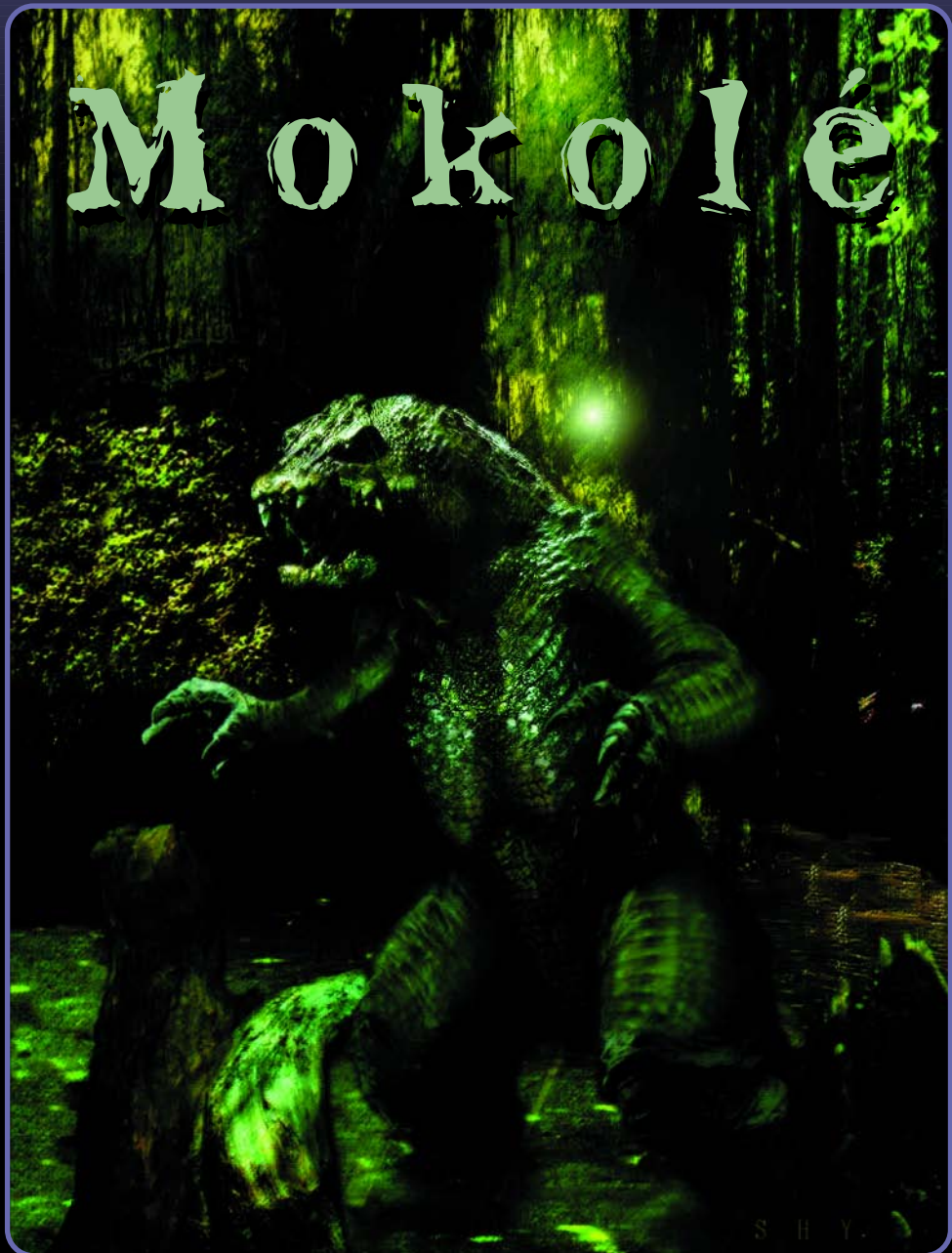


CONSPIRACY XTM

M o k o l é



BODYGUARD OF LIES 2

The Living Swamp Awaits

Strange creatures haunt the depths of the bayou. Sober witnesses report that they appear to be half human and half alligator.

Local legends tell of a guardian called Mokolé. The creature is said to protect the swamp and those who call it home. Tales also speak of vicious and relentless reprisals against those who despoil the wild.

What is the secret of the Mokolé? Is it part of an alien threat, a supernatural terror, or a long lost species of dinosaur? Is it truly benevolent, or will it rise up and eviscerate those that hunt it?

Any that spend time in the bayou feel the eyes of the Mokolé upon them. Those few who hear the nocturnal roars of the beast are changed forever.

Bodyguard of Lies 2: Mokolé is the second in a series of module/sourcebooks for the Conspiracy X roleplaying game. This book includes:

- A ready-to-run adventure exploring the swamps of Louisiana and the myths of the man-alligator Mokolé
- A short story revealing the horror of a journey into corruption
 - A detailed article on Alchemy, a new magical tradition
- New character Credential, the crusader Knights of Mona
 - A new look at skills, and new rules for skill defaults
- New traits and trainings for your Conspiracy X character

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BODYGUARD OF LIES

Mokolé



“In wartime, truth is so precious that she should
always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.”

- *Winston Churchill*

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Printed in the swamps of Louisiana.

Reference material for your Conspiracy X campaign may be found at www.llewellyn.com.

CONSPIRACY X™

Original Concept by Rick Ernst, Shirley Madewell, Chris Pallace

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second installment of Bodyguard of Lies (BoL), a series of Conspiracy X module/sourcebooks. We had high hopes for this line, and thought it would find an audience. Your response, however, has exceeded our expectations. We sold out the first print run almost immediately. Even the reprint is almost gone. We want to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for your support. Current plans call for a new BoL every other month.

We have sketched out the contents of the next two issues of BoL, and have first drafts of the missions in house. These two missions are stand-alone and similar to the adventures in the first two BoLs. For the future, Bernard Trombley, the Conspiracy X Rules Editor, is heading up a group of writers who are working through a multi-part mission. This story will run over the course of several BoL issues, but each episode will stand on its own, and may be played by itself. All in all, these stories will reveal some secrets about the Conspiracy X world, and portent things to come.

As for this volume of BoL, we are delighted to present two new writers, Martin Stennert and Paul "Wiggy" Williams. As with many who have worked to make Conspiracy X great, I have never met either in person. Wiggy submitted his Mokolé mission after several email messages; Martin originally sent the Odyssey story for our web site contest (soon to be reborn). They just happened to arrive as we were gathering material for this publication. We immediately knew both pieces were something special, and quickly assigned them a place in this issue. More than that, we are bringing both writers onto other projects. You should be seeing more of them both here and in other Conspiracy X supplements.

John Snead, author of *Forsaken Rites: The Supernatural Sourcebook*, joins in with a new magical tradition: Alchemy. This tradition is safer but slower than the usual ones, and adds a new twist to playing with the supernatural. John has submitted a number of articles based on magic and the supernatural. We will be presenting them over the course of the next few BoLs.

Finally, Bernard Trombley, Magnus Pettersson and Rens van der Bergh round out this issue with some new skill rules, new traits, new trainings and revised skill descriptions.

Next issue, we will be debuting another new author, Susanne Johnson-Haggett. Susanne has submitted an investigatory, city-hopping mission, called Synergy. As usual, the issue will be filled out with new rules and background material.

In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact us with your comments and concerns. Contact information may be found on the credits page. True to the purpose of BoL as a contributory publication, submissions are also gratefully accepted. They will be reviewed and if accepted, we will ask that you join the Eden Operative Program. This new program is detailed on the next page.

Again, thanks for your support. See you next issue . . .

M. Alexander Jurkat, Creative Director, Eden Studios

EDEN OPERATIVE PROGRAM

Through the Eden Operative Program, Eden Studios offers demonstrators, playtesters and amateur writers certain compensation for their contributions to our various products. The compensation takes the form of "Eden Bucks" and is awarded upon completion of an assignment, or acceptance of a submission. This article details the requirements and restrictions of the Eden Operative Program.

HOW DO I WRITE FOR BODYGUARD OF LIES?

The best way for an amateur writer to get an article into BoL is to contact us and ask what we are looking for, or to submit a suggestion of your own. If we like your idea, we'll give you the "go-ahead" and you can start working on it immediately. Many of our fans have written up materials that they are already using in their own games. We encourage them to submit those ideas for inclusion in BoL. If we like the piece, we will work with the author to fine tune it and find a place for it in BoL.

WHAT ARE THE OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM?

Eden is also looking for playtesters who are committed to reviewing and writing evaluations of gaming products. Our playtesters are not only rewarded with Eden Bucks for their part on each project, but they know that their comments and suggestions shape the world and game play of Conspiracy X. The playtesters have a great deal of influence on the way a book turns out.

Demonstration of the various Eden Studios products is the third way to be part of the Eden Operative Program. By contacting us and scheduling demonstrations at conventions and local gaming stores, fans of our products can earn Eden Bucks.

WHAT ARE EDEN BUCKS?

Those who help out as writers, playtesters and demonstrators are compensated with Eden Bucks. Each Eden Buck translates to one U.S. Dollar, which can be spent on anything Eden Studios produces.

I'M EXCITED ABOUT ALL THIS, HOW DO I JOIN?

Becoming a member of the Eden Operative Program is as easy as submitting a request. Please supply your name, address, email, and phone number. You will also need to indicate the part of the program you would like to participate in, and the game or games you want to work on. You will be sent out the complete guide to our program. Send snail mail or email to:

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S H Y

ODYSSEY

A SHORT STORY
BY MARTIN STENNERT

Dedication

To Neil Gaiman with thanks for all the hours I've been a guest in his worlds, to Eric Stolz for a most memorable angel Simon, to Jana Berger for her willingness to play Ping-Pong, for always listening and generally for being a friend and to Lord Alfred Tennyson for *Ulysses*

"[I am] merely one who regrets the abandonment of theology, in these strange warm times."
-- Loki in conversation, LA (Sandman: The Kindly Ones, by Neil Gaiman)

"Now I'm just taking things easy. Playing a little piano, and running the best damned nightclub and restaurant in this whole city of the angels."-- Lucifer in conversation, LA (Sandman: The Kindly Ones, by Neil Gaiman)

PROLOGUE

The sleet whispered against the windowpanes. In his big brass bed, Carlos Fuentes turned over restlessly, staring at shadows of the jalousie -- bars of darkness painted on ceiling and wall by a pale streetlight. Not too long from now, orange strobes and a muffled whining hum would announce that the night was drawing to a close. The snowplow would come through, preparing the streets of Washington D.C. for the traffic of yet another wintry morning. Carlos shifted his glance to the glowing digits of the bedside clock, and watched them march slowly from one minute to the next.

Once again, his thoughts dwelled on the icy depths of that nameless Norwegian fjord that had become the grave of so many men. The sudden rush of shadows, the terrible jerking of a caught body, the bubbles streaming from torn tubes, the slow downward tumble of a waterproof flashlight, the billowing clouds of gray suddenly illuminated a painful crimson. Carlos groaned and closed his eyes. He rolled over to the other side, tried to hide his face in crumpled sheets, but he could find no refuge there. The past was always with him, keeping up with every detail of his life, a constant companion. There was only one thing to do to keep it at bay.

When the snowplow finally moved down the street, Carlos sat up in bed, lit a smoke, and reached for the phone. He hesitated, staring at the glowing green display for a long moment. Then he drew on the cigarette, nodded as if agreeing to something, and started punching in the number.

CHAPTER ONE

CONVERSATION

They met over lunch. Yamazaki had found the file on his desk that morning. The greasy spoon diner was on the corner F Street and 11th, situated roughly the same distance from the Treasury Building and FBI Headquarters, or close enough to seem deliberate. The interior was dimly lit, booths padded in cracked red leather, and the only other patrons were a couple of young backpack tourists, and an elderly federal employee in a gray suit reading the *Washington Post*. Blurred silhouettes hurried by outside windows that were steamed up and dirty from winter to the point of being blind.

His contact, a powerfully built Puerto Rican, was waiting for him in a booth in the far corner of the room. Yamazaki could not help noticing that from his position the man was able to keep an eye on the entire restaurant and the door. A paper napkin with a neatly drawn bug-eyed alien was next to his steaming mug of coffee. He looked up when Yamazaki sat down. "Hi there, bit late."

"It wouldn't have done to draw too much attention at the Bureau, would it? I had to finish a debriefing -- nasty piece of business." Yamazaki changed the subject. "You sure this place is okay?"

The man gave Yamazaki an annoyed look.

"Food's supposed to be fine. Reuben Special with grilled chicken breast been highly recommended. Staked it out recently for a meeting with a material witness, but the lady was found dead in her swimming pool before I could talk to her. Wouldn't be here, if I thought otherwise, okay?"

After a second, he added, "You ready to order?"

Yamazaki had the recommended Reuben Special; the Puerto Rican only had some more coffee and a cigarette.

"So, who you supposed to be? My spook backup?"

"Special Agent Yamazaki, FBI. They came to me for help in solving the Vermont Devil case. They said I was Sensitive, and I guess they're right. I do seem to see more than your average Joe. From the file, I gathered the person we're looking for is a Focus. So I should be able to provide some help. Your turn."

The big man had been fiddling around with the adorned paper napkin and dropped it. It settled on a Formica top that had been scratched by generations of hasty eaters so that it now had the appearance of being air-brushed. He leaned back. The leather creaked. He brushed through his short-cropped dark hair.

"Special Agent Fuentes, Customs. Knew the lady in question, long time ago. Was a regular contact of my first cell, bit of a freelancer, really. Title of Occult Consultant with the brass. Native American shaman, used to be a member of the World Tree, in case that rings a bell."

Yamazaki nodded. He had encountered the LA-based Lodge of the World Tree two times since he had joined Aegis. Both times the loosely organized society of international shamanic practitioners had proven to be polite to the extreme, but a major pain in the ass as far as getting information out of them was concerned. All in all, they seemed largely benign. Something else troubled him, though. "Why just the two of us on this case? And why outside established Cell structures? This is unusual."

"Didn't they tell you? When it's one of us, this is standard, in case there's a traitor. Minimizes the risk. Bet they told you to be careful, trust no one, all that crap. You want to get old in this business, you better take that serious. Won't catch me forgetting to watch my back."

Carlos' smile was too full of teeth to be in any way comforting, Yamazaki decided. Outside it had begun again to snow.



CHAPTER TWO

DO NOT CROSS

The City of Angels had emerged shimmering in the heat of the February afternoon when the plane had sunk slowly into the hazy bell of smog that clung to the metropolis. Gentle Rain's oceanside mansion stood in Venice Beach, less than a ten-minute ride from Los Angeles International. Yamazaki had called ahead and a local Bureau employee had a car and keys to the house waiting at the airport.

2347 Ocean Front Walk, a whitewashed Spanish adobe-style hacienda, was built over Carroll Canal. An artful wrought iron fence and a beautiful old eucalyptus tree guarded the narrow steps to the porch. Carlos and Yamazaki flashed their shields to the police officer sitting in the shade of the tree, ducked under the black-and-yellow striped tape and walked up the stairs. Every step lifted white clouds of pollen and dust. On the porch, Carlos shielded his eyes with his hand and looked back up and down the street. Twenty-fourth street was deserted. The sun gleamed painfully bright on the windshields of parked cars. Opposite the row of villas, Ocean Front Walk was defined by a low cracked concrete wall, beyond which beckoned the beach and the open expanse of the Pacific Ocean. A small boy in swimming trunks and plastic sandals sat on the barrier. He held a large ice cream cone with both hands as if he did not know what to do with it. A convertible cruised down the road. The driver, a young man with long flowing blond hair and a neatly cut beard, his eyes hidden by mirror-shades, was talking on a cellular phone. Carlos suddenly remembered that he had forgotten his shades in Washington. He shrugged and followed Yamazaki.

The floors were warm terra-cotta, the walls cool white plaster. The air was almost palpably chilly inside. Ruth Gentle Rain, a professor of anthropology and archaeology at UCLA, had been a collector of items pertaining to mother goddess cults. Plain glass showcases adorned every room, each displaying only one or two tastefully chosen fig-

urines or ritual instruments. Yamazaki strolled through the house, hands in the pockets of his trousers. The young FBI agent seemed to be lost in thought, musing over this or that item. Carlos suspected that he was investigating the Seepage with his attuned senses. There would be a lot to discover, the Customs man was sure -- after all this building had been home to a powerful supernatural Focus for several decades. And knowing Gentle Rain, he suspected it would have been chosen for its rich magical aura in the first place. He regarded one exhibit himself, a wooden sculpture that seemed to combine features of a reptile face and human labia. He shrugged and went past it into the library. He stopped next to a chalk drawn human outline. Dark flecks of dried blood surrounded the head like a perverse halo. After a while, he knelt beside it, not sure if he wanted to have a closer look or if it was meant to be a gesture of respect.

Yamazaki walked to his side, the police report in his hands, turning pages.

"Victim is a Judith Scarpetta, 22 years of age, student of anthropology at UCLA and personal assistant to Professor Gentle Rain. Serious blunt trauma to the back of the skull, probably from knocking her head on the floor. Bruising of genitals suggests rape, but further tests are pending. Fingerprints and blood and skin-tissue under her fingernails, so far inconclusive. Currently, she is at the West Los Angeles Municipal Hospital, situation still critical. The next 24 hours will decide if she lives. Has not been conscious since she was found."

Carlos stood up and scanned the room. Nothing seemed disturbed, although a certain amount of disorder in the bookshelves made that difficult to assess. An archway led to an annexed chamber with more bookshelves and showcases, one of which stood ajar, the exhibit missing. He walked over to it and read the inscription on the label. "Depiction of Tabiti, Great Goddess of Scythians (fertility, plants, animals, and motherhood). Bronze figurine, c. 700 BC, Southern Ural Mountains, Kazakhstan."

A faint maroon fingerprint was visible on the

open glass door.

"There is absolutely no indication of forced entry. The burglar alarm had not been tripped; I checked with the armed response service. But an anonymous caller reported a young man entered with Scarpetta. He left alone and in a hurry approximately a quarter of an hour later, north on Ocean Front. The description is as follows: White male, twenty years of age or younger, about five feet nine, black hair, dressed in a red T-shirt, cut-off jeans and green canvas sneakers. He was carrying a small backpack.

"Pretty complete description for an anonymous caller, huh?" Yamazaki wondered aloud. He stood under the archway between the two rooms and his voice produced an eerie echo, hollow and far away. He blinked owlishly.

Carlos went to the narrow shuttered windows and looked out at the ocean. He was hardly listening to his partner. The sea was turquoise, the sky a deep azure. Sun worshipers sprawled on the blinding white sand.

Yamazaki checked the report again. "She was wearing sweatpants, running shoes, T-shirt and bandanna. Shoes and socks were soaking wet, sea water; shirt and pants were very sweaty -- she must have been jogging at the beach. She didn't even have time to shower or change."

Carlos continued to look at the ocean.



CHAPTER THREE

POINT BLANK

"Find anything interesting, boys?" Startled, both men turned around.

A middle-aged woman leaned against the frame of the door to the hallway, her arms crossed in front of her chest. She was dressed in dark blue, her shoes federal issue, Yamazaki noticed. She stared angrily at Carlos. The Customs agent regarded her stony-faced.

"Helen, this is Special Agent Yamazaki of the Bureau. Yamazaki, Marshal Olshaker. What's this case to you, Helen?"

"Perp is suspected to be a fugitive from a federal prison. Makes it our jurisdiction, doesn't it? What has Customs to do with it?"

"Stolen object probably imported in violation of federal antiquities regulation. Missing Dr. Gentle Rain might be involved in large scale smuggling operation. FBI is in on request from me, invaluable assistance, really. Can we now cut the crap? This is Foundation business, isn't it? Who you after -- Gentle Rain? You know she's not your kind of prey, Helen."

"The girlfriend, Scarpetta. Been watching her for two months now. Believe her to be prescient."

"I don't understand . . ." Yamazaki began, but he was cut short by Carlos.

"You know where Ruth is?"

The woman shook her head. "Left two days ago in that oversized classic of hers, '57 Plymouth Fury. As I said, not interested in her. She with you guys, one of the club?"

Again, Yamazaki interrupted, "Are you saying that you observed the assault and did nothing to intervene. Can you identify the attacker?"

For the first time, Marshal Olshaker looked at him. "I observed how both entered the house that morning and how the young man left about fifteen minutes later. I did not know what had happened or I would have taken action."

"So, you were the anonymous caller," Yamazaki realized suddenly.

Carlos flashed his humorless smile.

"The whole thing kind of puts an end to your case, huh? Prescient psychics should be kind of hard to surprise like this, don't you think?"

"Not necessarily, as you know well enough."

Carlos just gave her a blank look. For a moment the air between the two appeared to grow dark red to Yamazaki's senses. Raw emotional energy shimmered as a silent duel

was fought. His ability was not strong enough to grant genuine psychic empathy, but it allowed for a basic assessment of the situation. There was a familiarity between the Customs man and the Marshal that went back a long way. Their auras suggested the sort of intimacy that only exists between people that have been either very close, or that have worked together for a long time in a position that requires a lot of trust, like soldiers or partners in the police. There was much suppressed sexual attraction and even more hatred, the hatred barely suppressed at all. Carlos was the first to disengage. Again, he looked out to the ocean. His voice was tired and monotone.

"Go, Helen. There is enough bad blood in this to last both of us a lifetime. I did not ask for any of what has happened any more than you did. We were young, and the young do foolish things. Just let it be. And leave Jody out of this. You damn well know that no one is safer than her, here, together with Ruth. She won't be corrupted and she needs none of your group hassling her. Do it for Ruth. You owe her, too."

Helen Olshaker was very pale. She turned to Yamazaki and hissed between clenched teeth, "Did they tell you with whom you are working? Did they tell you what he has done? No, they didn't, did they? They never do. You and your goddamn boy scouts, you're all the same. Go, kid, ask your superiors for the classified file on Carlos Fuentes, before it's too late for you. Watch your back, and make sure that you don't learn too much from him. You don't even know how much you are out of your depth. You don't have any idea . . ."

"Helen . . ."

She choked on her words for a moment, then she turned around with something that sounded like a cross between a scream and a sob, and stumbled down the steps to the front door. For a long time after she had slammed it shut behind her, the silence in the house was so thick it drowned out the steady roar of the surf outside. When it became unbearable, Yamazaki cleared his throat. He searched for something to say.

"What . . . uhm, you two, erm, knew each other, I take it," he said finally, dismayed how lame his words were. Carlos didn't even bother to respond.

"Why don't you go and check out the back-ground on the stolen item. I'd try her office at the University, too. The Lodge might be worth a shot, but don't get your hopes up."

"What will you do?"

"Investigate on my own. She was right in that. We better go our separate ways from now on. You got my number on the cellular?"



CHAPTER FOUR

THE TEMPLE

The traffic of the Pacific Coast Highway was muffled and distant. The narrow Long Beach back street lay deserted in the golden glow of the late afternoon sun. Someone had sprayed something on the flaking green plaster: the black silhouette of a boy standing with lowered pants and widely spaced feet, giving it the appearance of a shadow of someone pissing against the wall. Where the imaginary stream of urine would have hit the bricks a ventilation pipe jutted out. A steady trickle of condensation ran across the dusty tarmac, perfecting the illusion. The fading lettering above the heavy steel door set deep into the wall was almost impossible to read in the contrast between the lengthening shadows and the blinding bright sky, but Carlos did not need to. He knew the words.

ORDO TEMPLI OKZIDENTIS

The inside was dark and icy cold. The bouncer had every air of a troll, the sort you would expect to be lurking under a bridge to waylay unsuspecting travelers. But no one unsuspecting would wander into the O.T.O. The owner, known only as "Aleister" -- something that had struck Carlos always as quite ridiculous -- had drifted south from San Francisco during the mid-70s. His first bar, which had never even had an official name but had com-

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monly been referred to as "The Temple" in LA's occult scene, had burned down after a few years. In the 80s, the O.T.O. had been the place to be seen for wannabe black magicians, voodoo and santeria bokkors, evil witches and sinister cult leaders. At the height of Carlos' notoriety, after he had realized what had become of him, he had often hung out here during the day.

The club had changed since then. The S&M scene had adopted it as its playground, and although the skulls, black candles, reverse crucifixes and black madonnas remained, the halls were now dominated by H. R. Giger motives, chains, racks and cages. Still, it was a lead. In his position, Carlos told himself, he could not afford to leave anything out. Besides, this was going to be fun.

Only a few patrons were scattered between the pillars, at the two bars, and in the backrooms. A tall, gaunt man in red leather sat on a barstool. At his feet, a hairless obese Filipino woman huddled harnessed in chains, and suckled on the toes of his boots. The man regarded Carlos from sunken eyes.

"Get you anything, boy?"

Carlos smiled grimly. Then he was upon the gaunt man. The pale, cadaverous face felt soft and somehow squishy beneath his fists as he slammed into him. The Filipino woman screamed. Her voice was deep and rough. Carlos would have expected a falsetto squeak.



CHAPTER FIVE

LONG DISTANCE, COLLECT

"Thought you'd ask. You're a bright kid. What gave him away?"

"A bloody U.S. Marshal, accusing him of something unspeakable and warning me to watch my back, that's what gave him away, Sir."

"Sergeant Carlos Fuentes, U.S. Navy. He was a SEAL, a good one at that. Lot of violence in him, but he had guts and was loyal to a fault. Up to the end of the Cold War, he did covert ops: extraction, espionage, sabotage, assassination, you name it. The Book sent an entire team into the lair of a Kraken -- the Nazis had sunken a shitload of occult paraphernalia there. Powerful mojo, trying to catch up with us, the boys in black, I reckon. The op went bad, major. Fuentes was the only one to survive. After that he joined a Seattle-based group of Law Enforcement officers hunting and exterminating psychics. By then Fuentes had given up the Navy, worked for the Treasury ever since. We don't know what sent him over the edge. To the best of our knowledge it was no simple infestation, maybe just enough darkness had accumulated in him. Whatever. He became an Incarnate, a Predator. As far as we can figure, he has twenty-two kills to his head. Messy. Most of them corrupted themselves, though. Gentle Rain, she took him in. He was badly hurt after a run-in with one of our Cells down in LA. She healed him, cleansed him of his corruption. He was never trusted with a Cell, but he was just too much of an asset to simply discard. He has regular psychological counseling, and he just burns to hunt down monsters -- the Book, bugs, Incarnate -- there's no stopping him. Guess this one struck too close to home. Gentle Rain meant a lot to him, so we figured, we send you along to keep an eye on things."

"And you didn't think I ought to have known all that?" Yamazaki asked, his voice cracked with incredulous fury.

"Wanted you to make your own picture first, so we didn't tell you. Now you know, right?"

"Yeah, now I know. And what do you expect me to do?"

"To do your job. That's all. To do your goddamn job."



CHAPTER SIX

MIRRORS

"Let him go, boys."

In the cold neon light, blood had the color of ink. Carlos bled, quite a lot. He had not even noticed that the knocked-out teeth had since grown back. The two hulking figures on both sides released their vise-like grips. Unsupported, Carlos dropped to his knees. The blood in his mouth tasted good, fresh and coppery.

"What have you brought me then?"

"Sire, he was asking questions about the Indian Woman and the stolen statuette. He had already trashed the O.T.O. and the Desperandum and he crashed a private party given by Crowe. We got hold of him when he broke into your downtown office where the items for the Inquisition exhibit are being kept. He killed Jiminy. We thought it best to bring him to you, Lord."

"Show me his face. He seems familiar."

One of the brutes gripped his forehead and jerked his head back. The light was bright and lent strength to his already nauseating headache. He could hear the vertebrae creak beneath his skull as they shifted to accommodate his mutating form. His breath was loud and labored.

The man he was staring at was huge. He was dressed in a black silk suit. The big pink slabs that were his hands rested on the silver tip of an elegant cane. His features bore the mark of cruel arrogance and decadent ennui.

"The Lord of Mirrors," Carlos spat blood on the floor. "I should have known you were behind this. What have you done to Gentle Rain? Why have you abducted her? It really is your style to leave her disciple raped and half dead on the floor, isn't it? Tell me, is it 'coz you can't get it up yourself any more, or

do you just get off on having your underlings force innocent women?"

The large man looked down at him for a moment, leaned back and bellowed with laughter. It took some time before he caught his breath again. Still wheezing, he dabbed at the corners of his eyes with a petite silken kerchief. "I have no idea what you are talking about, my dear Carlos. That is the name you go under right now, yes? Although I must say, you are growing increasingly familiar as we speak. I really hate to disappoint you, but I truly have nothing whatsoever to do with the little attack on Dr. Gentle Rain's plaything. I admit, I always had an interest in her little occult collection of female magic. No matter how much she assured the rest of us that her interest was purely academic, I can't help thinking that this immense stock of sexual energies stored in her eclectic private museum would do just nicely for some dark Tantric ritual."

Carlos growled. Magic was always ambiguous, often times healing spells asked for a sacrifice, and many potent agricultural rites drew their power from spilt blood -- death to you, life to your crops. Nevertheless, most traditions made a strict distinction between white and black magic, and to leave the white path meant to irreversibly taint oneself. There hardly was a greater insult than to insinuate Gentle Rain had used her skill and power for a curse, to summon a demon, or to do bodily harm to an enemy.

"But alas, her wards and protective magics were a match for my own capabilities. Building her house over flowing water -- that, my friend, was a stroke of genius. A bridge between the planes, the cleansing potential of fresh water. And to free the symbol of the god-mother from that patriarchal church once again without loosing the anti-sorcerous power of Catholicism -- all that without the help of any established counter-religion like voodoo. She and I might be enemies in your narrow view of the world, but that doesn't mean that I do not hold her in the highest regard. Petty revenge and jealousies are beneath me. It pains me that you would think

otherwise.”

Carlos moaned in pain as his jaw began the slow process of rearranging itself. The Lord of Mirrors leaned forward on his cane. He hissed sympathetically; his eyes gleamed as he observed Carlos’ suffering. One of the henchmen made a step to the side and his shadow fell on Carlos. The Lord of Mirrors smiled as he watched the subtle transformation continue.

“I must confess, I am impressed with you, too. So many people investing so much care and money in their safety, myself not least, and you just walk through all these defenses with hardly a scratch. For that alone I will not take your life, although you must admit, it would be my every right. Also, somehow I find myself convinced that you will still provide us with much fun and sport. Think of me as a gardener sparing the ripe and tasty fruit for the most promising seeds hidden inside, yes?”

He straightened his back and tapped the tip of the cane impatiently on the floor.

“Now get him out of here, boys. And someone clean up this mess.”

The rough deep-bellied laughter followed Carlos as he was dragged out of the room.



CHAPTER SEVEN

ΕΠΙΦΑΝΥ

Situated just west of Beverly Hills in the southern reaches of the Santa Monica Mountains, the University of California had a splendid view of the evening sky. Not a cloud marred the serene beauty of the ever-deepening blues. The coming night brought a dry, temperate breeze that smelled of jasmine and roses and wild thyme. Yamazaki leaned against the silver metallic Ford from the Bureau carpark and tried to collect his thoughts.

Carlos had been right; the Lodge had been a dead end. The elderly Chinese man Yamazaki

had found in the Lodge house in South San Gabriel had assured him that nothing untoward had happened to Mrs. Gentle Rain. He had insisted that it was absolutely impossible for him to give her current whereabouts to the police. He had promised he would inform her of the request, though, and ask her to call Yamazaki as soon as possible.

The wide eastern sky had been the color of a fading bruise when Yamazaki had walked back to the car. Over the sea, unseen behind the skyline of downtown LA, the sun was setting in vivid shades of red. The young FBI agent had driven west on the San Bernardino and the Santa Monica Freeway, then north on San Diego into Westwood, where he had taken the Sunset exit to UCLA. All other avenues of inquiry had proven fruitless as well; the neighbor who had noticed the open front door and notified the police had nothing to add to the official report -- the description of the suspect meant nothing to her. Yamazaki had talked to the detectives at the LAPD, but to them this was only one case of so many -- a fact of life in the city.

A few late students were leaving the library. Lights appeared in some windows. The humanities building, where the anthropology lecturers had their offices, could be reached through a small grove of orange trees. It was just that moment of the evening when the artificial and faintly greenish light from the street-lamps and the light slowly fading out of the sky were in perfect balance, giving everything a weird and otherworldly air. Yamazaki noticed a pregnant young woman walking beside him. Her hair was dark and long and flowed over her shoulders. Her leather sandals slapped lightly on the paved stonepath. He stopped and cleared his throat. “Excuse me.”

“Yes?”

She lifted her gaze; her eyes met his. Suddenly he was dizzy and very unsure of himself.

“Don’t I know you from somewhere?” It was not what he had wanted to say.

She smiled gracefully at him. Yamazaki felt stupid and clumsy. Hastily, he continued,

"I'm looking for the office of Professor Gentle Rain; she teaches archaeology and anthropology. Do you know her?"

Bemused she answered, "You might say that. Why?"

"Sogho Yamazaki, FBI. I think I'm a bit lost. Could you please show me the way?"

He smiled politely, tried to sound jocular and easygoing.

