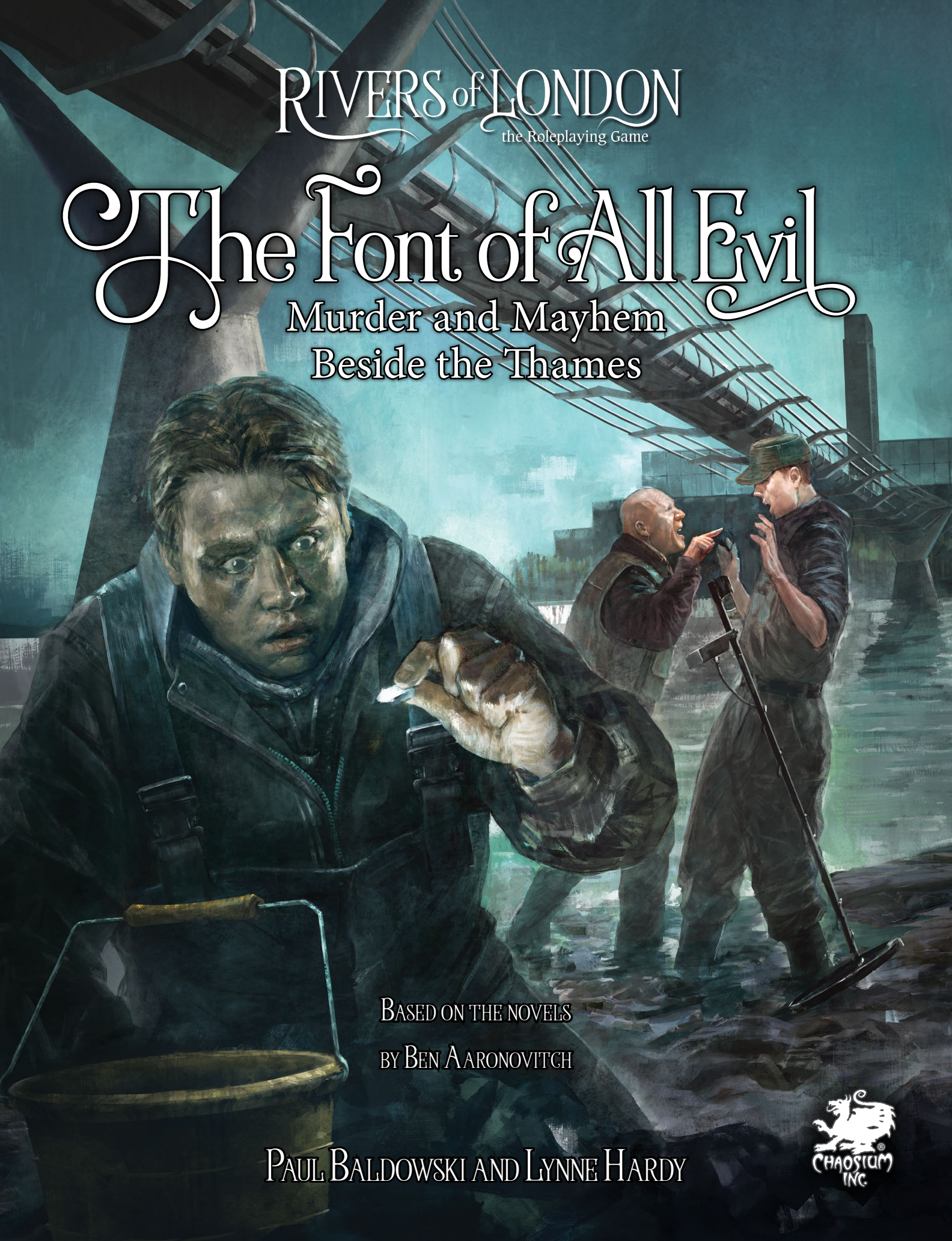




RIVERS of LONDON
the Roleplaying Game

The Font of All Evil

Murder and Mayhem
Beside the Thames

BASED ON THE NOVELS

BY BEN AARONOVITCH

PAUL BALDOWSKI AND LYNNE HARDY



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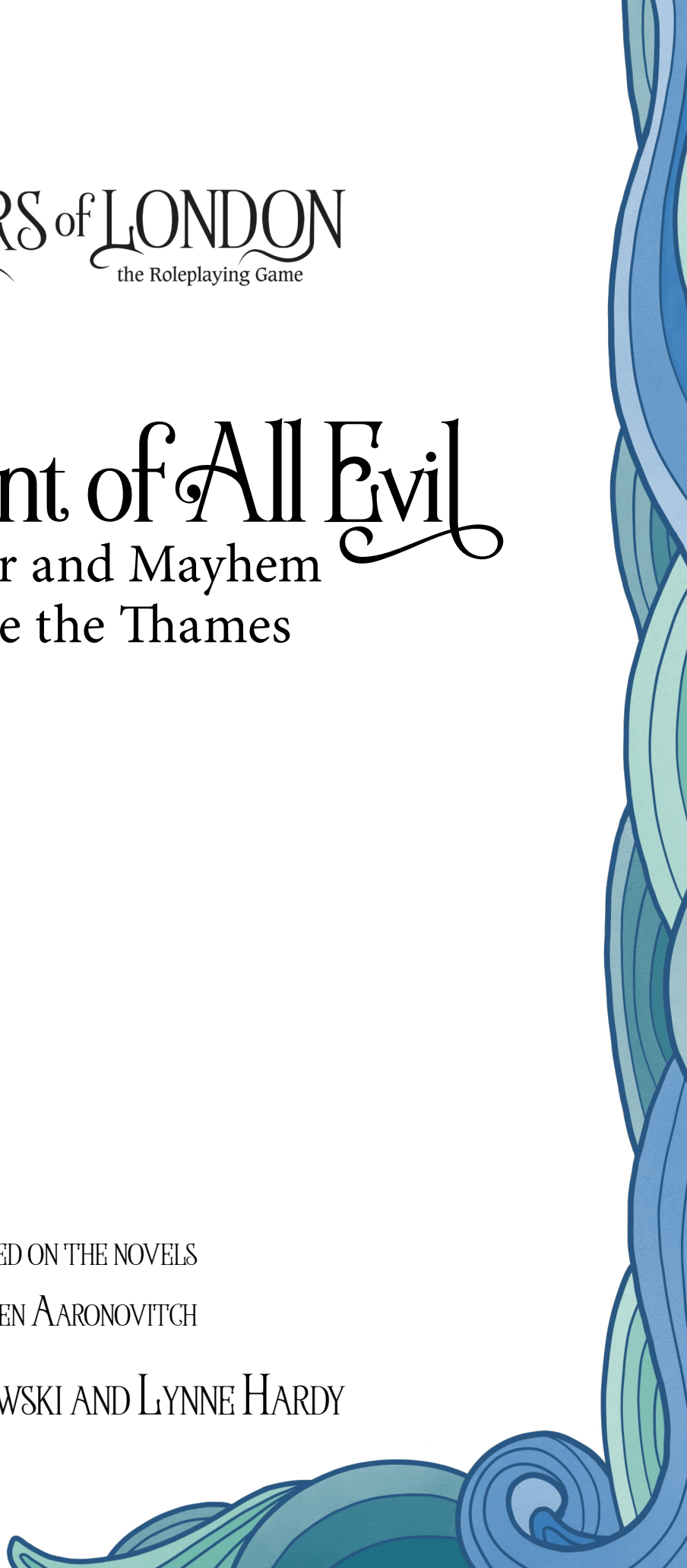
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Clear Credit

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The Font of All Evil

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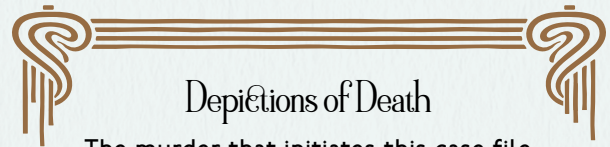
The Font of All Evil

The Font of All Evil is a standalone case file for *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game (RoL:RPG)*. It is designed for one to four investigators and should take around three to four hours to play. It takes place in 2016—specifically in the middle of May. Thursday 19th, to be precise. During the course of a single day, the investigators travel around central London to uncover the motive behind the gruesome murder of a man named Edgar Marsh and bring the perpetrator to justice.

Originally designed as a convention scenario, *The Font of All Evil* is an ideal alternate introductory case file, or it can be used as a follow-on scenario to **The Bookshop** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 285) or *Going Underground*, both available separately from chaosium.com. Given the potential for higher-order spell use, it also works well with more experienced investigators.

If you are going to play through this case file as an investigator, then stop reading now! Hereafter, the information is for Game Moderators (GMs) only. If you are the GM, we advise you to read through the whole investigation at least once before running it—preferably twice, if you have the time! *The Font of All Evil* is the GM's opportunity to bring the *Rivers of London* world to life for everyone, so confidence and comfort in the material can make all the difference to player immersion. See also **Running a Game** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 220).

GM, as you read this case file, take notes on its critical events, clues, and locations. While the investigation has a relatively linear route from start to finish, the paths taken along the way may vary, and players will inevitably ask unexpected questions and/or head off in surprising directions. If you need to, you can improvise additional content and cameo appearances based on the information presented in the following sections, as well as the background material found in **Chapters 5** and **7** of the *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* rulebook. See also **Dealing With the Unexpected** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 228).

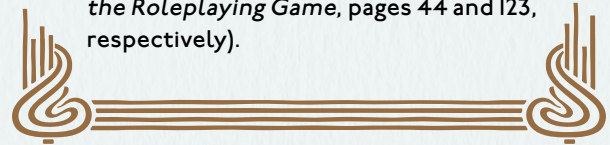


Depictions of Death

The murder that initiates this case file is a bloody and violent one. While some groups may be happy to discuss every gory detail of what happened to Edgar Marsh, others may not. As always, it is important to set people's expectations of the game's tone before play begins.

If the GM and players would prefer not to focus on the case file's more gruesome aspects, then concentrate on the motive for Edgar's death instead, fading to black as necessary when it comes to Edgar's autopsy (**Body of Evidence**, page 22).

And don't forget to have safety tools in play in case events at the table move in an unforeseen and/or unwelcome direction. See also **Considerate Gaming and Important: Tone** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, pages 44 and 123, respectively).



GM Background

A tiny apartment in Ealing, West London, is the scene of a brutal murder. Edgar Marsh—runaway and eldest child of a wealthy family, turned dilettante and shoreline scavenger—has fallen foul of an old and malignant curse channelled by arrogant rival collector, Robert Coach (**Dramatis Personae**, page 12). An act driven by a conflict over a mutual obsession—a piece of moveable (reusable) metal printer's

type owned by Edgar and coveted by Coach—and inflicted on the victim via supernatural means, this murder is far from ordinary. And the local police agree. As far as they and their superiors are concerned, the strange state of the victim and their home places the crime firmly within the purview of the Special Assessment Unit, aka the Folly.

TO KILL A KING

The cause of Edgar's murder, the moveable metal type, has a long and, occasionally, dramatic history. It originally belonged to Thomas Helgreen, a printer in 18th-century London who eked out an existence producing posters, flyers, and pamphlets for theatres and animal baiting establishments. Over time, the type at Helgreen's disposal built up its own *vestigium*, through the "magic" of printing and the emotions, passions, and violence surrounding the events it was used to advertise.

Then things began to go wrong for Helgreen. Employed by practitioner and Jacobite sympathiser, Edward Haswell, to produce a unique, anti-Hanoverian propaganda pamphlet (**Handout: Font 4**), Helgreen became unwittingly involved in a magical plot to assassinate King George I. Haswell's seditious pamphlet served as the focus for a vile curse; the intention was for it to be presented to the king, thus bringing about his end to the benefit of the Jacobite cause. (For a brief history of the Jacobites, see **The Fall From Grace** box, nearby.)

Somehow, the plot was uncovered, and Haswell was arrested before he could collect the pamphlet. The Worshipful Company of Stationers (**The Stationers' Company**, page 26), on the orders of the Prime Minister's agents, set about a scrupulous audit of all printers in the City of London to find Haswell's co-conspirator. Helgreen, who, for reasons he could not explain, was already suspicious of the type he'd used to print the cursed tract, panicked, burned the offending publication, and dumped the whole *forme*¹ off the Fleet Bridge into the waiting waters of the River Fleet below. Helgreen then fled London while his patron, Haswell, languished in chains, awaiting his fate.

Unfortunately, using the *vestigium*-soaked type to produce the cursed pamphlet tipped matters over the edge, magically speaking, thus sowing the seeds for Edgar's murder almost 300 years later.

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

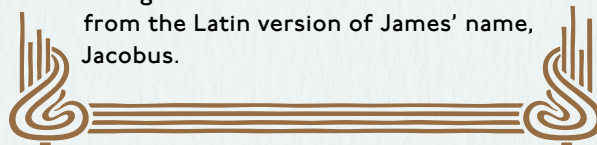
Helgreen's discarded type lay in the squalid waters of the Fleet, forgotten and unnoticed. Even before the death of his sons during the Great Stink of 1858 and its aftermath², the Old Man of the River had begun to withdraw his favour from the city, and some of the power that would have gone to him began to accrete around the type like mother-of-pearl around a parasite at the heart of an oyster.



The Fall From Grace

Simply put, the reign of Britain's last Catholic monarch, King James II of England and Ireland, VII of Scotland, was fraught with difficulty and dissent. In late 1688, matters came to a head and James fled to France during what became known as "the Glorious Revolution." This ended in the summer of 1689 when James' Anglican daughter, Mary, and her Protestant husband, William of Orange, were crowned as joint monarchs of England, Scotland, and Ireland, after James was deemed by the English and Scottish Parliaments to have abandoned his throne.

However, James still had supporters across Britain, Ireland, and France, and various uprisings over the next 60 years tried to restore him or his descendants—all members of the Stuart dynasty—to the British throne. In total, there were five attempts. Two of these "risings," one in 1715, the other in 1719, threatened the reign of Britain's first Hanoverian monarch, King George I. The final rising in 1745, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, James' grandson, took place during the reign of George I's son, George II. The term "Jacobite" comes from the Latin version of James' name, Jacobus.



Steeped in *vestigium* and stolen magic, the type festered away at the bottom of the river, slowly transforming into a malignancy—the Font. Over time, the pieces of moveable type became separated by the tide's constant ebb and flow.

Even after Mama Thames laid claim to the river's tidal waters, the individual pieces of type continued to absorb power, a process so discreet and well-established that it fell completely beneath Mama's radar. The *forme* yearned to be reunited so that it could fulfil its intended purpose—causing death—but had no means of its own to achieve it.

Footnotes: ¹A collection of moveable type that creates the page image to be printed, ²*Rivers of London*

MURDER MOST FOUL

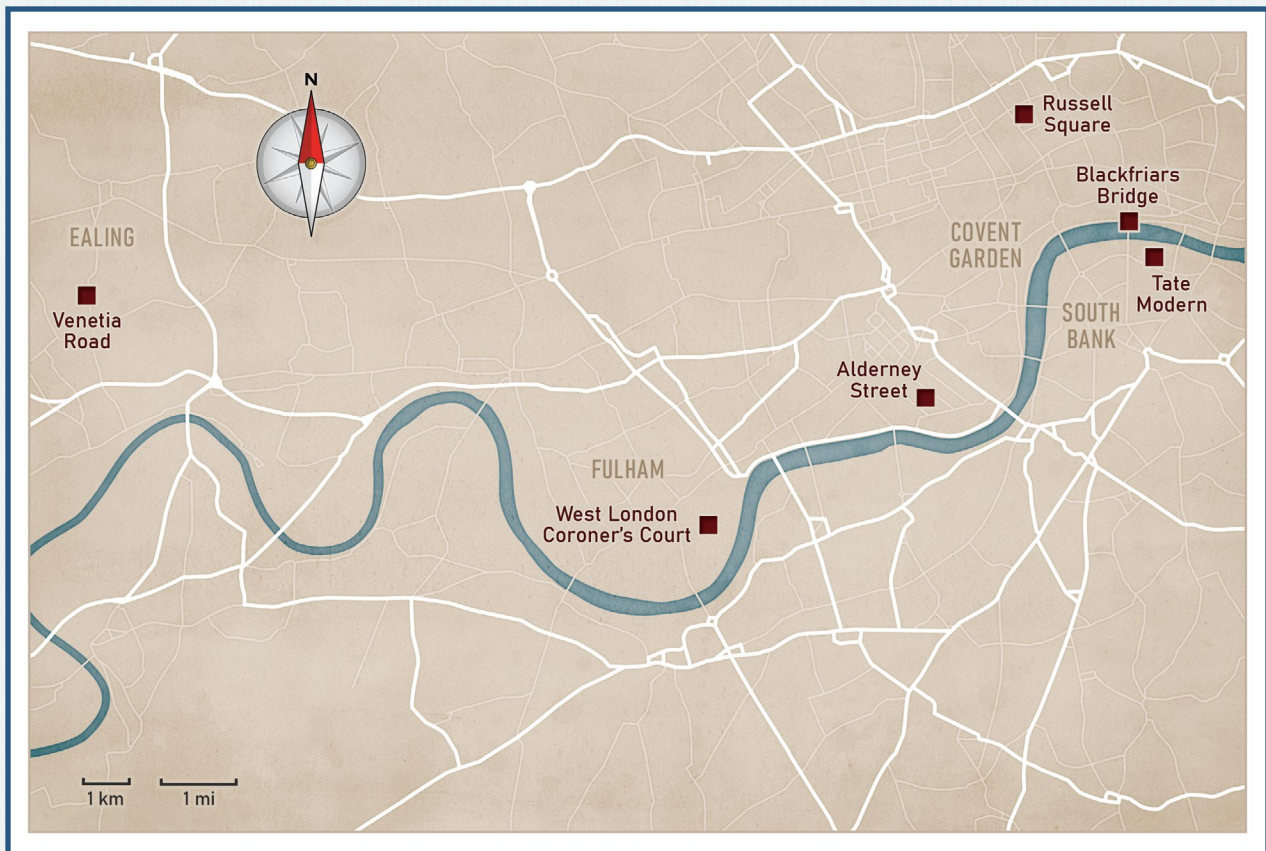
And so things would have remained. But then, scavengers on the shore—mudlarks—came along. The scattered pieces of the malignant *forme* latched onto the mudlarks' obsessive searching, refocussing it to suit its own purposes. In response, the mudlarks slowly gathered it up one piece at a time. Yet still the Font remained largely separated.

