



CUBICLE 7

FOR USE WITH THE LAUNDRY RPG



By Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan
Based on the 'Laundry Files' novels by Charles Stross



The

Laundry Files

GOD GAME BLACK

Based on the Laundry Files novels by Charles Stross.

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Introduction

The Laundryverse isn't a static setting. It's not eternal September, forever approaching but never quite reaching CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN in an asymptotic apocalypse. Each novel in the series moves the Stars closer to Rightness.

The core rulebook of the *Laundry Files* roleplaying game covers events up to *The Fuller Memorandum*. It describes the Laundry as it seems to new recruits – an eccentric entrenched bureaucracy that manages to succeed despite itself. It's underfunded, overstaffed, hide-bound and occasionally deranged. It's the Peter Principle mixed with Lovecraftian horror.

There's another side to the Laundry, as revealed in *The Apocalypse Codex* novel – an older, more competent, more powerful cabal hidden inside the shell of bureaucracy. *GOD GAME BLACK* provides updates and options for your Laundry campaign. Think of it as the DVD extras for the novel, or the patch notes for a software update. Or the ticking of a clock, counting down towards Apocalypse.

Chapter Two: External Assets describes how the Laundry deals with employees who don't fit comfortably into the standard org chart.

Chapter Three: Updated Personnel has write-ups of Bob, Mo, Persephone Hazard and other characters, and shows how a Laundry character develops over the years (if they survive).

Chapter Four: The Other Place discusses magic in all its forms, emphasising the look-and-feel of sorcery.

Chapter Five: The Plateau of the Sleeper contains a Laundry briefing document on CODICIL BLACK SKULL and the Pyramid of the Sleeper. It also discusses operations on the plateau, and how to use the Pyramid or a similar Mythos entity as the trigger for a phase change in your campaigns.

Chapter Six: Monsters has statistics for new creatures, such as the Tongue-Eaters and the Dead Kings of Tibet.

Chapter Seven: The Black Chamber has an extensive write-up of the world's biggest and most mysterious occult intelligence agency, including rules for creating agents of the OPA and playing campaigns based around the Chamber.

Chapter Eight: Before the Laundry delves into the history of the organisation before the Dee-Turing theorem and the modern emphasis on computational demonology.

Chapter Nine: The Phoney War describes the period after the Sleeper stirs in the Pyramid, the ramp-up to apocalypse.

Chapters Ten and Eleven present adventures for your *Laundry Files* game. In *Think of the Children*, the player characters must infiltrate a mysterious private school, while *The Moral High Ground* sends the characters to the Plateau of the Sleeper to stop Schiller's last-ditch plan for revenge.





External Assets

External contractors? I've never heard of such a thing. Not here, not in an agency that promiscuously hires anyone and everyone who stumbles across the truth—makes them a job offer they can't refuse, inducts them under the authority of an appallingly strong geas, and keeps them busy chasing paper until it's time to retire. But we don't employ external contractors! Do we?

— The Apocalypse Codex

In a time of recession, when jobs are being slashed across the public sector, the Laundry's recruitment practices continue to be... shall we say, voracious? Here's how to get a job in the Laundry.

Step 1. See something you shouldn't have. A BLUE HADES crawling out of the ocean. A really weird fractal. A copy of the *Necronomicon* (the real one). The true face of the dead thing that puts on its ill-fitting mask of skin every day before appearing on national television.

Step 2. See enough of it that the Plumbers cannot easily wipe your memory with a forgetfulness geas.

Step 3. Prove that you have 'skills, training, talents or other assets that would in some form be useful to internal operations while still being actively detrimental to ongoing activities.' In other words, if the Laundry can find a place for you anywhere at all, they have to take you. Oh, you might be assigned to a shed in the Pennines where you'll spend the rest of your life shoveling shoggoth dung, or used as a flesh suit when certain bodiless entities come visiting, or worse, put on the Helpdesk, but they'll find a job for you. And it'll be a job for life. With pension rights.

The Laundry is hugely overstaffed, horribly underfunded and aggressively insular. As far as most people know, the Laundry doesn't have External Assets and they certainly don't show up on any commonly available organisation chart.

And that's by design.

There's a loophole up in Step Three. *You can have 'skills, training, talents or other assets that would in some form be useful to internal operations' while still being 'not actively detrimental to ongoing activities'.*

Take the delightful BASHFUL INCENDIARY, aka Persephone Hazard.

Is she 'useful to internal operations'? Yes, most definitely.

Does she play well with others? No, she does not.

She belongs both inside and out the Laundry... in External Assets.

Why External Assets?

"The Laundry, Mr. Howard. It's not noted for enabling high achievers, is it? It is a government agency. And government agencies are run as bureaucracies. There is a role for bureaucracy; it's very useful for certain tasks. In particular, it facilitates standardisation and interchangeability. Bureaucracies excel at performing tasks that must be done consistently whether the people assigned to them are brilliant performers or bumbling fools. You can't always count on having Albert Einstein in the patent office, so you design its procedures to work even if you hire Mr. Bean by mistake. Wizards and visionaries are all very good, but you cannot count on them for leg-work and form-filling. Which is why there is tail-chasing and make-work and so many committee meetings and reports to read and checklists to fill out, to keep the low achievers preoccupied."

—The Apocalypse Codex

The Laundry excels at stability. Procedures for every eventuality, forms for every imaginable situation, and everything minuted, recorded, time-stamped and archived for posterity. The bureaucracy grinds out any spark of individual initiative - and that's by design. Anyone can be pulled off the street and put to work in the Laundry, so most of the work can be done by anyone. That bureaucracy serves a purpose. External Assets fulfills another - it's a place for those with unique talents, who don't fit into neat boxes, and who aren't standardised, interchangeable parts.

Status of External Assets

External Assets don't show up on the Laundry's organisation chart. They don't carry warrant cards, they don't go to meetings, and they don't visit the office under most circumstances. (If they did, they'd get eaten – no warrant card means the guardians treat them as intruding snack food).

They have, however, sworn the very same oath of office as every other employee.¹ Their souls are bound to serve Her Majesty's Government and to safeguard the United Kingdom against the forces of... well, darkness doesn't cover it. The forces of screaming abyssal horror that cannot be encapsulated in frail words, maybe. Some Assets have additional checks on their behaviour, too.

Non-human assets may be geased or otherwise restrained in their feeding practises. Others have magical watchers placed on them, like Ramona Random's succubus. (The Laundry tends not to use lethal entities like that, but the attentions of even a non-lethal watcher can be exceedingly unpleasant).

External Assets aren't on the payroll, either. They get funding from the Laundry, but on a mission-by-mission basis. Between missions, Assets are either expected to fend for themselves, or are paid a stipend from a black budget... or they slumber dreamlessly in certain hidden vaults or lairs. Between missions, External Assets are free to do whatever they wish – within the bounds agreed-upon by the Laundry. Some have fairly ordinary human lives. Some, like Hazard, have extraordinary human lives. Assets are permitted to run businesses, travel, train, relax, or do as they please as long as they are ready for duty when called upon.

That call can come at any time, and the Asset can be sent anywhere in the world (or beyond) and be called upon to face horrors beyond imagining. Assets are generously rewarded when they succeed, but they earn every penny. And when an Asset dies, there is no acknowledgement. No pension, no benefits, no funeral, not even the clandestine sealed-record honours sometimes awarded to a deceased member of the Laundry. Just the closing of a manila folder in an office in Whitehall.

Monitoring External Assets

The Laundry monitors its External Assets. In fact, those doing the monitoring normally don't know that the sinister occultists being monitored are secretly on the books. A team of low-level field officers might be assigned to keep an eye on some fearsome warlock who leads a cult of frothing Cthulhu-worshippers, and they never suspect that the warlock also works for the Laundry. The Oath of Office and other safety precautions ensure that External Assets rarely go rogue, but it's not impossible.

It's also not unheard-of for the Laundry to decide that a particular Asset is no longer required. Some Assets are brought into the Laundry on a formal basis – a fate worse than death if you're allergic to bureaucracy. Others are imprisoned or have their accounts permanently closed. Assets are in a precarious position compared to a regular employee. Most Assets, therefore, try to stay a few steps ahead of their monitors. It's better for them if the Laundry doesn't know about their secret Swiss bank accounts, or their planned escape routes, or their associations with certain renegade sorcerers who specialise in cracking geases.



¹: Or a variation – Assets are permitted a lot more flexibility. Not all Assets know that they're contracted to the Laundry. Some believe that they're working for some other OCCINTEL group, or for a private contractor, or something stranger. False God operations are quite common in this shadowy realm.

Categories of External Asset

*"It is possible that from time to time outside interlopers who, I emphasize, do **not** work for the Laundry, and who feature nowhere in our org chart, might take an interest in people associated with Number Ten. Wild cards, loose cannons."*

The Apocalypse Codex

External Assets don't fall into neat categories. That's pretty much why they're kept as External Assets – they don't fit into nice neat boxes on an org chart. Still, they can be roughly divided into five overlapping types.

- **Wild Cards:** Individuals with all the right skills to be useful, but who can't – for one reason or another – be employed in a bureaucracy like the Laundry. A lot of Wild Cards are former (or current) criminals. The Laundry's also got a few ex-mercenaries and former cult assassins on the roster. Wild Cards tend to be very good at doing nasty wet-work or breaking and entering.
- **Talents:** Sorcerers, psychics and the like. Most Computational Demonologists can be crammed into the Laundry's org chart – they like order and structure and planning things, even if they chafe under the strictures of bureaucracy. Traditional sorcerers tend to be even weirder and less accepting of rules, hence they tend to end up in External Assets.
- **Non-Humans:** The Laundry has a few non-humans on the books officially, but most fall under the aegis of External Assets. If Ramona had not defected so publicly from the Black Chamber and needed the Laundry's direct protection, she might have ended up as an External Asset. Some of those entities on the External Assets list actually predate the Laundry – they've been around for a long time, living amongst us. The Laundry allows them to continue to masquerade as humans, on the condition that they make themselves available when needed. Other Assets in this category include former humans who've been warped or changed by occult encounters.
- **External Agents:** Breaking your Oath of Office isn't a very wise thing to do. Even if you've got the magical protection needed to survive the ordeal, it'll leave you scarred, damaged and burnt – in every meaning of the word. Those who flee one OCCINTEL group need the protection of another to survive. Sometimes, the Laundry takes defectors in officially (Ramona again), but other ex-spies must be kept at arms' length. This category of Asset covers ex-agents from other

espionage organisations who work with the Laundry without being officially acknowledged. There are even some former Laundry officers who broke their oaths, but are still used as Assets from time to time.

- **Sideways Promotions:** Finally, External Assets is also a place to put Laundry officers who have proven track records, but who no longer fit within the organisation proper. Loose cannons, troublemakers, people who aren't team players – they get kicked out of the official org chart and pushed over into External Assets. This sort of sideways movement only happens rarely, but the Laundry prefers to avoid waste. They'll always find a place for you, even if it's as a zombie.

Handling Assets

Every Asset or team of Assets has a controller assigned to them. This controller (or, in Bob's case, this controller's slightly clueless assistant) acts as the Asset's point of contact with the Laundry. The controller passes on the mission, tells the Assets what's needed,² doles out the cash, and then stands well back. The relationship between Asset and controller is like that between an informant and a handler, or a length of blue touch-paper and a lit match.

A good controller gains the Assets' trust and confidence while also making it clear that they won't interfere with how they complete their mission. The controller is also responsible for reporting back to the Laundry, which often requires a mental balancing act over a tank of metaphorical sharks.

On the one hand, the whole point of using an external, deniable Asset is so that the Laundry can deny all involvement. On the other, the Laundry wants to know everything that its Assets – and its money – are up to. Controllers have to balance what the Laundry wants to know with what the Laundry needs to know. That swings both ways – even more than regular officers, Assets must only be told what they need to know. A good controller is, in effect, an information sphincter that reacts quickly and shuts very tightly indeed.

The controller also has to have leverage over the Asset. There's the Oath of Office, of course, but relying on magical compulsions for everything isn't the best idea.³ Money works, for a lot of contractors. Others are blackmailed or threatened into helping the Laundry (*"Work for us, or we'll tell the Thirteenth Directorate where to you find you."*), or the Laundry provides some support that isn't available elsewhere (like removing geases placed on an Asset by other OCCINTEL groups). A surprising number of contractor

2. Note: That's "what's needed," not "what is to be done." The Laundry doesn't tell Assets how to do their jobs. In fact, most of the time the Laundry explicitly doesn't want to know how they get things done. Plausible deniability, blessed be thy name.

3. For one thing, layering on geases tends to have deleterious effects on the subject's sanity. Too many geases sap creativity and independent thought, and conflicting geases means psychotic breaks and/or spontaneous combustion. Geases are a brute-force solution relied on by amateurs.



work for the Laundry because they know that when the Stars Come Right, the Laundry is one of the few groups on this planet that have a snowball's chance of surviving, and they want to be on the winning team (or, at least, the Not Immediately Losing Horribly team).

Others work for the Laundry because they've got bizarre sublimated death wishes, and interpret "fighting cultists and monsters" as "fun."

Controllers have to be able to walk the line between the Laundry's regimented bureaucracy and the unpredictable, dangerous shadow realm of the unplanned black operation. They need to be respected in both spheres, and that is a rare combination of skills. Most Assets consider line Laundry staff to be incompetent button-pushers who would crack or fold under pressure; few people have the talent and bravery to impress an Asset while also being compliant or smooth enough to navigate the Laundry's labyrinthine bureaucracy.

Matching Assets

Some Assets work as teams, like BASHFUL INCENDIARY and Johnny McTavish. Others work alone, or are formed into ad hoc teams by the Laundry for a particular mission. The Laundry keeps careful track of the talents and specialties of its External Assets and deploys them as needed. So, if a mission profile calls for a trio of merry ex-Special-Forces shitkickers, a computer hacker, someone who can walk through walls and an Anointed Daughter of Yig, the Laundry can look through its roster of External Assets and assemble a group that matches those requirements.

External Assets are professionals who know not to ask too many questions. You get the call and show up at the anonymous warehouse to meet five other professionals. You

don't know them except by codename, you do what the Liaison tells you to do, and you walk away when the job's done without looking back. On rare occasions, the best match for a mission involves staff from both inside and outside of the Laundry. External Assets can issue temporary warrant cards if it needs to bring outsiders inside the org chart for a few weeks, or they can brief the Laundry Officers on the existence and nature of External Assets if they've got the clearance to handle it.

Budgeting

The Department of Externalities has a pretty staggering budget in terms of cash on hand, but what really fries the brains of those newly transferred to the department is how little oversight there is on using this cash. Elsewhere in the Laundry, you've got to fill out a dozen forms and get the approval of six different managers just to buy a replacement pen for the one you emptied filling out another dozen forms for your last biro. In External Assets, they hand you suitcases full of unmarked non-sequential bills – or would you prefer it in gold?

In fact, there's plenty of oversight, but it stops at the controller. Once the money's handed over to the External Asset, it's out of the Laundry's control. Common practice dictates that a portion of a mission budget gets spent on necessary equipment and preparations while the rest gets spent on expenses and payments to the contractors. As long as the contractor delivers, the Laundry turns a blind eye to how the cash gets spent, and any reasonable expenses are paid without question.

External Assets aren't salaried employees. They only get paid after a mission. The Laundry prefers to keep them hungry.

Liaison

Laundry regulations state that a Liaison Officer (who may or may not be the controller for that Asset, but must have that controller's written approval) must monitor, supervise, oversee and/or accompany an Asset or Asset Team when on a mission. In practise, this can mean anything from:

- The Liaison Officer hands the Assets a mission and a bag of guns, then takes the battery out of his phone and sits on his hands for 48 hours.
- The Liaison Officer tags along with the Assets, voicing the Laundry's official concerns and supplying strategic advice and support.

Usually, the Liaison Officer checks in on the Assets every day or two via some form of secure communications, such as secure phone calls, oneiromantic visions, or destiny entanglement. The relationship between a Liaison Officer and an Asset is usually much more fraught than that between a controller and an Asset. The controller can keep out of the Asset's way; a Liaison Officer may not have that luxury.

The Liaison Officer reports to the controller. Any concerns or doubts that the Liaison Officer has about the Asset must go through the controller. This arrangement ensures that a controller can protect his Assets from inexperienced junior officers who don't understand that sometimes you have to follow procedure, sometimes you have to ignore procedure and sometimes you've got to pull the pin out of a grenade and hurl yourself backwards out the window of a 16th floor hotel room and then summon a byakhee on the way down in the full view of a hundred witnesses.

What External Assets Do

External Assets do what the Laundry's regular officers can't – or shouldn't. Think of them as super-spies or an occult Dirty Dozen...

Consultation

Or as consultants. External Assets are always very, *very* good at whatever they do. They're not only specialists; they're so talented that the Laundry bends over to keep them. External Assets are tapped as sources of information or training for conventional Laundry officers. Obviously, the Laundry officers involved are not always informed of the Asset's status.

The Laundry tries to avoid mixing External Assets and regular line staff. It tends to cause problems.

Standard Missions

A lot of External Asset missions are the same sort of field op undertaken by regular Laundry staff. Investigate that sinister corporation. Find out who tried to open a Gate in Wolverhampton. Exorcise that haunting. Catch ye shoggothe. That sort of thing. The only difference is cost – External Assets cost more to hire, but are expected to provide their own equipment.

In general, the Department of Externalities tries to block any attempts to foist regular operations onto External Assets. These Assets are too valuable to be wasted on tasks that could be accomplished by a card-carrying officer, but sometimes the pallid hand of Financial Control reaches out and forces Externalities to comply and help placate the dread god who awaits at the end of the financial quarter.

Illegal Missions

The real meat of External Asset missions, though, are the ones the Laundry cannot legally undertake. Persephone Hazard, for example, was hired to spy on a religious group that had direct contact with the Prime Minister. For the Laundry to have investigated the Golden Promise Ministry directly would have broken the ban on spying on Downing Street. Therefore, it used External Assets to do so.

Illegal missions skirt the letter of the law, but usually try to observe its spirit. Using External Assets in the Golden Promise case also protected the Laundry. Imagine if the

Rogue Assets

For an External Asset to do his job and accomplish what a regular officer could not, he has to be given leeway to move. He has to be trusted, even when he acts strangely, or drops out of contact, or suddenly flies to Singapore. The whole point of an External Asset is that he can do the things that the Laundry cannot do directly.

That means, though, that it's very hard to tell the difference between an External Asset that's gone silent and deep, and one that's gone rogue. That leeway, that freedom of action means that an Asset could go undercover to infiltrate a doomsday cult, but it also means he could have genuinely switched sides and gone cultist. When a questionable situation like that arises, it's up to the controller and the Liaison Officer to decide what action to take. Do they keep faith

with the Asset, and assume that what looks like rogue behaviour is actually a necessary deception? Or do they decide to terminate the operation... and the Asset?

It's not commonly discussed, but every Asset on the books in Externalities has an associated Kill Protocol. The nature of this protocol varies depending on the asset. It might be a piece of information that discredits the Asset and ruins them for any other OCCINTEL group. It might be a lethal clause in a geas, or a sympathetic-magic link that can be used as the channel for a death spell ("We've got your heart in a jar, and if you cross us, we'll crush it."). For other Assets, it may be a literal Kill Protocol – the Laundry knows how to destroy the Asset, and will dispatch a team to do so when necessary.

Golden Promise Ministry turned out to be a perfectly innocent bunch of clueless Jesus freaks, but in the course of that investigation, the Laundry discovered that the Prime Minister liked to play “sex up the dossier” with a young male secretary. That could lead to an absolutely unforgivable breach of trust between the intelligence services and the government, and could bring down the whole Laundry along with the Prime Minister of the day.

‘Illegal’ doesn’t mean ‘anything goes’ – it just means that certain inconvenient laws get circumvented. Assets are still expected to behave with decorum. Murder, theft, breaking and entering and so forth, are still usually verboten. (That said – if the Laundry were to require the death of a foreign national, or God forbid a British subject, then an External Asset would doubtless be used.)

External Assets are especially useful when dealing with situations overseas. While the Laundry can get officers into North Korea, or Antarctica, or Tibet, or Washington, the risk of a diplomatic incident means it often makes more sense to send someone who isn’t an official agent of the British Government. The Laundry can hardly be held responsible for the actions of a few tourists, after all.

Deniable Missions

Deniable usually goes hand-in-latex-glove with illegal. Every professional spy knows that the day may come when the cock crows three times and their superiors deny all knowledge of them. *“If you get caught”, they say, “we’ll deny all knowledge.”*

That sort of plausible denial is harder to pull off in the shadowy realm of the occult, where loyalty geases and Oaths of Office hold real power. The Laundry cannot just

deny all knowledge of AGENT CANDID if she’s caught fiddling overseas – she’s got so many spells on her to ensure her loyalty that it’s literally unthinkable for her to go rogue.⁴ If a situation might involve having to abandon an agent and claim that the Laundry knows nothing of her mission, then it’s best to use an agent who can actually act without the Laundry’s knowledge. External Assets aren’t always marked as being part of the Laundry; they just don’t have the same patina on their souls.

Problematic Missions

Problematic sounds much better than ‘suicide,’ after all.

When CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN comes, the Laundry will expand and unfold, taking on more and more power as it effectively becomes an emergency government for the duration of the crisis. All those pointless bureaucrats and overstaffed departments will suddenly become vital to the survival of our society in a recognisable form. Until then, the Laundry must protect itself and its internal staff.

That means that when a mission is expected to end with the deaths of most or all of those assigned to it, the Laundry turns to External Assets. They’re not part of the machine, and the machine – inefficient, slow and blind as it is – can carry on without them. Problematic missions are not undertaken lightly, but when they are necessary, the Laundry does not shirk from sending men and women and things to their deaths.

Licence to Thwart

Some highly trusted External Assets don’t have a defined mission. They’re allowed to act on their own initiative. These Assets are deep in the occult underground. They



4. At least, not without a lot of prep before and/or a hell of a lot of psychic trauma after.

hear of cult activity and supernatural events long before the Laundry proper picks up those rumours, and can respond more quickly because they don't have to go through multiple committee meetings and signoffs with Operational Oversight. These Assets have a License to Thwart as they see fit.

Usually, these Assets are given a particular zone (*"This city is yours — make sure nothing eats it."*) or field of expertise (*"Keep the ghouls quiet."*) and have *carte blanche* to operate there. The Laundry knows that the Asset is the best expert available, and will trust his judgement. As long as the Asset gets results without causing too many problems for the rest of the Laundry, Externalities is willing to tolerate eccentric behaviour or non-standard methods.

Playing an External Assets Campaign

An External Assets game gets away from the form-filling, the paperwork and the office-from-Hell jokes of a standard *Laundry Files* game and focusses more on independent agents. The characters have a lot more freedom of action and a lot less support from Head Office. They don't need to worry about budgets, or political repercussions, or being chewed out for breaking the law in the course of a mission. Really, they're much more like a traditional roleplaying team of plucky investigators or spell-throwing adventurers.

External Assets games may suit some groups of players better than a conventional *Laundry Files* setup. If your players chafe at being restricted in what they can do, and don't enjoy the office humour jokes, then they may have more fun in the looser, more action-heavy realm of an External Assets campaign.

The downside is that you lose a lot of what makes the *Laundry Files* unique and not just another "hunt the gribbly

monsters in the alleys of the modern world" game; try upping the tradecraft and the Mythos horror elements to compensate.

Creating External Assets

In a shocking development, most players in an External Assets campaign play External Assets. If you've got access to the *Laundry Agent's Handbook*, you can use the rules in that to create characters from outside the Laundry like defectors or independent occultists as well as Deep One hybrids or ghosts. *License to Summon* is also a useful resource for creating traditional wizards and psychics.

Add another 150 skill points divided as you wish among all skills, representing your External Asset's greater experience and toughness.

If you don't have access to those fine volumes, then create a character using the standard character creation rules from the *Laundry Files* rulebook, but instead of choosing Assignment and Training during Step 8, you can instead allocate 250 skill points among your skills as you wish. You can bring skills above 75% during this step. Remember to record your character's Wealth Level — it's more important when you don't draw a regular salary from the Laundry.

Madness Threshold

External Assets get the same enhanced Madness Threshold as standard Laundry officers (that is, they risk temporary insanity when they lose more Sanity than their POW score).

Status

External Assets have a Status score, but don't use it to purchase equipment — that's handled either by the Liaison Officer or through the black market (see the sidebar). An Asset's Status measures the Laundry's estimation of their reliability. A high

Special Powers

License to Summon gives rules for psychic talents and other weird powers, as well as expanded rules for traditional sorcery and mental magic, and we strongly recommend using it for an External Assets game. Many Assets have rare or unique talents beyond a knack for computational demonology. That said, if you want to wing it without *License to Summon*, the Basic Roleplaying Rules are easy to hack.

A new power (either a psychic talent, a natural ability like a Medusa's gaze or a magical gift) can be modelled as a skill that starts at a percentage equal to the character's POW score, and costs either SAN or inflicts temporary POW damage when used. Taking a new power like this costs 10 skill points, and a character should have no more than two or three such powers at most.

For example, Johnny McTavish's "witch-finders' eyes" is a skill that starts equal to his POW (but can be increased through skill points or experience). Switching on his eyes costs him 0/1d4 SAN each time, but lets him see the supernatural aspects of his surroundings, as though using a Tillinghast Resonator.

EXTERNAL ASSETS

Status means the Laundry considers the External Asset to be a valuable and trustworthy agent, while a low Status implies the agent is unreliable, sloppy or even suspect.

Status may be increased by completing missions successfully and quietly.

Status decreases when a mission is botched or when an External Asset creates problems for the Laundry. If Status hits 0%, then the Laundry takes action against the Asset. This could take the form of censure (a drop in pay), the use of a geas or other magical compulsion, or even termination.

External Assets & Equipment

There are three ways for an External Asset to obtain equipment - by requisitioning it from the Laundry, by taking it as starting gear, or by purchasing it.

Requisitions:

Equipment requisitions are handled by the team's Liaison Officer using the standard rules (see Chapter 11 of the *Laundry Files Rulebook*). The Liaison Officer controls the whole Budget for the operation, and always uses his or her own Status when making rolls, even when trying to draw equipment for another player character.

Starting Gear

An External Asset starts with some equipment depending on his Wealth Level.

Destitute: Pretty much nothing except what he can scavenge.

Poor: Three *Easy* items, one *Average* item. You can buy new *Easy* items without penalty.

Average: Any *Easy* items, three *Average* items.

Affluent: Any *Easy* items, five *Average* items, one *Difficult* item. You can buy new *Average* items without penalty.

Wealthy: Any *Easy* or *Average* items, three *Difficult* items.

Purchasing Items

Further equipment can be obtained in the course of the game. To find the right item, the character must make a successful roll of a suitable skill, like Knowledge (Occult) to find a dealer in magic wares, or Knowledge (Espionage) to find illegal weapons. To obtain the item, the character must then make a *Bargain* test, modified as follows.

Wealth	Easy Item	Average Item	Difficult Item
Destitute	½ Bargain	N/A	N/A
Poor	Bargain	½ Bargain	N/A
Average	Bargain x2	Bargain	½ Bargain
Affluent	Automatic	Bargain x2	Bargain
Wealthy	Automatic	Automatic	Bargain x2

For example, Penelope Hazard and Barry the Ghoul both want to purchase Class One wares on the black market. First, they both have to find a source of such items by making Knowledge (Occult) rolls. Both are successful, so both of them now get to Bargain for the item. The cost of a Class One ward is negligible for Penelope, so she gets it automatically. Barry, though, has to roll ½ his Bargain skill to scrape together enough gold fillings and stolen grave goods to buy the ward.

What if they needed Class Three wares? A Class Three ward is a *Difficult* item to requisition in the Laundry, and that rarity is reflected on the street. Barry doesn't have the cash to pay for one (Difficult items are N/A for Destitute ghouls like Barry). Ms. Hazard is Wealthy, but even she has to bargain for a potent ward like that one.

Creating a Liaison Officer

If a player wishes, he can play the External Asset team's Liaison Officer. There's only one Liaison Officer per team, so only one player character can take this role.

Create a Liaison Officer using the standard *Laundry Files* rules. The Department of Externalities Assignment and Training bonuses are +10% to Knowledge (Espionage), Knowledge (Law), Knowledge (Politics), Status and one of Sorcery, Science (Thaumaturgy) or Computer Use (Magic).

Most Liaison Officers are veterans. If you've got the *Agent's Handbook*, then use the rules for veteran Laundry agents on page 90. If you don't, then you can simulate those effects by reducing your character's SAN by 5% for every five years spent in the Laundry. Each five-year stint gives an extra 75 skill points divided among your skills as you wish.

Controllers

The team's controller is the equivalent of their manager in a conventional *Laundry* game – the great and terrible all-knowing NPC who sends them off on missions. Unlike a manager, though, whose power comes solely from the solid black line on the org chart, a controller must take a more avuncular, hands-off approach to handling the team. Controllers usually have some degree of a personal relationship with every member of an External Assets team.

External Missions

Illegal, excessively perilous, nigh-impossible – pick two out of three, or have them all on a bad day. External missions are nastier than the average Laundry operation. The tables below have all the horrible things that you could possibly want to throw at your External Assets team. They can also be used to generate missions for regular Laundry employees as humanity hurtles towards CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN (see page 82).

The Mission

What does the Laundry need done?

1. Eliminate, discredit or render a target.
2. Capture and recruit a potential asset.
3. Steal a relic, grimoire or other artefact.
4. Investigate rival occult agency.
5. Investigate a powerful cult or group.
6. Rescue a Laundry officer or British citizen.

7. Explore a recently uncovered Gate, underground structure or ruin.
8. Break into a highly secure area to complete or thwart a ritual.
9. Infiltrate a powerful cult or group.
10. Infiltrate a rival occult agency.
11. Destroy a powerful cult.
12. Capture or banish a non-human entity.
13. Investigate the death of a Laundry officer or another Asset.
14. Clean up someone else's mess.
15. Investigate someone powerful, politically connected, or dangerous.
16. Investigate a murder, disaster or other suspicious incident.
17. Do something illegal, dangerous and deniable to fulfill the Laundry's occult obligations.
18. Go undercover in a perilous situation.
19. Run a false flag operation, using another group as cover.
20. Roll again twice and combine the two mission profiles.

Location

Where does the mission take place?

1. Within the Laundry.
2. Major metropolitan area – London, New York, Beijing.
3. Major UK city.
4. Smaller UK city.
5. Smaller foreign city or town.
6. Rural UK.
7. Rural section of a foreign country.
8. At sea or near the coast.
9. Historical landmark – the Coliseum, Mad King Ludwig's Castle, Burj Khalifa.
10. Isolated or uninhabited region - getting there isn't easy.
11. Global flashpoint - somewhere that's in the middle of war, disaster or other crisis.
12. Extremely isolated region – island in the middle of nowhere, top of a mountain, etc.
13. Extremely dangerous region – deep desert, jungle, polar ice cap, etc.
14. Ruin or underground.
15. Mobile location (ship, aircraft).
16. Extremely secure location (military base, Black Chamber vault, high-security prison, etc.).
17. Dreamlands/Other Place.
18. Offworld.
19. Warped, tainted or parallel version of another location (roll again for base reality).
20. Globetrotting operation - roll again twice.

The Twist

What makes this one really tricky?

1. Predictive Branch says that there's a high probability of an apocalypse this afternoon.
2. Fly off to some exotic overseas location where people want to kill you.
3. There's a time limit, and the clock is ticking...
4. The Laundry can't help directly – the mission involves skirting the edges of the law.
5. Someone who looks human isn't.
6. The enemy is forewarned about the characters' involvement.
7. That's a lot of firepower.
8. That's an awful lot of tentacles.
9. Someone's betrayed – or is about to betray – the characters.
10. At least one other faction has taken an interest in the case.
11. One of the characters is somehow personally entangled in the mess.
12. It's a traaaaaaap!
13. The real situation is nothing like the mission briefing.
14. One of the characters gets infected/wounded/possessed and isn't operating at full effectiveness.
15. It's a set-up – not necessarily a trap, but someone's using the characters to do the dirty work.
16. When they said "sleeping god," they were only half right.
17. Multiple civilians are in the area – their safety is paramount.
18. There's a tricky diplomatic aspect to this mission – please don't start World War III.

19. This mission doesn't exist and never happened. No evidence, no witnesses.
20. Roll again twice.

Hostiles

Who are the opposition? External Assets play for higher stakes – they're less likely to be sent after clueless computer geeks or wannabe occultists. They're up against ancient cults and godlike entities.

1. Clueless cult.
2. Terrorists or another mundane threat.
3. Private organisation or group.
4. Corporation.
5. Dangerous, but ultimately human cult.
6. Mythos Cult.
7. Mythos Cult.
8. Extremely powerful Mythos cult (Black Brotherhood etc.).
9. Malignant and powerful sorcerer.
10. BLUE HADES.
11. DEEP SEVEN.
12. Another autonome species (Ghouls, Shoggoths, Mi-Go etc.).
13. Lesser (level 4) entity.
14. Greater (level 5) entity.
15. Rival European OCCINTEL group.
16. Black Chamber.
17. Thirteenth Directorate.
18. Nameless Bureau.
19. Rogue state.
20. Unknown threat.





Updated Personnel

"This is not a game, Mr. Howard. Your new pay grade comes with strings attached; I am not referring to the management training. Further advancement as an officer within this service will put you in situations where you will be responsible for whether other people live or die—this is inevitable as we move closer to CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. Worse: it is likely that you will encounter situations where you must choose who to save and who to cast adrift, answerable only to your oath of service and your conscience."

— *The Apocalypse Codex*

Time marches on, and entropy gets us all in the end. Or we may wish it did — those who live to see the horrors to come will envy the dead.¹ The personnel files in the *Laundry Files* rulebook are current to the start of *The Fuller Memorandum*. In this chapter, we'll bring them up to date with *The Apocalypse Codex*.



PERSONNEL RECORD

NAME: Howard, Robert

AGE: 35

POSITION: SSO4(L), ~~Darkside Hacker~~ Externalities Asset Liaison

SUMMARY:

STR 11 **CON** 11 **SIZ** 13 **INT** 16 **POW** 17
DEX 9 **CHA** 12 **EDU** 18 **SAN** 35 **HP** 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Equipment: Bob carries a Class III ward and his Necronomiphone everywhere he goes. He's cleared to use all manner of exotic weapons, but he's a demon with a Basilisk Gun.

Skills: Appraise 35%, Astral Projection 25%, Bargain 25%, Bureaucracy 50%, Computer Use (Hacking) 65%, Computer Use (Magic) 70%, Computer Use (Programming) 60%, Computer Use (Repair) 40%, Cthulhu Mythos 55%, Empathy 20%, Disguise 25%, Firearms (Esoteric) 70%, Firearms (Pistols) 45%, Insight 45%, Knowledge (Occult) 65%, Knowledge (Law) 20%, Knowledge (Espionage) 40%, Listen 45%, Repair (Electronics) 50%, Research 65%, Sense 30%, Soul Eating 17%, Spot 40%, Science (Mathematics) 60%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 65%, Sorcery 65%, Stealth 30%, Status 60%.



NOTES, MISCELLANY, ETC:

Things are getting better; it's been ten months and I only wake up screaming about once a week now. The physiotherapy is working and my right arm has regained eighty percent of its strength. The surviving members of the Wandsworth Cell of the Brotherhood of the Black Pharaoh have been arrested and detained indefinitely at Her Majesty's Pleasure, in accordance with the secret supplementary regulations in Appendix Six of the Terrorism Act (2003); and every day, in every way, my life is getting better and better.

(The happy pills help, too.)

— *The Apocalypse Codex*

They finally got him.

Not the cultists, or the Black Chamber, or the eldritch horrors.

No, he's one of them now. *Management*.

When we last looked in on Bob, just before the events of *THE JENNIFER MORGUE*, things were going pretty well for him. He and Mo were married (following a last-ditch attempt to shake off the ghost of Ian Fleming), his career as a field officer was going well, and he was still running bits of the Laundry's IT department when not playing fetch for Angleton. He even had a good working relationship with his bosses.

1. And we'll be able to tell them so in person, when they come hammering at our doors looking for braaaaains.

HOWARD, Robert: PERSONNEL RECORD (Cont.)

Things have changed. They changed in the crypts of London's Necropolis, Brookwood cemetery, when the Black Brotherhood tried to seize control of the entity known as TEAPOT, aka the Eater of Souls. That night, Bob died – for a few minutes, anyway – and was resurrected. The Black Brotherhood attempted to use the Fuller Memorandum to bind the Eater of Souls, but succeeded only in binding Bob to himself. Still, Bob and Angleton are now entwined on some level. As he puts it, he's the apprentice to the Eater of Souls, and the experience left him with some abilities that he's not comfortable with.

Both he and Mo try to make their marriage work, but it's not easy when she's the Laundry's lead violinist and he's the chosen one of the departmental monster. That level of strain makes things tricky, and that's before you add foreknowledge of the impending apocalypse into the mix. They try to stay sane. They mostly succeed.

As of *THE APOCALYPSE CODEX*, Bob's management. He now works for the Department of Externalities, under Gideon Lockhart. The Laundry's girding its loins, and that's not much fun for this particular loin.

Bobs Wound: The Brotherhood of the Black Pharaoh – well, two low-ranking cannibal goons called Julian and Jonty – snacked a chunk of Bob's arm. He's still got problems using his left hand for anything. In game

terms, if Bob has to use his left arm for anything, the Difficulty increases by one step (*Easy* becomes *Average*, *Average* becomes *Difficult* and so on).

Eater of Souls: Possibly as a result of the botched binding ritual, or possibly because the stress and pain opened his Third Eye, Bob's picked up some interesting quirks. He's got *Astral Projection*, *Empathy* and *Soul Eating*.

- **Astral Projection:** Bob can open his inner eye and step out of his body to see the Other Place. Bob's still tethered to his body, so he can't stray far (although he sometimes finds himself on the Plateau of the Sleeper – he's connected to the Wall of Pain now). Using this power costs Bob 1/1d4 SAN.
- **Empathy:** He can read emotional states. He uses a traditional sorcery spell (via a quick-cast macro) to boost his skill when he has to read someone else's mind. It costs only 0/1 SAN on most targets; insane or inhuman minds can bleed through into Bob.
- **Soul Eating:** There's an unwelcome fringe benefit to being associated with the *preta manger*, the hungry spirit. Bob can snack on the souls of others. Doing so requires a successful POW vs. POW contest on Bob's part. If he wins, the target dies. So far, Bob's only used this power on humans, and he's always won the contest. It costs him 1/1d10 SAN every time that he uses it.



PERSONNEL RECORD

NAME: Agent CANDID (Dominique O'Brien) AGE: 36

POSITION: Epistemological Warfare Specialist

SUMMARY:

STR 12 CON 14 SIZ 12 INT 17 POW 18
DEX 14 CHA 14 EDU 19 SAN 30 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0

Artefacts: The Violin, Personal Ward III

Skills: Appraise 40%, Climb 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 45%, Disguise 65%, Dodge 50%, Etiquette 55%, Fast Talk 40%, Firearm (Pistol) 65%, Firearm (Exotic) 50%, Hide 60%, Insight 60%, Knowledge (Occult) 65%, Knowledge (Philosophy) 80%, Perform (Violin) 90%, Research 70%, Science (Mathematics) 75%, Sorcery 35%, Spot 65%, Status 70%, Stealth 65%, Strategy 60%, Teach 65%.

NOTES, MISCELLANY, ETC:

Like me, my wife works for the Laundry; unlike me, she keeps one foot in the outside world, holding down a part-time lectureship in Philosophy of Mathematics at King's College. (Maintaining that much contact with everyday life is central to keeping Agent CANDID sane—I've seen what the other half of her job does to her, and it's heart breaking.)

— *The Apocalypse Codex*

Since the events in Brookwood Cemetery, Mo's aggressively pushed for a measure of normality in her home life, even as her professional life involves less

abstract philosophy and more nightmarish cult rituals. She's got friends outside the Laundry, she and Bob have a relatively stable marriage, and she tries to keep herself sane and grounded.

She needs it. She's become one of the Laundry's key assets, with enough influence to push back against Angleton if she has to. Unlike Bob, who's getting shunted towards a management role, CANDID will be on the front-line when the shooting starts.





PERSONNEL RECORD

NAME: Lockhart, Gideon

AGE: mid-fifties (or so it appears)

POSITION: SSO8(L), Department of Externalities

SUMMARY:

STR 15 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 16 POW 17

DEX 12 CHA 13 EDU 20 SAN 40 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Skills: Appraise 60%, Art 50%, Bureaucracy 70%, Command 65%, Computer Use (Magic) 40%, Cthulhu Mythos 45%, Etiquette 70%, Insight 75%, Knowledge (Espionage) 85%, Knowledge (Politics) 70%, Persuade 70%, Status 70%, Strategy 80%.

NOTES, MISCELLANY, ETC:

An observer, familiar with the internal pecking order of the Laundry, might at this point be justifiably taken aback. Here is Gerald Lockhart, SSO8(L), a middling senior officer in the backwater that is External Assets—a department most people (who are aware of it) think spends its time keeping track of loaned laptops—grilling DSS Angleton, a Detached Special Secretary (or, as scuttlebutt would have it, a Deeply Scary Sorcerer), one of the famous old monsters of the Operations Directorate: a man so wrapped in secrecy that his shadow doesn't have a high enough security clearance to stick to his heels. But a typical observer wouldn't understand the nature of External Assets. Or, indeed, be aware of Gerald Lockhart's real job.

— The Apocalypse Codex

Gideon Lockhart runs the Laundry's external assets division. He's one of the big players outside of Mahogany Row itself – his well-appointed corner office speaks volumes about his standing and pull within the Laundry. He's on first-name terms with Angleton and other powers. Mr. Lockhart is very sharp and very, *very* dangerous – and unless you're cleared, you won't even know he exists.

Oh, there are traces. Dig into the stacks, and his name shows up unredacted in a few old mission reports. He was an exemplary field officer earlier in his career, and won the respect of Mahogany Row by combining confidence, tactical *nous* and charm with an undeniable ability to get things done. He may even be still mostly human, all things considered.

Lockhart does not suffer fools lightly. Unlike Angleton, who is at least tangentially attached on the Laundry's standard-issue org chart thanks to his role in GPU and Arcana Analysis, Lockhart's role insulates him from the 'B team,' the gibbering horde of bureaucrats and marginally competent employees who make up the bulk of the Laundry's staff. He's used to working with the best, which means he expects excellence (and, when necessary, sacrifice) from both his underlings and his assets.

Physically, he looks to be in his mid-fifties. Fit and dapper, with a grey moustache and a military bearing, the sort who's probably got a knife strapped to his leg behind his Savile Row suit.

PERSONNEL RECORD

NAME: BASHFUL INCENDIARY (Persephone Hazard) AGE: 31
POSITION: Private Consultant

SUMMARY:

STR 14 CON 16 SIZ 10 INT 18 POW 20
DEX 17 CHA 16 EDU 20 SAN 40 HP 14

Damage Bonus: -

Artefacts: At a bare minimum, she packs a Class III Ward and her personal Athame ritual dagger. It's disguised as a silver crucifix, and gives a +2 bonus to the POW of any ritual magic spell she casts (and can injure creatures that are immune to conventional weapons).

She also owns a set of ritual robes originally designed for Aleister Crowley. The robes themselves are kept in a climate-controlled and warded case in London, but by combining her Astral Projection and Eidetic Memory skills, she can visualize herself wearing the robes in the Other Place and gain their benefit - a +10% boost to her Sorcery skill. She's also got a large collection of... souvenirs, from the Network days.

Skills: Appraise 60%, Astral Projection 60%, Athletics 70%, Climb 65%, Command 45%, Computer Use (Magic) 65%, Cthulhu Mythos 40%, Disguise 60%, Drive 65%, Eidetic Memory 60%, Fast Talk 50%, Fine Manipulation 65%, Gaming 40%, Hide 60%, Insight 50%, Knowledge (Accounting) 45%, Knowledge (Espionage) 65%, Intuition 70%, Language (Italian) 100%, Language (English) 50%, Language (Enochian) 55%, Listen 50%, Persuade 55%, Research 55%, Science (Thaumaturgy) 70%, Sense 60%, Sleight of Hand 65%, Sorcery 80%, Spot 60%, Stealth 70%, Strategy 50%, Swim 50%, Track 40%.



NOTES, MISCELLANY, ETC:

The witch wears an understated gray wool dress with black tights and kitten heels; with her hair pulled tightly back and minimal makeup, she exudes a gamine charm. She moves fluidly, as if only loosely bound by gravity. Lockhart thinks she carries herself like a dancer; but he notices the hardened skin on the backs of her hands—definitely obscured by a smudge of concealer across her knuckles—and the loose sleeves that conceal her shoulders and upper arms. The Nutcracker ballet, for Karate and Krav Maga, perhaps.

— *The Apocalypse Codex*

The BASHFUL INCENDIARY dossier contains everything that the Laundry officially knows about young Ms. Hazard. She first crossed their radar when she was eight years old; she showed up at a refugee camp in Bosnia. She was mute, and no trace was ever found of her family or prior history. An incident at the camp showed a precocious occult talent - or something watching over her. Two would-be child rapists got their souls eaten by something. She went from the camp to the streets of Italy, living hand to mouth as a thief and beggar. Then, two years later, a wealthy Italian couple with their own suspicious occult history adopted her.

Placed in a good school, Persephone thrived. It's also likely that her parents arranged for the best tuition in occult matters, because by the time they were murdered

six years later, she was ready to take revenge. The killers - possibly agents of the Red Skull Cult - were later found dead in a lake, showing clear signs of paranormal intervention.

With her parents' money and resources, Persephone set up the Hazard Network, a highly successful private occult intelligence consultancy. She recruited several other equally-talented agents, and spent the next five years building a stellar reputation as a witch, troubleshooter and problem-solver. She dissolved the Hazard Network seven years ago, paid off her staff, and retired to the UK - a twenty-four-year-old millionaire with an inherited noble title, a sizeable property portfolio, and an eclectic education. As far as the world is concerned, she's a socialite who takes an interest in a few charities and is a patroness of certain *avant-garde* artists.

As far as the Laundry's concerned, she's BASHFUL INCENDIARY - one of their best External Assets.

She's a talented ritual practitioner, but also has a knack for computational demonology, tradecraft, infiltration, seduction, business affairs, languages... in short, she's a terrifyingly smart polymath with the looks of a model (even unaugmented by a glamour), the body of a swimmer, and the soul of something very, very old and powerful.

BASHFUL INCENDIARY (Persephone Hazard): PERSONNEL RECORD (Cont.)

Persephone's Organisation: While the Hazard Network is no longer extant, Persephone still has a wide range of contacts and assets across the world. In England, she has a townhouse that contains a well-equipped occult laboratory and armoury, as well as a private training ground. She's also got a number of safehouses, bank accounts and backup identities in key locations across the globe, but England – and the Laundry – is where she intends to ride out CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN.

Persephone's Gifts: Persephone's a trained psychic – she can Astrally Project out of her body, at the cost of 1/1d4 SAN. Her gift of Intuition gives her an inhuman level ability to make lucky guesses, while her Eidetic Memory lets her perfectly recall what she has read. She's also adept at using these skills to augment her traditional ritual magic. She also knows a word of power that allows her to slow down time, allowing her to reroll any physical skill check. Speaking this word of power costs her a permanent point of CON.



PERSONNEL RECORD

NAME: PRINCE, Johnny (Johnny McTavish) AGE: 38
POSITION: Private Consultant

SUMMARY:

STR 17 CON 18 SIZ 16 INT 14 POW 19
DEX 14 OHA 11 EDU 16 SAN 40 HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1d6

Artefacts: In addition to a Ward, Johnny carries a knife given to him by the Duchess. This throwing dagger hits unerringly (it cannot be dodged), and inflicts an extra 1d6 damage per round until removed as it feeds on the blood of the victim. The blade can injure creatures normally immune to weapons. During the events of *The Apocalypse Codex*, he also uses a Shunt Talisman.

Skills: Athletics 75%, Brawl 90%, Climb 70%, Computer Use (Magic) 45%, Command 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 40%, Demolitions 80%, First Aid 70%, Grapple 75%, Hide 75%, Jump 80%, Navigate 65%, Pilot (Small Plane) 70%, Sorcery 50%, Spot 80%, Stealth 75%, Track 75, Throw 80%.



NOTES. MISCELLANY, ETC:

McTavish is easy to pigeonhole, hence doubly dangerous: in jeans and a hooded top he looks like a brickie, except I know what the side-long flat stare and the ridges on the sides of his hands mean. He reminds me of Scary Spice, one of Alan Barnes's little helpers—specialty: ferreting down rabbit holes full of blood-drenched cultists and undead horrors. The resemblance isn't perfect, but I've met NCOs in special forces before and he's got that smell. Although there is a slight something else about him as well: he punches above the weight.

– *The Apocalypse Codex*

Bob got a pretty good read on JOHNNY PRINCE in their first meeting – Johnny is indeed ex-special forces, having served his time with the French Foreign Legion's parachute regiment. The Hazard Network recruited him out of the army, and he stayed with Persephone as her bodyguard and lieutenant after she retired to England. He calls her 'Duchess' and he is utterly loyal to her. They work well together. Hell, she's raised him from the dead several times, and that's a real mark of friendship. You have to really trust someone to believe that they'll bring the real you back, and not Ye Liveliest Awfulness. There are fates much worse than death.

And how did Johnny end up in the French Foreign Legion? Well, his family comes from Scotland. Specifically, the isolated parts of the west coast, where certain small kirks still hold congress with Those From Below. MacTavish doesn't have the Innsmouth Look, but he's definitely touched with strangeness. He dreams of a pyramid on a dead world, and he knows that the thing that sleeps in that pyramid is in his blood and bones.

Witchfinder's Eyes: Johnny's got Second Sight. When he concentrates and uses this skill, he can see his surroundings as though looking through a Tillinghast Resonator. It costs him 1/1d4 SAN, plus the additional cost for anything he sees.



PERSONNEL RECORD

NAME: Panin, Nikolai

AGE: mid-40s

POSITION: Thirteenth Directorate

SUMMARY:

STR 15	CON 12	SIZ 15	INT 16	POW 17
DEX 10	CHA 14	EDU 21	SAN 30	HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Artefacts: Panin carries a *matrioshka* ward. One of the Directorate's little toys, this ward consists of several nested dolls, each one carrying the soul of... well, best not to say. Unlike a normal ward, which burns out if it's hit by a spell it can't handle, matrioshka wards degrade gracefully. An average matrioshka ward only loses a level of protection after the user fails *three* Luck rolls instead of one.

