

THE
ESOTERRORISTS

ALBION'S RANSOM WORM OF SIXTY WINTERS

BY IAN STURROCK





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VERITATIS

THE ESOTERICS OF

3

WORM OF SIXTY WINTERS



Introduction

GM's Introduction

The Worms of Sixty Winters is an Esoterrorists scenario set in the UK, ranging from Manchester to North Wales and Scotland. It forms the second part of the two-part Albion's Ransom sequence (Part 1 being *Little Girl Lost*), though it is also designed to stand alone. The scenario revolves around an Esoterrorist plot to bring about the **Fimbulvetr** of Norse mythology, a dreadful winter that lasts three full years and heralds Ragnarok, the Viking apocalypse.

Recap: Little Girl Lost

Little Girl Lost saw the investigators search for, and hopefully rescue, **Catriona Van Rijn**, who had been kidnapped as a rather personal part of the wider Esoterrorist scheme. The adventure climaxed with an Esoterrorist weather control ritual at an ancient stone circle, the Nine Ladies in Derbyshire, UK. The ritual was intended to be the first stage of the Fimbulvetr process, bringing sudden blizzards and extreme temperatures to the land. The stone circle had previously been occupied by an eco-activist camp, a collection of Esoterrorist-infiltrated hippies, punks, pagans, and peaceniks, campaigning to prevent a company called Stanton Stone from doing large-scale quarrying

in the region. An Esoterrorist dupe, Anton Bennett, was infused with the energy of the mass sacrifice at Nine Ladies, then was himself sacrificed by high-ranking Esoterrorist Will Carter, at the Manchester Centre for Nonlinear Dynamics research lab (MCND), which Carter then burned down. This further sacrifice had the dual effect of centering the extreme weather effects on Manchester, and giving the Esoterrorists some convenient scientists to blame (they will claim that the weather comes from a disastrous weather control experiment at MCND).

Using The Worms of Sixty Winters

This scenario is designed to allow for a great deal of GM flexibility. It has a number of optional encounters, as well as two separate but connected timelines, one for the progress of the apocalypse in Britain, the other for the sacrifices that bring it on. These are all covered in Chapter Seven (see p. 65). The intention is to give a high degree of freedom to both players and GM. The players can follow various possible investigative tacks, most of which have the potential to eventually lead to a satisfactory resolution, and the GM can insert various optional encounters, leads, and environmental effects to enhance narrative flow. Ideally, this narrative flow should eventually threaten to overwhelm the players; there is so much happening, so many

murders, so many leads, so much apocalyptic madness, that they should feel like events are spiraling far out of their control. To begin with, things can proceed more slowly, with the potential to explore the occasional red herring and blind alley.

Though skim-reading of adventures, and then hoping to be a paragraph or two ahead of the players all the time, is something of a GM skill in itself, it's unlikely to be enough in this adventure, partly because of that flexibility.

As in other GUMSHOE scenarios, characters often have 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, saving time may mean the characters can solve some of their problems before some of the time-related events detailed in the Appendices kick in. As usual, the GM should be open to players offering to spend points to speed up tasks, even when no such option is explicitly given. This may not always be possible for skills that inherently require a painstaking, dedicated approach (e.g. Evidence Collection); if it is, such a spend represents a moment of inspired genius, in which (for example) the evidence collector spots the crucial clue half by chance, half by intuition, far faster than would usually be possible by taking the methodical approach.

The large-scale nature of the conspiracy, and the potential impact if the PCs' efforts fail, mean that O. V. will allow them a greater degree of latitude in their activities. Many of the smaller plots within this adventure can be resolved with no or minimal bloodshed, and many of the NPCs are Esoterrorist dupes rather than Esoterrorist initiates, but nevertheless, it could be argued that there are times when the PCs simply need to shoot their way to a solution, just due to the time pressures involved, especially later in the adventure when every hour of delay could mean a thousand more innocents dead from the cold. The GM should, of course, still take

note when the PCs do kill (relatively) innocent people. They will be debriefed eventually, and may be subject to internal O.V. discipline if it is clear they are too bloodthirsty, particularly given their likely status as US citizens seconded to the UK branch of O. V.

Using The Worms of Sixty Winters without Little Girl Lost

If your players have not previously played through *Little Girl Lost*, assume that they are the replacements for a now-deceased Ordo Veritatis group that lived (and died) through the events of the earlier adventure. Chapter 1 gives an alternate briefing for characters in this circumstance (see p.13).

Little Girl Lost also included appendices with info on UK culture, geography, etc.; we've not reprinted those, here, so you'll either need to be familiar with such things already, research them, pick up a copy of the other book after all, or just wing it.

Regaining Pool Points

No set break-points have been given to allow characters to regain pool points. Ideally, they should be very nearly worn down and worn out by the end of the campaign, hoarding their last few pool points for the final showdown. That said, an inexperienced or unlucky group may need a break-point to even have a chance at completing the adventure, in which case the GM should consider inserting one or (at most) two when characters achieve significant goals (capturing/killing McLoughlin, Fairclough, or Black).

Exotic Vehicles

More than usually, the PCs are likely to want to use exotic vehicles in this adventure: snowmobiles to get across an ice-bound Britain, kayaks or mini-subbs to cross the Gare Loch and board a nuclear submarine in secret, etc.

Just let them get on with it, without worrying too much about whether they picked Kayaks And Rowboats as a vehicle type under their Drive skill. At least one of them was clearly a kayaking champion at high school, or similar.

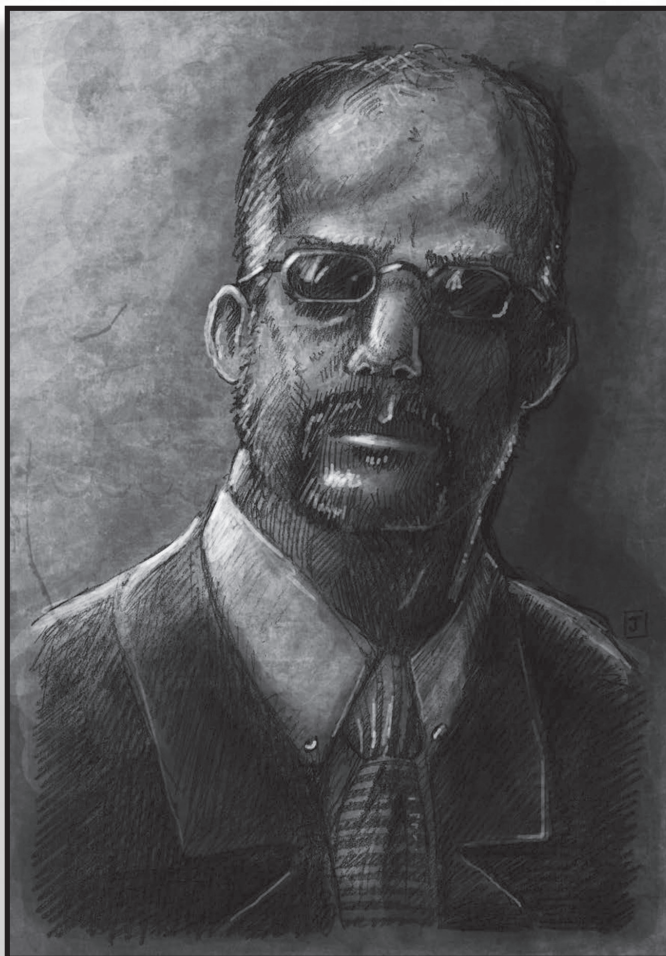
Overview: Cast of Characters

The main significant NPCs and organizations from the campaign are as follows:

- Barlow, Eddie: A driver used by O. V., potentially employed by the PCs as a fixer and informant.
- Bartley, Terrance*: Isa Kenaz Esoterrorist, shareholder in Stanton Stone (which has the quarrying contract for the quarry by the Nine Ladies stone circle) and head of Bartley Security (which has the security contract for Stanton Stone) (p. 7).
- Bellows, Alexander*: Nominal head of Ordo Veritatis operations in the UK. His day-job is a high-ranking position in MI5 (p. 12).
- Bennett, Anton: Occultist, physicist, and dupe of the Esoterrorists; probably sacrificed at the climax of *LGL*.
- Black, Rob "Black Pope"*: Vice-president of the Sons of Satan motorcycle gang, Isa Kenaz cabalist, and Esoterrorist (p. 50).
- Carter, Will: Esoterrorist and OTOM initiate. In his "Frater Bolthorn" guise, Bennett's mentor in OTOM (p. 24).
- Dvorak, Milos: Leader of the Adorers of the Wound and Esoterrorist member (p. 39).
- Fairclough, Laurence: Esoterrorist; high-ranking member of both Isa Kenaz and OBOD; editor of Manchester Evening News (p. 15).
- Gormley, Roger*: Leader of the Penumbra Brotherhood cult and Esoterrorist (p. 17).
- Hell Haven*: The UK-based Esoterrorists' safe house structure, surreptitiously organized through the OBOD newsletter (p. 23).
- Isa Kenaz: The Esoterrorist cabal responsible for the Fimbulvetr plot (p. 7).
- Kelly, Francis: Esoterrorist initiate and OTOA deputy leader.
- MacGregor-Mathers, Elspeth*: OTOA leader and Esoterrorist initiate (p. 33).
- McLoughlin, Evan: UK-based Mr. Verity for the characters, working in British Army Intelligence as his day job, but actually a quadruple agent with loyalties to the UDA (Ulster Defence Association – a paramilitary, terrorist & organized criminal organization dedicated to maintaining British rule of Northern Ireland) and to the Esoterrorists (specifically Isa Kenaz) (p. 7).
- OBOD: The Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids; a quasi-Masonic, mostly peaceable Druid order that has been infiltrated by the Esoterrorists.
- OTOA: Ordo Templi Orientis Association. A breakaway group from the main, US-based OTO group, which is a Thelemic occult order closely associated with Aleister Crowley. OTOA's leaders are Esoterrorists. OTOA is based in the Ra-Hoor-Khuit bookshop in Manchester, but its members are active around the UK (p. 33).
- OTOM: Ordo Templi Orientis of Maat. Another breakaway organization, focusing on the darkest aspects of the occult, blatantly encouraging its members to seek out possession by demonic entities. It is now almost entirely an Esoterrorist front.
- Reinhart, Desdemona*: Unaffiliated occultist and Green Anarchist, somewhat associated with both the Covenant of the Morrigan and with the Sons of Satan. Potential O. V. ally, if the PCs do not piss her off too much (p. 45).
- Scrimmager, Colin*: Grand Master of the Manchester lodge of OTOM and Esoterrorist.
- Sinclair, Tom*: OBOD member and Esoterrorist sleeper agent, operating a "Hell Haven" safe house in Manchester (p. 24).

- **Stanton Stone:** A commercial venture dedicated to quarrying stone for building materials, from the Derbyshire area. It has been infiltrated by and partially controlled by the Esoterrorists in the form of Terrance Bartley, so as to give them an extended base for use in *Little Girl Lost* (p. 20).
- **Van Rijns, The:** Frans Van Rijn is Catriona's father, a senior US-based O. V. operative, and the characters' first contact and briefer in the investigation. Catriona is a young, smart, hippyish student, now possibly brainwashed by the Esoterrorists.
- **Winton, Trevor*:** Commander of the *HMS Vengeance* nuclear submarine and Esoterrorist initiate (p. 64).

*An asterisk indicates that the NPC or organization in question is either new to this scenario, or very much expanded from its brief mention in *Little Girl Lost*.



Isa Kenaz

Isa Kenaz (literally "Cold Flame" or "Ice Cunning") is a cabal of major Esoterrorist personnel. UK Esoterrorists organize into cells, as elsewhere, but their leadership form cabals. 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 believe they can bring about a local apocalypse, a Ragnarok, in the UK, by combining extreme weather events with the Ur-Mensch troll-creatures they plan to use to possess people.

Investigation Trigger

A known Esoterrorist plot, involving mass human sacrifice (either attempted, or successful), triggers the investigation. The team is brought in to find out whether the sacrifices were part of a wider plan.

Sinister Conspiracy

Evan McLoughlin

Evan McLoughlin, an Esoterrorist double agent within O.V., orchestrated the kidnapping of Catriona van Rijn as a small part of the wider Isa Kenaz plan to bring about Ragnarok (see below).

These will both be caused by performing blood sacrifices at standing stones and other ancient sites, particularly up and down the Pennine mountain range. The sacrifices are dedicated to two Outer Dark entities: Nithogg, the hell-dragon of Norse mythology, who feeds on the dead and heralds apocalypse, and Bergelmir, a six-headed, godlike creature who fathered the race of frost giants, again from Norse myth. Bergelmir, summoned more and more fully into our world, has a physical manifestation in the form of the vast storm over the Pennines.

There are six members of Isa Kenaz: Roger Gormley (aka Guru; main roles: controller of Penumbra Brotherhood, p. 17; Esoterrorist fund-raiser), Evan McLoughlin (aka Spook; main roles: 2nd-in-command of Isa Kenaz; controller of the Church of the Adorers of the Wound; controller of the Covenant of the Morrigan; hatchet man; O. V. double agent; influential over army intelligence), Terrance Bartley (aka Boot; influence over Stanton Stone; owner of Bartley Security; Esoterrorist fund-raiser), Colin Scrimmager (aka Suit; owner of Scrimmager & Sprengler Media Group; disseminator of rumor and media contact; Esoterrorist fund-raiser; controller of OTOM), Rob "Black Pope" Black (aka Pope; Isa Kenaz leader; influence over the Sons of Satan motorcycle gang; runs Commander Trevor Winton), and Laurence Fairclough (aka Sack; runs the OBOD group; McLoughlin's confidant; another major media influence).

Only Black, the leader of the cabal, knows the full names and identities of the others. The others generally know "Isa Kenaz-level" of info: that is, the alias of each other member (see parentheses above), as well as an idea of each member's function within the conspiracy (but usually without info about the precise name of any other organization or company involved). McLoughlin knows rather more: the full names and backgrounds of Bartley, Scrimmager, and Fairclough, all of whom he has worked closely with. Fairclough knows almost as much as McLoughlin, with the precise amount being at the GM's discretion; this is a slightly unrealistic but vital option, designed as a backup, in case the characters kill McLoughlin outright rather than arresting and questioning him.

The above information will be important, as it is likely that the characters will capture and question one or more Isa Kenaz members at some point or other. This may reduce some of the effects of the Fimbulvetr, at the GM's discretion, if it prevents any sacrifices. In some cases, it will have little immediate effect (most of the wheels are already in motion), though it may be good in the long-term to bring Esoterrorists to justice, of course.

Trail of Clues

The characters pursue Evan McLoughlin (or, if he is dead already, Laurence Fairclough), who has gone to ground using the "Hell Haven" Esoterrorist safe house system (Chapter 1).

Questioning him leads them to two Esoterrorist-influenced organizations, the Church of the Adorers of the Wound (Chapter 2) and the Covenant of the Morrigan (Chapter 3), both of which, while not necessarily inherently evil, have Esoterrorist leaders planning major human sacrifices as part of the Fimbulvetr plan.

By either persuading Desdemona Reinhart to assist them, or waiting till another major ritual sacrifice gets carried out by the Sons of Satan motorcycle gang (Chapter 4), the team is led to said gang, and deduces that Rob Black is the "Pope" Esoterrorist leader running the entire conspiracy. By this point the conspiracy is sufficiently advanced and successful, or so the Esoterrorists hope (the team's efforts may have reduced the chance of this), that it only needs one last push to bring about the true and final apocalypse of Ragnarok – a nuclear winter that will last three full years, and perhaps, so they hope, destroy all of humanity.

This final push has been prepared by leaking "evidence" that the unseasonable weather has been caused deliberately by Pakistani spies in an attempt to bring Britain to its knees. Public outrage and right-wing politicians combine to render the unpalatable possible, and the nation prepares a nuclear submarine to nuke Pakistan. The commander of the sub is already an Esoterrorist initiate, giving the Esoterrorists a risky but possible back-up

plan, whereby if the attack orders are not received he will take over the control room by force and launch the missiles anyway. The team must get to the sub and stop him (Chapters 5-6).

Antagonist Reactions

Isa Kenaz firmly believe that they can bring about the Fimbulvetr, and then, Ragnarok. No team of investigators is going to stop them, so far as they can see. They are aware that O. V. are investigating, of course, but the Esoterrorists have deduced that their resources are better spent simply continuing with their planned sacrifices than attempting to disrupt the O. V. activities.

The one major exception to this is their need to ensure that the investigators do not prevent the launch of nuclear missiles from the *HMS Vengeance* submarine (see p. 60). Any time they detect such a threat to their plan, Isa Kenaz will devote all their attention to destroying the PCs, sending a variety of teams and individuals against them (see Optional Encounters: Esoterrorist Counterattacks, p. 70).

There are also minor exceptions, in that any time one of the Isa Kenaz cabal members or other high-ranking Esoterrorists feels that they are about to be tracked down by O. V., they will go to ground, usually using the Hell Haven system. The GM should monitor the O. V. team's progress towards arresting each Isa Kenaz member, and take note if said member might be alerted by the team's investigations.

If Isa Kenaz members become aware that the Hell Haven system has been compromised, they will avoid using it any more, and will make their own arrangements if they need to disappear.

Finally, there is an optional scene that can be used at almost any time, if the GM wants to liven things up with another direct strike back at the PCs by the Esoterrorists: Black Druids of Boggart Hole Clough (see p. 27).



Trail of Blood

If the characters do not act swiftly to deal with the Esoterrorist threat, the cultists continue their planned program of ritual sacrifice, spilling more and more innocent blood to strengthen the Fimbulvetr's icy grip on the land.

Each sacrifice is likely to bring Albion a step deeper into apocalypse (see Chapter Seven, p65). On the positive side, each sacrifice can also be investigated by Ordo Veritatis, if desired, potentially allowing the characters to gain new insights and leads that may help with their goals. This enables the GM to keep things moving if the players feel like they are making slow progress due to somehow failing to follow up on an earlier clue. Although the sacrifices as presented here are outside the main flow of the investigation, most of them can lead back in to said main flow easily enough, acting as reminders or prods as necessary.

There is no set timeline – the GM can speed things up or slow things down as desired. In addition, the GM should consider having the characters hear news of further sacrifices which are simply too far away for them to reasonably consider getting to in time to do anything useful (perhaps including one on the Scottish borders, and one each on England's east and south coasts, so as to extend the storm effect out of England). This adds to that overwhelming feeling – usually every sacrifice

In most cases the killings are dedicated to Nithogg, the snake-god of Norse myth, who sucks the blood of the dead and heralds Ragnarok, and to Bergelmir the frost giant.

It's suggested that the GM use the following scenes, in the order given, if the characters are not fast enough to prevent them:

Black Druids of Boggart Hole Clough (p. 27)

One More Wound (p. 39)

Paying the Morrigan's Due (p. 47)

Satan Walks the Earth (p. 56)

Author's Note

As with the first volume of Albion's Ransom, this is a work of fiction and fun, albeit a well-researched one. Real or realistic organizations have been used, to add verisimilitude, but their depictions here don't represent either the author's or the publisher's opinions of the corresponding groups in real life. Most motorcycle clubs, Moravian churches, druid orders, feminist eco-communes, and even Crowleyan occult groups, aren't tools of supernatural terrorists; and, though the 18th century Moravian churches that influenced William Blake really did practice the kind of bizarre sex-magick and Christ-wound-adoration stuff attributed to their fictional 21st century analogues in this book, the modern Moravians are probably no more evil than any other Christian group. Even the Manchester Evening News sometimes does good things. Probably.

I depicted Faslane Naval Base and *HMS Vengeance* based on research, of course, but also based on movie reality. There is probably no useful info in this book about how to break in to actual nuclear submarines, so please do not try this at home, or at your local naval base.

All art borrows from other art, and I think I must thank the many writers whose ideas have influenced this adventure, certainly including Pat Califia, Sonny Barger, Mick Norman, Hunter S. Thompson, Kurt Sutter, J. G. Ballard, and Alan Garner, as well as the usual occult suspects from Crowley to Lovecraft and beyond, and of course William Blake. Musical inspiration came from the amazing "Light of a Vaster Dark" album by Faun Fables, an American folk band. The starker tracks from the album make a great soundtrack for running the adventure to, particularly as it gets wintrier.



Chapter One: A Fresher Morning

This chapter presents a variety of opening scenes, some or all of which can be played through to lead players towards either Evan McLoughlin or (if McLoughlin is already dead) his associate Laurence Fairclough. Many of these opening scenes are about attempting to tie up loose ends from *Little Girl Lost*, before the team get drawn into further investigations.

Apocalypse Real Soon Now

Scene Type Info

(For characters who have played through *Little Girl Lost*)

The GM should devise the precise details of this scene as necessary, depending on the following factors:

- 1) Status of Evan McLoughlin. Is he alive or dead? If alive, have the characters successfully exposed him as a traitor to Ordo Veritatis? Or, does he suspect that they suspect he's a traitor, in which case he will have gone to ground? (Note that he will also have gone to ground if the characters succeeded in *LGL* sufficiently that Catriona was rescued alive and un-brainwashed – see 2, below – as he will be aware she may be able to expose him.) He may be available to give some

kind of briefing, but only if his cover is intact. Any briefing he does give will be intended to lead the characters into a trap, where they can be ambushed and if possible ritually sacrificed: see Boggart Food: McLoughlin Undercover (p. 24) for the briefing and trap. If McLoughlin is dead or in hiding, use Alexander Bellows as the new Mr. Verity.

- 2) Status of Catriona Van Rijn. Again, alive? Dead? If alive, is she a brainwashed Esoterrorist priestess (see *LGL*, p. 79, and this book, p. 25)? Do the characters know this? Have they told Frans Van Rijn of her status? Frans Van Rijn should be the second choice to give the briefing, if McLoughlin is dead or exposed as a traitor, but Van Rijn is likely to be indisposed (and off the case) if Catriona is known to be dead. In that case, the GM should use a Mr. Verity who has worked with the characters before, and have that person deliver the salient briefing points below.
- 3) The characters' general success by the end of *LGL*. Did they prevent the weather-control ritual entirely? Prevent Carter and Bennett doing their worst at the MCND lab (*LGL*, p. 83)? If so, the GM should assume that other Esoterrorist weather-control rituals occurred simultaneously, elsewhere in the country.



Alexander Bellows

Bellows is around 40, and looks like a thug crossed with a physics graduate: he has a shaved head, wire-rimmed glasses, a powerlifter's physique, and a demeanor that varies between thoughtful and stern. His interest in the occult started at university. There, he saw enough friends fall prey to cults, psychedelic drug use, and radical political factions, that he made it his mission to investigate the intersection of those factors once he started intelligence work. He started out as a junior analyst in MI5 nearly two decades ago, switching jobs a couple of times to related positions at GCHQ Cheltenham and DERA, then back to MI5 in a senior manager position. His O. V. "career" followed a similarly rapid path, with his skills and loyalty taking him rapidly to what is effectively the most senior O. V. role in the UK. He is a dogged workaholic, a near-genius-level strategic analyst, a walking encyclopedia on the subject of cults, and otherwise somewhat dull, much like any other obsessive when not dealing with the subject of their obsession.

Bellows has worked with McLoughlin several times over the last ten years, and brought him in to O. V. after having been impressed by his work in the British Army's Intelligence Corps.

He has no prejudices against Americans, or indeed against anyone. He recognizes how vital the team's work is, and will give them any support they want, within justifiable reason. He is happy for them to contact him at any hour of the day or night, and he'll do his best to expedite their work immediately, using official channels or by other means, so long as they keep getting results and making progress.

See You're The Backup (p. 13) for a sample briefing from Bellows.

This will bring about at least the first stages of the Fimbulvetr, and again the following points should be adapted accordingly.

In some cases, if the characters are still in pursuit of specific Esoterrorists from *LGL*, they may be more-or-less briefing themselves, here – all they really need do is to keep their superiors informed to the effect that they have tracked down a wider Esoterrorist conspiracy that goes far beyond simply kidnapping the occasional student, and they should get free rein to continue their investigations. In this case, again, the GM should pick an appropriate superior, and have them deliver the following briefing points.

Briefing points (amend, delete, or expand as necessary):

- a) An O. V. superior (probably but not necessarily in some kind of Mr. Verity guise) gives the characters approval to continue their investigations into the Esoterrorist activities uncovered in *LGL*, or suggests that such investigations should continue.
- b) If the characters have not worked out the "Hell Haven" cipher (*LGL*, p. 10 and p. 47), someone within O. V. will have done so for them, and get them the info, even if the characters did not pass on every detail of their findings to their superiors (see Hell Haven, p. 23, and Among the Fires of Hell, p. 28).
- c) If Catriona is alive, with the characters, and not brainwashed, she will already have mentioned to them that one of her most frequent torturers, during her captivity (she was able to recognize him by his voice, though he kept his face hidden by a full-head hood, so all she saw was his eyes) let slip once or twice that he'd caused her to be imprisoned and tormented because of something concerning her parents, before she was even born. The characters should be able to build on this info, particularly if they talk with Frans Van Rijn. One way or another (see the Exposing Evan McLoughlin sidebar), it should be possible for them to deduce that her hooded torturer was McLoughlin, and that he is therefore an Esoterrorist traitor.

