



# UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

FOR USE WITH THE LAUNDRY RPG



By Jack Graham, Paul L. Mathews, WJ McGuffin,  
Brian Nisbet and Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan

Based on the 'Laundry Files' novels by Charles Stross





The

Laundry

UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

Based on the Laundry Files novels by Charles Stross.

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# Introduction

*By the authority vested in me by the emissaries of Y'ghonzzh N'hai I have the power to bind and to release, and your tongue be tied of these matters of which we have spoken until you hear these words again.*

— *The Concrete Jungle*

The Laundry practises one form of unconventional diplomacy.

Often, its field operatives must resort to another form.

The first form is all about treaties and contracts with inhuman entities. Demons have been making deals with humanity for a very, very long time; when it comes down to it, all magic's really a transaction of energy between two parties, and seeing as one of those parties (Them) sees the other party (Us) as somewhere between an infestation of ants and tasty snacks, it's good to have a binding legal basis for all such deals. Without such binding protections, They would come boiling through the cracks opened by some foolish sorcerer, rushing in to devour us.

The Benthic Treaty. The Ghoul Acts. John Dee's bargains with what he called angels. The original Black Assizes. The Treaty of Brichester – think of them as hazmat suits, as safety protocols and containment structures for dealing with entities toxic to both sanity and reality. The diplomats of the Unconventional Diplomacy have more in common with the engineers who sealed Chernobyl than they do with the conventional diplomats they lunch with at the Traveller's Club.

Then, there's the other style of diplomacy – you know, the one where you 'persuade' people by waving guns at them, by invoking the power of your warrant card freely, by threatening and pleading and screaming and running. Gunboat diplomacy without the firepower to back it up, the diplomacy you resort to when it's all gone horribly wrong.

These six adventures are all about what happens when you mix those two sorts of unconventional diplomacy. While they can be played in any order, we recommend sticking with the sequence they're presented in.

**Legacy Code**, by WJ McGuffin, connects a failed Laundry experiment in subterranean espionage with the rotting remains of Soviet-era occult science, as that metaphor about containment structures and toxic presences becomes alarmingly, well, concrete.

**Ye Liveliest Awfulness**, by Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan, puts the player characters on the trail of what has to be an absurd

hoax. Lovecraft's dead, after all, so who just caused a fuss outside the American Embassy in London this morning?

**The Darkness Beyond Our World**, by Brian Nisbet, sends the characters off to the United States to pick up a Laundry officer who's refusing to get on a plane home. What could be easier – just take a hop across the pond, hang around in the airport for a few hours, then fly home again, racking up travel expenses as you go. As they soon discover, getting him onto the plane is the easy part – when the sky itself turns hostile, you may need more than your Valium.

**A Pocket Full Of Priapus**, by Paul L. Mathews, also involves little white pills, but you'd only take these ones on a plane if you intend on joining the Mile High Club. A botched Laundry operation sends the characters to Paris as the mop-up crew.

**CASE ARSON SPARKLEPONY**, by Jack Graham, returns the PCs to the United States for another extraction. This time, though, the target's much less cooperative, the hostile forces more numerous, and the one thing you're not going to find at the Burning Man is a convenient Starbucks.

**The Scramble for Buranda**, by Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan, sends the PCs off to the isolated African state of Buranda (formerly British Equatorial Africa). Their official mission is to negotiate for the safe return of three British aid workers, snatched by rebels against the Burandan dictator. Their real task is to recover a magical dagger that may hold the key to summoning a living god. And they're not the only ones after the dagger...

Finally, the appendix gives briefings on several potential flashpoints where the Laundry's Unconventional Diplomacy section might send the player characters. In each case, the mission is not to thwart a Mythos threat, but to keep the Mythos threat content and compliant so it signs on the dotted line. (At least, that's the starting point: if a cosmic horror won't come to the negotiating pentacle in good faith, then the PCs may need to apply the big stick end of diplomacy and banish the horror instead.)





## Legacy Code

*Legacy Code* is a Laundry mission for officers of any experience. The best candidates are officers who have experience or proper training (i.e. they stayed awake during the courses) in occult defences, infiltration, and magic containment. Being able to speak Polish and/or Russian is a plus but makes for a comical absence.

### Project VOLUME TEACAKE

In the 1950s, Cold War scientists became intensely interested in seismology because it could be used to detect each other's nuclear tests. As the Cold War belligerents listened for shockwave echoes, scientists began to pick up unusual and unexpected sounds. In the UK, the Laundry said, "Nothing to see here, move along now, oh and give us all that data so it won't be cluttering up your office, there's a good chap." The Laundry knew this seismology equipment was eavesdropping on DEEP SEVEN.

Thus began Project VOLUME TEACAKE, the Laundry's attempt to spy on Cthonians. It began as a data mining operation, combing through seismology data to find where the Cthonians might live or travel. Once the data pinpointed possible sites, the Laundry set up their own listening posts. Over the years, the boffins in the project (known as the "Teacakes") recorded millions of sounds and tried to understand if these were language, Cthonian whale songs, or what have you.

Then came the big mistake: Trying to talk to them. The Teacakes created a system that would replicate noises recorded from DEEP SEVEN sites. The Teacakes chose the most common 'phrase' they've recorded so far, hoping this would be a greeting and eventually lead to communication with this strange species. They set up the system, entered the phrase, and directed the noise deep down. The response was not so much deafening as maddening. All of the Teacakes, even those nowhere near the communication system, suffered horrible visions and splitting headaches. Several died of brain haemorrhages, while others simply went insane. Those that survived had the incredibly strong feeling that DEEP SEVEN wanted the Laundry to stop VOLUME TEACAKE immediately and forever. The Auditors did just that, and the Teacakes went their separate ways.

### Magiya Khranilische Odin

Flash forward to 1982 and shift to the Soviet Union (this will connect, we swear). The Soviets were never very good at environmentalism. Their drive to beat the decadent West

in production created a lot of toxic waste and pollution, and these were either ignored or dumped somewhere convenient, like the Arctic Sea. The 13th Directorate, Russia's version of the Laundry, was no exception. As they experimented with computational demonology, thaumic resonance contaminated a lot in their offices: pens, staplers, lab coats, chairs, tape drives, and so on. (Apparently, grounding was classified as 'Western capitalist dogma'.) When exonomes started to possess items and attack the staff, the 13th Directorate finally decided to clean up.

They created Magiya Khranilische Odin (MK1): a garbage dump for several truck's worth of hopelessly contaminated mundane items. Physically, it was a deep hole in the ground located in Poland. (They built it in Poland because, if anything goes pear-shaped, it won't hurt anybody 'important'.) Items were dropped in the hole and sealed with a thick concrete slab, complete with rebar and a few wards. A control room was dug out next to the concrete slab, and high above on the surface, they built a tranquil, working farm where a KGB agent would pretend to be a farmer and check on containment every so often.

The Russians knew this was a short-term plan, MK1 would be used only for 10 years or so, and began working on a more permanent solution. Everything went well enough until the Soviet Union collapsed. In the ensuing chaos, the 13th Directorate lost the records on Magiya Khranilische Odin and forgot it even existed. Since none of this affected MK1 directly, the KGB agent on the farm dutifully continued his vigil and waited.

Decades later, thanks to shoddy Soviet construction and a design used twice as long as intended, MK1 is a mess. Ground water leaked into the site, eventually cracking the concrete slab and its wards. Worse, thaumic resonance tainted the ground water, and thus tainted the KGB farmer and everyone in the nearby village. Even worse, with the wards broken, the thaumic resonance reached critical mass and is opening Class Three gates at random, which stay open anywhere from 30 seconds to hours. Things are bad.

How does this connect to DEEP SEVEN and the Teacakes? The Cthonians are none too happy to have a leaky thaumic resonance dump in their backyard and the water prevents them from getting in there. That means DEEP SEVEN needs to tell the surface monkeys to clean up their mess. What better people to contact than the ones they 'spoke' with decades ago?

## Mission Overview

Things start benignly as the officers escort an old Teacake to have tea (and yes, cake) with another old Teacake, who happens to be living in the St. Hilda's, a.k.a. the Funny Farm. Both suddenly start repeating map coordinates, leading to a small farming village in Poland. When the officers arrive there, they find the entire village is tainted with thaumic resonance, courtesy of the secret Soviet-era magic dump hidden deep underground. That dump is also opening random Class Three gates and angering the Cthonians, who demands that humanity fix things now.

Once the dump is discovered, the Russians quickly arrive to take care of the situation. This involves lots of talking and not actually doing anything. The Laundry asks the officers to stay as go-betweens, but this role quickly evolves into, "Doing something to fix the dump because it's pissing off the Cthonians who will destroy humanity if it's not fixed ASAP." The officers will need to steal Russian equipment, close the gates, and escape before they become part of the dump.

### 1. Shepherding the Elderly

This mission begins with a scheduled meeting. No midnight phone calls, no impending doom of all mankind (other than the ever-present Case NIGHTMARE GREEN, of course), and no inter-departmental budget fights. Just a simple 'caretaker' mission.

*You report to work on time, for certain generous definitions of the term, grab a pitch black coffee and head into Committee Room 12B. You've had 'Teacake Mission Briefing' on your calendar for weeks, but as you enter the room, you're saddened by the definite lack of tea or cake. Instead, you find your line managers and a gentleman you've never seen before.*

The line manager introduces Ted Manford of Human Resources. Manford takes over the meeting, speaking in a nasal, droning buzz that's equal parts annoying and sleep-inducing.

*Here at the Laundry, we take care of our own. That's why you will pick up Ronald Davies from his flat in Tottenham and escort him to see his old friend, Beatrice Morgan. The two will have tea and chat about the old times. But since the pair are our boffins, you are to surreptitiously record their conversation – both know too much and we are worried they might slip up now that they're a bit old. When two hours have passed, you will escort Davies back to his flat and report here with the recording. Any questions about the mission?*

Under matrix management, Manford will be the officers' manager for this mission. He slides a slim folder to one of the officers containing Davies' address in Tottenham

and Morgan's address: St. Hilda of Grantham's Home for Disgruntled Waifs and Strays, also known as the Funny Farm.

The officers know that St. Hilda's is where The Laundry puts its members that need psychiatric care, either for short-term or for life. All psychiatric institutions are a bit scary, but the Funny Farm is downright frightening. People rarely visit, and more rarely leave. Manford insists the standard-issue warrant card will get them in and out without incident. He hands the team a discrete digital voice recorder and sends them on their way. Given the nature of this 'mission', there is no budget.

If asked why this mission is called 'Teacake', Manford will say that's above their clearance.

### Not So Funny Farm

Picking up Davies is easy. He's expecting the group, as he always gets an escort when it's time to visit his Teacake friend.

#### Ronald Davies

STR 7 CON 8 SIZ 10 INT 16 POW 11  
DEX 9 CHA 12 EDU 15 SAN 30 HP 9

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** None

**Skills:** Computer Use 45%, Etiquette 65%, Fine Manipulation 42%, Medicine 25%, Science (Seismology) 58%, Spot 50%.

Davies looks like he would be the typical cantankerous old man, bitterly complaining about his pension and how people can't make a proper cup of tea these days. He looks this way because that's how he is. Davies will complain the moment the officers show up and won't stop until he sits down with his friend Morgan. If asked about his past or the 'Teacake' name, he will try to talk – but the magical restrictions kick in and he ends up just coughing.

Getting to St. Hilda of Grantham's is also easy. It's the getting inside part that is not so easy. The facility itself is surrounded by a high brick wall without a front door. The officers go through a grocers next door, down a back alley, and finally to an old wooden door with a bell pull. A minute or so after someone rings the bell, a pair of nameless, broad-shouldered orderlies escort the team to the reception area.

Visitors must surrender all electronics and occult items at reception for fear that a resident will get a hold of one and do very bad things. These will be returned once they leave, but it includes the digital recorder given to the team by Manford. If an officer balks at turning it over, the orderlies request help from a Sister.





Sisters are mechanical nurses: vaguely human-shaped robots that run on tracks in the floor and wear old nun habits. They enforce all rules strictly, and any officer who makes a stink about leaving something behind will be grabbed by a Sister and taken to 'the naughty room'. (This is just a waiting room, but don't let the players know that.) Sisters won't go out of their way to identify rule-breaking, so if an officer manages to use Sleight of Hand to hide the recorder in their pockets, everything will be fine.

*St. Hilda's is as institutional as you feared. Orderlies guide you to a large common room where a dozen old people stare out barred windows, argue with themselves, or otherwise behave like your normal, sanity-challenged patients in a psych ward. Davies instantly spots Morgan and they take a table by a window. A Sister rolls in with tea and biscuits, first for them and then for you.*

### Beatrice Morgan

**STR** 7   **CON** 11   **SI** 8   **INT** 14   **POW** 12  
**DEX** 8   **CHA** 10   **EDU** 14   **SAN** 8   **HP** 9

**Damage Bonus:** -1d4

**Weapons:** None

**Skills:** Art (Painting) 37%, Cthulhu Mythos 30%, Science (Physics) 67%, Sorcery 10%, Teach 50%.

Give the players time to settle in and figure out how to record the conversation without the recorder. Davies and Morgan chat about the recent passing of another of the 'Teacakes', but divulge no sensitive information. When the players are feeling comfortable, the conversation changes drastically. Assuming someone is listening in, both Davies and Morgan stop in mid-sentence and begin reciting the following: "5-3-point-2-0-0-4-8-2-2-point-1-0-7-5-8 fix this". Both repeat the message, in time, over and over again. The Sister in the room will quickly notice this, and St. Hilda's will go into lockdown.

An alarm sounds. The doors to this room swing shut and lock. The Sister that was standing idly by rockets past on the tracks and announces, "This fa-CIL-lity is IN lock-DOWN" – ching – "All PA-tients Re-main where THEY are" – hiss, clank.

Davis and Morgan are physically fine but nothing can bring them out of this strange possession. After a few minutes, the doors open and in roll five more Sisters. They insist on 'helping' patients back to their rooms, and while three go after the real patients in the room, two attempt to grab the officers in the mistaken belief that they are patients as well. Let the officers fear being institutionalised for a bit before human orderlies come in and sort out the mess. The officers can now safely leave the Funny Farm – in fact, they are ordered to leave. Davies? Not so much. The Sisters will not let anyone take him away, as he's still staring into space and reciting numeric gibberish. Soon enough, Manford sends a message (either through their phones if officers left St. Hilda's, or by message if they stayed) demanding they return Davies to his flat immediately. Players will have to decide which battle is more winnable: Fighting St. Hilda's to get Davies out, or fighting Manford to let St. Hilda's keep Davies (at least for now). Either is fine, and afterwards, the work day is over and the officers can head home.

If the PCs search the internet for the numbers, they get nothing until they split the numbers in half (53.20048 and 22.10758). These are coordinates to a spot in Zabawka, a small village outside of Lomza, Poland. There is nothing immediately odd about this location. In fact, it's such a small village that there's nothing on the internet about it.

### Playing Chicken

The next day, the agents are pulled into an emergency meeting first thing in the morning. Manford and their

line managers are there, as is an older woman wearing an unusually cheery floral dress. This woman is introduced as Susan Dalton from Internal Security. She starts distributing a file marked VOLUME TEACAKE to everyone but Manford, who is told to leave. Dalton speaks like a tired headmistress: Slowly and clearly for those who are a little slow but with hints of annoyance.

*The following is classified VOLUME TEACAKE, which you all have clearance for as of now. Is everybody ready to continue? Does anyone need to use the lavatory? Good. Please open your folders. As you will see, VOLUME TEACAKE was a project in 19-hundred-and-52 to contact the entities classified as DEEP SEVEN. Does everyone have DEEP SEVEN clearance? If not, now you do.*

*Is everyone paying attention? Good. VOLUME TEACAKE was a failure and the team re-assigned to different projects. Yesterday, you met Ronald Davies and Beatrice Morgan. They were both part of VOLUME TEACAKE. Since yesterday's incident at St. Hilda's, we checked on the remaining surviving members and all of them are repeating the same numbers. They continue to repeat the same numbers today and show no signs of stopping. Some very clever people here realised the numbers are coordinates to the town of Zabawka, which is very far away in Poland. Zabawka is a tiny farming village in the middle of nowhere and we have no intel suggesting this town is special in any way.*

*It is our belief that the numbers are a message from DEEP SEVEN. What they want us to fix is unknown, but it is prudent for us to take some action now while the clever boys and girls in Arcana Analysis continue their work. Your mission is to visit Zabawka and investigate the town for anything of significance. Then you are to report back. You are not to take any action that you are not trained for, understood? Very good. Investigate and report, that's it.*

The Laundry does not have any assets or agents in Poland, and since the officers are already aware of the situation to some degree, Mahogany Row thought it best to send these officers to investigate.

The folders also contain their cover identities as members of the British Poultry Council. (The Laundry had little time to create these identities, so while they're airtight, they are not exactly glamorous.) The identities include a valid UK passports with their correct names and images (it was faster to alter their true identities rather than create entirely false ones), a letter from the British Poultry Council confirming the officers are members in good standing on a fact-finding tour of continental poultry farms, a one-page overview of how people actually raise poultry on farms (see **Handout #1**), and a 75 Euro debit card to cover expenses.

The players will need to decide how to get from London to Zabawka, where to stay, and similar details. Encourage

them to use real travel websites to find flights and lodging – just don't make them unless you're really into LARPing. Officers can also ask for gear, depending on certifications and availability. Just remind players that the Auditors will not take kindly to first-class travel. The available budget for this mission is 25.

Research on Zabawka will reveal it's a small farming village east of Lomza. That's about it. There's nothing mysterious about this; it's just that Zabawka is that insignificant. (A note to anyone from Zabawka: We are not trying to offend your village, but come on, it's Zabawka!)

## 2. Enter Poland

When the officers arrive at the airport (or at a border check if actually driving/taking a train to Poland), they find a small welcoming committee:

*Two men in ill-fitting suits wave at you. They are both white, slightly overweight, and smiling. One holds a handwritten sign that says, "Welcome UK Chicken Men". They look disarmingly alike.*

Kacper and Lech Moroz (twin brothers) are representatives of the Polski Drob Komisja (Polish Poultry Council). In the Laundry's zeal to make the officers' covers as real as possible, they edited the British Poultry Council's website to include today's visit to Poland. The Poles found this out and hastily arranged for the twins to welcome their British counterparts.

Unfortunately for the Moroz brothers, a Sinister Third Party (see sidebar on page 8) caught wind of the Laundry's unscheduled Poland trip and wanted to know more. One of their Polish agents killed the Moroz brothers, and turned the brothers into drones, a.k.a. remote control zombies. They use zombie eye drops (see page 37 of *License to Summon*) to cover the tell-tale glow, so unless the officers specifically check, there's nothing to suggest Kacper and Lech are zombies. A successful Insight roll will reveal something is strange about their body language but there's nothing specific. Likewise, their knowledge of Poland is surprisingly small.

### Kacper and Lech Moroz

**STR 8 CON 10 SIZ 14 INT 10 POW 10**  
**DEX 13 CHA 13 EDU 11 SAN 50 HP 12**

**Damage Bonus:** 0

**Weapons:** None

**Skills:** Computer Use (Magic) 70%, Firearms (Pistol) 45%, Technology Use (Surveillance) 60%, Spot 45%, Strategy 30%.



The twins are friendly and speak passable English (even though their drone controllers back in the States speak English just fine). They start with the usual inane questions ("How was your flight?"), then start pressing for details by asking some very poultry-related questions, such as:

- Has the British council finalised their draft of the Joint Chicken Welfare Guide?
- Do you think 853/2004/EC is too restrictive or too loose in regards to hygiene?
- How does the UK handle violations of Section III of 853/2004/EC?
- How does the UK plan to improve stockmanship?
- How detailed is the UK training course demanded by Directive 2007/43/EC?

Once Kacper and Lech have rattled the officers with these questions, they start to probe for mission details, such as, "Can we give you a lift?" or, "Is there anything special you are looking for that we can arrange?" Officers can bluff their way through these questions with successful Fast Talk rolls, or they can give the Moroz brothers the cold shoulder and run for Zabawka. However, the pair will go to Zabawka if the team will let them, closely following and taking mental notes.

The brothers won't break their cover, but if the officers somehow manage to determine they're zombies, Kacper and Lech will act offended and leave. If necessary, the Sinister Third Party will pull out of the brothers, leaving the officers with two dead Poles to deal with. The players will have to decide how to get to Zabawka. Trains and buses run to nearby Lomza but not to Zabawka itself, and the officers will most likely have to rent a (very cheap) car to drive there.

## Sinister Third Parties

The organisation behind the zombies is left open as a vector for future investigations. Possible candidates for Sinister Third Party status:

- **The Black Chamber:** Remote-control zombies are one of their trademarks, and some of the older Nazgul are still fighting the Cold War.
- **The Teacakes:** Morgan and Davies are both old hands at occult espionage; maybe they want to ensure that their connection to the Cthonians is permanently severed.
- **A Sinister Cult,** like the Fraternity of Nagalu or the Starry Wisdom Sect (both of whom you'll find in *Cultists Under The Bed*), eager to take advantage of the situation by grabbing some obsolete but still potent Soviet sorcery.

## Tale of a Tail

The Sinister Third Party doesn't want to tip its hand yet. Therefore, its operatives will tail the officers as they drive to Zabawka. Not having the time to create a proper floating box, Kacper and Lech Moroz will simply follow the team in their ubiquitous grey sedan.

Noticing the tail is slightly complicated: If the officers announce they are looking for a tail, each character actively looking can make a Spot vs. Drive opposed skill roll. Success means the character noticed a car is following them. If the players do not announce such vigilance, then only the driver gets a roll.

If the officers notice they're being followed, it becomes a question of whether to confront the tail or try and shake it.

- Confronting the tail means trying to communicate with the other car. Nothing short of a bad accident will stop the car and the zombies' controllers would rather lose track of the Laundry officers than be confronted.
- Shaking the tail requires an opposed skill check. The officer will need a Drive roll, while the roll needed by the zombie depends on what the officers are trying to do. For example, if the officers are trying to speed away, it becomes a Drive vs. Drive roll. If the officers are trying to hide, it's a Drive vs. Spot check. See page 15 of the *Laundry Files: Agent's Handbook* for more details.

If the officers never spot the tail, then the zombies follow them all the way to Zabawka until the police contact the officers (see **Routine 'Questions'** below). Then the zombie operative(s) will park the car and walk to Zabawka in hopes of spotting the officers there.

## A Quick Note

As Magiya Khranilische Odin began to leak thaumic resonance, it contaminated the groundwater, then the crops and animals, and finally the humans. All of the locals in Zabawka are suffering from Level Two or Three thaumic poisoning (see *License to Summon*, pages 92-93). They have given into dark desires and are either cannibals, homicidal maniacs or simply mad. While they won't openly attack the Laundry officers (except for the police, see below), they will come across as resentful, suspicious or just plain odd.

As usual for a place with this much thaumic resonance, electricity sometimes dies and electrical devices often break. Any gear granted by the Laundry is protected from this low-level magic, but anything non-Laundry requires two successful rolls in a row instead of just one.

## Routine 'Questions'

As the officers turn onto the one road leading into Zabawka, a police car heading out of town flashes its lights and pulls the team over. The police officer, Tomasz Andrysiak, speaks some English and clumsily explains his town has had some trouble with outsiders lately: trespassing, vandalism, that sort of thing. He politely but firmly requests the officers follow him to the Zabawka Police Station for some routine questions and passport checks.

This is an outright lie. Like the other villagers, Officer Andrysiak suffers from high levels of thaumic poisoning and has given into dark desires. For the past few months, he and his deputy have lured tourists into town, killed them and ate them. This is exactly what he plans to do to the officers.

### Officer Tomasz Andrysiak

**STR** 12 **CON** 13 **SIZ** 12 **INT** 11 **POW** 8  
**DEX** 14 **CHA** 9 **EDU** 11 **SAN** 2 **HP** 12

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** 9mm pistol.

**Skills:** Brawl 25%, Dodge 35%, Drive 40%, Firearm (Pistol) 40%, Language (English) 55%, Knowledge (Law) 28%.

If the officers refuse, Andrysiak will be furious and will follow the officers' car into town but won't attack – yet. He will, however, look for any chance to arrest one or more of the officers, bringing them (and hopefully the other officers) to the station. Otherwise, Andrysiak will lead the officers into town.

*As you drive past Zabawka's farms, you notice the crops are struggling. Rye and flax fields are somewhat withered; the normally straight rows stagger like they were planted by drunks. A few fields are mixed with weeds and different crops. Finally, you can see the village – if you can call five old, Soviet-era buildings a village. The police car pulls into the front parking lot of one of these buildings: the Zabawka Police Station.*

Ask the players to make Spot rolls; success means the officers notice a pair of dusty but new cars parked, not in the parking lot in front of the building, but in the high grass behind the station. Actually, there are seven cars there, all rentals belonging to tourists who Andrysiak killed and ate; out-of-towners are literally fresh meat. Anyone who walks around to the back will see a horrific site: A barbecue pit with a half-eaten human corpse in it, along with a pile of human bones (SAN 1/1d4).

If the officers enter the police station, they will meet the only other police officer in town, Arek Urbaniak. At an opportune moment, Andrysiak and Urbaniak will attack the

officers. Neither is in their right mind, so they won't use their guns. Instead, they will use their fists and teeth like mad animals.

### Officer Arek Urbaniak

**STR** 13 **CON** 11 **SIZ** 15 **INT** 12 **POW** 7  
**DEX** 9 **CHA** 10 **EDU** 10 **SAN** 8 **HP** 13

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** None

**Skills:** Brawl 35%, Dodge 20%, Firearm (Pistol) 35%, Language (English) 20%, Knowledge (Law) 25%.

No matter the scale of the ruckus at the station, none of the locals will come to investigate. They know what happens there. Besides, they suffer from thaumic poisoning as well.

### The Village of the Thaumed

Besides the police station, there are four other buildings nearby.

**Tavern:** The social hub of Zabawka. Inside are three farmers, quietly drinking beer and staring at a TV. All of them look pale and unhealthy, with small but noticeable tumours on their face and arms. Like many electrical devices in town, the TV isn't working – the locals are so far gone, they think they're watching a football match. They will hush anyone who tries to speak to them and won't even defend themselves.

**Butcher's Shop:** Officers expecting an abattoir will be disappointed. While there is plenty of animal meat in the freezer, the place is clean and abandoned.

**General Store:** A small building that sells just about anything, including groceries, hunting supplies, magazines, and movies. The officers can find a single hunting rifle (damage 1d10, attack 1, special impaling, range 90, HP 11, SIZ 3) and 20 rounds behind the counter – but they also find the owner, Elzbieta Kaczynski.

### Elzbieta Kaczynski

**STR** 10 **CON** 13 **SIZ** 8 **INT** 12 **POW** 7  
**DEX** 14 **CHA** 12 **EDU** 10 **SAN** 10 **HP** 10

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** None

**Skills:** Bargain 50%, Hollow Stare 70%, Spot 40%, Firearms (Rifle) 50%.

Kaczynski is pale and tumour-ridden like the farmers in the tavern, but she is a little more aware of her surroundings. If the team explains they're heading for the source of the problem (however they explain that), she will actually give



## UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

them the rifle and ammunition. Whatever is happening to her village, she wants it to end. However, if the team tries looting her store or threatens her, she will shoot at them.

**Garage:** A small car repair shop that looks closer to a scrap metal dealer. The owner died a while back, so now the only resident is his cat.

### Evil Cat

**STR 7 CON 9 SIZ 2 POW 7 DEX 12**  
**HP 4**

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Claw 40%, damage 1; Bite 40%, damage 2.

**Skills:** Climb 70%, Hide 85%.

**Sanity Loss:** None

The cat won't attack the officers unless one goes off alone. However, it will follow the team as it works through the village, knocking things over to keep the players on their toes.

### Village Weirdness

Ramp up the weirdness by dropping in more supernatural events if the officers hang around the village, like:

- At night, the ground and especially the water glows with a strange and nameless colour.
- An unattended telephone in the garage rings at odd hours of the day or night. PCs who answer it hear nothing but static, but if they keep listening, they hear what sounds like very distant voices across the wires.
- Birds circle endlessly over Zabawka. They fly in from outside the village, then get trapped in the thaumic field and end up flapping aimlessly in wide arcs over the farm until they die of exhaustion.
- The whole village is a Level Two thaumic resonance zone; the farm's Level Three, and inside the containment structure is Level Four.

## 3. Magiya Khranilische Odin

The Russian farm that masks MK1 is run by KGB agent Yuri Bazarov. (Technically, he's part of the FSB now, the KGB's successor, but Bazarov never got the memo.) The 13th Directorate installed him here back in 1985, and he's been at the farm since. The locals know him as Bronislaw

Wysocki, and he has forged documents to prove it. Given his closeness to MK1, he was the first villager to succumb to thaumic poisoning. As such, he's barely human now.

### The Farm

The Wysocki Farm has two fields, one for grain and one for livestock. Neither has been touched for years and is obviously overgrown and abandoned. A battered house sits off the road and an old barn lies some distance behind the house. Searches of the immediate area show something makes tracks regularly from the house's front door and throughout the area: to the bar, the fields, the road, and so on. What made the tracks cannot be determined.

The livestock are all dead; their remains litter the fields and farm. All show signs of being eaten by something. A successful Spot roll will reveal a paperclip or two; these were left behind by Wysocki. He has been feeding off the livestock for a while.

The fields show even more neglect and problems than others in the village but are otherwise benign.

### The Farmhouse

This small, single-storey house is weathered and suffering from neglect. It is broken down into five areas:

1. **Front porch:** Mail has piled up near the front door, but since the postman has become tainted, there's nothing recent. The broken, weathered bones of the Wysocki dog litter the floor. (Wysocki long ago killed and ate the dog.)
2. **Living room:** A couch, rocking chair, and television set have been knocked over and broken. The wood floor shows many scratch marks and cracks leading from the cellar to the bedroom. The room smells of old paper, rotten meat and copy toner.
3. **Bedroom:** The bed's frame is broken, and the mattress and dirty sheets look more like a nest than anything else. In a drawer, officers will find two passports with the same photo: A Polish one with the name 'Bronislaw Wysocki' and a Soviet one (not Russian) with the name 'Yuri Bazarov'. A careful examination of the Soviet passport will reveal a small stamp with '13' in Cyrillic. (This was the Soviet's method of discretely labelling 13th Directorate staff.)
4. **Kitchen:** Bones, human and animal, are carelessly piled about the room (SAN 1/1d4). Since the house lost electricity a good year ago, opening the fridge will require a CON check to avoid throwing up from the smell.

5. **Cellar:** When Wysocki was human, he spent much of his time down here, canning vegetables or working on equipment. The thing he became is drawn here because of that, and this is where the officers will meet it.

### The Thing from the Cellar (Wysocki/Bazarov)

STR 16 CON 18 SIZ 20 INT 6 POW 11  
DEX 8 HP 22

**Damage Bonus:** +1d6

**Weapons:** Tentacle 40%, damage 2; Staple remover bite 30%, damage 1d4.

**Armour:** 2-point hide.

**Skills:** Grapple 50%, Listen 45%.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1d6

Wysocki is not just tainted like the other villagers. His body is twisted by both the thaumic poisoning and small possessed items dumped in MK1 that escaped through the cracks. Wysocki is now an unholy conglomeration of tentacles, mouths, and office supplies.

*A mass of pale, mottled flesh is barely visible along the far wall of the cellar. It turns, revealing a pale human torso covered in thousands of small cuts. Its head rests atop a neck too long to be called anything but a tentacle. Its eyes are stapled shut; its mouth filled with two staple removers that inch out on fleshy stalks and bite at the air. Below the torso is a writhing pile of tentacles, each coming to a point ending in a ball point pen. It loudly smells the air and stops suddenly when it smells you. Then it drags itself quickly towards you.*

The creature is hungry and will fight to kill, stopping only when it's dead. Even then, the possessed parts of him will flail about, unable to stop themselves. The Thing from

the Cellar will eventually need to be ignored or completely destroyed. (Kill it with fire!)

### The Barn

The barn is dusty and run down. Its red exterior is now more grey than any other colour, and the faded paint is falling off. A tractor fills most of the space, but there are six animal pens. A dead cow lies in one pen, rotted far past what even flies would eat (SAN 0/1d2). Four other pens are empty but dirty, while the sixth pen shows no sign of ever being used. Officers who make a successful Spot roll will find two buttons hidden behind a wooden plank, one red and one green. Another good roll will reveal a seam in the floor running down the middle.

This pen covers an elevator leading down into MK1. When the green button is pressed, the floor vibrates and a muffled, deep rumbling comes from below the ground. This is the secret elevator heading up the shaft, but let the players panic over what this might portend. In a minute, the floor splits along the seam and the elevator car ascends to floor level. Officers can all fit in the elevator car, which has green and red buttons just like the wall. The red button will cause the car to descend.

The shaft is unlit, and when the doors above close, officers will be in total darkness. A rusty metal ladder is built into the south shaft wall for emergencies. Halfway down the shaft, the electricity dies and the car stops, forcing the officers to travel the remaining way by ladder – assuming they can see the ladder, of course. When they finally reach the bottom, they can see a thick metal door and brackish, ankle-deep water covering the floor – assuming they were smart enough to bring some torches or something similar. Opening the door will require a Strength check against Strength 12.







## Deep Inside MK1

As the 13th Directorate experimented with sorcery during the Cold War, a number of common items collected thaumic resonance: paper clips, staplers, floppy disks, even lab coats. The 13th Directorate ignored these for as long as they could, until death by evil paper clips became a common occurrence. In 1982, they finally came up with a solution: build a thaumic waste depository in Poland.

The Magiya Khranilische Odin is basically a deep hole in the ground surrounded by concrete. It has two areas: Storage and Monitoring.

- Storage is the heart of the depository. It's a deep hole lined with concrete and rebar, and filled with the contaminated items. The remaining space was filled with xenon, an inert gas, in hopes to keep thaumic reactions in check. (The gas leaked away years ago.) The storage was built below the water table, but that was done during the dry season. The Soviets didn't realise the surrounding area would fill with water every spring thaw.
- Monitoring is a small room built just to the side of the storage's top. Banks of corroded Soviet-era computers and sensors allow workers to monitor the thaumic levels as well as the storage's structural integrity. A large window shows the surface of the storage, and an airlock door allows access to it.

Between the spring thaw flooding, poor Soviet workmanship, and a design used 21 years longer than intended, it's no wonder that containment failed and the people above it poisoned by the combined thaumic resonance of so many contaminated items.

## Evil Paper Clips

There are three important facts about MK1 that GMs should bear in mind.

- The entire area is the magical equivalent of Chernobyl. While being in the monitoring room won't kill you instantly, every hour spent here will require two days of expensive treatment back home to get rid of the resonance poisoning. Yes, this will destroy the line manager's budget.
- Because the background magic is so strong, magical apps (like the standard Necronomiphone suite) will not work. Spells can still be cast using Computer Use (Magic) using a laptop or Sorcery.
- The resonance is so strong that time runs much slower down here. The officers can spend fifteen minutes here and roughly five hours will have passed above.

When the officers finally open the elevator door, they see the following:

*You see a large room. The air is humid and water occasionally drips from the ceiling. Large tape-drive computers and machinery cover the left-hand and far wall. One space not occupied by the tall, obsolete machines has an old poster with Russian words and Soviet-era Constructivist artwork. Several consoles, complete with mouldy chairs and analogue phones, occupy the lower half of the right-hand wall. The other half is a giant window streaked with dust. Some kind of orange-white light flickers through the window, but you cannot see what is making the light from this angle. Next to the window is an airlock door that seems to allow access to the room past the window.*

This is Monitoring. All of the machines and controls are in Russian, and the poster admonishes workers to stay vigilant against capitalist magical attacks. Wysocki would come down here regularly to monitor the wards keeping everything under wraps, but as he became tainted, he gave up on his regular checks. Since then, the water that cracked MK1's wards seeped into the Monitoring and the elevator. None of the machines in this room are working save for the telephones.

The water is opaque with mud and particulates, but there is nothing there to worry about. Just don't tell the players about that.

*Through the dirty but solid window, you see a round room almost two metres high. The ceiling and walls are solid earth, but the floor is a huge slab of cement covered with containment wards. There's a big powered hinge at one side, so the slab can clearly open like a missile silo, and something in your gut tells you that's exactly the right ballpark of mental image.*

*Water drips from the ceiling and the slab has many deep cracks which have broken the wards. What most attracts your attention though is the large Class Three gate hovering in the air. The orange-white light comes from it and you can see the shadow of something large on the other side.*

Some netherworldly beast with glowing eyes watches from the other side of the gate and locks eyes with a random officer. Just before that unlucky officer gets possessed, the gate closes. Then a different gate opens up in a different part of that room, only to close again in a few minutes. This is the result of the critical mass of thaumically-charged items in Storage. There's simply so much magic there that Class Two and Three gates are being called into existence randomly. This is also what's pissing off DEEP SEVEN.

Give the players time to soak up what's going on here. Although they probably don't know what lies beneath the cracked warding slab, even a jaded, bitter Laundry officer will know something really, really bad is going on here; Class Three gates don't just open and close by themselves. Any devices measuring thaumic resonance will go off the charts. Before the officers can get too comfortable, one of the old phones rings.

Since the officers did not recite the 13th Directorate passcode upon opening the door to the Monitoring, they triggered an alarm in some nameless 13th Directorate office. The records of MK1 may have disappeared, but the old phone line still works. A confused Russian bureaucrat calls them to ask who they are.

**Caller:** *Kto eto? Kuda vy zvonite?* (Who is this? Where are you calling from?)

**Officer:** Um, do you speak English? We've got a problem here!

**Caller:** *Ya ne znayu, chto eto telefonnaya liniya yeshe rabotala. Eto tak vazhno?* (I didn't know this phone line still worked. Is this important?)

Regardless of how the officers respond, more competent members of the 13th Directorate quickly learn what Magiya Khranilishe Odin is and send several teams to secure the site. A more pressing problem, at least for the officers, is what's coming through the cracks in the once-warded Storage slab.

*Movement in the strange, round room catches your eye. You can see a long string of paper clips streaming out of one of the cracks like a flying, skeletal snake. Behind it comes several pens, jumping around like so many long, skinny frogs. Then you see a skeletal hand rise up from one of the larger cracks.*

This requires a SAN check (0/1d4). The paper clips and the pens are possessed by minor exonomes. They are hungry for life energy and will 'see' the officers in the control room. Then they will attack by bouncing harmlessly against the window. If anyone goes into that room via the airlock (the door is unlocked since the last time Wysocki/Bazarov went through years ago), he is attacked by evil paper clips and pens until he either escapes or dies.

### Paper Clip Chain

STR 9 CON 10 SIZ 5 INT 10 POW 5  
DEX 20 HP 7

**Damage Bonus:** -1d4

**Weapons:** Grapple 70%, damage 2.

**Skills:** Dodge 67%, Grapple 70%.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1d3

### Swarm of Pens

STR 6 CON 9 SIZ 5 INT 10 POW 5  
DEX 25 HP 7

**Damage Bonus:** -1d6

**Weapons:** Stab 70%, damage 3.

**Skills:** Dodge 80%, Melee Weapon (Self) 70%.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1d3

## 4. Liaising

Between the spontaneous gates, flying office supplies and skeletal hands, the team will likely head back to the surface to contact the Laundry. After all, their mission is to investigate, not act. (If the players are determined to stay, they'll need to work out a way to open the slab to proceed further, and doing that requires a key they don't have. They can either spend hours trying to bypass the security system, or – Idea roll! – search the farmhouse for the missing key.)

When they get back to the surface, they discover hours have passed. The sun is in a completely different part of the sky and the entire farm is now swarming with black-suited special ops agents. Several command tents and helicopters rest just outside of the barn.

A team of Russian-speaking (or more likely Russian-shouting) spec ops soldiers descend on the officers, tossing them to the ground and roughly restraining them. The officers will have to quickly explain a) why British officers



are on the Wysocki farm, and b) that they are not possessed former-humans who hunger for flesh. Let's hope someone speaks Russian. If the officers cannot get out of this problem on their own, a senior 13th Directorate official will confirm the officer's identities with the Laundry and 'rescue' the team.

We put rescue in quotes because while the officers are no longer about to be shot, they may not leave the farm. In fact, after explaining themselves to Dalton or another matrix-based manager like Manford via phone, the officers will get a simple order: Stay there and be the Laundry's liaison with the Russians and Poles. The situation is dangerous and fluid, and the Laundry wants to be kept in the loop. Updates are expected every half-hour. (Phones work again now that the team isn't inside MK1.)

That's not all. There are three authorities on-site: the 13th Directorate, the Russian spy agency Federal Security Service (FSB), and the Polish spy agency Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego (ABW). When the officers tripped the alarm down in MK1's Monitoring room, the 13th Directorate discovered what they left down there and panicked. They called for rapid-response help from the FSB, who politely informed the Polish ABW about the situation so FSB helicopters wouldn't be shot down crossing the border.

Each group has its own take on the situation:

- The 13th Directorate is pissed off. They dropped the ball on this one and they fully realise some of their heads will roll, even though no one was quite sure what was going on down in MK1. Their leader here is Pasha Grechko and his primary goal is to assign blame to long-gone Soviet bureaucrats to spare himself and his managers. Securing MK1 is a not-so-close second.
- The FSB is pissed off too. They expect to take the blame for this, because the 13th Directorate is all spooky and scary, making it hard for any blame to stick. This also reeks of KGB-era foolishness, and they are very tired of cleaning up the KGB's Cold War messes. Their leader here is Dominika Lyubov, and her primary goal is to make sure the 13th Directorate takes the fall for MK1. Securing MK1 is a distant second.
- The ABW is royally pissed off. They had no clue this was in their country, as the Soviet Union never asked permission to put the site here. Their leader here is Olek Sielski, in charge of the tiny ABW force here, and his primary goal is to get the Russians to admit they violated international law and to pay millions in fines. Securing MK1 is a Russian problem, not his. (After all, this is just an ignorant farming village. No big loss.)

## Pasha Grechko (13th Directorate)

STR 10 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 12 POW 14  
DEX 8 CHA 9 EDU 14 SAN 60 HP 13

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** Makarov PM 9mm pistol.

**Skills:** Bureaucracy 45%, Command 50%, Computer Use (Magic) 40%, Cthulhu Mythos 15%, Firearms (Pistol) 60%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 65%.

## Dominika Lyubov (FSB)

STR 12 CON 9 SIZ 9 INT 14 POW 8  
DEX 11 CHA 14 EDU 16 SAN 45 HP 9

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** AK-74M assault rifle.

**Skills:** Command 60%, Fast Talk 40%, Firearms (Assault Rifle) 65%, Listen 60%, Spot 30%.

## Olek Sielski (ABW)

STR 14 CON 11 SIZ 15 INT 13 POW 10  
DEX 14 CHA 9 EDU 13 SAN 50 HP 13

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** H&K P7 9mm pistol.

**Skills:** Command 25%, Firearms (Pistol) 55%, Listen 35%, Persuade 45%, Sense 60%, Spot 60%.

When they learn what the officers know about MK1, their goals (primary and secondary) will only become stronger.

## Hitting the Fan

.....  
All three will fight to be the first to question the Laundry officers but will settle for a group debriefing. Once informed about the (failing) status of MK1, they put together a coherent summary of the problem. Or rather 3 problems.

1. The containment (both wards and concrete) is broken and needs repairing.
2. The thaumic resonance has poisoned the area; MK1 is a very hot spot.
3. The thaumic materials are causing spontaneous Class Two and Three gates. Who knows what might slip through?

Then the groups meet to discuss how to fix these problems. As official liaisons, the officers can sit in on the meeting and even get a translator if necessary. Here is how each group quickly decides to fix everything wrong with MK1.

- Grechko (13th Directorate) wants to open a Class Five gate below MK1 and drop the entire site into another universe. He's confident that they can close the gate

before too much of Poland is sucked away. He is equally confident that nothing will come through from the other, to-be-named universe.

- Lyubov (FSB) wants to use a 100 kiloton nuclear bomb to smash MK1 into so much rubble. She is sure the fallout, both nuclear and thaumic is manageable and preferable to whatever MK1 might let out if the area isn't atomised.
- Sielski (ABW) actually doesn't have a plan. He's busy assessing how much Russia should pay Poland for this. So far, the figure is up to 12.7 billion Euros and climbing.

If the officers try to interject some urgency (or intelligence) into the debate, they are politely reminded that they're here to liaise, not participate. In other words, the agencies will waste a lot of time arguing instead of doing anything about the problem. This should drive the officers into action. If not, this should.

*You feel a vibration in your feet before the noise hits. Earthquake! In eastern Poland? Suddenly, a giant slab of basalt thrusts out of the ground in front of the barn and the earthquake stops. The stone has a flat, polished side with what looks like Polish words etched into the rock. "woda utrzymuje nas od zamknięcia bramy twój błąd grozi nam zamknięcie i będziemy karać". The Polish phrase translates as, "water keeps us from closing the gates your mistake threatens us close them or we will punish you." Below the words are rough etchings of your faces.*

DEEP SEVEN are livid. They want MK1's gates permanently closed before they ruin the planet and since the officers went down there, the Cthonians assume they should be the ones to fix it. Why visit a problem if you're not supposed to be fixing things? Then Laundry management calls the officers and asks if they know anything about 17 cities across the globe hit with sudden, unexpected tremors.

## Talking with DEEP SEVEN

If the officers want to attempt communication with Cthonians, good luck. First, you have to know where they are below ground. The equipment used by VOLUME TEACAKE can do this, but said gear is not in Poland. Second, you have to know how to get their attention. Yes, DEEP SEVEN is paying attention to MK1. That doesn't mean they'll pay attention to any surface monkeys trying to ping them. Third, even if you find them and get their attention, there's no guarantee that the Cthonians won't just fry your brain with the telepathic equivalent of a flamethrower.