Skills: Bargain 75%, Bureaucracy 60%, Command 70%, Computer Use (Magic) 65%, Cthulhu Mythos 40%, Disguise 55%, Etiquette 50%, Fast Talk 75%, Grapple 50%, Insight 80%, Knowledge (Espionage) 90%, Knowledge (Occult) 80%, Persuade 75%, Research 65%, Sorcery 65%, Status 80%, Strategy 90%.



NOTES, MISCELLANY, ETC:

Panin, whoever he is, is a player: his definition of honourable might not encompass allowing me to escape with my life, but he's unlikely to start something in the middle of a pub with an after-work drinks crowd.

— The Fuller Memorandum

The name's patently false – "Nikolai Panin" was the KGB spymaster in Anthony Price's cold-war spy novels. The face is probably false too, or else Nikolai's older than he looks. He remembers the Cold War very well indeed, and knows the Laundry well enough to have crossed paths with Angleton on more than one occasion.

Panin uses a cover role within the Russian government – usually something in the diplomatic service – to hop around Europe. He's the Directorate's point man and troubleshooter for all sorts of problematic situations, backed up by some experienced headerackers from Spetsgruppa V. He's a Chess player, always two or three moves ahead of the opposition, and he never runs an operation with just a single goal. He sets things up so that the Directorate always comes out ahead on some level.

During the events of *The Fuller Memorandum*, Panin wasn't able to get hold of the titular document (the binding rite for the Eater of Souls), but he did come away with the instructions for making a copy of an Erich Zann violin, and ensured the destruction of CLUB ZERO (the Black Brotherhood cell).

While Panin is willing to play cults and rival OCCINTEL groups off against each other, he's still on 'our' side. He's no longer willing to take risks that might cripple the Laundry or another potential ally in the days to come.

Updated Personnel



The Other Place

You're a necromancer, Mr. Howard, not just another button- pushing computer nerd. That's why they sent you here with me. You have the aptitude for ad hoc invocation and control. I think you would be extremely powerful, if you get over your squeamishness. It makes you as useful as a heart surgeon who faints at the sight of blood.

— *The Apocalypse Codex*

During the events of *The Apocalypse Codex*, we see 'traditional' ritual magic at its fullest. While Persephone Hazard and her associates are certainly capable practitioners of computational demonology, they're also old school wizards. Traditional magic is slower and more dangerous¹ than computer code, but it can be more flexible, and there are certain tricks that computers can't yet replicate.

Adepts of traditional magic can see through the veils of reality and perceive the truth. They call it the Other Place. They've seen the face of horror.

This chapter doesn't have many rules (for lots of extra options for magic, see chapter 18 of the *Laundry Files* rulebook and chapter 1 of *License to Summon*). It's about evoking the feel – and the horror – of sorcery.

What Magic Isn't

Like most of my ilk I work best in a nice warm office, with a bonking great monitor and a can of Pringles in front of me. I start swearing, under my breath, in Middle English: it's the only thing that language is good for, cursing and ordering the walking dead around.

—*The Fuller Memorandum*

The Laundry makes things seem clean. Sit in a beginner's lecture like *Introduction to Computational Demonology* and listen as the lecturer talks about the Dee-Turing theorem, about Dho-Nha curves cutting through Hilbert Space, about energetic geometries, and it all sounds like a strange form of science. No weirder than quantum mechanics, anyway – counter-intuitive, yes, but nothing more. Tap the button on your shinyphone, conjure up demons from the vasty deep. Actually, don't call them demons – call them economic entities, so you can laugh at all those deluded old-

school occultists and traditional wizards who thought they were dealing with something supernatural. It's all just nice, clean science.

Wrong.

Step into the Other Place.

Magic *violates* reality. It corrodes it and fucks it up, warping the sane little bubble of normality that humanity evolved in. We're not able to cope with it. Magic is not another set of rules on top of 'conventional' physics, it's a shifting maze of power that twists and perverts physics.

Here's an example – the *Jotun* working that the Nazis attempted at the end of World War II required mass human sacrifice. It was a grotesquely inefficient spell by modern standards, sloppy and un-optimised and full of bugs and brute-force solutions. A present-day version of the same spell would require much less power, much less effort, and be cast in a fraction of the time – and it would still need human sacrifices.

It's not that the Nazis were cruel for the sake of it (well, they were, but that's beside the point.) It's that the entities on the other end of the line, the ones we summon up through energised Dho-Nha curves, they have their own peculiar tastes and whims that must be sated. They hunger for human souls, for the sweet tang of blood, for the smoky soul-marking of murder. The 'rules' of magic are set down by entities older and crueler than we can imagine.

Working Magic

All magic, even computational demonology, works on the same principles. The magician draws an curve in the Platonic realm of mathematic, energises it to attract the attention

1. Well, somewhat dangerous, anyway. What's the old joke?

C: You shoot yourself in the foot.

C++: You accidentally create a dozen clones of yourself and shoot them all in the foot. Providing emergency medical assistance is impossible since you can't tell which are bitwise copies and which are just pointing at others and saying, "That's me, over there."

JAVA: After importing `java.awt.right.foot.*` and `java.awt.gun.right.hand.*`, and writing the classes and methods of those classes needed, you've forgotten what the hell you're doing.

C with the `.alhazred` library: You shoot yourself in the foot. It turns into a tentacle and tries to take over your brain.

C with the `.celeano` library: You realise your foot is a part of you... and that you are part of a higher-dimensional entity. You: your foot is equivalent to Entity: you, if folded thusly. And then the nightmares begin, and before you know it, you're standing naked in Tesco's chanting 'socks for the sock dog'.

of Something, and the Something reaches out from its universe into ours. As the laws of reality are different there, and Something carries the strangeness of its home with it, it can alter our universe. The magician might bring the Something through entirely (via a summoning or Gate), or just ask the Something to intercede in a limited fashion (say, to enforce the terms of a Geas, or to drag physics behind the bicycle sheds and kick the shit out of it in an Entropic Manipulation).

That's the basic idea. In fact, it's a lot more complex.

First, just drawing a curve to attract an Exonome without any other safety precautions is suicidal. It's the equivalent of smashing your nose off a wall, then sticking your head in a shark tank. You'll definitely get a response from something, but it'll eat your brains instead of doing what you want it to do. Drawing the curve is the easy part – most of the work in any incantation is basically laying down the ground rules so the entity does what you want it to do when it shows up. Think of it as a prenuptial agreement for your cerebral cortex.

Secondly, not every spell involves another entity. There are Dho-Nha curves that fold back on themselves. Remember, when CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN hits, it's because our universe and the universes where those things squirm are temporarily congruent. Why do they become congruent? Well, what we think of as the constants of reality are very, very slightly adrift. They can be pushed. In our universe, it's normally very very *very* hard indeed to move them.

You can't change the speed of light just by wishing it was so. In other universes, as discussed previously, those constants aren't tethered so tightly. Hastur the Unspeakable can change its reality as it pleases, and can impose that reality onto ours (and that's how a Gate spell to Aldebaran works). When CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN arrives, our constants will detach and our reality will become like theirs.

Even before that happens, though, there's a tiny little bit of a give in our universe. You can bend the rules slightly, and act as your own Exonome, changing reality through your own will. In practice, there's almost always an easier way to do this, but at least the risk of possession is minimal.

Third, because magic involves calling on alien entities, you have to dance to their tune. Some entities are as cold and impersonal as the Inland Revenue, taking their pound of flesh and sticking to contracts and bargains originally struck by the Elder Things or some other pre-human sorcerers. Others demand a more personal relationship with the magician. Just because you know how to draw the right curve and say the right words doesn't mean that the entity on the other end will respond as you expect. Some spells that work for one practitioner won't work for another if the entity chooses not to co-operate.

Computational demonology (and sorcery in general) usually uses predictable entities. Something like a Feeder in the Dark is about as smart as celery. Give it the right stimulus, and it responds in exactly the same way. Most low-level entities aren't fussy; they'll give up their reality-warping



powers for anyone who buys them lunch and draws the right curves. It's only the more powerful entities that are really problematic.

Casting a Spell

Despite the nigh-ubiquity of magic in the Laundry, where everything from the Thing on the Doorstep² to your paperclips is an enchanted item of power, spells still aren't thrown around wildly. An act of magic – even a simple one like activating an app – carries a measure of significance, and deserves to be described.

It's important for every spell to feel different, but consistent. The characters should be able to distinguish between, say, a Computational Demonology banishing spell and a traditional magic spell of the same type just by looking at the physical evidence, but they should also be able to tell they're both related.

Pre-written apps

I pull out the NecronomiPod and fire it up. Happy-fun icons glow at me: Safari, YouTube, Horned Skull, Settings, Bloody Runes, Messaging, Elder Sign, you know the interface. Bloody Runes gets me into the ward detector, which is showing the usual options. I point the camera at the door and peer into the shiny screen.

—The Fuller Memorandum

Push button, dispense magic. It is, genuinely, that easy. Activating a pre-written app is like picking up a ward or other magic item – the effect may be interesting but the act of using it is actually pretty simple. The fun with pre-written apps comes in describing the interface, in melding occult weirdness with commercial gadgets. Does the app have a prosaic, staccato name (*Warding 1.1*), an official designation (*Occult Field Countermeasures Utility Truck*) or some geek's idea of a joke (*Langford Death Parrot*). How does the interface work? What options are there?

Different Types of Magic

The *Laundry Files* rulebook describes the different styles of spellcasting, while the *License to Summon* sourcebook gives tweaks and modifications to several of them.

- **Pre-written apps:** Magic for end users. Press the friendly icon, and the computer does the rest. Advantages: easy to use, very fast. Disadvantages: bar a few basic parameters, you can't modify your spells. It's great for quickly throwing up a ward or a defensive binding, but you can't tune a spell to a specific purpose.
- **Computational Demonology:** The thinking man's magic. More accurately, the smart man's magic, because thinking about magic leads to your brain becoming snack food. Computational Demonology is relatively easy to use (assuming you can both code and chant), very flexible, and very fast.
- **Traditional Magic:** The original sorcery. Great fun if you like drawing elaborate pentagrams, dead goat proctology, and tongue twisters in Enochian. Numerous downsides: most sorcerers need a lot of support from other casters, ritual items, sources of power or extra-dimensional patrons, casting a spell takes a very long time, and if you get anything wrong, you're screwed.
- **Spell Macros:** (See *License to Summon*) Take a traditional magic spell and cast most of it, leaving only the final word of power to activate it. Then bind that uncompleted spell into an item or a fetish or your own brain. When you want to cast the spell, say the word. It's fast (if you ignore the hours of preparation time needed to set up the macro), but just as dangerous as traditional magic.³
- **Mental Magic:** Traditional magic, only without the assistance and safety net of the ritual elements. See also suicide.

Any sort of magic (bar unmodified spell macros and magic apps) can take advantage of local conditions like sources of power, or peripherals like ritual items, more casters, or human sacrifices.

2. Formerly Fred from Accounting. Really, he was Fred. Now he's not Fred any more, not really.

3. With the added bonus of having half-a-dozen highly unstable magical constructs bound to your person. It's like saying, "Cooking roast beef takes too long! I'll just bring a Molotov cocktail with me everywhere I go in case I meet a cow!"

The Gamemaster should work with the players to define the limits and abilities of each pre-written app. If they're too constrained, then they'll never get used. If they're too open, they'll take away from full-scale computational demonology. For the standard OFCUT suite, the basic apps allow:

- **Banishing:** Only at level one, which generally isn't much use - level one entities have trouble possessing a hamster or a calculator or a *Daily Mail* reader. It's got a chance of banishing level two entities, and even an ineffective banishing can irritate an exonome. Whether or not this is useful is left as an exercise for the reader. The standard Banishing app contains a dictionary of invocations and dismissals for commonly encountered types of exonome, as well as a more aggressive banishing grid.

If the user knows what sort of beastie he wants to banish, he can just hit the matching menu entry and the phone⁴ will automatically recite the appropriate formula of dismissal, backed up by a virtualised odour of sanctity to give spiritual weight to the formula. In this case, the phone's screen displays the text of the formula, complete with a little bouncing ball so the operator can read along.

If that fails, or if the entity is unknown, then the phone can be used to generate a banishing grid. The safe way to use a banishing grid is to link the phone to a pentacle of some sort, then use a ward to constrain the exonome, and then move the ward to force the exonome into the pentacle. The unsafe way to do is to grab your phone and stick it right into the exonome's face or closest analogous appendage. (Or, for a still-unsafe, but slightly stupid banishing, throw the phone at the target⁵). The rune of the banishing grid shows up on the phone's screen in this mode, and often flares brightly enough to burn its image onto the phone's phosphors.

When a creature is banished, it pops out of our reality. If it had some mass, this mass may either explode violently or leave with it, creating a vacuum. Other banishings can throw off electrical fields, burst of static or even fast neutrons.

- **Defensive Binding:** A level one Defensive Binding provides five points of protection. The standard OFCUT binding is configured against fast-moving projectiles (*aka* bullets) and other kinetic damage. It's possible to tweak the binding using the app's settings,

but doing so requires a Computer Use (Magic) test. The binding only works on humans (or at least humanoids), and only on the person carrying the phone. In effect, it projects a sort of force screen around the user. When in operation, the phone glows brightly and tends to drop calls. Defensive Bindings are a terrible drain on the battery, and can deplete a fully charged phone in minutes.

- **Entropy Manipulation:** This spell is famously flexible, and the options screen is infamously intimidating. The manipulation app requires a Computer Use (Magic) to adjust, although Science (Physics) is also a useful skill to possess at this juncture - if you're going to start tweaking fundamental constants of your local reality like G or c or m_e , it's best to know what the hell you're doing.

Most versions of entropy manipulation come with a list of presets for specific desired effects, like an anti-eavesdropping scrambler (boosts the co-efficient of entropy in sound waves, so their frequency and wavelength shift irregularly), a Maxwell's Demon invocation (letting the user adjust the ambient temperature) and a basic occlusion field (not invisibility *per se*, but somebody else's problem).

The basic version of this app generates a field either centred on the phone, or else projected in a cone from the phone's aerial. If the user wants to constrain the field, then he needs to set up a pentagram or other binding shape, ideally in a conductive medium, and then pair the phone with the binding pentagram. It's rather like pairing two Bluetooth devices, only it relies on the principle of Contagion.

When running, Entropy Manipulation displays a complex pattern of runes and equations on the screen of the phone. A badly configured Entropy Manipulation can result in unpredictable side effects. Energy cannot be created or destroyed, but it can be shunted from one place to another like a bubble of wallpaper paste.

If you try to, say, decohere the light so an infrared sensor beam stops working, you can end up setting fire to the curtains or cause all plants nearby to spontaneously wilt. Health & Safety assures users, though, that rumours of increased incidence of cancer associated with heavy use of portable Entropy Manipulation effects are largely false.

4. We say phone, but all this applies to any computing device of sufficient power to run the app. Of course, phones are a lot more portable than other such gadgets. You can run, say, Defensive Binding on your desktop machine, but good luck winning a firefight while dragging a plugged-in tower case around with you.

5. To be honest, the paperwork involved in getting a replacement phone is arguably worse than death.

- **Exorcism:** Everyone knows the old computational demonology joke – it's not an exorcism, it's an 'XORcism.'

(Pause for laughter).

The spell works by hitting the local thaumic field with a virtualised interference pattern designed to cancel it out. It works out what normal should be, then tries to squeeze out anything that doesn't match. As self-aware abnormalities (*aka* Things That Go Bump In The Night) can move and change, a basic exorcism isn't guaranteed to get rid of them – the spell can't distinguish them from what should be there. It works wonders against static magical effects, hauntings, psychic residue and all the other cobwebs of the spiritual realm, but isn't much cop against the spiders who weave them.

An exorcism spell cast from a phone sounds like a bell tolling deep underground (albeit a slightly tinny bell, as few phone speakers are up to much). The exorcism is accompanied by a whiff of sulphur, and the phone's screen flickers like a candle. (Synthesised bell, binary data file and a one-candle-power light source work just as well as traditional methods.)

- **Glamour:** The basic Glamour app takes a snapshot of your face and looks for distinguishing features. It then averages out your appearance with that of a face from a database of forgettable, unremarkable people that matches your gender, age and skin tone. It also tones down your clothing, changing its colour and erasing distinguishing marks and logos. The app is designed to smooth out any visual artefacts (earlier versions set up camp in the Uncanny Valley). When running, it displays a soft, oddly compelling glyph that does the hard work – glammers are 10% visual illusion and 90% soothing suggestion that you shouldn't look too hard.

The OFCUT app can import images of other people and use them as a baseline instead of an image from Database of Boringly Generic People, so it is possible to, say, snap a picture of a uniformed security guard, then use that image as a guide for the app so it creates the illusion that you're wearing that uniform as long as no-one looks too close. The level one app doesn't have the power to convincingly disguise you as a specific individual, but given a photo of that individual, it could give the impression that you're distantly related to that individual.

- **Scrying:** The OFCUT Scrying app has three major functions. First, it runs a TRUESIGHT program that pierces any level 1 Glamours and displays any thaumic structures, letting the user 'see magic.' In practice, that means that the operator can see runes and binding diagrams that aren't currently active and glowing with their own unholy light.

Second, it functions as a thaumometer. It picks up on any magical fields nearby (within four metres for standard intensity fields; bigger invocations obey the inverse square law) and gives visual and auditory feedback to the user. (Translation: clicks like a geiger counter, and paints a helpful arrow pointing towards the big glowy alien horror).

Third, there's a sympathetic magic scrying window that lets you track a target, providing you've got a sympathetic link to them like a photo, a personal item, or a drop of blood to smear across your phone's camera. You can also, theoretically, observe the target remotely, but that's like trying to get 3G reception on some deserted Scottish island.

All three forms of scrying integrate directly with the phone's camera. They don't work on a camera-free phone (although there's an old version of the software, designed originally for the Treo 600, which can run the thaumometer without visual input). Scrying's low-impact in terms of glowy lights and special effects, although a close examination of a scry-active phone shows that the camera lens glows with an unnamable colour.⁶

- **Ward, Area:** The Area Ward app has to be paired with a diagram to be effective – otherwise, it just protects the phone. The protective ward glows with an eerie intensity on the phone's screen. When the ward blocks a spell (or an entity), the phone's speaker hisses as a portion of the spell's information bleeds out as sound waves.⁷ Paired with a diagram, OFCUT can protect against level one spells or entities, and temporarily impede more powerful attacks.
- **Ward, Offensive:** The Offensive Ward subroutine runs constantly in the background on any OFCUT-equipped device. If an unauthorised person touches the phone, it alerts the phone's registered owner and triggers feelings of revulsion, anxiety or even pain in the mind of the would-be thief. (Switch this off in settings before letting someone borrow the phone.) While OFCUT isn't designed to include lethal countermeasures, some

6. You know when you drop your keys in the dark, and you don't have a torch, so you shine your phone screen on the floor because it's better than nothing. Well, if that ever happens again, don't use the weird alien light from a scrying camera. You'll see the things that scurry in the dark, the Eaters of Odd Socks and Dropped Biro's, or the Stealers of Keys whose spoor is dust and unexplained scratches.

7. Same sort of thing as EVP, actually.

users have set the Offensive Ward to automatically call the Switchboard – and the Laundry Switchboard can suck souls over the phone lines. The offensive ward is invisible until activated, whereupon it glows a fiery red, bright enough to be seen through the back of the phone.

- **Ward, Personal:** A phone can emulate a class one ward – not much good, but enough to impede low-level brain suckers. When active, this app displays a five-dimensional tesseract on the screen. Most people mistake it for a screensaver.

Any competent computational demonologist can write up a spell as an application. Optimising it so it runs as quickly as an OFCUT app isn't trivial – they've been tweaked and streamlined – but it's easy to stick an icon on someone's desktop that says "CLICK ME TO END WORLD." End users don't have to know what's going on under the case.

Computational Demonology

Magic being a branch of applied mathematics, when you carry out certain computational operations, it has echoes in the Platonic realm of pure mathematics – echoes audible to beings whose true nature I cannot speak of, on account of doing so being a violation of the Official Secrets Act. Theoretical Thaumaturgists are the guys who develop new efferent algorithms (or, colloquially, "spells"): it's an occupation with a high attrition rate.

—Down on the Farm



Aka what Bob does, most of the time. Computational Demonology isn't just coding, although the Laundry prefers to give the impression to newbies that everything's very safe, sanitary and entirely in silicon. While you can virtualise most stuff, sometimes you've got to put the rabbit in the silver-bladed runic blender to get results. Hell, back in the early days, you'd have Laundry staff running around in black robes with sacrificial daggers and drawing sigils in virgin's blood and myrrh, just like in the grimoires, only instead of a high priest in the middle chanting away, you'd have a PDP1 in the middle of the grid crunching numbers and outputting Dho-Nha curves.

In the modern era, scientific thaumaturgy has (mostly) worked out what bits of the old rituals are necessary to invoke Listeners, and which bits are just empty mummery or transmissions from crazy-town.

Tools

The basic toolset of the Computational Demonologist consists of:

- A Turing-Complete programmable state machine, also known as a computer. Verily, it is known that the greatest wizards of yore hath top-end Alienware, and woe betided those who quibbled over yon budgets.
- A suitable development kit, like a text editor that copes with Unicode Plane 13, a c compiler with all of the Laundry's custom libraries, and a warded shell.
- A ward. Casting spells without protection is for amateurs. Professionals take precautions.
- A charged geometry of some sort, depending on the spell in question. If you're summoning something, you need a summoning grid. If you're hiding from the thing you just summoned, you need a protective circle. Any spell that channels some sort of energy or influence needs the right geometry. An old-school sorcerer would draw lines in chalk or blood (or have something custom-made for each invocation out of silver or cold iron – anything conductive works well), but a computational demonologist can use lasers or a breadboard of copper wires to set up a geometry for the current situation.
- A colloidal silver pen for drawing geometries and runes by hand. While lasers are much more precise, sometimes close enough is good enough, and it takes ages to calibrate a laser pentagram. Also, remember to bring along a protractor, because nothing's more embarrassing than letting the monster out of the magic cage because you can't draw a 60 degree angle properly.

- Talismans of contagion, *aka* Wi-Fi or bluetooth dongles. They can easily be hacked using the Principle of Contagion, so they'll still channel magic even when not plugged into a USB port. Once part of the computer, always part of the computer.
- Pringles, pizza or other snack food. Caffeine and sugar-water.

While the computer takes care of the hard⁸ bits, the Computational Demonologist still has to set up the right conditions for the spell. Most spells have some real-world ritual elements. Summoning spells have a summoning grid, for example.⁹ For other spells, the caster might have to wire in peripherals, set up wards and circles, or provide that old 10cc of mouse blood.

There's also the inconvenient fact that most spells require an observer to collapse the quantum waveform at some stage of the process. Not everything can be automated.

Bleed Through

The strangeness of the Other Place bleeds through technology in unexpected ways. Thaumic energy twists things. *Das Unheimliche*, the Germans say, "the opposite of what is familiar." At low levels, it's merely disturbing. Out of the corner of your eye, the letters on your keyboard shift and become alien glyphs. The red led power light blinks, like the eye of something watchful and hungry.

At higher levels, you get more of a horror show. Cables bleed when you unplug them. The keyboard taps out messages from desperate ghosts. Users get cursed after touching the keyboard with stigmata or exotic diseases like ebola or bit rot. While most Listeners out there aren't sentient as we understand it, and don't have the social skills for mind games, an enchanted computing device can start picking up on your subconscious fears and that's when you start seeing your dead mother's name running as a process.

Most of this weirdness is caused by leaky code. Doing proper garbage collection on all your pointers to otherspace and regularly exorcising your machine avoids the worst of it, but it's not completely avoidable. Magic corrodes our reality, and even if you lock the magic away behind logic gates and computer code, it still bleeds through on some level.

Uses of Computational Demonology

Computational Demonology is faster, safer and more efficient than traditional spellcasting. It's the bee's knees, the cat's pyjamas, the ghoul's toothpick of arcane power.

It's more reliable, easier to teach and easier to maintain. No wonder everyone who's at all clueful has switched to it.

There are still some spells and rituals that only work in the traditional manner, though, and traditional magic is easier to change on the fly if you know what you're doing. Computational Demonology also takes time – the actual *casting* is faster than anything else, but if you don't know what you're doing, writing the code can take a long time.

Traditional Magic

In her mind's eye she is standing on an infinite gray plain, flat and dusty, that sweeps away towards a horizon beneath the utterly black sky above. She is wearing ritual vestments, a gown made to a pattern designed by Jeanne Robert Foster to the specifications of her magus; her hair is bound up with silver wire, and she holds a blunt-tipped knife with two notched ivory blades bound together by a band.

All this is immaterial, existing only within her imagination—but for a practitioner of ritual magic, as opposed to a technician of computational demonology, the set dressing of the Cartesian theater is a matter of great importance. Ritual magic is unpredictable, and the civil service hates it because it relies on the unaccountable exercise of power by the dismally eccentric, if not un-house trained, nor does it work as reliably as numerology or cabbalism, let alone their infinitely more potent and reliable descendants, algorithmic imprecation and computational demonology. Its practitioners also tend to die young and horribly, of Krantzberg syndrome or something worse. But to a trained adept it delivers the power to make a reality from the field of dreams and visions.

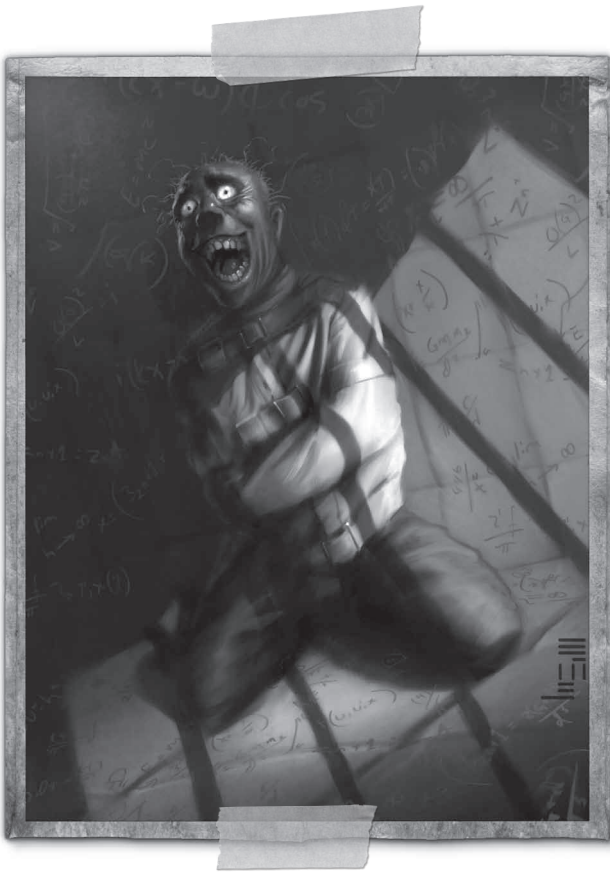
—*The Apocalypse Codex*

Instead of generating a Dho-Nha curve through mathematical procedures, the traditional practitioner (aka witch) visualises the curve in their mind. Few witches do this consciously, though. Instead, they follow a series of chants and mental exercises that map to the curve. It's like the old example of a thrown football – most people couldn't calculate the parabola traced by the moving ball, but they can do that calculation subconsciously in order to catch it if you throw it at their faces. Traditional magic is like that, only with a hand grenade.

It's unreliable, inefficient, and dangerous – but it's real, uncut, pure wizardry. There's nothing between you and the magic – it's your will remaking the universe. For many a practitioner, the thrill of magic is more addictive than any drug.

8. Or, more relevantly, the caster doesn't have to stick a sign on his forehead saying 'THIS SPACE FOR RENT TO SUPERNATURAL ENTITIES.'

9. You can summon a thing without a summoning grid. If you're lucky, it materialises right in the middle of your computer. If you're unlucky, it latches onto the closest sufficiently complex nervous system and eats you for lunch.



Word and Deed – Casting Spells

Words have no power on their own. Saying ‘Hastur Hastur Hastur’ doesn’t summon anything,¹⁰ and neither does abracadabra. Chanting in weird languages and waving your arms around has no inherent meaning, but it does help put the caster in the right frame of mind.^{11, 12} Effectively, a written spell is a mnemonic for something that you can’t consciously remember. It’s self-hypnosis that twists your brain inside-out. By following the ritual, the traditional magician is able to visual the unimaginable. You say the words, you *believe*, you put all your Magickal Will into it, and if you’re lucky, you glimpse a vision of something strange and twisted that you could never normally conceive.

(If you’re unlucky, then you put all your Magickal Will into it, and something lurking like a trapdoor spider in the astral plane pops out and eats your soul.)

Magic ‘Stunts’

A generous Gamesmaster should give bonuses to a character’s effective POW or Sorcery rolls for entertaining or thematic descriptions. Traditional magic offers a lot of scope for imaginative players. Babble about silver-etched athames or symbolic correspondences or drawing on ley lines for power.

A talented practitioner can combine elements from different spells, shaping the magic. Spells can be changed on the fly, adapted to take advantage of circumstances, woven and sculpted and changed like dreams.

Props and other ritual elements normally aren’t necessary, but again, they help to produce the right mental conditions. The wizardly robe and pointed hat are there for your benefit, not because of any inherent power. That’s one reason traditional magic is slow and inefficient – every spell has lots of meaningless symbolic cruft that isn’t needed for computational generation of a Dho-Nha curve. The problem is that some spells actually do need the ritual elements. Tracing a chalk pattern on the floor isn’t just a symbolic act – it’s needed to keep the summoned demon from devouring you. It’s easy to modify a traditional spell, which means it’s easy to accidentally delete a vital protective element and end up blowing your brains out.

Uses of Traditional Magic

Traditional magic is slow and unreliable at everything except getting your brain chewed up by demons, so why would anyone sane use it? (A lot of insane people use it, but they’ve got their own issues.)

Firstly, they might not have a choice. Not everyone has access to computational demonology, or the right computer program. Translating traditional magic formulae to iterated code isn’t easy, and some spells simply don’t translate – if the alien Listener wants a human soul, then you need to get the human element into the loop somehow.

Secondly, traditional magic is easier to recode on the fly. Redirecting an entropy manipulation spell using computational demonology means a lot of messing with xyz co-ordinates and vectors and trying to reconcile your phone’s internal compass with the magnetic field of Aldebaran.

Thirdly, they can’t (easily) take it away from you. A naked Computational Demonologist is a pasty-skinned nerd; a naked warlock still has his wand, and can cast any spells that don’t rely on ritual components. When you can remake the universe with the power that stems solely from your own mind and will, you’re as close as humanity comes to godhood...

10. Other than annoying memes.

11. Out of it.

12. Also, there are things Listening out there who recognise ancient commands once a connection is established through the platonic realm.

Gate Shunt

(Level Three)

Augmented reality for the win: my nascent necromantic spidey-sense doesn't see anything, but there's a spiderweb of really nasty schematics tingling and twitching all across the door's surface. A fine thread leads from it towards the giant cross. I've got a nasty feeling that if you touch the door without an invitation you're going to get to ride on Jesus's tree, and not in a happy way.

- The Apocalypse Codex

Teleportation is tricky and messy for anything bigger than an electron. Try to take a short cut through conventional space-time, and you'll end up splattered. If you set things up just right, though, you can set up a short-range Gate that transports a single individual to a predetermined location. The destination needs to have an active summoning grid or other magical anchor. A shunt has a maximum range of the POW of the spell in metres.

You could, for example, teleport into a panic room or use the spell to, say, nail an intruder to your decorative life-size crucifix, but you couldn't teleport across the Atlantic (not without boosting the spell with a staggering amount of power) or to get into a secure location (at least, not unless you can get a properly entangled summoning grid in there first).

Shunting is instantaneous¹³ if the destination grid is energised. If there's no destination, then the shunted target vanishes for a short time before reappearing nearby. More powerful entities can break or resist a shunt attempt.

Being shunted costs 1/1d6 SAN.

Common tricks using this spell:

- **Shunt/Ward Combo:** This is Raymond Schiller's security mechanism. Touch the door without the right permission, and the ward triggers the shunt, teleporting you onto the cross.
- **Shunt Talisman:** A custom magic item developed by Persephone Hazard, the shunt talisman consists of a chain of paper dolls attached to a computer chip. Activate the talisman, and it shunts up to three targets out of reality for 1d10 minutes. It's a level three effect, so a class three ward can block the attack. It's also not especially accurate, and just grabs the nearest three people to the dolls.

13. Well, almost. We're pretty sure it's limited to c.





The Plateau of the Sleeper

The Plateau of the Sleeper

CODICIL BLACK SKULL

THIS DOCUMENT IS CLASSIFIED CODICIL BLACK SKULL

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE CODICIL BLACK SKULL CLEARANCE, DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT.

Version 5.42.

Preamble

This is a briefing document intended for the use of Squadron 666 or SAS personnel who are about to be deployed as part of CODICIL BLACK SKULL observation and exploration missions. If this is the first time you have been deployed offworld, ensure that you are familiar with relevant safety, survival and security procedures.

Overview

The purpose of CODICIL BLACK SKULL is to ensure that an entity known as the Sleeper remains secure and undisturbed. The Sleeper currently resides in a tomb atop an alien pyramid, surrounded by a forest of zombies called the Wall of Pain. Our role is to ensure that no-one wakes the Sleeper, and to put it back down should it ever rise.

THE PLATEAU

The Sleeper's tomb stands on a distant planet, across the gulf of interstellar space. Attempts to locate it using conventional astronomy have so far been unsuccessful. Most researchers assume that it is somewhere within our galaxy, but there are no guarantees of that. It could be in another galaxy, or in another dimension, or be billions of years in our past or future – or even all three. "The Old Ones walk serene and primal between dimensions, untrammelled by our petty notions of space and time" to quote the Necronomicon.

The planet – or at least the Sleeper's Plateau – has a thin, but breathable atmosphere, suggesting that at some point life held sway here, cracking the oxygen out of the bluish rocks. Foot patrols to the planet carry extra oxygen supplies with them, but additional O₂ is only needed during periods of heavy exertion.

The only native flora discovered by past expeditions is a purple lichen that is mildly poisonous, but has powerful hallucinogenic and oneiromantic qualities. Background

radiation is approximately 20 millisieverts per hour (or as much as a nuclear power worker would absorb over the course of a year) – hot, but not unmanageable. The primary source of this radiation appears to be a mobile source that orbits the planet once every six hours, possibly a satellite or moon composed of highly radioactive material.

Gravity is approximately 70% that of Earth. The planet rotates once every 31 hours. There is little discernible seasonal variation in temperature, or in weather – you can expect clear skies and whispering, maddening winds year-round. Average temperatures hover just below freezing.

The planet has no magnetic field. Directions therefore use the pyramid's sides as the cardinal directions.

Rock samples recovered from the Sleeper's Plateau show that the pyramid rests on a granite outcrop. The rocks have a high proportion of selenium and cobalt, as well as traces of elements without official names from deep within the island of stability. The site appears to have been selected at least partially for its geological qualities; up until recent events, seismic instruments found no signs of earthquakes or other volcanic activity. Micrometeorite impacts are considerable less than would be expected, suggesting some force protects the plateau from disaster.

The rest of the planet is largely unexplored. Any Gates opened to the planet appear on or near the Plateau. Squadron 666's aerial observations show signs of other structures in the lowlands around the Plateau, but no expedition has ever reached these cryptic mausoleums and returned.

Exploring the Plateau has an extremely deleterious effect on the human psyche. Even with wards, medication and training, most visitors experience delusions or suffer



psychological breakdown within 48 hours. Therefore, except in emergencies, all contact with the Plateau and the Pyramid is minimized through use of supersonic overflight.

OPERATIONS ON THE PLATEAU

Standard insertion protocol is via a Class 3 Gate. As such gates have an operational lifetime measured in hundreds of seconds, you will either take your own Gate-making technology with you, or have a scheduled extraction time.

Radio on the Plateau is unreliable over distances longer than 500 metres, and power drains faster there than it does here. Electronic equipment fails alarmingly quickly on the Plateau, so keep visits short and carry spares.

Take precautions – treat the Plateau as though it was a radioactive hot zone, and always ensure that your personal wards are active. Unwarded individuals perish within a few hours of exposure to the Plateau.



THE PYRAMID

The Pyramid of the Sleeper is a four-sided stepped pyramid, made from the same stone as the Plateau. It is composed of approximately two million stone blocks.

Analysis of the stone blocks reveals traces of partially eroded symbols or markings. No translation exists, although some cults have partial transcriptions of the symbols and use them as part of their mysteries as a substitution cipher.

Despite the efforts of generations of astronomers, astrologers, numerologists and researchers, the pyramid does not appear to be aligned with any celestial object, nor does it appear to conceal any clues about the impending date of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. Its architecture does not correspond to that of any known human culture.

There are no roads, ramps, quarries, waste tailings or any other signs of construction around the pyramid. The stones are mortared together with an unknown substance that defies chemical analysis. It is a blackish-grey resinous compound that is a perfect electrical insulator.

While dating methods based on radioactive decay are unreliable without a better baseline for comparison, most researchers assume the pyramid is less than ten million years old.

The size of the pyramid is a matter of debate. Scale within dreams and visions is of course unreliable, and visions of the pyramid being 'miles high' or 'bigger than a mountain' can be discarded. However, four expeditions recorded different heights for the pyramid despite using reliable scientific instruments. The height ranged between 120 and 180 metres.

This discrepancy continued into the CODICIL BLACK SKULL era; observations by Concorde missions have recorded multiple different heights for the pyramid. These differences in scale cannot be explained by human error or the movement of the pyramid (the area is tectonically stable).

The steps are shallow enough to be ascended easily by humans in this low gravity. Many reports from those who have ascended the pyramid speak of falling into a trace or experiencing bursts of missing time, as though the monotonous act of climbing all of those steps is hypnotic.

In addition to the Wall of Pain at the foot and the temple on top, there are several other sites of interest on the Sleeper's Pyramid:

- **The Rosetta Stone:** A series of stone blocks on the 'north' face of the pyramid whose markings differ

from the rest of the pyramid; in fact, linguistic analysis suggests that there is a better than 80% probability that these markings are in a completely different language. This second language could help translate the cryptic symbols on the rest of the pyramid, and is the focus of intensive linguistic research by the Laundry and several other groups.

- **The Watchtower:** The watchtower is a small ruined structure located half-way up the south-eastern ridge of the pyramid. Most of the building has collapsed, but computer reconstruction shows that it was a twenty-metre-tall round tower made of the same stone as the rest of the pyramid. It is clearly a later addition, as the original steps are still visible beneath the scattered debris. The bottom quarter of the tower still stands, and was used as a base by the fourth expedition. The stones of the watchtower are unmarked.
- **The Erratic:** Located approximately one kilometre from the pyramid, on the far side of the Wall of Pain, this is a single carved stone block like the ones that make up the pyramid. Why this stone was rejected by the builders is a mystery. The stone was dragged six metres south by persons or forces unknown in 1992.
- **The Baron's Mark:** The fourth expedition found a broken cavalry sabre (a shashka sabre, identical to those used by Cossack soldiers) along with a water bottle and some rags on the west face of the pyramid. Someone – presumably Baron Ungern von Sternberg – used the sabre to carve a large 'X' into a nearby block. The Fourth Expedition examined the block in detail, but reported nothing unusual about it.
- **The Door:** The existence of secret tunnels and chambers within the pyramid has long been rumoured, but never confirmed, and ground-penetrating radar fails to penetrate the structure. In 1947, the Laundry obtained a photograph of a tapestry from a Tibetan monastery that appeared to depict a door or passageway half-way up the west face (near the Baron's Mark). The Fourth Expedition investigated this region, and found nothing. However, in 1984, a BLACK CODICIL overflight photographed six figures scaling that section of the pyramid. The Concorde made a second pass twelve minutes later, and found no sign of the intruders.

- **The Rapture Walk:** This is a section of the pyramid near the temple. There are no discernible physical signs that distinguish the Rapture Walk from the rest of the structure, but two expedition team members committed suicide here by hurling themselves off the walk and falling to their deaths. Furthermore, examination of the stones below the Rapture Walk revealed the presence of old blood and tissue, suggesting that other visitors also committed suicide by jumping off that spot.

THE WALL OF PAIN

The Wall was constructed by the 'Bloody White Baron of Mongolia,' Ungern von Sternberg, probably between 1919 and 1921. The Wall consists of two thousand, nine hundred and ninety-four human corpses impaled on stainless steel spikes. The Wall completely surrounds the pyramid on all four sides, and is between three and nine corpses deep all along its perimeter.



Most of the corpses are those of Russian soldiers from the Fifth Red Army; the Baron appears to have filled any gaps in the wall with Mongolian peasants or men from his own rag-tag army. Despite being nearly a century old, the corpses are well preserved thanks to the cool temperatures, high radiation and lack of native

bacteria. The corpses still wear their uniforms and carry their equipment, including rifles and swords. Most of the corpses' weapons were found in their scabbards or strapped to their backs, leading some researchers to suggest that the weapons were returned after the bodies were impaled. Rope burns and other scarring, together with some signs of dehydration and starvation imply that the victims were prisoners who were marched alive onto the Plateau, then impaled.

The two-metre steel spikes are made from a high-chromium steel alloy, similar to stainless steel. Where exactly the Baron got his hands on nearly three thousand high-quality steel spikes in the middle of Mongolia is a minor mystery. The fence was constructed with the aid of the Bogd Khan's priests, although the Baron appears to have greatly modified their rituals.

Injuries and post-mortem contortions strongly imply that the victims were impaled on the spikes while still alive. Most were impaled through the chest, but others were impaled through the anus, or else impaled multiple times through, say, the thigh and forearm. Marks on the necks and faces suggest that the victims' heads were restrained at the time of death – they were probably forced to stare at the pyramid as they died.

The Wall of Pain is one of the greatest examples of occult countermeasures ever created by humanity. Its purpose is at least three-fold.

Firstly, it is a wall of nightmares. The necromantic energy of all those deaths blocks the dreams of the Sleeper. Extrapolating from written accounts and other sources, it appears that nightmares of the Plateau were much more common before 1921. This was, it seems, the primary impetus behind Sternberg's actions – he saved the Bogd Khan from bad dreams.

Secondly, the trapped dead observe the Pyramid, blocking Gate spells and preventing anyone from using magic to bypass the wall. They are also theorized to observe the Sleeper, collapsing its quantum waveform and keeping it partially quiescent. The effectiveness of this spell is unknown.

It is possible that Sternberg's actions prolonged the quiet period before CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN; it is equally possible that the Sleeper is unaffected by the spell, and will wake on cue when the Stars are Right. No-one wants to try kicking the Wall that might be holding back the end of the world.

Thirdly, the corpses that make up the wall are vessels for possessor entities (Feeders in the Night). If anyone trespasses too close to the Pyramid, the zombies wake up and destroy them. The guardians of the Wall of Pain are considerably tougher than the average Residual Human Resource.

Those killed by the zombies are then added to the Wall of Pain. Squadron 666 observation photos are regularly analysed for new additions to the Wall.

Navigating the Wall of Pain

Sternberg's Wall prevents any intruder from reaching the Pyramid, and so far has proved almost completely impenetrable. Other than the 1984 incident, there were no successful attempts by unwanted persons to gain access the Pyramid until the Colorado ritual (cf. APOCALYPSE CODEX, BLOODY BARON).

The only known safe way to cross the Wall is with the aid of TEAPOT, the 'Eater of Souls' entity that formerly inhabited the body of Evgenie Burdakovskii, and is currently incarnated in a security location. As TEAPOT helped build the wall, it knows the transitive order in which the Wall must be deconstructed to break down the spell.

Recently, a cult in Colorado managed to open two Gates inside the Wall of Pain's protected zone, a feat that was previously believed to be impossible. Arcana Analysis suggests that the Sleeper stirred and helped them breach the containment field. If so, then the Wall may become increasingly unreliable as the conjunction approaches, raising the likelihood that troops will have to be deployed to the Plateau to augment the Pyramid's security.

THE TEMPLE OF THE SLEEPER

Atop the Pyramid is a temple containing the tomb of the Sleeper. The temple is largely unexplored, following the fifth expedition incident (see page 36). However, through a combination of fourth expedition photographs, eye-witness accounts and secondary sources, we can state the following:

The temple consists of 128 pillars, each 23 metres tall and 2.5 metres in diameter supporting a domed roof some 30 metres high at its apex. The temple is a square with sides of 128 metres in length. There are four entrances, one at the mid-point of each side of the Pyramid. These doorways are 3 metres wide

and 6 metres high, and have wooden doors. (The wooden doors are a new addition, and are made from Mongolian oak.) The pillars and door frames are all decorated with disturbing alien glyphs and symbols. As the scroll that lead to the possession of Evgenie Burdakovskii was derived from the markings on the temple, personnel are enjoined not to examine the symbols without prior authorization and proper safety procedures.

Surrounding the tomb are rows of benches, made out of a crystalline substance. Unlike the rest of the cyclopean structure, these benches are human in scale. They may be later additions to the Temple, as they do not match either the surrounding architecture or the style of décor. Each bench has a small gully behind each seat, suggesting they were meant for some humanoid species with a tail.¹

The Tomb of the Sleeper stands in the centre of the temple on a raised dais. It is a sarcophagus four metres in length. Markings on the Tomb are entirely unlike those on the Pyramid or the Temple, suggesting that the Tomb predates both edifices. The Tomb is the nexus for a powerful thaumaturgical effect, probably either a binding or a suspended-animation spell. Possibly, the Sleeper was deliberately imprisoned here for some purpose, or took refuge here to wait out the long aeons until it could exist again in our universe.

Operations within the Temple

If the Sleeper awakens, it will trigger a series of events that will lead inevitably to CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. Its return is a signal to the other Great Old One entities that the stars are right and that they should return. It is the first shot in the apocalypse.

Therefore, you are advised and enjoined to stay well away from the Temple. There are power sources and magical forces buried deep within the Pyramid that focus on the Temple. We do not know what might

disturb them. Damage to the Temple, touching the Tomb, loud noises, the wrong thoughts – consider the Tomb to be an unexploded and highly unstable nuclear bomb, and keep clear unless there is absolutely no other choice.

PREVIOUS EXPEDITIONS & CONTACTS

There are natural portals and dimensional fault lines (aka 'thin places') where the Plateau touches our world. Several of these portals are in Central Asia; other confirmed portals exist in Antarctica. The Miskatonic Expedition of 1931 encountered one such portal, when Charles Danforth saw a bizarre vision that drove him mad,² likely as a result of a fleeting psychic contact with the Sleeper.

Images and stories of a wonderful and terrible Plateau and sleeping kings are common in many cultures; the Sleeper was out there, waiting, long before human civilization arose. We grew up in the shadow of that dreadful Plateau, and it has informed our myths and nightmares throughout history.

Prehuman Contacts

- **Tomb Builders:** Presumably, some race built the Temple and the Pyramid around the Sleeper. We know nothing about this species except the structures that they left behind. It is unlikely that they evolved on the world of the Dead Plateau, unless some cataclysm (perhaps a previous conjunction) erased all signs of their civilisation and destroyed most of the biosphere.
- **ANNING BLUE SKULL:** The proximity of the Plateau of the Sleeper to ANNING BLUE SKULL ruins in Antarctica implies that they knew of its existence. Certain bas-relief carvings in their cities imply that they dreaded something in the mountains near their city.

BLOODY BARON

As per Section V.5 of the Second Treaty of Nice, all developments and information regarding the Dead Plateau and the Sleeper are shared with the Laundry's European partners on the BLOODY BARON committee. Please review guidelines on information sharing and cross-agency encryption and warding when submitting any reports with BLOODY BARON clearance.

1. Possibly DANUBE CROSSING, but we would need to find some more examples of their choice in furniture to know for sure.

2. Notably, according to Dyer's account, Danforth spoke of "the elder pharos" and "the original, the eternal, the undying," both of which might be descriptions of the Sleeper – it is immeasurably old, it is not dead, and it signals its brethren when it is chow time.

- **DANUBE CROSSING:** The pews in the Temple certainly resemble their reputed physiology.
- **BLUE HADES:** We cannot be certain that BLUE HADES had contact with the Plateau, but drawing a line through the Church of the Sleeping Christ to their inhuman patrons strongly suggests it.

Prehistoric Contacts

- Sigils matching those found on the Pyramid were found in a cave in Afghanistan, and verified to be more than 30,000 years old.
- The Mesopotamians worshipped (or placated) fearful gods in pyramids.

Historic Contacts

- Awareness of the Plateau is ancient among the mystics of Mongolia. The Priests of the Black Buddha, an obscure religious order in Tibetan Buddhism, conducted rituals that often involved visions or physical pilgrimages to the Plateau. The Priests of the Black Buddha were reputed to have driven a tribe or group of cannibals out of the mountains. These cannibals were likely either the Tcho-Tcho tribe,³ or devotees of a radical sect of the Dzogschen school of Buddhism.⁴
- Baron Ungern von Sternberg, an eccentric Russian military officer, mystic and warlord, visited the Plateau to construct the Wall of Pain. The Bloody Baron fought on the pro-monarchist side of the Russian civil war, and believed that he was destined to become a new Genghis Khan, who would lead an army of Mongolian warriors to conquer Eurasia and purge the land of Bolsheviks and other traitors. As part of his crusade, he allied himself with the Bogd Khan, the eighth Bodg Gegen. The Bogd Khan was the third most senior lama in the Gelugpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, and the *de facto* ruler of Northern Mongolia. The Baron won the Bogd Khan's support and trust by promising to end the nightmarish visions and dreams sent from the Pyramid.
- The OGPU (the precursor agency to the KGB) had a long-standing interest in the Plateau. Gleb Ivanovich Bokii – secret policeman, cryptographer

and Rosicrucian – took over the OGPU's Spetsotdel department in 1923. That included 7th Section (which later became the Thirteenth Directorate after another series of Stalinist purges and reorganisations). He tried to dispatch an official expedition to Tibet in 1925, but elements in the OGPU's Foreign Intelligence section blocked him (and accused him of drinking blood, to boot). He tried to do an end run around Foreign Intelligence by sending Yakov Blumkin to sneak into Tibet. Given Blumkin next shows up in Sternberg's old stronghold at Dauria, we believe he made it to the Plateau and learned about the Wall of Pain.

