



AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

FOR USE WITH THE LAUNDRY RPG





The

Laundry Files

AS

ABOVE,

SO

BELOW

Based on the Laundry Files novels by Charles Stross.

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Introduction

Few of our decisions really mean anything. File that report, fill that spreadsheet, attend that meeting – and at the end of the day, did any of that matter? Few of us make life and death decisions – and that’s a luxury. Even in the Laundry, that secret branch of government charged with protecting the world from horrors unimaginable, most decisions are inconsequential. Do you fix the printer in the HR office first or the DVD drive in the travel laptop first? Do you read the files about the incidence of birth deformations in cattle near dimensional weak spots, or the new directive on time tracking work emails while out of the office? (Hint: neither of them will ever have any future relevance to you).

This book is about two very different types of people whose decisions matter.

When there’s a clear and present danger, when the Laundry needs to apply force very quickly and very directly, they turn to the professionals. They call in the SAS, the United Kingdom Special Forces. Tough and highly trained, they’ll get the job done. The decisions made by Special Forces matter; their decisions are often made in the split second, and are the difference between life and death. Hesitate, or make the wrong call, and you die, or your squadmates die, or maybe everyone in the world dies. They’re down in the trenches, in the foxholes, in the godforsaken corners of the world, on lonely plateaus in Central Asia or warzones in Africa, spending the coin of their lives to complete the mission.

And then there are those in the corridors of power, managers and strategists and sorcerers who must weigh the fates of nations. They meet in oak-panelled rooms with green baize tables in Whitehall, in dimly-lit bunkers beneath obscure government buildings, in anonymous conference rooms with their counterparts from other nations, and they try to prepare humanity for those unimaginable horrors. Their decisions are made in committees, in briefing documents,

in agendas and initiatives, in the shuffling of papers – but they affect more people than any bullet or bomb.

There may be thousands of miles between Whitehall and that bloody ditch where a British soldier gives their life to get the job done, but they’re two sides of the same coin.

Using This Book

As Above, So Below describes operations protocols, tactics, equipment and character generation for Special Forces working with the Laundry. It also contains details on high-level meetings, on politics and status games, and how the Laundry fits into the British establishment. These are two spheres where the average Laundry player character (PC) never goes. Decisions get handed down from on high at the start of a mission (*your manager orders you to investigate...*) and the final confrontation often gets handed off to the Special Forces (*having uncovered the Cthulhu cult, the player characters need to hold out until OCCULUS arrives to clean up*). As above, so below – and the average Laundry PC is somewhere in the middle.

The intent of this book is to allow you to expand the scope of your games by bringing in temporary player characters. With these rules, you can quickly create a team of Special Forces operatives who’ll take over from your regular PCs when there’s fighting to be done. You can quickly whistle up a high-level committee meeting where shadowy senior figures make plans that the regular player characters have to implement, or trace your player characters’ rise through the ranks of the Laundry bureaucracy until they’re the senior management giving orders to new recruits. With these rules, there’s nowhere for the players to hide, no way for them to avoid making the hard decisions.

It’s all on them. They must decide who lives and who dies.





Boots on the Ground

This chapter takes you through the procedure for creating your own Special Forces character. Unlike regular Laundry officers, Special Forces characters are highly competent and highly focussed. Oh, and as they're only called in when things get really nasty, they tend to get horribly killed in the course of play. Therefore, we've streamlined the character generation process quite a bit.

Step One: Identity

Write down your character's name in the space provided on your character sheet. Your commanding officer will need it when writing a letter home to your family in the unfortunate event of your death. Also choose your character's gender at this point; the vast majority of Special Forces soldiers are male, but some exceptions have broken the Kevlar ceiling.

Step Two: Character Package

Pick one of the character packages listed on page 6 to 8. Each package gives a set of pre-rolled characteristics, along with some derived characteristics, starting skills and a suggestion of personality traits. Special Forces characters have already gone through extensive training and have been tested in battle – the guys with low CON, DEX or INT got washed out in recruitment, and those with low POW or CHA never made it through the rigorous selection process. You're the best of the best.

The names of the character packages are just nicknames, and while they might point you in the direction of a particular role, they aren't prescriptive. Taking the 'Officer Material' package doesn't guarantee promotion, just like the 'Lone Wolf' package doesn't mean you're the squad sniper.

Also remember to note down the standard equipment for your mission profile.

Step Three: Age

Your character starts at an age of $\text{EDU} + 4 + 1d6$.

You may add an extra 5 years to your age; if you do so, roll on the Veteran Action table. You may do this as many times as you wish, but your character cannot be more than 40 years old.

Veteran Action Table

d10	Result
1	Quiet, as tours go. Gain another 20 discretionary skill points.
2	A hostage rescue operation went badly wrong. Lose 5 SAN; gain First Aid +10%, Spot +10%, Stealth +10%. You've promised to never make the same mistake again – what was that mistake?
3	You were captured, tortured and interrogated by enemy forces. Lose 5 SAN and 1 point of either STR, CON or POW; gain a +10% bonus to Endurance, +10% Fast Talk, +10% Insight and +10% Status. Also, decide on which of your colleagues was on the team that rescued you, if any.
4	You were trapped behind enemy lines, but survived. Gain Navigate +10%, Hide +10%, Swim +10%, and a souvenir from the region you were forced to cross.
5	You participated in black operations during (or just before) a conflict. Gain Demolitions +10%, Status +10%, Strategy +10%. You learned something about that country's OCCINTEL activities that may be relevant later on, so specify the country or group you helped take down.
6	You participated in a high-profile mission that attracted media attention. Gain Fast Talk +10%, Status +10%. You can also either have written a book (no immediate benefit, but you'll be wealthy when you leave the military; gain +5% SAN) or kept silent (no benefit, but the Special Forces don't take bows after a performance).
7	You've worked with the Laundry before, on a cult suppression mission. Lose 5 SAN; gain Cthulhu Mythos +5%, Knowledge (Occult) +10%, and +10% in any skill related to how you took down the cult.
8	You helped contain a significant supernatural incursion. Lose 10 SAN; gain Cthulhu Mythos +10%, Knowledge (Occult) +10%, and Status +10%. You also still have a Class III Ward left over from that bad business.
9	You've been off-world. Lose 10 SAN; gain Cthulhu Mythos +10%, Navigate +10% and Technology Use (Survival Gear) +40%.
10	You've seen things that... Lose 15 SAN.

Step Four: Training & Specialisation

All members of a Special Forces group have the same core skills, already included in the character packages. They are familiar with all conventional (non-occult) weapons in the team and able to operate most other weapon systems encountered. These may range from spiky club-swords used by cultists to gizmo-laden high-tech firearms. If it can be operated by a human, a Special Forces trooper can make it hurt people. They may not understand all possible features of a complex weapon but the basic principles of how to break things and hurt people are the operator's key area of expertise.

Operators are also able to use most conventional explosives, grenades and similar military hardware plus vehicles, communications equipment and the like. Teams are highly skilled with their own equipment but should be able to figure out foreign or unfamiliar items from general procedures. Other skills that all operators have in common are stealth, observation skills, swimming, running and climbing plus a can-do mindset. They also have the ability to wait and observe patiently for a long period then go from zero to full-throttle mayhem in an instant.

Each character package also includes basic equipment suited to that operator's role.

It is not possible for a small team to cover all available specialties, but teams will include as broad a range of specialist skills as possible. For example it is highly unlikely that a small force would have more than one sniper, unless the mission required it. Larger forces have the luxury of overlapping a little.

Different specialties gain different added skills. Pick two specialties from the list on page 9 to 11. The Gamemaster (GM) may assign more specialties as needed.

Each specialty package includes the added gear your character carries.

Step Five: Discretionary Skill Points

Your character package gave you a number of discretionary skill points; you may now allocate them to any skills you want, as long as it doesn't bring that skill above 90%.

Step Six: Team Building

Describe your character briefly to the player to your left. That player decides on the squad's nickname or callsign for your character. You don't have to use your nickname, but rest assured the rest of the team will, so get used to it.

Collectively, decide on the team's Commanding Officer (CO). If there's no obvious candidate, or if you can't come to a majority decision, it goes to the oldest character. Use the highest Command skill to break ties. The CO gets an extra 20 Discretionary Skill Points to spend, as well as +20% to Bureaucracy and Status.

Optional Rule: Retroactive Skills

Instead of assigning discretionary skill points before play begins, players may do so at any point during play, as long as that player hasn't tested that skill already. The player must describe briefly how their character honed that particular skill. For example, instead of allocating her 40 discretionary points during character generation, Edel saves them for later. During the game, the team has to cross a treacherous ice bridge across a chasm, requiring an Athletics test. Edel's character has Athletics 70%, but she's still not willing to trust those odds; she puts 20 of her discretionary points into Athletics, bringing her to 90%. "Just like that time in Antarctica", her character mutters, "with that city in the mountains".

If Edel had already rolled Athletics for that character, then they wouldn't be eligible for discretionary skill points.

You can also apply this rule to equipment requisitioning. Instead of making the players roll for all their extra equipment beforehand, you can let them roll in the middle of play, as long as it's plausible. For example, Edel asks if her character has a demolition charge on her. The GM asks her to make a Status test; she fails, but makes up the difference by spending the mission budget, as per the normal rules (see page 108 of *The Laundry Core Rulebook*). As the test is now a successful one, her character always had a demolition charge stowed away inside a backpack, just waiting for the right moment. Preparedness pays off.

Standard Gear

Name	Type	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ
Combat Knife	Melee (knife)	1d4+1 +db	-	Impaling	-	-	-	1
Walther P99	Firearms (Handgun)	1d10+1 (.40 calibre)	3	Impaling	20	12	12	1
H&K MP7	Firearms (SMG)	2d6	3 or burst	Impaling	40	8	20, 30 or 40	1.5
Flashbang x 4	Grenade (throw)	Special	1	Special	-	4	1	0.5

For Field missions

Name	Type	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ
C8 Carbine (L119A1)	Firearms (Assault Rifle)	2d6+3	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	200	12	30	3
Grenade x2	Grenade (throw)	4d6	1	Knockback	-	8	1	0.5
Field Kit								4
Field Coveralls								-

Step Seven: Extra Gear

If the team needs extra gear, they can requisition it using the normal Status rules described on page 106 of *The Laundry Core Rulebook*. Special Forces missions usually have a Budget of 25-100, and there's no benefit to not spending it all (apart from the encumbrance rules, see **Encumbrance** box on page 28). Special Forces characters are unlikely to qualify for most Esoteric Weapons or heavy-duty Occult items – if the team needs a thaumometer or SCORPION STARE support, then some poor Laundry berk gets to tag along for the ride, like Bob did in *The Atrocity Archives*.

Character Packages

Officer Material

.....
You're cool, collected and charismatic. With a dry cool wit, you could be an action hero.

STR 14 CON 15 SIZ 12 INT 16 POW 13
DEX 12 CHA 16 EDU 19 SAN 65 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Major Wound Level: 8

Experience Bonus: 8

Move: 8

Discretionary Skill Points: 80 skill points.

Starting Age: 23+1d6

Skills: Athletics +40%, Bureaucracy +20%, Climb +20%, Command +40%, Computer Use +20%, Demolition +40%, Disguise +20%, Drive +40%, Etiquette +20%, Fine Manipulation +20%, First Aid +20%, Grapple +40%, Hide +40%, Jump +20%, Insight +20%, Knowledge (Politics) +20%, Knowledge (History) +20%, Listen +20%, Navigate +40%, Persuade 20%, Pilot +20%, Repair +20%, Ride +20%, Sense +20%, Spot +40%, Status +40%, Stealth +40%, Strategy +60%, Swim +20%, Technology Use (various) +20%, Track +20%.



BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Combat Skills:

Artillery +40%, Brawl +20%, Dodge +20%, Firearm (Assault Rifle) +40%, Firearm (Pistol) +40%, Firearm (Rifle) +40%, Firearm (SMG) +40%, Heavy Weapons (various) +40%, Throw +20%.

Tough as Nails

Nothing slows you down, nothing hurts you. You may not be the biggest guy in the fight, but you'll be the last one standing.

STR 17 CON 18 SIZ 15 INT 13 POW 10

DEX 12 CHA 10 EDU 17 SAN 50 HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1d6

Major Wound Level: 8

Experience Bonus: 7

Move: 8

Discretionary Skill Points: 40 skill points.

Starting Age: 21+1d6

Skills: Athletics +60%, Climb +40%, Command +20%, Computer Use +20%, Demolition +40%, Disguise +20%, Drive +40%, Fine Manipulation +20%, First Aid +20%, Grapple +60%, Hide +40%, Jump +40%, Listen +20%, Navigate +20%, Persuade +20%, Pilot +20%, Repair +20%, Ride +20%, Sense +40%, Spot +40%, Status +20%, Stealth +60%, Strategy +40%, Swim +40%, Technology Use (various) +20%, Track +20%.

Combat Skills:

Artillery +40%, Brawl +40%, Dodge +20%, Firearm (Assault Rifle) +40%, Firearm (Pistol) +40%, Firearm (Shotgun) +40%, Firearm (SMG) +40%, Heavy Weapons (Rocket Launcher) +60%, Throw +20%.

Lone Wolf

You don't get into the Special Forces without being able to trust your squad mates, and you know you can rely on them in a pinch. Still, you're most comfortable operating alone or in two-man team, on recon or sniper duty.

STR 14 CON 15 SIZ 13 INT 15 POW 14

DEX 16 CHA 10 EDU 18 SAN 70 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Major Wound Level: 8

Experience Bonus: 8

Move: 8

Discretionary Skill Points: 60 skill points.

Starting Age: 22+1d6

Skills: Athletics +40%, Climb +20%, Command +20%, Computer Use +20%, Demolition +40%, Disguise +40%, Drive +60%, Fast Talk +20%, Fine Manipulation +20%, First Aid +20%, Grapple +40%, Hide +60%, Jump +20%, Listen +40%, Navigate +40%, Pilot +20%, Repair +40%,

Ride +40%, Sense +20%, Spot +40%, Status +20%, Stealth +60%, Strategy +40%, Swim +20%, Technology Use (various) +20%, Track +40%.

Combat Skills:

Artillery +40%, Brawl +20%, Dodge +20%, Firearm (Assault Rifle) +40%, Firearm (Pistol) +40%, Firearm (Rifle) +40%, Firearm (SMG) +40%, Heavy Weapons (various) +40%, Throw +20%.

Survivor

You've faced death many times, but cling to life with incredible tenacity. If anyone's coming home from this one, it's you. The others might not be so lucky.

STR 13 CON 17 SIZ 13 INT 14 POW 15

DEX 16 CHA 13 EDU 17 SAN 75 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Major Wound Level: 9

Experience Bonus: 7

Move: 8

Discretionary Skill Points: 40 skill points.

Starting Age: 21+1d6

Skills: Appraise +20%, Athletics +60%, Bargain +20%, Climb +20%, Command +20%, Computer Use +20%, Demolition +40%, Disguise +20%, Drive +40%, Fine Manipulation +20%, First Aid +40%, Grapple +40%, Hide +40%, Jump +20%, Listen +40%, Navigate +40%, Pilot +20%, Repair +20%, Ride +20%, Sense +40%, Spot +60%, Status +20%, Stealth +40%, Strategy +40%, Swim +40%, Technology Use (various) +20%, Track +40%.

Combat Skills:

Artillery +40%, Brawl +20%, Dodge +20%, Firearm (Assault Rifle) +40%, Firearm (Pistol) +40%, Firearm (Rifle) +40%, Firearm (SMG) +40%, Heavy Weapons (various) +40%, Throw +20%.

Sensitive Soul

You don't fit the mould of most Special Forces types – most people mistake you for a teacher or a counsellor or an artist. Surely you're too nice to be slitting throats in the Hindu Kush?

STR 13 CON 15 SIZ 13 INT 14 POW 17

DEX 13 CHA 16 EDU 17 SAN 85 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Major Wound Level: 7

Experience Bonus: 7

Move: 8

Discretionary Skill Points: 40 skill points.

Starting Age: 21+1d6

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

Skills: Art (any) +20%, Athletics +40%, Climb +20%, Command +20%, Computer Use +20%, Demolition +40%, Disguise +40%, Drive +40%, Etiquette +20%, Fast Talk +20%, Fine Manipulation +20%, First Aid +20%, Grapple +40%, Hide +40%, Jump +20%, Insight +20%, Knowledge (Occult) +20%, Knowledge (any) +20%, Listen +20%, Navigate +20%, Pilot +20%, Repair +20%, Ride +20%, Sense +40%, Spot +40%, Status +20%, Stealth +60%, Strategy +40%, Swim +20%, Teach +20%, Technology Use (various) +20%, Track +20%.

Combat Skills:

Artillery +40%, Brawl +20%, Dodge +20%, Firearm (Assault Rifle) +40%, Firearm (Pistol) +40%, Firearm (Rifle) +40%, Firearm (SMG) +40%, Heavy Weapons (various) +40%, Throw +20%.

Technically Minded

You work with things that go fast and explode. You prefer solutions that involve the clever use of equipment – or high explosive.

STR 13 **CON** 13 **SIZ** 13 **INT** 17 **POW** 10
DEX 12 **CHA** 14 **EDU** 19 **SAN** 50 **HP** 13

Damage Bonus: None

Major Wound Level: 8

Experience Bonus: 8

Move: 8

Discretionary Skill Points: 80 skill points.

Starting Age: 23+1d6

Skills: Athletics +40%, Climb +20%, Command +20%, Computer Use (any two) +40%, Demolition +60%, Disguise +20%, Drive +40%, Fine Manipulation +40%, First Aid +20%, Grapple +40%, Heavy Machine +20%,

Hide +40%, Jump +20%, Listen +20%, Navigate +20%, Pilot +20%, Repair +40%, Ride +20%, Sense +20%, Spot +40%, Status +20%, Stealth +40%, Strategy +40%, Swim +20%, Technology Use (any two) +40%, Track +20%.

Combat Skills:

Artillery +40%, Brawl +20%, Dodge +20%, Firearm (Assault Rifle) +40%, Firearm (Pistol) +40%, Firearm (Rifle) +40%, Firearm (SMG) +40%, Heavy Weapons (various) +40%, Throw +20%.

Spook

You're more at home undercover in plain clothes than in camo gear. You straddle the line between Special Forces and espionage.

STR 14 **CON** 14 **SIZ** 11 **INT** 16 **POW** 14
DEX 13 **CHA** 13 **EDU** 18 **SAN** 70 **HP** 13

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Major Wound Level: 7

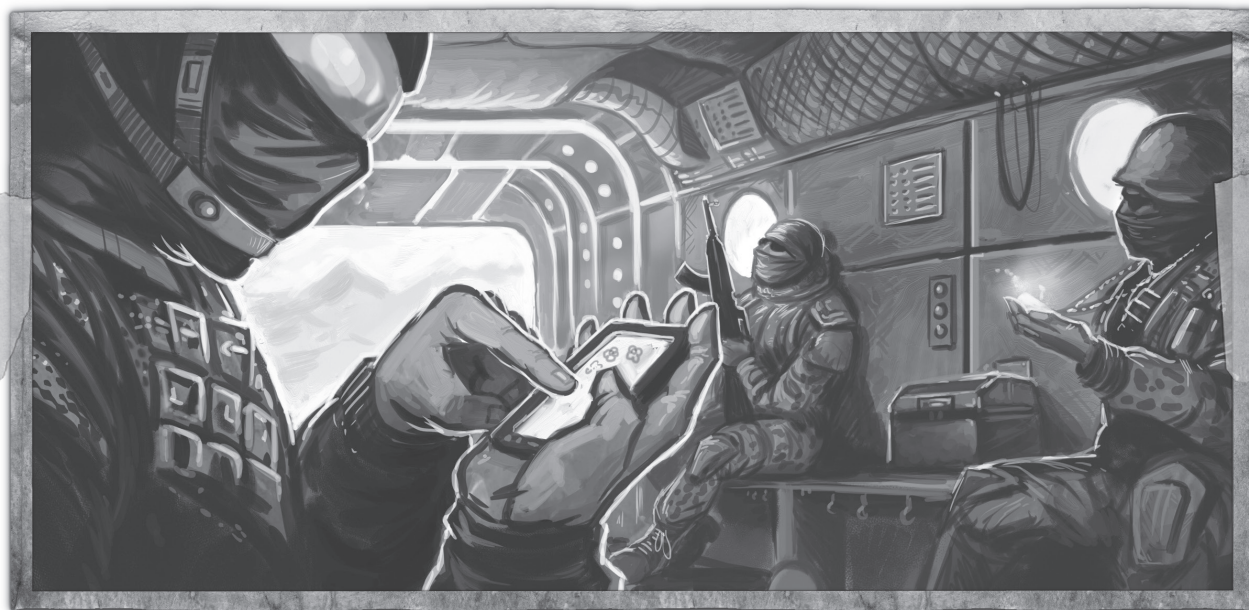
Experience Bonus: 8

Move: 8

Discretionary Skill Points: 60 skill points.

Starting Age: 22+1d6

Skills: Athletics +40%, Bureaucracy +20%, Climb +20%, Command +20%, Computer Use +20%, Demolition +40%, Disguise +40%, Drive +60%, Fast Talk +20%, Fine Manipulation +20%, First Aid +20%, Grapple +40%, Hide +40%, Jump +20%, Knowledge (Espionage) +20%, Knowledge (Politics) +20%, Language (any) +20%, Listen +20%, Navigate +20%, Pilot +20%, Repair +20%, Ride +20%, Sense +20%, Spot +60%, Status +20%, Stealth +60%, Strategy +40%, Swim +20%, Technology Use (Surveillance) +40%, Track +20%.



Combat Skills:

Artillery +40%, Brawl +20%, Dodge +20%, Firearm (Assault Rifle) +40%, Firearm (Pistol) +40%, Firearm (Rifle) +40%, Firearm (SMG) +40%, Heavy Weapons (various) +40%, Throw +20%.

Other Skills:

Add 20 Skill Points to each of the following skills: Bureaucracy, Disguise, Drive, Fast Talk, Knowledge (Espionage), Knowledge (Politics), Language (any), Spot, Stealth, Technology Use (Surveillance).

Specialities

Close Protection

Some operators are trained as bodyguards, which goes beyond simply shooting or beating up anyone or anything threatening the principal (the person being protected). Close Protection experts are trained to select a safe route, to spot potential threats and avoid or neutralise them, to search and secure a building, and to organise less skilled personnel into an effective guard system. Close Protection experts associated with the Laundry often have some knowledge of the occult and can recognise many unusual threats that would not be spotted by a conventionally trained bodyguard.

Skills: Command +20%, Brawl +20%, Dodge +20%, Drive +20%, Etiquette +20%, First Aid +20%, Insight +20%, Knowledge (Streetwise) +40%, Sense +40%, Spot +20%.

Gear: Class III Ward, concealed bulletproof vest (Armour 4).

Communications

Communications experts have the technical skills needed to maintain a link between the team and their controllers. They can operate and repair specialised communications systems, eavesdrop on enemy traffic, and conceal their position from hostile forces. On Laundry operations, Communications officers often have to deal with added complications, like the difficulty of getting a radio signal through an interdimensional gate.

Skills: Computer Use (Repair) +20%, Hide +20%, Language (any two) +20%, Listen +20%, Repair (Electronic) +20%, Science (Cryptography, Physics) +20%, Strategy +20%, Technology Use (Communications) +60%.

Gear: Comms Kit.

Counter-Revolutionary Warfare (CRW)

CRW experts are trained to deal with insurgents, revolutionaries and terrorists who might attempt to take control of an area or group. CRW experts are skilled at observing and watching for suspicious patterns of behaviour as well as taking rather more direct action to stop an attack. Covert operations and close-quarters combat are important skills in this arena, and these can also be used against less conventional threats. Laundry-affiliated operators specialise in dealing with cult activity or occult-terrorism.

Skills: Command +20%, Demolitions +20%, Firearms (Pistol) +20%, Firearms (Rifle) +20%, Hide +20%, Insight +20%, Knowledge (Anthropology) +20%, Knowledge (Politics) +20%, Language (any two) +20%, Strategy +40%, Teach +20%.

Gear: None, usually, but you can source briefcases of cash or high-grade heroin if you need to bribe someone.

Explosives

Explosives experts make destruction a fine art, and are trained to improvise explosives as well as to use a variety of standard ones. An explosives expert can place charges to get the right result, ranging from utter destruction to moving or damaging the target. Explosive ambushes can also be rigged – anyone can plant a claymore mine or two, but it takes an expert to get the most out of the available resources. Some experts are trained to use nuclear devices or to make them safe when someone else has tried to use one.

Skills: Climb +20%, Demolition +40%, Fine Manipulation +40%, Heavy Weapons (Rocket Launcher) +20%, Repair (Electrical) +20%, Science (Chemistry, Physics) +40%, Throw +20%.

Gear: A selection of demo charges appropriate to the mission.

Heavy Weapons

When you absolutely need something dead (or at least blown into lots of little wet pieces) call in the Heavy Weapons operator. These skills are normally applied to the destruction of enemy tanks and other armoured vehicles, but what frags the T-72 also frags the shoggoth.

Skills: Athletics +20%, Demolitions +40%, Heavy Weapons (any three) +40%, Hide +20%, Stealth +20%, Spot +20%.

Gear: Any one launcher or light support weapon.

Hostile Environment

After the first British Lunar Expedition, the SAS developed a hostile environment course for toshers and other personnel who will go into places inimical to human life – chemical spills, radioactive zones, alien worlds, low or high-gravity environments. They train in using Chemical-Biological-Radiological-Nuclear (CBRN) suits and other survival gear, in identifying and dealing with toxic threats, and in moving and fighting while encumbered.

Skills: Athletics +20%, Demolition +20%, First Aid +20%, Medicine +20%, Sense +20%, Science (Physics, Chemistry) +40%, Technology Use (CBRN Gear) +40%, Swim +20%.

Gear: CBRN suit or EPED suit, depending on what's on the far side.

Human Terrain

Experts in anthropology and psychology, Human Terrain operators study customs and beliefs from different cultures. They can make friends and influence people in a dozen languages, and have contacts everywhere from Irkutsk to Cape Town. Those attached to Laundry operations have also studied cult psychology and occult traditions.

Skills: Bureaucracy +20%, Command +20%, Disguise +20%, Fast Talk +20%, Insight +20%, Knowledge (Anthropology, Espionage, Politics) +40%, Languages (any three) +40%, Strategy +20%, Teach +20%.

Gear: None.

Infiltration

Specialists at getting into places where they're not supposed to be, Infiltration operators combine an incredible talent for stealth and deception with an understanding of architecture and infrastructure, enabling them to identify the best routes in and out of a target area.

Skills: Athletics +20%, Climb +20%, Demolition +20%, Fine Manipulation +20%, Hide +40%, Melee (Knife) or Grapple +40%, Listen +20%, Stealth +40%, Strategy +20%.

Gear: Ghillie suit if needed.

Intelligence Analysis

Usually, when a Special Forces team is deployed, all the decisions have been made at a higher level, and all that remains is the implementation of that decision. In other, murkier situations though, having expert analysis on hand can make all the difference. Intelligence Analysts do everything that a

Laundry spook does from behind a desk in London, only they may be called to carry out the consequences of their own analyses and recommendations. When a desk analyst recommends that a potential target be eliminated, it's a cold and clinical decision, divorced from the reality. A Special Forces analyst doesn't have that comforting distance.

Skills: Bureaucracy +20%, Insight +20%, Knowledge (Espionage) +40%, Knowledge (Politics) +40%, Language (any one) +20%, Persuade +20%, Research +40%, Status +20%.

Gear: Ruggedised laptop.

Languages

The ability to communicate with the locals is useful when operating in foreign countries and many operators are fluent in one or more languages. Others have a smattering of various languages, enabling them to get across basic ideas like 'turn off the summoning grid and surrender' or to identify a suspect crate. The ability to figure out which Chinese-labelled shipping crate contains boots and which one has the nuclear warhead in it can come in useful from time to time. In certain special operations teams, some operators may have learned to speak, read or at least identify non-human languages.

Skills: Bargain +20%, Command +20%, Etiquette +20%, Fast Talk +20%, Insight +20%, Knowledge (Anthropology) +20%, Language (any five) +60%, Listen +20%, Research +20%.

Gear: None

Medical

All personnel are capable of performing high-quality first aid, but a medical specialist goes beyond this. Not only is the medical specialist skilled in dealing with trauma but they can also diagnose and treat many other ailments and diseases. Whilst not a doctor as such, a medical specialist can help win 'hearts and minds' by assisting friendly locals with many medical conditions, and can train others in basic medical procedures. In teams which have contact with unusual circumstances, the medical specialist may be trained to treat certain not-always-unfriendly races or to perform autopsies on whatever creatures may be encountered. The medical specialist can often advise on the best way to kill any given non-human threat.

Skills: Fine Manipulation +20%, First Aid +40%, Language (Latin) +20%, Medicine +40%, Psychotherapy +20%, Research +20%, Science (Biology, Chemistry, Pharmacy) +40%.

Gear: Field medical kit.

Occult

Most operators involved with the Laundry have some knowledge of the occult, enough to recognise the most common threats and to realise that something really bad is going down. Some manage to gain enough knowledge to be considered specialists, though not to the level of a Laundry field operative. Thus while a typical operator will be able to recognise some of the common forms of what is termed 'animal' (magic) and will not be freaked out by it, a few will actually be able to assist or to identify what the opposition is up to without asking the Laundry agent. Unfortunately, some of what is 'known' to these personnel is, for various reasons, incorrect. A Special Forces Occult specialist may have a good working knowledge of the occult but be wildly off target from time to time.

Skills: Computer Use (Magic) +20%, Demolition +20%, Firearms (Esoteric) +20%, Knowledge (Occult, History) +20%, Language (any two) +20%, Science (Thaumaturgy, Mathematics) +20%, Strategy +20%, Status +20%.

Gear: Thaumometer, Class III Ward.

Search and Rescue

Trained to find and recover missing personnel, Search and Rescue operators have the medical skills to keep their targets alive, and the combat and survival skills to get to them. When a Laundry field team gets into trouble, Search and Rescue are the people they call in.

Skills: Athletics +20%, Command +20%, Drive +20%, First Aid +20%, Listen +20%, Navigate +20%, Pilot (any one) +40%, Sense +20%, Spot +20%, Track +40%.

Gear: Field medical kit.

Survival and Evasion

Survival and Evasion training prepares operators for extended missions in hostile territory. They train to live off the land for long periods of time, to dodge enemy patrols and hunting parties, to improvise and to blend in with the local population.

Skills: Athletics +20%, Dodge +20%, Disguise +20%, Drive +20%, Fast Talk +20%, Firearms (any one) +20%, Hide +20%, Listen +20%, Navigate +20%, Repair +20%, Sense +20%, Stealth +20%.

Gear: Extra field kit.

Sniping

All operators are good marksmen, but those trained as snipers have additional capabilities. As well as being among the best shots in creation, Special Forces snipers have the stealth skills to get into and out of position undetected, and the observation skills to locate very hard targets or figure out where a threat might be hiding. Although snipers are most commonly appreciated for their precision shooting, they are at least as valuable as reconnaissance and surveillance assets. Snipers are trained to decide when it is better not to shoot, and when they do shoot to make the most of each bullet.

Skills: Climb +20%, Fine Manipulation +20%, Firearms (Rifle) +40%, Hide +40%, Repair +20%, Spot +40%, Stealth +40%, Strategy +20%.

Gear: Sniper Rifle of your choice, usually an L96A1.

Underwater Operations

While all Special Forces are at the very least SCUBA-qualified, this specialisation covers underwater combat, submarine warfare, underwater demolitions and all sorts of wet-wetwork. For those working with the Laundry, it also includes a course in BLUE HADES culture and diplomacy – no-one wants a repeat of the Devil's Reef incident.

Skills: Athletics +20%, Demolition +20%, Grapple +20%, Melee (Knife) +20%, Navigate +40%, Pilot (Submersible) +40%, Spot +20%, Swim +40%, Technology Use (Scuba) +40%.

Gear: Scuba gear.

Vehicles

Vehicle specialists are trained to maintain, repair and operate a range of vehicles. At the most mundane level, they are useful in getting a team to the crisis point in minimum time despite rush-hour traffic. Pursuit driving, ramming hostiles off the road and evading roadblocks are all-important skills. Some specialists deal with more exotic vehicles than cars and trucks, which might include helicopters, boats, miniature submarines or earthmoving equipment.

Skills: Drive or Pilot (any three) +60%, Heavy Machinery +40%, Heavy Weapons (any) +40%, Navigate +20%, Repair +40%.

Gear: A vehicle suitable for the terrain of the mission.

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

Name:

Special Forces
Secret / UK Eyes Only

Age:

Gender:

Rank:

Character Package:

Specialities:

STR	DEX	SIZ	INT	POW	CHA	EDU

Damage Bonus:

San:

Max HP:

Current HP:

Major Wounds:

Skills:

Combat Skills:

Weapons:	Avail.	Base	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ



Weapons and Equipment

Military teams have access to a wide variety of weaponry, some of it very powerful. Most team members are permitted to choose their own weaponry, though compliance with standard ammunition calibres is encouraged. The majority of operators choose more or less the same weapons, and UK Special Forces (UKSF) has a fairly standard selection of favoured weaponry.

Special Forces weapons are commonly 'sanitised' – the serial numbers are removed and the weapons rendered more or less untraceable. That in itself is an indication of Special Forces involvement, so in some cases (e.g. covert operations overseas) weapons captured from the opposition are sometimes used. This has the advantage that the team can use enemy ammunition. On Laundry missions, using the weapons of the enemy may not be an option. Grabbing a cultist's AK47 is one thing, but it's best to leave that strangely lustrous sacrificial dagger where it lies.

A Note about 'Silencers'

There is no such thing as a 'silencer'. A suppressor, to use the more correct term, greatly reduces the noise made by a weapon. Some guns are very quiet with a suppressor, others less so, but the important thing is that the suppressor makes it less likely that the sound of a gunshot will be heard and identified as such, and also makes it harder to figure out where a shot came from. Basically a suppressor makes a big gun sound like a smaller one, but does not eliminate noise to the degree depicted on television. If you want actual silence, use a knife.

A Note on Availability

The Availability rating for weapons in this section is for Laundry personnel trying to request such an item from stores, not for Special Forces characters – SpecOps characters get to grab their gear automatically at the start of a mission. All these weapons are Certification Required, demanding a Firearms or Heavy Weapons skill of at least 50% before a requisition request can be entertained.

Handguns

Handguns are carried mainly for self-defence or as a backup where nothing better is available. They are sometimes the only weapon that can be carried covertly. In short, a handgun is an emergency weapon; a Special Forces operator who expects trouble will arm himself with something much more powerful if he gets the chance. That said, banishing rounds are expensive, so in cases where the briefing suggests a bunch of cultists and a small number of supernatural targets, loading up the handgun with specialist ammo and switching to it when needed is the most cost-effective strategy. It's not like spraying bullets is going to dissuade a Thing From Beyond, anyway.

Modern handguns are very safe (i.e. they dispense bullets only when requested by gripping the weapon properly and pulling the trigger). Some have a manual safety catch, but many top-end semi-automatic pistols (and all revolvers) do not. Semi-automatic pistols are favoured by operators as they are quicker to reload than revolvers; loading is a simple matter of removing the magazine and replacing it with a full one. Revolvers are still used in some circumstances, however.

All handguns use Pistol skill.



Desert Eagle .50 Calibre

A ludicrously over-powered and heavy handgun, the Desert Eagle is not favoured at all by operators as it lacks many of the advantages of a handgun – i.e. speed of engagement and ease of carry. It also suffers from massive recoil that makes it hard to shoot accurately. However, some users favour this weapon for its massive hitting power and the fact that it looks way cool. That guy centre stage on The Laundry Core Rulebook cover? Desert Eagle. ‘nuff said.

FN Five-Seven

The Five-Seven is an innovative weapon manufactured by Fabrique Nationale. It uses a 5.7mm round which is fired at a very high muzzle velocity. This gives it slightly superior ballistic properties to 9mm Parabellum ammunition and improves penetration. The same 5.7 round is used in the FN P90 personal defence weapon; some operators choose to carry both to maximise ammunition commonality.

Jericho 941

Marketed as the ‘Baby Eagle’, the Jericho 941 looks like a Desert Eagle but is chambered for .41 Action Express, a powerful handgun round. It is more favoured by poseurs who cannot handle a Desert Eagle, than by serious operators, but is sometimes encountered.

Korth Combat Magnum

Special Forces operators do not usually carry revolvers, but there are some circumstances where they are useful. The ability to load specialist ammunition quickly makes a revolver a possible choice, and some shooters simply prefer them. The Korth Combat Magnum is one of the very best guns available. Chambered for .357 Magnum, it is reassuringly heavy and quite intimidating to look at, which is sometimes useful if you don’t want to have to shoot.

Sig-Sauer P226 Tactical Operations

More or less the ‘industry standard’ in handguns for Special Forces and elite law enforcement, the P226 is available in several variants, of which the ‘Tactical Operations’ model is just one. It is available in various calibres but is normally used with 9mm Parabellum ammunition. 15-round magazines are normal but a high-capacity 20-round model is used by some operators.

SOCOM MK23 Mod 0

Developed for US Special Operations Command (SOCOM), the MK23 is a powerful .45 handgun designed to rigorous standards of safety and reliability. Felt recoil is surprisingly light due to a dual spring design, and the weapon can take a quick-detach suppressor.



Taurus Slim 708

Intended as a backup gun or concealed weapon rather than an overt sidearm, the Slim 708 is chambered for the rather weak .380 ACP round, which is readily available in North America and less so elsewhere. It is very narrow and easy to conceal.

Taurus Raging Judge

This delightfully-named revolver was originally marketed to US judges who felt the need for some additional courtroom security. It is a 7-shot revolver firing a .410 gauge shotgun cartridge. It is useful for close-range self-defence and can fire various specialist rounds (such as projectiles of exotic materials engraved with banishing enchantments) but is primarily favoured as a means of dealing with nuisances like snakes and small flying creatures.

Walther P99

Available in 9mm or more powerful .40 calibre, Walther’s P99 is favoured by some operators for its reliability and ease of maintenance. It can be stripped without tools, and has no manual safety devices but can still be carried ready to fire in perfect safety.

Pistols

Name	Avail.	Base	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ
Desert Eagle	Average	10	2d6	1	Impaling	20	10	7	1.5
FN Five-Seven	Average	20	1d10+1	3	Impaling	25	8	10	1
Jericho 941	Average	20	1d12	2	Impaling	20	7	10	1
Korth Combat Magnum	Difficult	20	2d6	2	Impaling	20	9	6	1
Sig-Sauer P226	Average	20	1d10	3	Impaling	20	8	15 or 20	1
Tactical Operations									
SOCOM MK23 Mod 0	Difficult	20	1d10+1	3	Impaling	20	8	12	1
Taurus Slim 708	Average	20	1d8	3	Impaling	15	6	7	0.5
Taurus Raging Judge	Average	25	2d6	2	Impaling	10	6	7	1
Walther P99	Average	20	1d10+1 (.40 calibre)	3	Impaling	20	12	12	1

Submachine Guns and Personal Defence Weapons

A submachine gun (SMG) is a small(ish) automatic weapon firing pistol-calibre ammunition, interchangeable with handguns in the same calibre. SMGs generally have a shorter range than rifles and do not penetrate cover or armour as well, but make up for this with volume of fire and short-range knockdown power.

Submachine guns can be broken down into three main categories:

- **Assault Pistols** are essentially handguns converted to fully-automatic or burst-fire capability. They are not generally favoured by operators as they get through a lot of ammunition real fast, have a small magazine, and are difficult to control. Assault pistols sometimes can be fitted with tiny shoulder stocks and foregrips to make them more controllable, and may use extension magazines that stick out of the butt, increasing ammunition capacity.
- **Uzi-Type Submachine Guns** are loaded through the handgrip like a handgun but are larger and, almost without exception, do not have an externally moving slide. Instead the moving parts are internal, much like an assault rifle. Weapons of this sort can be very compact and can sometimes be carried in a shoulder holster like a handgun.

- **Carbine-Type Submachine Guns** are normally loaded through a magazine well located in front of the trigger assembly, though some use a different configuration. Weapons of this sort tend to be somewhat larger than an Uzi-type, and may have a longer barrel for increased accuracy.

In recent years the term 'personal defence weapon' (PDW) has emerged. PDWs are usually (but not always) carbine or Uzi-type submachine guns. They offer high firepower in a compact package and are favoured by operators working covertly or in tight spaces like vehicles and buildings. Although they lack range compared to a rifle, PDWs are extremely effective at close quarters and can respond to a threat quicker (and with more bullets) than a heavier weapon.

All submachine guns use the Submachine Gun skill.

BXP

A South African weapon designed in the 1980s, the BXP is an Uzi-type SMG with a folding stock that forms a foregrip when folded. It is a fairly conventional 9mm weapon using a 22 round magazine or a longer 32-round one that projects out of the handgrip. The BXP can take a suppressor, but is primarily liked by some Special Forces operators for its capability to launch a rifle grenade. The BXP is possibly the only SMG with this capability as standard.

Calico M-950

A highly unusual 9mm weapon consisting of a fairly large submachine gun-like receiver which can take a variety of barrels and (optionally) a shoulder stock, the California Instrument Company M-950 uses a large helical feed magazine holding 50 rounds, or a larger version containing 100. It can be configured as a carbine or an oversized handgun, but is normally set up as a SMG. Unsuccessful in the civilian marketplace (largely for legal reasons), the M-950 is favoured by some operators who like having a lot of ammunition ready for use.

Cobray M11/9

The M11/9 is a modernised version of the Ingram MAC-10 and MAC-11 family of Uzi-type submachine guns. Other variants, chambered for various ammunition, exist but the M11 in Laundry service uses standard 9mm Parabellum ammunition. It is lighter than the original weapon, and in Laundry service it is sometimes further modified. Some weapons are converted to take a Sten gun magazine, which is intriguing since the Sten is long-defunct. However, the Sten gun magazine was itself co-opted from the German MP-38 and MP-40 submachine guns used during the Second World War, which raises the question: why do some Laundry backup teams need weapons compatible with WWII era German SMGs? The answer is probably dull and bureaucratic, but you never know...

FN P90

Fabrique Nationale's P90 uses the same 5.7x28mm ammunition as the Five-Seven pistol. Loading is unusual in that ammunition is carried in a 50-round cartridge loaded from the top of the shoulder stock. The P90 is favoured for urban operations as it is easier to handle in confined spaces than an assault rifle and also has more ammunition. Fired from a slightly longer barrel, its 5.7mm ammunition performs a little better than in the Five-Seven pistol. Larger magazines are available, in case you intend to shoot lots of people at close range.

Glock 18

The Glock 18 is an assault pistol, i.e. a fully-automatic version of the standard Glock 17 used by the Laundry and many police agencies. The Glock 18 can take 17-round Glock 17 magazines but can also use a 33-round extension magazine. This sticks out of the weapon and is awkward to carry, so commonly the smaller magazine is routinely in place, with extension magazines carried separately. Controlling a light weapon such as the Glock 18 under very high rates of fire is a problem for many users.

Heckler & Koch MP5K-PDW

The 9mm H&K MP5 is a carbine-type submachine gun. It has been a favourite of police agencies and Special Forces for a long, long time, and rightly so. The 'K' variant is especially short, and has a foregrip for stability when firing from this hip. In its recent 'PDW' configuration, the weapon

Name	Avail.	Base	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ
BXP	Difficult	20	1d10	3 or burst	Impaling	15/30	6	22 or 32	1.5
Calico M-950	Difficult	20	1d10	3 or burst	Impaling	15/30	6	50 or 100	2
Cobray M11/9	Average	15	1d10	3 or burst	Impaling	15/30	6	16 or 32	1.5
FN P90	Average	15	1d10+2	3 or burst	Impaling	40	10	50	2
Glock 18	Average	10	1d10	3 or burst	Impaling	10	8	17 or 33	1
H&K MP5K-PDW	Average	15	1d10	3 or burst	Impaling	25	9	15 or 30	1.5
H&K MP7	Difficult	15	2d6	3 or burst	Impaling	40	8	20, 30 or 40	1.5
Israel Weapon Industries Uzi-Pro	Difficult	10	1d10	3 or burst	Impaling	20	8	25	1.5
Steyr TMP	Average	15	1d10	3 or burst	Impaling	25	8	15 or 30	1.5

has a folding/detachable shoulder stock and can be carried concealed under a bulky coat with a small 15-round magazine in place. Most police departments use a version with a fixed stock and conventional rifle-type forearm, which has a slightly longer accurate range. Both variants can use standard 30-round magazines and can be fitted with a suppressor.

Heckler & Koch MP7

Much more recent than the MP5, the MP7 is an Uzi-type weapon firing an unusual 4.6x30mm round. It is surprisingly controllable when firing one-handed, even fully automatic, but is normally used in both hands. A folding foregrip increases stability under autofire.

Israel Weapon Industries Uzi-Pro

The Uzi-Pro is a 9mm submachine gun derived from the Micro-Uzi, smallest of all the Uzi family. It has a ferociously high rate of fire and can carry a range of accessories such as laser pointers, flashlights and sights using a modular Picatinny rail system. The Uzi-Pro is small enough for covert carry, and is sometimes issued instead of a handgun. It can be built up into a larger weapon using a family of accessories such as longer barrels and stocks, but ceases to be concealable.

Steyr TMP

Steyr's Tactical Machine Pistol (TMP) is a small Uzi-type submachine gun with a foregrip. It uses 9mm ammunition. A semi-automatic version, named SPP (Special Purpose Pistol) also exists; both are essentially the same weapon but for automatic fire capability.

Shotguns

Shotguns are smoothbore longarms capable of delivering a range of ammunition types. Most commonly, heavy buckshot is used, which gives heavy stopping power at short range, coupled with a spread of shot to increase the chances of a hit. However, buckshot does not penetrate well and is defeated by most forms of armour – though it may stun, knock down or at least badly bruise the target.

Other ammunition includes solid slug, which is a single heavy projectile with somewhat better range and penetration than a buckshot spread, and specialist breaching ammunition. This is used to shoot hinges or locks off doors when entering a building, and breaks up on impact to avoid collateral damage. Shotguns can also deliver tear gas and similar small specialist rounds, and less-lethal baton or beanbag rounds that will stun the target with little chance of killing them. Specialist ammunition is dealt with under **Weapon Accessories and Related Equipment**, below.

Many shotguns use a pump action, which is extremely reliable and robust, and has the advantage of enabling a specialist round to be chambered. A magazine cutoff (if fitted) permits the fired shell to be ejected without chambering a new one from the magazine, enabling a specialist round to be directly inserted into the breech. Working the action after this is fired chambers a new shell from the magazine.

Semi-automatic shotguns are favoured by many operators, as they give rapid fire capability in a close-quarters fight. Fully-automatic shotguns are quite rare, as they can be difficult to control under rapid fire. Perhaps more importantly, shotgun ammunition is bulky and a full-automatic shotgun needs a large magazine. Drums are a reasonable solution but they are bulky and very heavy.

Traditional double and single-barrelled shotguns are rarely used by operators, with one exception. A sawn-off shotgun is short and fairly easy to carry, but deadly at close range. Its manual operation is ideal for situations where specialist ammunition might be needed, and when dealing with opponents that can be intimidated, such a weapon makes a very convincing threat.

Most combat shotguns use 12-gauge ammunition, though some military models use specialist shells that will not fit in a standard shotgun.

All shotguns use Shotgun skill.

Amsel Protecta

An updated version of the earlier Striker shotgun, the Protecta uses a bulky 12-round drum magazine rather than a more standard under-barrel tube. It is a semi-automatic which can shoot faster and for longer than most shotguns, and is thus favoured by some operators. However, it is heavy and bulky.

Benelli M1014/M4

The standard semi-automatic shotgun used by many Special Forces units, the M1014 can deliver baton rounds as well as standard shells. Its action is very fast, enabling several rapid shots, but ammunition capacity is limited.

Beretta RS200

A relatively modern pump-action shotgun capable of handling a range of ammunition, the RS200 uses a 6-round tubular magazine fixed under the barrel. Reloading it through the breech and is much slower than with a magazine-fed weapon.

Browning Cynergy

A modern take on the classic over-under configuration double-barrelled shotgun, the Cynergy is designed for sporting use and is in no way a military weapon. However, guns of this sort are sometimes used for dealing with small flying creatures and similar threats, or may be the only weapon available in a tight spot.

Franchi SPAS-12

The SPAS-12 is a primarily semi-automatic shotgun which can be switched to pump-action if necessary. This enables the gun to fire low-powered ammunition such as tear gas or beanbag rounds which will not work the weapon's semi-automatic action. It has a folding stock which can be used to support reasonably accurate one-handed shooting.

Ithaca Stakeout

Based on a venerable but well-proven design, the Stakeout is a short, pistol-grip version of the Ithaca Model 37 shotgun specifically developed for law enforcement use. It has a pistol grip but no stock and a short barrel. Capacity is 4 rounds plus one in the chamber.

Pancor Jackhammer

An innovative design using specialist ammunition that will not fit in standard shotguns, the Jackhammer uses a 10-round rotating drum magazine at the rear of the weapon. Spent shells are retained in the magazine; nothing is ejected.

Remington M870 MCS

The M870 has been in use for several decades. In its current incarnation it is available in modular form, enabling the user to swap between configurations. It is typically put together as a fairly standard pump-action 6-shot full-sized shotgun or a short 4-shot version with a pistol grip but no stock. The latter is favoured for close encounters and by 'point men' who may need to respond to a sudden threat with heavy knockdown power. A stockless M870 can also be mounted under the barrel of a rifle, enabling door breaching operations to be undertaken whilst keeping the rifle ready for use. A breaching shotgun in this configuration can be used for combat. In this configuration the weapon is sometimes called the Masterkey. It holds 3 rounds plus one in the chamber.

Sawn-off 12-gauge, Generic

Sawing the barrels off a quality sporting shotgun is a horrible thing to do, so most guns of this sort are fairly cheap models. The weapon is converted into an oversized pistol by reshaping the stock into a pistol grip and shortening the barrels to the point where range is severely reduced. Alternatively, a 'coach gun' can be created by leaving the stock in place and shortening the barrels by a third. This reduces range and also spoils the weapon's measured swing, making it less effective for clay pigeon or flying-creature elimination, but does create a powerful short-range weapon that is handy to use and can be improvised in most country houses in just a few minutes.

Name	Avail.	Base	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ
Amsel Protecta	Difficult	30	4d6/2d6/1d6	3	Impaling	10/20/40	12	12	5
Browning Cynergy	Easy	30	4d6/2d6/1d6	2	Impaling	2	10	2	3
Benelli M4/M101	Easy	30	4d6/2d6/1d6	4	Impaling	10/20/40	12	6	3
Beretta RS200	Easy	30	4d6/2d6/1d6	2	Impaling	10/20/40	12	6	3
Franchi SPAS-12	Average	30	4d6/2d6/1d6	2	Impaling	10.20/40	10	6	3
Ithaca Stakeout	Easy	30	4d6/2d6/1d6	2	Impaling	10/20/40	10	4	2.5
Pancor Jackhammer	Difficult	30	5d6/3d6/1d6	2	Impaling	10/20/50	10	10	3.5
Remington M870 MCS	Easy	30	4d6/2d6/1d6	2	Impaling	10/20/40	12	6 or 4 or 3	3 or 2 or 0.5
Sawn-off Shotgun, Pistol	Easy	30	4d6/2d6/1d6	2	Impaling	4/8/12	7	2	2
Sawn-off Shotgun, Coach Gun	Easy	30	4d6/2d6/1d6	2	Impaling	8/16/32	10	2	2.5

Carbines and Rifles

A 'rifle' is essentially any long-arm (i.e. a firearm intended to be used in both hands) with a rifled barrel, but in modern usage some weapons are defined differently. Submachine guns are usually short weapons firing pistol calibre ammunition, while a short rifle-type weapon using the same ammunition is usually termed a carbine.

Most military units make use of what are termed assault rifles, which are lightweight weapons firing an intermediate cartridge – typically 5.56x45mm and equivalent to civilian 'small-bore' rifles. Assault rifles are normally capable of fully-automatic fire, though some use burst-fire instead, whereby one pull of the trigger fires a set number of rounds. A full-automatic weapon will continue to fire until the trigger is no longer pulled or the ammunition runs out. Most assault rifles are capable of semi-automatic operation (one shot per pull of the trigger) as well as fully automatic and/or burst fire.