## Suiting Up

Here is a summary of the situation as it stands: Three bureaucratic organisations are arguing over how to make MK1 safe. DEEP SEVEN are obliquely threatening all of humanity. And a team of Laundry officers must choose between closing gates and running away.

Heading down there right away is a good but flawed idea. The officers need some more equipment before they head down, as they probably did not bring enough gear to tackle this level of trans-dimensional issues. If only they had a group nearby that is trained in occult work...

The 13th Directorate brought some gear that will come in handy: Some musty anti-thaumic suits that protect against possession (enough for each officer) and a special piece of old, analogue gear called the Magicheskoye Ustroystvo Zakrytii Stvorki (MUZS). This runs off thaumic resonance generated by gates to force gates to close, effectively using the tremendous energy needed to stabilise gates against them. As a by-product, it generates a spherical ward against any nearby exnomes.

The MUZS is a great piece of occult gear and suits the situation perfectly, but it's not without its drawbacks. First, it requires a blood sacrifice to power up. (Soviets trusted blood over decadent Western lasers. Plus, it's cheaper.) Not a lot of blood is needed, but someone needs to cut themselves deeply to get the damn thing to turn on. Second, it tends to shut down unpredictably for no discernable reason, requiring yet another blood sacrifice. Third, it's complicated. There's a Russian manual that goes with it, but there are fourteen different knobs and switches that need adjusting to close a gate properly. Still, it's here and nothing else is.

Let the players explore their options. They can find out what the 13th Directorate brought (including the MUZS) through any number of means. Finding the gear should be easy; getting it is another matter entirely. There are several ways the officers can get the needed equipment from the 13th Directorate before heading down: Make an official request, make an unofficial request, or just steal the stuff.

- **Official Request:** The officers may not be in the country legally (they used fake passports, after all), but they are here in an official capacity and may make a legitimate Central Laundry Services-backed request for the gear. If the players choose this method, there will need to be at least two successful rolls. The first is to convince the Laundry to allow the officers to get involved (Status is best but Bureaucracy and Persuade will work as well). The second is to convince Grechko to let a team of Brits borrow highly-sensitive magical equipment and attempt to save the world (Persuade



is best but Fast Talk, Bureaucracy, and maybe even Bargain will work). If both succeed, Grechko might even send one of his men down to use the MUZS.

- **Unofficial Request:** The world does not move by proper paperwork alone. The officers may request the gear but make it clear to Grechko that this is an informal, off-the-record request that really never happened. The bureaucrats back in Moscow will never know the gear changed hands. Officers do not need permission from the Laundry for this if they don't want, but it might make for an interesting debriefing. Grechko can be convinced this plan is best through Fast Talk or Persuade, but because this is an unofficial request, Bureaucracy cannot be used.
- **Borrow it:** So much nicer than 'steal it'. In this plan, the officers quietly take what they need and head down with no one the wiser. The gear in question is aboard a helicopter guarded by two FSB soldiers, meaning the officers will need to create a distraction or quietly overcome the soldiers. Then there's getting the equipment from the helicopter to the elevator shaft. Officers can either use Stealth to sneak through the makeshift camp or brazenly walk to the barn and Fast Talk anyone who might question them. (Just remember the language barrier might make things more interesting.)

## An Offer

At a moment when the officers are more-or-less alone, two Russian special ops soldiers casually walk up to the officers and start speaking English. These are remote zombies, just like Kacper and Lech Moroz. They make an offer to the PCs, the nature of which depends on the Sinister Third Party you're using. For example, the cult might ask that the players retrieve some Soviet relic from MK1, then deliver it to a rare book store in the nearby city of Lomza called Rzadkie Książki.

The owner will pass \$60,000 USD, as their way of saying thanks. The Chamber might want Soviet records; the Teacakes might just want the players to throw MUZS into reverse and psychically sear any nearby DEEP SEVEN, convincing the Cthonians to stay away from the surface world for a few centuries.

They won't do anything the officers want, but they offer more help and money if the officers hesitate. If the officers still refuse, the Sinister Third Party pull their remote control, again leaving the officers with two corpses at their feet.

Regardless of how, this scene ends with the players suited up, carrying the MUZS on their way back down the barn's elevator shaft.

## What about the thaumic stuff?

The 13th Directorate, the FSB, and the ABW all want to close the gates first and foremost. DEEP SEVEN feels the same way. It's likely the players will want to shut the gates as well. But what if the players want to also fix MK1's Storage as well? Shouldn't the team take care of the source of the problems, not just the symptoms?

First, the team can be convinced to ignore that for now - focus on closing the gates before something big and bad wanders through, then worry about those possessed staplers later. Second, the team could rig a grounding system to drain the thaumic resonance from Storage to... another universe? A big jar? Let the players decide how to do that, if that's what they want to do.

## Shafted

Down in MK1, the situation is only a little changed from when they left. Opening the slab reveals a shaft leading down into the multi-coloured darkness (SAN Loss 1/1d6). The steel rungs in the side of the shaft are reassuringly solid and at the bottom the characters find themselves at the junction of four long, wide corridors. Huge cargo doors lead off the corridors into a seemingly endless series of vaults. The corridors are partially flooded; water that stinks of battery acid sloshes past the PCs' knees. Soviet-era office chairs, filing cabinets and other junk bob up and down in it. So do zombies.

## MK1 Zombies

**STR** 16 **CON** 15 **SIZ** 13 **INT** 1 **POW** 1  
**DEX** 7 **HP** 14

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4

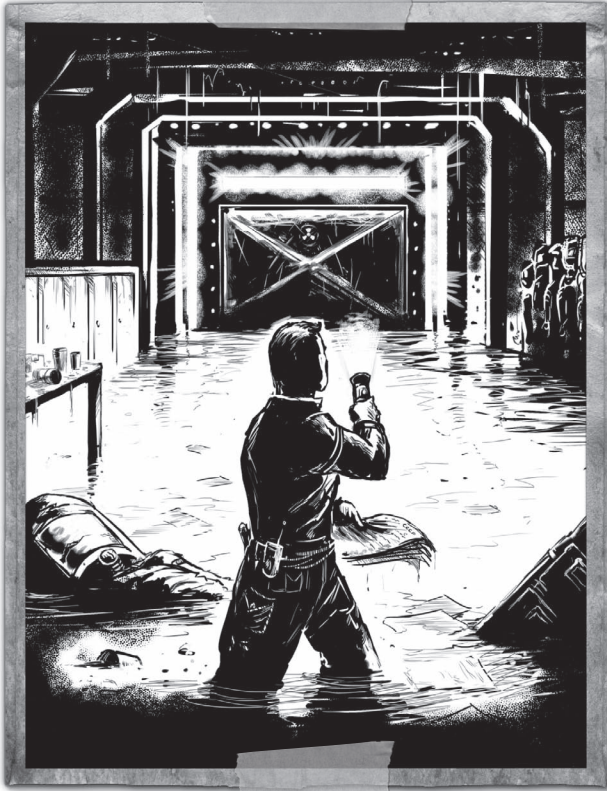
**Weapons:** Claws 30%, damage 1d3+bonus.

**Armour:** Impaling weapons do 1 point of damage and all others do half damage.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1d4

Note: Due to the high thaumic levels in MK1, any zombies who are 'killed' but whose bodies remain more-or-less intact will rise again in 1d4 rounds when another exonome flies into it.

To use the MUZS and close the gates will require venturing through the nearest cargo door and into the vault beyond, where the characters see a bubbling conjugation of three large half-open gates and innumerable smaller ones.



Those musty Russian anti-thaumatic suits protect officers from thaumatic poisoning but not from the possessed stuff. To do that, the team must activate the MUZS. Turning on the MUZS requires 2 hit points of blood – which requires someone break the seal on their anti-thaumatic suits and cut themselves. Once blood is poured into it, lights on the MUZS will glow green and a 2-metre-wide barrier centred on the MUZS appears to keep all possessed items away.

A successful Other Language (Russian) roll (or similar skill) is required to ‘aim’ the MUZS at one of the gates, but once aimed, the MUZS will be flush with energy. As the gate shimmers and slowly begins to shrink, all of the possessed items will be slammed into the room’s walls.

## Possession

Given this place is basically a cheap hotel for exonomes, there are plenty of demons just waiting to ride a human. If a human character breaks the seal on his Russian suit (such as to power up the MUZS), his player must make a POW vs. POW 12 roll. Success means an exnome tried to possess him but failed. Failure means that character has some demonic entity riding in his brain. Exorcisms are handled normally.

Let the player revel in success, as it won’t last long.

Since the MUZS uses a gate’s energy against itself, it gets harder to close the gate as it nears closing. That means more of the energy it’s leaching from the gate goes into closing said gate and not creating an exnome barrier. As the gate closes, the barrier protecting the officers from the exonomes shrinks. The haunted office supplies and zombies loom ever closer as the gate shrinks.

When the gate shuts, the exonomes are free to attack the officers. The barrier will return as soon as an officer re-aims the MUZS (with another successful roll) at the second gate, but there will be at least one turn of messed-up, weird combat. Once properly aimed, the barrier returns and shoves the possessed items back up against the wall. Then the process starts all over again, with the exonomes getting closer and closer as the second gate shrinks.

Just before the officers finish closing the second gate, the earthen roof above the slab shakes and a large drill bit pokes through. It’s spraying water to keep the bit cool, but the water is quickly replaced by concrete. The bureaucrats above decided to just pour more concrete down the hole so the ad-hoc committees (yes, there are several by now) can continue to argue.

The officers will have to close the last gate and run like the devil to get out of there, all while concrete pours in on their heads and zombies attack.

Finally, the officers reach the surface and find the Russians wondering where they had gone. Thanks again to the time dilation, hours had passed on the surface. The slab of stone sent up by DEEP SEVEN has been pulled back down and there are no more tremors in cities worldwide. DEEP SEVEN appears to be mollified, at least for now.

It’s time for the officers to return to the UK; unless they need to stop in Lomza for some rare books first.





## Handout #1

20/10/13

laundrymail - RE: Poultry Council cover

**From:** William O'Dea <wiodea@thelaundry.gov.uk>

**To:** Susan Dalton <sudalton@thelaundry.gov.uk>

**Date:** Sun, 20 Oct, 2013 at 04:32 AM

**Subject:** RE: Poultry Council cover

**Mailed-by:** mailer-real-daemon.laundry.gov.uk

**Signed-by:** security-real-daemon.laundry.gov.uk

---

Ms. Dalton,

Per your request, here are some facts your team could use in their cover:

Poultry includes chickens, geese, ducks, and turkeys.

Farmers raise poultry for meat and/or eggs.

Husbandry is the term for raising egg-laying poultry as well as breeding poultry.

'Intensive' farming means using cages and machinery. 'Free range' means the opposite.

Egg-laying hens used to be kept in battery cages, but since 1999, the EU demanded they be kept in furnished cages.

Broilers (meat poultry) are not kept in cages but in growout houses.

Beak trimming is cutting beaks, which reduces fighting and damage done by beaks. However, it's painful for the poultry.

Antibiotics and arsenic help poultry grow larger. Growth hormones are illegal, though.

Bird flu is a big concern among poultry farmers these days.

The EU mostly uses soybeans as feed for poultry.

Several nations are working on something called the 'Joint Chicken Welfare Guide'

Since this request came after 17:00, my invoice shall include overtime. Which department should I submit it to?

- Bill

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END



## Ye Liveliest Awfulness

*And there were those who came too damned close to the truth: if H.P. Lovecraft hadn't died of intestinal cancer in 1937 something would have to have been done about him, if you'll pardon my subjunctive. And it would have been messy, very messy – if old HPL were around today, he'd be the kind of blogging and email junkie who's in everybody's RSS feed like some kind of mutant gossip squid.*

– The Fuller Memorandum

True story: back in 1997, someone broke open HPLovecraft's grave, the one that just says I AM PROVIDENCE, for unknown reasons. The crime was never solved. What would anyone want with a few scraps of worm-ridden flesh from an obscure fantasist?

Of course, in the Laundryverse, Lovecraft was right.

Not completely right. He was right about the existence of prehuman monstrosities, with all their naughty tentacles and those squamous, rugose, batrachian horrors, but a bit vague on the specifics. Most of his information came from his grandfather's book collection, but his psyche got cracked open by a traumatic encounter in childhood with a magic unicorn, and Mythos lore seeped into his brain after that. He filled in the gaps through research and hanging around with suspicious sorts. No one spends that much time living down the street from the second incarnation of the Black Chamber without learning Things That Man Was Not Meant To Know, But Nonetheless Has Opened An Official File On Them Against All Sanity. By the end of his life, Lovecraft knew things that other people would kill to know.

And they did. It's easy to cause intestinal cancer with the right entropy manipulation.

Lovecraft died in 1937, penniless and depressed, unappreciated in his own lifetime except by a small circle of friends.

Fast forward to the present day.

Lovecraft just walked into the United States Embassy in London.

### What's Going On?

Hey kids! With the right spell, you can raise up the dead from their essential saltes, as described in *The Strange Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. Back in the 1920s, you needed all the remains, or you only got Ye Liveliest Awfulness, but in this modern age of computational demonology, DNA

recombination and inference algorithms, you can get a reasonable approximation of a resurrected human from just a pinch of grave dust. The resurrectee will have a portion of their original knowledge, and may even be sane enough to talk instead of gnawing their own tongue out with the shock of resurrection.

In other, wholly unrelated news, an American pharmaceutical company called Cob Chemicals recently opened a research facility in England. Through a labyrinth of shell companies and holding firms, Cob Chemicals is owned by the Uzarans Brotherhood, a sect of occultists and sorcerers who worship the Great Old Ones. The Uzarans possess an incomplete copy of a rite that they believe can open the way for Horrible Tentacled Things to come forth into our reality. Unfortunately, the last complete copy of the rite was lost in the 1920s.

Lovecraft saw the complete version of the rite during his travels. The Uzarans brought Lovecraft back from the dead to fill in the gaps.

Of course, since they couldn't be sure that the Aitch Pee Ell that they brought back would get it right, they decided to crowdsource their solution...

### The Uzarans Brotherhood

It's never a good sign for a cult when you include the phrase "at the zenith of the cult's power".

The Uzarans Brotherhood started out as a heretical sect of Zoroastrian fire worship. According to the cult's origin myth, Uzarans the Prophet stared into a sacred flame, and lo, the flame spoke back to him. Uzarans had inadvertently made contact with a nameless alien god-thing that was stuck on a lifeless, scorched world somewhere closer to the core of this galaxy.

Aided by the eldritch wisdom and magical power granted by the entity, the sect grew in wealth and influence. Notably, they possessed a form of summoning that was – by the



standards of traditional sorcery – pretty cost-effective, and used that to send swarms of Fire Vampires to zap their foes. Some historians claim that the invisible monster that famously ate Abdul Al-Hazred in broad daylight was a cult conjuration.

Anyway, at the zenith of the cult's power, see, they built a great temple complex at Ul-Chabar, and attempted to bring the god to Earth.

It turned out that the god couldn't exist under the conditions of our local reality. You know when you bring a creature up from the depths of the ocean, and it turns out that it's adapted for the extreme pressure of the ocean floor and it explodes violently when brought to the surface? Yeah. It was like that. The god went squelch with the force of a thermonuclear explosion. The Ul-Chabar temple was destroyed, along with most of the cult, and the survivors persecuted.

The cult's original sacred text – the *Namak Dvara Thwasha or Book of the Starry Door* – was destroyed in the explosion, although fragments survived in both occult lore and in the ruins of the temple.

Fast forward to the 1950s, when a new branch of the cult started up in the United States, first among Iranian immigrants and later among certain ex-oilmen and engineers. Today, the cult owns the petrochemical company, Cob Chemicals.

Just as a fire may smoulder for hours before bursting into new life if the right fuel is added, so too can a cult slumber for centuries before returning to glory. The temple at Ul-Chabar may have been ash and dust for centuries, but now the cult has the tools to bring their god back to this world. Without him going squelch, that is.

## Adventure Synopsis

The Laundry sends the agents to investigate a report that Howard Philips Lovecraft was seen at the American Embassy in London. They discover that Lovecraft was indeed there – he escaped from a tour bus when it stopped at a nearby supermarket, and was later bundled into the back of a white van. The van is a dead end, but the tour bus leads the characters to a private museum, where they meet another clone of Lovecraft.

The museum staff were geased to forget about the recent visit, when fifty identical clones of Lovecraft came to look at their copy of the Ul-Chabar Tablet, a fragment of the infamous *Book of the Starry Door*. The tour was organised by a fake charity, the Hermetic Society, and investigating that society leads the investigators to Cob Chemicals.

By the time they get there, though, it's too late. The summoning has already started. The investigators have to follow the cultists through a gate to a dead world and stop them from calling forth their alien god onto a Beowulf cluster of Lovecrafts.

The mission takes a sharp turn once the characters get from Cob Chemicals. It's relatively low-key until the gate and the alien god show up. Watch for player whiplash.

## 1. Madman at the Gate

The Laundry routinely monitors Metropolitan Police radio traffic and reports, scanning them for keywords: cult, ritual, Turing, tentacle and so on. Lovecraft's also on that list of target words, so when the police get called to deal with a public disturbance outside the US Embassy by a man calling himself Lovecraft, the Laundry knows about it – eventually.



Four hours after the incident took place, the characters get an email from Monitoring. It sounds like nothing, but protocol dictates they check it out. Give the characters a chance to requisition any items they feel might be useful from the Armoury before heading out.

## Checking with the Police

Contacting the police puts the characters in touch with WPC Nadia Laytham. She was the officer called to the US Embassy to take custody of some troublemaker. IC1 – White Caucasian, introduced himself as Howard Lovecraft, claimed to be an American citizen, but had no passport or other documentation and seemed confused.

By the time she got there, this ‘Lovecraft’ was gone. She questioned passers-by, and got a description of Lovecraft: gaunt, thin-faced, dark hair, wearing a sweatshirt and tracksuit leggings. He left the embassy and went back to a nearby Tesco Express, where he argued with the spotty teenager behind the counter over the price of ice cream.

Laytham’s happy to turn the case over to the Laundry; anything involving embassies means a lot of paperwork.

## Visiting the Embassy

The characters have to tread carefully here: the US Embassy is, obviously, US territory. The characters shouldn’t even dream of entering without a letter from the ambassador, but they can bend the rules and ask a few questions. The embassy receptionist was the one who called the police. She describes the intruder as being very polite, but clearly disturbed. He spoke with a Boston accent. To get rid of him, she made him fill out a form. He couldn’t answer most of the questions on it, got frustrated, and left. The signature on the form is identical to Lovecraft’s.

If the characters ask too many questions, then a cold-eyed fellow who’s clearly a Black Chamber remote-controlled zombie shows up and politely requests that they leave. Now.

**Security Cameras:** Checking security cameras (the characters can get access to CCTV easily) reveals the following:

- TA tour bus with tinted windows pulls up outside a Tesco Express within a few minutes’ walk of the embassy. The driver gets out and hurries inside. Registration number: XLX7663.
- While he’s inside, the door opens again, and Lovecraft gets out. Lovecraft wanders off down the street. He’s wearing a sweatshirt with the letters C O B on it. He seems drugged or sleepy.
- The driver comes back out, wolfing down a sandwich. He gets back in and drives off.
- Following Lovecraft on CCTV, the characters watch him enter the American Embassy. He’s in there for around 45 minutes. He then leaves and goes back to the Tesco.
- A white van arrives, two men get out, and escort Lovecraft into the van. They then drive off. Both men are in their mid-20s, wearing dark clothes and shades. One of them has something around his neck, like an amulet. The other may be armed – his hoodie rides up as he pushes Lovecraft into the van, and he has something tucked into his waistband that may be a gun or possibly a taser.
- The van’s plates are LC04 GNC.

## What Really Happened?

Cob Chemicals and the Uzaran Brotherhood want Lovecraft to provide them with the full *Ūl-Chabar Rite of the Unseen Mouth*. The only known copy of the rite is an incomplete manuscript, held in a private museum in London. They whipped up a bunch of Lovecraft clones, loaded them on a bus, and took them on a field trip to the museum. The museum staff were geased to ignore the fact that fifty identical New England eccentrics, all dressed in Cob Chemicals sweatshirts, came in to look at their collection of obscure 8th Century Persian manuscripts.

When the driver of the bus, stressed from having to babysit fifty Lovecrafts, succumbed to hunger and stopped for a snack, one of the Lovecrafts wandered out of the bus. The van was sent to find the errant Lovecraft and bring him back to the Cob Chemicals facility.

However, when they finally did a head count back at Cob, they discovered they were missing a second Lovecraft. The Cob Chemicals security team assume that both Lovecrafts got off at the Tesco. In fact, one of the Lovecrafts is still in the museum...



## Research

**Lovecraft Biography:** The Laundry has an extensive file on him (see **Handout #1**). In short, Lovecraft knew a lot about the occult, and some of his stories were suppressed after his death for security reasons.

Notably, someone broke into Lovecraft's grave in 1997. Paranoid players may recall *The Strange Case of Charles Dexter Ward* and how Joseph Curwen raised the dead from ye essential saltes; that method was accurately described in the story, especially the bit about bringing back Ye Liveliest Awfulness if you screw up.

## Running the Number Plates:

The bus's plate of XLX7663 resolves to a bus hire company, Abbot Coaches. The van's plates are fakes.

## 2. Tracking the Vehicles

The obvious next step is to follow the bus that dropped Lovecraft off, and the van that kidnapped him.

## The Van

The characters can find the van:

- By hitting the streets.
- By scanning the live CCTV feed via SCORPION STARE.
- By getting WPC Laytham to put out an alert on police radio for it.

- Through divination. The white van scraped against the kerb when they jumped Lovecraft, and they can use this fleck of paint to trace their target.
- Or just by hanging around the Tesco where the first Lovecraft escaped the van.

Driving the van are two Cob Chemicals security guards, codenamed DERLETH and PRICE. They're also low-ranking cultists of the Uzaran Brotherhood. They're under orders to find the missing Lovecrafts and return them to Cob Chemicals. Right now, they're driving around the streets near that ill-omened Tesco looking for the missing Lovecraft.

At the first sign of trouble, they try to pull back, using evasive driving techniques – turning down alleyways, racing red lights, sudden turns and so on. If pursuit continues, then they'll stop the van and release the insurance policy in the back.

They've got a hot summoning circle in the back of the van, which can summon two Class II exonomes (souped-up Fire Vampires) to incinerate any pursuers. To summon the vampires, the pair need to bleed on the summoning circle, so the characters may see them fumbling with a pocket-knife while driving.

So, the most likely scenario here is that the PCs start following the van, there's a chase scene with lots of opposed Drive vs. Drive rolls (possibly livened up with some shooting), then the van ends up driving down a narrow alleyway and a pair of Fire Vampires explode out of the back.

## Fire Vampires & Sympathetic Summoning

Fire Vampires are extradimensional buggers who 'think' by channelling loops of superheated plasma through loops and folds in spacetime. That means they're very, very hot and very radioactive in their natural state. When brought into our reality, they start to cool off rapidly, which means they go mad and 'drown' in the ice wastes of our world. To survive, they desperately try to possess humans or anything with a nervous system so they can downshift their thought processes. Of course, seeing as they're made of fire, they just end up incinerating the human instead of using it as a computing substrate.

Now, the Uzaran Brotherhood came up with a nasty little hack when it came to summoning Fire Vampires. They developed a summoning rite that incorporated a sympathetic link between a victim and the summoned vampire, which allowed the vampire to use the victim's brain without physical contact. So, the victim doesn't get burnt to death, they just go mad instead as the vampire eats their thoughts from within. The vampire gets to hang around longer, albeit in whatever the equivalent of constant freezing agony is for a Fire Vampire.

If the van survives, the player characters can use Occult, Sorcery and/or Science (thaumaturgy) rolls to reverse-engineer the summoning technique, and can recognise it as the rite used by the Uzaran Brotherhood.

The summoning rite used by the Uzarans binds the caster to the summoned creature, so if a Fire Vampire dies or gets banished, it takes the soul of DERLETH or PRICE with it. Similarly, if one of the goons dies, the matching vampire loses its handy computational engine and goes poof in a few rounds unless it can possess one of the player characters.

The cultists are both geased with security measures – if captured, their brains shut down. The Laundry can unpick these geases given lots of time and some careful psychic surgery (or, if the players are stuck, the Laundry can overpower those geases to get a few seconds of questioning time before the cultists explode).

## DERLETH and PRICE, Occult Rentagoons

STR 13 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 12 POW 10  
DEX 10 CHA 9 EDU 13 SAN 30 HP 13

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Pistol 55%, damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Drive 60%, Hide 40%, Knowledge (Tradecraft) 20%, Knowledge (Occult) 40%, Spot 40%, Stealth 50%.

**Artefacts:** Class Two Ward, Wand of Geasing (Casts a Level Three Geas, 3 Charges left).

## Fire Vampires, the Toasters from Beyond

STR 0 CON 7 SIZ 1 INT 11 POW 15  
DEX 17 HP 4

**Weapons:** Touch 80%, damage 2d6 burn +1d10 temporary POW damage (POW is regained at a rate of 1 point/hour).

All the characters have Class Two Wards. That means that the Fire Vampires can't touch them – but each time the vampire attacks, the character has to make a Luck roll. If the Luck roll fails, the vampire burns out the ward, so it can attack next round.

**Skills:** Dodge 60%, Dart Menacingly 70%.

**Armour:** Material weapons cannot harm a Fire Vampire. A fire extinguisher deals 1d6 damage to the incandescent creature; large volumes of water or extremely low temperatures can also damage the entity. A successful Computer Use (magic) roll using a Necronomiphone can banish a Fire Vampire, but you need to be up close to it.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1d4

## Searching the Van

We'll assume DERLETH and PRICE are dead or brain-dead. Checking the van reveals the following clues:

- Two sets of handcuffs, one syringe loaded with a sedative. Searching through a bag of rubbish in the passenger side footwell turns up a second, empty syringe.

- A map, showing the route from the Tesco to the Armsby-Britt Museum.
- The amulets worn by the two goons match the holy symbol of the Uzaran cult.
- A summoning circle, engraved on a slab of gorilla glass, wired to a pretty basic computational demonology engine. That suggests a cult or faction that's well-funded and technically adept, but not one of the big players – that engine's ten or fifteen years behind cutting-edge.
- There's a suspicious lack of other clues. No IDs, not even any pocket chaff. The two goons aren't wearing uniforms. The car's been wiped clean of fingerprints, and the summoning circle threw off enough thaumic radiation to mess with divinations. Fake licence plates; if the characters bother to run the serial number off the engine block, they discover that the van was registered as stolen six months ago.

## Researching the Uzaran Cult

Digging into Laundry archives with a Research roll (or spending some mission budget on a call back to the Stacks) gets the characters **Handout #2**.

## The Bus

Again, the investigators can find the bus:

- By hitting the streets.
- By scanning the live CCTV feed via SCORPION STARE.
- By getting WPC Laytham to put out an alert on police radio for it.

The bus's current location is a mystery, but the investigators can find out where it's been – it drove into London from outside the city (and outside the region blanketed by CCTV), visited the Armsby-Britt museum, then went back the way it came. Contacting the bus rental company reveals that they rented the bus to the Hermetic Trust for a week.

### Tooling Up

After running into Fire Vampires, the characters may pop back to the Laundry to grab improved gear. They'll be assigned a mission budget of 25 – and Class Three wards are *Difficult* (1/2 Status check) to obtain. They're unlikely to obtain wards for the whole team with that low budget, unless they start tapping their Departmental Budgets...



### 3. School Tour of the Night

Either by following the map in the van, or by retracing the bus's route, the investigators arrive at the Armsby-Britt museum. Some of them have probably been there before – Major Armsby-Britt was a British cavalry officer, explorer and 'antiquarian', which is a polite way to describe a tomb robber who looted graves and temples from Egypt to Beijing. Most of his collection was donated to the British Museum or quietly returned to the country of origin, but other items are still displayed in the small private museum founded in his name. The museum's like stepping back in time to the 1930s, and is crammed full of nostalgia for Empire and casual racism. Lots of portraits of stern moustachioed men machine-gunning African tribesmen or showing those Asiatics what-for, lots of tribal masks and spears and stuffed zebra heads on the walls.

The curator and manager of the museum is Mr Pratt; there's also a small café attached to the museum, run by a Ms. Jennings. From talking to Pratt (see **Questioning the Staff**) the investigators notice that Pratt's been geased – he's glassy-eyed and speaks in a slurred voice. They've also zapped Ms. Jennings.

However, the one customer in the café is unaffected, and he's taken advantage of Ms. Jennings' stupefied state to clean all the ice cream out of the fridge. The investigators find Howard Philips Lovecraft sitting and eating ice cream while reading a stack of newspapers.

#### Exploring the Museum

The museum's full of spooky exhibits and curiosities from across the world. Notably, there's a glass display case containing the damaged and incomplete tablet from the Uzaran temple at Ul-Chabar, with part of the Book of the Starry Door engraved on it.

A successful Occult roll remembers that not even the Laundry has a complete copy of the book, but that the book is mentioned in one of Lovecraft's suppressed stories, *The Light in the Tomb*. That story describes how the unnamed narrator sees a light in a graveyard in Providence on certain nights, and finally plucks up the courage to investigate. He learns that the tomb is reputed to be that of a sorcerer, and the old mute gravedigger places a lantern there on certain nights. Examining the tomb, he finds there is a metal grate in the floor, which would act as a window, letting the light into the tomb below. Greatly daring, he lights the lamp and looks down... and sees an impossible library.

**Cthulhu Mythos or Sorcery:** The tablet is broken and incomplete, but it looks like a partial description of a Gate spell. Without the full tablet, though, the formula's useless.

Checking the museum catalogue reveals that the Ul-Chabar tablet is not normally on display; whoever was on the tour bus must have arranged for the tablet to have been taken out of storage and put in the case.

History recalls information about the Uzaran cult; either Pratt or Lovecraft can fill the player characters in on the history of the cult if the players don't ask.

#### Museum Records

There was an attempted break-in several weeks ago, but the intruders were interrupted by a passing police patrol. The police gave chase, but failed to catch the intruders. Around the same time, there was a report of an attempted arson two streets away. One eyewitness claimed to have been "buzzed by a small UFO".

The museum was booked out for several hours by the Hermetic Trust. They paid by credit card, and the address of the trust is a small office in East London.

#### Questioning the Staff

Oh dear. The most the characters can safely get out of Pratt is that museum was booked by a private tour group belonging to a charity called the Hermetic Trust. The woman who booked the museum – Barker or Barking or something – explained that the trust's members are very shy, so they booked out the whole museum and asked that Pratt close the doors for three hours. It seemed like a reasonable request. Pratt can't recall anything about the visitors, and seems incapable of recognising the fact that there's a Lovecraft in the lobby. The characters can expect to have a lot of frustrating conversations like this:

**Laundry Officer:** Who visited the museum?

**Pratt:** Oh! Some people.

**Laundry Officer:** Describe them.

**Pratt:** Um... you know, people. People with... legs!

**Laundry Officer:** Can you be more specific?

**Pratt:** (*After great mental effort*): I think they had around two each. Legs, that is.

**Laundry Officer:** Sir, I'm legally allowed to degauss your nervous system if you annoy me.

It's clear that Pratt and Jennings have been geased, and it's a deep-seated one. If the characters keep asking questions of them, their brains will spontaneously combust. The geas probably also has a self-destruct code, so if you try to dispel

it with an exorcism, it'll dump its thaumic energy out as heat and again you've got cooked brains. Laundry psychologists and sorcerers might be able to unpick the geas, but it'll take months of delicate work. The only lead is the reference to the Hermetic Trust – and the Lovecraft clone in the coffee shop.

#### 4. Mr Lovecraft, I Presume

Lovecraft assumes that he's gone mad, just like his father, and that he's hallucinating the museum and the coffee shop filled with the most delicious ice cream he has ever tasted. He was always drawn to the storied city of London, so he is not surprised that his crazed imaginings include that ancient metropolis. He assumes the characters are more alienists, come to prod at him.

When playing Lovecraft, keep the following in mind:

- Be immensely polite and long-winded about things.
- Praise the old, the historical, the mystical, the beautiful, the gothic.
- Complain about foreigners, women, modern culture and anything that isn't, well, the last bastion of New England.
- Be fascinated or horrified by the modern world. Gadgets and scientific discovery – yay! Culture, music, the rush of modern life, architecture – boo! Non-white people, women and fish? Aaagh!
- Depreciate your own writing. You can, at best, by mustering all your strength, produce some pallid, weak and flawed tales of the weird that can, perhaps, evoke some slight reflection of true cosmic horror.
- Refuse to admit that anything in your stories is real. You have some small knowledge of the occult, and you corresponded with certain learned experts, but certainly there is no hidden message in your works. Why, you tried to hint at that, by having your Abdul Al-Hazred character – a character you invented as a boy – say there are no shoggoths except in the minds of those who have eaten a certain alkaloidal herb.
- If pressed, admit that ever since you were a boy, you have had weird nightmares. From the sounds of those nightmares, anyone with a good knowledge of Occult or Sorcery can guess that HPL's a leaky tap, cosmically speaking. Things from Outside have oozed in through his febrile brainmeats, hence all the visions of alien gods and sunken cities. It's even likely that Lovecraft was unconsciously responsible

for the madness and death of his parents – the boy would have been the thaumic equivalent of nuclear waste, throwing off possessors and lesser exnomes when agitated.

- You have no idea why you're alive, and you're not sure you want to be. Back in the 20s and 30s, the only thing that kept you going was your writing and your circle of correspondents. These days, in this strange raucous, tainted world, who has an interest in the particular quality of the weird you sought to evoke? And all your correspondents are dead, unless someone else brought Bob Howard back from the dead...

Some choice quotes to get you in the mood:

*I am only about half alive – a large part of my strength is consumed in sitting up or walking. My nervous system is a shattered wreck, and I am absolutely bored and listless save when I come upon something which peculiarly interests me. However, so many things do interest me, and interest me intensely, in science, history, philosophy, and literature; that I have never actually desired to die, or entertained any suicidal designs, as might be expected of one with so little kinship to the ordinary features of life.*

*I am essentially a recluse who will have very little to do with people wherever he may be. I think that most people only make me nervous – that only by accident, and in extremely small quantities, would I ever be likely to come across people who wouldn't. It makes no difference how well they mean or how cordial they are – they simply get on my nerves unless they chance to represent a peculiarly similar combination of tastes, experiences, and heritages; as, for instance, Belknap chances to do. Therefore it may be taken as axiomatic that the people of a place matter absolutely nothing to me except as components of the general landscape and scenery.*

*Let me have normal American faces in the streets to give the aspect of home and a white man's country, and I ask no more of featherless bipeds. My life lies not among people but among scenes – my local affections are not personal, but topographical and architectural.*

*However, the crucial thing is my lack of interest in ordinary life. No one ever wrote a story yet without some real emotional drive behind it and I have not that drive except where violations of the natural order – defiances and evasions of time, space, and cosmic law – are concerned. Just why this is so I haven't the slightest idea – it simply is so. I am interested only in broad pageants – historic streams – orders of biological, chemical, physical, and astronomical organisation – and the only conflict which has any deep emotional significance to me is that of the principle of freedom or irregularity or adventurous opportunity against the eternal and maddening rigidity of cosmic law, especially the laws of time... Hence the type of thing I try to write.*



## Howard Philips Lovecraft, Writer of Weird Tales

STR 10 CON 6 SIZ 11 INT 17 POW 15  
DEX 12 CHA 9 EDU 18 SAN 40 HP 8

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** None

**Skills:** Art (Weird fiction) 75%, Obsessive Letter Writing 80%, Cthulhu Mythos 20%, Knowledge (Occult) 60%, Knowledge (History) 70%.

## What the Writer Saw

So, what does Lovecraft remember? It's all a blur, but he recalls the following information. What was really going on is in brackets:

- Sitting in a room with a typewriter. A gentleman had commissioned a story from him. He felt like he had written that story already, under the title of *The Light in the Tomb*, but the gentleman wanted him to expand on certain minor details. (All the clones are stored in rooms at Cob Chemicals, trying to recreate the ritual from the Ul-Chabar Text. It's the thousand monkeys with typewriters, only it's Lovecrafts instead of monkeys. It's crowdsourcing.)
  - If questioned about this story, Lovecraft admits that it is partially based on an experience he had when he was a child. His grandfather, an antiquarian, showed him a copy of a Persian manuscript that he kept stored in a fireproof vault under his house. He can recall little about it, but it did inspire the story.
- A nightmarish din, a place of steel cylinders and crashing noises and flashing lights, and then a strange oblivion. His arm hurt. (They brought him out into the factory and drugged him.)
  - Anyone with Chemistry who makes a successful Idea roll suspects that Lovecraft's describing a modern chemistry plant.
- A dream of an alien landscape, seared by some tremendous heat where the sky was a seething torrent fire, and there was a strange black basalt city rising from the baked earth. Something terrible dwelt in that basalt city. (A vision of the alien world where the cult's god is trapped.)
- Then he found himself in this museum, looking at the Persian tablet. He felt dizzy and dreamed that he saw himself everywhere, as if he was unstuck in time and could see his past and future selves. It upset him so much he felt sick, and took refuge in a bathroom. (He was, indeed, surrounded by forty-nine clones of himself, and did in fact take refuge in a bathroom.)

- He does remember there being another man there, who said he was from the Hermetic Trust. He seemed to be in charge.
  - The description of this man matches the CCTV image of the driver of the bus who stopped at the Tesco.

The characters can keep Lovecraft with them for the rest of the mission – he'll bumble along with them, making sesquipedalian asides about all the swarthy foreigners they have in London these days, and so on – or they can stash him back at the Laundry.

## Job Done?

If the characters think that by finding Lovecraft at the museum, they've completed their assignment, point out the following:

- Lovecraft hasn't left the museum. He can't have been the same person who got kicked out of the US embassy... unless time travel is involved. Hmm... he is from 1937, and he was talking about seeing duplicate images of himself. Maybe he did time travel.
- Even if it is the same Lovecraft, maybe you should find out why he's here and what the hell is going on?

## Poking at Lovecraft

- Physically, this is a man in his late 40s, suffering from stomach cancer and malnutrition, which matches Lovecraft's condition just before his death.
- There's a low-level thaum field, consistent with the afterglow of necromancy.
- He's got several drugs in his blood system. There's a sedative, but also a lot of caffeine and methylphenidate, aka Ritalin. Someone was trying to overclock his brain.
- Anyone sticking Lovecraft in an MRI scanner or who puts him through a standard sorcery aptitude test notes that he's got the makings of an excellent medium. Lovecraft's lifetime of prophetic dreams suggests that there's a hole in his consciousness through which Things from Outside communicate. That talent could be enhanced and channelled with the right training.
- He's wearing a cheap sweatshirt and tracksuit bottoms, identical to those worn by the Lovecraft at the embassy.

The sweatshirt has the letters C-o-b on it.

- A successful Research check matches the style of this logo to that of Cob Chemicals, a small privately owned chemical manufacturer based outside of London.

### Using Lovecraft

You can use HPL as a clue stick if needed. He's got a convenient subconscious mental link to the other Lovecrafts, and has fragmentary memories of his occult research. If the players are stuck, then Lovecraft can have an idea or pass on a hint.

## 5. The Hermetic Trust

Call for Know rolls from any character with an Occult skill of 25% or more. Those who succeed have heard, vaguely, of the Hermetic Trust. They're some minor occult group. The Laundry has a file on them – it's a small, privately funded organisation, nothing too significant. They've bought a few occult grimoires, held a few lectures about spiritualism and imported various ritual items that are on the Laundry's watch list – stuff like mummy dust, candles from a particular chandlery in Brazil that uses human blood in the mix, and oil of Ulthar. These are things that could be used in genuine ritual magic, but are just as likely to be used in impotent, clueless mummary. Notably, several of those ritual items could be used in an Ul-Chabar invocation.

The Trust is run by a nebbish named Agnes 'Galadriel' Barket; the Laundry vetted her secretly, and she's just an enthusiast with no clue about the true nature of magic.

At least, that's what the Laundry knows.

In truth, Cob Chemicals funded the trust as a blind. They used the trust to import those ritual items. They know that, one day, they'd draw the attention of the Laundry or some other rival group, and wanted to make sure that attention was focussed on the Hermetic Trust instead of the chemical facility. And on that day, they wanted the trust to go out with a bang.

### The Trust Offices

Currently, Agnes 'Galadriel' Barket's sitting in her chair in the trust's poky little office, which is located above an Indian takeaway. The Indian takeaway also isn't quite what it seems – see **Our Man in Iran**, below, if the PCs pop in for a curry. A little side door marked with a laminated sheet of paper leads up a narrow, dusty staircase to the two-room offices of the Hermetic Trust.

Upstairs, the characters find Agnes Barket surrounded by her collection of crystal unicorns, her books and files on the occult – oh, and a summoning circle. She's the bait in a magical trap. Hidden in the walls, floor and even on the ceiling of the little office, and concealed behind dodgy 70s wallpaper with a fresh coat of paint are more engraved-glass summoning circles, like the one from the van. The laptop that runs the computational demonology engine running the summoning grids is hidden in a fireproof box in Agnes' desk.

Agnes has been nailed to her chair. She's drugged and unconscious when the investigators find her. Should they remove her from her chair without first checking for traps, then her blood spills on the floor, triggering the trap. One of the summoning circles flares red, burning through the carpet, and a Fire Vampire manifests in the little office. The presence of the vampire sets the office's papers and furnishings on fire. It also superheats some of the crystal unicorn figurines, which explode like sparkly nailguns, sending shards of hot glass flying across the room. All the player characters present need to make Luck rolls to avoid taking 1 point of damage from the flying glass.



Now, normally losing a single Hit Point wouldn't be a big thing, but that's when you're not standing in the middle of a summoning circle. PC bleeds, blood hits floor, and suddenly you're the binding node in a Class II+ Summoning. The characters who fail the Luck check find themselves bound



to angry Fire Vampires, who pop into existence in the room nearby. The heat from these new Vamps blows up more crystal unicorns, which may draw more blood, which may call more vampires and so on.

**Fire:** Everyone in the office takes 1d3 damage in the first round of the fire, then 1 point per round thereafter, rising to 2 points per round after a while, then 3 points per round as the fires grow. Smoke makes most rolls *Difficult*. There aren't any fire extinguishers (there are mounts for them on the walls, but the Uzaran cultists removed them. No sense in having a fiery deathtrap and leaving fire suppression equipment around).

Entropy Manipulation spells make for occult fire extinguishers, in a pinch; the characters can also put up Defensive Bindings against heat.

**There's A Fire Vampire In My Head:** So, what does a sympathetic summoning feel like from the inside? Firstly, the PC is instantly aware there's something wrong, that something's grabbed hold of what we'll call his soul for the purposes of this discussion. There's an undeniable connection between the PC and the vampire – he gets flashes of the vampire's perceptions, and can feel the vampire's thoughts running through his brain as the entity desperately tries to seize control of his nervous system. SAN Loss is 1/1d10.

Now, for a normal victim, that's pretty much it. The vampire roots the boxen of your soul, and you're basically turned into a processor for the thought patterns it can't run in these cold conditions. The vampire eats your brain. If the vampire dies, you die, and vice versa.

The player characters, though, have protective wards. (They are carrying their protective wards, right?) The wards can't block the connection completely, not while there's a blood-splattered summoning circle running, but they can block the vampire's death from taking the PC with it. If the vampire's killed or banished within half a minute (five rounds) of being summoned, the PC is safe. If it takes between six rounds and a few minutes, then the PC gets to make a Luck check.

If successful, then the ward burns out but the character is unharmed. If the Luck check fails, then the ward burns out and the character loses another 1d10 SAN and takes 1d6 temporary POW damage. Anything beyond that and the ward can't defend against the vampire's insidious tendrils.

So, all going well, the PCs end up in a burning room with an unconscious, semi-crucified witness, surrounded by exploding crystal tchotchkes of occult doom and symbiotically tied to a swarm of Fire Vampires. What else can go wrong?

**Stopping the Vampires:** First thing to do is get out of there – while the vampires can't get through the PCs' wards immediately, that many vampires will quickly overwhelm a ward. Even if the PCs have upgraded to Class III wards, several vampires acting in concert can burn through. Once clear, the characters can either break the sympathetic connection by destroying the summoning grids, or throw a banishment pentacle around the whole building.

Naveed can help out by chucking a grenade through the window, but only once the PCs are clear.

## Our Man in Iran

The Iranian equivalent to the Laundry is the VEVAK. They're twenty years or more behind most Western OCCINTEL groups (especially since the Black Chamber hit them with the computational demonology version of stuxnet), but if there's one thing they know, it's crazy Zoroastrian heretics who worship the Green Flame. The Uzaran Brotherhood tried to gain access to the temple where the Ul-Chabar rite was originally discovered, but were intercepted and killed by VEVAK. They traced the attempt back to London and the Hermetic Trust.

The guy behind the counter of the Indian takeaway downstairs is Naveed Rostami. He's a VEVAK agent. Along with his partner Reza Attar, he was sent to keep an eye on the Hermetic Trust and find out who's backing it. This morning, they saw a white van arrive at the Hermetic Trust. Two men got out and went upstairs, and spent about an hour up there before leaving in a hurry. Reza followed the van, while Naveed kept watch on the trust.

You can use Naveed as an added threat, or as a way to rescue the player characters if they can't cope with the Fire Vampire swarm.

## Naveed Rostami, Iranian Occult Spy & Fry Cook

STR 12 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 16 POW 13  
DEX 13 CHA 11 EDU 16 SAN 55 HP 14

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Shotgun 60%, damage 4d6/2d6/1d6; Grenade 50%, damage 4d6.

**Skills:** Athletics 40%, Craft (Fry cook) 40%, Disguise 50%, Drive 70%, Fast Talk 65%, Grapple 40%, Knowledge (Occult) 50%, Knowledge (Tradecraft) 60%, Stealth 60%, Sorcery 20%, Spot 60%.