Laundry Expeditions

Following TEAPOT's initial debriefing in 1945, the Laundry became aware of the danger posed by the Sleeper. Two expeditions in Tibet failed to locate any 'thin places' that crossed over to the Plateau, and a third expedition to Antarctica was cancelled due to more pressing business elsewhere. It was not until 1961 that the Laundry mounted a successful expedition to the Plateau.



3. An isolated ethnic group in Myanmar, whose myths and legends demonstrate previous close contact with alien entities.

4. Some Dzongchen sects were reputed to ritually consume the bodies of dead masters, as a portion of their enlightenment was passed on through eating their flesh.

The First Expedition reached the Plateau via the Gate on Bogd Uhl Mountain in Mongolia. On arrival, it conducted a cartographic survey of the Plateau, although it did not dare to cross the Wall of Pain. Two men died of exposure on the Plateau, and another three perished or went mad on the return journey. Still, the expedition confirmed that the Wall was still in place.

The Second Expedition (1965) used an artificial Gate opened in the basement of the University of Manchester using the Atlas-3 mainframe, in one of the first large scale invocations using computational demonology. The Second Expedition took more scientific equipment with it, and were able to measure thaumic flux and radiation on the Plateau, as well as being able to conduct a closer examination of the Wall of Pain.

The disastrous Third Expedition (1966) attempted to penetrate the Wall of Pain to reach the Pyramid. Arcana Analysis believed that it was possible to fool the watchers using a thanothic manipulation; this proved to be incorrect, and the entire expedition was killed. Their bodies are still visible on the south-east approach to the Pyramid.

The Fourth Expedition (1968), mounted with the assistance of TEAPOT, was the only expedition to cross the Wall. The means used to do so are classified WIDOW GAMBIT and are unlikely to be used again. Six members of the Fourth Expedition successfully crossed the Wall of Pain and spent 14 hours on and around the Pyramid of the Sleeper. The crossing was a one-way mission, but their observations and samples were placed in a glider and flown off the Pyramid to be collected by

the support team on the far side. Of the six officers who crossed over, four committed suicide (two on the Rapture Walk, two using their cyanide tablets), one was shot when he attempted to open the Sleeper's Tomb, and the last member vanished and is presumed to be dead somewhere inside the Temple.

Following the Fourth Expedition, Squadron 666 took over the duty of monitoring the Pyramid.

The Fifth Expedition (1984) conducted a search of the Plateau following the sighting of six intruders. It found footprints leading up to the Wall, but there were no signs of damage or any other tampering. Two members of the team returned to the Gate to contact mission control and request use of WIDOW GAMBIT. However, while waiting for clearance, the remaining team saw a bright light flash from inside the temple, followed by 'an inhuman scream.' Moments later, they received a radio transmission informing them that everyone in the Temple had perished.

Mission control denied the use of WIDOW GAMBIT, and there were no further transmissions or unusual activity at the Temple.

The Sixth and final Expedition (1987) planned to rappel down the side of the Plateau and explore a nearby structure nicknamed 'The Monastery.' A base camp was established at the edge of the Plateau, while the advance team descended to the plains below. They crossed six kilometres of broken terrain without incident before contact was abruptly cut off by a sudden dust storm. When visibility cleared, there was

TRANSMISSION TRANSCRIPT

Classified CODICIL BLACK SKULL - 8/9/84

0519 hours.

SMITH: Bravo, any sign?
 BRAVO: Not yet, sir. Doorway is still clear.
 SMITH: All right, let's assume that we're going to do this. Bravo, you'll escort [REDACTED] when -
 UNKNOWN VOICE: ... dead...
 SMITH: Say again.
 UNKNOWN VOICE: ... please... I can hear the flute...
 SMITH: Who is this?
 UNKNOWN VOICE: We looked beneath his mask... I saw... all dead...

SMITH: Are you on the Pyramid? Who are you?
 UNKNOWN VOICE: You fool... we're all dead...
 JACOBSEN: I think it's coming from up there, sir. Short range.
 SMITH: Who are you? Identify yourself! Where are you?
 SMITH: Identify yourself!
 SMITH: Anybody see them?
 SMITH: Anything?

---END---

no sign of the advance team. No radio transmissions or other signals were received, suggesting that whatever happened to them happened very quickly.

SQUADRON 666

The high casualty rate of ground expeditions onto the Plateau, coupled with the desire to develop more effective countermeasures against the Sleeper, led to the re-tasking of Squadron No. 666 with the mission of conducting regular reconnaissance overflights of the Dead Plateau. Squadron No. 666 was an Army Air Corps Air Observation Post unit up until 1964, when it was retrained to conduct offworld operations. The first flight of the new 666 Squadron took place in 1968, and it has successfully completed one recon flight every week since then from their base at RAF Cosford.⁵



Initially, Squadron 666 flew English Electric Canberras, refitted with optics and thaumaturgy equipment in addition to their payload of WE.177 tactical nuclear weapons. The Canberras were escorted on their flights by BAC Lightnings.

After 1978, the Squadron switched to using four Concorde refitted for occult reconnaissance and nuclear

strike capability, while Tornado F3s (and, latterly, Eurofighters) gradually replaced the Lightnings in performing escort duty.

Squadron 666 currently operates a stable of four MQ-9GORS Reapers to provide unmanned observations of the Pyramid.

Manned Flights

Currently, there are no manned flights to the Plateau, and all Concorde aircraft are undergoing extensive maintenance and exorcism. However, due to the unreliability of the Reaper drones when operating on the far side, the decision has been made to reactivate CODICIL BLACK SKULL manned flights as soon as possible.

Under standard conditions, flights take off at night from RAF Cosford and fly west over the Atlantic, refuelling from a VC10 tanker based at RAF St. Athan in Wales. The loadmaster on board then opens a Class Three gate big enough for the lead aircraft plus escorts.

Gate spells targeting the Sleeper's world are unreliable. The Plateau itself is remarkably easy to get to. The barriers between realities are thin there; it almost seems to draw travellers towards it. However, opening a Gate away from or above the Plateau is much more problematic. The far end of the Gate usually opens at an altitude of 2,000 metres within 50 kilometres of the Plateau, but considerable variation has been observed. Some flights narrowly avoided crashing into the Plateau itself; other flights arrived more than 200 kilometres off course and had to reorient themselves before commencing their scheduled overflight.

Standard watch protocol consists of flying three circuits of a racetrack pattern over the Plateau, using a rock formation nicknamed Bovington as a point of reference. Flying directly over the Pyramid itself or crossing the Wall of Pain is not permitted. During each pass, Concorde's crew capture images using a combination of conventional aerial photography, FLIR, thamatography and Raytheon SAR/MTI dual mode radar. Up until 2001, flights also used a Tillinghast/SCRY4 Kirlian camera, but the use of this instrument has been discontinued except in emergencies due to its deleterious effects on airframe and crew. All missions now carry air-launched GABLE WINDOW pods as an alternative to Tillinghast

5. Forty-three missions were scrubbed due to equipment failure or human error, and nine missions failed due to crashes, dust storms or other environmental conditions. In each case, 666 Squadron was able to fly a second mission within 72 hours to maintain the watch.

fields. Concorde flights also gather atmospheric data and photograph the sky or stars above the Plateau. The escort planes carry dust collection pods, and fly lower over the Plateau

Once the recon mission is complete, a second Gate is opened, and the flight returns to base. There, both crew and aircraft are exorcised. The Plateau is highly contaminated with necromantic energy. Squadron 666 crew are rotated regularly, and no member is allowed to log more than 200 hours on the other side.

Drone Flights

As of 2009, Squadron 666 switched to flying Reaper drones instead of sending manned flights into the Dead Plateau. These drones are launched from RAF Cosford and escorted by a recon aircraft (usually a Sentinel R1) equipped with a Gate generator. The drones fly through the Gate to the target world, while a second smaller Gate opens at the Remote Operations Centre at Winterbourne Gunner. Telemetry is sent through this second Gate via a sympathetic link, allowing group operators to control the drones even when the primary (physical) Gate closes.

The Sentinel circles until the Reaper flight completes its mission, then opens a second Class 3 gate to retrieve the drones. The intent of the switch to drones was to shield human operators from the deleterious effects of the Plateau.

Drone flights were suspended in 2010 following multiple mission failures. The sympathetic Gate link worked during test flights, but proved unreliable during field operations. Two drones failed to return to the exit Gate, and a third was destroyed in flight by an unidentified flying monster.

Post-Mission Analysis

Recon data from BLACK CODICIL flights is analysed between each mission. Images from previous flights are compared for changes, allowing the quick identification of any new features or movement. Concorde's crew complete a quick analysis while in flight; if they detect anything significant, then they flash a warning to the backup flight (see Threat Response). Between missions, staff at JARIC⁶ at RAF Brampton perform more detailed analysis of all readings and photographs.

6. The National Imagery Exploitation Centre; formerly the Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre based at RAF Medmenham (home, not co-incidentally, of Francis Dashwood's Hellfire Club and the Mad Monks.)

7. In the event that one of the White Elephants is unavailable, a Sentinel R1 equipped with Gate-opening technology can open the way for a scrambled Eurofighter with a hot payload.

Threat Response

One Concorde⁷ is always kept in readiness. Should analysis of images detect a threat, this aircraft can be dispatched to the Plateau to deal with the threat. (If an aircraft spots a potential threat during a reconnaissance flight, its orders are to return to our reality via a Gate, radio for authorization to engage, and then return to the Dead Plateau.) The threat response ladder for BLACK CODICIL is a short one, as no interference with the Pyramid can be permitted.

- **Rung One:** Intervention. A unit of paratroopers and support staff airdrop in (or Gate in) and secure the Plateau and the Wall of Pain. Likely scenario: cultists attempt to deconstruct the Wall of Pain.
- **Rung Two:** Conventional Strike. The escort aircraft launch a precision strike on the threat using Brimstone air-to-ground missiles. Likely scenario: summoned horror attempts to roll over Wall of Pain.
- **Rung Three:** Nuclear Strike. Concorde drops WE.177 tactical nuclear device. Likely scenario: Sleeper awakens.
- **Rung Four:** REDACTED . Likely scenario REDACTED

Support

Squadron 666 can provide CAS (Close Air Support) to teams operating on the Plateau. While this capability has not previously been employed, all Squadron 666 pilots are trained in close air support when directed by a qualified FAC (Forward Air Controller). Teams operating on the Plateau can employ laser targeting equipment to direct bombing runs or missiles onto hostile targets. Due to the difficulty of reaching the Plateau and the notoriously unreliable communications in the area, CAS is limited to a single bombing run under most circumstances.

Afterword

The Watch on the Dead Plateau is the single most important duty you will ever undertake. If someone succeeds in waking the Sleeper, they start a chain of events that ends in the destruction of our world. We must be prepared to make any sacrifice in order to prevent this catastrophe. Our mission is nothing less than the safety of the human race.

The Plateau of the Sleeper

This place looks well and truly dead at first sight. I take three steps after Persephone and nearly go arse over tit, for with each pace I land too late, too far away. Lower gravity than Earth, but not too low—this planet still has a breathable atmosphere, which suggests something is still putting oxygen into it. Above me the sky is dark, save for a broad sash of bluish glowing dust that crosses the up-turned bowl of the heavens—and a sun, angry and red-eyed and much too small. It's daytime and the milky way (or what passes for the ecliptic of the local galaxy) is visible and the ground underfoot is dry, uneven grit and stone slabs. Mountains rise in the distance, beyond a fencelike series of isolated lumpy posts.

- The Apocalypse Codex

You have dreamed of this place. Everyone has. If you're lucky, you forgot the dream upon waking, and it left only a lingering disquiet.

Not everyone is so lucky. Not everyone wakes up.

The Sleeper waits in a temple atop a Pyramid on a distant world. It is not dead, but lies in not-quite-eternal slumber, waiting for the strange eons to come again when the walls

of reality become so thin it can tear them down and let its masters return to the universe they once ruled. That cold, lonely Plateau is not the only battleground in the Laundry's struggle against the coming apocalypse, but it's one of the most likely flashpoints. The end of the world is closer there.

In your *Laundry Files* campaign, the Dead Plateau (or something like it) can work as an Endgame Condition.

Endgames

"The Sleeper. You're not saying it's N'yar lath-Hotep itself?"

"No, nothing that powerful: there is a hierarchy of horrors here, a ladder that must be climbed. But the thing in the pyramid can set in motion a chain of events that will ultimately open the doors of uncreation. To release it, they would best wait for the conjunction of chance: but it is in the nature of mortal cultists that they are impatient."

- The Fuller Memorandum

Roleplaying games have an interesting problem with risk. On the one hand, the chance of failure makes things interesting. If there's no chance of losing, then the players' decisions don't mean as much, and there's no point in rolling dice.

Survival on the Plateau

"One of the tools used by the monks was a preta, a hungry ghost: a body in its custody could function on the Sleeper's Plateau far more effectively than any of Sternberg's men, who had a tendency to die or go mad after only a few hours."

- The Fuller Memorandum

The Plateau's a bad place, for very, very large values of bad. Player characters sent to the Plateau face numerous hazards.

Cold: Anyone on the Plateau must roll Endurance once per day; failure means that the character loses 1d6 Hit Points.

Thin Air: The lack of oxygen means that characters who exert themselves for more than a few minutes on the Plateau must make Endurance rolls; failure means the character feels lightheaded and becomes Fatigued.

Sanity: Those who walk in the shadow of the Sleeper often go mad. Characters lose 1d3/1d6 SAN every three hours while on the Plateau, in addition to any other SAN losses caused by encounters or uncanny experiences.

Health: The Plateau drains the life force from those who walk on it. Characters lose 1d6 Hit Points every three hours spent on it. Warded characters can count their ward as armour against this roll (so, if you're wearing a Class 2 ward, you lose 1d6-2 Hit Points). Characters that perish from this life-draining effect just fall dead where they stand, with no marks or symptoms.

Gear: Bad luck haunts the Plateau. The Gamemaster should call for Luck rolls at especially inconvenient moments to determine whether or not key pieces of gear succumb to the increased entropy of the Sleeper's domain. Such items must be replaced or repaired.

On the other, failure has to be mitigated, especially early in a campaign. It's frustrating to have your character killed in the very first fight, and it's even worse if you accidentally end the world (and, more importantly, the campaign) by failing in your very first adventure. That's not an issue in novels and other fiction. There, the writer can decide whether or not a character succeeds. Roleplaying games bring interactivity and unpredictability to the story; it's their blessing and also their curse. Things can and do go horribly wrong.

The Gamemaster should build up the stakes slowly, so early missions revolve around minor threats, like shoggoths in the sewers and clueless cultists, leading to bigger bad guys in later games, once the players are familiar enough with the setting and the rules and effective tactics to deal with them.

If the player characters do screw up, then the Gamemaster can mitigate that failure. ("If you succeed, then you stopped a swarm of shoggoths from eating Wales. If you fail, then HMS York engages in a 'training exercise' off the coast that happens to involve blowing up a large chunk of the seashore").

If Bob were a player character, then his early missions were mostly small-scale affairs ('investigate concrete cows in Milton Keynes,' 'go check up on the conditions in St. Hildas,' 'look for occult secrets in Neverwinter Nights 2'). It could be argued that the ending of *The Jennifer Morgue* is an example of the Gamemaster interceding to pull the player character's bacon out of the fire when he screws up.

"The cat. You said it was the enemy. You didn't say it was occupied by the mind of that thing." She points up at the ceiling, where the cthibonic warrior is definitely twitching and writhing. I stare.

"Uh, well, I meant –"

"And you thought killing it would improve matters?"

"Yes?"

"One of the bole-like knots in the warrior's hide is growing larger. Then it opens, revealing an eye the size of a truck tire. It stares right back at me."

- The Jennifer Morgue.

Bob's Fumble on a Knowledge (Cccult) roll is followed shortly by the GM stepping in to contain the situation.

"Don't worry about the eldritch horror, we've a plan for this contingency – as soon as we've evac'd we'll just pop a brace of Storm Shadows on his ass and send him right back down where he belongs."

Ultimately, though, the Gamemaster has to take the kid gloves off. The Laundry exists in the shadow of Armageddon, and that apocalypse is delayed or hastened by the actions of the player characters. Having everything depend on one dice roll or even one adventure is a bad idea – it puts too much up to chance and can leave the players feeling cheated if they lose everything because of one bad call or one bad roll. The solution is to establish an Endgame Condition for your campaign.

An Endgame Condition is a big red button that the bad guys have to press. Getting into position to press the big red button isn't easy, and requires a lot of resources and cunning, but if the bad guys ever manage it, it changes the game completely. The more complicated it is to get there, the more secrets and occult revelations you layer around it, the better that final struggle becomes.

In the Laundry Files novels, the Sleeper in the Pyramid is an Endgame Condition. Wake the Sleeper, and CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN kicks off.

Twice, Bob's run into cults that want to get to the Sleeper and press the button. In both cases, getting into position requires overcoming the same obstacles, but the two cults use different tactics.

Obstacle	Black Brotherhood	Golden Promise
The Wall of Pain	Gaining control of TEAPOT, who knows how to deconstruct the fence.	Opening a Gate on the far side of the Wall and completing their ritual before the dead notice them.
Avoiding Detection	Infiltrating the Laundry and planting double agents on the very committee tasked with watching for threats to the Pyramid.	Drop a giant snowstorm/occult occlusion spell on Colorado to block the Black Chamber.
Waking the Sleeper	Contact the Sleeper via TEAPOT, powering the spell using the necromantic energy of the London Necropolis.	Enact the ritual from the Book of Enoch, including two members with the blood of the elect.

THE PLATEAU OF THE SLEEPER

Different cults might use different tactics, or revise their strategies when thwarted. The Black Brotherhood might go looking for the Burdovskii scroll to call up its own Eater of Souls, so the characters have to stop it stealing the Tibetan scroll from the archives of the Nameless Bureau. The Golden Promise may have lost its Mother-of-Hosts, but it has demonstrated the ability and the willingness to use alien horrors to further its plans – maybe it could go right to the primal source this time, and whistle up a Mi-Go surgeon to splice Deep Ones and human together and breed more of the Elect.

Adding third parties and unexpected enemies – or allies – makes the race for the Endgame Condition more unpredictable. In *The Fuller Memorandum*, Nikolai Panin and the Thirteenth Directorate want to ensure the safety of TEAPOT and to stop the cult, but they've also got their own parallel agenda.

In *The Apocalypse Codex* (and, for that matter, *The Jennifer Morgue*), the Black Chamber lurked in the background, using the cultists to do the heavy lifting before the Nazgul swoop in with taloned hands and grab the godlike entity.

The *Laundry Files* draws inspirations from spy thrillers, and the best spy thrillers exist on the threshold of Armageddon. The Plateau is Bob Howard's rain-slick Berlin street, his moving dots on a radar screen.

The Plateau & Other Places

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Games that track close to the novels can use the Dead Plateau and the Pyramid of the Sleeper, but there are other options, other potential endgames. If Leng's off the table, Lovecraft offers other secret places – none of them are the end of the world, but you can see it from there.

Look for places and concepts that offer lots of connections, especially ones that branch off into the febrile grounds of the occult, ancient myths, Lovecraftiana, nineteenth and twentieth century spying, and modern day military activity and espionage. You'll find eerie correspondences as soon as you scratch the surface.

- Great Cthulhu, he of the squiddy face and the weight issues, inspirer of plush toys and slippers, probably isn't sleeping at the bottom of the Pacific, but there could be a sunken outpost down there on the ocean floor, an abyssal zone too wet for the Cthonians to dare, shunned by the Deep Ones, dead yet dreaming. If the bad guys get down there with a submarine, or convince DEEP SEVEN to trigger a cataclysmic earthquake that brings some of the landmass to the surface, or find a way to remotely channel many

megadeaths worth of necromantic energy down to a stone door that's oddly non-Euclidian, then they can rotate R'lyeh out of hyperspace and into congruence with our reality. Suddenly, there'll be an Australia-sized land mass right in the middle of the Pacific, crammed with alien horrors and dread gods who last looked upon Earth three hundred million years ago.



- What lies frozen under the ice in Antarctica? What secrets did everyone's favourite star-headed crinoids leave buried? What were the Nazis looking for in New Swabia, and what did the Black Chamber find during Operations HIGHJUMP and DEEP FREEZE? Maybe the Elder Things were wiped out by a previous conjunction just like CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, but in the fading days of their civilisation, they discovered a way to control the dimensional permeability, to move the very stars from rightness. Maybe this secret could not stop the conjunction from happening, but could spare humanity from the worst of it – or, in the hands of a cult, throw the Gates open wide.
- Lovecraft wrote of a Nameless City, located somewhere near fabled Iram of the Pillars in the Arabian desert. (Iram, "which yet, after the annihilation of its tenants,

remains entire, so Arabs say, invisible to ordinary eyes, but occasionally, and at rare intervals, revealed to some heaven-favoured traveller" – which sounds strongly like a parallel world accessible via a thin place). This ancient city was inhabited by horrific reptile-men and concealed some awful secret. From there, you can tie in large chunks of the Cold War and the War on Terror – oil was just the cover for something worse.

- **OGRE REALITY:** Maybe Bob was wrong – maybe that parallel universe where the Wannsee Invocation succeeded and called up an Ice Giant is still extant. You could bring back the villains from *The Atrocity Archives*, because who doesn't love alternate-reality Nazis possessing people on behalf of their information-eating god?

Of course, the Object of Desire for the cultists doesn't have to be a physical location. It could be a goal that can be accomplished anywhere.

- Lovecraft's own take on CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN is hidden in *The Dunwich Horror*. *"They from the air told me at Sabbath that it will be years before I can clear off the earth, and I guess grandfather will be dead then, so I shall have to learn all the angles of the planes and all the formulas between the Yr and the Nbhgr. They from outside will help, but they cannot take body without human blood. That upstairs looks it will have the right cast. I can see it a little when I make the Voorish sign or blow the powder of Ibn Ghazj at it, and it is near like them at May-Eve on the Hill. The other face may wear off some. I wonder how I shall look when the earth is cleared and there are no earth beings on it. He that came with the Aklo Sabaoth said I may be transfigured, there being much of outside to work on."*

If those from outside need a human crossbreed, like Wilbur Whateley or his brother, then the goal of an apocalyptic cult might be creating a replacement hybrid. Back in old Wizard Whateley's day, there weren't any agencies monitoring IVF clinics or scanning the internet for references to Sentinel Hill. The Laundry and the Black Chamber watch for any attempts to recreate the Dunwich Horror – and even if a cult did succeed, it's hard to hide such a hybrid as it grows to monstrous maturity.

- Human consciousness is a complex structure of information, and randomising that information (*aka* death) creates ripples in the platonic realm. Killing *lots* of people in a ritual fashion was at the core of the Nazi's Wannsee Invocation, not to mention many other nasty occult rituals. Sacrificial murder is undeniably potent, and a great way to call up alien horrors, but

it requires both thaumaturgical expertise and multiple murders. Mass death works almost as well, assuming you don't mind which brain-sucker homes in on the pulse of necromantic energy, and is actually easier to conceal.

You don't need to stab your virgin sacrifice with a silver knife on an altar of obsidian on Walpurgisnacht – you just murder a few million people in a short period. The aim of the bad guys might be to cause multiple megadeaths, say by dropping a nuclear bomb on Istanbul or releasing a lethal bioweapon in Times Square. The bigger the disaster, the more likely that one of their monstrous patrons will sense it or take advantage of it.

- There are other ways to call the Great Old Ones back down to Earth. Worship on its own doesn't do much for them, but there are certain memetic patterns that can hijack the runtime of the human brain and make it easier for *Them* to break through. If the cultists can spread these memes to enough people, they can lower the permittivity of free space and let the horrors inside.

Doing so requires either massive social engineering – you need to get your memetic pattern up there with Christianity or Coca-Cola – or else optimise your software (the pattern) or hardware (brain comma human) so you can accomplish more with less. Tell me, have you seen the Yellow Sign? Better yet, can you look at this Yellow Sign while we pump you full of psychoactive drugs?

- If there was a fast-forward button for CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, don't you think that the Laundry or some other agency would have grabbed it long ago. In this scenario, there's a relic or artefact that can trigger the end of the world, and it's sitting in a secure vault.

Maybe the Black Chamber has Randolph Carter's Silver Key locked away deep under the Ranch, or the Laundry have the Moon-Lens hidden in a special lightless facility within TURNSTILE. The cultists plot to recover this relic from the authorities and use it to trigger the end of the world. Why hasn't the Laundry destroyed this artefact yet? That's for your players to discover!

- When the conjunction hits, groups like the Laundry are going to be humanity's shield against extinction. All the national occult security agencies have plans to protect their country when the tentacles go up – but what happens if one of those agencies gets taken

over by cultists? The Laundry can't keep the United Kingdom safe if the French get subverted by the Black Brotherhood and things squirm across the English Channel through the Channel Tunnel...

Seeding the Threat

Once you've got your Big Red Button, the next step is to seed the threat in your campaign. Bob didn't learn about the Sleeper on Day 1 of his career in the Laundry, but there were hints of the horrors to come even back then. Angleton's inhumanity and the threat of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN are present even in *The Concrete Jungle*. The seeds of the threat should always be presented as oblique references, as footnotes, as asides. Have the characters spot veiled references in old classified documents, have older spies mutter darkly about that bother in Ceylon, mention a botched operation in Singapore, and have a crazy cultist rant about the God of Still Waters.

Spread your seeds out across adventures as you introduce the threat gradually. For example, Bob learns about the White Elephants of Squadron 666 long before he finds out about the Wall of Pain. Drop nuggets of disassociated information into your games, so when the players finally draw the connections and realise what's really going on, it feels like a natural capstone to the game so far.

Let's say you've got the Yog-Sothoth gambit as your Endgame Condition – if a half-human, half-exonome hybrid casts the right spell, it'll bring the stars to rightness. You might kick off this campaign with *A Footnote*, the adventure on page 251 of the *Laundry Files* rulebook. It's a simple little affair, but it seeds the idea of artificially creating hybrids. A few adventures later, you could send the characters to obtain a grimoire from an occult book dealer, where they're chased by agents of a rival cult. There's no obvious connection between the two, until on a third adventure they start looking into the awful truth behind the myths of Leda and the swan... and find out that certain exonomes plan to use human hybrids as purchase on the fabric of our reality. By the time the characters are chasing invisible monsters through the streets of London, it will feel like a suitable epic turning point – or finale – to the campaign.

Defences & Requirements

Ending the world should never be easy. It's much more impressive and intimidating for the players to see the bad guys overcome tremendous obstacles and actually work to make their plans come to fruition than when they do it by Gamesmaster fiat. Building the opposition's credibility with the players is key to making the Endgame Condition feel suitably weighty.

Therefore, put yourself in Angleton's oddly cold shoes. You know there's this threat out there, this method for bringing about the End Times prematurely. You want to stop it, and you've had eighty years and the full resources of the Laundry with which to do so. Take some time to think about how the Laundry (or other, similar groups) would try to prevent anyone pressing the Big Red Button. For the Pyramid, there's the watch on the Dead Plateau and the Wall of Pain. What other countermeasures could be reasonably employed?

- Obtaining all copies of a grimoire, or planting fake versions of the grimoire in the occult underground.
- Maintaining a military cordon around a ritual site.
- Infiltrating agents into threatening cults.
- Running false flag and honey pot operations.

If any preparation would make the Endgame Condition unreachable, then come up with a reason why the Laundry can't do that. For example, the Laundry can't station troops to guard the Dead Plateau because people go mad and die there with only a few hours of exposure. Maybe the Laundry can't destroy every copy of a particular grimoire because there are copies in the archives of the Thirteenth Directorate, and they can't drop a nuke on the sunken continent in the Pacific because it would anger BLUE HADES.

Make a list of what needs to be accomplished to bring about the Endgame, come up with existing countermeasures for each of them, and then poke holes in those countermeasures. So, if the bad guys need to use the Silver Key to establish contact with Yog-Sothoth, and to do that safely they need a translation of an arabesqued parchment found with the key.

The Black Chamber has the key locked away (it doesn't want to destroy the key because it intends to use it), the Laundry's been running Professor Higgins, the best expert in the world on Tsath-Yo as an agent since 1974, and there's an oneiromantic strike team ready to deploy if anyone gets too close to Yog-Sothoth's throne room.

Let the players know the list of requirements, so they're not operating completely in the dark, but reveal both the Laundry's preparations and the opposition's plans slowly over the course of the game. The players need enough information to know what's at stake – if Bob was never briefed about the Pyramid of the Sleeper, then his struggles with the cults would feel oddly abstract, as he wouldn't know what the enemy hoped to achieve.

Feint & Counterfeint

Now that you've set up this intricate web of defences, countermeasures and stratagems, it's time to put the whole thing into motion. The opposition try to accomplish one of their requirements for bringing about the Endgame. The countermeasures go into effect – but the bad guys have a way to get around them. Now, it's up to the player characters to step in and save the day.

Going back to the example of the Silver Key, the opposition contacts Professor Higgins and demands that he translates the scroll. As per his instructions, he informs the Laundry that the enemy has made contact, but before he can give them a fake translation, the opposition murder him and capture his soul in a trap. The characters have to rescue a dead man before he translates the scroll for the cult.

If the characters succeed, then the opposition can try again with a new scheme, or look for a way to bypass that requirement. If Higgins won't translate the scroll, then maybe they can steal the Laundry's translation, or maybe a Laundry agent turns traitor and gives the translation to the cult.

And if the characters fail? Then they've lost one battle, and are one step closer to Armageddon, but the war's not over yet.

Pressing the Big Red Button

Keep hammering at a wall, and you'll break through in the end. When the player characters win, all they accomplish is keeping the opposition stalemated. When the opposition win, they get closer to Endgame, and eventually they'll be in a position to press that button. Months of preparation and intrigue, of move and countermove have led up to this moment.

Everything now depends on the actions of the player characters. If they can come up with a way to stop the opposition at the moment of triumph, then the enemy's plans are foiled forever. The characters have successfully avoided the premature arrival of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. You can either start again with another cycle of seeding threats, or you can have the End Times arrive 'naturally' in a few years (but the characters have bought humanity several more vital years in which to prepare for the onslaught).

If the characters fail, then don't save the day with any deus ex machina salvations and don't pull your punches. Move into the opening stages of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN (see *The Phoney War*, page 82).





monsters

Monsters

CYMOTHEA EXILIS

(EATER OF TONGUES)

Cymothoa Exigua is one of the weirder parasites found in nature. It's a species of parasitic aquatic louse, believed to be native to the waters off California. The louse feeds by swimming into the gills of a fish and making its way to the mouth. There, it digs into the base of the fish's tongue, cutting off the blood supply. Deprived of blood, the tongue atrophies and dies, and the louse attaches itself to the muscles and arteries that once supported the tongue. In effect, the louse becomes a replacement tongue for the fish (or, to put it another way, the fish becomes a mobile life support system for the tongue-eating louse).

There is a high correlation between *cymothoa exigua* swarms and the location of BLUE HADES underwater colonies. *Cymothoa exigua* is most often located off California, where there is a known colony off Baja California, but New England fishing records from the 1900s show that boats fishing near Innsmouth used to find tongue-eaten fish, and there's a cold-water breed called *cymothoa caledonia* that's sometimes found in cod brought up from Witch's Hole.¹

The truly dangerous form of the louse, *cymothoa exilis*, is a larger and magically potent form of the parasite. Research has yet to determine whether these creatures are exonomes (in which case the common *cymothoa exigua* is presumably a degenerate descendant of the true species) or autonomes (suggesting that *exilis* was bred from *exigua*, presumably through BLUE HADES intercession).

----- BIOLOGY -----

A 'naked' *exilis* specimen is a pale, soft-shelled crustacean measuring six to ten centimetres in length. It has seven pairs of legs, although the three rear pairs are used primarily for swimming and atrophy when the louse takes a host. It regrows these legs prior to leaving an exhausted host.

Like its smaller cousin, *cymothoa exilis* cuts off the blood supply to the human tongue and attaches itself to the roots of the glossus muscles, the lingual artery and the hypoglossal nerve. Unlike its cousin, *exilis* consumes the tongue for sustenance. It excretes a thick brown fluid that the host must spit from the mouth to avoid choking. *C. exilis* does not connect to the tonsillar branch of the facial artery or to the ascending pharyngeal artery, so the host bleeds into the mouth for up to three hours after the parasite latches on.

Once attached, *c. exilis* consumes most of the mind of the host, leaving only a shell of a personality. The host can appear to be human, and can still speak normally, but it exists only to serve the parasite. The parasite acts as the host's tongue; other than a slight slurring, the host's speech is unaffected. The parasite can attract new hosts by means of psychic compulsion (see below), but normally, an infected host is employed to capture and prepare new victims.

1. Pursuant to HR Directive 94532/c, fishing within the Dunwich Exclusion Zone is strictly forbidden.



The parasites can communicate telepathically, although their intelligence is heavily dependent on that of the host. An unattached louse operates solely on instinct, but once linked to a human host, they become capable of planning and complex thought.

C. exilis continues to grow while in a human host. Over time, it grows big enough such that it blocks the host's throat, rendering the parasitic relationship unviable. Shortly before the host chokes to death on his own monstrous tongue, it grows a new set of legs and detaches. The psychic shock of disconnection inevitably kills the host. Once free of its body, *c. exilis* goes in search of another host.

Fertile Tongue-Eaters

The lifespan of *c. exilis* is unknown, but based on its rate of growth, it must be measured in centuries. Adult, fertile tongue-eaters are therefore exceedingly rare.² A single fertile tongue-eater can lay more than fifty eggs per day; these eggs hatch into juvenile *c. exilis* within 48 hours.

----- ARCANES ABILITIES -----

C. exilis has a natural ability to project glammers. At all times, an entrenched parasite projects a level 1 glamour that prevents most observers from spotting it. A scrying spell or a sensitive can see the parasite for what it is.

When a parasite needs a new host, it projects a more intense glamour (level three) that compels a victim to make mouth-to-mouth contact with its current host.³ This glamour bypasses any protective wards, as it is a hypnotic effect instead of a geas or other magical spell. Similarly, an adult tongue-eater creates an almost irresistible glamour to draw victims close enough for its newly-hatched children to reach.

----- DOMESTICATION -----

If a suitably potent geas spell is applied to an adult tongue-eater, together with the promise of fresh hosts for its spawn, then the creature becomes docile and can be used as a means of mind control. The mother creature resides in a secure location, while the spawn are attached to vulnerable targets. Even without a fertile tongue-eater, individual spawn can be geased into submission, but the lack of a top-down hierarchical control makes this an expensive option.

Tongue-eaters may not be native to Earth. Evidence of tongue-eater activity has been encountered on several off-world expeditions. However, the weight of evidence suggests that *c. exilis* is connected to BLUE HADES. While they have not been observed to make use of the parasite in the modern era, individual *c. exilis* specimens have demonstrated an instinctive obedience to BLUE HADES hybrids.

----- COUNTERMEASURES -----

Exorcisms and banishing rites have no effect on the wholly physical *c. exilis*. Once the creature attaches itself to the hypoglossal nerve, only immediate medical intervention can save the victim. The parasite could be removed using a total glossectomy. A high dose of a suitable anthelmintic (de-worming) drug could also force the parasite to detach, but virtually all drugs of this sort are taken orally, and the parasite can block the ingestion of substances it considers harmful. Therefore, the parasite should be injected with a sedative before the host consumes the anthelmintic.

If the parasite is not removed within a short time, it consumes the host's consciousness and the victim is effectively moribund. Victims of *c. exilis* infection should be disposed of using zombie protocols.

2. Presumably, after growing too big for a human host, the parasite needs larger hosts in which to grow. Sperm whales carcasses sometimes wash up on shore with their tongues missing.

3. In other words, it zaps you and you french-kiss a fish. Or a zombie. Or a zombie fish.

Cymothean Parasite, Tongue-Eaters

Characteristic	Rolls	Averages
STR	1d3	2
CON	2d6+4	11
SIZ	1	1
INT	1d3	2
POW	2d6+6	12-13
DEX	3d6	11-12

Move: 4

HP: 6

Average Damage Bonus: 0

Weapons: Claw 40%, damage 1d3

Infest special – if the parasite gets to a creature's face, the creature must make a Luck roll (this is Easy if the creature knows about the parasite's abilities). If the Luck roll fails, the creature burrows into the victim's mouth. Once inside, the creature can only be removed with a Difficult Grapple roll.

Skills: Climb 70%, Dodge 70%, Hide 90%, Jump 60%, Stealth 90%.

Spells: A tongue-eater can cast a Level 2 Glamour at the cost of 1d4 temporary POW. The target of this glamour must roll their INT or POW against the glamour's strength of 14 on the Resistance table. If they fail, they are drawn to kiss the host of the tongue-eater.

Sanity Loss: 0/1d3 to see a tongue-eater; 1d4/1d10 to have one in your mouth.

Tongue-Eater Victims

Those suborned by a tongue-eater have their characteristics changed as follows:

Characteristic	Change
STR	+2
CON	+4
SIZ	-
INT	-2
POW	Reduced to 0
DEX	-2

The host's skills are unchanged, with the exception of Grapple, which is increased by 20%.

Fertile Tongue-Eater

Characteristic	Rolls	Averages
STR	4d6	14
CON	4d6+8	22
SIZ	4d6+8	22
INT	1d3	2
POW	2d6+6	12-13
DEX	2d6	7

Move: 4

HP: 22

Average Damage Bonus: +1d6

Weapons: Claw 40%, damage 1d6+db

Armour: 4-point hide

Spells: A tongue-eater can cast a Level 5 Glamour at the cost of 1d4 temporary POW. The target of this glamour must roll their INT or POW against the glamour's strength of 24 on the Resistance table. If they fail, they are drawn to kiss the host of the tongue-eater.

Sanity Loss: 1/1d6 to see a tongue-eater

Tough Zombies

Level Three Undead

One by one, the mummified corpses are helping each other down from the stakes upon which they were impaled. Limping and wobbling and rattling, they shuffle and lurch towards us across the dusty plain, still wearing the scraps of Russian civil war uniforms they wore when they were murdered. Many of them are fully skeletonized, but they're still articulated, and they carry knives and rusty cavalry sabres. They don't have working lungs or larynx with which to hiss brains, but you don't need to have seen many Romero flicks to know what they've got in mind.

—The Apocalypse Codex

The standard-model Residual Human Resource or possessed corpse – your basic zombie – is a dumb meat robot that obeys basic commands. Nasty up close, but slow, clumsy and easily fooled. The bound demon that drives them like a puppet isn't very powerful or smart, and it's running on rapidly-decaying hardware that allows it little freedom of movement.

GOD GAME BLACK

The Watch on the Dead Pyramid is another matter. They're still zombies, but they're juiced up on the necromantic masterwork of the Mad Baron. They've got more initiative than most shambling corpses, and retain the dexterity to use firearms. They're also tougher and harder to banish than a basic zombie. The Baron's monsters are the just one example of these improved zombies – any competent necromancer can make similar creatures with an investment of time and souls.

These creatures retain more of their human intellect, and can even show flashes of their former personalities. They're horribly *alive* on some level, which makes the Wall of Pain even more disturbing. These things can still hate...

Tough Zombies

Characteristic	Rolls	Averages
STR	3d6x1.5	15-17
CON	3d6x1.5	15-17
SIZ	2d6+6	13
INT	1d6	3-4
POW	3d6	11-12
DEX	2d6+3	10

Move: 6

HP: 14-15

Average Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Claw 60%, damage 1d4+damage bonus.
Antique Mosin–Nagant Rifle 40%, damage 2d6+4

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

Sanity Loss: 1/1d6

Dead Kings

.....
These are the reanimated forms of the half-human descendants of Nyatri Tsenpo. They look like elongated mummies, with finger-thick veins bulging out beneath their pale paper-thin skin. Their bodies are almost human, but human limbs don't bend that way, and humans don't have quite so many ribs.

They are connected to the Dead Plateau by an invisible psychic cord; when alive, they could use this cord to climb back to the Plateau at will. The cord gives them a profane form of immortality – as long as the cord remains intact, the king cannot die.



DEAD EMPEROR OF TIBET, Neck-Throned Kings

Characteristic	Rolls	Averages
STR	6d6	21
CON	4d6+8	22
SIZ	3d6+6	17-18
INT	3d6+6	17-18
POW	4d6+8	22
DEX	3d6	10-11

Move: 8

HP: 22

Average Damage Bonus: +2d6

Weapons: Claw 70%, damage 1d8+db. Sacrificial Dagger 80%, damage 1d4+1+db+1d6 temporary POW damage

Armour: 6-point hide

Skills: Command 90%, Cthulhu Mythos 75%, Dodge 30%, Grapple 70%, Listen 60%, Sense 100%, Sorcery 100%, Spot 60%, Track 70%.

Sanity Loss: 1/1d8 to see a Dead King

Magic Cord: A King with an intact magic cord is immortal, and regenerates 1 Hit Point per round when below 0 Hit Points.



The Black Chamber

And finally: they're the Black Chamber. They're not so much our sister agency as our psycho ex-girlfriend turned bunny-boiler.

— *The Apocalypse Codex*

Every since the Cambridge Five debacle, contact between the Laundry and its American 'cousins,' the Black Chamber has been severely restricted. The other elements of the UK and USA clandestine intelligence networks share information – sometimes freely, sometimes grudgingly – but the relationship between the Laundry and the Chamber makes liquid nitrogen seem toasty warm and friendly.

History of the Black Chamber

The biggest factor in the occult history of North America was probably smallpox. Infectious diseases brought by European settlers devastated the native population, with fatality figures reaching 80% in some cases. The Native Americans knew an awful lot about the *other* residents of the American continent, and could have warned those settlers about the things that lived deep underground, about the ghoulish tunnels that criss-cross most of the eastern seaboard and about the whispering voices in the dark forests.

They could have warned the settlers to shun certain ill-favoured hills, and what words and sacrifices kept the hungry ghosts in check – but they died shivering and pock-marked.

For most of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, different occult traditions and alien horrors swirled around the fabled American melting pot. The European tradition of witchcraft and traditional sorcery took root in New England, bolstered by emigrant sorcerers fleeing persecution in the Old World. Other waves of immigration brought different folk traditions, which cross-pollinated with native beliefs and forged new bargains with local entities and powers. Magic was largely ungoverned – the American equivalent of the 1864 Monster Control Act was not put into Federal Law until 1938, although individual states had similar mandates from 1830 onwards.

The Original Black Chamber

The present-day Black Chamber can be traced back to the Cipher Bureau founded by Herbert O. Yardley in 1919. It was a joint operation by the US Army and the State Department to preserve the cryptographic expertise built up during the First World War, and aimed at breaking the codes used by other governments (notably the Japanese during the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-22).

That first Black Chamber lasted until 1929, when the State Department withdrew its share of the funding, ostensibly because Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson didn't believe in the value of cryptographic research. He was patently lying – when he took over as Secretary of War ten years later, he made extensive use of intercepts and decrypted communications.

Yardley went on to write a book, *The American Black Chamber*, in which he decried Stimson's short-sightedness and exaggerated his own contribution to the Chamber's successes. In fact, Stimson had decided that Yardley lacked the moral fibre for the Chamber's new, more secret mission. In the winter of 1927-28, the State Department carried out a 'strange and secret investigation' into the coastal town of Insmouth. The village was a BLUE HADES breeding



ground and a stronghold of the Esoteric Order of Dagon, and the raid left the State Department in possession of numerous books and artefacts that needed to be decrypted and reverse-engineered, not to mention several hundred surly hybrid prisoners. Most of the Innsmouth prisoners died in captivity, but some proved willing to cooperate and submitted to interrogation. Coupled with the documents translated in 1931 by the Black Chamber, the prisoners revealed the existence not only of a previously unknown hyper-civilisation in the depths of the oceans, but also of a new form of arcane science.

Yardley's Cipher Bureau was based in New York; the reformed Black Chamber moved to Providence, Rhode Island. There, it had easy access to the Innsmouth prisoners and the town itself, but also to the extensive archives at nearby Miskatonic University in Arkham, which rapidly became the Chamber's primary source of new recruits.

One key asset that fell into the Black Chamber's hands in 1932 was the notebook of a Miskatonic student, Walter Gilman. A subsequent investigation of Gilman's background proved that he was related to the inhabitants of Innsmouth, suggesting that some of his discoveries were inspired (consciously or unconsciously) by his inhuman heritage. Gilman was a student of non-Euclidian calculus and quantum physics who identified links between his studies and various occult traditions, and thereby stumbled across elements of the Dee-Turing theorem more than a decade before Alan Turing's own initial thought experiments on the mathematical generation of Dho-Nha curves. Gilman died before he could be recruited, but by 1937, the Chamber had acquired sufficient magical ability to resurrect him from his essential salts – a process that was partially successful.

By that time, of course, the Chamber had already ploughed millions (of 1930s dollars!) into recruiting mathematicians and physicists to weaponise the Gilman papers. The brilliant von Neumann led the charge; delving into Byzantine history, he was able to reconcile the demon-summoning formulae of Theodora with operations in Hilbert space and kicked out *Mathematische Grundlagen der Quantenmechanik* as a by-product.

Stimson continued to serve as director for the Black Chamber until 1939, when he convinced Roosevelt to keep the Black Chamber independent of William 'Wild Bill' Donovan's Office of Strategic Services. He argued that the Chamber should focus on the investigation and suppression of the occult, and that its remit should be entirely domestic. On May 1st, 1939, Roosevelt issued a secret Executive Order, authorising the creation of the Office of Scientific Phenomenological Research (OSPR).

World War II

While OPSR analysts and counter-occult specialists provided support to the OSS agents in the field during World War II, the Black Chamber never deployed any of its officers overseas, as mandated by the Executive Order limiting it to domestic operations. As the scale of the Nazi occult threat became apparent, however, the OPSR began experimenting with methods for communications and control. Its researchers pioneered the use of Rosen-Waite psychic teleoperation and automatic writing so that the OPSR could operate agent overseas from its base in Rhode Island, and it began making extensive use of geas controls. The OPSR sent its first non-human agent – a bound succubus – overseas in 1942. By the end of the war it had more than two dozen non-human or partly-human agent and had perfected the casting of Class 3 compulsion magics to maximise the target's flexibility of thought while still maintaining complete control over their actions.

In 1943, Stimson (still on the board of directors for the OPSR, but now Secretary for War) feared that the Manhattan Project to build a nuclear weapon was progressing too slowly, and that the Nazis would complete Project JOTUNHEIM before the Allies had their bomb. With deep regrets, he directed the OPSR to begin work on its own summoning rites. Doing so required human sacrifices. The OPSR began experimenting on interned prisoners. Initially, these experiments were restricted to the last of the Innsmouth prisoners, but when these ran out, they started using interned German and Japanese citizens. A secret tribunal held in January of 1944 determined that the laws regarding treatment of prisoners only applied to humans, and that non-humans and entities that were clearly no longer human did not qualify. OPSR's Project PROVIDENCE aimed at creating a shortcut to an atomic weapon – instead of meddling around with chain reactions, neutron guns and explosive lens, you just open a Gate to a high-energy dimension and loose seething nuclear chaos upon the Earth.

Fortunately – mercifully – the Red Army rolled into Berlin before PROVIDENCE became necessary.

The Post-War Years

The OPSR snaffled up as many German physicists, mathematicians and philosophers as it could lay its hands on in the chaotic post-war years. The Nazi necromancers who took part in the Wannsee Invocation were off-limits even to the United States, and those captured were executed following a series of brief, but thorough military trials. Still, covert agents visited the graveyards in the winter of 1946 and collected essential salts and samples of grave dirt for future consultation.



The OPSR advised Secretary of State Marshall during the secret talks at Potsdam, where the victorious Allied powers discussed developments of occult weapons since the 1907 Hague Conference, and agreed that no government would pursue the summoning of godlike entities or large-scale Gate openings, nor would mass-possession or reality-degradation weapons be permissible in civilised warfare. This left an opening for the OPSR to capitalise on its growing expertise in binding, coupled with its newly-acquired Gate-opening techniques, to bind extradimensional entities to its service in situ. Instead of illegally invoking a potent exonyme, they could attempt to penetrate its home dimension and bind it there.

Co-operation with the Laundry and the other UKUSA Pact members greatly benefited the Black Chamber. The Laundry had the beginnings of computational demonology and much more experience in field necromancy and counter-possession techniques.

The horrors of the Atrocity Archives convinced the governments of all the Allies that the use of occult weapons could not be permitted. At least a thermonuclear war would be over quickly and the extinction of all human life on Earth would be clean and thorough. A hot war using occult weapons could doom all humanity to a literal eternity of

suffering. While hawkish elements in the Chamber argued that the Soviets were almost certain to renege on the secret agreements banning occult weapons, both the Laundry and the Black Chamber agreed that restricting and containing the use of magic was the safest option.

Where the Dark Commissioners of the OPSR and the Laundry's Mahogany Row differed was in their attitude towards BLUE HADES and the other older civilisations and powers. The Laundry's senior figures argued for a conservative, cautious approach, fearing the repercussions of angering more powerful entities. The Chamber responded that firstly, it had already dealt with several cults and even BLUE HADES incursions in the United States without any trouble; secondly, that nothing could be taken off the table and that it reserved the right to take whatever actions were necessary to protect the United States, and thirdly and most importantly, if they didn't go for it, then the Soviets would certainly try.

The Chamber expanded hugely in the post-war years, becoming ever more secretive and insular. Some of the Laundry's senior figures began muttering darkly about the dangers of corruption, and worried that their counterparts in the Black Chamber were a little too enthusiastic about certain passages in the *Necronomicon*. The lure of power is hard to resist. The Laundry had had its troubles with faustian bargains and corrupt wizards centuries ago, and dealt with them through the Black Assizes. The Black Chamber's sorcerers were far more powerful thanks to Computational Demonology, but no wiser than those medieval apprentices who were dragged before the secret star chamber.

The Chamber disengaged from the Laundry after the Cambridge Five scandal in the 1960s. The Chamber blamed the Laundry for leaking GREY CADAVER and other occult information-gathering data to a Soviet spy; the Laundry accused the Black Chamber of skirting the edges of both the Benthic Treaty and the post-war non-proliferation agreements with projects like JENNIFER MORGUE and the alleged PLUTO KOBOLD contacts. It was a messy break-up. Crockery got thrown, and things were said that cannot be unsaid.