Heavier military rifles are usually equivalent to civilian 'full bore' weapons such as deer rifles, and typically use cartridges in the 7.62x51mm range. Recoil on these weapons is heavier and their ammunition is heavier, so semi-automatic operation is the norm. Military rifles in this range are often termed 'battle rifles'. Although they lack the lightness and rapid fire capability of assault rifles their effective range is greater and individual rounds are more potent.

Sniper weapons normally use battle-rifle calibre ammunition, which offers superior ballistic performance over intermediate cartridges. However, small-bore rifles may be used for sniping at modest ranges, or when nothing better than a civilian 'plinking' gun is available. Some military sniper or marksman weapons are semi-automatic in operation; others use bolt-action which is marginally more accurate at long range.

Heavy 'anti-materiel' rifles are sometimes used by the military for extremely long range sniping but are primarily intended for use against hard targets such as vehicles, communications equipment and the like. They can use specialist ammunition such as incendiary or explosive rounds, and are occasionally deployed when large or unusually robust creatures are in the offing.

Civilian weapons that might be used by Laundry backup teams include small-bore and full bore hunting rifles (which will be bolt-action) and possibly powerful big-game rifles if a suitably large threat presents itself.

Rifles use Assault Rifle skill if they are capable of automatic fire, and Rifle skill if semi-automatic or bolt-action.



AK-103

The latest in a long line of weapons descended from the world-beating AK-47, the AK-103 uses the 7.62x39mm cartridge used by the original AK-47. Although a heavy-calibre bullet, this ammunition uses a shorter cartridge than NATO weapons and is thus an assault rifle rather than a battle rifle. The AK-103 can be encountered in Russian hands and is also exported, so can be found almost anywhere. Its predecessor, the AK-47, is the commonest assault rifle in the world; literally millions have been made. The AK-47 can be considered more or less equivalent in performance to the AK-103, though it will probably rattle more. Many operators favour the AK series for its extreme reliability and robustness, and for the fact that ammunition can be scrounged from the opposition almost anywhere in the world.

AN-94

A Russian assault rifle derived from the AK-74 and thence from the AK-47, the AN-94 uses the 5.45x45mm intermediate round developed for the AK-74. It is a complex but clever weapon, capable of delivering a 2-round burst at an extremely high rate of fire (treated as a single shot for additional damage) or fairly standard fully-automatic fire as well as semi-automatic. Ammunition is normally carried in a standard 30 round magazine but a larger 45 round magazine and a bulky 60-round casket magazine can be used. This adds 1.5 SIZ to the weapon.

C8 SFW Carbine (L119A1)

The C8 SFW ('Special Forces Weapon') is essentially an upmarket version of the US M4 carbine which arms most US regular forces. Itself derived from the venerable and successful M16 assault rifle, the M4 and its progeny are short and handy, making them ideal weapons for close combat in urban terrain. A shortened version, designated C8 CQB ('Close Quarters Battle') is used by British Special Forces for close protection work. Both weapons are similar in performance to the US M4, but of higher quality. Their 30-round magazines and 5.56x45mm ammunition are compatible with most NATO weapons. The C8 is known as the L119A1 in British service and is the standard Special Forces weapon.

FN2000

A futuristic looking weapon, the FN2000 uses a 'bullpup' configuration, i.e. the magazine well is behind the trigger assembly. This reduces the overall length of the weapon whilst retaining a long barrel for accuracy. Normally a bullpup weapon cannot be used left-handed unless converted to left-hand use, as the ejected cartridges will hit the user in the head. The FN2000 does not suffer from this problem and can be used in either hand or even shot one-handed with reasonable accuracy. The basic assault rifle can be augmented with accessories including a grenade launcher.

Heckler & Koch 416

The HK416 assault rifle is an improved version of the M4 carbine used by most US forces, intended for use by US Special Forces. It is produced to a higher build quality and has several rails for modular accessories such as a foregrip, advanced sights and a grenade launcher. The US Marine Corps uses a variant designated M27 Infantry Automatic Rifle as a light support weapon. The M416 can take 30-round magazines or a 100-round C-drum magazine that adds 2 SIZ to the weapon.

Heckler & Koch G36

H&K's G36 is a 5.56x45mm assault rifle which can be put together with a standard barrel, shorter 'carbine' barrel or a heavier barrel as a light support weapon. It normally uses a 30-round magazine but can take a 100-round c-drum magazine which adds 2 SIZ to the weapon. The G36 is in German service but can be encountered in use by Special Forces operators worldwide as well as some police agencies.

Assault Rifles and Carbines

Name	Avail.	Base	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ
AK-103	Easy	20	2d6+5	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	200	14	30	3
AN-94	Difficult	15	3d6 (2-round burst) or 2d6+3	1, 3 or burst, or special 2-round burst	Impaling	300	10	30 or 45 or 60	3
C8 Carbine (L119A1)	Average	20	2d6+3	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	200	12	30	3
FN2000	Average	20	2d6+4	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	250	12	30	3
HK 416	Easy	15	2d6+4	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	400	12	30 or 100	3
HK G36	Easy	15	2d6+4	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	400	12	30 or 100	3
L85/L86	Easy	15	2d6+4	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	200/400	10	30 or 80	2.5/ 3.5
SIG550	Easy	15	2d6+4	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	250	10	4, 20 or 30	3
QBZ-03	Difficult	15	2d6+4	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	250	10	4, 20 or 30	3

L85A2

The standard British assault rifle, the L85A2 is used by some operators. Its Bullpup configuration creates a short and handy weapon that is well-balanced and easy to bring up from a carrying position. However, reliability issues with earlier models of the rifle put some potential users off. The L85A2 (also known as the SA80) has a 'bigger brother' in the L86 light support weapon. Both can share magazines and are used in an almost identical manner, but the L86 can take an 80-round drum and has a heavier barrel to resist overheating. Originally intended for use as a squad support weapon, the L86 has been largely supplanted by the FN Minimi and is now used as a marksman weapon; its heavy barrel gives it a long effective range.

SIG 550

In many ways a typical modern assault rifle, the SIG550 is very well made and was designed for 'usability', i.e. it is very user-friendly. It is a 5.56x45mm calibre assault rifle, conventional in layout, which can be put together as a short-barreled carbine. The SIG 550 can take 5, 20 or 30-round magazines. Under various names, this weapon is in use with Swiss, German and Italian forces. Variants include the SIG552-2P Commando, which is a short carbine version, and the SIG 550 Sniper, which is a semi-automatic variant optimised for long-range accuracy.

QBZ-03

The most recent Chinese assault rifle, the QBZ-03 is a conventionally laid out weapon using 5.8x42mm ammunition. It is also available chambered for 5.56x45mm as used by NATO. It has a folding stock but is otherwise fairly conventional. This weapon has been supplied to some Asian and Middle Eastern countries, and may be encountered in the hands of their forces.

Accuracy international AS50

A .50 calibre (12.7x99mm) rifle sometimes used by British Special Forces, the AS50 is a semi-automatic weapon using a 5 or 10-round magazine. It is far too enormous to be routinely deployed but can be set up in an overwatch position from which it can hit anything within a kilometre.

Barrett M82A1 'Light Fifty'

The archetypical heavy anti-materiel rifle, the M82A1 uses the same calibre of ammunition as a .50 calibre machine gun and can shoot over very great distances. It is too big and heavy to fire on the move, and is normally used only when something large and robust needs breaking or killing. It is primarily used by US forces, but may be available to British units.

Gepard M6

Probably the most gigantic 'rifle' likely to be produced, the M6 is part of a family of oversized anti-materiel weapons. It uses a bullpup configuration with the magazine behind the trigger assembly, and shoots a 14.5 round designed to be used against helicopters, bunkers and the like. Manufactured in Hungary, these weapons are not in common use anywhere but may be available for 'special purposes'.

L96A1

The standard British Army sniping weapon, the L96A1 is normally chambered for 7.62x51mm ammunition. It has a 10-round magazine but its bolt action does not allow rapid fire. However, bolt-action weapons are very accurate as there are no internal moving parts to disturb the weapon while the round is on its way down the barrel.

L115A3

The L115A3, or 'Arctic Warfare Magnum' is a bolt-action weapon available in 7.62mm or .338 Lapua Magnum for long-range work. The current world record for a sniper kill was made with this weapon.

L129A1 Sharpshooter Rifle

Experience in Afghanistan showed the British Army that a marksman rifle was needed, with a range greater than that of the assault rifles in common use. The L129A1 can be used for sniping, but is generally deployed to increase the range of infantry forces rather than with specialist sniper units.

M110 Semi-Automatic Sniper System

A lightweight 'marksman rifle' intended to increase the effective range of infantry squads; the M110 is a battle-rifle calibre weapon, like most sniping rifles.

Stoner SR-25

Custom-designed as a semi-automatic sniping weapon, the US-made SR-25 looks a lot like an M16 type assault rifle fitted with a bipod. It is accurate and capable of quick semi-automatic fire.

Elephant Gun

A range of what are politely now termed 'stopping rifles' are available, chambered for ludicrously huge calibres such as .600 Nitro, .577 Tyrannosaur and .600 Overkill. These weapons are intended to stop a large animal such as an elephant in mid-charge and are not for the faint of heart. Some operators may bring them on a mission in anticipation of meeting something that needs a bus firing at it.

attle Rifles, Sniper Weapons and Heavy Rifles

Name	Avail.	Base	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ
Accuracy international AS50	Difficult	10	4d10+2	1	Impaling	1200	18	11	8
Barrett M82A1	Difficult	10	4d10+4	1	Impaling	1000	18	11	9
Gepard M6	Difficult	10	4d10+10	1	Impaling	1000	18	11	9
L96A1	Difficult	25	2d10+4	1	Impaling	600	10	10	4
L115A3 (.338 Lapua Magnum)	Difficult	20	2d10+8	1	Impaling	900	10	5	4.5
L129A1	Difficult	20	2d10+4	1 or 2	Impaling	500	10	5	4.5
M110	Difficult	20	2d10+4	1 or 2	Impaling	500	10	10 or 20	4
Stoner SR-25	Difficult	20	2d10+4	1 or 2	Impaling	500	10	10 or 20	4
Elephant Gun	Difficult	5	5d10+5	1	Impaling	200	12	2	6

Light Support Weapons

Light support weapons range from what are essentially overgrown rifles to grenade launchers and full-sized machine guns. Technically, weapons such as heavy machine guns are not really light support weapons but they are included here for simplicity.

Most machine guns (light, general-purpose and heavy) have a quick-change barrel to allow one to cool while another is being used, and use belted ammunition. This is usually a disintegrating-link metal belt which can be held in a box or drum for ease of carry. Belts are normally 50, 100 or 150 rounds long but can be joined together to make a very long belt if this seems desirable. Machine guns usually have a bipod and fittings to allow them to be used on a more permanent mount such as a tripod or vehicle mount.

Rifle-type support weapons (i.e. those derived from assault rifles) do not have a quick-change barrel and can be prone to overheating under sustained fire, but they are lighter and easier to handle in confined spaces. Most rifle-type light support weapons are fed from standard assault rifle magazines or an enlarged version of them.

Grenade launchers fire a fairly low-velocity projectile which travels in an arc, making them unsuitable for use indoors. Most can also use direct-fire projectiles such as beanbag rounds for close-range combat.

Rifle grenades are not very common, but they do sometimes see use. A rifle grenade fits on the end of an

adaptor on a rifle barrel and is fired in an indirect arc. They require some skill to use effectively but can be highly accurate under the right conditions. A skilled operator (with a dedicated launcher or rifle grenade) can put a projectile into a fortified position or through a window 100-150m away.

Shoulder-fired launchers range from what is essentially an enlarged rifle grenade, in the case of rocket-propelled grenade launchers, through to large powerful missiles fired from a reusable launcher.

Hand grenades are thrown by hand or can be used in various inventive ways such as setting up a tripwire to pull the pin out of a grenade taped behind a door. This acts as a sort of alarm system in addition to the obvious explosive and fragmentation effects.

All light support weapons are used with the Heavy Weapons skill, other than hand-thrown grenades which use the Throw skill.

FN MAG-58 (L7A1)

Designated L7A1 in British service, the Fabrique Nationale MAG-58 is a venerable design that has seen service in around 80 nations. It is a general-purpose machine gun (GPMG) capable of fulfilling many roles. In the Special Forces community it is sometimes found as a vehicle mounted weapon or in the hands of old-school operators.

FN Minimi/M249/Mk46

The 5.56mm FN Minimi is the standard light machine gun of the British armed forces and is used by many special ops teams. A number of variants exist, including the M249 which is in general US service and the Mk46, which is a lightened variant used by US Special Forces. Standard M249/Minimi weapons can take belted ammunition or any magazine compatible with the M16 rifle and its derivatives. Most weapons in special ops use lack the magazine adapter and can use only belted ammunition.

Heckler & Koch MG36

A support version of the G36 assault rifle and sharing many components, the G36 uses a 100 round drum and has a heavy barrel plus a bipod. It was not adopted by the German armed forces but is used by some Special Forces units.

Heckler & Koch MG4

A 5.56x45mm calibre light machine gun produced in Germany, the MG4 is a modern compact support weapon favoured by many European operators.

Negev

The Israeli-made Negev machine gun is a multipurpose 5.56x45mm weapon. It has a folding stock and quick-change barrel, enabling the full-length heavy barrel and bipod to be replaced with a shorter barrel and thus creating a high-capacity assault rifle. It can also launch rifle grenades. The weapon can take 35-round magazine or belted ammunition.

PKM

A Russian-made weapon based on the AK series of assault rifles, the PKM is a simple and robust weapon chambered for 7.62x39mm ammunition. It is sometimes found in the hands of operators from Eastern European countries, Russia, and anywhere that Russia sells arms to.

M2HB Heavy Machine Gun

The M2HB is in no way a light support weapon. It cannot be fired on the move and requires a tripod or vehicle mount. However, it is used by Special Forces personnel as a support weapon or for security of an area. The .50 calibre rounds delivered by this weapon are potent against vehicles and hard cover as well as personnel, and may be effective against some of the more robust otherworldly threats.

ARWEN

The Anti-Riot Weapon, Enfield (ARWEN) has a 5-shot rotary magazine and delivers a less-lethal beanbag or baton round out to about 100m. A stockless shortened version is available, and is sometimes carried by backup teams assigned to snatch operations. The target must make a Resistance roll against the weapon's damage or be stunned for 2d6 rounds.

Brunswick RAW

The Brunswick Rifleman's Assault Weapon fits on an adapter under the barrel of an assault rifle. It is a curious bowling-ball shaped weapon which functions as a large rifle grenade. The weapon will travel up to 2000m but is not accurate much beyond 200m. It delivers a large high-explosive warhead, but variants are postulated that contain more exotic payloads.

Light Support Weapons

Name	Avail.	Base	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ
FN Mag-58 (L7A1)	Average	15	2d10+4	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	800	12	Belt	8
FN Minimi/M249	Easy	20	2d6+4	1,3 or burst	Impaling	600	12	30 or Belt	7
H&K MG36	Average	20	2d6+4	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	400	10	100	5
H&K MG4	Average	15	2d6+4	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	600	12	Belt	6
Negev	Difficult	20	2d6+4	1,3 or burst	Impaling	400	10	35 or Belt	7
PKM	Average	20	2d6+3	1, 3 or burst	Impaling	500	10	Belt	7
M2HB	Difficult	10	4d10+4	1,3 or burst	Impaling	400	20	Belt	18

FN303

The FN303 is a modular launch weapon which can be used alone or fixed under the barrel of a rifle. It uses compressed air to fire 12-gauge projectiles from a 15-round drum magazine. Baton rounds can stun the target; a Resistance roll against the weapon's damage is required, or the target is down for 2d6 rounds. The FN303 can also be used to deliver tear gas or other specialist munitions.

Grenade Machine Gun

The GMG, produced by Heckler & Koch, is in use with British special operations units as a vehicle mounted or tripod support weapon. It is too heavy to fire on the move (other than from a vehicle) but can launch 40mm grenades at a rate of about 350 per minute. Normally used to engage larger Mythos creatures or to take out concentrations of minor threats, the weapon can also deliver a radar-altimeter-fused area denial weapon codenamed BATSTOP. BATSTOP munitions detonate at a set height, scattering small fragments of phosphorous coated metal. These are (mostly) harmless by the time they hit the ground but they create a no-fly zone for smaller airborne creatures by a combination of fragmentation, heat and smoke effects. BATSTOP has not yet been deployed operationally, but tests are promising.

Milan-SPW

A variant of the UK's MILAN guided anti-tank weapon, the MILAN-Special Purpose Weapon is wire-guided using a SACLOS (Semi-Active Command Line of Sight) system. It is guided by the operator, which means that so long as he retains his nerve and his sanity the weapon can hit anything he can see. The system is heavy and requires a vehicle to move it, but can be used for defence of an area against larger supernatural threats. Standard load is a shaped charge anti-tank warhead, but a specialist thermobaric (heat/blast effect) warhead is available for dealing with threats resistant to impaling type weapons.

Milcor MGL

The Milcor MGL uses a 6-round non-detachable cylinder to hold 40mm grenades, giving rapid fire when it is needed. It can be used for delivery of less-lethal ammunition such as stunbag rounds or can blow up a satisfying amount of stuff before requiring a reload.

Panzerfaust 3

The German-made Panzerfaust 3 uses a reusable sight/launcher to fire a range of warheads. Most commonly this is a shaped-charge weapon intended to take out light armoured vehicles but effective against some alien creatures.

RPG-7D

The RPG-7 is popularly associated with revolutionaries and assorted crazies, but is in fact one of the most widely used light anti-armour weapons in the world. The reusable shoulder-fired launcher can take a range of rocket propelled grenades, of which the commonest is a shaped charge anti-armour weapon.

You can also set the fuse to detonate at a set distance from the launcher, which might prove useful if you're an insurgent trying to take down a helicopter by showering its rotors with shrapnel. Or, same principle, you're trying to take down a flying monster before it flaps over and eats your lunch.

SMAW

The US-made Shoulder-Launched Multipurpose Assault Weapon (SMAW) fires an unguided 83mm rocket which is normally used against bunkers or light armoured vehicles. The launcher is reusable.

Rifle Grenade, HEDP

The basic rifle-launched grenade is an HEDP (high explosive dual purpose) type which combines blast and fragmentation effects to kill or injure 'soft' targets (e.g. people) nearby.

Rifle Grenade, HEAP

A HEAP (High Explosive Armour-Piercing) grenade is intended to punch through hard cover or armour using a shaped charge. It has little blast effect and must hit the target directly to cause any harm.

Rifle Grenade, SMD

An SMD (Special Munition Delivery) grenade is designed to punch through light cover or a creature's armour using a small shaped charge, then burst using a secondary dispersal charge, delivering whatever special munitions are carried. This may be something as mundane as tear gas or incendiary (heat/flame) munitions, but is normally tailored to a specific creature. Basically, find out what it's allergic to, stuff it into a grenade and let fly.

Grenade, Launched, HEDP

The standard grenade launched from an Underslung Grenade Launcher (UGL) or a grenade machine gun, High Explosive Dual Purpose grenades have a small blast/fragmentation radius and are effective against concentrations of enemy personnel.

Launchers and Other Weapons

Name	Avail.	Base	Damage	RoF	Special	Range	HP	Ammo	SIZ
ARWEN	Average	15	4d6	2	Knockback, Stun	100	6	5	4 or 3
Brunswick RAW	Difficult	5	5d6/2m	1	Knockback,	200	4	1	4
FN30303	Average	10	2d6	2	Knockback, Stun	70	4	15	4 or +2 if added to a rifle
Grenade Machine Gun	Difficult	5	3d6/2m	Burst	Knockback, Special Munitions	1200	20	32-round belt	18
MILAN SPW	Average	5	14d6/ 5 metre	1	Knockback	1200	16	1	20
Milcor MGL	Difficult	5	40mm grenade	2	Knockback	400	12	6	5
Panzerfaust 3	Difficult	5	9d6/1 metre	1	Knockback	900	12	1	6
RPG-7D	Easy	5	7d6/ 2 metre	1	Knockback	200	14	1	5
SMAW	Difficult	5	10d6/1 metre	1	Knockback	500	12	1	5
Rifle Grenade HEDP	Average	5	5d6/5 metre	1	Knockback	200	4	1	1
Rifle Grenade HEAP	Average	5	6d6/1 metre	1	Knockback	200	4	1	1
Rifle Grenade SMD	Average	5	Special	1	Special Ammunition	200	4	1	1
Launched 40mm Grenade, HEDP	Average	5	3d6/2m	1	Knockback	-	4	1	1
Launched 40mm Grenade, Burning	Average	5	Varies	1	Special Ammunition	-	4	1	1
Launched 40mm Grenade, Multiple Projectile	Average	5	6d6	1	Impaling	-	4	1	1
Launched 40mm Grenade, Stunbag	Average	5	5d6	1	Knockback/ Stun	-	4	1	1
Fragmentation Grenade	Average	25	4d6	1	Knockback	-	8	1	0.5
Flashbang	Average	25	-	1	Special	-	4	1	0.5

Grenade, Launched, Burning

Burning-type grenades include those that produce tear gas or other exotic gases intended to soothe or banish otherworldly creatures, as well as common old smoke grenades.

Grenade, Launched, Multiple Projectile

Multiple Projectile grenades are direct-fire weapons with a short range, essentially turning the launcher into a shotgun. The standard 'buckshot' version is highly lethal at close range, even through a door or other obstruction.

Grenade, Launched, Stunbag

A stunbag round is simply a bag of lead shot fired from a grenade launcher. It will knock down a man or similar creature and will probably wind, stun and deeply upset him. The target must match their CON + Armour against the weapon's damage or be stunned for 2d6 rounds and very sore for days afterwards.

Grenade, Thrown, Fragmentation

Your standard option for ruining someone's day.

Flashbang

As the name suggests, there's a flash and a bang, disorientating anything with eyes that see in the visual spectrum and with ears that work like ours. Anyone caught in a confined space with a flashbang is stunned, making all their rolls Difficult for one round. If they're ready for the blast, they get to make Luck rolls to avoid being stunned.

Weapon Accessories and Related Equipment

Special Forces units make use of a range of equipment, most of it utterly mundane. Boots are, pretty much, just boots even if they're issued by a secret sub-unit of the SAS. Flashlights, personal radios and the like are simply tools of the trade. UKSF uses generally pretty robust and effective examples of these items, but most of a soldier's kit is pretty standard. A few items are worth noting, however.

Field Coveralls, Urban Operations

The standard outfit used by operators when on 'overt' operations (i.e. they don't care who realises that they are soldiers) is a black coverall and boots, worn with gloves, a cool black cap and sunglasses – sometimes even at night. The coverall is somewhat fire-resistant and will offer protection for a short time from threats that would set

normal clothing afire. It is tough and reinforced at the knees and elbows with padding. A field coverall offers four points of protection against slashing and impaling weapons (e.g. knives, teeth and bullets) but is no use against crushing threats.

Field Protective Equipment, Urban Operations

If the team is expecting trouble then protective equipment is broken out. It is usually carried in vehicles or a field depot set up close to the site of operations. Protective kit comprises a heavy flak jacket and helmet (though some operators insist on retaining their cool cap rather than a helmet) plus eye protection in the form of armoured goggles. This kit gives the wearer 8 points of armour against most types of physical attack. It is normally worn over field coveralls, whose protection is included in the armour rating. A gas mask is included in the kit, which will provide complete protection from basic threats such as tear gas or the smoke from a building fire.

Tactical Vest

A tactical vest is basically a sleeveless jacket with lots of pockets for useful things like weapon magazines, tools, a flashlight and the odd grenade or two. Most have a sidearm holster built in and can be kept handy, allowing an operator to get tooled up with just one grab.

Ghillie Suit

Ghillie suits are specially customised camouflage suits. By covering the suit with leaves and other vegetation from the local area, it breaks up the wearer's outline and blends perfectly into the surroundings, giving excellent concealment. The downsides are the weight and bulk of the suit, and the amount of time needed to fashion and 'season' the suit, as each one takes weeks to customise properly and only fits one particular terrain. Wearing a Ghillie Suit gives a +20% bonus to Stealth tests.

CBRN Suit

Nicknamed a 'Noddy suit' because of the shape of the hood, this garment offers moderate protection from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards. Because when you're dealing with things like that, nothing reassures like 'moderate' protection. The standard UK-made suit is charcoal-impregnated nylon, made to be quickly slipped on over a regular uniform. There's a heavier version (aka 'Womble suit') for longer-term operations that, again, offers that wonderful 'moderate' protection.

EPDE Suit

The bastard child of a CBRN suit and a spacesuit. It's designed for Extra Planetary/Extra Dimensional Environments – it's what you sling on when you've got to go through a Gate. It's pressurised, heated, moderately shielded against hazards, and has a built-in radio and air supply.

Field Kit

This is a catch-all bag of tricks and gear – night vision goggles, binoculars, GPS, ropes, tape, basic survival and medical supplies – anything you might need on a mission but don't want to bother noting in advance. Nothing too high-tech or unusual. If there's ever a debate over whether or not your Field Kit contains a particular item, make a Luck test to see if you packed it.

Mountaineering Kit

Climbing gear – ropes, pitons, harnesses, ice picks and so forth – in case you need to scale a glacier or the Plateau of Leng or a haunted temple.

Military Comms Kit, Compact

A military comms kit is basically a headset and transmitter/receiver, carried in some cool-looking position on a tactical vest or belt mounting. The kit gives secure, clear communications over a modest distance, even indoors, allowing a team to communicate with one another and with a base or command post. The kit is reasonably resistant to interference and jamming.

Field Medical Kit

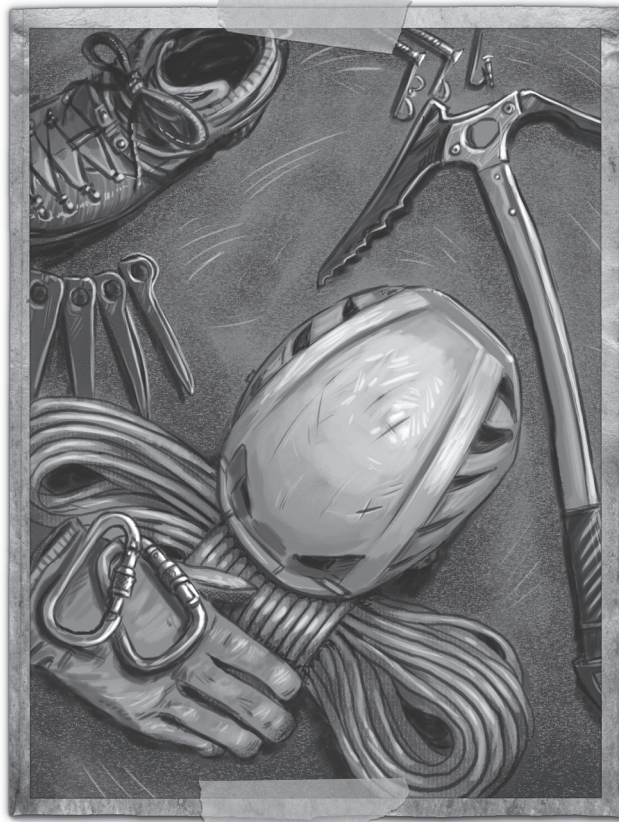
Enough equipment to patch up a fallen comrade, perform basic surgery, or treat an infected wound. Plenty of painkillers, too. It also contains antivenins, antibiotics and treatments for other common hazards – or to win hearts and minds.

Laser Designator

A portable laser unit that does no real harm to the target on its own, but can be used to 'paint' or 'lase' the target for an airstrike or artillery attack to home in on. Guided shells can home in on reflected laser light and will strike with great accuracy, though the designator has to be kept on target until the strike arrives. Ideally this is done from a concealed location with a good field of view.

Scuba

Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus, but you knew that already.



Demo Charge, Conventional

Small thing goes boom. Bigger thing falls over or goes bye-bye.

Charge, Breaching

Breaching charges can be a single shaped charge or a more dispersed frame charge, but they work the same way, blasting a hole in a wall or door to allow a rapid entry to the room beyond. Explosive Method of Entry assaults are normally used when attempting to neutralise hostiles who have hostages or who might do something bad if given time to prepare (shooting back at the assault team qualifies as bad) but a charge might be used simply to gain access to a locked or barricaded area.

Charge, Agent Defeat

Agent Defeat Munitions are normally used to destroy stockpiles of chemical or biological weapons by creating a massive thermobaric (heat and blast) explosion and incredibly high temperatures – as in, it defeats any chemical or biological agents present. An agent-defeat charge could also be used to take out a site contaminated by something more exotic than Anthrax. Few living things could survive the incredible heat and pressure of the explosion, though a DEEP SEVEN might find it produced a pleasantly cool breeze.

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

Name	Avail.	Skill	Base	Damage	Special	HP	SIZ
Demo Charge	Difficult	Demolition	01	6d6/3m	Knockback	15	1
Breaching Charge	Difficult	Demolition	01	4d6/1m	Knockback	15	2
Agent Defeat Charge	Difficult	Demolition	01	8d6/3m	Incineration	15	3

Name	Avail.	Protection	SIZ
Field Coveralls	Easy	4 vs. melee	-
Field Protective Equipment	Difficult	8	4
Tactical Vest	Easy	-	-
Ghillie Suit	Difficult	-	4
CBRN suit	Average	-	4
EPDE suit	Difficult	-	6
Field Kit	-	-	3
Climbing Kit	Average	-	4
Military Comms Kit	Average	-	3
Field Medical Kit	Average	-	3
Laser Designator	Average	-	0.5
SCUBA	Average	-	6



Encumbrance

The Laundry generally doesn't bother with encumbrance or anything like that. Your average player character doesn't carry much stuff - even the most unfit couch potato of a player character can heft a laptop and a smartphone at the same time. Carrying capacity only comes up when you're trying to drag that blood-stained stone altar two feet to the left so it's no longer part of the summoning pentagram.

Things can be a bit different for Special Forces. They've got to carry a lot of gear, including a variety of gadgets for accelerating small pieces of metal very fast in a particular direction. Weight and bulk matter for them. To keep things quick and abstract, we're using SIZ as a measure of an item's size and mass. You can carry equipment up to your STR or SIZ, whichever is higher, without penalty. If your total carried exceeds your STR or SIZ, then any rolls related to physical movement are made one difficulty class worse (stuff you wouldn't normally need to roll for becomes *Easy*, *Easy* becomes *Average*, *Average* becomes *Difficult*, *Difficult* is impossible), as you're dragging or swaying under the burden. The Gamemaster should call for regular Endurance (CON x 5) rolls to keep going under the strain.

Clothing doesn't normally count towards encumbrance, unless it's really awkward or binding - like a protective suit, in which case it definitely counts.



Special Forces Organisation

Special Forces have existed, in some form or another, for as long as there have been military forces of any kind. There have always been those who could do jobs that others could not, and who were vastly more effective than the typical soldier. Scouts, saboteurs or just all-round bad-asses, these warriors could and did turn a bad situation into a glorious victory.

The modern era of Special Forces goes back to the Second World War, when various elite groups were formed to cause mayhem among the enemy, and were the obvious choice for missions of a more unusual nature. Many different Special Forces formations exist across the world; some nations have several different types with a range of specialist capabilities. Not all of them are involved in occult operations, and some are more general in capabilities than others.

What Special Forces all have in common is the ability to function in small teams yet to produce big results. A handful of operators cannot take on a tank division head-on, but they could cripple it – mysterious explosions in the ammunition and fuel storage areas, disabled communications equipment, missing or dead key personnel. Depending on the Special Forces unit, the divisional commander's dog might or might not get kicked on the way out, but even assuming he was still alive then by the time the operators were finished he would no longer have an effective fighting force to command.

Special Forces units are, of course, appliers of intense violence at the right place and time, but there is more to them than this. A team of operators must be able to get into places where they are really not wanted, and get out again afterwards. They must be able to survive in difficult terrain and under dangerous conditions for a long period, and remain combat capable throughout the mission despite whatever hardships come their way. Their ability to evade and hide from enemies is often as important as their fighting skills.

For those really, really special Special Forces units that operate in the occult world of the Laundry, stealth and general sneakiness is often an asset, but sometimes it comes down to the key skill that all operators absolutely must have – the ability to keep your head and destroy everything that needs destroying in double-quick time. When it comes down to it, what the Laundry needs from its military backup is the ability to retain combat effectiveness no matter what crazy shit is going down.

Fortunately, the whole recruitment, selection, training and organisational model for Special Forces is all about that. It's just that the shit is not usually quite *that* crazy.

United Kingdom Special Forces

Since 1987, British Special Forces have been grouped into an organisation named United Kingdom Special Forces (UKSF). It is commanded by the Director Special Forces, who has usually been a Special Air Service Brigadier. The post has recently been upgraded to major-general level, reflecting the importance of UKSF.

The unified command structure allows specialists from various units to be formed into a team for any given mission without the usual difficulties associated with cobbling a force together from people who may have different ways of operating and even different words for the same action or object.

Within UKSF, there are several distinct formations. These are commonly subdivided into 'Tier 1' and 'Tier 2' units. Tier 1 formations specialise in direct action – i.e. kicking down doors, blowing stuff up and shooting anyone who looks like they need it. Tier 2 formations supposedly provide support in various other ways, such as communications, transportation, close protection (bodyguard) operations and the like.

The 'supposedly' above refers to the fact that special operations take place in pretty dangerous places a lot of the time, and just because you're a signals or intelligence expert does not mean that you won't come face to face with a bunch of insurgents or wild-eyed cultists. All special operations personnel are good at fighting. Very, very good at fighting.

Within UKSF are several whole formations and elements of others. The primary Tier 1 operators come from:

- Special Air Service (SAS)
- Special Boat Service (SBS)

Units providing Tier 2 support include:

- Reserve SAS (21 SAS and 23 SAS) (the Laundry's usual partners)

- Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRS)
- UKSF signals units
- Special Forces Support Group (which includes elements of the Royal Marines, RAF Regiment and the Parachute Regiment).

Recruitment and Selection

The Special Forces recruitment and selection process was unified in the late 1990s, with the result that standards, procedures and training methods are now common across all British Special Forces units. Costs were also reduced, but the importance of that 'also' depends on whether the matter is being viewed from Whitehall or some literal hell-hole.

Most British Special Forces personnel are volunteers who are already serving in regular units, though in the case of the reserve units they may have left the regular service and later re-entered in the reserve units. In some cases, such as L Detachment, personnel may enter directly from civilian life without prior military service. However, all UK Special Forces personnel go through a rigorous selection process, which is held twice a year at Hereford.

Personnel must be under 32 years of age (or 35 in the case of the reserve units) and have already shown a high standard of military capability or aptitude. This goes beyond merely being able to handle weapons well; special operations personnel must often teach other troops in the field and must have a broad range of skills as well as an extremely high level of toughness and endurance. Just getting through the door of the recruitment office, so to speak, requires being at least potentially one of the best.

Those that actually qualify for the selection process spend a couple of days being briefed about what they've got themselves involved in, and are subjected to a set of tests

that would be horrifically hard if compared to anything but what comes next. Fitness is a key issue but other field skills are also tested such as the ability to swim and not get lost in the wilderness. Those that qualify and want to continue are given a training programme to prepare themselves for selection, and a few weeks later the process begins in earnest.

Failure at any point from here on in means being 'RTU' – Returned to Unit. Candidates are allowed a second chance at selection, after which the door is permanently closed. About 90% of candidates are RTU; these are outstanding soldiers who may go on to do great things in the regulars, but they are not outstanding enough for the Special Forces.

The next weeks are a combination of training and selection; failure to learn the requisite skills means RTU, and many candidates are washed out for failing to master a single skill. Others cannot meet the physical requirements and some, quite literally, die.

The first four weeks are mainly about hills. Fitness and navigation training involves activities like running up and down hills with a heavy pack, navigating long distances in rough terrain with a heavy pack, and then finally marching 40 miles over the hills with a rifle, full kit... and a heavy pack. This is a timed march of course, over the Brecon Beacons. Even tough, motivated and highly competent personnel with food and water supplies do sometimes die or go missing on these marches.

For those that survive the hell of hills, the next four weeks is about soldier stuff – fighting, shooting, explosives and small-unit tactics. Candidates will have done this before, but never to this standard. Again, failure means RTU.

Personnel destined for the Special Reconnaissance Regiment face an abbreviated version of this phase (2 weeks instead of 4) and then undertake specialist training in undercover operations after a 2-week selection process to determine their suitability.



For most operators the next phase is six weeks of jungle training in Borneo, which not only teaches and assesses critical skills for operating in rainforest terrain but also the candidate's ability to put up with truly god-awful conditions. Operational skills put to the test include observation and patrol skills in a close environment, and boat handling on the distinctly hazardous jungle waterways.

Next is SERE (Survive, Evade, Resist, Extract), which takes another four weeks. Here the candidates learn all about how to evade an enemy searching for them and to resist questioning if caught. Serving personnel from Special Forces units act as hunters and interrogators, so successful candidates may someday get to experience the final test from the other side.

Successful completion of all the phases means that the candidate has passed selection. They then enter the Special Air Service with the rank of Trooper and receive a special hat – a sand-coloured beret. For the first year of service with the SAS, membership is probationary.

For those that wish to join the Special Boat Service, selection is not complete at this stage. From Hereford they move to Poole where specialist training is undertaken in beach and shallow water reconnaissance, underwater operations and the like. Passing this stage of selection qualifies the candidate for a different hat – a green beret like that of the Royal Marines Commandos.

Having completed selection, personnel are considered to have the basic skills needed for any operator. They are then trained in their specialist area. This may include languages and linguistics, parachute operations (including high-altitude drops), vehicle operations, urban anti-terrorist operations, communications (including control of close air support), and medical skills. All special operations personnel are skilled with weapons and are good marksmen, but those selected to be snipers must undertake a sniper course which is a whole additional skill set.

21 and 23 SAS have (slightly) less insanely rigorous selection and training processes. Candidates can still expect to spend about three months running up and down Welsh hills with heavy packs, then a similar amount of time doing advanced-soldier-stuff before completing selection and beginning a probationary period (during which more training is undertaken in things like parachuting, first aid and destroying things with guns and bombs). Additional training includes languages, close protection and counter-weirdness operations. 21 and 23 SAS do not inform candidates about the existence of the supernatural at this stage, but the psych profilers and testers know about it, and work to prepare candidates for the unthinkable truths that will be revealed if they pass.

Those that manage to get through all of this selection and training join operational units where they begin to gain experience in the field. It is still a learning curve at this point; one that becomes much steeper when the occult is involved.

There is as yet no formal selection process for those members of the Special Forces community who become involved in Laundry operations. Some are thrown in because personnel with their skills are needed right here and now. Some are spotted as potential counter-occult operators and 'tried out' either by presenting them with evidence of paranormal activity and observing the conclusions they draw, or working them in gradually through counter-cult/counter-occult terrorist operations.

A number of key figures within UKSF work closely with the Laundry (or even in the Laundry – they've got weekday desk jobs and spend their weekends training with the territorials) and have developed a knack for spotting those personnel who would make useful counter-occult operatives and those who can handle anything but the sort of weirdness the Laundry involves itself with. Over time, certain parts of certain formations have become heavily populated with occult-savvy operators, and these are the go-to units when the Laundry needs backup. However, every now and then it is necessary to just send in whoever is available and hope for the best.

CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN

When CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN kicks off properly, then the Special Forces are going to be the tip of the spear, or more accurately the tip of the banishing sigil. Senior officers within each branch have signed Section III and have been briefed on the threat posed by the supernatural. They may not believe half of it, but at least they're familiar with basic containment and countermeasures, and when the time comes, they'll be able to execute the orders given to them by the Laundry.

Rank and Chain of Command

Service with the Special Forces is normally for a 36-month tour, after which the soldier can Return To Unit or may undertake a second tour. Those that complete two tours are transferred to the Permanent Cadre of the SAS and become eligible for promotion to senior ranks within the Special Forces.

Personnel transferring to the Special Forces retain their old rank as 'shadow rank' and gain seniority for their time in UKSF, which may result in promotion once they return to their old unit. However, whilst in the UKSF personnel are part of an internal rank structure. The starting rank is Trooper, the equivalent of Private in the rest of the army. Rank titles are much the same as the rest of the army: Trooper, Lance Corporal, Corporal and Sergeant.

Officers can come into UKSF from the army, navy or air force. Army officers must hold at least the rank of captain, naval officers must be lieutenants or higher, and air force officers must hold the rank of flight lieutenant or higher. Upon passing selection, the officer comes into UKSF with their rank intact, but is permitted to serve only one term, after which they are returned to their unit.

If an officer wishes to serve another term with the Special Forces they must pass selection again, possibly coming back in at a higher rank after promotion. Completion of a second term allows the officer to transfer to the Permanent Cadre, essentially making the Special Forces their home unit.

The chain of command is fairly loose in the case of Special Forces, mainly out of necessity. Where possible, officers originally from the Royal Marines command Special Boat Service units, but this has not always been the case and SAS officers will sometimes command SBS units. Changes to the force structure in recent years have created greater interoperability, meaning that an officer from one part of UKSF (e.g. SBS) should be able to integrate well with personnel drawn from another (e.g. SAS).

Small units operate in the field, with a great deal of initiative and consequently significant responsibility placed in the unit commander. In conventional military operations the Special Forces contingent often operates semi-autonomously, providing specialist skills such as target reconnaissance to a larger force. While supporting Laundry operations, a similar model is used as when undertaking covert surveillance or hostage-rescue missions; the Special Forces team answers directly to the operational commander, with its personnel under the orders of the team commander and sub-leaders.

Special Forces teams do not take orders from Laundry field agents, nor from regular military officers who are not in their direct chain of command. They do, of course, cooperate with sensible requests and take obviously necessary actions. A Laundry agent cannot order his Special Forces backup team to shoot a household pet, but he can make a strong suggestion that it is necessary, which in most cases will get the same result.

In most cases, the same panicky stream of gibberish could be taken as an order or a suggestion. A Special Forces team would be quite entitled to ignore an order, but equally they would be well advised to do what the expert says is necessary. The formal version of this, as mandated by various training manuals and all manner of procedural documents, is to inform the Special Forces' command personnel that what appears to be a dog in front of them is in fact possessed by an Elder Brain-Eater From Beyond Physics and would he mind ordering his personnel to deal with it in an appropriate manner. The details are then up to the military commander.

Most situations are rather less formal than this, however, and generally speaking it is enough to point and scream something like "shootthatshootthatshootthatnow!" for the backup team to get the general idea. In short, while Laundry field operatives cannot give direct orders to their military backup team (not ones that will be obeyed, anyway), the team are not idiots and will act upon pertinent information whether it is phrased as an order or not. It is considered polite and will reduce friction for Laundry operators to simply point out the existence, location and nature of threats and let the military make the tactical decisions like how-many-more-bullets... but getting the job done without having your cortex devoured is the first priority.

Special Forces personnel assigned to assist a Laundry operation will typically be a small unit comprising a commander, second in command and several others who may or may not be grouped into smaller units with their own leaders. Any specialists present (including Laundry agents, communications officers, liaison personnel from foreign agencies or insurance adjusters) are not in the chain of command, i.e. they cannot give orders to the main body of personnel. In practice, an experienced support officer might take command if the unit's commanding officer is downed or if asked to lead a detachment. The chain of command can be considered to be just slightly less fluid than reality in any given situation.



"Bob, you can come along on this trip on one condition. The condition is that if you get any of my men killed by arsing about, I will personally shoot you. Do you understand and agree?"

- The Atrocity Archive

Primary UK Special Forces

There are many government agencies and odd sections of the police, military and intelligence services that might have come into contact with the sort of weirdness dealt with by the Laundry. These groups have a few people who 'know things' and try to handle whatever comes up. Secrecy being what it is, these people often believe that they are the only ones in the know; once they encounter a Laundry operation then the Laundry tends to co-opt them.

The following groups have an 'official' involvement with the occult and such like, i.e. it is part of their remit and in a few rare instances they are actually quite well prepared to deal with whatever occurs. These are the agencies that will be called upon to assist a Laundry operation that needs armed backup. Most of them thoroughly disapprove of the idea that Laundry agents should be turned loose with firearms. Occult weapons are unavoidable perhaps, but giving those people guns is not much better than letting the Elder Nasties run wild.

There is usually a degree of mutual respect between the personnel of these agencies and the Laundry, especially where an agent has proven effective in the field. Providing Laundry personnel do not allow their assorted quirks and personality disorders to interfere with the mission, the military professionals tend to be tolerant – in the same way that they will tolerate a top-end weapon system that gives great results providing it receives constant maintenance.

Indeed, it has been suggested that the deciding factor in whether or not personnel from these agencies are deemed suitable for Laundry-associated missions is not their ability to cope with reality-rendering monsters from the beyond... it's the ability to tolerate the people the Laundry sends to deal with them.

Special Air Service (SAS)

The Laundry is most closely associated with 21 SAS (The Artists' Rifles) but also has links with 22 SAS and 23 SAS. The three units are collectively known as 'The Regiment'. 21 SAS and 23 SAS are reserve formations, whilst 22 SAS is the main, full-time force. All SAS units use the motto

'Who Dares Wins' and the 'winged-dagger' emblem (which actually depicts King Arthur's sword Excalibur). Although 22 SAS can carry out a wider range of missions than its reserve counterparts, all three units are similar in many ways.

Whilst operational forces can be created to fit any requirement, the SAS requires a formal organisation for training and logistical purposes. This consists of sub-units termed squadrons, each of which is subdivided into four troops of sixteen personnel apiece. In 22 SAS each troop has a different specialist role, though the reserve formations do not specialise to such a degree.

The SAS has a fairly informal way of doing things. Most personnel are referred to by name or nickname, and saluting is uncommon. Officers are sometimes called 'boss' but nicknames are often used when addressing a superior. This can upset regular army personnel but does not in any way detract from the professionalism of the force. Indeed, the SAS is beyond the need for a formal military structure; its personnel are a team who work together and respect one another because to do anything else means failure and probably an unpleasant end.

This actually makes the SAS more accepting of the collection of oddballs that make up a typical Laundry operations team. There is one exception – you can be as eccentric as you like and still win the respect and trust of the SAS, but you must not be incompetent. Stupidity costs lives and will not be forgiven.

21 SAS (The Artists Rifles)

21 SAS is a Territorial Army formation, recruited from former military personnel and extremely capable civilians. Its official role is to 'add depth' to UK Special Forces capabilities, which implies that it is a backup force for the full-time SAS. This is only partially true. 21 SAS is descended from a volunteer light infantry regiment (the Artists Rifles) formed in 1859. It attracted many highly educated recruits including university students and gentlemen, and many of its enlisted men were transferred to other regiments to become officers.

The regiment served in the Boer War and in the First World War, but did not go on active service during the Second World War. Instead it officially served as an officer training formation, though there are suggestions that perhaps the regiment undertook other activities during this time, perhaps providing intelligent, combat-capable personnel for distinctly more-than-special operations at home and possibly abroad. The regiment was disbanded in 1945 but reformed two years later. Initially part of the Rifle Brigade it was quickly transferred to the Army Air Corps, becoming the 21st Special Air Service Regiment (Artists) (Reserve). The regiment served through the Malayan Emergency, producing veterans who then became the basis of the regular 22 SAS.

21 SAS continued to serve in a supporting role to 22 SAS, undertaking long-range patrol and reconnaissance operations. The intention was that this would free 22 SAS for a more 'direct' role against the enemy. The unit has served in the long-range reconnaissance role in Afghanistan, and also alongside 23 SAS during the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

Working as a composite 'V squadron' with 23 SAS, 21 SAS undertook 'operations in support of peace' – a catch-all term for patrolling, protecting refugees and supply routes, gathering intelligence and generally working towards local stability. This role was reprised in Afghanistan, along with close protection for important figures in the Afghan administration and mentoring of local forces including the Afghan National Police.

The Artists Rifles continues to attract highly educated recruits, and also former military personnel who for some reason decided to end their regular career then re-enlist in a territorial formation. At least some of these personnel have had contact with occult entities or other special circumstances, and have been directed into the Artists Rifles as a way of making their skills and knowledge available in the fight against Bad Stuff From Beyond.

21 SAS is commanded by full-time senior officers drawn from 22 SAS, and staffed by officers and enlisted personnel from the Territorial Army. It comprises a headquarters squadron based at Regent's Park in London and three operational squadrons designated A (based in London), C (East Anglia) and E (Wales). Communications specialists are drawn from 63 (SAS) Signals Squadron, another Territorial Army unit.

21 SAS contains the largest proportion of occult-savvy military personnel in the British forces, and there are probably few members who do not at least suspect that there is more going on in the world than a quick look at the Discovery Channel schedule would suggest. Many of its members are a lot older and more experienced than would be expected, and many are 'unofficials'.

Unofficials are personnel who officially cannot be members of the Special Forces due to age or other considerations like being too female or too foreign to pass the basic entry requirements (UKSF only allows male recruits... officially). These personnel are sort of attached to 21 SAS in a vaguely documented manner as consultants, training agents and occasionally job titles so Byzantine than nobody can figure out what they are supposed to be.

Unofficials are in the 21 SAS command structure and on the books in the places where it matters. Most of the time they are ignored by those not in the know, assumed to be civilian contractors, government nobodies or former special operations personnel retained as a repository of operational experience

and otherwise-long-forgotten rude words. When needed, they are wheeled out (sometimes, but rarely, literally) and sent into the field as part of a backup team from the Artists Rifles.

The words 'I'm a (whatever), attached to 21 SAS as an advisor' usually indicate that the speaker is an Unofficial, fully part of the Artists Rifles despite being barred from membership by some accident of birth such as being unforgivably foreign. It can, however, mean that the speaker is trying to sell their elite Special Forces martial arts system to the uninformed masses by posing as a combat instructor to the military. That particular misunderstanding has had interesting consequences on a couple of occasions.

22 SAS

22 SAS is the regular component of the Regiment, and undertakes the widest range of missions that are not connected with matters the Laundry has an interest in. The British government has a policy of not discussing SAS missions, and if something an SAS soldier does makes the news, it will be reported using the name of their parent regiment.

22 SAS was formed from veterans of the Malayan Emergency in the late 1940s, but can trace its spiritual origins back to the special operations units of the Second World War, including the Long Range Desert Group and Small Scale Raiding Force as well as the original Special Air Service Brigade.

Each of the four 'sabre' (operational) squadrons (designated A, B, D and G) is commanded by a major and contains four specialist troops of sixteen men, commanded by a captain. Each troop has a specialist area: boats (and underwater operations), air (i.e. parachuting), mobility (vehicles and desert operations) and mountain (which includes arctic operations). Within each troop there are four four-man patrols.

Casualty replacement and the occasional need for specialists is handled by L detachment, which is a reserve formation largely recruited from former SAS personnel.

Each sabre squadron can deploy a range of specialists, and each cycles through the Special Projects Team on a regular basis. This is not an occult-related group but is the SAS counter-terrorism/counter revolutionary warfare formation. Whilst on Special Projects the squadron trains even more intensively than normal, and is available to deal with any crisis. That might include terrorist threats with an occult slant or other out-of-the-ordinary situations.

23 SAS

23 SAS is a reserve formation, much like 21 SAS. Its three operational squadrons (B, D and G) are based in Leeds, Scotland and Manchester respectively, and tend to recruit in those areas. Its headquarters is in the West Midlands.

23 SAS is less closely associated with the Laundry than 21 SAS, but does deal with the occult at times. Its personnel are often trained for close protection work, and some receive 'special assignment' training that supposedly prepares them to deal with non-conventional threats. A government minister or other high-value target that was threatened by occult means might receive protection from one or more of these 'special capability' operators. Laundry agents are less likely to encounter personnel from 23 SAS under normal conditions, but might work with them to deal with a threat to government officials.

Special Boat Service (SBS)

The Special Boat Service got its present name in the 1980s, having previously been known as the Special Boat Section, Special Boat Squadron and Folboat Troop. The formation has been in existence since the Second World War and has generally had the same remit since then – carrying out unconventional operations in and around water.

The motto of the SBS is 'not by strength, by guile', and its operations have historically tended to be more subtle than those of the SAS. As one analyst put it: If the SAS decided to steal your wallet they might well kick your door in, beat you senseless and set fire to your dog along the way. If the SBS wanted your wallet then one day you'd realise it was gone and you'd have no idea how.