**Artefacts:** Ring of Fire Warding (10-point defensive binding against fire), Banishment Rounds loaded in pistol.

## Playing Naveed:

- Your mission is to stop the Uzaran Brotherhood from doing anything that might, y'know, doom the world.

You're not wild about the whole idea. This is the Laundry's problem.

- You have a basic understanding of computational demonology, but when the going gets tough, you put your faith in Allah and your trusty shotgun.
- That said, if the Uzarans did manage to summon their god, and you could somehow disrupt the summoning ritual, that would possibly result in the same cosmic squelch-boom that wiped out the Ul-Chabar temple. Deniably nuking London has a certain nihilistic appeal.
- You're very cranky. Going from an elite spy to serving kebabs to drunk Londoners does that to a man.

**Questioning Naveed:** Naveed's answers are always curt or evasive – he only reveals what he feels is necessary to further his mission. He can inform the characters about the involvement of the Uzar brotherhood, the specifics of sympathetic summoning, and the connections between the brotherhood and the Hermetic Trust. If threatened, he threatens back, hinting at a larger Iranian presence. Geasing him won't work – he's got his own loyalty geases. If pushed, he suggests an alliance.

Optionally, he can tell the characters about his partner, Reza Attar, who hasn't reported in since he went to follow the white van this morning. (Reza found the Cob Chemicals factory, but was captured by their guards.) However, Reza's mobile phone still works; if Naveed gives the characters the number, they can get a location fix on it.

## Agnes Barket

Poor Galadriel. All she wanted was to play Harry Potter in real life. The Hermetic Trust existed before her; it was set up in the 20s as a branch of the Theosophical Society, but was moribund until she joined. Even then, it was just a small society of eccentrics and magic geeks. Cob Chemicals took over and hollowed the trust out.

Initially, Agnes was more than happy to co-operate with Cob; she believed they were simply philanthropic philosophers. By the time Agnes suspected there might be more to the situation, it was too late.

**Questioning Agnes:** It's unlikely that Agnes survives the trap in the Hermetic Trust. Hell, it's unlikely that the player characters all survive that trap. Still, if they do, then Agnes can point the finger at Cob Chemicals.

## Finding Cob Chemicals

There are multiple routes for the characters to find out about Cob Chemicals:

- **Accounting:** If the characters salvage the books, or Agnes, from the Hermetic Trust or do a bit of background digging, they learn that Cob Chemicals was funding the Trust.
- **Reza's Mobile Phone:** Tracking the phone leads the characters to the Cob facility.
- **Lovecraft's Memory:** Using hypnosis or divination on Lovecraft can bring the characters to the chemical works.

### Who's Who at Cob Chemicals

Almost everyone at the company is a cultist. It's hard to build a business case for resurrecting Lovecraft and using him to summon an alien god. The CEO is Ransom Cob; American, but with an Iranian grandfather. Most of the other senior staff are from the American branch of the cult or Iranian expats; they also recruited several people in England, most of whom were ex-military or eccentrics from the roster of the Hermetic Trust. There's a distinct lack of chemical engineers on the company roster. In total there are 15 members of staff.

### The Final Phase

AKA, so what's the evil plan anyway?

**Step 1:** Clone Lovecraft and get him to recreate the gate formula from the *Namak Dvara Thwasha*.

**Step 2:** Open the gate. Go through to the world ruled by their dead god.

**Step 3:** Summon the god using sympathetic summoning. Now, one human doesn't have the processing power to support an entity like the god. A single human might be able to run the mental processes of a Fire Vampire, but not a god. What if, though, you had a rather special human, one who's used to having things squirming in and out of his brain? And what if you had, say 49 instances of this individual? And what if you networked them together into one virtual platform for your god?

**Step 4:** Come back through the Gate with the resurrected god. Rule world.



## 6. Oh God, The Chins, The Chins

The Cob Chemicals plant is a small chemical works, consisting of a long low factory and a warehouse, surrounded by big metal tanks and a plumber's fever-dream of pipes. There's no one at the security checkpoint at the front, or at the main reception desk. All the lights are on, but it seems that no one's home.

Looking around, the facility is structured very strangely. There's a newly built warehouse attached to the main building, and there's some large domed metallic structure at the back. A successful Idea or History roll confirms that this chemical factory replicates the layout of the temple at Ul-Chabar.

**Security Systems:** The usual array of security cameras, burglar alarms and keycard-locked doors that you'd find in any modern-day industrial facility, especially one that's also run by a demon-worshipping cult. Under normal circumstances, there'd be a dozen or so security guards, but they've gone through the gate (see below) to the alien world. There is only one guard left to watch over the gate and monitor the security camera feeds. When he spots the player characters, he'll release the rejects – see **Ye Liveliest Awfulness** below.

**The Cells:** Exploring, one of the first things the characters find is a warehouse that's undergone a weird conversion. They've built fifty small cells inside the warehouse, all identical. Each cell's decorated to look like the bedroom Lovecraft slept in at his aunt's house in Providence, where he wrote much of his weird fiction. In each cell is a typewriter; 49 of these typewriters have been used. All of them were used to write a description of the Ul-Chabar rite, complete with the incantations. The descriptions, including the precise wording of the chant used to align the Gate, vary somewhat.

**The Server Room:** Technically minded Laundry agents are drawn to the server room like, well, IT geeks to a big humming server. The hardware's nothing special, but it's been reconfigured for computational demonology – so, dismembered human fingers stuck in the USB slots, arcane runes glowing on the keyboard, a screensaver that's a looping animation of a sacred fire, weird blue energy dancing around the processors. Y'know, another day at the office.

Checking the system with a Computer Use roll, the PCs learn that this computer recently ran a gate-opening spell. There's an active gate somewhere nearby – class three, which is enough to allow a few people access to another world or dimension. The computer was only used to open the gate – it's being maintained from the far side somehow, maybe by a portable system or some other occult power. There's another odd clue in the server room – there are lots of books on networking, especially on Beowulf clusters. As any fule kno, a Beowulf cluster is when you stick a bunch of ordinary computers together so they can work in parallel, making one big number-crunching supercomputer. Poking around the Cob Chemicals network, though, there doesn't seem to be any Beowulf clusters on-site, so why all the manuals?

**The Cloning Floor:** Next comes the cloning floor – hundreds of Petri dishes, each containing a pinch of Lovecraft. Engraved on a pair of freestanding glass slabs are the two halves of a weird poem or chant; anyone with Sorcery recognises it as the formula for raising or putting down the resurrected. Every few seconds, a laser connected to a desktop computer stabs out and scans one of the slabs, casting the resurrection spell over and over again. There aren't any essential salte Petri dishes on the computer's target sigil, though, so nothing happens. It's still uncanny to hear a synthesised voice going “Y'AI 'NG'NGAH, YOG-SOTHOTH H'EE-L'GEB F'AI THRODOG UAAAH!”



## YE LIVELIEST AWFULNESS

According to the lab notes, they raised up more than four hundred Lovecrafts in order to get fifty viable specimens, then interpolated the data from them to get the correct gate formula.

Looking around, the characters see several metal gratings in the floor, covering shafts leading to an underground waste storage tank. That's where the rejects go. Reza's phone is down there, by the way, after he got eaten by the guards. The gratings can be remotely controlled from the security office. At the back of the lab is a large metal door leading to the gate room. As soon as any of the characters get close to that door, the guard remotely opens the grates. A few combat rounds later, the Misshapen Ones rise.

### Calling In Backup

Paranoid or cautious player characters can try calling in backup from the Laundry, especially once the scope of the threat becomes clear. Depending on the circumstances and the whim of the GM:

- *There's no time* - by the time the SAS mobilise, the Uzarans will have completed their evil scheme. The PCs are the ones on the scene - they have to deal with it.
- *We'll back you up* - bring in the SAS, and have them deal with the swarm of Lovecraft clones, or the Fire Vampires on the far side of the gate.
- *We'll take it from here* - allow some or all of the players to swap out their regular characters for SAS headbreakers.
- In playtest, the players lured the zombie mob to the nearest motorway, and let the SCORPION STARE traffic cameras do the heavy lifting.

### Ye Liveliest Awfulness

What do you get when you try to raise something up from incomplete salts? How would Lovecraft describe it? *What the thing was, he would never tell. It was like some of the carvings on the hellish altar, but it was alive. Nature had never made it in this form, for it was too palpably unfinished. The deficiencies were of the most surprising sort, and the abnormalities of proportion could not be described.*

So, three hundred and fiftyish shambling horrors, some of which bear a vague resemblance to the Sage of Providence,

but most of which look more like inside-out zombies or shambling masses of loosely associated organs. They're replication errors - some are just the same body part repeated over and over and over, others are reshuffled horrors where one organ tries to do the work of another, so you've got things that walk on legs made from rib-bones, and stare blearily through eyes that beat like hearts. A seething tide of wriggling, twitching, eternally restless, eternally hungry, eternally agonised, misshapen flesh; a vile torrent of Lovecraft-bits.

Basically, there's every chance that one of the player characters gets bludgeoned to death by a monster that's made entirely out of HP Lovecraft's long-jawed chin, repeated thousands of times to make a thing like a spiny echidna of chins.

SAN Loss for seeing Ye Liveliest Awfulness is a whopping 1d6/2d10.

**The Stumbling Horde:** There are so many of these things that it's best to treat them as an environmental hazard. Every round, each player character needs to do *something* to avoid being eaten - running, dodging, climbing, shooting, whatever. If the evasion attempt fails, the character gets nabbed and takes 1d6 damage. Failing multiple attempts in a row up the damage (2d6 for two fails in a row, 3d6 for three and so on). Player characters can rescue other characters from the effects of a failed evasion, and if at least half the characters inflict serious damage on the zombies, they can buy the whole group some breathing space.

Use zombie stats for individual things.

**Dealing with Ye Liveliest Awfulness:** Fighting the swarm of things isn't the best option. Possible solutions:

- **Run Away:** Rather than get surrounded in the cloning room, the characters can pull back into the factory. A lot of the Lovecraft-things can't walk or crawl very quickly at all, so the player characters can deal with the more mobile ones first, you know the ones with functional legs, then the great stumbling mass of the rest.
- **Escape into the Gate Room:** The doors are sealed, but can be pried or blown open, or the electronic lock can be overridden. That does put the player characters between a rock and a hard place - or rather, between an armed guard and a swarm of monsters.
- **Putting Them Down:** Anyone with Sorcery can try reciting the second phrase on that glass slab, the formula for putting down that which you've called up. Alternatively, re-aiming the laser or reprogramming the computer to use the other formula will zap a bunch of zombies every round.



- **Closing the Grates:** This stops the flood of fresh Lovecraft-bits, although the PCs still need to deal with the ones in the room with them.
- **Warrant Card Geas:** This gets hilarious. Technically, the resurrected things are human, which means they can be geased with a Warrant Card.
- **Basilisk Gun:** When all else fails... FWOMP!

## The Gate Room

The gate room is the heart of the Uzaran complex. It's a big circular chamber, almost completely empty.

The first thing the characters see is the gaping hole in reality in the middle of the room. In front of it is a corpse, clearly killed as part of a human sacrifice. These are the remains of Reza Attar, the VEVAK agent and Naveed's partner.

The second thing is the small security office at one side. It's more like a pillbox than an office, really, and there's a terrified young cultist there with a machine gun and a hot summoning grid. His name is Brian. He's under instructions to summon a Fire Vampire if anyone gets past the guardians. The Fire Vampire would then warn the cultists on the far side of the Gate, while he holds off the intruders with machine gun fire. That would result, of course, in his soul being eaten by the vampire. While cult doctrine claims that his soul would actually join with that of the vampire and he would dwell in eternal fiery joy, Brian's not convinced of this. He'd much rather hang on until the god comes through in person and conquers the world; as one of its acolytes, Brian's hoping for a big reward like being made King of Australia. He likes Australia – he went there on his gap year before joining Cob Chemicals. (His diploma in chemical engineering did not prepare him for all this, but the two guys who were supposed to be doing rearguard action died in a white van this afternoon...)

### Playing Brian:

- Aaaaaaaaaaagh!
- Ok, breathe. Everything's going to be fine. The Uzarans have the backing of a real life god. They're going to rule the world, and you're going to be on the winning side for a change!
- You were supposed to have backup. You were supposed to have training. You were supposed to have a supervisor. For God's sake, you're the cult's intern!

**Dealing with Brian:** The worst outcome here is that the characters force Brian to summon a Fire Vampire with sympathetic summoning, and the vampire raises the alarm through the Gate. If, however, the characters storm Brian's

position before he can shoot back, or take him by surprise, or talk him down, they can get through the Gate without the cult having advance warning of the intruders. Playing on Brian's confidence with Fast Talk or talking him down with Persuade works.

If they go for the violent option, it takes Brian one round to trigger the summoning grid; the Fire Vampire arrives in 1d3 rounds, and it takes another 1d3 rounds for the vampire to dart through the Gate. Brian can still shoot while cutting his hand for the blood sacrifice, but his skill is halved that round.

If captured and questioned, Brian doesn't know the details of the cult's plan, but he knows they're going to bring the god back to our side.

### Brian

**STR 9 CON 11 SIZ 11 INT 14 POW 13**  
**DEX 10 CHA 10 EDU 14 SAN 50 HP 11**

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** MP5 40%, damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Computer Use (Networking) 60%, Trivia 40%.

**The Gate:** Well, that's a genuine class three static dimensional gate, and no mistake. It was generated by a computational demonology rite on this side, but is being maintained from the far side, so the characters can't easily close it here. Looking through the gate, the investigators can dimly make out a desert-like landscape beneath a fiery sky. The dunes glisten weirdly in the alien light. A black structure looms out of the sand nearby – it's the original temple, the one that the Ul-Chabar temple was the merest shadow of. The cult have gone to the world of their god.

- If Naveed or Lovecraft is with the investigators, he observes that the cult's god cannot exist in our world, so this attempt by the cult to summon their patron must be futile. It can only result in the same devastation as the Ul-Chabar temple incident.

## 7. Through the Gate

The sand crunches underfoot – it's been partially melted into glass. The air is hot enough to burn your lungs; it fills your nose with the smell of your own scorched nose hair and stings your eyes. The sky overhead looks like a torrent of fire; an Idea roll confirms that the 'sky' is actually a swarm of Fire Vampires. There must be millions of those things up there. Beyond them are the hot, densely packed stars of the galactic core. Staying here more than a few minutes would be extremely unwise – this world is drenched in radiation. Radio signals don't work here either, drowned out by the howl of stars being dismembered and devoured by nearby black holes.

Looking at the footprints in the sand, a lot of people passed this way recently, emerging from the Gate and heading towards the black basalt structure.

There's no sign of any computer system maintaining the Gate, but it must be nearby.

### Welcoming Committee

If the investigators failed to stop the Fire Vampire from getting through the Gate, then the cult has a welcoming committee waiting for them – another three armed goons. These guys come over the dunes just as the player characters arrive, and start shooting. This close to their patron deity, they've got magical protection in the form of 10-point defensive bindings and entropy-manipulation cloaks that give a -25% penalty to any ranged attacks made on them.

**STR 14 CON 15 SIZ 13 INT 12 POW 13**  
**DEX 12 CHA 10 EDU 15 SAN 0 HP 14**

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** MP5 70%, damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Look Menacing 70%, Devotion to the Green Flame 90%, Hide 60%, Spot 50%, Strategy 65%.

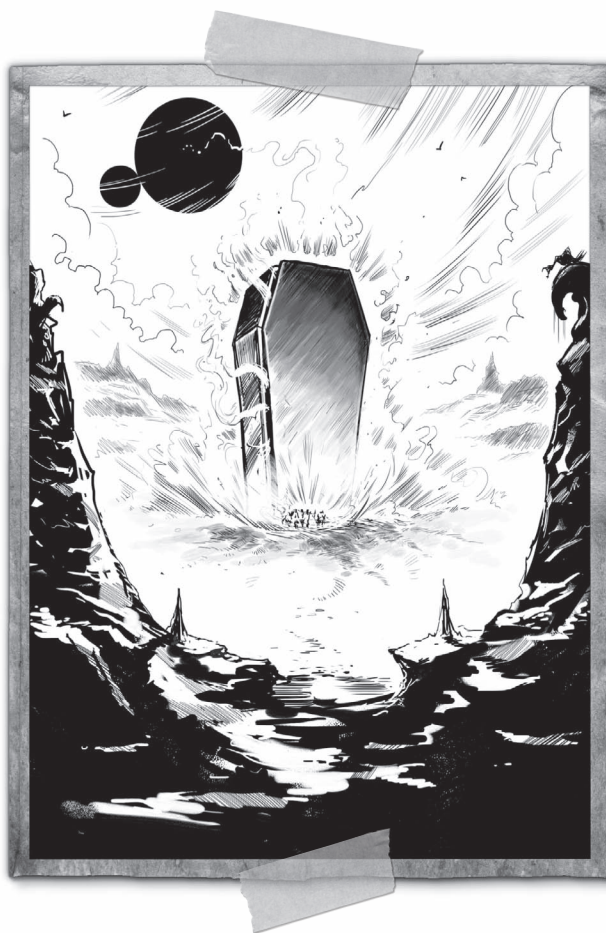
**Artefacts:** 10-point defensive binding, Class I ward, Cloak of Disguise.

### The Alien Temple

Actually, it's not a temple. It's a tomb, a casket twenty metres high and a hundred long. No doors, no windows, just high walls of black basalt marked with alien hieroglyphics. The only aperture in the whole structure is a crack about fifteen metres up.

The Uzaran cultists have set up along the nearest wall. Twelve cultists, half of whom are armed and the rest of whom have some mojo to throw around. And, of course, forty-nine Lovecraft clones. The Lovecrafts sit in a big circle, holding hands, while the cultists move around outside the circle, chanting and making adjustments on their laptops. As the investigators watch, a flame kindles and grows in the middle of the circle, burning without fuel. The hieroglyphs on the basalt structure glow in time with the flickering of the flames. The fire grows bigger and bigger, then flows into the Lovecrafts.

Off to one side of the circle is another computer setup – a laptop hooked up to more occult peripherals and a pair of dismembered corpses, their intestines pulled out and arranged into a pulsing wet glyph. That's the gate generator. Destroying that would destabilise the gate, causing it to close in a few minutes. The cult might be able to establish a new gate before they die of radiation poisoning – especially if they have a god helping them.



If the characters do nothing, then here's what happens: The cult network the Lovecrafts together into a Beowulf cluster. The god sideloads onto the cluster. Everyone marches through the Gate, and the god takes over the world, protected from the crushing weight of our reality by the Lovecraft network.

So, what can the player characters do? Fortunately for them, the god's currently occupied with squeezing itself into its human host network, so the characters need only deal with the cultists.

- **Direct Attack:** Well, the player characters are severely outnumbered and outgunned, but they have surprise on their side, right? Well, at least they can die heroically. Better yet, if they geased the swarm of Ye Liveliest Awfulness, they can sic the rejects on the cult.
- **Hack the Network:** Do the characters have a Lovecraft with them? If so, then they've got a back door into the Beowulf cluster. They can get their Lovecraft to run a Banishing spell, or stick a virus into him with Computer Use (hacking).
- **Put Them Down:** They've got the anti-necromancy formula from the cloning room (or, failing that, can fire an Exorcism spell to disrupt the thaum field and return



a Lovecraft to dust). They can disrupt the network by dusting all the clones.

- **Close the Gate:** If they take out both the gate generator and the computer being used to set up the Beowulf cluster, then the cult are stuck here. Alternatively, they could wait until the cult are on their way back to the gate, then sneak around and deactivate the generator when half the Lovecrafts are on the wrong side, removing the god's host and causing a small version of the Ul-Chabar effect on both sides of the Gate.

### Other Complications

- Those armed cultists use the same stats as the welcoming committee.
- After a few rounds, the god inhabits the Lovecrafts; all their eyes start glowing and they become capable of deity-level spells. That's bad.
- Know what's worse? While the god can't exist in *our* reality without help, it's perfectly fine here. If the characters take out the Lovecrafts, their next action has to be run like hell as that big basalt tomb *opens* and a *blazing, stumbling god-thing* comes out...

### Aftermath

If the cult succeeds in bringing their Lovecraft-supported deity through into our reality, then... well, awkward questions get asked in Parliament, which is now held in Manchester. The first question being "would the acting Prime Minister please tell the house what ate London?"

A kinder GM might have an OCCULUS raid foil the cult before they can establish a beachhead in our reality (resulting in great loss of life, heroic sacrifices, dulce et decorum set to have one's brain eaten by Fire Vampires etc.).

If the player characters stop the cult, they get 1d3% Status. Add on another 1% if they can provide a full accounting of the cult's plans, another 1% if they kept a Lovecraft or two alive for debriefing, and another 1% if they bring Naveed Rostami in alive. Should Lovecraft survive, the Laundry recruits him after fully interrogating him.

Further investigations can follow up on the owners of Cob Chemicals, or explore the vaults under the chemical plant. Plus, there's still the matter of the angry god in the giant space coffin; any player characters who thwarted the god's return feel palpably hot waves of heat emanating from a distant star every time they look up at the night sky.



HANDOUT #1 – WHAT EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT LOVECRAFT  
(BUT WAS AFRAID TO ASK)

Howard Philips Lovecraft (20th August 1890 – 15th March 1937) was a writer of weird fiction. His father died in a madhouse (probably complications arising from syphilis), and his mother also went insane in 1919. Lovecraft himself had a breakdown in 1908. He married Sonia Green in 1924, but the marriage did not last. He returned to Providence several years later, and remained there until his death from bowel cancer.

Lovecraft is best known for his 'weird fiction' – stories of alien gods and magic. As far as most people know, these stories are not based on any real-world events, although they do mention real-world locations like Arkham or Miskatonic University.

In the occult intelligence community, Lovecraft is somewhere between Ian Fleming and Kim Philby, between the Great Security Leak and the running joke. He drew on real-world sorcery and occult lore to inspire his stories, and some of them give the game away entirely. Stories like *The Call of Cthulhu* or *The Strange Case of Charles Dexter Ward* mix Lovecraft's inventions with genuine events; others, like *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* or *The Mountains of Madness* should be filed under 'non-fiction' almost in their entirety.

So, how did one obscure writer learn so much about the secret history of the world? The Laundry isn't sure, but it's probably a combination of the following:

1. His grandfather possessed a large occult library, including several rare tomes.
2. There are several odd gaps in Lovecraft's life, which he may have spent researching and travelling.
3. He corresponded widely with other writers, fantasists and occult experts.
4. He lived down the road from the Black Chamber's office in Providence, and may have been employed by them as a researcher.
5. He possessed some level of psychic ability, and his dreams were at least partly accurate.



## HANDOUT #2 – THE UZARAN FIRE CULT AND THE DESOLATION OF UL-CHABAR

The Uzaran cult was an offshoot of the Zoroastrian religion in Persia (modern-day Iran). Around 450BC, the prophet Uzara “heard the voice of the fire” and was inspired to write the sacred text of the cult, the *Namak Dvara Thwasha* (*Book of the Starry Door*), which claimed that their god dwelt “on the other side of the flame” and would soon join them. *Namak Dvara Thwasha* also included a wealth of occult lore, including instructions on creating interdimensional Gates and summoning rites.

The cult grew in power. Enemies of the cult tended to burst into flames or go insane. Analysis of the surviving fragments of the *Namak Dvara Thwasha* suggest that the cult was able to summon Class III exonomes with relative confidence.

By 300BC, the Uzaran cult’s influence had grown to such an extent that they were able to build the Great Temple at Ul-Chabar, where they intended to summon their god to Earth. What happened next is a matter of conjecture – some historians believe the temple was sacked by deserters from the army of Alexander the Great. Others blame the temple’s destruction on an earthquake. However, the most likely explanation is that the cult successfully invoked their deity – but that the alien Great Old One was unable to survive in our local reality, and exploded. The temple was utterly destroyed, and the cult’s power broken.

While the cult still has a few adherents, mostly in Iran and Turkmenistan, there are no known surviving copies of the complete *Namak Dvara Thwasha*. The *Book of the Starry Door* has passed into legend as one of the great missing grimoires, and there are numerous fakes and partial reconstructions floating around the occult underground.





## The Darkness Beyond Our World

*"Mankind is led into the darkness beyond our world by the inspiration of discovery and the longing to understand. Our journey into space will go on."*

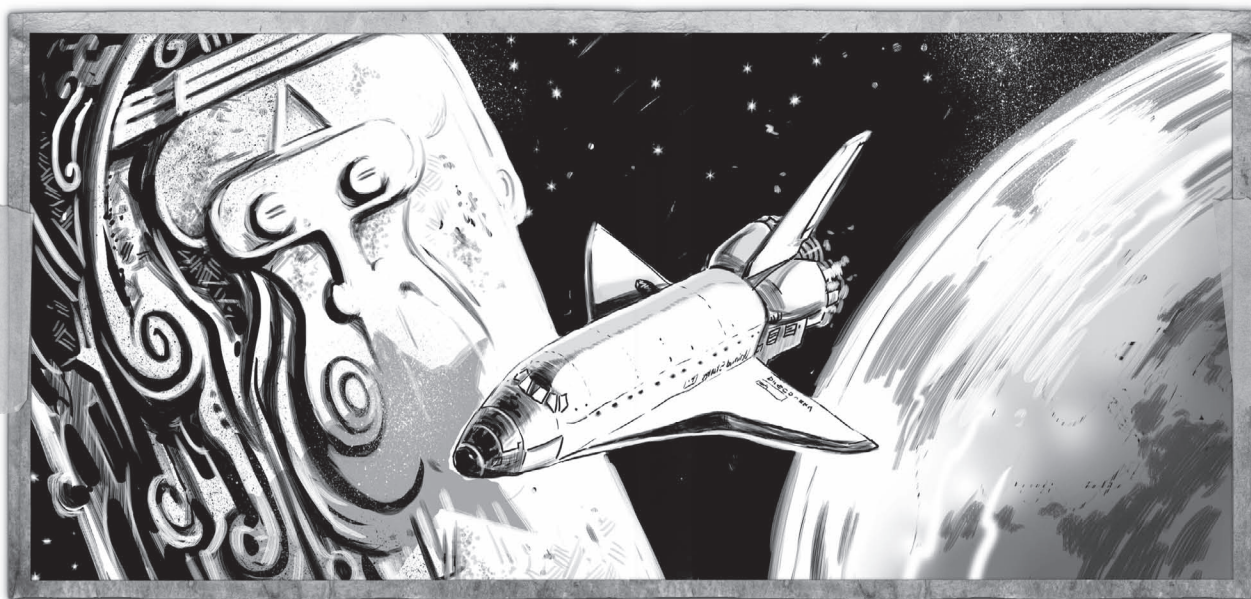
— George W. Bush, February 2003

The space shuttle *Discovery* has flown in and out of the Earth's atmosphere more often than any other object. It first left the atmosphere in 1984 and for the next 27 years it flew 35 missions, often with the hopes of a nation, possibly the world, resting on its stubby wings. Is it any wonder that the craft now proudly on display at the Udvar-Hazy Center, part of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum is different, in ways undetectable to NASA or the Black Chamber, from the one that stood on the launch pad in 1984?

It isn't easy to slip between dimensions, but the energy generated on take-off and re-entry is not only of great interest to some of the beings who live just next door, but it also does very interesting things to local space and allows them to, metaphorically, pop over for a cup of sugar. The first few times the various shuttles made trips they were observed. Just as at the Trinity test site, we were cave dwellers who'd managed to light a particularly bright fire. Of course the shuttle missions weren't just about science (and showing the Russians they hadn't a hope in hell of winning the Cold War), they also had more than a little of the occult about them. The Black Chamber had a few experiments of their own on various missions and they kept a very close

eye on what went up and what came down. It really is better not to speculate about any part they had to play in any of the disasters, but it's definitely worth considering just how little worth they'd put on seven lives against a huge potential threat.

However when *Discovery* landed for the last time in 2011, something was missed. It wasn't a big thing, just a looping piece of code on one of the on-board systems which quietly infected the rest of the shuttle. This set of instructions slithered happily into the guidance systems of the Shuttle Carrier Aircraft, nudging the course of the final fly-bys in minor but occultly significant ways. The new flight pattern, especially around the DC area, was enough to open a very localised gate, allowing a number of Level Two and Three exonomies into our reality. They can't stray far from *Discovery*, but they can influence those who come near. They've been quietly working away for a while and they've finally made some sort of breakthrough. They have their potential host, their exit strategy, but there are problems. Firstly he's a Laundry agent and secondly, pretty soon the Black Chamber are going to realise they screwed up. The stakes are high and nobody wants to find out what happens if everyone crashes and burns.





## The Sky Demons

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The exonomes on *Discovery* aren't brain-eating monsters; they're quite benign, even friendly creatures. They still overwrite any human nervous system they come in contact with, but that's not a deliberate act of consumption, any more than you're consciously eating a bunch of coliform bacteria when you take a mouthful of tap water. Any brains they eat while they're here are entirely accidental, you understand. It took them quite a while to get through the defences the Black Chamber put up around *Discovery* and her sisters, but they finally managed it just in time.

Right now they can't stray from the shuttle as the prevailing reality would shut them down quickly, but with the correct host they can open a proper gate and start exploring. Of course they wouldn't be the only entities that could use such a door, meaning the consequences of stopping their entry, or making some sort of deal may be even higher than either the Laundry or the Black Chamber realise. They're trying to keep British Embassy worker Jeremy Walshe (see below) close to the shuttle (i.e. in the DC area) as they slowly increase their power and influence over him. However, they didn't really account for him being called home, but they have contingencies. Over the last year they've been whispering to a discharged USAF Major, Rachael Commons, telling her they can get her back into the sky, to reclaim that feeling of power and freedom. She's been recruiting more people into her small but well-armed cult and they will be vital to the Sky Demons' plan.

The exonomes aren't completely inimicable to humanity, so a diplomatic solution may be possible. This doesn't necessarily mean working with the cult (crazy humans are crazy humans) but the Laundry could deal direct and surely if they're in the US then it's mostly someone else's problem. As mentioned, however, leaving the gate open might cause other complications, but that's a problem for another day, isn't it?

## Udvar-Hazy Center

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Built near to Dulles International Airport the Stephen F. Udvar-Hazy Center is a cathedral to flight. With a Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird at its heart, it also hosts a Concorde, the space shuttle *Discovery* and the *Enola Gay*. Other, less well known, aircraft fill the two hangars, generating awe and wonder and putting a lot of potentially very interesting electronics within reach of all sorts of people. The two main hangars are vast spaces, ringed with viewing gantries. Security is present, but not overtly tight, with no invasive checks on cars arriving to park and only a simple bag check on the way in. While it might be considered a terrorist target, there isn't much fear of someone walking away with a plane. Of course the presence of a major international airport only a few kilometres away does mean that any

unauthorised attempt to reach the Center by air would be met by deadly force. Over one million people visit the museum every year, so it's extremely easy to blend in and it's not usual for some visitors to spend an awful lot of time staring at just one or two aircraft, especially *Discovery*. A full on ritual would definitely require cover of darkness, but you could get a lot of prep work done during normal hours if you were careful enough.

## Jeremy Walshe

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Walshe is an unmarried man who has been working in the British Embassy in DC for five years now. He's medium height, slight build, with short dark hair and glasses. Officially he's a Third Secretary in the Embassy but his real role is with the Laundry Diplomatic Office (Unconventional) (SSO5(A) grade). He's a quiet, efficient man and his is a watching brief, mostly administrative work, keeping tabs on what's going on in the US without actively spying on anyone and trying to figure out, if it's ever possible, what the Black Chamber might be up to this week.

He's not a field agent, but he is very, very good at compiling reports, ferreting out details and separating the merely interesting from the really important. He's also a bit of an avionics nut. He loves to fly and he devotes a reasonable amount of his not inconsiderable brain power to remembering facts about anything mechanical that can fly. He got himself an invite to the official unveiling of *Discovery* at the Udvar-Hazy Smithsonian annex out by Dulles.

Ever since then, his superiors in both DC and London have noticed he's changed. He doesn't talk about planes all the time any more, in fact he doesn't seem to want to even look at the sky. His work has gone to hell and the standard internal management procedures in the embassy haven't discovered anything. There are concerns about drug or alcohol use, or possibly a relationship that's gone really bad, but Walshe's real management back in London are worried about a lot of other things, so they've called him home.

The reality is that while Walshe is still Walshe, he was badly affected by his experiences at the unveiling. The Sky Demons managed to worm their way far enough into his mind to start the process of using him to get off *Discovery* and into our reality and they're able to act through him. This manifests in voices in his head and terrible dreams.

It is important to note that even if the Sky Demons were banished or his connection cut, the curse would not go away and he could still be a potential gateway in the future. The most obvious symptom of Walshe's compromised psyche of this is a sudden, debilitating, fear of flying and the sky. Walshe has managed to get to Dulles Airport, but he isn't getting any further than that...

## Freedom of the Skies

Rachael Commons' USAF career was going very well indeed until she ditched millions of dollars' worth of aircraft over the Pacific. There was no technical explanation for the crash, only a brief loss of communication and Commons declaring she was ejecting. After that she refused to cooperate with investigations, declaring only that she needed to get back into the sky. Several attempts at counselling failed and she was discharged on health grounds. Since then she's been denied a civilian pilots licence and the once brilliant aviator has become depressed and angry, torturing herself with regular visits to the Air and Space Museum, both on the National Mall in DC and at Udvar-Hazy.

Shortly after *Discovery* was unveiled she started to have dreams from creatures promising her she would fly again, but at a price. She's gathered a small group of ex-military and civilian flight junkies around her, promising them the skies. They know Walshe is important and they know now that they have to bring him back to *Discovery*. The cult is, of course, completely unaware of what fate lies in store for them, all they can think of is touching the sky.

## Mission Overview

The players are briefed that Walshe was supposed to get on a plane twenty-four hours ago to come back to London for a debrief and evaluation after his behaviour rapidly changed. They're put on a plane (cattle class, of course) to Dulles to acquire Walshe and bring him back. The flight home gets interrupted by the Sky Demon influence and forced to emergency land. The Freedom of the Skies cult then make an appearance, shocked into action by their extra-dimensional masters. The party should be able to put together enough information from Walshe (and possibly a cultist or two) that links it all back to *Discovery*. They head back to the Smithsonian to find the Black Chamber attempting to 'clean' the shuttle.

While the Black Chamber are distracted by the cultists and wait for reinforcements, the players can use either use the degaussing equipment to break Walshe's link to the exonomes or find some kind of diplomatic solution that helps everyone (apart from the Black Chamber?). Then it's a desperate dash to Dulles to catch the flight home, where countless reporting and expenses forms await them.

## 1. Authorised Foreign Travel?

*The Laundry is not known for its largesse, indeed it's been said that if £10 can be saved on travel by forcing a twenty hour layover on an agent lucky enough to get to travel at all, then said agent better hope they've brought enough books. This is why*

*the phone calls instructing you to all to be in Briefing Room 23 with your passport and an overnight bag at 06:00 come as quite a surprise. Stumbling in, clutching your coffees, you're met by a very awake, well dressed woman who introduces herself as Mira Johnson from the Diplomatic Office. A dossier for each of you is already out on the table as Johnson clears her throat, "Right, you're on a plane to Dulles in three hours, so we're going to have to make this brief..."*

If the PCs have a manager they're likely also there, if suitable, but it's not necessary. Johnson is the one running this show. While she's obviously a morning person, she seems slightly on edge and the briefing, plus any Q&A, will be somewhat short. Of course time is also of the essence. The dossiers contain return tickets from London Heathrow to Dulles International. A quick look at the tickets shows they're economy class, of course, but the return time is a mere six hours after arrival (late evening, US time). One of the players (chosen however seems appropriate, but it should be specified, it may be important later) will have an extra ticket in the name Jeremy Walshe. The other items are a personnel file on Jeremy Walshe (see **Handout #1**) and his last written communication with the Laundry (see **Handout #2**).

*"Walshe is a good analyst. No, scratch that, he's a great analyst. Very level headed, never drawing conclusions that weren't backed by evidence, even if it's evidence nobody else can see. He's never sent us on a wild goose chase and he's never been responsible for a diplomatic incident. I wish I could say that for all of our analysts in embassies. Something clearly happened to him a couple of months ago, but we can't pin it down because it started off very subtly. We don't have access to his private calendar; we presume he still has his paper diary on him. Work wise, nobody else at the embassy has exhibited any similar behaviour, so we don't think it it's related to an artefact or an event at a meeting. Honestly, right now, we're stumped. A man who got into the sky whenever he had the chance suddenly won't catch a flight home. Something is very, very wrong.*

*We arranged some counselling at the embassy in DC, but clearly it hasn't worked, as you can see from his final report. So we called him home, but he never got on the plane. You can read the log there, clearly a very, very unhappy and disturbed man. We need you to bring him home. As far as we can tell he's still in the airport, so go and do your job."*

Johnson will explain that Walshe was very reliable and had never missed a report deadline or check-in, but that he's been acting increasingly erratic in the last couple of months. He'd been undergoing some counselling at the embassy in DC, but the written report was the last straw and he'd been summoned home. He was supposed to land late morning the previous day, but he never got on the plane. Attempts to contact him by phone resulted in the audio transcript. The Laundry believe he hasn't left Dulles, so the players will be instructed to fly to the airport, find Walshe, get him back on



a plane and back to London. In and out, but Johnson will not use the words “nice and simple” and she’ll glare at anyone who uses them or any approximation thereof. There’s not a lot else to add. The Laundry don’t know why he’s lost it and they aren’t sure why someone who adores planes and flying won’t step foot on the gangway. Force, at least almost anything not fatal or long lasting, is permitted (but will be difficult given security at airports), but persuasion is strongly preferred. The cover for the trip is a low-level meeting with UK Embassy officials to discuss new security procedures. Johnson will conclude the briefing with:

*“Walshe isn’t a field agent, he’s a backroom chap, try to be gentle with him. Oh, and if this wasn’t blisteringly obvious already, do not, in any way, draw the attention of or engage with the Black Chamber. This operation has nothing to do with them and neither you nor I need that kind of hassle. Now, you’d better get going, it’s an hour on the Tube to Heathrow!”*

## 2. Pond Hopping

Washington Dulles International Airport is, like many airports, a mixture of unhappy architecture, frustrating technology and unhappy, frustrated people. The main terminal building opened in the 60s, but it’s been extended over the years and, like a lot of America, it seems to be stuck in the 70s or 80s. The buses on stilts, however, seem to come from science fiction and the security regime very definitely comes from a dystopian future.

The trip to Heathrow and on to Dulles passes without incident. The players have plenty of time to chat and the pacing here is left entirely to the Gamemaster. Of course the pain and suffering that goes with travelling by plane can’t be avoided by Laundry agents any more than it can by members of the public, so anything they take with them has to be legal in carry-on. If someone desperately wants to check a bag then they can spend their own money to do so, but that’s no guarantee the bag will make it to Dulles in time, or at all. They’re certainly running without firearms for this one. Ingenuity should always be rewarded.

Dulles is a sprawling international airport, with lots of security and many, many places to hide. Luckily for the players Walshe isn’t really trying to hide. He’s caught between the whispers in his head getting louder and his deep love of flying, all mixed in with the fact he’s been ordered to come home. He’s a man in crisis. There isn’t a lot of segregation at the airport between incoming and outbound passengers. That, combined with the espionage skills possessed by the PCs makes finding their quarry straightforward. He made it as far as the gate, but couldn’t step through – the fear was too great. He’s found himself a corner in the main concourse near the gates and he’s holed up there, descending further into what will pretty soon be classed as madness. The

players have roughly six hours to find him, check him back into his new flight and get him on the plane. The only forces arrayed against them are standard airport staff (security and otherwise) and Walshe’s own issues.

Assuming they’re reasonably logical and check areas near the gates and on the airside of the airport the players should find the agent in 30 to 45 minutes. If they all march landside first, things are going to get a lot more complicated and they’re also going to waste a lot of time trying to check back in, along with any logistical issues getting back out to check Walshe back in. This section should be played with time pressure, reminding the players how long things have taken and how long they have left before the flight. They shouldn’t be given time to relax. Of course once they find Walshe, their real problems begin, because he simply won’t want to go with them.

In a dark corner, as far away from both the gates and security as possible, you spot your quarry. He’s sitting in a dark corner, head down, but enough of his face visible to confirm it’s Walshe. As you approach he looks up and you see his face. This mild, reasonably unflappable diplomat and agent is a drug-induced flashback of the man he once was. He clearly hasn’t slept in a while and his red eyes, stubbled chin and doomed expression show just how much stress he’s been under lately. There’s no hope in his gaze as he looks at you, he merely whispers, “From the darkness, they are here...”





## Jeremy Walshe, SSO5(A), Diplomatic Office

STR 8 CON 15 SIZ 11 INT 16 POW 12  
DEX 13 CHA 13 EDU 18 SAN 25 HP 13

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Skills:** Bargain 55%, Bureaucracy 55%,  
Etiquette 40%, Insight 50%, Knowledge  
(Flight) 70%, Knowledge (Diplomacy) 55%,  
Knowledge (Occult) 55%, Persuade 45%,  
Pilot 50%, Research 55%, Spot 70%.

## Rachael Commons, ex-USAF Major and Cult Leader

STR 14 CON 16 SIZ 11 INT 16 POW 13  
DEX 15 CHA 16 EDU 15 SAN 0 HP 14

**Damage Bonus:** 1d4

**Weapons:** Glock 17 handgun 65% damage 1d10  
and MP5 65% damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Brawl 55%, Command 60%, Grapple  
50%, Drive 55%, Pilot 70%, Sorcery 30%,  
Spot 65%, Strategy 55%, Stealth 20%.

### Sample Walshe Quotes:

"From the darkness beyond our world, they  
are here!"

"The demons, infesting the sky, the end of  
us!"

"Can't escape them, ever since the  
discovery, the demons!"

"No hope now, no flight, no rescue, no hope,  
no home..."

"Leave me, leave me to them, they have me  
now, they are here!"

"Here, but trapped, here, from beyond,  
they discovered me, they need me, help me,  
please..."

"Can't escape, no escape, endless sky, no  
escape!"

Walshe is clearly not possessed, but nor is he in his right mind. If they can manage to do some investigation into his condition, the term that springs to mind is 'cursed'. His eyes dart, with hands constantly moving and he talks to himself, quietly but quickly. He babbles about 'Sky Demons', about the "darkness beyond our world" and he mentions 'Discovery', although he won't specify what he's talking about. Feel free to make up any kind of nonsense about the sky, about planes, about fear and about various even slightly obscure references to space. Have fun. Indeed, if the players really make a mess of finding him, attention can be drawn by the airport staff deciding to throw him

out due to his behaviour. He's never met any of the PCs, so they need a little more than just words to get any sort of coherent response from them at all. The easiest way to start the necessary conversations is going to be to flash a warrant card. That will certainly jolt Walshe back towards the surface, though it won't solve the problem entirely. It's possible some of the PCs may outrank him, but even then compelling obedience when your target has demons screaming in his head is a little tricky. There are a few potential ways to handle this.

Force is possible, but will require significant ingenuity. Managing to force someone out of the airport will be easy enough, but getting them back through check-in and security, then onto the plane, will be near impossible and likely to result in screaming, fighting and possibly running away.

Persuasion is definitely possible. If Walshe can be convinced that he's safe then he can clamp down on his fear for long enough to board. This requires a lot of handholding (possibly literally), constant reassurance and likely a drink or two. Anything going wrong causes him to become skittish and may require some pretty fast explanations when dealing with suspicious TSA agents. Either Persuade or Bargain works.

Persuasion aided by use of a warrant card will be easier. This will be even easier again if one of the agents outranks Walshe, but that's not entirely necessary. Note: this is not just a case of flashing the card and telling him to shut up and follow, it will still require either a Persuade or Bargain skill with a default 10% bonus and others applied as the GM sees fit. This isn't fool proof, but it will make the whole experience easier and less likely to descend into last minute persuasions or crazy antics.

Interfering with the voices is a definite option. Using a Necronomiphone or similar device, along with some MacGyvered electrical items from Duty Free, a wearable device can probably be created that will act as a suitable ward. The basic Level One ward that comes with the phone won't be enough in this instance, but boosting it to Level Two either via a more complicated spell and/or additional technology will do the trick. Computer Use (Magical), Technology Use or Sorcery are the most likely skills to use here. It won't bring him back to complete sanity, for a start. Even if it completely solved the base problem (which it doesn't), mental recovery will take longer. It does bring him a hell of a lot closer to normal and is far and away the best option.

If problems do occur then the players are on their own to solve them and airport security are notoriously unforgiving. Don't forget, they're on a time limit here. Spending time in small rooms is not conducive to making your flight.



Again, use of a warrant card (or glamour or the like) may be necessary, but players should be reminded the more they do that kind of thing the more chance they have of attracting the Black Chamber's attention and nobody wants that.

### 3. Expect Turbulence

Once the PCs get their target onto the plane, one of them on either side of him, they can relax and dream of a long hot shower when they get home. At this point the agents have been awake for at least eighteen hours with one eight or nine hour flight in the middle. Even if he's wearing a device/ward Walshe needs some persuading on take-off, but it's only when the wheels leave the ground that the Sky Demons really get involved. The plane should reach cruising altitude after about twenty minutes when the captain will address the passengers:

*"This is your captain speaking. Thank you for joining us on this British Airways flight from Washington Dulles to London Heathrow. Flight time is expected to be around eight hours, but weather en route is looking good, so we're hoping to have you on the ground ahead of schedule. My first officer will update you later in the flight, but in the meantime please sit back and... what? What the hell?!"*

At this point the plane will start to shudder and twist as if the pilot was just playing around with the controls. It won't flip, but it will pitch and roll far worse than mere turbulence would cause. This is more like flying directly through a storm.