- d) If the characters somehow failed to rescue Catriona, she will be with McLoughlin, and will be fully brainwashed as an Esoterrorist priestess. If the GM is using the Boggart Food alternate scene, she can be incorporated there. If not, she can be assumed to be in hiding with McLoughlin using the Hell Haven system (see p. 29), or (if McLoughlin is dead) with Laurence Fairclough. In either case, the team should be briefed on the need to continue investigations into finding her.
- e) There is a new development: the apparent mass suicide of the Penumbra Brotherhood cult in County Durham (north-east England). Mr. Verity will give the team the pertinent facts about the case (see the "You're the Backup" briefing, p. 15). It is then up to them whether to investigate it directly, or just stay informed about the progress of the investigation there.
- f) The gloves are off, far more than they were before. Extreme force is sanctioned, and heavier weapons than would usually be in use, even by covert operatives, are available (O. V. sources can provide more-or-less anything that the characters ask for, so long as they ask for it early, before the roads start getting closed). The veil-out is not exactly optional – it never is, it never can be – but it is less of a priority than stopping this conspiracy before it leads to total disaster.

You're the Backup

Scene Type Info

(For characters who have not played through *Little Girl Lost*)

The characters are contacted on the 2nd February, 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 told to drop all other projects and make their way to

their nearest airport. Transports are waiting to get them to Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia. The transportation method will vary from commercial flights to Norfolk International Airport with an O. V. car to pick up arrivals and get them to the naval airport (for those traveling from the Northeast, South, or Midwest) to private jets or military aircraft directly to the naval station (for travelers from the West). There, Air Mobility Command has organized a fast military jet to take them to the UK.

The briefing takes place shortly after take-off, in the form of a scrambled satellite videoconferencing call with Alexander Bellows (see p. 12). Bellows is in the UK.

"I'm Mr. Verity. I run a lot of the O. V. ops in the UK. I'm bringing you in because I just lost my best team investigating a major Esoterrorist plot. They're all dead, the plot is ongoing, and I no longer have sufficient local resources to deal with all of the cells that this investigation has indicated are part of the conspiracy. We've never encountered Esoterrorist activity on this kind of scale or severity before; few countries have. That's why we need your help now."

- The previous team died while trying to stop a mass human sacrifice at an old stone circle in the county of Derbyshire. They were able to free Catriona Van Rijn and other prisoners before dying; local police took the freed prisoners into protective custody, and a team of O. V. psychologists interviewed them. (GM: If the PCs have a character whose specialty is Forensic Psychology, do consider improvising a scene in which she can carry out the interviews.)
- The same night, a suspected Esoterrorist member, Anton Bennett, believed to have been present during the mass sacrifice, died at his place of work at a research lab, the Manchester Centre for Nonlinear Dynamics, which burned down.
- Before they died, Bellows's team passed on their suspicions of their Mr. Verity, Evan McLoughlin, to other operatives they'd worked with in the past.

Guns, Gear, and Wheels in the UK

The team can snag their pick of weaponry and other kit at the USAF base. Have them decide whether to work legally or illegally, in gun terms (neither Bellows nor the O. V. / USAF staff at the base mind either way, and if need be can advise on the pros and cons of each approach). It needs to be one decision for the whole team, unless they plan to split into two sub-teams and make an effort not to be seen to be working together. A team working legally will be given local police ID and cover identities as members of the USAF police seconded to the British police, with full permission to carry firearms up to and including handguns, pump-action shotguns, and semi-automatic rifles.

Preparedness later in the adventure can be used as usual to indicate that the characters have picked up other items at this point.

Any or all of the following vehicles are available for their use:

Surveillance van, disguised as a typical white-painted builders' van as seen on any road, fully equipped with all the relevant police-issue gear.

Crew van, again looking like a builders' van, this one navy blue, with bench seats in the rear that can double as bunks, and plenty of storage space.

Muscle car (Audi A3 Sportback four-wheel-drive, or similar), seating five but with some serious speed and acceleration.

Small fast city car (Citroen DS3 or similar).

Land Rover: a big four-wheel-drive gas-guzzler.

All the vehicles are unmarked police cars, complete with discreet sirens, detachable flashing lights, disguised police radio and computer with link to the main databases (and, unusually, MI5 databases), and officially sanctioned gun locker in the trunk or rear.

- O. V. are still not certain he is a double agent; it is very, very rare that such people get through their screening process. However, Bellows would like them to investigate him, too.
- Bellows recommended McLoughlin himself, because his background appeared to be impeccable. The previous team reported their suspicions that when they passed info to him, it got used against them; they bypassed him towards the end, confiding their suspicions to Eddie Barlow, another operative. One of them called Barlow just before the end, saying McLoughlin was shooting at them.
- There's been no confirmation as yet that McLoughlin fired any shots at other O. V. operatives, but the organization is treating McLoughlin as a potentially rogue asset at this point. He has been out of communication since 31 Jan.
- The group will be landing at RAF Menwith Hill, sixty miles from Manchester. An O. V. contact at the US Air Force installation there will provide them with vehicles, weapons, and anything else they need. They have two options with firearms: undercover police permits that will let them carry pistols legally, along with a shotgun or two in the trunk of their vehicles; or military-grade weaponry and armor but no permit.
- Rooms for the group have been arranged at the Palace Hotel in central Manchester, but they should expect to be flexible. Bellows stresses the urgent and crucial nature of the case: "If you have to sleep in your van, think yourselves lucky that you got some sleep at all."
- There has been one new development since the group were called in. Early in the morning of 1 Feb, a previously obscure occult sect called the Penumbra



Brotherhood were killed in Durham. At first glance it appeared to be a mass suicide. It may well be connected to the deaths in Derbyshire, but O. V. are not certain yet. If it does form the start of a pattern of sacrifices, as seems possible, this problem may be even larger and more dangerous than it at first appears. A newspaper got to the crime scene before the police could, which is bad for O. V., as well as inherently suspicious. It's up to the team if they want to check it out. Bellows can get a local team on the case if not, and keep them apprised. (GM: See Cult of the Damned below)

- Bellows says he will be keeping a close eye on this investigation, and promises any assistance they need. The team are welcome to contact him if they need anything, at any hour of the day or night.

The flight is uneventful till the aircraft gets close to Britain, at which point the pilot advises the team that local weather conditions are very severe. Blizzards and storms centering on the Pennines mean that he needs to re-route further north, over southern Scotland, heading south again once the craft is well past the worst of the weather and landing an hour or so late. Light snow is falling at RAF Menwith Hill, but the plane lands without further problems.

Cult of the Damned

Scene Type Alternate

The next sacrifice is an entire obscure New Age cult, the Penumbra Brotherhood, apparently including their leader. This takes place in a long-abandoned coal mine on Cockfield Fell, part of the North Pennines, in Durham. Just a few hours after the events at the climax of *Little Girl Lost*, early on the morning of 1 Feb, all thirty members of the Brotherhood descended into the mine to commune with the Earth for Candlemas. Roger Gormley, the leader, led them all inside and handed round a ritual chalice containing a variety of drugs and toxins (including large quantities of heroin, as well as various barbiturates). This was sufficient to make all of them extremely drowsy within an hour or

so, and potentially kill several in itself.

Gormley had prepared the mine the previous day, stashing large quantities of petrol and butane canisters under cloth-covered benches, all carried out from a hired panel truck. He also dumped the recently murdered corpse of a middle-aged man of similar build to himself under the "high altar". A few weeks earlier, Gormley paid a private dentist a large sum of cash to replace his own teeth with implants, off the record. He then removed the corpse's teeth and shoved his own removed teeth into its mouth, planning that the fire would destroy any evidence that the corpse was anyone other than him. The idea was to reduce it to a few burned bone fragments and the teeth (teeth are somewhat more fire-resistant than bone).

After waiting for the drugs to kick in, Gormley calmly shot his followers in the heads with a pistol, starting with the ones who looked least incapacitated by the drugs. He then set up a simple incendiary device, using a burning cigarette as a fuse, and left the mine to burn. The combination of the fuel, the confined space, and the remaining un-mined fragments of coal, ensured a temperature high enough to consume almost everything other than teeth and some portions of the larger bones.

Isa Kenaz love the idea of this particular sacrifice, mostly for making O. V.'s lives difficult. It's at least a 4-hour drive from Manchester (or 3 hours from the airport at RAF Menwith Hill), given the blizzard conditions of the early days of Fimbulvetr, but it's high-profile enough to attract O. V. attention, and to need a veil-out.

Gormley took the time to place a quick call to the Manchester Evening News (MEN) from a public phone en route away from the area, claiming to be an early-morning dog walker who'd spotted smoke coming from the old mine and taken a look inside. Laurence Fairclough (editor of MEN) ensures he is on duty when the call comes in, and sends out his most jaded and unethical reporters and photographers to cover the massacre on the site before the police get there.



This contaminates the crime scene and is verging on illegal, of course, but Fairclough is counting on the country having bigger problems to worry about in the coming days.

Since this crime occurs either just before the O. V. team arrives in the UK (if they have not played through *Little Girl Lost*) or shortly after they get back from battling the other group of Esoterrorists in the climax to that adventure, the characters are notified of it during the initial briefing (p. 13). The characters do not necessarily have to travel to Durham, but are certainly consulted on the issue and apprised of any developments. O. V. do have other operatives in the UK, and can send a small team out to investigate the Penumbra killings if need be.

If the team does get involved, the following skills are useful; note that **Evidence Collection** must be used as a prelude to the other skills (either by the team or the local police), except for Forensic Accounting.

Evidence Collection: Very little is left of the bodies and other mine contents. Properly recovering what is, takes 4 hours (this can potentially be done by the local police CSI team, though they might not do such a good job); more, if the character wants to spend points to be thorough. 1-point spend: a lone spent shell casing turns up among the debris (Gormley attempted to recover all of them, but missed this one as it landed under a bench).

Ballistics: Analysis of the shell reveals it to be 9.3mm, a caliber almost exclusively used by the Makarov pistol (the same type of gun supplied to the characters by McLoughlin, though this does not necessarily indicate anything, as the weapons are common on the European black market). It's been fired from contact range.

Explosive Devices: The fire was set by a simple, home-made incendiary device, and burned a mixture of petrol, compressed gas canisters, and coal fragments from the walls and floor. This particular combination, along with the combined space, pushed the fire's temperature over 800C, enough to destroy most bone and even the smaller teeth. The device's construction was similar to that used on the MCND building (p. 4).

Forensic Accounting: Analysis of the cult's and Gormley's bank accounts indicates that he was making a large profit from the cult (many members transferred very large sums of money to the cult, often tens of thousands of pounds and occasionally more; this was more-or-less all transferred to him). He then spent it on a wide variety of luxury goods and services, from fast cars to vintage port and high-class escorts. This is classic Esoterrorist behavior, but of course it is also classic cult leader behavior too. There were also many cash advances. All of the cash was withdrawn from both accounts the day before the killings. A 1-point spend uncovers the purchase of a small (10-acre) isolated woodland by the cult, two years ago, just over the Scottish border (2.5 hours drive from here).

Forensic Anthropology: Matching up recovered teeth with dental records and with MI5's files on the cult (that organization had been keeping track of the Penumbra Brotherhood for some years) takes around 6 hours and indicates that all the cult members in the UK were in the mine and are now dead. 1-point spend, and another hour: A few fragments of skull indicate that at least some of the corpses were shot prior to being burned. 2-point spend, and a further hour: The teeth in "Gormley's" mouth don't match the jawbone in at least a couple of places, where there are faint traces of the original teeth having been extracted pre-mortem. Also, almost all of the "Gormley" teeth are actually more severely charred and burned than most of the other teeth found; this could indicate that they were not attached to the jawbone.

Interpersonal Skills: Various skills could be used to investigate the Manchester Evening News and its coverage of the sacrifice. It would certainly be legitimate to try to track down more info on the newspaper's informant who called them rather than calling the police and/or fire brigade; this is a dead end, though.

Cop Talk, or access to police computers and **Research**, tracks down the public phone used; it's the closest one to the site, and though it is overlooked by several houses, no-one saw Gormley use it at 6am when the call was made. Characters investigating the MEN further (their suspicions roused, no doubt, because Esoterrorist manipulation of the media is so common) may want to interview Fairclough, but this



is just likely to drive him underground, into the Hell Haven system (see Ch. 1).

Further investigation could offer some progress, at least in apprehending Gormley, but is unlikely to lead much beyond that. Gormley is in hiding, but not using the Hell Haven system. As a key Isa Kenaz member, but one who is not quite so willing to die for the cause of Ragnarok as the others (he enjoys material pleasures too much for that), he has had long enough to prepare for this moment.

He paid cash to have a high-tech, well-concealed, and well-supplied shelter built on his woodland in Scotland. There, he intends to lay low till Ragnarok, or till the winter finally ends and he can emerge as a new and well equipped leader of the new society made up of any survivors. The shelter is heavily insulated, and warmed by a geothermal heat pump, which is in turn powered by a low-

output diesel generator. LED lights, a massive fuel tank, and a huge stash of canned food and recreational drugs, complete the set-up. There is little space in the main room – not much more than just enough for the very warm bed, minimalist kitchen, and computer/entertainment system that make up the majority of the space. Beyond the tank and food store is a small but efficient shower/toilet room. There's no mains water connection (Gormley realized that the Fimbulvetr would disrupt mains water anyway); rather, this area uses a latrine-pit style toilet and a shower supplied by geothermally heated snowfall.

Gormley was unwilling to spend his time here entirely alone: he kidnapped a prostitute he picked up in central Durham en route here after setting the fire. Anticipating his own perverted needs, he had a set of restraints built in to the wall by the bed, and ensured there was enough food for two.

If the team tracks him down here, he only fights if he thinks he can win. If obviously outnumbered and outgunned, he surrenders. He is very intelligent and an extremely strong personality, but essentially cowardly and selfish. **Intimidation, Negotiation, or Interrogation** gets him talking about what he knows, but he is unlikely to give a full confession or useful information without some kind of offer of a deal. He knows a fair bit about McLoughlin, having worked closely with him, as well as knowing his fellow Isa Kenaz members, Terrance Bartley, Colin Scrimmager, Rob "Black Pope" Black, and Laurence Fairclough. He can give Isa Kenaz-level info about all of them (see Isa Kenaz, p. 7), but does not know any of their real names.

Gormley, Roger

Athletics 4, Health 7, Scuffling 6, Shooting 7, Surveillance 8

Damage Modifier: +1 (Wood Axe), 0 (Pistol)

The Veil-Out

It is tricky to disguise this as anything other than (at best) the mass suicide of a cult, given the amount of media attention already dedicated to that claim before O. V. even get to the site.

Exposing 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) double agents within British Army intelligence.

His Esoterrorist motivations are predominantly political, rather than concerned with personal power. The UDA, like all the Irish paramilitary groups, has for decades been split between factions that are purely political – usually getting more and more extreme over the years – and those that simply want to profit from the Troubles as best they can, acting like any other organized criminal fraternity in running drugs and other crime throughout Ireland.

McLoughlin was always involved with an even further right-wing faction within UDA than most of the organization, and negotiated to make links between UDA and fascist and racist groups in Britain, such as Combat 18 and the British National Socialist Movement. This fits perfectly with the Isa Kenaz philosophy, all Teutonic purity and superiority. McLoughlin and his UDA associates think of themselves not so much as the true Irish, but as descendants of Viking and Anglo-Saxon conquerors, keeping the unruly Celts in their place. Ragnarok might start with the UK mainland, but McLoughlin plans for it to spread to Ireland and elsewhere, leaving a land empty of the impure, awaiting resettlement by the surviving Teutonic stock. McLoughlin's originally Protestant Christian religious sensibilities were soon subverted into an older, more Asatru-style pagan occult faith by his new Esoterrorist allies.

Most of the time, it should be possible for the characters and/or their O. V. superiors to deduce that McLoughlin is a traitor, by the start of this scenario. (See the Boggart Food: McLoughlin Undercover alternate scene on p. 24 for info on what might happen if that is not

the case.) The following abilities can help with that deduction:

Reassurance or **Negotiation** to get Catriona to listen to audio recordings of McLoughlin's voice, if they suspect him and can obtain such material (the easiest option being to phone him, if he's not yet gone to ground and in the process disposed of the phone he used for O. V. contacts; alternatively, a bit of **Cop Talk** with the UK authorities could turn up archival audio material from McLoughlin's army records, or the characters could take a little longer to get the same material through O. V. channels).

Interview, used with Frans Van Rijn, reveals that he and McLoughlin were rivals for the love of Catriona's mother, decades ago in Northern Ireland. **Forensic Psychology** can piece together from this and the info from Catriona that the never-married McLoughlin is now obsessed with the daughter, having been refused by the mother.

Surveillance, **Electronic Surveillance**, etc., could be used to observe McLoughlin, if they can find out where he lives and works through O. V. sources (e.g. Bellows) or through some **Cop Talk**.

- Unless they move very quickly, he is likely to have gone to ground using the Hell Haven system.
- He has a small (1-bed) loft apartment in central Manchester, in a converted mill building with good security.
- At present he is semi-retired from army intelligence work, usually splitting his time between teaching the Manchester and Salford University Officers' Training Corps and the Territorial Army unit in Preston, with occasional stints back at the Intelligence Corps HQ at Chicksands in Bedfordshire. This semi-retirement gets him enough of an Army pension to live comfortably, particularly allowing for his part-time work, and enough free time to devote to

supposedly O. V. activities (but actually to Ulster Unionist and Esoterrorist activities).

- Getting to his apartment means getting past the security guard for the building, but **Cop Talk** will sort that. A 1-point **Cop Talk** spend gets them a master key that will get them inside the apartment without breaking and entering; otherwise it's a **Infiltration** and a crowbar or boot to break in noisily, or a 1-point **Infiltration** spend to go in silently.
- Assuming he has gone to ground using Hell Haven, there is little in the apartment that is out of the ordinary. His computer hard drive has been hurriedly and messily smashed a couple of times with a hammer, without the time taken to remove it from the machine; **Data Retrieval** and a couple of hours' work recovers most of the data, including: electronic copies of several OBOD newsletters; data that can be used to track McLoughlin's financial activity (see below); and various maps of the Pennines, including detail maps of many neolithic sites in the area (including but not limited to most of the places where sacrifices are planned).
- **Architecture** or a 1-point **Surveillance** spend spots a large hidden compartment built into the wall behind the bed area, incorporating a shelf and a clothes hanging area; this once held McLoughlin's ritual robes and occult book collection, but is now empty (**Evidence Collection** will find strands of black wool from the robes, and patterns in the dust on the shelf that indicate it once held several large books).

Forensic Accounting can examine his bank accounts, and spot irregularities. This is free if done from his home computer (see above for getting access to it), or a 1-point spend if done remotely.

- Unusually for an Esoterrorist, McLoughlin isn't particularly motivated by money. He started working for the UDA due to Loyalist political sympathies, not for financial gain, so there are no obvious huge payments. A

little investigation will turn up a second bank account controlled by McLoughlin, though, notable not only for the dubious payments in to it (a small monthly payment from a London-based bank account, which further investigation shows to be a UDA front, every month since July 1984), but for odd withdrawals: the account seems barely to have been touched for years at a time, but then McLoughlin will suddenly draw out a large amount of cash.

- In the past few months, he's made several large cash withdrawals, including £10,000 just a few days ago.
- A 1-point spend, and a great deal more investigation, will turn up the additional fact that he is the sole owner of a Swiss-based company called Alkahest. Their mail is forwarded to a P. O. Box at the central Manchester post office, to which McLoughlin has sole access. **Cop Talk** could get a warrant to intercept letters to the P. O. Box; if this is done, the GM should use the device to occasionally feed the characters new leads, if the investigation seems to be flagging.
- A 2-point spend will also reveal Alkahest as the owner of Ra-Hoor-Khuit Books, the Manchester-based occult bookshop associated with OTOA.

Of course, if McLoughlin shot at the characters during the climax of *LGL*, they may have more direct evidence (e.g. fingerprints on the sniper rifle, revealed easily by anyone with **Fingerprinting**). They may have seen him in the act, and even shot and killed him in return. If he is dead, adapt this section accordingly – the team will still probably want to investigate him.

McLoughlin, Evan

Athletics 5, Health 7, Scuffling 7, Shooting 9, Surveillance 9

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist), 0 (Pistol), +2 (Sniper Rifle)

Post Mortem for Nine Ladies

Scene Type Alternate

The team may decide to investigate leads found at the site of the attempted human sacrifice at the end of *Little Girl Lost*, whether they played through that adventure or not. They may either examine the site immediately after defeating the Esoterrorist threat there, or come to the crime scene a couple of days later when it is more stale.

For teams who played through the events at Nine Ladies themselves, the GM should determine what and how much evidence is available, depending on the outcome of those events (if they saved most of the victims, of course, there may be fewer or no corpses). It will almost certainly be a little more than is listed here for the scene a couple of days later, when some of the evidence will have deteriorated, though it may be less if anything particularly destructive occurred.

Assume that Bellows (or possibly the PCs) used O. V. influence with local police to keep the site in as pristine a state as possible for an O. V. team to investigate, rather than letting the local CSIs at it.

The site is a scene of devastation and massacre, with body parts, blood, gore, food, and sexual fluids all over the place. Notably, there is a trail of blood, milk, honey, bread, and soil in a circle around the stone circle, and a heap of all the above in the center. Corpses are strewn all around, more haphazardly.

Evidence Collection turns up a variety of drugs in the remains of the food served, as well as in any human remains on the site. Several murder weapons are also uncovered: knives, claw hammers, and hatchets.

Fingerprinting can reveal the following:

- Little attempt appears to have been made to hide fingerprint evidence by wiping weapon handles or wearing gloves (GM note: the killers were generally low-ranking Esoterrorist minions, and thus expendable).

- Several of the killers were already known to the police (**Cop Talk**, or O. V. contacts and **Research**, or a police computer and **Research**, to get access to police records), generally for low-level crimes such as soft drug possession, breaking and entering, shoplifting, etc. All of the ones with police records are also coincidentally known to MI5 (**Cop Talk** or **Research** again) as members of OTOA.

Architecture can be used to find the connection from the eco-activist tunnels to the Stanton Stone complex in the fenced-off quarry area beneath the stone circle, if the team did not already find it. It is clear that this was a very deliberately constructed connection from one area to the other, that could only have been built with the co-operation of some part of the eco-activist group with someone working for Stanton Stone or Bartley Security (who have the security contract to keep the activists out of the quarry).

Forensic Accounting (1-point spend) will find a connection between Stanton Stone and Bartley Security, in the form of Terrance Bartley, shareholder in the former and outright owner of the latter. Bartley's home address can be found with **Research** via the Companies House directory of limited company information. He lives in Buxton, close to both Nine Ladies and Arbor Low stone circles. If the characters head to his home, use the Boot The Door alternate scene (p. 21).

Further **Evidence Collection** in the tunnels indicates that they have been used for some months for the torture of various victims.

Forensic Anthropology determines the following:

- As expected, that the dead were generally stabbed or beaten with blunt instruments.
- There are few defensive wounds, suggesting that they were attacked by surprise, or drugged, or both.
- The attacks seem to have all started out quite controlled, targeting vital areas



such as kidneys, throats, and lungs, then deteriorated into frenzied attacks, as though to ensure that any victims who did not die from the immediate effects of the initial wound would bleed out soon afterwards.

- (1-point spend) The character matches up the DNA in the blood to the victims, and the DNA in the sexual fluids to an unknown male and Catriona Van Rijn (whose DNA info and other details, as a family member of a senior O. V. operative, are available through Bellows). If they ever arrested Bennett, they can match the unknown male's DNA to his.

Boot the Door

Scene Type Alternate

Terrance "Boot" Bartley might flee using the Hell Haven network (p. 29), but is essentially bull-headed and arrogant enough that he is more likely to simply fight the characters if they show up at his door. As far as he's concerned, his (mostly theoretical) Viking ancestors would rather he went out with a weapon in his hand than got arrested, and he's tired of all the pussyfooting around. It's time for a straight fight.

He shares his home with three very loyal Rottweiler dogs.

Bartley, Terrance

Athletics 6, Health 8, Scuffling 8, Shooting 6, Surveillance 4

Damage Modifier: 0 (Pickaxe Handle), +1 (Shotgun)

Bartley's dogs

Athletics 6, Health 6, Scuffling 7

Damage Modifier: 0 (Bite)

Hit Threshold 4

Forensic Accounting and Research, using his home computer (which holds all the main



Bartley Security files – his main office is at home), reveals plenty of evidence of Bartley Security's corruption, and Stanton Stone's involvement. Bartley made little attempt to hide any of his shady deals. There are shipments of explosives re-routed to Raven Steading (see Chapter Four) and to the Sons of Satan clubhouse (p. 53), as well as a variety of "bonus" payments to security personnel that, from the context, are clearly related to short-term jobs involving beating up or intimidating Bartley's personal or business enemies.

Heavy Weather

Scene Type Alternate

The team will probably wish to at least take a look at the remains of the burned-down Manchester Centre for Nonlinear Dynamics, either along with or instead of the local police team. (Skip this scene entirely if they prevented the MCND's destruction in *LGL*.)

Evidence Collection: It takes around 20 person-hours to sift through the burned-out remains of a large laboratory complex; the characters will probably need assistance from the police. This skill must be used before the others (below), but will turn up the remnants of the incendiary device, the remnants of the sprinkler control system, and three corpses.