Enter Robert Coach, a vanity publisher and increasingly hands-off mudlark, who became interested in the lost *forme*'s fate through his involvement in books—notably those about folklore and the capital's history, especially that of its printers (**Dramatis Personae**, page 12). Possessed of more money than any sense of adventure when it came to trawling the Thames' foreshore, Coach learned from his network of mudlarks that moveable type of the right age to be Helgreen's *forme* had begun showing up. The moment Coach saw his first piece, the malignancy seeped into his soul, recognising him as a suitably pliable receptacle to bring about its freedom. Coach's singular, driving desire thus became to complete his collection of the Font's component parts, and no price was too high, though he kept his purpose private and his rewards moderate for as long as practicable. Inevitably, his obsession pushed his finances into the red and his business slid into backlog and near bankruptcy.

After months of collecting, Coach discovered who owned the final piece of his coveted puzzle: fellow mudlark, Edgar Marsh. On the fateful night of Wednesday 18th May, after several unsuccessful attempts to purchase the object of his desire from Edgar, Coach again visited his rival at their flat (apartment), with the aim of getting Edgar to hand over the last of the *forme*. This time, the publisher would not accept no for an answer. Edgar's reticence to part with the type—regardless of the prize offered—pushed Coach to unleash an act of bloody violence; an act encouraged and relished by the malignancy, and one which was completely in keeping with Haswell's original murderous purpose. Edgar's death was all too sudden and straightforward.

Despite the horrific means by which he gained the last piece of his collection, Coach now thinks of nothing else besides his ultimate goal: reprinting the pamphlet that never left Helgreen's press. Little does he realise that achieving his aim will turn him into a mobile vessel for the malignancy until it can figure out a way to achieve true autonomy.

There is still a chance for Coach, though, and it rests in the investigators' hands...



Introducing the Investigators

The Font of All Evil assumes that the investigators are all members of the Folly, be they serving police officers or civilian consultants—although see the **Independent Investigators** box (nearby) for some suggestions if they are not.

If this is the players' first *Rivers of London* game, you may wish to use the ready-to-play (pre-generated) investigators provided in **Appendix A** of the *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* rulebook (pages 343–349), also available to download for free from chaosium.com. Using these pre-generated investigators allows players and their GM to dive straight into the case file; they also help new and less confident players learn more about the setting and the system before they tackle building their own bespoke characters. If there are just two players, we recommend Constable Nafeesa Jones and Dr Jordan Schneider. If there are three players, we suggest either Eli Venturini or Officer Morgan Omans as the extra investigator, while with four players, add whomever of Eli or Morgan that isn't already in play to the team. If running with more than four investigators, see **Player Group Size** for advice (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 222).

If the players or the GM decide to create their own investigators for this case file, we recommend that at least one person chooses the Police Officer/Detective occupation. Other useful occupations include Chancer, Criminal (with the GM's permission), Dilettante, Doctor of Medicine, Journalist, Lecturer, Librarian, Nurse, Paramedic, Parapsychologist, Private Investigator, and Social Worker. We also recommend that there is at least one practitioner on the team, be they hedge wizard or Newtonian practitioner.

Use the following bullet points to help guide the creation of new investigators:

- ♦ The following expert skills should prove very useful: History, Locksmith, Science (Forensics).
- ♦ The following expert skills may be useful but are not essential: Art/Craft (Printing), Art/Craft (Stained Glass), Language (English), Mechanical Repair, Medicine, Science (Chemistry), Science (Geology), Survival.
- ♦ The most helpful spells for an investigator to know for this case file are: *Impello*, *Impello palma*, Fireball, Shield.
- ♦ Additional potentially useful spells include: any spell that causes a distraction, such as Flash Bulb, Noisemaker, Waterbomb, or Bumblebee; Grasping Hand, Skinny Grenade, *Clausurafrange*.

The GM should also bear in mind the rules for **Trying Your Luck** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 114) if the investigators lack Survival, or any of the aforementioned expert skills.

GMADVICE

Why would the investigators need the Survival skill when they're in the middle of London? Well, it could prove helpful if the investigators choose to access the Thames foreshore, as it grants them the knowledge of how to avoid the dangers inherent in such an unpredictable and challenging environment.

For example, if the investigators head down onto the mudbanks without checking the tide times, you may wish to have them make either individual **Survival** rolls or a group one to avoid getting stranded when the tide turns, in the hope of avoiding a highly embarrassing rescue operation by the Marine Policing Unit (MPU) and/or one of Mama Thames' family!



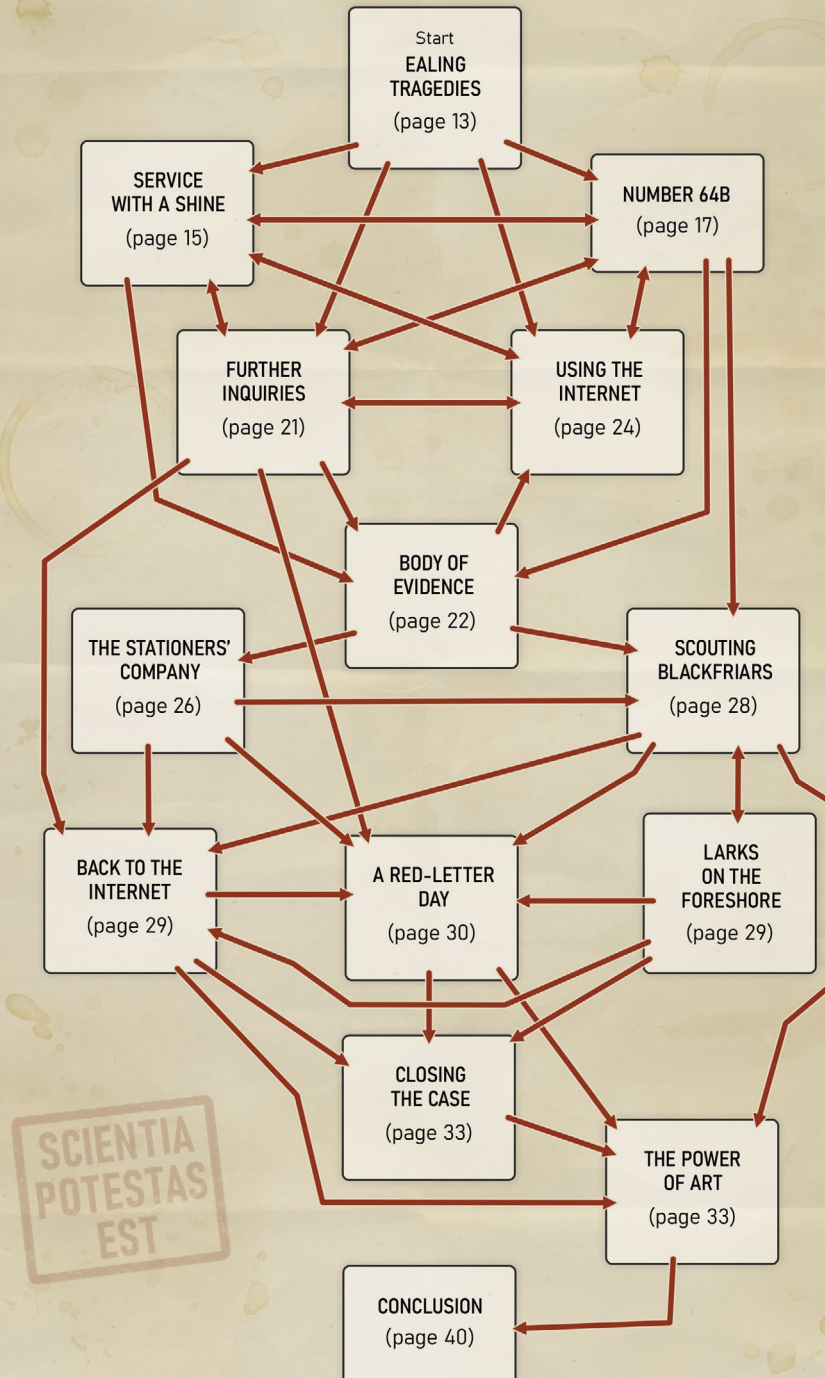
Independent Investigators

While more difficult, it is possible to play through this case file with investigators who aren't members of the Folly. In this case, the GM needs to think carefully about how those investigators become involved. For example, are the investigators part-time mudlarks who were friends of Edgar Marsh and are concerned that they might be next, given all the trouble there's been on the riverbanks of late (**Mudlarking**, page 25)? Are they hedge wizards and/or archivists from the Stationers' Company or some other organisation who have heard rumours of Helgreen's cursed *forme* through similar channels to Robert Coach, and want to track it down for their own personal reasons?

The GM also needs to figure out how a group of independent investigators might gain access to clues such as the postmortem results (**Body of Evidence**, page 22). Everything is possible—the GM just needs to be flexible and adaptable, and should always reward the players for coming up with entertaining ways of learning what they need to know, even if sometimes it may not be strictly legal!

THE FONT OF ALL EVIL

Plot Progression Diagram



Dramatis Personae

This section describes the key non-player characters (NPCs), including their appearance, motivations, and role in the investigation. Game profiles can be found at the end of the scenario in the **Cast** section (page 41). Primary characters lie at the heart of the events described, while those outlined under **Bit Players** (page 13) have only a small role to play during the investigation.

Robert Coach, age 48, *obsessed publisher*



Coach runs a vanity publishing company based out of a blink-and-you'll-miss-it office in Pimlico (**A Red-Letter Day**, page 30). It was chance—although some might say fate—that brought the Helgreen *forme* to his attention, a perfect storm of reading the right books at the right time, coupled with his interest in mudlarking. Once a man of some means with solid connections in the independent book scene, Coach now has an insular manner, a short temper, and a crumbling business.

- ♦ **Description:** a tall white man; well-proportioned, with a muscular build. Bald head, deep-set, intense blue eyes, and a strong, angular face with prominent cheekbones and a well-defined jawline. Wears a dark suit and shirt, and a pinkie ring set with a prominent blue stone.

- ♦ **Traits:** sophisticated, classic manner; business-like and professional. Yet, there's also an edge of fatigue and a tendency to slip into aggression, driven by the need to get the job done.
- ♦ **Roleplaying hooks:** in possession of the moveable type that links him to Edgar's murder. Coach has a surprising amount of sway with several mudlarks who hold him in high regard, usually when they're short of money or angling for a drink. Bringing Coach to justice before he can free the Font from its type is one of the investigators' main goals in this case file.

The Font of All Evil, *a malignancy*



A hostile manifestation created by a confluence of natural forces and human agency. The Font seeks destruction and death, striving to extend its power by latching onto and augmenting the obsessions of those who stray within reach of its **glamour** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 243).

- ♦ **Description:** a non-corporeal spirit, tied—initially, at least—to the scattered *forme* disposed of by Thomas Helgreen.
- ♦ **Traits:** angry, frustrated, and murderous.

- ♦ **Roleplaying hooks:** the investigators must find the means to disperse/destroy the malignancy before it can cause any more harm and make good its permanent escape.

BIT PLAYERS

The following characters appear fleetingly during the investigation. Physical descriptions can be found in the text where the investigators meet them in person, while their profiles can be found in the **Cast** section, beginning on page 41. Generally, these NPCs exist to pass on information and nothing more. While the GM may choose to elaborate on their personalities, try not to dwell on any of them for too long, lest the lingering detail make them potential suspects!

Indrani Natarajan, *age 29, Detective Constable*

A member of the Ealing murder team based out of Acton Police Station, Detective Constable (DC) Natarajan is the on-site liaison officer at the crime scene, there to officially pass the baton to the investigators (**Start: Ealing Tragedies**, nearby).

Adrian Shine, *age 43, garage owner*

Mr Shine is a local business owner and friend-in-passing to the victim, Edgar Marsh. His witness statement (**Handout: Font 2**) describes how and when Edgar's body was found this morning (**Service With a Shine**, page 15).

Samantha Whitlow, *age 22, Police Constable*

Constable Whitlow provides on-site support to DC Natarajan until the investigators arrive. She is also the guardian of access to the crime scene (**Number 64B**, page 17).

Vanessa Marsh, *age 20, victim's sister*

Miss Marsh is the victim's younger sibling, currently studying at Durham University, and therefore not in the vicinity at the time of the incident. Estranged from Edgar, she has little useful information to impart to the investigators (**The Victim's Identity**, page 14).

Dr Noah Arnold, *age 38, pathologist*

Dr Arnold has been commissioned by Ealing's Coroner's Officer to act as the specialist responsible for completing Edgar's autopsy (**Body of Evidence**, page 22). He will follow investigator guidance during the postmortem, if offered.

Lucas Tyler, *age 56, Stationers' Company archivist*

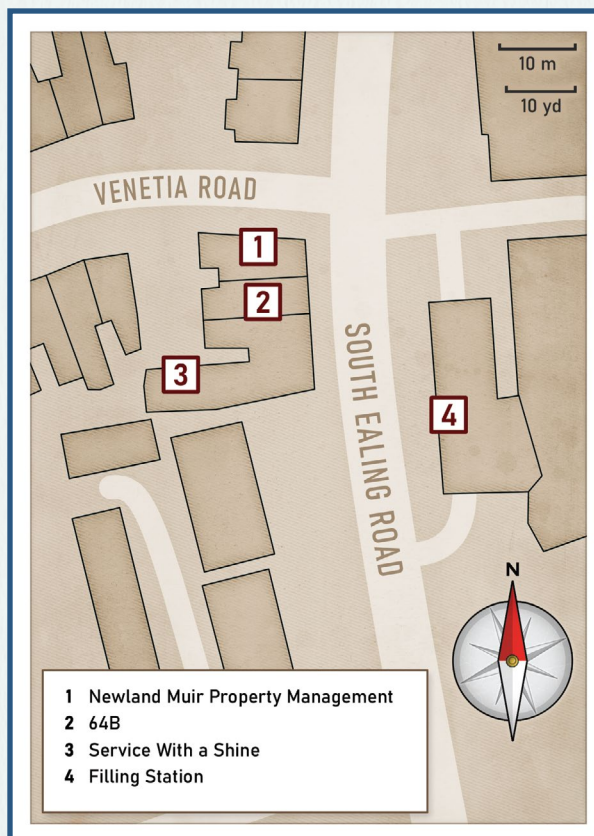
A resident expert on matters pertaining to the Stationers' Company, Mr Tyler is responsible for the preservation of historical documents and artefacts at the Tokefield Centre (**The Stationers' Company**, page 26). He can provide the investigators with information regarding the printer, Thomas Helgreen.

Start: Ealing Tragedies

Thursday 19th May, 2016, 7:57 am: DCI Nightingale requests the investigators meet at the junction of South Ealing Road and Venetia Road. It looks like it's going to be a warm day, with sunshine poking through thinning clouds. As the investigators journey to their rendezvous, the news reports fine weather, a gas explosion at a house in Hackney, and severe delays on the Jubilee Line—though not necessarily in that order. All the investigators know is that DC Indrani Natarajan from the Ealing Borough Operational Command Unit (BOCU) is awaiting them, looking to complete a handover.

Note: Ealing BOCU is amalgamated into the West Basic Command Unit (BCU) in the summer of 2018.

Venetia Road is a residential street linked to the main road opposite a filling (gas) station. When the investigators arrive at their destination, they immediately spot DC Natarajan's Incident Response Vehicle (IRV)—a white Vauxhall Astra with the signature blue and fluorescent yellow strip all the way around. As the investigators approach the car, they see that DC Natarajan is a small, Anglo-Indian woman with a round face and a bob haircut. She obviously has a penchant for caffeine, as evidenced by the way she's nursing a takeaway coffee in a dark red corrugated cup.



Having noticed the investigators, DC Natarajan gets out of her vehicle to greet them. In a clipped, matter-of-fact tone, she cuts short a message on her Airwave radio with the words, “Cancel that. They’re here now.”

The GM should read aloud or paraphrase the following text:

“Morning. Sorry if we got you out of bed. We had a call, around dawn, from a Mr Adrian Shine, proprietor of Service With a Shine,” the Detective Constable nods towards a garish yellow and orange sign at the end of an enclosed space behind the buildings, “about a possible break-in and physical evidence of the killing of Edgar Marsh, tenant of 64B.”

Natarajan points to where a constable’s bowler hat and a flash of blue-and-white Police tape are visible amid scaffolding. “Mr Shine was on his way to work this morning when he noted that 64B’s door was open. He was familiar with the property’s tenant and claims to have checked out of concern that the door might have been left ajar by accident. However, on investigation, Mr Shine found Marsh’s body lying on the floor, apparently dead, though he stated, on reporting the incident, that he hadn’t touched anything nor checked the body directly.”

“Ealing despatched officers and called in paramedics. There is no evidence of a break-in, though we haven’t been able to confirm whether anything was stolen. You’ll understand why when you view the property yourself. Evidence did suggest an attack, with signs of defensive wounds, but the nature of the injuries set alarm bells ringing and the Superintendent requested the body be moved, with all haste. Steps have been taken to expedite transportation for initial investigation by a coroner’s officer at West London Coroner’s Court. That’s in Fulham.”