Unless Walshe is somewhat separated via a device he'll completely lose it and even if he is wired up he won't be happy at all. Of course the rest of the passengers, possibly including some or all of the agents, won't be happy either.

Anyone sitting near a window will be clearly able to see movement and lights around the wings (SAN loss 1/1d3). It won't take a genius to realise the plane is being attacked by unnatural forces. The Sky Demons, realising the best chance for freedom is getting away, will exert themselves as much as they can, using the connection to Walshe to attack the plane and force it to land.

Suddenly all the times you've read through the safety announcement come back to haunt you. Do you even know which exit is closest to you? Quite a few of the passengers start to panic, not that there's much screaming will do for you, ten thousand metres above sea level. It's going to be up to the pilot to get this suddenly unwieldy tube of metal onto the ground, but is there anything you can do to help?

The exonomes want to keep Walshe alive, but they aren't too pushed about who else is hurt. After all, if the plane gets ripped apart, they can carry Walshe through the skies. The PCs can intervene as they see fit, but there is an armed air marshal on board and speaking in strange languages, messing with electronic gadgets or demanding access to the cockpit are all considered harmful in this age. The range on a Necronomiphone's Banishing app isn't great, but maybe someone in an overwing window seat could get lucky. A clever PC could try warding the plane through its electronics, assuming they can turn an in-flight entertainment system into a rudimentary Dho-Nha rendering engine before the plane falls apart. Threatening to kill Walshe also convinces the demons to back off.

If nobody does anything occult to help protect the plane then there will be a very loud bang as one of the engines goes out.

All the time, Walshe screams louder and louder. Most of this is lost in the noise, but the officers can catch fragments.

*"We touched the sky, we went out into the darkness, they came back, they came back! Please, oh please god, please, they came back, they want me, they're taking me, please get away from the sky, from the darkness! We should never have gone, never discovered, madness to think they wouldn't see!"*

Either shortly after the engine goes, or after an appropriate length of time if the PCs prevent that, the captain will come back on the intercom, in a calm, measured, but pointed voice, because it's British Airways and you aren't allowed to panic:

*"Emergency landing! Emergency landing! All passengers and crew ensure you are in your seats and adopt the brace position!"*

A few minutes later the plane reaches a cleared runway in Dulles. Eventually the landing gear will hit the ground hard, but it will stop, safely, as the sound of sirens can be heard in the distance. It's dark outside, but the plane doesn't appear to be on fire. The chutes deploy and the evacuation begins. There is scope here for the agents to gain some kudos with the airline by being extremely helpful, possibly letting on that they're law enforcement of some kind, which may make interactions easier later on. Either way they have to get an increasingly unhappy Walshe back off the plane. Even if he was wired up he's now losing it again, all his fears having come true.

If Persuasion was used earlier, skill checks have to be retaken or he'll have to be sedated in some way. Again, this can be covered up as tremendous fear of flying. Paramedic level help is available for the PCs at this point, but no miracles.

It's dark when they're all evacuated and after a couple more hours of hanging around all of the passengers are reissued for a flight the following day and given hotel rooms nearby. They are informed that a special plane is being laid on the following morning to take everyone back to London. British Airways apologise for any inconvenience etc. An Endurance check is necessary at this point to check if any of the PCs are fatigued. Maybe this is a chance to get some sleep?

## 4. Bogey, Bogey!

It is at this point that the Freedom of the Skies cult get involved. Rachael Commons, the cult leader, has been informed that Walshe is attempting to escape and that he has some help. If sorcerous means were used to calm him down then the cult is aware their opposition has that capability. If not then they are less prepared.

A mixed group of men and women show up at Dulles, one for each player and one for Walshe. They're all dressed in vaguely casual military gear; leather flight jackets, combat trousers, boots, tight haircuts etc. Call for a Tradecraft roll to spot them; they are armed, but they know they can't start something in the airport. Their plan is isolate and kill the PCs, grab Walshe and bring him back to the Udvar-Hazy Centre. The big complication for them is that the Black Chamber noticed the extra-dimensional interference and has traced it back to *Discovery*. Right now there is a team en route with some very heavy machinery.

British Airways staff start to herd disgruntled passengers into minibuses that will whisk them to the hotel. If the PCs go along with this, then they're directed onto a bus driven by a Freedom of the Skies cultist (Drive 65%). They and Walshe are pretty much the only passengers on this bus (any extra passengers who get on by accident will be collateral damage).

When the minibus convoy sets out, the cult driver takes another route – not towards the hotel, aiming instead for some disused land between Dulles Airport and the Udvar-Hazy Centre. He'll be followed by the rest of the cult group in one or more cars, depending on numbers. The plan, once there, is to simply kill the agents and grab Walshe. Nice and simple.

If the agents do nothing but question where he's going he just grunts noncommittally and keep driving. If they get any more aggressive then he pulls a gun and tells them to sit down. The assumption here is that the players will try to overpower him and take control of the minibus without getting shot or crashing. This requires one or more Brawl and Drive checks from everyone involved, including the cultist.

If the PCs try taking another option, like driving to their hotel/getting another hotel, then the cultists follow them and wait for an opportunity to grab Walshe. The characters could, of course, wait in the airport overnight like Walshe did, hop on another plane the next morning, and get zapped again by a Sky Demon swarm. Four or five emergency landings should convince them that they're not getting home that way.

There are a few likely outcomes from this struggle.

If the party are successful then they take control of the minibus and we switch from a fight inside the minibus to a chase. The cult don't want to attract too much attention, but the stakes are very high and they're willing to take their chances if it results in them getting what they want (leaving aside for a moment that that's not what they're going to get).

The cultists' cars are faster than the minibus, but not to a degree that will matter much. They do, however, know the roads, so the chase will come down to a series of opposed Drive checks, with a 10% penalty for the players. If they can win two in a row, they get away. If the cultists win two in a row, they box the minibus in and/or run it off the road. A fumble on either side will lead to an automatic overall successful result for the opposition. Of course some of the agents may be injured at this point and be in need of medical help.

If the driver fumbles his Drive check while struggling with a player, or fails two checks in a row, the minibus will go off the road. This will also happen if a player fumbles a Drive check while trying to take control, or fails two checks in a row (if one roll is failed and the next succeeds, the player has control of the vehicle). At this point everyone should roll DEX or suffer 1d6 damage. The cultists will have the minibus surrounded two minutes later and they'll demand Walshe with little interest in negotiating, however they'll be very careful not to harm their target, so there's plenty of scope for the agents to defeat them.

Defeated cultists can be a good source of information and they, eventually, give up that Walshe is needed by their Masters on *Discovery*, but precious little other detail.

If the party hand over Walshe then the cultists open fire, but not hang around to check their handiwork. If they lose the battle, then it's roughly the same outcome. That will leave the players with injuries and a need to get a damaged minibus back onto the road.

Throughout this Walshe gets more and more agitated, even if he's wired into a protective device. He isn't a field agent



and there are things in his head. Restraints of some kind may be necessary. He can babble away more, using phrases like “the white ship”, “cathedral of flight”, “Sky Demons” and, if they haven’t already figured it out, “Discovery!” If the players haven’t worked out that he’s talking about the space shuttle, then a Luck check lets them spot a billboard advertising the Air and Space museum.

## 5. Cathedral of Flight

Finally the party, with Walshe in tow, make it to the Udvar-Hazy Centre. They’re likely tired, possibly hurt and undoubtedly desperate for a cup of tea. If they escape the cultists and decide to get a little sleep, they manage a couple of hours at most before their cursed diplomat really loses it in a way that would require a real physical injury to stop.

The barrier into the vast car park at the museum is raised and there are only a few cars scattered across it when they drive up. The most obvious one is a big black truck near the entrance, parked beside two 4x4s with Smithsonian logos. The van looks menacingly official and a small leap of intuition or past experience will show that it’s Black Chamber issue. The building itself is built like a small airport terminal; lots of glass, through which flashes of white, blue and green light can be seen. The entrance is on the 1st floor, with the hangar floors below.

When the Americans build things, they really build them big. The building in front of you looks like an airport terminal, complete with an air traffic control tower. Normally the front would be lit by floodlights, but tonight the bright beams are getting a lot of competition from flashing lights inside the building. The white flashes are accompanied by the noise of small arms, but the blue glow and green flashes aren’t the product of anything as mundane as a gun.

The front door is open, the lock broken; there are no guards in sight. The entrance hall is wide and high, an IMAX theatre off to the right, a shop, restaurant and offices off to the left. The hall runs straight ahead until it opens out into the main hangar, ending in a viewing platform with steps down to the floor. Directly across from this viewing area is the hangar containing *Discovery*. Below the viewing area lurks the SR-71 Blackbird and planes are spread out to both the left and the right.

The Freedom of the Skies members, along with Rachael Commons, who weren’t in pursuit of Walshe were already in the museum when the Black Chamber tech team arrived, but they kept quiet until the US agents were busy setting up the giant field resonator and degaussing machine. This

model was specifically designed to be used on the shuttles whenever they came back from space, but it didn’t catch the inactive Trojan when *Discovery* last landed. It’s roughly a three metre cube of military-grade plastic, housing a computer system and a bunch of thaumaturgical gear – banishing pentacles, virtualised goats, inverse Tillinghast generators and other gear that the Laundry doesn’t have access to. A lot of tubes and wires sprout from it and are attached to various access ports on the shuttle (the shuttle was designed with occult countermeasures built in).

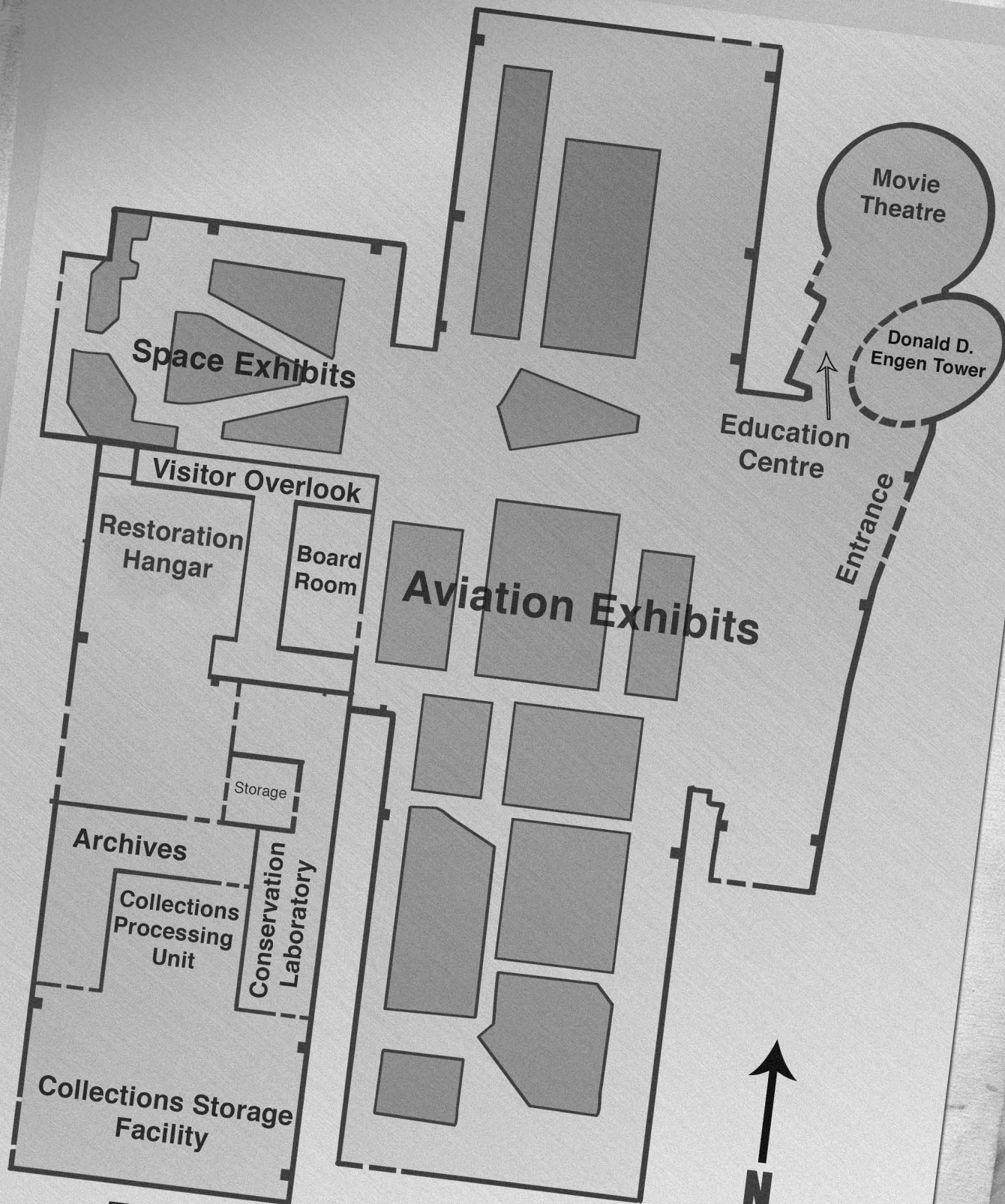
Both the box and the craft are glowing with blue light, with occasional flashes of green. The white flashes are more mundane, small arms. The device, and it’s interaction with *Discovery*, will necessitate a SAN roll, failure will cause the loss of 1d6 SAN. What the Black Chamber doesn’t know is that in order for the degaussing to be successful, Walshe must either be included or killed. While the Sky Demons still have a link to a human in this reality, they can’t be expelled.

Unless they draw attention to themselves, the agents can move across the floor while keeping under cover, although keeping Walshe quiet will become more and more difficult as he gets closer to the source of his curse. As they cross the floor the players can begin to see green ethereal figures trying to break out from the blue field. The figures have wings and horns, drawn from the dreams of Walshe and Commons, but very little else can be made out.

*Normally the first thing people notice about the space shuttle is that it’s much bigger in real life. In this case the first thing you notice is the glowing blue field around it, green sparks flying off it as demonic figures hammer away from the inside. Whatever got inside Walshe’s head is clearly not impressed by the Black Chamber’s attempts to send them home and they’re very angry. You’d guess they’ve taken their shape from Walshe’s imagination, possibly with influence from the cult that worships them, all wings and horns and gnashing teeth.*

*The machine generating the field isn’t comforting either, it’s a cube, roughly three metres to a side, matte black with a small console and absolutely no blinking lights. Tubes connect it to the shuttle and every so often a bullet ricochets off. Maybe it can do something for Walshe? Complicated reconfiguration and coding in a firefight, what could possibly go wrong?*

The Black Chamber people are just techs, but one’s already been taken over by a Black Chamber combat specialist, and as the other techs finish setting up the degausser, they too shiver as new consciousnesses slip into their bodies and take control. They are still better armed and more skilled (this is America), but the cultists have the advantage of high ground, surprise and numbers and right now things



# The Udvar-Hazy Centre



are roughly evenly matched. The Black Chamber have called for backup, but that will take a while to get here. When it does it's likely the remainder of the fight will be short and bloody.

The Freedom of the Skies fighters are on the balcony overlooking *Discovery* and arrayed in the exhibits around the shuttle. The Black Chamber agents are pinned near the far end of the glowing shuttle, there's more cover there. It's difficult to tell, but a successful Spot check would suggest about five Black Chamber personnel and maybe fifteen to twenty cultists. (Actual numbers are five and twenty.)

As the players get to a decent vantage point you can describe one Black Chamber tech getting winged while two cultists are taken down. The attrition rate will be reasonably slow after that, but feel free to drop people on either side if it seems useful and/or relevant.

The occult fumigation device is near the nose of the shuttle, seemingly with its own power source and reasonably impervious to gunfire. There is one body near the device, still with their submachine gun.

It is possible for the party to reach the device without being noticed as most of the fighting is concentrated towards the back of the shuttle. However the longer they hang around, the more chance they have of being spotted, especially as Walshe has hit rock bottom from a sanity point of view. He has to be physically restrained at this point using a contested Grapple roll to stop him running towards the shuttle at top speed.

However when the group of PCs and Walshe get within an appropriate range of the shuttle (up to you and dramatic tension), he goes suddenly calm and his eyes will snap open. He isn't possessed, but he is a conduit. He starts to speak to the players, quietly enough.

*"Please, we are peaceful, we just wish to fly in your beautiful skies, feel the rush of air, touch the skies, revel in the wind. Please, help us and we can help you, tell you things, see things for you. You can have this man, we just need him to open a gate, free the way!"*

Of course it's possible the PCs will gag Walshe at this point (his connection to the exonomes makes it effectively impossible to knock him unconscious at this point), but they can start a conversation with the entity. It reiterates that it means no harm, that the cultists wish to willingly join with them, they dream of flying. For the price of entry into this world the Sky Demons (just a name, it will insist, their forms taken from dreams), will work with the Laundry, not full time, but they will cooperate, agree a treaty, live

peacefully in the world, even move away from civilisation unless needed. Letting them in will require disabling the degaussing machine (in whatever way the PCs want) and getting Walshe into physical contact with the shuttle, all of this while bullets are flying and more Black Chamber agents are on their way.

There are a few realistic options at this point and a few suicidal ones.

## Shootout

The crazy thing for the party to do would be to engage in gunplay with multiple opponents. The Black Chamber is not on their side. It is possible that an incredibly lucky party may pull this off, but it is most likely to result in death. If they do take this route then Rachael Commons will be the last cultist standing and will do whatever she thinks she has to for her masters. Her own life will be a small price to pay. Also, even if the party does manage to drop everyone, it's likely the next wave of heavily armed Americans will show up and really ruin things.

## Diplomatic Solutions

The team could go down the diplomacy route. Disabling the machine is pretty easy if you know what to aim for or have your own countermagic. When it goes down, the degaussing field collapses with a bang. This draws everyone's attention to the PCs. A Level Three exnome takes possession of Walshe and starts to build a proper gate.

Another Level Three takes over Rachael Commons and the contagion spreads to the other cultists. At this point it's only a matter of time before the initial Black Chamber team are overwhelmed (SAN loss for the PCs is 1/1d6). However the newly possessed cultists won't attack the PCs, assuming the PCs established a truce with the demons beforehand.

The possessed cultists fly around the museum and the gate starts to let other exonomes in. If the PCs bargained for Walshe to be released, then the connection to him gets transferred to Rachael Commons. The entity possessing Commons urges them to get out of the museum before Black Chamber reinforcements arrive. It hands the PCs a USAF badge from its jacket, imbuing it with essence and turning it into an artefact capable of making contact at a future date.

If one of the PCs is a Sorcerer then some temporary binding can seal the deal; if not then a Warrant card should do the trick, but it will need to be properly codified later. The cultists float off into the sky; the PCs need to get clear before the Chamber arrives in force.





## The Sky Demons: Pros and Cons

**Pro:** As far as demons go, they're benign. They don't want to consume humanity.

**Con:** There are lots of them on the far side of the Gate. They'll take as many hosts as they can get.

**Pro:** The Freedom of the Skies cultists want to be possessed. They want to fly free.

**Con:** It's an open question how much of the host survives the possession process, and most of the cultists aren't within spitting distance of compos mentis anyway; they may not be able to give consent in their current states.

**Pro:** Having a bunch of semi-friendly exopomes who can fly, alter weather and take down aircraft on call could be a useful asset for the Laundry.

**Con:** The demons have no idea of the fragility of the human form; without protective clothing and supplies it's likely the cultists won't survive for more than a few months up there, leaving the demons to drag around a bunch of flying rotting zombie hosts. That means the Sky Demons will need a regular tribute of replacement hosts.

## Cult Consent

The twist on this is to try and make contact with the cultists before going down this route. The Freedom of the Skies crazies aren't going to be very amenable to dealing with those they see as trying to steal their chance of happiness. However, if the PCs can drop the Black Chamber agents and show peaceful intent and explain there are more Black Chamber agents on the way, then Commons will likely, eventually, be willing to cooperate.

## Free Walshe and Run

The 'safest' thing for the agents to do is to use the machine to break the connection between the Sky Demons and Walshe, and get out of the museum as quickly as possible. The machine can be used on smaller targets as well, and it automatically works on its operator, but it will take time. Walshe needs to be manhandled over to it and kept from trying to climb up onto *Discovery* (multiple Grapple rolls required here, he'll keep fighting), and the settings need to be changed to target Walshe instead of the entire shuttle. If any of the Grapple checks fail, that will add an extra -5% to the skill checks below.

The ideal skill check here is Computer Use (Magic). A suitable Technology Use speciality would also be suitable. The third alternative is Sorcery. A successful roll on any of these skills includes Walshe as a target and starts to break the connection (this will take 5 rounds). If two players can contribute then that will make things easier, but also introduce additional risk. A failed roll will delay the work. Either a critical fumble or three failures in a row will be described below. If two players are working on the device then it will only take 4 rounds of successes to complete.



## UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

One failure by either player will still delay the work. Two twin failures in a row will equal a critical fumble.

After the first round of work the PCs are be spotted by the Black Chamber folks and the cultists. As mentioned, the PCs are outgunned and outnumbered, but there is cover and suppression fire from one or two (depending on party size).

Other distractions such as pushing over some of the smaller rockets standing around the room can also temporarily negate the modifier, but this will require a successful DEX check (to avoid being shot) and STR to actually make something fall over against the stabilisers in place.



**Success:** The connection is broken and the exonomes are banished back to their own dimension with a very loud bang, drawing attention to the machine. Walshe collapses immediately. Rachael Commons loses her connection as well and goes completely insane, causing her to rush towards the machine, ignoring anything in her path. There's a 25% chance she'll be shot on the way, but if the players are still there when she gets there, she'll immediately attack them. The rest of the cultists won't be much better off, abandoning any pretence at control. At this point Walshe is saved, although he'll require years of therapy. All the players have to do is get him and themselves home. The museum

has lots of cover and they should be able to make their way out one of the side doors as the Black Chamber heavy field team arrives to mop up.

**Failure:** The field will collapse with a very loud bang, drawing attention to the machine, and things start to proceed as described under Diplomatic Solutions. Walshe is lost, his brain eaten, but the incursion can be stopped if the characters terminate him – the exonomes are still using him as their primary toehold in our reality. If he dies, they can't hold on.

### Possessed Rachael Commons, Level Three Entity

If one of the Sky Demons gets their hooks into Commons and the party stick around to try and fight, remember there are lots and lots of things in the museum that could be knocked down with the Wind Blast power. This is on top of how much the blast will hurt. It's going to become very dangerous very quickly. It's likely the entity will have quite a few more powers as well, but these should do for the duration of this fight. Feel free to make up more if it becomes a recurring character.

**STR** 14   **CON** 16   **SIZ** 11   **INT** 20   **POW** 15  
**DEX** 15   **CHA** 16   **EDU** 15   **SAN** 0   **HP** 14

**Damage Bonus:** 1d4

**Weapons:** Glock 17 handgun 65% damage 1d10 and MP5 65% damage 1d10.

**Wind Blast:** 60%, damage 1d8, knockback.

**Skills:** Brawl 55%, Command 60%, Grapple 50%, Drive 55%, Pilot 70%, Sorcery 30%, Spot 65%, Strategy 55%, Stealth 20%.

### Freedom of the Skies Member

Most of the cult are ex- or wannabe-pilots. Their uniform tends to be flight jackets, heavy shirts, combat trousers and big boots. They carry themselves with a military bearing and all have some training with fire arms and hand-to-hand combat. Most people take them for some sort of militia.

**STR** 13   **CON** 13   **SIZ** 14   **INT** 12   **POW** 12  
**DEX** 14   **CHA** 11   **EDU** 14   **SAN** 20   **HP** 13

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Glock 17 handgun 50% damage 1d10 or MP5 50% damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Brawl 50%, Grapple 50%, Drive 55%, Pilot 50%, Spot 55%, Stealth 20%.

(Add 10% to all weapons and skills if possessed)

## Black Chamber Tech

STR 8 CON 15 SIZ 11 INT 16 POW 12  
DEX 13 CHA 13 EDU 18 SAN 45 HP 13

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Glock 17 handgun 45% damage 1d10 and MP5 40% damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Brawl 40%, Grapple 30%, Drive 35%, Spot 60%, Stealth 20%, Computer Use (Magic) 60%, Technology Use 60%.

## Black Chamber Field/Combat Agent

STR 15 CON 15 SIZ 15 INT 15 POW 12  
DEX 15 CHA 11 EDU 16 SAN 45 HP 15

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Glock 17 handgun 65% damage 1d10 and MP5 65% damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Brawl 60%, Grapple 50%, Drive 55%, Spot 60%, Stealth 20%.

## 6. Back to Blighty!

Assuming some (all?) of the agents are still alive after they stop the incursion, they can flee the building and the site, with the cultists and/or the Black Chamber in pursuit. Unless they completely fail to use wards, or they leave pictures of themselves all around the place, the Black Chamber won't know who they are until they scrape some of the secrets out of the brains of the unfortunate cultists. Walshe will never be able to return to the US and the agents may want to give it a while, but most of their identities should be safe.

The distance from the hangars to the airport takes around five minutes. The first two minutes are the longest, pulling away from the car park, hoping to lose the pursuing spies and cultists, wondering when the sirens will start up, when the escape will fall apart, but your luck holds. A few minutes later you pull up in front of the terminal, nonchalantly stepping from your stolen car, knowing that by the time anyone thinks to check it out you'll be long gone.

Checking your watches you realise you don't have a lot of time before the rescheduled flight takes off, but if you hurry, you may have time to visit Duty Free, your colleagues in the office get very narky when people on trips don't bring something back...

If the Sky Demons break through then both they and Commons will be far too busy to worry about the Laundry agents, and the Black Chamber will be too busy trying to clean up; the plane home, however, encounters unusual levels of turbulence. If they're invited in then the Black Chamber is still very busy, but the flight home is unusually smooth.

## Aftermath

*What you want, as the plane touches down in Heathrow, is to go home and sleep for several days. That won't be possible, of course. For a start, there's the debrief. You have no idea what time it really is, but you're sure that Johnson is waiting for you in a briefing room somewhere...*

Assuming any of the agents make it back to London, they are intensively debriefed. There are four broad possible outcomes:

**Full Disruption Success:** Incursion stopped, Walshe alive. Johnson is very happy indeed, as are any of the agents' direct managers. There may be some small cleaning up to do with the Black Chamber, but that's minor next to all the positives. There are mountains of paperwork, but also 1d6% increase in Status.

**Full Diplomatic Success:** Exonomes in this reality, but bargain struck, Walshe alive. This will take a lot of explaining and then some more explaining. The players will likely all have to undergo a battery of tests to make sure they're still who they say they are and are banned from flying for at least a year. The contact artefact gets sent up the chain for analysis, but if it checks out, the PCs will be involved in future diplomatic missions with the Sky Demons. Unless they spin it very badly indeed they'll be told off publicly for making such decisions in the field, but congratulated privately. The paperwork will be even more mountainous than if they'd stopped the excursion, but they'll still gain 1d6% Status.

**Partial Success:** Incursion stopped, Walshe dead. This is a direct failure of the mission parameters. It will be acknowledged that the incursion was avoided, but there'll always be a black mark against the mission report. The mountains of paperwork don't change.

**Partial Failure:** Partial incursion, possession of the cult, but no gate, Walshe dead. This really isn't a good result. Lots of disapproving looks, requirements for long 'Lessons Learned' documents and retraining on a number of basic skills. 1d4% loss of Status.

**Full Failure:** Full incursion, possession of the cult, gate created. An extra-dimensional incursion in Washington DC is a major problem. That, along with some very pointed emails from the Black Chamber in regards to alleged Laundry agents interfering with Chamber operations, do not go down well with Johnson or the players' direct managers. The mountains of paperwork get higher, a full debrief and retraining course is called for and 1d8% Status is lost.



## Handout #1: Personnel Dossier – Jeremy Walshe

## PERSONNEL DOSSIER

**Name:** JEREMY DOUGLAS WALSHE

**DOB:** 3/3/1970

**Country of Origin:** UNITED KINGDOM

**Gender:** Male

**Education:** Durham University (History, BA and MA); St Dunstan's College, Catford.

**Background:** His mother was a university engineering professor, his father a history teacher at St Dunstan's. Walshe was a bright but unremarkable child, given to reading and model airplanes. There was an expectation that he would go on to either build or fly planes professionally, but his less than perfect eyesight barred him from military service and he seemed to have no interest in commercial piloting. He chose to study his second love, history, to Masters Level at Durham. He had started his PhD research and might well have gone on to a career in academia if he hadn't stumbled upon civilian reports relating to FOREST TANGO WILLIAM. Walshe's analytical mind rejected the official news reports and he started down a path which let him towards TANGO DELTA interference in human life. Thankfully the Laundry was tipped off and he was brought in.

**Operational History:** The initial expectation was that he would spend his time in a part of the Records Department, however pure research did not seem to suit and he repeatedly requested some opportunity to travel, while writing very interesting briefing notes on international events, gleaned from a variety of disparate sources. Due to this he was transferred to the Diplomatic Office (Unconventional) and spent time in Whitehall, then Paris and Berlin. He was transferred to Washington DC in 2009 and his record of analysis and non-sorcerous prediction has been excellent. Notably he provided some of the forewarning and analysis for JENNIFER MORGUE.

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**Assessment:** Walshe is one of the best analysts working for the Diplomatic Office (U) at this time. He remains unfazed by anything he has encountered and repeatedly provides excellent information to the team in DC and at the Home Office. He does not possess senior management potential, nor would there be any expectation of field work, but he is likely to continue to excel in his current role.



# THE DARKNESS BEYOND OUR WORLD

## Handout #2: Weekly Washington Report – Jeremy Walshe

**ITEM:** Recent Black Chamber activity around the renovated Reflecting Pool could further bolster theories that the renovation work was not merely necessitated by structural issues. There was some belief that the minor protests and attempts to reach various war memorials on the National Mall during the 2013 US Government Shutdown was manufactured in order to keep a flow of people moving past the Pool. This would lend credence to the theory that a minimum number of visitors are required to feed or power whatever is now in place.

**ITEM:** There is still far too little talk about the Clinton Presidential campaign for 2016. It's possible this is deliberate and mundane, either on the side of the campaign or the media, but there have been suggestions a peace making President might not be what's needed during that period of time.

**ITEM:** We are paying very careful attention to the Tesla Supercharger network around the country. There are multiple possible applications for such a grid, with possible parallels to SCORPION STARE.

**ITEM:** On the subject of Tesla, I continue to keep a close eye on the renovation of the old Tesla laboratory in Shoreham, New York. I can only assume that the Black Chamber have removed all occult items from the lab, but that does not wholly They Call To Me Their Voices From the Darkness eliminate the possibility that there may be something left over.

**ITEM:** Planning work continues for The Sky It Calls To Me the proposed Amazon biome in Seattle. The arrangement of the domes has not yet been finalised, but five of the seven official plans and seven of the eleven unofficial plans, strongly suggest From The Darkness Beyond Our World They Come at least alignment with local areas of note. The Pacific Northwest is a strange enough area at the best of times, it is currently uncertain whether this would anchor it, or make it stranger still.

**ITEM:** There has been increased occult scrutiny of vehicular traffic across the Canadian border as of last week. This may be due either to the rumoured raids on the Chosen of the Moon cult in Wisconsin or the feared spread of Les Enfants de Demain south. It is certain that the core of the Chosen have been killed or imprisoned and if any escaped, it was only new initiates.

**ITEM:** The Black Chamber's operations were demonstrably unaffected by the 2013 Government Shutdown. While this is not surprising it is good to have such things confirmed. What is potentially interesting is that almost all experiments in the National Institute of Health, including the ones whose papers you can't download, also continued.

**ITEM:** Despite repeated questions and news clippings via email, there remains no actual evidence The Wings Touching the Sky than a young star who likes getting attention.





## A Pocket Full of Priapus

Over the past decade alchemist Hakeem Nazef, 'The Algerian', amassed a fortune as the creator of expensive recreational drugs. His best seller is Priapus, a 'magic Viagra' that makes one feel like a Greek god whilst bequeathing an amazing erection.

Allegedly Priapus also has no side-effects. In truth, Priapus lays a 'worm' in the user's subconscious created to form a pan-European 'network' The Algerian calls if the 'Satyr Worm'. This network channels the sexual energy created during the sex act and stores it; the controller of the Worm can then tap that energy for ritual magic.

Recently, Priapus came to the Laundry's attention. Codenamed DONKEY KILLER, the investigation into the mysterious pills was assigned to Harry Hunt. Once Hunt enjoyed a reputation not only as an office stud, but also as an excellent case worker. However, he's started to make a lot of mistakes in the field, and the water cooler chat has it he's in the last chance saloon. Giving him a low-priority task like investigating possible occult connections to the street drug was generally seen as Management giving Hunt a chance to pull himself together.

Since being assigned, Hunt has traced Priapus' origins to Paris. There, he has discovered Priapus is linked to an auction for something called the 'Satyr Worm', and that this auction is being held somewhere called 'Jean-Michel'. Unfortunately he doesn't know where this 'Jean-Michel' is, or who's at the sharp end of the supply chain. His solution? Stake out two people who might know: Priapus dealer Håxan de Vries and his attractive girlfriend, Matilda.

True to form, however, he's decided the best way to get information on de Vries is to extract it from his girlfriend, so he's introduced himself to Matilda. Next thing he knows he's roaring drunk and in bed with her... then there's a bit of a blur. Next thing he knows, he's in the back of a police car, there's a bag of Priapus in evidence (not to mention the, well, clear evidence of Priapus use on his part), and he's under arrest for possession of an illegal substance and attempted sexual assault.

### La Femme Matilda

Hunt's now incarcerated in a police station praying the Laundry can spring him before the police realise there's something funny about the pills they caught him with.

Meanwhile, Matilda has told her boyfriend de Vries about Hunt. Normally that wouldn't be a big deal, but de Vries isn't a normal bloke. Being a dealer of occult designer drugs is just a sideline; in real life he's a DCRI officer (the DCRI being the French counterpart of the Laundry) and a very nasty man. So now he's looking for Hunt with every intention of killing him.

With her boyfriend out of the way, Matilda intends to utilise what she's learnt in pillow talk with the drunken Hunt, and focusing on tracking down The Algerian. In the years she and her boyfriend have been selling Priapus she's become greedy, so she's intends to find Jean-Michel, neutralise The Algerian, steal his little 'Satyr Worm', and then walk into the American Embassy and request a discreet introduction to the Black Chamber so she can sell them the Worm and retire to the States.

### Mission Overview

A Pocket Full of Priapus places the characters in Paris as they try to get Hunt out of jail, bring the Satyr Worm app back to England, and attempt not to get either killed, arrested, or both.

With Hunt having failed to report for two days, his line manager Bridges has called in the player characters, knowing that at least one of them has past history with Hunt (see sidebar **Harry Hunt: The Hero from Yesterday**). Briefing the characters on DONKEY KILLER and Priapus, he then dispatches the characters to Paris, hoping their familiarity with Hunt and his methods will give them a head-start in finding the errant case worker and cracking DONKEY KILLER.

Once in Paris the characters' investigations will lead them to uncover Hunt's dalliance with Matilda; his subsequent arrest and state of incarceration; de Vries' role in the Priapus supply chain and his desire to kill Hunt; Matilda's ambitions; and the existence of The Algerian, the Satyr Worm, and the laboratory at Jean-Michel.

Ultimately the characters should aim to free Hunt and eliminate any evidence of his (and their own) interference in what, ultimately, would be viewed as a domestic affair by the French and the DCRI. They should also secure the Satyr Worm for further investigation and analysis back at New Annexe.



## 1: Hunt is Missing

*Some days at New Annexe aren't so bad, especially when you pull Jezza duty: scrutinising The Jeremy Kyle Show for exnomes, demonic possession, cultists or early Type II manifestations. Not only is it as easy as it sounds, but it's also less dangerous than facing anything ghoulis down the London sewers, right?*

*So imagine your disappointment when you are summoned to Bridges' office. Such a summons usually means one thing: a field assignment.*

*As he sits behind the desk and shuffles papers, he stares at you. "Hunt," he says in a way that makes the name sound like a profanity. "You're familiar with him?"*

Now would be an ideal time to introduce the characters' relationship with Harry Hunt, and for the characters to confirm said relationship. If not, Bridges briefly describes Hunt in less than flattering terms.

*"Six days ago I gave Hunt an assignment called Donkey Killer. The last time I heard from him he was in Paris and was about to meet a contact of his called Larrousse. But now Hunt's missing, so I want you to find him and complete Donkey Killer. The target of the operation is to trace the source of a sexual enhancement drug called Priapus. Analysis shows that the drug's thaumically active; it's basically a knockoff of Viagra mixed with the Wine of Ubbo-Sathla, though we haven't worked out what the purpose of it is, beyond the obvious.*

*"You're booked on the 12:01 from St Pancras. Now go and collect your tickets from Transport and don't miss the bloody train."*

It's now approaching 10:30 hours, so the characters have just over an hour to get kitted up, familiarise themselves with DONKEY KILLER, polish up on their French and get to St Pancras.

## The Priapus Report

The Laundry's lab boffins have put Priapus under the microscope. As Bridges said, it's chemically similar to sildenafil citrate, but it's mixed with other substances, at least one of which is the Wine of Ubbo-Sathla, an alchemical concoction used for opening the human soul to possession. The lab techs' best guess is that the drug's sympathetically entangled with some sort of succubus effect; however they're not sure if it's used as a sex magic enhancer, or if someone's feeding their succubus by leeching off the orgasms of others, or if something else entirely is going on.

Finding the source and checking out what they do to the drug during the manufacturing process is the only way to find out what Priapus really does.

## 2: Arrival in Paris

The Eurostar arrives at Paris' Gare du Nord station at approximately 14:45. Once they reach Paris, the team have a number of avenues available to them:

1. Find and question Larrousse. Bridges has already made it clear he was the last man Hunt reportedly made contact with, so he may be able to offer some clues as to Hunt's present location.



## Harry Hunt: The Hero from Yesterday

Hunt's best years may already be behind him, but for one of the characters, that shouldn't matter...

It is recommended that Hunt stands as some form of friend or mentor to at least one of the team members. Perhaps he has worked with the team in the past in the field? He may share a flirtatious relationship with a member of the team ... or maybe something more serious. It's even possible he's saved at least one of the team's lives in the past.

Of course, there's no reason Hunt's character can't be substituted for an existing NPC with a relationship with the team, or an absent player's character. Whatever the case, it is recommended there be an existing relationship

between Hunt and at least one of the player characters to inject an extra degree of urgency and gravitas into the scenario.

**STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 15 POW 16**  
**DEX 12 CHA 17 EDU 15 SAN 30 HP 13**

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Glock 17 handgun 55%, damage 1d10.

**Artefacts:** Class Two Personal Ward.

**Skills:** Appraise 25%, Bargain 35%, Bureaucracy 30%, Cthulhu Mythos 45%, Etiquette 50%, Fast Talk 60%, Hide 30%, Insight 55%, Knowledge (Espionage) 55%, Knowledge (Occult) 40%, Language (French) 45%, Language (German) 40%, Listen 40%, Persuade 65%, Research 50%, Sense 30%, Sorcery 45%, Spot 40%, Stealth 35%, Talk You into Bed 75%.

2. Call Hunt on his mobile. It rings out (it's in the police station).
3. Check Hunt's credit cards: that leads them to Hunt's hotel room or Chez Raspoutine.
4. File a missing persons report for Hunt. This only brings the team to the attention of the police sooner than they might like as Hunt is currently in Police custody and being less than cooperative, so anybody who contacts the Parisian police and claims to be Hunt's friend is of great interest to said police and invited to the station at rue Bonaparte and detained to assist in the police's enquiries.

## Chez Raspoutine

Larrousse (see **Larrousse: Freelance Fixer**) is Hunt's contact in Paris, and can be found in Chez Raspoutine. Larrousse is a mine of information, and if asked the right questions, provides the first glimpse of the wider picture re: the Satyr Worm and the auction at Jean-Michel. The club is big on Europe's occult swinging scene. It is also developing a seedier reputation amongst the OCCINTEL community.

*Chez Raspoutine always enjoyed a rep amongst the OCCINTEL community as the place to go if you're in Paris and you want to get your rocks off. Recently that reputation has developed a more sinister facet: if you want to swap official secrets or if you want to trade tall stories about scary shit and autonomes under the bed, then Chez Raspoutine is the place for you...*

The club itself is situated on rue de Bassano in Paris' 16th arrondissement (or district), and sticks out like a sore thumb.

*The club's pseudo-Muscovite stylings are at odds with the district's nouveau architecture. Heavy wooden doors are flanked by two abstracted frescoes of unidentified saints, and an imposing turret looms over said entrance. This turret is decorated with the club's motif: the lustful Rasputin glaring at all and sundry with baleful red eyes.*

The club doesn't actually open until 11pm, and is locked up when the characters arrive. Gaining access should prove to be only a minor test of the characters' initiative, however. Banging on the front door, for instance, gains the attention of a French doorman who the team find Easy to either Fast Talk, Bargain or Persuade to let them in. The usual linguistic modifiers apply.

## Larrousse

Once inside the club, the characters aren't so much in the heart of darkness as some sort of red velvet vulva.

*The interior of the club continues the Russian theme with an abundance of imperial eagles and red velvet decor. Crystal chandeliers hang from wooden beams, and light streams through arched stained glass windows. Booths, mirrors and galleries abound.*

*Sadly, that's where the Muscovite exoticism ends. The staff are painfully ordinary and they barely notice you as they clean up last night's detritus.*

Bearing in mind the notes on DONKEY KILLER and the fact the team are here to find Larrousse, asking any member of the club's staff where to find him results in the characters being directed to the bar steward in question.

*Stood behind one of the two bars, he's tall and slender, with jet black, tightly cropped hair and a neat beard. He's cleaning wine glasses as he watches you. He raises an eyebrow and then, with a crooked smile, beckons you toward the bar.*

Should the characters approach Larrousse, he introduces himself and goes on to appraise the characters:

*"So," he says as he narrows his eyes, "you're too badly dressed to be Italians, not confident enough to be Germans and too clumsy to be French." He looks you up and down. "So what are you? Laundry? Section Five?" The timbre of his voice cools and he looks down his nose at you. "The Chamber?"*

There is no point attempting to deceive Larrousse. He knows the occult scene, and has excellent Insight. He's Impossible to Fast Talk or Persuade, and their best course of action is to be up front and Bargain with him to give them the information they require.

## Larrousse: Freelance Fixer

An ex-DCRI officer with over a decade of experience, Larrousse is a former partner of Haxan de Vries. He was discharged two years ago, however, after losing his bottle.

He now makes a comfortable living at Chez Raspoutine, keeping his ear to the ground and arranging discreet and illicit deals and exchanges for the occult and OCCINTEL communities.

**STR** 12   **CON** 10   **SIZ** 10   **INT** 15   **POW** 14  
**DEX** 12   **CHA** 14   **EDU** 14   **SAN** 30   **HP** 10

**Damage Bonus:** None.

**Weapons:** Sig P238 handgun 55%, damage 1d8.

**Artefacts:** Class Two Personal Ward.

**Skills:** Appraise 70%, Bargain 80%, Cthulhu Mythos 15%, Etiquette 70%, Fast Talk 60%, Insight 95%, Knowledge (Espionage) 75%, Knowledge (European Black Market) 70%, Knowledge (Occult) 60%, Knowledge (Paris) 80%, Language (English) 55%, Language (German) 50%, Persuade 55%, Sorcery 55%.

If the GM feels a character has struck up a good enough connection with Larrousse, and slipped him enough euros, the bar steward offers the following:

- Over the last week Larrousse has noticed an increase in what he calls 'Occriminals' frequenting Chez Raspoutine: occult ne'er-do-wells from across the globe, be they terrorists, dealers, rogue agents or whatever. He's unsure as to what to attribute this trend, but the frequently repeated words he's heard are "Satyr Worm".
- If asked about Hunt, Larrousse says that Hunt was in here two night ago with 'de Vries', a known drug dealer (Larrousse is unaware of de Vries' DCRI connection). He can give the players de Vries' number and address – for a price.

And that is as much as the characters get out of Larrousse as he simply doesn't know anything more.

## 3: Where is Hunt?

So, where is Hunt? As usual, in trouble. He's currently being held by the French police.

He slept with de Vries' girlfriend Matilda, and learned enough from her to connect the Priapus drug to The Algerian. She realised that he was going to put an end to her boyfriend's side business, so she decided to get out while she could. She slipped Hunt an overdose of Priapus together with a sleeping pill. He blacked out long enough for her to get him out of the apartment. She then phoned the police and warned them about a strange man wandering in the street outside who was acting aggressively towards any women he saw.

When Hunt came to, he was so high on Priapus that there was only one thing on his mind. Fortunately, the police arrived and arrested him before he could force himself on any unlucky passers-by. Hunt has only fragmented memories of the evening – he remembers going home with Matilda, and waking up in the back of the police car, but little else.

## A Friend in Need...

At an appropriate juncture the GM should choose the character with the closest ties to Hunt. At that point, the said character's phone rings...

*"Just listen, ok? Don't say a word. I'm under arrest in Paris. Police station on rue Bonaparte. Got that? rue Bonaparte? I wish I could get out of here."* He puts an obvious emphasis



## UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

on 'wish' – the character knows that Hunt used that tone of voice to refer to magic (he'd pull out his warrant card and say "*I wish you'd co-operate*" for example). Clearly, he's asking for a magical extraction from the police station.

The call ends abruptly, as if some third party cut it off.

### Diplomatic Methods

If the characters contact Bridges or another superior and ask them to intervene, they're told that the wheels of international diplomacy grind exceedingly slowly, especially as the Laundry hadn't cleared Hunt's mission with the DCRI (the investigation started in the UK and Hunt popped over to Paris without informing Bridges – but that's a conversation to be had with an auditor when Hunt's back on British soil).

