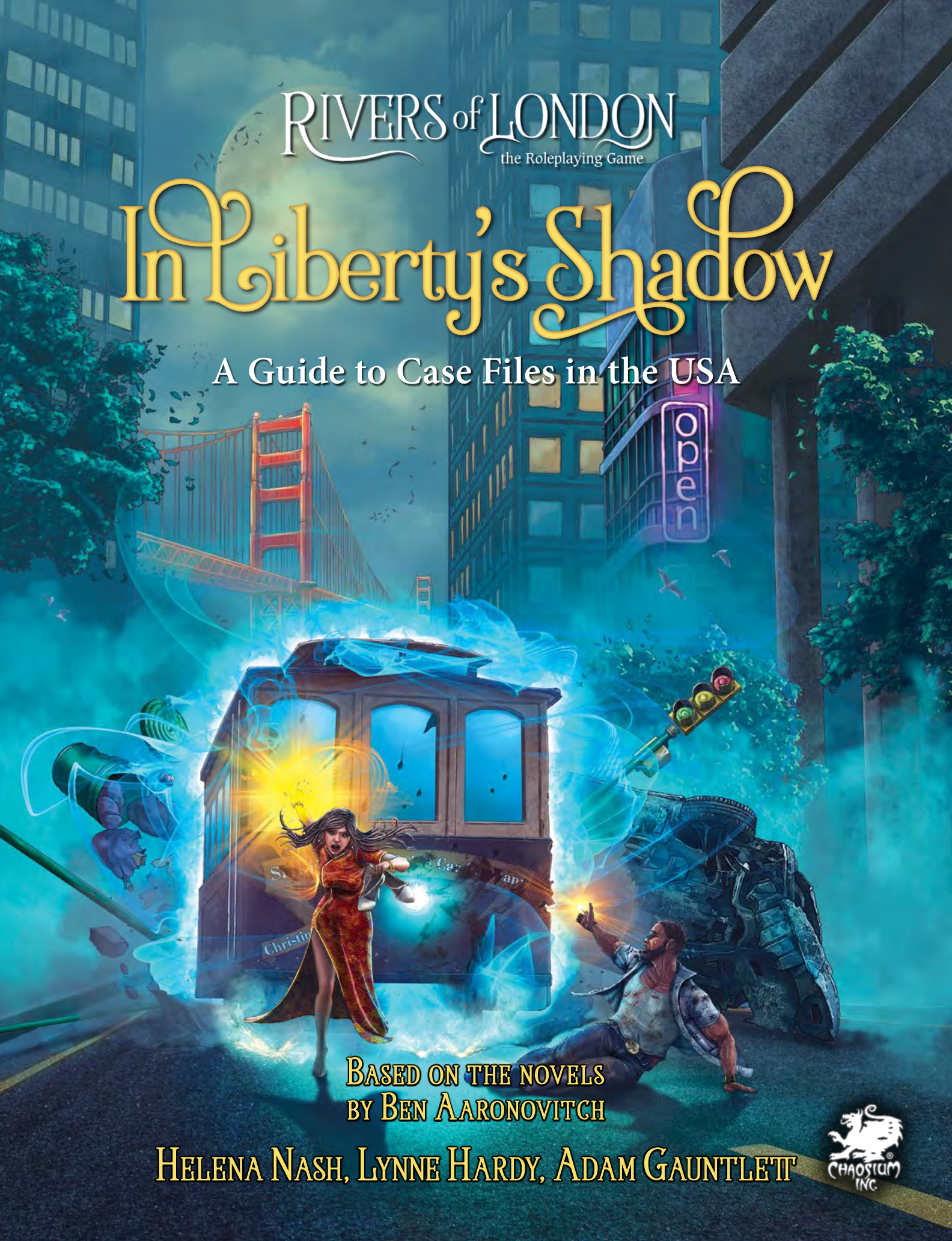
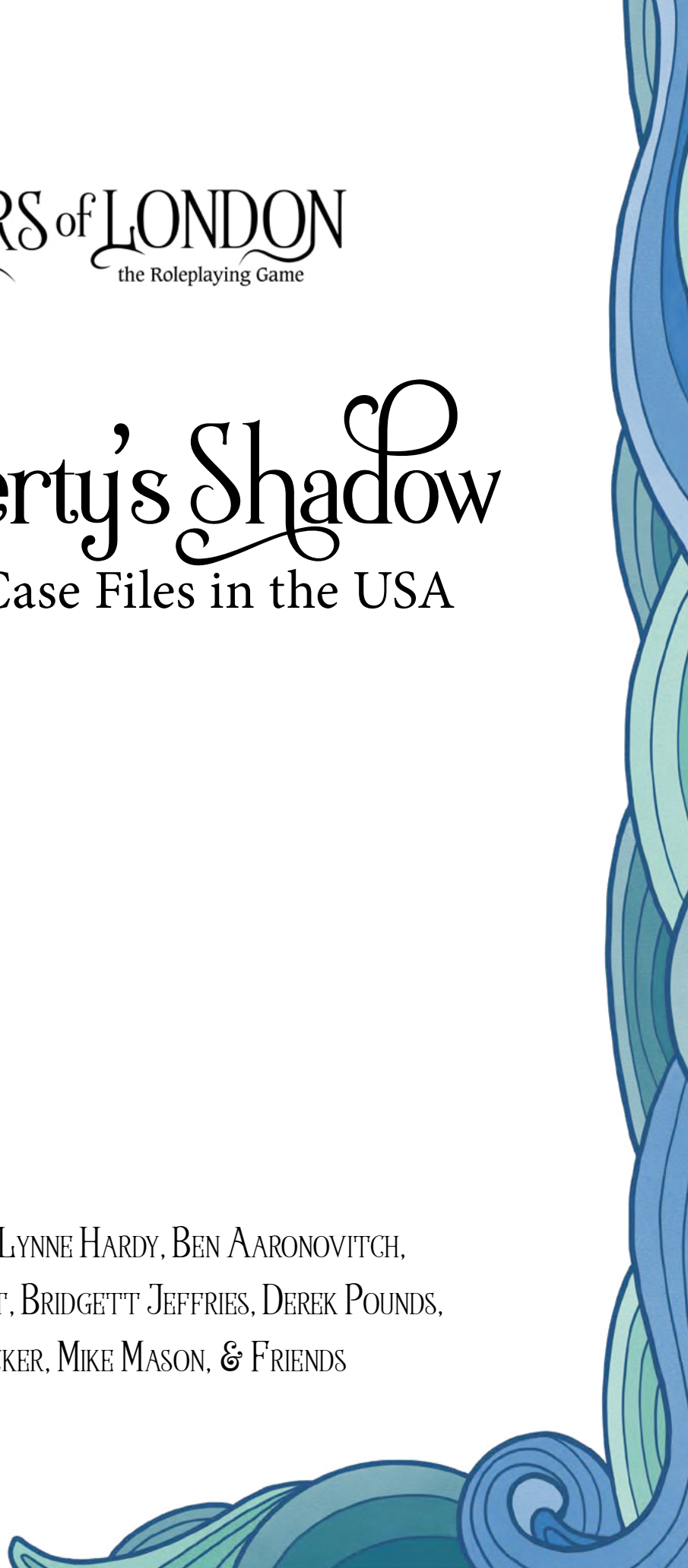

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the Roleplaying Game
In Liberty's Shadow
A Guide to Case Files in the USA
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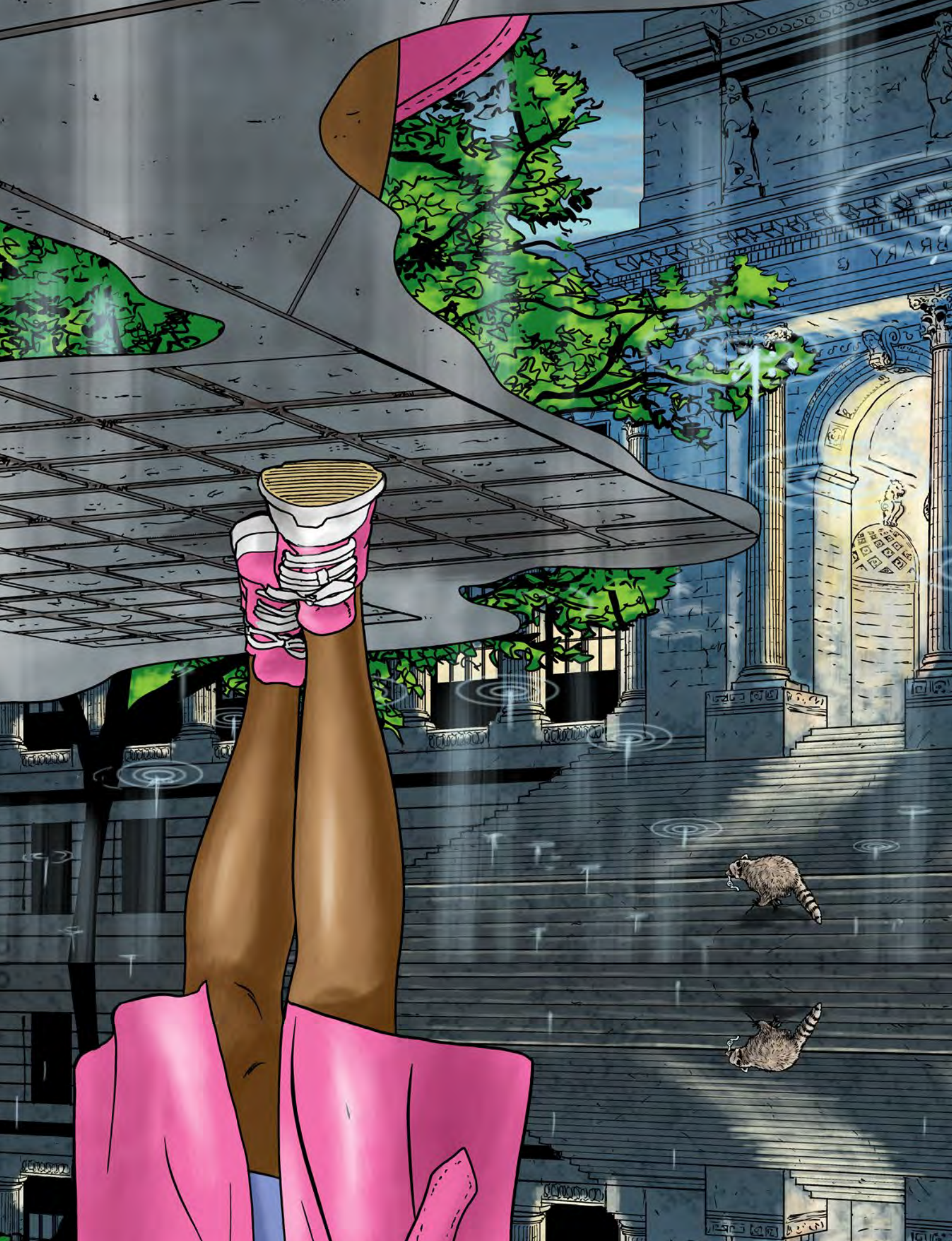
RIVERS of LONDON
the Roleplaying Game

In Liberty's Shadow

A Guide to Case Files in the USA

Helena Nash, Lynne Hardy, Ben Aaronovitch,
Adam Gauntlett, Bridgett Jeffries, Derek Pounds,
Paul Fricker, Mike Mason, & Friends





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NEV CLOSE
Corn Flakes



Ask, and You Shall Receive

A short Special Agent Reynolds story by Ben Aaronovitch

FOR A MOMENT, I thought there had been a massacre, but then I realized the slushie machine had exploded and splattered raspberry syrup across the snack aisle.

"*Do we know what caused that?*" I asked.

The evidence tech from the California Bureau of Forensic Services shook his head.

"*Not yet,*" he said.

I'd never heard of Nev-R-Close before, but it was obvious the owners had looked at a 7-Eleven and copied it down to the layout of the snack aisle and the green and white styling. The aisle was a mess. The slushie explosion had obviously been the coup de grâce since the syrup had been liberally splattered over the drifts of chips, candy, and nutrition bars that had been flung off the shelves. Careful not to disturb the tech, I matched up some of the items with the shelves they'd come from to see if there was a pattern. As far as I could tell, they'd flown west to east.

It would have been nice to just to check the surveillance cameras, but they'd been rendered inoperable by what the lab in Quantico insists on calling ASD (Anomalous Structural Decomposition) but the Brits called "sanding."

Fortunately, I had a real live witness—a high school senior who'd been working the late shift—who had told local LEOs that everything suddenly started flying around. His first thought had been that it was an earthquake, but he quickly realized it was the contents of the snack aisle that were moving, not the earth.

"*I'm thinking it must have been a poltergeist,*" he'd said in his statement.

I'm reliably informed that poltergeists take at least a hundred years to coalesce and the Nev-R-Close couldn't have been more than ten years old. But there are things that can be mistaken for your classic angry ghost. Things that are far more dangerous.

There had been a strong but confusing *vestigia* at the scene—a sense of trestle tables and homemade jelly, of wasps and a choir singing. An everyday sort of *vestigia*, only much too strong.

The local Chief of Police was waiting for me outside.

"*Since when was vandalism an FBI matter?*" he asked.

"*Vandalism isn't,*" I said. "*But bank robbery is.*"

The Nev-R-Close occupied a lot in a strange annex of the town of Chowchilla, California. Divided from the town proper by the railway and bounded to the north by the highway, it was a one-stop shop for passing motorists. It sported a McDonald's, a Starbucks, two motels, two garages, a truck stop, a drive-through bank, and the Church of Christ's Forgiveness—services every day, everyone welcome.

The bank was across the road from the Nev-R-Close and was currently closed. The bulk of the evidence team had been working there all morning. It wasn't a major branch and so had only been keeping approximately $75,000 in its vault overnight. Most of which had mysteriously vanished.

"*How is this possible?*" asked the regional manager, who had arrived less than an hour after I had. I'd left her alone for a couple of hours to let her calm down and give the rest of the BFS team time to process the scene.

Now we were standing in the bank's modest-sized vault. Every cash chest was open, and the coins spilled out of ruptured cash bags like metallic snow. There were drifts of green in the bottom of every chest and more notes littered the floor. Some appeared to have been ripped in half or shredded.

The regional manager repeated her question in a forlorn voice.

There had been two surveillance cameras covering the inside, but they were toast, as were all the bank's other cameras, internal and external. We hadn't got around to checking yet, but I was willing to bet good money that every bit of electronics not switched off had been sanded. The *vestigia* here was the same as at the Nev-R-Close, only so strong I sensed it before I came in the front door.

There was a definite pattern to the drifts. Most of the remaining banknotes had piled up in the southern corner of the vault as if blown there by an impossible wind.

"*What am I supposed to tell the insurers?*" asked the regional manager.

I think I may have picked up some bad habits from the Brits because I almost told her to report it as an act of God. May God forgive me.

People are always surprised that, in this day and age, investigators still sketch crime scenes by hand. It's a useful technique that allows you to fix crucial spatial relationships in your mind. It also allows you to follow the direction of travel of the chips and candy in the Nev-R-Close and of the money in the bank and see where the two lines cross.

Right in the middle of the Church of Christ's Forgiveness—services every day, everyone welcome.

I wasn't that surprised, but I was little bit upset by the blasphemy.

"*You can't no-knock a church,*" said the Chief of Police.

"*The house of the Lord,*" I said, "*should always be open.*"

And, amazingly, it was. So the Chief of Police, a pair of state troopers, and I walked in to catch the Reverend Raymond Holt, aka the Reverend Charles Boyle of the Church of God's Love in Madera, aka the Reverend Jacob Paretta of the Church of Perpetual Sacrifice in Fresno, by surprise.

I knew the pattern my informant had spotted two weeks ago was correct because the *vestigia* in the church was so strong I could have bottled it.

And because the Reverend was still bundling roughly $50,000 into a series of black gym bags.

"*God wanted me to have the money,*" he said when he saw us. "*And He sent a miracle.*"

"*I think we're going to have to talk about your theology,*" I said as one of the state troopers read him his rights. "*Because this looks like magic to me.*"

At that, the Chief of Police gave me a funny look, but I'm used to those by now.

Introduction

"I need you to pass a message to whoever is running the basement and tell them that we have a potential X-RAY SIERRA INDIA developing. I'll advise in person when they get here."
—Winter's Gifts

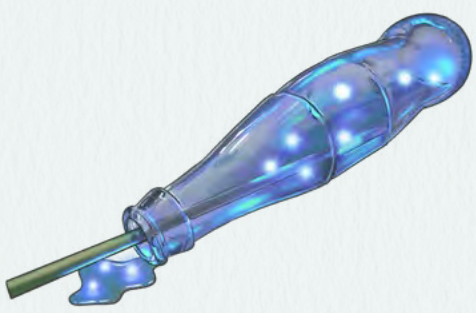
Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game (*RoL:RPG*) is a game that takes place in Ben Aaronovitch's urban fantasy world, as detailed in the *Rivers of London* novels and comics. It's a world that is both reassuringly familiar yet intriguingly different from our own, thanks—in no small part—to the existence of magic. While the game's core setting is London, home to the Society of the Wise—aka the Folly, aka the Special Assessment Unit, aka the Metropolitan Police Service's increasingly worst-kept secret—the *Rivers of London* series doesn't just focus on what's happening in the Big Smoke. There are magical traditions and supernatural phenomena beyond those found in and around Britain's capital city.

In that spirit, *In Liberty's Shadow* turns the spotlight on the people and places found "across the pond" in the United States of America. In this setting, you don't play a new recruit to the Folly. Instead, your investigator (player character) is a member of one of a variety of organisations, ranging from the officially sanctioned (e.g., the **Critical Incident Response Group**, page 46) to the downright unofficial (e.g., **Hedge Wizards, Monster Hunters & Others**, page 50). The core theme, however, remains the same: solving mysteries and uncovering more about the re-emerging world of magic and the demi-monde.

Spoilers!

Like the core rulebook, we have attempted to avoid major plot spoilers wherever we can. However, there are still some minor spoilers dotted throughout this sourcebook, both for the novels and comics that focus on Britain and for the novellas specifically set in the United States.

You can spot potential spoilers by the presence of footnotes[1] at the bottom of the page; these identify which book the information comes from. If you've not read that book, you may want to skip ahead a little. Although, be warned: not every footnote contains a spoiler!



Footnote: [1]Like this one

What's in This Book?

This sourcebook doesn't contain the rules for how you play the game—for those, you need the core *RoL:RPG* rulebook, sold separately. What this book does contain is all the information you need to run case files (scenarios) set in the USA, and, like the core rulebook, it has been designed to help you familiarise yourself with the setting. If you are the Game Moderator (GM), you should read through the book's contents at least once before running a US-based game for your friends.

- **Chapter 1** contains details on how to create investigators for a US-based game, as well as the cultural differences and differences in play style between a *Rivers of London* game set in the United States versus one set in the United Kingdom. It also contains information on the structure of law enforcement in America, along with rules for creating and using fake identification.
- **Chapter 2** discusses the history of magic in the US, post-colonisation. It includes details of several organisations the investigators could belong to, along with important non-player characters (NPCs) they may meet during their adventures, several case file seeds, and some interestingly odd places the GM might like their investigators to visit.
- **Chapter 3** is an introductory case file set in the Montana wilderness. It is designed to introduce players and their GM to the US setting, as well as develop their confidence with the game's mechanics.
- **Chapter 4** contains a more complex case file that picks up where the previous case file leaves off, leading the investigators from Montana to the bright lights of Los Angeles, California.
- **The Appendices** comprise five sections: six pre-generated investigators (**Appendix A**), ready for you to pick up and play; new spells (**Appendix B**); new creatures and a new fae investigator character creation option (**Appendix C**); a detailed key to the Weird and Wonderful United States of America map (**Appendix D**); and a bibliography and resources section (**Appendix E**).



A Note on Spelling

For the most part, this book uses the British English spelling of words like colour, harbour, specialise, and so on, unless the text is written by an American character such as Kimberley Reynolds (see **Chapter 2** for some examples) or it forms part of a name, such as Pearl Harbor.



GM ADVICE

Establishing tone and expectation for an American-based **RoL:RPG** game is just as important as it is for a Folly-based one. Due to the wide availability of firearms in the US, games may become more bloody and violent than those set in the UK. Who the investigators are will also have an effect on the type of stories you'll tell together (**What Sort of Investigators Do People Play?**, nearby). Taking the time to have a "Session Zero" helps make sure that everyone understands what tone you are aiming for and the themes you wish to explore, as well as establishing what the group's boundaries are. For more information, see the following sections in *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game:* **Creating Your Character** (page 44), **Considerate Gaming** (page 44), **Important: Tone** (page 123), and **Important: Consent** (page 190).

What Can My Players Read?

Your players may not be familiar with how law enforcement is structured in the US, so they may wish to read **American Law Enforcement** (page 22) to bring themselves up to speed. Depending on who their investigators are, who they work for, and who they are allied with, you may also wish to provide them with some information on the various organisations found in **Chapter 2**—although beware of spoilers! Sharing **Appendix E** (page 192) may also help your players understand the tone of your game, particularly if you plan on running one based around monster hunting.

We don't recommend allowing your players to read **Chapters 3** and **4**, as that would spoil the surprise!



The US Setting

America is a great location for those wishing to explore a different style of investigative game, one potentially less rooted in the police procedural mould of *RoL:RPG*'s core setting. As with the core rules, there's no need to be familiar with the *Rivers of London* novels and comics—all the background material you need can be found in the following chapters. If you have read Ben's novels and novellas, this sourcebook provides you with further information on many of the organisations and characters you met in their pages.

When and Where is the Game Set?

Just as with a London-based game, your American adventures begin in early spring 2016, not long after the events of the novel *False Value*. Not only are the Folly's ranks expanding but so are those of overseas organisations, ready to face the challenges and mysteries presented by magic's growing presence in the world.

What Sort of Investigators Do People Play?

As there is no direct equivalent of the Folly in America, players in a US-based game are just as likely to be "monster hunters" as they are criminal investigators. They may work directly for an official government agency, like **Kimberley Reynolds** (page 47), who is a Special Agent with the **Critical Incident Response Group** (CIRG; page 46), or they may be allied civilian consultants or intelligence assets, like **Cymbeline Moonglum** (page 49). Case files involving player characters who work for an organisation like the CIRG will resemble your favourite American investigative procedural TV show, with that added touch of "weird stuff," as Agent Reynolds would say.

Alternatively, your investigators may be independent operators who track down instances of the weird and wonderful, such as the **Cryptid Kickers** (page 56) or **Las Serpientes** (page 54). Then again, they may fall somewhere in between, like the **New York Library Association** (page 41). As none of these groups operate with any legal authority, their case files will play out more like your favourite supernatural adventure TV show; investigators may need to get creative—or even bend the law—to solve the mysteries the GM presents them with.

Civilian consultants for official law enforcement groups like the CIRG have their own equivalent of the **Folly Consultant's Card** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 60). While it grants them access to crime scenes, witnesses, and resources that a normal civilian wouldn't have, it doesn't grant them the full powers of a sworn FBI agent or police officer. Like its British counterpart, this consultant's card also doesn't grant a bonus die on Social rolls when dealing with law-abiding citizens. Investigators who are not with law enforcement may resort to using fake identification to talk their way into a crime scene, and so on. For more information on creating and using bogus IDs, see **Fake Identification** (page 20).

See **American Character Creation** (page 17) for more information on designing US-based investigators.

Reality Check

We know that the powers granted by the consultant's card aren't true to life, but if civilian specialists accompanying law enforcement officials into the field to solve crimes is good enough for a host of American TV shows, it's good enough for us!

What You Need to Play

There are a few things you'll need before you begin playing a US-based *Rivers of London* game.

- The core *RoL:RPG* rulebook.
- This sourcebook.
- Paper, pencils, and an eraser.
- Character sheets (downloadable for free from chaosium.com).
- **Roleplaying Dice** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 13) or a dice-rolling app.
- If playing in person: a place to get together, ideally somewhere quiet with a table to roll dice on.
- If playing online: your preferred video conferencing platform and/or virtual tabletop (VTT) platform.
- Two to four hours to play the game. We recommend around two hours for an online game, and no more than three to four hours for an in-person game.

GM ADVICE

While the assumption is that you'll use the material in this book to run games set in America, it's also possible to use it to help create American investigators currently on secondment (loan) to organisations located outside the US, such as the Folly. For example, someone like FBI Special Agent **Kimberley Reynolds** (page 47). And who knows, members of the Folly may even find themselves in the United States working alongside (or against!) their American counterparts.



What Now?

If you or your players haven't played through the solo adventure in the core rulebook yet (**The Domestic**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 17; also available as a free download from chaosium.com), we suggest you start there. That way, you can become familiar with the game's key rules and concepts before beginning your American odyssey. If you have all played The Domestic, it's time to dive into your new case file—either **Woolly Bully** (page 65) or one of your own creation.

Either way—have fun!

Table 1: Glossary of General Terms

Term	Definition
Allokosmoi	Other dimensions or planes of existence, e.g., Fairyland; sing. *allokosmos*
Case file	An adventure the investigators go on together; also known as a scenario or adventure
Character sheet	Where a player records information about their investigator
D10	A ten-sided die
D100	Percentile dice (comprised of a "units" die and a "tens" die)
Demi-monde, the	People and creatures who have been touched or changed in some way by magic
Falcon	The term used by the Metropolitan Police Service to denote cases involving magic and/or the supernatural
Folly, the	The Metropolitan Police Service's "magic branch," aka the Special Assessment Unit
Game Moderator (GM)	The player who runs (referees) the game
Genii locorum	Spirits of place; sing. *genius loci*
Hedge Wizard/Witch	A term used by the Folly for non-Newtonian practitioners
Investigator	A player's character in the game
Monster Hunter	Someone who hunts supernatural creatures
Newtonian Magic	A system of casting spells formulated by Sir Isaac Newton
Practitioner	Someone who uses magic; so, a Newtonian practitioner is someone who uses Newtonian magic
Profile	A collection of numbers, also known as statistics, that describe what each character can do in the game
Roleplaying Game (RPG)	A collaborative storytelling game


MWM





The Land of the Free

In the world of *Rivers of London*, America is beyond the reach and authority of the Folly and the novels' main characters, Peter Grant and Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) Thomas Nightingale—officially, at least. Still, it has a recurring influence on events in London and the United Kingdom as a whole. As with mundane spheres of human activity, like the economy and popular culture, the United States' history of involvement with magical phenomena does not exist in a continent-sized vacuum. Paranormal events in America affect what happens in the rest of the world, and vice versa.

This chapter begins with a look at the cultural and historical differences between the police practitioners of the Folly and their cousins across the Atlantic, along with a brief overview of relevant American terminology. It then delves into how to create a US-based investigator before discussing the different styles of gameplay and the sorts of case files the investigators will take part in. Finally, it describes the various types of law enforcement agencies investigators may encounter during the course of their (mis)adventures.

Cultural Differences

As mentioned in the Introduction, the US has no equivalent of the Folly. There is no designated federal or state law enforcement body to be contacted by local police whenever a Falcon incident is suspected or declared. There are no officially sanctioned "magic cops" in America.

The reasons for this are manifold but boil down to one key concept: independence. From the early days of Franklin and Jefferson, American practitioners have steadfastly sought—and fought for—the freedom to pursue magic as they see fit. Any attempts to bring practitioners under the watchful eye of a single authority have been strenuously resisted, even by such benign societies as the **Virtuous Men** (page 34) and the **New York Library Association** (page 41). Each group believes that their approach to magic and the demi-monde is the right one, which can lead to clashes between groups who hold opposing views.

In addition, it's a logistical impossibility to arrange oversight in a country of America's size and population. America has hundreds of practitioners from Indigenous cultures and a few centuries worth of magical immigrants from across the world. This, coupled with the sheer size of the country, have resulted in an America into which countless practitioners (Newtonian and others) and members of the demi-monde have managed to disappear very successfully. These groups, free from any sort of "County Practitioner" oversight as once existed in the UK (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 260), have few restrictions on their behaviour, save that of their own moral values and the fear of coming to the attention of the federal authorities.

The apparent recent resurgence in magical activity has seen an increase in magic-related crimes, which requires some sort of law enforcement response to ensure that the public is protected. Thus far, the policing of such matters has fallen haphazardly on the shoulders of several entities of varying authority and ability, primarily the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group, and the New York Library Association (**American Investigator Groups**, page 18), as well as **Alderman Technical Solutions** (ATS; page 37). Other official bodies doubtless exist but are either shrouded in governmental secrecy or operate quietly at a local or state level.

Frequently, the responsibility for investigating magic-related crimes instead falls to (or is claimed by) independent groups of American citizens among the loose network of hedge wizards and monster hunters scattered across the country. These individuals pursue their own interpretations of law and justice with no official sanction or authority, and indeed are frequently wanted by the police themselves as a result of their vigilante activities.

Table 2: American Magical Terminology

While American practitioners such as the Librarians use the same Latin terms for Newtonian spellcasting as their British counterparts, centuries of separate cultural development have resulted in the evolution of a unique American terminology for some concepts.

Term	Definition
Shade	"A creature that looks like a man but walks in the shadows[1]." A term used by both Alderman Technical Solutions and the New York Librarians to refer to a semi-human or non-human being. What the British would refer to as a fae or member of the demi-monde.
Area Shade Suppression	Military jargon used by Alderman Technical Solutions to describe large-scale offensive operations directed against shades.
AIS	Anomalous Intuition Specialist; another Alderman Technical Solutions term, for someone trained specifically to detect *vestigia*.
ASD	Anomalous Structural Decomposition; FBI equivalent to the British term "sanding."
The Basement	An unofficial FBI term for the tiny subsection of the Investigative and Operations Support Section (IOSS) that deals with cases with "unusual characteristics."
EM	Extra Mundane—a magical or supernatural effect, person, or item; often shortened to "Extra." Largely used by Alderman Technical Solutions though becoming more prevalent among West Coast wannabees like **ASU** (page 59).
EMAPD	Extra Mundane Anti-Personnel Device—demon traps, etc. As with EM, largely limited to ATS use.
EMSOP	Extra Mundane Suppression Operation; see also Area Shade Suppression.
IEMI	Indigenous Extra Mundane Individual—pronounced "E-mee." Also shortened to "Indy Extra," although this use is discouraged by the **Bureau of Indian Affairs** (page 25).
Infection of the Old World	Vampires, imported into America from Europe. Also: "the very spirit of death itself[2]."
Leech	A pejorative term used by ASU extremists to describe magic practitioners who "leech" the natural energy of the planet.
PAC	Passive Anomaly Check—the American equivalent of an Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA), i.e., a check for any *vestigia* in an area (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 206).
Proper Knowledge, True Magic, White Sorcery	Newtonian magic.
Twilight Subculture	A Virginia Gentleman's Company/Alderman Technical Solutions term for the demi-monde as a whole. i.e., the fae, practitioners, and those who associate with them (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 242).
UC	Unusual Characteristics—FBI-speak for cases with weird, supernatural, and/or occult involvement.
X-Ray Sierra India	An FBI designation for UC cases dating back at least as far as the 1970s, if not before.

Footnotes: [1]*The Hanging Tree*, [2]*Lies Sleeping*

American Character Creation

Now that you know a little more about how magic and the demi-monde coexist with the wider US, it's time for the players to create their investigators. The following sections present a **Character Creation Overview** (following), along with some suggestions for the types of investigator groups those characters might belong to (**American Investigator Groups**, page 18). There is also a section looking at potential **Restrictions** that may affect your game (page 18), such as a lack of official authority and limited access to trained practitioners who can act as mentors.

Character Creation Overview

The players should use the character creation rules found in **Chapter 1** of the *RoL:RPG* core rulebook when creating US-based investigators. In brief:

- First, think about your character concept (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 46). Work with your GM and your fellow players to ensure that your concepts are varied enough that everyone's character has the opportunity to contribute to the game. Remember, the idea is to have fun solving the mystery at the heart of each case file by working together as a team, so it helps if every investigator has a unique set of skills they can call on.
- Once you have an idea of who your investigator is, choose their occupation. Full details of the available occupations begin on page 62 of the core rulebook. Bear in mind that starting age restrictions for some occupations may be different in a US-based game.
- Next, divide 280 points between your investigator's five characteristics: Strength (STR), Constitution (CON), Dexterity (DEX), Intelligence (INT), and Power (POW). See page 46 of the core rulebook for descriptions of what each characteristic represents in the game. Once you've assigned point values to each characteristic, determine their half values. Then roll your Luck score and figure out your movement rate and age (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 49).
- Now, choose either two minor advantages or one major advantage for your character (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 50). Remember, if you want your investigator to be able to cast spells, they need to have the Magical advantage.



- Then, choose the six skills you want to boost, paying close attention to which skills are required by your occupation and which ones are recommended. Chosen skills begin play at 60%. Remember, all other common and combat skills begin play at 30%, while unboosted expert skills begin play at 0%. If your investigator has the Magical advantage and the Magic skill, they also gain Sense Vestigia as a bonus starting skill at 60%.
- Investigators with the Magic skill now choose their starting spells and *signare* (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 54). Remember, in the US, unless the investigators belong to an organisation like the **New York Library Association** (page 41), they are undoubtedly hedge wizards, as there is no direct equivalent to the Folly in US policing.
- Next, create your character's backstory and determine their affluence rating (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 56 and 57).
- Finally, equip your character using the suggestions listed under each occupation. As your character is based in America, they have access to firearms in a way that British characters do not (**The Firearms Skill**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 54). If you want your investigator to have a firearm and they wouldn't usually have access to one through their occupation (e.g., Police Officer, Private Investigator, Service Member, Special Agent), check with your GM first.

Remember to use a piece of scrap paper to record your investigator's details, at least to begin with. Once you are satisfied with the character you've created, you can transfer all the information to either a digital PDF or a paper character sheet. The digital character sheets available from chaosium.com are "autocalc," meaning they work out any additional calculations for you as you fill them in.



ADDITIONAL RULES

As in a UK-based game, if you'd like to add a little more "crunch" to character creation, you can use as many or as few of the additional rules in **Chapter 9** of the core rulebook as you desire. This includes the rules for **Playing Fae Investigators** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 318). You'll also find a new type of fae investigator, **Old Soldiers**, in **Appendix C: New Creatures** (page 183).

American Investigator Groups

The scope for generating groups of American investigators is broader than the "London game," with a varied choice of archetypes to play with. Each has varying levels of legitimacy, funding, and magical expertise—not to mention widely differing objectives and views on magical practitioners and the demi-monde! A group of investigators might be:

- Agents of the FBI's **Critical Incident Response Group** (page 46) like **Kimberley Reynolds** (page 47), called in to investigate any and all "weird stuff" that local law enforcement might report. CIRG agents have federal authority and access to funds and vast databases of information, but have little or no magical training, save perhaps for an ability to recognise *vestigia*. Other agencies, such as the **Bureau of Indian Affairs** (page 25), with its long-established but narrow remit to oversee Indigenous American practitioner activity, may operate along similar lines.
- Members of the **New York Library Association** (page 41) like **Stephen Higgins** (page 43), tasked with tracking down dangerous magic items wherever they might be. Librarians have the advantage of expert magical training and a large library of information to draw on. They are, however, anti-authoritarian and completely unsanctioned by any law enforcement body, and they must frequently operate on their own.
- Independent hedge wizards, cryptid hunters, and gun-toting vigilantes (**Hedge Wizards, Monster Hunters, & Others**, page 50), trawling the internet and local news reports for mentions of unexplained deaths, strange creatures, or items of occult significance. What they lack in official authority, funding, or resources, they make up for in tenacity, inventiveness, and the ability to disappear down the road the moment the job is done. Often wanted by the authorities.
- Practitioners recruited by the **Resolute Man** (page 35) in his attempts to reform Benjamin Franklin's magic society (**The Virtuous Men**, page 34). While historically the nearest American equivalent to the Folly, they now operate in the shadows along similar lines to the New York Librarians. The group is privately funded but no longer has any legitimate authority since being disgraced, in part, by the man now trying to rebuild them.

Restrictions

The broad scope of American investigator groups is balanced by additional restrictions on gameplay that do not affect a Folly-like group of British police practitioners. In general, these restrictions are:

- No official police or federal law enforcement authority.
- Inferior or non-existent magical training.

No Official Authority

Unless the investigator group includes someone from the FBI, a police department, or some other body that carries the equivalent of the "might and majesty of the Metropolitan Police[3]," the group won't be able to arrest suspects, search police databases, track phone records, or call in an armed response unit. However, it's not unknown for independent hedge wizards and monster hunters to use fake FBI badges to facilitate their inquiries with local police and the public.

American groups frequently operate on their own with little backup, so players should consider the consequences of charging into a situation without the comforting knowledge that a few hundred well-armed police or federal agents are just a short "officer down" call away.

Inferior or Non-Existent Magical Training

The once highly respected and well-established schools of magic learning established by the likes of Franklin and Jefferson are things of the past. Such magical expertise that does survive in America is closely hoarded by secretive groups like the New York Librarians.

This usually means that—unless someone has access to a highly skilled practitioner at the level of DCI Nightingale, Lady Helena Linden-Limmer[4], or **Mrs Patricia Chin** (page 44)—their ability to effectively cast spells may be reduced. Practitioners above the equivalent level of an apprentice are assumed to be few and far between in the United States, with skills and knowledge passed down haphazardly among family groups of hedge wizards or small fringe societies of witches' covens and amateur occultists. Not only does this limit the amount of magical lore and history that most US practitioners have access to, it also vastly increases the risk of brain damage, i.e., hyperthaumaturgical degradation (HTD; *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 177), not to mention the risk of injuring themselves or others with a miscast fireball, for example.

However, reducing the repertoire of spells available to US investigators and making them more susceptible to HTD isn't much fun to play. So, while this is the default position for NPC American practitioners in general, it is assumed that magic-using investigators do have access to a highly skilled, lone practitioner akin to Nightingale who taught them magic—and continues to do so. Thus, American investigators with the Magical advantage and the Magic skill have access to the same standard range of spells as their UK counterparts.

American Gameplay

RoL:RPG case files set in America are different from those set in the UK for several reasons. To recap:

- There is no Folly-like law enforcement body of "magic cops." The most official body, the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group, has very few agents with anything more than minimal magic knowledge.
- There are several official, semi-official, and wholly unofficial groups of Americans with an interest in magical affairs. These groups are frequently at odds with each other.
- Training in Newtonian magic is not widespread among these groups. Some include a few highly skilled practitioners while others actively discourage the practice of such "ungodly" arts, preferring to rely on mundane resources.
- Practitioners from Indigenous groups and other traditions around the world have brought their own flavour of magic to America.

GM ADVICE

Remember, in a US-based game, when we refer to law enforcement, we're predominantly talking about members of the **Critical Incident Response Group** (page 46). Not that individual American police officers can't be practitioners, of course, but investigators in games set in the United States are much more likely to be civilians than they are in a London-based story.



The Hook

The lack of powers of arrest and access to resources aren't the only challenges in games where the investigators have no official law enforcement authority; they also face the additional challenge of how to hook them into the case file to begin with. There will be no call to deal with a Falcon incident as there would be in a Folly-based game (**Magical vs Mundane Investigations**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 211). Instead, the group could be alerted by a friendly police officer or federal agent who is aware of the secret world of magic, or by a reporter or group of online "weird stuff" enthusiasts who monitor official and unofficial channels for references to possible magic-related events.

Example ways to hook investigators into an investigation are presented in the two case files in this sourcebook: **Woolly Bully** (page 65) and **A Regular Picture Palace Drama** (page 111).

Footnotes: [3], [4]*The Hanging Tree*



Fake Identification

As mentioned in **No Official Authority** (page 19), freelance hedge wizards and monster hunters have been known to use fake IDs to pass themselves off as government agents or local law enforcement officers (LEOs). Fake ID may be an identity card, agency badge, or both.

Creating Fake ID

An investigator can create their own fake ID if they have the expert Art/Craft (Forgery) skill (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 89). However, the investigator doesn't know how good that ID is until the **first** time they attempt to use it, i.e., the player makes an Art/Craft (Forgery) roll when their investigator shows the fake ID to the person they're trying to con.

In general, the following levels of success provide the following outcomes, although the GM should exercise some discretion; for example, a fake police badge or ID may pass muster on most occasions with a Regular success, while getting into somewhere like Quantico requires a Hard success, and so on.

- A **Critical** success means the ID is indistinguishable from the real thing, even to an expert or a card-reader machine. It gains the investigator a bonus die to Social skill rolls with law-abiding citizens the same way genuine ID would (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 72).
- A **Hard** success creates ID that convinces civilians, federal agents, and LEOs completely—however, an expert looking closely would know it wasn't the real deal. In addition, it grants a bonus die to Social skill rolls with law-abiding citizens.
- A **Regular** success produces ID that convinces most civilians, federal agents, and LEOs, assuming they are not looking too closely, and in addition grants a bonus die to Social skill rolls with law-abiding citizens.
- A **failure** means the ID arouses suspicion. Any subsequent Social skill roll incurs a penalty die, as the person suspects they're being conned—a successful Read Person roll identifies the subject's doubts.
- A **fumble** means the fake ID is bad and instantly arouses suspicion. The GM is encouraged to tailor the exact outcome of the fumble to the current situation; for example, the person being conned might immediately call the cops, yell for help, or attempt to confiscate—or destroy—the fake ID.

As always, an investigator can spend Luck to change the result of their Art/Craft (Forgery) roll, as long as they haven't fumbled or pushed the roll (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 114).

If an investigator wishes to create their own fake ID but doesn't possess the Art/Craft (Forgery) skill, they can always try their Luck (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 114) with a Hard DEX or INT roll (whichever skill is highest) the first time they attempt to use it.

Acquiring Fake ID

Investigators without the Art/Craft (Forgery) skill who do not wish to try their Luck can, of course, acquire a fake ID instead of making their own. They may either hire someone to make it for them or use the Connected advantage (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 50), if they have it, to get hold of one—although this may end up with them owing someone powerful a favour. Again, the investigator won't know how good the ID is until the first time they try to use it. Instead of making an Art/Craft (Forgery) roll, they make a Luck roll to see if they can convince its viewer that it is genuine.

- The roll results are the same as if they had created the ID themselves (**Creating Fake ID**, page 20).
- If an investigator hires or otherwise acquires an expert forger to create their fake ID, the GM can, at their discretion, grant a bonus die to the Luck roll.
- An investigator cannot spend Luck to improve the result of a Luck roll (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 114).

Using Fake ID

Once an ID's quality has been established, the player doesn't need to roll Art/Craft (Forgery) or Luck again to use it. The ID is either good enough to grant a bonus die to Social rolls as described for the relevant level of success (**Creating Fake ID**, page 20) or they'll have to make/acquire a new one—as well as, potentially, dealing with the consequences of attempting to impersonate a federal agent or LEO.

Encounters With Magical Beings

Following the campaigns of extermination during the 19th century against river spirits, "devils," and other "unnatural creatures" (**The Montana Territory Campaign & Other Atrocities**, page 39), it may at first seem that few of America's original Indigenous *genii locorum* or



fae remain. But, the truth is that the country is teeming with such beings, though they remain highly reclusive and frequently hostile to interference as a direct result of those historic purges. America has well over 450,000 square kilometres (just under 175,000 square miles) of designated wilderness, and vast swathes of the country have very low human population numbers. If someone or something wanted to stay hidden for the last century or so, it could easily do so.

For this reason, *RoL:RPG* case files set in modern-day America are unlikely to see the characters encountering large gatherings of Indigenous river spirits on the banks of the Mississippi or involve ancient communities of forest folk living in remote Massachusetts woods. Such older magical creatures are rare in American adventures. They are reclusive, resentful, and have become unbound from the sort of "arrangements" that maintain an uneasy magical peace in Europe (**Codes of Conduct**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 244), although the obligations regarding accepting food and drink are still carefully observed.

More common are newer arrivals, who have either immigrated to these shores in the last couple of centuries, or spontaneously sprung into being with the resurgence of magic. These may be distant cousins of the subterranean Quiet People[5] of London, imported nests of vampires, half-fae "goblin boys and girls" hustling and partying in the New York demi-monde, or the new-born *genii locorum* of a popular national park.

The investigators may also encounter rival or hostile practitioners from other groups or magical traditions, with their own views on the rights and responsibilities (or lack thereof) of people who wield supernatural powers. Between those practitioners, the dangerous magical items they have accrued, and any tragically inhuman creatures that have resulted from their magical experiments, the investigators will have more than enough to contend with.



GM ADVICE

Regardless of where your case file is set, remember: it needs to be logically coherent—this is just as important for a monster hunter-type game taking place in the US as it is for a police procedural game set in London. See also **Writing a Case File**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 336.

American Law Enforcement

The United States of America is very different to Great Britain when it comes to policing and law enforcement in general. While we can't hope to cover all the American system's intricacies in this book, the following sections aim to deliver a brief overview for those who are unfamiliar with it.

The US criminal justice system is divided into three components: law enforcement, courts, and corrections. Law enforcement operates through various government agencies (depending on the type of crime), the geographical location, and the supervising government entity. So, before discussing what those different agencies are, we first need to look at a geographical breakdown of the country to get an idea of the different levels involved.

- **The USA**: the word "federal" encompasses the entire country, which includes all 50 federally recognised states, as well as 14 additional American territories.
- **Individual States:** as mentioned, the US has 50 federally recognised states. And no, the UK is not the 51st.
- **Counties:** a county is an administrative and political subdivision within a state. Forty-eight states use the term "county," while the two remaining states use functionally equivalent terms, such as parish (Louisiana) or borough (Alaska).
- **Cities:** a city is a discrete geographical area in which a large number of people live in relatively close proximity. One city may rest within various counties, e.g., Columbus, Ohio, which is split over three counties: Franklin, Delaware, and Fairfield. Alternatively, one county may include several cities, e.g., Miami is the most populous city in the county of Miami-Dade, Florida, but the county is also home to the cities of Miami Beach, Sweetwater, and Opa-locka, to name but a few.
- **Municipality:** a municipality is a single administrative division; it may be a city, town, or district. Municipalities possess a corporate existence and usually their own government. These self-governing entities operate under the laws of the state in which they are located. A city charter, town charter, or municipal charter is a legal document that establishes municipality.

Example:
Brooklyn, New York, USA
Country (Federal): United States of America
State: New York
County: Kings County
City: New York City
Municipality: Bronx Borough

Footnote: [5]*Whispers Under Ground*



Types of Law Enforcement Agency

There are over 14,600 law enforcement agencies of varying sizes and jurisdictions within the US. They fall into three categories: federal, state, and local.

- Federal agencies include the FBI, DEA, etc.
- State agencies include state police or highway patrol.
- Local law enforcement agencies typically include police and sheriff departments.

Within these agencies, law enforcement officers (colloquially known in America as "LEOs") investigate crimes, coordinate with prosecutors, and detain suspected offenders pending judicial action. In addition to law enforcement, policing also covers other public services, such as emergency response and the protection of both public facilities and public servants. Depending on whose numbers you look at, between 20–30% of American LEOs are military veterans.

In game, the investigators may interact with a variety of both federal and local law enforcement agencies, all the way from the big hitters like the FBI down to some far smaller entities tied to a specific geographic location, such as the local Transit Authority Police, Airport Police, Harbor Police, University Police, or Hospital Police. Each has their own uniform or means of identification, and all may help or hinder the investigators, depending on how they are approached.

GM ADVICE

The distinctions can be confusing and sometimes overlap, but we'll discuss that further in the coming sections to ensure you have the tools you need to enhance the presence of US law enforcement in your games.

Federal Law Enforcement

Federal law enforcement includes federal police officers and federal law enforcement agencies. This is the highest tier of law enforcement. These individuals and agencies are authorised to enforce laws at a federal level; ergo, they have jurisdiction in all 50 states, US territories, and US possessions.

Among these agencies are: the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); the United States Marshals Service (USMS); and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP).

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Formed in 1908, the FBI is an intelligence-driven and threat-focused national security organisation tasked with protecting the American people and upholding the Constitution of the United States. The agency's remit includes combatting terrorist attacks, foreign counterintelligence, cyber-criminal activity, violent crimes, civil rights violations, kidnapping, interstate crimes, etc. It falls under the Department of Justice and answers to the Attorney General.

The FBI is led by the Director, who is appointed by the US President and headquartered in the J. Edgar Hoover Building on Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC. The Director is immediately supported by the Senior Staff (Deputy Director, Associate Deputy Director, and Chief of Staff). The leadership and structure include the Criminal, Cyber, Response, and Services Branch, the Intelligence Branch, the Science and Technology Branch, the Information and Technology Branch, the Human Resources Branch, and more.

There are 56 field offices in major cities across the US, along with approximately 350 smaller offices, known as resident agencies. The FBI's workforce consists of over 35,000 people, including field operators ("Special Agents") and support professionals such as scientists, forensic accountants, attorneys, victim specialists, and information technology specialists.

While local law enforcement's authority may be limited to their city or county, the FBI has country-wide jurisdiction. Despite what is often portrayed in crime dramas and movies, local law enforcement agencies are not subordinate to the FBI; the FBI does not "take over" their investigations. They can—and do—share their expertise to assist local agencies, though. For instance, if a local police detective is investigating a heinous murder, the FBI may have knowledge of a similar killer's MO from five states over, leading the agency to intervene in order to pool investigative resources in a common effort to solve the crime. The Office of Partner Engagement (OPE), Special Agent Kimberley Reynolds' former department, oversees such collaborations.

Though a domestic entity, the FBI has around 75 remote offices operating out of US embassies and consulates across the globe. These installations do not conduct investigations within their host countries except under exceptional circumstances, such as the death of a senator's son[6], but are regionally positioned for coordination with their local foreign security services. On US soil, FBI field operatives are expected to be armed at all times with their Glock semi-automatic pistols. However, when visiting the UK, they are not allowed to carry their weapons outside designated US territories (embassies, military bases, etc.), although Special Agent Reynolds didn't take much notice of that restriction[7].

To become an FBI agent, one must first be accepted into the FBI Academy, a 547-acre Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia. The 20-week training programme includes a myriad of modules, including firearms handling, tactical and emergency vehicle operations, survival skills, and law enforcement education. Quantico is also home to the FBI Laboratory.

Of most interest to *Rivers of London* games is the Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG) and its sub-department, the IOSS. For more on this branch of the FBI, see page 46.

FBI Ranks

There are two rank structures with the FBI: one for field operatives, and one for management. In ascending order, they are:

Field Operatives

- New Agent Trainee
- Special Agent
- Senior Special Agent
- Supervisory Special Agent
- Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge (ASAC)
- Special Agent-in-Charge (SAC)

Management

- Deputy Assistant Director
- Assistant Director
- Associate Executive Assistant Director
- Executive Assistant Director
- Associate Deputy Director
- Deputy Chief of Staff
- Chief of Staff and Special Counsel to the Director
- Deputy Director
- Director

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

The DEA is a federal agency tasked with combating drug trafficking and drug distribution within the US. It is the primary investigating agency policing drug cartels and other organisations that manufacture and distribute controlled substances. Its primary goal is to reduce the availability of illicit substances in domestic markets. It has concurrent jurisdiction with the FBI, i.e., both have jurisdiction over crimes involving drugs.

Footnotes: [6, 7] *Whispers Under Ground*

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)

Originally formed in 1886, the ATF's original function as a federal law enforcement organisation under the Department of the Treasury was to police alcohol during Prohibition. As laws have changed over the decades, so has the ATF's name and function. Today, its primary focus is on reducing the risk to public safety caused by illegal firearms trafficking and criminal possession of said firearms. It also investigates criminal organisations and gangs and monitors acts of arson, bombings, and illegal trafficking of tobacco and alcohol.

United States Marshals Service (USMS)

The USMS is the oldest US federal law enforcement agency and was founded in 1789 during George Washington's administration. It is primarily responsible for the protection of judges and other judicial personnel. It also operates the United States Federal Witness Protection Program. In addition, it is responsible for executing federal arrest warrants and is the federal government's primary agency for fugitive investigation and apprehension.

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

In the US, there are more than 9.5 million American Indians and Alaska Natives across more than 570 federally recognised tribes. Of these, over 1.9 million receive services from the BIA. Part of the Department of the Interior, the BIA, also known as Indian Affairs (IA), implements government policies relating to American Indians and Alaska Natives. It evolved from the Committee on Indian Affairs, first headed by Benjamin Franklin, a known practitioner and the founder of the **Virtuous Men** (page 34). The agency also manages the land held in trust by the US federal government for Indian Tribes in cooperation with tribal governments.

The BIA manages and assists with law enforcement on tribal lands through one of its four offices: the Office of Justice Services, which has jurisdiction over all crimes committed within or involving Indian Country. It has its own police force, the BIA Police, who work with tribal police to patrol reservations and deal with misdemeanour and felony crimes. It also has Special Agents who investigate serious crimes in Indian Country.

The BIA oversees the activities of Indigenous practitioners[8] but are very close-lipped about who those practitioners are (**Indigenous American Practitioners**, page 33). Given their history, it is unlikely the BIA has full cooperation in these matters. A deal struck in the aftermath of a UC (Unusual Characteristics) incident in Eloise, Wisconsin means that the CIRG may be privy to information other agencies are not in this regard[9].

State Law Enforcement

State law enforcement agencies vary greatly from state to state, making each state police body unique. To complicate matters further, each state has varying laws as to what is and isn't criminal activity and how those crimes are punished. This means that what applies in one state doesn't necessarily apply in any other.

The majority of states have a state police department or highway patrol, and their officers have the authority to carry out law enforcement and investigate criminal activity within their home state. State police officers are typically referred to as state troopers or "staties." They enforce traffic laws on state highways and interstate freeways, and serve to protect the state's governors, alongside other state-specific duties. State police often assist and support local police to coordinate multi-jurisdictional investigations.

Remember:

- State troopers work for a state.
- Sheriffs work for a county.
- Police officers usually work for a city.

County Law Enforcement

County police forces are autonomous entities and are actually fairly rare. The tend to operate only in metropolitan counties and cover unincorporated areas within a city. The chief of county law enforcement is a sheriff, who is an elected official serving a four-year term and leads a law enforcement agency known as the sheriff's office. Officers subordinate to the sheriff are known as deputy sheriff, sheriff's deputy, or simply, deputy.

The role of the sheriff's office varies greatly depending on the state and county; however, they typically make arrests, serve warrants, transport prisoners, give tickets/citations, etc. They also investigate accidents along with more serious criminal activity, such as homicide and narcotics. In the southern and western US especially, sheriffs have traditionally been viewed as the county's most influential political office holders.



Footnotes: [8]*False Value*, [9]*Winter's Gifts*

Municipal Law Enforcement

Municipal police agencies can vary greatly in size and may cover multiple municipalities and communities depending on where they're located. New York City, for example, has a large municipal police force, with over 40,000 officers. Small municipalities, on the other hand, may operate an entire department with just a single officer. In places like Indiana, these officers are still known as the town marshal.

As previously mentioned, most municipalities have their own police departments. These are funded at the municipal level, meaning many were formed by a merger of other smaller agencies to improve efficiency and services. Mergers also get around jurisdictional issues caused by a location's rapid expansion. In addition to often having a smaller budget than their state cousins, they sometimes have less legal power as well.

US Police Ranks

American policing uses a quasi-militarised rank system that shares some elements with British law enforcement while retaining its own unique flavour. Uniforms and insignia vary depending on what type of agency is involved and where it's located; as elsewhere, though, both are used to confer authority and help identify seniority.

The following is a general model of the police ranks American investigators may encounter during the course of their case files, though the specifics can—and do—change, based on the governmental level and department concerned.

Chief of Police/Commissioner of Police/Sheriff

These positions are typically appointed by a mayor or selected by a city council. These are the "chiefs" who are responsible for the entire police department.

Deputy Chief of Police

These individuals are the next rung down from the chief of police or sheriff. You may see these individuals as the warden of a county jail or performing other administrative and command duties.

Captain

Captains supervise individual police stations and various specialised units (detectives, patrol, etc.). In larger municipalities, they may be in charge of entire police precincts.

Two Nations Divided...

A quick note: Americans pronounce "lieutenant" as "loo-tenant," while the British historically pronounce it as "leff-tenant"—although that is gradually changing due to the prevalence of US police procedural shows on British television.

Lieutenant

A lieutenant typically supervises 3–5 sergeants. Depending on the size of the law enforcement agency they work for, they may actually supervise anything from a precinct to an individual squad of detectives.

Sergeant

A sergeant's duties, like those of a lieutenant, vary depending on the size of the department they work for. As a result, they may supervise various shifts in a manner not dissimilar to their British counterparts, up to overseeing individual detective squads.

Detective

Detectives are the investigatory specialists in charge of specific cases. They usually adopt plainclothes. Though detectives don't technically outrank police officers, they have typically undergone additional training and usually have a greater degree of authority than their uniformed colleagues.



Officer/Deputy/Trooper/Patrol

The front line of law enforcement in the US. They are responsible for enforcing laws, securing the scene of a crime, and serving the public. They are the jacks of all trades, as they must be familiar with laws, procedures, chains of command, etc.—i.e., every aspect of an investigation. These individuals are typically first on the scene and are the officers that American *Rivers of London* investigators are most likely to come across on a day-to-day basis—beside those from the FBI, of course!

Equipment

As with everything else about American law enforcement, what equipment an officer or agent carries varies depending on who they work for. Following is a list of common items usually carried by police and security officers in the pouches of, or otherwise attached to, their police duty belts. With dozens of attached pouches, the belt keeps equipment readily accessible and allows law enforcement agents to keep their hands free, although it can weigh as much as 9 kg (20 lbs) when fully loaded.

- Handcuffs
- Gun (in holster)
- Magazine
- Radio
- Portable lighting (one or more flashlights)
- Pepper spray or mace
- Taser
- Baton (straightstick, side-handle, or collapsible)
- First aid kit
- Knife
- Disposable gloves

In addition to the belt, law enforcement officers may carry medical equipment in their vehicles, such as an additional first aid kit or defibrillator. They may also have access to a portable breath analyser for testing intoxicated drivers. Other possible gear includes: a cell (mobile) phone, pager, binoculars, "tape" (digital) audio recorder, portable scanner, additional weapon, zip ties, etc. One of the most essential pieces of equipment, though, is a bulletproof vest. Typically constructed of Kevlar fibre, it can stop most handgun bullets and equivalent projectile weapons.

Training

Aspiring law enforcement officers may pursue their career directly after high school or undertake higher-level education prior to applying. Education requirements vary from state to state but, generally, an applicant requires a high school diploma. After that, there is a series of tests and exams they must pass, including a polygraph test. Failing even one test or exam disqualifies a candidate from joining the force.



Dealing With Policing Issues

As with case files set in Britain, the degree of police discrimination and violence that appears in the game is a topic the GM should discuss with their players before play begins; for example, during Session Zero. While some groups may wish to explore the subject, particularly with respect to how it impacts the world of the demi-monde, others may not, and their wishes should be respected. **Remember:** no player—and that includes the GM—should be pressured or coerced into roleplaying through any situation that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

See also **Considerate Gaming** and **It's Not Gritty** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 44 and 218, respectively).

A written test confirms the candidate's language comprehension, along with their mathematical and analytical skills, while the physical ability test confirms a candidate's readiness to face the career's physical challenges. There is also a medical exam, along with psychological screening and a background check.

So long as the candidate successfully completes every test, they can enter the relevant police academy. Each state has its own academy, along with a certified training programme. Typical academy training programs last six to seven months, though on average, academy attendees receive only around 600 hours of training. At the academy, applicants undergo physical and theoretical training on firearm use and criminal apprehension techniques. Additional skills include driving, first aid, and so on.

A 2006 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics showed that the training delivered by state and local law enforcement academies was heavily weighted in favour of the use of weapons/self-defence techniques compared to negotiation and de-escalation techniques (111 hours versus 8 hours, respectively). At the time *RoL:RPG* is set (2016), this is the most recent data available, despite being a decade old. As highlighted by the numerous events in the US which led to the Black Lives Matter movement and other demands for change, American policing has deeply entrenched issues. By 2018, individual police departments were implementing increased de-escalation training, usually as a result of a Department of Justice investigation into excessive use of force. However, these issues are far from dealt with. (See **Appendix E** for references.)

National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

The NCIC is a one-stop shop for information and is considered a key asset to US law enforcement. Launched in 1967 by the FBI, it's an electronic clearing house of crime data, available to every criminal justice agency nationwide and kept current via the continuing collaboration of dozens of law enforcement agencies.

The NCIC's individual databases include over 16 million active records and average millions of transactions a day. It assists law enforcement agencies in tracking down fugitives, locating missing persons, recovering stolen property, identifying terrorists, investigating identity theft, etc. What it does not contain is Special Agent Reynolds' Unreality List[10] (**Critical Incident Response Group**, page 46).

CODIS

The Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) is managed and maintained by the FBI. It contains DNA profiles of convicted criminals and arrestees, as well as those formed from evidence found at crime scenes. Nationally implemented in October 1998 under the provisions of the DNA Identification Act (1994), it operates at three levels: local, state, and national. Collected samples are analysed by participating local laboratories, then uploaded to the state index. State laboratories then upload them to the national index. Which criminals and arrestees have their DNA profiles collected and stored varies from state to state. All profiles are anonymised, so if a match is found, the original testing laboratory is responsible for confirming the perpetrator's identity. Note: a victim's DNA profile cannot legally be stored in CODIS.

AFIS and NGI

Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems (AFIS) began development in the early 1960s in a variety of countries, including the US, with functional systems coming online by the 1980s. The Integrated AFIS (IAFIS) managed by the FBI began operations in 1999. The system includes records of "tenprints" or "known prints" (fingerprints taken from suspects) and "latent prints" (those found at crime scenes and on physical evidence), submitted by law enforcements agencies at local, state, and national levels. Starting in 2011, as the science of biometrics advanced, IAFIS was superseded by the Next Generation Identification (NGI) system, which also includes palm prints, along with facial and iris identification data.

Footnote: [10] *False Value*

Table 3: Glossary of US Law Enforcement Acronyms and Slang

Acronym	Definition	Acronym	Definition
ADW	Assault with a Deadly Weapon	DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
AFIS	Automated Fingerprint Identification System	DOJ	Department of Justice
APB	All-Points Bulletin (Not used in Britain)	ERT	Emergency Response Team
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives	FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
ATL	Attempt to Locate	GSR	Gunshot Residue
ATS	Alderman Technical Solutions	IED	Improvised Explosive Device
BAM	By Any Means	IOSS	Investigative and Operations Support Section (CIRG)
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs	ITQ	It's Too Quiet
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour	LEO	Law Enforcement Officer
BFS	Bureau of Forensic Services	ME	Medical Examiner
BOLO	Be On the Lookout (Not used in Britain)	Miranda Warning	US equivalent of the British Police Caution
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television	MO	Modus operandi
CI	Confidential Informant	NCIC	National Crime Information Center
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency	NGI	Next Generation Identification
CIRG	Critical Incident Response Group	OPE	Office of Partner Engagement
CO	Commanding Officer	Perp	Perpetrator/suspect
CODIS	Combined DNA Index System	PMC	Private Military Contractor
CSI	Crime Scene Investigation/Crime Scene Investigator	USMS	United States Marshals Service
DA	District Attorney	VGC	Virginia Gentleman's Company



2

Our American Cousins

AMERICA WAS HOME to the magical demi-monde, both human and otherwise, long before any Europeans arrived, although colonisation, its accompanying wars, and westward conquest caused changes to the demi-monde as they did to the rest of America—changes that continue to have an impact right up to the present day. Some members of the American demi-monde are benign, if eccentric, practitioners of magic, while others are aggressive extremists with the resources and power to endanger the public and threaten national security.

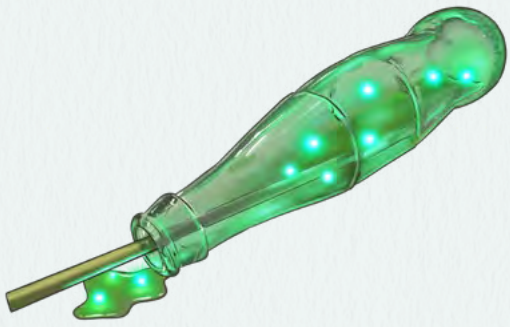
This chapter describes known practitioner and other demi-monde-associated groups, along with major events in their histories, notable individuals, and case seeds for each group. It also looks at places of magical interest that can be used in *RoL:RPG* case files.

The history of magical America is largely shrouded in mystery and there are what Special Agent Kimberley Reynolds calls "worrying gaps" in the FBI's Unusual Circumstances files[1]. Thus, some of the information in this chapter is presented in the form of reports filed by Agent Reynolds (see her entries in this chapter and in *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 237). These reports only include material that she has uncovered during the course of her investigations. Additional and/or conflicting information is provided in the form of excerpts from *Regierungsoberinspektor* Gunter Gebauer's report to *Kriminalkommissar* Tobias Winter of the German *Abteilung* KDA[2]. Both can be used as in-character sources of information—with suitable adjustments—in a similar manner to Sgt Finnegan's briefing (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, **Chapter 7**). However, much remains unknown, hidden, or the subject of wild speculation, which GMs and players alike can choose to explore and expand upon in their own case files.

Special Agent Reynolds

Kimberley Reynolds is an FBI agent who first encountered Peter Grant in *Whispers Under Ground*. Though they didn't hit it off straight away, a shared adventure in the London sewers forged a bond of respect that has grown into a genuine friendship. She now acts as the Folly's unofficial American liaison for all things "weird."

Although not a practitioner herself, Reynolds is currently the FBI's de facto expert in all things supernatural and has been given the unenviable task of cataloguing and investigating a number of inexplicable crimes, as well as identifying "persons of interest" who may be involved in America's magical demi-monde (for her personal history, see **Kimberley Reynolds**, page 47).