"And what do you mean to find there, Sogho Yamazaki?"

The conversation was not developing as expected, but he decided to simply go with the flow. "I'm not quite sure."

The young woman stepped closer and took his hands.

"I'm sorry, but I can't help you, Sogho. The heart is a lonely hunter and hunts on a lonely hill."

Still smiling gracefully she bent forward and breathed a gentle kiss on Yamazaki's lips. He closed his eyes, savoring the moment, inhaled her fragrance and felt himself transported back to his childhood, when his parents had been on holiday with him in Japan to visit his mother's father. His mother had taken him through a flowering orchard, where his grandfather had been waiting. Yamazaki had been frightened but wide-eyed with wonder, safe with the reassurance of his mother walking next to him, her gentle hand on his shoulder, her familiar smell mingling with the exotic smell of the flowering trees.

When he opened his eyes again, he was alone.



CHAPTER EIGHT

FOCUS

The small balcony on the westward face of Gentle Rain's house was cluttered with several dozen potted plants. Carlos sat on a white French bistro-style iron chair, his boots up on the railing, bathed in the intense scent of the

flowers. The stars crept across the silken midnight blue of the sky.

Esther Bonaparte had been a member of a CIA-sponsored Haitian insurgence group. Over time the group had grown independent, though, and when their actions threatened to expose American involvement, plausible deniability had forced Langely to put an end to the operation. She had died shooting at American soldiers, with an American financed weapon. She had been Carlos' first kill, that many years ago. Although she hadn't known, they had met two years before at a CIA symposium on guerrilla warfare. He had envied the ease with which she had moved between the mercenaries and revolutionaries, equally versed in Marxist rhetoric and military tactics. She had known exactly who she was and why she was doing what she did. Once he had watched her with a small group of Afghan paramilitaries. She had been listening seriously to one of them explain his Islamic vision of society in broken English. For a brief moment, her gaze had wandered through the crowd and met his. She had noticed his U.S. Navy uniform, and dismissed him as a useful tool that would never attain that status or respect she held for her ragged companions from the barren mountains of Central Asia. The knowledge that she in turn was only being used by his government had merely lent her the glamour of desperate heroism that made her arrogance the more cruel. When she died under his gun, she had been tired and dirty and somehow very beautiful.

Carlos forced himself back into the present. A soft breeze had picked up. The night in Venice Beach had cooled; the last party fires on the sandy shore had died; the teenagers had gone home. The smell of rain lay in the air. He fought the urge to scratch himself, although his skin itched terribly. He continued to listen to the creaking and slithering sounds that accompanied his body's slow mutation. Time was running out fast.

He was very much aware of the Seepage energies awash in the house, hints of past feelings and never-spoken words almost per-

ceptible, fragments of rash thoughts and passing touches whispering in undisturbed shadows.

He stood up and glanced along the road again. On the beach he thought he could see a couple making out, the night blossoming with tender sexual energies. And to the north on Windward Pier, a lone figure was standing, staring at the sea. There was something familiar about the figure, but Carlos could not put a finger on it yet.

He walked back inside, his steps sounding dry and hollow on the terra-cotta tiles. He remembered the line from that movie, where the blind Indian asked Sean Penn, "Are you human or just another hungry ghost?" So, he would be a hungry ghost -- somehow he felt much more content with that term than the official Aegis nomenclature "Predator". They would hunt him soon, but before he would find the creature behind all this. He flashed his teeth. The grimace had lost all semblance of a human smile.

Although it was pitch black but for the pale bars the streetlight painted through the shutters on the ceiling, he found the spot without a moment's hesitation. He went to his knees and sniffed at the dried blood. His tongue flickered across the floor, savoring the taste of dusty death, its every nuance bared for his new-found senses. He sank to the floor, and crawled across it on his belly like a snake, hunting for traces of blood and sperm, sweat and motes of skin. He was on the hunt, and, oh yes, the game was afoot!



CHAPTER NINE

CORRIDORS OF TIME

He had always liked the hum hot drink dispensers made after they ejected the styrofoam cup and before they began to fill it with a stream of brownish liquid. Back when he was

at Quantico, studying for his FBI graduation, one of these machines had been set down the hall from Yamazaki's room. Late at night, like now, he would stand up from his books and notes, and walk down the empty neon lit corridor past all the identical nondescript gray doors behind which his fellow students slept. He would slip a quarter into the slot, listen to that hum, and then hold the cup in both hands, blowing on the surface of the steaming coffee, like now, waiting for it to cool down. He had not been very adept at making friends, and sometimes those moments seemed the fondest memories of his time there. He was not sure if that saddened him as much as he thought it should.

He took a sip of the bitter black coffee and walked back to the intensive care ward. He passed a family of four, the little kids sleeping on the uncomfortable plastic chairs, the father and elder son sitting sleepless. Each time a nurse or doctor walked by, they looked up, hoping for good news. Each time, when none came, they would let their heads sink back in patient resignation.

Through a thick glass wall, Yamazaki watched Judith Scarpetta lying motionless in her bed. The doctor had expressed a halting confidence that she would make it, but emphasized that it was really too early to say anything definite.

"Ironically, we must assume that the rape actually saved her life -- if the injury had not been sustained in the course of it, that is. She is pregnant already. In fact, if certain facts did not prove that inception occurred less than two days ago, I would refuse to believe that this could happen so fast. Due to the particular hormonal conditions, pregnant women are exceptionally resistant against trauma shock and infection. Without this extraordinary condition, I strongly doubt that Ms. Scarpetta would have survived the ten hours before she received medical help."

With her head shaven and bandaged, surrounded by drips, monitors and life supporting machinery, she looked small and lost, a pale shadow of the person Yamazaki had read about in the HERMES transcript. As someone

close to a highly placed Aegis operative like Ruth Gentle Rain, a complete profile of the woman existed in the huge databases of the organization.

Her grandparents immigrated from Mussolini's Italy to New York. They had been quite wealthy, but after a series of bad investment decisions, hard times followed. In the sixties, her father left New York for San Francisco, where he met his future wife. Judith's mother died in a car accident when the girl was an infant and her father struggled to care for her and her elder brother. She excelled at school, and earned herself a scholarship that enabled her to enroll at UCLA. There she met her mentor. Her work gained considerable attention in the scientific community, but she also found time to play on the University's women's volleyball team and to work for a human rights initiative, fighting for the betterment of living conditions of natives in Latin America.

There was a darker side to her, though. According to Aegis sources, she was indeed prescient, and from all reports she did not bear the burden lightly. Several times, she predicted accidents of people she knew and spells of depression followed when she had not been able to prevent what she knew would happen. What troubled Yamazaki even more was the evidence that her gift might have been caused by one of Aegis' MK projects. One report noted that her mother had taken part in a double blind experiment in '71. She had been recorded as the recipient of a mildly hallucinogenic placebo, but the lack of discernible causes for the car crash and subsequent fire in which she died suggested uncontrolled psychokinetic activity. The ways psychic abilities were passed on genetically were still largely unexplained and no relationship seemed to exist between the nature of the gift of a parent and that inherited by a child.

Yamazaki's gaze lingered tenderly with her one more moment. He got up and walked down the hall again. The family



was still waiting for good news about the wife and mother. In his pockets, Sogho Yamazaki searched for a quarter.



CHAPTER TEN

OLD GODS AND LOST LOVES

Thick mist had rolled in from the sea. Several times Carlos had to backtrack his steps, but in the end he found what he had been looking for. The house on Zephyr Avenue, similar in construction to that of Gentle Rain, except for the characteristic bridge structure, slowly emerged from the murky gloom. The sky was still uniformly dark, but dawn was not far away. Carlos could feel it in his changing bones. He slipped over the white wall decked with carmine clay shingles. The courtyard with its old cypress and Joshua trees was lit from a flickering lantern on the balustrade. Beneath it, in the crook between the house and the stairs, face down, lay a body.

Carlos walked over and turned it with his foot. Other than a trickle of blood from his ears and nose, the boy seemed untouched. He was still dressed in the cut-off jeans and red T-shirt. The shirt read "hands off" across his chest. Carlos thought that quite funny. The canvas sneakers, one of which had come off and was lying next to him, were much too large, almost clownish. Something shuffled on the gallery above.

"What happened to him," Carlos asked.

The man with the flowing blond hair and the neatly cut beard answered, "He fell from grace. They break so easily, don't they?" His voice was mournful, expressing sadness beyond human bounds. He continued to look into the night sky. "Things are not as they used to be. Even the stars are different."

And as he descended on the stairs, he quoted, "Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho' /

We are not now that strength which in old days / Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are.

"Eh Carlos? Where do you stand on that subject?"

The hunter did not answer. He stared hypnotized at the slender man in the long trench coat. Boot-heels clacked on the steps.

"Walk with me back to the pier, will you?"

"You have been waiting for me," Carlos accused him.

"Of course I have."

"But why?"

The man smiled gently in the night. He crossed the yard and opened a small gate that lead to the Ocean Front Walk. He waited until Carlos had walked through, and without a glance back, followed.

"It is rare that one such as I can speak with someone without having to hide behind a mortal mask. Usually, we can do so only to worshippers, and they make poor companions. They never change, you know. I was looking forward to a decent conversation."

"Who are you?"

"Right now I am merely a private individual with the desire to reacquire a family keepsake. In my day, I used to be a god. My people were a savage and unrefined folk, although I cannot recall them ever throwing infants into dog-pits for entertainment, at least not more so than would in any given society. They were in the habit of burying their dear departed under mounds, not unlike some of the first inhabitants of this country. Later they forgot the origin of these mounds, called Kurgans, and believed them to be the home of the gods. Eventually they forgot about us as well and turned to a strange western cult very much concerned with guilt and blood and death."

He had led Carlos up to Windward Pier; now he stepped on the weathered wooden boards. His hands were buried deep in the pockets of his coat. The breeze toyed with the dangling ends of his belt. Head bowed, he slowly strolled down the landing. Over the sea thun-

der rumbled mighty clouds were rolling in towards the shore.

"You are not a God, you realize that, don't you?"

"Oh, am I not? I thought I was. But please, do go ahead, enlighten me."

"You are mad -- corrupted -- by supernatural energies. That body of yours," Carlos pointed at him accusingly. "It has been born to a woman and raised here, on ordinary material food. Don't you understand: your mind has been . . . twisted, by the Seepage. This has happened before; so many have fallen to it." Suddenly, with a gesture more helpless than angry, he fell silent.

The god had stopped and turned to face the desperate predator. His smile was mild and benevolent. The wind tousled his long blond hair.

"This body was indeed born to woman and raised on earth. The woman in question was a Cincinnati whore called Sugar Sue, I believe. At the age of twelve, her son ran away and eventually drifted to Malibu, where he lived the life of a small time thief, gigolo and junkie. Last week he took an overdose of some illegal substance or other and fell into a coma. Since his body suited my purposes, I took the liberty of possessing it. It's a trick I learned during my stint as an Eastern-Orthodox saint in the Middle Ages. It is so much easier than materializing. And you should see my speaking-in-tongues act. Well, we all must get by somehow."

"That is not true! Maybe you are even a Demon, a . . . a residue, a pattern held in the Seepage, a ghost of an Incarnate, but you are not a god."

"If you wish."

The god turned again and continued to walk to the end of the pier.

"But tell me, are we not all just patterns held in matter and energy, adrift in time and space, all powerful and yet nigh powerless, omniscient but blind?"

Carlos stepped up behind him. He could hear the whispers of the ocean, the call of the tide

pulling on him. For some time, the two just stood there, staring out to sea, the question unanswered between them. White horses rode the surf, luminescent with algae. Carlos felt little droplets on his bare arms, unsure whether it was spray or rain.

"The angels keep their ancient places; / Turn but a stone and start a wing! / 'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces, / That miss the many-splendoured thing. Francis Thomson, published posthumously sometime early this century."

The man professing to be an archaic Scythian god took the bronze statuette out of his pocket. In spite of the near darkness, Carlos could make out a female figure with a small faceless head and cone-shaped arms and legs lacking hands or feet. The breasts were oversized and the belly big and round, exaggeratedly pregnant. The curves were beautiful and the sheen of the ancient material warm and inviting to the touch. The hands holding the figurine moved slowly and reverently, as if afraid to hurt out of carelessness.

In the end, his golden voice was shaken, hoarse and solemn. "Tabiti, my sister, my lover, my mother. I miss you. I miss you so much. I wish we could roam the fruitful steppes of our homeland again, I would caress your swollen flesh with gentle summer rains, and my breath would spread the pollen of your word, so that life would flourish wherever we went. Oh Tabiti, I wish that it was as it used to be. Why are you not here any more?"

When the rain came down, it was dense and sudden. The sky had opened its gates and it seemed as if it would drown the entire world. It washed away what remained of Carlos' humanity, stripping him of memories and familiar feelings. It also eased the maddening itch, but he began scratching anyway, following an urge imbedded deeper than nerves. His skin came away in big flakes, the rain plastered it across the wooden boards of the pier. Beneath emerged the supple velvety pelt of a seal, glossy dark gold like honey, accenting the beautiful dance of his muscles. Again he bared his teeth, spit blood, and then slipped

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like a shadow from the pier, everything forgotten but the longing for an eternity of blue. The sea swallowed him hungrily, as if it had been waiting for him for a long time.



CHAPTER ELEVEN THE PRESENCE OF ANGELS

He had fallen asleep after all, but when he awoke, he could not remember what he had dreamt. He asked a nurse if there was a snack dispenser or a cafeteria. She told him there was an all-night-diner next to the hospital. After checking on Scarpetta, Yamazaki took his coat and went outside.

It was still dark and the wet tarmac glistened blackly, reflecting the bright streetlamps. The diner was crowded with hospital staff, having a quick breakfast before early morning shift. He got some black coffee and fresh doughnuts and found a seat at the window.

Occasionally, an ambulance hurried past, but otherwise the street, off the main thoroughfares, was quiet and deserted. Sipping his coffee and lost in thought, Yamazaki watched the purple darkness fade into twilight, and the eastern sky swim with shades of red. When the blood had faded to blue, he stepped outside again. The rain had cleaned the smog out of the air. The morning was clear and fresh and pledged to become a beautiful day, hot and sunny. After a few moments, he returned to Scarpetta.

He recognized her immediately from the file. Yamazaki had been back, a sentinel behind the thick green glass wall, the way he had spent the best part of the night, when Ruth Gentle Rain had entered the hallway.

He did not know how long she had been watching him, before she asked, "Do you think you can have her?"

She was dressed in an elegant, long coat and traditional Native American clothing beneath.

Hastily, as if caught doing something forbidden, he took down the hand that was pressed flatly on the window. His own action and feelings confused him. After an awkward moment of silence, he walked over to her.

"Special Agent Yamazaki, FBI. I must say, I'm more than glad to see you unharmed, Professor. We were under the assumption that the assailant of Ms. Scarpetta had abducted you, or worse."

"I was meditating, cleansing myself, at an ancient holy site. I do that occasionally. It is necessary for a shaman, to avoid tainting oneself. I never take a phone or pager with me; it would disturb the serenity of the ritual. I came here as soon as I heard what had happened."

"Doctors say it's looking pretty good for her. She will need much time to recover, but she'll be all right."

Gentle Rain nodded. She looked well -- tired and worried, but strong and energetic, very much alive. She put her hands in her coat pockets and moved to look more closely at Scarpetta. Yamazaki could see her ghostly reflection in the glass. Suddenly, he had to fight the urge to hug her. He couldn't quite say if he wanted to comfort her or to be comforted himself. The thought made him smile.

"I brought some doughnuts, Professor. Do you want one? And there's coffee down the hall. I would get you one, but I'm afraid I'm out of quarters."

Gentle Rain's reflection smiled at him, but her gaze turned back to the girl. Yamazaki walked back to the window, too. He regarded the young woman in the white bed for a long moment, then surprised himself saying, "I don't know. I don't know if I want to. But I'm afraid she's got me already."

The old Indian shaman nodded, smiled wistfully. For a long time they just stood there, watching over the healing woman, united by a shared concern. Judith Scarpetta was still unconscious, her life guarded and protected by machines and monitors, all hissing, humming, beeping and flashing their technological contentment.

Finally, Gentle Rain stepped back.

"You said there was coffee here somewhere?"

"Down the hall. Do you want a doughnut to go with it?"

"That would be very nice."

Yamazaki handed her the paper bag.

After a few yards she turned back to him and asked him in a calm voice:

"What do you think you are doing, Mr. Yamazaki?"

He thought about it for a second.

"I think I'm doing my job, ma'am. That's all, just doing my job."

"Do you think that is an excuse?"

"No, ma'am. It's just the way it is. Do I need an excuse?"

Now the professor thought for a moment before answering, "Depends if you are here as a Special Agent, I would say."

"Dr. Gentle Rain, I am not, as you might know."

"Aegis then."

Yamazaki blinked. He looked at Scarpetta. Gentle Rain went to get her coffee. Yamazaki took out his FBI badge and regarded it for a long time. When he looked up at Scarpetta again, he saw Gentle Rain's reflection next to his in the window. He carefully put away his badge, then looked at Scarpetta again. With his hands in the pockets of his coat, he said, "I work for the Bureau and I work for Aegis, and I will continue to do both. But as always I am here also as a human being, and I need no excuses for any of that."

Silence settled over both of them as they continued their watch over the young pregnant woman. Outside the sun climbed higher into the sky above the city of the angels. It was going to be a beautiful day.

EPILOGUE

I am a part of all that I have met;

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'

Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades

For ever and for ever when I move.

(Lord Alfred Tennyson, from *Ulysses*)

"There is a madness needed to touch the gods, yes, this is true. Few mortals possess it, the willingness to step away from the protection of sanity. To walk into the wild wood of madness . . ." Loki in conversation, LA (*Sandman: The Kindly Ones*, by Neil Gaiman)



CRUSADERS

Some start on the path of magic to save others from the dangers of the supernatural. Others encounter these dangers and come to believe that the greatest, or perhaps the only moral, use of magic is as a sword and a shield against the dark forces. Some of these Crusaders are fanatics convinced that everything magical is inherently evil. Believing they damn themselves by their actions, they willingly give their souls to protect humanity. Others simply decide that the world needs protecting from magical dangers, and that no one else would be as good a protector. Crusaders come to their line of work with a variety of motives including religious zeal, bravado, compassion, and a sense of duty. All soon learn that they have chosen a difficult and dangerous path, and few live to retire from it.

CRUSADERS AND PREDATORS

Unfortunately, fighting the minions of the supernatural can lead to more than just injury or death. Corruption and madness are the price many Crusaders pay for their zeal. While some Crusaders end up as Prophets and a few become Adepts, the majority of corrupted Crusaders become avenging Predators, killing any who break their moral code. Many of these Predators continue to banish ghosts and demons, and hunt down other deadly Incarnate and Forsaken. However, most also expand their efforts to include ordinary mortals. Members of dark cults and other malevolent magicians pay for their transgressions with their lives. Sometimes, as the corruption progresses, the Predators will take to killing any occultists who do not follow their severe code, slaying the innocent and the guilty alike. In their mad quest to save people from the supernatural, they become what they most hate. More than one corrupted Crusader has committed suicide when confronted with the true horror of what they have become. The rest are hunted by their former brethren.

To: London Legate

From: Jessica Renaldo, KCM

Re: Yearly Report (excerpt)

Los Angeles is bad this year. Predator populations in South Central and parts of Longbeach are thriving. We've done what we can, but the poverty and anger in these areas leave many of the residents open to such things. Our agents keep it under control in parts, but we need more people. We have been trying to expand recruitment through the Churches. Currently, we only have one locally-born operative, and she has already been much more effective at gaining the cooperation and aid of the residents than any of the other Knights we've sent in. With a few more like her, we might be able to make more of a difference.

Unfortunately, South Central is not the only current hot spot. Our hounds tell us that someone is opening doorways down in Orange County. We have begun an investigation, but so far have no concrete leads. Our best guess at the cause for the time being is either college Satanists or fundamentalists too stupid or too power-hungry to know better. In either case, we have evidence of one failed demon summoning and another that may have been successful. At this point, some of these practitioners may have fallen. Hopefully, others have found their sense and ceased their activities. No doubt, some have gotten their first taste of dark power and are eager for more. Again, I stress, we need more operatives. As soon as one of these dark cults is successful, they will begin to make pacts with the monsters. At best, even if they abandon their rituals, we may be forced to bring Grace to several fallen. As they are trafficking in demonic rituals, the risk of the fall cannot be overestimated.

The rest of the city appears quiet for the moment. The fallen I reported last quarter, who was hiding as a member of the Sheriff's department, has been brought to Grace. He was physically deformed enough that few of importance will call for an investigation of a murdered cop. The standard agitators can be safely ignored. The other officer at the scene saw the claws and fangs once the illusions had dissipated, and fired a few shots into the corpse himself.



THE KNIGHTS OF MONA

HISTORY

The Knights of Mona began as a British holy order of religious knights, founded in the 12th century to combat “devil worship, heresy and demons.” The Knights are one of the oldest magical orders still in existence. Named after Mona, an island off the coast of England and the most powerful Locus in the British Isles, the Knights willingly risk their souls by using magic to combat magic. All Knights vow to battle on the side of humanity against the corrupted.

Since the Reformation, the Knights have maintained bases of operation in both Rome and London. In the 16th century, they became loosely associated with the Society of Jesus and since that time a number of the Knights have also been lay members of the Jesuit Order. By the 18th century, almost all of the religious orders of knights had been disbanded. Nonetheless, the Catholic Church, which still recognized the reality of the supernatural, saw the necessity of perpetuating an arm of the Church that could effectively combat it. Since that time, the true purpose of the Knights has been kept secret. They ostensibly serve as guards for missionary and relief activities. During World War II, the Knights worked with Catholic priests organizing relief efforts in Nazi-controlled Europe. In addition to saving lives by providing medical attention and even smuggling people out of Europe, the Knights used their relief work as a cover for efforts to unmask and combat dangerous Nazi magics. When the Nazi SS deliberately created Incarnate predators to spread terror among conquered or besieged populations, the Knights used their own magics to find and destroy these monsters.

Since WWII, the Knights have been working with Catholic relief efforts and the Red Cross all over the world. From the urban battlegrounds of Detroit and Los Angeles, to the war-torn areas of Eastern Europe or the Middle East, the Knights provide both magical and material aid. They continue to use their considerable powers to hunt down and destroy Incarnate and amoral magicians who thrive in such troubled areas.

MAGICAL PRACTICE

Like most European occult groups, the Knight of Mona practice old-style Ceremonial magic. Specializing in banishing, divination, healing, and magics to protect and aid warriors, the Knights have an extensive occult library and a number of impressive enchanted objects acquired over their long history.

The Knights actively recruit anyone with deep Roman Catholic faith who has magic or psychic abilities. While they were originally created as an order of holy warrior magicians, theoretical distinctions between magic and psychic powers are nebulous and poorly understood even to this day. In fact, the speed and innate ability displayed by psychics is highly desired by the Knights and their ranks have always been open to the “natural magi”, as they call psychics.

While all Knights are trained to perform magic alone when necessary, they rarely do so. When performing the most difficult rituals, large groups of Knights will gather together to ensure success. This emphasis on shared practice is a matter of caution and inclination.

While most Knights have been trained to perform one or more offensive rituals that affect targets from long range, actually hunting down and capturing or killing their target is seen both as more virtuous and much more certain. When performing missions, Knights most commonly use rituals to provide information and protection, and to increase their physical capabilities. Magic is seen as a dangerous, but also necessary risk. Rituals are never performed without good cause. The rules of the Order mandate that all members spend a short period of time in reflection and meditation before any ritual to cleanse their minds and to reveal any sinful motives for performing the ritual. All of the difficult, large-scale, rituals are preceded by Mass and Confession for all participants so that they will not perform the ritual in a state of sin.

The Knights are exceedingly careful about the possibility of corruption. If a ritual fails or an assignment goes badly, everyone involved is examined closely by priests and healers of the Order. If necessary, divinations are performed to determine if the individual actually has been corrupted. In addition, every member must undergo an examination to detect corruption at least once a month while on active duty.

These extremely strict precautions mean that the corruption of a Knight almost never escapes early discovery. If a Knight actually becomes corrupted, this early detection allows the Order to act quickly in combating the corruption. All local members of the Order are immediately gathered together to perform curing rituals. The combined effort and the fervent belief of the Knights gives these rituals great power.

In the event that the corruption proves impossible to cure or the afflicted Knight becomes Forsaken or Incarnate, the Order will either imprison or humanely kill the unfortunate. Each member leaves a specific will dictating his preferences in this regard. Of course, the particulars of each situation are judged and sometimes the wishes of the former Knight cannot be honored.

As a final precaution against corruption, during all rituals performed by the entire local membership, the local Superior gives Saaamaaa amulets (see Forsaken Rites, Chapter Three: Secrets) to all of the other participants. Superiors who die, or are put to death as Fallen, as a result of the use of these amulets are considered martyrs by the Catholic Church. Of course, that status is known only to a select few. The Knights do not serve out of a desire for fame.



STRUCTURE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The Order is fairly large, with a total membership of almost 1,900. Most recruits are devout Roman Catholics, and any non-Catholics must convert before they are initiated. The brave efforts of several female magicians during World War II reversed 800 years of policy and now women are admitted as full members. All members must take vows of poverty, obedience and service to God and humanity. Vows of chastity are common but not required. The Order supports all members using funds from its investments and from the Church. Knights require little in the way of material comfort and possessions, but none suffer any form of deprivation.

Knights never work alone. In most cases, they work in pairs selected by the leadership of the Order. Members may petition for new partners if problems arise. Partners are usually close friends and regularly risk their lives for each other. When Knights work together in larger groups, these groups are almost always made up of two or more sets of partners. For Knights, interpersonal relationships and humanity are valued above all else, and the collective dynamic of the practice of magic is stressed.

All members of the Order serve both the General of the Order, and the Superior of the diocese to which they are assigned. The regional Superiors are responsible for keeping abreast of supernatural activities in their local area. All members who are not actively involved in a mission meet every Sunday for Mass. Weekly reports are given afterwards. In regions too isolated to allow Knights to meet with their Superiors on a weekly basis, monthly meetings are still mandatory and the Knights must report on a weekly basis by phone or letter. During weekly meetings, the Superior assigns duties to the various teams. Except during incidences of suspected corruption or similar severe problems, Knights are expected to obey their Superiors without question. Every quarter Legates from the General of the Order visit the diocese for summary reports. These reports are collected and analyzed and Order policy and initiatives are continually updated in response to these findings.

ACTIVITIES

Today, as always, the Knights fight corruption and evil magic throughout the world. The Order continues to use relief work as a cover for these supernatural activities. This cover, however, is not mere window dressing. Most Knights spend the majority of their time performing actual relief activities ranging from bringing food and medical aid to disaster or war-ravaged areas, to working with local priests, to acting as mediators in areas of urban violence, to guarding and protecting priests and other religious officials in violent or dangerous areas.

One of the Order's earliest duties was to escort pilgrims and to protect them from natural and supernatural harm. Whether in war-torn Belfast, or in the wilds of Afghanistan, Knights still escort religious travelers. They use these journeys to examine areas for evidence of malevolent supernatural activity. When such evidence is uncovered, either through investigation, or through divination performed by the Order's skilled oracles, all locally available Knights cease their other activities and begin investigating the problem. Once sufficient fact-finding is accomplished, the local Superior, in consultation with his own members and those of the General Staff, formulates a response. The response is approved by the General of the Order, and the initiatives commenced.



The vast majority of the supernatural problems that the Order combats are Incarnate or Forsaken activities. If possible, the Incarnate are captured and rituals to reverse their condition are attempted. If capture proves impossible, or the condition cannot be cured, the Incarnate is killed. Forsaken are either captured and turned over to civil justice, or killed. Members of the Order receive extensive training in battling a wide variety of Incarnate.

The most dangerous missions are those which also involve activities by malevolent magical organizations, powerful ghosts, and demons. While all such problems are fortunately quite rare, the dangers can be extremely great. All members of the Order know that if demons are involved, the death or corruption of at least one of the Knights involved is highly likely.

RELATIONSHIP WITH AEGIS

During WWII, the Order worked with the Watch to combat Nazi occult activities. The two organizations have been loosely affiliated ever since. In an effort to protect both organizations, only the Superiors and the General have any conception of Aegis' existence and extent. Knights who come in contact with alien activities in the course of their missions are sometimes recruited by Aegis, with the dispensation of their Superior.

Knight Nomenclature

The Knights understand much of the theory presented in the Queen's Tome but they have no access to it. They refer to mystic energies as Theophany, a manifestation of God. Mortal magi are granted the ability to contact and manipulate Theophany by the grace of God, and those that practice unwisely, or without full understanding of the seven virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, faith, hope, and chastity), risk debasement. Those that are debased are called the Fallen. Those with the Sensitive trait are labeled hounds. Supernatural Foci are the anointed. Both are seen as having a strong tie to the divine and thus blessed, and most at risk of debasement. Psychics of any kind are differentiated from other magicians by the title "natural magi" even though their training is as extensive as ritual magicians.

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KNIGHTS OF MONA PLAYER CHARACTERS

All members must possess at least one of the following traits: Sensitive, Supernatural Focus, Strong ESP, Lesser Psychic, or Greater Psychic. Having the trait Faith is not required of members, but most Knights possess it. All Knights receive some training in both the Occult and the Ritual: Ceremonial Magic skills. Basic training in some form of physical combat is mandatory, and all but a few Knights are accomplished warriors.

KNIGHT OF MONA

Influence provided:

Professional trainings: Alchemy: Ascension, Alchemy: Lesser Ascension, Alchemy: Purify, Alchemy: Restore, Awareness, Communications, The Protective Circle, Rappelling, Survival, Ritual: Cure Corruption, Ritual: Dispel Magic, Ritual: Diffuse Seepage, Ritual: Enhance or Diminish Body, Ritual: Immortality, Ritual: Teleport, Saaamaaa Amulets

Professional skills: Alchemy: Physical, Athletics, Autofire, Boating, Demolitions, Diplomacy, Drive, Escape, First Aid, Gun Fu, Martial Arts, Medical, Meditation, Melee Weapons, Occult, Pilot, Ritual: Ceremonial Magic, Small Arms: Pistol, Small Arms: Rifle, Stealth, Tracking.

PULLING STRINGS

Enchanted Devices: The Knights have acquired a number of enchanted devices in their long history. To get an enchanted “loaner”, the character must contact the headquarters in Rome and make a successful Df3 Influence test. Only one such request may be made in a month. All such devices must be returned within a week. If the device is damaged, destroyed, or not returned, and the resulting inquiry by the Superior reveals misuse or a lack of judgment on the part of the character, the character suffers a one point loss in Influence permanently (minimum of zero).

Partners: All Knights work in pairs. If the Game Master creates a situation where a Knight is working alone, either as an ally or infiltrator in Aegis, that Knight can call upon his partner’s aid if necessary. Typically, this is a Df1 test. If the Knight’s cover is deep, however, the Game Master may impose a higher Df test to account for the Superior’s unwillingness to risk discovery. The partner is completely loyal to the requesting Knight, but will not violate Order rules. The partner’s attributes, traits and equipment are designated by the Game Master but should not vary widely from the requesting Knight’s stats. There is also a possibility (1 in 6 per quarter), that the partner will call on the character’s aid. The importance and difficulty of the request is a matter for the GM.

Ritual Assistance: Knights generally work together on difficult rituals. A Df2 Influence test is necessary to find one additional pair of Knights to help with a given ritual. A Df3 test allows the Knight to recruit up to two additional pairs of Knights to help, and a Df4 test means that the Knight has convinced the Superior of the local diocese that the ritual is extremely important. The Superior will call upon all local Knights to assist with it. In addition, if the ritual is particularly dangerous and important, the Superior may risk debasement (a second, Df5 test, or GM’s discretion) and give Saaamaaa amulets to all participants.

Ritual Training: A Knight may receive free training in any ritual necessary for her mission. The Influence test to obtain training for a given ritual is equal to the Difficulty of the ritual -1. This training will take approximately one week. No more than one such request may be made per month. Knights who are not currently on a mission may be called upon to train others in rituals they know.

Sanctuary: All diocese of the Order have chapter houses where Knights and those under their protection may stay. A Df2 Influence test will grant a Knight sanctuary there. If necessary, those at the chapter house, Knights and staff alike, will work to deflect and hinder pursuit. They will also provide any necessary medical assistance including treatment of corruption.



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ALCHEMY HISTORY

There are many ways to manipulate Seepage. While the various ritualistic traditions discussed in *Forsaken Rites: The Supernatural Sourcebook* all use Seepage energy in a similar way, humans developed a radically different alternative long ago. Shortly after the fall of Atlantis, humans were free from direct Atlantean rule for the first time. They had used magic and psychic powers to aid them in this process, but a number of humans wanted more. They envied the vast powers of their former Atlantean masters, and sought the means to duplicate these powers.

