



MISSION: WHISPERS

Threats come, and threats go, and the sheer volume of them is enough to complicate the life of any CROSS agent. Given the vast number of threats compared to the limited number of hours in a day, sometimes a lead gets classified harmless, and sometimes it's what you don't consider a threat that turns out to be the biggest threat of all.

LOOK INTO THIS, WILL YOU?

The agents hear about an object called the Iron Man Buddha through open sources. The link of Nazis to a 1,000-year-old statue carved from a meteor made for an irresistible minor news story both in print and television media. Scientists who examined the object cited sufficient doubts about the statue's origins causing it to fall into obscurity once again. Obscure to most people but not all, and in this case, the person is Andre Jeffers. He works as a CROSS analyst for the Congregation of Information Services, but more importantly, he is an antiquarian who's confident there is more to the Iron Man Buddha than the media or the scientists know or are willing to admit. Based on Jeffers' insistence, the team promises to investigate.

DO YOU HEAR THAT?

Traveling to Hamburg, Germany the agents have to succeed with a Persuasion roll to obtain permission to view the figurine. The statue is unremarkable on observation, except that with an Investigation or Smarts -2 roll, the agent realizes the figure is not Buddha, but a representation of Vaisravana, the Great King of the North. However, any agent with a Spirit d8 or higher or the Arcane Background (Miracles or Magic) Edge can with a successful Notice roll, hear an indistinct whispering of some sort. Under no circumstances will the owner, Franz Schumer, allow the statue out of his home and thereby frustrates further analysis. No amount of investigation by any means will turn

up any useful information on the statue; forcing the agents to consider stealing the figure to determine the source of the whispering.

If the agents do decide to break into the collector's home, just as the team arrives, they will see a man in a classic black burglary outfit jump into a black sedan and speed away. If the agents pursue, use the **Chases** rules in *Savage worlds* to resolve the pursuit. Alternatively, after several Driving rolls to heighten tension the fleeing vehicle crashes. The driver is unconscious and the Iron Man statue is on the passenger seat.

If the agents do not attempt to steal the statue or the burglar escapes during the car chase, they hear about its theft on the news in the morning. Investigating on their own will require three successful Streetwise rolls to track the object to a warehouse on the docks. A Stealth roll will allow the agents to surprise the lone occupant who chooses to fight with a knife, but it is obvious he is no fighter. Once subdued, the statue is in a tin foil lined cloth bag in the warehouse's office. If removed from the bag, for those capable of hearing it, the whispering starts again and only stops if placed back inside the bag. Regardless of how the agents obtain the Buddha, the theft is all over the news and leaving Germany with the statue is impossible. If the agents want to find a safe place to lie low will require a Streetwise -2 roll, the use of an existing safe house in Germany, or create one by spending a Bennie.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Once in a safe place, examining the statue will require a person sensitive to its powers to take it out of the bag and roll make a Spirit roll. If this roll fails, that person is Shaken, and if the roll is a failure, they suffer a level of Fatigue. The results of a successful roll vary based on if the agent has Arcane Background: Miracles or just a Spirit of d8. An agent with Spirit d8 that makes a suc-

cessful roll will be able to hear someone speaking clearly. He or she must be able to speak German to understand the exchange, but it is apparent to the person holding the statue that he or she is listening in to a nearby conversation of some of the locals working on the dock. An agent that obtains a Raise on the roll will not only be able to listen in on conversations but will also be able to control to who he or she can listen. An agent with the Miracles Edge need only succeed with their roll to have full control of the statue's power.

THE TRUTH IS...

At this point, the agents have more questions than answers, and the GM should call for Smarts rolls. Successfully passing this test will remind the agent that given the unknown origins of the figurine, the best person to ask is Franz Schumer. Convincing Schumer that they have recovered the statue and will return it in exchange for some answers requires a Persuasion roll. If successful, Schumer agrees. Once he has his treasure, Schumer will be incredibly grateful and is open to the team's questions.

The most obvious question is what is the statue's origin? Schumer sighs and replies:

"It is, unfortunately, a fake. It was made by my father in 1955 to take advantage of the Nazi memorabilia market. He carved it himself from a piece of a meteorite he obtained from some unknown source. He hid it in our attic and left instructions to wait 50 years before claiming the Nazis brought it back to Germany from Tibet in 1938 and sell it to the highest bidder. I did the first part, but I cannot bring myself to do the second part. It has some hold on me I can't explain."

When asked if he knows anything about the thief, Schumer sighs again and continues:

"His name is Dieter Flieg. He's some sort of artist that lives in the neighborhood. He's asked to see the figure several times and always seemed disturbed every time he did. He's a good man, and I can't imagine what could have compelled him to steal it."

Unbeknownst to Schumer, his father was actually an occultist and an Investigation roll with a Raise will reveal that he was part of a secret society with ties to the Nazi party. It was Schumer that carved the Nazi symbol on the statue as the focal point of a binding spell that captured a demon within the statue.

UNEXPECTED COMPANY

Schumer is unaware of the statue's powers, its occupant, or how it could possess any form of supernatural ability. Before the team can decide what to do next, everyone sensitive to the figure must roll Spirit to resist a powerful psychic scream that even a non-sensitive can perceive as a low-frequency hum. Anyone that passes the test clearly can hear several people approaching Schumer's home stealthily. Anyone that gets a Raise on the roll or has Miracles can hear a focused thought coursing through every intruder's mind "Kill everyone!"

The agents have one round to prepare for combat before a number of thugs equal to their number burst into the room. The attackers carry silenced pistols and attack with unnerving ferocity. If the team is obviously winning the fight, one thug uses an action to shoot the statue even at the cost of his life. The thug's round strikes the figure, it will knock it to the floor where the agents find it after the fight is over. This or any violence against the statue will break the binding spell releasing the de-

mon spirit. With the true threat, revealed the agents should be able to banish the demon ending its manipulation of the statue's owners. Examining the statue after the fight will reveal that the bullet gouged a chunk out of the swastika defacing the symbol releasing the demon. Just as the agents make this discovery, those sensitive to the statue's power realize they can no longer hear the whispering and try as they may, they cannot do so again. They can put two and two together realizing that it was the demon that gave the statue its unusual abilities.

Schumer disappointment at the damage to the figure is obvious, but he's just happy to be alive and to still have his 'Nazi Buddha.' When the agents get back to the Manger, Jeffers pesters them for details of the figure and their mission.

When asked about the fanatical thugs that tried to steal the statue Jeffers smiles and adds:

"Funny you should use the pejorative form of the word thugs because you are closer to the truth than you know. Seems like the old enemy of the West, the Thugee appear to be making a comeback..."

NPCS

FRANZ SCHUMER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: -; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Tags: Earthly

DIETER FLIEG

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Driving d4, Fighting d4, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Art) d6, Knowledge (Painting) d10, Notice d6

Charisma: -; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Alertness, Dodge

Gear: Knife

Tags: Earthly

THUG(EE)S

See **Thugees** (*Secret Agents of CROSS*, page 152)

Additional Gear: Glock (9mm) with silencer

DEMON SPIRIT

See **Demon Spirit** (*Secret Agents of CROSS*, page 139)

Over the years while bound to the statue, the demon spirit inside found ways to spread hate and evil with the following powers:

Telepathy (Treat effects the same as the *Mind Reading* power)

Mind Control (*Puppet*, All Targets in Small Burst Template);

Psychic Scream (*Confusion*, All Targets in Small Burst Template)