“Your access to the site has been approved through... channels..., and Mr Shine is over there if you wish to ask him any further questions. I’ll leave you to... um... invoke the powers of darkness—or whatever it is you lot get up to.”

DC Natarajan smiles sweetly, offers the investigators a brief nod, then climbs back into the IRV. If the investigators don’t pursue her with further questions, she departs five minutes later, having reported back to her superiors that she’s passed the case over to the Special Assessment Unit.

PRELIMINARY INQUIRIES

If this is the investigators’ first case together, once the GM has said their piece as DC Natarajan, they should ask the players to introduce their characters to the other members of the team and encourage them to each say what they want to do next—or even ask how they feel about what they’ve just heard. Don’t dwell on it for too long, but this first introduction provides an opportunity for the investigators to ask questions and/or communicate their state of mind, as well as allowing the players to ease into their roles and build a sense of character and team. If the investigators already know each other, the GM can simply ask what the investigators plan on doing next.

GM ADVICE

If the investigators aren’t sure how to proceed, don’t be afraid to give their players some guidance by asking them open questions; for example, about how an investigator feels about some aspect of the case or inquiring whether the team has a plan. This not only helps the players to think about their options but also allows you to gather valuable information that will help you to shape the next encounter or event. A certain state of mind might put an investigator in a better position to grasp a clue or make an unexpected connection, while a plan of action lets you figure out the potential paths the investigation might take and make subtle adjustments to the story, if required—after all, certain information could come from several different sources. **Remember:** never be afraid to move clues around if it serves to keep the story flowing (**Further Scenes**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 339)



The Victim’s Identity

The investigators can find out the following basic details about Edgar Marsh from DC Natarajan (**Handout: Font 1**). If they don’t speak to her, Constable Whitlow can provide them with the same information before they enter Edgar’s flat (**Number 64B**, page 17). Adrian Shine, on the other hand, only knows how long Edgar lived in the area, that they didn’t have any pets or dependents, and that they didn’t get on with their family. For everything else Shine knows about Edgar, see **Handout: Font 2** and **Service With a Shine** (page 15).

If the investigators contact Vanessa, she has little to offer. A successful **Social** roll allows an investigator to establish sufficient rapport with her to discover that she hasn’t spoken to her sibling since they left home four years ago, after Edgar fell out with their parents. With a Hard success, Vanessa reveals that she felt Edgar never liked her much, believing her arrival stole their parents’ hearts and attention, though she denies any actual favouritism. Vanessa cuts any idle conversation short, citing the pressures of final year exams as her excuse. Anyone with Read Person 60% or higher senses no sign of deception in Vanessa’s response, no roll required.

Next Steps

Having learned some information about the victim and their personal and financial situation, the investigators may wish to:

- ♦ Talk to the witness, Adrian Shine. If so—go to **Service With a Shine** (following).
- ♦ Visit the scene of the crime. If so—go to **Number 64B** (page 17).
- ♦ Identify other potential witnesses in the local area. If so—go to **Further Inquiries** (page 21).
- ♦ Carry out an internet search on the victim. If so—go to **Using the Internet: Edgar Marsh** (page 25).

Handout: Font 1

- Edgar Marsh, age 29. Born in Wilton, near Ross-on-Wye, in Herefordshire; has lived in Ealing for the past three years.
- Single, no dependents, not even a pet.
- Work history patchy, at best; primarily light service jobs, like serving in local eateries or working low-end retail—nothing that paid well enough to maintain even a frugal London lifestyle.
- However, Edgar didn't need to earn much, as, despite a poor relationship with their parents, the Marshes kept a steady trickle of support going, paid monthly into Edgar's savings account.
- Attempts to reach Edgar's parents have so far only reached their housekeeper, who made it clear that they are away on a cruise and have been out of the country for six weeks.
- Has a younger sister, Vanessa, currently studying Medieval Literature at Durham University. She has been informed of the situation by Durham Constabulary officers, face-to-face.

Service with A Shine

An area of scarred and potholed tarmac extends back from the pavement on Venetia Road, enclosed on three sides by the brick walls of residential and commercial buildings. Scaffolding obscures the rear of several of the buildings facing South Ealing Road. Half a dozen cars occupy much of the space, with one tucked into a corrugated iron-roofed shed at the back. The shed bears a yellow and orange sign with the legend "Service With A Shine," with the subtitle "MOT Garage and Vehicle Valeting."

Inside the shed, Adrian Shine is busy easing the dents out of a silver saloon car's passenger side panels. Mr Shine is a short white man with a round face, soft grey eyes, and a mop of thick black curly hair that hangs down to his shoulders. He wears navy blue coveralls and builder's yellow work boots.

No roll is required for the investigators to notice the droop of Shine's shoulders and the sense of loss he exudes during their interview with him—it's like he's had the wind punched out of him. He can't account for why anyone would hurt someone he perceived as good-natured and innocent, and fruitlessly seeks insight from the investigators throughout their questioning.

When the investigators approach Shine, the GM should give the players **Handout: Font 2**. The GM should then allow the players the opportunity to read it and consider what it says, handling any immediate questions regarding clarity, but noting that any follow-up questions should be saved for direct interaction with the garage proprietor.

Once they're ready, the investigators can speak to Shine.

- ♦ If asked why he told the call handler that he hadn't touched Edgar's body, Shine looks embarrassed. *"I knew I shouldn't have said that, but I was worried I'd get into trouble or something. I swear, I only touched them, nothing else."*
- ♦ If asked how well he knew the victim, Shine explains that he had nothing more than a passing but good-natured acquaintance with Edgar. They would sometimes share thoughts on the weather and travel hassles, but usually they just exchanged pleasantries.
- ♦ If pressed about whether the victim shared anything recently, Shine notes that on the couple of occasions he saw Edgar in the last week, they brushed off contact all together. On both occasions, they seemed to be in a hurry to get home; they also seemed upset.

Handout: Font 2

Adrian Shine's Statement

I arrived to open the garage this morning around 5 o'clock. I get in early to handle the morning crowd—there are always customers dropping off or picking up before they head into work. Anyway, when I turned into the courtyard and walked towards my shed, I could see that Edgar's door was open. Just a bit, but still. I reckoned he might have left already and forgotten to secure it properly. Sorry, not he. They.

We often bump into each other. I took over this place two years ago, this past February. Edgar was already here and for the first couple of weeks I remember seeing them leaving their house early, always dressed like they were doing something outdoors. Manual work or community cleaning or something. One day, about a fortnight in, I literally bumped into them as they came out of their gate. I spilled a coffee, Edgar apologised profusely and offered to get me a fresh one. Introductions were made, pronouns were explained, but things never really went beyond that. Shy type, I reckoned, so I didn't look to push it.

Anyway, so we knew each other's habits well enough and given the time I reckoned they'd gone out. So, I nipped through the gate to have a look and make certain everything was okay. I could smell something wasn't right when I got to the door. The light was on inside and when I nudged the door open, I could see blood and... Edgar's body. I wasn't thinking straight, because I walked right in and checked them, looked for a pulse or something. But their skin was cold... lips were blue. I pulled my mobile out and dialled 999.

Guy on the end of the line asked me not to touch anything. He confirmed the address and the basic details, then asked me to step out but stay around until someone arrived. So, I did. I opened the garage up and got on with the morning's chores and pick-ups. Then the police arrived, and, well... here we are.

- ♦ If asked about Edgar's daytime activities, Shine admits they never shared, and he never asked. As noted in his statement, Edgar always looked dressed for manual work and often came home dirty and looking tired. Their coat and trousers often looked muddy and/or wet through.
- ♦ If asked whether Edgar had visitors, Shine doesn't recall seeing anyone else entering or leaving the flat, other than the occasional visit from the rental agency or maintenance person. If asked about the timing of the last such visit, *"I think it was from the rental agency, but it was a couple of weeks ago in the evening, just before I closed up."*
- ♦ If the investigators enquire about the rental agency's identity, Shine tells them that the property is looked after by Newland Muir, an estate agent and property manager occupying the corner of Venetia and South Ealing Roads. *"You probably walked past it to get here."*
- ♦ A query at Newland Muir about Edgar reveals that the recent visit was just to review the property's condition; no issues were reported, and the agency had no outstanding concerns. Edgar kept up to date on all ongoing payments for rental and utilities. They

do note that the visit they're referring to happened almost two months ago, though. Checking back with Shine confirms his certainty that the visit he saw occurred two weeks ago. *"Bald bloke. Tall. Heavy-set. Fancy suit. Big coat."* No one at Newland Muir matches that description.

NEXT STEPS

Having taken Shine's statement and potentially followed up with Edgar's letting agent, the investigators may wish to:

- ♦ Visit the scene of the crime. If so—go to **Number 64B** (following).
- ♦ Broaden the scope of their local investigation. If so—go to **Further Inquiries** (page 21).
- ♦ Investigate the victim online. If so—go to **Using the Internet: Edgar Marsh** (page 25).
- ♦ If they've already searched Edgar's flat, the investigators may instead wish to head to the West London Coroner's Court. If so—go to **Body of Evidence** (page 22).

Number 64B

The properties on this part of South Ealing Road have a rear exit into the tarmacked yard that houses Service With a Shine, each with a small fenced-off area containing bins for waste or recycling. Access to 64B runs between these fences; beyond a rickety low gate, steep steps lead down to a plain door with peeling white paint, set below ground level. The white plastic 4 is missing, in its place, the dark red ghost of a previous paint job.

As the investigators approach the flat, they get the feeling that someone must have bent spacetime to fit it into the available plot of land. For those clued into Lovecraft or dabblers in off-the-clock games of *Call of Cthulhu*, 64B feels like an act of experimentation with angular space, as if the landlord squeezed room out of an adjacent dimension.

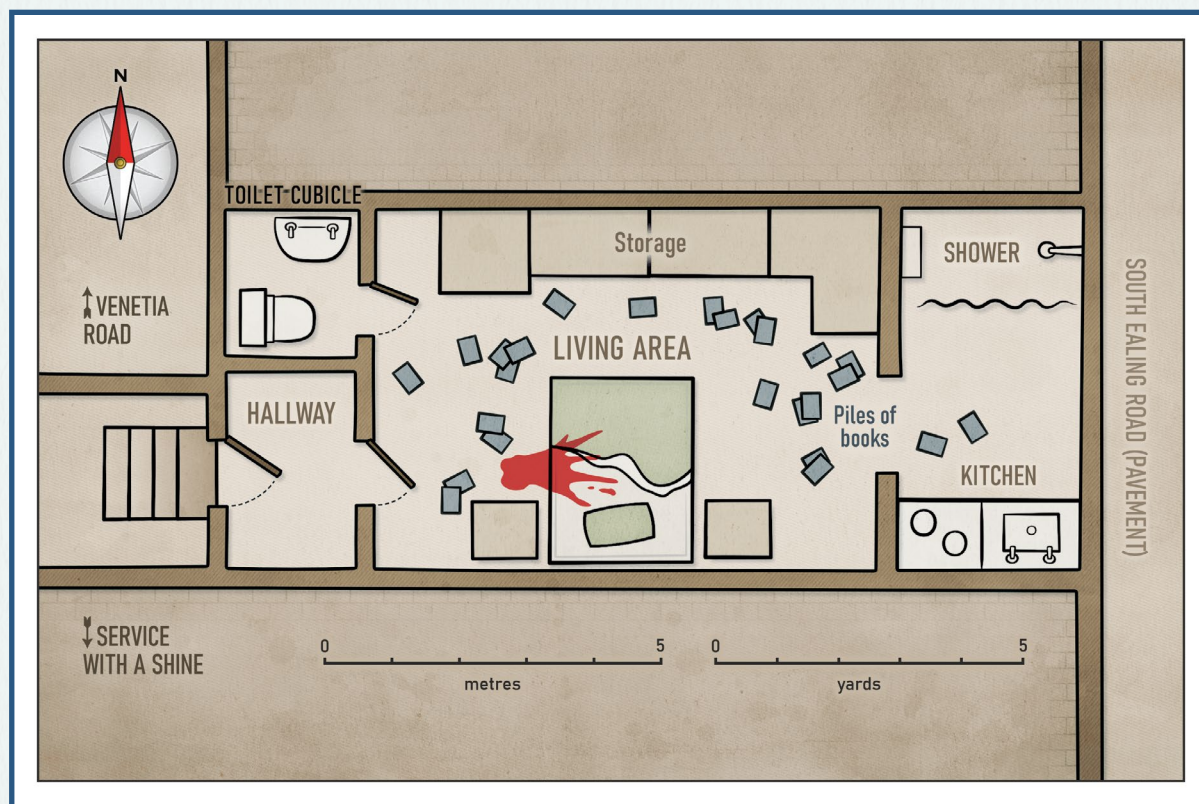
Constable Samantha Whitlow stands in front of the door, a hale and hearty-looking young woman with short brown hair peeking out from beneath her Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) bowler hat. A successful **Read Person** roll suggests a slight agitation, informing onlookers that, up until a couple of seconds ago, she was doing something else—probably checking her phone. “Morning,” she shouts, with slightly too much enthusiasm. “Nice weather for it.” A successful **INT** or **Language (English)** roll places her accent as belonging to the East Midlands, possibly Derbyshire.

Realising what she’s just said, Whitlow’s expression changes to one of embarrassment. “Um. Yes. Um. Ah. Everything’s left as it was, except the body. Chief wanted it checked over as a priority, so they ferried it to the morgue after securing the scene.”

- ♦ If the investigators have yet to learn the basic information about Edgar described in **The Victim’s Identity** (page 14), Constable Whitlow fills them in before she allows them into the crime scene. The GM should give the players **Handout: Font 1**.

Constable Whitlow then produces a brown manila folder from underneath her Met anorak. “DC Natarajan asked me to give you these before you went in. Response team photos, so you can see what it looked like in there before they took the body away.” With that, she unlocks the front door to let the investigators into Edgar’s flat. If anyone looks at the crime scene photographs before they enter the flat, go to **Where the Body Fell** (page 19), adjusting as necessary.

As the investigators enter 64B, it is immediately apparent that London property values make every cupboard a viable place of residence for someone. The kindest description of Edgar’s home is definitely “compact and bijou.” The cramped space has a strong sense of a converted cellar about it—probably because that’s exactly what it is.



THE HALLWAY

Immediately behind the front door is a short hallway. Wall-mounted hooks support a couple of long all-weather coats in good condition. Behind them hang a set of waders, a lightweight raincoat, scarves, a heather-coloured snood, and a couple of big umbrellas. On the floor are two pairs of stout, water-resistant shoes and a pair of expensive wellies (rubber boots), along with a small plastic tidy filled with brushes, all-weather sealants, polishes, and so forth.

While everything is, at first glance, clean, a thorough check of the boots finds an earthy, granular residue in the lugs of the outsoles. An investigator might tease some of the residue out with a pen, a pair of forceps (if they're a member of the medical profession), or a piece of cutlery retrieved from **The Kitchen** (page 20)—or they could just get up close and personal and give it a good sniff. Whatever it is, it's pungent and salty.

- ♦ A successful **Science (Forensics or Geology)** roll identifies the substance as gritty shoreline mud. Police Forensic Services (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 209) could narrow it down to a specific part of the Thames foreshore, but that will take time—something the investigators may not realise they don't have.

If the investigators choose not to examine the boots at this point, for example, because they don't yet understand the significance of what's in their treads, they may come back to them at any time while they are at the crime scene.

At the end of the hallway is a closed door.

THE LIVING AREA

Opening the hallway door leads into the flat's central living space, which contains a folded-out sofa bed, mismatched drawers and shallow cupboards for storage, and a deluge of books. At the back of the room, a doorless arch leads into a combi-kitchen/shower with a high, narrow, frosted window that leaks in light from South Ealing Road. To the left of the hallway, a door leads to a cupboard-sized toilet with a sink.

Directly ahead, a bright yellow evidence marker signposts an all-too-obvious splash of dark red on the floor and across the near side of the bed. Besides the blood, the floor is covered with pillars of books, notebooks, guides, and sheaves of stapled papers. While the books and papers around the rest of the room are arranged in carefully positioned towers, those on the floor between the hallway and the bed are in disorganised disarray, a mess of gore-stained literature fit only for cremation upon the investigation's conclusion.



Conducting an Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA)

As the investigators enter the living area, the GM should ask everyone to make a **Sense Vestigia** roll. While the cramped space is filled with organic material—hundreds of books, the wooden drawers and cupboards, etc.—which *vestigia* doesn't cling to well (**Vestigia in the Environment**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 163), there is, nevertheless, a flare of *vestigium*—one that has already started to degrade.

- ♦ **Regular success:** the investigator detects something that smells like hot tar or soot, with strong woody accents, and a spritz of saltiness, like brine.
- ♦ **Hard success:** the investigator detects the same aromas but also notes that the oily burning smell is more of a fragrance than the residue from an act of arson. In addition, there is a disconcerting sensation of enclosure, suffocating pressure, fury, and the distant screams of dying animals.
- ♦ **Failure:** if the investigator chooses not to spend Luck or push their Sense Vestigia roll, all they detect is Ealing's background *vestigium*—fear, joy, sweat, tears, and the chilling whistle of falling bombs.
- ♦ **Fumble or a failed pushed roll:** no matter how they try, the investigator can't pick up anything at all—it's almost as if a vacuum cleaner has violently sucked all character and atmosphere from the tiny apartment, leaving the investigator suddenly breathless.

Parallel with an IVA, inspecting the white (electrical) goods in the room, or a successful **Observation** roll, finds that a bedside clock and a small, monitor-sized television perched on a storage unit opposite the foot of the sofa bed both contain a small quantity of sand. Practitioners and those familiar with the direct outcome of using spells in proximity to microprocessors recognise this residue for what it is (**Spells and Technology**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 176), meaning that whatever happened here involved magic of some kind.