Bridges tells the characters to make contact with Hunt in the police station and find out what's going on.

If the players wait for Bridges to get Hunt out, then they're screwed – de Vries will track Hunt to the police station and kill him before Bridges can pull enough strings to get the police to drop charges.

### Le Commissariat

The commissariat on rue Bonaparte is the central police station for Paris' 6th arrondissement.

**The Direct Approach:** Claiming to be friends or family of Hunt gets a polite refusal – Mr Hunt is a person of interest in a recent crime, and visitors are not permitted at this time.

**The Covert Approach:** It is of *Average* difficulty for the team to Fast Talk their way past the staff on the front desk,

*Difficult* to Persuade, and *Impossible* to Bargain. However, this becomes Easy should anybody use a glamour. However, these conversations are conducted entirely in French, and the players should be mindful of the language barrier.

The obvious approach is to pretend to be Hunt's lawyer, or show British diplomatic credentials and claim that Hunt's someone of importance in the British Civil Service. Doing so gets the characters a brief unsupervised interview with Hunt.

**The Stealthy Approach:** Anybody wishing to break into the station has to contend with steel bars on the windows, although the station's alarm system isn't armed as the police aren't expecting anybody to break into their station in broad daylight.

Climbing to the roof grants access to the station's helicopter pad, which is covered by security cameras. The Parisian Prefecture de Police has one helicopter that covers the entire city, and each commissariat has a pad in anticipation of that chopper needing to land. Fortunately, this commissariat's helipad is surplus to requirement today, so there's no one around. The door leading from the helipad and down into the interior of the station is secured by a keycode lock which any character with Technology Use (Electronic Security) can crack.

Inside the commissariat, the security cameras are in use, so characters failing to take the necessary precautions are spotted by officers in the security room within 1d6 rounds.

However, once inside the station, glammers are very effective. By disguising themselves as uniformed police the characters remain unchallenged as they make their way to the Holding Suite. Also, there is a 75% chance that they pass a police officer or civilian worker per corridor who'll be quick to

#### Uniformed Police Officer

STR 13 CON 11 SIZ 14 INT 12 POW 10  
DEX 10 CHA 13 EDU 15 SAN 50 HP 13

**Damage Bonus:** None.

**Weapons:** Baton 40%, damage 1d6+1; Taser 40%, damage 2d6; Sig Sauer Pro SP 2022 handgun 40%, damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Brawl 40%, Bureaucracy 30%, Command 25%, Etiquette 30%, Grapple 40%, Insight 45%, Knowledge (Law) 40%, Knowledge (Paris) 55%, Spot 50%.

#### Armed Response Unit Officer

STR 13 CON 11 SIZ 14 INT 12 POW 10  
DEX 10 CHA 13 EDU 15 SAN 50 HP 13

**Damage Bonus:** None.

**Armour:** Ballistic Vest (4/8 vs. firearms).

**Weapons:** Sig Sauer Pro SP 2022 handgun 50%, damage 1d10; Heckler & Koch MP5 SMG 60%, damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Brawl 40%, Bureaucracy 30%, Command 25%, Etiquette 30%, Grapple 40%, Insight 45%, Knowledge (Law) 40%, Knowledge (Paris) 55%, Strategy 60%.

## A POCKET FULL OF PRIAPUS

stop the characters if they remain undisguised. Should they be stopped (and they're undisguised) they'll find it *Average* to Fast Talk, *Difficult* to Persuade and *Impossible* to Bargain their way out of trouble. Should a member of staff rumble the players, he/she attempts to raise the alarm via radio.

Doors to all rooms are secured by the same style of push button code lock utilised on the door to the helipad, and all have the same code.

On the plus side, the interior of the commissariat is well sign-posted, and the characters can find the Holding Suite with ease.

**Spotting Evidence:** While sneaking around the police station (or by intercepting police radio traffic/hacking into police computers), the characters can also learn the following:

- Hunt was arrested on rue Choron, following an anonymous tip-off from a young woman about a man who was behaving strangely and aggressively.
- A police car was nearby, and they discovered Hunt threatening several passers-by. He was clearly intoxicated and under the effects of chemical substances, and resisted arrest.
- He was found to be possession of 50g of the illegal street drug, 'Priapus'.
- Attempts to find the young woman who called in the tip have failed; until Hunt co-operates with the police inquiry, the suspicion exists that he attacked the young woman after she made the call.

### Interviewing Hunt

Hunt briefly fills the characters in on his mission, and what happened to him:

- He discovered that a dealer named de Vries was involved in Priapus distribution.
- He identified the source of the drug to an alchemist called The Algerian, and was determined to find The Algerian through de Vries.
- He tracked de Vries down via Chez Raspoutine, and met up with de Vries' girlfriend, Matilda.
- He ended up in bed with her at her boyfriend's apartment on rue Choron. He remembers taking something, then

it's all a bit of a blank. He remembered something about 'Jean-Michel', but doesn't know who or what that is.

- Next thing he knows, he's in the back of a police car.

The characters have to get Hunt out of there. He's got a mission to complete – his career in the Laundry is on the line. If he screws this up, they'll transfer him to some dead-end department (literally). He can't sit around in a police cell all night.



#### Jean-Michel

Jean-Michel is a relatively common French name, so it's of little use on its own as a lead. A quick internet search for 'Jean-Michel + metro' will point to the abandoned Metro station, so if the characters search in the right context, they can find it easily. Alternatively, if the players are stuck later in the scenario, prompt them into action by having them spot a reference to the ghost station somewhere. Any resident of Paris with an interest in the occult or history knows stories about Jean-Michel.



## Freeing Hunt

If the players choose to free Hunt from police custody, they'll have to break him out, which opens up a whole can of shan. Having a prisoner vanish alarms not only the police, but also alerts the DCRI and through them, de Vries. It'll also reflect badly on the player characters when they get back to London if the Laundry finds out about it.

Of course, if they do the 'right', ISO 9001-approved thing of walking away from the police station, filing a report with their mission supervisor, and handing Hunt's case over to Legal Affairs, then de Vries finds and kills Hunt long before the Laundry can legally extract him. See **The Talented Monsieur de Vries**, page 60.

## Free at Last

Once the team frees Hunt, he insists on getting out of the district as quickly as possible and, once clear, getting a stiff drink at the first café bar they chance upon. At this juncture, any character with the Insight skill and is Hunt's friend, finds it Easy to see all is not well with Hunt:

*He can't take his eyes off the waitress. Hunt's always been a goer, but at least he was relaxed about it, but now there's something predatory in the way he watches her as she moves about the café. He looks back at you and, seeming to remember where he is, and with whom, he clears his throat and smiles. A semblance of the old, casual Hunt returns, but still he glances at the pretty young girl.*

The characters should deduce that Hunt has, at some point, taken a Priapus pill, and is suffering the effects. He is now obsessed with sex. He is fighting this compulsion, but from this point on Hunt puts any opportunity to indulge in sexual intercourse before his, and the team's, safety or the success of the mission. The GM should play him accordingly.

Hunt urges the characters to follow up on his lead and find The Algerian. In the course of this investigation, have de Vries attack (see **The Talented Monsieur de Vries**, page 60).

Note that Hunt's equipment was confiscated by the police; he doesn't even have his warrant card or his ward.

## 4: De Vries' Apartment

*Rue Choron is in Paris' 9th arrondissement, an upmarket part of town. First floor above a posh café. Lush window boxes. Balcony with a picturesque view of the city. All very swish.*

As part of an apartment block, access to the de Vries' apartment is gained through a communal hallway on the ground floor. The doors, front and rear, are locked by a codelock, which can be hotwired (Technology Use (Electronic Security)), but caution should be exercised as this is a busy apartment block in a popular area, and if the characters are too blasé whilst tampering with the keypad then somebody will call the police. Once inside the apartment block they find the door to de Vries' apartment is also locked by a keypad.

## Unwelcome Mats

Once the characters gain ingress to the apartment there are offensive wards concealed on mats placed in front of the door and each window; the first person to step through suffers 2d6 damage.

## The Apartment

*The apartment is typically modern, with elegant furniture and very little in the way of personal touches like framed pictures and ornaments. And what few there were are now strewn about the apartment and smashed to pieces. Someone's even had a go at ripping the rather large flat screen TV off the living room wall.*

This is the aftermath of the latest row between de Vries and Matilda. They always occur when Matilda meets a new lover (in this case Hunt), has her way with him, and then comes home and tells de Vries. This occasion is no different, with de Vries smashing the apartment up before vowing to kill Hunt. The players, however, may assume that Hunt committed the assault while drugged.

## Occult Traces

A character who makes a successful Sense or Sorcery check (or scans with a Scrying app) notices a few odd things about the apartment:

- It's bang in the middle of a ley line intersection. From the balcony, you can see the spires of several churches line up.
- There's an electricity in the air that's not normal. Emotions seem to linger here, and feel deeper and more passionate. At a guess, someone's running a low-level sympathy field here, probably charged up from an old murder or two committed here in the past. Everything that happens here is significant, magically speaking – running a sympathetic magic spell here would get a very strong signal, but the same field would also block Scrying and occult surveillance from outside. It's a nice little magic hack. Whoever set this up knew their stuff.

## Searching the Apartment

*Whilst all but the most robust ornaments are now broken, most of the picture frames are still intact, though most need the glass replaced. All show a man [de Vries] and a woman [Matilda] together. She is every inch the latter day Marlene Dietrich with a cruel beauty and a crooked smile that matches the potency of her boyfriend's heavy frame and dark, handsome looks.*

If the characters know de Vries and Matilda by name, those names can be inserted into the passage above.

Snooping further into the apartment allows them access to a coffee table with a selection of rather expensive and weighty tomes on the likes of modern artists Die Brücke, Klimt and Rothko; a duo of small but well-stocked bookshelves with a broad range of books dominated by modern art, architecture, photography and a load of Gérard de Villiers' SAS novels; and CDs by jazz artists such as Grappelli, Rendell, and Urtreger. Also there is a bathroom, kitchen, and one bedroom with the usual array of personal effects and fashionable items you'd expect from a professional couple. There's also some expensive camera equipment locked up in a strongbox under the bed that belongs to Matilda.

**Sympathetic Magic:** A quick sympathetic magic spell (either via their Necronomiphone app, or using their own sorcery) gets the caster some rapid-fire visions of recent events in the apartment:

- Hunt and Matilda stumbling into the apartment, drunk and dishevelled. They fall onto the couch together. The psychic trace spikes with the lurid orange-red of unfettered lust, overwhelming the visual elements.
- Flashforward. The words 'Jean-Michel' and 'Satyr Worm' embed themselves in the character's mind like shards of hot glass.
- Flashforward. Matilda and another man, the man from the photographs – de Vries. She's telling him about how Hunt attacked her. She admits bringing him back to the apartment when she was drunk, but when she asked him to leave, he refused. De Vries drinks vodka while listening to her story; he gets more and more furious. At the end, he storms into the bathroom, and emerges a minute later carrying a sports-bag. He rushes out of the apartment; the psychic trace blazes with murderous rage.
- Flashforward, and it's disconcerting – the character is now observing himself, as he's picking up his own psychic trace. It's a recursion trap – he's observing himself observing himself observing himself observing

himself. The PC gets one shot at a Luck roll to break free; if that fails, the character loses 1d6 SAN per round until one of the other PCs realises what's going on and forcibly breaks the psychic link.

The other benefit of sympathetic magic is that the character gets a psychic trace that can be used to follow Matilda or de Vries through Paris. (Note that de Vries may be looking for Hunt, and so closing on the rue Bonaparte police station, or hunting the PCs and closing in on them...)

**On the Counter:** There's a bottle of vodka on the counter, and a half-full glass. A successful Spot check (or a close examination of the vodka) reveals a cloudy sediment at the bottom. Examining that with Chemistry (or tasting it) confirms that it's crushed Priapus.

Harry's friend can confirm that Harry never touched vodka; he hated the stuff. An Idea roll or checking with Larousse suggests it might be de Vries' drink.

## The Trophy Room

The team don't find any electronic devices such as mobiles phones or tablets that could be used to triangulate either de Vries or Matilda's position or allow access to any personal files of information. Their personal files are kept on a cloud and access is gained through an encrypted password which can only be elicited from either de Vries or Matilda.

They do find de Vries' trophy room, hidden behind a false wall in the bathroom; however, the door is protected by a further Level Three offensive ward which deals 2d6 damage to the first person to step through it. The entire trophy room has also been wired so as to be contained within a Level Two offensive ward which not only notifies de Vries that the Trophy Room has been breached, but records an image of the intruders and a record of anything they say whilst inside the apartment.

It is vital the GM make careful notes of any conversations, as de Vries will scrutinise every word when he returns to the apartment later...

Once inside the Trophy Room, the team sees it is just that:

*Each wall is lined with cabinets containing all manner of weirdness. Amongst the clutter you see canopic jars, a Luger with runes carved into the handle, a musical box, an African brass plaque depicting tribesmen worshipping something with tentacles; petrified faeries, and a homunculus head. There are strange eggs of every colour; severed fingers wearing pearlescent rings; and a human ear, the lobe of which is distorted by a flesh tunnel which harbours strange and miasmic lights.*





None of this is above board. All of it has been siphoned off of various sanctioned and non-sanctioned operations over the years, and the DCRI has absolutely no idea this lot even exists, let alone that de Vries has it in his apartment.

## 5: Matilda

So if Matilda didn't tidy the flat up once de Vries left, what did she do?

Whilst not a member of any OCCINTEL agency, Matilda has spent enough time with de Vries, and soaked up enough of his pillow talk and anecdotes to know all about the likes of the Laundry, the European OCCINTEL community... and the Black Chamber. So when she learned the Laundry are onto Priapus, she feared her and de Vries' Priapus gravy train was coming to an end, and decided to utilise what she's learnt from Hunt to find The Algerian, steal whatever this 'Satyr Worm' is... and sell it to the Black Chamber. She drugged Hunt to get rid of him, then sent de Vries off looking for Hunt to take revenge, leaving her free to find the auction site.

### Finding Matilda

There are multiple ways the characters can find Matilda:

**Scrying:** If they've got the psychic trace from the apartment, they can follow her across Paris. The trace is initially very clear, but when she gets close to the location of Jean-Michel station, she ducks into a closed section of the Parisian catacombs. She's not a trained sorcerer, but has picked up enough tricks from de Vries to know that she can lose a psychic trace by passing through an overwhelming thaumic field – the necromantic aura of Paris' storied dead

wipes her clean in a deathly baptism, clearing any low-level Scrying traces from her. It's only a short-term solution, but it means the characters can't follow her all the way to Jean-Michel – at best, they can follow her into the catacombs, then make a Navigate roll to find their way through the tunnels to the Metro station.

**Via Hunt:** Hunt took a lot of Priapus while lusting after Matilda; he's still entangled with her. While on the drug, he can *smell* her and follow her like a bloodhound across the city.

**Via de Vries:** De Vries has Matilda's phone number, and the resources to triangulate it through the mobile phone network. If the characters can convince him to help find his girlfriend, or take him down and grab his phone, they can trace her through him.

## 6: The Talented Monsieur de Vries

For the last few years, de Vries has played a dangerous game. He's a DCRI officer; the French equivalent of the Laundry. Like Hunt, he was assigned to track down the source of the mysterious Priapus drug when it appeared on the Parisian underground. He traced the supply chain back to The Algerian – and realised he could make a fortune selling the drug. He recruited a few other crooked DCRI agents to help cover up his conspiracy. As far as his superiors, and his magical oath of office, are concerned, the investigation into The Algerian is ongoing. With DCRI resources and muscle, he was able to seize control of The Algerian's distribution network and take the lion's share of the money.

The Algerian's less interested in money than in occult power; anyway, he had little choice in the matter. De Vries

would have killed or arrested him if he refused to play ball. De Vries has multiple exit options. If he makes enough cash, he hopes to buy his way out of the DCRI and retire – there was ways to sidestep an oath of office, but they're expensive and perilous. Option B, if it looks like his illegal drug dealing might be exposed, is to complete his DCRI assignment and terminate The Algerian.

## What de Vries Did Next

Having left his flat in a murderous mood, de Vries has spent the evening searching for Matilda's latest lover. He knows it's only a matter of time until one of his extensive array of contacts within the Parisian police and the DCRI coughs up Hunt's location. If the characters haven't released Hunt from jail by 19:00 hours, it's too late. The Préfecture de Police de Paris' forensics department at Place Louis Lepine realise there's something fishy about the pills Hunt was caught with, and call in the DCRI. At that point, one of de Vries' bent DCRI colleagues tips him off and tells him Hunt is being held at rue Bonaparte.

Utilising a Level Two glamour, de Vries, disguised as a more senior DCRI officer, gains access to the station, finds Hunt, and eliminates him. He makes it look like a suicide, by hanging Hunt from a ceiling pipe with a tie. Even a cursory autopsy would show several inconsistencies: for one thing, de Vries has to knock Hunt out first by hitting him with his pistol, but de Vries has leverage with the Parisian *procureur*, the official in charge of ordering post mortems. A quick Entropy Manipulation spell fritzes any security cameras.

De Vries then stops off for a couple of drinks at a jazz club on the way home before going back to his apartment. During this time he attempts to call Matilda on her mobile phone, but she doesn't answer, much to his annoyance.

## De Vries on the Hunt

By pulling Hunt out of rue Bonaparte, they may save him from de Vries in the short term, but place themselves in his firing line. Now, without Hunt being in one fixed position, de Vries is presented with the more challenging task of attempting to find the Englishman as he moves across Paris in the company of the characters. Alternatively, if the characters failed to save Hunt, but de Vries learns of their presence – either from the police station or from the occult surveillance system at de Vries' apartment – then they become his new targets.

### De Vries tracks his prey:

- Through sympathetic magic; he can pick up a trace either at the apartment, or by an item handled by a PC or Hunt at the police station.
- By intercepting police transmissions.
- Through informants on the streets.

## All Guns Blazing

When de Vries finally tracks Hunt/the player characters/ both quarries down, he does a quick assessment of the situation and picks one of the following tactics. Balance de Vries' advantages – his local knowledge, his combat expertise, the benefit of surprise, and his status as a DCRI officer – against his weaknesses. He's desperate to keep a lid on his involvement with The Algerian (or, failing that, get out ahead of the PCs so he can terminate The Algerian before they expose his involvement) and he's not thinking straight thanks to the drugs Matilda slipped into his vodka at the apartment.

### Possible tactics:

- **Warn them off:** If the PCs seem nervous, or if they're unaware of any wrongdoing on de Vries' part, then de Vries can approach them as a DCRI officer, and demand that they get off French turf. He'll send them a report on the ongoing investigation into Priapus at the next Joint Intergovernmental Framework on Cosmological Incursion session. Right now, leave. De Vries acts like a territorial dog; Insight suggests that he's barely containing his fury.
- **Blame Hunt:** Hunt's either in or just broke out of a police cell; de Vries' apartment was smashed up and Hunt threatened his girlfriend. The English officer is clearly unstable; the characters should call off the mission, as the whole thing is blighted by Hunt's incompetence and unprofessional behaviour.
- **Pull rank:** The DCRI started the investigation into Priapus; this is a DCRI operation. In a spirit of international brotherhood, de Vries will permit the Laundry officers to accompany him as he closes in on The Algerian. De Vries then sends the characters into Jean-Michel without any support; he'll rush in and 'save' them by killing The Algerian, getting the credit for saving the day and eliminating the key witness who could tie him to Priapus distribution.
- **Get them arrested:** If the PCs have committed a crime or just acted suspiciously, then de Vries can take a hands-off approach by getting his contacts in the French police to arrest the PCs. Even sticking the PCs in a holding cell for a few hours would give him time to kill Hunt, find Matilda and clean everything up. He could even give the PCs the same treatment he gives Hunt.
- **Hit Squad:** You don't get to be a drug dealing sleazeball without having a bunch of hired gun-toting goons on speed dial. De Vries can whistle up an assassin on a motorcycle to do a drive-by shooting of the PCs, or some thugs to threaten them. In either case, use the stats for The Algerian's guards overleaf.



- **Go For The Kill:** His last option, used only when he's desperate, is to try to take out the PCs himself. De Vries returns to his apartment and tools up with protective magic before trying a direct assault – when he attacks, he'll have a Level Three Defensive Binding (15 points of protection), he'll be invisible, glamoured to be intimidating and packing several nasty offensive wards and runes of destruction about his person.

## 7: Subway

By now all the pieces are in place, and it's time for the final dénouement. Either by following Matilda, interviewing Hunt, or working with de Vries, the characters find their way to the abandoned Metro station of Jean-Michel. If the characters are following Matilda, then she's lurking in the tunnel just shy of the guard post, trying to work out a way to get past The Algerian's goons. She'll happily use the PCs as a distraction and make a break for the Satyr Worm in the alchemy lab.

### The Ghost Station

As one of Paris' many decommissioned Metro stations, it is known as a 'ghost station'; but in this case the colloquialism is very apt. Built in the late 1930s as an extension of Metro line 3, Jean-Michel was abandoned after being accidentally flooded with waters from the Seine. An undisclosed number of workmen were drowned and the station was consequently abandoned.

As a consequence of the mass drowning there remains a high level of thaumic energy in the station and its tunnels. Thus, Jean-Michel, and its sister station Pont de Levallois-Bécon (the terminus of Metro line 3), are famous for being haunted by the ghosts of the workers who drowned when the station flooded. Since then, however, The Algerian has adopted Jean-Michel as his base of operations. Access to the station is gained by slipping away from Pont de Levallois-Bécon by virtue of the abandoned extension of line 3 itself.

Once the characters begin to traverse the tunnel, the effects of the thaumic energy are soon evident:

*The tunnel hasn't been finished. The walls are uneven and sharp, and cast in a stark chiaroscuro by unevenly spaced spot lights. Water drips constantly from the ceiling. The whole place is possessed by an unnatural and piercing cold.*

*Ethereal figures of sodden men in bi-vis jackets and hard hats stalk your peripheral vision, and the forlorn light from the spot lights highlights a network of power cables on the floor that slithers and twitches of its own accord.*

The team can't get a signal, incidentally, so once they're down here, they can't call for back-up.

The abandoned tunnel from Pont de Levallois-Bécon leads to Jean-Michel's central station.

There are five guards monitoring the entrance to the Jean-Michel's main platform, each sporting guns, body armour and personal wards.

### Guards

**STR 14 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 8 POW 11**  
**DEX 10 CHA 9 EDU 10 SAN 30 HP 14**

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Various SMGs 40%, damage 1d10; Various automatic pistols 40%, damage 1d10; Personal ward (Level Two).

**Skills:** Brawl 40%, Dodge 30%, Grapple 40%, Insight 30%, Spot 25%.

Should the characters successfully con, sneak or fight their way past the guards they are free to enter Jean-Michel.

### Where the Magic Happens

The inner sanctum consists of two corridors leading away from the main platform, and four large rooms from which Nazef runs the Priapus manufacturing operation. Another corridor leads to The Algerian's personal quarters, and a fourth leads to a small series of rooms with supplies and gear for his bodyguards. The Algerian is either in his rooms or his lab; whichever one the PCs don't check out first, that's where he is. A successful Idea check notices a lot of heavy-duty wiring and sinister-looking black boxes attached to the ceiling. It looks like some sort of summoning grid; it's currently inactive, like a bunch of snoozing cobras held together with cable ties.

### The Algerian's Rooms

Pinewood panelling decorates the circular walls and arched ceilings. Photographs of a North African family are set into the walls. These vignettes go back generations, from modern pictures of a dapper Nazef on the streets of Paris, to sepia pictures of the Nazef family posing on the docks of Paris when they first arrived in 1946. Further pictures show Nazef visiting the Algerian capital of Algiers and his elderly grandfather, with whom he shares a strong family resemblance. There are no captions or plaques to help identify these people or places.

## The Algerian

A third generation sorcerer and alchemist Nazef hails from a family of immigrants who came to France in the 40s from the French colony of Algeria. Promised equality and recognition as full French citizens by the French government, they were in fact treated as second-class citizens and subjected to scorn and bigotry.

Nazem thus harboured an abiding antagonism toward both what he viewed as the European Imperialist powers, and organised government as a whole. This antagonism inspired him to create the Satyr Worm, and to use the decadence of the European middle classes as a source of power.

Like most idealists, however, realism and pragmatism have ambushed Nazef in his middle-

aged years, and he now feels it's time to let a new generation of angry youngster fight the establishment. Thus he's abandoned his anarchist ideals and just wants one last big score so he can ensure his aging grandfather can see out his remaining years in luxury back in Algeria. He intends to auction the Satyr Worm off in the near future, just as soon as he can safely rid himself of de Vries.

### Playing The Algerian:

He's soft-spoken and pleasant; disarmingly polite.

Control your emotions and use academic language; be a thinker, not a fighter.

Never raise your voice. Never let them get to you. Show them who's master.

Documents here (protected by a Level Three offensive ward that blasts the soul of any trespasser for 2d6 damage and curses them with only being able to speak Sumerian for a year and a day, or until the curse is exorcised) describe two projections. One is the profit from selling Priapus, which took a sharp drop about 18 months ago when de Vries got involved. The other is an estimate of the amount of thaumic energy available to the Satyr Worm, and that's trending up. The graph's erect and positively throbbing with power. Other files have enough evidence to implicate de Vries in the drugs ring.

## The Alchemy Lab

It might be an underground meth lab – stainless steel tanks, glassware, hazmat suits, plastic boxes of little white pills – if it weren't for all the occult symbols etched into the glassware and the stink of horse manure. In the middle of the lab stand a dozen bell jars, each of which contains two little homunculi – tiny humanoid figures, no larger than the span of your hand. They're coupling energetically in a variety of positions, their whole mayfly lives consumed by lust. The faces of the homunculi change from moment to moment, and the characters spot the faces of both Hunt and de Vries among them – the homunculi jars are used as thaumic transformers, intermediaries that step up the sexual energy captured by the Priapus drug and turn it into raw magical power that gets stored in the Satyr Worm.

The homunculi only last a few hours before dying of exhaustion, so The Algerian keeps growing more of the little creatures in the tanks of horse manure off to one side of the lab.

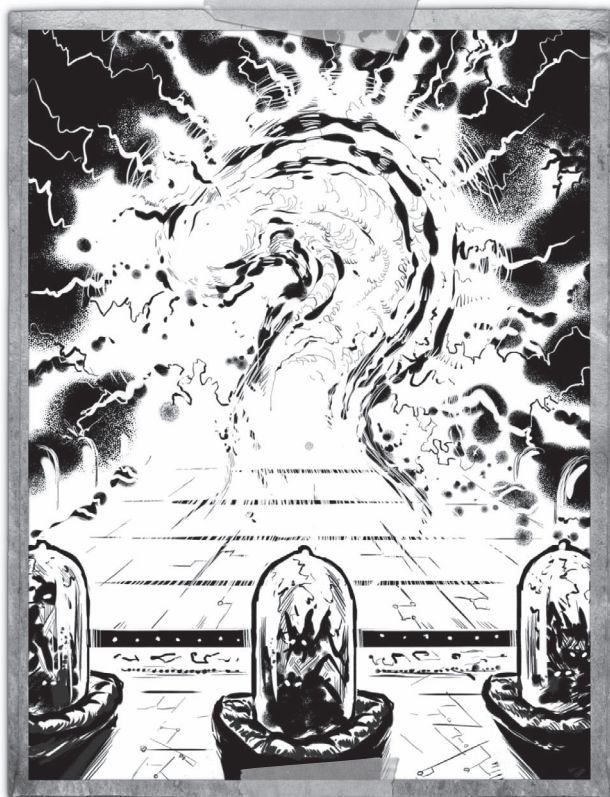
The Worm itself writhes above a summoning grid in the middle of the circle of bell jars. It's almost but not quite invisible; the PCs see it out of the corner of their eyes, but they can feel and taste it as soon as they enter the lab. It's a succubus demon, which means it can't exist under our reality without a human host. The summoning grid keeps the local conditions from snuffing it out, and sympathetic magic in the Priapus drug channels sexual energy to it.

The grid's wired into the mains power, but also has a long-lasting battery backup.

In effect, the Worm's piggybacking on every sex act performed under the influence of the drug, turning them into ritual sex. It's generating a lot of thaumic energy, but it's not doing anything with it. It's just a battery.

**Disabling the Worm:** Turning off the summoning grid will kill the worm, crushing it under the pressure of our reality. However, its death throes will be messy, as it's sympathetically linked to anyone with Priapus in their bloodstreams. As it dies, it'll vent thaumic energy back through them, either killing them or turning them into degenerate beasts. Safely disarming the worm requires a Sorcery or Computational Demonology test to use the homunculi to bleed off excess power from the worm; the strain will burn out the homunculi, but it'll bring the worm down below the magical equivalent of critical mass. Alternatively, a sorcerer could 'ground' the worm, so that its excess energy is vented locally instead of through the sympathetic link – doing so means rolling on the Spell Failure Table (see page 130 of *The Laundry Core Rulebook*) with a +50% bonus.





## Occult Defences

The Algerian has three layers of occult defences:

- **The Ghosts of Jean-Michel:** The Algerian uses the background thaumic resonance of the haunted station as part of the drug manufacturing process (sex and death being intertwined, alchemically speaking). The summoning grids distributed throughout the station allow him to turn up or down the gain on the ghosts. Increasing the resonance level slightly makes the deserted station scarier and creates low-level haunting effects, which he uses to scare off underground explorers or Metro workers. When the PCs show up, he can boost the resonance all the way up, conjuring the ghosts of Jean-Michel.

### The Ghosts of Jean-Michel – a six-pack

Level Two entities

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP	Damage Bonus
9	12	14	12	9	9	13	None
7	8	10	9	6	5	9	None
6	9	12	10	6	7	11	None
7	10	13	11	7	6	12	None
8	11	13	10	8	9	12	None
7	11	12	11	7	7	12	None

**Weapons:** Spectral grasp 40%, damage 1d8. Add any damage inflicted to the ghost's POW, up to a maximum of POW 15. At POW 15, the ghosts can start possessing people.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1d4

The ghosts attack both indiscriminately and at random.

- **The Priapus Drug:** Anyone under the effects of Priapus is linked to the worm, and The Algerian has the backdoor codes. He can increase the intensity of the user's entanglement with the worm. That boosts the user's strength, stamina, aggression and sex drive immensely (increases damage bonus by two steps, give 2d6 extra hit points), while also suppressing high brain functions and judgement. Think werewolves, only with less hair. Prolonged entanglement kills the victim, reducing them to a twitching, snarling mess as their lust takes precedence over things that seem less important, like breathing. Victims need to make Endurance checks (CON x 5%) every round to stay alive.

The Algerian needs to make a Sorcery check to trigger the effect, and can only do it to nearby targets.

- **Turning The Worm:** His last-ditch defence turns the worm into a bomb. By discharging all the power he's gathered using the worm, he can blast everyone currently under the influence of the drug with the same lethal curse as described above. There are thousands of Priapus users in Paris alone; as their faces flicker by in the homunculi, the PCs may recognise senior government figures and other important people. If the PCs force his hand, The Algerian can give up his dreams of selling the worm and just hurt thousands of people instead.

## How They (Might) Go Down

In a scenario about desire, let's recap what everyone wants and how they intend to go about getting it:

**Matilda** wants to steal the Worm and sell it to the Black Chamber. She knows enough about summoning grids to know one when she sees it, but that's about it – if she gets her hands on the grid holding the Worm, the chances of her getting it to the Chamber before the batteries run out are slim, which means the characters may end up chasing her through the catacombs.

Her assets are her gun, the element of surprise and her willingness to take advantage of the problems of others. She can also manipulate de Vries and Hunt; the former's in love with her, the latter's in lust with her, and both men are affected by Priapus, which means they're not thinking clearly in the slightest.

**Hunt** wants to find Matilda. No, The Algerian. He's here for The Algerian. Not Matilda. She's not in his head at all. He doesn't have any gear, unless the players loan him a gun and a warding talisman.

**De Vries** wants to kill Hunt and possess Matilda. When he has moments of lucidity, he also remembers that he needs to either kill the PCs to protect his investment in The Algerian, or else kill The Algerian and hide his involvement in the drug. Either way, he needs to keep the Satyr Worm safe so production of Priapus can continue (he can always find another cook). De Vries has his magic (see below) and can also call in support from any of his associates – he's got the pull to bring in the police, the DCRI or criminal backup, depending on how things look.

**The Algerian** really just wants a quiet life of harvesting sexual energy and building up the worm until he can sell it to the highest bidder. He'd also quite like to kill de Vries if he can do it safely (this is the first time he's encountered de Vries while the officer is on Priapus, giving The Algerian an excellent opportunity to take out his rival/partner). He wants to protect the worm if possible, but he'll sacrifice it to save his own skin if needs be.

The Algerian has lots of assets – his guards, his own magic, but the big two are priapic kill-switches for Hunt and de Vries, and the threat of turning the worm loose. He's not a combat sorcerer though, and doesn't have any defences against a mundane bullet, which may be his undoing.

## Potential screw-ups:

- Hunt screws things up for the PCs by going after Matilda at the worst possible moment.
- De Vries tells the PCs he's a DCRI agent, Hunt IDs him as the main Priapus dealer. Both are true, but do the PCs believe the unstable Hunt.
- They take out The Algerian, but quarrel over who gets the credit. In the confusion, Matilda tries to steal the grid.
- De Vries caps The Algerian, but the summoning grid gets damaged. Unless the PCs repair it, things end badly.

## Häxan de Vries, Deadly Dealer

**STR** 16 **CON** 17 **SIZ** 17 **INT** 16 **POW** 16  
**DEX** 14 **CHA** 13 **EDU** 13 **SAN** 35 **HP** 17

**Damage Bonus:** +1d6

**Weapons:** Sig 226 X-Five handgun 55%, damage 1d10; FN P90 SMG 65%, 2d6+5.

**Armour:** Concealed ballistic vest (Armour 4/8 vs. bullets).

**Artefacts:** Class Two Hand of Glory, Class Three Personal Ward.

**Skills:** Bargain 55%, Brawl 65%, Climb 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 40%, Dodge 40%, Fast Talk 40%, First Aid 30%, Grapple

55%, Hide 40%, Insight 55%, Knowledge (Espionage) 60%, Knowledge (Occult) 60%, Knowledge (Streetwise) 70%, Language (English) 55%, Persuade 70%, Sense 40%, Sorcery 45%, Spot 45%, Stealth 55%, Strategy 30%.

## Hakeem Nazef, Algerian Alchemist

**STR** 10 **CON** 9 **SIZ** 10 **INT** 17 **POW** 15  
**DEX** 12 **CHA** 13 **EDU** 16 **SAN** 50 **HP** 10

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** None

**Skills:** Art (Model Making) 35%, Bargain 40%, Brawl 20%, Computer Use (Design, Magic, Maintenance, Programming, Repair) 70%, Cthulhu Mythos 30%, Dodge 24%, Language (English 50%), Knowledge (Alchemy) 80%, Knowledge (Formula One) 60%, Knowledge (Occult) 40%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 55%, Sorcery 60%.

## Matilda, Femme Fatale

**STR** 8 **CON** 9 **SIZ** 9 **INT** 15 **POW** 12  
**DEX** 9 **CHA** 16 **EDU** 14 **SAN** 60 **HP** 9

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Kahr P380 handgun 30%, damage 1d8.

**Skills:** Art (Photography) 30%, Bargain 80%, Brawl 20%, Cthulhu Mythos 15%, Dodge 25%, Fast Talk 75%, Hide 40%, Insight 40%, Language (English) 55%, Language (French) 65%, Knowledge (Occult) 10%, Knowledge (Criminal Underground) 75%, Persuade 85%, Spot 30%, Stealth 40%, Streetwise 65%.

## How Was It For You?

.....

The PCs' mission was to recover Hunt and find the origin of the Priapus drug. Completing either assignment is worth 1% Status; capturing the Satyr Worm intact is worth another 3%. If Hunt's dead, reduce Status by -1d4%; if the Worm melted down and killed lots of people, drop Status by -1d10% and clear your calendar for all the chats you're going to have with the auditors.

If de Vries survives, he might become a recurring foe for the player characters (or worse, a recurring ally – even if the players have not worked out that he's the Priapus dealer, he'll want to eliminate them to ensure they don't expose him in the future).

If Hunt made it back from Paris, he learns absolutely nothing from his experiences; his friend can expect more calls for help (or bail money) in the dead of night.

Finally, should The Algerian somehow escape in possession of the Worm, he'll auction it off as soon as he can. Stopping that auction may be the PCs' next mission.





## CASE ARSON SPARKLEBONY

*YOU VOLUNTARILY ASSUME THE RISK OF SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH BY ATTENDING THIS EVENT AND RELEASE BURNING MAN FROM ANY CLAIM ARISING FROM THIS RISK. You must bring enough food, water, shelter, and first aid to survive one week in a harsh desert environment. Commercial vending is prohibited, as are all firearms, fireworks, rockets, and other explosives. You agree to read and abide by ALL rules in the Survival Guide and to follow federal, state, and local laws. This is a LEAVE NO TRACE, pack it in, pack it OUT event.*

– Disclaimer, reverse side of Burning Man event ticket

*You see tens of thousands of hippies having a naked drug party in the desert. I see a potential vector for the apocalypse. Hey... hey, PICK THAT BUTT UP. Tabarnak de chien salle. This is an LNT event.*

– Agent Nguyen, CSUIS

### Welcome to the Playa

The annual, week-long Burning Man arts festival in Nevada's Black Rock Desert is the most American holiday since Thanksgiving. Unlike Thanksgiving, though, it makes sense to foreigners – probably because a week of nudity, art installations and heavy drug use has more cross cultural appeal than conducting family spats while gorging on turkey.

The festival-goers, called burners, construct a temporary city with its own street grid, infrastructure, postal code, and body of customs. Then they party their asses off for a week, culminating in the burning of The Man, a 30 metre tall wooden effigy harking back to the old Celtic custom of the wicker man.

During the day, the Playa, the prehistoric alkali dust lake bed on which the festival is held, glares white in 110 degree heat. Daytime Black Rock City looks like a sexy Mad Max film, with dust-caked, half-clad revellers travelling to and fro on all manner of weird conveyance. At night, it becomes a fairyland where bizarrely decorated cars cruise the Playa, and 70,000 drugged-out eccentrics play with lit-up, computationally sophisticated art installations, many of which involve flamethrowers. What could go wrong?

### Mr Gneiss

Mr Gneiss (real name Lucas Honeywell) is a British national, software developer and unwitting (read: hideously dangerous) computational sorcerer. Honeywell left Britain a little over a year ago for a job in Boston, USA.

Honeywell's old UK employer, ConversionPoint, had drawn the Laundry's attention for writing e-commerce algorithms that predicted internet shopper behaviour, raising shoppers'

chances of buying something. Really what the programmers were unwittingly doing was subjecting hapless internet users to a flaky geas that would occasionally devour their minds. Gneiss turned out to be the real genius engineer in the company, not his witless employers, who were now in custody.

Shortly before the Laundry closed in, Honeywell was poached by a tech firm in Boston. He should never have been allowed to leave Britain, but a bureaucratic snafu at the Home Office meant his freedom to travel was never revoked. The loss of Honeywell was an embarrassment, but the Laundry has been biding its time, hoping to snatch him on a visit home rather than attempting an extraction op in Boston, a tech hub that crawls with Black Chamber agents.

### The Mass Geas

Now it's Mr Gneiss's extracurricular activities in the Burning Man scene, not Honeywell's day job, that have drawn attention. He's been blogging for months now about the art installation he'll be doing at Burning Man, and the photos of electronics he's posted look worrying.

They are, of course.

Laundry analysts haven't been able to work this out from the pictures Mr Gneiss has posted, but this project, which he calls the Great AUM, will cast a mass geas triggered by the burning of The Man on the second to last night of the festival. Gneiss's intentions are benevolent; he wants to join the entire festival in an uplifting, unison AUM chant.

Unfortunately, the devices constituting his summoning grid are not robust. Some will malfunction prior to the ritual, creating a trail of clues agents can follow. Others, in the

form of blinking jewellery Mr Gneiss has been handing out, will devour souls during the actual burning of The Man if not deactivated, leaving their wearers insane or possessed. All of this will jeopardise the agents' primary mission of extracting Gneiss/Honeywell and returning him to Britain.

## Mission Overview

CASE ARSON SPARKLEPONY sends agents to the disorienting, drug-addled world of Burning Man, where they must track down and extract a pseudonymously named computational sorcerer before his ritual goes awry, without recourse to many of the tools available in an on-the-grid setting. They must dodge the attentions of the Black Chamber and deal with a potential double-cross by an operative from a nominally friendly agency. If things get really out of hand, a rash of possessions and among the native revellers might result.

Even if they do thwart all or most of the extraction target's magical workings, they'll still have to complete a tricky extraction op on foreign soil.

## Timing and Events

Burning Man takes place over the week leading up to Labor Day (the first Monday in September), the holiday that's come to delineate the end of summer in the United States. Mr Gneiss's spell preparations take place over a series of art happenings during the festival, culminating in a major working near its end. He's not trying to hide (most of) what he's doing, but simply finding him will be difficult given the size and chaos of the festival.

His working consists of three major components:

- Multiple 'totems' arranged around the Playa that look like harmless art installations but contribute to turning the entire area into a giant summoning grid.
- A series of minor rituals which he'll perform at various camps all over the festival over the course of a week.
- A major ritual near the end of the event to activate his summoning grid.

A rough timeline of events follows, although the chronology may be altered by the characters' interference:

- **Day -3 (Fri):** Honeywell arrives on the Playa. He has a special pass to arrive early at the festival to set up his art.

- **Day 1 (Mon):** Festival gates open. Regular ticket holders, including the characters, begin to arrive. Mr Gneiss begins distributing bracelets to festival-goers.
- **Day 2 (Tue):** "Hast Thou Seen the Yellow Sign?" (see **Finding Mr Gneiss** on page 78).
- **Day 3 (Wed):** Possession event at Thunderdome (see **Finding Mr Gneiss**).
- **Day 4 (Thu):** Festival population swells as more revellers pour in for the weekend.
- **Day 5 (Fri):** Mr Gneiss returns to Camp Kaoss (see **Finding Mr Gneiss**).
- **Day 6 (Sat):** The Man burns, activating Gneiss's ritual.
- **Day 7 (Sun):** Last night of the burn. The Temple installation burns tonight.
- **Day 8 (Mon):** Exodus. 70,000 people get in cars and try to leave, all at once.

## 1. Briefing

The characters are summoned to Human Resources, where a perky senior HR officer and a stolid senior ops officer (use the characters' immediate superior if appropriate) wait to brief them.

The HR officer begins, "We've had a candidate for mandatory employment go missing across the pond, and we're going to need a bit of help completing his recruitment. This is Lucas Honeywell". She proffers a dossier. The attached photo is of a man in his early thirties, tanned, with hawkish features and a long, brown pony tail. He's wearing a faded, black t-shirt and sports a thick septum ring.

She continues, "Honeywell was a mid-level software engineer at a firm called ConversionPoint. We had to shut down the entire firm because their core product, a low-level compulsion geas, occasionally misfired and devoured the souls of online shoppers".

The ops officer puts in, "Solid performer in my stock portfolio, too. Damned shame".

The HR officer continues, "We nabbed the principles, debriefed them and wiped their memories, but turns out we oughtn't have bothered. They had no idea about how the geas worked. Lucas Honeywell was the real brains. We require him for debriefing".



The ops officer says, "Border control was supposed to keep all former ConversionPoint employees from leaving the country, but they muffed it. Honeywell took a job offer in Boston. He's been there almost a year. You lot are going to get him back."

## Mission Plan

From here, the characters are briefed on the mission plan.

The Laundry has been keeping an eye on Honeywell ever since he left the UK, but until now, an opportunity to recover him hasn't presented itself. Honeywell lives in Somerville, Massachusetts (just north of Boston) and works as a software engineer in the adjacent city of Cambridge (home to Harvard, MIT and myriad technology firms). The whole area teems with Black Chamber agents and is thus a virtual no-go zone for agents of any other OCCINTEL agency unless they arrive under a white flag with wards down. Similarly, charging Honeywell with a crime and then requesting his extradition was considered but rejected as too attention-drawing. The Laundry doesn't want Honeywell in the icy claws of the Nazgul of the Black Chamber.

But now another opportunity, and possibly the last chance to snatch him, has presented itself. Honeywell has been blogging regularly about the art project he's building for the annual Burning Man festival. Burning Man takes place in a remote, northern Nevada desert – a massively easier theatre of operations than Boston. The plan is for the players to approach Honeywell at Burning Man, where he goes by the moniker 'Mr Gneiss', spirit him off to the temporary airport on the outskirts of the festival, fly him to a major airport, and from there get him on an international flight.

The Canadian CSUIS (Canadian Secret Unconventional Intelligence Service) will be rendering operational aid to the players. Their contact is Agent Nguyen (Playa name 'Batnip') who will be camped at 4 o'clock and D Street.

## Research

The following points of information may be learned using the Research skill.

### ConversionPoint

ConversionPoint was a privately held startup backed by angel investors whom the Laundry has established as having no other occult connections. The company had only existed for about a year and was gearing up for an IPO when the Laundry broke it up.

### Lucas Honeywell

Honeywell's LinkedIn profile shows him as having worked

at a succession of tech startups. Some bombed; others yielded him a nice payout, but nothing that would make him especially wealthy. He has no criminal records or anything in his past suggesting cult connections or previous forays into computational sorcery.

### Mr Gneiss

Honeywell's Playa identity shows up regularly on Burning Man-related social networks, such as the UK Burners Facebook group. He's also an occasional poster on Errowid, a website devoted to discussion of psychedelics.

### Burning Man

A large number of websites cover Burning Man. Players hoping to blend in can learn enough to at least avoid social gaffes by reading up on the festival.