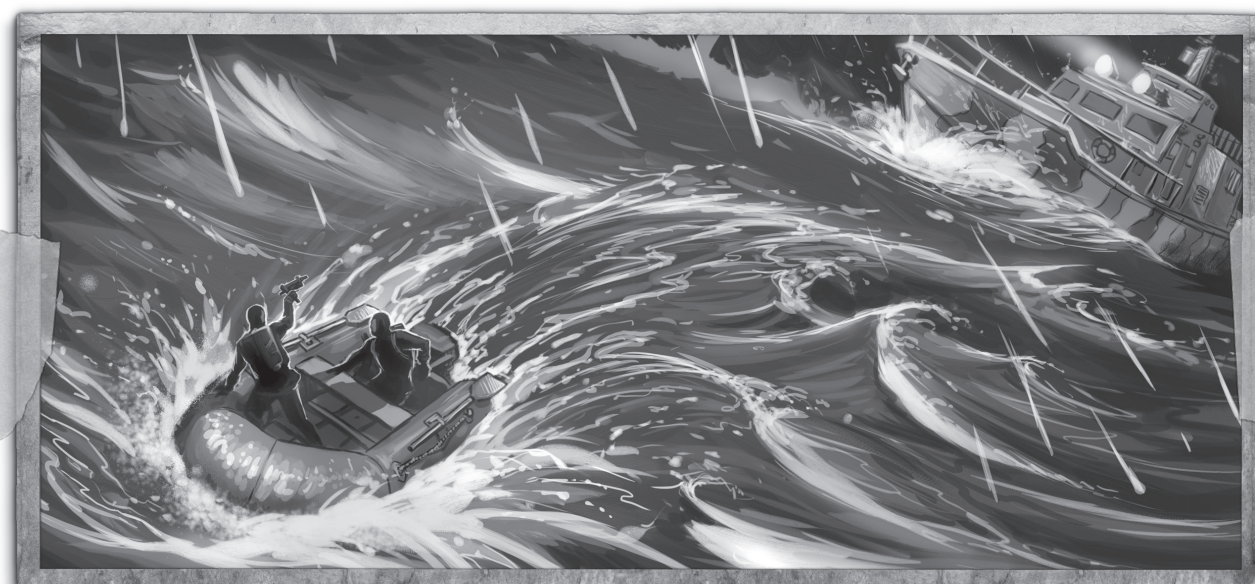
There has traditionally been a fairly intense rivalry between SAS and SBS, though in recent years this has been somewhat reduced by common training and selection. Although some SAS formations do train in water operations, it is the SBS who are the masters of maritime mayhem, and it is to them that the Laundry turns when operations are to be carried out at sea.

The SBS has its headquarters at Poole, Dorset. It has four operational squadrons, each with a specialist role. C and X squadrons specialise in small boat and diver operations, which can include coming ashore from small boats and proceeding inland. C and X squadrons have served in Afghanistan, operating quite far inland.

M squadron trains for maritime counter-terrorism operations, such as rescuing hostages from a vessel that has been taken over by bad guys of some description. They train for specialist tasks like boarding oil rigs and have been known to assist the Laundry in operations dealing with maritime transport or environments.

Z squadron specialises in underwater operations using swimmer delivery vehicles and other specialist equipment. Its personnel include some who have had contact with BLUE HADES. This, and the squadron's specialist skills make it the go-to unit for any operation that might encounter BLUE HADES.

The SBS is organised much like the SAS, with a squadron broken down into 16-man troops. However, the number of men that can fit in a boat has traditionally dictated its organisational structure, and the 2-man canoe team remains an integral part of SBS operations. In addition to its regular personnel, the SBS is supported by the Royal Marines, which provides boat crews on some occasions. Replacements and reinforcements come from the SBS Reserve.



Special Reconnaissance Regiment

The Special Reconnaissance Regiment, or SRR, is one of the most secretive parts of the UKSF community. It may have had its origins in intelligence-gathering operations conducted in Northern Ireland. Unlike the other Special Forces units in British service, SRR recruits women. Its remit is, as the name suggests, reconnaissance, surveillance and intelligence gathering rather than direct action.

It is likely that the SRR includes personnel who have occult experience and may deploy specialist teams to infiltrate or at least observe unconventional terrorist or similar organisations. Laundry operations are unlikely to directly involve the SRR although an operation may be based upon information provided by its personnel.

It is possible that an SRR operator or team may be the only available backup, or that an operation might be necessary to rescue SRR personnel from a cult or other bad people. As a rule, the only interaction most Laundry agents will have with the SRR is in the exchange of classified information.

Special Forces Support Group

As its name suggests, the Special Forces Support Group (SFSG) exists to support special operations. Its personnel come mainly from the Parachute Regiment, Royal Marines or RAF Regiment and must have passed either Marine Commando training or the Parachute Regiment selection.

SFSG provides security to Special Forces operations and supports them with additional manpower and firepower. Its personnel are trained to operate alongside Special Forces operators, eliminating the usual learning curve when regular infantry are called upon to operate in this manner. SFSG also undertakes training and mentoring tasks related to foreign militaries. These were traditionally allotted to the Special Forces, so SFSG frees up specialists for more direct roles.

The SFSG consists of a headquarters company and four strike companies. A, B and C companies come mainly from the Parachute Regiment, with some gunners from the RAF Regiment assigned to B company. F company is formed of Royal Marines personnel. There is also a support company which includes combat engineers, mortar crews and anti-

Support Requests

Section	Service	Difficulty
21 SAS	Armed backup (4-man squad)	Average
	Armed backup (16-man squad)	Difficult
23 SAS	Close protection team (4-man)	Average
SBS	Covert insertion by sea	Average
	Divers to recover alien artefact	Average, or Difficult below 100 metres
	Rescue at sea	Average
SRR	Infiltration of cult (1 SRR operative)	Average
	Surveillance of cult (4-man team)	Average
	Access to SRR reports	Average
SFSG	Cool gadget tech support	Average

tank weapons. SFSG has a number of attached personnel including forward air controllers, detachments of signals, medical and engineering personnel, and a specialist force trained to find and make safe chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Laundry sorcerers and computational demonologists cross-train with elements of the SFSG, and there's a long-term plan to add magic and counter-occult capabilities to the SFSG's roster. To date, no goats have been independently stared at.





Occult Engagement Protocols

Although more or less every contact with the occult is new and exciting (and not in a good way), the Laundry has evolved a number of protocols for dealing with whatever weirdness may occur. In cases where the contact takes place on foreign soil, standard procedure is usually to leave quietly and make sure all the trip expense claims are in order. Where otherworldly threats have to be dealt with, officers and Special Forces personnel are well-advised to follow standard procedures. Any deviation from these requires a full and formal explanation of what was done and why rather than the use of a pro-forma contact report. And the pro-forma is brain-twisting enough.

Officers would also do well to remember that mundane threats are still threats. Falling off a cliff or being bitten by a snake are pretty mundane misadventures compared to having your brain eaten, but that does not make them desirable, except maybe by comparison. Agents must be on the watch for mundane threats as well as occult ones. Most such mundane threats can be dealt with using common-sense precautions and do not require a Laundry-approved guide. Nevertheless, there is one.

Large chunks of the Field Operations Manual deal with issues such as how to use a ladder safely and avoiding stomach upsets in countries with inadequately clean drinking water. Clueless as many Laundry staff can be about the real world at times, most do manage to avoid mishaps without referring to the manual section on anti-slip precautions in the shower and similar environments. Of course, when you're being chased by Deep Ones, it is possible to forget these elementary real-world precautions and come a cropper, as the manual charmingly describes it.

However, the main mundane threat to Laundry officers is, ironically perhaps, the fabric of civilised society and its many agencies that try to be helpful and protective.

Clueless Responses to Incidents

(AKA: How Not To Get Killed By A Police Sniper Just Before You Confront Lurking Evil)

It is quite startling to discover what people can fail to notice going on in front of them, but once someone does actually spot the zombie horde or gateway to crappinessville, there will be a response of some kind. Fire and ambulance crews, lifeboatmen and other helpful people will attend the scene to try to save lives. Normally that's a good thing but it can lead to all kind of complications.

The police are a more active threat in this sense, in that they have a remit to protect the public from strange people who brandish weapons, and will feel duty-bound to try to deal with whatever is happening no matter how outmatched they are. That usually equates to evacuating an area, setting up a cordon and calling in anyone and everyone who might be some help. Thus a single police officer can bring down massive complications with a well-intentioned radio call. Pretty soon the area will be flooded with uniforms and people whose job it is to find out what is happening. Operating on the quiet can become problematic at this point.

It must also be stressed that cops have no sense of humour about people waving guns or things that look like guns, especially if bodies have been turning up or stuff has recently exploded in the area. Most patrol officers in Britain are not armed, in the sense that they do not have a gun, but they do have incapacitating sprays, batons and a radio to yell for help from the armed response team – and they do have guns. A Laundry officer who rushes around with a gun in an area covered by police marksmen might meet an untimely and rather ironic end.

The key to dealing with police and emergency-service response is cooperation and containment. That is, you need to contain the police response before they get too enthusiastic and call in the anti-terrorist unit, and you need to get their cooperation. Your warrant card is the primary tool in this case, and should be applied vigorously and early. If you can get to the first cops on the scene and co-opt them with your warrant card then you should be able to take control of the police response or stop it happening at all. If not, you need to get to the on-site commander and use your warrant card at that level.

Once you have gained control of the emergency-service response you should be able to use rather than work around the official response. Cops can be useful for keeping anyone else from wandering into the area, and to keep reporters out. If you're lucky and there are officers with appropriate experience present they may be able to actively help, but if not then the rule is to use the cops to keep everyone, including the cops, out of your way while you deal with the problem.



Conventional (ish) Operations

Some Laundry operations are not much different to other national security situations. Most of these are termed 'Counter-Terrorism and Rescue-Like Operations' in the field manuals, raising the question of exactly what a 'rescue-like' mission might achieve.

These operations are conducted much like conventional counter-terrorism missions, and might involve an element of interaction (of a non-violent sort) with the opposition. Many cults, occult organisations and even terrorist groups have a public face and do not want to be exposed for what they are before their plans are ready. It may be possible to negotiate meaningfully with such groups, so long as the Laundry officer does not forget that their long-term agenda is probably not something that should be encouraged.

Dealing with such groups can be a lot like international relations during the Cold War. Both sides know what the other is up to but maintain a polite façade to avoid escalation until they are ready or it becomes inevitable. Infiltration of a cult or other occult group is conducted much like infiltration of any other suspect organisation, though with the added complication of geases, magical wards and other sorcerous means of exposing a snitch.

Overt operations against a cult can be carried out much like any other operation. If it becomes necessary to smash in the door and rescue the hostages, it does not matter very much whether the hostiles worship Nyarlathothep or Osama Bin Laden; the details of the threat may vary but an arrest or hostage rescue op is much the same in either case.

Some groups are utterly crazed and unpredictable, but most follow some kind of logic and many are frighteningly rational when it comes to operating in the real world. These are the most insidious, as they tend to know how to 'play the game' and will use legal means, bureaucratic stalling and misinformation to protect themselves... backed up of course by less conventional defences. Once the façade is cracked, these groups are as ruthless as any international crime syndicate or intelligence agency, but not necessarily more so. They do tend to have more inventive ways of disposing of bodies, however.

Conventional (ish) operations include typical 'black bag' covert entry missions to plant evidence or obtain information as well as observation, surveillance and infiltration. Deliberate cage-rattling of a suspected cult is about as far as 'conventional' can go; once the weirdness is out in the open then it's time to move on to less conventional means.

Containment and Suppression

Containment and Suppression (or C&S, as it is sometimes known) is the Laundry's primary and preferred mission. In short, the threat is identified and contained, then quietly disposed of. Where possible, the Laundry prefers to co-opt anyone it can and to obtain artefacts for study – a former threat who now works in Cubicle 17a in the Indexing and Cross-Referencing Team is suppressed just as efficiently as one who has been vaporised or banished back to the outer realms.

Co-opting works best on humans who have stumbled upon something by accident or through being a bit too clever for their own good, but can be applied to some other entities too. The knowledge and abilities of the individual might be useful to the Laundry at some later date, and elimination always remains an option. Indeed, it is easier to achieve and to clean up afterwards if the individual is within the Laundry – the appropriate quote here is "keep your friends close, and give your enemies a job with a decent benefits package".

If the threat cannot be co-opted or negotiated with to a satisfactory outcome, then suppression is the only answer. 'Suppression' in this case means making the threat go away. The means used should be as cost-effective as possible and ideally will not involve any requirement for a cover story to sell to the masses. Low-key is good, but the need to succeed sometimes takes precedence.



In the case of a possessor entity threat, or any other threat that can spread, containment and suppression go hand in hand. The usual precautions must be taken against possessor entities – avoiding physical and electrical contact, treating encountered persons as suspect until proven ‘clean’ and so forth – and care must also be taken to ensure that innocents do not blunder into contact with entities.

Laundry agents may be aware that what appears to be Fred the Delivery Driver is not him any more, but this is not a conclusion that will leap readily to the mind of ordinary people encountering the entity currently wearing Fred’s uniform... and skin. A thin attempt to deceive, which will not convince the most distracted of Laundry agents, will work on an ordinary person who considers demonic possession to be the stuff of fiction.

Military personnel backing up a Laundry operation may have ways to deal with possessed entities, such as using less-lethal weapons to incapacitate the host body, while attempts are made to contain or drive out the entity. They also have guns and explosives, and those work pretty well, too. Shooting every possessed entity in an area will provide effective suppression of the outbreak, and extreme as it may sound it may be the only option.

Containment can sometimes be achieved by indirect means. Explosives will disable most possessed entities, but they can also be used to create obstacles that will contain or channel a group of enemies. Hostiles can be channelled into kill-zones in this way, or contained for a single response such as a large explosive device or mass exorcism.

Checkpoints and obstructions are also a useful way to control the movement of personnel and hostiles. A simple cordon-and-search operation can be used to ensure that an area is cleared, and afterwards access may be restricted to a few key points. These can be controlled by the creation of cleared ‘kill zones’ that deprive hostiles of cover, and movement through the kill zone can be further curtailed by using razor wire and similar obstacles that will impede movement but not bullets.

Note that many possessed entities will disregard threats that would cause a normal person to find another route. A possessor might try to push through thick thorny hedges or even razor wire, accepting damage to its host body that the host might not. Thus it is necessary to think in terms of what is physically possible when setting up obstructions, rather than what would deter most people.

Thick hedges or weak wire entanglements will slow down anything trying to push through them, and are thus useful as a delaying tactic. They must, however, be watched and use made of the delay. As combat engineers say ‘an obstacle not covered by fire is not an obstacle’, and a team that neglects to watch an approach because none of its members would

fancy climbing through that hedge might get an unpleasant and surprise. On the other hand, somebody trying to climb through a razor wire fence is pretty good confirmation of possession or mind-wrenching stupidity, both of which might merit opening fire.

As far as minor possessor entities go, it is usually possible for a team to maintain its security through the use of kill zones, obstructions and access control, at least for long enough to complete a primary mission. Those entities that get too close may have to be dealt with in the old fashioned manner (shooting them), and in this case suppressed weapons are preferred if the team is to remain fairly covert.

In a possessor-rich environment, a team may have to operate as a ‘roving pocket’, with team members covering all approaches on the move and shooting anything that comes too close. This works well enough in the short term, but is best used only when making a brute-force movement through hostile territory.

In many ways diseases and other forms of contamination such as radioactive fallout or hazardous chemicals can be harder to deal with than possessor entities. Similar principles are used, however, with barrier protection in the form of protective suits and breathing equipment, and a general policy of keeping your distance and not touching anything you aren’t sure of. Barrier protection such as a protective suit will only be useful so long as it is not compromised by holes or taking the helmet off.

Contaminants can remain on the outside of the suit, so decontamination is important after a mission. This takes the form of washing off the contaminants with neutralising agents or, if nothing better is available, lots of water and detergent. Decontamination is mandatory before removing protective equipment where there has been contact with... pretty much anything. Ideally it is performed in a sealed environment such as aboard a mobile decontamination suite, with the fluids then disposed of according to current Health & Safety legislation. Allowing contaminated liquids to enter the local drainage system can cause a new set of problems, after all.

One other form of contagion is to be avoided wherever possible, and that is civilian panic and stupidity. Both seem to be infectious and can be extremely dangerous. Establishing a secure area from which the public are excluded is of paramount importance, as is the creation of a suitable cover story. Explanations about E. coli outbreaks, termite infestations, gas leaks and such like can be used to keep the public away from an area without much effort from the security team, though it is necessary to watch for journalists, conspiracy theorists and perhaps a group of meddling kids with a large dog trying to see what’s really going on.

Use of the warrant card and a security detachment (which can be co-opted from local police if necessary) to secure an area will go a long way towards reducing panic. What the public can't see can still hurt them, but at least you'll be able to deal with it without tripping over rubbernecking yokels.

If the area cannot be properly secured, then a cover story can be effective at keeping people away. An announcement that anyone who has been exposed to – whatever – will need to report to a local hospital to be checked out and perhaps quarantined can prove surprisingly effective in clearing the vicinity. Which is why if it is necessary to get people checked for contamination, you should use a different story.

Suppression of a disease or contaminant can require anything from a good scrubbing down with bleach to the use of fuel-air munitions or thermobaric warheads. More physical threats can be more easily found and eliminated – though incendiaries and explosives work well there too. Other related threats will normally suggest an appropriate suppression response. Which translates as: “you weren't just going to leave that gate to another universe open, now were you?”

Paranormal Reconnaissance and Exploration

Sometimes the nature of a threat is not immediately apparent. A gate opening in time and space is rarely a good thing, but sometimes nothing immediately inimical leaps out and starts devouring. Alternatively, sometimes something does but rather than just slam the gate closed it may be necessary to investigate where it leads.

‘Paranormal Reconnaissance and Exploration’ missions also include entry into physical areas such as a suspect building or a mysterious tunnel under the arctic ice. Searching a lost city in the South American rainforest may also fall in this category, depending on what you find. It is wise to assume that there is a paranormal element – or at least a paranormal threat – involved with any new place your team is sent into. While the officers' mess may be a strange place indeed, it is probably not necessary to observe paranormal reconnaissance protocols when visiting (depends on your unit, though), but in most cases even a routine visit to the offices of a suspect company could result in contact with something even odder than the average database engineer.

Paranormal Reconnaissance missions are much like any other recon operations. The team will try to operate covertly, avoiding contact and observing where possible. Wards, protective equipment and a healthy degree of paranoia should be in place, and even apparently mundane objects must be treated with suspicion.

The goal of a recon op is to gather information, although sometimes this can lead to the realisation that something needs to be dealt with immediately. Wherever possible the team will go in, get the info and slip back out again. A properly planned response can then be set up using the Intel gathered by the reconnaissance mission.

One simple rule for paranormal exploration missions is: “don't touch nuthin”. Once the experts from the Laundry have examined an area or object and proclaimed it safe... you probably still shouldn't touch it if you can avoid it. An exploration mission takes the team into someone else's backyard, and there is no telling what horribleness might be just lying around waiting for someone to step on/fall into/invoke.

The team should move through the area to be explored cautiously, but not too slowly. The typical 4-man Special Forces patrol formation works as well here as anywhere else, with larger expeditions using the 4-man team as a building block. Typically the ‘tail end Charlie’ of any given 4-man patrol will be armed with a high-firepower automatic weapon such as a light machine gun, and will respond to a threat with intense fire while everyone seeks cover.

A team may send out scouts or detach personnel to investigate points of interest along the way, but the horror-movie rule of ‘don't go out of camera shot’ applies. ‘Nobody goes anywhere alone’ is another basic rule. Pairs cover one another as they explore or protect the Laundry boffins as they investigate things man was not intended to fiddle about with. A team may move through an area in bounds, with some elements static while others are on the move. Guard posts may be set up at key points, such as the entry to an area, and often snipers are used to provide security as others operate. Snipers do not operate alone; usually a sniper and his observer will suffice to provide mutual security, but a couple of additional personnel may be sent to protect them if necessary.

The sniper team will establish itself in a secure elevated spot, where it can observe the area. Fire support is a secondary role; the sniper's observation skills are the team's first line of defence. The sniper element's first task is to sanitise its location, making sure it is not sitting on top of something nasty, and while one soldier is using a rifle scope or specialist spotting scope to make a minute examination of an area, the other will be watching all around for threats. The sniper team must also make sure it has a clear avenue of escape in case things go badly wrong.

It is rarely possible to put so many personnel into an area to make it safe for Laundry agents to skip about from one interesting site to another, so movement must be carefully coordinated. With armed personnel at their backs and a sniper team up somewhere high, the specialists should be safe enough to do their thing... but ‘should’ is a dangerous word, and things can get hazardous fast when poking

around ancient ruins on the far side of a gate. Personnel who become complacent may not live long enough to learn from their mistake.

A variant on the recon mission is a live specimen snatch. Under some circumstances, a damaged specimen will do, so expedients like shooting it in a non-lethal area a few times can be used to assist the capture. More commonly, it is necessary to bring in a specimen undamaged, and that can pose a challenge.

Less-lethal weapons, either of a general sort or something specific to the creature to be snatched, can be used in a capture, or perhaps a sorcerer might be able to use a geas or similar spell to gain compliance. Unless occult means make it simple, 'bagging' a specimen is normally done the same way as snatching a terror suspect; the target is attacked by surprise, bashed, drugged or otherwise made less able to resist, and then secured for transport. That tends to be much easier with human-sized creatures, but a team may have to snatch something big. If so, mechanical assistance is useful.

It is vital that the whole team does not fixate on the snatch operation. Some personnel need to protect the rest of the team from incoming threats, and even if less-lethal weapons are to be used, some team members should have lethal weapons ready in case things go south and a fast put-down it required.

Recovery of Personnel and Artefacts

Sometimes it is necessary to retrieve people and things that have been... misplaced. There are all manner of reasons why an object might end up in potentially hostile hands, and if that object happens to be the owner of a warrant card then utter stupidity cannot be ruled out.

Options vary depending on the circumstances. If the object or person is in the hands of a neutral or potentially friendly group, or a group so powerful that a direct challenge is a bad idea, then bargaining or purchase is one of the few viable options. If the opposition can be kept in the dark about the value of what they have, so much the better. Occasionally a potent artefact is stolen by someone who knows nothing about its powers but thinks it might fetch a few quid on the Internet. A bag of notes is a small price to pay for its return in most cases.

Where the new owner is unwilling to hand over the item, coercion can be used. Threats to kill loved ones are officially frowned upon but as an alternative to leaving something dangerous in unpleasant hands, such measures might be acceptable. Deals to perform a service in return for the object, although the stuff of most console adventure

games, are not normally considered an option; the British government does not want its Special Forces operators rushing around the countryside doing the bidding of some crook with a hostage. There have been occasions where there was no alternative, however.

A stealthy snatch operation is always a viable option, using covert means to grab the item and then depart swiftly. In the event that a covert snatch is discovered, or if it is not an option, then a direct assault may be the only option. This does risk accidental damage to the artefact or hostage, but if the need is great enough then deliberate elimination may be acceptable to avoid hostiles getting access to the item or whatever the hostage knows.

The general rule is that stealth and surprise are the best options, and once a recovery operation goes 'loud' then it needs to be fast and violent. Flashbangs and similar distraction devices are only useful if they are followed into the room by armed people intent on violence. The aim, as with most rescue operations, will be to prevent the opposition making any coherent response and to overwhelm what opposition does materialise by a combination of speed and firepower.

A recovery operation can be broken into three main phases: approach, snatch and escape. The approach should be stealthy if possible, sudden and fast if not. The team may have to wait for a long period until the circumstances are right, and must be ready to go at a moment's notice.

Once the prize has been secured then the goal is to get it to safety, not necessarily to eliminate all of the opposition. Depending on what is at stake a military team may have to forgo a golden opportunity to take out a whole lot of bad guys in order to save some geek from the Laundry, but if those are the orders then they must be followed. The geek may be more important to the big picture than the opposition; though occasionally a rescue or recovery does suffer 'mission creep' or the team realises that they have to deal with something else important right now.

Escape is always part of the plan; possibly the most important part. Some elements of the recovery team may be assigned to cover the extraction route or to protect a safe house. Escape can be slow and covert or might be a crazy dash through enemy territory; the team will have to decide whether to make a break for it or to hold up and wait for the search to die down. Sometimes the extraction actually goes according to plan, which is always a nice surprise.



Non-Conventional Threat Responses

The British Special Forces have a set of doctrines for dealing with various circumstances, although much of the time the solution to a given problem will be obvious from its nature. Basic soldiering skills and small-unit tactics can be applied to a vast range of very unusual challenges.

Bug Hunt

A 'bug hunt' is a situation where there is very little information on the opposition, or even if there is any opposition. The nature of the threat may be vague, or some of its capabilities may be unknown. Many bug hunts end with no contact with the enemy, who may or may not ever have been there in the first place, and of those that do result in conflict the majority involve a fairly minor threat. However, occasionally a team finds itself hunting something that would be better not found.

The main problem with a bug hunt situation is uncertainty. Those personnel who are convinced there is a real threat but cannot find it can become fatigued and stressed, while those that are complacent risk becoming easy victims.

The procedure for a bug hunt is simple enough... in theory. Key areas are secured and the team undertakes a methodical cordon and search operation until something is found. Cordon and search is pretty what the name implies; some personnel block off all access to an area while others search it. The cordon provides security for the searchers as well as ensuring that any threat trying to evade the search is spotted as it moves off.

A bug hunt usually morphs into some other kind of operation if something is found, though occasionally the team finds itself drawn into a lengthy search and pursuit operation with an elusive target. Even if the opposition turns out to be something whose capabilities are well known, an operation requiring chasing something through air ducts or cluttered warehouses, woods and the like is still referred to as a bug hunt.

A variant on the bug hunt scenario is the 'dumbass hunt'. The phrase occasionally refers to trying to figure out where the Laundry guy has got himself to, but more properly applies to searching for an unintelligent but cunning opponent. A dumbass is thus any non-tool-using threat that is nevertheless smart enough to hide and perhaps ambush the team. Most of the bug hunt principles apply just as well to a dumbass as well.

Cocktail Party

The term 'cocktail party' is a convoluted reference to Rudyard Kipling's poem *The Sudan*, which is about battles between well-organised British troops armed with Martini rifles and desperately brave but outmatched tribesmen with hand weapons. As the poem goes: "we sloshed you with Martinis, and it wasn't 'ardly fair...."

The best kind of cocktail party is one where the team have clear fields of fire and the opposition are slowed by rough ground or obstacles. Any team engaging fairly mindless creatures with only hand-to-hand capabilities (e.g. zombies) will try to set up a cocktail party, enabling the opposition to be methodically shot down as they approach.

A good position for a cocktail party is not necessarily the same as one that would be chosen if the enemy had firearms. A team engaged in a firefight might use a ditch for cover, but for a cocktail party the ideal position might be behind the ditch, using it as an obstacle instead.

The key to a successful cocktail party is sustained, coordinated firepower. Suppressive fire is of little use against mindless creatures – something that does not understand or fear bullets will not be driven into cover by any number of them – so steady, well-aimed shooting is more effective as well as less wasteful of ammunition. That is not to say that rapid-fire weapons are not effective, but they tend to be used to drop concentrations of the enemy or to put a target down fast rather than to suppress incoming fire.

Magazine and belt-fed weapons have a big advantage in terms of firepower, in that they can put a lot of rounds out fast, but when all your magazines are empty you have a problem. With many firearms it is possible to chamber and fire a single round, but this is not a great solution. Using short, controlled bursts or aimed semi-automatic fire ensures that ammunition lasts as long as possible, and many teams will bring along weapons like revolvers and pump-action shotguns if they are expecting this sort of engagement; these weapons are less efficient in a flat-out bulletfest, but are excellent for providing steady sustained fire as they can be quickly reloaded using loose ammunition.

The other key to a successful cocktail party is using teamwork to create layered defences. There is a temptation to fixate on a sector in front of you, or to shoot at all the baddies (i.e. hand-to-hand-only threats) in front of you, but a well-planned defence is based on range, not sector. Distant threats are picked off with long-range weapons like sniper rifles or assault rifles with a good optical sight. Mid-range threats are engaged with assault rifles and perhaps submachine guns, while close-in threats are dealt with

using shotguns, handguns, submachine guns and even hand weapons. Concentrations can be dealt with using area-effect weapons. A grenade will not usually stop a bunch of zombies but it will spread them out and damage some so that they slow down, gaining time for the defenders.

In a well-coordinated defence, personnel will watch all around or be directed by a leader to engage threats in the correct distance zone. A rifleman might thin out a group passing through his range zone then switch to a group coming from a different direction rather than tracking the first group all the way in and trying to get them all. (This would be fine if that group was the only threat, but while the rifleman can shoot down zombies at point-blank range, his buddy with the shotgun could be handling them while the rifleman engaged targets that the shotgun cannot reach.)

A well-coordinated team using kill zones and a good layered defence can knock down a huge number of baddies, especially if unengaged team members are reloading magazines while they wait for something to come into their range zone. A team that just blazes away at what is in front of it risks the fate implied by the next line of Kipling's poem: "But for all the odds against you, fuzzy-wuz, you broke the square."

Goalpost Job

A 'goalpost job' is any situation where the goalposts have been moved – i.e. the normal rules may not apply. Most commonly this means that 'animal' (magic) is involved. The commonest goalpost job is one that looks like a typical hostage rescue or surveillance task, where the opposition suddenly turns out to be a cult with access to magical capabilities.

One of the big problems with a goalpost job is that many common techniques may not work. Killing the lights and going to night vision is an excellent tactic against the Inadequately Equipped But Zealous Revolutionary Front of Northern Whatsitstan, but if the opposition can use magic to find the team, or does not show up on imaging equipment, then it can make a bad situation much worse.

The key to a goalpost job is to try to figure out where the posts have been moved to, which is often easier said than done. A Laundry officer can usually advise (by which we mean: take a wild guess and stake everyone's survival on it) but in some cases there is literally no way to know what might happen next.

Fortunately, things are not usually that bad. Laundry personnel often have access to magic of their own and can at least guess at what the bad guys might field. Counter-magic tools can block magical scrying and prevent the team being detected, wards can be disabled and precognitive magic will probably

just confuse the bad guys if they try to use it. The commonest threats are the use of geases to turn team members against one another, summoning of otherworldly assistance, use of possessor entities or plain old entropy-flinging – i.e. using magic to do damage in a fight, complete with special effects.

There are few good solutions to a goalpost job, beyond the standard precautions that everyone should take – don't touch nuthin', get the Laundry spod to deal with weirdness and make a point of shooting anyone who starts flinging unfriendly animal around.

Lookup Job

A lookup job is any task that involves flying creatures, or possibly anything that can scuttle along the ceiling. Small flying creatures are extremely hard to shoot, though a team member with shotgun and a fondness for clay pigeon shooting can be a huge asset. Most smaller flying or ceiling-scuttling creatures are minor threats; good body armour and a full-face helmet (or helmet and gas mask at a pinch) should provide reasonable protection.

Confined spaces where flight is limited can be used as a refuge or a kill zone, and many flyers can be frightened off by something as simple as an illuminating flare. Few creatures will voluntarily fly into what looks like a big fire. Smoke (from grenades or, you know, burning stuff) can also be used to defeat flyers; not only does it hide the team, but ask yourself – would you fly headlong into a cloud of smoke that might or might not contain a brick wall? Tear gas grenades can be used to similar effect.

Larger flying creatures, of the sort that can swoop down and mangle someone, are a real problem for two main reasons. One is that they are hard to hit before they strike, and indiscriminate full-automatic gunfire can cause additional casualties to the team. Just as importantly, a creature that can fly can cover a lot of distance quickly and often silently. It can perch somewhere it will not likely be spotted and watch the team, picking its moment to strike.

Ground clutter is useful in avoiding swooping attacks; staying below the level of ruins, walls, bushes or any other obstruction will reduce the chances of a successful attack unless the creature is so big that it prefers to fly up, land and start munching.

Flying creatures are best engaged when on the ground or perched somewhere, as this makes them much easier to hit. A sniper with a suppressed weapon can sometimes pick off a flyer at a distance without disturbing others nearby – this is the preferred method where possible. Even potentially harmless flyers may be cleared in this way; any concerns about habitat destruction and over-hunting take second place to what might happen if the creatures decide to attack.

Techniques for engaging flyers with small arms are the same as for aircraft and helicopters; the team should use automatic weapons to put a hail of fire just ahead of the flying creature, so that it flies into the fire zone. Aiming directly at a fast-moving object is an exercise in futility; creating a beaten zone that the creature will hopefully fly into should produce at least some hits.

Some creatures are large enough to be worth engaging with guided weapons, but this is a problem in most cases. The majority of guided weapons use infra-red tracking, and few creatures produce enough heat for this to be effective. Laser-guided munitions may work if the laser can be kept on the target, but a flying creature presents quite a challenge in this manner. Command-guided weapons which are flown by the operator are another possibility, but require a big and fairly slow-moving target.

BLUE HADES

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Although somewhat tougher than a human, BLUE HADES, or the Deep Ones, are composed of terrestrial matter. If riddled with bullets to a suitable degree (or stabbed, blown up or dropped from a great height) they will die. However, they are also the easiest (that's a relative term of course) to negotiate with. The Benthic Treaty acknowledges that both humans and Deep Ones are entitled to life, which is more than most other non-human creatures are willing to give up.

The Deep Ones are extremely powerful, to the point that they could wipe out humanity with bioweapons or targeted climate change. Their power is more subtle and precise than that, however. Their ability to sink a ship would permit the curtailment of international trade, and for an island like Great Britain that would be a disaster. Britain has twice almost been starved into submission by submarine warfare; imagine what the Deep Ones might do!

Thus wherever possible, British policy is NOT to engage Deep Ones. Personnel are permitted to act in self-defence or to protect coastal communities from encroachment, and there may be other circumstances where negotiation is not possible and a Deep One expedition must be confronted. In this case, threats of force and demonstrations of capability may be sufficient to force a withdrawal, but if lethal force must be used then Deep Ones can be engaged in the same manner as human troops.

The primary differences between engaging human troops and Deep Ones is that the Deep Ones do not commonly use ranged weapons, which can allow for a cocktail party situation. However, Deep Ones are highly intelligent and will not behave like a zombie horde. They can be expected to use distractions and/or a stealthy approach, and generally prefer to bushwhack a team on the move or during a rest stop rather than engaging in a stand-up fight.

Deep Ones prefer hit-and-run tactics, and will sometimes get in among a force, cause some casualties and then pull back. Various reasons have been postulated for this; the most likely of which is psychological. Deep Ones may prefer to frighten a force into withdrawing (and spreading the word of terrifying attacks) rather than slaughter everyone. They may have some entirely different motivation; only they know, and they aren't telling. Individual Deep Ones rarely throw around major-league sorcery; their elders don't come to the surface.

It should go without saying that Deep Ones are vastly more capable in wet areas such as swamps or rivers, and are surprisingly fast at lunging out of water to grab a target. Against a human, a Deep One does not need to fight in this environment; it can simply pull him underwater and wait for the bubbles to stop. For this reason, personnel are advised to take special note of water-assisted approaches to their position, and to stay well away from any body of water more than a few centimetres deep if Deep One involvement is suspected.

Deep Ones are known to use other creatures as servitors, including shoggoths. It is possible that these creatures may be available as heavy support if a Deep One force encounters serious opposition. If combat with BLUE HADES does occur, it is thus policy to offer an apology to the retreating Deep Ones, or yell one over your shoulder as you flee (who knows, it might even work!) and to immediately relocate in case the Deep Ones send in their shoggoths to get some payback. Hanging around after a fight is rarely advisable, but in this case it may be terminal – and distinctly squamous.

DEEP SEVEN

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Official doctrine on engaging DEEP SEVEN entities comes down to 'you're kidding, right?' There are a lot more words, but that's about the gist of it. Much of the document's page count is filled out with academic discourse on the 'extreme unlikelihood' of a team coming into contact with a DEEP SEVEN entity with both parties able to act. Still, best to be prepared.

There will usually be plenty of evidence that a Cthonian is in the vicinity. A 10 metre-long, tentacled worm-thing burrowing through rock is hard to miss, and as the policy document innocently states: thermal imaging equipment may be useful in detecting an incursion. Tentacles capable of melting rock like butter do tend to have a significant thermal signature.

Most of the rest of the document deals with telepathic contact, which boils down to 'just don't'. Anyone making telepathic contact with a Cthonian is likely to go mad and/or die, possibly not in that order. Even their artefacts are covered by the don't-touch-nuthin' rule.

A military team forced to confront one or more DEEP SEVEN entities may be severely threatened by heat, and can be lashed with a hot tentacle or crushed as the Cthonian simply trundles over them. There are some fanciful suggestions that they may melt gobbets of rock and flick them at personnel as projectiles, but this is highly unlikely. A Cthonian is more likely to burrow away from a threat... assuming it notices that there is one. Most weapons that can be handled by humans are too insignificant to attract attention.

Small arms and light support weapons – i.e. the handguns, shotguns, rifles, submachine guns and light machine guns that arm most teams – are almost wholly useless against DEEP SEVEN entities. Rifle bullets will penetrate the outer skin of a Cthonian, but they are unlikely to find anything underneath to do any harm to – DEEP SEVEN organs are a mystery to humans, making the equivalent of a head or heart shot impossible. Thus while intense small-arms fire might hurt a Cthonian, chances are that all it will achieve is mangling some of its tissues near the surface of its body, and these are repaired or regenerated at an astonishing rate.

Heavier weapons might be an option. Fragmentation-type grenades will not penetrate deeply enough to cause much harm, but large explosive devices such as a satchel charge or shaped-charge anti-armour weapons may inflict sufficient damage to wound a DEEP SEVEN entity. The only useful response seems to be to lure the entity into a kill zone and hit it simultaneously with several shaped charges, anti-tank weapons or a really, really big bomb.

Giant Monsters

Giant monsters present a significant and unique challenge to a military team. In most cases, there should be sufficient warning of the presence of a truly major threat that heavy weapons can be deployed. A team confronted with such

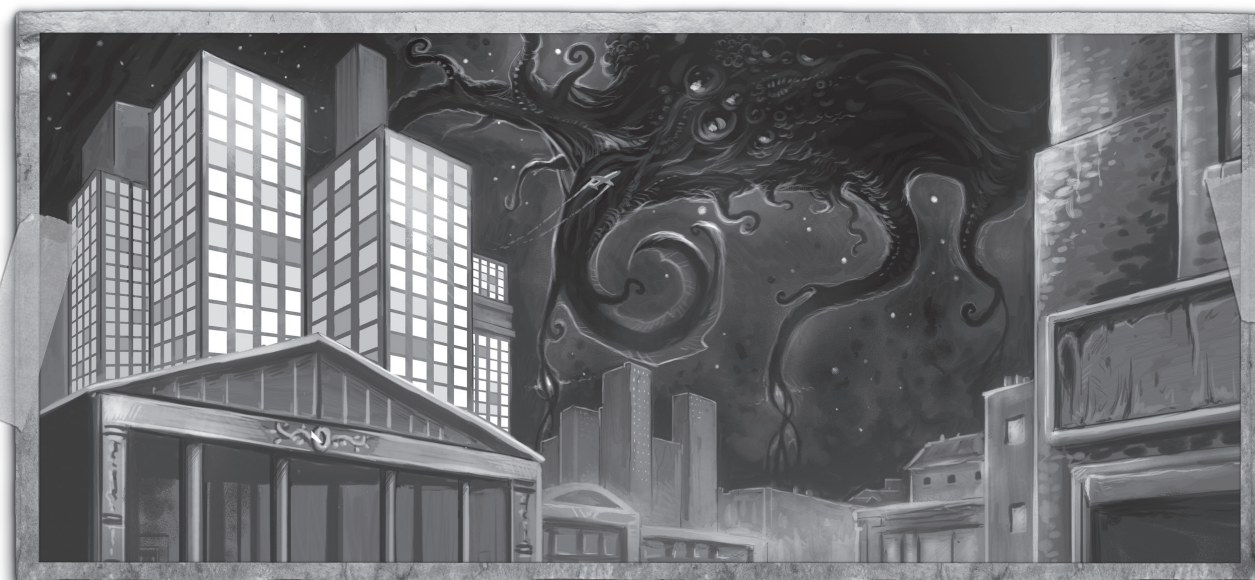
a massive threat should fall back to a defensive location and call for support. Missiles, artillery and airstrikes might be effectively deployed, and there are clearly defined circumstances under which nuclear release might be granted.

There are no weapons carried by a typical back-up team that can usefully engage Great Cthulhu or a similar god-like being, but portions of such a being (e.g. tentacles) may be successfully engaged with explosives and heavy firepower. The same approach applies to 'mid-level threats', a catch-all term for large monstrous creatures including shoggoths and similar servitor races.

If contact can be broken and the threat eliminated by use of heavy weapons, or it can be induced to withdraw, then this option is preferable. It may be that a shoggoth can be 'defeated' by bargaining with its BLUE HADES masters for its withdrawal. It is not always necessary to eliminate the threat; getting rid of it is a win in this case.

If forced to fight, the team should attempt to draw the monster into a kill-zone, ideally one primed with explosives or targeted for support weapon strikes. A coordinated application of all available firepower may suffice to kill or drive off the creature, or may disorient it while a banishing ritual is conducted. If this is not possible, then the team should choose a defensive location that limits the avenues of approach available to the threat and seek to harm it as much as possible as it enters.

Large threats can be entombed or trapped in a variety of ways. If occult means are available then these may offer the best option, but collapsing a building or cave may temporarily trap an entity that can otherwise not be stopped. Personnel must immediately file a 'containment of major otherworldly threat' report to the relevant authorities, taking care to complete the Health & Safety appendix to avoid unnecessary risk to follow-up missions.





Running Military Games

An OCCULUS extraction in Docklands would be visible all the way from six different TV stations and a couple of newspaper newsrooms. No-one wants to be the subject matter of a COBRA briefing to the Prime Minister and cabinet, due to a tower of smoke rising east of Downing Street; that kind of thing can be a career-limiting move, especially if the existence of the organisation you work for is a state secret the PM hasn't been cleared for. So the availability of a full OCCULUS team outside the bank HQ isn't about rescuing my sorry ass if I run into something I can't handle; it's about saving London if it turns out there's the thaumaturgical equivalent of a nuke in the basement,

— The Rhesus Chart

Often, military characters will be backup characters for Laundry agents, and the focus will be on what might be termed 'Laundry stuff' rather than special operations as such. However, some missions are more military in nature.

These operations may or may not be backed up by one or more Laundry operatives. In many cases a spec ops team won't like being saddled with an amateur (and a weird one at that) who lacks the proper training for the mission at hand; some matters are best dealt with by the professionals. If the boffins are lucky the operations team will bring them some bits back to look over.

Whether the Special Forces guys are the focus of the game or are simply there in the background, they will tend to act the same way. Special Forces units tend to be very relaxed in terms of military etiquette (which can cause friction with the regulars), but they are also very committed and take their tasks rather seriously (which can sometimes cause friction with Laundry agents).

For a military game to work, the players have to understand the mindset of the people involved. They are professional fighting men who are at peace with the idea of brutally killing anyone they need to, but they are in no way psychopaths. Their violence is done vigorously enough, but clinically. They weigh the odds and balance what is needed against what is possible. They may be idealists who will go to extreme lengths to get the job done, but they are also realists who know what is not possible.

Playing Special Ops

A special-operations military game is more suited to a roleplaying game than a formal military set-up, as the team tends to be informal and will deal with all kinds of circumstances and people. However, the guy in charge is still in charge and orders need to be obeyed. Players that want to be a maverick or loose cannon should play an attached expert (like a Laundry guy, a civilian intelligence operative or something similar) rather than an operator. Anyone who just does as he likes regardless of orders will be leaving the Special Forces pretty sharpish.

Special Forces personnel are trained to work well together as a team. A new guy might not be fully trusted until he's proven himself, but the team will respect the hell out of an operator who has earned their trust. This respect is given quietly and quite possibly alongside a great deal of personal abuse, but it is there for those who know to look for it. A team will not engage in petty internal conflicts, and if someone doesn't work well with the others then he'll be assigned to another team. Rivalry and some tension is good for roleplaying fun, but at the end of the day a team rely on one another completely, so backstabbing and petty politics won't work in this sort of game.

Operators are 'quiet professionals' rather than flamboyant heroes. They may grouse, wisecrack and bitch all day long but they will bust a gut to complete a task that needs doing. They do not brag about their exploits, on the whole, and will often say something bland and non-committal rather than give the slightest hint that they are involved in special operations. Indeed, anyone who says they are or were in the SAS, or talks about their experiences in the black ops community, is probably making it up. Real operators have a habit of secrecy about what they do.



Special Ops Missions

A military game might revolve around the missions of a specialist counter-occult team, or a group of operators supporting Laundry agents as they do... whatever it is they do. Alternatively, the characters may have to deal with a mix of conventional and decidedly unconventional problems.

A military game may involve the team doing exciting things like penetrating a foreign harbour in minisubs or exploring a lost city in the jungle (or on the other side of a gate), but there will also be a fair amount of lying in a bush observing a cult compound and occasionally reporting back. Action, when it happens, is swift and brutal, but it is not constant.

Most of what a special operations team does will be problem-solving. Some problems can be solved with violence, but where possible the team will have to find another way in, or round, or past. Putting off the moment when a mission 'goes loud' as long as possible can require some inventive thinking. Sure, you could blast through the checkpoint, but that would alert the cult and maybe start the ritual early. So you have to find another way in, something a bit less direct maybe....

This is where special operations work gets interesting. The end result might be explosions and mayhem, but getting to the point where that happens may require talking to people, following suspect individuals, sneaking around and bypassing security. Special Ops teams are good at fighting, but they will almost always be heavily outnumbered and far from assistance if someone gets badly hurt. So the players will have to think creatively in order to get the job done – especially since the sort of jobs that operators get sent to do tend to be... somewhat tricky.

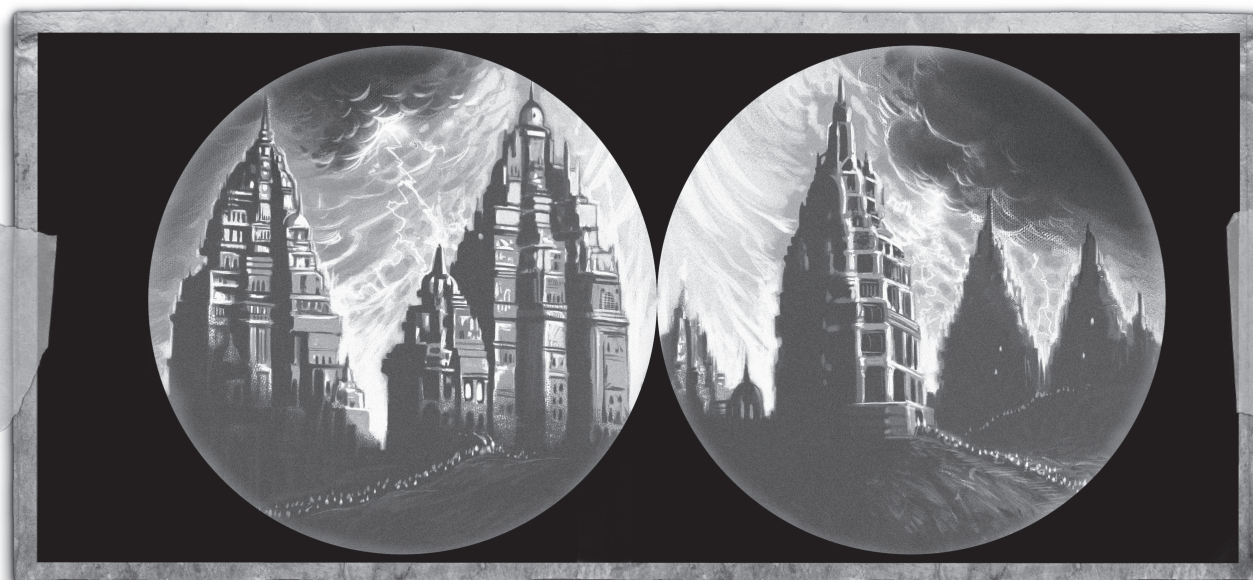
A massive outbreak of violence is a satisfying end to a tale of deceit and creeping horror, but constant gunfights will become boring sooner or later. Indeed, a properly conducted combat is more of a problem-solving exercise than a fight. In other words, a lot of the time when a team needs to fight, it will be a matter of a few quick shots, ideally from a concealed sniper with a suppressed weapon. It is entirely possible that the opposition will be taken out without a fight.

Things go wrong often enough that fighting fools will get their fill of carnage. Running gunfights, vehicle chases through Eastern bazaars (or Harrogate Farmers' Market), races across the rooftops to get to the chopper before the wild-eyed hordes close in... and the occasional Rourke's Drift-like stand against appalling odds... all these can and will happen in a military game. But for that stuff to remain interesting, it has to be counterpointed by other activity.

Just Following Orders

Orders are a great way to put a bunch of players somewhere they do not want to be and to limit their options. A team might be sent to investigate a suspect set of ancient ruins, or to provide security for a diplomatic mission trying to make contact with a BLUE HADES outpost. Rules of engagement can cause additional complications. A team might be ordered only to engage under certain circumstances, and have to interpret their orders carefully as things spiral out of control. Just blasting away might solve the immediate problem but cause the mission to fail, but not shooting at the right time might be equally damaging.

Military games can be made more convoluted by inter-service rivalries, and by disputes between groups ostensibly on the same side. The police might resent a military takeover of something that is their responsibility and fail



to share key info, or a government department might be trying to get control of a segment of special-operations budget. You need air support right now, but it's being blocked by bureaucrats who are not willing to sign off on dropping bombs on a Scottish island or a foreign town....

Military personnel might also get involved in mundane operations. Ordinary terrorists are still a threat to national security; the only team that can deal with a possessor outbreak might be retasked to try to catch a car-bomber cell in London. The team will have to figure out how to cover all the bases and get both jobs done. Well, they do say that the only easy day was yesterday.

It should be noted, however, that Special Forces teams are trusted by those that send them out, and those that can deploy Special Forces teams are powerful people. That means that a team carrying out an operation, even an off-the-books 'black op', has the backing of a powerful patron who has a good reason for wanting them to succeed. Thus a Special Forces team might be the victim of some interference but they do have a powerful patron who can bring a lot of assets to bear to smooth the way or to make the mission succeed.

For example, if a regular army captain calls for an airstrike on the radio, his request may or may not be granted depending on what assets are available. In the case of Special Operations units, support assets may well be on standby exclusively for their use (which may be why many regular units can't get support when it is wanted!) and will probably be immediately available.

That said, operators do not have a blank cheque under most circumstances. If a team asks for an artillery strike they will probably get it if the target is somewhere foreign and hostile, but the request may not be granted if the target is the village of Nether Poppleton in North Yorkshire... unless of course something really dire is going down and the situation merits such extreme measures.

Most of the time, this sort of thing simply will not happen, however. Special Operations are supposed to be low-key and localised, meaning that violence and destruction is limited to the immediate target area. A few sniper shots, a stabbing or two and a retrieved artefact is the ideal. Levelling a section of countryside is a bit more noticeable, and the military, just like the Laundry would prefer not to have to explain itself to an external commission.

The Essence of a Military Game

Thus the essence of a military game is this:

- A team of experts has been assembled and given a difficult mission
- The mission is important can probably not simple or easy to complete
- Significant assets are available to assist the team at need
- The mission needs to be kept as low-key as possible
- Everything is more complex than it seems, intel is never completely correct, and the team must use its not-inconsiderable skills to find a solution to a fluid and dangerous situation

A military game can be every bit as varied as any other Laundry game, just with more firepower available. Of course, the bad guys might bring a bit more to the fight too. After all, you wouldn't send in the best of the best if some bloke with a clipboard could deal with the problem, now would you?





On Borrowed Time

This mission is intended for a group of military characters in a special SAS squad that responds to occult threats when the situation gets so bad that extreme force is necessary. They should be aware of the supernatural, and may have dealt with it before. The squad might contain a magic user more appropriate to the Laundry, but most of the group should be soldiers, engineers, and the like. As the adventure begins, they have been called into service and flown to Brunei.

Gone Today, Here Tomorrow

Aeons from now, long after the entities of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN have devoured the last scrap of humanity and drifted back into the lightless depths behind space, a new race of beings will arise on this planet. Like our own civilisation, they will eventually create their own advanced technology, including a form of time travel. Leapfrogging their way back through the centuries, they established several way stations throughout our own history. These stations contain incredible machinery that harnesses temporal energy and are guarded by creatures that exist outside of linear time. They are also hidden from sight due to them being slightly out of phase with our own time.