Rise of the Nazgûl

The details are still murky, and not even the dead are able to talk about it, but there was a very nasty night of the long knives among the upper echelons of the Chamber in 1974. Several high-level officers got purged, and others went on the run (they didn't get far, contrary to certain rumours about ex-Chamber officers hanging out in Belize or Monaco). The Chamber re-organised in 1975, adopting the moniker of the Operational Phenomenology Agency.

The Strange Case of PLUTO KOBOLD

As you know, Bob, ol' HPL wrote about a race of fungoid beings from Yuggoth, aka Pluto, who flapped down to Earth to mine rare minerals and steal our brains. Lovecraft knew a lot more than he had any right to, even when you take into account that he did a lot of research at Miskatonic and that the Black Chamber's first headquarters was just around the corner from his home in Providence. Most occultists who've made the connection between what Lovecraft wrote and the horrific reality that we live in tend to overestimate his insight. He got a lot of stuff right, but he got even more wrong.

The Mi-Go were assumed to be something that he made up, or cobbled together from a dozen different sources. Certainly, the Laundry believed them to be a myth up until the mid '60s, when our sniffers started to hear rumours about a Black Chamber project connected to the space race. Allegedly, the Chamber had made contact with the Mi-Go, gotten into a brief scrap with them, but then signed a treaty with them. The Mi-Go got to continue their mining and bizarre medical experimentation, while the Black Chamber got access to some bits of alien technology and sorcery. The whole thing was, according to the rumours, based on the Benthic Treaty, only this time the Chamber cut the rest of humanity out and negotiated a unilateral deal with the space mushrooms.

A confirmed upswing in bizarre deaths, alien abductions, and stories about little green men followed. Later came the GOBLIN HEDGE raids,

when a double agent within the Esoteric Order of the Silver Twilight managed to steal the Order's copies of several documents that it had stolen from the Chamber. Those documents confirmed the earlier rumours. Pretty soon after that, we got hold of our first Mi-Go corpse, and Laundry analysts were able to talk to one in the '90s under the information-sharing terms of the Benthic Treaty. So, Mi-Go are real, the Chamber got them first, case closed, right?

Maybe not. There are two distinct but equally disturbing possibilities here.

Option 1: Take it all at face value. The Black Chamber bargained with brain-stealing space aliens, trading the lives of American citizens in exchange for occult secrets and the promise that the Mi-Go won't wipe us out. In this scenario, the Chamber's got an edge over every other occult intelligence agency out there, but one it bought at a high price. The Mi-Go must be pretty terrifying for the US Government to allow them to conduct the murder and dissection of American citizens.

Option 2: It's a ploy. There are no Mi-Go. The Chamber faked the whole thing. It was initially a scheme to hoodwink the US Government - "If you don't co-operate, and let us, er the spacemen do whatever we want, there'll be a flying saucer hovering over the White House by Tuesday!" and now the Chamber has expanded it to fool other occult intelligence groups. While everyone's chasing Mi-Go stories, the Chamber's off pursuing its real goal.

It started using the Dark Mark in earnest then, and the upper levels of the Chamber became effectively invisible to their subordinates. For the last thirty years, the Chamber's been hermitically sealed to outsiders.

Everyone started calling them the Nazgûl then. Hey, what else do you call invisible monsters who cloak themselves in the semblance of human form, and who offer shiny gold rings of power that suck your soul away?

Every grimoire is an apocalypse codex. Every mercury-crazed sorcerer and visionary talked about the end of the world. We've known about what we now call CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN for centuries, but it was only in the

last few years that we've started to prepare for it properly. Even the old enemy in the Kremlin acknowledges that we're all in this together, ever since they dug up those scrolls in Afghanistan and realised the folly of fighting a war on two fronts. While the Laundry may scuffle with the Thirteenth Directorate or other groups, we all follow the same rules of engagement. We all want humanity to survive...

...but no-one's sure who's calling the shots at the top of humanity's biggest and baddest occult agency. If you were a cosmic horror planning on eating the world, wouldn't you start by subverting the group with the best chance of stopping you?

Playing a Black Chamber Character

The default assumption for *Laundry Files* games is that you're playing agents of the Laundry (the clue's in the name) and that the Black Chamber are the bad guys. Yes, they've got more cool toys and they're better dressed and they don't have to suffer through as much bureaucracy, but the Laundry has more... Character? Tea? Oh wait, moral fibre, that was it. The Black Chamber consists of scary bastards in the extreme. "We had to turn the human population into fodder for our summoned alien slave-gods in order to save them".

This chapter does contain rules for generating Black Chamber characters. These rules are primarily for the GM's benefit, or for creating ex-Chamber defectors (see the rules for Breaking Oaths on page 66), but if you want to play a Chamber game, see the campaign advice on page 75.

Black Chamber characters are created just like regular Laundry characters, following the steps in Chapter 4 of the *Laundry Files* rulebook, with the following exceptions:

Step One: Choose whether you're playing a human officer, an inhuman asset, or a thrall.

- Follow the steps below to create a human officer or an inhuman asset. For more on non-human player character, see the *Agent's Handbook*.
- For a thrall, use any character creation rules (either these ones, the basic rules in the *Laundry Files*, or the Outside the Laundry characters from the *Agent's Handbook*). You don't work for the Chamber directly, but you bear the Dark Mark (see page 63). Ignore the rest of this section.

Step Eight:

- Pick one of the Assignments described in this chapter instead.
- Add the following skill bonuses: Bureaucracy +10, Cthulhu Mythos +5, Firearms (any) +5, Knowledge (Espionage) +10, Sorcery +5, Spot +5, Technology Use (any) +5, any other skill +5.

Step Nine:

- Black Chamber characters are bound with either the Dark Mark (see page 63) or a demon (see page 64), assuming that they're not already dead (see page 69).
- Black Chamber characters are all armed.

Structure of the Operational Phenomenology Agency

Here's how highly the Nazgûl value your soul – even if you're completely and utterly their creature, body and soul, they still don't trust you enough to even give you an organisation chart. You don't need to know it. The OPA generally isn't an organisation that you can advance in. For the most part, they don't recruit promising talent – they recruit tools.

Actually, the OPA can be considered to be six siloed organisations within the same body, organisations that rarely meet. At the very top, there's the Dark Commissioners and the Director. They're generally referred to as the Dark Lords. Below them, there's Control, the Unblinking Red-Rimmed Eye.

Under Control (if you'll pardon the expression) are the six major divisions of the Chamber – Assets, Monitoring, Operations, Support, Arcana and Research. Each division is highly compartmentalised – Mo, for example, was technically working for the Research Division when she was

in the United States, but had no idea about the real identity of her own – um, employers.

Each of these divisions has manpower and funding that dwarfs the Laundry like a shoggoth dwarfs a small lump of snot. The War on Terror was very good for the United States intelligence community's budget, with billions of dollars ending up funnelled into dozens of secretive agencies and think tanks, and the Nazgûl hollowed them all out and turned them into more bureaucratic wraiths, empty offices that exist purely to suck up more cash. The Black Chamber is staggeringly huge and byzantine.

Director

The Director of the OPA sits on the Intelligence Community committee alongside the directors of the NSA, NRO, CIA, FBI and a whole alphabet soup of other agencies. Given the Black Chamber's predilection for remote operation and wearing fleshy masks, there's every probability that the Director is a puppet for someone else, or even something else. The Director is supposed to be appointed by the President, but it's close to being the other way around these days.

Dark Commissioners

The OPA's counterpart to the Laundry's Mahogany Row. They work for the Director, and one squats at the head of each of the six Divisions. Little is known about them.

Control

Control is the evil genius (and that's the old meaning of genius, the divine spirit within every individual) of the Black Chamber. As far as the Laundry can determine, Control is made up of several dozen skilled sorcerers, although it could be a single entity or a gestalt of some sort. They share the Control identity and callsign, but have different personalities and specialities. The members of Control have three key responsibilities.

First, they run the day-to-day operations of the Black Chamber. If you've got the clearance, you can pick up a phone – any phone – and call them. Control knows pretty much everything, and can tap into police, federal or corporate databases seemingly at will.

Second, they're the Eye. They can synthesise all the data from Monitoring in real-time, and augment it with data from other sources, both occult and conventional. It's not paltry remote viewing – imagine a cluster of expert psychics feeding into a stochastic correction model, augmented with the biggest scry-surveillance network *and* live data from innumerable drones and satellites. That means that they can literally see anything that happens within the continental United States, and have terrifyingly good vision throughout most of the world. If Control's looking in your direction,

they can see you from the inside out and snarf your password from the reflection on your eyeball. The Eye is all-seeing.

They can also exert influence through their gaze. If the Eye fixes its gaze upon you, the shock of attention is worth a 1/1d4 SAN test. By manipulating probability, the Eye's gaze can give a +10% bonus or -10% penalty to any rolls made within its field of vision.

Third, Control can body-jump into anyone who bears the Dark Mark. They don't need to be invited in – if you wear the Mark, they can use you as a meat sleeve at will. Control has full command of the host body's movements and actions, and can use it as a channel for spellcasting (with most of the processing done locally, so if Control fucks up the spell, the host is the one who gets K-Syndrome).

So far, the Laundry has observed the following Controls, codenamed according to the original thirteen colonies. These codenames do not reflect the individual Controls' area of origin or influence; Control's reach is global and all the suspected different Controls seem to be peers.

New Hampshire: Impatient, extremely violent, low boredom threshold. Quite possibly psychotic. The Laundry believes this Control to be young and female. She's the most skilled Control in close combat.

Massachusetts: Massachusetts seems to have some added responsibilities beyond his duties as Control, as he sometimes seems distracted. Several times, he appeared to have conversations with a third party while in control of a body. Obviously, observers only heard Control's half of the

Beating the Eye

The Eye is all-seeing... up to a point. It can only look in one place at a time, so you can distract the Eye. If it's sweeping New York for a concealed dirty bomb, then you're free to smuggle shoggoths into San Francisco.

It is also possible to hide from Control's fiery gaze. The Eye's vision is made up of three components – remote vision, magical scrying from contagion subjects and digital imaging.

Blocking the first one requires an Area Ward or Entropic Manipulation to block the goat-fanciers. The second component relies on there being living witnesses who are part of the contagion network – either full-fledged stringers or just unwitting observers. If there's no-one else around, the Eye can't see you (assuming you're not part of the contagion grid). Finally, while Control can hijack any wired-in security camera, hop onto the nearest drone or even redirect a passing KHL2 spy satellite, they can't look through walls. No cameras, no eyes.

Of course, the Eye gets tetchy when it can't find someone. Creating blind spots in the Eye irritates it, and an angry Control is never, ever a good thing.

THE BLACK CHAMBER

conversation, but he appeared to be arguing with a superior, possibly the Director or a more senior Control.

Rhode Island: Avuncular, cynical, erudite, this Control is most often encountered when dealing with other occult intelligence agencies or when the Black Chamber deigns to talk to the US Government. He appears to have special authority with regards to diplomacy, and can override other Controls in certain circumstances. This Control is a chain smoker; when his host does not have a cigarette to hand, he fidgets.

Connecticut: Speech patterns suggest an elderly male. Connecticut is extremely callous and seems to enjoy using host bodies as disposable sleeves. Last encountered in 1997; the Laundry suspects the previous Connecticut has died, but a replacement has yet to be identified.

New York: Soft-spoken, professional, possibly an academic. New York is associated with the Black Chamber's Arcana and Research divisions.

New Jersey: Comes across like a Marine Drill Sergeant or a DHS hardass. Often deployed as a bully to intimidate annoyances and get the troops in line, but has also been sighted commanding teams in combat.

Pennsylvania: Never speaks. His area of expertise seems to be tradecraft, street artistry and assassination.

Delaware: The Delaware Control is the one most likely to jump into a host unexpectedly. He seems to abuse his position, using host bodies for sexual encounters or just for shits and giggles – for example, he once took control of a stringer and walked her off a 20th floor balcony to

demonstrate the strength of the Dark Mark. The other Controls did not censor him for his behaviour.

Maryland: Believed to be an older female. Like Rhode Island, Maryland has trumped other Controls in the past. Her role appears to be that of a troubleshooter; she's most often encountered when operations need a firm hand at the tiller to salvage them.

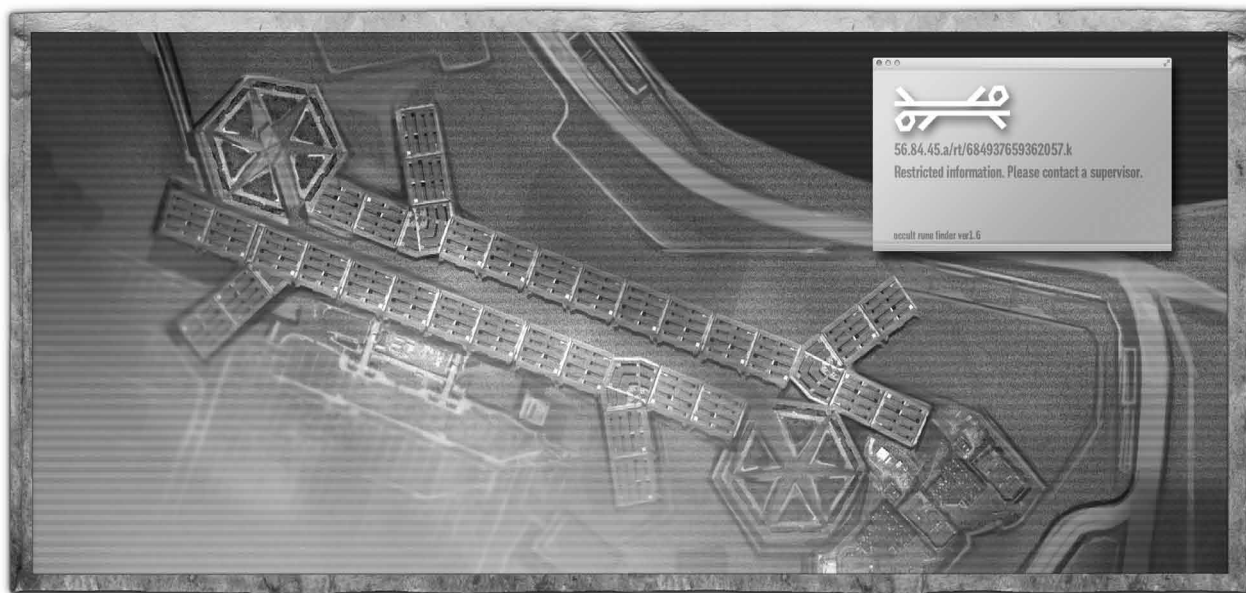
Virginia: The Virginia Control has never been observed to speak except in Enochian and other arcane tongues, and is strangely inept at controlling host bodies. When in possession, hosts move in a way that's been described as 'spasming' or 'insect-like.'

North Carolina: The North Carolina Control primarily handles overseas operations. Virtually all encounters with this Control happened between 0200 and 0800 hours EST, suggesting that North Carolina may be the OPA's night shift Control, or that he is physically located somewhere in Europe.

South Carolina: The South Carolina Control appears to be the group's technical expert, and is called in when a host needs computer skills. Speech patterns suggest a young male.

Georgia: Affects a 'good ol' boy' attitude, and has a strong Texan accent. His expertise seems to be in the military and technical fields.

The Black Chamber has hundreds of other mind riders who tele-operate zombies and other assets. These drone pilots may also take control of thralls as needed. Presumably, replacement Controls are drawn from this pool of junior operators.



Controlled by Control

Only one thing left. Utter desperation and fear threaten to weaken his knees before he can do it. It's a last resort: maybe they can-

****Help?****

Patrick loses consciousness immediately. Someone else looks out through his eyes, someone more detached, with the aloof cruelty of a small boy contemplating the antics of insects trapped in a jam jar.

"Hello," says Patrick's mouth.

And then, with an agility alien to a sixty-year-old in poor condition, he stoops sideways and scoops up the shotgun.

-The Apocalypse Codex

If Control grabs hold of a character, then they can use that character's body as if it was their own. The same features hold true for all Controls:

- Control ignores the effects of damage. If the character's taken a Major Wound, ignore any CON, DEX or STR losses. A body can't lose consciousness either when puppeted by Control. The downside is that if Control takes possession of a body that's suffered a Major Wound or has been reduced to 0 hit points, then that body takes another 1d6 damage when Control leaves.
- Control has scores of at least 70% in Command, Insight, Knowledge (Politics), Knowledge (Espionage), Knowledge (Occult), Listen, Sense, Sorcery and Spot.
- Control doesn't need to make Sanity checks under most circumstances (and any situation that's scary enough to freak out Control probably means that the host is dead anyway).
- Control's got a form of Second Sight, and can see magical effects, thaumic fields, invisible creatures and so on - treat as a Level 2 Scrying spell that is always on.

Different Controls have different skills. Assume that each Control's got 100% in at three key skills related to his specialty, and 80% in any skills that are arguably related to that specialty.

Control's a busy evil overlord. If there are other demands on Control's time, it may stay for just long enough to complete a conversation or overcome some obstacle, then hop out.

Calling Control: A character who bears the Dark Mark can voluntarily call upon Control. Calling Control works just like a Support Requisition (see page 106 of the *Laundry Files*). The difficulty of the test depends on what the character needs from Control.

Basic advice or information: *Easy*
Intervention with another government agency, spellcasting, classified info: *Average*
Possession, extensive spellcasting: *Difficult*

Seized by Control: If a character wants to resist being taken by Control, then he can try. He has to pit his POW against Control's POW of 20 on the Resistance Table. Success means that he can ward Control off for one round, but a fresh contest must be made in each round if Control keeps trying to worm its way in.

Most wards and other protective spells can't keep Control at bay. If you're wearing the Dark Mark, then Control is part of you already. It is possible to break free of the Mark, but it's not easy - see *Breaking Your Oath* on page 66.

The host is still conscious and aware when Control is in charge. If Control, say, chooses to stick your own shotgun in your mouth and pull the trigger, you'll taste the cold metal of the barrel and feel your own finger tighten on the trigger. In fact, given the service motto of the Black Chamber, you'll feel that slug tear through your living brain and blow out the back of your skull.

Control & Sanity: Being ridden by Control costs 0/1 Sanity. Being taken against your will is worth a 1d6/1d10 loss. If Control uses your body to do unspeakable things, then the SAN loss from those acts is doubled.

Assets Division

The Black Chamber's renowned for taking the Human out of Human Intelligence. Other intelligent species don't count as human under US law, so the Chamber's free to make use of them as living weapons. Assets Division runs the menagerie of bound servitors and trapped horrors. Some of these, like Ramona, are cloaked in glamours so that they can pass for human. Others... are harder to hide.

Each Asset is paired with a controller, who carries that Asset's tokens of binding – magical artefacts keyed to that Asset's demon, which give the controller the power of command over the agent. Agents who fail are punished – the Chamber can't steal their souls, but it can make them wish for oblivion. Assets Division also runs the Chamber's extensive necromancy section.

The Chamber makes extensive use of remote-control zombies and lobotomised meat puppets, not to mention the fact that you don't ever escape the Chamber's control thanks to the Dark Mark's soul-capture subroutine. Those who die wearing the Dark Mark have their consciousness preserved in the vaults of the Black Chamber. These bound ghosts are stored in glass jars in endless filing cabinets in a former coal mine.

The third category of Assets are stringers and informants (thralls, in company lingo) who have taken the Dark Mark, but are not actually employed by the OPA. The Chamber has thousands of these agents across the world. Some were paid to take the Dark Mark, others chose it out of fear or desperation.

Assets Assignments

Necromancer: Command, Computer Use (Magic), Medicine (any), Science (Thaumaturgy), Sorcery.

Remote Operator: Computer Use (any), Firearms (any), Technology Use (any), Spot, Strategy.

Asset Controller: Command, Knowledge (Espionage), Insight, Psychoanalysis, Sorcery.

Inhuman Asset: Any three skills, plus one special skill related to your inhuman nature. See the *Laundry Agent's Handbook* for more on inhuman characters.

The Chamber's thralls can be found in many different fields. Obviously, there are plenty of ex-cultists, criminals, police officers, spies and mercenaries in the mix, along with the rare book dealers, cryptographers, black-hat hackers, weapons dealers and sinister antiquarians who lurk on

the fringes of the occult world, but the Chamber has eyes everywhere. Anyone could bear the Mark.

Control may or may not be part of Assets Division. The Laundry suspects it got moved in and out during recent reforms, possibly reflecting internal strife within the ranks of the Dark Lords.

Monitoring Division

The counterpart to the Laundry's Monitoring section, but a whole lot bigger. Telephone conversations, email and other internet traffic, news, snail mail, reports from stringers and informants, and a whole lot of remote viewing and contagion-magic data goes through here. Monitoring sorts through it and sends the juicy stuff to Operations, Arcana or Research if it's actionable, or Control can use the whole division as one big fiery eyeball.

The Chamber's got access to a few tricks the Laundry doesn't – it's got more money and fewer ethics, so it can do stuff like run a contagion grid using blood samples taken from American citizens – if the Black Chamber has ever tasted your blood, they can find you and watch you with scrying magic. Based on what the Laundry picked up during the events of JENNIFER MORGUE, the Black Chamber intends to have 95% of the US population tagged by the time CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN rolls around. By then it will have up-to-the-minute data on possessions and mass deaths across the country, which will come in very handy when deciding where to allocate resources and where to sacrifice.

Monitoring Assignments

Analyst: Bureaucracy, Computer Use (any), Research, any two Knowledge skills.

Cryptographer: Computer Use (any), Knowledge (Espionage), Science (Cryptography), Science (Mathematics), Spot.

Human Terrain Technician: Insight, Persuade, Knowledge (group), Knowledge (Linguistics), Knowledge (any).

Remote Viewer: Computer Use (Magic), Knowledge (Espionage), Sense, Spot, Sorcery.

Station Officer: Bureaucracy, Knowledge (Region), Knowledge (Linguistics), Firearm (any), Stealth.

Operations

Field Operations are messy, dangerous things. They often involve travel, violence, hard choices and the risk of death or serious injury. The Black Chamber, therefore, doesn't like to get its hands dirty with field ops.

GOD GAME BLACK

Other people's hands, though, are fair game.

OPA Operations are characterised by the use of proxies (either knowing proxies like a bound Asset, or unwitting dupes), false flags, undercover officers and very dirty tricks. Operations gets some third party or an Asset to do the hard work, then swoops in and grabs the prize. The Laundry's been on the sharp end of a few OPA ops in the past, but we invented this sort of double-cross, and we're too old and canny for them to catch us out most days. No, the Black Chamber's usual dupes are well-meaning investigators, private corporations and other parts of the US Government. The Nazgûl are very, very good at extracting maximum return from minimum effort.

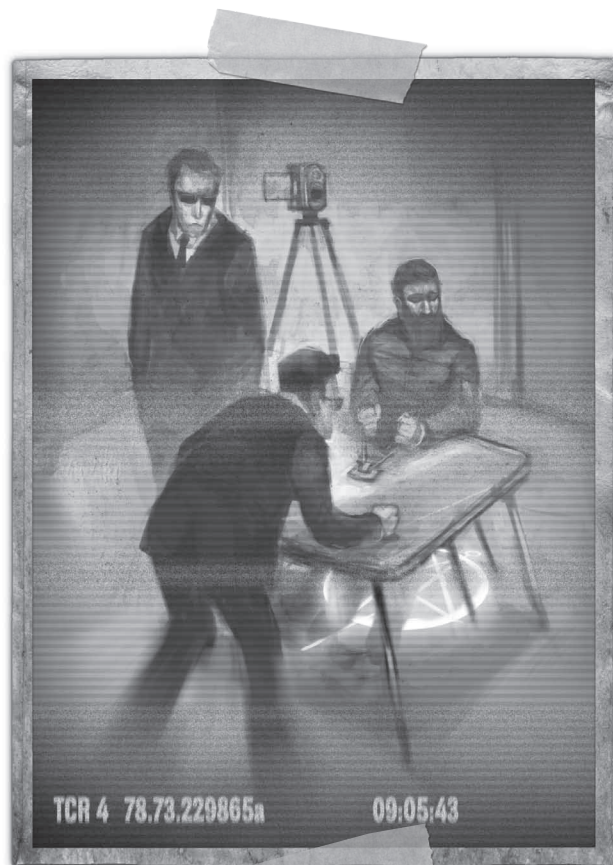
Operations, therefore, is a surprisingly small division within the OPA. They only need a handful of human field officers. These field officers are the best that the OPA can muster – sneaky, duplicitous buggers the lot of them, backed up with the full attention of the Eye and the unparalleled resources of the world's biggest occult intelligence outfit.

They need it, too. While the Chamber prefers to use proxies, the Nazgûl are crazily ambitious. When a cult high priest tries to summon his squiddy god and end the world, the Laundry's instinctive response is to have a cup of tea, then a second cup of tea over a budgeting meeting, and then a third cup with two sugars from a thermos flask just before sniping the head priest with a silver bullet. The Nazgûls' instinctive reaction is to hand the high priest everything that he needs, wait for the summoning ceremony to get into full swing, then wipe out the cult, stuff the god into a binding pentagram and stick its unholy ass in an undisclosed location for future interrogation and possible employment. Typical American bravado.

Speaking of which, the Chamber has its own military unit modelled on the CIA's Special Activities Division, and is believed to have an arrangement with SOCOM's Advanced Force Operations to obtain whatever Special Forces are needed.

Operations also handles mind control, and here's another place where the Chamber's approach differs from that of the Laundry. The Laundry uses mind-wipes sparingly, as erasing too many memories can cause all sorts of nasty side effects (psychotic delusions, for example). If a civilian saw too much to be safely wiped, they get to sign Section III and are drafted into the Laundry, where Personnel shunts them into a vaguely suitable job. That's why the Laundry is over-staffed with clueless office drones – most of the staff qualified for their job by being too stupid to run away when the eldritch chanting started.

The Black Chamber doesn't do that. They only take the best – if you work for them, it's because you have valuable skills or because they've got your soul by the spiritual balls. They're not going to recruit some hick from Bumfuck, Illinois just because he saw a shantak eating his cows. The Chamber's got lots of Men in Black to wipe people's memories, and they don't care about the side effects. That's what health insurance is for. There's a reason for all those alien abduction stories...



Operations Assignments

Technician: Computer Use (any), Fine Manipulation, Repair, Sleight of Hand, Technology Use (any).

Wetworks: Brawl, Firearms (any), Hide, Stealth, Spot.

Black Bagger: Demolition, Fine Manipulation, Hide, Stealth, Technology Use (any).

Street Operative: Disguise, Drive, Knowledge (Espionage), Insight, Stealth.

Field Sorcerer: Computer Use (Magic), Knowledge (Occult), Science (Thaumaturgy), Science (Mathematics), Sorcery.

Armed Support: Artillery, Command, Firearms (any), Heavy Weapon (any), Strategy.

Support

The Support Division takes care of the Chamber's infrastructure and physical assets, and houses the bureaucracy, liaisons with the other branches of government, manages the black budget and other bits of nightmarish housekeeping. The OPA is at the centre of a web of government contractors and support agencies, groups like TLA and Moonstone Metatechnology, and that all goes through Support. There's rumoured to be a revolving door between the upper echelons of this division and the boards of various occult technology corporations – you put in your time in the OPA, and then get a fat paycheque selling stuff to your old employers. (Of course, you never really leave... if the Nazgûl permit you to join a corporation; it's just a ruse to bind that corporation closer to the dark throne).

The Chamber's approach to security is... unforgiving. Lethal countermeasures are widely employed. If an employee triggers a death spell, then Internal Affairs have a chat to his trapped soul. If a civilian gets zapped, well, that gets shunted over to Operations to sort out. They can resurrect the civilian as a zombie who thinks he's alive (it's a pretty simple hack), or just erase all records and memories of the deceased.

Support Assignments

Bureaucrat: Bureaucracy, Knowledge (Accounting), Computer Use (any), Knowledge (Business), Status.

Computer Technician: Computer Use (any two), Repair, Science (any), Technology Use (any).

Political Liaison: Bureaucracy, Knowledge (Politics), Knowledge (Espionage), Insight, Status.

Purchasing: Appraise, Bureaucracy, Knowledge (Accounting), Science (Thaumaturgy), Technology Use (any).

Facilities Management: Craft (any), Heavy Machine (any), Repair (any), Spot, Sorcery.

Security: Firearms (any), Dodge, Listen, Sorcery, Spot.

Internal Affairs: Command, Bureaucracy, Insight, Sorcery, Status.

Arcana

Driving American scientific research since the 1950s, the Division of Arcana wields more arcane power than any other body on the face of the Earth (this declaration void below the thousand-metre Benthic Treaty line, or

below the Mohorovičić discontinuity). Division of Arcana necromancers and sorcerers get to play with all the coolest toys that a bloated military-industrial complex can build.

The Black Chamber's biggest triumphs – that we know about, anyway – are in the field of binding. The Laundry is happy to keep the many-angled ones at bay on their side of the Calabi-Yau manifold, but the Chamber deliberately seeks out and binds extremely powerful entities in massive containment grids. They were grabbing class fours by the early 1960s, and certainly made an attempt to bind an aspect of GIZA DISORDER (*aka* Nyarlathotep) in 1978. The ultimate intent of this project is unknown – during the Cold War, the Laundry assumed that the Chamber planned to use these bound entities as weapons if things went hot, but their rate of acquisition has only increased since the fall of the Soviet Union. It's possibly that they're trying to pre-emptively thin out the ranks of the Great Old Ones before the Stars Come Right, or that they believe they can somehow control these entities and use them against their own kind. Some paranoids suggested that the Chamber has made a deal with some of the brain eaters, and that their summoned prisoners are actually dinner guests who prebooked seats at the humanity buffet in exchange for sparing the waiting staff.

Arcana Assignments

Occult Scientist: Cthulhu Mythos, Computer Use (Magic), Knowledge (Occult), Science (Mathematics), Science (Thaumaturgy).

Binder: Cthulhu Mythos, Computer Use (Magic), Command, Knowledge (Occult), Science (Thaumaturgy).

Gate Technician: Computer Use (Magic), Science (Physics), Science (Astronomy), Science (Thaumaturgy), Navigate.

Research

Thousands of academics across the world unwittingly work for the Black Chamber. Research Division spends millions of dollars backing seemingly obscure PhD topics and translation projects. Army cash ends up being funnelled into studies of Babylonian theology or the philosophical implications of string theory. Dr. O'Brien's work at Miskatonic, for example, was funded by the Black Chamber.

The Chamber has its own version of the Laundry's Stacks; several of them, in fact. There's the Nightmare Archive on their company intranet, the expanded Wilmarth collection in the Providence building, and – allegedly – several floors of the extradimensional library at Celeano (staffed with armed librarians in spacesuits packing banishing rounds).

Research Assignments

Archivist: Cthulhu Mythos, Knowledge (Occult), Knowledge (Linguistics), Research, any Knowledge or Science.

Translator: Cthulhu Mythos, Knowledge (Linguistics), Knowledge (History), Research, any Knowledge or Science.

Researcher: Cthulhu Mythos, any two Sciences, Research, Sorcery.

Working for the Black Chamber

The Laundry recruits promiscuously, grabbing anyone who might have ever glimpsed the supernatural. Most of the Laundry's staff is semi-competent, clueless, bored or crazy, and the small core of really talented officers has to wade through a morass of bureaucracy. The Laundry moves with all the efficiency and grace of a morbidly obese hippo with severe OCD.

The Chamber isn't like that. Put simply, the Chamber doesn't fuck about. They've got a bottomless black budget and virtually no oversight. They can do what they have to do to protect the United States from an invisible and impending danger. That means that every employee of the Black Chamber is (a) easily replaceable, as they can always find someone else with your skills, or just kill you and bring you back in a more compliant form. Every employee is also (b) obsessively driven to succeed and hit their targets, because they're (c) scared shitless of what management might do to them.

At least in the Laundry, you know that someone's monitoring the Auditors. The Dark Commissioners have no such limitations.

Chamber Officers

If you're human and inside the Chamber, congratulations! You're one of the trusted few, the acolytes to the dark gods named Control and the Dark Commissioners. This is as likely as far as you'll ever rise, but that's okay – you're the ultimate Washington insider, one of the men in black who can topple presidents and start wars. Most of the human officers have desk jobs or couch jobs (remote possession of assets); field officers are a distinct minority among the human contingent. The Black Chamber recruits most of its human staff out of college. Chamber head-hunters scour the Ivy League and other respected universities for potential recruits. The ideal Chamber recruit majored in political science, history, languages, physics, computer science, mathematics or economics, is physically fit and

healthy, and is ambitious, but dissatisfied. The Chamber prefers candidates with a religious background, but who are non-believers. The Chamber rarely takes 'no' for an answer – those who refuse to answer their nation's call are often recruited later through indirect means. They might be subtly influenced to join a research institute that's secretly a Black Chamber project, or allowed to rise into a position of influence in the government or private sector and then recruited as a stringer.

Inhuman Assets

The legal foundation for the Chamber's Inhuman Assets section is the landmark case of *Marsh v United States (1937)* when lawyers for the Innsmouth detainees sued the American government for wrongful arrest and detention. In a secret ruling, the Supreme Court voted 6-1 against the appeal, deciding that citizenship and human rights applied only to entities that were human, and that the Deep One hybrids did not qualify. (The British Monster Control Act, by contrast, rules that hybrids and other quasi-human entities are legally human, but their rights can be constrained for reasons of public health and safety, just like medusas.)

The majority of inhuman assets, of course, are completely inhuman and non-sapient. The Chamber has an arsenal of bound demons writhing inside containment grids, of shoggoths slumbering in former missile silos, of byakhee circling endlessly above Creech Air Force base in Nevada. They dragged shambling horrors out of the vaults beneath the Curwen farm outside Arkham, and captured thousands of ghouls from the tunnels under Boston under the cover of the Big Dig in the 1990s.

The assets that can pass for human through the use of glamours live almost-human lives. They're paid by the Chamber and are permitted to maintain civilian identities. The Chamber keeps them under control by means of a bound demon. A human case officer gets assigned as a handler to each inhuman asset.

The Chamber's Infernal Lawyers interpret *Marsh v United States* to mean that formerly human entities no longer count as human, too. Obviously, the dead don't have human rights, so resurrected or soul-bound officers also fall under the inhuman assets category. Some of the more powerful undead retain enough political pull (or sheer magical might) to retain their independence, but for most staff, getting killed means a significant downgrade in your status within the Chamber.

Victims of possession are also tagged as non-human if banishing the demon would kill the host. Many possessors sink their psychic claws into the host's nervous system, so

that even if they're banished, they take chunks of the host's psyche with them. The former possessed is left a drooling vegetable or a hollow shell. The Chamber has the magical skill to bound possessor demons, turning demon and victim into a single asset. (Of course, if they've got the magical skill to do that, then they also have the necessary skill to unpick the demon's psychic hold and free the host safely – but if they did that, the host would be legally human again, and outside their jurisdiction...).



Thralls

The Chamber's vast web of spies and sleeper agents all wear the Dark Mark. It's standard operating procedure for the Chamber to "stamp and vamp" any potentially useful contacts encountered on a mission. If a cult tries kidnapping a professor of linguistics so that she can translate their copy of the *Book of Eibon*, then once the gore finishes dripping from the ceiling and the cleaning staff mop up the remains, that professor will find herself in an anonymous room with an anonymous Chamber drone, and she'll be "encouraged" to take the Dark Mark. In the next office down the hall, the cult leader gets the same offer – the Chamber is catholic in its hungers. Every soul can be useful in one way or another.

Most informants go for years without any contact from the Chamber. They live their little lives and try to forget about the oddly patterned black scar on their bodies. The Chamber provides for some useful informants (money, medical

aid, new identities in the Witness Protection Program, immunity from prosecution, protection from supernatural foes, etc.), although the majority go unrewarded for their service. Control watches from behind their eyes, monitoring every one of its thralls. Whenever a thrall's special skills or knowledge (or just their body) is needed, they're activated via the Mark or contacted by a handler.

The Echoing, Empty Chamber

The Black Chamber practises strict information security, and makes extensive use of obedience and memory-erasure geases. Low-ranking agents literally know what they need to know and nothing more. Persistent rumours claim that the Dark Mark can cause selective amnesia at the will of Control. The Chamber is highly compartmentalised, and everything is co-ordinated by Control. An employee might work for years in an office without knowing about any of the Chamber's other facilities. Curiosity is punished as harshly as failure.

Power plays are a rarity within the Chamber. In the Laundry, the knives come out when there's an opening for any management-level job in Administration, but not here. You need some measure of freedom of action to try to outmanoeuvre a rival or a superior, and most Chamber employees are much too tightly constrained to ever make a play. The Chamber's leadership is well entrenched – the Nazgûl running the show now aren't going anywhere.

The Chamber & Others

You know the old joke about the 800-lb gorilla sitting where he wants? In this analogy, the gorilla's invisible. You don't know where he wants to sit until he squashes you. The OPA operates in such secrecy that it only has to interact with other agencies and factions when it wants something – or when it's squishing them.

The Intelligence Community: Technically, the OPA is roughly on the same rank as the CIA, NSA, NRO or any of the other alphabet-soup agencies in the US Intelligence Community. In practise, the OPA rarely engages with its peers, preferring to rely on Marked thralls within those agencies instead of using official channels. If the Chamber wants access to an NRO keyhole satellite, they can request access or just have their mind-controlled puppet in Chantilly give it to them without his superiors knowing about it. Most government agents believe the OPA to be an information clearing-house, responsible for collating data from multiple agencies; only a small few know the OPA's true purpose, and most of *them* are thralls anyway.

The OPA sometimes deigns to co-operate with other agencies, throwing them a bone consisting of remote-viewing data or other magical aid in exchange for help.

Where possible, the Chamber likes to absorb the assets of other agencies. For example, if the CIA gives the Chamber access to a source in Iran, then that source and any CIA officers involved in the case will end up sporting matching new tattoos. The Chamber's the original vampire squid.

The Laundry: Occult espionage is one of the few fields where the UK still punches well above its weight these days. Thanks to the legacy of the Invisible College and early control of the Dee-Turing Theorem, the Laundry is still one of the premier occult-security agencies in the world. The Laundry's outmanned, outgunned and outspent several times over by the Black Chamber, but has still managed to stay competitive. Both agencies agree on the dangers of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, and both want to see all humanity survive the conjunction (as opposed to selling out the rest of the world to preserve one's own country). Both are actively researching computational demonology, occult defence systems, and pursuing contracts with alien powers in preparation for the conjunction.

In practise, the two agencies are bitter rivals. The Chamber formerly saw the Laundry as a nest of foreign spies, hopelessly compromised, but now regards it as a weak, hide-bound, bureaucratic waste of resources. The Laundry continues to regard the Chamber as a bunch of sinister control freaks who've sacrificed their own humanity for power. The Chamber has a much better chance of surviving CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, but it'll be a pyrrhic victory for humanity – instead of having their souls sucked by horrors from beyond, humanity will be devoured by a home-grown horror instead.

The Thirteenth Directorate: The Directorate was the Chamber's main rival for most of the twentieth century. Now that the weakness of the Directorate is evident in the post-Soviet Union landscape, the Chamber's new goal is to seize control of as many of the Directorate's old agents and assets as possible. There's a second Operation Paperclip going on right now in Russia, as OPA agents hunt down and forcibly render ex-Soviet necromancers. The Directorate's fighting a losing battle against the Chamber, but can't spare the resources to put up more than a token defence.

The Nameless Bureau: Like the rest of the American establishment, the OPA's quietly worrying about being eclipsed in the new Chinese century. The Nameless Bureau has many of the same problems as the Chamber, only even bigger. It has roughly the same land mass to protect, and while the Chinese population are more secularised than Americans (and more used to the sort of intrusive state control that will become necessary during the Conjunction), there are also an awful lot more of them. In fact, it's likely

that whatever solution works to protect the United States would also work for the People's Republic. Two men on a doomed plane, and only one parachute... that always ends well.

The European Agencies: The Chamber dismisses most of the European agencies, correctly, as small and limited in reach. It's got its tentacles in the Faust Force and the Portugese JPCOG, and can attend Joint Intergovernmental Framework meetings as observers via the Benthic Treaty. Plus, the Chamber sucked Europe dry of useful occult knowledge years ago. The exception is the French DCRI, whose rivalry with the Chamber is just as deep as the Laundry's, and a lot more violent. Both groups operate an occult foreign legion of bound inhuman assets and defectors. If you quit the Black Chamber and survive, then there's a place for you in the DCRI and *vice versa*.

UKUSA Pact: The Black Chamber has "an excellent working relationship" with the Australian, Canadian and New Zealander occult intelligence groups; it shares research with them, and probably hasn't subverted all of their field officers yet. Most contacts between the Laundry and the OPA are brokered by the Canadians. There's a direct phone line for emergencies, but that's rarely used.

Rest of the World: The Chamber's use of possession and remote control via the Dark Mark gives it unparalleled freedom of action in foreign operations. Inhuman assets can be deployed deniably overseas, and foreign nationals can be turned into reliable agents through the Mark. All the Black Chamber needs is one agent in place, one seed planted in fertile soil; from that one agent, it can grow a whole intelligence apparatus. There are Pashtun goat herders and Kenyan government officials and Serbian gangsters running around wearing the Dark Mark, all reporting to the Chamber.

BLUE HADES: The Black Chamber is acknowledged to be the biggest and baddest occult power on the planet... as long as you're talking about humans. BLUE HADES (or KUHOOK, as the Chamber refers to them) is a whole different kettle of aquatic post-technology superbeings. The Black Chamber has always had a much more antagonistic relationship with the Deep Ones than the Laundry, ever since the days of Innsmouth. It signed the Benthic Treaty only under considerable pressure from the other human parties, and still chafes under its restrictions (leading to provocative pranks like JENNIFER MORGUE or the USS *Jimmy Carter* and its onboard Class Five summoning grid).

The USA is the only Benthic signatory to regularly run war games and simulations aimed at preparing for a conflict

with BLUE HADES, suggesting that the Black Chamber is confident of being able to counter the Deep One's exotic weaponry. (That, or the Chamber thinks stopping some Deep One plot is worth the loss of the entire US Navy plus below the sea-level-plus-20-metres line). During the 2008 Azores summit (a meeting attended by all signatories other than the Deep Ones), the DCRI accused the Black Chamber of treating Appendix Two – the list of thou-shalt-not-meddle – as a shopping list, and warned that continued research and exploration of those locations could breach the treaty. It's unknown whether or not the Chamber pulled back, or just became more circumspect about its illegal activities.

The Dark Mark & Other Bindings

Learning that an old workmate has taken the Dark Mark—signed on as a freelance stringer for the Black Chamber's mind-riders to spy through—is harsh; that he's done it for the love of a good woman is all the worse, like a moral bullet to the kneecap.

—The Apocalypse Codex

The Dark Mark is the Black Chamber's ward, warrant card and mark of ownership, all rolled into one. It's a magical tattoo, inscribed on the employee's skin using a mix of ink, snake venom and nanoparticles inscribed with runes of binding and command. The ink's made according to a recipe created by Ben Franklin, who worked with a mysterious expert in dyes to create the formula. The snake venom comes from an unusual breed of poisonous serpent that the Chamber breeds on a secret farm in Caddo County, Oklahoma.

As part of the process, employees must sign their name in a huge book bound in human skin. A sizeable minority of Marked individuals have an allergic reaction to the venom, which causes the skin beneath the ward to blacken and partially rot. This does not affect the functioning of the tattoo, but bears an uncomfortably resemblance to the witches' mark described in some occult books.

Once inscribed, the tattoo fades into invisibility, and can only be seen when it's active, or when viewed using a scrying spell or Tillinghast Resonator. (The Chamber has cloaking spells that cause the tattoo to 'sink' into the bearer's body for undercover work – the tattoo remains present as striations on the underlying muscle or bruising on bones, but can only be detected using detailed MRIs).

The Dark Mark grows as the bearer loses more and more of his soul to the Chamber. A new recruit might have a Dark Mark the size of a quarter; a high-ranking employee wears a complex sigil that writhes and moves of its own volition.

In addition to tagging the bearer as property of the Black Chamber, the Mark has the following properties:

- **Control Link:** The bearer can telepathically communicate with Control, and Control can see through the bearer's eyes, read his thoughts, or possess his body (see page 56).
- **Warding:** The tattoo works like a warding talisman. The strength of the ward depends on the wearer's Status in the Black Chamber.

Status % required	Ward Strength
15%	Level 1
30%	Level 2
45%	Level 3
60%	Level 4

Unlike a regular ward, the Dark Mark can't be destroyed – it sucks the bearer's life force to keep itself going. If a Dark Mark is hit by a spell greater than its level, then its effectiveness temporarily drops by one level. The ward re-establishes itself at the rate of one level per hour, and sucks 1d4 points of temporary POW damage from the bearer to do so.

- **Badge of Office:** The Dark Mark identifies the bearer to the Black Chamber's supernatural watchdogs and security systems. Going in without a Mark means that you're monster chow.
- **Soul Trap:** Death is no escape. When the bearer dies, the tattoo acts as a spiritual containment vessel, preserving the last flickers of consciousness and preventing the soul from dispersing. The Chamber can then bind the trapped soul into a containment vessel. Only complete annihilation of the body at the moment of death (say, by standing next to a nuclear bomb as it goes pop) can release the soul from the Chamber's bonds.

The Chamber can, if it chooses, reincarnate the souls of the dead in new bodies (by binding them to cadavers, usually, but the Chamber can create fresh clones using UST). Only especially valuable agents are granted a new lease of life – most of the dead are left to rot in the infinite darkness of the filing cabinets, bodiless, voiceless and sightless, yet hideously aware. See *Death in the Chamber*, page 69.



Bound Demons

I can sense her succubus now, coiling like a black vortex of emptiness behind her conscious thoughts. There's nothing human, nothing warm – like death itself, not the small oblivion of orgasm but its complete antithesis, freezing and vacant, a hunger for life.

–The Jennifer Morgue

Not everyone in the Chamber bears the Mark. It only works on humans, and you have to voluntarily sign your soul away. The Chamber has other ways of keeping non-humans in line.

The traditional method for binding entities to your will is to use a geas. You call up a hoary shoggoth from the vasty deep, and before it slurps your organs out through a straw, you lay a geas upon it and say, “*thou shalt not eat my organs, nay, nor those of any other save those I say it is right and proper to slurp upon.*” The shoggoth cannot break this command (as long as the geas holds, that is) – but your command said nothing about ripping you apart limb from limb as long as it doesn’t eat you, so it murders you and continues on its merry way.

You can try a more restrictive geas. “*Do nothing unless I command it*” works, but it’s got its own problems. Firstly, it doesn’t make for useful servants, unless you’re really into extreme micromanagement (“*Roll forward! Eat that man in*

the red shirt! Turn left! Squash that tank!”). Secondly, if you draw the geas too tight, you can inadvertently kill someone. If you say, “*do nothing unless I tell to you do it*” to a human under a powerful geas, he will turn blue and fall over as the geas overrides his breathing reflex.

Writing a good geas is like writing a computer program. (Actually, it’s identical – Boolean algebra was conceived as a way to mechanise decision-making). You can bodge together a short-term geas easily by, say, whipping out your warrant card and saying, “*I order you to tell me everything you saw last night*”, but a long-term geas requires months of planning and design. *The Fuller Memorandum*, for example, describes the conditions that circumscribe Angleton’s freedom of action.

Even the best-designed geas, though, still takes away from the initiative of the subject. For some targets, this is fine – “individual initiative” and “shoggoth” should never go together. For a spy, that’s less than ideal, so the Black Chamber uses riders instead. The rider is a demon that’s geased to watch its host and consume the host’s soul if, in the thing’s judgement, the host acts against the best interest of the Black Chamber. Riders are semi-intelligent beasties, and tend to be frustratingly literal-minded, petty and judgemental. Keeping the thing happy by feeding it regularly loosens its grip a little.

The binding rite that bonds the summoned exonome to the agent’s soul uses a three-node diagram. Node one contains the asset that’s about to become home sweet home to something ghastly; node two’s the summoning node, with a big silver-inlaid electrically charged highway straight to node one’s soul. Node three is for the asset’s handler, who holds the tokens of power that become the key to the spell. Each handler has their own set of personal tokens – a set of dog tags, a class ring, the skull of their predecessor – that holds their authority over the agent and the bound demon.

The token also grounds the summoned entity in our reality. If you don’t have the token, you can’t constrain the exonome in a binding circle, or banish it back to the Dungeon Dimensions, which is all rather useful. It’s just embarrassing when an elite assassin can’t cross a line of salt.

Human Hosts

One of the Chamber’s dirty little secrets is that possession can technically rob a human of their human status (and with it, their legal protection and citizenship). After all, if a demon’s got hold of your nervous system, it’s in the driver’s seat, not you. There are thousands of cases of possession in the United States every year. Most are spontaneous cases, where some poor sap thinks the wrong thought or reads the wrong scroll in the back of some musty bookshop or spends too long messing with fractals. Others are deliberate malice

(cults and witches, usually). The Black Chamber very rarely punishes human assets by turning them into flesh-suits for demons.

The Chamber could exorcise victims of possession, but if they're useful, they're normally drafted instead. The demon is bound using the same ritual as described above.

Living With Your Demon

So, the Black Chamber's stuck a demon in your head. Time to get cosy with your soul-eating other half.

The demon's Hunger is a characteristic that starts at 2d6. Different circumstances and events cause the demon's Hunger to rise:

Going a day without feeding	+1
Using the demon's powers	+Varies
Attempting to exorcise the demon	+2d6
Minor breach of Black Chamber regulations	+1d4
Significant breach of Black Chamber regulations	+1d6
Major breach of Black Chamber regulations	+2d6
Resonances	+1d4

A resonance is a place or a circumstance that arouses the demon's hunger – a graveyard for a death demon, a mirror for a doppelganger and so on.

If the demon's Hunger reaches 20, then it breaks its binding. This will inevitably result in the death of the host in some horrible fashion.

Hunger can be reduced by feeding the demon. Each time the demon feeds, its Hunger drops by 1d6, to a minimum of 1. The demon demands to be fed if an opportunity arises; the host can resist this urge by pitting his POW against the demon's Hunger on the Resistance Table.

Succubus: Succubus entities feed on sex and death. You fuck someone, and in the moment of orgasm when the connection is strongest, the demon reaches through your sex and devours your partner's life. If the succubus can't have someone else's soul, it'll take yours.