These early humans had no concept of the vast complexity of Atlantean nanotechnology. Many did know that their previous overlords were immortal beings whose wounds healed almost instantly, and who were able to reshape the world around them with great ease. Humans wanted these powers and had no idea that a enormous technological infrastructure was necessary to produce these devices. Even magic could not easily reproduce these effects. Humans continued to experiment with techniques ranging from deep meditation, to primitive chemistry and medicine. Eventually these early experimenters made a profound discovery -- the art of alchemy. The early human scholars and occultists assumed that they had uncovered the secret powers of the Atlanteans. Later legends talk of either Hermes Trismegistus or the Goddess Isis as the founders of alchemy. Today, no one knows if these legends describe the two original founders of this discipline or merely two especially memorable alchemists.

In the thousands of years following the destruction of Atlantis, magic flourished in all human societies, from nomadic shamans living meal to meal to magicians-priests living in vast luxury. Alchemical learning was not so common. Although the early alchemists taught many students and alchemy spread across the globe, it was only found in large, prosperous, highly settled civilizations. Because of the long periods of time spent performing each alchemical operation, and in many cases, the complex tool and equipment required, alchemy could only be performed by people who were settled and who had sufficient spare time for their experiments. Most alchemists were either wealthy people, or religious functionaries like monks who were supported by others.

Further, while all known human cultures have some knowledge of magic, alchemy is much rarer. In the last two thousand years, alchemy has only been found in the large civilizations of the West, the Islamic Near East, India, China, and Mesoamerica. The Spanish conquest of the New World seems to have largely wiped out the Mesoamerican alchemical tradition, but the other four traditions all survive into the modern day. These four traditions have spread throughout Europe, Africa, and more recently to the Americas. Islamic alchemists worked in southern Africa almost a thousand years ago, and Chinese and Indian alchemy was practiced in Nepal and Southeast Asia even longer ago, but all forms of alchemy in use today come from these four sources.

All four of these alchemical traditions contain important similarities, and they all share a common origin. Regardless of the specifics of practice and the location of the practitioner, all forms of alchemy are directly or indirectly derived from the practices of the first alchemists dating after the fall of Atlantis.

PRACTICE

Alchemy is the art of transformation. These transformations can be physical, mental, and even spiritual. A skilled alchemist can transform lead into gold, madness into sanity, and even fragile mortality into ageless immortality. Though their methods can be wildly different, all alchemists learn to channel the Seepage through slow and careful processes which affect profound changes. Unlike ritual magic, these time-consuming alchemical procedures slowly absorb ambient Seepage energy. As a result, alchemy is much less dependent upon Pools or Loci for power.

Alchemy is at its heart a creative endeavor. All alchemical procedure involve creating something. The creative process produces specific changes in the mind of the alchemist, and so allows her to mold and shape the Seepage. Regardless of whether the alchemist is creating a new chemical, a work of art, a short story, or even a specific state of consciousness, the basic processes involved are identical, as are the results. Alchemy is the manipulation of symbols, concepts, and states of mind in specific ways to make temporary, or sometime permanent changes in the Seepage. It differs from magic in that these changes are produced slowly and methodically over the course of many days or weeks, rather than in a single ritual which lasts no more than a few hours. To perform alchemy, all alchemists must choose a specific method of manipulating these symbols, concepts, and mental states.

The most commonly known alchemists performed their transformations using chemistry. However, chemistry is merely a vehicle, not an end in itself. Alchemy can be performed with a wide variety of skills. In Europe and the Near East, chemistry-based alchemy is most common, but alchemy based upon painting writing, and music are not uncommon. While the Muslim Sufis use meditation-based alchemy, this form is otherwise quite uncommon in the West. The yogi-masters of India and the Taoist alchemists of China perfected meditation-based alchemy, and used that form as much as they used chemistry-based alchemy. Further, in China, alchemy based on painting and writing are also quite common.

ALCHEMY SKILL

The Alchemy skill covers the knowledge of different types of alchemical practice. When taking this skill, one particular sub-skill must be selected although the skill may be taken multiple times to represent a knowledge of different forms of alchemy. Each of the various alchemical sub-skills must be linked to a second skill. Below is a list of Alchemy sub-skills (Physical, Scriptual, Expressive, Spiritual) with the possible linked second skills included in their description. Unlike meta-skills, Alchemy tests outside the character's particular sub-skill may not be attempted.

Each Alchemy sub-skill enjoys certain advantages over the other sub-skills. The benefits of each of the different forms of Alchemy are presented below, as are possible linked skills (see Linked Skills below). Each form also has certain procedures that form the core knowledge of the practice, and thus are easier to learn.

PHYSICAL: Physical Alchemy is based on chemical or mechanical skills, and involves performing some physical task such as refining or isolating a specific compound, using scientific apparatus like chemical apparatus, particle accelerators, or gene-splicing equipment, or building some contraption with rare elements. In some cases, the object that is the focus of the alchemical procedure is used to make the final compound. In other cases, compounds are ingested by or applied to the subject of the procedure. However, the relationship need not be so direct. Often, merely performing or assisting in the procedure produces the desired effect in the subject. Physical Alchemists gain a +2t bonus on all procedures designed to affect a single subject.

Possible Linked Skills: Engineering (Construction, Mechanical), Repair/Build (Construction, Mechanical), Science (Chemistry, Pharmacy)

Professional Physical Alchemy procedures: Alter, Create, Enhance

Scriptual: Scriptual Alchemy is the talent of using words, numbers, and images to create the desired effect. This involves creating a written text, usually fiction or poetry, mathematical formulae, a map or other piece of cartography. Often, the subject of the procedure reads the text and the desired effect occurs. Sometimes, merely writing the text can have the desired effect on the alchemist. Some alchemists write or inscribe the result on an inanimate object which is the subject of such a procedure, and some alchemists merely write a story or poem about the subject of the procedure. Scriptual Alchemists gain a +2t bonus to all procedures designed to be used multiple times.

Possible Linked Skills: Cartography, Fine Arts (writing of all sorts), Science (Mathematics)

Professional Scriptual Alchemy procedures: Harm, Lesser Unlock, Lesser Ascension

EXPRESSIVE: Expressive Alchemy is a form used to stimulate the five senses. The alchemist creates a piece of art, music, or food depicting or representing the desired result. In some cases, merely creating the work is enough. In others, the work must be painted on, played in front of the target, viewed or heard, or consumed by the subject of the procedure. Expressive Alchemists gain a +2t bonus on all procedures designed to affect multiple subjects.

Possible Linked Skills: Disguise, Fine Arts (Cooking, Drawing, Painting, Music of any type, Sculpting, Singing), Hobby (Cooking, Drawing, Painting, Music of any type, Sculpting, Singing), Photography, Video

Professional Expressive Alchemy procedures: Purify, Weaken, Create Antithesis

SPIRITUAL: Spiritual Alchemy is performed using meditation or hypnotism. Usually this requires the alchemist to meditate on, or perform self-hypnotism about, the desired result for days or weeks at a time. This process allows alchemists to affect themselves. To affect others, the alchemist must either touch the person or object which is the subject of the procedure, or guide the subject through meditation or hypnotism. Unlike other forms, Spiritual Alchemy requires no props or external equipment. Spiritual alchemists also do not require a specially prepared workspace to perform their alchemy. Spiritual Alchemists gain a +2t bonus on all procedures designed to affect themselves.

Possible Linked Skills: Hypnotism, Meditation

Professional Spiritual Alchemy procedures: Resist, Restore, Enhance

LINKED SKILLS

To use the Alchemy skill, the practitioner must have at least one skill level in a possible linked skill. One skill level in the linked skill will allow the alchemist to create formulae, chemicals, paintings, books, photographs, or meditative exercises with no aesthetic or practical interest, but which function as useful vehicles for the desired alchemical procedure.

Greater levels with the linked skill allow the alchemist to produce results with artistic or scientific value as well as alchemical power. Also, if the alchemist succeeds in a Df3 test with the linked skill in the course of an alchemical procedure then she receives a +2t bonus to succeeding in the Alchemy skill test.

TIMEFRAME

Alchemy is less dangerous than conventional magic. Failed alchemical procedures may produce unexpected and sometimes dangerous results, but the alchemist rarely risks corruption. However, the price attached to this safety is that fact that all alchemical procedures are exceedingly slow. All alchemical procedures with a base Df2 require one day per final, modified level of difficulty. All alchemical procedures with a higher base Difficulty Level require one week per final, modified level of difficulty. However, if the procedure is already known to the alchemist, the alchemist need only spend two eight-hour days per week working on the procedure. For the rest of the time, the process “ferments.” This “fermentation” can occur in a vat of chemicals, or in the mind of the alchemist, but it is necessary for the procedure to succeed, and this time may not be reduced.

TEAMWORK

Unlike most other skills, alchemy is generally a solitary endeavor. Many alchemists work alone, and alchemists receive no bonuses for working with more than a single assistant. Additional people may assist in the procedure, but their presence provides no bonuses to the alchemical process. Thus, the highest teamwork bonus that may be applied to an alchemical process is -1Df (see Conspiracy X, Chapter Four: Tradecraft, Teamwork).



➤ ALCHEMICAL PROCEDURES

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Each alchemical procedure has a single specific result. This result is achieved in a variety of different ways, depending upon the specific Alchemy sub-skill being used. The simplest alchemical procedures, regardless of type, involve the alchemist performing the procedure on a specific person or object which must be present.

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Examples of procedures include the alchemist composing a creative work that is applied to or shown to the subject as it is being created. In some cases, merely creating or being present for the creation of the work is sufficient and the end result of the process is irrelevant. When this type of procedure is performed upon an inanimate object, the object is either a part of the procedure, or the result of the procedure is applied to, painted upon, written on, or played to the object. Procedures where the alchemist prepares a result which is then applied or shown to a target not present at the ritual are similar but are slightly more difficult to perform.

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Alchemy can also produce results affecting large numbers of people, or which can be used many times. There are a few alchemical paintings, books, and pieces of music that have existed for hundreds of years. Such items are extremely difficult to make and only the most skilled alchemists can create them.

All alchemical procedures are separate and unique. Each has a base Difficulty Level determined by the type of transformation involved. Regardless of modifiers, no alchemist can perform a procedure whose base Difficulty Level is more than one level higher than her Alchemy skill level. Note that it is quite possible for an alchemist to learn many procedures that she is incapable of performing.

Alchemical procedure are notable for being able to affect both the minds and bodies of living being, non-living objects and devices. The theory behind alchemy states that everything in the universe is reflected in everything else. Affecting one part of the universe, one type of object, or a specific phenomena is therefore no more difficult than affecting any other. Because of this philosophical unity, a single procedure can be used to affect minds, living bodies, and inanimate objects. In all cases, a single procedure will produce similar affects on any target. A Repair procedure can do everything from curing someone's insanity to fixing a broken chair leg.

LEARNING PROCEDURES

Learning Alchemy and the requisite linked skill are merely the first step on the road to performing alchemical magic. The alchemist must also learn the individual alchemical procedures. Alchemy is traditionally learned from a teacher. Learning a new procedure usually involves the junior alchemist assisting his teacher in performing the procedure. If the teacher performs the procedure successfully, the student now knows it. Learning the procedure without help is much more difficult. The alchemist must conduct a long-term Alchemy research project, with a number of breakthroughs equal to the Difficulty Level of the procedure to be learned. Books giving exact instructions for an alchemical procedure are a great help, but it still takes time to understand the complex symbolism involved. Using a book reduces the Df of the skill tests by one (it has no effect on the breakthrough roll). Regardless of the method, all alchemical procedures are learned by actually performing them. If the alchemist succeeds in learning the procedure on his own, he has also produced the result of the procedure.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

For all but Spiritual Alchemists, a workspace is an essential part of the craft. In this space, alchemists store their materials and perform their work. Because alchemists work their transformations in a wide variety of ways, these workplaces differ greatly in their layout and materials. Their ultimate purpose is the same, however. An alchemical workplace is a place where the alchemist structures reality so that the desired transformations take place. High quality workspaces provide bonuses for mundane uses of the appropriate linked skill or sub-skill.

PHYSICAL: Workplaces for Physical Alchemists generally appear to be conventional laboratories or workshops. Such a place could contain everything from homebuilt electronics and crack-pot inventions to high-tech gene sequencers and electron microscopes. Common items are chemicals, laboratory glassware like test tubes and beakers, electronic components, spectrographs, and in the best workspaces, items like cyclotrons and supercomputers. Alchemists who work for large research organizations sometimes use their employer's facilities as their workspace, but only if it is possible to ensure that their work will remain undisturbed.

SCRIPTUAL: Workspaces for Scriptual Alchemists vary widely in appearance. Traditionalists often use an abundance of hand-made paper, gold leaf, and special inks. Workspaces used by Scriptual Alchemists of a more modern bent often contain supercomputers with cryptography or global mapping software, exceedingly high quality laser printers, and satellite uplinks.

EXPRESSIVE: These workspaces are typically artists' workshop. Depending on the alchemist's linked skill, the workspace is usually littered with paints, canvases, blocks of stone, musical instruments, or even elaborate kitchen gadgets. The workspaces used by Expressive Alchemists usually contain a more diverse and eclectic collection of items than are found in other alchemical workspaces, but in most cases these items will have been selected for their aesthetic and not their practical value. High quality labs often have elaborate music synthesizers, rare hand-made pigments, and singularly unusual blocks of wood and stone.

SPIRITUAL: Spiritual Alchemists do not require a specific workspace. A simple, mostly empty room is adequate to perform all forms of Spiritual Alchemy.



THE PRICE OF FAILURE

Sometimes, alchemical procedures fail. The procedure may be too ambitious for the alchemist's skill level, or something in the laboratory may be disturbed, removed, or broken during the procedure. If the alchemist notices the disturbance, the procedure can be safely aborted by performing an Alchemy test with a Df one less than the Df of the procedure. Otherwise, the procedure fails. The consequences of failure depend upon the type of procedure being performed. Roll 2D on the nearby Alchemical Failure Table for specifics.

Alchemical Failure Table

- 2: Reduced effect. +
- 3: Reduced effect. +
- 4: No effect, the procedure fails utterly, but without side effects.
- 5: No effect, the procedure fails utterly, but without side effects.
- 6: Random energy release. ++
- 7: Random energy release. ++
- 8: Harm *
- 9: Reversed Effect (the procedure has opposite affect of what was intended)
- 10: Reversed Effect (the procedure has opposite affect of what was intended)
- 11: Corruption **
- 12: Disaster, roll twice on this table

+ The procedure succeeds, but is much less effective than desired. A procedure for healing a subject might cure less than half of the subject's injuries, and one designed to alter the subject's appearance might leave the subject halfway between their original state and the desired state.

++ The Seepage energy bound up by the alchemical procedure is released in a sudden burst. Roll on the normal Focus Invocation Table with no chance of control, and using twice the base Difficulty Level of the procedure as the number of Seepage Points present.

* The subject must make a Variable Willpower test. If the test succeeds, the subject takes a Tw1D wound; if the test fails the subject takes a Wn1D wound. Inanimate objects roll on the appropriate Damage and Malfunction Table instead. There is no staging for this damage.

** The subject of the procedure must make a Variable Willpower test. If this test fails, the subject is corrupted. If the subject is inanimate, it becomes Awakened (see Forsaken Rites, Chapter Seven: Bestiary, Awakened Beings).

MODIFIERS TO ALCHEMICAL PROCEDURES

IN WORKSPACE: The target of the procedure's result is present while the procedure is being performed. Procedures performed solely upon the alchemist always receive this bonus. +2t.

ABSENT TARGET: The procedure is performed in the workspace. The result of this procedure is later physically brought into the presence of the target -- a physical substance is touched to the target, a work of art is viewed by the target, a piece of music is played for the target. This is the default condition for all alchemical procedures and no penalties or bonus are assigned for such procedures.

ISOLATED TARGET: The procedure is designed to affect a distant target. For example, an alchemical painting or story about some well-known person or object, which is not present when the procedure is performed or used. Alchemical procedures where the result of the procedure must be ingested, read, seen or listened to by a target who was not present when the procedure was performed do not receive this penalty. Only procedures where there is no contact between the alchemist or the results of the procedure and the target receive this penalty. If an alchemist is performing a procedure upon an Isolated Target, the alchemist must possess some form of psychic link to that target (see Forsaken Rites, Chapter Three: Secrets, Psychic Links). +1Df.

SEVERAL TARGETS: The procedure is designed to affect multiple targets at once (up to a dozen). For example, making a cake with multiple slices, or a play or music which can be viewed, heard, or digested by a small group. +1Df.

MANY TARGETS: The procedure is designed to affect many targets at once (between 13 and 100). For example, the creation of a volatile gas which affects everyone who inhales it, a piece of art designed to be viewed by many people, or a play performed before a large audience (in the last case, the time to prepare the procedure could be both the time needed to write the play and the time needed to help the players rehearse). +2Df.

DURABLE: Non-durable alchemical products, regardless of the form, only function the first time they are used, played, read or viewed. When the procedure is designed to create durable results, they may be reused multiple times. For example, a crystal that infuses any liquid it is dipped in with the desired affect, or a story which can be read multiple times. Procedures whose results can be used only once can take affect instantaneously. Durable results require at least three hours to affect a target. This time may be the time required to read a story, carefully study a painting, or steep the crystal in the liquid.

It is important to note that all durable alchemical products must be made by the alchemist. A book or musical score must be actually written or typed by the alchemist. These products cannot be reproduced by any normal means. Chemically duplicating a reusable crystal, printing or retyping an alchemical poem or musical score, or even copying a painting brush-stroke by brush-stroke may produce a physical duplicate, but this reproduction will have no alchemical worth or power.



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Allowing an alchemical product (e.g., song, story, potion) to be used more than once increases the time of making the item. Each additional usage beyond the first requires one additional day in the lab. For example, an alchemist creating a lollipop that healed wounds and had 10 doses (which we all know is the secret number of licks it takes to get to the center) would take 10 extra days spent in the lab. If the alchemist went on missions or was away from the lab, he would still be required to spend two days a week in the lab and therefore it would take him five weeks to complete the 10 extra doses. If he had some Downtime (or was a full time alchemist), he could do the same in 10 days.

It is also possible to create an alchemical product which is effectively permanent. For example, a painting that affects everyone who studies it, a story that would affect all readers, or a specially grown crystal that transforms any glass of water it is immersed in into one dose of a specific potion. Creating such a permanent product is only slightly more difficult than performing any other alchemical procedure, but it is an exceedingly long and exacting process. To create such an item requires that the alchemist spend an additional 90 days (a full season) on the project and the test suffers +1Df penalty. Permanent alchemical products are exceedingly valuable and occult collectors are always anxious to buy or steal such items.

WORKSPACE: Alchemy procedures (except those performed by Spiritual Alchemists) require certain quality workspace depending on their base Df (see nearby Workspace Quality Requirement Table). The higher the base Df, the better the workspace must be or the alchemist suffers a penalty when attempting the procedure. If an alchemist attempts a procedure in a workspace of lesser quality than required, a penalty of +1Df is imposed for each level below the one required. If an alchemist performs a procedure in a workspace that is better quality than required, a bonus of +1t is gained for each level above the one required. Normal bonuses for workspace are applicable only for other purposes, not alchemical procedures.

Workspace Quality Requirement Table

Base Df	Workspace Quality
2	Normal
3	Good
4	Excellent
5	Superb



Jim wants to attempt a Binding (Df4) procedure but he only has a Good workspace. That is one level below he needs, so Jim suffers a +1Df penalty. If Jim were attempting Ascension (Df5) in this lab, he would suffer +2Df penalty because that workspace requires a Superb workspace.

Claris has Alchemist: Physical linked with chemistry. She is preparing a Weaken (Df2) potion in her Superb lab. Because Superb is two levels above that required, she gains a +2t to the final Alchemy roll. She does not gain the standard -1Df/+2t that superb workspaces grants because she is using it for alchemical procedures. She would gain those bonuses for non-alchemical chemistry projects.

CODEx OF ALCHEMICAL PROCEDURES

The Procedure List contains the game stats for a number of alchemical procedures. After the List, each procedure is individually described.

PROCEDURE LIST

Df	Procedure	Dur	Length	Limits	Prof	Non-Prof
Df2	Purify	P	2D	N	5	10
Df2	Resist	D	2D	N	5	10
Df2	Weaken	D	2D	N	5	10
Df3	Alter	P	3W	N	6	12
Df3	Harm	P/M	3W	N	6	12
Df3	Restore	P	3W	Lab	6	12
Df3	Lesser Unlock	S	3W	N	6	12
Df4	Binding	M	4W	N/Lab	7	15
Df4	Create Antithesis	P	4W	S	7	15
Df4	Lesser Ascension		S	4W	N	7
15						
Df4	Enhance	W	4W	N	7	15
Df4	Unlock	S	3W	N	7	15
Df5	Ascension	P	5W	Lab	10	20
Df5	Create	P	5W	Lab	8	17
Df5	Dissolve	P	5W	N	8	17
Df5	Reshape	P	5W	Lab	8	17

Dur: Duration, this is how long the affects of the procedure will last. Procedures affects may be permanent (P), month-long (M), day-long (D), or special (S). Special durations are explained in the text.

Length: The length of the procedure is given in either days (D) or weeks (W). The length of the procedure given here only applies to the basic procedure. Add any increases due to modifiers to this base length.

Limits: Most alchemical procedures have no limits on how they can be performed. These procedures are marked as (N). Procedures marked as (Lab) can only be performed on a Single target or on Several Targets that are all in the alchemical laboratory for the entire duration of the procedure. Lab-only procedures cannot be made Durable and they cannot affect Absent Targets, Isolated Targets or Many Targets.

Prof//Non-Prof: The professional and non-professional CP costs of

PROCEDURE DESCRIPTIONS

Specific alchemical procedures are broadly grouped under generic names like Purify, Restore, or Dissolve. When discussing these procedures, we have provided a number of examples and game effects. Players and GMs should not feel restricted to these examples. Alchemy is a broad art -- it may be applied in many and diverse situations. Players and GMs should feel free to work together to create new alchemical procedures, determining their exact natures and whether they fall under a generic name discussed below.

Df1 PROCEDURES

There are no Df 1 alchemical procedures. At this level of ability, the Alchemy skill allows someone to understand only the basic symbols and theoretical basis of the alchemical arts.

Df2 PROCEDURES

These procedures are capable of repairing objects and living beings, and of temporarily altering them in minor ways. Procedures of this base level cannot make any permanent or large scale changes.

PURIFY: This procedure purifies the subject, leaving it close to whole and as perfect as its natural state allows. It can not raise the dead, reverse aging, replace lost limbs, heal permanent insanity, long-term or congenital physical defects. It can cure temporary mental or physical illnesses and successfully repair broken but relatively whole devices, including alien-made objects. This procedure essentially restores the subject to its natural form.

If used to heal an injured person, Purify removes the highest level of damage starting with Splatter, then Break, Wound, Twack, Flesh, and finally Bruise.



The alchemist makes an Purify elixir and gives it to a wounded person. That person has suffered Bk5, Wn4, and Sp2 wounds, and ingests the elixir. The imbiber loses the Sp2 wound, but none of the others. A second dose would remove the Bk5 wound.

If used to repair damage to an object or device which could be repaired by mundane means (any level short of total destruction on any of the Damage and Malfunction Tables), this procedure repairs one day's worth of work. If an object requires more than one day's work to repair it, either a professional will have to finish or another procedure will have to be applied.



Jim has previous prepared some Purify alchemical paint. As he paints over the damaged areas of a piece of equipment, broken pieces mend, dents and scratches are removed, and one day's worth of repairs occur.

If used to heal the mind of a subject, this procedure removes all non-permanent MS points (Bodyguard of Lies 1: Psi-Wars, Nightscreams) that the subject has accumulated. Application also cancels any Shock Effects.



Claris has cooked some Purify candy. Jackson, who has 6 temporary MS points, 1 permanent MS point and has just received a Terrified result on the Shock Effects Table, grabs a piece. Jackson loses the 6 MS points and the Shock Effects Table result but retains the 1 permanent MS point.

This procedure cannot cure Corruption. It removes one stage of Corruption, if the subject has not snapped and become an Incarnate or Forsaken (remove the latest stage received).



Frank, a Chemical Alchemist, has mixed a combination of rare plants from all corners of the world to form a thick paste. He rubs this compound on his friend Tracy, who is in the process of becoming a Predator, and has just received her third corruption stage: Homicidal Tendencies. Tracy's body is wracked with pain as the Homicidal Tendencies trait is removed. Tracy remains corrupted, and retains her prior two stages of corruption.

RESIST: This procedure allows the target to resist a single specific condition. For the duration of the procedure, the target can more easily resist any one of the following: extremes of temperature (all extremes in temperature are treated as 30 degrees C/54 degrees F closer to body temperature), illness (the target is immune to all diseases), injury (a living subject stages damage down automatically), malfunction (-5 to all damage and malfunction tests), poison (+1 Siz to resist poison), fear (-1Df to all fear-related Willpower tests, including those produced by indoctrination, interrogation or torture), corruption (-1Df to all tests to resist corruption), magic (+1Df penalty on all rituals and Incarnate powers used on the target), psychic powers (-2R to all attempts to affect the target). Each procedure only protects against one hazard, which must be specified when the procedure is performed. Targets may benefit from different types of Resist procedures at one time, but cannot be affected by two applications of the same procedure.



Claris has sewn an Injury Resist shirt. For one day after donning the shirt, Claris will automatically stage down any injury received. If Claris were to don another Injury Resist shirt, it would have no effect. If Claris were to wear a Poison Resist necklace the same day she wore the Injury Resist shirt, she would be protected against both injury and poison.



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WEAKEN: This procedure makes the subject considerably more vulnerable to a single specific condition. For the duration of the procedure, the target is more susceptible to extremes of temperature (all extreme temperatures are treated as 30 degrees C/54 degrees F more extreme), injury (all damage is automatically staged up), malfunction (+5 to all malfunction tests), poison (-1 Siz to resist poison), fear (+1Df to all fear-related Willpower tests including those produced by indoctrination, interrogation, or torture), corruption (+1Df to all tests to resist corruption), magic (-1Df bonus on all rituals and Incarnate powers used on the target), psychic powers (+2R to all attempts to affect the target). Each procedure only exacerbates one hazard, which must be specified when the procedure is performed. Targets may be vulnerable to different types of Resist procedures at one time, but cannot be affected by two applications of the same procedure.



Claris discovers that her husband is cheating on her. She sews an Injury Weaken shirt, and an Fear Weaken pair of pants for him. After presenting them to him with much fanfare, she tells him to put them on, and sends him off to a bad neighborhood. Claris is such a loving and caring wife.

DF3 PROCEDURES

These procedures can create minor permanent or temporary changes in objects and living beings. These changes cannot affect the basic nature of the target, but may change unessential qualities like color, details of shape, or function.

ALTER: This procedure can alter the appearance of any single person or object. These changes are permanent until reversed, but are also purely cosmetic. A cheap gray sedan can be transformed into a fancy red luxury car, but the vehicle's size, durability, gas mileage, cargo capacity, or top speed are not altered. Similarly, this procedure can transform a skinny black man into a tall white woman, but does not alter the person's height by more than 10 cm (4") or weight by more than 10 kg (22 lbs). The subject's blood type, genetic structure, or any physical defects do not change. When using this procedure to change someone's gender, the changes are purely cosmetic and a medical exam will reveal the person's true gender. The changes to be affected must be specified as the procedure is conducted.



Alex, an alchemist who is going bald, decides to paint a picture of himself with a full head of hair. It takes three weeks to finish the masterpiece. At the end, Alex has a full head of hair and he looks 10 years younger. The painting does nothing for Alex's grumpy temperament.



The Alter procedure can also be used alter emotions. This procedure can instantly transform a single person's emotions. A happy person can be made deeply sad, or an calm person can be made furiously angry. There will be no obvious reason for these emotions, but most people subconsciously manufacture reasons to justify their emotional states. Unlike other uses of this procedure, the emotions produced in this way are as fleeting as any other emotion. Alchemically produced rage may last for a few minutes or for several days, depending upon the subject and the specifics of the situation.



Brody uses his Fine Arts and Alchemy skills to write a poem about sour grapes. When read to Jeannie, it causes her to become sullen and depressed. She will have little good to say about anything until her mood changes.

HARM: This procedure harms the target. When used on a living being, it produces either an injury of Wn1D or Tw1D depending upon the desire of the alchemist. It can also cause madness by adding one permanent MS point, and forcing the character to roll on the Negative Psych Profile Table (Bodyguard of Lies 1: Psi-Wars, Nightscreams). While this procedure can induce madness, it cannot change the subject's mind about anything. The procedure may also be used to produce 5CPs worth of any psych profile or medical history profile trait with a negative value. To achieve higher negative point value traits, multiple applications must be used. Finally, the procedure can cause sickness in a living target.

When used on an object, the Harm procedure causes it to break. If the object is very large and sturdy, like a huge statue or a building, it cracks or becomes discolored and unattractive. If used on a device, it malfunctions the next time it is used (make a normal malfunction roll).

The type of harm (injury, madness, sickness, negative trait, or damage/malfunction) must be specified at the time of the procedure. Moreover, if sickness or negative trait is chosen, the specific disease or trait must be decided while the procedure is taking place.

All physical damage caused by this procedure is permanent until healed or repaired. At the GM's discretion, all emotional and psychological changes only last a single lunar month, since human mental states are closely tied to the lunar cycles.



Sheila designs a Harm mathematical formula to create a Phobia against guns in her brother. Once the formula is complete, her brother must make a Willpower roll when in the presence of a gun. After a month, the phobia disappears.

Because of the power of the Harm procedure, it is best if the Game Master requires the alchemist to retrieve rare materials for the procedure. Further, some traits should not be used if they would unbalance the game. We suggest any trait involving specific beliefs like Skeptic, Prejudice, or Unpopular Beliefs, and any psychic traits be barred, since the purpose of this procedure is to harm, not to change someone's opinions.



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RESTORE: This procedure allows the alchemist to restore living beings and objects to their ideal condition. Unlike the Purify procedure, Restore removes congenital flaws as well as removing damage too severe to be normally repaired. Restore heals all damage to one individual, removes one permanent MS point (Bodyguard of Lies 1: Psi-Wars, Nightscreams), cures illness, removes radiation effects, and cures effects from drugs. The procedure also removes 5CPs worth of any psych profile or medical history profile trait with a negative value. To remove higher negative point value traits, multiple applications must be used. The Restore procedure can remove mental illnesses and negative traits, but it cannot change the subject's mind about anything.

If the subject has no stages of corruption, this procedure can cure the Corrupted by the Supernatural trait. However, the subject must make a Variable Willpower test or permanently become a Psychic Void. This procedure cannot cure someone who has snapped, and become either Incarnate or Forsaken.

When used on an object, the Restore procedure repairs it fully.

The type of restoration (injury, madness, sickness, negative trait, or damage/malfunction) must be specified at the time of the procedure. Moreover, if sickness or negative trait is chosen, the specific disease or trait need be decided while the procedure is taking place.

All Restore changes, both physical and mental in nature, are permanent. New damage or disabilities may be imposed later, but the old ones are removed forever.



Frank notices that one of his Cellmates is getting more and more unstable. Frank creates a short musical piece that when listened too seems to relax the mind and release the pressure and stress of life. This removes one permanent MS from anyone who listens.

Because of the power of the Restore procedure, GMs may require that the character retrieve rare materials before attempting to remove a negative trait. Some exceptions should be made for any trait that would unbalance the game. We suggest any trait involving specific beliefs like Skeptic, Prejudice, or Unpopular Beliefs, and any psychic traits, be barred since the purpose of this procedure is to cure injuries or illness, and not to change someone's opinions.



LESSER UNLOCK: This procedure opens or removes barriers. It can be used to create a key that can open any single physical lock. The alchemist need not know the specific lock when the procedure is performed, but once used the key is bound to that particular lock. The key always opens that specific lock, and a new key must be made if the alchemist wishes to open another lock. The key produced by this ritual cannot be used to open combination locks, key-pad locks, or voice-print locks since no physical key is used to open these locks.

If a combination lock, key-pad lock, or voice-print lock must be bypassed, the lock must be brought into the lab. No physical key is produced but the alchemist “learns” the key to get past the lock. This is useable once and is then forgotten.

The Lesser Unlock procedure is not limited to removing physical barriers. It can also be used to translate any single text, up to the length of a single book, or to decode any single coded message. If used to translate a language or break a code, the actual language or code not learned. The procedure must be used again to translate or decode a second piece of text in the same code or language. Translating or decoding texts or recordings may only be performed if the text or recording is actually in the alchemist’s laboratory while the procedure is performed. Unlike other uses of this procedure, these translations and decodings are Lab-only procedures.



Josephine is given a armored, locked briefcase to open. She is told it contains sensitive papers and cannot be busted or blown open. The briefcase has both a combination and a key lock. Josephine will have to perform her Lesser Lock procedure twice to bypass both locks.

Clever players may think to set a recorder and read the text out loud as it is decoded/translated. This will create a copy of sorts of the decoded text. While the specific message is known, the language or code is not (although cryptographers would certainly get a bonus in figuring out a code if they possessed hard copies of both the coded and uncoded messages)



DF4 PROCEDURES

For the most part, these procedures create temporary changes in the target's essential nature.