Footnotes: [1]*Winter's Gifts*, [2]*The October Man*

American Magical Traditions

Report by Regierungsoberinspektor *Gunter Gebauer for the Attention of KK Tobias Winter, BKA,* Abteilung *KDA*

Abstract
When considering the current state of organised magic in America, it is important to recognise that there has never been state regulation or guiding oversight. While the Federal Government and certain states have, historically, made use of various practitioner groups to advance the national interest, there has never been an attempt to create a proper legal framework. The one exception to this *laissez-faire* approach are the measures put in place to control Indigenous American practitioners.

The History of Magic in the United States

From Special Agent Reynolds' files:
The history of magic and magical practitioners in America is either lost to posterity or a closely guarded secret among certain shadowy societies that prefer to keep such valuable information to themselves. Certainly, Newtonian magic seems to have arrived in America by the 18th century, with noted practitioners Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson learning their craft at one or two removes from Sir Isaac himself. Who exactly imported magic from Europe is unknown, though it may well have been Franklin, who spent time among the learned men of both London and Paris.

Franklin and Jefferson subsequently founded societies of American practitioners (**The Virtuous Men**, page 34; **Alderman Technical Solutions**, page 37), whose rival members clashed during the Civil War, and consequently later refused to work together during World War II. Other "gentleman practitioner" associations may have existed from the early days of Franklin and Jefferson, either as splinter groups or wholly independent societies with their own imported traditions of magic but, if so, it's likely they were either eliminated over the years by the aggressive tactics of the Virginia Gentleman's Company (VGC; now the private military contractor Alderman Technical Solutions), or else have chosen to remain under the radar right up until the present day. (*There is some confusion about whether it's "Gentleman's Company" or "Gentlemen's Company" but see the entries on Indigenous American Practitioners and Alderman Technical Solutions for competing explanations of how the name originated.*—Reynolds.) Certain staff of the New York Public Library are one such example of a secret society of magical practitioners who have only recently come to light (**New York Library Association**, page 41).

The only other reasonably well-documented group of American practitioners dating back before the 20th century is Tecumseh's Indigenous Americans, who were trained by the British to harry United States forces in the War of 1812, although there are also tales of clashes between British and Indigenous practitioners prior to that arrangement. Though their numbers were severely reduced during and after that war, there are still Indigenous practitioners living both on reservation land and elsewhere, though their activities were prohibited until 1978 and remain highly restricted (**Indigenous American Practitioners**, page 33).

Note: British practitioners are allegedly restricted from using magic while on US soil under the terms of an accord reached in the aftermath of the War of 1812, although whether there is anyone left to enforce this agreement (*besides Alderman Technical Solutions*—Reynolds) remains unclear.

Magical activity in the United States during the 20th century appears to have gone into decline, much as it did elsewhere. A thriving community of Black practitioners based in Harlem, New York, largely vanished over the course of the 1930s and '40s, although elements may still remain (**The Midwives**, page 33). There is also evidence of a loosely knit network of what our English associates would call "hedge" witches and wizards practicing in and around New Orleans (**New Orleans Witches**, page 52). The largest and most powerful of the known practitioner groups, the Virginia Gentleman's Company/Alderman Technical Solutions, seems to have been the only major player on the block for some time, contenting itself with

the pursuit of lucrative government contracts to eliminate supernatural entities (termed "shade suppression") from Vietnam to Iraq.

Non-human supernatural entities are also known to have existed in North America's early history (**Indigenous American Practitioners**, nearby), but a campaign of extermination during the 19th century waged by the Virginia Gentleman's Company (and other private agencies working for powerful interests, such as the railroad companies) drastically reduced the numbers of *genii locorum* and other creatures. Those that remain have been driven deep into remote wilderness locations, or else are hiding in plain sight among human population centers. Certain dangerously powerful forces (**Hudson River**, page 42) remain active but are currently placated by arrangements with parties unknown, while records of "weaponized vampires" being deployed against paranormal beings indicate that Newtonian practice wasn't the only magical phenomenon brought over from Europe.

Present-day America is on the threshold of a rediscovery of magic. Fringe groups, such as Against Spiritual Usurpation (**ASU**, page 59), are either conducting illegal witch-hunts or possibly consorting with dark sorcerous forces (or both). A new wave of Newtonian practitioners, importing knowledge and artifacts from the United Kingdom, are either the victims or causes of magic-related crimes from Cleveland to Santa Cruz. Older societies like Alderman Technical Solutions and the New York Library Association are flexing their muscles and crossing paths with overseas magical law enforcement, such as the Special Assessment Unit of the Metropolitan Police Service, aka "the Folly." Home-grown hedge wizards and self-appointed "monster hunters" with easy access to dubious magical tutors, firearms, and decades of influential television shows, have been investigating reports of supernatural activity with varying degrees of collateral civilian casualties and property damage. There are also reports of the return of "manifestations" in sparsely occupied areas (local spirits, what the British call "*genii locorum*"); in New Hampshire, these appear to have taken the form of bears.

The country's only known official authority with powers to investigate magic-related threats is the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group, in particular, the Investigative and Operations Support Section (IOSS), in the form of "the Basement," aka Special Agent Kimberley Reynolds (**Critical Incident Response Group**, page 46). (*It's really weird writing about yourself in the third person, even if that is the received style.*—Reynolds.) If other agents, or indeed other agencies, exist, they are currently maintaining a low profile, leaving Special Agent Reynolds to police the entirety of America's magical community on her own.

The Midwives

Like almost everything to do with the American demi-monde, the exact identities of the Midwives, aka the Wise Women, are a matter of debate. Whether they were—or still are—a national or local network of "Aunties" who assist women in poor and marginalised communities during pregnancy and birth is unclear, as the only written evidence for their existence comes from a novel about New York's magic "scene" in the 1920s, much of which may be fiction.

The Midwives' exact nature is also uncertain. If the novel is to be believed, women in Harlem certainly propitiated them with gifts to ensure the safe delivery of their babies, but whether the Midwives were—are—*genii locorum*, fae, human hedge witches, or a loose collection of all three—is currently unknown.

Indigenous American Practitioners

From Special Agent Reynolds' files:
Although there is evidence of Indigenous American Newtonian practitioners dating back to the early 19th century, there are no "official" records of earlier magic systems among the Indigenous nations, though according to recently developed contacts within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (*I can't believe it's still called that*—Reynolds), they most definitely existed. Hard data on the names, numbers, and locations of Indigenous practitioners are incredibly difficult to obtain, either because they have been lost or destroyed, never existed, or our contacts are still reluctant to share all they know.

What we do know is that during the War of 1812 against the British and their Indigenous American allies under Tecumseh, *shemagana* (soldiers) practicing Newtonian magic proved to be a thorn in the side of the United States' forces. The source of their training was the Society of the Wise (aka the Folly), who'd sent British practitioners into Tecumseh's multi-nation confederacy to pass on their knowledge of the

forms and wisdoms of magic in addition to weaponizing Indigenous practices. The extent of this training is still unknown, but it is reasonable to assume the Folly wasted little time demonstrating anything other than spells with immediate military applications. Presumably the *shemagana* learned the relevant Latin terminology that is standard for Newtonian magic use, although whether the British bothered to explain the long-term risks of spell overuse (**Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation**; *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 177) is unclear. It is likely that a number of Tecumseh's practitioners succumbed to fatal brain damage and premature death during the War of 1812, or shortly thereafter.

Throughout the 19th century, as Indigenous populations clashed with white settlers during the great westward expansion, so too did their respective practitioners come into conflict, either directly or by engaging powerful supernatural entities to fight alongside/for them. For example, the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho counted among their allies the *genius loci* of the Yellowstone River, Mi tsi a-da-zi (from the Hidatsa name for the river), a powerful, male river spirit. That the 1876 Battle of Greasy Grass, known to white settlers as the Battle of the Little Bighorn, took place not far from the Yellowstone, not to mention its tributaries the Bighorn and Little Bighorn, may have been a deciding factor in the armed engagement that ended in the death of General Custer and the defeat of the Seventh Cavalry.

Revenge against Yellowstone for Custer's Last Stand came the next year, during the Montana Territory Campaign of 1877. See the entry on **Alderman Technical Solutions** for further details (page 37). It is unlikely that Yellowstone was the first or last victim of the Company's campaign of supernatural extermination in Montana and the western United States, although things did not always go the VGC's way, e.g., the ill-fated Marsh Expedition of 1843. Indigenous American practitioners (both traditional and those who were the descendants and pupils of Tecumseh's surviving *shemagana*) were similarly targeted and killed in the years following the War of 1812.

There are also reports of First Nations practitioners in Canada, though the degree of official oversight is considered lax by BIA standards (*Indigenous Services Canada might prove to be a less guarded source of information on Indigenous American, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis practitioners. Probably easier to approach them via the Brits, though.*—Reynolds).

The Virtuous Men

From Special Agent Reynolds' files:
Though officially called the Virtuous Men, this group of Newtonian practitioners from the University of Pennsylvania was also known as the "Printer's Men" by allies and enemies alike—a nickname inspired by their founder, the polymath printer, writer, scientist, and statesman Benjamin Franklin. The exact date of their formation lies somewhere between the university's foundation in 1740 and the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Although their overlapping histories make it just about conceivable that Franklin could have learned the principles of formal magic directly from Sir Isaac

Indigenous American Traditions

There can be no doubt that, like all other known cultures, Indigenous Americans developed their own magical traditions, often integrated closely into their spiritual and religious practices. Our current knowledge of the state of Indigenous American magic is poor, but several facts are certain. **One:** there is a great deal of diversity between groups as to power, technique, and relations with location-spirits. **Two:** it has strongly influenced American Newtonian practice, particularly in the West and South. **Three:** Newtonian practices have influenced Indigenous American practice, both through cultural osmosis and through formal training of Tecumseh's own practitioners both before and during the War of 1812. It is my belief that there are still active practitioners among all the Indigenous American nations—why else would the Bureau of Indian Affairs have a section devoted to suppressing it?

—ROI Gunter Gebauer

Newton, it's more likely he studied with Newton's former apprentices or other third-party students during his time in London in the 1720s, or else later in life while serving as American Ambassador to France.

The official name of the Virtuous Men is derived from the 13 virtues that Franklin strove to exemplify in his daily life: Temperance, Silence, Order, Resolution, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquility, Chastity, and Humility. It may be that the group of practitioners he founded similarly held themselves to these almost monastic virtues, which not only led to their early participation in World War II but also perhaps their enmity with the Virginia Gentleman's Company (**Alderman Technical Solutions**, page 37).

A long-standing rivalry between the two groups hearkens back to friction between their respective founders, Franklin and Jefferson. During the American Civil War, the Virtuous Men fought unofficially for the Union, while their old rivals from Virginia fought for the Confederacy. It seems likely these two practitioner groups not only used their spellcasting skills and knowledge against regular enemy military units but also, on occasion, directly against their opposite numbers in magical combat.

In 1940, months before Pearl Harbor and America's official entry into World War II, a hundred or so volunteers from the Virtuous Men arrived in London to assist their British counterparts in the Folly—and the Special Operations Executive—with the war effort. It's clear they were on cordial terms with the British practitioners, and either lived and worked in the Folly during the war or at least had occasion to visit there, unlike their rivals in the VGC. It is not known if any of the Virtuous Men engaged in the disastrous Ettersberg operation that claimed the lives of most of the Folly's practitioners, but recorded accounts of the operation maintain that there was no American participation (**Ettersberg**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 262).

How much official involvement the United States' authorities—at any level—had with the Virtuous Men remains a mystery, but they apparently fell out of favor with the expanding US military-industrial complex after World War II, either as a result of direct maneuvering by the Virginia Gentleman's Company, or because the Virtuous Men—and magic practitioners in general—began to be seen by the authorities as both un-Christian and un-American.

No further mention of the Virtuous Men has been uncovered after this period, though the discovery of present-day Newtonian practitioners operating out of the NYC Library (**New York Library Association**, page 41) may suggest a link to Franklin's organization.

GM Information

Base of Operations: University of Pennsylvania
Membership: 100–150 at its height around WWII; currently 1 (rusticated, to use the Folly's parlance).

The Fall of the Virtuous Men

The Virtuous Men were indeed persecuted by a government investigation taking place as part of the wider House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearings in the late 1940s. Engineered by their rivals in the Virginia Gentleman's Company, the Virtuous Men were accused of un-American and un-Christian activities, and consorting with "hostile powers," which some assumed to be the Soviets, while others took to mean demonic forces. Was there a grain of truth to this? Fragmentary records from the closed-chamber hearings suggest some pretty lurid activities were alleged to have taken place at the Virtuous Men's plush clubhouse on the grounds of the University of Pennsylvania.

The final blow came in the form of a damning testimony from one of their own (**The Resolute Man**, following), who claimed to have seen, but not participated in, "satanic rites and devotions" during ceremonies held behind closed doors. Worse still was his documented evidence of correspondence and even face-to-face meetings with certain Soviet practitioners both during and after WWII. The university revoked their charter, many lost their jobs, several members went to prison for treason, and at least one committed suicide. The clubhouse was sold to the Franklin Institute science museum and is now used as a storage facility and back office.

Persons of Interest

The Resolute Man

The last of the Virtuous Men, the Resolute Man is a WWII veteran who embodies one of Franklin's virtues and was a master practitioner in his day. He became disillusioned with the direction that the Virtuous Men had taken during the war, and the company they kept. This led to him causing the Virtuous Men's downfall when he testified as a "friendly witness" during the HUAC hearings. To avoid retaliation from his surviving former friends, the Resolute Man subsequently changed his name and went into seclusion. He now teaches history at a small private school, sometimes passing on his magical knowledge to the "right sort of pupil," in the hope of one day re-establishing the Virtuous Men as he sees them.

- **Description:** a very old, unassuming-looking white man with a thatch of silvery-white hair.
- **Traits:** a lonely and angry man, who nevertheless still believes he did the right thing in bringing down his "godless" society.
- **Allegiances:** only to the lofty ideals of the original Virtuous Men and those he deigns to train in the forms and wisdoms.

The Resolute Man, *master practitioner*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 40 **INT** 70 **POW** 80
DB: 0 **MOV:** 6 **MP:** 32 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Magical, Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 50%, Navigate 50%, Observation 70%, Read Person 50%, Research 70%, Sense Vestigia 70%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; History 90%, Magic 85%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 60%.



Languages
Ancient Greek 60%, English (own) 70%, French 50%, Latin 70%.

Spells
All mastered: *Aqua*, *Impello*, Noisemaker, *Scindere*, *Terra*, Werelight; Fireball, *Impello palma*, Invisible Catch, *Serra obscura*, Shield, Wandering Light; *Casus levis*, Grasping Hand, Throw Sound; *Telescopium,* The Wall Banger; *Siphōnem*, *Vultus occulto*. The GM may add others at their discretion.

Signare
The sound of a printing press, the smell of carbolic soap, and a jolt—like a sudden electric shock.

Case Seed: The Liberty Bell

Is it true that Benjamin Franklin secretly had a magical hand in the construction of Philadelphia's Liberty Bell—a bell that was cast by London's Whitechapel Bell Foundry, the self-same company that created the "drinking bell" over 250 years later[3]? And could it really be used to summon dangerously uncontrollable manifestations of Franklin's Thirteen Virtues?

Fortunately, the bell was rendered harmless when it was cracked by a 19th century Virtuous Man aiming to prevent any such summoning. But its secret properties might explain why someone is trying to steal the bell now. If they're successful, the unleashed Virtues would run amok like puritanical Horsemen of the Apocalypse, raining judgment down on any human who fails to measure up to their impossibly virtuous standards.

This case file might be used for a group of Virtuous Men trying to redeem their reputation, agents of the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group who monitor all crimes relating to bells, or any group with an interest in dangerous magic items, like the New York Librarians.

Footnote: [3] *Lies Sleeping*

Alderman Technical Solutions

From Special Agent Reynolds' files:
For much of its history, this group of practitioners appears to have acted as the US government's magical enforcers. It currently operates under the nondescript name of Alderman Technical Solutions, though for over 200 years it was known by the more refined title of the Virginia Gentleman's Company (VGC), nicknamed "the Virgins." The Virginia gentleman in question is their founder, Thomas Jefferson, a lawyer, architect, philosopher, and the third president of the United States. Jefferson was a believer in a rational system of order that governed the natural world and is known in his youth to have met Sir Isaac Newton, whom he held in high regard as one of the greatest men who ever lived. But exactly who taught Jefferson the principles of formal Newtonian magic is unknown (**The Virtuous Men**, page 34). (*Note: I've also seen the VGC referred to as the Jeffersonian wizards' militant wing, suggesting there may have been, at one time, a non-militant one.*—Reynolds.)

The company was originally located just outside Charlottesville, Virginia, not far from Jefferson's neoclassical estate, Monticello. Even today, the company's modern incarnation as the private military contractor (*a very loose interpretation of the term*—Reynolds) Alderman Technical Solutions is based in the same area. The date of the company's founding is unknown but lies somewhere between Jefferson coming to adulthood in the 1760s and the War of 1812 between the United States and the United Kingdom. The principles upon which Jefferson founded the organization are presumed to be based on his philosophy that through applying the rules of science (*or in this case, Newtonian magic*—Reynolds), the condition of "Man" could be improved.

Like his fellow practitioner and sometime-rival Benjamin Franklin, Jefferson also founded a university. The University of Virginia (UVA) in Charlottesville opened in 1825, one year before Jefferson's death, and it is reasonable to assume that some or all of the company's membership has been drawn from students and/or tutors of the nearby UVA.

The East Coast Anglo-Newtonian Tradition

Given his strong ties to the scientific community in London and his passion for founding institutions, it cannot be a surprise that Benjamin Franklin established the first formal Newtonian magical institution in the British American Colonies. In the 1750s, Franklin recruited British practitioners and installed them in the newly founded University of Pennsylvania.

Franklin's fellow founding father Thomas Jefferson set up his own "college" of practitioners during his Presidency. Unlike the academic Printer's Men, this was a muscular expression of the newly created United States' territorial ambitions and was strongly influenced by the Franco-Newtonian tradition pioneered by the French Academy. In 1812, the College was succeeded by the Virginia Gentlemen's Company, which, for the next 120 years, became the *de facto* if not *de jure* magical arm of the Federal Government. However, for reasons that I have yet to determine, the VGC abandoned the active practice of magic in the 1960s, although it did provide anti-magical support for US forces during the Indochina Wars.

Given New York's status as a major cultural and financial centre, as well as the principle *entrepôt* for European immigration into the United States, it would have been surprising indeed should it not have developed a distinctive magical tradition of its own. One grouping, active since at least the 1860s, appears embedded within the New York Public Library service while other more informal groups are operated among Italian, Jewish, African American, and other ethnic populations. There are rumours of a very active "scene" during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, although this seems to have been suppressed by the authorities in the mid to late 1930s.

—ROI Gunter Gebauer

After the War of 1812, in which company members clashed with British-trained Indigenous American practitioners, the VGC is known to have fought for the Confederacy as an official state militia during the American Civil War, while their old rivals the Virtuous Men fought for the Union.

The next confirmed reference to the Virginia Gentleman's Company is in 1843 with regards to the events surrounding the loss of Captain William Marsh's expedition to Wisconsin in search of an "abomination"—one of the VGC's terms for *genii locorum* and other powerful members of the demi-monde.

Better documented is the Montana Territory Campaign of 1877, which took place during a period of westward expansion by white settlers. The company took an active part in US expeditionary forces' clashes with Indigenous Americans who took up arms against encroaching settlement and forced relocation, as described in *Devil River*, a pamphlet written by one Robert Sharp, evidently a practitioner on friendly terms with the Folly (*possibly one of the Virtuous Men out of Philadelphia*—Reynolds). Sharp's account describes how a "group of gentlemen from Virginia" aided the expedition by systematically tracking, luring, and trapping the so-called "Devil of Yellowstone River," the powerful *genius loci* of Yellowstone (Mi tsi a-da-zi; **Indigenous American Practitioners**, page 33). These gentlemen utilized a weaponized vampire (*tactus disvitae*) to render the river spirit powerless before shooting him in the head with a pistol. The leader of the company's contingent was known to be one Captain Nathaniel Buford. Unfortunately, some people seem keen to revive such tactics in the modern day.

During the 1860s–'70s, the VGC also developed strong links with the Ku Klux Klan—links they have gone to great lengths to hide over recent years, presumably for the same reasons they later moved away from being active practitioners.

As far as can be ascertained, the company took no part in World War I, as per the "agreement" (*whatever that entails*—Reynolds), and is next recorded in late 1941, when, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States entered WWII. In addition to their base of operations in Hawai'i, several company practitioners established an overseas station in Istanbul, Turkey, though what actions they undertook against Axis forces remain unclear. It is known they eschewed any contact with the Folly or British Commonwealth practitioners due to the bad blood between the groups dating back to 1812. Tellingly, the company emphatically chose to not work with rival American practitioners the Virtuous Men, who maintained close links with their British counterparts in the Folly during the war.

If the company knew of the impending, disastrous Ettersberg raid, which all but wiped out the Folly's cohort of practitioners, they had their reasons for not getting involved. One is the low opinion in which they held the British. The other is that, through the company's close ties with the US military, they were well aware of the atom bomb being developed by the Manhattan Project, which would decisively swing the balance of power toward the United States without having to risk American lives on a raid into the heart of Nazi Germany.

One source suggests a possible link between the company's weaponized vampires of the 19th century and the Germans' later work in the same area during WWII, and therefore the possibility of a clandestine connection between the company and Nazi Germany, who they were supposedly fighting.

The post-war period signaled a change in direction for the company, with a move away from the practice of magic by its members to a more mundane "shade suppression" approach, or the elimination of supernatural entities deemed a threat to American security, both at home and abroad. They were active during the Vietnam War, carrying out operations to neutralize Vietnamese practitioners and Indigenous supernatural elements. The development of pragmatic, non-magical techniques may have been prompted by the inherent risk of brain damage caused by overuse of magic (**Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 177), or perhaps a general shift in official attitudes to the practice of magic, which was increasingly seen as un-Christian, un-American, and politically counterproductive for any organization, such as the VGC, keen to secure lucrative defense contracts from the US government.

In 2001, during the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the name of Alderman Technical Solutions (ATS) was officially registered as the legal title of the Virginia Gentleman's Company, now styling itself as a private military contractor with close ties to Washington. ATS was active in both Afghanistan and Iraq between 2001 and 2004, taking on small-scale "area shade suppression" contracts to eliminate the threat of Iraqi and Afghan magical resources. Their contract was abruptly terminated by the George W. Bush administration in mid-2004, following a redacted but apparently disastrous operation in Fallujah, Iraq, that—according to information gathered from a former Marine who worked for ATS as an Anomalous Intuition Specialist (*simply put, someone who sniffs out* vestigia—Reynolds)—took place during Operation Vigilant Resolve.

Theoretically, all official government ties between Alderman Technical Solutions and the US government were severed in 2004. But, given that ATS operatives retain sufficient credentials to walk into an FBI office and demand information from Bureau agents, it is likely that semi-official channels remain open (*One of the agents encountered in London claimed to be operating under Presidential executive orders with worldwide jurisdiction, though exactly which president issued the order is unclear.*—Reynolds).

Alderman Technical Solutions used their links with US intelligence agencies to dispatch not one but two units of

operatives to London during the One Hyde Park incident[4], to acquire valuable (*and dangerous*—Reynolds) magical items that had been put up for sale online, namely the Wild Ledger and the Mary Engine. During the course of these events, they encountered several British practitioners, *genii locorum*, and other supernatural entities, leading ultimately to the death of a unit leader and the deportation of the surviving agents under the aegis of the FBI.

Alderman Technical Solutions agents operate in small 4- or 5-person units. They are well trained, physically capable in hand-to-hand combat, and equipped with a variety of firearms. At least some of them have a familiarity with Newtonian magic, as evinced by certain *signare* sensed by Folly officers, but the exact disposition of their "spell arsenal" remains unknown. Their clandestine but effective links with the US government and intelligence agencies, plus their resources and experience both magical and mundane, make Alderman Technical Solutions a formidable force wherever they choose to intervene.

Fortunately (*or unfortunately, depending on who's reading this*—Reynolds) their lack of knowledge of—or regard for—magical practitioners outside US borders frequently leads to a "bull in a china shop" operational stance, which makes their agents somewhat easier to track down (*and then deport or bury*—Reynolds) after their characteristically conspicuous encounters with the supernatural.

GM Information

Base of Operations: Charlottesville, Virginia
Membership: 50–100
Practitioners: most ATS practitioners should be considered apprentices, akin to Peter Grant's level of proficiency in 2016 at best; their current lack of magical expertise is indicative of their move away from the active pursuit of spellcasting. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, they had far more experienced practitioners, all the way up to the level of Varvara and Nightingale.

The Montana Territory Campaign & Other Atrocities

While the hunt for the *genius loci* of the Yellowstone River is the most reliably recorded of the company's activities during the 19th century, it is far from the only one. Led by such "gentlemen" as Captains William Marsh and Nathaniel Buford, Lieutenant Percival Sanders, and the notorious Major Revelation LeRoy, the company embarked on numerous expeditions into the western territories with the boldly stated aim of locating, trapping, and executing as many supernatural entities as they could, the better to clear the way for white settlers without fear of being "*eaten alive, sacrificed to pagan spirits, or bent to the will of black-hearted medicine men*" (taken from a brief newspaper interview with Major LeRoy, 1856).

The VGC employed Indigenous scouts, hired gunfighters, and their own practitioner skills to deal with mundane threats on these campaigns, but were not afraid to co-opt magical entities (such as weaponised vampires) to neutralise their most powerful targets. Records refer to several campaigns and confrontations, including the Ghost Mesa Incident in Colorado, the Fire Creek Massacre in Louisiana, the Leech Lake Incident in Minnesota, and the Mississippi Undertaking. Little is known of these operations save for their names.

The Company in WWII

After Pearl Harbor, the Company established two overseas operational bases, one in Istanbul, Turkey, the other out of Hawai'i as part of the Pacific Fleet onboard the USS *Lexington*, from where they participated in naval actions against the Japanese near New Guinea and in the Coral Sea.

Not much is known about the Istanbul group's activities. Although Turkey remained neutral throughout the war, it maintained close economic and diplomatic ties to Nazi Germany and was therefore a hotbed of espionage activity by both the Axis and the Allies. Fragmentary reports place several company operatives in Istanbul at the same time as German and Soviet intelligence agents during an operation involving the merchant vessel *Anatolian Star*. The mission culminated in a spectacular explosion off the Black Sea coast, just north of the city, which resulted in the destruction of the ship and the loss of all hands and cargo.

The Fallujah Disaster

This 2004 operation undertaken in Iraq is so heavily redacted in official government records that not even its name is officially known. However, a reference to "area shade suppression" suggests that the company was sent into Fallujah to locate and neutralise hostile *genii locorum*, practitioners, and/or supernatural entities, a suspicion subsequently confirmed by a former employee[5]. That the ATS' government contract was terminated directly thereafter suggests an operational disaster of epic proportions. Or, as Peter Grant once put it[6], "*Given the low, low standards for success applied to private military contractors in Iraq, the fuck-up that got them fired must have been spectacular.*"

One can only speculate as to the nature of the failure, but they presumably not only botched their original objective, but also cost American lives and resources, and ran the risk of publicly and politically endangering US foreign policy to an unheard-of degree. Sources in Washington, who insist on remaining anonymous, have confirmed this general conclusion, but also added that, "*We thought we could handle it, but it was too big, so in the end everything had to burn.*" They have adamantly refused to elucidate further.

Footnotes: [4, 6]*The Hanging Tree*, [5]*Winter's Gifts*

Persons of Interest

John Alderman Jr

While the entire company structure of Alderman Technical Solutions is too long to list here, a brief description of its Chief Executive Officer should give an indication of the organisation's ethos, aims, and ties with the United States' government and military. John Alderman Jr was born into a wealthy family in Washington, DC, where his father worked during WWII as the VGC's liaison with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the wartime predecessor of the CIA. Educated at the University of Virginia like his father and grandfather before him, Alderman joined the family business and served as the company's operational consultant in Saigon during the Vietnam War, indirectly overseeing several covert shade suppression missions into North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

He assumed the position of company chairman during the Reagan era, forging ever closer bonds with the US military and intelligence communities, and later oversaw the modernisation of the company into Alderman Technical Solutions in 2001. Alderman remains the public face of the company, though he maintains as low a profile as possible, confining himself to his secure estate outside Charlottesville, the nearby ATS headquarters, or one of a number of exclusive country clubs where he networks with politicians, fellow CEOs, and government apparatchiks (aka yes-men).



Case Seed: The Sunken Star

A recent marine survey in the Black Sea off the coast of Turkey has located the wreck of the *Anatolian Star*, which was sunk in WWII. Whoever is first to recover the ship's contents will gain valuable intelligence on the VGC's wartime activities in Asia Minor, and the nature of ship's mysterious cargo. The sunken wreck still contains active vampire body parts in VGC-stamped containers, bound for German deployment against the Soviets on the Eastern Front. This evidence would confirm the company's treasonous links to the Nazis, so operatives of Alderman Technical Solutions are intent on retrieving or destroying it before anyone else gets their hands on it. Can the investigators—e.g., monster hunters, New York Librarians, or whatever vestiges of the Virtuous Men still remain—get there before them?

- **Description:** a well-groomed, solidly built white man in his early 70s, although he looks a good decade younger.
- **Traits:** as adept at greasing palms and manipulating people as he is, Alderman's skills were not enough to save the company from being stripped of its government contract after the Fallujah disaster.
- **Allegiances:** to the company and its longstanding tradition of supressing the demi-monde.

John Alderman Jr, *current CEO of ATS*

STR 50 **CON** 50 **DEX** 50 **INT** 70 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 23 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Magical, Rich.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 60%, Navigate 40%, Observation 70%, Read Person 70%, Research 50%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; Accounting 60%, Demolitions 60%, Magic 65%; Fighting 50%, Firearms 70%.

Languages
English (own) 70%.

Spells
Aqua (mastered), *Impello* (mastered), Rock Drill (mastered), *Scindere* (mastered), *Terra* (mastered), Werelight (mastered); Fireball (mastered), *Impello palma*, *Impello vibrato* (mastered), Invisible Catch, *Serra obscura* (mastered), Shield (mastered); Ball of Lightning (mastered), Grasping Hand (mastered); The Wall Banger.

Signare
The screech of car brakes, a whiff of gunmetal, and a chill across the back.

New York Library Association

From Special Agent Reynolds' files:
The "Librarians" are an organization of Newtonian practitioners operating within the New York Public Library system. Members of the "Association" are all fully qualified librarians, as their AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) trade union records indicate, and each associate spends a portion of their time devoted to mundane duties, serving in one or more of NYC's public library branches. Referred to by one London source as the "militant magical wing" of the NYPL, their self-appointed remit is the policing of supernatural individuals (including ghosts, revenants, shades, and ethically challenged practitioners), and the acquisition and containment of dangerous magical artifacts including—but not limited to—"overdue" books. The Librarians maintain a list of forbidden items (such as the Mary Engine) and constantly monitor news outlets, online auctions, and other publications for any mention of such an item resurfacing.

They operate without official sanction at local, state, or federal level, and regard law enforcement bodies as obstructions to be circumvented or, at best, tapped for information. Indeed, they balk at the very idea of government interference in what they consider to be their (magical) business. While their operational range is primarily confined to the five boroughs of New York City, parts of New Jersey, and upstate New York, the Librarians see it as their right to pursue their interests as far afield as the West Coast—and even abroad, should they deem the magical threat sufficient.

The Librarians' base of operations is the main branch of the NYPL on Fifth Avenue, where certain magical artifacts,



such as **Rose Jars** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 326), are stored in the basement. They maintain contacts in the New York Police Department, who are unaware that the Librarians are practitioners. The existence of the demi-monde and supernatural individuals within NYC is known to the Librarians, who tolerate their presence and monitor their activities. It is assumed there are one or more arrangements between the Librarians and the demi-monde to facilitate peaceful coexistence within the five boroughs.

The date of the Librarians' founding is unknown, but since the NYPL and its preceding libraries date back only as far as the mid-19th century, it's presumed the association of practitioners is (at most) 170 years old at the time of this report. However, confirmed sources can currently only trace Librarian activity back as far as the 1980s (**Willowbrook State School**, page 43). The quality and formality of their spellcasting suggests a Folly-like association that may have links to earlier American Newtonian organizations such as the Virtuous Men or the Virginia Gentleman's Company (**The Virtuous Men**, page 34; **Alderman Technical Solutions**, page 37).

There are two confirmed Librarian members: Stephen Higgins and Patricia Chin. Higgins appears to be the group's "legman," traveling the country and overseas in search of dangerous magic books that the Librarians believe should be locked up in their care. Chin is his supervisor and is the heavy hitter, magically speaking, who joins Higgins as necessary to provide sufficient spellcasting power to effect a successful acquisition.

Both Higgins and Chin show a disregard for law enforcement in general, and up until the encounter at the Serious Cybernetics Corporation (SCC) in London[7], were wholly unaware of the existence of the Folly and its officers. After the SCC incident, both were detained by the Folly and deported back to New York under the supervision of the FBI (**Kimberley Reynolds**, page 47).

It is this agent's assessment that the Librarians' experience in London has opened their eyes to the larger supernatural-associated forces at work both at home and abroad but has not dented their enthusiasm for intervening wherever—and whenever—they see fit.

GM Information

Base of Operations: New York

Membership: several hundred, many belonging to specific sub-orders. At least 20 core specialists are involved in overseas and high-profile operations.

Practitioners: a mix of apprentices and masters—Mrs Chin could certainly hold her own against DCI Nightingale.

Veteran-Vampire War

Vampires have always been a problem in New York, but the situation seriously worsened in the 1970s when whole neighbourhoods of the South Bronx, already ravaged by urban decay, became feeding grounds for nests of the parasitic creatures. Police and city authorities, preoccupied with gang warfare on the streets, had little time or enthusiasm to respond to wild claims of "monsters in the Bronx." So, it was left to a group of homeless Vietnam War veterans to fight back. Brought together by a resourceful former Green Beret, known on the streets as "Rooker," the vets armed themselves with improvised flamethrowers and napalm and went to war against the vampires. Many of the building fires that contributed to the popularisation of the phrase "The Bronx is Burning" in 1977 were the result of the veterans' handiwork.

The work of rooting out the deadly parasites was neither simple, quick, nor risk-free; there were casualties among the veterans, who had to contend with frequent gang and police harassment while they waged their war to protect the city's homeless. The last confirmed reference to the Veteran-Vampire War came in early 1983, during the heaviest snowstorm of the decade, when hundreds of homeless people were forced into the tunnels under the city to escape the bitter cold. "*It was like ringing the vamps' dinner bell,*" one survivor later said. When an entire community of people sheltering in an abandoned subway station on Manhattan's 91st St disappeared overnight, Rooker and his allies followed the trail into deeper, forgotten tunnels, and never returned. But neither did the vampires—for a while at least.

Hudson River (née Mahicantuck)

The current form of this angry, powerful *genius loci* is unknown, but it has previously been described as that of an unnaturally tall Algonquian man in 17th century clothing. Though once worshipped by the local Algonquians as a god, ever since the destruction of his tributary children, such as the Croton (née Kitchawan), by early Dutch and English settlers, the Hudson has become outright hostile to humanity.

Unless placated by regular offerings and acts of supplication, the Hudson is liable to stir from his torpid state, becoming restless and a threat to local shipping, along with anyone who ventures in or near the water. The Hudson is quite capable of sinking a large tourist boat or shipping container, flooding the Holland Tunnel, or drowning lower Manhattan and the New Jersey shoreline, if he so wishes. There is a secret shrine to the Hudson located in a locked pier on the Jersey side of the river.

Footnote: [7]*False Value*

Willowbrook State School

This former mental health institution once housed over 6,000 patients, and was notorious for overcrowding, violence, and poor hygiene. It was eventually closed down in the 1980s after a series of scandals, including the deliberate infection of many inmates with hepatitis by one of the institution's doctors.

The final straw was, in fact, an orgy of violence perpetrated by a single patient. The inmate, named "Margaret Green" by the Willowbrook staff, was discovered in the late 1940s as a child, wandering naked around a state park, and apparently displaying learning difficulties. When nobody came to claim her, the child was committed to Willowbrook and spent the next 40 years there, suffering deprivation, abuse, and infection. Maggie was not entirely human, and whatever she really was, she'd left some of herself back where she came from. Over the years at Willowbrook, that void inside her filled up with the collective *vestigia* of 6,000 troubled patients—their fears, their hallucinations, and their madness.

She reached bursting point one fateful night in 1987, displaying a terrifying range of magical abilities that left several patients and staff members dead and many more seriously injured. A contingent of Librarians, including the young Patricia Chin, ventured into Willowbrook's halls to investigate. The subsequent confrontation with the possessed Maggie Green put two Librarians in the hospital, left one wing of the institution a blackened ruin, and required that certain "organic remains" were sealed in steel containers and transported to a secure location with instructions never to open them.

The Statue of Liberty

The world-famous statue was donated to the United States by the people of France to commemorate American independence. What is less known is that some of those French architects, including Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and Alexandre Gustave Eiffel (he of the Tower), were members of the Parisian practitioner community and took the time and effort to weave some impressively high-order Newtonian spells into the fabric of the statue—or, more specifically, its highly retentive granite, concrete, and steel pedestal, thus creating something not unlike a *stadtkrone*[8].

The sheer magnitude of the magical power stored in the Statue's pedestal—the deposits of millions of inspired tourists for over 100 years—is astronomical. To tap into it would surely instantly annihilate even the most experienced and competent practitioner, and possibly also Liberty Island itself, along with much of Jersey City, Lower Manhattan, and Brooklyn. But rumours persist among the demi-monde that Bartholdi left blueprints for the construction of an item that might safely allow someone to tap that incredible energy source and cast spells of terrifying power...

Persons of Interest

Stephen Higgins (aka Jacob Astor, aka Mitchel West)

Higgins (born in Concord, NY) was a teenage runaway who joined the Librarians following an unspecified supernatural encounter on the New York subway. He is a roving agent for the Library with links to several ongoing cases (**Santa Cruz Witch Murders**, page 60; **ASU**, page 59). At least as competent a practitioner as Peter Grant, his confirmed spell repertoire includes Werelight, *Impello palma*, lock jimmying (a US variant of *Clausurafrange*), lightning bolt (a variation of Ball of Lightning), and "melt glass" (an invisible variation of the Fireball spell).

- **Description:** according to Peter Grant, Stephen is a "blandly handsome, slim white guy with black hair and high cheekbones." Identifying marks include a scar on his upper left arm and a crossbow bolt entry wound on his stomach.
- **Traits:** Stephen has shown himself to be quick-thinking, resourceful, and unafraid to break and enter using any means at his disposal.
- **Allegiances:** the New York Library Association, and Mrs Chin in particular.



Footnote: [8]*Broken Homes*

Stephen Higgins, *apprentice Librarian*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 70
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 20 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Magical.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 50%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; Art/Craft (Acting) 60%, Magic 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 40%.

Languages
English (own) 60%.

Spells
Aqua, Flash Bulb, *Impello* (mastered), Noisemaker, Rock Drill, *Scindere* (mastered), Werelight (mastered); Fireball (mastered), *Impello palma* (mastered), Invisible Catch, Light Bulb, Shield, Wandering Light; Ball of Lightning (mastered), Throw Sound; *Telescopium*; *Clausurafrange*.

Signare
A hushed whispering of papers and a busy, growling undertow, like engines underground.

Mrs Patricia Chin

Higgins' instructor, a senior librarian and highly accomplished practitioner, Mrs Chin is one of the Librarians in the *Ordo Machinis Spectandis*, a group tasked with monitoring machinery for signs of life (*Anima Vitalis*). Though not as young nor as fit as Higgins, she occasionally leaves New York to take part in important operations. Her confirmed spell repertoire includes those causing paralysis and pain—an effective spellcasting preventative—with one spell capable of numbing an arm or stopping a heart (**Heart Stop**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 192).

- **Description:** a tall, slender East Asian woman in her mid-60s, with a penchant for wearing half-moon reading spectacles.
- **Traits:** determined and confident in both her abilities and knowledge.
- **Allegiances:** the New York Library Association and her protégé, Stephen Higgins.

Patricia Chin, *Head Librarian*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 50 **INT** 70 **POW** 80
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 48 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Magical, Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 30%, Navigate 40%, Observation 80%, Read Person 70%, Research 90%, Sense Vestigia 85%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Accounting 60%, Appraise 70%, History 80%, Magic 85%, Tech 70%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
Ancient Greek 50%, English (own) 70%, Latin 60%, Mandarin (own) 70%, Sanskrit 50%.

Spells
All the spells listed in *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, **Chapter 4**, except: Snapdragon, Candano, Car Killer, Bumblebee, Skinny Grenade, and Natchaduri. She has mastered all the spells she knows and may know others of the GM's own design. See also **Appendix B** (page 173).

Signare
A hushed whispering of papers, an almost imperceptible chime, and a sound not unlike a crowd shouting at a football match.



Croton (née Kitchawan)

The ghost of the former Croton River, which flowed under the current site of the New York Public Library, haunts the building's lower levels. It's harmless, but less than friendly and a distressing sight to encounter on one's own. The ghost resembles a painfully thin young Algonquian man with a slender European sword thrust through his chest. The Librarians tend to steer clear of him.



Belvedere

The *genius loci* of Central Park incarnated as an old Jewish man who can be found playing checkers (draughts) in the park. Playing him offers the chance of getting a rare favour if you beat him, or of owing him more than you can afford if you lose. He lives in a private section of Belvedere Castle, ostensibly as some sort of caretaker. Just don't call him "Mister" Belvedere—he doesn't like it.

- **Description:** a stooped, old white Jewish man with messy white hair and a twinkle in his eye. Dressed in a well-worn but well-tailored suit and open-necked shirt, topped off with a woollen English flat cap.
- **Traits:** Belvedere is moderately cantankerous but can turn on a powerfully compelling glamour if he needs to (**The Glamour**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 243).
- **Allegiances:** Belvedere watches over his acolytes, the carriage drivers of Central Park—along with, it's rumoured, several talking horses.

Belvedere, *the spirit of Central Park*

STR 40 **CON** 40 **DEX** 60 **INT** 80 **POW** 150
DB: 0 **MOVE:** 7 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 150
Advantages: Natural Toughness, The Knowledge (Manhattan).
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive (Carriage) 60%, Navigate 60%, Observation 70%, Read Person 80%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 80%, Social 60%, Stealth 40%; Art/Craft (Carpentry) 60%, Art/Craft (Checkers) 90%, Art/Craft (Horticulture) 60%, Mechanical Repair 60%; Fighting 50%, Firearms 40%.

Languages
English (own) 80%, Yiddish (own) 80%.

Powers
The Glamour, Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Central Park.

Vestigia
The smell of hot pretzels and horses, the muted sounds of a distant city, yet with a strange sense of stillness and silence.



Case Seed: The Rivers of New York

The powerful, hostile Hudson River has recently become active, damaging boats and menacing tourists, as if whatever was keeping him pacified has stopped. This is in fact the case—an elderly employee of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey was the duly-appointed supplicant of the Hudson, a duty that's been handed down within the organisation for many generations. By making annual ritual offerings to the river at a secret shrine in an old pier on the Jersey side of the river, the supplicant kept the Hudson passive and no threat to anyone on the water. But he died recently without entrusting his knowledge and duties to a successor. Now nobody knows about this strange, locked pier and what goes on inside it.

The old man's grandchildren have tried to interpret his cryptic last words about keeping the river happy, but so far, they've just been arrested for taking a boat without permission and endangering themselves and the ferry lanes near the Battery.

Unless someone can work out what the Hudson wants and how to make him happy, he's going to flood Lower Manhattan. Maybe the ghost of the Croton River, long dead and haunting the lower levels of the New York Public Library, might somehow be persuaded to shed some light on the problem.

Critical Incident Response Group

From Special Agent Reynolds' files:
The FBI's Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), based in Quantico, Virginia, was formed to respond to special crisis situations, such as terror attacks, hostage situations, violent crimes, and other major incidents. The group's intelligence, surveillance, and tactical sections are equipped to provide operational assistance to both FBI field offices and also state, local, and international law enforcement agencies such as London's Metropolitan Police Service.

With such a broad remit, it's not surprising the Bureau's only special agent currently tasked with monitoring supernatural activity would be assigned to the CIRG—more specifically, the Investigative Operations Support Section (IOSS)—the better to screen incoming crisis reports for "unusual characteristics," as well as investigating historical cold cases where unexplained phenomena may have played a part. The special agent in question is Kimberley Reynolds (*also known as the special agent in charge of weird stuff, as Peter Grant might say*—Reynolds). Her duties include liaising with specialist law enforcement officers in partner agencies, such as London's Special Assessment Unit (the Folly), and overseeing the return of American nationals to US soil when magical activity is involved (*like escorting those gentlemen from Alderman Technical Solutions back home*—Reynolds).

Special Agent Reynolds is also responsible for compiling the Bureau's nascent database of supernatural creatures, magical practitioners, and "magic-adjacent" extremists, drawing on data from first- and second-hand sources at home and abroad. The paucity of pre-existing written information, whether hard-copy or digital, is perhaps not surprising given the secretive nature of the parties involved; thus, the ongoing development of Special Agent Reynolds' so-called Unreality List remains a long-term project unless further resources can be made available.

Certain other groups, such as the practitioners of the NY Public Library (**New York Library Association**, page 41), are under the mistaken impression the FBI has an entire department to deal with magical threats, and this may have been the case at some point in the Bureau's history. However, it may also be the result of quasi-official entities like Alderman Technical Solutions passing themselves off as federal agents in the pursuit of their own goals, or so-called "monster hunters" flashing phony FBI badges (**Hedge Wizards, Monster Hunters, & Others**, page 50). Or there may indeed be a wholly separate government agency, unknown to the wider FBI, operating quietly to shut down supernatural incidents before they become national news (*But, if so, their existence is above my pay grade; only the NSA knows for sure.*—Reynolds).

GM Information

Base of Operations: Quantico, Virginia

Membership: 3 (Or more, if you would prefer that Reynolds has some fellow agents to help her investigate the ever-growing Unreality List.)

Practitioners: currently officially none, though Reynolds has developed the skill to detect *vestigia*. (New agents may have magical capabilities, of course.)

The Unreality List

This database is located on the FBI's secure servers, accessible by Special Agent Reynolds, her superiors, and anyone with a sufficiently high security clearance. It contains entries for every known or suspected magical practitioner, magical entity, and magical object in the United States. It's currently quite small but is growing rapidly. Entries are keyed by name, location, group association, and "unreality rating." The unreality rating (UR) ranges from Low UR (a non-practicing member of a fringe occult club) through Medium UR (a trained Newtonian practitioner or supernaturally gifted lower fae) to High UR (a *genius loci* or powerful High Fae), to give a rough indication of magical capability and threat. Special Agent Reynolds constantly revises the entries up and down; down for so-called warlocks who turn out to be musicians who did way too many drugs in the '90s, and up for nice old ladies who are in fact able to throw cars around.

Entries are theoretically cross-referenced against other information sources, such as regular FBI databases, tax records, DMV records, state police records, military files, electoral registers, and company and land registries, but the restriction of a mere 24 hours in a day means that Reynolds only manages to do this on an ad-hoc basis when a case comes up. Likewise, there is a long-term intention to enable the Unreality List to scan online folklore and occult websites, as well as get access to digital copies of the Folly's vast magical library, if and when Peter Grant or Abigail Kamara remember to scan them in.



Persons of Interest

Kimberley Reynolds

Born in Enid, Oklahoma and educated at Oklahoma State University-Stillwater, where she studied Healthcare Administration, Criminal Justice, and Criminal Behaviour, Kimberley Reynolds became a fully-fledged FBI agent after a brief career in insurance fraud investigation[9]. Following training at Quantico, she served in the FBI's Albany field office and then the Office of Partner Engagement before transferring to the CIRG as a result of her experiences in London while investigating the death of American student James Gallagher[10].

Reynolds' first assignment for the CIRG was the re-investigation of several active shooter incidents to determine if any of them had a magical connection. She crisscrossed the country interviewing surviving incarcerated active shooters, including one prisoner in Florence, Arizona. Other assignments saw more action; for example, a later investigation resulted in the levelling of the centre of a small town[11].



Reynolds also investigated the death of the Anglo-American practitioner John Chapman in Cleveland, Ohio[12] and has more recently begun to investigate the "anti-magic" extremist group **ASU** (page 59) and their connections to certain unidentified supernatural forces[13]. As a result of her experiences, she is capable of detecting traces of magical *vestigia* after an event.

Footnotes: [9, 11]*Winter's Gifts*, [10]*Whispers Under Ground*, [12]*Lies Sleeping*, [13]*False Value*

Kimberley is independent, a flexible thinker, and proficient at improvising resources from whatever local materials are at hand. As a committed Christian, her beliefs have been modified by her experiences with the world of magic.

- **Description:** a slim white woman in her 30s, with green eyes and auburn hair cut in a bob. When at Quantico, she dresses in a smart trouser suit and a blouse, with her gold FBI badge on her belt. Out in the field, she dresses according to the mission.
- **Traits:** relatively down to earth but can sometimes have an air of superiority. Thanks to her Christian upbringing, Reynolds doesn't swear or blaspheme, and tends to wince if others do so in her presence.
- **Allegiances:** first and foremost, to her faith, then the FBI. Also has deepening ties to the Special Assessment Unit (aka the Folly) in London.

Special Agent Kimberley Reynolds, *FBI*

STR 60 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 70 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Fast Reactions, Signature Firearm (Glock 9mm service pistol).

Skills
Athletics 50%, Drive 60%, Navigate 40%, Observation 70%, Read Person 60%, Research 50%, Sense Vestigia 40%, Social 60%, Stealth 40%; Law 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 70%.

Languages
English (own) 70%.

Lane Harris

Harris is Assistant Director of the CIRG and Special Agent Reynolds' immediate boss.

- **Description:** a smartly, if conservatively, dressed white man in his mid-50s, with small blue eyes, thin lips, and a straight nose. According to Reynolds, Harris' receding hairline gives him the appearance of a cartoon owl even though he doesn't wear glasses.
- **Traits:** Harris is an intelligent, insightful man who is well aware of the existence of the supernatural and has been lobbying his superiors for more resources with which to tackle the growing threat of organisations like the **ASU** (page 59).
- **Allegiances:** his staff and the FBI.



Lane Harris, *Assistant Director*

STR 50 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Signature Firearm (Glock 9mm service pistol), Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 60%, Navigate 50%, Observation 70%, Read Person 80%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 80%, Stealth 40%; Law 80%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 70%.

Languages
English (own) 70%.





Jan Stepanyan

Lane Harris' personal assistant. Jan, referred to by Reynolds as the "wonder PA," organises their boss' office and makes sure it runs extremely efficiently; they also have contacts everywhere, within both the Bureau and its partner agencies. While usually on hand to take notes, they sometimes absent themselves from meetings dealing with UC cases in order to maintain the department's plausible deniability. If such a case is officially authorised retrospectively, Jan drifts quietly into the office to record the proceedings for prosperity.

- **Description:** Jan is in their mid-fifties, dresses professionally, and wears horn-rimmed glasses.
- **Traits:** highly organised, calm, and methodical—some might say, unflappable.
- **Allegiances:** Harris, the IOSS, and their contacts.

Jan Stepanyan, *personal assistant*

STR 50 **CON** 50 **DEX** 50 **INT** 60 **POW** 70
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 14 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Silver-Tongued, Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 50%, Drive 60%, Navigate 50%, Observation 70%, Read Person 70%, Research 70%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 70%, Stealth 40%; Computer Use 70%, Read Lips 60%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 40%.

Languages
English (own) 80%.

Cymbeline Moonglum

A former hedge witch who now works for an environmental advocacy group in Washington, DC, Cymbeline acts as an intelligence asset for Special Agent Reynolds on matters pertaining to the demi-monde.

- **Description:** a tall, incredibly thin white woman in her late 30s. Smartly dressed in a navy-blue skirt suit and pink blouse during office hours. Always wears a silver Celtic knot pendant on a silver chain—enchanted, based on the *vestigia* emanating from it.
- **Traits:** described by Reynolds as an inveterate gossip, Cymbeline nevertheless enjoys making people work for whatever information she has. Passionate about environmental causes, and deeply suspicious of large corporations and federal government.
- **Allegiances:** CIRG intelligence asset. Maintains contact with her former coven members, whom she refers to as "old friends."



Case Seed: Tin Men

Agents of the CIRG are contacted by a prison guard who hopes they might not laugh in his face when he tells them about the time he had a "close encounter" on an empty road outside the small town of Ffestiniog, Pennsylvania. At first, he thought he'd hit a deer, but there was nothing save for a large human handprint embedded in the hood (bonnet) of his vehicle. He swears he saw a ghostly, alien face looking at him from the surrounding woodland, which subsequently vanished. Trained agents can sense some *vestigia* from the bonnet (hood) of the car (a successful **Sense Vestigia** roll): low singing or humming, and the tang of earth and metal.

The citizens of Ffestiniog are unusually unfriendly to outsiders, and indeed the entire place seems to have no nightlife, actively encouraging visitors not to come into town after dark. The investigators discover that the town is still (somehow) producing quality tin items, though they cannot locate the old mine entrance, refinery, or workshop.

With a little digging, the agents could discover the elusive community of Pobol Tyrchod ("Mole People" in Welsh) living in an unlikely subterranean complex, working the old tin deposits. They are distant cousins of the Quiet People of London—pale, strong, and able to mould metal with their bare hands. They have become curious about the outside world, but the townsfolk who profit from their tin goods are not happy about them trying to leave. The townspeople are also not happy to have interfering outsiders from the government nosing around.

Cymbeline Moonglum, *former witch*

STR 40 **CON** 60 **DEX** 50 **INT** 60 **POW** 70
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 17 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Magical.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 70%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 70%, Stealth 40%; History 60%, Magic 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 40%.

Languages
English (own) 70%.

Spells
Aqua (mastered), *Impello*, Snapdragon (mastered), *Terra* (mastered); Candano, Waterbomb.

Signare
The smell of rich earth, the sound of running water, and a feeling of hunger.

Hedge Wizards, Monster Hunters, & Others

From Special Agent Reynolds' files:
While rumors of small groups of American practitioners continue to surface, such as the Santa Cruz witch coven and the **New Orleans Witches** (NOW, page 52), individual "hedge wizards" remain an elusive species of magic user. Given the fractured and decentralized history of American magical practice, it is no surprise that any attempt to trace hedge wizards is a challenge. For every report of a possible lone practitioner, there are a dozen con artists, stage magicians, cult leaders, and people claiming that they can "do magic." The added threat of persecution and actual bodily harm from hostile organizations (**Alderman Technical Solutions**, page 37; **ASU**, page 59) makes it doubly hard to identify any genuine practitioners, who are wisely maintaining a low profile for their own safety.

That said, there is evidence of several practitioners at large across the country who do not seem to be affiliated with any of the known groups. These individuals have been mentioned in news and police reports as persons of interest who effected a miraculous escape from a crime scene, or who are wanted for questioning in relation to

Nazareths, Cons, & Gun Shows

'Did he say where he got them from?' asked Lesley.
'Nobody ever says where they got their goods from,' said Hyacinth, 'And if they do say, you figure they're lying.'

—Whispers Under Ground

London has a loosely organised set of nazareths, formerly known as goblin markets (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 283), where those affiliated with the demi-monde can operate more or less in the open. Things are different in the United States. While some major cities have similar arrangements, the US is considerably larger than the UK, and its markets aren't centralised in one or two major cities.

Over the last hundred years or so, US-based members of the demi-monde have traditionally used two venues for open trading: science fiction and fantasy (SFF) conventions, and gun shows.

These venues offer invaluable benefits to traders of the twilight subculture. First, they can operate openly. Nobody cares what they look or dress like—and if they do, the glamour covers up most problems. Second, they can do business on a cash-only basis. This is becoming increasingly more difficult at the largest comic and SFF conventions, where mundane attendees expect to be able to use their cards. Gun shows still welcome the almighty greenback, so quite a few shades prefer doing business there. There's a smaller contingent that haunts major book markets, like the annual New York Antiquarian Book Fair, but there aren't nearly as many demi-monde in the book business as there used to be.

As these shade markets aren't in charge of their own security, the people organising them can't insist—as they do in London—that attendees leave their masks, glamours, and weapons at the door. This means vendors are especially paranoid, which has, in the past, led to some unfortunate incidents. The most recent was an assault at a West Coast SFF convention in 2015; the most violent was a fatal shooting, with two others wounded, at a gun show in 2008.

Generally speaking, the demi-monde who attend gun shows differ in their political and social views to those who prefer SFF cons. Sometimes this is a convenient fiction used to pass, but more often it springs from genuine conviction. However, the demi-monde will always back each other up in any conflict with outsiders. "*Hey, Rube!*" still carries a lot of weight—if that old carnie call goes out, all demi-monde in the vicinity will respond regardless of their personal opinions or politics.

The main reason why the demi-monde hasn't decamped *en masse* to the internet is because it would mean having to adopt an electronic payment system. Some shades are too old-fashioned for that, but most simply prefer not to have bank accounts, social security numbers, or anything else that involves KYC (Know Your Customer) of any description. Some say it's an antiquated fear of the modern world, others that it's difficult to explain to officialdom why you still seem to be 30 when you were allegedly born in 1902.

Which is not to say that there are no members of the demi-monde on the internet. There are plenty, and more can be found doing business there every year. There's always gossip that popular streamer so-and-so is really... and so on. Gossip is frequently all it is, though.

Any American investigator with either the Occult or Magic skill is aware of how the shade markets operate, no roll required. However, gaining access to one inside a gun show or con requires a successful Social skill roll.

unsolved crimes of a bizarre or even allegedly supernatural nature. It remains unclear whether these unnamed hedge wizards are the perpetrators of those crimes, or (*may the Good Lord protect us*—Reynolds) private individuals who have taken it upon themselves to use their magical skills to "assist" official investigations. The answer is probably a little of both.

Where such individuals would have received their training, if not from one of the recognized American magic associations, is unclear. And while it is likely that some can trace their lineage back to the early Franklinian and Jeffersonian traditions, others may be Indigenous or descended from immigrants who brought their own magical traditions from elsewhere in Europe, Africa, and Asia, and subsequently passed their knowledge down through families or community groups.

The term "monster hunter" covers a broad spectrum. Some are vigilantes—mobile, well-armed individuals who have taken it upon themselves to track down and, usually, kill creatures they deem to be a threat to American lives. Whether acting out of a sense of public spirit, personal vengeance, or just the thrill of hunting something "unnatural," they can be a formidable threat to anyone or anything they train their sights on (*as confirmed by the backlog of unsolved homicide case files on the Unreality List*—Reynolds). This kind of monster hunter tends to be far easier to track than your average hedge wizard. At least, it's easier to tell where they've been by simply scanning law enforcement reports for unexplained attacks on drifters, unidentified charred skeletons, and people admitted to hospital emergency rooms with "unusual" stab wounds.

Just what counts as a monster to these hunters is loosely defined at best, and covers a wide variety of targets: a vampire nest in a Midwest farming community, "fairy folk" prowling the Las Vegas strip, or reports of a six-foot gator-beast haunting the Louisiana backroads. It's likely that monster hunters encounter as many harmless members of the American demi-monde just trying to get on with their lives as they do genuinely dangerous fae or monstrous cryptids. Regardless, the results of these encounters are often violent (*which supports my theory that a proportion of monster hunters are just unstable criminals in muscle cars who like shooting peaceful fae for fun*—Reynolds).

Such vigilantes should not, of course, be confused with the community of cryptozoologists who undertake research in the pursuit of finding "Bigfoot" and other creatures of folklore, and who are, on the whole, a law-abiding group. You can usually track them down through their blogs and vlogs, although they may also end up in the emergency room from time to time.

New Orleans Witches (NOW)

Base of Operations: New Orleans
Membership: unknown
Practitioners: non-Newtonians, all levels of ability.

Described in an ATS operative's research notes[14] as a "network," the exact number of witches (and/or wizards) based out of New Orleans is currently unknown, as are the origins of their traditions. Given the Crescent City's history, there are undoubtedly influences from the French *Académie Royale de Philosophie Occulte*, along with traditions brought from Africa by the city's enslaved and *gens de couleur libres* (free people of colour) populations. The Spanish, French Acadian immigrants (Cajuns), and, later, white Anglo-Americans, also brought along their own practices.

One of New Orleans' most well-known witches is Rosemarie Louise Moreno, "the Rose of New Orleans." Born to a wealthy Creole *gens de couleur libres* family sometime after 1750, she was educated in Paris and was a member of the French Royal Academy until the Revolution, when she fled to London and began associating with *La Société de la Rose*. Rose jars are named allegedly after her (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 326) and she probably had a hand in creating the infamous Mary Engine with her associate, Mary Somerville, aka "the Lilly," aided and abetted by Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace[15].

Sadie Clarkson

Briefly served as the town librarian in Eloise, Wisconsin, where she'd allegedly moved to escape New Orleans' humidity. Clarkson returned to the Big Easy after succumbing to HTD, known in the US as Rebenstock's Syndrome (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 177), while defending her library from supernatural attack[16].

- **Description:** a small, middle-aged, dark-haired woman. Narrow-shouldered, with a penchant for dressing in short skirts and jackets in primary colours. Her left eyelid droops slightly, and there is an almost imperceptible stiffness to the left-hand side of her face.
- **Traits:** a dry sense of humour, a firm handshake, and reasonably good at keeping secrets.
- **Allegiances:** the loose network of other New Orleans practitioners; local contact for Special Agent Kimberley Reynolds.

Footnotes: [14, 16] *Winter's Gifts*, [15] *False Value*

New Orleans

We know from records obtained during the Second World War that the French magical establishment maintained strong links to their counterparts before, during, and after the War of Independence. Rosemarie Louise Moreno, the so-called Rose of New Orleans, is confirmed to have started her career in the Crescent City.

More information will require a greater expenditure of resources than have been allocated to this office. However, given the strong influences from Spain, France, the Caribbean, and Africa, I would expect traditions in New Orleans to be both diverse and distinctive.

—ROI Gunter Gebauer

Sadie Clarkson, *rusticated witch*

STR 40 **CON** 40 **DEX** 60 **INT** 70 **POW** 70
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 17 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Magical.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 40%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 50%, Research 80%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 60%, Stealth 30%; Computer Use 60%, History 60%, Magic 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 70%, French Creole (own) 70%.

Spells*
Aqua (mastered), Flash Bulb, *Impello* (mastered), Rock Drill (mastered); Candano, *Impello vibrato* (mastered), Fireball (mastered); *Musique des Feuilles (Arbuscula cantans*; mastered), *Ombres Sourdez* (*Sagum umbrarum*), *Sarte Taillis* (mastered).

*While Sadie Clarkson still remembers all of her spells, she dares not use magic again, as it risks a further, much more severe stroke than the one she has already suffered.

Signare
A burst of heat, like stepping out into summer sunshine; the taste of strong liquor and the rank smell of still water; the last note of an old, sad song.



Las Serpientes

Base of Operations: Los Angeles
Membership: 12
Practitioners: non-Newtonians; Salvo Muñoz can be considered a master practitioner, while other family members are either apprentices or non-practitioners.

This elusive band of snake-masked vigilantes has been sighted across Los Angeles County and much of Southern California at the scene of violent attacks on drug dealers, street gangs, and even organised crime syndicates, at least some of whom have links to the darker side of the American demi-monde. They appear to fight unarmed but have managed to render at least a dozen hardened criminals in need of serious hospital attention, while leaving dozens more battered, bruised, and eager to confess their felonies to the local police.

In reality, Las Serpientes are all members of the Muñoz family, whose patriarch Salvo, a former *luchador* (masked wrestler), is a non-Newtonian hedge wizard who has trained *la familia* to develop their supernaturally enhanced physical abilities in a war on crime and magical predators. They have developed a sort of "thaumaturgical sight" they call *brujajos*, enabling them to see an unearthly glow emanating from the skin of magical practitioners and fae. Rumour has it that it was they who put an end to the so-called San Fernando Jaguar's bloody attacks on undocumented Mexican immigrants.



GM ADVICE

For game purposes, treat *brujajos* as equivalent to the Sense Vestigia skill.

Salvo Muñoz

Originally from Naucalpan, Mexico, the man who would become Salvo Muñoz came to America with a touring group of *luchadores* in the mid-1970s. A gifted *técnico* ("good guy" wrestler) known as El Águila, he wore his eagle mask with pride. However, his rise to *lucha libre* stardom was dashed in Los Angeles, when he and the other members of his *trios* (three-person tag team) were attacked by vampires; only he survived.

El Águila swore vengeance against the creatures who had killed his friends. Casting aside his eagle mask, he took the names of his dead teammates and was reborn as Salvo Muñoz, La Serpiente. From that day on, he dedicated his life to learning magic from the hedge wizards and witches living in California's various Mexican communities, to help him and, later, his extended family in their fight against evil, whatever shape it takes.



- **Description:** a solidly built Mexican man in his late 60s, with receding white hair and a neatly trimmed white moustache. As he has officially retired from fighting to concentrate on training the younger generations of Las Serpientes, he no longer wears his serpent mask.
- **Traits:** driven and determined, Salvo is also a fiercely proud family man.
- **Allegiances:** Las Serpientes and his civilian family; Southern California's Latin American community.

Salvo Muñoz, *wrestling patriarch*

STR 60 **CON** 60 **DEX** 60 **INT** 50 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 39 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Fast Reactions, Magical, Natural Toughness.

Skills
Athletics 65%, Brujajos (Sense Vestigia) 85%, Drive 40%, Navigate 30%, Observation 70%, Read Person 80%, Research 40%, Social 65%, Stealth 75%; Art/Craft (Acting) 70%, Magic 80%, Occult 75%; Fighting 85%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English 50%, Spanish (own) 60%.

Spells
Salvo is the equivalent of a Newtonian master practitioner, although he has trained purely in spells that can be used for attack, defence, and distraction. In game terms, he therefore knows—and has mastered—all the spells in *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, **Chapter 4**, except: Rock Drill, *Terra*, *Impello vibrato*, Light Bulb, Wandering Light, Bumblebee, The Coffin Bell, *Telescopium*, The Wall Banger, *Clausurafrange*, *Seducere*, and *Vox imperante*. Not that he knows them by those names, of course! At the GM's discretion, Salvo may also know any relevant spell from **Appendix B** (page 173), such as *Casus levis* and *Sagum umbrarum*.

