

NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS

THE DUBAI RECKONING

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NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS - THE DUBAI RECKONING

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THE DUBAI RECKONING

This is a globe-spanning scenario focusing on corporate malfeasance and Conspiracy ladder-climbing, instead of facing down supernatural horrors. This scenario is well suited as a change of pace from a run-and-gun-against-monsters or as part of a **MIRROR** campaign, or anytime the Agents seek to develop elements within the Conspyramid.

It also works as a starting scenario for *Night's Black Agents*, giving the Agents an initial line of investigation to follow into the heart of the Conspiracy.

If the Agents play their cards right, they could even end up with their own spy inside the Conspiracy — either Katherine Altone (p. 12), Owen Altone (p. 12), or Mr. Darvell

(p. 20) might become a recurring character in your campaign, feeding the Agents information and clues. The *Double Tap* supplement includes rules for a Conspyramid collapsing and conspiring against itself, which is exactly what's happening here.

EYES ONLY BRIEFING

AgraWealth is an agrichemical research and development company — working on new pesticides, genetically modified organisms, new farming techniques, and similar projects. It's got a lot of investor cash sloshing around, mostly from the Middle East: one of AgraWealth's big projects is working on ways to develop plants that can survive droughts and high temperatures.

It's also a Conspiracy front. The default assumption is that AgraWealth is working on some sinister scheme, as described in the *Dark Projects* sidebar. Some alternative possibilities:

- AgraWealth means nothing to the Conspiracy — it's just a convenient financial vessel to be sucked dry. Over the next few years, all that investor cash will get shuffled away and spent on mercenaries, or bribes, or mysterious archaeological digs in Cappadocia. AgraWealth's extravagant promises about feeding the world will come up empty, and the husk of the company, drained dry of all its money, will be discarded by the financial vampires of the Conspiracy.

- AgraWealth is an infection vector for the Conspiracy. For example, the government of the United Arab Emirates is concerned about food security (especially after the Arab Spring riots); AgraWealth promises to solve that problem — giving the vampires access to the highest echelons of the Emirati government.
- Vampires take the long view. They're going to live forever, and want to secure their own food supply. AgraWealth's brief is to develop a food source that can feed people *after* the Conspiracy pulls off its endgame. If the vampires intend to trigger a global thermonuclear war that shrouds the world in eternal twilight and lets them walk abroad by day, then they've got AgraWealth working on mycoprotein-based food substitutes and hydroponics. If the vampires are the product of a genetically modified virus themselves, then they might have AgraWealth working on a foodstuff that alters the blood chemistry of everyone who eats it,

making it easier for the vampires to digest the blood of victims.

- AgraWealth is a generally useful front for Conspiracy activities — it is a secretive company with lots of private security, operates in multiple countries, and has a legitimate reason for moving large amounts of materiel. These boxes of earth aren't vampire coffins, oh no, they're soil samples. And that private army is to protect our researchers from those anti-GMO loons. The company itself is legitimate, but it's riddled with Conspiracy minions.

Katherine Altone is a vice president of AgraWealth, and is next in line for the company's CFO position. She's shrewd and manipulative, a key asset for the Conspiracy, able to launder and shuffle illicit funds through research grants and patents. Her husband is **Owen Altone**, former sports broadcaster turned stock market whiz.

A whistleblower at AgraWealth, **Eddie Joyner**, plans to release evidence of financial misconduct with hints of Conspiracy involvement, but

before he can turn documents over to the Agents, he's killed. This begins the chase and leads to the eventual capture of Katherine Altone, who then sends the Agents on a second mission — to retrieve her husband in exchange for her informing on the Conspiracy.

In Dubai, the Agents discover that Owen Altone is behind his own kidnapping — he's making a play to replace his wife as the Conspiracy's asset in AgraWealth, with the aid of his personal assistant / lover, **Sabrina Martin**. (The Agents may also discover that Sabrina was working for a mysterious master, **Mr. Darvell**.) The Conspiracy found out about his treachery shortly before the Agents, and Owen's been rendered to an AgraWealth research facility in the desert outside Dubai. Rescuing him from there ends the mission — but it's only the beginning of the Agents' investigations into the Conspiracy.

THE SPINE

This operation is divided into five main components.

■ New Rockford, North Dakota:

The Agents rendezvous with Eddie Joyner at his family farm in order to receive the incriminating evidence, only to have Joyner taken out via Conspiracy-employed sniper. The evidence points to Altone's home in Norfolk, Virginia.

■ Norfolk, Virginia:

Tracking down Katherine Altone, she flees, leading to a dangerous DC Beltway car chase and her capture. Enhanced interrogation is an option here for Agents, but eventually Altone reveals that she'll exchange her information for the safe return of her husband, being held hostage in Dubai.

■ The Flight to Dubai:

While en route to Dubai, the Agents encounter the Conspiracy-employed sniper a second time, revealing itself to be more horrible beast than human, endangering the lives of everyone on board.

■ Dubai, United Arab Emirates:

Once in-country, the Agents must plan and enact a rescue operation for Owen Altone, held in a heavily fortified hotel room—turned—fortress-slash-bunker. The tables

DARK PROJECTS

What's really happening behind closed doors at AgraWealth?

Witchcraft

It's experimenting with blights — either industrial-strength witchcraft, blighting whole nations instead of withering one field of crops, or else a plague that attacks staple food crops like rice and wheat. The long-term plan is to trigger a global famine, a worldwide necromantic death ritual fueled by the demise of billions. It's the four horsemen in one — the pestilence will bring famine, the famine will bring war as nation fights nation for the dwindling food supplies, and death follows after all three.

Blood Farming

AgraWealth's experimenting with ways to mass-produce human blood. Victims are treated with drugs to overcharge their bone marrow and stimulate blood production; automated exsanguination machines suck the excess blood and store it safely. The

stress kills the victim within hours, but hey, it's still in development. Once it perfects the process, the vampires will have blood security forever.

Mutant Monsters

AgraWealth's experimenting with genetic modifications of whatever weird virus or mutation created vampires. It's making monsters in there. It had to shut down the Norfolk laboratory when one of the test subjects escaped; moving their research to the middle of the desert south of Abu Dhabi might prevent similar issues in future.

Buried Secrets

There are deeply buried alien relics scattered across the surface of the earth (crashed spaceship wreckage, diffracted shards of hyper-reality, escape capsules containing sleeping vampires). Experimental farms are a great excuse to build well-guarded industrial structures in the middle of nowhere.

are turned during a dramatic reveal that Owen is not who (or what) he claims to be, and the Agents must act swiftly to prevent further disaster.

■ Eastern Rub' al-Khali Desert, United Arab Emirates:

Tracking Owen to an experimental farm in the desert, the Agents take on the Conspiracy directly for the first time.

The presence of three different bad guy factions — Katherine and her bodyguards within AgraWealth, Owen and the goons he hired as part of his plan to replace Katherine within the Conspiracy, and the Conspiracy's own cleaners, who don't give a damn who's running AgraWealth for the vampires as long as the node isn't exposed — complicates the basic structure.

ENTRY VECTORS

There are a number of ways into this adventure, either from previous ops or from random chatter and character backstories. The Director should salt as many leads as she feels necessary, or

customize them to suit her campaign.

DIRECTLY

- Introduce Joyner as a **Network** contact or old friend of one of the Agents — he's a biochemist with a military background, he's traveled widely, spends a lot of time outdoors, and has a sizable collection of mostly legal weapons, making him an ideal contact for a **Night's Black Agents** player character.
- Joyner contacts the Agents through a trusted third party (a Solace or mentor, perhaps) after he falls sick; he needs their skills to both protect him and take his information public.
- Joyner hires the Agents to break into an AgraWealth satellite office to steal some data — the last piece in the jigsaw he's putting together.
- **Military Science:** According to rumors, there's a company called AgraWealth that's hiring a lot of "private security." Stories about off-the-books operations, corporate espionage, maybe even kidnappings. Worth checking out.

SWITCHING CITIES

Swap out the local color, and you can use this operation anywhere in the world. If the Agents are more global, then maybe Eddie Joyner meets them in London. Or Tokyo. Or Milan. All you need to do is change the names along the way.

- **Accounting:** You've spotted some odd investment patterns around a company called AgraWealth. It's getting a lot of cash from odd sources — anonymous investors in the United Arab Emirates, banks in Switzerland, offshore hedge funds. Nothing obviously illegal or suspicious — but that money's vanishing out of AgraWealth almost as fast as it's going in. Either AgraWealth's doing something very expensive that it's not talking about, or the money's being rerouted.
- **Traffic Analysis:** Email and phone traffic from known Conspiracy sources point at a company called AgraWealth as being involved in the vampires' schemes. You need someone with inside access to find out more.
- **Notice:** While you're dumping the body of the last guy who tried to kill you, you find he's got a company credit card in

The Conspiracy sniper attack can occur anywhere, as can Katherine Altone's capture after her attempted escape. Owen Altone doesn't have to be in Dubai, any exotic locale with a fortified but dramatic room for a final act showdown will do.

his wallet. AgraWealth...

- **Chemistry:** Analyzing the weird chemicals you found turns up a synthetic enzyme patented to a company called AgraWealth.
- **Explosive Devices:** The bomb's homemade, your standard hillbilly truck-full-of-fertilizer-go-boom IED, but the fertilizer's straight from the factory — it was never bagged or processed. He must have obtained it straight from AgraWealth. Time to go digging.

OUTSIDE LEADS

These leads come from outside this scenario; from the core rulebook adventure (*S*)*Entries*, *The Zalozhniy Quartet*, or *The Dracula Dossier*.

THE LENNART DOSSIER

The Lennart Dossier (from page 206 of (*S*)*Entries*, the operation included in the *Night's Black Agents* core rulebook) may provide leads to AgraWealth.

- **Accounting:** The Lennart Dossier describes international money-laundering practices at major corporations like AgraWealth.
- **Data Recovery:** It takes a bit of digging into the metadata, but some of these documents were created on computers registered to an American company called AgraWealth.

THE ZALOZHNIY QUARTET

- Donald Carroll (*ZQ*, p. 19) mentions AgraWealth as "something worth investigating." Research tracks down a string of suspicious articles about strange promotions and secretive hiring practices.
- **Accounting:** The Black Sea Bank (*ZQ*, p. 85) is a major investor in AgraWealth.
- **Interrogation or Research:** One of Overwatch Security's major clients is AgraWealth.

THE DRACULA DOSSIER

- **Data Recovery:** AgraWealth poached several researchers from Nox Therapeutics (*DH*, p. 162). Why would an agriculture company want chemists from a secret US military project?
- **Criminology:** Romanian mafia (*DH*, p. 157) or Ruvari Szgany (*DH*, p. 162) goons with too much Heat on them get put on a plane and sent to the US, where

MEETING EDDIE JOYNER

there are jobs as security guards at AgraWealth waiting for them.