They'll also learn that Mr Gneiss is likely not the only sorcerous threat on the Playa. Any number of other art installations at the festival might have the computational complexity to be dangerous.

Perhaps most importantly, if they trouble to read that far, they'll learn maybe 75% of what they need to know about camping for a week among hippies in a sun-blasted, high-altitude desert. The rest will be trial and error.

Agents with an eye for petty crime may realise that if they're hoping to use illegal drugs to lubricate their investigative inquiries, they'd best locate them in San Francisco and then drive from there to Nevada (a trip of about six hours).

### Black Chamber activity on the Playa

The Laundry's archives, as is often the case regarding the Black Chamber, have nothing to offer here. Given the large number of computationally hazardous art installations at Burning Man, though, it would be surprising if the Chamber were totally absent.

### Canadian CSUIS

Laundry analysts speculate that CSUIS expends much of its resources on investigating and guarding against those things which haunt the vast, untouched wilderness that covers most of the country. If they have an agent at Burning Man, it's probably to keep an eye on their own nationals, a sizeable number of whom will be there; getting naked, taking drugs and hopefully not calling forth the Wendigo by hooking up too many Arduinos to a giant, rideable robot caribou.

CSUIS has a history of being friendly but guarded in its interactions with the Laundry. Cooperation on missions is not uncommon when spheres of interest overlap, but the Canadians have demonstrated little willingness to take part in any operation that would anger their neighbour to the south.

## Leaving the Laundry

The players will receive 30 points to spend on gear, together with a stern admonition to bring it all back, border security be damned (which, in this case, is fairly literal).

They'll also be issued airline tickets from Heathrow to Reno, Nevada (with a stop in San Francisco), tickets to Burning Man, and \$5,000 USD. The latter, if they budget carefully, is just enough to rent a van to get them from Reno to the Playa, and to buy enough water, food, camping gear and sundries like sunscreen to survive.

Their Laundry superiors haven't bothered reading the Burning Man Event Survival Guide, so if the players want additional funds for things like clothes/costumes that blend in or bicycles (the only fast way of getting around the Playa, since cars are limited to idling speeds), they'll probably need to dip into department budgets.

## Across the Pond

Foreign visitors to the United States are photographed and fingerprinted on entry. Body scanners (either millimeter wave radar or backscatter x-ray) are commonplace in US airport security. Other precautions include chemical sniffers to test for explosives, facial recognition run on security camera footage (woe be to any player with a prior in US territory), and scrutiny by profilers who engage anyone suspect in seemingly innocuous banter designed to draw out would-be bombers. All luggage, including checked, is X-rayed.

Entering with anything short of military grade firearms is shockingly easy, however. One merely has to have the right permit from the American ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms). Technically the permit is for hunting weapons, but US law gives a very broad definition of what type of hardware one might need to deploy against wildlife (up to and including semi-automatic civilian versions of assault rifles, which can then be converted to fully automatic with a \$50 USD conversion kit, a few hour's work, and a Repair (Firearms) roll). Ammunition is covered by the same permit.

Players will have more trouble trying to sneak in certain types of occult items. HOGs violate customs regulations on transport of human remains. Personal wards often contain materials that will provoke close inspection to see if they're drugs or explosives, and unusual electronic devices like a SCORPION STARE gun or Tillinghast Resonator may draw scrutiny. Some items of high-tech spy gear, such as Smart Cards, will get players detained and probably deported if they're recognised, while others, like 3-W

Lasers, are perfectly legal as long as one doesn't pull them out and start waving them around in flight.

To further complicate matters, the Black Chamber long ago recognised airports and land border crossings as useful choke points for weeding out occult infiltrators. While they lack the resources to watch every US entry point, they've taken passive measures, such as warding airport immigration and customs areas. Geases beneath Level Four, including those projected by Laundry Warrant Cards, simply do not work in US border control zones. Fortunately, the Laundry knows about this and warns players in advance.

Smart players may think to FedEx themselves certain items. Their Canadian CSUIS contact, Agent Nguyen, can retrieve these deliveries from a safe drop point in Reno, Nevada; they arrive automatically in this case. If players choose to make such arrangements on their own, ask for a Luck roll from the player with the lowest Luck on the team. Failure indicates that the shipment has failed inspection and been confiscated by US authorities. If the shipment included any definitively occult paraphernalia (e.g. a HOG), Black Chamber spooks may, at the GM's discretion, have the players' pickup location staked out.

## 2. Black Rock City, Here We Come

Burning Man takes place on the Playa, a long-dry prehistoric lake bed. The temporary city built for the festival is called Black Rock City (BRC). It's the third largest city in Nevada for the week that it exists.

BRC is shaped like an immense letter 'C' with The Man at its centre, streets radiating outward like spokes, and concentric ring streets connecting the spokes. The innermost, main street is called the Esplanade. The spoke streets are given clock numbers, from 2 o'clock to 10 o'clock. The connecting radial streets start with the Esplanade and then are lettered from A upwards (usually ending around J or K).

The huge swath of land beyond the 'C' (past The Man) is called the Deep Playa. No one camps there, but various art installations are scattered throughout it, and art cars cruise there day and night.

Weather on the Playa can reach temperatures up to 45 degrees Celsius during the day and then drop into singles digits at night. Humidity is extremely low; staving off dehydration requires drinking about 4 litres of water a day. Heat stroke and dehydration are very real dangers, but the GM is advised to simply describe the resulting discomfort unless players were particularly stupid about preparing properly.



## UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

High winds are common, blowing away tents and belongings that aren't tied down, as are white-out dust storms that obscure vision to under a metre (and, incidentally, disrupt laser pentagrams). The dust on the Playa is a fine powder.

Dust storms aren't abrasive like sandstorms, but the dust hangs in the air for hours after the storms stops and makes breathing difficult for people without filter masks. Dust storms are rare at night but can happen with little warning any other time. The GM may decide whether they represent a foil to the players' plans or a convenient cover for an escape. Dust storms impose a -20% circumstance modifier on all rolls that require seeing clearly, prevent accurate use of firearms beyond point blank range, are *Difficult* to Navigate, and are *Impossible* to fly through.

### Burners

A group of British IT nerds are barely noteworthy at a multinational hedonism fest like this. Blending in won't be too much of a challenge, but getting cooperation might be.

Using a Warrant Card on the average burner will be effective, but if players do so in front of observers who aren't later told to forget the situation, rumours may spread that they're narcs of some sort.

### Culture

During this week, an alternative economy prevails in which a culture of gift giving and free-spirited revelry prevails. Status in this community stems not from position, title, or wealth, but from creativity, free gifts and the creation of participatory art.

Or at least, that's the idea.

In practice, the burner subculture is every bit as political as life outside, and gifts are extended with preference to whether the giftee is cool, attractive, or perceived as having status themselves (e.g. because they're known for having created a notable art piece). Friendly, non-creepy players who appear to be down with the whole scene and demonstrate their cute British accents in conversation will probably be showered with offers of back rubs, artisanal kombucha, and various treats incorporating bacon as an ingredient. Players who look and act like they're on furlough from the Basement Troll Protection Plan might merit a perfunctory pity hug.

### Camps

Camps are the basic unit of social organisation at Burning Man. "Where are you camping/who are you camping with?" is a basic conversation starter. Camps range in complexity from small groups with a few tents, a communal kitchen and a sun shelter, up to sprawling affairs with gigantic rave domes, orgy tents, yoga studios and sound stages. Smart PCs will quickly catch on that figuring out who Mr Gneiss camps with will be key to tracking him down, if nothing else so that they can find an item linked to him for purposes of Sympathetic Magic.

### Black Rock Rangers and Emergency Services

Burning Man attempts to self-police. The Rangers are the organisation in charge of this. Rangers are trained as mediators. Their jobs are to defuse disputes and check on





people who look dehydrated, disoriented, or psychotic. In situations that look like violence or harassment is happening, they try to intervene but will call law enforcement if they can't calm things down. In situations where someone is dehydrated, heat exhausted, or having a bad drug experience, they'll try to get the person help.

Emergency Services run medical volunteer stations. They're equipped for dealing with bad stuff the desert can do to one's body, alcohol poisoning, drug overdoses, drug-induced psychosis, and minor injuries (like slicing your ankle open on the peg someone used to tie down their tent). The Black Chamber has a plant, Dr Vowel, among the medical volunteers (see below).

Both Rangers and Emergency Services are good sources of information on strange happenings. If, for example, the players are chasing rumours of people with glowing eyes behaving weirdly, these are the people to ask.

Players may also work out that if they want help from a large, organised force of people who have radios and aren't cops, asking the Rangers is worth a shot. With the right cover story (or a gas), they can have hundreds of Rangers on the lookout for Mr Gneiss's bracelets (see below).

## Gate and Perimeter

When the players enter the festival, the gate volunteers will take their tickets, give them hugs, and encourage them to jump on the ground and make snow angels in the Playa dust. They'll also search the players' vehicle if they're in something big like an RV. They'll be checking to make sure there are no stowaways coming in without tickets, but if the players are dumb enough to have firearms out in the open, they'll be turned away.

Perimeter volunteers keep people from sneaking into the festival. They have fast vehicles, night vision goggles, thermographic imagers and radar watching the edge of the festival, making it virtually impossible to sneak in without a ticket.

All of this hardware is plugged into a central command centre, and the volunteer watching the feeds is most likely something boring like an accountant in the real world, meaning that watching a radar screen for intruders sneaking in to Burning Man is the most exciting and engaging thing they do all year.

Because the terrain is completely flat, providing zero cover from all this detection gear, players who want to sneak in will have to resort to sorcerous means to evade them.

## Burner Argot

**Camp:** the basic unit of social organisation. "Who are you camping with?" is a common question to ask strangers upon introductions.

**DPW:** Department of Public Works. Surly, Carhartt-wearing, whiskey-swilling, hyper-competent volunteers who build and maintain festival infrastructure (contrast to sparkleponies, who are pretty much the opposite).

**Gifting:** the giving of gifts to strangers, be it food, massages, or controlled substances.

**LEO:** law enforcement officer.

**LNT:** Leave No Trace, the ethos of leaving no MOOP on the Playa.

**MOOP:** Matter Out Of Place. Litter, excrement, used dish water, stray boa feathers, cigarette butts - anything burners are responsible for picking up and not leaving laying around.

**Playa name:** pseudonyms adopted by burners for easier identification (e.g. Mr Gneiss, Batnip, etc.).

**Sparkleponey:** a pretty, scantily clad, MDMA-popping burner, stereotypically but not necessarily young and female; derogatory, as it implies one whose sole contribution to the festival is being eye candy.

## Law Enforcement

Players who try to cooperate with local law enforcement may or may not find useful allies, depending upon whether they can fashion a good cover story.

Warrant cards will work on rank and file officers, provided the players don't give them too much time to think about why they're knuckling under to British spooks. But using one on the ranking officer of any of the agencies below will have unintended consequences, as they've been geased to report telltale signs of occult activity (people with glowing eyes, foreign nationals drawing summoning circles, and the like) to the Black Chamber.

If this happens, the officer will begin to take damage as the Level Three obedience gas put on them by the Black Chamber fights against that put on them by the Laundry agent. If neither party is around to remove their gas, the



officer will probably be torn apart by the geas, and the Chamber will soon be hunting for whoever is casting spells on their informants.

**Cops** at Burning Man usually respond to three things: violence, overt drug use, or driving motor vehicles that aren't authorised as art cars. Anything else with an engine is allowed to drive only on the access road, and then to drive to where the owner is camping. Players hoping to extract Lucas Honeywell by tearing away in a car will almost certainly be pursued.

The **Bureau of Land Management Rangers** administer the federal land on which the event is held. BLM Rangers are usually mounted in big, marked, police SUVs.

**Nevada Department of Public Safety** is the state of Nevada's investigative bureau. Most of the undercover agents looking for drugs are from this agency.

**Pershing County Sheriff's Departments** is in charge of general public safety. Some officers are undercover. Others are mounted in SUVs or on ATVs.

All American police are armed. Nevada law enforcement also does a stand-up job of conforming to physical stereotypes of American cops. Aviator sunglasses abound, as do moustaches that look as if they took flight from a seventies porn film before eventually alighting on the wearer's upper lip.

### 3. The Black Chamber and Friends

Burning Man is a busy time for the Chamber. Partly this is for the usual occult security reasons. Partly it's so that the Chamber can scout for new talent. And partly it's because 70,000 people in various altered states are the largest concentration of high, drunk, and/or stoned people in the world. They're perfect for quietly testing various post-NIGHTMARE GREEN psychic management strategies.

Assuming the characters made it onto US soil without being tagged, there are still multiple vectors for them to run into the Black Chamber. They might:

- Get spotted by a sparklepony.
- Cause a disturbance that attracts Agent Finer.
- Get injured (or cause injuries), requiring treatment from Doctor Vowel.
- Trip a thaumic sensor.
- Run into the authorities, who then inform the Chamber.
- Bump into the Chamber while investigating supernatural activity.

### Agent Finer ('Gander')

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Actually a Level Three entity in a meat blanket, Agent Finer is a walking case study on why the Black Chamber's methods set the Laundry and every other occult intelligence agency's teeth on edge.

Finer looks like a very fit, fortyish burner in a black cowboy hat, dusty dungarees and combat boots; he blends in easily with the crowd here. However, he carries a satchel with several dangerous magical devices and the tattoos peeking out from his t-shirt are part of a powerful geas keeping him bound to this body. Players interacting with him notice the tattoos with a Spot roll. On a success, they'll realise they're magical; on a special success, they'll realise the ink is part of a geas.

When he has to interact directly with burners, Agent Finer introduces himself as Gander. His cold, piercing gaze and stilted diction make most people want to stay the hell away from him, which is fine. Finer's job is to be the final authority on which perpetrators of demonological mishaps merely have their gear confiscated and their memories wiped – and which get bundled off to Maryland for a job offer, unspeakable torture, or both.

Luckily, Finer isn't here to track down Mr Gneiss, at least, not initially. There's enough other activity going on at Burning Man that this occult bloodhound has his/its hands/pseudopods full sniffing out VJs whose music visualisers might accidentally eat someone's brains. But if Finer picks up Mr Gneiss's scent, the PCs are in for some serious jurisdictional conflict.

### Agent Finer ('Gander'), the Black Chamber's Man on the Playa

**STR** 10 **CON** 14 **SIZ** 12 **INT** 16 **POW** 18  
**DEX** 14 **CHA** 10 **EDU** 18 **SAN** \* **HP** 13

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** Glock 17 (with regular ammunition and Banishment Rounds) 70%, damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Brawl 40%, Bureaucracy 70%, Computer Use (Magic) 85%, Cthulhu Mythos 60%, Dodge 60%, Etiquette 60%, Firearm (Pistol) 70%, Grapple 40%, Insight 40%, Knowledge (Espionage) 50%, Knowledge (Group: Burners) 40%, Knowledge (Occult) 60%, Listen 40%, Persuade 70%, Research 60%, Sorcery 80%, Spot 60%, Status (Black Chamber) 70%, Strategy 40%.

**Artefacts:** Black Chamber ID (equivalent to Laundry Warrant Card), Concealed Ballistic Vest, Bullet Ward (Class 3), Necronomiphone, Personal Ward (Class 3), Thaumometer.

**Spells\*\*:** Banishing (Level 3), Truth Geas, Silence Geas, Sympathetic Magic (Level 2)

\*Much like the Laundry's own James Angleton, Finer is immune to most forms of Sanity loss and uses Etiquette as a proxy for Sanity. It is unlikely that his Etiquette will take a big enough hit to break his stride during this scenario, but should it do so, the awful effects thereof are left to the GM's twisted imagination.

\*\*Finer's spells are all loaded on laptops and smartphones in his possession. He has multiple phones and laptops in reserve in case he loses one or needs more processing power.

## Camp Gander

Agent Finer's base of operations is a nondescript RV parked at 3 o'clock and F Streets.

Outside the RV is a generator, a 500 gallon tank for watering the sparkleponies, and several drums of petrol for the Slagwagon.

The doors and windows are protected by Level Three Offensive Wards that paralyse intruders and alert Finer to the intrusion attempt. Inside are espionage-grade comm gear, MREs and several laptops and smartphones loaded with the spells noted in Finer's statistics below. Also is a coffin-sized disposal unit that can reduce worn-out agent sparkleponies or other meaty refuse to slurry and store them in a tank for later disposal (Leave No Trace!); a weapons locker containing enough guns for a platoon of agent sparkleponies; and a bolted-down interrogation chair with heavy restraints. If the Black Chamber finds Lucas Honeywell before the players, he'll be held here pending transfer, guarded by a pair of agent sparkleponies.

There's also a small cabinet containing computational sorcery devices: mirrors, lasers, conductive ink pens, and the like. None of it is unidentifiable, but everything is top of the line and new. Apparently the Black Chamber doesn't suffer from the same budgetary constipation as the Laundry.

## Agent Sparkleponies

These minions of the Black Chamber are nearly identical, cloned sparkleponies. Some are stationed near promising/threatening art installations, while others roam free. A few of them always crew the Slagwagon (see below). There are dozens of them on the Playa.

Agent sparkleponies are uniformly young, fit, scantily clad (if at all), and appear to be tripping balls (possession is like that if the person in question is so pretty that one can ignore the drool). Most (75%) are female. Variations in hair, makeup, accessories, and the like, help obscure the fact that

they look freakishly similar. The majority are house bound Level Two entities, although a few are remotely operated by agents in a bunker in Utah.

The ones housing Level Two entities are tattooed with Binding geases to prevent unauthorised bodyhopping and equipped with Level One Glamours to keep their eyes from glowing. Close examination of an agent sparklepony's tattoos followed by a Sorcery or Science (thaumaturgy) roll reveals their nature.

Agent sparkleponies are drawn to thaumic energy like furry-booted moths and will report back what they see to Agent Finer. Even the naked ones carry some type of bag with water, a dust mask, sunscreen, and a small radio with which they can report in.

The entities controlling them aren't much for conversation and will evade attempts to question them by acting like they're on ecstasy. Making inane conversation about how the music is really deep, bringing up astrology, or expressing a desire to hug/cuddle/snog is the extent of their social capabilities. The few that are remote controlled are sent in when communication beyond the level of drug-addled smalltalk is required.

Sparkleponies don't camp anywhere, as they never sleep. The Black Chamber used to pump them full of nutrient pap once a day but discovered that this was unnecessary, as being young, attractive, and mostly naked meant that the locals were constantly feeding them. However, water is scarcer, so they can occasionally be observed returning to Camp Gander (see above) to re-fill their bottles from the water tank there.

If Agent Finer needs extra muscle and doesn't want to use the local cops, he'll arm the sparkleponies with silenced pistols.

## Agent Sparkleponies, Pretty Vapid Clones

(remote control and possessed variants)

STR 12 CON 14 SIZ 10 INT 12 POW 12  
DEX 16 CHA 16 EDU 10 SAN n/a HP 12

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** Glock 17 50%, damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Dodge 60%, Grapple 40%, Spot Hidden 30%, Spot Thaumic Energy 60%, Stealth 50%, and one of the following: Perform (Dancing) 65%, Perform (Fire Spinning) 65%, Perform (Pole Dancing) 65%.

**Artefacts:** Level 1 Glamour.

**Spot Thaumic Energy:** Agent sparkleponies have the equivalent of a POW 13 Level 1 Scrying spell active at all times, meaning they can detect thaumic emanations from a



distance of 12 metres. However to do so, they must succeed at a Spot Thaumic Energy roll.

## Doctor Vowel

Vowel (his Playa name, not his real one) poses as a medical volunteer, where his job is to get 'psychotic' cases spirited away by geased paramedics. A few possession cases each year are not unusual for Burning Man in recent years. Debriefing the possession survivor (if they're very lucky) or the possessing entity (if they're not) is standard operating procedure.

Doctor Vowel is a small, affable, cherubic man with neat dread locks who wears a flat-billed cap with a Bassnectar logo on it and a Black Rock City Emergency Services t-shirt under his lab coat. He's the only fully human Black Chamber agent on the Playa.

Vowel always works night shifts in the medical tent, as this is when the majority of possession events occur. Other doctors on the medical volunteer staff don't question his freakish stamina or preference of shifts, as it means they get to take the night off and do drugs themselves, instead of spending it dealing with people who've taken too many. They may certainly remark on it in conversation, though.

If possession victims from Mr Gneiss's bracelets end up here (or any other possession victims), Vowel is either the doctor on duty or finds out about it from someone else. He then signs an order to have them transferred to an area hospital, then uses geased paramedics cloaked by an Entropy spell to instead have them transferred to Camp Gander. There they are debriefed by Agent Finer, who interrogates the possessing entity, banishes it, interrogates the human victim/remains, and then geases them to forget the whole thing.

If the victim was still wearing a Mr Gneiss bracelet, Agent Finer then has a Sympathetic Magic link that can be used to find both Lucas Honeywell and other bracelet wearers. Once this happens, Doctor Vowel and all agent sparkleponies are on the lookout for Mr Gneiss, the bracelets, and anyone taking an interest in them.

If Azathoth helps them, a player falls into Vowel's clutches, they're in deep shit. If they're identified as Laundry agents (via a Truth Geas, or because they have a Warrant Card among their effects), Agent Finer won't bother interrogating them himself. The Chamber will have operatives en route to disappear the player within the hour. At this point, the mission is most likely a wash and the consequences the remaining players will face if they return home without their captured teammate are not pretty.

Dr. Vowel has a small camp stocked with water, MREs, and a meticulously organised cache of distinctly non-recreational sedatives and tranquilisers. His camp is not far from the medical tent, at 6 o'clock and F Street.

## Dr. Vowel, Possessee Spotter

**STR** 10 **CON** 12 **SIZ** 10 **INT** 15 **POW** 12  
**DEX** 10 **CHA** 11 **EDU** 17 **SAN** 60 **HP** 11

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** None

**Skills:** Cthulhu Mythos 30%, Dodge 20%, Fast Talk 70%, First Aid 60%, Grapple 50%, Insight 35%, Look Innocent 70%, Medicine 80%.

**Artefacts:** Level 2 Personal Ward, hypodermic needles, radio, sedatives.

## The Slagwagon

The Slagwagon is a matte black '65 Bonneville hearse equipped with leather interior, a 400 cu in V8 engine, flamethrowers, and baleful red lighting that makes it look like it drove straight off the 666th layer of the Abyss.



Attached to the top of the car is the shell of a smaller automobile, covered in weird metal arches, pointy spires, and small gargoyles in the style of a gothic cathedral. A tungsten carbide plate bolted to the dash is inscribed with

the geas that keeps the Level Two entity possessing the car from going amok and turning every hippie it encounters into crispy roadmeat.

The Slagwagon serves as backup and sometimes transportation for the agent sparkleponies. It can hold a dozen of them, but most of the time there are just a few inside pretending to drive it. Its engine is big enough that it can outrun just about anything on the Playa (including police vehicles), and what it can't outrun, it can ram. For extra speed, it can also blow the bolts attaching its upper, sculptural portion; the entity inside isn't too concerned about the harm that might result to any sparkleponies riding in its upper cabin.

Despite these advantages, given half a chance, the entity inside wouldn't hesitate to jump someone's brains and trade speed and mass for opposable thumbs. If anyone is stupid enough to break its bindings, that's exactly what it will do.

The Slagwagon is not a subtle beast, so Agent Finer will only use it as a secret weapon.

## The Slagwagon, Demon Possessed Art Car

**STR** 50 **CON** 25 **SIZ** 65 **INT** 10 **POW** 12  
**DEX** 14 **CHA** n/a **EDU** n/a **SAN** n/a **HP** 45

**Damage Bonus:** +2d6

**Weapons:** Ram 60%, damage 4d6.

**Armour:** 4 points against bullets and melee weapons (explosives and anti-vehicle weapons ignore armour); 8 points for characters riding inside.

**Skills:** Dodge 30%, Drive 70%, Terrifying Engine Rev 80%, Spot Hidden 50%.

## 4. O Canada, We Stand on Guard Against GREEN

Canada's CSUIS always has at least one pair of boots on the ground at Burning Man. It would be embarrassing if one of the Canadian contingents at the festival accidentally called up something they couldn't put down south of the border. The Canadians have offered the Laundry cooperation of their agent in locating Mr Gneiss, but she's playing a double game.

### Agent Nguyen ('Batnip')

Nguyen is part of a faction in CSUIS who are fanatical backers of Le Plan d'Atténuation des Risques Existentielle Canada (The Canada Existential Risk Mitigation Plan, or CERMP). This is Canada's plan to evacuate its citizens to the 'Hollow Earth' (a vast cave system/dimensional

discontinuity – they're not sure which) as a refuge against NIGHTMARE GREEN.

Nguyen's faction wants the mass geas technology for Canada: because you try getting millions of civilians to evacuate to a hole in the ground hundreds of miles from civilization some time! CSUIS is willing to create an incident with the Laundry to get it, but they're far less willing to piss off their scary neighbours to the South. So Nguyen's plan is to set the Chamber and the Laundry against each other – and then make off with Honeywell herself.

With her black denim, dusty bandana, utility belt of survival gear, and jaded scenester attitude, Nguyen (Playa name 'Batnip') blends in flawlessly at Burning Man. Any Laundry agent who spends more than five minutes talking to her and makes a successful Insight roll, though, will notice a weird intensity about her. Like them, this woman has seen some shit.

Nguyen's transport around the Playa is a supercharged '78 Datsun U620 covered in fake ocelot fur, with a rack for her bike in back, and a rack of moose antlers on the hood. It seats five with room for two more in the bed, has a pretty sweet sound system with night time party lighting, and sports Level Two wards against spells and bullets. A heavy steel locker hidden under the back seats holds mission gear, some of which she's willing to loan out to Laundry agents who had trouble in customs. It holds a HOG, five Glocks with ammo, a shotgun, a smart card, two 3-W lasers, 2 locator bugs, an ounce of marijuana, 100 pills of ecstasy, 20 hits of LSD, a high-end laptop, and two spare Samsung Galaxy phones loaded with all of the spell apps listed in her stats below. The locker is protected by a Level Three Offensive Ward. In no case will she let the players examine the contents, citing her own operational security regulations if they press.

Nguyen has a small camp at 4 o'clock and D Street, including a sun shelter, tent, food, sundry supplies and water. Other than a Level Two Offensive Ward protecting her tent, she keeps everything magical or incriminating in her truck.

Finding 'Batnip', as her neighbours know her, is easy for the first few days of the event. She's camped a block away from her main source of worry, a giant robot caribou built by a bunch of British Columbians who have yet to correlate their robot's constant breakdowns with Nguyen's visits to their camp. If the players ask around, they'll find her quickly.

Nguyen has been briefed on the players' mission and will be extremely helpful, happily loaning them supplies or gear. After all, she wants them to find Honeywell. She won't let them know she's got locator bugs or a HOG, however.



She exchanges phone numbers and radio frequencies with the player characters. She won't follow them everywhere (she has that robot caribou to sabotage), but she'll definitely be keeping a close eye on them. If she can plant locator bugs on the PCs without getting caught, she does so. If she has a chance, she also pilfers some of their effects so that she can later run Sympathetic Magic spells.

Nguyen looks for opportune moments to set the Black Chamber on the players' heels so that she can make off with Honeywell herself. If she's present at any scene where delay would result in the Chamber getting one step closer to the players, she tries to make it happen. Dirty tricks she might employ here range from prolonging inspection of an incident scene to give the agent sparkleponies longer to close in, to planting drugs on players when it might result in them being detained by LEOs.

### Agent Monique Nguyen ('Batnip'), Undercover Hipster

**STR** 10 **CON** 15 **SIZ** 9 **INT** 12 **POW** 12  
**DEX** 15 **CHA** 13 **EDU** 14 **SAN** 60 **HP** 12

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** Glock 17 60%, damage 1d10.

**Skills:** Brawl 60%, Bureaucracy 30%, Climb 50%, Computer Use (Magic) 25%, Disguise 60%, Dodge 50%, Drive 70%, Fast Talk 80%, Hide 60%, Insight 50%, Language (English) 55%, Language (French) 80%, Language (Vietnamese) 25%, Listen 40%, Persuade 60%, Repair (Mechanical) 40%, Sleight of Hand 70%, Spot 60%, Stealth 70%.

**Artefacts:** Level 1 Bullet Ward, CSUIS ID Card (equivalent to Laundry Warrant Card), Level 2 Personal Ward, HOG, Locator Bugs.

**Spell Apps (on phone):** Level 1 Scrying, Level 1 Sympathetic Magic.

**Spell Apps (on laptop):** Level 2 Banishment.

## 5. That Sure is a Gneiss Summoning Grid

Lucas Honeywell's magical working consists of three components: eight giant, metal lotus flowers forming an octagon around Black Rock City; a summoning circle in The Man itself; and dozens of blinking bracelets that Mr Gneiss has handed out as gifts.

The setup is hazardously novel in that it bypasses physical obstructions by using RFID signals in addition to the usual lasers and conductive writing. Incorporating electromagnetic signals into a summoning grid is still in the realm of theory, excepting a few disastrous experiments back in the sixties.

Ambitious players should realise there's a potential status boost in bringing back some of Honeywell's equipment in working condition – or at least denying it to the Black Chamber.

### The AUM Lotuses

The lotuses are one component in Honeywell's summoning grid. They're steel sculptures of lotus flowers rising on 4 metre-tall metal stems. During the day, the flowers are closed. At night they open, and both blossoms and stems course with animated LED lights. They're clearly designed to have their best effect if one is on a lot of LSD.

There are eight of the lotuses arranged at regular intervals in a circle 1 km in radius with The Man at its centre. Three stand in the Deep Playa; the other five are at the edge of the Esplanade (the main street at the inner edge of the 'C').

The heads of the lotuses contain arrays of lasers and mirrors, lined up with the arrays in the other flowers so as to form a giant octagon of laser light. They also point to the centre, The Man, where Honeywell has set up the hub of his summoning grid. Being a giant hippie, he conceptualises the whole thing as a Wheel of Dharma, rather than a dangerously experimental demon summoning apparatus.

The lotuses are easy to spot, and sabotaging them is simply a matter of misaligning their lasers. However, Honeywell, if he hasn't been collared by then, will spend the afternoon before The Man burns recalibrating them, which will undo any sabotage attempt.

The lotuses appear in Honeywell's blog, but only as CAD drawings and unassembled parts. There were no photos of the finished products. A player who looked at his blog and sees one can recognise it with a successful Idea roll.

As far as their purpose in the actual ritual, analysing them with a successful Computer Use (Magic) roll suggests that they're to form an outer protective perimeter for whatever's to happen inside the circle

### Lovely Gifts

If only it were as simple as eliminating all of the lotuses. Unfortunately, Mr Gneiss, in the Burning Man tradition of gifting to strangers, has distributed about 100 cute, blinking bracelets that he lovingly hand-soldered over the last year. They form part of the summoning grid in their own right. Unfortunately, Mr Gneiss didn't realise how dangerous they could be. They're prone to malfunctions and can devour souls spontaneously if, for example, they get wet and short out.

From Monday onward, Honeywell hands out thirty of the bracelets each day. Thirty is a sufficient number to form his summoning grid; everything after that is gravy.

Photos of the bracelets were shown in Honeywell's blog. A player who looked at his blog and sees one can recognise it with a successful Idea roll.

Any time a bracelet is damaged, there's a chance it activates and attempts to run its bit of Honeywell's spell. Absent the protection afforded by the AUM Lotuses, there's a 25% chance that this results in the wearer being possessed by a Level Two entity. If they're lucky, and this doesn't happen, they simply pass out for 5 minutes and wake up with a bad headache.

If a player disassembles a bracelet and analyses it with Computer Use (Magic), they can work out that it generates an effect comparable to a Gate spell; albeit a very unsafe one.

Once players connect the bracelets with Honeywell, they might try staking out a heavy traffic area like the Esplanade or Center Camp to look for more. This will be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Allow characters doing this a 1% cumulative chance per hour spent of having a chance to make a Spot roll (and let them know these odds). If they can get LEOs or the Rangers looking for the things too, the chance goes up to 10% per hour, massively upping the odds of finding one.

Everyone wearing a bracelet had some type of interaction with Mr Gneiss, but all of them (except for the people at Camp Kaoss below) are people he just met. Nonetheless, the emotional significance of the exchange is enough to make the bracelets' workable foci for Sympathetic Magic.

If players try this, it's recommended that 70% of the time the bracelet point to Mr Gneiss, and 30% it point back to the person to whom he gave it. GMs may wish to adjust this chance to control pacing. If the Chamber gets one, give them a 50/50 chance of finding Honeywell with it.

## Possessed Bracelet Wearers, Vicious Level Two Entity Hosts

STR 15 CON 16 SIZ 12 INT 12 POW 12  
DEX 12 CHA 9 EDU 2 SAN - HP 14

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Grapple, Bite 1d4+1d4.

**Skills:** Bite 60%, Dodge 40%, Grapple 60%, Rave & Slaver 70%.

**Artefacts:** incidental, from host body.

## Sparklepocalypse

Mr Gneiss's main ritual will run on the penultimate night of the festival, about an hour before The Man burns – automatically, if the players or the Chamber have already collared him but didn't disarm the components.

Gneiss's pièce de résistance is a heat-activated summoning circle, the focal point of his summoning grid, which he drew at the top of the platform on which The Man stands, between its feet. The Man builders thought it was kind of cool looking and so have left it undisturbed. There is an observation platform under The Man's feet, but a volunteer, sometimes accompanied by an LEO, always guards the ladder up to the top where the summoning circle is.

The glyphs are drawn in an unbroken line of conductive ink. A simple battery pack with a heat sensor will activate the





circle when The Man starts to burn. A solar-charged wireless router handles communication with the bracelets. Any player with Computer Use (magic) or Sorcery training will recognise it immediately if they get close enough to see it.

If the summoning circle is not disrupted within a few minutes of The Man starting to burn, everyone on the Playa will participate in a spiritually uplifting AUM chant, compelled by the mass geas – except anyone wearing a Mr Gneiss bracelet.

The lucky bracelet wearers briefly become radiant loci of spiritual energy for the brief time of the AUM, bathed in light and love. But about 1 in 4 will have their brains devoured, after which they'll be possessed by one of the swirl of Class Two entities attracted by the ritual. Ironically, the AUM Lotuses make the grid more stable, affording some protection to the bracelet wearers. If the Lotuses haven't been sabotaged or removed, only 1 in 10 will be possessed. Players who have decided to go the extra mile and protect the bracelet wearers realise this on a successful Science (thaumaturgy) roll.

## 6. Finding Mr Gneiss

Enquiring with the locals will point to several people (and a dog) named Mr Nice – none of whom are Honeywell. If the players follow up on one of these leads, the events described will happen immediately. If they don't, each event will happen at a set time (given in **Timing and Events**, page 67) whether or not the players are present. Both LEO's and burner volunteers (such as the Rangers, DPW, and Perimeter people) have radios that can be used to listen for unusual events. Both systems however are encrypted, so simply knowing the frequencies isn't enough to eavesdrop. A character with the right tools could disassemble a 'borrowed' radio using Repair (Electrical), identify the encryption key using Computer Use (Maintenance) and Science (Cryptography), and build a decryption unit with Repair (Electrical). This takes about two day's work – or the players can just steal radios from the burners, who, unlike the police, won't bother locking a radio that goes missing out of their network.

### LEOs: Typical Police Officer

**STR** 13 **CON** 12 **SIZ** 14 **INT** 10 **POW** 11  
**DEX** 12 **CHA** 11 **EDU** 12 **SAN** 55 **HP** 15

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Glock 17 50%, damage 1d10; Taser 40%, damage Stun.

**Skills:** Fast Talk 40%, First Aid 40%, Grapple 60%, Insight 40%, Spot Hidden 30%.

### Mr Nice #1: "Hast Thou Seen the Yellow Sign?"

The characters learn from one of their informants that someone known as Mr Nice, loosely matching Honeywell's description, is aboard the Yellow Manse, a three story Victorian house mounted on an old bus chassis that wends its way slowly around the deep Playa at night.

When the players find it (it's the only mobile Victorian house here), they'll see a fanciful, wheeled, yellow house, very dimly lit, stopped far from any other vehicle. Flying from the widow's walk at the top and painted on the door posts is the Yellow Sign. Oddly, there's nothing else near it. Cyclists avoid it, and unlike most of the party buses roaming the Deep Playa, no revellers are trying to board it.

Players without personal wards will feel a strong aversion to the place but can approach it on a successful POW x 3 roll. Anyone with a ward can walk right up to it.

The Level One aversion geas keeping revellers away was cast by Havalissa, the spirit of a prehistoric shaman who's recently possessed a woman whose Mr Gneiss bracelet malfunctioned. When the players approach, she's drugged the Yellow Manse's cargo of revellers and is preparing to eat one of them in order to get caught up on the last eon of history.

The ground floor of the Manse has a piloting cab at the front, a wallpapered hallway in the middle (where the front door is located), and an engine room at the rear. The second storey has a sitting room and dining room, and the top floor is a drawing room. Stairs connect all three floors and the widow's walk above. The décor inside is haute steampunk, heavy on wall-mounted bric-a-brac. The place is long but narrow relative to a real house and would probably tip over if it made a sudden turn going more than 10 mph.

The bottom floor is deserted. On the second floor, tea spiked with a potion Havalissa whipped up has left about a dozen people, most of them in steampunk evening wear, sprawled about in a dreamy stupor.

On the top floor, Havalissa has bound a young man to a chair and will be in the process of cutting through his skull to get at his brains. The players come up the stairs just in time to see her remove it with a flourish and a wet sucking sound. Sanity Loss for this scene is 1/1d6.

The whole room has been set up to cast a Level Three Obedience geas, and Havalissa will immediately command any who enter to lay down on the floor and not move. The young man in the chair has an excruciated look on his face;

he's been commanded not to move or speak while she opens his head. Players can avoid this by simply not coming up the stairs. If she manages to capture the whole group in this way, she'll eat all of them.

Havalissa is still wearing the Mr Gneiss bracelet.

Every 5 minutes the PCs spend investigating here, there is a cumulative 10% chance that an agent sparklepony notices the magic being used here and reports back to Agent Finer.

**Havalissa, Antediluvian DANUBE CROSSING Sorceress in a Monkey Suit**  
**STR 10 CON 14 SIZ 10 INT 16 POW 18**  
**DEX 12 CHA 14 EDU 10 SAN 90 HP 12**

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** None

**Skills:** Dodge 30%, Fast Talk 50%, Persuasion 70%, Sorcery 90%.

**Spells:** Defensive Ward Level 2, Obedience Geas Level 3.

## Mr Nice #2: Two Boffer Enter, One Boffer Leave

If the players don't follow this lead, the events described below will happen on Friday night, whether or not they're present. If the players aren't there, they may learn about it from a befriended LEO or Ranger, or by listening in on either of those groups' radio traffic.

Doom Guild, possibly the most antisocial crew on the Playa, host a ritualised Mad Max boffer combat arena in a 30 metre diameter geodesic dome, complete with gothed-out ring girls and howling spectators roosting on the dome's outer surface.

Players looking for Mr Gneiss may pick up by asking around that he can be found here most nights during the bouts. However, the Mr Nice who's at the Doom Guild dome is actually a pit bull smuggled in by one of the Doom Guild members. Dogs aren't officially allowed at Burning Man, but the Doom Guild combat dome is such a spectacle that Mr Nice's owner, a tribal goth named Deke, gets away with it.

Persistent players can find Deke and his dog in the Doom Guild camp next to the combat dome. While they're trying to decide whether the dog is guilty of dangerous sorcery, the bouts are in full swing.

The rules are simple: two combatants are given boffer swords with which they smack the shit out of each other until someone yields or the refs declare a victor. Unfortunately, one of the combatants tonight is wearing a Mr Gneiss bracelet,

and forgets to take it off before entering the combat dome with her boyfriend. Shortly after the players arrive, she takes a hit to the wrist that shorts it out, causing a Class Two entity to possess her.

The PCs will hear an inhuman shriek followed by dismayed noises from the crowd. Those who react quickly will arrive in time to see the possessed combatant, in a clinch with her boyfriend that ends when she bites off his ear (more tears, actually) and spits it into the air.



In the ensuing scuffle, a few big guys try to restrain her and are bitten or decked for their trouble. Then everyone clears back while she crouches menacingly in the centre of the circle. If the players don't themselves intervene, cops will show up quickly, taser her, and take her off to the medical tent. From there, Dr. Vowel will have her signed over for 'hospitalisation', which will actually involve a trip to Camp Gander. If this happens, Agent Finer will waste no time in using Sympathetic Magic on the bracelet, which will lead him to Honeywell.

Players who know what to look for will notice the bracelet on her wrist with a successful Spot Hidden roll. If they can stay with the victim long enough to perform an exorcism and wait for her to recover, she'll relate that she got the bracelet from a man she didn't know matching Honeywell's description.



## The Real Mr Gneiss: Camp Kaoss

While all of this goes on, the real Mr Gneiss hasn't been back to his camp site at Camp Kaoss, a group of Boston campers, for several days. Polite enquiries with his camp mates reveal that they've no clue to his location. His tent is neat and well stocked with food, water, party clothes, and electronics tools. A box truck parked nearby contains welding equipment and digging tools he used to set up the larger pieces of the installation. There are also half a dozen broken bracelets that he never handed out (they're non-functional and harmless).

Honeywell hasn't been back to camp because on the first night after finishing his project, he met a woman (Playa name Nilly; real name unknown) who dug his giant lotuses. They've spend the last several days on a tabbouleh-fuelled sex, drugs and booze bender, crashing wherever they were when they were tired, snogging wherever the mood takes them, and generally not giving a damn.

Barring Sympathetic Magic, once the players have had the above two encounters, Honeywell will stumble back to

camp with Nilly in tow to get some fresh underwear and announce their impending engagement to his camp mates.

It will be one HELL of a downer when the players catch up with him.

## Lucas Honeywell, Clueless Sorcerer

**STR** 14 **CON** 10 **SIZ** 10 **INT** 17 **POW** 14  
**DEX** 10 **CHA** 13 **EDU** 20 **SAN** 60 **HP** 12

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** length of rebar 30%, damage 1d6+1d4.

**Skills:** Academics (Mathematics) 70%, Computer Use (Magic) 35%, Computer Use (Programming) 85%, Dodge 25%, Fast Talk 40%, Giving Hugs 75%, Persuade 60%, Repair (Electronics) 80%.

## 7. Playa Random Encounter Table

To give an idea of the weirdness of Burning Man, GMs may wish to occasionally roll on the table below to introduce some local colour:

d100	Result
01-10	Spherebots. A swarm of 5 rolling, spherical robots, 1 metre in diameter, roll up to the players. Speakers inside play samples of Marvin the Martian quotes ("Activate the Illudium Pu-36 Space Modulator!") while rolling in circles around the players. One of them then says, "I'm a beautiful woman!" in a breathless voice, after which the whole swarm rolls away and disappears around a corner.
11-20	Flaming Helmet Guy. A shirtless man in a steel helmet with a propane tank strapped to his back walks by. As he passes the players, there's a puffing noise, and a gout of flames ignite from a nozzle atop his helmet before going out.
21-30	Beer Drop! Someone on the roof of a nearby bar yells, "[Something] drop!" (successful Listen roll to make out that the first word is "beer") and throws an object that arcs into the air. Players with PTSD probably think they're about to be grenaded, but instead a can of Pabst Blue Ribbon floats down on a little parachute. It's American pisswater, but at least it's ice cold.
31-40	BDSM Stilt Lady. A woman in a dominatrix outfit on 3 metre high stilts offers to whip one of the players.
41-50	Zombie Flash Mob. A pack of people dressed as zombies appears. Some of the participants are wearing UV-reactive eye makeup, which could lead to misunderstandings if the encounter happens at night.
51-60	Bacon Cookies. The players are offered chocolate chip cookies with pieces of bacon in them. They may or may not contain other substances.
61-70	Flaming Tandem Bicycle. A woman zooms past on a tandem bicycle. Attached to the back seat, seemingly pedalling along with her, is a wire automaton wrapped in brightly burning wick fabric.
71-80	Monkey Chant. Deep chanting alternating with caterwauls of "chak-chak-chak!" thunder from a huge, nearby tent. Players trained in sorcery might briefly suspect an attempt at traditional sorcery. Instead, the tent is packed to the walls with hundreds of burners performing a Balinese monkey chant.
81-90	Hexapod. A giant, six-legged robot stomps by. The driver is naked, painted silver, and wearing a mitre.
91-00	The Slagwagon. A pair of sparkleponies, perhaps accompanied by unwitting revellers, cruise past in the Slagwagon. If any of the players are actively emitting thaumic energy, and they spot it, they'll stop to investigate.

## Burners

Almost all conflicts with burners can be resolved by flashing a warrant card, but a few characters representative of different volunteer corps are provided.

Emergency Services volunteers are often paramedics, nurses or doctors in the real world (First Aid and Medicine skills from 40% to 90%). Rangers may have above average (60% or better) skills in Fast Talk, Persuasion, and Insight. Gate and perimeter volunteers should have above average Spot skills (60% or better, with substantial bonuses to perimeter volunteers for all of the hardware at their disposal).

### Coldwell, foul-mouthed, chain smoking Gate volunteer

STR 11 CON 14 SIZ 9 INT 16 POW 12  
DEX 9 CHA 13 EDU 19 SAN 60 HP 11

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** Heavy Tool 30%, damage 1d6.

**Skills:** Academics (17th century epistolary literature) 80%, Dodge 40%, Invective 70%, Insight 55%, Spot 60%, Teach 60%.

### John from New Brunswick, firm but friendly perimeter volunteer

STR 15 CON 14 SIZ 16 INT 12 POW 13  
DEX 10 CHA 12 EDU 12 SAN 65 HP 15

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Heavy Tool 30%, damage 1d6.