Signare
The roar of an excited crowd; the impact of a fist on flesh; the warm, comforting smell of old family recipes cooking.

Junior Luchador, *Las Serpientes*

STR 60 **CON** 60 **DEX** 60 **INT** 50 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10* **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Fast Reactions, Natural Toughness.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Brujajos (Sense Vestigia) 60%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 30%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; Occult 60%, Track 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 60%, Spanish (own) 60%.



Notes
If you want your junior *luchador* to be a practitioner, change STR and CON to 50 and INT and POW to 60. Substitute the Magical advantage for Fast Reactions and Natural Toughness, and replace the Track skill with Magic 60%. In terms of spells, the *luchadores* prefer combat-based spells; choose the appropriate ones from the **Spell List** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 179) and **Appendix B** (page 173). Remember to also create a *signare* for them, including one element from Salvo's.

*Adjust their base MP by adding 1 per mastered spell.

Case Seed: California Burning

A curator is found neatly bisected in a Pasadena aeronautics museum. Apart from the missing half of her body, the only other item to have disappeared from the scene is a prototype jet engine dating back to the 1950s. Someone calling themselves "The Jack Parsons Project" is haunting the more obscure online forums where the mechanical meets the magical, and an unnaturally intense forest fire is raging on the outskirts of Pasadena.

How was the curator killed so cleanly? Where is the missing half of her body, and the engine? What is the connection to jet propulsion pioneer and occultist Jack Parsons? What is the Babalon Cup and what is the connection to Aleister Crowley's goddess Babalon, the Mother of Abominations, from his *The Book of the Law*? And why do all roads lead to that geekiest of geek meccas, a comic shop?

This case seed is presented as a hook for the Los Angeles-based family of *luchador* hedge wizards, Las Serpientes. But FBI agents from the CIRG might equally be contacted by local police to investigate, given the "weird" Jack Parsons connection. Equally, the New York Librarians might learn of the curator's death and send some of their people to locate and contain the dangerous magical artefact known as the Babalon Cup.

Playing with Hedge Wizards & Monster Hunters

Hedge wizards and monster hunters may be used either as investigators in a demi-monde or monster-hunting game, or non-player characters (NPCs) in an ongoing "mainstream" game where the investigators are part of the CIRG or some other official organisation—perhaps as allies, antagonists, or annoyances.

They can be played as all-hunter or all-wizard groups who stick to their own kind, or as diverse parties that include a mixture of hunters and wizards working together. If law enforcement agent investigators are part of any monster-hunting group, some thought should be put into why that character has chosen not to arrest or report their partners for any illegal vigilante activity—although you mustn't forget that many "monster hunters" are, in fact, law-abiding professional or amateur cryptozoologists!

An example outline for a group of monster hunters and hedge wizards is presented in the following section. The group's individual profiles can be found in **Appendix A: Ready-To-Play Investigators**, starting on page 165.

Cryptid Kickers

Base of Operations: mobile
Membership: 6
Practitioners: 2; not that the others know that—yet!

Cryptid Kickers is the name of an online paranormal reality series in which four friends from college—Shawn Floyd, Rumer Kaliparayath, her twin sister (non-identical) Meg, and Gray Sartori—travel around America investigating reports of mothmen, hominids, ghosts, witches, and aliens. Episodes are put together using hand-held cameras, thermal imagers, EMF readers, and an impressive amount of background research. Ninety per cent of their investigations are disappointingly inconclusive, though the shows are always edited together with plenty of jump scares and eerie low-light encounters in old houses and creepy woods.

The other ten per cent of their encounters have genuine elements of the supernatural: traces of some reclusive fae, magical creature, or ghost. Practitioners and hedge wizards generally give the well-meaning but often annoying Cryptid Kickers a wide berth in order to avoid showing up on an online video streaming channel with a few thousand followers. Which is frustrating for Rumer and Meg, both fledgling—and secret—practitioners, who are seeking a mentor to teach them more about magic.

Whenever things get genuinely dangerous, the Cryptid Kickers call in some friendly muscle in the form of Francisca "Frankie" Morales and Josefina "Joey" Castro, best friends and occasional lovers who stumbled across the existence of magical creatures when their band's tour van stopped off at a remote truck stop south of the Mexican border. Having escaped a brush with a nest of vampires by the skin of their teeth, Frankie and Joey now travel across the US, chasing down reports of unexplained or savage deaths and hunting the monsters responsible. In between cases, Frankie and Joey fund themselves by playing gigs as retro punk band Cheri Bomb. Their tour van contains an impressive array of firearms, hunting knives, crossbows, and flamethrowers.

- **Shawn Floyd:** a solidly built Black man with an easy-going smile. The Cryptid Kickers' de facto leader.
- **Rumer Kaliparayath:** a petite young woman of South Asian descent with long black hair, rarely seen without her shapeless beanie hat. The Cryptid Kickers' sound person and researcher.

Playing with Hedge Wizards & Monster Hunters (Continued)

- **Meghana "Meg" Kaliparayath:** a little heavier set than her twin sister, with short black hair and a reassuring smile. The Cryptid Kickers' driver and nurse.
- **Gray Sartori:** a skinny Italian American who looks barely out of his teens. The Cryptid Kickers' cameraman, and responsible for managing the video channel and all their tech requirements.
- **Francisca "Frankie" Morales:** a slender, bass-playing Latinx person with close-cropped black hair, who dresses like someone in a punk rock band: ripped trousers, chains, etc., when not wearing mechanic's overalls.
- **Josefina "Joey" Castro:** a curvy Latina woman with shoulder-length hair and a fondness for practical clothing with lots of pockets. Cheri Bomb's drummer.

Case Seed: Real Jackalopes of Tennessee

Someone finds evidence of an actual living jackalope (a jackrabbit with antlers) in the wild and contacts the investigators to look into the matter. The creature has been magically created by fusing a jackrabbit with an antelope, much like the human-animal chimeras in the Strip Club of Dr Moreau in London[17].

It's the creation of an American practitioner who learned the practice from the first Faceless Man in the 1970s, and they or their descendants have been experimenting with creating hybrids for years. But what other, more dangerous, cryptids are they working on? Which ones are locked up somewhere secret and which have already been released into the wild?

Mr Sunday

Mr Sunday is neither a hedge wizard nor a monster hunter. He's a fixer and go-between, with deep connections to both the American demi-monde and some very rich people—either he's old money or he's very good at faking it. He has carved out a lucrative niche as the middleman for those in need of someone with a very particular set of skills and is known for hiring contractor A to work for client B without either knowing of the other's involvement, thus providing total deniability—a must in the shady world of acquisitions and extractions.

Sunday has offices in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles. He claims to have an extensive collection of embarrassing files (which may or may not exist) on pretty much anyone in the United States connected in any way with magic—the organised Newtonian version and everything else besides, up to and including hedge wizards and shades. Only he and his assistant, Ms Elena Jueves, know where, if anywhere, they're kept: some anonymous bank vault, hidden servers in Nevada, an abandoned intercontinental ballistic missile silo in the Midwest, or a prepper's paradise in California, perhaps? They're not saying. Or it could all be a bluff. Mr Sunday could just be a chancer in an expensive suit, claiming talents and extortion material he doesn't possess.

Mr Sunday

Sunday claims to be a lawyer and is certainly intimately familiar with the profession, except there's nobody by that name on any state bar. He is well known in Washington, DC and is a member of the city's elite Alibi Club. Anyone who's heard of Mr Sunday knows only one thing for certain besides his legendary discretion: he never leaves the continental United States, not for any reason. He doesn't even cross the border into Canada or Mexico. He claims he doesn't like foreign travel.

Footnote: [17]*Moon Over Soho*



- **Description:** a silver-haired, clean-shaven white man of uncertain age, possibly in his 40s or early 50s. He has a pleasant, lean face with a genteel but knowing smile. Dresses in smart suits that would make a highly paid attorney proud.
- **Traits:** smooth, polite, and has suitcases full of cash—literally. Mr Sunday will work with anyone and is entirely mercenary. He is a great fan of literature and can often be found in out-of-the-way bookstores on the hunt for anything he might add to his collection of GK Chesterton first editions. He also has a near childlike delight in anything to do with dinosaurs.
- **Allegiances:** once Sunday takes a contract, his allegiance to his employer is ironclad, and he will never reveal their identity. Sunday's reputation—and his future employability—depends on his loyalty and discretion. He never ever gets his hands dirty; that's what contractors are for.



GM ADVICE

Mr Sunday is a useful way to bring freelance hedge wizard and/or monster hunter investigators into a case file, particularly if they're new to delving into the weird and wonderful. See the two case files in this book for examples of how to use him in this way.

Mr Sunday, *charismatic fixer*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 80 **INT** 80 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12* **LUCK:** 60
Advantages: Connected, Silver-Tongued.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 40%, Navigate 40%, Observation 70%, Read Person 70%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 70%, Stealth 40%; Appraise 70%, History 70%, Law 70%, Occult 60%, Sleight of Hand 60%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 40%.

Languages
English (own) 80%, French 50%, Latin 70%, Spanish 40%.

Spells
None—unless the GM prefers otherwise, in which case, Sunday gains the Magical advantage and the Magic skill at 60%, plus spells of the GM's choosing from **Chapter 4**: **Newtonian Magic**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* and **Appendix B** (page 173). And don't forget to create a mysterious *signare* for him as well.

*Adjust his base MP by adding 1 for each mastered spell.

Elena Jueves

Ms Jueves is Mr Sunday's chauffeur and personal assistant; she answers all his calls, organises his life, and provides 24-hour personal security for him. Apart from Sunday, which is her day off. She is worked off her feet but never caught off guard and would look dignified even if she were scrubbing toilets. A black belt bureaucrat, she carries a gun and has one or two spells up her well-tailored sleeve.

- **Description:** an attractive and athletic Latina woman in her mid-20s; full of poise and style, with long black hair in a power ponytail. As befits Mr Sunday's personal assistant, she is always immaculately dressed in a business suit.
- **Traits:** Ms Jueves' philosophy is that there is no pleasure, only business. Her one area of vulnerability is that she is superstitious and has regular appointments with her psychic.
- **Allegiances:** loyal to Mr Sunday, Ms Jueves will not break his confidences. She may be called on to rescue any investigators hired by Sunday if they truly get out of their depth, or to point them in the right direction if they become stuck.

Elena Jueves, *Girl Friday*

STR 60 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 13 **LUCK:** 62
Advantage: Magical.
Weapon: Walther PPK (Regular Handgun).

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 70%, Navigate 50%, Observation 60%, Read Person 50%, Research 40%, Sense Vestigia 65%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; Computer Use 60%, Locksmith 40%, Occult 40%, Read Lips 50%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 50%.

Languages
American Sign Language 50%, English (own) 60%, Spanish (own) 60%.

Spells
Impello, Noisemaker (mastered); Shield.

Signare
The scent of strong black coffee and cigars, the bittersweet tang of lime juice, and the sound of playing cards being shuffled.



ASU

From Special Agent Reynolds' files:
ASU ("Against Spiritual Usurpation") is a fringe group of "extreme animists" who, by appropriating Indigenous practices, believe that all objects possess a spirit, including trees, rocks, and even machines (*Of course it turns out that they're right about trees, or at least some trees, and some rivers too.*—Reynolds). Further, they believe that those who use magic are usurping the natural order; they refer to practitioners as "leeches" (*frequently in upper case*—Reynolds) who they claim are sucking the spirit from the world. Practitioners, when identified or suspected of using magic, are ASU's primary targets, along with so-called "magic items," such as Rose jars (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 326) and the Mary Engine.

Membership of ASU is loose and mainly confined to special interest groups on social media sites. The FBI estimates there are over 100 active adherents to the ASU doctrine, though the true identities of online members have so far proven elusive. Low-volume pamphlets espousing ASU philosophy are in circulation, and certain individuals like Anthony Lane[18] have penned semi-coherent manifestos of their beliefs.

Reports on ASU date back to 2007, but that may simply be when they first appeared on the FBI's watch list. Their likely place of origin is the West Coast, possibly San Francisco or Portland. ASU have been implicated in several attacks in California, such as the killing of witches from a coven in Santa Cruz by persons unknown (**Santa Cruz Witch Murders**, page 60), the attack on Branwell Petersen's tech firm in San Jose by known ASU member Anthony Lane, and the later carjacking attempt on entrepreneur Terrence Skinner's life in Los Angeles by an unidentified assailant[19]. Confirmed ASU attacks have thus far involved single perpetrators armed with handguns, although the Santa Cruz deaths included offensive magical "demon traps," which suggests a possible ASU splinter group with more sophisticated capabilities, not to mention access to practitioner resources.

The FBI's Counterterrorism Analysis section initially assessed the threat posed by ASU to be low, but the Anthony Lane attack, combined with new information from sources in London and New York (**New York Library Association**, page 41) has reclassified the group as DVEs (Domestic Violent Extremists). Whether as lone active shooters or a coordinated splinter group, ASU poses a real and credible danger to practitioners, those wrongly identified as practitioners, and anyone else caught in the crossfire.

Footnotes: [18, 19] *False Value*

The Wild West

As I have already indicated, the limited resources available to generate additional intelligence sources means that much of the following is based on limited information and speculation. Simply put, outside of enclaves such as New York, the demi-monde runs completely out of control. Small groups of autodidactic practitioners are scattered from the Midwest to the Pacific coast. These range from paranoid "prepper" communities to so-called witches' covens that are little more than reading groups with some magic on the side. Self-styled monster hunters pursue location-spirits, malignancies, and rogue practitioners with a fine disregard for law or procedure. There are rumours of bizarre cults and remote communities making deals with talking animals.

Conclusion
It is a sad fact of modern life that social problems that originate in the United States can spill over to the rest of the world. While some may regard the chaotic state of magic in the US with amused contempt, it is my belief that it is only a matter of time before trouble over there becomes trouble over here.

—ROI Gunter Gebauer

GM Information

Base of Operations: somewhere on the West Coast
Membership: 100–150
Practitioners: at least one member has the ability to produce demon traps, though the membership as a whole is presumed to have little or no magical training.

Santa Cruz Witch Murders

Santa Cruz was home to a group of low- to mid-level practitioners calling themselves the Glory Circle. They were feminist activists with an interest in "empowerment rituals"—energetic group activities involving dancing and chanting while collectively creating magical *formae*. Their magical training came from an older member of the group who'd moved out to the West Coast from New York after her husband died, bringing with her a book, the *Aendor Manifesto*, which contained a number of elaborate high-order spells of dubious origin and purpose that leant heavily on the "curse" side.

The effect of the witches' rituals was largely a general sense of well-being and positivity among the group, but the widely reported cases of spontaneous combustion among several notorious domestic abusers in the area may be more than a coincidence.

Their activities inevitably attracted the attention of one or more ASU members, who went to great lengths to murder the witches with a range of magical attacks ranging from domestic homicide, drowning, and jellyfish toxin to demon traps. (Like many mundane groups, the hypocrisy of this position is either rationalised away or simply ignored. If they were entirely rational they wouldn't be doing what they do anyway.) It's presumed that every member of the coven was killed, but as the precise roster is unknown, it is possible that one or two witches survived by moving town and changing their identity, or simply lying low until ASU lost interest. If so, they may retain possession of more dangerous magical items.

Persons of Interest

Santa Cruz Murderer

This resourceful, relentless killer waged a war of terror on the Santa Cruz witches' coven, employing bewilderingly varied methods. They may be a single person with sufficient magical ability to create demon traps, compel partners to commit domestic homicide, and drown people in their own baths. Or they may be a group of ASU actors working together using means both magical and mundane. Or, more worrying still, the murderer may be a supernatural entity, such as a powerful revenant or even a *genius loci*, working at the direction of ASU to eliminate enemies of their twisted belief system.

Locations

To round off this chapter, this section contains places of interest with a strong connection to American magic, practitioners, and the demi-monde. They may be used to inspire further case files or as a source of NPCs.

Acadia National Park, Maine

Off the coast of Maine, Mount Desert Island is home to Acadia National Park, comprising almost 200 square kilometres (almost 50,000 acres) of woodland, lakes, and mountains, including the highest peak on the east coast. From the 1880s to the 1920s, it served as a summer retreat for America's wealthiest family dynasties, who held extravagant parties in luxurious island mansions. Today, the park is a popular destination for hikers, climbers, and wildlife enthusiasts, as well as horseback riders traversing the miles of historic carriage roads lined with granite stones, known as Rockefeller's Teeth. Some Wabanaki still live on the island; others frequent it regularly to engage in traditional harvests and festivals, and to attend board meetings and exhibitions.

Recently, several park visitors have cut their vacations short amid reports of inexplicable and unnerving incidents. Horse riders are run off the carriage roads by a vintage—and eerily silent—Duesenberg Model J car. Campers experience vivid waking nightmares near a derelict mansion that once belonged to raffish playboy Lawrence Vanderley. Hikers encounter a disturbing "witch of the woods" in the shady depths of the Acadia pine forest. Is it all just exaggerated hearsay, or is there a common, supernatural origin?

Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Washington, DC

Conspiracy theorists have long debated the supposed occult significance of the dollar bill's symbology, particularly that of the eye in the pyramid. While that specific element was only added to the bank note in 1935, an earlier form of paper money called Continental currency also featured a similar, though unfinished, pyramid. What could it mean? Given that known Newtonian practitioner Benjamin Franklin was involved in the design and printing of some of America's earliest paper currencies, did he add some form of enchantment to those old paper bills? Could there still be a grain of magical significance in the notes in everyone's wallet? Perhaps something intended to shore up America's economy through boom and bust, depression and war? Could there be an object in the Bureau itself that once imprinted every single note with the tiniest, undetectable magical effect? What happened when the old presses were replaced with newer, mundane machines? Who would go out of their way to collect and steal as many pre-20th century dollar bills as possible, and to what magical end?

Case Seed: MANA in the Wilderness

"Make America Natural Again," or MANA, is a phrase that the FBI has flagged as being linked to ASU. Pamphlets bearing that slogan are found on the body of an ASU activist killed in suspicious circumstances when his pickup truck went over the edge of a mountainous ravine. A *vestigia* assessment (a successful **Sense Vestigia** roll) on the vehicle suggests that something unnatural forced it off the road.

The activist recently picketed and harassed various individuals who he suspected of being "leeches." Most of these people are mundane, if eccentric, citizens; however, a couple are genuine fae and hedge wizards who did not appreciate the activist's attention, nor will they appreciate being investigated for his murder.

Perhaps his paranoid editor at the MANA pamphlet office knows something, but they're unlikely to be helpful to anyone who seems "a bit weird." Not only that, but an active ASU cell is now aggressively tracking whoever killed the activist, causing further harassment and deaths. Both ASU and the murderer must be found and stopped.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The City of Brotherly Love boasts none other than Benjamin Franklin as its most famous citizen, a point of pride that is borne out by the science institute, museum, and national memorial that all bear his name. The institute's extensive collection of "Frankliniana" includes vintage electrical apparatus, automata, and other rare technological artefacts. But, given the great man's connections to Newtonian magic, isn't it possible that, somewhere in the city, stranger, darker secrets lie buried?

Indeed, the recent arrest of a museum curator, detained at Philadelphia International Airport with a

lost Franklin diary and an inexplicably animated human hand in her luggage, suggests that somebody has an ethically challenged interest in the effects of the forms and wisdoms on body parts. When the hand's lingering ghost is identified as an 18th century Londoner, links are revealed between English experimental anatomist William Hewson and his famous housemate Benjamin Franklin. But what has this to do with a long-hidden laboratory below a Philly landmark and a spate of "spontaneous organ failure" deaths among the city's more privileged residents?

This Philadelphia case seed could lead to a follow-up investigation in London, where the original subjects of Hewson and Franklin's anatomical experiments might still live, after a fashion, in a long-sealed Pall Mall cellar. Conversely, a London-based group of investigators could discover the grisly contents of the cellar first, and then follow the trail of loose ends to Philadelphia, where they become involved in the events described above.

Loveland, Ohio

Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, Loveland, Ohio, has been the location of repeated nocturnal sightings of a curious, bipedal amphibian creature that has passed into folklore as the Loveland Frog. Approximately 1.2 metres (4 feet) tall, the creature is variously described as a giant frog or iguana with a leathery face. It is occasionally depicted with a ridged back, not unlike a dinosaur. At least one account reports an encounter with several "frogs," one of which wielded something not unlike a wizard's staff. Is there more to this than simple folkloric nonsense? Is there a genuine colony of frog-like cryptids living out by the Little Miami River? Or is that mention of a staff an indication of an altogether more human, but no less incredible, explanation? But what would anyone, practitioner or otherwise, have to gain by masquerading as a giant frog?

Giant Honey Fungus, Oregon

This single sprawling organism lying under the tree roots of the Malheur National Forest in Oregon, is the world's single largest living thing. Measuring over 3.2 km (2 miles) across and covering almost 8 square kilometres (3 square miles) in area, it's also estimated to be up to 8,000 years old. Inexorable, indestructible, and ancient, what power might be stored in this inconceivably vast living organism? Has it infected and absorbed more than just the forest trees in its millennia of existence? Animals, perhaps, or even people? Is it sheer coincidence that its network of membranes and fibres resembles that of some titanic brain?

Abbey of New Clairvaux, California

Shipped over in crates from Spain in the early 1930s by millionaire William Randolph Hearst, this Trappist monastery sat in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park for decades until its reconstruction finally began in the 1990s. Now the abbey stands in the town of Vina in Northern California. But stone retains *vestigia* better than any other material. Stone *remembers*. What came over from Spain with those stones? Perhaps an unwelcome passenger, seeking to escape the widespread burning of Catholic churches and monasteries by anarchists in May 1931, shortly after the revolution that removed King Alfonso XIII from the Spanish throne? And what else did the stones absorb during their long tenure in Golden Gate Park? What strange astrological rituals did the hippies enact there during the Summer of Love? Now that the stones are reassembled, certain memories and powers are beginning to align and exert their influence on the locals…

Case Seed: Stairway to…?

There is a well-known "urban" legend among US park rangers and search and rescue teams regarding isolated staircases of concrete or stone that apparently lead to nowhere. Usually found in hard-to-access areas deep in the woods and other wildernesses, some are clearly part of abandoned buildings that have collapsed and subsequently been covered by vegetation or water. Some may have been erected as eccentric viewing or hunting platforms, or by pranksters or artists, although no one has yet claimed responsibility for them.

Others are harder to explain, especially as they give off a troubling *vestigium*: feelings of dread and nausea, along with the touch of an icy cold hand on the shoulder. Are these staircases linked to other strange phenomena in the areas they're found in? Are they, as some claim, portals to other locations, including *allokosmoi*? Or are they a very unusual form of malignancy?

And why have they started appearing in other countries?


















WELCOME

3

Woolly Bully

Several of the groups that moved to Montana in the last ten years had vanished without a trace. Since their whole plan, in the first place, was to live off the grid the circumstances of their disappearance were hard to determine. Although rumours filtered east of a creature that stalked the night and ate heavily armed survivalists for breakfast.
—False Value

This case file is for two to four investigators and is designed to take around four hours to play—longer if all the optional encounters are included. It is set in March/April 2016 in the (fictional) town of Meriwether, Montana and the nearby Red Cedar Forest. Woolly Bully demonstrates the sort of adventure that American-based investigators may get mixed up in (**American Gameplay**, page 19). It is also an opportunity for the GM and players to further explore the rules of *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*—just a little further afield from the streets of London!

If you are going to play through this scenario as an investigator, it's time to stop reading, as the rest of this chapter is specifically for your GM. If you are the GM, we recommend that you read through this case file at least once before you run it for your players (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 220).

Woolly Bully has a fairly linear central plot—there aren't many twists, turns, or side-tracks, meaning that it's quite straightforward to run. However, there are several optional encounters included as extras; the GM might include one or more of these for added depth—look for "(Optional)" after the scene's name to tell you which ones they are. The GM can include as many or as few as they feel they and their players would enjoy. While not essential to reach the case file's conclusion, they can give the investigators the opportunity to learn more about the dark shadow looming over Meriwether and help shape its future.

As this is may be only the first or second case file you run for the game, additional GM advice and information on the rules and setting can be found in boxes throughout the text. If you wish to run this case file with more than four investigators, see **Player Group Size** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 222).

GM ADVICE

This case file is another example of using ideas from the novels as a starting point for your adventures. It differs from The Domestic solo adventure and The Bookshop introductory case file (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 17 and 285, respectively) in that it adapts and develops a discussion between Peter Grant and Mrs Chin found in *False Value*, rather than borrowing a plotline in full (see also *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 336).



Depictions of Horror

Not only does this case file deal with the repercussions of (accidental) drug use, but it also contains strong elements of horror, from the brutal and violent deaths of the monster's victims to the body horror of the Metzger family's supernatural mutation into human-bison hybrids (**GM Background**, nearby). Thus, the text describes several scenes of bloody mutilations and catastrophic tissue loss, in keeping with some of the more memorable passages in the *Rivers of London* novels.

If any of the players or the GM are uncomfortable with this level of mature content, simply gloss over the more graphic descriptions, in the same way that some medical and police dramas on television don't actually show anything too gory. Remember, a case file should be fun for everyone taking part. So, rather than dwelling on the gore, concentrate on presenting the mystery and get the investigators focused on dealing with the peril instead (see also **Important: Tone** and **Tone of Play**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 123 and 218, respectively).

GM Background

A few days ago, Meriwether resident Roy Ellsworth was savagely killed by Gordon Metzger (**Dramatis Personae**, this chapter, page 72), a hulking half-human/half-bison hybrid on the loose in the hilly, thick woods of Red Cedar Forest outside town. Gordon ("Gor" for short) is the only child of Kayla and Carl Metzger, who broke away from a reclusive community of preppers called the Götterdämmerung 2000 Group, or G2K (**Downfall (Optional)**, page 107). Gor's parents were not entirely human, having taken part in a ritual to magically transform themselves into bison-people before Gor was born.

At some point after their son's birth, the Metzgers fled G2K, ending up in Red Cedar Forest. There they hid out for more than a decade, raising their preternaturally large child in complete isolation from human society. Only Kayla's sister, Jo-Ann Hadley (**Dramatis Personae**, this chapter, page 70), knew they were living out in the wilds with their monstrous son. As Meriwether's Chief of Police, Hadley has kept everyone out of Red Cedar Forest for the last few years as a way to protect her sister's family from discovery. This plan was working fine—until recently.

Afraid of what Gor was becoming, the Metzgers chained their son up within the old mine they had claimed as their secret home. Things came to a head when Gor—now grown into a massive creature far larger and stronger than both Kayla and Carl—broke free of his confinement while his parents were out collecting supplies from Chief Hadley and disappeared into the forest.

With the woods exhausted of big game by his mum and dad and with no clue of how to hunt for himself, Gor followed his nose to the smell of cooking meat, which led him to Ryan Stinson's barbeque. Terrified of the approaching man-beast, Stinson locked himself in his camper van-*cum*-drug lab (**The Meth Lab (Optional)**, page 90), while Gor helped himself to the abandoned burgers and beer. Not used to alcohol, the now-drunk Gor ransacked the rest of the campsite, accidentally consuming quantities of Stinson's product, crystal meth, from contaminated glassware in the process. Unfortunately, Gor was highly sensitive to the drug, making its effects both swift and violent.

After failing to acquire more food at Stinson's, Gor made his way to Roy and Renee Ellsworth's cabin, where he smashed his way inside to get at their evening meal. During the terrifying assault, Roy drew Gor out towards the road while Renee fled blindly into the woods. Unfortunately, Roy was fatally wounded by Gor before he could get a decent shot off with his hunting rifle. The man-bison tore off Roy's leg to help satiate his hunger but was startled by an approaching truck and so retreated back into the forest to chase down Renee. He soon found her hiding up a tall red cedar tree, safely out of his reach. Yet, even after the man-bison stomped off in frustration, Renee was too terrified to move, and she died from a combination of shock, exposure, and thirst in the days that followed. Her body is still stuck up the tree, a magnet for local carrion birds.

Worse was yet to come. Unsure of where else to go after failing to dislodge Renee Ellsworth, Gor headed home, arriving there shortly after his parents. His pent-up frustration and resentment, fuelled by the crystal meth, boiled over at the sight of them. In a fit of uncontrollable rage, he brutally killed and partially ate both Carl and Kayla. Later, when the drug's effects subsided, he was horrified at

what he'd done but too paranoid and afraid to seek his aunt's help—not that he even knows how to contact her.

Even though crystal meth usually suppresses the user's appetite, Gor continues to range throughout Red Cedar Forest in search of meat, growing hungrier and more desperate with every passing hour. The only person who suspects what has happened is Chief Hadley. She took one look at Roy Ellsworth's body and his wrecked cabin and concluded that some or all of her sister's strange, monstrous family had finally gone completely feral and are loose in the forest somewhere. Hadley dare not take time off from her highly visible job to track down the Metzgers, so she has done the best she can for now: downplaying any suggestion of "monsters in the woods" by using a bear attack as a cover story. She might just get away with her cover-up if it weren't for these meddling investigators…

Alternative Settings

This case file is situated in the sparsely populated hills and mountains of northwest Montana, and builds on a passing reference in *False Value* to strange disappearances and a dangerous creature in the Big Sky State. However, there is nothing set in stone about the adventure's location. Meriwether and Red Cedar Forest could easily be transplanted to somewhere else in America or Canada—or even further afield—without the GM having to change much; all that's needed is an area of low population density with plenty of wooded hills nearby that could conceal criminal skulduggery and supernatural monstrosities alike.

If the GM does decide to change the location, they should bear in mind that Gor and his family are linked heavily to the American bison, which is appropriate for a case file set in Montana. If the adventure is moved away from the bison's historical grazing lands, it might work better with another mammal hybrid; if so, make minor adjustments to Gor's depiction and profile. For example, if moving this case file to the United Kingdom or Europe, we suggest making Gor a stag or wild boar hybrid instead. The same is true for Wash, Red Cedar Forest's *genius loci* (**Dramatis Personae**, this chapter, page 71)—while raccoons have escaped into the wild in Europe, there are more appropriate creatures you could use.

Although we've placed this case file in 2016, it's easy to shift the year if you'd rather play a more contemporary game, as there's nothing in it that links it to a historical event beyond the Millennium (2000). Even Gor's age can stay as it is—his parents just had him a little later in life, is all. It's also worth bearing in mind that methamphetamine production and use in the mid-2010s was not as prevalent in the UK and certain parts of Europe as it was in the US.



History of the American Bison

The American bison, often (mistakenly) referred to as the buffalo, once roamed the Great Plains of North America in mighty herds that shook the ground with a sound known as the "Thunder of the Plains." Able to subsist by grazing on the rough grasses and sedges of grassland and woodland alike, the bison is a natural-born survivor, weathering the heat of summer and the sub-zero temperatures of deep winter with characteristic hardiness. Its thick, shaggy fur, short, curved horns, and muscular humped back make an adult bison a match for any grizzly bear, and even wolf packs are careful to hunt only calves or lone, older bison.

Numbering in the tens of millions around 1800, they were hunted almost to extinction in the late 19th century by settlers, hunters, and sportsmen alike. "Buffalo Bill" Cody reportedly killed over 4,000 bison in an 18-month period in the 1860s. This wave of slaughter was endorsed by the US government, who saw the bison population's reduction as a means of not only securing grazing land for domestic cattle, but also of denying the Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains a vital food source, and thus, dealing a terrible body blow to their way of life.

At the slaughter's height, hunters managed to shoot an average of 5,000 bison every day. Mountains of bison skulls were shipped east by railroad to be pulverised and turned into glue and fertiliser. By 1884, there were just 325 wild bison left alive in the United States. The handful that survived, in Yellowstone National Park and elsewhere, were saved by early animal conservationists like Molly Goodnight. Today, the population stands at around 500,000—though the "Thunder of the Plains" is unlikely to ever be heard again.

Introducing the Investigators

This case file involves the hunt for a "monster," a staple plot of many genre television shows. While Gor's profile has been tailored so that there is a high probability of surviving an encounter with him, there is still a risk of an investigator being seriously injured, or even killed, during this adventure. Thus, the GM may wish to encourage their players to use/create investigators they wouldn't necessarily mind losing to the perils of Red Cedar Forest. As with **The Bookshop** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 285), this means you can treat this adventure as a practice run with "one-off" investigators. Although it might sound a little strange, sometimes playing a case file with a reasonably high mortality rate can be fun, as long as it only happens occasionally—just ask players of Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* RPG! Any investigators who survive will certainly have a tale or two to dine out on.



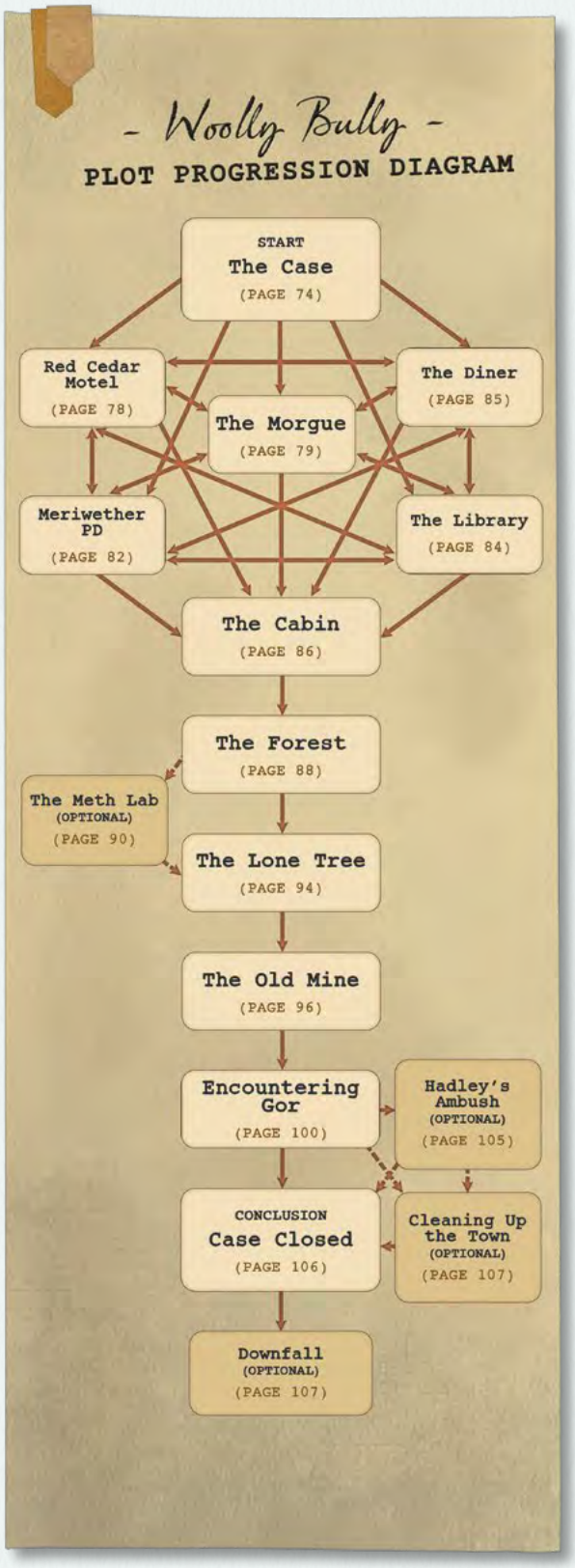
GM ADVICE

We don't recommend using the following option with beginning investigators, but if you want to increase the threat posed by Gor—and your investigators are suitably tough and well equipped to handle the challenge—we've also provided an alternative option where he deals increased damage. See **Greater Danger (Option)** (page 109) for further details.

Players could instead use members of the Cryptid Kickers team and their monster-hunting associates Francisca "Frankie" Morales and Josefina "Joey" Castro, who are provided as ready-to-play investigators in **Appendix A** (page 165). If there are just two players, Frankie and Meg are the most appropriate investigators to choose. For larger player groups, consider adding in Shawn and Joey in that order (then Rumer and Gray, if playing with more than four investigators). Alternatively, players can use the Cryptid Kickers or **Las Serpientes** (page 54) as inspiration for their own monster-hunting team.

If the players do decide to create their own investigators, it's recommended that they choose from these useful occupations: Doctor of Medicine, Influencer, Journalist, Nurse, Private Investigator, Service Member, and Special Agent.

For ease of play, the investigators should all belong to the same organisation. **Chapter 1** describes an array of US-based investigator organisations they could belong to



(**American Investigator Groups**, page 18). Each of these groups will have different reasons for following up on the report of Roy Ellsworth's death. Suggested goals for each group are covered in **Investigator Objectives** (page 75). Of course, if the GM and players would prefer to create their own investigator organisation rather than using one of the ones mentioned, follow the guidelines in **Creating Your Organisation** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 316).

With all the above in mind, use the following points to help guide the players when they create their investigators:

- The following expert skills should prove very useful: Appraise, Art/Craft (Architecture), History, Medicine, Science (Biology or Botany/Zoology), Science (Engineering), Science (Forensics), and Track.
- Useful, but not essential, expert skills are: Animal Handling, Computer Use, Language (American Sign Language), Law, Magic, Occult, Science (Chemistry), Science (Pharmacy), and Survival.
- The most useful spells for an investigator to know for this case file are: *Impello*, Werelight, and Shield (for protection).
- Other potentially useful spells include: *Candano*, *Scindere*, *Serra obscura*, spells that can cause a distraction, such as Noisemaker and Snapdragon, and spells that can be used offensively, such as Flash Bulb and Fireball.

GM ADVICE

Remember, even if the investigators lack some or all the recommended skills, they can always try their Luck (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 114). The only exception to this is the Magic skill, for which they must have the Magical advantage.





Dramatis Personae

This section provides descriptions for the key non-player characters (NPCs) who are involved in this case file, including what they look like, their motivations, and the role they play in the adventure. These entries don't include their game profiles, which are gathered together at the end of the case file in the **Cast** section (page 108) for quick reference when needed. We suggest the GM copies or prints out these gathered profiles for ease of use, to reduce page flipping when running the case file.

Jo-Ann Hadley, age 43, *police chief*

Chief Hadley runs the Meriwether police department with a team of five officers, operating out of a small police station in the centre of town. She has lived in Meriwether all her life and has a spotless conduct record.



- **Description:** a white woman of slightly short stature with shoulder-length brown hair shot through with grey streaks. She wears the regulation black Meriwether PD uniform, with an insulated jacket for when the temperature drops to around freezing, as it does after nightfall, even in March and April.
- **Traits:** gives the impression of a by-the-book career cop, keeping the peace in a largely sleepy town. Beneath her calm exterior, though, Chief Hadley is a worried woman; not only is the ongoing drug trade making her look bad, but she's also pretty damn sure that her sister's weird family was responsible for Roy Ellsworth's death.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** on the face of things, Chief Hadley is an obvious person for the investigators to check in with to get some local background. However, she would very much like her "family problem" to go away and is determined not to get linked with the killer or killers. As a result, she may re-enter the case file towards the end to prevent any evidence of her involvement reaching the authorities (**Hadley's Ambush (Optional)**, page 105).

Tina Larsen, age 44, *waitress*

Larsen's family have lived in Meriwether since the town was founded, just like the Hadleys. Her grandparents opened Larsen's Diner on Main Street back when Meriwether was a thriving mining and logging town. The diner is still a family affair but probably not for much longer—Tina has no children, and none of her nieces or nephews are interested in taking over once she and her brother Chuck are gone.



- **Description:** a stocky white woman with short, permed brown hair and glasses. Dresses in smart but comfortable black slacks, a short-sleeved white blouse, and a red apron when working; otherwise wears jeans and a checked blouse.
- **Traits:** motherly and chatty, even with strangers—slightly unusual in Meriwether, which isn't used to tourist traffic. Not that the locals are unfriendly, just reserved and watchful with outsiders.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** as most of Meriwether's older citizens visit the diner at least once a day, Larsen gets to hear all sorts of gossip, making her a good alternative source of information if the investigators wish to avoid the police. She also grew up with the Hadley sisters, so knows something about their family history (**The Diner**, page 85).

Ryan Stinson, age 24, *meth cook*

An accomplished, largely self-educated chemist, Stinson cooks and distributes highly illegal crystallised methamphetamine to the local addicts in and around Meriwether. He operates out of an old VW camper van, which he moves from secluded spot to secluded spot in Red Cedar Forest every month or so. He has an out-of-state record for drug possession as a minor.

- **Description:** a skinny white man with prematurely receding red hair. Usually wears yellow coveralls with the top half hanging down to reveal a stars-and-stripes sweater; both coveralls and sweater are stained and bleached by chemical spills.
- **Traits:** an industrious self-starter in many ways, Stinson has chosen the volatile life of a criminal drug supplier to make his fortune. He likes Red Cedar Forest because Chief Hadley has done such a great job of keeping everyone out. Not only that, but there also don't seem to be any bears or other large predators in the forest. He is nervous towards authority figures and suspicious of anyone who might threaten to rat him out to law enforcement.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** an optional encounter for the investigators, should they come across the VW's tracks and decide to follow them (**The Meth Lab (Optional)**, page 90). As he has recently had a bad experience with Gor and has taken his own crystal meth, Stinson is jittery and wide-eyed. He is armed with a small handgun and will react drastically and recklessly—with severe consequences for himself and anyone around him—if he feels threatened by the investigators' actions or words. If the investigators can interact with Stinson without him freaking out, they can gain more information on recent events in the forest (**Handout: Woolly 6**).



Wash, age 10, *spirit of the forest*

The spirit of Red Cedar Forest was absent for a long time after the Virginia Gentleman's Company (VGC) killed them over 100 years ago. The reduction in magic in the world, plus the presence of miners and loggers, did nothing to encourage their return. Then a strange form of peace fell on the woods (when the Metzgers arrived). Slowly but surely, the spirit returned.

- **Description:** unlike their recently manifested counterparts in New Hampshire (**The History of Magic in the United States**, page 32), Wash has taken on the form of a raccoon rather than that of a bear—the better to maintain their anonymity. They are somewhat larger than a normal raccoon and can speak when they choose to. Their voice is quite high pitched, and they tend to chitter or make clicking noises with their tongue between words.
- **Traits:** mischievous, smart, and curious, though still cautious around people—for example, they don't venture into town in search of food like Meriwether's normal raccoons. While Wash is young for a *genius loci*, they are old for a raccoon and behave more like a spritely old man

than a child. They wave their front paws around as they speak, occasionally scratching their cheek or belly.

- **Roleplaying hooks:** Wash may only have inhabited Red Cedar Forest for a few years, but they are aware of everything that goes on within its boundaries. As a result, they are a good source of information if the investigators enter the woods without having explored Meriwether. However, their frame of reference is limited and still influenced, to some extent, by their late predecessor's memories.



Gor, age 15, montanataur

Gordon "Gor" Metzger is the monstrous son of the transformed Kayla and Carl Metzger (**GM Background**, this chapter, page 66). Unlike his parents, the bestial side of Gor's hybrid heritage is much more pronounced, both physically and mentally.

- **Description:** a literal man-bison standing over 2 metres (7 feet) tall, Gor has a massive furry head, complete with a wide muzzle and small curved horns but very human eyes. His chest and shoulders are powerfully muscled and shaggy with fur. His fingers have partially fused into hooves, rendering him unable to manipulate objects or climb trees; his feet are more severely affected (**Strange Tracks**, page 88). Gor wears stretched, torn sweatpants, and has a strong animal odour. The malformation of his larynx has rendered him unable to say more than his own nickname, Gor.
- **Traits:** having spent most of his life with no other company besides that of his parents (and after two years mostly chained inside the mine), Gor is ill-educated, isolated, and ignorant of the world outside. Prior to his encounter with Ryan Stinson, he was part hormonal, resentful teenager rebelling against his parents, part young bull asserting his dominance over his territory (Red Cedar Forest). Now, he's paranoid, frightened, and alone.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Gor is this case file's central antagonist. He is very hungry for animal flesh, previously provided by his increasingly desperate parents. While he'll eat it raw, including carrion, he is particularly drawn to the smell of cooked meat. His current paranoia and fear mean he may attack anyone he sees as a threat and, in desperation, he may even resort to eating human flesh again. Perhaps the only thing he fears is large vehicles, which he does not understand. Ultimately a creature with a tragic backstory, Gor's role in the case file is to be identified, tracked down, and stopped one way or another.

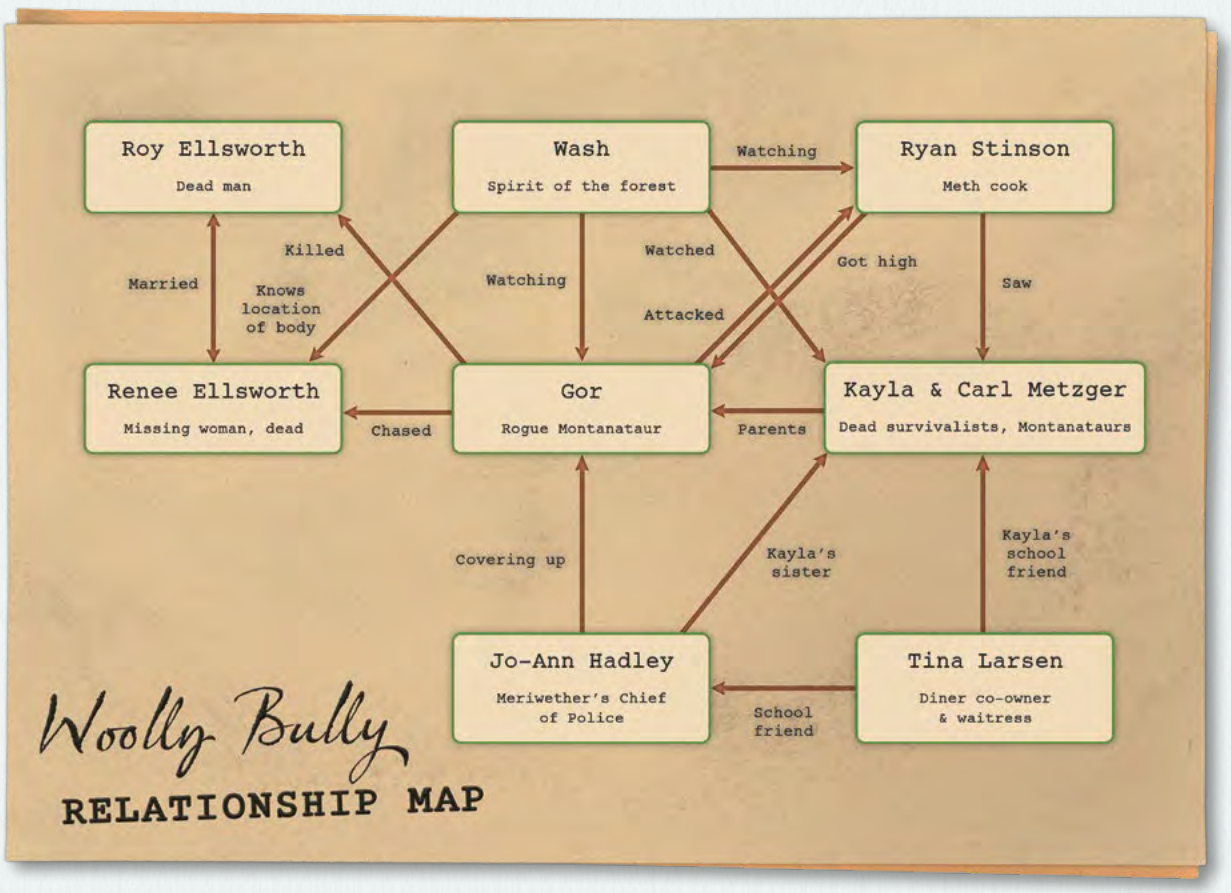


Gor's Vestigium

As a supernatural hybrid born of strange magic, Gor leaves his unique *vestigium* behind in the aftermath of his attacks; it also lingers in the Metzgers' home in the old mine. As *vestigia* are absorbed differently by wood, metal, stone, and other materials (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 163), the amount of information the investigators can glean with a **Sense Vestigia** roll varies depending on which scene they are in. Each scene states whether Gor's *vestigium* is weak, strong, or extremely strong, as follows:

- **Weak *vestigium*:** a Regular success determines the *vestigium's* core element(s), in this case—a gnawing hunger and the sensation of the ground shaking beneath your feet. A Hard success or better detects all the *vestigium's* elements—a strong animal odour; the sense of something huge breathing down the back of your neck; a great, gnawing hunger; and the sensation of the ground shaking beneath your feet.
- **Strong *vestigium*:** a Regular success detects all the *vestigium's* elements, as previously described.
- **Extremely strong *vestigium*:** unless otherwise stated, no Sense Vestigia roll is required.

See also **Vestigia Strength** and **Detecting Vestigia** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 161–162).



Start: the Case

The way this case file gets underway depends on which organisation the investigators belong to.

- If they are part of an organisation such as the CIRG or the New York Librarians, the investigators are given the assignment by a senior colleague, such as **Special Agent Kimberley Reynolds** (page 47) or **Mrs Patricia Chin** (page 44), who briefs them on events in Meriwether. The GM should give the players **Handout: Woolly 1** and allow them time to read it and absorb what it says. Alternatively, the GM could ask one of the players to read it aloud to everyone.
- If, on the other hand, the investigators are an independent band of hedge wizards and/or monster hunters, the GM has several potential options. Perhaps the investigators find the newspaper article contained in **Handout: Woolly 1** as they trawl newspapers for hints of weird phenomena. Alternatively, they could be sent the newspaper clipping by a contact in Montana. Depending on the investigators' backstories, this contact could be someone they've worked with in the past or it could be a friend among the demi-monde—or someone who owes them a favour. Then again, perhaps they receive the clipping from an anonymous source, or are hired to look into the matter by **Mr Sunday** (page 57).

Apart from the details contained in **Handout: Woolly 1**, there is one other key piece of information that the investigators and/or their bosses are aware of—something that casts that mention of a bigfoot attack in a whole different light. Rumours have been circulating among the demi-monde and American practitioners for some years now of something supernatural going on in Montana, "… *a creature that stalked the night and ate heavily armed survivalists for breakfast*…"

It's up to the investigators to find out if there's any truth to these rumours or whether Roy Ellsworth's death really was caused by a rogue bear. Depending on which group the investigators belong to (**Introducing the Investigators,** this chapter, page 68), exactly what the investigators wish to achieve during their time in Meriwether may vary (**Investigator Objectives**, following).

GM ADVICE

Mr Sunday is a good way to bring together disparate investigators from all over the United States, or even further afield. Using him as an introduction means that the investigators don't even have to know each other before the case file begins.

If you do use Mr Sunday as your starting point, he sends each investigator the newspaper clipping (**Handout: Woolly 1**) and reservation details for the **Red Cedar Motel** (page 78), promising to cover all expenses; there will also be a generous—though unspecified—bonus if they can get to the bottom of who or what killed Roy Ellsworth.

Finally, Mr Sunday provides descriptions of the other "operatives" they are to meet in Meriwether. In this case, Sunday isn't working for anyone; he's simply testing out potential new contractors for future high-profile cases, such as that in **Chapter 4**.



Handout: Woolly 1

THE MISSOULA EXAMINER |19|

MAN KILLED IN ANIMAL ATTACK

Kootenai River Valley. The body of Meriwether resident Roy Ellsworth was discovered on a road near his home this week. Ellsworth, 38, was pronounced dead at the scene just over a mile outside Meriwether after reportedly suffering substantial blood loss, most likely from a bear attack. Meriwether Police Department describes the incident as "tragic, but thankfully rare," and advises citizens against entering Red Cedar Forest while the investigation continues. Online speculation suggesting the death was the result of a "bigfoot attack" has been dismissed by Meriwether PD's Chief Hadley as "both irresponsible and insensitive." Mr. Ellsworth's wife Renee, 37, is not available for comment at this time.■

Investigator Objectives

Following are some suggestions as to what the different investigator groups' goals might be for this case file. All are designed to drive the investigation forwards: initially to discover the truth behind Roy Ellsworth's death, then to track down the unknown killer. The GM should adapt and use these as best fits their game and who the investigators are. If the investigators create their own organisation, the GM should use these suggestions as inspiration when coming up with suitable goals and motivations for that group.

- **The Virtuous Men**: identify, locate, and contain any supernatural threats to the public. Keep a low profile. Uphold the Virtues.
- **New York Library Association:** confirm or disprove those rumours of some man-eating creature running wild in Montana. Recover any dangerous magical artefacts for the Library.
- **Critical Incident Response Group:** confirm or disprove the presence of magical activity, protect the civilian population, and uphold the law.
- **Hedge Wizards, Monster Hunters, & Others:** find whoever or whatever did this. If it turns out to be a monster, kill it—if necessary. Don't get caught.

Background Checks

The investigators may wish to carry out some background checks on the victim, where he lived, and how he died before they head off into the wilds of Montana.

The Victim

Researching Roy Ellsworth discovers nothing unusual, criminal, or supernatural about him (no Research roll required). He was born and bred in Meriwether, married to Renee Ellsworth for 19 years, owned a pickup truck with a clean driver's licence, and had a hunting licence.

The Location

When researching Meriwether, the GM should give the players **Handout: Woolly 2,** which contains a brief overview of the area, easily found with a quick internet search (no Research roll required). Points of interest for the investigators include the Meriwether Police Department, the Red Cedar Medical Center (where the town's morgue is located), and the local public library. It's a pretty sleepy place, all told. In addition:

- A successful **INT** roll suggests that the town would be more prosperous if it cashed in on the hunting, camping, and tourism opportunities presented by the nearby Red Cedar Forest. It's a little strange that, so far, it hasn't.
- Remember, players can spend Luck points to turn a failed INT roll into a success (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 113). Even if they choose not to, don't forget: a failure should still help move the story along in an interesting or unexpected way (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 106). For example, in this case, the investigators could be openly surprised when they discover there's only one place to stay in Meriwether (**Red Cedar Motel**, page 78) because they assumed the town would have a thriving tourist industry. This assumption could, in turn, affect how the locals treat them.

While the investigators are researching Meriwether, the GM should ask for either a **History** or **Occult** roll (whichever skill is higher):

- A **Regular success** reveals, disappointingly, that the Kootenai River does not appear to have a resident *genius loci*. It is, like many North American rivers, another victim of the Virginia Gentleman's Company's campaign of supernatural extermination in the western United States during the 19th century (**The Montana Territory Campaign & Other Atrocities**, page 39). It takes an investigator two hours to uncover this information.
- A **Hard success** or better uncovers the above information in one hour.
- A **failure** reveals the same information, but it takes four hours to uncover it.
- A **fumble** suggests the investigators did a little digging but ran out of time before they had to head to Meriwether.

GM ADVICE

Why no Research roll to discover the information on Roy Ellsworth? Because while it gives the players details about who he was, it isn't important to what happened to him. Also, the players need this information to help set the scene, meaning they get it automatically—so, no roll is required. Easy-to-find information about Meriwether doesn't require a dice roll for the same reasons, while the information about the Kootenai River requires a little more effort and specialised knowledge to uncover.



GM ADVICE

If the investigators don't look into Meriwether's history before they head off to Montana but later decide to head down to the river to try to locate and talk to "Kootenai," they don't find a river spirit. Instead, a successful **Observation** roll spots **Wash** (**Dramatis Personae**, this chapter, page 71) watching them from the nearby trees. See **The Bandit in the Woods** (page 89) for further details.



Handout: Woolly 2

MONTANA

About Meriwether

This town is in northwest Montana, located where the plains of the Big Sky State give way to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, covered in thick forests of pine and western red cedar trees. The Kootenai River (or Kootenay, over the border in Canada) flows through the middle of town. A major tributary of the mighty Columbia, the Kootenai is hundreds of miles long and eventually flows into the Pacific Ocean. Originally a logging and silver mining town in the 19TH century, Meriwether's economy is now based on light manufacturing and service industries, which provide employment for its adult population of around 1,500.

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Handout: Woolly 3

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Bear Attacks in Montana 2000-2015

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Abstract

During this sixteen-year period, there were a reported 33 bear attacks on humans within the state of Montana: 25 by brown (grizzly) bears, and eight by black bears. Of these, only three proved fatal: two deaths were attributed to brown bears (October 2001, Ovando, Flathead National Forest; July 2010, Gallatin National Forest, southeast of Bozeman), one to a black bear (September 2015, Kalispell, Glacier National Park). Most attacks involved a sow and her cubs, though some were caused by food conditioning/habituation or surprise encounters with young males.

The majority of incidents took place in or around Glacier National Park. When looked at in relation to visitor numbers to the park, the chances of being attacked by a bear were calculated as somewhere in the region of 1 in 2 million. (The odds of being struck by lightning in Montana are, by comparison, around 1 in 250,000.) Almost all attacks took place from July to October; autumn was most dangerous due to increasingly active bears seeking food prior to hibernation. Attacks in spring (March–April), the time bears emerge from their dens, were rare.

Bear Attacks

If the investigators are interested in the frequency of bear attacks in Montana, a successful **Research** roll identifies the information in **Handout: Woolly 3** in around an hour. If necessary, a successful **INT** roll after reading the article realises something doesn't add up: not only did the attack happen at an unusual time of year, but the fact it happened at all is astonishing, as there has never been a reported bear attack in that area.

- A **Hard** success or better uncovers the same information in 30 minutes.
- A **failure** takes two hours to uncover the relevant details.
- A **fumble** suggests the investigator got distracted by reading survivors' stories and adverts for bear spray.

If the investigators are (still) concerned about the risk of bear attacks and how to avoid them, the GM should permit the players to look up that information on the internet—as long as it doesn't become a distraction from heading to Meriwether.

Next Steps

The investigators now need to get themselves to Meriwether. The GM should permit the investigators to stock up on easily available equipment, such as camping gear and bear spray, before they head out. As the journey isn't important to the plot, the GM should borrow a trick from the movies and have them travel there "by map," i.e., don't slow the adventure down by describing how the investigators get to their destination—they just do. This way, the case file moves straight from the set up to the next part of the plot with no interruptions.

Meriwether

It becomes clear to the investigators when they arrive in Meriwether that there is only one place to stay—unless they brought camping gear, of course. The **Red Cedar Motel** (following) is located on the main road at the edge of town. If the investigators were contracted by Mr Sunday, they are already booked in to stay here, but otherwise, the lack of alternatives may come as a surprise. If they head into downtown Meriwether first, they find **The Diner** (page 85), where Tina Larsen can direct them towards the motel.



Red Cedar Motel

The long, single-storey motel stands beside the main road into Meriwether. There is only one car in the spacious parking lot. A sign leads the investigators to the reception and dining room at the right-hand end of the red-roofed building. Both are clean, even if the décor is a little plain and tired—strangely, there are no stuffed fish or animals or other hunting paraphernalia on display, as might be expected in an area like this. A bored-looking young man, probably in his late teens, sits behind the reception desk reading a comic. He looks up when the investigators enter and gives a half-hearted greeting.

If the investigators have been hired by Mr Sunday, the young clerk checks their names on the computer next to him and issues them their room keys. If the investigators haven't booked a room, they find it a reasonably priced place to stay. The clerk is studiously incurious about their reasons for visiting Meriwether.

A successful **Observation** roll notices a small stand containing tourist pamphlets on a table by the entrance. If the investigators state they are looking for flyers or tourist maps while in the reception area, no roll is required. Interestingly, none of the flyers are for local attractions. There are ones for Glacier National Park, Flathead National Forest, and the National Bison Range, i.e., nothing within 160 km (100 miles) of Meriwether. Given how faded they are, all the flyers also appear to be at least a decade old.

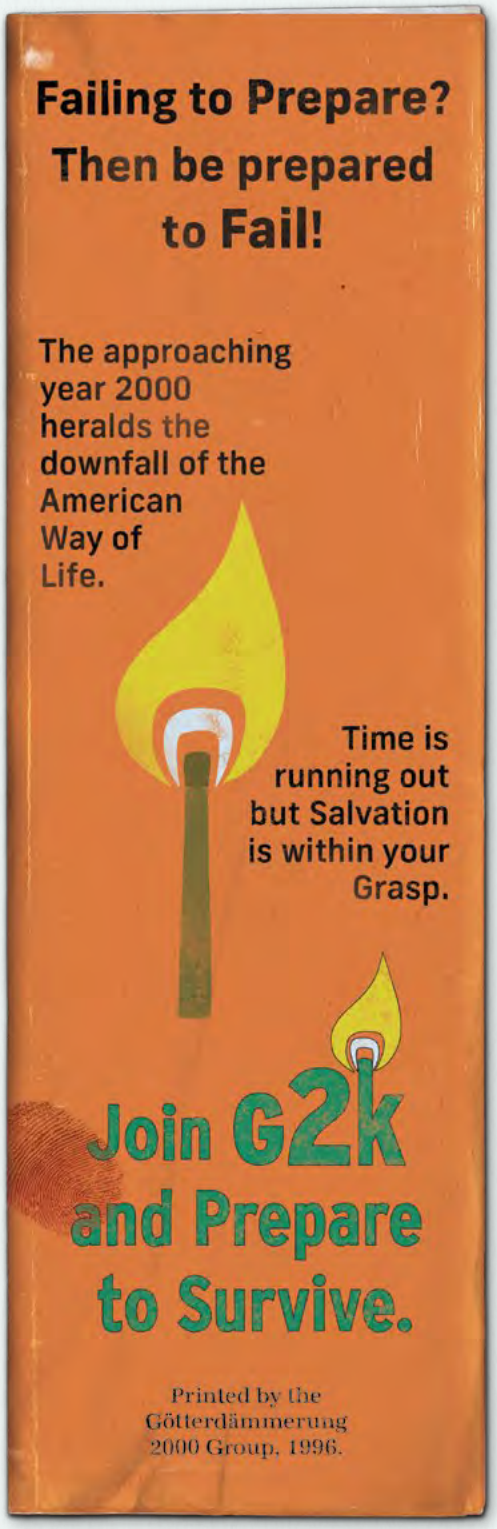
Note: the game's default setting is 2016. In 2020, the National Bison Range was restored to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and has since been renamed the CSKT Bison Range. GM, if you have moved this case forward in time, the range's previous name may act as further evidence of how old the flyers are.

Tucked in among the tourist leaflets is something slightly odd: an old trifold pamphlet for a Millennium survivalist group (**Handout: Woolly 4**). The dog-eared tract contains details on standard survival techniques, but overall looks more like a recruitment brochure than a useful field guide.

- If asked about it, the young reception clerk sniffs, "*Prepper crap. Before my time.*" He has no idea what it is or where it came from. A successful **Read Person** roll confirms he's telling the truth.
- An online search for G2K, along with a successful **Research** roll, discovers that the group formed in Montana in the 1990s only to disappear around the time of the Millennium. For some ideas about how to use G2K as the starting point for further case files, see **Downfall (Optional)** (page 107).

Rooms at the motel are basic but clean, warm, and dry. The décor is as old-fashioned as it was in the reception, but the bedspreads at least show the sort of wildlife you'd expect out here in the wilds of Montana: bears, deer, wolves, salmon, etc.

Handout: Woolly 4



Next Steps

Now that the investigators have a base of operations, they can begin their inquiries in earnest. There are several leads they can follow in Meriwether:

- If the investigators wish to head to the Red Cedar Medical Center to examine Roy Ellsworth's body and his personal effects—go to **The Morgue** (following).
- If the investigators wish to talk to local law enforcement about Roy's death—go to **Meriwether PD** (page 82).
- If the investigators wish to do a bit of digging into Meriwether's history—go to **The Library** (page 84).
- If the investigators prefer to get some local scuttlebutt—go to **The Diner** (page 85).
- If the investigators want to head straight to the crime scene—go to **The Cabin** (page 86).

These options allow the investigators to treat the town as a "sandbox," i.e., they get to wander around Meriwether and make their own decisions about who they talk to and in what order. This is a more freeform style of play, and it gives the players greater freedom to go where they please, at least initially. Remember, while allowing the players to decide where and when they go to places in town, aim to keep them focused on just these four key locations rather than wasting time in shops and other town hangouts.

If the investigators decide to camp outside Meriwether in Red Cedar Forest rather than stay at the motel, they still have the same options. If they know Roy Ellsworth's address, they may instead wish to head straight to **The Cabin** (page 86) from their campsite to survey the scene of the crime.

The Morgue

The Red Cedar Medical Center is on the corner of Main Street and West 5th Street, not far from the police station. There is a large parking lot out back, accessed from West 5th Street. Entering the Medical Center is not difficult—it's a public building with lots of visitors, so the investigators can move around with ease unless they decide (or manage) to cause a commotion.

Locating and getting into the morgue in the basement is not difficult, either. However, staying there long enough to carry out an investigation without someone turning up and asking awkward questions is a little trickier. The investigators have two main options: talk their way in or sneak in.

- If the investigators try to talk their way in, the GM should ask for a **Social** roll. The players can either nominate someone to do the talking, with their level of success or failure determining the outcome (**What the Investigators Find**, following). Alternatively, all the investigators can have a go at the same time. In this case, the lowest (worst) level of success or failure determines the overall outcome. The GM should grant the investigator(s) a bonus die if they present an official law enforcement ID card, e.g., from the FBI/CIRG (in the same way that presenting a warrant card grants a bonus die in London-based games; *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 72).

GM ADVICE

Never be afraid to offer your players a list of "here's what you can do" options for them to choose from—like the list we've provided here for you—to help keep the story moving forwards. Less confident players may also need some additional guidance, especially if they're not sure where to begin or go next.

If this is the case, suggest the investigators head to **The Morgue** (nearby) first. If they were sent to Meriwether because they're part of an organisation like the CIRG or the New York Librarians, you can simply have their superior tell them during their initial briefing that the morgue should be their first port of call. Otherwise, you could say something along the lines of, "*Now you're here, you think the morgue would be a good place to start.*" Seeing Roy Ellsworth's body means the investigators quickly discover that something powerful, not human, and possibly supernatural was involved in his death.