Explosive Devices: The device used to set the fire was a simple one, with a burning cigarette left as a crude fuse, leading to a box of matches held in place with an elastic band, next to papers, cardboard boxes, and bottles of flammable laboratory chemicals, so as to rapidly create a large blaze. 1-point spend: This pattern of incendiary device is a standard one taught by the CIA for use in guerrilla operations against established governments, when more sophisticated equipment may be unavailable.

Infiltration: The remains of the building's sprinkler system reveal impact damage to the master control panel, showing that it was deliberately and crudely disabled before the fire was set, probably by smashing it with a hammer.

Forensic Anthropology:

- The three corpses in the building are hard to identify and analyze, having probably frozen soon after they burned.
- Bennett's is particularly badly charred, but the soot-blackened stone statue of the Persian demon from his house (*Little Girl Lost*, p. 57) can be found

inside his body, shoved into a wound in his chest cavity, right up against his stabbed-through heart. The wound was inflicted before death by a very sharp, serrated-edged knife with a blade around 30cm long.

- The other two corpses were found at the security station by the entrance to the building, and have also been stabbed before death, by the same or a very similar blade, one neatly in the neck and the other in a more frenzied, repeated style.
- This latter one has defense wounds on the hands and forearms, as well as around 40 wounds to the body and face, indicating that he was able to put up some kind of a fight before death.
- It is possible to identify all three corpses (Bennett and two security guards) from dental records (1-point spend).

Art History (1-point spend), or **Anthropology** (1-point spend) or **Occult** (2-point spend): The



Hell Haven

The Esoterrorist infiltration of OBOD includes 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 Hell Haven member 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 solid cover identity, and a refuge – usually 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 stocked with a couple of camp beds, a chemical toilet, and at least one month's worth of food and other supplies for two adults.

As OBOD (Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids) places no restrictions on members regarding which other groups they can be part of, many important Esoterrorists in the UK 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.

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, for example, <ahimsa10@hotmail.co.uk>, <lafay10lynx@hotmail.co.uk>. These two 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. 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 (deliberately) not useful for tracking down Esoterrorists or cells within OBOD.

Cryptography: A character studying the membership list will spot something suspicious regarding the cipher, and will be able to decipher it in a few minutes. (Note that this was a 1-point spend in the previous adventure, but is now free, since it has become more vital to the plot.)

stone statue from Bennett's chest is an ancient Persian maggot-demon, associated with conjuring primal gods from the Outer Dark by human sacrifice. (This kind of cross-cultural approach is quite common for Esoterrorists – Isa Kenaz may have more of a fascination with the Norse myths than most, but they will use whatever occult sources they can, from yoga to Qabala.)

Electronic Surveillance:

- If the characters don't think to ask the cops or university security whether they keep surveillance records off-site (Cop Talk), a 1-point **Electronic Surveillance** spend allows the character to remember that this is standard practice to reduce the risk of the loss of data due to this

kind of occurrence. The university's security guards have a central office where the data from their video cameras is kept.

- Examining this indicates that Bennett arrived with another man (Will Carter – not that the characters are likely to recognize him). The quality of the video recording is not high.
- **Data Retrieval** can enhance it as normal, but Carter's face does not match any that is on file (he has never been arrested or put under observation by any official body). The team may have seen him already, of course, or they may be able to interview Bennett's housemates (who have met Carter and been introduced to him solely as "Frater B." by Bennett).

Data Retrieval or **Research** could also be used to track Carter via his email address, if the team have access to Bennett's computer to find the emails that passed between the two. It's a Gmail addy (bolthorn23@gmail.com), so it would be possible to find out the owner, with co-operation from Google; this would take the best part of a day, assuming police contacts or police authority, and again would need some use of **Data Retrieval** or **Research** to track down Carter's office via his I.P. address (he used a false name when setting up his Gmail account).

Carter runs an advertising agency in central Manchester that is part of Colin Scrimmager's Scrimmager & Sprengler Media Group. The two know each other well, working together in their day jobs, in OTOM, and in the OTOM-based Esoterrorist cell; Scrimmager recruited Carter into the latter. If the characters track Carter down, they may be able to go from him to Scrimmager, but Carter is likely to snap and simply attack them in a frenzied manner with the knife from the MCND killings, and Scrimmager will certainly be aware of any police activity in Carter's office, and decide to go to ground rapidly (using the usual Hell Haven setup, p. 28).

Carter, Will

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

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

Scrimmager, Colin

Athletics 6, Health 6, Scuffling 6, Surveillance 6

Damage Modifier: -1 (Knife)

Boggart Food: McLoughlin Undercover

Scene Type alternate

This scene represents another attempt by McLoughlin to wipe out the characters, using their deaths as part of another sacrificial ritual to advance the general Fimbulvetr

plan. Note that it can instead be used, with some alteration, as an optional encounter later (see The Black Druids of Boggart Hole Clough, p. 27).

McLoughlin has little patience for anything elaborate by this point; he just wants to kill the characters as rapidly as possible, preferably in a place that resonates with some kind of magical power. He calls them up early one evening and suggests they meet as soon as possible at Boggart Hole Clough, near Blackley in North Manchester, where he claims to have vital information to impart. They should scent a trap, of course, if they have even the slightest bit of suspicion about him already, but they are likely to want to be there anyway. If he still has Catriona, he will say he has tracked her to the park, and needs the PCs to meet him there to rescue her at last; if not, he claims to have a lead on Esoterrorist activity in the Clough (not entirely untrue).

The Clough is not known for megaliths or chambered tombs, but it is an old and hard-to-navigate piece of woodland, full of steep slopes and sudden drops. It has long associations with potentially hostile supernatural forces.

Linguistics (1-point spend):

- The name Boggart Hole Clough is derived from a Boggart (etymologically related to bogeyman, boogiemán, bogle, bugbear, etc., and deriving from Middle English bugge meaning a frightening ghost).
- The Hole portion indicates the Boggart's legendary lair deep within one of the many hollows and gullies of the Clough.
- Clough is derived from an Old English word meaning ravine or gully, and hints at the tumbled geography of the site.
- (2-point spend): Blackley, the nearest town, is etymologically related to the term "ley line"; modern occultists might even consider it to indicate that a "Black ley", or evil ley line, runs through this area.

Catriona Van Rijn, Brainwashed Esoterrorist Priestess

If the team did not rescue Catriona in time in *LGL*, or did not play through that scenario at all, Catriona is lost to the Esoterrorists, possibly forever. The role McLoughlin has planned for her is as his bride, his priestess, and a major figure in the new, post-Ragnarok Britain – perhaps the mother of a new generation of fine Britons to repopulate the land.

She has been brainwashed to believe utterly in the cause, by a combination of torture and other conditioning. She sees McLoughlin as a mentor, a lover, and something of a father-figure. She will quite happily feign innocent victimhood, if doing so will get her close to the PCs, where she can knife them and sacrifice them to Nidhogg. If it is clear that McLoughlin and the Black Druids have lost, by the time the PCs get to her, she will sob (apparently with relief at her rescue) and bide her

time before she strikes, choosing either a moment when she can escape again, or a moment when the PCs are distracted by other foes.

She might potentially be cured, if captured alive, but such a conclusion would be a very long-term one, and not something the PCs are likely to be involved with. Most likely, the best they can do for her is to hand her over to Ordo Veritas, which will get her into a secure facility, close to her father, where she can get treatment.

Van Rijn, Catriona (as Brainwashed Evil Priestess)

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

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist, Kick), -1 (Knife)

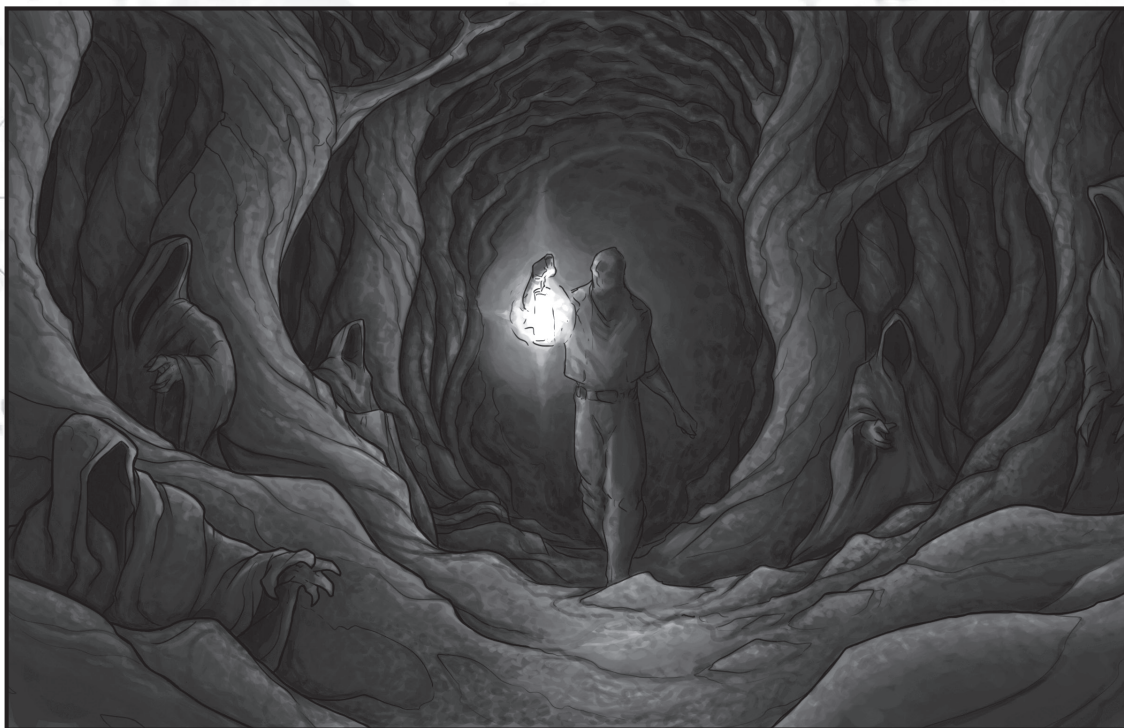
Occult (1-point spend):

- The Boggart from the legend that gives it its name has the same kind of “the fair folk” gloss as most fairy legends, which is to say that locals have spoken of it as a good spirit for hundreds of years not so much because it is benevolent, but because it is very, very dangerous when angered. Indeed, the word “Boggart” used here rather than “Brownie” has connotations which are mischievous at best and outright evil at worst; it could be a brownie (helpful spirit) which has turned angry due to having had a dispute with humans at some point, or it could have been evil from the start.
- In one legend associated with the Clough, the Boggart is mentioned as working for “Owd Hob” (Satan); the Boggart and his wife, Jinny Greenteeth, lurk in the holes and swamps of the region, drowning or smothering humans and animals who

stray into their domain. They are also capable of sending animals crazy, causing them to stampede or attack humans.

- (2-point spend): Locals tell tales of masked and robed occultists meeting deep within the woods, carrying out dreadful sacrifices to their dark gods. This could be the usual, typical fear of the unknown based around a harmless pagan group, but the tales of evil are quite persistent, so may be genuine on this occasion.

McLoughlin will do a more-or-less straightforward ambush, using his better knowledge of the site to his advantage. He has his Black Druid cult to assist him. Their primary aim is to kill the characters off, mostly for McLoughlin’s sake, since he knows they are either onto him or soon will be. If the Black Druids can kill the team in their favorite gully, where they have carried out (usually animal) sacrifices before, better still.



The kills can be dedicated to Nidhogg and Bergelmir, and incorporated into the general program of Ragnarok sacrifices. Thus, they would prefer to use ritual daggers to at least finish off the characters, but are pragmatic enough to start out with shotguns.

McLoughlin has no qualms about using Catriona as bait. Note that she will certainly be in "Brainwashed Evil Priestess" mode by now, if she was not already; she will feign being tied up and perhaps in pain, but actually has a couple of knives secreted in her sleeves, ready to join the fight as soon as she is in striking distance of any would-be rescuer.

Boggarts and Ghoulies

This is one of those places that is just plain spooky, even to a hardened occult investigator. The supernatural inhabitants of the Clough, if there are any, have no way to manifest in a physical form, but they are utterly unnerving. All the investigators must make Stability tests on entering the Clough at night. A failure gives the player a choice: either lose 1 Stability, or lose 1 from Surveillance pool (due to constantly jumping at shadows).

Ambush

McLoughlin and his Black Druids will make Surveillance contest rolls against the player characters. The enemy team have a Difficulty of 3, given their greater familiarity with the area and their prepared hiding places. The O. V. operatives have a Difficulty of 4. Use the Piggybacking rules, as usual.

The first failed roll represents that party being detected by the other. Their opponent is automatically the aggressor; if this is the Esoterrorists, they will have Partial Cover and the PCs will be Exposed, at least till the PCs get to act. If the PCs detect the Esoterrorists first, both sides have Partial Cover. Again, this represents the Esoterrorists advantage in preparing the ground.

Note that Surveillance is used here rather than Infiltration, since detecting the opposition is the most crucial aspect, and since the characters are sneaking through the woods rather than trying to evade an organized security set-up.

This group is utterly fanatical, and would rather die than be captured, if at all possible.



In any case, they firmly believe that if they die in this place, they will live on as Boggart-ghosts themselves.

Black Druid cultists

Names: Crom Cruach, Guledig, Arawn

Athletics 5, Health 6, Scuffling 6, Shooting 5, Surveillance 6

Damage Modifier: -1 (Sickle or Knife), +1 (Shotgun)

Black Druids of Boggart Hole Clough

Scene Type Alternate

For this scene, refer to Boggart Food: McLoughlin Undercover (p. 24) for the background info on the Clough, and p. 27 for the game stats of the Black Druid Cultists. Assume they are led by either Laurence Fairclough or an unnamed Esoterrorist initiate, depending on narrative needs and Fairclough's status. The GM can use this scene in one of two ways:

- 1) Ambush, payback, and cleanup. The Esoterrorists decide to kill the PCs off, once and for all, and work their deaths in to the wider plan, as sacrifices. This version plays out very much like the aforementioned Boggart Food scene, but with a different hook or clue to lead the PCs to it, and a different leader for the Black Druids. The Esoterrorists might use any or all of the following as bait:
 - a) Anonymous phone call to local police, mentioning "satanic sacrifices" taking place every full moon / dark of the moon / Celtic fire-festival (whichever one is just around the corner, in calendar terms, so that the PCs can investigate then) at Boggart Hole Clough. The caller gives descriptions of black-robed druids, and directions to the part of the Clough where the supposed animal sacrifices take place.

Of course, the police pass the tip-off on to the correct department for dealing with such things... which is staffed almost entirely by Ordo Veritas operatives, who pass it on to the PCs, as planned.

- b) False info from a captured prisoner. If McLoughlin or Fairclough has been captured, the captive can feed the PCs info according to a prearranged plan with the rest of the Black Druid coven ("if I go incommunicado, and you receive no countermanding message from me, assume O. V. operatives will arrive at the Clough on the night of the next full moon / dark of the moon / Celtic fire-festival; prepare an ambush accordingly").
- 2) Genuine lead. If for some reason the team have met a dead end (which should be almost impossible in a GUMSHOE game, but it never hurts to have a back-up plan), the GM can use variations on either of the above two baits as real leads, giving the PCs a chance to do their own ambush rather than be ambushed.



Chapter Two: Among the Fires of Hell

This chapter details the Hell Haven system of sleeper agents, starting with the one the characters are most likely to investigate first.

Going to Hell

Scene Type Core

In this scene, the characters descend on the closest of the various Hell Haven bolt-holes, to track down Evan McLoughlin. If McLoughlin is dead, they be tracking down Laurence Fairclough instead. In this latter case, the GM should emphasize the importance of investigating the Penumbra Brotherhood massacre (p. 15), ensuring the team attempts to interview Fairclough at the M.E.N. Offices and finds him vanished as soon as they begin to get close to him.

Terrance Bartley is another possible candidate for fleeing to the Hell Haven network, as, for that matter, are all the Isa Kenaz members. The GM should keep track of which NPCs the characters have spooked into fleeing.

Cracking the Cipher, and Beyond (Core Clues)

Once the team has cracked the cipher (Hell Haven, p. 23) they must still use the minimal info they now have, to track down the real names and locations of the people whose email addresses have aroused their suspicion.

To that end, the following abilities are useful:

Occult: The number 10, in qabalistic numerology, relates to the Hebrew word BCh, meaning "a hidden place, bosom".

Research: Half an hour with an internet connection reveals... nothing. None of the hell-themed email addresses is mentioned anywhere online: not on websites, forum signature files, or blog posts. This in itself is a little suspicious. Sure, not everyone's email addresses be found online, but an experienced researcher would know to expect at least some kind of hit on around half the email addresses, on average.

- The next stage is to go to Microsoft with an official warrant to uncover the real names and addresses associated with the Hotmail addresses. This takes around a day with **Cop Talk**, or is expedited with more **Cop Talk** (1-point spend to reduce the time taken to an hour) or by contacting Bellows and having him exert pressure directly (he's happy to do so). It's trivially easy to get a Hotmail account without giving one's real details, though (as any characters with a vaguely techie background know: certainly the GM should assume that anyone with **Electronic Surveillance**, **Data Retrieval**, **Research**, or **Cryptography** be aware of this), which is exactly what has been done in this case.

- An hour or two of **Research** soon reveals that all the names and addresses are fake. The only really viable approach is to get further info out of Microsoft (another day or hour, as before; or it can be done simultaneously with the bogus name and address details, if the characters ask). IP addresses of the places used to log in by the email users, along with records of the traffic to and from each email account, should narrow things down considerably, and are also available from Microsoft.
- There is almost no traffic to or from any of the addresses. A small number of messages from what appear to be fellow druids, starting conversation, have been ignored entirely.
- A far smaller number of messages with the subject line HH and the single word "SANCTUM" followed by a single letter (A, B, C, or D) in the body of the text get rapid replies from the Hell Haven email accounts; these replies use a simple numeric code, with 11 numbers and nothing else, such as 01010813003.
- **Cryptography** determines from analysis of the particular numbers involved that this is a pattern of day/month/year (first 6 figures), time in 24-hour-clock format (next 4 figures) and a final figure between 1 and 9 (so the example is 1st January 2008 at 1pm, final figure 3). The time in each case is within a day or two of the return email (as sent by the Hell Haven operative). The final digit is probably (1-point **Cryptography** spend) a location, presumably one memorized in advance by all parties. (GM note: the letter code after "SANCTUM" indicates the urgency of the need for a safe house, with A being particularly urgent; as the Hell House system gets used so rarely, it's assumed that the team don't really have enough info to work this out, though doing so is not vital anyway.)
- The IP addresses are also useful. All the Hell Haven operatives employ IP anonymization services, but anyone with **Cryptography** (or a 1-point **Data Retrieval** spend or 2-point **Research** spend) works around the anonymization in an hour or so, tracing the specific location of the device used.
- Hell Haven operatives need to check their email regularly, as Esoterrorists may need rapid assistance, so all make use of smart phones or similarly portable devices, rather than static computers; finding out their identities and locations is a simple matter of going through the mobile phone companies with **Cop Talk**.

Table 2-I: Hell Haven Sleeper Operatives

Email address	Druid magical name	Real name	Physical address
ahimsa10@hotmail.co.uk	"Ahimsa Dell"	Chris Waltham	Waltham's Cleaners, Manchester
lafay10lynx@hotmail.co.uk	"Hymen LaFay Lynx"	Bill Harris	Tor Cottage, Edale, Derbyshire
solar10city@hotmail.co.uk	"Heliopolis"	Joe Patton	Effra Rd, Brixton, London
mysticelf10@hotmail.co.uk	"Mystic Harmonies of the Elves"	Paul Shanks	Ty Capel, Gobowen, Near Oswestry, Welsh Borders
ainsophaur10@hotmail.co.uk	"Sphere of Limitless Light"	Andy Walsh	Poplar Drive, Coppull, Lancashire
rising10plane@hotmail.co.uk	"Hymenaeus Lux the Elder"	Phil Webster	Lumb Lane, Halifax

For pacing, it is suggested to the GM that only one or two of the Hell House operatives' real names and addresses come through from the phone companies at a time, according to the needs of the story. It is certainly quite reasonable for one batch to come through several days after the other, if the later batch consists of those operatives who were security-conscious enough to only use unregistered smart phones, which can still be tracked, but the process is more laborious, and more likely to involve triangulation, eliminating some possible cells to narrow the possibilities down, etc. Assume that the **Cryptography** character is doing this on an ongoing basis while other investigations continue. Bellows can have appropriate equipment sent to her if the characters didn't opt to use the surveillance van.

Table 2-1 gives the email address and magical name combinations that use the cipher, along with the real names and locations of the people involved.

The order given is approximately the order in which the GM usually release the names and addresses, and can also be assumed to be more-or-less the order in which the Esoterrorists make use of the Hell Havens, though it would also be good for the GM to introduce the occasional name and address that is not currently in use, again to add to the tension as the team travels around and checks address after address, sometimes only pulling in a lone sleeper operative.

Different game stats and descriptions have not been given for each of the sleeper operatives, because they are all classic "gray men". Each was recruited young, often through university pagan societies or local spiritualist churches, before they had a chance to attract the attention of police or (especially) O. V., then instructed to live as mundane lives as possible. They are rather dull, unremarkable individuals, fitting in so seamlessly to their environments that the neighbors are barely even aware of their existence. In game terms, treat them all as Black Druid Cultists (p. 27), though they not have firearms (not wishing to either risk criminal records, or end up on police files for legally holding guns).

Waltham's Cleaners

Chris Waltham owns a cleaning supplies shop just across the street from Ra-Hoor-Khuit Books, the OTOA hangout in the Northern Quarter of Manchester city center. The Northern Quarter centers on Oldham Street, just off the city's central square, Piccadilly Gardens. In theory, this is the city's bohemian, alternative quarter, but gentrification ensures that Oldham Street has at least as many trendy bars and restaurants as music shops and body piercing salons.

In any case, both Waltham's and Ra-Hoor-Khuit are on Tib Street, a backstreet parallel to Oldham Street, still technically in the Northern Quarter but with almost no passing trade. Tib Street has a mix of empty, boarded-up shops, army surplus stores, sex shops, pet shops, cheap cafes, a few alternative shops, and some housing near the two shops in question, at the northern end, furthest from the city center.

Research (for characters who specifically studied Manchester) or **Trivia** (1-point spend) gives all the above info, which also be apparent to all observers when they get there. A further 1-point spend on either ability reveals the following:

- Tib Street is named for the River Tib, supposedly named after the Tiber by Manchester's first Roman settlers, but no sign of the river is visible on the surface.
- Various pre-20th century regenerations of the city involved building new shops and houses directly over the old city, including, here, the river. The river still runs the length of the street and beyond, in a culvert a meter or two underground.

Tib Street is perfect both for Ra-Hoor-Khuit (for the cheap rent) and Waltham's (for the cheap rent, again, but also for the obscurity).

As indicated already, and as might be expected for a man who has made a living selling vacuum cleaners and mop buckets, Waltham comes across as rather dull. He keeps regular 9-6 business hours on Monday and Wednesday to Saturday, has Tuesday off, employs no-one, and lives in an apartment over the cleaning shop.

Waltham appear to fully co-operate with any police or O. V. type investigation, because he has almost nothing to hide. If he has any suspicion that the investigation is anything other than completely routine, though, he alert his Esoterrorist superiors that this particular Hell Haven appears to be compromised.

Waltham, Chris

Athletics 5, Health 5, Scuffling 5, Surveillance 9

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist)

The building is three-story, with the shop on the first floor, a large stockroom and office on the second floor, and Waltham's apartment on the top floor. The apartment is only 2/3 the size of the other floors, not extending all the way back to the edge of the stockroom roof, which is flat. The Hell Haven is built in to the old fire escape of the building next door, which is also Esoterrorist-owned (though not by anyone directly financially connected to Waltham).

The next-door building is boarded up and apparently empty, but its three-storey internal fire escape, next to the cleaning shop, is stocked as a Hell Haven. It consists of two long staircases connecting the three floors, and three landings where the beds and supplies are set up. All connecting doors to the rest of the next-door building have been bricked up and replastered, leaving almost no trace; even the external fire exit, leading to a private, security-gated back alley used as a fire exit by all the shops on this block of the street, has been bricked up and re-finished to blend in with the walls. There are only three entrances:

Closet Entrance: Through Waltham's apartment, accessed by removing the rear panel of his walk-in closet.

Emergency Exit: This has been added through a hatch in the lowest floor, and leads down a ladder directly in to a hole cut through the top of the arch over the culverted River Tib. A small rubber dinghy is hooked to the inside of the arch, a little above the usual waterline, ready for use to escape down the underground river. Just under a mile downriver, the Tib flows through a locked grate into the River Irwell; a key taped to the inside of the dinghy allows the fleeing

Esoterrorist egress. The Irwell is a larger river, running through Manchester and Salford, visible from the surface and used by light commercial shipping and pleasure boats. The Esoterrorist could then either paddle on downstream, or clamber out of the river and make himself scarce on the streets. Pursuers without dinghies could potentially swim or wade down the Tib, but unless they are right on the tail of their target, it be next to impossible to catch up before he gets to the grate (**Athletics** test, Difficulty 7). Fortunately the grate lock is rusty and stiff, so that a determined and fast character (**Athletics** test, Difficulty 4) reaches the target just as he finally opens the grate, or could pause to take a couple of shots at him instead.

