



LAUNDRY FILES

FOR USE WITH THE LAUNDRY RPG



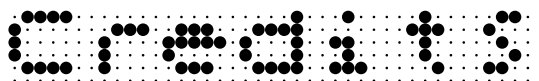
By Gareth Hanrahan

Based on the 'Laundry Files' novels by Charles Stross

The title 'BLACK BAG JOBS' is rendered in a stylized, dot-matrix font. Each letter is composed of a grid of black dots on a white background, giving it a digital or retro aesthetic. The letters are spaced out evenly across the page.

By Gareth Hanrahan

Based on the Laundry Files novels by Charles Stross.



Line Developer: Gareth Hanrahan

Writer: Gareth Hanrahan

Art Direction: Gareth Hanrahan, Jon Hodgson and Dominic McDowall-Thomas

Director of RPG Development, Production & Studio: Dominic McDowall-Thomas

Cover Art: Malcolm McClinton

Interior Artists: Kim Feigenbaum, Nate Furman, Andy Hepworth, Veronica Jones, Pat Loboyko, Rich Longmore, Scott Neil, Lee Smith

Cartography: Aaron Acevedo

Graphic Design: Simon Lucas, Mark Quire and Dominic McDowall-Thomas

Layout: Simon Lucas

Editor: James Knevitt

Proofreaders: Simon Lucas and Nick Robinson

Playtesters: Chris Crofts, Sarah Hallinan, Neil Kelly, Fiachra Kelly, Denis Ryan

Publishers: Angus Abranson and Dominic McDowall-Thomas

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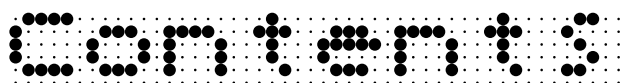
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Introduction

'I love these bastard colostomy-fucking reconnaissance jobs, I really do.'

—The Atrocity Archives

In the vernacular of the spy, a black bag job involves breaking and entering to acquire illicit information. Watergate, for example: that was a classic black bag job. It is the domain of the locksmith, the safecracker, the second-storey man. You get in, you get out, and no-one knows that you were ever there... assuming no-one sees you. If a black bag job goes wrong, then you might have to shoot your way out and that involves a very different sort of black bag.

The Laundry runs its own black bag operations from time-to-time but that is not what this book is about.

It is about the other side's black bag jobs. It is about what happens when they try to break in to our reality, when they covertly sneak through the windows of the world and spy on us... and what happens when they try to fight their way out.

Black Bag Jobs

CASE LAMBENT WITCH: The Witch Bravo oil platform is not responding to radio signals from the shore. Something very strange is going on out there—and according to the Laundry archives, the platform is drilling right where the Deep Ones told us to not to go. It is off to the North Sea for zombies, shoggoths and your best impression of the marines from *Aliens*.

Lost and Found: This one is a black cab job—some clueless muppet left a Laundry laptop behind on the back seat of a taxi. The screensaver eats brains and Angleton was supposed to be briefing the new Home Secretary from that very laptop 10 minutes ago. The very large bolus of faecal matter is approaching the wind tunnel at high speed!

The Shadow Over Kafiristan: Welcome to sunny Nuristan—possibly the most isolated and inaccessible bit of Afghanistan, high in the Hindu Kush. It is home to lots of people who want to kill us all. It is also home to Alga Akhan, an Afghan warlord who might be a vital ally... or a worshipper of an alien god. Or both. It is up to the characters to make that call.

The Wild Hunt: The characters are sent to a retreat in a little village in Dartmoor. Population—a few dozen people, one Californian hippy shaman, four undead horrors and one alien parasite. When the Wild Hunt takes to the night sky, the characters are the prey.

Secret Agendas: Someone within the Laundry leaked a top secret document to the Black Chamber. There are three possible suspects—an untrustworthy field agent, an unstable researcher and an Auditor. The characters have to find the leak by any means necessary.



The Signal: A dead world, billions of light-years away, inhabited only by gargantuan worms. Someone on this husk of a planet has opened a gate back to Earth and sent a signal through. The signal is the names of the characters, repeated over and over.

How to use this book

Prewritten missions are not a strait-jacket. Nothing in this book is holy writ, from which thou shalt not deviate on pain of being stoned to death with dice. Take the missions in this book and do with them as you wish. There are four basic ways to use them.

Running the Missions As Is

You can just jump straight in using your players' existing characters. All of the missions can be run with minimal preparation on the part of the GM. Just skim the Mission Overview section of each scenario before starting. The six missions should each take one to three sessions to play out and each of them can be started 'cold'—they all start with the characters in the Laundry offices in London, going about their everyday duties.

Running the Missions As One-Shots

If you are not already running a Laundry game, or just want a change of pace, you can use the pregenerated characters from the core rulebook and one of these missions to fill a night or two of gaming. One-shots mean you can run the game with the gloves off and run a really horrific game. Several of these missions, like CASE LAMBENT WITCH and Secret Agendas, can potentially end in apocalyptic disasters and the one-shot format is perfect for ending the world.

Breaking Them Down For Parts

If you do not like running prewritten games, you can still mine these missions for parts. Strip the concept of vetting allies from The Shadow Over Kafristan and put it together with Group K and run a game where the characters have to assess the security of a clandestine attempt to circumvent the Benthic Treaty. Turn the Sanru cult loose in modern-day England, make the characters part of the RACIP unit from Lost and Found, reuse monsters and Non-Player Characters or just use these scenarios as examples and make your own from scratch.

As Part of Your Game

While you can just drop any of these missions into your game, you can make them even better by tailoring them to your Player Characters. If you have got the time, read through the scenarios and alter them to be personally resonant to your group. For example, The Wild Hunt's opening hook is that the characters are sent to investigate a spiritual retreat centre, and while there they find out about several recent disappearances. You could just use the retreat as a cover and replace one of the generic kidnapping

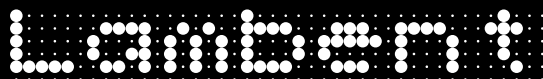
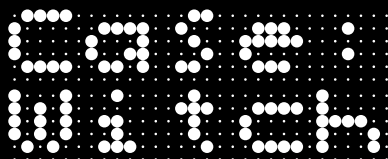
victims with someone important to the Player Characters, like a relative or friend. Similarly, if the characters are having doubts about the morality of the Laundry, you can play up that theme in Secret Agendas. You could remove the unfortunate Geoffrey Piper from Lost and Found entirely and put a Player Character in his place. Make these scenarios your own.

Some of the scenarios use Angleton as a stand-in for the Player Characters' superior but his sinister presence is not strictly required (except for in Lost and Found).

As A Campaign

There are not any explicit links between these scenarios but if you run them in the order that they appear in this book, you can treat them as a six-episode mini-campaign. The characters start off as nobodies in the Laundry bureaucracy but prove themselves useful in two very different unexpected crises (CASE LAMBENT WITCH and Lost and Found). They are given a baptism of fire as field officers in The Shadow Over Kafristan. After an overseas mission like that, they deserve a break, so it is off to visit The Wild Hunt.

By now, they are trusted enough to be given the delicate investigation in Secret Agendas. Finally, the characters' future importance—and the threat of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN—is shown in the glimpse of what is to come in The Signal.



"Ocean is more ancient than the mountains, and freighted with the memories and the dreams of Time."
—H.P. Lovecraft

CASE LAMBENT WITCH is a Laundry mission best suited to officers who have proved themselves reliable and capable (Status scores of 30%+, ideally, but anyone will do in a pinch). The best candidates are officers who have experience in firearms, occult countermeasures, dealing with BLUE HADES, and have very strong stomachs. The mission starts in the Laundry headquarters in London before sending the characters off to the North Sea.

North Sea Oil and Gas

The North Sea contains vast reserves of oil and natural gas.

Well, it used to.

Even the most ambitious and generous assessments of the total recoverable amount of crude oil suggest that 70% of it has already been removed. Production of North Sea oil peaked in 1999 and has dropped to around half that level by the present day. The United Kingdom is now a net importer of oil, with the ensuing hideous implications for energy security and the economy. The country faces the prospects of rolling blackouts and energy shortages by 2018 or so, unless renewable sources come online a lot faster or the government crash-builds a lot of nuclear power plants.

There are plans afoot to use the drained gas fields for carbon sequestration. You save the planet by pumping that nasty CO₂ into the porous rock and hope that it does not bubble up through the stone. (If it does, you have just turned the ocean into a fizzy drink.)

Even in their reduced state, the oil fields are worth billions. New strikes at Rockall suggest that there is still scope for expansion and profit in the North Sea.

The Witch Field

The zone known as the Witch Field extends between 150 and 200 kilometres offshore, along the edge of the continental shelf. Just east of the Witch Field, the seabed drops steeply down to the abyssal plain far below. The Witch Field is one of the few still-productive fields within UK territorial waters and is considered a vital national asset.

There are four oil platforms working the Witch Field, designated Witch Alpha, Witch Bravo, Witch Charlie and Witch Delta. All of these are tension leg platform designs,

built at Aberdeen and then floated out to sea. Crews are flown out from Aberdeen on a four-week rotation. The Witch Field is right in the teeth of Atlantic storms and Arctic winds; it is one of the most challenging fields in the world outside the polar regions. Ice, howling winds, high seas and very, very poor television reception, like the ninth circle of Hell.

Witch Bravo

The Witch Bravo platform was launched in 1994 and refitted and moved to its current location in 2005. The platform is operated by Northern Futures, a subsidiary of British Petroleum. At peak production, Witch Bravo produces 230,000 barrels per day, with the oil then transported by pipeline to the onshore facility at Aberdeen. Fully crewed, it carries 120 personnel.

When Witch Bravo was first proposed by Northern Futures, there was an apparently inexplicable four-month delay between lodging the application for an extraction license with the Department of Trade and Industry and the first meeting to discuss the application. Even the bureaucracy of Whitehall normally grinds a little faster than that, especially where billions of pounds of tax revenue is involved.

Why the delay?

In a word, squamous.

The Benthic Treaty

The Benthic Treaty between us (humanity) and them (the other major civilisation on this planet, known as BLUE HADES or the Deep Ones or the Things from the Ocean Floor) has a bewildering number of sub-clauses and special cases. One of the restrictions limits where and how deep we can drill under the ocean and BLUE HADES are unwilling to explain *why* they impose these restrictions.

Those who have not dealt with the Deep Ones before might complain about such seemingly arbitrary rules. 'Why should a bunch of inbred fish-men get to put limits on our use of our vitally needed natural resources?' is a common question, along with 'why can't we just nuke the buggers and be done with it?' Because, firstly, see the second question and secondly, nukes don't work very well underwater and they have eldritch horrors that make H-bombs look like

BLACK BAG JOBS

matchsticks. When the Deep Ones say 'thou shalt not', any sensible species should grin and bear it.

No-one ever accused humanity of being sensible.

The Secret History of Witch Bravo

When the Witch Field proposal was reviewed, there was a minor turf war between the Laundry and other government groups. The Department of Trade and the Treasury wanted to push the proposal forward for economic reasons, but the Laundry had reservations about the proximity of Witch Bravo to one of the prohibited areas mentioned in the Benthic Treaty. In an attempt to explain *why* pissing off the Deep Ones was such a bad idea, a Laundry officer called Phillipa Reston circulated a number of files relating to BLUE HADES to members of the Interdepartmental Liaison Committee.

One of the other members of this committee was an ambitious swine, James Lancaster. He saw an opportunity in the files and contacted MI6 with a proposal. If they backed his scheme, he would give them a way to humiliate the Laundry. MI6 and the Laundry have been at loggerheads since the Second World War. Lancaster suspected that the reason for the prohibited area at the Witch Field was that it contained something the Deep Ones were afraid of and convinced MI6 that he could safely retrieve it. Now, Lancaster is head of a special project within MI6 called Group K.

If the United Kingdom possessed a weapon that BLUE HADES feared, then the next round of negotiations on the Benthic Treaty might go very differently and MI6 could finally justify absorbing the last remnant of the old Special Operations Executive—the Laundry.

It all hinged on Lancaster's belief that CASE LAMBENT BLACK held the key to the kingdom of the Deep Ones. The Witch Bravo station was permitted to drift into the prohibited zone and some of the drilling attempts were looking for something other than oil.

They found what they were looking for.

ANNING BLACK

The Laundry calls them ANNING BLACK. The cultists and the Deep Ones call them *shoggoths*. Abdul al-Hazred feverishly denied that there were any on earth, except in the dreams of those who chewed a certain alkaloidal herb, but he had his own issues to deal with. The shoggoths are protoplasmic horrors wrought millions of years ago by the Elder Things. They are virtually indestructible shape-shifting monsters, able to form any limb or sensory organ or weapon they need from the unstable mass of their flowing bodies, like a T-1000 made out of meat and jism and eyeballs. In time, the shoggoths rose up and overthrew their creators.

Aeons later, the Deep Ones captured some shoggoths and bound them to obey. Like the Elder Things before

them, they used the shoggoths as tools and weapons but eventually they realised the sullen monsters were too dangerous. The shoggoths proved capable of shucking off even the most powerful binding spells, evolving new brains and new nervous systems to escape magical compulsions. The formless cannot be controlled forever. Rather than destroy the shoggoths—a difficult and expensive task—the Deep Ones corralled the shoggoths under the sea-bed and held them in reserve as living weapons.

The Laundry file LAMBENT BLACK contains speculation about BLUE HADES weapons, including shoggoths (a shoggoth was encountered during the 1928 raid on Innsmouth, confirming the connection between the Deep Ones and the shoggoths). As the shoggoths were not originally created by BLUE HADES, the document further speculated that their capabilities would not necessarily reflect those of other Deep One weapons.

J. C. Lancaster took that thought further—if BLUE HADES mastered the shoggoths instead of creating them, then so too could humanity. Witch Bravo's secret mission was to probe the Witch Field prohibited area in the hopes of striking shoggoth. The oil rig workers were told that they were helping a project to test carbon sequestration. Scientists and computational demonologists from Lancaster's Group K were flown out to the platform. The whole operation was carried out in strictest secrecy to ensure that the Laundry did not find out.

Using a submersible, Group K found a circle of binding stones on the sea-bed containing the shoggoth colony. One of these stones was removed and a drill was plunged into the colony to extract the shoggoths. Initially, the drills just brought up protoplasm—the formless substance of sleeping shoggoths. Wards were put in place to protect the rig against any BLUE HADES defensive measures, not to mention the threat of rampaging shoggoths, but the creatures seemed quiescent and harmless.

Two days ago, they brought up an *active* shoggoth. It consumed one of the scientists and learned human form and human language from him. Lancaster and his MI6 backers came out to the rig to see the wonder for themselves.

The creature had a proposal for them. There were more shoggoths—or more of itself; shoggoths have a fuzzy distinction between the individual and the group—down in the Deep One corral. It told Lancaster that it would help him break the bindings and serve him. Arrangements were made to take the shoggoth, codenamed Gordon, to the mainland.

Then the crude protective measures collapsed. Rig workers were possessed by thaumaturgical blowback from the shoggoth bindings and the slumbering shoggoths began to awaken. The MI6 team fled Witch Bravo and were even forced to use firearms to keep the possessed workers at bay. The decision was taken to attempt to rebind the shoggoths in situ; as soon as 'Gordon' has revealed the secrets of how to command the shoggoths, the ones on Witch Bravo will

CASE : LAMBERT WITCH

be commanded to sink the rig, hiding all evidence of the MI6 operation. The other shoggoths in the Deep One corral will later be freed and brought onshore, to be used as future weapons against BLUE HADES or other enemies of the Crown.

At least, that is the plan...

Mission Overview

CASE LAMBERT WITCH puts the characters right into the middle of a disaster movie. The characters are flown out to take charge of the situation at Witch Bravo because they are the staff on duty at the time. Once they have helped the SAS secure the rig, they investigate Witch Bravo and find clues about the illegal experiments going on there. They also have to bluff BLUE HADES to ensure that that the Deep Ones do not find out about the treaty violation.

Clues on the rig lead the characters to Group K's Aberdeen base, where Gordon the Shoggoth has taken over. It is up to the characters to prevent the shoggoth from freeing the rest of its squamous kind.

1. Thirty Minute Warning

It is a Bank Holiday Monday evening. You are on the late shift on a day when most of the office is empty anyway. Even the zombies take evenings like today off. Unfortunately, you lot drew the short straws and get to sit around playing games on Facebook and auditing surveillance camera footage of skylad wiccans for potential occult threats. The evening drags on so slowly you begin to suspect the existence of hitherto undiscovered hours between nine and ten pm. You are seriously considering clawing your own eyes out for entertainment purposes, or even doing some actual work, when a door along the corridor bangs open. You hear raised voices, urgent footsteps and then Angleton arrives with what looks like half the Royal Navy and a gaggle of senior civil service types in tow.

'Gentlemen, briefing room two now, please, and make it snappy. We're about, oh, 12 hours at least into the end of the world.'

As usual, substitute an existing superior officer in the Laundry for Angleton if you prefer. Angleton sweeps the characters into the briefing room and gives them Handout #1. As the players read this, he rapidly briefs them.

'At 0944 this morning, communication with the Witch Bravo oil platform was lost. It was initially believed to be a combination of heavy weather and technical difficulties but when they continued to remain out of touch, Witch Charlie sent a chopper out. It couldn't land because of high winds but the pilot noted two things.

Firstly, there were crew moving about on deck. Actually, he said 'stumbling'.

Secondly, the gas flare from the rig was green.

At 1602, a rescue boat from the coast guard made contact with the platform. The last transmission we got from them was, 'Oh fuck, they're got glowing eyes'.

Finally, about 20 minutes ago, someone deigned to let us know there was a problem.'

Angleton produces a map of the North Sea and then another map of the same area. On the first map are the locations of various drilling platforms and oil rigs; on the second, the no-go areas defined in the Benthic Treaty. Witch Bravo is right on the edge of the forbidden zone.

'Without wishing to prejudice your findings, it is entirely possible that some moron has drilled into Cthulhu's arse-crack.'

The Mission Plan

Angleton explains the current mission plan, which he came up with about 10 minutes ago and considers 'a work in progress.'

The characters are the Laundry's advance team. They will shortly be collected by burly men from the SAS and flown to Aberdeen. From there, they will travel by boat or helicopter, depending on the weather, to Witch Bravo.

Once they arrive at the platform, they are to secure it as much as possible. If the crew are indeed possessed, they must be exorcised or neutralised. The characters should then investigate the platform and attempt to ascertain what happened. If possible, re-establish communications with the shore. If not... well, that is where the plan is at the moment, other than the fact that he is talking to Downing Street about the possibility of having some heavier firepower on hand if necessary.

It is possible that BLUE HADES will show up to investigate. The characters are to treat the Deep Ones with respect and to give the appearance of co-operation but they must stall the fishes as much as possible. Under no circumstances are they to:

- Admit that humanity is responsible for the breach of the treaty.
- Imply that it was a deliberate breach.
- Do anything that might cause the Deep Ones to wipe out our species.

The characters have about 20 minutes to read documents, ask questions and collect equipment from the Armoury. The mission has a budget of 50 and Angleton strongly advises the characters to tool up with wards and weapons, as they are unlikely to receive further support once they are in the field.

Research

A successful Research check about the Witch's Field turns up a series of memos (Handout #2). If the characters do not find these memos now, they can find them later when communications between the oil platform and the shore are temporarily re-established.

Getting There

From the Laundry offices, the characters are collected and brought to RAF Northholt, where they meet with the 16-member squad from 21 SAS under the command of Alan Barnes. While on the plane to RAF Kinloss, Major Barnes briefs them on the military side of the mission. His lads have practised assaults on oil platforms before. If possible, they will go in by helicopter; otherwise, it will be a longer journey by sea. His men will secure the entry area and then accompany the characters. If, as is likely, the workers are possessed, they will try to disable them with banishing rounds and tasers instead of using lethal force.

All the SAS soldiers are carrying Class Two wards for personal protection but have no other magic.

Once the rig is reclaimed, it is then up to the characters to work out what the hell is going on. They will have tactical command; he will retain operational command. In other words, they tell him what they want done and he decides how his men will do it. If the situation turns violent, they are to listen to the scary men with the guns and to refrain from arguing.

The characters and the SAS troops transfer from the plane to a pair of Sea King helicopters and set off for Witch Bravo. It is a stormy crossing; winds buffet the helicopters and thick gobbets of Atlantic rain smear themselves across the windows. The outside world looks like a howling grey void.

As the helicopters approach the platform, the characters all hear an eerie electronic hiss coming from their headsets. Something on the rig is scrambling radio transmissions and interfering with electronic equipment. Gadgets still work... mostly. Call for Luck rolls when any character uses a complex device; if the roll fails, the gadget is temporarily disabled.

2. Hot Landing

'Approaching Witch Bravo', says the pilot, 'winds at 55 knots and rising. Fuck.'

A lurid green light spills in through the windows. Looking out, you can see the gas flare from the oil rig and it is indeed burning a ghastly, sickening green. One of the SAS team—Scary Spice, maybe—lets out a low whistle and rechecks his gun. 'That just ain't right, man.'

Barnes glances back at you. 'When we land, stay in the chopper until you're told to move, then get over to the stairway double-quick, ok? Pikey, you're on babysitting duty.'

You circle the platform once. White waves smash against the sides, throwing spray up to rattle against the helicopter's belly like small arms fire. The platform creaks and rocks under the storm's assault. There are no signs of life but you do spot two bodies lying on a walkway. You cannot tell if they are dead or unconscious, but you would guess dead.

The lead helicopter makes its approach to the helipad. The downdraft beats a huge circle on the rain-slick deck, like an occult glyph appearing out of nowhere. The SAS team descend on ropes, swarming over the helipad and vanishing down the stairs. The helicopter lifts off again; through the open door you spot another trooper strapped in behind a nasty-looking sniper rifle.

Your turn next. Your helicopter actually lands on the deck with a bone-shattering thump. The SAS team unbuckle and race out into the rain. Pike stares out after them. 'Hold on, wait for the signal.'

There is a moment of calm, as if the winds pause for breath. All you can hear is the hiss of static on the radio and the steady heartbeat of the spinning rotor.

And then the world quakes. The whole platform is lifted violently by a gigantic wave and there is a lurch and the screaming noise of metal on



CASE : LAMBERT WITCH

metal as your helicopter begins to slide across the suddenly sloped decking. You are slipping towards the edge.

'MOVE MOVE MOVE!' shouts Pike, pushing you towards the exit.

All characters need to make an Easy unmodified Agility check to unbuckle themselves and get out of the door. Characters have three rounds to do so before the helicopter goes over the edge. A character who helps another character gives a +20% bonus to the roll. On the third round, the helicopter goes over the edge; characters still on board need to make Jump checks to leap to safety. A critical success means that the character lands on the helipad safely; a mere success means he grabs onto the edge, suffering 1D3 damage. Failure implies that the character falls to the ocean below, suffering 6D6 damage. A fumble means the character is trapped inside the helicopter as it slides off the platform and crashes into the sea, which inflicts 8D6 damage. Characters in the water suffer another one point of damage each round due to shock and exposure and must immediately swim to safety—either the oil platform, or a rope dropped by the surviving helicopter.

Mutiny on the Bravo

'Down the stairs to the door, keep two hands on the rails,' orders Barnes. You stumble down the staircase at the side of the living quarters block, until you come to a landing. There is a corpse in an orange jacket lying in front of the door. Four SAS stand over the body; one of the troopers is drilling through the door to insert a snake camera.

Another soldier gestures to the body. 'It was like that when we got here.'

The corpse appears to be one of the platform engineers; he has been shot in the chest at close range with a pistol. The corpse is cold and the clothing is drenched, suggesting it has been several hours since he was killed. There is no sign suggesting that the corpse was ever possessed but that cannot be ruled out without a full autopsy.

The soldier with the snake camera reports that there are two more bodies on the far side. He also notes that the door was jammed shut from the outside; there is a crowbar thrust through the handle to keep it shut.

On the far side of the door, the characters find themselves in a corridor in the middle of the rig's living quarters. The lights flicker wildly and there is a bizarre organic stench permeating the whole place, a smell like rotting seaweed.

The two corpses are locked together in a bloody embrace. One body has been beaten, bitten and finally shot in the back; the other shows no signs of significant injury. The first corpse is that of a middle-aged man, dressed in a boiler suit and wearing a broken pair of glasses; the second corpse is that of a younger, larger man, dressed in the same safety gear as the corpse outside the door.

THINGS THE PLAYER CHARACTERS DON'T KNOW ABOUT WITCH BRAVO (BUT REALLY WISH THEY DID)

- The surviving platform workers are in Living Quarters, Section B. There are zombies hammering on the door.
- There are still dozens of active possession victims on the rig.
- That big green flare? It is not just a special effect. The BLUE HADES barrier that contained the shoggoths is a massive piece of thaumaturgical engineering and its occult energies are being bled off and burned using Witch Bravo's gas boom. Without bleeding off the energy in this way, the thaumic energy will be released in the form of possessor spirits instead. If that flare is shut down, then everyone on the rig will be attacked by spirits—but while that flare is burning, the corral on the sea floor is getting weaker and radio transmissions from the rig will not work.

SAS soldiers move past the corpses, searching for more threats. There is no-one else in this corridor. There are also no signs of a firefight or a struggle here.

Barnes gestures towards a room off to the side. 'We'll use this as a command post for now. Radios are working at short range, more or less, so we can keep in contact with you. What do you recommend?'

3. Securing Witch Bravo

From the command post, the SAS spread out to secure the rest of the platform. Major Barnes and another soldier stay with the characters to pass on orders. Refer the players to Handout #4, the chart of the platform; there are three four-man SAS teams waiting on instructions from the characters. In each location, the characters can order the SAS team to move through, thoroughly search or hold position.

Moving through means that the soldiers push onto the next section. A thorough search means that they spend some time poking around and find any clues or lurking monsters in that section. Hold position means the SAS team dig in and blast away at any incoming bad guys. Moving or digging in takes two minutes; searching an area takes five minutes.

Keep track of the amount of time elapsed since the helicopter landed. The players do not know this but they are in a race against time. There are three separate timed events.

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T+8 minutes: The zombies break into Living Quarters B, where the surviving unpossessed workers have taken refuge. Unless the characters direct the SAS team to this section of the platform before the deadline, all but one of the survivors is killed.

T+10 minutes: Zombies move towards the command post from Living Quarters B, Pump Control, Drill Storage and the main Control Room. If there are no SAS teams holding position between the zombies and the PCs, then the characters are attacked by brain-hungry possession victims. Zombies take five minutes to move between sections.

T+20 minutes: The flare boom overheats and must be manually restarted. On the bright side, this re-establishes communications between Witch Bravo and the mainland. However, it also means that the magical bleed from the shoggoth corral turns into possessor spirits.

This whole section of the adventure puts the onus on the players to take charge and give orders. The GM should play the SAS soldiers as they give reports by radio. Individual SAS soldiers may get picked off one-by-one as they penetrate the darkness of Witch Bravo. Try to get a feeling of mounting terror and paranoia going.

The Habitat Section

Command Post: A small warren of offices, supply closets and corridors next to the external stairs to the helipad. There are signs of a recent brawl and three corpses in the area. Major Barnes orders the characters to stay here unless there is a good reason to move elsewhere; if the characters do move, then Barnes and the other SAS soldier move with them.

Living Quarters A: Cabins and corridors. The living quarters on board a modern oil rig are on a par with those

The SAS Team

Bulldog 1

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	SAN	Damage Bonus
#1	11	12	10	14	10	7	11	30	+0
#2	14	13	12	10	13	12	13	55	+1D4
#3	15	14	14	12	12	11	14	55	+1D4
#4	12	10	11	15	11	16	11	75	+0

Bulldog 2

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	SAN	Damage Bonus
#1	17	12	14	11	11	15	13	75	+1D4
#2	13	13	15	12	13	8	14	40	+1D4
#3	10	11	10	14	12	9	11	45	+0
#4	13	10	10	16	10	10	10	50	+0

Bulldog 3

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	SAN	Damage Bonus
#1	12	16	14	10	10	11	15	55	+1D4
#2	14	15	14	14	12	9	15	35	+1D4
#3	15	14	13	11	11	14	14	65	+1D4
#4	13	16	15	9	12	10	16	50	+1D4

Command

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	SAN	Damage Bonus
Barnes	14	16	11	15	16	12	14	50	+1D4
Blevins	13	15	10	17	14	13	13	55	+0

General SAS Skills: Brawl 65%, Climb 70%, Command 55%, Demolition 50%, Hide 60%, Listen 40%, Spot 40%, Stealth 65%, Strategy 55%, Track 50%.

Barnes: Artillery (spotting) 50%, Brawl 45%, Climb 70%, Command 75%, Cthulhu Mythos 25%, Demolition 35%, Dodge 50%, Drive 50%, Etiquette 35%, Firearms (assault rifle) 80%, Firearms (pistol) 70%, First Aid 30%, Grapple 65%, Heavy Weapons (rocket launcher) 55%, Insight 45%, Jump 45%, Knowledge (occult) 30%, Knowledge (politics) 40%, Navigate 60%, Persuade 50%, Repair 30%, Ride 25%, Sense 30%, Spot 40%, Status 75%, Stealth 70%, Strategy 75%, Swim 45%, Technology Use (battlefield comms) 40%, Throw 45%

Weapons: H&K 60%, damage 1d10

Armour: Bulletproof vest (6 points)

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on a cruise ship; each private or two-man cabin has its own television, comfortable bunks and plenty of storage space. They are also all empty—it looks as though an evacuation was carried out at great haste.

Search: There are four bodies; three are found in a corridor, one inside a bathroom. The three in the corridor were shot several times, the one in the bathroom appears to have been mauled to death and the door of the bathroom is smashed down from outside. There is a laptop computer open in one room and it looks like the owner was writing a journal entry when the crisis hit. The last entry stops abruptly, as it complains about ‘the Group K guys messing up the drilling again.’

Recreation: This area contains a gym, a cinema, an internet cafe, and crew lounges.

Search: No bodies, minimal signs of a struggle. There is a notice board in one of the lounges with announcements pinned to it; one recent announcement reminds crew that the ‘Group K laboratories are off limits and anyone needing to pass through those zones should first ask permission’. There is also a laminated notice about biohazard protocols—how to avoid contamination, containment, proper washing techniques and so on.

Stores: Everything from food and medical supplies to 20 man-years of toilet paper.

Search: There is a surprising amount of medical equipment and biohazard handling gear here—NBC suits, gloves, centrifuges, chemical supplies, hospital disinfectant—which would not normally be part of an oil platform’s supply. There is also a box of high-powered electric cattle prods, the sort you need to motivate a lazy elephant.

Galley: Food preparation, more stores and a cafeteria. It is a bloodbath—at least a dozen people died here. Bodies lie scattered across the tiled floor and the cafeteria tables, and sticky blood quivers in puddles as the waves rock the rig. The victims were all bludgeoned and beaten to death with two exceptions, who were repeatedly stabbed with kitchen knives. The stabbed victims (formerly possessed) were attacked from in front and behind.

Search: Searching this area means that the SAS team spot the zombies outside Living Quarters B before the zombies spot them and can engage them at range. They also notice that the doors to Living Quarters B have been sealed shut from the inside.

Living Quarters B: When the platform was overrun, some of the unpossessed crew retreated here and managed to seal the door shut behind them.

If the SAS arrive here before eight minutes have elapsed, then they run into a zombie group outside the sealed entrance. If they arrive here later than that, then the zombies have battered down the door and are attacking the few remaining survivors.

The doors to this section were welded shut from within by the survivors. If the characters can stop the zombies before they are overrun, then there are a dozen survivors; if the zombies got here first, then there is only one survivor, Gary Crane. See *Investigations on the Rig* for Crane’s story.

Search: If the zombies got in here first, then the SAS team must search to find the survivor.

Helipad Control: The control tower for the helipad. The green flare from the gas boom is clearly visible from here. All the electronics in this room are non-functional; a successful Idea roll lets a character notice that the static on the screens and the glitches in the computer systems are happening in tune with the dancing flames of the gas flare.

Search: This lets the characters find the log book, which notes that the most recent helicopter flight from Aberdeen brought six ‘special consultants’ and one ‘J.C. Lancaster’ to the rig.

Machine Shop: Lots of tools and industrial machinery for making repairs; drills, lathes, presses, winches and other devices. If the Player Characters are wandering around the platform unescorted, this is a great place for a zombie attack.

Search: Nothing.

Submarine Control: Group K have a remote-control submersible, which is currently docked in the Moon Pool below. The control systems for the submersible are here but are non-functional due to the gas flare.

Search: There are a number of print-outs of images taken by the submersible’s camera on the wall. These print-outs show the sea-bed beneath Witch Bravo. There is a low dome surrounded by a ring of carved stones. The dome appears almost organic and moves from photo-to-photo (in fact, it almost seems to move in static photos but that must be a trick of the light). In one image, there is a metal object descending from the surface which must be a drill from Witch Bravo.

Moon Pool: The moon pool is an enclosed area that is open to the sea from below, allowing engineers to lower the submersible. The submersible is currently in its cradle above the pool. The Deep Ones also show up here in Section 5, *Submarine Diplomacy*.

Search: The submarine can be lowered into the water but it will not work without the control room. The submersible has some external damage that looks alarmingly like claw marks.

The Pump Section

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This is the heart of the oil platform, where the oil—and other things—is pumped up from the seabed. The pump section is a maze of narrow, pipe-lined corridors and thundering industrial machinery. The air smells of oil and

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hot metal; there are brightly coloured warning signs and control panels everywhere.

Pumps: The pumps are still operating, despite the other problems on the platform. The noise in this area is incredible, and a character who enters this area without ear protection is temporarily deafened.

Search: The pumps are bringing up shoggoth biomatter from the sea floor. A close examination of the pumps shows that they have actually been switched off—whatever is on the sea bed is under such high pressure that it is pushing itself up through the pipes. There is no way to prevent this.

Oil Capture: This section has been completely remodelled from the original blueprints. A thick pipe runs from this machinery through to the Carbon Sequestration Pumps.

Search: The pipe is wrapped in a wire field coil, connected to a circuit board and a still-living white lamb. An Occult or Science (thaumaturgy) check suggests that it is a carefully constructed exorcism device, used to dispel binding spells without affecting other thaumaturgical energies in the area.

Condensate Handling: Usually, this section is used for separating out gases from the crude oil and either liquefying them or channelling them into the gas flare boom. It has been changed—there are circuits and cabling everywhere and there are glowing runes painted on the walls and on the machinery. The section is illuminated by an eldritch glow. Heavy-duty magic is being done here.

Search: The SAS team are not qualified to analyse the occult technology in use; the characters can walk them through an examination of the machinery in order to make a Science (thaumaturgy) check remotely but a failed check means a nasty magical backlash (as per the rules in the *Laundry* core rulebook).

A successful Science (thaumaturgy) check lets the character work out the purpose of the strange machinery—it is designed to peel a binding spell not by dispelling it but by pulling off part of the soul. That would kill a human (if they were lucky; the alternative is irreparable brain damage and psychic crippling) but whatever is in the pipes is not human anyway. The extracted spell is still mixed in with some organic material, which is being pumped towards the flare boom. There are strong thaumic fields around the section; the binding is extremely old and powerful, beyond anything the characters have encountered before.

Pump Control: Monitoring and control station for the pumps. There is a pack of possessed zombies here, lurking in crawlspaces under the floor. They emerge to ambush anyone in this room, dragging their victims down into the crawlspace to devour them.

Search: A search in this area locates the entrances to the crawlspaces, as well as an emergency shutdown control for the pumps. This jams the pumps closed, preventing more shoggoths from climbing onto the platform.

Flare Boom: The gas flare boom is a long arm where the excess gas from the condensation machinery is vented and burnt off. Currently, the flare is running at full capacity and blazing a lurid green, because it is not burning gas—it is burning a condensed slurry of shoggoth nervous tissue and Deep One binding magic. If this flare is shut down, communications with the mainland will be restored—and the condensate handling section will start churning out possessor spirits.

Search: Searching this section lets the characters find the controls for turning the flare on and off.

The Drilling Section

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The drilling section is comparatively quiet; there has been no significant new drilling at Witch Bravo in more than three months. Group K have taken the section over.

Drilling Derrick: The derrick rises 30 metres above the platform. There is nothing of interest up there, although a character pursued by zombies could try climbing up there.

Search: Nothing.

Storage: According to the schematic, this should be a storage area for drill components. It is actually another set of cabins, identical to Living Quarters A and B. This area, Living Quarters C, was dedicated to the Group K personnel. It is also where the zombification started—this section is positively drenched in blood and there are bodies everywhere.

Search: A search of this area confirms the number of bodies (14) and turns up several occult reference books and texts. There is nothing especially potent here, just standard reference texts that might be found on any computational demonologist's shelf.

Substructure: This area has been converted into Group K's laboratory. There are twisted organic samples floating in tanks here. There are microscopes and other scientific equipment, sample jars and shoggoth cultures in petri dishes and a powerful binding circle in the middle of the floor. The binding circle is powered down and empty.

Search: Searching this laboratory turns up some useful notes—a discussion of the shoggoths (Handout #3).

Carbon Sequestration Pumps: Or, more accurately, shoggoth holding tanks. This area is lined with huge tanks and these tanks are overflowing with amorphous organic *things*. The shoggoths are quiescent, which makes them almost more disturbing. They slumber, their ever-shifting flesh quivering and slipping from one form to another. They unconsciously sprout and consume new organs, mimicking their surroundings. A character that looks too closely at a shoggoth culture might see it suddenly shape itself into a copy of his face... or it could just try to claw his face off.

Search: It is a room full of shoggoths. *You* take a closer look at it!

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If the characters strongly order the SAS to investigate this room, they find a survivor hiding in the shoggoth tanks—see *The Horror in the Tanks*, page 14.

The Control Section

Main Control Room: The main control room serves as the nerve centre of the entire Witch Bravo platform, and is currently overrun with zombies.

Search: The platform's main computer server is located here. It has crashed and cannot be rebooted while the gas flare is active. There are security cameras located throughout the platform that are monitored from this control room; once the server is rebooted, the characters can search through the archived camera footage and learn what happened here.

Main Generator: The platform's power generator (gas-fired turbine).

Search: Nothing.

Dangers on the Platform

Witch Bravo is crawling with horrible monsters. The longer the characters stay here, the more danger they are in.

There are two ways these dangers can be encountered—either when the Player Characters themselves run into them, or else when one of the SAS squads under the characters' command does. In the former case, use the standard combat rules from the *Laundry* core rulebook. For squad-level combat, you can still use those rules but that is a lot of numbers and dice rolling to keep track of, so you may wish to use the Squad Combat rules in the sidebar on page 12.



Zombies: There are two dozen permanently-possessed ex-rig workers roaming around on the rig. These unfortunate victims of spiritual blowback from the shoggoth corral are possessed by minor entities from the bottom of the Mandlebrot set and now want nothing more than to kill other living things and feed on the release of life energy.

A Pack of Zombies

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	POW	HP	Damage Bonus
#1	15	13	13	9	1	13	+1D4
#2	14	15	11	8	1	13	+0
#3	15	13	14	5	1	14	+1D4
#4	15	19	18	3	1	19	+1D6
#5	19	13	13	11	1	13	+1D4
#6	13	16	13	4	1	15	+1D4

Skills: Shamble 40%, Loom Unexpectedly Out Of The Shadows 60%, Disturbing Moan 75%.

Attacks: Claw 30%, damage 1D3+damage bonus.

Zombies are tough; impaling weapons do one point of damage and all others do half damage.

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Hearing a zombie kill soldiers over the radio is worth 1/1D3 Sanity Loss. Being attacked by a zombie pack in person costs 1/1D6 Sanity.

A Host of Spirits

	INT	POW
#1	3	11
#2	2	12
#3	3	8
#4	1	14
#5	4	13
#6	3	10

Possessor Spirits: These entities are a side effect of the breach in the ancient Deep One magic on the sea bed. They are Class II exnomes, who will try to possess any living creature on the oil platform and turn them into zombies. Characters wearing Class III wards are immune to the possessors except in very large numbers; characters wearing Class II or lower wards can be possessed if they fail a Luck check. The possessors will target unwarded individuals—like the surviving rig workers—first, and only then go after warded characters.

If a possessor does make flesh-to-ectoplasm contact with a human, that character must pit his POW against the spirit's POW on the Resistance table; if the spirit wins, the human is possessed. Unless the victim is exorcised within a short time—say, one minute per point of POW—the spirit will take up permanent residence in his cerebral cortex and be unremovable without significant occult technology that is unavailable on Witch Bravo.

QUICK SQUAD COMBAT RESOLUTION

To save on rolling lots of dice when the SAS teams run into zombies, just assume that a team has a 65% chance of defeating the zombies without casualties. The team gets a +20% bonus if they are dug in or can ambush the zombies. If the check fails, roll 3D20 and permanently subtract the result from the SAS's chances of success. If a team's chance of success is reduced to 0, the team is wiped out.

The possessor spirits can be dealt with using exorcism rounds, banishing spells or by turning on the gas flare to burn them up.

Survivors: There are 10 survivors on the platform, huddled in Living Quarters B. If the characters do not rescue them in time, then all but one of the survivors becomes zombie chow. If they do rescue them, but then turn off the gas flare without setting up a ward, then the survivors get possessed and turned into more zombies.

Shoggoths: There are several shoggoths and bits of shoggoths on the platform, in holding tanks. The shoggoth parts (actually, let's call them shoggettes) are largely dormant,

Ten Desperate Survivors

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP*	SAN*	Damage Bonus
Crane	10	13	14	10	12	9	8	30	+0
#2	13	9	8	13	10	10	9	40	+0
#3	9	10	12	14	11	5	9	10	+0
#4	11	12	11	6	14	10	4	45	+0
#5	14	10	13	11	9	11	4	50	+0
#6	15	13	15	12	8	13	6	65	+1d4
#7	8	14	10	11	10	12	10	55	+0
#8	12	10	12	14	13	14	5	60	+0
#9	8	11	10	7	11	9	4	30	+0
#10	10	12	11	10	12	8	6	20	+0

*: Several of the survivors are already injured or have suffered Sanity loss.

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 35%, Gibber about Zombies 60%, Repair (oil rig machinery) 50%, Spot 30%.

Weapons: Improvised Club 35%, damage 1D6+damage bonus.

Four Fearsome (if Flaccid) Shoggoths

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	POW	HP	Damage Bonus
#1	70	50	90	2	10	70	+9d6
#2	65	35	80	3	12	58	+8d6
#3	60	40	84	4	11	62	+8d6
#4	61	42	86	5	11	64	+8d6

Weapons: Crush 70%, damage is Damage Bonus.

Armour: None. Fire, electrical and chemical attacks do only half damage. Physical weapons do only one point of damage. Shoggoths regenerate two Hit Points per round.

Sanity Loss: 1D6/1D20

reacting only to stimuli like powerful magic or the smell of blood. At this stage of the scenario, they are not a major threat to the characters. There are four full shoggoths; these too are dormant but may wake up for longer periods.

4. Investigations on the Rig

Once the *Witch Bravo* site is secure, the characters can begin a proper investigation of the events and evidence on the rig.

Testimony from the Survivors

Questioning the survivors (or survivor, if the zombies got in) allows the characters to reconstruct the following series of events. All of the survivors are terrified and traumatised; good roleplaying or a few Insight, Persuade or Psychotherapy rolls may be required to calm the witnesses down and extract the information.

There have been scientists on Witch Bravo for the last two years. They work for something called Group K, a government project investing carbon sequestration under the seabed. Group K took control of the drilling every few weeks and conducted experiments but mostly they kept to themselves.

Three months ago, Group K got very active. There were helicopter flights coming in at all hours of the day and night and the regular platform workers were informed that their shifts were being cut. The whole night shift was given over to Group K work and the personnel complement of the platform dropped to around 80.

At the same time, Group K started installing all sorts of strange equipment in the drilling section and the pumps. They rebuilt the gas separator, added some equipment to the flare boom and even built holding tanks.

Group K started bringing up some sort of organic sludge from the sea bed.

Around the same time, people started getting sick. There were reports of dizziness, hallucinations, weird behaviour... Group K blamed it on gas fumes mixed in with their sludge and started running a gas flare.

After that, the electronic systems started to go haywire. Communications were cut off for hours at a time, production dropped to nearly zero. The crew complained but were told that Group K's needs took precedence.

Three days ago, something big happened. No-one knows why but the Group K staff were all extremely pleased and excited. A day after that, a helicopter came in from Aberdeen with a group of armed private security and a government-type in a suit. They went down to Group K's little enclave.

Two days ago, everything went crazy. There was some sort of explosion down in Group K's section and then people went mad. It was... horrible. People were tearing at each other, mauling each other, killing and maiming and chewing and, Christ, *eating*.

The captain ordered an evacuation but the government type countermanded him and said to fall back to the helicopters where a 'proper accounting' could be made. Soon after that, they started shooting.

Some of the survivors claimed they saw someone else in the middle of the evacuation, someone from Group K that no-one recognised—a big, fat bloke. They seemed more worried about protecting him than anything else.

As soon as the government guy and the fatso made it onto the helicopter, it took off, leaving the surviving workers with the crazies. They managed to seal themselves into the upper levels of the cabin section.

Checking The Records

The computer system is currently down but there are plenty of paper records for the characters to search through. Notable facts:

- There should be 82 people on the platform right now; 51 Northern Futures staff, 31 Group K.
- Production at Witch Bravo has fallen to less than 10,000 barrels per day, which is only a fraction of its intended capacity.

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- According to the flight log in the helipad, the last helicopter to arrive was a 'special Group K flight' from Aberdeen, carrying six 'special consultants' and a named individual—J. C Lancaster.
- Northern Futures and Group K are both based in Aberdeen; Northern Futures have offices in Altens near other petroleum firms, while Group K is located well outside the city, in an industrial estate.
- There are several documents describing Group K's experiments in carbon capture and sequestration (CCS), by pumping carbon dioxide into the empty oil beds. These documents speak in glowing terms of how Group K is leading the way into a low-carbon oil-based economy for the future. There are a few rather sketchy technical diagrams.
- There are also Group K-issued documents and blueprints describing the changes being made to the oil platform. It is obvious that whatever they are doing has no resemblance to the CCS technology described in the 'public' documents. An easy check on a suitable Science or Repair specialty lets the character work out the purpose of the modifications—the rig has been altered to suck up material from the ocean floor and channel it into holding tanks. The gas capture mechanism now includes what looks like a Laundry-designed exorcism grid and some sort of binding circle, while the holding tanks are equipped with a variety of sensors and sampling devices.
- One recent document, dated two days ago, is a description of how one of the Group K scientists died in an 'accident.' He fell overboard and could not be recovered. Strangely, there is no mention of anyone being washed overboard or of any search efforts in any other documents. In fact, the scientist was eaten by Gordon the shoggoth.
- There is also Handout #3, from the Group K laboratory.

Computer Files

The computer systems are offline until the gas flare is shut down. Once the flare stops, a successful Computer Use (repair) check lets a character reboot the servers. Searching the computer system for clues turns up the following:

Security camera footage showing the last hours of Witch Bravo. One of the shoggoths in the holding tanks manages to take on human form and learns to speak English; it is like watching a child develop from infant to obese adult in a matter of hours. Lancaster and the security team show up and then everyone starts going crazy.

Shipping logs show that several tons of 'mud samples' and a 'salvaged item' were transported from Witch Bravo to Aberdeen, bound for Group K's office.

The Horror in the Tanks

The tanks underneath the drilling derrick contain dozens of chunks of sleeping shoggoth-flesh and three whole shoggoths that have managed to knit themselves back together. These three shoggoths are still partially subdued by Deep One sorcery but any strong stimulus can provoke a response. Call for Stealth checks when the characters are moving through the laboratory or the 'carbon sequestration pumps'; if a check is failed, then one of the shoggoths lazily spits out a pseudopod in the direction of the disturbance.

The Fence: The shoggoth tanks are surrounded by electric fences to contain the horrors but these fences have shut down and cannot be restarted while the gas flare is lit. If the fence is active, anyone touching it gets fried for 6d6 damage.

The Survivor: Hiding in one of the tanks is Dr. Mary Green, a Group K researcher. She took refuge in the tank when the platform was overrun by possessed victims but 24 hours spent in close proximity to a shoggoth, even a semi-dormant one, has driven her insane. She huddles in a corner of the tank, breathing as lightly as possible to avoid waking the shoggoth. Her flesh is marked with weird puckers and oozing wounds where the shoggoth brushed against her.

If rescued from the tank, she jabbars constantly about how one of the things *'ate him and then it spoke, oh god, it spoke'*, referring to the incident where one of the shoggoths absorbed another worker and learned to pass for human. Getting a coherent account out of Dr. Green is impossible; the trauma of her experience is overwhelming.

Run Away! If you are feeling cruel, or if the players did not think the zombies were terrifying enough, then the shoggoths can wake up briefly and pursue the characters through the substructure of the platform. The shoggoths will fall back into their dreamless slumber after a few rounds but those will be very, very long rounds for the unfortunate Player Characters fleeing down the corridors.

Sanity Loss for seeing a shoggoth in a tank is worth 1D3/1D8 Sanity Loss; seeing an active shoggoth costs 1D8/1D20 SAN.

The Gas Flare

While the gas flare is burning, it is dumping entropy into the locality; this has deleterious effects on complex or sensitive systems. The characters first noticed this as a disruption to radio signals and electronics but the flare affects everything on the platform (spending too long in proximity to the flare is a very bad idea if you value your health).

The gas flare can be deactivated easily and as soon as it is quenched, the platform's computers can be rebooted and communications re-established with the shore. It also means that the hostile magic of the binding spell is no longer being burnt off, so instead it is letting possessor spirits in our reality. These creatures begin manifesting once

the flare is turned off and start looking for hosts almost immediately. They are a mix of Class I and II possessors, with more powerful entities following in their wake.

Word From The Shore

Once the gas flare is shut down, the characters are contacted almost immediately by Angleton, demanding an update on the situation at Witch Bravo. He seems unsurprised by the revelations about shoggoths being sucked up from the ocean floor and hordes of zombies devouring oil rig workers; his first priority is finding out about the Deep Ones and the possible breach of the Benthic Treaty.

If the characters ask about J.C. Lancaster, Angleton sends them a copy of Handout #2 (assuming they do not have it already) and tells them that Lancaster is now working for Group K, a semi-private think tank within MI6 that was supposed to be securing the UK's energy supply against terrorist attacks and future threats. It is obvious that Group K is operating slightly outside its remit and he suspects a visit to Group K's headquarters in Aberdeen will be on the agenda very soon. He does not want to involve either the police or the government in this; this will be handled by the Laundry alone. Dragging MI6's embarrassing little secrets out into the open could backfire. Better for the characters to handle it. He suggests they take Major Barnes' merry men along with them, as negotiations always go more smoothly when one has the Artist's Rifles on hand.

He also tells the characters that he has arranged that backup he was muttering about—*HMS Richmond* is in the waters near Aberdeen and can be called in to provide fire support. The *Richmond* is a Type 23 Frigate, with eight Harpoon missiles and a 4.5 inch naval gun, as well as a Lynx submarine-hunting helicopter. That *should* be enough for the characters to be getting on with, unless they plan on starting a war with the Deep Ones—and that is exactly what they are *not* supposed to do.

5. Submarine Diplomacy

The Deep Ones show up at a suitably inconvenient time for the Player Characters; just as they are poring over the notes on LAMBENT BLACK, for example, or when they are trying to contain a zombie outbreak. If your Player Characters are only neck-deep in trouble, dump another load on them and *then* have the fish-faced ones show up.

The Deep Ones like to make a grand entrance.

Over the wind and waves, you hear another noise from outside, a croaking noise like a million angry frogs crammed into a materialising TARDIS. Looking out at the storm-tossed sea, you see thousands of round heads with fishy eyes staring up at you. BLUE HADES. They stare up at the rig for a moment, then sink back down into the depths. A light, sickly and yellow, blossoms under the waves and moves towards the Moon Pool.