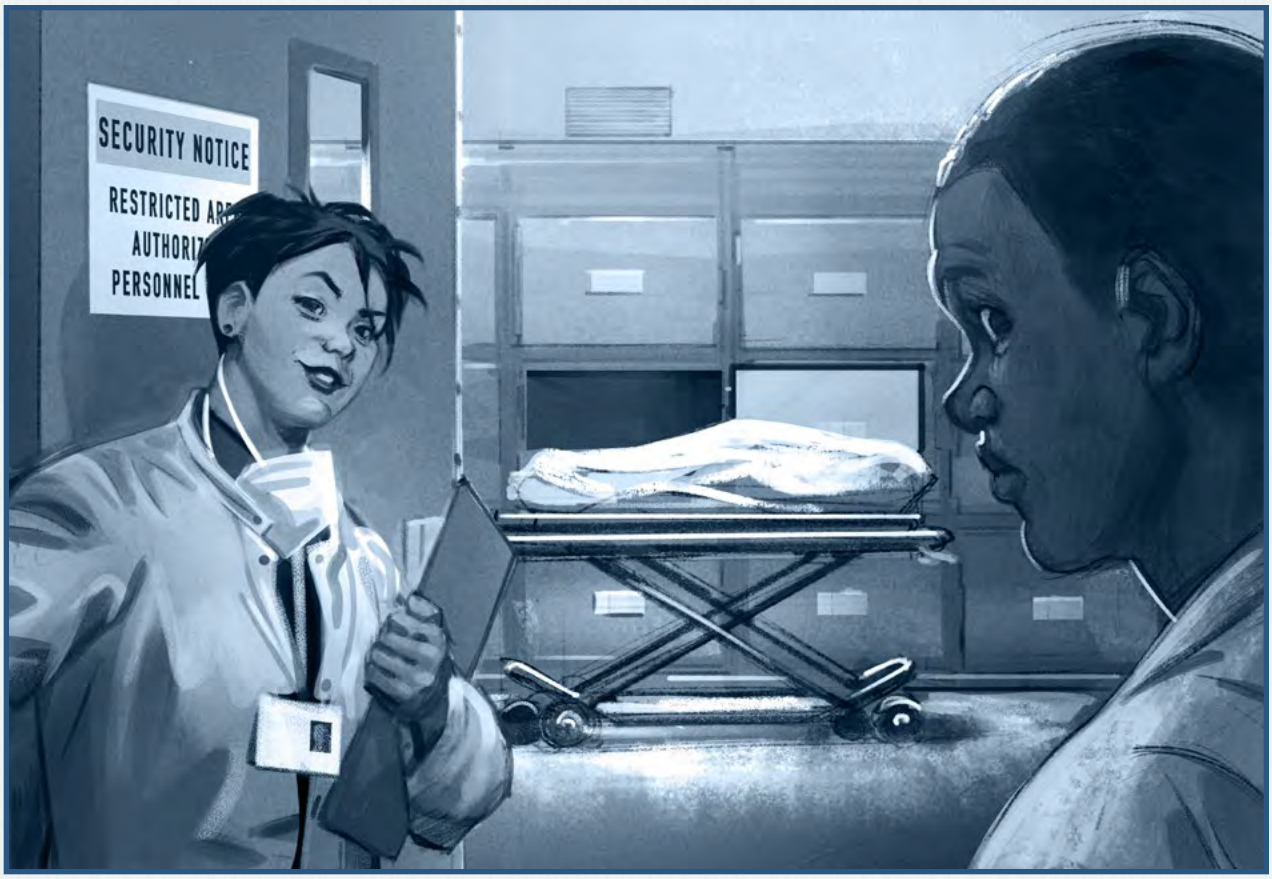


GM ADVICE

Don't worry if the players want to split the party to cover more ground—after all, it's part of the grand tradition of "monster of the week"-type television shows! If the group does decide to split up, follow the advice given in **Splitting the Party** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 226) to ensure the players remain engaged with the adventure. Places where the party might split are:

- During the early investigation in Meriwether—some investigators may wish to go **The Morgue** (nearby) while others go to **Meriwether PD** (page 82), **The Library** (page 84), or **The Diner** (page 85).
- In Red Cedar Forest—some of the investigators may want to follow the vehicle tracks to Ryan Stinson's mobile **Meth Lab (Optional)** (page 90), while the others want to follow Gor's strange tracks in another direction, leading to **The Lone Tree** (page 94).







GM ADVICE

Getting into the morgue is a good place to encourage players to spend Luck on their rolls to get a better outcome, like turning a failure into a Regular success, or a Regular success into a Hard one, especially if they've only missed the better (higher) level of success by a few points (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 113). It's also possible to push this roll if the investigators can come up with a good enough justification (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 108).

- Even if the investigators don't belong to a law enforcement agency, they could attempt to pass themselves off as members of one, particularly a federal agency like the FBI or the DEA (Meriwether is sufficiently small that attempting to pass themselves off as local LEOs automatically fails). If an investigator has fake ID and is using it for the first time, they need to make the appropriate skill roll to see if it's convincing: a Regular **Art/Craft (Forgery)** if they made it, a **Luck** roll if they acquired it from someone else, or a Hard **DEX** or **INT** roll if trying their Luck (**Fake Identification**, page 20).
- If successful, the investigator may attempt their Social roll with a bonus die; if the forgery is spotted (a fumble), the investigators are immediately removed from the premises and medical centre staff contact Chief Hadley.
- If the investigators try to sneak in, ask for a **Stealth** roll from every investigator involved; the lowest (worst) level of success or failure determines the overall outcome (**What the Investigators Find**, following). Alternatively, the GM could ask for a group Stealth roll, where the person with the lowest Stealth value makes the roll on behalf of the entire group.

What the Investigators Find

The morgue is chilly and smells strongly of disinfectant. Roy Ellsworth's body is easily located in a conveniently labelled mortuary drawer. His printed autopsy report lies on a table; a digital copy can be downloaded from a nearby password-protected laptop with a successful **Computer Use** roll.

The level of success or failure previously achieved by the investigators on either their Social or Stealth roll when attempting to access the morgue indicates how much they can uncover before they are shooed out by Medical Center staff.

- A **Regular success** reveals that Roy Ellsworth was killed by something large and powerful. His body is in a terrible, mangled state. There are abrasions on his face and hands. His ribs and arms appear to have been broken and are covered by extensive bruising. The lower half of Roy's left leg has been torn off below the knee, possibly after he died. The remains of the leg are placed with him, though there is not enough tissue left to make up a whole leg. Medically trained investigators (e.g., Doctor, Nurse, or Paramedic) suspect that a puncture wound in Roy's torso would have caused considerable blood loss, as mentioned in the newspaper article (**Handout: Woolly 1**) (no roll required).
- A **Hard success** or better uncovers the same and permits the investigators time to examine the body and personal effects more closely—go to **The Late Roy Ellsworth**, following.
- A **failure** gives the investigators only enough time for a brief glance at Roy's body and the opportunity to quickly scan the autopsy report before they must leave. The report reveals that Roy suffered massive blunt force trauma before he died, although the cause of death was blood loss and organ damage from the puncture wound in his torso.
- A **fumble** suggests the investigators are ejected from the Medical Center by security guards or medical staff almost as soon as they pull out the drawer containing Roy's body. The same is true if an investigator fails a pushed Social or Stealth roll while in the Medical Center. They know that his body was badly mauled by something, but no details beyond that.

The GM should call for a Regular **POW** roll from each investigator who looks at Roy's corpse if they express horror and revulsion at his injuries (**Suffering Impairment**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118); the same is true for anyone reading the autopsy report and viewing the accompanying gruesome photographs. If they fail the POW roll, the player should mark the Impaired box on their character sheet; their investigator performs a suitable **Involuntary Action** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 108), such as fainting or vomiting, plus they now fumble if they roll 90 or more when making a skill roll (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118). Luck points can be spent to turn a failed POW roll into a success, thus avoiding impairment.

As bodies are notoriously bad at retaining *vestigia*, investigators looking for such traces on Roy Ellsworth need to achieve a Hard success with their **Sense Vestigia** roll to detect all of Gor's supernatural "scent." A Regular success only detects its core elements (**Gor's Vestigium**, page 73).

GM ADVICE



If an investigator suffers impairment as a result of witnessing Roy's injuries, they can spend 10 Luck points at any time during the case file to recover from it (**Impairment and Recovery**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 119). The GM should ask the player to describe how their investigator overcomes the trauma—or buries it within themselves. And remember, once an investigator is impaired, regardless of the reason, they can't become impaired again until they've recovered.

The Late Roy Ellsworth

If the investigators achieve a Hard success or better on either their Social or Stealth roll, they have the time to further examine Roy's body.

- A successful **Medicine** roll corroborates the autopsy report's findings. It also confirms that Roy's leg was removed postmortem, and that some of it is missing. A Hard success or better reveals large blunt teeth marks on the torn leg, larger than a human's but oddly similar.
- A successful **Science (Biology** or **Zoology)** roll reveals that none of the wounds are consistent with a bear attack—nor that of wolves or even a charging moose.
- A successful **Science (Forensics)** roll reveals that the puncture wound in Roy's torso was made by something short, sharp, and curved.
- A Hard success or better on the **Science (Biology**, **Forensics**, or **Zoology**) roll suggests that Roy Ellsworth was gored to death by something closely resembling a bison horn. However, a successful **INT** roll recalls that the nearest bison to Meriwether are at the National Bison Range, well over 240 km (150 miles) away. No INT roll is necessary if the investigators found the Bison Range's flyer at **Red Cedar Motel** (page 78).

The investigators can also examine Roy's personal effects—his clothes and rifle—which are stored in a nearby locker.

- The clothes are torn and bloodstained, consistent with his wounds. Nothing more can be determined from them except that the ends of his boot laces are incredibly muddy; a successful **INT** roll suggests that he must have put his boots on in a hurry and without fastening them properly.
- The hunting rifle is twisted out of shape and quite unusable. A successful **Firearms** or **Science (Forensics)** roll reveals, from the scent, that it was fired around the time of his death.
- Thankfully for the investigators, Roy's rifle was mostly made of metal. A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll on the rifle reveals all the elements of **Gor's Vestigium** (page 73).

Next Steps

The investigators now know that Roy Ellsworth died in a shockingly violent manner. They may also be aware that his killer was not a bear or any other large, naturally occurring predator. If they wish to work out what's going on, they need to look further into the circumstances around Roy's death. There are several leads the investigators can pursue following their visit to the morgue:

- If the investigators wish to talk to local law enforcement about Roy's death—go to **Meriwether PD** (following).
- If the investigators wish to do a bit of digging into Meriwether's history—go to **The Library** (page 84).
- If the investigators wish to find out what Meriwether's citizens know—go to **The Diner** (page 85).
- If the investigators wish to examine the site of Roy Ellsworth's death and his nearby home—go to **The Cabin** (page 86).

Meriwether PD

Meriwether's Police Department operates out of a small station on Main Street. Its staff consists of Chief of Police Jo-Ann Hadley (**Dramatis Personae,** this chapter, page 70) and five officers. There are named photographs of all of them on a wall as the investigators enter the station. The officer on duty, Pete Erickson, sits behind the front reception desk. Speaking to Officer Erickson about Roy Ellsworth's death uncovers little new information beyond what was in the news report (**Handout: Woolly 1**), except that Roy was found dead not on any old road but at the bottom of his own driveway. A successful **Read Person** roll reveals that Erickson believes the official story about it being an unfortunate bear attack.

Speaking to Chief Hadley

If the investigators ask to speak to Chief Hadley, Erickson first pops his head around the Chief's door to check that she's free, then shows the investigators into her office. Hadley sits behind a large wooden desk, on which are a computer monitor, several small, neat stacks of paperwork, and a framed photograph. Provided the investigators haven't caused any trouble around town, she greets them cordially and asks what she can do to help them.



As soon as the investigators begin questioning Chief Hadley, the GM should call for either a **Law** or **Social** roll (whichever is highest). As at Red Cedar Medical Center (**The Morgue**, page 79), presenting an official ID card grants the investigators a bonus die to any Social rolls in this scene, as does a convincing fake ID card (**Fake Identification**, page 20).

- With a **success** (any level), Chief Hadley informs the investigators that the department is very busy with an ongoing drug investigation and doesn't have time to pay attention to ridiculous rumours of a "monster" lurking in the woods. Roy Ellsworth was mauled to death by a grizzly bear—unfortunate, but this is bear country; case closed. No forensic evidence the investigators may have acquired from the morgue to the contrary, such as the autopsy report (**The Late Roy Ellsworth**, page 81), shakes Hadley's assertion.
- **Failure** means Chief Hadley simply repeats the same information given to the investigators by Officer Erickson.
- A **fumble** or a **failed pushed roll** means the investigators push Chief Hadley too hard and she picks up the phone to check their bona fides. It's probably a good time to leave—especially if those credentials are fake. The investigators might also want to avoid crossing paths with the police for the rest of the case file.

A successful **Read Person** roll during the interview suggests that the Chief knows more than she's telling, while a successful **Observation** roll notices that the photograph on the desk appears to be of a younger Jo-Ann Hadley with a similar-looking woman—a sister, perhaps? If asked about the photograph, Hadley confirms that it is her sister, but asks the investigators in a vexed tone what that has to do with anything?

As the investigators leave, Chief Hadley warns them not to venture into Red Cedar Forest—there is a man-eating bear on the loose, after all.

The Autopsy Report

If the investigators haven't viewed Roy Ellsworth or his autopsy report—perhaps they didn't visit the morgue, or their attempts to use fake ID saw them thrown out of the medical centre, or they fumbled or failed a pushed Social or Stealth roll to get in—there is an open copy of the autopsy report on Chief Hadley's desk.

As the investigators can only catch a quick glance before Hadley notices their interest and closes the folder, they need to make an **Observation** roll to read what it says—unless they can find some way to distract the Chief, thus giving themselves longer to study it.

- A **success** (any level) reveals the extent of Roy's injuries and his cause of death (**What the Investigators Find**, page 80).
- A **failure** means they only have time to spot the gruesome photographs of Roy's injuries and realise the violent nature of his death. They may need to make a Regular **POW** roll as a result (**What the Investigators Find**, page 80).
- A **fumble** or a **failed pushed roll** means they don't learn anything, and Hadley warns the investigators to mind their own business.



GM ADVICE

Remember: you can always move important clues to a more convenient place if the investigators miss them in their original location.

Where's Renee?

If the investigators ask where Roy's wife Renee is, Erickson and/or Hadley inform them she's gone to stay with relatives. If the investigators have already visited the cabin and discovered Renee didn't pack for a trip, challenging this story results in a bemused shrug from Erickson, who shows them in to see Chief Hadley; if the investigators haven't spoken to her already, now is their opportunity to question her about what's going on. Her reply regarding Renee is, "*She didn't want to hang around to pack. Said she'd buy new once she got there.*" A successful **Read Person** roll suggests this is a lie.

Next Steps

Having spoken to Chief Hadley, there are several leads the investigators may wish to explore:

- If the investigators haven't already examined Roy Ellsworth's body and his personal effects and wish to do so now—go to **The Morgue** (page 79).
- If the investigators wish to examine the site of Roy Ellsworth's death and his nearby home—go to **The Cabin** (page 86).
- If the investigators wish to do a bit of digging into Meriwether's history, or Chief Hadley's—go to **The Library** (following).
- If the investigators wish to talk to the locals to find out what they know about the Ellsworths and Hadley—go to **The Diner** (page 85).

The Library

Meriwether's public library, located on East 6th Street, one block back from Main Street, is the obvious place for investigators to do a little research into the town's history and that of Red Cedar Forest. Local records held by the library date back to the 19th century. If the investigators decide to search through them, the GM should ask for a **Research** roll. The level of success or failure determines how long it takes the investigators to dig out the information listed in **The Records** (following):

- **Regular success:** two hours.
- **Hard success or better:** one hour.
- **Failure:** four hours.
- **Fumble:** the investigator was distracted by tales of early prospectors looking for gold, silver, and other precious metals in the hills and mountains around town and found nothing of relevance to the case.

For investigators who belong to a law enforcement agency, the Research roll may instead represent them checking official records or talking to their colleagues to acquire the same information—with the possible exception of the information about *genii locorum*, depending on who the investigators are!



GM ADVICE

Don't worry if your investigators decide not to talk to the cops or visit the library. While both locations contain useful information, none of it is essential to solving the mystery, so don't push your players to engage in encounters they aren't interested in (**Player Agency**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 221). Alternatively, if the investigators hang around town for any length of time or attract attention to themselves, Chief Hadley might seek them out to warn them off!

The Records

In addition to the following information, if the investigators didn't research Meriwether before they arrived in town, the GM should now give the players **Handout: Woolly 2**, regardless of their Research roll result.

- There are no records of anything supernatural in the area, and no mention of any river "strangeness," suggesting there is no resident *genius loci* (**The Location**, page 75). There are, however, reports of an unusually large raccoon in the area (**The Bandit in the Woods**, page 89).
- Apart from the recent Ellsworth incident, there is no history of unexplained disappearances or deaths in Red Cedar Forest, though there are rumours of things like bigfoot elsewhere in the state (**Start: The Case**, page 74). If the investigators examined Roy Ellsworth's body and discovered the teeth marks on his leg (**The Late Roy Ellsworth**, page 81), searching for reports of cannibalism also draws a blank.
- Red Cedar Forest is a no-go area, thanks to the police warning people to keep out due to the risk of bear attacks (**GM Background**, this chapter, page 66). If the Research roll was a Hard success, the investigators also uncover evidence of Chief Hadley's ongoing campaign to block the forest's development for tourism.
- Crime is generally low in and around Meriwether, except for an ongoing crystal meth problem. The supplier is believed to be local, but they have proven quite elusive. The theory is that they have a mobile lab somewhere (**The Meth Lab (Optional)**, page 90).

The library is another place the investigators could find **Handout: Woolly 4**, among a similar collection of pamphlets to those found at **Red Cedar Motel** (page 78).

Checking Up On Hadley

The investigators may wish to learn more about Meriwether's Chief of Police, especially if they've visited her office (**Speaking to Chief Hadley**, page 82).

- No roll is required to learn that Hadley's police record is spotless.
- If the investigators have not already learned this fact, a successful Hard **Research** roll uncovers evidence that she has been quietly supressing development in and restricting access to Red Cedar Forest for over a decade.
- Investigators who spend time checking Hadley's financial records with a successful **Computer Use** roll discover that for the last few years, she has made increasingly regular bulk purchases of medical supplies, clothing, and food online. If confronted with this evidence, Hadley claims they are donations to homeless charities. A successful **Read Person** roll detects that this is a lie. In truth, they were bought for her sister Kayla's family.



Next Steps

After their visit to the library, the investigators should be aware that, other than the town's drug problem, Meriwether is a pretty quiet place, making Roy Ellsworth's savage death even more peculiar. They may have also discovered that Chief Hadley wants to keep people out of Red Cedar Forest—something that long predates the alleged "bear attack." In addition, they may be aware of her strange shopping habits.

Where the investigators have already visited determines where they go next.

- If the investigators have yet to examine Roy Ellsworth's body and his personal effects and wish to do so now—go to **The Morgue** (page 79).
- If the investigators wish to examine the site of Roy Ellsworth's death and his nearby home—go to **The Cabin** (page 86).
- If the investigators wish to talk to local law enforcement about Roy's death—go to **Meriwether PD** (page 82).
- If the investigators wish to get a local perspective on what's happened—go to **The Diner** (following).

The Diner

Larsen's Diner is located on Main Street, two blocks from the police station. Its interior is reassuringly old-fashioned: a jangling bell every time the door opens, booths with red leatherette seating and white laminated tabletops, stools along the counter, and a black and white chequer-patterned tile floor. Everything is clean, if well worn, and a delicious smell of home cooking fills the air.

The waitress is **Tina Larsen** (**Dramatis Personae**, this chapter, page 70). She greets the investigators with a friendly smile before seating them at a booth. The rest of the clientele is middle-aged, if not older; they all look at the investigators with curiosity. A successful **Read Person** roll identifies that their attention isn't threatening or malicious—they're just not used to seeing strangers.

If the investigators chat to Tina about Roy Ellsworth's death and Meriwether in general, she reveals the following, no roll required:

- Everyone in town is very shocked by Roy's death. While there's never been a bear attack in the area before, it just goes to show that Chief Hadley is right to keep everyone out of Red Cedar Forest.
- No one has seen Roy's wife, Renee, since he died. Renee wasn't from Meriwether, so everyone's assumed she's gone to stay with relatives out of town until the funeral.
- It's such a shame about the drug problem—Meriwether's such a nice town, and the sooner someone finds out where that stuff is coming from, the better. The only place the producer could be hiding is in the woods—although more fool them if there's a man-eating bear on the loose.

While Tina is happy to reveal that the locals view Chief Hadley as a decent cop, if they want to know more, the GM should ask for a **Social** roll.

- A **Regular success** reveals that Hadley has a younger sister, Kayla. "*She married that no-good Carl Metzger and ran off with him to join some silly survivalist group back before the Millennium. Never seen hide nor hair of her since. Broke my heart—we used to be such good friends when we were kids. Poor Jo-Ann. She had to work hard to live that down.*" If the investigators found the G2K flyer at Red Cedar Motel or the library (**Handout: Woolly 4**), Tina confirms that was the group the Metzgers joined.
- A **Hard success** also reveals that some people regard the Chief's prohibition on entering Red Cedar Forest to be overzealous. "*Roy's death proves how wrong they were about that!*"
- A **Critical success** encourages Tina to add: "*Mind you, Jo-Ann wanting to keep people out of the woods is nothing new—between you and me, I'm pretty certain she's been doing everything she can to make sure there's been no logging or tourism for over a decade now. It's a shame—the town could do with the extra money. Giving the youngsters some gainful employment might help knock all this drug nonsense on the head.*"

If the investigators leave Tina a good tip when they leave, e.g., around 25% of their bill, they gain a bonus die on all future Social rolls with the chatty waitress.

Next Steps

Once the investigators have spoken to Tina Larsen, there are several avenues they can explore:

- If they have yet to find accommodation—go to **Red Cedar Motel** (page 78).
- If they wish to find out more about Meriwether and its history—go to **The Library** (page 84).
- If they wish to talk to Chief Hadley about the alleged bear attack—go to **Meriwether PD** (page 82).
- If the wish to view Roy Ellsworth's body—go to **The Morgue** (page 79).
- If they wish to visit the scene of the crime—go to **The Cabin** (following).

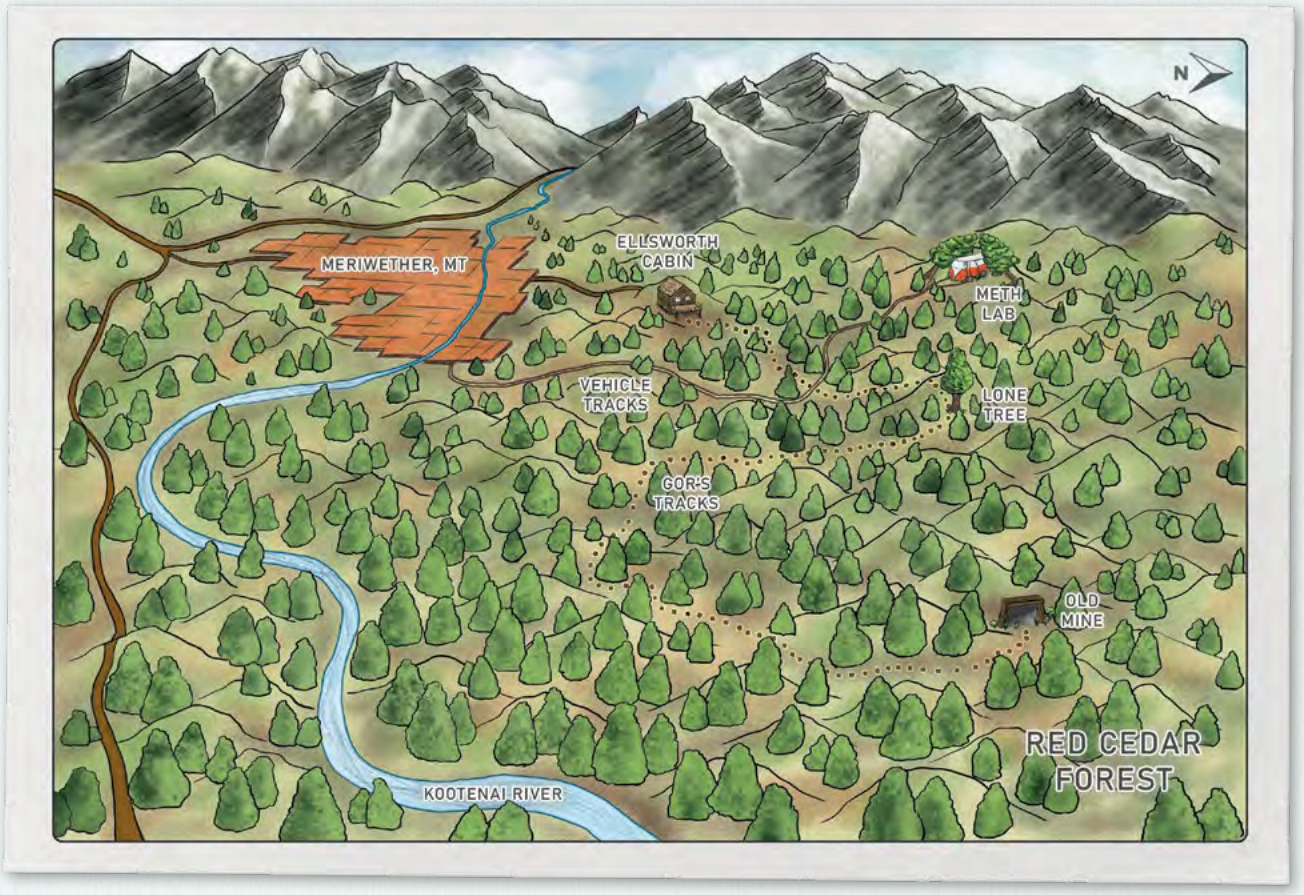
The Cabin

The site of Roy Ellsworth's death is at the edge of a quiet tree-lined road 2 km (1.2 miles) out of town. Distinct patches of dried blood are visible on the asphalt and on the packed earth track leading to the Ellsworths' cabin a couple of hundred metres/yards back from the road.

- A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll on the asphalt reveals nothing but the background rumble of motor vehicles and the scent of sawdust.
- A successful **Observation** or **Track** roll reveals that any footprints Roy and his assailant may have left behind have been obliterated by a vehicle driving up to the cabin and back. They look like they were made by an SUV.
- No roll is required to find a different set of tracks leading into the trees behind the cabin—see **Strange Tracks** (following).

The cabin stands right by the edge of Red Cedar Forest. It is a modest two-storey house built on a hillside that slopes down into a thickly wooded valley. Black and yellow police tape stretches across the closed front door, which has clearly been badly damaged by multiple impacts. The door is not locked. The cabin's back door leads out onto a partially collapsed wooden balcony, underneath which lies a woodpile. Roy's truck stands to one side of the cabin; a successful **Observation** or **Track** roll reveals it wasn't the vehicle that made the tyre tracks spotted earlier.

The cabin's interior is in disarray: overturned and wrecked furniture, smashed crockery, pulverised knickknacks (tchotchkes), and dirt tracked in across the floor. Whatever happened here, it was sudden and violent. There is a single, empty rifle rack on one wall—presumably once home to Roy's rifle, now in the morgue (**The Late Roy Ellsworth**, page 81). There is also an unfinished meal for two on the floor by an overturned dining table. All that remains of the meal are some congealed, mouldering mashed potatoes and two rotting side salads (there is no trace of the steaks that undoubtedly accompanied the meal). A broken, framed photograph on the floor depicts Roy and Renee sat together on the balcony. Of Renee, there is no sign.





If the investigators decide to search the cabin, they may find the following things:

- A successful **Appraise** roll reveals that none of the Ellsworths' valuables have been touched—so, this was not a robbery gone wrong.
- A successful **Science (Forensics)** roll shows there is no blood anywhere inside—so, Roy must have got out of the cabin before he was wounded.
- A successful **Observation** roll spots that Renee's clothes and toiletries are still in the cabin—so, it's unlikely that she fled after a domestic dispute turned ugly or is off visiting relatives (**Meriwether PD**, page 82). She obviously isn't here, though, so wherever she's gone, she must have done so on foot, as the truck is still parked outside. Given the situation, she may be injured and alone in the forest.
- A successful **Science (Engineering)** or **Art/Craft (Architecture)** roll confirms that the cabin has sustained considerable damage—like someone really strong took repeated swings at it with a sledgehammer. There also appear to be holes, like pick marks, in the wood. If the investigators are aware of the wound that killed Roy Ellsworth, a subsequent successful **Science (Forensics)** roll indicates both puncture marks are uncannily similar, and were made by something sharp, short, and curved.
- Due to the dampening effect caused by the cabin's mostly wood construction, the *vestigium* left behind by Gor is weak, meaning it requires a successful Hard **Sense Vestigia** roll to detect all of its elements (**Gor's Vestigium,** page 73).

GM ADVICE

Up until this point, there may have been no sense of urgency to this investigation, but with the discovery that Renee is missing, try to give the players the feeling that the clock is ticking, and they need to get a move on. Sadly, it's too late to save Renee (**The Lone Tree**, page 94) but having the investigators involved in what they think is a race against time is an excellent way of keeping up the pace (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 225).



Strange Tracks

There is nothing more to be learned inside the cabin, but if the investigators look around outside, they soon find some large, strange tracks leading down into the wooded valley behind the Ellsworths' home. The prints are almost circular, approximately 15 cm (6 inches) front to back, but shallower at the front edge where there appears to be a slight notch—give the players **Handout: Woolly 5**. If the investigators examine the tracks closely:

- A successful **Science (Biology** or **Zoology)** roll suggests the footprints are similar to those made by a cow, although larger (almost twice the size). With a Hard success or better, the investigator realises that the likeliest creature with a hoof print that size would be a bison, but a successful **INT** roll recalls that the nearest bison are at the National Bison Range near Missoula (if the investigators are not already aware of this fact; **Red Cedar Motel**, page 78, **The Late Roy Ellsworth**, page 81).
- A successful **History** recalls that cattle rustlers used to use special boots with a pair of cow hooves attached to the bottom of them to hide their tracks. Yet, whoever—or whatever—made these tracks is obviously bipedal and heavier than a large man, with an equally large stride. A successful **INT** roll suggests that if someone's gone to the trouble of disguising their footprints, they've done an incredibly bad job of it.

Next Steps

It's clear that whatever attacked the cabin headed deeper into the forest. Plus, Renee Ellsworth may be out there, injured and needing help. Following the strange tracks is a good way to draw the investigators from this scene to another, pulling them further into Red Cedar Forest towards Renee's final resting place and the horrors that await them in the **Old Mine** (page 96).

- Unless the investigators came out to view the murder scene before attempting to view Roy Ellsworth's body, then there really is only one thing for them to do: follow the tracks—go to **The Forest** (following).
- If the investigators have yet to examine Roy's corpse, and they wish to do so before heading into Red Cedar Forest—go to **The Morgue** (page 79).
- If the investigators wish to ask the police about Renee's whereabouts—go to **Where's Renee?** (page 83).

Handout: Woolly 5



The Forest

Red Cedar Forest sprawls over the wooded, hilly terrain outside Meriwether. Few vehicles could handle the combination of steep slopes and thick trees without expert local knowledge, so it's really only accessible on foot. There are no man-made trails, thanks to Chief Hadley discouraging hunters, hikers, and campers, and the loggers and miners are long gone—in fact, the only "industry" left is Ryan Stinson's mobile enterprise (**The Meth Lab (Optional)**, page 90).

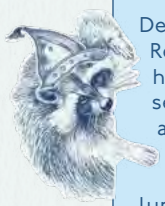
- The forest's background *vestigium* is weak, thanks to all the trees; a successful Regular **Sense Vestigia** roll detects the smell of pine needles and, more tellingly, freshly cut wood, while a Hard success adds the sound of dripping water and tree branches creaking in the wind.
- Other *vestigia* can be detected depending on where the investigators are, as noted in the relevant sections, e.g., **The Bandit in the Woods** (page 89), **The Meth Lab (Optional)** (page 90), and **The Old Mine** (page 96).

The area is named after the cedar trees that dominate the terrain: towering western red cedars, not unlike giant redwoods. Besides the red cedars, the forest is home to pine trees, ferns, low-growing shrubs, and so on, giving the

backwoods a uniform appearance. The only landmarks are the occasional rocky promontory or fallen tree. During the day, sunlight penetrates the canopy far above, giving good visibility for roughly 100 metres/yards in all directions. At night, the lack of landmarks turns the forest into a maddening maze of identical towering trees.

The forest has a distinctive scent: a resinous amber smell given off by the trees. The ground underfoot is spongy and blanketed with fallen pine needles, berries, and ground-covering plants. All sound is deadened here. Humans and animals, such as dogs or coyotes, do not generally leave obvious prints on the spongy floor, though larger beings—like Gor—do, meaning his tracks don't stop once they enter the forest.

GM ADVICE



Describe the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of Red Cedar Forest to your players. Such descriptions help bring the setting to life, giving the players a real sense of place and atmosphere. You could even read aloud or paraphrase the relevant bits of text from the start of this section—just remember not to inadvertently drop any clues about what's really lurking out there in the forest!

The investigators may wish to carry out some woodland investigation as they follow the mysterious tracks deeper into the backwoods:

- A successful **Science (Biology** or **Botany)** roll reveals that the trees are hundreds of years old and very healthy.
- A successful **Science (Biology** or **Zoology)** or **Survival** roll indicates that there is very little wild game here, except for small, fast animals like squirrels. The deer and moose one would expect to find in this sort of habitat are non-existent, and there are no signs of bears, grizzly or otherwise, which undermines Chief Hadley's bear-attack story.

If the GM wishes, they may occasionally call for an **Athletics** roll to see how well the investigators cope with clambering up and down the forest's slopes and the occasional rocky outcrop—but, at most, only call for this roll twice. If the investigator fails the roll, they should attempt a **CON** roll; if that fails, they suffer a total of 1 damage from scrapes and bruises—subsequent falls inflict no further harm. If the investigator fumbles the Athletics roll, they automatically incur 1 damage; again, subsequent falls inflict no further loss. Anyone with the Natural Toughness advantage or wearing some form of armour, such as a stab vest, avoids incurring any damage.

GM ADVICE



While you might be tempted to keep inflicting damage with each failed Athletics roll—or increase the damage to 2 for a particularly nasty tumble—the consequences (e.g., ongoing Hurt and impairment from being Down) could put the investigators at a real disadvantage when they eventually meet Gor, leading to a short and disappointing finale. Use the limited damage to underline the perils of the forest without overdoing it. Anyone who is Hurt can walk it off by the time they enter the next scene.

The Bandit in the Woods

If the investigators haven't already met Wash by the Kootenai River (**The Location**, page 75), the GM should permit them an **Observation** roll as they wander through the forest following Gor's tracks.

- Wash's Stealth is 80%, which should mean an investigator needs a Hard success to spot them (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 105). However, they only need a Regular success because Wash is curious about the newcomers and, while they won't initially approach, they aren't trying to hide from them either.
- A successful **Science (Biology** or **Zoology)** roll notes that the creature is rather large for a raccoon.
- A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll identifies the "raccoon" as no ordinary forest critter. Despite the trees, it only requires a Regular success to detect all the components of Wash's *vestigium*: the scent of tree resin and damp earth, the tickle of icy water running over your hands, and the tart taste of sun-ripened berries.
- A successful **INT**, **History**, or **Occult** roll reminds the investigators that the presence of what appears to be a *genius loci* in Montana is a little surprising, given what happened during the VGC's Montana Territory Campaign.

Provided the investigators do nothing to frighten Wash or drive them away, they may be approached. There is a curious twinkle in the creature's eyes, and at close range (3 metres/yards), their *vestigium* is noticeable even without a skill roll. Wash greets them politely with a chittering, "Ki'su'k kyukyit! *Hello?*"

The investigators may wish to ask Wash about what's going on in the forest.

- If asked about what happened to Roy Ellsworth, Wash replies, "*The snorting one was angry—so, so angry. And hungry. He needs meat but his parents caught it all. They didn't catch me, though! So, he went to the man's cabin for food, but it all went wrong.*"

- If asked to describe the "snorting one," Wash replies: "*Not like the man in the cabin and the moving cabin—tall, like a tree, and strong. Taller and stronger than his family. Such lovely thick fur! Keeps him warm come winter.*" (If the GM isn't going to use the encounter with Ryan Stinson (**The Meth Lab (Optional)**, nearby), there's no need to mention the "moving cabin," i.e., Stinson's camper van.)
- If asked about where the snorting one lives, Wash gestures along the path they're following. "*That way. To the hidden hole in the rocks. Make sure you do right by the tree-lady on the way.*"
- If asked about the tree-lady, Wash shakes their head sadly. "*You'll see.*"
- If asked if there's anyone else in the forest, Wash replies, "*The snorting one's family, but I haven't seen them in a couple of days. And the smelly one with the moving cabin.*" (Again, there's no need to mention Stinson if not using his optional encounter.)
- If the GM is including **The Meth Lab (Optional)** (nearby) and the investigators ask about the moving cabin or Meriwether's drug problem, Wash sniffs and wipes his nose. "*Tracks down there will take you to the moving cabin. It smells bad wherever it goes, so I stay away. Makes me feel… wrong. Sick. Soon I think it will be time to make him go. I think he made the snorting one crazy.*"

Wash will not accompany the investigators deeper into the forest. "*Goin' fishing. I'll keep an eye out for you, though. And be careful—the snorting one might still be angry.*"

Next Steps

Once the investigators have finished talking to Wash, they can continue on their way.

- If the GM wishes to use **The Meth Lab (Optional)** (nearby)—go to **More Mysterious Tracks (Optional)** (following).
- If not using **The Meth Lab (Optional)**—go to **The Lone Tree** (page 94).



GM ADVICE

As Wash is a *genius loci*, they can use their glamour to sway people into doing what they want. As long as the investigators don't antagonise Wash or do something to damage Red Cedar Forest (like set it on fire), the spirit of the forest won't use their glamour against them. An offending investigator can attempt to resist Wash's glamour with a **POW** roll. How successful they are depends on whether they're aware of what the glamour is and how to withstand it (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 243).

More Mysterious Tracks (Optional)

If the GM wishes to use the optional encounter with Ryan Stinson (**The Meth Lab (Optional)**, nearby), then as the investigators reach the bottom of the hill leading from the Ellsworths' cabin, they come across some obvious tyre tracks, running perpendicular to the strange footprints that led them here. These vehicle tracks seem to lead back towards Meriwether in one direction and further into the forest in the other.

If the investigators are already aware of the rumours of a mobile meth lab somewhere in the area (**Meriwether PD**, page 82, **The Library**, page 84, or **The Diner**, page 85), it looks as if they've stumbled across a clue to its whereabouts. Perhaps whoever's behind it might know where Renee is?

Next Steps

The investigators now have a choice to make: do they keep following the trail of strange footprints from the cabin in their search for Renee or do they go off chasing the tyre tracks?

- If the investigators continue to follow Gor's tracks deeper into the forest—go to **The Lone Tree** (page 94).
- If the investigators discover the vehicle tracks and decide to follow them deeper into the forest—go to **The Meth Lab (Optional)** (following).

Mobile (Cell) phones

Mobile (cell) phone coverage in Red Cedar Forest is almost non-existent. If an investigator wishes to call for help or search the internet for information, the GM should ask for a **Luck** roll. If successful, they have just enough bars to contact the outside world.

The Meth Lab (Optional)

The tyre tracks lead a few kilometres/miles deeper into Red Cedar Forest, snaking around towering trees and traversing gentle ridges and shallow valleys. No skill roll is necessary to follow the trail, but a successful **Observation** or **Track** roll indicates that the same vehicle has passed this way several times within the last week.

After an hour of walking, the tracks end on a gently sloping hillside. Part way up the bank, two great red cedar trees have fallen against each other, creating a leafy bivouac that shields the old, dirt-spattered, orange and white VW



camper van parked beneath them from being spotted from the air. The driver and passenger seats are hidden from view by large, flattened cardboard boxes wedged up against the inside of the windshield. A successful **Drive** or **INT** roll suggests this vehicle is around 50 years old—the type that was popular with hippies and campers in the 1960s and 1970s. The fact it is evidently still driveable is a testament to the quality of German auto manufacturing.

Trash litters the immediate area. Crushed and empty beer cans, a folding camping chair, a small plastic table, and a cheap barbecue grill lie scattered among the debris. A successful **Observation** roll reveals scraps of cooked hamburger, several days old, clinging to the barbecue's cooking grid; it also reveals a set of keys for the camper van, trampled into the dirt. A heap of discarded plastic chemical containers and dirty, broken glassware lies a little beyond the campsite. A successful **Science (Chemistry** or **Pharmacy)** roll reveals that the containers once contained some of the main ingredients for making crystal meth.

There are more of the strange tracks the investigators have been following all around the campsite and the camper van—these lead further into Red Cedar Forest (to **The Lone Tree**, page 94, by an alternative route). Getting closer to the VW reveals that all the windows (apart from the windshield) have been covered with corrugated sheet metal, with small viewing slits cut into them. The side and rear doors are locked and show obvious dents and impacts from something large capped with two small spikes.

The *vestigia* on the damaged vehicle is strong, meaning a successful **Sense Vestigia** roll here reveals all the elements of **Gor's Vestigium** (page 73).

The Unhappy Camper

The investigators' most immediate problem is **Ryan Stinson** (page 71), the owner of the camper van-*cum*-mobile meth lab, who has cowered inside the vehicle since Gor—lured by the smell of cooking hamburgers—ransacked the campsite. Terrified by the snorting man-beast and unable to drive away (having dropped his keys outside), Stinson locked himself inside the vehicle while Gor rampaged outside. Though not a habitual user, Stinson has repeatedly injected himself with small doses of his own product to stay awake and alert and is, consequently, somewhat agitated. There are several ways the investigators' interactions with Stinson might play out—the following sections outline some possibilities.

Flashing the Badge

Investigators presenting themselves as having any connection to law enforcement—i.e., anyone wearing a uniform and/or waving a badge or gun around—get little cooperation from Stinson, who remains locked in his camper van and denies that he has seen or heard anything, claiming—unconvincingly—that he is a bird spotter on vacation. While it doesn't require a skill roll to know he's lying, a successful **Read Person** roll highlights that, judging by his voice, Stinson is very twitchy; as a result, his behaviour could be unpredictable.

If the investigators attempt to physically breach the camper van, Stinson fires several rounds from his handgun through the vehicle's shell at wherever he thinks the main threat is coming from. The same is true if the investigators threaten Stinson with arrest (he is, after all, cooking and distributing an illegal substance). Each player should make a **Luck** roll to see if their investigator avoids being hit by a stray bullet—unlucky investigators who fail the roll suffer 1 damage.

Methods the investigators could use to gain entry to the camper van include:

- Unlocking the side doors with the dropped keys.
- Picking the lock with a successful **Locksmith** roll.
- Using a tool of some sort to lever the side doors open, coupled with a **STR** roll; a Regular success is required if using a lever, while a Hard success is needed if attempted using strength alone.
- Using the Fireball spell to melt the locking pin, followed by *Impello* to pull the side doors open (this is how Peter Grant used to deal with locks before he learned *Clausurafrange*).

Should the investigators manage to get into the VW and restrain/overcome Stinson, e.g., with a successful **Combat Manoeuvre** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 134), it takes a successful **Social** roll to get him to spill the beans about what happened. The GM should grant the investigator a bonus die if they state they are using intimidation or the threat of abandoning him in the woods. If the investigators are successful in their interrogation, the GM should give the players **Handout: Woolly 6**, which contains Stinson's statement. More guidance on running a combat encounter can be found in **A Stand-Up Fight** (page 101).

Handout: Woolly 6

RYAN STINSON'S STATEMENT

Never felt scared in these woods 'til that... thing... turned up, 'cos nobody ever comes out here thanks to the Chief telling everyone it's off-limits. All that quiet makes it perfect for my... line of work, if y'know what I'm sayin'. Only other folks I ever seen out here are a real pair of weirdoes. All dressed up in survival gear, like with these big hoods that covered their faces. Only ever see them at a distance, digging around in the undergrowth. I swear it looked sometimes like they were eating the plants right out of the ground. Crazy.

What happened here? Well, I was cooking up some burgers when some... thing came stormin' in—I didn't hang around to get a good look, but it was like, big, real big. Bigger than a man—like grizzly-big. And shaggy, y'know? And kinda... top-heavy? But there ain't no bears in these woods. Least none that I've seen. Come to think of it, I ain't seen any animals out here bigger than a raccoon. Anyways, I ran for the bus while it stomped around out here. All of a sudden it went crazy—snorting, smashing stuff up, and hammering on the van. Then it just sort of gave up and went away, I guess. Unless it's still nearby, watching us... Man, did it drink all my beer?

Making a Deal

Investigators who do not present themselves as having any connection to law enforcement—e.g., hedge wizards, monster hunters, New York Librarians, etc.—have a much better chance to interact with Ryan Stinson without things turning nasty.

If the investigators take a softly-softly approach and try to talk to Stinson without threatening him or invading his van, the GM should call for a **Social** roll to see if they can calm him down and get him to open the side doors so they can speak face to face. The GM should grant a bonus die if the investigator involved presents themselves as a fellow dropout from society, perhaps here to buy some of his crystal meth. Investigators with the Wealthy affluence rating also gain a bonus die if they flash some cash through one of the window slits.

- A **Regular success or better** means Stinson chills out, opens the van, and answers the investigators' questions (**Handout: Woolly 6**).
- A **failure** means Stinson freaks out and starts firing through the vehicle's shell (**Flashing the Badge**, page 92).
- A **fumble** or a **failed pushed roll** means Stinson totally loses it, takes another hit of crystal meth, and goes into cardiac arrest, dying within minutes. An investigator can attempt to administer medical aid if they can get into the van (**Flashing the Badge**, page 92) but the **Medicine** roll incurs a penalty die due to the location and lack of decent equipment (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 147). If the roll fails, Stinson dies; if it succeeds, his condition is stabilised, but the investigators need to get him to Meriwether as soon as possible. They can take the camper van, but it requires a successful **Drive** roll to negotiate the difficult terrain back into town.



GM ADVICE

Remember: a dice roll can have a maximum of one bonus die (or one penalty die) applied to it. So, if the investigator claims to be a dropout but also attempts to leverage their Wealthy affluence rating, they only gain one bonus die to their Social roll, not two (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 143).

Next Steps

Providing Ryan Stinson hasn't been arrested and/or rushed to hospital, there are two main options open to the players; which one they choose depends on how the adventure has gone so far and how much time the group has available. If Stinson is taken back to town, the investigators have the option to visit any locations they missed when they arrived—although they may wish to avoid Chief Hadley, given that they've broken her prohibition on entering the forest.

Waste Not...

Ryan Stinson has copious supplies for cooking crystal meth stacked inside the camper van, including plastic containers of various liquid chemicals, along with the equipment needed for its manufacture.

- If the investigators gain access to the vehicle, they could conceivably use these supplies to synthesise a useful chemical compound—poisonous, corrosive, or explosive—with a successful **Science (Chemistry)** roll. But a fumble or a failed pushed roll causes some kind of an explosion—refer to **Other Forms of Damage** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 149) and use Splat damage for anyone inside the camper van, Terminal damage for anyone within 3 metres/yards of the camper van, and so on.
- If the investigators try to synthesise their chemical compound in a hurry, the Science (Chemistry) roll incurs a penalty die to reflect their lack of due care and attention.

If the investigators attempt to make explosives, etc., it could end very badly for them and perhaps even suddenly conclude the case file. The GM should advise players of the possible lethal consequences so they can make an informed decision about whether to proceed. A poor Science roll probably means using up some Luck points if they want to avoid things going *"BOOM!!!"*

- If the investigators continue following Gor's tracks deeper into the forest—go to **The Lone Tree** (following).
- If the case file is running long and the general feeling is that it would be a good time to wrap it up—go directly to the finale in **Encountering Gor** (page 100).

GM ADVICE

If everyone is enjoying themselves but you are running short of time for this session, there's no harm in calling a halt and picking up the action again next session, rather than jumping ahead to the climax. Pausing here means the investigators have the opportunity to uncover more of the mystery before their final showdown with Gor.

If you do break now, don't forget to let the players roll 1D100 to see if they can recover any spent Luck points (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 115). Remember, if a player rolls higher than their current Luck value, they gain 1D10 Luck points, but if they roll equal to or less than their current Luck value, they don't recover any Luck this time.

The Lone Tree

After approximately another hour of following the strange tracks further into the backwoods, the investigators hear strange hissing sounds coming from high up in the treetops somewhere ahead of them. The GM should call for a **Science (Biology** or **Zoology)** roll.

- A **Regular success** identifies the hisses as belonging to turkey vultures, which the investigator knows are carrion eaters.
- A **Hard success** or better recalls that this hiss is one of the few sounds turkey vultures can make, thanks to their lack of a voice box. It is reserved for when they are annoyed or jockeying for position on a carcass.

The strange tracks—and the hissing sounds—lead to a hilltop on which stands a badly damaged red cedar tree. Not only have virtually all the lower branches been broken off and left lying around the base but, more strikingly, the bottom 3 metres (10 feet) of the trunk are completely stripped of bark, with deep holes punched into the exposed trunk.

- A successful **Science (Biology** or **Botany)** roll indicates that the damage to the tree happened in the last few days, as resinous sap is still oozing from the puncture wounds.
- A successful **Science (Forensics)** roll reveals that the holes are the same as those found at the cabin and are similar to the wound in Roy Ellsworth's torso.
- If the investigators have heard Ryan Stinson's story (**Handout: Woolly 6**), it should be obvious, based on the strange tracks and the damaged tree, that the creature that attacked him was responsible for whatever happened here, too.

GM ADVICE

If the players are having a hard time figuring out the significance of any clues, permit them to make an **INT** roll so their investigators can put two and two together (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 113). Besides stalling the game, it's no fun for your players if you leave them to struggle—and the whole point of *RoL:RPG* is to have fun creating shared stories with your friends.

The Late Renee Ellsworth

High above their heads, approximately 9 metres (30 feet) up the tree, the investigators can see turkey vultures edging along a branch towards a human figure that, from this angle, appears to be leaning against the trunk. Strangely, the vultures keep hissing and backing off every time they get close. Calling up to the figure has no apparent effect, nor does any attempt to catch their attention. At best, the person is either asleep or unconscious; at worst, they are dead.

A Ghostly Encounter

Once the investigators have examined the tree and spotted the figure in the branches, something strange happens. As they look at the red cedar, the investigators see the smoky figure of a woman scrambling up the trunk, breaking off small branches as she climbs. Her body momentarily moves violently from side to side, as if the entire tree is being shaken. She looks down at something, screams, and continues to climb up to the branch where the investigators saw the turkey vultures.

- If the investigators found the Ellsworths' framed photo (**The Cabin**, page 86), they recognise the woman as Renee.
- If they make a concerted effort to interact with the ghost, for example, by calling her name, Renee fleetingly pauses in her climb and notices them. Even so, she only manages to shout, *"It can't climb—thank God, it can't climb!"* before fading out.
- Casting Werelight produces a gently glowing, milky white sphere of light whose colour rapidly changes to a dark crimson. It also causes the "film clip" of Renee climbing the tree to repeat itself for as long as the werelight lasts. While she appears more solid thanks to the infusion of magical energy, Renee is still too terrified to say anything more.
- The ghost's presence explains the lack of predation injuries on Renee's body and the turkey vultures' odd behaviour—every time one gets near, her spirit scares it off.



If the investigators spoke to Wash (**The Bandit in the Woods**, page 89), it looks as if they've found their "tree-lady." The spirit of the forest asked them to "do right by" her. How the investigators interpret that is up to them.

- The investigators could ring Meriwether PD and inform them that they've found a body, along with its location, before continuing further into the forest. Unless they do so anonymously, calling in the body alerts Chief Hadley that the investigators have broken her prohibition on entering the woods, which will have consequences if she sees them about town. See also **Hadley's Ambush (Optional)** (page 105).
- They could attempt to recover the body from the tree themselves. (This is a good option if the investigators haven't identified who the ghost is yet.)

Retrieving the Body

If they decide to recover the tree-lady's body, a successful **Athletics** roll permits an investigator to climb up to the figure (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 82). The GM should grant a bonus die if the other investigators assist by giving them a boost to get past the broken lower branches or if suitable climbing equipment is used (e.g., ropes, climbing spikes, and so on).

As the investigator reaches the motionless figure it becomes obvious that it is the body of a woman, secured to the branch by a belt. A successful **INT** roll suggests she must have fastened it that way to stop herself from falling. Her body can be carefully cut free and lowered to the ground with rope or unceremoniously pushed off the branch once the belt is undone.

- If the investigator doesn't have a knife but knows the *Serra obscura* spell, they can use its blade to cut Renee's belt. Otherwise, it requires a successful Hard **DEX** roll to unfasten the belt without falling out of the tree (3 damage from the fall if the roll is failed, but at least Renee falls with the investigator). If the falling investigator doesn't know the *Casus levis* spell (page 174), a kind GM might allow them a **Luck** roll to see if Renee's body cushions their landing; this, if successful, reduces the damage to 1.
- If the investigators don't wish to climb the tree, *Impello* can be used to dislodge the figure from its perch with a successful **Magic** roll, followed by a successful **POW** roll (as Renee is lashed to the branch, it requires additional effort to dislodge her).

If the investigators don't yet know who the woman is, once the body is on the ground, they have no difficulty identifying her as Renee Ellsworth from the ID in her pocket. A successful **Science (Biology)** or **Medicine** roll indicates that, judging by the degree of rigor mortis, she has been dead for a day or so,

probably from dehydration and exposure. This means she must have climbed the tree around the same time her husband was killed—or shortly thereafter. Puzzlingly, even though she has no physical injuries and therefore could have climbed down at any time, she chose not to. If required, a successful **INT** roll suggests she may have been too afraid of whatever caused the damage to the tree to do so.

If they haven't already done so, the investigators should now inform the police that they've found Renee's body. (This may require a gentle prompt on the GM's part, or a successful **INT** roll to realise it would be bad form to just leave the body here.) They could return to town with it themselves, but, without a suitable vehicle, this is a difficult task to achieve. Besides which, they would also face detention and questioning if they do.



GM ADVICE

Depending on what you have agreed with your group (**Depictions of Horror**, page 66), you may wish to add a little more detail about the state of Renee's body. Rigor mortis (stiffening of the body's muscles) usually sets in a couple of hours after death, starting with the face. This stiffness progresses steadily through the body to the legs, peaking at around eight hours postmortem. The muscles begin to relax again in the same order around 24 hours after death, becoming fully relaxed 12 hours later.

It's up to you whether Renee is suffering from the full effects of rigor mortis when the investigators find her, or if it is wearing/has worn off. This may also affect their attempts to retrieve Renee's body (for example, a potential penalty die if attempting to lower a floppy corpse to the ground) and give them a better idea of her time of death.

Next Steps

The investigators now know Renee Ellsworth's fate. Like her husband, she was a victim of whatever creature stalks these woods. Unless they wish to return to town to stock up on supplies, there really is only one place to go—deeper into the forest on the trail of those never-ending footprints…

- If the investigators continue to follow the strange tracks—go to **The Old Mine** (following).
- If the investigators return to Meriwether without attracting police attention (for example, to arm themselves), let the players narrate a brief montage sequence—another trick used in film and television that shows the passage of time without dwelling on the details—then simply resume the action back at Renee's tree. Don't forget to move time on, though; did they return the following morning or is it now evening?

The Old Mine

After around two hours of further trekking through the forest following the strange tracks, the investigators enter a ravine where the trees grow thickly together, and visibility is reduced to 20 metres/yards at best. A successful **Science (Biology** or **Botany)** roll reveals that the low-lying vegetation prevalent elsewhere is virtually non-existent here. All that can be seen are cropped stalks of vegetation that have been gnawed down to the ground, apparently by some sort of large herbivore. Similarly, the tree bark has been scraped and scored many times, up to a height of around 2 metres (7 feet).

Note: numbers and letters in parentheses in the following sections refer to locations on the Old Mine map (page 97).

The tracks lead to a tattered green camouflage net that partially covers a section of the ravine's wall (3). There is something behind the netting, but the investigators must duck under it to see what it is: an old mine entrance, but one that has obviously been strengthened and secured with fresh timbers and wooden doors at some point in the last decade or so. The ground outside the mine is muddy and heavily trampled in all directions. A successful **Track** or **Observation** roll notices faint traces of adult human boot prints in among the strange markings that brought them here. If the investigators take a look around the woods surrounding the mine entrance, they may discover the following:

- A successful **Observation** or **Survival** roll leads to a foul-smelling latrine dug into the ground some distance away from the mine's entrance. It smells more like a farmyard than a human lavatory. Cruel GMs may wish to ask the investigator(s) for a **CON** roll to see if they can avoid vomiting at the stench.
- A pile of animal bones is heaped some distance from the mine's entrance. A successful **Science (Biology** or **Zoology)** roll reveals the bones are those of the large animals that should be common to this area: deer, moose—even bear and wolf. None of the bones are fresh.

Once the investigators have finished their search, there really is only one way for them to go—**Down the Mine** (page 97).

Refusing to Face the Peril

Conceivably, the players might decide that some or all of the investigators should stay outside the mine entrance where it might be safer, or even head back to Meriwether looking for backup.

Staying just outside the mine's entrance is a reasonable option as it doesn't remove the investigators from any activity in the mine, as they are just a shout, scream, or explosion away from running in to help their colleagues (**Down the Mine**, following). On the flip side, whoever stays outside the mine will be the first to see Gor when he returns to his home (**Encountering Gor**, page 100). The GM may wish to give any investigators outside the mine a chance to hide (a successful **Stealth** roll) when they hear the man-bison's noisy approach. Alternatively, on hearing Gor crashing through the woods towards them, they could run into the mine to warn their friends. If they decide to wait out in the open, they have their first encounter with Gor in the clearing.

If some or all of the investigators wish to return to town, the GM can remind them that it's now at least a four-hour hike back through the forest. Depending on when they originally set out, it may even be dark before they can safely return. On top of that, they have no idea if anyone is trapped or injured down the mine. Hopefully, this should encourage them to stay and investigate further. If it doesn't, the GM should let the investigators head back to Meriwether, perhaps not returning to the mine until the following day. The GM also has the option of Gor arriving before the investigators leave. In this case, go straight to **Encountering Gor** (page 100), although the action happens outside the mine's entrance rather than within its cramped tunnels.

Down the Mine

Beyond the camouflage netting, the mine's doors lead into a tunnel (4) that curves just enough that daylight fades to pitch blackness within 20 metres/yards. If the investigators do not have their own light sources (including Werelight), a handy tin box by the entrance contains a couple of rusty but working flashlights.

The tunnel is quiet and still. The smell of animals and death hangs in the air, growing stronger the further in the investigators go. Thick plastic sheets (5) hang across the tunnel approximately 60 metres (65 yards) from the entrance, masking whatever lies beyond. A short distance behind the sheets is an intersection of tunnels, which appears to have been converted into living quarters of some kind (6). It is in a terrible mess. Camping furniture, cooking equipment, books, and tools—almost all spattered with blood—lie shredded, smashed, and scattered across



the mine floor. From the amount of furniture, it looks as if two, or maybe three, adults lived here, although it's hard to tell due to the chaos. The GM should call for an **Observation** roll:

- A **Regular success** uncovers two long-expired Montana driver's licences for a Kayla and Carl Metzger, along with an old photograph of two similar-looking young women, one of whom appears to be Kayla. If the investigators visited Chief Hadley's office and spotted the photograph on her desk, they realise the two photos are the same (**Speaking to Chief Hadley**, page 82). They also discover a well-thumbed American Sign Language (ASL) dictionary.
- A **Hard success** uncovers an old trifold leaflet tucked into a first aid manual as a bookmark. If the investigators didn't find the G2K pamphlet at **Red Cedar Motel** (page 78) or **The Library** (following), give the players **Handout: Woolly 4**, which shows the pamphlet's cover. At the back of the book, in a sealed plastic bag, are two embroidered G2K patches. The patches are old, worn, and were once sewn onto something.

Niches in the mine walls contain numerous candle stubs, but the lack of smoke in the air indicates they have not been lit recently. Someone has thumbtacked a child's drawing to a wooden support beam—give the players **Handout: Woolly 7**, which depicts three unusual stick figures. On another wooden support, someone has scratched the name "Gordon," along with a date of birth (almost 15 years ago to the day) and a very odd height chart.

- A successful **Observation** roll reveals that there is no height mark for age one—the chart starts at age two. A subsequent successful **INT** roll, if required, suggests that the mine's occupants must have moved here around 13–14 years ago.
- According to the chart, Gordon was already 1.5 metres (5 feet) tall by age six, and at age 12 he had topped 1.8 metres (6 feet). There are no more age and height markings after that.

Lastly, a thick trail of dried blood on the floor leads to a side tunnel and more plastic sheeting—go to **A Grisly Discovery** (following).

A Grisly Discovery

Following the trail of dried blood beyond the second set of plastic sheeting leads the investigators to a bedchamber of sorts (8), containing a nest made of old blankets (A). Thick steel chains lie on top of the bedding. It looks like the chains have been torn out from bolts in the stone wall (B).

Vestigia in the Mine

Although the mine's supports are wooden, their dampening effect is lessened both by age and the sheer amount of rock they're embedded in. This means *vestigia* in the mine tunnels are extremely strong, thus, no roll is required to detect **Gor's Vestigium** (page 73). However, Gor's is not the only *vestigium* down here. A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll detects something that is clearly separate: a sensation of bodies huddled together for warmth, intense protective love, voices raised in anger, and, underlying it all, a sense of fear and despair—the *vestigia* belonging to Gor's parents.

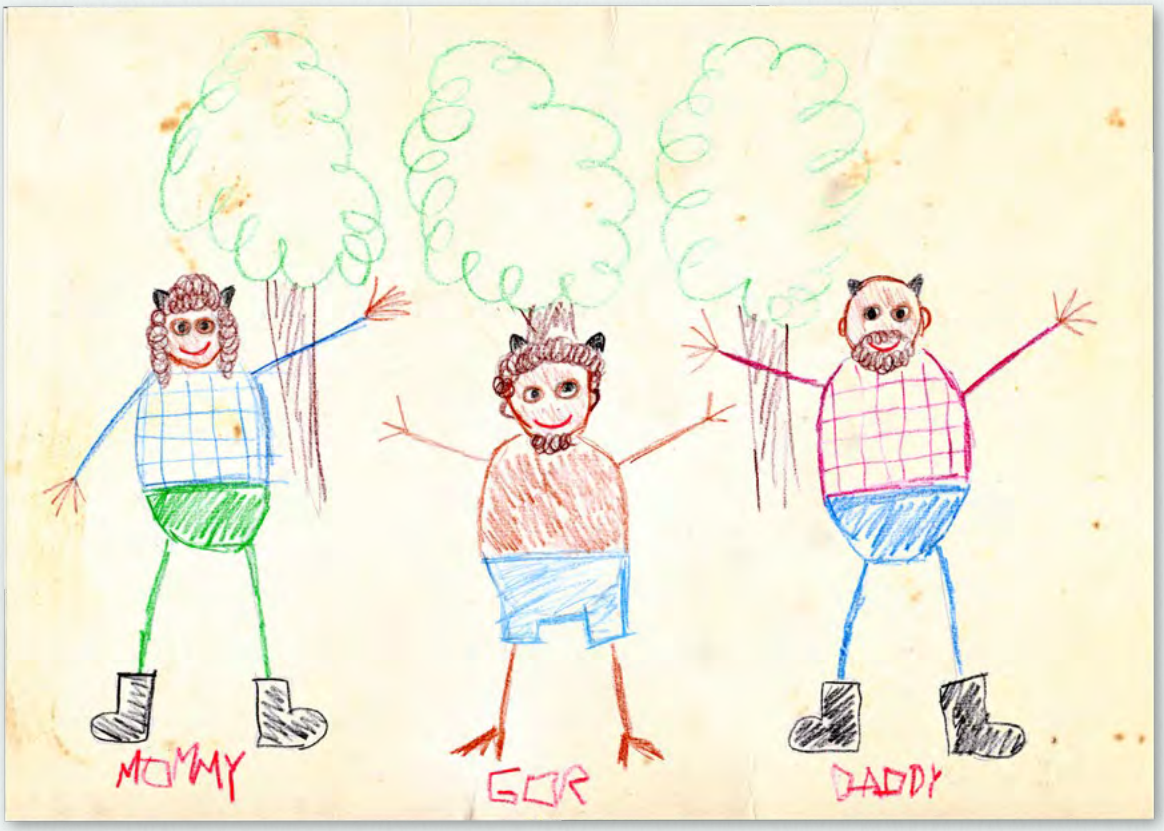
- A successful **INT** roll, if required, suggests that something large and powerful was once restrained here. Could it have been the creature who attacked Ryan Stinson and Roy Ellsworth?

The dried blood trail leads beyond the bedding, further down the tunnel to where the smell of death is almost overpowering. Two bodies, one male, one female, partially dismembered and largely consumed, lie in the darkness (C). Strangely, neither of the bodies appear to be completely human. Judging by what's left of them, both were thick-set and larger than average. The uneaten remains also appear to be covered in short, downy brown fur. The "hair" on the woman's head is styled like that of the woman in the child's drawing (**Handout: Woolly 7**), as is the man's facial fur. Both have a pair of small, curved horns jutting out from their scalps.

The GM should call for a **POW** roll to see if the investigators become impaired through witnessing the shocking state of the corpses and their bizarre appearance (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118). The GM can also ask investigators who are already impaired to make a **POW** roll to see if they can retain their composure (**Other Effects of Impairment**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 119); on a roll of 90 or above, they perform an appropriate involuntary action.

