the others, particularly Chris. H regards Chris as his closest friend, but he realizes there’s not much point trying to implicate anyone else; Chris is going down anyway, as soon



as the characters or the local police search his room.

- He decided long ago that he didn't much like Catriona ("she was pushy, and nutty; I suppose she was pretty too, but pushy and nutty is a bad combination"). He was quite glad when she and Jim split up, as he hoped that would mean she wouldn't be round as often.
- If asked where Chris is now, H will try to stall, unless the characters have already persuaded him to admit that Chris was the flat's main dealer. In that case, he'll take the guess that if Chris isn't in the house at this time, he's probably in the roof garden, out of his head (see Chris Aspinall, below). He can show the characters how to get there.

Alan Loach

Alan would rather not be in Flat 42 at all, but there's not a whole lot he could do about it other than tell the University authorities about his flatmates' drug use, and he was always brought up to "never grass." Getting any information out of him would be tricky because of this, but a 1-point spend of **Intimidation** could do it. He doesn't know all that much anyway:

- He can confirm that all his flatmates are drug users, though he says that the others corrupted poor Greg. He doesn't really know what drugs they take, or where they get them from, but he reckons that H. and Chris are the ringleaders – they're the ones he sees insensible most often, and the ones who always seem to be daring the others on to greater excesses.
- He doesn't know Catriona by name (he really does keep himself to himself) but he will recognize her from a

photograph, and can confirm that "her and her mates" (i.e. Talia and Jasmine) were round here quite often, at least four or five times a week, but in the last couple of months she hasn't been over as often as the other two. He hasn't seen her here since sometime last week.

Chris Aspinall

Chris is mostly interested in taking speed (amphetamine sulfate), buying more speed, selling all kinds of drugs to get money for speed, and (while high on speed) taking other drugs or drink to a degree that seems almost superhuman to a non-drug-user. He's nominally studying History, in his 3rd year, and it's nothing short of a miracle that he's not been thrown out of the University by now. When sober (which is rare) he's reasonably intelligent; likewise, sometimes he takes some speed without any drink, and he's somehow evolved a way to make enough sense of the experience to write an essay or two every term while out of his head. He gets a fair bit of cash from his parents, and supplements this by selling speed, hash, and a little acid – mostly hash, and mostly sold to fund his own speed habit.

Chris is tall and rather plain-looking, with an Iggy Pop style ragged mane of dirty blonde hair. He dresses in classic rock gear, with a plain leather biker jacket, denim jeans, army surplus boots, and a tattered T-shirt depicting the New York Dolls.

He'll be too incoherent to talk much under questioning any time on the Tuesday; in any event, he probably won't be in the house.

A search of his room turns up the following, amid the usual student junk and psychedelic music collection:

- A set of brass scales, with copper coins and small metric weights to weigh out drug quantities. A 1-point spend of **Streetwise** means that the character recalls that British cannabis dealers use



pennies to weigh out an eighth of an ounce of hash, tuppennies (two-pence pieces) to weigh out quarter-ounces, and if they can get it, the no longer legal tender ha'penny (half-penny piece) to weigh out sixteenths; the metric weights would be for dealing amphetamine, cocaine, or heroin.

- A sizeable quantity of amphetamine sulfate: around 20 grams, enough evidence (along with the scales) to potentially put Chris in prison for up to 14 years as a dealer.
- A sizeable quantity of cannabis resin, around 2 ounces. Again this is enough to convict Chris.

He attempted to go to sleep at about 5 am, but had taken so much speed he couldn't. He got up again after an hour or so, still fully clothed, and decided to go and see the dawn in, sitting in Cornbrook House's little-known roof garden area. This is usually accessible from a doorway just beyond the security office, but of course Chris found the doorway locked. Still stuck on his course of action, he crossed Oxford Road, climbed an exterior staircase, and shinnied up a wall there to get onto the roof that way. The roof garden isn't actually over Cornbrook itself, but over the pedestrian bridge that crosses high above Oxford Road from the Precinct Center. There he sat, staring at the stars, then staring at the dawn, muttering to himself. Finally, he went to sleep (or as close as an amphetamine addict gets to sleep: a kind of semi-comatose state, with plenty of twitching and muttering) in a corner of the roof garden, huddled up in his leather jacket. A mostly empty tequila bottle is by his side.

If the characters show up to find him, he's woken up again, and is in the process of snorting the last of his speed. He's paranoid, jumpy, and confused. **Negotiation**, **Flattery**, or **Flirting** will get him co-operative, and briefly coherent; if Catriona's name is



mentioned, he'll get a dreamy look in his eyes and tell the characters:

- "She's off to help the ladies, man... she's gonna do her witchy magic to help them out. Savin' the fuckin' planet. More than I could do. More than I would do. She's got a big heart that girl, a fucking big heart, but she's a devil woman." He breaks into a passable rendition of Cliff Richard's song "Devil Woman," loses the plot a bit in the middle, does his party trick of vocalized wah-wah pedal effects in a Hendrix style, and then morphs the song into Elvis's "Devil in Disguise." (He's referring to the Nine Ladies stone circle, which the characters will get to in Chapter 6: Dark Rocks among the Stars of God (p 65); they're unlikely to work that out now, though if one



of the players mentions a suspicion that he's talking about stone circles or other megaliths, a 2-point **Trivia** spend might let someone have heard of the Nine Ladies stone circle in Derbyshire.)

That's the last coherent information the characters can get out of him; he's undergoing amphetamine psychosis, as a 1-point spend of **Chemistry** or **Forensic Psychology** will reveal. That is, he's taken so much speed, for so long, that he is in psychotic state that could last several days. This is unlikely to make him violent to himself or others (since he isn't normally), but it does mean that he'll talk pure gibberish for the next few hours. He

can potentially respond to instructions (if delivered with a 1-point spend of **Negotiation**, **Flattery**, or **Flirting**), but though he thinks he still makes sense (and may attempt to have a conversation), he can only rarely string two syllables together to make a word, let alone three words to make a sentence. Any "conversations" he does have will be purely in nonsense sounds on his part.

At any point, an attempt by a character to use **Intimidation** or **Interrogation** on Chris, or a mention that the characters are police officers, FBI agents, or other authority figures, will send turn him aggressive and panicky. He may attempt to hit the nearest

Doing it for Smokie

It's up to the characters, of course, whether they want to spend any time ensuring the UK police have a case against Chris and the other drug-using flatmates. It would distract somewhat from the more urgent business of finding Catriona, but the characters may well believe that Frans Van Rijn would want them to ensure that those who drew his daughter into the drugs scene are properly punished.

If they call him up and ask, he says they should just hand the problem over to the UK police as soon as possible, and get on with the search. That's their job. He doesn't want them getting distracted, and he won't be happy with them for calling him at all when they don't even have any news; in any case, the correct protocol would be to talk to McLoughlin (who will say much the same, if asked).

Of course, it's essential that if the characters are to succeed in busting Chris and company, they follow correct procedure; if they used a master key to get in, without the presence of Powell, it may already be too late for that. They may also be surprised at the lack of enthusiasm the Manchester police have for busting anyone for mere possession of cannabis; they'll be willing to take Chris in for the more serious offence of dealing, but it would take a 2-point spend of **Cop Talk**, **Negotiation**, or **Bureaucracy** to convince them to charge the others.

What they may, arguably, have a duty to do is ensure that Greg's death is dealt with properly and completely. Still, they can't save him, and they can probably tell the authorities what they know at a later date. A 1-point spend of **Cop Talk** or **Bureaucracy** could get them off the hook just long enough to complete the investigation, so long as they agree to come back and fill in the correct paperwork as soon as they're done.



character, particularly if one of them is trying to hold him, being aggressive, or between him and his planned exit.

Said planned exit is the route over the railing and down the sloping wall, the same route he got up here by. Going down it in a chase is a lot tougher than going up it at one's leisure; it's a Difficulty 3 Athletics task.

Failure indicates a fall onto either the concrete staircase on the left-hand side, or through the glass roof of the building on the right-hand side. A falling character can make a Difficulty 4 Athletics check to fall onto the stairs (Damage Roll at -1) instead of through the roof (Damage Roll at +1).

Chris

Athletics 1, Health 4, Scuffling 4,
Stability 1 (Stability Pool -4),
Surveillance 3
Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist, Kick)
Hit Threshold 2

(Note that these game statistics represent Chris in somewhat amphetamine-enhanced form; if he's sober, drop Surveillance to 1, increase Stability Pool to 1, and increase Athletics to 4.)



Chapter 4: In Learning's Bower

AH! THEN AT TIMES I DROOPING SIT,
AND SPEND MANY AN ANXIOUS HOUR,
NOR IN MY BOOK CAN I TAKE DELIGHT,
NOR SIT IN LEARNING'S BOWER,
WORN THRO' WITH THE DREARY SHOWER.
- William Blake, *The School Boy*

Manchester University

The characters can, if it occurs to them, talk to the University's various departments to see if they know anything useful. In the unlikely event that it doesn't occur to them, the GM may have a character with **Bureaucracy** remember that Universities keep extensive records on their students these days. Likewise a character with **Trivia** will have read somewhere that Universities in the UK have entirely separate Student Unions to cater for the social and leisure needs of students, with the Unions having their own records, I.D. cards, and so on.

In particular, the Administration Section hold records on Catriona; the English Language and Literature Department contains her tutors, lecturers, and fellow students; and the University of Manchester Student Union will have records on which societies she joined and when she was last in the Union building at night.

Getting around the University campus is best done by walking. Assume a 5 to 10 minute walk between any two of the places in this chapter.

University of Manchester Administration Section

Scene Type CORE

This area is unlocked and staffed from 9.30am to 4.30pm. It can be quite hard to find, as it's located deep inside a large building on a fairly obscure part of the campus. One gets the impression that its denizens are not at all displeased if some of the people looking for the place give up in disgust. They are not especially helpful, either, managing to portray an air of politeness so excessive as to border on disdain.

Bureaucracy: Showing the admin staff some of the personally addressed University literature from Catriona's room, along with the FBI credentials and UK police ID cards, will elicit immediate co-operation. After a wait of around 10 minutes, the admin staff produce Catriona's University records (see below).

If the PCs don't have the literature from her room, the admin staff complain that it will take them some time to find Catriona's records from her name alone, and ask the PCs to come back tomorrow. In fact the staff are just being awkward, as a 1-point spend of **Bullshit Detector** reveals. Still, the characters will need to either come back tomorrow, or

spend 1 point of **Bureaucracy** to speed things up and get the info in 10 minutes, as above.

Note that if the characters are on good terms with the staff here, they can also get records of virtually any other student and/or staff member. We have not provided details of said records for all the NPCs, but at the very least the characters will be able to get addresses and other contact details.

Catriona's Records

These are for the most part unremarkable, confirming her address, Van Rijn's home address in Virginia, a receipt for her University fees and Hall of Residence charges having been paid, and her coursework grades (middling to good). They include a timetable of her tutorials and lectures, with contact details and addresses for the lecturers taking the classes.

Research (Core Clue) A thorough read-through of the records by a dedicated researcher reveals, from Library Security Office data, that Catriona's University library card was used to enter the John Rylands University Library at 7.37 pm on the Friday evening on which she was last seen by her flatmates. She borrowed a book entitled *Blake's Night*, used the library computers, and left at 8.22 pm.

If the characters ask them if any further information on Catriona's library visits is available, the Admin staff will direct them to the Library Security Office. If necessary, the GM could hint to the character with the highest **Cop Talk** that the Security Office will probably have CCTV footage of the Friday evening's comings and goings.

If the characters ask for her medical records, the admin staff stonewall at first – "We don't have copies of those, and in any case, they'd be confidential." Another 1-point spend in **Bureaucracy** or **Flattery** will get them a quick

look ("but we shouldn't really let you see these at all") at the admin department's copy of the medical records from the University's Student Health Center: she seems to be in fine health, though she admits to occasionally drinking to excess, and smoking 20 Silk Cut a day.

John Rylands Library Security Office
Scene Type CORE

The library has a series of turnstiles, into which the students' library/ID cards must be inserted to gain access to the building. The PCs will need to attract the attention of a security guard (easy enough to do), then show their credentials, to be let through a side door.

Cop Talk or **Flattery** (Core Clue) can be used to persuade the security supervisor to release the CCTV records for the previous Friday. These reveal that Catriona entered the library alone, but left with a tall, slim-looking man in his late 20s.

Data Retrieval: (Core Clue) If the PCs ask if any further information about the older man is available, the security guards will let them check who he was from which library card he used to pass through the turnstiles and exit the building. Records reveal his name to be Stephen Hodge; he's an Assistant Lecturer in the English Department, aged 26. His address – a flat in Fallowfield, on Wilbraham Road – also comes up. His library card only dates from the start of this academic year, indicating he was only appointed some six months previously. The character with the highest level of **Research** will recall his name from the data from the Admin Department; he's one of Catriona's tutors, taking her for the two-hour Poetry 1750-1850 tutorial on a Thursday afternoon.

Electronic Surveillance or **Data Retrieval:**

A 1-point spend gets a blown up image of Hodge, printed out from CCTV footage. Alternatively the characters could go back to

Interviewing Stephen Hodge in the English Department

The characters may be able to talk to Hodge here, though this depends on the time of day they call in – he is only reasonably certain to be in his office for around 25 hours a week, as he's permitted to work from home quite a lot. It's up to the GM whether he wants to let the characters find Hodge here if they just call in, or if they would need to get a copy of his timetable from the English Department secretary to be certain of doing so; interviewing him in his office will work the same way as interviewing him at home (see Hodge's Flat, p. 46), though they will get more information from the surroundings in his home than in his office.

His office is relatively standard for a laid-back young lecturer here: half-a-dozen chairs around a table for students, for when he takes tutorials here, a couple of comfortable desk chairs, some framed prints of photographs of Anthony Gormley's sculptural installations, and a large, glass-doored bookcase. **Occult Lore** will spot a small number of academic books on British occult and pagan history, nestled among the poetry journals and critical anthologies, as well as Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*, a book of Celtic mythology and poetry that inspired much of the Celtic and Goddess-centered branches of 20th century occultism.

the Admin Department and get it with a 1-point spend of Bureaucracy.

University of Manchester English Language & Literature Department
Scene Type alternate

The characters can very easily talk with several of Catriona's tutors and/or fellow students. In particular, they'll probably want to talk to Hodge (see sidebar).

The other tutors & students know little enough; they've barely even noticed that Catriona hasn't shown up for lectures or tutorials this week yet, and don't regard it as particularly remarkable.

University of Manchester Students' Union

Scene Type alternate

The Student Union is an independent body, rather than part of the University. It's staffed from a small office with two administrative staff, and theoretically run by a committee of elected students.

Bureaucracy or Flattery: The characters can easily persuade the admin staff to check through their records regarding Catriona. They're bored and don't have anything else to do.

- She has only rarely signed in to the Student Union (which is a requirement for anyone entering the building after 6 pm), only on most Wednesday evenings and occasional Tuesdays. She was last in on the previous Wednesday (30th January).
- She joined the following societies: Earth Action, Pagan Society, and Repetitive Beast Messiahs. "Ooh, I don't know anything about them, chuck. Best thing is for you to check the notice boards out in the corridor."

A look in the corridor reveals that each society has a notice board. A few minutes' **Research**, checking through the often tatty, torn, scrawled, overlapping, and overwritten notices, reveals the following:

- Earth Action meets on a Tuesday evening at 7 pm, in one of the

University's meeting rooms. They're an eco-activist group (see p. 51), comprising a number of students who get together to go on "Actions." The most recent were something called a "McDonalds Manchester Head Office Action" in mid-January, and a "Stanton Moor Quarry Action" on Saturday 26th January. There is a mobile phone listed as a contact number for the society: "Call Dolphin on 07933578624." If a character calls the number, go to the "Dolphin of Earth Action" scene (p. 51).

- The Pagan Society meets on a Wednesday evening at 7.30 pm, again in a meeting room. This Wednesday's meeting is entitled "Burroughsian Cut-Up Magick." There's a contact email address for more info: nyarlathotep93@gothking.demon.co.uk. All the notices about meetings are signed with a flamboyant, stylized "N." **Document Analysis** reveals them to be written by the same person as wrote the *Book of Shadows* in Catriona's room. (GM Note: This is Anton Bennett again; see Bennett's House, p. 53).
- The Repetitive Beast Messiahs, despite having a name that may ring a few alarm bells with the characters, is a society for dance and alternative music enthusiasts. On the third Wednesday of the month they run an event in the Student Union's on-site nightclub, called RBM-RPM.

Bureaucracy or Flattery with the admin staff will persuade them to dig out the records and contact details of one or more of the registered Officers of the various societies Catriona joined:

- Just asking, with the requisite skill, can get them the info on Anton Bennett, who does indeed own the nyarlathotep93 email address, and

lives in a house in Moss Side (see Bennett's House, p. 52, if they follow up on this). The phone number listed for him is a landline, rather than a mobile; it's a shared line for the whole house, and they use an answering machine to screen their calls. Refer to the Bennett's House section again if the characters call. Bennett will answer if he's in, and if the person calling is female and sounds like she might fancy him. Otherwise he'll probably neither answer nor return the call.

- Alternatively, a 1-point spend can get them the contact details for the Repetitive Beast Messiahs' president (Martin Oliver). He will be even more bemused than the characters are, & knows nothing about Catriona's disappearance anyway. If pressed, he can describe some of her comings and goings over the last few months, but he's so vague and laid-back that he barely knows where he's been himself.
- Earth Action is a somewhat shadier group, and harder to get information on. Those who set it up left a specific instruction with the staff here not to pass on any of their contact details. Getting such information will again be a 1-point spend, but is harder work. In any case, Dolphin has moved house (into a squat in Hulme) since she gave a registered address to the University; only her phone number (the same as the one on the notice board) is still viable.

Hodge's Flat

Scene Type alternate

Although this scene is listed as an alternate, the characters must either interview Hodge – whether at his home, or in his office at the University (see p. 45) – or else speak with Dolphin (see p. 51); one or other must be

a core scene, depending on the characters' actions. It is quite likely that they will want to speak with both Hodge and Dolphin, and they'll get more information by doing so. Note: This provision of two different potential paths also means that if the characters somehow comprehensively mess up one of the scenes – perhaps getting angry and shooting Hodge, or something equally daft – they still have a chance of getting back on the right track by doing the other scene.

Hodge's flat is on the top floor of a small, purpose-built block of nine flats over three floors. He's wary of letting the characters in, to begin with, but if they show their ID cards he unbolts the door.

His flat is sparsely furnished, every piece of furniture carefully placed to give the home an air of sophisticated good taste. The main room is a big, spacious lounge & dining room, with a small kitchen off, bathroom, and two bedrooms off it.

The main bedroom is done out in antique dark oak furniture, including a king-size bed. The bin by it contains several used condoms & packets, among other things (**Evidence Collection** to spot them). Hodge's DNA traces are on the insides; Catriona's on the outsides.

The spare bedroom is set up as Hodge's study: if the characters get a look in it, they find bookcases on every wall except the one with the window and desk. The bookcases hold an even mix of literature, poetry, philosophy, history, mythology, and pure occult with a Celtic neo-pagan slant. The desk is an old-fashioned leather-topped writing desk with a laptop computer on it as well as fountain pens and parchment paper.

A 2' x 1' x 8" locked metal box is tucked under the desk by the wall, like a footrest (**Evidence Collection** and a thorough search of the room to spot it). Hodge has a key, of course, and might be persuaded to open it

if he's co-operative; alternatively, picking the lock is a Difficulty 2 Infiltration task. It contains Hodge's regalia and literature relating to the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids (OBOD; see p. 10), of which he is a member. **Occult Lore** will recognize the white robe, blue robe, blunt ritual sword, and Celtic-inspired, quasi-Masonic regalia as relating to OBOD. A collection of OBOD newsletters and handbooks confirms this.

A careful study of the OBOD literature reveals the following:

Occult Lore: The character can gain the first paragraph of information on OBOD in Appendix 99. If he stretches his mind back to O.V. briefings on OBOD (1-point), he can get the rest of the information too.

Cryptography: A 1-point spend, for a character either specifically studying the membership list, or studying all the documents specifically looking for codes and ciphers, will let the character spot the small but significant number of email addresses that are HotMail addresses *and* have the number "10" in the body. Alternatively, a 2-point spend can get that information, and spot the "H, E, L, L," cipher hidden in the magical names of the members with those email addresses (for details and examples, see Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids: Additional GM Info, p. 10).

Stephen Hodge

Hodge is not an Esoterrorist, though the characters could be forgiven for thinking he is, if they get a chance to snoop around his flat and find the OBOD material. He's a very serious scholar, delving deeply into both literature (particularly the works of William Blake) and the occult (particularly the Celtic and Druidic traditions of Britain). He's also quite deeply in love with Catriona, to the point of being captivated with her, at grave risk to his career (teacher/student relationships being specifically forbidden by his contract with the University). Her slightly

sullen, ethereal beauty, and her obvious empathy with his own fields of study, have him on fire.

Although OBOD is predominantly a group-oriented magical order, the Esoterrorists within it have borrowed a concept that has worked well for them within other occult groups, that of the personal magical teacher or mentor. They make a special effort to cultivate an informal teacher-pupil relationship with their most promising recruits, and Hodge was selected at the start of this year by Laurence Fairclough, a high-ranking Esoterrorist and OBOD member, as a pupil. Fairclough, unlike the non-Esoterrorists within OBOD, has a magnetic, compelling personality, as well as an intelligence at least as keen as Hodge's own; he's also older than Hodge, running a number of very successful and prestigious businesses, including an independent publisher of poetry. Hodge would love to get his own mystical Celtic poetry published, so was already in awe of Fairclough when the first met. Fairclough has been subtly manipulating Hodge into falling for Catriona, Fairclough having had instruction from his Esoterrorist superiors that she should be watched and gradually drawn to an Esoterrorist way of thinking. Fairclough feels that Hodge might be able to draw her into OBOD, and thence, eventually, she may become an Esoterrorist priestess; he knows that there are alternate Esoterrorist temptations being placed in her way too, though, if Hodge fails.

Hodge is tall, Scottish (from the Borders, to the south-east of Edinburgh, but with the rich & rounded accent of the well-educated Scot), and good-looking in a lean, chiseled kind of way. He has short, slightly curly dark hair, and fiercely inquisitive deep blue eyes. He's intense, driven, and obsessive, particularly when the subject matter is his spirituality, his study of poetry, and Catriona his Muse.

Though he can be tough to get along with, particularly if one is of a more normal frame of mind than him, his heart is very much in the right place; his study of the occult is misguided, rather than deliberately evil. It's a natural extension of what he sees as his Celtic heritage, and his fascination with the mystical poetry of Blake.