Concealed Exit: This second emergency exit involves breaking open a lightweight false panel, blended from the outside to look like the external wall, from the third-storey landing onto the flat roof over the stockroom. From this roof, it is possible for a reasonably athletic individual to make an escape over other rooftops and into the back streets of the city. This is likely to be an opposed **Athletics** contest, and even if the character fails that, an opposed **Surveillance** contest could track the felon down.

There are no apparent occult books or trappings in the apartment, shop, or stockroom, and nothing untoward on Waltham's computer hard drive or in his web browsing history. It certainly appears that he is as dull as he first seems, spending his time doing crossword puzzles and reading a variety of non-fiction books (mostly popular histories, travel books and biographies).

Architecture notes that there appears to be a 2-meter wide section between the two buildings that is not occupied by either, if the character gets a brief look around the outside of both buildings and inside of one.

Evidence Collection and a thorough search of Waltham's apartment reveals the false back on the closet. It's then a simple matter to find the latch (**Infiltration**) and discover who is inside.

The actual Haven is somewhat spartan, with a pair of camp beds on the middle level, food storage on the lower level, and a variety of reading material on the upper level (which Waltham sometimes goes into to study occult matter).

Interrogation

Scene Type: alternate

If the characters capture an Isa Kenaz member at or near a Hell Haven, they almost certainly want to interrogate him. Any of **Interrogation**, **Intimidation**, and/or **Negotiation** could work to get the following info, depending on the characters' preferences and on the particular Isa Kenaz member they have captured:

- The Isa Kenaz-level of info found in the Introduction (Isa Kenaz, p. 7).
- (Core Clue): The locations of the Adorers of the Wound church, and Covenant of the Morrigan farm, and their natures as Esoterrorist dupes and planned sacrifice sites. This should seem difficult info to extract, but it should be at least possible, assuming that the captured Esoterrorist is either McLoughlin or Fairclough. Note that either of them give up the Adorers first (more for reasons of plot convenience than anything else); this should seem like enough of a breakthrough that the characters should pursue it right away. If they apprise Bellows of this latest info, he advise that they pursue their investigations immediately. They can hand McLoughlin in to local police, and Bellows get a dedicated O. V. interrogator down to the cells to continue extracting info from him.

McLoughlin probably need extreme levels of **Intimidation** or some very tricky use of **Interrogation** before he talks. Torture certainly does not help, simply reinforcing his sense of the rightness of his actions, as well as potentially thinning the Membrane. He is not really interested in co-operating if he can avoid it, being essentially a political and religious fanatic rather than a selfish powermonger. He has enough confidence in his two Esoterrorist minions (Dvorak in Ch.

3 and Brigant in Ch. 4) that he feels revealing minimal info about them could actually play into Isa Kenaz hands, if Dvorak or Brigant can simply incorporate the investigators into one or other sacrifice. However, extensive **Intimidation** or **Interrogation** might get a few more details about the Adorers and the Covenant out of him.

Another option, if played correctly, combines **Reassurance** and **Impersonate** to convince him that the players are not O.V. operatives at all, but rather are members of another, non-occult shadowy right-wing conspiracy – presumably one controlling the security services. McLoughlin is very suspicious of this, particularly because he has never heard of it. Playing on his paranoia and fanaticism is the best bet.

Fairclough, on the other hand, happily bargains (**Negotiation** skill) to salve whatever is left of his reputation and career, if it is clear that the game is up. He knows very little of the details of the organizations in Chapters 3-4, just their locations. He also knows that he was recruited predominantly for his media contacts, and that at some point he will be given a major news item to leak throughout the press.

Scrimmager might potentially be captured via Hell Haven investigations, if he fled during Chapter 1. Like Fairclough, he is somewhat selfish, and so **Negotiation** should be sufficient to get him talking. He knows even less than Fairclough about the other organizations involved (just their names), and was also recruited for his media contacts, so knows about the planned news "leak".

If the characters do not wish to handle the interrogation themselves, perhaps because they have other urgent needs to follow, they can hand off their prisoner to Bellows or another of his operatives, who gets results, one way or another, and communicates them back to the PCs. **Bullshit Detector** realizes that Bellows's methods may involve torture. Remind the PCs, if they need reminding, that this would be a major problem if it were to occur: O. V. principles are that torture weakens the Membrane, potentially causing far more problems than it solves. If they do not use **Negotiation** to insist on less damaging

means of interrogation, or else do the job themselves after all, the GM should consider penalizing them in a suitable manner (perhaps the tortured Esoterrorist becomes possessed by a powerful entity that gives him sufficient supernatural strength to break out of captivity again, killing his tormentors en route).

Further Investigation at Waltham's

scene type: alternate

If the characters somehow lost their quarry, or shot him dead, this scene allows them to move on to Chapter 3 by alternate means – investigating his personal effects, notably his phone and diary (the latter in traditional book form), found either on his corpse or left hurriedly in the Hell Haven when he fled. In either case, the following skills be needed:

Evidence Collection to find the items.

Data Retrieval to bypass the password lock on the phone and retrieve the Contacts data and phone logs.

Cryptography to decipher the simple cipher in the diary, which correlates the dates and times of planned sacrifices with short codes representing the Esoterrorist cells that be carrying them out. The codes are predominantly mnemonic, allowing for characters to combine them with a look at the contacts tab on the phone to determine which group is which. Notably:

- That very evening, there is a sacrifice planned at the Adorers of the Wound church near Sedbergh, Cumbria (see Ch. 3).
- The following night, another sacrifice is planned at the Covenant of the Morrigan on the Welsh borders, (see Ch. 4).

Ra-Hoor-Khuit Books

Scene Type alternate

Characters who have figured out that McLoughlin has a financial connection to Ra-Hoor-Khuit books may wish to pay it a visit, either before or after checking out Waltham's. The bookshop is unlikely to lead to much useful info, though it is a focal point for Manchester's occult scene and thus a viable recruiting-ground for a variety of Esoterrorist groups and individuals.

It comprises a bookshop-cafe on the ground floor, just across the road from Waltham's, with a large meeting-room / temple space on the middle floor, decked out in Masonic-style black and white tiling, with a black pillar and white pillar adjacent to an altar table on the east wall. On the floor above is another small apartment, rented out to one of MacGregor-Mathers's OTOA colleagues. The middle and upper floors are not reached directly through the shop, but via a separate street-level entrance with video-phone and key access.

The bookshop's staff pride themselves on offering a full, traditional range of occult materials, not shying away from Satanist tomes, voodoo dolls, and similar items that a more New Age or pagan shop might not stock.

Note that Waltham is usually able to observe any unusual goings-on here from across the street, either from his shop or his flat; if the characters go here before paying him a visit, he informs his Esoterrorist superiors of any obvious police raid, etc., particularly if he currently has one of them in his Haven.

Elsbeth MacGregor-Mathers

MacGregor-Mathers is in her mid-40s, but still dresses like a teenage goth. Heavily tattooed and even more heavily made-up, she holds court over the bookshop, at least in the afternoons (various hangers-on work for her for free or minimum wage in the mornings, opening the bookshop so she doesn't have to get up early).

She runs the OTOA Manchester operation, which is effectively the whole of OTOA; there are a few individuals elsewhere, but this is a very small operation compared to the "official" OTO. It tends to attract rebels, kinky sex fans, and those who are disaffected with more mainstream occult and pagan groups. This suits MacGregor-Mathers just fine.

Her own interest in the occult is a classically Esoterrorist one: she wants power and earthly pleasure. Running her own cult fits the bill perfectly.

Any team investigating her and her shop find plenty of evidence of all kinds of deviant and cultic behavior – she makes no real secret of this stuff, with an OTOA Facebook page that has plenty of crossover with the local fetish scene. It is clear from even a cursory look at the shop computer or at her home PC that the "temple" room above is frequently the site of orgiastic parties. None of this is strictly illegal, though, and nor are the high membership fees she charges for OTOA membership and initiation. McLoughlin has been careful to keep MacGregor-Mathers relatively clean, at least legally speaking, so far. She knows little about the Nine Ladies camp ("Yes, Frannie and some of our more idealistic initiates spent time on the protest camp, but they assured me that the protests they were involved in were entirely non-violent and quite legal").

She knows nothing of the Fimbulvetr plan, though if pushed (**Intimidation**, or if in custody or other official situation, **Interrogation**, 1-point spend) admits that she received instructions from the "Outer Head of the Order" (McLoughlin – whom she has never met, and who only ever contacts her by encrypted email, but who also pays her a stipend). She does not know his name. **Data Retrieval** and access to either of her computers could turn up the same info about her contacts with McLoughlin as can be found in Chapter 1 (see p. 18). MacGregor-Mathers herself lives in Whalley Range, in

south Manchester. She lets the apartment over the shop out to two young students who are OTOA members, Alexandra and Rhona.

The name MacGregor-Mathers be familiar to anyone with **Occult** knowledge – the founder of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the late 19th century was S. L. MacGregor-Mathers, effectively one of the founding fathers of modern occultism. Elspeth took her name from him, changing her own surname legally.

MacGregor-Mathers, Elspeth

Athletics 4, Health 4, Scuffling 3, Surveillance 6

Damage Modifier: -1 (Club)

Other Hell Havens

Scene Type alternate

It is likely that the PCs want to track down more than one Hell Haven sleeper, for various reasons, usually because they need to run down a second or third Isa Kenaz cabal member. Such scenes are not covered in detail, but enough info is given here to allow the GM to run them easily enough.

Harris, Shanks, Walsh, and Webster are all within an hour or so's drive of Manchester (in normal weather). All but Shanks are also on the edge of the Pennines, or nearly so, allowing the Esoterrorist leadership to have the potential for very rapid escapes from pursuit after a sacrifice, if necessary. Shanks is close to the Covenant of the Morrigan. Patton, in London, is effectively a backup in case of any new plan involving a direct attack on central government or royal targets.

Other than Waltham and Patton, all the Havens are in semi-rural areas, close to fields or other open country. All these Havens have underground escape routes out into said open country, usually only for short distances. The sleeper ops ensure any Haven users are provided with maps and compasses in case of the need to flee again.

Chapter Three: Seek Pleasure from the Festering Wound

This chapter deals with the investigation of the Adorers of the Wound, a Moravian church splinter group obsessed with sexual mysticism in the style of William Blake. The Adorers are largely controlled by Evan McLoughlin (through their leader, Milos Dvorak, an initiate of McLoughlin's), so the team can be led here by investigating him.

They may have the option of going straight to Chapter 4 instead, since they may have the info on that group too, but the Adorers are both geographically closer and more urgent (assume that their sacrifice is planned for the evening on which the characters get the info about it).

Misguided Mystics

Scene Type: Core

The Adorers of the Wound have an old church building nestled in the Howgill Fells, just above the town of Sedbergh, a 90-minute drive from Manchester (in normal weather; at least 2 hours in snowy conditions). Sedbergh is a small town of around 3000 people. Asking around the high street shops (it has a butcher, supermarket, and greengrocer) using more-or-less any relevant Interpersonal skills (**Reassurance** is probably best) reveals:

- The members of the church do come in to Sedbergh occasionally, usually two of

them a couple of times a week, and do a bulk shop, presumably to feed the entire congregation. They are polite, but not enormously talkative or friendly, tending to keep themselves to themselves.

- The people of the town have a certain amount of affection for "their" cult up the hill, not really thinking of it as a cult ("They're a sort of Christian, aren't they, really? Good folk"), but more along the lines of the Quakers and Methodists who have many meeting-houses and churches in the North of England.
- The church building dates back to the first founding of the Moravian church in this part of Britain, in the 18th century. It is of simple, predominantly wooden construction, in a small, unnamed hamlet composed of a dozen or so houses, all owned by church members.
- Getting to this hamlet from Sedbergh requires a hill climb too steep for cars, given the weather. Even a Land Rover simply does not have enough traction to get up the hill. (Assume a 1-hour climb, if an **Athletics** test (Difficulty 3) is successful, otherwise 2 hours.)

Occult (1-point spend) or **History** supplies get the following info about the origin of Moravian churches:



- These Bohemian churches were founded early in the 18th century by Count Zinzendorf, and later popularized further by his son Christian von Zinzendorf.
- The original churches had rites involving ecstatic contemplation of Christ's wounds, in what was quite frequently a very worldly manner. Zinzendorf believed that such contemplation could allow his followers to get over their guilt about sex.
- He explicitly identified Christ's spear-wound with the female sex organs, and encouraged his married followers to imagine they were sexually penetrating Christ's wound when they had sex.
- His son took this a stage further, advocating and participating in actively homosexual rituals with the "Single Brothers" (unmarried males) of the Church.

The Adorers are indeed predominantly Christians, if peculiar and mystical ones.

Unlike most modern Moravian churches, they continue to follow the teachings of their founders. Thus it is that this small, deliberately isolated community still practises unbridled, orgiastic, transcendental rituals.

The Rite of the Side-Wound

The night the PCs arrive is the night of a far more dark and fell orgy than ever before. Milos Dvorak, head of the Church, plans to convince his followers that they can take their meditations a step further by actually opening wounds in their own and each others' bodies, and conducting sex acts involving the wounds.

He waits till he has them in the throes of religious and sexual ecstasy before handing out knives and instructing them to begin those self-destructive acts. At this point he plans to explain that their strength of spirit and faith in Christ will allow them to transcend the weakness of their fleshy forms, so that they will not die of their wounds, but rather will be miraculously healed. This is a lie, of course,



and he certainly intends to encourage the orgy to continue and intensify till all present are bleeding from potentially mortal injuries.

Note that Dvorak is the only active Esoterrorist here. The others are all pious and even moral, at least by their own distinctly odd standards. This allows for a non-violent approach on the part of the O. V. team, if desired, but the team would need to handle this with extraordinary care: the Adorers fervently believe Dvorak to be the spiritual descendant of Zinzendorf himself. Approaches that might work include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Peaceful arrest. The Adorers are no more innately violent than other ordinary people – possibly less so, in fact, since they have found spiritual happiness of a sort. They are perhaps a little more suspicious of outsiders, including external authorities such as the police, than most people, simply because of their unusual and detached lifestyle. However, a very deliberate and calm arrest, that does not

involve waving guns about or grappling Dvorak to the floor, might well work.

Negotiation (1-point spend), **Intimidation** (2-point spend), or **Reassurance** would be needed to explain that the team are arresting Dvorak largely as a formality, and that once he has answered police questions satisfactorily, he will be released, and the team can get on with catching the real culprits.

- Snatch squad. The team wait to get Dvorak alone, perhaps asking to interview him in his home (adjacent to the church building), and then simply bundle him out and down the hill at high speed, perhaps gagged and/or at gunpoint. Depending on the time of day, and whether the PCs aim to do this concentrating predominantly on stealth or on speed, the Adorers may pursue the group, and do violence if they catch up. There are a couple of four-wheel-drive cars in the hamlet, including a Range Rover owned by Dvorak.

One of these can be commandeered to get Dvorak down the hill, though it is a hair-raising experience, given the snow. Treat this as a **Driving test** (Difficulty 6), with failure indicating that the vehicle has come off the rough track. It comes to a violent halt, but the driver has one last chance to reduce the damage with another **Driving test** (Difficulty 5); success means the occupants only subtract 1d6-1 from Health Pools as the vehicle comes to a permanent halt against a tree, whereas failure means a loss of 1d6+1 as it rolls several times down a slope before smacking into a large boulder.

- **Kill team.** Similar to the above, but simpler. If the characters decide they have enough evidence, or urgent enough need, to just assassinate Dvorak, they probably get away with it, particularly if they can do the deed without attracting the attention of the other Adorers. There may, of course, be consequences with O. V. later – outright assassination is not usually sanctioned, particularly in the UK – but the circumstances and threat are extreme, so it is probably justifiable.
- **Exposure.** Telling the Adorers the truth about Dvorak is highly unlikely to work; they would need far more evidence than a court would, and the characters just do not have that kind of evidence available yet, particularly without revealing far too much about the Esoterrorists and even O. V.

Fighting Back

Dvorak gauges the situation as best he can, to determine whether to resist. He is not a highly trained combatant, and assumes that the PCs are, so he is unlikely to fight back unless he thinks he can win, or believes he is about to be killed. He is carrying a knife and pistol about his person at present, since he knows just enough to be aware that a large Esoterrorist plot is in the offing (and to know his own part in it). He also has a legally held shotgun in a gun cabinet in his home, though he is unlikely to have a chance to access this.

If he gets desperate, or if the characters are so blunderingly ineffective that he thinks it might work, he may try to persuade his followers to rise up against the team, either fully violently or just by physically resisting his arrest. This is unlikely to work, if the PCs handle things correctly and calmly, because the Adorers are not precisely a bunch of brainwashed cultists. They do have enormous respect and love for Dvorak, but not to a completely irrational degree.

The major exception to this is if they are in the throes of sexual and religious ecstasy, during the sacrifice. A church full of Adorers, all bleeding and armed with knives, and utterly fanatical, might be quite a handful.

Adorers of the Wound

There are around 70 church members living in the hamlet, with each of the homes housing perhaps 5-10 members of one extended family. Typically, around 10-15 are in the church itself at any one time, with the others being at their homes, or at work in the communal vegetable gardens and sheepfolds of the church, or in Sedbergh at day jobs (the latter often conceal their cult affiliation from their work colleagues). None go armed as a matter of course, and none have access to anything more dangerous than improvised weapons, household objects, tools, etc.

Some sample Adorers are listed below, in case the characters do attempt a diplomatic or partially diplomatic solution.

William Hodge: Hodge is Dvorak's de facto deputy and PA, but has no idea of the latter's Esoterrorist involvement. He is in his late 20s, and even more fanatically obsessive about his religion than most Adorers. He has a huge crush on Dvorak, which is perfectly acceptable in the homosexuality-friendly Church, but which has remained unrequited. Dvorak prefers women, for the most part, but has no compunction about using Hodge's affection for him to get constant support in any disputes, as well as unpaid labor. Hodge is likely to act with devoted, even self-sacrificial zeal, if Dvorak appears in



physical danger, but he is intelligent and at least theoretically willing to listen to reason.

Patricia Crabbe: In her early 30s, Crabbe is also reasonably devoted to Dvorak, but perhaps a little more suspicious of him than is Hodge. Dvorak has called her to his bed several times a month since she was in her late teens, and she has gone willingly, feeling honored by his attention, but the frequently bizarre (even for the Adorers) and ritualistic sex acts he expects of her have recently begun to make her feel uneasy. She knows he is different to the other Adorers, with a special place in the community, but even allowing for that, there is a faint niggling suspicion of him, growing in her, suppressed most of the time by the usual mental defense mechanisms that cultists employ on their own rogue thoughts. She might speak out against him, if given a context in which she could voice her concerns. Her parents also live in the hamlet, sharing a house with her and other family members.

Stewart King: King is in his sixties, rotund, bespectacled, and scholarly. He is much respected by the Adorers, who generally value the older church members for their wisdom and their status as a link to the traditions of the Moravians. They particularly respect King, who is the official archivist of the church. King's secret is his sympathy for atheism, which has been growing for some decades. He still has enormous affection for the Adorers and their beliefs, but has studied other religions too, all his life. He feels that other than the Adorers' sexual tolerance, they are little better than or even different to other religions. He has been bisexual all his life, and relatively promiscuous, disliking the idea of forming any long-term attachments other than with his idea of Christ. He feels too old and set in his routines to actively rebel against or leave the church, but might be an unexpected ally against Dvorak if presented with firm proof of the latter's crimes.

Dvorak, Milos

Athletics 5, Health 6, Scuffling 7, Shooting 6, Surveillance 6

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

Adorers of the Wound

Names: Humphries, Scott, Thompson.

Athletics 4, Health 4, Scuffling 4, Surveillance 4

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

Next steps

At the end of the chapter, the PCs either continue interrogating McLoughlin (Fairclough, if McLoughlin is dead) to get a lead to Ch. 4, or if they left their prisoner in Bellows's care, are given the info directly.

One More Wound

Scene Type: Alternate

If the team somehow fail to stop Dvorak, he carries out his sacrifice of his own cult, with their inadvertent but active participation. It is unlikely that this is discovered until after the wider crisis is resolved (one way or another), because the Adorers of the Wound are such an isolated community. Some of the folk of Sedbergh notice that none of the Adorers have been in town for a while, a week or so after the sacrifices, but if the weather is still severe they put this absence down to that, and assume the Church members have enough food to last through the disaster. It is another few days after things return to normal before a villager takes a hike up the hill and discovers the gruesome corpses lying entangled on the church floor.

Dvorak plans to take advantage of this to simply wait out the disaster right here. He is paranoid about discovery. However, he is convinced that when Fimbulvetr ends, it will not herald a return to normality, and the arrival of police, but full-blown Ragnarok. So, he believes that the longer he waits, undiscovered, the more likely it is that all police and most people will be dead, with he and a chosen few Esoterrorist initiates being left alive to re-populate the planet with a newer, purer race. If the Isa Kenaz plans come to nothing, only then does he make himself scarce as best he can.



Thus, though this sacrifice happens if the PCs do not prevent it, they may not hear of it till weeks later. If for some reason they delay in reaching the Church of the Adorers of the Wound, perhaps skipping this chapter but coming back to it later, they find Dvorak hiding out, convincing himself that he has gotten away with it and that he played his part in bringing about apocalypse.

The Veil-Out

In this case, it should be an easy enough process, given the Church's isolation and insularity. Perhaps they have simply decamped en masse, back to Moravia, where their roots are.



VERITATIS

Chapter Four: To Listen to the Hungry Raven's Cry in Wintry Season

This chapter deals with the investigation of the Covenant of the Morrigan, a hardcore Green Feminist co-operative based in the rural Welsh Borders. As with the Adorers, these people are not all Esoterrorists, but they are all extremists, and criminals (doing various acts of political activism, some of which cross the line into terrorism).

Thus, a diplomatic approach could work, if handled carefully; though the Covenant members naturally assume they have more in common with each other than with the characters, particularly if the characters admit to working for the authorities, this is not true, at least in all cases. Sane people, however extreme, have very little in common with Esoterrorists.

Hunting Ravens

scene type: Core

The Covenant of the Morrigan has a communal farm on an isolated part of the Shropshire hills, close to the Welsh border. The Esoterrorists consider this to be, magically speaking, a necessary focal point outside the Pennines, so as to start to extend the spiral of winter storm energy out beyond the boundaries of England.

Research for the name Covenant of the Morrigan turns up a brief mention on a listings website for Goddess Spirituality

groups. No physical address is given – just a P. O. Box address and a contact email.

Cop Talk reveals that the Covenant is known to the police, and suspected of being a haven for extremists in the environmental movement, many of whom are thought to have criminal convictions for eco-activism verging on terrorism. Its physical location is noted in police records, if the characters do not have it from one of the Esoterrorists already.

Anthropology, History, and/or Occult gives the following info:

- The neo-pagan Goddess Movement or Goddess Revival was, like so many neo-pagan subcultures, an offshoot of Wicca, the nature-based witchcraft cult that most scholars agree was invented in the 1950s by Gerald Gardner. It has diverged considerably from its Wiccan roots over the past 60-odd years.
- The Goddess Movement is very much centered on feminism. Many groups accept both men and women, though they often expect men to take on a somewhat lesser role, claiming that this represents a return to an earlier, matriarchal society (most contemporary scholars would not accept that there was any strong evidence such a society ever existed in Europe, but that does not stop neo-pagan myth-making).

- Covenant has much the same meaning as coven, in neo-pagan terms – it's a group of people who get together to celebrate and "cast spells", usually on the equinoxes, solstices, and fire-festivals (eight Sabbats) and sometimes every full moon too (Esbats). There is a suggestion that a covenant requires a higher level of commitment than a coven, though this is not universal.
- **(History or Occult only):** The Morrigan was the Irish goddess of war, typically appearing in crow or raven form. She was a berserk, murderous kind of goddess, taking undue delight in slaying her foes in a bloody and gory fashion.
- **(Anthropology only):** The modern Goddess scene often looks to the darker goddesses, such as the Morrigan, Kali, Sekhmet, etc., feeling that they are a perfect fit for the kind of empowering feminism that drives so many women to Goddess-worship in the first place.
- Thus, it would be far more socially acceptable in pagan circles to profess to worshiping even a near-demonic pagan mythological figure, such as Lilith or Hecate, than similar male figures such as Lucifer, Set, Hades, etc. A witch-coven dedicated to the Morrigan might be murderous psychopaths, just like anyone else might, but they're much more likely to be ordinary, relatively peaceful, neo-pagan hippies; the name Morrigan isn't a firm indicator in either direction.

Raven Steading

The farm the Covenant own is a small one (around 30 acres, with sheep, one cow, a few chickens, two pigs, a small woodland, and a kitchen garden), but just big enough to support the nine of them in near-self-sufficiency, at least in food terms. They sell a little wool, lamb meat, and mutton, and several of them take on part-time or temporary work off the farm.

Occasionally, in summer, they hire out one of their fields to carefully vetted visiting neo-pagan or Green activist groups, though such visitors are not generally allowed in to the main farmhouse. A small barn with a downstairs

kitchen and hayloft style sleeping space, as well as camping space in the field, and a composting toilet, mean that visiting groups can leave the Covenant some privacy. Particularly trusted groups can also make use of the Covenant's small Celtic roundhouse temple for ceremonies or meetings, by prior arrangement.