SCENE TYPE: Introduction

LEAD-OUTS: Engaging the Sniper, The Norfolk Situation, AgraWealth Norfolk

Eddie Joyner's family has owned a farm in North Dakota since he left for college. It's a small place, no longer doing the work of horse rearing or cattle farming that Eddie's parents started years ago. The land is valuable, but following the death of Eddie's parents, Edith and Tobin, the farm is Eddie's to do with as he pleases. He used it as a retreat away from the stresses of AgraWealth; when

he got sick, he withdrew back here. He's done his best to keep the location a secret, and he's pretty sure he's never mentioned it to anyone.

From the outside, the place is modest, and could stand a new coat of paint, maybe a new roof as well. The inside, though, is well appointed and immaculate, designed by the best architects and contractors to be an open, inviting, and up-to-date space.

Eddie himself is in his mid-50s. He's an ex-Marine; with a master's in biochemistry, he specialized in biohazard handling and countermeasures, and was part

of the teams searching for chemical weapons during Desert Storm. After the war, he worked with various research companies as a manager before joining AgraWealth three years ago. He's an avid hiker, weight-lifter, and gun enthusiast. Whatever he does, he does it with a combination of brash enthusiasm and total competence.

At least, that's how it used to be.

Eddie looks like he's melted. All the muscle's gone from his body, leaving him with bags of fat sliding around his belly and legs. His skin's gone waxy and yellow, his teeth and hair are falling out. He looks like a meth addict or the

NEW ROCKFORD, NORTH DAKOTA: QUICK AND DIRTY

Remote doesn't even begin to describe it. It's pastoral land, with wide open spaces under routinely picturesque blue skies. Incorporated in 1885, Eddy County (where New Rockford is the seat) is mostly owned by farmers and hunters. New Rockford is the largest town in the county, boasting fifteen intersection roads, one major highway in and out of town, and, as of 2013, a single movie theater.

POPULATION
1,390

CONFLICT

The largest scuffle to date has been between police and teenagers who stole some street signs.

BACKDROPS

HUNTING LODGES: Lots of corporate CEOs travel out to North Dakota to indulge in duck hunting and nefarious under-the-table deal-making.

STREETS: New Rockford has one major highway (Route 281), and all town roads branch off from it. It's a quiet town, not accustomed to dangers that the Agents know exist in the world.

TWO HOOKS

- Duck hunting is a dangerous sport. It's pretty easy to get shot by your hunting buddy, or find something that isn't a duck to hunt.
- And while we're talking about hunting abominations and horrors, for miles in every direction around New Rockford is open country, most of it uncharted, treacherous, and devoid of population. Is there something lurking out there, preying on the people and animals who get lost?

poster child for Gulf War syndrome; **Diagnosis** suggests he's been poisoned, and Eddie agrees — he's pretty sure that someone found out he was digging into AgraWealth's finances and tried to send him a warning. He's shown them, though — he didn't give up, even though the company offered to put him on indefinite medical leave at full pay.

THE INFORMATION

Eddie has a computer full of suspicious documents, copies of emails, phone call transcripts, and hours of digital video between key AgraWealth personnel and foreign (read: Conspiracy) parties. He wants to go public; exposing what he assumes is just general impropriety and financial wrongdoing. He hasn't shared the information with anyone, and the only place it's stored is on this computer, which isn't networked.

Joyner can provide Agents with:

- passports and papers (a 2-point **Cover** identity only, but enough to allow Agents to impersonate middle management should they need new business-y identities)
- (core) **Data Recovery:** computer logs showing traffic in and out of AgraWealth's servers. Some of the traffic suggests video-conferencing with some external caller (accessing the network through an encrypted VPN); others are from inside the company network. Tracing the IP of these connections points at

Katherine Altone's home in Norfolk

- (core) **Accounting:** hundreds of pages of email correspondence and memoranda outlining and then later obfuscating certain grant and patent dispensations (read: money laundering), most of them implicating Katherine Altone to one degree or another
- cash, in extremely limited amounts
- guns, in less limited amounts

Eddie admits that he doesn't know much about the financial side of AgraWealth — he knows patents and chemistry, not corporate law or accounting. He can tell something hinky is going on, but he needed extra help to break this thing open even before he got poisoned. He does know that AgraWealth gutted its main US lab, moving the best researchers overseas to a "less oppressive regulatory regime." He guesses the EPA or FDA has been sniffing around AgraWealth too.

If asked about Katherine Altone, Eddie says that he didn't like her much even before she was implicated in financial misdealings. Her husband Owen is a minor celebrity — a stock market pundit and investment advice speaker. He sometimes freelances for AgraWealth as a spokesman.

THE POISONING

Pharmacy or **Forensic Pathology** guesses that the poison is some form of

organophosphate. Nothing can be done for Eddie, and he knows it. He treated himself, but succeeded only in delaying the inevitable. He doesn't know who poisoned him, but he has two likely suspects:

- He's seen the same guy in several unlikely places in the last few weeks. A tall, thin, pale man. Eddie thinks he heard an Eastern European accent, but he's not sure. The guy was at AgraWealth at one point, with a visitor's pass. Maybe even snooping around Eddie's place in Norfolk.
- Just before he got sick, there was a party at AgraWealth. Since the company's shutting down one of its US labs and moving a number of researchers overseas, there was a going away celebration for them. Eddie was there; so were the Altones, and he spotted the thin guy there too. Any of them could have spiked his drink.

THE SNIPER

While Eddie's talking, call for **Sense Trouble** tests.

If anyone beats a Difficulty of 8 or more, they spot a flash from outside the window — dying sunlight reflecting on a sniper scope — and can react in time to rescue Eddie. Tackling him to the ground or otherwise getting him out of the line of fire saves his life. Otherwise, the first sniper shot hits Eddie square in

the temple, blowing off his head.

Anyone who beats a Difficulty of 4 doesn't react in time to save Eddie, but can get into cover before the second shot.

Anyone who doesn't beat a 4 is a target of opportunity for the next shot.

The sniper — the operative — started with a Shooting pool of 12; 4 of those points went on that kill shot aimed at Eddie. He'll keep shooting at any Agents he can see through the window (he's at Extended Range, so these snap-shots cost him 2 points to make on top of any points spent on the roll). If he doesn't have any visible targets, he spends

2 points and takes a shot at Eddie's computer, destroying Eddie's evidence. If the Agents just keep their heads down and play dead, or if the operative runs out of Shooting, he flees. If the players engage, then run *Engaging the Operative*.

AFTERMATH

If Eddie's alive, then he urges the Agents to take what they need and investigate. He's sure the sniper is a second attempt to shut him up.

If Eddie's dead, then the Agents can grab what they need from his house. His computer is a write-off, but a **Notice** spend spots a false bottom in

a desk drawer where Eddie's hidden a copy of his findings on a memory stick. Alternatively, a 2-point **Data Recovery** spend lets the Agents reconstruct some of the files from the damaged hard drive.

Optionally, within a few minutes of the shooting, an anonymous source provides the local police department and the FBI with surveillance photos of the Agents entering Eddie's farm, as well as "proof" that the Agents are members of a drugs cartel who'd been blackmailing Eddie into cooking meth for them. That's worth 4 points of Heat.

ENGAGING THE OPERATIVE

SCENE TYPE: Combat

LEAD-IN: Meeting Eddie Joyner

LEAD-OUT: The Norfolk Situation

Outdoor Survival or **Military Science** spots the best nest for a sniper — a low rise to the south of the farm, close to a side road. The sniper's about 500 meters away, which is Extended Range for a rifle (see page 67 of *Night's Black Agents*).

Pinned down within the house, the Agents have the following options:

- **Mount a Firefight:** There are a few rifles in a gun cabinet in the bedroom (count the house as a cache; *NBA*, p. 94). The operative's got full cover (+1 Hit Threshold) and is at Extended Range (2-point Shooting levy). If the operative's Hurt, he falls back to his car and drives off.
- **Sneak Around:** Getting out of the house and retreating without being

seen is a **Surveillance** test (Difficulty 4); getting close enough to shoot the operative is Difficulty 6; getting close enough to tackle the operative in Hand-to-Hand is Difficulty 8.

- **Call for Help:** Agents with military or law enforcement contacts (**Cop Talk**) can drum up support in the form of a few sheriff's deputies or at best a helicopter flyover. The operative flees as soon as he hears the sirens.

THE OPERATIVE

He's a Conspiracy cleaner, sent in to deal with any mess from the Altones' squabbles. If Eddie survives, or the Agents ask around at *AgraWealth Norfolk*, they can confirm that this is the "tall, thin, pale man" who was snooping around the company.

If the operative escapes, he'll show up again in *The Flight to Dubai* (p. 13) or *Executive Sanction* (p. 14). If he's killed, he's mostly a dead end — a thin Cover under the name of "Anthony Caul," and his fingerprints aren't in any US law enforcement database — but he's got a burner cell phone on him, and the only call on it is from the Altone residence in Norfolk.

The operative won't be taken alive. If the Agents somehow manage to incapacitate him, kill him off in a way that foreshadows your vampires (explodes into flames at dawn, dies of a mysterious brain aneurysm, turns out to be a 200-year-old-corpse when the Agents check on him in the morning, vanishes when a bright light passes overhead). Or just give him a false tooth filled with cyanide, the way the KGB used to do it.

He's a Renfield, given enhanced speed and strength by the Conspiracy. If you've a really experienced team of Agents, consider giving him Apportation or some form of invisibility too.

General Abilities: Aberrance 12, Driving 6, Hand-to-Hand 8, Health 10, Shooting 12

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Damage Modifier: +2 (sniper rifle), -1 (fist, kick)

Armor: -1 vs. any

Free Powers: Enhanced Hearing, Regeneration (2 Health per round), Tracking by Smell, Unfeeling

Other Powers: Spider Climb, Strength (tests mandatory for feats of strength; *NBA*, p. 137), Vampiric Speed

AGRIWEALTH NORFOLK

SCENE TYPE: Alternate

LEAD-IN: Meeting Eddie Joyner

LEAD-OUTS: The Norfolk Situation, Executive Sanction

AgraWealth's Virginia office is aggressively dull and anonymous, like tofu that's absorbed the flavor of the surrounding spy agencies. Neither of the Altones are here; Owen Altone is in Dubai on company business, and Katherine often works from home.

Flirting with the receptionist gets some inside gossip:

- The Altones' marriage is on the rocks. Everyone thinks that Owen's sleeping with his new PA.
- No one's sure what happened to Eddie Joyner — he's sick, but there are all sorts of rumors about what's going on.
- The company is courting some new investors in the Middle East — or Eastern Europe; no one seems to know which.
- The company recently moved its main research lab to Dubai.

Showing Joyner's evidence to anyone at the company is useless — everyone in a position of influence is either willfully blind (*"Hey, I've got stock options — don't ruin this for me"*), too scared to do anything (*"You got this from Joyner, so you know what happened to him — please, I have kids ..."*), or already in bed with the Conspiracy (*"That's ... very interesting. Let's discuss it more. Meet me at the abandoned industrial yard, at night. Come alone, and please daub your center of mass with this phosphorescent dye to make it easier for the sniper"* — run *Executive Sanction* (p. 14))

Getting in with **Digital Intrusion** (Difficulty 5) confirms what Joyner's amateur snooping uncovered — most of the suspicious traffic comes through the Altones' home connection. The answers are there.