He loves being an academic, and could not see himself in any other line of work; no-one but a university would pay him to come up with new interpretations of Blake's *The Four Valas*, or give a lecture on the Celtic mythological significance of the works of W. B. Yeats. Indeed, the outside world scares him somewhat, on the few occasions his thoughts turn to it at all.

Hodge will not respond well to aggressive questioning, and will demand to have his solicitor (lawyer) present unless the characters quickly take charge of the situation. He's likely to mutter about "bloody interfering Yanks" and how they have no right to question him.

If the characters pursue a line of questioning concerning his interest in the occult, including his activities with OBOD, and in particular if they mention Esoterrorists or an alleged kidnapping of Catriona, he will certainly insist on calling his solicitor, and is unlikely to answer any questions without legal advice. He gets very touchy about his OBOD activities; as far as he's concerned, he's carrying on the great British tradition of the bard-druid-poet, a tradition that dates back to Grand Archdruid William Blake and beyond, and he refuses to be victimized or discriminated against for his religious beliefs.

See the *Mr Deaver* sidebar, if he does call his solicitor. The characters may have to arrest Hodge and take him to Bootle Street police station to get him to say anything at all, if they've annoyed him sufficiently to want the solicitor present; at this point, a good relationship with Inspector Morgan (see p.

Mr Deaver, Hodge's Solicitor

Mr John Deaver is a furtive, sneaky-looking little chap in an expensive suit, so that he resembles a very well-dressed weasel. His balding ginger hair and shifty eyes only enhance this look. He'll do his best to persuade Hodge not to say anything at all, unless the characters are prepared to arrest and charge his client.

Deaver is another OBOD member and Esoterrorist recruit. Most of the Manchester OBOD crew use him as their solicitor, thanks to the quasi-Masonic nature of the organization.

He has made a special study of the legal rights of religious and occult groups. Any attempt by the characters to stereotype occultists as evil, demented, Satanic, etc., will soon have him shouting about how the characters are breaking the law against "incitement to religious hatred" and he may very well bring a nuisance lawsuit against them for exactly that. He will certainly advise any client of his to sue for wrongful arrest, if arrested and later released without charge.

If the characters have thoroughly studied the OBOD literature, including the membership list, a 1-point spend on **Research** will let someone remember that there was a "J. Deaver" listed among the membership.

20) could prove invaluable, particularly if the characters later have to release Hodge without charge.

If the characters press Hodge hard, right from the start, on the issue of his relationship with Catriona, implying that they know he's had an affair with her and that he would be in deep trouble for it, his fears for his academic career may make him suddenly co-operative. This could be achieved in a variety of ways (notably **Negotiation**, **Bullshit Detector** if he denies the relationship, or **Interrogation**, but **Flattery** could also work) but ideally the players should suggest that line of questioning themselves. Of course, a more strait-laced group will not want to offer any kind of deal to a known occultist & philanderer, so they'll have to resort to other methods.

If that fails, the only ways they're likely to get him to talk at all are by threatening to beat it out of him (no lawyers, just plenty of **Intimidation**, though this will certainly result in him getting Deaver to give the characters some legal heat as soon as he

gets a chance to) or calling in some serious assistance from the local police to get him arrested and charged. Given that he was the last person to see Catriona, the characters may try to bring a (very flimsy) case against him, for either murder or kidnapping, but there can be no murder case without a corpse, and there's no actual evidence he kidnapped her either; at best they can get him arrested on suspicion of involvement with her murder or kidnap, and later release him without charge.

Getting him arrested at all is only likely to happen at all if the characters have Inspector Morgan firmly on their side (see p. 20) or if they call Evan McLoughlin and see if he can use his own influence. McLoughlin is willing to do this, largely to ensure his credibility & verisimilitude with the characters are assured. He won't help in only the way they expect: as well as arranging the arrest, he'll use the Esoterrorist network to influence Hodge through Fairclough & Deaver, recommending that he co-operate fully once arrested. Of course, the characters are unlikely to work that out at this point;

they'll just be pleasantly surprised at having "broken" Hodge so easily.

Here's what Hodge can tell them, when they finally get him talking by whatever means:

- "It wasn't what you think." Catriona is his muse; yes, he and she are now lovers, as of last Friday, but this is a pure, poetical, spiritual thing, not carnal lust.
- He had been "courting" her for a while, giving her one-to-one assistance with her understanding of some of the literature on the course, eventually inviting her over to his flat for dinner and poetry on the Friday. They'd arranged to meet at the library as she needed to pick a book up there anyway, it gave them an opportunity to meet inside the campus but outside the English department (where tongues might have wagged), and it meant he could be properly gentlemanly and drive her to his flat for dinner rather than expecting her to make her own way there.
- (Core Clue) They stayed up talking and reading poetry till past 3 am, then spent the night making love. He dropped her off at the Student Union on the Saturday morning because she was going on to some kind of eco-activist demonstration in Derbyshire with the Earth Action group.
- He hasn't seen her since the Saturday morning, and has been unable to raise her by mobile phone. He yearns to see her again, but has managed to convince himself that she needs her freedom; he believes her to be saving the planet in Derbyshire, or perhaps embarked elsewhere, on a spiritual or poetic quest of her own, and he is sure she will come back to him, given time.

If the characters ask about his involvement with OBOD, and whether he tried to draw Catriona into that, then a 1-point spend of **Intimidation**, **Interrogation**, or **Negotiation** could convince him to tell them more:

- The two of them did talk about neo-paganism, and he mentioned his involvement with Druidism early on in their conversations. He encouraged her to "find her own path," which included her involvement with Earth Action, particularly her planned defense of the Nine Ladies Stone Circle, which is where he believes she is. Note that he doesn't think of Earth Action as a neo-pagan group (it isn't) but recognizes that any "defense of Mother Earth" is in accordance with neo-pagan principles. He believes (largely because he's been told so by Fairclough) that the best tactic to recruit a new member is the softly-softly approach; let them make the running, maybe even pretend to try to put them off, suggest that they make their own mind up... then gradually reel them in. That was what he hoped to do with Catriona.

If the characters somehow present Hodge with convincing evidence that OBOD is predominantly an Esoterrorist front, and that he has been duped by them all along, he will at first react with disbelief. Still, he could eventually be convinced of just how much danger his occult studies have put him and others in. He will become angry with Fairclough and the others who have subtly manipulated him for so long. At that point, with a 1-point spend of **Interrogation** or **Reassurance**, he passes on the following information:

- He speaks of his pupil-mentor relationship with Fairclough, and gives them Fairclough's contact details (see p. 48).

- He mentions that Fairclough subtly egged him on regarding Catriona. Fairclough even planted the seeds for Hodge's attraction for her in the first place, suggesting to him a long while ago that he needed to find himself a beautiful, mystical young Muse.

Dolphin of Earth Action

Scene Type alternate

Characters wanting more information about Catriona's visit to the Nine Ladies Stone Circle after having spoken with Hodge (see p. 47), or just following up on the contact for the Earth Action group from the noticeboard, will call the mobile phone number for "Dolphin."



Anti-Quarrying Protests

Dolphin can explain more about why eco-activists are against quarrying, if asked. In general, with the UK's relatively small land area, very little of which is wilderness, most potential quarrying sites are someone or another's beauty spot; likewise, many are in areas of scientific interest. This particular quarry, in the Peak District, is in one of the UK's recognized National Parks as well as being close to the Nine Ladies prehistoric site, so there is enormous opposition to it reopening.

"Dolphin" is a tall, slim hippy student with bright blue-green dreadlocks. She'll be suspicious of the characters at first, and won't give any information out over the phone, but will arrange to meet them in the Student Union bar if they can convince her (**Reassurance**) that they might really be looking for the missing Catriona, rather than just investigating Earth Action so the government can keep tabs on local activists (she's encountered a fair bit of the latter before).

She'll approach the Student Union building carefully (Surveillance 4), being at least a little paranoid about this being a set-up for immediate arrest, even after the **Reassurance**. If the characters come clean with her about what they're doing (that is, they're FBI agents seconded to UK police, looking for a missing student), and provide proof (showing her both sets of I.D. and the missing persons report), they can overcome her suspicions and get her co-operation. If they claim to be relatives of Catriona, or any other such transparent subterfuge, it will take either a 2-point spend of **Impersonate** to convince her they're telling the truth, or a 2-point spend of **Reassurance** afterwards, when they do admit the truth, to convince her to trust them again.

Once she's talking, she'll tell the characters the following:

- (Core Clue) Catriona came with her and 7 other Earth Action students to the Nine Ladies stone circle, first thing on Saturday morning, in the Student Union minibus which they'd hired for the occasion. They were going as part of an organized eco-action, co-ordinated by the anti-quarrying protesters camped out at the stone circle.
- (Core Clue) The day went well, with the protesters disrupting attempts to re-start quarrying. All the Earth Action lot stayed around for a while in the evening, sharing a supper with the on-site activists & celebrating the day's success. Catriona decided she wanted to stay for a few more days, and said she'd make her own way back - hitch-

hiking or catching a lift from one of the other protesters.

- If asked, Dolphin didn't notice anything untoward about Catriona's decision to stay. In fact, she got the impression that Catriona had found her spiritual home. Dolphin thinks she may well still be there, just happy to be doing some good at last, making a real difference.
- Dolphin drove the minibus to Stanton Moor herself. She can give the characters directions (both driving to the Moor, then walking to the Stone Circle and the nearby quarry containing the protest site), if they ask, but she wants something from them in return (this will require **Negotiation**). She wants them to agree that they'll take the protesters as they find them, once they get to the site: "You have to realize that though these people have different world-views to your own, they're exercising their democratic right to protest. They're doing what they feel is right, to save the planet for our children and grandchildren. Don't judge them by your own standards. Don't feel like you ought to arrest them on site or go in mob-handed. These people are my friends, almost my family, and you must realize by now that Catriona feels the same way - maybe even more strongly than I do. I'll tell you how to get there as long as you agree to treat the camp and its occupants with respect and courtesy."

Finding the Nine Ladies without Hodge or Dolphin

If the characters got some but not all the clues from Hodge, and somehow managed to scare off Dolphin, all they'll know is that Catriona is somewhere in Derbyshire doing some eco-activism. In this case, a couple of hours of **Research**, mostly internet-based, could work out where she's likely to be (the Nine Ladies protest camp) and how to get there (it's not far from Manchester, but it can certainly be tricky finding it).

Alternatively, if the characters know from Hodge or Dolphin that Catriona went to the Nine Ladies camp, but don't know how to get there, it takes about 30 minutes of **Research** to plan the best route there.

Chapter 5 : Soft Deceit & Idleness

THE LOOK OF LOVE ALARMS
BECAUSE 'TIS FILL'D WITH FIRE;
BUT THE LOOK OF SOFT DECEIT
SHALL WIN THE LOVER'S HIRE

SOFT DECEIT AND IDLENESS,
THESE ARE BEAUTY'S SWEETEST DRESS.
- William Blake, *Several Questions Answered*

The alternate scene in this chapter will not give the characters much, if any, of a lead as to Catriona's whereabouts, if they do not already have such a lead. It can be useful for a good deal of background information, though, particularly when it comes to piecing together the wider Esoterrorist plan. As ever, it's a tradeoff; characters avoiding this potential scene will probably rescue Catriona more rapidly, but may wrongly believe that in doing so they have solved the case; certainly they won't have as many hints as to the precise nature of the imminent apocalypse. Of course, there's nothing to prevent them from rescuing Catriona and then coming back to Manchester to tie up some loose ends.

If the characters wish to proceed directly to the Nine Ladies Stone Circle, and know how to get there, the GM can skip ahead to Chapter 6: Dark Rocks among the Stars of God (p 65).

Bennett's House

Scene Type Alternate

If the characters wish to interview Anton Bennett, self-styled "Frater Nyarlathotep" and President of the University's Pagan Society, they can find him at his home in Moss Side, by checking records at either the Student Union or the University's Admin Department. He'll be in most days before midday or so. He's a postgraduate student

in Physics, studying for his PhD under Professor Quartermann at the Manchester Center for Nonlinear Dynamics (MCND, part of the University), which is where he spends his afternoons. This leaves his evenings free for writing up his work (usually done at home again), then setting off for Pagan Society meetings, neo-pagan pub moots, or nightclubs.

Bennett's house is a pokey little 3-bedroomed semi-detached in Moss Side, owned by his friend and housemate Andrew Henderson and also lived in by Arthur "Arty" Blagg (inevitably, visitors refer to the three of them as "the three 'A's").

The GM should ensure that Anton, Arty, & Andrew are sufficiently differentiated in the way their appearance & actions are described to the players, to avoid confusion between the similar names. Refer to them by surname if necessary.

Getting There

Getting to the house, and getting into it, could be tricky for the characters. It's on an estate in the southern part of Moss Side, about a 35-minute walk or 20-minute drive from the University. That's a 20-minute drive if you know where you're going; navigating round housing estates in the UK can be a tricky experience at the best of times. It seems like each new generation of town planners had a very different set of ideas as to how best to build a development,

and Moss Side is full of blind alleys, weird curves, dead ends, and of course violence, for the unprepared. Entering Moss Side will certainly ping the "Spider Senses" of any character with **Streetwise**; this is an unsafe area, particularly for outsiders. Fortunately, the characters are professionals, so unless there is some factor making the characters' lives difficult (perhaps the driver is somehow impaired, or the characters not having access to their usual GPS equipment, Manchester street atlases, etc., for some reason), they will drive to the place in around 30 minutes, avoiding any trouble en route.

If for some reason they choose to walk, it will take a 1-point **Streetwise** or 2-point **Intimidation** spend to get them to their destination without being mugged or attacked. In either case, this will involve the character with the relevant ability effectively facing down the potential predators. The **Streetwise** character can do this in such a manner as to avoid causing the potential predators to lose face; the **Intimidator** will need to terrify them to such an extent that losing face is the least of their worries (a mere 1-point spend of **Intimidation** would only scare them off long enough for them to come back and hunt the characters with a variety of firearms after a few minutes). If no-one is willing to spend the points, they end up fighting some muggers (see Moss Side Assailants sidebar).

However the characters get to Bennett's house, they will find another violent situation ongoing, literally on his doorstep. A large gang of teenagers has set upon a man in his 40s, who is lying in the house's front garden as they beat him repeatedly with sections of fence post that were once part of the boundary between Bennett's house and the one next door. As soon as the gang spots the characters arriving, they will attempt to melt away into the back streets – some cycling off on mountain bikes, some running, all going in different directions.

Moss Side Assailants

Most potential attackers in Moss Side will be dressed similarly – hooded tops, padded jackets, baseball caps, sneakers, etc. Some may hide their identities with bandannas & smog masks over their mouths, sunglasses, and so on. Some will proclaim a gang allegiance by sporting a headscarf or neckerchief, usually in blue, red, or black. The wealthier ones will wear plenty of chunky gold jewelry. Ethnically, most will be black or mixed-race, but a few in any larger group will probably be white or Asian (usually Indian or Pakistani).

Muggers (equal in number to the characters)

Athletics 5, Health 5, Scuffling 6, Stability 3, Surveillance 5

Damage Modifier: 0 (Machete, Iron Bar, Hammer, or Crowbar), or -1 (Knife)

Teenage Gang (twice as many in number as the characters)

Athletics 6, Health 3, Scuffling 3, Stability 2, Surveillance 5

Damage Modifier: -1 (Knife or Fence Post)

The characters could attempt to capture one or more of them, but this is likely to be an exercise in danger and futility (as anyone with **Streetwise** will surely know). These little thugs are experts in urban escape, evasion, and counterattack. Most of them have fathers or elder brothers or cousins who are more powerful gang members, in nearby streets and houses.

Once the gang of teenagers have been frightened off, or possibly arrested and charged (if the characters are very effective, though somewhat forgetful of their jobs), the characters can speak with their victim, Bill Irvine (not that he'll mention his name if he can possibly help it). He's bloody and bruised, but not seriously hurt, and he picks himself up once he realizes he's not being battered any more. He wants to get out of

there as rapidly as he can; the characters can speak with him briefly if they want (**Negotiation**, or better, **Reassurance**), but he has a broad Glaswegian (Scots) accent (1-point spend of **Linguistics** to understand more than one word in three):

- He says he was attacked because the lads accused him of selling heroin to one of their sisters. He denies this (**Bullshit Detector** will see through his denial, and any character who is **Streetwise** will recognize him as a probable long-term heroin user himself: the bad skin, surly defiance, small pupils, and thousand-yard stare are all strong indicators). Note that if the characters identify themselves as police, or have an obvious “cop look” to them, he’ll be wary of even mentioning drugs; he may bluster a little and try to claim this was just a mugging.
- He doesn’t want the characters to call an ambulance, or the police.
- He doesn’t know the people who live in the house personally; he was just walking past when he was attacked by the gang, and tried to back away any way he could. He has seen them about, though, and has heard that they’re a “bunch o’ de’il-washerpuze” (devil worshippers) from a Muslim woman he knows down the street. If shown a picture of Catriona, he thinks he’s seen her walking with the “big goathuh yin” (big gothy one) from the house, but he’s not sure; “thuh big yin huss a diff’nt gurr! uv’y wike” (the big one has a different girl every week).

If the characters do succeed in arresting him, his attackers, or both, they will get a favorable response from the local police, particularly if they made the effort earlier to get to know Inspector Morgan (see p. 20). Irvine is known to the police as a heroin user,

but they weren’t aware he’d started dealing; with this new information from characters, the police will search the squat Irvine was living in, find evidence of his dealing, and prosecute him. This will earn the characters a considerable amount of kudos with the Manchester Police Department, so that any future requests of assistance will be much more likely to be granted without quibble (perhaps reducing what would usually be a 1- or 2-point spend to a freebie, at the GM’s discretion). Of course, involving the police, holding Irvine while they arrive, and giving statements, will take time; at least an hour for the whole party, or a couple of hours if they’re smart enough to assign two of their number to the task while the others investigate the house immediately.

The GM should check the sections on the three housemates, below, to determine which, if any, of them are in when the characters call. Henderson is most likely to answer the door, if he’s in; if he’s out, but the other two are in, Bennett will try to get Blagg to answer it.

Any meeting with the housemates is likely to take place in the house’s lounge. A more private interview might happen in one of their rooms, but Bennett would rather talk with his friends around if he can manage it. The lounge has a faint scent of marijuana and hashish (**Chemistry** or **Streetwise** to note it), and the once white wallpaper has become slightly yellowed from many months of smoking all kinds of things here, but there are no signs of drug paraphernalia unless the characters start snooping in the drawers of the sideboard (**Evidence Collection**), one of which has several hash-pipes, bongs, and chillums, all of which have been used (**Chemistry** or **Streetwise** again to recognize the telltale signs of burnt cannabis resin and marijuana ash in the bowls). Henderson is determined to ensure that the house looks outwardly respectable at all times, so the pipes are always stashed away after a dope session.

Bennett's room is something of a pig-sty, with overflowing ash-trays, overflowing bins, used condoms, clothes and goth boots and books everywhere, and a bed that doesn't appear to have been changed since the middle of 2007. Bennett won't be happy about the characters poking around in here, but if they do anyway (arresting or otherwise subduing him, or breaking into the house sometime when no-one's about, or whatever), **Evidence Collection** will find the following:

- A small bag of herbal marijuana under the bed.
- An array of occult books, with an emphasis on Aleister Crowley, Kenneth Grant, Michael Bertiaux, Anton LaVey, and other notorious ritual magicians.
- Various textbooks on physics, astrophysics, fractal mathematics, and climatology.
- A black IBM Thinkpad laptop computer (see the Bennett's Laptop section).
- A small altar made from a chest of drawers, draped in black, with various ornaments on it.

Bennett's Laptop

Bennett's laptop is password-protected at log-on, and again to check email. If Bennett is co-operative, he can of course log in himself, or even provide the passwords (Ktulu and Night-Gaunt respectively). Otherwise, getting access to the PC will take about an hour and a half with **Cryptography** and appropriate software, or just 30 minutes with a 1-point spend to really impress the other characters.

A small amount of **Research** then uncovers a large number of flirtatious emails to various women Bennett has been pursuing, plus a smaller number of brief emails addressed to "Fr. B." and sent to the following email address: bolthorn23@gmail.com. These latter emails predominantly deal with arranging various meetings between Bennett and this "Fr. B." Their next scheduled meeting is at Bennett's home in the late afternoon of Thursday 31st January, at 4 pm (in the reply to the mail from "Fr. B." which set up the meeting, Bennett complains that he'll have to leave the lab early; "Fr. B." responds brusquely, saying there are good magical reasons for the timing of the meeting). A few of the emails touch on Bennett's occult activities, usually with Bennett asking for advice from "Fr. B." The emails to and from "Fr. B." started around six months ago, towards the end of last summer; previously it appears that Bennett was corresponding with a different person, "Fr. T." over the same kind of issues.

There is also an "OTOM Rituals" folder, and a "General Rituals" folder, both of which are full of fairly standard stuff but contain a few useful additions to Ordo Veritatis's library.

Other than that, the computer predominantly has software and files related to Bennett's studies. These include his (as yet unfinished) thesis. Skimming through this convoluted, highly technical work, which in many sections descends into shorthand and notes, is a 1-point **Research** spend and takes around an hour (Bennett hasn't written an abstract for the paper yet, so there is little explanation for most of it). It appears to be a look at the technical feasibility (or unfeasibility) of weather control, examining and discarding a variety of possible techniques that could be used for that purpose.

Anyone looking more closely at the altar will see the following atop it:

- A large piece of gravestone-shaped wood, painted with an Egyptian style picture & hieroglyphics. **Archaeology** or **Art History** will recognize this object as a modern replica of a stele, a type of ancient Egyptian religious art. **Occult Studies, History, or Archaeology** will recognize the figures on it as Horus, Nuit, Hadit, and the priest Ankh-af-na-Khonsu. A character with **Occult Studies** will know that all of these are central figures in Aleister Crowley's mythological and magical system of Thelema. A 1-point spend of **Occult Studies** recognizes this particular stele as a hand-made copy of the "Stele of Revealing," which Crowley saw in the Museum of Cairo, and which he believed was particularly holy. Anyone with this as the centerpiece of their altar is clearly a Crowley devotee.

- Four figures of deities, all facing the stele. **Occult Studies, History, or Archaeology** will be enough to recognize Horus (hawk-headed Egyptian god of vengeance and war), Kali (Hindu goddess of destruction), Pan (Greco-Roman god of male sexuality and fecundity), and the Morrigan (Celtic goddess of war). All in all, a strong indication that whoever owns this altar is a fan of the darker, nastier deities.