- **Evidence Collection** (1-point spend) finds the packed-down dirt under the roundhouse that indicates it has been disturbed then the evidence hidden. Digging here turns up five newborn baby corpses and two adult female corpses – more than enough evidence to convict Brigant, especially when Forensic Pathology reveals all seven to have been murdered.

We hear you guys are white witches

scene type: ALTERNATE

This scene covers various peaceful approaches the characters can make.

The Covenant is not especially receptive to visitors – particularly those from the authorities, particularly if they happen to be male (since their sex even more clearly identifies them as agents of oppressive patriarchy that the Covenant members believe rules the land). Having a woman do the talking, and be in or appear to be in a position of authority, makes the PCs' lives a little easier. Being a female-only group, even more so.

Likewise, claiming to be "seekers", who have come to the Covenant in the hope of learning its ways, may open more doors here than admitting to working for the any kind of law enforcement agency. This sisterhood are extremely suspicious of strangers, though. Police infiltration attempts are a fact of life in extremist groups, and even looking right (dreadlocks, tattoos, piercings, tribal jewelry) is no longer a guarantee of acceptance.

Impersonate gets the look right, but unless every member of the group in contact with the Covenant has at least two of **Impersonate**, **Reassurance**, and **Streetwise**, the witches remain suspicious, constantly suspecting the characters of being agents of the state.

Epona Brigant

Brigant is a quiet, well-spoken, murderous fanatic. She is white-haired, slim, and in her early sixties.

She has worked reluctantly with McLoughlin, because he was able to convince her that he was a feminist, pro-matriarchy, Goddess-worshipping type, tapping in to his Irish heritage (all a fabrication, thanks to plenty of Occult and Persuasion on his part), but she plans to ensure that men are either killed or in subservient roles after Ragnarok. Her interpretation of the coming apocalypse is all tied up in Welsh and Irish myths: tales of catastrophic floods, Merlin's prophecies of famine driving out the Norman invaders and returning the land to the peaceful Celts, and the legend of the Tuatha de Danaan or Irish fairies (again, a matriarchal society, at least in Brigant's eyes), who fled "under the hill" when the human settlers arrived but who will someday reclaim the surface world as their own. She believes that the Esoterrorists' work will tear this land apart, allowing for a return to a simpler way of life more in keeping with her Green Feminist ideals.

She has documented her few meetings with McLoughlin in her magical diary, along with her various solo rituals to the entity she thinks of as simply "the Dark Goddess" (supposedly a composite or archetype of all the dark goddesses such as Kali, Sekhmet, etc.) but which is actually an Outer Dark entity. The diary is written in a simple cipher which Brigant learned by heart, years ago, and which she now writes as easily as regular script. **Cryptography** and half an hour's work cracks it with ease. She has kept in contact with McLoughlin via text message or old-fashioned letter (sent to the P.O. Box he uses), but deletes the texts and burns any letters she gets back from him after reading.

Her radicalism came gradually, building up from her experiences of domestic violence in the 1970s, and what seemed to her to be the tacit state support of that violence. Her feminism, dark spirituality, and

environmental activism combine to justify almost any crime, certainly up to and including murder. She has some medical training, along with a mixture of hokum and herbalism, which has given her the role of doctor to the Covenant. When those Covenant members who still occasionally sleep with men become pregnant, Brigant encourages them to bring the babies to full term, if they are willing, so that a female child might be brought up in the Covenant, or a male "given up for adoption." In fact, no male child has survived more than a matter of minutes past the moment of birth. Brigant feeds the new mother a variety of herbal drugs, then if the child is a boy, strangles it with the umbilical, offering it up for sacrifice to her dark goddess. She buries each body in front of the main altar in the Covenant's roundhouse temple (p. 42), stamping the earthen floor flat again afterward, ensuring that every ceremony in the temple is at least somewhat twisted towards the Outer Dark entities she worships in the guise of Morrigan et al. As far as the rest of the women in the Covenant are concerned, these are tragic accidents or stillbirths, though the Goddess is wise, of course, and perhaps She decreed that these males – future oppressors and tyrants – would be best not born to the women here. The authorities are unaware of any of the dead children. Brigant's magical diary details these sacrifices, again in her cipher.

She rules her Covenant by quiet yet vindictive force of personality, and has surrounded herself with others who virtually worship her for her supposed Mother Goddess wisdom. Two women, over the decades, have significantly, publicly challenged her authority. Both are buried beneath Raven Steading, like the babies. As far as the other witches here are concerned, they packed their bags and left in the night, after disputes with Brigant. Both cases are cold, now – Missing Persons rather than murders, since the bodies have not been found.

Hippies and protesters go missing all the time, sometimes deliberately, simply dropping off society's radar.

As might be deduced, Brigant is cunning, manipulative, and vindictive to a very high degree. She plans to whip up her followers to a state of near-frenzy, persuading them that a conference at a nearby hotel in Shropshire will gather together the heads of a variety of environmentally destructive corporations. They have been preparing for this moment for decades, one way or another, convincing themselves that more and more extreme direct action is not only appropriate, but necessary.

Brigant has stockpiled a variety of automatic weapons, grenades, and explosives, most of it beneath the food stores in the farmhouse cellar (though she does keep guns under her

bed too). The house also holds three legal double-barreled shotguns in a gun locker in the hallway. The other coven members are aware of the shotguns, but not the rest. Brigant tells them, if she thinks the time is right, knowing that at least some of them will be resistant to the idea of exposing the group to major police attention by possessing illegal weaponry, unless there is clearly a need to take that risk. That need could be the aforementioned action against the conference, or it could be a need to defend the Steading against state incursions (the PCs).

Brigant, Epona

Athletics 5, Health 7, Scuffling 6, Shooting 6, Surveillance 7

Damage Modifier: -1 (Knife), +1 (Assault rifle)

War Goddess's Revenge

scene type: ALTERNATE

Of course, some groups may favor going in guns blazing – in which case, they get a fight, if probably not an enormously effective one (give the Covenant a chance to stab you in the back, though, and the witches might just get somewhere).

Taking the middle ground – arriving with guns ready, but intending to make arrests rather than kill – might be productive. The Covenant surrenders, other than Brigant, who makes a run for it if she can, and shoot the PCs with the AK-47 she keeps under her bed if she cannot (while remaining alert for any chance to make a break for it).

Defending Raven Steading

The witches all carry knives about the farm, as a matter of course. This routine has been drilled into them repeatedly by Brigant: the logic is that (a) knives are legal to carry around one's own home, particularly for farm workers etc.; (b) women need to wield

and be familiar with weapons to fight back against male violence and oppression. Though none but Brigant know of the murders she has committed, they have all talked about the need to fight and even kill, if necessary, to defend the Covenant against the incursions of the patriarchy or other outside threats. They react very swiftly and violently to combat or intimidation in their home. Though most have never used their knives in anger, they drill and train with them regularly, as well as using them for everyday tasks. They are all at least competent with the shotguns, too, and make use of them if it appears there will be a more drawn-out fight.

Witches, Feminists, Hippies, and Radicals – the other Covenant members

"You can't consume your way out of the destruction of Mother Earth. Buying more stuff, even if it's supposedly ethically produced, environmentally friendly stuff, does not stop the big corporations from mining the rainforests, digging up the tar sands, carving up the Arctic, trawling all the fish from the sea, and killing the last

resisting indigenous peoples of the world. Writing letters and signing petitions doesn't stop them either. The only way to answer such crimes is by becoming at least as extreme as the criminals."

The Covenant members are hardened activists, most of them having either spent decades involved in environmental direct action, or having been brought up in that atmosphere, in Raven Steading, as second-generation eco-radicals. The older ones have tried all the newspaper-friendly activism – the marches and placards, even the Greenpeace-style dinghies and tree-houses to put their own bodies in the path of those who would despoil Gaia. And they have moved on, become more and more extreme, more and more willing to destroy property or even people, so long as it is enemy-owned property, or they are enemy people. This is a war, a war against unbridled, destructive capitalism, and one that the Covenant plan to win, or die trying to win.

Note that this means the Covenant are not, as a whole, significantly less extreme than Brigant. Some of them, at least, would support her against O. V., even if the full nature of her crimes and beliefs was exposed. She might worship dark supernatural forces – but as long as they are named for Goddesses, that is probably acceptable.

Covenant of the Morrigan

Names: Nabi, Mitylene, Penthesilea, Badb.

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

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist, Kick), -1 (Knife), +1 (Shotgun)



The Woman With Death On Her Face

scene type: ALTERNATE Desdemona Reinhart

Reinhart is a second-generation eco-activist, effectively an "associate member" or ally of the Covenant, though there is no such formal status. She was born here, twenty-two years ago, but left at sixteen to take an even more radically self-sufficient approach, as a covenant of one. She's lived on protest camps and squats all over Europe, as well as taking a few journeys further afield. There are few official records of her existence; she's proud of never having claimed benefits, living instead on capitalism's surplus, dumpster-diving and shoplifting. Put her in any city on the globe, and a few hours later she'll have a squatted place to live and the scavenged makings of a decent meal; put her in the countryside and it'll be a tree-house or bender, with gathered wild food for dinner.

She has dyed, bright red hair, and expert tattoo work over her face and upper arms: her face is crafted as a Mexican Day of the Dead skull mask, a semi-realistic skull overlaying her features, embellished with flowers and snakes. Her arms each have scenes of Hell, taken from Blake's art for Dante's *Inferno*.

Politically she is very nearly as radical as the Covenant, but in her case this is tempered with a compassion and amiability that belies her extreme appearance, as well as a measure of practicality. Yes, she will fight, politically, for Mother Earth, and has done; but she won't kill, other than in self-defense or defense of those she loves (though this might mean that she fights the characters, if they appear to be attacking the Covenant indiscriminately). She is not so dogmatic that she sees the Covenant's approach as the only viable one. She dislikes the common run of humanity, whom she sees as dupes of capitalism, but has a lot of time for anyone who thinks outside the box.

She has severe mood swings. On a good day she is filled with joy in life, fired up with energy and enthusiasm; on a bad day, nihilistic and cynical almost to the point of suicide. Assume that she's having an up day, the day she arrives at the Covenant; she would be unlikely to travel far on a bad day, unless it were to a remote and wild place, for solitude. If the characters spend any significant time with her, though, they see her other side. The GM can use her nihilism, if desired, to get her away from the characters; she does not want any human company in that state of mind, and will barely be able to communicate verbally.

She is fascinated by the occult, and by mythology, but she does not believe in any of it, strictly speaking. If anything, she's closest to being an atheist.

She's also a hedonist, mixing in a great many circles, not judging people so harshly as the Covenant. While she would be suspicious of police or O. V., she could be persuaded to co-operate, particularly if the characters are very truthful with her. She has seen enough of the occult and alternative scene throughout Europe (including at various drug- and BDSM-fueled parties) to be at least peripherally aware

of the existence of the Esoterrorists, though not under that name. She would see them as at least as much of a threat to human existence as she sees global capitalism.

She is very attracted to extreme people (male or female). A month or so back she met Rob Black (see p. 52) at a fetish party, and started an intense relationship with him. She is fascinated by his detachment and studied cruelty, as well as his utterly egotistical, monstrous philosophy, which strikes a chord with her misanthropy (which is a constant, whether it is directed towards sheep-like consumers on one of her good days, or everyone on a bad day). He is one of the few people capable of dealing with her nihilism and negativity, recognizing a bad day early on and taking advantage of it – using and abusing her, beating her even more severely than in the regular course of their relationship. Bizarrely, this does tend to lift her mood, or at least allow her to tolerate it.

She arrives at the Covenant alone, riding a modified, all-weather motorcycle loaned to her by Black, as it's one of the few vehicles that can readily negotiate around the deep snowdrifts that cover the roads near the Covenant.

The GM should time her arrival so as to maximize the chance that the characters will at least have the option of talking to her rather than fighting her, if they can get over the way she looks. This may mean, for a particularly trigger-happy group, that they see her or meet her before the rest of the Covenant, just before or as the player group arrives here. Most probably she will arrive after they do, but before the situation erupts into violence. Getting her on-side could reduce the violence, when it comes, because she is respected almost as much as Brigant, here, and loved more. The older members of the Covenant saw her grow up, which means that not only do many of them adore her, but they also experienced at first hand just how smart, sensible, practical and likeable she has always been. One of her reasons for leaving was that it was clear to her she would come into conflict with Brigant if she stayed, though her wanderlust would have taken her away sooner or later anyway.

Reinhart, Desdemona

Athletics 7, Health 8, Scuffling 6, Surveillance 7

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist, Kick), -1 (Knife)

Coven Meeting

scene type: ALTERNATE

This scene deals with non-violent resolutions, or minimally violent resolutions, to the Covenant problem. Ideally, the characters get Reinhart on-side, along with her mother, Diana (a long-standing Covenant member), and other senior people here, to expose Brigant as the hardened killer she is. Most Interpersonal skills can be used for this, but it takes time, debate, tactical disclosure of facts, and a lot of roleplay. Even with all that, it is unlikely that the characters arrest Brigant without fighting most of the Covenant.

The witches would potentially be willing, if convinced of Brigant's guilt and her involvement with Esoterrorist outsiders, to **Negotiate** a settlement in which she and her closest followers are exiled from the Covenant, without her illegal weaponry. Let a known, committed Esoterrorist simply leave, along with the makings of a new coven? It might not be enough for the PCs, but the alternative may well be a large and brutal fight with the entire Covenant. It would, in any case, be enough to prevent her from carrying out the sacrifice in Shrewsbury, on McLoughlin's orders; she will no longer have the resources to do it, either in terms of personnel or weaponry. If released, she will take at least a few months to examine her principles, eventually justifying her Esoterrorism to herself again, convincing herself and those still loyal to her that her "Dark Goddess" could not possibly be anything other than the avenging, feminist spirit she has always thought it was.

Reinhart, if convinced to co-operate with O. V., and if told of the real nature of the Esoterrorists (certainly a breach of the usual procedure, but probably justified by the extreme circumstances) will put two and two together concerning her lover, Black. It becomes clear to her that not only is he an

Esoterrorist (hence part of the reason for her fascination of him), but that the Esoterrorists are far, far more inimical to humanity than she realized earlier. She could be convinced to lead the characters to the Sons of Satan, and potentially to help expose Black in much the same way she did Brigant. Smart characters will also use her info about Black to re-interrogate McLoughlin, to see if he can confirm it, which he can if **Interrogated** sufficiently (the characters will need to break him utterly before he will betray Black; he will need to think that all is lost, already, and that all he can do is try to do damage limitation with regards to his own life).

Most groups will probably not have the patience, or even for that matter the good luck, to find a non-violent solution, which most likely means they will end up fighting Reinhart too, and not having her help in Chapter 5.

Paying the Morrigan's Due

scene type: ALTERNATE

If the characters do not somehow get to the Covenant of the Morrigan and prevent them, Epona Brigant leads them on her holy crusade against the capitalist patriarchy, slaying what she claims is a secret conference of the largest and most evil corporations on the planet, in a small hotel near Shrewsbury, but which is actually a convention of Vodafone telesales staff for team-building and training purposes (just a cover, according to Brigant). The convention has been holed up in the hotel for several days longer than it should have been, by this point, the roads up into the Shropshire hills being hard to traverse. For most of them this provides a grand excuse to stay a few days extra on the company dime, simply "unable" to get back to work, and with plenty of opportunity to get very drunk now that the formal convention is over.

The Covenant, armed with explosives, automatic weaponry, and the conviction (via Brigant) that a new, matriarchal society will arise from the ashes of the Ragnarok they see all around, kill hotel staff and convention-goers alike with ease.

They simply set charges in the basement and walls, detonate them, and gun down any survivors trying to flee, dedicating the whole affair to "the Dark Goddess".

Afterwards, the usual **Evidence Collection** and similar crime scene skills are barely necessary to determine what happened here, since it is all so blatant. Still, the following leads are available, and could potentially be of use:

- **Ballistics:** The spent shell casings are from AK-47s, for the most part, but a few come from 20-gauge shotgun shells.
- **Streetwise** could eventually trace the AKs back to the Sons of Satan, from whom they were bought by Brigant (via contacts set up by McLoughlin), though it would be a laborious process involving the tracing of a supply line across the country.
- **Research** of police files reveals the shotguns to be legally held by the Covenant. They are no longer concerned with being exposed as criminals, having by this point been convinced that the current society is breaking down in a final manner.

- **Explosives** (1-point spend) determines that the charges used are a commercially available type, used predominantly in the mining industry.
- **Forensic Accounting** of Stanton Stone's accounts, either due to investigating them specifically or as a longer-term process of checking all mining and quarrying companies in the UK, could trace the batch of explosives to them. The charges should be in one of their facilities, guarded by Bartley Security. This could lead the characters to Terrance Bartley (Boot The Door, p.21), if they are not already investigating him.

The Veil-Out

By this point, it is likely that the severe weather has reduced communications and media activities to a bare minimum. The characters probably do not need to perform more than the most cursory of veil-outs; one more massacre barely rises above the level of background noise any more.



VERITATIS

Chapter Five: The Wolves of Famine

This chapter deals with the investigation of the Sons of Satan, a motorcycle gang duped by Esoterrorist influence. The Sons have been prepared by the Esoterrorists to take on Ur-Mensch forms; Isa Kenaz plan to use them as harbingers and soldiers of the Apocalypse, terrorizing the nation.

As with many of the other groups, the Sons can potentially be turned from Esoterrorist influence, though doing so would be tough. The only full Esoterrorist cabalist involved is Rob Black, and he is only the vice-president of the chapter; if the PCs can offer proof to the President of Black's Esoterrorist involvement, he is cast out from the gang, which has strict rules about members with two masters. Either way, they need to capture Black, or at least get his phone and computer, which contain the last bits of Ragnarok plan info needed, i.e. solid leads to the nuclear submarine.

Sons of Hell

scene type: Core

The Sons of Satan operate out of a scrapyard and motorcycle breaker's in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, close to the Peak District. It's a market town and former mining area, with around 100,000 inhabitants, not far from the larger cities of Sheffield and Manchester. The whole region is very popular with motorcyclists, because of the tight bends,

beautiful scenery and exciting roads, once one gets out among the Peaks proper.

The Prez: Ballistic

Ballistic is a solidly muscular six feet tall, one of the few bikers of his age (early 40s) who has not let all the beer and fast food make him fat. He comes from a military family and background, having served in the First Gulf War with his second-in-command, Rob Black. His nickname does not come from that time – he was a Royal Marine Commando, not an artilleryman – but from his tendency to go ballistic at the first sign of trouble. For Ballistic, this is not about shouting and going red in the face – it's about hurtling into the source of the trouble, knocking it onto the ground, getting one hand on its throat and beating it to a bloody pulp with the other.

He formed the Sons twelve years ago, a couple of years after leaving the Royal Marines. This followed a schism from another local motorcycle club, which left the leader of that club in hospital with a punctured lung, and Ballistic barely escaping a prison sentence.

Ballistic likes Black, but has faint suspicions of him, just below the surface of his conscious mind. He suppresses these suspicions for the sake of harmony in the Sons, and because he does not want to believe his oldest friend and ally might betray him by working entirely for his own interests instead of the gang's.

- **Trivia, Cop Talk, or Research** (1-point spend, for a UK-based character) remembers or uncovers the case. It was an arranged fight, with a “no weapons” agreement. Ballistic’s assailant drew a knife anyway, and Ballistic knocked him out then stabbed him with it. Ballistic’s counsel argued it was self-defense, unsuccessfully, but Ballistic was given a suspended sentence anyway.
- **Cop Talk** discovers that Ballistic and the Sons are well-known to the police, and suspected of crimes including amphetamine dealing, organized motorcycle and car theft rings, and ownership of illegal firearms. Most cases against them collapse before getting as far as court. It is very, very hard to convince any witnesses to testify against them.
- **Research** reveals that the club has large parties at least five or six times a year, including motorcycle rallies in the summer. They have a winter party scheduled in a few days (see *Satan Walks the Earth*, p. 56). If the players choose to attend the party rather than targeting the Sons at their base, see *Partying in Hell*, p. 56.

Ballistic (President of the Sons of Satan)

Athletics 8, Health 7, Scuffling 12, Shooting 6, Surveillance 7

Damage Modifier: +0 (Machete), +1 (Shotgun)

The Vice Prez: Rob Black Pope’Black

Black is the brains, and the personality, behind the Isa Kenaz cabal. If anything, he is even more charismatic than Ballistic, but not quite so much in a way that appeals to the Sons of Satan. He has a slimy, manipulative quality to his charm, contrasting with Ballistic’s straightforwardness. He’s tall and lean, with a black goatee beard and close-shaved scalp.

He has been a member of the Sons around five years, rising in seniority more rapidly than usual thanks to his long friendship with the Prez and through him, the club. In general,

he’s not a joiner; he wants to command hierarchies, not serve under them. So, it took him some years of examining the Sons from the outside to come to the conclusion that there was something he could use, here, even if it involved compromise.

Black joined the Esoterrorists soon after mustering out of the Royal Marines. He was a natural recruit – even before joining them, he’d established a small coven of willing pseudo-Satanist rockers and bikers, predominantly to ensure his debauched sexual needs were met. He arranged theatrical “black masses” for the Sons of Satan for some time before finally accepting the invitation to prospect for them. All the usual Esoterrorist motivations apply to him: he wants power, money, drugs, violence, and sex, preferably all at the same time.

Like Ballistic, he has managed to avoid criminal prosecution so far.

Black has no immediate plans to seize control of the gang. He knows that granting Ballistic the power to become the kind of Viking or Mongol-style predator lord he has always wanted to be, will serve the Esoterrorists’ ends perfectly well. He also knows that once Ballistic and the gang become Ur-Mensch, he will no longer need to control them; they will be doing Esoterrorist work by their very existence.

Black’s divided loyalties (Esoterrorist and motorcycle gang) could get him thrown out of the gang.

- **Anthropology**, a 1-point **Streetwise** spend, or a 1-point **Trivia** spend, reveals that motorcycle gangs look very poorly on any member who is found to have another affiliation. One is supposed to give one’s full loyalty to the club; being a member of a specific occult terrorist group is almost as bad as being an undercover cop, particularly if one does not reveal one’s affiliation to the rest of the Sons.

Black has a personal room at the clubhouse, on the scrapyard premises. He is not quite so security-conscious as the likes of McLoughlin, preferring to keep every bit of info on file if at all possible, for blackmail and other purposes. Thus the laptop he usually keeps in his room could be a godsend to the characters, in terms

of providing solid evidence (probably to the rest of the gang, in the first instance) of his activities. There are emails from most of the other Isa Kenaz members on here, emails they have all long since deleted from their own machines (at Black's insistence!). He feels that the combination of the castle-like club premises, with the relatively unsophisticated password lockdown system he has on the laptop, is enough. Also, he is selfish, of course; he does not much care if the whole conspiracy comes down around his ears, if he personally has already been arrested anyway.

- (Core Clue) **Cryptography** and half an hour's work with appropriate tools gains full access to the data on the laptop.
- (Core Clue) There is info on his planned ritual to transform the Sons into Ur-Mensch. This includes his detailed pop-psychological profiles on each member, such as notes on their weaknesses and on which qualities to use to bring each of them most fully into the required "primal" mental state (including drug combinations and sexual practices). This info will be found early on.
- (Core Clue) Note that there is data on his involvement with Commander Winton, here, too, though the characters only spot this among the mountain of data if they know what to look for (his name, probably) or if they spend a couple of hours trawling through the whole hard drive (**Research** or **Data Retrieval** spends could reduce the time). In most cases, it's probably best for the PCs not to get this info immediately, giving them a chance to finish things up here before moving on to the sub (Chapter Six).
- (Core Clue) Initial drafts of the memos and emails that incriminate "Pakistani agents" in the destructive weather events are on the laptop, well hidden, again only found when the PCs trawl through the entire hard drive.
- **Evidence Collection** finds further incriminating evidence in Black's room, in the form of a piece of parchment paper covered in occult designs and with

Sparean sigils around the edges. These sigils each represent the full legal name of one of the Sons of Satan gang members, encoded in a visual style resembling that created by early 20th century shaman and artist Austin Osman Spare.

- **Cryptography** or a 1-point spend of **Occult** decodes the sigils.
- Alternatively, a 1-point spend of **Evidence Collection** finds a discarded scrap of notepaper with the same sigils on, each at the end of a line or two that start with the gang members names and lead through various workings-out to the final sigil versions.
- **Occult** recognizes the sigils' provenance, as well as working out that the parchment paper is basically a single talisman intended to transform all the named persons into subhuman creatures. This gives the characters some ammunition to use in convincing the other Sons that Black has his own agenda. **Persuasion** is enough, if the team can get the Sons to listen for long enough – Ballistic is certainly smart enough to understand the sigil code. It's not quite as much of a smoking gun as voodoo dollies done up as each gang member, but it could be spun to seem quite similar.
- A 1-point spend of **Occult** identifies Spare as something of an inspiration to some sections of the modern Esoterrorist movement, with his focus on creating an Alphabet of Desire that could be used to realize the desires of the magician, however sordid.
- **Document Analysis** proves that the same person wrote the parchment and the note. If given a sample of Black's handwriting (Ballistic has Black's signed and hand-written club membership form on file), the character determines that the author is Black, and can prove this to the club's satisfaction ("see the characteristic way he crosses his Ts").
- Black also the most vital of the above info (everything but the ritual data) on his smartphone, which has full access to his email client, again password-protected.