Succubi can tune into mortal thoughts. They primarily use this ability to pick up on a victim's kinks and desires – demons prefer to skip the foreplay and get right to the

sexy soul-sucking – but a skilled host can pick up on useful information from the target's mind in addition to their desire to be fucked by nuns. Reading a victim's mind increases the succubus' Hunger by 1; delving for specific information increases Hunger by 1d6, as the demon gets annoyed by 'irrelevant' telepathic contacts.

If the binding is broken, the succubus will devour the agent's soul the next time he has sex. Good luck going celibate – an angry succubus puts your sex drive up to eleven.

Night Hag: Night Hags feed on dreams. The victim of a night hag suffers from sleep paralysis, as the entity manifests and forces its way into the victim's unconscious to use his dreamspace as a nest. They're memetic horrors; in a few years, that dream's subconscious births will birth a clutch of hags, and they'll eat his soul like a wasp larva. A Black Chamber agent ridden by a Night Hag can use the creature to explore the dreams of others or paralyse sleepers at the price of 1d4 Hunger. The agent must be within POW kilometres of the target, and be able to visualise or recognise the target somehow. A Class Three ward or a dreamcatcher app can block hag attacks.

Working with a Night Hag is exhausting; if the agent uses the hag's powers, he must make an Endurance roll when he wakes up. If he fails, he's fatigued for the rest of the day (see the *Laundry Files* rulebook, page 61).

If the binding is broken, the hag murders the agent the next time that he sleeps.

Doppelganger: Doppelgangers are created when an extradimensional entity uses a human as a template when manifesting in our reality. The doppelganger is a mirror image of the original (right-handed hosts give rise to left-handed copies) that appears near the original. A character bound to a doppelganger is haunted by his duplicate. Sometimes, the duplicate may help the original; at other times, it pursues its own inscrutable purposes.

The Doppelganger has the same physical characteristics and skills as the original. Its body isn't quite real – it's really just a mess of ectoplasm, insect shells, dry leaves and other debris, cloaked in a glamour – but it looks and feels like the real thing. They can appear and disappear at will, assembling bodies out of whatever trash happens to be convenient.

Doppelgangers are weirdly obsessed with their originals, and often fixate on some long-buried desire or dream. Your doppelganger might decide that you married the wrong man, and that your current husband must die so you can be with your college boyfriend, or want to turn your home into a temple to some alien god.

Agent Bindings

There's nothing subtle about the degree of control the Black Chamber exercises over its subjects, or the consequences of error. The Chamber has a secret ruling from the Supreme Court that citizenship rights only apply to human beings. Ramona's kin are barely able to pass with the aid of a glamour. For failure, the punishment can be special rendition to jurisdictions where the very concept of pain is considered a fascinating research topic by the natives.

-The Jennifer Morgue

Just because they don't chain your thoughts with a geas doesn't mean that they don't exert control. The Chamber has its own Oaths of Service and silence, and they are much more restrictive and lethal than those employed by the Laundry. An officer holding a token of power can compel the agent to speak or to stay silent, to act or remain still, or for that matter, to live or die.

Breaking Your Oath of Office

"I don't work for you anymore, Michael," Officer Green quavers. "Not this century, you bastard." He stretches out an arm, lays a hook-like claw on the other side of the illusory shared table; it appears horribly burned. Then he raises his other claw and pulls back his cowl, to reveal a thing of horror.

The Senior Auditor looks at him evenly. "To betray your oath of office was your decision, not mine."

-The Apocalypse Codex

So, you've made a huge mistake. You've joined the Black Chamber, and it turns out that you just can't pull off the black cloak look. You want out.

You've got two options, and neither of them is appealing.

Option 1: Break your Oath of Office through sheer will. You've got to roll your POW against a strength of 15 + (Status/5) on the Resistance Table.

Fail, and you can't go through with it (but you do lose 1d6 SAN and take 1d6 damage for trying). Succeed, and the oath's penalty clause kicks in. Test your Luck. If you fail, then the spell kills you outright. If you're lucky, you just take 6d6 damage and (if you're still alive) you get to roll three times on the Major Wound table. Magical defenses might protect you from the spiritual backlash, but there are no guarantees. No-one breaks an oath like that and gets away unscathed.

Option 2: Get someone else to unpick the geas spell. You can't just exorcise a spell like that away. Magic of that potency gets seared onto your very soul... but you don't need your whole soul, do you? A skilled arcane surgeon could go in and cut away portions of your selfhood, slicing out memories and emotions and bits of your identity until the geas spell has no purchase to hang on to anymore. The sort of sorcerers with this level of skill and knowledge don't come cheap - Elias Billington had one on staff, and presumably the Brotherhood of the Black Pharaoh had one too, since Iris was able to escape her oath to the Laundry.

In this option, the sorcerer subtracts the skill of the caster who put the original geas on you from his own Sorcery or Computer Use (Magic) skill, then makes a roll. If the roll succeeds, then you lose 1d4 points of POW and 1d10 points of SAN, as well as suffering 2d6 damage - but you're free of your oath. If the sorcerer fails, then you get hit with the penalty clause described above.

All this applies to Laundry Oaths too. The Laundry may be more friendly than the Black Chamber, but that's a long way from forgiving.

Back Doors

"The Black Chamber have been known to forcibly install back doors in the minds of foreign operatives who fall into their hands, turning them into sleeper agents. After your experience in Santa Cruz eleven years ago... we felt it best to take precautions. It's a standard precaution for all field agents who are tagged for fast-track development."

-The Apocalypse Codex

The Chamber can bypass an Oath of Office in another way, by magically suborning part of the

victim's brain to create a shadow personality. Imagine a tumour, growing inside your brain, one that sends out narrow little tendrils from your cerebellum to all the other parts, linking little knots of damaged tissue together so it can function without the rest of your grey matter. This dodges the Oath of Office because it's literally a different person that happens to share your brainpan.

If a foreign agent is captured by the Chamber, they may be unwittingly turned into a double agent.

Doppelgangers 'feed' by being allowed access to the original's life, especially personal relationships. So, letting your shadow-self take your car for the afternoon might reduce its Hunger by 1; letting it sleep with your wife reduces its Hunger by 1d6. Doppelgangers become enraged and murderous (+3d6 Hunger) if the host ever reveals that he has a Doppelganger.

Manifesting a Doppelganger costs 1d6 Hunger. The demon hangs around for a single service, like some evil genie, before vanishing again.

An unbound doppelganger seeks to murder the original and take his place.

Death Eater: This nasty things feed on the burst of entropy that comes from the death, especially sudden, violent ones, of a human being. They're the most unpleasant entities to be bound to – they sap your emotions and humanity, turning you into a soulless shell over time.

To feed a Death Eater, you have to be close to a human as they die. Committing the murder yourself works best, but the creatures aren't picky – being within a few metres is enough if the demon isn't too hungry. The creatures make for excellent assassins. If the host attacks a human target, he can increase the demon's Hunger by 1 to increase his damage bonus by one rank. Adding another point of Hunger lets the character apply his damage bonus to a ranged attack.

If the Death Eater is unbound, then the host's in for a *Final Destination* remake ending in his death. Any failed Luck roll puts the character into potentially lethal peril, no matter what the Luck roll was called for. If the Gamemaster asks for a Luck roll to see if the character has change in his pocket to buy a newspaper, and the character fails, then a

car smashes through the window of the newsagents or the character suddenly suffers a heart attack.

Stalker: Stalker entities are your classic tentacled horrors from beyond the stars. When one of these is bound to a Black Chamber agent, he becomes a disposable asset – all the Chamber handlers need to do is remotely break the binding, and the creature appears to devour both the agent and any bystanders before sublimating off to another dimension. The agent can also temporarily relax the binding, causing the monster to appear and attack anyone nearby. Doing so increases the creature's Hunger by 1d6. Basically, if you've got one of these, you're a suicide bomber wearing a vest of grenades, but you can chuck a few before the whole vest goes boom.

Stalkers can feed themselves, but the host has to, on occasion, let the monster out for 'walkies.' The entity feeds by disorganising complex structures, especially living ones. So, if you let the demon kill a few people, or smash something, its Hunger drops. (Since it costs Hunger to summon the monster, the host usually has to let it commit several acts of mayhem before putting Fido back in the box).

Remote Operations

The twenty-first century is the era of drone warfare. Predators and Reapers circle the skies over Pakistan, fighting a war where half the combatants drive home to their families at the end of the work shift. Many of the Chamber's remote operations run on the same control hardware as a Predator drone.

In Chamber parlance, a 'drone' is any remote-controlled or possessed entity. There's a difference between remote control or remote possession, although they both come under the rubric of remote ops.

Remote Control

In remote control, the operator sits at a console with a screen, a keyboard and a summoning grid with an entry vector aimed right back at him. (Basically, a similar setup to Bob's *Neverwinter Nights* rig in *Pimpf*, only running on a big fat SPARC workstation.) The operator gets access to the drone's senses, but it's at one remove – he doesn't, for example, see through the drone's eyes directly, but gets a visual impression that's processed and cleaned up on the workstation. The operator controls the drone with a combination of joystick and keyboard commands, relying on the drone's own residual motor control impulses to handle the hard bits. It's like playing a computer game, only you're controlling a shambling corpse in the real world. A microphone picks up the operator's speech and relays it to the drone's speech centres, so the drone can talk in a drooling, slurred fashion. Most drones controlled in this fashion are zombified humans, although the same technique can be applied to anything with a nervous system that can be possessed by an exnome.

Running a remote operation in this fashion is computationally easy, and doesn't damage the sanity of the operator. It's no different to flying a remote-control UAV. The Chamber has hundreds of operator consoles at various Air Force bases around the world, running zombie soldiers on black ops in Africa and the Middle East.

A remote-operated drone uses the operator's skills and mental attributes, but all skill tests involving physical movement and co-ordination suffer a -20% penalty.

Remote Possession

This is what Control does when it grabs the body of a Marked thrall. The operator lies on a couch and meditates on the Rune of Kamog while in an active summoning grid. His consciousness then jumps to the drone's body. Remote Possession gives the controller full access to the drone's physical abilities and senses, which allows for much finer control. A remote-controlled drone looks drunk and confused, and moves in a jerky, artificial way. A remote-possessed drone moves as smoothly as the controlling intellect wishes.

The downside of remote possession is that the operator's consciousness is partially housed within the drone for the duration of the possession. This can cause sanity loss (body dysmorphic disorder and other identity disorders are a common side effect) and exposes the operator to hostile magics (like geas spells). It's also a much more powerful spell, requiring considerably more computing power.

A remote-possessed drone uses the operator's mental characteristics and skills, with the exception of physical skills. Any physical skills (Athletics, Brawl, Climb, Dodge,

Fine Manipulation, Grapple, Jump, Listen, Sense, Spot, Swim, Throw, etc.) use the drone's value or the operator's value, whichever is better.

Possessing a drone costs 0/1d4 SAN (or 1/1d10 SAN the first time a distinctly non-human drone like a shoggoth is used).

Creating a Drone

Any creature of sufficient complexity and size (a small bird or rat at minimum, although the Chamber's research facility at the University of Georgia has had some success in swarm consciousness transfer) can be turned into a drone. If the target's alive, then it must be tagged with an arcane symbol like the Dark Mark to tie it into the contagion grid. For humans and other sentient creatures, an item of personal significance can also work as a connection.

If it's dead, then stick in an animating exnome to make it undead, then tag it.

Resisting Possession: If the drone's unwilling to be puppeted, then it can resist by making a POW vs. POW contest against the operator (use the operator's own POW for a remote possession, or the workstation's effective POW for remote control). If the drone wins, it resists the remote-control attempt. An especially good roll (winning by 50% or more or rolling a natural 01-05) breaks the connection if it's not a secure link. For example, a sigil scrawled with indelible marker or a stolen personal item might spontaneously combust.

Wards can block possession, and an exorcism or banishment spell can kick the possessing entity out of the host.

Playing a Drone Operator

A player character drone operator should create their operator player character as normal. Drones then get requisitioned like equipment.

Rotting Zombie	Easy
Glamoured Zombie	Average
Lobotomised Human	Average
Thrall	Average to Difficult, depending on the Thrall
Small Animal (rat, cat, bird, small dog)	Easy
Medium-sized Animal (guard dog)	Average
Inhuman Drone (shoggoth, byakhee)	Difficult

Death in the Chamber

[T]he leftmost of the wraith-like figures nods, a slight inclination of the cowl that hints at a skull within. "I am Officer Black. This"—a band of mist that might conceal a hand, or some other, less human limb, gestures to its right—"is Officer Green. And I have the pleasure of introducing Patrick O'Donnell, formerly of the Hazard Network, subsequently one of our freelance informers, now deceased."

The phantom limb stretches alarmingly past Officer Green and flips back the hood covering the wreckage of O'Donnell's head.

Lockhart swears very quietly—but not so quietly that he escapes notice.

Officer Black emits a dry chuckle. "Remember our service motto? 'Death is no escape.'"

—The Apocalypse Codex

Those who bear the Dark Mark are beholden to the Black Chamber even after death. Their souls get trapped by the Mark and transferred to a spiritual detention centre. There, they can be interrogated or consulted when needed, or reincarnated in a new host.

If a player character dies, that player should make a *Difficult* Status check. If successful, the Chamber decides that the character is of sufficient value to incarnate in a new host. Depending on circumstances, the Chamber may choose to grow a clone of the original body, or animate the character's body as a zombie possessed by his own ghost, or provide a living, but soulless donor body.

If the Status check fails, then the Chamber keeps the soul on ice, and the character is effectively out of the game.

Dead characters aren't bound by the Dark Mark and can't have a demon riding shotgun on their souls. The Chamber doesn't need such safeguards – this second lease on existence can be snatched away by the Dark Commissioners with a single word of power. Any attempt by the dead to betray the Black Chamber means that the character is instantly hurled back into the dark abyss for an eternity of enhanced interrogation.

Chamber Assets

Old stories about the shape of the Pentagon aside, the Chamber has assets across the world. Most of their facilities are anonymous grey offices inside the Washington Beltway in the heart of spook country, but several have become infamous in the occult community. The vast expansion of conventional intelligence gathering since 2001 allowed the Chamber to build dozens of new fortresses across America.

When the US has more than fifty intelligence centres or military commands all dedicated to tracking terrorist funding, all filing virtually identical reports that rephrase the same few facts over and over, it's easy to hide occult operations in plain sight.

The Dark Tower

Oh, come on, you knew that name was coming. The Chamber's new headquarters – built in 1999 – is a monolithic black block surrounded by green carnivorous lawns. It's got space for more than 20,000 staff on the surface; the vaults and, well, dungeons underneath are even larger. Don't bother looking for it on Google Earth, as they've had it redacted from the maps. Actually, don't bother looking for it in meatspace either. The whole building is cloaked in an invisibility glamour.

Inside, it's a maze of twisty corridors, all alike – literally. You can only see the office you're looking for – every other door is unmarked and leads back to the corridor you're in. Visiting the Dark Tower is a disconcerting experience, as you can see hear the ringing of phones and low murmuring of conversations in adjacent offices, but you just can't get to them.

The same applies to the exit – if you're not given permission to leave the tower, you'll wander the labyrinth forever until you starve to death. Some unfortunates have survived for months by camping in washrooms and stealing food from desks at night.

The Ranch

She's already far enough inside the ranch house that by rights she should be standing with her feet firmly planted in the dirt fifty feet behind it – outside, but that's not how things work here.

—The Jennifer Morgue

The Ranch looks like a small farmstead in the middle of sun-baked nowhere. You could drive past it a hundred times and not realise there was anything out of the ordinary about it.

The old man rocking on the porch just keeps on rocking day and night, scanning the dusty horizon with eyes that see more now they're dead than they ever did when he was alive. Inside, the Ranch houses the Chamber's archives of occult weapons, techniques and horrors, including live exhibits of everything that the Chamber knows about, and might expect to run into again. It's the largest example of practical demonology in the world. The Chamber keeps its toys out here in the middle of nowhere in case any of the exhibits ever escape.

Providence Campus

The spiritual home of the Black Chamber, this old brownstone on Federal Hill is a listed historic building. Officially, it's home to some of the more obscure civil records; bored tourists wandering around the ground floor never suspect what lurks just a few feet above (or below – it's built atop a labyrinthine ghoulish warren). The building is still in active use by the Black Chamber. So, sometimes, are the tourists.

Amhurst Viewing Centre

The Army revealed the existence of their remote viewing program, Project STARGATE in 1995, claiming that it produced no useful evidence. That was a deliberate leak, designed to take pressure off the Chamber. The Dark Commissioners dislike being dragged into petty matters like national security, and prefer not to have to answer to the secret Congressional Committee on Phenomenological Activities. By discrediting remote viewing in the eyes of some sections of the government and the intelligence services, it was able to avoid petty entanglements with the clueless while preserving its relationship with those who know what's really going on.

Unlike the Army's petty little STARGATE, the Amhurst Remote Viewing centre is a state-of-the-art facility built by the TLA corporation. Viewers scan the contagion-feeds from millions of subjects in real time, channel-surfing across the subconscious of America. The computer automatically filters the data and identifies patterns while smoothing out

artefacts. The centre's power can also be focussed to home in on and enhance weak contagion links; it can lock onto you and scry on you through contagions as weak as the lingering body heat and emotional connection from a handshake.

The Room

The Room is an extradimensional space that can be accessed from any Federal building in the United States if you've got the authority to summon it. Everyone gets their own instance of the basic Room. It looks like a small, anonymous interview room. It always arrives empty apart from a desk, three chairs, a desktop computer, a telephone and a sinister fern, but it is possible for senior Black Chamber operatives to stash particular items in their instance of the Room; for example, there might always be a gun waiting in the desk drawer, or a copy of the *Necronomicon* on a shelf.

Dismissing the Room disconnects it from our reality. If you've got the Dark Mark, you can survive this, but you can't reconnect back to our universe without external help, and calling up someone else's copy of the Room is tricky. If you don't have the Dark Mark, and you're in the Room when it undocks from this universe, you'll get eaten by the Things Between.

Montauk

The Chamber operated a research facility at Montauk Air Force Station from 1947 until 1987, primarily focussed on summoning and Gate travel. The first men on the moon



stepped from the concrete floor of Disjunction Room B, deep beneath Long Island, onto the surface of the sea of Tranquillity. The Montauk Big Grid ran from the 1960s until the station was shut down in 1984, and it was the most powerful summoning grid on Earth for most of that period (especially after the Russian grid at Zaozyorsk went boom during a botched attempt to summon the Render of the Veils).

In 1977, BLUE HADES lodged an official protest through the Benthic Treaty framework, claiming that the work at Montauk breached Article 6 (the “do not summon anything you cannot put down” clause), and threatened to sink Long Island if the experiments continued. The Black Chamber shut the grid down for two years, during which time they worked with the nearby New London Submarine Base to seed the whole north-eastern seaboard with warding buoys. The grid started up again in 1979, but ran for only a few months before encountering difficulties – the summonings had somehow altered space-time within the base.

The Montauk facility became ‘leaky.’ Gates opened and closed randomly, entities filtered through from outside, and computational demonology became both easier and less predictable. Rather than risk another accident, the base was mostly decommissioned, leaving only a skeleton crew in place to continue research and make sure that any incursions are contained. Most of the researchers moved to the Chamber’s new facility in Alaska.

Gadgets

Like the Laundry, officers of the Black Chamber can requisition gadgets, equipment, occult items and tactical support as needed. This uses exactly the same rules as described in chapter 11 of the *Laundry Files* rulebook – roll Status to requisition an item, making up the difference with Mission Budget points if you fail, and dipping into the Departmental Budget if you’re still short. The main difference is that Black Chamber budgets tend to be an awful lot more generous than the Laundry’s penny-pinching. Double the suggested Mission Budgets in a Black Chamber game.

Common Gadgets

In addition to the ones listed here, the Black Chamber can replicate virtually any item used by the Laundry. The exceptions are the Erich Zann violins (the Chamber has only one, and it doesn’t leave the Ranch), Personal Panic Buttons (no SCORPION STARE network in the US) and Warrant Cards (that’s what the tattoo is for).

Ubbo-Sathla Tissue

Availability: Easy

Black Chamber only

Magical healing is a notoriously bad idea. Ubbo-Sathla Tissue (usually referred to as UST) is therefore also a notoriously bad idea. In its natural state, it looks like whitish goo. Slap it on a wound and apply a thaumic field, and the UST merges with the patient’s flesh to heal the damage. It can mimic skin, muscle tissue and even major organs. It’s not quite a miracle cure, though – the replacement flesh is sensitive to magic. It’s an easy avenue to possession, as the nerves are simpler and easier to map, and in especially strong thaumic fields the flesh can even start growing again into strange new patterns. The Chamber keeps tabs on field agents who make excessive use of UST, and retires those that are close to being overwhelmed by their replacement flesh.

A UST patch heals 2d6 points of damage, or restores any characteristics lost to a Major Wound with the exception of CHA. It takes 10 minutes to heal a point of damage, or thirty minutes to restore a characteristic point. Using a UST patch costs 1/1d6 SAN.

Gorgonism Trigger

Availability: Difficult

Black Chamber only, Certification Required.

The Chamber continued the research of the Nazi researcher, Professor von Schacter, and can now induce gorgonism in a subject using a combination of brain surgery and medication. After the brain surgery, the subject appears normal and has no unusual abilities, although an MRI will detect unusual scarring and apparent tumours in the cingulate gyrus. Other than occasional migraines and a heightened risk of brain tumours, the “sleeping medusa” does not affect the subject’s health. Once the trigger shot is taken, however, the subject develops gorgonism within four hours. The standard trigger shot looks like an epipen, although the medication can also be ingested in pill form. This artificially induced gorgonism is identical to that of a naturally occurring medusa, complete with basilisk vision and a fatal brain tumour. The Chamber also has techniques for keeping the tumour from growing, prolonging the life of the subject.

A character that develops gorgonism has the same abilities and restrictions as a natural medusa (see the *Agent’s Handbook*, page 95).

A character must have Medicine 50% or more to requisition a Gorgon Trigger.

Basilisk Shades

Availability: Average
Black Chamber only.

These black mirror-shades interfere with the quantum tunnelling component of a medusa's gaze, effectively countering the gorgon effect. If a medusa looks at you through one of these glasses, you'll feel slightly warm, but won't be blasted into fiery silicon-rich ashes. If the medusa lowers his shades, boom. An unspecified, but very high proportion of Black Chamber security staff wear these shades.

Shades of Night

Availability: Easy
Black Chamber only

Another mirrorshade magic item, the lenses of these glasses are marked with the Sigil of Al-Hazred. This functions as a Level Two Scrying spell, discerning any glamours or wards active on the target. The Shades of Night also let the wearer see perfectly in the dark. Long-term exposure to the Shades of Night results in the wearer's eyeballs turning black and rotting away. This does not affect the user's vision in the slightest as long as he continues to wear the glasses.

Fear Engines

Availability: Average
Black Chamber only, Certification Required.

The Chamber benefits hugely from the post-911 fear industry that dominates American culture. A terrified, paranoid populace that accepts intrusive surveillance and security measures is ideally suited for CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN. Over the next five years, the Chamber plans to increase the use of subliminal messaging and emotional glamours in the media, all tailored to different socio-economic groups, with an ultimate goal of complete compliance by 2020. Every opposing faction will, by then, be either marginalised, terrified into obedience or too burned-out to resist.

Fear Engines are portable nodes of a Level Four Archetype Entanglement. The engine requires a designated "monster," which is plugged into the engine via a sympathetic link (a blood sample, a photograph, a personal item etc.). The engine associates this target with the archetype of the Monster, the Big Bad Wolf, the Serial Killer, the Terrorist.

Once the geas gets traction, the target is seen by civilians as something horrific and ghastly that must be destroyed. The engine can easily be tuned to trigger a fight response (if you

want torch-bearing mobs on the streets) or fear (crowds running in terror when they see the target). Either mode promotes enhanced respect and co-operation with authority.

In effect, the Fear Engine makes its target into Public Enemy Number One, and triggers hatred of the target in every bystander. Former allies turn against the target, police scour the streets for him, and everyone instinctively fears and hates him.

The Engine does have some side benefits, questionable as they are. The Monster archetype is associated with killing, especially the murder of innocents. The spell does make it easier for the target to kill people without being discovered, but each killing makes the Monster more hated and feared, and draws the net closer.

The Chamber has Fear Engines installed in most airports, ports and other major transit terminals, wired into the No-Fly list.

The power of a Fear Engine effect starts at a rating of 1d4, and grows over time at a rate of 1d4 points per day. This has the following consequences:

- The target's Influence score is reduced by the rating x 5%.
- The target's Command, Disguise, Fast Talk and Persuade skills are reduced by the rating x 5%.
- The target's Hide, Stealth and Brawl scores are increased by the rating x 5%.
- The target can add the rating to any melee damage attacks.
- There is a chance equal to the rating x 10% that anyone who sees the target feels strong antipathy towards him.
- Any attempts to Track or Spot the target have a bonus of the rating x 5%.
- Any Command or Persuade rolls to convince people to attack the target or help hunt down the target have a bonus of the rating x 10%.
- Any firearm attacks on the target may add the rating to their damage.
- The rating increases by 1d4 each time the target kills another human being. The rating decreases by 1d4 each time that the target puts himself at risk to act in a selfless or generous manner.

Certification to operate a Fear Engine requires Command 50% or more.

FLAMEGATE Variable-Geometry Ranged Pentacle

Availability: Truck-mounted model is Average.
Drone-mounted model is Difficult.
Black Chamber Only, Certification Required.

FLAMEGATE is the result of work done at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. It's a big black box containing four lasers, a dozen specially engineered prisms, an occult optic-geometry engine, some very clever computers, and a human head and torso harvested from a convicted murderer. The whole assembly can be carried on the back of a pick-up truck, but it's designed to be mounted on a Predator Drone.

Here's the science bit – FLAMEGATE can scan any surface within range, and map it. It then projects a laser pentacle or other occult geometry onto that surface, automatically compensating for obstacles or uneven sections of the target area. The pentacle's charged using a second energy-transfer beam that's shunted into the Dho-Nha curve using the occult optic-geometry engine, with the corpse working as a necromantic gate.

So, picture the scene. You're a Black Chamber agent, hunting down a boojum that escaped from the Ranch. You corner it in an alleyway, but you need a protective pentacle to contain it. You could either ask the slaving monster if it wouldn't mind waiting for twenty minutes while you sketch out a magic symbol in chalk, or you could call in the FLAMEGATE-equipped drone that's circling overhead. It projects a charged pentacle right on top of the boojum, trapping it. You can then run a banishing app (or, since you're the Black Chamber, you can drag that boojum home like a hunter who just bagged a deer, then stick it into some poor goon's head and call him an Unconventional Asset).

FLAMEGATE doesn't just do protective pentacles. It can do any form of 2D magical geometry. Area wards, summoning grids, gates, geasa circles, geist zones – if Dr. Dee could have hiked up his robes and drawn it on the floor, then FLAMEGATE can trace it from 20,000 feet. Chamber troops operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan use FLAMEGATE-equipped drones to fast-summon demons as needed in the field.

A FLAMEGATE device can instantly project a powerful sigil, reducing the time needed to create certain effects. Even if a spell does not require the drawing of a sigil, the FLAMEGATE can count as a peripheral, giving a +1 POW bonus (see page 134 of the *Laundry Files* rulebook).

Certification for the basic FLAMEGATE requires Computer Use (Magic) 50%.

Certification for the drone-mounted model requires both Computer Use (Magic) 50% and Technology Use (Remote Operations) 50%.

Ring of Power

Availability: Average.
Black Chamber Only.

A comparatively simple, but powerful little trinket, a Ring of Power is a shiny gold ring. Usually, these are made to resemble a class ring or a military academy ring. Inside, there's a small gate circuit and a lump of exotic matter from distant Yaddith, where the triumphant dholes writhe and bellow. The Ring augments the user's magical ability, increasing his INT and POW by 3 points each for the purposes of spellcasting. The downside is that the wearer becomes dependent on the Ring, even addicted to it. If the ring is lost, then the user not only loses the bonus INT and POW, his personal POW drops by 3 until he recovers the Ring. He also loses 1 SAN per day without the ring.

ICEQUEEN Virus

Availability: Difficult.
Black Chamber Only, Certification Required.

The existence of ICEQUEEN was confirmed only recently, although it's believed that the Chamber first deployed it in 2008. Like its conventional counterparts STUXNET and FLAME, ICEQUEEN is a computer virus that targets specific hardware. STUXNET was aimed at Iranian uranium-refining centrifuges, but ICEQUEEN casts a wider network, and targets computers with lots of number-crunching power that's suited for embarrassingly parallel problems – like plotting certain complex curves. If it gets onto a machine with a lot of fat juicy GPUs, then ICEQUEEN signals home for instructions. It's got a selection of tools to disable a GPU – it could upload a program that introduces small, but significant errors into any generated curve, so any magic cast using the flawed curve becomes incredibly inefficient. It could fry the GPU, or it could just run a conventional summoning spell and call up something hungry to wreck the joint.

ICEQUEEN can spread through conventional (USB stick, LAN infection) or occult means. It can be dropped onto a target network by running a contagion spell, assuming you've got access to chips made in the same batch as those on the target computer. It also has a geas module – if activated, it flashes an obedience geas on the screen at random intervals. If the user isn't wearing a ward or some other protection, then the geas compels them to insert a USB stick, get a copy of the virus, then go to the most powerful uninfected machine they know and infect that one too.

ICEQUEEN infections have shown up on machines in Iran, South Korea, Germany and England (not in the Laundry itself, but in QinetiQ). Laundry analysts believe ICEQUEEN was originally aimed at the Chinese, but the Chamber now uses it to sabotage any computational demonology box they don't like. The original ICEQUEEN ran on Windows, but the Chamber's ported part of the code to Linux. It can even zap smartphones.

If a computational device is infected with ICEQUEEN, the controlling agent can:

- Download any information on the computer.
- Reduce the computer's POW by 10 points for the purposes of casting spells.
- Destroy the computer.
- Cast a summoning spell via the computer.

ICEQUEEN certification requires Computer Use (Hacking) 50%.

Mindseal Talisman

He winks at me slowly, then tugs his left ear lobe. He's wearing an earring that looks a lot like a symbol I see most days at the office on my way past the secure documents store in Dancey House.

—The Jennifer Morgue

Availability: Easy (Level Three)
Average (Level Four)
Difficult (Level Five)

Black Chamber Only.

Standard issue for any Chamber officers who actually go into the field, as opposed to sitting in an air-conditioned SWCIF (sensitive warded compartmented information facility), a Mindseal Talisman gives its wearer complete immunity to telepathy and other psychic info-scarfing techniques. The talisman shields the wearer's mind while projecting a screen of plausible psychic noise – it's much better to have a head that seems full of inane notions about local sports teams and your kid's upset stomach than to be a suspicious blank spot. The Talisman also ensures that the wearer's thoughts are secure even if something punches past its psychic shields. If this function is active (and it's set when the talisman is first issued), then the talisman incinerates the wearer's mind if someone succeeds in reading his thoughts.

Bullets of Soul Eating

Availability: Easy

Basically banishment rounds for the human soul, these singularly nasty things are hollowpoint slugs engraved

with the Sign of Mung and bathed in oil of mistletoe and trimethyl thallium. A character wounded by one of these bullets takes temporary POW damage equal to the Hit Point damage. A character killed by a Soul Eater bullet has his soul utterly destroyed – no coming back as a ghost, no GRAVEDUST, no resurrection spells. Complete and utter annihilation.

Waite-Dirac Possession Apparatus

Availability: Difficult

The Waite-Dirac device looks a little like a brass spider and a little like an optician's testing kit. The Chamber allegedly developed it from notes captured during a police investigation in Arkham in 1928, although some rumours claim it incorporates OLD DREAMER technology found in Australia. The device allows its operator to swap minds with a target, as per remote possession. The big advantage of a Waite-Dirac machine is that it doesn't need a connection with the target. It works on line-of-sight. You just point it at a victim, calibrate it (requiring a Technology Use roll and about two minute's work), press a button, and you swap bodies.

When the device is activated, the operator must make a Firearms (Exotic) roll to hit with the transfer beam. If successful, the target pits his POW against the machine's POW of 14 on the Resistance Table. If the machine wins, then the operator gets control of the target's body for a number of minutes equal to the margin of failure.

For example, if the Resistance roll fails by 28, then the operator has control for 28 minutes. If the target wins, then the operator suffers 1d6 points of temporary POW damage from psychic feedback. The machine must be recalibrated after a failed transfer.

The machine has a built-in sedative injector that pumps sodium thiopental into the operator's body after a successful transfer, so the target has only a few seconds of consciousness in the operator's body before falling asleep. If the drug is not used, then the target gains control of the operator's body just like the operator has control of the target's body.

Repeated use of a Waite-Dirac machine prolongs the transfer time. Multiply the margin of failure by the number of times the operator and host have swapped bodies to determine transfer time. So, if this is the third time that agent Zach has swapped bodies with Laura, and Laura fails her Resistance roll by 20, then Zach has $3 \times 20 = 60$ minutes to play in Laura's body.

Any warding spell blocks the transfer. If either body is targeted with a banishing or exorcism spell, or the machine is destroyed, then the effect ends and the minds swap back.

Being the unconsenting target of a mind swap costs 1/1d8 Sanity (or more, depending on what your body did while you were asleep).

Zombox

Availability: Easy

A Zombox is a ruggedized bit of electronics kit, consisting of a study container about the size of a packet of cigarettes. Three short needles stick out of the back, along with two sticky strips to hold it in place. On the top, there's an activation switch. Inside, there's a contagion link, a summoning grid, some custom-built processors, a little dried blood and a battery.

Operating a zombox couldn't be easier. Stick it into a corpse, ensuring that the needles penetrate the flesh and the sticky strips bond firmly with the skin. Hit the on switch, and the box does the rest. It summons up a lesser demon to animate the corpse as a zombie, then runs a geas spell to keep the zombie under control and open it up to remote control via the contagion link. In short, it turns any corpse you stick it into a remote controlled drone for a Black Chamber remote operator.

The OPA produced tens of thousands of zomboxes during the 1980s for use in foreign wars. Just air-drop a single agent in with a bag of these things, and you can raise up a guerrilla army in no time.

Zomboxes are reusable, as long as the battery holds up. If the zombie's too badly damaged, just pull it off and tape it onto another corpse.

Chamber Games

"The Black Chamber has always relied on non-human assets, hasn't it? To a much greater extent than any of the European agencies. But now the great conjunction is beginning, and you've got a huge land mass to defend. You've also got a population who are geographically dispersed, many of whom subscribe to frankly implausible religious beliefs that will badly impair their ability to recognize the truth about what is happening. So you've got to find a solution to the religious lunatic problem—to people who will mistake the Black Chamber for Satan and his happy helpers—and to defending the United States. It's only natural to look for the biggest stick. And that thing"—her gaze tracks towards the gate—"is the biggest stick that comes to hand. Am I right?"

—The Apocalypse Codex

The Black Chamber is a fever-dream of the American security state; it's an event horizon of black helicopters and sinister conspiracies. They're the Majestic 12, the Nine Unknown Men, the Men in Black, the Rand Corporation. They're Herman Kahn with a copy of the Necronomicon and glowing worms in his eyes, the epitome of the Strangelovecraftian nightmare.

The Chamber represents the road not taken for the Laundry. They're what happens when you forget to cling to your humanity, and start using the Mythos for your own ends. John Tynes once memorably compared the Cthulhu Mythos to 'mental plutonium – get too close, and your mind sickens and dies.' The Black Chamber got too close, and now they're building nuclear bombs.



The Chamber as Antagonists

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The Black Chamber makes excellent antagonists in a *Laundry* game. It is not a cult, so you can't wipe them out. They're not monsters, so you can talk with them and intrigue against them. They're not the enemy, *per se*, but you can't let them win.

The Chamber works best when it's kept off-stage as much as possible, but is a constant threat in the background. Put Nazgûl in as undercover agents in cults, have them turn out to be the even-more-sinister backers behind already-sinister schemes, mention them in hushed tones. Impress the players with the size and power of the Chamber; make sure that the players know that they're the underdogs in this contest.

The Chamber's aims do sometimes match those of the Laundry, but even when both sides are working towards the same goal, don't let them rely on the Chamber. The Nazgûl are much more likely to let the player characters do the grunt work, then swoop in and take the prize themselves. Keep the Chamber's ultimate goals ambiguous – never let the players be sure which side the Chamber is actually on.

Playing Within The Chamber

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All the above advice applies to games where the player characters are part of the Chamber too. Even if the characters are employees, they shouldn't completely agree with what the Chamber does. Encourage them to work from within to reform the Chamber, or hint that the Dark Commissioners are mythos-worshipping cultists or even inhuman monsters themselves. A game where the Black Chamber's approach is the right one contradicts the worldview of the *Laundry* novels – it suggests a belief not only in American exceptionalism, but in *human* exceptionalism, that we're somehow a special case in the universe.

Playing Chamber Officers

If you use the Black Chamber as an American version of the Laundry, then it's best to embrace the Strangelovecraftian weirdness. Run with a mix of player character types – have some play remote operators, have some play demon-possessed inhuman assets, have some play field agents – and throw them up against big threats. Everything's bigger and louder in America.

While the Laundry hunts down possessed sheep in a rainy field in Essex, the Black Chamber's off fighting DEEP SEVEN in the Colorado Mountains, or blowing up large chunks of the Middle East. Go weird, loud, and paranoid – have Control set the player characters against each other, and kill off characters if they fail. Death is no escape, after all.

Playing Thralls

The unfortunate fate of Patrick O'Donnell offers an unusual take on a Chamber game. In this set-up, the player characters are stringers and thralls – they might be ordinary people who got caught up in this shadow world, or ex-operatives like O'Donnell, or useful pawns for the Chamber. They've all got the Dark Mark, but aren't always working on Chamber business. They might be a bunch of private occult security consultants, or a gang of thieves, or heroic Mythos investigators, or an occult A-Team.

Sometimes, the Chamber demands that they carry out a mission. Sometimes, they're the ones calling on Control for help, but that help always comes at a very high price.

Playing Undercover Agents

Finally, you can always have a single Black Chamber agent in a regular campaign. The Chamber has moles everywhere, and the Dark Mark can be hidden. Putting a Chamber spy in a Laundry group means lots of juicy paranoia...





Before the Laundry

"The Laundry is stranger and older than you probably realize," she says quietly. "And the core, the informal group the bureaucrats call Mabogany Row, goes back even further. For hundreds of years they existed, a select band of practitioners of the dark sciences, solitary by nature, funded out of the House of Lords' black budget." Howard's jaw flaps, silently; it's always amusing to watch their reaction when they learn the truth. "Mabogany Row, the bureaucrats call it. They don't know the half of it. The larger organization, built from the guts of SOE, was created purely to support the wizards of the invisible college; these days, the civil servants think they're the real thing. But only because the occupants of those empty offices choose not to disabuse them of such a useful misconception."

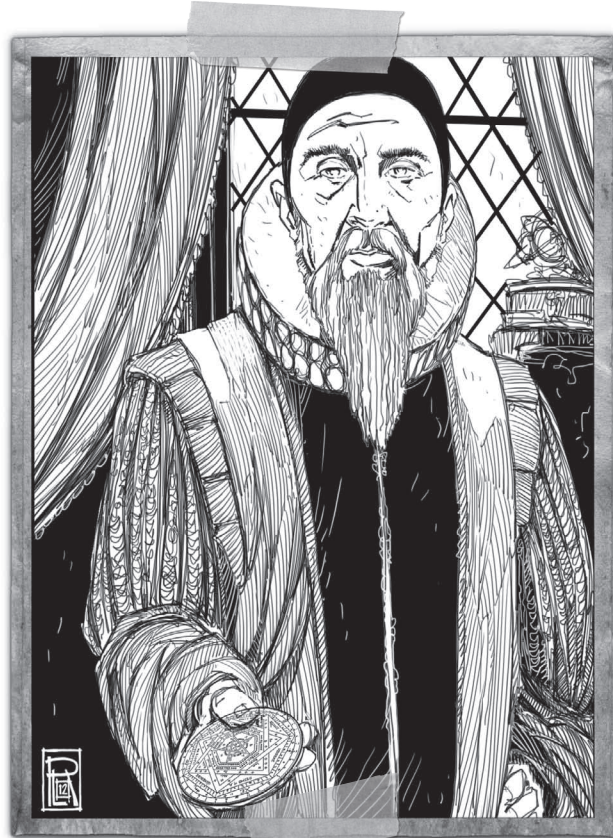
— *The Apocalypse Codex*

Magic has always been with us, on the fringes of society. Humanity evolved under the pressure of the occult – once our monkey brains achieved a critical mass of complexity, we became a target for every possessor entity and necrovore out there. Our ancestors selected for mathematical inability and a highly restricted state of consciousness – most of those apes who could see things or work magic were beaten to death before the brain-eaters got them. Those few pariahs who survived became shamans and priests and monsters and wizards. Our species thrived despite our intelligence – we learned to shun magic. We put our own fake gods up against the real ones and worshipped glove puppets and genitalia and zombie carpenters instead of Yog-Sothoth.

All through history, there's a hidden thread of magic. The same patterns repeat themselves over and over – smart idiots uncover coded references to occult powers, they start experimenting, they make contact with things from outside, and then either get their souls sucked dry or start worshipping those things (and providing sacrifices). There's also a second pattern, where society turns on those madmen, those deviants, those witches and kills them. The Laundry and other occult agencies are the latest iteration of that pattern. We're more sophisticated, but we're still effectively beating Thog with a big stick before he lets the big bad gods into the cave.

Skip over a few thousand years. In thirteenth century England, there was a monastery where the monks collected books and relics that they locked away in lead-lined vaults instead of venerating. (Don't bother looking for it – all records of it were carefully erased, and there's a government bunker there now.) With the dissolution of the monasteries, those books passed into the possession of the Crown. A cabal of nobles, all of whom claimed some interest in the occult, asked for permission to study the collection. This cabal were bound to use their magic for the good of the Kingdom, and a stipend was paid out of the Crown coffers to fund their work. A century later,

under Elizabeth I, the cabal came under the control of her spymaster, Walsingham. The cabal's agent at court was John Dee, the original 007.



The cabal became known as the Invisible College. Its influence waxed and waned over the years. Charles I feared their power, and instituted the Black Assizes as a check on the college's influence. Cromwell suppressed the College, driving it underground. It took more than a century for the college to emerge again, hiding behind masks of freemasonry and Rosicrucianism as it searched for members who could wield magic without being corrupted by it. Isaac Newton carried a warrant card, and so did many

other members of the Royal Society. The College recruited from among academics; William Hopkins was the college's gatekeeper, and paid for his long service with his sanity. The college became an unofficial institution, a club of academics, dilettantes, theologians and sorcerers.

The cabal influenced the growth of the British Empire. They collected secrets like magpies, and gathered occult lore from across the world. They discerned terrible patterns in the data – the gods worshipped among the Inuit shared aspects of demons mentioned in legends from the Horn of Africa. The formulae concealed in Egyptian hieroglyphs matched spells cast by wizards in China – and those same formulae came tumbling out of the abstruse calculations of Gauss and Riemann.

The 1861 Monster Control Act and the secret 1864 Contagious Works Act gave the invisible college official standing again, formalising its relationship with the government. By the early twentieth century, the invisible college was a secret but vital part of the British establishment. The original cabal, the college's Secret Masters, continued to oversee the protection of the Crown, and they employed a number of researchers and agents to help them defend the United Kingdom against supernatural threats.



The college suppressed evidence of the occult where it could, and monitored those occult groups it could not control. There was a largely unspoken agreement among the European powers that occult weapons were too terrible to be used in war. (Previously, they'd also been

too impractical, but science was rapidly making military wizardry a nightmarish reality).

After the Great War

The interbellum period (1918 to 1939) marked the height of the college's activity. During the 1930s, they used the Mass Observation Project to exhaustively document knowledge of the occult among the general public, and took steps to wipe it out (the knowledge, not the public). The growth of universal primary education across the western world let the governments inculcate a safer worldview, one that wasn't compatible with magic. Even things that had been relatively common knowledge, like medusa, were driven into the realm of myth.

After 1939, the college became the Laundry and vanished into the ineffability of Mahogany Row, but back before then there were still giants walking the streets of Mayfair. Coincidentally, this was also the time described by Lovecraft in his fiction, and the era concentrated on by the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game. Playing a campaign set in the interbellum years combines the attitude and metaphysics of the Laundryverse with the wealth of background information and scenarios available for *Call of Cthulhu*.

Creating Characters

Follow the normal character creation rules for Laundry player characters, with the following exceptions:

- There's no Computer Use skill.
- Science (Thaumaturgy) is also unavailable.
- Status is replaced by Credit Rating. Your character's initial Credit Rating depends on your Wealth level.
 - Destitute: 0%
 - Poor: 5%
 - Average: 15%
 - Affluent: 30%
 - Wealthy: 60%
 Credit Rating can be increased like any other skill.
- During Step Eight, assign 50 points to any five skills of your choice, and add +10% to your Credit Rating, Knowledge (Occult), Knowledge (Politics), Etiquette and Knowledge (Espionage) skills.
- During Step Nine, you can learn a number of spells equal to the tens digit of your Sorcery skill. (So, a character with Sorcery 50% knows five spells).
- Invisible College characters don't receive the same training as Laundry agents. Their Madness Threshold is 5 or *half* their POW, whichever is higher.

Instead of working for the Laundry, your characters are agents of the Invisible College. From time to time, you may be called upon to serve King and Country in unlikely ways. Contacts come in the form of written correspondence from the Secret Masters, or by meeting one of the more established agents (see Notable Characters, below). The Invisible College doesn't have a headquarters (at least, not one that your characters know about), so meetings happen at various clubs and private homes around London.

Grimoires and Practical Magic

While the College is on the trail of a unified theory of magic, they're not quite there yet. Sorcery works somewhat differently in this campaign framework. Instead of a character knowing all the spells permitted by their Sorcery score, spell effects are learned individually. So, you don't learn one Summoning spell and cast it as level one, two or three – you learn Summon Feeder in the Night, then learn another spell called Summon Fire Vampire and so on (actually, you're more likely to learn *Ye Shade of the Mortuary & How It May Be Bound To Thy Will*).

Learning a spell takes 1d6 weeks of study per level of the spell. At the end of this time, the character can make a Sorcery test. If successful, he learns the new spell.

- **Defensive Bindings:** Each type of damage is a different spell.
- **Destiny Entanglement:** Does not exist in this era as a distinct spell. Some rituals may incorporate elements of the entanglement, but the Invisible College does not yet understand it well enough to make it into a formula.
- **Entropy Manipulation:** There are literally hundreds of spells based on Entropy Manipulation, each of which can be studied independently.
- **Exorcism:** Unlike other spells, learning Exorcism at level one allows the character to cast it at an arbitrarily higher level.
- **Gate:** Each different destination is a different spell.
- **Geas:** Each different type of Geas (truth, silence, binding, oaths of service and so on) is a different spell.
- **Glamour:** Each appearance is a different spell.
- **Prognostication:** Only exists as a single spell, although there are lots of different (and equally unreliable) forms.
- **Scrying:** Each level is a different spell.

- **Sympathetic Magic:** Each level is a different spell.
- **Summoning and Banishing:** One spell per creature type. And yes, you learn Summoning and Banishing separately.
- **Wards:** Each type of ward is a different spell.

Without computers, all spells must be cast using Traditional Magic, Pen and Paper, or Mental Magic (see pages 131-132 of the *Laundry Files* Rulebook).

Magical Items

Mass-producing magical items requires computers (or invocation of alien minds that don't get K-Syndrome after recasting the same spell over and over), so the nascent Laundry doesn't have a huge arsenal of Class Two wards and Hands of Glory. They do have a room in the British Museum where they keep certain items with curious and occasionally useful qualities, and those relics may be assigned to the player characters as needed.

Of course, ancient relics and magic fetishes usually lack the ease of use and portability of modern talismans. The Invisible College might issue a character with a ward, but it might take the form of a carved shell marked with runes of binding, and the crustacean inside (a creature that baffles the best minds in the field of Natural History) must be fed on blood regularly. The 1930s version of a thaumometer is a bulky device with crackling electric coils and carefully balanced droplets of mercury in glass tubes; you can carry one in a suitcase if you don't mind breaking your back.

Characters can create their own magic items ahead of time. Enchanting a spell into an item increases the POW requirement by 2 and the casting time by a factor of five. So, to enchant a level 2 ward requires POW16 and 120 turns (10 hours) work.

Requisitions, Training & Bureaucracy

Fortunately for the player characters, this is the era before the Invisible College hid itself in a shell of bureaucracy. The characters are not employees – they might be private citizens who are informally called upon to serve, or agents of the intelligence service, or officers in the army. Their work for the invisible college is conducted in secret, as a clandestine adjunct to their normal lives. It's not a 9-5 job, it's *"by the way, Wingate, while you're off suppressing the uprising in Transjordan, would you terribly mind popping into the desert and taking another look for that pesky lost city of Zerzuza?"*

Characters can use Credit Rating instead of Status to requisition support or equipment, as per the standard rules in Chapter 11 of the *Laundry Files* rulebook. Mission

Personalities of the Interbellum

Playing a historical game lets the characters rub shoulders with figures from history. Occultism and espionage are traditional occupations of the great British eccentric, and a surprising number of people combined the two. In any game based on the real world, research is your friend. Wikipedia is especially wonderful for this - delve into the background of any historical figure from this era, and you'll find an aunt who was involved with spiritualism or a mysterious holiday to Egypt or a bibliophilic hobby that you can hang a mystery on. Active during the 30s, you've got figures like the following:

J.F.C. "Boney" Fuller: Later to become 'F,' chief of SOE. Fuller retired from the British Army in 1933 to concentrate on his theories on mechanised warfare (his theories on tank warfare were the foundation of the German blitzkrieg), occultism (he was a devotee of Crowley) and far right politics (he strongly sympathised with the Nazis, and was given a choice between running the Laundry and internment when the war began).

Claude Dansey: He becomes Assistant Chief of SIS until 1944; he then transfers to the Laundry and becomes instrumental in defining the Laundry's structure. In the 1930s, he works officially for MI6, but has no confidence in the agency. Instead, he spends the decade building his own intelligence network, codenamed the Z Organisation, which recruits businessmen, industrialists and travellers. Spiteful and often cruel, he has a special dislike for intellectuals and academics, which makes his position in the Invisible College rather awkward. He does, however, have a brilliant deductive mind.