Provided the investigators don't all flee the scene, they can attempt to examine the bodies further.

Handout: Woolly 7



- A successful **Science (Biology)** or **Medicine** roll reveals the pair have been dead for a few days. It looks as if they died around the same time as Roy Ellsworth, although whether before or after is impossible to tell.
- A successful **Science (Forensics)** roll reveals they were killed by the same sharp curved implement used on Roy Ellsworth.

Although their heights and weights no longer match, based on the photographs on the drivers' licences, these are the bodies of Kayla and Carl Metzger. How they came to change so dramatically is a mystery, although a successful **Magic** or **INT** roll recalls rumours coming out of London, England, of a practitioner who could transform people into animal-human chimeras[1]. The only logical conclusion is that someone—or something—turned the Metzgers into bison-people. If the Magic roll is a Hard success, it suggests that the necessary transformation spell would be at least sixth order.

Footnote: [1]*Moon Over Soho*

GM ADVICE



Should one or more of the investigators flee as a result of witnessing the Metzgers' remains, they could run into Gor as he returns home. If you decide to take this option, go to **Encountering Gor** (page 100), adjusting the details accordingly. The sounds of any interaction should, hopefully, attract their colleagues' attention!

Next Steps

As the investigators carry out their examination, the floor begins to tremble beneath their feet. They feel the stomp of heavy hoofbeats as a deep snorting sound fills the tunnels. Suddenly, a huge, lumbering creature with the head of what looks like a bison bursts through the plastic sheeting—go to **Encountering Gor** (following).



Encountering Gor

The investigators are, as far as they know, trapped in the mine! Behind them, the side tunnel runs on into the hillside. Ahead of them, a massive man-beast stands shaking his head from side to side, snorting, and pawing the earth with his hoofed feet.

- A successful **Science (Biology** or **Zoology)** roll recalls that head shaking, snorting, and pawing the ground are all signs that a bison is preparing to charge.
- A successful **Read Person** roll realises the same thing.

There are three main options for the investigators: fight, flight, or attempt to calm the creature down.

- If the investigators try to talk to Gor—go to **Tact & Diplomacy** (following).
- If the investigators choose to fight—go to **A Stand-Up Fight** (page 101).
- If they decide to flee—go to **A Hair-Raising Chase** (page 103).

GM ADVICE

This is the case file's climax—it should be dramatic and exciting for you and your players, whichever option they take. And while it's written to take place in the old mine, if it makes more sense for it to happen elsewhere in Red Cedar Forest, then go for it! Later, any surviving investigators have the opportunity to discover the mine and its shocking secrets if they want to.

Of course, where the investigators encounter Gor may affect how they react—for example, running may seem like a far more viable option when out in the forest than it does down a dark mine! And if they've interacted with Renee's ghost (**A Ghostly Encounter**, page 94), the investigators know at least one way to evade the creature should things go sideways.



Tact & Diplomacy

Gor is startled and surprised to find strangers in his home, feelings heightened by his crystal meth-induced paranoia—hence his defensive behaviour. However, the investigators can attempt to talk to Gor, if they so wish. The GM should ask for a **Social** roll with a penalty die (to reflect Gor's paranoia).

- A **Regular success** causes Gor to stop shaking his head and pawing the earth, although he continues to snort. A successful **Read Person** or **Science (Biology** or **Zoology)** roll realises he is calmer but there is still a danger he'll attack. They must proceed carefully.
- A **Hard success** sees Gor's mighty shoulders sag as his anger and surprise drain out of him. Despite his size, he looks just like the confused, scared teenager he is.
- A **Critical success** also sees Gor make gestures with his hands. Anyone who knows ASL recognises "*Hello,*" and "*My name...,*" followed by what sounds like "Gor."
- A **failure** causes Gor to take a menacing step forwards. The investigators have one more chance to calm him down before he charges.
- A **fumble** or a **failed pushed** roll sees Gor charge immediately. The investigators still have the opportunity to fight (**A Stand-up Fight**, nearby) or flee (**A Hair-Raising Chase**, page 103).
- As always, Luck can be spent to improve the roll's level of success. The roll can also be pushed if a player can justify how their investigator achieves that.

Providing the investigators manage to pacify Gor, they can speak further with him. Gor attempts to communicate with ASL, although it requires a successful **Language (ASL)** roll to interpret his hesitant hand gestures. Those who don't know sign language can attempt to translate using the ASL dictionary in the main living area, if they found it; however, they require a Hard success to decipher his gestures. A fumbled or failed pushed roll causes Gor to melt down out of frustration and charge; the GM should lower this to a failure if the investigators only achieved a Regular Social success when calming him down.

- If the investigators didn't find the various items in the main living area, Gor shows them the driver's licences, the G2K leaflet and patches, the ASL dictionary, and the picture of his mother and Chief Hadley, signing what looks like the word "*Aunt.*"
- If asked, Gor attempts to sign what happened to him at Ryan Stinson's campsite (**The Meth Lab (Optional)**, page 90). "*Bad drink. Bad food. Sick. Mad.*"
- If the investigators haven't found Gor's parents and ask where they are, he signs the word, "*Dead.*" If asked how they died—or who killed them—he signs "*Me,*" and begins to sob. It's quite the sight.
- Gor also signs that he is hungry and scared, finishing with the sign for "*You help me.*"

Next Steps

Once the investigators have learned the truth from Gor, they need to decide what to do with the teenaged man-beast. This may include removing him from the forest—but where on Earth could the investigators take him where he and those around him would be safe?

- If the GM and players feel they have reached a good end point to the story, they can wrap up the case—go to **Conclusion** (page 106).
- If the GM wants to hit the investigators with one last challenge, they are bushwhacked (surprised) by Chief Hadley—go to **Hadley's Ambush (Optional)** (page 105).
- If the investigators want to make a deal with Hadley that would allow Gor to remain free—go to **Taking Care of Gor** (page 106).
- If the investigators want to tidy up any loose ends, like Ryan Stinson's meth lab or Chief Hadley's corruption—go to **Cleaning up the Town** (page 107). (This is a good potential option for investigators who are part of a law enforcement agency, less so for monster hunters—unless they have personal reasons for doing so.)

A Stand-Up Fight

If the investigators' attempts to pacify Gor fail, then a stand-up fight may seem like their best option. Before the fight begins run through this checklist:

1. Ask each player what their investigator is doing (**Declaration of Intent,** *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 124).
2. Use the players' answers to figure out what skill rolls they should make during the first combat round, e.g., Fighting, Firearms, Magic, or Athletics (**Which Skill to Use in Combat,** *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 131).
3. Work out who makes the first attack (**The Combat Round**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 124). This might be an investigator, or it might be Gor. **Remember:** each character involved in the combat gets to initiate one action per round (their turn).
4. Once that character has taken their action, determine whose turn it is next (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 125).
5. Once everyone has had a turn, a new round begins *if* there are still people left to carry on the fight.

The investigators might decide to attack Gor with whatever weapons they are carrying. Melee weapons use the **Fighting** skill, while guns use the **Firearms** skill. Investigators could

even use chains as **Improvised Weapons** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 134); a chain has a base weapon damage of 1. Practitioners use the **Magic** skill to cast spells in combat. A very useful spell under the circumstances would be **Shield** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 185).

Use the following steps during each character's turn; for more details, see **Running Combat Encounters** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 127).

1. **Set Your Goal:** you describe the action you want your character to perform.
2. **Target Responds:** the target now describes how they react (respond) to the attack. They may **Do Nothing**, **Dodge**, **Fight Back** (once per combat round), or **Flee**. Gor's preferred reactions are described below (**Gor's Combat**) and in his profile (**Cast**, page 109). **Remember:** each character has one "free" response per round; if they are attacked again that round, they are **Outnumbered** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 135)—they can still respond, but their attacker gains a bonus die to their Fighting roll (they do not add one to ranged attack rolls like Firearms and Magic).
3. **Dice Rolls:** the attacker and the target both roll dice to determine who succeeds. Depending on what happened in Steps 1 and 2, this may be an **Opposed Combat Roll** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 131), where the highest level of success wins, or an **Unopposed Combat Roll** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 132).
4. **Damage Roll:** if the attack was successful and the goal was to cause harm, the victor rolls to see how much damage they inflict: a **STR** roll for unarmed and melee attacks, or a **DEX** roll for Firearms and other ranged attacks, like spells. Gor has Natural Toughness, so unarmed and blunt weapons inflict 1 less damage to him. See **Table 4: Damage Conditions Summary** (nearby) for a reminder about damage conditions.
5. **Narration:** the victor describes what happened.
6. **Next Player's Turn**.

Gor's Combat

- Once engaged in combat, Gor's intent is to inflict damage by headbutting his opponent. As Gor has the Damage Bonus advantage, the base damage for this attack is 1 (0 for an unarmed attack + 1 damage bonus).
- Gor's first response to being attacked is to fight back. He can only do so once per combat round, so, if he is attacked again in the same round, he dodges melee attacks but does nothing against spell or firearms attacks.
- If there is more than one investigator engaged in hand-to-hand combat with Gor, he is outnumbered. Thus, each round, every investigator who attacks him after the first gains a bonus die to their Fighting roll against him (but not to Firearms or Magic rolls).

GM ADVICE



Players can always spend Luck points to improve their level of success in an opposed combat roll or to turn a failure into a success in an unopposed combat roll (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 113). Remember, though, that combat rolls cannot be pushed (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 141).

If, at any point during combat with Gor, the investigators decide to flee rather than continue trading blows, refer to **A Hair-Raising Chase** (page 103).

Table 4: Damage Conditions Summary

Total Damage Suffered	Damage Condition	Notes
1	Hurt	—
2	Down	Impaired.
3	Bloodied	Out of the fight but not dead.
4 (in a single attack)	Mortal Wound	Automatically Down. Needs medical aid (a successful Medicine roll) within an hour or they die.
5 (in a single attack)	Fatal Blow	Must spend 30 Luck points or dies instantly. If 30 Luck points are spent, treat as a mortal wound.



GM ADVICE

We recommend that you encourage your players to download the free *RoL:RPG* Players Rules Crib Sheets from chaosium.com so they have a quick reference guide to hand during the fight. Alternatively, you could print out or share onscreen the combat rules summaries from **Appendix B** of the core *Rivers of London* rulebook. **My Options: When Someone Tries to Hit Me** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 353) should prove most useful.

- Gor ignores any character who is **Down** or suffering a **Mortal Wound** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 144)—as long as there is still someone to fight or chase. If there is no one left to fight or chase, Gor may begin to eat his victims, starting with anyone who is mortally wounded. However, the GM is advised to have a noise scare him off (e.g., a semi-truck (articulated lorry) honking its horn in the distance, the noise from an aircraft overhead, or Wash's raccoon-like screams echoing through the tunnels/woods), so he runs away before munching down on one of the investigators.
- For a more dangerous version of Gor, see **Greater Danger (Option)** (page 109).

The Non-Lethal Option

The investigators may prefer a non-lethal means of dealing with Gor even though they have engaged in combat. If so, use the following to guide the encounter:

- They could subdue and/or restrain him—using the chains from his bedroom, for example—with a **Combat Manoeuvre** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 134).
- They could subdue and/or restrain him with magic, e.g., **Candano** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 183). Alternatively, if an investigator has mastered **Scindere** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 180), they could boost it for a total cost of 3 magic points and attempt to hold Gor in place (requiring a successful **Magic** roll to cast the spell, followed by an opposed STR 120 vs the caster's **POW** roll to see if Gor is suitably restrained).
- If the investigators went back into town for supplies and brought fresh meat—lots of it—throwing the meat at Gor distracts him. As he eats, the investigators can attempt to calm him with an **Animal Handling** roll; a fumble or a failed pushed roll causes Gor to instantly attack. If successfully calmed, Gor does not attack once he has finished eating. **Remember:** Gor understands English; he's non-verbal but can communicate using ASL. See also **Tact & Diplomacy** (page 100) for what the investigators might learn.

Subduing, restraining, or calming Gor doesn't solve the problem, though. Getting Gor, restrained or otherwise, out of the forest is going to be tricky, but the GM should reward players who come up with any ingenious means of doing so (e.g., keeping him calm with a successful one-time **Animal Handling** roll while tempting him to follow along with meat, and so on). A successful **Navigate** roll permits the investigators to find the road Hadley uses to drop off the Metzgers' supplies (11; **The Old Mine map**, page 97).

There is, potentially, a way to leave Gor in his domain while reducing/removing the threat he poses, but that may require the cooperation of a certain police chief (**Taking Care of Gor**, page 106).

Next Steps

Once the fight is over, any survivors can see to their wounds (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 144). Gor may be dead, but, depending on the investigators' strategy, he may still be alive and possibly restrained—although the investigators may wish to take extra precautions to ensure he doesn't escape!

- If everyone is satisfied with how events have turned out, the GM can wrap up the case—go to **Conclusion** (page 106).
- If the GM feels the investigators would enjoy a showdown with Chief Hadley—go to **Hadley's Ambush (Optional)** (page 105).
- If the investigators want to explore options that would allow Gor to remain in Red Cedar Forest—go to **Taking Care of Gor** (page 106).
- If the investigators want to tackle Ryan Stinson's meth lab or Chief Hadley's attempted cover up—go to **Cleaning up the Town** (page 107).

A Hair-Raising Chase

Confronted with Gor, the investigators may decide that their best option is to flee.

- A successful **Science (Biology** or **Zoology)**, **Survival**, or Hard **INT** roll reminds the investigator that running away from an angry bison is not recommended—the general advice is to back away slowly, placing as many obstacles between you and it as possible. Or climb something, like a tree (**Higher Ground**, following).

- However, it takes a successful **POW** roll to follow that advice and not immediately turn and make a break for it.
- If an investigator manages to resist the urge to flee, they can either try talking to Gor (**Tact & Diplomacy**, page 100) or fighting him (**A Stand-Up Fight**, page 101).

If all the investigators attempt to hotfoot it, use the rules for **Chases** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 358). Like the bison he is related to, Gor is big *and* fast—terrifyingly so—and quite happy to try to run the investigators down.

The investigators always have the option to flee during combat (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 130); Gor won't follow them unless there's no one left to attack. So, if all the investigators decide to run away from combat in the same round, Gor gives chase, but if only one investigator runs away, he keeps on fighting unless they're the last one standing.

If a chase is initiated, use the following steps (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 151):

1. **Establish the Location:** the GM describes where the chase is taking place, and the investigator describes where they're heading and what they're doing to get there.
2. **Chase Roll:** investigators who are flat-out running away compare their MOV to Gor's (MOV 9); if it is lower, they incur an automatic chase failure; if it's the same, they make a **DEX** roll to see if they can achieve a chase success. Investigators who have to avoid obstacles, such as the plastic sheeting in the mine or the forest's sheer drops and dense trees, make an **Athletics** roll instead; if they succeed, they gain a chase success; if they fail, they incur a chase failure.
3. **Track Successes:** if an investigator gains 2 chase successes before they incur 2 chase failures, they get away from Gor. If they incur 2 chase failures before they gain 2 chase successes, Gor catches up with them.
4. **Combat or Next Player's Turn:** if Gor catches up with an investigator, he attacks and initiates combat. If the investigator managed to evade him, it's the next player's turn. As Gor is an NPC, he moves forwards automatically on his turn. Unless he catches up with an investigator who has lost the chase, that is all he does on his turn.

GM ADVICE



Investigators can either spend Luck points to turn a failed chase roll into a success (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 113) or they can describe what they're doing to push the roll (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 152). However, if they fail, something bad happens, which may include Gor catching them.

Your players can download the free *RoL:RPG* Players Rules Crib Sheets from chaosium.com so they have a summary of the chase rules in front of them during the game. Alternatively, we recommend that you print out or share onscreen **Investigators Fleeing** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 358) to help your players keep track of what's happening during the chase.

Investigators fleeing through the mine who make a successful **Luck** or **Navigate** roll find an alternative exit, one that brings them close to the road Chief Hadley uses to deliver supplies to her sister.

Higher Ground

While the mine and Red Cedar Forest are full of obstacles, the woods provide one way of getting away from Gor, at least temporarily: by climbing a tree (a successful **Athletics** roll). Investigators can use their turn to declare they are climbing a tree rather than continuing to run.

- If the investigator has 1 chase success and no chase failures, they have time to climb before Gor reaches them; their Athletics roll is made with a bonus die.
- If the investigator has 1 chase success and 1 chase failure, the Athletics roll is made as usual (no bonus or penalty die).
- If the investigator has no chase successes and 1 chase failure, Gor is hard on their heels; their Athletics roll is made with a penalty die.

Once safely ensconced up a tree, investigators who have ranged weapons or who can cast spells may attack Gor with relative impunity. Gor attempts to shake them out of the tree (as he did Renee), meaning any attacks are made with a penalty die, but Gor does nothing to get out of their way, i.e., he does not **Dive for Cover** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 128). There is no need for the GM to ask the investigators for a DEX or Athletics roll to see if they can maintain their balance; it is assumed they've had the sense to wedge themselves tightly into the branches. Alternatively, instead of attacking Gor, investigators can attempt to calm him down.

Next Steps

Once the chase is over, either the investigators escape or they end up engaged in conversation or combat with Gor, whether on the ground or from a safe vantage point up a tree.

- If the investigators got away and the GM and players feel they have reached a good end point, they can wrap up the case—after all, they know who killed Roy Ellsworth and were lucky to escape with their own lives—go to **Conclusion** (page 106).
- If the investigators are fighting Gor—go to **A Stand-Up Fight** (page 101).
- If the investigators talk to Gor—go to **Tact & Diplomacy** (page 100).
- If the GM wishes to include an extra twist at the end of the case file, Chief Hadley attempts to protect her secret—go to **Hadley's Ambush (Optional)** (following).
- If the investigators want to tidy up any loose ends—like Meriwether's drug problem or Chief Hadley's dodgy dealings—go to **Cleaning up the Town** (page 107).

Hadley's Ambush (Optional)

Somehow, Chief Hadley became aware of the investigators' meddling in her affairs. This may be because the investigators:

- Fumbled or failed a pushed roll when viewing Roy Ellsworth's body and were forcibly ejected from **The Morgue** (page 79).
- Visited the Chief at her HQ and aroused her suspicion (**Meriwether PD**, page 82).
- Brought Ryan Stinson in, either under arrest or for medical treatment (**The Meth Lab (Optional)**, page 90).
- Returned to town with Renee Ellsworth's body (**The Lone Tree**, page 94) or for hunting supplies.

As a result, Hadley followed the investigators into the forest. Realising that their encounter with Gor undoubtedly caused them to learn too much about her involvement with the Metzger family, she decides to silence them before they can ruin her reputation and send her to jail.



GM ADVICE

If Ryan Stinson's brush with Gor has become known in Meriwether, you may decide that Hadley has, "off-camera," permanently dealt with the only other witness who can corroborate the investigators' claims before she seeks them out.

Dodging the Bullet

The investigators barely have time to recover from their encounter with Gor before a gunshot narrowly misses one of them. A successful **Observation**, **Track**, or **Firearms** roll pinpoints their assailant's location but not, initially at least, their identity. The investigators now face another choice: tackle whoever is shooting at them or try to get away.

- If the investigators decide to fight, use the combat rules to determine who wins out in the end. Remember, even though there may be more investigators than Chief Hadley, they don't receive a bonus die to their combat rolls unless they are involved in hand-to-hand (melee) combat with her (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 135). Should the investigators manage to take Hadley alive, she slumps in defeat. *"What else could I do? They were family,"* she mutters regretfully.
- If the investigators decide to flee, use the chase rules. If they manage to successfully evade Meriwether's corrupt police chief, it's probably a good idea for them to get out of town as quickly as possible to avoid any further attempts on their life. They still might end up the subject of a BOLO, though…
- If Gor is with the investigators, the gunshot enrages him, causing him to charge the shooter. It is up to the GM whether Hadley is cold enough to attempt to kill her own nephew or if she prefers to incapacitate him. As this is a dramatic event between NPCs, there is no need for the GM to roll dice—they decide what the best outcome is, story-wise.



Next Steps

One way or another it is time for the **Conclusion** (following), but what happens next depends on the outcome of the investigators' encounter with Chief Hadley.

- If Gor is still alive, the investigators may want to make a deal that would keep him in Red Cedar Forest—go to **Taking Care of Gor** (nearby).
- If the players want to tidy up any loose ends, such as Ryan Stinson's illegal activities or Chief Hadley's corruption—go to **Cleaning up the Town (Optional)** (page 107).
- If the players want to better understand what happened here, and the GM would like to build a case file of their own to address that—go to **Downfall (Optional)** (page 107).

Conclusion: Case Closed

The case file is almost over. The investigators have solved the mystery of Roy Ellsworth's death and uncovered the monstrous secret in the forest—or died trying. Besides **Taking Care of Gor** (following), surviving investigators may still have business they wish to conduct in Meriwether before heading home (**Cleaning up the Town (Optional)**, page 107), or delving into the mystery of the G2K pamphlet they found (**Downfall (Optional)**, page 107).

Taking Care of Gor

If Gor survives, the investigators should take steps to ensure no one else suffers the same fate as the Ellsworths and the Metzgers. In part, this means ensuring that Gor has a steady supply of meat to eat. It may also involve getting rid of Ryan Stinson and his meth lab to avoid Gor getting high again and hunting people for food (**Cleaning up the Town (Optional)**, page 107).

If the investigators don't mind a bit of extortion, the most obvious candidate to provide Gor with the food he needs is Chief Hadley. They may approach her when they get back to Meriwether or in the aftermath of her attempts to silence them (**Dodging the Bullet**, page 105). If they know where Ryan Stinson is, the investigators can kill two birds with one stone.

Presenting Hadley with evidence of her relationship to the Metzgers—i.e., the photograph found in the old mine (**Down the Mine**, page 97), along with threatening to expose her cover-up of Roy's death—gives the investigators sufficient leverage to make a **Social** roll. A Regular success or better means Hadley agrees to take on the responsibility of caring for Gor. The investigators can still attempt to coerce the chief if they don't have evidence of her being Gor's aunt, but, in this case the Social roll incurs a penalty die. If an extortion attempt takes place after Hadley's failed ambush (**Dodging the Bullet**, page 105), the Social roll gains a bonus die.

- **Success:** Hadley agrees to provide Gor with regular meat and to keep an eye on him in return for the investigators' silence.
- **Failure:** Hadley calls their bluff and refuses to cooperate. The investigators must find another way to take care of Gor and decide whether to expose Hadley (**Cleaning up the Town (Optional)**, following).
- **Fumble or a failed pushed roll:** Hadley goes on the offensive, either attacking the investigators if she is in a position to do so or doing everything in her power to blacken the investigators' reputations and get them arrested.

GM ADVICE



While Wash may seem like an ideal candidate to look after Gor, they're not really in a position to provide him with the food he needs. They could be a useful ally when it comes to dealing with Chief Hadley, though—after all, they could use their glamour to convince her to keep her nephew fed and safe.

However, that's something the investigators need to ask the spirit of the forest to do, as otherwise they become bystanders to solving the problem—and that's not fun for the players.

Alternatively, the investigators may wish to take it upon themselves to keep Gor fed and cared for or see if any of Montana's demi-monde are willing to take on this responsibility—potentially requiring a successful **Social** roll to convince their contact to get involved (any bonus or penalty to the roll depends on the investigator's relationship with the "volunteer"). An investigator with the **Connected** advantage (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 50) may wish to use this to secure Gor's future, but there will be a cost—one that could, potentially, lead to a whole new adventure of the GM's creation.

If the investigators leave Gor behind in Red Cedar Forest without finding someone to take care of him, it isn't long before he's driven into the outskirts of Meriwether in his desperation to find food. Tragedy will, inevitably, follow.

Cleaning up the Town (Optional)

Depending on which optional scenes the GM included, the investigators may have uncovered some of the secondary criminal activity around Meriwether, like the location and identity of the crystal meth cook Ryan Stinson (**The Meth Lab (Optional)**, page 90) and Chief Hadley's involvement with the Metzgers and the subsequent cover-up of Gor's attack on the Ellsworths.

Just how much of the full weight of the law the investigators can bring down upon Stinson and/or Hadley depends very much on who they are. CIRG/FBI investigators can go the federal route and get them arrested, while less official groups may have to resort to exposing their activities to the press or state authorities, or simply take matters into their own hands, dealing out whatever rough justice the players see fit.

Once the investigators have finished their clean-up operation, the case file is closed. The investigators can get back into their vehicles and head home for rest, recuperation, and **Rewards** (nearby). If they wish to look deeper into the Götterdämmerung 2000 Group, go to **Downfall (Optional)** (following).



GM ADVICE

There's no need to dwell on the nitty-gritty in a conclusion unless you and the players want to. A player-narrated montage sequence of the investigators' actions, such as taking in Ryan Stinson or revealing what they know about Chief Hadley and the Metzgers to a sympathetic journalist or Mr Sunday, is enough to bring the case file to a satisfying conclusion.

Downfall (Optional)

If the investigators found the G2K pamphlet (**Handout: Woolly 4**), they may wish to learn more about the mysterious Götterdämmerung 2000 Group. The exact nature of what G2K were up to and how that led to the Montana preppers' disappearance (**GM Background**, this chapter, page 66) and the Metzgers' transformation is beyond the scope of this scenario, but we present it as a starting point for a case file of the GM's own design (see *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 336, for hints and tips on how to go about this).

Perhaps there's a hidden community of bison-people living in the backwoods of Montana or elsewhere in the vast American wilderness, one that will do anything to protect the secret of their existence. Someone, somewhere, must know how the transformation was achieved. Who is this powerful practitioner? Did they teach the preppers how to perform the ritual, or did they preside over it themselves? And what was their motivation: money, vanity, or something much darker? Or did something else effect the transformation? That's all for the GM to decide when designing their own follow-up case file.

Rewards

Once all the loose ends have been tied up, follow the steps in the **Investigator Development Phase** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 120).

- If you are using the standard system of gaining development points, award the investigators 1 development point per session of play.
- Unless the investigators managed to get themselves arrested, Chief Hadley put out a BOLO on them, or they sold their story for a lot of money, there should be no need to change the investigators' employment status or affluence rating.
- Optional: if the GM intends to have an in-game break between the end of this case file and the beginning of the next, they may wish to award 1 additional development point for **Training** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 122).

This concludes **Woolly Bully**. Congratulations!



Cast

The following section contains the profiles for the various NPCs the investigators are likely to run across during the course of this case file. Common skills are listed first, followed by expert, and then combat skills. None of the NPCs in this case file are practitioners, so they don't have any spells listed.

Jo-Ann Hadley, *age 43, police chief*

STR 50 **CON** 50 **DEX** 50 **INT** 70 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Steadfast.
Weapon: Smith & Wesson M&P (Regular Handgun).

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 40%, Navigate 50%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 40%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Law 60%, Track 50%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 60%.

Language
English (own) 70%.

Pete Erickson, *age 31, Meriwether PD*

Use Erickson's profile for any other Meriwether PD personnel the investigators interact with.

STR 60 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Steadfast.
Weapon: Smith & Wesson M&P (Regular Handgun).

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 40%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 40%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Law 60%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 60%.

Language
English (own) 60%.

Tina Larsen, *age 44, waitress*

STR 50 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Silver-Tongued.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 70%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 70%, Stealth 30%; Accounting 60%, Art/Craft (Cooking) 60%, History 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 40%.

Language
English (own) 60%.

Ryan Stinson, *age 24, meth cook*

STR 40 **CON** 60 **DEX** 70 **INT** 60 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: The Knowledge (Red Cedar Forest).
Weapon: Glock 19 (Regular Handgun).

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 60%, Navigate 60%, Observation 60%, Read Person 40%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 40%, Stealth 60%; Science (Biology) 30%, Science (Chemistry) 40%, Science (Pharmacy) 70%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Language
English (own) 60%.

Wash, *age 10, spirit of the forest*

STR 30 **CON** 50 **DEX** 80 **INT** 70 **POW** 100
DB: 0 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 100
Advantages: Natural Toughness, The Knowledge (Red Cedar Forest).
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 70%, Navigate 70%, Observation 80%, Read Person 50%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 50%, Stealth 80%; Track 80%, Wash Food 90%; Bite/Scratch 50%.

Languages
English (own) 70%, Kootenai (Ksanka; own) 70%.

Powers
The Glamour, Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Red Cedar Forest.

Vestigia
The scent of tree resin and damp earth, the tickle of icy water running over your hands, and the tart taste of sun-ripened berries.

Gor, *age 15, montanataur*

STR 120 **CON** 70 **DEX** 30 **INT** 40 **POW** 60
DB: +1 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 60
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 30%, Navigate 60%, Observation 60%, Read Person 30%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 30%, Stealth 30%; Track 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 30%.

Language
American Sign Language (own) 40%; while Gor understands English, he is effectively non-verbal and mostly communicates with grunts, bellows, and ASL, hampered by his partially fused fingers.

Powers
Luck of the Demi-monde.

Vestigia
A strong animal odour, the sense of something huge breathing down the back of your neck, a great, gnawing hunger, and the sensation of the ground shaking beneath your feet.

Special
In combat, Gor's intent is to inflict damage by headbutting his opponent. As Gor has the Damage Bonus advantage, the base damage for this attack is 1 (0 for an unarmed attack + 1 damage bonus).

Gor's first response to being attacked is to fight back. He can only do so once per combat round, so, if he is attacked again in the same round, he dodges melee attacks but does nothing against spell or firearms attacks.

If there is more than one investigator engaged in hand-to-hand combat with Gor, he is outnumbered. Thus, each round, every investigator who attacks him after the first gains a bonus die to their Fighting roll against him (but not to Firearms or Magic rolls).

Gor ignores any character who is down or suffering a mortal wound as long as there is still someone to fight or chase. If there is no one left to fight or chase, Gor begins to eat his victims, starting with anyone who is mortally wounded. However, the GM is advised to have a noise scare him off (e.g., a semi-truck (articulated lorry) honking its horn in the distance, the noise from an aircraft overhead, or Wash's raccoon-like screams echoing through the tunnels/woods), so he runs away before munching down on one of the investigators.

Greater Danger (Option)
Increase the base damage for Gor's attack to 2 (1 damage for his knife-like horns + 1 damage bonus). Also increase Gor's ability to fight back to twice per combat round due to his rage. If attacked again in the same round, he dodges melee attacks but does nothing against spell or firearms attacks. As he doesn't have the Fast Reactions advantage (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 51), he can still be outnumbered in combat.

Gor ignores any character who is down or suffering a mortal wound as long as there is still someone to fight or chase. If there is no one left to fight or chase, Gor begins to eat his victims, starting with anyone who is mortally wounded. In addition, loud or scary noises no longer frighten him away.




GENERAL STORE
SALOON
STORE
SHERIFF
DIRECTOR

4

A Regular Picture Palace Drama

THERE IS A gun out there. A very special gun—a piece of American history. Its price cannot be measured in dollars because the gun is magic. People have died for the gun. People will die for the gun.

Lost for years, the gun has now resurfaced, and a lot of people are after it. Some of them are criminals. Some of them are killers. All of them are a little bit magical. And then there are the investigators, who need to find the gun and deal with it—without ending up dead themselves.

This case file is for two to four investigators and is designed to be played over two to three sessions of approximately three hours each, although it can be extended if the GM wishes. The plot revolves around the pursuit of a special, magical gun as it wreaks havoc in Bozeman, Montana, and Los Angeles, California. Set in 2016, shortly after the events of **Woolly Bully** (page 65), the investigators should already be in the right place at the right—or wrong!—time to get involved.

If you are a player: please stop reading now. As with **Woolly Bully**, the rest of this chapter is for the GM's eyes only. If you read further, you'll only spoil the surprises this case file has in store for you. If you are the GM, as always, we recommend you read through the scenario at least once before running it, making any notes you need to help you keep track of all the moving parts. See also *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 220, for more advice on running a game.

This case file contains a more complex adventure that builds on both the rules and the US setting. In addition, it introduces the investigators to people, places, and objects that could become part of future cases—such as the Los Angeles demi-monde, Arrowsmith (**What is Arrowsmith?**, page 114), and the "Treasures of Hollywood" (**Git Along, Little Buntline**, page 114). It provides the GM with an opportunity to direct multiple non-player characters (NPCs), each with their own agenda, and for the players to experience a "race for the prize"-type scenario.

While this case file has a fairly linear central plot—the chase to acquire the gun—the investigators' actions mean that the adventure could take several different paths, both in Montana and Los Angeles. Also, the organisation the investigators belong to will have an impact on the other characters involved in the chase. Several additional lines of enquiry are listed as optional scenes, should the investigators want to dig deeper into the gun's history and those who have crossed its path—as in Woolly Bully, these are identified with "(Optional)" after the scene's name. Supplementary information and GM advice appears as boxed text throughout.

Depictions of Death

There is a pretty grisly murder in this case file—that of Celia Holmes (**Holmes' Sporting Goods**, page 134, or **Celia's House**, page 137). Another NPC, Whitman Jacobi, undergoes a violent home invasion with gruesome consequences (**The Boat**, page 147).

As with Woolly Bully, if any of the players or the GM aren't comfortable with graphic descriptions of death, torture, and/or injury, gloss over them and focus instead on the associated clues (see also **Important: Tone** and **Tone of Play**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 123 and 218, respectively).

GM Background

Way back in 1877, Buck Yestler was a junior member of the infamous Yellowstone Expedition (**Alderman Technical Solutions**, page 37). Something of a tall-tale teller, he later made himself out to be a famous gunfighter in the Old West. He backed up his exaggerated claims by commissioning a deluxe, long-barrelled Colt revolver, complete with a fancy presentation case, and pretending it was a gift from writer **Ned Buntline** (nearby).

Yestler later became a stuntman in early Hollywood silent films, where he used his limited skills as a practitioner to produce magical "special effects" during shooting. Throughout his Hollywood career, he was never seen without his trademark "Buntline Special" gun, which steadily soaked up the magic of the movies—quite literally (**A Very Special Buntline**, nearby).

For more information on Buck Yestler, see **Handout: Drama 4**. The investigators receive this handout when they search one of the crime scenes in Act One (**Examining the Study**, page 139).

GM ADVICE



Think of this case file as one of those movies where various groups of people race to claim a prize before their rivals can get hold of it, but instead of a rare falcon statuette, pirate treasure, or money buried under a gigantic W, it's a priceless magical gun. It's also a little like the plot of *The Hanging Tree*, where Peter Grant and his colleagues must contend with a number of interested parties while chasing after lost Newtonian artefacts.

Ned Buntline

"Ned Buntline"—in reality, Edward Zane Carroll Judson Sr—was a 19th century American soldier, dishonourably discharged for drunkenness; he was also a sailor, journalist, seducer, duellist, amateur bounty hunter, target of a lynch mob, and, most importantly, a dime novel author. He wrote pulp before pulp was pulp, specialising in two-fisted heroes and clichés—and not necessarily in that order. For a time, he was the richest writer in America, earning over $20,000 a year—well over $600,000 in today's money.

Buntline wrote extensively about Western heroes, including Buffalo Bill, and claimed he'd presented several famous lawmen with special Colts, thereafter called "Buntlines," in tribute to their courage. It's not clear whether this ever actually happened, and there's good reason to suspect Buntline made it all up to bolster his own legend.

A Very Special Buntline

Like the original Buntlines, Yestler's gun is a copy of a regulation Colt Single Action Army revolver with a 30-cm (12-inch) barrel. However, unlike the fancy wooden grips on the other Specials, the grips on Yestler's gun are made of polished granite, which makes them rather good at absorbing and storing *vestigia*, as the old rogue intended. Both types of grip, however, are engraved with the name "Ned."

"Genuine" or not, the Buntline is a valuable piece of American history. However, it is incalculably more precious for what it *does*. For the gun is haunted—not by a human but by the magic of the moving pictures. It embodies those early years of film-making—white hats vs black hats, shoot-outs, melodrama, and a cavalier attitude towards health and safety. It is suffused with movie magic, which is why everyone in this case file has been sent after it.

The Buntline has two magical properties when not safely shielded in its wooden presentation box (or some other wooden container). As these properties are magical in nature, they have the same effect on anything containing a microprocessor when first triggered that a spell would (**Spells and Technology**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 176).

A Very Special Buntline *(continued)*

- **Special Effects:** the gun manifests short-lived phantom film excerpts if magic is used in its vicinity—brief snatches of spectral movie actors that behave like loopers but without their attraction to werelights (**Ghost**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 249). Story-wise, these effects linger in an area just long enough for the investigators to walk in on them and observe the ethereal figures run through their "scene" a couple of times (**Movie Magic**, page 149).
- **Lights, Camera, Action!:** if magic is used in the Buntline's vicinity while on a former film set or shooting location, that film's entire cast, crew, and set come to "life" as something resembling **Simulacra** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 249). These effects linger in an area until someone—probably the investigators—seals the gun in a wooden box or removes it from the vicinity (**The Roaring Thirties**, page 154), or longer, at the GM's discretion.

Vestigia

The Buntline's *vestigium* is a distinctive blend of sensations encapsulating a movie from the Classical (Silent) Age of Hollywood: the intense heat of carbon arc lights, the noisy cranking of an old silent movie camera, and the oily smell of actors' greasepaint.

Ammunition

The Buntline has no ammo and is not intended to be used as a weapon in this case file—its value lies in its magical power (see also **The MacGuffin**, page 115). But it could be fired, if cleaned and loaded with the appropriate (.45 Colt) calibre rounds. Regular bullets fired from it have no magical properties and simply behave like any normal bullet, i.e., they hurt people (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 61). If the GM decides that "special" bullets do exist for the Buntline, they have long since been separated from it. See also **Case Seed: The Buntline Bullets** (page 160).



Git Along, Little Buntline

Yestler died in the 1930s doing one last job for the Virginia Gentleman's Company, whereupon his Buntline was acquired by Arrowsmith, a rich and influential organisation with close ties to the West Coast movie industry (**What is Arrowsmith?**, nearby). Whether Arrowsmith got it through fair means or foul is unknown, but the gun stayed in the organisation's possession for several decades until it was stolen in the 1960s.

Following the Buntline's use at an old movie location to create a Secret Reel (**What is Arrowsmith?**, nearby), Arrowsmith attempted to return the gun to its Culver City headquarters. However, it was purloined en route by one Ivar Lundberg, a failed actor and petty thief. Sensing the gun was both valuable and strange, Lundberg kept the Buntline rather than fencing it. He then drifted east into Montana, picking up a little magical training along the way—just enough to cast a werelight so he could trigger the gun's special effects, much to his delight. However, over the years, repeated exposure to the Buntline's effects exacerbated Lundberg's underlying mental health issues. Eventually, he could no longer distinguish between reality and fantasy and would only answer to the name "Mr Mix," after the movie star, Tom Mix. He was committed to a Montana mental institution, where he recently passed away from natural causes. The gun remained at home among Lundberg's effects, safely contained in its wooden presentation box.

A Change of Hands

After Lundberg's death, the Buntline passed to his impoverished great nephew, Dante Christensen, who discovered it while cleaning out the old man's home. Not a practitioner, Christensen had no idea that the gun had

What is Arrowsmith?

Arrowsmith dates back to the Golden Age of Hollywood in the early 20th century. Its exact origins and membership are shrouded in mystery and fiercely protected by a powerful legal team, and the Arrowsmith building in Culver City, California, is highly secure. The organisation has a very discreet interest in magic, at least as it relates to the movies. Rumour has it among fringe cinephiles and movie nuts that Arrowsmith owns certain rare movie prints, such as Victor Mature's starring role in a Robert E Howard sword and sorcery adventure, the uncensored 1930s' version of *The Masque of the Red Death*, and director Val Lewton's adaptation of HP Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu*, to name but a few.

Astute readers will note that these films, known as the "Secret Reels," aren't just rare—they shouldn't even exist! None of the Secret Reels were made in the conventional way. Instead, they were produced using magic—more accurately, by using magic-infused items that have a long association with the movie industry, collectively known as the "Treasures of Hollywood." Without the Buntline, Arrowsmith's ability to produce new Secret Reels has been severely hampered. They want it back, and they will pay handsomely to get it. Unfortunately, so will a lot of other people. And this is where the investigators may come in (**Introducing the Investigators**, page 117).

While interacting directly with Arrowsmith is outside the scope of this case file, investigators may learn more about the organisation, if they wish (**Arrowsmith 101 (Optional)**, page 146). Exactly *who* is behind Arrowsmith is also beyond this case file's ambit. Some suggestions the GM might like to use in a future case file of their own design include:

- A cabal of shades who use magic and influence to get the films made that they want to see.
- *Genii locorum*, the "gods of Hollywood," who live for movies and are sustained by audiences "worshipping" them in theatres.
- Ghosts of long-dead movie legends—such as Orson Welles—who are trying to recapture their glory days by "fixing" their old films.

magical properties; all he saw was an old and, hopefully, valuable antique firearm with the word "NED" carved into its stone grip. His online searches for "*old gun ned price*" triggered web alerts set up by several interested parties in the worldwide demi-monde, tipping off Arrowsmith, the other clients (**Dramatis Personae,** page 118), and the investigators' boss that the Buntline had finally resurfaced.

Blissfully unaware that a number of highly motivated people were homing in on him, Christensen headed to a gun show in Bozeman, hoping to make a quick buck or two. Having sold the Buntline to local gun store owner Celia Holmes for a cool $4,000, Christensen returned home somewhat pleased with himself, only to fall victim to chaser **Jay Memphis** (page 119), who killed him while extracting the name of the gun's buyer. As the case file opens, Christensen's body lies waiting to be discovered at his ranch near Ringling, a little over 90 km (56 miles) north of Bozeman (**Christensen's Place (Optional)**, page 143).

Unlike Christensen, Celia Holmes had handled enough "weird weapons" over the years to know exactly what she was dealing with—the strong flash of *vestigia* from it when Christensen opened its presentation case was enough to convince her that this firearm was even more special than the original Buntlines it resembled. Celia swiftly bought the revolver from Christensen for way less than she hoped to get for it from certain discerning parties, then sent him on his way.

Immediately after the sale, Celia's booth was approached by chaser **Tony Tan** (page 119) and his associate, **Big Sister Yu** (page 120). Tan offered Celia a substantial amount of money for the gun on the spot but, firmly convinced she could get even bigger bucks for it elsewhere, she refused to sell. Frustrated, Tan left her his business card, which she immediately threw in the trash (**Gun Show Eyewitness**, page 130).

A short while after the show, Celia noticed that other unsavoury characters were also taking an interest in her—chasers **Eve Wonderful** (page 118) and Jay Memphis began asking after her and hanging around outside her house and gun store. Unnerved by the attention the Buntline was causing, Celia decided to secretly mail it to a trusted friend in Los Angeles, **Whitman Jacobi** (page 121), with instructions to look after the gun until the heat died down (**The Boat**, page 147). Jacobi is not a practitioner and has no idea about the gun's magical properties—Celia thought it better not to spook him with that information.

As the case file opens, Celia Holmes is either about to be murdered by Eve Wonderful at **Holmes' Sporting Goods** (page 134) or by Tony Tan at **Celia's House** (page 137).

The MacGuffin

As Aldo Muñoz correctly identifies (**Quesada's Bar**, page 151), Yestler's Buntline is what's known in the movie business as a MacGuffin. The term is credited to English screenwriter Angus MacPhail, whose colleague, legendary film director Sir Alfred Hitchcock, mastered the MacGuffin's use on celluloid. It refers to an item that galvanises the characters into action but isn't necessarily worth anything to them in and of itself. However, the concept of an object that drives the plot forwards is an ancient one and includes such items as the holy grail quested after by King Arthur's noble knights. In this case file, the gun has no intrinsic value to the chasers (**Loose Lips**, page 145) or, potentially, the investigators. It's what it will grant them if they retrieve it—cash, notoriety, magical training, and so on—that matters to them.

Alternative Locations

If the GM changed Woolly Bully's location (**Alternative Settings**, page 67), then the investigators may not be in Montana to pick up the Buntline's trail as written. The beginning of this scenario can be shifted to the new location, providing it is somewhere that Christensen could easily sell the gun to Celia. This shouldn't be too much of an issue if the GM set Woolly Bully in the US, but it may be if the case file was moved to somewhere with much stricter firearms regulations, like Canada or the UK. At the end of the day, there's nothing to stop the sale from being illegal, it just means it would be conducted in private outside the gun show, and the GM should adjust when Tan approaches Celia accordingly.

Similarly, the denouement doesn't have to take place in Los Angeles—after all, lots of places have a history of filmmaking: Fort Lee in New Jersey, Ealing and Pinewood Studios in England, Cinecittà in Rome, etc. As long as it's somewhere the Buntline could feasibly be posted to and has a casino built on an old, forgotten movie set, then it shouldn't cause too many problems. National and international travel

is always an option and should never be a barrier to telling a good story if there's somewhere else the GM knows their players would enjoy exploring more than Tinseltown.

The same goes for *when* the case file is set. If the GM has moved Woolly Bully forwards in time to a contemporary setting, there's absolutely no reason why this case file can't follow on straight after it. Be aware of any potential changes in gun regulations, though—for example, in 2022, Canadian law changed such that it became illegal to buy, sell, or transfer handguns.



GM ADVICE

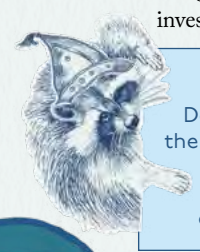
The casino where the finale takes place (**The Roaring Thirties**, page 154) isn't real—we made it up so we'd have an exciting backdrop to the investigators' struggles to get hold of Yestler's gun. Never forget that the world of *Rivers of London* is fictional and that you can create tailormade locations for your case files, just as Ben did with the Skygarden Estate in *Broken Homes*. As long as you don't stretch your players' credulity too far, you should be able to get away with it!

Running This Case File

A Regular Picture Palace Drama consists of two "acts": one set in Bozeman, Montana (Act One) and the other in Los Angeles (Act Two), with a brief **Interlude (Optional)** (page 145), where the investigators have the opportunity to develop a relationship with one of the chasers at the GM's discretion (**The Road of Trials (Optional)**, page 145).

At their core, both acts are about pursuit and action, with the investigators facing various challenges as they hunt down Yestler's Buntline. The plot is deliberately written to keep the gun out of the investigators' reach until the climax of Act Two, in order to keep the case file moving towards the show-stopping finale (**The Roaring Thirties**, page 154).

While this case file is written such that certain important events happen "off screen"—e.g., Celia's murder—the GM should feel free to play fast and loose with any of the case file's moving parts, if they so wish. It all depends on how the players want to tackle the plot, and how their investigators interact with the various NPCs they come across as they hunt for the gun. For the GM, it's less of a chess game and more of a multi-ball bonus level in pinball: lots of balls bouncing off each other, causing unexpected and interesting encounters for the GM and investigators alike.



GM ADVICE

Don't forget that if a chaser casts a spell in the investigators' presence, a successful **Sense Vestigia** roll reveals their distinctive *signare*—a great way to later identify which chaser committed which crime.

The GM is encouraged to add any extra scenes or locations they wish, as long as they promote action. Likewise, feel free to drop any scene or location that slows the game's pace. And if things do get bogged down, have an NPC come through the door with a gun. Or two guns. And a fireball.

Using the Chasers

Many of the challenges the investigators face in this case file are caused by the other people who are after the Buntline: the chasers Eve Wonderful, Jay Memphis, and Tony Tan. Using these three—and their assorted cronies—is one of the biggest challenges for the GM in this scenario. Think of them as a bit like evil archaeologists chasing after the Ark of the Covenant, or treasure hunters competing to obtain a rare bird statuette who are more than willing to double cross the investigators and each other to get it. While each has a specific basic role to fulfil, they can also be used to add extra depth and richness to the story (see **When the Chasers Come a-Calling**, page 130, and **Interlude (Optional)**, page 145, for some suggestions as to how).

Several optional run-ins with the chasers are described throughout this case file. Additional suggestions for encounters that the GM can drop into the plot as and when they desire include:

- As the investigators drive between locations, a fast sportscar lingers in the rear-view mirror—it looks as if someone's tailing them! It might be Eve Wonderful or Jay Memphis, both of whom have flashy cars. But then, it might be someone else entirely—or even a complete red herring!
- Wonderful or Memphis attempt to seduce one or more of the investigators in a crowded bar, perhaps **Mooney's Place** (page 127) or **Quesada's Bar** (page 151). See also **Consent** (nearby). Alternatively, they could burst in just as the investigators are about to learn some juicy information.
- Tony Tan challenges one or more of the investigators to a poker match, winner-take-all.
- Big Sister Yu ram-raids an investigator's motel room while some—or all—of the investigators are elsewhere, perhaps playing poker with Tan. If anyone happens to be having a lie-down, they are rudely awakened.

Losing a Chaser

At any point in the case file, the investigators may decide to deal proactively with one or more of the chasers. They may opt for a frontal assault on a chaser's base or try to set the chasers at each other's throats. Depending on who they are, the investigators could arrest Jay Memphis for killing Dante Christensen (**Christensen's Place (Optional)**, page 143), or they could attempt to turn Flynn Turner's bodybuilders against Eve Wonderful for (potentially) getting him mixed up in arson and murder (**Wonderful's Gym (Optional)**, page 152). Or the players may come up with an original scheme of their own.

Consent

As discussed in **Considerate Gaming** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 44), there are certain elements the players or the GM may not be comfortable dealing with during a case file; romance and seduction are two of them. If the GM wishes to use seduction as a chaser tool, it's important to make sure the players are on board with the idea. If someone isn't, either don't use it with their investigator or don't use it at all. If the GM has any concerns, they are under no obligation to include it in their game. The same goes if a player wants their investigator to romance or seduce an NPC—everyone involved must be willing to participate without coercion. *No means no.* Even if someone says yes, remember: consent can be withdrawn at any time, no questions asked.

If the investigators do take one (or more!) of the chasers out of action in some way, whether by hospitalising them, killing them, or getting them locked up, the GM is free to move the remaining chasers around to fill any plot gaps. Alternatively, they can introduce a replacement chaser, representing a new, previously unheard-of client. Just remember to keep any clues to the identity of a crime's perpetrator consistent, especially when obtaining eyewitness descriptions or reading practitioner *signare* using Sense Vestigia.

Introducing the Investigators

This case file is playable by all types of investigators and investigator organisations. While it's assumed that players will want to use their characters from Woolly Bully, if they took advantage of the "practice investigator" option on page 68, they may wish to create new characters for this case file now they have more of a handle on how the game works. If they're happy with the investigators they've got, then head straight to **Start: The Case** (page 121) to dive into the action!

If the players wish to use the ready-to-play investigators found in **Appendix A** (page 165), the most appropriate Cryptid Kickers for this case file are Meg and Gray, followed by Shawn and Rumer. Players who appreciate some physical backup may wish to substitute in either Frankie and/or Joey instead.

GM ADVICE

If you don't feel confident running all three chasers, you don't have to wait for the investigators to reduce their number—you could always do it yourself. Not only would that mean you have fewer people to keep track of, but you could also use it to emphasise just how dangerous the chasers are by having one of them attack and kill a rival to thin out the competition. Such a murder could take place "off-screen," with the investigators later stumbling across the body at one of the case file's locations, along with suitable clues pointing to the murderer's identity—ones that match those found at the other crime scenes in this scenario. Or it could happen while the investigators are in the middle of an encounter with a chaser, whose forehead is suddenly pierced by a well-aimed bullet, or who suddenly bursts into flames, courtesy of a sneaky fireball.



If players wish to create new investigators, useful occupations for this case file include Author, Chancer, Criminal, Entertainer, Journalist, Private Investigator, and Special Agent. Investigators with these occupations are more likely to have the right skills to get the job done and won't have to keep trying their Luck to acquire information and uncover clues. They may even gain some small advantage when it comes to interacting with certain NPCs and uncovering information about the Buntline, the demi-monde community in Bozeman and Los Angeles, and the chasers—even Arrowsmith and the secret history of Hollywood magic (**Arrowsmith 101 (Optional)**, page 146).

Players may also wish to create new investigators to explore what it's like to be part of a different organisation to the one they belonged to in Woolly Bully: the **New York Library Association** (page 41), the **Critical Incident Response Group** (page 46), the **Virtuous Men** (page 34), or **Hedge Wizards, Monster Hunters, & Others** (page 50). Which organisation they belong to may affect how NPCs react to them: friendly, neutral, or outright hostile. It will also affect how they become involved in the hunt for the Buntline (**Start: The Case**, page 121). For instance, if the investigators are monster hunters, they may be hired by **Mr Sunday** (page 57) on behalf of an anonymous third party (i.e., Arrowsmith). Finally, players creating new investigators should keep the following in mind:

- Sense Vestigia is an important common skill in this case file, useful for identifying which chaser has committed which crime.
- These expert skills should prove especially useful: Art/Craft (Acting), Computer Use, Science (Biology, Chemistry, or Forensics), History, Magic, Medicine, Occult, and Tech.

- Useful, but not essential, expert skills are: Accounting, Animal Handling, Appraise, Art/Craft (Forgery), Art/Craft (Gambling), Art/Craft (Photography), Law, Locksmith, Mechanical Repair, Science (Cryptography), Science (Mathematics), and Sleight of Hand.
- Potentially useful first and second order spells for an investigator to know for this case file are: *Aqua*, *Impello*, *Scindere*; Car Killer, Shield, and Waterbomb.

Dramatis Personae

This section provides descriptions for the key NPCs who appear in this case file, including what motivates them and the role they play in the proceedings. Minor NPCs, like Celia Holmes' wife, Sonia, are described in **Bit Players** (page 120).

For quick reference, all NPC game profiles are gathered together at the end of the case file in **Cast** (page 161). As always, we suggest the GM prints out or copies these game statistics, so they have them readily to hand during the course of the adventure.

Mr Sunday, *charismatic fixer*

For Mr Sunday's description, see page 57.

- **Roleplaying hooks:** if the investigators are freelance hedge wizards and/or monster hunters, their boss in this case file is Mr Sunday (**Hedge Wizards, Monster Hunters, & Others**, page 50). His client—not that he will ever reveal such information—is Arrowsmith, who wants its gun back in a hurry and is prepared to pay well for it.



GM ADVICE

As mentioned in **Chapters 2** and **3**, Mr Sunday is a good way to bring together a new team of independent investigators. Even if he's hired them before (**Woolly Bully**, page 74), his asking to meet the investigators at Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport (**Monster Hunters & Hedge Wizards**, page 122) is their first opportunity to meet him face to face. The job is sufficiently important that, this time, he prefers to handle the proceedings in person.

Elena Jueves, *Girl Friday*

For Ms Jueves' description, see page 58.

Eve Wonderful, *age 29, influencer*

To the public and online, Wonderful is a social media micro-influencer with around 30,000 followers, specialising in travel videos and endorsing food, health products, and self-care. Born Bridget Langhanke in Quincey, Illinois, she now lives in Los Angeles and is, in reality, an ambitious low-level practitioner who wants her shot at the big time in the world of "security contracting." How she picked up her magical



training is unclear, but given that she's done a number of jobs for **Alderman Technical Solutions** (page 37), it's possible that at least some of her paycheques contained spells rather than cash.

Wonderful drives a vintage sportscar which is immune to her "EMP" version of the Car Killer spell (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 183). She never lets her gym rat lovers drive it.

- **Description:** a bisexual white woman in her late 20s, dressed in the latest fashions, with dyed blonde hair and hazel eyes. Always looks radiant when on camera, but there's a cold, hard look in her eyes, as Wonderful is as fake as her name.
- **Traits:** Wonderful can be pretty dazzling when she wants to turn on the charm, but underneath the Hollywood exterior, she's completely ruthless. She doesn't plan, preferring impulsive action, which usually results in flashy fire spells, chases, bloodshed, and property damage. This has earnt her the nickname "the Toaster" in demi-monde circles, on account of her tendency to burn anyone or anything that gets in her way. She usually keeps one of her tame bodybuilders with her to play her muscle, though she thinks of them as little more than dumb brutes, easily discarded when they become tiresome.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Wonderful's old friend Alderman Technical Solutions has hired her to retrieve Yestler's Buntline. However, she will sell out to the highest bidder; greed is her polestar.

Jay Memphis, *age 36, celebrity bodyguard*

Memphis (real name unknown) is American by birth but grew up in Israel. He styles himself as a celebrity bodyguard but moonlights as an "acquisitions agent," helping celebrities, Silicon Valley CEOs, and other stupidly rich egomaniacs expand their personal collections. Rumour has it that if you're famous, into something really odd, and absolutely have to have it, you call Memphis, who gets the job done by any means. When director FW Murnau's skull was taken from its grave, everyone knew Memphis did it. They say he's got the devil's luck, which is partially true—his mother was fae and he's inherited a few interesting abilities from her.

Memphis drives a Porsche Cayman with California plates.



- **Description:** a heavily tanned man in his mid-30s, with dark hair and Byronic good looks. Memphis is a sharp dresser, though he wears too much cologne. However, if seen on camera—whether digital or analogue—his attractiveness deserts him on account of his fae blood, making him look somewhat bulgy of eye, crooked of teeth, and—inexplicably—about six inches shorter. This squishing is merely an illusion, though—his physical proportions do not change.
- **Traits:** Memphis usually has a big grin on his face—he thinks of himself as a funny guy. He's always joking and talking; this is partly a personality tic and partly to lull people into a false sense of security before he suddenly pulls out a gun and commits an act of outrageous violence. He has a habit of stealing odd trinkets from places he's been, whether they're worth anything or not. He's rather touchy about people taking his photograph or filming him because he looks so different on camera.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** a tech CEO from Texas is paying Memphis to bring them the Buntline. As a lone operator, he is more likely to hit and run, using his luck to evade capture. He may also temporarily ally himself with the investigators, only to betray them at the worst possible moment (**Offering the Investigators a Deal**, page 145).

Tony Tan, *age 52, "travel agent"*

Tan's real name is Tan Yong-Min, aka "the Whale," due to his enormous girth and gambling habits. His passport says he's a travel agent operating out of Macau, but he's actually a middle-rank triad criminal with practitioner training and business interests around the Pacific Rim. He once competed with the New York Librarians in South America for a particular item of some magical significance. He won. His boast is that he always wins.

Tan has a heavy gambling habit and is well known in professional poker circles in Las Vegas and Atlantic City. While he's only moderately successful at games of skill and calculation like poker and blackjack, he is frequently "lucky" at craps and roulette, on account of his discreet use of *Impello* to guide the odd die or ball the way he wants it to go. He hasn't been caught using this trick. Yet.



Big Sister Yu (following) drives Tan around in a rented luxury sedan; it is large, comfortable, and inconspicuously armoured against gunfire and heavy impacts.

- **Description:** a huge, rotund Macau businessman in his early 50s; Tan has a benevolent face and a goatee beard, like a walrus with a trust fund. He wears expensive suits and sometimes fiddles with a pair of ivory dice in one hand. He moves lightly for such a big man.
- **Traits:** Tan is a practitioner of some ability, though his exact school is unknown—Newtonian spell names are used for the purposes of this case file. His preferred spells are of the *Impello* variety, which he uses to flip cards, catch objects in mid-air, or bring down brick walls. Tan is a thinker and is invariably polite while he puzzles out all the angles so that he comes out on top. He has a habit of making wild bets on a whim.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Tan's client is a shadowy Chinese organisation with an interest in the arcane, hidden behind one of several impenetrable shell companies. Tan never travels without his bodyguard, the unsmiling Big Sister Yu, whom he relies on to do anything physical or unpleasantly violent. Outside his predilection for gambling, Tan is generally risk-averse and may negotiate with the investigators rather than go to jail, hospital, or worse.

Big Sister Yu, *age 39, enforcer*

Yu Ming-Li, known as Big Sister, is Tony Tan's hitwoman and bodyguard, and a notorious figure in the Macau and Hong Kong criminal fraternities for the violence she has committed while enforcing Tan's edicts.

- **Description:** a short, muscular Chinese woman with a severe haircut; she seems almost child-sized when standing next to her gargantuan boss. Her arms are covered in tattoos of dragons, stalking tigers, roses, and daggers drawing blood. She wears tight fitting vests (tank tops) so people can get a good look at her ink, and usually carries a small but very sharp hatchet, as well as a gun or two.
- **Traits:** Big Sister has a quick temper and a willingness to chop bits off people first and ask questions never. Bizarrely, she also has a reputation for making really good, quirky dim sum. If she's not hurting someone or making dumplings, she's incredibly bored—and doesn't bother to hide this fact.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Big Sister is fiercely loyal to Tan. He never lets her down or patronises her and, in return, she makes sure nobody gets close to laying a hand on him. She doesn't talk much while Tan is around. If the investigators get in her or Tan's way, Heaven help them.



Bit Players

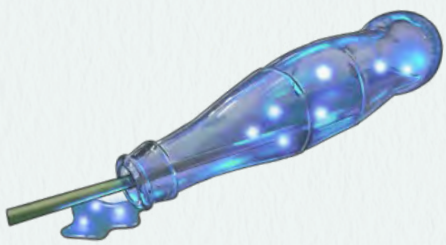
This section describes the minor NPCs the investigators may encounter during their enquiries. None of them play as large a role as the chasers but they may still have useful information to impart. Their game profiles can be found in the **Cast** section, starting on page 162.

Mark Lashwood, *age 43, gun store clerk*

Lashwood is Celia Holmes' only employee. A law-abiding man of few words, he is a source of information about his boss' behaviour since the gun show, as well as a witness to the gun store break-in—and possibly Celia's murder (**Holmes' Sporting Goods**, page 134).

Sonia Holmes, *age 57, artist*

Sonia is Celia Holmes' wife. They were married just a couple of years ago. She knows her way around guns but has no knowledge of the world of magic. She is a source of information about her wife's behaviour since the gun show, as well as a witness to the house break-in—and possibly Celia's murder (**Celia's House**, page 137).



Whitman Jacobi, *age 65, gun collector*

Jacobi is Celia Holmes' old friend and fellow gun collector. Like Sonia, Jacobi knows nothing about the demi-monde, but he is an expert on guns, especially old ones, and can point the investigators at his assailants—if he survives.

Aldo Muñoz, *age 25, intermediary*

Aldo is a member of the Los Angeles luchador family **Las Serpientes** (page 54) but isn't magically trained. He's a face, someone the family uses to speak to people they don't know well enough to trust. He looks maybe 16 and gets carded in every bar. People who treat him like a fool or a victim are surprised to discover he's proficient in hand-to-hand combat and a dab hand with a knife. If something goes badly wrong, or if magic is used, a Las Serpientes minder is close at hand to back Aldo up.

Flynn Turner, *age 33, gym owner*

Turner is Eve Wonderful's current "boyfriend." He's a big, musclebound lug who runs the Ready Set Go! gym in Los Angeles, which Wonderful uses as her base **Wonderful's Gym (Optional)**, page 152). Turner is besotted with Wonderful and is happy to help her carry out whatever dirty jobs need doing, oblivious to the disdain she holds for him.

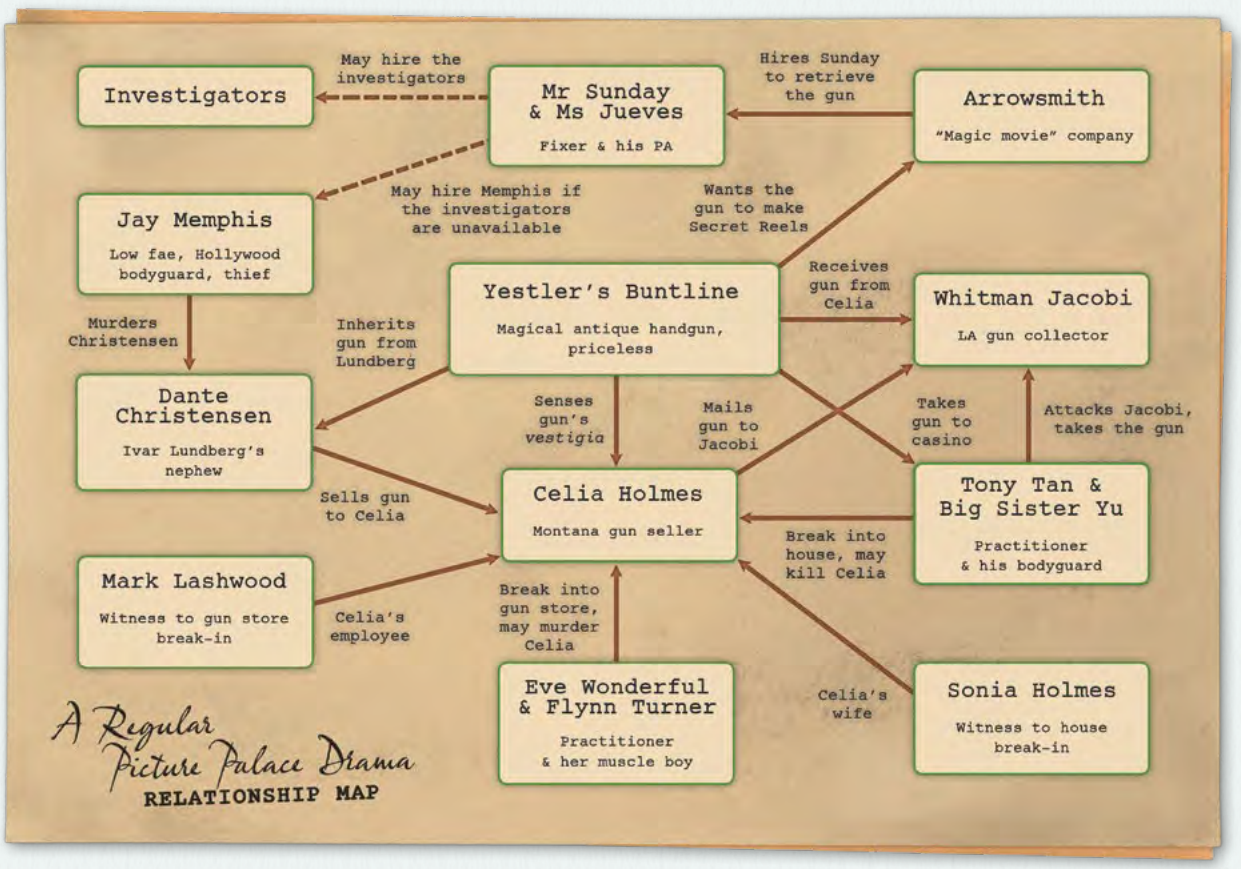
Start: The Case

As mentioned in **Introducing the Investigators** (page 117), player characters can belong to a variety of organisations, each with varying degrees of legal authority and magical expertise, not to mention different motivations for chasing down Yestler's Buntline. Which organisation the investigators belong to determines not only who their boss is for this case file, but also how they become involved. The following sections discuss suggested hooks for the **CIRG** (following), the **Librarians** (page 122), the **Virtuous Men** (page 122), and **Monster Hunters & Hedge Wizards** (page 122).