THE OLD RESEARCH LAB—

In addition to the company office in Virginia, there's also a research farm out in the countryside.

Breaking into the shut-down lab — the one whose staff and equipment were recently moved to AgraWealth's Dubai office — requires an **Infiltration** test (Difficulty 6) to bypass the empty building's surprisingly tight security system, including armed guards, dogs, silent alarms, and CCTV.

Some of the equipment is still in boxes, waiting to be shipped out to Dubai. **Data Recovery** at the shipping company gives the Agents a pipe clue, the location of Site B (p. 21).

The other clues obtained there foreshadow whatever AgraWealth's up to. Riffing off the *Dark Projects* on p. 5:

⚡🌀 WITCHCRAFT

- **Outdoor Survival:** Lots of dead animals around here. Lots of birth defects and stillbirths too, and the soil — it's barren, utterly dead and blighted.
- **Astronomy:** The layout of the farm buildings is weird — they're aligned precisely with the stars of the constellation Ophiuchus, the serpent-bearer. Even the access road twists back and forth like a snake, as if the buildings are whipping the land around them.

⚡🌀 BLOOD FARMING

- **Forensic Pathology:** Digging around, you find bags of bone fragments in one shed, labeled for incineration. They're animal bones, probably cow bones, but they've *burst* from the inside. No sign of heating or other trauma — all the stress fractures suggest the animal's bones cracked from within.
- **Pharmacy:** One trash bag of discarded medicine containers yields some clues. All the drugs here are for treatment of various myeloproliferative conditions — basically, diseases where the body produces too many red blood cells.

🌀👁 MUTANT MONSTERS

- **Outdoor Survival:** The buzzing of flies leads you to a little stand of trees near an outflow pipe. There, you find the carcass of a large dog. It's been beaten and gutted, like it came up against something much, much fiercer and more dangerous. Digging around in the grass nearby, you find a few shell casings. Something fought the dog here, killed it, and then presumably got shot by a security team from the farm.

KATHERINE'S MOVEMENTS

A quick timeline of the events leading up to the very bad decision she's about to make.

One Month Ago: Katherine complains to her Conspiracy superiors that someone is spying on her. (In fact, she's found evidence both of Joyner's investigations and Owen's meddling, but she assumes they're both the responsibility of the same person.) The Conspiracy dispatches an operative to deal with the problem. The assassin targets Joyner, leaving Owen free to act.

One Week Ago: Owen goes to Dubai with his assistant, Sabrina.

One Week Ago: The operative returns to Norfolk. Katherine gets

nervous that he's going to eliminate her too, hires extra private security.

A Few Hours Ago: Owen puts his plan to discredit Katherine into operation, faking his kidnapping in Dubai.

So — Katherine believes that she's being targeted by an assassin sent by her displeased masters, but also thinks that her husband has been kidnapped by Islamic extremists and that the only way to free him is to steal millions from AgraWealth and transfer it to their accounts. She's not thinking clearly ...

■ **Urban Survival:** Poking around, you find an access tunnel that leads to that outflow pipe. The tunnel's blocked by a grate, but the grate's been smashed and twisted open. Something immensely strong broke out of here.

BURIED SECRETS

- You don't need an Investigative ability to spot the giant hole in the middle of the floor of the barn here at the experimental farm. It's a dig shaft that goes down more than 50 meters. What were they digging up?
- **Photography:** You try to take some photos of the scene,

but they come out weirdly distorted. Something *wrong* was here, something that left a stain or crease on reality itself.

- **Chemistry:** The building is rusting abnormally fast — you can almost see rust creeping across the doors, pipes, and hinges with the naked eye.

THE NORFOLK SITUATION

SCENE TYPE: Hazard

LEAD-INS: Meeting Eddie Joyner, Engaging the Sniper, Agra Wealth Norfolk

LEAD-OUT: Chase & Capture

Norfolk is a bustling commercial center located in the Virginia Tidewater. Upscale, cosmopolitan, and loaded with wealthy families, it is also home to the US Navy, and a somewhat transient population of sailors, aviators, and officers. (Increase all Heat gains by +1 to reflect the tighter security and heavy armed presence.) It is the second largest city in Virginia.

The Altones live on Mowbray Arch, a curving road alongside the Elizabeth River. It is one of the most exclusive neighborhoods in the city.

FINDING KATHERINE

She's not at home — she's driving around with her bodyguards. Calling her cell phone goes to voicemail; persistent characters may be able to get a brief, evasive conversation with her, and then a 2-point **Reassurance** spend gets the characters a face-to-face with her (see *The Interrogation*, p. 12, only it'll be in less unpleasant surroundings).

THE ALTONE HOME

Getting in is easy enough with **Infiltration** (Difficulty 5); failure triggers a silent alarm that brings both local police and Altone plus her bodyguards.

The ground floor of the home is spacious. It's a rich family's home, full of expensive designer furniture and appointments. There are numerous

pictures on the wall of Katherine and Owen together, some formal, some not. There are no children in any of these photos. A single staircase heads to the second story.

This floor holds the massive master bedroom, a cavernous master bathroom, and two large offices — one for Owen, decorated in leather and blues; one for Katherine, decorated in patterned fabrics and reds.

A 1-point **Electronic Surveillance** or **Notice** spend while searching the house spots a tiny bug hidden in a picture frame. (The Agents aren't the first people to break in here — the operative was here before them, investigating the Altones' loyalty to the Conspiracy.)

THE COMPUTERS

Each office has a computer with biometric security.

Owen's files detail a planned sales trip to Dubai that began about a week ago and an Internet history rife with photos and reviews of Dubai hotels and real estate.

- **Data Recovery** on Owen's computer turns up several emails from his assistant, Sabrina, about the trip to Dubai; reading between the lines suggests their relationship is less than professional, but there's nothing obviously incriminating or suspect here. In fact, you'd guess he scrubs his machine regularly, or does most of his emailing on his phone.
- **Accounting** turns up a payment from Owen to a private detective agency, dated two months ago. Whatever they sent him, though, isn't on this machine.

- Katherine's computer has two hard drives. The first drive is packed with domestic material: shopping receipts, emails to girlfriends, a Pinterest board of books she wants to read. The second drive has material similar to what Joyner provided. References to "other operational files" are made and **Data Recovery** (pipe clue) shows that these other files are kept on a portable hard drive. Her corporate email account is not stored here, though it may be accessed — at a cost (see *Corporate Email Hackery*).

- **Accounting:** Looking at her credit card, Katherine's just spent a fortune on private security. And given AgraWealth already has plenty of its own private security, that's doubly suspicious. If these guys are worth what they're charging her, they've got to be good.

- **Data Recovery:** With these details of Katherine's new car, you can **Digitally Intrude** (Difficulty 7) into the car company's database and access her vehicle's GPS to get her position.

CORPORATE EMAIL HACKERY

Breaking into Katherine's account requires a **Digital Intrusion** test at Difficulty 7; failure immediately triggers warning flags, alerting both AgraWealth and Katherine to the attempted breach. She'll return home immediately. If the Agents succeed, they find an untraceable email with a link to a recently uploaded video (see *What's on the Video*, p. 13).

Agents are encouraged to toss the house, but the hard drive is nowhere to be found.

CHASE & CAPTURE

SCENE TYPE: Chase

LEAD-IN: The Norfolk Situation

LEAD-OUT: Interrogation

Two options — either Katherine comes home unexpectedly, or the Agents lie in wait for her. Either way, here's how it goes down.

Katherine's paranoid about assassins and Conspiracy cleaners, so she's hired some pretty heavy protection — a trio of bodyguards (use the Police stats on *NBA*, p. 69, not the tougher bodyguard stats — these guys talk a good game, but they're not that great). One member of the trio enters the home first and checks to make sure it's safe (**Conceal** tests, Difficulty 6, from the Agents who want to stay hidden).

Once combat starts, one of the guards rushes Katherine to the car outside; the other two execute a fighting retreat to the vehicle. So, unless the Agents have a good plan in place, the most likely outcome is that there's a car chase with Katherine and some of her bodyguards (one of whom is driving) trying to escape the Agents.

Her best avenue of escape is to head for Norfolk International Airport, about 15 minutes away at her current speed. Her route is fairly linear, just down East Princess Anne Road. Only if the chase grows close will she change routes and make for the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

If she makes it to the airport, she ditches the car in one of the several parking lots and attempts to blend into the crowd. A 1-point **Notice** or other creative ability use discovers her easily, and she surrenders if her bodyguards are incapacitated.

If she detours to the tunnel, she purposefully drives up the oncoming lane of traffic (read: the wrong way), in an effort to discourage pursuit. This taxes the bodyguards' Driving abilities to the limit, and ultimately results in an epic multicar crash that snags traffic for hours ... once she surrenders to the Agents.

HAZARDS & ENCOUNTERS

GOING TO THE AIRPORT—

Here are some interesting wrinkles the Agents may encounter as they chase Katherine:

- Garbage trucks bottlenecking the road
- Lunchtime traffic through downtown Norfolk
- Local PD provoked by the

chase's ignorance of stoplights and speed limits (**note:** this potentially adds to Heat and may increase Katherine's Lead)

- Construction detouring the whole chase onto alternate and longer roads, taking the chase past Mount Trashmore (the local landfill and park) and into downtown Virginia Beach, a much swankier and upscale (read: uptight) community even less welcoming of chases



KATHERINE ALTONE, THE PARTICULARS

Katherine Altone is a tall fair-haired woman in her mid to late 40s, looking very much the well-groomed, all-business wife who's as successful as her husband, if not more so. (In fact, she not only makes more money than he does, she's orchestrated his second career as a financial pundit.) She is reserved, controlled, not prone to outbursts of anger or profanity, and doesn't smoke, drink, or dabble in narcotics.

She prefers avoiding direct confrontation, letting gossip-mongering, favor-baiting, and passive-aggressive commentary partner with shrewd business acumen to dissect her opposition without "getting things messy."

She's married to Owen Altone. He's a former sports star turned financial

pundit. She passed on advice to him, and the combination of her insight plus his reputation and charisma proved to be very effective. However, in the last few years success has gone to his head, and he now thinks he's smarter than she is. He's also jealous of her mysterious new contacts in the Conspiracy, and wants in. Their marriage is on the rocks thanks to their new affairs (her with the Conspiracy, him with his perky assistant, Sabrina).

PLAYING KATHERINE

You're the obnoxious, perfect wife no one in town likes. You're better, richer, smarter, and absolutely not afraid to simultaneously remind others of your supremacy and that they're so much

less than you are. Frequently looking disgusted and bored when speaking, you're at your happiest when digging the knife into someone's back and stepping over their body to get what you want.