- Three more figures, at the front of the altar: in the center of the front, a small, broken stoneware thing, with a fading glaze in turquoise color, that vaguely resembles a fat maggot. Either side of it a modern resin sculpture facing inwards towards it: on the left, a tentacle-faced winged demon (anyone with a smattering of **Occult Studies** recognizes this as Cthulhu, the all-devouring deity invented by H.



P. Lovecraft but today worshipped by various occultists), and on the right, a hermaphroditic version of Baphomet, god of the Knights Templar and of ritual magicians. A 2-point spend of **Art History** or **Archaeology** to identify the small piece of stoneware as the remains of an antique Persian figure of a maggot-like, worm-like demon, a tormentor of lost souls, some 4,000 years old; if this identification is made, a 2-point spend of **Occult Studies** or 1-point spend of **Anthropology** will recall a Persian myth relating to maggot-demon sculptures which can be empowered by ritualistic blood sacrifices to turn them into focuses for enormously powerful magical effects.

The Persian demon is the only object here that has any significant magical power (not that the characters will know that). Exorcising it (properly,

using bell, book, and candle, if a character genuinely believes in the efficacy of such things), destroying it, or even simply taking it away from the house, will significantly impede the Esoterrorists' ability to target the first extreme weather events directly on the MCND building (see *Albion's Ransom Part II: The Worms of Sixty Winters*), which will jeopardize their whole plan. It was given to Bennett by his OTOM mentor (see Bennett's Diary, below).

Inside the drawers of the altar are the following:

- Some 23 different ritual robes, in various colors, adorned with pentagrams, hexagrams, and other occult symbols. A 1-point spend of **Occult Studies** will let a character know that 12 of these form a complete set of Planetary and Elemental robes, for performing a variety of different magical rituals; a further 1-point spend recognizes the remaining 11 as dedicated to one each of the Qlipothim, the Broken Shells that represent the dark side of the Judaic Qabalistic mystical system, a staple of OTOM ritual magic.
- A black stoneware chalice (**Art History** to determine that this is a late 20th century French work), a massive knife with a spiked knuckle-guard and pommel (**History** recognizes this as a World War I trench warfare knife), a rune-covered, pointed wooden wand (1-point spend of **Occult Studies** to spot that the combination of runes on it indicate its creator to be concentrating on magical power, particularly solar-phallic power), a wax pantacle with various geometric shapes inscribed into it, and a small scalpel. A character with **Occult Studies** will recognize these as versions of the five standard magical weapons of the elements, basic tools for

Bennett's Diary

Bennett started his diary on the day he joined OTOM, nearly four years ago. He mentions his Initiation, but not in detail.

Soon after Initiation, he was assigned to personal magical teacher, a higher-grade initiate whom he refers to only as Fr. B. He meets with Fr. B. about twice a month on average, and has various tasks and courses of study assigned to him.

Particular areas of interest for Bennett and Fr. B. appear to be as follows: scrying, trance-magic to explore the Qlipothim, the shamanic-style magic of the artist Austin Osman Spare, the folklore and practice of weather-witchery, and the evocation of Goetic demons.

Bennett regularly attends "Lodge Meetings" of OTOM's Manchester group, Rended Veil Lodge. Meetings tend to be communal rituals, culminating in group trance magic, or sometimes group sex magic.

Bennett last met Fr. B. ten days ago. The two of them seem to have spoken about Catriona several times, with Bennett asking if the time was right to pursue her sexually, and Fr. B. performing various divinations (often Runic divination, but sometimes Tarot, I Ching, or Tai Hsuan Ching), but always urging him to bide his time for the moment. At the most recent meeting, Fr. B.'s casting of the Runes indicated that it was time for Bennett to make his move on Catriona.

Bennett also mentions meeting Catriona on other occasions. He often writes about her afterwards, praising her beauty, intelligence, psychic potential, and general-purpose perfection, even hinting that he might be ready to settle down if only he can have her. He writes of the electricity of their goodnight kiss the previous Wednesday night.



the working ritual magician; depriving Bennett of these and the robes, while not preventing him from doing rituals, would certainly be considered to reduce the efficacy of said rituals, at least until he had a chance to acquire and consecrate replacements.

- Assorted oils, incenses, candles, and other consumable paraphernalia. Many of these come in jars or bottles marked “Ra-Hoor-Khuit Books.”

A 2-point spend of **Evidence Collection** will reveal a secret compartment built into the back panel of the altar. This contains Bennett’s magical diary, a thick, heavy, massive leather-bound book, revealing in detail every magical ritual he has performed over the past four years, as well as related information such as OTOM meetings he has attended, initiations he has undergone, and so forth. This is all hand-written, in the lazy scrawl Bennett uses when he can’t be bothered to do decent calligraphy (the Book of Shadows from Catriona’s room traditionally has to be in the witch’s “best hand of write”, though **Document Analysis** will still determine the two to be written by the same hand).

A thorough read of the diary will take around 20 hours, or 15 hours with a 1-point spend of **Document Analysis** to more rapidly decipher Bennett’s handwriting. A quicker read, fully reading a few salient and representative passages from each year and skimming through the rest as rapidly as possible to see if there’s anything of interest, will require a 1-point spend of **Textual Analysis** and take just 4 hours (or 3 hours if 1 point of **Document Analysis** is also spent by the same character, again for speed of handwriting deciphering). See the Bennett’s Diary sidebar for what can be gleaned from reading through the book.

Bennett’s Housemates

Andrew Henderson owns the house. He’s reasonably respectable compared to the other two; another Physics graduate, now with a good job working for a technology start-up in Wythenshawe. He has mid-length hair & wire-framed spectacles. He’s something of a pushover, which is why Bennett and Blagg are still here, despite frequent rent arrears. So, he will co-operate with the characters if they show him some relevant I.D., in terms of letting them in (if he’s in himself; he’ll be out at work between 8 am and 6 pm), answering questions to the best of his (limited) knowledge, and even permitting a search of rooms if they bamboozle him sufficiently (1-point spend of **Intimidation**, **Negotiation**, or **Flattery**). He knows the other two are members of the University’s Pagan Society, and has even been along to one or two of their meetings himself, but he doesn’t know about anything else they might be involved with; they’re just his old friends.

Arty Blagg is renowned as a liar, or more precisely a bullshitter, even among the highly deceptive world of the neo-pagan community. He’s always been receiving “visions” from the Gods, usually based on whatever comics he’s been reading, or cable TV shows he’s been watching. He came to Manchester to do Media Studies at the University, but dropped out within a few months and just ended up hanging around with the people he’d met, especially the Pagan Society lot. Five years later, aged 23 but looking more like 35, he’s still here;

Arty Blagg

Athletics 3, Health 6, Scuffling 7, Stability 0 (currently -8), Surveillance 6
Damage Modifier: 0 (“Prepare to be cloven in twain by King Arthur’s Sword, Excalibur,” a cheap, but heavy, stainless steel broadsword) or -2 (Fists and feet).



moustachioed, ponytailed, and wild-eyed. He's the only one who in the house who is at all likely to put up a physical fight, particularly if Anton feels threatened. Arty firmly believes himself to be the reincarnation of King Arthur. Anton was happy to go along with this, and portrayed himself as Merlin the Magician in Arty's deluded worldview, convincing him that other Pagan Society members and friends were other Arthurian figures. Thus Arty is willing to fight to defend the "Myrddin of my realm," Anton. A character with **Forensic Psychology** will recognize Arty as deluded and potentially psychotic, after spending even a few minutes in his presence. A 1-point spend of **Reassurance** could prevent him from attacking the characters, even if Anton is egging him on; a 2-point spend of **Shrink** could restore him to lucidity as usual (see *The Esoterrorists*, p. 47), if he has already become aggressive. In any event, he is not an Esoterrorist or a member of any occult body (other than the Pagan Society); interviewing him will provide little in the way of useful information, though it may give the characters an idea of just how manipulative Bennett can be. Arty will be in the house almost all the time, reading comics or occult books, or using the internet; about the only time he gets out is to go to Pagan Society meetings.

Anton Bennett

Bennett has three great passions in his life: physics, the occult, and women. Mostly women. From his perspective, the physics is fun, but has the major side benefit that it gets him a Research Council grant to carry on being a student and thus pursue student women (it's great that hundreds more arrive each year, 18 years old, excited to be in the big city and unaware of his reputation). The occult, too, is fun, and makes him feel powerful and mysterious... which he regards as invaluable qualities for pulling women, particularly the goths, rockers, space cadets, and hippies he prefers.

Bennett is 23 years old, very tall and skinny (6'3" and only 150 pounds or so), and passably good-looking. He sports very long, dyed black hair, and wears a leather biker jacket or knee-length black wool trenchcoat, with tight black jeans and big New Rock boots to make him look even taller and skinnier than he already is. His full forename is Anthony, but he shortened it to Anton, after Anton LaVey, the founder of modern Satanism.

He isn't an Esoterrorist. Yet. But he is a member of OTOM (see p. 98), an occult group that is almost wholly controlled by the Esoterrorists. His research, into the chaos inherent in weather systems, is also key to the Esoterrorists' plan to mess up the UK's weather and "blame the scientists." They will use ritual magical means to bring about their Fimbulwinter, but they have every intention of using Bennett as a patsy: having him appear to "leak" a faked report on a weather control experiment that's supposedly being carried out by MCND, using headed notepaper & appropriate protocols to make it seem genuine. In fact, his entire PhD thesis is based on the impossibility of weather control; his OTOM mentor, Will Carter, advised him to select exactly that subject, so it would be easier for Bennett to later re-jig a large portion of his thesis work to appear to be a weather control experiment. Carter already has a draft of the "leaked" report, prepared by Bennett for him under the guise of preparation for "a ritual magical thought-experiment concerning the weather in the Cthonic Dream-Spaces of Yag, with the intent of psycho-neurally reprogramming you, Fr. Nyarlathotep my lad, into both a more gifted scientist and a more powerful magician. Not that there's anything wrong with your capabilities in either field at the moment, of course, but we can all do with improvement..."

Bennett is bound by oaths of secrecy concerning his "Great Work" within OTOM. It will be very difficult to get him to talk

Using the Internet to investigate Anton Bennett

The characters may well have Bennett's email address by now: nyarlathotep93@gothking.demon.co.uk. They could try emailing it directly and asking him for a meeting; depending on how they phrase this, it might or might not get a response any time soon. If the email sounds like it might be from a woman who's seen him around and wants to date him (**Flattery**), he'll get back in touch as soon as he sees it (certainly within 8 hours or so, whatever time of day it's sent). If not, it could easily be a week or more; too long to be useful.

Another option is to try to investigate traffic to and from that address, either by hacking (2-point spend of **Cryptography**, and about three hours of time with an internet connection) or by attempting to get the information from his ISP by marginally more legitimate channels (a 1-point spend of **Law** and a 1-point spend of **Bureaucracy**, to come up with a legal document demanding access to the ISP's records; it will take 1 hour or so of a character's time to sort this out, though the ISP won't release the information to her for another 12 hours after that). Either way, see the Bennett's Laptop section (p. 56) for a guide as to the likely traffic; of course, they'll not see the whole record of Bennett's past sent & received emails, just similar ones from that point on, as they are sent or received.

Research: A simple search engine query for Anton Bennett and/or his email address will not turn up very much; he doesn't appear to be active on any of the major public access occult forums or mailing lists. It will turn up both his personal website and his information on MCND's Researchers page (see below).

Technologically savvy characters (**Research**, or possibly **Data Retrieval** or even **Cryptography**) will immediately think to check Bennett's email address domain name against the corresponding URL: <http://www.gothking.demon.co.uk>. This is his web page, which is predictably gothic, moody, and mysterious, without revealing a great deal about him. He does claim to be "an initiated Witch, and a full member of several occult Orders." There's an arty, purple-toned photograph of him in full goth clubbing gear & eyeliner; **Data Retrieval** or **Photography** could be used to enhance it and de-pretension it enough for it to be useful to identify Bennett in everyday life.

His entry on the MCND Researchers page is short and factual; he's a postgraduate researcher into the chaos inherent in weather systems. (He's figured out, probably correctly, that he's unlikely to want to date any girls who found out about him on a Physics web page, so for once he hasn't put a gothy picture or bio here.)

about his OTOM activities, for that reason. Convincing him that the OTOM are actually just a front for the Esoterrorists won't help either. He would love the idea of being an Esoterrorist rather than just an OTOM member; it would be something to aspire to, a secret occult society within a secret occult society, controlling the membership of the outer Order for their own ends – perfect!

In fact, the Esoterrorists have no plans to recruit him directly. He would almost be perfect Esoterrorist material – he's easily manipulated and easy to keep happy, since he has a major weakness (women); he's intelligent; and he's already committed himself to the darker side of the occult. He's more useful dead, though, which is how he's going to end up once the Esoterrorists are ready to launch the Fimbulwinter Plan.

There are plenty more clever, womanizing guys who want unlimited power, after all.

Getting Bennett to talk should not prove too difficult, even though he feels sure he could resist any torment... though he does take his oaths of secrecy to OTOM very seriously, and getting him to break them will be much tougher (see below).

By far the easiest way to approach him on any matter is to be attractive, female, and apparently interested in him (**Flirting**). At a pinch, average-looking, female, and apparently interested in him, will do almost as well. This is going to be tougher (but not impossible) if the female has already identified herself as a police officer or FBI agent. Better if she can approach him alone (although if she has a female friend who's equally good at **Flirting**, or even **Flattery** or **Negotiation**, and they hint at a threesome...), ideally using a little **Impersonation** to pretend to be something like an overseas postgraduate student from America who's really turned on by English accents and tall goths – maybe a friend of Catriona's, who heard about Bennett from her? Of course, this approach could also easily be used to get a look around Bennett's bedroom. The characters should have enough hints about Bennett by now to guess that he can't resist a pretty face.

Other interpersonal skills could potentially work, depending on the characters' approach, but will be a 1-point spend. However they get him talking, this is what he'll reveal without too much difficulty:

- He knows Catriona, and will claim to know her very well (**Bullshit Detector** will spot this to be a slight exaggeration; Bennett is trying to gain a little kudos by implying that all the most attractive girls in the Pagan Society are his best friends or lovers). She often had small parties in her

room, & he'd frequently end up there with his Pagan Society cronies.

- He last saw her the previous Wednesday (23rd January, as her appointments diary mentioned). They met up for dinner at On The Eighth Day, the vegetarian restaurant a short walk up Oxford Road from Cornbrook House, then went on to the Pagan Society meeting. They went back to her room afterwards, sitting, talking, and smoking hash (he'll only mention this latter if he doesn't think the characters are with the authorities, or if they already know he's a drug user anyway). He left around 2 am and walked home. (He wanted to spend the night with her, but she kicked him out with a goodnight kiss; he probably won't admit this if the characters ask why he left, trying instead to hint that he's happy the two of them are "just good friends," though again **Bullshit Detector** might catch him in the lie.)

- She is about as regular an attendee at the Pagan Society meetings as anyone: she's eager to learn, interested, receptive, and perspicacious.

If asked about his Book of Shadows, found in Catriona's room, he admits the following:

- It is his, and he sometimes uses the magical name Frater Nyarlathotep.
- He wrote it out as one of his tasks when he was initiated as a 1st Degree Alexandrian Witch, in a coven that is now defunct. He claims to have moved away from conventional Wiccan ideas now.
- Catriona had asked him about Wicca and Witchcraft, and he offered to loan her the book to give her an idea what it was all about. If the characters ask him



why he did that, when presumably he'd sworn an oath of secrecy never to reveal what was taught him, he makes light of the issue: "Oh, it doesn't really matter, the Alexandrian Book of Shadows was published more-or-less completely by the Farrars years ago anyway. I just thought she might like a look at the handwritten version."

(Of course, depending on how the characters present their knowledge that he left a book with Catriona, their cover as flirty American students may start to slip.)

If the characters ask him whether he is involved with any occult groups or covens at present, he tries to evade the issue, his natural secrecy and paranoia coming out - "Why do you want to know about that? That's more personal." He can be wheedled into saying that he has joined a Thelemic Magical Order though. **Flattery** at this point, or a 1-point spend of another appropriate interpersonal skill (appropriateness being at the GM's discretion, depending on the tack the characters take), will get him to reveal the name of the group, with pride: the OTOM, or Ordo Templi Orientis of Maat.

Persuading him to talk about OTOM in any detail, which might be perceived as skating close to breaking his current oaths (which he takes a lot more seriously than oaths to a defunct Wiccan coven), will be hard. A 2-point spend of **Intimidation** (scaring him more than the penalties of his oaths is going to be difficult) or **Negotiation** (regarding immunity from prosecution, if the characters can convince him they have something to charge him with, such as possession of the hashish from his room) might do it. If characters are going more down the seduction route, then plenty of wine with a 2-point spend of **Flattery** or **Flirting** (or a 1-point spend of each), could also do the trick, but the character would need to make Bennett feel that she was sincerely interested in joining OTOM, and being his magical sex

partner... Either way, ferreting out each fact will take some time and some hard work. Here's what he'll say:

- He's been a member of OTOM for nearly four years. He believes it used to be a pseudo-Masonic order when it started out, but these days it's about personal magical development and personal power. Which is a good thing, right?
- Each member is assigned a mentor, of the next higher OTOM Degree. Ideally it takes one to three years to go up a Degree, and so long as your mentor goes up a Degree at around the same time, you'll keep the same mentor; if not, you may be temporarily or permanently assigned a new one. There are 11 Degrees, one for each of the Spheres of the Qlipothim. Bennett is currently a 2nd Degree member, working his way towards 3rd Degree.
- As well as meeting their personal mentors one-to-one, members meet in Lodges for group magical workings. Each Lodge is also divided into Houses, one for each Degree, so sometimes he just meets with other 2nd Degree members to explore the mysteries of the 2nd Degree.
- His mentor is Frater Bolthorn, a 3rd Degree member. Bolthorn has been his mentor since last July. His next meeting with Bolthorn is Thursday 31st January, this week. Bennett doesn't know Bolthorn's real name; members keep their day-to-day identities secret from one another. Nor does he have an address or telephone number for Bolthorn, just an email address: bolthorn23@gmail.com.
- If asked about the small Persian demon, & talkative about Bolthorn, Bennett will admit that it was given





him by Bolthorn. Bolthorn asked Bennett to carry it on his person whenever doing scientific work or research of any kind, keep it on his altar the rest of the time, and charge it up once a week with his own blood in a variation of the Mass of the Phoenix. Supposedly the demon will help him with his studies. (**Occult Lore**, 1-point spend, to know that the Mass of the Phoenix is a ritual created by Aleister Crowley, that involves the practitioner cutting a cross and circle – the “Mark of the Beast” – into his own flesh then pressing a “Cake of Light” onto the blood to mark it). This variant Mass of the Phoenix is listed in his magical diary (see p. 58) among the rituals; it’s very similar to the standard one, but involves pressing “the sacred stone” (presumably the stoneware Persian demon) up against the practitioner’s bloody flesh.

- If asked, Bennett has never heard of the Esoterrorists, or anything resembling that name.

The characters may elect to try to spy on, or interrupt, Bennett’s meeting with Bolthorn (Will Carter); if all goes well, they will do this after rescuing Catriona, but of course this all depends on the timescale involved. It is possible that they will split into two groups, one tracking Bennett and Carter, the other heading to the Nine Ladies Stone Circle. In any case, Bennett’s meeting with Carter is covered in Chapter 6, in the Bennett & Carter sidebar (see p. 83).

Of course, if the characters let Bennett go free, he will probably inform Carter of all that occurred with them, either by email, before their meeting, or in person at the meeting. Carter’s reaction will depend very much on the impression the characters made on Bennett, but he may well raise the alarm with McLoughlin (see Antagonist Reactions, p. 10).

Chapter 6: Dark Rocks among the Stars of God

SUCH IS THE ANCIENT WORLD OF URIZEN IN THE SATANIC VOID,
CREATED FROM THE VALLEY OF MIDDLESEX BY LONDON'S RIVER,
FROM STONE-HENGE AND FROM LONDON STONE, FROM CORNWALL TO CATHNES.

THE FOUR ZOAS RUSH AROUND ON ALL SIDES IN DIRE RUIN:
FURIOUS IN PRIDE OF SELFHOOD THE TERRIBLE SPECTERS OF ALBION
REAR THEIR DARK ROCKS AMONG THE STARS OF GOD, STUPENDOUS
WORKS! A WORLD OF GENERATION CONTINUALLY CREATING OUT OF
THE HERMAPHRODITIC SATANIC WORLD OF ROCKY DESTINY,
AND FORMED INTO FOUR PRECIOUS STONES FOR ENTRANCE FROM BEULAH.
- William Blake, *Jerusalem*

The Nine Ladies Stone Circle

Scene Type Core Getting There

The drive to the edge of Stanton Moor, near to where the circle is, is relatively simple, now that the characters are used to the winding & often badly signposted routes of the UK. It takes an hour or so, depending on the time of day they go. If they set off during the rush hour (any time between 4.30pm and 6.30pm) they can expect to be slowed down significantly by heavy traffic out from Manchester on Stockport Road, which could easily add half an hour or even an hour to the journey. With clear traffic, a willingness to break the speed limit, and a Difficulty 4 **Driving** task, it might be done in 30 minutes.

Finding the circle and camp will require either a 25-minute walk with a compass and a large-scale, local walking map (simple **Preparedness** test, or the characters explicitly going to a bookshop or outdoors shop to buy it), a 15-minute walk with detailed directions from Dolphin or a GPS (simple **Preparedness** test for the latter again, if the characters suggest it), a 40-minute walk with a 1-point spend of **Evidence Collection** to follow the extant tracks from protesters going between the parking area and the protest

site, or about one to two hours of randomly wandering about, getting lost, and following sheep tracks by accident. Add at least 50% to the above times in darkness, even though the characters have decent torches. The walk takes characters over the high moor, among spindly, scattered silver birch trees – quite a spooky place, especially at night.

The Nine Ladies

Like many of the megalithic sites in the UK, this stone circle is low-key, quite unlike the titanic, smoothly carved boulders of Stonehenge. There are nine haphazardly shaped, thigh- to waist-height rocks in a 12-yard diameter circle (the Nine Ladies, of course), and one flatter rock about 30 yards outside the circle. Several burnt patches in the grass at the circle's center indicate that bonfires are regularly held here.

Archaeology: This is a Bronze Age monument, around 3,000 to 3,500 years old. The single stone outside the circle is generally known as the King Stone or Fiddler's Stone. It is believed that the King Stone is a newer addition to the circle. A 1-point spend will spot the characteristic shapes of some 70 burial mounds in the landscape en route to and around the circle, suggesting that this is just a part of a far wider ritual landscape.