But things are changing. Due to a combination of factors – the proximity of our own end times, global warming, the moral turpitude of today's youth, and what have you – the cloaking effect on one of these way stations has lost power. In short, it has winked back into existence.

The Laundry on the Case

This particular way station is located in the jungles of Brunei right in the middle of the British Army's Jungle Warfare training course. Because these courses are run fairly regularly, it wasn't long before the way station was discovered. The squad that found it reported back to their superiors, who reported to their superiors, and so on, until it came to the attention to some ears and eyes within the Laundry (speculation on whether these ears and eyes were actually attached to a human person is still extant). Description of the way station as being some kind of ancient crypt covered in strange carvings prompted the dispatch of a pair of Laundry field agents: Professor Chris Tallman and Maisie Bloom.

Upon arriving in Brunei, the two officers were given an Army escort to the site in question. Immediately upon seeing the crypt, the Professor called in a request to create a temporary camp in the area for further study. After only a few days, Professor Tallman and Ms. Bloom cracked the wards on the way station's inner sanctum and discovered the machinery within. There was a brief skirmish with the station's guardians, but the army escort drove them back into the angles of time. Unfortunately, this was to be their final triumph.

Fit for a King

Since its inception, the American OCCINTEL agency, the Black Chamber, has standing orders to retrieve any strange and unusual technologies that might help them further their opaque goals. Time travel certainly fits that criterion. Thanks to satellites beefed up with PLUTO KOBOLD expertise, when the Laundry agents breached the way station's inner chamber, several monitors began flashing deep within the Black Chamber's HQ. This information was relayed to a certain general, whose response was simply, "Dispatch King's squad."

Agent King and his men are a first-strike squad that have been conditioned, both mentally and physically, to withstand a particular brand of gate travel developed by the Black Chamber. They are peak specimens of humanity. At the General's orders, the team was quickly teleported to Brunei. They gunned down the British soldiers with cold professionalism and took over the camp. Maisie Bloom was able to activate a protection charm and temporarily hide herself within the mess hall. Agent King himself then confronted Tallman within the central chamber.

The Professor tried to shoot the American. His marksmanship was... lacking.

He did shoot the crystal at the heart of the machinery, though, causing it to crack in several places. The temporal energy stored within the crystal spilled out, fracturing the time stream in a localised area. The way station guardians were able to take advantage of the situation by possessing the Black Chamber killers. Agent King and Professor Tallman, at ground zero of the temporal explosion, began to mutate. Maisie managed to send a distress call to the local British Army base. The transmission came across garbled, but when cryptographers unscrambled it, they sent for the PCs to clean up this mess.

Assembling the Team

You can run this mission with regular Laundry characters, but they'll be at a disadvantage in a firefight. A team of Special Forces types can succeed, but they'll likely have to rely on Maisie Bloom for help with the tech stuff. The ideal compromise is to send one or two of your regular PCs along with Special Forces support. So, who gets to be the unfortunate Bob-like baggage on the mission?

The Shadow of the Future

Later in the mission, the PCs are going to run into future versions of themselves who've fallen into the thrall of the Black Chamber. To represent these guys, make copies of the PCs' character sheets. Feel free to spread around a couple of extra skill points here and there to represent their experience. Don't forget to use the PCs' equipment, like ballistic vests, and other assets too, like wards. While they are fairly identical, in strengths and weaknesses alike, play up some physical differences between the current characters and their doppelgangers. Maybe one is missing an eye or even a limb. Maybe one's started to transform into a BLUE HADES, or is hideously scarred. Little differences work too; the presence (or absence) of a wedding ring, for example.



Wilkins

1. Welcome to the Jungle

The small nation of Brunei is located on the island of Borneo in the South China Sea. It has a tropical climate with plenty of humidity and rainfall. Large portions of the land are engulfed in jungle foliage. Though it gained its independence from the UK 30 years ago, the government of Brunei is still on friendly terms with the British. In fact, the British Army maintains a Jungle Warfare Training School in Brunei to instruct the Royal Marines on the finer points of finding and killing people in a tropical rainforest. This is where all the temporal faeces have hit the fan.

You have spent nearly a full day in transport and seen the inside of many a plane since getting the call to action. The details were scarce – you were told that you were needed in Southeast Asia for a very bush-bush mission. You have dozed when you could and endured the slop that passes as food. Most of all, you have been patient.

If this is a new squad, give the players the opportunity here to introduce their characters, their appearances, their skills and so forth. If the characters are an established group, they might spend this time speculating on their mission.

Upon landing at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Kuala Lumpur, you are greeted by Captain Grant and Wilkins, his aide. Captain Grant is a stocky, white-haired fellow in his 50s, who looks like he has spent most of the past decade behind a desk. Wilkins, in his 20s, is taller than the captain by more than a foot, and his brown hair is growing a bit shaggy. The Captain waves you aboard a mid-sized passenger jet further down the tarmac and doesn't speak until the plane has taken off.

"Good morning, soldiers. You are no doubt tired from your long trip, so I'm sure you will appreciate if I get down to brass tacks. In a short while, we will be over Brunei airspace, where an incident has occurred at the British Army's Jungle Warfare Training School."



Captain Grant

Grant looks at his watch. "13 days ago, a squad undergoing one of our Jungle Warfare courses came across something unusual: a temple-like structure carved into the face of a hillside. It wasn't there the day before. As is protocol for such occurrences, we kicked it over to the specialists at the Laundry, and they sent a couple of agents to investigate: Professor Chris Tallman and technician Maisie Bloom.

"We sent a handful troops to accompany them, and to assist with the construction of a temporary base there. The usual stuff: a couple of prefabs to serve as barracks, mess hall, lab, whatever was necessary.

"2 days ago, we received this transmission from the site."

Captain Grant nods to Wilkins, who taps a button on his tablet. There is a shriek of cacophonous noise, interspersed with crackles of static and snippets of what might be voices, though they are unintelligible.

"The boffins managed to work out that the broadcast contained more human speech than it sounds like. Parts of it were sped up, parts slowed down, and still others completely backward. Here's the message as best as they could recreate it."

Wilkins taps another button, and plays another recording. A terrified female voice barely penetrates a wall of static.

"Hello? This is...<STATIC>...at the...<CRACKLE>...site. We've just been attacked by...<HIGH-PITCHED SQUEAL>...dark suits...<STATIC>...out of nowhere...<LOUD POP>...might be agents of the Black Cham—<STATIC>—man still inside the...<CRACKLE>...here in the mess...<FEEDBACK>...what the hell? I think there's someone outside..."

"We believe that the sender was Maisie Bloom. We are hoping that she is still alive." The aide hands Grant a folder. He opens it to reveal a number of photos. "Satellite images show that at the same time we intercepted this message, the area was suddenly covered by... well, see for yourselves." He hands the photos around. In them, you can see that a small area of the thick Borneo jungle has been covered by a dome of shimmering, but completely opaque, light.

The captain collects up the photos. "We're going to airdrop you into the camp, where we need you to dispose of any threats and extract any survivors." Captain Grant rubs his eyes. "Expect animal and be ready for anything. Any questions?"

Here are some typical questions players might ask, and Captain Grant's answers.

What is this strange shimmering dome?

"Unfortunately, we don't know, and we haven't had much time to research it. It's not natural, that's all we can tell. We don't think it's a weapon, but we can't say for sure."

Agents of the Black what now?

"Ah, yes. It is possible that Ms. Bloom was referring to the Black Chamber. They've declined to comment on the matter, which in and of itself is a bit damning. They tend to have their sticky fingers in all sorts of strange pots, so it is entirely possible that this site is of interest to them too."

How lethal should we be?

"If anyone or anything has attacked our soldiers and the Laundry agents, you are authorised to use the full extent of your force upon them. Use your best judgement on the scene, of course."

Where do we go when we are done?

"Team Training Brunei HQ is only a few clicks away in the town of Seria. There are paths and roads leading back to civilisation, but it might be a bit of slog on foot. If you can establish radio contact once any and all tangles have been eliminated, we can send a jeep to your location."

After their briefing, the PCs are given parachutes and told to suit up. They also have whatever gear is listed on their character sheets, if that issue is in question. Due to the small size of the plane, it doesn't hold any extra gear.

The Jump

Shortly after the briefing is concluded that the plane reaches the designated airdrop spot. The passenger jet, a British Aerospace 125 (or BAe 125), isn't normally equipped to deploy paratroopers, but the Army has modified it slightly for special occasions such as this one. These alterations, in addition to the low altitude at which the jet is currently flying, mean that Captain Grant and his aide don't need to worry about being sucked out of the door. However, they do strap into their seats before the hatch is opened remotely by the cockpit crew. The squad is still encouraged to jump as quickly as possible: this is no time for dilly-dallying!

The plane is flying at about 200 metres, which is a fairly low altitude for parachuting, but it does offer a spectacular view of the jungle canopy, as well as the flickering dome that apparently encircles their final destination. Wary PCs will probably not want to jump directly into that unknown energy. With an Average Navigate or Spot check, they can soon a small clearing a few dozen metres away from the camp.

After everyone has jumped, they notice another, albeit smaller, low-flying aircraft. From its shape and size, it appears to be some kind of unmanned drone. As they watch, it launches a number of air-to-ground missiles toward the dome. The PCs will probably try to manoeuvre their parachutes to avoid any blast radius or attempt to radio HQ. Before they can accomplish anything significant, however, the missiles impact the shimmering energy. Beyond the normal explosion they might expect from a Hellfire missile, there is also a bright flash of sickly green light and a massive blast of wind that threatens to blow them all the way into Malaysia. As they are whisked away from the camp site, they can see that the dome is growing in size.

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

At this point, have each PC make a *Difficult* Jump check. If they were already heading towards the smaller clearing, this is an *Average* check instead. Failure means getting banged up for 1d6+1 points of damage from a poor landing. Either way, the squad can gather themselves up and get their bearings. Luckily, there is a trail leading towards the camp site, even though it is not exactly maintained. Attempting to use their radios results in a squelch of static and no response. The only way that they'll find answers is if they complete their mission.

Hitting the Wall

The squad begins the march through the jungle to the camp. The weather is warm but pleasant and humidity is fairly low. If one PC is scouting ahead, have them make an *Easy* Navigate or an *Average* Spot check. Otherwise, have whichever PC is in the lead make this check. Success means that they arrive at the following scene relatively quietly, failure means that they blunder in, making a lot of noise.

The group comes across a wooden wall erected in the middle of the trail. This is one of those obstacle-course walls with a rope dangling from the top, meant to be surmounted by eager grunts while drill sergeants question their parentage.

The PCs see two human figures standing next to the wall. They appear to be wearing black suits and sunglasses, but looking directly at them is a recipe for a headache. These two figures are hybrid agents (see sidebar) sent out to guard the trail. Getting closer to the two agents requires a *Difficult* Stealth check. If they've made a lot of noise, they cannot make this check, and the agents automatically spot them. Once they notice the PCs, they both move quickly behind the wall and use their ability to travel through angles to return to the camp and warn the others. They leave no trace.

It is only a short while before the PCs reach the camp proper.



The Hybrid Agents

While the Black Chamber agents' modifications allowed them to survive the instantaneous transport from America to Brunei, it left them vulnerable to a twisted kind of possession. Directly after the accident, the way station's guardians took advantage of this weakness, creating a twisted hybrid of man and monster. From a distance, they appear to be tall human men wearing dark suits and sunglasses, but up close it is clear that something is odd about them. Their forms are angular, looking almost like Cubist paintings come to life. Their faces have a lupine quality, and those sunglasses seem to physically be a part of their heads, growing out of (or into) the skin. They possess the uncanny marksmanship of the original agents and the guardians' ability to fold space by moving magically through sharp corners in the environment.

When a hybrid agent is killed, he leaves behind a small cloud of thick greasy smoke that quickly dissipates and his black suit. The fabric of the suit feels more like a discarded snakeskin than any kind of cloth. They aren't carrying any forms of identification, only their guns. While, they are unsettling to look upon, they do not inflict any Sanity Loss until one sees their space-folding magic first hand.

Hybrid Agents (5)

STR 20 **CON** 18 **SIZ** 13 **INT** 16 **POW** 18
DEX 17 **APP** 10 **EDU** 13 **SAN** N/A **HP** 15
Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Pistol 75%, damage 1d10

Armour: 1-point/skin. Regenerates 3 hit points per round, unless reduced to 0 hit points.

Skills: Athletics 70%, Grapple 30%, Listen 60%, Spot 60%, Track 50%.

2. The Camp Site

The jungle foliage parts. Three prefab buildings have been built at the base of a large hill, around an area free from trees and bushes. A triangular doorway perhaps the size of a truck opens into the hill. A number of bodies dressed in British Army fatigues lay scattered about the camp. The whole place is eerily quiet. There is no sign of the explosion that you saw when parachuting in.

Before you can plan your next move, you see yourselves running out from the hillside opening. A young woman in a black dress trails after you tapping furiously on her smartphone. One of you is shouting into a radio, "Base, you have to intercept that drone! I don't care if it'll cause an international incident, an explosion will just cause the crazy nonsense that's been happening here to spread. It could eventually engulf the whole..." You watch yourselves stagger to a halt as they notice you standing just outside the camp.

That's when the missiles hit. Again.

Metres above you, an explosion blooms forth in slow motion. The shockwave, completely visible at this speed, rolls inexorably toward you. The ground beneath your feet begins to shake and buck. The air around you becomes superheated.

Your hair catches fire. Your skin begins to bubble. The pressure of the explosion turns your bones to jelly. It is intense, agonising pain and you begin to tell yourself that it will at least be over quick. But it's not. It takes minutes for you to die. More than a few.

And then it is over. However, you aren't dead. You aren't even wounded. The camp is still intact.

Experiencing one's own violent death incurs 1d6/2d6 Sanity Loss.

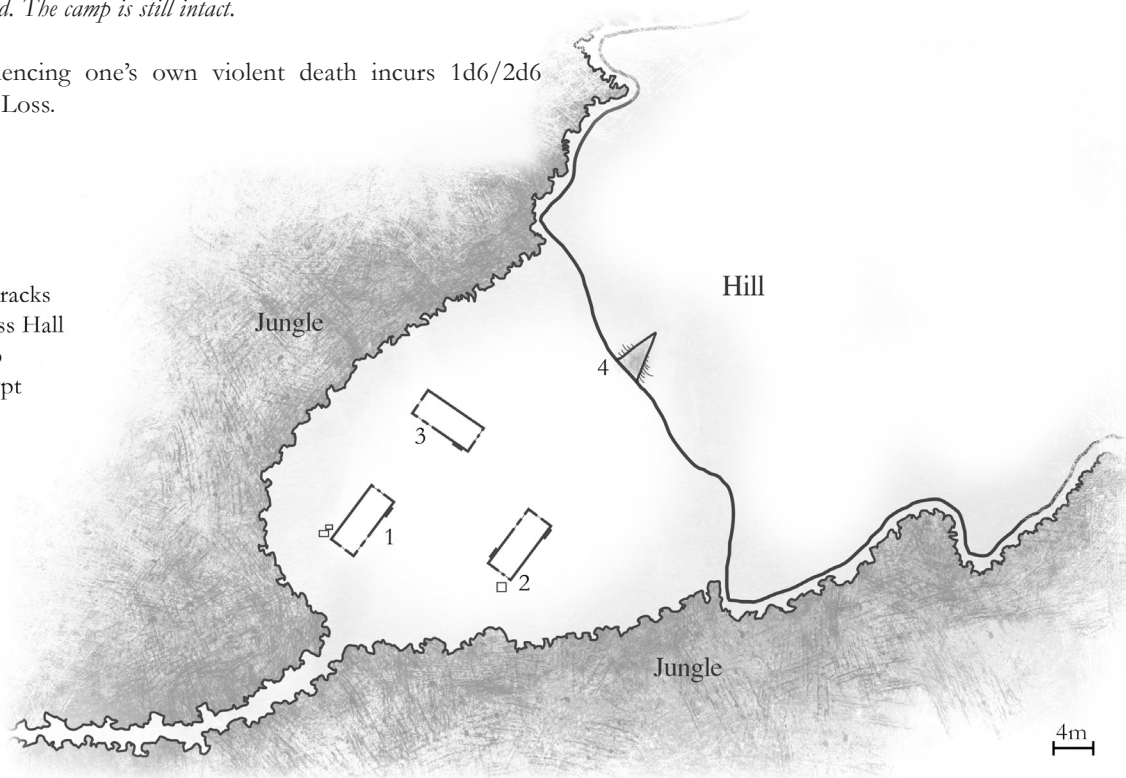
Once the PCs take stock of what just happened, they can see that the camp is empty once again. Even the bodies they saw have disappeared. In fact, the whole area gives off a neglected air, as if it has been abandoned for years. There are no sounds, and no movement can be seen through the windows of the buildings. In many places, plant life has begun to encroach on the clearing. The oddest things about the camp are the curtains of shimmering light that divide up the area. They reach far into the sky.

These curtains are a result of the temporal energy splashed about when the crystal in the way station was cracked. They separate the camp into discrete pockets of time. When a PC touches or walks through one of these curtains, it flares up with a sickly greenish light, inciting a wave of nausea in the entire squad. They are effectively transported to the associated time pocket (see descriptions below), while that curtain temporarily disappears. Leaving the camp altogether resets all of the curtains (though changes, such as dead enemies, in that time pocket are not reset).

Another side effect of the explosion of temporal energy is that there is only one way into the camp: the path on which the PCs arrived. Attempting to hack one's way through the jungle to arrive, say, closer to the hillside results in getting turned around and lost for a brief time. Climbing up the back of the hillside reveals no camp at all, just the head of the trail that leads back to the clearing where they landed. Once back on that trail, one can turn around and see the camp once again.

Key:

1. Barracks
2. Mess Hall
3. Lab
4. Crypt



Talking to Yourself

At some point, your players might want to radio HQ for advice or information. Unfortunately, the temporal energy leaking into the area makes contact next to impossible. HQ only hears a random string of nonsense from their end (like Maisie's message from the briefing), and if they respond, the PCs hear the same. However, too much of that can get a little dull. If your players keep trying to contact HQ (maybe after some clever Technology Use rolls to boost their radio signal or something similar), then have their messages answered by time-shifted versions of themselves!

If they talk to their past selves, and perhaps try to warn them of dangers to come, have the gruffest member of the group grab the radio and tell them to "stop fucking around and get off this frequency before I find you and cram my boot up your ass." Better yet, the warnings are too late. "Yeah, we already did that and Peterson got his throat torn out. Where were you 15 minutes ago?!"

Having them talk to future versions of themselves is a good way to get a confused party back on track. "You haven't been inside the crypt yet? What are you waiting for? Christ, were we really such tossers an hour ago?" Or simply mess with their heads. *sounds of screams* "Dead...all dead...Whatever you do, don't—" *sounds of snapping bones*

Talking to yourself through time incurs 0/1d3 points of Sanity Loss.



1. The Barracks

As you pass through this shimmering curtain of energy, it is suddenly night. A large, full moon peaks through the jungle cover, dappling the camp in soft light. Faint animal noises whisper from the foliage. The windows of all the buildings are lit, as portable generators chug along. The relative quiet is broken by the sound of a gunshot. Someone is shooting at you from inside the largest building!

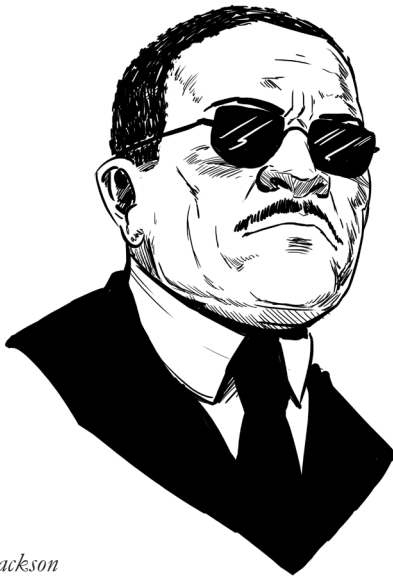
There are three hybrid agents inside the barracks. (If any of the hybrid agents were killed at the obstacle-course wall, reduce the number here accordingly) They have standard-issue pistols and fire from the windows at the PCs. They are fairly competent shots and have cover, so this could prove a challenge for the squad. Let this be a test of their strategic thinking and ability to work together.

Once the agents have been finished off, the PCs have the opportunity to investigate the barracks and their new surroundings. An *Easy* Knowledge roll reveals that the last full moon was the night before the PCs were called in for this mission. The next full moon won't be for another month, obviously.

The largest building of the three, the barracks has a single door and a couple of windows on the front and back walls. Inside, there are eight uncomfortable-looking cots and a privacy screen hastily tossed up in the one corner for modesty's sake. A duffel bag sits at the foot of all but one cot. The room is very austere and there is the faint sweaty odour that comes from seven people sleeping in close proximity for a fortnight. Some crumpled black suits lay on the floor near the windows.

The squad can search through the personal effects of the British Army soldiers and the two Laundry agents if they so choose, but there's not much of interest to be found. Just clothes. The players will probably be more interested in the remains of the hybrid agents (see sidebar on page 52). Touching an agent's crumpled suit triggers a wave of nausea as the PCs are transported elsewhere.

The room now contains a single man in a dark suit, who is looking out one of the windows. He doesn't notice the squad, as he takes a smartphone from inside his jacket and dials a three-digit number. He says, "Jackson here. This mission has gone off the rails. Agent King was inside the cave when some sort of explosion happened, and the rest of my teammates have literally disappeared. Though it's far beyond acceptable parameters for occult activity, I'm heading into the cave to see if something can be salvaged from this mess. If further contact is not initiated within 6 hours, initiate failsafe drone strike. Over and out." As he turns to leave, he notices the PCs. He quickly draws his pistol, but there is another wave of nausea and the PCs are inside the barracks by themselves once again.



Agent Jackson



Maisie Bloom

2. The Mess Hall

As you pass through this curtain, it is suddenly dawn. Warm, red sunlight spills into the camp, and a thin layer of condensation glistens on the jungle foliage. The mess hall is the smallest of the three buildings, but it is the only one with two doors, one facing the centre of the camp, and one close to a generator and a dustbin in the back. Approaching the mess hall, you hear a woman's scream from inside and a few gunshots.

Rushing inside, the PCs experience a momentary feeling of nausea and find themselves standing among four British Army soldiers in the middle of a meal. There is no sign of either a screaming woman or a discharged firearm. The soldiers are, of course, surprised to see them and demand to know the reason for their presence. The players can decide whether or not to tell the soldiers the truth or simply ask their own questions.

The interior of the mess hall holds four tables and a number of folding chairs. There is a kitchen area in the back, separated from the rest of the building by a thin wall. In the kitchen is an industrial refrigerator unit and a large microwave. A back door leads out from here.

The four soldiers are members of the Royal Gurkha Rifles regiment, who have been given the task of watching over a couple of Laundry agents. They are Jeevan Himanshu, Rupal Lohani, Dhara Chalise and Vikram Pande. The fifth member of their squad, Chandresh Dhakwa, is with the Laundry agents inside the crypt. They set up camp 10 days ago. They don't know much about the nature of the crypt, though just a few hours ago, they were present as Professor Tallman discovered a previously hidden room inside. There was a cloud of billowing smoke and they saw a pair of creatures that looked like weird, angular

wolves. The soldiers fired at these things, causing them to disappear. Tallman has told them that the smoke must have contained some kind of hallucinogen, an ancient trap left behind to scare off superstitious grave robbers. Since then, they've been discussing the incident over lunch. Jeevan Himanshu doesn't believe that they were hallucinations.

After a few moments of discussion, Vikram Pande spots something through a window. Outside, a low hum emanates throughout the area. In a small circle in the middle of the camp, clumps of dirt begin to float upward. Frost forms on the nearby grass. A jagged rip forms, free-floating in the air, leading into what appears to be deepest, darkest space. Vague shapes can be seen within the fissure, though the mind rebels upon trying to see more detail. Then, seconds later, it disappears, leaving behind Agent King and his team (Black Chamber agents in dark suits, buzz cuts and sunglasses). They draw their sidearms and begin scouring the area.

The soldiers' first instincts are to grab their rifles and begin shooting, and if not stopped, that's exactly what they do. The players can attempt to rally the troops and influence their strategy with a Command roll. Soon after the first shots are fired, however, the PCs are snapped back to the 'present', wherever they might be standing at the moment. The mess hall is empty. In fact, it looks pristine, like it has just been constructed. There is no sign of the soldiers.

Someone is inside the mess hall, though. A woman's voice rings out from every corner of the building, "Don't be alarmed. And by that, I mean 'don't shoot me.'" This is Maisie Bloom, and she has just finished sending out her emergency message. She drops the invisibility charm that has kept her safe thus far, appearing in the kitchen doorway. She is still a bit shaken up from her experiences, but she is relieved to see what she hopes are friendly faces.

Maisie Bloom is a potential source of information for the PCs, a victim to protect, and a GM mouthpiece if the players get stuck. She is very smart, but she doesn't have much combat training. If given a sidearm, she will take it for the comforting weight, but she never takes off the safety and she never fires it. Maisie has a lot of IT know-how, and can rig up electronic systems if none of the squad has the appropriate skill. If they do, then she merely offers helpful suggestions. She also knows a thing or two about the occult, and can offer useful explanations.

She knows of the machine within the crypt's inner sanctum, but she doesn't quite know what it does. She knows that the camp has just been attacked by men who she thinks are agents of the Black Chamber, but she doesn't know why. She was catching a few winks in the barracks when it happened, and she managed to toss up an invisibility charm before she was spotted. She attempted to leg it to the lab, but was forced to come here instead. She sent out a distress call with her smartphone, and that's when the PCs arrived. She is unaware of what has been happening to the camp since.

After a few minutes of talking to Maisie, right as the PCs are ready to leave the mess hall, smoke begins to emanate from the far corners of the room. The characters can see canine shapes within the clouds, starting small and gradually getting bigger as though traveling from very far away. As the smoke dissipates, the shapes twist into human forms. Witnessing the arrival of this pair of hybrid agents inflicts 1d2/1d6 points of Sanity Loss. Maisie screams. The players can stand and fight the agents or run, though the agents will pursue them outside.

3. The Lab

As you step through this curtain, a hard rain is falling. It seems as though it has been falling for hours, as puddles are now scattered throughout the camp. The smell of wet earth permeates your nostrils. Two generators squat next to the building ahead of you, and a number of antennae are perched on the roof. You can see a couple of people inside.

Inside, there are two sophisticated desktop computers and one laptop hooked into a LAN. One desktop is running a complex mathematical simulation, while the other has the latest iteration of a popular real-time strategy game installed. Only Laundry-approved occult protection software is installed on the laptop. A couple of notebooks are scattered on the desk next to one desktop's keyboard.

The two people in the building look up in surprise as the PCs enter. They are Professor Chris Tallman and Maisie Bloom. If Maisie is with the squad, she gets a bit woozy and mutters, "Wait...I remember this..." The Professor takes off his glasses and says, "Fascinating! I thought the instruments were

picking up traces of temporal energy." He turns to the other Maisie. "And you wanted to pack up and leave. We must redouble our efforts! Unless these fine people would be so kind as to give us a clue..."

Before they can respond, the PCs are hit with a wave of nausea and the scene shifts. The room is empty of people. The whiteboard and the laptop are gone. The rest of the computer equipment looks old and rusted. Part of the ceiling is missing and a few vines are growing in through the hole. The notebooks in the room are too badly water-damaged to read.

If she is with the group and asked about what just happened, Maisie explains that the day before she and Tallman discovered the inner chamber within the crypt, this exact scene occurred. A number of people stepped into their computer lab out of the rain, and one of them was her. They simply disappeared after a few moments. The professor was quite excited about it and stayed up all night taking readings. If asked why she didn't mention this before, she looks confused and says, "I'm not...sure. I guess it never came up?" She then admits to having a bad headache and doesn't want to talk about it any more – she's just suffered a big chunk of SAN damage from having her own history rewritten right in front of her.

4. Approaching the Crypt

As you pass through the curtain nearest to the hillside, the landscape changes dramatically. The camp disappears, replaced by thick foliage that towers over you. A large bee buzzes next to a brightly coloured bloom, unlike any you have seen before. The hillside is now more of a mountain, and atop that mountain are huge metallic towers that stretch into the sky. These structures are capped with what appear to be antennae of unusual design. Some of them spin gently, while others retract and expand.

The wind suddenly picks up, causing the nearby trees to sway and dirt to fly up into your faces. Strange piping whistles echo above you, and a number of hazy shapes pass in front of the sun. The gusts continue to grow in intensity. The opening into the hillside is about 30 metres ahead of you, offering obvious shelter from the winds.

Unfortunately for the PCs, they have been transported back to the Late Cretaceous Period, right to the moment when half a dozen flying polyps staged an attack on the alien city on the mountain. Fortunately for the PCs' minds, the polyps are phasing in and out of visibility, so they can't get a good look at them. However, the polyps are brewing up a hurricane-force windstorm. All of the other time curtains have vanished.

To cross the distance between their current position and the entrance to the way station, each PC needs to succeed at 3 Effort rolls. The first check is at *Easy* difficulty, the next two checks are at *Average* difficulty, and after that the

checks are at *Difficult* difficulty. At that point, failed checks result in 1d4 points of damage as a character's flesh is scoured by dust blown by the hot winds. A character may make a check at -10 to move themselves and one other PC or NPC. If Maisie Bloom is with the squad, assume that she succeeds at the first check, but make it clear that she requires help to traverse the remaining distance.

Once through the doorway, a character is safe from the winds. Inside, a slanting corridor leads deeper underground. Another shimmering curtain of light is situated 10 metres down this hallway.

The Late Agent Jackson

As you pass through yet another gauzy wall of energy, the corridor doesn't change much physically, though the sound of howling winds behind you immediately ceases. The stone walls look a bit more touched by age, and a few dusty cobwebs hang from the ceiling. A few metres ahead, the hall opens up into a small chamber. The walls here are carved with frescoes, mostly obliterated by the passage of time. The room is otherwise empty, except for the corpse of a man in a black suit leaning against a wall in a pool of drying blood.

After contacting HQ, Agent Jackson came to the crypt to investigate the explosion he heard within, and to see if his superior, Agent King, was still alive. When Jackson found King, he was still undergoing the throes of mutation and lashed out at his former comrade-in-arms with a giant claw. Jackson was mortally wounded, but did not die right away. King, vaguely aware that someone (the PCs) was altering the time stream, probed the dying man's mind to learn of his encounter with the squad in the barracks (see above). King then tossed Jackson into the antechamber here to die.

With an Average Medicine check, a character can determine the wounds to Jackson chest and neck came from a jagged, but not sharp, weapon. They can also tell that Jackson's spine was broken, probably from impact with the wall against which his body is leaning. His death occurred no more than an hour ago. The PCs will probably recognise him as the man they saw in the barracks.

Rummaging through Jackson's pockets reveals no ID and a smartphone with a cracked screen. His firearm lies a few feet away on the ground. The phone is currently unusable, but British OCCINTEL might want to take a look at the SIM card later, in order to learn something about the Black Chamber's encryption protocols.

Inside the Crypt

On the far side of the antechamber is another corridor that opens up onto a much larger area. Fluorescent light spills in from that room, blocked partially by a number of figures, their shadows stretching almost completely into the antechamber. With the light directly behind them, it is difficult to make out any more details, but something about the faint traces of their voices seems familiar. One of the shadows isn't entirely human.

The PCs have the element of surprise here, but not a lot of intel. An Average Stealth check provides an opportunity for reconnaissance, by sneaking further into the crypt and crouching behind a dusty sarcophagus.

The inhuman figure is the mutated Agent King. He still wears a black suit, like those of the other Black Chamber agents, but all similarity ends there. One of his hands has been replaced with a large lobster-like claw, and the other tapers into a red horn shape. His neck is elongated, and his head lacks hair, with slender gray stalks in its place. His eyes are great black saucers. When he speaks, there is a faint buzzing, like electronic feedback, behind his voice.

The other figures are the PCs, albeit somewhat older and more grizzled. Their faces are lined with scars, and their eyes are haunted by madness. They have just finished setting up for a siege, moving tipped-over stone coffins into defensible cover positions. They don't seem interested in small talk with one another, speaking only enough to make sure they are prepared for a fight.

Behind all of them is a large doorway, through which can be seen a vast machine, all brass and crystal. Occasionally, a crackle of purple electricity arcs from the device.

Agent King and the Time-Snatched PCs

Agent King was at ground zero of the temporal explosion that rocked the way station. His body was mutated by the temporal energy released, which explains his horrific appearance. Since the accident, King has been attempting to repair the crystal, in the hopes of bringing it back to Black Chamber HQ. He's been distracted by the also-transformed Professor Tallman (see below), cowering and frightening him to keep in the secret chamber.

When he became aware of the PCs' presence in the camp, King knew that he had to take some precautions. Thanks to his altered DNA, he was able to reach out through the time stream and bring in reinforcements. This assistance has come in the form of versions of the squad from a future in which King succeeded in his mission. In this future, war rages across the globe as the Black Chamber

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

attempts to prepare the rest of humanity for the coming of the Elder Gods. These future PCs have been convinced that by killing themselves in the past, they can avoid this fate for themselves. The players aren't likely to learn much about this desperate temporal suicide, as their doppelgangers are only interested in fighting.

Seeing the altered Agent King and future versions of themselves incurs 0/1d6 Sanity Loss.

Take the copies of your player's character sheets and use their own stats against them in this fight. They growl and spit angry phrases at their past selves. When a doppelganger is defeated, there is a sound like the twang of an out-of-tune guitar and the body disappears, returning to the timeline from where it came. A doppelganger disappears in the same way if the corresponding PC is killed in battle, but this time the doppelganger grimaces with relief.

Mutated Agent King

STR 24 **CON** 14 **SIZ** 18 **INT** 20 **POW** 13
DEX 10 **APP** 11 **EDU** 15 **SAN** 30 **HP** 16
Damage Bonus: +2d6

Weapons: Pincer 40%, damage 1d6

Armour: 2-points of scaly skin. When the mutated Agent King is defeated, his body turns into a puddle of disgusting goo. His suit remains.

Spells: With a successful Sorcery roll, the mutated Agent King can cause a single individual to age rapidly, inflicting 1d10 points of damage as bones grow brittle and organs fail.

Skills: Insight 35%, Knowledge (Occult) 70%, Listen 50%, Sorcery 65%, Spot 50%

Taking down the Doppelgangers

The PCs are at a bit of a disadvantage in this situation. Tactically, they are in a poor position, with only one avenue of attack and bright lights shining directly into their eyes (-20% to attack rolls). Their opponents have cover and a slight advantage in numbers.

However, all is not lost. Firstly, as long as their scout didn't fail their Stealth roll to reconnoitre the scene, they still have the advantage of surprise. Secondly, they have a few avenues of attack that could provide cover for them. The crypt has two rows of three sarcophagi each, one row fairly close to the corridor to the antechamber, the other in the middle of the room. Each stone sarcophagus provides plenty of protection from flying bullets for one PC, and they are close enough together that soldiers can move between them and still act again at half of their normal DEX rank. PCs can

also attempt to sneak up to these positions with an *Average* Stealth check before combat begins. Failing this roll means that a fight starts right then and there.

Finally, the PCs' doppelgangers are determined to die, one way or the other. When combat starts, if a doppelganger can spot their PC, that doppelganger will focus all attacks on them. A doppelganger or two might act completely reckless, running out of cover and attempting to kill the PC with a melee weapon (or even their bare hands).

One way to help even the odds would be to try to sow confusion among the doppelgangers. A smoke grenade (or similar) would be a good opening gambit. The lights can be shot out with an aimed attack (at a -10% penalty). Just remember that if the PCs have means to negate these hindrances (gas masks or IR goggles), that the doppelgangers also have that equipment. However, it will take at least a round for the doppelgangers to retrieve and put on that gear, which are precious seconds for the PCs to exploit.

The Machine

The far room is much smaller than the crypt itself, although it is still fairly large. The majority of the chamber is occupied by a tall, slender machine made of brass and crystal. It hums and sputters, most likely because of the long crack running down the device's central crystal. Crackles of arcane energy writhe about the machine, occasionally throwing off a spark that smells like maple syrup.





A number of more modern electronic devices, such as an oscilloscope and a laptop, can also be found here, on a couple of wobbly-looking folding tables. Two folding chairs are pulled up to the tables. Another table is covered with notebooks, their pages filled with a mix of mathematical equations, electrical diagrams and mystical formulae. It appears that the author got frustrated with the work, as some pages are smudged with angry scribbling.

When the PCs enter this room, it is obvious that someone or something is attempting to hide under one of the folding tables. As soon as one of PCs makes any kind of noise, the someone or something explodes from its covering place and begins throwing pens at the squad. It is a man, or something like a man. It has the requisite two legs, two arms and one head like a man, and it is wearing clothes like a man. In fact, there is a striking resemblance to Professor Chris Tallman, we the squad saw in the lab. However, this figure stands with a stoop and has a noticeably more pronounced brow. There is something altogether prehistoric about this Chris Tallman.

If she is with the group, Maisie gasps as she recognises Professor Tallman. She moves forward to attempt to calm the Professor, but his recent experiences have left his mind more than a little scarred. With an animalistic screech, Tallman tackles Maisie to the ground and begins pounding on her head and neck with his fists.

The PCs should react quickly to this threat. Hopefully, they will avoid bloodshed and find a nonlethal way to immobilise Tallman. However, there is nothing stopping them from blowing his brains out. The prehistoric Tallman isn't much of a challenge, even if the characters resort to hand-to-hand combat. Maisie is grateful for the assistance once again, but is rather despondent if Tallman is killed.

It should be obvious to anyone with eyes that the strange machine in the centre of the room is the cause of all of the recent troubles. The best way to truly fix the device would be to replace the broken crystal, but such a component won't exist on this planet for many thousands of millennia. The scattered notebooks provide another possible solution. A character with Knowledge (Occult) or Science (Mathematics) can begin to decipher the cryptic formulae. Maisie will gladly assist, unless the PCs' killed Tallman. Convincing her to help in that case requires an *Average Command* or *Persuade* roll.

The notebooks describe a way in which one can harness the temporal energy of the mechanism to make a brief trip through time. However, Tallman didn't have time to finish his calculations before the Black Chamber agents struck. It appears as though he attempted to return to his work at some point, but his now prehistoric brain was not up to the task. A Science (Mathematics) or Technology Use check allows the players to furnish the missing pieces of this scientific puzzle. With the equipment in this room, and any electronics they may have brought with them, the PCs can build a working time machine!

PCs without the Proper Skills

If no one in the squad is well-versed in the mechanics of space-time manipulation, they fortunately have an ace in the hole. As long as Maisie is alive and still cooperating with the PCs, she will be able to direct them in the building of the time machine. However, don't rob characters with the appropriate skill of the chance to shine in this critical moment!

What to do with a Working Time Machine?

The crude manner in which the temporal energies are being harnessed from the device lead to three minor faults with the time machine:

- First, it can only transport the PCs backwards in time, not forward, as far back as the device's creation and no further.
- And second, they cannot leave the inner chamber. Any time to which they travel must be within this room, and once there, they will be unable to exit.
- Finally, they only get 5 minutes in the past to do whatever it is they want to do. However, even with those restrictions it should be possible for them to save the day.

Before they make their decision as to when to travel, the PCs can get a glimpse of the area's past using the laptop. A small window shows grainy black-and-white footage of the room from the vantage point of the machine. They can pan the "camera" around 360° to see the entire chamber, and rewind and fast forward through the "feed" just like a typical video playback program. There is no sound, however. The video appears to be thousands of years long, though from the beginning of the video to about three days ago, not much happens in the dark, empty chamber. These are the highlights:

- Three days ago, the feed shows a crack of light as the chamber's door is opened from the other side. Tallman and Maisie enter the chamber with torches, marvel at the machine. They spend a few minutes examining the device and in excited discussion with one another. The silhouette of a British soldier can be seen in the doorway, his pistol at the ready. Maisie leaves and comes back several times, with loads of equipment, while the Professor scribbles furiously in a notebook. This continues for several hours, until one point when Maisie stretches tiredly and exits. Tallman stays there for a while longer, until he nods off where he is sitting.
- Several hours later, Tallman awakes with a start. He looks around with a confused look on his face. One of the soldiers enters the chamber, says a few words to him, and presses a pistol into his hand. Tallman tries to give it back, but the soldier is adamant. The soldier then leaves the room, and Tallman crouches in the far corner.
- Not long after, another figure enters the room. It is Agent King, his black suit only slightly dusty from his trip through the crypt. He calls out to Tallman, pointing a gun in his direction. The Professor reacts out of panic and fires his pistol. He shoots wide and hits the largest crystal on the device. The feed ends.

Here are some ideas of what the PCs might do with the time machine:

Stop Tallman from Shooting the Crystal

The PCs can appear in the room at any point before Tallman shoots the crystal after he cowers in the room when the Black Chamber agents attack. It should be a simple matter to subdue Tallman and wrest the gun away from him. Depending on how well they time their entrance, they might have to face Agent King. He is a formidable opponent, but the PCs outnumber him.

Diverting Tallman from the Device

Another solution is to travel to the moment Tallman first enters the room, and warn him of the consequences of his find. Whether they try to reason with him or simply order him to forget what he has seen, it should require a successful check of an appropriate skill.

Destroying the Device or the Room.

They might travel to long before the way station reappears in Borneo and either attempt to destroy the device or the room it is in. It should occur to most players that breaking the device is what caused this mess in the first place (otherwise give them an Easy Idea roll), but burying the device in rubble could avert the catastrophe. Some carefully placed explosive charges will destroy the room without harming the device, making sure that all Tallman finds in the future is a pile of rubble.

This solution has a major consequence, however. If the room is collapsed, the PCs will return to be trapped within the rubble. They will have only minutes of breathable air and the pressure of thousands of kilograms of rock crushing them. Such a tragic fate could be averted by only sending one PC back in time to collapse the room, while the others wait outside to rescue their trapped colleague. Or perhaps that PC makes a noble sacrifice.

Some other Ingenious Plan

Players have a tendency to implement confusing and convoluted plans for which no GM could possibly plan. Give them a time machine and that problem is compounded exponentially. But this gives you smart (and good-looking!) GMs a chance to shine. Give them a chance to enact their plan, assigning checks from the appropriate skills. If the checks succeed and the plan somehow stops the crystal in the device from being damaged in any way, then they have successfully saved the day!

Returning to the Present

Once their 5 minutes are up, the PCs are yanked back to the present. Any changes they made in the past should be noticeable in the present. Most importantly, the device is undamaged, and the wild temporal energy that did a number on the area has dissipated. The device's many moving parts slowly grind to a halt. The squad's time travel escapades have completely drained the device of all its strange power. It is now no more than a fancy decoration, fit only for study.

At this point, radio signals return to normal, and the PCs can report back to HQ. Depending on how they changed the timeline, there might not even be a record of their mission!

Tying Up Loose Ends

The complexities of time travel make linear storytelling different, especially when it comes to scenarios like this one. But there are a couple of areas that are sure to be of interest to your players, no matter how they changed the past. Anything else you should be able to extrapolate from the information given.

The Laundry Team and the British Soldiers

If the PCs travelled to a time after the Black Chamber agents launched their attack, not much changes in the camp from what they have already seen. The British soldiers still perish in the fight and Maisie is still hiding in the mess hall. Tallman can be found wandering dazedly through the crypt, whereupon he recognises the PCs and quietly asks for an explanation. He and Maisie return to the local HQ with the squad and undergo a debriefing.

If the PCs travelled to a time before the Black Chamber agents launched their attack, then the squad finds the camp gone. When Tallman and Maisie were warned away (or failed to discover anything), they called an end to the mission and headed back to London. All of the British soldiers are alive and well!

The American Agents

If the PCs stopped Tallman from shooting the crystal and defeated Agent King, the other agents realise that they might be outmatched and, using an emergency extraction beacon, depart as quickly as they arrived. This does leave the PCs with the task of cleaning up the aftermath of their initial strike. The American government denies any connection to these attackers.

If the PCs prevented Tallman from finding the device or warned him away from it, the Black Chamber doesn't learn of its presence right away. Since it has been depleted of power, the device now offers nothing of interest to the American agency. In effect, the Black Chamber agents never arrived at the site.

In either case, Agent Jackson never got the opportunity to call in the drone strike.

Debriefing

If the PCs return to Brunei HQ with Maisie and the Professor, they are given a fairly normal debriefing. Captain Grant wants to know who attacked the camp and why. The two Laundry agents give their accounts of the events (though altered from how the PCs might have experienced them), describe the men in dark suits who arrived and then just as quickly left after sowing destruction. Assuming the PCs tell Captain Grant about the device, he calls for another Laundry team to study it, though that is fuel for possible further missions.

If Brunei HQ has no record of sending the squad to the crypt site (for example, if they altered the timeline before the Black Chamber agents arrived), then Captain Grant demands a full explanation of the PCs' presence on his turf. The PCs can concoct whatever story they like, lying or citing high clearance levels. They can even tell the truth, and, as strange as it sounds, Captain Grant is likely to believe it, considering that the area from which they came miraculously appeared overnight. The squad's superiors back in the UK are most interested in the strange device, information about which is classified **BROKEN CLOCK**. Once again, though, that may be a matter for further missions.





The Shadow Of Mahogany Row

This is the Laundry. We are part of the secret side of the civil service, so naturally we do committees. Did I say we do committees? We probably invented the damned idea, sometime between the Roman invasion and Canute's unfortunate intertidal dilemma. We're good at them, with the kind of polish and proficiency that only arrives after four hundred years of diligent practice. We use committees for all the ulterior purposes for which they might have been designed: diffusion of executive responsibility, plausible deniability, misdirection, providing the appearance of action without the substance, and protecting the guilty.

— The Rhesus Chart

You can't stay in the cubicle forever. Those who survive field missions, who demonstrate competence under stress — or those who have the ambition and callousness to navigate the cut-throat bureaucracy of the Laundry — get promoted. Some cthonic horror that feeds on middle management dwells in the bowels of Dansey House, and its appetite is insatiable.

(Actually, any cthonic horrors in the bowels of Dansey House probably died years ago from thaumic poisoning and/or asbestos. The place is a deathtrap, which is why the rebuild of the Laundry's HQ is several years behind schedule and not likely to be finished any time soon.)

Some player characters may seek out power and influence. They might have their eyes fixed on the upper ranks, either out of ambition or because they know that when CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN kicks off, they want someone sane and competent calling the shots. Others, like Bob, get promoted because they're good at what they do; they may not want power, but power's going to be thrust on them.

In game terms, it's all about Status. A character's Status skill score measures their influence and standing in the Laundry.

Status & Promotions

"You've been fast-tracked for senior management for the past eight years. You knew that, didn't you? But you're only graded as an SSO3. That's a bit low for someone who's reporting directly to a DSS, so I did some digging. You're not being held back; it's just that the Laundry operates a Y-shaped promotion path — administration and line ranks diverge above a very low level. You're due for regrading later this year, Bob. If you pass the board, they'll make you an SSO4(L). Doesn't sound like much, but it's the first step up from the fork into the line hierarchy..."

— The Fuller Memorandum

The relationship between Status and actual rank in the Laundry is a curious, possibly even non-Euclidean one. Status measures not only a character's informal reputation

in the Laundry, but also their official rank and ambition. A character with a Status of 40% might be a middle manager in a moderately important department, or a senior supervisor in some obscure section. Matrix management muddles the whole issue further. Angleton, for example, is the head of the Counter-Possession Unit, which is a small but vital element of the Laundry's internal security division. One might expect the head of that unit to have a Status in the 60s, but Angleton's got a whopping 90% for Status without calling in any favours. Why? Because there's a little dotted line on the org chart between Angleton and the Director's office — he's not only head of CPU, but he's the Private Secretary to the Board. (That, and he's the Hungry Ghost bound into human flesh, but that doesn't affect his standing, just his pension).

The Promotion Table (see overleaf) gives a rough measure of the relationship between Status and rank, and should be used to determine the level of responsibility and influence given to a player character. Some things to note:

- The levels of Status overlap considerably. A character with a Status of 40% might be a senior manager in one department, or a junior manager in another, or might have avoided management entirely. Maybe this high-Status, low-rank officer is waiting for the right position to open up, or maybe she wants to dodge being stuck behind a desk.
- The table makes no distinction between a character's normal Status, accumulated over the course of time and many missions, and a Status boosted using any of the means in the next section, like Departmental Status or having a Mentor. An ambitious character can race up the promotion ziggurat by making deals and alliances, but they're building a house of cards — if they lose the support of some element of their artificially boosted Status, they're also in danger of losing their rank.

The table has four categories of Department: Key Line Departments, Key Administration Departments, Peripheral and Deliberately Obscure. On each row, cross-reference the character's Status score to determine approximate rank and responsibilities in the department.

A **Key Line Department** is an important section of Operations Division (as well as a few stragglers from Administration) that has been designated as being of part of the Laundry's Line divisions. That's line as in 'ships of the line'; these are the departments that will be fighting the war and running the country when CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN gets hot. Following a promotion track through Key Line means a lot of danger for not very much reward.

Examples: Operational Oversight, Security Management, Interdepartmental Liaison Group, Armoury, Field Support, Computational Demonology, Q Division.

A **Key Administration** department is a department that is absolutely vital to the Laundry's bureaucratic functions (or has a firm grip on the budget), but is not part of front-line services. Following a promotion track through Key Administration is a great way to build a career in the government; assuming there's a government, and indeed a species, left when it all kicks off.

Examples: Auditing, Financial Control, QA, Health and Safety, Personnel, Training, Purchasing, Transport, Black Assizes, Legal Affairs, Internal Affairs, Counter-Subversion, Media Relations.

Peripheral departments may consider themselves vital to the Laundry's operations, but don't have the clout of the more prestigious administration sections. A career here is functionally equivalent to being entombed alive in paperwork.

Examples: Housing, Residual Human Resources, Medical & Psychological, Catering, Facilities, Information Technology, Maintenance & Janitorial, Archives, DRM, Monitoring, Translation & Analysis, Mathematical Modelling, Occult Forensics, Predictive Branch.

Finally, **Deliberately Obscure** departments don't have much official sway – at least, on a day-to-day level. Among Those Who Know, though, working for one of these department carries a great deal of prestige. A career in one of these sections... well, they also serve those who only sleep and dream...

Examples: Black Assizes, Inhuman Resources, Enchantment & Production, Switchboard, Contracts & Bindings, Acquisitions, Special Projects, Counter-Possession, Diplomatic Office (Unconventional), External Assets.

Status	Line	Admin	Peripheral	Deliberately Obscure
0-10	Grade 1	Grade 1	Grade 1	Grade 1
11-20	Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 2
21-30	Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 2
31-40	Grade 2	Grade 3 (M)	Grade 2	Grade 3
41-50	Grade 3	Grade 4 (M)	Grade 2	Grade 3
51-60	Grade 3	Grade 5 (M)	Grade 3 (M)	Grade 4 (M)
61-70	Grade 3	Grade 6 (M)	Grade 3 (M)	Grade 4 (M)
71-80	Grade 4 (M)	Grade 6 (M)	Grade 3 (M)	Grade 5 (M)
81-90	Grade 4 (M)	Grade 7 (SM)	Grade 4 (M)	Grade 5 (M)
91-100	Grade 5 (SM)	Grade 7 (SM)	Grade 4 (M)	Grade 6 (SM)
101-110	Grade 5 (SM)	Grade 8 (SM)	Grade 5 (SM)	Grade 6 (SM)
111-120	Grade 6 (SM)	Grade 8 (SM)	Grade 5 (SM)	Grade 7 (SM)
121-130	Grade 7 (SM)	Grade 9 (SM)	Grade 6 (SM)	Grade 8 (SM)
131-140	Grade 8 (SM)	Grade 9 (SM)	Grade 7 (SM)	Grade 9 (SM)
141-150	Grade 9 (SM)	Grade 10 (SM)	Grade 8 (SM)	Grade 10 (SM)

M on the table means Management. When a character obtains a M-rated Grade, he's considered qualified for a management role. He may be able to fend off this fate for another grade or two by bureaucratic wrangling, but they'll get him in the end. Moving into a management position doesn't necessarily end a character's time in the field, but it does severely restrict it.

SM means Senior Management qualified. A character at this grade is definitely managing something, and may be a contender for department head. It also implies that this character has become one of the players in the Laundry.