Despite it all, you're not a monster — at least, not an actual one. You think you're working for an international consortium of bankers and criminals, not a Conspiracy of literal vampires. If AgraWealth's involved in something like biological weapons or blood harvesting, you don't know anything about that (although you may have worked very hard to maintain that ignorance). And despite your current problems, you're still fond of Owen.

- If the Director is feeling particularly malevolent, she should note the whole Norfolk–Virginia Beach area floods anytime more than an inch of rain falls — flooded streets increase the Difficulty of Driving tests by 2 because the streets are narrow and without decent drainage

HAZARDS & ENCOUNTERS

AROUND THE TUNNEL——

Should Katherine elect to take a route that leads her up the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Agents may encounter the following:

- Minimal room to maneuver because the bridge-and-tunnel pathway has

narrow lanes in each direction

- The danger of ever-present water, since crashing off the side of the bridge will plunge the car some 20 meters into Chesapeake Bay — all that keeps a car from doing that is a standard steel guardrail
- Constant traffic at all hours, with bottlenecking particularly at the chokepoints caused by tollbooths

INTERROGATION

SCENE TYPE: Core

LEAD-IN: Chase & Capture

LEAD-OUTS: The Flight to Dubai, Executive Sanction

The first order of business should be to stash Katherine somewhere and let any created Heat cool off. The closest reasonable location is an old motel way out on the far side of the city, the Sunset Motel.

The motel has seen better days. The main building is shaped like a lozenge, with two arms of five rooms each cutting out from it like antennae. The white paint is cracked and faded from years of neglect, revealing the flamingo-pink original color.

Rooms aren't much better. Threadbare carpets, out-of-date furniture, beds with magic fingers, mirrors on the ceiling, and frequently disgusting bathrooms make condemning the building a godsend. It just hasn't happened yet.

The front desk clerk can be easily bribed, coerced, or fooled into handing over a room without asking too many questions via a number of creative spends. **Forgery** can produce a bogus credit card. **Pharmacy** can reveal the clerk is a meth addict, great for threatening or bribing. Even **Shrink** or **Cop Talk** can be used to encourage the clerk to be helpful. In any event, Katherine can be stashed in a room and questioned.

Whatever room is given, it has poor security. Sure, the phone line can be yanked out of the wall, but the door only has a deadbolt and a chain, there's a window you can open from either side, and the motel is not too far removed from the highway. Keeping her here long term is likely not an option, so the Agents have to get straight to business.

REVELATIONS——

Interrogation on its own doesn't work. However, if the Agents show the evidence they obtained from Joyner, it gets her talking, mainly to deny any real culpability ("I was just moving money around—I haven't harmed anyone") and to elicit sympathy by talking about her husband's kidnapping.

- Owen arrived in Dubai as per the itinerary possibly found in the house search.
- (core) Owen is staying at the Burj Al Arab, one of the best hotels in Dubai, and one of the most expensive (around \$1,350 per night for the smallest room, around \$2,600 per night for an average one bedroom).
- He called once a day, and, because of the time difference, often left a voicemail several minutes in length.
- He stopped leaving messages two days ago, and has not left one since.
- She did receive a video to her corporate email account a few hours ago.

She urges the Agents to access her corporate email account, if the team has not done so already. The email with the video file is untraceable, and the link to the video file is password encrypted, but Katherine reveals the password to be “aidualc” — her middle name backwards.

WHAT'S ON THE VIDEO?—

Instead of Owen's usual voicemail, Katherine received a link to an uploaded video, showing Owen restrained in a chair in a brightly lit room, flanked

on both sides by three large figures wearing *keffiyah* headscarves wrapped around their faces. He reads from a prepared statement, stammering and crying, asking Katherine to commit various frauds and misappropriations of AgraWealth funding, so that he would not “get hurt.” The ultimate goal, as explained by an electronically distorted male voice at the end of the video, is to set aside several tens of millions of dollars into a limited-access account, then transfer the money to a specified other account once the amount has been reached. The voice states that all accounts are being monitored, and that not complying will result in Owen being “mailed home two inches at a time.”

- **Human Terrain:** The guys threatening Owen aren't Arabs — they're Pakistanis dressed up to look like Arabs, judging by their choice of clothing.
- **Criminology:** Typically, kidnappings of this sort are attacks of opportunity, and they don't happen in Dubai. Two possibilities: One, Owen left Dubai to go somewhere much more remote and dangerous (Iraq, perhaps), got grabbed, and then blabbed so much that the kidnappers were

able to make specific, informed demands of Katherine. Two, these guys aren't jihadists at all, they're just trying to intimidate Owen and cover their own tracks.

- **High Society:** You know those carpets. That was taken in a hotel room in the Burj Al Arab!

KATHERINE'S CHOICE—

If Katherine doesn't hand over the cash, her husband dies.

If she does, the Conspiracy will kill her.

She offers the Agents a deal — if they rescue Owen and leave her in place in AgraWealth, she'll pass on anything she learns to them. She'll even give them her hard drive, which has contact details for the elements of the Conspiracy she knows about. But first, they've got to go to Dubai and secure Owen's release.

Once the information from Katherine has been obtained, she can be relocated to a more secure facility or safe house via judicious use of an Agent's **Network**.

If the Agents take a commercial flight to Dubai, run *The Flight to Dubai*. If they have their own plane or try some other unlikely route, run *Executive Sanction* (p. 14).

THE FLIGHT TO DUBAI

SCENE TYPE: Antagonist Reaction

LEAD-IN: Interrogation

LEAD-OUT: The Burj Al Arab

Flying commercial, the Agents may choose to blend into airline staff (a 2-point **Forgery** spend produces a reasonable air marshal badge; **Disguise** lets them sneak on in flight crew uniform) or just take seats along with the other passengers. The average flight time to Dubai is about 15 to 16 hours. During that time Agents may further investigate Joyner's documents, via **Accounting**, **Research**, or **Forgery**. They can compare data to Katherine's testimony using **Bullshit Detector** or **Accounting**.

If they have preserved any hard drives (not Katherine's portable; she won't

part with that under any circumstances until Owen is safe), **Data Recovery**, **Electronic Surveillance**, or **Digital Intrusion** can investigate any existing leads further. The plane does have Wi-Fi so as to enable Internet-based investigations.

TROUBLE IN THE SKIES—

If the players have kept an extremely low profile, and take precautions when flying to Dubai (traveling under stronger **Covers** than the ones Joyner provided, avoiding surveillance at the airport or driving up to New York for a different flight to Dubai), and you want a low-key spy thriller instead of a high-octane action movie, you may wish to skip this section. Otherwise — the Conspiracy

has minions everywhere, and it knows that its Norfolk operation is in jeopardy, explaining its tightened security.

The Conspiracy has three assassins on board the plane.

- In seat 16C is **John Tourling**; he's got a fake air marshal badge and a firearm, but he'll only start shooting if their primary plan fails. Tourling's got the all-American gravitas of a grizzled old gunslinger, instantly inspiring trust and loyalty from passengers and crew alike. When he declares the Agents to be dangerous terrorists, it sounds convincing.

➤ **Sense Trouble** (Difficulty 5)

spots the gun under his jacket.

➤ **Human Terrain** guesses that he's relying on giving the impression of authority to make people trust

TOURLING

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Hand-to-Hand 6, Health 8, Shooting 8
Hit Threshold: 4
Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: +1
Damage Modifier: -2 (fist, kick), +1 (9mm)

him; **Cop Talk** lets the Agents rattle him into making a mistake. As soon as he loses his cool and starts shooting, it's clear he's not a trained air marshal — he fires without regard for the safety of other passengers.

- Ostensibly in seat 39D, but roaming the plane until she sits next to one of the Agents is **Margerie Olsom**. Bubbly, middle-aged, and overweight, she plumps down next to her chosen victim and explains loudly that her husband has fallen asleep back there, but she can never sleep on planes, she gets nervous and when she gets nervous, she talks a lot. She'll try to distract the Agents (raising all **Sense Trouble** difficulties by 1 while she's in your face) or throw suspicion on them ("*Say, you sure seem to know a lot about explosives*").
 - **Bullshit Detector** picks up on her deliberate duplicity, and the way she keeps glancing toward the steward's trolley.
 - **Flirting** or **Notice**: She's not wearing a wedding ring. So much for the sleeping husband in 39E.
- The third is another Renfield, like the sniper at Joyner's house (if the operative survived that scene, then it is the operative,

OLSON

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Hand-to-Hand 12, Health 8
Hit Threshold: 3
Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: +1
Damage Modifier: -2 (fist, kick), -1 (garrote; treat as a Called Shot to the throat)

in disguise). He's taken the place of one of the stewards.

- 1-point **Human Terrain** spend: The other stewards aren't happy about the sudden roster change, and complain that the new guy doesn't know where anything is.

The plan is to eliminate the Agents the same way that the Conspiracy dealt with Eddie Joyner — with poison. When the steward comes around with the drinks trolley, he'll dose the Agents' beverages with a lethal toxin. **Sense Trouble** (Difficulty 5) spots him dosing the drinks; a **Pharmacy** or **Notice** spend also works. (If an Agent does drink the poison, treat it as anthrax (**NBA**, p. 81), only ingested with a 4-hour onset instead of inhaled.)

If the Agents object to being poisoned, then Tourling the "sky marshal" steps in and escorts any troublemakers to the galley, where he and the steward try to murder them. If the Agents start a fight, then all three Conspiracy agents attack.

- Remember to use the Renfield's inhuman strength. Pin an Agent in the seat and pummel them, or clobber them with a drinks trolley (+2 damage).
- Olsom has a garrote concealed in her sleeve, and knows how to use it. She's also an expert martial artist.
- Tourling's not afraid to lay down

THE OPERATIVE

General Abilities: Aberrance 12, Driving 6, Hand-to-Hand 8, Health 10, Shooting 12
Hit Threshold: 4
Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: +1
Damage Modifier: +0 (concealed knife), -1 (fist, kick)
Armor: -1 vs. any
Free Powers: Enhanced Hearing, Regeneration (2 Health per round), Unfeeling
Other Powers: Spider Climb, Strength (tests mandatory for feats of strength; **NBA**, p. 137), Vampiric Speed

Suppressive Fire (**NBA**, p. 77) or make extra Shooting attacks, even on a plane. Collateral schamage.

AFTER THE ATTACK

If all goes according to the Conspiracy's plans, then the three assassins deplane safely at Dubai and vanish before they pass through passport control, and the poisoned Agents are left to suffer like Joyner; maybe they'll be more cooperative and actually die. However, if the Agents defeat the assassins on board the plane, then **Criminology** or **Military Science** tells the Agents that the best thing to do is vanish themselves (taking 3 points of Heat) when they arrive in Dubai. There's every chance that the Dubai police are already riddled with Conspiracy minions, so hanging around to answer questions is extremely unwise.