The CIRG

If the investigators are members of the CIRG or associated in any way with law enforcement, their boss for this case file is Special Agent **Kimberley Reynolds** (page 47). She contacts the investigators via phone to arrange a briefing.

- If the investigators are already in Montana having dealt with Gor Metzger (**Woolly Bully**, page 65), Reynolds briefs them via an online video conferencing platform. The same is true if they are regular law enforcement seconded to the CIRG for this case file, regardless of their current location.



- If the investigators are newly created members of the CIRG, the briefing takes place in a conference room at Quantico (**Critical Incident Response Group**, page 46).

During the briefing, Reynolds informs the investigators that the appearance of a certain gun has demi-monde chatrooms twittering with excitement, "*Like it's the lost Ark or something.*" She knows the gun is allegedly a Buntline Special, recently seen changing hands at a gun show in Bozeman, Montana. There is little else she can tell them at this point.

"*This much buzz among the supernatural must mean it's important—and in my experience, that usually results in uncalled-for mayhem. Your directive is to recover this gun and protect the public from any threats, magical or mundane. Understood?*"

The Librarians

If the investigators are members of the **New York Library Association** (page 41) or their associates, their boss for this case file is **Mrs Patricia Chin** (page 44), senior librarian and master practitioner. Regardless of whether they are new or existing investigators, Mrs Chin turns up unannounced wherever they're currently staying to brief them on the situation. She informs them that the appearance of a certain gun has piqued the interest of various magically inclined groups around the world, "*Or, as I like to think of them, international idiots—dangerous ones.*"

Mrs Chin knows the gun is allegedly a Buntline Special and that it was seen changing hands at a recent gun show in Bozeman, Montana. There is little else she can tell the investigators beyond unsubstantiated Hollywood rumour, which, as a seasoned New Yorker, she classifies as West Coast Bullshit.

"*As keepers of the secret knowledge, it falls to us to take these items into our safe keeping and away from meddling amateurs. Your duty is to recover this gun, thus keeping it out of anyone else's hands. Do I make myself clear?*"

The Virtuous Men

If the investigators are members of the Virtuous Men or associated with them in some way, their boss for this case file is the **Resolute Man** (page 35), the last of the original members. He arranges to meet them by actual telegram and holds the meeting in a deserted underground parking lot, his face obscured by the fifth order spell, *Vultus occulto* (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 191).

The Resolute Man announces that the appearance of a certain gun has come to both his attention and that of his old foes, Alderman Technical Solutions, "*And anything they want, I very much need them not to get.*" He knows the gun is allegedly a Buntline Special, last seen changing hands at the recent Bozeman gun show in Montana. There is little else he can tell the investigators at this point.

"*Regardless of this item's value—real, magical, or historical—it must not wind up in the Virgins' possession. Your mission is to recover this gun and make sure those ATS bastards never get their hands on it.*"

Monster Hunters & Hedge Wizards

If the investigators are not associated with any of the previously mentioned organisations, their boss for this case file is **Mr Sunday** (page 57), whom they may have worked for before (**Woolly Bully**, page 74). He asks the investigators to meet him and his associate, **Ms Jueves** (page 58), at the Museum of the Rockies display at Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport. Transport is, of course, provided to get them there—in the form of train or airline tickets, rental vehicles, or taxis, as appropriate.

Ms Jueves confirms each investigator's identity and bona fides as they arrive. Once all are present, Sunday leads the group to the airport conference room. There he explains that he's looking for reliable "contractors" who can discreetly find and retrieve, "*a certain firearm of some value.*" He knows the gun is allegedly a Buntline Special that was seen changing hands at the latest gun show here in Bozeman. The job shouldn't be too hazardous, nor should it require any serious lawbreaking. "*There may be other people after the item who could be considered dangerous, though, so I advise you to watch your backs.*"

Mr Sunday is willing to offer $15,000 per investigator for a successful, intact recovery, with a bonus of $10,000 each if this happens within the week. He doesn't explain the reason behind the rush, nor does he mention who he's currently representing, no matter how much the investigators try to wheedle the information out of him.

"*All you need to do is recover the item as soon as possible. Once you have acquired it—undamaged and in its wooden presentation box—you are to send a picture of it to Ms Jueves, who will collect it from you and arrange payment. Do we have an agreement?*"

GM ADVICE

If the investigators don't want cash, Mr Sunday is open to suggestions. Let the investigators negotiate, bearing in mind that Sunday has a wide variety of options. He won't give away the farm, though—his operating budget runs to around $30,000 per investigator, give or take. Free first-class airline travel for a month or two? Sure. Brand new car? No problem. Magical training from a master practitioner? Can do, etc.





What if Sunday Hires a Chaser?

If Mr Sunday doesn't hire the investigators—probably because they belong to a different organisation—the GM might decide to have him hire one of the chasers instead. This is a good way to keep Sunday and Arrowsmith involved in the case file, albeit in the background.

The obvious chaser for Sunday to hire is Jay Memphis. If this happens, the GM should simply replace the Texan tech billionaire described in Memphis' **Dramatis Personae** entry (this chapter, page 119) with Sunday. None of Memphis' actions change from how they are currently presented in this case file, although he has no clue he's working on Arrowsmith's behalf.

Background Checks (Optional)

Before they delve any deeper into their commission, the investigators may wish to do a little digging regarding the object of their search (**Buntline 101**, following) and where it was last seen (**Bozeman, Montana**, following). If the investigators were hired by Mr Sunday, they may also want to find out more about him (**Sunday 101**, following).

Buntline 101

Regardless of who hires the investigators, a quick internet search (no Research roll required) pulls up various snippets of information about Buntline Specials, which the investigators can jot down for future reference (**Handout: Drama 1**).

Bozeman, Montana

Likewise, an online search about Bozeman reveals the information found in **Handout: Drama 2** (no roll required).

Sunday 101

If the investigators were hired by Mr Sunday—or if, later in the case file, they find out that he's hired one of their rivals (**What if Sunday Hires a Chaser?**, nearby)—they may wish to learn something about this mysterious figure.

Handout: Drama 1

— According to Old West legend, dime store novelist Ned Buntline had a number of Buntline Specials made in the 1870s.

— He allegedly presented them to various famous lawmen, including Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson.

— Each was supposed to be a 30 cm (12-inch) barrelled .45 Colt Single Action Army revolver in a wooden presentation box.

— There is no hard evidence for any of this, although the company did make revolvers matching the Buntline's specifications in the late 1950s, on the back of a wave of Wild West nostalgia.

— These replicas ceased production in the early 1990s.

Handout: Drama 2

MONTANA

About Bozeman

Located in southwest Montana, the city is currently the fourth largest in the state, with a population of around 45,000. Named after the frontiersman, John M. Bozeman, it was once known as "the Egypt of Montana" on account of its scenic location and abundant freshwater springs. Bozeman has historic links to Montana's gold rush and the earliest days of its cattle industry and was once nationally renowned for its canned pea production. Modern attractions include the Museum of the Rockies and the nearby ski area of Bridger Bowl, and the region has guest starred as the backdrop in multiple movies. Bozeman is also home to Montana State University, one of the city's major employers.

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If the investigators ask the local demi-monde community or their usual contacts, they learn only that he is a known fixer in the twilight subculture, and rarely goes anywhere without his personal assistant, Ms Jueves. If they continue to dig further, Mr Sunday calls them directly, whether they've had previous contact or not.

- If Sunday hired the investigators, he asks them, politely but firmly, to get on with the job at hand.
- If Sunday didn't hire the investigators, he either asks them to back off from their investigation (because he already has a chaser hot on the Buntline's trail) or he attempts to hire them (if his chaser is dead, incarcerated, or otherwise unable to continue with the job).

It's up to the investigators if they take any notice of Sunday or not, but the GM should make a note if they ignore him or turn him down. After all, he's a well-connected man and their defiance may well come back to bite them at some point in the future…

Next Steps

The investigators have their remit and may know a little more about where they're going and what they're looking for, so there's really only one thing to do: head to Bozeman, Montana (**Act One: Welcome to Bozeman**, following). Assuming they aren't already there, of course!

GM Advice

Don't get bogged down in travelling between locations unless you and your players really want to! For example, you may wish to have a car chase (**Vehicular Action**, page 128). In Act One, feel free to simply drop the investigators at Bozeman airport, issue them with a car or two—courtesy of whichever group they're working for or out of their own funds—then jump to wherever the players want them to go. Likewise, Act One could end at the scene of Celia's murder, with Act Two starting at Jacobi's boat in LA (**The Boat**, page 147); there's no need to roleplay the investigators journeying from Montana to California unless you and your group fancy a virtual road trip. If you do, you might find it fun to drop in a tense little encounter with a chaser along the way (**The Road of Trials (Optional)**, page 145).

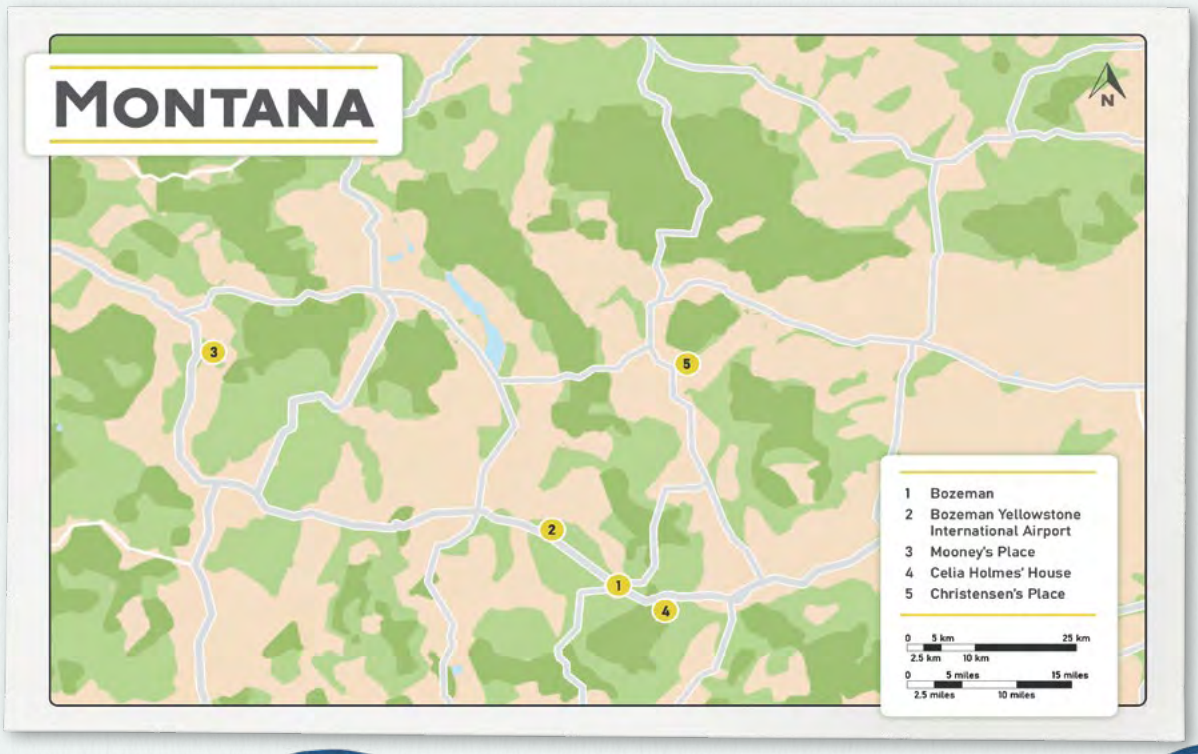
Remember, case files aren't travelogues, so treat them like a TV show or movie and cut straight to the next interesting situation.

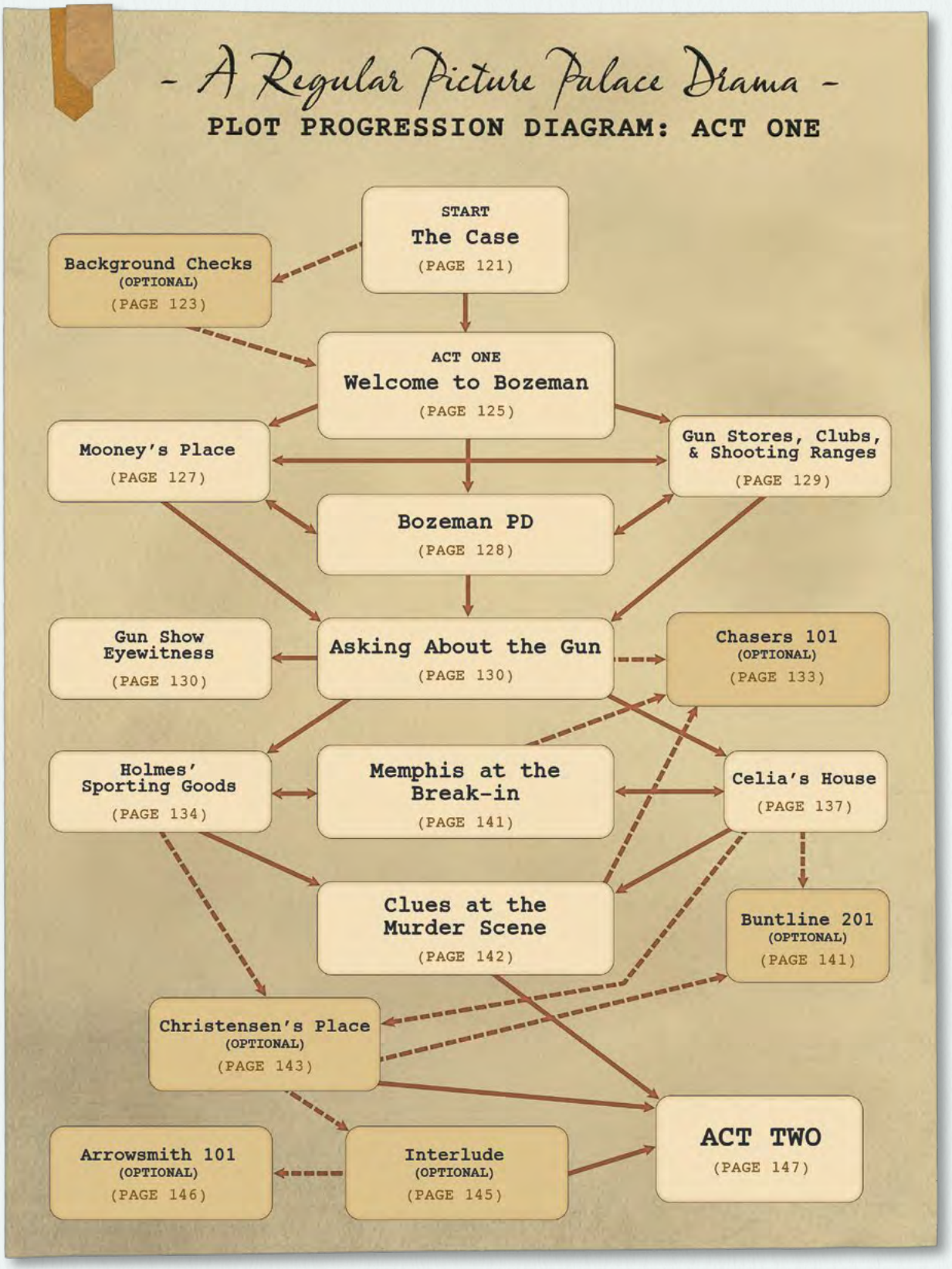


Act One: Welcome to Bozeman

Once the investigators arrive in Bozeman, they need to find out who bought the gun. There are several lines of enquiry they could follow:

- Talk to police officers at **Bozeman PD** (page 128).
- Visit local **Gun Stores, Clubs, & Shooting Ranges** (page 129).
- Ask about at the local monster hunter hangout, **Mooney's Place** (following).




- A Regular Picture Palace Drama -
PLOT PROGRESSION DIAGRAM: ACT ONE
START
The Case
(PAGE 121)
Background Checks
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 123)
ACT ONE
Welcome to Bozeman
(PAGE 125)
Mooney's Place
(PAGE 127)
Gun Stores, Clubs, & Shooting Ranges
(PAGE 129)
Bozeman PD
(PAGE 128)
Gun Show Eyewitness
(PAGE 130)
Asking About the Gun
(PAGE 130)
Chasers 101
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 133)
Holmes' Sporting Goods
(PAGE 134)
Memphis at the Break-in
(PAGE 141)
Celia's House
(PAGE 137)
Clues at the Murder Scene
(PAGE 142)
Buntline 201
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 141)
Christensen's Place
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 143)
Arrowsmith 101
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 146)
Interlude
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 145)
ACT TWO
(PAGE 147)



The GM may wish to remind their players that the important term the investigators need to use when questioning people is "Buntline;" without that key word, they'll end up with a lot of unhelpful information about the multiple other firearms that were sold at the gun show.

Mooney's Place

Given the gun's magical history, questioning folks from the local demi-monde community—such as it is in this part of the world—is a good way to get the information the investigators seek. Any investigator with either the Magic or Occult skill has heard of the local monster hunter hangout, a biker bar called Mooney's Place (no roll required). It's a couple of hours' drive outside of Bozeman, just off the I-90. It requires a successful **Social** roll to get past the knot of scary-looking bikers who permanently lounge around smoking outside the bar's entrance. If no one succeeds, the bikers physically block the investigators' entry, meaning they will have to go elsewhere to get the answers they need. Don't forget, the investigators can spend Luck or push their roll to turn a failure into a success.

If the investigators get inside, they find draft beer, greasy burgers, and hard rock on the jukebox. The house specialty is Mooney's Pizza, a 94-cm (37-inch) monster laden with spicy meat. People say that the late, much-lamented Mooney

GM ADVICE

This is the first time in this case file that the investigators are presented with multiple leads they could follow simultaneously. It's fine if they want to split up now or later, as it's very much in keeping with the genre—characters in police procedural dramas frequently separate off into pairs (or go alone) to visit crime scenes and interview witnesses, rather than turning up mob-handed at every location. Just make sure you manage the threat level in each encounter accordingly, so investigators aren't overwhelmed by an aggressive chaser or hazardous challenge, particularly if they're on their own. For example, an encounter with a chaser could be restricted to a tense conversation and a threat of future violence if the investigators don't back off, rather than devolving into a fight.

GM ADVICE

The bikers at Mooney's prefer not to get into a fight—they don't like to attract too much outside attention—but if the investigators insist on escalating the matter, they will defend themselves. Use the **Biker** profile (page 163) as required.

was a werewolf; he was certainly big and hairy enough—not that anyone ever dared say that to his face! Once in, it's fairly easy for the investigators to spot some monster hunters, either downing a few beers at a table or playing pool at one end of the room.

Asking around, coupled with a successful **Social** roll, finds someone who is willing to talk to the investigators. If they are monster hunters themselves, they have an easier time of it—the GM should grant them a bonus die to their Social roll. If the investigators are associated with law enforcement in any way, such as the CIRG, or choose to falsely present themselves as such (**Fake Identification**, page 20), they won't find the locals so welcoming, meaning they incur a penalty die to the roll instead.



GM ADVICE

If they're not in play as investigators, we suggest using Francisca "Frankie" Morales and Josefina "Joey" Castro of the **Cryptid Kickers** (page 56) as a couple of approachable monster hunters. However, if you'd rather use someone of your own design, go for it!

Next Steps

Where the investigators go next depends on how successful their visit to Mooney's was.

If the investigators find a friend at Mooney's, go to **Asking About the Gun** (page 130). Once they have an in, the investigators may return to the bar at any time.

If the investigators failed to convince anyone to talk to them:

- They can try visiting the local cops—go to **Bozeman PD** (following).
- They can see if someone in the local firearms community knows anything—go to **Gun Stores, Clubs, & Shooting Ranges** (page 129).

Bozeman PD

Visiting the local police department is another potential way of getting information on the Buntline, as long as the investigators are themselves associated with law enforcement or choose to falsely present themselves as such.

If an investigator waltzes into the local police department waving new fake law enforcement ID and asking about the Buntline, the GM should ask them to make either an **Art/Craft (Forgery)** or **Luck** roll, depending on where their dodgy credentials came from (**Fake Identification**, page 20). Use the levels of success or failure described in **Creating Fake ID** (page 20) to determine the roll's outcome. If the ID's believability has already been established, no roll is required.

If Bozeman's cops are satisfied with the investigator's credentials, they can now ask about the Buntline with a **Social** roll, potentially with a bonus die, depending on the circumstances. If the roll succeeds, the police are happy to continue the conversation. However, if the investigator fumbles either the ID roll or the Social roll, the cops get suspicious and inform them they're going to "make a few calls" before they give out any information. This is the investigator's cue to beat a hasty retreat and try a different approach. From this point on, local law enforcement is suspicious of the investigators and keeps an eye out for them while they are in the area.

Vehicular Action

With three ruthless chasers running around looking for the Buntline while the investigators do likewise, there is plenty of scope for vehicle-based action. For example, the investigators' car could be sideswiped by a chaser's vehicle while they drive from one location to another (perhaps from Mooney's Place to Holmes' Sporting Goods in Act One, or from Jacobi's boat to Quesada's in Act Two). Or a lurking chaser might flee a crime scene in a high-performance sports car, inviting the investigators to give chase—if they have a suitable pursuit vehicle of their own.

The GM can either play these encounters out as per **Vehicle Chases** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 157) or they can simply narrate a brief "vehicular incident" to the players, something along the lines of, *"As you drive out of Bozeman on your way to the crime scene, a vintage sports vehicle pulls up alongside you at the lights. The woman driving it gives you a cool look, then suddenly, your vehicle dies on you. With a laugh, she pulls away. Give me a Sense Vestigia roll, please."*

On the other hand, if the GM and players want to keep this case file short and snappy, simply skip any vehicular travel and go to the next dramatic location.

Next Steps

Where the investigators go next depends on whether they convinced someone in the local PD to talk to them.

If the investigators convince the local cops to trust them, go to **Asking About the Gun** (page 130).

If the investigators drew a blank:

- They can try visiting a popular demi-monde watering hole—go to **Mooney's Place** (page 127).
- They can see if someone in the local firearms community knows anything—go to **Gun Stores, Clubs, & Shooting Ranges** (following).

Gun Stores, Clubs, & Shooting Ranges

There are a number of stores, clubs, and ranges in the Bozeman area, and their addresses are readily available online and in local phone books. Emailing, phoning, or visiting them and speaking to the staff, proprietors, or club members is a good way to get information on the Buntline and who bought it, since many of the people associated with them attended the recent gun show.

Of course, reputable gun owners aren't just going to give out that sort of information easily, and it takes a successful **Social** roll to convince them to talk. If the investigators are associated with law enforcement in any way or successfully manage to present themselves as such (**Bozeman PD**, page 128), they gain a bonus die to the roll.

Next Steps

Where the investigators go next depends on whether they found someone willing to share what they know.

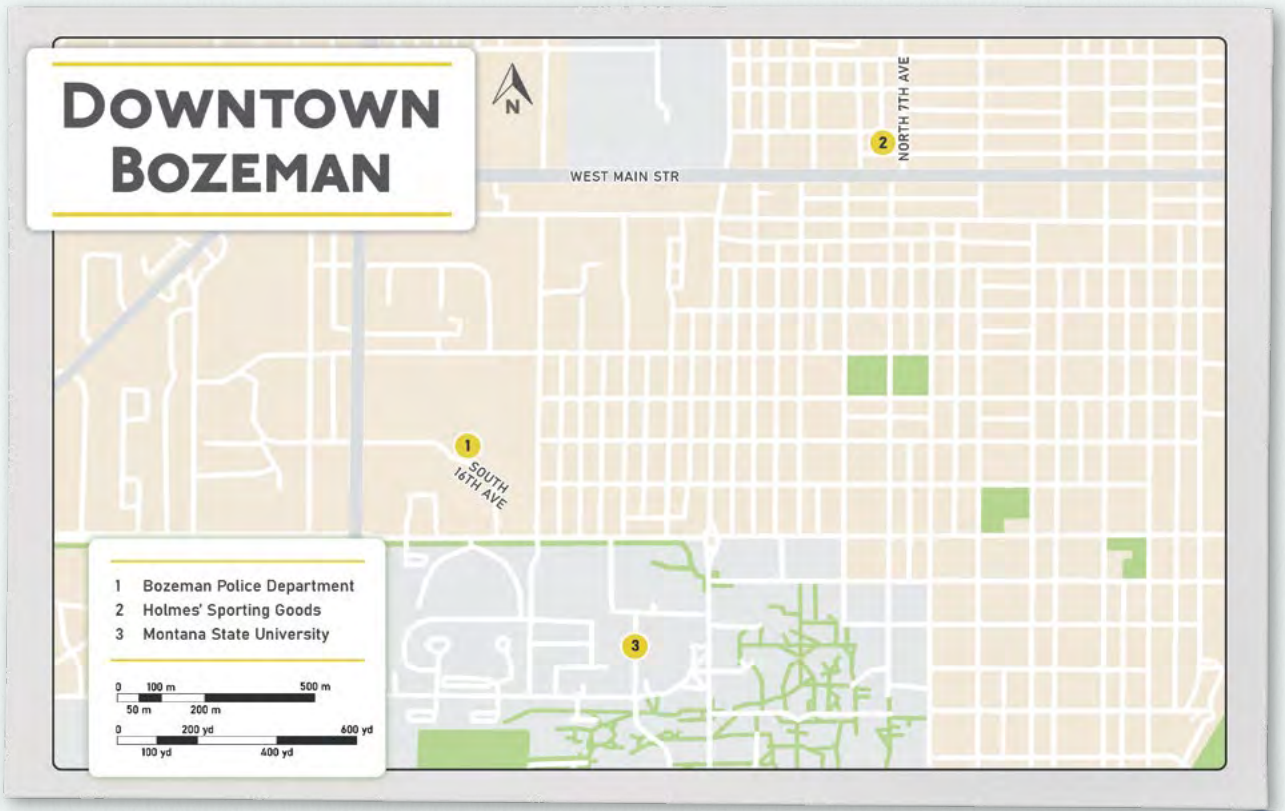
If the investigators identify a cooperative gun enthusiast, go to **Asking About the Gun** (following).

If the investigators couldn't find anyone talkative:

- They can visit the local monster hunter bar—go to **Mooney's Place** (page 127).
- They can try talking to the officers in the local police department—go to **Bozeman PD** (page 128).

If, on the other hand, the investigators have exhausted all possibilities and haven't learned who bought the gun, the GM can help them along with a timely tip-off from a third party—for example, a phone call from their boss, who reveals they have discovered that local gun store owner Celia Holmes is the purchaser. As discussed on page 298 of *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, the GM should never be afraid of using the investigators' employer to point them in the right direction if they're stuck. Not knowing where to go next is frustrating for investigators and players alike, so use the NPCs to help keep the plot moving.

The investigators now have two options: go to **Celia's House** (page 137) or **Holmes' Sporting Goods** (page 134).



What About the Cops?

Much of this case file involves the investigators—and the chasers—sniffing around crime scenes and getting involved in "incidents." In a realistic police procedural game, you'd expect local law enforcement to have a major presence: locking down crime scenes, arresting troublemakers, and generally getting in the investigators' way—something Peter Grant and Kimberley Reynolds might approve of!

In this case file, unless the investigators are members of the CIRG or another law enforcement organisation, they are likely to be operating outside the law, and the police turning up with sirens, lights, and tactical units every time someone casts a spell is going to over-complicate the game for both the GM and their players. Instead, the GM is encouraged to keep the police "off-camera," and use them in one of two ways:

- The police have already visited a crime scene, taped it off, then left, conveniently leaving it wide open for the investigators to explore.
- A very large and loud force of well-armed officers is heading the investigators' way. They will arrive in two minutes to arrest everyone in sight, encouraging the investigators to get the heck out of Dodge as soon as they hear the approaching sirens.

Asking About the Gun

Once the investigators have found someone to question, the GM should ask the players to make a second **Social** roll. Law enforcement characters—or those successfully pretending to be so—gain a bonus die to this roll unless the witness is from Mooney's Place; if they are, the roll incurs a penalty die instead. Alternatively, the investigators may use **Law** or **Firearms** instead (with the police and gun owners, respectively), but without a bonus die.

- A **Regular success** gives the investigators the name of a local gun store owner, Celia Holmes. The address of Celia's store in downtown Bozeman is readily available, as is her home address on the outskirts of town.
- A **Hard success** uncovers the same information, but the person also saw Celia buy the Buntline at the gun show. Go to **Gun Show Eyewitness** (nearby).
- A **failure** means the person has no idea who bought the Buntline. The investigators will have to ask elsewhere to get the information (**Bozeman PD**, page 128; **Gun Stores, Clubs, & Shooting Ranges**, page 129; or **Mooney's Place**, page 127).
- A **fumble** or a **failed pushed roll** means that not only does the person have no idea who bought the Buntline, but one of the chasers becomes aware of the investigators' interest and decides to pay them a little visit (**When the Chasers Come a-Calling**, nearby).

When the Chasers Come a–Calling

What happens if an alerted chaser decides to visit the investigators? The chaser may try to threaten and intimidate them into backing off. Or they may propose an alliance—with potentially interesting consequences, such as pushing the remaining chasers to join forces against them. There's strength in numbers, after all. Of course, any such coalitions are purely temporary; once the Buntline is in play, it's every crook for themselves!

Which strategy a chaser adopts is up to the GM, based on what they know their players will enjoy and how the case file has unfolded thus far. Alternatively, if the GM prefers to avoid a face-to-face meeting at this point, the chaser could shadow the investigators instead, letting them do all the hard work before attempting to steal their glory. See also **The Road of Trials (Optional)** (page 145).

Gun Show Eyewitness

If the investigators find someone who saw the sale go down, they learn more about what happened at the gun show. As this may be via a face-to-face meeting, a phone conversation, or an email, depending on who the eyewitness is; the GM should adjust the following information to suit.



According to the eyewitness, most of the attendees were regular local weapons enthusiasts, but there were also a few unfamiliar faces. They saw Celia Holmes, who they describe as a local gun store owner with an interest in rare and unusual firearms. She bought "*a sweet, sweet pistol*" from a skinny white guy with a goatee beard, faded jeans, and a checked shirt (Dante Christensen). Whoever he was, they didn't recognise him.

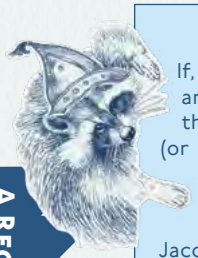
If the eyewitness is from Mooney's or is a local gun owner, they also saw two people approach Celia shortly after the pistol exchange. "*This huge East Asian guy and his chick wanted in on the deal. The woman was heavily inked* [tattooed]. *I saw the big guy offer Celia a wad of cash, no questions asked, for immediate possession. The chick just gave everyone the Liam Neeson death stare. I never seen either of them before, and they sure didn't play like they were from around here. When the deal didn't go through, the guy gave Celia his business card, but she threw it straight in the garbage. I liberated it. You want it?*"

The business card can be bought for $100 unless the investigators can find some other way to get it, such as theft (requiring a successful **Sleight of Hand** or Hard **DEX** roll). The card is printed in Portuguese, Cantonese, and English, and belongs to Tony Tan, a travel agent from Macau (**Handout: Drama 3**). A successful **Law** or **Research** roll reveals that "Macau travel agent" is often another way of saying "triad middle management." Triad gang members often have elaborate tattoos, which would explain Tan's companion's appearance.

If meeting in person or talking on the phone, a successful **Read Person** roll confirms the eyewitness is telling the truth but also that they have more to tell, if they can be persuaded—a successful **Social** roll or some more cash should do the trick. If convinced, the eyewitness says they also noticed a stunning blonde woman and her arm candy, "*an LA muscle boy,*" hanging around in the parking lot outside the gun show. They looked as if they wanted to go in, but once the woman saw the East Asian pair, she backed off quickly. According to the eyewitness, the woman and her boy toy argued in the parking lot about what to do. The boy toy wanted to muscle in on Celia and take the pistol. The woman disagreed, saying, "*We can get it from her later.*"

- If the witness is a monster hunter or other member of the local demi-monde, they recognised the woman. Her name is Eve Wonderful, a low-grade magical talent with a reputation. They follow her on social media. "*She knows her shit, man. No lie.*"
- If the eyewitness is a local police officer, things go a little differently: they saw Celia buy the Buntline, but they didn't see her exchange with Tan or spot Wonderful in

the parking lot. Instead, as the investigators leave the police station, they're followed by a low-rent criminal/police informant who fills them in on the additional details and offers to sell them Tan's business card.



GM ADVICE

If, as happened during playtesting, the investigators are members of law enforcement but conduct their interview with Bozeman PD via police radio (or phone), be prepared to move the location of Handout: Drama 3 so the investigators don't miss out on finding the clue. For example, you could place it at **Celia's House** (page 137) or on Jacobi's boat (**The Boat**, page 147)—i.e., anywhere Tan could feasibly have dropped it or Celia could have thrown it away.

Next Steps

If the investigators have been successful in their attempts to uncover who bought the Buntline, they now have two main options. Which one they take affects where Celia Holmes' murder takes place and who the killer is (**GM Advice**, nearby). Alternatively, if they've spoken to the gun show eyewitness, they may wish to find out more about the other people chasing the Buntline before they go see Celia.

- They could visit Celia at work—go to **Holmes' Sporting Goods** (page 134).
- They could visit Celia at home—go to **Celia's House** (page 137).
- If the investigators wish to do some research into their rivals—go to **Chasers 101 (Optional)** (page 133).

GM ADVICE

Although poor Celia Holmes may be doomed to die in this case file no matter what the investigators do, the location of her murder is fluid (though see also **The Body in the Office: GM Advice**, page 137). If the investigators go to the gun store first, Celia is killed at her house. Conversely, if the investigators go to her house first, Celia is killed at the gun store. This makes sure (hopefully!) that the investigators visit both locations looking for Celia and the Buntline, thus picking up as many clues as possible. Celia's body is always at the second of the two locations visited.

Similarly, the encounter with Jay Memphis takes place at whichever location the investigators go to first—i.e., the scene of the break-in, not the murder. See **Memphis at the Break-In** (page 141) for more details.



Handout: Drama 3



Chasers 101 (Optional)

Depending on who they've talked to, the investigators may know a little about the other people who've shown an interest in the Buntline—a description, a name, or even a business card (**Handout: Drama 3**). At any point in the case file, the investigators may wish to discover more about who these people are.

- If the investigators have a chaser's name or description, they can check up on them online with a **Research** or **Computer Use** roll. A success leads to the right forums where such things as "people who hunt down magical artefacts" are discussed.
- Alternatively, the investigators can visit Mooney's Place again and ask the local demi-monde community. A successful **Social** roll gets them the answers they seek. If they're already in Los Angeles when they decide to follow up on their rivals, the investigators can ask the demi-monde who frequent **Quesada's Bar** (page 151) about them instead.

With a Regular success, the investigators find the following information, albeit only on the chasers they know enough to ask about. If they already know some of these facts, consider this as confirmation of their veracity.

- Eve Wonderful is a "security contractor" known to some shades as "The Toaster." She is Dangerous with a capital D. Things tend to blow up or catch fire when she's around. She also has expensive tastes, which she supports by taking on shady jobs for the rich and powerful. She's based somewhere in Los Angeles.
- Tony Tan's real name is Tan Yong-Min, and he's an unknown quantity. He claims to be a travel agent operating out of Macau, East Asia. He goes everywhere with an unsmiling bodyguard called Big Sister Yu. His American base of operations shifts around.
- Jay Memphis is a celebrity bodyguard. He moonlights as an "acquisitions agent"—shorthand for high-end thief. They say he's got the luck of the devil. He often takes on work for Hollywood bigwigs, movie stars, Silicon Valley CEOs, and other sickeningly rich folk. He's based somewhere in Los Angeles.

A Hard success reveals further details:

- Wonderful is some sort of magically trained practitioner. She is also frequently accompanied by a bodybuilder of one gender or another; they seem to change frequently. The rumour is that she occasionally does specialist work for some Virginia military contractor, Alderman Technical Solutions. For the last year she's been hanging out at a gym, Ready Set Go!, on Wilshire Boulevard in LA, which is owned by a guy called Flynn Turner.
- Tan's nickname is "the Whale," possibly because of his big spending habits at casinos, or maybe because of his size. It's a fairly open secret that "Macau travel agent" usually means "middle-rank triad criminal." He often takes on freelance work for rich Chinese shell companies. Word is he's kind of average at poker and blackjack but real lucky at craps and roulette. His bodyguard, Big Sister Yu, is a dab hand with an axe, according to those who've seen her fight. When they are in Los Angeles, Tan and Big Sister are often seen at Dreamland, a casino out on Alameda Street.
- Memphis is a smiling, handsome Angeleno. He could easily have been an actor but is somewhat touchy about appearing on camera. He's currently staying at a high-class apartment block called Aspiration out on the corner of De Longpre Avenue and Cahuenga Boulevard.

GM ADVICE

If the investigators carry out preliminary research on one or more chasers while in Bozeman but don't achieve a Hard success on the required skill roll, don't worry—give them another opportunity to learn those details from **Aldo Muñoz** (page 121) once they're in Los Angeles. This time, though, it only requires a Regular success to learn where the chasers are based—they are on the chasers' "home" turf, after all.



Dreamland's Movie History

It just so happens that the Dreamland casino has a bit of history with moving pictures, just the sort of thing that's going to trigger the gun's Lights, Camera, Action! property as soon as someone casts a spell there (**A Very Special Buntline**, page 112). It was used back in the 1930s and '40s by a couple of the larger studios as a shooting location, primarily for gangster movies. The magical imprint left by those movie shoots has been simmering for the better part of a century, just waiting to be unleashed (**The Roaring Thirties**, page 154).

When the investigators learn that the casino is Tan's base, the GM may permit them an **Art/Craft (Acting)** or **History** roll to inform them of its past: a Regular success reveals only that it was a movie set, while a Hard success uncovers the nature of the films made there.



Holmes' Sporting Goods

The gun store is located in downtown Bozeman on a smallish lot on North 7th Avenue, a couple of blocks back from West Main Street. The low brick building has a flat roof and is surrounded on three sides by its parking lot; the fourth side is screened from the adjoining road by a line of scrubby trees. A painted sign informs the investigators that parking is for customers only. Assuming the investigators drove here, there are only one or two other cars there besides their own.

When the investigators enter the gun store, they see that it is in complete disarray, as if it has just been robbed. There is also a faint whiff of smoke in the air, yet there are no burglar or fire alarms ringing. A short, balding Black man with a moustache stands in the middle of the chaos, bruised and bleeding. He looks frightened and seems to be having trouble making a call on his mobile (cell) phone. He flinches instinctively when he realises the investigators are there, dropping his phone in the process.

It takes a successful **Social** roll to coax the man into telling the investigators who he is and what's going on: he's Celia's employee, Mark Lashwood, and there's been a break-in. Anyone who first tends to Lashwood's wounds with some first aid (no roll required; *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 94) gains a bonus die to this roll and any subsequent Social rolls with him.

Once Lashwood has calmed down enough to tell the investigators his name, they can question him. He asks them to face him and speak clearly, as his hearing aid doesn't seem to be working at the moment.

Talking to Mark Lashwood

There are two main topics the investigators can ask Lashwood about once they've convinced him to talk: Celia and the robbery.

Asking About Celia

If the investigators ask Lashwood about Celia, he says that his boss has seemed distracted lately; she was pretty pleased with herself straight after the gun show, but shortly after that she got a little twitchy whenever the phone rang or someone new came into the store. He remembers Celia being particularly edgy after "*this good-looking guy from out of town came in earlier and started asking about the show.*" (This was Jay Memphis, though he looks different on the gun store's surviving security tapes; **Examining the Video Footage**, page 135.)

- If the investigators came to the gun store first and have not yet been to the house, Lashwood tells them that Celia went home early today, before the break-in, claiming she felt under the weather.

- If the investigators went to the house before the gun store, Lashwood nervously reveals that Celia was in the office when the assailants broke in. The robbers have only just left, so he hasn't had the chance to check back there yet to see how she is.

Asking About the Robbery

If the investigators ask Lashwood about the break-in, he says that two masked assailants entered the store not long ago by the front door. Going by body type, one was probably a woman, the other a very muscular man. Neither of them spoke. The bigger one punched him a few times and indicated he should lie face down on the floor while they got on with the robbery.

According to Lashwood, one of the attackers then "*let off some kind of flash bomb.*" The shorter one then made their way through the store to the staff only area, while the bigger one rifled the cash register. Lashwood heard noises from the direction of the office but couldn't really tell what they were; he taps his ear to indicate his malfunctioning hearing aid. Shortly after that, both attackers exited through the front door, followed by the sound of a car pulling away at high speed. That's all he knows.

Lashwood tried calling 911 to inform the police, but his phone doesn't seem to be working. If an investigator asks to see it, or his hearing aid, they hear the tell-tale sound of trickling sand; to anyone with the Magic skill, this suggests some form of magic was used during the robbery (no roll required; *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 176).

Examining the Gun Store

The investigators may wish to examine the gun store for clues. If they've lent Lashwood their phone to call 911, they only have a limited time in which to do so. Otherwise, they need to convince Lashwood not to call the cops until they've had a look around (a successful **Social** roll).

The following information is obvious (no roll required):

- The cash register has been emptied, but Lashwood points out that only a couple of hundred dollars—the morning's takings plus change—were stolen.
- The lock on the security door that should have barred unauthorised access to the staff only area has been broken open—actually, it's been melted, the metal, including the handle, still hot to the touch. If asked, Lashwood says the smaller figure wasn't carrying a blowtorch; he's at a loss as to how the damage happened.

A successful **Observation** or **Tech** roll shows where the store's security cameras are located. Almost all the cameras—and most of the other electronic equipment—are inoperative, so security footage from inside the store is almost non-existent.

- Anyone with the Magic skill realises this was undoubtedly the result of a directed spell effect intended to fry electrical equipment, and it did the job moderately well (no roll required).
- A successful **Magic** roll suggests that the **Flash Bulb** spell (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 178)—or something very similar—was the probable cause, explaining the bright flash Lashwood saw before most of the cameras died.
- A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll allows an investigator to detect the caster's *signare*: raw and demanding, with an underlying, appetising scent of cinnamon.

However, the investigators also find a chunky, old-fashioned security camera. A successful **INT** or **Appraise** roll identifies that it dates from the 1970s. If asked, Lashwood informs the investigators that it's part of an old video-based system Celia kept as a backup. The recorder it's linked to is stored in a cupboard in the staff bathroom, along with a matching recorder linked to a camera in the office.

Once the investigators have looked around the store, they should head to the staff only area, where Celia's office is located. Through the dividing door, the investigators find themselves in a short corridor. On one side, a door leads into Celia's office. There are two doors on the other side: the first leads into the staff bathroom, the second into a small workshop.

Examining the Video Footage

Lashwood told the investigators there are two video recorders in the staff bathroom: one linked to a camera covering the store, one to a camera in Celia's office. If the investigators decide to view the footage, they find the recorders hidden in a large, anonymous-looking wooden cupboard that also contains hand towels and toilet rolls, along with various cleaning products and utensils—and an old monitor (currently unplugged). A successful **Observation** roll notices that the cupboard is lined with green wood and the recorders are stored on greenwood shelves; a subsequent successful **Magic** or **Occult** roll recalls this would protect the cupboard's contents from the effects of magic.

As there are two recorders, there are two sets of footage the investigators may wish to view. To do so, they need to plug the monitor into a power supply and attach a recorder to it. Only a cruel GM would ask for a successful **Tech** roll to wire everything up correctly. While the surviving security footage has no audio, it still has some very interesting silent recordings of both locations.

When fast forwarding through the store tape, the investigators see the following regardless of when they visit:

A few people coming in and out of the premises today. This includes a short, ugly guy (Jay Memphis in his less attractive form) asking around and then leaving, obviously dissatisfied.

Later, two masked attackers, one short and slender and one tall and heavily built, storm into the gun store and attack Lashwood. The smaller attacker heads towards the staff only area as there is a bright flash, after which the video shows only snow.

When the investigators visit the gun store determines what else they see on the office's video footage:

- If the investigators came to the gun store before the house, the footage simply shows the short attacker rifling through the desk and files with increasing frustration, before apparently setting fire to the desk with their hand, then storming back into the main store to rejoin the larger attacker.
- If the investigators went to the house before the gun store, the footage shows the shorter attacker confronting a surprised woman—presumably Celia. Suddenly, the woman's right sleeve catches fire; she staggers backwards while attempting to put out the flames before sliding into a heap on the floor, clearly in a great deal of pain. A successful **Magic** roll realises that although the flames are undoubtedly magical in nature, they weren't caused by a standard Fireball spell. The woman's attacker rifles through the desk and files with increasing frustration before returning to question Celia once more. Horrifically, the clothing on Celia's upper torso also catches fire, along with her hair. Her attacker storms out of the office, leaving Celia to burn. Any investigator watching the traumatic footage of Celia's murder should make a **POW** roll for impairment (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118).

Examining the Office

Celia's office is, like the main store, a complete mess. It is also filled with smoke.

- If the investigators have already visited Celia's house, there is an unmistakable smell of burned meat and scorched fabric in the office, too. If the investigators have watched the office security tape (**Examining the Video Footage**, page 135), they also know why.

The room has clearly been searched quickly and messily—there are paper invoices, letters, forms, and office supplies scattered all over the desk, the floor, the filing cabinets, and the ammunition lockers. A successful **Observation** or **Tech** roll spots another old-fashioned video camera mounted high in a corner.

- If the investigators examine the papers strewn about the office, the GM should ask for an **Accounting** or **Science (Mathematics)** roll to check Celia's company accounts. A success shows that the business was legitimate and had no apparent shady dealings.
- If the GM wishes to use **Christensen's Place (Optional)** (page 143), the investigators also discover a crumpled bill of sale from the gun show, with the name and address of the person who sold Celia the gun—one Dante Christensen.
- If the investigators examine the desktop computer, its processors have been reduced to sand. As a result, all of its data is irretrievable (**Spells and Technology**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 176).

If the gun store is the investigators' first attempt to meet Celia and someone lent Lashwood a phone, his intention is to call his boss at home while they search her office. However, he is interrupted by the arrival of Jay Memphis (**Memphis at the Break-In**, page 141). As the investigators return to the main store, they see the panicked salesclerk talking to Memphis, the borrowed phone clutched tightly in his hand.

GM ADVICE

There is a chance that the investigators may wish to head immediately to Dante Christensen's home after they find the crumpled bill of sale. While their enthusiasm is commendable, if the gun store isn't the murder scene, that will throw off the timing of their arrival at Celia's house to discover the break-in. A successful **INT** roll suggests that there are two reasons why the investigators should probably head to Celia's home first: she is obviously in imminent danger, and, less importantly, her house is, more or less, on the way to Christensen's, so they might as well stop in there first.



The Body in the Office

However, if the investigators went to the house before the gun store, they find Celia's body slumped where she fell, still smouldering. Her entire torso, arms, and head are blackened. There is no sign or scent of an accelerant like gasoline in the room (no roll required). Any investigator present at this grisly murder scene should make a **POW** roll for impairment (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118), if they have not already done so.

- A successful **Science (Biology**, **Chemistry**, or **Forensics)** roll gives no clue as to what caused this apparent case of spontaneous human combustion.
- A successful **Magic** roll indicates that Celia's death was caused by some sort of fire spell; however, there is no evidence on the footage to suggest that it was Fireball. Given magic was involved, it's sheer luck the camera survived to record the crime.
- A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll identifies the caster's *signare*. As in the main store, it's demanding and raw, underpinned by that appetising scent of cinnamon.



GM ADVICE

Don't forget that if an investigator has already suffered impairment through witnessing Celia's murder on video tape, they don't need to make another POW roll—they are impaired until they take steps to recover (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 119). The same applies when discovering Whitman Jacobi in Act Two (**The Boat**, page 147)—only investigators who are not already impaired need to make the POW roll.



GM ADVICE

When it comes to Celia's fate, remember what you have agreed with your players in terms of their boundaries and be watchful of their comfort as the scene unfolds (**Considerate Gaming** and **Important: Tone**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 44 and 123, respectively). While Celia's murder is a botched attempt to extort information from her about the gun's whereabouts, not a hate crime, the people at your table may have experienced violence against LGBTQIA+ people or know someone who has—or they may simply be tired of encountering that trend in fiction. Other players, though, may be eager to play a game with high stakes where anyone can die and you can't save everyone.

If you or your players would prefer it, then Celia isn't quite dead when the investigators find her, either here at the gun store or at her home (**The Body in the Study**, page 139). Like Whitman Jacobi (**Examining the Body**, page 150), she has, instead, suffered a mortal wound and will die without immediate and successful **First Aid** or **Medical Aid** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 146 and 147, respectively).

However, Celia's injuries are worse than Jacobi's, so the best the investigators can do is to keep her alive long enough to get her to hospital. She does not regain consciousness during the course of this case file and, thus, cannot identify her attackers.

Next Steps

There are several options open to the investigators once they've completed their initial search of Holmes' Sporting Goods:

- If Celia was murdered in the office, they could search for **Clues at the Murder Scene**—go to page 142.
- If Celia was not murdered in the office, they encounter Jay Memphis—go to **Memphis at the Break-In** (page 141).
- If the investigators wish to track down the gun's previous owner—go to **Christensen's Place (Optional)** (page 143).
- If the investigators have not already done so, they could visit **Celia's House**—following.

Depending on what the investigators find in the office, they may also have some distressing news to break to Mark Lashwood, who is greatly upset by any reports of his employer's death and begs the investigators to find out who was responsible.

Celia's House

The ranch house shared by Celia and her wife, Sonia, lies to the southeast of Bozeman, out towards the Mt Ellis Trailhead. The properties here are widely scattered—great for privacy; not so great when something goes wrong.

As the investigators turn onto the road leading to Celia's house, they see a large, dark sedan driving in the opposite direction. A successful Hard **Observation** roll spots the license plate. When the investigators arrive at Celia's isolated 1970s-era house, everything looks fine—from the front. However, there is a faint cloud of dust rising from the rear. A woman stands on the driveway, facing the front door. She grips a shotgun in her hands and her head darts nervously from side to side, as if looking for something. It doesn't take a Read Person roll to see that the woman is very shaken and scared.

A successful **Social** roll is needed to calm the woman down and get her to tell the investigators who she is and what's happening: she's local artist Sonia Holmes, Celia's wife, and someone just broke into her home.

- Anyone who is associated with law enforcement gains a bonus die to the roll, as does anyone successfully passing themselves off as law enforcement (**Fake Identification**, page 20).
- Anyone openly displaying or carrying a firearm incurs a penalty die to their Social roll, which may cancel out an investigator's bonus die.
- If the Social roll is fumbled, Sonia thinks the investigators are more attackers and brings her shotgun up to shoot at them. An investigator must put their gun away if they have one drawn and/or succeed at another **Social** roll to talk Sonia down (GM's discretion).

Talking to Sonia Holmes

There are two main topics the investigators can ask Sonia about once they've won her confidence: the gun purchase and the break-in.

Asking About the Gun Purchase

If the investigators ask Sonia about Celia, she says her wife was pretty satisfied with a purchase she made at the last Bozeman gun show. Not long after that, though, she got kind-of jumpy, especially when the phone rang or someone knocked at the front door. She only seemed to calm down a little after she mailed a package to her old friend Whitman in LA. Sadly, Sonia doesn't know Whitman's surname nor where he lives. Searching the internet for "Whitman" and

"California/LA gun collector" quickly identifies Whitman Jacobi, no roll required; however, identifying his address requires a more detailed search (**Clues at the Murder Scene**, page 142).

- If the investigators came to the house before the gun store, Sonia tells them that Celia went into work today before the break-in, even though she wasn't feeling well.
- If the investigators went to the gun store before the house, Sonia nervously reveals that Celia was in the study when the assailants broke in. Sonia doesn't know where she is but hasn't yet worked up the courage to go look for her.

Asking About the Break-In

If the investigators ask Sonia about what's going on, she says she was in the living room when she heard—and felt—the house rumble and shake, "*Like a small earthquake, or maybe a car running into the wall.*" She ran out of the house but could find no signs of damage until she headed round back, where she discovered the backyard littered with bits of stonework from the study's chimney. Through the new "window" she could see two figures rifling through the study's contents—one figure was huge, "*Like one of those inflatable sumo wrestler suits,*" while the other was much smaller and carried something that glinted, "*Maybe a big knife?*" However, she couldn't see Celia anywhere. Sonia fled back to the front of the house to call the police but found her phone wasn't working. She ran to the garage to fetch her shotgun instead but then froze, afraid of what she might face if she went back to the study. Asking to examine Sonia's phone reveals the usual trickling sand noise of magic-exposed microprocessors (**Spells and Technology**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 176).

If the investigators are very clearly not the police or any sort of law enforcement, Sonia starts to get nervous again towards the end of the interview. If the investigators have been at all brusque with her during their conversation she may clam up or back away while training her shotgun on them, requiring another successful **Social** roll to reassure her of their intentions (GM's discretion).

If Celia isn't at the house, at some point, Sonia asks to borrow a phone so she can call her wife to tell her about the break-in. However, before she can, Jay Memphis arrives (**Memphis at the Break-In**, page 141).

Examining the House

As long as the investigators haven't alienated Sonia with their questioning, they can examine the house for clues; otherwise, they may need to convince her with a successful **Social** roll. If Celia was at home when the chimney breast was damaged, Sonia is especially grateful if the investigators offer to find out what's happened to her. Such an offer grants a bonus die to the Social roll, if required. While Sonia will accompany the investigators into the house unless specifically asked not to, she's still too shaken to go with them to Celia's study. She does ask if they have a working phone she can call the cops with. As at the gun store, the investigators may wish to ask her to hold off on that until they've had the chance to look around.

Even a quick search shows that the house is undisturbed apart from the study; the attackers were, apparently, uninterested in the rest of the building. The sturdy steel-with-wood-overlay security door to the study is locked—if asked, Sonia informs the investigators that Celia has the key with her. Fortunately, though, there is a gaping hole in the exterior wall where the chimney used to be, courtesy of Tan's spellcasting (**Examining the Study**, page 139). Alternatively, the investigators could pick the lock, requiring a successful Hard **Locksmith** roll. The **Clausurafrange** spell (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 190) can also be used to "pop" the lock open, while the **Lock and Key** spell (**Appendix B**, page 173) can be used to burn it out.

A successful **Observation** or **Tech** roll reveals where the house's security cameras are placed. Almost all the cameras—and the electronic equipment closest to the study, like the burglar alarm—are fried, so security footage from around the house is almost non-existent.

- Anyone with the Magic skill realises this was undoubtedly the result of a spell being cast in the area (no roll required).
- A successful **Magic** roll suggests that the damage to the chimney breast was probably caused by an *Impello*-based spell—most likely *Impello vibrato*—or something very like it.
- A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll identifies the caster's *signare*: the feeling of warm sunshine on your back, the scent of apple blossom, and a sense of precision.

However, the investigators do find a single old security camera; a successful **INT** or **Appraise** roll identifies that it's from the 1970s. Like the ones in the gun store, it is linked to a magically shielded video recorder (**Examining the Video Footage**, page 135). The recording looks down the drive from the front door. Fast forwarding through the tape, the investigators see the occasional car passing down the road for a few hours. Later, a large, unassuming, dark sedan—identical to the one they saw leaving the area—drives past first one way, and then, a few minutes later, back the other way. If the investigators do not already have the license plate's details, a successful Hard **Observation** roll acquires them.

- If the investigators came to the house before the gun store, the footage then shows Celia getting in her car and leaving for the gun store.
- If the investigators went to the gun store before the house, the footage then shows Celia coming home and entering the house.

Not long after Celia's departure/arrival, two distant figures move quickly across the grass in an upper corner of the footage, heading for the back of the house. One figure is very rotund, the other slimmer; both move lightly and quickly. The image wobbles briefly, as if from a tremor. It then shows Sonia running around the house and then to the garage, followed by the two figures moving back away from the house. Shortly afterwards, Sonia re-emerges with the shotgun. Minutes later, the investigators see themselves arriving.

Identifying the Car

The sedan's license plate can be traced to a national high-end rental company with a successful **Research** roll. If the investigators visit the local office and can convince staff that they're law enforcement, i.e., by presenting legitimate or convincing fake ID and succeeding at a **Social** roll (possibly with a bonus die), they learn that it was hired by a gentleman called Tony Tan. The car itself is currently at Bozeman airport, having been recently returned by Mr. Tan's assistant.

Examining the Study

Once the investigators have looked around the house in general and examined the security footage, they can search the study for clues. It's a mess. The chimney on the rear exterior wall is badly damaged, though, thankfully, the ceiling above it appears to be intact with no danger of collapse.

- If the investigators went to the gun store first, the study also contains Celia's body (**The Body in the Study**, nearby).

The room has clearly been searched quickly and messily—there are notes, books, magazines, pictures, and gewgaws strewn everywhere over the comfortable furniture and display cabinets. There are also several guns—mainly antiques—in display cabinets or discarded on the floor.

- If the investigators examine the scattered books and notes on guns, the GM should ask for a **Firearms** or **Observation** roll. A success shows that Celia knows a lot about guns, especially handguns of the Old West—like Colts. There are several marked passages describing Buntlines and their originator (**Ned Buntline**, page 112), a short biographical article on Buck Yestler, and some handwritten notes about the gun she bought at the gun show. The GM should give the players **Handouts: Drama 4** and **Drama 5**, which can be passed around or someone can read aloud. A successful **Magic** or **Occult** roll, if required, links the Virginia Gentleman's Company to its modern-day counterpart, Alderman Technical Solutions.
- The motherboard in Celia's laptop computer has been reduced to sand, so all of its data is irretrievable (**Spells and Technology**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 176).
- A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll identifies the caster's *signare*: a sense of precision, the feeling of warm sunshine on your back, and the scent of apple blossom.

The Body in the Study

If the investigators went to the gun store before the house, they find Celia's body sprawled on the floor, a pool of blood beneath her head. Several fingers of her right hand have been neatly severed and lie among the debris. Any investigator witnessing this grim scene should make a **POW** roll for impairment (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118).

- A successful **Medicine** roll confirms that the head wound was the fatal blow, caused by impacting against a solid, square surface. The fingers were removed with some sort of sharp, wedge-shaped blade, in a manner suggesting that the victim was tortured before she died.
- A Regular success on a **Science (Forensics)** or **Observation** roll identifies the bloodied edge of a display cabinet that Celia's head must have hit; a Hard success also reveals scuff marks on the floor and Celia's shoes, indicating that she fell backwards—or was propelled—with some force.

GM ADVICE

If you decided to give the investigators an opportunity to save Celia, then she isn't quite dead when they find her, and a successful first aid or medical aid attempt has the same outcome as described in **The Body in the Office: GM Advice** (page 137). This time, however, Sonia accompanies her wife to hospital, leaving the investigators free reign to explore the house in search of any clues they have not yet had the chance to discover.



Handout: Drama 4

In 1877, Buck Yestler, then 15 years old, was a junior member of the Yellowstone Expedition mounted by the Virginia Gentleman's Company, for which he allegedly served as a wilderness scout. After the expedition broke up, Yestler went his own way. By turns a gambler, gunman, and tall-tale teller, he migrated west, then south, until he reached California, where he settled for a while.

It was good timing, as the silent film era was just beginning. Yestler picked up work as a Western advisor, stunt man, and "special effects" whiz. He was also a Prohibition agent for three months in 1921, one of the carpenters who built Cecil B. DeMille's *Exodus* set in Santa Barbara, and a minor villain in six Tom Mix features. And then there were the other well-paid "odd jobs" for studio heads or big-shot movie stars: dealing with bothersome actors, union reps, nosey reporters, errant mistresses, and the like—no questions asked.

A self-proclaimed Old West legend, Yestler owned a rare long-barrelled Colt handgun, which he claimed was a gift from writer Ned Buntline, given to him for his daring deeds as a lawman. Throughout the rest of his Hollywood career until his death in the 1930s, Yestler was never seen on set without his trademark "Buntline Special."

Handout: Drama 5

Regulation Colt single action army—12-inch barrel, fancy stone grips (granite?) with the name "NED" carved into them.

Excellent condition—sealed in presentation box for years; seller inherited from family member.

At least 100 years old. Ammunition missing—shame!!!

FAKE Buntline—Yestler had rep as self-promoter. Still, a genuine long-barrelled Colt—a real piece of American history.

Traces of VESTIGIA. Bright, intense heat? Mechanical cranking? Oily smell? Can't sense when gun shut in box.
Would explain stone grips—excellent VESTIGIA STORAGE potential.

PRICELESS—Dante Christensen had no idea what he had.

Next Steps

There are several options open to the investigators once they've completed their initial search of Celia's house:

- If Celia was murdered in the study, they could search for **Clues at the Murder Scene**—go to page 142.
- If Celia was not murdered in the study, the investigators encounter Jay Memphis—go to **Memphis at the Break-In** (nearby).
- If the investigators have not already done so, they could visit **Holmes' Sporting Goods**—go to page 134.
- If the investigators wish to follow up on who sold Celia the gun—go to **Christensen's Place (Optional)** (page 143)
- If the investigators wish to carry out some research on the Buntline—go to **Buntline 201 (Optional)** (following).

Depending on what the investigators find in the office, they may also have some distressing news to break to Sonia about Celia. Sonia is utterly distraught when she learns of her wife's death and begs the investigators to find out who was responsible.



GM ADVICE

If the investigators visit Celia's home before the gun store, tracking down Dante Christensen as their next action could cause timing issues for discovering both the robbery and Celia's body. A successful **INT** roll suggests that it will most likely be faster to follow Celia to the gun store and ask her where Christensen lives than to search for him on the internet. Besides, Celia is probably in danger—Christensen can wait.

Buntline 201 (Optional)

Once the investigators have some hard information about who previously owned the Buntline (**Handout: Drama 4**), they may wish to find out more.

- If the investigators go online or visit a library, the GM should ask for either a **Research** or **Occult** roll, as appropriate.
- If the investigators prefer to ask around a local demi-monde hangout or talk to their usual contacts, the GM should ask for a **Social** roll.

A **Regular success** uncovers the following information:

- Yestler's Buntline vanished after the old grifter died. People have been searching for it ever since.
- Rumours claim the gun was behind Yestler's talent for "special" effects.

A **Hard success** also reveals:

- An organisation called Arrowsmith acquired the gun after Yestler's death in the 1930s.
- The Buntline was stolen from Arrowsmith in the 1960s by person or persons unknown. (If the GM chooses to include **Christensen's Place (Optional)** (page 143), the investigators will have the opportunity to identify the thief.)

Memphis at the Break-In

This scene allows the investigators to meet their first chaser face-to-face. It takes place at either **Holmes' Sporting Goods** (page 134) or **Celia's House** (page 137), i.e., whichever location the investigators go to first, while Celia is being murdered at the other location.

Just as the investigators exit the break-in location, they find a flashy sportscar pulling up out front—a Porsche Cayman with California plates. A smartly dressed, deeply tanned, and good-looking man in his mid-30s is there with either Mark Lashwood (gun store) or Sonia Holmes (the house), talking over the break-in. If approached, he introduces himself as Jay Memphis, reporter; he heard there'd been an incident and came down to get the scoop. If asked, Memphis flashes a press ID card bearing the name of a legitimate Montana newspaper.

- A successful **Observation** roll notices that Memphis isn't making any notes or even recording the "interview."
- A successful opposed roll (the investigator's **Read Person** vs Memphis' **Social** of 70%) identifies that Memphis is lying about his credentials and reason for being here.
- A successful **Art/Craft (Forgery)** roll spots that his ID is an out-of-date fake; the paper uses a different design these days.
- Anyone whose Sense Vestigia skill is 60% or more gets a definite sensation of something *other* about Memphis as they talk to him. While he doesn't have a distinct, recognisable *vestigium* in the same way practitioners such as Wonderful and Tan do, whatever he is, he's not entirely human…

Lashwood or Sonia are outraged if Memphis' deception is brought to their attention and tell him to get lost before asking the investigators to call the cops for them. If it isn't, Memphis tries to get as much information as he can from the investigators on the Buntline's whereabouts—and the other chasers. It's up to the players how much their investigators reveal—if anything. Memphis then makes a move to go inside and inspect the office/study. Do the investigators let him poke around?

If the investigators don't have an official reason—or plausible ruse—for their presence at the break-in, or if they call his bluff, Memphis warns Lashwood or Sonia that he thinks they're part of the same gang that broke in and suggests they phone the police immediately; if they admit that they can't because they don't have a working phone, he offers to do it for them. If the investigators do have a plausible reason, Memphis subsequently attempts to follow them around to see what they know and who they're working for (a successful **Observation** roll to spot the tail, although he always manages to elude capture by them).

A successful **Observation** roll at any point during the investigators' interaction with Memphis notices the fresh dirt on his shoes, like he's been on a hike. The muddy footwear is actually due to him walking through a wheatfield after he killed Dante Christensen (**Christensen's Place (Optional)**, page 143).

Next Steps

Once the investigators have finished chatting with Memphis, their main option is to proceed to the location they haven't visited yet.