Down at the Moon Pool, the Deep One's emissary emerges from the water. Her name is Sibyl; she is a Deep One construct, like Ramona

Random. The essence of female beauty, sketched in quicksilver and pale skin, created to speak to the surface-folk on behalf of her aquatic masters. Sibyl climbs out of the Moon Pool, naked except for a waterproof documents folder on her back.

'My name is Sibyl and I am here on behalf of the primary non-human signatories of the Agreement of the Azores. I am here to explore possible remedies under Article 2 for the ongoing breach of Article 7. I have a few questions for you, in a consultative capacity, before further action is taken by my superiors. Do you understand?'

Play Sibyl as a shark-like lawyer, who seizes on any inconsistencies or gaps in the characters' accounts and tears into them. Ultimately, though, she is on the not-wiping-out humanity side of the fence (if the surface folk are wiped off the face of the planet, then there will be no need for emissaries like her). While Sibyl is capable of distinguishing between different groups of humans and can appreciate that 'the Laundry' is different from 'Group K' and that both groups are subsets of 'the United Kingdom', the Deep Ones do not have congruent social organisations and are willing to treat everyone in the United Kingdom as equally guilty.

Sibyl's questions are:

- Why did humanity remove items from the prohibited area, in direct contravention of Article 7?
- Her masters have examined the damage on the seabed. Humanity has freed the shoggoths—where are these entities now?
- One of the containment steles is also missing. Where is this stèle?
- Is humanity making an attempt to weaponise the shoggoths, in breach of Article 7?

This structure is already forfeit and will be destroyed at a time of her superiors' choosing. The degree of further reparation depends on the co-operation of the characters with Sibyl's questions.

If the players ask about the stèle, then Sibyl explains that it is part of the containment that keeps the shoggothim in place on the sea bed and, without the stèle, there is a chance that the creatures will awaken.

The best approach for the characters is to plead ignorance and admit that someone has indeed violated the Benthic Treaty without actually specifying who (the passive voice is always safer in these situations). If they can show BLUE HADES that they are taking steps to rectify the situation, then Sibyl can persuade her superiors not to take hasty action. If BLUE HADES is unconvinced that the United Kingdom is willing and capable of recovering the stèle and accounting for the breach, then they will take suitable punitive actions that will render the whole island of Britain uninhabitable within three months.

Pulling Your (Tension) Leg

Witch Bravo is a tension leg platform, which means the floating platform is tethered in place by long steel cables anchored to the sea bed. The Deep Ones intend to destroy Witch Bravo as part punishment for meddling in their affairs. As soon as Sibyl slips back into the water, the whole oil platform shakes violently. Gigantic tentacles rise from beneath the sea-bed and wrap themselves around the leg cables. When the Deep Ones choose, these tentacles will wrench the entire platform underwater.

6. Aberdeen

The missing stele and the shoggoth are not aboard Witch Bravo; they must have been evacuated to Aberdeen. The surviving Sea King has since refuelled at another Witch platform and is ready to take the characters back to the mainland. The seas are still too rough for the helicopter to land, so the characters are winched up in harnesses.

The Sea King can carry up to 20 personnel, so the characters can take an SAS squad with them if they wish. They should also use the flight time to discuss their tactics—do they want to try sneaking in, or confront Lancaster directly?

As soon as the Sea King is clear of the entropic effect of the gas flare, the characters can communicate with the mainland once more. Angleton contacts them once more to update them on events in London. He has made some not-particularly-discrete enquiries about Group K and has confirmed that the elusive Mr. Lancaster should be at the Aberdeen office.

Angleton himself has several new heads hanging from his belt and intends to have a full and frank exchange of views at the next meeting of the Joint Intelligence Committee—assuming there is a next meeting. The Meteorological Office is tracking an ‘unexplained and extremely large swell’ in the North Atlantic that looks remarkably like an artificial tidal wave and there are all sorts of strange lights in the skies north of Britain. Predictive Branch is estimating a 70% chance of apocalypse and a 30% chance of light drizzle turning heavy in the morning. Would the characters please give BLUE HADES everything they want before Angleton has to wake up the Prime Minister? (In the background of the radio message, the characters hear some flunky hand Angleton a report on ‘whether or not the civil defence shelters are waterproof’.)

Kevin the Night Watchman

STR 13 CON 14 SIZ 16 INT 6 POW 8 DEX 7 CHA 6 EDU 10 SAN 40 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Truncheon 45%, damage 1D6+damage bonus

Skills: Head Butt 65%, Insight 25%, Listen 30%, Spot 20%

The characters have the location of Group K’s Aberdeen office, either through documents on the platform or via Angleton’s inquiries. The Sea King helicopter has enough fuel to go straight there. Depending on how long it took the characters to secure the oil platform and uncover what is going on, the current time is probably the early morning, still before dawn. The Sea King cuts through the unnatural rain over Aberdeen and zeroes in on an ordinary-looking unit in an industrial estate.

The Group K Building

The helicopter comes in low over the sleeping city, heading for the industrial estate where Group K has its headquarters. As you approach, you can make out the Group K building, hazily illuminated through the rain. It is a two-story industrial unit, anonymous and grey, with a loading bay and a single entrance at the front. There are five vehicles outside; four cars and a large cargo hauler. There are lights on inside the building.

Knock knock, open wide, there’s a shoggoth on the other side...

Entry Points: In addition to the front door (leading to reception) and the loading bay (leading to the Shoggoth Tanks), there is a rear door to the security section and a skylight that leads into the Shoggoth Tank section.

Security Systems: There are binocular security cameras above all entrances and overlooking the reception desk; these cameras are SCORPION STARE-ready, as per government preparations for CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN but are not active Basilisk devices. They do work perfectly well as security cameras though and the security staff will spot anyone caught on camera.

Reception

This could be the lobby of a moderately upscale car dealership, maybe, or a dental surgery—apart from the morbidly overweight night watchman behind the desk. There are photos of oil rigs and enormous pipelines on the walls and a glossy prospectus on securing the UK’s future energy reserves.

The night watchman, Kevin, has no idea what Group K is actually about: he is on watch for Al Qaida terrorists. He thinks of himself as ‘one of the lads’, even though the security team are hardened ex-special forces and Kevin is a club bouncer when he’s not working at Group K.

CASE : LAMBENT WITCH

Four Twitchy Guards

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	SAN	Damage Bonus
#1	13	12	14	13	10	11	13	50	+1d4
#2	12	10	10	11	12	10	10	45	+0
#3	15	12	13	12	11	9	13	35	+1d4
#4	14	14	13	10	13	13	14	60	+1d4

Weapons: Submachine gun 55%, damage 1d10

Skills: Dodge 35%, Hide 40%, Spot 40%, Stealth 50%, Strategy 40%.

Security

There are four security guards here, the survivors of the evacuation from Witch Bravo. They are armed with submachine guns and overdoses of caffeine pills: Lancaster ordered them to remain on site until the whole Witch Bravo situation is resolved. The guards investigate any intrusions and understand 'investigate' to mean 'use harsh language, physical intimidation and possibly burst fire'.

Offices

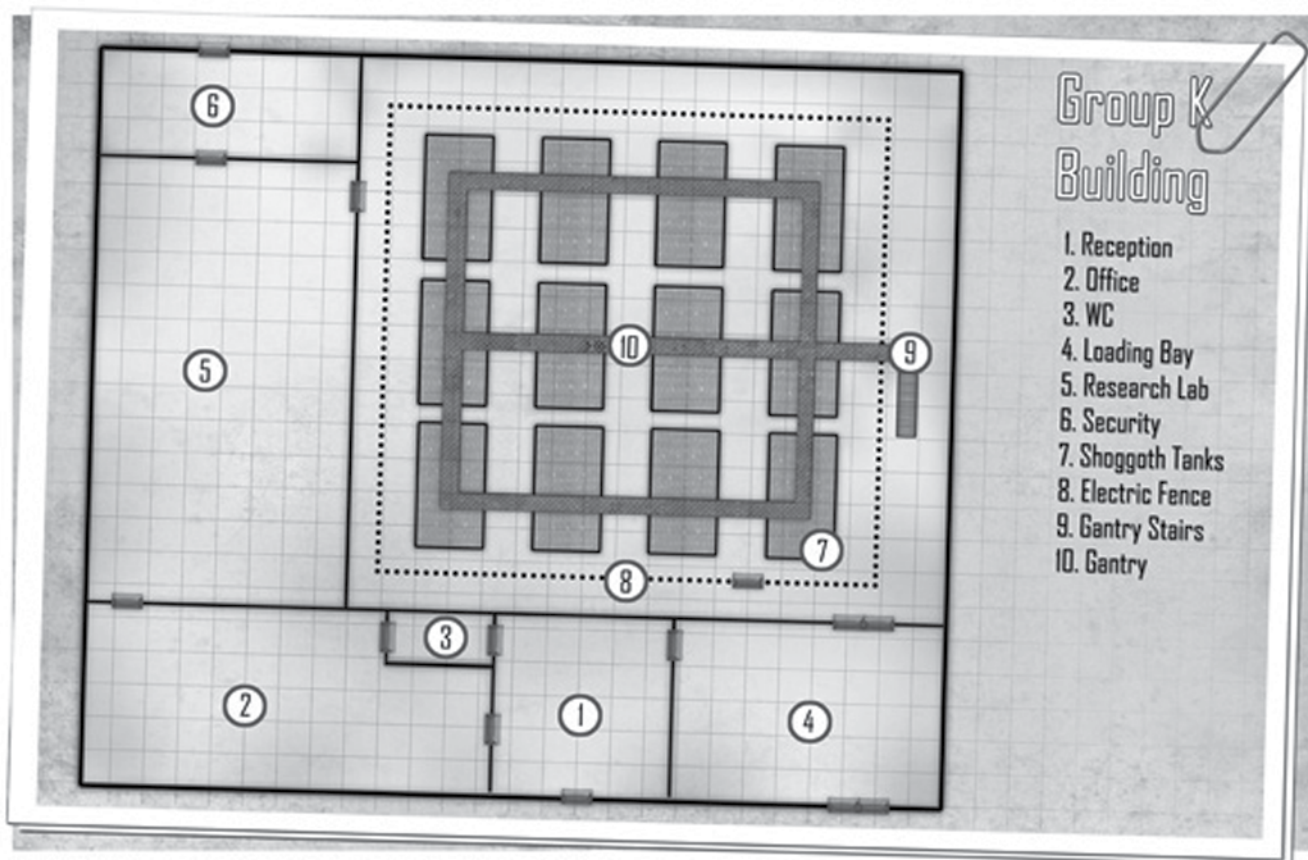
Because you cannot run a secret occult think tank devoted to securing a shoggoth deterrent for the United Kingdom without generating a lot of paperwork. The office section is currently empty.

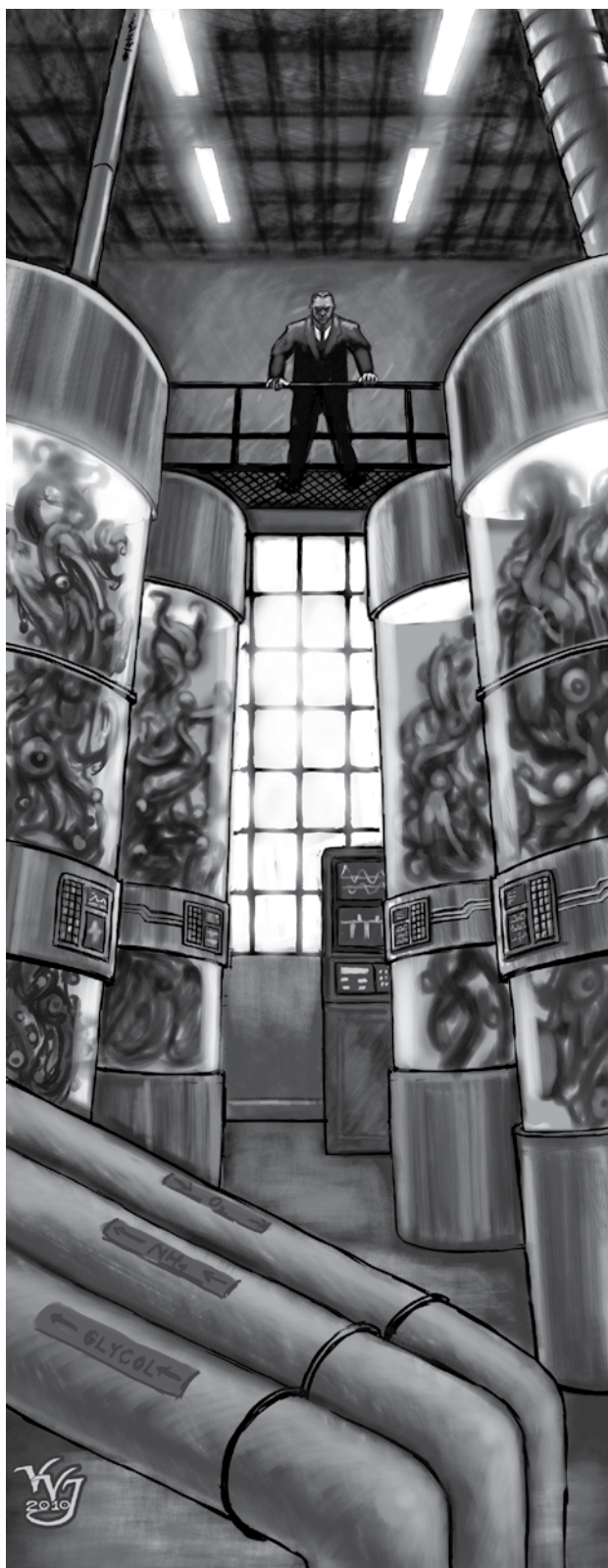
Research

The research section consists of a half-dozen office cubicles, each one equipped with a high-power workstation and a mid-level researcher. They are currently burning the midnight oil, trying to crack the geases placed on the shoggoths by BLUE HADES. Wireframe images on computer screens show the stolen stele and the thaumaturgical topography of the geas.

None of the researchers here are practical sorcerers but they can rustle up an offensive ward or two given time and motivation.

Examining the research with Sorcery or Computer Use (magic) lets a character analyse the work that has been done.





The geas is an extremely complex one. It hooks into the binding spell; the binding keeps the shoggoths contained and the geas compels them not to fight against the binding, preventing them from even trying the bars of their prison. This is Deep Wizardry, cutting-edge stuff.

The researchers have been examining the binding spells for weeks but made no progress. A day ago, though, someone made a stunning breakthrough that has nearly cracked the puzzle. Whoever wrote that section of code is a genius beyond compare; all that is left to do is debug the spell and the binding can be broken.

The Stele: The stele is in this room on a turntable, spinning steadily as a laser scans the glyphs on it. A close examination of the stele reveals that some of the glyphs have been removed with a chisel, altering the original structure of the stone.

The Shoggoth Tanks

In addition to Gordon the Shoggoth, Group K brought back other shoggoth samples in the weeks between breaking into the corral and Witch Bravo being overrun. These shoggoths are still under the geas effect and are dormant. The tanks are surrounded by a powerful electrical fence—if one of the shoggoths ever got loose, this fence would be enough to fry the monster before it could eat Aberdeen.

There is a walkway over the tanks, used for observation and experimentation. J. C. Lancaster—or the thing wearing his face—is waiting here.

7. Join Me, and Together...

Rewind 24 hours or so.

Lancaster fled the Witch Bravo platform with Gordon the Shoggoth. His plan was to use Gordon's insight to crack the geas binding and activate the other shoggoths. By the time BLUE HADES discovered the breach of the Benthic Treaty, he hoped to have a working deterrent to threaten them with.

That is still the plan. It is just not Lancaster's plan any more. The shoggoth consumed him soon after they arrived at Group K. There is still something of Lancaster's mind within the creature, but Gordon is in control.

Gordon's primary goal is to crack the geases using the same methods as Lancaster was using, but that takes time. If he is unable to stall the Player Characters, then he has a backup plan—he has altered the stele to collapse the spells binding the other shoggoths. If the stele is replaced without being repaired, the other shoggoths will be freed to rampage over both land and sea.

As soon as the characters enter the shoggoth tank chamber at Group K, read the following:

Standing on the walkway above is a tall man in a business suit—Lancaster. His expression is unreadable but he does not seem surprised to see you. He spreads his hands and walks along the gantry, causing it to creak with every step. He speaks in a monotone.

I take it you're from the Laundry. Here to do BLUE HADES' dirty work, no doubt.

PLAYING GORDON THE SHOGGOTH

Horror comes from *implication*, from piecing together disassociated hints into one ghastly whole. Therefore, you never want to say 'hey, this guy's a shoggoth in human form'. You want the players to make that deduction. Instead, drop hints—subtle ones at first but then more blatant ones. The initial hints are in body language and speech patterns but if the players do not pick up on that, you can have them notice 'Lancaster's' flesh crawling or have a character smell the same acrid, acidic scent around Lancaster as he noticed in the shoggoth tanks on Witch Bravo.

Fishfuckers. How does it feel being at the beak and call of a bunch of overgrown sardines? Isn't it humiliating to be cowed by such creatures?

The shoggoths are more powerful than you can imagine. Free them, and we have a weapon that BLUE HADES fears. We rewrite the balance of power on this planet, and put ourselves on top! The Laundry will be obsolete—but there can be places for all of you in Group K. Promotions. Salary increases. Pension plans. Think of the power.'

If the characters point out that the Deep Ones are already on the move, then Lancaster asks for more time. They are very close to unravelling the geases—all he needs is a few more hours.

If they ask what happened to Gordon, he gestures towards one of the storage tanks and the sleeping shoggoth within.

Try to convey the unnaturalness of Gordon's movements when roleplaying him. Walk as though you weigh twice as much as you do, wear your body like an ill-fitting meat suit. Whisper *tekeli-li* under your breath. Successful Insight rolls let a character note that there is something odd about Lancaster—viewing him using a Tillinghast Resonator or using a Scrying spell or app lets the character see the horror beneath 'Lancaster's' skin.

There are three potential outcomes here.

Sure, We'll Help You Screw The Deep Ones

The PCs agree to 'Lancaster's' plan and give him time to break the binding. If any PCs have knowledge of thaumaturgy, they can help with the unbinding spell. Lancaster tells the characters that he needs to return the stele to the shoggoth corral and for that he needs their helicopter.

Angleton calls for an update at this point. 'Lancaster' tells the characters to stall him but Angleton will see through their lies. 'Lancaster' then takes the phone from the character and threatens Angleton, saying that the day of the Laundry is over and a new power is coming. The shoggoth then switches the phone off and tells the characters to ignore further calls from the Laundry—in a few hours, the Laundry will no longer matter in the grand scheme of things.

If a character contacts Angleton again, then he warns the characters that the thing he talked to on the phone was definitely *not* Lancaster—Angleton can tell when he is talking to an entity with a soul and Lancaster does not possess one.

If the characters continue to go along with this plan, then Lancaster brings the stele back to Witch Bravo and tells the characters to use the submersible to replant the stele. If the stele is replanted, skip onto *Shoggoth Apocalypse*, page 20.

We'll Never Betray The Laundry!

If the characters refuse, then 'Lancaster' surrenders. He tells the characters that the only way to calm BLUE HADES is to immediately return the stele themselves, using the submersible at Witch Bravo. If they just hand the stele back to the Deep Ones, then they will be admitting that they tampered with the shoggoth corral but if they put it back themselves, then everyone has plausible deniability. This is a lie—Lancaster would prefer to return the stele with the binding fully removed but he will take what he can get.

This option plays out similarly to *Screw the Deep Ones*—the characters return to Witch Bravo and use the submersible to replant the stele, triggering a *Shoggoth Apocalypse* unless they realise in time that 'Lancaster' is lying to them.

You're Gordon, Aren't You?

If the players realise that 'Lancaster' is in fact Gordon the Shoggoth, then they have got a fight scene on their hands. The features of Lancaster melt away as the shoggoth reverts to a seething mass of protoplasm and attacks.

Unless the characters are packing some considerable firepower—a Basilisk gun is ideal—then fighting the shoggoth head-on is extremely inadvisable. There are other ways to deal with it:

- Luring it into the crackling electric fences surrounding the shoggoth tanks.
- Calling Angleton and getting the Laundry to upload SCORPION STARE to the security cameras.
- Calling in a Harpoon strike from *HMS Richmond*.
- Using the research at Group K to recast the binding spell on the shoggoth.

BLACK BAG JOBS

Gordon the Shoggoth

STR 40 CON 30 SIZ 32 INT 12 POW 15 DEX 7 CHA 6 EDU 6 SAN 0 HP 31

Damage Bonus: +3D6

Weapons: Razor-Edged Tentacle 60%, damage 1d6+damage bonus. Devouring Maw 30%, damage 2d6+damage bonus.

Skills: Bargain 30%, Disguise 60%, Fast Talk 40%, Insight 40%, Sorcery 45%.

8. Return to Witch Bravo

If the characters destroyed Gordon the Shoggoth at Group K, then they can just grab the damaged stele from the laboratory and fly back to Witch Bravo. However, if they have not realised that 'Lancaster' is the shoggoth, then they get to fly back to the oil platform in close proximity to an inhuman horror. (Ideally, they work this out while two feet away from the monster on board the helicopter.)

More clues that 'Lancaster' is not all that he seems:

- The helicopter pilot notes that the Sea King is carrying a lot of extra weight.
- The characters' warding amulets crackle when close to 'Lancaster'.
- He insists that the characters must be the ones to restore the stele to the seabed; they must not involve the Deep Ones at any point.

Confronting Gordon

If the characters confront the shoggoth on the helicopter, they are almost certainly doomed. Gordon can survive a plunge into the icy waters of the North Sea when he eats

the pilot: the PCs cannot. If the characters work out that 'Lancaster' is a shoggoth while in the air, then they must stall until they reach the platform.

At Witch Bravo, they can try to lure the shoggoth into a trap, or assemble a weapon against him. Again, a Basilisk gun in the writhing hideous face is the best approach. Alternatively, they can inform BLUE HADES, who will take appropriate action (see *From Beneath*, page 21). Other shoggoth-killing methods on the platform include:

- The shoggoth tanks here are also equipped with electric fences. If the characters flee into the shoggoth tanks with Gordon in hot pursuit, they can fry the creature.
- Again, they can call in attacks from *HMS Richmond*.

For that matter, they are sitting on an oil platform. It can go boom very effectively.

Repairing the Stele

If the characters know that the stele was damaged, they can report it to BLUE HADES or repair it themselves. Normally, such a repair would be beyond the reach of humanity, but the characters do have access to high-quality 3D scans from

SHOGGOTH APOCALYPSE

Returning the stele using the submersible is a nerve-wracking experience. The operator must guide the submersible down to the ocean floor, dodging the writhing tentacles that are wrapped around the platform legs and avoiding mysterious shapes lurking in the silt. Give the players plenty of opportunities to abort the expedition and confront Gordon instead, because if the altered stele is replaced, then everyone is in trouble.

If the stele is replaced, then there is an eruption of thaumic energy from the sea floor as the shoggoth corral short-circuits. The shoggoths in the holding tanks and on the sea bed go on the rampage, smashing through both the Witch Bravo platform and the Deep One tentacles. Immediately fleeing the platform is the only way the characters can survive.

The characters have just freed 500 shoggoths from their prison; over the coming months, these shoggoths will wage war on the Deep Ones who imprisoned them and humanity will be collateral damage. The Laundry's Deep One allies will be unavailable and shoggoths will crawl out of the ocean along the eastern coast of the United Kingdom. Worse, the creatures are breeding... if you want to start CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN early, this is a great opportunity to kick your campaign from 'occult espionage' to 'occult apocalypse'.

CASE : LAMBERT WITCH

the Group K office. Fixing the stele is a Craft (stonecutting) test... what, no-one took Craft (stonecutting)? At all? Well, then, let them use Agility. A failed roll means the stele is repaired, but is 'leaky'—there'll be shoggoths washing up on the east coast for a few months after the stone is replaced.

Alternatively, they can tell the Deep Ones the stele is slightly damaged. The Deep Ones can repair it, but won't be happy.

From Beneath...

Once the stele is returned to the Deep Ones (or dumped on the sea bed), then they make good on their threat of removing Witch Bravo. Massive tentacles erupt from the ocean and wrap around the platform, tearing it apart and dragging the remains into the depths.

The time allocated to evacuating the platform depends on the characters' relations with the Deep Ones; if they were diplomatic when dealing with Sybil, then she graciously gives them time to sprint to the helicopter before the

tentacles arrive. If they annoyed her, then the tentacles start writhing early.

From the helicopter, the characters see Witch Bravo being dragged into the ocean. Sanity Loss for witnessing this is 1D3/1D8.

Aftermath

Back at the Laundry, the characters are debriefed. The Unconventional Diplomacy office has a lot of questions for them, as they try to patch over the breach of the Benthic Treaty. Angleton informs them that Group K will be shut down and that he is going to have some very one-sided discussions with the Joint Intelligence Committee.

If the characters acquitted themselves well and dealt with the treaty breach and Gordon, they gain 1D6+1% Status.

Freeing the shoggoths and pissing off BLUE HADES reduces Status by 1d6+5%.

Player Handouts

Handout #1

WITCH FIELD RIG OVERVIEW

Document part of Witch Field proposal, information © Northern Futures Inc.

The four proposed Witch Field oil platforms are tension leg designs. The upper platform floats on the surface and is moored to the ocean floor by long cables under tension. These cables allow the platform to move a limited distance horizontally while minimising vertical movement, emphasising stability and cost-effectiveness compared to more expensive concrete caisson designs.

The mooring points for the cables are pile driven into the ocean floor. Mooring is accomplished by submersible vehicles.

The surface platform is divided into several firewalled subsections. In the event of a fire, explosion or other disaster, the likelihood of a fire passing from one protected section to another is exceedingly remote.

Section 1: Drilling derrick and substructure.

Section 2: Pumps and oil capture, separation and gas treatment equipment, condensate handling, flare boom.

Section 3: Control room and main generator.

Section 4: Living quarters, workshop, medical facility, helipad, submersible control and moon pool.

Each of the four platforms will pump oil back to shore via a pipeline, terminating at the Northern Futures receiving station at Aberdeen. Estimated yield per annum is approximately 350 million barrels of crude oil.

Each platform requires a crew of between 80 and 120 personnel.

LAMBERT WITCH

Handout #2

Minutes of meeting 18/10/03

Secret/BLUE HADES

Present: J. C. Lancaster (ILG), Boris (AA), H. Smith (UD), M. Holland (Aqua), P. Reston (Legal)

Agenda: Discussion of proposed drilling in Witch's Field, with reference to Benthic Treaty restrictions.

Minutes:

1. Request from Whitehall to quickly process application for economic reasons.
2. Does the Benthic Treaty forbid extraction of resources from seabed—no, only structures and only within prohibited zone.
3. Only one section of Witch's Field falls within prohibited zone. Suggested locations for three platforms are within acceptable area. Witch Bravo suggested location questionable—referred to legal for analysis.
4. Discussion of future action, ref. North Sea Oil & Gas and potential for trespass and or public/private partnership in area, with or without BLUE HADES involvement. Inconclusive.
5. Relevance of Benthic Treaty standard operations advisory document questioned; referred to committee.
6. Any other business—disturbing odours in committee room when discussing BLUE HADES. Probably psychosomatic, referred to hygiene committee.

Memorandum

Secret/BLUE HADES

TO: Interdepartmental Liaison Group, ref. Dept. of Trade

CC: Arcana Analysis, Unconventional Diplomacy, Aquatic Affairs

FROM: Legal Affairs

SUBJECT: Proposed North Sea drilling in Witch's Field

DATE: 3rd November 2003

With reference to our meeting of the 18th October, I have reviewed the relevant clauses of the Benthic Treaty and my recommendation is that the Witch Bravo application be denied. The relevant section of the Witch's Field is designated a prohibited area according to Appendix Two and past incidents have shown that any trespass into a prohibited area is harshly punished. An exclusion zone of at least five kilometres should be observed when dealing with protected areas.

Yours sincerely,

Phillipa Reston

Memorandum

Secret/BLUE HADES

TO: Legal Affairs**CC:** Arcana Analysis, Unconventional Diplomacy, Aquatic Affairs**FROM:** Interdepartmental Liaison Group**SUBJECT:** Proposed North Sea drilling in Witch's Field**DATE:** 4th November 2003

With reference to your memo of the 3rd November, the suggestion of moving the Witch Bravo site was raised with Northern Futures using the agreed-upon cover story of a suspected WWII-era weapons dump. NF were extremely unwilling to compromise and pointed out that the eastern Witches Field is potentially the most valuable section.

Following the consultation, questions were raised by both the Dept. of Trade and the JIC about undue caution with regard to BLUE HADES. While obviously we cannot be seen to be in contravention of the Benthic Treaty, a five kilometre exclusion zone within our own territorial waters and the resulting restriction on our ability to use a vital natural resource seems excessively deferential, especially as BLUE HADES has not raised any formal objection to preliminary submarine investigation of the Witches Field, up to the limits of the prohibited area.

Yours,

J. C. Lancaster

Memorandum

Secret/BLUE HADES

TO: Interdepartmental Liaison Group, ref. Dept. of Trade**CC:** Archives**FROM:** Legal Affairs**SUBJECT:** Proposed North Sea drilling in Witch's Field**DATE:** 6th November 2003**ATTACHMENTS:** JENNIFER MORGUE, WHITE LABRADOR, LAMBENT BLACK, DEVIL'S REEF

Mr. Lancaster,

I read your memo of yesterday with dismay. Categorising what must be the bare minimum of caution when dealing with a significantly more powerful alien civilisation as 'excessive deference' is a worryingly negligent attitude. I appreciate the economic and security implications of fossil fuel reserves in the North Sea but the implications of trespass onto territory claimed by BLUE HADES are far more alarming. I draw your attention to the attached files, in the hopes of impressing on you (and, by proxy, the JIC and Dept. of Trade) the gravity of the situation.

Phillipa Reston

LAMBENT WITCH

Memorandum

Secret/BLUE HADES

TO: Legal Affairs

FROM: Interdepartmental Liaison Group

SUBJECT: Proposed North Sea drilling in Witch's Field

DATE: 20th November 2003

Mr Lancaster,

I have yet to receive an update on the Witch's Field proposal. Please include me in your reporting chain on this matter, so I may properly update our records on operations near Benthic Treaty prohibited zones.

Phillipa Reston

Memorandum

Secret/BLUE HADES

TO: Interdepartmental Liaison Group, ref. Dept. of Trade

FROM: Legal Affairs

SUBJECT: Proposed North Sea drilling in Witch's Field

DATE: 21th November 2003

Ms. Reston,

Please note that J.C. Lancaster has been seconded to the Secret Intelligence Service and no longer works in the Interdepartmental Liaison Group. In answer to your question, I am informed that Northern Futures have agreed to move the Witch Bravo platform some three kilometres west of its original proposed location, which Arcana Analysis believes is sufficiently outside the prohibited area to avoid interference with BLUE HADES.

In resolving this matter, I noticed that Mr. Lancaster had three codeword-clearance files (JENNIFER MORGUE, WHITE LABRADOR, DEVIL'S REEF) withdrawn under your authorisation; I have returned these files to the Archives.

A. Bright

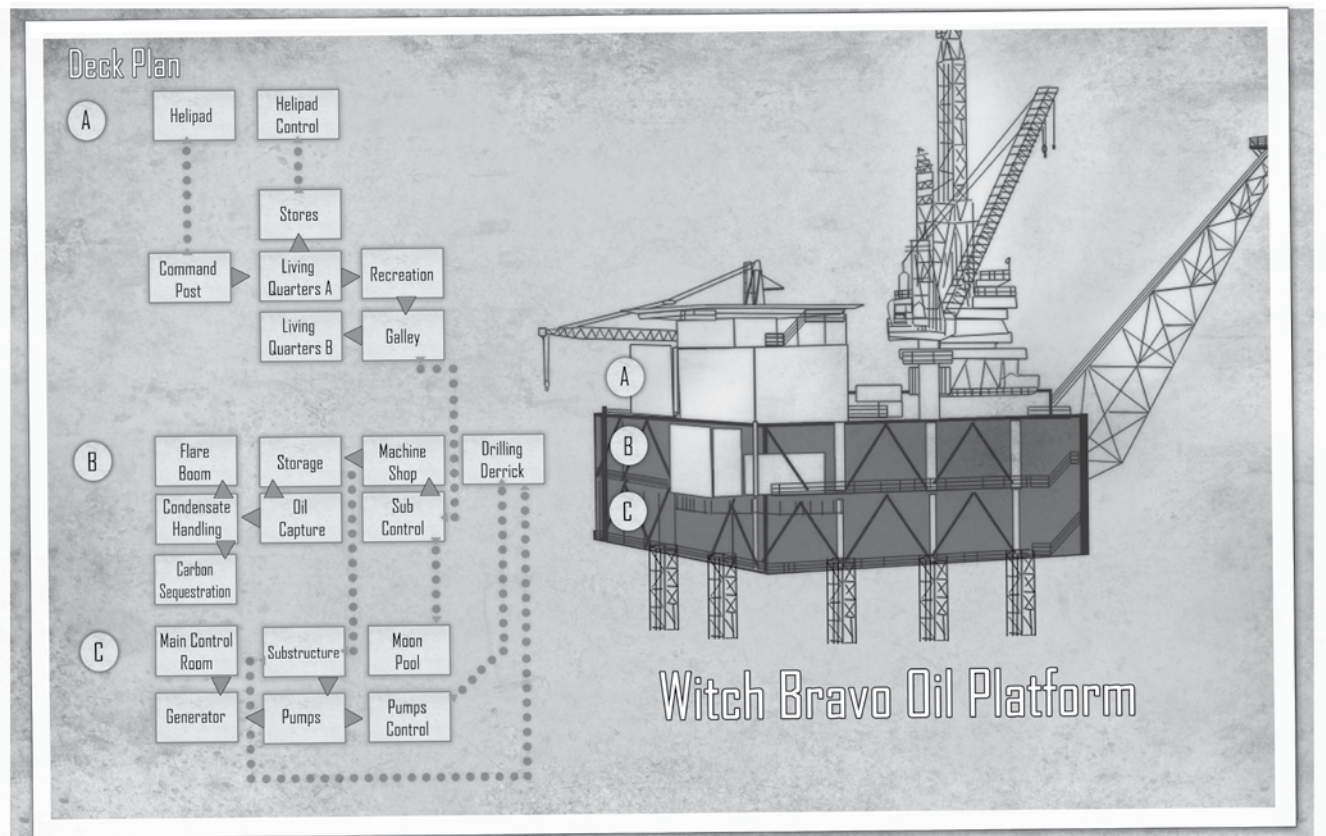
GROUP K RESEARCH—TOP SECRET

A PRELIMINARY OCCULT ANALYSIS OF THE WITCH FIELD SITE

1. **TARGET:** The target within the prohibited area is a region approximately 400 metres in radius, containing an estimated 500 ANNING BLACK entities, henceforth referred to as 'shoggoths'. The edges of the target are demarcated by 256 stone markers, placed evenly in an approximate circle around the contained shoggoths. We believe but cannot yet confirm that the target is of BLUE HADES design.
 - 1A. **LOCATION:** The target is on the sea bed, at a depth of 200 metres. This has made acquisition problematic.
 - 1B. **ACQUISITION:** The chosen method for acquisition uses the Witch Bravo oil platform, equipped with a custom-built extraction nozzle to vacuum shoggoth material off the sea floor. A remote-control submersible was used to open a gap in the external binding circle.
2. **ANNING BLACK:** The entities codenamed ANNING BLACK are believed to be a colony of nanoscale assembler/disassembler devices, capable of restructuring their own matter into different forms. As such, they are virtually indestructible and capable of destroying any known target.
 - 2A. **CASE LAMBENT BLACK:** The CASE LAMBENT BLACK document (already disseminated) describes the use of shoggoths as a weapon and suggests that they could be turned on BLUE HADES.
 - 2B. **CONSIDERATIONS:** Use of the shoggoths as a weapon carries undeniable risks. All standard safety protocols will be followed.
3. **BLUE HADES CONTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY:** The shoggoths are contained in a thaumaturgical holding facility, consistent with observed BLUE HADES occult technology. Preliminary investigation suggests a three-part containment structure. All three parts of this containment must be overcome in order to successfully utilise the target as planned.
 - 3A. The ring of containment stones, which has already been breached by submersible.
 - 3B. A binding spell, keeping the shoggoths in place. We have successfully bled off this spell, although the method used is extremely inefficient and must be refined if the target is to be fully harvested as planned.
 - 3C. A geas spell, to ensure obedience and dormancy. This is currently under analysis but a lack of information on baseline shoggoth mentality makes progress difficult to ascertain.
4. **RECOMMENDATIONS:** This phase of the operation is extremely time-sensitive, due to the potential pressure from external actors. Therefore, efforts must focus on the following areas.
 - 4A. Resolving the geasing problem, allowing new commands to be issued to the shoggoths.
 - 4B. Improving the unbinding system, in order to increase the extraction rate to the estimated peak of one shoggoth per four hours.
 - 4C. Accelerating development of tactical and strategic plans for weapons deployment against BLUE HADES.

BLACK: BAG JOES

Handout #4





Lost & Found

Lost & Found

Lost & Found

LOST & FOUND

Details of departmental losses were disclosed to MPs in a series of written ministerial answers to the House of Commons which reveal that at least 1,052 laptops have gone missing, including 200 in the last year alone. The Ministry of Defence is one of the worst offenders, having had 503 laptops and 23 PCs lost or stolen since 1998, including 68 in 2007.

—Guardian newspaper, 4th March 2008

Losing important laptops has become a government pastime in Whitehall. So far, the Laundry has managed to avoid the embarrassment of a significant security breach—all that ISO9001 certification and endless paperwork just to requisition a three and a half inch floppy disk (yes, the Laundry still uses floppies in certain cases) means that you're less likely to leave a shiny work laptop on a tube train and anyone who tries stealing from the office runs into the Night Watchmen (not necessarily *men*, in the strictest sense of the word—actually, Night Watchgaunts is a more accurate term). The Laundry has kept itself continent unlike, say, the MoD, who managed to lose both a laptop and the encryption key needed to read the secure files at the same time.

Reshuffles are another government pastime. Downing Street moves ministers around the departments, replacing incompetent or scandal-prone politicians with old cronies or loyal backbenchers, promoting eager young high-flyers or rewarding allies with power and pensions. Reshuffles are a headache for the intelligence services, including the Laundry. One has to brief the new minister and bring him or her up to speed on all the secrets and more importantly teach him or her not to ask troubling questions that have even more troubling answers. It is a very tense time in Whitehall. Even Angleton has to leave his dungeon lair and slither up to Admiralty Arch.

Perils of the Laundry

There is another pastime that is unique to the Laundry—bloody, murderous power plays with live ammunition. **Stanley Gubbins** is a sorcerer in Administration, weaving his sinister webs from the depths of Readiness Assessment and Social Integrity Planning. He has his eyes on a position in Operations and plans to use the reshuffle as a way to take down senior Ops personnel (including Angleton) and advance his own cause.

A mid-ranking Laundry officer, **Geoffrey Piper**, is due to bring a laptop to Whitehall for a high-level meeting with the new Home Office minister. Gubbins intends to have that laptop 'stolen' en route, thus blackening the name of the Ops department and humiliating the Laundry representatives at that meeting. Gubbins' agents will then conveniently 'recover' the laptop from the criminals, saving the day at the last moment.

When Piper sets off for Whitehall, he will be joined in the taxi by Gubbins' right-hand woman, **Diana Renne**. Her mission is to *geas* Piper and the taxi driver, erasing their memories of her presence and commanding Piper to leave the laptop behind. The driver will then bring the laptop to a safe place, where it will be 'stolen' by hired criminals. These criminals will leave the laptop in a prearranged location, where it will be retrieved by Gubbins' staff. Hooray for Gubbins, boo to Ops who nearly managed to lose key data right in front of the minister.

The Twist

What Gubbins does not know is that Diana Renne intends to run exactly the same scam on him. The stolen laptop has a CD in its drive, containing scanned copies of numerous occult tomes, including the *Necronomicon*. She intends to leave clues pointing back at Gubbins, showing that he screwed up by leaving the CD in the drive of the laptop. This CD will be 'stolen' before the laptop can be recovered.

So, Gubbins brings down Angleton by 'retrieving' the laptop and then Renne brings down Gubbins by showing that he failed to retrieve the CD. Gubbins will be unable to protest, because if he argues with Renne's version of events, she can reveal his greater betrayal of the Laundry's trust. It is mutually assured destruction, where she has the upper hand.

The only way this scheme could fail is if some unlikely group of Laundry officers tracked down the laptop before it could be 'recovered'...

Mission Overview

The characters are sent to Whitehall to brief a new government official about the Laundry. The Member of Parliament has not bothered to read the briefing documents, so the briefing is suitably farcical. The characters are rescued from this by Angleton, who sends them off to find the missing laptop.

Their investigation shows that the laptop was stolen and they track it to a house in South London. There, they find that the thieves have been murdered and it appears that the laptop contained something other than the briefing for the minister.

BLACK: BAG JOES

The characters are contacted by the traitorous Diane Renne, who sends them off to arrest her boss, Stanley Gubbins of RASIP. They have to fight their way past Gubbins' defences in a race against time—Gubbins is on the phone to the Home Secretary, lobbying to get Angleton fired over the whole missing laptop scandal. Once they deal with Gubbins, Renne tries to kill them—she intends to blame Gubbins' murder on Angleton, eliminating both her boss and her bosses' boss and jumping two steps up the promotion ladder in a single bound.

Lost and Found works with any level of Laundry employee, although they should have a modicum of social and investigative skills.

1. Just Another Day

Working in the Laundry, you need to learn the plural of apocalypse. You need to learn distinctions between different grades and types of world-ending disaster. This one wipes out all life as we know it on Earth; this one collapses the false vacuum and reality winks out in the blink of an eye and that one means the things behind the walls crawl out and devour our brains. Today is somewhere between 'the continents are rent asunder by giant worms' and 'Jesus returns, and this time he's got tentacles.'

There has been a cabinet reshuffle.

You have been in effective purdah for a week, waiting for your new elected master to be assigned. The civil service may run more efficiently without the minister but that is neither here nor there. Anyway, new

ministerial appointments were made this morning, which means that there is a host of new junior ministers, chairpersons and hangers-on to brief on matters of national security. The higher-ups have been stalking around Mabogany Row all day, girding their bureaucratic loins for war. Even Angleton has emerged from the gloom of his lair and gone up to Whitehall for briefings. You have not seen this many hands on deck in years.

Fortunately, you are much too low-ranking to be doing ministerial briefings and while the bosses are away, you get to relax.

Ask the players how their characters plan on wasting the day—reading restricted files? Playing Facebook games? Summoning horrors from beyond the wall of sleep? Napping?

As soon as the characters get comfortable with the idea of some free time, the phone rings.

'This is Stanley Gubbins at RASIP. Put me through to Angleton please.'

Angleton has already gone to Whitehall where he is in a meeting and cannot be disturbed. When informed of this fact (which he already knows), Gubbins continues.

'Damn and blast. We've got a bit of a problem here down at RASIP. There was a tiny little snag with a binding, just a slight miscalculation. Absolutely nothing to worry about, but, well, they've locked down our building for a few hours and I'm stuck in here. It's all horribly inconvenient, because I'm due to brief the new PPS—Parliament Private Secretary—on OCCINTEL ops in half an hour. I was hoping to get James to cover the briefing but you'll have to do it instead.'

'Me?' says the innocent Player Character. Am I not the lowest of the low, a fungus in a t-shirt who is kept in the dark away from the public eye? How can I be sent to Whitehall to brief a Member of Her Majesty's Parliament? Gubbins assures the PC that it is easy.

'Look, this is a very simple briefing with the new PPS. Bring a few other staff to look impressive and diverse. Just go in, tell him that everything's perfectly fine and there's no way that CNG will happen before the next election, answer any questions, and then pass the minutes back to me afterwards so I can write up what actually happened. Any problems, keep me in the loop. Oh, and tell James that I'll be up there as soon they tell us we're not brain-eating monsters.'

So, all the characters need to do is get to Whitehall, brief the new Parliamentary Private Secretary and not actually throw up in the room. Simple.

All of the Player Characters should tag along; the PPS will be more impressed by a large delegation. If the players try to palm this job off on a superior, then they are told that everyone is busy; they should seize the bull by the horns, *carpe diem*, take bold action and so forth, and anyway, their meeting is in Whitehall in 20 minutes and they really don't want to be late.

READINESS ASSESSMENT AND SOCIAL INTEGRITY PLANNING

Readiness Assessment and Social Integrity Planning (RASIP)'s role is to assess the preparedness of the United Kingdom and the Laundry for CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN and other challenges, and to review methods of ensuring continuity of government and society during periods of stress—what happens to *Eastenders* when the stars come right and Cthulhu eats Broadcasting House? RASIP is based in an office block outside central London and from this dark tower they dispatch winged monkeys armed with surveys and assessment forms for other, more productive departments. RASIP is loathed by most of the Laundry, as it combines intrusive bureaucracy with a complete lack of results—the success or otherwise of RASIP will only be determined when it is far too late for any of us.

Oh, and they are representing the Laundry in public. Wear a suit.

Getting to Whitehall in time means hopping into a black cab and spending a small fortune that the Laundry will never, ever, reimburse in a million years. The briefing is in an office in Admiralty Arch.

Yes, Parliamentary Private Secretary

For those blessedly unfamiliar with the workings of the UK Government, a Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) is a Member of Parliament (MP) who is attached to a government department. It is the first step on the ladder to cabinet. There are dozens of PPSs in government; some are ambitious young MPs eager to serve the country but others were given the job as a reward for past service or just to keep them quiet.

Damien Holt, MP, has *fantastic* hair and good cheekbones. He also has no personal convictions or beliefs whatsoever but is very good at mimicking yours. He took to politics like a shark to a duck pond. He was also at university with some of the party's high-flyers, so he has enough embarrassing memories and personal connections to wrangle a PPS appointment despite his near-total lack of any qualifications. His assistant, Rhoda Wells, gave him a dossier to read late last night about the Laundry, computational demonology, the true nature of reality and the impending apocalypse where alien space gods return from the dead to eat our brains. He skimmed it but did not really pay much attention.

The characters now have to brief this buffoon on CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN and the Laundry's preparation and readiness for it.

At Admiralty Arch, you are ushered through a twisty maze of wood panelled corridors and portraits of overweight gentlemen in wigs, all alike, before being deposited in a rather nice meeting room overlooking Trafalgar Square. At the door, a woman introduces herself efficiently as Ms. Wells and hands you each a copy of the agenda. You sit down and wait.

Hand the players a copy of the agenda (Handout #1). Note that the agenda calls for magical bindings to prevent eavesdropping—any character with Sorcery can easily enact such a binding. Let them stew for a moment.

The door opens and a dynamic, forceful head of hair enters the room, closely followed by its owner. He shakes your hands firmly and warmly, a good handshake that makes your input feel valued. He smiles winningly. 'Hi. Hi. Good to see you. Good to see you. Hi. Yab. Shall we get me up to speed?' Damien Holt, MP for some godsforsaken part of the Midlands sits down at the head of the table and opens up a dossier. There is the sulphurous pop of a ward fizzling and he frowns. 'Damn thing always does that. How odd.'

Invoking Naash-Yet: To ensure privacy, official Laundry business conducted outside HQ is protected by magical incantations. These spells block casual eavesdroppers

or intruders. The spells are tied to the meeting—they are activated by the chairman calling the meeting and dismissed in a like manner when it is brought to a close. It is a simple invocation but it confuses Damien immensely when the characters do it.

Briefing Damien: According to the agenda, the characters are to brief Damien on Laundry operations, then on CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN and its impact and finally on ways that the Laundry has discovered to deal with the problem (SCORPION STARE and so on). Over the course of the briefing, Damien's SAN clearly drops by quite a few points. He assumed that the Laundry was something to do with recycling, or cleaning, or maybe (if he stretched his imagination) some sort of witness-protection program. Elder Gods, higher mathematics and the true horror of reality fit into his worldview about as comfortably as a tiger fits into a breadbin.

Damien has his own insightful questions based on his skimming of the dossier, such as:

- How do you pronounce this one? Neerlap? Neherlato?
- Computational demonology... wait, wait, I know this one. That's something to do with... with... no, it's escaped me again. What's a computational demonology?
- It says here, about wards, yes? So, where are these wards? In an orphanage or hospital of some sort, is it?
- Now, I have some reservations about this whole SCORPION STARE thing. I understand it's about CCTV—now, have we considered the privacy implications of turning these cameras on the general population?

Obviously, the whole thing should be played for laughs. The players will probably either try to put the Laundry in the most non-offensive light possible and keep poor Damien in the dark, or drive the MP under the table with a stream of terrifying revelations.

Once the joke begins to wear a bit thin and drag, move onto the next section.

Enter Angleton

You all notice the burning-sulphur smell once again. Static electricity dances around the metal fittings of the table and your wards crackle. On the door, red runes flare into existence. From the corridor outside the office, you hear muffled voices and then a hoarse shout of 'ASH NAGH SEISHAR!'

The door flies open and slams into the wall, taking out a chunk of wood panelling. The protective wards collapse under magical assault and one of the agendas spontaneously combusts. Standing in the doorway is Angleton and he looks positively pissed.



The young man bobs his head in a sickly approximation of a greeting.

'Mr. Piper's done something a little bit silly, hasn't he?' Angleton continues, 'Why don't you tell these nice boys what you've done, Geoffrey?'

'I, er, I seem to have mislaid the laptop I was supposed to bring to the minister's meeting. I think I, actually I'm rather sure I left it in, well... in the taxi.'

'And what was on that laptop, Geoffrey?' prompts Angleton.

'A PowerPoint briefing' says Piper miserably, 'including sensitive information about the Laundry's staffing and budget...'

'Thank you, Geoffrey. Gentlemen, get that laptop back, without letting anyone else in the Laundry or the government know that it has gone on a sightseeing tour of London. Young Mr. Piper will remain here to help you with your investigation, in case you have any questions or need a human sacrifice.' He fixes Piper with a withering stare.

'I am going to meet with the minister and I believe the term is 'ramp' until that laptop is recovered. Please refrain from fouling this up any more.'

With that, Angleton stalks out of the room, leaving the somewhat bemused characters to interrogate Geoffrey Piper.

'So sorry, Mr. Holt, but I must cut this briefing short. We'll pick it up again at some future date but I need these staff now, I'm afraid. Thank you, thank you, get out.'

Holt is only too pleased to get out of this madhouse early. He gathers his belongings and scurries out the door in search of the promised sandwiches.

2. Angleton's Assignment

Angleton hauls a young man in from the corridor and sits him down in the seat vacated by Holt. The young man wears a hangdog expression and the overwhelming impression is that of a naughty schoolboy, with Angleton playing the part of demon headmaster.

Angleton scribbles a vastly more powerful privacy rune on a sheet of paper, spits on it—his saliva is black as tar and steams slightly—and glues the paper to the back of the door.

'Gentlemen. Where is Gubbins?'

On being told that Stanley Gubbins and the rest of RASIP are stuck in their offices due to a security problem, he sighs a deep and gusty sigh, one that conveys fatalistic acceptance that once more, humanity has failed and he must again shoulder the burden.

'Fine. Wonderful, in fact. Having their brains eaten by demons might improve RASIP. Anyway, this is Geoffrey Piper from GCHQ. Say hello, Mr. Piper.'

Interrogating Geoffrey

Geoffrey Piper is a 28-year old analyst from GCHQ and he knows that his career is hanging by a very, very slender thread. He will do anything to get that laptop back and save himself from an embarrassing scandal.

His recollection of events is as follows: He left the Laundry's New Annex at 10:45am and hailed a black cab from outside. The cabbie regaled him with insider gossip on the reshuffle, the state of the economy, internal geopolitics and how the Illuminati were really to blame for everything before dropping him off at Admiralty Arch. The cab driver was a white male, around 40 or so years old, with a shaved head and a Cockney accent. Geoffrey cannot recall the cab's number or the driver's name.

The taxi dropped him off sometime after 11:00am and he realised the laptop was gone almost immediately.

He definitely had the laptop when he got into the cab. It was in a shoulder satchel.