BINDING: This procedure binds objects together. It can be used to form a link between two objects, or between an object and a person. Once the link is formed, the object can be used to find the linked object or person. In general, when the object is held or allowed to swing freely, it points in the direction of the linked object or person, like a compass. It is usually only practical to use relatively small objects to locate that which they are bound to. This binding lasts one month. When performing this procedure, neither of the objects needs to be actually present in the alchemist's laboratory. However, the two objects must usually touch each other to form the linkage. Attempting this ritual without such objects in the lab is done with the Isolated Target modifier.

This procedure can also be used to form emotional bonds between living beings strong enough to be considered a psychic link. These bonds can be those of friendship, enmity, passionate love, obsession, or deep hatred, and in all cases, are mutual. As before, neither subject need be in the alchemist's laboratory while this procedure is performed. Also, while the type and object of the emotion is determined by the procedure, the exact nature of the emotion produced depends upon the subjects. If a bond of love is formed between two people, this love will be expressed as these people normally express love. Using this procedure to turn hatred into love or obsession into loathing is difficult. If the procedure is used to produce an emotion which opposes one current being felt, the result is significantly less strong than the emotion which could be produced between strangers. Hatred could become liking, but not love. Similarly, love could become dislike, but not hatred.

Finally, this procedure can also be used to trace an emotional linkage between people. If the subject is in the laboratory during the entire procedure, the alchemist can determine all significant emotional bonds the subject possesses. Also, during this procedure, the alchemist can create small objects which can be used to locate the other bound person, in the same way as an object can be linked to a person using this procedure. The object must then be brought into the presence of the subject.



Indira is a Physical Alchemist who creates small mechanical objects during her procedures. She uses the Binding procedure to attempt to find everyone close to someone she suspects of being a disguised Saurian. She creates a small compass-like device which she uses to detect these bonds. When she is near the subject, she can use this device to determine the intensity, direction, and approximate distance of the bound people. Once she has located one of these links, she can turn the matter over to Randy, the surveillance expert.

Ryan is a Scriptural Alchemist using Binding to help a mother locate her kidnapped son. Ryan writes a story about the kidnapping and the mother looking for her son, and leaves several blank pages after the mother begins her search. When the procedure is finished he turns to the first blank page and sees "...the various clues all indicated that the kidnappers must have taken her son to New York City, so she decided to search there first." Ryan and the mother go to New York and he turns to the next blank page.

CREATE ANTITHESIS: This procedure can be used to create something's alchemical antithesis. When an object, person, thought or memory encounters its antithesis, both are destroyed, and nothing remains. When creating something's antithesis, the exact nature of the thing to be eliminated must be decided upon while the procedure is being performed. The alchemist can only create the antithesis of a specific individual or object (such as a specific person's blue 1996 sedan). Humans, animals, aliens, the Incarnate, and the Forsaken can all be destroyed without a trace using this procedure. By its very nature, this procedure can only affect a single target and cannot be durable. This procedure can also be used to totally and permanently destroy any ghost. Using this procedure on an Ascended Ghost or a Demon imposes a +1Df penalty.

It is also possible to use this procedure to destroy less tangible targets. The alchemist can create the antithesis of specific memories to destroy all memories of a specific person, object, or event. This procedure only destroys these memories in a single individual, unless the procedure is designed to affect multiple subjects. However, while the specific memories must be decided upon when the procedure is performed, the individual it is used upon need not be known before hand. These memories are permanently erased, but the subject can relearn them. Other memories, associated with the targeted memory, are totally unaffected.



The Antithesis procedure could cause someone to forget the building where they work. The target would forget the appearance and location of their workplace, but they would still remember the name of the company they worked for, the details of their job, the names of their co-workers and how much they were paid. Similarly, causing someone to forget the time the last murder they committed would only affect someone who had actually committed murder. The murderer would entirely forget the actual murder. He would remember planning the murder (if it was planned) as well as any other related activities such as disposing of the body or hiding the murder weapon.

Subjects affected by this procedure are unlikely to immediately notice that they have forgotten anything. This procedure can also be used to totally destroy a subject's mind, leaving a mindless, but still-living husk behind.

Whether the procedure is used to destroy an object, living being, a memory, or supernatural entity, the alchemist must possess a psychic link to the target. Also, the target must come into physical contact with the product of this procedure. This procedure cannot be used to affect Isolated Targets.



Claris, using a physical method, wants to be rid of her nuisance of a husband; Bob Smith. She goes into the lab, and brews up an anti-Bob Smith potion. When the opportunity presents itself, she pours it on him and Bob vanishes. She could not have brewed an anti-husband potion as this would not have been specific enough. Likewise, she could not make an anti-Saurian potion. She could make one to destroy "That Big Saurian that Attacked Me," as long as she secured one of his scales (the psychic link). In that case, the potion would destroy only that particular Saurian and no other.

METAMORPHOSE: This procedure can temporarily enhance, or reduce, almost any property of an object or living being. Used on a living being, it can enhance or reduce any characteristic except Size by one point to a maximum of five and a minimum of one. A person can be made stronger, dumber, more perceptive, or even stronger willed using this procedure. This procedure can also be used to speed up or slow down any device, or to make it operate more or less efficiently. Cars become faster or more maneuverable, and computers more capable of solving problems. Even emotions can be affected by this procedure. An alchemist could make someone significantly more or less emotional. While the type of emotions experienced would still depend upon the circumstances, the degree of emotional reaction can be radically changed.

The exact nature of the enhancement or reduction must be specified at the time the procedure is performed, but this enhancement can be used on anything applicable. A procedure designed to make something more rapid could make a computer more efficient, a car faster, or it could give a human better reflexes.



Jerred is always taking on new research projects but has scarcely enough time to finish the ones he has already started. He decides to create a coin that when held enhances his understanding. This speeds his ability to complete research projects. In game terms, this allows Jerred to make two long-term research tests a week.

LESSER ASCENSION: This procedure is a temporary version of the alchemist's ultimate Great Work. This procedure can be used to turn up to a kilogram (35 ounces) of any metal into another (such as lead to gold), to transform a member of the Forsaken or the Incarnate into a normal human, to raise the dead, even to make someone ageless and immortal.

However, all of these affects are temporary. If used to create gold, or raise the dead, the effect will last only one day. During this time, a person resurrected by this procedure will be fully conscious and lucid. If used to transform a member of the Incarnate or the Forsaken into a normal human, the affect will last for one month. If used to make someone temporarily immortal, the affect will last a full year. At the end of this time, the object or person will revert to its true form.

When used to make someone immortal, the person will revert to their true age when the affects of the procedure wear off. Since the procedure can be used multiple times before it has worn off, the end of the immortality produced in this fashion can result in the subject aging many decades in an instant. Immortality produced in this manner is identical to that produced using the Df5 procedure Ascension, except that it is temporary.



Kelly's Cell is constantly finding itself involved with supernatural places, horrific creatures, and just plain weird occurrences. Kelly is concerned that one day a Cellmate might become corrupted and snap. In that case, the Cell may be forced to kill that person before they could get him help. Kelly prepares a small crystal that she wears around her neck. When touched to an Incarnate, Forsaken or corrupted, the poor sap returns to normal for one month. Kelly figures she can just toss it at any of her Cellmates if they start acting too strangely.

UNLOCK: This procedure allows the alchemist to get past barriers that are beyond the physical world. The user could to produce a specific argument which will convince any single person of a single reasonable request. Reasonable requests do not include asking a person for their life savings, a request for the person to harm one of their loved ones, or a request to help you overthrow the government (unless made to a survivalist). The alchemist must decide upon the exact nature of the request when performing this procedure, but the result of the procedure may be used on any single target (or on multiple targets if the appropriate modifiers are used). The GM is ultimately responsible for determining reasonableness.

Also, the alchemist could prepare himself to decode codes, translate languages, open keycode, combination, or voice-print locks without needing any of the items in the lab. Like an argument, the alchemist prepares himself, and once he reads an unknown language it will be translated, or the first voice-print he doesn't have access to would open when he spoke to it.



Rose has just received her third speeding ticket this year. She heads for her lab to prepare an argument to have the ticket dropped. Four weeks later, she waltzes into court, and waves off the court assigned attorney. She delivers an impassioned plea mentioning her baby and the sitter. The judge is swayed by the argument (the Unlock procedure takes care of that), and drops the charges. Rose smiles on her way out of the court, thinking "third time this year".

DF5 PROCEDURES

These procedures create permanent changes in the target's essential nature.

ASCENSION: This procedure is also known as creating the "elixir of life" or "the Great Work." Using it, the alchemist can transform any metal into another (such as pure gold), create orichalcum, raise the dead, permanently transform both Forsaken and Incarnate back into normal humans. Some even use the procedure to attain immortality.

The procedure does have some limitations. No more than two kilograms (70 ounces) of gold or 200 milligrams of orichalcum can be created at a time. Creating larger amounts requires making multiple doses. Also, any corpse, Incarnate, or Forsaken must be physically present in the alchemist's laboratory for the entire duration of the procedure. Also, the immortality produced using this procedure is not as extensive as that produced using Atlantean Blood Surgeons. The immortal individual ceases to age, and is totally immune to all diseases. In addition, the person's wounds automatically stabilize without medical treatment and all such wounds receive a -1Df to all healing tests. However, all forms of impairment from wounds are unaffected, and a sufficiently injured target can die.

Orichalcum

Also known as the philosopher's stone, orichalcum is an incredibly valuable material for alchemists. When orichalcum is incorporated into a Df2 procedure, it may be performed in hours instead of days. Df3+ procedures may be performed in days instead of weeks. This effect may only be gained if the alchemist has Df x 50 milligrams of orichalcum to consume in the procedure. Alchemists do not require any special training to use orichalcum in this fashion, but they do require a considerable quantity of this rare substance.



CREATION: This procedure allows the alchemist to create almost anything. The necessary raw materials must be available and the alchemist possesses a piece of, or a psychic link to, the object or device being created. If insufficient materials are available, a smaller version of the device can be produced instead. Alchemists can create anything from a mini-gun to a jet fighter to a Saurian bodymorph chamber using this procedure.

Living beings can also be created. Once again, a psychic link to the individual being duplicated is necessary. However, the procedure can be used to create duplicates of individuals long dead, or extinct animals. At the end of the procedure, the alchemist will have a living, but mindless body. This being is a classic "soul-less automaton." The being eats, sleeps, and breathes, it responds to its environment, and it obeys all orders spoken given by the Alchemist who awakened it. However, the "golem" has no will or volition of its own, nor does it possess any real consciousness. While all of its physical characteristics are the same as the individual duplicated, it cannot speak and has an effective Intelligence, Willpower and Perception of one.

The Creation procedure can also be used to create minds and personalities. Using a subject created by this procedure, or one whose mind has been destroyed through accidents, drugs, or the Create Antithesis procedure, the alchemist can create a new mind and a new personality for the subject. While the procedure cannot create detailed memories, it can create a basic personality, complete with likes and dislikes, basic knowledge of one language and up to 29CPs in other skills. The subject will have an Intelligence, Willpower, and Perception of three.

Non-living places or objects can be imbued with spirits in a similar manner. Such spirits will resemble ghosts haunting a place or object, except the spirit never had a human existence. These ghosts can, if the alchemist desires, possess the Mask power as well as a lesser version of the Thrall power which simply allows the entity to produce an emotional aura similar to that produced by the spell of the same name (Forsaken Rites, Chapter Four: Grimoire, Emotional Aura). This procedure cannot be used on a living being which still possesses a mind or upon a building or object which is already haunted.

The Creation procedure can also be used to produce awakened animals and objects, but such creations will have their own will and desires and are not necessarily under the control of the alchemist.



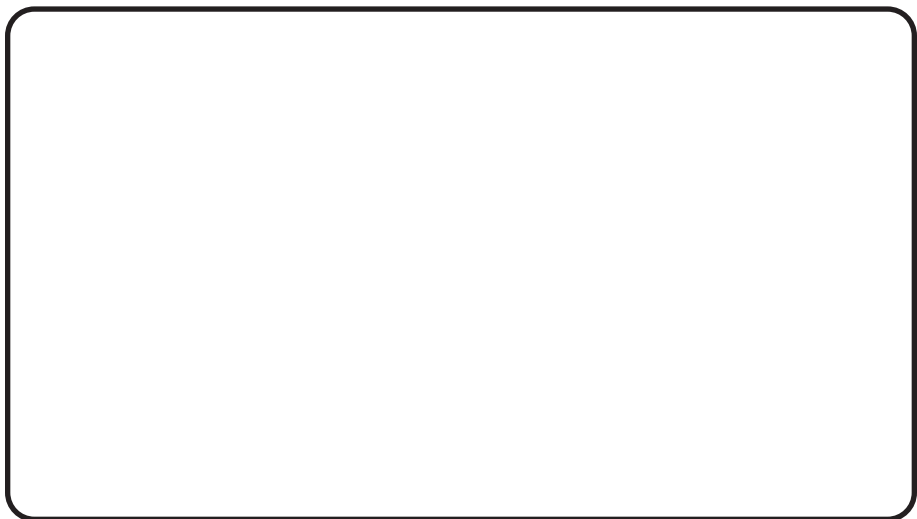


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DISSOLVE: This procedure, also known as creating the universal solvent, can be used to destroy almost anything. Dissolve can transform any liquid into a substance known as alchahest, which will dissolve anything it touches. Performing this procedure also produces a container capable of resisting the affects of that particular solvent, but not the affects of any other universal solvent. No more than five liters (five quarts) of alchahest can be produced at one time. Every half liter (half quarter) of alchahest thrown or otherwise applied to a living target will produce a Sp3 wounds. Armor is useless against alchahest. In fact, the alchahest will dissolve any armor the target is wearing. Alchahest cannot dissolve more than its own volume. A liter (a quart) of alchahest will completely and instantly dissolve a liter (a quart) or 1000cc (61 cubic inches) of any substance, converting both into pure water.

This procedure also has other, less physical uses. It can be used to completely dissolve any barriers or objections that a subject has to any single idea. Someone who would normally never agree to perform some action readily performs it after being subjected to this procedure. Subjects even agree to perform acts that they would normally never consider, such as killing friends or family. When performing this procedure, the exact action must be decided, but not the subject being affected.

Finally, if a living subject is in the laboratory during the entire duration of the procedure, the alchemist can remove all barriers in the subject's mind. All commands or alterations produced using hypnotic mind control, and psychic or magical Domination are instantly revealed. All of the subject's memories are completely accessible, including all memories of dreams, and any memories which have been suppressed or altered using magic, drugs, or psychic powers. Minute details, not noticed at the time they were perceived, can be recalled with perfect clarity. Being subjected to the procedure is extremely draining. Once the procedure is complete, the subject will be in a deep trance lasting a full day. During this time, the subject is lost in her memories and cannot be awakened. After the trance is over the subject is exhausted. Also, in addition to being completely free of all affects of previous mind control or Domination, the subject retains detailed memories of a single experience. This experience must be decided on while the subject is in the trance.



RESHAPE: This procedure allows the alchemist to completely reshape a person or object. While the subject's basic nature must remain the same -- a car must remain a moderate-sized ground vehicle and a person must remain humanoid -- all other aspects of the target can be slightly or radically changed. A tall, fat, man could become a short, slender woman, or even a Saurian or a Grey. An ordinary single-engine private plane could be transformed into a propeller-driven float plane.

If the alchemist has a psychic link to some related object or individual, the subject can be transformed into an exact duplicate, down to serial numbers, wear patterns, blood type, and voice prints. For sentient subjects, their minds remain unchanged, as does their Willpower and Intelligence, but all other aspects become those of the individual being duplicated. If a psychic link of this type is not used, the subject may be transformed into a general type, which could include an alien. When transforming someone into an alien, alter the appropriate attributes by using the species averages modified by the subject's deviation from their own species average (e.g., a Size 4 human would become a Size 3 Grey).

GMs may wish to limit the reshape degree per application. The exact level of power granted by the Reshape procedure should be tailored for each campaign, but the following suggestions are advanced. Strength, Size, Agility, and Reflexes could be changed by three. Speed could be changed by two, Handling by up to +/- 2t, or Ar by two.

The Reshape procedure can also be used to modify minds. In addition to raising and lowering the subject's Intelligence, Willpower, or Perception by two, entirely new memories can be created, and up to 10CPs in any skill or training known to either the alchemist, the subject, or someone assisting in the procedure can be gained. As in all procedures, only one such change can be performed at a time. Increasing Intelligence and adding a new skill cannot both be done during the same procedure. When creating new memories, the subject automatically believes them to be true, but reacts to them in a normal manner. New drives and new imperatives such as those produced by magical or psychic Domination can also be produced in this fashion.

This procedure can lead to some game imbalance. Characters could give themselves armored skin, Size 6 bodies, an Intelligence of 6 and so on. If characters go down this road, make sure that they realize that armored skin will look much different than normal skin, or superhumanly intelligent people will have difficulty dealing with normal humans, and so on. There are always consequences for those beings who are gifted/cursed beyond the human range. If nothing else, they will be prejudiced against by those less fortunate.

SKILL DEFAULTS

Over the past year, we have seen a number of email questions and suggestions concerning the skill system. One of the most frequent discussion points concerns skill defaults -- how to handle situations where a character attempts something that he has no skill level for. The most frequent response -- use Luck -- is not universally appreciated. This article presents a slight change to a character's beginning skills to cover skill defaults.

BASIC SKILLS

All characters are considered to have certain basic skills. These are learned as the character goes through school, or survives through adulthood. All characters are considered to have the following skill levels (at no CP cost), and may purchase them to a higher skill level. Where appropriate, sample sources of the information have been given. Zero level skills may be used to attempt Df1 tests (with a Target Number of 4, plus any applicable modifiers). Any skills not on the following list cannot be attempted without a Luck test, or by using a suitable sub-skill of a meta-skill (as detailed below).

Athletics (any) 0
(basic high school gym classes)

Autofire 1

Brawling 1

Computer Use 0

Diplomacy (any) 0
(general socialization)

Drive: Auto 1

Humanities (any) 0
(basic high school classes)

Language (native language) 3

Photography 0

Research 0

Science (any) 0

(basic high school classes)

Small Arms: Pistol 0

Small Arms: Rifle 0

Throw 0

SKILL CATEGORIES

Several playtesters have pointed out inconsistencies in the current Conspiracy X skill system. In particular, they question some of the meta-skill categories and how one skill may be used in place of another. They also disagree that being an eminent biologist (Science: Biology 5) automatically makes one a superior astronomer (attempt all other Science tests as skill level 4). The following skill categories attempt to address their concerns.

Skills are organized into three groups: General, Meta and Specific.

GENERAL SKILLS

General skills follow the usual Conspiracy X skill system. The skill is an isolated one that provides no benefits or aid in attempting other skills. Cartography, Disguise, Hypnosis, Psychotron and Tracking are examples of General skills.

META-SKILLS

Meta-skills require characters to choose a particular sub-skill concentration (and even a specialization under certain circumstances). Under the main rulebook rules, such characters may test any related sub-skills at a +1Df penalty. This rule theorizes that any character who has enough training in a specific sub-skill had to learn a bit about everything in the overarching subject.

Under these new skill categories, meta-skills do not provide so great a benefit. When a character attempts a skill that she does not possess, the GM has to decide whether that skill is related in any way to one of the character's meta-skills. If the relation is close, the meta-skill is lowered by one, and applied in the new skill test. If the relation is only "in the ballpark", the meta-skill is lowered by two, and applied to the new skill test.

Finally, no meta-skill may be applied outside it's concentration at a level higher than two.



Claris is one of the best biologists in the world having Science: Biology 5. Under the new general rule, Claris could attempt a any skill test at level 4, if the GM considered it closely related, and level 3, if the GM did not. Due to the final restriction on meta-skills, however, no test can be attempted in another sub-skill at professional level (3) or better. If she wanted to attempt a Science: Chemistry, regardless of how related the GM considered this skill, she would test at a level no higher than 2.

SPECIFIC SKILLS

Specific skills require a character to choose a sub-skill to be trained in, but it has no relation to any other sub-skills. Sub-skills in this category are related under a common topic but have little actual relation to each other.



Alex rushes into a Chinese restaurant, and knocks over a waiter carrying a tray of food. He tries to explain, using his Language: English 4 skill, that he was chasing a man who stole his wallet. As there is no relationship between Language: English and Language: Mandarin, the angry Chinese proprietor has no idea what Alex is saying. For his part, Alex cannot make out the specifics of the proprietor's comments, but he certainly understands the general tone.

SKILLS AND CATEGORIES LIST

Over the next two pages, the skills published to date are gathered in one table. Each skill's modifying attribute (Att), category type (Type) and the Conspiracy X book(s) describing it (Source) are detailed.

Skill List

Skill	Att	Type	Source
Alchemy	INT	Specific	Bodyguard of Lies #2
Animal Handling*	PER	Meta	Aegis Handbook
Athletics	AGL	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Autofire	STR	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Behavioral Sciences	INT	Meta	Exodus
Blind Maneuvers*	None	General	Aegis Handbook
Boating	PER	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Brawling	STR	Specific	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Cartography	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Cerebro-Stimulator	INT	General	Shadows of the Mind
Computer Programming	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Computer Use	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Cryptology	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Cryptozoology	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Demolitions	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Diplomacy	WIL	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Disguise	PER	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Dreaming	WIL	General	Bodyguard of Lies #1
Dreamspeaker Lore	INT	General	Exodus
Drive	REF	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Engineering	INT	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Escape	AGL	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Fine Arts*	PER	Meta	Aegis Handbook
First Aid	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Forensics	PER	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Forgery	PER	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Gambling*	AGL	General	Aegis Handbook
Gun Fu	AGL	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Gunnery	REF	Meta	Bodyguard of Lies #2, Exodus
Heavy Weapons	AGL	Meta	Bodyguard of Lies #2, Exodus
Hobby*	Varies	Specific	Aegis Handbook
Humanities	INT	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook

* These skills may be taken by any starting character to level 5. They are not limited to a certain skill level, and need not be on your character's professional skill list.

IMPROVING SKILLS

The rules for improving general and specific skills remain the same as those presented in the main rulebook. Raising meta-skills is also the same for the specific concentration taken. When raising a closely or somewhat related sub-skill (at GM's discretion), the character's treats his default skill as the base skill.

Skill Cost Table

Level	Skill Cost to Raise
1	2
2	4
3	8
4	16
5	32

Skill List

Skill	Att	Type	Source
Hypnosis	WIL	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Kirlian Photography	INT	General	Shadows of the Mind
Language*	INT	Specific	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Lens Breeding	INT	General	Nemesis
Lockpicking	AGL	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Martial Arts	Varies	Specific	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Medical	INT	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Meditation	WIL	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Melee Weapon	AGL	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
MHIC-EDOM	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Monitor	INT	General	Shadows of the Mind
Occult	INT	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Oneirokinesis	WIL	General	Exodus
Parapsychology	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Photography	PER	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Pilot	REF	Specific	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Psibot Operation	WIL	General	Nemesis
Psibot Programming	INT	General	Nemesis
Psychotron	WIL	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Repair/Build	INT	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Research	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Ritual	WIL	Specific	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Sailing*	PER	Meta	Aegis Handbook
Science	INT	Meta	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Shadow	PER	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Small Arms	AGL	Meta	Bodyguard of Lies #2, Exodus
Stealth	AGL	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Teaching	PER	General	Aegis Handbook
Throw*	AGL	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Tracking	PER	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
UFOlogy	INT	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Video	PER	General	Main rulebook, Aegis Handbook
Visualization	WIL	General	Shadows of the Mind

* These skills may be taken by any starting character to level 5. They are not limited to a certain skill level, and need not be on your character's professional skill list



Jim has Humanities: Business 3 and wants to have Humanities: Economics 3. The GM decides that Humanities: Economics is a closely related skill to Humanities: Business. Thus, Jim is considered to have Humanities: Economics 2. Jim needs 8CPs to improve his default Humanities: Economics 2 to level 3.



If Jim wanted to improve his Humanities: Theology skill, and he only possessed Humanities: Business 3, he would start at a lower level. As Humanities: Theology is only somewhat related, he would have to raise it to level 2 (for 4CPs) first since his Humanities: Theology is only considered level 1.



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NEW TRAITS

By Rens van den Bergh

New Traits	Value	Cost
Bravery		10CP
Cowardice	10CP	
Hip-Shooter		10CP

BRAVERY: Aegis is particularly interested in recruiting the bravest of people. They take on the most daring missions, face the strongest foe, and handle the most horrific circumstances. These agents are the heroes of Aegis. Agents with this trait gain a -1Df on all their Fear tests.

COWARDICE: Not all people are cut out to face horrible aliens and risk death every day. These people know very well that "Heroes are always the first to die". Normally these people would not make good members of Aegis, but some have skills and talents necessary for the war effort. Rather than let them slip by, they were recruited. Characters with the cowardice trait suffer a +1Df on all their Fear tests.

HIP-SHOOTER: Some agents have a natural talent for firing accurately while moving. Others spend long hours training themselves to be able to "hit and git." Agents with this trait do not suffer a -1Df when they run and shoot in the same turn.

NEW TRAININGS

By Magnus Pettersson and Bernard C. Trombley

New Trainings	Prof	Non-P
Assassination	15	N/A
Vehicle Kill	4	N/A

ASSASSINATION: The character is trained in the art of assassination, and ambush. She can spot the perfect location from which to kill her victim. The assassination training also includes a complete understanding of the various sensitive spots on the body, such as nerve centers, and vulnerable joints. Characters must choose an associated skill when they purchase this training. Relevant associated skills are Brawling (any specialty), Martial Arts (any specialty), Small Arms: Pistol, Small Arms: Rifle, Melee Weapon (any sub-skill), or any other combat skill. When using the associated skill, a character with Assassination training automatically stages up the damage as long as the attack occurs at optimal range (see below). At any other range, if the associated skill is used, the character gains +1t on staging tests. This training's benefit may be used with a called shot.

Skill	Optimal Range
Brawling/Martial Arts	Point Blank
Melee Weapon	Point Blank
Throw	Close
Small Arms: Pistol	Effective
Small Arms: Rifle	Long
Heavy Weapons	Extreme

The following professions should have Assassination added to their list of Professional Trainings:

Air Force: Intelligence Officer
Army: Ranger
CIA: Agent
Federal Bureau of Prisons: Violent Criminal
Navy: Seal
Project Moondust: Ops Specialist
U.S. Secret Service: Agent



VEHICLE KILL: Much like the Assassination training, there are individuals trained to quickly take out a vehicle. This training includes knowledge of weak spots of armor, location of gas tanks, engines and other vulnerable areas on vehicles. Characters may choose a broad group of vehicles as their concentration, such as sports cars, pickup trucks, jet fighters, oil tankers, motorcycles. When the character succeeds at hitting a vehicle within his concentration, any non-Electronic Malfunction roll required suffers a +2 modifier. Optionally the character may concentrate in a specific vehicle such as police cruisers, Jeep wranglers, Apache helicopter, etc. In this case, he receives a +3 bonus to the non-Electronic Malfunction roll when attacking that specific vehicle, and a +1 bonus on closely related vehicles (GM's discretion).

The following professions should have Vehicle Kill added to their list of Professional Trainings:

Air Force: Pilot
 Air Force: Technician
 Army: Helicopter Pilot
 Army: Technician
 ATF: Field Agent
 CIA: Technician
 DEA: Field Agent
 DOE/EOR: Technician
 DTIC: IACS Technician
 Groom Lake: Technician
 Groom Lake: Test Pilot
 Navy: Aviator
 Navy: Sailor
 Navy: Seal/Underwater Demolitions Specialist
 Navy: Technician
 Project Moondust: Technician/Engineer
 Project Moondust: Blue Fly Pilot

REVISED SKILLS

The skills have been updated to account for various types of weaponry. For the most part, characters will be limited in the types of weapon skills they can choose. The other types of weapons skills (such as Force and Energy) are known and used mostly by Saurians.

GUNNERY (REF): This meta-skill governs the use of all types of vehicle weapons. Characters choose from Energy (electric, laser, plasma), Flamethrowers, Force, Indirect projectiles (battleship guns), Missile (missiles, rockets), and Projectiles (cannons) sub-skills. Like other meta-skills, using a related category imposes a +1Df. Further, attempting to use alien technology incurs a further +1Df until enough time is spent becoming familiar with the weapon system.

HEAVY WEAPONS (AGL): This meta-skill governs the use of all types of heavy weapons. Characters choose from Energy (electric, laser, plasma), Flamethrower, Force, Indirect projectile (grenade launcher, mortar), Missile (missiles, rockets), and Projectile (heavy machine-gun, minigun, railguns) sub-skills. Like other meta-skills, using a related category imposes a +1Df. Further, attempting to use alien technology incurs a further +1Df until enough time is spent becoming familiar with the weapon system.

SMALL ARMS (AGL): This meta-skill governs the use of all types of hand held weapons. Characters choose from Energy (electric, laser, plasma), Force, Pistol, and Rifle sub-skills. Like other meta-skills, using a related category imposes a +1Df. Further, attempting to use alien technology incurs a further +1Df until enough time is spent becoming familiar with the weapon system.



Mokolé

The Menace of the Man-Alligator

WRITTEN BY PAUL "WIGGY" WILLIAMS

Disclaimer

Whilst this adventure does make use of a voodoo ritual, the author has no working knowledge of the religion other than that gained from books. It is used purely for atmosphere in a gaming context. Although the ritual does contain elements of real voodoo, nothing contained in this mission is intended to demean the religion in any way, or to reveal its secrets to the unenlightened masses. No offense is meant to any follower of voodoo by this work.

The author wishes to thanks the following people and organizations
for their aid in the writing of the adventure:

The Louisiana Travel Promotion Association
(for mailing me information on Louisiana)

The Chitimacha Indian Cultural Centre National Historical Park & Preserve
(for the legends found on their web site)

The Morgan City Archives (for details on the city)



Ψ INTRODUCTION

Aegis has set itself up as the defender of humanity. Of primary concern are the presence of alien menaces, but the supernatural and paranormal are also in Aegis' self-appointed mandate. This mission falls primarily into the latter realms. Although a Saurian presence is felt throughout the mission, it is unlikely the agents will uncover this.

By the nature of the organization, most Aegis missions are set in locales near the agents' base of operations. This adventure, however, is deliberately set in the Louisiana bayou. For teams that are not situated within the Louisiana area, a number of potential hooks are included below. If these appear unsatisfactory, or the Game Master otherwise does not want to move the storyline to Louisiana, feel free to move the entire location to a swampy area near to the agents' Cell. Naturally, the Game Master would have to change the names of the city and towns to match those near to the Cell and he should be careful about transferring the voodoo to areas where the religion has few adherents. American Indian shamanism could be substituted if the area fits. The alligator farm can be moved quite easily, with Blackie raising the alligators for the local clothing and food industries, whether or not alligators are native to the region.

This adventure is designed for a team of 4-6 agents with some experience. Although no one skill is vital to the mission, a broad balance will be very beneficial to the team. As always, psychic or ritual abilities will be helpful.

The exact time of year and date of the adventure is not important, nor are such factors as the weather. The Game Master should feel free to make up the weather conditions as and when she needs them. For example, running around the bayou in a thunderstorm can be very atmospheric (and downright terrifying!)

This adventure is broken down into three separate components. The first, which follows directly after this, is the overview and introduction. This will give the Game Master a firm idea of what is to follow in the main adventure, and will introduce him to the main characters and organizations in the story. Much of the information may never be known to the players, but without it the adventure will lack atmosphere and motive.

The second section is the main adventure itself. The various scenes that make up the complete mission are detailed in a rough order, but the agents have a relatively free hand as to the order they investigate key locations and encounter key people. It is recommended that Game Masters become thoroughly familiar with the plot, so as not to be caught out when the agents visit a specific location.

The appendices are presented last. To ease the Game Master's burden, these playing aids mirror the format presented in the Night of Rage module attached to the Conspiracy X GM's Screen. Appendix A contains player handouts, including witness statements and a newspaper clipping, all supplied by HERMES when requested by the characters. Appendix B has a complete listing of all the movers and shakers in the mission, as well as statistics and typical responses to likely lines of inquiry. In order to make the adventure seem as real as possible the GM should familiarize himself with the non-player characters and create a few minor quirks for each. A map of the area, detailing all of the areas known to the agents at the start of the mission is also provided here. Separate maps for the GM detail those locations that the players may travel to after the investigation starts.

OVERVIEW

For the most part, this adventure takes place in the Deep South, in the Bayou Teche near Morgan City. Matrox Chemicals, a well-known pharmaceutical company controlled by the Black Book, has been conducting experiments in genetics under the direction of the Saurians. Over the last few years, scientists from both races have been recreating certain beasts from the Saurian past -- in this case natural born killers that resemble dinosaurs. In order to test the creature's adaptability to present environmental conditions, the scientists have released one of the beasts into the bayou to monitor its progress.

The agents become interested in the area after several sightings of an alligator-man in the bayou. They learn that the sighting is related to several mysterious disappearances of Matrox employees in the area.