Ian Fleming: Later to win fame as the creator of James Bond, Fleming was recruited by the Invisible College after dropping out of Sandhurst. (His mother, Evelyn Fleming, is also tangentially associated with the college - what do you expect from a woman whose maiden name is Eve Beatrice St. Croix Rose? Eve, meaning the firstborn of a new age, and Beatrice, who guided Dante to enlightenment, of the Rosy Cross?) During the 30s, Fleming bounced around various failed careers as a journalist, banker and stockbroker before joining Naval Intelligence. These careers provide cover for his work with the Laundry.

Denis Wheatley: Another Invisible College alumnus who went on to a literary career, Denis Wheatley is already a respected novelist. He's a valuable consultant and researcher for agents of the College, and he has an extensive secret library of occult tomes.

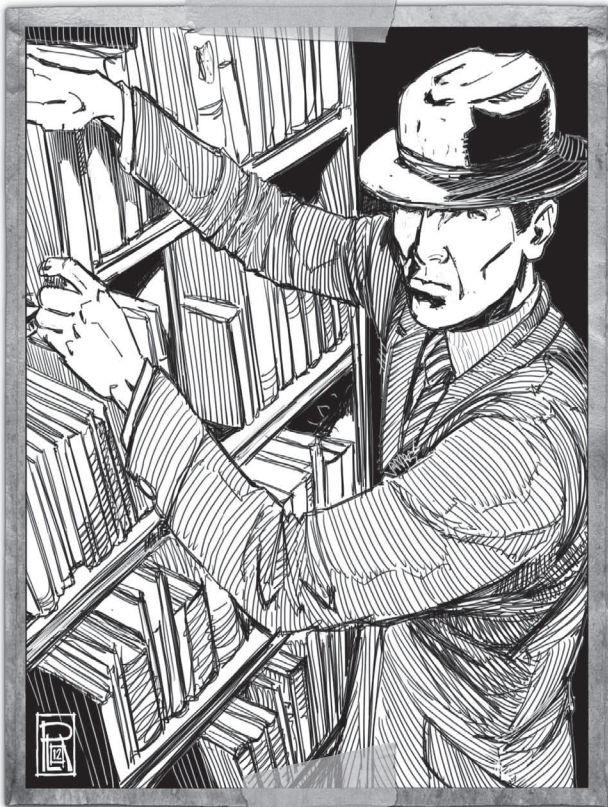
Aleister Crowley: The *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, a precursor to the better-known Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, was one of the Invisible College's infrequent recruiting fronts. In the modern era, anyone muttering about the Kabbalah or the language of angels or the Rosy Cross is probably a clueless wannabe, as the real occultists are off plotting fractals or arguing about Hilbert spaces. Back then, though, those who knew what they were talking about hid among the ranks of the deluded and delusional. The Secret Masters would occasionally release documents, to see who took an interest. Those who proved intelligent and sceptical enough to separate nonsense from genuine magic would then be recruited to serve the Invisible College.

Crowley, 'the Great Beast,' was also the great failure of the College. He was recruited as an agent, and was assigned to gather intelligence about occult developments across the world. He left the service of the Invisible College in 1930, when he managed to break his Oath of Service using a ritual he conducted in Lisbon, but by '34 he was bankrupt and needed the College's protection again.

Crowley should prove a very unreliable ally for the player characters. He's a talented magician, he has friends and devotees everywhere, and he's undeniably brilliant. However, he's also a drug addict, a sex addict and an egotist, and delights in controversy and dramatic confrontations.

The Schoolmaster: In 1929, J.F.C. Fuller and several other members of the college successfully bound a hungry ghost, codenamed TEAPOT, into the body of a condemned murder. They bound the creature with a powerful geas spell, and hid it in a public school as a mathematics teacher. The TEAPOT entity is still there, terrifying schoolboys and behaving like an ordinary Englishman, revealing few signs of the soul-eater sewn into its flesh. In a few decades, TEAPOT will be known as James Angleton, but in the 1930s it's an untested weapon in the Laundry's arsenal.

budgets still exist, representing the informal sanction of the Invisible College. Characters can exceed their Mission Budget and draw further on the goodwill of the College and its allies, this works like drawing on a Departmental Budget, but the punishments for doing so are much, *much* more severe, as the character risks bringing the Invisible College into the public eye. Double the Status Loss described in *End of Mission Accounting* on page 108 of the rulebook and apply the loss to Credit Rating instead. Cross the college, and it will ruin your reputation or drive you mad.



Training still exists, but as an informal correspondence course between the characters and the Secret Masters. If the characters perform adequately on a mission, the Gamesmaster may reward them with a letter from a PO Box in London containing a handwritten treatise on some obscure topic that grants a check in one or more skills.

Threats & Dangers

The College's seers have foreseen a second war, more terrible than the last. Both the English and their German counterparts prepare for an occult struggle. Agents of the *Ahnenerbe* and the Thule society explore the world, collecting relics and spells. They're already on the trail of computational demonology, and their research will lead to the Wannsee conference and Hitler's doomsday weapon of Project Jotunheim. The war is still a few years away, but the player characters will run into plenty of Nazi spies and sorcerers.

The Gamemaster can also draw from Lovecraft. Stories like *At The Mountains of Madness*, *The Hunter of the Dark*, *The Shadow Out of Time* and several other tales take place in this era, and are a fecund source of inspiration. A partial conjunction in 1925 between our world and Outside (recorded by Lovecraft as *The Call of Cthulhu*) stirs up cult activity and Mythos worship across the world.

The Wizards of Mahogany Row

In a present-day *Laundry Files* campaign, the player characters should never meet the Secret Masters (or the Board, as they're known now) in person. They don't have bodies anymore, at least not as we know them. They may still communicate with the characters on rare occasions through unlikely channels. A character might get a typed memo signed with a simple 'F,' or one of the Residual Human Resources could suddenly offer erudite advice at just the right moment. The Board also communicates by possessing Laundry agents (what, you thought only the Black Chamber could play those games) or through prophetic dreams.

These communications become more frequent during the Phoney War. It's almost as if the Board desperately tries to tie up all their loose ends before it's too late.





The Phoney War

*"We go home." Her voice is tired. "We conduct the post mortem. Then we dig in for the phoney war."
"Ah." His eyebrows rise with enlightenment. "You think it's going that way?"
"I am certain of it."*

— *The Apocalypse Codex*

The Phoney War refers to the period just before the end of the world as we know it. It's the time just after the lock on the gates of Hell opens, but just before the demons push the gates open from the far side. Think of it as injury time in the Great Game.

In your *Laundry Files* campaign, the Phoney War happens once you've pressed a Big Red Button (see page 40). The Stars are now coming Right, and nothing can stop it. In a few short weeks/months/years (delete as appropriate), reality is going to melt in the terrible presence of the risen Great Old Ones. Life may seem to continue as normal during the Phoney War, but that's only a desperate pretense. Even if you're an ordinary clueless civilian who knows nothing about the Cthulhu Mythos or CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN, you'll instinctively know that *something's* going wrong.

As the world moves towards the end times, there'll be all sorts of signs and portents. Here are a few to look for:

Weird Weather

As our reality becomes porous, microscopic leaks between universes shunt energy and information back and forth. On a macro level, the biggest manifestation of this is weird weather. There'll be more heatwaves and snowstorms, especially unseasonable ones, lots more electrical storms, more earthquakes and other seismic activity – more natural disasters in general. These effects will be especially intense around certain days that are outside the natural cycle of time. Walpurgisnacht (May 1st), Pentecost (varies) All Hallows' Eve (October 31st) and the periods around the solstices are especially vulnerable.

Fortean enthusiasts will have a field day – we can look forward to rains of fish, blood, space jelly and all sorts of cosmic debris. More alarmingly, there'll be a steep rise in cosmic radiation penetrating the atmosphere, accompanied by a noticeable jump in skin cancers.

Uncanny Events

The wheels are coming off the bus. The Herald of the End Times won't be a trumpet blast; it'll be in the funny pages. Expect spontaneous combustions, earth-lights,

unexplainable co-incidences, mysterious disappearances, two-headed goats chanting the Unspeakable Names, Cthulhu appearing in tortillas and other weird shit. Hauntings will spike, too, as all of the extra thaumic energy sloshing around takes form from psychic echoes and stone tapes.

Official Paralysis & Corruption

The world's governments have known about CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN for years, but most people still don't believe the reports. It's hard to look out at the sane, stable world you've known all your life and then reconcile that with alien space gods descending to eat our brains. It's unthinkable.

During the Phoney War, we'll have to deal with the governmental equivalent of shock. Some parts of the establishment will fall back on the reflexes and training we've inculcated into them over the last few decades, but other sections will just grind to a halt or get bogged down in pointless habits. Expect lots of failed summits, empty sabre-rattling, unusually stupid policy-making and widespread denial. Most of the systems in place right now won't be able to cope with the coming disaster. All-out thermonuclear war was simple in comparison.

As existing institutions founder, expect others to take advantage of the situation. More wars, more whole-scale looting of economies, more flouting of regulations. In any war, thieves and arms dealers thrive at the start of hostilities.

Increased Security

Not so much a symptom as a reaction, and part of the treatment. Even the best-case scenarios for the next few years aren't pleasant ones. An invasion of brain-eaters means that the entire civilian population must be treated as potential fifth columnists. Anyone outside a warded zone could become a vector for possession. While the real fireworks won't start until the Great Old Ones arrive, the Phoney War is when we roll out our totalitarian security networks. The UK's actually ahead of the curve here, with SCORPION STARE and national ID cards. We can also expect more security checks on travellers, under the guise of the War on Terror.

Madness

There's going to be an epidemic of dementia—not mad cow disease, new variant CJD, but something our house doctors call Krantzberg syndrome: if a sorcerer unintentionally thinks the wrong thoughts, performs magic by mind, the listeners and feeders and actors they invoke from the quantum foam take tiny bites out of their brains. Dream the wrong dreams, and you can wake up with a palsy or an aneurysm.

There will be amazement and miracles, too. Magic wands stuffed with silicon chips that work wonders. Twisted biological creations that obey our directives. Ordinary people discovering they have the power to summon demons and angels and warp reality to their will. Somnolent sentient species rising from the deeps to take an interest in the suddenly interesting land-dwelling aboriginals. Alien emissaries, and powers beyond our comprehension like the Sleeper in the Pyramid – Monstrous conquerors no bullet or atom bomb can kill – and their willing servants.

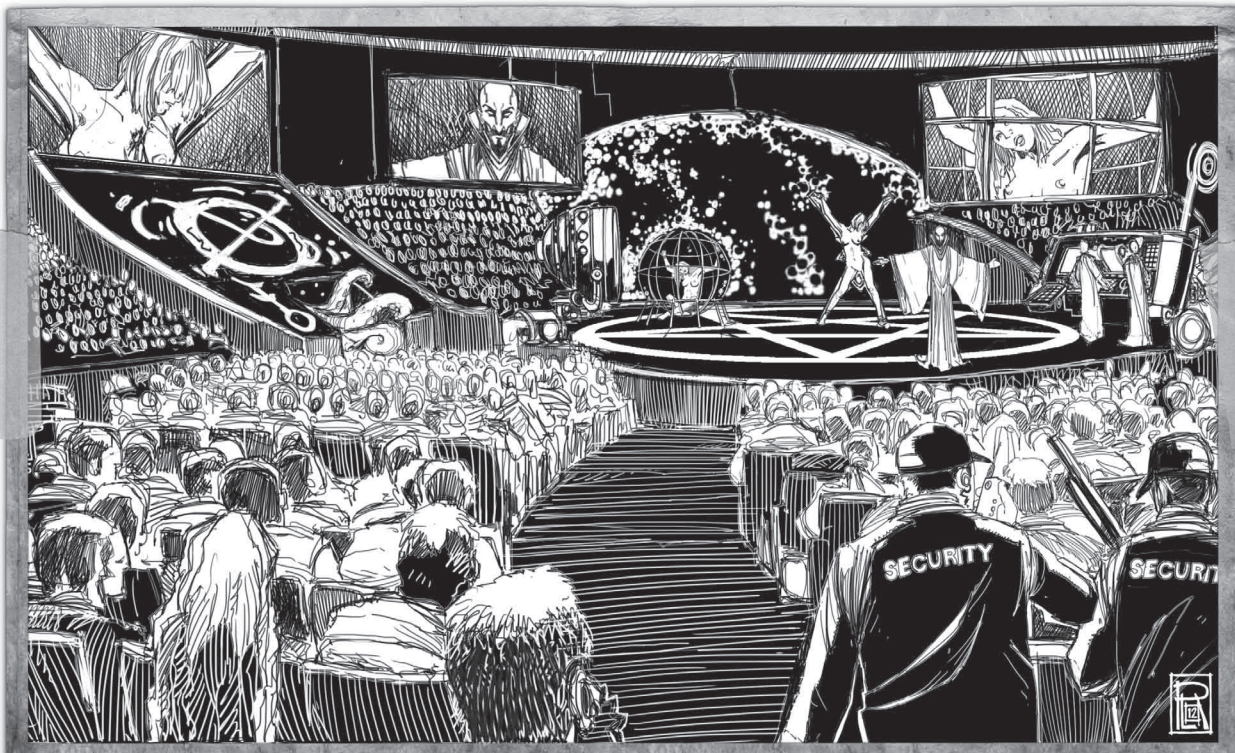
—The Apocalypse Codex

Incidence of all forms of mental illness can be expected to rise steeply during the Phoney War. Five factors will become especially problematic:

- **Pre-K-Syndrome and Psychic Contacts:** The threshold for psychic potential will dip as the Great Old Ones return. Those who had the occasional glimpse of the future or who were just generically 'lucky' may become full-blown psychics; others who were previously slightly sensitive will move into the danger

zone. They'll be at high risk for possession (see below), but even those who aren't fully possessed may still have brush contacts with exonomic entities. This means more cases of K-Syndrome and more spontaneous revelations of cosmic horror.

- **Dream Visions:** The human mind is especially vulnerable when dreaming, as the subconscious is better at pattern-matching than the conscious mind. We project a large number of cases where a sleeping individual makes fleeting contact with a Great Old One, leading to mental collapse or shock.
- **Psychic Pressure:** Insomnia, stress, anxiety, depression, all boosted by the inescapable feeling of impending doom.
- **Collapse of Existing Support Mechanisms:** As mental health services and support networks become overloaded, cases that would previously be successfully caught and treated become acute.
- **Adaptation:** The upcoming conjunction is a big one, but it's not the first time that the Great Old Ones have awoken. There were smaller conjunctions before recorded history, and we survived those ones. An unknown percentage of the population will respond instinctively to the collapse of reality, adopting modes of behaviour that seem irrational to those of us who cling to our current frame of reference. We have no idea what form this adaptation will take, but it may be indistinguishable from cult worship of the invaders.



Enhanced Magic

The full Conjunction is expected to massively increase our magical firepower, but there will be spikes of thaumic energy throughout the Phoney War. Spells will become easier to cast at times, and contact with previously inaccessible regions of the multiverse will become achievable.

In game terms, the POW available for all spells increases by +1, and there's an additional +1 POW available when drawing on thaumic resonance.

Increased Cult Activity

This one's easy – every Mythos cult in the world has their own version of CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN eschatology. Their gods are coming back, and they'll be rolling their respective welcome mats out. Cults that were previously dormant will reactivate; active cults find their magical power (and with it, their ability to recruit more members) increasing. We may also see a swing back towards various forms of organised religion.

Projections also show an increase in spontaneous development of cults. Humans are hard-wired to worship what we interpret as stronger apes and higher powers. As the crisis grows, more people will turn to the alien powers in a misguided search for safety or meaning.

Spontaneous Possessions

As magic in general becomes more powerful, the likelihood of entities either slipping through spontaneous Gates, or else sensing movement in the platonic realm and homing in on human thoughts rises. We can expect more cases of spontaneous possession throughout the UK. Most of these will be low-level entities that can only control one victim at a time; multiple-body possessors get to wait until the main event.

Old Ones Awake

Imagine the ab-reality of the Great Old Ones as a sea that rises and falls with the tides. We evolved in the damp spot on the beach left by the retreating sea, but now the waves are rising again and we're going to be drowned. We share this patch of beach with strange things left behind by the sea. They look dead and dried out, but when the sea comes back, they'll stir back to life.

These stranded entities can't survive under the conditions of our reality. They've calcified – they might be frozen as patterns of information, or fossilised into stone, or slumber deep underground, or they've gone native and disguised themselves as hairless apes. As the Stars Come Right, they'll live again, the advance guard of the apocalypse.



The Laundry & The Phoney War

When CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN finally hits, the Laundry will effectively become the British government. All those layers of pointless bureaucracy, all those clerks and administrators who know about alien horrors, but spend their days counting paperclips and arguing over cabling requirements – their destiny awaits them, when they march on Whitehall and ensure that the machinery of state endures even the apocalypse. During the Phoney War period, the Laundry stirs and stretches forth its tentacles, awakening like a papier-mâché copy of a Great Old One made from forms and three-ring binders.

Firstly, those bureaucrats need cross-training and upskilling. Bob got a taste of that when he was sent off to the National School of Government, and he's not the only employee on that list. By the time the conjunction hits, the UK government will have defence in depth in bureaucratic terms at least. Someone has to try to keep the lights on.

What does that mean during the Phoney War? More work, as half of the staff is off on training courses or meetings with other government departments.

Second, those officers who are marked for field work and command, the Line officers, they get a lot more responsibility and power. All those years hunting cultists in Berkshire and

exorcising ghosts in Wigan? Those were training for the real work to come. The Laundry needs every field-qualified agent to be at the top of their game, as they're going to be on the front lines when the war for humanity's survival kicks off.

(Of course, it's not going to be a war in the early stages. It'll be more like an epidemic, a plague, as monsters ooze through cracks in reality and seize our bodies. Those field officers will be plague doctors, the guys sent in to seal the breaches and to burn the still-moving bodies. Later, during the height of the conjunction, it'll be a shooting war – and a wizard's war – fought with banishing rounds and EMERALD JAVELIN and SCORPION STARE and who knows what else.)

Third, the Laundry moves to proactive recruitment. Up until now, with a few key exceptions, the Laundry gets most new staff as a result of field operations. Mr. Smith sees a BLUE HADES while out swimming, and next week Mr. Smith starts his exciting new career in Catering. During the Phoney War, the Laundry goes hunting. For some of the targets, it's for their own protection – it's better for Ms. Chandrarti the mathematics researcher to be inside the (warded) tent, instead of accidentally summoning Nyarlathotep unawares. Others get recruited because the Laundry actively needs their particular skillsets, and it won't take no for an answer. Such targets include existing occult investigators, those with military training, criminals, independent sorcerers and so on will also be co-opted. Many will end up as External Assets.

Fourth, it's time to clean house. Previously, due to lack of resources (and other factors), the Laundry monitored some potential cults instead of rolling them up. That policy ends during the Phoney War. Previously, the Solomon Birchwood society was a bunch of fringe scholars studying the works of a discredited eighteenth century philosopher, but once magic starts to rise, they become a danger to national security. As the walls grow thinner, magic becomes easier. The same housecleaning goes for non-human entities – sorry, Mr. S., who lives alone in a strangely slanted house, and buys only frozen mice from the pet store, but your time is up.

Fifth, this is when the stakes go up in the game played between the OCCINTEL agencies. The Laundry has to know what the other players are planning. There are three possibilities. A rival agency might be doing the same thing as the Laundry, building up its defences and preparing for the worst, in which case the Laundry needs to co-ordinate with its efforts and minimise the number of cracks that horrors could slip through. The second possibility is that the rival agency is on the trail of some method or relic that increases its chances of survival while damaging those of the Laundry, in which case Mahogany Row makes the call about the Laundry's response. The classic example here

is the Black Chamber and their policy of capturing and repurposing alien horrors as living weapons.

Possibility three, of course, is that the rival intelligence agency has fallen to the enemy, and is now run by Mythos-worshipping cultists. The time to confirm scenario two or scenario three is during the Phoney War. It won't do us much good to know the French DCRI is full of madmen (well, the wrong sort of madmen) when Cthulhu's slouching towards the Channel in a beret. During the Phoney War, everyone – even our European partners – starts checking up on everyone else through both official and covert channels.

Sixth... well, if there's anything on your bucket list, anything you've always wanted to do, or anything you need to say to loved ones, now's the time.

Equipment Upgrades

Along with the enhanced magical conditions, the Phoney War period brings some much-needed upgrades to the Laundry's arsenal.

- **Necronomiphone S:** The newest model Necronomiphone S runs off the latest iPhone or Android-OS hardware (yes, porting OFCUT to two platforms is a pain, but it's easier than trying to convince certain people to part with their shinies), and runs the level two versions of entropy manipulation, exorcism and banishing as well as standard level one versions of all apps).
- **Necrominipad (Average, Certification required):** A tablet-sized Necronomiphone, running level two versions of all apps. Plus, it's great for reading grimoires.
- **Basilisk Guns:** The old Basilisk Gun consisted of two video cameras taped together with a custom circuit board. It was bulky, prone to failure and very hard to conceal (plus, it ate battery power like crazy.) New-model stoner guns consist of a handheld 3D digital camera with custom firmware. It looks like a geeky tourist's toy, but spews look-to-kill atomic death up to 80 times at a range of 100 meters on a single battery charge.
- **Wards:** Class Three wards are now Average difficulty to requisition.



Think of the Children

These days, the British government has a rather awkward relationship with faith. Public displays of religious fervour are seen as, well, a little odd. No-one was that happy when Tony said he talked to God about invading Iraq; the consensus in Whitehall was that if the PM had to talk to a spin doctor, he might have gone to a reputable one. Similarly, while the Tories like to be seen as traditional and as quintessentially English as a Turner painting, or cricket, or Jack the Ripper, they try to keep the good old Church of England off to one side – an optional extra instead of something inherent. Freedom of religion, multiculturalism, everyone has a part to play in the rich tapestry that is modern England.

And if one of those churches is happy to stay low-key, while also investing millions in non-profit schools, why, even the most sceptical chap must admit that religion isn't all bad.

If you follow the money, then you can trace the connections between the Golden Promise Ministry and the Washlamb Trust academies. They're private schools, owned and funded by a holding company that's part of the Golden Promise group. Washlamb operates three academies in England. Two of them are exclusive, but relatively innocuous schools; most of the students there are the children of Golden Promise members. Exam results are excellent, discipline is strict, and religious education classes are... interesting, but they're almost exactly what they seem.¹

The Third Academy

The Third Washlamb Academy is the one that got highlighted in all the meetings and prayer breakfasts with the government. Academy #3 isn't for the children of cult members or rich families who want little Eustace to have a spot of discipline – it's for problem children. It takes in kids with behavioural and social problems from across the south of England – the ones who got kicked out of every comprehensive school – and gives them the best education possible, for free.

Studiously avoiding any dental exams of this equine present, the Department of Education never looked too closely at the entrance criteria for the Academy. If it had, then it would have noticed that some of the questions asked of prospective students are rather odd:

"Have you ever dreamed about something happening, and then it comes true?"

"Have you ever stared at a spider or a fly or some other small animal, and it died?"

"Do you ever hear the thoughts of people around you? What am I thinking right now?"

"Did you have strange dreams around the 30th of April or the 1st of May?"

Some humans are more sensitive than others. There's a crack in their minds, and visions from Outside leak in. In centuries past, they'd become saints or madmen or prophets. These days, they're more likely to be diagnosed as schizophrenic and dosed with olanzapine. The development of these psychic gifts usually happens in early adolescence, and usually leads to other behavioural problems.

So, the Washlamb Trust collects potentially psychic kids from across the south of England and sticks them in an occult hothouse that's disguised as a faith school – and they're doing it right under the Laundry's nose.

The Russian Connection

The star pupil of the Washlamb Academy's esoteric program is a young woman named Zoë Waters. The Washlamb Trust believes that she was the child of cultists who ended up in an English foster home, and that she's got a psychic hotline to the Sleeper. They're mostly right. They're just missing one small detail – she's a Thirteenth Directorate asset. The Russian occult intelligence group planted her as a tethered goat, knowing that one cult or another would pick her up. They didn't expect that cult to be a bunch of American bible-thumpers, but they rolled with it.

Timing

If this adventure takes place before the events of *The Apocalypse Codex*, then the player characters' investigation may be what prompts Lockhart to send Persephone to investigate Golden Promise Ministry's connection to the British government. If it's after the novel, then the Golden Promise organisation is on the ropes and desperately needs a way to contact the Sleeper now that Raymond Schiller is gone. Zoë becomes even more important in this scenario. And, obviously, if your games take place in a parallel universe to those of the *Laundry Files* novels, you don't need to worry about when all this happens.

1. Of course, Golden Promise kids also attend the special Sunday School lessons, where they learn how Jesus will only come when he can no longer ignore the suffering billions of humanity, and how we must all open our hearts and minds to His hungers.

1. The Break-In

This opening scene targets the family of one of the player characters. If a character has already established a few family members as non-player characters, use them. Otherwise, have the player come up with details on the fly. Tell the player that his character gets an unexpected call from a family member, and ask the player to expand on who that family member is. A brother? A sister? A parent? Friendly or estranged? Married with kids, single, divorced? The two constraints are that the family member has to be living in or near London, and the family member doesn't know about the Laundry. As far as they're concerned, the player character works for the NHS or some other forgettable government department.



The Call

It's a brief phone call to the character's personal phone. The family member is obviously terrified, and sounds like they're hiding while making the call from the way they whisper into the microphone. Between the breathless gasps and the sobbing, the character can make out the following:

- Some strange young man just broke into the house. His name is David.
- He demanded to talk to the player character, and kept saying something about "the laundry."

- David's scary. Even if the family member is a big tough ex-marine, then they're terrified of this David. He's done something terrible that the family member is too alarmed to describe, but it's obviously ghastly.
- David's got a knife, and he's dangerous.
- Then, before the character can ask any questions, there's the sound of a struggle and the line goes dead. Sanity Loss for hearing a family member in that much distress is 1/1d4.
- A successful Idea or Knowledge (Occult) roll suggests that there's got to be a supernatural component to this. It's got that stench.

Call the Cops!

Instead of going to the family member's home themselves, the characters can call the regular police, or call the Switchboard and have the Laundry send round a plumbing team. If the characters choose the police, then the cops get there too late - by then, David has erected a basic anti-intruder ward, preventing the cops from getting in. He sacrifices the family member and any other bystanders, then kills himself.

If they go for a Plumbing approach, then they've got to pay for it out of their Departmental Budget, although given the circumstances, the Laundry will be lenient (+20% to Status when rolling to determine how big a hole the character blows in the budget). By the time the characters arrive, the Plumbers have done their job. The house is clean, there's no blood on the floors, and the family member has had their memory erased. The only weirdness is the dead body of David on the floor. He's got a bullet hole in his forehead and a knife in his hand. The family member and any other bystanders have been geased by the Plumbers not to notice or acknowledge the corpse in any way.

House of Horrors

This section assumes that the family member lives in a semi-detached house in suburbia. Adjust as necessary to match the player's descriptions of their family member's home.

Something blasted the front door off its hinges; it looks like a train hit it, but a successful **Spot** roll notices a magical

rune scrawled on the floor in front of it. Just inside the door is a strand of something pinkish-red and slimy. A close examination shows that it's a length of viscera – it's something's gut. (If the family member had a pet, then David repurposed it as a warding spell. If not...well, that family member didn't need all of their intestines.) It's arranged to form part of the perimeter geometry for a warding spell. It's a level one spell, so the characters can easily exorcise it or pick it apart, but it stops anyone from passing it without first matching POW against its POW of 16.

Inside, the characters find a scene of horror. David's pushed the couch into the centre of the room. He removed all the cushions, then forced the family member to lie on

the bare couch, and finally placed the cushions back on top – entombing the family member in a plush coffin. He's scrawled more symbols on the cushions in his own blood.

David's a fattish young man of about seventeen or eighteen. He's dressed in a blood-stained white t-shirt and black combats, and he's wearing very shiny black shoes. More importantly, he's got a kitchen knife in one hand; his other hand is covered in a lot of blood, and it's not all his.

His eyes glow from within, and the blood that drips from a dozen long shallow cuts on his left hand and forearm steams and hisses when it hits the ground. Thaumometers click rapidly when pointed at him – he's magically hot.

David Philpott

Two years ago, David was a teenage monster. His violent behaviour and strange mood swings threatened to destroy his family, and he spent his nights running riot with a gang of other feral youths. The Washlamb Trust identified him as a potential psychic, and arranged for him to attend the school. As far as his parents are concerned, the Academy has transformed David into a model citizen – every time they visit him, they're impressed by how polite and stable he seems.

The Academy did transform David, but not in the way that his parents hoped. Through a regimen of occult instruction, psychotropic medication and ritual abuse, they turned him into a psychic receptacle for the dreams of the Sleeper in the Pyramid. David's a medium now, tuned into the howling nightmare song of the cosmos. He managed to pick up on stray psychic signals and followed them back to the Laundry. This attack is a cry for help.

Playing David

There's too much in your head. Religious instruction, a childhood of rage and confusion, your own guilt and doubt, fear of the outside world and fear of your captors, and most of all the ceaseless, maddening dreams of the Sleeper. It's all too much, and your head is cracking open.

The Academy taught you to see everything through a twisted version of Christianity. In this religion, the Sleeper is Christ, and the Laundry is part of the army of Satan. However, you can't take any more of Christ's

love, so you are desperately reaching out to Satan's little minions for help.

At the school, you fell in love with another student named Zoë Waters, but you were both placed in the gifted program, where carnal lusts are forbidden. Worse, you read the mind of one of your teachers, and you know what they intend to do to her. You should be overjoyed that she has such a great and holy destiny, but instead it sickened you. You have to save her.

Between the Academy's instruction and the dreams of the Sleeper, you've got a wealth of occult lore churning around your brain. You don't know what you're doing, but you can instinctively cast several spells like the warding you put around the house to keep people out.

You want the dreams to stop, but you don't have the courage to kill yourself. Suicide is a sin. Maybe the armies of Satan can murder you, and that can be the loophole that gets you past the Angel with a fiery sword that sits in your mind and forces you to be good.

David Philpott, Troubled Teen

STR 12 CON 15 SIZ 15 INT 11 POW 17
DEX 13 CHA 8 EDU 13 SAN 30 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Knife 50%, damage 1d4+db

Skills: Dodge 30%, Knowledge (Religion) 50%, Knowledge (Occult) 20%, Rant Crazily 70%, Spot 40%, Telepathy 60%.

Talking to David

David recognises the player character. *"I dreamed about you. You're one of the unbelievers, the servants of the Antichrist. Show me your warrant card, slave of the beast! Show me!"*

If shown a warrant card or other proof that the character is really in the Laundry, then David reveals what he wants in his own unique idiom. *"The Lord is coming, and he fills my head with visions of his holy temple. You are like the impaled men who guard the gates, the Russians with the cold eyes who ate my father, hollow be thy name. Please, let the cup pass from Zoe's lips! Keep Him away from her!"* He then tries to stab the family member through the cushions.

If the characters don't comply, he gets straight to the stabbing.

David's got a DEX of 13, and needs only one successful knife attack to kill the already-wounded victim. Whatever the players do, it has to be fast enough to bring David down quickly. A warrant card won't work on him – he's magically protected against low-level geases like that.

Aftermath

Once David's restrained or dead, the characters can deal with the aftermath of the scene. If the family member is still alive, they need comforting – and answers! Do the characters just try erasing memories, or come clean about the Laundry? If the family member dies, then that's a hit of 1/1d6 SAN.

If the characters delve into David's background, see *Background Reading*.

2. Mission Briefing

As soon as possible, the characters get called into the Laundry for a debriefing. The incident is coded HERALD GAMBIT. The briefing officer – a brusque, but still-human woman from Monitoring named Karen Wills – explains that Predictive Branch picked up several suspicious psychic signals in the hours before David's attack. Images of pain and terror, emotional flashes mostly, but they were unable to pin it down until David crystallised it for them. Weather Service thinks that maybe – they can't be sure, but it's possible – that there may have possibly been perhaps more than one (or one, but not less than one) sources of this psychic distress, and maybe possibly someone should take a look. Maybe. For Predictive Branch, that counts as an iron-clad act of steely determination.

Wills is more worried about how this David knew about the Laundry *and* was able to identify a civilian connected to a Laundry officer. Ever since the BLOODY BARON leak,

Counter-Espionage's mole hunting has reached new heights of paranoia and bloodletting. If David's source is inside the Laundry, it must be identified.

As the player characters are already involved, they're to investigate. Wills tells the characters that she expects them to be discrete – if they're too loud, then the enemy – whoever they are – may vanish. The Mission Budget is 25.

You're Off The Case

As an optional twist, the character related to the family member could be told not to get involved in this investigation. They're already personally compromised. Obviously, any headstrong player character will ignore this command and keep investigating anyway. Use this twist if your players are the sort to defy orders and spark conflict with the Laundry.

Background Reading

Anyone with **Research** can easily dig up the following with a few hours' work:

- The assailant was David Philpott. 17 years old, with a string of ASBOs and cautions for assault, breaking and entering, drug possession and other charges. The most recent incident was nearly two years ago.
- His address is on file; the characters can go interview his mother if they wish. His mother Amy is full of praise for the Washlamb Academy; she's not a religious person herself, but they're so *good* there.
 - A **Spot** test notices a Golden Promise Ministry flyer on the table; Amy says that David's school sent it to her, and she's thinking of going.
- David's parents are separated, and he has no official contact with his father, Timothy Philpott.
 - In fact, David met with his father just before the incident. The characters may encounter Timothy Philpott if they maintain surveillance on the school. See *Timothy Philpott*, page 98 for details.
- Two years ago, David transferred from a comprehensive school in east London to the Washlamb Academy. Checking with his old school shows that he was on the verge of getting expelled; he was extremely disruptive and violent.
 - A successful **Insight** roll notices that the teacher is holding something back. If pressed, she admits that David was a disturbing pupil. Sometimes, it seemed like he could read minds. Nothing overt, but there was always something very eerie about him.

Examining David

Even if David survived the events of last night, he's gone catatonic. An examination with **Medicine (Forensics)** reveals the following:

- He's been castrated. It was done several months ago by a skilled surgeon. The testicles were removed and replaced by plastic balls, and blood vessels in the penis were cauterized to prevent him ever having an erection. None of this surgery is visible without close examination.
- Multiple bruises, scars and broken bones imply violence and/or abuse. The more recent injuries are all consistent with physical torment and restraint, but there's no sign of sexual abuse.
- There are track marks in his arms, suggesting intravenous drug use. A toxicology screen shows traces of powerful hallucinogenic substances, including variations on MDMA (ecstasy), LSD and something that it takes the Laundry's lab boys several hours to identify before coming back with a tentative diagnosis that it's some form of the fabled Liao drug that's supposed to send the user's mind off voyaging through time and space.

Other notable clues:

- He's got a crucifix around his neck, inscribed with the Rune of Al-Sabbah. That's a great way to guard yourself against possession, in the same way walking around with a handgun carved from a block of uranium guards you against petty theft. Not so much overkill as a suicide pact.
- In his wallet, there's a cheap silver-plated ring engraved with the letters ZW. (It's a promise ring from Zoë Waters.) There's a lot of emotional energy bound up in that ring, if the characters want to try scrying or using sympathetic magic to find her. (See *Zoë*, page 97).
- He's *geased* – any attempt to compel him to talk will trigger a self-destruct routine in his brain. The Laundry can unpick this spell, but it'll take months before he's safe.

The Washlamb Academy

Research or a suitable **Knowledge** (like **Politics** or **Accounting**) digs up the following clues:

- The Washlamb Trust is a private trust that operates three second-level schools in England. The first school opened in 2000, the second in 2004, and the third in 2008.

- All three schools are academies, which means that they're government-funded, but are outside the direct control of the Local Education Authority and are partially sponsored by a private group – in this case, the Washlamb Trust.
- The Washlamb Trust has a 'strongly Christian ethos.' Digging into its background shows ties to various fundamentalist Christian groups operating in the United States, including the Golden Promise Ministry.
 - If this operation takes place after the events of *The Apocalypse Codex*, then characters with clearance for GOD GAME RAINBOW (or at least SACRED BRUNCH, Hazard's report on the GPM's contact with Downing Street) can check the Stacks and learn about Golden Promise Ministry's occult ties. Otherwise, they're going in dark.
- The first two Washlamb Academies were established in middle-to-upper-class districts, and most of the students come from families who would traditionally have gone to a public school. They've got excellent academic records and have the money to attract some of the best teachers.
- The Third Washlamb Academy is a boarding school, unlike the other two. It takes 'troubled teens' and 'invests time, money, hope and charity' in them. It too has excellent results, turning low-achieving kids with terrible records into model students in a matter of weeks.
- Six months ago, a bus carrying a dozen students back from a field trip to Scotland crashed into a petrol tanker, leaving no survivors. An inquiry found that the fault was entirely with the driver of the tanker. If the characters dig into the bus crash, give them *Handout #1*
 - Following up on Zoë may bring them to *Handout #2* – see *Zoë*, page 97.

The Bus Crash

Everyone who was on that bus had been dead for weeks before the bus hit the petrol tanker. The school faked the crash to explain the deaths of students and staff who it had previously killed in ritual sacrifices or to prevent them from talking. Robert Vake forced the tanker driver to crash into the bus.



Church: An impressive building, all brushed concrete and glass. The huge double doors are oddly out of place in such a modern building – they were salvaged from an older church, and the eerie bas-relief carvings go unmentioned by most visitors. The large altar is a scale model of the Sleeper's tomb within the Pyramid atop the Plateau.

Science Block: Classrooms, laboratories, lecture theatres. Nothing out of the ordinary, with the exception of the nurse's station. While you might expect to find hallucinogenic drugs in a school, they're normally sold by creepy drug dealers lurking in the bushes, not stocked in the medicine cabinet.

3. Jesus was in Griffindor

There's a particular sort of light that only appears in stock photographs on the covers of prospectuses and glossy corporate reports. You know it – pictures of four ethnically diverse pretty young people laughing on the grass in front of a striking, high-tech building, all suffused by a bright glow. It's like a transmission from another universe where things are just *better* – more fun, more educational, more successful. Fragments of a better life, caught and pinned in photographs like images from a wonderful dream.

From a distance, the Washlamb Academy looks like that. It's a shining temple to education surrounded by leafy trees and green playing fields... and high walls with security fences and CCTV cameras. Security here is unobtrusive, but very, very tight. The campus consists of four dormitories, a main assembly hall and church, a science block and a humanities block, and an administration building and cafeteria. The current student population is 507, but the campus can house up to 1,200 students.

There's a definite Stepford vibe to the whole place.

Dormitories: The four dormitories (girls and boys, over and under fifteen) are all very well equipped. Students share a room with another classmate, but all the rooms have private bathrooms, computers and internet connections – the works. There's a shop, a laundrette, a sandwich place and a recreation room on the ground floor of the dormitory complex. Each student has a swipe card to open the front door and the door to their room.

Assembly Hall: A large auditorium, big enough to hold all of the students and staff. It's used as a sports hall or event centre (or ritual summoning space, after school hours).

Humanities Block: As above, but observant characters might spot some rather unusual books on the library shelves. There are small meditation and counselling rooms for one-on-one tuition and prayer on every floor of this building, used for teaching the gifted students.

Cafeteria: Jamie Oliver would be proud. Then he'd be sacrificed to their dread god.

Administration Building: The heart of the school, the admin building has the staff room, records office, reception and offices for the key staff members. There's also a security room where Vake or his lieutenants monitor the security cameras.

Security Systems

A tall wall topped with a concealed sensor surrounds the whole compound; any pressure on the sensor triggers an alarm. All gates and other approaches to the compound are watched by security cameras. Inside, all the buildings have keycard locks, and there are yet more security cameras and motion-sensitive floodlights attached to the exteriors. One of Vake's guards is on duty at all times; if the alarm is raised, then more guards show up within ten minutes. The guards carry illegal handguns, but will only fire if they believe the school is in danger or if the characters stumble across the Black Pit.

In addition, Malcolm Beal cast three protective spells on the school. The first is a simple aversion ward – anyone who gets too close to the Black Pit experiences an intense feeling of embarrassment and awkwardness, a blast of *I shouldn't be here* that drives away most intruders. Any warded character can ignore this – it's only a Level One warding. Pushing through it without a ward costs 1d4 SAN.

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The second is a protective anti-scrying spell. Any attempts to use scrying, remote viewing or any other forms of occult information-gathering trip this spell. Beal doesn't know who's trying to spy on the school, but it warns him that someone's snooping around. This spell centres on the Black Pit, and provides a small amount of occult occlusion that prevents the Pit from being seen directly.

The third is a nasty beast, a really big hellhound. This monster lives in the woods above the Black Pit, but can be called by Beal or Gantz to help defend the school. The creature has a Defensive Binding spell protecting it, which absorbs the first 15 points of damage from bullets (and also blocks banishment rounds). Students who misbehave are sometimes sent for a walk in the woods...

The Hellhound

STR 18 CON 18 SIZ 13 INT 7 POW 13
DEX 15 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Bite 40%, damage 1d8

Balefire Breath 30%, damage 1d6

Armour: 1-point fur, 15 points of ablative
Defensive Binding

Skills: Hide 60%, Spot Hidden 80%, Track 40%

Sanity Loss: 0/1d3

Teaching Methods

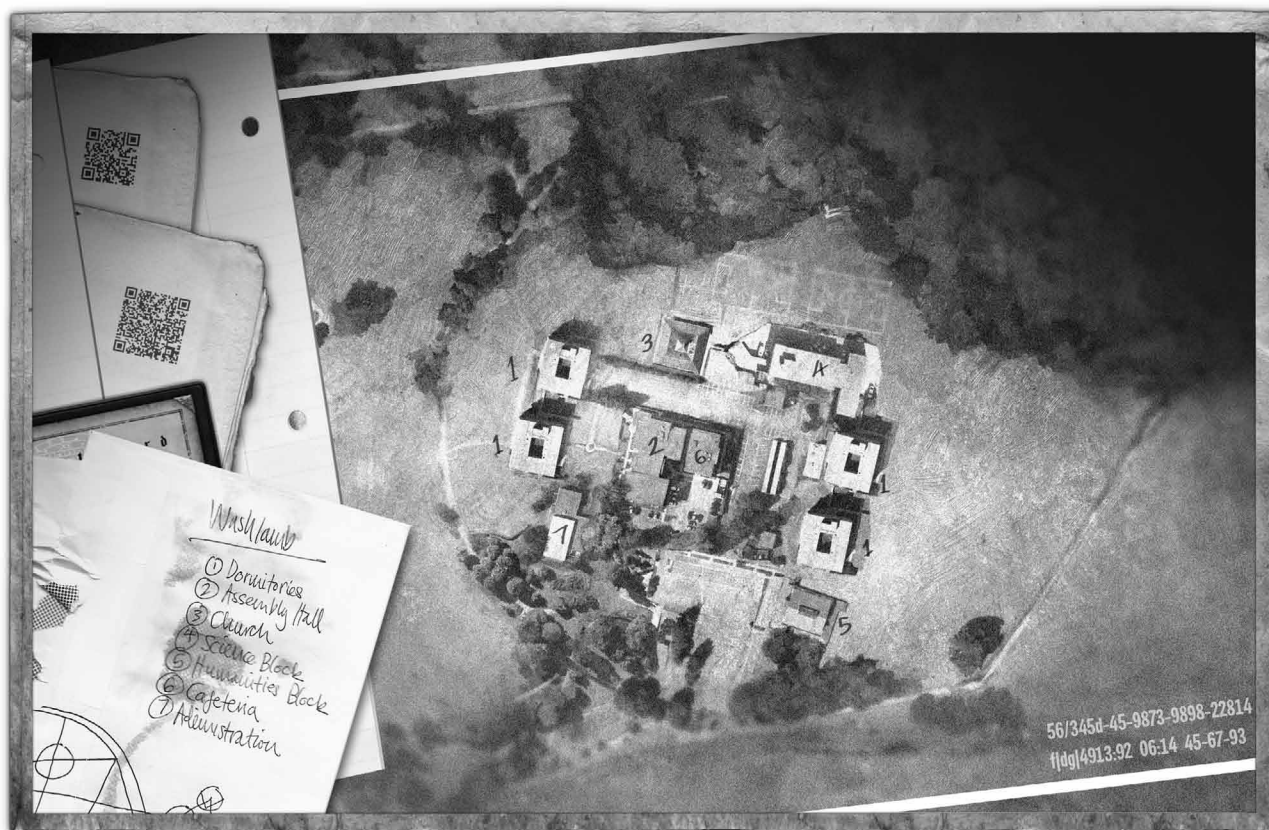
The Washlamb Academy demands discipline. In addition to academic lessons, students are expected to pray, attend religious services and study the Bible and related teachings daily, as well as exercise and work in the grounds. Most students also attend regular counselling sessions or one-to-one lessons "to get them up to speed."

Contact between parents and children is kept to a minimum, unless the parents are part of the Golden Promise Ministry church or a related group. Given the background of many of the children, a sizeable number of the students are orphaned, were neglected by their parents, or were placed in care and have no contact with their parents anyway.

The school places most of its emphasis on history, languages, religious instruction and business studies. Most of the sciences are neglected (it's not so much "we do not teach the controversy" as "you won't need science when Magic Jesus comes back"), although the school has a surprisingly excellent syllabus in mathematics and computer studies.

Not listed on the official curriculum are several activities, including:

- Classes in Enochian, angel summoning, and other ritual devotions.



- Testing for divine gifts. These start with basic psychic tests; students who demonstrate actual abilities are moved to the 'gifted' program.
- Meditation and religious instruction: Students are encouraged (with the aid of chemical enhancements and ritual magic) to meditate on images of His glorious Pyramid, the face of God, and the End Times.
- Fruitfulness: God commanded that humanity be fruitful and multiply, and the school helps with that. Not only does it take in pregnant teenagers, it also encourages relationships between 'approved' students. If the students are old enough, the school arranges for them to be married; if that is not possible, then the child is taken by the Golden Promise Ministry for use elsewhere. Female students are also subjected to involuntary egg harvesting.
- Military training: All male students are taught to defend the church against unbelievers. The school doesn't have any legal firearms, so the students train with replica weapons.
- Mortification of the Flesh: In general, being a Quiverfull ministry, the Golden Promise Ministry is strongly pro-life. Still, some are chosen by God to make special sacrifices so their divine gifts are focused and enhanced, and they are not distracted by the needs of the flesh.
- Disciplinary methods for students who do not accept the school's rules and regulations. The school uses physical and mental coercion and geas spells to keep troublesome students in check.

The Students

507 students, ranging in age from 11 to 18. Most are perfectly ordinary, for values of ordinary that encompass "moderate to severe psychological issues/terrible behaviour records/violent impulses" with "brainwashed by a fundamentalist cult" on top. Take the most thuggish teenage scumbag you can imagine, put him through a Come-to-Jesus makeover and stuff him full of ADHD drugs and love bombing, and you've got the average student at Washlamb.

Currently fifty-four students are part of the "gifted" program. These are students who've passed the second-level screening progress for potential psychic ability. They get extra religious education as described above. Not all of the gifted-program students develop supernatural abilities;

those who fail to manifest gifts can still help as human sacrifices, and are ritually sacrificed to fuel their more fervent classmates.

The Staff

As academies are state funded, the characters can easily get access to some staff records. In general, all the staff has excellent qualifications. Roughly half are American, and more than 75% are of a Christian denomination of one flavour or another. Several have degrees in esoteric topics – apparently the answer to the question "*what do you do with a joint degree in Mathematical Theory and Dzongha?*" is "*teach at a creepy school.*"

Notable members of staff include:

- **Principal Nigel Cragge:** English. *Very* English, in fact – he's employed as a figurehead, and is paid a large amount of money to not do his job as principal. He has no idea what's going on in the school. He's a former civil servant in OFSTED,² and he's very adept at bureaucratic stalling.
- **Vice Principal Adam Gantz:** See the sidebar.
- **Pastor Malcolm Beal:** The school's spiritual guidance counsellor. Big smile, great hair, the sort of preacher you'd expect to see at a megachurch instead of at a small school. He's also trained in ritual magic, and works with Vake to provide occult countermeasures like geases and wards.
- **Legal Counsel Henrietta Cable:** Why, you might ask, does a small school keep a high-priced City lawyer from Barretts & Grey on retainer? Cable's a shark who specialized in knotty patent disputes before she crashed her car and found Jesus in a concrete barrier on the M25. As soon as there's a hint of trouble, the school deploys her.
- **Chemistry Teacher Jill Marsham:** One of the newer members of staff. She's a committed Christian, but she's not part of the Golden Promise. She was drawn to the school because of its Christian ethos, though she now suspects that something strange is going on. Vake has his eye on her; if she gets too close to the Black Pit or the school's religious education program, she'll get a bus trip to Scotland.
- **Truancy Officer Robert Vake:** See the sidebar.

2. Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.

Adam Gantz

The power behind the principal's office. Gantz is a descendant of the founder of the Golden Promise Ministry. He grew up in the cult, and is consumed by its holy purpose. He believes that he will find a prophet of the elect among the children of England, and is utterly obsessed with this cause. He loathes disobedient children; disobedience is a sign of faithlessness. Honour thy father and mother, says the Lord. In this place he is their father, and he that spares his rod hates his son. He runs the Black Pit (see page 97), together with Malcolm Beal.

More importantly, Gantz is a ritual sorcerer of no small power, and he's been briefed on UK-based OCCINTEL operations.³ See Cult Responses, page 100.

Playing Gantz:

- You're not only a crazy cultist who worships a distinctly squamous Jesus, you're an *entitled* crazy cultist. Your great-great-grandfather founded the Golden Promise, and you're convinced that you're destined for greatness. The Washlamb Academy is your ticket to fulfilling that destiny. Like Enoch, you walk with God.
- You're very, very, very tightly-wound. The students see you as a terrifyingly harsh martinet; the staff sees you as either a stern father or a borderline psychopath. The pressure is getting to you, and you're almost ready to burst.
- Speak in clipped, harsh tones. Use a stapler or some other piece of office stationery as a focus for your sublimated aggression.

Adam Gantz

STR 10 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 16 POW 16
DEX 12 CHA 15 EDU 18 SAN 0 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Glock 17 Handgun 60%, damage 1d10

Spells: Given time to prepare, Gantz readies a Defensive Ward (Level 3), an invisibility Entropic Manipulation (also Level 3) and a

lethal Offensive Ward (Level 3; 2d6 damage).