EXECUTIVE SANCTION

SCENE TYPE: Antagonist Reaction

LEAD-INS: Interrogation, AgraWealth Norfolk

LEAD-OUTS: The Norfolk Situation, The Burj Al Arab

In this scene, the operative makes another attempt on the Agents' lives. The two possible lead-ins are:

- The Agents made too much noise investigating AgraWealth in Norfolk or

- The Agents chartered or hired their own plane to Dubai

(If the operative got killed in *Engaging the Sniper*, substitute a hired assassin (Shooting 10 — use the Special Police

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: QUICK AND DIRTY

Dubai is the second most populated city in the United Arab Emirates, after Abu Dhabi. The 2.1 million people occupy the 1,588 square miles of otherwise inhospitable rock and desert. The temperature hovers somewhere between 30 and 41 degrees Celsius (85 and 106 degrees Fahrenheit) for much of the year, and remains humid constantly. It is an uncomfortable place.

That said, it's also a city of immense wealth, with a GDP of around 86 billion dollars, and an economy built on financial markets, construction, and oil. While many international agencies cite a lack of human rights in the Islamic country, Dubai remains a jewel of an economy and destination for commerce.

POPULATION

2.1 million approximately (roughly the size of Houston, Texas)

CONFLICT

Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum rules Dubai while also serving as vice president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates. Allegations run rampant that Maktoum is far more focused on increasing his nation's oil and commercial trade profits, regardless of expense, and Dubai

routinely comes under fire for human rights violations on its exploited and maltreated immigrant work force.

BACKDROPS

DUBAI GOLD SOUK: This open-air market trades in gemstones, jewelry, and precious metals. Its winding labyrinth of vendor booths and shops are cramped and loud, and make surveillance or tracking difficult as upwards of 15,000 people a day patronize legal and black market materials.

DUBAI MIRACLE GARDEN: This irrigated flower garden is the world's largest, hosting species of flowers and plants from all over the world. Its open-air galleries and paths are closed erratically with little explanation, even at night or during the busiest times of day.

THE UNIVERSE: This artificial archipelago saw construction begin in 2009, but was halted and placed on indefinite hold when the construction teams arranged foundational pylons in specified configurations to mirror the alignments of stars and constellations and reported strange phenomena on scene.

THREE HOOKS

- The souks of Dubai trade in all manner of commodities, legal and otherwise. It's not hard to

find someone willing to buy or sell what the Agents need, but it's another matter entirely if the transaction or merchant is trustworthy. A vendor may smile and nod while keeping his Conspiracy handlers informed about what the Agents are doing in Dubai.

- Dubai's working poor toil for their rich masters, the majority having emigrated from one set of unfavorable conditions in Southeast Asia to a new set of unfavorable conditions in a staunchly hostile and exploitative climate. They brought with them not only able bodies but also a wealth of lore about vampires, spirits, and creatures the Agents may encounter while in Dubai.
- As a confluence of Western capitalism, economic prosperity, Islamic faith, and Muslim law, Dubai serves as a critical greenhouse for cultural assimilation and influence expansion for the Conspiracy. Whether through the economics of oil, or the explosion of tourism, or Arabian history, the Conspiracy has many tools at its disposal to stay entrenched, undetected, powerful, and active in the region.

stats on page 70 of *NBA* with a +2 damage sniper rifle.)

In either case, the assassin sets up somewhere with a good line of sight to the Agents. Maybe he plants himself on an overpass above the airport approach road, or cuts the fence and wriggles onto

the field near the runway. Maybe he has an AgraWealth contact lure the Agents somewhere remote and murder-y.

Again, **Sense Trouble** checks (Difficulty 6) give the Agents a moment of warning before the shooting starts. Run this as more of a chase than a

shootout — force the Agents to make **Driving** tests to stay on the road while the assassin fires at their car, or **Athletics** and **Piloting** tests to race onto the plane and take off before they're shot.

RENT-A-SHEIKH

SCENE TYPE: Alternate

LEAD-IN: Any in Dubai

LEAD-OUTS: The Fracture, The Burj Al Arab, Life in Death

Human Terrain or **Accounting** (or **Network**) reminds the Agents

that Western companies doing business in Dubai often bring an Emirati prince in as a board member and local liaison—a practice referred to by locals as “rent-a-sheikh.” Given his position as AgraWealth's sales and glad-handing specialist, Owen

Altone must have been involved in this arrangement.

Asking around Dubai with **High Society** (or checking Owen's calendar through Katherine or the AgraWealth computer network) discovers that Altone had a meeting with Yousef bin

Rahim. Again, **High Society** gets an audience with the sheikh. He'll confirm:

- **AgraWealth** has established a research farm in the desert — it claims that it'll be able to make the desert green and growing. The farm is exceedingly isolated and is not open to visitors. A suitable Interpersonal spend (**Flattery**, for example) gets the location of *Life in Death*, p. 21.
- Mr. Altone and his charming assistant are staying in the *Burj Al Arab* (p. 16)
- A **Flattery** or **Negotiation** spend

gets his honest impression that Mr. Altone was rudely eager to cut their meeting short, as if he had another appointment. Such behavior reflects very badly on AgraWealth.

- Through his sources, he knows that another gentleman, Mr. Darvell, is very interested in AgraWealth's fortunes. Darvell is staying on a yacht in the marina (*The Fracture*, p. 20).
- **Bullshit Detector** or **Vampirology** confirms that bin Rahim is free of vampiric influence. If the Agents can provide proof of

AgraWealth's sinister plans, then he can get them military backup when they raid Site B. They'll need evidence of supernatural threats, and to spend a total of 4 points from **Human Terrain**, **Vampirology**, **Reassurance**, **Tradecraft**, and **Negotiation**; even then, bin Rahim can at most promise to send Emirati armed forces on exercises near Site B — they'll only intercede *after* the Agents start a firefight in *Hostile Takeover* (p. 23).

THE BURJ AL ARAB

SCENE TYPE: Core

LEAD-INS: The Flight to Dubai, Rent-a-Sheikh

LEAD-OUTS: Room 222, The Helipad Run, What the Butler Saw

The Burj Al Arab is the "world's only 7-star hotel," sitting on a peninsula of beaches. The building is architecturally unique, shaped like a capital letter D, and frequently cited as "an exercise in opulence and excess." The only access to the hotel is via a private bridge — either talk your way in with **High Society** or book in advance with **Preparedness**. It's got the largest atrium in the world, rising 600 feet from the lobby floor — imagine NASA's vertical assembly building with more 22-carat gold fountains.

The staff is known to be accommodating to a fault, providing absolute discretion and privacy to all its guests, and is rumored to be willing to indulge their more off-the-books requests should patrons know the code words and the right method of inquiry. Every room has a dedicated member of staff (and there's an 8:1 ratio of staff members to guests)

■ **High Society** or **Streetwise:**

Okay — if every room has its own staff attendant, then either they're in on the kidnapping, or Owen bribed them to look the other way. Either way, questioning the staff may be a good idea. If the Agents question the relevant staff

attendant before entering *Room 222*, see *What the Butler Saw* (p. 17).

If the Agents surveil the building prior to entry (say from the exclusive parking garage or even from within the lobby itself), they find quite a few interesting details:

- (core) **Digital Intrusion** used investigatively shows that Room 222 is reserved by AgraWealth under the name Altone. Furthermore, several thousand dollars of room service has been rung up by that room in the last 48 hours.

➤ **Architecture:** The windows to Owen Altone's room are blacked out.

- A **Notice** or **Tradecraft** spend reveals that several of the people in the lobby are armed, are doing their best to cover up their ear pieces and Agent surveillance, and are all very much larger, hulking people (AgraWealth Dubai security personnel).

➤ **Traffic Analysis:** There's an AgraWealth security team already here, but it doesn't look like they're here to rescue Owen Altone. Whatever they were doing, they've already done it.

- **Electronic Surveillance**, again coupled with **Digital Intrusion**, gets access to the hotel's security camera network, and the Agents get a glimpse of Owen Altone being escorted up an access stairwell by two security

goons (not the guys seen in the kidnapping video) before the feed goes dead. He's still in the hotel.

- **Notice** or **Military Science:** A chopper thunders overhead and lands on the helipad 29 stories up. Some gut instinct tells the Agents that's not some rich sheikh's shiny toy - it's trouble.

ENTERING THE HOTEL

There's no reception desk — guests are met by personal greeters and assistants when they arrive. At any mention of "Owen Altone," a greeter informs the Agents that it is against hotel policy to disclose who is staying there, and then she attempts to conceal her tapping a message on her phone. This alerts the security teams in the lobby, who'll then attempt to secure the Agents ("*Come with us, and there won't be trouble*"). AgraWealth doesn't want to cause a scene in public, so the guards either (a) try to force the Agents to come into the service section

SECURITY GOON

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Hand-to-Hand 7, Health 8, Shooting 9, Weapons 8

Hit Threshold: 3

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +0

Damage Modifier: +0 (baton), +1 (9mm pistol), -2 (fist, kick)

of the hotel where they can have a fight scene without upsetting the tourists or (b) follow the Agents into the elevator and mug them on floor 22.

The AgraWealth crew is watching the elevator and lobby, so if the Agents just walk in, they're spotted. Possible options for getting past the cordon and up to room 222:

- **Infiltration** (Difficulty 6) or **Disguise** (Difficulty 4) to sneak past
- Causing a distraction (**Explosive Devices** to blow up an AgraWealth car, **High Society**

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

The Conspiracy has its own investigators, and they already knew Owen Altone was an unreliable asset. They stormed his hotel room and captured Owen only a few minutes before the Agents arrived. They intend to fly him out to the AgraWealth site in the desert for questioning via the helipad at the top of the hotel. They've set a bomb in his hotel suite to clear up any evidence.

to cause a scene in the lobby)

- Using **Architecture** to access the hotel via the utility corridors and service entrances
- If the Agents cause too much carnage

for you to plausibly sweep it under the (astoundingly expensive if somewhat tacky) carpets of the Burj Al Arab, have Room 222 explode and jump straight to *The Helipad Run* (p. 18).

WHAT THE BUTLER SAW

SCENE TYPE: Alternate

LEAD-INS: Room 222, The Burj Al Arab, The Helipad Run

LEAD-OUTS: The Fracture, Life in Death

Tracking down the staff attendant assigned to Owen Altone's room in the Burj Al Arab (**High Society** / **Data Recovery** to get it out of the hotel, **Negotiation** or **Interrogation** to bribe/bully it out of other staff, or **Notice** when searching Room 222) leads the Agents to Azzah. They might meet her:

- in Dubai, after the confrontation at the hotel
- at the hotel, if they search for her
- at the hotel, if she helps them in escape during *The Helipad Run* or *Hot Times in the Burj Al Arab*

Azzah's one of the thousands of staff members at the Burj; she's proud to have such an important and prestigious job. She's lived in Dubai all her life, and watched as the city changed around her. (She's not Emirati, though; she's Arabian.) Her job in the hotel is to

ensure that the guests have a perfect experience of unparalleled luxury, where their every desire is catered for.