Laptop Security: The laptop is password-protected with a strong password. If you enter the wrong password three times in succession, it displays a glyph that devours the mind of anyone who sees it. There is a background application on the laptop that automatically connects to the internet if there is a wifi signal within range and 'calls home' to the Laundry. As soon as the laptop is switched on, it should

inform the Laundry of its current location. (To be precise, it will contact RASIP.)

The Laptop's Contents: The laptop is used for presentations—it is a shiny widescreen media centre machine, with a remote control and really big speakers. The presentation due to be given to the minister is the only thing on the laptop—the laptop was prepared by the Laundry's readiness section, RASIP, especially for this presentation. The laptop's contents would be of interest to any other OCCINTEL group, not to mention rivals in the intelligence community, criminals, cultists and anyone else who knows about the Laundry.

Investigations by Phone

The initial investigations will be probably be made by phone; the characters have Angleton's backing and are calling from the heart of government, so they can expect swift co-operation from any official group they contact. (In game terms, +20% bonus to Status and Persuade.)

Calling Lost and Found: Any items lost in a London taxicab are supposed to be handed in to the Lost and Found office eventually. If the characters phone this office, they are told that no laptops have been handed in this morning but their helpful contact points out that the driver might not have contacted Lost and Found yet. She also suggests contacting the Public Carriage Office.

Calling the Public Carriage Office: The Public Carriage Office is the authority in charge of licensing and monitoring taxicabs in London. Without a taxi number, though, they cannot be of much help. There are nearly 20,000 licensed taxis in London; a sizable proportion of those are driven by balding white men. The PCO promises to look into the matter and will contact the characters if they track down the cab.

Calling the Police: The police can also only offer limited help. They cannot stop and search every taxi in Central London but promise to circulate a description of the driver and to look for the missing satchel. They will report any findings to the characters.

Calling the Laundry: If the characters think to call the New Annex, the desk clerk confirms that a Mr. Piper signed out one Laundry laptop at 10:30am this morning. It has been a busy morning but he seems to remember that Mr. Piper was talking to someone when he was signing out the laptop.

The Receipt

Clever players may think of asking for the receipt from the taxi journey. Checking it gets the registration number of the taxi driver, which the characters can use to find the taxi via the Public Carriage Office. A Streetwise roll also lets a character notice that the 'extras' on the fare is higher than normal, implying that there was a second passenger for at least some of the journey.

Investigations by CCTV

Ah, the benefits of the modern surveillance state. There are four relevant sections of CCTV footage.

At The Laundry's New Annex: Retrieving this footage requires either contacting the Laundry by phone, or logging in remotely to the security database if the characters have clearance. The security camera at the front entrance of the New Annex clearly shows Piper walking out the front door at 10:45am, carrying the laptop satchel. He walks out alone. Several other people enter and leave the building at the same time. Later on, once the characters know what Diane Renne looks like, they recognise her as one of the people on the video. She leaves the New Annex two minutes before Piper (she told him that she needed to grab a cup of takeaway coffee and that he should hail a cab and pick her up at the end of the street).

On The Road #1: If the characters make a successful Status roll and wait for the police to put the footage together, or head down to Scotland Yard (15 minutes' walk away) and flash Warrant Cards about, they can trace the path of the taxi through London from the New Annex to Admiralty Arch. There are two notable events during this journey. Firstly, the taxi is trailed all the way by a red van. Tracing the license plate shows that the van was stolen in Brighton this morning. (The van is being driven by the criminals hired to 'steal' the laptop.)

On The Road #2: Secondly, a short time after leaving the New Annex, the cab stops and a figure gets out. The figure is obviously using a magical cloak of invisibility, as the camera shows only a fuzzy, distorted image, probably a level two or three Entropy effect. The figure is not carrying the laptop satchel—it is clearly visible inside the vehicle on the camera footage as the figure leaves the taxi. (This figure is Diane Renne, leaving the taxi after geasing the driver and Piper.)

If they didn't get hold of the taxi's details from the receipt, the characters can get the taxi's licence plate number from this video and use that to trace the taxi.

At Admiralty Arch: A security camera overlooking the Mall clearly shows the taxi dropping Piper off for his meeting. The taxi then drives off. Strangely, although several people try hailing the taxi, the driver ignores them and zooms off, closely followed by that same red van.

Sorcery

There are several ways to use magic to find the missing laptop.

Sympathetic Magic: A Level 1 spell can track the missing laptop, if the characters have a sympathetic link to it—and Piper can be used as such a link. Signing the laptop out created a bond between him and his charge, so the characters can zero in on it with a spell. This lets the characters track the laptop to the suburb of West Dulwich.

LOST & FOUND

Truth Geas: A Truth Geas can be used to enhance memory recall. If the characters put Piper under such a geas, then he can recall a lot more of the journey. He can recount the taxi driver's conversation with him, word for word. He can remember the taxi number. He can remember the insulting graffiti on the 'no smoking' sticker, the number of pockets on the laptop satchel and the number of times the taxi stopped at red lights.

He can also remember that he is *not* to remember the person who was in the taxi with him. He remembers that he is *not* to remember anything about this person and neither is the taxi driver. And he can remember that he is *not* to remember deliberately leaving the laptop in the taxi, as per the orders given to him by the person he is not to remember. It is obvious that pushing this line of enquiry will result in Piper's brain getting fried—someone has already put a magic whammy on him. A careful exorcism by a trained psychologist might be able to unwind the geas from Piper's mind but that will take time.

The Game's Afoot

Once the characters trace the taxi's registration number or license plate, and pass this information onto the police or the Public Carriage Office, then they are told that the taxi in question is driven by a Mr. Tom Foley and that it is in West Dulwich, where the driver has just reported a robbery. Alternatively, the characters can use magic to track the laptop, which also brings them to the taxi in West Dulwich.

3. Mysteries in a Black Cab

West Dulwich is a sleepy little suburb of London but it has its dark alleyways and dangerous corners just like anywhere else. You find the taxi in one of these alleyways. There is a police car nearby, its strobes flooding the alleyway with blue light. The taxi driver is leaning against the side of his car, giving a statement to two police officers.

Talking to the police gets the characters an overview of what happened here. The taxi driver was hailed from the side of the street but when he pulled over to pick up the fare, two other young men ran out of the alleyway and tried to steal the car. They were armed with crowbars and baseball bats; they prised open the passenger door and stole something off the back seat. They also smashed the front window but the driver managed to fight them off and escape.

Interviewing the Driver

The driver, Tom Foley, is shaken and confused. He has been a London cabbie for 15 years and he has never been attacked like that. They were brutal, vicious thugs who put him in fear for his life. He thinks at least one of them was Eastern European. After attacking his taxi and breaking into the back seat, they fled down this alleyway. He considered going after them but called the police instead.

If asked why he drove from Central London down to Dulwich (about six kilometres as the crow flies but the

crow does not have to deal with London traffic), Foley is confused. He has absolutely no idea why he is so far outside the city centre. He did not have a fare on board. The players should realise that this is the result of a geas.

Foley cannot remember there being anything on the back seat but he could have sworn that the thieves stole something from there.

If the characters ask about a red van, Foley does remember seeing a red van following him and he heard what sounded like a van taking off from the far end of the alleyway. Maybe the attackers had their van waiting at the end of the alleyway?

Searching the Taxi

Conducting a quick search of the taxi allows the characters to turn up three clues.

Firstly, on the floor of the taxi is the remote control for the laptop, which fell out of the satchel when it was grabbed. This is a much better sympathetic link than Piper and can be used to guide the characters through the use of magic to the actual laptop.

Secondly, tucked behind a seat cushion is a small piece of card, like a business card. Drawn on the front of the card is a magical symbol that swirls and shifts in an unnatural manner. The characters' wards are triggered by the symbol—it is a mind-warping fractal. It devours memories. Tom Foley and Geoffrey Piper would be incapable of remembering the person who showed them this card. The card is powered by the user's will and its effect is nearly gone, so it must have been activated around 10:45am this morning.

Written on the back of the card is an address—the street in West Dulwich where the taxi was attacked. This address is surrounded by another geas glyph. It is clear that the driver was magically compelled to drive here by someone who knew sorcery.

Thirdly, on the floor of the cab is a single-serving packet of sugar, the sort you get with a take-away coffee. This sugar packet is in the corner and the characters find it only when carefully searching the back of the cab.

Questioning the Police

The two police officers have no useful information for the characters. It appears to them to have been an opportunistic attack, without premeditation.

Following the Trail

There is no obvious clue to follow, so all the characters can do is wander around Dunwich, looking for the mysterious attackers. After a short time, they spot the red van parked in the driveway of a nearby house. Alternatively, they can use sympathetic magic again to continue homing in on the laptop—it does not seem to be too far away.

A CALL FROM ANGLETON

At some point during this scene, the characters receive a call from Angleton. He sounds unhappy.

'The minister is unimpressed. Questions are being asked about the Laundry's security and the wolves are at my door. Certain parties are using this to force me out of Counter-Possession and I shall be looking for alternative employment by the end of the day if they have their way. Someone is pouring poison in the minister's ear. What have you found?'

When informed that the evidence suggests a deliberate conspiracy as opposed to a random theft, Angleton is bizarrely cheered. *'This sounds like an internal power play as opposed to enemy action. Good. Identify the backstabber as soon as you can. I want a head on my desk before it is my head on the minister's desk.'*

4. The Double Cross House

Number 84, Lichfield Villas is a small Victorian terraced house, backing onto an old graveyard. Even in the current depressed housing market, it is worth somewhere in the region of a quarter of a million quid...even with the walls painted that virulent shade of yellow.

Of course, the stolen van parked just outside might bring the value down slightly. But it's not all bad news—that is definitely the same van that was following the taxi.

As arranged with Gubbins, the thieves brought the laptop back here after stealing it from the taxi. According to the original plan, the thieves should leave the laptop on the kitchen table and flee before the police arrive, escaping through the graveyard to safety.

Diana Renne has altered the original plan. The three thieves have been murdered; she killed them while concealed by her cloak of invisibility. She has also planted evidence that the CD of the *Necronomicon* was in the laptop when it was stolen.

Inside the House

The house is currently for sale and was unoccupied when the thieves showed up.

The front door is locked but this can be picked or forced open. At the back, there is a small garden, divided from the graveyard by a low wall. The patio door at the back of the house is closed but unlocked; it opens into the dining room. There is a large and very obvious shoe print in the middle of the patio, a big muddy man-sized print pointing away from the house. See Fingerprints and Footprints, page 34.

On the ground floor, a hallway leads from the front of the house to the kitchen. Doors lead off the corridor to the living room, a bathroom and the dining room. Upstairs, there are two small bedrooms.

The whole place was redecorated in an attempt to sell it; there are no personal touches or mementos anywhere and no furniture bar the bare minimum. A smell of burnt coffee pervades the house.

The Bodies

The characters find the first body in the hallway by the front door; there are two more corpses in the kitchen. All three were killed by a single gunshot to the chest or head. The two in the kitchen appear to have been carrying weapons (a baseball bat and a crowbar, respectively, are found near their bodies).

Searching the bodies turns up no wallets or money, suggesting they were hastily robbed after being shot. The three victims match the description given by the taxi driver of the men who attacked him. SAN Loss for finding the corpses is 0/1D3.

There is a coffee machine running on the countertop, with four coffee-stained cups in front of it.

Laptop of Doom

The stolen laptop is in the living room, on the table facing the door. The CD drive tray is open. The laptop is currently displaying its screensaver—a potent soul-sucking glyph. A character who sees the glyph must roll on the Resistance table, pitting his POW against the laptop's POW of 14. Fail and you are a drooling moron (INT 0) until the Laundry pours your brains back in your ear. It is a Class Two Offensive Ward, so a Class Two Defensive Ward can protect you for a while.

Cancelling the screensaver brings up the desktop screen. It is currently showing a .pdf scan of a medieval Latin, *wormiusnecro.pdf*. A quick check of the computer shows that it recently had a CD-ROM disk in its drive and that CD contained dozens of scanned occult tomes, together with Laundry commentaries and discussion documents. Some of those books are available on file-sharing sites but others contain enough genuine sorcery to be dangerous. This CD is definitely restricted and should not be on the loose. Having it outside a secure Laundry facility is problematic; three corpses and a stolen laptop constitutes a definite security breach.

LOST & FOUND



Searching for Clues

A quick search of the house turns up a few potential clues. Searching the red van is less productive.

The Coffee Cups: There are only three people here but four coffee cups. This suggests that there was a fourth person—possibly, the same person who murdered the other three and stole the CD.

The Satchel: The satchel that contained the laptop is on the floor. It is an unremarkable courier bag, with a few pens stuffed in the front pocket and a sheet of paper noting that this laptop was prepared by RASIP for the purposes of displaying a briefing and that using it for personal web-surfing, installing any other software on it, connecting it to the internet or anything else means RASIP will no longer take responsibility for its contents. The satchel also has a few sticky spots on it—paranoid players may think it is blood but it is actually dried coffee.

Fingerprints and Footprints: There are no fingerprints visible with a cursory examination. There is one nice big footprint right in the middle of the patio and another in the mud. These prints were apparently made by a large man (in fact, they were made by Diana Renne using a man's shoe to throw the Laundry onto the wrong trail).

The Red Van: Is a stolen red van. Nothing out of the ordinary.

5. Blue Light Special

Let's recap the plan for a moment. Stanley Gubbins arranged for the laptop to be stolen. His plan is to let Angleton wither in the scornful gaze of the minister, then 'recover' the laptop and save the day, lining himself up neatly to take Angleton's job after the inquiry. To ensure plausible deniability, he needs to have a neutral witness present when his agent, Diana Renne, recovers the laptop. Therefore, he contacted the police and gave them the location of the laptop. The plan was for the thieves to run off moments before the police arrived, leaving the laptop for Renne to 'recover'.

Renne arrived there early, shot the thieves and removed the CD that she had planted earlier. She then loitered outside, invisible, until the police showed up.

Assuming that the Player Characters are in the house, read the following:

Blue strobe lights flood in through the window and you hear the screech of tires from outside, then running footsteps. You've got three corpses at your feet and the police are at the door. What do you do?

Let the players decide what to do—they can justifiably claim that they found the bodies, or just flash Warrant Cards. Knowing the planning ability of some players, they might panic and run, or start shooting, or do something monumentally stupid like turn the corpses into zombies and pretend that everything is fine. After

FROM POWERPOINT IT DEVOURS

The characters may check out the PowerPoint presentation that was supposed to be shown to the Minister. It is mostly a dull recitation of figures and acronyms, organisational charts and schedules that bear little resemblance to any sort of reality. Buzzwords float across the screen like jettisoned debris from a management seminar; apparently, in the years to come, the Laundry will provide 'dynamic cohesion' and 'take focus in upskilling stakeholders in post-event priority management' while deploying 'multifaceted strategies to secure BAU in key sectors post EOTWAWKI'.

There is one interesting slide towards the end, which discusses RASIP's recommended weapons against the End Of The World As We Know It. This is Handout #2.

their moment of panic, Diana Renne shows up to put her plan into action. If the characters are still in the house, then Renne walks in, flashes her ID at the police and takes charge. If the characters left the house, then she tracks them down wherever they flee to.

Meet Diana Renne

Diana Renne, secret agent—the name conjures up images of a cat-suited Avenger or James Bond femme fatale but the reality is a short, mousy brunette with thick glasses and an upturned nose. She is dressed in a green rain coat over a sensible skirt and very sensible shoes and she has got a large shapeless handbag hanging from her shoulder. She seems on edge.

‘What the hell are you doing here?’ she snaps.

Call for Idea rolls from any players who looked at the Laundry CCTV footage; if successful, then they recognise Renne as being someone vaguely familiar. They have seen her somewhere recently but cannot quite place her face.

The presence of the PCs complicates Renne’s schemes immensely. She cannot wait for Gubbins to bring Angleton down, not with the PCs present. She has to adapt. Renne’s goal in this scene is to get the characters to work out that Gubbins was responsible, so she can turn the PCs against her boss. Her new plan is to send the PCs after Gubbins, in the hope that RASIP’s defences can take the PCs down.

When playing Renne, try to stay one step ahead of the players by having them underestimate you. Give the impression that Renne is a semi-clueless bureaucrat, not a semi-clueless bureaucrat with a cloak of invisibility and sociopathy. If they have not picked up on the clues that the laptop theft was an inside job then have Renne lead them through the deductive process.

Renne’s Version of Events

Renne claims that her boss at RASIP, Stanley Gubbins, told her that he had managed to locate the laptop thanks to a security program installed by RASIP and that she should meet with the police at an address in West Dulwich. He ordered her not to tell anyone about the mission and to bring the laptop straight back to him. He also told her that the police *had* to be present when she found the laptop but that they should not be allowed to examine it. It all seemed a bit odd to her but she is not one to question orders.

Diana Renne, Treacherous Double Agent

STR 10 CON 12 SIZ 9 INT 15 POW 16 DEX 13 CHA 10 EDU 16 SAN 50 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Silenced Glock-17 40%, damage 1d10 Pepper Spray 60%, damage 1 point + blindness.

Artefacts: Cloak of Invisibility, Class Two Ward, Kinetic Binding Amulet (10 points), Necronomiphone.

Skills: Bureaucracy 60%, Caffeine Addiction 45%, Command 30%, Disguise 40%, Fast Talk 50%, Insight 40%, Knowledge (occult) 40%, Spot 45%, Sorcery 40%.

She also draws the characters’ attention to the missing CD. It looks as though Gubbins left the CD in the drive by accident, which is a horrible breach of security. She will have to have words with her boss about that, once they are finished dealing with his attempt to disgrace the head of CPU by faking the theft of a laptop.

If the characters suggest pursuing the CD thief, then Renne tells them to leave that with her. She guesses that the criminals who Gubbins hired to steal the laptop turned on each other and that one murdered his compatriots and fled with the CD. She will pursue this line of investigation (this is, of course, a lie; Renne killed the criminals, and has the CD in her handbag; she just wants to get the PCs chasing after Gubbins).

Renne suggests that the next step should be to confront Gubbins directly, at the RASIP office.

Phone Consultations

Calling Angleton: When the characters call Angleton, he sounds like he is waiting in line for the hangman.

‘Gentlemen, you’re late. The minister is in an urgent phone call with someone and the half of the conversation I can overhear does not sound positive for my continuing employment in Counter-Possession. This displeases me. What news from the front?’

Once informed of Gubbins’ betrayal, Angleton guesses that Gubbins is the person talking to the minister on the phone. He cannot walk in and accuse Gubbins, not without proof. He tells the characters to get over to RASIP and wring a confession out of Stanley Gubbins immediately.

Calling Gubbins: If the characters opt to try to raise gubbins directly by phone, they find that it goes directly to an answer machine. Gubbins must be on a call. They are, of course, welcome to leave him a message!

6. The RASIP Offices

The Department of Readiness Assessment and Social Integrity Planning occupies one wing of what was a Victorian insane asylum that was bought by the Laundry a few years ago. Yes, they’ve heard all the jokes.

It’s an impressive building, if you like exotic forms of mould, lead-based paint and more twisted gargoyles than you probably want on a hospital. Two of the wings are still being renovated, but RASIP

BLACK BAG JOBS

has been operating out of the East Wing for four years now. The thought of Laundry cubicles in a padded cell cuts a little too close to the bone.

There's a sign taped to the inside of the door. On the top, there's a glyph that makes it unreadable to anyone without a Warrant Card, and underneath it reads the disturbing message, 'DUE TO A POSSIBLE FAILED BINDING, RASIP OFFICES ARE SHUT. CONTACT THE SWITCHBOARD FOR OTHER BUSINESS.'

Stepping inside, the place stinks of fresh paint overlaying mildew. There's a receptionist zombie behind the front desk. 'Closed...' it moans at you. 'There is... problem... Look at sign. Go away.'

If the characters ask to see Gubbins, the zombie picks up a phone and stares at it. There is a Post-It note on the handset saying 'DO NOT USE'. The zombie puts the phone back down. The characters can either grab the phone (it is a direct-line to Gubbins' office) or peel off the note and get the zombie to call for them.

Once the characters manage to contact Gubbins, they get to have a nice chat with the head of RASIP. Initially, he tries to fob them off with excuses (*'there are demons loose in the building, I'm on the phone to the Minister, go away'*) but as soon as the characters make it clear that they know about his scheme to discredit Angleton, then Gubbins loses the plot entirely.

'I'd hoped that it wouldn't come to this. Angleton should have retired years ago, damn it. I shouldn't have had to force him out... and I shouldn't have to kill you, either. Oh well.

You'll never leave here alive, you fools. This is a designated Regional Seat of Government, you know. We take our security seriously here. Die!

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to get back to my phone call.'

In his office, Gubbins activates the building's security systems. The doors slam shut and lock and magical wards prevent anyone from breaking through. The whole place is suddenly transformed into a fortress and the PCs are locked inside.

From down the corridor, the PCs hear the sound of moaning.

The East Wing

The RASIP Offices occupy three floors of the East Wing of the old asylum. All three floors have the same general layout—a long corridor with a staircase at either end. The staircase near the entrance lobby is under construction and cannot be used, so the characters will have to travel along the ground floor corridor to get to the back stairs. A dozen small rooms—former patient cells—open off the long corridor. These cells have been converted into offices for the building's modern inmates without losing a bit of their charm or comfort.

WE ARE NOT ALONE...

Diana Renne is following the PCs, concealed behind her cloak of invisibility. She wants to make sure that they do not eliminate Gubbins until he has toppled Angleton. She too is trapped within the RASIP building. She will follow invisibly behind the Player Characters as they move through the building.

Call for Sense and Listen checks every so often; a player who gets a Special Success either hears Renne moving nearby, or smells the fresh coffee that she bought en route.

There are also four larger rooms on each level—these were formerly kitchens, laundries, day-rooms, libraries, doctor's surgeries and so on. These have been converted and repurposed into laboratories or (on the third floor) Gubbins' office.

The whole building has been rewired to support the Laundry's computing needs, so CAT-5 cabling has been punched through the Victorian brickwork and there are network ports in every power socket. There are also two security cameras along each corridor and one in each stairwell.

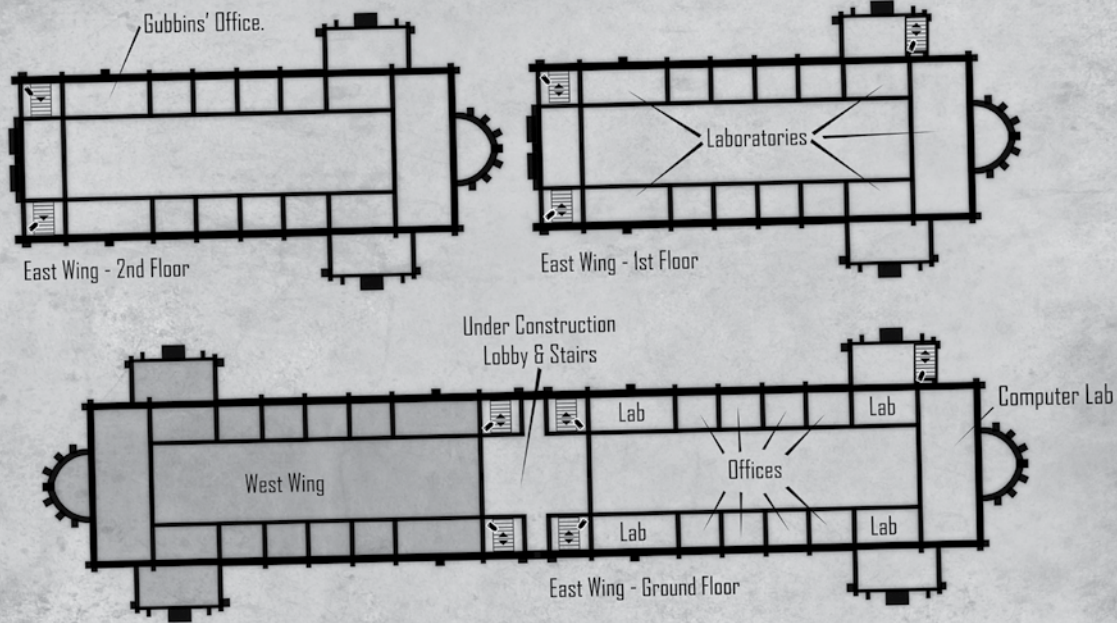
Despite all the upgrades and renovations, they have managed to retain the crumbling brickwork, the unnatural chills and the sense of despair. Indeed, the sense of despair has been lovingly restored to its original state.

Ground Floor: Zombies

The first wave of defence is your traditional pack of residual human resources. Zombies. You cannot go wrong with zombies and RASIP has lots of zombies. These particular zombies are part of a project called GRAVE ALLOTMENT, which is looking into the possibility of preserving human society after CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN by using zombie labour. After all, once the Great Old Ones wipe out most of us, the survivors will have lots of corpses. May as well put the lazy buggers to work. So, marching down the corridor towards the characters are a dozen zombies armed with a variety of basic farm implements. Hoes, shovels, rakes, scythes and so on. They are all dressed in boiler suits that make them look like a bunch of decaying beekeepers.

The shambling zombies move slowly and are about as agile as a drunken three-legged race contestant, so the characters can dodge through the mob (fail a Dodge check, though, and you will get torn apart by inhumanly-strong zombie

RASIP Offices



labourers.) Alternatively, strongly presenting a Warrant Card can slow the monsters down.

The larger rooms on this level are a horticultural laboratory that opens out into a small walled garden behind the asylum, used for zombie training, and a cafeteria.

1st Floor: SCORPION Stairs

Once the characters get past the zombies, then Gubbins uploads SCORPION STARE to the security cameras in the building. As a safety measure, lights flash on any active camera when the program is activated. Anyone standing in

Zombies

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	POW	HP	Damage Bonus
#1	15	13	13	6	1	13	+1D4
#2	14	15	11	5	1	13	+0
#3	15	13	14	5	1	14	+1D4
#4	15	19	18	3	1	19	+1D6
#5	19	13	13	4	1	13	+1D4
#6	13	16	13	4	1	15	+1D4
#7	18	15	11	7	1	13	+1D4
#8	21	16	14	4	1	15	+1D6
#9	16	15	16	6	1	16	+1D4
#10	17	14	10	3	1	12	+1D6
#11	20	16	14	5	1	15	+1D6
#12	20	18	10	6	1	14	+1D6

Weapons: Claw 30%, damage 1d3+damage bonus.

Armour: None but impaling weapons do one point of damage and all others do half damage.

Skills: Gardening 30%, Shamble Forward 50%.

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view of the cameras in the stairwell or in the corridors gets flash-fried by the basilisk effect.

If the characters do not notice the flashing lights, their first clue that the SCORPION STARE is running comes when the paint on the stairs bubbles and blackens and the 'no smoking' sticker begins to smoke.

The characters need only make it past the three cameras on the stairwell. Due to the design of the stairwell, the cameras have to swing back and forth to cover each floor. It is possible for a brave character to run forward when the camera is pointed away from him, hide in the blind spot *under* the camera and then run up the stairs again when the camera looks the other way. Miss-time that and you will get hit by SCORPION STARE.

Timing a run correctly requires a successful Difficult (½) Agility roll. If the character fails, he gets hit by the Basilisk effect (6D6 damage). Alternatively, the characters can shoot out the cameras, cut the power cables or find some other clever way of getting past them.

There are two more cameras in the second floor corridor. Again, these swivel back and forth, so a character can run along this corridor and hide in the mercifully deep doorways to avoid being incinerated. Alternatively, instead of darting door-to-door, the characters can just ignore this corridor and keep going up the staircase.

If they do explore this corridor, then the larger rooms on this level contain a computer laboratory (where there are a dozen laptops identical to the stolen one) and a geas research lab, full of weird symbols and countless cages of brainwashed mice.

2nd Floor: Social Integration

This level is mostly offices. At the far end of the corridor is Gubbins' nice large director's office. The door is open and the characters can hear his voice echoing down the corridor. *'Yes, minister, I understand your concerns, but I must reiterate... yes... well, I would advocate a reorganisation... I'm sure the Board will listen to your opinion...yes...'* interspersed with grunts and the sound of heavy items being dragged across the floor.

Whilst the Player Characters were fighting their way past zombies and security cameras, Gubbins was putting the time to productive use. One of the projects being evaluated by RASIP is the Social Integrity Geas—effectively, a giant mind-control weapon. The theory is that when the brain-eating horrors arrive, serious civil servants with extremely stiff upper lips will strap on these Social Integrity Generators and shelter the vulnerable minds of the ordinary voter. Or, to put it another way, they will temporarily become the directors of 1,000-strong hive minds.

At least, that is the theory. Currently, it just allows the user to telepathically dominate people within line of sight, assuming that it does not blast the user's nervous system



out through his nose. Gubbins has spent the last few minutes dragging the various components of the SIG from the lab into his office and reassembling them there, so that he can telepathically enslave the PCs.

Why he did not think to just walk next door and use the SIG in situ is anybody's guess. Perhaps because he is still on the phone to Admiralty Arch and the new minister. He is, he believes, very close to convincing the minister that Angleton should be replaced as a matter of priority. Gubbins is a high-level manager. He can multitask, even when his phone is tethered to his desk.

As the characters approach, Gubbins unleashes the Social Integrity Geas.

Your vision blurs, then fractures. Suddenly, you are seeing two places at once. You are where you were but you are also standing in a plush office, surrounded by thaumaturgical gadgetry. You feel an unfamiliar weight on your upper lip as the psychic echo of a moustache sprouts there. Your hand curls around the receiver of a phantom telephone. You are Stanley Gubbins and Stanley Gubbins is you.

'Social Integrity!' he shouts at you from an office down the hall. 'We'll keep society intact if we have to lash the proles together. You are slaves to my will now! ... no, minister, I don't mean you. I was talking to my staff.'

Gubbins orders the characters to kill each other by whatever means they have. If they are armed, wonderful—blast away! Otherwise, he psychically compels the characters to beat their co-workers to death with office equipment, stationery, or whatever else they find to hand. The Social Integrity Geas is a Class Three effect—characters with a Class Four Ward are immune, while those with Class Three Wards must make a Luck roll each round to prevent their wards being overwhelmed.

Fighting The Geas: The characters cannot easily resist the compulsion. They must attempt to make lethal attacks on each other. However, Gubbins can only compel them to do one thing at a time and Player Characters can multitask too. They can still talk to each other and perform other actions as long as such actions are combined with attempted murder. For example, a character could shoot a gun at a fellow PC while also typing commands on a keyboard, or run a magic app on his Necronomiphone.

Stanley Gubbins, Head of RASIP

STR 12 CON 10 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 10 DEX 12 CHA 14 EDU 17 SAN 40 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: None.

Artefacts: Social Integrity Generator.

Skills: Bargain 50%, Bureaucracy 70%, Command 40%, Computer Use (magic) 40%, Knowledge (politics) 30%, Sorcery 40%, Stay Focused On The Telephone 65%.

RENNE'S OFFICE

During the struggle with Gubbins, the Player Characters may spot Diana Renne's name on the office next to the director's office. Renne's office is piled high with unfiled papers and coffee cups—she has a crippling caffeine addiction—but if anyone searches through the pile, they find a pair of enchanted goggles. These are the counterpart to Renne's cloak of invisibility (every cloak has a matching set of goggles, after an embarrassing incident where a dozen invisibility cloaks were lost because someone put them down somewhere and no-one could see them).

An especially strong-willed character *might* be able to resist the compulsion (it has an effective POW of 18), but this is not a reliable tactic.

If a character can make it to Gubbins' office, he finds Stanley standing on the desk, surrounded by the bizarre paraphernalia—binding circles, bomb calorimeters packed with voting leaflets, flags and other symbols of patriotism linked by cables, eldritch runes projected by laser pointers. Stanley is clutching the phone and talking to the minister.

The geas can be ended by cutting the power, destroying the equipment or distracting Stanley so much that he cannot concentrate. Stanley will command any characters who get too close to go away but he can only give one command at a time—ordering the Player Characters to leave means that the murder command is overwritten.

Gubbins and The Minister: While the characters are stumbling around half-heartedly murdering each other, Stanley continues his pitch to the minister.

Play this for farce—this climatic combat scene involves a middle-aged bureaucrat standing on a table talking to a member of Her Majesty's government while simultaneously zapping the PCs with death spells. Gubbins will keep

BLACK BAG JOBS

talking even when bantering with the PCs, by cupping his hand over the mouthpiece. Gubbins' dual conversations are a confused jumble of magic, managerial jargon and murderous instructions, along the following lines:

'A reorganisation under RASIP, with commensurate transfer of budgetary appropriation... one moment, sir. DIE YOU BASTARDS! KILL YOURSELVES! GO TO HELL! LA! LA! CTHULHU... sorry about that, sir. As I was saying, a re-org under RASIP could bring savings of up to 12% per annum...'

Gubbins' focus on the telephone can be his undoing. If the characters manage to distract him, or to ruin his pitch to the minister, then his concentration collapses and the geas field dissipates. Once this happens, Gubbins knows the game is up and surrenders to the characters. He is confident he will be able to talk his way out of trouble at some later time.

Sadly (for him), he is mistaken. As soon as Gubbins surrenders, move onto the next section...

7. Lost and Found

There is a gunshot and Gubbins' head jerks back. He collapses to the floor, blood gushing from the neat hole that just got punched in his forehead.

'God, that was satisfying' says a disembodied voice. 'I was just going to frame him with that missing CD, but shooting him in the face... I think I need a cigarette.'

It is Diana Renne, or at least her voice. You cannot see her.

'Now, what are we to do with you? Angleton's brave boys... I think that will work, yes. You broke in here on Angleton's orders and murdered heroic Stanley Gubbins, in retaliation for him revealing the scope of CPU's incompetence. CPU gets cut, RASIP takes over... but who will run RASIP? Could it be Stanley Gubbins' right hand woman, the eternally overlooked but very competent Ms. Renne? Why yes. Yes it will be.'

Try not to bleed too much on the carpet as you die, please.'

Diane Renne is armed with a silenced Glock 17. She has also got a Cloak of Invisibility (Level Three Entropic effect) and a Kinetic Binding amulet (Level 10; 10 points of protection). She also has a can of pepper spray to deal with anyone who grabs her. She has plenty of ammunition but not much patience—she wants the characters dead as quickly as possible.

Fighting the Invisible: Ranged attacks on Renne automatically miss unless the characters know roughly where she is. Even then, attack skills are reduced to 1/5th normal.

Melee attacks on Renne are all Difficult (½ normal skill) if the character can get a grip on her. She will use her pepper spray on any foes that grapple her.

The invisibility effect can be dispelled with a Level Three Exorcism spell; a Level Two Srying spell will not pierce the invisibility but can reveal Renne's location.

There is also the Social Integrity Generator—a character can push Gubbins' corpse out of the invocation circle and take his place, then give Renne an order to drop her gun or deactivate the invisibility cloak. (Characters using the SIG will also be giving orders to any of their colleagues in line of sight, affording ample opportunity for mischief and mishap.)

Take Cover: The gun battle takes place in the corridors and offices; there are plenty of doors and desks to hide behind (giving 2–3 points of armour against Renne's attacks). Renne knows this office very well indeed, so hiding from her is not an option for long.

Aftermath

.....
The security systems of the RASIP building are still in force, until someone with the authority to deactivate the wards arrives. Angleton promises to get someone down from Head Office with a Letter of Release.

As soon as Gubbins gets off the phone with Admiralty Arch (or rather, the call is unexpectedly terminated), Angleton stalks into the meeting with the minister like the mummy emerging from its tomb and puts the Laundry bureaucracy back in order. All that remains is to assemble the evidence that Gubbins was responsible for stealing the laptop in the first place, then present this evidence to the minister. The characters are trapped in a building full of laptops with PowerPoint installed—it should be the work of mere minutes for them to knock a presentation together for Angleton to show the minister...

Status: Successfully completing this mission increases Status by 1d4%. If the characters somehow fail and Angleton is (temporarily) reduced in influence, then the characters' Status drops by 2d4%.

Sanity: No changes.

Player Handouts

Handout #1—Official Government Agenda

LAUNDRY/RASIP OVERVIEW BRIEFING

PPS: Damien Holt, MP

LO: S. Gubbins + staff

11am–12.30 pm, Briefing Room 4A.

1. Invocation of Naash-Yet and Blessing of Thoth, Keeper of Secrets.
2. Introductory briefing.
3. CNG overview.
4. Civilian impact.
5. Countermeasures and Emergency Planning.
6. Dismissal of Naash-Yet.
7. Tea, Coffee, Sandwich Selection.

Handout #2—Powerpoint Document

RECOMMENDED COUNTERMEASURES

1. SCORPION STARE

- Turns any CCTV camera into look-to-kill weapon.
- UK already has highest CCTV density in world.
- Proven to be effective on any carbon-based life form.

Not all targets are vulnerable.

2. EMERALD JAVELIN

- Missile-deployed banishing grid.
- Still in testing but early results are promising.
- Multiple potential vectors (air, sea, shoulder-launched).

Limited by production and cost.

3. REFUGES

- Reactivation of Regional Government Headquarters Plan (1979).
- Custom-built and renovated bunkers.
- 1% of population can be sheltered for up to six months.

Other refuge options are being discussed.

LOST & FOUND

Handout #2 (cont.)

.....

4. GRAVE ALLOTMENT

- Use of residual resources.
- Would enable food production and other basic services to continue during crisis.
- Could possibly be expanded into local government, etc.
- Very 'green' solution—uses 'waste product'.

Downsides: legal issues, horror of the walking dead.

5. SOCIAL INTEGRITY

- Mass command geas.
- Sublimates will of general populace to select few.
- Leaders would be trained to remain sane during crisis.
- Possible ethical issues.

Alternative: pangloss geas.

6. ????

- Ongoing research likely to bear fruit.
- Joint efforts with European partners.

Other efforts.



KAFIRISTAN

*'He wants to know if you are gods.'
'Not gods—Englishmen. The next best thing.'*

—The Man Who Would Be King

In the north-east of Afghanistan, high in the mountains of the Hindu Kush, is the province of Nuristan. The name means 'the land of the Enlightened Ones'. It was given this new name in the 19th century, after the forced conversion of the native population to Islam. Before that, it had another name, Kafiristan—'the land of infidels'.

Afghanistan is a notoriously dangerous country. Two great empires, the British and the Soviets, tried and failed to conquer it and now a third empire is bogged down in another Afghan war, a war of guerillas in the hills and alliances between petty tribal warlords. The Great Game lives on into the 21st century.

The Politics of Nuristan

Nuristan is mostly dominated by the resurgent anti-American forces—the Taliban who once ruled central Afghanistan, al-Qaeda and Hezb-e-Islami, who are united by their opposition to the coalition forces. The province is known for its fierce warriors, such as the Kom tribe, and was at the forefront of the war against the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Many of the Taliban's soldiers come from Nuristan. The Nuristani themselves are respected all over Afghanistan and traditionally occupy high places in government.

Breaking the enemy's hold on Nuristan would be a significant victory for the coalition forces operating in Afghanistan. Drone attacks and patrols from Kabul and forward bases can only accomplish so much—the coalition needs boots on the ground in the province and for that to happen they need allies. Just like the British diplomats and adventurers in the 19th century, there are SIS spies in the Hindu Kush, searching for tribal warlords who can be bribed to switch sides.

In Alga Akhan, they may have found their man. This warlord rules a distant valley in the heights of Do Aab district and his village of Katala could be an ideal staging area for counterattacks against insurgent forces. The SIS are very close to sealing the deal with Alga Akhan.

Ancient History

Before there was a Laundry, before evidence of the supernatural was related to the restricted stacks and the funny papers, the British Government collected a wealth of documentation on the curious practices of all those

benighted foreigners and subjects. One curious element of Kafir culture was the existence of the 'pshur', a mystic who would become possessed by spirits or gods on occasion. These pshurs were fortune-tellers and oracles; some were alleged capable of superhuman feats of strength or speed.

Most of these pshurs were charlatans or madmen but those associated with the cult of the god Sanru seemed to have genuine supernatural powers, according to a suppressed report written by George Scott Robertson. On the strength of this report, two more British explorers returned to Kafiristan in search of the secrets of Sanru but they never returned. Before further investigations could be carried out, Kafiristan was conquered and the Sanru cult apparently eradicated, leaving behind only a few carved symbols.

One of these symbols is tattooed onto the neck of Alga Akhan. There is a possibility that Alga Akhan is a cultist of Sanru. That is perfectly fine—the United Kingdom has allied itself with far worse people than cultists in the past. Who gives a damn if he is a Sanru worshipper, or Muslim, or Christian, or a Scientologist, as long as he provides troops and a secure base for the coalition? His personal beliefs are his own affair. It only becomes a problem if Alga Akhan is using the old cult sorcery.

If he has genuine magic, then that is a different matter. It brings questions like non-proliferation (one little Afghan village of cultists is not going to tip the balance but if some other local power like Pakistan got their hands on the cult's magic, they could crack the Turing-Lovecraft Theorem and start summoning Squiggly Evil) and the reliability of Akhan as an ally (private worship of Sanru is fine; sacrificing

FUN FACTS ABOUT KAFIRISTAN

Rudyard Kipling's short story, *The Man Who Would Be King*, is set in Kafiristan and was the inspiration for this adventure.

British soldiers to alien space gods is officially a bad thing). The Laundry wants to vet Akhan before they will sign off on using him as an ally.

The Undying Dreamers of Sanru

Opium has been produced in Afghanistan for thousands of years. Opium-eaters are part of their culture and opium cultivation is such an entrenched part of their economy that poppies have replaced currency in some regions. Afghanistan produces 90% of the world's illicit opium. The Taliban declared growing opium to be un-Islamic but even executing opium farmers barely put a dent in production. Since the fall of the Taliban regime, opium production has skyrocketed again, especially in the south.

While the largest poppy fields are in the southern regions, the poppy grows in many places in Afghanistan. Some strains even thrive in the high valleys of the Hindu Kush and one very special flower grows only in the valley of Katala. This is the flower that the locals call Sanru.

Those who consume the opium of Sanru are transported to a marvellous paradise, a shared dream of endless joy in a beautiful sunset city that they also call Sanru. In the embrace of Sanru, there is no pain, no hunger, no fear, nothing but pleasure. Even death is helpless before Sanru—if you die while dreaming, then your soul resides in the city forever despite the death of your body.

The priests of Katala long ago realised that if everyone was permitted the joys of Sanru, the city would be overrun with dreamers. They therefore took control of the poppy flowers. The opium is offered as a reward to those who serve the priests. A little opium lets you walk the streets of the city for a short time. The greatest reward is, of course, to smoke Sanru on one's death bed, so your soul dwells in the city forever.

The elder priests of the valley are immortal and communicate with their followers through specially prepared mystics called *psburs*. This system has endured for centuries, surviving the wars of Emir Abdur Rahman Khan, the tribal feuds of the 20th century, the Soviet invasion, the Taliban regime and the current conflict. With each war, the numbers of the living Katala dwindle and the dreams of the living are needed to sustain the immortals in the city. If all the Katala are killed, then the city will vanish.

Through their *psburs*, the undying have fostered this tentative alliance with the British with the intention of spreading the way of Sanru out of its traditional seat in Nuristan, so that they will survive the extermination of the Katala.

Mission Overview

The characters are briefed on the proposed alliance with Alga Akhan and his possible connections to the Sanru cult. After meeting with MI6, they are flown to Kabul and escorted up to the village of Katala. Officially, they are here as technical support for Carlyle, the MI6 officer who

brokered the deal with Akhan but their real mission is to search for evidence that Akhan is a cultist.

During an attack on the village, the characters learn that there may be another British citizen in the area. They make their way to a temple high in the mountains and are transported to a bizarre dream-city where they meet Dravot, a British explorer and adventurer who is trapped in the dream-city of Sanru and begs that the characters rescue him.

1. Where The Magic Happens

Sometimes, you can see the bad shit coming in advance but there is still nothing you can do about it. Take this email that just arrived, for example. On the surface, there is nothing wrong with it—just a form email from Human Resources, politely checking to make sure certain documents are in order. Do you have a valid passport? Are you inoculated against various tropical diseases? Did you pass your last medical check? All innocent on the surface... but something about the email raises your hackles. Maybe it is the passport bit—they do not send people at your pay grade abroad except to mind-numbingly dull conference meetings and suicide missions; you are not sure which is worse.

You've got mail. This time they want to know if your next of kin registration is still valid. That does not pin it down—it is either a suicide mission or a really, really boring conference.

The third email of the morning, though, may as well be titled 'RE: Bad Shit'. It is actually entitled 'Meeting 10:30 room C4' but the cc list includes someone called ventry@sis.gov.uk'

The characters are met at the meeting room by Rebecca Fairclough, of Operational Oversight, one of the Laundry's scarier sections. Operational Oversight are the people who ensure that everything goes right and pin blame when things go wrong. Although she has never done field work, Fairclough is a very dangerous woman—in the bureaucratic and budgetary turf wars within the Laundry, she is the equivalent of a hardened killer. She tells the characters to sit up straight and look professional—they have guests. She hooks her laptop up to the room's projector and curses when the ancient projector crashes. She gets the most technically-minded PC to fix it while she gives the characters a quick pre-briefing briefing.

'Back me up, no matter what I say. Don't show weakness in front of the enemy.'

A few minutes later, a trio of spooks from MI6 arrive, led by Ernest Ventry. He is wearing a suit that probably cost more than the department budget; he already has his OBE and is working on his CBE.

'So... this is where the magic happens, is it? Hello, Rebecca.'

'Ernest. Welcome to the Laundry Basket. I know it is a step down from the exalted heights of Box 850 but sometimes you have to step down from your pedestal. Shall we get down to business?'

Ventry asks who the characters are; Fairclough says they are a 'top team of analysts'. Ventry shrugs and starts the meeting.

Meet Akhan

Ventry brings up a photograph on the projector. It shows a bearded man in his mid-forties, dressed in military fatigues. He looks Greek, with a very long nose and dark eyes. He is sitting in the passenger seat of a jeep, with a rifle cradled in his hands. There are more soldiers in the background, probably Afghani militia.

'This gentleman is Alga Akhan. First came to prominence during the war against the Soviets, he then turned around and started fighting both the Taliban and Hezbe. For him to have survived is something of a miracle. He's got control of a small but strategically important bit of Nuristan Province.'

He runs through a series of tactical maps, all showing troop movements and forces that you don't quite follow but the one constant is a little patch of blue in the mountains.

'We've been courting Akhan through intermediaries since 2005 and we've finally managed to open direct dialogue with him. The bastard's not an easy man to find when he wants to stay hidden. We're nearly ready to move to phase two, establishing a forward base in the village of Katala, here.'

'However, I understand the Laundry has raised an objection.'

Rebecca Fairclough brings up another photo of Akhan. This time, he is holding a black goat by the neck as he wrestles it to the ground. He has got a curved dagger in one hand. There is a crowd of excited villagers in the background and a thick haze of smoke over them. Fairclough zooms in on Akhan's shoulder. He has a tattoo of a complex geometric shape.

'While the Laundry's primary role is domestic, and we'd never dream of stepping on SIS's toes in the normal course of events, we must be especially diligent in this case. We can't approve the use of Akhan as an asset without checking him out thoroughly, or we risk putting the troops in danger. That tattoo is associated with the Cult of Sanru, an esoteric group that was suppressed during Abdur Rahman Khan's invasion of the province in 1895.'

According to our dossiers on the Cult of Sanru, they practised animal sacrifice among other... less savoury rites. There is every possibility that Akhan here is a cultist of Sanru.

I know Mr. Ventry doesn't give a damn about Akhan's religious beliefs, and neither do I... but if he has the forbidden secrets of the elder pshurs and utahs of the cult, he may be an adept of non-computational demonology and hence fall within the Laundry's purview. I'm very sorry, Ernest, but until my analysts have thoroughly vetted Akhan, he's untouchable.'

Putting the characters on the spot: Ventry turns and puts the spotlight on the characters, asking if they agree with Fairclough's assessment. Is there more evidence than one photo of a man with a goat and a tattoo? What does it matter if Akhan is using magic? How will they assess him? The players should be able to bluff their way through; if not, then Fairclough rescues them by assuring Ventry that he will be kept in the loop during the extensive planning session that they are going to have after this meeting.

The Plan: As soon as it is clear that Fairclough will not back down, Ventry moves onto the second item of his agenda. The Laundry team will be flown to Kabul and accompany their men to Katala. There, they will help set up an advance base while vetting Akhan. Their contact in Kabul is Carlyle; he is aware that they are from the Laundry but has not signed Section III and they should not discuss occult matters with him.

Setting up the base and making the initial assessment of Akhan should take no more than a week; if all goes well, the Player Characters should spend no more than two weeks in Afghanistan.

Gunboat Bureaucracy

Characters with experience in the Laundry bureaucracy can recognise that Fairclough is deliberately impeding the MI6 operation in Afghanistan. If challenged, Fairclough admits that is exactly what she is doing but it is in the Laundry's best interest. The evidence against Akhan is very slight indeed but if he does turn out to be a cultist, then the Laundry can take credit for saving MI6 from a very embarrassing mistake. If, as is likely, he turns out to be harmless, then the mission in Nuristan still becomes a joint operation, forcing MI6 to share credit with the Laundry. It is win/win—assuming that the characters make it back alive.

Our Extensive Dossiers

Fairclough claimed the Laundry had extensive dossiers on Sanru.

It has a dossier.

Well, it has a page or two, which are reproduced as Handout #1.

Flight Plans

The characters have a budget of **30 points** to purchase weapons and equipment. While the characters will have armed escorts in any dangerous regions, firearms-qualified characters are encouraged to bring weapons with them. The weapons will be delivered to the characters at Kabul airport. The characters are also given a codephrase, EXIT BLUE NINE, which will get the attention of any British radio officer and call in an extraction team.

Ventry contacts the characters before they leave London, giving them the address and the key of a safehouse in Kabul where they will meet the SIS man on the ground, Carlyle.

The team flies from London to Dubai and then on to Kabul.

2. Foreign Junket

The approach to Kabul airport gives the characters an excellent view of the city, which seems to be two-thirds bombed-out slums to one-third construction sites. The airport is crowded with soldiers, diplomats, businessmen,

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journalists and returning refugees, as well as the usual host of beggars, thieves, drifters and thugs. A huge amount of foreign money is being pumped into this desperately poor country and a whole ecology has evolved to separate Westerners from their cash.

The characters have to get a taxi from the airport to the safehouse. A Kabul taxi-ride is an experience best compared with riding a rollercoaster during an air raid. The taxis careen through the alleyways at high speed. All the taxi drivers know the address is an MI6 safe house and take great pleasure in calling the characters 'Mr. James Bond'.

The Safe House

The safe house—well, safe apartment—is in one of the safer parts of the city, used by Western businessmen. The building was recently rebuilt, so the whole place smells of fresh paint and tries to give the impression of a productive, business-friendly, forward-looking Afghanistan. The four armed guards smoking on the front step do take away from the ambience slightly.

The safe house is apartment 8. The power is out but turning on a flashlight makes every surface start crawling. The whole place is infested with cockroaches. If the characters search the apartment, call for Spot checks. A Success turns up a false wall at the back of the main living room—this apartment is connected to the neighbouring apartment. Any characters with military experience can guess that someone blew a hole in the wall years ago during street fighting and it was never repaired when the building was renovated. A Special Success lets the characters find a cache of firearms hidden inside a false bottom of the oven.

Carlyle

The MI6 officer shows up a few minutes after the characters arrive. Dan Carlyle has been in Afghanistan since 2002 and the stress is clearly marked on his face. He is deeply tanned, unshaven and dresses like a Mujahideen. He speaks Pashto like a native and has friends in every province and village across the country. There is also a bounty on his head of several thousand dollars, an unimaginable amount for some poor boy with a rifle. For his part, Carlyle is thoroughly sick of Afghanistan. He has a family back home in England who barely remember him and he just wants to sleep some place without worrying about having his throat slit.

Carlyle, Our Man In Afghanistan

STR 14 CON 13 SIZ 15 INT 12 POW 14 DEX 11 CHA 13 EDU 16 SAN 50 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Handgun 55%, damage 1d10.