Station Heads and Square Pegs

Not every role in the Laundry falls neatly onto the org chart. Someone like Jack Griffin, for example, isn't part of any one department (there isn't much call for bureaucracy in a one-man station in the Caribbean), but would follow the promotion track for Admin or Peripheral depending on the size and importance of the station (Jack's definitely Peripheral).

Grade Titles

Different departments use radically different job titles, sometimes even for the exact same role. Parts of the Laundry cling to the old SOE titles; others use standardised civil service codes, or their own esoteric or even ceremonial titles. What matters is the Grade.

Grade 1 examples: Administrative Assistant, Research Assistant, Operations Assistant, Sorcerer's Assistant

Grade 2 examples: Administration Officer, Scientific Officer, Experimental Officer, Field Officer

Grade 3 examples: Executive Officer, Senior Scientific Officer, Senior Experimental Officer, Senior Field Officer

Grade 4 examples: Higher Executive Officer, Principal Scientific Officer, Principal Experimental Officer, Deputy Field Supervisor

Grade 5 examples: Senior Executive Officer, Senior Principal Scientific Officer, Senior Principal Experimental Officer, Field Supervisor

Example: A Tale of Three Careers

Let's compare three Laundry characters and see how their career paths developed.

Bob, first. He's first recruited into IT, a Peripheral department. He struggles up through the low grades (there's not much scope for promotion or building Status in the dungeon), and applies for field duty out of boredom. His early missions prove he's not as useless as he looks, and Angleton takes an interest in his career. By the end of *The Atrocity Archive*, he's got Status 20%, but has unwittingly moved from Peripheral to Deliberately Obscure (thanks to that matrix management link into Counter-possession). With Angleton as his Mentor, Bob can also add 1/5th of Angleton's Status to his own when he invokes his boss's name, giving him a +18% bonus when he needs it.

The events of *The Concrete Jungle* and *The Jennifer Morgue* build Bob's reputation, so by the time of *The Fuller Memorandum* he's up to Grade 3 (Senior Scientific Officer 3, to be precise) and on the cusp of getting onto the fast-track to Senior Management. His transfer to External Assets bumps his Status up to 60%. There's no escape from Management now...

Iris Carpenter joins the Laundry late in her career, but has the civil service qualifications to jump straight into administration as an SSO5(A), which is a Management-level grade. She's put in charge of Bob – but she points out, once Bob gets promoted to SSO4(I), he'll outrank her. Iris' rise is helped by her connection to the Black Brotherhood: other cultists in the government count as Allies for her, so she has secret connections that benefit her career.

Finally, Mo joins the Laundry in a temporary role in the Archives at Grade 1. After the traumatic events of *The Atrocity Archives*, she changes department to Acquisitions, where she proves to be a suitable... partner for the Erich Zann violin. That moves her to Special Projects. As Agent CANDID, she logs a lot more field time than Bob, so she gets promoted even more quickly. Membership of key committees like CLUB ZERO gives her extra Status.

Getting Promoted

Once a character accrues the necessary Status to qualify for the next grade, the next step is applying for a promotion. Normally, this happens automatically, but a cruel Gamemaster could make a character jump through some hoops – maybe there's only one opening in the department, so they have to compete against some other employee, or there are no openings so the character has to transfer, or only one who has undergone the Blasphemous Rite of Al-Azar can enter the Corner Office Perilous.



A character can use boosted Status (see below) when trying to qualify for a new grade, representing the character calling in favours and relying on the support of external forces. This is the quickest route to high office; the downside is that if your allies turn on you, you'll go crashing down swiftly if your artificially inflated Status can't sustain your present grade.

Getting Demoted

Losing a few points of Status doesn't affect a character's Grade – Status also measures 'pull' and reputation, so a small blow to Status reflects a decline in the character's influence, not their take-home pay or official rank. However, losing 10 or more Status in a single incident (an Audit, being placed on suspension, a bureaucratic omnishambles, losing Cornwall to DEEP SEVEN, accidentally handing your work email password to that nice girl from the Black Chamber you met in the pub) can result in the loss of one or more Grades.

Pay Grade & Wealth Level

A character's Grade determines their income, and income determines their Wealth Level. Obviously, a character's exact cash-on-hand isn't going to be a major factor in most games, and cultists don't carry 2d6 x 10 gold pieces with a 10% chance of gems, but money can still be a motivation – and if you're going to play office politics, it's nice to have a concrete value for your soul.

See page 28 of *The Laundry Core Rulebook* for a description of each Wealth Level.

Grade 1: Poor

Grade 2-5: Average

Grade 6-10: Affluent

Grade 11-12: Wealthy

Bureaucratic Games

If your campaign involves a lot of bureaucratic entanglement, as opposed to using the bureaucratic elements of the Laundry for comic relief or – as described here – as a battleground for politicking and conspiracy, then you should check out *The Agent's Handbook*, which goes into more detail on the uses and pitfalls of Bureaucracy.

Military Equivalents

Line Rank	Military Rank
Grade 1	None
Grade 2	Staff Sergeant
Grade 3	Captain
Grade 4	Major
Grade 5	Lieutenant Colonel
Grade 6	Colonel
Grade 7	Brigadier
Grade 8	Major General
Grade 9	Lieutenant General
Grade 10	Field Marshal

Boosting Status

For lower-ranking officers, the only ways to gain Status are those outlined in *The Laundry Core Rulebook*: successfully completing missions (especially under-budget), and going on certain training courses that emphasise management skills. There's also the option of just working away, which nets on average of 1 Status per year, at most. At that rate, the Residual Human Resources will outrank you by the end of your career.

Player characters gain Status for completing missions, usually between 1d3 and 1d6%. For the average character, that means 5-10% per year, although going over-budget on a mission or running into bureaucratic difficulties can severely reduce Status. Once a character reaches Management rank, though, their duties keep them out of the field except in dire emergencies. Therefore, most people in the Laundry have a Status of around 20-30% (average employee), or else stall out around 65% (middle management).

Those on the promotion ladder, though, have other ways of increasing their influence in the Laundry.

Departmental Status

Power begets power; a character with enough internal influence to affect the decisions made by a department can use that influence externally. If you're a high flyer in, say, Budgeting, then you can get favours and special consideration from any other department by hinting that their budget allocation for the coming fiscal year hangs on your goodwill, and that if they don't make you happy, they'll all be outsourced to the living dead. Other departments have less obvious sway, but even some lowly section like Sanitation or IT can throw its weight around.

Benefits: A character who has a Management rank in a department can claim Departmental Status. This lets the character add 1/5th of one skill associated with their department to their Status total, but only in situations where their department has sway. The skills associated with each department are those listed in *The Laundry Core Rulebook* (Chapter Nine, mostly).

For example, Bob (circa The Fuller Memorandum) has Status 55% and Computer Use (Magic) 70%; when he's speaking for IT support, he can add 1/5th of his Computer Use score to his Status. Later, if Bob got moved to Counter-Possession, he'd be adding 1/5th of his highest skill from the following list instead: Bureaucracy, Insight, Knowledge (Occult), Sorcery or Stealth.

The other benefit of being strongly associated with a department is that it's easier to get support from that department. When making a Support Requisition, the availability is reduced by one category (Difficult to Average, Average to Easy) if you're drawing on your own department. So, a character in the Armoury can requisition any weapons more easily; a character who works with the Plumbers can call in Plumbing support more cheaply.

Responsibilities: The main downside of being strongly bound to a department is that you're expected to be a good little footsoldier in that department's bureaucratic turf wars. He who lives by the Department of Sanitation dies by the Department of Sanitation. You must protect your department first, and the other members of your department second – getting the mission done comes in a distant third. Rumours that some Laundry departments have mutated into insular cults are, of course, wholly accurate.

Mentors and Allies

The avuncular mentor is as big a spy trope as trench coats, coded messages, eccentric behaviour and getting shot in the back by your former comrades. Having a senior spy take you under his wing or forging an alliance with a powerful politician can pay dividends for one's career.

Cultivating a Mentor or Ally

A Mentor takes an interest in you, not the other way around. A character might acquire a Mentor through family connections, through excellent performance or by displaying potential. In the Laundry, having a Deeply Scary Sorcerer or equivalent take an interest in you is not necessarily a reassuring experience; Bob's career might have benefited from Angleton's patronage, but the same cannot be said for his marriage, his sanity or his soul.

Allies, though, can be cultivated by offering them information or favours. Hinting at the truth behind a D-Notice to a journalist, going to the same club as a politician or taking a troublesome case out of the hands of the Metropolitan police could be the start of a beautiful – or at least mutually beneficial – friendship.

Inside the Laundry

All the ISO9001-compliant documentation cannot capture the institutional memory of an organisation like the Laundry. Some things cannot be written down; they are instincts, honed by long years of experience, or secrets passed on only in whispers¹. A Laundry mentor can teach an up-and-coming young officer all the tricks of the trade and spycraft developed over the last 50 years – and all the occult lore accumulated over a considerably longer period.

Or, to put it another way, the only way to become a real wizard is by apprenticeship.

Even in the non-occult departments of the Laundry, having the backing of a senior figure does wonders for your career – and the investment pays off for the mentor in the long run, through having a protégé in some position of influence who owes a huge debt.

Benefits: The biggest benefit is an intangible one – having the Mentor's guidance and advice is invaluable when dealing with their areas of expertise. Bridget helped Harriet make a play for control of Counter-Possession; Angleton helped Bob deal with all sorts of crises, notably the Fuller Memorandum situation.

A character can draw on the Mentor's reputation, adding 1/5th of the Mentor's Status score to their own by invoking the Mentor's name. This is not without its risks – you're putting your Mentor's good name in jeopardy. If you phone up the Metropolitan Police and demand they send a police helicopter *now*, or they'll answer to Angleton, then you had better have a very good reason for needing a police helicopter, or Angleton will take his discomfort out on you².

1: Other things cannot be written down because they'd crawl off the page and infect other printed matter, and then you've got to burn the place down to contain the outbreak.

2: Through comfort soul-eating.

Some Mentors may also offer off-the-books tuition in particular skills, allowing a character to take certain training courses without requiring a training budget.

Downsides: A relationship like this is a two-way street, only you're on a space hopper and the mentor's in a limo. If your Mentor asks you to do something, you jump to it or risk losing their support entirely.

Mahogany Row

A character doesn't have to meet their Mentor in the flesh to cultivate a relationship. For that matter, the Mentor doesn't necessarily have to have flesh. The invisible powers of Mahogany Row sometimes pluck some lowly mortal from the Laundry's cubicles and groom them for greatness (or sacrifice). In such a case, the pupil never sees their patron, but receives memos, typed letters, cryptic phone calls and other indirect communications. The Board work in mysterious and infuriatingly obtuse ways, so their chosen one will likely spend a lot of time fumbling through old case reports and news clippings, trying to work out exactly what their Mentor is trying to tell them.



The Security Services

Going across the river to the Dustbin – Thames House, the headquarters of the Secret Service, aka MI5 – is a brave move for any Laundry officer. The two agencies are both responsible for domestic security and intelligence gathering in the United Kingdom, and so have effectively been engaged in a nasty turf war for most of the 20th Century.

Also across the river is Legoland; that grand architectural monstrosity, that wedding cake in concrete and steel that houses the third sibling organisation, the Security Intelligence Service, aka MI6. The Laundry's still officially on the books as SOE Station X, the last bastion of the Special Operations Executive, even though the rest of that wartime organisation was absorbed into MI6. That was strike one. Strike two is the fact that the Laundry regularly operates overseas, which means trespassing onto SIS affairs. The two organisations liaise and coordinate their efforts as much as either can stomach, which leads to endless committee meetings where no one says anything, but you could cut the loathing with a knife, if you could find any knives that weren't already deep in someone's back. Strike three is that the Laundry's just plain strange. Espionage attracts eccentrics, but you only get to be eccentric if you went to Oxbridge. The Laundry's ilk are just weirdoes.

There's also the Metropolitan Police, who have to deal with the occasional ritual murder, ghoulish sighting or outbreak of demonic possession³.

All three organisations dislike any interference from the Laundry. All three organisations really like it when the Laundry takes ownership of problems that they're not set up to deal with. MI5, for example, might want the credit for identifying and arresting an Islamic extremist with possible ties to Al Qaeda, but don't want to deal with the possibility that he's using an information-transfer gate to encode Namtar, the Mesopotamian deity of plague, into a common virus to create a biological weapon. Foiling a bioterror plot – excellent! Plays very well with the media. Foiling Namtar – that's harder to claim as a success.

The Joint Intelligence Committee and various subordinate liaison committees and meetings are supposed to oil the gears and ensure that all the machinery of the security services works together smoothly, but that rarely works. However, an unofficial working relationship with one's counterpart in another agency can sort things out quickly and efficiently.

Benefits: After any mission in which the Laundry called on the resources of that other agency, or in which that other agency needed the Laundry's help, the character with the

3: Getting more common as the Stars Amble Towards Rightness.

Ally in another agency gains +1% Status. Furthermore, when calling on the resources of that organisation (see **Support Requisitions** on page 106 of *The Laundry Core Rulebook*), the Difficulty of any rolls is reduced by one step.

Downsides: Going outside normal channels means you don't have the ablative armour of collective responsibility. The relevant committee didn't approve your use of DI5 resources in this case, therefore all the fallout from, say, getting the Security Service to arrest a cultist on anti-terror charges, only to find out he's totally innocent will fall on you.

The other downside is that your ally may ask for your assistance in ways that compromise your status in the Laundry. They might ask for access to Laundry records or for magical assistance with a mundane case. That prickly feeling in your skull is your Oath of Office warming up...

The Civil Service

Having an ally in some more mundane organ of government – the Treasury, the Foreign Office, the Home Office and so on – isn't much help in the field, but is of huge help in furthering one's career beyond the Laundry. This sort of relationship is conducted over drinks at clubs and meetings in swanky hotel restaurants; players at this level of government dictate the terms to the Laundry officer.

Benefits: The patronage of a civil service mandarin acts as a career booster; all Status gains are increased by +1%. In situations where the Laundry must accommodate the interests of the other department – domestic threats with the Home Office, international problems with the Foreign Office and so on – you may add 1/5th of your patron's Bureaucracy score to your Status.

Downsides: You just became a mole. Oh, don't worry – your Oath of Office is unlikely to fry your brain when you're reporting to someone in the Treasury or the Home Office – but you'll be... encouraged to take action to keep the Laundry in line. It's like being the Head Boy in your year in a private school – you've got the principal's ear, but your classmates all think you're a toffee-nosed lickspittle.

Westminster

Obviously, you don't want to shackle yourself to some one-term backbencher who rides the swingometer⁴ into government, and will be back in Woking in a few years' time. If you're going to ally yourself with a Member of Parliament, then go for some ambitious high-flyer or someone who's been around forever and is already on the inside.

The Cthulhu Mythos and CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN and all that are an Outside Context Problem for most

politicians. They're short-term thinkers, mostly, focused on the next election at best or the next news cycle in most cases. They don't deal well with tales of alien-super-civilisations or billion-year cosmic cycles. Still, the people have spoken, and who are we to disagree with them?

Benefits: If you've got the ear of a politician in government, then all Status gains are increased by +1%. Better yet, if they're a minister or on an appropriate Select Committee, all Status gains increase by +2%.

Also, it never hurts to have a friendly voice asking the questions if you are called to account for yourself before Parliament...

Downsides: There's an election coming. Or a reshuffle. It's always something. Political allies are fickle, more concerned about their own image and the electoral implications than anything else, and Laundry missions have a strange habit of intersecting with politics in unexpected ways. You take down a cult of Dagon worshippers, and suddenly your formerly friendly politician is on the phone demanding to know why fish stocks in the North Sea just collapsed...

The Fourth Estate

The Laundry has a whole department – Media Relations – to deal with what is inaccurately but charmingly archaically referred to as 'the Press', but having a tame journalist (or blogger) can still be very handy. Just keep a bucket of ice water handy to drown your head when your Oath of Office goes nuclear.

Benefits: There's no direct impact on Status to having an ally in Fleet Street, but nothing builds one's reputation in the Laundry faster than making problems go away, and embarrassing leaks and journalistic exposes are big problems. The Laundry is supposed to be a covert organisation, for pity's sake, protecting humanity from Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. Keeping those Things off the front page of the *Grauniad* is everyone's responsibility.

Journalists can also provide leads and access to sources.

Downsides: Everyone leaks. It's embarrassing, but it happens sometimes.

If you're going to enter into a semi-illegal arrangement with a muckraking journalist, though, you'll need to leak very juicy material on occasion. It'll all be *quid pro quo*, of course – they'll help you cover up that little accident if you give them something equally valuable in the future.

4: A potent tool of divination in the right hands.



Supernatural Patrons

There are powers and dominions out there that take an interest in the affairs of the Laundry. Some were once human. Others masquerade as humans. Others we can glimpse only dimly, their forms and commands tumbling out as the only possible solutions to abstruse equations that map the folds of alien space-time.

Having, say, the Ghost of Dr John Dee or Quachil Uttaus, Treader of the Dust in your corner isn't much good during your annual Competence Framework Utilisation review, but it can be of use in more esoteric circles.

Benefits: The right supernatural Patron can open doors for you. True, some of these doors open to nameless netherworlds where dying gods scream eternally, but you still get to add 1/10th of your Sorcery score to your Status as long as your Patron favours you.

Drawbacks: These vary by Patron, but expect regular sacrifices (blood/a white calf/permanent POW/a year of your life), ritual supplications and the occasional bizarre request.

Committees

'Welcome to BLOODY BARON,' says Iris, offering me a recycled cardboard folder with MOST SECRET stamped on the cover: 'You have two hours to familiarise yourself with the contents before the Monday afternoon team meeting'.

— The Fuller Memorandum

Most internal committees and working groups in the Laundry are the sort of thing you find in any other grotesquely swollen bureaucracy. Bob spends his days⁵ arguing about cabling and network usage policies; others have their own hells to contend with in Accounting or Sanitation Management or Assessment Metrics. Sisyphus wouldn't trade an eternity of his boulder-pushing for five minutes in a Laundry health and safety policy revision working group subcommittee.

Other committees, though, are where the action is. BLOODY BARON, for instance, oversees matters related to Baron Ungern Sternberg and his necromantic activities – a fairly wide brief, considering it encompasses TEAPOT, CODICIL BLACK SKULL and a whole host of other potential nightmare scenarios. COBWEB MAZE's bunch of busy spycatchers search for moles in the Laundry; GOD GAME games out the end of the world in different forms. Membership of certain committees is a signal that you're a player, someone to be reckoned with. Dropping the right codeword into a conversation is like moving your jacket just so, so the person you're talking to can make out the outline of a gun in a shoulder holster.

Membership of a committee and knowledge of its associated codewords is worth +2% or +5% Status, depending on the importance of the committee. Those worth +5% are extremely sensitive; just reading the briefing documents needed to get up to speed means a hefty SAN check, and that's before you make any decisions.

There are three restrictions on committee membership. Firstly, all major committees are on a need-to-know basis. You can't volunteer for COBWEB MAZE; *they* bring you in when you're ready, or when you're needed, and those two conditions aren't necessarily congruent.

Secondly, each committee has requirements – minimum skill levels needed to contribute effectively. You can be on a committee without having the required skills, but you're expected to get up to speed as soon as possible.

Thirdly, there are only so many hours in the day (or night, for certain committees). You can only have a number of active codeword committees equal to half your INT. Beyond that, it's too hard to keep track of vital information.

5: Or used to, anyway, before External Assets.

International Meetings

I'm here to take part in the monthly joint-liaison meeting with our EU partner agencies. It's held under the auspices of the EU Joint Intergovernmental Framework on Cosmological Incursions, which is governed by the Common Defence provisions of the Second Treaty of Nice. (You haven't heard of this particular EU treaty because it's secret by mutual agreement, none of the signatories wanting to start a mass panic.)

- The Jennifer Morgue

International committee meetings are even more bureaucratic and time consuming than regular ones, but at least they have the frisson of international travel⁶. An international committee has a Status bonus +2% higher than (so, +4% or +7% Status), but counts as two committees for the purposes of the INT/2 limit.

Example Committees

Committee	Remit	Requirements	Status Bonus
BLOODY BARON	Matters relating to the Bloody White Baron, TEAPOT, and the Fuller Memorandum	Status 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 20%, Knowledge (Occult) 50%, Knowledge (Espionage) 40%, Knowledge (History) 50%, Knowledge (Politics) 35%	+5%
COBWEB MAZE	Internal security and containment in the wake of the Black Brotherhood incident	Bureaucracy 40%, Knowledge (Politics) 40%, Knowledge (Law) 50%, Knowledge (Espionage) 60%, Science (Forensics) 40%	+5%
LUCKY GOLD	External Asset oversight	Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Knowledge (Occult) 40%, Knowledge (Politics) 50%, Knowledge (Law) 30%, Strategy 60%	+2%
DANUBE BRIDGE	Non-human entities who have been granted asylum and civilian identities in the UK	Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Bureaucracy 50%, Etiquette 50%, Knowledge (Archaeology) 40%, Knowledge (Politics) 40%, Knowledge (Occult) 40%	+5%
WEDDING GUEST	Liaison and relations with BLUE HADES	Bureaucracy 25%, Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Etiquette 40%, Knowledge (Politics) 40%, Swim 25%	+2%
BLACK SKULL	Oversight and control of Concorde flights over the Dead Plateau	Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Knowledge (History) 40%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 40%	+2%
STATELY HOME	Control of the Laundry's secret facilities in the English countryside	Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Etiquette 40%, Knowledge (Art History) 40%, Sorcery 40%	+2%
BLAZING FOLLY	Development of tactical weapons against Class 3+ entities	Bureaucracy 40%, Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Demolition 40%, Knowledge (Accounting) 40%, Knowledge (Politics) 40%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 60%, Strategy 40%	+5%
OVERSHOOT	Oversight of all matters related to the British Lunar Expedition, including the survivors	Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Knowledge (History) 40%, Knowledge (Politics) 40%, Medicine 40%, Science (Astronomy) 20%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 40%	+2%
1955	Formed in the wake of Turing's death to oversee the science of Computational Demonology	Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Computer Use (Magic) 60%, Knowledge (Occult) 40%, Science (Mathematics) 60%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 60%	+5%
SILVER TWILIGHT	Drafts legislation relating to the Black Assizes	Knowledge (Law) 70%, Knowledge (Occult) 50%, Knowledge (Politics) 50%	+2%
EMBANKMENT	Liaison with ghouls colonies beneath London	Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Etiquette 40%, Knowledge (Occult) 40%, Knowledge (Group: Ghouls) 50%	+2%
OPERA CAPE	Integration of PHANGS	Medicine 20%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 20%, Knowledge (Occult) 20%, Law 20%	+2%

6. Financial control strips away any frissons long before you get your hands on them. Prepare to travel cattle-class on budget airlines that deposit you at some obscure regional airfield in the dead of night, if they get you there at all.



Running Political Games

Politics isn't to everyone's taste. Some players prefer to keep the office job aspects of the Laundry to a minimum, and keep the game focused on investigating mysteries, thwarting things that need to be thwarted and generally stumbling towards apocalypse. Every few weeks, the Gamemaster presents some juicy plot hook or mission briefing, the characters investigate, uncover the horrible truth, and then either save the day or get eaten. Events may be flavoured by the Laundry's themes of bureaucracy, espionage and geekiness, but that's all – they're background elements, not the main event.

Other players, especially those raised on a diet of *The Sandbaggers* and John le Carre novels, want the circles within circles, the tradecraft and the backstabbing. Emphasising the politics – both internal and external – of the Laundry lets you run games where the Mythos takes a back seat to parliamentary double-dealing and nights of long knives on Mahogany Row. Either check with your players before delving into this sort of play, or run a 'taster' game first (scenarios like **Secret Agendas** in the *Black Bag Jobs* supplement, or **Hot Potato** on page 85 are ideal).

Low-ranking player characters usually don't have the influence to be involved in political intrigues, but they may still be dragged into them by accident, or be used as pawns by their superiors in some ineffable struggle whose dimensions

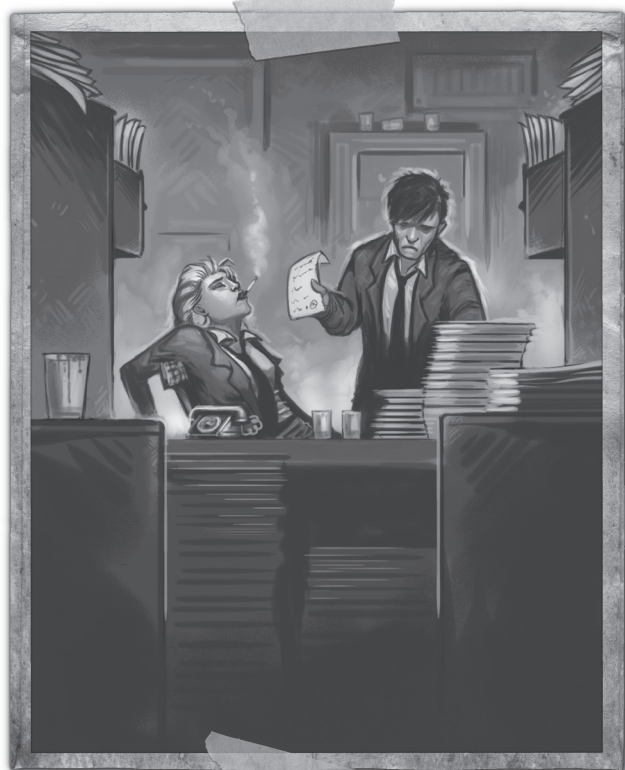
they glimpse only dimly. Take *The Concrete Jungle* or *Pimpf*, both stories are about internal turf wars in the Laundry, but Bob (our proxy player character) isn't involved in the intrigue and political power plays. The machinations dump problems on his head, like mysterious concrete cows or haunted *Neverwinter Nights* dungeons. Similarly, consider the plight of the poor player character who thinks she saw an MP's advisor at a cult gathering. She has no proof that the cult has dug its tendrils into the MP, but he's got friends within the Laundry who will protect him from any 'baseless accusations'. Does she drop the matter and try to forget what she saw, or risk her career by running an off-the-books investigation, or does she try to build support for an official surveillance operation?

In a longer campaign, bringing the politics to the fore can keep the office-side parts of the game fresh and interesting. There are only so many jokes you can make about boring committee meetings and pointless bureaucracy – but once the players find their feet within the setting, and the Gamemaster establishes a supporting cast, then the office intrigue and politics can grow with each adventure, and those meetings stop being about boring trivialities and become knife-edge negotiations for the fate of world. (In *The Apocalypse Codex*, Bob goes to amusing ghastly civil service training courses; Angleton struggles with the Black Chamber even as Reverend Schiller tries to wake the Sleeper).

The key to a successful transition is to give the players an antagonist within the Laundry. Give them an ambitious, backstabbing Human Resources officer, or a manager who intends to use their corpses as stepping stones on his way up the promotion ladder. Give them a foe that they can't zap with a warrant card or shoot with the Basilisk Gun, and force them to connive and conspire in self-defence. Once they get involved in Laundry politics, they'll be trapped in a sticky web of favours, debts and grudges that will keep getting bigger and deeper throughout the campaign.

High Status Characters

The danger of politics, though, is that winning often involves promotion (usually into the office of some vanquished rival), and after a few promotions, the scope for regular Laundry-style missions gets narrower and narrower. It's entirely plausible that a bunch of office drones get sent to investigate the weirdness-of-the-week, whatever that is – ghouls on the District and Circle Line, or a mad sorcerer who tries crowdfunding his attempt to build a Raspberry PI-powered Tillinghast Resonator.



It's less likely that a group of experienced agents and managers would drop everything to run off on a mission, unless the fate of the world was at stake. Getting a desk job may mean the end of a character's investigative career.

There are several ways to deal with this problem (assuming you don't want to shunt the characters over to External Assets or Special Projects or Ways and Means, where Status matters less than your Firearms (Esoteric Weapons) skill):

- **Phase out missions:** You can drop the whole mission of the week structure entirely. Middle managers don't go on most missions. You then either 'go loud' or 'go deep'

Going loud means sticking to really high-stakes missions. As Agent CANDID, for instance, Mo doesn't get sent to degauss haunted planes or investigate weird goings-on at St Hilda's; she's sent off to take down major cults, or to nuke Billington's super-yacht before DEEP SEVEN rises, or to fiddle while the world burns. Write missions where the stakes are very high and the political fallout is extremely toxic. (The approach of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN makes this sort of mission more and more common as time goes on).

Going deep means writing longer, more complex, more intricate missions. For example, the COBWEB MAZE committee's brief is to investigate penetration of the Laundry by the Brotherhood of the Black Pharaoh and other hostile cults. An adventure revolving around a single strand of that investigation could take many, many sessions to complete (see Mole Hunts on page 73).

- **You have to log field hours:** Just because you're the newly minted head of Special Projects doesn't mean you can neglect the basics. In this set-up, every Laundry officer, even mid- and high-ranking ones, have to take a certain number of field cases every year. This lets you send veteran agents off on seemingly irrelevant or farcical assignments just as easily as you sent them when they were fresh meat.
- **Multiple Player Characters:** Another option is to let the players run two or more player characters each. If your first cadre of player characters have risen to the top, or at least middle, and are stuck in managerial roles that leaves little time for field duty, then have the players create a new gang of fresh-faced, innocent, unscarred recruits. You could even assign each new player character to the department run by a haggard ancient, so the players get to boss each other around and devise amusing torments for the n00bs.

Alternatively, you can have the players create old and experienced senior management characters to go with their regular field officers. Most weeks, they play Bob-level dogsbodies, but once in a while, you cut to a committee

meeting involving Great Old Ones on a par with Angleton or the Auditors. For example, say that the player characters are off on a mission, and have just discovered that the Black Chamber are about to launch a pre-emptive attack on the BLUE HADES colony off Innsmouth. The player characters call their supervisors at the Laundry and ask for a steer – do they warn BLUE HADES, or try to stop the Chamber without the Deep Ones finding out, or do they just get the hell out of there? You then run a scene where the players play those supervisor-level characters, and let them hash out the Laundry's official response.

See **High-level Meetings** on page 76 for one way to handle such an angle.

Committee Scenes

Hmm, a scene where all the participants are seated around a table, talking – how could one possibly model that in a roleplaying game? Committee scenes are the purest form of roleplaying, as it's all about arguing and plotting in character. There's no need to roll dice, no need to ask the Gamemaster to resolve an action. The line between 'player' and 'character' is very thin, here.

Like a real meeting, though, committee meetings need to be kept on track. Introduce new information or new problems whenever the action droops, so the players don't end up arguing the same points over and over. This new information might come from a telephone call or report, or from a non-player character (and, depending on your level of player input, you might also let players make references to past events that they invent on the spot – *"this is the Ingolstadt incident all over again – can we use the same solution as we did there?"*) Demand that the players conclude the scene once the argument has run its course – the committee has to come to a decision, even if not all the members agree with it.

Intrigues

Political intrigue conjures up images of one-on-one meetings in dark alleys and smoky back rooms. Player characters, however, tend to travel in gangs of four to six. You can split the players up and run different scenes for each player, but that can get unwieldy, especially when the player characters don't trust each other and start demanding sidebar conferences with the GM¹. One option is to shunt as much of the intrigue and secret meetings off into email conversations² between game sessions. Leave game night free for action and investigation,

1: Your humble author once ran a campaign where more than half of every game session got taken up in one-on-one conferences with conspiring players.

2: Also known as 'bluebooking', if you're a very old-school gamer. Admittedly, by using something as gauche as email, I suspect I have marked myself as belonging to a particular generation, and the kids these days probably use Facebook messages or twizzle or something. Sufficiently advanced Eternal September becomes indistinguishable from future shock.

and then during the week have all the intrigue and plotting. One great virtue of using a written medium is that it allows for more intricate political plotting and more complex backstories – it's hard to extemporise a subtle political mystery and keep all the clues straight. Using email helps both players and Gamemasters keep track of their web of lies.

Political Adventures

When designing a political adventure, you'll need a larger cast of supporting characters than the average field op, and the clues will perforce be subtler and more obfuscated. In a field operation, the PCs discover what the cultists are up to by reading their rambling blogs or interrogating their corpses with Gravedust rigs; in a political game, much as they might like to, the PCs can't shoot their way to the end. Always have a fallback in case the investigation part of the scenario doesn't go as planned – if the players don't work out that a particular NPC is the cultist through the subtle clues dropped in the first part of the game, then they can still thwart her plans later on, but they'll be at some disadvantage or penalty for not catching her early.

The Mole

There's a spy in the Laundry, a double agent who's working for the Enemy. The characters must identify this mole and obtain incontrovertible proof of his treachery.

- **Who is the Mole?** Are they just some minor clerk in a position where they can steal the occasional sensitive document, or is someone in the Laundry's upper echelons a traitor? The characters meet the Mole early in the investigation (a plot in which the characters identify some office drone they've never met or heard of before as the spy would be extremely unsatisfying), so you'll need a large cast of potential traitors for them to investigate until they work out that the kindly tea lady or the oddly aware zombie is the Mole.
- **Who's he spying for?** There are lots of potential adversaries – the Black Chamber or another OCCINTEL group, a powerful cult like the Black Brotherhood, another security agency or organ of government, or even another part of the Laundry.
- **How does he get away with it?** Magic offers a level of security and forced loyalty that real-world spy agencies can only achieve by seizing control of the interest and suborning the whole population with tales of terrorism and paranoia. The Mole must somehow deal with both his Oath of Office and any other codeword-clearance geases and security checks. Sufficiently powerful magical protection can block the Oath; alternatively, the Mole might have finagled a special exemption from the Oath – maybe he's blackmailing an Auditor, or was released from the Oath to carry out an

infiltration mission into yet another organisation. He could even be a triple agent – a cultist pretending to be a Laundry officer pretending to be a cultist...

- **Who are his allies and supporters?** The Mole's allies and supporters are obstacles the player characters must overcome. Some may be friends and comrades of the Mole, who remain convinced of his innocence until presented with proof they cannot deny. Others might be compromised themselves, or complicit in the Mole's treachery. Others might be opposed to the player characters on other grounds – maybe they fear the disruption a mole hunt will bring, or have staked their own reputations on existing security measures.
- **Who are the red herrings?** The characters may know there is a Mole in a particular department or section, but that just narrows the list of suspects down to a few names. To catch the traitor, they need to winnow the suspects down further, and that may prove tricky. Everyone's got something to hide if you dig deep enough. No one's above suspicion. This cast of suspects will be the focus of the game for some time, so the Gamemaster should invest time and energy in developing them, and giving them personalities and backstories that will spark off those of the player characters.

Optionally, the Gamemaster can keep the true identity of the Mole undecided for most of the campaign. At the start of the game, any of the suspects could be the Mole. As the players mark them off, one by one, the Gamemaster adds more and more evidence incriminating the remaining herrings, until finally he picks one real traitor who has retroactively been the Mole all along. Keeping the answer indeterminate in a long investigation helps ensure that the Gamemaster does not give the solution away accidentally.

- **How do the characters know there's a Mole?** What tipped off the Laundry? What information did the Mole leak that alerted the Laundry to the danger? Or did someone else learn of the Mole's existence at the cost of their own life?
- **What's the Mole's exit strategy?** What does the Mole do in response to the player characters' investigation? Can he throw obstacles in front of them? Hide his own trail? Frame someone else? What about the Mole's secret masters – how do they protect their asset? Will the player characters come under attack, or be framed themselves? Finally, when the heat gets too great and the Mole realises that arrest is inevitable, what does he do? What escape route or final grand gesture has he been planning all these years?

Example: Ten years ago, seven people made it back through the Sultan's Gate after the botched operation codenamed TITAN BLUE HAMMER. Of those seven, one is dead, one has left the Laundry, and one is in a padded cell in St. Hilda's. Four remain active, scattered among different departments in the Laundry. Some are in positions of power; others got buried in the stacks after the disaster.

Now, a routine investigation into another cult turned up something disturbing. The cult had access to internal Laundry documents and thaumaturgical technology, including schematics of the Trawsfynydd Very Large Containment Grid. They're TITAN BLUE worshippers, plotting to use the Laundry's own summoning grid to return their alien god to Earth. One of the survivors of TITAN BLUE HAMMER beheld the majesty of that god and became a secret worshipper of its inhuman glory.

The characters must find the Mole before the cult makes its move on Trawsfynydd.

The Scandal

In this plot, a political catastrophe strikes the Laundry. Senior management types scurry for cover; others fall on their swords. The balance of power shifts suddenly, and those in a position to take advantage of this scandal can profit greatly from it. The characters, however, are caught by surprise, and have to learn to swim very quickly in order to survive.

- **What was the scandal?** The Laundry's a super-black secret agency, but its screw-ups still make headlines. Oh, you won't see CLANDESTINE SECRET AGENCY DROPS BALL, MANCHESTER EATEN BY SHOGGOTHS on the front cover anytime soon³, but Laundry officers can still be identified as 'senior civil servants' or 'intelligence analysts' after they embezzle millions/are caught with drugs and a prostitute or three/end up dead in a duffle bag because of a 'botched auto-erotic asphyxiation sex act'.

Scandals can also be internal: a leaked memo, a laptop left behind in a black cab, a failed project, a screwed-up operation or a very bad decision. You can also substitute any other catastrophic event for a scandal. The death or retirement of a senior figure like one of the Auditors, or a general election and the resulting shift in power in the Civil Service can cause the same sort of upheaval.

- **Who loses?** Putting one of the character's allies or mentors at the heart of the scandal is ideal, especially if the characters have come to rely on their avuncular mentor a bit too much. The characters also lose influence and position inside the Laundry if their enemies rise in stature.
- **Who wins?** Who do the characters really hate? Better yet, who do the players really hate? Their enemies and rivals within the Laundry turn out to be in the best position to take advantage of the upheaval, and suddenly the characters are outranked and on the defensive. Did their enemies engineer the scandal or did they just get lucky?
- **What's the real truth?** What really happened? Was the scandal real, or faked? If it was faked, who was responsible? If real, how did it come to pass? Did someone help the disaster along, or prevent the character's former mentor

from learning of the problem until it was too late? This plot shares many features with **The Cover-Up** (see below), although in general, scandals are fresh and new, whereas cover-ups are hoary, dusty crimes believed long-buried.

- **How can the characters use this?** With their new knowledge of the scandal, can the characters turn it to their advantage? Can they restore their allies to their former status by clearing them of responsibility, or can they at least ensure that their enemies do not profit from the scandal?

Example: A senior researcher in Computational Demonology left the Laundry six months ago⁴, and instead of taking the nice quiet sinecure lecturing in maths, he's joined a cutting-edge tech company, and now they're meddling with Riemann-Gilman functions. Either someone screwed up the geas, or someone deliberately sold Laundry secrets to the private sector.

Oh, and that researcher – his corpse was just found by a man walking his dog.

While half the Laundry's caught up in a circle of blame and recrimination, the characters must investigate the researcher's death, find out exactly what the corporation intends to do with the secrets, and find out who's behind the scandal. Is someone trying to discredit a rival, are they getting a pay-off from the corporation, or is there an even more sinister scheme at work?

The Cover-Up

The characters asked the wrong questions, and now they're on the trail of some long-buried secrets. Something terrible happened many years ago; those involved tried to hide it, but there are still clues hidden in the Archives, and in the testimonies of other survivors. This plot-line can lead to **The Scandal**, and vice versa.

- **What's the first hint?** How do the characters find out that something was covered up? Does their mentor confide in them? Do they come across a cryptic reference in an old file from the Archives, or find the evidence during an unrelated investigation? This hook must be tantalising enough that the players cannot resist it, but also so vague that the nature of the cover-up is not immediately obvious.
- **Who covered it up?** Those involved in the cover-up will be the focus of the adventure, so again the Gamemaster should ensure that these non-player characters have personalities and personal histories that will work well with those of the player characters. Go for either ironic echoes (you could have been him 30 years ago) or conflicting traits (you argue with authority/she demands respect and unquestioning compliance from underlings).
- **What do they have to lose?** Why the cover-up? Cosmic horrors that corrode the human soul are the topic of idle conversation in the Laundry's cafeteria, so it must have been something

⁴: You can't ever leave the Laundry, but you can be put on inactive status. They put a blocker geas on you, so you can't discuss the Laundry with outsiders, and you're restricted in the sort of work you're allowed to do as a civilian. Also, they can activate you again if they ever want you back.

³: Not for a few years, anyway.

worse, or else something more personal. Is this an official or unofficial cover-up – in other words, does the Laundry know what really happened? Did the conspirators betray the Laundry somehow? Did something go so wrong that it would cost them all their careers if it was revealed? Maybe the cover-up has more to do with mundane politics than the supernatural.

• **What happens if it's revealed? What happens if it stays hidden?**

Work out the consequences for either event. Avoid maintaining the status quo; the decision to reveal or conceal the uncovered information always results in big consequences for the campaign.

- **What got covered up?** Over the course of the adventure, the characters will undoubtedly work out something about what got covered up. The final revelation, though, adds a new layer of horror. The secret has something even more alarming associated with it. For example, the characters discover that, say, they were involved in a Laundry operation several years ago, but it went so wrong that the whole operation was buried and their memories were erased. They investigate, learn more about the mission, and finally get hold of the final report – where they learn that there were no survivors. The player characters are actually magical duplicates of the original team, raised up from their essential salts for some cryptic purpose.

Example: The characters find a misfiled folder while searching the stacks. Inside is a partial report on a Laundry experiment in the 1970s, including a photograph of the research team involved. Some of the faces on that photograph are known to the player characters – but they refuse to discuss it, and there's no other official record of the experiment. Then the deaths begin...

The Grand Design

In this plot, the characters or one of their mentors has a plan for the Laundry's future, a great work to safeguard the institution into the future. The characters must overcome entrenched opposition to complete this grand design.

- **What's the big idea?** Is this an internal goal – say, the creation of a new department, or the overthrow of some mummified⁵ bureaucrat? Or is it an external goal, like establishing an alliance with BLUE HADES or pushing for the existence of the supernatural to be revealed to the public? Is it an attempt to get support for some grand operation, like an assault on the Dread Plateau?
- **Who supports it?** In addition to the characters' mentors and allies, a few other members of the Laundry's upper management who look favourable on the scheme. These allies can suggest possible tactics and opportunities for the characters to further the Grand Design.
- **Who opposes it? Why?** Who are these deluded fools that oppose the Grand Design? Can they not see its brilliance?

The opposition provides a range of challenges for the players,

and so require them to take a different approach in each case. One session might involve bluffing their way through a budget meeting; next week, it's off to dig up blackmail material on a stubborn manager who keeps blocking the Grand Design. Some opponents can be turned into supporters or at least neutralised with the right approach; others are uncompromising foes who must be destroyed, politically or otherwise.

- **What's the opportunity?** The Grand Design hinges on something – the support of a government minister or a member of the Board, a celestial conjunction, a temporary weakness in some enemy, the successful completion of a field mission against a cult, the successful translation of the coded segments of *De Vermis Mysteriis*. The characters must be ready to seize this opportunity when it arises.
- **What gets in the way?** What might stop them from seizing the opportunity? Who's pouring poison in the Minister's ear/filing false reports with the board/conducting their own counter-ritual/sabotaging the field mission/stealing the one intact copy of *De Vermis Mysteriis*?
- **What's the twist?** Nothing ever goes smoothly, even when the characters win. They get the Grand Design off the ground, only to find out that something else has gone wrong. Perhaps one of their erstwhile allies intends to use the Grand Design to do something horrific ("OK, you've convinced the government to build protective wards around the whole of the UK – only now you've got to stop your former ally from unleashing a magical plague intended to wipe out the rest of humanity, thus averting CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN.")⁶

Example: The proposal for Operation REVELATION has knocked around the Laundry since the 80s – do a massive exercise involving the Laundry, the army and the emergency services to simulate a mass outbreak. It would test the nation's disaster-readiness capability, prepare the civilians for CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, and provide valuable training for all participants. It would, of course, mean bringing parts of the Laundry out of the shadows.

Now, one of the characters' allies is pushing for a stripped-down REVELATION. Instead of making it nation-wide, he wants to take a medium-sized town and subject it to a simulated apocalypse. By bringing the number of civilians and non-Laundry personnel involved down to only a few hundred thousand, it would be possible to wipe the memories of everyone concerned. The after-effects of the simulation could be attributed to a natural disaster, like a flood or a chemical spill.

He wants the characters to sell the Laundry – and the government – on this taster course of Armageddon, and if it goes ahead, he wants them to run it. With CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN looming, an exercise like this is vital if the Laundry is going to handle the real thing – but can the characters' careers survive the lead-up to REVELATION?

⁶: Avoid making the Grand Design itself a trick, though, unless you give the players plenty of opportunity to uncover the truth in advance. Nothing sucks more than the players working hard to accomplish a goal, only for the Gamemaster to yell "surprise! You were fooled all along, even though there was no way for you to discover this

⁵: Take this as literally as you wish.



High-Level Meetings

The five stages of bureaucratic grieving are: denial, anger, committee meetings, scapegoating and cover-up. And now we are entering stage three.

— The Rhesus Chart

Let's draw a line.

It could be a line on an org chart. After all, it connects you to the upper echelons, to the exalted aethers of management and Mahogany Row.

It could be part of a circuit diagram. Think transistors – a small change on one side of the line is mirrored by huge changes on the other. A brief conversation at some high-level meeting can make or break a career, kick off a decade-long operation, or institute a new policy that will one day affect the lives of millions. A silence can contain and condone a murder or a sacrifice in some conferences.

It could be a line on a warding pentacle, an occult representation of a curve burning brightly through the virtual space of the platonic realm, a line in the numbers that says *this far and no further shalt thou come – the stars are not yet right for your kind to cross into our realm*. The decisions in those meetings are made under the shadow of the apocalypse. The wrong decision, the wrong call, and the consequences are incalculable. Worse, those who make those decisions are not always the people who must implement them. They must decide not only what is to be done, but who is to do it. They must decide who to send into danger, and how much to tell them. They must decide who will live and who will die.

So, that's the line. Keep it in mind. We'll cross it in time.

First, though, let's talk practicalities.

Hardcore Nerderdy

Roleplaying games are only fun if you're in charge of your own decisions. Oh, the GM can kick off the game with a mission handed down from on high (*"this week, you're chasing abominable snowmen who've had their brains stolen by PLUTO KOBOLD"*) and can pressure the characters in various ways that push for one decision or another ("the Russian goon says he'll blow your brains out if you

don't give him the binding codes") but, in general, you expect to have control over your choices. That's why strict chains-of-command and long-term mind control or totally railroaded, sit-down-and-endure-my-unpublished-novel scenarios don't work well in most conventional RPGs – they rob the players of one of the things that makes the experience enjoyable.

Another, even more inarguable fact about roleplaying games: your GM only has one mouth¹, which means there can only be one NPC speaking a time. And, unless your GM is really good at portraying different voices and mannerisms, there can only be two or three talking NPCs present in a scene before things get confusing. On top of that, the average party of player characters wanders around in a tight huddle, so you've got three to six player characters all talking to one NPC.

In most situations, those restrictions can be worked around. We give our player characters a little more leeway for independent action than people in a real intelligence agency might have. We avoid pointing out the absurdity when six trenchcoated spies meet the same contact in a dark alleyway. One place we run hard up against these restrictions is in high-stakes Laundry Files operations.

Take the sort of missions that Agent CANDID goes on with her wonderful violin, or the high-level game played against Billington in *The Jennifer Morgue*. These are carefully planned affairs, blessed and sanctified in Mahogany Row. They're light-years away from Bob's trademark brand of bumbling around (except when they incorporate said bumbling into the mission plan – again, *The Jennifer Morgue*). There, a lot of the fun² decisions get taken at a level far above the ones the player characters operate at. Agent CANDID didn't get to come up with the clever method of exploiting a hole in Billington's hero trap; that was all decided on in committee by Angleton and his cronies.

To replicate that sort of mission in a roleplaying game while still keeping it fun, we need to change things up. It's time for a minigame!

1. #insert obvious_shoggoth_joke

2. For values of "fun" congruent to a roleplaying game. We're not suggesting that tense, high-level strategic planning sessions in buried war rooms with the fate of the world at stake are in any way fun. Unless you're a sociopath.



Cards on the Table

This minigame is designed for running scenes involving high-ranking NPCs in the Laundry or a similar organisation. It doesn't use the normal rules – it doesn't matter what Angleton's CON or Firearms (shotgun) or Perform³ are, so there's no point in doing full sheets for such exalted personages. Management at that level don't go into the field.

Instead, it uses a normal deck of playing cards, which get used as both **Influence cards** and **Issue cards**.

Influence Cards

Influence cards represent political sway and power in the committee. The value of the card determines how much influence it carries, higher values being better. The suit of the card determines the sort of influence it represents.

HEARTS are personal status – your own standing in the Laundry. It converts roughly to the Status skill in the game, so the 2 of Hearts represents a Status skill of 20% or so.

SPADES are departmental status – how important your department is in the Laundry, how much of that influence is relevant and how much of that you influence you can bring into play.

CLUBS represent allies, political patrons, mentors, sway from outside the Laundry.

DIAMONDS are occult power – either your own sorcerous abilities, your supernatural allies, the after-effects of certain unusual training courses or just your reputation as a Deeply Scary Sorcerer.

Aces count as a 1 when used for Influence.

Face cards (Jacks, Queens and Kings) aren't used as Influence cards except when trumping (see below).

Tracking

While the general meaning of a card doesn't change – the 7 of Diamonds is always something occult and moderately powerful – what it specifically represents varies from game to game. In one meeting, the 7 of Diamonds might be an alien relic recovered from an expedition offworld. In another, it's the Rite of Naar. If you've got a lot of cards on the table, use post-it notes or clip them to index cards with their current meaning written on them.

Issue Cards

Cards can also represent challenges or problems for the committee to tackle, in which case the value of the card measures how difficult the problem is. Cards used in this way are called Issues. Combined, they're referred to as the Agenda.

HEARTS represent troublesome individuals.

SPADES are organisations – cults, rival OCCINTEL groups, suspicious societies, or even whole species like BLUE HADES or DEEP SEVEN.

CLUBS are internal problems within the Laundry or the British establishment, or twists or complications like an unforeseen delay in the production of EMERALD JAVELIN anti-giant-alien-space-monster missiles.

DIAMONDS are occult problems – exonomes, lost relics, the Necronomicon, CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN.

Aces count as 11 when used for Issues.



3. Con 9, Firearms (Shotgun) 40%, and it's Perform (Ritual Strangulation) 70%, Perform (Make the non-Newtonian cradle on his desk tap back and forth in a manner designed to drive you insane) 90%. You did ask.

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

When used as an Issue, a Jack, Queen or King has a value of 12, and indicates the involvement of, respectively, a supernatural entity (Jack), a woman (Queen) or man (King).

For example, the agenda for The Apocalypse Codex might look something like this:

King of Spades – the New Life Church and Reverend Schiller

5 of Clubs – Schiller's connections to Downing Street.

4 of Clubs – Schiller's based in the United States, so the Laundry has to dodge the Black Chamber

Ace of Hearts – the Sleeper in the Pyramid.

The Aim of the Game

This being the Laundry, there are three orthogonal aims.

The goal of the *committee* is to solve any Issues presented to them. You've got a problem – come up with a solution that addresses all the issues raised. You do this by playing Influence cards from your hand.

The goal of *individual players* is to score cards. You score cards by being the one whose solutions are adopted by the committee, or by undermining or overruling (trumping) other people's solutions. The more cards you score, the better it is for your own PC when you go back to regular play.

The third goal is play as few cards as possible, as any cards left in players' hands at the end of the meeting go to determining the mission budget.

Ways to Play

There are three variants of this minigame – pick the one that suits the current situation in game.

Existing Crisis: If you're dropping a committee scene into an on-going scenario, then you've already got a crisis in mind. The Cult of the Black Pharaoh are behind a coup in Iraq; the MOD's lost a submarine in the Antarctic; there's a mass possession outbreak at the Chelsea Flower Show; the Teapot's missing, and someone's going to make tea... in this case, you know why the committee's been assembled. In this variant, you pick the cards used for Issues.

Random Plot Generator: If you're comfortable with winging it, you can kick off a game with a committee scene. Randomly dealt Issue cards determine the sort of problem that the Laundry has to sort out; the players fill in the details. Especially suitable for masochistic GMs or those who like chaos.