Black, Rob Black Pope

Athletics 8, Health 8, Scuffling 10, Shooting 8, Surveillance 8

Damage Modifier: 0 (Iron Bar), +1 (Shotgun)

Getting In**scene type: alternate**

The scrapyard is tricky to enter without notice. The Sons have their club-house at the center, attached to the various workshops and offices. The yard is irregularly shaped, and around 200 x 500 meters across. It is surrounded by a tall, razor-wire-topped metal fence on three sides, with a steep rock wall on the fourth side and closed-circuit video surveillance throughout.

- An **Athletics** test (Difficulty 4, or 3 with climbing gear) gets the characters down the rock wall (one end of the scrapyard is on the site of a former open-cast mine), or **Infiltration** (Difficulty 4) gets them over the fence.
- Avoiding or deactivating the cameras is an easier **Infiltration** task (Difficulty 3).

Arriving during business hours, or simply pushing the intercom button on the entry system, is another option, but the Sons do not have their usual wariness of dealing with the police. Rob Black has gradually, subtly primed them over the past few months to believe that some kind of natural disaster is just around the corner, a disaster that will break down the usual rules of society, removing power and authority from the police and allowing the formation of a new order. For the most part he has done this in a joking manner, asking the Sons what their zombie survival plans are, or talking about what the gang would do if the oil ran out, Mad Max style. All twenty-two of them are ready and willing to fight any police who show up. Most of their fear of the consequences has evaporated with the arrival of the snow, and the first instances of looting. As far as they can see, this is an issue of survival, now; the possibility of future arrest is less relevant than the likelihood of starvation if they allow anyone else to control them.

- **Impersonate** and **Streetwise** gains access to the place peacefully, if the characters attempt to come across as



Black's Winter Plans

Some or all of the following info can be gained by various means, such as talking to club members, eavesdropping, and snooping around the clubhouse.

"Gonna be a cold one, this winter." The rest of the gang mocked Black mercilessly late last year, for his apparent obsession with winter gear for bikes. He bought a snowplow attachment for one of their two ATVs, as well as snow chains and an imported kit to turn a motorcycle into a snowmobile-like vehicle, replacing the

front wheel with a ski and the rear wheel with a caterpillar track. Working with scrounged parts from the scrapyard, he then made jury-rigged copies of the latter kit on a few old motorcycles. The mockery has grown less and less as the winter has grown more severe. The gang now realize that they have options available to get around, options which almost no-one else in the country has, options which give them a Blitzkrieg-like power to raid where they like, intimidate who they like, and even kill as they like.

potential customers or suppliers for one of the gang's illicit trades. All characters involved need at least one of the relevant skills, and whoever does most of the talking needs both. A 1-point spend in **Intimidation** or **Streetwise** lets the characters come across as sufficiently powerful and/or connected that they are not to be messed around. The Sons are always on the make, always willing to screw the weaker party in any deal, and always confident in their ability to win any war that results from such a twisting of contract on their part. This is even more the case now that they have less fear of the police than usual.

- **Impersonate** alone lets characters come across as ordinary civilians who are looking for spare parts from the scrapyard or motorcycle breaker's. The problem there is that the gang are currently all fired up for the ongoing apocalypse. They might let strangers in peacefully, but they have fewer concerns than they used to about robbing them and leaving them for dead, dropped down an old mineshaft somewhere.
- **Intimidation** is always an option if things go badly wrong, but it takes a 2-point spend to even have the gang give pause long enough for the characters to begin **Negotiation** – a

negotiation that is likely to go in the gang's favor, because they believe they hold all or most of the cards.

The gang do not usually keep any guns easily accessible, since easily accessible guns are also easily found by police. They do have a couple of small, well-concealed stashes of guns at the very heart of the heaps of scrap metal and rusting cars that make up the scrapyard, though. In their current state of heightened alertness, at least four of them will be carrying some kind of gun at any time, as a balance between what they think is currently a very low chance of a police raid, and what they think is currently a high chance that one or other of their enemies or rivals will attack. All the gang carry large knives at all times when on the premises, too. They are very much used to fighting as a team, having honed their tactics in hundreds of bar fights and random scraps, and they actively enjoy fighting of all kinds, relishing the opportunity to break some heads.

Sons of Satan

Names: Shank, Filth, Priest, Hook, Sketch, N. G.

Athletics 4, Health 5, Scuffling 10, Shooting 5, Surveillance 5

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist, Kick), -1 (Knife), +1 (Shotgun)

Desdemona Reinhart and the Sons

scene type: alternate

If the characters have Desdemona Reinhart with them (p. 45), and she is willing to co-operate with them fully, she can probably get them inside safely. The characters can roleplay out the process of convincing her to turn fully against Rob Black – which needs to be done in advance, as she will certainly defer to him if she has not been convinced otherwise – or the GM may allow them to simply explain which Interpersonal skills they are using, and how.

- **Negotiation** should be paramount. On a good day, Reinhart is rational and logical, after all. A character taking the time to negotiate, particularly with a bit of **Reassurance** thrown in, gets the best results from her. What does she want? Actually, ideally, some kind of freelance, undercover troubleshooter role within O. V. would suit her perfectly – she doesn't believe in any occult stuff, after all, but she can be made to realize just what a threat the Esoterrorists are to humanity. A bit of cash as a retainer for doing what she does anyway – hanging around with various fringe groups all across Europe, but never quite fully joining any of them – would be just the ticket. She mentally says good-bye to Rob Black with some regrets, but she knew it couldn't last, anyway, and at least this way she gets to save the world in the process of having her anticipated messy break-up. (Yes, a job offer would break the rule that O. V. should remain utterly secret, but breaking the rule here can be justified as a necessity.)

- **Intimidation** works, perhaps surprisingly, but only if combined with a hint of **Flirting** from the same character. Reinhart digs her heels in or fights back, if she feels under pressure, unless she thinks there's at least some chance of kinky sex from the person doing the intimidation.
- **Flattery** is counterproductive if it has anything to do with her appearance – she gets comments all the time, positive and negative alike, and ignores them or finds them irritating. The same skill used in relation to her intelligence and perspicacity gets a positive response from her, but only if used in addition to some of the above-mentioned skills.

Most of the Sons respect Reinhart, after she fought one of their drunken Prospects, who had tried to grab her ass without invitation. She knocked him out with a barrage of fists to the face, then when he woke up and menaced her with a knife, she pulled





The Sons as Ur-Mensch

Black plans to transform all the Sons into Ur-Mensch, via an elaborate ritual he will perform, culminating in a mass sacrifice and transformation at the Sons' winter bike festival. Usually this is held a little further afield, in the countryside, but last-minute changes of weather forced a last-minute change of plan. It will now essentially be a winter party, rather than a full-on festival, held on the land of a friendly farmer on the banks of the River Rother, not far from the scrapyard. It will probably only get locals along to it, rather than the usual array of

allied gangs and friends from all over. See "Satan Walks the Earth", p. 56, for more info on the festival.

If the Sons do get transformed, they continue much as they have done, but with less concern for money. Life as an Ur-Mensch biker is one long violent party. Occasionally Black may perform a further ritual to guide the Ur-Mensch to a specific end, such as killing the PCs. Otherwise he simply lets them get on with it, as they rampage across an already ravaged land, slaying and eating.

out her own blade and faced him down. The assembled crew mocked and ridiculed the Prospect out of the gang forever, and Ballistic himself congratulated her. Black just looked on, quietly amused at the whole affair. So, the gang hears her out, even if she accuses Black.

At least one member of the O. V. group needs to speak, too, to back up her claims. The Sons will not take a lone outsider's word against Black's, but a number of outsiders, backed up by evidence, might just do the trick. This is particularly the case if the O. V. operatives make it clear that they are here solely to deal with Black and those crimes of his (terrorism, essentially) that go far beyond the Sons' usual remit. This should not mean revealing the existence of O. V. (they can simply say they are part of a special unit that deals solely with cult and occult terrorism).

Negotiation is absolutely crucial here. The Sons will not necessarily just let the characters arrest Black, take him away, and be done with things. They want to talk privately (gang only) before making a definite decision on anything. If the PCs say the wrong things, that decision is "kill the cops, and punish Black internally, in our own way."

Another option is to use Reinhart as bait – draw Black out without having to fight

or confront the whole gang. This feels less ethical to her, somehow – it would suit her sense of justice to see him exposed to the gang's censure – but she might be persuaded to do it (a 2-point **Negotiation** spend).

Grabbing the Black Pope

scene type: alternate

Without the backup of Reinhart – someone the gang already respect – it is unlikely that the PCs convince the gang of anything very much. What they can do, via stealth, observation, or subterfuge, is get at Black when he is alone, or nearly alone. As ever with this kind of situation, the GM should let the players come up with a plan, then determine the results.

Black rarely leaves the scrapyard alone, particularly in the current situation, almost always preferring to take at least a couple of other bikers with him. He could be persuaded to meet Reinhart though – she is definitely a weakness of his. If anything rouses his suspicions, he ensures he is watched surreptitiously by another biker or two.

- **Surveillance** is probably the most useful skill here.





Tonight, we party in Hell

scene type: alternate

The characters might infiltrate the party, simply buying tickets online (these events are important money-raisers for the club), or arriving in a more official guise. The latter is a dangerous approach, unless the characters draft in large numbers of serving police to keep order – most of the party-goers are either outlaw bikers, or at least very sympathetic to that lifestyle, and so resent official presence at a “peaceful” party.

Some degree of **Impersonate** and/or **Streetwise** are useful if the characters wish to avoid too much attention, though they’re unlikely to be scrutinized too closely if they just appear to be party-goers.

This might be an opportunity to snatch or even assassinate Black, with good use of

Surveillance and combat-related skills. They have to pick their moment carefully; he will not get drunk or take drugs on this occasion, but might let his guard down a little. As ever, PCs who come up with a clever plan should be rewarded with a good chance at success.

Note that if they leave it too late to make their move, Black’s midnight ritual goes ahead, and they have Ur-Mensch to contend with as well (see *Satan Walks the Earth*, p. 56), or more likely, to run from in screaming terror.

Next Steps

Black’s laptop, smartphone, and/or Black himself and a good deal of **Intimidation**, **Interrogation**, and/or **Reassurance**, are necessary so the PCs can move on to investigating Commander Winton and the nuclear submarine plot (Chapter Six).



Satan walks the Earth

scene type: alternate

If Rob Black's quiet biker party happens without interruption (see p. 56), around 200 people show up in a farmer's somewhat snowy field, with bonfires, beer, and music to help them stay warm. On the stroke of midnight, during a drunken orgy involving the Sons of Satan and local prostitutes hired by Black, each member of the club is transformed into an Ur-Mensch, precisely

according to Black's plans. They then have the rest of the party-goers to devastate, probably starting with the prostitutes.

At this point in the Esoterrorist plans, it is fine for there to be fleeing, terrified survivors. Their wild tales terrify the region, and spread, enhancing the general terror felt by the nation.

Investigating after the fact would probably involve tracking down the survivors and interviewing them, as well as examining the site, but by this time, events have moved on, and the PCs should be instructed to get to Scotland as a priority – see Chapter Six: Deep Heaves the Ocean Black.

Chapter Six: Deep Heaves the Ocean Black

This chapter is about getting across country to HMNB Clyde, the UK's nuclear submarine base west of Glasgow, and from there, getting aboard the sub before it sets out.

The External Enemy

scene type: Core

Finally, someone to blame.

As soon as the PCs have captured Rob Black, or gained access to his phone or laptop, the GM should start the following sequence of events rolling.

Scrimmager, Fairclough, and other, lesser Esoterrorists within various media associations, begin a series of carefully planned leaks: fabricated memos and other supposed evidence that the extreme weather events were actually carefully planned, by Islamic terrorists funded by Pakistan. Note that even if one or other of the Isa Kenaz members have been neutralized by PC action, the leaks will go ahead, though with slightly less initial furore: both created various systems to ensure that the fabricated evidence still comes into the hands of their subordinates and colleagues, from a minion of Black's who they both noted down as a "trusted intelligence source".

"DID PAKISTANI SCIENTISTS DESTROY BRITAIN'S WEATHER?" scream the headlines, in the few newspapers still being distributed. Most people get their news by radio, by this point: a mixture of the BBC and a few local stations that are still broadcasting. The BBC, relatively shallowly infiltrated by Esoterrorist initiatives so far, is cautious, at least to begin with, reporting on what the major newspapers are saying, rather than claiming the rumors are true itself. Local, provincial stations repeat the most extreme claims without reservation, or even exaggerate them further. The British tendency towards xenophobia, never far beneath the surface, is roused.

The following claims are made by various media sources:

- The severe weather events began with a known Pakistani secret agent, Anton Bennett, deliberately destroying his weather control lab at Manchester University (see *Little Girl Lost*) so as to permanently destabilize Britain's weather.
- This was part of a wider plan by Pakistani Islamists to punish Britain for its role in prosecuting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are seen by the Islamists not as wars on terror but as wars on the innocent, killing non-combatants by the hundreds of thousands.

- Islamic extremists were behind many of the instances of looting, violence, and murder that were previously blamed on desperation and lawlessness brought about by the severe winter.
- At this point, Britain must take even firmer action against this state-sponsored terrorism, seen by many as an act of war. Pakistan has allied itself with the remnants of Al-Qaida and the Taliban, becoming the most extreme and dangerous of the rogue states. It must be destroyed, to send a final lesson to the Islamist terrorists.
- Within hours of the initial reports, questions are being asked in Parliament, and ministers being pressed by reporters: "What is Her Majesty's Government going to do about the Pakistan situation? Are you going to sit there and let another country destroy us?"

Bellows phones the PCs soon after the first news stories break. He suspects this is part of an Esoterrorist plot (particularly if they already brought in and/or investigated Fairclough or Scrimmager), but he can do little to stop the media feeding frenzy, and has no influence over national government. He wants them to concentrate on any connection between their ongoing investigations and these new revelations, and be ready to drop everything if anything new comes up. This should hopefully be their cue to more thoroughly investigate the contents of Black's computer, if they are not already doing so: see the Black's Ops scene, below, and Chapter 5 (p. 49).

Black's Ops

scene type: Core

Other than the Ur-Mensch transformation of the Sons of Satan, Black's main role in the conspiracy has been to "run" Commander Trevor Winton of the *HMS Vengeance*. The two met when both served aboard the same helicopter carrier during the first Gulf War. Black saved Winton's life when a helicopter exploded over the ship. Black initiated Winton into Esoterrorist ways soon after,

convincing him that various entities from his own complex Gnostic theology were what had enabled Black to save him ("you were being watched over, mate, watched over").

This connection is documented in some detail in Black's computer. It includes info as to the precise nature of the Esoterrorist re-conditioning that Black put Winton through: a series of drug-fueled initiatory psychodramas designed to utterly break down his personality and allow Black to reassemble it from the ground up. The new personality turned Winton's central loyalty to Black rather than the British state. In Winton's mind, Black is the British state; a living embodiment of Albion in human form, hereditary guardian of the land.

- **Forensic Psychology**, used by someone reading the notes here on Winton, deduces that he cannot easily be snapped out of his brainwashing, not without months of therapy.
- **Cop Talk or Research** and a military connection (including via Bellows) can check up on Winton's current posting, and on his service history with Black. The implications of an Esoterrorist initiate commanding a nuclear submarine in active use should not be lost on the players.

Also on Black's computer are the fabricated documents implicating Pakistani agents as the creators of the extreme weather events. Black is proud of these; he created them all himself. They might not stand up to dedicated scrutiny by serious experts in geopolitics, but they probably do not need to. Just stand up long enough to whip up a media hype that can be exploited by politicians looking for an external enemy to shift blame onto. Black has a list of organizations, garnered from Fairclough and Scrimmager, to which he sends the documents. He has not told anyone else, even in Isa Kenaz, of the precise nature of the planned nuclear apocalypse; just that "something big, very big" will cap off the Fimbulvetr in the most spectacular manner possible. This secrecy maintains the security of the plan, even if some of his co-conspirators are captured before it comes to fruition.

Race against time

scene type: Core

Military data, probably from Bellows as soon as the PCs let him know that Winton commands a nuclear sub, indicates that the *HMS Vengeance* is scheduled to launch in just under 24 hours, for a 3-month stint deep in the ocean. Once it is at sea, it is virtually incommunicado, unless the British Government chooses to send it orders to launch a nuclear strike.

The PCs have less than a day to get from the north of England to Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde (HMNB Clyde), then board the sub. The base is 20 miles or so north of Glasgow, and so perhaps a four- or five-hour drive in normal conditions. It could easily take two or three times that, depending on the severity of the Fimbulvetr, the characters' means of transport, and any encounters that the GM chooses to throw in en route to enhance the tension. A number of **Driving** tests should be made to avoid hazards, and possibly a **Mechanics** test or two to repair frozen vehicle parts.

The characters should use the opportunity of the long journey to plan and **Research**. They continue to receive updates from one of Bellows's operatives given that task, as follows:

- Several Members of Parliament from both main political parties have stated that they would support or even demand a full-scale war if it emerges that "any other nation" has done this to Britain.
- Representatives from the security and intelligence services have generally been advising caution. It's simply not possible, till the snow lifts, to establish the authenticity of the leaked documents with any certainty.
- A few of the more hawkish, opportunistic government ministers and advisers are now loudly calling for war. They say that the intelligence community has had "more than enough" time and resources to say with certainty if Pakistan was

behind the attack, and blaming them for having "failed" to provide warning of the attack. Their tone and language are clear – as far as they are concerned, the issue of the weather being an "attack" has been resolved. All that remains is to point the finger, find the attacker.

- The Pakistani embassy and government have denied any involvement or knowledge.
- The hawks ignore or dismiss the Pakistani statements. "Of course they would deny their complicity."
- The armed forces are said to be mobilizing for war.
- Bellows has done what he can to let his own bosses know that an ongoing investigation indicates that the documents are all forged, but he is being shouted down by politicians and opportunists wanting a war for their own reasons. He can't yet offer them definitive proof either way.

The GM should insert other intelligence findings from Bellows and his operatives into the above sequence, as appropriate: for example, if the characters left an Esoterrorist with Bellows's interrogators, they probably receive occasional updates from that source too.

War and Peace on the Clyde

scene type: Core

HMNB Clyde is a vast, sprawling complex, in several sections, around two sea lochs. The part where the nuclear subs are based is called Faslane. It is a 2-mile stretch of coastline that has 8,000 personnel working in it, most of them living on the base.

There are three main ways to the sub:

- Official channels – attempting to use official channels to gain access through one or other of the main gates.

- Pure stealth – midnight swims, kayaks, or mini-sub used to get across the bay, avoiding the base’s security systems.
- Join the protesters – HMNB Clyde has had an ongoing anti-nuclear protest outside it for thirty-odd years. Occasionally the protesters attempt to sneak onto the base or even aboard subs, to make political points. They know the base, the bay, and the subs better than anyone other than senior staff there.

Official channels

Cop Talk could do this, particularly if the PCs have official ID or have Bellows call ahead.

This may tip off Winton, who has arranged that one of his personal friends is working the south gate (the one most commonly used). If the PCs travel instead to the north gate, taking an extra 10 minutes or so, given travel conditions, Winton does not hear of their arrival.

In either case, there is a delay of at least an hour, as they are kept in a holding room by armed guards. They are not permitted to bring any weaponry or electronic equipment (even phones) into the base – security is tighter than ever at present. A successful **Infiltration** test (Difficulty 5) lets a character somehow smuggle a well-concealed item past the pat-downs and metal detectors.

The difficulty with this option, if Winton knows they are on the base, is the timing issue. It is not hard for Winton to use his contacts on the base to keep the characters delayed almost indefinitely, if he is aware they are there. He can then set sail with impunity, unless the characters decided to fight their way to him, having already lost the element of surprise. Various interpersonal skills get them a phone call to Bellows or another superior, who pulls strings and gets them out, but the delay is still significant, and Winton still very much tipped off. It is very likely that, even with strings pulled, the best that can happen is the PCs are kicked out of the base with just a few hours left before the sub launches, and have to form a different plan.

If Winton does not know they are there, the PCs might be able to get as far as the sub’s dock before having to revert to using force or stealth. This is best handled on an ad hoc basis, depending on their plan of action. Overpowering sentries, “losing” their escort, or simply having some PCs make a break for the sub while others cause a distraction, could all work.

Pure stealth

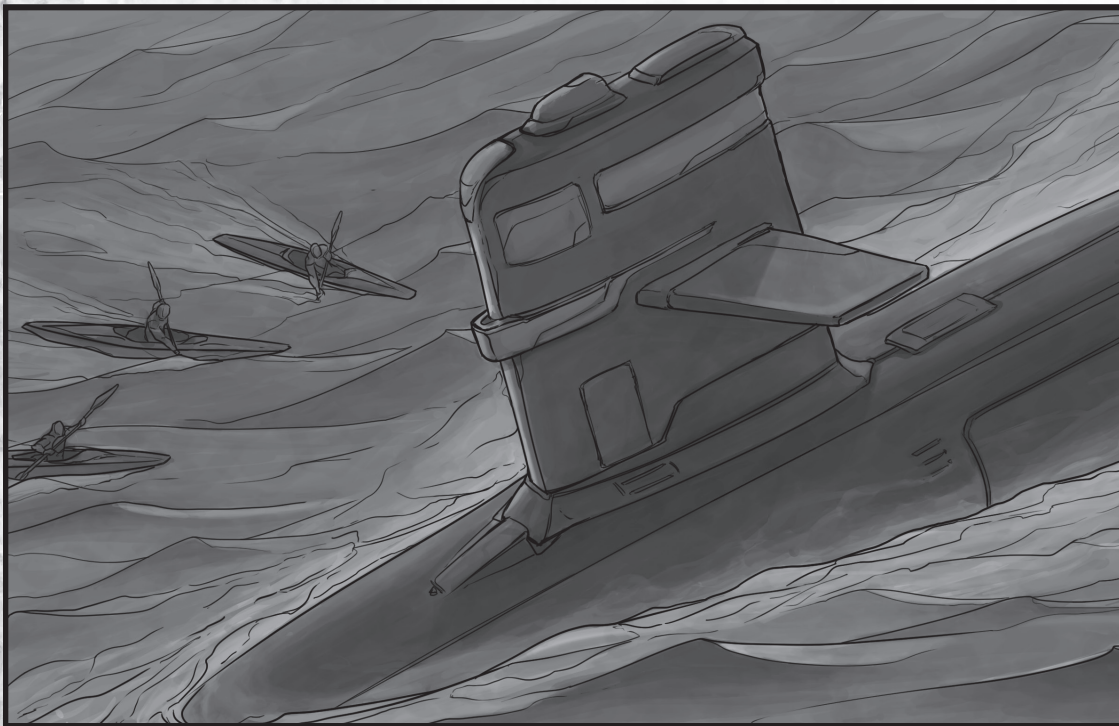
This generally involves **Athletics** (for swimming) or **Driving** (for vessels), as well as **Infiltration** (Difficulty 4 for an underwater swimmer, or 5 for a surface swimmer or submerged mini-sub, or 6 for a kayak, since the waters of the loch are very closely surveiled).

Anyone immersed without a good quality thermal drysuit rapidly succumbs to hypothermia (effectively taking a -2 hit every minute spent in the water). Swimming out takes an hour, kayaking half an hour, and piloting a mini-sub, 15 minutes. If caught, in the current political climate, the characters are shot at if they resist, or arrested and locked up if they surrender. As with Official Channels, above, they may be able to talk their way in to being permitted to make a phone call to get them out, but this is much harder than if they’d entered officially.

Preparedness is unlikely to get the characters drysuits, kayaks, or mini-sub, but gets them the kind of breaking-and-entering tools needed to acquire some or all of those things from a large aquatic sports store en route.

Join the Protesters

- **Trivia:** There are two long-term anti-war protest camps at Faslane, one just outside each main gate. Each has a couple of dozen trailers and tents, with perhaps 30 permanent residents in each. The camps are established fixtures on the political, legal and media map of Scotland, having been in and out of the news for decades. Several prominent politicians have been arrested on protests here, as well as hundreds of ordinary people.



The protesters have access to drysuits and kayaks, among other things, as well as specialist knowledge of exactly the kind of **Infiltration** required, and of this particular loch. If they can be brought on-side, they could do a demonstration or two of their own as a cover for the characters' **Infiltration**; that, combined with the specialist knowledge they can impart, reduces the Difficulty number of the test by 1.

Bringing them on-side is the tricky part. As with other non-mainstream groups in this adventure, they are suspicious of outsiders in general and authority figures in particular. The best option is almost certainly going to be to come clean, at least as cops (probably not as O. V. members, of course). It still requires a great deal of **Reassurance** and **Negotiation**, but if the protesters can be convinced the PCs are, at least in this case, just as anti-war as they are – and convinced of the real threat of a nuclear war – they will help. A few assume that the PCs are simply trying to entrap them into illegality, but some of the older and more knowledgeable protesters soon shout this down – such entrapment is illegal in and of itself, and any evidence from it would not be admissible in court. It just makes no sense for the PCs to be trying to entrap the protesters into criminality

– there would be better approaches if the characters really did want to betray them.