Skills: Bargain 60%, Brawl 45%, Bureaucracy 30%, Climb 60%, Cynical Bitterness 60%, Disguise 55%, Dodge 40%, Firearm (handgun) 55%, Hide 40%, Knows People Everywhere 45%, Language (Pashto) 55%, Listen 40%, Knowledge (Afghan Culture) 55%, Persuade 45%, Spot 55%.

Making an alliance with Alga Akhan is Carlyle's ticket home. If they have a solid base in Nuristan, then his network of spies and contacts will not be needed by the coalition. He can finally take some leave. He is therefore rather unhappy with anyone interfering with his plans, especially some pasty-faced technicians from a government department that he has never heard of.

Play Carlyle as impatient and paranoid. He is a good guy but the characters are standing between him and his family. He does not *want* to treat them as the enemy but they leave him no choice.

'Alright, lads? You found the place fine, I see. So, you're the fucking Laundry, are ye? Tell me—what the fuck is the Laundry?'

Once the characters have given him a suitable non-answer, he tells them to grab their gear and follow him. He opens the secret door at the back of the apartment and leads them into the next room, where there is a change of clothes. Then he brings them through a series of stairways, corridors and alleyways into the city. He is aware that everyone knows about the safe house—he spent a week spreading rumours about it—so he lets rival spies watch the safe house while he takes the characters out the back.

Finally, they arrive in a small cellar room under a cafe, where the characters can speak privately. Carlyle questions the characters about their mission and their vetting of Akhan and tries to probe about the nature of the Laundry.

The characters may have questions for Carlyle too:

What can he tell them about Akhan? *He's an odd sort. Ex-Muj, been fighting all his life. Hated the Taliban, kept fighting them even when there was no chance of beating them. He's not one to make friends easily—it took me bloody ages to get him to even admit that we could be useful to each other. Very proud.*

Has he ever seen anything unusual around Katala? *What do you mean? These people have been fighting against all comers for 30 years. It's a siege mentality. But yeah, they're odd. Lot of opium, lot of clerics. It's more like a religious compound than a village.*

What does he know about Sanru? *Sanru...sanru? Name rings a bell... can't recall where I heard it, though.*

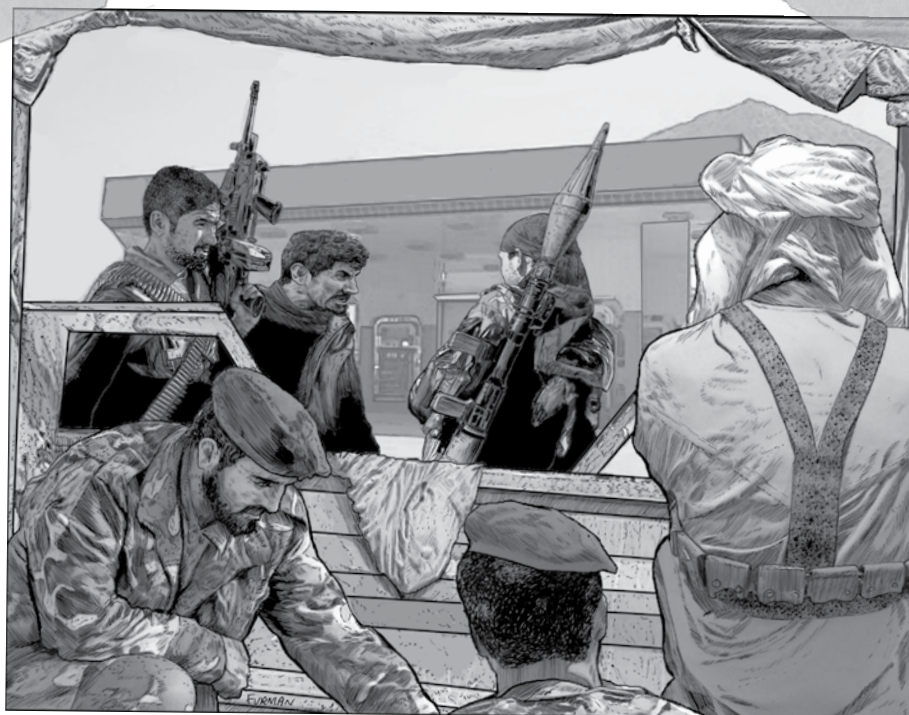
A phone rings in the cafe above, signalling to Carlyle that the convoy is ready. He brings the characters through another

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maze of streets again to a main road. Four armoured trucks come racing down the road and pull to a stop in front of the characters. Carlyle hurriedly instructs them to get onboard and the trucks take off again immediately.

On board the trucks are 20 Afghani mercenaries, none of whom speak more than a few words of English. The trucks carry the equipment that the characters will need to set up the advance base in Katala—medical supplies, a diesel electrical generator, a satellite radio, surveying tools and some construction equipment.

The mercs grin at the characters as the trucks roll into the night.



Ghulam

One of the younger mercenaries speaks some English and tries to wheedle favours and money out of the characters in exchange for acting as an interpreter. Ghulam explains that Carlyle hired them all with promises of excellent pay but few of them will live to collect it, as they are going to one of the most dangerous places in Afghanistan. The Taliban have allies over the border in Pakistan and they are strongly supported via the high passes of the Hindu Kush. Ghulam declares that he is going to stay close to the characters, because Westerners have a much better chance of

survival. They have the US Army on their side and people will come and rescue them. Or, if no-one comes, he can hand the characters over to the Taliban and they will spare his life. It's a plan with no drawbacks.

Truck Stop

The trucks keep going through the night, swapping drivers half-way through. The characters can try to sleep in the back if they wish. They stop in the mid-morning for water, food and fuel in a tiny roadhouse. Carlyle orders the characters to stay hidden, as the sight of Westerners would draw undue attention.

The Mercenaries

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	SAN	Damage Bonus
Ghulam	8	11	8	13	12	14	10	70	+0
Wakil	14	10	15	10	13	10	13	65	+1D4
#1	11	12	10	14	10	7	11	35	+0
#2	14	13	12	10	13	12	13	60	+1D4
#3	15	14	14	12	12	11	14	55	+1D4
#4	12	10	11	15	11	16	11	80	+0
#5	11	14	10	11	8	10	12	50	+0
#6	13	10	9	13	10	13	10	65	+0

Weapons: AK-47 50%, damage 1d10.

Skills: Bargain 50%, Demolition 45%, Drive 50%, Hide 45%, Language (English) 10%, Language (Pashto) 50%, Rape and Pillage 60%, Spot 55%, Stealth 60%, Strategy 40%

The heat in the back of the truck becomes sweltering. The buzz of the flies is deafening and the trucks stink of spilled diesel and rotting meat.

Through old bullet holes in the truck, the characters can see the mercenaries gathering around a half-barrel of water. They can hear raised voices; some sort of argument has blown up. A successful Insight roll (or if a character speaks some Pashto) reveals that the argument is about money. The mercenaries want more money to transport the Player Characters.

Carlyle wades into the middle of the crowd and starts shouting in Pashto. From their vantage point, the characters can see half a dozen of the mercenaries circling around behind Carlyle. Several of them are openly carrying rifles, mostly AK-47 knockoffs. The air is tense and explosive.

If the characters burst out of the truck, the six dissidents are taken by surprise. The most likely result is that they start shooting and the roadhouse turns into a spontaneous warzone. The other mercenaries return fire; in the ensuing carnage, three of the mercenaries are killed along with an innocent bystander. Carlyle is furious with the characters for disobeying his orders and blames them for the deaths. (Obviously, if the characters are able to disable the six without starting a fight, you should adjust events to match.)

If the characters stay in the truck, then Carlyle defuses the situation. The problem is that six of the mercenaries want more money and their leader is holding out for a huge amount. Carlyle dismisses the leader and concentrates on the other five, pointing out that they can have the promised amount or nothing.

Into The Mountains

After another day of driving, the convoy reaches the mountains. The drive is mostly uneventful, if you do not count the occasional rifle shot from some distant sniper. At dusk, the convoy stops once again and the cargo is transferred to a mule train. From this point on, the roads are much too dangerous. If the IEDs do not get you, the cliffs will.

The landscape becomes first breathtaking, then monotonous. The mountains of the Hindu Kush have defeated armies before and while the first soaring majestic snow-crowned peak is inspiring, the fiftieth gets a bit samey. Eventually, the characters reach Katala.

Alga Akhan, Chosen of Sanru

STR 16 CON 14 SIZ 16 INT 14 POW 13 DEX 11 CHA 16 EDU 11 SAN 30 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: AK-47 65%, damage 1d10.

Skills: Bargain 30%, Brawl 45%, Climb 70%, Command 60%, Hide 50%, Language (Pashto) 55%, Listen 60%, Stealth 60%, Strategy 50%.

3. Katala Village

You struggle up the crest of yet another stony hill and find yourself staring down into a wide valley. There are signs of farming along the valley floor, where fields of poppies wave in the sun. The village is located on a small shelf above the farms, surrounded by low stone walls and defensive entrenchments. You can also spot several ruins or older structures higher up on the far side of the valley.

Approaching the village, you spot several figures in the heights with rifles trained on you. Carlyle is leading you right into the teeth of a crossfire if this situation turns violent. The MI6 man keeps his nerve and no-one blows your brains out with a rifle slug as you enter Katala Village.

People crowd around you curiously, pulling at your clothes and shouting questions. These people are obviously malnourished and desperately poor but there's a strange vitality and confidence to the village. They carry themselves like royalty, even the poorest of them.

The crowd parts as Alga Akhan comes striding towards you. He is flanked by a pair of bodyguards and accompanied by a younger man who twitches and mutters to himself as he limps behind the warlord. Akhan embraces Carlyle, then turns to the twitching man. At a guess, he is one of the pshur mystics mentioned in the dossier. He certainly seems to ham it up, making a great show of groaning; waving his arms, speaking in different voices and rolling his eyes back up into his head. You are not sure what it all means but it appears that you are welcome to the village.

Katala Village has a population of approximately 300. Most of the houses are two-level wooden structures, with the lower level used for storage or as an animal pen. There are also a number of stone buildings, mostly storage sheds. There is a village well, but no plumbing or toilet facilities beyond a basic latrine. There is no doctor in town; the nearest medical facility is down the valley in another village, 15 kilometres away.

The Welcoming Committee

Akhan's followers show the characters to one of the stone houses, which will serve as their home. There are two armed guards outside for protection but it is not clear if they are bodyguards or jailors. Carlyle tells the characters that they are free to start work but not to do anything that might provoke the Katala tribe.

Try to keep the players on edge while they are in Katala. Keep asking them questions about their security

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Katala Warriors

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	SAN	Damage Bonus
#1	10	7	11	10	10	6	9	20	+0
#2	11	10	12	14	8	10	11	40	+0
#3	13	13	14	11	14	11	14	45	+1d4
#4	12	12	10	9	10	15	11	65	+0
#5	14	11	13	8	11	10	12	40	+1d4
#6	10	10	12	14	13	12	11	50	+0

Weapons: Old Rifle 40%, damage 1d8.

Skills: Fanatic Loyalty 60%, Hide 65%, Language (Pashto) 50%, Spot 60%, Stealth 55%, Strategy 20%.

arrangements, their movements, their attitudes towards the villagers. Make them choose between endangering the diplomatic mission and endangering themselves. Play into their suspicions and fears—if a player thinks that the Katala lured Carlyle here as a human sacrifice, then mention that every Katala carries a wickedly sharp dagger and that they seem to be treating Carlyle as a very honoured guest. If the players suspect the Katala are some sort of monstrous hybrids, like the folk of Dunwich, then make sure to describe the unexpected pale skin and piercing blue eyes of the mountain folk. For Lovecraft aficionados, drop hints about the features carved into Mount Ngranek in the Dreamlands and how those people descended from those daughters of men who danced with the gods would bear the same traits.

Setting Up

Setting up the advance base is more trouble than the characters anticipated. The equipment provided is substandard and poorly maintained. The radio needs to be rewired before it will work and the generator is extremely baulky. Setting up the base was supposed to be a simple cover for their observation of Akhan but it will actually require either a full day's work from all the Player Characters, or several day's dedicated labour by one character. Do they abandon their mission for a day, or will one character shoulder the burden?

The whole effort is watched closely by the twitching young man, Akhan's *psbur*. He is fascinated by the characters' strange behaviour. Attempting to converse with the *psbur* is difficult—he speaks no English and even his Pashto is broken and hard to follow. He appears to be suffering from some form of schizophrenia and has rapid mood swings. Ghulam can translate some of the *psbur*'s speech but the boy is just asking the same questions over and over in different ways. What are the characters doing? Why? How does that work? These questions are actually being asked by different undying priests in Sanru, who use the *psbur* as their medium for learning about the mortal world.

CRITICAL DIPLOMACY FAILURE

Players have a knack for tackling delicate situations with the grace, tact and subtlety of a herd of charging drunken elephants. When told to investigate the religious beliefs of the Katala without insulting or angering the natives, some players will hear this as 'kidnap a priest and threaten him with the sharper bits of a Leatherman multi-tool until he admits he worships something with too many angles'. If the characters do end up angering the Katala and get caught instead of ending up dead in a gully somewhere, then Akhan magnanimously does not have the characters shot. Instead, he imprisons them in the village until Carlyle finishes the negotiations. The villagers are visibly unhappy with Akhan's merciful decision but the charismatic warlord is able to enforce his will.

The characters are kept in the stone hut assigned to the Westerners, under armed guard, until the raid begins (see page 51). They can use the confusion of the raid to escape.

Investigations

The characters are here to investigate Akhan. Step one in any investigation is asking questions... anyone speak Pashto? If not, the characters can ask Carlyle or Ghulam to translate. Carlyle has a vested interest in not helping the characters, while Ghulam's grasp of English is shaky. Still, there are some avenues of investigation that the characters can pursue:

Looking around the village: The village has endured attacks in the past; there are marks of bullet and mortar attacks on the walls. It is well defended by both snipers in the surrounding hills but also with watch towers and fortified mortar positions within the village.

There is no sign of any occult activity; no village temple with suspicious glyphs or blood-stained altars.

Outside the village: A well-travelled path leads out of the back of the village and winds its way up the hillside into the mountains. If the characters try following this path, they meet armed guards on the slope who tell them to turn back. This path leads up to the temple—see *The Temple*, page 55. If the characters try to sneak past the guards, it is a grave insult to the Katala.

The village is surrounded by fields, including several fields of poppies. Growing poppies at this altitude is extremely unusual. The strain of poppy grown in Katala has iridescent petals that shimmer purple and gold in the sun. Even inhaling the pollen has a mildly soporific effect. The fields are guarded by the same armed soldiers as those that protect the path.

Interviewing Akhan: The characters can interview Akhan through Carlyle if they wish. Carlyle warns that the warlord is an intensely proud man and they must be very polite. Any disrespect shown to Akhan could jeopardise the whole plan. If questioned about his religious beliefs, Akhan takes them to a tower overlooking the valley and gestures towards the poppy fields. There is Sanru and that is all he needs. If asked about sorcery, he nods enthusiastically—yes, he is a sorcerer, which is why he is so successful. His magic brings him luck. He is a good Muslim, he says, but he also worships Gish, the traditional war-god of the Kafirs.

Akhan is always accompanied by his *pshur*. If the characters mention Sanru, the demeanour of the young man changes completely. He stands up straighter and asks the characters (in Pashto) how they know of Sanru. He then twitches again, says *'my word'* in perfect English and falls down frothing at the mouth.

Religious Rites: If the characters ask about religious beliefs and rites in the village, they are told that the priests of the mountain temple come down to the village every few days to conduct ceremonies. The *utabs* of the hills are their priests and they do not live among the people save as *pshurs*. The temple and the *utabs* are sacrosanct and the characters are forbidden from going there.

THE PSHUR OF KATALA

The pshur is the individual who is supposed to be the subject of temporary inspiration.... At times he behaves with the utmost violence but there seems to be no rule on this point. The Kam Pshur's antics were extraordinary. Occasionally he would rush about and shout like a maniac. One of the Kafir Pshurs, a Kti Kafir, was a wonderful athlete and when 'possessed' performed wonderful feats of activity and strength; but another Kti Pshur adopted other methods. He used to stare fixedly with his light blue eyes on some object invisible to all but himself, while his right arm and right leg shook violently. The Presungal Pshurs were in the habit of falling on one knee and invoking an invisible object with a trembling tongue. On the whole, the Bashgul Pshurs are despised by their fellows. The latter believe they are sometimes really inspired, but that generally they are merely liars, as the Kafir put it in their direct way of speaking.... The majority of Pshurs believe in themselves to a certain doubtful extent. I imagine the Kam Pshur knew himself to be an imposter, but believed in other Pshurs and expected some day or other to be really inspired himself.

—The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush

Among the other Kafir tribes, the *pshur* were madmen or charlatans, unlike those of the Katala. Well, some of the Katala *pshurs*, anyway. They certainly have their share of liars. The few genuine *pshurs* are capable of seeing the undying priests of Sanru. The dead priests can partially possess the *pshurs* and use them as mouthpieces. While possessing a *pshur*, the priests can speak through the unfortunate possessed and dimly see the mortal world but it is like experiencing everything through a thick veil—unsatisfying compared to the endless delights of Sanru.

Of the three living *pshurs* in Katala, one never leaves Akhan's side. This *pshur*, Inzir, serves as his chief advisor and counselor. The undying priests whisper in the warlord's ear, ensuring that he keeps fighting to protect the Sanru flowers and preserves the marvellous dream-city.

The second *pshur* is a young girl of eight years old named Rahila. She is kept in a stone house and is not permitted to attend the village school or play with the other children. The elder priests rarely possess her. If the characters question her, she can tell them about the priests who appear in her dreams. After another five years of confinement, her mental defences will be sufficiently eroded to let the undying priests walk in and out of her consciousness freely.

The third *pshur* is an old man whose name has long since been forgotten. He stays in the monastery on the mountain, serving as the voice of the undying priests. This *pshur* is dying and eagerly awaits the day when he can smoke Sanru on his deathbed and enter the city forever.

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There are two *psburs* in the village itself—the twitching young man who accompanies Akhan and a girl of around eight. See the *Psbur of Katala* sidebar.

Scrying: There is no sign of any sorcery in the village, apart from the *psburs*, who are clearly showing as being possessed in ‘walk-ins’—transient possessors. Akhan has no visible traces of active magic.

A Cryptic Note

At some point during the characters’ time in the village, a note is passed to them by one of the villagers. Ideally, the note should be pushed into a character’s pocket in the crowd, or given to a character who cannot speak Pashto and so cannot question the messenger. This note is Handout #2. It was given to the villager by the female *psbur* but comes from Daniel Dravot.

My Dinner with Akhan

A day or two after the characters arrive in Katala Village, Carlyle arrives and informs them that there has been a development in the negotiations with Akhan. The warlord is now willing to support the coalition forces and the Afghanistan government, as long as Carlyle arranges for the Katala to get a piece of the opium trade into Europe. It is not the first time that British intelligence has covertly supported the drug trade, after all, so Carlyle is inclined to agree with Akhan’s proposal. They will not have to get their hands dirty dealing with heroin dealers, just make the introductions and look the other way when it comes to opium smuggling out of Nuristan.

To celebrate this agreement, Akhan invites the characters to a feast, which will be held at dusk. A huge bonfire is built in the middle of Katala and goats are brought in from the fields to be sacrificed and cooked. Hundreds gather in the village square for this feast.

The Spy: One of the characters spots one of the mercenaries who accompanied them from Kabul. The mercenary, Wakil, is leaving the village at a time when everyone else is heading in for the feast. The mercenary strolls nonchalantly until he is out of sight of the village, then hurries up the slope to a point overlooking the valley below. If challenged, the mercenary responds angrily in broken English that he is going to relieve himself. If the characters keep harassing him, he pulls out his rifle and threatens them.

The mercenary is secretly in the employ of Hezbe-e-Islami; he was a spy planted to watch Carlyle. The anti-coalition militia are trying to prevent any alliance between Akhan’s followers and the coalition and this feast is the best time to attack. The spy is leaving the village to signal his allies and to get out of the way of the impending rocket attack.

If the characters follow him without being spotted (pitting their Stealth against his Listen), they see him climb the outcropping and make signals with a hand mirror. The characters spot an answering flash from across the valley.

There are several dozen militia advancing from the far side of Katala Valley.

Akhan the Butcher: Back in the village, two young *utabs*—priests—in goatskin robes arrive from the temple in the mountains. They carry between them a large cedar-wood chest, decorated with carvings of the same symbols mentioned in the Laundry dossier on the Sanru cult. To celebrate their arrival, Akhan brings out a black buck goat and cuts its throat in front of the *utabs*. The priests solemnly bless the sacrifice and chant a prayer to Sanru.

If the characters ask about the young priests, an excited villager tells them that only the young priests ever leave the temple. The elder *utabs* speak only through the *psburs*.

The Sanru Smokers: After the sacrifice, the priests open the chest and produce a bag of seeds and a smouldering brazier. Akhan ceremoniously gives the seeds to Carlyle, then places the brazier on a round table in front of his best warriors. The warriors eagerly inhale the aromatic smoke and fall into drugged stupors with blissful smiles on their faces. Akhan himself reaches for the brazier... and then the first rocket falls on Katala.

4. The Raid

The village explodes in fire as something falls out of the sky and goes boom. Another rocket comes flying out of the night and blows a row of houses to burning splinters. In the distance, there is the stomach-punch of mortar fire and the bark of machine guns. A kid staggers past you, clutching at his face, blood pumping from between his remaining fingers. You’ve lost sight of Carlyle as the panicked crowd surges around you. Everyone’s screaming, shouting, running. What do you do?



BLACK BAG JOBS

Do not play this as a combat scene—this is utter confusion. The attacking force are somewhere out in the darkness, beyond the village's walls, but they are getting closer. The militia's plan is to soften Katala village with an opening bombardment, then sweep the streets for Akhan, his followers and the Westerners. They do not want to kill everyone in the village but civilian casualties are not a major impediment to their plans.

Call for Luck checks from the characters; anyone who fails takes 1d4 damage from flying debris, stray shots, concussion or being trampled in the crowd.

It is impossible to get a clear idea of who is winning the fight without a successful Strategy check. Initially, the militia have the clear advantage of surprise and firepower but as they try to push into Katala, they are repelled by the unnerving fanaticism of Akhan's followers. It is one thing to believe that dying in battle will ensure that you go straight to heaven; it is another thing entirely to have first-hand experience of it. The militia are driven out of the village, leading to bloody short-range combat on the slopes. As soon as most of the militia forces are out of Katala, mortar and rocket fire resumes for some time until Akhan's forces get close enough to threaten the artillery positions. It is a win for both sides from their own perspectives. The militia fail to kill Carlyle but do inflict significant damage on Katala and weaken Akhan's fighting ability considerably. Akhan's forces can claim to have turned the tide of a surprise attack against a foe with superior numbers and firepower and to have saved Katala (if you overlook 27 dead and more than 100 injured).

Under Fire

Carlyle just tries to get under cover. Once he has found a shelter, he tries to find the Player Characters and his mercenaries and depending on the situation, he either supports Akhan's counter-attack or tries to get out of the village to safety.

Akhan shouts orders to his men, organising the defence of the village. He then grabs the brazier, takes a great snort of

WARNING AKHAN

If the characters spotted the spy leaving the village earlier, or were paranoid and kept watch on the outskirts of the valley for attackers, they may be able to warn Akhan about the attack. If this happens, Akhan puts more men on watch and the fire fight is much less one-sided. The fighting never reaches the centre of the village, sparing the civilians from the brunt of the carnage.

SEPARATED CHARACTERS

Stress is a great way to reveal personality traits. The second you start dropping rockets, mortar shells and screaming gunmen on Player Characters, you push them to reveal their innermost traits. Some will flee, some might fight, some might start hacking hands off dead kids to make Hands of Glory. It is possible that, in the confusion, the characters might get separated from one another and that is fine. The likely result is that some characters end up dreaming of the Marvellous City, while others remain in the waking world. Later, the waking characters can run into their dreaming colleagues and have to protect the dreamers' bodies from having their throats slit by the militia while they lie insensate.

aromatic Sanru-smoke and then charges into the fray brandishing his rifle.

The mercenaries fight back against the militia alongside Akhan's followers, or join up with Carlyle, or run, depending on their individual situations and level of courage.

Continue to call for Luck checks every few rounds; anyone who fails gets hit for minor damage (1d2 points). A Special Success means that the character finds something useful, like a dropped gun, a loyal mercenary or a good place to hide. A fumble implies that the character suffers a more serious injury (1d6 points) from an explosion, collapsing building or stray shot.

Let the players focus on surviving the attack for a few rounds. They might try fighting back, or protect civilians, or just stay alive. After a few minutes of panic and carnage, the characters are contacted by Dravot's agent.

Dravot's Agent

A young Afghan girl with intensely blue eyes emerges from the smoke and gestures to you. 'This way,' she says in English, 'quickly!' From the way she pronounces her words, it sounds like she doesn't understand what she's saying but has been rehearsed in what to say. She leads you out of the combat zone and up to a small cave behind the village. It stinks of half-cured goatskin. She reaches into a crack in the wall and removes a handful of some white substance. She babbles something in a dialect that you can't quite catch, then says 'burn this and breathe. Burn and breathe.'

This strange girl is the second *psbur* in Katala village. A mortar strike blew open the locked door of her prison and

Dravot commanded her from the Marvellous City to make contact with the Player Characters.

The white substance is raw opium resin, gathered from the Sacru opium flowers that are grown in the valley. Any characters who smoke this opium are transported to the Marvellous City.

5. The Marvellous City

The smoke grabs your mind and whisks it far, far awake. You feel euphoric, lighter than air and full of energy. It's wonderful.

You—all of you—find yourselves in a marvellous sunset city. The streets glitter in the orange light of the setting sun. Minarets and elegantly curved domes are outlined against the purple sky. The music of flutes and delicate bells can be heard in the distance. In a square, you see some of the people of this wonderful city. They are all young and beautiful, dressed in rich robes or nothing at all.

'Wonderful, isn't it? Welcome to Sanru, chaps'.

The speaker is a young man. He's dressed in a yellow silk robe and has a crystal goblet of wine in one hand. He offers a handshake with the other.

'Daniel Dravot. Glad you could make it. Come, it's best we don't talk here. The revellers don't care about us but the priests might. There's a quiet garden where we can speak without fear of eavesdroppers.'

Dravot is an English explorer and adventurer. He has been a resident of the Marvellous City for more than a century, although time flows strangely in the dream and he has no idea that it has been so long. He is not concerned if told that a century has passed, though, as he was told that smoking Sanru makes you immortal. He thinks that his body is in suspended animation in the temple.

Play Dravot as a rogue who pretends to be a patriot. He is a loyal servant of the Crown when it suits his purposes.

He is everyone's best friend and drinking buddy. His vision of paradise was a bar where the drink never ended and the native girls were easy.

Dravot's Tale

In 1894, Daniel Dravot and 'Peachey' Carnehan left Chitral, on a mission to explore Kafiristan. After several weeks wandering in the mountains, they encountered the valley of Katala. Their rifles and trade goods made them kings among the Kafirs. The priests of the mountain temple shared their Sanru drugs with them and the pair dreamed of the Marvellous City for a brief time.

Dravot was so enchanted with the city that he wanted to stay but Carnehan argued that they should loot the temple's gold and escape in the night. Dravot agreed—the pair had signed a contract with each other to stick together—but the heist went awry. They were discovered and had to flee. Dravot was caught as they crossed a rope bridge but Carnehan escaped with a sack full of treasures. The priests were furious with Dravot but feared the consequences of killing him, so they imprisoned him in the temple and fed him opium to keep him from escaping.

No-one could ever grow truly tired of the city of Sanru but Dravot wants to visit England once again. He intends to return to London, present his findings to the government and then return to Kafiristan and the endless delights of Sanru. He wants the characters to break him out of paradise by climbing up to the mountain temple, finding his slumbering, immortal body, taking him out of the temple and then escorting him back to England. He can even sweeten the deal—the undying priests of Sanru are the ones really calling the shots in Katala. He can use his influence in Sanru to encourage them to order Akhan to ally himself with the English. Dravot is a little out of touch, but the Great Game is still the Great Game.

The characters may have questions for Dravot.



BLACK BAG JOBS

What is the deal with the pshurs? *They're mystics. They can see Sanru without chasing the dragon's tail. Handy sorts. The priests use them to talk to the villagers. See, the priests have got a nice racket going with the magic opium. It's given as a reward to those who serve the temple. The pshurs let them boss people around without having to dole out the Sanru drug.*

You do know it's the 21st century, right? What sort of state is your body in? *The 21st century? My word! I didn't think...well, that is a grand adventure and no mistake. No matter—as long as England meddles in the affairs of the east, there's a place for men like me. My body, well, it's probably a little worse for wear but the priests say they're undying, so it should be fine.*

What can you tell us about the temple's defences? *It's got a few armed guards but they should be off with Akhan's men. The priests themselves are harmless. You should be able to sneak in and out without much trouble. If you've made it up here to this corner of the world, then you're surely resourceful chaps.*

What exactly is Sanru? *Now, that's a deep question. This city is Sanru. The drug that brought you here, the opiate they harvest from the flowers, that's also called Sanru. The priests also worship a heathen god they call Sanru.*

How do we leave the city? *Just wait a while. I told the pshur to only give you a little Sanru. You'll wake up soon.*

Exploring the City

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In the brief time before the drug wears off, the characters can explore the city of Sanru. Most of the inhabitants are, apparently, figments of the imagination—impossibly beautiful women, wise sages, musicians, slaves, street vendors and entertainers, eunuch guards. These inhabitants can only repeat the thoughts of dreamers; effectively, they are objects, not full participants in the dream of Sanru. The undying priests and other true inhabitants of Sanru each have a palace to themselves.

The Temple to Sanru: In the centre of the city is a huge temple to Sanru. It is astoundingly beautiful, a staggering, impossible edifice of gold and marble. Walking through the precincts of the jewelled temple and admiring the stunning statues and artistry is an unforgettable experience. Even the most cynical or unartistic soul feels the urge to prostrate himself before Sanru.

Inside, the temple has an altar to Sanru which has the same carvings as the temple in the waking world. See page 55.

Daniel Dravot, Our Former Man In Afghanistan

STR 10 CON 13 SIZ 13 INT 9 POW 12 DEX 13 CHA 14 EDU 11 SAN 40 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: None.

Skills: Appraise 50%, Bargain 40%, Fast Talk 55%, Insight 50%, Language (Pashto) 25%, Wheedle 40%.

DEAD YET DREAMING

It is possible that a Player Character could get himself killed while dreaming. A stray rocket could blow his body to pieces while his mind delights in the Marvellous City, or he could just get his throat slit by the attackers. Such characters are in the same situation as Dravot—they can never leave the city and are effectively dead. If you want to keep the character in your game, then the Laundry might be able to launch some sort of psychic extraction/rescue mission, or the character could permanently possess the body of a pshur.

The Pshurs: The three pshurs have a presence in the city. Here, they appear as ghostly, transparent shadows of their waking-world selves. The pshurs are unable to see the city or its denizens but they can dimly hear the commands of the priests and can open themselves up to possession. In order to possess a pshur, the dreamer needs to match POW against POW on the Resistance table. The three pshurs have POW scores of 16 each.

Back in the Waking World

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After a short time in the Marvellous City, the characters who took the Sanru drug awaken once more. Sanity Loss for leaving Sanru is 1/1D4. The militia attack is over. Carlyle has gathered his surviving mercenaries and informs the characters of the current situation. The militia have retreated for the moment and Akhan is rallying forces from other villages in Katala valley to hold his position but the attack was still a grave blow. Unless Akhan gets support from the coalition, then Carlyle believes that Hezbe forces will inevitably take the Katala valley. Carlyle wants to set off back to Kabul at first light.

The radio transmitter and other equipment that the characters brought with them were destroyed and a dozen of Carlyle's mercenaries are dead or gone.

If the Player Characters try to convince Carlyle to help them with rescuing Dravot, remember that Carlyle has no idea that the supernatural exists. He dismisses the note as a fake and suggests that the characters got stoned during the fight

The Priests of Sanru

STR 10 **CON** 11 **SIZ** 10 **INT** 13 **POW** 14 **DEX** 11 **CHA** 15 **EDU** 12 **SAN** 40 **HP** 11

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: Bolt Action Rifle 50%, damage 1d8.

Skills: Ancient Afghan Drug Preparation 60%, Fanatic Devotion 75%, Listen 40%, Religious Flim-Flam 50%, Spot 45%.

and hallucinated the whole city. As far as he is concerned, they are just stalling.

6. The Mountain Temple

High above Katala valley is a sullen, clouded peak. A path, little more than a goat track, winds up the mountain from Katala village. The path is marked by carved markers, each depicting the same symbol that the characters saw in Robertson's letter back in London.

A short distance outside Katala village, there is an empty guard post; the guards have gone to aid Akhan's troops and there is nothing left there but some leftover food and other waste. As the characters continue to climb the hill, it gets much colder. The whole valley is spread out below them, from smoke-shrouded Katala village to the shimmering fields of Sanru. A thick fog engulfs the characters, forcing them to slow down or risk stepping into the void. The trail ends in a steep, almost vertical cliff. There are hand-holds and foot-holds cut into the rock.

At the top of the cliff is a cave entrance leading to the temple of Sanru. There is a single guard here—one of the young priests, armed with a battered bolt-action rifle. He will fire at anyone who comes up the cliff stairs. The characters can either circle around the cliff and climb up elsewhere (requiring a Climb check to avoid a rapid descent into the valley below) or distract or incapacitate the priest.

Once the characters are past the lone guardian, they can enter the temple. Well, 'temple' is a grand way of describing it. It is a cave. A cold, miserable, damp cave. It is lit by flickering torches. The walls are decorated with carvings and rotting goatskins, and little effort has gone into making the place impressive or comfortable. Hey, when you have got the most desirable city of dreams on tap, there is little impetus to make the boring old mundane world look good.

The Outer Sanctum

The Outer Sanctum is where the younger priests live and work—there are a few dormitory cells for them to sleep in, a dining room, storerooms and a workshop for maintaining the vessels and tools used to prepare opium. There are few priests here when the characters arrive; most are out in the valley, doing what priests do (preaching about how heaven awaits in the arms of Sanru but only if you are a good little Afghan hill warrior and serve the temple; collecting tribute and testing the local kids to see if any would make good priests or *pshurs*).

The three priests remaining in the temple are all deep in the embrace of Sanru. They lie on their pallets, moaning and utterly insensate thanks to the smouldering brazier of opium in the middle of the room.

The Pit of Bodies

This is a large cavern with a steep-sided pit in the middle of the floor. The only way across is via a narrow rope bridge. The pit is at least 30 feet deep and is filled with hundreds of corpses. There are strata of death here—the top layer consists of the recently killed but the lower levels are skeletons picked clean of meat. These are the remains of those sacrificed to Sanru in the past.

Sanity Loss for finding this mass grave is 1/1D3.

From the bridge, the characters can see that some of the bodies are those of Taliban or Hezbe-e-Islami warriors. Others are wearing Pakistani army uniforms. There are also the bodies of women, which are mostly young and comely. All of the bodies died in the same way—a stab wound to the heart. The characters recognise some of the victims as



BLACK BAG JOBS

people they saw in the Marvellous City. There, they were vapid courtesans and guards and entertainers; the half-witted servants of the dreamers.

If the characters search the grave, they find one set of remains that is different from the others. It is a skeleton, more than a century old, dressed in rags. Nearby, there is a battered and rusted metal case that might once have held cigarettes. It is engraved with the initials D.D.—Daniel Dravot.

The characters were talking to a dead man.

The Inner Sanctum

On the far side of the rope bridge is the inner sanctum. This is a narrow tunnel lined with deep shelves and on each shelf are the remains of an undying priest. They may be undying in Sanru but they are very dead in the waking world. Each corpse is wrapped in a winding sheet and has a clay bowl next to his head. These bowls once contained the priests' last breath of opium, which carried their spirits into the Marvellous City.

Beyond the tombs of the priests, the cave opens up into the cult's treasury. The light from the characters' flashlights is reflected by bowls of gold and silver. Here is where the Sanru opium is ceremonially prepared; it is like discovering a backstreet drug lab in the Vatican. There are cedar-wood chests for storing the opium, fire-pots for heating it and other tools.

Through the treasury, the cave leads to...

The Secret of Sanru

This dark cavern is illuminated by a single low-burning brazier in front of a huge carved slab. Smaller side tunnels lead off from the cave; they are all dead ends.

On the wall of this final cavern is a complicated carving, made by the mad priest who founded the cult of Sanru. Before the Marvellous City was dreamed into existence, those who smoked the strange opium produced in the valley saw something else entirely, something depicted in these carved symbols. The language used is incomprehensible to the Player Characters but there are diagrams that make an alarming amount of sense to any character with Science (mathematics) or Sorcery at 50% or more, or those who succeed in a Cthulhu Mythos check.

The Last Pshur

STR 7 CON 9 SIZ 8 INT 8 POW 16 DEX 5 CHA 8 EDU 6 SAN 20 HP 9

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: None.

Skills: Grapple 40%, Rambling Religious Diatribes 50%, Sense 50%.

There is a point of near congruency between our reality and another universe, here in Katala. The lonely inhabitant of that other universe, judging by the diagrams, is an infovore, a mind-eater. The Marvellous City and all its inhabitants exist only in the simulation-space of the entity's vast and cold intellect. Sanru does not bring immortality; it merely brings the consciousness of the user into alignment with the infovore, allowing the alien horror to scoop up your mind-state like plankton.

If Carlyle brings the Sanru seeds back to England, if Akhan is permitted to sell his opium in the heroin markets, then the infovore will have millions of new minds to sample. The creature could, as the walls between realities grow thinner as CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN approaches, break through into the Katala valley to devour minds wholesale. The Marvellous City is nothing but a passing thought in the mind of a hungry alien god.

The Last Pshur

Lurking in the shadows of the cave is the third *pshur* of Katala. He is an ancient man, bald as the mountain and ascetically thin. He is very close to death, so he is careful to never be too far from the Sanru drug. He keeps a ball of opium resin and a pipe on him at all times.

As the characters examine the carvings, an English-accented voice rings out from the shadows. *'What's the delay? Wake me up and let's get going!'* It is Dravot, possessing the body of the last *pshur*. He demands that the characters retrieve his sleeping body, wake him up and help him escape the temple—and he will not take no for an answer. He staggers forward to stand next to the burning brazier.

If the characters point out that his body has been dead for centuries, Dravot refuses to believe them. He can only see dimly through the eyes of the *pshur* and they could be trying to gull him, to leave him behind while they run off with the treasure. He will not let them leave without him—if they try fleeing, then he will cast this ball of Sanru into the brazier. The fumes will fill the whole chamber, sending everyone into the Marvellous City. By the time the characters awaken, they will be captured by the priests.

Stopping Dravot: There are several ways that the characters can deal with Dravot. Just shooting him will not work, as he will drop the ball of resin into the burning coals. The characters can shoot the opium ball out of his hand with a Difficult shot, or talk Dravot down, or exorcise him (*'Eat futureshock, Victorian explorer-guy!'*).

Escaping the Temple: If the characters shoot their way out of the temple, they have committed the most unforgivable sin against the followers of Sanru. They will have to flee the valley, pursued by Akhan and all his fanatics. The only way to placate the tribesmen is with the sacrifice of one of the Player Characters. If present, Carlyle will strongly advocate that the Player Character who is most responsible for ruining the alliance with the Katala step up to face justice for his actions.

7. Back to England

The characters can either return to Kabul with Carlyle, or call for extraction with the SAS. On the return journey, Carlyle begs the characters to give a positive report of Akhan—if they do so then Carlyle gets to go home.

You can skim over the return journey and get on with the important stuff—the committee meeting. The characters are called to a debriefing by Rebecca Fairclough and Ernest Ventry, to discuss the mission and the vetting of Alga Akhan.

The important questions to resolve are:

- Is Akhan involved with the Sanru cult?
- Does the Sanru cult pose a danger to British forces operating in the Katala Valley region?
- If the proposed alliance with Akhan goes ahead, do the characters endorse the suggestion of permitting Akhan to sell opium to the black market?

Do not let the players get away with easy answers. Make them weigh the risk of letting the Sanru-drug onto the streets with the risk of a longer war in Afghanistan. If they argue that the alliance with the Katala might increase the risk of an alien infovore breaking into our reality, then make them quantify this risk, or come up with suggestions on how to counter it. The characters should come out of the committee feeling soiled, not heroic.

Status gain for this mission ranges from 0% (the characters gave a negative assessment of Akhan without strong justification) to 10% (the characters showed they could stand up to SIS but also work with the other agency and played the Laundry bureaucracy game to perfection). Sanity *gains* should be minimal—inflict Sanity losses on the characters if they let the cult extend its shadow beyond Kafiristan.

Player Handouts

Handout #1—Robertson's Letter

CLASSIFIED SECRET, FOREIGN OFFICE

RECLASSIFIED OPAL SMOKE. IF YOU DO NOT POSSESS OPAL SMOKE CLEARANCE,
DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT

Dear R,

As per your request, I removed the material on Sanru before sending my manuscript to Lawrence and Bullen.

From what I recall, the Sanru cult was found only in one valley in Kafiristan, a place called Katala, but there it had almost completely displaced the worship of any other god. The followers of this cult were very committed to it indeed, believing that Sanru would carry them to heaven. At the command of a priest—an utah, they called them—a follower of Sanru would unhesitatingly sling himself from a high cliff or disembowel himself with a sword. I was reminded of nothing so much as the tales of the Hashisbeen and the magic garden of Hassan-i-Sabbah.

Unlike the Assassins, though, the followers of Sanru are no more warlike than the next hill tribe. Bloodthirsty brutes, excellent fighters but uninterested in either proselytising or conquest. They just wanted to be left alone.

Like other tribes in the area, they have the tradition of the pshur, or divinely inspired mystic. A pshur is expected to be the vessel of the gods, to perform semi-divine feats and to prophecy. I confess I saw little of the Katala pshurs. I did happen upon one ceremony where the priests of Sanru sacrificed a bull and a buck goat to their god. Curiously, they first drugged the animals with opium-smoke before cutting their throats. I have never seen a creature to go the grave as happily as those sacrifices. The worshippers, too, made extensive use of opium as a ritual drug. As an outsider, I was not permitted to take part, of course.

On my last night in Katala, I saw the utahs carrying a rich chest of gold up into the mountains. I tried to follow them but was rebuffed by guards who appeared as if out of nowhere along the trail and it was only feigning ignorance that I was able to escape intact. I do recall a strange symbol on the chest, something like this.



Regrettably, I found no sign of the two agents dispatched from Kumbarsen. In the absence of any word from them, I feel it likely that they ran afoul of our bloodthirsty Emir.

I hope they are keeping you busy in the new Board of Control. Please do not hesitate to call if I can be of any further service.

BLACK BAG JOBS

Handout #2—The Note

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*I am an ENGLISHMAN imprisoned by the
priests of Sanru. I beg you, HELP ME. I shall
send word to you when I can so that you can
DELIVER ME from this gilded cage. DO NOT
FORGET THE WIDOW'S SON!*

D. Dravot



THE WILD HUNT

*'Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,
Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are a-gleam,
Our arms are waving, our lips are apart,
And if any gaze on our rushing band,
We come between him and the deed of his hand,
We come between him and the hope of his heart.'
The host is rushing 'twixt night and day;
And where is there hope or deed as fair?*

—William Butler Yeats, *the Hosting of the Sidhe*

According to legends, the Wild Hunt is a spectral cavalcade of monstrous riders, charging across the sky in pursuit of some unfortunate prey. In some traditions, the hunt is led by Odin, or by the Devil himself. In others, the hunt is led by some fairy king. One thing all the traditions agree on—seeing the Wild Hunt is a very bad omen.

In Devon and Dartmoor, the local version of the Wild Hunt is associated with the dwarf oaks of Wistman's Wood. According to the tales, the Hunt rides across the sky in search of sinners and the unbaptised.

This being the Laundryverse, there is a horrible truth behind the myth.

Before we get to that truth, though, we must take a quick diversion into computer hardware history and discuss floppy disks. Remember them? (Please, please remember them. Don't make me feel really old.) Before you could use a floppy disk, it had to be formatted by writing a file structure to it. Without formatting, the disk controller would be unable to locate information. Different operating systems had different file structures and you could not use a floppy disk formatted for one system in a different OS.

Back to the horror. There are creatures in the multiverse that cannot quite survive in our reality. They are closer to our physics than, say, the tentacled horrors of Lovecraft's fevered imaginings but they are still not part of our reality. They can be summoned here (or travel here) through the Platonic overrealm of mathematics via sorcery but once present they must somehow anchor themselves to our reality. Some are the other-dimensional equivalent of remora fish, suckering onto some febrile mind and living off the stray thoughts. Others repurpose animal brains into sorcery engines, constantly weaving spells to keep the creatures from being crushed under the weight of our reality.

Thousands of years ago, one of these entities—we will call it the Herla, after the mythical elf-king—entered our reality and entered into a parasitic relationship with a stretch of

primal woodland, sapping the life from the trees to keep itself alive. The roots of the trees interwove, forming a vast underground network. For hundreds of centuries, it survived in this restricted, weakened state until it learned to feed on humans, to use their minds to cast the spells needed to sustain it.

In order to impress itself onto the minds of humans, it needed those without strong preconceptions or beliefs. If Scrofula the 10th century peasant is convinced that he will go to Hell if he consorts with faeries, then it is hard for the Herla-entity to make use of him—his mind will fight against the Herla's implanted spells, forcing the Herla to spend more effort than it is worth to dominate Scrofula. Social conditioning and faith are powerful forces; the belief associated with a Christian baptism is effectively a psychic disk formatting, making the human useless to the Herla. The baptism itself has no spiritual power but belief in it does. If you are already convinced you are damned, the Hunt can take you. Far better to grab Scrofula's cousin, Codpiece, a known criminal and vagabond. He has no strong beliefs, he lacks the social support of a community to fortify his mind against strange thoughts—like alien magic that gets imprinted on his mind by a parasitic thing from the woodland.

So, in summation—the Wild Hunt is one manifestation of an extra-dimensional entity that has survived by feeding off the energy of the woodlands but prefers to use juicy human brains as computational engines. The Hunt seeks out criminals and the unbaptised not out of some sense of divine vengeance but because their minds are less resistant to external psychic impressions as they are not strongly formatted.

At least, that is how it used to be. The number of suitable victims within range of the Hunt dwindled, as the local population learned to resist the Hunt's predations. Ironically, if the Hunt were still around these days, it would find a feast waiting for it. The social cohesion and support networks that once fended off the Hunt are not as strong as they

once were. The Hunt could find hundreds of victims whose personal beliefs and convictions and sense of self-worth are not strong enough to resist the Hunt. If the Hunt were to become active again and if it manages to feed on enough local victims to give it longer range, there is no limit to its growth.

The Village of Hesstock

West of Arkham, the hills rise wild...

Wait, no, that's the start of *The Dunwich Horror*.

West of Exeter, the moor rises gently, rolling around the feet of the granite hills (called 'tors'). It is beautiful in the rain, which is lucky, because it rains a lot here. Much of the moorland is boggy and treacherous. This is the region that inspired *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, as well as hundreds of other ghost stories. During the summer, tourists can be seen walking across the moors, soaked and bedraggled.

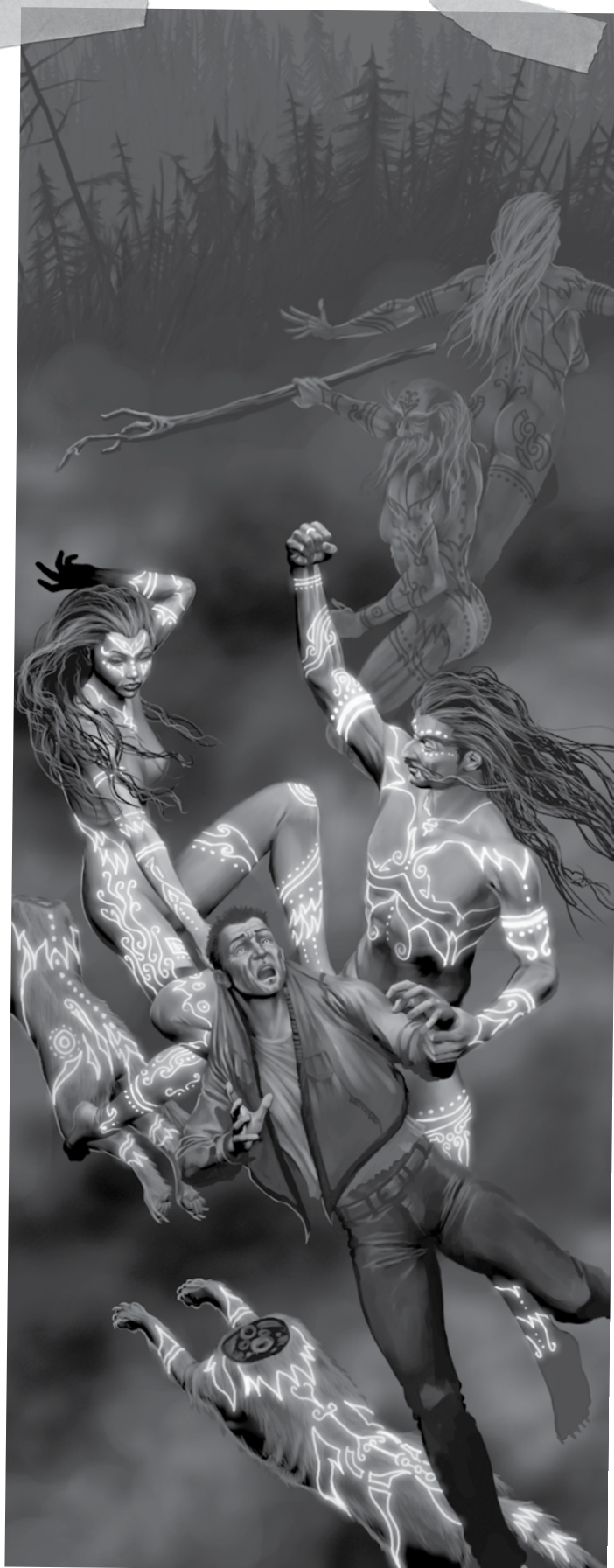
Hesstock village is a small and extremely isolated community about 20 miles west of Exeter, close to Wistman's Wood. It is the village that time ignored; the whole place seems stuck in the 1970s at best. There is a reason for Hesstock's inertia—this is the closest community to the Herla entity and being close-knit and traditional used to be survival traits here. Those who deviated from the community were eaten by the Hunt in previous centuries and it is continued as a folk belief: stay close and the Hunt will not get you.

The village is within the Herla's defensive psychic field, which is a low-level ward much like the ones surrounding Dunwich village. The wards dissuade casual visitors and ensure that people do not think too much about the strangeness of the area. Even though the Hunt has not ridden out for centuries, its unseen presence still warps the people of Hesstock.

The De Redvers

The de Redvers family (who trace their lineage back to the family of the same name who were the Earls of Devon) built a manor house outside Hesstock in the 17th century. The locals warned them not to build so close to the haunted Wistman's Wood but they did not heed these warnings.

One stormy night in 1713, Herla reached out to take them. The woods engulfed Redvers House and consumed those living within, transforming them into servants. If you go to the former site of the house, there is nothing



but an overgrown ruin there. Unfortunately, you will not see even that, as the ruin is covered by a glamour, so you will actually see what you expect to see—a fine, if slightly run-down manor house. The de Redvers family are similarly shrouded in glamour. You see them as wealthy country landowners, not the moss-covered fetches of bone and wood they really are.

As Herla declined in recent centuries, the de Redvers similarly became weaker. Years might pass between periods of activity. They slumbered in the overgrown ruins of their ancient home, pressed into the Herla-infested trees. If left alone, they might have slept until the end of the world (it is, after all, only another 20 years or so according to some projections).

They were not left alone.