You can combine either of these with **Bob, You're in the Meeting**. Instead of all the players playing senior management, one of them gets to play their normal character, who's been called into the meeting or temporarily deputised by their line manager to attend in their stead. Here, instead of randomly dealing Influence cards, you assemble the player's hand based on their character sheet and backgrounds.

Bob, You're in the Meeting

Using one of your regular player characters in this mini-game? Go through the deck and pick cards as follows. If a card isn't available (because another player has it), they get the next lower card of the same suit.

Pick the Hearts card corresponding to the character's Status skill divided by 10. If it's more than 10, take the 10s card.

Pick the Spades card corresponding to the character's highest departmental skill divided by 10. (See page 66 for departmental status and departmental skills).

Pick the Diamonds card corresponding to the character's Sorcery divided by 10 (Aces are low, so a character with no Sorcery gets an Ace.)

Give the character a Clubs card based on their mentor, if any (see page 66 for more on mentors).

- Internal mentor – that mentor's Status divided by 10.
- Media – 6 of Clubs
- Security Service mentor – 7 of Clubs
- Civil Service – 8 of Clubs
- Westminster – 9 of Clubs
- Supernatural – 10 of Clubs

Set-up

1. Split the deck into the four suits. If you're playing the **Existing Crisis** variant, assemble the Issue cards now (see below).
2. Deal one card from each suit to each player. The players keep their cards hidden from one another. If you're playing **Bob, You're In the Meeting**, assemble that PC's hand now (see the boxout nearby).
3. Now, shuffle the decks together. Deal one card to each player. Each player should now have five cards in hand. These are Influence cards.
4. If you're playing **Random Plot Generator**, deal out six or so cards, face down, and put them in the middle of the table. (If you're playing **Existing Crisis**, you've already assembled the Issues.) They're the Issues that have to be overcome. For a more difficult problem, deal out more cards.

Building the Agenda

Random Plot Generator: Flip over the cards dealt in Set-up Step 4, one by one. For each card, have a player describe what specific challenge that card represents based on that card's suit and value. Encourage the players to build on each other's ideas. Cards of the same suit can represent a single developing situation. As a guideline, a good Issue can be phrased in the form of the question "*what the hell are we going to do about <insert Issue here> before all hell breaks loose upstairs?*"

For example, in a three-player meeting, the following cards are turned over.

Jack of Clubs (Supernatural Entity within the Laundry): It's the Switchboard. It's not working properly.

7 of Clubs (middling problem within the Laundry): Internal communications within the Laundry are therefore disabled.

7 of Hearts (mid-ranking troublesome individual): One of the Switchboard engineers has gone missing.

Ace of Clubs (major problem within the Laundry): The Switchboard is one of the pillars of the organisation. If Switchboard can be compromised, then anything and everything in the Laundry is potentially vulnerable.

King of Hearts (high-ranking troublesome individual): A notorious freelance computational demonologist and black hood⁴ hacker, the Rabbit, is believed to be in London.

⁴ Criminal hackers are black hat hackers. Ones who summon demons and ownz0r your brainz wear pointy black hoods and robes.

King of Clubs (high-ranking male within the Laundry): Dr Brown, one of the Auditors, picked up his office phone this morning, and got his soul sucked out through the receiver. Recovering what remains of Dr Brown's consciousness before it can be dissected and sold on the black market is a priority.

Existing Crisis: The GM picks Issue cards that reflect the existing situation in the game. The total value of the agenda should be roughly 10 x the number of players.

Let's take the scenario A Footnote from The Laundry Core Rulebook, page 251. To refresh your memory, that's the one about air-deployed canisters of the powder of Ibn-Gazī and invisible monsters left over from an old Laundry experiment in breeding half-demon cows – the one with Yog-Snuffles and the railgun. If we hypothesise there was a committee scene before the regular player characters got sent to Scotland to clean up the mess, then the GM might build a six-card Agenda as follows:

9 of Clubs – the GABLE WINDOW test firings, which are being conducted jointly with the RAF.

4 of Clubs – the Kilcudbright testing range – any Laundry investigation has to be low-key.

8 of Diamonds – the supernatural entity spotted in the testing.

3 of Diamonds – the abandoned BLUE LILY experiments which probably don't have anything to do with the current situation.

8 of Spades – Mahogany Row needs this situation resolved quickly so they can proceed with the high-priority GABLE WINDOW project.

4 of Hearts – there might be civilians nearby. Keep the situation contained.

You don't even need to use cards if you don't wish to – just write down two to five Issues that have to be overcome, and assign them numerical values that total up to roughly 10 x the number of players.

Playing the Game

At the start of the meeting, each player introduces themselves (or, more accurately, their temporary high-ranking manager-type). As part of this introduction, each player reveals one Influence card that reflects their standing in the Committee. So, if you're here as a representative of the Department of Acquisitions, flash a Spade. If you're here in your own right as an experienced field agent, show a Heart. It doesn't have to be your highest card, but it should be how the other players know you. The player who reveals the highest-value card chairs the meeting.

The chair gets to decide on the order of events if two or more players try to do something simultaneously. At the end of the meeting, the chair must also compile a list of action items for the regular player characters based on the committee's decisions.

Proposing Solutions

The players then propose solutions to the various problems. They may address the Agenda as a whole, or tackle individual Issues one at a time as they prefer. When proposing a solution, the player takes an Influence card from his or her hand and puts it next to one of the Issues, while describing how that Influence can be employed to tackle that problem.

For example, let's say the Issue is *Internal Communications in the Laundry are disabled*.

- (Plays 7 of Spades) "The Department of Acquisitions has an old pneumatic tube system for transferring physical documents – we can bring that into service for the rest of the Laundry.
- (Plays 6 of Hearts) "I'll talk to the IT kobolds about the security implications of implementing Voice over IP on our bound server daemons"
- (Plays 9 of Clubs) "Let's use this crisis as an opportunity, and bring in a modern internal communications system instead of a Switchboard that's still running on hardware we inherited from Churchill's War Department in 1946"
- (Plays 4 of Diamonds) "Why can't we just use telepathic magic like the Yanks do in the Black Chamber?"

A good solution includes a proposal for the regular player characters to take some action. Of course, doing so offloads more problems and dangers onto the regular player characters – but that's all part of the fun...

- (Plays 7 of Spades) "The Department of Acquisitions has an old pneumatic tube system for transferring physical documents – we can bring that into service for the rest of the Laundry. Of course, someone will have to go down into the basement and clear out the tubes. There could be anything down there..."
- (Plays 9 of Clubs) "Let's use this crisis as an opportunity, and bring in a modern internal communications system instead of a Switchboard that's still running on hardware we inherited from Churchill's War Department in 1946. Someone will have to vet any potential private contractors for security."

- (Plays 4 of Diamonds) "Why can't we just use telepathic magic like the Yanks do in the Black Chamber? I've got an experimental enchantment that might do the trick – all I need is a couple of sacrifices. I mean, test subjects."

For the solution to work, the total Influence applied to that issue needs to equal or exceed the value of the Issue. When that happens, see **Resolutions**, below.

Other players may support that solution by playing their own Influence cards. Again, the player must describe how that Influence card is being applied to the Issue.

For example, Bob's played the 4 of Diamonds in an attempt to solve the problem of the Laundry's internal communications problems with magic. That's a 7-point Issue, so that solution isn't enough on its own. Another player must support him by playing a card with 3 or more to "top up" the solution.

- (Plays 3 of Hearts) "I agree – while some may see soul binding as an extreme solution to having no internal telephones, I think it's an idea whose time has come."
- (Plays 3 of Spades) "It would improve internal security. No one can bug our souls, right?"
- (Plays 3 of Clubs) "I think the cost savings would go down well at our next budget review with the Minister."
- (Plays 3 of Diamonds) "I think the soul binding would go down well with the Emissaries of Y'ghonzzh N'hai, as long as we get preliminary functionality specifications done before the solstice."

If the initial solution didn't include something for the regular player characters to do, then a later play of a status card can bring them in.

The GM can interject at any time to modify or veto a proposed solution – especially one that won't translate smoothly into regular play. If a solution exceeds the Laundry's abilities, scope or most importantly, budget (*"I know! We'll issue everyone in the UK a Class Four ward!"*), then the GM should either suggest an alternative (*"you might be able to afford a one-shot of iodine tablets engraved with the Rune of Ptah for everyone in Luton"*) or have it go wrong in a way that leads to an adventure for the regular player characters (*"OK, this week, you're all flying off to China to do quality-assurance testing on the warding talismans – you didn't think they were going to be manufactured in the UK, did you? They got outsourced to cheap Chinese factories."*)

Face Card Quick Reference

As Influence: Aces count as 1, Jacks/Queens/Kings count as 0

As Issues: Aces count as 11, Jacks/Queens/Kings count as 12

As Trumps: Aces count as 11, Jacks/Queens/Kings count as 12

Scoring Cards

There are three ways to score a card:

- 1 By proposing a solution that defeats an issue (score the Issue card)
- 2 By trumping a solution (score the highest card played in the trumping attempt)
- 3 By defeating another player's trumping attempt (score the highest card played in the trumping attempt)

When you score a card, place it face down in front of you. That card is out of play until after the end of the meeting.

Trumping

When a player plays an Influence card to address an Issue, or to support a solution, then another player may trump by playing a card of equal or higher value, or by playing an Ace, King, Queen or Jack. The trumping player describes why that solution or offer of support isn't going to work. The player getting trumped may fight back by playing another Influence card to add to their initial card; the trumper may respond by doing likewise.

The player with the highest final total **scores** the highest card played in the trump attempt.

Aces have a value of 11 for trumping; Kings, Queens and Jacks have a value of 12 for trumping.

A player may trump someone else's status card, then play one of his or her own on the same solution.

Bob plays the 4 of Diamonds to propose his "solve the communications breakdown with a sympathetic magic hack" solution.

Pinky backs up him up with the 3 of Diamonds.

Angleton, seeing a chance to score a card, plays his 4 of Spades to trump. "I'm afraid the Board wouldn't go for that, my boy. They exist on a... rarefied plane, and require, shall we say, intermediaries when interacting with the lower echelons. Direct communication would be regrettable for both parties."

Pinky now has a choice. He can let Angleton's trump go through, or he can fight back by playing another of his influence cards. He plays the 6 of Clubs to fight back.. "Look, without the Switchboard, how can we order pizza? No pizza, no late night hackathons in the necromancy lab. No late night hackathons, no brilliant solutions to world-threatening problems".

Pinky's total is now 9 (3 + 6) vs. Angleton's 4.

Angleton responds by sighing and playing the Queen of Hearts. Face cards don't count for Influence except when trumping. "You have been ordering takeout to a restricted-access, top-secret government laboratory? Dare I ask how the delivery drive got past the wards?" "We sent a dimensional shambler to pick it up," mutters Pinky. "We glamour'd it first, though. Usually. When we remembered."

Angleton's Queen is worth 12 when trumping. His total is now an insurmountable 16 (4 + 12) to Pinky's 9. Pinky concedes defeat.

As Bob's 4 of Diamonds isn't enough to sustain the proposed solution, and no one else in the meeting is willing to jump in, then that solution fails. Angleton gets to score the Queen of Hearts.



Resolution

If the total Influence applied to an Issue is equal to or higher than the value of that issue, then that Issue is considered to be resolved. The player who proposed the solution gets to score that Issue.

If the total Influence applied to an Issue isn't enough to solve it, discard all the Influence cards played on that Issue.

Depending on the situation, the Gamemaster may give certain benefits or extra information if an Issue is successfully resolved. For example, say the committee are meeting to plan a mission that impinges on BLUE HADES territory. If the BLUE HADES Issue is fully resolved, then the Committee has obviously found some way to mollify the fish-men and there won't be any problems with Deep Ones when the game switches back to regular play. If the players didn't manage to resolve it, then they may run into trouble or added complications. Check out **Fire Drill**, page 105, for an example of this in play.

Ending the Meeting

The meeting ends when either

- 1) All the Issues have been dealt with – a very successful meeting.
- 2) Some Issues remain on the Agenda, but the players don't have sufficient Influence cards or willingness left to tackle them. Each player must then discard one card from their hands, if any are left.

Each player may then choose to score one of the cards left in their hands. Any remaining cards are totalled to determine the mission budget assigned to the player characters. A kind GM might top up this mission budget (page 108 of *The Laundry Core Rulebook*) in proportion to the Issues faced by the committee. Face cards count as 12s for the purpose of determining mission budget.

Players keep any scored cards when the game returns to regular play.

Finally, the chair of the meeting records any action items for the regular player characters – what's been decided, who's promised to give what support, and which issues are going to be delegated down to those poor schlubs.

For example, at the end of a meeting, the players' hands are as follows:

Bob – 7 of Spades, Jack of Diamonds

Pinky – 5 of Hearts

Angleton – 10 of Diamonds, 5 of Spades, 5 of Clubs

The meeting was a success, so no one has to discard any cards. Each player may then score one card. Bob scores his Jack, Angleton his 10. Pinky, being a generous fellow, doesn't bother to score his 5 of Hearts. So, the remaining cards are the 7 of Spades, the 5 of Hearts, the 5 of Spades and the 5 of Clubs.

The mission budget for the regular player characters is $7+5+5+5=22$.

Using Scored Cards

In the course of regular, oh-god-we're-going-get-eaten-by-a-shoggoth play, a player may use a scored card to gain a bonus equal to $5 \times$ that card's value when making a roll. So, play a scored 7, and get a 35% bonus to your next Dodge roll. Face cards and Aces are worth a 50% bonus.



Sample Interpretations

If you're stuck for inspiration, here are some possible interpretations of the cards.

Influence

	Hearts Personal Status	Spades Departmental Status	Clubs Allies & Patrons	Diamonds Occult Power
Ace	New recruit	IT	University roommate working in the City	What's a shoggythoth?
2	Junior assistant	Catering	Occasionally useful journalist	No real occult power
3	Average cubicle drone	Monitoring	Metropolitan police inspector	Knows about CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN
4	Lower management		Retired but respected Laundry officer	Can throw a spell around
5	Senior boffin	Arcana Analysis	Backbench opposition MP	Signed their name in the Black Book
6	Middle Management	Legal	Senior SIS spook	Possibly not quite human
7	Respected veteran	Ways & Means	Senior military officer	Has a holiday home in the Dreamlands
8	Deeply Scary Sorcerer		Media magnate	Deeply Scary Sorcerer
9	Head of Department		Whitehall Mandarin	Definitely not entirely human
10	Speaks to the Board	Auditors	"I was having dinner with the Minister last night..."	Ia! Ia!
Jack (trumping only)	-	-	-	-
Queen (trumping only)	-	-	-	-
King (trumping only)	-	-	-	-

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

Issues

	Hearts Troublesome Individuals	Spades Troublesome Groups	Clubs Internal Problems	Diamonds Supernatural Weirdness
Ace	Plucky civilian investigator	Petty crooks	Cafeteria out of biscuits	Haunted public building
2	Member of the public	Club	Report due but not complete	Mythos tome on the loose
3	Meddling journalist	Corporation	Project behind schedule	Weirdness in the Dreamlands
4	Clueless graduate student or researcher	Government interference	Missing memo	Ghouls causing trouble
5	Lone madman	Organised crime	Internal leak	Archaeologists uncover cursed tomb again
6	Suspected cultist	Major religion	Horrible supernatural incident	Things stirring in the ocean
7	Rogue spy	Major Mythos cult	Internal power struggle	Major reality breach
8	Deranged CEO	Other European Agencies	RHRs clawing at office doors	Alien god demands worshippers
9	Renegade sorcerer	Thirteenth Directorate, Nameless Bureau	Budget cuts	Mysterious activity at Pyramid of the Sleeper
10	Minister with an idea	The Black Chamber	Audit	CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN
Jack	Possessed victim	BLUE HADES	The Teapot	Nyarlathept
Queen	Cult High Priestess	Shub-Niggurath Cultists	Persephone Hazard	Nameless Thing
King	Vampire King	DEEP SEVEN	Member of the Board	Yog-Sothoth





Hot Potato

"You mean the Laundry has a public information campaign stored up and ready to roll in event of CASE – sorry, in event of us being invaded by tentacle monsters from another dimension?"

"Yes, that's exactly it... The books and posters are MAGIC CIRCLE OF SAFETY, but she said I'd find it in the stacks under a very strange reference – KGB.2.YA – what's so funny, Bob? Are you choking?"
Kiss Good-Bye 2 Your Ass: I love the Laundry sense of humour.

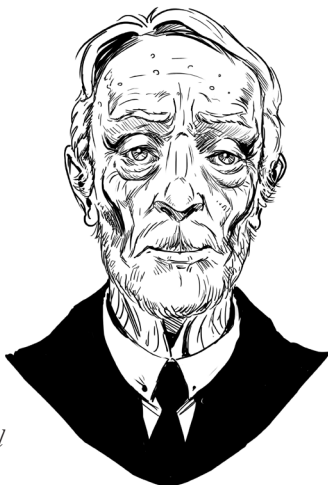
– The Rhesus Chart

The Laundry's ultra-black. Beyond top secret, no official acknowledgement. In many parts of the intelligence community, it's a rumour, a joke, a ghost story for spooks. Its relationship with the government is equally tangential – only senior ministers are briefed on the continued existence of SOE Station X, and then only on a need-to-know basis. Even Prime Ministers don't always need to know. Let them get on with running the country, and the Laundry will keep trying to save it.

The Laundry, therefore, doesn't leak visibly. Even if the press got hold of an internal Laundry document – assuming that the document didn't eat their souls¹ as soon as they read past the bit that says "DO NOT READ PAST THIS POINT WITHOUT CLEARANCE" – it would be entirely outside their frame of reference. They'd assume it was a joke, a Photoshop job by the comedians down in the photography department. You could reveal the whole thing to them, talk about how the gods are coming back and they're going to consume all of us, and they wouldn't pay it any attention.

But redact it, edit out the things that are too big or too terrifying for them to comprehend. Refine it. Make it digestible and, suddenly, the Laundry has a problem.

Ultra-black institutions aren't supposed to end up on page 1.



Albert Kendal

1: Assuming they have souls. At least one national newspaper is staffed by things wearing flesh-masks that thrive on human misery.

The Screwtape Committee

SCREWTAPE's part of the Laundry's machinery for preparing for CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. Specifically, its role is to prepare the civilian population and infrastructure for the approaching apocalypse. Given the government attaches about one percent of the resources and political capital to this threat as they did to the London 2012 Olympic Games, a lot of SCREWTAPE meetings are taken up with complaints about their inability to make any real progress. It's hard to, say, draw up plans to build a thaumically warded TEMPEST-shielded shelter for 10,000 key civil servants slap bang in the middle of London when the people from the London planning authority aren't cleared to meet with you.

The membership of SCREWTAPE changes regularly. New members get brought in to advise on whatever their topic of expertise is, or because their manager's trying to keep them busy; others rotate out as soon as they can claw their way up the ladder. While SCREWTAPE's brief grows in importance the closer we get to CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, so too does the risk of being on the committee. It's a hot potato; no one wants to be holding it when the day finally dawns, or doesn't dawn because some cosmic horror has eaten the sun. The only long-term members of SCREWTAPE are those who can't wriggle out of it, or whose particular mix of skills and experience means there's no escape.

Albert Kendal's the longest serving member of SCREWTAPE.

Mission Overview

This adventure takes place almost entirely within the Laundry. The player characters get temporarily assigned to SCREWTAPE, where they acquire Albert Kendal as a mentor. A redacted Laundry document then mysteriously ends up in the hands of a journalist, and Kendal's accused of being the leak. He's placed on administrative leave, and dies under questionable circumstances shortly afterwards.

When the characters investigate Kendal's death, they find that the leaked document was not the first suspicious aspect to SCREWTAPE, and that one of their fellow committee members is in thrall to a sinister supernatural threat that has its own intentions for humanity in CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN.

You can interweave the first four scenes of **Hot Potato** into other scenarios. Make SCREWTAPE feel like an unusually detailed example of the seemingly-pointless bureaucratic busywork that occupies 85% of one's time in the Laundry (the other 15% being split between 10% breaks and 5% mind-numbing terror). The real investigation kicks off when Kendal dies, although the players may start poking around on their own initiative before that – see **Internal Investigations** on page 92 for all manner of things to be poked.

Prying into the secrets of the other committee members point towards two interwoven avenues (if avenues can interweave) of investigation: a scam by Lucien Kelly and Scott Burley to profit from the delay in implementing SCREWTAPE, and Laurie Adams' connection to the ghouls.

1.SCREWWed

It is, the characters are told, like being in charge of deckchair supply and maintenance on the Titanic, or like planning the parking arrangements and catering for your own funeral. SCREWTAPE combines the dull with the disturbing, as meetings discuss topics like corpse disposal or regional seat of government devolution in the event of

SCREWTAPE Members

Albert Kendal: Kindly worn-out old necromancer; he's been bumping around the Laundry since the '60s, and is well past retirement. Completing SCREWTAPE is supposed to be his legacy. He's a mentor not only to the player characters, but also to Laurie Adams.

Major Eric Phillips: Not a member of the Laundry, although he has clearance to be there and has signed the Official Secrets Act in blood. Phillips may be a target for the characters' investigations as the redacted documents are for consumption by those outside the Laundry, and he's a window to the wide world outside.

Lucien Kelly: One of the Laundry's more annoying sorcerers, sent to SCREWTAPE to shut him up. Kelly plays at being the Brooding and Mysterious Occult Master, which might have flown in the 1920s if he was hanging around with Aleister Crowley, but he works in an office where Cosmic Horrors run on every desktop. He'd be a joke if he wasn't an excellent intuitive sorcerer.

Scott Burley: A former construction engineer who dug in the wrong place; now a manager in Buildings & Works. He's secretly involved in a scheme to profit from the Laundry's construction projects; he has his friends on the outside buy up key plots of land that will then be bought by the government. He convinced Lucien Kelly to weaken Burley's oath-of-office geas just enough so he doesn't get fried by it.

Dr Ann Taylor: She comes out of Human Resources' nastier, weirder older sibling, Quality Assurance. She's allegedly here to ensure that the British taxpayer gets value for money. In practise, she's Kendal's loudest critic and the heir-apparent to SCREWTAPE. She's the main obstacle to any official investigation of the leak; as far as she's concerned, it eliminates her main rival and she's not one to look a gift scandal in the mouth.

Laurie Adams: A new recruit to the Laundry, she got drafted when she found her way into the Archives as part of an urban-exploration expedition into officially abandoned tube tunnels. Secretly, Laurie's a proto-ghoul, on the verge of transforming into something inhuman. Kendal had experiences with ghouls earlier in his career (see **COFFIN DODGER** on page 96) and was helping her resist the transformation. Unfortunately, Adams fell prey to the real villain of the adventure, the Elder Ghoul.

Outside SCREWTAPE

Auditor Curtis: Comes in to investigate the alleged leak, and to scare the crap out of the remaining committee members.

The Elder Ghoul: An ancient and powerful post-human entity that lives beneath London. Ghouls feed on the flesh of dead humans, and the Elder Ghoul intends to provide for his people through the long winter of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. He psychically dominated Laurie Adams into leaking the document, knowing that it would disrupt SCREWTAPE long enough for him to complete his own preparations.

apocalypse. There isn't even the thrill of planning ways to defend humanity against the scum of the multiverse – all the tactical planning gets done at a higher level. Most of SCREWTAPE's work involves taking existing mundane disaster-preparedness plans, mostly exhumed from the '70s and replacing all references to 'fallout' with 'catastrophic permeability of the reality membrane'. Oh, and swapping 'warhead' with 'pretty much any computational device more complex than an abacus, and that includes the contents of your skull.'

All the characters are assigned to SCREWTAPE for the foreseeable future – in other words, until they can wrangle some other poor sod into taking their place.

Joining SCREWTAPE isn't entirety without its perks – the characters each get a temporary +2% bump in Status, and get to put SCREWTAPE down on the Security Clearances section of their character sheets. They also get to meet the other regular attendees at the meetings. First impressions:

- Albert Kendal (Chair) looks like he should be on *Gardener's Question Time*, leaning on a spade and answering questions about his prize roses. He shows up pleasantly drunk to the meetings if they're scheduled on Friday afternoons, having had a liquid lunch in the *Squid and Crown*; those meetings normally get sidetracked with lengthy anecdotes about his long career in the Laundry. Insightful characters get the impression that Kendal's not quite as senile and harmless as he pretends to be, but he's certainly well past his prime; Residual Human Resources probably have a suit already laid out for him. He sometimes forgets to speak English, and drops into Enochian – it's an open secret that the old man's in the early stages of K-Syndrome.
- Ann Taylor (Quality Assurance) actually runs the meetings. She's efficiently ruthless, as opposed to being ruthlessly efficient. Every mistake the characters make gets noted down on her tablet. Turn up late, speak out of turn, fail to have the requested information at your fingertips, take two biscuits when the tea trolley comes around; it all goes on your assessment, you know.
- Lucien Kelly (Arcana Analysis) is supposed to be the resident thaumaturgical expert. He has the sort of demeanour that suggests he'd be most comfortable in a wizard's robe, which is good as he's got the sort of pale, weaselly face that would be best concealed in a wizard's hood. He mutters about dire portents and sinister occult secrets when he forgets to bring the actual reports from A.A. Oh, and he claims to be a direct male-line descendant of Ed Kelley, the forger and medium who worked with Dr John Dee. He tells everyone this as soon as he can possibly jam it into the conversation.
- Scott Burley (Buildings and Works) has the slightly bemused look of an ex-civilian who has been told about demons and extradimensional horrors and magic and all the rest, but doesn't quite believe it, and half-suspects it might be some elaborate in-joke or metaphor he's not in on. People like that wander around the Laundry in search of someone sensible who'll confirm that it's all just a bit of harmless office fun, and that none of it is real. Scott, therefore, sits through most meetings looking bewildered unless asked a direct question.
- Laurie Adams (Internal Logistics, but hoping for a transfer to Field Ops) is a new recruit to the Laundry. She was an avid urban explorer, and used to spend her weekends poking around decaying ruins and abandoned tunnels under London. She was one of the children rescued during COFFIN DODGER.



Scott Burley



Laurie Adams

SCREWTAPE Meetings

Play through a few brief section of typical SCREWTAPE meetings. Have Ann Taylor ask the characters a question related to their field of expertise and to the post-apocalyptic wasteland anticipated by the Laundry's most optimistic projections. A character from IT might be asked about the best way to mass-delete user profiles on a secure Windows NT network, in the event that, say, 90% of all users suddenly died. Someone from Media Relations gets tasked with writing up a style guide for announcements relating to the return of the Elder Gods in a way that doesn't damage morale among the remaining civilian population. Play the meetings for laughs; they're the dull slice-of-life bits before the real mission starts.

Play up Kendal's growing infirmity and eccentric behaviour as his K-Syndrome gets worse.

Kendal as a Mentor

Over the weeks, Kendal takes more and more of an interest in the characters' affairs. He's a former field agent, too old to do much more than a desk job these days of course, and anyway, everything's computerised these days. He's not up to speed on these modern computer jobbies; when he was in the field, a Rune of Destruction came inscribed on a metal amulet, and you to had wear lead-lined gloves when handling it after more than six shots. Now, there's an app for that.

Make Kendal useful to the player characters. Have him provide a hint or clue in some troublesome mystery; maybe he shows them one weird trick for dealing with fire vampires, or lets them borrow his old class four ward when they're heading into a dangerous situation. Play him as your lovable-but-slightly-creepy uncle.

Meeting Adams

Hint to the player characters that they're not the only junior Laundry officers that Kendal has taken under his wing. They might spot Laurie Adams leaving Kendal's office, or the two might show up at a SCREWTAPE meeting together. A successful Insight roll confirms there's some sort of relationship between the two, but both refuse to discuss it. Adams looks alarmed if questioned; Kendal just smiles in a tired way and suggests that it's none of the PCs' damned business.

(Laurie Adams is a proto-ghoul, a human who's on the verge of transforming into a full ghoul. Kendal's helping her conceal this condition from the Laundry, as it would severely impact on her chances of promotion, not to mention her humanity and sanity. He's using magic to delay her metamorphosis.)

2. The Last Meeting

A special SCREWTAPE meeting materialises on the characters' Outlook calendars one morning, for 10AM sharp. The usual committee members are all mentioned, along with a special external guest – Major Eric Philips, a clerk of works from the Royal Engineers. The Major shows up in uniform, with his visitor's badge and ward pinned to the front. One of his arms is missing, with the empty sleeve neatly pinned to his shoulder. He's clearly been in the Laundry before, and doesn't even twitch when an RHR shambles past. He's even more clearly in a foul mood.

10AM rolls around, and there's no sign of Albert Kendal or Laurie Adams. The Major's moustache twitches with suppressed anger; Ann Taylor tut-tuts softly and makes a note about Kendal's tardiness. She asks the player characters if they object to her starting the meeting without Kendal. If the players agree, then Kendal never shows up; if they argue that they should wait for Kendal, then he finally shows up 45 minutes late, looking exhausted. (He was using his sorcerous powers to stop Adams' transformation.)

Whether or not the meeting's delayed, the Major raises the issue of 'Building 4', a topic that none of the player characters have a clue about; it's from before they joined the committee. Remember, SCREWTAPE's a high-velocity revolving door that's been running for decades. The minutes are buried so deep in the Stacks that even the zombies have trouble finding them. The Major's rant can be summarised as:

- Building 4 construction was due to start in 2009.



Major Eric Philips

- Building 4, to be clear, is part of a giant underground bunker capable of holding 10,000 people that's designed to be proof against rampaging elder gods. This isn't a bloody portable toilet they're talking about – it's a major engineering project. Rushing construction might be disastrous – one gap in the wards, and things might get in.
- They still haven't even secured all the needed property. The Compulsory Purchase Orders² need to be signed off by the SCREWTAPE committee.
- A company, CGH Holdings, just put in an offer for part of the site for Building 4. While the CPO can still go through, the CPO has to reflect current market value, which just went up by several million pounds. SCREWTAPE's delay has cost the British taxpayer a great deal of money.
- This is not Major Philips' fault, and he will make that damn clear to Whitehall.

If Kendal's present, then he seems too exhausted to argue, and merely mutters that he'll look into the matter and see what can be done. If he's not present, then Philip's wrath falls on the player characters, mainly because they're sitting across the table from him. The other committee members – Taylor, Kelly and Burley – stay quiet while the storm rages.

There isn't much for the player characters to do while the storm rages. They might fast-forward to **Internal Investigations** (page 92) even before the leak becomes public.



Auditor Curtis

²: A legal instrument by which the UK government can force a private individual or entity to sell a property to the state. The US equivalent is eminent domain.

3. The Leak

A few days after Philips raises a stink about CGH Holdings jacking up the price of the Building 4 site, one of the player characters gets woken up by someone knocking on their door at 6am. The thing on the doorstep isn't an eldritch horror, it's just a horror – she's Gail Pilchard, a freelance journalist. She wants a comment about Building 4. You know, the government project that's going to cost the taxpayer an estimated £70 million extra because of bureaucratic delays? Any comment, Mr Player Character?

While the PC tries to find synonyms for 'no comment', the Laundry's Media Relations department phones, warning (a little late) that there's been a leak. The press have gotten hold of an internal memo that talks about Building 4. The memo's so heavily redacted that it doesn't actually mention the Laundry or the purpose of Building 4, but it does mention several people by name, including the members of SCREWTAPE.

As soon as Media Relations hang up, the phone rings again. It's Internal Security. The Auditors want a word with all SCREWTAPE members. A car's on its way.

Pilchard continues to bombard the unlucky PC with questions – what is the purpose of Building 4? Who's responsible for the delays? Does the Home Secretary have any direct involvement in this project? If so, is he going to resign? – until the car arrives to whisk the PCs to the Laundry.

Internal Audit

The player characters are brought before Auditor Curtis as soon as they arrive. One by one, they troop into a nicely appointed conference room and stand on the golden sigil sewn on the carpet. There's a three-person board of inquiry, led by Auditor Curtis. (Any player characters who played through Secret Agendas in Black Bag Jobs may have already met and/or been inside the consciousness of Auditor Curtis, but she's not going to let that prejudice her findings.)

She asks the player characters if they leaked the document, as well as any awkward questions that you've been storing up from previous missions. She also asks if they've seen any lapses of judgement or signs of ill health on the part of Kendal.

- A successful Sorcery/Computer Use (Magic) or Science (Thaumaturgy) roll (or even Idea in a pinch) suggests that Curtis is double-checking the characters' loyalty geases. That's not part of the standard operating procedure for a Board of Inquiry – it takes serious magic to tamper with an Oath of Office.

SCREWTAPE 2

Later that day, the characters are summoned to another session of the SCREWTAPE committee. Kendal's not there, so it's chaired by Ann Taylor. She announces that Albert Kendal's on 'gardening leave', which is a euphemism for 'suspending pending an investigation'. She'll be taking over as chair of SCREWTAPE, and is looking forward to putting the current media problem behind them and getting those CPOs moving through the pipeline as soon as possible.

- Taylor's obviously pleased as punch to be the SCREWTAPE chair: she gets a bump in status, and can claim the credit for salvaging a damaged project if she succeeds, or blame everything on Kendal if it falls apart. It's win/win, or at least win/no-lose for her. That leak positions her perfectly to make the jump to upper management.
- With Kendal gone, Kelly considers himself the master sorcerer on the committee. He looks like he might leap on the table and start proclaiming the return of the Great Old Ones at any moment.
- Burley's looking pleased too. A successful Spot check, er, spots a brand-new JesusPhone in his pocket, which is a bit of a no-no inside the Laundry. You're not supposed to bring a network-enabled device in without IT vetting it first.
- Laurie Adams looks heart-broken and wretched, and utterly exhausted. She's got dirt under her fingernails, and her breath is rank.



At the meeting, Taylor asks the player characters to go to Kendal's home and make sure that he doesn't have any documents related to SCREWTAPE, so she can 'alpha progress the CPOs', whatever that means.

4. Long Service

Here's what happens on the last day of Albert Kendal's life. He has a bad, sleepless night. Exhausted, he goes to work, and reads the newspaper on the train into the office. Right there on the front page is a memo about his secret committee in a top-secret government agency, and that shakes him to his core. He's so discombobulated that the Auditors grow suspicious, and suspend him. He's sent home.

He takes a walk to a nearby graveyard. He goes to the post office and sends a parcel.

Then he explodes.

What's Really Going On: Kendal was up all night, engaged in a sorcerous struggle with the Elder Ghoul for the soul of Laurie Adams. In other circumstances, Kendal might get help from the Laundry, but he knows that if Laurie's ghoulish tendencies become a matter of official record, she'll be condemned to – literally – the lower levels of the organisation forever. The poor girl deserves something of a normal life, even in the Laundry. So, he fights his sorcerous battle alone.

He's blindsided by the leak of the SCREWTAPE memo by the Elder Ghoul, who obtained it from Adams.

When he returns home, he visits the graveyard and speaks to some of the local, friendlier ghouls, who warn him that the Elder Ghoul is coming to get him. Cut off from Laundry support because of his suspension, facing the end of his career over the leak, and just so very, very tired, Kendal realises that he's going to die soon. Rather than allow the Elder Ghoul to consume his flesh and, through it, his memories, he casts a spell of self-combustion to annihilate himself.

Before he does that, though, he sends his pocket-watch to one of the player characters via the post office.

Visiting Kendal

Kendal's mobile phone is switched off. His house has a landline, but it seems to be out of service if they try it.

If the player characters head to Kendal's home right after the SCREWTAPE meeting, then they get there just before he explodes.

Kendal lives alone in a little cottage in Crowhurst, in East Sussex. It would be a charming place, with ivy-covered walls and quirky little mismatched windows and a prize-winning collection of garden gnomes, if it wasn't exploding outwards in a titanic fireball. Chunks of roof and rafter and Kendal rain down on said garden gnomes, who scurry for cover. Call for Luck checks; anyone who fails takes 1d4 damage from flying glass.

A successful Idea roll suggests that it wasn't a conventional explosion – the cottage is thaumically hot, implying it was a spell or magical discharge of some sort.

In the Rubble

The PCs can either pick their way through the debris hastily before the emergency services arrive, or wait until after the Laundry baggers and cleaners have shown up and taken charge of the situation. As soon as it becomes clear that the sole victim of the gas leak was also the civil servant at the centre of the morning's memo leak fiasco, the press also descend on the sleepy little village of Crowhurst. ("Embattled Civil Servant Dies In Accident" says the following day's *Times*. "Crowhurst Inferno Linked To Building 4 Scandal" trumpets the *Grauniad*. "OUR Money to Burn", tries *The Sun*. The *Daily Mail*, with unwitting accuracy if not immediate relevance, goes with "Nazi Demon Maths Causes Brain Cancer".)

Examining the remains and asking around the village, the PCs can learn the following:

- This was definitely a suicide – or a magical accident. The blast is precisely focused on where Kendal was standing. His body was almost completely incinerated. It might have been his Oath of Office going nova, but the only way to get a reaction that big would be to sell out to the Space Nazis from Dimension X while casting a death spell at the Queen. More likely, he cast an old-school blast spell – was he aiming it at someone else, or did he mean to kill himself?
- The garden gnomes are actually golems – low-powered sentinels, animated by magic. They're divided into teams of three, composed of one gnome with a shovel, one gnome with a wheelbarrow and one gnome with a rune of death. It seems to be overkill for dealing with moles.
- Most of the papers in the house – most of the everything in the house – was destroyed in the blast. However, the characters find one folder that survived because of its magical wards. The folder came from the Laundry's stacks, and is classified under COFFIN DODGER.
- Asking around the village, the characters can reconstruct Kendal's last movements: his visit to the nearby graveyard, and his trip to the post office to send a package.

o A successful Track or Knowledge (Occult) roll finds traces of ghouls in the graveyard. There's one particular crypt that the tracks congregate around, but there aren't any ghouls there now. The characters could call in a favour from the Subterranean Operations Liaison section in Inhuman Resources (the ghoul wranglers), but even a specialised ghoul liaison is unable to rouse the locals. They've fled deep beneath the earth, possibly terrified by the magical explosion.

o The little old lady in the post office knew that poor Mr Kendal quite well. He was always so worried, poor dear, as if the weight of the world was on his shoulders. She knew he worked for the government, but had no idea he was so important. He posted a parcel just before the gas explosion. A successful Persuade or the flash of a warrant card gets the parcel; otherwise, the characters receive it the next morning.

The Parcel

Kendal's parcel drops through the letterbox of one of the PCs the next day (pick whichever PC had the closest relationship with Kendal). Inside is a silver pocket watch, awarded to Albert Kendal for 50 years long service in the Laundry. It still ticks away perfectly, although its dial bears baffling hieroglyphs and its four hands do not move in consonance with any time system known on this planet. Carrying the pocket watch gives a +5 bonus to Sorcery checks and increases the POW of any spells cast by +2.

The pocketwatch is entangled with Kendal's consciousness, and something of this entanglement persists after death. Using a Gravedust rig (page 94 of *The Laundry Core Rulebook*) on the watch unlocks a posthumous – or post-combustion – message from Albert Kendal. It's a jumble of images and thoughts:

- A strong desire to protect Laurie Adams, coupled with an underlying fear of her; image of Laurie ripping out Kendal's throat with her teeth.
- Image of a letter from CGH Holdings; anger and frustration.
- Image of a trove of gold coins, buried deep underground; fear.
- The image of a completed CPO form for the Building 4 site on the desk in Kendal's office; anger and mistrust.
- Kendal, many years ago, in a dark tunnel. His hands glow with magic. All around him is blood and gore; he slips and slides on viscera torn from the bloody corpses of his men. A dozen dead in this tunnel alone; the smell of blood, the staccato echo of distant machine gun fire. Short, controlled bursts. COFFIN DODGER.

Give the players an Idea roll, or have the bearer of the watch have a few dreams about Kendal³ if the players don't think of using Gravedust (or another thaumaturgical widget).

The Funeral

Albert Kendal had no surviving family, and no close friends outside of work. No one else from SCREWTAPE, not even Laurie Adams, attends the funeral, although several relatively senior Laundry officers do show up, in spirit if not in body.

After that, the matter rests. The evidence suggests that Kendal leaked the memo himself – possibly due to his advancing K-syndrome. No one else on the committee had the power to resist their Oath of Office, and the old necromancer's behaviour had certainly been erratic of late. With pressure from Whitehall to get moving on SCREWTAPE as quickly as possible, everyone just wants to put the whole regrettable incident behind them.

If anything more is to be done, it's up to the player characters.

5. Internal Investigations

This section covers multiple possible lines of inquiry for the player characters in the wake of Kendal's death. It's organised by subject: secret projects, members of the SCREWTAPE committee, other key Laundry personnel, hints from Kendal's watch; and then by the degree of ingenuity and investigation needed to uncover that information. Some things are common knowledge, others require a little digging, and still others are utterly secret. The PCs likely know any **Common Knowledge** already; asking the right questions of the right people or conducting a spot of research uncovers the information listed in the **Digging Deeper** section; the **Top Secret** material requires risky action to obtain (forcing people to talk, breaking into the archives, surveilling targets, sorcery or necromancy).

While we've provided some ways that the players might investigate these clues, this part of the scenario is likely to be relatively freeform.

As it's not an 'official' Laundry mission – at least, not at the start (see the **Proofs of a Conspiracy** sidebar) – you can again interweave this section with other missions.

There are two key mysteries to be disentangled. Firstly, there's Laurie Adams' secret that she's on the verge of transforming into a ghoul and is being manipulated by the Elder Ghoul. Secondly, there's Kelly and Burley's scheme to profit from the Compulsory Purchase Order for Building 4 in partnership with CGH holdings – and

Proofs of a Conspiracy

Once the PCs have some solid evidence that Kendal's death was more than an old man's suicide, they can approach Auditor Curtis and get official backing for their inquiries. As the whole SCREWTAPE affair brought the Laundry uncomfortably close to the public eye, she's willing to deputise the player characters to carry out an initial investigation before a second round of audits begin.

the Elder Ghoul's behind that too. Everything leads to a confrontation with the Elder Ghoul (see **London Underground**, page 98).

Albert Kendal

Recently Deceased Chair of SCREWTAPE

Playing Kendal: Well, he's dead and incinerated. I guess you could set yourself on fire, but that's a greater devotion to verisimilitude than we'd normally ask of a GM. Oh, you mean playing him *before* he's killed off? Weird creepy uncle, like we said earlier.

Common Knowledge: Kendal suffered from K-Syndrome, which likely affected his judgement. K-Syndrome's an illness that only afflicts sorcerers – at least, usually. It's a side effect of doing mental magic. If you let alien mental processes run on your brain's hardware, which is basically what spellcasting is, you don't always get that hardware back in one piece.

He was a great field operative in his day; he wasn't always mummified in an office. That's why he takes such an interest in younger officers like the PCs. He still craves the thrill of field operations.

Kendal was somehow involved with young Laurie Adams. He was more than her mentor; he seemed to take an almost paternal interest in her.

Digging Deeper: Kendal was involved in a classified operation called COFFIN DODGER (see page 96). Whatever COFFIN DODGER was, it went horribly wrong. There are some stories that it was a military operation on British soil, but that's just a rumour. The only people who know for sure are those with COFFIN DODGER clearance, and they're not talking. *Laundry gossip, digging into Kendal's background with Research.*

Top Secret: Kendal was engaged in a sorcerous battle with the Elder Ghoul for Laurie Adams' soul, or at least her humanity. He lost.

³: First person to make a Doctor Who pocket-watch reference automatically fails their next Luck roll.

Ann Taylor

Quality Assurance, New Chair of SCREWTAPE

Playing Taylor: Brusquely efficient, stopping a plonk length before actual rudeness. Time every conversation you have with the player characters – don't draw attention to it, but get out your phone or watch and track exactly how much of her valuable time is being wasted with irrelevant matters.

In Conversation: *"The whole matter with Albert Kendal was regrettable in the extreme, but let's face facts – the old man was dying anyway. It's time to move on."* Taylor has no interest in going over old ground. She believes that Kendal leaked the memo himself.

Common Knowledge: Since becoming SCREWTAPE chair, Taylor's put herself on the fast track to promotion. She leaves the everyday details of running the committee to Kelly and Burley; her career goal is clearly to get free of SCREWTAPE as soon as she can and move onto something more high-profile.

Digging Deeper: Taylor wrote the memo that got leaked to the press. She sent copies to Kendal, Major Philips and the Board after Philips raised a fuss. She was covering her own ass; she assumed that Kendal had signed off on the CPOs, and that lapse in double-checking could have ruined her own career too. *Checking internal Laundry records, or questioning Taylor.*

Top Secret: Zilch. Ann's exactly what she seems to be.

Lucien Kelly

Resident Dark Sorcerer

Playing Kelly: Kelly attempts to rebuff any inquiries by hinting about the vast cosmic battles that he must undertake on a daily basis to safeguard our reality. He hints that with Albert Kendal's passing, he alone must shoulder the dread burden of ensuring that the SCREWTAPE shelter is kept safe from extradimensional horrors.

In Conversation:

"Even now, in the labyrinthine recesses of my mind, I am drawing wards and pentacles of vast effulgence. Do not bother me with your petty concerns!"

Common Knowledge: Kelly might come across as a poseur, but underneath all the black fingernails and Crowley cosplay, he does know his stuff. He was a Plumber for a few years, and they don't tolerate mistakes. *Laundry gossip, Science (Thaumaturgy) or Research.*

Digging Deeper: Kelly recently acquired several expensive occult relics and curios: obscure tomes, items belonging to great sorcerers of the past, a painting by Osman Austin Spare. Where'd he get the cash? *Appraise or Art when visiting his home; Knowledge (Accounting) of Kelly's pay grade.*

He's also acquired (or reacquired, to be accurate) a cocaine habit. If the Laundry discovers this, he'll be given addiction treatment and counselling. *Investigating Kelly's off-duty activities; getting access to his medical records.*

Kelly recently wrote a paper, *Mathematical Modelling & Evocation of Jungian Archetypes with Regards to Compulsion Geas Enforcement in Human & Post-Human Subjects* that has the boffins down in Arcana Analysis very excited. Without getting too technical, it's about drawing on deep-seated archetypes in human consciousness and using them as a short-cut when designing geas spells, especially geas spells aimed at human subjects. It's a brilliant piece of work – far better than anything Kelly's produced before. *Laundry gossip, Science (Thaumaturgy) or Research.*

Top Secret: Kelly obtained the idea for his paper from the Elder Ghoul. He used it to tweak his and Burley's Oath of Office so they could make a deal with CGH Holdings. *Confronting Kelly about his cocaine use, his sudden wealth or breaking into his (warded) home and finding the original notes from the Elder Ghoul, written on yellowed paper and stained with grave dirt. Kelly was too egotistical to question where the notes came from – he assumed that he'd caused them to manifest through sheer sorcerous power.*

Kelly deliberately lost the CPO filed by Kendal. He changed the labels on it, so the Residual Human Resources took it away and filed it in the depths of the stacks. *Research and a lot of digging, or using sympathetic magic and a paperclip from Kendal's desk to track it down.*

See **Confrontations**, page 99, if the PCs confront Kelly about his meddling with the geas spells.



Lucien Kelly

Scott Burley

Construction Engineer, Department of Buildings & Works

Playing Burley: Use cluelessness as your shield. Pretend to be utterly ignorant of the workings of the Laundry and the occult. Mispronounce and misinterpret every occult reference. ("A Cluu-loo? Is that some sort of French lavatory?")

In Conversation: *"It's a shame about Mr. Kendal, isn't it? Still, work to be done, and we'd best get on with it. Sooner we get the diggers rolling, the sooner it'll all get finished."*

Common Knowledge: Burley got drafted into the Laundry when he accidentally dug into a buried 18th Century ornamental garden that doubled as a binding pentacle. One backhoe in the wrong place, and suddenly there was a pissed-off and confused ELMO TWO (aka Fire Vampire) trying desperately to cram its brain into the digger's wiring. Some draftees adapt better than others to their new life in the secret services; Burley's towards the bottom of the pack, and seems to deliberately avoid anything that smacks of the supernatural. It's a bit odd that he hangs around with Lucien Kelly so much.

Digging Deeper: Burley's amiable attitude is a false cover over a deep well of bitterness; get him talking, or drunk (or both) and it all comes pouring out. How he lost his well-paid job; how his wife left him because she couldn't handle the secrecy; how he hates having to swear magically potent oaths, and how forgetting his wallet one morning could get him eaten by fucking *zombies*. He really, really hates the Laundry. *Influence, Fast Talk, an evening's drinking down the Squid and Crown pub.*

Like Kelly, Burley recently came into some money, although he's a lot more circumspect about it. Getting access to his bank records (Computer Use (Hacking) or a use of Status to get the Laundry to get MI5 to do it) or spying on him reveals that he's getting regular payments of £10,000 per month.

Top Secret: Burley was approached by CGH Holdings, who suggested that if he could delay the Compulsory Purchase Order for the Building 4 site, they could buy it before the CPO went through. The government would have to pay more, and CGH would pay Burley for his efforts. When Burley pointed out that his Oath of Office precluded him to conspiring to defraud the British Government, CGH suggested he recruit his friend Kelly to tweak the Oath (and when Kelly was unable to get the spell right, the Elder Ghoul stepped in to provide the necessary magical guidance.)

See **Confrontations**, page 99, if the players tackle Burley directly.

Burley doesn't think he did anything wrong – the Laundry stole his life, so this is justified compensation. It's not like it hurts anyone, anyway – other than the government, and they waste far more money every day anyway.

Laurie Adams

Internal Logistics

Playing Adams: You're under a lot of stress – you're turning into a ghoul, for one thing. Even worse than becoming a corpse-eating post-human monster, though, is the prospect of becoming subservient to the thing that haunts your dreams – the Elder Ghoul. Hide this stress by being a little too nice and superficial. Smile. Be perky. Follow the PCs around like a puppy, hoping to pick up some tips that might help your application for field service. Field service just might get you killed before the transformation consumes you.

Every time she thinks about the Elder Ghoul, she can feel her ghoulish side growing more powerful. Her only solution is to *not* think about him. She doesn't know if that will help, but it's all she's got right now.

In Conversation: *"I don't want to talk about it."* Laurie's terrified of thinking too much about Albert Kendal. He was trying to protect her from the Elder Ghoul, so if she thinks about Kendal, she'll think about the Elder Ghoul. Her transformation seems to have stopped since Kendal's death.

Common Knowledge: Adams wants a transfer to field operations – presumably in a vain attempt to escape bureaucratic entanglements like SCREWTAPE. There's all sorts of salacious speculation in the cafeteria about her relationship with Albert Kendal. *Laundry gossip.*

She recently became a strict vegan, which is surprising – a month ago, she was taking about how she's really into BBQ.

Digging Deeper: Laurie Adams was recruited when she accidentally broke into a Laundry storage depot as part of an urban exploration expedition. She was nearly eaten by the RHR guardians; she escaped, and was inducted into the Laundry as a security precaution. *Getting hold of her file, or gaining her trust.*

That wasn't her first brush with the Laundry: she was one of a dozen children rescued as part of operation COFFIN DODGER, a classified military incursion into the tunnels under London. *Getting access to COFFIN DODGER, weakening Adams' loyalty geas so she can talk about it.*

She leaked the memo to Anthony Black; she claims that it was to embarrass the rest of the committee into actually getting the project started. *This is a lie, she was forced to leak*

it by the Elder Ghoul. The characters can convince her to reveal her involvement in leaking the memo by interrogating her, but she continues to conceal her ghoul nature for as long as possible.

Top Secret: Laurie is in danger of turning into a ghoul. She's avoiding the usual triggers – thaumic fields, eating dead flesh – but the Elder Ghoul can force her transformation through sorcery. The Ghoul can also read her mind when she sleeps. *Inferred from COFFIN DODGER notes or Albert Kendal's work.*

The Elder Ghoul forced her to leak the memo to Anthony Black.

Optionally, Laurie can use her link with the ghoul to find the lair of the Elder Ghoul. See **Confrontations**, page 99, for what happens if the PCs confront Laurie.

Major Eric Philips

Military Liaison

Playing Philips: Maintain a ramrod-straight posture. Be icily polite or else erupt with anger. Pull one arm inside your sleeve or make sure not to move it, to emphasise his missing arm.

In Conversation: *"You will forgive me if I don't shed a bloody tear for Kendal. I've known him a damn sight longer than you have, and I've seen sides to him that you haven't."* Philips just wants to get SCREWTAPE moving again. He doesn't know who leaked the memo, but wishes he did; it shook up the committee and got rid of Kendal. The leaker deserves to be bought a drink. Then court-martialed for leaking classified documents. Then another round of drinks.