Royal Marine Commandos

Names: James, Parsler, Stuart, Challis.

Athletics 9, Health 9, Scuffling 6, Shooting 10, Surveillance 6

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist, Kick), +0 (Fixed Bayonet), +2 (Assault Rifle or Light Machine-Gun)

Scotland Beheld the Descending War

scene type: Core

In this scene, the characters finally board the sub, attempting to either take it over or simply arrest Winton. He must be prevented from both (a) carrying out the order to nuke Pakistan, if it has come in semi-legitimately, and (b) going Ur-Mensch in the control room and simply breaking open the safe with the nuclear deterrent access, killing his comrades, and launching anyway.

The GM should determine how best to pace this one. There are two solid options, depending on personal and group preference:

- **Realistic.** Almost. The characters get aboard the sub just a few minutes before it launches from the dock, possibly getting fired on by Marines or Navy personnel from the base. Once it is clear of the loch and in the sea (10 minutes from launch), the order to nuke Islamabad comes through from the British Prime Minister. The launch sequence takes around another five minutes, and involves Winton and his first officer opening a safe containing the launch codes. This gives the characters plenty of time, though they do have a large (150m long, four stories high in places) and unfamiliar vessel to get through, occupied by 135, probably hostile and armed, crew. Play this scene out for maximum dramatic effect; think "Under Siege", with characters and crew stalking each other, the tension erupting occasionally into fierce gunfights or hand-to-hand combat.
- **Movie-style.** Even more movie-style, that is. As above, but the sub departs a few seconds before the characters get aboard, and they have to swim for it, getting to the last hatch, in the conning tower, a moment before it is sealed, or perhaps even having to use explosives to blow a hatch open. For maximum spy-movie goodness, think characters aboard mini-sub, not so fast as the *HMS Vengeance* at full speed but more maneuverable in the confines of the loch; think opposed **Driving** tests and tension as the mini-sub grapple the larger vessel and use high-tech limpet-like connectors that can bore or blow their way through its armor plating. Just bear in mind that most groups will find such things far too silly (limpet-like spy tunnels on mini-sub are just that bit beyond what **Preparedness** normally covers), but for the right group this could make for a seriously dramatic climax after a long and tough campaign. Of course, the timing in this case is split-second,

with the PCs arriving in the control room seconds after they get on board, but with only moments to spare before the final sequence in the launch code is complete.

In either case, it might just be possible to minimize the violence, if desired (at least in theory, the PCs are on the same side as the sailors and marines on the sub, other than Winton). This probably involves a great deal of Mexican stand-offishness, with shouted orders ("No, YOU put the gun down!") till some kind of an accommodation can be reached. Winton's First Officer, Dan Harrold, listens to the characters, if they identify themselves clearly as representatives of whichever authorities they are from. They must provide immediate and convincing evidence of their suspicions of Winton, and use **Negotiation** and **Reassurance** to come to a deal. Harrold needs to be convinced to relieve Winton of command, temporarily, till the truth of the matter can be ascertained.

If Commander Winton is aware the PCs are pursuing him directly (i.e. have made it as far as boarding the sub), he goes rogue earlier than planned, in which case he tries to get the nukes set off before they get to him to arrest him. From the perspective of dramatic appropriateness, this can happen just as the PCs are arguing with Harrold over who has the authority, and who can place whom under arrest – it would be perfect proof that they are correct in their suspicions. Winton has a small talisman on his person, provided by Black, which he can activate by plunging it into blood (he will cold-bloodedly shoot a crewmate) to become a particularly large and powerful Ur-Mensch, capable of ripping the safe from the wall and still just about having the willpower to hammer the codes into the launch mechanism.

There is nothing that can be done other than fight the creature, preferably before it launches a nuclear strike. In this case, hopefully, the characters at least have a crew of trained military personnel on their side – at least, the ones who do not flee in screaming terror.

Winton, Trevor (still human)

Athletics 7, Health 8, Scuffling 7, Shooting 10, Surveillance 7

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist, Kick), 0 (Pistol)

Winton, Trevor (Ur-Mensch form)

Athletics 14, Health 16, Scuffling 14

Hit Threshold 3

Armor: +3 vs Shooting

Weapon: +2 (Teeth and Claws)

Aftermaths and Veil-Outs

With Black no longer active, and most of the other Esoterrorists under him either arrested

or gradually being tracked down and dealt with, the Fimbulvetr finally begins to end, and Britain returns to its usual levels of cold, dreary winter, rather than supernaturally enhanced ones. So long as Winton has been stopped, there is no limited nuclear exchange with Pakistan, no push of the planet into perpetual nuclear winter. The GM should describe a quite dramatic break in the weather, with the snows beginning to melt the next day after the characters stop Winton.

As to the veil-out, the British are quite resilient, and quite good at veiling out supernatural explanations themselves, particularly once the sun is out again. A simple explanation that yes, the winter was very severe, and yes, a small number of people did commit horrible crimes such as murdering others for their food, but no, there was nothing supernatural at work, and no, scientists – Islamist agents or not – did not mess with the weather, should do the trick.



Chapter Seven: Destruction flies, and strikes in darkness

This chapter is intended to give the GM the tools needed to let the players experience the gradual degeneration of British society, through the various stages of Fimbulvetr and all the way to Ragnarok. The sections that follow are in approximately chronological order, though as ever the GM should feel free to tweak that. In particular, it is always good to give players some clear, in-character feedback as to the consequences of their actions, or inaction: so, for example, the GM might describe a slight lifting of the Arctic weather conditions if the team manages to prevent a large-scale ritual sacrifice, or the GM might use a worsening in the weather conditions as an indication that the characters have failed to prevent a sacrifice, foreshadowing a call the following day in which Mr. Verity lets them know that police have found another fresh mass murder site.

Conditions should generally get a little worse each day. The adventure should take around two weeks of game time to play out, but this may vary considerably depending on the PCs' speed. This is enough time for much of Britain to degenerate into looting, murder, hypothermia, and starvation, with severe enough weather. The interconnectedness of modern society, combined with the country's reliance on imports for food, means that impassable roads rapidly lead to power cuts,

shops running out of food, food spoilage, etc.

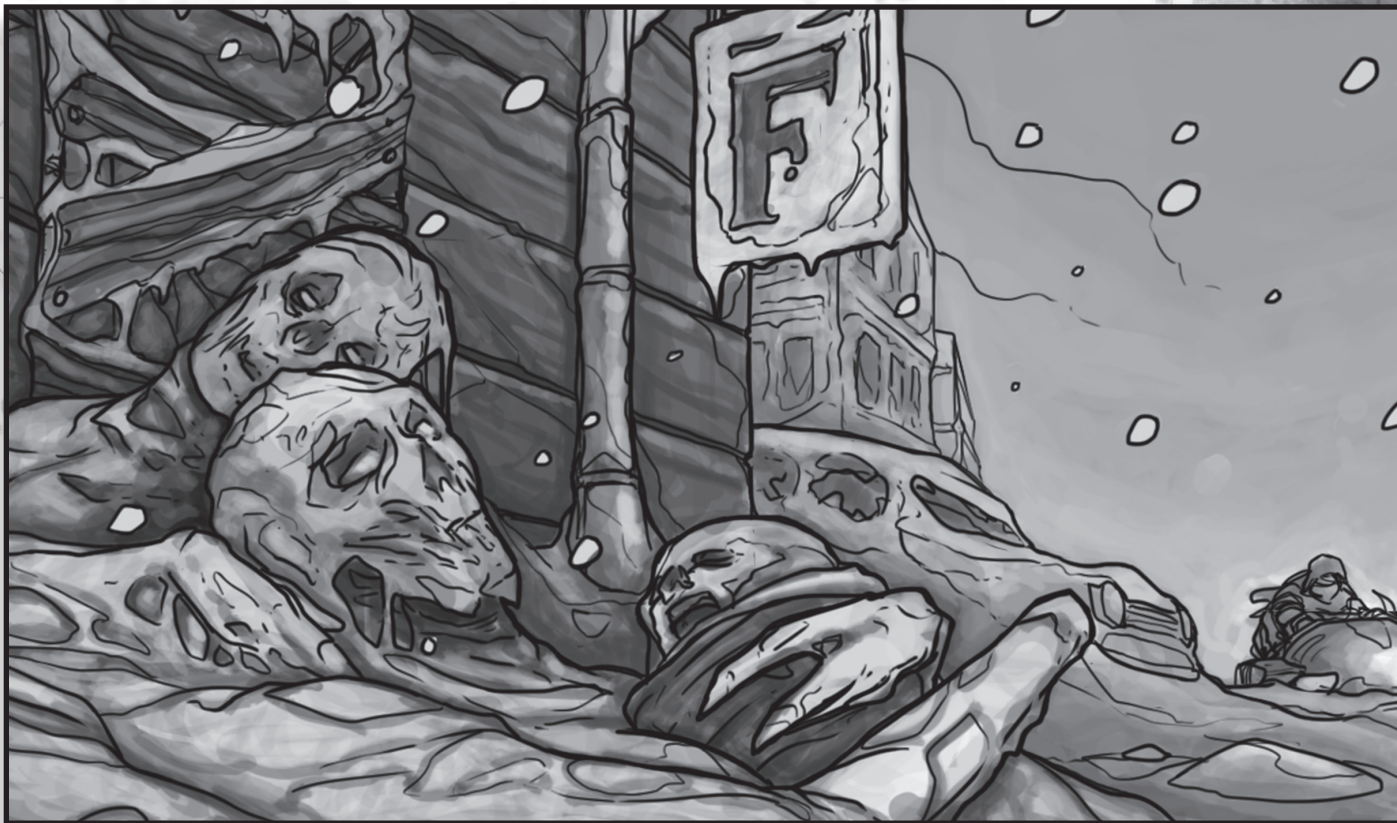
Few specific, planned encounters are given for the GM to use to enhance this picture of a country degenerating into chaos (though see Optional Encounters, p. 70, for a few). Rather, the GM is encouraged to adapt to player action, inserting appropriate vignettes to convey the mounting apocalypse; think *28 Days Later*, *Day of the Triffids*, *On The Beach*, etc.

Note that the events in this chapter occur more-or-less concurrently with the events of the other chapters. Ideally, for maximum emotional satisfaction, the GM should time things so that the worst of the apocalyptic weather occurs (up to and including *Rise of the Ur-Mensch*, p. 69), just before the end of Chapter 6, but the PCs are then able to reverse it and, against all odds and at great cost, restore normality to the world (*Aftermaths and Veil-Outs*, p. 64).

A Spot of Foul Weather

scene type: alternate

To begin with, this is just like any other of the severe winters that occasionally afflict Britain. The country is not well-adapted to heavy snow and sub-zero temperatures, since such conditions do not occur every year.



Unlike countries that mandate snow tires in winter, or where motorists usually top up with very high-grade anti-freeze, or where the railways and airports are designed to keep running despite the weather, Britain begins to close down, a little. People make the best of it, for the most part, enjoying a few enforced days off work, staying snug in their centrally heated homes. There are a few accidents, usually cars sliding off icy roads and into garden walls.

The main effect on the characters is to make travel more dangerous and time-consuming. Local governments do send out gritting lorries to salt main roads, as best they can, but the sheer volume of snow falling every hour threatens to make a mockery of their efforts. **Preparedness** ensures that any vehicles the characters are using have winter tires, at a minimum, along with snow chains, shovels, food, and blankets for emergencies.

The news media are full of dire warnings about not driving unless strictly necessary, as well as stirring tales of Brits bearing up

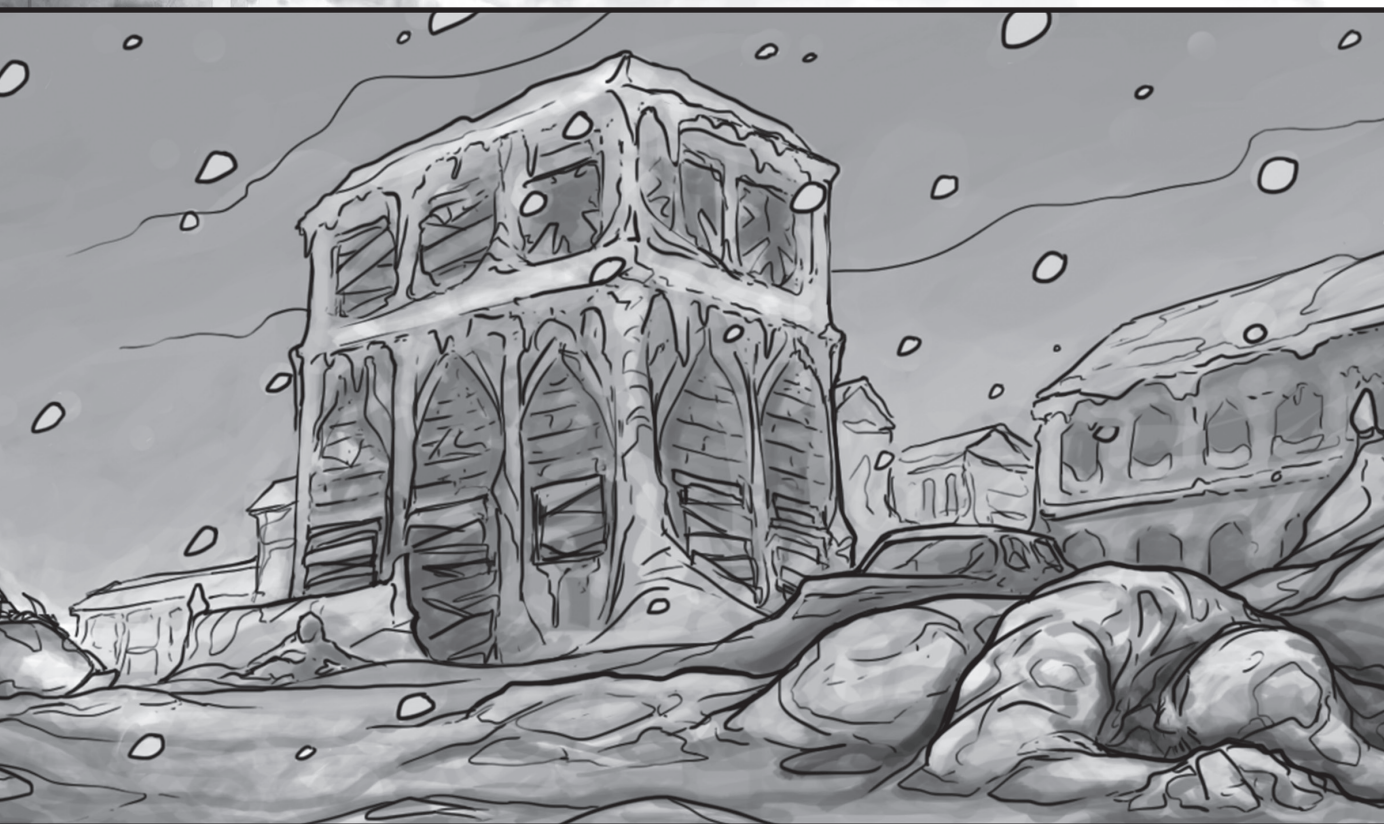
despite the cold. Some mention that it's already the coldest winter in 30 years, and liable to get worse. A few commentators are beginning to drop in the classic line about how Britain has a Blitz spirit that keeps it going through thick and thin.

The worst of the tabloid newspapers are blaming it on the lab that was destroyed in the Manchester fire. They seem to have uncovered, or been fed, evidence that Anton Bennett was working on a weather control device. Various editorials run on the theme of scientists playing god, and meddling with forces that are better left alone.

Switching off Britain

scene type: alternate

Eventually, after perhaps four to five days of very heavy snow and blizzards, the problems become more widespread, and more deadly. Across the country, the majority of people



have no viable way to get in to work. This includes electrical power station operators, and even the drivers of the gritting lorries. Some local councils run out of salted grit anyway. Overhead power lines in rural areas fail first, blown down by the high winds, and present a new hazard for a while, with lines dangling into the road and occasionally sparking. Within another day or two, though, most of the main power stations have closed down, too, through lack of staff and lack of supplies.

Most homes are heated by gas-fired central heating systems, but the main gas pipes tend to require electricity to keep the gas flowing, and boilers in individual homes usually switch off if the electrical power goes off, too. Hypothermia becomes a significant problem. Bad weather in winter can kill 40,000 people or more, even in a mundanely severe winter. Prolonged, supernatural extremes of weather are likely to kill thousands every day, eventually rising to tens of thousands every day, starting with the elderly, infirm, and young.

Food supplies to supermarkets dwindle to nothing. Looters, some desperate through hunger, others just seeing an opportunity, begin to break into supermarkets and other shops, stealing food. Fortunately the cold preserves much of what would otherwise have rotted in now-unpowered refrigerators and freezers, but some food is inevitably spoiled or wasted.

With many homes having no power, broadcast resources being limited, and rapid travel being more-or-less reduced to snowmobiles only, the only media source that penetrates far into the population is radio. People listen to battery or wind-up radios; a few enthusiasts or electronics geeks make improvised crystal radios; some areas still have power. The broadcasts now are purely practical or news-related. The authorities attempt to take some measure of control over the official radio stations, encouraging people to share food and other resources, but independent stations report on the looting and lawlessness that plague many areas.



The government sends in the army to attempt to keep order and distribute emergency food supplies, but years of defense budget cuts and foreign wars mean that it cannot reach all areas. The emergency food soon begins to run short, and after a day or two of this it is given only to troops and government personnel; after that, only to key government personnel, now in bunkers beneath the streets, and their personal guards. The army is soon beginning to fragment too, with some units forming ad-hoc local governments with residents and former councilors, and others degenerating till they are little better than any other looters or gangsters – just better organized.

The lawlessness of the land does vary considerably, partly due to regional differences in the weather (and thus, in the power situation and the food supplies), and partly due to other factors such as local temperament and privilege, specific groups and individuals persuading their neighbors to work together (or in some cases, building up criminal gang-style structures around themselves), etc. The area around the Pennines (that is, most of the North of England, the Midlands, and bits of southern Scotland, other than coastal areas) generally suffers the most severe weather, with Manchester being the very center of the worst storms. (Some of the wilder-eyed radio presenters mention how bizarre and baffling it is that the extreme weather seems to have been somehow generated inland, rather than sweeping in from the coast.) The GM should emphasize the contrast between the most battered and blizzarded regions, and those that are simply snow-bound. Gradually, though, the severity and terror spread outwards, till only a few areas on the south coast remain relatively lightly affected.

Ordo Veritatis does its best to keep functioning despite all this, but its powers, too, are limited by the weather. Mr. Verity probably does his best to contact the players again, giving them a brief precis of the information in this section, then ramming home once more the vital

importance of their task, which may be the only thing that can hold back the chaos.

**Nuthin' to eat,
so ah'm gonna
eat thee**

scene type: alternate

It gets worse. By the middle of the second week in February, widespread reports of murder for food begin to circulate, as much by rumor as by radio, now. There are also hints of isolated instances of cannibalism – probably partly provoked by the first few Ur-Mensch (see below), who are certainly man-eaters by nature, though there are almost certainly a few desperate humans who have turned to cannibalism too.

Walking through Britain is now the only way to travel, if you don't have a snowmobile, heavily adapted vehicle (Difficulty 4 or 5 **Mechanics** test per vehicle, as well as access to suitable raw materials for crafting skids and caterpillar tracks), or cross-country skiing expertise. Traveling is now deeply disturbing. Frozen corpses of humans and animals, some killed violently, a few perhaps gnawed by... something... can be found on almost every street. Survivors huddle, and skulk; those few who are armed might fire warning shots at the approach of strangers, if they are feeling relatively friendly, or might go straight to shoot-to-kill, particularly if the strangers clearly have something of value, like a vehicle that runs.

Rise of the Ur-Mensch

scene type: alternate

The Ur-Mensch, or primeval humans, occupy an idealized position in some Moravian and Gnostic philosophy, being seen as classic noble savages: primitive, yet possessing virtues and strengths that have been lost by modern humans. Both Adam and Christ are sometimes considered to be Ur-Mensch. The Esoterrorist versions, inevitably, are far

darker and less virtuous than those mythical divine figures, being more like the trolls and dark-elves of Norse myth.

Broadly, the Ur-Mensch come in two categories, both of them starting out as humans but being possessed by forces from the Outer Dark. Trolls resemble oversized (2m or taller) humans, with pot-bellies, long ape-like arms, massive shoulders and chests, short wide legs, low foreheads, and angry expressions on their long snouts. Svartalfar are around 1.2m to 1.5m tall, and quite dark-skinned, but otherwise look quite like the Trolls. Both types of Ur-Mensch have long, sharp talons and fang-like teeth; both are almost entirely resistant to the cold weather, though this is largely because the demonic spirit possessing them cares little about tissue damage. Trolls are usually made from favored Esoterrorist initiates, whereas Svartalfar are formed when Esoterrorists offer up children for possession by demonic entities. Trolls tend to rely on brute force, Svartalfar on swarming an enemy, or, if alone, on cunning, though both are capable of some tactical subtlety rather than being completely mindless. There is little point in reasoning with either kind; they no longer speak English, and have little interest in anything other than bloodshed. If an Ur-Mensch is killed, the possessing spirit leaves it, and it reverts to the form of the possessed human, often appearing blue with cold and black with frostbite. The first time this happens, characters observing the reversion to human form must make a Stability test or lose 3 Stability (4, if the Ur-Mensch victim was a child).

The GM should use Ur-Mensch sparingly, introducing them gradually as the apocalypse intensifies. The characters might find a few corpses, recently killed by Ur-Mensch, to begin with; **Forensic Anthropology** reveals they were torn limb from limb by something as strong as a gorilla but with claws as deadly as a big cat's. News reports, or amateur radio bulletins, reveal that similar unexplained killings are taking place elsewhere. Their next encounter might be the glimpse of a group of sated Trolls in the distance, bearing human corpses off to some kind of hidey-hole to devour.

If ever they face Ur-Mensch in battle, it will likely be a horrifically one-sided fight, with bits of PC flying in all directions.

People everywhere – hopefully including the PCs – become more and more terrified. Old legends of monsters and boogeymen have come to life, it seems. People huddle in their homes, particularly at night, starting at every noise. The end times seem near. The Esoterrorists' hold on the consciousness of the nation tightens a little more.

Ur-Mensch Svartalgar

Athletics 8, Health 12, Scuffling 9

Hit Threshold 4

Armor: +2 vs Shooting

Weapon: 0 (Teeth and Claws)

Ur-Mensch Trolls

Athletics 10, Health 15, Scuffling 12

Hit Threshold 3

Armor: +3 vs Shooting

Weapon: +2 (Teeth and Claws)

Optional Encounters

This section covers encounters caused by the Fimbulvetr conditions, and Esoterrorist counterattacks on the characters. The Esoterrorists only make an active, concerted counterattack on the PCs if the latter seem to be getting close to Rob Black, and thus, to the sub. Even if Black is killed or captured, so long as other members of Isa Kenaz remain at large, the two counterattacks (Howl of the Rime Giant, p. 71, and Conventional Weapons, p.72) can be launched.

Looters

scene type: alternate

These can vary from lone women breaking into corner shops to find food for their families, all the way up to organized, armed

gangs using stolen farm tractors or Land Rovers to ram-raid major stores full of consumer goods. Food looters tend to get more desperate, and hardcore criminal looters more brazen, as the weather gets worse, but both kinds can be found at any stage.

In either case, most looters have standard human game stats (i.e. Scuffling 4, Health 4, etc.).

Soldiers

scene type: alternate

Soldiers may be on a specific mission to protect a sensitive government installation, or may have been assigned to assist or fill in for local police with general law enforcement, or may be put to work clearing major roads, distributing food, and otherwise relieving the disaster. They are reluctant to fire on civilians, at least to begin with, but this resistance is reduced as the disaster worsens. In the final stages, they may be entirely out for their own survival and/or gain, either feeling that they must act independently to re-establish some kind of military rule in the absence of regular government, or simply being (in effect) a better-organized, better-armed criminal looter gang.

Soldiers

Names: Bowen, Robertson, White, Jones.

Athletics 8, Health 8, Scuffling 6, Shooting 9, Surveillance 5

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist, Kick), +0 (Fixed Bayonet), +2 (Assault Rifle or Light Machine-Gun)

Police

scene type: alternate

In the early stages, police patrols aim to keep order, in particular preventing looting, but as with soldier encounters, police motivation and lawfulness deteriorate over time. The frequency with which characters sight police also reduces as time passes, since most police vehicles are less blizzard-capable than army ones. Police patrols, having inherently stronger ties to the



local community than an army unit would, rarely degenerate to the point of gangsterism, but may start to take an exceptionally hard line with any perceived criminals.

Police, Armed Response Team

Names: McKenzie, Thomas, Wilson.

Athletics 7, Health 5, Scuffling 5, Shooting 8, Surveillance 4

Damage Modifier: -1 (Baton), 0 (Pistol), +1 (Shotgun or Rifle)

Armor: Light body armor (Scuffling +1, Shooting +2)

Police, Detectives

Names: Bevan, Hall.

Athletics 6, Health 5, Scuffling 6, Shooting 3, Surveillance 9

Damage Modifier: -2 (Fist or Kick), 0 (Pistol; not issued as a matter of routine, but available if necessary)

Police, Riot

Names: Evans, Johnson, Pugh, Wright.