Arriving in the bayou, the agents begin their investigation. Within a few hours, the agents run into another team investigating the alligator-man -- members of the Royal Cryptozoological Society (RCS). Although not here to cause trouble per se, the RCS is determined to find the truth.

Along the way, the agents visit a local alligator farm, where the owner, a man named Blackie, gives them a guided tour of the facility. During the tour, the characters spy several monstrously sized alligators and, after some brief questioning of Blackie, learn that several have begun to show similar signs of development. Investigation of the alligators' diet leads to a local chicken farm, where the agents learn that the feed crops are enhanced with Matrox fertilizer. Scientific study of the chickens, corn or fertilizer reveals a growth hormone targeted toward reptiles.

Upon visiting the Matrox facility the agents are introduced to the company's PR representative, Miss Catherine Downs, and given a tour of the facilities. Miss Downs is a Black Book agent assigned to keep the breeding project under control and out of the public's eyes.

Upon investigating a village situated in the bayou, the agents are lead to the local mambo (voodoo priestess), Madame M'Bodo. She invites the agents to participate in a voodoo ceremony and explains that it will help them with their case. One of the agents is temporarily possessed by a voodoo deity and valuable information is gained from the experience.

After the voodoo ceremony, the agents suffer from nightmares, clues that something bad has happened. Shortly afterwards they are informed that another Matrox employee has been killed in the bayou, apparently torn to shreds by an alligator. The crime scene tells a different story, however. Evidence suggests that the scientist was killed by a bipedal reptile that stands in excess of nine feet. A medallion found at the crime scene leads the agents to conclude that Blackie's nephew, Billy-Joe, is somehow involved.

The investigation then leads to a deserted house in the bayou. Inside is a collection of kinship dolls, used by a shaman to track his tribe members. The investigation is cut short when a dinosaur bursts into the house and tries to eat all of the agents. After a fierce battle, the creature is killed and the agents have a chance to examine it in detail. They discover that the creature has been created by Matrox Chemicals, although they have no idea for what purpose.



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If the agents return to Matrox to question them about the dinosaur they find that they are expected. The public information officer explains that Matrox is secretly using the alligators to help recreate dinosaurs to help combat world food shortages. The creature the agents killed escaped early and was not destined for survival. A blatant lie perhaps, but a believable one.

Fearing that the agents know too much and that security has been endangered, the Black Book activates an emergency plan. Thousands of gallons of chemicals are released in the bayou and Matrox arranges to have the National Guard (Black Book soldiers) seal off the area and evacuate the inhabitants. In the confusion, Matrox smuggles its genetic researchers and material to a Black Book safe haven.

The agents are led to the alligator farm, where they discover Billy-Joe suffering from an unknown illness. Before the agents can act further, the Guard turns up, Billy-Joe changes form, and a fight breaks out. Regardless of the characters' actions, the Mokolé dies and reverts to the form of Billy-Joe. The arrival of reinforcements forces the agents out of the area before they can gather much in the way of evidence. With the Mokolé dead and Matrox cleared out, the agents have little more to do in the area.

MORGAN CITY REGION

Morgan City lies roughly in the bottom center of the state of Louisiana, on the Atchafalaya River, and is connected to several large bayous. Lake Palourde abuts the northern edge of the city and the Intracoastal Waterway passes through the city. Within the city is a shallow-draft port facility. The city is well connected by roads and can be reached by Highways 20, 70 and 182 and Interstate 90. It has no airport of its own, but New Orleans International Airport is only a few hours drive away. Nearby Lafayette has a regional airport and Patterson has a small airfield if the Cell has its own air transportation. The city is quite small, having fewer than 25,000 permanent inhabitants, although the actual number rises during the holiday season.

Morgan City stands on an island, known as Tiger Island, and the area was once inhabited by coastal Indians, who survived by fishing, trapping and hunting the surrounding lands. The area around Morgan City was owned by both the French and the Spanish at one time. After the American Revolution, English-speaking settlers moved to the area via the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the banks of the area were dotted with small sugar cane plantations. In 1857, the construction of the NOO and GW railway from New Orleans to Berwick Bay gave birth to the town of Brashear, named after its founder, Dr. Walter Brashear, a noted Kentucky surgeon.

Marine commerce during the first half of the nineteenth century saw an increase in water traffic between the port of New Orleans from Berwick Bay and the Bayou Teche. Because of the strategic location commanding the entrance to the Atchafalaya Basin, Federal forces occupied Brashear during the Civil War. Between 1862 and 1865, the town was used as a base of operations during repeated attacks against Confederate positions in western Louisiana. Following the war, the steamship and railroad enterprises of business magnate Charles Morgan, contributed to an era of major economic development. In Morgan's honor, the town was re-named Morgan City in 1876. Discovery of oil in the Gulf of Mexico in 1947 led to the establishment of a vigorous petroleum industry.

Morgan City boasts a scenic tourist center, a modern municipal auditorium and a highly regarded city archives and library.

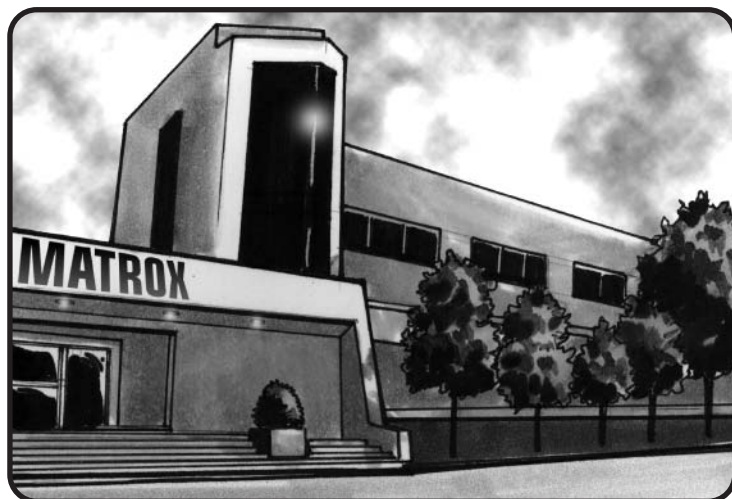
Patterson and Bayou Vista are both within the mission's sphere of influence, although they play no direct part. Both settlements are rather small, being little more than large villages, and have populations of 4736 and 4733 inhabitants, respectively.

MATROX CHEMICALS

Matrox Chemicals is a large pharmaceutical company with several branches around the country. Their headquarters is situated in Arizona, but they have manufacturing facilities in Morgan City, New York City and Cleveland. Much of the company's work involves the manufacture of prescription medical drugs, although sideline projects include chemical fertilizers and pest controls. Local citizens generally see Matrox as beneficial to the area, diverting funds into local health and welfare projects for the benefit of the community. They also maintain a good record with the various environmental agencies and safety commissions. Finally, any local politician will be very supportive and protective of Matrox (a direct result of generous contributions or tax revenues).

For those in the know, Matrox has a darker side. The company is controlled by the Black Book. Recent developments in genetic experimentation have allowed Matrox, with Saurian war-tech help, to recreate certain prehistoric reptiles. Neither Black Book nor Matrox knows why the Gna-Tall Saurians sponsored the project, but they are too wise to argue with them. Barely five percent of Matrox employees know anything about the Book, and they are mainly senior scientists and management. The remainder of the workforce believe they work for a legitimate, and surprisingly generous, pharmaceutical company. Matrox's involvement with the Black Book and Saurians is so well hidden that no background check on Matrox, no matter how detailed, reveals anything untoward.

The latest secret project has involved "live trials" -- Matrox released one of their creations into the bayou to see how it adapts to its environment. A successful test would result in the Gna-Tall stepping up production of the creatures, affectionately known as "Sauroids" amongst the Matrox personnel.





THE MOKOLÉ

Local legend tells of a creature, half-human and half-alligator, that haunts the deepest parts of the bayou. Some say that it is benevolent, protecting travelers who wander into dangerous areas. Others argue that the creature detests man for the damage he has done to the Earth and that it is protecting the bayou from man, not the other way around. Like most legends, there are many stories about the creation of the creature. An Indian spirit, an African voodoo spirit brought by the slaves, and dumb superstition are various purported causes of the Mokolé. Few that spend any amount in the bayou leave without the feeling that something powerful is watching them. A few have even heard the beast roar at night -- a frightening, mournful sound that causes goosebumps in all but the hardest of men.

Contrary to popular belief, the Mokolé does exist, and has for many millennia. Originally the creature lived in the bayou and tended it, caring for the flora and fauna as a doctor would a sick patient. At this early stage, the beast appeared almost fully human, only its strange affinity with the bayou seemed unnatural. Over the centuries, the bayou changed hands as Indian tribes migrated away and new ones entered the area. The tender remained.

When the white men came, everything changed. Whereas the Indians had preserved the sanctity of Earth, the white men exploited it, cutting down trees for houses and to make room for crops, tearing gaping wounds in the Earth to extract precious minerals, and slaughtering the animals en masse. The Indians could not resist the guns of the settlers and they resorted to drastic action. One of the shamans, a powerful ritualist, undertook a bizarre ceremony to imbue himself with the living spirit of the bayou. Whether he knew what the outcome would be is doubtful, but he physically merged with the tender, and became the first true Mokolé, a living creature, part-alligator and part-man.

In the few decades it took for the settlers to kill off or drive away the Indians, the Mokolé killed dozens of white men, leaving their mutilated bodies for others to find. Many settlers refused to live around the bayou, claiming it was haunted by Indian spirits, or still inhabited by murderous Indians. For another few decades the Mokolé lived peacefully. When it died another shaman undertook the ritual, intent on keeping the area untouched by man for as long as possible.

Eventually the settlers came back, with better guns and black slaves from across the sea. At first, the Mokolé was fearful of the blacks, for it had never seen men with skin such as that. Over the years the Mokolé watched and waited, spying on the slaves' rituals and rites, studying their ways. It soon became apparent that the blacks were slaves to the white men, something that the Mokolé knew too well from his own peoples' experiences. The Mokolé decided to adopt the slaves as his own. Many slaves were set free from bondage when their masters died brutal deaths while in the bayou. Alligators were blamed, but the slaves knew better.

Before this Mokolé died, it passed on the knowledge of the ritual to one family of slaves, who had been living in the area since the first blacks were moved in. The ritual he taught them was different from the Indian ritual, for it allowed the Mokolé to choose between human or beast-form as he saw fit. This way, the Mokolé could travel amongst men and find out their plans for the bayou, thwarting them if necessary by reverting to beast-form. Through the ritual, the slave family named one of their own as the Mokolé, and took on the hereditary burden.

The Mokolé still comes from this family. Only a few dozen living people know this, however, and all of them are family members or very trusted friends. The latest Mokolé is a young boy named Billy-Joe DuPres, who inherited the title from his great-uncle when he died eight years ago. Billy-Joe is not the brightest of children, suffering from a below average IQ, but he cares about the bayou more strongly than anyone still living can remember and was taught the Ritual of Changing on his twelfth birthday.

Since undergoing the ritual, Billy-Joe has learned that Matrox is not as beneficial as it seems. Although he has no idea what they are doing, aside from making chemicals, he knows that a strange presence recently entered the bayou from the Matrox facility. A presence similar to his own and yet more destructive and violent. Billy-Joe's simple mind saw an easy solution to the problem of Matrox -- if he killed enough Matrox scientists, they would have to close down and move elsewhere.



THE ROYAL CRYPTOZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

As detailed in *Cryptozoology: Dossier of the Unexplained*, the Royal Cryptozoology Society, or RCS as it is better known, is a collection of scientists and explorers who all share a passion for cryptozoology. All the individual Game Master needs to know for this mission is that the organization is extremely wealthy, has five branches across the globe, and can draw on some very up-to-date equipment. The RCS is not afraid to bend the rules if it thinks this is necessary to the successful outcome of an expedition. In many respects they pose a threat to Aegis, as their goal is to discover life forms scoffed at by conventional scientists, such as Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster, and prove their existence to the world. Some life-forms, Aegis would rather keep buried.

During the mission the RCS presence is intended to keep the agents on their toes and to let them know that any mistake or discovery could conceivably be captured on film by the RCS team members. The RCS initially assumes that the agents are in the area for reasons similar to its own, but is likely to label them as nuts and crackpots working for a big city paranormal magazine unless it learns otherwise.

Law enforcement agents will not concern the RCS members if the characters have a good cover story (kidnapping, murder, drug smuggling), but claiming to represent the military or some quasi-secret organization is going to convince the RCS that the agents are up to no good. If suspicions are raised too high (the Game Master has the final word on this), the RCS will start taking small risks to learn what the agents are really up to. Breaking into hotel rooms and vehicles are likely to be high on the list, although seduction and drugging are also viable options.

Faking a sighting of the Mokolé is the best way to rid the bayou of the RCS. This will convince them that the whole tale is a hoax. Such a scheme will not be easy, however, especially once the Matrox scientist is murdered.

The RCS Investigation Timetable follows (Day 1 is the day the Aegis Cell arrives in Morgan City). Game Master may make changes to non-player character reactions as appropriate (e.g., if the RCS have already visited Blackie when the agents arrive at the alligator farm, he may ask the characters if they are working with the others). Changes to the schedule caused by the death of the Matrox scientist must be handled by the individual Game Master, as there is no way of foretelling when the event will take place.

RCS INVESTIGATION TIMETABLE

DAY & TIME

LOCATION

Day 1, 1000 hours

The RCS arrives in town and checks into their hotel.

Day 1, 1130 hours

The RCS visits the police station to let the police know they are in the area, and to try and gain information on the sightings of the alligator-man. They do not make much progress and leave rather disgruntled.

Day 1, 1400 hours

The RCS spends the rest of the day at the public library, going over past sightings and retrieving as much information on the current sightings as possible.

Day 2, 0900 hours

The RCS combs the first disappearance site for clues.

Day 2, 1200 hours

The RCS combs the second disappearance site for clues.

Day 2, 1600 hours

The RCS takes a quick trip to see Blackie and spots the large alligators.

Day 3, 0900 hours

The RCS returns to the alligator farm and spends several hours studying the alligators.

Day 3, 1400 hours

The RCS visits Jed Thomas but gains no information useful to their immediate quest.

Day 3, 1600 hours

The RCS spends the entire day at the village, questioning locals and listening to local superstitions.

Day 4, 0900 hours

The RCS continues talking to the locals.

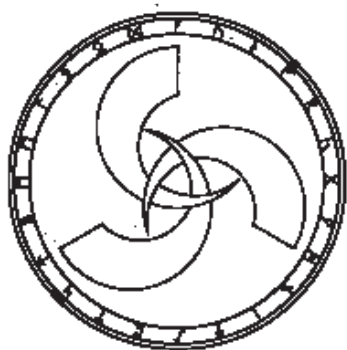
Day 4, 2000 hours

The RCS spends the night camping in the bayou, trying to capture the Mokolé on film, with no luck.

Day 5, 1000 hours

The RCS leaves the bayou, convinced there is no solid evidence to be gained on this trip.





THE TITANIDAE

The Titanidae are an ancient order, dating their creation back to the first millennium before Christ. They are a highly secret order, who have only been infiltrated by Aegis on a handful of occasions. The society is large, well funded, and very organized, with substantial occult and paranormal resources at its disposal. All of its members are psychics. Although the Titanidae openly seek to discredit the supernatural and paranormal, they actually have a different goal -- world domination through the control of supernatural and paranormal entities. Unlike many other organizations with similar goals, the Titanidae have no place for belief in aliens in their philosophy.

The Titanidae are in the bayou for one reason and one reason alone -- to make contact with the Mokolé. If it cannot be "recruited" for their cause, it is to be killed. Although the agents may see the Titanidae team arrive, they are unlikely to have any prolonged exposure to them, purely because the Titanidae are doomed to die a very quick death while pursuing their cause. The Titanidae Contact Timeline is given nearby (Day 1 is the day the Aegis Cell arrives in Morgan City).

TITANIDAE CONTACT TIMELINE

DAY & TIME	LOCATION
Day 2, 1000 hours	The Titanidae arrive in Morgan City and book a hotel. They spend much of the morning in their rooms, planning their mission in the bayou.
Day 2, 1700 hours	The Titanidae enter the village and speak to Madame M'Bodo. She is of little help to them, viewing them as dangerous to the harmony of the bayou.
Day 3, 0800 hours	The Titanidae spend most of the day touring the bayou, trying to find a suitable site for their ceremony.
Day 3, 2200 hours	The Titanidae enter the bayou on foot and prepare for the ritual that they hope will bring the Mokolé into the open so they may communicate with it.
Day 3, 1159 hours	The Sauroid, summoned accidentally by the Titanidae, enters the clearing where the ceremony is taking place and kills the entire team.

TITANIDAE, RCS AND MOLES . . . OH MY!

Not all Aegis members are government agency employees. Some work in the political and religious arenas and some aren't even really working for Aegis at all. So what happens if a Cell member is a Titanidae mole or an RCS attachment? Well, there are two possible causes of action open to the Game Master.

First, the Game Master can simply ban the agent from going on the mission or from even being created in the first place. This might be seen as rather heavy-handed and may cause resentment.

The second approach is more believable for both the agent and his parent organization. Both the Titanidae and the RCS are investigating the Mokolé, although for entirely different reasons. Although the RCS tends to be more open with its members than the Titanidae, personal prestige and rivalries still exist (after all, its members are only human). Before he departs on the mission, the mole is contacted by one of his superiors and warned that an important mission is taking place in New Orleans and that the agent is not to interfere.

But what if the agent goes on the mission anyway? If the agent does not know any of the RCS or Titanidae members involved in the mission, then there is little chance of immediate recognition. Of course, the RCS are acting openly and might be approached by an agent who has loyalties to the organization. The senior RCS member on site, Doctor Haley Daniels, will not be impressed by junior members interfering on a case and she immediately calls her superiors and asks for the agent to be warned off. Sure enough, the agent receives a call from the RCS and is told to leave the RCS team alone. He is not to interfere with the on-site investigation, nor is he to deliberately try and conceal their activities from his Aegis colleagues. A serious reprimand awaits any agent who breaks these orders.

HOOKS

Initially, the agents are introduced to the mission and gather background material. The Game Master should copy relevant player handouts from Appendix A and distribute them as required. Some of the handouts are only available if the agents actively request further information from HERMES. Several potential hooks for the adventure are given below and the Game Master should feel free to pick the one that most suits her campaign. Of course, Game Masters should feel free to create their own openings as well.

HERMES REPORT

The outright command-from-above method of introducing an adventure may not be very subtle, but it is direct and effective. Following standard Aegis procedure, one of the agents (probably a computer specialist) checks the latest HERMES alerts on a regular basis. One morning, a report comes in from Morgan City, Louisiana. The alert links to a newspaper article detailing the disappearance of a Matrox scientist only a few days ago. The alert and follow-up documents are found in Appendix A.

Ψ NEWSPAPER/TV REPORT

Today's culture is full of paranormal journals and supernatural documentary shows. Reports of Bigfoot sightings, ghosts and UFOs fill our bookshops, newsstands and television channels. Many Aegis Cells monitor these magazines and shows as part of their daily routine. During a trip to the supermarket or when watching television, an agent comes across a report on the alleged sightings of an alligator-man, or Mokolé, in the Louisiana Teche Bayou. The report mentions the sighting of the beast by an elderly tourist couple, Mr. and Mrs. George Jacobs of Kansas City (HERMES has their statement on file and it is included in Appendix A).

Shortly after, the same or a different Cell member notices a newspaper article detailing the disappearance of a scientist in the Teche Bayou.

If the agent checks with HERMES, he finds that a team began an investigation into the Mokolé some years ago but the case was never solved. The file was officially closed after twelve months of inactivity.

RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PLACE

One of the agents is in the Morgan City area, either visiting relatives or working on a minor mission (such as securing equipment with Resource Points). While having a drink in a local bar, she hears the townsfolk discussing the sightings of giant alligators in the bayou. Many of the locals have their opinions on why the creatures have grown so big, ranging from space radiation to government experiments through to alien interference. At some point, one of the locals brings up the Mokolé and the conversation really heats up.

If the agent checks with HERMES, he finds that a team began an investigation into the Mokolé some years ago but the case was never solved. The file was officially closed after twelve months of inactivity.

A PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER

In theory, clues to the Mokolé can be planted in adventures before this mission is run, although not every mission lends itself to clue-dropping. For instance, dropping clues about the Mokolé while the team is investigating the disappearance of a U.S. Senator in Washington may seem a little silly. On the other hand, there is no reason why a lone conspiracy theorist being investigated by the Cell cannot have numerous articles and photos of the Mokolé plastered all over his bedroom.

INITIAL DOWNLOADS

However the subject of the Teche Bayou or the Mokolé is introduced, further checking brings forth certain data. Information about Matrox Chemicals may be found by conducting a short-term Computer Use or Research research project(x2). This material is also presented in the form of Appendix A player handouts. These documents should be given to the players as they sort through their investigation.

ARRIVAL IN THE DEEP SOUTH

Getting to Morgan City is an easy task for the team and needs no description. HERMES can supply a map of the general area if asked, and this is reproduced in Appendix A. It marks the general settlements and also the sites of the disappearances and sightings.

Once in the area, the agents, depending on their cover story, have several courses of action open to them. Each is detailed separately below in no particular order.

A HOTEL

Morgan City has a fine selection of hotels and guest houses, ranging from cheap doss-houses to four-star establishments. No matter what hotel the Cell chooses to stay in, however, it will also be inhabited by the RCS team. If the agents have already met them in the police station, the RCS members will be polite, generally making friendly conversation and finding out if they are also hunting for alligator-man. Talk of working for a paranormal journal immediately persuades the RCS members to find someone else to talk to. Agents who refute the creature's existence may find themselves arguing their point against the RCS all night.

It is important that the agents know that the RCS is in town fairly early in the mission. This adds an extra degree of pressure and should encourage the party to be more discrete in their investigations. It also means they have competition.

STRANGERS IN TOWN

Around mid-morning of the agents' second day in the area, a transit van bearing the crest of the University of Texas arrives in Morgan City. The occupants, five men and one woman, are supposedly five students and a lecturer on a field trip to the bayou. All six are, in fact, members of the Titanidae, only one of whom actually works at the University. The Titanidae, like Aegis and the RCS, has also heard about the Mokolé and has dispatched a small team to make contact with the beast.

None of the Titanidae members will be alive for very long, so no statistics have been given for them. It is only important to know that all six of them are Telepaths; five Lesser and one Greater. The leader is a Greater Telepath and a Lesser Empath. The Titanidae schedule while in the bayou is detailed earlier in this mission.

While the Titanidae are touring around the bayou searching for a suitable place to conduct their ritual, there is a chance they will encounter the Aegis agents. For every hour the Aegis agents are mobile in the bayou, have each agent roll against their Luck. On Good Luck, they spot the Titanidae's van parked by the side of the road. Two of the "students" will be guarding the van, while the others search for a suitable glade. All of the Titanidae members are fully versed with their cover story and there is very little chance of the agents tricking one into revealing sensitive information. The back of the van contains camping equipment, specimen bottles, a few laptops and a week's worth of food. The ritual paraphernalia is concealed in a well-hidden section of the van's floor.



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The Titanidae do not talk much about the local area, claiming that they have never been here before and aren't staying for more than a few days at most. Their cover story is that they are in the bayou to collect water samples, which will then be tested for pollutants. They are spending a month in Louisiana, collecting samples from the bayous and lakes and Morgan City is only one of their stops. The final results of the project will enable future generations to compare pollutant levels against those of the present day.

To avoid making it look contrived if the Game Master has to think up names on the spot, the names of the Titanidae members are Doctor Joseph Bonsall, Ian Combes, Wade Perry, LeRoy Akacho, Miguel-Rafael Lopez, and Lucinda Hamilton. Doctor Bonsall is both a real University of Texas lecturer and the leader of the team.

If the Titanidae encounter the agents more than twice in the same day, whether by accident or by player-generated encounters, they will use their telepathic powers to determine what the agents are really after. Use the basic psychic discipline at Greater level if Bonsall is near; otherwise, at Lesser level. For purposes of this encounter, no psi-trainings are used (see *Shadows of the Mind: The PSI/INT Sourcebook*). The Titanidae knows little of Aegis, but does know that secret groups snooping around spell trouble. From then on the Titanidae remain in their hotel room and their leader uses Remote Viewing as best he can to locate a suitable spot for their ritual.

THE TITANIDAE RITUAL

It is important that this event takes place before the agents kill the Sauroid (assuming they do). If the agents are making good progress then either delay the Sauroid's attack on the agents or bring this event forward.

The six members of the Titanidae enter a secluded area of the bayou around 2230 hours and begin setting up the necessary paraphernalia for their "ritual". Six brass braziers are erected and filled with incense, which is then ignited to produce a sweet smelling smoke. Viewed from above, the braziers form the corners of a Seal of Solomon, and are to be used to protect the members from the Mokolé should it turn on them unexpectedly. A statue of Sobek, the ancient Egyptian crocodile god, is placed in the center of the charm. This is intended to placate the Mokolé.

Once a liberal sprinkling of pure water has purified the area, the six members take up positions in front of one brazier apiece and enter a meditative trance. The leader contacts the others in the circle telepathically and together they call out to the Mokolé, telling it that they mean it no harm and only wish to communicate with it. Each of them adds his voice to that of that leader's, sending out messages of peace and friendship over much of the bayou.

Psychic agents within ten miles of the Titanidae's location feel the thoughts trying to enter their mind. If the agent cannot block out the thoughts, he must make a successful Df3 Will test to avoid being drawn towards the ceremony by the alluring words of the Titanidae.

The ritual proceeds well, and contact is made with some reptilian form in the bayou. The creature's mind is definitely not human, and the Titanidae begin the next phase of their plan. Using mental images, the Titanidae guide the creature to the clearing in which they sit. Each of the psychics is excited over the fact that they have successfully contacted the Mokolé on their first night of trying. The creature

draws closer and the Titanidae sense that the creature is also excited, but they fail to recognize why. Titanidae excitement quickly turns to outright horror when the Sauroid, summoned by the Titanidae's psychic call, bursts through clearing and straight through the protective ward. Without hesitation, it begins slaughtering the Titanidae members.

Although the Titanidae defend themselves well, their adventure in the bayou comes to a bloody end as the Sauroid mercilessly kills them all. Three of the members are gutted by the beast's toe claw, two receive fatal bites, and one has his neck broken when the beast pounces on him as he tries to flee the clearing. The braziers are toppled during the skirmish and a small area of grass ignites, destroying much of the evidence.

Agents who are near to or in the bayou may make Df4 Per tests to hear the roar of the Sauroid tearing through the still night air. Those who succeed can roughly determine the direction from which the noise originated, but cannot estimate the distance. Whether the agents find the site is dependent on a Luck roll by the agent leading the search. Bad Luck brings them smack into the centre of an alligator resting spot (1D in number). Otherwise they stumble into the remains of the Titanidae camp in 1D hours, or 1D x 30 minutes if they rolled Good Luck. If they abandon their search before the required time passes, they will have to come back after word gets out that the police have found the bodies.

Alligator

Str 4	Siz 3
Agl 4	Ref 4
Int 2	Will 2
Per 4	Luck none

Skills

Sneak(water only)	3
Hide(water)	3
Hide(other)	2

Combat

Savagery	3
Bite (Sp2)	
Armor Rating	2



Ψ THE REMAINS

A grisly site greets visitors to the clearing -- six human bodies, rendered limbs and exposed intestines cover much of the clearing (Df2 Fear test, see Aegis Handbook or BoL1: Psi-Wars). Any character willing to get close enough to the massacre can determine the cause of death for each of the victims (it is pretty open and shut). The six dented braziers lie on their sides, one crushed flat by the Sauroid. Around them are scorched areas of grass, signs that they once held small fires of some kind. Many of the bodies also show signs of having been burned in the fires. Anyone who examines the braziers will notice traces of a sticky residue in the braziers. A short-term Science: Chemistry(x1) research project will identify it. The residue is partially burnt frankincense, expensive and moderately hard to acquire.

Any agent looking around the scene of the attack may make a Df3 Per test. With success, the character finds a blood-splattered tape recorder, used by the Titanidae to record their contact with the Mokolé. It lies to one side, kicked there by a fleeing Titanidae member during the panic. A transcript of the data recorded on the tape is given in Appendix A and should be given to the players if they listen to the tape.

None of the Titanidae carries any form of identification. Fingerprint checks, only available from two of the victims due to the fire and the lack of arms, reveal that one of the deceased had a shop-lifting record in Texas. Tracing the name reveals that he is a university students from Texas. The answer to the question "what were they doing here?" that the police will adopt is that a fraternity party ran into some alligators and came to a bloody end.

Because of the secluded spot the Titanidae choose, the clearing is unlikely to be found by accident and the police are not called in to investigate until three days have passed. By then, Matrox security has cleaned up the site, after tracking the beast's whereabouts via an implant. Matrox left the braziers and one of the bodies, the man with the broken neck, and planted evidence suggesting that a lone man performing some bizarre ritual was disturbed by alligators skulking through the night. In a panic, the man ran straight into a tree branch and broke his neck. In the shuffle, however, Matrox operatives covered up the tape recorder. The Cell can find it if they succeed in a Df4 Per test. Unless contrary evidence is presented, the police investigators find all of Matrox's "evidence" and recreate a story very close to the false scenario for themselves.

THE CRIME SCENES

The agents may wish to investigate the areas where the Matrox scientists disappeared. Time has removed all evidence from the scenes and there is nothing to be gained from either site. Should the agents visit the areas when the RCS team are there they will naturally encounter them.

THE MORGAN CITY POLICE

The Morgan City Police have jurisdiction over the bayou area, although Patterson Village has its own sheriff. Depending on their cover, the agents may find a guarded welcome, or sincere indifference. The first thing the agents encounter when they enter the station is a small group of people arguing with the desk sergeant.

The conversation is not too hard to overhear, given that most of the people involved are shouting. It seems that the citizens are members of something called the Royal Cryptozoological Society (RCS) and are trying to get information from the police sergeant on the location of the alligator-man sightings. After a few minutes of this, the group gives up and storms out, muttering phrases such as "public servants!" and "serve and protect!" under their breath. One of the party, a middle-aged man with a beard, glances at the agents as they pass by and mutters, "good luck."

The RCS are indeed looking for the alligator-man but the scarcity of information has forced them to try more orthodox methods to discover where the sightings occurred. Their failure to acquire the information will force them to make more subtle inquiries. These include breaking into public records offices, acquiring any reporter's notes that may exist, and bribing local officials.

If the Aegis agents are posing as law enforcement officers, the police are cooperative, although curious. They received no word that any Federal agents were visiting their home territory and wish to know more. Although the officers are not impolite enough to ask what case the agents are investigating, they do ask probing questions. Any sensible answer will be accepted, whereas semi-plausible or obviously false stories are questioned further. Should the agents' cover story be so false as to be blatantly bogus, the police will have the agents placed under a low-level surveillance while they contact the agents' "superiors." Unless the agents have done some very good background work, their covers are likely to be blown sky high, at which point they are in serious trouble for impersonating government law enforcement officers. Probably the wisest answer is to merely wave a badge and tell the local officers to do as they are told.

Assuming the agents can convince the desk sergeant that they are genuine, they are invited to talk to the police chief, Captain D. W. Hastings. Hastings is a stereotypical southern policeman -- fat and wearing a sweat drenched shirt. He is as polite as can be expected, given the heat and the fact that Federal agents are on his turf without prior notification. Although he can answer questions on the local disappearances and on Matrox Chemicals, he is not very conversant with local legends, believing them to be just that. The Captain's stats and views are provided in Appendix B.



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Police Officer

All attributes 3 Luck 2/12

Skills

Brawling: Police Training 2 Drive: Auto 2 Melee Weapon: Nightstick 2
Small Arms: Pistol 3 Small Arms: Rifle 3

Trainings

Awareness: Criminal Activity
Surveillance

Traits

Combat Experience
Police Connection

Equipment

Nightstick Auto Pistol Handcuffs Flashlight

Once the interview is over the Captain asks how long the agents intend to be in town and whether they have made provisions for transport around the area. Any statement suggesting that they have a car, or will rent one, is met with laughter. The Captain howls, "Hell boys! You really are from out of town aren't ya? Car won't do ya no good 'round here. You need a boat. Now, if you can't drive one, I can supply a driver for you." The reason for the Captain's generosity is two-fold. First, the sooner the agents complete their investigation the sooner they are gone, and second, the driver can keep an eye on them.

If the agents accept the offer, Officer Lucas Winfield is assigned to assign them. His statistics and views on areas of interest to the agents are covered in Appendix B.

If the agents approach the police as common citizens or as reporters, they receive a decidedly cold welcome. The police have received dozens of calls and visits from "cranks and from UFO/paranormal magazines asking about the alligator-man." Many of the calls have been placed by Black Book agents trying to discredit the alligator-man story and to increase the level of ridicule. Aside from the inhabitants of the bayou itself, none of the citizens of Morgan City place much belief in the alligator-man legend. The police give out no extra information and invite the agents to go about their business. They are politely warned not to cause trouble or annoy the locals "with stupid questions."