The Esoterrorists Imbolc Timetable

The Esoterrorist plan, at least at this location, has its climax on the night of Thursday, January 31st, 2008. The following is a timeline for events here on that evening. Of course, this assumes that the characters don't interfere. They could certainly disrupt the timeline given here if they are present, though for much of the time they may prefer to simply observe, if they have managed to arrive here reasonably peacefully.

If the characters arrive here after dawn on the 1st February, they will find a scene of some devastation. The Esoterrorists no longer worry overmuch about being caught; the more terror they can spread, the better. See the sidebar Sorry We're Late (p. 85) for more information.

For maximum dramatic effect, it may be best to arrange for the characters to arrive perhaps half an hour to an hour before the planned Imbolc ritual. That way, so long as their cover stories hold up, they should be able to wangle invites to stay around and observe or participate in the ritual and party.

The Night Of January 31st to February 1st

Time	Activity
4.52 pm - Sunset	The start of the protesters' Imbolc ritual and party, which will mostly take place at the Nine Ladies circle itself. This will be guided by Francis Kelly, who has been trying to establish himself as the protesters' spiritual authority. To begin with, he just says a few words about the significance of the time of year (see The Ewemeolc Ritual, p. 80), then encourages the revelers to start partying. Also, by this time, the Esoterrorists running the torture operation in Roz's Tunnel (see p. 76) will be bringing their work to a close. Any victims who have not been brainwashed by now will be prepared for moving out of the quarry itself to the Nine Ladies circle: strapped to stretchers and tranquilized, or shackled together, ready to be sacrificed later. If the characters have not rescued Catriona by now, she will be fully brainwashed as an Esoterrorist agent, and will be leading the midnight activities later. A further six of the victims will be brainwashed too, ready to assist the Esoterrorists in any way possible.

00.05 : Will Carter and Anton Bennett arrive at the site, so that Bennett and his Persian talisman can be magically "charged up" with the sacrificial energies of the victims on site.

00.25 : True Midnight (halfway between dusk and dawn). The sacrifices begin. By this point, the revelers should all be suitably drugged up, whether they wanted to be or not.

07.40 : Will Carter will drive Anton Bennett to the MCND building, and Bennett will enter and "work on his thesis."

Dawn : The first blizzard destroys the MCND building (and Bennett, for that matter).

History: A 1-point spend lets the character chatter away at some length about the relatively late period of the monument, and how it represented a valiant attempt to continue the native megalith-building tradition in the face of waves of proto-Celtic invaders from Europe; it was built during a quite warlike time compared to the earlier stone circles. This exposition can continue until it either impresses or bores the other characters.

Occult Lore: Though often associated with Druids, both in the popular imagination and in the minds of neo-pagans, the first stone circles predate the coming of the Druidic religion and the Celtic invaders to Britain. Little is known of the rites and celebrations of the megalith-builders in antiquity, but today almost all neo-pagan traditions regard them as sacred sites, perfect for almost any ceremony. In particular, many neo-pagans gather at stone circles for what are known as the Eight Great Sabbats in Wiccan tradition, or as the “Wheel of the Year” in wider neo-pagan parlance: February 1st (called Imbolc, Imbolg, Ewemeolc, or Candlemas), the Spring Equinox around March 22nd, May 1st (Beltane), the Summer Solstice around June 22nd, August 1st (Lughnasadh), the Autumn Equinox around September 22nd, November 1st (Samhain), and the Winter Solstice around 22nd December. A 1-point spend lets a character remember that these celebrations often begin the night before the calendar date, supposedly because the Ancient Britons used to measure their days from dusk till dusk rather than dawn till dawn.

A few tens of yards away from the circle is a steep drop down into an old quarry. This is the site of the protest camp, whose inhabitants are campaigning against the re-opening of the quarry and other proposed quarrying, here in Britain’s oldest National Park. The quarry can be entered down a winding path along its side. A variety of tents, benders (shelters made from bent

willow withes and tarpaulin), huts, shacks, and other homes are visible inside the quarry from the edge, and as the characters descend into the quarry itself, they begin to see tunnel entrances too.

The Protest Camp

The camp has around 30 inhabitants at present. There is a noticeable “type” to their appearance – many have dreadlocks of various colors, but shaved or cropped hair is also common, with Mohawk haircuts and long hair also being represented on one or two of the protesters. Others look relatively respectable in terms of hairstyle, though even they tend to wear the standard uniform – baggy woolen jumpers, army surplus gear, chunky but practical boots or all-terrain sneakers, with plenty of pendants, body piercings, bangles, embroidery, and other adornments. Their ages range from around 16 to nearly 50.

The Esoterrorists, both in the form of an OTOA-based Esoterror cell and another, smaller cell known as Night’s Revenge, have been infiltrating the protest camp for the some time now: a little under six months for the OTOA group, but several years for Night’s Revenge. Many of them only know a few hints of what they’re working towards, but they’re all true believers in the Esoterror cause, kept happy with power or sex or drugs and willing to kill for their leaders; there are 9 of these Esoterrorist Minions in the camp (see sidebar, p. 75). Another 7 Esoterrorist Initiates supervise them, including **Roz Mitchell** (see Roz’s Tunnel, p. 76) and Franny (Francis Kelly; see p. 75).

Of course, there are many other activists here; the infiltration is by no means complete. Fourteen of these ordinary eco-activists are on site, a mixture of neo-pagans, New Agers, and the occasional Christian or atheist.

It’s extremely difficult to tell who is an Esoterrorist, and who is just an ordinary

Call the Cops

Of course, if the characters are convinced there is wrongdoing here, they may try to use O.V. contacts to pressure local law enforcement to show up in force.

If they go through their Mr. Verity (McLoughlin), he will certainly block any such attempt unless the characters have visited the site and acquired evidence of criminal activity. If they have evidence, he will vacillate as long as he can – certainly long enough to get a message to Roz Mitchell (see p. 77) to collapse the portion of her tunnel that leads on to the torture chamber and cells. Then he'll arrange for whatever police forces the characters want to descend on the protest camp, and of course find nothing. **Bureaucracy** or **Bullshit Detector** will recognize that he's stalling for time.

Any attempt to bypass McLoughlin in the O.V. hierarchy, using US-based contacts, will also fail if the characters have no evidence. If they do present evidence to high-level O.V. operatives in the US, the characters can get local police assistance as though they'd spent 1-point of **Cop Talk**, without the spend (see below). If they also suspect McLoughlin of stalling, his O.V. superiors may be convinced to take him off the case, and assign Eddie Barlow as their new Mr. Verity; McLoughlin will break contact with O.V. in this case, and try to take out the characters as soon as possible, rather than worrying about capturing them as sacrifices.

If they've made local contacts with non-O.V. police, **Cop Talk** could get them two uniformed police officers in a patrol car, or (1-point spend) two undercover detectives in an unmarked car, with another 8 uniformed police in a van nearby, or (2-point spend) two armed undercover detectives in an unmarked car, with 16 riot police and a three-man armed response team in vans.

Note: Characters attempting to phone out from the quarry will find they have no signal, unless they have a satellite phone or similar (Difficulty 5 **Preparedness** roll). The sides of the valley are too steep for a standard phone to get a signal. The Vodafone cellphones given them by McLoughlin have no signal even on the edges of the quarry (which is why McLoughlin picked Vodafone); the characters will need to walk for about half a mile uphill to get a Vodafone signal. The other networks have better coverage here, and will get a signal from the top of the quarry.

Uniformed Police

Athletics 5, Health 5, Scuffling 4, Stability 4, Surveillance 4
Damage Modifier: -1 (Baton)
Armor: Light body armor (Scuffling +1, Shooting +2)

Riot Police

Athletics 6, Health 5, Scuffling 6, Stability 4, Surveillance 4
Damage Modifier: -1 (Baton)
Armor: Riot armor (Scuffling +2, Shooting +2)

Detectives

Athletics 6, Health 5, Scuffling 6, Shooting 3, Stability 5, Surveillance 9
Damage Modifier: -2 (Punch or Kick), 0 (Pistol)

Armed Response Team

Athletics 7, Health 5, Scuffling 5, Shooting 8, Stability 7, Surveillance 7
Damage Modifier: -1 (Baton), 0 (Pistol) or +1 (Shotgun) or +1 (Rifle)
Armor: Light body armor (Scuffling +1, Shooting +2)

protester. If the characters are suspicious of any individual, it will take them a 1-point spend of **Forensic Psychology** to spot anything out of the ordinary in their demeanor, and even then only if the Esoterrorist accidentally betrays himself somehow (perhaps after the characters say or do something deliberately provocative). A 1-point spend of **Bullshit Detector** could also work, if the characters ask leading questions. Generally, though, the Esoterrorists in this camp were recruited from the same kind of counter-cultural backgrounds as the other protesters, so they look the same, act the same, and even appear to think very similarly (apart from all the thoughts about stabbing people in the eyes).

The Ordo Veritatis Cover Story

The characters have hopefully by this point decided on how they plan to portray themselves to the protesters here. Are they going to head in mob-handed and attempt to arrest everyone? It looks like there are at least a couple of dozen people living in the camp, so this may not be a great idea. Are they going to admit to being law enforcement operatives, but claim to just want to interview people? Or will they disguise themselves in some way, perhaps impersonating protesters, sympathizers, or journalists? These options are covered below:

You're All Under Arrest! This is the one course of action that is liable to unite Esoterrorist and protester alike. The protesters know they haven't committed any crimes, and like any dissidents are naturally suspicious of the motives of government representatives; though they are committed to non-violence during the course of their protests per se, if they think the characters are part of some kind of US government agency devoted to suppressing radicals (an impression which the Esoterrorists will certainly do their best to encourage), some of them may well fight in what they think of as self-defense. This is a great way to ensure

a mass melee with 20 or more combatants against the characters, and several innocent bystanders likely to get killed or injured in the crossfire.

CAN YOU HELP US WITH OUR ENQUIRIES?

Unfortunately, this doesn't get the characters much further than the more forceful approach. Again the protesters don't consider themselves criminals, and so are highly suspicious of officialdom. The characters' cover story may well be that they're looking for a missing girl, but most of the people on this site (egged on by both the Esoterrorists among them, and their own sense of disenfranchisement and paranoia) will believe that their true motives are to put together some kind of secret file on activists, perhaps to get them all arrested on conspiracy charges at a later date. It will take a 2-point spend of Reassurance and a 2-point spend of Negotiation to get anything more than hostility out of the protesters with this approach.

Where's Our Friend? Depending on the characters' ages and demeanors, they may be able to pass themselves off as fellow students and friends of Catriona's, looking for her. This will be tough, but it will at least give them a plausible reason for asking direct questions about her, which could be handy. Getting this to work requires any one of the following conditions: (1) all the characters involved to have **Impersonate** skill, and at least one of them (the one who does most of the talking) to make a 2-point spend; or (2) at least half the characters to have the **Impersonate** skill, and to make a 2-point spend each (the others keeping their mouths shut if at all possible). This can be explained to the players beforehand. There is always the option of only having some of the characters go in undercover in this way, of course, with the rest watching from nearby or in radio contact, ready to assist if need be.

Right On, Brother! If the characters have deliberately prepared by buying and/or making clothing that at least vaguely resembles eco-activist kit, this can be a much easier piece of **Impersonate** than pretending to be students. It does mean that they'll have less of a reason to be asking questions about Catriona, but it will give them a good chance to have a bit of a poke around the camp and get acquainted with the protesters. So long as at least half the characters involved have **Impersonate**, and one of them makes a 2-point spend (or two of them make a 1-point spend each), they should make a favorable impression, at least on most of the activists. Some will always fear that these could be undercover police – a reasonable enough suspicion, and one that will be encouraged by some of the Esoterrorists present – but most will be willing to give the characters the benefit of the doubt.

Your Cause is Ours. Sympathizers to the eco-activist cause come in all shapes and sizes. Often the most respectable-looking people have at least some interest in Green politics, particularly if said politics involves the preservation of the British landscape. So long as at least two characters have **Impersonate**, they can fake this successfully, though again there will always be some suspicion from the activists (even if it is well hidden).

What An Interesting Campaign You Have Going On Here. This option covers most other cover stories the characters might devise for visiting the site: reporters, documentary film-makers, perhaps even tourists, etc. It will be difficult to make this work without rousing the protesters' suspicions, because even if they believe the characters' cover story, they have had a number of bad experiences with the media in the past. So long as at least half the characters involved have **Impersonate**, and one of them makes a 2-point spend (or two of them make a 1-point spend each), their cover story is accepted – but that does not

necessarily mean the protesters are happy having them around for any great amount of time. That would require **Negotiation** at some length, and probably a 1-point spend. The characters might also be surprised at quite how media-savvy the activists are; if they don't have the requisite waiver forms and contracts available (**Preparedness** test), the activists will be unwilling to be filmed, or even interviewed. Even with the right forms, they may well demand a number of changes in their favor (that should not concern the characters too much, of course, but if they give in to the protesters' demands too readily that may arouse suspicion too).

Note that an **Impersonate** attempt may be easier, at the GM's discretion, with some or all of the characters who don't have **Impersonate** having **Linguistics** instead, to have at least some chance of feigning a British accent. Of course, depending on the cover story the characters have come up with, they may be able to justify the presence of one or more Americans in the group anyway.

The GM should bear in mind the characters' approach at all times when dealing with the people in this chapter. Even the Esoterrorists, who are themselves acting to some extent too, and who (at least in the case of the Initiates) know exactly who the characters are, will react to them based on the characters' cover story (if any), at least until the knives come out at midnight, or until the cover story is obviously compromised in some way.

The protesters can be friendly, open, welcoming, and generous, or they can be cynical, hostile, harsh, and exclusive. It all depends on who they think the characters are, what they think the characters' motivations are, and how the characters treat them. Thus, although notes are given here as to what the protesters know in general, whether any of them know anything more in particular, and what skills tend to work

best in dealing with each character, it is up to the GM how much they will reveal to the characters, which interpersonal skills are required for that particular interaction, and whether a point spend is necessary.

Approaching the Camp

Unless the characters arrive after dark, they will almost certainly be spotted en route to the camp, walking down the winding path. They are expected by the Esoterrorists anyway, sooner or later – perhaps right now, if they still have their mobile phones with them (McLoughlin will alert the Esoterrorist groups on-site if the characters' phones move into the cellphone cells close to Derbyshire). Thus, they will probably first be met by **Yin-Yang** and **Two's Up**, who have been assigned precisely that task by their master, Francis Kelly. (Note that if the characters arrive after dusk on Thursday 31st, the revels will be in progress, and any greeting they do get will be far more informal; many of the protesters will barely notice that six strangers have joined the party.)

These two look like much any other activist couple in the camp. Yin-Yang is short, very beautiful, in her early 20s, and part North African. Her face (exceptionally cute, and constantly smiling or laughing) is framed with black dreadlocks extending to her waist. She wears a tattered old motorcycle jacket and baggy green combat trousers (BDUs, in US terms). Two's Up is a little older, perhaps 30, and ruggedly good-looking. He wears a big, multicolored, stripy, baggy pullover that looks like it was knitted by his mother, and black combat trousers.

Yin-Yang greets them first: "Hey, fresh blood. Cool. Welcome, guys." Her and Two's Up both smile. Two's Up invites the characters to sit and talk about why they're here, and gestures towards an old picnic table and deck-chairs set up outside a small, battered caravan (owned by Yin-Yang and Two's Up).

Forensic Psychology used on these two will very nearly draw a blank; Yin-Yang is so well-brainwashed by the Esoterrorist ideals that she genuinely believes she's doing the characters a favor by helping lead them to their deaths. After all, their sacrifice will be for a far, far greater cause than that of a few individuals. Two's Up, though, has a sadistic, predatory edge to his personality, and is looking forward to gorily slaying the characters for his own pleasure, not just for the Esoterrorists' more long-term ends. He also loves tricking people, and is hoping for a chance to drug the characters to make the gory slaying part a little easier. It will take a 1-point spend to spot this sense of sadistic anticipation and sneakiness about him.

This is the characters' first chance to try out their planned cover story. It's also the Esoterrorists' first chance to mess the characters up, if they're not on the alert already. It is suggested that the GM only prompt the characters with the **Forensic Psychology** potential skill spend during their meeting with these two, and not the other skills (mentioned below). If they don't think to use **Streetwise** or **Chemistry** when appropriate, or don't become suspicious from the **Forensic Psychology** hunch alone, they are going to end up shanghaied (see sidebar, p. 74), then they have the opportunity for either a glorious escape, rescue, and vengeance mission, or a futile death on a bloody Esoterrorist altar. Either one could be a lot of fun, and it would be a shame to spoil that potential fun by dropping too many hints.

Once the characters and Two's Up are all sitting down, Yin-Yang offers to go and make everyone a cup of tea. Two's Up says, "Anyone prefer a stronger brew?" He holds up a can of Special Brew lager, opens it himself, and takes a swig. "Got more of these in the caravan, like." Either way, the two of them soon bring out bent old metal tea-trays laden with a random assortment of mugs,

glasses (if anyone wanted beer), and even a big plate of chocolate cake.

All of these are drugged, to a greater or lesser extent. The chocolate cake is rich and bitter, tasting like a good quality Sachertorte or Death By Chocolate cake made with plenty of dark chocolate... but the bitterness is there to hide the taste of a variety of drugs, including cannabis oil (more or less tasteless anyway), skunk-weed (a very strong marijuana, capable of producing hallucinogenic and disassociative effects even at quite low doses, and raw opium. Yin-Yang has an eye-dropper filled with extract of datura stramonium, a strong natural hallucinogen which is also distinctly toxic; she will put a few drops in each character's tea in the caravan. Her knowledge of drugs and dosage is excellent, and she'll ensure each character gets just enough to take him to the edge of Hell for two or three days (yes, datura really is that strong). There are three main ways of avoiding the drugs:

- A character who simply does not eat or drink anything will, of course, not be affected, though this will certainly seem churlish to the protesters, unless a quick bit of **Reassurance** is used to come up with an excuse – special diet, allergies, diabetic, whatever.
- If a character insists on going into the (obviously a bit too small for more than one person) caravan kitchen and “helping” with the tea and snack preparation, Yin-Yang will assess the situation as it arises; she will refrain from using the eyedropper (and thus, refrain from drugging the drinks at all) if she thinks the character is attempting **Surveillance** on her, realizing that it's just not worth the risk (there's more than one way to skin an Ordo Veritatis agent, after all). If the character convinces her he's just trying to help (**Reassurance**, 2-point spend), she will try to use the eyedropper when he's

not looking (Difficulty 5 **Surveillance** task to catch her out; she's very sneaky and well-practiced at this task).

- **Chemistry** or **Streetwise**: A 1-point spend will spot the distinct taste of marijuana underneath the bitterness of the chocolate. (Note that even **Chemistry** is not sufficient to detect the datura stramonium extract in the drinks, without doing a proper laboratory analysis; it is tasteless and odorless.)

Yin-Yang and Two's Up, as well as any protesters who happen to be passing, will eat the cake too. Most of the people on site are used to drugs anyway; they'll certainly be affected, but they're likely to handle the situation a lot better than are most of the characters.

If the characters accuse Yin-Yang and Two's Up of trying to drug or poison them, they will, of course, deny any untoward actions. They may admit that the cake is a “space cake,” i.e. a cake with cannabis in, but as far as they're concerned, that's a perfectly normal thing to eat (a 1-point spend of **Bullshit Detector** will see through the claim that this is no more than a space cake); they try to pass it off as a misunderstanding, more than anything else. Most of the protesters are likely to side with Yin-Yang and Two's Up, thinking that, if anything, this is just something to have a laugh about. A few of the activists may waggle fingers and tell them it was unethical to give people space cake without informed consent, but if the characters are expecting to expose evil Esoterrorist agents here, they may be disappointed.

Any attempt on the characters' part to blow the affair up is just likely to hurt their own credibility, unless they can produce clear evidence of something more sinister than space cake (for example, by showing the other protesters the eye-dropper full of

Drug Effects from Cake & Drinks

Any characters accepting a drink that has been spiked with datura by Yin-Yang and Two's Up will receive a High Dose of a Toxic Psychedelic.

Any characters eating a slice of their cake will receive a Standard Dose of Opiates, a Standard Dose of Mild Psychedelic, and a Standard Dose of Cannabis.

See p. 8 for full details of these drug effects.

datura). Even then, the worst that is likely to happen is for a number of the protesters to criticize Yin-Yang, and maybe put a bit of pressure on her to leave the site forever within a few days – and that's only if she and Two's Up don't convince the other protesters that they were just taking pre-emptive action against the characters, who after all are clearly spies for the police / government / Special Branch / MI5 / CIA.

Once the characters have got to know a few of the protesters (and are presumably at least a little suspicious of Yin-Yang and Two's Up), they can attempt to wheedle some information out of them. For the ordinary protesters, **Flattery**, **Flirting**, **Reassurance**, **Streetwise**, and **Negotiation**, depending on context, can all be useful tools to get them to open up.

Talking to the Activists

The following is general knowledge among the protesters, though how much of it they will reveal to the characters at any one time depends on who the characters talk to, which interpersonal skills they use, what their cover story was, and how things have gone so far.

- The camp has been here for the best part of a decade now. The underground complexes in it are probably the most extensive protest

tunnels in Britain (see Eco-Activism, Appendices, p. 93).

- The camp population fluctuates greatly, with more people coming and going almost all the time. Some come along just for the big parties and gatherings and actions, others stay for weeks or months or years.
- The tunnels have been dug into the hillside, often into old quarrying works, so it will be far harder for the protesters to be winkled out of the place in the event of any attempted eviction. It's a standard eco-activist tactic. People often feel they "own" tunnels that they or their friends worked on, and some choose to live in their tunnels more-or-less all the time, though most prefer tents when not under threat of eviction. The tunnels are always designed to be low and narrow, to make life difficult for bailiffs and hired security guards on eviction day.
- "A lot of people here are pagan, but not so much like witches or something. It's more that we revere the Earth, our Mother. Celebrating the Times and Seasons, the old Celtic fire-festivals and the Equinoxes and Solstices, that's just all a part of that – it's not like occultism or devil-worship or any of that stuff."
- "Yes I suppose there are some occultists here, but even they are more like us pagans really. A few of the guys are part of this OTO Association thing. But they're here because they believe in the same cause as us, they're here to defend the land just like the rest of us are. Franny's the leader of them sort of – well, we don't really have any leaders as such, but the OTO lot all respect him, and, well, he's the kind of guy you do respect, you know? It's like he exudes it. He doesn't demand

Shanghaied

If the characters do all accept food or drink from Yin-Yang and Two's Up, they will find themselves drugged and very nearly incapable within 30 minutes or so, particularly if they were drugged with the datura stramonium. The advantage with datura is that it gets the characters in a suitably suggestive state already, as well as very nearly incapacitating them; they'll be just ripe for torture either by the Dogs or by Esoterrorists.