Athletics 6, Health 5, Scuffling 6, Surveillance 4

Damage Modifier: -1 (Baton)

Armor: Riot armor (Scuffling +2, Shooting +2)

Police, Uniformed

Names: Davies, Parry, Brown.

Athletics 5, Health 5, Scuffling 4, Surveillance

Damage Modifier: -1 (Baton)

Armor: Light body armor (Scuffling +1, Shooting +2)

Militia

scene type: alternate

In the later stages of apocalypse, locals begin to band together to protect their areas, in

particular working to secure and control whatever large supplies of food may be left. In theory, they are neutral so long as the characters do not attempt to steal their food, but in practice militia tend to be paranoid, trigger-happy, and less well-trained than police (so that their guns are at least as likely to go off by accident as design).

Howl of the Rime Giant

scene type: alternate

The first approach to stopping the PCs at this point is for Black or one of his minions to perform another sacrifice to Bergelmir, calling upon it to sweep them away in its storm. The GM should describe the rising intensity of the weather in the characters' immediate area. This takes place over several minutes, at least, even if they are close to the Pennines area, or possibly an hour or more if far away. The wind rises, first, and the temperature plummets, not just from wind chill. The wind seems to carry death upon it, not just cold. Uncanny whistling and howling sounds issue from anywhere the wind can eddy – trees or buildings.

A Stability Test (2-point loss) may be appropriate already, if the characters are relatively inexperienced and in a particularly spooky location, especially if it is night-time. The GM should use discretion when applying Stability Tests. It is suggested that at most two be used throughout this sequence, with no more than a 3-point loss at any one point. O. V. investigators who have frequently encountered this kind of supernatural horror probably only need to make one, when it is at its height.

As the wind rises still further, the sky grows thick with black cloud, starting at the horizon in all directions and gradually converging on the team; this is utterly uncanny, as though the winds are spiraling in towards them, whirlwind-style, rather than simply blowing over the land as they usually do in Britain. Now the wind does carry audible howls and screams, as though hurling threats at the team in some long-forgotten language.

Linguistics detects similarities to Proto-Indo-European, the prehistoric language that was the ancestor of hundreds of European and Asian languages). At this point the team has a matter of perhaps 20-30 seconds to get to some kind of shelter (an **Athletics** test may be necessary) before the temperature plummets to Arctic conditions and the winds rise to the point that anything from roof tiles to (as it rises still further) trees and cars are swept up to batter them. There is a real risk of being blown away and hurled into solid objects, too.

Bergelmir, embodied in the storm, should be treated as having a Shooting rating and pool of 25, which he can use to attack up to six opponents simultaneously, with the different objects that are blown into characters doing from -1 to +1 damage depending on size. Some characters may experience visions of him, a howling, demonic, gnarled, six-headed savage, covered in icicles. There is no particular way to fight back, but his power is limited in time by the needs of plot; the GM should ensure the characters are battered and terrified, but preferably not wiped out.

At that point, the wind drops, the howling ceases, and the temperature returns to a less blatantly supernatural chill. Anyone not treated rapidly may be at risk of frostbite or hypothermia, particularly if their cold-weather clothing was damaged or torn off.

Characters who are able to make it into cover should avoid any damage from the earliest attacks (roof tiles and small loose objects), but depending on the cover, may be at risk of the entire place blowing away (if a car or even a small building such as a shed or barn), or in a larger building, being hit by flying glass from shattered windows, objects flying through windows, bits of ceiling or wall collapsing when hit by trees or cars, etc.

Conventional Weapons

scene type: alternate

Once it is clear that Bergelmir has not killed the team, the Esoterrorists resort to relatively conventional attacks – probably in the form of duped members of the Sons of Satan gang (p. 49). This, of course, can only work if Isa Kenaz have some idea of the characters' whereabouts.

They may also perform rituals to guide the Ur-Mensch (p. 69) to converge on the team, increasing the frequency and severity of those encounters. This approach does not necessarily require precise knowledge of their location; rather, it involves setting up a psychic link between the Ur-Mensch and the O. V. operatives, which the former can use to track the latter, at least if already close by.



VERITATIS

Chapter Seven: Optional Encounters

In Search of a Distant Hope

Scene Type: Alternate

Slowly, the dawning realisation comes to some that if they stay in England as the winter grows forever colder and snow falls forever deeper, they will die here. It's only a matter of time. As such, they gather what possessions they have and plot a way to escape. Many believe they stand a greater chance of survival by heading to the coast and taking their chances with a boat, crossing over to Ireland or sailing south towards France and mainland Europe.

This scene can manifest in a number of ways, but in each case it is fuelled by the same desire of the NPCs to escape the country. Presented below are a few examples. In each case, the PCs are assumed to be making their way across the open countryside in a snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle.

- The PCs are flagged down on a snow-covered road by a young couple that are wrapped in coats that barely provide enough protection from the bitter cold. Behind them on a battered pair of sleds, they drag their possessions in a couple of worn cases. They beg the PCs for a ride to the coast where they believe a boat is waiting that will get them to the coast. This
- is purely a social encounter which may resort to raised voices and the PCs driving off should they not wish to make such a significant detour. If they pass by the same road later, they find the frozen bodies of the young couple by the side of the road, prompting a 3-point **Stability** check.
- The scene plays out much like the one above, but there are perhaps a few couples, or a whole family group in the party that stop the PCs. When what they see as a reasonable request (even offering to pay the PCs) is rejected, they become angry and tension will escalate quickly. The group will come to blows (with bare fists or perhaps minor weapons) against the PCs and will try to take the vehicle by force. They don't want to kill the PCs. The group simply wants the working vehicle and will beat the PCs into submission and dump them on the side of the road before driving off towards the coast.
- If the GM is looking for a more combat-driven encounter, the group is perhaps 8-person strong, and moderately well organised. Having tried and failed to convince others in attempts similar to those above (except directed against other NPCs), they now stay close to home and lay traps for any passersby in working vehicles.

Digging wide trenches into the road and then filling them with loose snow causes vehicles to become temporarily stuck. Likewise, building road blocks with snow can bring the vehicle to a halt. They then rush out, armed with improvised weaponry to attack the PCs. They don't care if the PCs are alive or dead at the end of the attack. They will attempt to take the vehicle by any means possible, whatever the cost.

In each instance above, use standard human game stats for the opponents (i.e. Scuffling 4, Health 4, etc.).

There is always the chance that the PCs could actually accept the request of the NPCs and take them to the coast. Over the course of the journey, the GM is encouraged to get the PCs talking with the NPCs, detailing their fear of death should they have stayed at home any longer, and their hope to find escape at the coast. However, this doesn't provide them with the hope they wish. Arriving at the major ports, most of the docks and waterways are frozen solid, having cracked the hulls of weaker vessels or trapping larger ones completely. There is little hope of escaping by sea. In desperation, the NPCs might seek out a small sail boat hauled up on the shore and to try and slide out over the ice towards open water, believing there's nowhere else to turn to. They may disappear out into the horizon, or they may fall through the ice as it becomes perilously thin the further out they get.

The emotional impact and potential reduction of Stability should be tailored to how well the PCs get to know the NPCs on the way to the coast, and how much they end up getting attached to them, etc. This encounter is intended to convey a sense of desperation that ultimately heads towards tragedy.

A Call for Help

Scene Type: Alternate

When the snowfall disrupts all other major forms of communication, radio is left as the only medium that can effectively reach the masses. The government has attempted to take control of official radio stations by this point,

but they can not control the number of private households with their own radio transmitters.

Whilst there are not a great numbers of private transmitters, there are enough scattered across the rural communities that mean lines of uncensored communication can be kept open. As travel becomes almost impossible in some areas, radio contact is the only hope some communities have for survival, and to maintain their sanity should the isolation become too much to endure.

If the PCs search the airwaves for transmissions, they stumble upon a recorded message that plays on a loop for an hour each day, at noon, before it ceases and lets static reign once more. A desperate woman's voice begs the listener for help. They recite the address of a farm no more than a couple of hours away from the PCs current location, in a now desolate rural area. The woman and her husband are running out of food, their transportation is useless in the snow, and they need someone to come with supplies or working transport to get them to the nearest town before its too late.

Should the PCs go to provide assistance, they find the farm is in a valley, completely choked by heavy snowfall. Using a snowmobile or getting in on foot are the only realistic options of how to get to the farm that is completely cut off from the rest of the world.

The farmhouse itself sits in the middle of a complex, circled on one side by barns and cattle sheds, with a wind turbine and radio mast at the rear. If the PCs decide to investigate any of these buildings before proceeding to the farmhouse itself, they find a couple of snowmobiles covered over in the barn, completely drained of fuel by otherwise in working order. More ominously, piled behind one of the out-buildings, are what appear to be burnt corpses. A **Forensic Anthropology** spend will reveal that each person was shot at close range with a shotgun before being burnt.

Soon after this discovery, or if the PCs go straight to the farmhouse, they encounter the farmer and his wife who live there. Some time ago, they realised that travelling to the nearest town to gather supplies was too dangerous. With roaming gangs of looters stalking the

towns and cities, they realised it was everyone for themselves and decided to bring supplies to them instead. They set up the radio message to lure people to the farm, and to their deaths. Shooting them, they loot their bodies and vehicles for anything of use and then burn the bodies to warm the house before disposing of the remains and hiding the vehicles.

As far as they are concerned, they are desperate people who have done what they had to in order to survive. If that means multiple murder, then so be it. They can't be reasoned with, they won't back down, because their lives are on the line. They have left themselves no choice, and they intend to make the PCs their next victims.

This is not intended as a serious death-trap for the PCs to contend with, but to emphasise the horror that can arise from desperate people in desperate circumstances. As such, the farmer and his wife have standard human game stats (i.e. Scuffling 4, Health 4, Shooting 4, etc.).

Purge the Unbeliever

Scene Type: Alternate

As the weather continues to deteriorate, Christian communities turn their churches into active shelters for the masses. The stone walls of these old buildings hold up firm roofs that provide more protection from the deepening layers of snow outside than by this time has wrecked many weaker structures.

Stockpiling wood and fuel from the ruins of houses in the surrounding area, bonfires are maintained in the church to warm the congregation. As the snow continues to fall and the temperature drops even further, the faithful huddle around the fire and pray for God to spare them from the apocalypse. It is the warm glow of the fire within, seen through the stained glass windows, which the PCs may be attracted to, should they be passing by the church at any time.

The local priest, in an effort to maintain morale, comforts the masses with sermons of hope and the triumph of mankind over adversity. However, as the cold bites ever deeper, the fires dwindle, and food runs dangerously low, even the most hopeful

of hearts may be broken. Whispers circulate that this is the end, that God has deserted them. Then the most dangerous of questions is asked: why is this happening?

Eventually, the consensus becomes that the storm is the wrath of God ravaging the land. Mankind has committed a vile sin and now God has sent a second flood, one of ice and snow, to cleanse the land so that humanity can start afresh once more. The nature of the sin is debated fiercely by the terrified congregation.

Perhaps it is the priest that first mentions it, or maybe the more conservative members of the congregation, but the issue of Britain's multicultural society is raised. Over the years, many other faiths have taken root in what was once "Gods Own Country". In their desperation, looking for someone to blame for the apocalypse, the congregation turns its anger upon other religious groups in their community.

This "heathen infestation" is the taint that the ice and snow seeks to cleanse from the land. It is God's command that they be purged so that the true faithful might be spared to rebuild society in the spring to come. Armed with whatever they can find, the congregation sweeps through the community to round up any "unbelievers" they can find. These unfortunates are taken back to the church where they are burnt at in the bonfire. The flames will purify their unclean souls and remove the stain from the land, as well as serve to warm the freezing congregation.

If the PCs are sheltering in the church when the purge begins, they will be questioned about their faiths. If they are Christian, they will be expected to aid the congregation in carrying out God's command. If they refuse, or declare themselves as followers of another faith, they are just as bad as the other unbelievers and a space for them shall be prepared in the heart of the bonfire.

Potentially, the PCs could try and resolve the issue by convincing the masses of the errors of their ways, or maybe stop them by force. Likewise, the PCs could try to aid those being persecuted, or even, if they are uncaring enough, simply just walk away, provoking a 3-point **Stability** test.

This scene can play out both in rural and urban areas, wherever there is a church. It works particularly well after word spreads of the supposed Pakistani involvement in the apocalypse. In rural areas, with smaller populations, the purge is likely to take place as a series of swift surgical strikes. In an urban environment, it can easily devolve into a prolonged guerrilla warfare-like struggle between different religious groups.

Members of the congregation should use standard human game stats (i.e. Scuffling 4, Health 4, etc.).

Within the Eye of the Storm

Scene Type: Alternate

They say that money can't buy you everything, and there will certainly come a time in the course of the apocalypse when the rich will find that all their wealth means nothing anymore. Food and fuel begin to run low, their estates begin to succumb to the force of the weather, and no amount of money will stop the onslaught of the weather. Then, something happens...

One night, the landowner has a dream. They see themselves walking outside, the clouds parting above their estate, the sun shining down upon them, but the storm continues to rage beyond their borders in the surrounding countryside. Advancing to the gates at the end of their long drive, the wind blows them gently open and the rough outline of six huge faces form in the swirling snowfall (five circling around the larger sixth face). They dream the faces, speaking in unison, offer the landowner a deal. In return for blood and devotion, the being will spare the land owner and their estate.

In the morning, the landowner wakes from their disturbing dream, only to find the scene they dreamt of now playing out for real. The storm has stopped on their land, the gates at the end of the drive have blown open, and in the distance, they can see the six faces looking back at them made up of the swirling snow. Moments later, the snow begins to fall again on their estate.

This is a manifestation of Bergelmir, pushing individuals of power and wealth (people with

lots to lose and who are desperate to hold on to it) to commit acts that will ultimately strengthen its grip on the wider area. In return for easing the intensity of the storm over their estate, the sacrifices they perform allow Bergelmir to increase its ferocity in the surrounding areas. When Bergelmir desires another sacrifice to further increase its power, it lets the snow fall on the landowners estate once again, which prompts the landowner to make another sacrifice. Thus, the cycle repeats again.

The landowner approaches members of the surrounding community, offering them a place to stay where it is warm and the weather has abated due to the geography of the surrounding landscape (being sheltered by hills, perhaps). Lured inside, they are drugged unconscious (usually via a sleeping draught in a warm drink) and then taken out to the back garden where they are tied to a flat, ornamental stone bench. Here, they are offered up as a blood sacrifice to the storm, which promptly weakens across the estate.

If the GM is inclined, perhaps the landowner also has servants in their employ that are fully accepting of the price to be paid to save themselves from the storm (especially if they have seen the faces in the snow and experienced the being's control of storm, etc.).

Here are some examples of how the scene could begin.

Whilst travelling through the countryside, the PCs pass another all-terrain vehicle that is carrying a whole family back towards the estate. It could be driven by the landowner or one of their servants. If asked about where they are going, the driver will inform the PCs of the estate where they are taking the family to, that they have some extra room and that the landowner is performing a public service of sorts. The PCs won't initially be invited to join them, but if they push to see the estate, the driver does not object and leads them there, expecting the PCs become additional sacrifices to the storm.

The PCs pass through a small village but find that it is completely deserted. There are no signs of struggle or forced entry to any of the houses, no bodies or signs of a fight. Everyone has seemingly vanished (as they have all been

taken to the estate, to their deaths). As the PCs leave the village, they wander into the area over the estate where no snow falls and the clouds are parting above them. Seeing the unnatural boundary between where the snow does and does not fall prompts a 3-point **Stability** test. Directly approaching the estate attracts the attention of the landowner (and staff if any) unless the group passes an **Infiltration** test (Difficulty 5). If they manage to get in unseen, the PCs can scout around the grounds, finding nothing out of place until they stumble upon the blood-saturated snow around the stone bench.

Should the PCs enter the estate and go along with the landowners invitation to stay and enjoy the shelter, they will be offered tea and coffee laced with the sleeping draught. If the PCs take it, they will soon feel its effects and realise they have been drugged. The PCs can resist the drug's effect for as long as it takes to perform one specific action with a successful **Stability** test. Difficulty begins at 2, but cumulatively increases by 1 for each subsequent attempt to resist it that they make. If the PCs fail and fall unconscious before they have managed to overpower the landowner and any staff, there is little hope for them. They take 1d6 damage as they awaken a short while later, bound to the stone bench, being stabbed by the landowner. At this point, the PCs can make **Athletics** tests each round (Difficulty 5) to try and escape their bonds, but suffer 1d6 damage each round whilst they remain bound to the bench as they are repeatedly stabbed to death.

If the PCs discover what the landowner is doing at the estate and confront them (without being drugged), they will first invite the PCs to assist in performing the sacrifices so that they might all be spared from the storm. The landowner isn't insane, but they have suffered significant **Stability** loss from seeing the faces of Bergelmir, and performing the subsequent sacrifices to it. Ultimately, they are doing what they need to in order to survive, but more importantly to protect the land that is theirs.

If the PCs refuse, the GM should consider what form the escalation could take from here, taking into account factors like the number of staff in the house on the landowners side, etc. (which should be no more than twice the number of PCs). There doesn't necessarily have to be a fight – for

example, the PCs could talk their way out of the situation, should they think they are outnumbered with relevant **Interpersonal** spends.

Should the PCs manage to leave the estate after having put an end to the sacrifices taking place there, this might be an appropriate point to consider running the "Howl of the Rime Giant" scene (see p. 71) in retaliation for their interference.

All opposition in this scene should use standard human game stats (i.e. Scuffling 4, Health 4, etc.).

A Land of Standing Corpses

Scene Type: Alternate

This scene should run fairly late on in the apocalypse, when Nithogg has the power to manifest in the material world. The hell-dragon that feeds upon the dead, Nithogg increases its hold upon an area by spreading fear and terror. To do this, it manifests as a swarm of small snakes made from ice and snow that burrow their way into the array of corpses that litter the side of the frozen roads at this point in the apocalypse. Once inside, Nithogg can move and control the frozen corpses.

In the dead of night, Nithogg positions these frozen corpses to stand around the houses of survivors that are holding back the influence of the storm (by being well provisioned, insulated, etc.). When the occupants look outside, they find their house surrounded a ring of standing corpses. They don't move whilst they are being looked at, but others in the circle do so, either turning out to look at occupant, or reaching out to them. This prompts a 5-point **Stability** test for viewers.

Throughout the course of the evening, the corpses advance upon the house and knock at the doors or windows menacingly. They perform no action other than to terrify, and prompt **Stability** checks. If the PCs approach, the corpses move out of sight so that when the PCs knock on the door, they are met by an occupant, driven almost out of their mind, that attacks them, thinking the PCs are walking corpses until persuaded otherwise.

At which point, whilst they are not looking, the ring of corpses around the house is re-established, prompting another **Stability** test as above.

This effect could also be used to terrify PCs travelling out on the road. As they pass rows of frozen corpses on the road-side, they might casually look in their rear-view mirror and see the bodies now sat bolt upright in the snow. When looking in front of them again, the corpses further down the road are standing and facing the oncoming vehicle. Looking behind for a second time, the corpses are standing and reaching towards the vehicle moving away from them. Returning their gaze to the road ahead again, the PCs catch a brief and terrifying vision of a corpse, mouth open in a silent scream, arms raised to the sky as the vehicle runs over it. This prompts the same **Stability** test as above.

Should the PCs decide to attack the corpses, they don't fight back. Nithogg's physical confrontation can be found in "The River of Ice". The PCs can expend all the effort they wish on attacking the corpses (**Hit Threshold** 0), and damage them as much as they like.

If any PC subsequently examines the corpses with a relevant point spend, they discover the presence of a multitude of snake-like creatures seemingly made of ice, burrowing through the frozen flesh with ease. As soon as they try to capture one for further examination, all of the snakes start to melt. In seconds, all of them are gone as Nithogg relinquishes its influence upon the corpse. It has served its purpose.

The River of Ice

Scene Type: Alternate

This scene is best run some time after "A Land of Standing Corpses" (see p. 76) and can take the form of another attack directed at the PCs by Black or one of his minions, in a similar manner as the "Howl of the Rime Giant" scene (see p. 71).

If the PCs are passing by a frozen river, they become viable targets for Nithogg. Out of the corner of the PCs eyes, they think they see the river flowing, which shouldn't be happening. When they turn their full attention towards it, they see the entire body of ice moving before their eyes. A tremendous cracking sound fills the air as

the moving ice crashes into the banks at a bend in the river. The ice begins to pile up upon itself, extending into the air. As it does, it begins to take a more defined shape, opening at the top to allow another shaft of ice to protrude higher into the sky, which then proceeds to open again and allow another shaft to rise from within, and so on.

This continues whilst the lower sections of the ice shaft take form, resembling the open mouths of a giant snake from which another snake springs. Eventually, some few dozen meters high, the final shaft of ice appears as a monstrous snake's head with multiple eyes that look down upon the PCs. The whole body of ice becomes animate at this point and slithers towards the PCs at alarming speed with a roar that echoes across the countryside. Should the PCs ask at this point, a relevant **Academics** point-spend will confirm the image as being that of Nithogg from Norse mythology.

Nithogg's manifestation has an **Aberrance** pool of 40 that it uses to fuel every action it takes (spending points in place of **Athletics** to chase the PCs, **Scuffling** to strike at them, etc.). If the PCs decided to move as far away from the river as possible when the manifestation started forming, a chase begins. Once in range (i.e. the PCs fail the contest roll), Nithogg swipes at them with its head and tail simultaneously, thus performing two attacks each round. Being hit by a solid block of ice several meters across inflicts a tremendous amount of damage. Successful attacks from Nithogg have a +4 damage modifier.

Given its size, the manifestation has a **Hit Threshold** of 2. It moves quickly, so it is still possible to miss, but it is otherwise significantly easier to hit than a normal target. Each point of damage inflicted upon the manifestation reduces its Aberrance pool on a one-for-one basis. It continues to attack the PCs until its Aberrance pool is completely drained.

Once the manifestation reaches Aberrance 0, Nithogg's power to manifest has been depleted and the mountain of ice crashes to the ground, inanimate. Nithogg hasn't been destroyed, just dispelled for the time being. After all, it takes a lot more than guns or brute force to kill a God.

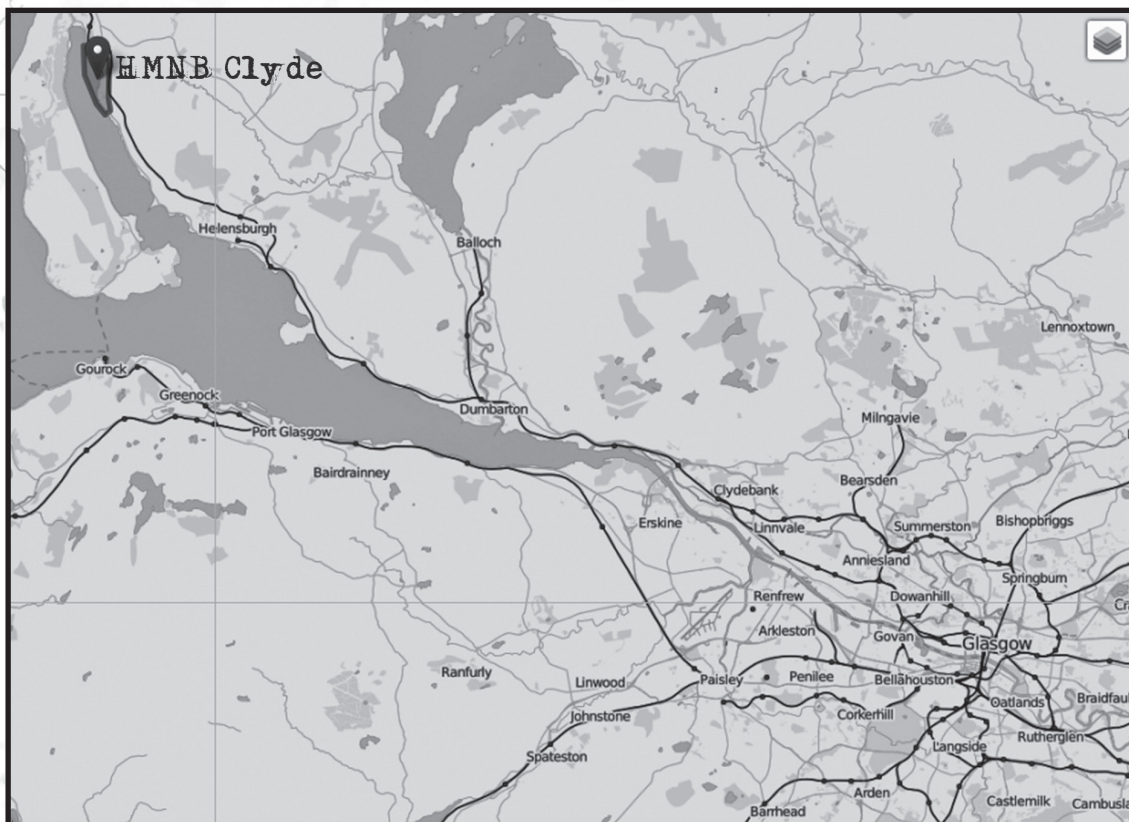


Appendix I: Area Maps

I. Chesterfield to Glasgow



2. Glasgow to HMNB Clyde



3. HMNB Clyde