Skills: Bureaucracy 60%, Command 65%, Cthulhu Mythos 30%, Drive 50%, Fast Talk 55%, Insight 50%, Knowledge (Religion) 80%, Knowledge (Occult) 40%, Sorcery 55%, Spot 60%, Teach 65%.

Robert Vake

His official title is 'truancy officer,' which is absurdly redundant at a boarding school. Most truancy officers don't command a small unit of armed guards, either. Vake's a scary man. Ex-Army, the demeanour of a Gila Monster, and the empathy of a stainless steel knife. He believes that most of humanity consists of irredeemably sinful beasts, and that he is a righteous man who must sometimes cull them. He'd be a serial killer if he wasn't a cultist; he found a genuine higher purpose, and is utterly committed to freeing the Sleeper.

Gantz's plan to find a psychic powerful enough to call the Sleeper does not sit well with Vake; it smacks of defying the prophet's instructions in the Book of Enoch. Still, the church sent him here, and he'll do his duty.

Playing Vake:

- Talk as little as possible. Use silence as a weapon.
- Fear is good. People should be afraid of God... and His servants.
- Stare right at the player characters.

Robert Vake

STR 17 CON 15 SIZ 16 INT 10 POW 8
DEX 15 CHA 10 EDU 16 SAN 0 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1d6

Weapons: Glock 17 handgun 80%, damage 1d10
Heckler & Koch MP5 Submachine Gun 75%, damage 1d10 (burst fire possible)

Armour: Ballistic vest (8 points against firearms).

Artefacts: Charm of Unlocking - allows him to open any mechanical locks.

Skills: Brawl 70%, Climb 60%, Command 50%, Demolition 70%, Dodge 65%, Drive 65%, Grapple 65%, Hide 80%, Melee Weapon 70%, Spot 55%, Sorcery 25%, Spot 65%, Stealth 70%, Track 60%.

³ He doesn't know about the Laundry by name, but he knows the forces of darkness are legion and have their claws in the British government.

Vake's Men

A sordid assortment of true believers and hired thugs. Not especially competent, but reliable muscle.

STR 14 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 10 POW 8
DEX 11 CHA 10 EDU 16 SAN 0 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Glock 17 Handgun 40%, damage 1d10
Heckler & Koch MP5 Submachine Gun 35%,
damage 1d10 (burst fire possible)

Armour: Ballistic vest (8 points against firearms)

Skills: Brawl 50%, Dodge 55%, Drive 50%,
Grapple 60%, Spot 50%.

Contacting the School

If the characters contact the school openly, they will be stonewalled. Principal Cragge (with lawyer in tow) meets any characters posing as Ministry of Education inspectors/journalists/police/concerned citizens, and expresses his sorrow and regret that David Philpott was involved in such a bizarre incident. He produces paperwork showing that David was responding to therapy and counselling, and that he had no history of violent behaviour while at Washlamb. Cragge's at a genuine loss to explain it; if the player characters press him, then Henrietta Cable steps in to protect the school. The young man showed no signs that he was about to do anything dangerous, and he was off school property at the time of the incident.

The school denies all knowledge of any injuries or surgical modifications to David Philpott.

Official Channels

Trying to inspect the school through any sort of official channels (police investigation, school safety inspection, etc.) is equally ineffective. Cable hovers over the characters like a litigious vulture, and throws red tape at them if they get close to anything. Trying to force this issue will impact badly on the characters, costing them Status. Cragge has various officials in the Ministry of Education and Downing Street on speed-dial, so characters who use the brute-force approach quickly find themselves talking to their line manager who just got an earful from the Minister of Education who just got an earful from some advisor. The characters need to clearly tie the school to occult activity before they can deploy the machinery of the state.

4. Covert Ops

Subtlety and player characters don't often mix, but here are some ways to investigate the school without flashing a warrant card.

Surveillance

A bit of old-fashioned tradecraft pays dividends.

Trailing Teachers: Following teachers (with a successful **Stealth** test) lets the characters identify Jill Marsham as a potential recruit. She's clearly troubled by the incident with David Philpott (he's in her chemistry class), and meets Timothy Philpott in a pub near the school, where they discuss David. (See the sidebar for more on David's father on page 98).

Intercepting Communications: The school's phone and computer networks are surprisingly secure. A Difficulty Computer (Hacking) roll or some covert bugging gets the characters in. At a suitable juncture, give them Handout #3.

Satellite Imagery: Examining a satellite photo of the school shows that there are several buildings on the grounds that don't show up in the official plans. These buildings are weapons bunkers, guard posts, and the Black Pit (see page 97).

Recruiting an Agent

The best way into the school is to turn either a student or a teacher into a spy. While gifted students are geased to keep silent, the rest are free of magical compulsion (but see *Sanitise*, page 101). Similarly, while most of the teaching staff are initiates of the Golden Promise or bound by magic, some of the new recruits (like Jill Marsham) are potential recruits. Jill, for example, might work with the Laundry if the characters convince her that more students like David are in danger. Other agents could be recruited through blackmail,

Alternatively, the characters can provide a suitable agent and wait for the Washlamb Academy to take the bait. (*"Look, we've got this poor seventh son of a seventh son who was born on a moonless night and who can talk to cats - wherever will he get a first-class education?"*) Using juveniles in an intelligence operation is dangerous; if the mission fails, then the characters can expect Operational Oversight to come down hard on them for endangering a child.

Recruiting an agent comes in five phases:⁴

4. The Agent's Handbook has a lot more detail on handling agents and other elements of tradecraft in the Laundry.

Background Check: Is this agent suitable? Does he have the nerve to carry out the mission? Is he already compromised by the enemy? What's the best recruitment pitch? Does the Laundry need leverage over the agent, or will he do his duty for Queen and Country? Likely skill tests at this stage include **Insight**, **Research**, **Technology Use (Surveillance Equipment)** and **Research**.

Approach: The Laundry officer approaches the agent and tries to recruit him. Actually "tries" is the wrong word – no competent handler will make an approach without being virtually certain that the agent will agree. Obviously, the approach and any other meetings between agent and handler have to be carried out in secret, as the prospective agent may be under observation by enemy forces. Likely skill tests here are **Persuade** or **Fast Talk**.

Handling: The characters need to prepare the agent for the mission. They need to work out what the agent already knows, what he can find out without risk, and where he needs to go to find out what's really going on. The agent also needs to be trained to use whatever tools he'll need. How are the characters going to communicate with their agent? A wire is simple, but might be detected. How about a scrying spell? Or some form of Destiny Entanglement?

Operation: Finally, it's the spy's version of the big date. The agent gets sent into the heart of darkness to recover the data – in this case, information on the Black Pit and proof that the school is operating an occult program. The agent needs to get in and get out without arousing suspicion.

Debriefing: The handler collects the information off the agent, and may arrange for the agent to disappear or provide protection against retaliation by the enemy.

Undercover Officer

The characters could also try sending one or more player characters in undercover. They could apply for a job in the school ("Oh, did your entire *Mathematics department* get food poisoning on the same day? It just so happens that we've got six highly qualified replacement teachers looking for work."), or steal the identity of an existing staff member using a combination of conventional disguise and glamour spells (remembering, of course, to use *Destiny Entanglement* or some other method of identity-theft to get past the school's wards). Mr. Gantz interviews all potential new teachers personally to make sure they're a good fit for the school.

Black Bag Job

Finally, there's always the good-old option of sneaking into the school at night. The grounds are not a safe place to walk after dark – see *Security Systems* on page 91.

Accounts & Rumours

Once the characters gain access to the students and staff, they can pick up all sorts of interesting rumours.

- David Philpott met with his father several times recently, in breach of a restraining order. If anyone finds out about that, his father will be in big trouble.
- A big black dog lives in the woods at the back of the school. It's dangerous to go there at night.
- The gifted kids are weird, and aren't allowed to talk about their special classes.

Running an Agent Scene

If the players go for the agent plan, then there are several ways to play the scene:

Offscreen action: Once prepped, the agent goes into the school. Make a secret roll against the most appropriate skills of the *player characters*, reflecting how well they prepared the agent. For example, if the plan is for Jill Marsham to sneak into Mr. Gantz's office and stick a virus-laden USB stick into his computer, then secretly make **Stealth** and **Computer Use** rolls using the player characters' skills. If successful, then the agent completes the mission. If a roll fails, then the agent was captured, or spotted, or maybe even turned.

Bird on a Wire: If the characters fit their agent with a wire or other communications method, then they can run the agent as a sort of time-shared player character. Those not giving orders to the agent can still help out (providing distractions, advising on technical problems, hacking into the school computers to open doors).

Player Character agent: For added drama, let one of the players play the agent as a temporary player character. Remember that civilians don't have the heightened Madness Threshold of Laundry officers, so they're more likely to go nuts if they run into something ghastly.

- One of the gifted, a girl called Jemima, got really sick when she started on the program. She started throwing up, and talking in tongues, and some people swear that her eyes started glowing. She left school for a few weeks, and came back just in time to go on that bus trip to Scotland.
- Vice-principal Gantz mentioned a trip to America to visit the Golden Promise Ministry. He'll take a few students with him.
- One of the kids smuggled in a box of condoms and started selling them. Vake tracked him down and punished him for defying the Lord's commandments.
- Vice-principal Gantz really runs the school.
- Zoë Waters? She's one of the gifted kids. She's sick, so they've sent her home for a few weeks.

The Black Pit

The Black Pit is the dirty little secret at the heart of the school. It's located in a small wooded area at the back of the school grounds, on the far side of the football pitches. The Pit was originally a disused air raid shelter; now, it's the cult's secret temple.

Finding the Black Pit is not easy. It's carefully hidden (a Difficult Spot or Navigate check to find it when searching the woods) and heavily guarded. In addition to the Hellhound on the threshold, the heavy steel door leading into the Pit is secured with an electronic lock and a rune of warding (Level 3, 2d6 damage and sounds the alarm). A steep steel staircase winds down into the darkness. The atmosphere inside the Pit is dank and cold.

At the bottom of the pit, the characters find:

- **The Armoury:** The school is prepared for a siege. They've got automatic weapons, ammunition, explosives, medical supplies, dried food and bottled water to last a long time. There's also electronics components and occult paraphernalia aplenty – nothing cutting-edge, but enough to suggest that someone knows their way around a summoning grid.
- **The Surgery:** A small, but well-equipped surgery. Here is where Beal 'augments' some of the gifted, and delivers children.
- **The Nursery:** The school's attitude towards procreation (be fruitful or it goes on your permanent record) means that at any time, several of the female students are pregnant. Their children are delivered here, in secret, and then smuggled to Golden Promise-

run care facilities. The nursery is staffed by a terrified woman named Murana; she's an illegal immigrant from the Sudan, who's ended up imprisoned in an underground nursery taking care of a never-ending stream of newborns.

- **The Chamber of the Sleeper:** This large room is decorated according to the formulas described in the *Testament of Enoch*, so it's a scale model of the temple atop the pyramid. In the middle of the temple, where the sleeper's coffin should be, is a floatation tank wired up to a live summoning grid and a laptop running a Destiny Entanglement spell. Zoë Waters is trapped in the floatation tank, as the grid pumps the dreams of the Sleeper through her fragile mind.



5. Zoë

There are Listeners, out there in the stranger realms of existence, timeless beings bound by laws laid down by long-dead races. They wait for commands from our universe, for vibrating curves arcing through the mathematical plane that is the only common ground between here and there. Most of these terrible Listeners are quiescent, dormant, waiting for the conjunction to arrive.

Others stir in their sleep. These ones are not content to wait; instead, they reach forth their tendrils of influence, probing

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the weak places in the fabric of reality. Some of these touch the brains of humans, cracking them open and letting the outside rush in. Call these unfortunates the touched, call them prophets or psychics or gifted. Psychics are those who were blindly groped by an alien god.

There are other ways to open the third eye. Rituals and spells and blasphemous ceremonies that rip the protective caul from the human soul, and turn you into an open door for horrors to stroll through. The girl now called

Zoë Waters was born in Tajikistan sixteen years ago. Her parents were members of a cult that worshipped the Sleeper; Zoë was conceived on the slopes of the Plateau of Leng under alien stars. A Thirteenth Directorate black operation destroyed the cult before the cult could use Zoë to contact the Sleeper. Four years ago, the Directorate planted Zoë in London with a minder named Karla Waters; a year later, this minder faked her own death so that Zoë ended up in care. Then they waited for someone to take the bait.

Timothy Philpott

Tim Philpott is not the sort of man one would expect to find at the heart of an occult conspiracy. He's an unemployed alcoholic and a terrible father, although to his credit he tried to change all three of those traits. He failed with two of them, as he usually does - he can't hold down a job and he crashed out of rehab - but he has finally taken on some responsibility for his son. Back when he was married to Amy Philpott, Tim blamed most of their marital strife on his 'fuckhead weird son' David. Now, he recognizes that he was partially to blame, and wants to make amends.

He had no idea how to go about contacting David, but then he met a journalist named Mary Keller. She told him that David was now in a special school, the Washlamb Academy, but Mary had doubts about the school's methods. Timothy's fervently anti-religious, and was furious that Amy had handed his son over to an ultra-Christian school.

Now, Timothy is 'Mary's' unwitting agent. Through one of the teachers (Jill Marsham), he made contact with his son David. He met with David half-a-dozen times, questioning him about the school while trying to rebuild a relationship with the troubled boy.

Finding Timothy: The characters can run across Timothy in several ways:

- Digging into David Philpott's background.
- Via Jill Marsham, either by questioning or following her.
- If they watch the school, they may also spot Timothy Philpott doing the same thing.

Questioning Timothy: Timothy has no idea about his son's bizarre ritual attack; as far

as Timothy knows, David is still somewhere behind the high walls of the Washlamb Academy. Revealing that David is dead or in custody causes Timothy to break down in confusion and anger. In this vulnerable state, he's vulnerable to questioning:

- He can identify Jill Marsham as his contact inside the school.
- He's met with David several times in the last few months, trying to rebuild his relationship with the boy, and shake some of that religious nonsense out of his head.
- He knows about Robert Vake; that bastard threatened him when he found Timothy snooping around outside the school walls.
- If pressed, he admits that a journalist, Mary Keller, told him where his son was and encouraged him to investigate the school.
- Keller also told him about another student at the school, Zoë Waters; David befriended her.

Playing Timothy:

- You're not that bright, and are completely unequipped to deal with your present situation. Get pointlessly aggressive whenever you run into a problem.
- All you wanted was a normal son - not the unstable, violent, strange boy you once knew, or the religious freak they're trying to turn him into at that damned school.
- Your hands shake all the time, and you sometimes stammer. If anyone acknowledges this weakness, get angry at them.

A medium like Zoë is an irresistible prize to any apocalyptic cult trying to bring about the Apocalypse. Therefore, the Directorate booby-trapped her by inscribing a very subtle formula into her soul. If she's a part of a large-scale summoning (Class Five), that spell triggers, altering the summoning. Instead of calling its intended target, the summoning gets redirected, conjuring up seething nuclear chaos right on top of the ritual. She's a poison pill for any cult that tries to use her.

Zoë has no idea about any of this. She doesn't remember her birth parents, and they erased her memory of those four years in a Thirteenth Directorate laboratory. She does remember her 'aunt' Karla, who was 'murdered' when she was twelve.

Considering Zoë's tragic history, and the fact that she dreams of the Plateau every night, she's remarkably sane.

Zoë & The School

Before this adventure begins, Vice-Principal Gantz imprisoned Zoë in the Black Pit. She's nearly ready to be shown to the elders of the church, and he wants to isolate her from any corruptive spiritual influences.

The Shutdown Code

The Directorate implanted a post-hypnotic suggestion in Zoë when they prepared her – if she hears the right codeword, she'll fall asleep instantly. The codeword is a short phrase in Enochian; it translates to "Not dead, but dreaming/not yet, but soon."

Any character with previous experience of Directorate tactics, or who checks previous mission logs (with **Knowledge (Espionage)** or **Research**) could find out about the Directorate's habit of planting back doors in their agents' souls. Alternatively, some elder spy like Angleton could mention the probability that there's a shutdown code once the characters learn about Zoë's true nature.

Playing Zoë:

Be as sympathetic and ordinary as possible. Some of this is an act – you consciously try to be normal; normality is your wall against the awful things in your head.

You're very good at pretending to believe pretty much anything. Like a spy, you live your cover.

Changes the subject whenever your family or your past comes up in conversation.

Sometimes, react to things that only you can see.

Zoë's Watcher

For the last four years, Nadja Mikhailov, *aka* Karla Waters, has watched over Zoë. Karla's a Thirteenth Directorate agent; she spent a year posing as Zoë's aunt to establish the girl's legend, then faked her own death in a way that was certain to draw the attention of anyone watching for cult activity.

Since her 'death,' Karla's continued to monitor her 'niece' at a distance. She comes to London every few weeks to check in on Zoë, using the cover identity of Mary Keller, a photographer and freelance journalist. Karla remains fond of Zoë, and regrets putting the young woman in this position. Karla tries to soothe her conscience by telling herself that Zoë is doomed either way – either she dies unwittingly stopping a cult triggering CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN prematurely, or she dies when CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN hits and something crawls into her inviting soul.

When the Washlamb Academy took the bait and accepted Zoë as a pupil, Karla made contact with Timothy Philpott, David's estranged father. She uses him as an unwitting agent to watch both the school and Zoë. Again posing as Mary Keller, she claimed to be a journalist working on an expose about the school, and pointed at Zoë as an example of the vulnerable teenagers being preyed upon by the Washlamb Trust.

Activating Zoë: The Thirteenth Directorate believes that the Golden Promise Ministry is a clear danger, and wants Zoë moved into position to poison any attempted summoning. As it is unlikely that the Golden Promise cult will try anything on British soil, that means they need to push the cult into moving Zoë to the United States and their core temple in Colorado.

Investigating Karla: The characters may make contact with 'Mary Keller' via Timothy Philpott. If they try following her, she goes into full-evasion mode (it's a contest of her **Hide** against the player's **Spot**). She'll use occult evasion methods like Entropy Manipulation if she has to.

If the characters have the dossier on Zoë Waters (handout #2), then a **Difficult Disguise/Technical Use (Photography)** or **Computer Use (Art)** roll lets the characters realize that 'Mary Keller' is also 'Karla Waters.'

Digging into Mary Keller's history with a **Difficult Research** roll turns up evidence to suggest that her job as a photojournalist is a cover identity. The Keller identity seems to have been used by at least three different people over the last decade, and one of them is a suspected Russian spy.

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Karla's staying at a small hotel near the school; searching her room turns up flyers about the Golden Promise Ministry, a copy of *The Testament of Enoch*, and surveillance photos of the school, including shots of Zoë Waters, David Philpott, Adam Gantz and Robert Vake. If the characters haven't bugged the school, you can also stick in a copy of Handout #3 here.

Interrogating Karla: Karla sticks to her cover identity as Mary Keller for as long as she can, or until it is no longer useful. At that point, she will identify herself as a Thirteen Directorate officer, and explain that she is in England to oversee the conclusion of a long-running sting operation aimed at the Golden Promise Ministry. She asks for the Laundry's assistance in ensuring that Zoë Waters is brought to the United States by Gantz.

If the characters make the connection between Karla and Zoë Waters, then they can try to put her through a wringer of guilt. How can she sacrifice her 'niece' like this? A successful **Insight** roll can tell that Karla clearly still has some emotional attachment to the girl. If the characters do this, then the Directorate may step in to ensure the operation goes ahead.

Karla knows Zoë's shutdown code.

Playing Karla:

- You're a veteran undercover officer. Commit yourself to whatever role you're playing, whether it's the crusading journalist Mary Keller, the eccentric, but caring aunt Karla, or the stalwart, cold-hearted Directorate agent Nadja.
- You're a qualified necromancer – use magic to gain advantage where you can.
- Let your voice show a little genuine emotion when talking about Zoë; all other feelings are feigned.

STR 11 CON 14 SIZ 9 INT 16 POW 14
DEX 13 CHA 10 EDU 17 SAN 40 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Browning Hi-Power Handgun 60%, damage 1d10

Artefacts: Ward (Class 3), Rune of Destruction (1d10 damage, attack with the Sorcery skill).

Skills: Athletics 50%, Brawl 60%, Computer Use (Magic) 40%, Cthulhu Mythos 20%, Dodge 50%, Disguise 70%, Hide 50%, Knowledge (Espionage) 70%, Persuade 60%, Sense 50%, Sorcery 45%, Spot 60%, Stealth 70%.

A Word from the Directorate

This is the Thirteenth Directorate's operation – the Laundry's involved only to put pressure on Gantz. The Directorate may intercede to stop the characters interfering with Karla Waters, or to warn them to back off if the situation gets out of hand. They may also step in to force Karla to carry out her mission should the characters convince her to listen to her conscience.

The Directorate might go for:

- **A little chat:** Nikolai Panin invites one of the characters for a pint, ala *The Fuller Memorandum*. He hints darkly about Zoë's purpose, and suggests that the characters help Karla complete her mission. After all, it's the best way to get that unexploded nuclear bomb of a girl out of the country. As a gesture of good faith, he may hand over Zoë's disarm codes to a particularly persuasive player.
- **Thugs in the night:** Directorate agents can grab a player character and threaten him, or sabotage a surveillance operation, or just lurk in the background looking menacing. They could even attempt to warn Gantz if the characters get too close to rescuing Zoë.
- **Official contact:** There's a black telephone in the heart of the Laundry that hasn't rung since 1989. The Directorate contact the player characters' superiors and warn them about the on-going mission against a 'common foe.' It's up to the player characters whether or not to back off, or to ignore the Directorate and keep investigating.

6. Cult Responses

Gantz has four levels of response, depending on how threatened he feels and how close the Laundry is to exposing the school. In general, move up one rung of the response ladder each time the characters do something that alarms Gantz. Visiting the school might move him up to Alert; questioning a student makes him order Sanitise; breaking into the school provokes him to Escape.

The Directorate *want* Gantz to escape. They want him to believe that England is no longer a safe place, and that he

has to take his prodigy to the safety of Colorado and the cult's stronghold there. The Laundry is their stalking horse to drive Gantz to America.

Alert

.....
This is the lowest level of response. Even if the characters do nothing, then Gantz orders an Alert as soon as he discovers that David Philpott is dead or in custody.

Added security on all approaches to the school. Vake or one of his men watches all the entrances to the school. The characters may have to make a **Hide** or **Disguise** test to avoid being spotted.

Students are told to report any contact with outsiders. This means that any attempts to question students get reported to the school.

Members of staff who are not part of the cult are put under observation. Vake does not have enough manpower to follow all the teachers, but he's already suspicious of Jill Marsham, so he puts two men to shadow her.

Cultists investigate anyone who visits the school. Any visitors also get shadowed by Vake's agents. These thugs follow the visitors home and spy on them. At this stage, they just observe – they won't attack or threaten the characters.

Sanitise

.....
This response level lets the Washlamb Academy stay functioning as a school while hiding any occult elements.

All students and staff are *geased* for silence. This is a basic Level One geas, administered *en masse* as part of religious services by Malcolm Beal. He hides the spell inside the

religious ritual; a successful **Knowledge (Occult)** or **Knowledge (Ritual)** test spots that he's casting a spell. The geas prevents the students from answering any questions about the school.

Troublesome staff may be sent on another "bus tour to Scotland." If Gantz suspects any of the staff (like Marsham) to be behind the leaks, he sends them on a team building weekend. Vake then arranges another accident – in this case, the bus carrying the teachers tragically drives off a bridge, killing everyone on board.

If Gantz still believes the player characters are civilians (school inspectors, concerned parents, private investigators, etc.) as opposed to part of the Laundry, then he dispatches Vake to scare them off or eliminate them.

If he's intimidating the characters, then Vake poses as a religious extremist who's obsessed with 'secular saboteurs'. He petrol-bombs the house of one of the characters, and leaves documentation implicating an extremist Christian sect in the attack.

If he's got orders to kill, then he distracts the characters with a summoned horror (level 3 nasty thingy), then cloaks himself in invisibility and attacks.

Any suspect books or documentation in the school are hidden; the secret areas like the Black Pit are sealed and camouflaged. Special studies and training for the gifted students are temporarily suspended.

Escape

.....
Gantz prepares to leave the United Kingdom. He contacts the Golden Promise Ministry and arranges for a plane from Heathrow to Colorado. Meanwhile, he destroys all



incriminating documentation, has the Black Pit filled in with sand, and removes any cult relics from the school. He also sends Vake to purchase false passports for several students from a black-market fixer called Jorowski.

When the plane is ready, he brings some of the more promising students (including Zoë Waters) and his inner circle of followers to Heathrow (including a heavily armed Vake) via bus and retreats to the safety of the USA. In an emergency, he can arrange for the Golden Promise jet to land at a disused airfield a short distance from the school instead.

Intercepting Gantz: Trying to stop Gantz at Heathrow is the worst possible option – no-one wants a hostage crisis at an airport, especially with kids in the line of fire and the potential of hostile magic. A better option is to intercept the bus on the road before it reaches the airport. The characters will have to contend with Vake, but at least they can contain the situation.

Other possible solutions include taking control of the plane, or stalling Gantz at the airport until the characters can take him out safely and quietly.

If the characters stop Gantz from escaping, or convince him that escaping isn't an option, he jumps straight to "wake the Sleeper, usher in the end of days" – see *Apocalypse*, below.

Of course, if the characters follow the Thirteenth Directorate game plan, then they *want* Gantz to escape. The Golden Promise Ministry will only believe that Zoë Waters is one of the true Elect if it can snatch her away from the forces of darkness (*aka* the Laundry) at the last minute. The characters must therefore convince Gantz that they're desperately trying to stop him, while still giving him an opening to escape.

Apocalypse

In this scenario, Gantz believes that there is no chance of escape. He therefore tries to call the Sleeper. As soon as he embarks on this scheme, the Laundry's Predictive Branch contacts the characters and warns of an impending doom. Something big is coming.

The gifted and the saved students gather in the church, along with a few choice sacrifices. He stations Vake and a few other trustworthy cultists to guard the doors.

Malcolm Beal summons up a few minor exonomies – nothing especially dangerous, but powerful enough to possess the other students and staff and turn them into slavering zombies with glowing worms in their eyes, and enough intelligence to pull the trigger on an assault rifle or a suicide vest. This *ad hoc* army is ordered to defend the

school against any intruders. Without proper binding spells, the summoned entities just try to possess as many people as possible, but that works just as well to occupy the authorities while Gantz completes his actual plan.

In the church, Gantz sacrifices various staff members and students to open a Gate to the Plateau of the Sleeper, then orders most of the congregation to drink a lethal dose of the psychoactive drug cocktail used to enhance the psychic powers of the gifted. He then puts Zoë Waters on the receptor node of a summoning grid designed to channel the deaths of the gifted students through her, boosting her innate abilities and awakening the Sleeper.

At least, that's the idea. What Gantz doesn't know is that the Thirteenth Directorate intended for Zoë Waters to be used in a summoning ritual; instead of calling the Sleeper, she's calling something else in the hierarchy of horrors, a being of seething nuclear chaos that only wants to devour and destroy. The Directorate intended for this alien god to show up and devour some isolated cult compound, but instead it's going to take a large chunk out of London.

Stopping the Ceremony: The easiest way is to stand back, call in the SAS, and hope that Major Barnes and company can blast through the school's defences before the ritual is finished. This approach means a lot of unnecessary bloodshed, as the SAS will have to kill the possessed victims instead of exorcising them.



If the characters have Zoë's disarm codes, then they can sneak past the hordes of zombies, eliminate Vake and the other guards, then shout the disarm code just before Zoë's booby-trap soul is triggered. Alternatively, killing Zoë at the last minute stops a worse horror from devouring London.

Aftermath

What constitutes a win in this adventure? Idealistic players might want to see the Washlamb Trust shut down (a

virtual certainty) and Zoë reunited with her 'aunt' (unlikely, although exceptionally cunning player characters might be able to convince Karla to defect to be with Zoë). Pragmatists might prefer to see the Directorate's mission through to its conclusion, with Zoë on her way to the United States to ruin some other cult's triumph.

Even if Zoë stops that summoning attempt, that's just delaying the inevitable. The students in the Academy will never get to grow up. They're the children of the end times. They'll come of age in CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN.

Handout #1 - Newspaper Article

CORONER RECORDS VERDICT ON BUS CRASH

Human error and fatigue were to blame for the tragic bus crash that claimed sixteen lives, according to coroner Arthur Pollack. This verdict comes as a blow to the family of petrol tanker driver Veno Kanjir, who hoped that the inquest would exonerate him. On November 3rd last year, Kanjir's petrol tanker collided with a tour bus carrying twelve students and five members of staff from the Washlamb Academy school as they returned from a school trip to Scotland. There were no survivors.

Speaking after the inquest, Principal Cragge said that the inquest was a necessary step in the process of grieving, and that the students and colleagues could now rest peacefully. He also expressed his hope that Kanjir's family would be able to put the tragedy behind them. "The Lord chose to take our friends from us early - we must trust in His wisdom and His infinite mercy".

Handout #2 - Laundry incident report

----INCIDENT REPORT #08129/A----

HOLMES2 flagged an SCD-1 investigation of a recent homicide for further study. The suspected victim was Karla Waters, a Russian immigrant. She is missing, presumed dead. Neighbours reported sounds of breaking glass and raised voices shouting in Russian and other unfamiliar languages. The police were called, and found that the door to Waters' apartment had been forced open. They found signs of a struggle, notably:

Blood splatter marks, consistent with defending against an attacker with a knife.

A bloodstained silk scarf, similar to those used in ritual killings in northern India. Markings on the scarf include symbols used by the suppressed Thuggee cult of the Yellow Silk Priest. Striations and deposits on the scarf suggest it was used for strangulation.

Both the blood splatter marks and the bloodstains on the scarf matched the blood type on file for Karla Waters.

Scrawled on the floor was a magical glyph (Zoroaster Type C invocation), designed to summon an ELMO TWO entity. The Dee-Hamilton arc of the glyph was misaligned, causing the summoning to fail. Presumably, the-summoned entity would have incinerated its surroundings and destroyed all evidence of the attack.

Karla Waters has not been seen since. Local children reported seeing a body in a nearby canal, but police divers have yet to recover any remains.

Waters' only known relative is her niece, Zoë Waters. According to immigration records, Karla adopted Zoë after the girl's parents were murdered. She claimed they were involved with a 'Tibetan cult,' and that the Russian army rescued the child and gave her to Waters' care. The Russian government denies any such involvement. Zoë was absent from the flat on the night of the attack; she is currently in care while the police attempt to trace another relative.

Analysis: The presence of a summoning glyph implies the involvement of a dangerous cult, perhaps a resurgent Yellow Silk group. I recommend making covert contact with our Russian counterparts to ascertain whether Karla Waters' account of Tibetan cults and military action had a kernel of truth.



Handout #3 - Telephone call

VOICE 1: Adam Gantz (AG), Vice-Principal of Washlamb Academy

VOICE 2: Unknown American (UA)

CALL DURATION: 1:22:08

CALL ORIGIN: Washlamb Academy.

CALL DESTINATION: Unlisted number, Colorado.

UA: Hello?

AG: It's Adam Gantz. Something's come up. I need to talk to them.

UA: Hold on. What do you have?

AG: One of the Gifted... she's chosen of the Lord. She dreams of the Pyramid every night. Her oneiromantic readings are astounding. She has the preternatural gifts of Eve.

UA: Is she one of the Elect?

AG: It's the one I told you about, the Russian girl. We couldn't trace her bloodline, and she has none of the Holy Marks, but...

UA: Many are called, but few are chosen. You know this.

AG: I know, but... you've got to meet her. I think she's the real thing. The Testament promised signs in the last days. It said we would become like them. I think she's one of the Elect despite her mongrel blood. The Lord has looked upon her soul and found it pleasing to him.

UA: Beware of false pride. We'll do this according to protocol, okay?

AG: I want to talk to the board.

UA: No, it's too early. We've got to test her first.

AG: Okay, but...

UA: Send me everything you've got on her, and be ready to bring her over here if the board agrees to see her. I'll consult with the pastors; find out what the best course of action is.

AG: We've got to move fast. You know the enemy is at my door.

UA: Fuck. Okay. I'll put the jet on standby in case we need to bring you home.

AG: You do. You do. The time is at hand. He's coming back, and we are his chosen servants.

UA: Amen. Sit tight. Leave things on this end with me.



The Moral High Ground

The situation may be non-survivable.

— *The Apocalypse Codex*

This scenario takes place a short time before and after the events of *The Apocalypse Codex*. The first three scenes take place in London, and are suitable for any characters. The second section involves an air assault on the plateau, and is aimed at tough, experienced Laundry personnel, and at least one of the characters should have excellent Computer Use (Magic), Science (Thaumaturgy) and Sorcery skills. If your regular player characters aren't up to the grade, then they can make temporary combat-heavy player characters who are ready to kick tombs open and shoot bad guys. Ideally, mix the temporary and regular player characters together so that some of the regulars can go through the Gate, while the other players take SAS shitkickers.

In the mountain air of Colorado Springs, on a plateau that eerily mirrors another, older, formation, Pastor Raymond Schiller opened up two Gates to the Pyramid of the Sleeper. The first of these Gates stayed open for several weeks, as Schiller's followers brought back the tongue eater and other holy relics from the Plateau. The second was open only briefly, and was intended to be the way of the Lord as He came forth from His slumber to devour the faithful and make them part of His Divine Body.

Fortunately for humanity, Schiller's plan to wake the Sleeper failed. BASHFUL INCENDIARY, JOHNNY PRINCE, and BASTARD OPERATOR¹ successfully prevented the cult from opening the tomb. They also disabled the area ward that blocked the Black Chamber from squashing the cult.

The Black Chamber subsequently squashed the cult.

However, before the Chamber's dark-cloaked goons swooped in, some of the cultists made it through the Gate. They're now loose on the Plateau. Someone has to go clean them up.

The Chosen

The path of the righteous man is beset by many evils. Schiller knew that Plan A – find another member of the Elect in whom the old blood still ran pure enough to hold open the Gate – was risky, but God's on a tight schedule and the Golden Promise couldn't delay. Therefore, he prepared a backup plan to ensure that if he failed, the Sleeping Christ

might still be awoken in accordance with the prophecies. Among the worshippers at Colorado Springs was a group of specially trained devotees, called the Chosen. To them, Schiller entrusted a special mission.

The Plateau touches our world sometimes, drifting into alignment and then falling away again. The task of the Chosen is to drag it back into conjunction and bind it there, bringing the Pyramid physically back to Earth. The Golden Promise believe that the Sleeping Christ will awaken when He can no longer ignore the cries of billions of suffering humans, so the mission of the Chosen is bring Christ to Earth and make those cries into a deafening chorus.

The Chosen are all young, committed members of the Church. They're all familiar with sorcery and computational demonology, and they've all committed the Apocalypse Codex to memory. Schiller sent twelve of them through, apostles to the Sleeping Christ. Four have military training; six are 'Saved' through the intercession of the tongue-eaters, and the last two are Schiller's chosen disciples.

Without Schiller, they can't risk crossing the Wall of Pain. They've got a different target.

The Dmu Thag of Nyatri Tsenpo

According to Tibetan legend, the first king of Tibet was Nyatri Tsenpo, who descended from Heaven and was worshipped as a god by the Tibetans. Tsenpo possessed many mythic qualities – his hands were webbed, and his eyelids closed from the bottom of the eye, like a nictating membrane. He claimed to be the scion of a monster called a theurang, said to a one-legged beast with a huge flapping tongue. Most prodigious of all, Nyatri Tsenpo was immortal. When his son, Mutri Tsenpo, came of age, Nyatri Tsenpo returned to heaven by means of a magical silver cord, his *dmu thag*. All the kings were linked to heaven by these cords, until the eighth king, Drigum Tsenpo quarrelled with his horsegroom. His cord got severed in the fight, preventing the king from ascending into heaven. Drigum Tsenpo was buried in the Earth,² and from then on his descendants died naturally as mortals do instead of climbing into the heavens on their *dmu thag* cords.

1. This isn't actually Bob's codename, but he really, really, *really* wishes it was.

2. Well, "encased in a hundred concentric copper vessels and chucked in a river that flows into an abyss," actually. Because that's how you honour a king, and not how you deal with something dangerously radioactive.

The Chosen

The Swords of Christ: The four Swords of Christ were recruited from the Air Force Academy near Colorado Springs. They're all loyal members of the church, but they're not elite Special Forces or trained in Gate travel - they just occupy the intersection of two circles marked 'access to weapons' and 'willing to die for the cause.'

STR 14 CON 13 SIZ 13 INT 11 POW 10
DEX 11 CHA 9 EDU 15 SAN 40 HP 13 (8)

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Remington 700 Sniper Rifle 45%, damage 2d8

Colt M16A4 Rifle 50%, 1d10

Knife 40%, damage 1d3+1+db

Armour: Ballistic vest (8 points)

Artefacts: Class 2 Ward

Skills: Climb 60%, Demolition 50%, Dodge 45%, Hide 40%, Spot 40%, Stealth 50%.

Note that the soldiers start out at reduced Hit Points, due to the life-draining effects of the Plateau.

The Tongues of Christ: Those who were 'Saved' by the tongue eaters are less vulnerable to the terrible proximity of the Sleeping Christ. His glory does not sap their life force, nor does his glorious presence drive them insane. The Saved can move relatively freely on the Plateau. These six tongues of Christ were specially chosen by Schiller for this great purpose. Unlike most of the Saved, their Hosts have not devoured the souls of these six victims - they need those souls to awaken Nyatri Tsenpo and the other Dead Kings. The Tongues shall profess the glory of the Lord, as their trapped souls are consumed by the children of the Lord.

STR 16 CON 16 SIZ 12 INT 8 POW 8
DEX 11 CHA 8 EDU 10 SAN 0 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Weapons: Beretta Mod 92FS Handgun 50%, damage 1d10

Knife 40%, damage 1d3+1+db

Skills: Hide 50%, Stealth 60%, Lick Lips Disconcertingly 60%.

All of the Tongues of Christ have tongue-eater larvae inside them (see page 45).

The Hands of Christ: The two designated Hands of Christ are Aldar Jacobs and Louisa Perrin.

Jacobs was an independent sorcerer and a worshipper of Yog-Sothoth until he found Jesus a few years ago. Now he's got the zeal of a convert, and put his genuine occult knowledge to work in the service of the Church. Schiller valued Jacobs' insight into sorcery and computational demonology, and chose him to lead this mission to the Dead Plateau. Jacob refuses to admit it to himself, but he knows that there's only One True Religion, and the thing in the Pyramid isn't going to save anyone. His manic determination to carry out Schiller's commands is his way of distracting himself from the truth.

STR 11 CON 15 SIZ 14 INT 16 POW 14
DEX 13 CHA 13 EDU 17 SAN 30 HP 15 (12)

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Beretta Mod 92FS Pistol Handgun 65%, 1d10

Knife 40%, damage 1d3+1+db

Armour: Ballistic vest (8 points)

Artefacts: Class 3 Ward, Laptop.

Skills: Computer Use (Magic) 45%, Disguise 50%, Dodge 40%, Drive 55%, Knowledge (Tradecraft) 40%, Knowledge (Occult) 60%, Sorcery 60%, Spot 60%, Ignore Reality 70%, Crazy Rambling Rants 60%

By contrast, Louisa Perrin was born into the Golden Promise, and was raised on a combination of occult lore and Christian Dominionism. She showed promise as a mathematician and a sorcerer, so she was groomed as one of the Golden Promise Ministry's special missionaries. She lacks Jacobs' field experience, but the rest of the cultists consider her more trustworthy than a former pagan blasphemer.

STR 10 CON 12 SIZ 11 INT 16 POW 15
DEX 11 CHA 13 EDU 15 SAN 20 HP 12 (8)

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Colt M16A4 Rifle 40%, 1d10

Knife 40%, damage 1d3+1+db

Armour: Ballistic vest (8 points)

Artefacts: Class 2 Ward

Skills: Computer Use (Magic) 30%, Dodge 45%, Knowledge (Religion) 50%, Knowledge (Occult) 30%, Sorcery 45%, Spot 50%.



Schiller's researchers suspect that Nyatri Tsenpo and his offspring possessed the blood of the Elect. Those dmu thag cords are psychic links between the world of the Sleeping Christ and our mortal existence. If they could be reactivated, then the primordial kings of Tibet would drag the Plateau back into alignment with Earth.

There's a fabled monastery within sight of the Dead Plateau. Schiller suspects that monastery is the last resting place of Nyatri Tsenpo.

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1. A Distant Trumpet

The Laundry maintains a document codenamed IVORY TRUMPET, but it's usually referred to as the "I never" file, short for "I never believed my work could have practical applications." It's a list of academics, researchers, collectors, artists and other specialists who are experts in some incredibly obscure field – like, say, violin repair, or the history of hanging and execution, or the acoustics

and manufacture of church bells – that may be of use to the Laundry, or to some competitor. (Mo was on that list, for example). Twenty or thirty percent of the 'I never' crowd end up getting recruited by the Laundry in some capacity, and they keep tabs on the rest. Just in case.

Tenzil Gyatso is a recent addition to the list. He's a Tibetan historian and translator who fled the region six years ago, and is now writing and teaching in London. The Laundry tagged him for I never when he arrived, added his name to the watch list, and then forgot about him.

Mission Briefing

The scenario kicks off with the player characters' supervisor dumping a huge stack of ~~pointless busywork~~ vitally important work on the characters. Everything in the stack requires a field-qualified officer, but it's all tedious stuff that makes counting the concrete cows in Milton Keynes seem exciting and important. The characters have to go down into the sewers and renew the wards on an iron door that was last opened in 1842; they've got to replace the silver ball-bearings in the eternally-running spiral escalator³ behind a secret door in Holloway Road tube station; they've got to meet with some recently-promoted Metropolitan Police officers and explain the sort of situations they should call the Laundry in to deal with, without mentioning what the Laundry is or giving away anything about the occult; check in on the server room at Transport for London to make sure the sigils on the SCORPION STARE servers⁴ are still up and running. Occult busywork, basically.

The last item on the list is to check in with Tenzil Gyatso. Two days ago, he complained to the police that someone broke into his flat while he was out. The police logged a report, and that tripped the Laundry's keyword search.

Playing Gyatso

Gyatso is a pot-bellied man in his mid-fifties, with a stringy white beard. He's an absent-minded academic, and ever since his wife's death, he's taken little care of himself. Gyatso's convinced that the Chinese government is spying on him; he's friends with dissidents and other critics of Chinese policy towards Tibet. He's therefore cranky that the police didn't take his break-in seriously.

3. They actually built a mechanical spiral escalator. It didn't work.

4. Try saying that six times fast. Actually, don't – it might summon something.

He hasn't signed Section III (or any of the Official Secrets Act), and isn't aware of magic or the Laundry.

- Gyatso complains about everything. He assumes the player characters are police and berates them for taking so long.
- He talks with his hands. Gesture wildly.
- He's obsessed with his new smartphone, and uses it for everything. If the characters give him a business card, he'll photograph it and stick it on Evernote. If they ask about Tibetan history, he'll pull up pdfs of his publications and email them instead of bothering with hardcopies.

Gyatso's Flat

Tenzil Gyatso's flat is a small one-bedroom apartment on the eight floor of a housing block. The elevator's broken. By the time the characters arrive, it's early evening. His flat, by contrast, is spotlessly clean, but disorganised. Stacks of papers on ninth century Tibetan legends jostle for space with reference books and piles of magazines.

- A **Spot** rolls notices an oddly out-of-place flyer in a stack of letters – it's a flyer from the Golden Promise Ministry, calling the faithful to a big Christian prayer meeting in the O2 Arena. (It was delivered by the two GPM would-be kidnappers during an initial scouting pass).

The Break-In

According to Gyatso, the break-in happened two days ago. He employs a cleaner, Mrs. Watson, who comes around twice a week to tidy the flat. She says two young men leaving the flat. She shouted at them, and they fled – she didn't get a look at their faces, but both were white, clean-shaven and well-dressed. One of them had a briefcase. Mrs. Watson called Gyatso, and he called the police.

As far as he can tell, nothing's missing. He suspects that the intruders were planting bugs.

A quick search of the apartment turns up the following clues:

- The door wasn't forced, but the lock is a cheap one and there are small scratches that imply the use of a snap gun (a lockpicking device). Anyone with **Fine Manipulation** spots this clue.
- A scan with a thaumometer or a scrying spell coupled with a successful **Science (Thaumaturgy)** roll reveals the lingering taint of magic. Some sort of low-level binding field, from the look of it.

- A successful **Hide** check finds some shards of something like an eggshell under Gytso's bed. **Knowledge (Natural History)** or **Science (Zoology)** rolls suggests that it might be an insect egg.

The Missing Mrs. Watson

Canny or paranoid characters may want to check up on Mrs. Watson. She lives nearby. Or, rather, lived. Checking her flat, there's no sign of her.

- Asking the neighbours reveals that she was visited last night by two young men. She left with them, and seemed to recognise them.
- A quick search reveals blood in the sink and toilet. It looks like she spat up a considerable amount of blood.

What Really Happened?

The Golden Promise sent three of their faithful to acquire Gyatso. The team's leader is Aldar Jacob (see page 107), one of Schiller's trusted lieutenants. He's a devoted servant of the Sleeping Christ, with a natural talent for spellcasting. Under him, he's got two clean-cut young men named Chris Hollander and Lewis Kyril (Aldar Jacobs ideally needs to survive to move on *Flyover Country*, but you can kill off Chris and Lewis if you want). She's also got a tongue eater larva.

Chris and Lewis broke into Gyatso's flat under orders from Aldar Jacobs. They planted a tongue eater hatchling there under the academic's bed. The plan was for the creature to wake up, Save Gytso, and then bring him to the Golden Promise.

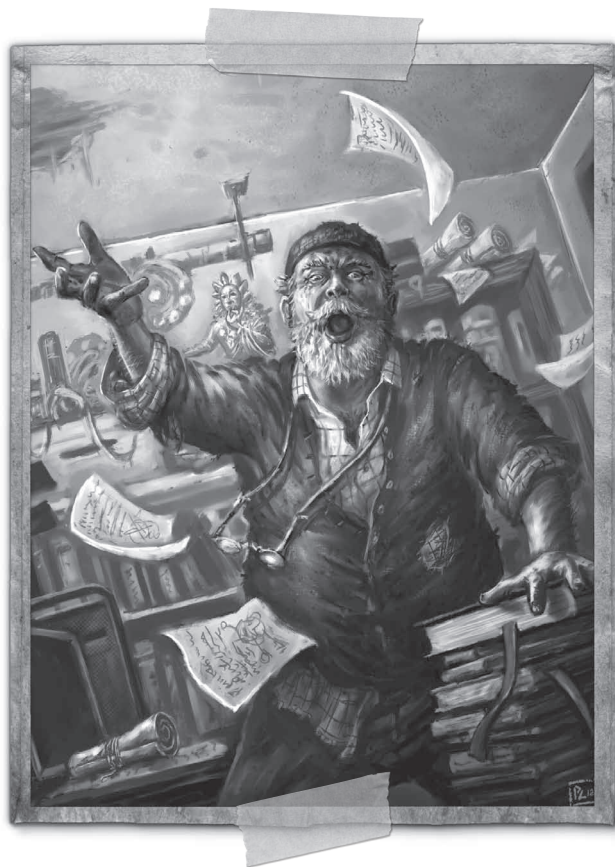
Unfortunately, Mrs. Watson woke the creature up first. It ate her tongue instead. The cultists followed the hatchling's psychic scream of confusion, and collected the now-Saved Watson from her flat.

Gyatso's Work

If the characters ask about Gyatso's research, he explains that he specialises in the Zhang Zhung period of Tibetan prehistory. He'll happily ramble on about it for hours. He mentions Nyatri Tsenpo and the prehistoric kings, but

only as part of a larger story. Unless the characters have good scores in **Knowledge (Occult)** or some other skill like **Knowledge (History)** or **Knowledge (Religion)**, most of this is way over their heads. However, an **Idea** roll later in the adventure can bring back memories of Gytso's work.

If pressed, he mentions an odd incident last week. A young American man who introduced herself as Aldar Jacobs contacted him and invited him to give a guest lecture at a private function in Colorado. He was hazy about who exactly was hosting this private function, but he got the impression that it was something religious. He said no – he loathes travelling to the United States. The American seemed disappointed, and left Gytso a phone number with which to contact him. If the characters check it, it goes to a pay-as-you-go disposable mobile phone.



Securing Gytso

It's up to the characters whether or not they take Gytso's account seriously. The next scene assumes that they put Gytso under surveillance; if they ignore the Tibetan, then you'll need to adapt the next scene to suit.

The most budget-efficient approach is just to give Gytso a direct phone number so he can call the Laundry for help. Paranoid characters may prefer to install a bug or a ward, or to watch the flat.

2. The Saved and the Lost

A day later, the cult makes a second attempt to secure Tenzin Gytso. This second attempt relies on Mrs. Watson; she's one of the Saved now, with a juvenile tongue eater in her mouth, and is only too willing to help. The plan is a simple one:

- Mrs. Watson contacts Gytso, explaining that she unexpectedly had to visit her sister, who had fallen ill. She's going back to her sister for the weekend, so she wants to come to Gytso's flat this afternoon to clean it. (She picks a time when Gytso is certain to be present.)
- The two GPM goons drive her to Gytso's building in a small van. Aldar follows in a second car.
- Mrs. Watson goes to Gytso's flat. She then pulls a gun on him and escorts him out, grabbing his passport *en route*.
- The two GPM goons follow them out. Everyone piles into the van. The tongue eater leaves Mrs. Watson and Saves Gytso.
- They drive to Heathrow and fly to Colorado, leaving the van in the long-term car park with Watson's corpse in the back. By the time anyone notices the smell, the Sleeping Christ will have returned and we'll be well into Tentacle Rapture territory.

Taken by the Cleaner

So, what preparation, if any, did the characters make for Gytso's protection?

- If they just gave him a panic button or a phone number to ring, then he triggers it while talking to Mrs. Watson. The characters may get to hear the cleaner threatening Gytso and ordering him to find his passport.
- If they've got his flat under surveillance, then they can intercept the Golden Promise cultists before they get to Gytso.
- If the characters made no preparation at all, then the first time that they hear of Gytso's plight is when one of his neighbours calls the police, saying she saw him being mugged at gunpoint just outside her home. By the time the characters get there, he and the cultists are long gone, but they can get a picture of Aldar Jacobs via CCTV cameras in the area.