The Esoterrorists have various options now. Their favorite one is to somehow hustle the characters into Roz's Tunnel (see p. 76), manacle them, and let the Torture Dogs go to work on them. This is only really an option though if they got datura into the characters. They have no objection to capturing the characters one at a time or in small groups, if they can be separated. Ideally, at this point, they don't want to give the game away to the other protesters, so any capture of the PCs must be surreptitious – female characters being offered the chance to “learn more about the Daughters of Albion” (see Roz's Tunnel, again), or characters who are badly affected by the drugs being led away “for a quiet lie down in this tent till you feel better.”

As ever with *The Esoterrorists*, don't be too heavy-handed with a capture attempt. If the players want to fight through a couple of Esoterrorists grabbing them and attempting to drag them off somewhere or handcuff them, let them go for it. (Handcuffs and thumb-cuffs, incidentally, are not uncommon on the site; they are sometimes used for locking protesters on to machinery during eco-activism, though they're not as popular as the stronger bicycle D-locks and similar these days.)

If the Esoterrorists only drugged the characters with the cake, they'll wait, and make their move later – ideally during the festivities, if the characters did arrive here on the night of the Imbolc ritual, or else during the evening (if the characters arrived earlier than that), or when the characters are en route back to their own vehicles after having made an initial reconnaissance of the site and not found Catriona. The Esoterrorists are quite happy to treat the initial drugging as a useful softening-up process. The GM should keep track of just how drugged up each character is at each point, as if they stay around for the Imbolc party, things are just likely to get worse.

Characters who are captured in this way will need to use all their prowess to escape again, but there's nothing wrong with a bit of luck helping them – perhaps an Esoterrorist captor is careless, or some of the Torture Dogs are sent away on another mission. **Preparedness** could let a character come up with some useful gizmo – perhaps a handcuff key or picklock secreted about his person. **Intimidation** might just work against a particularly passive Esoterrorist minion (2-point spend). In any case, the characters will be right at the heart of the Esoterrorist operation when they make their bid for freedom, which should give them both the information and the opportunity they need to get Catriona out, and maybe the other characters too.

it but you know he's done stuff that means he deserves it anyway. He knows more about the old myths and the sacred landscape and all that than anyone I've ever spoken to before. I'm not saying I'd join that OTO lot myself you understand, I'm not really a joiner,

but their hearts are in the right place, yeah.”

- (Core Clue) “Yes, that girl Catriona was here last weekend – did she stay overnight, or not? We didn't see her in the morning, anyway.”

- “She did fit in pretty well here – I was surprised she didn’t stay a bit longer, she was supposed to be doing that.”

One of the protesters, Rush, spoke to Catriona at some length on the Saturday night. If asked and suitably buttered up (**Flattery** or **Flirting**) he will tell them when he saw her last:

- (Core Clue) “It was really late, and I was comin’ up on some ‘shrooms so I’m not 100%, like, but I’m pretty sure she was hangin’ out with that Bog Lady last thing on the Saturday night. They wen’ off together towards Roz’s tunnel. Didn’ see ‘er in the mornin’ but then I wasn’ up till the afternoon that day an’ even then I felt like a badger shat in me brain.”

If the characters ask specifically about Roz’s tunnel, any of the protesters can tell them more:

- Roz is very particular about who she’ll let in her tunnel – no blokes allowed, only her Daughters of Albion (depending on which protester is talking, they will find this either eminently sensible, or a bit pretentious and exclusive). She seems at least a little bit unhinged – none of the protesters would recommend going in there without her permission. “But then, a tunnel’s a very personal thing, innit? We all get a touch of cabin fever every now and then, so she’s not that different to the rest of us. You wouldn’t want anyone traipsin’ through your house without askin’ either, would you?”

If they ask more about the Daughters of Albion:

- It’s some mystical feminist group. They believe that they’re the sacred

guardians of England, which includes protecting the Earth on these eco-actions. A bit of a strange bunch maybe, but it takes all sorts.

The People of the Camp **Ordinary Eco-Activists**

Names: Manic, Spacegirl, Zephyr, Teenth, Rush, Magic, Cavegirl, Ivanhoe, Pookie, Dread Ed, Sicknote, Sonic, Mike Bastard, Goblin

Athletics 8, Health 4, Scuffling 4, Stability 2, Surveillance 6

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist, Kick) or -1 (Improvised Weapon)

Esoterrorist Minions

Names (OTOA members): Crow, Smelly, Yin-Yang, Two’s Up, Wigan, Iggy

Names (Night’s Revenge members):

Monkey-Girl, Chickpea, Heaven

Athletics 6, Health 4, Scuffling 5, Stability 1, Surveillance 4

Damage Modifier: -1 (Knife)

Esoterrorist Initiates

Names (OTOA members): Dancer, Little Pig, Big Pig

Names (Night’s Revenge members): Bog Lady, JuliAngrrr.

Athletics 7, Health 5, Scuffling 6, Shooting 3, Stability 1, Surveillance 7

Damage Modifier: 0 (Camp Axe, Hammer, or Crowbar), +1 (Shotgun)

Francis Kelly (aka “Franny”), Esoterrorist Initiate

Athletics 5, Health 6, Scuffling 5, Shooting 8, Stability 2, Surveillance 8

Damage Modifier: -1 (Blackthorn Walking-Stick), 0 (Pistol)

Roz's Tunnel

This separate tunnel has a circle painted around it in bright red, with a handmade sign reading "Daughters of Albion Only" above the entrance, again in red. The entrance is always guarded by Roz herself (who never leaves her tunnel complex, other than to stretch out a little on the grass immediately in front of it) or by one of her Night's Revenge initiates. For the fifty or so yards, the tunnel is much like the others on the site – small, typically little more than four to five feet high or wide, and kept from falling down by regular props made from railway sleepers. Then it turns a sharp corner to the left (taking it even further away from the other tunnels on the protest site), opens out for another twenty yards or so, and terminates in a locked hardwood door. Hanging on pegs to the side of the door are hooded black robes, their fronts stained with dark splashes and encrustations.

Beyond the door, this is not really a tunnel any more, not in the same way as the others on site. The workings beyond were hollowed out from the rock and earth by the picks and shovels of quarrymen two generations ago, and transformed into torture chambers and holding cells by the Esoterrorists. One of McLoughlin's associates in Isa Kenaz, **Terrance Bartley**, holds a sizable share in Stanton Stone, the firm that owns the quarry sites and is battling for the legal right to re-open them (in direct opposition to the protesters, of course, but it's not like the Esoterrorists care about the activists' cause anyway – just about using them). Bartley used his influence to garner the security contract for Stanton Stone's various quarries in the area; they chose not to contest the activists' control of this one, but they knew that one of the quarried tunnels from the next quarry over ran close to the protest site, and enlarged and modified it accordingly, working with Roz to join the two tunnels together.

This gives the Esoterrorists two ways into and out of Roz's tunnel – her entrance, from the protest site, and the alternate route from the other Stanton Stone quarry a little further across the moor (through a locked concrete bunker and down into an old mine working, leading eventually to the torture chamber and thence to Roz's tunnel). The Esoterrorists can easily move prisoners into the torture chambers from the Stanton Stone quarry, given Bartley's control of the security contract there. Such prisoners will generally have been kidnapped in a conventional way, often from the other side of Britain, and include a variety of people: those who have been asking awkward questions that might get close to an Esoterrorist conspiracy, those who have some quality that might be worth something to the Esoterrorists if they can be brainwashed to the cause, and random victims of Esoterrorists' vices and crimes who now know too much to be allowed to go to the police. The facility to make such people "disappear," with a phone call and a small payment to an Isa Kenaz member, has been invaluable to a variety of Esoterrorist cells and cabals across the nation. Of course, it has also been very handy for ensuring that Isa Kenaz have plenty of victims.

They also have the option of acquiring occasional prisoners directly via the protest site, typically by Roz inviting them to see what it's like being a Daughter of Albion. Obviously they can't take this latter approach too often – the protesters would notice if too many people disappeared down Roz's tunnel – but they can get away with it more frequently than might be expected. Eco-activist camps have a rapidly fluctuating population; though there are regulars who have been living on the site for years, there are always comings and goings, and no-one keeps official track of such things. If someone was on site one night but wasn't there the following morning, half the protesters would barely notice, and the other half would assume the missing person had gone on to another protest site, or a Traveller site (see

Eco-Activism, Appendices, p. 93), or back home, or off to a free festival.

Roz Mitchell

Roz (nobody uses her surname, here or anywhere else, if she can help it) is a long-time Esoterrorist. Her big vice is that she likes hurting things. Hurting small weak things is great, but hurting big strong things is even better – a bit of a challenge. Her Esoterrorist masters (notably McLoughlin) have given her this particular post because they need someone to supervise their torture and brainwashing operation, and guard it from interlopers. She gets to torment the helpless deep in the tunnels, and she knows that someday she will get to go out into the world and wreak horrible agony on all before her, if McLoughlin's plan goes right.

Roz is 6' tall in her Doc Marten steel-toed boots, with cropped dirty blonde hair, harsh features, and wiry muscles. When she's not in the torture chambers, or guarding her tunnel entrance, she's doing bodyweight exercises or working on her grip strength by swinging and levering her felling axe; she quite often does the same while nominally on guard, too (it's a good excuse to be always warmed up ready for a scrap, and to have her axe in hand or nearby – nice and intimidating too).

Roz is the head of the Night's Revenge cell, the Esoterrorist group that was first assigned to infiltrate the Stanton Moor protest site. She has created a persona for herself, that of a radical, kick-boxing, man-hating, half-mad, witchy feminist, which is not too much of an exaggeration of the truth anyway.

Roz the Berserk, Esoterrorist Initiate

Athletics 9, Health 7, Scuffling 8, Shooting 4, Stability 1, Surveillance 8

Damage Modifier: +1 (Large Felling Axe) or -1 (Steel-Toed Kick), 0 (Pistol)



This persona, while a cliché, seems to have convinced most of the protesters, and it keeps them away from her and her tunnel – which is exactly what she wants.

Her Night's Revenge cell operates as a supposed Goddess-centered feminine spirituality group, called the Daughters of Albion. Except during the the Ewemeolc ritual (see p. 80), most of the Night's Revenge women will be in or around Roz's tunnel, most of the time.

A 1-point spend of **Trivia** might note that this is a reference to a William Blake poem.

If the characters are surprised that a feminist group appears to have taken its name from a poem by a man, they are right to be, though Roz or the others will claim never to have heard of Blake (a 1-point spend of **Bullshit Detector** will spot this as a practiced lie). In fact, she's obsessed with Blake and his concept of Satan as limitless energy; it was what drew her to the Esoterrorists in the first place. "Feminism? Screw feminism, let's torture someone. Or as Blake would put it, 'Sooner strangle an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.' Let's go kill some kids. I'd hate to think I was nursing an unacted desire. I might burst, or something."

Torture Chambers and Cells

This thoroughly unpleasant area resembles the prison of a medieval tyrant, or something out of Danté's description of Hell. In fact, in deference to Isa Kenaz's interest in William Blake, the walls are decorated in large reproductions of the pictures Blake painted to accompany Danté's *Inferno*.

The wooden door at the end of Roz's tunnel opens out into an irregularly shaped cavern around 60 by 30 yards in size. Cement block walls around its edges delineate some 25 smaller cell-like areas. Each cell has an iron grill-work door, closed with a hefty padlock.

In the main area of the cavern are a baker's dozen (or perhaps Satanist's dozen) torture stations: a rack, an Iron Maiden, an inverted cross, a surgeon's operating table equipped with straps, a similarly furnished dentist's chair, and eight simple pairs of manacles hanging from the walls. Various industrial steel tool trolleys are scattered around, each containing a wide array of torture equipment: brands, cutting tools, crushing devices, etc. Most of the time, at least half the torture stations are occupied; sometimes all of them, if the staff are available. Six Torture Dogs (see *The Esoterrorists*, p. 59) roam this

Corporate Esoterrorist Torturers

Athletics 5, Health 5, Scuffling 3, Shooting 5, Stability 2, Surveillance 4

Damage Modifier: -1 (Torture Implement), 0 (Pistol)

Note that only one or two Torturers will have pistols, and the Shooting skill.

area freely, going to work on any available victims and also acting as guards.

Any number of Esoterrorists may also be here, at the GM's discretion: either members of the two cells from the protest camp, or more corporate occultists coming in from the other Stanton Stone quarry site. Certainly on the afternoon and evening of January 31st, several extra Esoterrorists will be present to assist with final victim processing and transport. These latter will be well-to-do gents and ladies, wearing good quality outdoor gear (Barbour jackets, golf clothes, hunting wear, etc.) under bloodstained black robes. The robes, complete with slit-eyed hoods, hang on pegs just outside the main torture chamber, so that anyone wanting to enter and do some torturing can remain anonymous from the prisoners.

The cells, and frequently the torture stations, contain a variety of victims, almost all of them in badly deteriorated mental and physical states. They include Catriona (assuming the characters get here in time, of course), several investigative reporters, members of rival occult groups, some kidnapped political or religious enemies (a retired and knighted judge, and two prominent fundamentalist Christian leaders), business competitors, and perhaps worst of all, innocent victims of Esoterrorist vice, including three children. All will still be alive, if, of course, the characters get to them for rescue before around 11 pm on the 31st; if they arrive much after that, the victims will be en route out to the stone circle, those who have not succumbed to brainwashing already.

Little Girl Found

Catriona is provided here with two sets of statistics: "Catriona, Damaged Prisoner," which is her if the characters rescue her in time, and "Catriona, Brainwashed Evil Priestess," if they don't.

Catriona is very pretty, in an either damaged or evil way. She has near-waist-length light brown hair, a heart-shaped face, slightly arched eyebrows, and deep blue eyes. **Forensic Psychology** will certainly determine that she has been badly affected by her treatment, but it would take a 2-point spend to note that she seems very much in control and devious, if she is in Brainwashed Evil Priestess mode.

Catriona, Damaged Prisoner

Athletics 3, Health 2, Scuffling 1, Shooting 2, Stability *, Surveillance 1

*Stability varies depending on the time the characters rescue her; see p. 79

Catriona, Brainwashed Evil Priestess

Athletics 8, Health 6, Scuffling 6, Shooting 6, Stability 2, Surveillance 8

It's very much up to the GM to determine how much detail his player group prefers in these matters. For most groups, simply describing the situation dispassionately will give them a chance to draw their own gruesome mental pictures. Groups wanting a bit more gory detail can have as much as the GM is willing to give.

Rescuing the prisoners could be hard work. Most are barely in a fit state to walk; certainly running will be impossible for the majority, and trying to walk around the uneven ground of the quarry environs, in the dark, will be extremely difficult. Worse, most of them are, to a greater or lesser extent, mentally and spiritually broken too (Stability Pool of between -2 and -12). They

will show this in various ways, including the usual mental illnesses, any additional mental illnesses the GM likes the sound of, and in some cases a conversion or partial conversion to the Esoterrorists' cause.

This conversion is partly a result of Stockholm Syndrome, but has been deliberately exacerbated by McLoughlin's cronies and the Torture Dogs, all of whom have been ordered to torment the prisoners with the specific aim of converting them. It's not that the Esoterrorists are short of initiates, and movers and shakers – but they are certainly short of mindless cannon fodder, and that was the intended plan for most of this lot.

Catriona was different. McLoughlin has a strange obsession with her, seeing in her once more Van Rijn's long-dead wife, Laura, a woman he pursued for years but lost to Van Rijn when the latter came over to Northern Ireland to work with McLoughlin twenty-five years ago. McLoughlin believes in Catriona as a kind of lucky charm – both a means to strike hard at Ordo Veritatis, and a reincarnated priestess of evil. He hopes to awaken that harsh and tyrannical side within her, and this is exactly what the torture and psy-ops of the past few days have been all about – if the characters don't rescue her in time, she is McLoughlin's (and the Esoterrorists') for probably the rest of her life. Even if they do rescue her before dusk on the 31st, she will need therapy and psychiatric treatment for months, perhaps years, before she is ready to re-enter normal society.

What the Prisoners Know

Very little. Each will have a different background story, of course, but once they got here their tales are depressingly familiar – mind-bending drugs, indoctrination, and horrendous torture at the hands of both black-robed humans and those hellish Torture Dogs. Still, a 2-point spend

of **Reassurance**, and some very careful handling (including a **Shrink** roll for most questions), will elicit the following information:

- Sometimes the torturers didn't bother wearing the robes. These were hard-eyed men and women, looking like road protesters or something, with multicolored dreadlocks and piercings. The prisoners can identify the following activists, by description, as Esoterrorist torturers: Smelly, Two's Up, Wigan, Iggy, Monkey-Girl, Big Pig.
- That poor hippy girl (Catriona) always seemed to get the worst of the torture - they were working on her virtually twenty-four hours a day.
- Catriona herself, if she has not been brainwashed, may remember that one of the hooded torturers (McLoughlin) dropped a hint that she had been captured for something her parents had done, years before.

Game statistics are not provided for the prisoners, other than Catriona. Even the six who have been brainwashed by the night of the 31st will not be in any state to do much more than gibber and chant, though in a few days they might be considered to have similar game stats to the other Esoterrorist Minions (see p. 75).

The Ewemeolc Ritual

The night of the 31st of February is traditionally Imbolc in the old Celtic pagan calendar, or Ewemeolc in the less well-known Saxon or Teutonic pagan calendar. The protesters are used to celebrating the Eight Sabbats of neo-paganism, so to them, this is normal. Special, of course, because that's what sacred festivals are all about, but they aren't expecting too many surprises.

Francis Kelly plans the following activities:

- 1) He will introduce the festivities with a brief speech about the significance of the festival (see Kelly's Speech, p. below).
- 2) He will lead the protesters on a circuit of the cairns and other sacred sites within an walking distance of the camp. They will gather earth at the furthest North, South, East, and West points of the walk. The whole thing will take around an hour, and will be torchlit throughout.
- 3) They will all gather back at the Nine Ladies Stone Circle for a party, getting into the mood for the climax of the ritual.
- 4) At True Midnight (00.25), still at Nine Ladies, they will mix the clods of earth with honey, milk, and bread that has been sacrificed by the protesters from the camp. The Esoterrorists also plan to mix in blood spilled from all the non-Esoterrorists who are present at that point, of course, but Kelly will not mention this to the other protesters, given that they are going to be several of his victims. Much of the mix of earth, blood, and foodstuffs will be fed to Bennett as part of a ritual to charge him up with magical energy, too.
- 5) Those who are still capable will make one further circuit of the area and replace the now-adulterated earth at the appropriate places.

Kelly's Speech: "Most of you know this festival is Imbolc, but the old English name of it is Ewemeolc, literally ewe-milk. Ewemeolc is the first hint of Spring; the first milk of the spring lambs is available to drink, though the earth is still hard and dead with winter frost. It is a time of hope, a time when we can rejoice that though the winter was difficult, with hail and snow, Spring will come again! It is a time, too, of fertility, for the shoots are beginning to stir within the

earth, just as young men and women begin to stir with lust. It is a time of creativity, of fire within the frost of winter, and of all the crafts associated with fire: baking, poetry, and the forging of weapons of war.

"This night we gather to honor our own success in protecting this ancient place over the years. We anticipate another fine Spring and Summer here, during which we will gather stores of food, work hard, and continue to strengthen the camp in preparation for Winter – both the literal winter of next year, and the symbolic one

The Real Ewemeolc Rite

Francis's true agenda is not to celebrate the coming of Spring at all, but to lock the land down in Winter forever. Traditionally the Ewemeolc walk around the boundaries of the land would be sunwise (clockwise); he will lead the group widdershins (anti-clockwise), to reverse the effect. Of course, the Esoterrorists taking part in the ceremony are practiced ritual magicians, capable of holding the true intent of the night's business in their hearts. That intent, energized by blood sacrifice, will kick-start the extreme weather that the Esoterrorists hope to soon spread over the UK. A great, irregular widdershins spiral out from the Nine Ladies, marked by more rituals and blood sacrifices at various points on its route, will spread the great storm across the UK out from the Pennines. With a little misdirection via The Sun tabloid newspaper, the Esoterrorists will make people believe the storm started out just above the MCND building in nearby Manchester – whether because of Bennett's bungled "weather machine," or the meddling scientists' switching off of the Gulf Stream, or even divine vengeance on those who would tamper with nature. In any event, people's belief that the UK has been plunged into a new ice age, coupled with the Esoterrorists' rites, will be sufficient to make it happen – but that is for Part II of *Albion's Ransom*.

that may someday come when outsiders try to evict us from this place to quarry their stone from our sacred hills once more.

"We are the heirs to the Pecsætan, the old English inhabitants of the Peak District, and to the Picts who are said to have given this place its name, hundreds of years before the English ever even came to this land. We will honor their memory this night, as we see in the Spring with a great ritual, and an even greater celebration! Let's party!"

Throughout the course of the evening, the Esoterrorists hand out a variety of drugs:

Bottle after bottle of homemade wine, supposedly spiced elderberry, but actually elderberry with nutmeg (hallucinogenic in large quantities) and belladonna. (Treat as Toxic Psychedelic + Alcohol.)

Joints and pipes of very strong imported skunk-weed marijuana that has been infused with opium. (Treat as Mild Psychedelic + Opiate.)

More "Space Cake" of skunk-weed, with a load of barbiturates in liquid form sprinkled into the sponge prior to icing (Barbiturates + Mild Psychedelic.)

Mushroom tea, supposedly made from last autumn's dried crop of Psilocybin "magic mushrooms," but also including a significant dose of the more dangerous and extremely hallucinogenic Amanita Muscaria, and a small quantity of still more deadly Amanita Pantherina. (Treat as Toxic Psychedelic.)

They also swing huge brass censers around the whole area, giving off great clouds of incense smoke; among the usual frankincense, the incense includes more belladonna, datura stramonium, henbane, hemlock, and similar plants that are psychoactive to the point of toxicity. (More Toxic Psychedelics, though characters who deliberately don't take any of the other

Oops, Are We Early?

If the characters arrive before sundown of Thursday 31st, most of this chapter will still happen as written. Even if they disrupt the day-to-day activity here to a large extent, by getting into a fight with Roz and company, and rescuing Catriona, the Esoterrorists will still attempt to hold a massive blood sacrifice here at the planned time – it just might get a lot less neat, with automatic firearms and randomly kidnapped strangers if need be. The MCND building will still be destroyed by the great blizzard in the morning (with Bennett killed as planned, or if he has already been arrested or otherwise neutralized by the characters, with a contingency plan which still blames Bennett). Any such major impediments the characters put in the way of the conspiracy can be assumed to reduce and slow its effects, possibly forcing the Esoterrorists to tip their hand and come out from the shadows, too, so is certainly worth while; it's just that Isa Kenaz have several backup plans, since this operation will be such a major coup for them if they can pull it off.