**Skills:** Dodge 30%, Mycoculture 65%, Heavy Machine (Construction equipment) 70%, Insight 30%, Spot 75%.

### Doctor Hermes, gregarious Emergency Services volunteer

STR 12 CON 9 SIZ 11 INT 17 POW 14  
DEX 14 CHA 14 EDU 20 SAN 70 HP 10

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** Heavy Tool 30%, damage 1d6.

**Skills:** Academics (Psychedelic Substances) 80%, Bureaucracy 50%, Dodge 35%, Medicine 80%, Science (Chemistry) 60%.

### Ranger Schnitzel, Black Rock Ranger

STR 13 CON 11 SIZ 13 INT 14 POW 10  
DEX 11 CHA 11 EDU 15 SAN 50 HP 12

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** Heavy Tool 30%, damage 1d6.

**Skills:** Computer Use (LAMP Web Site Development) 70%, Dodge 25%, Fast Talk 40%, Insight 55%, Persuade 60%.

## 8. Extraction

The Laundry's plan for extraction is pretty straightforward. Burning Man has its own airport, located just beyond the perimeter. CSUIS has a plane ready to go once the package is in hand.

Geas Mr Gneiss to cooperate, fly him to the larger airport in nearby Reno, and get him on a flight out of the US using a combination of warrant cards and the falsely identifying but otherwise 100% legitimate British passport for Gneiss provided by a semi-repentant Passport Office.

Nguyen has a Canadian passport for Gneiss, of course, and if she hasn't tipped her hand yet will follow the PCs to the very end, only betraying them when they're on a plane off the Playa.

There are quite a few ways extraction by air could go wrong though, in which case the PCs have a few other options, including escaping by Mad Max-style art cars or the more prosaic option of laying low until the festival ends and then trying to blend into the mass exodus of departing burners. In any scenario, the Black Chamber should be steps behind them, and with Nguyen sticking close to them looking for the right opportunity (or using sympathetic magic to track them if they've given her the brush off).

### Black Rock City Airport

The airport includes a lit airstrip, temporary control tower, and a camp (the only one beyond the main perimeter fence). If the players have a pilot among them, that player is in charge of flying the plane. If not, the pilot is a Canadian



## UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

CSUIS agent who's camped out at the airport (but isn't in on Nguyen's scheme – and may not be sure whom to side with in case of a double cross).

Either way, the plane is a DHC-6 Twin Otter, a fairly common civilian turboprop plane popular with bush pilots. CSUIS issued a DHC-6 for the mission because it's nondescript but well suited to the harsh environment. It's also fairly slow, making it unlikely to shake off pursuers, but makes up for this with aftermarket Level Two bullet wards and long range tankage sufficient to reach any US West Coast city, Vancouver, or Tijuana (about 1,500 km – 1,800 if the players jettison gear, seats, and/or Canadians).

Because the Playa is in a flat, high-altitude desert surrounded by mountains, weather is unpredictable. Planes must be tied down against the wind, so taking off requires 5-10 minutes of prep time. High winds, which can come on suddenly, mean that Pilot (propeller plane) rolls are *Average* most of the time (and *Impossible* during dust storms).

### Aftermath

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If the players get Lucas Honeywell off US soil in one piece, he'll be extensively debriefed and then given a job. This will

most likely land him in R&D, unless the GM has other plans for him. Depending upon how he was treated, it's entirely possible he'll become a thorn in the players' side politically. He lacks the ruthlessness to be really dangerous, but he didn't want to return to England and will at minimum act the baleful sad sack in any subsequent encounters with the players.

**Status:** Returning successfully with Honeywell increases the players' status by 1d3%, or 1d4% if they return with working examples of his equipment.

If the characters manage to capture working Black Chamber equipment, such as one of Mr Gneiss's laptops; if they capture Havalissa; or if they bring back substantial information about CSUIS's CERMP plan (either by capturing Agent Nguyen or by extensively debriefing her), increase status gain to 2d4%.

If they lose Honeywell to either the Canadians or the Black Chamber, or if any Laundry agents are captured, decrease status by 1d4%, or 2d4% if both happen. If Honeywell dies but the agents otherwise return unscathed, no Status changes.

**Sanity:** No changes.





## The Scramble for Buranda

Buranda (formerly British Equatorial Africa) is referred to in international diplomatic circles as the 'North Korea of Africa', only with few nukes and a less camp leader. The country (located in a conveniently vague place somewhere north-east of Ghana) sealed its borders in 1974 following a coup. Since then, as far as anyone knows, the mountainous little nation has had little contact with the outside.

They're half right.

Buranda has plenty of contact with things from Outside.

### A Brief History of Buranda

See also **Handout #1, Factbook Briefing.**

The country was initially colonised by the Germans, then it became part of the English Equatorial Protectorate in the 1890s. Missionaries and preachers wrote about the unseemly and unpleasant nature of the native religion, and violently suppressed the Burandan witch-doctors. The best known of these preachers was a fire-and-brimstone madman called Providence Baxter, who broke the power of the Cult of the Bloody Tongue.

Buranda's relative inaccessibility and troublesome natives meant it was propelled towards independence with unseemly haste in the 1950s, becoming an independent member of the Commonwealth in 1951. The last governor of Buranda was Sir Alan Whitsun.

In 1974, a cabal of communist-based generals overthrew the fragile government and closed the borders "for the duration of the emergency". They launched bloody pogroms against minority groups, then fell to infighting. General Samuel Umtali emerged as the country's dictator; his son Charles is now the 'great leader'. Charles Umtali relaxed his father's thirty-year policy of isolation in 2006, allowing limited trade with the outside world – mainly with China. Buranda's mountains contain sizeable deposits of valuable minerals, including coltan and uranium, and Umtali bargained away the mining rights in exchange for infrastructure – new roads, a new airport and a telephone network, all built by Chinese corporations.

Most of Buranda is still undeveloped. Medical care, telecommunications and clean water are virtually unknown outside the capital city; famine and disease are common. Despite this, Umtali bans western aid agencies from operating inside Burandan borders. A band of rebels, the People's Army, continues to fight against Umtali's regime with limited success.

### The Cult of the Bloody Tongue

See also **Handout #2, ORDEAL LEOPARD GREEN.**

Secretly, Umtali is a devotee of the secret state religion of Buranda, the Cult of the Bloody Tongue. British purges in the 1890s destroyed most of the cult, including the secrets of the cult's most powerful relic, the Blade of the Thirsty One.





## UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

The cult managed to hide the dagger, but no longer remember how to activate it. Umtali intends to crack the code and become an avatar of the entity codenamed GIZA DISORDER by the Laundry, and ‘fuck! Nyarlathotep!’ to everyone else.

Part of Umtali’s deal with the Chinese included the provision of a Dawning 5000c Dragon Core supercomputer, plus the software expertise needed to model the geometries of the dagger’s alien blade. So far, he’s managed to hide his plans from the Nameless Bureau, the sinister Chinese OCCINTEL group. However, the Black Chamber believes the Bureau are trying to acquire Bloody Tongue relics; unable to penetrate Umtali’s government, they’re now backing the rebels.

The Laundry don’t know anything about this. Yet.

**Charles Umtali:** A quick Research test digs up the basics: educated in France, degree in Economics, hugely charismatic. Since becoming leader of Buranda, he’s continued most of his father’s policies of isolation, but started rebuilding Buranda’s infrastructure and technology through foreign investment. He’s got at least a dozen children through multiple wives, and splits his time between his palace in the capital and his country estate. As far as African dictators go, he’s considered to be a rational actor and has shown no interest in starting trouble outside Buranda’s borders. Inside the country, though, he’s run numerous purges and ethnic cleansing campaigns.

The player characters only interact with Umtali in person during the final scene (see **The Mountain of Light**, page 97), but he can show up via teleconference earlier. Play him as an alpha male, a predator. He’s stronger, smarter and better than you are, and he knows it. For him, rebuilding the Cult of the Bloody Tongue isn’t an act of worship; it’s a tool to cement his authority over Buranda.

**Cult Assets:** As Good Leader of Buranda and head of the resurgent cult, Umtali’s got control of:

- The armed forces (around 10,000 guys with AK47s, and a few dozen battered jeeps that don’t have fuel half the time).
- The secret police.
- Around 20,000 cultists.

### Charles Umtali, the Good Leader

**STR 17 CON 17 SIZ 17 INT 16 POW 17**  
**DEX 12 CHA 17 EDU 18 SAN 20 HP 17**

**Damage Bonus:** +1d6

**Weapons:** Pistol 1d10.

**Artefacts:** Talisman of the Bloody Tongue (Level Three Ward), Bulletproof Vest (8 points vs. firearms).

**Skills:** Bureaucracy 70%, Brawl 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 30%, Dodge 50%, Etiquette 40%, Intimidating Charisma 80%, Favoured Son of the Bloody Tongue 80%.

### Burandan Secret Police Officer

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

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Assault Rifle 2d6+2 or Nightstick 1d6+1+damage bonus.

**Skills:** Brawl 50%, Grapple 60%, Insight 50%, Listen 40%, ‘Persuade’ 70%, Spot 60%.

### Burandan Soldier

**STR 13 CON 13 SIZ 13 INT 11 POW 11**  
**DEX 11 CHA 11 EDU 10 SAN 55 HP 13**

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Assault Rifle 2d6+2.

**Skills:** Athletics 60%, Brawl 50%, Command 30%, Fear Jungle 70%.

The cult worships but does not control the surviving Sasabonsam – they leave human sacrifices tied to poles out in the jungle for the Sasabonsam to devour.

**The Sasabonsam:** Local legend speaks of the Sasabonsam, monstrous ogres who dwell in the trees and eat human flesh. These tales stem from the cult’s use of conjured servitors, bound into human bodies. Since the destruction of the old cult, the remaining worshippers are unable to control the Sasabonsam, but they placate them with offerings.

A Sasabonsam looks roughly humanoid, with withered dark grey skin that glows under moonlight. Bizarre ferrous growths sprout from their jaws; an old Sasabonsam has a mouth like a scrapyard, with spiky iron teeth poking out of the macerated ruin of its torn cheeks. They have prehensile feet and live in the trees, leaping from branch to branch with inhuman strength.

SASABONSAM		
Characteristic	Rolls	Averages
STR	4d6+6	20-21
CON	3d6	10-11
SIZ	2d6+6	13
INT	2d6	7
POW	3d6	10-11
DEX	4d6	14
CHA	2d6	7

**Move:** 8/6 Climbing **HP:** 12

**Average Damage Bonus:** +1d6

**Armour:** 2 points; 8 points in a head-on attack.

**Weapons:** Claw 50%, damage 1d4+damage bonus; Grab 50%, damage none; Bite 100%, only after grab, damage 2d6+damage bonus, ignores armour and defensive bindings.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1d6 to see the Irontooth Men.

## The People's Army (Army of Dead Men)

These guys are the Burandan resistance, fighting initially against the communist takeover in the 70s, then against Umtali's regime. They've got a bad reputation – stories about torture, child abuse banditry and other nastiness hang around them like a bloody shroud. In recent years, wild tales about dead men fighting alongside the living have entered circulation (ever since the Black Chamber got involved).

The People's Army's (PA) leader, an old guerilla called Ofala, was ousted by the coup in '74. Back then he was just a young army officer; now he's old and hard. He's almost as much of a bastard as Umtali, and a lot less polite. The PA's assets consist of around 3,000 fighting men. They're backed by the United States, so they've recently acquired better weapons than the opposition.

### Ofala

**STR** 8 **CON** 8 **SIZ** 14 **INT** 16 **POW** 16  
**DEX** 10 **CHA** 16 **EDU** 15 **SAN** 40 **HP** 11

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Pistol 1d10

**Skills:** Command 60%, Diplomatic Hardball 75%, Strategy 70%, Complain About The Old Days 75%.

### People's Soldiers

**STR** 10 **CON** 11 **SIZ** 12 **INT** 11 **POW** 12  
**DEX** 11 **CHA** 11 **EDU** 11 **SAN** 60 **HP** 11

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Assault Rifle 40% 2d6+4; Grenade 30% 2d6.

**Skills:** Athletics 50%, Brawl 40%, Navigate Jungle 60%, Sneak Through Jungle 60%, Look Nervously At 'Allies' 70%.

## The Nameless Bureau

Like the Laundry, the Nameless Bureau must answer to the interests of its home nation. The Chinese have a billion citizens to protect – a billion minds to be consumed when the Great Old Ones return. They need to prepare, and for that, they need data. They know how dangerous the Blade of the Thirsty One can be, but they believe that studying the weapon is vital to the security of the People's Republic.

As per their agreement with Umtali, they've created a model of the Blade using a laser scanner and a computer. The ritual to activate the Blade can be mapped into a mathematical model of the weapon's topography, giving the Nameless Bureau insight into the sort of entities that are going to munch on Earth in a few years. They're not stupid – they've no intention of giving Umtali the secrets of the weapon.

**HTE Telecoms:** A front company for the Nameless Bureau, HTE provides infrastructure and telecom development in developing countries.

**The Compound:** All the Chinese workers (and the Nameless Bureau's on-site team) live in a newly-built walled compound in the heart of Buranda city. It's guarded by armed troops, and is effectively a self-contained village. Few of the workers ever leave the compound except when installing new equipment or overseeing construction.

In the middle of the compound is the Forbidden Villa, where the Nameless Bureau team are based. The villa's protected by lamia and other magical defences as well as armed troops (see page 97 for notes on breaking into the villa).

### Assets:

- 300 foreign workers in the compound; they're clueless about the Nameless Bureau.
- 30-strong security team, armed with SMGs, pistols and nightvision goggles with built-in Tillinghast capabilities.
- 4 lamia-type guards bound to the Forbidden Villa.

### Nameless Bureau Security

**STR** 12 **CON** 14 **SIZ** 11 **INT** 15 **POW** 14  
**DEX** 14 **CHA** 11 **EDU** 17 **SAN** 50 **HP** 12

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** SMG 60% 1d10

**Artefacts:** Bulletproof Vest (absorbs 8 points of damage), Tillinghast Goggles, Class Two Ward.

**Skills:** Athletics 40%, Brawl 60%, Defend the Compound 65%, Security Patrol 50%, Spot 60%, Strategy 50%.

### Lamia

**STR** 17 **CON** 12 **SIZ** 10 **INT** 7 **POW** 15  
**DEX** 16 **CHA** 10 **HP** 10

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** Claw 60%, damage 1d8+damage bonus; Acid Spit 50%, damage 1d6.

**Armour:** Non-magical weapons do minimum damage to the Lamia.

**Skills:** Act Like A Receptionist 70%, Kill Intruders 80%.

**Spells:** Lure (Level 2 Geas, target must beat the Lamia in a POW vs. POW contest or be drawn to her), Glamour (Level 2).



**Dr Zuang:** Head of the local Nameless Bureau section, Zuang's a computational demonologist at heart, not a manager and certainly not a general. If it were up to him, he'd be on the first flight back to Beijing, but he can't leave. Duty keeps him here as surely as his loyalty geas. He believes that the safety of China – of all humanity – depends on learning ways to stop the coming of the Old Ones during CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. The rites of the Thirsty Blade may give vital clues about how exonomies break through into our continuum.

Zuang knows that Umtali and his inner circle are all cultists. He seems himself as a doctor working in a plague ward, studying the dying in the hopes of finding a vaccine. He justifies his experiments by telling himself they are for the greater good.

## Dr Zuang

**STR** 10 **CON** 11 **SIZ** 11 **INT** 17 **POW** 15  
**DEX** 10 **CHA** 12 **EDU** 20 **SAN** 50 **HP** 11

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** None

**Artefacts:** Level Three Ward, Space-Folding Talisman (Casts Level Three Gate).

**Skills:** Computer Use (programming) 90%, Computer Use (magic) 75%, Cthulhu Mythos 40%, Etiquette 50%, Insight 60%, Justify Actions To Self 50%, Science (mathematics) 75%, Sorcery 70%.

## The Black Chamber

In the game of international occult espionage, the Black Chamber's at the top of the leaderboard, the eye of the pyramid. That means, of course, that they're looking over their shoulder more than anyone else.

The Chamber knows that HTE is a front for the Nameless Bureau, and believes that the Bureau is working to summon the God of the Bloody Tongue. Obviously, this cannot be allowed – another instance/aspect of that entity is a BC asset, and they don't want any other groups with access to the exome. Unable to infiltrate Buranda itself, they turned to the PA rebels. They're providing the rebels with money, guns, and remote-piloted post-human drones (basically, zombies piloted by bored NCOs in Iowa via Xbox controllers).

## Black Chamber Remote Zombie

**STR** 16 **CON** 15 **SIZ** 13 **INT** 1\* **POW** -1\*  
**DEX** 12 **CHA** 0\* **EDU** 0\* **SAN** 0 **HP** 14

\*or as user (12-14)

**Damage Bonus:** +d4

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

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

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1d4.

## The Unexpected Cultist

The wild card in all this is Jane Baxter, one of the three British citizens who crossed the Burandan border – and secret cultist. She's got the original notes written by her great-great-grandfather who suppressed the cult back in the 1900s. Over the generations, her family switched from fundamentalist Christian to something older and darker and terribly *real*. She wants the Blade to summon Nyarlathotep and become his avatar. She's clueless about Umtali's connection to the cult, and even if she knew Umtali was a fellow devotee of the dark gods, she's still convinced becoming the avatar is her special destiny. These primitive barbarians don't understand their own god.

Buranda's a powder-keg, and she just crossed the border holding a match.

**Jane Baxter:** She's a student of anthropology at Jesus College, Oxford. Notably, she's related to Providence Baxter, infamous preacher. A quick use of Research/Knowledge (history or occult) turns up some notes about Baxter senior: he became very eccentric towards the end of his life, and was rumoured to be involved in theosophical circles and spiritualism.

Jane's a third-generation cultist with ambition. She's a bright young thing who intends to bring about the end of the world. This scramble-dash for the Blade isn't as clueless as it appears to be on first glance – she planned her expedition into Buranda, and alone might have been able to reach the capital city and find the Blade. She didn't expect the other two aid workers to follow her, and they blundered into a rebel patrol. She's a remarkably talented young sorceress, backed up with magical fetishes stolen from the cult back in the 1900s. She also knows a little about the Laundry too, mostly half-understood rumours from the British occult underground.

## Jane Baxter, Occult Young Thing

**STR** 10 **CON** 12 **SIZ** 11 **INT** 16 **POW** 18\*  
**DEX** 13 **CHA** 15 **EDU** 18 **SAN** 0 **HP** 18\*

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Pistol 1d10

**Artefacts:** Cult Fetish (Level Three Ward), Ring of Invisibility (Level Three Entropy Manipulation, drains 1 POW per round), Bullet Ward (Level 3, absorbs 15 damage)

**Skills:** Appraise 40%, Art 50%, Athletics 55%, Computer Use 30%, Cthulhu Mythos 25%, Fast Talk 50%, Hide 60%, Knowledge (history) 65%, Listen 55%, Navigate 45%, Sorcery 75%\*.

# THE SCRAMBLE FOR BURANDA

Thanks to her family's sacrifice, Jane's running around with a lot of bonus mojo.

**The Other Hostages:** Alice and Sebastian have no idea about the occult, or the Cult of the Bloody Tongue, or anything else. They never intended to get caught up in Buranda. They volunteered with a charity, and were told not to go near the border. They knew Jane as a slightly odd fellow student; brilliant, but weird.

Sebastian, by the way, is a grand-nephew of someone terribly senior in the Treasury, which is why these three hostages are getting the full-court press.

## Competing Agendas

There are multiple factions running around the little mountain kingdom, so here's a quick reference chart to see who wants what. Initial Goal refers to their plans when the scenario begins; Later Goal is what they ultimately want.

Faction	Initial Goal	Later Goal
Charles Umtali/ Cult of the Bloody Tongue	Use the British government to put pressure on the Chinese to finish mapping the Blade.	Use Baxter's notes to activate the Blade the old-fashioned way.
Jane Baxter	Steal the Blade, summon the Bloody-Tongued One.	Steal the Blade, incarnate as the god, kill everyone.
The Nameless Bureau	Study the Blade in preparation for CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN.	Bug out successfully with all their data intact.
People's Liberation Army	Overthrow Umtali.	Not get eaten.
Black Chamber	Stop the Nameless Bureau.	Keep their asset from being summoned.
The Laundry	Investigate the Blade.	Stop the summoning.

## 1. The Delicate Matter

The adventure begins with a very sinister appointment slithering out of Outlook to park itself right in the middle of the player character's calendars. The location is one of the meeting rooms up on Mahogany Row, normally reserved for visiting ministers and the Board. The other names on the distribution list are equally terrifying – Foreign Office types,

SAS brass, and Laundry DSSs. Attendance is mandatory, and it starts in about five minutes.

The chair is Ms. Frobisher, from the Court of St. James. She efficiently runs around the table, acknowledging the player's manager as a 'representative of the Board', and a young SAS captain called Lews. The player characters get to introduce themselves at this point (call for Etiquette rolls if you're feeling cruel; failure means a 1d3% drop in Status).

## Frobisher's Briefing

Frobisher runs through the following points like an elegant machine. Any questions raised are answered efficiently and briefly; she's clearly not wasting any time on pleasantries. She hands them a big bundle of documents, but draws their attention to a few key facts:

- Four days ago, three British aid workers crossed the border into Buranda. According to reports, they were captured by Burandan rebels and are now being held hostage by the People's Front.
- The hostages are:
  - Alice Keeler (21).
  - Jane English (23). This isn't actually her real name – she's Jane Baxter, as described above. As the Baxter name is anathema in Buranda, she called herself 'Jane English'. A quick Bureaucracy or Research test when going through the documents provided by the Foreign Office would spot this discrepancy between the initial reports and the copies of the students' passports on file.
  - Sebastian Wallis (22).
- All three are Oxbridge students from extremely well-connected families; all three are on university gap years, volunteering with a charity group called *Friends of Africa*.
- No-one is quite sure why they crossed the border – it's well known that the Burandans don't want Westerners in their territory. It's possible they were kidnapped.
- The Burandan government contacted the British through Ghanaese diplomats. They're offering to help rescue the hostages.
  - This is the first contact with the Burandans since '74. Umtali's government is an international pariah – this may be a signal that they want to come in from the cold. More likely, though, this is connected to Chinese investment in Buranda. It's likely that the Burandans want to use the UK as a stalking horse.



# UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

- The Laundry is to provide backup and security for the diplomatic team, as per prior agreements.
- The plan is to fly to Ghana, then drive to Buranda. There, Frobisher will meet with representatives of the Burandan government and attempt to negotiate the release of the hostages.
  - Elements of 21 SAS under Captain Lews will accompany the team to Ghana. There, they'll meet with a helicopter from HMS *Somerset*. If the team needs armed backup, they can call on them.
  - Alternatively, if the characters find where the hostages are, then 21 SAS can attempt an extraction. Diplomatic options are to be exhausted first, of course.
- The team will depart in two hour's time.
- Any questions?

Once Frobisher finishes her briefing, she departs, leaving the characters to their manager's tender mercies.

## Laundry Briefing

*"You're wondering, of course, why we've jumped into this mess, instead of letting the boys over at MI6 handle it. Central Africa's a little outside our bailiwick after all. Well, Archives dug up an old report from colonial days. It seems that British Equatorial Africa – excuse me, Buranda – was once home to a nasty little cult called the Cult of the Bloody Tongue. A fire-and-brimstone preacher called Baxter wiped out most of the cult back in the early 1900s.*

*The cult's prized possession was a knife called the Blade of the Thirsty One. The preacher never recovered the weapon, and we suspect it is now in the possession of the Burandan government.*

*Obviously, you are to do what you can to rescue the spoiled brats. However, while there, you are also to ascertain the current status of the Blade. If you can buy the damn thing, do so – maybe you can work into whatever Umtali wants in exchange for helping rescue the civilians. If you can steal it without causing a diplomatic incident, do so. At the very least, confirm that the Blade is secure – Predictive Branch has a queasy feeling about the damn thing."*

- If the company point out the odd co-incidence of the two Baxters, then their manager frowns and orders a background check that turns up the relationship. It's still a co-incidence, but worth investigating.
- The FCO doesn't hold out much hope for a safe return of the hostages. The People's Army are just as dangerous as the Burandans, and the jungle is full of mines and traps. They're possibly dead already. That's

why MI6 were willing to hand this mess over to the Laundry.

## Outfitting

The team are to leave their Warrant Cards at the front desk – this is a deniable mission. They are going as attachés to the Foreign Office, not the Laundry. However, they are all issued with Hands of Glory and Necronomiphones, as well as any other reasonable weapons and occult gear. There's also a dreamer standing by, so the team can communicate with quick naps (there's an app on the phone to induce REM sleep in a matter of seconds) or report back to London in deeper slumber.

The team also get a satellite phone that should work even in Buranda. If they need to call in the SAS, their designation is DRAGON BASE, the team are KNIGHT ONE and the hostages are PRINCESS ONE, PRINCESS TWO and PRINCESS THREE.

After a last chance to ask questions, grab gear or do research, the team are bundled into a pair of government cars and given a police escort to RAF Northholt.

### Ms. Frobisher

STR 9 CON 11 SIZ 10 INT 16 POW 15  
DEX 10 CHA 16 EDU 20 SAN 60 HP 10

**Skills:** Etiquette 70%, Persuade 75%,  
Knowledge (Politics) 90%, Chilly Glare  
Even In African Heat 80%.

### Captain Lews

STR 15 CON 15 SIZ 16 INT 14 POW 13  
DEX 15 CHA 13 EDU 19 SAN 60 HP 16

**Damage Bonus:** +1d4

**Weapons:** SMG 70%, damage 1d10+banishing.

**Artefacts:** Level Two Ward, Banishing  
Rounds, Bulletproof Vest.

**Skills:** Brawl 60%, Command 75%, Navigate  
80%, Exude Military Confidence 65%.

## 2. Into Africa

A government jet whisks the PCs south. Ms. Frobisher is on board, as are a dozen other Foreign Office Sir Humphrys in one part of the plane, and a detachment from 21 SAS in the back. On the flight, the team can check in with Captain Lews and discuss tactics with him. He's signed Section III

(in blood) and knows about the Laundry, although this is his first mission involving potential supernatural threats.

Frobisher also speaks to the PCs, explaining that she'll likely be occupied with formalities and high-level meetings. If the hostages are to be freed, it'll be up to the agents to arrange it. They'll be meeting with a representative of the state police.

## The Road to Buranda

At the airport, the team meets with the British Consul in Ghana, who collects them in an air-conditioned SUV and drives them towards the border. Meanwhile, Captain Lews and his men pile onto a helicopter – they'll wait on board HMS Somerset for the call.

Also in the car is Rebecca Talbot, from the *Friends of Africa* charity. She's the hostages' liaison here in Ghana. She can answer any questions about the three missing aid workers.

- Alice Keeler was very popular with the other aid workers and the people they're helping. A genuinely lovely girl.
- Sebastian Wallis gets a less glowing report – he was a spoiled rich kid, infatuated with Jane. He effectively followed her into Africa.
- Jane English (Talbot corrects the PCs on her second name if it hasn't come up already) was a strange young woman. Very, very smart, very diligent, but... Talbot couldn't work out why she was here. She didn't seem to care about charity work.

Talbot begs the agents to do what they can to ensure the safety of the three. Even in the car, she fields two phone calls from their family members (Keeler and Wallis) and another three from the media, from friends and from the charity.

At the Burandan border, the road ends in a checkpoint manned by stern-faced soldiers. Waiting there is an old jeep, newly painted but obviously very old. From the smell of it, it's a diesel engine converted to run on vegetable oil. The driver of the jeep introduces himself as Philip Mbele; he's a colonel in the state police, and he's here to work with the British representatives. Please, follow him.

Call for Spot tests; those who succeed notice that all the guards have odd rust-coloured fillings. (It's traditional to use iron fillings among cult worshippers, in tribute to the Sasabonsam).

### Philip Mbele

Mbele is the Burandan NPC that the players will interact with the most. He is not part of the Cult of the Bloody Tongue, but knows about them. Even the secret police fear the cult. If Mbele prostrated himself before the altar of Nyarlathotep and swore allegiance to the Bloody Tongue, he would be safe and in a far more powerful position, but something in him rebels at obeisance to the alien god. His family are 'guests' at Umtali's private sanctum in the mountains, and Mbele knows that if he betrays Umtali, his family will be sacrificed.

Mbele has no illusions about his role in the government. He sees himself as ensuring stability while the Good Leader improves things. Buranda is a poor country, but poor is better than a failed state like some of its neighbours. With work and discipline, there will be good times ahead. The Good Leader promises this.

### Mbele

STR 14 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 16 POW 12  
DEX 13 CHA 15 EDU 15 SAN 40 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Pistol 1d10

Skills: Etiquette 60%, Spot 70%, Show Up  
Inconveniently 70%, Chaperone Foreign  
Diplomats 65%.

On the road, Mbele points out the jungles off to the west, and says that is where the rebels are, and so too are the hostages. His spies will find them, he hopes.

## Welcoming Committee

The jeep bounces along the muddy track towards Buranda City. The team's first look at the city is an unprepossessing sight. It's a shanty town of crumbling buildings and shacks, and appears partially deserted. It's hard to get a feel for a place when you're driving through it at speed, but it looks like an African cross between Cuba and a post-apocalyptic wasteland. There are few signs of life, and fewer signs of development, although brand-new power lines cross the road at one point.

Mbele takes the characters to the old Governor's Mansion, now a government building. They can stay in the old guest quarters. The Good Leader will meet them shortly, but they



have a few minutes to rest first. He asks that they not leave the mansion grounds without an escort – crime is a problem in the city.

The mansion could be from another world compared to the city below. The fittings would not be out of place in a five-star hotel, there are fully stocked fruit bowls and minibars, and every room has a flatscreen satellite TV. From the windows of the mansion, they can see the Leader's Palace and the Chinese compound, rising like alien intruders out of the sea of poverty.

## Meet the Leader

After an hour, Mbele ushers the PCs and Frobisher into a wood-panelled meeting room. On the wall is a flatscreen TV with a built-in webcam. On the screen is the face of Charles Umtali. The Good Leader apologises for being unable to greet the honoured guests in person, but it would be problematic for the head of Buranda to meet with outsiders directly. The outside world makes the Burandan people, and the British are... well, let us say that the memory of Baxter's purges is still raw and bloody.



However, he welcomes this chance to speak with the British government. He invites Frobisher to visit him at his private palace in the mountains. Mbele will make the arrangements. The other delegates (the PCs) should remain in the city and work with Mbele to locate and secure the hostages.

## 3. Buranda City

There's a lot to see and do in Buranda City.

If the characters aren't proactive occult investigators, then run The Old Woman & The Graveyard, with the Old Woman as a cleaner in the governor's mansion.

## Hostage Negotiations

Mbele stalls for the first day, claiming that his spies are making progress but need time to locate the hostages. He claims that direct contact with the rebels is impossible.

Frobisher contacts the agents via telephone (anyone with Knowledge (tradecraft) can guess it's bugged) and reports that Umtali's initial demands are mostly what the Foreign Office expected – foreign aid money, weapons sales, medical supplies – but he also wants something unusual. He wants the UK government to provide training and specialists in an odd set of fields: computer modelling, telecommunications, linguistics, computer programming and the like.

Umtali claims that the Chinese provided Buranda with a supercomputer to handle many aspects of the country's economy, such as prospecting for minerals or running the telephone system. However, they control access to it. He wants Burandan engineers and scientists trained in famous British universities. She's inclined to grant the request unless the PCs have a solid objection.

If the players agree, then Mbele suddenly has a breakthrough. His spies discovered a rebel camp in the jungle. He shows them roughly where it is on a map, but cautions that the rebels move around a lot. The camp may not be there tomorrow. He recommends waiting until his spies can discover more.

- The SAS need a better fix on the location before launching a rescue. They recommend either convincing Mbele to tell them more (with a bigger bribe) or that the PCs investigate themselves.
- Mbele can be convinced to let the PCs head into the jungle themselves.

## The Dagger

If the players wish to see the dagger, Mbele offers to arrange a visit to the Burandan Museum, where the Blade of Kings is stored in a special display case. Photos in the case clearly show Umtali wearing the dagger at various public events and ceremonies.

The dagger in the museum is a gaudy fake (Insight, Appraise or a suitable Knowledge make this clear; Mbele may also

## THE SCRAMBLE FOR BURANDA

volunteer this information if the characters express a strong interest in the dagger). Mbele explains that the Chinese guests wished to study and appraise the dagger, and that the Good Leader permitted it. The display case contains a replica; as far as Mbele knows, the real dagger is either in the Chinese compound, or else the Burandan government has reclaimed it.

Next to the display case is an account of how the dagger was saved from the British imperialists under Providence Baxter. Apparently, a child carried the dagger through a secret tunnel in the mountains, walking through the darkness for days.

Mbele dismisses any offers to buy the dagger. The Blade is sacred to the Burandan people.

### Occult Methods

The characters don't have their warrant cards, and can't download new magic apps for their smartphones, but they can use computational demonology or old-school sorcery if necessary.

- All their Burandan handlers and secret police goons carry Class Two wards in the form of ugly amulets that were clearly made from mummified human hearts.
- The characters can communicate over long distances using oneiromancy, as described in the briefing. Just

stare into your phone's screen until it puts you in a trance, then descend the Seventy Steps of Lighter Slumber until you meet two bearded clerks, Nasht and Kaman-Thah, who direct you to a dream canteen just off the staircase. Talking to their manager means descending the Seven Hundred Steps of Deeper Slumber to a much swankier meeting room in Dylath-Leen.

- If they check in with the Laundry, they confirm that Predictive Branch is having issues divining anything about Buranda.
- Bringing up rumours of the Black Chamber or Nameless Bureau makes their manager crack a frown, and he promises he will look into the matter.
- If the team persuade him to risk the displeasure of the board with Persuade or Status, then he can send some Laundry chaps to the Baxter stately home to investigate the family. See page 96 for more.

- Scrying spells or other divinations show signs of low-level magical activity throughout the city, and those newly-installed Chinese power cables run right along ley-lines.

### Independent Investigations

To make any sort of independent investigation, the characters need to shake their secret police minders (easily

#### The Dreamlands

*On the seventh day a blur of smoke rose on the horizon ahead, and then the tall black towers of Dylath-Leen, which is built mostly of basalt. Dylath-Leen with its thin angular towers looks in the distance like a bit of the Giant's Causeway, and its streets are dark and uninviting. There are many dismal sea-taverns near the myriad wharves, and all the town is thronged with the strange seamen of every land on earth and of a few which are said to be not on earth.*

Dylath-Leen hasn't changed much since Randolph Carter and ol' Haitch Pee Ell dreamed of it back in the 20s. Think of it as a sort of psychic Casablanca, all dark alleyways and sinister towers and traders on the make.

#### Something Lurking in the Dreamlands

The oneiromantic connection isn't trustworthy. There's something out there, in the interstices between minds. The entity that the Burandans call the God of the Bloody Tongue, and the Laundry terms GIZA DISORDER has many aspects, many masks. It can walk in dreams - and right now, it's heading to Buranda from the United States. The Black Chamber bound it decades ago, but if it's summoned into our reality, it can break free from their geases.

In the early stages of the adventure, just hint at Badness Afoot. The PCs might see a shadowy shape as they walk down the steps, or mutter the name of the Bloody-Tongued One in their sleep. Later on, after Baxter calls the Sasabonsam, the dream-weirdness gets worse, cutting the agents off from the Laundry.



accomplished with a lit Hand of Glory, or another spell, or just some tradecraft).

Buranda city is a Third World hellhole, with a lot more fascist death cult and a little less warring factions. The streets are strangely empty, but the characters spot drawn, terrified faces watching them from the shacks and tenements. The city is virtually silent due to the lack of cars (or televisions, or radios, or people on the streets not hiding from the fascist death cult).

Once out on the city streets, the characters can:

- Visit/break into the Chinese compound.
- Break into the secret police HQ.
- Make contact with the rebels.
- Find signs of the cult.
- Head to the jungle.

## The Chinese Compound

Armed guards discourage visitors to the compound. The characters can either bluff or sneak their way past the outer wall, but the HTE building itself is another matter.

- **Compound Housing:** Ugly concrete boxes and prefabs with minimal luxuries. On the bright side, running water and lighting means they're luxury apartments by local standards.
- **Generator:** A big diesel generator that provides backup power to the telecommunications network. It also smoothenes out the spikes and dips in Buranda's notoriously dirty national grid.
- **Engineering & Fabrication:** Technical supplies and electronics parts, as well as construction vehicles.

**The Forbidden Villa:** Dr. Zuang stationed Lamia guards at the front entrance and on all three floors. These summoned entities can see through glamours and invisibility spells of Level Three or below, and are programmed to alert the guards to any magically active intruder. The Lamia manifest as beautiful women wearing smart business suits with long, razor-sharp teeth and nails. Getting past the Lamia requires a cover story, some clever sorcery, or excellent stealth.

The topmost level of the building contains a high-tech modelling suite, with a laser scanner and several robot arm armatures of a sort more commonly used in manipulating fuel rods or other dangerous substances. Nearby, the characters find the Dawning supercomputer installed at Umtali's request. A successful Research roll turns up a copy of Zuang's report.

**Dr. Zuang, I Presume:** If Mbele arranges a visit to the compound, or if the characters approach it openly and

Persuade the guards to let them in (or if the characters get into a fight and are forced to surrender), then they get to meet the head of the facility, Dr. Zuang. He's paranoid enough to run every visitor past a webcam running a powerful Scrying spell, and his office is wired with defensive bindings and warding circles. He's blandly helpful if the characters are here legally, and fearful and snappish if they broke in. Still, he has no desire to start a fight with the Laundry, and will let the agents go after stripping them of magical defences and taking blood samples.

### Electronic Intrusions

Rather than break into the compound, a technically-minded character could piggyback on the compound's wifi and break into their network with a Difficult Computer Use (hacking) test. Doing so successfully turns up data on the Nameless Bureau's scanning and translation efforts on the Blade of the Thirsty One, as well as Dr. Zuang's report (**Handout #3**).

## The Secret Policeman's Office

The State Police HQ is eerily clean. Oh, the official records are a litany of horrors – dissidents, rebels, criminals and ordinary people all processed, tortured and sent for execution – but there's no basement rooms drenched in blood, no torture chambers, no sign of any bodies. It's weirdly bloodless. There are strong clues that occult ceremonies and ritual sacrifices are part of police procedure, and it's apparently a standard punishment for minor crimes to have one's tongue surgically altered before being sent to join the 'Favoured Ones' in the mountains.

The State Police have spies in the rebel camp, just as Mbele hinted. Records give the current location of the rebels, as well as a bar in town where rebel sympathisers meet. It's under surveillance by the police.

## Contacting the Rebels

Secret police archives (or just discreet enquiries on the streets) point the characters towards a ruined church on the edge of the city. Unlike the other churches (see **Signs of the Cult**), this one is in poor condition, but still seems to be in active use as a Christian chapel. The rebels here are mostly hangers-on and new recruits, and State Police have the place under constant surveillance. If the characters talk their way in, they may get a pointer to the rebel forward base. Of course, making contact with the rebels probably triggers a police raid.

Optionally, the company can meet the Old Woman (see **The Old Woman & The Graveyard**), but they'll need to lose any State Police tails to follow her to the graveyard.

## Signs of the Cult

Evidence of the Cult of the Bloody Tongue is everywhere in Buranda, if you know where to look:

- Some people on the streets mumble and hiss in an inhuman language. Their lips are flecked with blood, and their tongues were surgically dismembered by the State Police. Some are beggars; others are acolytes of the cult.
- On the outskirts of the town, in gardens and near churches, the characters find wooden stake posts with manacles chained to them. Old blood stains the wood a deep burgundy.
- The churches in the town – and there are lots of them – are chapels to the God of the Bloody Tongue. Lots of bizarre and disturbing iconography, beheaded crucifixes, lolling red tongues and sinister priests.
- Rumours in the town talk about dead men in the forest, or iron-toothed monsters that live in the trees. Some of these rumours conflate the two monsters, or claim that the rebels worship a strange alien god.

## The Old Woman & The Graveyard

At some point, an old woman makes contact with the characters. She spots them (even through a glamour) and beckons them to follow her. She's obviously had training in evasion and escape techniques. The woman brings the characters to a graveyard, and leads them towards an open grave that's filled with bodies, all killed within the last few days, all riddled with bullets. They're clearly former rebels. She points to one corpse that has a metal box around its neck.

Closer examination of the talisman reveals that it's a ruggedised necromantic engine and summoning grid. It calls up a lesser horror from beyond to zombieify the body, then wires in a higher intelligence. It's pretty clever stuff, a mix of occult sorcery and military-grade electronics.

The corpse sits up and glances around blearily. It peels the remains of its left eyeball off its cheek, then stumbles to its feet. It spits a gobbet of gore out of its mouth and takes several laboured breathes to clear its chest. *"Sorry, the lungs got hit. This unit's not going to last long. You're Laundry, right? I'm a Lieutenant in the US Army; I can't give you anything more, but trust me. We know where your missing civilians are. We can help you get to them."*

The zombie – clearly it's a remotely-piloted Black Chamber drone – explains that the Chamber is working with the PA. The British civilians blundered across the border and got picked up by a rebel patrol. The Chamber can convince the rebels to hand the civilians over to the British authorities, but the rebel leader won't deal with the Umtali government and doesn't trust the British. The characters must go and fetch the civilians.

- If the characters suggest that the Lieutenant just give them a map grid, the zombie responds that the rebels have the hostages, and won't respond well to a chopper off the *Somerset* dropping down out of the sky. No, they have to go in person – and anyway, the Lieutenant wants a word using a more intact body.
- The Lieutenant directs the characters to a rebel forward base. He'll meet them there and bring them to General Ofala. The forward base is only 30 minutes outside the city; he leaves getting there up to the characters.
- After speaking to the characters, the Lieutenant asks them to shoot him in the head or to exorcise the corpse. It's a risk operating a zomdrone this close to Buranda City.

## 4. The Rebel Base

How do the PCs get out here? Let me count the ways.

- Firstly, there's the most likely route – they're invited here by Lieutenant Zombie. They'll need to shake Mbele and any other police tails (or else let them get killed by a zombie ambush).
- Secondly, they could end up here off their own initiative, by following Mbele's spies, breaking into the State Police archives, or just wandering around the jungle
- Thirdly, if all else fails, then Frobisher agrees to a multi-million pound bribe, and suddenly Mbele's spies 'remember' that they know exactly where the rebel base is. Funny how that works.

## Getting to the Rebels

Ditching a police escort and stealing a car is easy for a trained Laundry officer. Lighting up a Hand of Glory and strolling out of town is also an option, but then you end up trading your iPod for a donkey or something and/or collapsing from heatstroke.

The rebel forward camp is alarmingly close to the capital city. With American backing, the rebels have come closer



to overthrowing the Umtali regime than ever before. It's in a thick, trackless part of the jungle, where the fearsome Sasabonsam are said to dwell. These horrors must be propitiated with offerings. Once, they served the cult but are now wild beasts. The PA hasn't seen any signs of the monsters in years, but the jungle still has a bad reputation.

## Zombie Guards

If the rebels expect the characters to show up, then a troupe of zombies emerge from the trees. All the zombies are clearly fallen Burandans (a mix of PA and loyalist forces), but they speak like Midwestern army kids having fun playing *Call of Duty: Undead Edition*. They goof around when not in combat, muttering *brains* to each other and making their zombie avatars walk into trees. The Lieutenant (in a more intact zombie body) shows up to greet the characters.

If the characters aren't expected, then it's a bloody ambush. The zombies wipe out any Burandan escorts (or pursuers), but stop shooting at the characters as soon as they realise they're not Burandans. One of the private zombies calls Lieutenant Zombie over to chat to the player characters.

If any of the zombie bodies get damaged, they grab replacements from among the dead before setting off towards the main rebel encampment. (If the characters fight back, and manage to deal with the rebel ambush and the zombies, then they find a map on one of the bodies leading to the main camp).

The living rebels are obviously used to their zombie allies, and object only when the zombies try to use fallen PA soldiers as bodies.

Lieutenant Zombie has a battered Burandan jeep; he has one of the player characters drive, as "*the lag from Nevada is a pain*". He directs the team down a newly-cleared dirt road through the jungle, while the other zombies switch off in the back. On the way, he questions the PCs about their mission in Buranda, and clearly angles for information about HTE Telecoms and the Chinese presence.

Several hours' drive brings the characters to a larger rebel encampment somewhere near the border. There, the characters are roughly dragged from the jeep and brought before General Ofala.

## General Ofala

The general is old and half-blind, sustained by a combination of bile and foul hand-rolled cigarettes. He hates the British almost as much as he hates Umtali. Nominally, he's continuing the counter-rebellion started back in '74 against the communist takeover, but in reality he's just another warlord. Unlike the rest of his troops, he accepts

the presence of the zombie Americans – if it brings down Umtali, he'll take any help he can get.

He demands to know what the British promised Umtali. Money? Weapons? International recognition? What do they want? Did Umtali promise to deliver the hostages? Ha! Ofala has them, and Ofala will kill them if he chooses.

If the characters bring up the Cult of the Bloody Tongue, Ofala laughs. Of course Umtali is a cultist. Everyone knows this. Ofala is an enemy of the cultists. Look! He points to a tree outside the tent, where he's hung five captured enemies by their tongues. The British broke the cult a hundred years – the only good thing they have ever done in Buranda.

Lieutenant Zombie intercedes, saying that continued American support is contingent on cooperation from both parties. The general shrugs and has his men produce Sebastian Wallis, who's somewhat the worse for wear. Ofala generously lets the agents question Wallis for a few minutes.

**Wallis' Testimony:** The aid worker fills the PCs in on the events that got him into this mess. He went to Jane's tent one night, and found her missing. He woke Alice, and they discovered that Jane had fled across the border. She'd obviously been preparing for this for weeks, gathering supplies and planning her route. They chased after her, and were then captured by these bastards. Please, please, get him out of here!