Dr. Greg Satori

He is not a doctor and his last name is not Satori; it is Carmichael. He is a Californian shaman and spiritual adviser who used to run a therapeutic commune out of San Francisco, but there were tax irregularities so he decided it was time to get in touch with ancient druidic traditions in another country. He came to England 18 months ago with the intent of setting up a new 'spiritual retreat'. He found Hesstock and Redvers House.

The de Redvers were strangely supportive of his efforts and have permitted him to renovate the old stables into dormitories and workshops. The *Satori Rejuvenation Retreat Centre* offers courses in meditation, yoga, relaxation and opening yourself up to alien mind parasites.

Greg has no idea that his business partners are 400 year old undead slaves of an extra-dimensional woodland horror. Greg is a curious mix of charlatan and believer in his own spiel. Does he believe that yogic flying can help you grow as a person? Absolutely. Does he also think you should pay him a lot of money? Oh yes.

A major part of Greg's course involves a concept he borrowed from Timothy Leary and Robert Anton Wilson, the idea of the 'reality tunnel'. We all perceive the world according to our preconceptions and biases, which form a tunnel. We ignore things that do not fit in to this world view. Greg's therapy involves deliberately jumping from one tunnel to another by first creating, then discarding, a series of extreme world views. Greg's ultimate intent is to teach people to deconstruct their original reality tunnel but it also has the effect of making the subjects vulnerable to the Wild Hunt. The *Satori Centre* has only been open for a month and already there are four suspicious deaths associated with it.

Mission Overview

To recuperate from a previous mission, the characters are sent to a tiny, isolated village on Dartmoor, where a new therapeutic retreat has just opened. It is very much in the middle of nowhere—no phones, no internet. It is like

stepping back in time. The characters quickly discover that the Wild Hunt haunts the village and it is targeting them...

Timing and Events

The characters are sent on retreat to Hesstock on a Tuesday, arriving in the mid-afternoon. After that, timing is left deliberately loose. Allow the characters to investigate the village and the Satori Centre and interact with the NPCs. The journalist, Francis Palmer, shows up a day or two after the characters.

The first appearance of the Wild Hunt at night triggers the second half of the mission. Once the Wild Hunt rides out (see Section 6), the characters have only one night to locate the Herla and save themselves before they become the next victims of the Hunt.

1. Compassion and Firearms

It's been one of those weeks. Your last field mission was a clusterfuck... with tentacles. Some demonic accountant over in Financial Planning wants a budget report covering the period from six years ago until the heat death of the universe and there's some argument up on Mahogany Row about the direction of current projects, so you've been switched from one project to another and back again six times in the last four days.

On Thursday, Bankett over in Recruitment lost the plot completely. They dragged him out of his office. He was screaming that there were demons in his filing cabinet, which is utter nonsense. The only demons in his office were in the secure server at the back. Overwork and stress claims another victim. It cast a pall over the whole office.

Friday... Friday was a good day, until three in the afternoon. That argument up in Mahogany Row somehow spilled over into an upcoming pan-European committee meeting, so you all had to work overtime to assume the documentation needed. You finished that at lunchtime on Sunday, 20 minutes before they told you that the committee meeting had been postponed because of the Belgians.

Some days, the end of the world would be a blessed relief. They call those days 'Mondays'.

Let the players roleplay office hell for a few minutes, then they get called into the office of their manager (ideally, their manager on the Human Resources/Admin side, their Harriet, instead of Angleton or whatever Operations officer you are using).

Your manager smiles like a shark that is desperately trying to be nice but isn't quite getting it. 'You've all been working very hard lately, very hard indeed and I've got a memo here from Med & Psych suggesting that you all need some time off. So, I've arranged a little break for you all. Here's the brochure.'

Give the PCs Handout #1 at this point.

'It all sounds lovely, doesn't it? Just the sort of relaxing trip you need to recover. While you're down there, by the way, there's one tiny little job we'd like you to do. You see, Security Management want you to assess

BLACK BAG JOBS

the retreat centre for future use by the Laundry. It's easy: just poke around while you're there, make sure the place is secure, and the staff aren't spies or cultists or, you know, a front for a money laundering scheme or something.'

The arrangement is that the characters will drive from London to Exeter and from there on to Hesstock. The retreat will last from Tuesday until the following Friday. The manager insists that the security check is a mere formality and will not interfere with the characters' relaxation and enjoyment of the weekend at all.

A Bureaucracy check and some paperwork lets the characters work out that their manager is paying for this break out of the Security Management department's budget instead of her own. By sending the characters on a retreat, she is fulfilling the Medical and Psychological memo without costing her department a penny.

Research

If the characters do some digging in the records before departing, they can turn up the following information with Research checks. Each clue has another skill associated with it—characters following those lines of inquiry can use the listed skill instead of Research if it is higher.

Hesstock (Bureaucracy): The village of Hesstock barely exists, bureaucratically speaking. There is next to no trace of it in government records, other than births, marriages and deaths. It is suspiciously quiet... or is that the character's incipient paranoia talking?

Local Legends (Knowledge (occult)): Dartmoor is home to lots of local legends. There are reputed to be all sorts of ghosts on the moors, from ghostly yeth hounds to phantom monks to pixies and fairies in the woods, as well as more modern tales of serial killers. Wistman's Wood, which is mentioned in the advertising flyer, is an area of primal wooded upland, known for its thick fogs, dwarf trees and otherworldly appearance. It is traditionally associated with fairies.

Dr. Greg Satori (Knowledge (accounting)): There are court records online that show a 'Gregory Carmichael' of San Francisco as owing more than \$100,000 in unpaid taxes and other debts, as well as being the subject of a lawsuit for 'emotional pain and suffering' as the result of one of his treatments. One of the documents mentions 'Greg Satori' as an alias for Gregory Carmichael.

Suspicious Deaths (Knowledge (law)): There are three recent incidents that seem out of the ordinary:

- **David Kay** died in Exeter one month ago. He was found in his garden on a summer morning, having apparently jumped off the roof of his house. Strangely, his body was partially frozen and the injuries were so extensive that some early reports speculated that he must have fallen out of an aeroplane.

- **Susan and Mel Richards** both vanished on the moors two weeks ago. They were last seen in Hesstock. Enquiries are continuing.
- **Sophie Zolotas** crashed her car soon after leaving the Satori Centre. She is in a coma in Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital.

See *Further Enquiries*, page 69, for more details on all these incidents.

Leaving the Laundry

Before departing, the characters are assigned a budget of **25 points** for equipment and support. Note that transport and living expenses come out of this pool; if the characters want to take public transport to Exeter, it will cost five points for a basic ticket. From Exeter, the only way to proceed is by vehicle.

The journey to Exeter is uneventful. However, as the characters enter the valley of Hesstock, they must drive over a narrow stone bridge, the Old Bridge, that crosses the River Arrow. At the mid-point of the bridge, all the characters feel their ward prickling slightly. Call for a Drive roll from any character who is driving; if he fails, then he scrapes the side of the car on the bridge, ruining the paintwork. It was as though an invisible hand grabbed the wheel.

If the characters stop and examine the bridge, they notice that someone else had a nasty accident here recently. There are a few shards of broken glass and plastic by the side of the road and one section of the bridge was obviously recently damaged. There are also fading skid marks on the road, suggesting that someone had a bad accident here within the last week. This was **Sophie Zolotas** (see *Further Enquiries*).

2. The Village

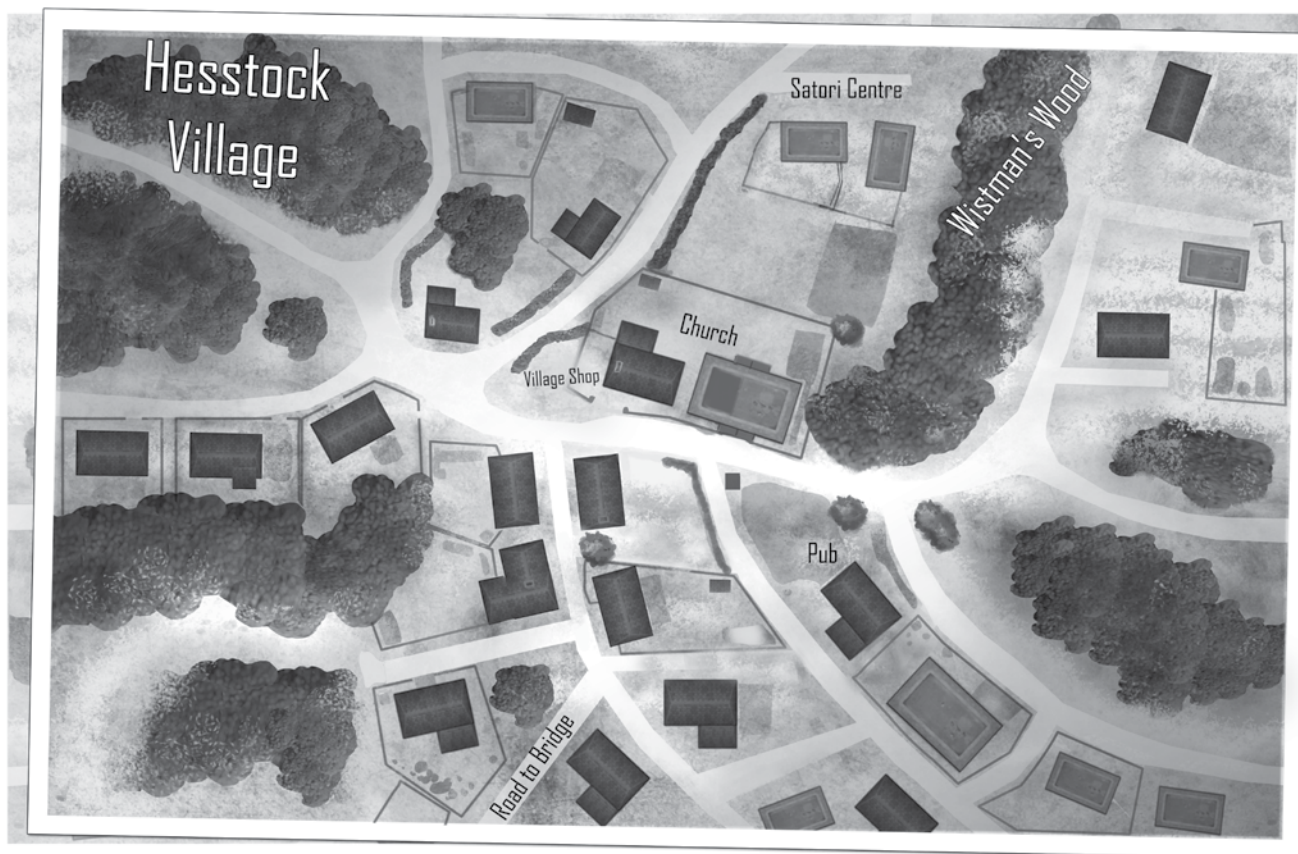
You've been to places like Hesstock village before, but they were behind security cordons and used to contain Deep One Hybrids. There's a definite Dunnich vibe to the whole place. Hesstock village consists of a church, a pub, a village shop and a handful of houses that would best be described as 'sullen'. Modern life has certainly not reached here yet. You're faintly surprised that they've even got electricity. Grey rain washes over grey slate roofs and cascades down gutters. The gutters didn't start out grey, but they're working on it. Suspicious villagers stare at you with hollow, suspicious eyes.

By comparison to this lot, the squamous inhabitants of Dunnich were party animals. A newish sign points up the hill, directing you to the Satori Centre.

If the characters head straight to the Satori Centre, skip onto Section 3.

Communications Blackout

Maybe it is a quirk of atmospheric conditions, or maybe it is the lack of phone masts. Really, it is probably the eldritch



influence of the Herla in the woods. Regardless, mobile phones rarely work in the valley. Any characters wanting to make a call must make a Luck check to get any bars of signal at all, while internet connectivity is out of the question.

There are landlines in the village and in the Satori centre but only a single phone cable runs out of Hesstock and it goes through a section of forest—the Herla can easily isolate the PCs if it wants to.

Fun Things to Do in the Village

This section is intentionally left blank.

Places in the Village

The Village Hall: The hall is a squat grey building, used for everything from Christmas pageants to meetings to basketball games. There is a surprisingly extensive archive of documents related to Hesstock's history. If a Player Character is astonishingly dull, he can spend a day or two researching here to turn up several interesting facts about the Redvers:

- Redvers House was built in the 1670s and damaged in a fire in 1713. There is no clear record of it being rebuilt.
- The parish death records have an unusual number of missing persons and deaths by misadventure.
- There are no birth records for the de Redvers..

The Pub: The village pub, *The Huntsman's Rest*, is very much a local pub for local people. They only get a handful of tourists every year, thanks to the warding effect of the Herla's influence. Outsiders are made to feel very unwelcome by the regulars but if you stand your round, you can extract a few rumours from the locals:

- The new centre up at the Redvers House is the stupidest thing any of them have ever heard of. Dr. Greg came down to the village when he first arrived and offered a free course in holistic therapy; he has not shown his bearded face in Hesstock again, not after the mockery of last time.
- The Redvers themselves are strange indeed. No-one goes near them and no-one wants to. People do not like to talk about them. Best to change the subject.
- There have been a lot more visitors around lately, probably thanks to that new centre. Why, there were those two hikers who vanished on the moors—

they visited the centre before going out walking. And that poor girl who crashed her car on the old bridge, wasn't she another guest at the centre? The place is obviously bad luck.

- A journalist came by the pub yesterday, asking the same sort of questions. He said his name was Palmer.

Drive By Baptism

One of the characters has a curious encounter while in Hesstock. A strange old woman—Madge Collins—comes up to him and throws a bottle of water in his face. She then tries to make the sign of the cross on his forehead, as if trying to baptise him. Her son, Big Ed, soon arrives to restrain his mother and explains that she suffers from bouts of dementia and means no harm. In her delusions, Madge was trying to protect the character from the Wild Hunt.

3. The Satori Centre

The Satori Centre building was originally the stables of Redver's House. Unlike the house itself, the stables were actually a genuine ruined building when Dr. Greg arrived. Since then, they have been rebuilt into a dozen small

bedrooms on the upper floor and his 'workshop space', offices and a breakfast room and kitchen on the ground floor. It is all pine and bare stone walls decorated with fashionable ethnic rugs and knick-knacks. Everything smells of incense.

There are three members of staff—Dr. Greg himself and a pair of Hesstock villagers he employs to take care of the guests.

Hello, I Must Be Going

You drive up the narrow road towards the Satori centre. You pass through an old stone gateway in a crumbling wall—it must have been very impressive a long time ago but now it's covered in thick moss. Off to your right, through the trees, you can see stately Redvers House, which looks like it, too, has seen better days.

To the left, though, is the shiny new Satori centre. There are three cars parked outside and you draw up next to them.

A door opens and two figures emerge. The taller guy has to be Dr. Greg himself. He is in his sixties, wearing a long tan-coloured robe and sandals. He looks like an American Jesus, if Jesus spent a lot of time on tanning beds and smoked a lot of dope. Clinging to Dr. Greg is another man; he's wearing a business suit but carrying his tie in his hand. Greg peels him off when he sees you and waves.

'This man...' says the smaller guy, 'this man changed my life. This is a NOOSE! He made me see it! I'm free now! Free! He changed my life!' He breaks down in tears again, burying his nose in Dr. Greg's armpit.

'One sec, guys', says Dr. Greg. Again, he unwraps the other man's arms from around his waist. 'Look, Jeremy, it's time for you to go. But you remember what you saw in the sweat lodge, right?' He pushes Jeremy towards one of the cars. 'Be you, Jeremy. Be you.'

'Welcome to the Satori Rejuvenation Retreat Centre! You think of yourselves as the guys from Capital Laundry Services, right? That's just where you work, not who you are. I am Dr. Greg and I'm here to help you find you.'

Jeremy Hayes—the clingy, weepy guy, drives off. He will be dead by Section 6 of this adventure.

Greg leads the characters into the Satori Centre's reception area and has one of the staff enter the characters' details onto the centre's ancient computer system—Dr. Greg bought a PC in 1994 and has not upgraded it since. Each group of guests gets a whole floppy disk to themselves.

'Guys, we've got a few rules here at the Satori Centre. First, relax. Treat this place as your home. Do whatever you want. Be happy, and be good to one another. Second, no mobile phones or computers. You're here to get away from the modern world. If you absolutely, positively have to make a call, you can come to me, but otherwise, you turn off the electronic leashes and be free for a few days.'



Dr. Greg Satori

STR 11 CON 14 SIZ 12 INT 13 POW 11 DEX 10 CHA 14 EDU 14 SAN 50 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: Non-violent protest and singing.

Skills: Bargain 30%, Fast Talk 50%, First Aid 50%, Knowledge (occult) 45%, Perform 60%, Persuade 40%, Psychobabble 60%, Psychotherapy 55%, Spot 60%.

Dr. Greg expects all the characters to hand over their phones and will be *'very cranky'* with anyone who does not comply. The phones are locked inside Greg's office.

Accommodation

The accommodation in the centre consists of small but comfortable private rooms with communal bathrooms. There is a kitchenette downstairs for self-catering; breakfasts are included as part of the retreat and Dr. Greg is happy to share his meals during the day. He claims to be a 'holistician'—he only eats meat from animals that *wanted* to be eaten.

Treatment Sessions

You can run these treatments in any order, or skip over them if the players are more focussed on the investigation than on roleplaying relaxation therapy. You should at least mention the treatments on offer, to provide context for the investigation.

Yoga: There are two yoga sessions each day. While bending and stretching, the characters have an excellent view of the Redvers House and the woods beyond. If the investigation is stalling, the characters can see something suspicious, such as the Redvers out riding or disposing of evidence.

Group Therapy: In these sessions, Dr. Greg tries to get the characters to express their inner frustrations and feelings. As far as he knows, all the characters work for Capital Laundry Services but it is clear to him (he is a sensitive guy) that they are under a lot of stress and there are unresolved issues within their workplace. He will do his best to get them to open up, asking questions like:

- Do you like your job?
- This is an open forum—do you have anything to say to your co-workers?
- Let's clear the air—have you hurt any of your co-workers? Have they hurt you? Let's discuss how and why we feel this way.

Guided Meditation: In the guided meditation sessions, Dr. Greg has the characters lie down and relax in a darkened room. He puts on a cassette of soothing pan pipe music and has them visualise walking through a shadowy wood. What are they looking for in the wood? What is their goal,

their dream? What obstacles lie between them and this goal? Oddly, all the characters dream of the same forest—the mossy dwarf oaks of Wistman's Wood.

Quantum Tunneling: Dr. Greg borrowed this term from physics, because it sounded cool. The 'quantum' part is nonsense; the 'tunnelling' is a reference to the concept of reality tunnels. In this session, Dr. Greg encourages the characters to describe their own world-view. How do they believe the world works? What is the meaning of life? What led them to this conclusion?

He then asks them to adopt other reality-tunnels. He brings out documents and material to drive the characters into other frameworks—fundamentalist Christian literature and videos, children's books, accounts of poverty and famine in Ethiopia and some immensely dull bureaucratic paperwork. He encourages the characters to deconstruct their own realities and to embrace the view of a fundamentalist, a child, a starving victim or a government functionary.

If a character actively participates in this session, call for an Idea roll. If successful, he has the momentary feeling of being watched, as if something took notice of him.

Dr. Greg

Play Dr. Greg as a ghastly parody of every absurd self-help guru and get-enlightened-quick gimmick salesman imaginable. He talks in a sing-song Californian lilt and speaks exclusively in clichés and psychobabble. He does have a measure of personal charisma and he believes what he is saying more than half the time, which does make him somewhat convincing. He is mostly harmless.

Likely specific questions are:

The Satori Centre: The Satori Centre is his own idea, based on work he did in the United States. It is partially owned by the de Redvers family.

The Redvers: The de Redvers are an eccentric and very private family but they have been really supportive of Dr. Greg's work. The youngest of the de Redvers even helped him design the new quantum tunnelling part of the treatment.

His Methods: If asked about his methods, Dr. Greg spouts a torrent of buzzwords. A Psychotherapy roll confirms that it is a mishmash of psychology, occultism and nonsense.

SUITABLE CANDIDATES

The Herla seeks those who can be formatted to serve it. Those who are strong-willed, or who are already committed to some belief or cause, or who are already deeply embedded into a culture—such people are useless to the Herla in its current weak state. It needs easy prey. Those characters who are not committed to the Laundry, or who are very receptive to the quantum tunnelling therapy, or who do not have strong ties to some cause or belief qualify as prey.

Fortunately for the characters, their magical oath to the Laundry makes them all mostly immune to the Herla's predations. The Herla can only perceive this when it tries to suborn them to its will—to go back to that floppy-disk analogy, the characters have their read-write slider pushed to 'read only'.

Why No Mobile Phones?: Dr. Greg was being honest with the Player Characters when he said that they were a distraction.

His Beliefs: If asked about the occult, then Dr. Greg believes in psychic emanations and spirit guides. He has no real knowledge about the true nature of reality, computational demonology or actual sorcery.

His Tax Problems: If the characters ask about Dr. Greg's tax issues, he is initially evasive and blames it all on a misunderstanding. Pushing him on the topic results in him

getting genuinely angry and throwing the characters out of the Satori Centre.

4. The House and The Wood

Redvers House, from the outside, looks exactly as you would expect it to look—a 19th century manor house in a poor state of repair. There are a few signs of modern conveniences but the whole place is obviously in great need of maintenance and renovation. The roof is sagging, the windows rattle in their frames. Inside, it looks like an illustration of the end of empire. Plenty of old family portraits, suits of armour, wood panelling and gilt frames. Again, it looks exactly what you would expect.

If you can see through the Class Four glamour, though, then you see the true state of the place—it has been ruined since the early 18th century. All that is left of the house are a few scattered stones and collapsed walls, all overgrown. Trees poke through the cracked remains of flagstones and foundations. There is no house here, just a copse of trees in a ruin.

Everything in the house is cloaked by this glamour. If the characters visit the house for dinner, then they may believe that they are being served wine from a crystal glass instead of drinking muddy water from a cupped leaf. There are a few real items in the house, such as letters and other documents, which are kept in the surviving part of the cellar.

The De Redvers Family

Four members of the de Redvers family were in the house when it was claimed by the forest. They accepted a form of symbiotic immortality from the Herla and became creatures of moss and wood instead of flesh and bone. They resemble creatures of moonlight and bone, with glowing silver skin and twisted, elongated features. The

Richard de Redvers, Immortal Landowner

STR 21 CON 15 SIZ 14 INT 12 POW 13 DEX 14 CHA 10 EDU 10 SAN 0 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D6.

Weapons: Hunting Rifle 40%, damage 1d10. Claw 50%, damage 1d4+damage bonus.

Armour: None but see *The Hunters* sidebar.

Skills: Fast Talk 40%, Grapple 70%, Listen 40%, Ride 90%, Spot 60%, Track 80%.

Mary de Redvers

STR 20 CON 20 SIZ 10 INT 13 POW 15 DEX 10 CHA 10 EDU 10 SAN 0 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D6.

Weapons: Claw 50%, damage 1d4+damage bonus.

Armour: None but see *The Hunters* sidebar.

Skills: Dodge 30%, Grapple 60%, Ride 90%, Sense 70%, Sorcery 60%, Track 80%.

John de Redvers

STR 22 CON 18 SIZ 16 INT 13 POW 14 DEX 14 CHA 14 EDU 10 SAN 0 HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1d6.

Weapons: Claw 60%, damage 1d4+damage bonus.

Armour: None but see *The Hunters* sidebar.

Skills: Dodge 50%, Grapple 70%, Listen 50%, Ride 90%, Spot 60%, Track 80%.

Alice de Redvers

STR 20 CON 16 SIZ 11 INT 13 POW 15 DEX 15 CHA 17 EDU 14 SAN 50 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1d6.

Weapons: Claw 60%, damage 1d4+damage bonus.

Armour: None but see *The Hunters* sidebar.

Skills: Grapple 70%, Listen 50%, Persuade 60%, Ride 90%, Spot 60%, Track 70%.

same glamour that shrouds the house also protects them, making them appear to be upper-class landowners.

glamour makes her appear to be a woman in her forties, dressed in jodhpurs and a riding coat.

The four are the Herla's chief agents when it is not manifesting the Wild Hunt. They tend to its human sacrifices, protect the woodland from intruders and watch for new potential victims. They can still pass for human in person, as long as they are not questioned for too long. They slept through most of the 20th century; the last time they had any extended contact with humans was in the 1920s and their attitudes and behaviour have changed little since then. Dr. Greg did not notice anything unusual because he knew next to nothing about English society when he arrived and assumed everyone would act like something out of Wodehouse.

The characters will only encounter Mary Redvers in the last section of the adventure, *In Wistman's Wood*.

Richard de Redvers: The oldest of the four, Richard appears to be a gruff man in his fifties. He and Mary de Redvers spend most of their time deep in the woods, watching over the Herla. He leads the Wild Hunt when it is called.

Richard angrily confronts the characters if they try to enter the woods near the Redvers House, shouting at them that this is private land and they should not trespass. If they try sneaking into the woods, he hunts them like animals—he has an old hunting rifle that can be brought to bear on unwanted intruders.

Mary de Redvers: Of the four, Mary is the one closest to the Herla and therefore the least human. The other three try to shield her from outsiders, as she is the least capable of masquerading as a human. The



THE HUNTERS

The de Redvers are immortal. If one of them is killed, they are resurrected by the Herla a short time later. The original body of the slain de Redvers falls apart into ash and wood dust; a new body forms from tree bark, leaves and moss in Wistman's Wood. This process takes only 2d6 rounds.

A magical glamour makes all the de Redvers appear normal but their true form is silvery-skinned, elfin figures. They can only fly when given added power by the Herla but can move swiftly (Move 10) at all times.

John de Redvers: John is the most aggressive of the four and the one who is called upon to deal with intruders. He appears to be a young man in his early twenties, wearing a scarlet jacket. He is the one who realised that Dr. Greg could be used as a way to lure potential victims to the valley.

John keeps watch on the guests at the Satori Centre and will intercede if there are any problems there. Play him as a smug, supercilious bastard. He may have died with a tree branch sticking out of his mouth but the glamour makes it look like a silver spoon.

Alice de Redvers: The youngest of the four and the one who most enjoys being an immortal woodland creature. Alice appears as a beautiful and glamorous woman in her early twenties. Of the family, she alone was capable of remaining active while the others slept and is responsible for many local legends of beguiling fairies luring men to their deaths.

Yeth Hounds

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	POW	HP	Damage Bonus
#1	16	14	8	13	11	11	+1d6
#2	17	13	9	14	10	11	+1d6
#3	18	13	10	13	14	12	+1d6
#4	15	14	9	15	13	12	+1d6

Weapons: Bite 40%, damage 1d8+damage bonus. Worn armour is no protection against the Yeth Hound's bite but magical protection or a naturally tough hide does reduce the damage from the monster's extra-dimensional bites.

Armour: 3-point hide.

Skills: Spot 60%, Track 100%.

Phase: Yeth Hounds can teleport up to 10 metres, sliding in and out of our reality.

Sanity Loss: 1/1d4 to see a Yeth Hound, 0/1 points to hear its howl.

Alice may play at being the most sympathetic of the four. Depending on how receptive the Player Characters are, she might try to seduce one of them, or pretend that her family are part of some devilish cult and beg the characters to 'rescue' her.

The Hounds

At the back of the house, surrounded by the trees, is a large kennel, home to a dozen huge hounds. These hounds are unnatural creatures called Yeth Hounds, but the same glamour that shields the de Redvers makes them look like normal, if vicious, hunting hounds. Seen in their true form, the Yeth Hounds are jet-black and lean. A Yeth Hound has no head but gleaming red eyes and wickedly sharp teeth sometimes momentarily appear, floating in the air just above the twitching neck stump, as if the creature's head was invisible. If the creature wishes, they can slide more of their body into this immaterial state, phasing in and out of reality like the Cheshire Cat, if the cat was black as night, weighed 100 kilos and could bite through a car door.

Piercing the Glamour

The glamour protecting the de Redvers is a Level Four effect; a Level One Scrying spell can only detect the presence of thaumic fields and a Level Two Scrying can confirm the existence of a glamour but cannot pierce it. To break through the glamour, the characters will either need to a Level 3 Scrying spell (beyond their means, unless one of the Player Characters has a Sorcery score of 45% or more and access to POW16 or more).

Searching the House

When the characters explore the house, they find nothing out of the ordinary... in a suspicious way. The house does not seem to be lived in at all and has no personal touches or signs of life. It is more like a stage set than anything else. If the characters keep investigating, they find more signs

that the place is strangely soulless and seems to conform to their expectations at every turn. There are lots of old cloth-bound books but they are all so boring that you cannot actually read them. There is a big TV but there is nothing worth watching on. Your attention just slides off everything in the house. If the players do not work it out from those clues, an Idea roll suggests that the whole place is under a glamour to look right and what the characters are seeing may not actually correspond with reality.

Wistman's Wood

The characters may try exploring the wood before the Wild Hunt's first ride. If they do so, they meet Richard de Redvers, who tries to order them out of the wood. If they sneak past, he hunts them. If they keep going, skip onto *In Wistman's Wood*, page 73.

The wood is quite small, covering less than 300 hectares, but it is extremely hard going. The slopes around the wood are steep and the rocks are covered in moss and slime. The trees range between 10 and 30 feet in height but grow at such weird angles that it is hard to find a clear route through the wood. Characters trying to move through the wood without compass or GPS must make Navigate checks to avoid getting lost.

Researching the Wood

Wistman's Wood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and has been the subject of several surveys in the past. The wood is one of three such copses of stunted oaks on Dartmoor. It is a primal woodland and has changed little in centuries.

The wood is small enough that you can walk around it in an hour. Going through it is another matter, however—in 1912, one geological survey group abandoned their expedition into the wood as they found the terrain too difficult. There are sections of the wood that are virtually inaccessible by foot.

The characters can research more about the wood either in Hesstock (the village shop has a few books about the wood in its tiny tourist section) or via the Laundry. There are dozens of ghost stories and fairy tales about the wood; the name 'Wistman's Wood' derived from the word *wisht*, or haunted. Some tales speak of the Wild Hunt riding out in search of sinners and the unbaptised. According to local accounts, the Hunt is only seen infrequently and it is always a bad omen. The last time when the hunt was seen regularly was in the 1920s.

5. Further Enquiries

Some of these clues require the characters return to Exeter. If they do so, then either encourage some of the characters to stay behind to keep an eye on the Centre, or else let them conduct investigations remotely via Laundry agents or police records in Exeter. Try to ensure that at least some of the investigators are in Hesstock when the Wild Hunt rides out—isolation breeds terror.

The Journalist

A journalist named Francis Palmer started writing a puff piece about how the economic downturn led to more domestic holidays and how different communities in Devon were taking advantage of the influx of visitors but his article has turned into something much more interesting. His research into the Satori Centre turned up the rumours about tax evasion and unethical behaviour involving Dr. Greg, so he started digging deeper. Then the bodies started piling up—at least four people have been killed or injured soon after leaving the Satori Centre. The centre has only been open for a month, so they are running at a casualty rate of nearly 10%, which is high even for an active-duty military unit. For a yoga centre, it is off the charts.

Dr. Greg refused to talk to him by phone, so Palmer decided to drive out to Hesstock in person. He started by talking to the locals and now he is heading to Redvers House. He arrives in mid-afternoon, probably in the middle of a yoga session.

The face-to-face interview with Dr. Greg lasts only slightly longer than the phone interview. As soon as Palmer arrives, Greg starts shouting about harassment, sceptic cultural terrorism and tabloid journalism. He dismisses any questions about deaths or mysterious disappearances at the centre as mere coincidence (*'and not the good kind of coincidence! Not the "synchronicity of the universal mind" but the "shit that doesn't mean anything!"'*) and points out that the two missing girls are not missing at all—they called their parents and are fine. When Palmer refuses to leave, John de Redvers appears and orders the journalist out.

Questioning Palmer: The characters can meet with Palmer down in the village after he is ejected from the Satori Centre. He is a journalist in his mid-40s who never got beyond the local newspaper level and is slightly bitter about it. He is a chain-smoker and has connections in local politics. He is hoping that there is something to this chain of deaths; 'HERO JOURNALIST FOILS AMERICAN CULT SERIAL KILLER' would look good on an election poster.

Palmer can tell the characters about the other disappearances and deaths. **David Kay** visited the centre a month ago and was found frozen and splattered in his garden—the police are not sure if he froze to death and was then thrown off a roof, or fell off a roof and then froze. **Susan** and **Mel Richards** visited Hesstock two weeks ago and went for a day treatment at the Satori Centre before vanishing on the moors. Finally, **Sophie Zolotas** crashed her car near the centre.

He asks if they have seen anything unusual at the Centre, or if they know anything about what is going on. When he leaves, he gives the characters his contact details and promises to ring them from Exeter tomorrow.

Palmer's Death: John de Redvers takes it upon himself to deal with the troublesome journalist. When Palmer drives back to Exeter, de Redvers deals with him the same way

he struck at Sophie Zolotas. As Palmer drives over the old bridge a short distance outside Hesstock, a pair of hairy, inhuman hands manifest on the steering wheel of his car and seize control. The car goes off the road and smashes into a tree at high speed, killing him instantly. He dies 20 feet from where Sophie Zolotas crashed.

David Kay

David Kay, an architect from Exeter, visited the Satori Centre one month ago. He was suffering from stress and was strongly considering a career change. His wife booked him into the centre to help him relax and consider his options. He found Dr. Greg's treatments very helpful and there is a glowing review of the centre in the guest book under Kay's name.

The Wild Hunt came for him after he left the centre. It plucked him out of his study through the window and tried to carry him off to Wistman's Wood. He managed to wriggle free of their grasp as they soared over Exeter and plunged to his death from 30,000 feet.

Investigating the Scene: The death happened a month ago, so the police have already completed a full investigation of the scene. There is no sign of forced entry. All the doors to the house were locked—as far as anyone can determine, Kay climbed out of the narrow window in his study, then clambered up onto the roof and jumped off.

Kay's Wife: She has accepted the explanation of suicide—David was under a lot of stress and while he seemed better after returning from the Satori Centre, she thinks it all caught up with him one night and he could not take it any more.

Eyewitness Reports: Checking newspapers or online forums turns up a few reports of strange lights and UFOs in the skies over Exeter. One posting even suggests that 'the frozen jumper' jumped out of a flying saucer.

Kay's Jacket: There is one niggling problem with the suicide theory: Kay's jacket was missing. The last time he was seen, he was wearing a leather jacket but there was no sign of it on his body. The characters may find the jacket while exploring Wistman's Wood—see page 73.

Ask Dr. Greg: Greg admits that David Kay was treated at the centre but takes no responsibility for the suicide. You cannot expect three days of yoga and meditation to solve everything.

Sophie Zolotas

Sophie Zolotas is a Greek woman in her 20s; she was a student in Exeter University and had been living in England for the last eight years. She visited the Centre last week for a three-day course of treatment. She also visited the pub in town twice and made friends with the locals. While driving out of Hesstock, she crashed her car and was severely injured. She has yet to awaken from her coma.

Medical Investigations: Zolotas is currently in intensive care at a hospital in Exeter. If the characters contact the hospital and either bluff their way in or use Warrant Cards, they can get access to her medical records. Her injuries in the crash were enough to knock her unconscious and possibly cause her coma but her doctors have also found a fungal infection in her brain. It appears to be a form of *aspergillus flavus*; they also found dirt-encrusted scratches on her hands and forearms, suggesting that she had been pushing her way through brambles or holly bushes. The fungus might have entered her bloodstream there but aspergillosis affecting the nervous system is very rare except in the case of patients who are already immuno-compromised. Her brain activity is extremely erratic, suggesting ongoing degradation of her nervous system.

Her family have gathered around her bedside, in preparation for the inevitable.

The Crash: Zolotas crashed her car on the old bridge, just outside Hesstock. She was found by a local farmer, Big Ed, who recognised her from the pub and called an ambulance. If questioned, Big Ed says he saw Zolotas' car swerve off the road as if she was aiming to kill herself. A few passers-by mutter about the 'Hairy Hands', a local legend. According to the story, the Hairy Hands are the ghostly remains of a madman who seizes the wheel of cars on the road where he died and tries to steer the victims to their death.

If the characters ask questions of a drunken Big Ed, he admits that he thought he saw something that day. When he arrived at the crash site, he swears he saw a white figure leaning through the smashed windscreen of the car, trying to pull the girl out of the wreckage. When Ed arrived, the ghost vanished.

Ask Dr. Greg: He remembers Zolotas; she took to his Quantum Tunnelling therapy very well and made real progress in deconstructing her world view in a short time.

The Richards Sisters

Susan and Mel Richards were a pair of Australian backpackers, exploring England on their gap year. They arrived in Hesstock two weeks ago and did a one-day treatment session before setting off on a long hike across Dartmoor. They have not been seen since. They are not officially missing persons—their parents got a strangely stilted text message from Susan's phone a week ago, saying the pair are fine and will be out of touch for a few weeks while travelling in Scotland. (This text message was actually sent by Richard de Redvers, after it was reported that the hunt for the girls might be called off if they got in touch. He got Dr. Greg to demonstrate how to use a mobile phone.)

Search Parties: Several attempts were made to find the girls during the week between their disappearance and the text message but there was no sign of them. They were last seen leaving Hesstock village heading in the direction of Moretonhampstead. Their path would have taken them through Wistman's Wood.

6. The Hunt Rides Out

The Wild Hunt rides to gather the unbaptised, the criminal, the fearful... and, these days, the people who were receptive to Dr. Greg's quantum tunnelling nonsense. Unformatted minds, basically; minds that the Herla can adapt to its use. It also rides to eliminate those who threaten the Herla. The Player Characters *might* fall into the first category. They *definitely* fall into the second.

Twilight

At twilight, the four de Redvers ride into the woods, wearing hunting jackets and accompanied by their pack of hounds. The characters will spot this movement only if they have the house under observation. Soon afterwards, the temperature around Wistman's Wood and the valley drops precipitously, as if the whole valley were in a supernatural cold spot.

The Wild Hunt

The Hunt rises from the heart of Wistman's Wood. From a distance, it looks like a shimmering streamer of milky-white light. The characters can hear the baying of hounds and the sound of hunting horns. As it comes closer, the characters can make out figures within the hunt—nude figures clinging to spectral horses, slaving Yeth Hounds and weird tendrils snaking through the heart of the host. A successful Difficult Spot check (made Easy if the character has access to binoculars) lets him recognise one or more of the de Redvers amid the hunt.

The hunt rides across the sky, heading east. Sanity Loss for seeing the hunt is 1/1D6. Call for Luck checks from all those who see the hunt. Those who fail are marked by the hunt, which will have repercussions in Section 7, *Dead by Dusk*.

The Prey

The hunt rides to Exeter and hunts down Jeremy Hayes and Sophie Zolotas.

Hayes is its first quarry. It tracks him down while he is driving on a back road outside the town. The hunt swoops down and wrenches Hayes out of his car by tearing off the roof, then carries him off into the sky.

The hunt then heads towards the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in search of Sophie Zolotas. Exeter is at the extreme edge of the hunt's effective range, so the hunters dare not assault the hospital directly. The hunt swirls around the building in frustration before releasing a few Yeth Hounds. The hounds materialise in the intensive care unit and attack both staff and patients, driving them away from Zolotas' bed. Once

NO WITNESSES?

It is possible that your characters are not in a position to see the Wild Hunt when it rides out. To be honest, I am not sure how they would manage this—if they are not in Hesstock, then they are probably investigating events in Exeter, where they would also encounter the Hunt. Player Characters do the craziest things, though, and it is possible that your group were trying to exorcise sheep or frantically researching Arthurian legends when they should be watching the night sky. If they do manage to miss the hunt, then Dr. Greg can bear witness instead and tell the PCs about it the next day. He will consider it a mystic dream vision as opposed to a supernatural encounter.

STORMING REDVER HOUSE

If the characters observed the de Redvers during the hunt, they may choose to break into the mansion to investigate. Under the effect of the glamour, the de Redvers appear to be sleeping in their bedrooms instead of nesting under trees and the house looks like a house, not a ruin in the middle of a copse of dwarf oak trees.

However, in the hours after the hunt, the Herla's energies are focussed on assimilating the new victims and it cannot fully maintain the protective glamour. When exploring the house, the characters' perceptions may 'flash' between the glamour and the reality. They momentarily see the ground under their feet as leaf-strewn dirt, not carpet; they see the de Redvers as moonlight-skinned spectres, not humans.

The de Redvers awaken if any of them are injured. The creatures can be killed but not destroyed—the Herla can resurrect them if they are slain.

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the room is clear, the de Redvers smash through the window and steal her away.

Mysterious disappearances in the middle of nowhere are one thing. Eldritch extraction missions in important regional hospitals are another kettle of mad fishmongers entirely and this incident certainly draws the Laundry's attention. If the characters contact head office, they will be informed of the strange events in Exeter.

The Hunt Rides Home

The Hunt returns to Wistman's Wood four hours after it departed. The de Redvers ride out of the wood an hour after that, returning to their house. They are exhausted by their long ride and can barely maintain the appearance of

being human. If encountered in this state, the de Redvers behave in an obviously inhuman way; they fall back into early 18th-century speech patterns, forget to breathe and generally act like alien monsters.

As the hunt vanishes into the depths of the wood, any characters who were marked by the hunt experience a moment of unnatural terror, causing them to lose 1/1d4 SAN.

7. Dead by Dusk

After the Wild Hunt rides out, the characters have only a day before it comes for them. The characters need to complete their investigations and find a way to defeat the Herla before they are devoured.

THE HUNT COMES FOR THE CHARACTERS

When darkness falls, the Hunt rides out again in search of new prey—the Player Characters. The Hunt rises from the heart of Wistman's Wood and rides across the sky. It homes in on the general vicinity of the characters, wherever they are. If they are in the Satori Centre, the Hunt descends there. If they are trying to flee the town, then it might chase them down on the road. If they have taken refuge in Exeter, the Hunt besieges wherever they are staying. The only safe places are locations out of range of the Hunt (London is pushing the Herla's resources) or somewhere with powerful warding spells (like the Laundry).

The Hunt: The Hunt consists of a host of flying Yeth Hounds, accompanied by the unglamoured forms of the four de Redvers. There are also innumerable lesser spirits, the psychic echoes of previous victims of the Herla. The characters may recognise the ghostly forms of Jeremy Hayes and Sophie Zolotas in the host of spirits.

Evading the Hunt: Characters may make Stealth and Hide checks to evade the Hunt. The difficulty of these checks is initially Easy, then Average and eventually moves onto Difficult as the hounds get closer. Staying on the move is the best way to avoid the hunt. As soon as a check is failed, the hounds catch the character's scent and charge towards him.

There are a dozen Yeth Hounds, who are trained to attack but not to kill. As soon as a character is brought down by the hounds, one of the de Redvers swoops down to grab the character and carry him away. The hunt departs as soon as it has four victims.

Defending against the Hunt: The Hounds and the de Redvers are Class Three demons and can be kept out with a warding spell or countermagic like Warding Tape. They can overwhelm such defences, given time, by channelling more power from the Herla.

Firearms are next to useless against the Hunt. You can temporarily knock out a Yeth Hound or de Redver with a well-placed shot (and Banishing Rounds work even better) but they will respawn back at Wistman's Wood. The characters might be able to wipe out the entire hunt if they have got a lot of firepower but that is only a temporary solution.

Victims of the Hunt: Any Player Characters grabbed by the Wild Hunt are carried off across the sky to Wistman's Wood. Sanity Loss for a wild ride across the sky in the icy hands of an undead host is 1d3/1d8. If all the Player Characters are captured, then skip onto Section 9, *The Herla*. If some of the characters are captured and others escape, then the free characters can attempt to rescue their captured companions.

Contacting the Laundry

If the characters handed over their phones to Dr. Greg, then those phones are gone. During the night, John de Redvers sneaks into the Satori Centre and destroys them while they are locked inside the office. The characters find the phones smashed to pieces and covered in leaf mould and dirt.

Attempts to use the landlines are equally doomed. There is only one phone line out of the village; it runs through a spur of the wood and it has a habit of breaking at the most inconvenient times. Like now. Look, it is in-genre. The phone lines always go down, trapping our heroes in the creepy little town.

If the characters managed to hide their phones, or just ignored poor Dr. Greg's requests, they can call in support from the Laundry. Their superiors will forbid them from running away but can send a car down with a boot full of occult weapons, defensive charms, scrying goggles and other useful gadgets, like napalm. The attack on the hospital in Exeter has the Laundry on edge and if the characters seem to be in position to put an end to the threat, the Laundry will give them the tools they need.

Of course, the car may fall prey to the same magical defences that keep the characters from easily leaving Hesstock. That Laundry van full of shiny basilisk guns and charms might take a dive into the River Arrow (see *Fleeing Hesstock*).

Fleeing Hesstock

The characters may decide that discretion is the better part of valour and drive out of Hesstock before nightfall. The Herla does not let its prey go so easily. As the characters approach the old bridge, a pair of Hairy Hands appears in the car and grabs the steering wheel. Call for a difficult (x1/2) Drive roll.

If the roll is a Special Success, then the character manages to keep control of the car. The characters can continue driving—the Hunt will come for them at nightfall (see sidebar).

If the roll is a success, then the car is forced into a wall, wrecking it. All passengers take 1d6 damage.

If the roll is a failure or worse, then the car goes through the wall and nose-dives into the River Arrow. All passengers take 1d6+1 damage and must make Endurance rolls to avoid being knocked unconscious for several hours by the impact.

Deductions and Revelations

If your players are still floundering and have no clear direction, then a merciful GM might drop a few hints. Any character with Sorcery, Computers (Magic) or Science (thaumaturgy) knows that the Wild Hunt they saw was a powerful unnatural manifestation. Whatever created that cannot have been native to our universe, so it must be using a lot of computational

power. Either there is a Beowulf cluster of computers in the middle of the forest, or they are using some other source for their arcane power. There must be something in the heart of the forest that is powering the hunt.

8. Into Wistman's Wood

The source of the Wild Hunt is somewhere deep in Wistman's Wood. To defeat the Herla, the characters must march bravely into the haunted forest. You must gather your party before venturing forth.

Wistman's Wood is a bizarre landscape. The oak trees grow at crazy angles from the hillside and it is hard to tell gnarled root from twisted branch in places. The floor of the forest is a treacherous mix of moss-covered rocks and sucking mud. Slip and you are likely to snap your ankle or fall into a bog. The forest covers steep hills with no flat areas—you are either struggling uphill or sliding down. It is eerie and beautiful, assuming that you can see it and it is not clouded in one of the impenetrably thick fogs that descend with alarming speed.

Richard de Redvers

The head of the family patrols the fringes of the wood, keeping trespassers from getting too close to the Herla. If the characters go into Wistman's Wood before they first see the Wild Hunt, they may be chased out by Richard. However, if they go in after they have seen the hunt, then they will not encounter Richard until the final battle with the Herla; otherwise, the conversation would just be absurdly awkward:

Richard: Get off my lawn! I mean, my eldritch primal woodland!

Smartass PC: Didn't we see you flying naked in the moonlight last night at the head of the wild hunt?

Richard: ...maybe...

Smartass PC: That does rather diminish your authority as local landowner, you know.

Navigating the Wood

A successful Navigate check ensures that the characters manage to keep their bearings and can make it through the wood without difficulty. If the check is failed, the characters become lost until they can work out a way to re-orientate themselves or waste an hour retracing their path. This is merely irritating if the characters are exploring the wood during the day but can be life-threatening if they are racing against the Wild Hunt.

GPS and compasses do work in the outer reaches of the wood but are prone to failure once the characters get close to the Herla. Call for Luck checks from any character using a navigational aid—if the check fails, then the GPS loses its signal or the compass starts spinning wildly.

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Sympathetic magic can also be used to navigate through Wistman's Wood, if the characters have a magical link to one of the Herla's victims.

The Jacket

The first clue that the characters find while exploring the wood is a leather jacket, caught in the upper branches of a stunted oak. It has obviously been exposed to the weather for several weeks; it is soaking wet and very battered. Searching the pockets of the jacket turns up a set of house keys and a wet mush that used to be a pocket full of business cards and notes. In the slightly more sheltered inside pocket is a clip of business cards belonging to 'David Kay, Architect'.

This jacket belonged to David Kay, who was attacked by the Wild Hunt a month ago. He slipped out of the jacket and fell to his death, and the hunters dumped the garment as the Hunt dispersed.

Warding Spells

As the characters approach the heart of Wistman's Wood, they all feel the first twinges of an impending migraine. They recognise this as the effect of a misdirection ward, like the ones that defend Dunwich and other secret Laundry facilities. Their own personal defensive spells ensure that they can penetrate this misdirection, as long as they are aware of it. It does mean that whatever is on the far side of this misdirection has gone undisturbed by casual passers-by and ramblers. It is even possible that no-one has entered this section of the woodland in a very, very long time. This is primal woodland, after all, and there are creatures out there that are much older than humanity.

The Escaped Prisoner

Once the characters are past the warded boundary, they hear the baying of Yeth Hounds, not far away and getting closer. They are not after the Player Characters, though—they are homing in on a different moving target, who is stumbling and crawling through the trees in blind panic. As she gets closer, the characters see a mud-covered woman wearing the ragged remains of hiking clothes. It is Mel Richards, one of the two hikers who went missing two weeks ago. She looks like she has been buried underground since then and has just forced her way out of the grave.

There are three Yeth Hounds chasing her; the characters need to either kill or banish the hounds or grab Mel and flee. The Australian girl is exhausted and terrified beyond rational thought and will have to be carried if the characters try fleeing.

Mel Richard's Tale

Once the characters have escaped or defeated the Yeth Hounds and calmed Mel down, they can ask her what happened to her. Mel is hovering on the verge of complete breakdown, so the players will have to be careful when questioning her.

She and her sister Susan left Hesstock intending to hike to Moretonhampstead but a fog descended on the moor and they got lost. They were looking for a place to make camp when the Hunt found them. They were carried up into the sky and brought to the forest where they were buried alive in shallow graves by these crazy silver people. There were roots in the grave and they squirmed and burrowed into her *skull*, oh god.

Then... it was as though something was trying to consume her mind. It reminded her of Dr. Greg's talk about reality tunnels, only it was not a tunnel, it was a hole straight down and it was trying to make her fall into it. She clung onto the thought that she had to save her younger sister Susan and that if she gave in, Susan would die. She fought for so long and then the thing was distracted and she was able to pull herself out of the grave. There were dozens of other graves in the weird wood and she started looking for Susan but then those dogs arrived and she had to run...

Examining Mel: There are several small wounds on her head that are encrusted with blood and some sort of bark. It appears that whatever bored into her skull spread out and could have extruded tiny tendrils into her brain. She is also coughing up a lot of blood and is suffering joint pain, which could be symptoms of aspergilliosis fungal infection. Finally, she is severely dehydrated, exhausted and in need of medical attention as soon as possible.

Into the Wood: Mel can guide the characters to the Herla. The place she escaped from is not far away.

9. The Herla

If you did not know what you were looking for, you could walk right past it. The Herla's lair is on the steep side of a rocky outcrop, in a shallow cave. A few stunted oaks grow from the side of the hill; a botanist would be intrigued and confused by the trees' absurdly complicated interwoven root system and would be alarmed by the cornucopia of fungal growths and parasites in the bark. At night, the branches wave but not with the wind. At certain times of the year, the whole glade fluoresces with colours not normally seen on Earth.

While the oak trees in the glade are healthy despite the weird ecosystem of parasites and fungi, the surrounding woodland is noticeably greyer and sickly compared to the rest of the wood, as if these trees are drawing strength from the rest of the wood.

There are dozens of shallow graves hidden in the roots of the trees. Some are centuries old; others were dug the night before. It is here that the Herla keeps its victims, using their brains as peripherals to boost its magical processing ability. They last only a few months before their brains break down but in this time the Herla can call up the Wild Hunt and find more replacements.

There are two ways that the characters can end up here—the good way and the bad way. The good way involves

them walking voluntarily into the Herla's lair. The bad way is being carried here by the Wild Hunt. Let us deal with the bad way first.