Catriona has been here since the previous Saturday night, but was only worked on by the Esoterrorists from Sunday night onwards. Her Stability, and Stability Pool, will vary depending on when the characters rescue her.

Day/Time	Catriona's Stability	Stability Pool	Mental Illness
Tuesday 29th, before 16.00	3	-4	None
29th, after 16.00	3	-5	None
30th, 00.00 - 08.00	2	-6	Paranoia
30th, 08.00 - 16.00	2	-7	Paranoia
30th, 16.00 - 24.00	2	-8	Paranoia
31st, 00.00 - 08.00	1	-9	Paranoia
31st, 08.00 - 16.52	1	-10	Paranoia
31st, 16.52 onwards	1	1	Esoterrorist

drugs, and try to avoid breathing too much incense smoke, will take little to no effect from this.)

As mentioned earlier, the other protesters are for the most part fairly hardened drug users, at least when it comes to cannabis and the mild psychedelics. The idea with the above combination of drugs is to overwhelm even them. Most of them will deliberately over-indulge anyway, since tonight is a party night (and they have the added excuse that it's a sacred party night). They might be a little surprised at just how out of it they are, and how quickly, but they'll probably be quite pleased about that, until their blood is spilled.

Until just after midnight (00.10 or so), the party is relatively uneventful. People drink and dance and drum, and smoke and shout and sing. Some flirt or cavort, some vomit, some make fools of themselves, some launch

into great paranoid conspiracy theories, some do little solo circus performances with fire poi or fire juggling. It's a good party, if you like that kind of thing. The characters, if present, may be able to use the participants' more than usually addled state to press them for information – or the characters may be addled themselves. All the protesters are present, including all the Esoterrorists, except for Roz (still refusing to leave her tunnel).

A 1-point **Bullshit Detector** spend will let a character note that several of the people present are exaggerating how drugged or drunk they are, and are not indulging in quite the amounts they seem to be. These, of course, are the various Esoterrorist minions and initiates.

At around 23.40, half a dozen protesters (Esoterrorists again) set off back towards the protest camp, claiming they've run out

Bennett and Carter

Unless the characters disrupted the meeting between these two somehow (perhaps by getting Bennett arrested on a trumped-up charge), they met at Bennett's house as usual, at 4 pm.

If the characters have Bennett somehow under their control, so that he is completely unable to warn Carter beforehand, they may be lying in wait for Carter – either to arrest him too, or just to spy on what goes on between the two of them (**Electronic Surveillance** could be handy here). Carter will observe some minor counter-surveillance precautions en route to Bennett's, but he's not especially suspicious. If Bennett has warned him, he will stay away entirely, and see if he can rearrange the meeting for first thing on the Friday morning (7 am). This will be less effective than having over 12 hours to prepare Bennett for his own death, but it will do.

Carter will first have Bennett call the MCND lab, to arrange for it to be opened up by 7.30 am the following day, supposedly for some time-sensitive weather observations he needs to do.

Next, Carter plans to take Bennett through a lengthy initiatory experience, involving major psychedelic drugs, flagellation, and chanting & dancing to exhaustion – classic shamanic methods of altering consciousness, all supposedly intended to enhance Bennett's magical and scientific prowess. At around 22.30 he will drive the by now near-comatose Bennett to the Nine Ladies site, arriving at the circle just after midnight, as the ceremony there draws to its bloody climax. All the Esoterrorists present will worship Bennett and Catriona as King and Queen of Winter. At Carter and Kelly's urging, Bennett & Catriona will have ritualistic sex, covered liberally in the blood of the victims and the soil collected from around the sacred sites of the area. This sex magical act will be unusual, in that it will be designed for destruction rather than creation; blasting the land with the energies of Winter. Blood and sexual fluids will be used to consecrate the Persian demon figure, infusing it with all the magical intent of the night's ritual. Once all the rites are done, Carter will drive Bennett back, continue to work through the night on him using a variety of initiatory and consciousness-altering magical and psychodramatic techniques, and finally take him into the lab first thing on the Friday. The security guards may be suspicious, but they know Bennett, and they know he wanted to be let in early – presumably the other guy is a visiting researcher or something.

Carter ritually slays Bennett, stabbing him through the heart and inserting the Persian demon into the wound. He sets a small incendiary device in the lab and drives off rapidly, leaving the lab just as the blizzard erupts over it, the combination of ice and fire destroying it utterly.

The Esoterrorists have contingency plans, of course. They are nothing if not adaptable:

- If Bennett has been arrested or is otherwise unavailable, they'll pick an Esoterrorist Minion for the high honor of being sacrificed as King of Winter. He will take Bennett's place in everything, even down to the sacrifice in the lab (Carter simply knifing the security guard to get in this time).
- If Catriona has been rescued, an Esoterrorist Initiate will take her role.
- Even if the whole Nine Ladies operation has been compromised, Carter and the other Manchester-based Esoterrorists will go to Plan Z. This has to involve something far more blatant, and risky to them: mass murder in the city center somewhere, perhaps with a conventional terrorist bomb in a student hall of residence, their deaths hastily dedicated to the cause. So long as Bennett's thesis is in Carter's possession, they can start the Fimbulwinter project, if a great deal more shakily than planned.

Will Carter

Athletics 4, Health 8, Scuffling 9, Shooting 3, Stability 3, Surveillance 7

Damage Modifier: -1 (Knife), 0 (Pistol)

Carter is a classic suit-wearing psychopath. He has a very well-paying job running an advertising agency, always carries a serrated-edged sheath knife, and would love to kill some of his underlings and clients at the agency if he thought he could get away with it (he has, once or twice, but mostly he uses his Esoterrorist involvement to deal with those kinds of urges). He's also a highly accomplished and manipulative occultist.

of beer and need to get some more. In fact, they are going through Roz's tunnel to the torture chamber beyond, to assist some of the corporate Esoterrorists with bringing the captives out. Those captives who can walk are shackled in a line and whipped till they move fast enough for the Esoterrorists to be happy. Those who cannot are strapped to stretchers and carried.

At 00.10, fifteen minutes before true midnight, all hell breaks loose. The returning Esoterrorists, along with any corporate Esoterrorist torturers the GM wants to throw in, and (if desired) the Torture Dogs, come back to do their dark deeds. Bennett and Carter show up and get involved; the central portion of the ritual involves a sex magical act between Catriona and Bennett (see the Bennett and Carter sidebar, p. 83).

McLoughlin would like to show up around this time too, but if he knows the characters are here, he is likely to observe from a distance with a night-vision scope and a sniper rifle – he doesn't want any risk that the characters will spot him.

Unless the characters prevent it, the ritual sacrifice will go exactly as planned. The Esoterrorists will first slay the other eco-activists, pulling out a variety of camp tools and other weapons on a pre-arranged signal at 00.11. Next the remaining prisoners will be tortured to death, as Catriona and Bennett are acclaimed Queen and King of Winter. Finally they have sex amid the blood and gore at the center. One last ritual procession round the area, widdershins again, scattering the remaining blood, honey, milk, bread, and soil at the cardinal points of the compass... and the rites are done for the night. The Esoterrorists collapse Roz's tunnel, then leave the camp; they will inform a newspaper about the bloody corpses and horror of the place before the police ever find out about it, so as to ensure maximum disturbance of the nation's psyche.

The GM should carefully consider game balance at this point, based on the particular character group involved. A big, climactic fight with the Esoterrorists could be great, and there will be a need for plenty of them to fight in that case (and they're heroes, so can probably handle that), but the Torture Dogs just might tip the balance in the Esoterrorists' favor – perhaps McLoughlin will have had to send them off to track down another enemy, if the GM thinks they're too powerful. Another option is for the characters to recognize that the forces arrayed against them are overwhelming – there's no shame in fleeing occasionally, and there's certainly no shame in calling for back-up (indeed, the latter is very much within O.V. policy for this kind of situation).

Victory

If the characters succeed in all or most of their aims – notably, rescuing Catriona and hopefully preventing the mass sacrifice at Nine Ladies – the Esoterrorists' plans will be at the very least massively disrupted. The GM should determine how much disruption the characters have achieved. Any contingency plans that Isa Kenaz have to activate (see Bennett and Carter, p. 83) will mean that the Fimbulwinter plan is reduced in effectiveness somewhat – the weather disruption will be slightly more localized and less severe, and most significantly, the Esoterrorist minions possessed by frost-demons will be less numerous and less powerful.

A complete disruption of the plan, including the arrest or death of all the major Esoterrorist figures named in this adventure (notably McLoughlin, Mitchell, Kelly, and Carter), will render the Fimbulwinter plan null and void. Of course, that would be extremely tough to achieve. It will also prevent your group being able to make use of the sequel!

Sorry We're Late

Characters who arrive at the protest camp after the ritual is complete will find nothing but corpses. Catriona will be long gone. The Esoterrorists' work will presumably have gone on as planned. Damage limitation may be possible, but must wait for Part II, *The Worms of Sixty Winters*.

If the GM wishes to ensure the characters arrive in time for the ritual, rather than in its aftermath as described above, a couple of different options are available. Feel free to use one or both, if you think your players will have more fun arriving on time:

1) Evan McLoughlin decides he wants everyone there for his planned climax; he'd been hoping the characters would make it through their own cunning, but if he has to, he'll help them along a little. McLoughlin, still in his role as Mr. Verity, calls one of the characters up on their cellphone with "new information" that he has uncovered. He claims to have received a tip-off through an undercover O.V. source that a girl matching Catriona's description was seen at the Nine Ladies camp recently. He'll tell the characters this on the afternoon of the 31st, so that if they dive into their car and start driving, they can make it their in time. Of course, the GM should assume that the Esoterrorists are very much prepared for the characters' arrival, in this case.

2) Something happens to delay the ritual. There are several possibilities here. Perhaps an astrological conjunction just after the 31st means that it's considered "magically favorable" to hold the Ewemeolc rite a day or two after the traditional date (occultists are notoriously willing to convince themselves to alter the dates of their rituals under the guise of magical appropriateness, even if the real reason is just convenience). Perhaps this group of Esoterrorists follow the "Old Calendar", and hold their ceremonies a full 11 days after the usual Gregorian calendar date (so, 11th February rather than 31st January). Perhaps some unexpected snag demands the postponement of the rite – a cave-in at Roz's Tunnel, or a similar disaster.

The Veil-Out

Well, clearly there should be one – but it's going to be damned hard to clear up this mess. Still, a news story about a horrible rivalry between Traveller factions at the eco-activist site could work, as could a dreadful tragedy with some tainted drugs poisoning people. A lot depends on how successful the characters have been in general. Appendices: United Kingdom Source Material

Appendices: United Kingdom Source Material

These Appendices are predominantly addressed to player & GM groups from the USA, but can also be useful to any groups that don't already have a detailed knowledge of UK culture and institutions. They give an overview of the culture and some of the geography of the UK, as well as taking a look at Esoterrorist activity there.

Anthropology gives a character all the information in the *Regional Rivalries*, *Pub and Club Culture*, *Crime*, and *Religion and Beliefs* headings. A 1-point spend at any time gets either the *Eco-Activism* information or the *Travellers* information too.

Linguistics gives a character all the information in the *UK English* heading, including the *UK Slang* sidebar. A 1-point spend at any time lets the character decipher an especially difficult conversation in a strong regional dialect, or identify the region a character comes from by their accent.

Occult Studies gives a character all the information in the *Overview of Esoterrorist Activity* heading. As soon as a character specifically asks about a group (which might be as soon as hearing them mentioned by name in the *Overview*, or might occur during the course of the adventure), they also get the first paragraph in each *Known Occult Group*. A 1-point spend at any time gets all the information about any one *Known Occult Group*, or all the information in the *Occult Manchester* sidebar of the *Manchester* section.

Trivia gives a character all the information in the *Getting Around* section.

Research gives a character all the information in the *Manchester* (except for the *Occult Manchester* sidebar), and *Derbyshire and the Peak District* headings, but only if they specifically ask for information on one or other area (it's likely they'll ask for the *Manchester* info on the flight, as soon as they know where they're going). A 1-point spend will also get the information in the *Occult Manchester* sidebar of the *Manchester* section. Given access to Ordo Veritatis computers, a 1-point spend at any time can be used instead of an *Occult Studies* spend to get all the information about any one *Known Occult Group*.

Introduction

The UK is a relatively small country. Its cities, other than London, are fairly small too. There's a lot crammed in there though. It's easier to get lost in a small British city, with its organic, random street plan, than a more ordered but larger American city. The same principle applies to many other aspects of the UK. It's a tangled, old, fractally organized kind of place. One small city might have a dozen or more distinct sub-cultures, styles of architecture, and styles of town planning.

Appendix I: UK English

The US and UK have been described as “two nations divided by a common language.” There is some truth in this, as any American who attempts to understand a strong British regional accent for the first time can attest. UK English is marked by strong regional dialects and accents, incorporating a fair amount of US English slang as well as its own.

There follows a list of the main regional accents of the UK. Note that this list is a generalisation. Each accent tends to be at its most harsh and strong in a city, but will have slight variations depending on exactly where you go in the city; furthermore, the regional accents of the cities continue out around them in a somewhat mellower, more rounded form.

For example, the Manchester accent closely resembles the more rural accents of the surrounding counties, Lancashire and Cheshire, but Mancunians tend to sound harder and more guttural than Lancashire & Cheshire people. Someone with a keen ear, who has lived a long while in Lancashire, will be able to determine precisely what Lancashire village another person is from, whereas a person from the South of England who has never lived in the North may just think they all sound “Northern,” and find it hard to distinguish between the accents of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Manchester, etc., though the Liverpool accent (with its strong Irish influence) is distinctive even to an outsider. A visitor from the US may find all of them hard to comprehend, with the strongest, fastest-spoken city accents sounding like they’re not even in English.

Received Pronunciation: “RP” is what might once have been thought of as BBC English; the dialect spoken (or rather, enunciated) by the well-educated. Today, even the BBC have opened up to regional accents, to the extent

that you’ll rarely hear an RP accent reading the news. Still, Britain’s better private schools (some of which are known, confusingly, as “public schools” in the UK; schools which don’t charge a fee are called “state schools”) still produce RP-speaking students. An upper class or upper middle class person, who attended a good quality private school, will tend to speak RP overlaid with the faintest hint of a regional accent, even if they were brought up somewhere not usually known for RP (such as Scotland).

London & the South-East: *US visitors often assume that the plethora of London accents they hear are “Cockney.” In fact, modern London accents vary considerably depending on the part of London and the age & background of the speaker. Young working-class Londoners are more likely to have an accent influenced by everything from American hip-hop music to Jamaican Yardie dialect, with hints of Indian & Pakistani slang. When angry or excited, they can be nigh-on incomprehensible due to the speed & harshness with which they deliver their sentences. When calm, they’ll speak with the chilled-out rhythm characterized by British urban black culture, almost universal whether in the ghettos of London or Manchester or Bristol. Multiculturalism is here to stay in Britain, and in London, more than anywhere. To many of these youngsters race is less important than class or home town, and it shows in their multifaceted, rapidly mutating speech patterns.*

The rest of South-East England tends toward the more traditional “Southern” accent – somewhere between RP and what the US would think of as “Cockney.”

The South-West: Traditionally the rural South-West accent is represented by the movie convention of “Mummerset” – an old-fashioned, exaggerated, piratical kind of West Country accent. There are still rural areas where you’ll find people who seem to speak that way, but much of the South-

UK Slang

Blag: Originally, any criminal activity. Today it relates particularly to a low-level confidence trick, or an act of scrounging, or something in between the two. Older or more professional criminals may still use it to relate to bank heists or similar. Q: "Where'd you get that leather jacket?" A: "I swapped it with A.B. for a bit of draw; he blagged it from his brother."

Brew: Cup of tea, or can of beer (particularly Carlsberg Special Brew).

Chav, charver (pejorative): A member of the working class or underclass youth culture characterized by wearing hooded tops, tracksuits, trainers, and baseball caps; often associated (sometimes unfairly) with criminality, drunkenness and violence.

Crustie (mildly pejorative): A member of the underclass culture characterized by having dreadlocks, facial piercings, ragged army surplus clothing, and big boots. Often thought of as physically dirty; associated with squatting, eco-activism (see p. 93), and Travellers (see p. 95).

Dope, spliff, draw, hash, rocky, red seal, gold seal, leb, red leb, sputnik, soap-bar: Cannabis resin.

E, X, doves: Ecstasy/MDMA

E'd up, loved up, on one: Under the influence of Ecstasy/MDMA.

Gear: Any drug, particularly cannabis resin (North-West England) or heroin (South-East England).

Geordie: A person from North-East England.

Grass, skunk, homegrown, Northern Lights, draw: Marijuana

Having a rake, raking you (Ireland): Taking the piss (q.v.).

Jock: A Scot.

Manc: A person from Manchester (short for "Mancunian").

Peeler (Ireland), copper, bizzzy (North-West England), rozzer (South-East England), polis (Scotland): police officer

Pikey (pejorative): A traditional Traveller, usually of Irish Tinker origin but also sometimes of Romany origin (see Travellers, p. 95).

Pissed (England), pished (Scotland): Drunk (contrast with US "pissed").

Pissed off (England), pished off (Scotland): Angry (compare to US "pissed").

Sally (Northern England), townie (Southern England), Kevin (Southern England), ned (Scotland): A chav (q.v.), or a person who dresses like a chav (but without quite such strong associations of violence etc.).

Scouser: A person from Liverpool.

Shrooms, Magic Mushrooms, Mushies: Any hallucinogenic fungus, particularly psilocybin mushrooms.

Taff, Taffy: A Welsh person.

Taffia: The "Welsh Mafia," the probably non-existent conspiracy that is perceived to be responsible for ensuring that only native-born Welsh people get certain jobs in Wales, e.g. local government work.

Taking the piss (or pish, in Scotland): Good-natured mockery ("I was only taking the piss"), or behaving unacceptably ("You're taking the fucking piss now, son").

Wanker, tosser, tosspot, fucker: These & other swear words can be insults in context, but these days are at least as likely to be used sarcastically, affectionately, or neutrally, among friends, e.g. "Didn't any of you wankers think to get me a drink?", or "Am I the only fucker doing any work on this job?"

Wiz, whiz, billy, speed: Any amphetamine drugs.

Woollyback (pejorative): A Welsh person, or (depending on the region) any person from the country, as opposed to the city. Alludes to the practice of bestiality.

Yank, Yankee: American (from any part of the USA, not necessarily the North).

West region is now settled by people from the South-East, who moved out in search of cheaper accommodation or a more laid-back lifestyle. Urban areas, particularly Bristol, are more likely to strong influences from the aforementioned urban British black culture.

The Midlands: The Midlands accent is the subject of some amusement to those from other parts of the UK, as it is felt that Midlands people speak slowly and flatly. These qualities do at least make the Midlands accent fairly easy to understand for visitors to the UK, once they get the hang of it. As ever there are variations in the Midlands accent, with Shropshire to the West sounding more like Cheshire or Mid-Wales Welsh, the more northerly parts of the Midlands sounding a little more like Yorkshire or Lancashire accents, and so on. The thriller "Dead Man's Shoes" has a good selection of the northern Midlands accents found in Derbyshire, where much of this adventure is set.

Manchester & The North-West: Made famous outside the UK by Christopher Eccleston's portrayal of Doctor Who, the Manchester accent is probably the most recognizable Northern English accent. Softer variants can be found throughout North-West England. The Liverpool accent is somewhat different, with a Northern Irish influence & elongated vowel sounds. Further north, in northern Lancashire and Cumbria, dialect becomes stronger & more rural. Older episodes of the soap opera "Coronation Street" tend to feature something more like the Lancashire accent, whereas newer episodes have the harsher twang of modern Manchester; both can be useful research material for those interested in British dialect variations.

The North-East: Here the principal accents are Yorkshire (in Leeds, York, Sheffield, and the surrounding countryside) and Geordie (in Newcastle, Sunderland, and the surrounding area). The Yorkshire accent sounds quite similar to a Lancashire or other North-West

accent; the best reference is probably the accents in the movie, "The Full Monty." The Geordie accent tends to be stronger and harder to understand, being somewhere between Yorkshire & Scottish.

Wales: South Wales, Mid-Wales, and North-West Wales, tend to have the strongest Welsh accents. North-East Wales has an accent that is more reminiscent of Cheshire, or a watered-down Liverpool accent, thanks to several generations of English migrants to the region. Wales is also noted for the entirely separate language of Welsh. The heartland of native Welsh speakers is North-West Wales, but today Welsh is taught in every school in Wales, so that anyone brought up there will be capable of switching to Welsh conversation if they ever need to baffle non-Welsh speakers...

Scotland: The various Scots accents can be surprisingly hard to comprehend to outsiders. Most Scots don't speak in "Hollywood Scots," Sean Connery style. The Glasgow accent in particular is fast-spoken, guttural, and harsh. Even a working-class Edinburgh accent (reference: the "Trainspotting" film) can be tough to understand, though a traveler in the classier parts of Edinburgh will hear the easygoing, pleasant-sounding accent he associates with the Scots in movies.

Pub and Club Culture

Much of British social life revolves around the pub. British pubs have their own etiquette; a rich and complex array of protocols that can seem utterly baffling to outsiders, but that adult Brits understand on an almost entirely unconscious level.

Some pubs cater predominantly for tourists, some for locals, some for bikers or rockers, some for anyone. One pub might have a dozen old men playing dominoes and drinking Guinness at one end, and loud heavy metal music at the other; another pub might specialize in showing wide-screen football matches on satellite TV in the main room, but be a classy bar-restaurant in the side room.