AMOS' LAUNCH

The Teche Bayou consists of hundreds of miles of waterways, some little more than swampy soil and others as wide as highways. There are very few roads cutting through the area. The locals rely heavily on water transport, whether speedboat or air-boat. Hiring a boat is the easiest way to get around quickly and also allows the agents to reach otherwise unreachable areas. Any of the locals can point characters to Amos' Launch as a place to hire water transportation.

Amos has lived in the area all his life and is of Cajun descent. Aside from hiring out boats, he is an expert chef. Amos has a small selection of boats available but only hires them out to experienced pilots. Unless an agent has at least skill level 2 in Boating: Speedboat, Amos refuses to let him drive in the bayou (speeding on the bayou is a criminal offense and Amos wants no reckless pilots). However, Amos is more than willing to hire himself out as a pilot if the Cell needs one, for a price.

THE ALLIGATOR FARM

One obvious place for the agents to visit is the local alligator farm, which lies on the far side of the bayou. Any number of local residents will mention it. The farm is not generally open to the public, except on certain days of the summer months when tours are available. The lake area connects directly to the bayou and has no fencing to keep the alligators in. The only ways to reach the farm are by car from Morgan City or Patterson, or by boat. The entire area is surrounded by alligators and very few locals ever visit.

The owner is a large black man, Gabriel Clarence, and is called Blackie because of the state of his teeth. The farm was constructed twenty years ago by Blackie's late father, Samuel, and has grown steadily since. Blackie raises the alligators for zoos, local restaurants, and also for the handbag and shoe trade. On average, he has some sixty alligators in residence at any one time.

The farm is little more than a collection of simple wooden buildings and is visible from the main road.

INVESTIGATING THE FARM

Agents trying to find details on the farm are likely to meet with a dead-end. This is not due to any secrets held by the farm, but because it is a local business with only Blackie doing the bookkeeping. A short-term Diplomacy (any)(x1) research project may be started to find financial and ownership information, but it must be performed within Morgan City, and it may not be done on the computer. Even so, the lack of information and poor organization imposes a -1t penalty on the Diplomacy skill test, while Investigation training will add a +2t bonus. Any information found merely gives the agents access to the information above. Financially, the business is doing well, showing a small, but steady, growth since it was founded.

BLACKIE

When the agents pull up to the main gate, Blackie comes over to talk to them. He leans on the gate, a home-rolled cigarette sticking out from between his teeth, looks at the agents and nods politely. If any agent walks up to talk to him he smiles his infamous smile and bids them a good morning. If the agents produce any form of official government identification, Blackie comes to the conclusion that he has committed a crime of some sort (illegal alligator trade, bad books, or suchlike). He is more than happy to answer questions, but always tries to find out the agents' reasons for visiting him. Although not open to the public, requests for a visit are obliged with another smile and the opening of the gate.

If the agents are simply posing as civilians or reporters, Blackie hints that the farm might be open for a tour if he could be persuaded. He is not a greedy man; he simply likes to make a little extra money when possible. Once negotiations are complete, he smiles at the agents and opens the gate.

Blackie's game stats and viewpoints are included in Appendix B.



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A GUIDED TOUR OF THE FARM

The farm consists of three wooden buildings and a large pool, which the alligators tend to stay in or around during the day, basking in the heat. One of the buildings is Blackie's house, where he lives with his young nephew Billy-Joe. The other buildings are storage areas and hatcheries for young alligators. The doors to all of the buildings are extremely sturdy and have several bolts, to stop the alligators from entering.

The first area Blackie shows the Cell is the hatcheries. He is proud of his achievements in raising the alligators and is eager to show his facilities off. In the first one, the agents see Blackie's nephew, Billy-Joe duPres, tending to some young alligators. The boy looks to be around fourteen years old and he smiles a toothy grin at the agents when they enter. A successful Df3 Per test gives the agents the impression that the boy is not particularly bright. Aside from Billy-Joe and the hatchlings, the area is filled with a dozen incubators and some very basic medical equipment.

If the agents strike up a conversation with Billy-Joe, they soon discover that he is very knowledgeable about alligators, but knows little about anything else. Billy-Joe does not answer questions about the Mokolé. Blackie explains that the boy is his nephew and that he lives here during the summer months to work on the farm. If pressed, Blackie will explain that his family lives on the other side of the bayou.

In the middle of the alligator pool is a large island with a retractable bridge leading out to it. Blackie explains that this is where the alligators are fed. If asked what the alligators eat, he happily states that the alligators are mostly fed on locally raised whole chickens, but occasionally they eat each other. He notes that the agents are more than welcome to return at feeding time and watch, if they are interested.

While wandering around the pool listening to Blackie's standard speech about the farm and alligators in general, the characters notice several alligators basking on the shore. Blackie calls out to them by name. He knows all of the alligators by sight and has names for them all. Agents examining the lake will spot two rather large alligators swimming lazily on the surface. Each one is around eighteen feet long, which is very big for an alligator, especially one which resides in semi-captivity. Characters who succeed in a Df2 Science: Zoology test know that alligators rarely pass the fifteen-foot mark in the wild.

If questioned about this, Blackie says that he isn't sure why they have grown that large "because it ain't nat'ral." Recently, several others have started growing quite large recently as well. He jokes that maybe it is their diet. If the agents ask, Blackie willingly reveals the location of the chicken farm. For a few dollars, Blackie will even sell the agents one of the chickens he has in his stores.

THE CHICKEN FARM

The farm where Blackie gets his chickens is a small family-owned affair a few miles from the alligator farm. The owner, Jed Thomas, is a middle-aged man who does not appreciate nosy “city-folk” poking around in his business. He takes every occasion to tell this to the agents if they visit him.

The farm is fairly large but produces just enough chickens to sell to the alligator farm and a few local restaurants. A cornfield, barely enough to feed the chickens, stands at the edge of the farm. The farm contains some thousand free-range chickens (alligators eat a lot), which spend much of their day roaming about the yard, pecking the ground and eating.

Upon arriving at the farm, the agents pull into the driveway, scattering chickens as they do so. From one of the barns emerges a middle-aged man wearing overalls and brandishing a double-barreled shotgun. He walks straight up to the agents and rudely demands to know what they want on his farm. His attitude is one of open distrust and hostility.

If questioned, he admits that he sells chickens to the alligator farm and has done so for years. If asked about any changes he has made to the raising of the chickens recently, such as to their diet, he says that he has recently started using fertilizer made locally at Matrox Chemicals because they sell it cheaply to the locals.

If the agents ask to purchase any of his corn, fertilizer or chickens he amuses them by charging a few hundred dollars per sample.

Any talk of him using steroids or growth hormones results in him growing angry and demanding the agents leave his property. Should they refuse he levels his shotgun and pulls back the hammers. Unless the agents can quickly diffuse the situation, he fires a single barrel into their car hood, wrecking the engine. He then turns back to face them and says, quite calmly, “you still here?”.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHICKEN, CORN OR FERTILIZER

At some point, the agents are likely to acquire a chicken for analysis, either from the alligator farm or the chicken farm. They may also gather samples of the corn used to feed the chickens, or the fertilizer used to grow the corn. The samples can be sent for analysis to an outside laboratory using pulling strings or, if the agents can gain access, tests may be done in a local laboratory. If the agents elect to perform the tests themselves, they need to conduct a short-term Science: Biology(x1) project.

The results show that all of the samples contain a highly effective, and previously unknown growth hormone. The hormone exists in greatest concentration in the fertilizer and in weakest amounts in the chickens. Computer analysis shows that the hormone remains dormant until digested and, rather strangely, only seems to affect reptiles. If the test is really botched, the results show only a simple form of steroid.

Ψ MATROX CHEMICALS

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The Matrox Chemicals facility is hidden deep in the bayou and is built to be practically invisible from the roads. This preserves the area's natural beauty, and offers Matrox some privacy. A small side road leads from the main road to the main gates of the plant. Any local can tell the agents that Matrox Chemicals moved in about ten years ago, created dozens of new jobs and brought wealth to the area. Regular monetary donations have enabled the local villagers to build a new clinic, playground and library. If the agents choose to visit the facility, any local can give them directions.

The factory is quite small and is surrounded by a sturdy chain-link fence topped with razorwire. A sign on the fence warns people that armed guards and guard dogs patrol the area. Cameras are situated on tall poles within the compound. The cameras link back to a central office, and can show both normal and infrared images. Disabling a camera alerts the security personnel, who respond immediately. The front of the building is reinforced one-way glass. Internally, all of the doors are locked and require both a passcard and a seven-digit serial number to open them. Once again, any attempt to force the doors alerts security. The majority of the sensitive areas are underground, requiring a special elevator key to access them.

Driving up to the main gates, the agents are stopped by security guards armed with sub-machine guns. Guard dogs may also be seen. The guards approach the vehicle and ask the agents who they are here to see. Unless the agents can give a specific name, they cannot get past the gates. Even if they happen to give a correct name, the guards check with the person named. Since the agents do not have an appointment, they are turned away. Agents requesting literature on Matrox receive a small bundle of material at the gates after a few minutes delay.

Guard Dog

Str 3	Siz 3
Agl 3	Ref 3
Int 2	Will 2
Per 3	Luck none

Traits	Combat
Strong ESP:	Savagery 2
Sixth Sense 1	Bite (Wn3)
	Pounce

Matrox Security

All attributes 3 Luck 2/12

Skills

Autofire 2 Brawling: Military Training 2 Drive: Auto 2
Melee Weapon: Nightstick 2 Small Arms: Pistol 3 Small Arms: Rifle 3

Trainings

Awareness: Security Breaches
Surveillance

Traits

Combat Experience

Equipment

Nightstick Taser SMG 1 Extra Clip Handcuffs Flashlight



Agents waving around official government identification receive a slightly different response. The guards radio the central building and, after a brief conversation, the Cell is escorted to the visitors' area. They are informed that someone will meet them on the inside and that, for reasons of security, they are not to wander around the grounds unescorted. Agents who fail to comply with these instructions soon find themselves dumped back at the main gates at gunpoint. Trying to run from the guards is likely to result in shots fired and agents wounded.

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

The lobby of the main building is very spacious, has marble floors and pillars and, in one corner, a waterfall and a fishpond filled with large carp. Several tall, leafy plants of an unknown genus decorate the rest of the spacious area. Agents making a successful Df4 Science: Botany test know that the plants are native to the Amazon Basin. Behind a desk labeled "Reception" sits an attractive blonde female wearing a telephone headset.

If the agents introduce themselves to her, she makes an internal call and tells someone that "they are here." She issues the agents visitors passes and asks them to sign in, telling them that someone will be down to see them in just a moment. By the time the agents finish signing, an elevator door opens revealing a professionally dressed brunette, who walks over to them. She introduces herself as Catherine Downs, the company's public relations officer, and asks how she can help them.

If the agents mention the dead Matrox employees, she tells them that such matters should be discussed in private and ushers them into the elevator. She presses the button for the first floor. The agents in the elevator will notice the key hole below the control panel. Miss Downs will not answer any questions on the subject.

When the elevator doors open, the agents find themselves in a long, wood-paneled corridor, with several doors along it. Miss Downs opens the first door on the agents' right and shows them into a large conference room. Refreshments are brought in shortly afterwards.

Miss Downs happily answers the agents' questions, although any mention of the Mokolé brings a wry smile to her lips. With a straight face, she asks the agents if their organization believes in legends and myths. Her other answers are covered in her character description in Appendix B. She will steer the conversation toward the good work that Matrox has done for the local community, citing such examples as the new clinic, playground and library. Once the Cell is done asking questions, Miss Downs offers them a tour of the plant.

TOUR OF THE MATROX PLANT

The agents are given a two-hour tour of the facility during which they are shown the offices, and the non-restricted laboratories where the company manufactures standard prescription drugs and the fertilizer. Miss Downs continues to answer questions while the tour runs.



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During the tour, the agents may make a Df3 Per test to realize that they are being deliberately kept away from certain areas. If they question Miss Downs over this, she informs them that Matrox has certain corporate secrets that it must protect and that some areas require hazardous environment suits. Characters from official law enforcement agencies know that Matrox is on solid ground here. Without a warrant from a local magistrate, the Cell has no hope of legally entering those areas.

Once the tour is over Miss Downs takes the agents back to the lobby and wishes them a good day. She stands by the door and watches them until they leave the compound. Once the agents are gone, she contacts her superiors and the Black Book clean up operation begins in earnest.

BREAKING INTO MATROX

In order to find further clues to Matrox's involvement in the current mission, the agents may decide to break into the facility and snoop around for themselves. This is both illegal and potentially dangerous to their health. Any law enforcement agent knows that without a warrant, entering the Matrox facility could place them in serious legal trouble.

The cameras outside the building cover every inch of the perimeter fence, and internal cameras cover the building's interior. The guards are armed with tasers, police batons and sub-machine guns and wear Kevlar vests under their uniforms. The dogs are Rottweilers, but have been altered genetically to have more powerful jaws, better leg muscles and no vocal cords. The guards use their tasers first, but are not afraid to use deadly force if they feel that it is necessary.

Assuming that the agents are captured, they will be disarmed and detained in a holding area. The agents are given sodium pentathol and questioned about their reasons for attempting a break-in. If Matrox learns that the team is an Aegis Cell, it activates its emergency plan (see The Chemical Spillage below). The Black Book also tries to discover the location of the agents' Cell and will neutralize it with as much force as it deems necessary. The agents are then killed and their bodies disposed off. Lone agents that are captured are also interrogated and executed. The Black Book reasons that the other agents will not call in the authorities to find their colleague, who was, after all, committing a crime. If the Book learns nothing from the agents, the local police are called and the agents are handed over.

If the agents do not reveal their Aegis links, Matrox Chemicals starts legal action against the agents' legitimate parent organizations. Needless to say, the agents will find themselves in real trouble and, at a minimum, will be suspended from active duty for several weeks while their actions are investigated. Depending on the Cell's standing in Aegis, their actions will be covered up and Matrox will be pacified. Otherwise, the self-destruction mechanism on their links will be triggered, and they will be left to their own devices. If the agents wound any of the guards or are caught trying to steal anything, they are brought before a internal tribunal and removed from their jobs unless they can make a Df4 Influence test. Even if they succeed, they are confined to a desk job until further notice. Aegis is also likely to send an ISS team to investigate the Cell's activities in minute detail.

THE VILLAGE

The Village of Patterson lies outside of Morgan City and is situated not far from the Matrox Chemicals plant. The large majority of the villagers are descendants of slaves and many are unemployed. Crime is extremely low, as everyone minds everyone else's business. There are around 100 ramshackle buildings in the village, and it has a population of 429. The clinic, playground and library stand out like sore thumbs, being much newer and better constructed than the other buildings.

The sheriff, Jebediah Wilson, is the senior officer investigating the disappearance of the two Matrox employees. He lives just outside of the village in a mock colonial period house. Sheriff Wilson is helpful to the agents, and happy to talk about the disappearances and strange sightings, so long as they show some form of official identification. He is too busy to waste his time with city-folk trying to find proof of the alligator-man. He has no objections to the agents asking the locals questions, so long as they do not disturb the peace. If the agents start questioning the locals without first speaking to the sheriff, he soon hears of it and comes to investigate, prepared to move on any camera crews or reporters.

The villagers are very wary of the agents and it will take a successful Df3 Diplomacy (Persuasion) test to pry any information from them without drawing attention. If the agents use some other form of Diplomacy, the test is still Df3 but may draw undue attention. For the most part, they will tell the characters that Blackie is the local expert on alligators, and will point the way to the alligator farm. If the Cell presses the Mokolé issue, after several hours of questioning various citizens, the agents learn the following information. The Game Master may read the following to the players as if given from one source, or may break it up into bits and pieces and hand it out from various sources.

Villager's Mokolé Tale

The Mokolé has been here since before man lived in the bayou.

The original Indians called it the "Eater of Pain" and honored it.

When the white man came and killed the Indians, Mokolé was not happy and attacked many of the white men in their camps. Although they had guns, they could not hurt it and they fled the bayou in terror.

It was many years before the white man came back and when he did he brought slaves from Africa with him. The slaves soon found out about the Mokolé and they too realized it was not a monster, but a helpful spirit.

Many escaped from slavery because of the Mokolé's help. Of course, they was wanted for murder after their masters' bodies had been found all torn up.

The white men say the Mokolé is a myth, based on ancient stories of giant alligators, but we don't believe that. It is real and living in the bayou even today. It still eats bad things or bad people.

Other information that can be gleaned from the locals is listed in Appendix B.

When the agents return to their vehicle they find a hand-written note on the driver's seat. It reads "Visit Madame M'Bodo." If the agents ask about Madame M'Bodo, they will be told that she is a mambo (voodoo priestess) who lives deep in the bayou. Many of the locals speak of her in awe and can provide directions to her house. Others in the area hold her in contempt for her "primitive beliefs."

The Mysterious Note

The note is handwritten with a standard ball point pen and is, therefore, untraceable. The Agents will undoubtedly begin to wonder who left the note and for what purpose. Questioning the locals brings the agents no closer to an answer -- the locals deny seeing anyone go near the vehicle. In fact, the note was not left by any mortal power. The loa of the voodoo religion have a vested interest in the Mokolé and see the agents as a tool they can use to get what they want. The note was, in fact, left by supernatural forces to help guide the agents as part of an unknown agenda. Of course, GM's who want a more pedestrian explanation should feel free to create one.

VOODOO WOMAN

There is no road or waterway to Madame M'Bodo's house and the agents will have to travel there on foot. The area of the bayou in which she lives is particularly foul, with many alligator and snake residents. Although none will attack the agents unless antagonized, the party need not know that.

The house itself is a run-down wooden affair and the outer walls are decorated with strange markings. As the agents approach, they see the porch is covered with snakeskins. A heavy drape serves as a door.

If the agents call out, a voice answers from within -- Madame M'Bodo only speaks French, however. Once communication has been established, she invites the agents in and offers them hospitality. Madame M'Bodo is a very large black woman, wearing many colored bangles. The party finds her sitting behind a table covered in mystic paraphernalia. Agents making a successful Df2 Occult roll recognize the markings and jewelry as being exclusive to voodoo.

Madame M'Bodo tells the agents that she knows why they have come and that she is willing to help them. She then sits there behind her desk, saying nothing and doing nothing. The agents should be able to work out that she is waiting for money. One hundred dollars will be enough to loosen her tongue. Once she has been paid, she tells the agents that the spirits must be contacted at the appropriate time and that the agents should return to her house at midnight tomorrow.

THE RITUAL

When the agents return to the house the next night, they discover a large gathering outside. Many carry torches. A large bonfire burns in the middle of the clearing. Madame M'Bodo is nowhere to be seen. If the characters ask the villagers what is going on, they are informed that the ritual is about to begin, and that Madame M'Bodo is "in the house preparing the potion." The locals have been called to help in the ritual, and no one will say what the potion is for.

Suddenly, the group goes quiet and a drumming begins. The source of the drumming cannot be discerned but is nearby. The door to the house opens and Madame M'Bodo emerges carrying a small bottle and dressed completely in red. The crowd cheers wildly and begins chanting in a tongue unknown to the agents. Characters making a successful Df2 Occult test know that the villagers are greeting Madame M'Bodo as their priestess and are praising the voodoo loas for their benevolence.

Madame M'Bodo walks to the center of the gathering and the villagers break into a dancing frenzy, praising the voodoo loas and beginning the Ritual of Possession that is to take place tonight. The villagers are lost in the passion of the ritual and ignore the agents, although they are free to join in if they wish. Although not hypnotic in the true sense, the drumming and dancing may have an effect on weaker willed agents, who, if they fail a Variable Wil test, begin to sway and dance in rhythm to the music. After an hour of dancing and drumming, the ceremony stops, very suddenly.

Madame M'Bodo approaches one of the agents (either choose at random or let Luck rolls decide) and produces the bottle from beneath her robes. She offers it to the character and encourages him to drink. Once the agent drinks the potion, Madame M'Bodo will finish the ritual. The natural Seepage Level of the area has been raised to three by the ceremony, and there should be enough available for the ritual to succeed. If the agent took the potion without hesitation he counts as having participated willingly and so the ritual's Difficulty Level is reduced by one.

The agent who takes the potion suddenly has a massive stomach cramp. He doubles over in pain and then loses consciousness immediately, his body now filled with the spirit of Eleggua, the voodoo messenger of the loas.

Madame M'Bodo tells the other agents that their friend is now "omo-orisha," possessed by the loa. Voodoo adherents refer to this as being ridden, for they believe that the loa rides the possessed person like a horse. Indeed, the possessed person is often referred to as "horse" while he is possessed. Madame M'Bodo informs the agents that their friend is quite safe and that the loa should be respected by them.

Agents who physically manhandle the horse or who start demanding answers before the loa is ready, invoke the loa's wrath. Eleggua brings messages in his own time and does not tolerate insults. Madame M'Bodo cautions the agents not to touch the horse or make demands of the loa. Although the spirit is more than willing to forgive outsiders once, an agent making a second mistake is told that "by the Laws of Obatala, you have been given two irole (days)." Madame M'Bodo explains that this is a dire situation, and that in two days the agent will suffer a terrible accident. Game Masters should make sure that in two days the agent does suffer a nasty accident, preferably one disfiguring or debilitating rather than lethal. The spirit world should not be taken lightly by agents, nor should it be reduced to a stage show. The agents have offended a god -- let them know that!

The horse raises his head, his eyes completely glazed over, and begins to walk amongst the crowd, greeting certain people as if they were friends. After a few minutes of this he turns to the agents. It will be obvious to the agents that they are expected to give the loa a gift of something personal. Any agent succeeding in a Df3 Occult roll knows that the gift is returned once the possession is over. Once a gift has been given, the horse speaks to them, his voice strong yet strangely distant.

The Horse Speaks

Mes cheri, the Mokolé has been here for a long time but he is not alone in this world. There are others like him, living elsewhere on the planet. Many do not believe in the story of the Mokolé because they cannot face the awful truth -- that mankind was not here first. There are older things, darker things, and they have awoken and returned.

The Mokolé is not always the same. There have been many different Mokolé living here in the bayou. Once they were many but they were driven out in a great war with powerful earth spirits. The Mokolé is the chosen of the loas and is the protector of the bayou. People who do bad things in the bayou will meet the Mokolé one day. (deep chuckle)

Do not think that your guns will help you. The Mokolé is an ancient creature and cannot be hurt with your modern weapons. Your shield cannot save you from the Mokolé if it wants you. To fight it, you must first believe in it. Do you believe in it -- agent men?

The horse waves a hand in dismissal. With that, Madame M'Bodo places a white handkerchief over the horse's head and blows into his ear, through the material, three times. The drumming begins again. The loa leaves the agent's body and he regains control of his senses. He is wide-awake and unharmed, although he has no memory of anything that happened to him during the possession. Madame M'Bodo thanks the once-possessed agent for his help and wishes him good luck for the future. The agents are free to stay on and partake of food and drink if they so wish.

Most of what the loa tells the agents is true, if a little cryptic. The older things he refers to are actually Saurians, although none of the locals, including Madame M'Bodo, has ever seen a Saurian and can offer no help on the matter. The reference to a shield is a reference to Aegis itself. Other information that Madame M'Bodo herself can supply the agents is given in Appendix B.

Around two-thirty in the morning, the gathering ends and the villagers drift home.

BAD DREAMS

That night, each of the agents who visited the ritual at Madame M'Bodo's house has a strange nightmare that causes them to wake screaming in a cold sweat. The dreams are all similar and involve the character being devoured piece by piece by a large alligator. Each of the affected agents must make a Df3 Fear test.

Agents who purposefully check the time, or who make a Df3 Per test, notice that the clock in their room reads five o'clock in the morning.

DEATH IN THE BAYOU

Around six o'clock in the morning the day after the voodoo ritual, the agents are disturbed from their sleep again, either by a call from Sheriff Wilson (if the agents have introduced themselves to him as law enforcement officials), or by the RCS team tromping past their door carrying bags of equipment. However they are awoken, the party learns that there has been a bizarre accident near the Matrox Chemicals building. Apparently a Matrox worker was dragged from his car by an alligator and torn to bits.

If contacted by the Sheriff, he asks for their assistance, even though the crime may be out of their jurisdiction. If they encounter the RCS team in the corridor outside of their room, the agents may decide to make their own way to the crime scene.

SCENE OF THE CRIME

When the agents arrive at the crime scene, the Patterson Village police have already taken photos and searched for evidence. They will leave law enforcement agents free to investigate as they see fit. Others are kept back behind a police cordon. There are a total of three police officers, plus the sheriff, at the scene. The police have erected several spotlights to illuminate the area. The body of the victim is still lying beside his car.

The police are under the impression that the worker, who has been identified from his driving license as Dr. Thomas Norton, a Matrox biochemist, must have stopped his car to let an alligator cross the road. They can only assume that a second alligator then attacked the car, pulling the doctor from the car and savaging him. However, the evidence leads to an altogether more disturbing conclusion.

First, there is a large dent in the hood of the car, indicating that something applied a fair amount of weight to it. Second, the door has been ripped from its hinges by sheer force, and third the body has not been dragged away as food.

A successful Df2 Science: Zoology test informs the agents that alligators are normally creatures of opportunity, lunging at prey that comes too close. They are very rarely active at night as they are cold-blooded reptiles, and they prefer to drag their food underwater so it can decay and be eaten more easily.

The body of Dr. Norton has been subjected to a horrific attack and the area is covered in blood. A Df1 Medical: Forensics test reveals that the body has claw and teeth marks over it, indicating that some sort of animal did this. However, it is unlikely that an alligator did this as the claw wounds indicate that the creature took swipes downwards at the body, and powerful ones at that. The damage is more indicative of a bear attack. A successful Df2 Medical: Forensics test places the time of death a few hours ago, around five in the morning.

Agents searching the area for clues will notice a large footprint in the mud beside the bayou. A Df3 Per test will find a gold medallion snagged in the branches of a tree. The chain is broken and it seems to have caught there as someone passed by. The strange thing is that the medallion is eight feet off the ground.

THE FOOTPRINT

Anyone investigating the footprint more closely may make a Df2 Science: Zoology roll to deduce that the prints were made by a reptile of some kind, quite possibly an alligator. However, a Df3 Forensics test or a Df4 Int test (or a Df3 Int test if the agent passed the previous Zoology test) allows the agent to realize that the prints belong to a bipedal creature. From the size of the footprint, and its depth in the mud, whatever made the mark was around nine feet tall and weighed in excess of 800 pounds. No known creature matches the shape and size of the thing that created this footprint.

A Df3 Per test indicates that someone or something tried to camouflage the footprints, although not very successfully.

Ψ THE MEDALLION

The medallion is a sports gold medal with the words "Morgan City Junior High 1998 Sprint Champion" engraved around the edge and a picture of a runner in the middle. If the agents show the medallion to any of the police officers, they identify it as belonging to Billy-Joe duPres, the nephew of Blackie. One of them clearly remembers the day Billy-Joe won it at the school sports day. The officers offer no opinion as to how it got here and dismiss it as evidence.

Any other local can also identify the medallion as belonging to Billy-Joe, although they will not tell the agents this unless physically threatened. They will instead shrug and say that they can't remember where they have seen it before.

BACK AT THE FARM

If the agents revisit the farm they find Blackie giving the alligators their breakfast - more chicken. If asked about Billy-Joe's whereabouts Blackie claims that he has not seen him since last night when Billy-Joe went out into the bayou for a walk. Blackie isn't overly concerned for Billy-Joe's safety as he often goes on night walks and knows the bayou better than any man alive.

If the agents do not ask about places Billy-Joe may have gone, Blackie mentions that occasionally Billy-Joe goes to stay at an old house in the bayou. He uses it as a den when he wants to be alone. Blackie can give the agents directions to the place.

BILLY-JOE'S HOUSE

The house that Billy-Joe visits is deep in the bayou, although a worn track does lead to it. As long as they move slowly, the agents' vehicle can drive safely up the track. The house is situated in a clearing. Roughly twenty feet of clear land lies between the trees and the house, offering little cover for agents approaching the house. The house itself is falling apart and there is no door, nor is there any glass in the windows. Calling out elicits no response.

While they decide how best to approach the house, have each agent make a Df3 Per test. Those that succeed feel the hair on the back of their necks rise and they get the distinct feeling that they are being watched from the trees, although they can see nothing. A search of the area reveals nothing untoward. The Mokolé is watching the agents. If they approach, it uses its powers to blend in with the natural surroundings, causing them to walk right past him.

Eventually, the characters will enter the house, only to discover that it is currently empty. However, there are signs that the house has been occupied and not that long ago. A pile of old bean cans rests in one corner, an area of the floor has been used as a fireplace and there are cold ashes there, a box of matches lies near the fire, and the floor is dotted with chicken feathers. Agents passing a Df3 Int test can deduce that the house was last used a few days ago. Those with Survival (Jungle or Swamp) training have the Difficulty Level reduced by one. On a rickety table sits a collection of dolls.

The dolls are mostly black and are shaped into the forms of people; many of them are naked. One of them clearly resembles Blackie, the alligator farm owner. A successful Df2 Occult tests identifies the dolls as voodoo dolls, while a Df3 test reveals them more akin to American Indian kinship dolls than voodoo dolls. Kinship dolls supposedly allow the tribal shaman to locate his fellow tribe members simply by concentrating on the likeness of the doll. This way, he would be able to find anyone in his tribe no matter where they are.

Just after the agents have investigated the dolls, have each of them attempt a Df4 Per test. Those who succeed hear something large moving outside and have one round to act before all Hell breaks loose.

THE MONSTER ATTACKS

The wall of the house suddenly flies apart as a seven-foot, bipedal reptile crashes through and starts attacking anyone in sight. The creature resembles a velociraptor and looks particularly pissed off. Steam hisses from its nostrils and saliva drips from its razor sharp teeth. A fierce roar, causing the agents to make a Df4 Fear test, echoes through the ruined house.

Any agent who heard the noise outside may now join the creature in combat; those who failed are stunned into inaction for the first round by the creature's entrance. If any of the agents who passed the test shouted a warning, the remaining agents are allowed to attempt evasion or use such traits as Quick Draw or Killer Instinct, or attempt psychic powers. The creature is actually the Matrox construct, and it will fight to the death.

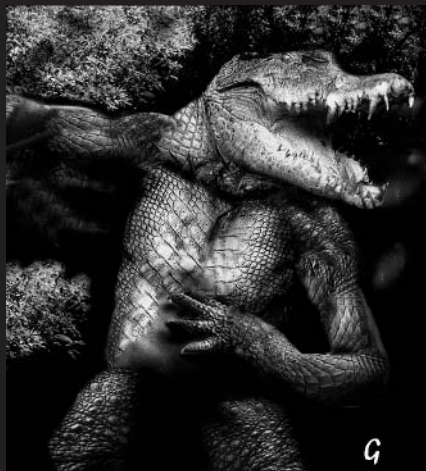
Should the characters try to run, the creature chases them. However, it won't enter inhabited areas, preferring to re-enter the bayou and wait for its prey to come back. Once the creature is dead the fight is over. The agents may decide to try and turn the tables on the beast by hunting it through the bayou. If they choose this course of action, see the section entitled Stalking the Beast.

Sauroid

Str 6	Siz 6
Agl 4	Ref 3
Int 3	Will 3
Per 3	Luck none

Skills	Combat
Jump 3	Savagery 4
Shadow 3	Bite (Wn5)
Track 2	Claw (Wn5)
	Pounce-Rake (Wn4)
	Armor Rating 2

The Pounce-Rake is a combo, knocking the defender prone, and inflicting damage.



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Agents who examine the creature's body (not possible while it is alive and trying to eat everyone) make Df4 Per tests. Success reveals two important pieces of information. First, the creature has what appears to be a small bar code printed behind its right ear hole. Second, it has a small scar on its forehead. Cell members who check to see if the creature could have made the tracks found near Dr. Norton's body may be surprised to find that the answer is no. It is about 300 pounds too light, and three feet too short. Talk of this being a "baby what-ever-it-is" is probably going to be on the agents' minds around now.

BARCODE

The agents can use any standard supermarket barcode reader to read the barcode on the monster's head. Of course, dragging a huge reptilian corpse into a supermarket is likely to cause a stir and the agents would be better off either cutting out the barcode or trying to acquire a portable unit (from an electronics shop).

Once the agents have the necessary hardware and scan the barcode, it generates a message on the reader, which reads "Matrox BioDiv Proj Snapdragon batch A serial number PRG-4501834-X9 male."

INVESTIGATING THE SCAR

Buried within the creature's head is a small transmitter. Aside from allowing Matrox to track the beast, it also measures its life signs and sends them back to those who monitor the beast's adaptability to the environment in the bayou.

Any character who operates on the beast must pass a Df3 Medical: Surgery test to find and extract the device without damaging it. The implant's true nature can be discovered after a successful short-term Engineering: Electronics project(x2). Each breakthrough will reveal one of the implant's functions.