Reassurance garners the following:

- Owen Altone is a regular visitor to the hotel; she's seen him before. Sabrina, his "assistant," is new — Azzah suspected the two were having an affair, but such matters are none of her business.
- (alternate core for *Life in Death*, p. 21) Owen works for AgraWealth — they're building an experimental agricultural facility out in the desert.
- Altone asked for privacy and discretion, and told her not to ask any questions. Strange men came to his room and didn't leave.
- Azzah considered reporting the unusual behavior to her supervisors, but she came home one evening to find an envelope on her doorstep. It contained photographs of Azzah's sister and her nieces, along with images of dead children. The threat was clear — say anything, and Azzah's family would be punished.

- Sabrina gave Azzah more instructions when she returned to the hotel.

If anyone tried calling, Azzah was to redirect the call and pretend to be the regular receptionist, and claim that Owen Altone was "away" and that his room was empty. She was also to ensure that the other staff didn't disturb the room.

- (alternate core for *The Fracture*, p. 20) Owen has stayed in the room since. Sabrina left only once; greatly daring, Azzah followed her — she went to a yacht moored at the marina downtown. Azzah saw her go aboard a ship called the *Countess*.
- Now / a few hours ago / yesterday, depending on when the Agents question her, men from Owen's company arrived at the hotel. They went to Owen's room and took him away. She doesn't know what else they did, but she's terrified that she'll be blamed for whatever terrible things Owen has done. She doesn't know who else to turn to.

ROOM 222

SCENE TYPE: Hazard/Alternate

LEAD-IN: The Burj Al Arab

LEAD-OUTS: The Helipad Run, Life in Death, The Fracture, What the Butler Saw

The door to Owen Altone's suite is locked, but easily opened with a **Filched**

passcard or **Mechanics**.

Inside, the Agents immediately see the following:

- This was clearly the hotel room where Owen's kidnapping video was recorded. There's no sign of Owen now, though.

- Lying on the floor, dead, are the corpses of the three men who were holding Owen in the video. Seated on Owen's chair, also dead, is a young woman who must be Sabrina, Owen's assistant.

■ Beep. Beep. Beep. Sitting in the middle of the room is a small bomb, and it's counting down. Disarming the bomb requires an **Explosive Devices** test (Difficulty 5). If the bomb goes off, treat it as a Class 3 boom (see *NBA*, p. 67) — enough to annihilate the hotel room and any evidence in it. The explosion, inevitably, gathers a lot of attention, so run *The Helipad Run* next. If the Agents do disarm the bomb, they can grab clues from this room before the lack of an explosion attracts a similar amount of hostile attention.

First clues first, assuming the room isn't a smoking ruin:

- **Forensic Pathology:** These guys were shot with the same sort of weapons that the AgraWealth guards typically carry. Still warm — the attack happened only a few minutes ago. And it was a professional hit, from the look of it. Nice tight grouping.
- Sabrina, on the other hand, has had her tongue and heart cut out.
 - **Criminology or Occult Studies:** That reminds you of a ritual killing — or the

way some gangs punish traitors and informants.

- **Data Recovery:** Sabrina's phone has several text messages on it that appear to be coded messages in German. It's also got Owen's schedule while in Dubai.

➤ (alternate core) **Traffic**

Analysis: Notably, Owen had a meeting with "K's boss" the day he arrived at "AWD Site B." (AWD is AgraWealth Dubai; Site B is their research farm in the desert.) Judging by travel times and other appointments, they must have flown there and back by helicopter, and there's a helipad on top of the hotel.

➤ **Tradecraft:** You're pretty sure she was (a) a spy and (b) manipulating Owen.

➤ (alternate core) **Electronic Surveillance:** Accessing the phone's GPS lets the Agents work out her recent journeys — she took one trip to a location in the desert (Site B / *Life in Death*, p. 21) and one trip down to the Dubai marina (*The Fracture*, p. 20).

- (alternate core) **Outdoor Survival or Photography:** Scattered on the floor are papers and slides from Owen's presentation to investors. Most of it is just corporate platitudes about opportunities and the growth of biotech, but you spot a few satellite photos and maps showing an AgraWealth research site out in the desert. It looks to be surprisingly secure for a glorified farm.

- **Notice:** A card in the wastebasket welcomes Owen Altone and Sabrina Martin to the hotel, and tells them that "Azzah" will take care of all their needs during their stay. See *What the Butler Saw* (p. 17).

There's no sign of Owen or his laptop.

If the bomb hasn't gone off within five minutes, AgraWealth sends a team to investigate the lack of an evidence-destroying explosion. If the Agents avoid a confrontation and sneak out of the hotel, then the Conspiracy whisks Owen Altone away in a helicopter to the Site B farm, and the Agents pick up the trail in *Life in Death* (p. 21). If they want to try extracting Owen before it's too late, run *The Helipad Run* (below).

THE HELIPAD RUN

SCENE TYPE: Alternate

LEAD-IN: Room 222, The Burj Al Arab

LEAD-OUTS: *Life in Death*, *What the Butler Saw*

The helipad is up on the 28th floor of the building, above the Al Muntaha restaurant on the 27th floor — one of eight restaurants in the hotel (the seafood one is underwater and built into an aquarium). All the elevators shut down automatically if the bomb goes off or if people start shooting, leaving the Agents with six flights of luridly decorated stairs to climb. Somewhere above them are Owen Altone and his Conspiracy captors.

Run this as a chase scene using **Athletics**. Owen's captors' start with a Lead of 5, and can make a Sudden Escape to the helicopter (*NBA*, p. 59) when their Lead hits 7.

Possible obstacles and stunts:

- Panicking staff and guests

stumbling out into the corridors

- Moderately efficient hotel security staff (use Police stats; *NBA*, p. 69)
- Jumping across the atrium from one balcony to another (it's only a 500-foot drop down to the ornamental fountains)
- Leaping over a cart laden with delicious food and fresh fruit
- Charging through a bar (\$1,000 cocktails served in diamond-studded glasses)
- AgraWealth goons blocking the stairwell
- Taking a service exist that leads to the exterior and free-climbing the wall of the building

OWEN ALTONE & THE CONSPIRACY GOONS

That's the worst band name ever.

TOOLING UP

While gun crime is relatively rare in Dubai itself, there are plenty of guns in the Emirates. The Bedouin value their rifles. Heavy weapons can also be obtained with a **Network** spend or **Preparedness** — it's easy enough for the Agents to lay their hands on some Iranian-made rocket launchers or Pakistani military surplus if they know where to look. Remind them that the AgraWealth Dubai Site B farm is out in the middle of nowhere, dozens of miles from anywhere else — they can make some noise without drawing a lot of Heat if they have to.

If they've allied with Darvell, then he can supply them with heavier guns, or put them in contact with an arms dealer.



Also, it's a succinct description of the guys the Agents are chasing. They've drugged Owen and are now dragging him up six flights of stairs to the helipad. Previously, Owen's injuries were expertly applied makeup courtesy of Sabrina to make him look suitably threatened on camera. Now, those injuries are mostly real — the Conspiracy goons aren't too pushed about keeping Owen alive.

Use the Bodyguard stats (*NBA*, p. 69) for the guys holding Owen; use the AgraWealth security goons for the rest. If the Agents do catch up, one of the bodyguards will use Mook Shield (*NBA*, p. 76) on

Owen. The goons will fight to the death if pressed, but preferably they'll drop Owen, drop a grenade, and run.

ON THE HELIPAD

Waiting on the helipad is an AgraWealth helicopter — an AugustaWestland AW101, to be precise. Gorgeous machine. Luxury interior that puts Marine One to shame, although the six armed AgraWealth goons on board do take something away from the overall

HOT TIMES IN THE BURJ AL ARAB

Between explosions, running gun battles, the bodyguards that the other guests bring with them, and the sort of mischief that players get up to, any combat in the Burj Al Arab is going to draw serious Heat (at least 4 points, maybe more if things get helicopter-crashing-into-the-restaurant messy). Optionally, you could have Azzah (p. 17) show up and escort the Agents through the service corridors and back rooms of the hotel to safety if the players are in need of rescue.

Alternatively, if the Agents are captured or have no way out, then have one of Darvell's servants intercede on their behalf and bring them to the yacht (see *The Fracture*, p. 20).

Altone. (**Preparedness** plus a good throwing arm could tag the chopper with a tracking device that leads to *Life in Death*, p. 21; alternatively, using **Bureaucracy**, **Cop Talk**, or **Data Recovery** can get its course from Dubai air traffic control.)

Complications for the helipad:

- The downdraft from the rotors raises the Difficulty of all tests by +1
- Using a Throw is lethal here — it's a long way down off the helipad
- The goons on the helicopter have full cover (+1 Hit Threshold), but if the helicopter takes more than 10 damage, or if the Agents start using called shots on the (bulletproof) canopy or the rotors, it'll depart immediately.

AGRAWEALTH SECURITY GOON—

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Hand-to-Hand 4, Health 4, Shooting 4, Weapons 4

Hit Threshold: 3

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +0

Damage Modifier: -1 (baton), +1 (9mm pistol), -2 (fist, kick)

THE FRACTURE

SCENE TYPE: Alternate

LEAD-INS: What the Butler Saw, Room 222, Rent-a-Sheikh

LEAD-OUT: Life in Death

The *Countess* is a luxury yacht. Almost anywhere else in the world, she'd draw the admiration and attention of everyone who passed by her mooring; here in Dubai, though, she's one among hundreds in this playground of the ultra-rich. If you know what to look for, though, you might see that she's got ELINT aerials (**Electronic Surveillance**) nestled amid her masts to snoop on phone calls, or that all the windows are bulletproof.

Vampirology notes that if you're paranoid about vampires, staying on a luxury yacht and keeping running water between you and the shore at all times is an excellent countermeasure.

The *Countess* is owned by Sabrina Martin's controller. Call him Mr. Darvell. The nature of Mr. Darvell is up to you — he can be vampire, human, or something else entirely depending on your campaign. Some options:

- "Augustus Darvell" is the name of the main character in Byron's "Fragment of a Novel," the unfinished vampire tale that inspired Polidori. In that tale, Darvell falls victim to a vampire and is buried in a Turkish graveyard, only to rise again as one of the undead. Is Darvell's name a nom de guerre, a joke, or a clue to his vampiric nature?
- Darvell's condition could reflect or echo that of Eddie Joyner — maybe he too was poisoned by the Conspiracy, and believes he can obtain a cure from AgraWealth's research. Digging with **Accounting** might connect him to some other company taken over by the Conspiracy, just like it seized control of AgraWealth.
- Darvell might be in the same line of business as AgraWealth — he represents a much larger multinational that's threatened by AgraWealth's research. In this scenario, it's human greed that drives him; he sent Sabrina to

disrupt AgraWealth because of the danger to his company's stock price. Vampires didn't enter into it.

- Darvell's a fiction — he's actually working for the CIA, or MI6, or some other vampire-hunting intelligence agency, gathering intelligence about the Conspiracy (or trying to break a chunk of the Conspiracy off so his organization can control the vampires).