Common Knowledge: Philips is ex-SAS. Wounded in action and offered an honourable discharge, but he stayed on instead in a desk job. As he'd worked with the Laundry

before and was cleared for occult weirdness, he's the go-to liaison for military operations that don't involve shooting shoggoths with LAW rockets.

Digging Deeper: Philips was wounded on a Laundry mission called COFFIN DODGER. *Research, questioning Philips, digging into the archives.*

He blames Kendal for his injury. *Insight tests.*

Top Secret: There's more to COFFIN DODGER than is in the original reports. There was something else down in the tunnels, a force behind the ordinary ghouls. He blames Kendal for not preparing the team better. *Gaining Philips' trust, reading between the lines of the COFFIN DODGER report.*

Building 4

The proposed site of a civil service shelter for CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. Building 4 (as well as Buildings 1, 2 and 3, the already-completed parts of the shelter) is in Wapping, in East London.

Common Knowledge: None. Building 4 is classified SCREWTAPE GREEN. If you do not have SCREWTAPE GREEN clearance, do not read this document.

Digging Deeper: Building 4's site is currently owned by CGH Holdings, who managed to rush the purchase through a few weeks ago. The Laundry can still use a Compulsory Purchase Order to obtain the site, but it'll be tied up in legal disputes for months and cost the government millions extra. *Research into SCREWTAPE minutes.*

Top Secret: Visiting the Building 4 site brings the characters into the lair of the Elder Ghoul (see page 102).

The Compulsory Purchase Orders

A legal tool enabling the government to take ownership of sites of national importance.

Common Knowledge: SCREWTAPE is authorised to request CPOs for sites that are especially suitable for shelters against CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN (deep caves, promising ley lines).

Digging Deeper: Searching through the records, a CPO for the site was indeed signed off on by Kendal weeks before his death. That CPO should then have gone to the Home Office, but never arrived there. It vanished into the Laundry's bureaucracy. *Research into the files.*

Top Secret: The CPO was deliberately destroyed by Lucien Kelly. *The CPO was kept in a warded folder, so destroying it without triggering magical retribution required considerable sorcerous talent.*

Ghouls in the Laundry

Ghouls (*Homo sapiens necrosis*) are humans suffering from a genetic mutation triggered by consumption of dead flesh. In rare cases – like Laurie Adams – the transformation can be triggered prematurely by exposure to thaumic fields.

Most ghouls retain little interest in their former lives. They retain their intelligence, but changes in brain chemistry mean their instincts and hungers are heightened and their desire (but not capacity) for abstract thought diminished. A few ghouls do work for the Laundry directly, in various low-level roles.

COFFIN DODGER

A classified Laundry operation.

Common Knowledge: COFFIN DODGER's an old mission – it goes back 20 or 30 years. It was, by all accounts, a clusterfuck. Multiple casualties, multiple careers ended.

Digging Deeper: In 1988, a renegade band of ghouls broke their treaty with the Laundry and broke through to the surface of London. They abducted a dozen children from a crèche and carried them down into the tunnels beneath the graveyards. The Laundry investigated the kidnappings, located the ghoul lair and deployed an SAS hostage rescue team to recover the stolen children. They encountered unexpectedly heavy resistance in the tunnels, and were forced to respond with lethal force. Casualties were considerable on both sides, and several of the hostages were killed by ghouls before the SAS team could extract them. Questions were asked at a secret session of the Home Affairs Select Committee. *Access to the official COFFIN DODGER report.*

Albert Kendal and Eric Philips were both part of the COFFIN DODGER team. *Cross-referencing service records with the dates of COFFIN DODGER; questioning Philips.*

Top Secret: There are hints that there was something else behind the ghouls. *Close analysis of the COFFIN DODGER report with Strategy.*

Follow-ups on COFFIN DODGER were quietly suppressed to avoid a war with the ghouls, the effective nullification of the safeguards in the Monster Control Act, and the inevitable revelation of the existence of a tribe of cannibal post-human immortal monsters. *Speaking with a political ally or mentor.*

Laurie Adams was one of the children abducted by the ghouls. *Cross-referencing the redacted details on the hostages with Adams' personal records.*

The purpose of COFFIN DODGER, from the ghoul's perspective, was to assimilate knowledge of the surface. The Elder Ghoul is immensely powerful, but clueless about the modern world, and he decided he couldn't wait for a Pickman-esque intermediary to show up naturally. He needed information, and decided that planting the seeds of ghoullism in some mortal children was the way to go – these children would grow up on the surface, then come down to him. *Speaking to the ghouls, Cthulhu Mythos test.*

CGH Holdings

The property company that sniped the Building 4 site from under the Laundry's nose. They purchase sites in London for later sale to other companies (or, if the CPO order goes through, the government). The manager of CGH Holdings swanky ultramodern London office is Julie Zhao.

Common Knowledge: CGH Holdings has been around for a while; you can see their fingerprints on many transactions and property deals in London over the last few years.

There were rumours in the financial papers a few years ago that CGH had overextended itself, and was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Digging Deeper: CGH obtained a new source of funding from a mysterious, anonymous investor. This same investor suggested buying the Building 4 site. *Hacking or otherwise obtaining CGH Records; zapping Julie Zhao with a warrant card.*

Julie Zhao regularly visits antique dealers and auction houses; she's selling a cache of gold coins and other treasures. Checking these suggests that she's falsified purchase records, suggesting that these coins are buried treasure that should have been reported to the local Coroner and offered to museums for purchase instead. *Following Zhao.*

Top Secret: Zhao obtained the coins from her new investor. She doesn't know who or what he is, but knows where he can be found. Following her directions brings the characters to the ghoul warren near Building 4 (**The Lair of the Elder Ghoul**, page 102).

CGH are paying Scott Burley and Lucien Kelly. *Tracing payments in their accounts, or confronting them directly.*

The Leaked Memo

A report on the slowness of the SCREWTAPE process,

Common Knowledge: A heavily redacted version of this memo was leaked to the press. The Laundry's never, ever supposed to come that close to the public eye. Heads will roll – literally, if the Black Assizes gets in on the action. They've got a magic guillotine that was smuggled out of Paris in 1940 that they really want to play with.

Digging Deeper: The memo was written by Ann Taylor, and CC'ed to the chair of SCREWTAPE (at the time, Kendal) and Major Eric Philips, as well as their superiors and the Laundry's Board. The memo mentions, but was not sent, to Lucien Kelly, Scott Burley, Laurie Adams and the player characters. *Bureaucracy to find the original memo with.*

The copy of the memo leaked was the one that was sent to Albert Kendal. *Bureaucracy; or failing to find a copy of the memo in the ruins of Kendal's home.*

The redactions were carried out hastily. Someone got a copy of the memo and a big fat black felt-tip pen, then drew thick black bars across certain lines, erasing all mention of the supernatural, CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN and the ultimate purpose of Building 4. This copy was then copied again and leaked to Anthony Black. *Computer analysis of the leaked memo.*

The memo carried a basic Laundry 'read this without permission and your brain fries, oh and it'll also void your photocopier's warranty' security geas, but it was removed. That takes a modicum of sorcerous skill.

Top Secret: The memo was leaked by Laurie Adams at the instigation of the Elder Ghoul. She did it while in a ghoulish trance, and has only fragmented memories of the incident.

Anthony Black

Freelance Journalist

In Conversation: Black's immensely pleased with himself when encountered by the player characters – the Building 4 scoop acquired legs when Kendal incinerated himself in Crowhurst, so he's got plenty of material to write about. If contacted by the player characters, he assumes they're low-level government drones trying to save their own careers.

Black won't reveal his sources unless the characters threaten him or pull a warrant card, either of which would endanger their Status in the Laundry.

Common Knowledge: His particular speciality is government gossip and scandals; he can write intelligently on spending cuts for the broadsheets, or turn his hand to three-in-a-bed cocaine sex romps for the tabloids. In his younger days, he also did some writing for conspiracy/weirdness magazines and websites like the *Fortean Times* and *Bizarre*, but he's tried to cover that up as his career trended towards the respectable.

Digging Deeper: Black met with Laurie Adams at a cheap restaurant near his flat in Clapham, and she gave him the memo. He assumed she was having a nervous breakdown – she was acting very strangely – but he suppressed his conscience with a bottle of the house Merlot and took the memo anyway. After checking it out to confirm it was genuine, he wrote the article that killed Albert Kendal's career, and soon afterwards also killed Albert Kendal. *Threatening or geasing Black, checking security cameras; asking around; dumpster diving for the restaurant receipt.*

Adams ordered a rare steak, and seemed to be acting strangely. *Interviewing Black; talking to restaurant staff.*

Top Secret: If Black is given any reason to suspect that the player characters are part of a top-secret branch of the British government dedicated to protecting humanity from eldritch alien brain-eaters from beyond space and time, he'll start investigating them. He might trail the investigators home, or to the Laundry, or show up when they visit Building 4. The PCs may need to arrange for Black to be visited by a Plumber, or even recruited into the Laundry.

Ghoul Attack!

If you ever need to raise the stakes by throwing in an action scene, have a bunch of ghouls stalk the PCs, and attack when the opportunity arises. The ghouls disguise themselves in stolen clothes and only come above-ground during the night. They're armed with teeth and claw, although the smarter ones carry cricket bats, tire-irons and other bludgeons to disguise the injuries.

Ghouls with an INT of 12+ may know a few spells like *Defensive Bindings*, *Wards*, *Exorcism* or *Entropy Manipulation*.

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	HP
#1	18	14	16	8	10	11	15
#2	17	13	15	10	14	12	14
#3	16	11	12	11	12	14	12
#4	15	15	13	12	10	12	14
#5	15	12	8	15	13	10	10
#6	17	12	11	14	16	17	12

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Claws x2 30%, damage 1d6+1d4
Bite 30%, damage 1d6+automatic worry next round if it hits with bite and two claws
Club 40%, damage 1d6+1d4+1

Armour: Firearms do half damage, rounded up.

Skills: Disguise 40%, Stealth 70%, Sorcery INT X5%

6. London Underground

COFFIN DODGER and other references to ghouls may warrant a trip downstairs. The Laundry maintains cordial relations with the ghoul tribes under London. The Monster Control Act of 1864 recognises ghouls as something almost human, and so almost deserving of the protection of the law. The Laundry permits the ghouls to dwell safely in a tunnel network deep below London, provides them with trinkets and a supply of food, and ensures they don't bother the neighbours on the surface. Try to stay away from terms like 'reservation' or 'enclave'; the preferred phrase is 'ghouldom'. The Laundry permits the occasional trip to the surface – your modern ghoul is as fascinated by ShinyPhones and *Heat* magazine as they are by delicious rotting corpses and yummy brains – as long as the ghouldom residents don't scare the humans. In exchange, the ghouls assist the Laundry from time to time, passing on ancient lore or guiding Laundry expeditions underground.

Should the characters wish to question the ghouls, the first thing to do is call in a favour from the Subterranean Operations Liaison of Inhuman Resources (if they mention such a plan in front of Laurie Adams, then she points out that she knows the guys over in 'SubHumans', and that she can arrange a visit to ghouldom – allowing you to have the Elder Ghoul ambush the PCs while they're underground). A trip underground means putting on heavy orange overalls, safety helmets and breathing masks, and carrying a backpack full of carefully wrapped hunks of mystery meat, as well as a handgun. The Liaison offers warn that discharging the handgun isn't permitted, except in dire emergency. It's there as a show of force, to remind the ghouls to suppress their natural hunger for human flesh. The ghouls are doing the PCs a favour by *not* eating them, and the PCs should respect that courtesy.

Then it's off and *down*, through London's tunnel strata. Down to City Road tube station (officially shut down in 1922, but the elevator still works...), and then down a spiral of cable tunnels, into the city's intestines. Victorian brickwork gives way to concrete, and then to natural tunnels carved by water (or inhuman hands) in the soft chalky soil.

Meeting the Ghouls

The ghouls – loathsome and meeping, rangy grey-green shapes slipping out of the darkness of the deeper passageways – cluster thickly around the PCs and the SubHuman liaisons. They laugh and whisper to one another, and take joy in reaching out from the darkness to fondle or pinch the visitors. After a few minutes, they lead the PCs to a huge cavern deep under London, a cave so large that you could fit St Paul's Cathedral in here and still have room to spare. An older ghoul wearing a tattered judge's wig waits there. She calls herself Mother Hubbard, and speaks for the ghouls.

Playing Mother Hubbard:

- Imagine your grandmother perching on a tombstone while gnawing on a shinbone, but don't change anything else.
- She was around in the 1860s, when there was a secret war between the surface folk and the ghouls, and she has a healthy respect for guns.

To get anything useful out of the ghouls, the characters need to either persuade them to talk through intimidation, or offer them something they want (more access to the surface, more food or a place to hide from CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN).

Questioning the old ghoul reveals the following:

- Her tribe takes no responsibility for the events of the COFFIN DODGER incident. All the blame for that can be laid at the hooves of the Elder Ghoul.
- The Elder Ghoul is a newcomer to London, but he's ancient even by ghoul standards – he ate the bitumen-infused flesh of mummified corpses buried in Memphis and Tyre), and has hidden from the sun for more than three thousand years. He doesn't care about the Monster Control Act, or the strength of the surface people. He's a great and terrible sorcerer.
 - o Any PC with knowledge of Sorcery knows that there are some inhuman spellcasters whose thaumaturgical powers rival those of the Laundry. If the Elder Ghoul is that old and powerful, then a direct confrontation may be extremely dangerous.



- Some of her people went to follow the Elder Ghoul, but returned to Mother Hubbard after the COFFIN DODGER debacle.
 - If Laurie Adams is present, or if one of the PCs shows Hubbard a picture of her, then the ghoul crows and says that she's 'gravebound' and will soon join them under the earth.
- The Elder Ghoul made a prophecy – there will be seven fat years, followed by seventy lean years, as the stars come right. He warned that there would be no corpses for the ghouls to eat in those lean years, because 'them from beyond' would ride the corpses and make them walk out of the grave.
 - It's clear to the PCs that he's talking about CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN; if exonomes animate any available human corpses as zombies, then there'll be nothing for the ghouls to eat.
- She's heard that the Elder Ghoul makes his lair near Wapping, but she also knows that some of his followers took a perilous trip to the surface a few days ago, disguising themselves as surface folk and riding the trains to the village of Crowhurst.
 - The ghouls will guide the player characters there in exchange for a really big favour – bringing them to the **Lair of the Elder Ghoul** (page 102).

7. Confrontations

Three individuals on the SCREWTAPE committee are guilty of breaking their oaths. Kelly and Burley both conspired with CGH Holdings to defraud the Laundry out of millions; Laurie Adams is under the influence of the Elder Ghoul. Once the players discover the clues pointing at these three, they must choose how to confront them. Do they speak to the implicated individuals directly, or follow the dictates of the civil service handbook dictates and hand the matter over to Internal Affairs?

Internal Affairs

If the PCs call in a favour from Internal Affairs using Status, then they can get access to whatever IA uncovers in the course of the investigation. If they just let IA know about the security breach without pulling some strings, then the suspects vanish, never to be seen again – which may mean that the PCs lose a lead pointing at the Elder Ghoul.

Laurie Adams: Bringing the hammer of Internal Affairs down on Laurie is a bad idea. The stress triggers her transformation into a ghoul, and she goes berserk inside the interview room. She kills three Internal Affairs officers and a junior clerk who happens to get in the way before security terminate her. The player characters get called before the Auditors for their part in this debacle.

- Internal Affairs do discover (in a post-mortem) that Laurie had already begun her transformation into a ghoul, and that it was being delayed by some external force, presumably Kendal's magic.
- Surveillance recordings of her rampage show she was ranting about the "Elder Ghoul" as she murdered her fellow officers.

Lucien Kelly: Kelly suspected that Internal Affairs might stick their noses in as soon as he started meddling with the loyalty geases, so he's ready for them. He's got a Prognostication spell running on his home computer, focused on answering the question "what's the best time to flee to Kenya before Internal Affairs arrest me and drag me before the Black Assizes?" Prognostication's usually unreliable, but Kelly gets lucky. He shows up at a player character's home to take revenge before heading for Heathrow. If the character survives Kelly's sorcerous attack (see below) then they may be sent overseas to Kenya to hunt Kelly down; if they manage to take Kelly down before he can escape, then Internal Affairs show up with an Auditor.

- The Auditor dissects Kelly's mind. A sliver of it shows up on a PC's desk in a brown envelope – the memory of him finding the scroll that inspired his recent paper.

Scott Burley: Dropping Internal Affairs on Burley works. He doesn't have the sorcerous talent or strength of will to prevaricate or hide anything, so they go through him like DEEP SEVEN through butter. He admits that he was offered a bribe from CGH Holdings, that he brought Lucien Kelly in to weaken his loyalty geas so he could both earn and take the bribe, that he has no loyalty to the Laundry that wasn't forced on him by magic, and that given half a chance he'd sell the lot of you bastards to the private sector, or the Great Old Ones, whichever comes first.

- Internal Affairs passes on everything they find out – the link to CGH Holdings, Kelly's involvement, the meddling with the memo.



Laurie Adams the Ghoul

STR 18 CON 12 SIZ 10 INT 16 POW 12
DEX 16 CHA 13 EDU 17 SAN 30 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Claw x2 50%, damage 1d6+1d4
Bite 50%, damage 1d6+automatic worry

Items: Warrant Card, Class II Ward.

Armour: Firearms do half damage.

Lucien Kelly, Wannabe Dark Lord

STR 8 CON 8 SIZ 16 INT 16 POW 15
DEX 11 CHA 9 EDU 18 SAN 25 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Black-market Hand of Glory Class III 60%, damage 3d6+4

Items: Warrant Card, Class II Ward, Talisman of Gnash-Teth (Defensive Bindings vs Bullets & Spells, Level 2), Curse-Ring of Blindness (Level 4 Curse, blinds first character to attack him, blindness removed with Exorcism).

Skills: Appraise 40%, Fast Talk 40%, Knowledge (Occult) 70%, Sorcery 70%.

Direct Intervention

Laurie Adams: Confronting Adams starts to trigger her transformation into a ghoul. The PCs can avert this with a hasty geas (Level Three at least) or with a successful Persuade test. If she does transform, use her ghoul stats (see sidebar). If the PCs stay the grotesque mutation, then she warns them that HE (the Elder Ghoul) can sense her, and HE's stopping her from talking. The PCs must find a way to block the Elder Ghoul's influence; Entropy Manipulation, putting her inside a ward, finding a strong thaumic field, or just getting high off the ground all work. Throw in a ghoul attack to add action if you wish.

Given temporary relief from the influence of the Elder Ghoul, Adams reveals everything she knows – her impending transformation, Kendal's attempts to help her and the threat of the Elder Ghoul. She doesn't know about the connection between the Elder Ghoul and CGH Holdings; she assumed that he made her leak the memo to destroy Kendal, and that she's what the ghoul is after. She hasn't realised that Building 4 is the real target.

Lucien Kelly: The best place to confront Kelly in private is at his home; he'll dodge any attempts at interrogation inside the Laundry. And when the PCs finally do track him down, they've got a problem.

What do you do if you're an ambitious sorcerer who's suddenly got access to a lot of money *and* the Laundry's archives? Ebay! Kelly's picked up several tomes and relics that have boosted his sorcerous ability (see sidebar). When challenged, Kelly attempts to get one of the PCs alone, then opens up with magical attacks and summonings. He'll then flee to Heathrow airport and escape to Kenya, cackling like the evil necromancer he desperately wants to be.

Alternatively, if you wish to raise the tension, then Kelly might work out that the player characters are about to uncover his treachery, and ambush them before they can bring his malfeasance to the attention of the Laundry.

Scott Burley: Burley denies taking bribes, even as he hurries to get into his brand-new car to drive to his brand-new house with his brand-new girlfriend; if the PCs push him, he panics and runs into his own loyalty geas. Kelly's modifications to the geas means that Burley doesn't spontaneously combust, but he does topple over with steam curling from his ears. It's clear that Burley's involved in wrong-doing, but it's even more clear that he's not the mastermind.

His phone has several calls from Julie Zhao at CGH Holdings, some of which predate the purchase of the Building 4 site.

8. Building 4

Soon, very soon, the stars will come right. The walls of reality will melt, unable to bear the cosmological pressure exerted on them from beyond, and things will seep through into our dimension. Our Earth will intersect with alien worlds and conditions that are literally unimaginable by human minds. It's going to be hellish. The lucky ones will be those who perish in the initial upheavals and chaos, because if you're still alive when the Great Old Ones show up, there's every chance... well, there are fates much worse than death, and all are one in Yog-Sothoth.

Or, maybe you'll ride out the storm in one of the government shelters. Her Majesty's Government isn't going to let a piddling little apocalypse get in the way of the business of government. Buildings 1-3 are already half-

built (they will be, respectively, a deeply buried command centre, infrastructure for power generation and waste recycling, and a giant ward generator, although right now they're just mazes of bare concrete and rebar). Building 4 will be the big housing centre, where thousands of vitally important civil servants will attend to the running of whatever's left of the nation.

Building 4—or, rather, the present site of what will be Building 4—is a series of dilapidated warehouses and old factories, built before the UK economy decided that producing things was passé. It's mostly abandoned; investigating it, the PCs pick their way through the ruins and find...

Well, how far are you in this adventure? Do the players know about the Elder Ghoul and what's really going on, or are they just checking out Building 4 early in the adventure? Timing dictates the sort of clues they find.

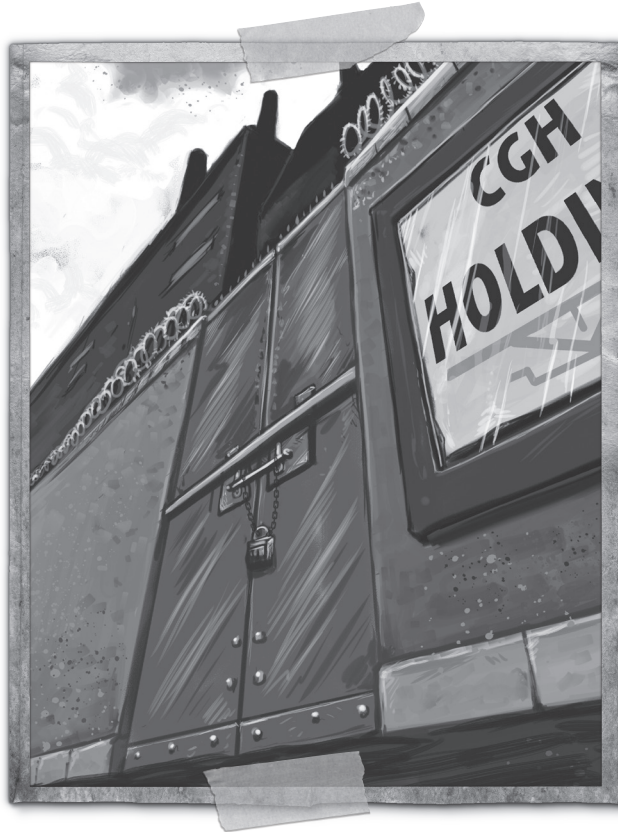
Early

Give the characters a clue that hints at the involvement of CGH Holdings and the Elder Ghoul, like:

- A discarded, dirty sports bag that contains several hundred gold coins dating back to the 11th Century—a fortune worth at least half a million pounds in today's money. A crumpled credit card receipt in a pocket of the bag identifies its original owner as Billy Conroy, who vanished six years ago. The Elder Ghoul left this money here for Julie Zhao from CGH Holdings to collect.
- Julie Zhao and a survey team from CGH Holdings, looking around their new purchase. An Insight test suggests that the survey team are confused as to why CGH would want to own a pile of overpriced ruined warehouses; Zhao looks wary but excited.
- A pile of well-chewed bones; a Medicine test confirms they're human remains.
- The sound of scratching, or maybe digging, from somewhere far far below.

Late

Everything looks pretty much the same as before—but there's something wrong. Something just beyond the edge of perception. With a suitable spell (*Exorcism*, *Sorcery*), the characters discover a hole in the floor that's been glamourised against detection. Normal people can't see that hole, and the characters were only able to detect it because of their experience with sorcery in the Laundry.



Examining the glamour runes scratched into the concrete with Science (Thaumaturgy), Sorcery or Knowledge (Occult) confirms that the glamour isn't finished yet—it's already up to Level 3, but by the time it's finished, it'll be a strong and permanent Level 4. No one will be able to see that hole, not even a Deeply Scary Sorcerer or other high-ranking Laundry officer. They'll build Building 4 around that tunnel entrance without noticing it—everyone will just ignore it, even as they dig around it and unconsciously change the plans of the shelter to avoid that concrete tapeworm.

What do the characters do?

- **Investigate the tunnel entrance:** Brave souls! Draw them in by hinting that there are more runes of concealment and glamour drawn deeper inside the tunnel. The tunnel leads to Scene 8, the Lair of the Elder Ghoul.
- **Destroy the Glamour:** Tampering with the glamour draws the attention of the Elder Ghoul. Run Scene 8, but instead of the PCs running around the ghoul lair, they're running around the ruined warehouses, trying to find their way back to the safe streets of London.
- **Call it in:** Call for a Status test on the part of the character taking the lead on this. If successful, the warning is taken seriously, and the Laundry dispatch an OCCULUS control team to investigate this potential threat to their ultimate bolthole. You can run with the **Call Them In** option, below, but the ultimate responsibility is out of the player characters' hands.

- **Call Them In:** Having learned the lesson of COFFIN DODGER, the PCs call in a bunch of SAS Toshers to go into the noisome hole on their behalf. Break out the military PCs. Then take the gloves off the ghouls and go nuts when they're actually in the tunnels.
- **Fill the hole with concrete:** Well, there is construction equipment down the street. You can thwart this by having the Elder Ghoul pop out half-way through, or let it go ahead – only the player characters can't find the hole when they return after concreting it over. Is Building 4 safe, or are there invisible ghouls scraping their way towards the meat...?
- **Cancel SCREWTAPE:** This is what a Sir Humphrey would call a very courageous decision. "Cancelling the British government's refuge from cosmic horrors on the grounds that its security cannot be guaranteed? Trusting to the pluck and ingenuity of the Laundry to save the world when the stars come right instead? Very courageous, sir. A morally upstanding decision." Tell the players that they just saved thousands of people from a horrible fate. Describe how the ghouls intended to treat SCREWTAPE like a giant larder, creeping in to devour unfortunate victims every night over the long years of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. Describe how awful it would be to be trapped in the dormitories of Building 4, listening to the ghouls padding past your door, wondering if this is the time that they'll burst in and eat you, or if it'll be your neighbour who gets gobbled up instead.

Then hit them with a d10% drop in Status, because doing the right thing doesn't always get rewarded.

- **Something else, probably involving plastic explosive or basilisk guns:** Like "I wire two GoPro cameras together, upload SCORPION STATE firmware, and then strap them to my Parrot drone and fly it into the tunnel mouth." Ten points for creativity, five bonus points for brand awareness, but minus several million for deploying a WMD in the middle of London.

Second Time Around

Players are often loathe to retread over old ground; once they've visited a location or talked to an NPC, they rarely return. Draw their attention back to Building 4 if necessary with some event – the mysterious death of some vagrant at the hands of the ghouls, Laurie Adams having a breakdown and being summoned by the Elder Ghoul, dreams from Kendal's pocket watch, or just an Idea roll to check out the building site again now that CGH Holdings have had access to it for a while.

8. Lair of the Elder Ghoul

Down. Down and down and down and down. The tunnel from Building 4 drops like a disembowelled intestine, twisting and slipping down through all of the city's previous incarnations, through the graves of older Londons and older civilisations, past the tunnels and tubes and sewers, burrowing down into the chalky stone below. It ends in another, older tunnel network, one that predates human habitation of these islands. Carvings and images on the walls resemble cave paintings, but show modern-day objects like cars and buildings. There's no light other than any sources the characters bring with them, and the stench is enough to force everyone to make CON rolls or start gagging.

There are ghouls here. Lots of ghouls. Initially, they scurry away when the player characters approach – all the characters hear is scuttling and scraping and the occasionally eerie gurgling laughter from somewhere nearby – but as the intruders get into the deeper tunnels, the ghouls grow bolder. They're not hostile, at least not yet. They just stare at the intruders with yellow-glowing eyes, peer at them through broken spectacles or Victorian opera-glasses or shattered night-vision goggles looted from some previous incursion into their kingdom. They paw and poke at the player characters, as if checking to see how fat they are. (It's a Difficult Stealth test to get in here without being seen – the agents are on the ghoul's home turf here. Magic, like an invisibility spell or Hand of Glory, will put the test difficulty back to Average).

Then the tunnel opens into a larger chamber. There's a building here, of sorts, made of thousands of stolen gravestones piled on one another. The door into the building is nine feet tall, and cloaked by a leathery curtain that jangles with piercings – it's made from flayed human flesh. SAN Loss for the entire experience is 1/1d8.

The curtain's drawn back, and the Elder Ghoul emerges, ducking to fit under its door.

'Normal' ghouls could pass for human in a dingy nightclub or at a distance. Sharper teeth, more canine features, rubbery skin, but something of their former humanity remains. The Elder Ghoul has left all that behind. He stands more than ten feet tall, his scales are grey-black and swallow all the light that falls on them. His head reminds the PCs instantly of images of Anubis, the Egyptian god of the dead, and they know instinctively that those long-dead sculptors and painters used this very creature as their model.

Black eyes glitter with intelligence older than the cities.

What do the player characters do?

The Elder Ghoul**Playing the Elder Ghoul**

- You're older than civilisation. Demand respect. Be a king.
- You can smell sorcery, and you know that none of these mortals before you have any real power - but you've learned, through bitter experience, that their toys and trinkets can be surprisingly efficacious. Be wary of technology you don't understand.
- Search for words. Mutter to yourself in unknown languages every so often, and drop thees and thous into your speech.

Negotiation

The players might not realise it, but they're actually in a good position here. For all his power, the Elder Ghoul can't take on the whole Laundry; he can do damage to the organisation, but it'll cost him his immortal life. The PCs have blown his scheme to burrow into the Building 4 shelter and eat the CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN refugees when they're vulnerable, and he doesn't have the strength for a direct confrontation.

He can probably kill the player characters, but he has to suspect that the rest of the Laundry knows about his plan. So, the Elder Ghoul's looking for two things in any negotiation, and the second thing's predicated on the first:

1) Confirmation that the player characters have informed the rest of the Laundry about their discovery of his plan. This proof is right in front of him if the PCs have already called in the SAS, or if they were able to report home between finding the tunnel entrance at Building 4 and entering his lair. Otherwise, he asks them obliquely:

- *Hast thou come alone to my palace? Do thy masters know you have strayed?*
- *Do the Unseen Masters speak through you, or are you here on your own recognisance?*

2a) Once he has this confirmation, he looks for a way out that allows him to save face, anything that lets him maintain his authority over the ghouls and claim some sort of victory. An Insight roll suggests what he's looking for. The characters could offer:

- A partnership between the ghouls and the Laundry in the run-up to CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. Ghouls are instinctively short-sighted; they see the upcoming apocalypse as an all-you-can-eat buffet of carrion, which is only true in the short term. Yes, billions will die, but that's only for starters. When the Great Old Ones come back, they'll wreak as much horror on humanity's cousins as they will on base humanity. The ghouls are just as screwed. Maybe by working together, the combination of the Elder Ghoul's ancient sorcery and the Laundry's computational demonology can cobble together a better solution. As for the ghouls' hungers, that's an issue for Catering.
- COFFIN DODGER's purpose was to give the Elder Ghoul a bridge to understanding the modern world. The PCs could convince Laurie Adams to embrace her ghoul nature and be that bridge. She'd be giving up her humanity, but not her place in the Laundry (at least, not if the PCs fight for her.)
- Recognition - right now, the Laundry deals primarily with Mother Hubbard's ghoul kingdom, and the Elder Ghoul got the business end of an L85 in his face last time he poked his snout above ground. If the Laundry were to stop taking sides in ghouldom, he could make his play to rule the underworld under London.

Running Away

A very, very good idea. The Elder Ghoul's too big to fit through most tunnels, although he is terrifyingly agile and lithe for such an ancient thing. To escape, the PCs need to survive two rounds of attacks from the Elder Ghoul, make their way back up through the tunnels (they do have a way of finding the route back, right? They're not relying on Navigation tests, made *Difficult* by the darkness and the

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

hordes of angry ghouls?) and then dodge the Elder Ghoul *again* when he bursts out of the tunnel just behind them, having taken a different route to the surface.

On the bright side, on the surface the PCs can get phone reception, so they can have conversations like this:

PC: HELP I'M BEING CHASED BY GHOULS AND-

Laundry: You've reached Capital Laundry Services automated switchboard. To order a cleaner-

PC: Need extraction, tactical support, sodding big lads with machine guns -

Laundry: Press one. To report a horrible mess, press two. For billing services, press three.

PC: And they're going to eat us all! SCREWTAPE! They got Kendal, and-

Laundry: To invoke the Pentacle of Naash-Taar, press four. For dry cleaning, press five. If you are trying to reach a particular department and know their extension code,

PC: Yes! Get me Bob Howard! Or Andy-

Laundry: Press six followed by that four-digit code. To speak to a *snigger* live person, or if you're calling from another dimension or using a rotary phone, please stay on the line.

PC: Glargh my liver is being eaten. Am being dragged away towards the tunnel...

Adams & the Ghoul

If the players brought Laurie Adams with them, then the Elder Ghoul can trigger her transformation with a touch. Use this to either raise the stakes (the Elder Ghoul transforms Laurie to put pressure on the PCs) or to give the characters a way out (Laurie goes berserk and attacks the Elder Ghoul, giving the PCs a chance to flee).



Fighting the Elder Ghoul

The Elder Ghoul is immensely tough and powerful – would you like your tank ripped to scrap by its claws, or fried by its sorcery? Unless the player characters have some big-damage weapons like a Basilisk Gun to hand, fighting the Elder Ghoul is a very risky proposition. There's also the issue of hundreds of ordinary ghouls who'll join in the scrap. The best approach is to take out the Elder Ghoul and run like hell – killing the boss monster means most of the other ghouls flee in terror.

If the players have switched out their regular characters for a spec ops team, then it's time to break out the heavy weapons and Aliens quotes.

The Elder Ghoul

STR 30 **CON** 20 **SIZ** 24 **INT** 20 **POW** 24
DEX 16 **CHA** 18 **EDU** 20 **SAN** 0 **HP** 22

Damage Bonus: +2d6

Weapons: Claw x2 70%, damage 2d6+db
Bite 80%, damage 2d6+automatic worry

Armour: Firearms do half damage

Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 50%, Grapple 80%, Knowledge (History) 90%, Knowledge (Occult) 90%, Sorcery 90%.

9. Aftermath

So, once the dust settles on Building 4, what's going to happen at the next SCREWTAPE meeting? What have the PCs discovered and achieved? What compromises have been made? Specific questions to be answered:

- Is the Building 4 project going ahead? If so, have the PCs ensured that everyone in the shelter won't be eaten by ghouls at some point in the future?
- Are Lucien Kelly and Scott Burley still in good standing with the Laundry, or has their treachery been exposed?
- Is Laurie Adams still human? If so, for how long?
- What's the state of ghouldom in London? Is the Elder Ghoul running things, or Mother Hubbard, or is there a ghoul war that's threatening to spill over onto the surface? Is the Laundry involved?
- Most importantly of all, have the players managed to protect their own Status scores?



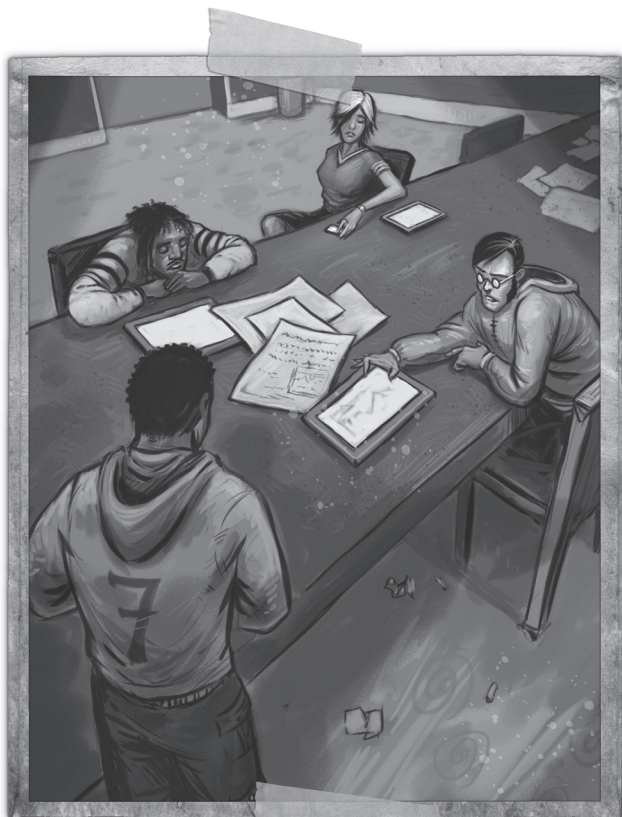
Fire Drill

This is an unusual Laundry Files adventure. Instead of presenting a series of unfortunate and squamous events for Laundry agents to enjoy and perhaps survive (or vice versa), you'll find a series of unfortunate and occasionally fiery NPCs, locations, and organisations all tied together in one of several plots.

Several? Yes. These people and groups come in three flavours, and both the GM and players decide which flavours to use while running through the adventure. Remember those old "Choose Your Own Adventure" books where your decisions affected the story, and you could read it several times with different results? That's what this adventure does. You'll make decisions on which version of the NPCs and organisations to use, which can take the adventure in very different directions. There's even three different climaxes, from preventing the deaths of several thousand people to saving the Earth.

Mission Overview

About two years ago, the Laundry investigated a rash of spontaneous human combustions (SHCs) in Pavlodar, Kazakhstan. After discovering a possible connection to a spaceflight firm, DKX Systems, the Laundry sent one of their agents, Steven Barrow, to infiltrate the company and investigate.



Four months ago, the Laundry lost all contact with Barrow. He missed two scheduled check-ins – was he under surveillance? Dead? Turned? Then, a week ago, he showed up on the dashboard camera of a vehicle carrying a British civil servant on a trade delegation. In the video, he appears homeless and deranged, but the Laundry speculated that Barrow wanted to be caught on a camera in hopes of getting a message home.

Between not leaving an agent behind and worrying if Barrow had joined the Thirteenth Directorate (or something worse), the Laundry is sending a team into Pavlodar to find out what's going on with Barrow and those suspicious spontaneous human combustions.

The rest of the overview depends on decisions made by players in the committee meeting scenes, but the agents will travel to Pavlodar, Kazakhstan and investigate the old sect (Daniiltsy), the spaceflight firm (DKX Systems), and Agent Barrow, who wants a Laundry-held relic to save his soul. They will also discover a plan that, with the best-case scenario, involves killing hundreds of thousands of people.

Worst-case scenario? All life on Earth dies in a fiery apocalypse. No pressure or anything.

1. Case SOMETHING COLOUR

The adventure begins, as all good Laundry adventures do, with a committee meeting. This first part of the scenario uses the rules from **High-level Meetings** – see page 76.

Brief the players on the following background information:

- Over the last two years, there has been an outbreak of spontaneous human combustion in the vicinity of Pavlodar, in the former Soviet state of Kazakhstan. The Laundry recently thwarted an apocalyptic cult that used PYRETIC PHANTASMS, aka fire vampires, so an investigation was launched.
- Four of the victims were employees of DKX Systems, a rocketry and aeronautics research firm in Pavlodar.
- Relations with the Thirteenth Directorate were chilly at the time, so an undercover Laundry officer was dispatched to investigate. Steven Barrow went out six months ago, under the cover of an engineer hired by DKX; he filed one report, then went silent (give the players **Handout #1**, found on page 123).

- A week ago, a British civil servant caught Barrow on dashboard camera video. Barrow appeared to be living on the streets and was dressed in rags. He clearly wanted to be seen – he runs up to the car, shouting and waving his arms, then runs off before the police arrive. Analysis of the video shows that he was shouting something like “Daniel” or “Daneel”.

Now, set up the Issues that the players need to sort out in committee. You’ll need to decide whether the players are playing their own PCs (if suitably high-ranking enough) or new committee members, as per the rules on page 78. The scenario assumes they’re new committee members.

1. Finding & Extracting Steven Barrow (9 of Hearts):

How will the team locate the missing Laundry officer? He’s supposed to be working at DKX systems, but the video showed him living on the streets.

2. Investigating the Spontaneous Combustions (7 of Diamonds):

The spontaneous combustions are still happening. Barrow may have found a solution; if not, the new team will have to take over.

3. Added Background Research (5 of Clubs):

If the committee wants to put more work into researching the situation, that’ll take resources.

4. The Thirteenth Directorate (10 of Spades):

While Kazakhstan isn’t part of Russia, the Thirteenth Directorate still operates there. Do the committee want to open a dialogue with the Thirteenth Directorate, or come up with a way to hide the team from their scrying and surveillance?

5. Logistics (5 of Clubs):

Putting resources into this Issue ensures the team get their smoothly, safely, and with any gear they need intact.

The players also need to decide on a code name for this operation. Barrow’s investigation was filed under RUMPLED OCHRE.

Resolution

Finding & Extracting Steven Barrow (9 of Hearts)

If the players resolve this Issue in committee, then give their regular PCs whatever resources and assistance decided in the meeting. Maybe the PCs are given a magical way of tracking Barrow, or there’s a specialist extraction team ready to pull him and his rescuers out once he’s found. Extraction from Kazakhstan, by the way, is very, very tricky – you’re thousands of miles from anywhere that might be considered faintly friendly. The best option is likely dropping an SAS team in from a glamourous plane and having them wait out in the countryside until they make pick-up, then heading into China by road.

If they don’t resolve this one, they’ll need to do more investigation to find Barrow when they get there, and you should throw extra complications and road-blocks at them, as suggested on page 118.

Investigating the Spontaneous Human Combustions (7 of Diamonds)

If resolved successfully, give the players whatever they decided in committee, along with Handout 2 – the police report from Pavlodar.

If the Issue isn’t resolved, then they don’t get the report, and they’re going in blind. What fun it shall be for them!

Added Background Research (5 of Clubs)

If the players resolve this Issue, then give them a fuller background on the Daniiltsy sect, as cross-referencing Barrow’s cryptic message with Pavlodar and spontaneous human combustion turns up an obscure reference deep in the Stacks.

If they don’t, they’ll have to uncover the Daniiltsy connection on the ground in Pavlodar.

The Thirteenth Directorate (10 of Spades)

Resolve this Issue, and the players don’t need to worry about interference from the Thirteenth Directorate until the mid-point of the mission (**Shipping & Handling**, page 119). That also means that the Thirteenth Directorate are probably Clueless or Compromised (see page 112).

If this Issue isn’t resolved, then the player characters will need to keep a low profile in Pavlodar.

Logistics (5 of Clubs)

Resolving this Issue means they get to Pavlodar safely (see **Getting There**, page 114).

Not resolving this Issue might mean trouble at customs, baggage searches, laptops being impounded, weapons confiscated (*“what are you intending to do with drawing of pentagram in silver ink, iPhone and human heart in jar, sir?”*)

What’s Going On?

The following facts are true no matter what the committee decides:

- Back in the 18th Century, there was an obscure Old Believer sect, the Daniiltsy, in a monastery near Pavlodar. They practised self-immolation as a way of transcending the sinful nature of the flesh – and knew a ritual to summon fire vampires.

- Some of DKX's rocket engineers are veterans of Soviet-era experimentation in using supernatural methods of propulsion derived from Daniiltsy rituals.
- Steven Barrow's investigation got him entangled with a fire vampire. The alien horror has its hooks in his soul, and he needs a magical artefact, the Robe of Koth, to disentangle it. The Robe is in the Laundry's vaults.
- The spontaneous human combustions are the result of fire vampire possession.

The following aspects, though, are variable. Based on the decisions and speculations made in the meeting, on the actions of the regular player characters, and on your own whim, you'll need to decide what's really going on. There are four groups potentially involved in this case – some may be wholly innocent, only tangentially involved, or entirely mixed up in the Mythos.

- Is **Steven Barrow** still loyal to the Laundry? Is he being played by whoever's behind the situation, in which case they're using him to get hold of the Robe of Koth? Or has he turned traitor, and is now in league with the bad guys? For more detail, see **Steven Barrow** on page 108.
- Is the **Daniiltsy Sect** still around? Are they clueless, or wholly corrupted by entities from beyond? Are they an obscure fringe sect, or are they secretly running DKX Systems? For more, see **Daniiltsy & Nazer Nabiev** on page 109.
- Is **DKX Systems** just an innocent company? Are they trying to use fire vampires as a form of rocket propulsion? Are they a front for a reborn Daniiltsy cult, or have they seen through the Daniiltsy rituals to the true horror beyond? For more detail, see **DKX Systems & Alexei Orlov** on page 110.
- How are the **Thirteenth Directorate** involved? Are they unaware of the threat? Has their agent in DKX systems switched sides? Are they planning their own violent suppression of the cult? Or are they actually behind the whole affair? For more, see **The Thirteenth Directorate & Malika Fomenko** on page 112.

You don't need to decide what's really going on immediately – you can let the players eliminate some possibilities through investigation first before you choose which combination you're going for. You need to pick at least *one* of options marked with an exclamation mark in the chart below, though, to ensure you've got a big explosive climax at the end.

Steven Barrow:

- ☐ Loyal
- ☐ Being Played
- ☐ Turned
- ☒ Corrupt

The Daniiltsy Cult:

- ☐ Extinct
- ☐ Clueless
- ☐ Malignant
- ☒ Active & Malignant

DKX Systems:

- ☐ Innocent
- ☐ Clueless
- ☐ A Front For The Cult
- ☒ Completely Corrupt

The Thirteenth Directorate:

- ☐ Investigating
- ☐ Compromised
- ☐ Conspiring
- ☒ Hostile

Robe of Koth

This old garment dates back to at least 3000 BC and is attributed to either the Egyptians, Minoans or Sumerians. It is a flax robe covered with images of lions, birds, and warriors, but a closer examination shows Enochian written into the pictures. The Robe gives a +4 POW bonus to any attempts at summoning, banishing or exorcising fire vampires; if set alight, it gives a whopping +8 bonus while it's on fire. The catch is, you have to wear the robe while it's on fire – have 1d6 damage per round as you burn.



Steven Barrow / Kliment Marchuk

Laundry field agent who disappeared four months ago and now may have purposefully made contact via dashboard camera. His average looks and manner made him perfect for field work. Undercover as Marchuk, he has longer hair and a goatee like a young Richard Branson.

STR 11 **CON** 13 **SIZ** 10 **INT** 15 **POW** 13
DEX 14 **CHA** 10 **EDU** 15 **SAN** 45 **HP** 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: None.

Skills: Bureaucracy 15%, Computer Use (Hacking) 75%, Computer Use (Magic) 55%, Disguise 55%, Drive 30%, Etiquette 30%, Fast Talk 45%, Firearm (Pistol) 40%, Knowledge (Espionage) 35%, Knowledge (Rocketry) 45%, Knowledge (Russian) 80%, Spot 45, Stealth 30.

Artefacts: Class two personal ward, home-made Hand of Glory with two fingers remaining.

After the Laundry connected the spontaneous human combustions and DKX Systems, it sent Agent Barrow undercover to investigate. He may have discovered someone (another engineer at DKX? The whole engineering department? A lone cultist out near the monastery ruins?) attempting a summoning spell, or he may have found the Daniiltsy summoning rite (perhaps in an encrypted server on the company network or by digging around in papers belonging to a cultist) and experimented with it himself. Either way, he's got a fire vampire clinging to his soul.



Steven Barrow

Why hide on the streets? At first, he feared Alexei knew of his usual drops and would be watching should Barrow try to contact his handler. As weeks turned into months, he noticed Thirteenth Directorate agents in Pavlodar and decided to play it cool. But now his dreams and blisters are getting the best of him.

That's because the ritual was partially successful. Although a Level Two Exonome like PYRETIC PHANTASM cannot get past Barrow's class three ward, the ritual specifically invites the entity to be entangled to a human's soul. This caused a fire vampire to have a tiny foothold on Barrow's soul. The nightmares have started, and now he's getting the occasional burns and heat blisters on his skin. He suspects that the fire vampire will burn him alive soon.

That would be fine (well, not for Barrow) if there was just one fire vampire in the mix. The ward technically caused the ritual to never end. Every few days, the gate reactivates and another fire vampire is entangled to his soul. The nightmares and injuries aren't because one fire vampire is getting closer. It's because there are currently 127 fire vampires putting huge pressure on the wall between our world and theirs. That wall is going to collapse soon, suddenly releasing 127 fire vampires in one body. The ensuing explosion will be messy, for Barrow and any cities nearby. He can't leave Pavlodar, either – he's bound to the original location of the micro-gate that let the Fire Vampire through into our dimension. Going even a short distance outside town is agonising, and he suspects he'd explode if he tried returning to England. (The original gate may be at the Daniiltsy ruins, or at DKX systems, or at Barrow's old flat depending on how he got entangled.)

That's why he contacted the Laundry in the safest way he knew how. He knows the Laundry has the Robe of Koth, an artefact that can sever the connection between his soul and his fire vampire buddy.

If he's *Loyal*, then things are as simple as that. He screwed up his undercover mission and is now in danger of exploding.

If he's *Being Played*, then it wasn't an accident that Barrow got entangled with a fire vampire. Whoever the bad guys are discovered that he was a Laundry officer, and they're planning on grabbing the Robe of Koth when the player characters bring it to him.

If he's *Turned*, then he's working with the Thirteenth Directorate. He may want the Robe of Koth in order to give it to the

If he's *Corrupt*, then he's in league with the Bad Guys. If he burns himself alive while wearing the Robe, it'll complete the summoning ritual and let PHLISTOGON LOCK into the world.

PYRETIC PHANTASM (Fire Vampires)

Fire vampires can be found in *The Laundry Core Rulebook* on page 201. They are beings of superheated plasma, radiation and gravity from another dimension where thermodynamics are different enough to permit such a life form. Like many exonomies, they can map onto a human's nervous system. This tends to quickly immolate the human, but possession is never a happy thing. Fire vampires quickly die in our universe, as it's just too cold for them to exist here.

PHLOGISTON LOCK

This Level Five+ Exonome has many names, including the Elemental Lord of Fomalhaut and, in some literature, Cthugha and/or Fthaggua. It resides in the same hot dimension as PYRETIC PHANTASM. Ancient texts suggest it is either the leader or the mother of fire vampires. Unlike fire vampires, though, it can easily exist in our universe. It's not necessarily happy about it, mind you, as our cold universe causes it a lot of pain. That means PHLOGISTON LOCK will likely turn the surrounding area (say, an Astronomical Unit) into a miniature version of its dimension full of superheated plasma. Anything in that area (i.e. planets or the living creatures on them) is mere fuel.

Several versions of things in this adventure reference a deal made by PHLOGISTON LOCK to give humans unimaginable power, transform them into fire vampires, or something similar in exchange for being summoned to Earth. Will the Elemental Lord do this? Maybe. You cannot predict what Elder Gods will do.

There are no stats for PHLOGISTON LOCK, because if it appears in the game, said game is over. So's the Earth.

The Daniiltsy Sect & Nazer Nabiev

The cult known as Daniiltsy began as a Russian Orthodox Church heresy. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, many Russians turned away from Christianity and embraced mysticism and spirituality. One of these was Vladimir Leontyev, an Orthodox monk who discovered Gnosticism. This old Christian sect believed everything physical is flawed and gets in the way of the soul reaching Heaven. Inspired by this, Leontyev began to preach that the body endangers the soul, and that cremation after death is required to allow the soul to leave.

Leontyev established a monastery outside the small village of Pavlodar where he and his followers could practice in peace. Over time, Leontyev looked deeper into the Gnostics and eventually came across an old book called the *Letters of St Polycarp*. This was actually a Mythos grimoire written under the guise of Christian literature. Leontyev found one entry particularly interesting: the Ritual of the Holy Spirit of the Pentecost. They tried it, and it worked. By "worked", we mean a fire vampire became entangled with a human's soul, burning the poor human alive before itself dying in our cold, cold universe. But to the Daniiltsy faithful, the Holy Spirit came and removed that wicked body, freeing the soul to get on up to Heaven. This ritual of self-immolation became the cornerstone of their monastic life, with only the most pure and holy being allowed to partake.