Where the Body Fell

Edgar's sofa bed occupies a good portion of the room's centre. The covers are thrown back, the pillow still dented and twisted from someone's sleeping head. Both are spattered with blood. The mattress, though, is the most heavily blood-stained.

The pictures taken by the response team show Edgar's body on the floor, collapsed against the bed in an almost seated position. A large, roughly circular stain on their chest distorts their T-shirt to the point that it's impossible to identify the characters on the front or the humorous message accompanying them. Edgar's face is a shocked mask; their eyes and mouth wide open, their final gaze fixed upon a

featureless point on the ceiling above the hallway door. A successful **Science (Forensics)** or **INT** roll suggests Edgar would have locked their attention upon their attacker at the time of their death, and that the recorded focus is purely a result of their fall.

The GM should take note of the investigators' reactions to both the crime scene and the photographs of Edgar's body. If they express shock, revulsion, or fear, the GM should call for a **POW** roll. Only investigators with the Steadfast advantage (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 52) are exempt.

- ♦ Failure results in the investigator's impairment (**Suffering Impairment**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 118).
- ♦ The investigator also performs an **involuntary action** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 108); the GM may either choose one for the investigator, or they can discuss with the player which of the suggestions feels appropriate—or they can roll 1D10, ignoring anything that doesn't make sense for the current situation.

If the investigators search in or around Edgar's bed, they find a book beneath their pillow—a last read before a very final sleep. Flicking through it finds a receipt dated yesterday from the Black Friar pub in, unsurprisingly, Blackfriars, and tickets to and from Blackfriars Station. If the investigators don't search the bed, the GM should ask for an **Observation** roll to locate the book.

Looking under the bed identifies a backwash of books like a tide mark, pushed there as Edgar fell back against the once neatly arranged stacks. In addition, several stacks leading from the body over to the mismatched storage units on the opposite side of the room have also been knocked over. A successful **Science (Forensics)** or **INT** roll suggests that these stacks weren't toppled by Edgar's fall—something, or someone, else flattened them.

The GM should ask for an **Observation** roll. If the investigators have done something to cause considerable disruption to the various stacks of books, the difficulty of this roll increases to Hard. If an investigator has The Knowledge (London) advantage (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 52), a bonus die should be granted to the roll.

- ♦ On a success, the investigator realises that the books in the room are not just a random jumble; they were, in fact, stacked methodically and purposefully. The stacks contain books covering history, archaeology, antiques, and an array of booklets from museums and auction houses, but whatever the subject matter, each stack roughly corresponds to a point of urban geography within London.

A successful subsequent **Observation** roll, or a specific statement from an investigator that they're leafing through multiple books—perhaps because of what they found in the one beneath Edgar's pillow—notes that Edgar marked progress or points of interest in their books with receipts, among other scraps of paper. Searching through the books and cataloguing these makeshift bookmarks takes a long time and requires great care, given that the site is a crime scene. The most recent receipts all come from eateries in and around Blackfriars and Fleet Street. The GM should ask for a **Read Person** roll from any investigator taking part in such cataloguing. If an investigator succeeds, they identify Edgar as something of an obsessive.

Mismatched Storage Units

The wall of the living area facing the bed is lined with a mishmash of cabinets and bookshelves, a wardrobe, and two sideboards.

- ♦ The wardrobe and a couple of drawers contain everyday clothing—including hiking socks, some heavy jumpers, and a fisherman's gilet. The remaining space is occupied by an array of shoeboxes, old ice cream and margarine tubs, plastic organiser trays, and heavy-duty glass jars.
- ♦ The containers hold a cleaned and roughly sorted collection of bric-a-brac (tchotchkes), including shards of pottery, clay pipes, pieces of glass, coins and medals, buttons, buckles, keys, nails and needles, marbles, miniature figurines, metal tokens and balls, and fragile items of thin wire jewellery. There's no division within the types of items—for example, Roman coins sit among those from later eras, including pre-decimalisation “old money” dated up to 1970. (Britain swapped from its existing currency system to decimal coinage in February 1971.)
- ♦ A couple of tubs hold an array of cleaning equipment, including plastic bottles of mild detergent, filthy-looking toothbrushes, tweezers and toothpicks, soft cloths, and a pair of rubber household gloves. A few areas amid the collection comprise unused, empty tubs and other containers.
- ♦ A successful **Observation** or **Read Person** roll identifies that several boxes appear to be out of place. Given the ordered chaos of the book piles and the rest of the collection, the displacement seems at odds with what the investigators have gleaned about Edgar's personality and behaviour, suggesting that whoever entered the property was looking for something.

- ♦ A Hard success on the Observation roll finds a discarded empty container. Unlike the other empty and unused containers, this one contains some sort of gritty residue, suggesting that whoever searched the place emptied it. The container returns the same information as the IVA (**Conducting an Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA)**, page 19), while the grit in the bottom matches that found in the boot treads in **The Hallway** (page 18).

GM ADVICE

Remember to remind—even encourage—players to spend Luck on skill rolls to access the benefits of a Hard success (**Spending Luck**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 113). In a one-shot adventure like *The Font of All Evil*, folk can sometimes be overly cautious about using their resources, but the standalone nature of this case file offers the players a perfect opportunity to be utterly frivolous with their Luck points. Don't feel you need to hammer the point home with every roll, though—one or two gentle reminders—something along the lines of “Don't hoard your Luck points, folks—spend them like they're going out of fashion!”—should hopefully keep the possibility in the forefront of their minds for the rest of the session.



THE KITCHEN

The kitchen cupboards reveal scant supplies—tea bags, biscuits, dry roasted peanuts, and muesli—and only sufficient crockery and cutlery for Edgar. Unlike the pantry in the Folly, the investigators find no alcohol, few treats, and no rampant excesses. There's also no fridge—just a small carton of Long Life (UHT) milk sat on the countertop.

If the investigators haven't found the receipts bookmarking the islands of reading matter in the living area yet, a successful **Observation** roll finds a receipt poking out of a book in a pile just inside the kitchen doorway with the logo from a well-known high-end sandwich chain, along with another for the Tipperary pub on Fleet Street, both dated two days ago. Edgar appears to have eaten out regularly, spending sums quite at odds with their miserable living conditions. If the investigators have already found any of the receipts in Edgar's books, no roll is required to find these ones.

A shower curtain screens off one of the kitchen's walls. Behind it, the shower cubicle's whitewashed and tiled walls are clean of mould and moisture stains. A simple wire rack suspended by suction cups contains a random assortment of body soap, shampoo, conditioner, and facial scrub.

THE LOO

At the other end of the flat is the toilet cubicle. It's clean and tidy and smells faintly of lemon zest. The only unusual thing about it—given the general nature of the main living area—is the absence of any reading material.

The Calendar

On the wall beside the toilet door, beneath a white plastic battery-operated clock, is this year's calendar. Someone, presumably Edgar, has methodically written in each square of the current and previous months in blue ink. The notations all follow the same format: the word "High" or "Low," followed by a time in 24-hour clock format; a successful **INT** or **Survival** roll, if required, realises that these denote the high and low tide.

A successful **Research** roll, along with cross-referencing the times with an almanac—there's one on one of the sideboards—or online reference source, indicates the times match certain locations along the Thames, suggesting that Edgar planned to visit different points over the course of the year. The current times match the Thames' high and low tide times in Central London, specifically around Blackfriars, which ties up with the food receipts found in Edgar's books (**Where the Body Fell**, page 19, and **The Kitchen**, page 20).

GM ADVICE

You and your players may not be familiar with the term "mudlark," meaning that their investigators may struggle to identify Edgar's profession. Therefore, investigators who gather the evidence described thus far should, if required, make either a **History** or **INT** roll, whichever is higher. A success brings them to the conclusion that Edgar spent their time searching the shores of the River Thames as a full-time mudlark. Further information on what a mudlark is and what they get up to is available with a successful **Research** roll (**Using The Internet: Mudlarking**, page 25).

If none of the investigators realise what Edgar does each day, either through player knowledge or by succeeding at the aforementioned skill roll, you can point them in the right direction during a later conversation—potentially as part of a progress-check phone call from DCI Nightingale, if the investigation is in danger of stalling (**Missing Clues**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 226).



NEXT STEPS

Once the investigators have completed their search of the crime scene, there are several other avenues they may wish to explore.

- ♦ If the investigators haven't spoken to Adrian Shine yet—go to **Service With a Shine** (page 15).
- ♦ If they wish to widen their immediate area of investigation—go to **Further Inquiries** (following).
- ♦ If the investigators wish to carry out some general research on the web—go to **Using the Internet** (page 24).
- ♦ If, on the other hand, the investigators wish to attend Edgar's autopsy—go to **Body of Evidence** (page 22).
- ♦ If the investigators wish to trace Edgar's last known steps instead—go to **Scouting Blackfriars** (page 28).

Further Inquiries

The investigators may wish to talk to neighbours, locals, and staff in the filling station on South Ealing Road, as well as check local CCTV camera footage, to establish a clearer picture of what happened last night. Remember, though, that canvassing door-to-door or pursuing the necessary legal channels to access CCTV footage—which someone then needs to collect, collate, and review—takes considerable time, and is best carried out by NPCs to keep the action at the table moving (**Constables and Trainee Officers**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 208). One potential option is to contact DC Natarajan to see if the Ealing BOCU has the resources to carry out this sort of legwork on the investigators' behalf. This way, if the investigators become stuck, the GM can have the results arrive in the nick of time to get the investigation going again. The same goes for any results from Police Forensic Services regarding the foreshore mud (**The Hallway**, page 18).

CCTV FOOTAGE EVIDENCE

If, by some means, the investigators do acquire local CCTV footage, a review and cross-reference of recordings from street CCTV, the filling station, and security cameras in Newland Muir's property management office reveals the following:

- ♦ At about a quarter past one (1:15 am), a tall, bulky, bald figure in a heavy coat walks north along South Ealing Road from the nearest bus stop, carrying what appears to be a heavy leather satchel over his right shoulder. If the investigators have interviewed Adrian Shine, his appearance matches that of the man Shine saw visiting Edgar's flat two weeks ago (**Service With a Shine**, page 15).

- ♦ Footage from the Newland Muir office is largely blocked by monitors hanging in the window, but just as the figure passes their door, heading in the direction of Venetia Road, there's a freeze-frame facial shot clear enough to run comparisons against police records.
- ♦ Footage from the filling station's cameras just catches the same figure turning into Venetia Road.
- ♦ When the man appears again, it's 30 minutes later. He's obviously in a hurry as he retraces his steps back towards the bus stop.
- ♦ Cross-referencing the freeze frame against custody records identifies the individual as one Robert Coach. Coach served a suspended sentence for aggravated assault and criminal damage in the last quarter of 2014, via an electronic monitoring tag. His home address is listed as an apartment on Eccleston Square, Pimlico. Should the investigators wish to visit Coach's home, his cleaner, Mrs Lewis, insists he wasn't in when she arrived for work today. She suggests they try his business address in Alderney Street, a short walk away (**Handout: Font 5**).



GM ADVICE

There is nothing of interest to this investigation at Coach's flat as he carries the Font's moveable type with him wherever he goes, so we advise that you keep any visit brief. Mrs Lewis doesn't interact much with Coach, even when he's at home, so there is little else she can tell the investigators, other than that he seems particularly anxious and distracted of late.

Next Steps

The investigators may now have a name for the person Adrian Shine saw visiting Edgar's flat, a man who was, more importantly, also in the vicinity the night Edgar was killed. Their investigation may now go one of several ways, depending on what else they have uncovered:

- ♦ If the investigators wish to learn more about Robert Coach—go to **Back to the Internet: Coach Publishing** (page 29).
- ♦ If they have learned where Robert Coach conducts his business, and they wish to pay him a visit—go to **A Red-Letter Day** (page 30).
- ♦ If the investigators have yet to interview Adrian Shine—go to **Service With a Shine** (page 15).
- ♦ If they wish to visit the Coroner's Court in Fulham—go to **Body of Evidence** (following).
- ♦ If the investigators have yet to search Edgar's flat—go to **Number 64B** (page 17).
- ♦ If they wish to carry out some research on the web regarding either Edgar or their profession—go to **Using the Internet** (page 24).

Body of Evidence

The West London Coroner's Court sits midway along Bagley's Lane, Fulham, in a three-storey building facing residential flats. The river isn't far from here, and the building was once part of the old Shell refinery depot and offices, as evidenced by the company's scallop shell motif rendered prominently on the building high above the entrance.

Inside, presenting an active warrant card or a **Folly Consultant's Card** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 60) sees the investigators escorted through the cool, starkly lit interior of the building's mortuary section. Their guide, a lanky youth named Kevin, walks them along corridors with whitewashed brick walls and dark green doors, through the secure storage facilities where bodies await collection, before finally delivering them to the post-mortem room.

In a stark suite equipped with glass-fronted cabinets and wipe-clean workbenches, Kevin introduces the investigators to the appointed pathologist, Noah Arnold, then beats a hasty retreat. Arnold is a heavy-set Black man, sporting thick black hair with a widow's peak, close-set eyes, and a shallow jaw. He looks pleased to have some company, although a successful **Read Person** roll notes some slight apprehension, creating hard creases around the corners of his eyes. Arnold wears a white coat over green scrubs; a black lanyard confirms his identity. After checking the investigators' ID and that of the cadaver they've come to view, he manoeuvres Edgar's body out of a storage locker and onto a shiny stainless-steel table in the centre of the room.

While the investigators have the option of whether they want to be witnesses—or, indeed, participants—in the autopsy, the GM should provide information as if everyone is present, even if they're down the corridor committing aggravated assault on a recalcitrant vending machine. See also **Depictions of Death** (page 7) for how to handle the details provided by the postmortem.

INSPECTING EDGAR'S BODY

Arnold takes a cautious lead as he examines Edgar's corpse but willingly follows investigator guidance on what to examine. He allows anyone medically qualified—e.g., a Doctor of Medicine, Nurse, or Paramedic—to assist.

An initial visual inspection of the body reveals that Edgar was a round-faced white person, with a wide mouth and broad nose, a mop of dark brown hair, and small ears. A dark five o'clock shadow suggests that, had they survived, there would have been the challenging bristles of a beard and moustache to deal with come the morning. Edgar's short build and lean frame indicate an active lifestyle and, judging by the lack of food in the flat, a tendency to forget to eat regularly or well.

The GM should ask any investigator participating in the autopsy to make a **Medicine** or **Science (Forensics)** roll:

- ♦ **Success:** the investigator takes over the autopsy and impresses Arnold with their technique. More importantly, they make the discovery outlined in **Autopsy Results** (following).
- ♦ **Failure:** the investigator falters and Arnold steps in before they do something to compromise the evidence. They receive the same information as if they had succeeded, it just takes slightly longer to acquire it.
- ♦ **Fumble or a failed pushed roll:** the investigator not only loses Arnold's respect and confidence but also manages to stab themselves through the hand with one of the surgical tools, inflicting 1 damage. Arnold calls support down to the room and has everyone ushered out. Someone helps the wounded investigator get cleaned up and their injury treated—potentially a fellow investigator, if medically qualified. As long as the investigator is only **Hurt** by this damage (**Wounds and Healing**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 144), they shake it off by the **Next Scene** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 173), although the wound will take time to heal fully. Arnold emails his findings to the investigators several hours later.

Even if the investigators maintained their composure at the crime scene or when viewing the photos of Edgar's body, if this is their first postmortem, the GM may wish to ask for a **POW** roll to see how well they cope with the experience. A failure leads to impairment, as described previously (**Where the Body Fell**, page 19). Any investigator who is already impaired, or who has the Steadfast advantage, does not need to make a POW roll here.

Autopsy Results

Investigators who succeed at their Medicine or Science (Forensics) roll are able to make a more detailed examination of Edgar's body, and thus learn the following:

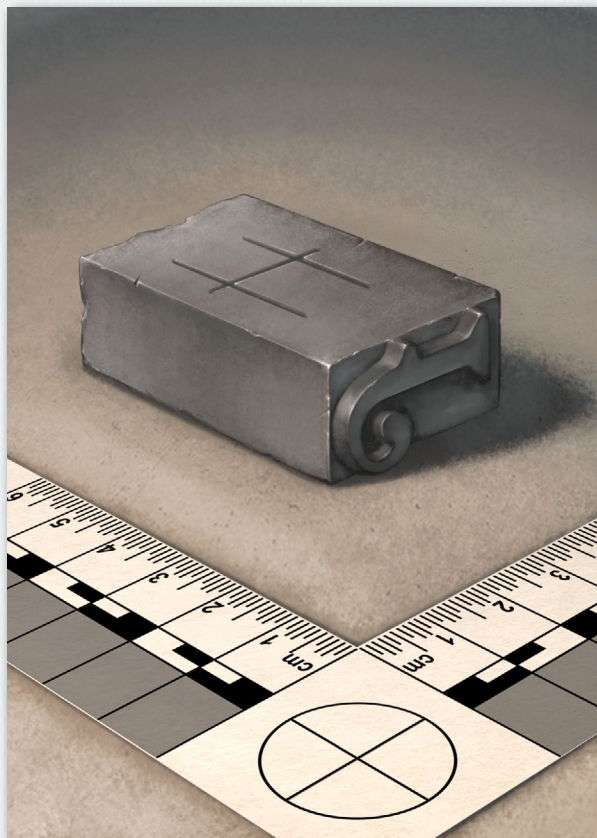
- ♦ Edgar has what appear to be defensive wounds at the base of both palms and across their wrists—long narrow slashes that almost resemble claw marks.
- ♦ A successful **Observation** roll identifies gritty residue under Edgar's evenly trimmed fingernails, matching that found in the tub and boot treads at **Number 64B** (page 17).
- ♦ Edgar's chest bears a circular wound, approximately 20 centimetres (8 inches) across, comprised of a series of small incisions, as if struck by an enormous lamprey. Inspecting Edgar's back finds an incomplete circle—some but not all of whatever pierced their front drove all

the way through their body and exited out of their back. Dark whorls have formed on Edgar's skin even where the wounds haven't fully penetrated, shadows of the internal trauma caused by the attack.