SNEAKING ON BOARD——

A **High Society** spend gets the Agents into the exclusive and heavily guarded marina (**Flirting** to get an invitation to a yacht party, or just sneaking in with **Infiltration** works too). The yacht's got four Bodyguards (*NBA*, p. 69) standing guard at all times; getting on without being spotted requires an **Infiltration** test at Difficulty 6. The yacht has a small arsenal of weapons on board, but the bodyguards won't shoot to kill unless the Agents open fire first.

Darvell never leaves the main cabin; when the Agents arrive, he's tracking the flight of the helicopter from the Burj Al Arab to AgraWealth Site B and discussing options with one of his guards. (If the Agents come here before visiting the Burj Al Arab, then the bombing of Room 222 and Owen Altone's extraction happen offscreen, and Darvell fills them in on what just happened at the hotel).

MEETING MR. DARVELL——

The main cabin of the *Countess* is a strange mix of the luxurious and the clinical. It's richly decorated — Turkish rugs and divans on the floor, oak furniture and fittings, burning lamps to chase away the gloom left by the opaque tinted windows. Mixed in with all that, though, is medical equipment — oxygen cylinders, monitoring devices, a reclining bed. It's clear that the owner of this yacht is immensely wealthy, but not a healthy man.

Darvell looks like a vulture — bald, prominent chin, clawlike hands. Despite the punishing city heat outside, it's chilly

inside the cabin, and he's wrapped in a Turkish bathrobe. Regardless of how the Agents got here, even if they're pointing guns at him and dripping water and/or bodyguard blood all over his carpet, Darvell gestures for them to sit down and discuss the situation rationally.

He freely explains that Sabrina Martin was working for him — he initially sent her to gather information about AgraWealth. "That company now serves ... corporate masters who are enemies of mine." She did her job too well, and inadvertently pushed Owen Altone into betraying his wife and trying to take over AgraWealth's financial section. Now, Darvell's here to run damage control on a fiasco he must admit some responsibility for.

AgraWealth operates a research facility here in the United Arab Emirates, and it's taken Owen there for ... questioning.

Darvell wants to salvage something from this situation. He's furious that Owen's bungling has cost him the life of Sabrina Martin. He offers the Agents a deal:

- If they damage AgraWealth sufficiently by destroying Site B here in Dubai, he'll arrange to spirit them out of the country and pay them a considerable amount of money. He'd also be open to working with them in future against "mutual enemies."
- Convincing Katherine Altone to pull the trigger on the "ransom" (bankrupting the American branch of the company) would also work — but as soon as she learns that her husband's cheating on her *and* cheating her, she'll have no reason to pay for his "safe return" and will report the Agents and everything else to her Conspiracy masters. To bring down AgraWealth that way, the Agents need to rescue Owen and use him as leverage *before* the Conspiracy tells Katherine about what really went on at the Burj Al Arab.
- He doesn't give a damn about Katherine Altone, or Owen. If the Agents want to take steps to preserve their lives, that's acceptable. However,

either AgraWealth burns, or else whoever takes over in AgraWealth works for Darvell.

- **Bullshit Detector:** Darvell's being honest for the most part. He's clearly a sinister corporate overlord if not an actual vampire, but right now, his interests align with those of the Agents.
- **Negotiation** can wheedle more cash or guns out of Darvell.

- If the Agents try **Intimidation** or something similar, then Darvell is unimpressed. If he's human, they can kill him easily, but there will be repercussions. His organization will take revenge (kill off a Solace if the Agents do murder Darvell out of hand). If he's a vampire, shooting him just means there's a fight scene (or, more likely, a "run away while we use **Preparedness**

for some thermite and scuttle the yacht" scene). Use whatever vampire stats suit your campaign; default to the Linea Dracula build on page 144 of *NBA* if you don't have a stronger alternative).

If the Agents take Darvell's deal, he sets them up with a hired car and local guides to bring them to Site B. Their task there is to damage AgraWealth one way or another.

LIFE IN DEATH

SCENE TYPE: Climax

LEAD-INS: Room 222, The Helipad Run, The Fracture, What the Butler Saw

LEAD-OUTS: Hostile Takeover, The Reckoning

The United Arab Emirates is a thin ribbon of cities along the Gulf coast. South and west, it turns into desert, endless and bare. Some of the borders are still unknown and unmarked, lost in the wastes of the Empty Quarter. Beyond the oilfields and the few oases near Abu Dhabi, most of the country is deserted. What's the line? Boundless and bare, the lone and level sands stretch far away ... apart from that spot of riotous green over there!

That spot is the AgraWealth experimental farm. It's a collection of newly built concrete structures, surrounded by a tall fence. With only minimal irrigation, the company has coaxed life from the sands. (How are they really achieving it? Take your pick from vampiric weather control, genetic engineering of mutant seeds, alien radiation, or sleight of hand to lure some wealthy emir into buying the company.)

The helicopter from the Burj Al Arab can be seen outside the main compound.

- **Military Science:** Security looks tight. Minimal cover in the surrounding landscape, and there might be buried mines or other antipersonnel stuff. Only one gate in the fence, and it's guarded. CCTV cameras and armed guards. And that little crop-monitoring surveillance drone circling overhead isn't armed, but it'll spot any movement on the desert by day or night.

- **Traffic Analysis:** Executives come in by helicopter, staff by bus across the desert. It might be possible to sneak in via that bus, either by **Disguising** as staff, hiding on board with **Conceal**, or just ambushing it and driving in.
- **Outdoor Survival:** Even with minimal irrigation, they'll need water. They're probably pumping it from one of the northern oases or right from the desalination plants at the coast. The pipeline's much too small to use as an ingress, but sabotaging it and ambushing the repair team might work.
- **Digital Intrusion:** It's Difficulty 4 to hack in, poke around their network, and download schematics of the base, including the location of its generator and backup generator. Shutting down CCTV is Difficulty 6; a separate check (or an **Electronic Surveillance** spend) is needed to disable the feed from the circling surveillance done.

GETTING IN

The base Difficulty for sneaking in is 6, modified as follows:

- +2 if the Agents try crossing the desert without some sort of cover, distraction, or camouflage
- +2 for the drone
- +2 for the guard patrols

In other words, it's Difficulty 12 to just stroll up to the base. Suitable spends (**Traffic Analysis**, **Electronic Surveillance**, **Military Science**, **Outdoor Survival**) can reduce the Difficulty. The base is guarded by plenty

of generic AgraWealth security — mostly Somalian mercenaries instead of the rent-a-cops used by the AgraWealth Norfolk branch, but roughly the same degree of training and equipment. There are also a few operative-level special forces in the mix — assume one elite security (see *Tooled-Up Operative*, p. 24) and five regular per player character.

If the Agents are spotted, there's plenty of combat advice in *Hostile Takeover* (p. 23).

RESEARCH FARM LOCATIONS

1. Security Control: Main guard post and armory, monitors CCTV feeds, dispatches patrols.

2. The Barn: Restricted access. See *Finding Altone*, below.

3. Laboratories: Small laboratories working on samples from the fields.

4. Researcher Barracks: Most of the researchers live in Dubai, and only come down here when their experiments necessitate it. The researcher barracks are spartan but comfortable considering the desert heat.

5. Guard Barracks: Overcrowded and basic, but considerably better than the laborer barracks.

6. Laborer Barracks: AgraWealth Dubai takes full advantage of the country's lax regime regarding human rights and working conditions. The laborers here — mostly South Asians from Sri Lanka and Indonesia — are treated as slaves; depending on what's in the barn, there may be a terrifyingly

high turnover rate as victims are fed to the horror.

7. Canteen/Generator: Solar panels on the roof provide most of the base's power requirements. Meals in the canteen are strictly segregated; researchers never eat with guards, and laborers are lucky if they get to eat at all.

8. Administration: Payroll, computer servers, and communications. Also, stores, supplies, and a small sickroom. Owen's laptop is here; if the Agents grab it, it contains much the same data as Katherine's portable hard drive (p. 10).

9. Generator: Backup diesel generator.

10. Garage/Workshop: Spare parts and repair facilities for the jeeps, the farm vehicles, and the drone. It's a 4-point pool that can be spent on Mechanics or Preparedness, too.

FINDING ALTONE

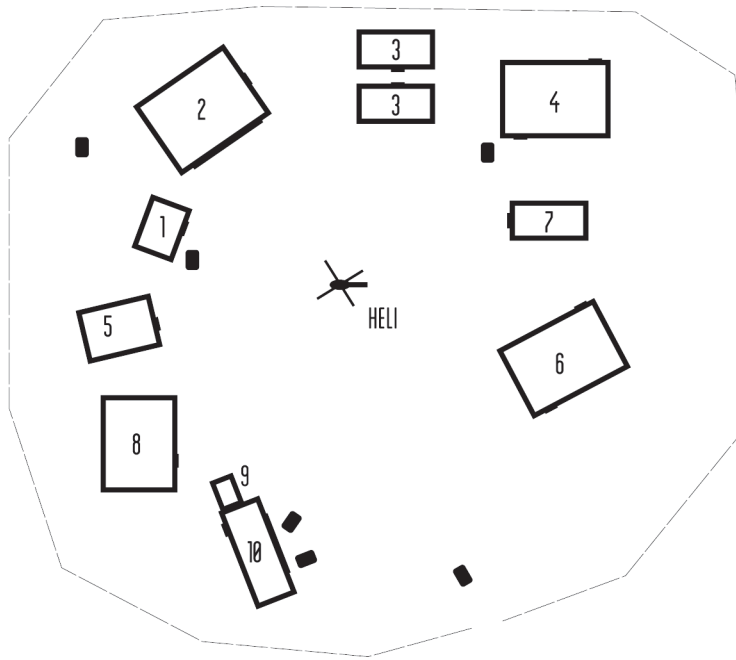
If Altone's here, he's being held in the barn.

- **Traffic Analysis** picks up on conversation about "the *al'ahmaq* [idiot] from the hotel" being moved to the barn.
- **Military Science** spots heavier security around that building.
- Grab a guard and hit him with **Intimidation**. Also, hit him with your fist. He'll tell you where the prisoners go.
- Make contact with any of the laborers (**Reassurance**, plus **Languages (Tamil)**), and they'll tell you about the prisoner.

THE EXPERIMENT

What's inside the barn? That depends on your campaign, and your vampires. Whatever it is, it's something unpleasant, dangerous, and about to consume Owen Altone. Riffing off the examples given earlier (p. 5):

- ⚡☠ **Witchcraft:** Altone's about to be sacrificed. He's tied to a stone altar, and there's a mechanical apparatus above him that looks like the hideous offspring of a sacrificial dagger and an automated slaughterhouse, a machine that can cut out the hearts and livers of a conveyor belt of victims. There's a



- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. SECURITY POST | 6. LABORER BARRACKS |
| 2. THE BARN | 7. CANTEEN/MAIN POWER |
| 3. LABORATORY | 8. ADMINISTRATION |
| 4. RESEARCHER BARRACKS | 9. GENERATOR |
| 5. GUARD BARRACKS | 10. WORKSHOP/GARAGE |

burning brazier nearby, a receptacle for the hearts. Concealed speakers in the walls recite an unholy ritual chant.