Once the creature dies, Matrox makes plans to retrieve it for disposal. The transmitter device is powerful enough for Matrox to track it over a range of twenty miles with an accuracy of 10 meters. They make a dedicated effort to retrieve their property. After half an hour studying the device's signals, Matrox knows whether it is stationary or mobile. A stationary location results in a Black Book strike team entering the premises and liberating the carcass. If the agents have been resourceful enough to leave the body in a "sensitive area", such as the police station, Matrox uses fake government identification to gain access to it.

If the target is mobile, Matrox watches and waits. Only if the carcass is heading out of the area do they try and run the agents' car off the road and liberate the beast, using tasers and stun grenades rather than lethal force (unless they know the agents are Aegis members). The team sent to retrieve the beast consists of three gunmen.

THE BOOK GUNMEN

The Black Book does not look kindly on outsiders interfering in its projects and will take steps to remove agents who have gone too far in their investigation. Although the Game Master has the final word on when "too far" is, it should be assumed that if the agents have taken an serious interest in Matrox or have been asking too many questions of the locals that the Book moves in with a heavy-handed approach. Their plan is to use security personnel posing as "hunters".

Once the scientist is killed, Matrox decides to perform some damage control and brings in a Black Book team to "clean up." Matrox makes a public announcement, on the local radio and television and in the newspapers, that a reward of \$20,000 is being offered for the capture of the alligator that is terrorizing the area. While several civilian gun-touting hunters arrive to claim the reward, the exercise is really an excuse to bring the Book team to the area. The next morning three agents arrive in the bayou and make their base in Morgan City.

The Black Book team may or may not play a large part in the adventure. They are dedicated professionals, however, and may be used as recurring characters in subsequent adventures. For that reason, their stats are given in detail.



Lance Johnson

Str 3
Siz 3
Agl 3
Ref 3
Int 3
Will 4
Per 3

Luck 3/12

Equipment

Auto Pistol Rifle
3 Extra Clips Each Kevlar Vest
Hands Free Radio
Cellular Phone

Skills

Autofire 3 Brawling: Military Training 3
Computer Use 2 Demolitions 2 Drive: Auto 1
First Aid 1 Heavy Weapons 2
Melee Weapons: Knife 3 Small Arms: Pistol 3
Small Arms: Rifle 3 Stealth 3
Throw 3 Tracking 3

Training

Awareness (animal tracks) Surveillance
Survival (jungle)

Traits

Combat Experience Drug Addict: Nicotine
No Records Veteran

Background: Johnson, a ex-Green Beret, is the team leader. After four tours in 'Nam, he is a survival specialist who enjoys the thrill of hunting game, any game. He is rather thoughtful and rarely says more than a few words at a time. Johnson is slightly over-weight, balding and middle aged.



Nigel Stanford

Skills

Athletics 3 Autofire 3

Brawling: Military Training 3 Demolitions 2

Drive: Auto 2 First Aid 2 Heavy Weapons 3

Melee Weapons: Knife 3 Small Arms: Pistol 3

Small Arms: Rifle 3 Stealth 3

Throw 2 Tracking 3

Str 3

Siz 4

Agl 3

Ref 4

Int 3

Will 4

Per 4

Luck 2/12

Training

Awareness (animal tracks) Surveillance

Equipment

Auto Pistol Rifle

3 Extra Clips Each Kevlar Vest

Hands Free Radio

Cellular Phone

Traits

Combat Experience Light Sleeper No

Records Physical Training Veteran

Background: Stanford is an ex-British SAS soldier who has seen service in Northern Island, the Falklands and also in several secret operations in Colombia. He is a dedicated soldier and is not comfortable chasing reptiles around the bayou. Although now in his forties, Stanford is still superbly fit and can easily pass for a man ten years younger.



Michael Patterson

Str 3

Siz 3

Agl 3

Ref 4

Int 3

Will 4

Per 4

Luck 2/12

Equipment

Auto Pistol Sniping Rifle

3 Extra Clips Each Kevlar Vest

Hands Free Radio

Cellular Phone

Skills

Athletics 2 Autofire 3

Brawling: Military Training 3 Demolitions 2

Drive: Auto 1 First Aid 2 Heavy Weapons 2

Melee Weapons: Knife 3 Small Arms: Pistol 3

Small Arms: Rifle 4 Stealth 3

Throw 2 Tracking 2

Training

Awareness (animal tracks) Surveillance

Survival (jungle)

Traits

Combat Experience No Records

Veteran

Background: Patterson. Like Johnson, he is a military veteran, although his experience is from Grenada when he was a Ranger. Patterson has a rather warped sense of humor and enjoys irony. Of all the team members, he is the most likely to pull the trigger when an agent enters his sights. Patterson is in his early thirties, and maintains his physique through regular and punishing physical exercise.

AN UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT

Once the Book team arrives in town, they begin to trail the Cell members. They shift frequently, and change their hunting gear as well. Given the number of hunters in town, the party will not notice their tail unless they specifically state they are on the look out. This means the players must succeed in two Df4 Per tests per day over the course of a few days. Failing more than two tests a day means the Book agents are onto them and evade detection for that day. All successes are voided and the agents must start their search all over.

WARNING

This encounter is potentially deadly, and unless the players are very experienced and very good, there is little they can do to avoid it. Thus, if played true, it may seem as if the Game Master is "railroading" her players. The scene was written to show the Black Book as it really is -- a professional, dangerous organization. Unless the characters have been very careful, the Book agents know who they are. The Cell members have no idea who the Book team may be, if they even know there is one in the area. While they may see a number of hunters around, there is no reason they should think of these individuals as Black Book (of course, they may be paranoid of everyone -- that is true spirit of Conspiracy X). The Book has a plan, and the capacity to make it work. If the Game Master feels the players can handle the potential loss of one of their number, play it through. Otherwise, the scene may be modified to make the Book a bit "sloppier", and likely to get caught. Of course, this may generate a deadly firefight and get all the Cell members killed anyway. Finally, the GM may wish to remove the scene altogether. In any event, you have been warned.

At some point during one of the agents' field trips to the bayou, preferably away from centers of civilization, ask one of the players her luck stat. Roll dice behind a screen, and announce that she has been shot in the shoulder. Patterson has "accidentally" put a bullet into one of the agents from medium range, using a telescopic sight and one round of aiming. Rifle damage is Wn4; roll staging normally.

As soon as the agent drops, the hunters break cover and rush over to the area. Once they come into view the hunters act surprised, offer medical aid, and scream out apologies. Johnson calls for an ambulance and the police on his cellular phone. Both the ambulance men and police are Black Book operatives working for the local authorities (they have allowed for this contingency when they began the experiment; the hunters call Matrox which contacts the operatives). When the ambulance arrives, the paramedics give basic on-site first aid and then load the injured character aboard the ambulance. They discourage anyone from riding along, citing the size of the ambulance, but will allow one person if pressed.

The ambulance crew gives the wounded agent a dose of sodium pentathol as soon as they pull away. If a companion is aboard, they wait a few moments and attempt to take him down with tasers or lethal damage. Once everyone is pacified, the Book crew interrogates the wounded agent as to his reasons for being in the bayou. If they learn that he is an Aegis operative, they try to discover what other Aegis

agents are in the area and also the location of his Cell (ready for a full raid later). Then, they make sure that neither he nor his companion, if any, ever recover from their wounds. Agents that resist the truth serum are mind blanked of the interrogation with drugs or a RHIC-EDOM device (see *Shadows of the Mind: The PSI/INT Sourcebook*) and then delivered to the hospital.

Meanwhile, the police take statements from the agents and the hunters at the scene of the shooting. The hunters tell the police that they were a little trigger-happy and take full blame for the accident. They agree to hand over their guns and not leave town until the local prosecutor decides whether to press charges. They also offer to pay for any expenses accrued by the wounded agent during his hospital stay.

Unless the agents wish to press charges, the police are happy to confiscate the hunters' guns and let it go at that. Of course, there is no chance of the team remaining in the area and the guns will never make it to the real police. If the agents demand that charges be pressed, the police arrest the hunters and read them their rights. They are then taken to Matrox and shipped out of the area. Should the agents opt to follow the police to the station, the Black Book goes through the process of arrest and charging the hunters at the station. However, within an hour bail is paid and the hunters have left the bayou, never to return.

If the agents manage to contact the police and ambulance services first, the wounded agent is taken straight to the hospital. The arrested hunters are still released on bail after an hour or so, regardless of any charges brought against them.

BACK TO THE VODOO WOMAN

If the agents bring the dolls to Madame M'Bodo, she willingly examines them in return for fifty dollars. After an hour of study she informs the agents that the dolls are not voodoo dolls, although the resemblance is very close. Instead, she thinks that the dolls are more akin to American Indian kinship dolls. The kinship dolls allow the tribal shaman to locate his fellow tribe members simply through concentrating on the likeness of the doll. This way he can find out where they are and if they are in trouble.

STALKING THE BEAST

At some point, either of their own accord, or after fleeing from the beast (at Billy-Joe's house, for instance), the agents may decide to turn the tables on the Sauroid and hunt it down before it can kill again. This is not an easy proposition: the creature is smart, ideally suited to the bayou, and can kill a man quickly and silently. The agents should note down what equipment they are carrying. There are no hardware shops in the areas of the bayou where the agents are going.

Unless the agents can find sure-fire signs of the creature and follow them (and so far there have been none), they are pretty much going to have to enter the bayou blind and take it from there. For every half-day (six hours) the agents spend in the bayou have them make Luck rolls. If any agent rolls Bad Luck, the creature has smelled him and comes to investigate. Within 2D minutes, the creature attacks from ambush, making a pounce-rake attack and then fleeing back into the dense vegetation, ready for another attack later in the day. The second attack takes place 1D x 10 minutes later, unless the agents have left the bayou area.



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If the agents take sensible precautions after the first assault, such as setting trip flares, organizing watches, or blasting huge areas of jungle with automatic weapons, the beast is merely content to watch the agents. It “knows” that sooner or later, they will move off, making them vulnerable to ambush again.

If any agent rolls Good Luck, the agents have encountered the scene of the Titanidae massacre (although some may not consider that very lucky) and that scene should be played out. A second Good Luck roll means that the character has heard noises up ahead. Scouting ahead to where the noise was heard, the agents find the beast in a small clearing, eating a small alligator it has just caught. The agents may think they have the drop on the beast, but have it make a Df3 Per test to hear/smell the agents approaching. Once it senses intruders, the creature attacks with all its might, causing the agents to make a Df4 Fear test.

The hunting scene should be played out to its full, especially if the agents have gone hunting at night. A good atmospheric description of bayou works wonders here. Describe the heat, the mosquitoes, the agents’ feet sinking shin deep in the mud, the sudden movement of birds and other creatures startled by the agents’ progress. Every noise should be a potential source of danger, every smell that of the beast, every movement the creature hiding up ahead or stalking them from behind. Cell members who stroll through the bayou without a care in the world should be ambushed by the creature -- just to teach them a valuable lesson.

BACK TO MATROX

Once the beast has been identified as being owned by Matrox, the agents may decide to pay them a visit in order to get some answers. If they do so, they may be surprised to discover that they are expected.

As the agents pull up to the plant, they are approached by four Matrox security guards, armed with sub-machine guns. Two other large men dressed in dark suits, flanking Miss Downs, who looks like a midget by comparison, follow behind them. Although not apparently armed, a successful Df3 Per test reveals suspicious bulges under their arms. Neither of them speaks, although one of them does open the agents’ door as if to invite them out.

Miss Downs asks why the agents have returned. If the creature is mentioned, she asks if the agents have the body with them. Positive answers are greeted by one of the large suited men using a hands-free radio to call for a hazmat team, who arrive with swift promptness in full biohazard suits. Miss Downs asks the agents to hand over the body, although she does not make any comment if they refuse. The body is swiftly removed around the back if they agree and they do not see it again.

Negative answers, or a refusal to comply with her wishes, result in her inviting the agents in to the Matrox facility for a talk. The agents may be suspicious, with reason, and suspect a trap. Miss Downs promises them that they will be unharmed and that they may keep any firearms they may possess. Refusing again results in the security guards cocking their weapons and leveling them at the agents. Miss Downs stares at the agents for a few moments and says, very quietly, “please?”

Wise agents know when they have lost and enter the Matrox plant. Those who wish to fight their way out are gunned down. Those who still refuse are arrested as trespassers and corporate spies, and roughly manhandled inside, after being searched and stripped of any weapons they may carry.

Once inside the agents are marched into the elevator and taken down to sub-level three. They are then ushered into a conference room while the security guards take up positions in the corridor outside. Once everyone is inside, one of the suited men locks the door and pockets the key.

THE TRUTH REVEALED

Miss Downs sits at one end of the conference table and indicates that the agents should also be seated. The two men do not leave the door during the discussion and prevent the agents from leaving until Miss Downs is finished with them. Once everyone is seated, Miss Downs begins talking.

Miss Downs' Explanation

We had hoped to keep our real work here under wraps, but, since you have stumbled across our little project, it seems that we will need to explain a few details to you.

The creature that you shot and killed was a prototype, created using DNA from alligators and extinct dinosaurs. Over the last ten years we have been trying to clone dinosaurs. Yes, real dinosaurs. Why? Because they could represent the future for our planet. Famine is widespread across much of Africa, there are not enough cows to provide meat and soy beans are a poor substitute in the long term. Our company has invested billions of dollars in genetic research to recreate certain species. Imagine it, dozens of diplodoci stuffing themselves full of trees, and then killed to feed the world's poor.

Naturally, this process may take another ten years before the costs become viable, but we have made a start. The creature that you saw is effectively 60% alligator, modified with the dinosaur DNA to walk upright. We needed alligators with certain growth patterns, to accelerate the cloning process, so we doctored their food. I assure you, the substance is entirely harmless to humans.

The creature you killed was never meant to be released. It was an early test subject that escaped from its holding cell. The only reason it was kept alive before it escaped was to study its continuing development.

Everything that you have relating to the existence of this creature is our intellectual property and we want it back before it falls into the wrong hands. By law, we have the right of ownership over every part of that creature. You may refuse to comply, but we don't think that you should consider that a viable option. Our lawyers can make things very tough for you. Any photos and notes must also be handed over.

The Mokolé of which the locals speak is nothing more than our escaped experiment and backwater superstition mixing together. Maybe now the area can return to its natural state?

One last thing. We'd prefer it if this conversation never happened for reasons of security. Do I make myself clear?"

The agents should get one of two feelings. First, that they have stumbled across a legitimate, although misguided, project of no relevance to their larger mission. Second, that the entire case is nothing more than an exercise in futility. If they agree to hand over all material relating to the creature, Matrox officially lets the matter rest. However, the agents may be followed for a month or so and any agent living in a private accommodation is likely to have her phone bugged. Should it come to light that the agents work for Aegis, the Black Book starts a major surveillance operation in an attempt to discover the location of the Cell and neutralize it.

The agents may refuse to comply with Matrox's wishes outright. In this case, they are allowed to leave the building unmolested. Characters that travel to their homes by airplane may be slightly annoyed when it explodes in mid-flight, killing all the passengers. Travel by car or rail meets with similar results for the agents. The Black Book prefers to have no loose ends if it can and accidents do happen.

No matter what the final outcome, Matrox knows that it must close down the facility and, as soon as the agents have left, the clean up operation is commenced.

CHEMICAL LEAK

Ten hours after the beast is killed, whether the agents have visited Matrox or not, the Black Book decides to clean up its operation and remove all the evidence from the bayou. Remember, the creature had an implant and the Matrox war-techs and scientists know when it died. They plan to stage a major chemical leak and, while the authorities clean it up, smuggle out all of their research material and staff.

A valve leading to the bayou, normally used to dump treated sewage water, is opened and thousands of gallons of toxic material are allowed to escape. The material spreads quickly. The chemical is in fact a strong tranquilizer and merely places infected creatures in a deep sleep. Being concerned citizens, Matrox duly alerts the media and the military, in that order. A hazmat team, accompanied by several companies of National Guard, move in to seal off the bayou and evacuate the inhabitants. Naturally, all of the senior officers are Black Book operatives or allies and know the details of why the accident has been staged.

Twelve hours after the death of the creature, the normal radio and television schedules are interrupted by an urgent news flash. The announcer states that a chemical leak has occurred and that the National Guard is moving in to evacuate the inhabitants while a team of specialists tries to contain the spillage.

An hour later, eight military transport helicopters land in the bayou. One, carrying the hazmat team, lands at the Matrox facility. The others land in the surrounding area and deploy soldiers who immediately set up roadblocks. A fleet of trucks travels to the village and the other houses (such as the alligator and chicken farms) to evacuate the people. Within an hour the roads are completely blocked. No one is allowed within ten miles of the Matrox facility, and the villagers are moved safely out of the area. The bayou is locked solid. Security is extremely tight around the Matrox building and the agents are unlikely to be able to get very close.

Under cover of the quarantine, Matrox removes all of the research staff, equipment and test subjects by helicopter, taking them to an Army facility elsewhere in the state, before moving them to the Dulce base. The media crews in the area report that the helicopters are removing the sick to a military chemical warfare hospital, as well as carrying canisters of the recaptured toxin to a secure military holding facility.

Agents who manage to collect water samples from the bayou and perform a short-term Science: Chemistry(x1) or Science: Pharmacy(x1) research project discover that the so-called toxin is in fact just a powerful tranquilizer. Of course, lab facilities are required. Any one who falls into the water while it contains the tranquilizer is liable to swallow some and must make a Df5 Siz(Wil) test or fall unconscious for 2D hours. The drug naturally dissipates in a week.

If the agents still have the Sauroid corpse when the Guard moves in, Matrox directs soldiers to the location of the corpse and instructs them to retrieve it, with as much force as they deem necessary to accomplish their goal. Characters who resist are shot or clubbed, depending on how they resist. Those that flee find roadblocks set up to thwart passage through the bayou. A helicopter gunship is called in to comb the area for signs of the agents as well. Cell members who are caught with the corpse meet a bad end. Interrogation is followed by exposure to a deadly chemical and dumping (dead) in the bayou. This then becomes further proof of the emergency in the area. If the agents have yet to kill the Sauroid, they are merely arrested and taken to the safe area outside of the bayou. They are released two days later along with the rest of the villagers.

THE FINALE

There are several methods of getting the agents to the right place for the adventure to end. With all the military presence, taking on Matrox Chemicals is almost impossible, although pulling strings might make things a little easier. In the end, the agents have to make do with the evidence they already have and make the most of a bad deal. After all, even a minor victory (shutting down the Book/Saurian operation) is better than a complete failure. Game Master should keep this in mind when awarding Aegis Points (see Aegis Handbook).

The final scene takes place at the alligator farm and the agents need to be there. Blackie has been taken away by the military and Billy-Joe has fled to the bayou in Mokolé form. However, the Matrox alligator hormone has started to affect him (a small part of him is actually part-alligator). Suffering from bad stomach cramps, Billy-Joe returns to the farm to try and find something to ease his pain. In Mokolé form, he is half-mad with pain and attacks anyone who tries to stop him reaching the farm. A small selection of possible methods for aiding the agents in reaching the farm is included below. Game Masters should feel free to use whichever one best suits the current situation.

Ψ THE LOA RETURNS

This option should be used if the Game Master wishes to make the power of voodoo more known to the agents. It may help to give them a healthy respect for the religion and the possessed agent may end up suffering from a self-induced trauma (knowing you can be possessed at any time might cause some anxiety) that causes him to seek counseling.

Two hours after the National Guard seals off the bayou, the agent who participated in the voodoo ceremony suddenly goes into a trance (this could be extremely dangerous if he is driving a vehicle). While in the trance, the agent speaks to his colleagues in the same voice as when he was possessed.

The Horse Speaks Again

"Bonjour, mes cheris. Time is short and my message is brief. The Mokolé is in trouble and needs your help. Go to the farm, agent men. Go to the farm."

With that the agent snaps into consciousness, with no memory of what just took place and feeling perfectly well. Hopefully the agents are clever enough to realize that the voice meant the alligator farm. The agents may ask why the loa is giving them this information (and may use some psychic power to get the answers). Well, the Black Book and the soldiers are likely to try and take the Mokolé alive, since they may have a "cure" for the hormone it has ingested. The loa actually hopes the agents will kill the creature, ending its torment quickly and painlessly.

SIGHTINGS

While driving around the bayou trying to evade the military patrols, the agents see a giant, bipedal, lizard-like creature dart across the road in front of them. The creature fits the identification of the Mokolé perfectly and is heading for the alligator farm. The agents are unlikely to be able to catch it on foot through the bayou, but may well be able to reach the farm first if they can avoid any checkpoints.

DEATH IN THE BAYOU

The party comes across a grisly sight while travelling around the bayou. What appears to be a Guard checkpoint has been viciously destroyed and the six soldiers on duty have been ripped to death by an unknown creature. The area is soaked with fresh blood and all of the soldiers' guns have been destroyed. Their jeep has also been badly damaged, with a huge hole smashed through the hood into the engine itself. Agents making a successful Df3 Per test spot large reptilian footprints heading into the bayou in the direction of the alligator farm.

ONCE MORE TO THE FARM, DEAR FRIENDS

When the agents arrive at the farm, they discover three freshly dead soldiers. All have been killed by savage claw blows and bites. Their equipment is smashed beyond repair. From inside one of the hatcheries the agents hear a muffled cry of pain. Entering the building reveals Billy-Joe curled up on the ground in agony, throwing up a thick yellow liquid. Although too ill to speak coherently, he is clearly in great pain. A quick Df3 Medical: General Practice test reveals that Billy-Joe is seriously ill (high temperature) and that the liquid he is regurgitating is not identifiable. A longer exam will be cut short, as trouble is rapidly approaching.

The agents may kill Billy-Joe on the spot for being the Mokolé (that is their choice), in which case the adventure is effectively at an end. Before the agents can effect an escape from the alligator farm, however, they hear the sound of several vehicles approaching. Anyone watching the road sees two military jeeps and a truck approaching at high speed. They drive straight through the outer gate and screech to a halt in the main yard of the farm. Armed soldiers disembark from the jeeps and several men in biohazard suits dismount from the truck.

Agents who surrender, in the hope that Billy-Joe will be fairly treated, are sorely mistaken. They are forcibly arrested and Billy-Joe is dragged to the truck by the hazmat team. The party is handed over to the Black Book and Billy-Joe is removed for testing at the request of the Gna-Tall. All in all, a bad way to end the mission.

Billy-Joe, through his pain, hears the soldiers' approach and quickly incants the spell that transforms him into the Mokolé. In front of the agents' eyes, Billy-Joe's form twists and writhes and, over a minute or so, transforms into a giant man-alligator. Anyone witnessing this act must make a Df4 Fear test. Once fully transformed, the Mokolé stands upright, although it is a little wobbly on its legs, and looks at the agents. It then lurches out of the hatchery straight towards the soldiers.

The Mokolé knows that it is dying and wants to die, preferably defending its home as countless Mokolé have before it. If need be, it turns on the agents in an effort to commit suicide.

Scientists

All attributes 3
Luck 2/12

Skills

Drive: Auto 1
Science: Biology 3

Trainings

Bio-Hazard Controls

Equipment

Automatic Pistol
Hazmat Suit

Soldiers

All attributes 3
Luck 2/12

Skills

Brawling: Military Training 2
Drive: Auto 2 Small Arms: Pistol 3
Small Arms: Rifle 3

Traits

Combat Experience

Equipment

Automatic Rifle
Kevlar Vest

Ψ THE BATTLEFIELD

The Mokolé charges into the soldiers, killing three before the rest can react. Most of the soldiers panic and fire their weapons on full auto without regard for their colleagues safety. Bullets rip through the area, punching holes in many of the farm's wooden buildings. The agents must make Luck rolls. Those who roll Bad Luck are hit by a stray bullet for Wn4 damage.

Unless the agents join in on one side or the other, the following scenario unfolds. The battle rages for another thirty seconds or so, the soldiers expending their magazines into the beast as it claws and bites its way through them. The last soldier dies and the badly wounded beast turns to the agents. Its eyes, which are human, look at them, as if to say "why didn't you help me?" and then it falls. Upon death, the creature reverts back to the form of Billy-Joe, his body mutilated by dozens of bullet wounds. The sounds of a helicopter can be heard in the distance. Unless the agents leave immediately they are likely to be shot or arrested.

The agents can join in on the soldiers' side, in which case, just before the Mokolé dies it looks at them, as if to say "why do you fight me?" Once the fight is over the soldiers radio for back-up and place the agents under armed guard until reinforcements turn up to confiscate the body of Billy-Joe.

If the agents attack the soldiers, the Mokolé realizes that they are helping and leaves them be. It still dies after all the soldiers are dead, but before it does so it reverts back to the form of Billy-Joe and thanks the agents for their help. Once again, the agents have little time to gather evidence before a heavily armed helicopter arrives.

Particularly cruel Game Masters might wish to have more fun with this climax, especially if the agents are well armed. If the Sauroid is still alive it smells the blood from the battle and joins the fight! With four sides involved, the fight could get very messy, especially as the Sauroid is not overly fussy about who it attacks. For those who like to scare the agents, the Sauroid could jump through the wooden hatchery roof and set upon them in the confined space within. Others may prefer the classic Godzilla movie approach and have the Mokolé and Sauroid battle it out to the death. Whatever method the Game Master chooses, the Mokolé should not survive once all the shooting and slashing is done.

AFTERMATH

With the Matrox plant empty of evidence and the real Mokolé dead, the agents should feel that it is time to go home.

Staying on merely leads to a continuing string of dead ends, with Matrox denying any involvement in genetic projects and the villagers becoming extremely tight-lipped about the Mokolé. If the agents have not killed the Sauroid before this time, Matrox Chemicals operatives will capture it. No loose ends are left in the bayou.

On the way back to Morgan City to collect their belongings, the agents see the villagers, all dressed in black, standing by the side of the bayou and throwing flowers into the water. They do not speak to the agents, except to say, "the Mokolé is dead." With that, they return to their homes.

Characters who actively helped the Mokolé in the final battle find a new ally in Madame M'Bodo. Although she will not actively join the Cell or agree to be part of Aegis in general, she is a useful occult contact.

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Second Matrox Scientist Drowns

by Kenneth G. Barnes

MORGAN CITY -- Local police are combing the Bayou Teche for Mr. Peter Stead, a 28-year old chemical engineer from Morgan City. Mr. Stead and his wife were enjoying a peaceful weekend boating on the Bayou Teche when Mr. Stead went missing. His wife, Marsha, aged 27, told police that her husband had stopped the boat at a small island and went ashore to explore while she prepared a picnic. That was the last she saw of him.

Sheriff J. Wilson has told reporters that an alligator may have grabbed Mr. Stead while he was exploring the island and may have dragged him into the water. He went on to dismiss claims by local bayou residents that a creature known as the Mokol  was responsible for taking Mr. Stead.

Ms. Catherine Downs, a spokesperson for Matrox Chemicals, expressed the company's sympathy for Mrs. Stead and offered a reward of \$5000 for information leading to the whereabouts of Mr. Stead. Although Mr. Stead was the second Matrox employee to be lost in the Bayou Teche in the last few months, Downs stated that Matrox would not bar their employees from entering the swamp. A memo warning of the dangers in the bayou, and offering a outdoors survival seminar has been circulated, according to Ms. Downs.

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//Disappearance of chemical engineer, reported in local paper.//

A local paper **<reports>** that a second Matrox Chemicals employee, Peter Stead, has been lost in the nearby bayou. Given recurring local legends of strange creatures, alien or paranormal activity may be present. Investigation appears warranted.

[illegible]

//Text of article describing recent disappearance in Bayou Teche.//

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<related report><author>

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//Geographic data on Bayou Teche.//

The Bayou Teche is an area of waterway situated some five miles west of **<Morgan City>**, Louisiana. The Bayou is one of many in the area and it connects to the Atchafalaya River just outside of the city limits. For much of its length, the bayou is a twisting, slow-moving waterway, its banks hidden by cypress, oak and tupelo-gum trees. Further inland, the ground is waterlogged and marsh-like, and much of it is covered by thick undergrowth. The area around the Bayou is dangerous terrain, with many deep pools of water, venomous snakes and alligators. Those trained in jungle warfare will understand the dangers, others should pay attention to local warning signs.

Although the Bayou has been in existence for many millennia in one form or another, the native Indians, the **<Chitimacha tribe>** have a legend that attributes the existence of the Bayou to the **<death of a giant snake>**, which once frequented the area. There are also sightings of an alligator-man, known locally as the **<Mokolé>**, which appears to be a very distant cousin to **<Bigfoot>**.

[illegible]

//Summary of Chitimacha legend of the creation of the Bayou Teche.//

The <Chitimacha> tribe of Louisiana speaks of a time when a huge, venomous snake lived in what is now the <Bayou Teche>. Their tribal legends say that the snake was so big that they did not measure it in feet, but in miles. The snake had been an enemy of the tribe for many years and was a constant source of destructive powers. One day the tribal chief summoned all of his warriors and told them to prepare for a final battle against the serpent. The men fashioned arrows from the bone of the garfish and clubs from the native trees.

The Chitimacha warriors could not instantly kill so large a monster in one hit and so struck at it along its entire length. The battle raged for days, the snake fighting as tenaciously as the brave warriors. In the final days of the conflict, the snake turned and twisted to escape a slow death, its movements broadening, curving and deepening the place where its huge body lay. The Chitimacha claim that the Bayou Teche marks not only the exact final resting-place of the snake but also his exact shape.

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TRANSCRIPT OF TAPE RECORDING FOUND IN SWAMP

Voice 1 (male): Is everything ready?

Voice 2 (female): Yes master. All is prepared exactly as you instructed. The seal is closed. We are safe.

Voice 1: Good. Take your places and prepare to begin.

[Almost of minute of near silence follows, with only very faint shuffling sounds to be heard in the background.]

Voice 1: Concentrate on your breathing. Feel the air going in and out. Clear your minds. In and out. In and out. Feel the silence engulf you. Ah! We are one!

Multiple voices: We are one!

Voice 1: Concentrate your thoughts with mine. I will begin to contact the creature. Oh Lord Sobek, god of crocodiles, guide your servant, the Mokolé, to us tonight. Grant us an audience with your divine messenger great Sobek. Hear are words and grant us our wish. We are the true believers. We are your servants. Now my friends, call out to the beast.

[Almost twenty minutes of near silence follows. Only the breathing of someone near to the recorder and the background noise of the bayou can be heard.]

Voice 1: I can feel it coming! Soon it will be with us. Soon we shall join it with us. Soo...

[The silence is shattered by a terrifying and bestial roar, followed seconds later by a piercing scream. The night air is alive with the sound of an unknown creature and human screams. No one voice can be picked out.]

Multiple Voices: Help me! . . . Lord Sobek is here himself, oh great lord, argh! . . . Have pity! . . . What the fuck is it? . . . Fry its mind! . . . Look out! . . . Watch the braziers! . . . Annal nathrak . . . Help me! I'm burning! I'm burning. . . God have mercy, it's a . . . Transmit a report back. Quickly! . . . Our Father who art in urgh! . . . Run! Run! . . . Aaaaaaargh! . . . (very feeble voice) Help me! No, no, NOOOO! [snap] . . .

[During the apparent struggle, the tape goes slightly out of synch, as if the recorder had been suddenly and violently moved. Another five minutes of tape is filled with the sounds of crackling fire and the snuffling of an animal. The snapping of bones and the sound of a predator chewing can clearly be heard. The noise stops after several minutes and for a few seconds the sounds of a creature moving away through the bayou's undergrowth can be heard. Another five minutes of fire noises follows. Finally the night noises of the bayou return as the fires die down, and fill the remainder of the tape.]

APPENDIX B – NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

TYPICAL RESIDENT (PATTERSON VILLAGE)

Typical Resident (Patterson Village)

Str 3 Siz 3
Agl 3 Ref 3
Int 2 or 3 Will 3
Per 3 Luck 2/10

Skills

Brawling 2 Drive: Auto 1
Repair/Build: Mechanical
or Electrical 2



Various ages, black or white, typical store-bought or catalogue clothing, much of it in need of repair. A few (2 on 2D) have Small Arms: Pistol 1 and a revolver. The residents of the village are generally poor. Those that hold jobs perform low-level manual labor or clerical work. They are not overly friendly to outsiders, especially Federal government types. Few are anxious to engage the agents in conversation or even be associated with them.

About Matrox Chemicals: They don't give us many jobs, 'cept as cleaners, but they gave us a new playground and clinic. More than our government has done for us. I'm glad that Matrox chose to move here, they've helped lots of folks out.

About the Mokolé: Got to go see Blackie if you lookin' to find out about big alligators. (For more on what the locals know about the Mokolé legend, see text concerning visits to the village.)

About Blackie: He's a good man. Got himself a good money earner there. He's bigger and got more money comin' in since his poor pappy died a while back.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: Blackie's nephew? He's a little slow but he's a good boy. Never been in trouble with the law and always polite, 'though he don't say much. I think he'll take over the farm when Blackie finally passes over to the other side.

About Madame M'Bodo: She is the local mambo. She talks to the spirits for us, asking them to help when we got problems. She's very wise. No one questions her word when she speaks. Insult her and you'll have me to deal with.