- ♦ The slash marks on Edgar's hands and arms align with the shallower wounds in their chest, as if they threw up their arms to stop something from hitting them, sadly, unsuccessfully.
- ♦ A standard Y-shaped incision in Edgar's chest reveals more of that internal trauma, with the lungs, heart, and stomach all showing signs of damage.

After methodically cataloguing the injuries for a few minutes, whoever leads the autopsy finds something buried deep inside one of the wound tracks that didn't penetrate all the way through: a small piece of metal (**Handout: Font 3**) about 5 centimetres (2 inches) in length, snapped off at one end. Anyone with a suitable skill—for example, Science (Chemistry or Forensics), Mechanical Repair, or Art/Craft (Stained Glass)—can identify the metal as lead, no roll required. The unbroken end is embossed, while the shaft is etched or scratched with a letter H that has a slightly elongated crossbar.

Handout: Font 3



- Someone in their 50s or older recognises this as being a piece of a typewriter or something similar, no roll required. Anyone a decade or more younger with the History or Art/Craft (Printing) skill also readily recognises it; again, no roll required. Otherwise, the investigators must resort to an image search on the internet, coupled with a successful **Research** roll.
- Once identified, something odd becomes apparent: the moveable type's size is unusual, as is the fact that it appears to have been snapped off from a longer metallic rod. This is no ordinary piece of type. A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll detects the same elements identified in the earlier IVA (**Conducting an Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA)**, page 19), as does any attempt to detect *vestigia* on Edgar's body.

Note: if an investigator fumbled their Medicine or Science (Forensics) roll, or failed a pushed roll, and everyone was removed from the morgue, the investigators need to retrieve the physical evidence from Arnold before they can attempt the **Sense Vestigia** roll.

NEXT STEPS

The investigators now know that Edgar died as a result of sudden and massive internal trauma, but they are no nearer to understanding how it was achieved. Their only solid clue is the piece of metal type found in one of Edgar's wounds. Depending on who else the investigators have spoken to and what other evidence they have gathered, several paths may now be open to them.

- If the investigators wish to carry out their own research on the victim using the internet—go to **Using the Internet: Edgar Marsh** (page 25).
- If they wish to learn more about Edgar's profession—go to **Using the Internet: Mudlarking** (page 25).
- If the investigators wish to follow up on the moveable type—go to **The Stationers' Company** (page 26).
- If, prompted by the receipt and tickets found in Edgar's flat, the investigators wish to visit Blackfriars—go to **Scouting Blackfriars** (page 28).

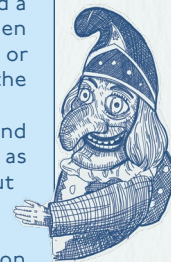


GM ADVICE

Once the investigators have examined the scene of the crime and attended Edgar's autopsy, you might wish to ask your players to recount what they think their investigators have discovered so far and whether they have any ideas about what's happening.

You can do this at any point during *The Font of All Evil*, of course, but it's always good to give the players time to consider their findings and formulate theories as a group after their investigators have uncovered a lot of information. It's especially beneficial when running this case file—or any other—with new or less confident players and those not familiar with the *Rivers of London* setting.

Allowing the players to bring their thoughts and speculations together not only helps them bond as a team, but it might also spark fresh ideas about what they want to do next. It might spark some ideas for you, too! At the very least, it will give you a clearer idea of what the players think is going on, allowing you to make adjustments and clarifications, as necessary.



General Research

While the investigators might wait until after they've inspected the crime scene and Edgar's body before digging deeper into Edgar's background, alternate avenues of research are always open to them, particularly the internet and other publicly accessible sources of information.

USING THE INTERNET

During the investigation, curiosity and following up on clues may lead the investigators to use the internet as a source of information. If this is the case, the GM should determine what the investigator is specifically focussing on and ask their player to make a **Research** roll. A casual search takes around 15 minutes, making using the internet an ideal way to eke value from sitting in the passenger seat of a vehicle while travelling between the various widely scattered locations.

The scattergun nature of search results on the open web makes for a crapshoot of false leads and rabbit holes, so, as a baseline guide for the GM, when searching the internet:

- A **Regular success** on a Research roll brings forth "surface" information—obvious stuff, but with sufficient detail to still make it worthy of note.
- A **Hard success** reveals greater levels of detail, tucked away in dead ends, obscure websites, or cached pages accessible only through a determined trawl of the internet archives. The internet doesn't stand still, and few crazes last for more than a couple of years, so the internet equivalent of archaeology takes focus and a willingness to go off the easy trail of randomly served up hyperlinks.

- ♦ A **failure** on this sort of search might lead to error pages, people with shared names but no links to the case, web pages occupying old addresses offering off-brand medication, incredibly expensive deals on domain names, or Not Suitable for Work content. Something useful turns up eventually, but only after an inordinate amount of time—several hours, at least. Only an outright **fumble** reveals nothing of use—or sends the investigators off on a wild goose chase.

The following sections outline what's available to investigators who search the internet for two key topics of information:

Edgar Marsh

- ♦ **Regular success:** Edgar is absent from the common current social media websites—strange in this day and age, but not unheard of. However, the investigator does uncover a couple of mentions of Edgar on an early social networking site, detailing their attendance at the King's School in Gloucester, as well as a short-lived appearance as a contestant on Britain's Brainiest Kid.
- ♦ **Hard success:** the investigator pulls up an early Noughties page set up by Edgar on a hosted blogging site. It reveals an intense interest in Japanese collectible trading cards, including several posts going into excruciating detail on obscure finds and manufacturing errors. There's nothing of relevance to the current turn of events, aside from the evidence of Edgar's obsession with trivia.
- ♦ **Failure:** reveals a childcare firm in Wisconsin and a scattering of websites that use either Edgar or Marsh in their name.

Mudlarking

- ♦ **Regular success:** the Victorian term “mudlark” originally referred to children sent to scavenge along the shores of the Thames for things with potential resale value, but contemporary usage refers to those willing to negotiate the dangers of the tidal foreshore in search of historical—and, oftentimes, valuable—objects. It also uncovers an array of local articles on mudlarking and some of the valuable finds made on the Thames foreshore, along with varied hobbyist and academic articles on how the finds come from the array of items dropped into the waters over the past 2,000 years. A general sense of territorialism comes across in these pieces, suggesting that mudlarks have favoured scouting grounds along the north and south banks all the way from the Thames Estuary (the river's mouth) up to the tidal head at Teddington Lock³.

While not a closed shop, it seems no 'lark is likely to share their secrets with anyone.

- ♦ **Hard success:** in addition to the above information, the search also finds articles from the last six months relating to crimes committed by individuals who are cited elsewhere as mudlarks. The police have been called in to break up several heated situations involving verbal abuse and acts of physical violence, where mudlarks clashed over territorial disputes and rights of possession, with the police issuing multiple cautions and even making several arrests. The details of the specific items the mudlarks were fighting over are not divulged. To learn that, the investigators will have to find some actual mudlarks to talk to (**Larks on the Foreshore**, page 29).
- ♦ **Failure:** the investigator finds plenty of pictures and puff pieces on the surge of hobbyist mudlarking, as well as the changing definition of the term, as detailed under Regular success, but nothing more specific.

GM ADVICE

The internet can often be your friend and a fine place to uncover both interesting truths and delightful red herrings that you can use to improvise material at the table or create case files of your own design. You can, within limits, even let your players use it to access mundane information on behalf of their investigators, for example, finding out what mudlarking is. In the round, though, the internet has a habit of turning every search for facts into a long, slow descent down a kaleidoscopic rabbit hole of fascinating, but largely useless, information. So, if you do decide to let your players loose on the internet during this case file, make sure it doesn't distract them from the rest of the investigation (**Using Tech**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 227).



Footnote: ³*Rivers of London*

The Stationers' Company

Once the investigators have uncovered any connections to publishing and/or publishers, especially of a historical nature, a successful **INT** or **History** roll recalls the existence of the Stationers' Company, based in the heart of the City of London.

- A subsequent successful **Research** or **History** roll, or a Hard success on the previous History roll, reveals that the Stationers' Company was founded in 1403, incorporated in 1557, and dominated London's trade in printed books well into the 17th century. It became the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers in 1937, the official title under which it remains to the present day.

The Stationers' Company—much less of a mouthful than its full title—persists behind a modern grey building on Ave Maria Lane, a short distance from St Paul's Cathedral. It was there, around the cathedral, where manuscript writers and illuminators once set up their stalls and stations to peddle their services and wares. The Stationers' Company is one of the surviving livery companies that regulated and protected the trade's craftspeople.

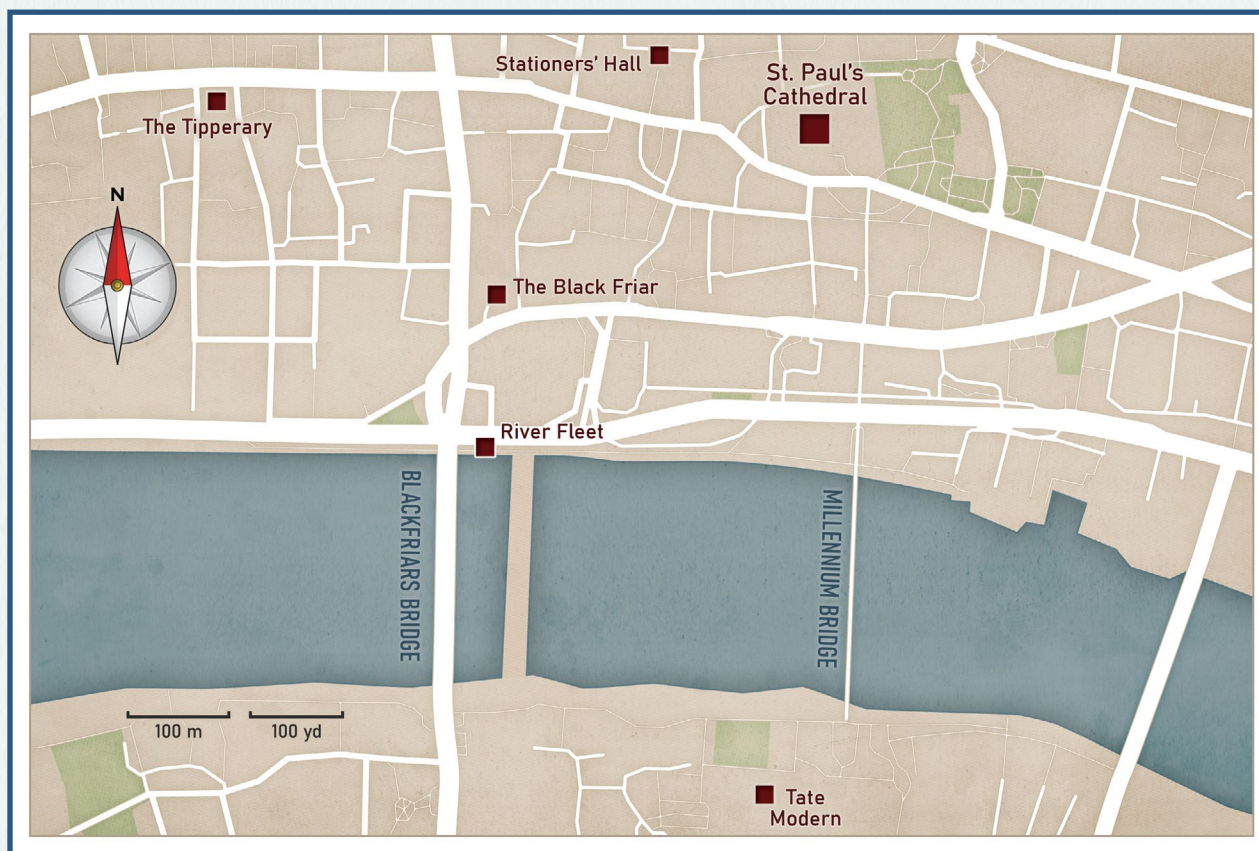
Through a square tunnel beneath the uninspiring office building, a courtyard opens onto Stationers' Hall, restored in

the aftermath of the Great Fire and partially re-built over the following centuries. Accessed through the gardens behind the hall—through a narrow passage signposted Stationers' Garden, for anyone in doubt—the black-panelled doors of the Tokefield Centre lead into a small, modernised facility, including a public reading room.

When visiting—or if calling for assistance—reception passes the investigators over to archivist Lucas Tyler (**Bit Players**, page 13). In person, Tyler is a tall and slender white man with a narrow face, furrowed brow, and a long nose supporting an overly large pair of black spectacles. He is dressed in a lightweight navy suit with a black rollneck jumper.

DESCRIBING THE VESTIGIUM

If an investigator describes the sooty, tarry, woody elements of the *vestigium* found in Edgar's flat to Lucas, or that on their body/the moveable type, he identifies the scent as old school printers' ink, the sort common around the early days of the printing press. Printers developed the ink from various natural materials in pursuit of something that would possess colour and longevity, and not easily smudge—a common problem with the inks typically used in medieval handwritten works.



Handout: Font 4

The Printer's Mark

The printer's mark associates the type with **Thomas Helgreen**, who worked in London under the auspices of the Company from 1706 through to 1720, when he failed to renew his membership and disappeared from all available records.

Thomas Helgreen, originally of Norwich, had good standing with the Company and mainly produced flyers and pamphlets for various "entertainments" on the South Bank. For example, theatres and baiting halls advertised their events with flyers printed by Helgreen's hand. He fell out of sight, and favour, after allegedly producing a piece of Jacobite propaganda for a gentleman called **Edward Haswell**, who ended his days with his neck on a block. The propaganda was damning, denouncing **King George**, and cursing his lineage. There are no known copies of it in existence. Helgreen is said to have disposed of all his possessions by casting them into the **Fleet** and fleeing London before he met the same fate as Haswell.

THE PIECE OF TYPE

Presenting Lucas with the moveable type found in Edgar's torso—or pictures of it—allows the archivist to cross reference Company records. He confirms that it is typical of that used in "cased printing" on old presses, though the possibility that the piece might have had a longer stem would make it unusual. Lucas also reveals the information contained in **Handout: Font 4**.

NEXT STEPS

The investigators have learned more about the type and to whom it belonged. Their next steps depend on which leads they have yet to follow up on.

- ♦ If the investigators wish to visit the place where Helgreen dumped his *forme*, a successful **INT** or **History** roll, with a bonus die if the investigator has The Knowledge (London) advantage, points them at Blackfriars Bridge, where the Fleet sewer empties into the Thames—go to **Scouting Blackfriars** (following).
- ♦ The same applies if the investigators found the recent receipts from establishments around Blackfriars and Fleet Street in Edgar's flat.

- ♦ If the investigators already know Coach's business address and wish to pay him a visit—go to **A Red-Letter Day** (page 30).
- ♦ If, on the other hand, they would prefer to do some background research on Coach—go to **Back to the Internet: Coach Publishing** (page 29).



Scouting Blackfriars

Several eateries and public houses along the banks of the river attract mudlarks. Among these, The Black Friar is particularly close to Blackfriars Bridge, while The Tipperary claims a complex array of certainties and firsts on a dark green board outside—none of which holds up to scrutiny, but which seems to play well with some of the mudlarks' senses of humour. There are recent receipts from both pubs among Edgar's possessions (**Where the Body Fell**, page 19, and **The Kitchen**, page 20).

If armed with a picture of Edgar, investigators questioning staff members in the varied public houses and eateries around Blackfriars Station garner some potentially useful information:

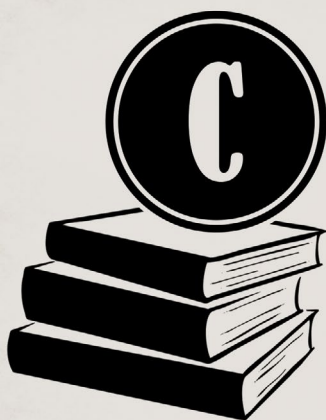
- ♦ Edgar had been in the area over the past month, eating or drinking alone. However, even if the investigators have receipts to hand, Edgar was a sufficiently vague presence that many staff have no recollection of their visits—they were just another customer among hundreds.
- ♦ Various mudlarks frequent the same locations, but Edgar didn't socialise with them in any meaningful way beyond short, offhand conversations or greetings.

- ♦ If referenced by name, shown the freeze-frame image from Newland Muir's security camera (**CCTV Footage Evidence**, page 21), or an investigator asks about notable mudlarks, Robert Coach is identified as a known quantity with a reputation and not a little notoriety. He often dined at The Black Friar and has a strong network of local mudlarks. He hasn't been seen for a couple of days.
- ♦ If the investigators have not retrieved the CCTV footage from Newland Muir's office, Coach's physical description matches that given to the investigators by Adrian Shine (**Service With a Shine**, page 15), thus confirming him as a person of interest in this investigation.

The GM should ask for a group **Luck** roll (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 113). On a success, one of the staff members the investigators talk to gives them Coach's business card (**Handout: Font 5**).

Remember: you cannot spend Luck on a Luck roll. If the group Luck roll fails, there is another opportunity for the investigators to acquire Coach's business card from one of the mudlarks (**Larks on the Foreshore**, page 29).