Jane and Alice are in another holding cell in the camp. He thinks they're both still alive, but the rebels won't tell him anything, and my god, some of them are dead. Wallis is obviously several SAN checks short of POWx5.

## The Demons

So, the PCs are in the rebel camp, so are the hostages, and both the rebels and the Black Chamber are willing to help them. Mission accomplished! All they need to do is call in the SAS, extract, and head back to Blighty. True, they haven't got the dagger, but it's clear that the Cult of the Bloody Tongue is not a significant threat... right?

Unfortunately, Jane Baxter isn't going to go quietly. Among the spells stolen by her ancestor was the chant to summon the Sasabonsam. This spell can only be used by an anointed speaker for the cult, so it's time for some emergency tongue surgery. To Alice's horror, Jane takes a razor and cuts her own tongue to pieces. She then speaks in a voice that's far from human.

The jungle answers.

Called by words not spoken in Buranda in more than a century, the Sasabonsam come. And they're hungry.



The iron-toothed demons descend on the camp. They target the zombie drones first – after all, the dead were traditionally left out as sacrifices for the iron-toothed ones, but they’re hungry, and they don’t stop there. Fortunately for the PCs, they’re not on Jane’s shit list (primarily because she has no idea they’re there. She told her summoned demons to kill the rebels and the zombies, and never mentioned the other two hostages or the PCs. Therefore, the Sasabonsam won’t attack the PCs directly (they’ll still swipe at them if they get in the way).

Run this scene for maximum carnage and horror.

## Aftermath

The team finds Alice Keeler in the tattered ruins of a tent, holding four small lumps of red tissue in her hand, covered in the blood of their guards. She gibbers about how Jane cut her tongue, and then call those things out of the jungle, and they killed everyone... everyone. After calming her down with Psychotherapy, they can question her about what happened:

- She saw those things carry Jane away. Jane went with them willingly, though. They seemed to recognise her.
- She knows that Jane is actually Jane Baxter. Keeler’s thesis is on Burandan history, and she interviewed Jane about her family background.
- She doesn’t know where Jane is going, but she went north-east, into the heart of Buranda.
- Before cutting open her tongue, Jane looked up something on her laptop. It looks like scans of some old documents.

## 5. What Rough Beast?

Baxter’s evocation of the Sasabonsam opens the thaumic floodgates. For the first time in a century, the secret words of the Cult of the Bloody Tongue were spoken aloud in Buranda. Nyarlathotep approaches, casting off the shackles of the Black Chambers. All those mutilated mediums and acolytes speak of the coming of the Thirsty One.

Buranda City descends into chaos. Some cultists believe that their dreams of Baxter herald the coming of their god; others declare the words of the priests to be a sign that Umtali is to usher in the End Times. Both cult factions agree that the thing to do is sacrifice a lot of victims to the Sasabonsam. However, the other thing both factions agree on is that the other guys are wrong and deserve to be shot. Gangs from both groups roam the streets in search of victims.

Umtali’s supporters have the backing of the secret police, but the Baxter-backers are more numerous and more fanatical in their beliefs. Meanwhile, the rebels take advantage of the chaos, although without General Ofala to unite them, there’s no coordination or planning. They just charge ahead.

Consultation time: The agents have a potential rogue cult and an exome incursion. Where do they turn?

## Frobisher

The Foreign Office diplomat has a satellite phone. She’s at Umtali’s fortress in the Mountains of Light when the PCs call. She recommends extracting the two surviving hostages immediately, then looking for Jane Baxter. While the agents are in touch with Frobisher, Umtali’s guards grab her.



Umtali then uses Frobisher's satphone to contact London (the PCs get included in the conference call), claiming that his guards have taken Frobisher "for her own safety". She's his insurance against Western interference as he puts down both Baxter and the rebels.

## 21 SAS

Captain Lews can extract the hostages at this point. As for Frobisher, he's planning a rescue mission, but assaulting the presidential palace is going to be a harder prospect than grabbing the hostages away from a few half-trained rebels. Still, in for a penny, in for a pound – he's willing, at this point, to fly the PCs and his SAS team deeper into Buranda and, if necessary, attack the presidential palace.

## The Black Chamber

To contact the Black Chamber, the characters need to find and repair one of the zombie drone boxes. Lieutenant Zombie is dead – the Sasabonsam killed some of the operators with thaumic feedback, something that should normally be impossible. Activating a box puts the characters in touch with someone (or something) more senior in the Black Chamber. He's worried – the entity codenamed GIZA DISORDER is loose and moving.

Asking about GIZA DISORDER (or checking with the Laundry) confirms that it's Nyarlathotep. The Black Chamber bound an aspect of this entity back in the 60s; apparently, now it's loose. Notably, this means it can communicate with its followers directly (and all over Buranda, mediums and those who've undergone the tongue-cutting ceremony start speaking in an alien language).

The Black Chamber believe that this must be something to do with the Chinese, and suspect that the Nameless Bureau summoned up the Sasabonsam. They want GIZA DISORDER back in its pen before it uses the dagger to cross over into our reality. They can provide the PCs with the binding formula, but it's a beast (level 4 spell) and extremely short ranged. To fire off a successful binding, though, the agents need to be right on top of GIZA DISORDER.

## The Laundry

Contacting the Laundry via the oneiromancy app gets harder as soon as Baxter invokes the demons. The agents get one or two more conversations with home base before the deeper dream-realm becomes inaccessible.

If the Laundry hasn't already raided the Baxter house by this point, the local office attempts to take the remaining Baxters into custody. The raid on the house turns up all manner of weirdness – bodies buried under the patio, caves dug into the local hillside, African temples replicated in the

English countryside, summoned monsters, and the whole family found dead around the dinner table after a cyanide toast. They knew the Laundry were coming.

Management uploads what the Laundry team salvaged from the Baxter estate – it's Handout #4, the Baxter testament, plus a series of psychic flashes.

Their assessment is that Jane Baxter knows far too much about the Blade of the Thirsty One – it would be problematic if she got her hands on the dagger, or if the cult got their hands on her brain. There's a second problem too: as GIZA DISORDER appears to have shaken loose from the Black Chamber's shackles and is even now sloping towards Buranda, the cult's mystics and mediums may be able to communicate with the entity. If they wait too long, then Umtali may be able to use the dagger without Baxter's help.

The manager also mentions, by the by, that he's authorising HMS *Vigilant* to support HMS *Somerset*, just in case.

HMS *Vigilant* carries nuclear-tipped Trident missiles.

## 6. The Sharp End

At this stage, the PCs are on point for the apocalypse. They were sent in to grab a knife while recovering some hostages, now one of those hostages has freed an alien god and it's heading into the heart of darkness. They need to come up with a plan.

## The Nameless Bureau

Once Baxter invokes the demons, the Chinese realise that something very unpleasant is on the way. Zuang decides that it's time to get out while the going's good. The Nameless Bureau team prepare to pull out, and Zuang plans to head north-east along the main road, driving hell for leather.

Before Zuang can manage this, though, Umtali's forces attack the Chinese compound. If Umtali's going to compete with Baxter, he needs Zuang's summoning spell and associated research. The HTE troops manage to hold off the attackers, but they're pinned down in the compound.

**Heading to the Compound:** The compound is in the heart of town, surrounded by state police forces. Zuang used the computer to cast a powerful defensive spell around the compound, holding the attackers off (anyone who crosses the line gets eaten by invisible monsters), but the police blew up the power lines, so the wards will collapse when the compound's generator runs dry. From the sound of it, it's sucking diesel fumes already.

**Rescuing the Chinese:** The PCs can sneak across using Hands of Glory or Level 3 wards, or they can make contact with Zuang by telephone. Alternatively, they can use Mbele (see page 89) to call off the dogs of war. If the PCs don't intervene, then Umtali's forces storm the compound once the protective ward goes down. Zuang and his senior staff kill themselves rather than let their knowledge fall into Umtali's hands. Umtali's men bring the supercomputer and copies of the files to the presidential palace.

**Help Me, Dr Zuang:** Zuang's research points at a way to destroy the Blade of the Thirsty One. The downside is that it requires a Level 3 banishing spell cast at a very specific spot on the Blade. You'd have to be right next to the weapon to cast it.

## Mbele

If Mbele's still alive, then the PCs can recruit him as an ally – he's lost all faith in the Good Leader, and now sees the cult for what it is. He knows about a secret entrance into the presidential palace (see opposite).

## In The Dreamlands

Contact with Angleton in the Dreamlands becomes increasingly difficult, then impossible as GIZA DISORDER's presence warps reality. The characters can still use dreams to coordinate with each other, though, and as they do so they may spot something strange invading the dreams. GIZA DISORDER's moving through the psychic realm. In the Dreamlands, GIZA DISORDER manifests as a dark-eyed Egyptian boy with a mocking smile. He moves through the cobbled streets of Dylath-Leen like a spy trying to defect, darting through alleyways and employing every trick in the tradecraft textbook to dodge and evade its pursuers.

If the agents make contact with GIZA DISORDER, they can negotiate (carefully) with the entity. As monstrous alien space gods go, this aspect of the entity is reasonable. It wants to escape the Black Chamber's control, and will listen to any offer that accomplishes this goal. It hints that if the PCs protect it from the Chamber, then it might be willing to help the Laundry (getting to corrupt the Laundry from within meshes with the god's sinister aims more than being embodied in Africa. Sure. Being a living god on Earth means a lot of tasty snacks, but he knows that the real banquet isn't due until CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, and he'd prefer to make sure that the Laundry can't stop the End Times when they arrive.

Calling the God requires a Level 5 summoning spell or the dagger. Their only chance of accomplishing a Level 5 spell means using the Chinese supercomputer together with a lot of POW-boosting techniques. However, as a gesture of good faith, it can call the Sasabonsam off for a while.

## Tracking Baxter

She's heading for the Mountain of Light. The agents have little chance of intercepting her as she travels through the jungle with her entourage of Sasabonsam, but they can track her course by the bloody corpses she leaves in her wake.

## 7. The Mountain of Light

All these forces converge at the Mountain of Light. The name's something of a misnomer, but 'Sullen Lump of Strangely Unwholesome Rock' wouldn't fit on a postcard. Providence Baxter sketched the mountain before killing everyone who lived there. It's largely unchanged today, if you ignore the huge gaudy pink palace with the swimming pool and the scantily-clad girls and the fences and the landmines.

Welcome to the end of the world.

## The General's Fortress

The Good Leader's palace is, coincidentally, built on the former site of the Cult of the Bloody Tongue's temple. It's a luxurious compound that happens to be surrounded by razor-wire and minefields, and the only approach road is heavily guarded.

Heavily guarded, you ask? Say around a hundred armed thugs, all committed members of the cult, all packing grenades and AK-47s. They're ready to repel attacks from rebels or rival cultists or anyone else who trespasses into the Good Leader's playground. Since Baxter invoked the Sasabonsam, Umtali's issued Class Two wards and enchanted bullets to all the guards. He also staked out various political rivals and criminals on the front lawn. Inside, it's 30% Cthulhoid cult temple and 70% dictator's pleasure palace. Yes, there are sacrificial altars, but they don't block your view of the big screen TV from your king-size bed.

**Security Systems:** CCTV cameras and alarms on the windows, as well as panic buttons located discreetly at key locations.

**Getting into the Fortress:** Storming the fortress is a bit tricky, unless the PCs bring the SAS with them. Sneaking in is easier, especially if they've got Hands of Glory or other spells available. There's a secret passage that was once used by the cult (as Mbele can reveal, or the PCs can reverse-engineer from the display in the Buranda museum or the Baxter archives).

## Umtali's Plan

The Good Leader's in an awkward position. To counter Baxter, he needs to use the dagger himself, but he doesn't know how.



## UNCONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY

- If he's got Zuang's research and has Frobisher as a hostage, then he demands that the PCs complete Zuang's work and give him the summoning ritual.
- If he doesn't have Zuang's work, but finds out who Baxter is, then he demands the Laundry provide a copy of the ritual to activate the knife.
- If all else fails, then he's prepared to fight the Sasabonsam. The sacrifices in front of the palace are wired with explosives; he intends to use the confusion to capture Baxter and learn how she was able to summon the monsters.
- He's accompanied at all times by three seers who chant in the secret bloody tongue, and keep him apprised of the proximity of the god.

### Baxter's Arrival

There really isn't much left of Jane Baxter by the time she arrives at the Mountain of Light. She's insane, covered in blood, and barely capable of standing upright, let alone rational thought. She's accompanied by dozens of Sasabonsam, and she can sense the location of the dagger.

She's still just human. Her family's magical sacrifice gave her a measure of protection, but sufficient firepower could bring her down.

### The God of the Bloody Tongue

So, you've got two lunatics – one warlord, and one cultist – both of whom want to use the magic dagger to become a god. The player characters have a few minutes to act before either Baxter's army of demons rips the palace apart and recovers the dagger, or Umtali cracks the spell to use the dagger and beats her to godhood. They must use this narrow window to recover the dagger and escape alive.

Possible options:

- **Grab the Dagger and Run:** If the characters sneak into Umtali's fortress, ideally cloaked by Entropy-Manipulation spells, they can grab the dagger from Umtali and run to the roof, then extract via the SAS helicopter.
- **Destroy the Dagger:** If they use a level three Banishment spell on the dagger's tip, they can shatter the dagger. Blowing it to bits with a fistful of C4 works too, of course – the dagger's tough, but not indestructible.
- **Sabotage Umtali's Ritual:** If the General forces the PCs to complete Zuang's work in mapping the dagger's

ritual geometry, they can sabotage the resulting Dho-Nha curve. There'll still be some effect – you can pump that much thaumic energy and not wake something up – but it's more likely to be a titanic rift in space-time than Umtali's apotheosis.



- **Bind the God:** The Black Chamber can provide a level 4 binding ritual keyed to GIZA DISORDER. Casting it on an incarnate god prevents the greater entity from escaping the Nazgul geases and contains the situation in Buranda. It does leave the chamber in control of a powerful asset, but maintaining the status quo is a win here.
- **Summon the God themselves:** If the characters get hold of both the dagger and the ritual, they can try summoning the God of the Bloody Tongue themselves. Becoming a god is a breach of one's Oath of Office to the Laundry, so the new deity has only a few moments of corporeal existence before he spontaneously combusts. Still, it gives the character a chance to be a vengeful god and buy time for the rest of the team to bug out.
- **Storm the Palace:** With SAS support – and a few cruise missiles from HMS Vigilant – and the fact that Umtali's guards are distracted with the ravening horde of Sasabonsam, the characters can kick in the front door of the fortress and forcibly recover the dagger.

# THE SCRAMBLE FOR BURANDA

- **Nuke the Site from Orbit:** The ultimate contingency – if the god is made to manifest, HMS *Vigilant* is authorised to fire a nuclear missile at Buranda. It'll be denied, of course – publicly, it'll be called an accidental detonation, the product of Buranda's previously unsuspected nuclear weapons program.

## Extraction & Aftermath

.....  
If Captain Lews' helicopter is still flying, then that can extract the characters back to HMS Somerset; otherwise, the characters need to head into the jungle and wait for a second rescue chopper, or even disappear into the Burandan countryside and try to make it across the border

into Ghana with the vengeful remnants of the cult on their heels. Did the player characters make it out alive? Then they definitely deserve a biscuit or three – that was a lethal assignment. Give them 1d4 Status each for surviving, modified as follows:

- +2% if the hostages made it out alive.
- 2% if the hostages were killed.
- +2% if the Blade of the Thirsty One was recovered.
- 2% if Frobisher died.
- 2% if the SAS team died.
- +2% if GIZA DISORDER is no longer under the control of the Black Chamber.
- 2% if Buranda got eaten.

## HANDOUT #1

### FACTBOOK REPORT - BURANDA

#### INTRODUCTION:

Buranda became independent from the United Kingdom in 1951 and experienced multi-party rule until a military coup in 1973, when a group of five generals seized power and instituted a communist regime. This 'gang of five' was reduced to one by 1974, and General Samuel Umtali ruled the country until 2001, when he was succeeded by his son Charles Umtali. Under the Umtali regime, Buranda is almost entirely isolated from the outside world, with extremely limited contact and trade. Since 2004, Charles Umtali has signalled a reversal of this policy, permitting Asian companies to build infrastructure and develop the country's natural resources.

Rebel forces (the People's Army) control the hills in the west of the country and continue to fight against the Umtali government with increasing success.

#### GEOGRAPHY:

Location: Western Africa

Area: 24,193 sq km

Land: 24,151 sq km

Water: 42 sq km

Area comparative: roughly the same size as Wales.

Climate: hot jungle.

Terrain: mountainous and difficult.

#### PEOPLE & SOCIETY:

Population: 2.3 million

Languages: English, French, Djerma.

Religions: Christian (40%), Muslim (30%), Other

Indigenous (10%), No religion (20%).

Major Cities: Buranda City (100,000)

Life Expectancy at Birth: 40 years

#### GOVERNMENT:

Government type: Republic (effective dictatorship)

Head of State: Charles Umtali, "the Good Leader".

Legal system: Derived from English principles.

Membership of international organisations: none

Diplomatic contacts: none

Embassies: none

#### ECONOMY:

Buranda is a land-locked and heavily isolated state, with access to the outside world cut off by both geography and politics. The country conducts next to no trade with the outside world, although smuggling and informal cross-border trade is not unknown. Most of Buranda is entirely undeveloped, with no electricity or motor transport outside the capital city and a few other key areas. The primary economic activity is subsistence farming. The country boasts significant mineral reserves.

#### COMMUNICATIONS:

Since 2006, Chinese telecoms company HTE has constructed a mobile phone network and power grid in Buranda City.

#### TRANSPORT:

No airport or seaports; limited paved roads. Fuel is in extremely short supply and is restricted to military and government use in most cases.

#### MILITARY:

Burandan State Army numbers 10,000 fighting men, with reserves of 300,000. State police number another 20,000.



## HANDOUT #2 - ORDEAL LEOPARD GREEN

CLASSIFIED MOST SECRET. Imperial War Ministry. 12th September 1914.  
 RECLASSIFIED TOP SECRET ORDEAL. Ministry of War. 19th August 1946.  
 RECLASSIFIED TOP SECRET LEOPARD GREEN. 3rd December 2004.  
 \*\*IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ORDEAL LEOPARD GREEN CLEARANCE. \*\*

DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT

Salisbury, 2nd April 1903

Dear Sir,

You refer in your letter of the 16th of February to your book on comparative religion. I am familiar with your Golden Bough, sir, and find your conclusions to be distasteful and impudent. I pray that the Lord may show you the error of your ways when you come to reconsider the plain facts. Nonetheless, I will furnish you with some notes on the savages that it was my great privilege to save by dragging them kicking and screaming to the gospels.

Previous to the conversion (of those who could be saved), the hill tribes of British Equatorial Africa worshipped a devil called He of the Bloody Tongue. This false god demanded sacrifice to sate its bloody thirst, and many young men and women were put to death on the god's sacred mountain. Priests of the cult were obliged to have their tongues ritually mutilated, for it was believed that the human mouth could not pronounce the secret names of their god.

Chief of all the cult's holy relics was a weapon called the Blade of the Thirsty One, which they claim was carried out of the heavens by the servants of the Bloody Tongue. Through a ceremony involving this Blade, the cult leader could join bodily with the Bloody-Tongued One and become an avatar of the god, although this mystical procedure was said to be extremely perilous.

The cult also worshipped the Sasobansam, a sort of arboreal ogre with iron teeth who they believed were the special servants of their god. Infants and criminals were chained to posts in the wooded hills for the Sasobansam to devour. The Lord Governor put an end to this practice, and many others equally vile.

The leaders of the cult once dwelt in a cave in the east of the country, in a place called the Mountain of Light. They dwell there no longer. I know this because I took a company of honest Englishmen, brave Christian soldiers every one, and we put an end to the evil of the Bloody Tongue. We killed their bloody-handed witchdoctors, and their apprentices, and their acolytes, yea, even their children. We burnt out the evil, root and branch. I interrogated the cult leaders to make sure that they held nothing back, and I am confident that nothing of them remains (save perhaps their ruddy-edged dagger, which I was unable to recover).

Such a fate, Mr Fraser, awaits all those who wilfully deny the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. A day of reckoning is coming, sir, when the Papists and the Brahmins and the Mohammedans and all the others who worship false idols will be cast down and hurled into the flame everlasting, and do not think that just because you are a fellow Englishman that you will be spared.

I remain yours Faithfully,

Providence Baxter



## HANDOUT #3 – ZUANG'S REPORT

## -----REPORT #16-----

*(Translated from Mandarin Chinese)*

The fourth attempt to model the topography of the item was more successful than the previous three. Employing a modified Dee-Yau manifold permitted the coherent light to penetrate the dimensional boundary of the item's edge and discern the deep structure beyond. I am relatively confident that the item is a hyperfolded intrusion of a larger entity, most likely one of the fifth order. As suspected, the item's topography is mathematically congruent to a subset of Dho-Nha curves. Further study will determine the precise curve needed to feasibly impose the Dee-Yau manifold onto local space-time in order to permit the entity to unfold into our lower dimensions.

Presumably, the act of using the item in the correct ritual-sacrifice context would map precisely to that curve, thus creating the god-summoning effect claimed by the Cult of the Bloody Tongue. Physical evidence suggests that the cult have, in the past, attempted to recover the missing ritual components through trial-and-error experimentation. We are fortunate that they did not succeed - as dimensional barriers in general grow weaker as we approach the Grand Conjunction, I surmise that a successful invocation of the god would lead to a full manifestation and consequent calamities.

----

Efforts to determine a viable universal countermeasure are not yet successful. I no longer believe that the God of the Bloody Tongue associated with the item is a valid test subject for our banishing and binding projects.

----

Tests suggest that the item itself may be vulnerable to a correctly formulated banishing attack. Instead of driving away the entity, it may be possible to break its connection to this universe. I offer this as a possible route for further investigation, though I admit that it is a tactic of limited applicability, especially when dimensional barriers weaken sufficiently that the gods no longer need physical footholds or worshippers to aid their transition into our universe.

Research continues, as it must. I remain wholly confident that a determined and forceful effort will yield success in advance of the Grand Conjunction, despite recent setbacks.

----

As discussed, the item was returned to the Burandan government. (I recommend that the countermeasures discussed above be pursued in earnest, and obviously we must never give them any data that could be used to recreate the ritual).

Research continues.



## HANDOUT #4 – THE DREAM DOSSIER

*The first part of this dossier consists of a series of 'psychic photographs' – slices of memory from the team that investigated the Baxter estate. A patina of emotion covers each image.*

- **Approaching the Baxter House:** You're looking down a long driveway that winds through parkland to a big old stately home. A large chapel adjoins the main house. You can see a dozen cars parked outside. Your stomach churns, and you find yourself gripping the steering wheel tightly.
- **Overlooking the Grounds:** You're kneeling on a hillside overlooking the grounds of the Baxter house. The terrain here is clearly artificial. They've built a scale model of a mountain, and decorated it with transplanted plants, creating their own little corner of Buranda in England. It's their own private Mountain of Light. Your thaumometer ticks with the dispassionate horror of a Geiger counter.
- **The Library:** It's schizophrenia in paper and leather bindings here. Lots of religious texts and histories, with a strong Christian bent... and then an extensive collection of occult books. A 19th century reprint of the Dee *Necronomicon* jostles for space with Kierkegaard; *Cults of the New England Canaan* is shelved next to *A History of British Equatorial Guinea*. The Baxters took their occult lore seriously. It's all old-school stuff, all analogue magic without a hint of computational demonology, but they obviously knew what to look for. Dread drips down the walls and seeps into your bones.
- **The Mass Grave:** Down in the basement, you find... oh god... how deep is this pit? Tiled like a swimming pool, sheer sides, funnels for the blood... so many corpses. Hundreds of them. The ones on top are so fresh that they're still bleeding, but if you wade into that charnel house, you know you'd find victims going back seventy years. Above it all is a mural, depicting something dark and terrible, its horrible red tongue reaching out to drink the blood of the slain...
- **The Family Room:** You don't know where to look when you walk into this room. Twelve people sit around a long dining table. They're all dead. Young and old, men and women, children too, they're all dead, with cyanide-blue lips. There's a clear family resemblance between all of them. All of them died in agony, but they all kept their eyes fixed on the same spot – they all died staring at a picture hanging over the fireplace.

The painting shows Jane Baxter, stark naked, her body drenched in blood. In her gory hands she holds the Blade of the Thirsty One. Weird sigils writhe around her, making the picture painful to look at. As you stare at – you can't look away – her form seems to change. Her blood-drenched hair now seems to be a tongue of flame, rising from her head to devour the world. Her teeth become iron fangs as she embodies a living god.

*Attached to the dossier is a description written by Providence Baxter, detailing precisely how to use the Blade of the Thirsty One to invoke the God of the Bloody Tongue. He extracted it using torture from the last priest of the cult. The torture's described in lascivious detail, and that's the most pleasant part of the whole affair.*





## SCOTLAND

### CLASSIFIED FISHING BOAT BLUE

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE FISHING BOAT BLUE CLEARANCE,  
-----DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT-----

#### OVERVIEW

The upcoming referendum on Scottish independence poses a significant challenge for operations. Should Scotland secede from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, then bindings or treaties that specifically refer to that state may not automatically devolve onto a independent Scotland, resulting in the negation of those bindings. Action is required to ensure that certain poorly phrased bindings are reformed before the date of the referendum.

#### BACKGROUND

Discussion of Scottish home rule and independence movements are beyond the scope of this document; it is assumed that any readers are broadly familiar with the key parties and socio-economic questions involved. Should Scotland leave the Union, the possibility exists that certain bound entities would interpret this as a negation of any binding that invokes the name of the United Kingdom of Great Britain.

While economic entities do not customarily care or have any awareness of national politics, mathematical modelling of the treaty geases confirms that the foundational reference schema used maps directly to that political entity.

This is not the first time such an issue has arisen; when the Irish Free State was formed, some bound entities within the confines of the southern portion of the island of Ireland were able to break their bindings. Similar discontinuities occurred during other secessions and revolutions. While secret clauses and codicils can transfer a binding from one reference schema to another (for example, Clauses 19 and 20 of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921), these are at best stopgap measures.

In this case, both the proximity of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN and the increased media attention making secret sessions of Parliament unfeasible means that introducing a secret clause is not a viable alternative. This operation aimed to remake the geases, replacing the original foundational reference with something more robust.



## OPERATION OBJECTIVES

1. Identify any entities that live in Scotland or its territorial waters, or whose extradimensional domains intersect with our reality within Scotland.

In addition to the considerable BLUE HADES population in the North Sea (WHITE LABRADOR, LAMBENT BLACK), we have treaties with the Sawney ghouls, DANUBE CROSSING defectors, and other unique entities.

2. Identify any treaties with such entities

The text of these treaties must be reviewed in light of the possibility of Scottish independence; work with Mathematical Modelling to explore the decision space available to the bound entities after a rending of the foundation reference. Occult operations in Scotland go back to long before the 1707 Act of Union, so the deeper archives must be searched for references to obscure bargains made during the reign of James VI and other workings of the Invisible College.

3. Remake bindings

Any treaties or bindings should be re-cast using the approved devolution clause which ensures that the bound entity continues to obey the terms of its geas regardless of any change in the United Kingdom's structure. Note that this new geas cannot be applied while the old one is in effect; field operatives should ensure that the bound entity does not take advantage of this gap to cause any sort of mischief or apocalypse.

## KEY ISSUES

- Fortunately, the Benthic Treaty with BLUE HADES supersedes any local agreements, so we can be confident swarms of Deep Ones will not climb out of the Firth of Forth and devour the population simply because they are no longer under the aegis of Westminster.
- A related issue (under discussion in GAME BOAT BLUE) is the standing of this organisation or any future successor OCCINTEL group in an independent Scotland. The division of OCCINTEL facilities and assets may be even more critical and divisive than the debate over the Faslane submarine base. Field operatives should ensure that disagreements and internal divisions do not impact on the rebinding efforts.



## THE AZORES

### CLASSIFIED AZORIAN BLUE HADES

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE AZORIAN BLUE HADES  
CLEARANCE,  
-----DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT-----

SERIOUSLY, HOW CAN YOU NOT HAVE BLUE HADES CLEARANCE?  
HAVE YOU NEVER BEEN TO SCENIC DUNWICH?

#### OVERVIEW

Perhaps the most significant diplomatic treaty in human history was the Agreement of the Azores, in which humanity agreed to share this planet with an older and considerably more powerful species. While BLUE HADES had entered into bargains with various isolated communities, the Benthic Treaty represented a huge leap forward in human/Deep One relations. The treaty not only ensures that BLUE HADES no longer threatens our civilisation on the surface, it also allows for limited exchange of resources and information between both sides. Maintaining the détente with BLUE HADES is critical to the survival of our species.

#### BACKGROUND

During the 2013 round of revisions, BLUE HADES signalled that they intended to invoke sections of Article 8 and, if necessary, Article 4. The relevant clause in Article 8 permits BLUE HADES to request that humanity provide items or information of importance to the BLUE HADES civilisation; the Article 4 clause allows BLUE HADES to ignore the one-kilometre boundary if humanity fails to respond under Article 8. In short, they are going to provide us with a shopping list, and are threatening to invade if we don't play ball – or rather, play fetch.

Intelligence assets within BLUE HADES have procured a draft copy of the list. We have a brief window before BLUE HADES officially present us with the final list to analyse it, to procure the items, and to assess the possibility of extracting concessions in exchange for the items.

#### OPERATION OBJECTIVES

##### 1. Secure the draft list

The only extant copy of the draft list is in the possession of a Type III Hybrid, designated DEEP GILLED THROAT, currently located in an underwater city deep beneath the Pacific. Contact with DEEP GILLED THROAT thus far has been through oneiromancy; a field team must link up with the informant and obtain the list. This may require an overseas trip to New Zealand or another suitable meeting place, or possibly even an expedition below the one-kilometre treaty boundary if DEEP GILLED THROAT is unable to travel to the surface.



## 2. Analyse the list

On previous occasions when BLUE HADES invoked Article 8, they usually requested the return of artefacts taken from their surface operations prior to 1953 – relics from Esoteric Order of Dagon temples, books and scrolls, remains of Deep One hybrids killed in the Innsmouth raids, the protoshoggoths involved in CASE LAMBENT BLACK and so forth. They have, however, sometimes requested other objects including moon rocks, genetic material of various species, items of unknown providence from Central Africa, Australia and Antarctica, and even specific individuals (all of whom had BLUE HADES ancestry to some degree).

The contents of this new list may shed light on BLUE HADES activities and intent as we approach the conjunction. The list must also be reviewed for items or information that cannot be shared; they may ask for a breeding population of humans again, and there are only so many ways we can say 'no' politely.

## 3. Procure the items

This phase of the operation will be coordinated through the Department of Acquisitions, and may be outsourced to external assets as needed. Depending on the items on the list, acquisition may require extraordinary procurement through semi-legal means.

## 4. Analyse the items

As we may have only a short period in which to do so, time is of the essence.

## 5. Provide the items to BLUE HADES when they request them.

The Diplomatic Office, in conjunction with Predictive Branch and Legal Affairs, will determine what, if any, requests we will make in exchange for these items. The more of the items we have, the better our bargaining position.

## KEY ISSUES

- DEEP GILLED THROAT may intend to defect. However, if BLUE HADES learn of his activities, they may interpret it as a breach of the treaty as a whole, which would not be a desirable situation. Careful handling of DEEP GILLED THROAT is required, up to and including double-wet operations.
- We have yet to determine if the list is intended solely for us, or if BLUE HADES intend to present it to all signatories. If it is a general request, then there may be other acquisition teams searching for the items, especially if BLUE HADES hint that they will look favourably on whoever provides them with what they request.



# CHIPPING LICHBURY

## CLASSIFIED TROLL GARDENER RED

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE TROLL GARDENER RED  
CLEARANCE,  
-----DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT-----

### OVERVIEW

TROLL GARDENER is a powerful and apparently immortal sorcerer. He may be a human who has somehow prolonged his life with magic (and avoided the worst effects of k-syndrome) or an alien entity that masquerades as human or is bound to a human host. Just under one hundred years ago, TROLL GARDENER was successfully bound with a geas not to leave the confines of his home village. That geas is due to expire before the end of the year; it must be renewed or some other means of ensuring that TROLL GARDENER maintains his current neutrality must be found.

### BACKGROUND

Mr. Simon Wisman (TROLL GARDENER) lives at Hill Cottage, Fosse Road in the small village of Chipping Lichbury in the Cotswolds.

He has lived there for at least three hundred years. The Domesday book entry for Chipping Lichbury notes that a peasant named "Wyse" owned nine acres of land outside the village. An archaeological dig in the area discovered a mound of bones and pottery fragments dated to around 500BC; tooth marks on the bones match Wisman's dental records obtained from the local dentist.

99 years ago, members of the Invisible College (a precursor group to the present-day Laundry) fought a magical duel with TROLL GARDENER. The battle ended in a stalemate, and TROLL GARDENER agreed not to leave the village for a hundred years and a day, on condition that no other sorcerer dared trespass in the village. That deadline is approaching rapidly; the status and intent of TROLL GARDENER must be determined before the geas ends.

### OPERATION OBJECTIVES

#### 1. Gather information in Chipping Lichbury

Limited monitoring of TROLL GARDENER was performed throughout the 20th Century. He does not possess a telephone or computer, so ELINT was of limited use (we do have an archive of his Ceefax page requests). HUMINT was similarly challenging, as TROLL GARDENER appears to use a compulsion geas to stop any of the locals thinking too hard about the immortal wizard. Files on TROLL GARDENER are out of date and cannot be relied upon (especially as the agent assigned to monitor TROLL GARDENER spent most of his career sitting in the lounge of the *Owl and Weasel* instead of watching his target).



## 2. Open a dialogue with TROLL GARDENER

As per the original agreement with TROLL GARDENER, no member of the delegation may be a qualified sorcerer. Predictive Branch are "quite confident" that computational demonology does not breach the terms of the bargain struck with the Invisible College, so officers may deploy computer-assisted countermeasures and wards as needed.

## 3. If possible, convince TROLL GARDENER to willingly submit to a renewed geas

Officers are permitted to negotiate on behalf of HM Government in the event that TROLL GARDENER's compliance can be purchased or obtained through diplomatic means.

## 4. Ensure that TROLL GARDENER is pacified

The approach of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN will be heralded by a brief but immensely dangerous upswing in the magical permeability of our reality. In the case of an already-powerful sorcerer like TROLL GARDENER, this acceleration will considerably enhance his magical abilities.

The emergency of a renegade godlike entity in the Cotswolds is not an acceptable scenario; officers are to use whatever means are needed to ensure that TROLL GARDENER does not present a threat to security.

### KEY ISSUES

- TROLL GARDENER has vanished for several weeks at a time. According to intelligence gathered from Chipping Lichbury locals, he "goes on holiday", although he has not been observed leaving the village and there are no records of him ever travelling through any British port. If TROLL GARDENER is found to be absent during the time leading up to the expiration of the geas, officers are enjoined to enter the house and search for any information or active Gates that could provide clues to TROLL GARDENER's current location.
- TROLL GARDENER purchases a considerable amount of meat from the local butcher every week, and neighbours have reported "unearthly howling" coming from his garden. He does not own a dog.



## UNDER LONDON

### CLASSIFIED FLEET SUPPER

IF YOU DO NOT POSSESS FLEET SUPPER CLEARANCE,  
-----DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT-----

#### OVERVIEW

Under the terms of the Monster Control Act, ghouls in the United Kingdom enjoy legal protection as long as they voluntarily restrict their movements and feeding to agreed-upon limits. These limits must be regularly renegotiated as the ghoule population swells or declines.

The Department of Inhuman Resources reports that a new "ghoul queen" has claimed rulership over London's ghouls, and that this new monarch demands an immediate reassessment of the borders of ghouldom. If an agreement cannot be reached, the ghoule queen threatens to ignore the terms of the Monster Control and allow her ghouls to move openly on the surface.

Action is required to placate the ghoule queen in order to avoid a second Bazalgette War.

#### BACKGROUND

Ghouls (*homo sapiens necrosis*) are a mutant sub-species of humans. The transformation from human into ghoule is triggered by the consumption of meat from human cadavers. Ghouls are stronger, faster and considerably long-lived compared to normal humans. Ghoule colonies exist throughout the world, and most large cities have a sizeable ghoule population.

'Younger' ghouls often appear sufficiently human that they can blend in with the surface population at night, and can still communicate comprehensibly; older ghouls become progressively more animalistic and monstrous, and their thought processes cannot be easily understood.

Under the terms of the 1969 Amendment to the Monster Control Act, ghouls are considered to be citizens of the United Kingdom. The Laundry monitors the ghoule population, works to keep their existence secret, and supplies them with nutritional supplements and a limited amount of necrotic tissue. Despite occasional disputes over territory, this arrangement has provided successful and resilient, largely due to the influence and authority of the previous ruler of the ghouls, Black Eyed Jack.

#### OPERATION OBJECTIVES

##### 1. Ensure that the ghouls are contained

The primary objective is the safety and continued ignorance of the surface population, as well as London's vital infrastructure. Power, water, communications, rail tunnels and other subterranean structures are all vulnerable to ghoule attack.



The London Underground network is especially vulnerable: more than 20 million journeys are made each day, which means more than 20 million opportunities for a hungry ghoul to pop out of a utility tunnel and devour a taxpaying commuter.

### **2. Re-establish cordial relations with the ghouls and define mutually-acceptable boundaries**

Construction works associated with Crossrail have crossed the boundary into the Underground Kingdom of the Ghouls, so we expect to begin any negotiations at a disadvantage. Negotiators may offer increased surface access, more corpses, and shiny beads and trinkets like games consoles and Apple products to the ghouls.

### **3. Gather all information possible on ghoul folklore**

This regime change is an unprecedented upheaval in ghoul society under London. We should take the opportunity to learn about ghoul culture, tradition and politics during this transition period, when they may be more forthcoming or open to investigation.

#### **KEY ISSUES**

- The status of Black Eyed Jack, the previous ghoul ruler, is unknown. Jack was a valuable ally; if alive, he could continue to be an asset and informant.
- The origins of the new ghoul queen must be ascertained, ideally before negotiations begin. If she is not a British citizen, that conjures a number of legal issues.
- Negotiators may be eaten.



## INTO THE ARCHIVES

### CLASSIFIED PLUTONIAN ABBOT GREY

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE PLUTONIAN ABBOT GREY  
CLEARANCE,  
-----DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT-----

#### OVERVIEW

The organisation commonly referred to as the Laundry, and is officially SOE Station X, inherited many of the assets and responsibilities of older OCCINTEL organisations and groups, notably the original Invisible College. As such, it also inherited the treaties and bargains made by those precursors. Regrettably, due to the paucity or eccentric filing methods of documentation prior to ISO-9000 methodology, the specifics of the Laundry's bargains with certain extradimensional powers are missing or obscure. The present-day Board is not always certain of the responsibilities inherited from its previous incarnations.

#### BACKGROUND

Building on work done through TRANQUIL and GRAVEDUST, as well as OLD DREAMER, PLUTONIAN ABBOT aims to entangle the consciousnesses of present-day officers with their counterparts in history, enabling the present-day staff to experience past events. Once the experiment is correctly calibrated, Q Division is confident that they will be able to zero in on the missing treaties and bargains and gather the required information.

This is not technically time travel, but neither is it a simple necromantic recording of memory. The entanglement means that the travellers will be able to act in the unobserved spaces; as long as nothing they do contradicts history, they will have freedom of action while in the 'past'. In effect, they will possess the historical counterparts. Q Division is also confident that should a traveller attempt to alter history, the psychic entanglement will collapse before a universe-destroying paradox is created. Q Division's confidence on this question is, of course, deeply comforting to the Diplomatic Office (Unconventional).

The initial target zone for PLUTONIAN ABBOT GREY is the interbellum period (1919-1938).

#### OPERATION OBJECTIVES

1. Search the archives for documents, relics and remains associated with the target zone

These documents are necessary not only to calibrate the PLUTONIAN ABBOT experiment, but also to provide necessary background briefing information for the travellers.



## **2. Entangle the psyches of designated travellers with their historical counterparts**

The ideal targets for this operation are those on the fringes of the Invisible College, who have access to the required information but are sufficiently obscure that they retain maximum freedom of action.

## **3. Observe and report on any treaties, workings or bindings**

Note that extradimensional observers may be able to perceive entangled entities, and may demand an explanation or become hostile to entangled travellers.

## **4. Do not collapse the space-time continuum**

We really can't stress this one enough.

### **KEY ISSUES**

- PLUTONIAN ABBOT experiments have confirmed that the time dilation factor varies unpredictably. Travellers may experience months of subjective time in only seconds of objective time, or the ratio may be much closer to parity, in which case travellers will appear to be in a vegetative state in the present day while their minds are entangled in the past. This issue has multiple stakeholders (including Health & Safety, Medical & Psychological, Janitorial, Payroll (including pensions), and Counter-Possession).
- Again, we are concerned about the possibility of creating a universe-destroying paradox and require further reassurance on this question.



# THE HOUSE OF BOKRUG

## CLASSIFIED GAME JERICHORED

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE GAME JERICHORED CLEARANCE,  
-----DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT-----

### OVERVIEW

JERICHORED is a Class IV Exonome that inhabits a dimension relatively close to our own. Contact was made with JERICHORED during the 1980s, and the Diplomatic Office successfully negotiated a treaty with the entity in 1991. In exchange for propitiatory offerings and automated worship (computers running an algorithmic derivation of the *Rites of Ib*), JERICHORED agreed to assist active operations and to refrain from attempting to enter our dimension.

### BACKGROUND

JERICHORED manifests to human perceptions as a giant and somewhat flabby water-lizard. Traces of Bokrug-worship can be discerned in the Sumerian and proto-Babylonian cultures, but these traces vanish after around 2,500BC. According to legend, the inhabitants of a city called Mnar slaughtered their neighbours, the Bokrug-worshipping people of Ib, and stole the idol of Bokrug. In retaliation, Bokrug later manifested in Mnar and destroyed the city.

Recent studies (Petersen, Maunsell et al, 1999) suggest that the account of Mnar (which Petersen speculates could be the root of the biblical tale of Gomorrah) was altered by enemies of the Bokrug cult. In Petersen's translation, the beings of Ib are exonomes who pass on Bokrug-worship to the city of Mnar. The idol of Bokrug later appears in Mnar, and soon afterwards the city vanished. Petersen theorises that the idol of Bokrug is a physical component of a Level 5 Gate ritual that carried Mnar into the dimension of Ib. The worship of the inhabitants of Mnar was sufficiently pleasing to Bokrug that he devoured/transformed/abducted them.

Two weeks ago, the Idol of Bokrug manifested outside 111 Cannon Street in London. It was removed to a holding facility in the New Annexe, but has since been stolen from there. How the thieves managed to evade the warding spells and guardians is under investigation.

### OPERATION OBJECTIVES

#### 1. Recover the stolen idol

Predictive Branch believes the idol of Bokrug is still within London, probably within the confines of the M25.



## 2. Return the Idol to JERICHO RED's dimension

Preferably *before* the idol sucks all of London through a Gate.

## 3. Politely refuse JERICHO RED's offer

The manifestation of the idol suggests that JERICHO RED intends to treat London like Mnar; he is pleased with our worship and wishes to bring us closer to him. The attitude of the Board is that while this is very flattering, it is not in the best interests of the United Kingdom at this time for the inhabitants of London to be dragged into an alien dimension to be transformed into green voiceless amphibians with bulging eyes to worship Bokrug for all eternity.

However, the Board wishes to continue our current arrangement with JERICHO RED, so our refusal must not offend the entity.

### KEY ISSUES

- The theft of the idol from a secure holding facility suggests that one or more members of the Laundry may be involved.
- Predictive Branch estimates that we have at most 72 hours before the gate to Ib opens.



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# VICTORIANA

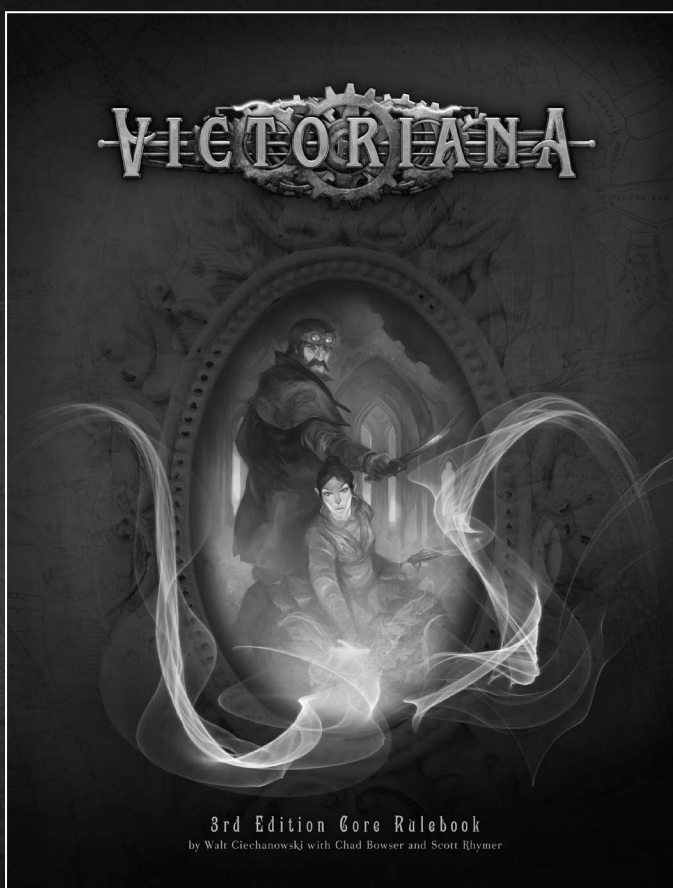
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