The Bad Way

The hunt spirals down towards Wistman's Wood. You catch a glimpse of the lights of Hesstock village before you plunge through a fog bank and dive into the forests. Your captor drops you from a height onto the muddy ground. You land heavily in... a newly dug grave. That can't be good.

The Wild Hunt lands around you. Mary de Redvers leans down into the grave. 'Your soul will feed ours! The Herla thirsts for your life! O Herla, God of the Hunt, take this offering and feast upon it!'

Tree roots spring from the earth at the head of the grave and wriggle towards you, probing for your head. You try to struggle but Mary grabs you and drags you by the skull towards the roots. You feel dirt and wet tendrils being dragged over your face, then the root plunges into your skull and you hear a loud crack. Everything goes black.

Some time later, consciousness returns. There is a weight on your whole body and you cannot see anything. You are buried alive. There is something in your head, inside your skull. You can feel the roots squirming around under the skin of your scalp. They have gone in through every gap in your skull, through the eye sockets and the ears and in through the tiny gaps between the fused bones in your skull. You know this because you can feel these gaps. You'd throw up but you'd only get a mouthful of grave dirt.

Worse—and worse is relative in this situation—you are getting uncomfortably warm. Your oath to the Laundry carried with it certain restrictions. You are magically barred from betraying the Laundry. If you were to attempt to do so, you would die first. In fact, you would spontaneously combust. The growing feeling of warmth in your body is an indication that your oath is being triggered.

From the surface, you hear a frustrated wail. It is Mary de Redvers. 'It rejects them! Are they consecrated to another?' John replies to her. 'No, mother, we were careful. These are worthy sacrifices. Tell the Herla to keep trying.'

There are several problems that the characters must overcome in this situation.

Being Buried Alive: Firstly, the character must make a Sanity check (1/1d4) to cope with being buried

alive. Secondly, forcing your way out of a grave requires an Effort check. If the check succeeds, the character claws his way out of the dirt; if he fails, he is unable to force his way out without help.

Spontaneous Combustion: As the character is not wilfully breaking his oath, he is not going to burst into flames instantly. It is more that he is aware of the struggle between the Herla and his existing geases. A cruel GM might inflict one or two points of damage every so often on the character, to remind him of his predicament.

See also *I'm A Peripheral, Get Me Out Of Here*.

Being Surrounded: Mary de Redvers and four Yeth Hounds are always in attendance on the Herla; depending on the time and ongoing events, the other three members of her family may also be present. Any characters captured by the Wild Hunt will be stripped of obvious weapons—a character will not be buried alive with a shotgun but he might get away with a pistol in a concealed holster and they certainly will not recognise a mobile phone as a potential weapon.



The Good Way

You creep through the forest and come to a small glade in the shadow of a tor. The trees in the glade are strangely twisted and misshapen and have luridly lush foliage in comparison to the bareness of the surrounding wood. Up ahead, you spot a silvery-skinned naked figure squatting over a pile of loose earth, patting it down as if she's just finished burying someone in a shallow grave...

Sneaking up on the Herla means the characters have time to plan their counter-attack. Mary de Redvers is focussed on attending to the needs of the Herla and tending to the brain-suck victims in the graves, so she will not notice hidden PCs. The Yeth Hounds are more likely to track down intruders but the characters may be able to draw the hounds away with a distraction.

The Graves

While there are dozens of graves around here, most contain nothing but a few dry bones. The 'active' graves are the ones holding people the Hunt captured during its most recent period of wakefulness. In order of burial, there is a tramp whose disappearance was never reported, Susan Richards, Sophie Zolotas, Jeremy Hayes and any captured Player Characters. The graves are all dug with the head of the grave facing towards the oak trees, so the root network can bore into the buried victim's skull.

A character with Computer Use can spot the similarity between the root network and a PC network, with the graves as part of a computer cluster.

The de Redvers

The family that buries people as offerings to its alien god together, stays together. As soon as the PCs show up at the grove, Mary calls the rest of her family (by throwing back her head and letting out a freakish ululating cry) and Richard, John and Alice de Redvers ride out of the woods a few minutes later. The de Redvers have dealt with intruders before, so they will play with the Player Characters before grabbing them and sticking them in graves. They are over-confident, malicious and prone to lengthy monologues, like all good villains.

They have been servants of the Herla for centuries. They are not the first servants it has taken—the Hunt is older than humanity. There are a lot of perks to the job; virtual immortality and the thrill of the hunt being the two major ones. The Herla was forced to slumber through a long drought while it learned to consume these modern minds. These are much more confusing and tangled than the simple peasants it used to feed on but, thanks to the work of Dr. Greg, it has got a handle on the problem now. Soon, they will not need Dr. Greg any more and England shall be a banquet for the hunt.

The characters can try negotiating with the de Redvers but that is like the fox opening multilateral talks with the hounds and the huntsmen. They are inhuman monsters

now and empathy is not their strong point. They will only talk if the characters have clear leverage, like basilisk guns or the ability to do lasting damage to the trees, or if they have managed to bind one of their family in a magic circle. Even if the characters have such leverage, the family are unlikely to listen to reason.

Look, mater, they've come to us! Where's the fun in that? You foolish mortals, did you think you could deny us our victory? The Herla will have your brains to feast upon, but first... run!

Calling the Wild Hunt

When the de Redvers tire of talking to the characters, or if a fight starts, then the Player Characters get to witness the calling of the wild hunt. Silver mist pours out of the ground, lifting the de Redvers and the Yeth Hounds into the air. Horns sound from somewhere deep underground. Streamers of thaumic energy flow from the occupied graves to fuel the hunt.

The Wild Hunt soars into the sky, then turns to swoop down on the Player Characters. The hunt's tactics in the forest are to let the Yeth Hounds savage the fleeing prey until the victims are too weak to resist, then grab them and carry them off to the waiting graves. The PCs can use the trees as cover while they run but they are still in the nightmarish situation of being chased by a supernatural hunt through a dark forest full of insanely twisted trees and treacherously uneven terrain.

The characters do have one advantage—the hunt is a single entity, so if they split up, the hunt will only pursue one of them. A character could heroically lead the hunt away while the rest of the Player Characters double back and work out a way to deal with the Herla. They had better work fast, however, as a single character against the Wild Hunt is most likely a one-sided affair.

I'm A Peripheral, Get Me Out Of Here

It is possible that some of the PCs will end up buried and plugged into the Herla. If the character remains connected to the Herla's root system for too long, the creature can continue to undermine the Laundry's geas until it gains control of the character's brain, or until the unfortunate PC explodes, whichever comes first. While the Herla worms its way deeper into the brain, the character can see glimpses of the Herla's thoughts. Whatever an aeons-old alien mind that has been possessing an oak tree thinks about, it is nothing comprehensible.

A trapped character can attempt to send his consciousness out into the Herla's network. This costs 1d6 SAN but lets the character telepathically contact the other victims of the Herla, who are equally confused about what is going on. A character can also try to sabotage the Herla from within, by pitting his POW against the creature's effective POW of 16 on the Resistance table. If successful, the Herla is discomfited and the Hunt is distracted. Doing this angers the Herla, causing it to inflict 1d4 damage on the character.

Destroying the Herla

How do you deal with a problem like the Herla?

Fire: It's not big and it's not clever but you can just nuke the thing by dousing it in petrol and setting it alight, or turning a basilisk gun on it. If the Herla's spiritual anchor is destroyed, it will be forced to exit this continuum.

Banishing: A Level Three banishing spell is needed to get rid of the Herla. Lower-level spells can work but must be matched against the Herla's POW, *plus* the collective POW of the victims. The Herla's got a POW of 16 on its own, plus 10 per living victim.

Alternatively, a character who is on the inside of the Herla's network can cast the banishing spell at the creature directly, so the Herla does not get the benefit of its peripherals.

Undoing it from Within: Similarly, a character with Sorcery or Computer Use (magic) who is currently part of the Herla could unravel the creature from within by turning the Hunt against it. Alternatively, the characters could induct one of the doomed victims into the Laundry and use the anti-betrayal geas/spontaneous combustion as a suicide bombing tactic.

Aftermath

As soon as the Herla is destroyed, the Yeth Hounds melt away into mist. The de Redvers hold on to their integrity for a few seconds, long enough to let out a few anguished screams and Wicked Witch impressions before joining their dead dogs.

Redvers House vanishes as the glamour fades away. Dr. Greg happens to witness this and the sight of a country house transforming into a ruin in an instant triggers a drug flashback. The poor, deluded 'doctor' is last seen running across Dartmoor, his bathrobe trailing behind him like a great tan bat.

The victims of the Herla may survive, if they receive medical treatment promptly enough. Subsequent Laundry investigations of the site discover hundreds of remains buried in the grove, dating back to prehistoric times.

Defeating the Herla is worth 1d8 Sanity Points and 1d4% Status.

The Satori Centre is not approved as a retreat centre for troubled Laundry staff.

Player Handouts

Handout#1—SATORI BROCHURE

.....

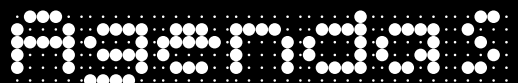
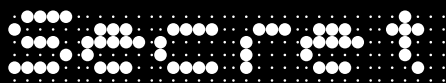
SATORI REJUVENATION RETREAT CENTRE

Come find yourself again! Cast off the stress and pain of the modern world and rejuvenate yourself under the expert care of Dr. Greg Satori, healer and spiritual guide. The Satori Centre offers week-long and weekend breaks and can cater for the needs of any individual, couple, group or organisation. Located in the scenic village of Hesstock on the grounds of historic Redver House, the Satori Centre is your gateway into a better tomorrow.

- ✿ Directed meditation.
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Dr. Greg Satori: Dr. Satori has trained under some of the greatest healers and shamans in the world. He has visited the Amazon, Tibet, Kenya and the Pacific Islands and consolidated all these ancient wellness systems into one syncretic whole—the Satori Total Awareness Program.
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As a special introductory offer, the Satori Centre is pleased to offer 25% off any group bookings of four or more.
Contact our bookings office for more information.



'Since knowledge is but sorrow's spy, It is not safe to know'

—William Davenant

The disintegration of the Soviet Union resulted in a large portion of a superpower's arsenal finding its way onto the black market. If you have the right connections, you can buy anything from an AK-47 to an aircraft carrier. The thought of Soviet nuclear technology or biological weapons falling into the wrong hands is a nightmare for every western intelligence agency—including the Laundry.

The Soviets had their own occult research groups, their own computational demonologists. Most of these groups were part of the Thirteenth Directorate and are still operational in Russia. Others were shut down and confirmed destroyed in the years since the fall of communism.

In 2003, the Laundry began Operation RED QUEEN, aimed at locating certain key Soviet occultists. RED QUEEN targets were deemed too valuable to be left uncontrolled. If necessary, a target could be eliminated or made safe using a memory-erasure geas, but the primary goal of RED QUEEN was to recruit ex-Soviet computational demonologists and sorcerers before the Black Chamber got to them. The Chamber has proved willing to use assets that would make Stalin think twice. The RED QUEEN list, a database of targets and their current locations, took the Laundry years to assemble. Creating the RED QUEEN list involved powerful divination spells, years of research, dozens of field agents, spies and more than 10 million pounds of taxpayers' money.

Now, the Black Chamber has it. Someone leaked the list to the Laundry's biggest rival.

Normally, this would be a case for the Auditors. They would come in and ask penetrating questions, backed up by truth-compulsion spells and mind reading charms. The Auditors get to the bottom of things. Nothing can be hidden from their sight.

Unless the leak comes from *within* the Auditor's office...

A, B and C

Only three people in the Laundry had access to the particular version of the RED QUEEN List that the Black Chamber obtained. One of those three must be the spy.

Subject A: Annabel Gladstone.

If there is no glamour in spying, she did not get the memo. Annabel is a stunning blonde/brunette/redhead (delete as appropriate depending on current disguise)



with a degree in Anthropology and black belts in six different martial arts. She was a freelance occultist specialising in rare books and artefacts and the selling of such items to the highest bidder, until a disaster in Malta three years ago forced her to join the Laundry for protection.

Subject B: Paul Brown.

A Laundry man all his life, Brown was recruited straight out of university. He is pale as a cave fish and smells of



musty old tomes. Even by the standards of the Laundry, he is a bit spooky. He rarely leaves the Stacks, preferring to communicate with the outside world via email.

Subject C: Auditor Curtis.

Here is how you become an Auditor. You rise through the ranks of civil service management. You work hard, build a good career for yourself, establish a reputation as a woman who gets things done and under budget. You do so well, in fact, that they push you into a deep dark hole



called the Laundry and fill your brain with sorcery. The power changes you, inevitably and irreversibly. When you have got the magical power to compel and command, to bind and to hold, to treat other humans as tools to be manipulated by your will alone, it makes maintaining a family life very hard indeed....

The Sopov Incident

Filip Sopov was a Russian sorcerer, part of a project called the ZMEY Working Group. The project was shut down in 1997 and Sopov went underground. The Laundry tracked him down as part of RED QUEEN. Paul Brown wrote a report on Sopov's work and recommended that they try to recruit him. Annabel Gladstone was sent to Moscow to finalise Sopov's extraction but the operation went wrong. Sopov was killed by an assassin before Gladstone could secure him.

There were several problems with Gladstone's report on Sopov's death, so both she and Brown were Audited by Curtis. As part of this Audit, the RED QUEEN list was updated to include Sopov's death—and it is that version of the list that the Black Chamber obtained. Therefore, it must have been either Gladstone, or Brown, or Curtis who leaked the document.

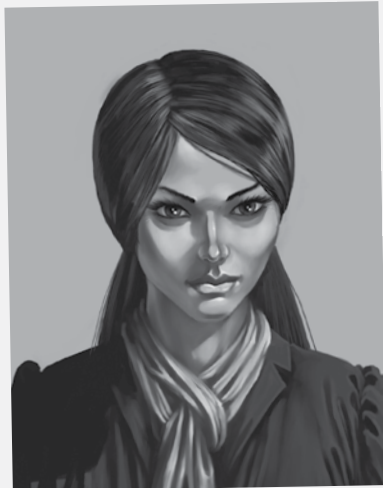


What's Really Going On...

.....
We have met A, B and C. Now here is D, E and F.

Subject D: Aleksandra Danovna.

Subject D is an ex-Thirteenth Directorate operative. She has been looking for Sopov and the rest of the ZMEY Working Group for years. The ZWG went rogue before being shut down. They switched sides—and in the great game that all the occult intelligence agencies are playing, there are only two sides: Us and Them.

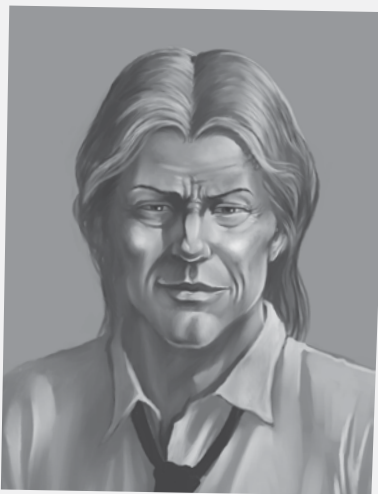


The ZWG turned from being occultists into cultists; they began worshipping Yog-Sothoth and propitiating the god with sacrifices. Sopov was the last high priest of the cult and Danovna killed him in a lonely Moscow subway.

At least, she tried. Sorcerers are hard to kill.

Subject E: Ed Baler

Subject E is Ed Baler, a Black Chamber agent. He is an old friend of Annabel Gladstone and met with her in Moscow—a fact she left out of her report, which led to the whole Audit in the first place. Baler is the friendly face of the Black Chamber: he is not a remote-controlled zombie, neither does



he have a succubus riding shotgun on his brain, he's not wearing a suit made of human skin and he has not sold his soul to any extra-dimensional horrors.

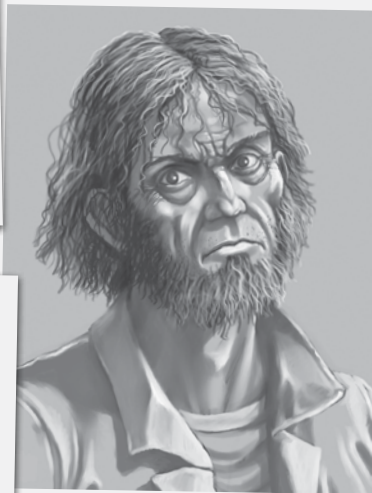
Baler is currently in London to find out who handed the Black Chamber a copy of the sensitive RED QUEEN List, which he believes was an overture to a defection.

Subject F: Filip Sopov

Finally, there is F—the late Filip Sopov. Computational demonologist turned cultist and priest of Yog-Sothoth, who dreams of opening the gates and bringing his master through to devour this world. Sopov lacked the strength to complete this ritual—he was dying of cancer—so he developed a way to transform his mind into a psychic virus, a possessor entity that could inhabit other, healthier bodies. He never managed to put this scheme into operation, as the mind-transfer spell requires both time and a close connection with the target.

When he was killed by Aleksandra Danovna, he managed to jump his mind into that of Annabel Gladstone. He hid inside her mind until she returned to the Laundry, whereupon he was able to infect Paul Brown. Now, he seeks to find a way to infiltrate the mind of the Auditor, Curtis. An Auditor is an accomplished and powerful mage and Sopov can use Curtis' power to summon Yog-Sothoth.

To break into Curtis' mind, Sopov needs all the power he can muster. If he can fully control the other two victims, he can draw on them to fuel his assault on Curtis.



Sopov leaked the RED QUEEN list to the Black Chamber, as a petty act of malice—he hates his former colleagues and believes that handing them over to the monsters in the Black Chamber is the best revenge. He possessed Brown's body and used him to send a copy of the list to the US Embassy in London.

Special Observation

.....
As part of this mission, the characters are assigned to watch Subjects A, B and C. They will be questioning them, spying on them, following them... and they will also be in their dreams, thanks to a Destiny-Entanglement spell. This magic allows the characters to step into the subconscious imaginings of the three targets, to trawl their psyches for clues about the leak.

As an unplanned side effect, it means that the Player Characters get to play hide-and-seek with Sopov the sorcerer.

Office Politics

.....
Part of the reason that the characters have this mission is an ongoing feud between Cabot of Counter-Subversion

BLACK BAG JOBS

and Curtis the Auditor. The two loathe each other—Cabot is jealous of Curtis' power and believes he would make a much better Auditor, while Curtis thinks Cabot represents the worst possible use of mind-controlling magic. She worries about the future of the Laundry if the power of the Auditors were to be used to its fullest, annihilating free will.

Mission Overview

The Player Characters are selected specifically because they know nothing about this mission and have no connection to the three subjects. They are briefed secretly by the Counter-Subversion Office and given dossiers on all three subjects before being destiny-entangled.

After that, the investigation is up to the Player Characters. There is a separate section for each subject of the investigation; the Gamemaster should jump between sections as needed. However, Curtis' dream should be run last, as it is the conclusion of the main plot of the mission.

- There are also sections for the other three major NPCs (Danovna, Bales and Sopov). These three show up as the investigation proceeds to complicate matters.
- Danovna's mission is to find out if Sopov is still alive and to warn the Laundry that the ZMEY Working Group turned into a cult.
- Bales' mission is to find out who contacted the Black Chamber with the RED QUEEN list. He initially assumes that Gladstone leaked it and suspects she wants to defect.

Sopov shows up only in the three dream sequences, as he tries to break in to Curtis' mind so he can use her power.

1. Wilderness of Mirrors

You sometimes suspect that Human Resources is actually some bizarre psychological experiment on human suffering that will end only when you run screaming out of the building. Every time you endure another one of their little indignities, they put a little tick in the checkbox marked 'still suffering'. This afternoon's meeting promises to be a

BUT I ALREADY WORK FOR CSO!

In the unlikely event that one of the Player Characters already works for the Counter-Subversion Office, then put that character in charge of the investigation. Cabot tells him that he is the department's designated mushroom, kept in the dark until needed. Now, it is time for the mushroom to shine...

perfect example—you have all been ordered to attend a meeting on improving reporting standards. You have been to meetings like this before. It will be a dozen people in a hot, airless room trying to fend off migraines while some HR troll talks about taking ownership of problems and the proper use of cc lists.

This meeting is not even in the usual conference room—you have to stumble through a maze of corridors and staircases to get to Room 342. Judging by the furniture and the decor, this place was last used in the '60s and the decorator was both colour-blind and psychotic. The wallpaper oozes in a way that wallpaper really shouldn't.

Then the door opens and three high-grade managers walk in, followed by a technician carrying some serious hardware. This is not the advertised meeting at all...

The chairman of the meeting introduces himself as Cabot, Director of the Counter-Subversion Office. He is a raving paranoid as soon as he gets going, prone to fits of rage and extremely creative insults. He transferred in from MI6 (more accurately, MI6 dumped him on the Laundry, for reasons that will quickly become obvious). He is convinced there are Black Chamber spies everywhere in the Laundry and trusts no-one. Unfortunately, this time he has actually got proof that the Black Chamber are spying on the Laundry, which makes him doubly insufferable.

Cabot is the characters' main superior for this mission, so the Gamemaster should cultivate a distinct tone of voice and mannerisms for him. Cabot is a notorious drunk and prone to what would be embarrassing gaffes in anyone else—he is racist, sexist and verbally abusive. His attitude that 'the foreign bastards' will try to get you with blackmail, bribery, or by appealing to your ideals, so if you are absolutely shameless, have simple tastes and have no moral compass or loyalty to a cause, you are incorruptible. Play him as loud, abusive and abrasive.

The Initial Briefing

'Right. I've not worked with any of you lot before. I'm Cabot, head of the Counter-Subversion Office. As of now, you're all reassigned to my department. You don't talk to anyone outside the CSO about anything. You don't tell anyone anything without running it past my desk first.'

He throws a sheaf of papers onto the table. It is mostly standard stuff—timeslips, non-disclosure forms, confirmation letters, equipment registration—but at the back there is a waiver for something called 'Group DE2 Oneiromantic Binding'. Cabot growls at you to sign.

'Good. You've all got RED KNIGHT clearance, which qualifies you to be at this meeting.'

He holds up a folder. This is the RED QUEEN list. Took us the best part of 10 fucking years to assemble. It's the most complete inventory of the post-Soviet unconventional arsenal that exists outside of the fucking Thirteenth Directorate. Every red sorcerer, every artefact, every godbomb, from Stalin's necromancy-fuelled invocation of Yog-Sothoth to the Akademik Fedorov undersea binding in 2007.

What you're going to fucking find out for me is how the fucking Black Chamber got their hands on the most recent version of RED QUEEN.

'We have three suspects. They're the only people who had access to the most recent draft of the document. There's a dossier on each of them prepared by my staff. Question each of them, put them under surveillance and find out which of them leaked the document to the Black Chamber.'

Hand out the three dossiers now (Handouts #1 & #2, #3 & #4 and #5).

Handout 1: A personnel file on Annabel Gladstone.

Handout 2: A report written by Gladstone, with comments by Curtis.

Handout 3: A personnel file on Paul Brown.

Handout 4: A report written by Paul Brown.

Handout 5: This should have been a personnel file on Auditor Curtis but she has magically altered it. When the characters open the dossier, they see handwritten text magically scrawling itself across the page.

Likely questions:

Why us? *Where there's one mole, there could be more. I can't trust anyone in my office—we'd be the first target for subversion. Not if the fucking Auditor is the mole.*

What exactly do you want us to do? *Find out who leaked the RED QUEEN list.*

Are the three suspects under arrest? *I fucking wish. No, they're not. They're all on light duties and they can't scratch without us knowing it but they're still at large in the community.*

What resources do we have? *You can draw on the CSO's budget if you need. You're also authorised to question the bastards on any topic using any means you deem necessary—and I've got a fucking closet full of medieval spiky bits. You are to figuratively and, if necessary, literally put their nuts in a vice and squeeze until the truth squirts out.*

How do we know the Black Chamber have the RED QUEEN list? *Never you mind. Ask more questions like that, and we'll be having a nice little chat, you and I. If you needed to fucking know that, I'd have fucking told you.*

This dossier on Auditor Curtis is... odd: Curtis used her magic to alter the dossier (see page 90 for more details). If shown the dossier, Cabot is enraged and rants about Curtis abusing her position.

Total Surveillance

'We're not going to let the bastards get away, are we? Frank, tell these fuckers what they've won.'

The technician opens up a big laptop and starts plugging peripherals into it. 'This is an experimental Destiny-Entanglement incantation, downstepped via an oneiromantic resonator and channelling the sympathetic link from a token pentacle. Class Two, by the way, so there's less danger of terminal psychic entanglement. You've got at least a week before any entanglement symptoms appear, and probably three months until there's any permanent.... anyway, that's not important. We'll be dispelling this entanglement well before that happens.'

Effectively, this ritual will enable you to share the dreams of the targets. It'll only render one oneiromantic visualisation at a time. While dreaming, you'll be in a lucid state and you'll retain full memories upon waking. The subject, though, shouldn't remember any more of the dream than normal.

We're using items of personal significance to charge the entanglement. Can you each give me a personal item, please?'

The characters may return to their cubicles if they do not have any personal items on them but even a Warrant Card would do in a pinch.

The items provided by the targets of the ritual are:

- A necklace with a dented and crushed bullet threaded onto it. Any character with Firearms or Medicine recognises a bullet that was probably dug out of someone's flesh. This is a keepsake belonging to Subject A, Annabel Gladstone—she was shot and nearly killed in Malta a few years ago. The necklace is there to remind her that life is short and precious.
- A first edition of a book of poetry, *The People of the Monolith*, published in 1926, which belongs to Paul Brown. The poems are all dark and doleful, redolent with hints of eldritch horror and the original author perished in a Hungarian madhouse. Brown was given this book as a graduation present.
- A family photograph—husband, wife and two kids. From the hairstyles and dress, this must have been taken in the late eighties. This was taken from Auditor Curtis' desk.

The targets do not know that these personal items were taken and the items will be returned immediately so no-one outside the Counter-Subversion Office knows about the Destiny Entanglement.

Once the characters provide suitable tokens of their own, the technician casts the destiny-entanglement spell. He explains that nothing will happen until the subjects are asleep—when any one of the targets is dreaming, the characters will be able to share in that dream.

Starting the Investigation

'Results. That's what fucking matters' says Cabot. 'Find the fucking mole quick. I'll be watching over your shoulder the whole time, so don't think you can treat this as another fucking fact-finding picnic. Get to it.'

2. Running the Investigation

In game terms, the characters have a budget of **50 points** and any surveillance requisitions are Easy, thanks to the characters' connections with the Counter-Subversion Office.

Subject A, B and C

The three targets of the investigation are discussed below. For each subject, there are four subsections in common, as well as any extra details that may be needed.

Playing describes how to roleplay the subject.

Interviewing discusses likely topics when the subject is questioned by the characters. Remember that these interviews are carried out in a truth compulsion enchantment, so the subject **cannot** lie. See the **Truth Compulsion** section.

Surveillance discusses the subject's movements and actions. The Player Characters will probably stalk/bug/scry on the subjects. See **Tailing and Surveillance**.

Dreams describes any notable dreams experienced by the subject (and hence shared by the characters). See **Dreamscapes**.

Truth Compulsion

One of the nastier geases used by the Laundry is the Truth Compulsion field. It is usually used by the Auditors when questioning people but some managers (such as Angleton) have their offices wired with truth spells for unofficial interrogations. The game effects of a Truth Geas are found in the *Laundry* core rulebook, but to summarise: avoid a question and you suffer agonising pain until you start telling the truth. Tell a lie deliberately and your bones get crushed, causing 1d3 damage per round until you recant your lies or the spell pulps you.

Tailing and Surveillance

Physically following someone uses the Stealth skill, opposed by the target's Spot. Knowledge (espionage) or Disguise can be used as complementary skills. The difficulty for tailing is Easy on a very crowded street, Normal in most circumstances and Difficult if there are few people around to provide cover. Proper tailing requires multiple people working in sequence to ensure that the subject does not spot the tail; if a single tail is following the target for more than a few minutes, the tail becomes obvious.

If the tail is spotted, the target may try to throw off the tail, usually using Stealth. Common tactics for losing a tail include rapid changes of direction or modes of transport (hopping on and off trains and taxis, suddenly darting into shops or side streets) or breaking line-of-sight and then adopting a quick disguise.

The characters may also try following a target using surveillance cameras. Police security cameras do not provide

complete coverage but it is possible to track a target around central London via camera.

Dreamscapes

While in a dream, the characters appear as 'themselves'—it is like being inside a virtual reality computer game (only, you know, not crap). The characters do not know which dream they are in unless they know which of the subjects is currently sleeping. The characters can interact with the dream-versions of people and objects and use their waking-world skills in the dream. They have whatever equipment they usually have on them—if it is part of a character's self-image that he is never without his smartphone, then he has a smartphone. If his gun is part of him, then he has his gun. If a player tries to argue that his character always feels like he has got a basilisk gun, or a tank, it is probably a subconscious cry for help and the character needs counselling.

It is possible to die in a dream—doing so costs the character 1d8 Sanity when he wakes up.

Have fun with the dreamscapes. All three are surreal in their own way. By the way, they are all inspired by Lovecraft stories (*The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, *The Statement of Randolph Carter* and (very, very, very loosely) *The Outsider*, respectively). Throw in strange events, meaningless references and confusing bits of weirdness—the characters are running around the subconscious of the subject, it does not have to make complete sense. In each dream, Sopov attempts to exercise more control over the subject and get closer to the dream-representative of Curtis.

You can run the dreams of Gladstone and Brown in any order but keep Curtis' dream for the climax of the scenario.

Investigation Timeline

Day 1: The mission to recruit Filip Sopov is approved.

Day 5 (Mon): WOLF GAMBIT (Annabel Gladstone) travels to Moscow. Secretly, she has dinner with her friend Ed Baler of the Black Chamber.

Day 6 (Tue): She interrogates Professor Lobachevsky and travels to the village where Sopov is hiding.

Day 7 (Wed): She returns to Moscow with Sopov. Sopov is killed in the subway by Danovna.

Day 9 (Thurs): Gladstone returns to the Laundry and makes her initial report.

Day 14 (Tues): The RED QUEEN list is leaked to the Black Chamber.

Day 20: (Tues): A Laundry spy reports on the leak to Cabot.

Day 21 (Wed): The characters are brought onto the case.

Day 22 (Thurs): Danovna and Baler arrive in the UK.

Day 23 (Fri): Sopov overwhelms Curtis' defences and possesses her. Unless stopped, he uses the Auditor's power to open up a Gate for Yog-Sothoth.

2. Subject A—Annabel Gladstone

Annabel is the wrong sort of secret agent. Under normal circumstances, the Laundry would never have recruited her—she is flashy, brash and acts before thinking. She has no patience for bureaucracy, she rebels against authority and she is not even British. However, she is intelligent, resourceful and damnably lucky. Give her a task and she will get it done.

Playing Annabel

Annabel tolerates working for the Laundry for three reasons. Firstly, she owes them a debt for saving her life. Secondly, when it is interesting, the work is *very* interesting—there are few places where you get to play with cutting-edge technology and ancient arcane artefacts at the same time. Thirdly, of course, they will not let her leave so she has to make the most of it. She is almost as clever as she thinks she is.

- Be super-confident. You are far better and smarter than anyone.
- Use your beauty to charm people or get them to underestimate you.
- The English expect you to be a brash, loud American—play to the stereotype if it annoys them.

Interview

When questioned, Annabel sticks to her report. She travelled to Moscow, interrogated Professor Lobachevsky, then went to Sopov's village. There, she convinced Sopov to return with her to England. Sopov agreed, they travelled back to Moscow and an assassin shot Sopov at Vykhino Station.

Of the three subjects, Annabel is the most likely to run afoul of the truth compulsion. She knows that she screwed up by meeting Ed Baler in Moscow, even though she is convinced that Ed would not betray her. She tries to keep the interrogation focussed on Sopov, to avoid awkward questions about her personal life.

Professor Lobachevsky: She dangled the professor out of a 6th-floor window to ensure that he told her the truth. The professor was very cagey when discussing Sopov; it was obvious that he did not want to admit he knew Sopov. There was no sign of any occult activity or paraphernalia in the professor's office and he did not seem to be an adept.

She warned Lobachevsky that if he told anyone what happened, she would be back.

Filip Sopov: Sopov's shack was filled with papers, which looked like mathematical formula. He burned the papers

before he left. There was an old stone tower next to the shack, which he used as a furnace. The scientist's main concern was avoiding scrying spells, suggesting that he had enemies who were looking for him using thaumaturgy. She took all the precautions she knew and the Laundry had provided her with a protective amulet for Sopov.

Sopov was a very sick man and the journey to Moscow exhausted him. She was worried that he would die of natural causes before they even reached England. His behaviour was strange but most old sorcerers are weird. He kept staring at her but she is used to that. He never discussed his work or the Laundry on the train to Moscow.

Sopov's Death: She did not recognise either of the two agents in the subway station. She never made it to the Laundry dead drop arranged by the Moscow office containing the disguise and travel papers for Sopov. She does not believe there was any way she could have saved Sopov's life—whoever killed him knew he was coming and had their shit together.

The RED QUEEN List: She has no idea who leaked it. She certainly did not do it.

Ed Baler: If the characters ask about her movements in Moscow, then Gladstone has to admit that she met a friend on Day 5 and ended up spending the night with him. This friend was Ed Baler. She knows Baler works for the Black Chamber, so if asked about him, she says (truthfully) that he works as a rare book dealer. This is Baler's cover identity; Gladstone knows the truth but will only admit that she met a Black Chamber officer if asked directly.

She and Baler have been friends since 2006; their work takes them to the same sort of places. Their friendship exists in random spaces, in airport lounges and archaeological digs and occult bookshops and mathematics conferences. They both know the other works for a rival occult intelligence agency, so they have resolved never to discuss professional matters. They have slept together casually several times. She is aware that this relationship is a serious breach of protocol but, despite this, wholeheartedly believes that she can trust Baler on a personal level and is careful never to let her relationship with him interfere with her duty to the Laundry.

Paul Brown: Brown's got his nose buried in old books and has never done any worthwhile field work. She does not think much of his skills as a historian either.

Auditor Curtis: Gladstone has not dealt with Curtis before.

Surveillance

While in London, Gladstone stays at a Laundry safe-house used for visiting officers. She has a flat in a village in Cornwall which is technically her home but she has not been there in months. When not at the Laundry offices underneath Mornington Crescent, she is either at the safe-house or out on the town.

BLACK BAG JOBS

Annabel Gladstone, Femme Fatale

STR 12 CON 10 SIZ 8 INT 16 POW 15 DEX 14 CHA 16 EDU 16 SAN 50 HP 9

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: None.

Artefacts: Class Two Ward, Warrant Card.

Skills: Appraise 50%, Bargain 40%, Brawl 75%, Bureaucracy 30%, Climb 60%, Disguise 50%, Dodge 50%, Fine Manipulation 55%, Firearm (handgun) 50%, Hide 40%, Kick Ass And Look Good 40%, Listen 60%, Persuade 55%, Research 40%, Sleight of Hand 45%, Spot 60%, Status 35%, Stealth 70%,

On day 21 (the first day of the mission for the PCs), she goes out to an exhibition opening at the British Museum and spends an enjoyable evening mocking eminent historians.

On day 22, she receives an email at one of her secure personal addresses from Ed Baler, letting her know he is in London. She meets with Ed that night—see **Ed and Annabel**, page XX.

Annabel's Dream

In the dream, the characters find themselves in a dream-version of a small town in Malta where Gladstone was shot in 2007 (see Handout #1). It is a sundrenched landscape, all golden sandstone and glittering marble. Thousands of cats gambol around the ruins. The characters can see the Mediterranean gleaming in the sunlight and can make out strange shapes moving under the waves.

A path leads up the hill to a small square, where there is a pleasant little cafe with white wrought-iron tables and excellent coffee.

The Cafe: Waiting in the cafe at the top of the hill is a young man with beautiful Egyptian features, like a boy-pharaoh with mocking dark eyes. He introduces himself as Ali Celik and admits that he is waiting for a courier. He invites the Player Characters to join him and asks what they are doing in Malta.

After a few minutes, Annabel arrives, carrying a briefcase. She looks warily around the square, spots Celik and walks towards him. Just then, a weird shadow passes over her.

Attack of the Shantak: The sky fills with nightmarish winged shantak-birds, huge beasts the size of horses with venomous claws and ugly bat wings. One of these birds

swoops down and slices its claw across Annabel's torso, severely wounding her. Another shantak grabs Celik and carries him off into the sky. The shantaks proceed to attack the characters, trying to drive them away from Annabel's briefcase. Sanity Loss for this experience is 1d3/1d10.

Annabel has six Hit Points left and loses one each round until someone makes a successful First Aid check to staunch the bleeding.

If the characters manage to open the briefcase, they find it contains Curtis' disembodied head, drenched in blood. Her lips move silently, as if she is still chanting a spell.

A Horror in Shining Armour: After a short time, a figure emerges from a shadowed alleyway and staunches the flow of blood from Annabel's wounds. In the original incident, Annabel was rescued by a Laundry officer, Martin Slate, but in the dream it is Ed Baler who is here to save her life. Baler asks the characters to fight off the shantaks while he treats her injuries. Call for Spot or Insight checks from anyone speaking to Baler; if successful, the characters realise that it is not Baler—it is Sopov disguised as Baler. For Sopov's stats, see page 94.

The dream ends when 'Baler' gets the briefcase, or if the characters stop him from obtaining it, or if Annabel bleeds to death in the dream. If 'Baler' gets the briefcase, then Sopov triumphs in the dream.

Other Topics

These lines of enquiry are all red herrings but may still come up in investigation.

The Laundry's Moscow Office: WOLF GAMBIT—the only codename they know Gladstone by—arrived in

Shantak Birds

STR 24 CON 13 SIZ 40 INT 3 POW 8 DEX 10 HP 23

Damage Bonus: +3d6

Weapons: Claw 30%, damage 1d6+damage bonus.

Armour: 5-point Hide.

Moscow on Day 5. They had already received notice from London of a possible extraction and informed WOLF GAMBIT through channels of a dead drop in a train station.

Ali Celik: The former Turkish intelligence operative is off the Laundry's radar but a little digging finds that he was caught by a US patrol in Northern Iraq and has not been seen since. Reading between the lines, he was probably trying to recover some Mukhabarat leftovers and got picked up by the Black Chamber. He has probably in a holding facility under Fort Dietrich in the United States.

Hans Volrath: Gladstone's former employer; a dealer in antiquities, especially illegal and pre-human ones. Volrath is still in business but Gladstone is no longer in contact with him.

Martin Slate: Slate was the Laundry officer who saved Gladstone's life in Malta. He is now working a desk job in the Laundry. He takes an avuncular interest in Gladstone but feels she is poorly suited to life in the Laundry and suspects he only delayed her meeting a messy end.

4. Subject B—Paul Brown

Paul Brown is a Laundry man through and through. There are not many places you can go with a history degree from Miskatonic, an obsession with death and phobia about social gatherings, sunlight and toothpaste. He has scurried from one book-lined dungeon to the next for his whole career.

The Laundry is the only life he has ever known.

Playing Brown

Brown rehearses everything he intends to say and gets easily flustered when forced to improvise. A conversation with him is like talking to an academic textbook that degenerates into a word salad when you question it. He is nervous, foul-smelling and spooky but also highly intelligent and diligent. He has a few close friends, mostly other researchers and occultists.

Interview

Although he worked in the Auditors' department for several years, Brown has never been on the wrong side of a truth compulsion geas. He is terrified of breaching any regulations or directives; he is one of the few Laundry employees who actually acts on every memo from Human Resources.

Filip Sopov: Brown points to his original report on Sopov if asked questions about the dead Soviet. He does not know why Sopov was living in a village in the middle of nowhere; Brown expected Sopov to be living under an assumed name in Moscow and working at the MPEI. The village suggests that Sopov was in hiding.

Sopov's Death: He does not know who killed Sopov but there are several possibilities in his mind. First, it is possible that the Black Chamber killed him to deny Sopov's expertise

to the Laundry. Second, and more likely, the Thirteenth Directorate may have been behind the killing. A third possibility is an old enemy of the ZMEY Working Group—as far as Brown can determine, the ZWG made enemies in the years before it was disbanded.

The RED QUEEN List: He did not leak it. He would never disobey the Laundry.

Annabel Gladstone: In his estimation, Gladstone is unreliable and unstable. He would have preferred to send a different agent to Russia. He is also—as the truth compulsion forces him to admit—jealous of her.

Auditor Curtis: He respects Auditor Curtis and has always worked well with her. He does not believe that she could ever betray the Laundry.

Strange Aeon Books: It is an occult bookstore that he visits regularly. The owner, Lewis Stimson, is one of his closest friends. Stimson is unaware of the existence of the Laundry and believes that Brown works for the National Trust (a charitable organisation dedicated to preserving old buildings).

The Letter to the US Embassy: Brown initially tries to say that he has no memory of sending a letter to the US Embassy via Lewis Stimson (see *Strange Aeon Books*) but that is only half-true and triggers the truth-compulsion spell. He then admits that he keeps dreaming about giving a letter to Stimson but it is only a dream. It did not happen.

Continuing to question Brown on this topic under truth-compulsion will kill him—he did leak the RED QUEEN list but Sopov has blocked his memory of doing so. The two warring geases will cause cranial bleeding and agonising death if the characters push this line of inquiry. If the characters successfully exorcise the Level Three geas, Brown recovers his memory and confesses to leaking the document.

Surveillance

Brown lives alone in a small bedsit in Brixton. Keeping surveillance on him is easy—each day, he leaves his job at the Laundry, goes home, orders takeout from the Chinese restaurant on the corner (always chicken batter balls and chips with extra vinegar) and spends his time on the internet or reading. His apartment is a maze of old books, papers, notes, files and stacked takeout containers.

The only variation on this pattern comes on the day after his dream. That day, at lunchtime, he leaves the Laundry and goes to Strange Aeon Books. He does not enter but just stands outside for a moment as if confused.

The Dream

In Brown's dream, the characters find themselves in Arkham, Massachusetts. The year is 1928—the characters know this because everything is in black and white. Brown

BLACK BAG JOBS

Ghouls of Arkham Town

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	Damage Bonus
#1	15	13	10	14	12	7	12	+1D4
#2	14	13	12	10	11	12	13	+1D4
#3	15	14	12	12	12	11	13	+1D4
#4	14	12	11	15	11	10	12	+1D4

Weapons: Claw 40%, damage 1d4+damage bonus.

Skills: Climb 60%, Track 60%, Whoop and Bay 50%.

always felt like a man out of his time and is much more at home in the more 'civilised' age of the Roaring Twenties.

The characters are apparently students at Miskatonic University, listening to a lecture by Professor Upham on visualising Dho-Nha curves in four-dimensional spacetime—i.e. old-school sorcery. The lecture ends and the characters are carried out by the crowd of students into the quadrangle.

Exploring Arkham: Out in the dream-version of the city, the characters can wander around. This dream Arkham is a strange mixture of the historical and the contemporary. The clothes, the cars, the architecture are all from the 1920s but the characters see the occasional laptop or television. There is no sign of anyone familiar; if the characters ask about Paul Brown, the passersby seem to recognise the name but refuse to admit if they have seen him. There is a definite mocking undertone to their answers (*'Paul Brown...no, I certainly don't know Paul Brown. I dare say no living man knows where Paul Brown may be found.'*).

The geography of Arkham is twisted and strange. Streets run into each other at odd angles and the characters find themselves unable to leave the town. It is as though the characters are running down the same three or four streets over and over again. Landmarks repeat with minor variations, as if Arkham has only one church, one school, one corner ice-cream store template that was reused ad infinitum.

Monsters on the Streets: As the characters walk the streets, they notice an inhuman cast to the features of passers-by. The people of Arkham subtly become more threatening and monstrous. Teeth lengthen into fangs, their eyes become yellow and hungry. Crowds become packs. The background noise of chatter on the speech becomes the baying of ghouls.

At an unheard signal, the citizens of Arkham attack the Player Characters en masse. There are too many to fight, even if the characters had weapons in the dream. Their only hope is to sprint down alleyways and climb over rooftops to escape the savage mob.

Strange Aeon Books: Once you tire of chasing the PCs with dream-ghouls, the characters spot a strange occult bookstore in a quiet side street. Warm light and the comforting smell of old leather spills out the door, making the bookstore feel like a blessed refuge from the madness of the outside world. Make it clear to the Player Characters that they will be safe from the ghouls there. If they hesitate, then have the ghouls eat one of them¹.

Call for Knowledge (occult) or Knowledge (Streetwise) from the characters. Those who are successful remember that there is a bookstore in London called Strange Aeon Books that looks very similar to this dream shop.

Inside the bookstore, the characters are greeted by the owner, Lewis Stimson. He is dressed in modern-day (well, ish—he is hardly the height of fashion but his clothes look like they were bought in the last 10 years instead of dating from a century ago like the cannibal mob outside) and speaks with a strong English accent. He seems worried and asks if the characters are looking for Paul Brown.

Stimson explains that Paul visited the bookstore earlier, in the company of a strange man. The pair were on their way to an old graveyard off the Gainsville Pike, north of Arkham, with the intent of exploring certain secret chambers underneath an ancient crypt. Stimson confesses that he fears for the life of his friend Paul.

The Graveyard: Oddly, once the characters leave the bookstore, they find themselves on the outskirts of Arkham. They can still hear the ghouls barking to each other and gibbering at the rising moon but the characters

The Thing in the Graveyard

STR 24 CON 16 SIZ 44 INT 5 POW 10 DEX 6 HP 30

Damage Bonus: +3d6.

Weapons: Claw 40%, damage is damage bonus.

Armour: 5-point Hide.

¹ Dream sequences are one place where you can railroad your Player Characters shamelessly and without remorse.

Paul Brown

STR 10 CON 12 SIZ 13 INT 14 POW 10 DEX 11 CHA 6 EDU 16 SAN 40 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: None.

Artefacts: Class Two Ward, Warrant Card.

Skills: Appraise 30%, Bureaucracy 40%, Craft (bookbinding) 50%, Knowledge (occult) 70%, Nervous Mumbling 40% Research 65%.

can easily slip away through the outlying houses and follow the signs to the Gainsville Pike.

A few minutes walk along the tree-shrouded turnpike brings the character to an ancient graveyard, where crumbling, moss-covered tombstones stand like broken teeth. In the middle of the graveyard, the characters spot a hunched figure next to an open crypt. The figure is old and white-haired and as the characters approach, they recognise him. It is Filip Sopov.

Sopov has a portable telephone attached to a long wire. The wire trails away from him down into the crypt and he is muttering instructions to whoever is on the other end of the line. He is urging the subterranean traveller to keep going. When the characters approach, Sopov spots them and snarls *'you fools, Brown is dead!'* He then turns and flees into the darkness, vanishing from the dream.

Paul Brown is somewhere in the catacombs underground. Sopov brought him here, promising him mystical revelations but instead the tunnels are full of horrors. The Russian was guiding him from the surface via the telephone but now Brown is lost and terrified. *'There are things down here... indescribable... horrific... what should I do? He promised me that there were secrets down here, wonders beyond imagining... should I keep going?'*

If the characters tell Brown to keep going, then he proceeds down the underground tunnel to his death. *'Keep going? You're right... I must steel myself. Courage, Paul, courage. I... oh God! You can't know what...the things! Terrible things! I... run! Save yourselves! I'm done for! I—'* and the line goes dead. Brown's death ends the dream in Sopov's favour.

If the characters urge Brown to return to the surface, then he makes a valiant attempt but falls short. *'Alright, I'm coming back, following the wire... like Theseus in the Labyrinth... this slope's steep...I...agh!... oh...oh no. God. I slipped, my ankle's twisted. I can't walk on it. They're coming.'* To save Brown, someone will have to descend into the underworld to rescue him.

In The Tunnels: The tunnels under the crypt are a catacomb, walled with entombed bodies. The bones of the dead poke out through the mud walls. In places, there are bricks inscribed with strange symbols, or broken statues of alien gods. The place stinks of something caustic, causing the characters' eyes to water. Following the wire brings the characters to the top of a steep and slippery slope leading

into the darkness. Something huge is moving down there, growling and snuffling blindly as it searches for Brown.

Climbing down the slope without falling requires an Agility roll. If a character fails, he slides down, falling past the injured Brown and into the maw of something very large and very hungry. The character is devoured and wakes up screaming. If a character manages to get to Brown, he needs to carry the injured dreamer back up to the surface. This requires three successful Effort rolls. Each round, the thing in the darkness gets to swipe at a Player Character (Attack skill of 40%, damage of 3d6). A character can abandon Brown and just flee up the slope without needing to make an Effort check.

If the characters manage to get to the surface with Brown, they awaken.

Other Topics

Strange Aeon Books: The characters may find out about this bookstore by following Brown, or by observing his dream. The bookstore is located on a side street in Clapham; according to the sign outside, it sells 'Antique and Rare Books' but a lot of the contents are just second-hand trash and New Age nonsense. There is a small section inside with a few genuinely antique books.

The proprietor is another antique named Lewis Stimson, who has genially presided over the slow decline of his bookstore for the last 30 years. These days, it is really just an excuse for him and his coterie of eccentric friends to chat about books and drink tea. If he had any sense, he would sell the premises and cash out; the air in Strange Aeon Books is pregnant with an incipient Starbucks franchise.

If asked about Paul Brown, then Stimson admits that Paul is a good friend of his. In fact, on day 14, Paul called in and gave Stimson a sealed letter and asked the bookshop owner to post it to the US Embassy. Paul said that it was some old tax documents related to his time in Arkham back in the 70s. This letter contained a copy of the RED QUEEN list—it went from the Embassy to the Black Chamber as soon as they realised the importance of the enclosed documents.

Stimson admits that Paul *'wasn't himself'* that afternoon. *'He seemed rather ill, to be honest, and a little confused. I offered him a cup of tea, but he said he didn't have any time. It was all rather strange.'*

4. Subject C - Auditor Curtis

Privately, Matilda Curtis has grave doubts about how the Laundry works, how prepared the United Kingdom is for the dangers to come and about her ability to stay sane and balance being an all-powerful sorcerer with staying human.

None of the Laundry employees that she has eviscerated (usually not literally) would ever guess that Curtis had such doubts. In the office, she is completely professional, where 'professional' means 'terrifying sorcerer devil-woman who peers into the hidden depths of both your soul and your expenses statement'.

Playing Curtis

To Curtis, the Player Characters are annoying, buzzing insects. They are so many levels below her on the org chart that they barely exist in her universe. They are nothing but Cabot's pawns. She will not swat them with the full force of her will but instead brushes them off. If the Laundry were filmed, then they would try to get Dame Judi Dench to play Curtis.

While the leak of the RED QUEEN list is a matter of grave concern to her, she knows that it is only part of the problem. Cabot and the CSO are using the leak as a way to attack her—she has to defend her position in the Laundry bureaucracy first before dealing with the spy.

Interview

Interviewing Curtis should be frustrating for the PCs. She knows the ins and outs of the compulsion gas better than anyone and will even give them tips on how best to question her. She only answers exactly what was asked and sticks to one-word answers whenever possible. The exception is when she wants to say something impolitic, such as her true opinion of Cabot; she can use the gas as an excuse to insult and humiliate her rivals and have it entered as a matter of record in the Laundry archives.

Likely question topics:

The RED QUEEN dossier: All three of the suspects had access to the updated copy of the dossier, so any of them could have leaked it. She did not leak it and does not know who did.

She also points out that leaking the dossier without orders would be a breach of one's oath of loyalty to the Laundry and that oath has real power. Since none of the three have burst into flames or been torn to death by invisible claws, there is more afoot here than a simple disgruntled employee. There are several possibilities but the most likely is that whoever leaked the document had their gas dispelled or suppressed and *that* would take considerable magical talent. The only one of the three who could attempt such a feat is Curtis herself—although presumably the Black Chamber could also do so.

Her Personnel Dossier: If asked about her magical annotations to the dossier prepared by Cabot, Curtis smiles icily. She has a minor divination that lets her know when someone speaks or writes her name three times within a short period. The divination only works within the Laundry. It was a small breach of protocol but Mr. Cabot deserves everything he gets. This whole inquiry is an imposition on the work of the Auditor's Office.