- If the investigators have yet to visit Celia's business—go to **Holmes' Sporting Goods** (page 134).
- If the investigators have yet to visit **Celia's House**—go to page 137.
- Alternatively, they may wish to find out more about Memphis—go to **Chasers 101 (Optional)** (page 133).

Clues at the Murder Scene

Depending on where Celia was killed, this scene takes place either in the gun store's office or in her house's study. The vital clue for the investigators to locate and piece together is a tangled ball of shredded paper containing the remains of the Buntline's shipping label, improperly addressed to Whitman Jacobi in Los Angeles.

As soon as an investigator announces they are searching the crime scene for the Buntline or clues to its whereabouts, the GM should point out that although the computer equipment in the room is useless, there is a printer, and next to that a small paper shredder full of minced paperwork. Alternatively, the GM could ask for an **Observation** roll for the investigators to spot the shredder. If the investigators struggle to grasp the potential significance of the shredded paper, ask them to make an **INT** roll; with a success, they realise this may be a clue.

Reassembling the paper strips requires a successful **INT** or **Science (Cryptography)** roll. Once put back in the correct order, the investigators can see they have a printed shipping label for the Union Rapid courier company, dated earlier today (**Handout: Drama 6**).

GM ADVICE

Alternatively, if playing in person rather than online, you could print out **Handout: Drama 6** and cut it into strips before the game. Then, when the investigators discover the shredded paper, you could ask their players to reassemble it!

Only use this option if you know the players will enjoy this—if they won't, just let them make a dice roll to discover what their investigators found. Also, make sure you don't cut too many strips, or it will take too long for your players to put things back together—1 centimetre (0.4 inches) should be narrow enough to provide an enjoyable challenge.



The package's listed weight and dimensions tally with that of a Buntline Special in its presentation case (a successful **Firearms** or **INT** roll). A successful **INT** roll realises that something is missing from the shipping label: a street address for the parcel to be delivered to—this is probably why Celia shredded it. The investigators can find Jacobi's full address online with a successful **Research** or **Computer Use** roll—he lives on a boat called "*Santana*" moored in the marina's Basin H. It looks as if Celia sent the gun back "home" to California!

The Story So Far

By the end of Act One, the investigators should know (at a minimum):

- A lot of people want the Buntline and are willing to kill for it.
- Someone murdered Celia, presumably to get the gun.
- They failed because Celia Holmes sent the gun to Whitman Jacobi in Los Angeles.
- The Buntline has its own *vestigia*.

That's all the investigators need to know before Act Two begins, although they may also have uncovered several other facts, including:

- The *signare* of one or more attackers.
- That Eve Wonderful and Flynn Turner attacked Holmes' Sporting Goods (and possibly murdered Celia).
- That Tony Tan and Big Sister Yu attacked Celia's house (and possibly murdered her).

While this is all interesting additional information, it isn't essential, and the investigators don't need to know any of it to move on to Act Two.

Handout: Drama 6



Next Steps

Provided that the investigators have discovered that the gun is no longer in Bozeman and to whom Celia sent it, then Act One may have reached its conclusion. However, at the GM's discretion, there is more the investigators can learn.

- If the investigators are keen to follow up on who Celia bought the Buntline from—go to **Christensen's Place (Optional)** (following).
- If the investigators want to know more about the people chasing the gun—go to **Chasers 101 (Optional)** (page 133).
- If the investigators wish to find out more about the gun they're chasing—go to **Buntline 201 (Optional)** (page 141).
- If the investigators are ready to hit the road and the GM wishes to complicate their lives—go to **Interlude (Optional)** (page 145).
- If the investigators are ready to hit the road and everyone wants to get straight to Tinseltown—go to **Act Two: Welcome to LA** (page 147).

By this point, the chasers have also discovered where the gun has gone—either directly from Celia or because they are sneakily shadowing the investigators and/or the other chasers—and are all on their way to LA. This knowledge may affect the investigators' desire to follow up on various optional aspects of the case file. The GM should remind them that every second they spend in Montana, the Buntline slips further away from them. If the investigators still wish to dig deeper into the backstory, the GM should let them, but they should also keep any remaining scenes in Bozeman short and snappy as they bring Act One to a close.

Regardless of the investigators' actions, Tan—the more efficient of the three chasers—gets to Jacobi's boat first, even if he wasn't the one who extracted Jacobi's name from Celia before she died. The investigators will not be able to get to Jacobi before Tan finds him and takes the gun (**The Boat**, page 147).

Christensen's Place (Optional)

If the investigators identified Dante Christensen as the gun's seller (**Examining the Office**, page 136, or **Handout: Drama 5**), they can easily locate his address and head on over to Ringling to talk to him. They're too late, of course—Jay Memphis killed Christensen during his interrogation (**A Change of Hands**, page 114).

After a roughly 60-minute drive north, the investigators arrive at a farm track that leads to Christensen's dilapidated ranch house. Beyond it, a recently broken fence opens into a large wheat field. If the investigators get out of their vehicle to look, they see tire tracks and a winding trail of crushed stalks disappearing off through the wheat.

Following the trail leads to a beaten-up pickup truck, smashed head-first into a gnarled tree in the middle of the field. The truck's windscreen has been completely caved inwards by the tree's boughs. On the passenger side is the body of a thin white man with a straggly goatee beard, his head and upper body impaled by branches. Any investigators present who are not already impaired should make a **POW** roll to see if they now become so (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118). A successful **Medicine** roll suggests that death occurred sometime within the last 24–48 hours and must have been instantaneous. There is no sign of a driver.

- If the investigators spoke to the **Gun Show Eyewitness** (page 130), they received a description of the Buntline's seller, Dante Christensen—the body matches it.
- Regardless, pulling down the visor on the driver's side reveals a Montana driver's license, registered to the dead man: Dante Christensen (a successful **Observation** or **INT** roll).

The investigators can examine the tracks, the vehicle, and the accident site to learn more about the fatal collision.

- A successful **Drive** roll indicates that the brakes were not applied before the pickup crashed. In addition, the weaving trail straightens up in the last 100 metres/yards, as if the driver deliberately aimed for the tree.
- A successful Regular **Observation** roll discovers footprints leading from the driver's side back to the ranch house. The size suggests they may belong to a man. A Hard success also suggests the driver was in no hurry to leave.
- A successful **Mechanical Repair** roll reveals that the truck was in good working order, including the brakes and steering—except for the seatbelts, which have been slashed. The truck was not fitted with airbags.
- A successful **INT** roll concludes that the driver—whoever they were—was incredibly fortunate not to have suffered the same fate as their passenger—the branches seem to have missed them by centimetres/inches.
- There is no *signare* at the scene, meaning magic wasn't used to ensure the driver's survival. It must have been pure luck!

There are further clues for the investigators back in the ranch's driveway. If they decide to search there, the GM should ask for an **Observation** roll:

- A **Regular success** reveals fresh tire tracks from a sportscar.
- A **Hard success** reveals a distinctive tread pattern, enough to positively identify the exact vehicle that made them, if the investigators can find it.

GM ADVICE



The investigators have already seen Memphis' Porsche Cayman (**Memphis at the Break-In**, page 141) but if they don't make the link, permit them an **INT** roll to see if they remember who they've interacted with recently who drove a fancy sportscar.

The investigators can also search the ranch house for clues to the Buntline's history. The door isn't locked. Inside, the place is a shambles. There was obviously a struggle of some sort in the kitchen, but the rest of the house isn't a great deal tidier.

A successful Regular **Observation** roll discovers paperwork that shows Christensen recently inherited "an antique gun in presentation box" from his great uncle, Ivar Lundberg, along with Lundberg's out-of-date driver's licence. A Hard success also reveals old papers from a mental institution which refer to Lundberg's insanity, particularly that he would only respond verbally if addressed as "Mr Mix." A successful **INT** or **Art/Craft (Acting)** roll recalls the cowboy movie legend, Tom Mix.

An old family photograph on one wall looks like it's from the 1970s. It shows several people at a Halloween party. Based on the driver's licence, the man dressed up as a movie cowboy—including a ridiculous 10-gallon hat—is Ivar Lundberg. More importantly, he's brandishing the Buntline Special.

A successful **Computer Use** roll gets past Christensen's computer password, revealing his browser history, which includes online searches for "*old gun ned price*" and the recent Bozeman gun show.

Next Steps

There is nothing more for the investigators to learn here, and, depending on when they visit the ranch, there may be only one place for them to go.

- If the investigators are ready to head straight to California—go to **Act Two: Welcome to LA** (page 147).
- If the GM wishes to add a little excitement to the journey to Los Angeles—go to **Interlude (Optional)** (following).
- If the investigators have more research to carry out—go to **Buntline 201 (Optional)** (page 141).

Interlude (Optional)

Like all two-act plays or double features, this case file has an intermission. However, instead of providing a break from the action, the GM can further complicate things for their investigators during this one. It's entirely optional, so if the GM prefers, they can instead head straight to **Act Two: Welcome to LA** (page 147).

The Road of Trials (Optional)

During the interlude, either Eve Wonderful or Jay Memphis approaches the investigators—whichever one is the most fun to roleplay or would be the most annoying for the investigators.

- The encounter could take place at an airport, train station, or petrol (gas) station, and can go one of two ways: **Offering The Investigators a Deal** (following) or **Ambushing the Investigators** (nearby) to see what they know.
- The investigators may even wish to pump the chosen chaser for information during their run-in (**Loose Lips**, nearby).

Whichever way it goes, the investigators now have a "friend"—or a shadow; a returning presence in their lives for the remainder of the case file, dogging their footsteps, hassling them, and definitely showing up for the climax (**The Roaring Thirties**, page 154). This chaser is about as trustworthy as a snake and will betray the investigators if there's a chance they'll get the gun as a result. Until that point, though, they'll be as good as gold.

Offering the Investigators a Deal

The chaser approaches the investigators openly and appeals to their curiosity—and/or greed—by offering to cut them a deal. They want the investigators' help to recover the gun. Any reward the investigators have been promised, the chaser will double it—triple it, if needs be.

- This deal really only works if the investigators are freelancers working for someone like Mr Sunday, but the chaser doesn't know that. And anyway, the investigators just might be tempted to betray their boss, take the money, and run…
- If the investigators refuse, the chaser backs off but follows them wherever they go. A successful **Observation** roll spots the stalker, but they always manage to get away before the investigators can catch them.

GM ADVICE

Depending on how their previous meeting with him went, Jay Memphis may already be shadowing the investigators (**Memphis at the Break-In**, page 141). If the investigators aren't aware of his attentions, this is an ideal opportunity for him to make his presence known and may result in an invitation to Aspiration (**Memphis' Apartment**, page 153). Even if Memphis is hard on the investigators' heels, it doesn't mean that Wonderful can't accost them here—perhaps because she sees an opportunity to thwart his plans.



Ambushing the Investigators

The chaser surprises a lone investigator, or a pair of them. They are all smiles at first, polite as you please. But as soon as they've won the investigator's trust, the chaser holds them at gun—or spell—point while they interrogate them about what they know. Depending on how cooperative the investigator is, the chaser may be tempted to get a little physical with them—though the GM should remember to keep any physicality at an appropriate scale (**Mooney's Place: GM Advice**, page 127). What, if anything, the investigator reveals is up to them.

Loose Lips

The investigators may wonder how much this chaser knows about the Buntline. If questioned, they freely admit they have no personal interest in the weapon—they only care because their client cares. The pay-out they'll get for returning it is worth a fortune to them.

During this or any following encounter, the chaser might also mention—and name—the other two chasers. This isn't altruism—they're trying to find out how much the investigators know about their rivals. Let's face it, they don't want to invest a lot of time and effort in the investigators if they're already working for the enemy.

The chaser may also let slip that Arrowsmith is after the gun—something along the lines of, "*Hell, I hear even Arrowsmith is after it!*" They do not know that Mr Sunday is working for that organisation.

- If Mr Sunday hired the investigators, they might deduce that he is working for Arrowsmith—meaning they are, too. They could confront Mr Sunday with this theory, but he will neither confirm nor deny it—after all, confidentiality is part of his service.
- If Sunday didn't hire the investigators, they might deduce that one of the other chasers is working for Arrowsmith. This is most likely Jay Memphis (**What if Sunday Hires a Chaser?**, page 123), even if he's the chaser they're talking to. As previously mentioned, the chosen chaser has no idea they're working for Arrowsmith-by-proxy, even if the investigators have figured it out—Mr Sunday is nothing if not discreet!

Arrowsmith 101 (Optional)

If the investigators do become aware of Arrowsmith's existence and its interest in the Buntline, they can look into the organisation with a **Research** roll:

- A **Regular success** reveals that Arrowsmith is a limited company domiciled in Switzerland, with head offices on Venice Boulevard in Culver City, California. It does little business, and its financials are clean. According to its website, it collects and preserves films, mainly from Hollywood's classic (silent) and golden eras.
- A **Hard success** further reveals that Arrowsmith is legendary among certain off-the-wall, occult-fringe, gaze-into-my-crystal Hollywood types. It's whispered that they occasionally host very, very exclusive "special screening" events in out-of-the-way places like old, abandoned movie theatres. Depending on who you ask, Arrowsmith is into anything from Satanism to Santería, human sacrifice to UFOs.

A successful Hard **Computer Use** roll gets into Arrowsmith's system and discovers a peculiar list of film titles in its archive, filed in a folder called "Secret Reels" (**What is Arrowsmith?**, page 114). Checking around also reveals that security at the Venice Boulevard site is way too tight for the investigators to fast talk their way in—FBI authority or no—or to risk breaking in. There are rumours in dark corners of the internet that those who've tried were never seen nor heard from again…



GM Advice

If the investigators learn of Arrowsmith, one or more of them might attempt to renegotiate their deal with Sunday, requesting an invitation to one of Arrowsmith's exclusive Secret Reel screenings as their new reward. You could roleplay these negotiations or ask the player to make a **Social** roll for their investigator, with a bonus or penalty die for politeness or lack thereof. A success gets the investigators what they asked for, while a failure means they are stuck with the original cash (or goods) offer. A fumble, on the other hand, sees them added to Mr Sunday's *persona non grata* list—they will not hear from him regarding future contracts unless they do something supremely impressive to make amends for their gauche behaviour.



GM Advice

You may wish to develop the Arrowsmith story later. See **Case Seed: The Casino Incident**, **Case Seed: The Buntline Bullets**, and **Case Seed: Hooray for Follywood** (pages 159–160) for how you might go about this.



While the investigators may fancy a trip to Arrowsmith, any such diversion is beyond the scope of this case file. Should they persist in travelling to Culver City, the GM should remind the investigators of their primary goal—retrieving the Buntline and/or getting it out of general circulation.

Act Two: Welcome to LA

Having uncovered at least some of the details of Celia Holmes' death (**The Story So Far**, page 142), the investigators arrive in Los Angeles, hopefully on their way to Whitman Jacobi's boat at Marina Del Rey.

The Boat

The *Santana* is moored in a relatively quiet part of the marina, on a floating jetty alongside a few other boats. It looks large enough for one person to live on—as long as they don't have too many belongings. A narrow gangplank leads onto the open deck at the stern. Forwards, there's a large, enclosed cabin which presumably contains the living quarters, along with a small navigation station up top where the helm is. The cabin's windows look cracked.

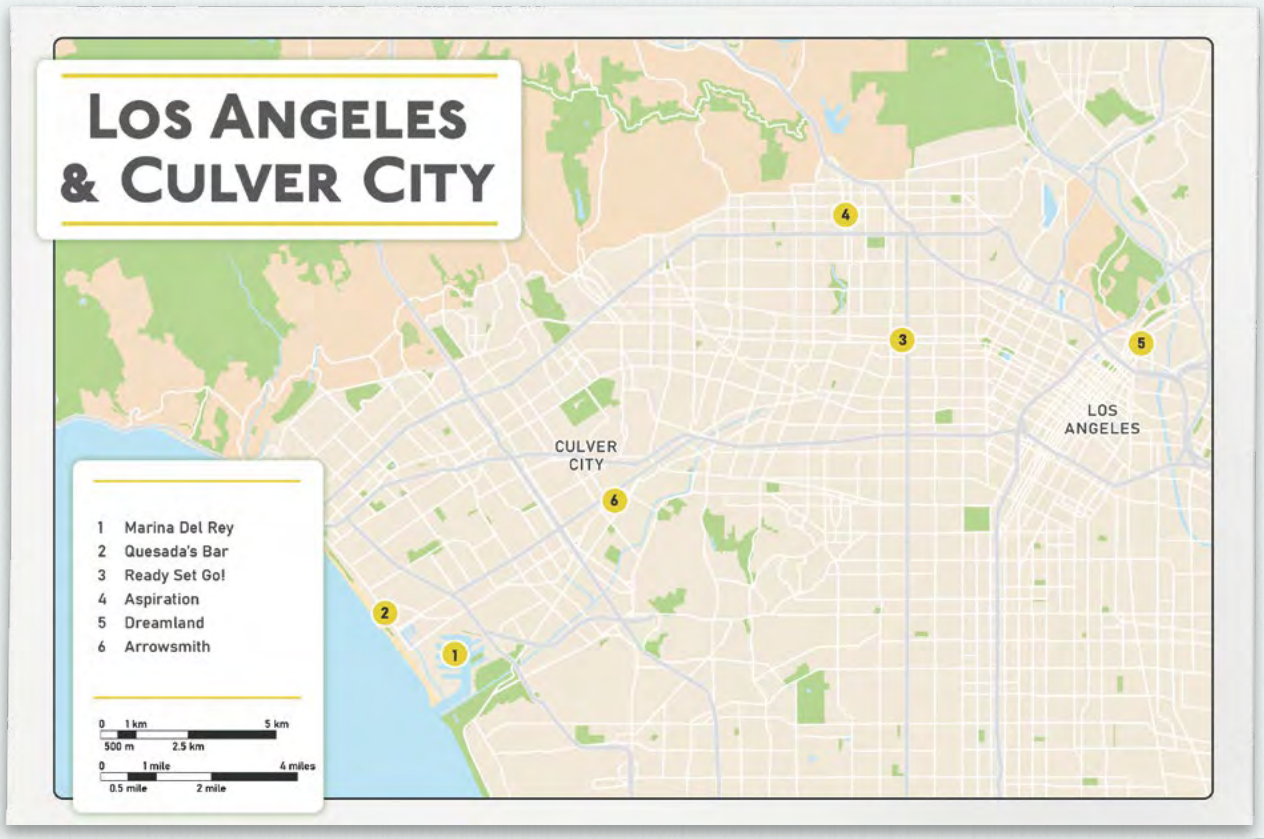
It's polite to call out and ask permission to come aboard a boat, but if anyone does, there's no answer. A successful **Observation** roll hears what sounds like a cat yowling somewhere inside the cabin. If the investigators head onto the boat, they find the cabin's interior has been trashed. Shards of wood, glass, metal, and ceramics cover the floor—basically, every antique firearm, piece of crockery, ornament, and free-standing piece of furniture appears to have been methodically destroyed.

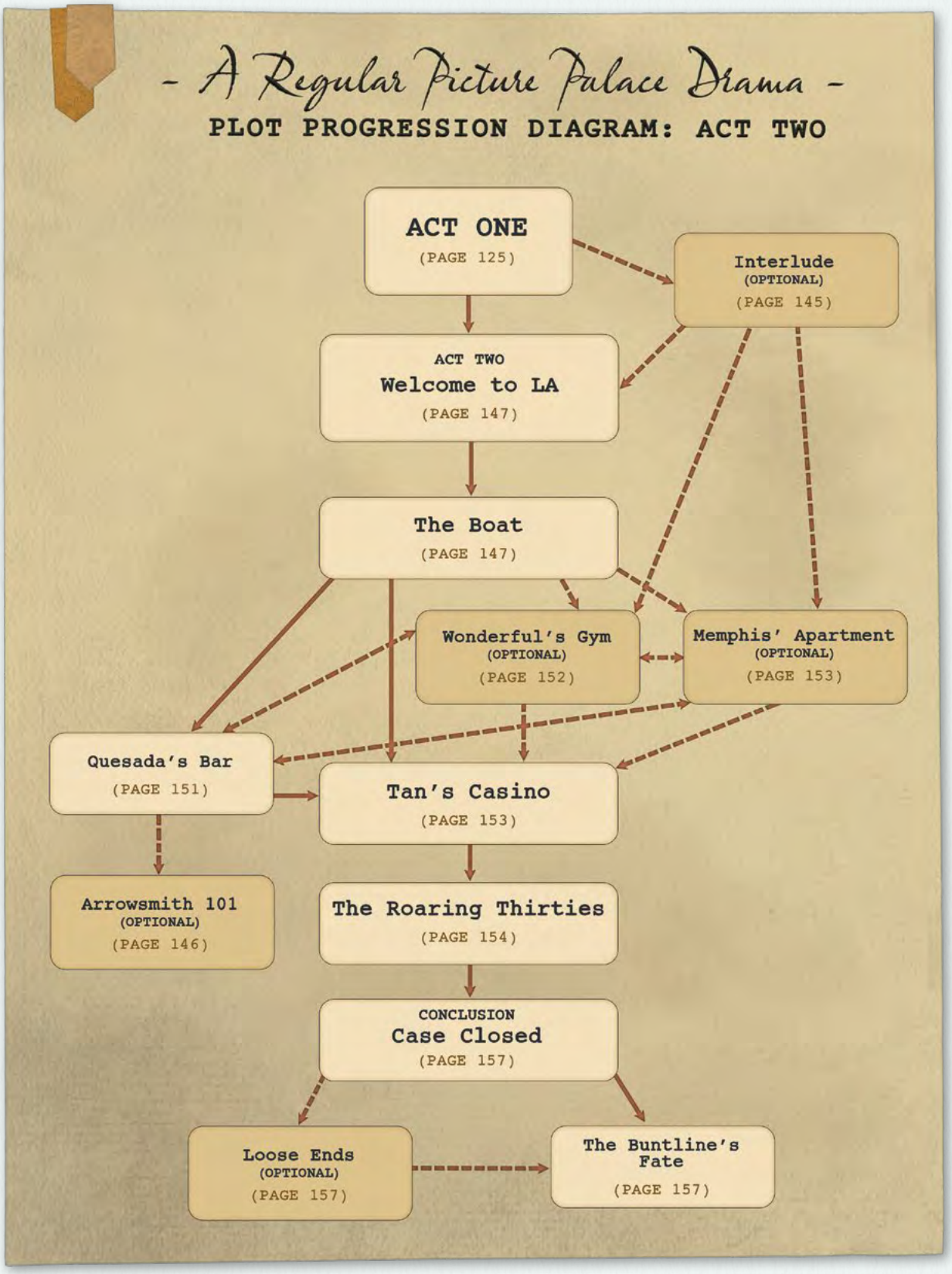
There appear to be only two undamaged items remaining inside the boat. Discarded among the debris is the first: an open wooden presentation case—just the right size for a Buntline Special. (Tan's employer doesn't want the case, just the gun, and has supplied Tan with a custom built, suitably anonymous attaché case to transport it in.) The second is a chair with a white-haired, heavily tanned man slumped in it. His face and clothes are bloodstained, there is a nasty gash in his forehead, and several fingers are missing from

GM ADVICE

As in Act One, Act Two allows for the players to split their investigators into smaller groups. For example, some investigators could go directly to Quesada's Bar for local information while the others visit Jacobi's boat or a known chaser's base.

If some investigators get to the casino before the rest, have the latecomers arrive just as it all goes crazy (**The Roaring Thirties**, page 154). Alternatively, they could show up a little later, exactly when they are needed most—just like the cavalry!




- A Regular Picture Palace Drama -
PLOT PROGRESSION DIAGRAM: ACT TWO
ACT ONE
(PAGE 125)
Interlude
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 145)
ACT TWO
Welcome to LA
(PAGE 147)
The Boat
(PAGE 147)
Wonderful's Gym
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 152)
Memphis' Apartment
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 153)
Quesada's Bar
(PAGE 151)
Tan's Casino
(PAGE 153)
Arrowsmith 101
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 146)
The Roaring Thirties
(PAGE 154)
CONCLUSION
Case Closed
(PAGE 157)
Loose Ends
(OPTIONAL)
(PAGE 157)
The Buntline's Fate
(PAGE 157)

his right hand. If Celia was killed by Tan and Big Sister, the investigators recognise the *modus operandi*—torture then death (**The Body in the Study**, page 139). Any investigators witnessing this grisly sight who are not already impaired should make a **POW** roll (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118).

Movie Magic

Before the investigators have time to react, they suddenly see a flickering image appear in the middle of the cabin: a shortish man in his 40s, wearing a dark nautical cap and a dark jacket, waving a handgun menacingly. He looks around, threatens everyone in the cabin to tell him what he wants to know, then fades out. The scene repeats a few seconds later, though somewhat fainter, then fades away altogether. A successful **INT** or **Art/Craft (Acting)** roll identifies the man as Humphrey Bogart; a Hard success indicates that, while the scene is very similar to one from his famous noir thrillers of the 1930s and '40s, it isn't identical.

Note: this variation is the investigators' first hint of the Secret Reels' existence (**What is Arrowsmith?**, page 114).

The investigators may also wish to determine if there are any *vestigia* associated with what they've seen. A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll reveals two distinct magical residues:

- A sensation of precision, sunshine warmth, and apple blossom, which the investigators may have experienced at Celia's home (**Examining the House**, page 138).
- The smell of actor's greasepaint, intense heat, and something that sounds like a handle being repeatedly cranked, i.e., the same *vestigia* Celia described the Buntline having (**Handout: Drama 5**).

If an investigator casts a Werelight spell to feed the apparition, it has no effect, indicating there's something strange going on. A **Magic** roll may help the investigators to figure out what.

- A **Regular success** reveals that Bogart isn't a ghost—though he may look like one, his presence has nothing to do with this location and was only recently released or triggered by something.
- A **Hard success** suggests that the effect was caused by someone using magic here and, more importantly, in the presence of the Buntline. Given the devastation, the spell used was something like *Impello* or its more destructive form, Grasping Hand.



Examining the Body

If the investigators examine Jacobi's body, they make a startling discovery—he's alive, but only just! He has a mortal wound from the gash in his head and needs urgent medical attention to stop him from bleeding out within the hour. The investigators can attempt to save his life with a **Medicine** roll (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 147)—the roll may incur a penalty die depending on what equipment the investigators have with them, at the GM's discretion. Alternatively, they might prefer to roll **Luck** to see if a paramedic reaches him in time. If no one has the Medicine skill, an investigator may wish to perform first aid with a successful **INT** roll to stabilise Jacobi's condition prior to calling the paramedics (**First Aid**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 146).

If the investigators save Jacobi, he is weak but able to give a physical description of his attackers: a huge East Asian guy and a heavily tattooed East Asian woman—undoubtedly the same people seen by the **Gun Show Eyewitness** (page 130). He also mentions seeing the ghost of Humphrey Bogart, though he has no idea why—he assumes delirium. Investigators who search the boat for his missing fingers find them lying amid the debris (a successful **Observation** roll). It's probably too late to save them, but the investigators might want to pack them on ice to send to the hospital with Jacobi just in case. A successful **Medicine** or **Science (Forensics)** roll confirms that they were removed with the same sharp, wedge-shaped blade that caused Jacobi's injuries.



GM ADVICE

If the investigators haven't encountered Wonderful yet, now is a good time for them to do so. For example, they could spot her sneaking away from Jacobi's boat, presumably having overheard everything that's happened. They may decide to give chase on foot or by car—the latter giving Wonderful the perfect opportunity to wield her Car Killer spell. Catching Wonderful leads to an invitation to Ready Set Go! to discuss a deal (**Wonderful's Gym (Optional)**, page 152) or threats to keep out of her way, at the GM's discretion.

Alternatively, Wonderful and her henchman Flynn Turner could burst in on the investigators. The encounter could range from a brief nod to a threatening word, or it could blow up into a full-scale fight (**Ambushing the Investigators**, page 145). Just remember to handle any scene that escalates the relationship between the investigators and Wonderful with caution if the player characters are more scholarly than action-oriented, as there is always the risk that a fight may turn deadly—especially given her magical capabilities. Unless the investigators are collectively skilled with fists, guns, or spells, keep the interaction verbal rather than physical.

Examining the Boat

If the investigators search the cabin, they disturb Jacobi's pet cat, Jingo, who is hiding in a small overhead locker. It leaps out, hissing at the first investigator to come close; if they're not already impaired, they should make a **POW** roll to see how badly startled they are. The cat doesn't attack and could be rescued, should the investigators manage to make friends with it (a successful **Animal Handling** roll—potentially, an opportunity for an investigator to try their Luck; *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 114). Jingo wears a blue collar with a nametag and a bell.

No matter how hard they look, the investigators find no sign of the Buntline—Jacobi's attackers must have taken it with them. However, they do find a poker chip from the Dreamland casino. There's nothing else like it on the boat and Jacobi, if alive, denies owning it. Only Tan and his accomplice could have dropped it, and if the investigators haven't already learned that the pair hang out at the casino when in LA (**Chasers 101 (Optional)**, page 133), this clue points them in the right direction. Looking Dreamland up on the internet identifies its location on Alameda Street, no roll required. (See also **Dreamland's Movie History**, page 133.)

Who Took the Gun?

If the investigators don't know the thieves' identities, possibly because Jacobi died before he could give them a witness statement, they need to find that information—and fast. Again, the poker chip should help them do that. However, while it tells them where the assailants may be found, it doesn't tell the investigators who they are.

The most straightforward way to learn that is to question the denizens of the local twilight subculture. If the investigators don't already have contacts in the LA scene they can turn to, a successful **Magic**, **Social,** or **Occult** roll gets them an invite from someone called Aldo (no last name) to a former speakeasy turned upscale bar: Quesada's, in Venice.

Next Steps

Whether they save Jacobi or not, the investigators probably want to get away from the crime scene as quickly as possible. They have several options:

- If the investigators need to talk to the local demi-monde—go to **Quesada's Bar** (page 151).
- If the investigators know where Tan and Big Sister are—go to **Tan's Casino** (page 153).
- If the investigators wish to track down the other chasers—go to **Wonderful's Gym** (page 152) and/or **Memphis' Apartment** (page 153).

Quesada's Bar

Quesada's Bar in Venice is where many of Los Angeles' demimonde like to chill. During Prohibition, Canada's finest liquor was smuggled in through underground tunnels to the speakeasy below Quesada's grocery store (as can be learned with a successful **History** roll). These days, the grocery is a very fancy bar and restaurant with the original, smaller saloon beneath. It's allegedly haunted by former owner Dino Pentangeli, who still hangs out in his personal booth at the back of the saloon—or so they say!

If the investigators have been invited to Quesada's by Aldo Muñoz (**Who Took the Gun?**, page 150), once they get downstairs, they can ask for him at the bar. The bartender directs them to a booth containing a young Hispanic man who is slowly working his way through several beers. Alternatively, if the GM wishes, they may switch out Aldo for a contact of their own creation.

While Aldo may have invited the investigators to the bar out of curiosity—especially if they are the new demimonde kids on the block—he can be very helpful if properly approached, i.e., with a **Social** roll; the roll gains a bonus die if money changes hands, but incurs a penalty die if the investigators are from a law enforcement group like the CIRG (ignore this penalty if Aldo specifically invited the group to meet him). If the roll fails, Aldo clams up; if it's a Regular success, Aldo knows several juicy pieces of gossip he's prepared to divulge.

If the investigators already know that Tan has the gun, or at least have a description if they don't have a name, Aldo has the following to say: "*Those two from Macau—Tony Tan and his lady killer? I hear the owners of that casino on Alameda—you know, Dreamland—are none too happy at having unexpected guests. But Tan has major pull back in China, so they're just sucking it up. Word is he's*" <makes spellcasting gestures> "*trained in the Arts. That's what I heard, anyway.*"

If the investigators don't know Tan has the gun but have found the poker chip (**Examining the Boat**, page 150), Aldo furnishes them with the same information. "*This? This can only mean the Macau travel agent and his bodyguard are up to their neck in this. Yeah, you'll find them out at this casino on Alameda Street. Just watch your step—the guy's a heavyweight, in more than one sense of the word.*"

If the investigators wish, they may ask Aldo about the other chasers they've encountered. He doesn't know anything about who is behind them (including Mr Sunday), but he does have background information about the chasers themselves; see **Chasers 101 (Optional)** (page 133). He also has no information on the Buntline beyond what the



investigators may have already found (**Buntline 101**, page 123, and **Buntline 201 (Optional)**, page 141).

- If the investigators ask about Eve Wonderful: "*The beefcakes and gym bunnies that work out at that gym, Ready Set Go!, are practically queuing up to be her personal bodyguards, the poor doomed meatheads. Don't they know what happens to them when she gets bored? Poof! Up in smoke! That's what. Sometimes literally.*"
- If the investigators ask about Jay Memphis: "*Memphis? Well, he's tearing around town in that midlife crisis sportscar of his like his life depends on it, tracking down every last rumour about the MacGuffin you're all after. Oh, and you know he's*" <makes a pointy-ears gesture> "*one of those guys, right?*"

If an investigator achieves a Hard success on their Social roll, Aldo adds: "*Ever heard of Arrowsmith? They're like a Hollywood legend, man. I hear they throw pretty wild movie nights—not that I've ever been to one. Anyway, they've got their claws deep in the magic of the movies—and I do mean magic.*"

If the investigators ask for more practical help, Aldo politely declines on behalf of Las Serpientes. He doesn't mind providing information but this whole scene looks too messy, and he doesn't want to get caught in the middle—he's not about to die in someone else's crusade.



GM ADVICE

Of course, if the investigators made an exceptionally successful (Hard or Critical) **Social** or **Occult** roll to meet Aldo or achieved the same when asking him for information—or just made a really good impression during their conversation—he and one or two of his family members may nevertheless turn up at the casino to save an investigator at a crucial moment, should things get too far out of hand (**The Roaring Thirties**, page 154). The investigators will owe him a favour, though...

Next Steps

Unless the investigators want to discover more information about their rivals, there are three main locations they can visit next.

- If the investigators want to track down Eve Wonderful—go to **Wonderful's Gym (Optional)** (following).
- If the investigators want to track down Jay Memphis—go to **Memphis' Apartment (Optional)** (page 153).
- If the investigators want to track down Tony Tan—go to **Tan's Casino** (page 153).
- If the investigators have learned Arrowsmith's name and want to know who they are—go to **Arrowsmith 101 (Optional)** (page 146).

Wonderful's Gym (Optional)

Eve Wonderful's base of operations in LA is the Ready Set Go! gym on Wilshire Boulevard. Located in Koreatown, it's one of the many 24-hour businesses that are gentrifying the district. The gym is actually owned by Wonderful's main muscle boy, Flynn Turner, and his grinning face is plastered all over the signage.

Any information that Wonderful might have on the current situation—like the locations of the other chasers' bases—is in Turner's office in one corner of the gym. This is also where the investigators may find Wonderful (GM's discretion).

Wonderful relies on Turner and the gym crew—both male and female—for protection, and the crew will try to block the investigators from reaching the office. Their loyalty to her is lessened if she has allowed Turner to come to any harm. If she has and the crew knows about it, Wonderful has to fend for herself when the investigators come to visit. Any investigator that can impress the gym crew with their prowess on the weight machines (a successful **Athletics** roll) gains a bonus die to any interaction with them during their time at the gym.

If Wonderful is present when the investigators arrive, how she reacts depends very much on whether they barge, sneak, or talk their way in, or if she invited them to discuss some sort of collaboration (**Offering the Investigators a Deal (Optional)**, page 145, **Examining the Body: GM Advice**, page 150). Unfortunately, there is the ever-present danger of Wonderful letting off a few fireballs and burning the whole gym down with the investigators still inside, as indicated by a successful **Read Person** roll.

If the investigators don't already know that Tan has the gun, Wonderful or one of the gym crew can fill them in following a successful **Social** roll. If the investigators gain access to Turner's office, a successful Regular **Observation** roll finds a flyer for Dreamland and one for Memphis' apartment complex, both with neat holes burned through their centres; a Hard success also finds Wonderful's gym bag with an Alderman Technical Solutions T-shirt inside.

Next Steps

Once the investigators have finished working out, there are several locations they can head to.

- If the investigators want to ask around the LA demi-monde—go to **Quesada's Bar** (page 151).
- If the investigators want to track down Jay Memphis—go to **Memphis' Apartment (Optional)** (following).
- If the investigators want to catch up with Tony Tan and the Buntline—go to **Tan's Casino** (page 153).

Memphis' Apartment (Optional)

Jay Memphis' base of operations in LA is an apartment—borrowed from a celebrity friend—in the high-end Aspiration complex at the corner of De Longpre Avenue and Cahuenga Boulevard. Aspiration is a modern apartment block in imitation Art Deco style. Anything Memphis might have on the case—like the locations of the other chasers' bases—is here. This is also where the investigators may find Memphis (GM's discretion).

Memphis and the other residents rely on a central security team located in the main entrance lobby to keep unwelcome visitors out. The investigators can't get into the complex without either going through the main entrance or having a special resident's key. Any investigators that can impress the security team with law enforcement ID—fake or otherwise—gain a bonus die to any Social rolls involving them while at the apartment complex. If Memphis is expecting the investigators (**The Road of Trials (Optional): GM Advice**, page 145, **Offering the Investigators a Deal (Optional)**, page 145), they are shown straight in.

Memphis' Porsche Cayman—with its distinctive tire treads (**Christensen's Place (Optional)**, page 143)—is parked in the complex's private garage.

If Memphis is present when the investigators arrive, how he reacts depends very much on if they barge, sneak, or talk their way in, or if he invited them over to discuss their plans to retrieve the gun. Unfortunately, there's always the risk with Memphis that he'll pull out a gun or make a run for his car and a quick getaway, as indicated by a successful **Read Person** roll.

If the investigators don't already know that Tan has the gun, either Memphis himself can fill them in, or they can find notes at the apartment. A successful **Research** or **Computer Use** roll discovers photos of Tan at Dreamland on Memphis' computer, while a successful Regular **Observation** roll finds flyers for the casino and Flynn Turner's gym stuck on the fridge with circles scrawled around their addresses. In addition, a Hard success on the Observation roll means the investigators spot a few incongruous, incriminating items on a shelf—all things that Memphis stole when he visited each of the crime scenes:

- A labelled box of pistol bullets from Holmes' Sporting Goods.
- A biographical book on Ned Buntline, labelled inside as the property of Celia Holmes.
- An old wristwatch engraved on the back with the name Ivar Lundberg. (The GM should only use this if the investigators went to **Christensen's Place (Optional)**, page 143.)
- A framed photograph of *Santana*, Whitman Jacobi's boat.

The apartment also contains several oil and charcoal portraits of Memphis in his "good-looking" form and, more interestingly, some photos where his true, less attractive form has been digitally replaced with an artist's impression of his pretty face. A successful **Art/Craft (Forgery** or **Photography)** or Hard **Observation** roll detects the photo manipulations.

Next Steps

Once the investigators have finished at the Aspiration complex, there are several other locations they may wish to visit.

- If the investigators want to ask around the LA demi-monde—go to **Quesada's Bar** (page 151).
- If the investigators want to track down Eve Wonderful—go to **Wonderful's Gym (Optional)** (page 152).
- If the investigators want to catch up with Tony Tan and the Buntline—go to **Tan's Casino** (following).

GM ADVICE

If the investigators are struggling and haven't uncovered Tan or his casino base, don't be afraid to help them along with a timely tip-off. This might be a phone call or email from their boss, who has learned that Tan has the gun at Dreamland. Alternatively, the investigators may catch a live news report of an ongoing incident at Dreamland (**Tan's Casino**, following).



Tan's Casino

Tan and Big Sister use Dreamland as a base of operations whenever they're in LA. It's not a comfortable situation, as Big Sister does not play well with others. However, the owners want to keep in with the triads here and in China, so they're willing to give him some support—even muscle, if he needs it. So long as Tan and Big Sister don't make a mess, they can stay in LA as long as they like. But that could be about to change...

On the outside, Dreamland is deliberately shabby and Orientalised, to match the neighbourhood décor. But inside, it's all glitz and glamour. There are card tables for poker and blackjack, craps tables, a roulette wheel, and plenty of slot machines. The sound is a loud mixture of gamblers' voices, electronic beeping, and the occasional big cash pay-out from the slots. Most of the customers are Chinese, while the staff are largely Taiwanese. Croupiers, waiting staff, and security move among the tables and booths, as well as the bar, dining area, secure cashiers' cage, and the exclusive members area.

Tan is waiting to hear from his client about handing over the Buntline, which is currently locked inside a tough attaché case handcuffed to his wrist. A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll near Tan reveals the gun's *vestigia* emanating from the case (**A Very Special Buntline**, page 112). While he waits, Tan celebrates his acquisition of the gun—and the hefty finder's fee he's about to receive—by spending big at the gaming tables. Big Sister

lurks at his shoulder while he dabbles in roulette and craps; thankfully, he has so far resisted casting *Impello* to cheat how the ball or dice land.

How Tan and Big Sister react to the investigators depends very much on whether they barge, sneak, or talk their way into the casino. With Tan, there is, unfortunately, an ever-present chance of him *Impello*-ing something—like the furniture—at the investigators, or just setting Big Sister and her hatchet loose on them. Tan is a cool customer, though, so Read Person is useless against him. However, a successful **Observation** roll does reveal Tan secretly signalling his immediate intentions—whatever they may be—to Big Sister. As long as the other customers are in no immediate danger, the casino's security team keeps out of it.

The moment anybody casts a spell in the casino, the Buntline's Lights, Camera, Action! effect kicks into effect (**A Very Special Buntline**, page 112). The gun doesn't even have to be held by someone or taken out of its attaché case. With a sudden flood of extremely strong *vestigia* (no roll required), the Buntline's powers interact with the casino's movie history to manifest an ethereal gangster movie set, complete with cast and crew—and, of course, a shootout, superimposed on the casino and everyone inside!



GM ADVICE

Remember: violence is not the only option when it comes to recovering the Buntline. Depending on who they are, the investigators may instead want to employ stealth, subterfuge, or perhaps even a tranquiliser gun. They may even use magic as part of their plan—with all the consequences that would entail. Bold investigators may take a leaf out of Tan's book (**Using the Chasers**, page 116) by challenging him to a winner-take-all game of poker, with the Buntline as the prize—an offer he cannot refuse. The GM should resolve the outcome with an opposed **Art/Craft (Gambling)** roll between the two players. If no investigators possess that expert skill, they could always try their Luck (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 114)! Alternatively, kind GMs may decide to ask for an opposed roll using an investigator's **Luck** value vs Tan's **Art/Craft (Gambling)** skill. Should the investigators prevail, it's up to the GM if Tan is a sore loser. Don't use this to deny the investigators their win, though—that's unfair. It simply means that Tan is keen for a rematch, should they ever run into him again.

Next Steps

While the investigators may refrain from using magic when they face down Tan and Big Sister, the Man from Macau will cast something at some point, even if it's just to vent his frustration at losing the Buntline. Now that the curtain's raised and the gun is making its presence felt, there's really only one place to go: **The Roaring Thirties** (following).

GM ADVICE

If you're feeling confident, you can have Tan accidentally trigger Lights, Camera, Action! before the investigators arrive at the casino. If he does, **The Roaring Thirties** (nearby) is already in full swing when they get there. The investigators are greeted by terrified casino customers fleeing from every exit, accompanied by a cacophony of gunfire from inside. When they enter the casino, they see Tan, Big Sister, and the casino's security people involved in a wild firefight with phantom gangsters and cops, with the Buntline somewhere in the middle of the chaos. Whether it is still in the attaché case fastened to Tan's wrist is at the GM's discretion.

Having Tan trigger the effect early is also a good way to encourage investigators who are wary of entering the casino due to his triad links to get involved—for example, because it's good cover for whatever they have planned.



The Roaring Thirties

As soon as the Buntline's Lights, Camera, Action! effect is triggered, spectral gangster movie actors and crew flicker into life in full Technicolor and sound, as if from hidden film projectors. If the investigators are cinema buffs, it's clear that no single identifiable movie has manifested here—it's more like a mash-up of several classic gangster films. If they're not cinema buffs, a successful **Art/Craft (Acting)** or **INT** roll reveals the same information. If the investigators express shock or surprise, anyone who is not already impaired should make a **POW** roll to see how well they react to the sudden manifestation (**Suffering Impairment**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118); if they have already witnessed the apparition on Jacobi's boat (**Movie Magic**, page 149), they gain a bonus die to the roll.

The phantom cast and crew resemble **Simulacra** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 249): they move, talk, and interact with the environment but are not truly sentient and have a limited range of actions and responses. While the apparitions cannot physically interact with the real world, their unnerving appearance—and the fact that at least half of them are playing gangsters in a shootout—means that the investigators and chasers now have additional obstacles to deal with when retrieving the Buntline or escaping the premises with it—as does any customer who tries to leave. These obstacles last for as long as the effect is ongoing. The casino customers and staff have the right idea and scatter, screaming.

Following are some suggested incidents that can be thrown at the investigators as they attempt to retrieve/escape with the Buntline:

- A phantom director on a high canvas chair yells, "*Action!*" and the shootout begins. Gangsters pull out Tommy


MVVM

guns and point them every which way, including at the investigators and a few frozen casino customers. The investigators have just enough time to react before several of the gangsters let rip with their guns, which cause no harm but make one heck of a bang and flash.

- A ghostly, short Irish American guy with a lop-sided grin leaps onto a casino table and yells, "*Made it, Ma!*" at the top of his voice, then starts giggling hysterically. The investigators have a moment to react before he is felled by several unseen gunmen. He falls from the table, staggers dramatically, and collapses at an investigator's feet.
- A gangster pulls a gun on an investigator and snarls, "*Oh, a wise guy, huh?*" The investigator has a moment to react before a real, live enemy—a chaser or security person—leaps through the apparition and strikes the investigator at point-blank range. If using the additional rules, the GM may permit the investigator an **Observation** roll to see if they can avoid the surprise attack (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 327).
- Two translucent stagehands walk up and drop a flimsy wooden scenery flat (screen) between an investigator and their opponent. The investigator has a moment to react while their opponent takes the opportunity to disappear into the chaos.
- An unfortunate casino customer wearing vintage 1930s clothing runs towards the investigator, wild-eyed and screaming. The investigator has a moment to react (**DEX** or **Fighting** to dodge) before the customer charges straight into them with a solid thud, sending them flying and knocking the breath out of them. If knocked down, treat the investigator as prone (**Combat Manoeuvres**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 134).
- The phantom director yells, "*Cut!*" and the spectral actors stop shooting and begin laughing, joking, and grousing about who's getting top billing, before retaking their marks, ready to repeat the scene all over again.



GM ADVICE

As this is the case file's climax, it should be exciting, dramatic, magical, and (potentially) dangerous, with a lot of running around, noise, and weird magical effects going off. However, there's no need to keep track of every single NPC in the casino at all times—just have people pop up in front of—or behind—the investigators and take an action, then melt back into the chaos. That action could be to tackle an investigator, cast a spell, make a grab for the gun, shoot at a real person, shoot at a gangster apparition, or simply point and scream at something. Keep it fast and choppy, switching frequently between investigators, like the final fight in a big budget superhero movie, with lots of very short shots of each main character doing something cool.

The Buntline's effect can be muted by removing it from the casino or sealing it in a wooden box, such as its presentation case, at which point the gangster movie shoot begins to fade away (but see also **Reports of Full Torso Apparitions**, page 157).

As long as Tan didn't lose the Buntline in a game of chance, he and Big Sister are intent on keeping the gun in their possession—or recovering it, as well as neutralising the investigators and anyone else who looks like trouble. Any other chasers present have the same objectives, though they may ally or betray the investigators or each other as the GM sees fit, based on the investigators' previous interactions with them.

Next Steps

As soon as the investigators have wrested the gun away from whoever has it and have seen off any active threats at the casino from the other chasers or casino security, it's time to beat a hasty retreat. The end of Act Two is in sight—go to **Case Closed** (following). But before that, the investigators may wish to call for reinforcements, i.e., the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), to clear up the mess, particularly if they are associated with law enforcement themselves. Assuming, of course, that they haven't already done so.



Conclusion: Case Closed

The investigators can now deal with any remaining plot threads, such as what happens when the police show up and who got away (**Loose Ends (Optional)**, following). Then there is the decision of what to do with the gun itself, now that they've finally got hold of it (**The Buntline's Fate**, nearby). After that, the GM and players can take care of the investigators' development phase (**Rewards**, page 159).

Loose Ends (Optional)

There are three potential loose ends the investigators may have to deal with once they have retrieved the Buntline.

The Sound of the Police

The case file's immediate aftermath likely follows a loud magical incident at the casino. As such, even if the investigators haven't already given them a call, members of the LAPD, including their SWAT team, soon arrive—in force—at the crime scene. Investigators who are associated with the CIRG, or who have some other official authority, can stick around to coordinate the clean-up with the cops. They can also choose how much of the "real story" to include in the official reports. Investigators who are not associated with law enforcement in any way are advised to leave the casino's vicinity as quickly as possible, unless they want to be rounded up and taken in for questioning—or get themselves arrested!

At the GM's discretion, the Roaring Thirties manifestation at the casino could linger for some time after the investigators insulate the gun or remove it from Dreamland. If it does, they may wish to prevent the LAPD officers from entering the casino and witnessing a fully-fledged magical 1930s gangster movie running riot around them. This is more likely if the investigators have some link with law enforcement; how they attempt to keep the cops outside is up to them. Alternatively, the investigators could just let them enter, leading to the police opening fire on a few ethereal mobsters and anyone not smart enough to have vacated the building.

Reports of Full Torso Apparitions

The GM should remember that any spells cast by the investigators or chasers during the grand finale mean that everybody's mobile phones are completely fried—unless they remembered to deactivate them before entering the casino (a successful **Luck** roll, if required). This in turn means that, despite frenzied reports by customers and staff of "ghost gangsters" appearing at the casino, there is no digital footage of the incident. However, given that the casino has been operating here for at least 50 years, the GM might decide that there may be some old-school security cameras and video recorders in the building; the taped footage of the Roaring Thirties incident might prove very valuable to certain parties—Arrowsmith, for example…

Retrieving any video tapes before the police arrive may be a challenge too advanced for the investigators, but if successful, it could get them an in with Arrowsmith—if they know of the organisation's existence.

The Ones Who Got Away

Other interested parties who were in the casino for the grand finale disappear as soon as the investigators take their eyes off them. This includes any surviving chasers and members of the LA demi-monde who might have become involved. They all know better than to stick around waiting for several dozen well-armed police officers to show up.

Finally, there are the indirectly involved parties, like Mr Sunday and Arrowsmith. These people are far too smooth and well-connected to get caught sniffing around any of the crime scenes personally. But they do take note of how the investigators handled the case file and may decide to contact them. It might even happen sooner than the investigators think (**The Buntline's Fate**, following, and **Case Seeds**, page 159).

The Buntline's Fate

In the likely event that the investigators end the case with the Buntline in their possession, they have a number of options regarding what they can do with it, some of which are described in the following sections. Remember that unless the investigators have sealed the gun safely in a wooden box, it continues to manifest its Special Effects whenever a spell is cast nearby (**A Very Special Buntline**, page 112).

Note that if the gun does not end up with Mr Sunday—and therefore, Arrowsmith—the investigators earn the undying enmity of the secretive organisation, whether they are aware of its existence or not.

Hand the Gun to Sunday

If the investigators were hired by Mr Sunday to retrieve the gun and they do not call Ms Jueves immediately to arrange a handover, Sunday contacts them as soon as their mobile phones are active, having heard about the Dreamland incident on the news. Depending on how much attention the investigators have drawn to themselves—for example, if Sunday fears they are about to be arrested and the gun placed into evidence—he may even pull up to the sidewalk outside the casino in a fancy car, driven by Ms Jueves, to take possession, promising to organise the best possible legal representation to get them off any charges.

Regardless, Sunday congratulates the investigators on a job well done, though his praise may be toned down if the Buntline's recovery involved one or more Peter Grant-sized incidents of destruction. He honours the agreed-on fee for each investigator, whether that was money or some other benefit (**Monster Hunters & Hedge Wizards**, page 122).



Hand the Gun to Their Boss

If the investigators are working for the CIRG, the Librarians, the Virtuous Men, or some other group where a finder's fee isn't part of the deal, they can deliver the Buntline to their boss with no more incidents. Practitioners like Mrs Chin and the Resolute Man are intrigued by the gun's magical properties but are mainly concerned with keeping such a powerful item out of circulation and away from meddling amateurs and enemy groups like Alderman Technical Solutions. The Buntline disappears into whatever secure facility the group uses to store such things. If the investigators are regular (or semi-regular) CIRG agents, Special Agent Kimberley Reynolds expects a full report from them as soon as possible, including a fresh entry for the Buntline in the FBI's **Unreality List** (page 47) and suggestions for how the gun can be made safe.

Destroy the Gun

While this is difficult, it's not impossible. Though the Buntline has impressive magical properties, it will still melt in an industrial furnace just like any other antique firearm. Taking this option gets the investigators no reward from their boss (assuming there was one), but does, at least, take one target off their backs—though Arrowsmith is horrified by the destruction of a precious Treasure of Hollywood and may well stir up trouble for the investigators in the future, as may Mr Sunday, if he was their boss.

Hide the Gun

If the investigators decide that the best thing to do is to put the Buntline beyond everyone's reach—including that of their own boss/organisation—they could always just bury it out in the desert, throw it into the Pacific Ocean, drop it into a cave, or lock it away in a bank vault. But there's no telling who—or what—might stumble across it or deliberately sniff it out in the future, only to wreak havoc on the set of an old Universal horror movie. Or on a lot where the 1933 version of King Kong was filmed, one of which is less than 1.5 km (1 mile) from Arrowsmith's Culver City headquarters…

Keep the Gun

The investigators could simply defy whoever they are working for and keep the Buntline for themselves. Its magical properties may come in handy in future case files, at least as far as a

distraction technique is concerned—though that would be sure to attract Arrowsmith's attention. Plus, the investigators would need to do some fancy explaining to their boss as to why they're still carrying such a potentially disruptive artefact around.

Rewards

Once all the loose ends have been tied up and the Buntline has been dealt with, follow the steps in the **Investigator Development Phase** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 120).

- If you are using the standard system (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 120), award the investigators 1 development point per session of play.
- The players might want to alter their investigators' backstory entries based on their experiences in this case file. For example, perhaps they formed a relationship with—or a grudge against—one of the NPCs (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 122).
- If the investigators were working for a monetary reward, such as that offered by Mr Sunday, their Affluence Rating might move up a band, although they may need to purchase a new advantage to enable this. They may also have opened up new avenues of employment if they are freelancers and managed to impress a client or two. Conversely, if they were working for the CIRG, the Librarians, or the Virtuous Men and made an almighty public mess of the case file, they might find their jobs under review (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 122).
- Optional: if the GM intends for there to be an in-game break between the end of this case file and the beginning of the next, they may wish to award 1 additional development point for **Training** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 122).

This concludes **A Regular Picture Palace Drama**. Congratulations!



Case Seeds

The climax of this case file may well be messy and explosive, not to mention likely to draw the attention of all sorts of folks, from law enforcement to movers and shakers in the American demi-monde. There may be a number of people or factors that could come back to haunt the investigators—perhaps literally, if the GM feels like dropping in the ghost of a dead chaser, for example. However, the investigators' actions may also have opened up new opportunities for the GM and players to develop jointly in future games, if they so wish. Following are a few suggested case seeds that build on this idea.

Case Seed: The Casino Incident

Following the Roaring Thirties incident, the LAPD cordons the casino off indefinitely as a "structurally unsafe hazard." Perhaps Arrowsmith offer their services to make it safe, sending in the investigators—either freelancing directly or via Mr Sunday—along with some practitioner filmmakers and the Treasures of Hollywood, who then produce a new Secret Reel—James Cagney and Edward G Robinson in the previously unheard-of gangster flick *Caesar of Shanghai*. Is filming all plain sailing, or are there actual ghosts haunting the site that aren't thrilled by their new, noisy neighbours?

Case Seed: Everyone Comes to Quesada's

The demi-monde bar in LA becomes the investigators' regular haunt, where they can be contacted by people who need their services. Mr Sunday might approach them at the bar with a new case file, or the players might choose to create new investigators, such as bar regulars Las Serpientes, meting out their own brand of family justice to magical threats in the Greater Los Angeles area. Or perhaps the players would prefer to create their own new Tinseltown-based organisation.

Case Seed: I'll Be Back

If any of the other chasers survived the case file and/or avoided arrest, did they part on hostile terms with the investigators? Was blood spilled? Were lives lost? Is revenge now that chaser's top priority? Might they appear midway through another case file at the worst possible moment? Or did everyone part on neutral terms, or even as uneasy allies? Might a chaser team up with the investigators (again) for another case file, or make a fleeting cameo appearance to pass on a hot lead with their dying words?

And what of the Holmeses? While Celia wasn't a practitioner as such, she'd certainly had enough encounters with magical artefacts to recognise the Buntline for what it was. If she died, what other strange objects might Sonia

discover tucked away in a rented storage unit while dealing with her late wife's estate? Does she call on the investigators for help? If Celia survived (**The Body in the Office: GM Advice**, page 137), once she has fully recovered, does she approach the investigators to safely dispose of any other artefacts she has hidden away? Or do the investigators come across one—or both—of the women again while chasing down another MacGuffin?

Case Seed: Leeches!

The local LA chapter of **ASU** (page 59) hears about what happened at the casino and begins asking around, getting eyewitness descriptions of everyone present during the Roaring Thirties incident. And, wouldn't you know it, they now have photos of the investigators pinned onto their corkboards under the label, "LEECHES—CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGERS." It's only a matter of time before an ad hoc cell attempts to eliminate the investigators when they are at their most vulnerable. And what the ASU lacks in competence, leadership, and brains, it makes up for in insane conviction and access to the deadly cornucopia that is their local gun fair. Will the investigators be able to avoid or, at least, survive the attack, whatever form it takes?

Case Seed: CIRG, LA

Responding to the increased magical activity uncovered during the case file, the CIRG sets up an office in LA, in the main FBI building on Wilshire Boulevard. While special agents and direct employees of the FBI will be transferred automatically, are the investigators invited to join the unit because of their particular set of skills? Or are the investigators "people of interest" that the unit is now hunting for? How do other local groups, like Las Serpientes, feel about the Feds getting up in their business?

Case Seed: The Buntline Bullets

Whatever happened to the Buntline's original bullets? Are they magical as well? If so, what properties do they have? Where are they? Does Arrowsmith still have them, or did Lundberg steal them, too—and are they now in the possession of a former inmate or staff member of the mental institution, ready to cause their own brand of magical havoc?

Case Seed: Hooray for Follywood

Increasingly aware that magic is returning to the world, Arrowsmith pulls a few official strings and steps up as California's freelance version of the Folly. Are the investigators invited or paid to work as Arrowsmith's agents to keep the peace among the Californian demi-monde? Or is Arrowsmith a sinister controlling influence that seeks to claim dominion over all magical activity on the West Coast—sort of an evil mirror to the New York Library Association?

Case Seed: You're Hired

What of the chasers' clients, who were presumably thwarted in their efforts to acquire the Buntline? Have the investigators' actions earned their enmity, or have they inadvertently impressed one or more potential shadowy employers? Perhaps the Texan tech billionaire or the Chinese shell company contacts the investigators with a new job offer, offering to fly them to Austin or Hong Kong for a "special job." Or has Alderman Technical Solutions decided the investigators are a threat to their future operations, one that must be dealt with?



Cast

The following sections contain the profiles for the various NPCs the investigators are likely to run across during the course of this case file, organised by role. Common skills are listed first, followed by expert, and then combat skills. Practitioner's spells are listed by order and note if a spell is mastered (and can, therefore, be boosted).

The Chasers

Eve Wonderful, *age 29, influencer*

STR 30 **CON** 50 **DEX** 50 **INT** 70 **POW** 80
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 20 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Magical.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 60%, Navigate 40%, Observation 50%, Read Person 40%, Research 40%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 60%, Stealth 50%; Art/Craft (Social Media) 80%, Computer Use 40%, Languages 60%, Magic 60%, Occult 40%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 40%.

Languages
Cantonese 40%, English (own) 70%, Mandarin 30%, Spanish 60%.

Spells
Flash Bulb (mastered), *Impello* (mastered), Werelight (mastered); EMP (Car Killer), Fireball (mastered), Lock and Key.

Signare
Raw and demanding, with an underlying, appetising smell of cinnamon.

Jay Memphis, *age 36, celebrity bodyguard*

STR 70 **CON** 60 **DEX** 60 **INT** 50 **POW** 40
DB: +1 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 65
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.
Disadvantage: Looks Bad on Camera—the character looks tall and attractive in person, but shorter and less good-looking when viewed through a digital or analogue camera, or if captured on film or a digital image.
Weapon: Glock 9mm pistol (Regular Handgun).

Skills
Athletics 70%, Drive 60%, Navigate 30%, Observation 50%, Read Person 60%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 70%, Stealth 40%; Appraise 60%, Computer Use 40%, Disguise 40%, Law 60%; Fighting 70%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
English (own) 60%, Hebrew (own) 60%.

Powers
Luck of the Demi-Monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Acquisition, i.e., finding and retrieving things.

Tony Tan, *age 52, "travel agent"*

STR 40 **CON** 60 **DEX** 60 **INT** 70 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 18 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Magical, Wealthy.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 70%, Read Person 60%, Research 70%, Sense Vestigia 70%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Accounting 50%, Appraise 60%, Art/Craft (Gambling) 60%, History 50%, Languages 60%, Magic 70%, Occult 60%, Read Lips 50%, Sleight of Hand 50%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
Cantonese (own) 70%, English 60%, Macanese Patois (own) 35%, Macanese Portuguese 60%, Mandarin 60%.

Spells
Although Tan isn't a Newtonian practitioner, for the sake of this case file, treat him as knowing *Impello* (mastered), Noisemaker, Rock Drill (mastered), *Scindere* (mastered), Werelight (mastered); *Impello palma* (mastered), *Impello vibrato* (mastered), Invisible Catch; Grasping Hand.

Signare
A sense of precision, the feeling of warm sunshine on your back, and the scent of apple blossom.

"Big Sister" Yu, *age 39, enforcer*

STR 60 **CON** 70 **DEX** 70 **INT** 40 **POW** 50
DB: +1 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Scary.
Weapons: Hatchet (axe), QSZ-92 9mm pistol (Regular Handgun).

Skills
Athletics 80%, Drive 60%, Navigate 40%, Observation 50%, Read Person 60%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Art/Craft (Dim Sum) 70%, Demolitions 40%, Medicine 40%; Fighting 70%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
Cantonese (own) 60%, English 40%, Macanese Portuguese (own) 40%.

Bit Players

Mark Lashwood, *age 43, gun store clerk*

STR 50 **CON** 60 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 40%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 40%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 30%, Stealth 30%; Accounting 60%, Appraise 60%, Law 30%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
American Sign Language 40%, English (own) 60%.

Sonia Holmes, *age 57, artist*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 70 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Weapon: Remington 870 Wingmaster (Shotgun).

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 50%, Navigate 40%, Observation 70%, Read Person 40%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 40%; Art/Craft (Fine Art) 70%, Art/Craft (Photography) 60%, Art/Craft (Sculpture) 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 40%.

Languages
English (own) 60%.

Whitman Jacobi, *age 65, gun collector*

STR 40 **CON** 60 **DEX** 50 **INT** 60 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —
*Jacobi is suffering from a mortal wound

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 30%, Navigate 50%, Observation 60%, Read Person 50%, Research 70%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 50%, Stealth 30%; Appraise 70%, History 70%, Pilot Boat 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 80%.

Languages
English (own) 60%.

Aldo Muñoz, *age 25, intermediary*

STR 50 **CON** 60 **DEX** 50 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Silver-Tongued, Steadfast.
Weapon: Switchblade (Knife).

Skills
Athletics 50%, Brujajos (equivalent to Sense Vestigia) 60%, Drive 50%, Navigate 40%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 30%, Social 70%, Stealth 50%; Occult 50%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
English (own) 60%, Spanish (own) 60%.

Flynn Turner, *age 33, gym owner*

STR 80 **CON** 70 **DEX** 50 **INT** 40 **POW** 40
DB: +1 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 8 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Damage Bonus.
Weapon: none, unless the GM wishes.

Skills
Athletics 80%, Drive 50%, Navigate 40%, Observation 40%, Read Person 40%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
English (own) 60%.

Extras

Biker

STR 70 **CON** 70 **DEX** 50 **INT** 40 **POW** 50
DB: +1 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Damage Bonus.
Weapons: improvised or GM's choice.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 60%, Navigate 60%, Observation 40%, Read Person 40%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 50%, Social 60%, Stealth 30%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 50%.

Languages
Own Language (e.g., English, Spanish) 60%.

At the GM's discretion, some of the bikers at Mooney's Place may be hedge wizards or fae. Change the hedge wizards' advantage to Magical, remove their damage bonus, give them two first order spells (one mastered) and one second order spell, and increase their Sense Vestigia skill to 60%. Fae bikers gain Natural Toughness, 60 Luck points, and an affinity of the GM's choice (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 320).

Ready Set Go! Gym Crew Member

STR 80 **CON** 60 **DEX** 60 **INT** 40 **POW** 40
DB: +1 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 8 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Damage Bonus.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 40%, Navigate 30%, Observation 40%, Read Person 40%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 30%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 40%.

Languages
Own Language (e.g., English, Spanish) 60%, Other Language 30%.

Apartment/Casino Security Person

STR 70 **CON** 70 **DEX** 50 **INT** 50 **POW** 40
DB: +1 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 8 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.
Weapon(s): QSZ-92 9mm pistol (Regular Handgun); plus, if casino security, whatever makeshift weapon comes to hand.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 40%, Navigate 30%, Observation 50%, Read Person 40%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 70%, Stealth 30%; Fighting 70%, Firearms 50%.

Languages
Cantonese (own) or Mandarin (own) 60%, English (own) 40%.

LAPD Officer

STR 60 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 40%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 40%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Law 60%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
Own Language (e.g., English, Spanish) 60%, Other Language 30%.