⚡☠ **Blood Farming:** Altone lies strapped to a hospital gurney. Seven innocent Sri Lankans are in similar restraints. All of them are hooked up to IVs pumping a cocktail of drugs into their bodies; all of them are now bleeding from the eyes and nose as their bodies produce a dangerous excess of blood.

☠ **Mutant Monsters:** Altone's lying on the ground in a cage. His cage is connected to another, larger cage, and that one contains a creature that might once have been a leopard, but now it's got blood-red spots and mangy fur. There's a huge canker-sore on the tip of its tail that might be the beginnings of a poisonous stinger, like that of the fabled manticore, and its teeth have grown to a prodigious size. Its eye sockets are empty and scabbed over, but you know it can still see you with a sense you can't name. Oh, and it's *hungry*.

☠ **Buried Secrets:** Altone's floating in the air, suspended by a field of bright blue light. His skin is burned, like he'd been left out in the desert sun for hours. Every muscle in his body is

contorted, snapping him from one position of agony to the next. The light's blazing out from the bottom of a crater dug in the floor of the barn — they're excavating something that's buried in the sand, and whatever that thing is, it's feeding on Altone.

Despite his agony and the sedatives still running through his bloodstream, Altone's still speaking. His mouth has left his brain far behind, but that ability to keep talking — and to believe what he's saying — is what got him this far. He's trying to bargain with the Conspiracy, with the vampires, with anyone who'll listen, claiming that this is all Katherine's doing, she set him up to cover her own malfeasance, he's innocent, you gotta believe him. (If the Agents listen, then a **Bullshit Detector** spend is needed to cut through his crap — he's convinced himself that it's true.)

As soon as he sees the Agents, Owen latches onto them as his saviors, promising them anything — money, everything he knows about the Conspiracy, more money, his eternal loyalty — if they get him out of here.

Rescuing Altone from his predicament isn't the problem (**Pharmacy** can give

MUTANT VAMPIRE LEOPARD THING

Because what else are you going to call it?

If the Agents rescue Altone from his cage, the theft of its dinner infuriates the monster to such an extent that it smashes free of its own enclosure and attacks.

Pin: Spend 2 Aberrance when attacking with Fighting to drag an enemy to the ground. That enemy can escape with an Athletics or Hand-to-Hand contest against the monster.

Rend: It only costs the monster 1 Aberrance instead of 2 to make an Extra Attack against a prone or helpless foe.

General Abilities: Aberrance 12, Fighting 10, Health 16

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +2

Stealth Modifier: +1

Damage Modifier: +2 (huge teeth)

Armor: -2 vs. any (fur and thick skin)

Free Powers: Regeneration, Tracking by Smell, Unfeeling

Other Powers: Pin (see text), Rend (see text), Strength (tests mandatory for feats of strength; *NBA*, p. 137), Vampiric Speed

Banes: whatever created it can also destroy it — use the drugs and weird chemicals from the labs to turn Pharmacy and Chemistry into Tactical Fact-Finding Benefits

him some drugs to counter the worst effects of the medication, **Mechanics** can pull him out of the sacrifice machine or the cage). The problem is getting him (and, ideally, the other victims of the farm) out of here safely.

If they try shooting their way out, run *Hostile Takeover* (p. 23).

Sneaking out is, obviously, the reverse of sneaking in, requiring another **Infiltration** test. The obvious exit strategy (**Military Science** if the players don't pick up on it) is to steal that luxury helicopter that's conveniently parked just outside the barn. If no one has **Piloting**, or if the helicopter's already a smoking wreck, then they'll need an alternate exfiltration strategy, like stealing a car. Alternatively, an Agent with a background in the region might know one of the few remaining Bedouin tribes, who could provide horses or camels for an escape across the desert.

HOSTILE TAKEOVER

SCENE TYPE: Action

LEAD-IN: Life in Death

LEAD-OUT: The Reckoning

Life in Death assumes the Agents try ghosting in and out of Site B. If they get discovered, decide to take the direct approach to hurting the Conspiracy, or quite reasonably decide to level the hellish place, run this scene.

As noted earlier, there's roughly five AgraWealth security guards and one Renfielded (or otherwise supernatural) operative-grade security specialist for each player character, plus extra mooks if needed for cinematic explosions. There's also around a dozen executives, scientists, and admin staff, plus a hundred or so noncombatant farm migrant workers as vampire chow or test subjects.

Standard operating procedure for an attack on the farm:

- Guards secure the perimeter and all approaches.
- All staff members (scientists and executives) fall back to their barracks and take shelter.
- Laborers are ordered back to their barracks and locked in.

Anyone who hesitates is shot.

- Operatives fall back to security control, tool up with heavy weapons and body armor.
- If it's nighttime, all the floodlights go on, drenching the surrounding desert in football-stadium light.
- If the perimeter's been breached, use CCTV cameras to find the intruders.
- Two operatives take to the air in the helicopter, packing a sniper rifle. The rest form a roving kill squad to take down enemy attackers.
- If the farm is lost, executives and scientists retreat in the helicopter or by vehicle. Operatives are to set demolition charges on the barn, labs, and computer server room to prevent them from falling into enemy hands; the laborer barracks gets torched with the workforce inside.

A 2-point **Military Science** spend lets the players predict all of those moves in advance, letting them plan countermeasures. For example, if they attack at night and take out the backup generator and the solar batteries, then the farm will be plunged into darkness, and only the operatives carry night

vision goggles — all the guards will have to make do with torches. Freeing the laborers (and giving them the weapons of a few defeated guards) gives the Agents a ready-made insurgency.

THINGS THAT GO BOOM

Notice or **Urban Survival** spots these instantly. Tanks of diesel for the helicopter, the backup generator, and the trucks. Barrels of agricultural chemicals. Crashing a truck bomb through the gates of the compound also works.

SNEAKY DISRUPTIONS

Jamming enemy communications with **Electronic Surveillance** stops them from coordinating; hacking in with **Digital Intrusion** and scrambling CCTV; **Disguising** yourself as a laborer or guard.

THINGS THAT GET MESSY

Chemistry: Setting fire to piles of plastic sheeting and bags of fertilizer generates a really, really thick cloud of smoke that engulfs the whole farm.

AGRAWEALTH SECURITY GOON

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Hand-to-Hand 4, Health 4, Shooting 4, Weapons 4
Hit Threshold: 3
Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: +0
Damage Modifier: -1 (baton), +1 (9mm pistol), +2 (assault rifle), -2 (fist, kick)

TOOLED-UP OPERATIVE

General Abilities: Aberrance 12, Driving 6, Hand-to-Hand 8, Health 10, Shooting 12
Hit Threshold: 4
Alertness Modifier: +1 (+2 by night vision optics)
Stealth Modifier: +1
Damage Modifier: +2 (sniper rifle), +1 (assault rifle), -1 (fist, kick), grenades
Armor: -2 vs. any (tough skin and concealable ballistic armor)
Free Powers: Enhanced Hearing, Regeneration (2 Health per round), Tracking by Smell, Unfeeling
Other Powers: Spider Climb, Strength (tests mandatory for feats of strength; NBA, p. 137), Vampiric Speed

Outdoor Survival: The drivers of the tractors and trucks working on the farm might panic and let their vehicles go out of control.

If the bad guys get the helicopter into the air, then counter-sniping the pilot crashes the chopper down on top of the farm (do you seriously need an Investigative ability to think of shooting the helicopter? Although it is fitted with bulletproof glass, so you either need to shoot through the open door with a Called Shot, or else point out that “bulletproof”

is a misnomer, and it's actually 'proof against small arms,' but this here is a black market Iranian-made Shaher anti-materiel rifle firing .57 cal B-32 full metal jacket armor piercing incendiary rounds, and I'll take my 3-point Shooting refresh for that technothriller monologue now please”).

ADDED DANGERS

If things are going too smoothly for the Agents, here are some optional complications to add to the fight:

- There might be a supernatural guardian attached to the base, or even a full vampire here to oversee the work being done in the barn.
- Either side might turn the experiments being done at the farm into a weapon. Maybe the blight magic works as a death spell if concentrated on a single target (**Stability** test, Difficulty 8 to resist; fail, and it's +3 damage as your internal organs rot); maybe the vampire gorges itself on the blood of the drugged victims and goes on a rampage (a blood-gorged vampire gets +8 Aberrance, but takes +1 damage from all attacks and +2 damage from edged weapons that slice it open like a swollen leech).
- The Conspiracy might have added military assets of its own, either more mercenaries or compromised elements of the Emirati armed forces. **Traffic Analysis** hears their radio chatter and tells the Agents that they need to get the hell out of the area before reinforcements show up.

THE RECKONING

SCENE TYPE: Finale

LEAD-INS: Life in Death, Hostile Takeover

So, when the dust settles and the accountants and insurance adjusters start adding up the cost, where are the Agents? What becomes of AgraWealth and the Altones?

Owen Altone is likely a dead man. Once he's free and cleaned up somewhat, he recounts the entire plan and claims it can still work — if Katherine transfers the money, he'll be able to convince the Conspiracy that she's working against AgraWealth. His original plan was to convince Katherine that he'd been kidnapped, blackmail her into sending the money, and then walk out of his hotel suite unharmed, making it look like Katherine was stealing from AgraWealth.

Now, he'll need to convince her mysterious supervisors that she was the one behind the kidnapping. He begs the Agents to pretend to be his private security team while he recontacts the Conspiracy and

lies his way into Katherine's job. The most likely outcome of this plan is that Owen ends up dead, but if the Agents want to support his story with faked evidence (or force a “confession” out of Katherine), they might be able to make it work. If they go with this option, the end result will be Owen running AgraWealth on behalf of the Conspiracy, with the Agents as his go-to troubleshooters. The Agents can then start taking the Conspiracy down from the inside.

Katherine Altone could go either way. If the Agents tell her about Owen's treachery, she's likely to turn back to the Conspiracy and burn both Owen and the Agents. However, if the Agents wait until she's transferred the money and committed herself to stealing from the Conspiracy, or force Owen into pretending that the kidnapping was real and he's still in love with Katherine, then the Agents could end up with Katherine running AgraWealth for the Conspiracy but feeding them information on the side.

Katherine's private portable hard drive, if the Agents get hold of it, contains information about the Conspiracy nodes directly above and below AgraWealth, as well as a wealth of intercepted emails and internal comms (use the same rules as the Lennart Dossier on p. 206 of *Night's Black Agents*, but it's a 2-point pool for investigating the Conspiracy's corporate side only).

Augustus Darvell could become a patron for the Agents, feeding them leads and support in his private war with the Conspiracy. There's every chance, of course, that he's also part of the Conspiracy, trying to take down one of his rivals elsewhere on the Conspyramid. Right now, though, he's willing to make use of the Agents for his own ends.

The contents of the barn, whatever they were, should give the Agents some clues as to the true nature of their vampiric quarries.

DUBAI