Cabot: Mr. Cabot is a jumped-up little fascist with a fetish for mind-control spells. He has twice applied for consideration as an Auditor and both times Curtis vetoed his application—it takes a certain level of maturity and discipline to qualify and Cabot has the maturity and discipline of an attack dog.

Annabel Gladstone: Ms. Gladstone is, in her estimation, a potential security risk at the best of times and should not have been entrusted with the mission to Moscow. She is aware that Ms. Gladstone 'does not work well with others'—this is a personal failing that needs to be overcome, not a justification for inadequate staffing.

Paul Brown: She worked with Mr. Brown previously; he is an excellent researcher but difficult to work with. The poor fellow needs therapy or medication to cope with his psychological disorders.

Filip Sopov: She knows little about Sopov beyond the RED QUEEN dossier report. He strikes her as a thoroughly objectionable sort but it is better to have such people inside the Laundry where they can be monitored than out in the wild, or worse, in the hands of the Black Chamber or another... less restrained organisation.

Surveillance

Day 21: Curtis works late at the Laundry. She eats in the canteen, then takes an underground train to her flat in West London.

Day 22: She leaves work during the mid-afternoon and meets with her younger son, Luke, who is a third-year student at the London School of Economics. She takes him out to dinner and subtly interrogates him; she is worried that he has started using cocaine again but is unwilling to use her Auditor spells to compel the truth from him. She and Luke argue, as he feels she is trying to control him; he storms out of the restaurant. Curtis finishes her meal and orders another bottle of wine afterwards. She leaves the restaurant drunk. While walking to a taxi, she is accosted by a mugger, who she magically stuns and then calls the police. She could do far worse things to the thief, but manages—barely—to contain her frustration.

Day 23: Curtis comes in late to the office with a stinking hangover. She leaves slightly early and takes a train to her family home in Chorleywood. There, she meets with her husband Alan, her older son Matthew and her teenage daughter Sandra.

The Dream

Curtis's dream is the climax of the scenario, as Sopov's plot to open a gate to Somewhere Unpleasant comes to fruition. This dream has effects in the real world, even before the gate opens.

Firstly, if Sopov has managed to sink his psychic tendrils into another victim, such as Paul Brown or Annabel Gladstone, then as soon as the dream starts, the victim experiences tremendous pain and suffers 2d6 points of POW damage. A character reduced to 0 POW dies.

Secondly, the Laundry's Predictive Branch issues a warning, claiming there is a strong likelihood of a Class One Reality Excursion within the next four hours and a measurable chance of everyone getting devoured by cosmic horrors before Tuesday.

Thirdly, an unnatural thunderstorm manifests above the town of Chorleywood.

Chorleywood: In the dream, the characters find themselves in the pleasant English town of Chorleywood. It is all bucolic village greens, country pubs, expensive houses: very middle England. It is one of the nicest places in the whole country to live, according to government statistics.

Of course, those statistics do not mention the rampaging Cthulhoid horror.

The Doom That Came To Chorleywood: The monster in the middle of the village stands 30 feet tall; it is a horrific slime-dripping nightmare, all teeth and tentacles and eyes that peer into your soul. Its tentacles grab victims and bore into them through the top of the skull, sucking out part of their brains and planting vile pulsating eggs in their cranial cavities. Worse, the victims are kept alive after it lays eggs in their skulls, so they can feel the larvae hatching. The horror slowly stalks through the village, defiling everything it touches. The Sanity Loss for seeing the Horror is 1d4/1d10.

The horror is actually Curtis—it is how she sees herself. It is the manifestation of her doubt and self-loathing, a representation of what she could be if she was not constantly on guard against corruption.

The horror stomps across Chorleywood towards the Curtis home; the characters must race across the town to get there ahead of it.

Curtis' Home: Inside the house, the characters find the dream-versions of Curtis's husband, Alan, and her three children frantically barricading the doors and windows. They know that the creature is coming for them and beg the characters to help them stop it. If asked about Auditor Curtis, they tell the characters that she is upstairs, preparing a spell to banish the monster.

The creature reaches the house and starts battering at the windows, trying to force its dripping tentacles inside. In

each round, there is a 110% chance of a tentacle breaking through, -20% per Player Character who helps man the barricade. (If you have more than five Player Characters, then increase the chance of a breach—basically, if all the characters help, there is very little chance of the monster breaking through.)

If a tentacle does get in, then one of the people inside the house gets brainsucked and turned into a slave of the



BLACK BAG JOBS

Matilda Curtis, Auditor

STR 10 CON 7 SIZ 10 INT 16 POW 17 DEX 10 CHA 12 EDU 17 SAN 45 HP 8

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: None.

Artefacts: Class Three Ward, Warrant Card, Auditor's Staff.

Skills: Awkward Questions 75%, Bureaucracy 55%, Command 60%, Etiquette 40%, Glare of Incineration 60%, Insight 80%, Scary Sorcery 75%, Status 65%.

creature outside. The victim can either be a Player Character or one of Curtis's family.

Sopov and the Ritual: Upstairs in the master bedroom, the characters find Auditor Curtis. She is sitting cross-legged on the bed, chanting. Weird glyphs and mathematical formulae float in the air around her. When the characters enter, she snaps at them, ordering them to get back downstairs and hold off the monster outside until she can banish it.

This is actually Sopov, disguised as Curtis. The ritual is not intended to banish the monster—it is a summoning incantation using Curtis's magic, designed to open a Gate to the darker reaches of the multiverse and invoke whatever entity Sopov worships.

If the players have not already worked it out, there are several clues that can be obtained with successful skill checks:

Science (thaumaturgy) or Sorcery: That is a summoning spell, not a banishing.

Science (mathematics): The formulas floating in the air around Curtis use Cyrillic notation, suggesting Russian origin.

Insight: That did not sound like Curtis.

Foiling Sopov: The difficulty of defeating Sopov varies depending on the results of the other dreams. If Sopov was victorious in any of the previous dreams, increase his POW by 1d6 per dream.

- **Countering the spell:** A character with the Sorcery skill can attempt to undo Sopov's spell. If the Sorcery check is successful, the character must make a POW vs POW roll against Sopov. Computer Use (magic) can also be used, in which case the POW of the character's computer (or dream-version of his computer) is pitted against Sopov's POW.
- **Killing Sopov:** Sopov has a damage resistance spell that absorbs damage equal to his POW before he loses any Hit Points. If the characters try shooting Sopov, he ignores them and concentrates on his spell.
- **Feeding Sopov to the horror:** This is the best approach—if the characters feed Sopov to the

thing outside, they are effectively drawing Curtis's attention to the stowaway in her psyche. To defeat Sopov in this fashion, the characters need to let the monster tentacles into the house and lure them up to the master bedroom.

5. Subject D - Aleksandra Danovna

Twenty years ago, Danovna was part of a Thirteenth Directorate team sent to assess the ZWG experiments in Krasnoyarsk Krai. There, they found that the ZMEY Working Group had turned their back on the Soviet Union, on their duties and oaths, and on all sanity. The ZWG had become cultists, worshipping monstrous entities from beyond the walls of reality. They had done horrible things. When Danovna closes her eyes, she still sees the lake of eyes, the twisted men, the thing that squatted on the pedestal...

She remembers the horrors clearly. She does not remember giving the order to kill every living thing on the base. She does not remember shooting the cultists. All that happened in a red haze, when she realised these people must be erased.

They did not get all of the ZWG that day. Sopov and a few other cultists were not at the base and so escaped the purge. The Thirteenth Directorate was divided between rival power blocs and a final decision on Sopov's fate was never made, despite Danovna's protests. The ZWG was never rebuilt and Sopov was not permitted to continue his research. Danovna and her team were found to have 'overreacted' and were removed from active duty.

For 20 years, Danovna has waited for Sopov to make his move. As soon as he stepped outside the limits of his Thirteenth Directorate sanction, she could kill him without fear of reprisal—and she had spies watching him all the time. Her fear was that Sopov would try to restart his experiments with the backing of some other power, such as the Black Chamber. *They* would do things even the Thirteenth Directorate could never countenance.

When Annabel Gladstone made contact with Sopov, Danovna assumed she was a Black Chamber agent—why else would an American be speaking to Sopov? The sorcerer was under constant surveillance by Danovna's agents, so all of Gladstone's tradecraft precautions were useless. Sopov was doomed as soon as he set foot outside the little village.

With Sopov's death, Danovna assumed the ZWG case was finally closed. Then, two things happened.

Firstly, on the occintel grapevine, she heard rumours of something called the RED QUEEN list, a Laundry list of ex-Soviet scientists. If Sopov was on that list, then the 'American' could have been a Laundry agent. The Laundry, she reasoned, could be persuaded not to pursue Sopov's blasphemous research.

Secondly, her agents were able to retrieve some of Sopov's papers from the fire and these fragments suggested Sopov was looking for a way to transcend death. If there is any chance the sorcerer could somehow have survived, the Laundry must be warned.

Using a false passport in the name of Katalin Lem, Danovna travels to London on Day 22.

A Visitor

That evening, Danovna makes contact with the Player Characters. She can either make a brush-contact on the street, slipping a card with the name of a pub and a time into the pocket of a Player Character, or make an anonymous phone call to a Laundry cut-out via a payphone, or even just turn up in the characters' safe house.

Danovna is a stocky, dark-haired woman in her mid-50s. She does not look especially dangerous but she has surprising upper body strength and is a remarkably quick shot, so any character foolish enough to try attacking Danovna is in for a nasty surprise. She is not here for a fight—she just wants to warn the Laundry about Sopov's history.

'The woman in Moscow—she was your agent, yes? You sent her to get Filip Sopov. Do you know what you brought back?

I knew Sopov, back before the Thirteenth Directorate disbanded the ZWG. He had turned to the other side. The side we are all against. He wanted to bring about the end of days, to let Them back in and wash the Earth clean of human life.

'The other ZWG scientists... we killed them. Sopov escaped the purge and there was no proof to convict him but...feh, as a foulness shall ye know them. He was a cultist. He stank of it.

I am here to warn you. I do not know how much he told you before I killed him, but you can trust nothing that passed his lips. He is poison.

Aleksandra Danovna, 13th Directorate Assassin

STR 16 CON 14 SIZ 10 INT 14 POW 13 DEX 12 CHA 10 EDU 15 SAN 40 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Pistol 65%, damage 1d10.

Artefacts: Life Hidden In An Egg (restores 2d6 Hit Points to Danovna when she is reduced to 0 HP).

Skills: Bargain 40%, Brawl 55%, Disguise 40%, Fast Talk 50%, Fine Manipulation 55%, Firearm (handgun) 75%, Grapple 40%, Hide 55%, Knowledge (espionage) 50%, Listen 40%, Melee Weapon (kill you with a pencil) 45%, Sorcery 35%, Spot 55%, Stealth 65%.

'And if you use him, he will poison you.'

If the characters mention the RED QUEEN list was leaked, then Danovna is grimly pleased. *'Good. Many of the bastards on that list deserve death and the Directorate will kill them rather than let the Black Chamber steal them away. Whoever leaked that list signed 100 death warrants.'*

Danovna is here without Thirteenth Directorate backing but she still has a plan for extraction if things go awry. Her associate Petrov is waiting down the street with an earthmover. If Danovna is not back within an agreed-upon time, he will start by tearing off the front of the building.

6. Subject E—Ed Baler

The Black Chamber has a reputation for taking the 'human' out of 'human intelligence.' Remote-controlled zombies, demons, golems, bound entities... it is rare to find an actual, 100% *homo sapiens* Black Chamber operative in the field. This reputation can cause problems for the Chamber. Some people do not like dealing with monsters. It is hard to concentrate on negotiations when the other party is eyeing up your skull's potential as a nest for its young.

Ed Baler is one of the Chamber's approachable faces. He is an actual human, not a demon or a hybrid or a spell-warped sorcerer or anything unnatural. He is the guy the Black Chamber sends to be deliberately nonthreatening. Sure, he is armed and knows seventeen ways to cripple you with a pencil but he is a nice guy.

In fact, Ed cannot help being a nice guy. He falls in love with everyone he sees. He is under a permanent love-spell enchantment. If Ed is in love with you, then you will unconsciously pick up on his signals and reciprocate them to some degree. You will be a little bit more open with him, a little more relaxed, a little less guarded. You can tell on some unconscious level that he is on your side—because when he is talking to you, he really is. Ed would die for you, if the myriad geases on him would let him. For the duration of the conversation, he is genuinely in love.

Then his eyes flicker to the next target and he falls in love with them instead.

Ed's cover is as a salesman for a rare book dealership, Laban Books. It takes him all over the world.

Ed and Annabel

Ed contacts Annabel via email and persuades her to meet him for a drink in a hotel bar. She agrees to do so but only for five minutes. It is one thing for them to meet in Moscow but it is very risky for her to be seen with him in London. Nevertheless, she goes.

If the characters eavesdrop on their brief conversation, then they hear Baler confirm that the Black Chamber has the RED QUEEN list—the US Embassy in London passed it on to them after receiving it in the mail one morning. Someone in the Laundry wanted to attract the attention of the Black Chamber by giving them such an impressive gift and Baler wants to know if it was Annabel. He never explicitly offers to arrange her defection to the Black Chamber but it is obvious that is what he is hinting at.

Throughout the conversation, Annabel becomes more worried, until she finally gets up and leaves without giving Baler an answer. Baler returns to his room and the next day he visits several collectors, book dealers and bookshops in London (including Strange Aeon Books), leaving his calling card in each place in the hopes that the suspected defector makes contact.

Confronting Baler

The characters can intercept and intimidate Baler but he is diplomatically untouchable—the characters have no proof that he is Black Chamber and even if he is, he is still human and an American citizen. The Foreign Office would have the characters' heads if they try arresting or attacking an American. If the characters make contact, then Baler either plays dumb if they seem threatening (*I'm just a rare book dealer and a friend of Annabel's*) or sounds them out to see if they are the would-be defector if they seem approachable.

Baler is magically defended against truth compulsion and other geas effects. If the characters try using occult methods to compel the truth from him, attempts of Level Three or less fail. Sticking him with a more powerful geas causes Baler to spontaneously combust, inflicting 3d6 fire damage on anyone in the same room.

Ed Baler, Black Chamber Face

STR 13 CON 10 SIZ 14 INT 13 POW 12 DEX 10 CHA 15 EDU 15 SAN 30 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: None.

Artefacts: None but he has got a powerful speaker on his mobile phone and can speed-dial the Number of Death. Anyone who hears the ghastly sound at the other end of the line suffers 3d6 damage per round, thanks to a Class Three Auditory Ward. Baler is immune to this spell.

Skills: Charming Patter 90%, Fast Talk 80%, Grapple 60%, Insight 90%, Persuade 80%, Winning Smile 60%.

7. Subject F—Filip Sopov

Sopov was dead, to begin with.

Now, he is alive again, as a sort of mental parasite or a conscious meme. To know Sopov is to have him crawl inside your head. He can only exist as a stowaway in the minds of others.

At least, that is true until he opens a Gate and calls his masters through. When the humans are washed away and the Earth is reshaped according to the unknowable whims of Yog-Sothoth, Sopov believes that he will be re-embodied in a new and better form. Something immortal. With tentacles. It will be glorious!

Filip Sopov was not a poster child for mental stability even before he turned from serving the Soviet state to worshipping alien gods and death has not helped him reassess his attitudes. He is a fanatic madman with nothing to lose. (Hey, being already dead is pretty much the definition of 'nothing to lose'.)

Exorcising Sopov

It is possible that the players work out that Sopov is alive in some form well before Curtis's dream and report the existence of a hostile entity in the dreams of one or more of the suspects. The Laundry has some experience dealing with possession but it is made more complicated in this case because Sopov's consciousness was human, so it is hard to disentangle him from the victims. All three subjects are placed under observation in a secure medical facility and another Auditor is called in to help with the exorcism. The characters are told to re-enter the subject's dreams and provoke Sopov; if the sorcerer can be brought to the surface of the mind, the Laundry may be able to remove him without inflicting significant damage on the subject.

Having the suspects under constant observation does mean that there is no chance of Curtis being used to summon Yog-Sothoth—they would kill her before she was able to open a Gate. However, this also means that the Player Characters are at risk of being trapped inside her mind as she is executed.

Filip Sopov, Dead Sorcerer

STR 13 CON 10 SIZ 12 INT 17 POW 14 DEX 10 CHA 12 EDU 15 SAN 0 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: None.

Artefacts: None.

Armour: Equal to his POW.

Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 40%, Deranged Cackling 60%, Disguise 65%, Knowledge (occult) 70%, Science (mathematics) 80%, Science (thaumaturgy) 65%, Sorcery 90%, Thickly Accented Bond Villain English 50%.

Sopov in your Dreams

As an optional complication, Sopov can use the Destiny Entanglement to jump into the dreams of one or more of the PCs. All the other PCs would share this dream thanks to the entanglement.

Such dream-encounters should unfold much like the other three dreams, with Sopov disguising himself as a trusted ally in order to obtain the memory of something deeply important to the victim. If Sopov wins in the dream, he can sap the PC's POW for the final confrontation.

If Sopov Wins...

...it is bad. Not end-of-the-world bad but certainly tens of thousands dead. The Laundry has the occult firepower to stuff Sopov's God back into the box but it takes time to deploy and the collateral damage is considerable.

The opening of such a Gate cannot be kept secret. The Laundry will have to go public and the revelation that there are Alien Space Gods lurking behind the curtains of the cosmos will hasten the coming of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. If Sopov wins, then future historians will look back and say 'that's when it all started to fall apart.'

8. Aftermath

If the characters defeated Sopov, it is worth 1d8 Sanity. If Sopov opened the gate, the characters lose 1d4/1d10 Sanity.

If the characters worked out what was going on and dealt with Sopov, then that is worth 1d6% Status. Letting Sopov's god eat London is a big black mark on the characters' records, costing 1d10% Status.

The characters' report on the whole case determines the fate of the three NPCs.

Gladstone: If the characters report on her inappropriate friendship with Baler, then Cabot demands that she be heavily geased and the Laundry takes another step towards the mind control that Curtis fears.

Brown: Technically, he is responsible for the leak of the RED QUEEN documents, even if it was Sopov's possession that made him do it. If the characters report on Brown's involvement, then the researcher will vanish into the depths of the Stacks and never be seen again.

Curtis and Cabot: The tone of the characters' final report determines the route that the Laundry takes in future investigations of this sort. Do the characters advocate stronger magical restrictions on the free will of Laundry officers, or is that a step too far? Do they support Cabot or Curtis in their ongoing battle for the organisation's soul?

Player Handouts

Handout #1—Subject A Dossier

SUBJECT A

Name: ANNABEL KAREN GLADSTONE

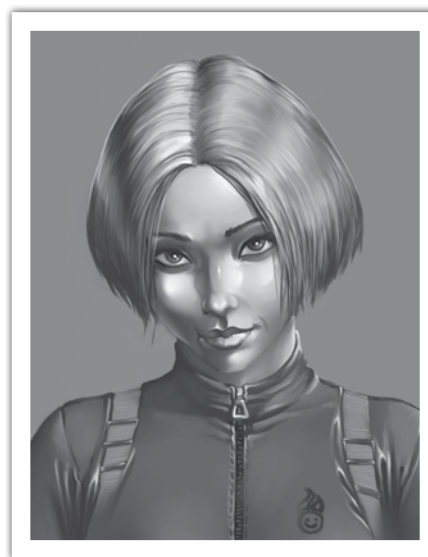
DOB: 4/6/1980

Country of Origin: UNITED STATES

Gender: Female

Education: Tancred County High School; University of California (Anthropology, incomplete)

Background: Her father was a police officer; her mother, a history teacher. Gladstone distinguished herself early, excelling both academically and athletically. After graduating high school, she studied at the University of California in Los Angeles. Her time at university was marked by unstable behaviour and clashes with authority. She was expelled from the university in 1998 for assaulting another student. She then travelled in Europe and Africa for two years, working for the Dutch antiquarian dealer Hans Volrath. Volrath is a known dealer in occult items and Gladstone came to the attention of the Laundry during this time.



In June of 2007, Volrath sent Gladstone to Malta to close a deal with Ali Celik, an agent of the Turkish JITEM's occult branch, involving the sale of controlled literature. As per occult non-proliferation operations, the Laundry monitored this transaction. Celik attempted to double-cross Gladstone and shot her, stealing both the controlled books and the money. Despite her injuries, Gladstone was able to pursue and incapacitate Celik and destroy the books before succumbing to her injuries. The Laundry officer on-site rescued Gladstone and recruited her into the Laundry.

Operational History: Following her recovery and training, Gladstone was assigned to the Acquisitions Section as a field operative. Her performance in the field has been excellent. Due to the unusual nature of her recruitment and her lack of British citizenship, all operations involving Gladstone must be deniable and she is officially a Type D Asset.

In March of 2009, Gladstone was transferred to RED QUEEN and designated WOLF GAMBIT. She was sent to Moscow to secure Filip Sopov following the recommendation of SUBJECT B. During this assignment, Sopov was killed by an unidentified assassin (see attached report).

Assessment: Subject is highly intelligent and competent but has a notably poor tolerance for boredom. While capable of charm, she demonstrates little empathy for others and is extremely arrogant, leading to clashes with authority figures. Poor team player.

Qualifications:

- Incomplete Degree in Anthropology with a minor in Archaeology and Folklore.
- Level 4 Qualifications in personal combat and martial arts.
- Level 3 Qualifications in survival/evasion, firearms, surveillance.
- Level 2 Qualifications in occult combat techniques.
- Fluent in English, French, German, Arabic, Russian, Mandarin Chinese.

Handout #2—Report

RED QUEEN/RED KNIGHT/WOLF GAMBIT

Can I just say that I hate the name 'wolf gambit?' It is the sort of codename that a 12 year old would come up with.

v. poor report format

Moscow is just another city these days. Close your eyes and you could be anywhere, at least in the city centre. You have got to get out to Lefortovo for some old-school despair and brutalist architecture. Brown pointed me at a lecturer in the Moscow Power Engineering Institute, Professor Lobachevsky. ~~I put on~~ *I put on* my best poor-confused-student-in-need-of-strong-male-guidance act and I was in his office within 10 minutes.

I. Lobachevsky, associate professor of electrical engineering

They don't let me carry a Warrant Card, not a full one anyway, so I couldn't just throw a geas on him. Still, there are ways to convince people to help you, especially in an office on the sixth floor.

'In Shitville. Sopov is in Shitville.'

Unexplained gap in report. WG arrives in Moscow on Monday, visits professor and travels to village Tue, returns Moscow Wed. What about Monday evening?

OK, he didn't actually say Shitville, but that's the closest translation. The village in question was 300 kilometres outside of Moscow. You get there by taking a train, then hiring a car and then your car breaks down and they tow it with a yak. This place used to be a gulag, back in the good old days. Now, it's an underfunded and run-down gulag.

Sopov, according to a friendly yak farmer, lived in a shack at the edge of town. You can't miss it—there's a tower in his back yard. For a crazy sorcerer on the run from everyone, he really wasn't making it too hard to find him. There was no security, no discernable wards, so I took the direct approach and kicked down the door.!

Autopsy confirmed extensive cancer, brain lesions, prob. K. syndrome

You could tell by looking at him that he wasn't well. Yellowed skin, gaunt as a famine victim, stinking of piss and enough pills on the table to open a drugstore. I showed him a card and explained the deal. Come with me and you get to live out your days in a nice retirement community for ex-spies in Wales.

He agreed, but only after I promised him that we were covered against scrying. After setting an incendiary charge in his house to erase the portions of his research he didn't want to bring to England, we drove back to the nearest station and took a train for Moscow. Our travel arrangements were complicated by Sopov's ill health—I had to carry him up the stairs at the station.

As per arrangements, we had a cover identity prepared for Sopov. The Moscow office had the disguise and documents ready; the plan was to use a dead drop at Vykhino Station. Sopov and I arrived at the station at 11pm, local time.

Confirmed by Moscow office

I didn't make the tail until we were inside the station. He was tall, mid-40s, close-cropped hair, athletic build. I believe he picked us up as we moved from the railway terminus at Kazansky to Vykhino. Given the pressure of time and the fragility of the cover identity prepared for Sopov, I decided that getting to the airport was the best plan and planned to lose the tail on the subway.

We arrived at the platform just as the train was departing. A single shot was fired from the moving train, hitting Sopov in the head and killing him instantly. The shooter was female, stocky build, no more than 5' 5", dark hair, armed with a high-powered pistol. I immediately went into full evasion. The first tail I spotted was gone by the time I returned to the upper level of the station and there was no attempt to pursue me. I believe that Sopov was the intended target.

I don't know how they found us; Sopov was worried about scrying, but the Laundry-provided occultation talisman should have stopped any detection attempts. I can only suggest that either the talisman was a dud, or else they had agents watching for Sopov's return to Moscow. In the latter case, they must have been tipped off by someone, such as Professor Lobachevsky.

Reporting is sloppy and insufficient. Inadequate info on all fronts. AUDIT.

Handout #3—Subject B Dossier

.....

SUBJECT B

Name: PAUL VICTOR BROWN

DOB: 11/12/1956

Country of Origin: UNITED KINGDOM

Gender: Male

Education: Barrow Hall School, University of Durham (BA, Hist), Miskatonic University (M. Phil)

Background: Orphaned at a young age, Brown was raised by his two maiden aunts. He developed an obsessive interest in history during his childhood and won a scholarship to the University of Durham at 17. He completed his masters at Miskatonic University in the United States, writing a thesis on the evolution of burial techniques and beliefs in New England. On his return to the United Kingdom, he was offered a place in the Archives section.

Operational History: Brown worked in the Archives from 1984 until 1990 and was then transferred to Translation and Analysis. He was a part of the Eltdown project as a senior researcher and also worked on a revised translation of the *Book of Eibon*.

Brown also served as an advisor and translator with Subterranean Affairs. He was licensed for field work from 1988 until 1994 and spent four months underground as part of LONG GREY PILOT.

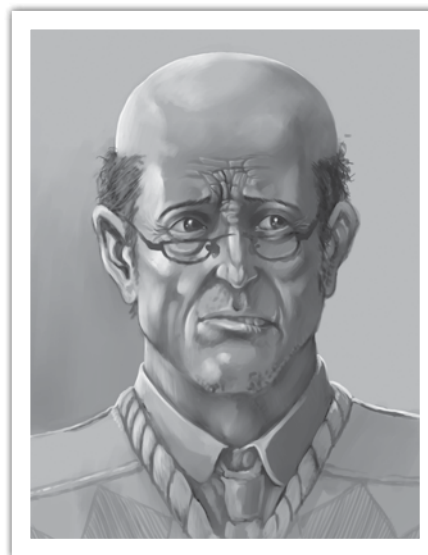
In 1996, Brown refused a promotion to SSO5(A) and was moved horizontally to the Auditors' office as a clerk and researcher.

In 2004, Brown was assigned as a researcher for RED QUEEN.

Assessment: Mr. Brown is poorly socialised, with no close friends or family. His only personal contacts are with other occult historians through electronic correspondence; he is more comfortable with books and long-dead historical figures than with living people. He shows signs of social anxiety, stress, paranoia and delusional behaviour. In short, he is well within the norms of Laundry personnel.

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's Degree in History, Masters in Folklore and History.
- Level 2 Qualification in Occult Computing and Occult Combat.



Handout #4—Report

The following document is classified REDBOARD. If you do not have REDBOARD or better clearance, do not read this document.

FILIP SOPOV AND THE ZMEY WORKING GROUP

Soviet engagement with the occult-warfare sphere was piecemeal at best. Instead of a single umbrella organisation that was given sole responsibility of researching, containing and weaponising the Turing-Lovecraft theorem, the Soviet method involved dozens of small, separate laboratories and groups working on different aspects of the field. This lack of an overall structure can be traced to the rise and fall of different power groups within the Kremlin and the Soviet government but may also be attributed to a greater willingness to contemplate the implications of the theorem and the occult. Instead of attempting to shield themselves from the true nature of reality by walling it away within a single monolithic containment structure, the knowledge of the occult was distributed throughout the Soviet Union military-industrial complex (modified, of course, by the usual caveats—state propaganda, information control and an unwillingness to engage with the theological/spiritual/eschatological nature of the occult all limited the dissemination of information).

The ZMEY Working Group (ZWG) was founded in 1983 under the auspices of the VPK, the Military Industrial Commission, to investigate means of harnessing existing entities for military purposes. The ZWG's formation was likely precipitated by the second-round discussions of the Benthic Treaty two years previously, during which BLUE HADES reiterated their objections to human attempts to control dormant or inaccessible entities. The fact that this prohibition was restated suggests that one or both sides in the Cold War was already attempting to do just that.

The ZWG's early efforts met with little success; the dig in the Aral Sea turned up nothing and a botched invocation of an entity in 1984 caused a devastating tornado in the Yaroslavl area. The group was reorganised in 1986 and a new chief scientist was put in place, the young Filip Sopov.

Little is known of Sopov's past before joining the ZWG. His background is in pure mathematics but he published no papers and had little academic presence; the most likely theory is that he was part of the Soviet apparatus for mathematically modelling nuclear explosions, which would have precluded any such publications. His family background is unremarkable but respectable. We have photographs of his wedding to Vira Grachev, the daughter of a prominent politician, in 1987. They had at least one child in 1989.

Within a year, he turned the ZWG around and gave the organisation a new focus—invoking more tractable eldritch horrors from the far reaches of the cosmos. Satellite photos shared by the USNRO suggest the construction of a four-kilometre summoning circle outside the Uzhur-4 Naukograd (science city) between 1986 and 1988 in preparation for a large-scale invocation.

Sopov's fall from grace was as swift as his earlier rise. The ZWG was shut down in May of 1990; several senior members were arrested. Discerning the truth during that chaotic period in Russian history is inevitably difficult but it appears that the ZWG was purged, possibly for failing to successfully invoke the target entity.

Much of the above history is derived from the debriefing of CECIL, a former ZWG technician who fled to the UK and was placed in the Laundry's protection until 2004. CECIL claimed that Sopov was among those arrested in 1990 and hinted that Sopov probably died in prison. CECIL himself perished under unusual circumstances—see CASE GILT WHISTLE.

Sopov vanished into obscurity for the next 20 years. There were a few sightings in the mid-1990s, mainly in China, where he is believed to have worked as an advisor to the Nameless Bureau and on the board of a Korean electronics company in 1998. There is a record of a hospital admission in Seoul in January of 1999 and then there is no sign of Sopov for another decade—apart from one curious incident, which leads me to conclude that Sopov was alive at least until 2008.

In 2008, Professor I. Lobachevsky of the MPEI published a paper on Bessel beams in n-dimensional space, portions of which are identical to work performed by Sopov during the ZWG years. Lobachevsky credits 'a distinguished mathematician' as providing useful insight. If the Professor was in contact with Sopov in 2008, he represents our best route for locating the former head of ZWG.

Assessment: Even after 20 years, Filip Sopov's importance cannot be underestimated. The fractured nature of Soviet-era occultism means that we still have no high-level overview of their understanding of computational demonology. His undoubted talents as a mathematician are very much secondary to his insider knowledge of Turing-Lovecraft-derived weapons within the eastern bloc.

SECRET AGENDAS

Handout #4—Subject C Dossier

SUBJECT C

Name: MATHILDA CURTIS

DOB: 30/10/19[REDACTED]

Country of Origin: UNITED KINGDOM

Gender: Female

Education: [REDACTED]

Background: Curtis started her career as a researcher in the Foreign Office, before transferring to the Laundry as a [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Operational History: *I hardly think this is relevant, Mr. Cabot, and you'll forgive me for this intrusion. If you have questions, please ask them directly instead of stalking me like some spotty little pervert.*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Items that may be of importance: I am a fully qualified Auditor, an adept of the Tongue of Maat. Mr. Brown—I assume he's caught up in this little witchhunt too—worked with me from 2002 to 2004. I had barely begun my investigation into the death of Filip Sopov when I was informed that the matter was being taken out of my hands.

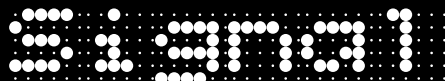
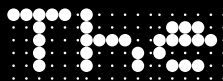
Assessment: Curtis is effectively an over-promoted middle manager. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Charming. And you, Mr. Cabot, are an over-bearing paranoid obsessed with power.





'Space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows...'

—Albert Einstein

You know the universe, right?

Big place. Very big place, in fact. Unimaginably vast.

We are all just tiny specks of carbon, dust particles on the skin of an infinitesimally larger dust particle that is circling a hot dust speck that is one of billions and billions of other stars. When it comes to the totality of the universe, your existence has so little meaning and relevance that you may as well not bother. Call in sick to work and spend the day on the couch watching Jeremy Kyle, because anything you do will not matter a damn in, say, six billion years time.

Despite this, we cling to life. We fight, tenaciously, desperately, blindly, for a few more minutes. A human might kill for, say, another 50 years of life, even though those 50 years are less than an eyeblink on a cosmic timescale. It is like the old joke: *'why are office politics so vicious? Because the stakes are so small.'*

Gaze into the abyss and know that the abyss does not even notice if you fall into it.

At least, that is how it is supposed to work. The Player Characters are about to have their preconceptions challenged.

The Refuge

The late Douglas Adams had some wise words to say about the vastness of space (*'you might think it's a long way down to the shops, but that's just peanuts to space'*) but he also correctly guessed that one of the biggest problems with time travel is not the paradoxes, it is the grammar.

There is a planet circling a dying star a few galaxies over. As planets go, it is a paradise by human standards—you can breathe the air (you will not enjoy it but it will not kill you), there is a small amount of liquid water and the radiation is not immediately lethal, although spotting melanomas rapidly becomes a necessary survival skill. (There is also one other, tiny, drawback to the place, which we will get to later.)

An alien race once evolved here, or colonised here. The evidence is inconclusive but either way, they have been gone for centuries.

Call it Ys.

At some point in the near future (or possibly in a parallel universe), a Gate will be opened between Earth and Ys. In that chaotic, terrible future, refugees from an Earth ravaged by the return of the Great Old Ones will flee through the Gate to Ys, gambling that life on a dying alien world is preferable to incomprehensible suffering at the hands¹ of the Outer Gods. They lose this bet, because there is no better option, only different forms of unbearable suffering. The survivors on Ys cannot tolerate their existence any longer. (Plus, there is that small drawback we mentioned earlier.)

The survivors conceive a plan. They intend to reach back into the past, using the unthinkable magics of the Great Old Ones and send their minds back to Earth, to a time before the Stars Came Right. By possessing present-day humans, they can live out their lives in something approximating normality.

The problem is that the survivors are no longer even remotely human in mind or body. When the Stars Came Right, reality melted and flowed like thawed ice and the survivors were changed. Long years on this distant outpost of Ys changed them still further. They are post-human in the same way that Earth is now post-apocalypse. They cannot just jump back into the 'normal' human world of the past. They need to learn how to be human again, before they can usurp the bodies of innocents and live out fresh lives in the past.

How do you learn what it is to be human at the turn of the 21st century? You set up a social networking site, NameZone, from the future, wait until people entrust their personal information to it and then graft the persona of your chosen host onto your own broken psyche. Simple. Every time you update your profile on NameZone, you bring your own doom at the psychic tendrils of insane post-human survivors one step closer.

Life After The End of the World

The survivors on Ys are divided into two groups—the Monks, who live in the Ministry of Dead Names and are ones behind the NameZone scheme and the Dhole Scum. The Dhole Scum live in the ruined city outside the Ministry, trying not to get crushed by the dholes.

Dholes, by the way, are mind-bogglingly gigantic worms, hundreds of metres long. They were responsible for the

¹ Tentacles/pseudopods/claws/tendrils/prehensile genitalia/other manipulators (delete as appropriate)

extinction of the city-builder civilisation on Ys and have honeycombed the planet with their tunnels. The dholes are kept out of the city by warding magic and almost all of the survivors' efforts go into casting warding spells to keep the horrors out.

Most modern technology was abandoned during the exodus from Earth—in the last days, any computing device was a potential vector for Things From Beyond to get in, so microprocessors are contraband on Ys (of course, after many years on the desert planet, there are no functional electronic devices there anyway). Magic is used to support the needs of the survivors but as the dholes and the escape plan sap more and more of their resources, starvation and madness are rife. The Dhole Scum—who were once ordinary citizens of the United Kingdom—have descended into savagery and cannibalism. The Monks—government officials, soldiers and the Laundry—claim that the escape plan is for the benefit of the Dhole Scum but they use the other survivors as sacrifices to power their spells.

There is probably a metaphor about modern society in there somewhere.

Mission Overview

After a seemingly unconnected opening scene, the characters are called to a construction site that will one day be a new research facility for the Laundry. A gate has opened there and the first scout team through the gate detected a curious transmission—a Morse code message, reciting the names of the characters over and over. It is decided to send the PCs through the Gate to investigate.

On the far side of the Gate, the characters explore a ruined alien city that has partially been reclaimed by the post-human survivors and find evidence to suggest they are dealing with time travel. They encounter a bizarre Ministry and learn of the survivors' plan to possess present-day humans.

It is up to the characters to foil this scheme before present-day Earth is invaded by our own future selves.

Foreshadowing

This mission takes place in either a parallel reality or the near future, depending on your perspective. Either way, the characters will encounter future versions of Laundry co-workers (it is possible that the original message that brings the characters to Ys comes from future versions of themselves). You can use this glimpse of a potential future to throw new light on established characterisations. When playing the denizens of Ys, portray all of them as insane and horribly changed by their experiences. They no longer think like humans and so need to steal identities on NameZone.

The two most significant future NPCs are the Prisoner (a Laundry officer who helped whoever sent the original message) and the Minister himself. Think about who to put into these roles. A nightmarish future Laundry could

be ruled by the PCs' hated rival in Human Resources as the Minister, for example. Alternatively, you could put some trusted friend of the PCs (or even one of the PCs) in as the Minister—how will the players react to the revelation that their good pal Bob is the fascist ruler of a future government in exile?

1. Bright College Days

Your mission: one of the Laundry's monitoring programs has picked up suspicious activity at some benighted ex-polytechnic near Manchester. According to the reports, someone has been running potentially dangerous code on the college network—Dho-Nba visualisers, fractal generators with intent to summon and so on. The suspicious activity was traced to a student computer lab. Someone's been using the machines there every night between 8 and 11 for the last week.

The culprit in this case is a student called Kevin Lemure.

More accurately, it is the *body* of a student called Kevin Lemure. The mind inhabiting that body cannot remember its own name. Kevin used to be a heavy user of NameZone but now he is a beachhead for the future invaders. Instead of playing *World of Warcraft* every night, he is exploring the esoteric reaches of *Mathematica* using custom plugins to get around the hidden anti-demon restrictions.

The University

The simplest thing to do is to base the university on the worst parts of your own alma mater. It is small, underfunded and underachieving. It smells of socks and weed and every wall is covered with posters for society events, student bands that have the lifespan and talent of mayflies and a strata of chewing gum that will mystify archaeologists in centuries to come.

There are university-run dormitories on campus for residential students. The student accommodation is basic but liveable. The computer lab in question is in an underground complex near the dormitories. The underground area has four lecture theatres/meeting rooms, a shop (closed at night) and the computer lab. The lab is usually empty these days, as the majority of the students have their own laptops at home or in their dormitories.

Kevin Lemure

Kevin is one of the first humans to be possessed by the invaders from Ys. His possessor knows everything that Kevin put on his NameZone profile, from his favourite bands and his opinions on filesharing and global warming to how long he is willing to spend farming virtual sheep (answer: a very long time). Since becoming host to a brainsucking horror from the future, Kevin has spent his time working on the incantations to bring the rest of the survivors through from Ys.

He has also prepared a number of defensive measures to deal with any meddling Laundry officers who might thwart his schemes.

Kevin Lemure, Possessed Student

STR 13 CON 14 SIZ 12 INT 16 POW 13 DEX 10 CHA 6 EDU 16 SAN 0 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: None.

Skills: Brawl 45%, Computer Use (magic) 80%, Deranged Mumblings About How We're All Doomed 60%, Deranged Mumblings About Social Networking 60%, Grapple 60%, Science (mathematics) 70%, Sorcery 50%.

Investigation

Ask the players how they intend to go about their investigation. Their likely routes of investigation:

College Records: A Research check and a few hours work turns up an interesting fact—one student, Kevin Lemure, recently switched from 'English and Gender Studies' to 'Advanced Mathematics'. He claimed he'd been studying maths in his spare time and completed an examination to justify leaping from one faculty to another. The results were impressive, to put it mildly—the whole mathematics department are still trying to wrap their heads around it.

Computer Records: The computers in the student lab are public computers—there are no user profiles, so it is impossible to tell who has been using a particular machine.

Discrete Inquiries: There are lots of irrelevant rumours but there are stories about strange events at night near the student computer lab. Apparently, there is a Satanic cult or something meeting in one of the rooms there. In fact, there is a tabletop gaming society who meet there once a week and have nothing to do with Lemure's incantations.

There is also a rumour going around that a girl called Phillipa Masters has gone missing; none of her friends have seen her in two days. She has not been missing long enough for the college authorities to take official notice.

Divination: Wandering around the university with a thaumometer and other divination spells does pick up some curious magical echoes but nothing especially potent. Whatever the suspect is up to, they have not started throwing sorcery around yet.

Stake-Out: The characters can choose to stake out the computer lab, or (if they have identified Kevin via the college records or other methods) head straight to his dormitory room.

The Computer Lab

Your steps echo on the stairs as you descend into the basement. It smells like a basement, certainly. Stuttering fluorescent lights illuminate a long corridor, lined with poorly printed posters. On the left-hand side are lecture theatres; on the right, a meeting room and then the computer laboratory. The theatres are empty at this hour but you can see lights from the other two rooms.

You can also hear sinister muttering coming from the meeting room.

The D&D game next to the computer lab is actually part of Lemure's scheme. He prepared the map for the game and wove a Dho-Nha curve into the diagram. When the time is right, he will use the sacrifices from his dormitory room to open up a gate via the battle map, allowing more of the survivors from Ys to come through and possess the D&D players, all of whom have NameZone profiles too. This is a test run for the coming invasion, which will use a new social game as an infection vector.

The Meeting Room: In the meeting room, a life-and-death struggle is being waged between a bunch of heroic D&D players and the evil warlock Zagor. Laundry investigators listening at the door may overhear what they consider to be suspicious occult mutterings but a successful Occult or Gaming check confirms that they are just gamers.

Steve, the Dungeon Master, does not take kindly to intrusion. Those who try entering the room get shouted at and pelted with polyhedral dice.

If the characters actually enter the meeting room and interrupt the game, call for Spot Hidden checks. A successful Spot Hidden check means the character notices the remarkably complicated battle map that they are using for Zagor's lair. It is drawn on graph paper with dry-erase markers and covered with notations for secret doors and flame traps but it is also a powerful Dho-Nha diagram that could, coupled with an influx of power and a human sacrifice, be used to open a Gate.

The Computer Lab: Kevin is the only person in the lab. He is sitting next to the wall adjoining the meeting room next door, where he can hear the D&D players jabbering and laughing. He is logged into three adjacent computers, all of which are running complex calculations of some sort. Kevin moves like a giant cockroach in a human suit and speaks in a stilted, disjointed way. He also takes far too much pleasure in simple things—he has got a can of cola open on the desk and savours every sip as though it was ambrosia.

Confronting Kevin: If the characters speak to Kevin without giving away their identity as Laundry agents, he makes his excuses and hurries out of the lab, heading for his dormitory room. He turns off the monitors but leaves the computers running, so his Mathematica calculations can continue processing. As he passes the meeting room, the GM shouts 'great map, Ker!'

If the characters attempt to question, restrain, geas, taser, shoot or otherwise Kevin, then he invokes the lesser-order

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summoning. To activate this, he just needs to hit a key on one of the computers. A Level Three Horror from Beyond phases into existence in the computer lab to attack the PCs. Kevin attempts to flee while the characters are dealing with the rampaging entity. The Horror from Beyond resembles a two-metre-long wasp larvae made of harsh light, trailing razor-sharp tendrils and dripping with ichor.

The D&D players keep playing. Hey, wouldn't you?

Kevin's Rooms

In a maze of twisty dormitory rooms, all alike, the characters find Kevin's room. It is your average college student bedroom—dirty laundry, piles of books, prints on the walls, arcane scribbles on every surface, female victim tied up and gagged in closet, slowly bleeding to death. Blood flows out from under the door of the closet and into a complex diagram scraped into the linoleum floor. Dotted around the door are miniature figures, the proxies for the characters in the D&D game. Kevin intends to use the D&D game as a channel to possess his friends.

In an emergency, Kevin can also use the diagram on the floor to summon that Horror from Beyond (he only does it once—if the players confront him at the computer lab, he summons the horror there instead).

Phillipa Masters is the unfortunate victim in the closet. She was kidnapped by the possessed Kevin a day ago, to serve as the power source for his summoning ritual. She is terrified beyond rational thought and is convinced that she is going to die. She is exhausted—she spent the night trying to escape from her bonds and the effort of that coupled with dehydration and blood loss means she is extremely weak and can barely crawl. She needs immediate medical attention.

After setting up the possession invocation and leaving the computer lab, Kevin returns to his dormitory to trigger the final part of the spell by spilling more of Phillipa's blood. Unless the characters intervene, he ritually murders Phillipa, causing the five D&D players to be possessed by invaders from Ys.

Back to the Laundrycave

Once Kevin is stopped, the investigation ends in a dead end. If they manage to capture Kevin, then the possessor

from Ys abandons the body. There is no sign of how Kevin became possessed in the first place—the possessor entity seemed to come out of nowhere.

After cleaning up the dormitory room and dealing with any bureaucratic fallout, the characters return to the Laundry. A few days pass.

2. The Gate

Several days after the Kevin incident, the characters are working at their normal desk jobs in the fathomless depths of the Laundry, when they are collected by stern-faced warlocks and marched up to a parking garage. There is a convoy of four vehicles waiting there, including an OCCULUS truck. The fit has definitely hit the shan somewhere. The characters are loaded into the back of one of the vans; it feels very much like they are being arrested. A pair of armed guards climb into the van and sit with the characters. Through the windows of the van, they see other Laundry personnel, notably Mike Ford, Pinky, and Brains, climbing into another van. They are clearly not being treated as prisoners. The characters seem to be under suspicion.

The convoy takes off and weaves its way through London traffic. After leaving the city, it turns off the motorway at a junction marked 'Work Units Only' and arrives at a construction site somewhere near Slough. In the middle of the construction site is an area shrouded in a large plastic tent that was obviously hastily erected to conceal... something.

The convoy stops. The characters are left in the truck to watch as other Laundry staff disembark and walk into the tent, carrying scientific equipment and occult paraphernalia and heavy weapons. The characters are made to wait for an hour (or, more likely, until the players get bored and come up with some absurd escape attempt).

Finally...

Boris emerges from the tent and marches over to your van. With his bald head and long black leather trench coat, he looks like he is auditioning for the role of a SS interrogator or Rasputin in some low-budget horror video.

'Okay, you come now,' he says and escorts you into the plastic holiest of holies. You don't spot anything out of the ordinary, although whatever this building is going to be, it's built like a fallout bunker. Thick

The Horror From Beyond, Class Three Exonome

STR 18 CON 15 SIZ 10 INT 3 POW 11 DEX 15 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D6.

Weapons: Razor Tendril 50%, damage 1d6+damage bonus.

Armour: None but most weapons do minimum damage.

Sanity Loss: 1/1d6 for seeing the Horror from Beyond.

Following Kevin: Kevin heads back to his dormitory room earlier than normal, even if the PCs do not disturb him.

Examining the Computers: All three computers are running complex *Mathematica* calculations.



concrete walls, heavy-duty power cables, rooms with no sharp angles, blood mixed into the mortar—this has the smell of a Linen Closet about it: a secret Laundry base.

Boris leads you down a half-finished corridor and into a larger chamber.

There is a hole in the world. The hole hangs in the air in the middle of the room and it hurts your brain just looking at it. It is almost impossible to tell where the hole ends, so you are grateful for the ring of yellow 'DO NOT CROSS' tape around its perimeter. The hole is a gap in space-time—through it, you can see a dusty alien landscape, a reddish desert under a red sun.

A Tosber team suits up to go through the portal, pulling on diving suits and checking equipment. Pinky enthusiastically sends a refitted bomb disposal robot through the portal, while Brains stares into the alien sky, as if searching the dust clouds for some cosmic truth. Other researchers poke and prod the Impossible Thing from a safe distance.

One technician calls Boris over. 'The same transmission again, sir.' He has got a radio receiver and out of the speakers comes a string of dots and dashes. Morse code. Boris shows you a sheet of paper with the decoded message.

It is a list of your names.

Looking Before You Leap

If the characters have suitable skills (Sciences, mostly) they can conduct experiments themselves. Otherwise, they can

ask the various NPCs, or Boris can fill in any gaps during the meeting in the next scene.

The Building: This construction site will one day be the Crowthorne Centre for Research, a new 30 million pound research facility for the Laundry's research branch. It is not due to open until 2015, assuming that the budget is not cut again. The Crowthorne Centre is scheduled to be used for Gate and hyper-spatial folding research but right now there is no equipment or sorcery on the premises. They have not even put in the plumbing yet.

The Portal: The portal is a Class Four breach in our reality (roughly on a par with the one Bob encountered in Amsterdam during *The Atrocity Archives*). It has been opened from the far side. The gate appears to be relatively stable, in that it is unlikely to vanish in the next 20,000 seconds (a bit over five hours). After that, it may begin to degrade. Maybe.

The gate is definitely coming in from somewhere very similar to our spacetime—this is somewhere well within the tiny subset of universes marked 'here there be human-like things'. It is either coming from elsewhere in our spacetime, or from a universe next door. The closer two universes are, the more mojo it takes to bring them to contact—it is easier to call up utterly alien things from the bottom of the Mandlebrot set than it is to jump across our galaxy—so whoever opened this gate expended an awful lot of effort doing so. If it slams shut, then opening it again will be... problematic.

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The Planet: It is pretty nice, astronomically speaking, on the far side of the gate. Gravity is 1.2gs, about 20% higher than on Earth. The atmosphere is breathable, although the fine dust in the air may aggravate or cause respiratory problems. Radiation is within tolerable levels. The solar spectra implies that the star is approaching the end of its lifespan and is perilously close to using up all its of hydrogen and expanding into a red giant. The temperature is about 320 degrees Kelvin, or a balmy 50 degrees Celsius (120° Fahrenheit).

The sun is low in the horizon; it should set in about three hours.

Radio signals work, as demonstrated by the received transmission but there is no sign of any other signal traffic, just the same Morse code message, repeating every two minutes. Long-distance radio signals do not travel through the portal; the Laundry will establish a monitoring station at the portal entrance and relay messages back and forth between the PCs and Crowthorne Base.

Initial Survey: After 30 minutes, the Tosher team emerge from the portal and give their report.

The gate is exactly the same on the far side—a freestanding portal, just hanging in the air. There is no sign of anyone or anything in the immediate area of the portal. The portal is in a circular valley, maybe an old impact crater, that is approximately a kilometre in diameter. To the south (relative to north-south on Earth—there is no magnetic pole on the far side), a desert that stretches as far as the eye can see. The team saw some dust clouds in the distance that could indicate moving vehicles or maybe a herd of animals but the clouds were too thick to make out any details.

To the 'north-east' of the portal site, there is a city.

It is a city of black stone domes and strange spires. It appears to be mostly ruined but there are still some intact structures. They confirmed that the radio transmission was coming from the direction of the city but could not triangulate how far or exactly where the source is. The city is approximately five kilometres away from the portal. There are several smaller structures in the desert between the portal and the city.

The Meeting

Once the Tosher team have returned from the far side and recovered from their ordeal, Boris calls the characters to a meeting in the OCCULUS truck.

I talk to head office. Decision is, you go through portal. Someone there asked for you—there must be reason. Before you go, think hard. Do you have congress with any alien beings lately? Penpal letter with lots of stamps? Strange dreams? No?

You will go through portal. SAS team shadow you. You march down to ruined city, find source of transmission, find out what is going on. Make it back here before gate shuts. Any questions?