Handout: Font 5



ROBERT COACH

Director

- ☎ 020 7946 09914
- 📍 133B Alderney Street
Pimlico, London SW1V 4HB
- 🌐 coachpublishing.co.uk

- ♦ A successful Regular **Social** roll convinces a staff member at either pub to share some gossip with the investigators. Some mudlarks have been barred during the last six months for starting fights over their scavenging territories and certain finds—the staff member even had to call the police on occasion when things got really out of hand.
- ♦ A Hard success reveals that, while the staff member doesn't know what the finds were, word is that Robert Coach was very interested in them, although he was careful never to get involved in the fights themselves.

BACK TO THE INTERNET

If this is the first time the investigators have heard Robert Coach's name, they might choose to engage in further online exploration. If so, the GM should ask for a **Research** roll.

Coach Publishing

- ♦ **Regular success or better:** Coach Publishing has been a prominent fixture of the indie scene for the past 20 years, publishing an array of books of varied reputation. A decade back was the last time Coach won any awards, but the publisher continues to support new and doggedly passé authors who never really broke out. Gossip suggests that Coach might be better focussing on the writing on the wall, given his slow decline into obscurity.

Note: depending on how the GM plans to conclude the investigation (**Closing the Case**, page 33), a success may also reveal that Coach is listed among the independent publishers appearing at Offset 2016 at Tate Modern this coming weekend. See **Inside Coach Publishing** (page 31) for details of what else can be found on Offset's webpage.

- ♦ **Failure:** the investigator finds a slick but insubstantial vanity publishing house website that hasn't been updated in six months. The listing of recent publications covers coffee table books of niche interest, collections of urban poetry, and scattered works of speculative fiction. Robert Alexander Coach is identified as the sole owner. The website provides a head office address in Pimlico.

Of course, if the investigators have Coach's business card (**Handout: Font 5**), they can head straight to his website. However, it still requires a successful **Research** roll to garner anything beyond the superficial about the publisher.

NEXT STEPS

Following their visit to Blackfriars, the investigators potentially have several new leads to explore.

- ♦ If the investigators wish to track down some mudlarks—go to **Larks on the Foreshore** (following).
- ♦ If the investigators wish to visit Coach Publishing—go to **A Red-Letter Day** (page 30).
- ♦ If Coach is taking part in Offset 2016, the investigators may wish to head straight to Tate Modern. If so—go to **The Power of Art** (page 33).

Larks on the Foreshore

The investigators may wish to question some practising mudlarks, either because they've figured out that was Edgar's profession (**The Calendar: GM Advice**, page 21) or because they've visited Blackfriars and spoken to the serving staff at various hostelryes (**Scouting Blackfriars**, page 28). If so, the investigators can find 'larks on almost any stretch of the Thames foreshore, dependent on the tides. The further west they go, the more likely the investigators are to find foreshores they can explore in the mid-morning or late afternoon, when the tide is low.

- ♦ Unless they head straight to Blackfriars from the crime scene, investigators who figured out the clues on Edgar's calendar (**The Calendar**, page 21), or who make a successful **Survival** roll (GM's discretion), know that the tide won't be low enough to gain access to the foreshore there until late afternoon/early evening.

The mudlarks generally keep to themselves, possessive of the spot they're working and keen to keep others clear. A successful **Read Person** roll identifies that while not lying in response to any questions, a mudlark's answers never reveal anything proprietary or personal, as if they are keeping to some unspoken code.

- ♦ A successful **Social** roll, though, coaxes a mudlark into discussing their day's finds and their favourite places to hang out locally after a hard day on the mud, including The Tipperary and The Black Friar.
- ♦ A Hard success, or a specific reference to pieces of moveable type—or a success with a cash bribe of £20 or more—leads the 'lark to mention Robert Coach. If shown the piece of type recovered from Edgar's body (a photo or the actual piece itself; **Handout: Font 3**), the 'lark offers the investigators money for it. Assuming they refuse to part with the type, the mudlark gives the investigators Coach's details (**Handout: Font 5**) and a reference to his hanging out in the pubs and eateries

around Blackfriars. *“He’s got deeper pockets than me when it comes to those bits of scrap metal. But you wanna be careful who you go flashing that whatchamacallit at. Those things have caused nothing but trouble around here for the last six months or so—fistfights and everything, including bringing the Law down on a few idiots’ heads. So, just watch your back if you do speak to Coach. You won’t turn him down quite so easily. What he wants, he usually gets, one way or another.”*

- ♦ A failed roll, however, closes any conversation, while a fumble or a failed pushed roll leads to aggression. *“What’s here is mine and you’ll do well to back off before I slap you one, mate—rozzler or no rozzler.”*

BEN SAYS

Although “rozzler” is, officially, one of the many slang terms for a police officer in the UK, Ben reckons that no one outside *The Beano** has ever used it in real life. Other terms, of varying levels of insult, include copper, bobby, the Old Bill, the Fuzz, the Filth, and the Plod (or PC Plod).

**The Beano* is a much-loved, long-running, and irreverent British children’s comic, published by DC Thomson. Its greatest star is Dennis the Menace. Bizarrely, he and his American counterpart of the same name both appeared in print for the first time on the same day in March 1951!

NEXT STEPS

The investigators have now spoken to Edgar’s fellow mudlarks and may have learned of their favourite watering holes—if not something more useful.

- ♦ If the investigators wish to visit the places the mudlarks—and Robert Coach—hang out—go to **Scouting Blackfriars** (page 28).
- ♦ If they have learned Coach’s name for the first time and wish to find out more about him—go to **Back to the Internet: Coach Publishing** (page 29).
- ♦ If the investigators would prefer to head straight to Coach Publishing—go to **A Red-Letter Day** (following).
- ♦ If they want to cut straight to the chase and this case file’s finale—go to **Closing the Case** (page 33).

GM ADVICE

If you run the investigation on any day besides Thursday 19th May, 2016, you may wish to look up the low tide times for yourself.

To find out the Thames’ tidal patterns, and specifically when low tide occurs, consult the Port of London Authority’s website (<https://tidepredictions.pla.co.uk/>). Click the Gauges tab at the top of the screen to be taken to the Tide Table page and use the calendar to search for your time period of interest; London Bridge is the nearest gauge to Blackfriars Bridge. While the site has basic information for the *Rivers of London* timeline period (2016), more detailed gauges are available from 2019 onwards.



Where There’s Muck

A cautionary note for anyone interested in engaging in a spot of mudlarking in our world: please don’t. The foreshore is private property, and mudlarks are legally required to hold a Thames foreshore permit, issued by the Port of London Authority. At the time of writing, due to a massive upsurge in hobbyist mudlarking, no new permits are being issued in an attempt to protect the habitat and its archaeology.

A Red-Letter Day

The address on Coach’s business card and website lies in the depths of the Regency-styled streets of Pimlico. The white painted stucco façades with pillar-framed main entrances display both an elegance and a somewhat overwhelming repetition, like the face of a single, endless structure without break between one end of the street and the other.

The narrow streets have limited parking, clearly sign-posted for permit-holders only, but there are a couple of paid parking spots in front of Coach Publishing’s address, with several more just around the corner. Between the pillared doorways, black iron railings fence off narrow accessways to basement flats, with 133B marked with nothing more than its number. Leaning over the railings, the investigators can see a barred window and a door tucked under the steps that lead to the ground floor flat. Thankfully, the gate is latched, not locked. Beyond it, steps lead down into gloom.

If an investigator heads down to peer through 133B's window, within the gloom there appears to be an office with a central desk, a computer, bookshelves, and several filing cabinets. A door on the office's right probably leads into a hallway, accessible via the front door. There's also a door in the back that might lead to a kitchen, bathroom, or some ungodly arrangement of both—if Edgar's apartment is anything to go by, anything is possible.

The front door has a small gold effect sign that reads "Coach Publishing" in a black serif typeface, and the cut-price clip art book logo from his business card (**Handout: Font 5**). Both door and window are locked. Knocking on the door receives no response, no matter how persistent the investigators are—although, it might attract the attention of neighbours (a failed **Luck** roll). Anyone who does emerge, aside from being annoyed by the noise, admits to not having seen Mr Coach in the office this week, adding that he might be on holiday.

A SPOT OF B&E

Reasonable cause might allow the investigators to apply for a search warrant (**Stop and Search**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 212), but they won't get one in a hurry. Given that, the options fall to forcing the door or the window. Depending on how subtle and/or destructive the investigators wish to be, that means using either **STR**, **Athletics**, or **Locksmith**, or a combination of a Fireball to the lock followed by *Impello* (as used by Peter Grant to get through locked doors before he learned more proficient spells).

Note: investigators who are more experienced practitioners may, alternatively, prefer to use spells such as Grasping Hand or *Clausurafrange*.

- ♦ **Success:** the investigator gains access to the office without attracting undue attention.
- ♦ **Failure:** the investigators get in eventually, but if they subsequently fail a group **Luck** roll, they receive a visit from constables belonging to **Belgravia Police Station** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 268) during their search of the premises. Even with the station's connections to the Folly, the responding officers take a dim view of breaking and entering (B&E) on their patch.
- ♦ **Fumble or a failed pushed roll:** a neighbour alerts the local police, who arrive just as the investigators gain access to 133B.

Of course, breaking and entering is illegal, but, sometimes, needs must. If caught, as long as the investigators spin it that they feared for Coach's life—hence the necessity for

immediate access without a warrant (**Stop and Search**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 212)—a successful **Social** (civilian investigator) or **Law** (police officer investigator) roll convinces any attending officers not to file an official report with DCI Seawoll.

The Right Side of the Law

If the investigators have an attack of conscience or would prefer to avoid being on the receiving end of a monumental bollocking from DCI Seawoll, should things go spectacularly wrong, they might want to pursue other avenues of investigation.

- ♦ If the investigators located the company's address via Coach's business card and have not yet carried out any other research on him, the GM may wish to suggest that they do some online digging—go to **Back to the Internet: Coach Publishing** (page 29). This way, the investigators can still pick up the lead to Offset 2016 at Tate Modern.
- ♦ The investigators could track down Coach's letting agent with a successful **Research** roll, if using the internet, or a successful **Social** roll, if they knock on the front door that leads to flats 133A, C, and D upstairs. Police officers in uniform, or those presenting a warrant card if in plainclothes, gain a bonus die to their Social roll (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 72). The letting agent's representative, Jemima Knight-Quintrell, a willowy, middle-aged blonde woman with a Sloane Ranger accent, arrives with a spare key 15 minutes after the investigators contact her. She refuses to enter the property, claiming she has a viewing elsewhere. Her parting instructions are, "*Make sure you lock up properly when you're done. And be a good sort and pop the key in the post—no need to come into the office, okay, yab?*"—go to **Inside Coach Publishing** (following).

INSIDE COACH PUBLISHING

If the investigators gain access to the office, they find a week's worth of letters on the mat behind the front door. The slightly musty smell about the place emanates from souring foodstuffs in the back kitchen and a half-eaten sandwich mouldering on the desk next to the computer. There is no power—Coach hasn't paid his electricity bill in a while, as evidenced by all the red letters and final demands among the piles of mail on the floor and scattered across the desk. Without power, the desktop is useless and the milk in the fridge has started exploring new opportunities as a thin yoghurt for those with a robust constitution.

Handout: Font 6



As well as the mail, the office also contains a scattering of printed manuscripts and book proofs. The filing cabinets are filled with more of the same, along with numerous bills and invoices, organised by date. The bookshelves hold repetitious lines of titles, all printed by Coach Publishing—none of which hold any interest for the current investigation or contain anything useful tucked away inside them.

Checking the paperwork on the desk more closely reveals other long overdue demands from suppliers and utility businesses besides the electricity company, while a quick check around the office confirms that both the water and gas have also been cut off. Even the letting agency has recently initiated steps to repossess the property through legal channels.

Among the paperwork, the investigators find an eye-catching flyer that suggests a new avenue of investigation, **Handout: Font 6**. It is stapled to an invoice from a local van hire firm for a Transit van, booked from just before the Offset event through to the day after. Further digging finds an exhibitor welcome letter, on Offset-headed notepaper, providing detailed information regarding site access prior

to the event, along with setup and breakdown timings, contact points, and so forth. An online search (no roll required) leads to Offset's website, which contains details of the Offset 2016 event, showcasing self-publishing, with a hundred or more small companies listed as attending, including Coach Publishing.

Investigators calling the van rental firm learn that Coach hasn't collected the van and that the credit card used to make the deposit was declined, no roll required.

NEXT STEPS

Unless the GM has decided to stage the denouement elsewhere (**Alternative Locations**, page 34), all the available evidence points to Robert Coach's attendance at Offset 2016. As the publisher hasn't been seen at any of his other usual haunts over the last few days, the investigators' only option is to head to Tate Modern—go to **The Power of Art** (page 33).

Closing the Case

The clues in this case file are widely scattered, meaning that the investigators may have missed something and not be sure where to go next. Even if they have found all the evidence, the investigators may still need to link the crime with Robert Coach and surmise his whereabouts based on the information gleaned from his office or elsewhere.

- ♦ If the investigators are struggling, the GM should encourage the players to discuss their discoveries to date and where, geographically, those discoveries lead. Summarising what their investigators know, for example, in a phone call to DCI Nightingale, should help the players to identify any leads they have yet to follow up on or any connections that they might have missed.
- ♦ Even if the investigators have gathered all the clues and successfully linked them together, a discussion now gives them the opportunity to formulate a plan regarding where they want to head next and what they intend to do once they get there. The GM could, if required, gently nudge the investigators by asking them where they wish to go. Hopefully, the answer is “Tate Modern”!
- ♦ If all else fails, and the game session is running short of time, a bulletin comes in over the investigators’ Airwave radios about a break-in at the Tate Modern gallery; the suspect’s description matches that of the person of interest in the Edgar Marsh case.
- ♦ Alternatively, if the investigators have the broken piece of type from Edgar’s body (**Autopsy Results**, page 23), the GM could ask for a **POW** roll, as the Font reaches out through its missing component to guide whoever has it to its current location. As the type is damaged and, potentially, quite a distance from the Font, whether the investigators have been trained to resist the glamour or not (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 243), only on a fumble are they compelled to follow the tug towards the rest of the malignancy. Otherwise, a successful **INT** or **Magic** roll suggests that following the pull should lead the investigators to their quarry.
- ♦ However, if the GM and players would prefer not to rush the finale, any recap and planning steps are the perfect place to break until the next session—or a great way to start the next one.

Once the investigators have figured out that Robert Coach is their best suspect in Edgar Marsh’s murder and identified where he is most likely to be found, it will be getting late. Regardless, Coach takes no action until after closing time, wherever he intends to complete the final act under the Font’s guidance. While the ending of this case

file is written under the assumption that it will take place at Tate Modern (**The Power of Art**, following), two other suggestions are presented in the **Alternative Locations** box (page 34).

GM ADVICE

While *The Font of All Evil* is written to take place in just one day, May 19th, you can spread it out over two days, if you prefer—or if the players are enjoying roleplaying their investigators and/or taking their time finding the clues. As *Offset 2016* doesn’t begin until Friday evening, this gives Robert Coach time to break into Tate Modern to carry out his plan between early closing at 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm, when the fair’s launch event is scheduled to commence. If you choose to host the final showdown elsewhere, Coach simply breaks in after closing time on May 20th instead.



THE POWER OF ART

Tate Modern, located on the South Bank of the Thames not far from Blackfriars Bridge, is a striking structure. Once a power station, it now houses a diverse collection of modern and contemporary art. Both the exterior and interior have a brutal industrial quality, evoked inside through cavernous spaces and exposed girders.

The weekend coming kicks off the second *Offset* fair in London, a celebration of published media as art. This year, it takes place in Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall⁴. The gallery has set aside the cavernous rear section of the Turbine Hall for the fair, which includes more than 140 participants in the fields of literature, graphic design, poetry, and art, as well as those who promote them all—including a range of independent publishers, among whom is Coach. As part of the broader event, Tate Modern’s curator, Angelique Ozanne (no relation to the Ozanne River in France), has acquired original examples of varied small-scale printing devices, including a grand wooden printing press—the same model as the one used by Thomas Helgreen to print Haswell’s cursed pamphlet (**To Kill a King**, page 8).



Footnote: ⁴*Whispers Under Ground*

Alternative Locations

While the how and what remain the same, where the final act takes place is not entirely fixed. Two other possibilities besides Tate Modern are outlined in the following sections, but these are not the be-all-and-end-all—the investigators' actions may suggest another, more fitting, location for that particular group. But, for starters, the final events could also occur at:

- ♦ A sound stage in a studio just off Kennington Road
- ♦ The Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers

The Studio

In this instance, the investigators found another letter in Coach's office among the various stacks of correspondence, one from Peter Grafton at the University of Reading. Grafton writes to apologetically decline a request to access a restored grand wooden printing press, as someone else presently has the device on loan. A production company, filming a series entitled "The Bastards of St Paul's," has borrowed the press; its return is expected in three months' time. A successful **Research** roll when searching the internet finds a link between a series of that name and Gateway Media Studios of Montford Place, Kennington.

Gateway Media Studios is situated close to a local gin distillery, two now-defunct gasometers (gas holders)—one of them a listed

(legally protected) building—and the world-famous Oval cricket ground. A high, red brick wall surmounted by security fencing hides a courtyard surrounded by low, repurposed commercial buildings, refurbished as production offices and studio space. As with the finale at Tate Modern, Coach waits until everyone has gone home for the day before attempting to use the printing press.

The Company of Stationers

With the Tokefield Centre at the tail end of restoration and modernisation work, various exhibits charting the history of the Stationers' Company remain in storage awaiting the final opening of all the centre's facilities to the public once again. As a paid-up member of the company, Coach has an invite to an opening evening next week, which the investigators find in his office on top of a stack of correspondence next to his computer. Among the highlights listed is a viewing of a faithful and functional recreation of a grand wooden printing press, which, the invitation states, currently resides in a back room, off limits to all but staff though accessible upon written request.