CAPTAIN D. W. HASTINGS, MORGAN CITY POLICE CHIEF

Capt. D.W. Hastings

All Attributes 3

Luck 3/12

Skills

Brawling: Police Training 2

Diplomacy: Interrogation 2 Drive: Auto 2

Small Arms: Pistol 2

Trainings

Surveillance

Investigation

Traits

Combat Experience

Police Connection



Age: 43; white; stocky with a big gut; sweat-stained police uniform and gun belt.

Captain Hastings is a career police officer, having risen up the ranks through hard work and dedication to the job. He is not overly educated, but he has a good level of general knowledge. Although he has no aversion to working with government agencies, he does like to know when they are on his turf and why. Recently he has been under a lot of pressure, what with Matrox employees disappearing in the bayou and the sightings of an alligator man attracting dozens of calls from cranks and fringe paranormal investigation groups.

About Matrox Chemicals: They've done us proud. Brought jobs to the area, built Patterson a new clinic and stuff. We meet with them every month to discuss security, check local health regulations and the like. Nice people. Can't say I understand what they do though.

About the Mokolé: That legend has caused so much trouble! A few folk go missing and we've got nuts from all over the US phoning up asking if we got pictures and footprints. A few accidents near an alligator and the whole world goes nuts.

About Blackie: Blackie? You mean the guy at the 'gator farm? Hell, he's a nice guy. Raises some fine 'gators for eating. You want to try some of the 'gator stakes at Ma Joseph's while you're in town.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: Who he?

About Madame M'Bodo: The old voodoo woman? She's just a harmless nut living alone in the bayou.

OFFICER LUCAS WINFIELD, MORGAN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Officer Lucas Winfield

All Attributes 3

Luck 2/12

Skills

Boating: Speedboat 2

Brawling: Police Training 2 Drive: Auto 2

Melee Weapon: Nightstick 2

Small Arms: Pistol 2 Small Arms: Rifle 2

Trainings

Surveillance

Awareness:

Criminal Activity

Traits

Combat Experience

Police Connection

Equipment

Nightstick Auto

Pistol



Age 24; white; average build; police uniform and mirror shades

Officer Luke Winfield has been on the Morgan City police force for five years, following a family tradition going back three generations. Born and bred in the south, Winfield has a habit of referring to Blacks as “niggers”, although he is not by nature a racist man and means no harm by his remarks. As he is fond of saying, old habits are hard to break.

Winfield loves his work and is destined to become a sergeant if he maintains his current record. One thing he won’t let get in his way are some reports of an alligator-man and a few missing scientists. He sees this case as his chance to gain promotion and maybe a transfer to the New Orleans P.D.

About Matrox Chemicals: They brought plenty of business to the area. They’ve got their own security so we don’t go up to the plant much. Their guards have got better gear than we have, must be for guarding all those drugs they make.

About the Mokolé: Black superstition. About as real as a black President is going to be! Seriously, it’s just some big ‘gator got out of hand. When we find it and kill it the legends’ll stop.

About Blackie: Ain’t he the guy from the ‘gator farm? Breeds a mean beast for eating, and no mistake. Most of the local restaurants buy from him, as does the clothing trade. You know, handbags and shoes. Might get myself a pair one day.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: I got no idea who he is.

About Madame M’Bodo: She that crazy woman lives in the bayou? You wouldn’t catch me living there, with all them ‘gators and snakes. No sir. She may be crazy but she’s got some savvy living out there without any facilities.

AMOS BENNS, LOCAL BOAT RENTER

Amos Benns

All Attributes 3

Luck 3/12

Skills

Boating: Speedboat 3

Brawling: Street Fighter 2

Build/Repair: Mechanics 2 Drive: Auto 2

Hobby: Cooking 4

Language: Cajun 3

Trainings

Navigation



Age: 40; white; Cajun; faded jeans, wool shirt, baseball cap, necklace of 'gator teeth.

Amos was born and bred on the bayou and his family can trace their history back to the days of the French exodus from Acadia (now Nova Scotia) in 1755. Amos' history is less turbulent however. After leaving the Navy, where he specialized as a launch pilot in the early 1970s, Amos started his boat hire company in his home town. The business is popular with tourists and Amos lives a fairly comfortable life. Aside from his boat hiring, he also organizes Cajun feasts for tourists and his reputation is quite high within the bayou.

Amos does have one habit when around tourists. He is so accustomed to giving tours of the bayou that when on his boats he automatically goes into his pre-set speeches without realizing what he is doing.

About Matrox Chemicals: Now there's a story. They moved in the late 80s and began spending money on the local community. Sure, they done us a world of good with the playground for the children, but parts of the bayou became their property and so we can't sail them any more.

About the Mokolé: Many folk laugh when the Mokolé is mentioned but you want to mark my words, he's real. No, I ain't never seen him but I've heard him, roaring at night, scaring all the birds away. You hear his cry and you remember it forever.

About Blackie: Breeds the finest 'gators in Louisiana, mon ami. Those beasts taste mighty fine I can tell you. Of course, it's in his blood you know. His pappy owned the farm before him.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: He's Blackie's young nephew. A bit slow maybe but he knows plenty about 'gators. Yep, if he were a little brighter he'd be one of them fancy doctors.

About Madame M'Bodo: She lives in the bayou but she doesn't see tourists. Her magic might be superstition to most folk but she has real power, mark my words. If its voodoo you want to see, go to New Orleans and look in the museums.

Ψ GABRIEL “BLACKIE” CLARENCE, ALLIGATOR FARMER

Gabriel “Blackie” Clarence

All Attributes 3

Luck 3/12

Skills

Animal Handling: Alligators 2

Boating: Speedboat 2

Brawling: Street Fighter 2

Repair/Build: Electric 2

Science: Zoology 1

Trainings

Awareness: Hidden Alligators



Age 45; black; short hair; black teeth; scruffy overalls; hand rolled cigarette in mouth.

Blackie, real name Gabriel Clarence, is a native of the bayou and has spent much of his adult life around alligators. His father founded the farm when Blackie was in his twenties and Blackie left his job at the Morgan City zoo, where he tended the alligators, to help his father.

The farm grew steadily. Blackie and his father began doing business with local restaurant and clothing establishments, as well as zoos from around the country.

Blackie's father died eight years ago of lung cancer and Blackie has run the farm by himself, although his nephew helps out during the summer.

About Matrox Chemicals: Don't notice them much. Don't deal with them much either. I can't say I like them being here in the bayou, but they are helping the locals, so I guess it would be selfish of me to complain.

About the Mokolé: I ain't never seen it but I've heard its call at night sometimes. Real loud it is too. You'll know when you hear it roar, boy, you'll know. I think it's lonely.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: My nephew? What about him? He ain't in trouble is he? No? Well, what do you want to know? He's a good boy, works hard and keeps himself out of trouble with the law. Sure, he's a little slow, but he's real good around 'gators. Best worker I ever had as well.

About Madame M'Bodo: Madame M'Bodo is very old and very powerful in the way of voodoo. She is the local priestess and gives advice and help to the local folk. Don't you go troubling her now, boy. She ain't got time for no city folk trying to get some news story for one of them tabloid magazines.

BILLY-JOE DUPRES

Billy-Joe duPres

Mokolé Stats

Str 7 Siz 6
Agl 3 Ref 4
Int 2 Will 4
Per 4 Luck none

Human Stats

Str 3 Siz 2
Agl 3 Ref 3
Int 2 Will 4
Per 3 Luck 2/12

Skills

Climb 2 Track 3

Combat

Savagery 4
Bite (Wn5)
Claw (Wn4)
Trample (Bk5)
Armor Rating 3

Skills

Animal Handling:
Alligators 4
Athletics: Running 2
Occult (Voodoo) 3

Trainings

Survival (Bayou)

Traits

Animal Empathy
Runner



Age 14; black; baggy overalls; smile like he knows something no-one else does

Billy-Joe DuPres is Blackie's nephew by his brother. The boy lives with his father for most of the year, but spends the summer months helping his uncle out at the alligator farm. Although he looks like a simple-minded young boy, Billy-Joe is much more. He is the native guardian of the bayou and capable of shapechanging through magic into the creature known as the Mokolé.

About Matrox Chemicals: They have dangerous chemicals. I don't like them.

About the Mokolé: It is the spirit of the bayou.

About Blackie: He's my uncle.

About Madame M'Bodo: She is the voodoo woman. Very powerful. Very wise.

JED THOMAS, CHICKEN FARMER

Jed Thomas

All Attributes 3

Luck 3/12

Skills

Animal Handling: Chickens 3

Boating: Speedboat 1

Brawling: Street Fighter 1

Repair/Build: Carpentry 2

Small Arms: Rifle 2

Equipment

Shotgun



Age 72; white; thinning hair; skinny; denim overalls, baseball cap

Jed is a survivor of World War II, although he only saw action in the last few months of the war as a young sailor on a cruiser in the Pacific. After the war, Jed came home to his father's farm and worked for many years until his father died, when Jed inherited the farm. As times became harder, Jed sold off parts of the farm until all he owns now is the house and a few fields he uses for growing corn.

The only business that keeps Jed's farm open is the regular chicken order from the alligator farm. Jed is a bitter man, blaming his failure to manage the farm as successfully as his father did on the government and their tax program. He hasn't voted since the 1960s, and dislike government officials, preferring to drive them off his land with his shotgun than listen to their lies.

About Matrox Chemicals: They don't do us no harm. Built us a good clinic and playground. They also sell me the cheap fertilizer, which saves me money. Can't be bad, unlike them government types who tax us to death.

About the Mokolé: You believe in that legend? Sure, there're plenty of strange things in the bayou but there ain't no alligator-man a running around.

About Blackie: He runs the alligator-farm. Buys my chickens from me, which keeps me fed. I'd have more cash if I didn't have to pay them stupid government taxes.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: Blackie's nephew? Don't see much of him. He's a bit stupid. Maybe his parents were cousins or something. Heh heh.

About Madame M'Bodo: The voodoo woman? Bad load of old nigger superstition from the slave days if you ask me. Still, she don't come a-preaching around here so I got no beef with her.

CATHERINE DOWNS, MATROX CHEMICALS PR OFFICER

Catherine Downs

Str 3 Siz 3 Agl 3 Ref 3
Int 4 Will 4 Per 3 Luck 4/12

Skills

Athletics: Running 2 Computer Use 2
Diplomacy: Persuasion 4 Drive: Auto 2
Language: French 2 Science: Chemistry 2

Trainings

Politics
Savoir Faire

Traits

Driven New Identity
Media Connection



Age 36; white; English; fashionable black suit; brown hair; green eyes; faint whiff of expensive perfume; very attractive

Catherine Downs, formerly Angela White, attended Oxford University in England. Upon graduating with honors, she began working for Exxon, as a junior PR researcher. Her hard work and dedication moved her quickly up the ladder to Assistant PR Manager. Her happy life changed on March 24, 1989, when the oil tanker Exxon Valdez spilled her cargo of oil.

Downs visited the area shortly after the spill and stumbled upon a Black Book operation. One of the operatives knew of Downs through her media work and realized her potential as a recruit. The Book staged a fatal helicopter crash on the return trip. Two weeks break, with a new identity, she began working for Matrox Chemicals.

Downs is a professional through and through. She loves her job, is dedicated to the Book, and wants to see the Matrox project succeed, partly so she can leave the area and partly because she has performed such marvelous PR work on the locals and wants the recognition. She has no qualms about ordering the agents' deaths if she perceives them as a threat to "her project."

About Matrox Chemicals: We're a large pharmaceutical firm with facilities in four states. We mainly produce medical drugs, although we have some fertilizers and pesticides products as well. It's our policy to support the communities we work in, building playgrounds, libraries, clinics, and so on. Matrox also tries to protect the environment. That's why our plant is hidden in the bayou. We practice non-intrusive site situation techniques.

About the Mokolé: That is just an old legend. Many rural areas have their own legends: Bigfoot, ghosts, Indian spirits. This area has an alligator-man story.

About Blackie: I don't know him personally but I have tasted a few of the alligators that he raises. They are very nice. I can recommend them to you.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: Who? I don't know him.

About Madame M'Bodo: Isn't she the local voodoo woman? We don't have any dealings with her but we appreciate the work she does for the villagers.

MADAME M'BODO, MAMBO

Madame M'Bodo

Str 3 Siz 4 Agl 3 Ref 3
Int 3 Will 5 Per 3 Luck 2/12

Skills

Meditation 3 Occult 4 Ritual: Caribbean 4

Trainings

Ritual: Banish Spirit Ritual: Bind Spirit
Ritual: Ghost Possession Ritual: Prophecy
Ritual: Prosperity Ritual: Summon Ghost
Ritual: Summon Human

Traits

Supernatural Focus



Age around 50; black; large build; brightly colored clothes; wears beads and jewelry; piercing eyes; soft voice; powerful aura of self-confidence

Madame M'Bodo, real name Delila DuVille, was born in Haiti. She left during the "Papa Doc" regime, fleeing to New Orleans and eventually to the Bayou Teche. As a child, she always knew she was different. She had friends that no one else could see and she heard voices. Upon reaching puberty, she was given to the local mambo (voodoo priestess) to train. She learned about spirits: how to summon them, how to bend them to her will, how to appease them, and how to pay them proper respect.

After fleeing to New Orleans, she set up as a mambo and formed a successful group, catering for the spiritual needs of the poorer blacks. During a riot in the city, her group was singled out by a gang of white youths, who threw stones and petrol bombs. Seven worshippers died that night and the authorities did nothing. Having lost faith in the "civilized" world, Madame M'Bodo moved deep into the bayou.

Since then she has been living on the outskirts of Morgan City, making a living by catering to the local blacks' spiritual affairs and acting as an advisor for personal and business problems. She takes little money, but accepts food and gifts of clothing. Although her reputation as a fortune-teller is very well known in Morgan City, few travel out to the bayou to visit her, and she does not make house calls.

About Matrox Chemicals: They are intruders. They try to hide away and give us coin, but they bring poison to the bayou. The loas will be happy to see them go.

About the Mokolé: The Mokolé is the spirit and protector of the bayou. It is angry at the moment because outsiders are disturbing the peace of the bayou. It has always been with us, and always will be. The all-knowing loas can tell you more.

About Blackie: He is a good man, a faithful man. He does not come to visit as much as he used to. Still, the loas watch over him.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: Billy-Joe is blessed by the loas, for, although he has a simple mind, he knows many things and sees many things closed to other men.

JEBEDIAH WILSON, PATTERSON VILLAGE SHERIFF

Sheriff Jebediah Wilson

All Attributes 3

Luck 2/12

Skills

Boating: Speedboat 2 Brawling: Police Training 1

Drive: Auto 2 Small Arms: Pistol 2

Small Arms: Rifle 2

Trainings

Investigation

Equipment

Shotgun



Age 43; white; slightly overweight; balding; smokes cigars continually; police uniform and gun belt

Sheriff Wilson has been involved in local law enforcement since he was seventeen. Over the years, he worked his way up to sheriff, a job he loves as it is not only the pinnacle of his career but also gives him an excellent social position within the community. He enjoys his work immensely and takes his duties very seriously. No crime is too small or too big for him.

About Matrox Chemicals: Matrox have done us proud, boy. What with the new clinic and library and all. Since they've moved in they've spared no expense in helping us. The crime rate has dropped since the locals started working at Matrox, and the kids will have a decent education.

About the Mokolé: Bah! These legends ain't worth spit, boy! Next you'll be believing in Bigfoot and little green men from Mars! Folk see a big 'gator and they get excited. Living here can make a man crazy real quick.

About Blackie: The guy from the alligator farm? What about him? His daddy owned it before he did. Nice little business, perfectly legitimate. Hell, he's as near as you can get to a pillar of the community around here, boy. Them 'gators sure do taste good too.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: He's Blackie's nephew. Bit of a retard I hear. He keeps himself private. He ain't got no criminal record, which is unusual for one of his lot.

About Madame M'Bodo: Hell, boy, why do you want to talk about that old fraudster? She just sits in the bayou and takes what little money these folk have in return for advice and fake potions and charms.

RCS TEAM MEMBER

RCS Team Member

All Attributes 3
Luck 2/12

Skills

Computer Use 2 Cryptozoology 2
Drive: Auto 2 Occult 2 Photography 2
Research 2 Science: Biology or Zoology 2
Tracking 2 Video 2

Trainings

Awareness:
Cryptozoological
Creatures
Survival (Jungle)

Equipment

Miscellaneous
scientific equipment



Age 25 to 30; white; well dressed; polite; use a lot of scientific terms

The RCS team consists of four individuals; Doctor Haley Daniels, the team leader, and three research assistants, Nicholas Kowalski, Issac Rubenstein, and Rudy Carter. All of the team members work out of the New York office of the RCS. The research staff is along to do most of the grunt work, and the agents are likely to meet them first.

Nicholas Kowalski is a Harvard graduate who shows great promise as a cryptozoologist. He is currently awaiting news as to whether his membership has been accepted by the Board and has been invited along by Dr. Daniels, who is secretly evaluating his performance on behalf of the Board.

Issac Rubenstein is an assistant member of the RCS, having only been working with them for a little under twelve months. He is very eager to please, and can be a little pushy if he thinks he is onto an important lead.

Rudy Carter is the youngest member of the team and comes from a wealthy Boston family that has donated millions of dollars to the RCS over the years. His father is a full member of the RCS and Rudy is currently finishing a degree in zoology at Harvard before he applies for full membership.

About Matrox Chemicals: Matrox? Aren't they the big chemical plant in the bayou? They've lost a few scientists to accidents recently haven't they? We'll get around to talking to them soon, but I don't think they can help.

About the Mokolé: Have you ever seen it? We're here to investigate it and determine if there is any truth in the legends. Do you have any opinions on what it might be? Hang on, let me get a note pad . . .

About Blackie: The alligator farm owner? We've been to see him already. He sure has some big alligators in that pond of his. Have you tried one of his steaks at your hotel yet? They're delicious.

About Billy-Joe DuPres: I don't think I have him down to talk to. Let me get my notebook. Right, can you spell his name for me?

About Madame M'Bodo: The voodoo priestess, eh? She is likely to be a great source of information on the local legends and superstitions. Do you put any faith in the reported powers of voodoo? Do you think that the alligator-man could somehow be tied in?

DOCTOR HALEY DANIELS, RCS TEAM LEADER

Doctor Haley Daniels

Str 3 Siz 3
Agl 3 Ref 3
Int 4 Will 3
Per 3 Luck 3/12

Skills

Computer Use 2 Cryptozoology 3
Drive: Auto 1 Occult 2 Parapsychology 2
Photography 2 Research 3
Science: Zoology 2 Tracking 2 Video 3

Trainings

Awareness:
Cryptozoological Creatures
Survival (Jungle)

Traits

Strong ESP: Hunch (1)

Equipment

Miscellaneous scientific
equipment



Age 31; white; tall; smart casuals; tight-lipped; dedicated; very defensive of the RCS and its mission.

Dr. Daniels has something of a reputation within the RCS. Although she is normally very mild mannered and laconic, she reacts with a fervor when the credibility of the RCS is brought into question. Many an ivory tower academic has received a verbal lashing at conferences.

As far as this case goes, Dr. Daniels sees the Mokolé as the southern cousin of Bigfoot. She firmly believes that it exists and that it is likely to be some kind of throwback. Her training is such that she is unlikely to be fooled by hoaxes unless they are very good.

About Matrox Chemicals: Aside from having lost a few scientists to accidents, they are of no concern to us. Still, when you are one of the largest employers in the area you do expect to be on the down side of statistics. We might ask if we can leave some questionnaires with them in case any of their work force has seen anything strange, but that is about as far as our investigations goes with regards to Matrox.

About the Mokolé: There have been sightings of an alligator-man in this area going back to the earliest records. Unlike Bigfoot, which is a relatively recent phenomenon as far as whites are concerned, this is well documented. The Indians were the first to have legends about it, saying that it was the protector of the bayou. Some of

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ALLIGATOR FARM



1 PONTOON BRIDGE

2 LAKE

3 DOCKS

4 FEEDING ISLAND

5 SWAMP

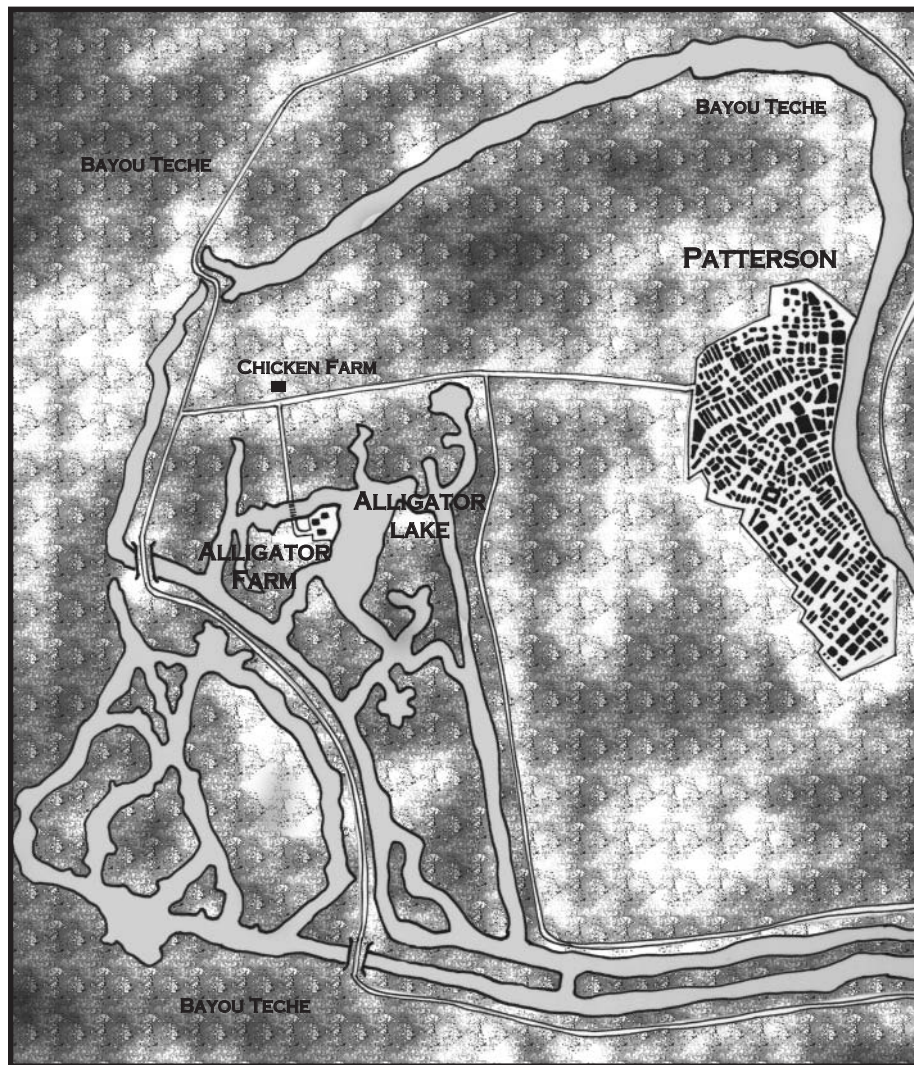
6 INCUBATION HOUSE

7 MAIN HOUSE

8 STORAGE FACILITY



PLAYER MAP #1



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ONE MILE



ROAD



GRASSLAND



WOODEN BRIDGE

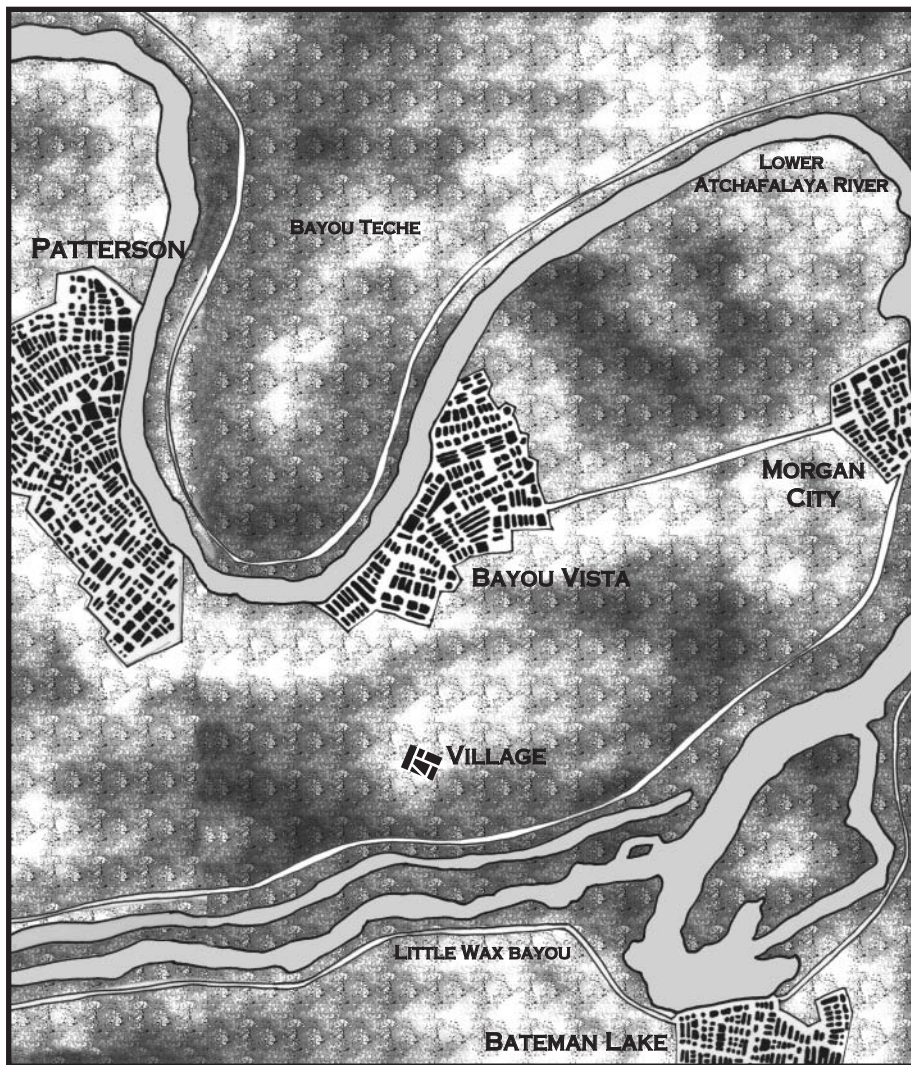


DEEP SWAMP





PLAYER MAP #2



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ONE MILE



ROAD



WOODEN BRIDGE



GRASSLAND

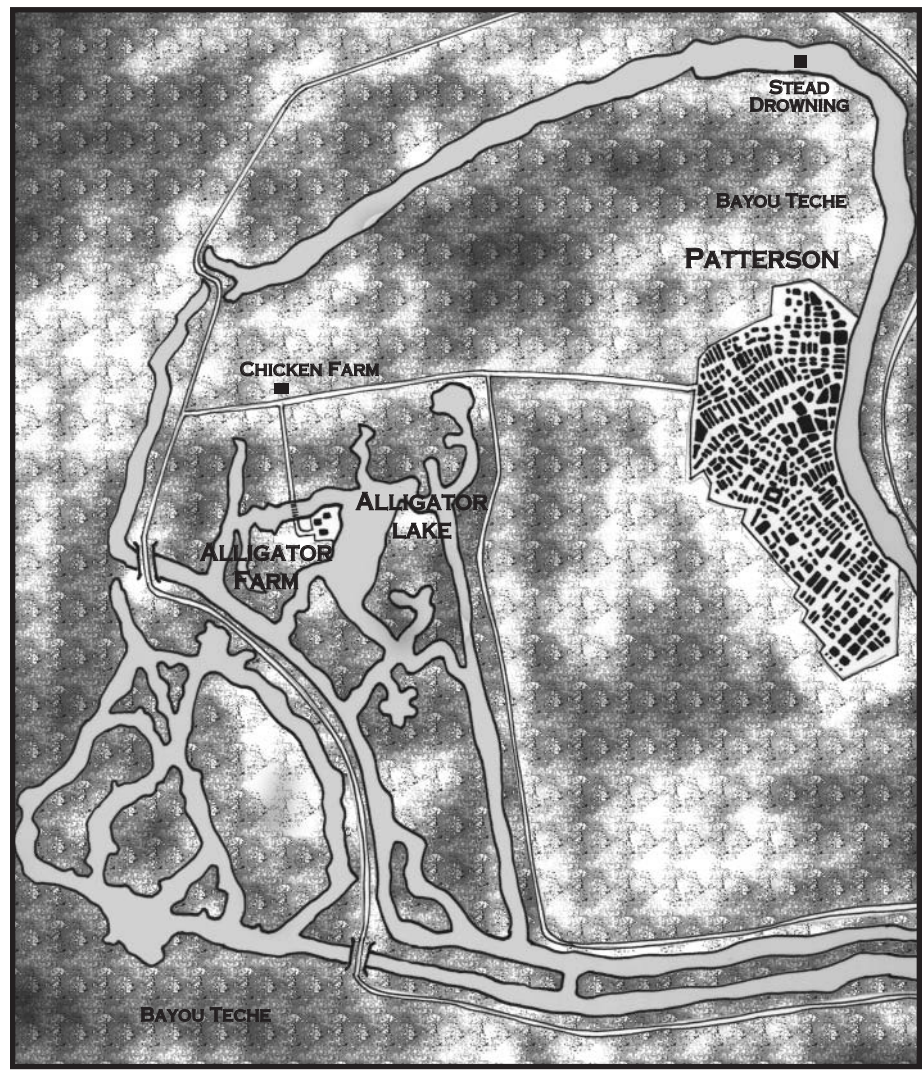


DEEP SWAMP



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GAME MASTER MAP #1

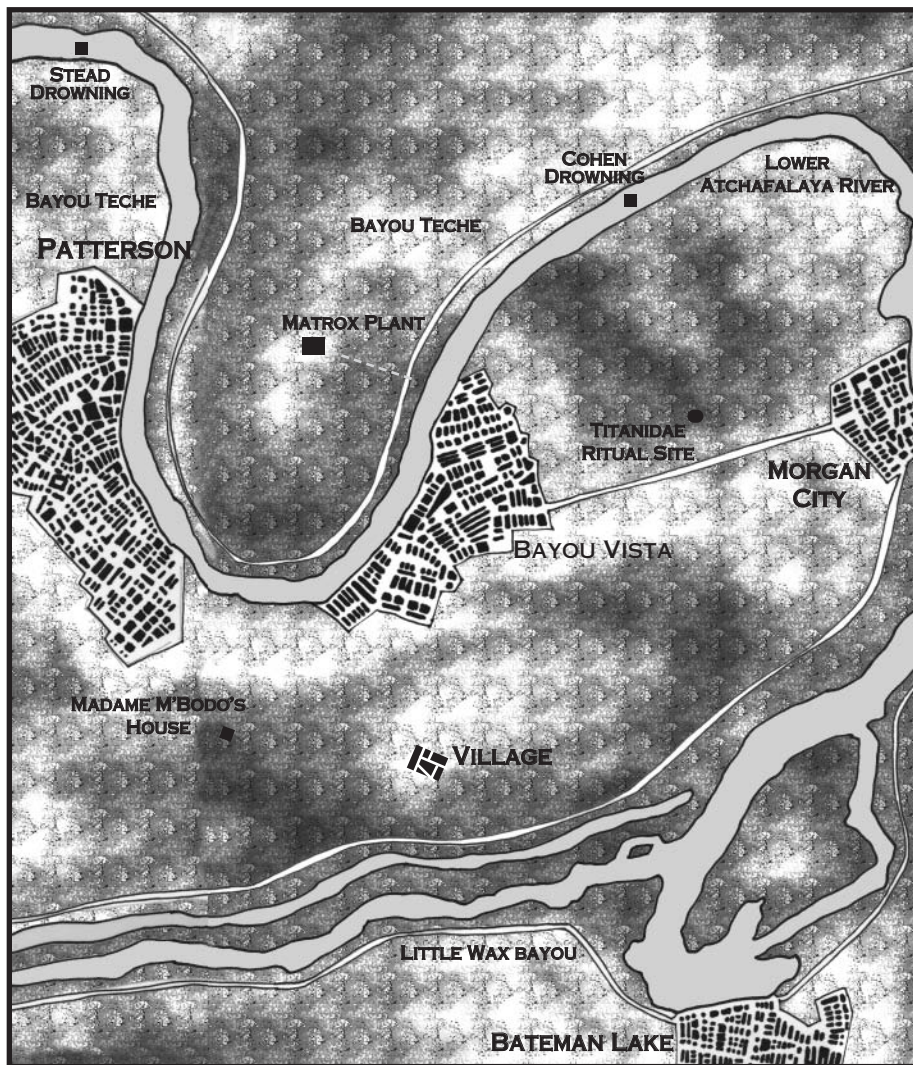


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ONE MILE

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|---|--|
|  ROAD |  GRASSLAND |
|  WOODEN BRIDGE |  DEEP SWAMP |



GAME MASTER MAP #2



— · — · — · — · — · —
ONE MILE



ROAD



GRASSLAND



WOODEN BRIDGE



DEEP SWAMP