Getting Gytso is not a major priority for the Golden Promise – his knowledge of the Tibetan Kings would be

useful, but they're prepared to activate the *dmu thug* without him if necessary.

The Chase

If the characters have the opportunity to intercept the cultists, then it's going to be a chase scene, either on foot or by car. Mrs. Watson, Chris and Lewis are all armed, and Mrs. Watson can use her unassuming appearance to her advantage. She looks like a sixty-year old blue rinse brigade housekeeper, not an international terrorist, as long as no-one examines her tongue too closely.

Aldar hangs back. In a car chase, he'll try to tailgate the player characters; in a foot chase, he might 'accidentally' block the player characters.

Possible hazards:

- On a narrow street, the van slows down enough for Chris to take a shot at the player characters
- Mrs. Watson hurls herself out of the back of the van, trying to smash into the player character's vehicle and make it look like they ran over an old lady. The tongue eater will grab the first bystander or paramedic who gets too close.
- Similarly, if the player characters try to restrain Mrs. Watson, the tongue eater abandons her body and goes for a player character instead.

Chris & Lewis, Servants of the Sleeping Christ

Mrs. Watson, Saved Housekeeper

For Aldar's statistics, see page 107.

Cleaning Up

Ideally, Aldar gets away to threaten the player characters in the next scene. If Chris and Lewis are arrested, then they can be interrogated, but they're pretty much designated mushrooms in fanatical faith sauce. They can identify Aldar, but otherwise will just clam up and give no more useful information. They know next to nothing, and can't even be connected directly to the Golden Promise – they think they're working for the Sword of Christ, an extremist sect, and that Gyatso was going to supply Jacobs with weapons.

3. Flyover Country

Time passes. The characters go back to their usual duties. The events of *The Apocalypse Codex* occur. Persephone investigates the Golden Promise Ministry, Bob flies off

to the Land of the Free and the Home of the Religious Crazies, Colorado vanishes behind a magical veil... and far, far away, the Sleeper stirs.

In the aftermath of GOD GAME BLACK, a CODICIL BLACK SKULL flight scrambles to conduct a surveillance run of the Pyramid. The White Elephants still aren't ready to fly, but they've got the emergency backup flight of a Eurofighter making a supersonic pass through a gate opened by an escort Sentinel R1, and that's exactly what they do. Less than 48 hours after Bob made it back home, an aircraft from RAF Cosford soared over the Dead Plateau, photographing the Pyramid and the Wall of Pain before circling around and exiting back into our world.

And four hours after that, the characters find themselves whisked into a very high-level meeting. Lots of military brass from the RAF and SAS, various senior Laundry staff, including half of the BLOODY BARON committee, observers from other agencies, and Angleton sitting at the heart of it all like Banquo's ghost. The meeting gets right down to business. Victor Chodhury briefly summarises the key events of APOCALYPSE CODEX as he understands them.

The Golden Promise Ministry are a religious group with a very unorthodox version of Christianity, and their bible includes a coded ritual to wake their "Sleeping Christ," which corresponds to the Sleeper in the Pyramid. Laundry assets prevented a successful ritual, but the cult was able to open multiple Gates to the Dead Plateau and transfer an indeterminate amount of personnel and material through.

An RAF captain takes over, and walks everyone through a series of surveillance photos.

- **Photo #1:** The skies over the Dead Plateau, just through the Gate. Wilder and more dangerous than usual; yellow-tinged clouds scud across a crowded alien sky. The captain mutters about high winds and turbulence, and how the scouting mission ran into trouble.
- **Photo #2:** The Pyramid itself. It looks unchanged – vast and timeless, but with a sense of impending doom. It's hard to shake the feeling that it's about to come crashing down on your head.
- **Photo #3:** Kirlian photo of the previous view. Thaumatic energy explodes out of the Pyramid's stony flanks like solar flares. The temple on top is too bright to see. Angleton shakes his head quietly. His craggy face is unreadable.
- **Photo #4:** The Wall of Pain. Still intact.

- **Photo #5:** A close-up of a section of the wall. A handful of new undead sentinels dressed in sober black suits hang impaled on shiny spikes. Like their century-old neighbours in Red Army uniforms, their dead eyes stare at the Pyramid in an eternal vigil.
- **Photo #6:** As the plane banked around to head back towards the Gate, it took a photo of the entire Plateau – and there, bottom right of the frame, are a dozen or so human figures creeping across the barren waste.
- **Photos #7, #8, #9:** Close-ups of these intruders. They're dressed in camo gear and heavy jackets, and each of them carries a heavy backpack – they obviously came prepared for conditions on this dead world. Several carry assault rifles and other firearms; others have scientific equipment. The camera caught them as they scurried for cover when the aircraft's sonic boom roared through the thin air of the Plateau. One of them is looking straight up at the camera - Aldar Jacobs.

Angleton asks the characters to confirm his identity. Everyone assumes that these intruders came through one of the Golden Promise Gates, but it's nice to know exactly what sort of apocalypse one is dealing with.

Planning the Mission

Angleton steeples his fingers. "Options?"

The RAF captain points out that while Squadron 666's primary response is not available, a conventional attack is possible. That gets vetoed on the grounds of geological instability – there are mentions of tremors and other seismic events in the report, and while smearing the cultists across the ground with a Brimstone missile is a pleasant thought, it's too risky. Anyway, this intel is several hours old, and it'll be several more hours before a response mission can be launched.

Major Barnes coughs lightly. "What are the chances of opening another Gate to the Plateau?"

Any player character with Science (Thaumaturgy) of 50% or more or experience in Gates can field that one – not likely. The Gate could open anywhere within hundreds of miles of the target. There's a lot of magical energy sloshing around the Plateau right now, making an accurate Gate impossible.

"Parachute insertion, then. Drop a few lads on the ground, track the intruders, take them out. I presume opening a Gate back home should be easier, right?" asks Barnes. Angleton nods. "All right - assume that's the game plan. Major Barnes, pick your team and come up with a plan to secure and detain a dozen hostiles."



Introduce any temporary player characters at this point if you're using them. Optionally, hand out copies of the briefing document in chapter 5.

Topics to be discussed:

- What are the Golden Promise doing on the Plateau? Judging from the photos, they're heading away from the Pyramid towards the so-called 'monastery,' an unexplored structure at the foot of one of the cliffs leading down off the Plateau. If Aldar Jacobs is part of the Golden Promise group, what does that imply?
- The cultists are armed and presumably packing magical firepower. What preparations should the team make? How long should they wait before departing? What about backup? What about transport?
- Where should the team make their drop? Over the monastery? On the Plateau? At a safe distance from either location?
- Observation flights go in at supersonic speeds to minimise exposure time. For a safe parachute jump, the plane should really be going no faster than 200KPH. For that matter, skydiving uses the **Athletics** skill; if a character doesn't have that specialty, then it's going to be a *Difficult Athletics* roll to land safely. The SAS can handle tandem jumps, but not at high speed.

- What's the exit strategy? The Plateau's normally easy to Gate out of, but recent events have stirred up the luminiferous ether. It should still be possible to make it back to Earth, but the team need to bring the equipment to create a Class Four Gate.

If it becomes an issue, the team has a Mission Budget of 100.

Once the team has a rough idea of the plan, it's off in a helicopter to RAF Cotsford, where there's a C130 Hercules that's been hastily fitted with the occult-geometry optics bench needed to open a Gate. As the characters approach, they see Laundry technicians tracing warding spells onto the fuselage. The pilot, Flight Lieutenant Hollins, introduces himself and shows the player characters into the cargo bay. He's trained on the White Elephants, so flying a Hercules into the mouth of hell will be a new experience for him. He's not looking forward to spending that much time over the Pyramid, but needs must and so forth.

The big Hercules usually carries much heavier cargo than a team of parachutists and a Gate generator, so it takes off almost daintily and powers across the Bristol Channel and then out over the Irish Sea. A pair of Tornados escort it out, like shadowy wraiths lurking just beyond the glow of the navigation lights. In the front of the cargo bay, two Laundry necromancers hunch over the Gate generator like gnomish acolytes. One's got what looks like a theodolite; the other's got a laptop open, with the plane's current location overlaid onto a map drawn by eighth century Irish monks.

A red light flashes, and the Gate generator activates. The air around the machine ripples, then seems to tear and melt. The plane shudders, and the characters all feel strangely stretched for a moment as they cross millions of light years in an instant (SAN loss of 1/1d4) – and then a sickly violet light bleeds in through the windows, and the characters find themselves in a very different sky. The plane immediately starts rattling as the winds buffet it.

Welcome to the Dead Plateau.

4. Through the Gate

Hollins' voice crackles in the characters' ears. *"Transit achieved. Looking for markers... ok, we're about four hundred clicks off the beacon, so -"*

Something huge and wormlike slithers out of the clouds and slams into the belly of the Hercules with a wet THUMP.

One of the Tornado pilots confirms that there's something big clinging to the outside of the plane. The characters can hear scales scraping off the fuselage. What do they do?

Ignore It: Does that ever work? The characters sit there while the flying worm-thing thrashes and bites at the outside of the C130. They get treated to several minutes of nerve-wracking horror as the monster continues to rip at the plane until it finally detaches and vanishes into the clouds behind. Two new problems arise in quick succession. First, the plane's leaking fuel and coolant, and there's no way it's going to make a safe pass over the Plateau. The team will have to bail out now and hike across the alien landscape to the target. Second, the worm-thing damaged the Hercules' hastily-prepared wards. Everyone needs to make immediate **Luck** rolls.

Those who fail have their Wards dropped by one level as something alien tries to claw its way into their skulls. (No ward? You're possessed! Thank you for playing, and let's hope that one of your teammates can put a bullet in your skull quickly).

Oh, by the way, Flight Lieutenant Hollins isn't wearing a powerful ward. Make a **Luck** roll for him too (he's got Luck 70%). If that fails, then he's got worms in his eyes and someone will have to race up to the cockpit and wrestle him out of the pilot's seat before the possessor works out how to run its new puppet.

Get The Hell Out Of There: Not necessarily the best plan, but at least they're doing something. The characters can bail out immediately, leaving the C130 to climb steeply and force the worm-thing to detach. See below for the rules on parachuting, and call for Luck checks as the characters bail out. The character who fails by the biggest margin gets a good look at the worm-thing when it snaps at him. That's a 1/1d6 SAN loss and a 20% chance of taking 2d6 damage from the monster's jaws.

Have A Tornado Shoot It Off: Not exactly what the pilot is trained for, but it's worth a try. The Tornado carries a Mauser BK27 cannon that can make mincemeat of the worm-thing, but a missed shot could damage the C130. If the characters go for this option, then have one of them roll the Tornado pilot's **Artillery** skill of 70%. A success wounds the creature and convinces it to detach; a special success kills it. A failure means that both creature and plane are hit; the monster detaches, but the Hercules can't make it to the drop zone, so the characters get dropped early. A fumble means that the Tornado misses completely, and fire rakes the cargo bay of the Hercules. Everyone gets to make **Luck** rolls; those who fail take 1d4 damage from flying shrapnel, and one unlucky NPC gets splattered – oh, and that thing's still out there. Plan B?

Shoot It Off: The creature is close to one of the side doors; if Hollins slows down, and everyone's strapped in, then some brave soul could try crawling out there with a machine gun and blasting the monster. The lucky volunteer

gets to go toe-to-toe – or muzzle to slaving maw – with the creature. Firing in such conditions is *Difficult*; inflicting 10 or more damage on the creature convinces it to leave.

Banish It: It's just on the other side of that wall. If the characters fire a banishing spell, it might convince the worm-thing to leave. The downside of this plan is two-fold. First, you'd need a chunky banishment spell (Level Three at least). Secondly, the airframe is warded. The characters can take down the wards for just long enough to cast the spell, but that exposes the crew as described above under *Ignore it*.

The Thing On The Plane, Elephantine Mount		
Characteristic	Rolls	Averages
STR	4d6 +20	34
CON	2d6 +6	13
SIZ	4d6 +36	50
INT	1d6	3-4
POW	3d6	11-12
DEX	2d6+3	10
Move: 6/30 Flying HP: 32		
Average Damage Bonus: +4d6		
Weapons: Bite 55%, damage 2d6+2+db		
Armour: 9-point hide		
Sanity Loss: 0/1d6		

Drop Zone

If it's still flying, the C130 continues towards the Dead Plateau. The "prepare to jump" light flickers into life. There are several possible drop zones. The characters can choose any of them, assuming the Hercules isn't damaged.

Making a parachute jump requires **Athletics (Skydiving)**. Characters who don't have that skill can just make a *Difficult Athletics* roll. Jumping in tandem with another character is also *Difficult*. A failed parachuting roll means the jumper suffers 1d4 damage on the landing. A fumbled roll has added problems, as described below.

The drop zones are:

- **Directly Over The Monastery:** Skip most of scene 5, *Across the Dead Plateau*, and jump straight to *Welcoming Committee* on page 116. The Golden Promise cultists take pot shots at the player characters as they parachute down. The range means the the cultists' attacks are at 1/8th of their normal. Make one attack roll on each player character. A Fumbled roll means the character presents the perfect target as he falls outlined against the lurid starry sky; the cultists get to make 1d3 attacks at 1/2 their normal attack skill.

- **Edge of the Dead Plateau:** This gives the characters some cover from the cultists in the Monastery while minimising travel time. A failed roll means the character drifts over the edge of the cliff and ends up separated from the rest of the team. A Fumbled roll means the same, plus another 1d6 damage as the character falls even further.
- **On The Dead Plateau:** The team land on the Plateau, a short hike from the edge. This is the safest landing zone. A Fumbled roll here means the character lands much too close to the Wall of Pain, and gets attacked by 1d4 zombies.
- **Far Off Course:** The characters fall short of the Plateau entirely, and have a long march ahead of them to get to the Monastery. A fumbled roll means the character drifts off course; finding him (or finding your way back to the rest of the team) requires a successful **Navigation** roll.

5. Across the Dead Plateau

The alien landscape of the Dead Plateau surrounds the characters. The lower gravity means the rocks pile themselves at angles that would be impossible on Earth, and look like looming shapes or reaching claws. Overhead, the first storm in centuries rages wildly. The air has a gunpowder tang, and breathing too deep makes the characters feel ill. In the distance, they can feel the terrible attention of the Sleeper in the Pyramid. It has an Eye, and it's watching them.

Crossing the Plateau is perilous, as described on page 39. The longer the characters spend on the Plateau, the more it saps their souls. Every three hours (or portion thereof), the characters lose SAN (1/1d6) and Hit Points (1d4-Ward strength). Keep track of how many times the characters get hit by this draining effect – it also determines how many dead kings the Golden Promise manage to awaken.

Their exposure to the dead world depends on where they landed:

- **Directly Over The Monastery:** Hit them once with SAN/Hit Point drain as they're exploring the Monastery.
- **Edge of the Plateau:** If they rappel down, then hit them twice – once as they cross the valley and again as they're exploring the Monastery. If they take a longer route, then they get hit three times.
- **On The Plateau:** As per Edge of the Plateau, plus an extra hit as they cross the plateau.
- **Far Off Course:** Five hits. Ouch.

Getting Down To The Valley

There are two possible routes down from the Dead Plateau to the valley below. The most direct route is to rappel down the cliff face opposite the Monastery and cross the broken ground below. The safer, but much longer route is to find one of the places where the steep sides give way to somewhat more gentle inclines – less climbing, but a longer walk there and back.

Climbing down the cliff face requires a **Climb** test for each character. If successful, the character makes it down without difficulty. If the test fails, then that character gets into trouble and someone (either that character, or someone else who comes to help him) must make another **Climb** roll. If this second roll fails, then the character (or both characters) fall. A Fumble on any **Climb** roll means the character automatically falls. A falling character must make a **Luck** roll. Success means the character only falls a short distance, and takes 1d6 damage. Failure means a longer fall for 3d6 damage.

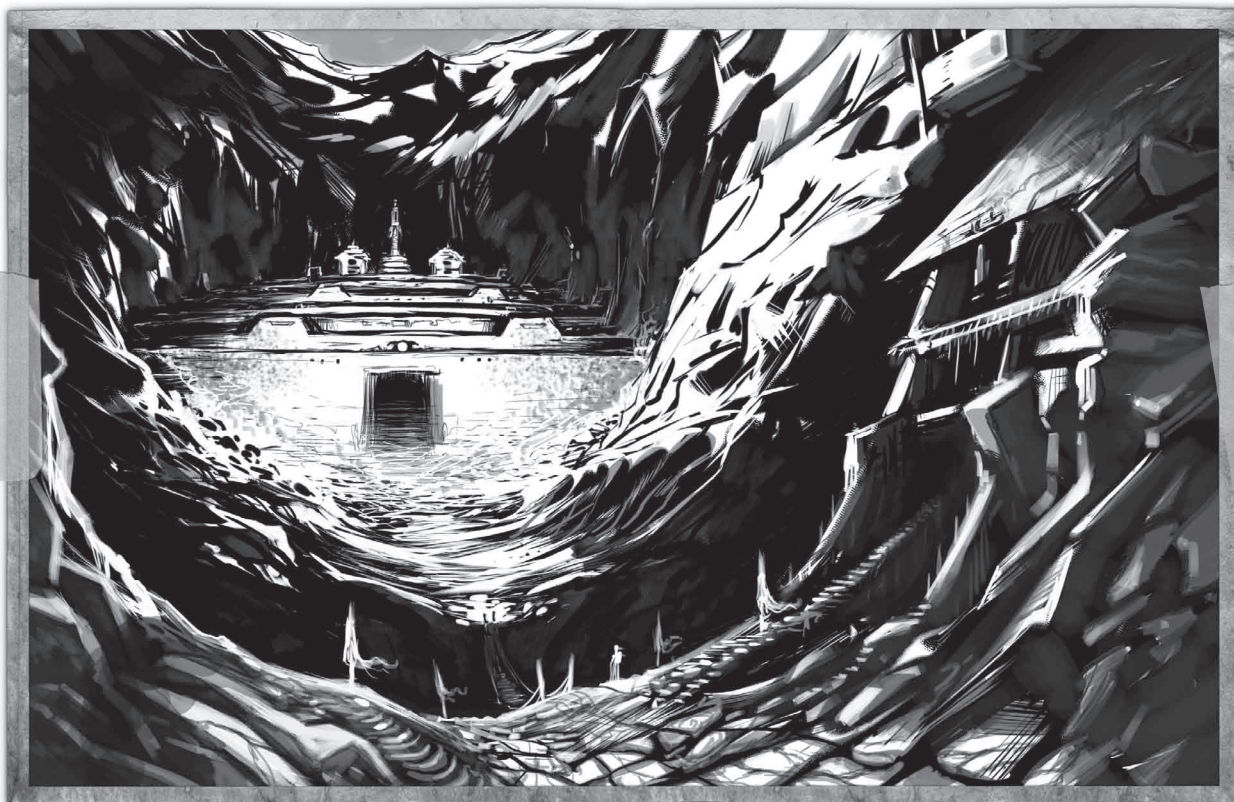
Encounters & Events

Throw in one or more of the following encounters as the characters cross the Dead Plateau.

- **Discarded Gear:** The characters find a backpack abandoned by the Golden Promise cultists. Inside, they find food, water and medical supplies, as well as a GPS locator, a satellite phone and maps of the Himalayas.

The GPS locator and the phone obviously don't work on this alien world, so why bring them?

- **Dead Man Walking:** One of the Golden Promise cultists succumbed to the life-draining effects of the Plateau. The other cultists left the body behind, and now it's inhabited by a hungry ghost. The zombie stumbles towards the player characters, trying to possess them too. This close to the Pyramid, the zombie is more powerful than the average Residual Human Resource – use the Tough Zombie statistics on page 48.
- **Quake:** The ground shudders in an oddly mechanical way, as if aeon-old machinery buried deep beneath the surface suddenly quivered into life. The characters may stumble and fall harmlessly – unless they're doing something dangerous like scaling a cliff or trying to sneak up on the Monastery.
- **Shrine of Kings:** The characters come across a pile of stones. On close examination, they notice that some of the stones bear weathered carvings. A successful **Knowledge** roll using a suitable speciality like **Archaeology**, **Anthropology** or **Art History** identifies the style as Tibetan; it's a grave marker.
- **Hungry Ghosts:** A flock of hungry ghosts descends on the characters. These are level three possessor entities. The ghosts are slow-moving and easily confused, so the characters can flee the area or try banishing the ghosts.



- **Strange Tracks:** The characters find a set of footprints in the dust. They're clearly of recent origin. A successful Track roll identifies them as bootprints, probably from a handmade boot – definitely not one with a rubber sole, anyway. These tracks were actually left by **Shamar**, the Shepherd (see page 118).

The Dmu Thag

While the characters cross the Dead Plateau, the Golden Promise are busy awakening the psychic links of seven dead kings.

As each *dmu thag* cord is energised by a human sacrifice, it drags the world of the Ssleeper closer to congruence with Earth. This progression towards apocalypse is marked by the following events:

Thaumic Spike: Any character with a thaumometer detects a sudden spike in background energy as each cord activates.

Cords in the Sky: Looking through a Tillinghast Resonator, or with Second Sight, or through some other means of seeing the Other Place lets the characters see the cords writhing in the sky over the monastery. Of course, looking into the Other Place hear means seeing... other things. (SAN Loss of 1/1d8).

Gravity Shifts: As the Plateau comes into congruence with our world, the lighter gravity of the dead world sometimes gives way to the stronger gravity of Earth.

Mountain Wind: A cold, but refreshing breeze blows past the characters. It smells like snow and mountain air.

Alien Dawn: The air grows progressively warmer, and the characters feel a source of heat rising in the sky. They can't see it, not yet, but the sun of Earth is rising over the Himalayan mountains and its heat filters through the growing Gate.

Welcoming Committee

The Golden Promise assumed that the forces of Satan would come after them as they tried to bring God to Earth. They've got a pair of snipers stationed in the rocky heights near the monastery, ready to bring down anyone who might try to stop the ritual.

If the characters parachuted down near the monastery, then the cultists get to shoot at them as they fall, as described on page 114.

However, if they landed elsewhere, there's a chance that they spot the snipers before the shooting starts. If a player declares they're looking for signs of bad guys, then it's a straight **Spot** roll; otherwise, it's a *Difficult Spot* roll. If the roll succeeds, the characters spot one of the snipers scrambling into position.

Under Fire: The snipers are armed with Remington 700s which have an optimum range of 100 metres (200 metres with a scope, which both rifles have) and deal 2d8 damage on a hit. The rifles have a four-shot magazine, so the snipers have to spend two rounds reloading after firing four shots.

The snipers both have military training, but they're young Air Force cadets, not veteran soldiers.

The snipers start firing as soon as the characters come within 300 metres, making their initial shots *Difficult*. They'll aim to boost their chances of hitting, gaining +20% per round spent aiming. They've also got tripods, which give another +20% to their attack rolls, but this bonus is lost if they're forced to move.

Sneaking Past: The flat valley floor offers little cover, but the characters can try dodging between the rocks near the base of the plateau, or making a break for the broken ground in front of the monastery. Hiding on the open valley floor is *Difficult*; hiding amid the rocks or in the broken ground is average difficulty, but the broken ground starts 150 metres away from the monastery. A successful **Hide** test must be made each round to avoid exposure to the snipers.

Counter-Sniping: The characters can try shooting back with their own sniper rifles. As soon as the shooting starts, the Golden Promise gunmen try to cover each other (one fires, then the other watches for someone trying to counter-snipe). The Golden Promise snipers have cover in the rocks, making any attacks on them *Difficult*.

Occult Countermeasures: Clever characters can use magic to deal with the snipers. Obviously, spell like Defensive Bindings are a must in any firefight, but the characters could also use a Hand of Glory to hide from the snipers, or cast an Entropy Manipulation spell to give everyone cover. They could also sic a hungry ghost or other summoned monster on the snipers, or just blast the whole hillside with a full-power basilisk gun attack.

Past the Snipers: Once the characters get past the snipers, a quick search of the area confirms that the Golden Promise went into the strange 'monastery.'

On the off-chance that the characters manage to capture one of the snipers alive, then he starts babbling about how the *'Kings of the Elect'* will soon awaken and *'bring the suffering masses before the throne of the Sleeping Christ'*.

6. The Lamaserie

Up close, the characters can tell that this 'monastery' was built to a more human scale than the titanic Pyramid. In fact, it looks like it was built by human hands, although it was clearly carved from the stone of the Plateau. It consists of six stepped concentric levels that support a cylindrical tower. The only visible entrance is through a yawning empty doorway.

Inside, the characters discover intricate paintings and carvings on the walls. Again, a character with a suitable **Knowledge** can identify them as being similar to those from the Zhang Zhung period of Tibetan history. The carvings mostly depict smiling monster-kings dismembering humans or being worshipped as gods, or show the proper way to propitiate these hungry deities. Either way, examining the walls is worth 1/1d4 Sanity.

There's no sign of the Golden Promise cultists, and the monastery is a maze of small, lightless dusty chambers containing clay jars and cryptic pieces of warped metal. Other rooms contain hundreds of parchment scrolls that crumble to dust when touched. The Golden Promise must be in here somewhere, though.

The Haunted Monastery

The monastery, and the catacombs beneath it, are not safe places. Dimensions shift and contract here, and angles change depending on your point of view. What seemed like a short corridor when you walked down it become a long and winding one on the way back; a room that seemed small is actually much bigger now that you're inside it.

The characters hear impossible echoes, see movements in the shadows, and get buffeted by waves of nausea or strange emotions (of which hunger and a strange longing for a specific place in the night sky are the most common, or at least the most recognisable).

There's a lot of magical energy here, giving a +3 POW bonus to all spells.

The Recent Carvings

Another corridor has carvings on the walls that seem to depict the history of the ancient kings. The characters can identify several distinct panels:

- A strange entity, possibly a hooded monk, in front of the Pyramid of the Sleeper, arms raised in veneration.
- The same hooded entity coupling with a human woman. It looks like there are humans worshipping the hooded entity.
- Seven sets of virtually identical panels, which the characters recognise as the kings described by Gyatso, starting with Nyatri Tsenpo. The inhuman king comes down to Earth, rules for a period, sires an heir, and then returns to the Pyramid via a strange cord that emerges from his head. At the end of each reign, the carving depicts the king being interred into a coffin-like object beneath the monastery.
- The eighth panel shows the death of Drigum Tsenpo. He fights with his servants, and one of them picks up the king's sword and uses it to cut the psychic cord.
- Below each of the histories of the seven previous kings, there's a large panel of some sort of text. Any character with **Sorcery** or **Knowledge (Occult)** 50% or more recognises it as the Language of Leng, an occult tongue best used for (a) entering into ghastrly bargains with inhuman powers or (b) writing a compiler that translates from C to the underlying structure of space-time or (c) turning your skull inside out. From the look of those carved panels, it seems to be a transcription of the thoughts or speeches of the seven kings *after* they died. Most alarming of all, the bottom lines of each panel are freshly carved. Someone updated these carvings within the last few hours – someone for whom the Language of Leng is clearly a native tongue.
- Below the eighth panel is what looks initially like a mantra or a chant, but any character with **Computer Use** who makes a successful **Idea** roll has the disturbing intuition that it's really a transcript of a failed handshaking session. Say you're trying to open a connection to another computer – there's a whole protocol to be followed where you send a signal, it responds, and then you send a response to the response. If the other party fails to respond, you don't know if they didn't get it because they're not listening, or because the network dropped the packet. This transcript looks like someone's trying to open up a network connection, but the packets keep dropping, so they retry every few centuries. There are fresh carvings at the bottom of this panel too – it looks like the network's back up...

The Shepherd

As the characters explore the monastery, they hear terrified whimpering coming from one side room. Exploring, they discover a young Tibetan man huddled in a corner. He's clearly human, not possessed, and absolutely terrified. Once the characters calm him down, they can talk to him (if none of the characters speak Lhasa, then Shamar knows a few words in Chinese or English and can make himself understood).

Shamar is a young Tibetan shepherd. He explains that he was out looking for an escaped goat near "the haunted ruins" when he found himself in this strange valley. He couldn't find his way home, and wandered here for some time before people started shooting at him. Terrified, he ran into this building and doesn't know where he is. He fears that he's dead and in hell.

Long ago, in his great-grandfather's time, the priests of the Black Buddha worked magic in the mountains, and many goats were sacrificed to the blue fires. Then, before Shamar was born, government men from far-off Beijing came to the village and took the priests away. Shamar never saw it himself, not until today, but the old men sometimes spoke guardedly of secret passes that led to other worlds, and terrible monsters that dwelt in the heights.

Shamar can translate some of the inscriptions on the walls, and knows the tales of the ancient kings and how Drigum Tsenpo was slain with his own sword. The tale is often told in Shamar's village.

The Haunted Ruins: If asked about the Haunted Ruins, Shamar explains that there is an old tomb on the hillside

near his village. Legend says that the body of a king was secretly buried there, long long ago.

7. Into the Catacombs

Exploring further, the characters find a copper-clad trapdoor that leads down into a catacomb beneath the monastery. Small niches, each containing a human skeleton, line the walls. The skeletons all show signs of violent death and dismemberment; notably, every one of them has had its skull cracked open. The catacombs lead to the tombs of the seven Tsenpo kings – there's a warren of narrow, twisty corridors between each tomb.

Cult Operations

Before the player characters got here, the Chosen started awakening the dead kings. Two cultists (Aldar Jacob and another sorcerer) are already atop the monastery, performing the spell that will draw the two worlds into alignment. The remaining seven (twelve, minus the two up top, the two snipers, and Mr. Zombie) are busy in the catacombs, digging up the dead kings. The faster the characters moved through the earlier parts of the scenario, the higher the ratio of living cultists to undead alien hybrid monstrosities.

Exploring the Catacombs

The first two tombs that the characters find are all identical: each one is a square room shaped like a truncated pyramid, so the walls slope inwards sharply. Whoever built this place thought that 'squids and skulls' was a motif worth using on every available surface.

Back to the Mountains

If the characters bring Shamar back out of the monastery, then they can retrace his steps down the valley. As the cultists bring more of the *dmu thag* online, then the link between this world and ours grows stronger. A short walk down the valley brings the characters out onto a mountain slope somewhere in the Himalayas. Looking south, they can see the beautiful vista of the Roof of the World in the morning sun, but looking behind them, they see the alien skies and the looming shape of the Dead Plateau. The two worlds are coming into alignment!

The Tomb of Drigum Tsenpo

With his *dmu thag* severed, Drigum Tsenpo could not establish a connection with the world of the dead plateau. His all-too-mortal body is buried in the ruins near Shamar's village. The characters have all the ingredients needed to reactivate Drigum in the same way the Chosen woke the other dead kings – but since Drigum doesn't have a functional *dmu thag*, it's like short circuiting the whole system.

Resurrecting the eighth king disrupts the ritual.

Of course, taking *that* approach means the characters end up stuck in the wilderness of the Himalayas with an angry dead king...

There's a cylindrical copper coffin in a stone-lined well in the floor at the centre of each room. Judging by the size of the coffin, whatever was buried in there must have been bigger than a human.

In the first two tombs, the Golden Promise cut open the top of the coffin with a blowtorch and then wired one of their own cultists into a summoning grid. A pale corpse of a cultist lies next to each tomb; they drained their own life force into whatever was in the coffin. The coffins are now empty apart from piles of ancient human bone fragments.

What's in the other five tombs depends on how long it took the characters to get here. For every time the characters got hit by the life-draining effect of the Dead Pyramid, the cultists had time to open another coffin. So, the characters might run into the cultists in the fourth chamber if they only got hit twice, or get to the empty eighth chamber and find that all the coffins are already open if they got hit five or more times.

Empty Tombs

Examining the walls reveals one panel that depicts how the kings were buried. The carving shows a king – clearly not human, more like a stretched BLUE HADES – being lowered into its coffin by human servants. Each of the kings carried a pair of sacrificial knives, and was accompanied into the grave by three human sacrifices.

Meeting the Cultists

If the characters catch up with the cultists, then they come across up to four Golden Promise Chosen in one of the tombs. One cultist stays on guard with a submachine gun, while another works on cutting the coffin lid open with a blowtorch. The third cultist has a laptop and other electronics to set up a summoning grid, and the fourth cultist is the designated sacrifice. If there are fewer than six cultists remaining (including the two up top), then they've got to multitask (so, the last poor cultist has to wire himself into the summoning grid) after cutting open the coffin, poor bastard.



If attacked by the characters, the cultists try to awaken the dead king immediately. Doing so requires a successful **Computer Use (Magic)** roll against the cultist's skill of 45%. If the cultists get killed before they wake the king, the characters can take advantage of the open coffin to grab the sacrifice knives. Otherwise, they need to deal with an angry dead Tibetan god-king in a cramped space... (see page 48 for the statistics for angry undead Tibetan god-kings).

Unlooted Tombs

Any tomb that the Chosen haven't yet opened is a bonus. The characters can, if they want, bash the coffin open with an entrenching tool and grab the knives within. Yes,

Soul Knives of the Tibetan Kings

Each of the seven kings was buried with a pair of knives. As the characters should have worked out from Tenzil Gyotso's account of Tibetan mythology, the weapons of the Tsenpo kings can sever a *dmu thag* cord, as happened to the unfortunate Drigum Tsenpo. The 'knives' are more like swords; the blades are nearly a metre long, and made from a heavy alloy incorporating elements that don't occur on Earth (or show up on the periodic table, for that matter). The blades use the **Melee (Sword)** skill and inflict 1d8+1 damage on a successful hit. They can also injure immaterial creatures like ghosts. Using such a weapon costs 1d4 SAN per attack; if you're driven mad by the sword, then you start believing that you're one of the Tibetan god-kings and that everyone around you is a sacrificial victim.

Most importantly, the blades can be used to counter the ritual – see *Riding the Dmu Thag*, below.

they're going to save the world by killing monsters and taking their stuff. If there aren't any unlooted tombs, then the characters have to be more creative when it comes to getting the swords...

The Stairs

Finally, the maze of catacombs doubles back on itself and ends in a narrow spiral staircase, leading up through the centre of the monastery. From above, the characters hear an unearthly noise, a buzzing drone that bypasses their ears and seems to vibrate their skulls directly.

Half-way up the stairs, the characters pass another copper-lined door, like the trapdoor they passed through earlier. This door is sealed and has clearly not been opened by the Chosen. Judging by its position, it must lead into the upper levels of the monastery.

8. Riding the Dmu Thag

The staircase leads the characters out onto the partially ruined roof of the cylindrical tower atop the monastery. It's a target rich environment: in the middle of the roof are Aldar Jacobs and the other Chosen (a woman named Louisa Perrin), plus any surviving cultists if the characters stopped some of the dead kings from waking. Surrounding them, sitting crosslegged on thrones like monstrous judges, are the dead kings. Three metres all, grey-skinned, frog-like eyes, long sharp claws, and each of them with an expression of blissful tranquillity on their blood-splattered faces. A silvery cord, barely visible to the naked eye, rises lazily from each king's forehead and climbs into the sky.

Aldar and Perrin sit in the middle of a magic circle with a copy of *The Apocalypse Codex*, a laptop, and – being Americans – lots of guns. Praise the Sleeping Christ and pass the ammunition!

Thwarting the Ritual

Thwarting with extreme prejudice, of course. There are several ways to do it.

- **Cutting The Dmu Thag:** This is the most likely option. The characters can recreate the deeds of Lognam and cut the silver cord using the sacrificial knives. If they looted the tombs, then they already have knives. If they don't, then they'll need to steal or otherwise obtain the knives from the animated kings. To cut a silver cord, the characters need to make called shots (-20% penalty to their attack rolls) when attacking the dead kings. Any amount of damage will sever the cord. Cutting the cord makes the king mortal, but doesn't otherwise impede it.

- **Killing the dead kings:** They can't be killed by physical damage alone – their *dmu thag* cords have to be severed to deny them their connection to the spiritual realm. However, they can be crippled by enough damage, and then the characters can use the knives to slice the cords.

- **Killing the Chosen:** Aldar and Perrin are protected by a warding circle that's both a Level 4 Area Ward and a Level 4 Defensive Binding that's plugged into the magic of the monastery – the binding regenerates back up to its full protection after each round. So, the characters need to do twenty points of damage before they can even try shooting the Chosen.

- **Breaking the Circle:** The circle's there to protect the Chosen from the hungers of the dead kings. Removing the circle (with a well-placed exorcism, or by physically breaking the lines) means the dead kings might decide to eat the Chosen instead.

- **Resurrecting Drigum Tsenpo:** As described above, the characters can get back to Earth as the link between our world and that of the Sleeper grows. If they activate the broken *dmu thag* of Drigum Tsenpo, it'll disrupt the connection.

- **Talking the Cultists Down:** Louisa Perrin was raised in the faith and is a true believer in the Golden Promise, but Aldar Jacobs came to the Sleeping Christ late in life. The characters could appeal to his sanity by getting him to look at the undead horrors surrounding him. At the very least, they could slow him down while they start sawing at silver cords.

The Face Beneath The Silk

Tibetan legend claims that Nyatri Tsenpo's father was a beast called a Theurang, a horror with a flapping tongue that covered its face.

Lovecraft wrote of a "*High-Priest Not To Be Described, which wears a yellow silken mask over its face and dwells all alone in a prehistoric stone monastery*" upon the Plateau of Leng. In a dream, he encountered this horror:

At the farther end was a high stone dais reached by five steps; and there on a golden throne sat a lumpy figure robed in yellow silk figured with red and having a yellow silken mask over its face. To this being the [guide] made certain signs with his hands, and the lurker in the dark replied by raising a disgustingly carved flute of ivory in silk-covered paws and blowing certain loathsome sounds from beneath its flowing yellow mask.

–*The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*

THE MORAL HIGH GROUND

The thing that dwells behind that second copper door, the father of Nyatri Tsenpo, the High Priest Not To Be Described... and the player characters probably just killed its children to the seventh generation. No wonder it's pissed. From the monastery below, the player character hear an unearthly, ungodly keening, a ghastly wail carried on the thin winds. As the portal back to Earth closes, the wail echoes out across the Roof of the World, and half the population of the world hear it in the distance. Up close, it's worth 1d4/2d8 SAN loss.



Then, from below, the characters hear the sound of something shuffling towards that second copper door on the spiral staircase. Unreasoning terror grips all of them – they know something terrible is coming.

What do they do?

- **Run Away:** Very, very sensible. The last character down the stairs (determined by DEX rank if nothing else) sees the copper door opening behind him. If he looks back, it's 1d10/1d100 SAN loss. The surviving characters find themselves outside the monastery – from there, they can either Gate home or else slip through the closing portal into Tibet.
- **Barricade the Door:** Holding the door shut against the High Priest Not To Be Described means matching STR against its strength of 15 on the Resistance Table.

Three successes keep the door shut long enough for the rest of the team to escape, or for a boffin to open a Gate home. Each failure means the character holding the door glimpses part of what's on the far side, for 1d6/1d20 SAN loss.

- **Climb Down The Outside:** The fastest way off the monastery is to rappel down the sides. This sheer surface calls for a *Difficult Climb* check. Failure means the character has a choice – either he falls, taking 2d6 damage, or climbs down slowly and so sees the High Priest as it looks over the parapet (1d6/1d20 SAN loss).
- **Gate Out:** Opening a Gate back to Earth would normally take thirty minutes, but right now the plateau is dimensional swiss cheese. A level three Gate (requiring only two minutes, and a successful **Computer Use (Magic)** roll) is enough to punch a hole back to England.
- **Fight the High Priest:** Well, there's a reason we encouraged the players to make temporary player characters.

Aftermath

If the characters escaped via a Gate, then they tumble through a portal into a field near Somerset. A Laundry helicopter retrieves them within an hour. However, if they escaped into Tibet, then they'll need to find a way to call home and then hide until they can be retrieved, or until the British government can arrange their return home. The Chinese – and especially the Nameless Bureau – will want to know what half-a-dozen British soldiers were doing on the Roof of the World.

Back in England, the surviving characters are exorcised and debriefed. Keyhole satellites glimpsed the Dead Plateau as it came into alignment with Earth, but full congruency lasted only a few seconds. If the Sleeper sensed the proximity of more than seven billion minds, it didn't react.

No apocalypse today. Wait for tomorrow.



GOD GAME BLACK

Handout #1 - Church Meeting Flyer

*I am come that they might have life,
and that they might have it more
abundantly*

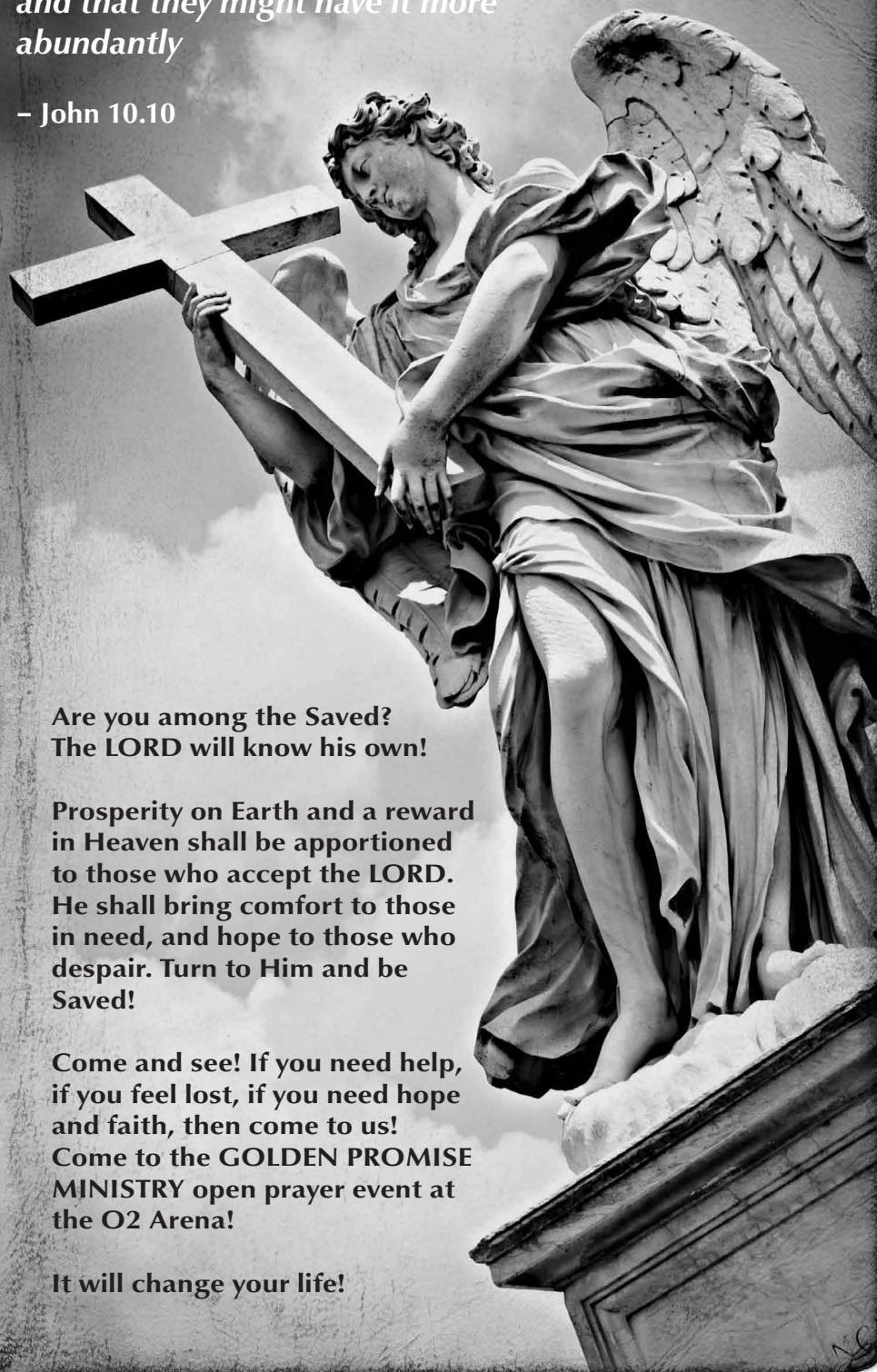
– John 10.10

**Are you among the Saved?
The LORD will know his own!**

**Prosperity on Earth and a reward
in Heaven shall be apportioned
to those who accept the LORD.
He shall bring comfort to those
in need, and hope to those who
despair. Turn to Him and be
Saved!**

**Come and see! If you need help,
if you feel lost, if you need hope
and faith, then come to us!
Come to the GOLDEN PROMISE
MINISTRY open prayer event at
the O2 Arena!**

It will change your life!



Handout #2 - Tenzil Gyatso Letters

THIS DOCUMENT IS CLASSIFIED
IVORY TRUMPET CLEARANCE
 IF YOU DO NOT POSSESS IVORY TRUMPET CLEARANCE, DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT.

Tenzil Gyatso
 C/O International Council for Tibet
 17th June 2006

Dear Sir,

I was given the name of your office by a friend in the British Museum. I understand that you provide funding and resources to foreign academics resident in the United Kingdom who are not attached to any university or other institution, and I certainly fall into that category, as I was forced to leave my homeland under duress. My field of expertise is the early history of Tibet and Buddhism. I can make myself available for interview at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Tenzil Gyatso

Tenzil Gyatso
 C/O International Council for Tibet
 5th October 2008

Dear Sir,

In your most recent letter, you asked for a fuller description of Nyatri Tsenpo, Drigum Tsenpo, and the *dmu thag*. Nyatri Tsenpo was the first king of Tibet. According to legend, he was the son of a magical creature called a *theurang*, and possessed prodigious magical powers. Notably, he was connected to Heaven by a silver cord that extended from his forehead into the sky. Nyatri Tsenpo could ascend by means of this cord to the heavens to obtain divine wisdom. The cord also held Tsenpo's immortality.

When his son came of age, Nyatri Tsenpo ascended again into heaven, and did not return. His son ruled Tibet for many years, until his son came of age in turn, and in turn the second king (Mutri Tsenpo) ascended to join his father. This cycle continued for seven generations, until the time of the eighth king, Drigum Tsenpo.

Drigum Tsenpo quarreled with one of his servants, a groom named Lognam. In their fight, Lognam severed the silver cord of the king, ending Drigum Tsenpo's immortality and killing the king. The descendants of Drigum Tsenpo also became mortal, and the era of magical kings was ended.

The *dmu thag* refers to the silver cord that sprouted from the forehead of each king and connected them to heaven.

I hope this satisfies your curiosity.

I also note that you have yet to reply to my letters of the 15th of March, or the 8th of June, or the 12th of August. If you do not intend to provide funding for my work, I wish that you would say so instead of leaving me in suspense. I was forced to leave my homeland with very little, and am forced to devote the bulk of my time and energy which should be devoted to my work on arguing with bureaucrats and immigration officials. Should I add your office to the list of British officials who have given me nothing but empty promises?

I await your swift response!

Yours,

Tenzil Gyatso



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GOD GAME BLACK

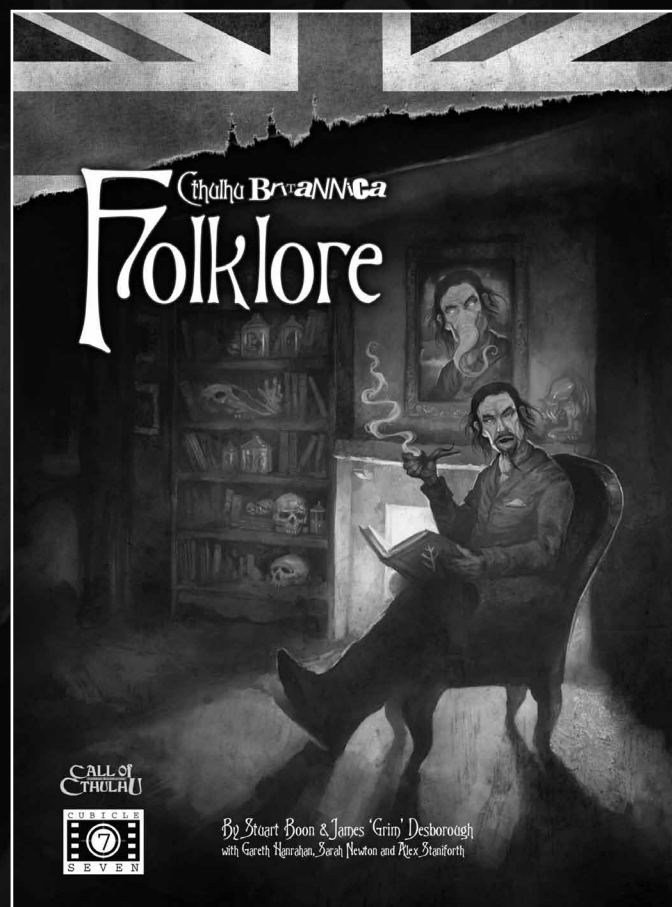
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Cthulhu Britannica Folklore

Behind the modern façade of Britain in the 1920s is a country teeming with links to the supernatural. British folklore harkens back to days of old when early cultures lived alongside strange folk and stranger creatures, when druids and shamans made sacrifices to pantheons of gods both powerful and terrible, and when people celebrated myth and legend in song, art, and oral tradition at the very heart of their civilizations. And those deep roots that so colourfully tell of fantastical creatures, miraculous events, and wondrous deeds also hint and grasp blindly at darker truths. The truth is that folklore can take us behind the veil of reality to glimpse the terrible, alien truths of the universe beyond, capturing vague notions of evil, malevolent beings, their horrible deeds, and the primal fears that they inspire and that have been preserved in Britain's cultural memory.

Cthulhu Britannica: Folklore presents a uniquely British vision of Lovecraftian horror where fairies, witches, and folk traditions intertwine with the dreadful, eldritch powers and otherworldly terrors of the Cthulhu Mythos. The book features:

- A folklore bestiary, including fairy folk, shape-shifters, giants, little folk, black dogs, dragons, water horses, bodily horrors, and much more
- A folklore calendar and a new 1920s profession—the folklorist—for players
- Detailed sections on using folklore and folk magic for *Call of Cthulhu* Keepers
- And nine Folklore Mythos threats that can introduced into any scenario or campaign, or used as single-session scenarios



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