A successful **INT** roll, if required, suggests that Coach is unlikely to wait for the event before attempting to use the press, and is more likely to hammer the centre's front door down after hours to get to the latest object of his desire.

Widening Access

Once the investigators arrive at Tate Modern, scouting around the building finds an abandoned white Mercedes—registered to Coach—parked haphazardly across three spots in the loading area off Park Street. Closer inspection notes that the bonnet (hood) is exceedingly warm, the boot (trunk), ajar and empty. A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll reveals that the boot has just the right tinge of salty, soot-filled claustrophobia to connect it with the piece of moveable type and Edgar's murder.

It's not difficult to see that service door into the gallery has been forced, probably with a crowbar. Inside

the building, the Turbine Hall is a maze of tables and backboards, strewn with an array of unopened crates, cardboard boxes, and plastic-shrouded pallets. Many of the stands for Offset 2016 have been set up, while others remain incomplete.

Upon entering, the investigators hear a male voice raised in unnaturally theatrical tones, an almost sing-song intonation of something not quite musical. The words are unintelligible—nonsensical, whatever language skills the investigators have—yet cleanly enunciated, filled with forceful energy and certainty. Between the point of entry and the distant voice, random objects have been shoved



aside, and even overturned—tables, display boards, chairs, lighting, and so forth.

Investigators may rightly assume that the forced entry has triggered a silent security alarm, for which a representative has undoubtedly already been despatched from an offsite office; if not, the GM should permit the investigators an **INT** roll to realise that civilian backup is on the way. There are visible point-of-contact details for the alarm system plastered on a wall by the service door, so a wary investigator may wish to get in touch, confirm their presence, and perhaps attempt to keep any innocent interference at a distance (a successful **Social** roll, with a bonus die if the investigator identifies themselves as a member of the Metropolitan Police Service—yes, even over the phone!).

The voice's source isn't difficult to find. As Robert Coach hoves into view, the investigators see him working the mechanism of a grand wooden printing press. It looks oddly like a torturous piece of antique flatpack furniture, complete with an array of knobs, screws, slats, plates, and levers, along with a large, shallow wooden box (the case, containing all the pieces of type—but one!). The GM should give the players **Handout: Font 7**. Discarded beneath the press is the leather satchel the investigators

may have viewed on CCTV footage from South Ealing Road (**Further Inquiries**, page 21). Surrounding Coach and the press, faux walls of fake shelves filled with books and lit by an artificial window present an olde worlde setting for Coach's strange, apparently ritualistic, activity.

As the investigators watch, Coach finishes inking the moveable type in the case with two large, ball-like tools ("dabbers"), positions a sheet of paper into the frame-like contraption on the press' near end, then drops the frame into position over the *forme*. Next, Coach cranks a handle that moves the wooden box into position beneath a screw mechanism that has a long wooden lever attached to it; the bottom of the screw mechanism looks a bit like a lid for the box. (This "lid" presses the sheet of paper against the inked letters in the case, as anyone with the Art/Craft (Printing) skill knows, no roll required.)

The GM should ask the players how their investigators intend to deal with Coach.

- ♦ Should the investigators make themselves known, Coach pulls the long wooden lever towards himself, grunting with effort. He lets go of the lever, winds the case out from under the screw mechanism, then flips the frame up into its original position. He turns to face the

investigators after triumphantly pulling the now printed sheet of paper free from the frame, his eyes gleaming, his face flushed.

- ◆ If, however, the investigators wish to sneak up on Coach unawares, he is far too distracted and making far too much noise to notice their approach. If the GM is using the **Surprise** rules (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 327), any attack automatically succeeds, no Stealth roll required. Depending on when the investigators time their intervention, Coach may or may not print the cursed tract; if he doesn't, the Font is left trapped in the *forme*. This doesn't make it any less dangerous to deal with, though.
- ◆ If the investigators choose to split up to tackle Coach—perhaps to flank him or find some other advantage (**Splitting the Party**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 226)—we suggest comparing DEX values to determine what happens when, if it isn't clear who initiates the showdown (**Who Goes First?**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 124).

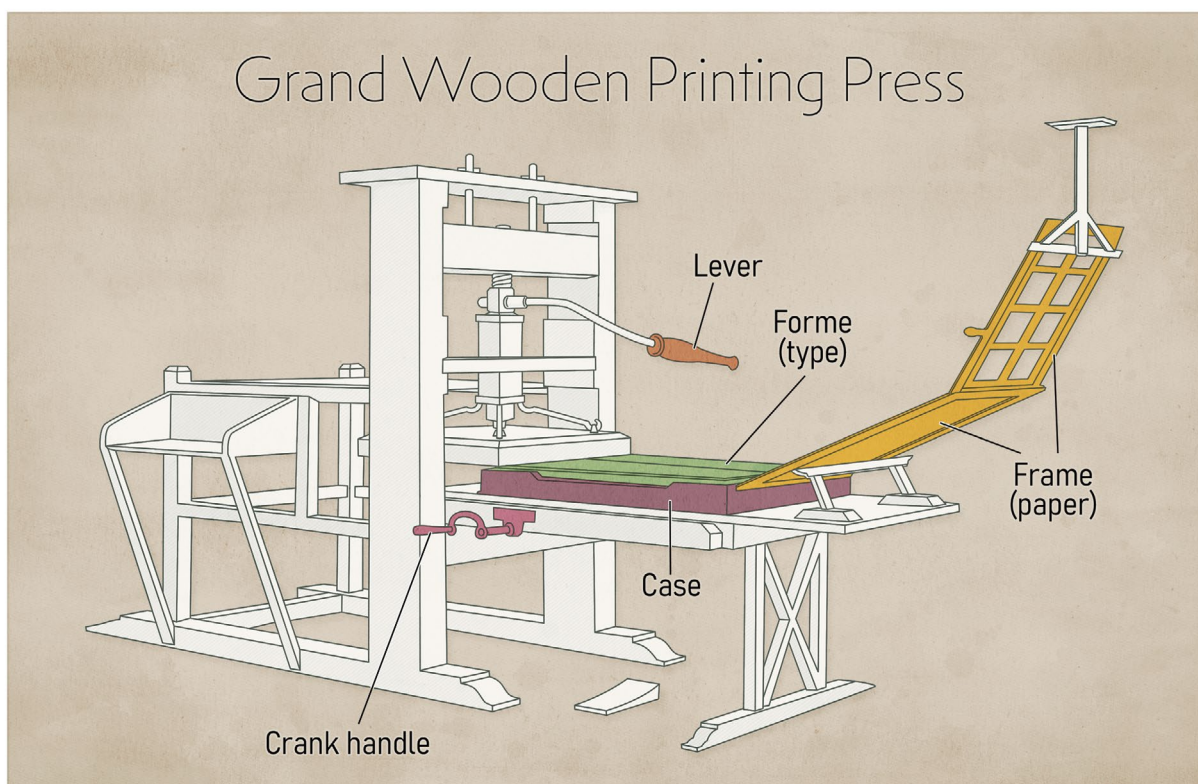
Provided Coach is not interrupted, he manages to print Haswell's infamous pamphlet. In doing so, he believes he has achieved all he needs to and only wishes to escape with his prize, the printed sheet. Other than as a physical reproduction of a lost historical tract, the sheet is worthless. It also has no intrinsic power, having served its purpose as a conduit to further cement the Font's control over Coach.

Regardless of the investigators' tactics—go to **Dealing With Coach** (following).

A Note on Timing

Like certain fictional wizards, the investigators are never late to Coach's ritual. Nor are they early—they arrive at the most dramatically appropriate moment to make for an exciting finale.

Handout: Font 7



GM ADVICE

As you may have noticed, Helgreen's *forme* isn't technically complete when Coach attempts to print Haswell's pamphlet, although the piece recovered from Edgar's body (**Autopsy Results**, page 23) may be very close by, assuming that the investigators brought it with them. Even if the investigators don't have the missing piece, the Font has grown strong enough that the piece's absence doesn't impact what is about to happen. Of course, if you fancy a theatrical flourish, if the investigator carrying the missing piece fails a **Luck** roll, it flies out of wherever they're carrying it to rejoin its siblings, quite probably giving away the investigators' presence and ruining any surprise attack. Only do this, though, if you think your players will enjoy this sudden yet inevitable turn of events!



Dealing With Coach

There are many ways the investigators may wish to tackle Coach—not all of which necessarily adhere to the **Four Es** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 71).

- ♦ Ideally, if Coach has become the malignancy's new home, the investigators need to subdue him, as rendering him unconscious drives the Font back into the type nestled in the case. A successful **INT** or **Magic** roll suggests this as a course of action, while a successful **Combat Manoeuvre** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 134) or a well-timed use of a spell like *Impello palma* is required to execute it.
- ♦ Another way to drive the Font back into the type is to reduce its damage condition to **Down** or worse (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 144) by successfully fighting back whenever it attacks. **Remember:** damage is cumulative, and investigators can fight back using melee attacks and spells (**Response 3: Fight Back**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 129). (Technically, they could also fight back using a readied firearm but, this being London, it's unlikely that they'll have one.)
- ♦ If the malignancy never leaves the moveable type, or is forced back into it, dispersing or otherwise "defusing" the *forme* should render it harmless, at least for the time being. Separating the pieces of moveable type and storing them in different locations—perhaps even giving them to the various Rivers for safekeeping—is one method. Placing the *forme* in one or more green wood containment boxes in **Secure Storage** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 264) in the Folly's basement is another temporary solution—though Nightingale will expect it to be dealt with on a more permanent basis as quickly as possible. A successful **Luck** roll identifies sufficient green wood packing crates stashed under and around Offset's booths to use for such purposes.

- ♦ There is only one true way to destroy the malignancy: fire⁵, and the more of it, the better. If the investigators don't have the means necessary at their disposal, such as a nice Fireball or Skinny Grenade spell, they can always call on the services of **Frank Caffrey** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 239), his Parachute Regiment friends, and their cache of white phosphorous grenades⁶; after all, what's good—well, bad—for vampires is equally good for dealing with malignancies. Moving the type to somewhere less flammable than a publishing exhibition before torching it would probably also be a good idea (**Fighting Fire With Fire**, page 38), unless the investigators have their hearts set on causing some property damage—not to mention potentially incurring the wrath of Ms Ozanne, their superiors at the Met, and, last but not most definitely not least, Fleet, who takes a keen interest in Tate Modern and its exhibitions⁷.

Engaging Coach directly in combat is a dangerous affair, as the Font uses its Luck to manifest itself to aid him (see the Font's profile in the **Cast** section (page 41) for further details on how it attacks). Not only that, but the malignancy has also gifted Coach access to its Luck pool. Depending on how much of that gifted Luck Coach uses, the malignancy has three manifestation attacks left to it. Once manifested, the Font is like a chaotic firework display, all sulphur and show, its metallic pin-like streaks hulking and huge, hot with rage and reeking like a slaughterhouse. In those flashes where the malignancy has form, it appears like a great, bristling bear, made from wands of lead type. When the creature roars, its face contorts, becoming a pipe of barbs, extending and contracting with a sharp stabbing action. The GM might offer a suggestion of form—as presented in **Handout: Font 8**—or stick to a suitably unsettling description to maintain the Font's mystique and ambiguity.

Coach has bulk and an athletic vigour about him, the adrenaline rush of success—or anger at being thwarted—making him an intimidating opponent, roaring and hollering. He picks the weakest looking of the investigators to fight (lowest STR value), while the Font targets the stronger opponents (highest STR value or practitioners). Although Coach uses his fists by default, at the GM's discretion, he may instead use one of the dabbers as an **improvised weapon** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 134).

- ♦ If Coach succeeded in printing the cursed pamphlet and, thus, has become the Font's new vessel, he is keen to get away as soon as possible. His response in combat is to **flee** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 130), while the Font attacks to cover his/their escape, either using its manifestation attack if it still has Luck to

Footnotes: ⁵Winter's Gifts, ⁶Rivers of London, ⁷Whispers Under Ground.

Handout: Font 8



spend, or its glamour to order the targeted investigator to break off their attack. See also **The Power of the Press** box (page 39).

Remember: if Coach is targeted by more than one investigator per combat round, he is **outnumbered** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 135).

- If Coach manages to run, the GM can handle his getaway attempt as a **chase** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 150). He creates obstacles, zigzags through pedestrians and traffic, and generally seeks escape while putting pursuers in harm's way (**Negotiating Obstacles**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 152). Should Coach evade the investigators, the malignancy fully takes hold and feeds off him, seeking further opportunities to secure its complete freedom. Just how it achieves this could form the basis of a case file of the GM's own creation.
- If Coach hasn't yet printed the pamphlet, his aim is to break free of any fight long enough to do so. Producing the pamphlet takes him up to 5 combat rounds,

depending on when the investigators interrupted him: 1 round to ink the *forme* with the dabbers, 1 to load the paper and position it over the *forme*, 1 to roll the case under the press, 1 to print the pamphlet, and 1 to rip the paper from its frame, thus completing the Font's move into its new receptacle. In the meantime, the malignancy either uses its manifestation attack until it runs out of Luck, or it attempts to glamour the investigators one by one to give Coach time to complete the process. If successful, Coach attempts to flee as previously described.

Fighting Fire With Fire

Unless the Font's damage condition is down or worse when it is driven back into the font—meaning it can take no further part in the fight and its aftermath—it isn't going to go quietly, as long as it has Luck left to defend itself with. The same is true if it never leaves the type. At the GM's discretion, even if the Font runs out of Luck, it may attempt to use its glamour to influence an investigator to protect it or refuse to incinerate it. However, the GM should avoid using this to prolong the confrontation any



The Power of the Press

As long as the investigators are part of the Folly, they have been trained how to handle a member of the demi-monde attempting to use the glamour on them. This means that when the Font attempts to glamour an investigator during a confrontation, the investigator only has to comply with the Font's demands if they fumble their POW roll to resist (**The Glamour**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 243). Otherwise, it's up to them whether they comply or not.

However, if the investigators are not Folly-allied and have not been subjected to the glamour before, they are at a much greater risk of being coerced into doing the Font's bidding; only a Critical success on their POW roll (i.e., a dice roll of 01) prevents them from complying without a second thought. Investigators can spend Luck or push their POW roll, if necessary, although there may be severe consequences if they fail a pushed roll to resist. See also **Important: Consent** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 190) for further advice on making sure the players don't feel like they've lost control of their investigators as a result of having the glamour used on them.

longer than is necessary or entertaining—repeatedly frustrating the investigators' attempts to bring the story to a satisfying conclusion is no fun for the players.

Thankfully, lead has a low melting point, meaning that as long as any incendiary spell causes 2 or more damage in a single attack, the type melts, collapsing the malignancy's core and putting an end to the Font once and for all. The entity departs with a final roar loud enough to knock the wind from the investigator's lungs. Each investigator should make a **CON** roll: if successful, they suffer no ill effects; if they fail, they gasp for breath, suffering 1 damage in the process as they are well and truly winded. If still in the Turbine Hall, the roar sends loose papers and booth cloths flying in all directions, leaving a pretty

mess that someone's going to have to clean up before Offset 2016 can commence.

That's not the only potential for damage in the Turbine Hall, though: Skinny Grenade has a blast radius that will undoubtedly set any and all surrounding flammable materials alight, regardless of where the destruction takes place. Molten lead isn't exactly cool, meaning that if the investigators turn it into slag while it's still on the press, they're going to set the whole thing on fire unless someone is standing by with an extinguisher. And spells occasionally misfire—unexpected sparks causing the scenery to burst into flames is certainly an appropriate consequence if someone fumbles their casting roll or fails a pushed one. Tate Modern does have a sprinkler system and fire curtains, so damage to the gallery as a whole can be limited, although Offset 2016 certainly won't open as planned. Overall, the investigators' best bet is to safely corral the type then destroy it somewhere else under more controlled conditions—if the situation allows!



Using Magic Against the Font

Although, technically, the Font can be defeated without the use of any spells, *RoL:RPG* is, like the novels it's based on, fully invested in the magic. As mentioned in **Introducing the Investigators** (page 10), spells such as Noisemaker could be used to distract and misdirect Coach, while Shield could be cast to protect against the Font's attacks and *Impello palma* used to slap either Coach or the Font out of the way during any showdown—or render Coach unconscious. And let's not forget everyone's favourite incendiary spells: Fireball and Skinny Grenade—ideal for permanently dealing with the Font and its type, even with all the potential consequences their use may bring.

These are only some suggestions, though, and the GM should reward players for creative use of other spells, including those from different traditions, such as Snapdragon, *Candano*, and *Natchaduri*.

Conclusion

Hopefully, Coach and the Font have been dealt with, thereby removing the immediate threat posed by the malignancy. However, the investigators may—or may not—find themselves left with a quandary regarding a final solution, for example, if they dispersed the malignancy's present manifestation, but it still persists in the type.

As noted previously, handling the malignancy may lie outside the bounds of the investigators' abilities, either because of their current location or because they personally lack the necessary "firepower" to take care of it once and for all. Regardless of the solution the investigators come up with to permanently render the malignancy harmless, even if they're not the ones to carry it out, the GM should ensure that they are at least present to witness it to so that their players leave the case file with a sense of satisfaction at a job well done. Hopefully, very well done. Positively toasty, in fact.

LOOSE ENDS

The Font is not the only issue the investigators may still have to deal with. While Acton's Family Liaison Officers take care of informing Edgar's parents of their child's death, there's Robert Coach, Offset 2016, and, by extension, Tate Modern to consider as well.