What if the Gate shuts before we make it back? If the Gate shuts, then the Laundry will try to reopen it but this may be impossible. The characters should, if possible, find the source of the Gate and secure it for themselves. They should also keep track of how long they spend on the far side and make sure they can make it back before the 20,000-second time limit elapses. Actually, by the time they actually get going, it will be closer to four-and-a-half hours.

What about equipment? The characters can grab what they can use from the armoury in the back of the OCCULUS truck—it has got a range of assault rifles, pistols and esoteric weapons like HOGs. Major Barnes reminds them that the far side of the gate is about as hospitable as Death Valley, so loading themselves down with heavy equipment is suicide. Each member of the expedition is to take a radio, a hand torch, head protection, sunglasses and plenty of water. An intern has popped down to the local chemist to buy all of the sunscreen in the shop.

What if it's a trap? Boris laughs at this. *'Someone open portal from other side of universe—is very expensive, very hard. They want you that much, we sell you to them. No need for trap. Is probably not trap. Probably. Well, if is trap, then SAS are there.'*

Are the SAS under our command? No—Major Barnes will retain command. He will monitor the characters' progress, give advice and come running when they call. The SAS team will shadow the characters as they approach the city, then take up a support position on the perimeter. The characters will have sniper support as long as they stay in the open.

How do we get from the portal to the city? Walking is the obvious option. The walls of the crater are too steep to drive a vehicle up. Creative players may suggest using mountain bikes, which they will have to carry up the steep slope but can then ride across the desert to the city.

Have we tried replying to the radio message? No. If you want to try, use your radios when you are on the far side of the portal.

The location of the portal on this side seems suspicious—could time travel be involved? Boris shrugs and calls Dr. Mike Ford into the OCCULUS and asks him to speculate. Dr. Ford removes his glasses, squints, puts his glasses back on and then shrugs. Gates within the same space-time don't violate causality anyway, so there is no prohibition against time travel within this universe. If the portal is from a parallel universe instead, then time could flow faster or slower, relatively speaking, so it could be from a parallel future.

I don't want to go through the weird portal to an alien world!? Very sensible. Off you go.

Survival Briefing

Barnes gives the characters a quick run-through on desert survival: stay cool, stay hydrated, stay in the shade if possible. He makes sure all the characters have plenty of water and

advises them to sip a little rather than taking large gulps. He also passes out salt tablets, just in case. He points out that the sun on the far side is going to set while they are there and the temperature may drop significantly at night. The dust and the heat are going to play havoc with equipment—keep gadgets and weapons covered until you need them.

Two of the SAS team will stay behind at the portal; the other six, including Barnes, will accompany the PCs to a point overlooking the city.

Given the conditions, the travel time to the city may be over an hour. With an hour to get there and an hour to get back and allowing for the usual fuck-ups and delays, the characters should get in and out as quickly as possible. The SAS will wait as long as possible but he will pull out in time to get his men back to Earth.

Departure Gate

When all possible preparations have been made, the characters are brought to the threshold of the Gate and step through. The SAN loss for being sent to an alien world across the unimaginable gulf of space-time is 1/1d4+1.

3. Through the Gate

On the far side of the portal, the SAS team hurry the characters away from the Gate and towards the cover of the rocky walls. The shock of walking on an alien world is worth another Sanity Check (1/1d3)—it is like the first time you swam in the sea, or the first time you saw the sky. The air on Ys tastes like licking a battery (more accurately, it is like having a D-Cell crammed down your throat). The sunlight prickles like a million tiny needles. Every footstep and even the slightest movement throws up clouds of incredibly fine dust particles. The characters are encrusted with a thick sheath of ochre dust after walking 10 feet from the portal.

Two of the SAS team set up a small pup tent to protect their radio set and establish radio contact with the OCCULUS through the portal. The others continue to hustle the Player Characters across the crater floor and up the cliffs. It is torturous and backbreaking in the otherworldly heat.

At the top of the cliffs, the characters get their first look at the city. The SAS reported it as being made of 'black stone' but it looks more like the crumbling exoskeletons of giant insects. There are perfectly round domes in various states

of collapse and towers that reach towards the red sky at crazy angles. The buildings are all huge, the size of football stadiums and office blocks. There is no sign of movement.

Replying to the Transmission

There is no response if the characters try replying on the same frequency as the original transmission. The Morse code message cuts out an hour after the characters pass through the Gate.

Crossing the Desert

Crossing the desert is possibly the hardest physical exertion of the Player Characters' lives (well, it depends on the characters—ex-military characters have gone through worse but any IT nerds or bookish necromancers are going to suffer horribly). Characters must make an Endurance check; if they succeed, they lose only one Hit Point. Failing the Endurance check costs 1d6 Hit Points (if the characters try crossing the desert without water or other protective measures, then the damage is 1d6/1d10). Crossing the desert at anything faster than a death march turns it into a Difficult (½ skill) Endurance test.

The SAS team accompany the characters as they cross the desert. It is like being stalked by your own shadow. Even in a barren, arid desert, the SAS find places to take cover and hide. They keep their distance from the Player Characters.

The Tunnel

As the characters stagger across the desert, they come to an area of cracked and tossed earth, as if something broke up the soil from below. The broken ground is 10 metres wide and extends to the left and right as far as the characters can see.

As the characters walk across the broken area, call for Luck checks. The ground abruptly collapses beneath any characters who fail their Luck rolls—directly beneath the broken earth is a huge hollow tunnel, some 10 metres deep. Falling characters may make Agility rolls to grab onto the edge of the sudden pit but the earth continues to crumble away, forcing the characters to move quickly.

If anyone falls into the pit, he takes 2d6 damage. Below is a long round tunnel, extending into the darkness in either direction. The walls of the tunnel are made of packed earth, coated with a caustic slime that has bleached them bone-white. The stench of the tunnel burns the lungs of anyone inside it. The SAS team have rope and will help rescue any characters who fall in. Exploring the tunnel is useless—it goes on for miles...

Support

Half a kilometre outside the city is a promontory of red stone. Major Barnes points it out and says that the SAS team will wait there. He checks the characters' radios, to ensure they can stay in constant communication

PHONING HOME

If the players are relying too much on radio contact with home, then you can have it cut out at a suitably dramatic point. The two SAS soldiers at the Gate get eaten by a passing horror and no sign of them is ever seen again.

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with the team and also checks to ensure that the relay back to OCCULUS is working. Overhead, the swollen sun has rolled down to the red horizon and the whole landscape looks like oozing blood.

From the top of the promontory, the characters can see a disturbing sight. The ground between the promontory and the city is criss-crossed with hundreds of trails, similar to the one they just encountered. There is no easy way across but now that the characters know that the areas of broken earth mark underground tunnels, they can move carefully when crossing the broken ground. Characters may make Easy (x2) Agility rolls or continue to rely on Luck. Again, anyone who fails falls through the earth.

The Boundary Stone

After crossing this obstacle, the characters come to a pillar at the edge of the city. This pillar is made of black stone and is engraved with magical runes that glow with arcane power. It is obvious even to the uninitiated that this is part of a spell, probably a protective ward. A successful Idea roll lets the character notice that the broken trails in the earth stop just short of the pillar—the pillar must be keeping whatever's making the trails out (and watch all the Player Characters hastily decamp to the far side of the pillar).

An Occult roll draws comparisons between some of the symbols on the pillar and certain inscriptions attributed to the almost-certainly-fictional Naacal super-civilisation that allegedly inhabited South America 50,000 years ago.

4. The Ruined City

You walk the streets of this alien city. The red dust obscures almost every surface feature—there could be inscriptions or signs underneath this cloaking ochre pall. None of the buildings have entrances at ground level but you might be able to climb into one of the ruined domes. There is no sign of life as you enter the city but as the sun sinks below the horizon, you hear scrabbling from somewhere underground.

THE PRESSURE OF TIME

For maximum stress, you want the players to be aware that the portal back to Earth will soon close but not so focussed on it that they ignore the rest of the adventure. If you play up the time limit too much, then the players may decide to head back to the Gate without ever investigating the survivors or the Ministry. If the players get too worried about getting home, you can have Mike Ford relay a message via radio that the portal still seems to be stable.

The scrabbling noises come from survivors in the smaller tunnels under the city. The survivors shelter from the scorching heat of the day underground and emerge at night. All of the entrances to the underground tunnels are inside the domes.

The Domes

The cavernous black domes are, on close examination, made of something that does feel like dry bone. It is an extremely resilient material, impervious to gunshots but either the ravages of time or some tremendous force has cracked most of the domes like eggshells. The characters can either climb the nearest dome with a Climb roll, or walk around until they come to a dome where the damage reaches ground level.

The SAS team radio the characters if they go inside a dome, warning them that they will not have sniper support.

Inside, the air is blessedly cool. The cavernous area inside the dome is mostly empty, other than a few pieces of crumpled metallic foil and scraps of black cloth. This black cloth is matted with some dried liquid, probably blood. There is a circular hatch in the middle of the floor. This hatch is two metres wide and marked with glyphs similar to the ones on the pillar outside of town. The hatch leads down into the tunnels under the city. There is no way to open it from the surface but if the characters wait here until sundown, the survivors emerge from the hatch. See *Survivors*, page 111.

The Towers

The cryptic towers are even more disturbing as you get close to them. They really do look like the legs of some huge insect buried under the ground. They have no windows but are instead covered in strange protrusions and black spikes. Some of the towers also move slowly, bending towards the setting sun. The purpose of the towers is a mystery, even to the survivors.

The Outpost

In the middle of the town, hidden by surrounding structures, is a very strange sight. The characters spot the remains of a dozen prefabricated buildings, the sort you would expect to find on a modern-day army base or construction site. The prefabs are clearly of human design and from some time close to the modern day. They are stained red by the dust and in varying states of repair. Some have collapsed entirely, others have smashed windows and doors but others are almost intact.

Exploring the ruined prefabs confirms that they are definitely of human origin. Searching around turns up some interesting clues:

The Poster: There is a torn and faded poster tacked to the wall of one prefab. It depicts tentacles coming out of the screen of a smartphone and the message 'DON'T LET THEM IN—DESTROY ALL ELECTRONICS'.



The Typewriter: Lying on the floor inside one prefab is a rusted and damaged mechanical typewriter. The year of manufacture is stamped on the case; this typewriter was made in the present year. One corner of the typewriter is heavily dented, consistent with, say, being used to bludgeon someone's skull in.

The Laundry runs the only remaining manual typewriter factory in the United Kingdom, in preparation for CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. When the walls come down and Cthulhu rises to eat our brains, then computing and electronic devices will be suspect—any Turing machine could easily summon up horrors, as the energy required to evoke the Dho-nha curve asymptotically approaches zero.

And on that day, when reality fails and the nightmares close in, the Laundry will still be able to fill out paperwork and write reports.

The Letter: There are piles of desiccated and faded papers everywhere in the prefabs. They might once have been reports, assessments, archives, the contents of a hundred

thousand three-ring binders but they are all so bleached by the weird sun of Ys that they crumble to dust before they can be read. By a strange chance, one letter has survived—this is Handout #1.

The Gunman

While the characters are exploring the prefabs, they are spotted by a figure atop one of the towers. He shouts what sounds like '*dole scum*' at them and opens fire with a machine gun, spitting a hail of bullets at the characters. The gunman has an Assault Rifle skill of 40%, halved by the range to 20%. He is using burst fire with five-round bursts, restoring his effective skill to 40%.

The characters can scramble into cover, meaning the gunman has only a 20% chance of hitting.

The gunman is located on top of a nearby ruined dome. A successful Spot check lets the characters locate their attacker. He is perched in one of the cracks in the dome, giving him excellent cover against attacks from below. Judging by the

The Gunman

STR 8 CON 16 SIZ 12 INT 15 POW 13 DEX 14 CHA 5 EDU 16 SAN 10 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +0.

Weapons: Assault Rifle 40%, damage 1d10.

Skills: Deranged Screaming 60%, Hide 40%, Spot 60%, Wild Spray of Gunfire 60%.

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IT'S A SET-UP!

The discovery of a Laundry officer on this side of the portal may set off the players' paranoia, causing them to assume that the whole mission is some sort of elaborate bluff, or even a trap. Let them radio back to Crowthorne and shout at Boris—then have the radio go dead, as the SAS at the relay post get eaten...

volume of fire, running out of ammunition is not one of his problems.

Shooting Back: A robust response! The gunman is 150 metres away and has cover. This means that any attacks from the characters have their chances halved by the cover and halved or more by the range.

Getting a better firing position: The characters can try creeping around to get past the gunman's cover, or climbing up the dome. If the gunman spots a moving character, he fires a few rounds in their direction.

Negotiating: The gunman does not seem interested in

talking. Other than the occasional shriek of '*dhole scum*', he jabbers to himself in an unknown language.

Retreating: The gunman's mission is to keep the Dhole Scum out of the area claimed by the Monks. If the characters retreat away from the prefabs, he stops firing.

Calling in fire support: Barnes contacts the characters as soon as he hears gunfire, asking for a sitrep. His sniper cannot see the gunman—if the characters can draw him out by presenting a tempting target, then the SAS sniper can make the kill.

Death of a Gunman: When the gunman is killed, he topples forward and slides down the side of the dome, landing in a puff of red dust at the base of the structure. The characters can examine the corpse for a few minutes before the survivors show up.

The gunman wears a tattered black cloak over a ragged, unidentifiable garment. Under the cloak, the thing is humanoid but so twisted and misshapen that the characters are unsure if it was even human, let alone male or female. The corpse's eyes are milky-white, its skin is bluish and cracked, like that of a crocodile and its limbs were distended and twisted even before its fall from a great height.

The gunman was armed with a battered assault rifle, covered with a makeshift wrapping to keep dust out of the delicate



A Pack of Survivors

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	SAN	Damage Bonus
#1	8	4	7	13	10	10	6	0	+0
#2	7	10	8	10	13	11	9	0	+0
#3	10	13	10	7	11	13	12	10	+0
#4	11	8	13	10	14	12	11	10	+0
#5	16	7	9	11	9	8	8	0	+0
#6	4	9	8	15	4	19	9	0	+0
#7	9	7	11	10	10	14	9	0	+0
#8	10	8	14	7	6	10	11	10	+0
#9	9	8	10	8	3	8	9	0	+0
#10	11	9	11	9	6	9	10	0	+0

Weapons: Claws 30%, damage 1d3. Crude Knife 40% damage 1d4.

Skills: Howling Mob Mentality 60%, Sorcery 40%, Spot 30%, Track 60%.

mechanism. The weapon is clearly old and worn. There are 300 rounds of ammunition draped around the figure's shoulders. The rifle was broken in the fall but it still makes a sturdy club.

Searching the gunman's body turns up a folded scrap of cardboard in a leather pouch around the corpse's neck (the 'leather' is human skin). This scrap of cardboard is a very old and stained but still legible Laundry Warrant Card.

5. Survivors

Once the sun comes down, the survivors emerge from their underground burrows. Their routine is the same every night—they scurry around the city, looking for carrion, collecting the moisture that condenses on the inside of the domes and begging for scraps from the Ministry. Gangs of the fitter survivors prey on weaker ones, killing them and devouring whatever scraps of flesh can be torn from the corpse. Some survivors even have a little sorcery.

Some nights, a few of the saner survivors might gather and tell tales of half-remembered Earth, of a paradise of wonders and pleasures that they knew in their vanished youths. There are fewer of these sane survivors every month, as madness, savagery or cannibalism diminishes their numbers.

Physically, the survivors resemble the crazed gunman who attacked the characters. They wear blackened cloaks and little else. They have all been transformed in bizarre ways, mutated or warped or *changed*. One is covered with bristling black hairs, another has vestigial limbs sprouting from his torso, or shambles on all fours like a beast, or has somehow melded with a concrete wall and now drags lumps of concrete along at the end of his left arm and left leg. Others are more like insects now, or devolved simian things, all fur and fang and sinew.

The survivors emerge from the hatches under the domes; the characters hear the scrabbling from below grow louder

and then the eerie whoops and cries of the survivors before they see them. The SAS team warns of movement on the streets, all around the characters' location. The characters have time to hide if they wish, before the first bands of Dhole Scum find them.

Never say that these are human survivors, or that they are speaking a strange pidgin tongue that was derived from English. Let the players work out that these are not just weird aliens but something much closer to home...

The Survivors and the Corpse

As soon as a band of Dhole Scum spot the corpse of the gunman, the leader of the band lets out a triumphant roar—they have found meat, the greatest of treasures in this city. The band descends on the carcass like hyenas and drag it out of range of any snipers before tearing it to shreds and devouring it. If the Player Characters are close to the corpse, the Dhole Scum challenge them for possession of the meat with a display of strength—shouting, waving weapons, chanting spells. The Dhole Scum are easily intimidated by a working firearm, as functioning weapons are all controlled by the Ministry.

Dhole Scum

Dealing with the first band of Dhole Scum draws the attention of the rest. Soon, the city of Ys is alive with predators converging on the Player Characters. The black domes and the slowly writhing towers echo with the war-cries and shouts of the cannibal gangs. If a character listens closely, he can discern oddly familiar accents in the clamour. These mutated, degenerate, cannibalistic horrors are British, a cross-section of the United Kingdom's citizens, all reduced by CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN to the lowest, most desperate state imaginable, where the drive to survive overwhelms all civility, all reason.

To the Dhole Scum, the characters are an incredible bounty. Not only are they the freshest of fresh meat, meat

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so sweet and untainted with the rot and metallic aftertaste of Ys, but they have treasures like those described in the old stories and weapons that are even better than those possessed by the Monks. Even better, these strangers do not have the magical sensitivity of the survivors. They only see in three dimensions and have not had their senses agonisingly changed by exposure to higher-dimensional beings. The survivors no longer perceive or think as humans do and this gives them an advantage on the hunt. The Dhole Scum can communicate without speech, they can see thaumic energy and they speak the language of the Old Ones.

The Dhole Scum attack from every angle. They come running down the streets, they hurl stones from above, they sneak out of hatches in the ground and ambush the characters from alleyways.

Fighting the Dhole Scum: Do not run this as a regular combat encounter—it is more chaotic than that, with figures rushing out of the darkness, illuminated by muzzle flashes and dancing torches. There are hundreds of Dhole Scum in Ys; the characters cannot hope to defeat them all. Their only chance is to keep moving through the city, staying ahead of their pursuers.

Each round, 1–5 Dhole Scum attack the characters. Roll 1d6 for the number of attackers. If you roll a 6, then the characters are attacked by five Dhole Scum and a sorcery spell. Half of the attackers make ranged attacks; the other half charge towards the characters or try to grab them. Any successful firearm attack takes down a Dhole Scum. The unfortunate creatures are so weak from hunger and deprivation that they have no stamina.

If the characters stay in one place, then add a cumulative +1 modifier to the number of attackers. If the characters somehow dissuade pursuers (say, by conjuring a barrier of fire, or using claymore mines), then apply a negative modifier to the die roll of—1 to—3.

The aim in this encounter is not to kill the Player Characters, it is to scare the players. Keep the pressure on them but always give them a chance to escape by jumping from the frying pan into the fire. Herd them towards the *Sacrifice Patrol* encounter.

Sorcery: The Dhole Scum come from an Earth grotesquely transformed not only by the Stars Come Right and the return of the Great Old Ones but also by the ‘acceleration’, the period during which magic went from being computationally difficult to trivial. The survivors lived through a phase when the impossible became commonplace and the esoteric became terrifyingly real. They are intimately familiar with sorcery.

- The survivors may use magic to throw spells at the fleeing Player Characters. These spells are level one and two curses, so characters wearing wards have some immunity to these attacks. If a character does get hit with a spell, pick one of the following effects:

- **Blinded:** The character is completely blinded for several minutes and has blurry vision until the spell is lifted or dispelled.
- **Palsy:** One of the character’s limbs is paralysed or severely weakened. Movement is halved (if a leg is targeted) or all attacks are made Difficult (if the attack is aimed at an arm).
- **Misdirection:** The character is deluded into moving in the wrong direction, so he runs towards the Dhole Scum or leaves cover.
- **Wounding:** 1d6 damage in a variety of really unpleasant ways (bleeding from all orifices, eldritch runes appearing as welts on your skin, small bones in the hands, ears and ankles being transmuted to molten lead).

Sickness: The full Exorcist, lots of pea-soup vomit and unbearable nausea.

SAS Support: The SAS team give what support they can with sniper fire. Barnes shouts at the characters to rendezvous at a point at the edge of the city if possible; he will bring his team into the city to provide cover but they do not have the firepower or the ammunition for an extended *Zulu* fire fight. Loose the pursuers, get into the back streets, stay hidden.

Sacrifice Patrol

.....
You flee through the streets and alleyways of this alien nightmare city, a horde of flesh-eating freaks close behind. They only want you for your body. All the domes look the same in this half-light, so you feel like you are blundering through a maze. You are not sure which street leads out into the desert. You keep scrambling over rubble, dodging through alleyways and the degenerate horrors get closer with every wrong turn.

Echoing from within the dome ahead of you, you hear a chorus of guttural war-cries. Another mob of the creatures is coming straight towards you. You are surrounded. It is dinner-time. Which one of you is the starter?

Before the characters get eaten, the street is flooded with harsh light. A vehicle of some sort advances down the street. It is a heavily refitted APC, adapted to the strange conditions on Ys. It is also battered and heavily damaged. Its armoured sides are marked with arcane runes and a soldier-monk rides shotgun in the turret; he clutches a rifle in his insectoid hands. The Dhole Scum scatter, gibbering, ‘*Sacrifice patrol! Sacrifice patrol!*’

The soldier fires off a few shots from his rifle into the crowd. He is firing tranquiliser darts to incapacitate the ‘volunteers’. Call for Luck rolls from the Player Characters; the character who gets the worst result is struck by the dart, which is tipped with POT 15 poison.

The rest of the shots hit Dhole Scum. Once the unlucky Dhole Scum go down, more black-cloaked Monks emerge

Ministry Guards, Monkish Madmen

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	SAN	Damage Bonus
#1	10	8	9	8	11	15	9	15	+0
#2	11	12	10	10	12	10	11	15	+0
#3	13	11	11	7	13	9	11	15	+0
#4	14	12	10	10	14	8	11	15	+1d4

Weapons: Battered Assault Rifle 40%, 1d10. Tranquilliser Rifle 40%, 1 point + POT15 poison.

Skills: Brawl 40%, Command 30%, Drive (APC) 40%, Hide 40%, Listen 50%, Spot 40%, Strategy 30%.

from the APC, grab the groggy victims, hand them a form letter (Handout #2) and throw them back into the vehicle. If the characters fight back, the Monks retreat to their APC in disarray.

The characters can use the confusion to flee into another alleyway. As they run, a rough hand grabs the character at the rear of the group...

6. The Terrible Old Man

'There ain't nothin' you can do for 'em naon,' hisses a gnarled figure. It looks like a cancerous garden gnome. 'The Monks have 'em. They'll tek all of us, in the end. Them or the worms. Ia! D'yhole' It peers at you with rheumy, orange-tinged eyes. 'You... whence come ye? Another refuge? Or am I mad, mad old Bert they call me...'

Bert is the crazy old man, here to provide a rambling exposition of the backstory. He comes of the same lineage as Zadok Allen of Innsmouth. He is too old to stay ahead of the cannibal gangs and the sacrifice patrols for much longer. He is also old enough to remember the years before CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, so the Player Characters resemble ghosts from his youth. He is not sure if they come from another refuge, or if they are ghosts, hallucinations or the onset of Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease but they seem less likely to eat him than other survivors.

Play Bert as senile and insane. He is easily distracted by memories of his youth when life involved fewer giant worms, by his terror of being captured by the monks and by shiny objects. He occasionally breaks into Enochian instead of English.

'The government men brung here, long ago. The government men said it was safe. The government men said they wouldn't find us here. They never talked about the worms, mind, the dholes. Ye hear 'em at night, gnawing their way in. Ye can't sleep at night 'cos of the worms, nor in the day 'cos of the heat, but who sleeps anyway? Sleep, and ye may dream... Ia!

'The government men say they'll save us all again. Feb. They saved us before and that brung us to the worms and I don't rightly know if the worms are better than what we left behind. I don't like what they're doin' in that Ministry. They took too many for the sacrifices and it ain't right, it ain't, it ain't.'

The characters may have a few questions for Bert.

Where the hell are we? *'The government said it was a refuge. The government brung us here in... I can't remember. Long ago. I used live in Birmingham, before the war.'*

What happened to you? *'They came. Everything changed. Everyone... Ia! Ia!'*

Who are those monks? *'They're government Monks. They run this refuge. That's their Ministry in the middle of the city.'*

What Ministry? *'It's the Ministry. Only one left. One little corner of an alien world that is forever England...'*

What are they doing there? *'They said they were going to save us all, get us away from the dholes and make things just the way they were, before everything changed. Before they came.'*

What's a dhole? *'Out in the desert. They're worms. Big worms. I don't like to look at 'em.'*

Do you know anything about a radio signal? *'Radio? I remember radio. We had radio when I was young. BBC, wasn't it? No, they don't let us have radios any more. No electronics. The only people who have radios any more are the Ministry.'*

How the hell do we get out of here? *'There's no way out. There's nothing out there, 'cept dust and dholes. Only the Ministry Monks can leave the city.'*

SACRIFICIAL VICTIMS

So, you have been hit by a tranquilliser dart, abandoned by your comrades and grabbed by a bunch of crazed monks intent on sacrificing you to power their eldritch social networking site. It has been one of those days.

If a Player Character does get taken by the sacrifice patrol, then he is not necessarily doomed. The victims are brought to the Ministry and carried down into a dungeon to await processing. The rest of the characters can rescue the captured victim if and when they break into the Ministry in Section 7.

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Bert, He Who Delivers Exposition

STR 6 CON 8 SIZ 6 INT 10 POW 11 DEX 8 CHA 6 EDU 10 SAN 10 HP 7

Damage Bonus: +0.

Skills: Babble Semi-Coherently 50%, Hide 65%, Stealth 65%.

How do we get into the Ministry? *'You don't. Not without a card. I know a door but it's sealed with a spell. You have to have one of their cards to get in.'*

If shown a Warrant Card, Bert confirms that it is the sort of card carried by the Monks.

Into the Tunnels

Bert can guide the characters through the smaller tunnels under the city. He can bring them to the rendezvous point with the SAS, or to the entrance into the Ministry. The tunnels are a fetid maze, reminiscent of the London Underground during the Blitz, all filthy tiled walls and ragged corpses. There are no lights down here, but the survivors can see in the darkness. At night, the tunnels are almost empty.

Sometimes, the dholes find gaps in the city's magical defences and break through from below. Bert guides the characters around these dhole-blighted areas, where the tunnel ends in a seemingly bottomless shaft. Characters brave enough to look down the shaft may glimpse a dhole in the depth.

Consulting with Major Barnes

If the characters rendezvous with the SAS, Barnes reports that his team saw tremendously huge worms rise out of the ground outside the city. They barely made it past the worms without being crushed. Despite the danger, Barnes suggests that the characters continue the mission—they will also need to find some way to get past the worm-creatures. If the characters have some way of banishing the monsters, that would be very handy. A nuke, maybe.

Barnes and the other SAS soldiers are not Laundry staff, so they cannot enter the Ministry through Bert's hidden back door.

The Ministry Entrance

The secret entrance to the Ministry is via a tunnel that ends in a rune-inscribed doorway. A peeling, yellowed warning poster notes that unauthorised personnel are not permitted beyond this point, on pain of death cursing. The door is bathed in a sickening yellow glow. Anyone who steps through the door who is not a member of the Laundry gets blasted by the ward.

RAISING THE ALARM

If the characters take basic precautions, such as stealing a black cloak or using a Hand of Glory, they can sneak around the Ministry without being noticed. Call for the occasional Easy Stealth or Disguise check to keep the tension up but let the players gather information without much difficulty.

Most of the Ministry staff are focussed on their assigned tasks and pay little attention to their surroundings. There are random guard patrols, consisting of two armed guards wandering around, but their purpose is to maintain the atmosphere of post-apocalyptic dystopian oppression, not actually looking for intruders.

If the characters do get spotted, then the guards start showing up within 2d6 rounds.

7. The Ministry of Dead Names

As the dholes consumed the previous civilisation of Ys, the sorcerers raised a fortress of black stone in the heart of the city. This was their last redoubt, their last act of defiance against the unrelenting mindless assault of the worms. The last sorcerer of Ys perished within these walls.

The Ministry is determined that this exiled England will not end the same way. Here, within these walls, England prevails. Unlike the rest of the city, there are still vestiges of modern technology. Phone and electrical cables run along the walls and the corridors are lined with filing cabinets (no computers, of course, or other computational devices). There are still tea breaks and portraits of the Queen on the walls. The Monks consider themselves to be the effective government of England, even if the country has been abandoned. They believe they are serving the nation and its citizens (times are hard; sacrifices must be made, including human sacrifices).

Most of the Monks are employed casting banishing spells on the dholes, or working on the Annals, so the characters can sneak around the lower reaches of the ministry without being detected.

The Ministry Basement

In the Laundry, no-one pays attention to the IT department. It is almost unheard of for anyone from the exalted heights of Management or Human Resources to descend into the fetid depths of the basement, where the grues and geeks dwell.

It is the same in the Ministry. The lower tunnels are where the nuts and bolts of the scheme are put in motion, where the quotidian parts of the mass-possession-through-social-networking operation are executed.

The Library

The Library is a large chamber, lined with hundreds of three-ring binders. These binders are filled with typewritten computer code. There are hundreds of pages in each binder. The code is mostly C++ and Python but there are also long stretches of PHP. Glancing through the code, the characters spot several references to NameZone. These binders contain the source code for the NameZone social networking site. Someone has written out the entire code for a website on a typewriter.

The Annals of Dead Names

The Annals of Dead Names is another room full of three-ring binders. Examining these binders, though, reveals that these contain transcripts of NameZone profiles. Every comment, every update, every private message, every embedded video and 'What Kind of Kitchen Implement Are You' quiz.

There are Monks here, hunched over their typewriters, busily transcribing details for future reference. These Monks are in magical trances and are unaware of their surroundings—they are engaged in automatic typing. Elsewhere, different Monks study existing profiles, learning to speak and think like the humans they plan to replace.

The Scriptorium

Here, sorcerers toil to perfect the final stage of the Ministry's grand scheme. They are developing a magical diagram that will consume the soul of those who look upon it and allow another consciousness to leap across the endless gulfs of space to inhabit the recently vacated body.

This complex arcane glyph must be powerful enough to devour souls whole and open the way for the survivors of Ys but must also be simple enough to run on Windows 95 or better and fit into a NameZone application. Once this glyph is complete, it will be packaged into a social networking game and set loose on Earth.

On a whiteboard on the wall, there are truncated or uncharged depictions of the glyph. Characters who saw the glyph on the D&D game board in the university back in Section 1 of this adventure recognise it as a variation on the same design.

The Lesser Gates

This is where the typewritten code for NameZone is uploaded to servers on Earth. There are two sets of magic circles inscribed on the floor. Monks place the requisite three-ring binder of code in the appropriate circle and activate the magic; through the arcane law of contagion, the code on the live server is patched.

The other magic circles are for downloading information from the servers; Monks sit in these circles and meditate, allowing a million profile updates and wall posts to flood their minds. They then stagger to the room of the Annals and transcribe what they learned.

These lesser gates are Class Two information-transfer portals. A close examination of the magic involved (using Science (thaumaturgy) or Sorcery) allows the character to work out that these Gates' destination is the same place the PCs came from. It also reveals that these gates are capable of being overcharged so they can transfer more than just information. They can be made into Class Three (gating a group of people) or even Class Four (a freestanding portal, like the ones the characters came through) but it would require a lot of power and the only readily available source of arcane juice here is the dungeon...

The Dungeon

Actually, according to a sign on the wall, this is a detention facility for citizens who have broken Ministry Emergency Regulations or who have been volunteered for special duties but 'dungeon' works pretty well. It is a long corridor of cells.

Most of the prisoners here are Dhole Scum dragged in by the Sacrifice Patrol. These unfortunates lie crumpled in their cells, listless and drugged. They are waiting to be brought down the corridor to be processed.

The Sacrifice Chamber: Your standard evil wizard sacrificial chamber, with a few optional extras. The black altar, the torture machines, the serrated daggers and the blood-encrusted runes you would find in any cult temple but those high-tension power lines and the form noting when this sacrificial altar was last cleaned speaks of government-funded industrial sorcery.

The Ministry Prisoner: One of the prisoners, though, is from the Ministry. This figure has suffered more changes than the average survivor; it resembles a living skeleton, with a fine network of runes engraved on its bones. An eldritch light burns in its eyesockets. This skeleton is all that remains of a former Laundry officer—and it is someone the PCs knew. If you do not have a suitable NPC in mind, then use Peter-Francis Young. He is young no longer—for him, the days before CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN are decades in his past.

The Ministry prisoner was imprisoned for treachery. He set up an illegal radio transmitter in the tower above the Ministry, the same radio transmitter that broadcast the Morse code

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message that the Laundry detected back in Crowthorne. He was asked to do this by an old friend, a friend whose name he cannot mention due to a magical geas.

All Ministry personnel are under powerful geases to obey the Minister's commands. Their behaviour is heavily circumscribed. The prisoner was able to rebel only within certain limits. The radio transmitter was a loophole that was left open because there is no-one to talk to on Ys. The exorcism spell will remove these geases. It will also destroy the prisoner but as the lich falls apart, he will have a few seconds of free speech.

He spots the Player Characters if they make it down here (or if a Player Character gets captured by the Sacrifice Patrol). He speaks with a sepulchral voice. *'You're here. It worked. There's little time to explain, and I can't do it, yet. Compulsion geas. You've got to exorcise me. I can give you the spell—come closer...'* The prisoner extends a bony finger towards a Player Character.

If a character submits to being touched by the prisoner, then weird images and eldritch words pour through his mind and out of his mouth. Having someone else cast a Level Four spell through you is a dizzying and horrifying experience, like having a rollercoaster full of screaming octopi plunged straight through your brain. Sanity Loss is 1d4/1d10.

When the spell is cast, the skeleton of the prisoner begins to fall apart. His bones crack and flake, as entropy catches up with him. *'Abh... here it comes. Game over. This was the only way we could act. I sent the radio message... others opened the Gate. We knew we could rely on you. Listen: the Minister thinks we can escape back to before the end of the world, to usurp your world. They're insane—we're not human any more, none of us. We can't go back. You have to stop them. Wipe it all out. Let the worms eat the ashes... let your people have a few years before...'* His skull falls to the floor as the rest of the body collapses. The lights in the eyesockets go out.

The Corridors of Power

The upper level of the Ministry... think *Downfall*. Think the last days in Hitler's bunker under Berlin. The Ministry is desperately trying to hang onto power, to prolong their existence for another few scant days until their scheme comes to fruition. Outside these halls, the dholes mindlessly batter themselves against the magical barriers. Outside, the common survivors are degenerate barbarians, hardly worth saving. Ammunition and fuel are running low; so too is food and water. This last outpost of human civilisation cannot endure. Everyone in the Ministry above the lowest pay grades knows this but are bound by their oaths and geases.

So they remain at their posts but try to blot out the horror of the unfolding disaster. Some drink; others worship strange alien gods, or ignore the reality of their situation. Some fuck on their government-issue desks, trying to find partners whose genitalia are warped in a compatible way. Others yet have killed themselves, but they keep working anyway.

Security here is considerably tighter than on the lower level. There are Ministry guards everywhere. They expect to be fighting invading Dhole Scum, not Laundry officers from another dimension, so the characters do have the advantage of surprise but as soon as the alarm is raised, they will quickly respond with deadly force.

Offices

Lots and lots of pointless bureaucracy, tracking the declining supplies, the population of Ys, dhole sightings, paperclip audits... the lists are endless.

The Armoury

The ministry's arsenal of weapons. Thousands of rounds of ammunition, machine guns, handguns, three refitted APCs, explosives, fuel and other supplies. At the back of the Armoury is a weapon salvaged from the ruin of Earth—a portable nuclear device, designed for use against weakly godlike entities with tentacles. The Minister has the command codes for this bomb in his briefcase.

The Armoury is guarded by four guards at all times.

Main Entrance

The main entrance to the Ministry building, leading out onto the streets of Ys. Heavily guarded at all times to keep the Dhole Scum out. Gathering or loitering within 500 metres of the main entrance is banned by order of the Minister, on pain of being shot by government snipers.

The Tower

Dozens of spiked towers rise from the Ministry building; this one is the source of the radio transmission. If the characters search this tower, they find an out-of-the-way room near the top of the tower, containing a transmitter and a lot of blood. A quick examination suggests that several people were gunned down at close range in this room.

There is also thaumaturgical equipment—a silver bowl, chalk, burnt-out candles, electrical tape, a breadboard—scattered about the floor. There is a magical diagram chalked on one wall. Examining this diagram suggests that it is another gate-opening spell, almost identical to the ones down in the basement. The difference is that this is a Class Four mass-transfer portal and the variable for where the gate actually manifests is an unfamiliar symbol. An Idea roll suggests that this is where the portal to Crowthorne was created.

Dhole Incantation Chamber

The Dhole Stones surrounding the city require constant maintenance. The few Monks who can still manage proper sorcery spend their energy weaving spells to hold the worms back. If these rituals are disrupted, then the magical protection of Ys would collapse, letting the dholes in. Due to the importance of this chamber, it is guarded by four

The Minister, Dark God of Bureaucracy

STR 16 CON 15 SIZ 30 INT 14 POW 10 DEX 5 CHA 8 EDU 16 SAN 0 HP 23

Damage Bonus: +1D6.

Weapons: Flailing Tentacle 50%, damage 1d6+damage bonus.

Armour: 8 points of blubbery hide.

Skills: Bureaucracy 75%, Computer Use (magic) 60%, Knowledge (occult) 50%, Persuade 40%, Sorcery 60%.

soldiers; there are also several Monk sorcerers here, weaving their spells.

At the centre of this room is a deep shaft, reaching down into the network of dhole tunnels that honeycomb Ys. The sorcerers encircle this shaft, hurling their incantations down into the echoing darkness. When necessary, they take sacrificial subjects from the dungeon and drain their souls for power.

The Minister's Chambers

The Minister does not think of himself as a great man. He never wished to be the last leader of the United Kingdom, to be responsible for the last refuge of surviving humanity. He rose to this position not through innate talent (though he is more accomplished than he admits to himself) or ambition but by staying alive. His former superiors perished through starvation, madness, murder or stranger means, until he was the most senior official left alive. The civil service is resilient, even in the face of Armageddon. Technically, as a civil servant, he should not use the title of Minister but elections have been suspended for the duration of the present emergency.

The Minister resembles a gargantuan frog, now, a hulking frog-faced thing with a downy hide and fur-fringed bat ears. Oh, and tentacles. He is nearly blind but his other senses are inhumanly keen and his teeth and claws are inhumanly strong. The Minister believes that his final duty is to provide for the survivors of Ys, even though he despises them. The official policy, set down by his predecessor, is to travel back to Earth before the beginning of the present emergency and the Minister intends to carry out this policy to the best of his ability.

The Minister too was a Laundry officer before CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN shattered the world. His identity is left up to the Gamemaster.

If the characters make it into the Minister's rooms, they can confront him and either try to persuade him to cancel the possession scheme, or just put an end to his twisted existence. The Minister is unwilling to cancel the scheme—his duty is to provide for the survivors of Ys, by any means necessary. Life on this planet is intolerable and they cannot return to the Earth of their time. His administration must look to the past. Play any roleplaying interactions with the Minister for black humour—he is a 10 foot-tall insane mutant frog who is trying to justify a

civil service policy of time-travelling possession via social networking.

The Minister has a battered red box containing key documents related to the Ys refuge, including a high-level briefing on the NameZone project and the possession plan, and the activation codes for their last nuclear device.

8. Ending The Book of Dead Names

Once the Player Characters have worked out what is going on in Ys, they must put a stop to it. There are lots of ways to do this, from the subtle to the extremely unsubtle.

- **Bringing down NameZone:** If the social networking site goes down, then the Monks cannot deploy their soul-sucking game. Characters with a good Computer Use skill can hack the live site by changing the code in the right three-ring binder and sneaking it into the information-transfer gate. Alternatively, the characters could flee back to their Earth and bring the site down from there.
- **Magical sabotage:** The Monks are using almost all of their magical power to keep the dholes out and run the NameZone servers. They have only just enough left to create the possession spell and send their minds through. If the Player Characters sabotage these efforts, the Monks may not have the strength to recover. They could, for example, free the prisoners who are awaiting sacrifice, or start throwing exorcism spells around. One clever solution would be to alter the incantations used to create the information-transfer gates in the same way the mass-transfer gate's point of origin variable was changed, causing the info gates to open somewhere other than within the NameZone servers.
- **Burn it all down:** Hey, it's a library and there's no water on bone-dry Ys for fire fighting. One stray match can ruin the whole scheme. More ambitiously, there is that nuke in the armoury, if the characters grab the activation code from the Minister's room.
- **Letting the Dhole Scum in:** The characters can open the door of the Ministry by storming the main entrance, or by inducting the Dhole Scum into the Laundry. After all, the magical barrier in the

BLACK BAG JOBS

basement lets sworn members of the Laundry past; all the characters need to do is lure the cannibal mob down there and then shout 'you're drafted' while waving their Warrant Cards.

- **Letting the dholes in:** This is the simplest but also the riskiest way to deal with the Ministry. Just cancel the dhole-banishing spell, either by sabotaging the sorcerers' incantation or just by sticking a few pounds of C4 plastic explosive to the stones on the city's perimeter.
- If the characters breach the protective magic, then the dholes go Godzilla on Ys immediately. Phallic nightmares the size of aircraft carriers erupt from below, swallowing buildings whole. The thrashing of the dholes causes earth-shattering quakes; the wrath of the dholes consumes the city in a paroxysm of unthinkable violence. There is no way of stopping the dholes once they are unleashed.

Escaping the City

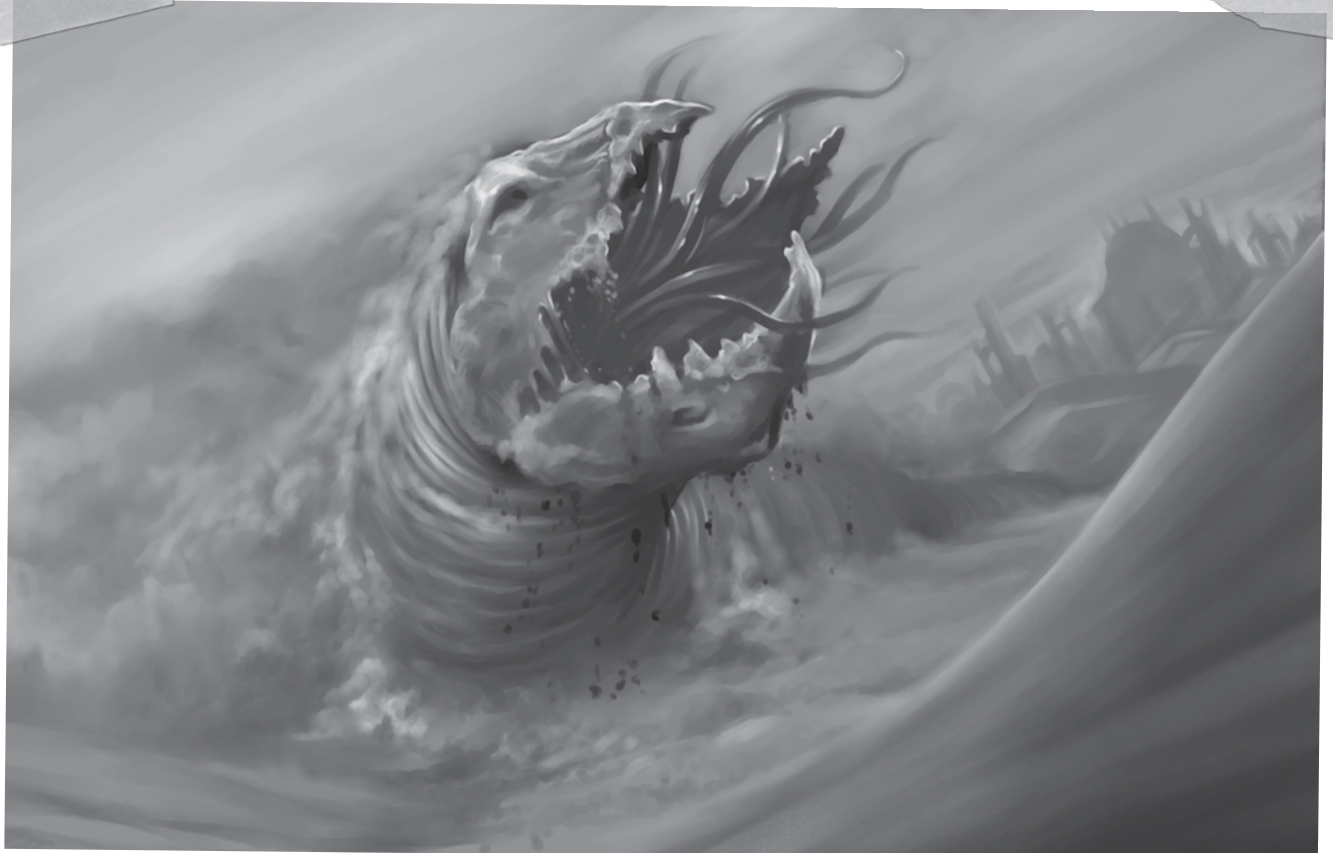
.....
The characters can flee the city the same way they came in, with fire support from the SAS team, or they can sneak out via the dhole tunnels. Depending on what happened in the city, the journey back to the portal may involve the characters being chased by the Ministry's Sacrifice Patrol, by a mob of cannibal Dhole Scum or by writhing dholes,

DHOLES

Dholes are gigantic worm-creatures that have infested certain alien planets. They are really, really big. Godzilla-remake big. A dhole nest can hollow out an entire world, turning it into a writhing nest of monsters. They dislike daylight, though it does not visibly harm them. Some spells can restrain the dholes but these spells must be constantly renewed to keep the horrors out.

Dholes can spit globs of sticky, acidic goo up to two or three miles. They can also crush things. We could give them stats but let's cut to the chase—the only way to take one of these bastards out is with a nuke.

Sanity Loss for seeing a dhole is 1d6/1d20. Seeing a dhole is usually shortly followed by being eaten or flattened by a dhole. Being eaten by a dhole costs no additional sanity but does cause a mild case of death.



or they may be able to flee safely while Ys is devoured by the monsters.

If you need a *deus ex machina* ending, then there is always Boris. The team in Crowthorne have had several hours to assemble more resources. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility to have Boris show up in a helicopter gunship to rescue the characters from the pursuing dholes.

Aftermath

Back in the Laundry, the characters must endure weeks of debriefings and audits. Every scrap of evidence taken from Ys is analysed and catalogued, and every aspect

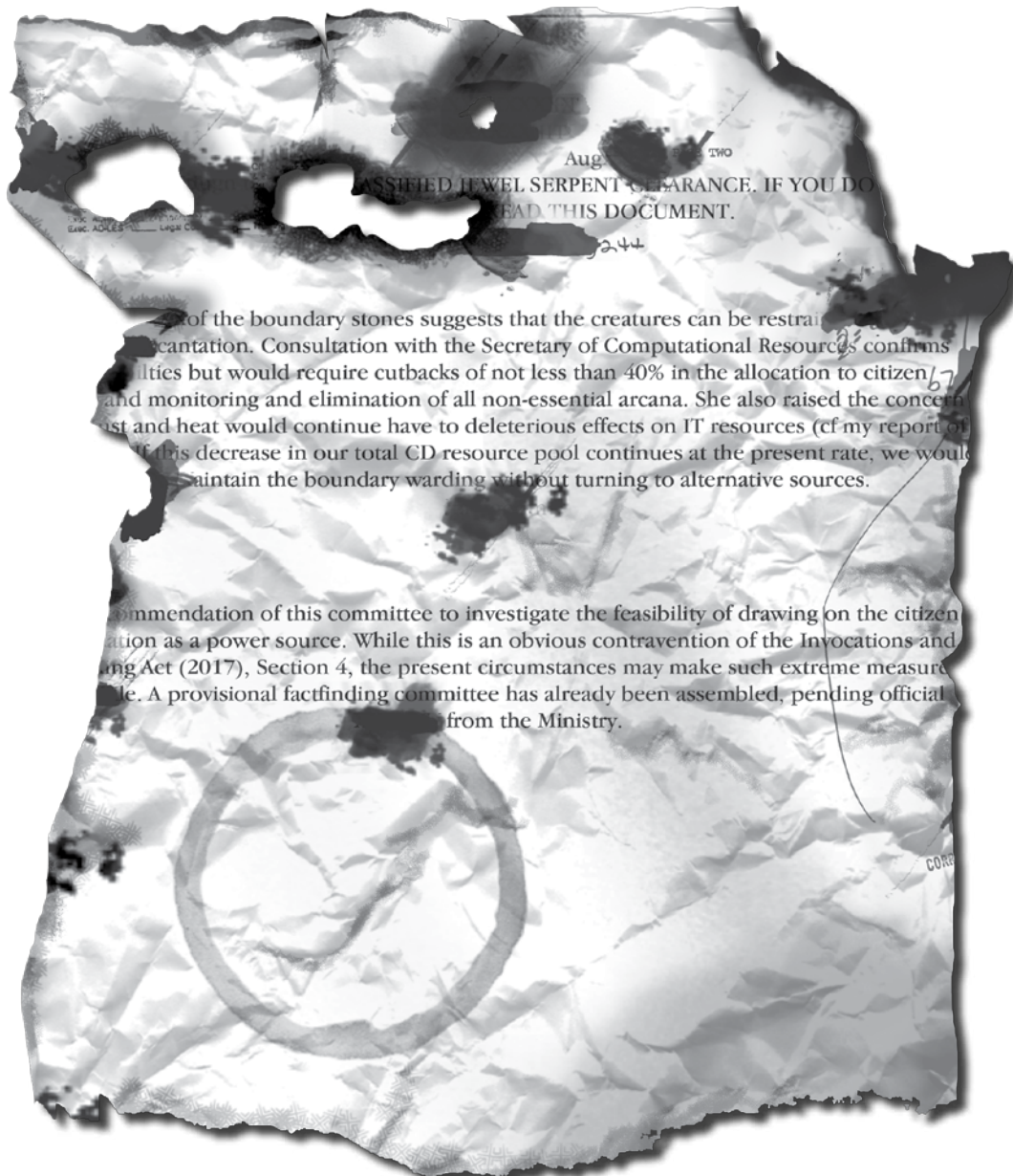
of the characters' experiences there is noted down in exhaustive detail. The whole matter is filed under CASE OCHRE REVELATION. No-one in the Laundry's upper management is comfortable discussing the case with the Player Characters. In fact, the characters find themselves increasingly isolated within the Laundry, as if they bear some invisible mark or taint. Their Status is reduced by 1d4%.

No sanity is gained as the result of completing this mission; even if the characters bring down NameZone, they have to live with the possibility that a ghastly future inevitably awaits humanity.

Prophets are often feared and hated.

Player Handouts

Handout #1—Typewritten letter



READ THIS CAREFULLY

You have been randomly chosen from the civilian population of the United Kingdom to aid the war effort. This service to the nation may result in bodily injury or even death. As per the Emergency Powers Proclamation, you will be held for up to 48 hours while your condition and value to the war effort is assessed. At this time, a determination about your future status will be made.

If any of the following apply to you, inform your case officer immediately! Do you have:

- Dependants, such as children, aged parent or infirm relatives?
- Skills useful to the war effort, such as medical training or knowledge of a trade?
- Medical conditions that might affect your ability to serve?
- Knowledge of criminals or enemies of the state?

In the event that you are deemed suitable for service, the Ministry will make every effort to inform your next of kin. However, due to the ongoing emergency, this is not possible in all cases. Your name will be entered into Ministry records; these records will be made public at some point after the cessation of the present emergency.

The Ministry wishes to make its appreciation of your sacrifice known.

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