The main differences between British pub etiquette and American bar etiquette are as follows:

- **Tipping.** Tipping isn't the norm in British pubs at all (though tipping is expected in restaurants, and encouraged by cafes and cab drivers). If you receive exceptional service, or if you know the bartender very well, you might say "Have one yourself," meaning that you'd like them to pay for a drink for themselves out of your change. Today it's quite rare for the bartender to actually take a drink with you; rather, they'll take 50 pence or £1 out of your change, and put it in the tips jar to be shared out by all the staff later.
- **Service.** There is almost never table service for drinks in British pubs. In those that serve food, you usually have to order your meal at the bar, though it will often be brought to the table when ready. More than one American group has stormed out of a pub, complaining of the appalling service, after sitting at a table and wondering when the staff were going to get to them to take their orders. Drinks are bought from the bar according to what can often be an arcane process of queuing; next in the queue is not necessarily the person who has been waiting longest, but can be the person best known to the bar staff, or the prettiest girl, or the person who looks most relaxed and least frustrated at the slow service. Clearing your throat, waving high-denomination notes around, or complaining loudly, is likely to ensure that your place in the (almost entirely virtual) queue is lost.
- **Rounds.** Almost all serious drinking in British pubs is done in rounds. You don't buy a drink for yourself; you wait till it's your turn to get a round in, then buy for the whole group, often including hangers-on. This is a chance to demonstrate either conspicuous consumption and a happy-go-lucky attitude, or penny-pinching miserliness. Even if you're not drinking alcohol, you'll be expected to buy the occasional round.
- **Beers.** Most beer drunk in the UK is European lager, such as Stella Artois, though bitter beer, real ales, Guinness, and cider (alcoholic cider, that is) are also popular in some areas. Beer-drinkers don't ask for "a beer" as they might in the US; they always, at least, specify "a pint of lager," "a pint of bitter," "a half of stout" (Guinness), etc.
- **Drugs.** Some pubs in any city will covertly tolerate drug use on the premises. Police and locals will be well aware that the pub is a druggie one. It will get raided every so often, but probably not closed down. The management will be keen to ensure that drug use & sales are done discreetly, but are unlikely to throw anyone out or call the police if they're too blatant, just give them a warning. Each drug pub or club will have its own etiquette; you might only be allowed to smoke hash in the back room, or only on the stairs, or only small joints (that resemble cigarettes). You will usually be expected to buy a token drink every so often, usually half a pint of lager. (Note that pub drug culture is likely to alter by the time this book goes to press, since cigarette smoking will be banned in all pubs & clubs in the UK in mid-2007.)

Nightclub culture is similar. Again, each nightclub has its own character. In some, drunkenly groping the opposite sex on the dance floor, or having fights every Friday and Saturday night, or passing out in a pool of one's own vomit, is not just accepted, but expected. Of course, the same behavior in a classier or more peaceable nightclub is likely to result in police being called, or the offenders being thrown out by the security staff. The more violent nightclubs in the UK are among the most violent clubs on the planet, with the door staff having to break up or get involved in literally hundreds or even thousands of fights each year.

Drunken violence also spills out of both clubs and pubs, and onto the street. Most pubs close at 11.30 pm, and most nightclubs around 2 or 3 am, meaning that vast numbers of drunk and often aggressive people are on the streets just after those times.

Nightclub bouncers are generally better-organized than they are in the USA, as well as being strictly regulated by a government agency, the SIA. However, many nightclub security firms remain fronts for organized crime, and some gangs still regard nightclub door work as their own if on their turf.

Appendix II: UK Culture

Regional Rivalries: The North-South Divide and Others

It might seem to the casual visitor to the UK that everyone here hates everyone else. There's some truth in that, though hate is probably too strong a term, most of the time. Friends from different regions will give each other a good-natured ribbing over their origins, but it's not usually intended too seriously. That said, even humor can turn nasty, since generally the Northern sense of humor revolves around mocking & piss-taking: a Northerner thinking he's showing affection by taking the piss out of his Southern friend can cause far more hurt feelings than he realizes. Generally people from the North will be a lot more tolerant of their friends taking the piss, and far more extreme in their own piss-taking of their friends, than will people from the South.

The North-South divide is the most well-known regional rivalry in the UK. The cliché is that Southerners perceive Northerners as poorly educated, poor, work-shy, and prone to wear flat caps, race whippets, and keep ferrets, while Northerners perceive Southerners as rich, arrogant, having no common sense, and being "soft" (physically weak, especially in a fight and/or unable to cope with cold weather). Most of the wealth in the UK is still concentrated in the South-East, so there's certainly some truth in the idea that Southerners are richer in general. Likewise, most of the cold & otherwise bad weather is concentrated in the North, so there's also some truth in the idea that Southerners are more likely to complain of the cold - they're not as used to it as most Northerners.

Other small-scale regional rivalries can be at least as significant. Two football (soccer) teams in the same town, or in nearby towns,

will create major rivalries and sometimes violent conflicts (see Crime, p. 92) among their fans. For example, Manchester has two major football teams, Manchester United and Manchester City, whose fans are likely to fight each other... but both hate the fans of Liverpool Football Club, or Liverpool's other team Everton (whose fans, inevitably, hate Liverpool F.C.'s fans too). In fact, for a long while the first sight that greeted visitors to Manchester arriving on the train from Liverpool was a large piece of graffiti reading "MANCS SLASH SCOUSERS."

Adjacent counties occasionally have rivalries, the most notable one being that between Lancashire and Yorkshire. Again this is largely good-natured today, though it's based on a misunderstanding of the Wars of the Roses conflict from six centuries ago. (The Wars were a conflict between the noble houses of Lancaster and York, not between the two counties).

There is some degree of anti-English sentiment both in Scotland and in Wales, though this varies enormously. Welsh and Scots nationalists are to some extent fighting a losing battle, since the English have settled in their countries for so many hundreds of years that many of the supposed Welsh or Scots nationalists probably have significant English ancestry anyway. Still, this anti-English sentiment can and does spill over into violence, so that today the Committee for Racial Equality notes there are more racially motivated attacks on English people in Scotland than on other ethnic minorities in Scotland.

Of course, the Scots and Welsh also have their own internal divisions. Scotland's two main cities, Glasgow and Edinburgh, have long been rivals. Glasgow's two football teams, Rangers and Celtic (pronounced "Seltic") are associated with the sectarian violence of Northern Ireland and beyond, with Rangers attracting a predominantly

Protestant following and Celtic a Catholic one.

Among the Welsh, anti-English sentiment grows more pronounced in the more rural regions, especially if English migrants are perceived as buying up Welsh family homes to use as holiday cottages. There's also a rivalry between North and South Wales, with North Waleans perceiving the Cardiff-run National Assembly of Wales as being biased against them.

Crime

The UK is not quite as bad as the USA, in terms of its rate of violence. Moreover, this violence, when it does happen, rarely results in any deaths, given the UK's severe legal restrictions on weapon carry. Shootings are very rare, and knifings still reasonably uncommon, but drunken violence, muggings, and (recently) "Happy Slappings," where teenagers slap a victim's face and film the event on their mobile phone cameras, all happen far too often for comfort.

As mentioned above, weapons are illegal to carry in the UK. This includes not just all guns, but any knife or other bladed object of a size and construction sufficient to make it an effective weapon, as well as all batons, saps, blackjacks, and other blunt weapons. Although weapons are illegal to carry, most are legal to own in the home, even swords, knives, clubs, etc., though in practice the police and courts are more likely to look favorably on a person who defends their home with a hammer or kitchen knife than a purpose-designed weapon. Most British citizens who have no criminal convictions can get a license to own a shotgun at home, for pest control, hunting, or competition rather than for self-defense, but few do so, and no gun shop will sell even a shotgun to someone who cannot prove they have a license. Other firearms are even more tightly restricted, particularly handguns. Even "less than lethal" weapons, such as

O.C. spray or stun guns, are completely illegal (they can't even be owned in the home). Characters visiting from the USA on O.V. business are unlikely to be given any special treatment when it comes to weapon carry, since visiting American police or other government operatives would also not be permitted to carry weapons. They will therefore need to think like criminals do; that is, work on their unarmed combat skills and the use of improvised weaponry, and only carry (illegal) weapons when they have a specific task in mind, and when their need for weapon carry outweighs the risk of getting caught. Of course, O.V. operatives are unlikely to be prosecuted for illegal weapon carry, but even a night spent in the cells while the formalities are sorted out is likely to be a significant impediment to any O.V. investigation.

British policing is probably about as good, on average, as anywhere in the Western world. Most police are genuinely striving to catch criminals, protect the public, and make the country a better place. Still, it's inevitable that a career spent dealing predominantly with either wrongdoers, or other police, will polarize most officers' views eventually. To another police officer, if you're in the police, you're trustworthy and good; any minor crimes you might appear to be guilty of are probably just irregularities that need to be smoothed out. It's probably not worth the paperwork, or the stigma of going against their own kind, to do anything about it. On the other hand, if you're a member of the public, you're probably guilty of something or another; most people are, aren't they? This attitude isn't a consciously corrupt one, by any means. It's a natural consequence of a life in which the people you meet are either your enemies (criminals) or your allies (other police). Still, some forces are much better than others, in terms of trying to treat suspects fairly, and things are generally improving. In most of the country, the days when a member of an ethnic minority or a drunk might get a good kicking in the back

of the van for being "mouthy" (talking back), are gone. The occasional close-knit police force might well continue the tradition, though, and a mouthy Yank who claims to be some kind of special agent could easily get the same treatment if he's unlucky.

Like anywhere else, the UK has its fair share of dangerous areas. These are not always just working-class regions. Sometimes a formerly good area will go downhill for a variety of reasons: empty houses being taken over by squatters or drug users, a particularly vicious gang of teenagers terrorizing the older residents, or just the particular layout of an estate being conducive to criminal activity (and not conducive to policing or security).

Also, areas with a high population of University students tend to have a high crime rate. Very few British Universities have room for all their students on campus in halls of residence, so student accommodation tends to be spread over the whole city. Criminals are well aware of this, and know too that students are often not streetwise enough to protect themselves and their possessions.

Like the USA, the UK has a culture of loving outlaws, particularly bank robbers. Centuries of tradition, from Robin Hood ballads to Hollywood's adoration of the heist movie, mean that many or even most UK citizens will look at news items about audacious, large-scale robberies with a degree of admiration, and hope that the criminals get away with it. Add that to working-class Britain's hatred of grasses, and you get an environment that can be at best neutral and at worst quite hostile to law enforcement, even among non-criminals. There is still a perception (almost entirely misguided) that big heists are carried out by old-fashioned criminals who "never hurt anyone except their own kind" and have their own sense of honor.

Drug use is common among all levels of society, particularly the under-40s. Cannabis, in particular, is seen as relatively harmless. The busier police forces have largely ignored cannabis for several decades, recognizing that it simply isn't worth their time to prosecute users or small-scale dealers. Harder drugs are widely available on council estates, in pubs and clubs, or just among friends, though these are taken much more seriously by police.

Eco-Activism

Eco-activism, short for ecological activism, has been a significant factor in British single-issue politics since the early 1990s. It has its roots in the activism of Greenpeace and C.N.D. (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) some two decades earlier, but it first became newsworthy, widespread, and truly effective with the anti-road-building movement of the early to mid-1990s, when bands of activists across the country cost the Government millions of pounds by disrupting its planned large-scale road-building program. Many credit the activists with effectively halting the program entirely, thus saving sizeable areas of Britain's already massively depleted woodland from destruction.

With the road-building program effectively shelved, thanks both to the campaigns and to a widespread understanding that new roads get filled up with traffic as fast as they are built, eco-activists have moved on to other areas. Typical targets now include almost any plans for building activity that is seen as unnecessary, such as new supermarkets and fast-food restaurants on woodland or other green space. Anything disruptive of local ecologies is also seen as fair game, such as quarrying, or landfill sites and other waste disposal.

Most eco-activists have been committed to "Non-Violent Direct Action" right from the start, and still are today. In theory, this means they will avoid violence against

individuals, including construction workers, security guards, police, and so on – even in self-defense. In practice, the same holds almost entirely true. It is very rare that an eco-activist will rise to the bait and hit back, even in the face of quite significant violence from the “opposition.” They’re well aware that a hostile press will exaggerate any violence on the part of the protesters, no matter the provocation.

However, they will use almost any other, non-violent means of direct action to disrupt the activity they’re protesting against, for example: squatting in houses or tree-houses in the path of a planned new road or re-opening quarry, locking themselves to machinery, or physically interposing their bodies in the work area, as well as all the usual, expected stuff like chanting, waving banners, singing, shouting, and so on.

One of the most successful tactics used recently has been to dig tunnels beneath protest sites, and have several eco-activists occupying the tunnels 24 hours a day. This works in a similar way to the squats or tree-houses – the activists must be evicted before work can continue. Generally it’s far harder to physically remove activists from a prepared tunnel than from a squat or tree-house, since bailiffs & police have to ensure this is done in a safe manner. Thus, tunneling can be very effective at prolonging a campaign, and ensuring that any eviction is very costly.

A small number of eco-activists are also willing to damage property or equipment if doing so advances their cause; sometimes by stealth, perhaps smashing machinery at night, and sometimes quite blatantly, fully expecting to get arrested and tried for their actions. This is not generally seen as going against the ethos of non-violence, even by activists who are not personally willing to risk arrest in the same manner.

There is a small but significant neo-pagan tendency among eco-activists (see Religion and Beliefs, p. 95). Many eco-activists are practicing neo-pagans; more still have a vaguely neo-pagan, earth-centered spirituality, without actually going in for ceremonies other than perhaps having a big party at each of the neo-pagan festivals. It’s important not to over-state this neo-pagan tendency; many more activists are irreligious, or broadly Christian in the same way as are most British people (that is, virtually irreligious except for births, marriages, and deaths). A fair few are actively Christian, or active in other, non-pagan religions, and see political activism as a natural extension of their religious beliefs. The Esoterrorists are not believed to have made significant in-roads into the eco-activist movement, which tends to be too chaotic and decentralized even for their tastes; eco-activists just don’t tend to be joiners of anything much, including occult groups.

The public perception of eco-activists is that they are soap-dodging, work-shy, dreadlocked, heavily pierced hippies and punks. There is some truth in the cliché, and there is some crossover between eco-activists and Travellers (see below). However, the pierced, dreadlocked crusties make up only a sizeable proportion of eco-activists. Plenty of eco-activists look perfectly normal and respectable.

These are a mixture of students (who may well give up their activism on graduation, as well as that subtle nose stud), lifelong political campaigners, local teenagers (drawn into the protest more actively than their parents), and other local residents (often middle-aged or elderly). The older, less visible activists often focus more on support networks (arranging and cooking food, acquiring other supplies, building or augmenting structures of all kinds, and so on) or on administration (the letter-writing and lobbying campaigns that complement a direct action campaign), though a few will

be found on the front lines alongside their pierced and tattooed comrades. Locals who support the campaigners, but choose not to live on the site, are often very generous in the assistance and goods they provide, turning up regularly with car-loads of food from the local supermarkets.

Every campaign will tend to draw a few hangers-on, too; often Travellers (see p. 95), squatters, and/or heavy drug users, who recognize that protest camps tend to provide free food and often a place to stay, too. Sooner or later, these people will usually either start contributing a bit to the campaign, or be thrown out by the other activists.

Travellers

The UK has had Travellers for many generations. Till recently most of them have either Romanies ("Gypsies") or Irish Travellers (sometimes known as "Tinkers"). In the past 30 years or so, a new kind of Traveller has begun to arise: hippy Travellers, or "New Age Travellers."

New Age Travellers emerged originally out of the hippy movement, traveling from free festival to free festival in the summer, occasionally doing seasonal agricultural work but often making their living selling some kind of crafts or other items at the festivals. Many will "winter" in a squat or other static environment, seeking a place to settle for the colder months, often claiming state benefits during this period. Since the early 1990s, New Age Travellers have also been associated with the free party and rave scene, their numbers swelling with crusties, ravers, and punks, all eager to withdraw from regular society to a greater or lesser extent.

Romanies have always tended to be in the minority compared to Irish Travellers in the UK. Both cultures do seasonal agricultural work, like the New Age Travellers, but Irish Travellers are also especially likely to get

involved in other laboring work: scrapping cars, building driveways, gardening work (especially felling trees and cutting hedges), fixing roofs, and so on. Traditionally, Travellers are enthusiastic about horses and greyhounds, meeting up for county fairs and horse racing events; these are also still the venue for bare-knuckle boxing matches, with Travellers battling for the title "King of the Gypsies."

There is sometimes antagonism between the three main groups of Travellers, particularly between the more traditional Travellers and the New Age Travellers. The latter are often seen as newcomers, fakes, and/or drug dealers.

All kinds of Travellers will sometimes cease traveling for a greater or lesser period, as there are a number of established "Traveller Sites" around the country where they can park up in a group. In theory, the Council (local government) in each county has a legal requirement to provide Travellers with such sites, though many or most Councils ignore or try to evade this responsibility. Different Traveller Sites often have very different characters, depending on the particular makeup of the different Traveller groups living there.

All kinds of Travellers experience prejudice in the UK. They're perceived as thieves, confidence tricksters, drug users, litter louts, and violent criminals. There can be little doubt that some of this prejudice has a basis in fact: given a large enough Traveller population, there is bound to be some criminal element, but whether said element is any larger in proportion than that found in more normal society, is open to question.

Religion and Beliefs

The UK is nominally a Christian country, predominantly Church of England. However, most ordinary British people are so ambivalent about religion that they verge on agnosticism. Very few attend church

services on a regular basis. Some more will go to Church once or twice a year, at Christmas and Easter, but most will only see the inside of a church for weddings and the occasional christening. More and more people don't bother having their children baptized, and either don't get married at all, or get married without any religious ceremony. Even the Church of England itself is not especially religious; most vicars and even bishops do not believe the Bible to be literally true.

The usual array of minority religions can be found in the UK: Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientologists, spiritualists, and many more. In some areas, especially where there is a large Indian and Pakistani population, Hinduism and Islam are also popular. A minority of British people hold New Age spiritual beliefs of various kinds, though this is often an adjunct to their nominally Church of England faiths rather than a wholesale replacement for it.

Neo-paganism, of various kinds, is another minority religion in the UK, but one of particular interest both to Esoterrorists and to the Ordo Veritatis members who hunt them. Most British neo-pagans have an eclectic mix of spiritual beliefs, drawing from Wicca, Druidism, Shamanism, Asatru (Norse-style paganism), ceremonial magic, and other sources. All these sources have their own dedicated practitioners too, but these are certainly outnumbered by eclectic neo-pagans whose religious practices are either solitary or based around a semi-random array of festival camps, pub moots, impromptu celebrations in friends' living rooms, visits to stone circles, and so on. Generally, Esoterrorists looking for recruits are more likely to try to take over or start up a specific, dedicated group, as the eclectics are sufficiently independent-minded as to be hard to brainwash, and sufficiently vague as to not be much use when they have been recruited anyway.

Appendix III: Esoterrorists and other Occultists

Overview of Esoterrorist Activity

Ordo Veritatis operatives have identified several strands of Esoterrorist activity in the UK. There can be little doubt that further, as yet uncharted, Esoterrorist cells exist. No national head has yet been identified, if the Esoterrorists even have such a structure.

One standard pattern in the UK seems to be for a small Esoterrorist cell to infiltrate a larger organization, often a neo-pagan one but sometimes a Masonic or similar group. For the Esoterrorists' aims, the ideal organization is one that has several layers of membership, so that the outermost, largest layer will be entirely unaware of the "inner mysteries." The atmosphere of secrecy that such groups cultivate (even when not run by Esoterrorists) plays right into the Esoterrorists' hands; they know that members will be unlikely to grow suspicious if other members are selected for "special, private training" or similar. It is believed that the Esoterrorists have infiltrated the following two major groups to a greater or lesser extent: Ordo Templi Orientis, and the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids.

The other main Esoterrorist tactic is to create a new group, wholesale. This is generally more work than taking over an established organization, but has the advantage that it can be tailored to the Esoterrorists' specific needs. In particular, it can be used to recruit members from a particular social class or even work background.

Known Occult Groups

Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO, COTO; usually pronounced by initial letter)

Basic Information (Occult Studies): This group has been around in one form or

another for over a century. Founded by two German occultists, and later more-or-less completely taken over by the notorious Aleister Crowley, it claims to draw on the heritage of groups and traditions as diverse as the Knights Templar, the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, the Illuminati, and the Tantric Sex Magic of India. Crowley's influence ensured that the Order adopted his own philosophy/religion, Thelema. Since Crowley's day, OTO has been through a number of changes of leadership, power struggles, and schisms, so that the modern limited company which has established the legal right to the name OTO is only one of several different competing OTOs. Some occult scholars refer to it as the "Caliphate" OTO (or COTO for short) to distinguish it from the other groups; Ordo Veritatis records have adopted that nomenclature for convenience. COTO's present managing directors, based in the USA, have focused firmly on profit: establishing the Order as the legal heir to Crowley's copyrights, reprinting Crowley's major works, charging plenty of money for membership, and being aggressively litigious in the face of any challenge or perceived challenge to its authenticity or legitimacy. COTO today is worldwide, with the leadership being based in the USA but with a total membership of between 1000 and 3000 organized into local Camps, Oases, and Lodges. A Camp is the smallest administrative division, often with only a handful of members. An Oasis or Lodge will be larger, and will have the capability to Initiate more members. Each country is ruled by a Grand Lodge. Members are expected to swear allegiance to their superiors in COTO, but in practice, given the current watered-down approach, it is unlikely that they will ever be asked to do anything too onerous, or even that the leadership would be surprised if members refused such a request. The UK has its own Grand Lodge, but has been the site of two major schisms from COTO (see OTOM and OTOS, below), so is somewhat depleted in numbers. COTO activity in the

UK occurs predominantly in Yorkshire and South-East England.

Controversy stalked the various incarnations of OTO from Crowley's day onwards. The Solar Lodge in California, a discredited group associated with OTO in the 1960s, is said to have performed a number of bizarre magical workings designed to increase racial tensions and cause race riots, and has been claimed by some to have had connections with the Manson Family. Both the Solar Lodge, and the Agape Lodge of OTO (also in California) have often been said to have been heavily infiltrated by CIA elements interested in learning just how to do cult mind-control properly.

Many of the most influential figures in the Californian OTO groups in the 1950s and 1960s had US government connections in one way or another, including the following:

- Major Grady Louis McMurtry (for many years the head of OTO, informally known as the "Caliph", partly after the "Caliph-ornia" connection) of the US army.
- Government rocket scientist and OTO initiate Jack Parsons (dead in a mysterious lab explosion half a century ago).
- Jean Brayton, the head of Solar Lodge.
- The late L. Ron Hubbard: former OTO initiate, better known as a science fiction writer and as the founder of the Scientology religion. Hubbard became notorious among fellow initiates in the 1950s for his alleged theft of Parsons's yacht as part of a complex scam. After leaving OTO under a cloud, he claimed to have been working undercover for US Intelligence Services all along.

The modern COTO has always denied any CIA connection, as have the CIA

– it's unclear as to which group is more embarrassed by the alleged association.

Additional Information (1-point Spend): For COTO today, the occult side of things has become just another facet of its business; something that has to be maintained to provide the essential element of mystery to draw in new members, but which is subservient to the needs of profit. Since it is based in sue-happy USA, and often criticized among the occult community as being "run by its lawyers," it has watered down much of its genuine occult tradition so as to avoid potential lawsuits brought against it by its membership; after all, the Initiation Rituals that might once have been thought of as "character-building psychodramas" could be seen as "psychologically traumatizing torture and kidnap" these days. The Esoterrorists have found it very difficult to gain a significant hold over the COTO. The current COTO leadership tends to throw out any group or individual within it that it suspects of attempting to create its own power bloc within COTO.