Prosecuting Coach

The investigators may still be involved in the case's aftermath regarding what charges are levelled against Coach. CCTV footage (**Further Inquiries**, page 21) and forensic evidence from the crime scene provide a baseline to support any prosecution, along with the investigators' detailed—though carefully sanitised—official reports.

However, at the GM's discretion, Coach may be declared unfit to stand trial. After all, if the Font managed to transfer itself from the type into the hapless publisher, he effectively suffered a form of sequestration, which is never good for the victim. An MRI scan of Coach can be carried out by Dr Walid at the investigators' request; his brain shows clear signs of **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (HTD; *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 177). Coach's mental health is also badly affected by everything that's happened, potentially leading to him being sectioned under the Mental Health Act, or voluntarily admitting himself for treatment and monitoring, rather than him being charged.

Offsetting the Damage

Depending on what happened at Tate Modern, the fate of Offset 2016 may hang in the balance, especially if the investigators' response involved flames, along with any resulting fire and smoke damage (**Fighting Fire With Fire**, page 38). Setting the fair alight, accidentally or otherwise, has professional consequences for the investigators, up to and

including a visit to the Directorate of Professional Standards (**Police Oversight**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 214), if the situation got out of hand.

It is possible to smooth things over with Fleet, and through her, Ms Ozanne, by making appropriate offerings at Fleet's source at the Vale of Health (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 280)—alcohol (lots of it)⁸, or something suitably artistic or media related, along with large quantities of treats for her border collie, Ziggy, the captain of her dogs⁹, ought to do it.

REWARDS

Once the investigators have dealt with any loose ends to theirs and the GM's satisfaction, their players should follow the steps in the **Investigator Development Phase** (*Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 120).

- If using the standard system of gaining development points, each investigator receives 1 development point per session of play.
- Unless the investigators caused significant property damage or loss of life, 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 *The Font of All Evil*. Congratulations!



Footnotes: ⁸False Value, ⁹Whispers Under Ground

Cast

The following section contains the profiles for the NPCs the investigators meet during their investigation. Profiles include skills in the order of common, expert, and then combat. As none of the antagonists are practitioners, there are no spells listed.

Robert Coach, age 48, obsessed publisher

STR 70 CON 50 DEX 60 INT 60 POW 40
DB: 0 MOV: 8 MP: 8 LUCK: 60 (80)*

**The Font of All Evil gifts Coach access to its Luck pool, while the publisher pursues the goal of releasing it from the type and causing mayhem and murder in the process.*

Advantages: Scary, The Knowledge (London).

Skills

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

Languages

English (own) 60%, French 60%, German 30%, Latin 30%.

The Font of All Evil, a malignancy

STR 120 CON 80 DEX 70 INT 40 POW 50
DB: +1 MOV: 12 MP: — LUCK: 60 (80)**

Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.

Skills

Athletics 60%, Observation 30%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 60%, Stealth 30%; Fighting 30%.

Language

Non-verbal.

Powers

The Glamour, Luck of the Demi-monde, the Gift of Luck (Luck shared with Robert Coach).

Vestigia

An oily smell like soot and turpentine, fragrant with a bitter woodiness and tidal saltiness, a sensation of suffocating pressure and enclosure, rage, and the screams of the slaughterhouse—or animal baiting pit.

Special**

Initially, the Font attacked using the moveable lead type directly as an impaling weapon. Once it takes up residence in Robert Coach, it no longer needs the type's physical presence to manifest and attack. If driven out of Coach and back into the type, for example, if he is knocked unconscious, the Font can still attack as long as Helgreen's *forme* is within arm's length (1 metre/yard or less) of the target. In this case, it no longer looks like the creature in **Handout: Font 8**, just a cylinder of long-stemmed type travelling at high speed.

Each joint manifestation/attack costs 20 Luck points. The assault on Edgar has already consumed this much—thus the reduced Luck value indicated. Unless Coach uses Luck directly during his confrontation with the investigators, this leaves the Font with three more manifestations of this devastating attack. However, if the investigators fail to deal with the malignancy before 1:00 am the following morning, its Luck refreshes, increasing the number of attacks available to it.

The target of the Font's attack must be within arm's length of the manifestation, and the Font must succeed at an opposed Fighting roll to hit them; if the target does nothing to avoid the attack, the Fighting roll is unopposed. The Font can, of course, spend Luck to ensure a hit, although this reduces the number of subsequent attacks it may make. If successful, the Font's base weapon damage is 2; its damage roll is a STR roll, as this is a melee/hand-to-hand attack. It is also an impaling attack, meaning Natural Toughness offers no defence, though regular and ballistic armour are still effective (**Armour**, *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, page 135). Once the Font has made an attack, successful or not, it vanishes. To re-manifest and attack again, it must spend a further 20 Luck points. Once it runs out of Luck, it cannot attack this way again until its Luck value refreshes.

BIT PLAYERS

Indrani Natarajan, age 29, Detective Constable

STR 50 CON 50 DEX 60 INT 60 POW 60
DB: 0 MOV: 9 MP: 12 LUCK: —

Advantage: Speedy.

Skills

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

Languages

English (own) 60%, Tamil (own) 60%.

Adrian Shine, *age 43, garage owner*

STR 60 **CON** 60 **DEX** 60 **INT** 50 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —

Advantage: Natural Toughness.

Skills

Athletics 30%, Drive 60%, Navigate 50%, Observation 60%, Read Person 40%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 30%; Appraise 60%, Locksmith 60%, Mechanical Repair 70%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Language

English (own) 60%.

Samantha Whitlow, *age 22, Police Constable*

STR 50 **CON** 60 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —

Advantage: Fast Reactions.

Skills

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

Language

English (own) 60%.

Vanessa Marsh, *age 20, victim's sister*

STR 50 **CON** 50 **DEX** 50 **INT** 70 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —

Advantage: Wealthy.

Skills

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

Languages

English (own) 70%, Middle English 60%, Latin 30%, Old English 30%.

Dr Noah Arnold, *age 38, pathologist*

STR 50 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 70 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —

Advantage: Fast Reactions.

Skills

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

Language

English (own) 70%.

Lucas Tyler, *age 56, Stationers' Company archivist*

STR 50 **CON** 40 **DEX** 70 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —

Advantage: Connected.

Skills

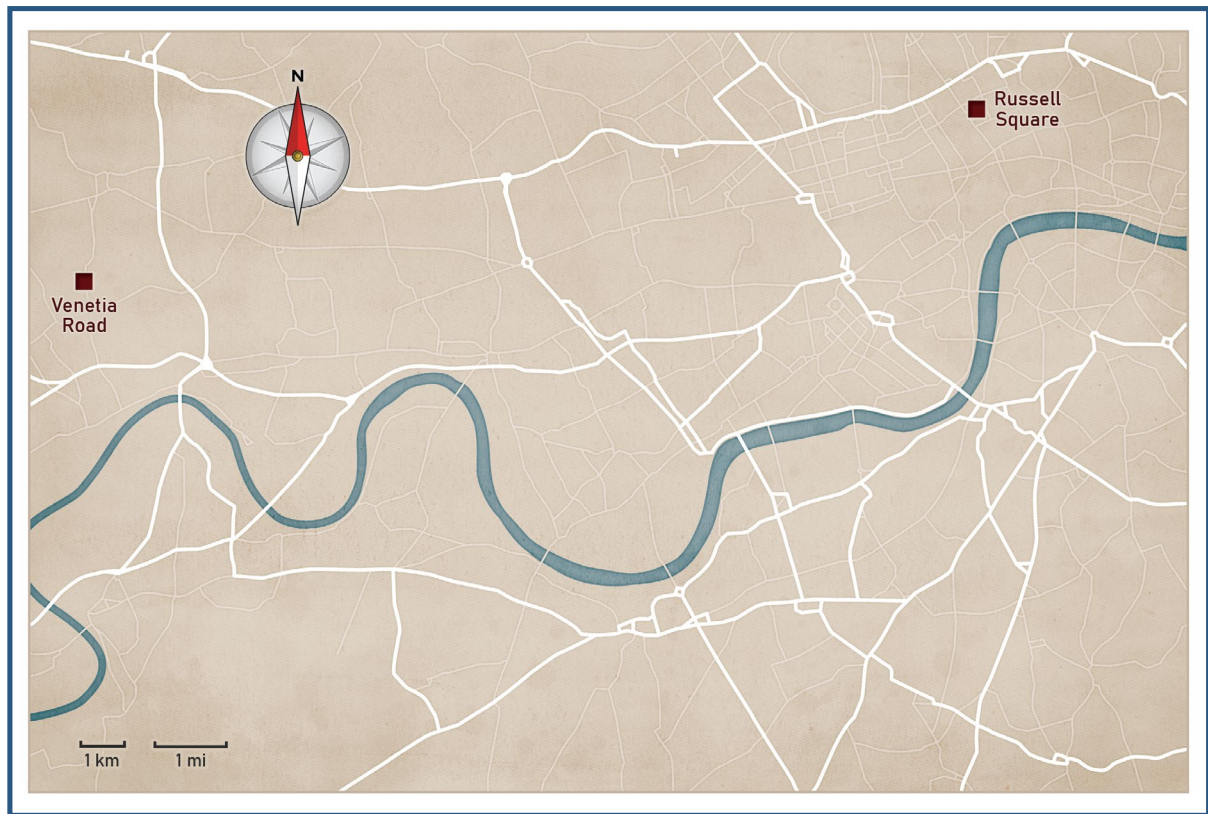
Athletics 30%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 40%, Research 70%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 50%, Stealth 30%; Appraise 60%, Art/Craft (Printing) 40%, Art/Craft (Calligraphy) 60%, History 70%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Language

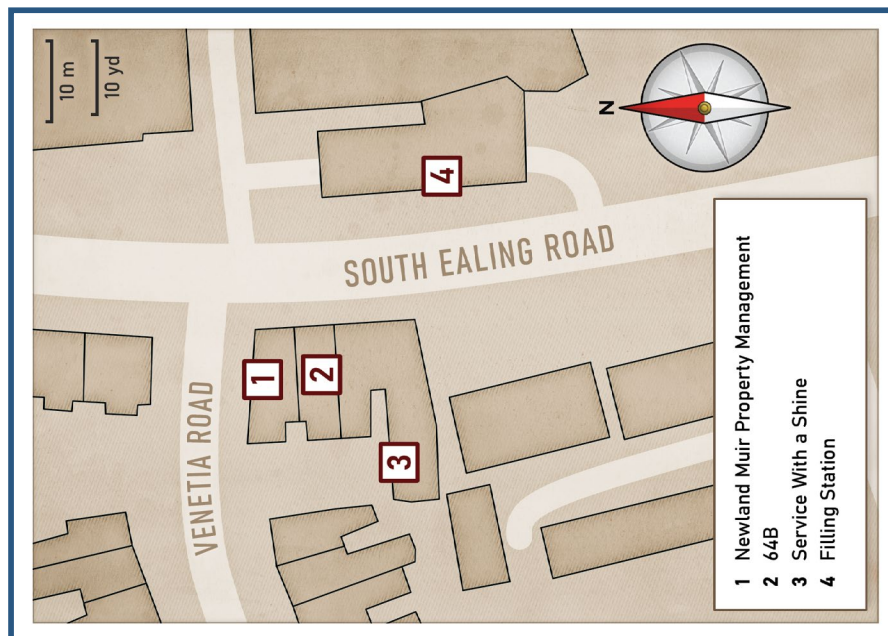
English (own) 70%, French 50%, Latin 60%, Middle English 60%.



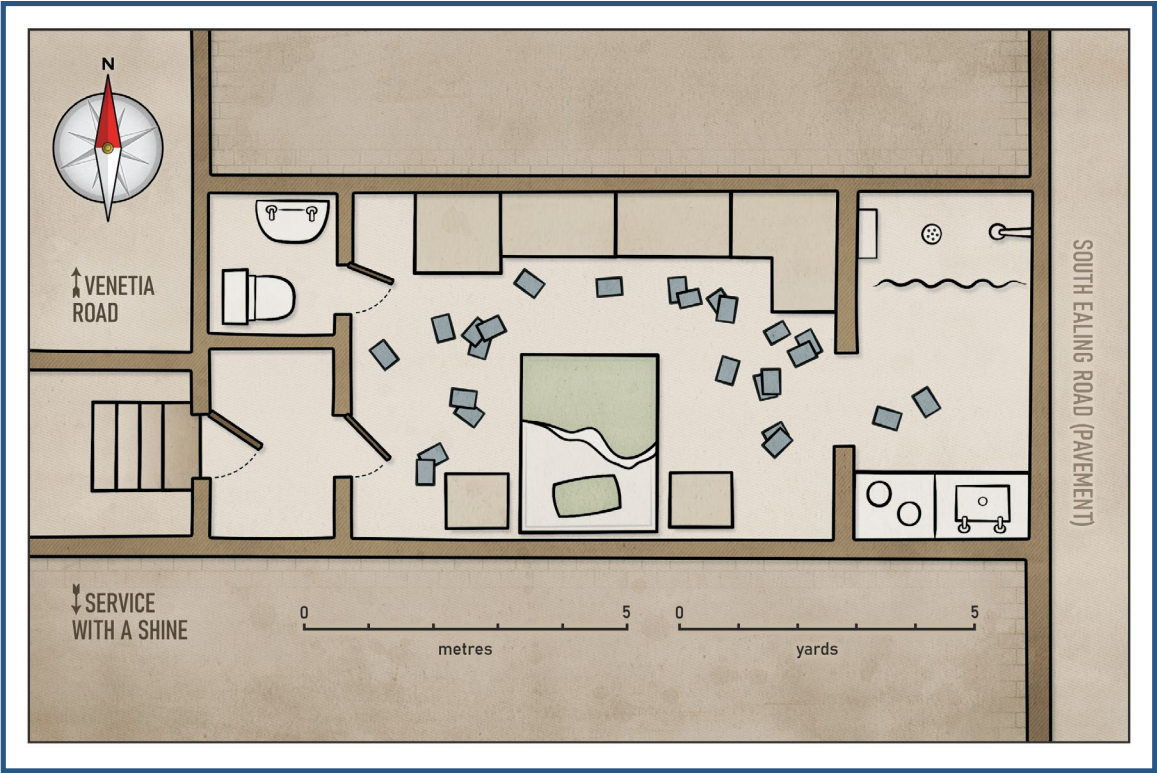
Case File Location Overview, Players



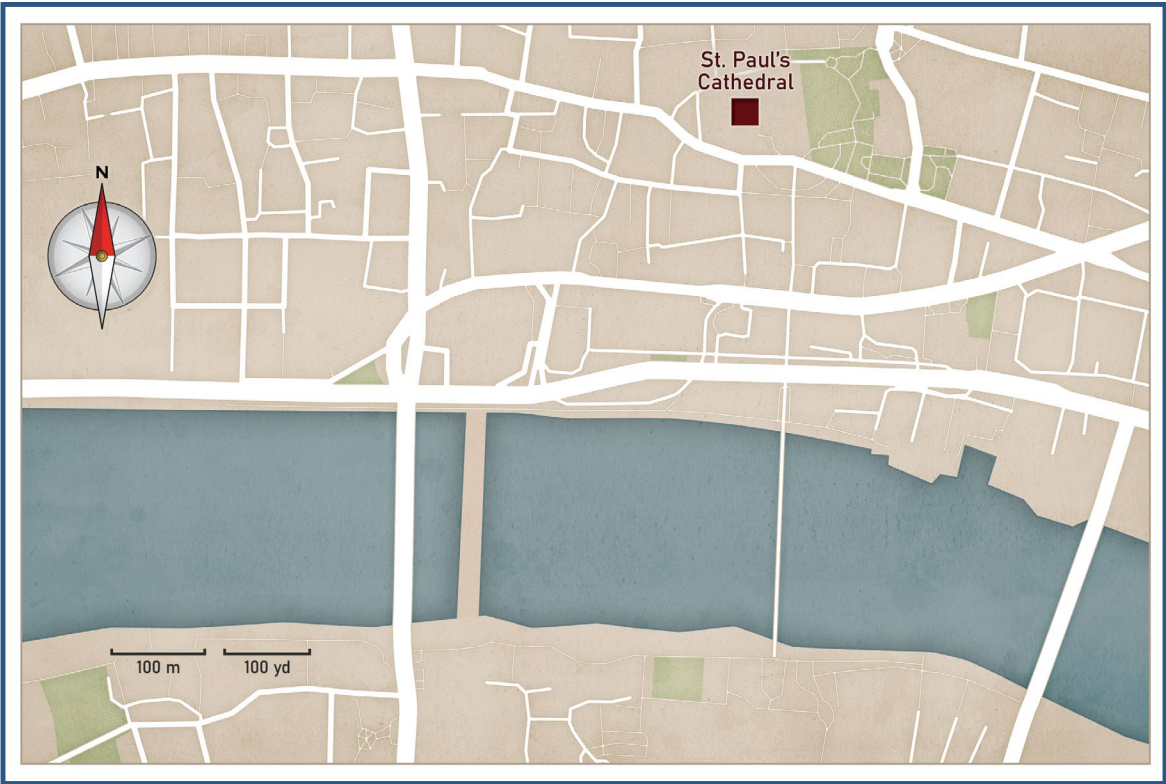
Venetia Road, Players



Edgar Marsh's Flat, Players



Blackfriars and the South Bank, Players



RIVERS of LONDON
the Roleplaying Game

The Font of All Evil

Murder and Mayhem
Beside the Thames

Thursday 19th May, 2016: you have been called in to investigate a gruesome murder scene in Ealing, West London.

The local police were so concerned by the odd nature of the victim's injuries that they called in the Folly to investigate. But how did the victim die? Why does their home look like a hoarder's nest? Most importantly: why would somebody want them dead?

Can you crack this case?

The Font of All Evil is a standalone introductory scenario for *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*.



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