Appendix A: Ready–to–Play Investigators

While this sourcebook and the *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* rulebook contain all the rules you need to create your own US-based investigators, if you want to dive straight into the sample case files in Chapters 3 and 4, you can use the various members of the **Cryptid Kickers** (page 56) as pre-generated, ready-to-play characters.

They are slightly more experienced in dealing with the supernatural than their British counterparts (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 344–349), as reflected in their higher skill values. Two of the characters have the Magical advantage, although they are even more secretive about their abilities than members of the Folly—to the point that their colleagues may not know just what they're capable of (player's discretion)! The rest of the team have a wide variety of skills and advantages to help ensure everyone can contribute to each game.

Skills in bold text are the investigator's starting skills. As always, feel free to customise these profiles as you wish, altering the name, gender, backstory, and so on, to best suit your game and your players' preferences.

Table 5: Cheri Bomb Van Contents (Weapons) (page 172) lists those armaments Frankie and Joey usually store in their van, along with the skill(s) required for their use, the base weapon damage they inflict, and their base range.



ADDITIONAL RULES

If you'd like these ready-to-play characters to be even more skilled, you could permit your players to take the experienced investigator package (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 310). All the pre-generated investigators have already been given 60 extra skill points, so if they do choose the package, they only gain one new skill at 60% ***or*** a further 60 points to spend how they please. They must also select a disadvantage (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 311).

Shawn Floyd

Occupation: Entertainer (Actor/Presenter)
Age: 25
Pronouns: he/him

STRENGTH	50/25
CONSTITUTION	60/30
DEXTERITY	50/25
INTELLIGENCE	60/30
POWER	60/30

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Advantages: Silver-Tongued, Steadfast.

Common Skills	
Athletics	40/20
Drive	40/20
Navigate	40/20
Observation	**60/30**
Read Person	**60/30**
Research	30/15
Sense Vestigia	40/20
Social	**60/30**
Stealth	40/20



Expert Skills	
Art/Craft (Acting)	**60/30**
Art/Craft (Photography)	30/15
Art/Craft (Writing)	30/15
Disguise	**60/30**
Language (ASL)	60/30
Language (English)	60/30
Occult	**60/30**

Combat Skills	
Fighting	40/20
Firearms	30/15

Description
A solidly built Black man with an easy-going smile.

Backstory
Born and raised in Macon, Georgia, you always dreamed of something more than working in manufacturing, like the rest of your extended family. An only child, you loved being the centre of attention at family gatherings. It surprised no one when you decided to major in Theatre and Acting at the University of West Georgia. But it was during your Psychology minor—well, the unit on parapsychology—that you really got the bug for all things supernatural. You decided to set up your own online paranormal reality series with your college friends Rumer, Meg, and Gray—with you as front man, of course!

Affluence
Average.

Equipment
Cell (mobile) phone, stage makeup, laptop, flashlight, spare batteries, night-vision goggles, walkie-talkie.

Rumer Kaliparayath

Occupation: Journalist
Age: 24
Pronouns: she/her

STRENGTH	40/20
CONSTITUTION	40/20
DEXTERITY	60/30
INTELLIGENCE	70/35
POWER	70/35

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Magic Points: 15
Advantage: Magical.

Common Skills

Athletics	30/15
Drive	30/15
Navigate	40/20
Observation	**60/30**
Read Person	40/20
Research	**70/35**
Sense Vestigia	**60/30**
Social	**60/30**
Stealth	40/20



Expert Skills

Art/Craft (Writing)	**60/30**
Art/Craft (Photography)	**40/20**
Art/Craft (Sound Recording)	**40/20**
History	**60/30**
Language (English)	70/35
Language (Hindi)	70/35
Magic	**60/30**

Combat Skills

Fighting	30/15
Firearms	30/15

Description
A petite young woman of South Asian descent with long black hair, rarely seen without her shapeless beanie hat.

Backstory
You are a first-generation Asian American (your parents moved from Chandigarh, India to Sunnyvale, California to work in the tech industry before you were born) and the younger of non-identical twins. You majored in Mass Communications (Journalism) with a minor in History at the University of West Georgia, close to your Dad's sisters in Atlanta. Your twin sister, Meg, came along, too and introduced you to her weird friends, Gray and Shawn, and somehow you ended up as the sound operator and researcher for their paranormal online series. Your aunts taught you and Meg some strange, magical things while you were in Georgia. Now you're secretly searching for someone who can take you to the next level.

Affluence
Average.

Spells
Aqua, *Impello* (mastered); Waterbomb.

Signare
The heady scent of roses, the sound of rumbling thunder, the taste of pistachios and cardamom.

Equipment
Cell (mobile) phone, notebook, pens and pencils, digital audio recorder, analogue audio recorder, shotgun mic, flashlight, spare batteries, night-vision goggles, walkie-talkie, analogue wristwatch.

Meghana "Meg" Kaliparayath

Occupation: Nurse
Age: 24
Pronouns: she/her

STRENGTH	50/25
CONSTITUTION	40/20
DEXTERITY	50/25
INTELLIGENCE	70/35
POWER	70/35

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Magic Points: 15
Advantage: Magical.

Common Skills

Athletics	30/15
Drive	40/20
Navigate	30/15
Observation	**60/30**
Read Person	**60/30**
Research	40/20
Sense Vestigia	**60/30**
Social	**60/30**
Stealth	50/25



Expert Skills

Language (English)	70/35
Language (Hindi)	70/35
Magic	**60/30**
Medicine	**60/30**
Science (Forensics)	**60/30**
Science (Biology)	**50/25**
Science (Pharmacy)	**30/15**

Combat Skills

Fighting	30/15
Firearms	30/15

Description
A little heavier set than her twin sister, Rumer, with short black hair and a reassuring smile.

Backstory
You are a first-generation Asian American and, as you like to remind your non-identical twin sister, Rumer, you were born a few minutes before her. You also weren't interested in joining your parents in the tech industry but decided to follow in your aunts' nursing footsteps instead, which is why you ended up at the University of West Georgia. Your aunts teaching you and Rumer magic coincided with you meeting Gray and Shawn on the parapsychology module of your Psychology elective. Shawn asked you to be part of his online paranormal series—you suspect partly because of your medical skills but mostly because you have a car. Regardless, it's a good way to look for someone who can teach you more magic.

Affluence
Average.

Spells
Scindere, Werelight (mastered); Shield.

Signare
The heady scent of roses, the sound of rumbling thunder, the sting of antiseptic.

Equipment
Toyota Highlander SUV (2012), cell (mobile) phone, flashlight, spare batteries, night-vision goggles, walkie-talkie, analogue nurse's watch; nurse's bag containing: syringes, dressings and surgical tape, saline, alcohol gel, alcohol wipes, disposable gloves, specimen bottles, bandage scissors, clinical waste bags, sharps bin, diagnostic equipment (stethoscope, blood pressure monitor, thermometer, etc.), and a small selection of drugs (mostly painkillers and cold medication).

Gray Sartori

Occupation: Computer Specialist
Age: 22
Pronouns: he/him

STRENGTH	50/25
CONSTITUTION	50/25
DEXTERITY	60/30
INTELLIGENCE	60/30
POWER	60/30

MOV: 9
LUCK: 60
Advantages: Fast Reactions, Speedy.

Common Skills	
Athletics	**60/30**
Drive	50/25
Navigate	50/25
Observation	**60/30**
Read Person	30/15
Research	40/20
Sense Vestigia	40/20
Social	30/15
Stealth	**60/30**



Expert Skills	
Art/Craft (Photography)	**60/30**
Art/Craft (Architecture)	**30/15**
Art/Craft (Special Effects)	**30/15**
Computer Use	**60/30**
Language (English)	60/30
Language (Italian)	60/30
Tech	**60/30**

Combat Skills	
Fighting	30/15
Firearms	30/15

Description
A skinny Italian American who looks younger than he is (barely out of his teens). The Cryptid Kickers' cameraman, and responsible for managing the video channel and all their tech requirements.

Backstory
It's an odd step from New York to the University of West Georgia but it seemed like the best way to get out from under your overbearing dad and stepmom. At least majoring in Computer Science helped keep the peace, although your father wasn't as happy about your minors (Film and Video Production and Psychology). Your mom and her new partner, on the other hand, have been nothing but supportive. This paranormal online series is a great outlet for your boundless energy, even if it can be a little dangerous at times. Thank the gods you filmed that Cheri Bomb gig for your course credits—it means you at least have backup when the going gets rough.

Affluence
Average.

Equipment
Cell (mobile) phone, digital SLR camera, handheld digital camcorder (with night vision), EMF reader, IR thermometer, IR thermal imager, night-vision goggles, laptop, spare batteries, tool kit, duct tape, flashlight, walkie-talkie, cable ties, a bag full of connector cables.

Francisca "Frankie" Morales

Occupation: Tradesperson (Vehicle Mechanic)
Age: 26
Pronouns: they/them

STRENGTH	50/25
CONSTITUTION	50/25
DEXTERITY	70/35
INTELLIGENCE	60/30
POWER	50/25

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Advantages: Signature Weapon (monkey wrench), Steadfast.

Common Skills	
Athletics	40/20
Drive	**60/30**
Navigate	30/15
Observation	**60/30**
Read Person	40/20
Research	30/15
Sense Vestigia	30/15
Social	40/20
Stealth	**60/30**



Expert Skills	
Appraise	**60/30**
Art/Craft (Bass Guitar)	**60/30**
Art/Craft (Auto Detailing)	**40/20**
Art/Craft (Singing)	**30/15**
Language (English)	60/30
Language (Spanish)	60/30
Mechanical Repair	**60/30**

Combat Skills	
Fighting	**60/30**
Firearms	40/20

Description
A slender, bass-playing Latinx person with close-cropped black hair, who dresses like someone in a punk rock band: ripped trousers, chains, etc., when not wearing mechanic's overalls. One-half of Cheri Bomb; the other half is her occasional lover, Josefina "Joey" Castro.

Backstory
You've always had a restless soul and you couldn't wait to get out of San Antonio, Texas, even if it meant leaving your Pop's auto repair shop behind. Thankfully, you managed to convince your best friend and bandmate, Joey, to come with you. Knowing how to fix a car helps keep you on the road, and being one of the best bass players on the circuit takes care of food and accommodation. You have scars from your various encounters with the supernatural, both physical and mental. Keeping those crazy kids safe after meeting them at that university gig in Carrollton has almost become a fulltime job in itself!

Affluence
Average.

Equipment
Bass guitar, mechanic's tool kit including monkey wrench, white 1969 Ford Econoline van (Cheri Bomb logo on rear doors), hunting knives (2), cell (mobile) phone, flashlight, plus anything available from the Cheri Bomb van (**Table 5: Cheri Bomb Van Contents (Weapons)**, page 172).

Josefina "Joey" Castro

Occupation: Entertainer (Drummer)
Age: 25
Pronouns: she/her

STRENGTH	60/30
CONSTITUTION	60/30
DEXTERITY	60/30
INTELLIGENCE	50/25
POWER	50/25

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.
Damage Bonus: +1

Common Skills	
Athletics	40/20
Drive	30/15
Navigate	40/20
Observation	30/15
Read Person	**60/30**
Research	40/20
Sense Vestigia	50/25
Social	40/20
Stealth	**60/30**



Expert Skills	
Art/Craft (Drums)	**60/30**
Art/Craft (Singing)	**40/20**
Art/Craft (Writing)	**30/15**
Language (English)	60/30
Language (Spanish)	60/30
Occult	**60/30**

Combat Skills	
Fighting	**60/30**
Firearms	60/30

Description
A curvy Latina woman with shoulder-length hair and a fondness for practical clothing with lots of pockets. Cheri Bomb's drummer, and Francesca "Frankie" Morales' on/off lover.

Backstory
You were always getting into fights in San Antonio as a kid, so you learned to protect yourself and your best friend, Frankie, from whatever came at you. That fighting instinct has saved your butts so many times now. Music was your escape from a miserable home life and a way to work out your frustrations on your drums. Luckily, you were good at it, as it gave you and Frankie a way out when things got really rough. You know Shawn, Rumer, Meg, and Gray are the same age as you, but you can't help thinking of them as kids who need taking care of.

Affluence
Average.

Equipment
Drum kit, drumsticks, cell (mobile) phone, flashlight, Bowie knife, hunting knife, flick knife, Colt Single Action Army revolver, Colt M1911A1 pistol, Heckler and Koch Mark 23 pistol, plus anything available from the Cheri Bomb van (**Table 5: Cheri Bomb Van Contents (Weapons)**, page 172)—particularly the guns.

Table 5: Cheri Bomb Van Contents (Weapons)

Weapon	Skill	Base Weapon Damage	Base Range (metres/yards)
Fire Axe	Fighting or Athletics	1	Touch or STR/5*
Flamethrower	Firearms	2	30
Flare Gun	Firearms	1	15
Folding Crossbow (× 2)	Firearms	1	50
Grenades (1D6)	Athletics	2 (6-9 m/yds) 3 (3-6 m/yds) 4 (within 3 m/yds)	STR/5*
Ithaca 37 Shotgun (sawn off)	Firearms	2	50
Smoke Grenades (1D6)	Athletics	Special**	STR/5*
Tranquiliser (dart) Rifle	Firearms	Special†	50
Winchester Model 1300 Pump Action Shotgun	Firearms	2	50
Winchester Model 1873 Rifle	Firearms	2	100

*See the **Athletics** skill description for further details (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 82).

****Smoke Grenades:** add a penalty die to all Observation, Firearms, Navigate, and Track rolls for 1D6 rounds following deployment.

†**Tranquiliser (dart) Rifle:** on a successful attack, the target must make a Hard CON roll: if failed, they immediately fall asleep for 1D6 hours; if successful, the target feels woozy and suffers a penalty die to all actions for 1D6 hours instead. Tranquiliser guns do not get a bonus die for **Point-Blank Range** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 138). If the tranquiliser darts contain etorphine, an unconscious target can be revived quickly with its counteragent, naloxone, although a trip to hospital is probably in order, just to be on the safe side. There is no reversing agent for ketamine.

Appendix B: New Spells

Chapter 4 of *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*'s core rules contains many of the spells mentioned in this book. This appendix details several new ones that American practitioners may find useful. The spells are categorised by order, and each description lists any prerequisites that spell requires. As in England, a spell may have a formal Latin name, or it may simply be called something far more modern.

First Order Spells

Treaclefoot

Prerequisite: *Scindere*.

Known in most magical traditions by one name or another, Treaclefoot creates a sticky layer between two objects. In its most basic form, the spell is used to secure a single small item onto a surface, such as a wall or desk, thereby providing much harmless entertainment for generations of students at **Casterbrook** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 261). Any item thus affixed stays in place for 5 minutes. As with **Scindere** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 180), anyone wishing to move an object stuck down with Treaclefoot must succeed at an opposed STR vs POW (of the caster) roll.

Boost: adding *inflectentes* renders the spell far more useful by allowing a practitioner to stick people's shoes to the ground, hence its colloquial name. The spell appears to key to the end points of a person's legs but, interestingly, does not work on bare feet because of the human body's innate magical resistance. The target(s) must be within 3 metres/yards of the caster for the spell to be effective.

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 2 magic points): sticks one person's shoes to the ground for a period of 5 minutes unless the victim succeeds at an opposed STR vs POW (of the caster) roll to pull themselves free. If the victim fails the opposed roll, they have the option to remove their shoes, if practicable—although the time taken to do so may achieve the same purpose as sticking their shoes to the floor in the first place, i.e., the caster's escape!
- **+2 magic points** (total cost of 3 magic points): extends the effect to a group of up to four targets, as long as the whole group is within a 2 metre/yard-wide zone.
- Prior to the end of the spell's duration, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell for another 5 minutes.

Failing to cast the spell causes the target's socks to stick to the inside of their shoes—unpleasant, but unlikely to slow them down. A fumble or a failed pushed roll, on the other hand, sticks the caster's shoes to the floor, with all the consequences that might entail!

Second Order Spells

Lock and Key

Prerequisites: Flash Bulb (mastered) + *Impello* (mastered).

A variation of the Fireball spell used by those not versed in the art of lockpicking or *Clausurafrange*, Lock and Key destroys inconvenient locks by superheating their metal components and melting them to slag. While far from subtle, it requires a surprising degree of precision to melt only the lock and not set fire to the entire door, hence the required mastery of its two *formae*, *lux* and *impello*. Can be followed up with an *Impello* spell to break open any remaining stubborn components, although a good hard kick or shove often does the trick—providing the caster avoids the extremely hot lock.

Unlike Fireball, this spell is not usually used in combat situations, as it requires the caster to be in close proximity to the object to be melted, i.e., within arm's length (1 metre/yard). If getting up close and personal is not an issue, then the spell causes Severe damage to the victim (**Other Forms of Damage**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 149). An investigator targeted by the Lock and Key spell should make a Luck roll to determine if their clothing subsequently catches fire, causing a further 1 damage per round until the fire is extinguished.

Third Order Spells

Arbuscula Cantans

Prerequisite: *Impello vibrato.*

Enchants a small tree or bush (up to 1 metre/yard in height) to vibrate in such a way that it produces a single musical note. The note lasts for 5 minutes and may be anything from a soft sighing-like noise to a kazoo-like buzzing, depending, in part, on the species of plant involved. While not the most immediately useful spell, it can act as a means of entertainment and as a distraction—sometimes, both.

In order to produce a simple tune, the caster must succeed at a combined Magic and Art/Craft (Music or Any Musical Instrument) skill roll when casting the spell; if the Art/Craft (Music or Any Musical Instrument) roll fails, only a single note is produced, as per usual. (For more details on combined skill rolls, see *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 322.)

This informal Newtonian spell, known to the witches of New Orleans (NOW) as *Musique des Feuilles*, is based on enchantments used by Indigenous African traditions. It utilises the base *forma viridis*, which anchors any following *formae* into plants or plant-based materials, such as wood, bamboo, and some types of paper—but not fungi, which require a different *forma*. Learning this spell therefore also confers training in *viridis*, which, sadly, doesn't do all that much on its own.

Boost: each additional magic point spent allows the caster to choose one of the following:

- Increase the size of the plant affected by 1 metre/yard; for example, for a total cost of 4 magic points, a caster can enchant a tree or bush up to 2 metres/yards in height. (**Note:** spending an additional magic point does not cause an already enchanted plant to grow any taller—that's a different spell altogether.)
- Increase the number of plants of the same size that are enchanted by +1.
- Add an additional melody in order to produce complex chords and/or harmonies.
- Prior to the end of the spell's duration, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell for another 5 minutes.

As you might expect, this spell is hard to do well—at least if you want to produce something pleasant to listen to. Failing to cast the spell correctly causes a discordant, high-pitched squealing noise, guaranteed to attract attention. Fumbling the casting roll, or failing a pushed roll, causes the plant to explode through excessive vibration, causing 2 damage to anyone within a radius of 3 metres/yards, unless they **dive for cover** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 128).

…or that time you enchanted a tree in Kew Gardens to sing the "Flower Duet" from Lakmé*?*
—The Masquerades of Spring

Casus Levis

Prerequisite: Shield.

Also known as Light Fall, this *aer*-based spell was developed by Casterbrook students in the 18th century, although similar spells are found in other traditions. As the name suggests, it cushions the caster's fall, meaning they suffer less damage on landing. Sadly, although people have been tinkering with it for hundreds of years, they still haven't made it work any better than its current form.

The basic spell reduces damage from any fall by 1; for example, someone falling 3 metres/yards onto grass would suffer zero damage, while someone falling from the same height onto concrete would suffer 1 damage (see *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 149, for standard fall damage).

Boost: additional magic points can be spent to make the spell more effective:

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 4 magic points): reduce damage from any fall by 2.
- **Each additional magic point spent**: reduce damage from any fall by a further point.

Example: *Gussie leaps from the balcony of the Roxy Palace onto the stage below—a drop of 6 metres/yards. Falling onto a sprung surface like the stage would inflict 1 damage per 3 metres/yards fallen, for a total of 2 damage. His player spends a total of 4 magic points (basic cost for a third-order spell, plus a 1 magic point boost) to reduce the damage to zero.*

They then make a Magic roll to cast the spell. Even with a bonus die for mastery, the roll fails.

Gussie's player spends Luck points to turn the roll into a success, and announces that, although Gussie suffers no damage, his landing isn't the best; he snaps the heel off his shoe, loses his balance, and ends up in an undignified heap on the stage. Thankfully, only his pride—and his shoe—is injured.

No wizard has figured out a way to fly yet, but there are a couple of spells a chap might use in extremis *to break his fall… It sort of thickens the air near the ground, so that it slows one's fall just prior to impact. Timing is crucial or you break a shin bone—or worse.*
—The Masquerades of Spring

Ianua Adhaeresco

Prerequisites: Treaclefoot.

A favourite of those wishing to evade pursuers, *Ianua adhaeresco* sticks a door to its surrounding frame, thus preventing entry or exit via the sealed doorway. As it includes the base *forma viridis*, it acts specifically on doors and frames made from plant-based materials, such as wood. While it should be theoretically possible to adapt the spell to work on doors and frames made from plastic, metal, and/or glass, nobody has yet found a suitable combination of *formae* and *inflectentes* to do so effectively.

The base spell acts on a typically sized single door and lasts for 5 minutes. A door stuck with *Ianua adhaeresco* can only be opened with magic, using spells such as *Impello vibrato* or Grasping Hand, or with a Hard STR roll; particularly solid wooden doors also require some form of manual battering ram, such as the Metropolitan Police Service's "big red key," aka the Enforcer.

Boost: additional magic points can be spent to alter the size of door affected:

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 4 magic points): doubles the size of door that can be affected (e.g., a double door).
- **+2 magic points** (total cost of 5 magic points): doubles the size of door that can be affected again (e.g., the main door into a cathedral or castle).
- Prior to the end of the spell's duration, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell for another 5 minutes.

Sagum Umbrarum

Prerequisites: Flash Bulb or Werelight + Shield.

Known by the New Orleans Witches as *Ombres Sourdez*, this very subtle spell is based on *lux*, *aer*, and *congolare*. The simplest version thickens the shadows within a roughly human-sized volume, centred on the caster. In normal lighting conditions, it merely looks odd—as if the caster has stepped out of a poorly-lit photograph. In dim lighting conditions it can, within reason, obscure the caster completely, meaning this spell is really only useful where shadows are plentiful.

According to Peter Grant's latest experiments, it reduces the number of photons that escape from the affected area, but the mechanism is still obscure. Once cast, the spell's effect lasts as long as the caster maintains their concentration or 5 minutes, whichever lapses first.



Boost: additional magic points can be spent to expand the spell's effects:

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 4 magic points): the shadow thickening extends around one other person, as long as they are within arm's reach of the caster (within 1 metre/yard).
- **+2 magic points** (total cost of 5 magic points): the shadow thickening expands to conceal up to four people, as long as they are within the same 2-metre/yard-wide zone as the caster.
- **+3 magic points** (total cost of 6 magic points): the shadows can now conceal a small car or something of equivalent size, as long as the caster is either inside it or standing immediately next to it.
- **+4 magic points** (total cost of 7 magic points): the caster thickens shadows not around themselves but around a roughly human-sized object within a 10-metre/yard line of sight.
- Prior to the end of the spell's duration, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell for another 5 minutes or until the caster's concentration fails, whichever occurs first.

I felt, rather than heard, Nightingale whisper a long complicated spell and experienced a dashed strange sensation, as if the air were thickening around me. I glanced to the left and right and saw that the shadows which concealed us had grown thicker and darker.
—The Masquerades of Spring

Sarte Taillis

Prerequisite: Fireball.

Also known as Slash and Burn. Part of the New Orleans/French Creole tradition, it is thought to be a development of a ritual spell used in West Africa to help clear fields for slash and burn agriculture. Consisting of the *viridis*, *lux*, and *impello formae*, the spell only directly affects unprocessed plant material, i.e., not plant-derived fabrics, paper, doors, furniture, etc.; it also doesn't directly affect animals. The indirect effects, though…

The caster must be at point-blank range (3 metres/yards) or less and able to see the vegetation they wish to burn. If successfully cast, the spell sets fire to a 2 metre/yard radius of living and/or dead plants, which continues to burn until those plants are fully consumed. Any person or creature within that radius suffers Minor to Severe damage (**Other Forms of Damage**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 149) per round until they remove themselves from the area and douse the flames. The level of damage is determined by the scale of the foliage they are surrounded by; for example, Minor if surrounded by short dry grass, Severe if surrounded

By Any Other Name…

The NOW aren't the only witches with their own names for spells. The Night Witches (*Nochnye Koldunyi*)[1] also have their own alternatives, two of which are presented here.

Table 6: Night Witch Spell Names

Newtonian Spell Name	Night Witch Official Spell Name	Official Acronym	Night Witch Colloquial Spell Name	Colloquial Acronym
Sagum umbrarum	*Плащ теней* (Plashch teney; Cloak of Shadows)	ПТ (pt)	*Шинель* (Shinel'; Overcoat)	Ш (sh)
Winter's Breath	*Дыхание зимы* (Dykhnaiye zimy; Breath of Winter)	ДЗ (dz)	*Сибирский бриз* (Sibirsky briz; Siberian Breeze)	*сибриз* (SiBriz), *СБ* (esbe)

Footnote: [1]*Night Witch*

by trees. Damage to any non-living objects, such as vehicles, is at the GM's discretion but should be suitably dramatic as befits the situation.

A fumble or a failed pushed roll when casting the spell causes an explosive fireball of boiling plant sap, burning leaves, etc., inflicting Deadly damage (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 149) on anyone caught within the spell's area of effect.

Boost: each additional magic point spent increases the radius by 1 metre/yard.

In front, down at street level, were the blackened husks of two burned-out vehicles, one a pickup truck and the other the Toyota that I'd signed the papers for that morning.
—Winter's Gifts

ADDITIONAL RULES



Indigenous peoples also traditionally used this spell to clear dead brush, etc., as part of their forest/land management activities. If the GM wishes, as an alternative to the standard boost effect, the caster may spend 1 additional magic point to gain finer control over the spell by adding extra *inflectentes*, meaning they set only dead plants on fire, leaving any living plants unscathed. A failed roll while casting this variant sets all plants within the affected area on fire, while a fumble or a failed pushed roll has the same consequences as previously described.

"I don't know what the Groundskeeper or the Headmaster are going to say about the "enchanting" burnt patch you have created on the front lawn, Master Nightingale. And this, young man, is a fundamental lesson in why we rake the leaves here at Casterbrook."

Winter's Breath

Prerequisites: Glitter Bomb or Ice Blast.

Causes a small volume of air to suddenly lose heat energy. Historically used by the bright young things of the Folly to chill their drinks on a hot summer's day or cool their fevered brows while in the tropics. However, the *Nochnye Koldunyi* (night witches) put it to far more sinister use on the Eastern Front during World War II, having discovered that suddenly and dramatically decreasing the air temperature around someone's head led to immediate and violent bronchospasm (narrowing of the airways in the lungs), causing the target to cough themselves to death. While not the quietest way to kill Axis sentries, it certainly worked as a lethal distraction technique.

By varying which *inflectentes* they use, the caster has the choice of one of three options when deploying the base spell:

- Cooling the air within a 10-cm (4-inch) diameter sphere by 30 degrees Celsius (54 degrees Fahrenheit) from its starting temperature.
- Cooling the air within a 20-cm (8-inch) diameter sphere by 20 degrees C (36 degrees F) from its starting temperature.
- Cooling the air within a 30-cm (12-inch) diameter sphere by 10 degrees C (18 degrees F) from its starting temperature.

The energy is transferred to the air surrounding the globe; a successful Observation roll notices a slight shimmer in the air around the sphere as a result. The sphere moves with the object it is cast on and lasts for 5 minutes. The lowest temperature the air within it can be reduced to is –30 degrees C (–22 degrees F).

To cause bronchospasm severe enough to cause harm, the caster must create a 30-cm (12-inch) sphere centred on the target's head *and* reduce the sphere's internal temperature to at least zero degrees C (32 degrees F). Depending on the weather conditions, this may be possible without the need to boost the spell. The larger the temperature drop, the more damage the spell causes.

Table 7: Damage Level Inflicted by Relative Temperature Drop

Temperature Drop (degrees C/degrees F)*	Damage Level
10 (18)	Moderate
20 (36)	Severe
30 (54)	Deadly
40 (72)	Terminal
50+ (90+)	Splat

***Remember:** the change in temperature must reduce the air inside the sphere to at least zero degrees C (32 degrees F) to have an effect. For example, if the ambient air temperature is 20 degrees C (68 degrees F), the caster would need to spend 4 magic points (base cost 3 magic points plus 1 for an additional 10-degree C/18-degree F drop) to get the air temperature low enough to cause bronchospasm. As the change is sudden and quite dramatic, the damage caused by the ensuing violent coughing is Severe (**Other Forms of Damage**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 149).

Fumbling the spell, or failing a pushed roll, has the exact opposite effect of heating the air within the sphere by the corresponding amount.



Boost: each additional magic point spent allows the caster to choose one of the following:

- Increase the diameter of the sphere by 10 cm (4 inches). The largest diameter the sphere can be expanded to is 30 cm (12 inches)—more than large enough to contain a human head.
- Decrease the temperature within the sphere by a further 10 degrees C (18 degrees F).
- Extend the effect for a further 5 minutes.

Fifth Order Spells

Crocker Process, The

Prerequisite: *Impello* (mastered).

Another of the many informal Society of the Wise spells developed by junior members during their time at Casterbrook. Legend goes that its creator was a scholarship boy named Crocker, whose parents were in the Manchester rag trade (clothing/fashion industry). His attempts to create a useful tailoring spell that neatly pulls garments apart at the seams subsequently saw far greater use as a means of nigh-instantaneously disrobing someone. The act of disrobement is called "Crockering," while the victim is said to have been "Crockered."

The spell only works on clothes that are being worn. It is speculated that it requires a strong morphological field to provide smooth contours for the force doing the ripping. (*Or some completely different reason that we haven't spotted yet*—Peter Grant.) While, theoretically, it should be possible to Crocker more than one person at a time, nobody has found the right combination of *formae* to achieve this yet.

The caster must be within point-blank range (3 metres/yards) and line of sight for the spell to work. The base spell undoes enough seams on **visible** clothing to remove one garment, e.g., a jacket or pair of trousers.

Boost: additional magic points can be spent to expand the spell's effects:

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 6 magic points): unpicks enough seams to completely remove two visible garments.

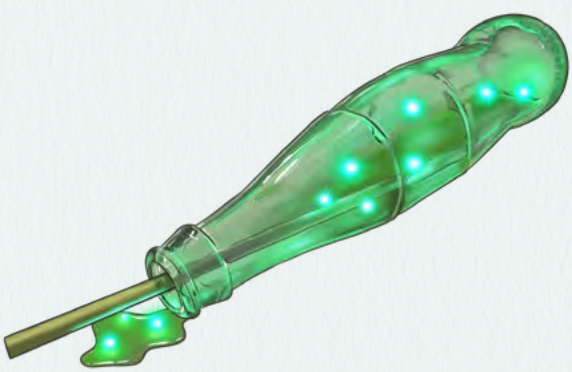
- **+2 magic points** (total cost of 7 magic points): permits the complete removal of all of the target's visible clothing.

I've also had it cast on me, so I happened to know for a fact that the victim of the spell is aware, for just a moment, of the sense of thousands of little fingers sliding along their bare skin. That part is not nearly as much fun as it sounds…
—The Masquerades of Spring

Reminder: Consent

Crockering, like *Seducere* and *Vox imperante*, could be used to affect investigators and NPCs in ways that players and GMs may find embarrassing and unwelcome. This is the reason why the spell, as written, only affects the visible clothes a person is wearing, not all of their clothing. However, that doesn't stop someone with sufficient magic points from casting it again to completely disrobe a target, depending on how many layers they have on.

As discussed on page 190 of *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* (**Important: Consent**), the GM and their players should determine what they consider to be acceptable usage of this spell in their game, so that no one is made to feel targeted, uncomfortable, or unsafe by its inclusion.





Appendix C: New Creatures

This appendix contains profiles for a new creature, an example of how a malignancy can manifest in creature form, and a new member of the demi-monde that may also be used as an investigator, with the GM's permission.

Talking Raccoons

Like their British equivalents, the talking foxes (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 253), North America's talking raccoons are approximately one-quarter larger and one-third heavier than their common cousins, *Procyon lotor*. However, their origins are very different to those of Abigail's colleagues, as is their operational remit (**How We Came to Speak Again**, page 181). Their paws are also far more dextrous than a fox's, so they are capable of getting up to all kinds of mischief that a fox would need human assistance for.

Talking raccoons act as the re-emerging *genii locorum's* eyes and ears, watching humans for any signs that a repeat of the genocidal campaigns of the past are in the making. Like talking foxes, they can be helpful or obstructive, depending on an investigator's motives and behaviour towards the animals and their patrons.

The only place you won't find raccoons, talking or otherwise, is in Alaska—they are not native to the state and all attempts to introduce them for the fur trade failed.

Talking Raccoon, *an example*

STR 20 **CON** 40 **DEX** 90 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 80
Advantages: Natural Toughness, Silver-Tongued.

Skills
Athletics 80%, Navigate 50%, Observation 80%, Read Person 60%, Research 50%, Sense Vestigia 80%, Social 80%, Stealth 80%; Raid Trash 90%, Sleight of Hand 70%; Bite 50%.

Languages
Other (e.g., Cree, English, Navajo, Ojibwe, Salish, etc.) 60%, Own (Raccoon) 60%.

Malignancies & Despairs

But even those misty-eyed nature lovers of the untrammelled mountain peaks recognised that magic could imbue nature with a hostile spirit, one that actively sought to kill, maim and destroy.
—The October Man

To quote the Director of the *Abteilung KDA*, *"… a despair will suck you in, but a malignancy is coming to get you."*[1] — meaning, a despair is a hostile spirit that remains in one place and doesn't change with time, while a malignancy always expands its effects beyond its starting point.

Malignancies and despairs have no fixed form. They can manifest as anything from an inanimate object to a plant or an animal, including people, e.g., revenants and vampires, as

BEN SAYS

Basically, malignancies and despairs are runaway magical effects. However, it's a bit more complicated than that. To understand how a malignancy forms, it's important to know that magic comes in various "flavours"—for example, the human flavour, e.g., what practitioners do or the *vestigia* that gets laid down at the sites of massacres, and the environmental flavour, e.g., what the rivers do. If you want to get all physics-y, think of each flavour as a different magic wavelength or electron state.

A malignancy or despair usually starts off as a human-derived magical effect that flips to a different state, e.g., environmental—all very quantum mechanics. The change in state forms a kernel of power which then grows. Even at this stage, it's not guaranteed that the result will be malign. It's a random effect, like grit in an oyster—rarely, that grit leads to a pearl; most times, it doesn't. Now, in the Rivers of London world, that pearl may turn into a *genius loci*, a benign expression of that power in the grand scheme of things, or it may develop into a full-blown malignancy or despair.

Footnote: [1]*The October Man*

How We Came to Speak Again

When the men in the tall ships arrived, we knew they were trouble. We know a trickster when we see one. We, more than any other animal of the forests, knew humans and what they would do to each other when they believed each other to be so very different. We did not know how bad it would get.

More and more of the tall ship people came from their home in the east. We watched as they warred with the ones already here, the battles so fierce we lost count of the dead on both sides. The wisest among us saw opportunity, though, a trick that only we could play.

While the Star People were gone, the River People, who were nearly their equals in power, remained. The River People wanted nothing to do with the newcomers, so, to protect themselves, they receded from the humans, easterner and local alike. The only way to be sure was to keep hidden. Yet we knew the River People; they were as curious as they were cautious, and they would bargain for secrets.

Our wise ones followed the ancient protocols and came to the River People first with gifts of food, beads, and tools stolen from the newcomers. The River People, too, remembered the old ways and they listened. Our elders reminded the River People how closely we had always lived with the humans, right within their villages—so closely that they hardly noticed us. From this position we could learn the humans' schemes and see that the River People knew them as well.

Following traditions, the River People acknowledged the gifts and asked what they could offer in return. Not to seem too eager, our elders acted surprised, as if they did not know what we might have use of. Many offerings were brought up, but then dismissed. An offering of fish would keep us away from the humans and so spoil our gift. An offering of beauty might make the humans take greater notice of us, which was no good. Then, as if struck by sudden inspiration, one of the wise suggested we would be better able to share the humans secrets… if we once again had the power of speech.

The River People were hesitant—this gift would cost them greatly, and it would upset an old balance. The gambit had been played, however, and our elders each in turn agreed that we would make much better spies if only we could speak again. The River People realised they were trapped by the protocol; if they did not make this offer, they would bring on themselves great shame.

Able to speak again, our wise elders went back out into the world and taught their kin, and we have made good on their promises. We watch the humans, and we report back.

Occasionally we loot vending machines, but only when we have to.

And so our pact is not forgotten.

well as composite creatures, such as snow monsters[2]. Despairs are more common than malignancies, although both are, thankfully, quite rare. You're less likely to notice a despair, though, as you can walk away from it—unless you know what you've wandered into, you'll usually just feel really miserable while you're in one. More importantly, you don't take the effect away with you when you leave.

The best way to deal permanently with a malignancy or a despair is to find its point of origin—its core—and destroy it. Fire is usually the best option; fire-based spells, such as Fireball, or physical options such as a flamethrower or a white phosphorous grenade or two, never come in wrong[3]; gas explosions are also known to work in a pinch[4]. Once the core has been destroyed, any extensions of the malignancy usually disintegrate.

The power levels of a malignancy or despair vary greatly but can reach those of a well-established *genius loci*, given time. Any extension of a malignancy, such as a snow monster (following), is dangerous but not usually as powerful on its own as the force creating it. Just as a *genius loci's* powers diminish the greater the distance they are from their home territory, a malignancy can only extend its powers so far (**Table 8: Malignancy Control**

Footnotes: [2, 4]*Winter's Gifts*, [3]*Rivers of London*

Range, following), meaning that the farther away an extension is from its source, the weaker it becomes and the easier it is to destroy. The malignancy can, of course, dissolve any such extensions at will.

Table 8: Malignancy Control Range

Malignancy Strength	Control Range
Weak	Up to 1 km (0.6 miles)
Strong	Up to 2 km (1.2 miles)
Extremely Strong[5]	Up to 4 km (2.5 miles)

Snow Monsters

A malignancy-powered conglomeration of plants and flesh—human or animal—melded into a gruesome parody of a living creature and held together with snow. Examples witnessed in Eloise, Wisconsin[6], included an eyeless, man-sized "decaying snowman with antlers" with a spike-filled slit for a mouth and a four-legged dog-like creature with a huge, gaping, leech's maw. Basically, the stuff of nightmares.

Should the GM wish to use similar creatures in warmer climes, such as Louisiana or Florida, simply substitute mud for snow and turn them into swamp monsters—a potential source of southern bigfoot-like sightings, perhaps?

Snow Monster, *an example*

STR 80 **CON** 70 **DEX** 40 **INT** 20 **POW** 60
DB: +1 **MOV:** 7 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 60
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.
Disadvantages: susceptible to intense heat (flamethrower, phosphorous grenades, etc.).

Skills
Athletics 40%, Navigate 60%, Sense Vestigia 60%; Track 60%; Fighting 70%.

Languages
None.

Powers
Luck of the Demi-monde.

Vestigia
Variable, but usually displays elements of the powering malignancy's *vestigia*, along with the stench of rotting vegetation and flesh—although that may be an actual smell rather than a *vestigium* in most cases.



Footnote: [5,6] *Winter's Gifts*

Special: Susceptibility to Intense Heat
When a being that is susceptible to intense heat suffers harm caused by fire (or heat), the damage is increased by 1 (so the base Fireball spell would do 2 damage rather than 1 damage, etc.). As all such creatures contain dead plants, they are also susceptible to the NOW spell **Sarte Taillis** (page 176), which inflicts the same damage as Fireball. Flamethrowers inflict Deadly rather than Severe damage (**Other Forms of Damage**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 149). Likewise, phosphorous grenades cause Splat damage.

All other weapons inflict a maximum of 1 damage against these creatures per combat encounter (**not** combat round)—a gunshot wound slows them down enough to allow the shooter and/or their companions to flee, but it isn't going to stop them completely. The only ways to do that are to burn them to ash, lure them beyond the malignancy's range of control so that they collapse into a soggy pile of their component parts, or destroy the malignancy's core.

Old Soldiers

'You've met Oberon and the Old Soldiers like him,' said Tyburn. 'You know what can happen when a lot of people get slaughtered in the same place. All that life has to go somewhere.'
—Lies Sleeping

Old Soldiers are a type of lower fae, perhaps the most famous of whom is Oberon[7], a former enslaved person who fought for the British during the American War of Independence (American Revolutionary War)[8]. Old Soldiers are a product of what historians refer to as linear warfare, where soldiers from opposing forces faced off against each other on a battlefield then slugged it out for anything up to a day until one side was declared the winner. This style of brutal and bloody warfare is ancient, but, due to changes in armaments and the way battles were fought, it died out over the course of the 19th century, one of its last major gasps being the American Civil War (1861–1865).

It takes a very specific set of circumstances to create an Old Soldier, and almost none have come into being since the dawn of the 20th century. The candidate must lie fallen on the battlefield, surrounded by the mass casualties of the battle in which they were mortally wounded. Dying slowly of their injuries, they must still be conscious at the point of death. More importantly, they must also be in a particular state of mind, having an acceptance of and openness to death. If all of these conditions are met, then an Old Soldier may be born. Or reborn, depending on how you want to look at it.

Old Soldiers—the name they give themselves—are quite rare. Most continued to fight in wars after the one in which they were created—for a while, at least. Most



Footnotes: [7]*Whispers Under Ground*, [8]*Detective Stories*



keep souvenirs or items from their original military service, e.g., Oberon's red jacket and infantry sword[9]. Existing Old Soldiers can sense the creation of a new one. They seek them out, as Oberon did with Andre Lemaitre at the Battle of Waterloo[10], so they can be inducted into the fraternity.

Old Soldiers are physically tough. If left to their own devices, they just keep on living; they also don't appear to age. However, they are not invulnerable, and they can be killed. As in the words of the song, Old Soldiers are also known to "fade away"—a staged psychological withdrawal from life; first from soldiering, then from civilian life, then from society as a whole. Most end up living as recluses on isolated islands or in remote parts of the world. Some, though, remain anchored to life, often through relationships, like Oberon and Effra[11]. Oberon also reckons that some stick around because they have unquiet memories or unfinished business—or are simply too beautiful to fade away[12]. Of course, he could just be making all of that up.

Old Soldier, *an example*

STR 60 **CON** 70 **DEX** 60 **INT** 50 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 50

Advantages: Natural Toughness, Signature Weapon (infantry sabre).

Disadvantages: Damaged, Hot-Headed.

Skills

Athletics 60%, Drive 40%, Navigate 40%, Observation 60%, Read Person 50%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; Survival 60%, Track 60%; Fighting 80%, Firearms 70%.

Languages

Own (e.g., English, French, German, etc.) 60%.

Powers

Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-Monde Affinity

Conflict (see page 185).

Vestigia

The smell of blood, the sound of a flint being struck, the bite of cold metal.

Playing an Old Soldier

The following sections deal with creating an investigator who is also an Old Soldier. While creating this type of fae investigator mostly follows the rules found in *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* Chapter 1 and pages 318–319, there are some exceptions.

Footnotes: [9]*Broken Homes*, [10,12]*Detective Stories*, [11]*Whispers Under Ground*

Occupations & Experience Packages

All Old Soldiers have the same occupation: Service Member (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 73).

However, because almost all Old Soldiers are well over 100 years old, they have had the opportunity to gain a wide variety of skills and experience over the course of their long lives. To reflect this, an Old Soldier investigator gains the Ex-Military Experience Package (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 310). The player may also select one of the following experience packages (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 310), appropriate to what their Old Soldier has spent the rest of their life doing:

- Academic Experience Package
- Criminal Experience Package (with the GM's approval)
- Paranormal Experience Package
- Police Experience Package

The player should use the required and recommended skills for both packages' listed occupations as a guide on where to spend their additional skill points during Step Four of character creation. As always, no skill may be raised above 80% by this method.

Advantages & Disadvantages

To reflect their general fortitude and longevity, it is strongly recommended that an Old Soldier chooses Natural Toughness (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 51) as one of their two starting minor advantages; the usual prerequisites apply.

As the Old Soldier has the benefit of two experience packages, they must also incur two disadvantages (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 311). To reflect the circumstances surrounding their rebirth, one of these disadvantages must be Damaged (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 311). The usual limits apply when selecting the second disadvantage.

Luck & Magic

As Old Soldiers are fae, their Luck value is equal to their POW and refreshes every day at a clearly defined time of the player's choosing. However, as lower fae, they cannot use the glamour (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 318). Being fae also means that an Old Soldier cannot cast spells and cannot take the Magical advantage during character creation. They begin the game with a starting Sense Vestigia skill value of 60% due to their inherently magical nature.

Relationships & Backstory

As an Old Soldier has presumably had a long and interesting life before they become an investigator, it's important that the player has some idea of where their character has been and what they've been up to in the time between their creation and when they begin play.

Instead of answering questions about the Old Soldier's childhood (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 56), the player may instead prefer to develop a brief outline of one or two incidents that helped define who they are now. Remember not to overdo it, though: leaving space to reveal elements of their experience during play may give rise to surprising and engaging revelations about the character's past that enrich the roleplaying experience.

Given what an Old Soldier is, the player should also answer the questions in the **Brush With the Supernatural** step (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 57). They may also have relationships within the demi-monde—friends, adversaries, potentially other Old Soldiers—as well as distant relatives or descendants who are most likely unaware of exactly who and what the Old Soldier is. The GM may wish to suggest NPCs the Old Soldier knows, as well as using characters from the Old Soldier's backstory in future case files.

An Old Soldier should also have one or two items kept as a memento of their military service, e.g., a piece of clothing, a hat, or a period-appropriate weapon of some sort.

Demi-Monde Affinity

An Old Soldier's affinity is conflict; after all, its aftermath is why they exist. While a fae investigator cannot use their affinity to directly inflict damage (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 319), the Old Soldier's talents can be used to indirectly cause it through their manipulation of (potential) conflict situations.

- **Everyday manifestation:** cause an existing argument between two minor NPCs or bystanders to escalate into pushing and shoving. Often used as a distraction technique (5 Luck points).
- **Significant manifestation:** cause peaceful minor NPCs or bystanders to erupt into full-on physical violence. Particularly handy for causing small-scale fracas involving up to six people, such as a barroom brawl or a canteen food fight (20 Luck points).

Old Soldiers, like Quiet People, give off *vestigia* when they use their thematic powers. The player can use the *vestigium* presented on page 184, or they can follow the rules for creating an investigator's *signare* (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 164), either choosing appropriate elements from the *signare* table or rolling for them. The third element of an Old Soldier's *vestigium* should always be the smell of blood.


Seattle
Olympia
WASHINGTON
Salem
OREGON
MONTANA
Helena
IDAHO
Boise
NORTH DAKOTA
Bismarck
SOUTH DAKOTA
Pierre
WYOMING
Cheyenne
NEVADA
Carson City
Sacramento
Salt Lake City
UTAH
Denver
COLORADO
Lincoln
NEBRASKA
KANSAS
CALIFORNIA
Los Angeles
ARIZONA
Phoenix
Santa Fe
NEW MEXICO
Oklahoma City
OKLAHOMA
TEXAS
Austin
Houston
ALASKA
Juneau
Honolulu
HAWAII
MARSHAL
US
TOMBSTONE
AZ
0 200 km
0 200 mi
0 100 km
0 100 mi


NEW HAMPSHIRE
VERMONT
MAINE
Augusta
Montpelier
Concord
MASSACHUSETTS
Albany
Boston
NEW YORK
RHODE ISLAND
Providence
Hartford
CONNECTICUT
PENNSYLVANIA
Philadelphia
New York
NEW JERSEY
Trenton
Harrisburg
DELAWARE
Dover
Annapolis
MARYLAND
WASHINGTON D.C.
St. Paul
WISCONSIN
MICHIGAN
Madison
Lansing
IOWA
Des Moines
Chicago
ILLINOIS
OHIO
Columbus
Springfield
Indianapolis
Jefferson City
INDIANA
WEST VIRGINIA
Frankfort
Charleston
Charlottesville
Richmond
VIRGINIA
KENTUCKY
MISSOURI
Raleigh
NORTH CAROLINA
Nashville
TENNESSEE
ARKANSAS
SOUTH CAROLINA
Atlanta
Columbia
Little Rock
MISSISSIPPI
ALABAMA
Montgomery
Jackson
GEORGIA
Baton Rouge
Tallahassee
LOUISIANA
New Orleans
FLORIDA
Miami
THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
0 200 km 400 km
100 km 300 km
0 200 mi
100 mi 300 mi

Appendix D: The Weird and Wonderful US of A

The following key accompanies the Weird and Wonderful United States of America map. The cryptids mentioned may or may not exist in both our world and that of the *Rivers of London* and are presented here purely to spark the GM's imagination.

If a state has no cryptid listed, assume it either has a lake monster or a bigfoot-type creature—there's a lot of them about!

Table 9: The Weird and Wonderful Cryptid Key

State	Name (Location)	Description
Alabama	The Wolf Woman (Mobile[1])	A rare female hybrid creature with the body of a wolf and a woman's head; she is even described in some reports as being pretty.
Alaska	The Kodiak Dinosaur (Kodiak Island)	An absolutely huge (60-metre/200-foot long) plesiosaur-type aquatic reptile with a long neck, blunt head, flippers, and a long, tapering tail.
Arkansas	Fouke Monster (Fouke)	A smelly and not very friendly bigfoot, 1.8–2.4 metres (6–8 feet) tall, with dark hair, long and thick hairy arms, and eyes "like coals of fire." It only has three toes on each of its feet.
California	The Abbey of New Clairvaux (Vina)	See page 62.
Colorado	Slide-Rock Bolter (Rocky Mountains)	A land whale with a hooked tail that it uses to hang off mountaintops, letting go only to whoosh down slopes to catch its prey. It has camouflaged and textured skin, small eyes, and a wide mouth, from which dribbles lots of saliva.

Footnote: [1]The city, not her ability to move about

Florida	Skunk Ape (Everglades)	Another stinky bigfoot-type creature, a heavy-set brown/red hairy hominid, 2.1–2.4 metres (7–8 feet) tall. May walk on its knuckles, like a gorilla, and has opposable thumbs.
Georgia	*Altamaha-Ha* (Darien)	A 6–9-metre (20–30-foot) long river monster with an alligator-like head/crocodile-like snout. Variously described as a grey-brown sea serpent or plesiosaur, with a bony ridge along its back and long, sharp teeth. It only has two limbs, though—a pair of flippers towards the front of its body.
Hawai'i	*Menehune* (Kauai)	Tiny engineers and architects, 0.6–0.9-metres (2–3-feet) tall, who get really miffed if you interrupt their work of an evening. They only work at night, so probably have large eyes.
Idaho	Sharlie (McCall)	Described as an 11-metre (35-foot) long water monster, with a dinosaur head, a large jaw, camel humps, and a shell-like skin, Sharlie is another plesiosaur-type creature. It was originally called Slimy Slim until its name was changed following a competition.
Illinois	Enfield Monster (Enfield)	A 1.2-metre (4-foot) tall creature with large pink eyes and three legs; each of its feet has five or six toes. It has an almost humanoid body and short, stubby arms, all covered in grey fur. It can also leap really far.
Indiana	The Beast of Busco (Churubusco)	Also known as "Oscar." A giant turtle, the size of a dining room table (1.8 metres (6 feet) long by 1.2 metres (5 feet) wide). Oscar's hypothesised origin story reads like Gojira's, only several years before the Gojira movie was shown in America.
Iowa	Van Meter Visitor (Van Meter)	A 2.4-metre (8-foot) tall, bat-winged, humanoid creature with a beak, three-toed feet, and a light-emitting horn on its head. Some reports mention that it came from an abandoned coal mine; others compare it to a pterodactyl, as it crawled along the ground on all fours.
Kansas	Sinkhole Sam (Inman)	A giant worm that lives in a lake created by a sinkhole; described as 4.5–9 metres (15–30 feet) in length, 0.5 metres (21 inches) thick, with a flat head.

State	Name (Location)	Description
Louisiana	Rougarou (SE Louisiana)	A 1.8–2.1-metre (6–7-foot) tall *loup-garou*, usually described as a dog- or wolf-headed human whose eyes glow. Sometimes also described as fully furred.
Maine	Specter Moose	An enormous, spectral, glowing white moose, 3–4.5-metres (10–15-feet) tall, with antlers 3–3.6 metres (10–12 feet) across—and with 22 tines on each antler!
Massachusetts	Bridgewater Triangle (between Abington, Rehoboth, and Freetown)	The site of all sorts of weird stuff, including ghosts, pukwudgies, thunderbirds, and bigfoot.
Massachusetts	Gloucester Sea Serpent (Gloucester)	A classic sea serpent, 18–30 metres (60–100 feet) in length and 0.9 metres (3 feet) thick. Described as "a long humpy thing" with a flattened, serpent-like head as big as a horse's; dark colouration, with a 1.2-metre (4-foot) long tongue. Allegedly musket ball-proof.
Michigan	Dogman (N Michigan)	2.1–2.4 metres (7–8 feet) tall. Various descriptions, including: a dog's head on a naked human body, a human face with a dog-like snout and paws instead of hands, and bipedal dogs. Always have blue or amber eyes.
Montana	Shunka Warak'in (Ennis)	Best described as a wolf/hyena-like thing with high shoulders and a slanted back, 1.2 metres (4 feet) long and 0.7 metres (28 inches) tall at the shoulder. Its stuffed remains are in a museum in Ennis.
Nebraska	Walgren Lake Monster (Hay Springs)	Formerly known as the Alkali Lake Monster. A smelly, huge (12-metre/40-feet long) alligator-like creature with a rhino horn between its eyes and nose.
New Jersey	The Jersey Devil (Pine Barrens)	A flying bipedal cryptid, with a (skeletal) horse face, horns (sometimes described as ram's horns), a long neck, bat wings, hooved feet, and a forked tail. Also described as "crane-like" by one eyewitness.
New York	Champ (Lake Champlain, between Vermont and NY)	A water monster, described as anything from a sea serpent to a plesiosaur, 4.5–15 metres (15–50 feet) in length. One eyewitness account described it as black, with a white star on its forehead and a band of crimson around its neck. It allegedly has a flat head and three teeth—two in the lower jaw, one in the upper. Large, white eyes (the colour of a peeled onion). Also described as a fish-tailed serpent. And it has humps, too!

North Carolina	Beast of Bladenboro (Bladenboro)	A large black cat-faced and cat-like creature with a grudge against dogs; most of its victims' corpses were drained of blood. Described as 0.9–1.5 metres (3–5 feet) long and weighing 40–68 kg (90–150 lbs). One hunter claims to have killed it and that it was a bobcat (red lynx).
North Dakota	Thunderbird	Adopted from Indigenous American legends; a giant terrifying bird with a wingspan of 21 metres (70 feet) who causes storms.
Ohio	Loveland Frogman (Loveland)	See page 62.
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Octopus (NE Oklahoma)	A giant freshwater octopus, 6 metres (20 feet) in length. Reddish brown, leathery skin.
Oregon	Giant Honey Fungus (Malheur National Forest, nr. Prairie City)	See page 62.
South Carolina	Lizard Man (Scape Ore Swamp, Bishopville)	A green, wet-looking, bipedal creature, about 2.1 metres (7 feet) tall, with red eyes, lizard-like skin and snake scales, with three fingers per hand.
Texas	Chupacabra	The chupacabra's description varies depending on whether you're talking about the original Puerto Rican one (a hunched reptilian thing with spikes down its back, glowing red eyes, and sharp fangs) or the Texan one (basically, a hairless blue dog).
Washington	Bigfoot	While hairy hominids pop up all over the US, the most sightings of the creature known as "Bigfoot" are reported in the Pacific Northwest, especially Washington State.
West Virginia	Mothman (Point Pleasant)	A 1.8–2.1-metre (6–7-foot) tall, humanoid/insect flying thing with wings that fold behind its back. Exactly what the wings look like varies between witness reports. The creature has two, glowing red, circular eyes; otherwise, it's reported as being grey in colour, with two human-like, muscular legs.
Wisconsin	Hodag (Rhinelander)	A green-furred creature, the size of a black bear, with two large fangs and matching horns, sharp claws, and bony spines/thorns all down its back and tail.
Wyoming	Jackalope (Douglas)	A jackrabbit with branching antlers on its head. See also page 57.



Appendix E: Bibliography & Resources

Detailed here is a range of useful source materials that could be of use to those playing *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, including books, graphic novels, films, television shows, and websites.

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Rivers of London
the Roleplaying Game

PORTRAIT

INVESTIGATOR INFO

Name _____

_____

Occupation _____

Place of Birth _____

Residence _____

Pronoun _____ Age _____

Affluence _____

Notes _____

_____

_____

CHARACTERISTICS

STRength _____/_____ (Full/Half)

CONstitution _____/_____ (Full/Half)

DEXterity _____/_____ (Full/Half)

INTelligence _____/_____ (Full/Half)

POWer _____/_____ (Full/Half)

SUPPLEMENTAL INFO

MOV _____

Luck _____/_____ (Starting/Current)

Magic Pts _____/_____ (Starting/Current)

ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

COMMON SKILLS

Athletics	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
Drive	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
Navigate	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
Observation	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
Read Person	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
Research	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
Sense Vestigia	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
Social	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
Stealth	_____/_____ (Full/Half)

EXPERT SKILLS

_____	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
_____	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
_____	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
_____	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
_____	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
_____	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
_____	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
_____	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
_____	_____/_____ (Full/Half)

COMBAT SKILLS

Fighting	_____/_____ (Full/Half)
Firearms	_____/_____ (Full/Half)

DAMAGE

- ☐ Hurt
- ☐ Bloodied
- ☐ Down
- ☐ Impaired

WEAPONS

_____/_____ (Full)/_____ (Half)/_____ (Damage)/_____ (Range)

_____/_____ (Full)/_____ (Half)/_____ (Damage)/_____ (Range)

_____/_____ (Full)/_____ (Half)/_____ (Damage)/_____ (Range)

_____/_____ (Full)/_____ (Half)/_____ (Damage)/_____ (Range)

_____/_____ (Full)/_____ (Half)/_____ (Damage)/_____ (Range)

_____/_____ (Full)/_____ (Half)/_____ (Damage)/_____ (Range)

MAGIC SPELLS

☐ _____/_____ (Order/Name)

☐ _____/_____ (Order/Name)

☐ _____/_____ (Order/Name)

☐ _____/_____ (Order/Name)

☐ _____/_____ (Order/Name)

☐ _____/_____ (Order/Name)

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NAME

OCCUPATION

CONTACTS

Name / Relationship ☐ Secure ☐ Sour

Name / Relationship ☐ Secure ☐ Sour

Name / Relationship ☐ Secure ☐ Sour

Name / Relationship ☐ Secure ☐ Sour

Name / Relationship ☐ Secure ☐ Sour

Name / Relationship ☐ Secure ☐ Sour

Name / Relationship ☐ Secure ☐ Sour

Name / Relationship ☐ Secure ☐ Sour

SIGNARE

MAGIC SPELLS

☐ Order / Name

☐ Order / Name

☐ Order / Name

BACKSTORY

EQUIPMENT

CASE FILES

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Helena Nash

Helena has been tabletop roleplaying since 1981 and has died on paper many times at the hands of formless horrors, faerie knights, and at least once by explosive decompression. She has written adventures for the *Call of Cthulhu*, *RuneQuest*, *Dune*, and *Conan* RPGs. Helena is one of the original developers of the cult film and television game *7TV*, created the official roleplaying game of Robert Rankin's Brentford books, and wrote a Choose Your Own Dinner Party gamebook combining elements of a Mike Leigh play and an Alfred Hitchcock film. She has written articles for Hugo-nominated fanzine *Journey Planet* and the popular *Scarred for Life* books. She currently lives in Hertfordshire by the River Lea, about 30 miles north of Mama Thames as the duck paddles, with her wife, small dog, and far too many comic books.



Lynne Hardy

A multi-award-winning games designer, Lynne discovered roleplaying games at university thanks to—of all things—American football. A few years later, a cheeky letter to Wizards of the Coast got her into the gaming industry and there she's stayed, on and off, for the last few decades. Over that time, she's worked for Nightfall Games, Pelgrane Press, Cubicle 7, Modiphius, and Green Ronin, amongst numerous others, either as a writer, editor, or both. She also created her own steampunk pulp adventure game: *Cogs, Cakes & Swordsticks*. Lynne is rather fond of tea, books, and fountain pens, along with the occasional G&T. When she's not beavering away at the day job as Line Editor of *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, she gives talks and workshops on traditional hand embroidery techniques.



Adam Gauntlett

Hi! I'm Adam, and I'm a nut for film, crime novels, and magic. I've written fiction, games journalism, horror, and RPG stuff for the likes of Pelgrane Press, Stygian Fox, and, of course, Chaosium. My tendrils spread out from the island of Bermuda, where I lie in wait for the end of days. I can be bribed with cheesecake. Almost any kind of cheesecake. *Rivers of London* was the first I'd heard of Ben Aaronovitch, and I quickly converted to Aaronovitchism, establishing a small shrine of books and graphic collections. My cat regularly sacrifices lizards in front of this sacred fane, though I do my best to stop them as lizards are bad for cats and the sacred fane.



Anna Urbanek

Anna is a graphic designer by trade, a librarian by education, and a folklorist by heart's demand. As a part of the Double Proficiency team, she has been fortunate to provide layout and graphic design for such tabletop roleplaying and board games as *Starport RPG*, *Adventure Tactics*, *Old-School Essentials*, *Gangs of the Undercity*, *Inspirisles*, *Asunder*, *The Lost Citadel*, *Earthdawn*, and many more. Whenever she finds the time, she collaborates with her partner on writing, editing, designing, and illustrating in-house projects, like *Herbalist's Primer*, a collection of encounter decks known as *Wayfarer's Decks*, and the upcoming strategy tabletop RPG, *Aphelion Toolkit*.

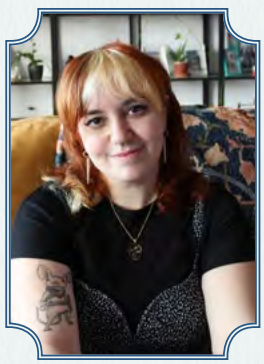
Outside of work, Anna is a reclusive witch hiding in the middle of a Finnish forest with a partner, a wolf-like dog, two cat familiars, and a couple of mini humans. She busies herself with researching obscure and arcane topics, embroidering 8th century clothing replicas, playing *Shadowrun*, and studying world mythologies and folk stories. Powered by the glories of coffee and pistachios, she wages an eternal (and losing) battle with the cats to keep at least one houseplant alive. Her current life goal is to befriend the local murder of ravens.



Artist: Emma Bickell (@spookynest)

Meredith Katz

Meredith Katz (she/they) is an author, editor, and game designer who lives in Edmonton, Alberta with their lovely wife. She usually writes LGBT+ sci-fi, fantasy, and horror, and is best known for her novella *The Cybernetic Tea Shop*, about a robot and her ace AI technician falling in love. They've done editing work for companies such as Darrington Press, Catalyst Game Labs, Bully Pulpit Games, and (of course) Chaosium. Her original short TTRPGs include *Came Back... Wrong?*, a game about trying to pretend everything's normal after bringing a lover back from the grave, and *Body/Horror*, a *Lasers & Feelings* hack about monsters solving problems while failing to pass as human. She started gaming at age 8 when her stepdad invited all the kids to a game of *AD&D 2e* (elf thief all the way!), and has never looked back. Find them at www.softcryptid.com.



Fleur Sciortino

Fleur Sciortino (she/her) is a freelance illustrator and designer who currently works in the Tabletop RPG industry, running her own independent publishing house "The Wanderer's Tome." Her first game *Flabbergasted*, co-written with her sister, was nominated for 3 ENnie awards. Fleur has previously worked in a number of fields including book and board game publishing, video game development, animation, and storyboarding for film, as well as on multiple design agency projects. Her work has appeared in many international publications, and she has worked with clients such as Penguin Random House and Scholastic.



Derek Pounds

Derek has been obsessed with RPGs before he even knew what they were, cutting his teeth on the *Dungeons & Dragons* cartoon and *Choose Your Own Adventure* books. Derek started writing professionally in 2020 and has since had the honor of writing, developing, and editing for *7th Sea* 2nd Edition, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, and the Nebula Award nominated *Coyote & Crow*. A citizen of the Samish Indian Nation, Derek is obsessed with the oral traditions of Indigenous communities. When he's not running or playing RPGs, Derek is a stay-at-home father, a supportive husband, and a student of Native American Studies at The Evergreen State College in their Native Pathways Program.



Çağdaş Demiralp

Hi, I'm Çağdaş Demiralp, a professional artist with a deep passion for creating fantasy-themed art. I was born in İzmir, Turkey, and now live in Warsaw, Poland. Fantasy universes and games have fascinated me for as long as I can remember, and drawing has been a part of my life since childhood. To turn that passion into a career, I earned a Bachelor of Arts in Cartoon and Animation and later sharpened my skills at Watts Atelier of the Arts.

Since 2019, I've worked as a freelance artist, focusing mainly on book covers, character designs, and detailed illustrations, particularly in the fantasy genre. I'm hardworking and always up for a challenge, constantly striving to become a better artist than I was the day before. Aside from my art, I'm also a gamer, comic book reader, punk guitarist, and a huge fan of *The Lord of the Rings*. These interests fuel my creativity and keep me inspired as I continue to push myself and grow in my artistic journey.

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the Roleplaying Game

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A Guide to Case Files in the USA

"Nightingale had told me there was a whole tradition of American wizardry, more than just one in fact…"

—Ben Aaronovitch, *Whispers Under Ground*



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