Ordo Veritatis believes that there are several Esoterrorist cells working within COTO at any one time. The Esoterrorists seem to have given up on any attempt to take over the group entirely; doing so would be difficult, and would, in the estimation of the Esoterrorists, be unlikely to be worthwhile in terms of either financial reward or quality of recruits. Rather, they focus now on cherry-picking the brightest, most gullible, most magically powerful, and/or most corruptible members from COTO, either recruiting them directly and openly into the Esoterrorist cell, or else influencing a whole Lodge, Oasis, or Camp of COTO into performing rituals and other acts that are in conformity with Esoterrorist aims.

Ordo Templi Orientis of Maat (OTOM; usually pronounced by initial letter)

Basic Information (Occult Studies): This was one of the first groups to split off from

COTO, even before there truly was a COTO in its modern, corporate incarnation. Founded by one of Crowley's personal acolytes, who claimed that Crowley had made him head of the British Kingdom of OTO, this group has right from the start been far darker and more edgy than the mainstream COTO. Its members believe they have discovered a Cthulhoid pantheon of powerful demon-gods, beyond and above the Egyptian-influenced pantheon Crowley revered. Their magical workings are designed to explore that more demonic side. OTOM is at present based almost entirely in the UK.

Additional Information (1-point Spend): OTOM did not start out as an Esoterrorist group; its founders were genuine, if crazed by any normal standards. However, it was a natural target for Esoterrorist contact, given that it would draw members who were devoted to the darker side of the occult. It is unknown as to whether OTOM was openly "turned" by diplomatic contact with an Esoterrorist group, or taken over from within by an Esoterrorist cell, but it is believed that OTOM is now entirely, or almost entirely, an Esoterrorist front, working for the personal power of the high-ranking members and for the usual Esoterrorist aims of bursting open the very seams of reality. Its members are believed to be particularly adept with dreamy, trance-like magic: falling into a state of mind that lets them directly access the worlds beyond our own, the world of the Outer Dark, populated by the Creatures of Unremitting Horror. Its members are generally far more secretive than members of other OTO variants, which makes them far harder to keep tabs on for the Ordo Veritatis. Its members have an especial affinity for the darker sides of all pantheons, including entirely synthetic, modern ones such as the Cthulhu mythos, as well as far older systems such as the Qlipoth, the reversed version of the Qabalistic Tree of Life in Judaic mysticism.

Ordo Templi Orientis Association (OTOA; usually pronounced by initial letter)
Basic Information (Occult Studies): The OTOA was the product of a relatively recent schism within COTO, when most of the British and Irish membership were thrown out or resigned in the early 1990s. Though their intentions were, for a bunch of occultists, relatively principled – they felt that COTO had lost touch with its original aims – the OTOA soon began to falter, and is now thought to have at least some Esoterrorist involvement.

Additional Information (1-point Spend): Several of its highest-ranking members had always bridled at the restrictions they felt at being run by a group of disinterested Americans, and today are believed to be using OTOA “just as Crowley intended” – that is, to explore their own sexual kinks and to summon Creatures of Unremitting Horror to kill their enemies. They seem to have made an active effort to join the Esoterrorists, and now draw their followers in directly through OTOA into Esoterror cells. The OTOA is based at an occult bookshop-café in Manchester city center’s Northern Quarter, Ra-Hoor-Khuit Books. Ordo Veritatis is suspicious of them, but does not yet have sufficient proof to mount an active operation against them.

Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids (OBOD; usually pronounced “Oh-Bod”)
Basic Information (Occult Studies): The Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids is the main Druid Order in the UK today. It claims to date back at least as far as the Celtic revival of the 18th century, and supposedly numbers several poets among its membership back then, including William Blake. Some members suggest its origin to be far older, believing it to be the remnant of a genuinely unbroken secret society formed by the surviving druids after the Roman Conquest of Britain. Today OBOD is organized along pseudo-Masonic lines, and is often favored by occultists wishing to preserve a veneer of

respectability: if one admits to being a druid, one is thought of as an English eccentric, whereas if one admits to being a witch or Satanist one is more likely to be castigated by polite society. OBOD is part of a wider alliance of Druid Orders known collectively as the Druid Council. The other Druid Orders are broadly similar to OBOD, though are less likely to be quite so respectable, large, or venerable.

Additional Information (1-point Spend): The OBOD is thought to hold a number of Esoterror cells, purpose as yet unknown. It is not believed that the Esoterrorists recruit a great many OBOD members, but rather that high-ranking OBOD members, who were already Esoterrorists prior to joining, subtly manipulate the generally peaceable, law-abiding OBOD acolytes to pervert the intent of OBOD rituals for their own ends.

Appendix IV: UK Geography

Getting Around

Driving for 8 hours to see a show or band, as is common enough in the USA, is virtually unheard of in the UK, because even the motorways are narrow and congested compared to US highways. Some of the country roads, even through villages, are only just wide enough for a horse and cart to pass each other. Sure, a car can pass another too – so long as you both slow down to 15 mph, and so long as there are no other cars parked on either side, and so long as it isn’t on one of the numerous bends or hills, and so long as the ever-present road-works haven’t hit that street yet.

Road works in the UK are notorious for the length of time they cause disruption. Improving a motorway bridge might take a year, during most of which time there’s no sign of any actual work taking place, just mile upon mile of road-cones blocking

off one or more lanes, flashing lights, extra signs, and traffic reduced to 40 mph at best. If you see a road maintenance worker, he's probably either leaning out of a slow-moving truck dropping road-cones by the side of the road to block off another lane, taking a very important tea-break, giving his work "a good dose of looking-at," talking to a fellow worker (often over another tea-break), leaning on his shovel, walking from one part of the road works to another (usually on his way to one of the aforementioned activities; if he's carrying a shovel or a tea mug, that's a dead giveaway), or very occasionally operating a pneumatic drill (apparently more to cause annoyance to passers-by than to actually get any work done). Most likely, though, you won't see a road maintenance worker at all; just seemingly endless lines of road-cones. A visitor might consider such workers to be just another quaint British legend, a modern one for a time when most people no longer believe in elves and goblins.

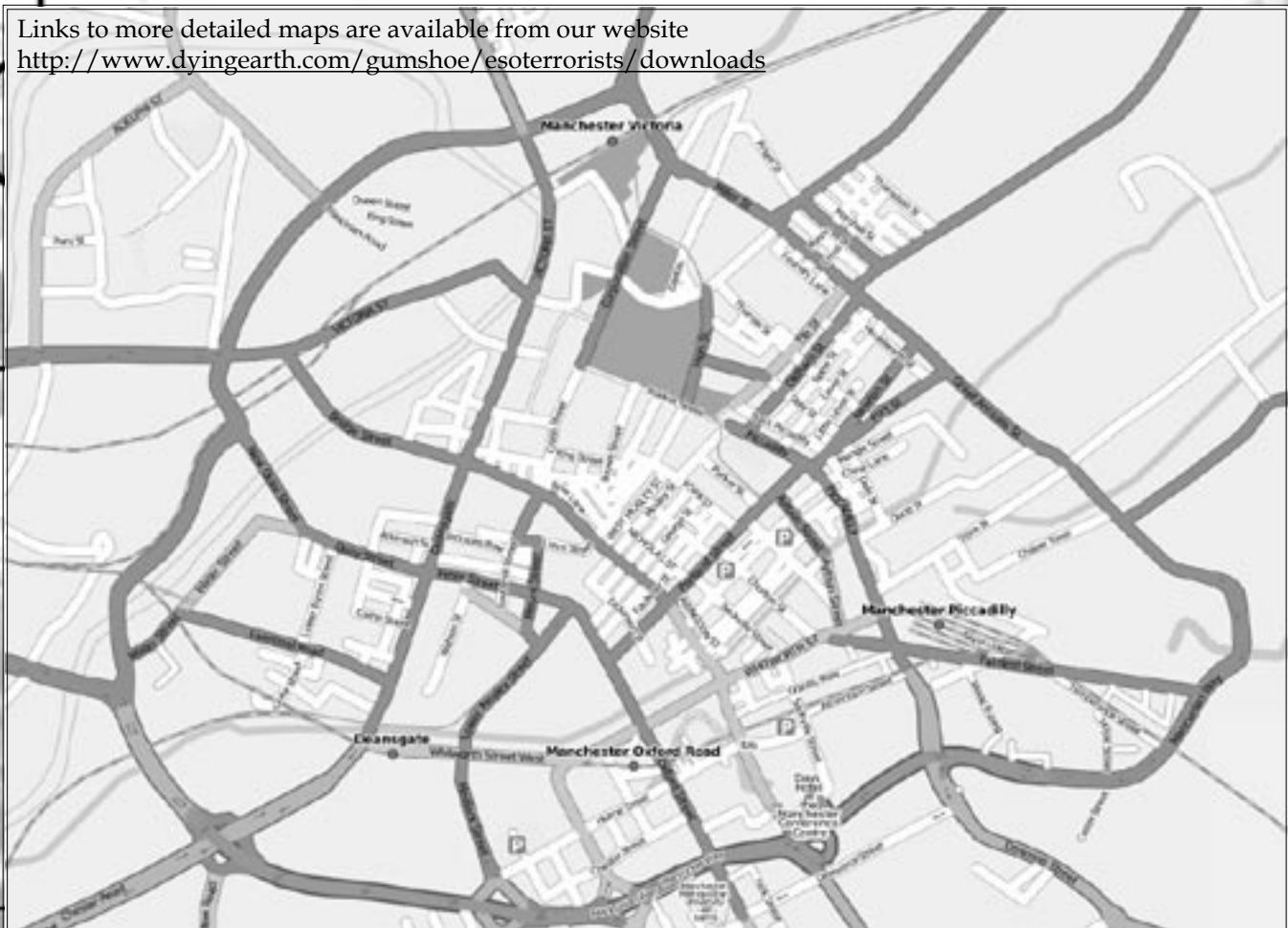
Public transport is about as bad as Amtrak is in the US, in terms of not running according to timetables, though the food on the trains is worse in the UK. Still, there are trains between most towns, and buses between the suburbs and smaller villages.

There might only be a train to where you want to go, every two hours. You might need to make three train changes to get to where you want to go. Delays might mean you miss your connection, and if it's the last train of the day, the station manager will call and pay for a taxi to where you want to go if it's a short distance, or pay for local hotel accommodation if it isn't; but you will get there, eventually.

Manchester

Manchester is the largest city in the North of England. Like most of Britain, it was enriched greatly by the Industrial Revolution, being a hub for transport by

Links to more detailed maps are available from our website
<http://www.dyingearth.com/gumshoe/esoterrorists/downloads>



canal and train, and the center of much of the North's textile industry. In the late 20th and early 21st century it has successfully been reinvented as a major cultural center, with much of Britain's music industry drawing inspiration from Manchester bands, especially including the dance music scene and the indie/Britpop scene.

An aggressive redevelopment program, coupled with significant destruction of the city center when the IRA exploded a bomb there in 1996, have resulted in many of the older slum regions being demolished, as well as older shops and commercial buildings. The new buildings that replaced them include affordable but good quality housing in the Hulme area, about a 25-minute walk from the centre, and a renewed emphasis on city-center living in high-quality, luxury loft apartments interspersed with the shops, cafes, and bars.

The City Center: The city center has the usual British high street shops, spread out over a fairly wide area. Market Street is theoretically the main high street, but the Arndale Center just off it has many more of the major shops. The classiest shops, such as House of Fraser and Harvey Nichols, are just past the Arndale Center, in the Deansgate area. In the middle of the long Deansgate road, these give way to more obscure shops, and the other end of Deansgate has mostly motorcycle and car dealers.

The Northern Quarter is seen as Manchester's creative and cultural hub; the area of the city center just north of the main bus station and railway station, around the Oldham Street area. Quirky bars, nightclubs, and cafes, shops selling everything from retro fashions to hardcore pornography to obscure dance music, recording studios, and New Age emporiums can all be found there. The streets here are often decorated with some Council-funded art project or other: weird sculptures made from rolls of paper

wrapped around trees, or poems inscribed into the city's flagstones.

The eastern edge of the Northern Quarter is known as Smithfield, and is still the heart of the city's rag trade, with dozens of sweat-shops, mostly run and populated by Indian and Pakistani immigrants. Several small, cheap, high quality curry houses exist predominantly to serve the sweat-shop workers.

Just to the south of the city center is Manchester's famous Gay Village, with its bars, cafes, clubs, and shops clustering particularly around Canal Street.

Geographically, most of Manchester is quite flat, though there are several hilly regions close by. Cycling is thus a popular way to get around, both for students and locals. There are also frequent, regular bus services all over the city, including night buses; good rail links; a tram service covering much of the western, central, and southern portions of the city; and reasonable roads for driving on. Manchester Airport is some 20 miles out of town, to the south, but has good rail and bus links to the center and is a major international airport.

North Manchester: Further north of the city center, much of North Manchester (including Cheetham Hill, Prestwich, Newton Heath, Moston, Failsworth, Oldham, Rochdale, Blackley, Middleton, and Crumpsall) is a predominantly working-class, white-populated region. Most of the younger residents would be regarded as scallies (youths who wear track suits drink cider and listen to dance music); other youth cultures do not flourish in North Manchester.

Only Cheetham Hill here has a significant ethnic population, mostly Afro-Caribbean, though Prestwich was traditionally an area with many Jewish immigrants. Cheetham Hill is notable as the home of the "Cheetham Hill Mob," a major criminal gang and the



traditional rival of the Moss Side gangsters (see below).

South Manchester: The central part of South Manchester is predominantly occupied by the various Universities and other higher education institutions (the University of Manchester's North and South Campuses, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester Business School, and the Northern College of Music), and their assorted suburbs. Oxford Road runs south from the edge of the city center through the main University campuses (most of which are technically in a district called Chorlton-on-Medlock, though that name is little-known now) and then the student districts: Rusholme, with its distinctive "Curry Mile" of Indian restaurants, surrounded by a residential area that includes many houses rented to students; Fallowfield and Withington, with many more student-occupied houses and Halls of Residence; and Didsbury, a wealthier area where many lecturers, richer students, and former students live. Past Didsbury the tone of the

neighborhood sinks again: Wythenshawe is widely regarded as one of the roughest parts of Manchester, with high rates of street violence and drug use.

To the south-west, heading out from the city center, are Hulme and Moss Side. These are former ghettos, now with an air of respectability but still major centers for drug dealing and organized crime (notably the two biggest Moss Side gangs, the Gooch Close gang and the Doddington Close gang; see sidebar). Hulme was once the countercultural center of Manchester. Until the mid-1990s, most of its residents were squatting semi-legally in empty council apartments, spending their time in fairly equal measure on getting out of their skulls and in a variety of artistic endeavors, from running local crustie circus groups to kick-starting the city's indie, Acid House, and "Madchester" music scenes in the 1980s and 1990s. That community was deliberately scattered when Hulme was redeveloped, but some remnants live on in one form or another. Moss Side is a predominantly

Gangchester: Gang Activity in Manchester

Manchester is one of the most notorious areas in the UK for gang-related violence, with newspapers calling it "Gangchester," "Gunchester," or even "Britain's Bronx." Most of the gangs there are home-grown, mixed-race groups, though some grew out of football hooliganism, or had a strong influence from criminal immigrants such as the Yardies or Chinese Triads. Almost all evolved primarily to control a particular area of the city's drug sales, particularly heroin and crack cocaine.

In the UK they have a dangerous reputation, but visitors from the serious gangland areas in the USA tend to regard even Manchester's gangs as relatively tame by comparison to those of Los Angeles or Miami. Though there are guns and knives on the streets of Manchester, they are predominantly used either for intimidation during muggings and "taxings" (armed robbery of rival drug dealers), or to target rival gang members. Of course, muggings sometimes go wrong, and "taxed" victims sometimes fight back, and perhaps most tragically of all, the wrong people often get shot due to mistaken identity, so the streets of Manchester are not exactly safe; but the city does not yet have the kind of criminal gang culture that will systematically, deliberately murder civilians just as a matter of course. Manchester's gangs are also far, far smaller than most US gangs. Even the major gangs listed below probably only have between 20 and 30 active members. Dozens of smaller, unnamed gangs in the city may have as few as 6 to 10 members.

At present, the Ordo Veritatis does not suspect any significant Esoterrorist influence over Manchester's street gangs. However, the gang culture does contribute to an atmosphere of urban paranoia which plays very much into the Esoterrorists' hands, and the ready market for illegal guns also means that Esoterrorists based here may be able to get hold of firearms more easily than elsewhere.

List of Major Gangs active in Manchester

Cheetham Hill Mob: Based in Cheetham Hill. This is a predominantly Afro-Caribbean gang. At one point it had an agreement with the Gooch Close Gang to divide the whole city into specific turfs, but that agreement has long ago been dissolved into violence. Known feuds in the past have included the Gooch Close Gang, Doddington Close Gang.

Doddington Close Gang: Based in Moss Side, the Doddington Close Gang has been warring with the Gooch Close Gang off and on for a couple of decades, mostly over drug supply. Most are Afro-Caribbean or mixed race in origin, but the gang recruits Moss Side locals first and foremost, irrespective of race. Known feuds: Gooch Close Gang, Pitt Bull Crew, Cheetham Hill Mob.

Gooch Close Gang: Based in Moss Side, this is another predominantly Afro-Caribbean and mixed race gang. For many years it was probably the best-known and most feared gang in the city, though today the situation is more finely balanced. Known feuds: Doddington Close Gang, Longsight Crew, and Cheetham Hill Mob.

Longsight Crew: Based in Longsight, again mainly Afro-Caribbean or mixed-race. The Longsight Crew is a relative newcomer to Manchester's gang wars, but is already establishing itself as ruthless and dangerous. Known feuds: Gooch Close Gang, Pitt Bull Crew.

Pitt Bull Crew: Based in Longsight. Known feuds: Doddington Close Gang, Longsight Crew.

Quality Street: This was a significant, old-fashioned criminal gang that carried out armed robberies around Manchester and Lancashire in the 1960s to 1980s. Today it is often believed to be a thing of the past, thanks to the imprisonment of most of its members, but a modern descendant of it remains in some of the outlying towns to the north of Manchester, predominantly dealing drugs.

Occult Manchester

Aside from its strong connection to OTO spin-off group, OTOA (see p. 99), Manchester has a rich occult history. Dr. John Dee, Queen Elizabeth I's court astrologer, alchemist, sayer, and ritual magician, was once Warden of Christ Church College, Manchester, in the medieval building which is today the home to Chetham's School of Music in the city center. Whether he left any lasting influence over, or legacy in, the city is unknown, but it is believed that he continued his alchemical and other experiments there.

North Manchester, near Blackley and Moston, holds the dark and mysterious woodland known as Boggart Hole Clough. Locals still tell a variety of legends about the Boggart who is said to inhabit a hole somewhere in that plunging, ancient wood, and of modern occultists who are still sometimes said to practice dark sacrifices in its depths.

In recent years Manchester has developed a thriving occult scene, with neo-pagans, witches, ritual magicians, and druids rubbing shoulders in its various occult bookshops (Golden Dawn books till 1993, and Ra-Hoor-Khuit Books thereafter), pagan pub moots, midsummer celebrations, psychic fairs, and pagan conferences. According to "Psychic Questing" author Andrew Collins, one of the most evil and powerful occultists in the UK has long lurked somewhere in the Greater Manchester area (which includes the city itself and the various outlying towns). Collins called him the Black Alchemist, a sinister, bearded figure, said to be responsible for the Great Storm of 16th October 1987.

Afro-Caribbean and African area, again with a strong music scene, but also with a somewhat sinister reputation for its violent gun- and knife-wielding gang culture. Further out from the city center, beyond Moss Side, are Whalley Range, another student-populated area close to Fallowfield, but which also has a large Indian and Pakistani population; and finally Chorlton-cum-Hardy (Chorlton, for short), a wealthy but also somewhat bohemian area bordering on Didsbury.

Heading south-east from the center are Ardwick, a slum close to the city center, perhaps someday to be redeveloped as Hulme was, but presently a mix of older houses and concrete deck-access apartments; then Longsight and Levenshulme, popular student areas but with a high crime rate and a rough reputation; and finally Stockport, the beginnings of the south-eastern portion of Manchester's commuter belt, since it has some decent countryside around it. Beyond

Stockport, various towns in Cheshire and Derbyshire continue the commuter belt.

Salford and West Manchester: The western portion of Manchester is technically a city in its own right: Salford. This is traditionally a rough area, home to old-school organized criminals, football hooligans, drug addicts, up-and-coming boxers, and many of Manchester's nightclub door staff. Neighboring Trafford and Stretford are considered to be much safer, with Trafford being a major out-of-town commercial, shopping, and business district, and Stretford a reasonably classy residential area.

East Manchester: North of Stockport, and east of Ardwick, are Ashton-under-Lyne, Denton, Hyde, and other suburbs in the Tameside region. These are generally similar to North Manchester, if perhaps a little quieter.

Derbyshire and the Peak District

Just to the East and South of Manchester is Derbyshire, a very beautiful but relatively little-known county of England, reached from Manchester by heading up into the hills on the notorious "Snake Pass," the twisting, winding, main road, frequently affected by severe weather, that leads over the Pennine hills through Derbyshire to Sheffield in Yorkshire. The northern portion of Derbyshire forms the main part of the Peak District.

The Peak District is a major National Park, covering the hills to of the southern part of the Pennines, the "backbone of Engand" range that extends from Derbyshire right up the border between Lancashire and Yorkshire, eventually terminating in Cumbria and Northumbria. The Pennines are not especially large, being more like hills and moors than mountains, especially in the Peak District, but they can certainly be bleak.

The Peaks are a mixture of the "Dark Peak" gritstone moorland and bog to the north, and the more populated "White Peak" limestone hills and valleys to the south. Several villages and small towns are scattered through the White Peak area.

There is an old, Celtic feel to much of the Peak District, with the very name of the place said to derive not from the "peaks" but the Picts. Remnants of Stone Age and Bronze Age settlements, sacred sites, and mines can be found throughout the area, including the megalithic monuments of Arbor Low and Nine Ladies. The ancient tradition of "Well Dressing" still takes place in most of the villages, where the village well is decorated with flowers at a special ceremony in the spring or summer. This tradition is thought to descend from ancient Celtic and Druidic rites, where water spirits would be honored and propitiated to ensure the well or spring did not run dry.

The closest Peak District towns to Manchester are Buxton and Glossop, both of which have good rail links to the city and are popular with wealthier and older commuters.