Daniiltsy was never a threat to anyone but its members. But when the Communists came to power, they put an end to religion's role in society. For a small, weird cult like Daniiltsy, this meant eradication. The Soviet Army hunted down and eliminated the cult and Leontyev.

The ruins of the sect's monastery still stand outside Pavlodar.

Nazer Nabiev is a direct descendant of Vladimir Leontyev. He's a janitor at DKX systems – and may also be the last remaining member of the sect, or the leader of a resurgent cult. Physically, he's a short, stocky man with a strange mix of fat and muscle. Mostly bald, he tends to wear hats everywhere. He chain-smokes cheap Chinese cigarettes and loves classical Baroque music.

Nazer Nabiev

STR 13 CON 9 SIZ 9 INT 14 POW 10
DEX 12 CHA 16 EDU 11 SAN 50 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: None.

Skills: Drive 45%, Fine Manipulation 50%, Heavy Machinery 60%, Knowledge (Islam) 40%, Repair 65%.

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

If the cult is *Extinct*, then Nabiev knows about great-grandfather Konstantin but thinks Daniiltsy was a Russian Orthodox sect with some weird ideas. PHLOGISTON LOCK occasionally sends weird dreams to Nabiev, who is on prescription sleep drugs to help get through the night. He's still a faithful Muslim but lately has developed a fascination with fire.

If the cult is *Clueless*, then Nabiev holds ceremonies for the last few old faithful in his flat in Pavlodar. Once every few years, when a member is too old or sick and wishes to leave the physical world behind, Nabiev drives them out to the ruins of the monastery and helps perform the ritual self-immolation. The fire vampires may be the result of these rites.

If the cult is *Malignant*, then Nabiev holds ceremonies in DKX for a few of the engineers he's converted to fire worship. Some of these engineers may be part of the Vulkan-LEX team; their rites may have allowed a few fire vampires to escape.

If the cult is *Active & Malignant*, then Nabiev is the cult's high priest, and plans on summoning PHLISTOGON LOCK to Earth. The Robe of Koth might be the key to this, or he might be planning on using the Vulkan-LEX engine. Either way, the high priest deserves better stats – how about:



Nazer Nabiev

Nazer Nabiev, as High Priest

STR 13 **CON** 9 **SIZ** 9 **INT** 17 **POW** 16
DEX 12 **CHA** 16 **EDU** 11 **SAN** 0 **HP** 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Skills: Drive 45%, Fine Manipulation 50%, Heavy Machinery 60%, Knowledge (Occult) 75%, Repair 65%, Sorcery 65%.

Spells: Defensive Bindings (Level 4 Heat, Level 3 Kinetic), Entropy Manipulation (Level 4 spontaneous combustion), Gate (Level 3), Scrying (Level 2), Summoning (Level 3, Fire Vampires).

Nabiev can call on PHLISTOGON LOCK for backup, boosting the effective POW of his spells by +8.

DKX Systems & Alexei Orlov

The Soviets approached the Space Race differently to the Americans. NASA was one giant organisation, with a single leader to direct everyone's efforts. The Soviet Space Program, however, had separate design groups that would work on different and even competing ideas. In the early days of the Program, this worked wonderfully. The competition brought out the best in the engineers and scientists, pushing people to achieve.

The unnamed design group that would become DKX Systems began with a string of successes from this competition. Their rockets and fuel designs literally helped propel the Soviets past the decadent West and initiate many world firsts, including the first man in space and the first probes sent to the Moon and Mars. Moscow declared them heroes of the people and showered the team with alcohol, women, and similar perks.

Then came the disaster that was the N1-L3 rocket program.

While the Soviets (and their American counterparts) had figured out how to send small things to the Moon, sending a team of cosmonauts required a more powerful rocket – but one that was safe. The Americans poured their efforts into a new design called the Saturn rocket, which worked wonderfully; strong enough to reach the Moon, but safe enough to not kill the poor people trying to get there. The Soviets countered with an even bigger, stronger rocket called the N1-L3.

At the first test firing of the new rocket, it blew up. So did the second version. And the third. And the fourth, by which time Neil Armstrong had already strolled around the Moon. It seemed that, no matter what this design group tried, the N1-L3 kept blowing up. This wasn't due to sabotage or anything; it was simply a bad design with too much power for the materials available in the 1960s.

Moscow was not at all pleased. Not only did the perks end, but so did the lives of several engineers and managers. The competition between design groups intensified as others smelled blood. More and more of the team took a one-way trip to the gulags, and the surviving members began to panic. They decided upon a week-long retreat in the small town of Pavlodar, hoping to brainstorm a new idea that would save their jobs and lives. What happened next depends on which version of Daniiltsy you are using:

- If Daniiltsy was *Clueless*, the engineers discovered the ruins of the Daniiltsy cult and got inspired by the cult's "purifying fire" blasphemy in some old books left there. That's when PHLOGISTON LOCK began sending dreams to the engineers, subtly pushing them to rediscover the math behind the Ritual of the Holy Spirit of the Pentecost.
- If Daniiltsy was *Malignant*, Nazer Nabiev's father (then high priest of the cult) taught the engineers the summoning ritual to lure them into worship of his fiery god.

The design group was fascinated by the maths used in the ritual, and after some trial and error (and at least one accidental PYRETIC PHANTASM possession/immolation), they realised the energy released by summoning a fire vampire was impressive – and the necessary gear carried almost no weight. The team began work on Project Vulkan-LEX: a rocket that would carry Soviets to the Moon and beyond by using computers to repeatedly summon PYRETIC PHANTASMs and use it as thrust.

Let's say that again so it sinks in: Vulkan-LEX rockets fly by shooting fire vampires at the ground. Most of these vampires freeze to death soon after being summoned, but a sizeable minority survive long enough to find hosts – who then spontaneously combust. The rocket's exhaust is effectively a giant death cloud of desperate, starving fire vampires.

Thankfully, this rocket design never saw the light of day. Before a prototype could be constructed, the Soviet space program was re-organised and the various competing projects cancelled in favour of a single design team. Vulkan-LEX was forgotten and filed away.

When the Soviet Union broke up, many government groups turned into private businesses. The design team moved back to their old haunt in Pavlodar and became DKX Systems. There, they began designing rockets again, earning a decent profit from Moscow's launches from Baikonur. The team's manager, Alexei Orlov, became the company's president. Concerned with both keeping the company alive and maintaining his lavish lifestyle, Alexei dug through DKX System's old Soviet-era files for something that would give him a competitive edge despite the bribes. That's when

he discovered the plans for the Vulkan-LEX. Alexei is a manager, not an engineer, so all he knows is this rocket would let him undercut his competitor's prices by more rubels than bribes would make worth.

If DKX is *Innocent*, then they haven't done anything with the Vulkan-LEX plans yet. Alexei's engineers can't see how it would work – as far as they're concerned, it's the boss's crazy side project that'll (literally) never fly. The Daniiltsy vampire-summoning rite, translated into '60s Soviet engineering schematics, sits on the DKX intranet, gathering digital dust. In this scenario, Alexei's a buffoon (so you'll want to make the Daniiltsy sect the major villains).

If DKX is *Tainted*, then they've started work on Vulkan-LEX. They don't really know what they're dealing with, and haven't connected the mysterious spontaneous human combustions with their experiments.

If DKX is *A Front for the Cult*, then some of the engineers are worshippers of PHLISTOGON LOCK, led by Nazier Nabiev. In this scenario, Orlov thinks those engineers are working on his rocket engine, but they're actually working on a giant summoning grid to bring their god through.

Another option is that DKX is *Completely Corrupt* – the whole company is a cult worshipping PHLISTOGON LOCK, and Alexei Orlov is their high priest.

Vulkan-LEX

Let's take a moment and describe the worst rocket idea ever. In theory, the Vulkan-LEX could put up to 210 metric tons into orbit (or over two Space Shuttles) at about one-quarter of the price. That's a very big upside. The downside? The engine is actually a collection of nine electric grids based on the Ritual of the Holy Spirit of the Pentecost and controlled by several computers (several because this is the 1960s. Tape drives were still used). The computers activate the grids about once per half-second, and with no human soul to bond to, the ritual functions like a repeating fire vampire summoning spell. The engine also includes a system to push the fire vampire downwards. This means 18 fire vampires are shot out the nozzles per second.

There's absolutely nothing that could go wrong with that.

Alexei Orlov

Owner of DKX systems. Orlov is in his early 60s with short white hair, thick gold-rimmed glasses, and a big belly but otherwise is in average shape. He tends to wear grey suits at work and loud, ugly shirts at home. He never touches alcohol but drinks thick, sweet coffee all hours of the day.

STR 9 **CON** 11 **SIZ** 12 **INT** 11 **POW** 12
DEX 8 **CHA** 16 **EDU** 13 **SAN** 60 **HP** 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: None.

Skills: Bargain 45%, Bureaucracy 65%, Command 45%, Etiquette 45%, Fast Talk 70%, Know (Politics) 50%, Persuade 55%, Science (Engineering) 15%. (If he's the cult leader, give him Sorcery 60%, Computer Use (Magic) 75%).

Equipment: Vulkan-LEX design files (paper and digital).

The Thirteenth Directorate & Malika Fomenko

The Laundry's counterpart in the Soviet Union – and now, in the Russian Federation – was the Thirteenth Directorate. The Directorate has one agent in place in DKX Systems, a spy named Malika Fomenko. What's the Directorate's involvement in this situation?

- *Investigating:* They're basically doing what the Laundry's doing, only more slowly; Kazakhstan is the Directorate equivalent of the Laundry sending an officer to some desolate hillside in Wales. Anyway, Fomenko's fixated on the mysterious Kliment Marchuk (Barrow) who showed up, asked some strange questions, then vanished. She suspects he's a foreign agent.
- *Compromised:* Fomenko's been turned by the bad guys – she's now working for the Daniiltsy Cult, or the fire worshippers in DKX systems. She's sending false reports back to her superiors to keep the Thirteenth Directorate off their backs.



Alexei Orlov

- *Conspiring:* The Thirteenth Directorate is behind the whole thing. They're secretly supporting the engineers' development of the Vulkan-LEX engines; maybe they're running the whole company through Alexei Orlov, or maybe they're just sponsoring the secret cabal of engineers through Nazer Nabiev. Maybe they let Barrow escape so he can beg the Laundry for the Robe of Koth which they need to get the Vulkan-LEX up and running. Why? Because the old Soviet-era Energia rockets still aren't back in production, and the Directorate needs to get its Polyus Orbital Battle Stations flying before CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN kicks off.

- *Hostile:* In this scenario, the Thirteenth Directorate is planning its own operation against the bad guys (the cult or DKX systems), and the Laundry are about to get in the way. Kazakhstan is the Directorate's turf, and they don't appreciate the British butting in. Barrow – and the PCs – are about to become collateral damage.

STR 10 **CON** 17 **SIZ** 13 **INT** 14 **POW** 15
DEX 11 **CHA** 12 **EDU** 16 **SAN** 65 **HP** 15

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Pistol (d10+2 damage).

Skills: Appraise 50%, Brawl 60% Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Computer Use (Magic) 60%, Firearms (Pistol) 75%, Hide 80%, Insight 55%, Knowledge (Espionage) 75%, Language (Kazakh) 55%, Research 65%, Sense 60%, Search 50%, Track 40%.

Artefacts: Class three ward, Amulet of Protection (10-point defensive binding), Ring of Invisibility (Casts level three entropy manipulation, costs 1 HP/minute).

In addition to Fomenko, the Directorate also has a bunch of lower-ranking street teams and armed goons in place in Pavlodar.



Malika Fomenko

2. Killing Time in Kazakhstan

How this section plays out depends mostly on the players; they should switch back to their regular PCs once the committee meeting is wrapped up. Once the agents arrive in Pavlodar, they can start by trying to contact Barrow, investigating DKX Systems, following up on local police, and more. Therefore, this section gives GMs locations and NPCs most likely to be investigated by the agents.

Since a good portion of this adventure is decided on the fly, we thought it prudent to start with some background information on Kazakhstan and Pavlodar. For example, some players might want to know the currency (the tenge), what religion is prominent (Sunni Muslim), and how many cheesy nightclubs there are (too many).

Republic of Kazakhstan

The area now called Kazakhstan has almost always been inhabited. In fact, the horse was likely domesticated there, and a pastoral, nomadic lifestyle dominated the region for a long time. It fell under the Mongol Empire in the early 13th Century, but the Kazakhs as a people (with their own language and culture) really didn't emerge until the 1500s. By the 19th Century, Imperial Russia had taken over the area, and ethnic Russians began to "settle" the region in a similar way to how Europeans "settled" North America. Local Kazakhs tended to resent the Russian immigrants, and brutal fighting flared.

When Moscow fell to the Communists in 1917, Kazakhstan was independent – for about two years. Then the Soviet Army swept in and showed everyone the benefits of joining the Soviet Union, such as not dying from gunfire. Stalin, showing his usual calm demeanour, killed millions with purges and bad agricultural planning. The traditional horselands of the region were turned into factories and grain farms, with even more Russians coming to live there. The Soviets tested a nuclear device in Kazakhstan in 1949, ruining a good piece of the Kazakh countryside and cementing a hatred of Communists and Russians in the minds of many locals.

Protests by the people, and counter-attacks by the army, continued through the 1980s until the Soviet Union fell apart and the country won independence in 1991. It inherited over 1400 nuclear warheads but promised it would return every one to Russia, declaring itself free of nuclear weapons.

Today, Kazakhstan is mostly home to ethnic Kazakhs, but Russians are still a sizeable minority. The Soviets used the Kazakh city of Baikonur as their main launch site during the Space Race, and the city continues to see regular

Population: 18 million (most Kazakhs, then Russian and other ethnicities)

Government: Democratic republic

Capital: Astana (UTC +6)

Important cities: Almaty, Baikonur, Pavlodar.

Corruption level: Moderate to severe.

Currency: Kazakhstani tenge (KZT), 1 tenge = 0.0045 Euros (or 1 Euro = 225 tenge).

Languages: Most people speak Russian, especially in business, but Kazakh is the state language.

Religion: Sunni Muslim, but the region has a strong Russian Orthodox tradition.

Urbanisation: Roughly half the population lives in urban areas.

Important neighbours: Russia, China

space traffic (well, as regular as that can be in this day and age). Kazakhstan is more modern and Western than some might suspect. Its infrastructure is solid, its utilities reasonable and constant, and unemployment at 5%. While corruption is a serious problem, this isn't some backwards Third World nation.

The country is decidedly Muslim but has a strong history of Russian Orthodox Christianity and some Judaism. Food is as varied as any modern country, but traditional fare includes lamb, breads, rice and black tea. Football is the most popular sport, but hockey, cycling and boxing are important. Given the horse's impact on the region, equestrian sports is a valued piece of the culture.

Pavlodar

The city of Pavlodar is in north-east Kazakhstan along the eastern side of the Irtysh River. It's roughly 200km from the Russian border, and although the country is primarily Kazakh, Pavlodar has more Russians than Kazakhs these days.

While locals have always lived in this region, Pavlodar as a town didn't begin until 1720 when it was founded as an Imperial Russian outpost to protect salt mining interests. In 1900, the city had only 8000 inhabitants. That changed dramatically under the Soviet Union, who invited large

numbers of Russians to settle the area. Factories were built, and Pavlodar was closed to foreigners until 1992 due to the amount of arms and armour manufacturing there. Today, the city is home to over 330,000 people.

As with the rest of Kazakhstan, Pavlodar is very Muslim. Russian is the most popular language, but Kazakh is the state language. Both appear on road signs, adverts and the like. An extensive tram network keeps traffic relatively low. Guns are available but heavily regulated; foreigners, like the agents, will have trouble buying them legally. However, there's a vibrant black market in town, and guns can be bought illegally.

Getting There

Pavlodar has its own airport (imaginatively named Pavlodar International Airport), but major airlines do not fly there and, alarmingly, local airlines are not authorised to fly in or out of the EU because they do not meet safety requirements. Agents will likely have to connect in Moscow or Almaty. Trains and buses connect Almaty, the capital Astana and Pavlodar, and while the timetables aren't extensive, they do tend to run regularly and safely.

Entering Kazakhstan as a foreign national requires an entry/exit visa applied for before travelling. Transport section supply one for each agent good for two weeks. Passports and visas must be carried at all times. It's up to the GM to decide what cover identities, if any are issued to the agents.



Getting Around and Accommodation

Again, trains and buses are as extensive and regular as one would expect in a modern nation. Pavlodar has many city buses, trams and taxis but no underground. Car rental is possible from the airport. There's the usual number and range of hotels you'd expect from a major city, and there's no big event in town, so agents will easily find rooms for their stay.

Investigations in Pavlodar

The two primary tasks for the player characters are finding the source of the combustions, and locating Steve Barrow. Either the initial committee scene or clues discovered in the course of their investigations will put them on the trail of the Daniiltsy cult.

Spontaneous Human Combustion

The rash of exploding people is, of course, due to fire vampire leakage. These fire vampires might be coming from any of the following sources (and you can, of course, have multiple sources or red herrings).

The Daniiltsy Cult

- (*Clueless*) Nazer Nabiev's infrequent immolation rituals for elderly or dying members of the Daniiltsy cult. In this case, potential clues are found at Nazer's house, the Daniiltsy ruins and at the government offices.
- (*Malignant*) Nazer's ceremonies in the bowels of DKX Systems and at the ruins. Again, clues are in Nazer's house, the ruins and DKX Systems.

DKX Systems

- (*Clueless*): The engineers experimenting with getting Vulkan-LEX up and running are inadvertently leaking fire vampires. Clues can be found in DKX systems, at the Mojo Karaoke bar and in Orlov's house.
- (*Tainted or Corrupt*): As above, but they're doing it very much advertently with malice aforethought.

Barrow

- (*Any*): Barrow's accidental entanglement means he's contagious – people near him run the risk of getting fire vampires glomming onto their brains. Clues come from finding Barrow.

The Homeless Agent

Contacting him is going to be hard, not because Barrow doesn't want to be found, but because he doesn't want to clue in the Thirteenth Directorate agents (like Mileka Fomenko) moving around town. Use **Thirteenth Directorate Interference** to slow things down if the PCs rush to locate Barrow.

According to Barrow's handler, there were two dead drops created but never used. One is at the Pavlodar Library in a book called, *Abai Kunanbaev: A Biography*. The second is underneath the metal bench in Riverside Park nearest the central fountain. Barrow checks the bench regularly (easy for a supposed homeless person to do), but only checks the library once per week.

Occult means of contacting Barrow might work. Barrow doesn't have his laptop or Necronomicon anymore, so he cannot initiate any magic, but a scrying or prognostication spell might work.

The best recommendation is to use these as backups but allow the players full freedom to come up with an idea. If they get stuck, remind them of how spies sometimes use dead drops. A quick call to the Laundry will reveal the two drops, and Bob's your uncle.

Meeting Steven Barrow

- If Barrow's *Loyal* or *Being Played*, he is nervous and malnourished. He explains everything truthfully, including the botched ritual and subsequent fire vampire entanglement. All he wants is the Robe of Koth, stuck in a Laundry vault back in London. Barrow is scared, and if the agents refuse to help, or the Laundry sounds unwilling to part with the artefact, Barrow will threaten to turn double agent for the Thirteenth Directorate. He doesn't want to do that, but desperate times and all that. Any readings of Barrow (such as with a thaumometer) reveals much more magic than one Level Two Exonome should cause.
- If Barrow is *Turned*, then while he's dressed as a homeless person, he's actually been staying in Mileka Fomenko's flat while being debriefed by the Thirteenth Directorate. A successful Sense or Disguise roll notices flaws in his 'costume'. There's a Directorate team watching any meet, ready to intervene if things go awry.
- If Barrow is *Corrupt*, he just wants the Robe of Koth. He'll explain that he's got this fire vampire thing turning him into a living nuclear weapon, and the Robe is his only hope of saving both himself and whatever region he's in. He acts in an almost eerily calm demeanour. In reality, Barrow wants the Robe so he can destroy it, allowing him to open a gate and bring PHLISTOGON LOCK through.

Either way, he will tell the agents to check the Riverside Park bench drop in three days for where to meet him next.

It's important (but not vital) that Barrow escape. To facilitate this, Barrow suggests any damage to his body will cause it to detonate. So what are the agents doing to do, tackle him? If the agents use force on him, he stresses out and starts to show signs imminent fire vampire possession: his skin is red hot, his hair starts to smoulder, that sort of thing.

It's possible at this point for an agent to panic and kill Barrow. That would be a (nuclear) bad idea. At least allow an Insight roll before ending the game.

Obtaining the Robe

To get the Robe, the officers need approval from on high. Run the scene **Shipping & Handling** when this happens.

Pavlodar Locations

Here are some important locations in and around Pavlodar that the agents will most likely want to visit, and the clues that may be found there. If the agents ask to visit places not listed below, let them. Repurpose something below for the unplanned for location.

Mojo Karaoke Bar

Located in downtown Pavlodar, this two-level bar is popular with both a young singles crowd and an older singles crowd desperate to meet the younger ones. Karaoke goes on every night on the ground floor, while the second floor is a traditional nightclub. Watered-down drinks are at least cheap, and the lighting is both colourful and awful. Most people here know nothing about anything important to the agents, but the bartender (Inkar Serik) and the bouncer (Rustam Popov) can reveal the following with some good roleplaying:

- Two of the non-DKX victims (Sezim Amangeldy and Anara Bolat) were regulars on the karaoke machine.
- Several DKX employees are regulars too, including some of the engineers, owner Alexei Orlov and one of the victims, Nurlan Ibrayev.
- None of the above ever got into fights or did anything suspicious. Creepy, yes, but not suspicious.
- Nazer Nabiev is not a *regular* – he never comes here.

Alexei Orlov's House

Alexei Orlov lives in a large manor house originally built for Imperial Russian aristocrats in the late 1800s. It has

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

that vaguely Versailles look popular among people with too much money and not enough class. Alexei owns it and has decorated it in fake gold, fake marble statues, and other ostentatious but cheap items. It has two stories, with Alexei's bedroom on the second floor. There is a basement as well.

- If Alexei is *Innocent*, plans for Vulkan-LEX can be found in a safe in his bedroom closet. The safe's lock is digital but not guarded against occult measures.
- If DKX's been taken over by the cult, the plans are still in his safe as with the Foolish version but the lock includes magical trap: unless it is found and disabled with a successful Science (Thaumaturgy) or Sorcery roll, it opens a level one gate to a high energy universe for half a second, causing 3d6+3 heat damage to everyone within one metre of the safe. Also, a successful Search roll finds evidence of a magic circle drawn on the basement's floor, and a successful Sorcery or Science (Thaumaturgy) roll reveals it's a contact spell of some sort (Alexei uses it to get orders from PHLOGISTON LOCK).

Either way, there's a passcard to the secure section of DKX (see page 117) in the safe.

Victim's Flats

All seven victims died in their flats. Two of these flats (Zherdov and Amangeldy's) burned down, but the others can be investigated. They are not watched by police, but the Thirteenth Directorate is still investigating and two agents are watching the flat of the latest victims, Anara and Yuri Bolat, from an old black sedan across the street. Remember that all seven victims were killed over the course of several months, and some flats will be rented by other tenants now.

Malika Fomenko's Flat

Luka lives on the 8th floor of a Soviet-era building in a small one-bedroom flat with shabby furniture. The flat is rented by the Thirteenth Directorate and warding runes are inscribed in blood around the inside of windows and doors, creating a level two area ward around the whole flat. The bedroom also has a level two offensive ward to alert Malika if anyone enters that room. See *The Laundry Core Rulebook*, pages 145-146 for details. There is a pile of occult reference books on the nightstand.

There's an old laptop charging in the dining/living room. The laptop is protected by strong but mundane security, requiring a Computer Use (Hacking) to break in. On the laptop are several magical apps and enough evidence to clearly identify Malika as a Thirteenth Directorate officer. Use the stats for the Necronomiphone for specific apps.

In the bathroom are cosmetics that provide a level two glamour to anyone who uses them.

If agents enter the bedroom without disabling the offensive ward, Malika instantly knows the faces of anyone entering that room. She quickly informs the Thirteenth Directorate, who dispatch one sobirat agent per player to arrest the intruders. Malika then goes into hiding at another safe house in the city, meaning she's absent from her DKX Systems job.

She spends most nights in the flat but goes to DKX Systems during the day. She still frequents Mojo Karaoke Bar at the weekends.

If Steve Barrow was staying here while being debriefed, then a Spot roll spots (as Spot rolls tend to do) men's clothing in the spare room.

Steve Barrow/Kliment Marchuk's flat

Barrow lived in this flat when undercover in DKX Systems as Kliment Marchuk. It was thoroughly ransacked by either Daniiltsy and/or the Thirteenth Directorate. As such, there's nothing here. In fact, a young Kazakh couple lives there now.

- The exception is if Barrow accidentally entangled himself with a fire vampire, in which case there's a microscopic gate in the room where he conducted the ritual. The gate spits out another fire vampire every few hours. Most of these join the host entangled with Barrow (and the PCs could follow these sparks of economic consciousness to find the missing spy); others fly off and incinerate innocents along the way.

The gate can't be closed while Barrow lives.

Checking nearby alleyways, though, with a Tradecraft or Search roll (or a Scrying app) lets the characters find a cache left by Barrow, hidden in a heating oil tank at the back of a house. The cache is wrapped in a watertight sheet of plastic, and contains:

- A stolen photocopied copy of the Letters of St Polycarp, with the name Nabiev scrawled across the title page.
- More hand-written notes, clearly written by Barrow, translating the immolation/purification ritual of the Daniiltsy into Dho-Na notation.
- A handful of burnt-oil electronics that were clearly part of a summoning grid. A successful Science (Thaumaturgy) roll connects the electronics to the rite in the book.

If Barrow's Turned, then the cache is under observation by the Directorate.

Nabiev's House

Nazer Nabiev lives alone in a tumbledown farmhouse outside of town, near the ruins of the monastery. It's a much bigger place than a mere janitor could afford – he inherited the property from his father. One of the outbuildings has been converted into a chapel for the Daniiltsy sect.

Searching the house reveals that Nabiev works as a janitor at DKX (if the company's *Corrupt*, he's got a passcard for access to the secure basement, which an ordinary janitor shouldn't have). There's also a copy of the *Letters of St Polycarp*.

If the cult is *Malignant*, then there may be supernatural defences like wards or guardian monsters here too.

Daniiltsy Ruins

These ruins lie about 20 minutes north-west of Pavlodar. A dirty plaque in Russian and Kazakh explains this was a Russian Orthodox monastery in the 19th Century before being destroyed by Soviet forces in the 1920s. All that remains is one half-crumbled round tower and some walls. Thaumometers show significant but old magical residue all over the ruins. Examination of runes and glyphs carved on the walls remind the PCs (with an Idea roll) of the Robe of Koth.

- If the Cult is *Clueless*, then searching around discovers several piles of greasy ash – the remains of someone who spontaneously combusted. Keeping the site under observation lets the PCs discover Nazer Nabiev and the other elderly adherents of the sect.
- If the Cult is *Malignant*, then Nazer may hold rituals here for the DKX engineers.

Pavlodar Library

All good agents know to research in the library, and this one is pretty good thanks to all the oil money making Kazakhstan rich. Agents can discover whatever information about the chosen versions of Daniiltsy that the GM feels as appropriate and/or likely. There's not much to dig up on DKX Systems other than they were part of the Soviet Space Program, had some great successes, screwed up the N1-L3 program and now make rockets for Moscow and private companies.

This is also home to one of two dead drops between the Laundry and Barrow (see **The Homeless Agent**, page 115).

Government Offices

Successful Bureaucracy rolls reveal DKX Systems has lost a lot of bids over the past few years and is in deep financial trouble. If the Daniiltsy cult is *Clueless*, then cross-checking death notices with the dates of the spontaneous combustions notes that there's a correlation between a death occurring in a certain set of families (the few families that still adhere to the dying cult), and the combustions. Some discreet enquiries lead the officers to Nabiev's door.

Pavlodar Police Department

The local police are competent and untainted by magic or Mythos. With the spontaneous human combustion cases, they are completely baffled and embarrassed. As said in **Handout #2** (see page 124), the officers are hoping it stops and goes away on its own.

Pavlodar State University

The only connection with this university is that two victims (Sezim Amangeldy and Anara Bolat) worked at the registrar's office and were good friends. They frequently went to Mojo Karaoke Bar. A successful roll interviewing co-workers will reveal both complained about guys from DKX Systems hitting on them.

DKX Systems Building

Built on the outskirts of town in an office park, this four-storey building looks more at home in London than an old Soviet republic. Full of glass and with a big "DKX" written in Cyrillic and English letters over the double doors, this is a modern building with modern security: several guards (use the stats for Pavlodar police officers if necessary) and a networked alarm system. There are roughly 90 people working here if you include janitors and secretaries.

Inside, the building is divided into three sections. Section A is the bottom two floors and is home to bureaucrats, lawyers, human resources and other necessities of modern corporations. Section B occupies the fourth floor and is where management has their offices; Alexei Orlov has the large corner office. Section C is home to the engineers and scientists – it encompasses the third floor and the high-security labs at the back of the building. The basement is also used for research.

Keycards are required to access the elevators and stairwells.

Getting Inside

DKX has moderately tight security: surveillance cameras, burglar alarms, regular (unarmed) security patrols and

electronic locks on all external doors. Section A is easily accessible by the PCs, either by sneaking in or by some ruse. Getting access to Section B – the management floor – is harder, although a Fast Talk roll or a suitable cover story (“we’re here on behalf of the European Space Agency”) could get them a meeting with Alexei Orlov.

Section C is kept more secure; the doors have tougher electronic locks that can only be opened with a passcard (or a *Difficult Technology Use* (Electronic Security) roll. The basement – where any occult experiments or ceremonies are held – is more secure again, with electronic locks, physical locks and wards (class three offensives that alert Orlov or Nabiev about the intruders, plus 2d6 fire damage). If DKX is *Completely Corrupt*, then add a swarm of fire vampires.

Investigations

Barrow was employed as Kliment Marchuk but suddenly stopped coming in months ago. His cubicle was reassigned to another employee. The cubicle of Mileka Fomenko shows some evidence of blood magic (i.e. minute traces of dried blood) but otherwise is free of evidence.

- If DKX Systems is *Innocent*, then the plans to Vulkan-LEX are in Alexei’s office and on the computer network.
- If they’re *Tainted*, the plans to Vulkan-LEX are in Alexei’s office. A small, experimental version of the thrust system is in the basement. If turned on, it will summon five fire vampires out before shutting off.
- If DKX Systems is a *Front for the Cult*, then Alexei’s office also has a safe with a contact spell (to speak with PHLOGISTON LOCK), and Nazer Nabiev is on the payroll as a ‘senior adviser’ despite being a janitor.
- If DKX Systems is *Completely Corrupt*, then not only is there a prototype of the Vulkan-LEX engine in the basement lab, but there’s also an experimental full-scale version in the manufacturing facility at the rear of the building. This giant summoning engine is watched day and night by cultists.

Pavlodar Events & Complications

Drop any of the following events in to liven things up:

General Screw-Jobs

- The PCs are stopped at passport control and asked to explain their business in Pavlodar. What’s their cover story?
- A snowstorm makes exploring the city streets difficult and hazardous.

- One of the management-level characters created as part of the first committee meeting calls up the PCs and demands an immediate status report.
- The PCs are alerted they can’t use the Laundry-Issued credit card, as there’s a chance that the Directorate will spot it. They need to survive in Pavlodar on cash alone.
- Someone close to the PCs – a receptionist at a hotel, an informant on the streets, the driver of the tram they’re riding – spontaneously combusts.

Cult Interference

- The cult sends a fire vampire after the player characters.
- Cult members keep the PCs under surveillance.
- One of the PCs dreams of burning alive in a strange monastery.

DKX Interference

- Alexei Orlov hears about the Westerners in town, and invites them to dinner and drinks at the Mojo club. There, he pumps them for information – what are they doing in town, and can he somehow leverage this information to make himself richer? (Selling the PCs out to the Thirteenth Directorate is one option...)
- DKX hackers tap the PCs’ local phones.
- Orlov bribes the local police to harass or spy on the PCs.

Thirteenth Directorate Interference

- Mileka Fomenko or one of her agents breaks into the PCs’ hotel room and ransacks it.
- The Directorate threaten the PCs, hinting that they know who they are and warning them to leave Kazakhstan immediately.
- The Directorate abducts one of the PCs in a snowstorm and carries him or her off to the extradimensional gulag described on page 120.



3. Committee Scene: Shipping and handling

So, by this point in the scenario, the regular player characters should have a rough idea of what's going on in Pavlodar, and they should have met with Barrow and learned that he needs the Robe of Koth – and that if he doesn't get it, he's going to burst with fire vampires before too long. Time for another committee meeting!

Deal out Issues as follows:

- Barrow's immobility and unreliability, plus the expense and difficulty of getting the Robe of Koth to him makes him a solid King of Clubs
- Deal out Spades for DKX Systems and the Thirteenth Directorate, and Diamonds for the Daniiltsy cult – choose the value of the cards based on the perceived threat posed by these factions to the mission. If the regular PCs have determined that the cult is defunct, but they've angered the Thirteenth Directorate, then put down, say, the 2 of Diamonds and the 10 of Spades.
- Optionally, deal one or two more cards and interpret them on the fly as added Issues that only the committee knows about – problems that the officers on the ground haven't yet encountered.

Suggest to the players that they'll want to have enough Budget left at the end of the meeting to call in Special Forces support – and remind them that bringing in a 16-man SAS squad is a Difficult Status check, and that there'll be a -20% penalty for sending them to Kazakhstan (and possibly up to another -20% penalty if they don't give sufficient advance notice).

4. Investigation Scene: Pick Your Apocalypse

In this scene, the agents have to implement the new plans made in the second committee scene. This probably includes getting the Robe of Koth from London, but the committee might have decided not to hand it over. Either way, the agents will have to meet and deal with Barrow. That deal's going to be interrupted by the big bad of the adventure – maybe the Thirteenth Directorate will swoop in, or DKX Systems will try to steal the robe, or Barrow will betray the player characters and screw them over.

Delivering the Goods

Barrow will send a fellow homeless Kazakh to deliver a handwritten message to the bench drop. The message says

to take a table at a trendy and crowded cafe called Krendel at noon. Barrow has cleaned himself up and stolen some new clothes, so he looks completely different. He's waiting in a car park across from the cafe, and won't arrive until 30 minutes after the agents get there.

- If Barrow is *Loyal*, he comes in and sits at a table next to the agents, then he asks for the Robe of Koth. To use it, he needs to put it on at the site of the original gate (his apartment/DKX Systems/the Daniiltsy ruins). The PCs need to help him get there.
- If he's *Being Played*, then the bad guys swoop in – see below. Barrow tries to flee, and stresses out (see below). This may give the PCs time to escape.
- If he's *Turned*, then he sneers before the bad guys swoop in. The cafe's a trap – the other customers and staff are all agents of the bad guys in disguise.
- If he's *Corrupt*, then he opens his mouth and hosts of fire vampires swarm out of him. The PCs are (presumably) warded; the other customers aren't so lucky. The cafe explodes, and Barrow uses the opportunity to grab the rope. To summon PHLISTOGON LOCK, Barrow needs to get the robe to the site of the original gate.

If the agents don't have the Robe of Koth, Barrow stresses out – see below.

Stressing Out

Whether the agents fail to give up the Robe of Koth, if the Thirteenth Directorate arrives to make a mess of things, or if the agents try forcing the Robe on Barrow, the stress of this event taxes Barrow tremendously. He falls to his knees screaming, the air around him shimmering with heat. As his clothes start to smoulder and catch fire, PYRETIC PHANTASMS manifest; some attack the agents while the other starts burning the cafe.

The PCs may be able to talk Barrow down or stun him with something clever (an exorcism spell, a taser). Other options:

- **Nazer Nabiev** (if the cult's *Active*) has enough authority to temporarily restrain the fire vampires. Barrow collapses in a heap at Nabiev's feat; Nabiev takes the robe, if he can.
- **Alexei Orlov** has his engineers show up with a truck. On the back is a tank of chemicals and a hose – he sprays Barrow with an enchanted vampire-retardant foam to temporarily delay the explosion. The Robe of Koth might have a few white stains, but he only needs it to last until he summons PHLISTIGON LOCK through.

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- **The Thirteenth Directorate** have a sniper across the street with a rune-engraved bullet. It's a slow death. When the bullet hits you, it vanishes. The wave pattern of your death – the wave pattern of your skull exploding as the bullet punches through your head – remains virtual until the Directorate Issue a kill order, at which point you take the death and die. Interference patterns between the two quantum patterns of you-dead and you-alive create all sorts of disturbing weirdnesses, like insomnia, spontaneous bleeding, people believing you to be dead, social media accounts shutting down of their own accord – and, in the case of Steven Barrow, it traps his fire vampire passengers in a loop between the two states. He won't explode until his occult quantum state is resolved.

Alternatively, Barrow can use his Hand of Glory to escape the scene.

The Opposition

The handover to Barrow never goes smoothly. Even if you're aiming for a finale that doesn't necessarily involve the Robe of Koth, you should add another obstacle by having some faction of bad guys make a play for the Robe. Even an extinct and clueless Daniiltsy sect might be spurred into new life by dreams sent from PHLISTIGON LOCK, prompting Nabiev and his followers to make a grab for the prize.

If the bad guys are a resurgent Daniiltsy cult or DKX Systems, then the PCs are up against enthusiastic amateurs – throw one armed goon up against the PCs per player character, plus another 1d6+2 bad guys with nothing more than fists and vigour, and maybe some hand-held runes of destruction (add another 1d8 damage to melee attacks). And fire vampires, of course. Innocent passers-by exploding into flames should also add to the confusion.

Thugs

STR 14 **CON** 10 **SIZ** 11 **INT** 15 **POW** 8
DEX 10 **CHA** 10 **EDU** 16 **SAN** 35 **HP** 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Handgun 45%, damage 1d10 or Rune of Destruction 60%, damage 1d3+1d8.

Skills: Brawl 40%, Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Dodge 30%, Disguise 20%, Knowledge (Occult) 30%, Research 35%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 30%, Sorcery 10%.

Artefacts: Class one personal ward.

If the Directorate is the opposition, then the PCs are in more trouble. There are two Directorate agents for every PC, with more available as backup.

Directorate Heavy

STR 14 **CON** 14 **SIZ** 16 **INT** 14 **POW** 13
DEX 11 **CHA** 13 **EDU** 14 **SAN** 45 **HP** 15

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Pistol with Banishment Rounds (1d10)

Skills: Brawl 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 10%, Computer Use (Magic) 50%, Dodge 40%, Firearms (Pistol) 50%, Hide 35%, Insight 55%, Knowledge (Espionage) 50%, Language (Various) 50%, Research 65%, Sense 30%, Search 50%, Track 40%.

Artefacts: Class two personal ward, plus the following items among the group: class three Hand of Glory, Egg of Life Hiding (keeps one human alive despite any injury as long as the egg is intact), Banishing Grenade (one-shot level 3 exorcism spell), Winter Skull (if unveiled, drops temperature in surrounding area to -30° C).

Captured by the Directorate

If the PCs get captured by the Directorate, then they wake up in a holding facility... somewhere. It's a desolate gulag of concrete bunkers and cells on a snowy tundra that stretches off infinitely in every direction. The skies are forever cloudy and grey. There are no roads leading up to the place, no walls or fences surrounding it – it's in its own pocket dimension of eternal winter. The Directorate interrogators simply appear out of the swirling snow, like cold war phantoms.

The PCs may be able to talk their way out if they can convince the Directorate that they know how to avert an impending catastrophe (of course, that assumes that the Directorate aren't the ones behind said impending catastrophe). Alternatively, switch to the special force characters for the rest of the mission, and have the regular PCs wake up three months later as their Moscow-London flight lands at Heathrow.

5. Flashpoints

So, you've got (at least) four potential ways that everything can go horribly wrong. If your regular PCs are up to the challenge of saving the world, then they can make the attempt. Otherwise, it may be time to switch to Special Forces, and have your regular PCs brief the SAS strike team that flies in under the radar from Turkey on a glamourised Boeing Globemaster III.

Burning Barrow

(Barrow is *Corrupt*)

Steven Barrow was sent to investigate a rash of spontaneous combustions, but in the course of his investigations, he was seduced by the fiery worship of PHLISTIGON LOCK. He needs the Robe of Koth to open the gate – but if the PCs didn't obligingly bring the relic to Pavlodar, then he can improvise using the Vulkan-LEX prototype in the basement of DKX Systems. So, Barrow's either heading for DKX, his old apartment or the monastery ruins.

With the Robe, and the impending arrival of PHLISTIGON LOCK, he's vastly more powerful than before, and keeps emitting more fire vampires. To stop him without nuking Pavlodar, the player characters need to recover the robe, put it on him and run a banishing spell, while dodging fire vampires and spontaneous combustions. The other big complication is that the Thirteenth Directorate aren't going stand by while a British spy tries to summon up an alien god right in their backyard, which means this situation is going to turn into a hastily organised and probably botched version of **Purge Sequence**, below.

The Cult Ritual

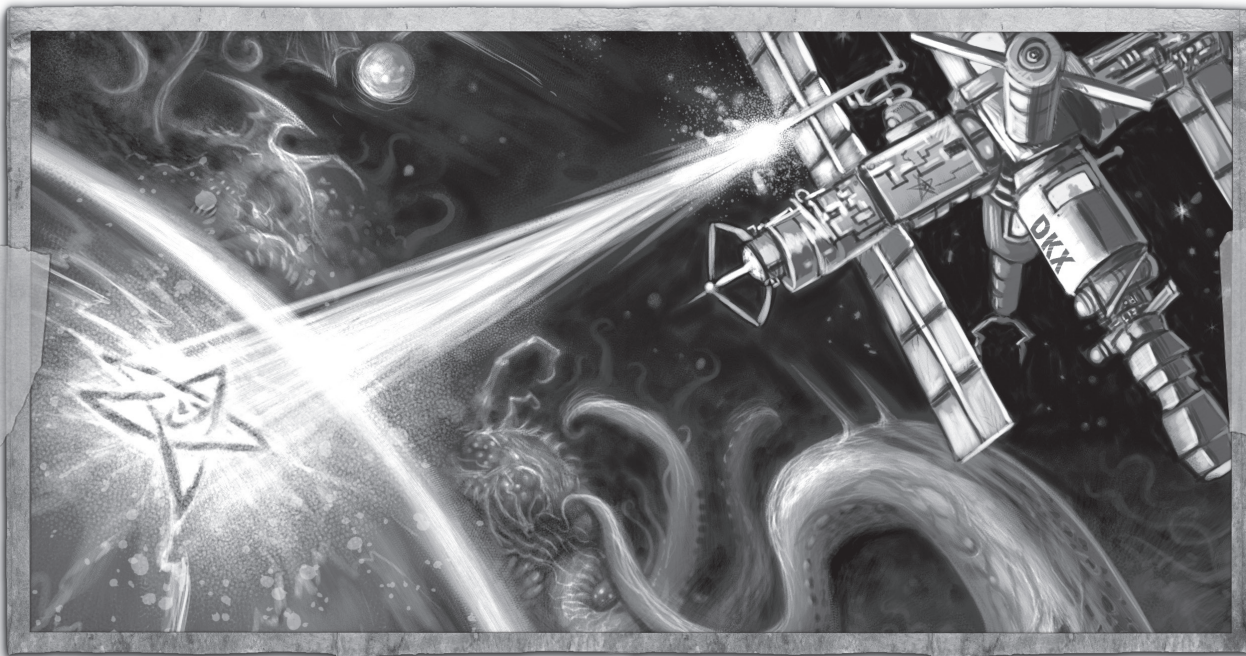
In this setup, Nazer Nabiev intends to bring forth the alien god. He might be planning on using the Robe of Koth to do so, or maybe he's planning to overclock the Vulkan-LEX prototype at DKX Systems so it spits out PHLISTIGON LOCK. In either case, he gathers his loyal cultists around him. They'll bring suicide vests and cans of petrol to wherever the ritual is going to take place – after all, fire purifies. They intend to burn to death and leave the corrupt flesh behind, one way or another. They'd prefer to die in the all-consuming embrace of their god, of course, but martyrdom will suffice.

In this set-up, the PCs need to stop Nazer Nabiev from summoning PHLISTIGON LOCK, dodging fire vampires and suicidal cultists. One possible option is to use Stephen Barrow as a connection to Nabiev – maybe Barrow can psychically sense Nabiev's ritual, so the PCs must choose between finding Nabiev and using the Robe of Koth to 'disarm' the Barrow-shaped nuke.

Vulkan-LEX

The Vulkan-LEX engine, if fired, releases a plume of fire vampire exhaust. It could also, if configured just right, be used as a bigger summoning grid to bring PHLOGISTON LOCK through.

If you're going with DKX Systems is *Completely Corrupt*, then their end-game might be to 'test-fire' the rocket engine over a highly populated area. Say, send it flying on an arc over China, freeing millions of people from the sinful, corrupt bonds of matter by igniting their souls. Alternatively, maybe they want to bring the god through, in which case the test-firing would look a lot more like an implosion. Either way, the action's going down at DKX Systems.



AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

If the Thirteenth Directorate's behind the scheme, though, then they want a working Vulkan-LEX to launch their battle stations in advance of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. The trouble is, in its current form, Vulkan-LEX is effectively a weapon of mass destruction, with each launch causing millions of spontaneous combustions. That would put the Directorate in a hideous catch-22: they need to launch their Polyus stations before CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, but the act of launching them might cause enough deaths to trigger the phase state transition of reality and urge the stars to rightness. Waiting to work out the kinks in the system might mean that they've got no defence against the Great Old Ones – their choice would be to get eaten or trigger CNG prematurely and have a shot at survival while everyone else gets eaten. Guess which option they're most likely to pick? In this case, then, the goal for the PCs is to destroy the Vulkan-LEX prototype before it can be successfully tested.

Purge Sequence

The Thirteenth Directorate is going to take out the Daniltsy Cult or DKX Systems, and the Laundry's caught in the crossfire. In this setup, the Directorate drop an Occlusion Field on Pavlodar – think a Almaz-X satellite-projected combination of entropic manipulation and memory gas, ensuring that no-one in the afflicted area can remember or interfere with their operations. (No-one, that is, who isn't protected by a ward.)

After that, the spetznaz move in. A sixteen-man GRU team is more than enough to take out the expected opposition at either target site (the monastery or DKX Systems). If they suspect there's a strong Laundry presence there, they'll add in another 16 spetznaz and back them up with a bound drekevac.

Spetznaz

STR 15 **CON** 16 **SIZ** 13 **INT** 13 **POW** 12
DEX 14 **CHA** 10 **EDU** 16 **SAN** 60 **HP** 15

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Kalashnikov AK-47M (2d6+4, Banishment Rounds), explosive grenades (4d6/4 metres).

Armour: Body armour (4/8 vs firearms)

Skills: Athletics 50%, Brawl 65%, Climb 60%, Command 55%, Computer Use (Magic) 50%, Demolition 50%, Firearms (Assault Rifle) 90%, Firearms (Esoteric) 40%, Knowledge (Occult) 40%, Listen 35%, Spot 45%, Strategy 65%.

Artefacts: Class two defensive binding (kinetic and cold).

Drekavac

Drekavacs are a side effect of possession. When an exnome possesses a human host, the human consciousness gets entwined with the alien entity. If the host dies and the possessor jumps to a new host, elements of the human personality sometimes survive. Drekavacs occur when the second host has less processing power (for example, an animal), and you end up with the simplest, most primitive human instincts overlaid onto a supernatural beast.

Drekavacs usually resemble animals warped into roughly humanoid forms, their flesh torn and remoulded to fit the after-image of the entity's previous host. Their screams carry an echo of the death of the human host, and so are damaging to those who hear them without proper protection (a class two ward or enchanted noise-cancelling headphones.)

Characteristics	Rolls	Average
STR	2d6+6	13
CON	3d6+3	13-14
SIZ	2d6+3	10
INT	2d6	7
POW	3d6	10-11
DEX	3d6+3	13-14
Move: 12		HP: 12

Average Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Claws 40%, damage 1d8+db
Scream 70%, damage 1d6 + 2d6 SAN Loss

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

Sanity Loss: 1/1d3



Handout #1: Barrow report

Issued by the Department of Field Support

Serial No.: 1415-RKO-1194731

References: RUMPLED OCHRE

From: Field agent Steven Barrow

Subject: DKX Systems report #1

Intelligence Report
Secret / UK Eyes Only

I infiltrated DKX Systems one month ago. This involved creating a cover identity as Kliment Marchuk, a Ukrainian engineer who worked for the State Space Agency of Ukraine and let go due to alcoholism. After a brief interview process, I was hired and "moved" to Pavlodar.

I began working with a team tasked with improving the thrust and stability of the Proton-M rocket. During this time, I discretely collected data from colleagues through conversations, reading memos, and similar low-impact methods. I focused on background information to get a feel for DKX Systems and their corporate culture. No one has identified me as a foreigner nor seemed unduly interested in my background. They view me as a talented drunk.

DKX Systems was originally part of the Soviet Space Program. They worked on the N1-L3 rocket, then moved to another project called Vulkan-LEX before being shut down and metamorphosing into a private company owned by Alexei Orlov. They have several contracts from Moscow to improve upon aspects of the Proton-M rocket. However, the company is worried that Moscow will abandon the Proton-M in favour of the Angara rocket designed by rival company Khrunichev State Research and Production Space Centre.

There is a notable air of panic when this is brought up. Rumours suggest a project led by Orlov will save the company, but these appear to have been started by middle management. At least one version of this rumour suggests Orlov is repurposing the Vulkan-LEX design, and this is somehow connected to an "Old Group".

I have not been able to source the spontaneous human combustions in Pavlodar. Although four of the seven victims worked for DKX Systems, this could be a coincidence. I can hear my old Advanced Occultism instructor saying, "There is no such thing as coincidences in magic," so I will continue to investigate. The only connection between the four DKX engineers that I've uncovered is a passion for the local football club (FC Irtysh Pavlodar), but everyone here has that.

One last note: the Thirteenth Directorate appears interested in DKX Systems as well. Last week, I spotted what appeared to be a scrying app running on a laptop. The owner, an engineer who I had not been introduced to yet, quickly shut it and started talking to me about a local nightclub in a clumsy attempt to change the subject. I played along, but later found tiny traces of blood on his desk. Given the Thirteenth Directorate's fondness of blood magic, it's reasonable to assume they are looking into the SHC incidents as well.

*Where does Barrow's loyalty lie?
How can field agents find him and determine that?*

*How do we operate in Kazakhstan without
alerting the Thirteenth Directorate?*

*What is the code name
for this operation?*

As Above, So Below



Handout #2: Pavlodar Police Report Summary

- There are five (5) or seven (7) victims of spontaneous human combustion in Pavlodar over the past year.
- Four (4) of them work for a company called DKX Systems: Nurlan Ibrayev, Boris Akhmetov, Artyom Marat, and Dina Zherdov.
- Two (2) others work for Pavlodar State University: Sezim Amangeldy and Anara Bolat. The last victim is Anara's brother, Yuri Bolat, a tram driver.
- Order of deaths: Ibrayev, Amangeldy, Akhmetov, Marat, Zherdov, and the two (2) Bolats.
- All of them burned up in their flats, two (2) of which burned to the ground (Dina Zherdov and Sezim Amangeldy). With the others, the fire either was contained by locals or burned itself out. That's why the number of victims is either five (5) or seven (7). Dina Zherdov and Sezim Amangeldy might have been burned by a fire, not spontaneous human combustion.
- Evidence is always the same: ashes and a random body part blistered but not burned. Bodies were identified by DNA. No accelerants were detected, but Yuri Bolat and Dina Zherdov were both alcoholics with bad smoking habits and may have burned themselves up.
- Nothing was stolen or damaged apart from by fires. One (1) flat (Anara Bolat) had evidence that someone else was there, such as two (2) glasses of wine, but no one (1) has been identified.
- Police interviewed several people from DKX Systems and Pavlodar State University, but no connection was made to the victims. The four (4) DKX Systems employees were well-liked and respected but not overly so.
- The police seem at a loss to explain what's going on. Neighbours of the victims sometimes reported a stranger in the building prior to the event, but everyone (1) describes a different person, and some report no one visiting at all. Police are blaming a serial arsonist, maybe a terrorist cell, and unofficially are hoping this goes away.



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