

# London Calling

## PREPARING TO PLAY

### PLOT SYNOPSIS

The shadowrunners and Mystic Crusaders both arrive in London to find the next cache; after a brief period of adjustment to the local scene, the two teams will be gunning for the cache—and each other. Frosty’s map will lead the shadowrunners beneath the streets to London’s lost rivers and a band of urban druids with problems of their own, dodging the Mystic Crusaders at every turn, facing the odd monster and unexpected complications. The twist comes when the astral rift is activated and the map changes—it turns out that the physical anchor where the cache is the London Stone, an ancient public landmark. It’s a race to the finish on both the metaplanes and in the mundane world to see who will claim this cache.

### WHAT’S REALLY HAPPENING AND WHY

Frosty didn’t plan on this little venture, but she’s damned sure she isn’t going to lose and aims to hit the ground running when the plane lands in London. She’s calling in all of her favors and getting in touch with all her contacts to make sure the shadowrunners have what they need when they touch down—and relying on the fact that she has all four of the artifacts needed to find the caches, which should put the Mystic Crusaders at a disadvantage. Unfortunately for Frosty and the player characters, the Atlantean Foundation’s resources run deep—a fragment of Frosty’s map that was separated from the rest of the artifact before the Awakening, which they can use to follow Frosty’s map and activate the astral rifts that lead to the caches.

Initially at least, the Mystic Crusaders are at a disadvantage because they have to use the shadowrunners to find the astral rift. So while the shadowrunners are getting settled and equipped, the Mystic Crusaders will be waiting and watching, keeping them under close surveillance. It’s only a matter of time before the shadowrunners tip off that they’re being tailed, but by that time the Mystic Crusaders hope to either have an idea of where the astral rift is or be able to pinpoint it themselves using their map fragment.

The shadowrunners for their part can follow the map to where until it says they should be standing right on top of it...and not find it. A little detective work or a bolt of inspiration should tell them that the astral rift is actually several meters beneath their feet, in a natural grotto carved by one of London’s famous “lost rivers”—streams that were paved over during the centuries that London was being built up. Getting there becomes something of a challenge, requiring the player characters to find an entrance to London’s underground network of sewers and tunnels and try to navirift as best they can (provided they don’t get creative and decide to just burrow or blast a hole straight down to it). Just when they get close, the shadowrunners get hit by an ambush by St. John’s mob, a local group of criminals.

The grotto is the sacred space of the Bel Tann Spelunker’s Society, a small group of urban druids who explore and preserve the London underground; the BTSS is at odds with Bridgett St. John and her crew, who have their own designs on how to use the space—the shadowrunners just happen to get caught in the middle, and the Mystic Crusaders take this as an opportunity and come in at the end to claim the astral rift and whatever artifacts the player characters are holding. How the shadowrunners work that particular situation out is mostly up to them, but presumably at one point one or more people will activate the astral rift and go through it—which is when the map shifts.

The London Stone is the physical anchor where the cache will manifest; these days it is quietly on display with rather minimal security off of Cannon Street, several miles away and several meters above where the shadowrunners and Mystic Crusaders (or their physical bodies, if using the astral rift) currently are. It can become a race to get to the stone first—either to claim the cache, or to destroy it and stop the others from claiming the cache.

### RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

First things first, read **The Old Smoke: London 2072** to get a feel for the sprawl. Foreign runners will stand out a bit based on their accents, idiom, and mannerisms, but the real problem is that the rules of how the game are played are different in London, especially given recent events. Any player that asks for a quick synopsis should be given that section as a handout to read.

Basically from the moment they touch ground in England, the shadowrunners are going to have eyes on them from the Mystic Crusaders, as described in **On Your Six**. As such, the gamemaster will be making periodic Perception + Intuition Tests to see if the player characters recognize the same people showing up around them and twig to the fact that they’re being followed. Further guidelines on how to play this out are given in **On Your Six**.

In the transition from Chapter 1, we’re going to skip over the boring part of getting on a plane and flying across the Atlantic. This chapter starts with **Getting Sorted**, where the player characters arrive in London, get set up with the vehicles and accommodations Frosty has set up for them while the team is en route, and then attend a buy with a local fixer in order to pick up some much-needed equipment.

The shadowrunners should also have a little bit of downtime to take in the local color, fortify their position, rest up if they got damaged in the scene, and possibly make some inquiries or local contacts as Frosty re-aligns the map for a

more precise location. When the map is aligned, the player characters are encouraged to **A Marks the Spot**, a rather simple task that also gives them a bit more time to spot their tales, as described in **On Your Six**. Whether or not the shadowrunners take notice of the Mystic Crusaders, they will find out that there is no astral rift at the spot marked on the map—and a little bit of deduction should allow them to figure out that the astral rift is actually several meters below them.

If the player characters take to the sewers (as opposed to trying to blast their way through the street or some other plan), they go down in the ground **Where the Dead Men Go**, finding their way through the sewers and underground tunnels, dodging a deranged mutaqua. However they get there, when the shadowrunners finally get near the rift, it turns out **It Was a Fraggin' Ambush!** as members of the local underworld and a group of druids clash, with the shadowrunners stuck in the middle. After the firefight, the shadowrunners have the option of talking and dealing with either the **Sewer Druids**, who guard the astral rift, or **St. John's Mob**, the London criminals that want the druids to leave—and who have a deal worked out with the Mystic Crusaders.

By hook or by crook, the shadowrunners should eventually end up at **Bel Tann's Rift**, where the player characters and the Mystic Crusaders will probably both try to access the astral rift. Any player characters that go through the rift will end up on a brief astral quest in **London in the Shadows**; anyone that stays behind will find out that once the rift is activated the map has changed—the physical anchor where the cache will emerge is not coterminous with the astral rift like the last one; and since the Mystic Crusaders have a fragment of the map chances are they'll know that too. It's a race then to get to the physical anchor, **The London Stone**.

When all is said and done, if the shadowrunners survived then they go to **Recovery**, where they find Harlequin, who answers a few questions before Frosty herds them back on the plane again. Then the player characters are on a race to the next stage of their journey: the map leads them to Azania.

>>>>> **BEGIN BOXED TEXT**

## **THE OLD SMOKE: LONDON 2072**

>>>>> **END BOXED TEXT**

## **GETTING SORTED**

### **SCAN THIS**

The player characters touch down in London's Heathrow Airport. Frosty has been busy for at least the last six hours doing the side of things shadowrunners normally don't see fixers and Johnsons do—arranging all the details of their trip, where the shadowrunners will stay, how they're going to get around the city, and setting up a meet to buy guns and gear. Frosty and the shadowrunners pick up their vehicles on the ground and go directly for their lodgings, after making sure their temporary headquarters is secure she gives the player characters a little bit of time to get sorted out before they head out to meet a fixer and pick up the gear she's arranged.

## **TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT**

### **Read the following to the characters:**

A suborbital can take you from Portland to London in about three hours, weather permitting. When you're flying on the sly, in a jet owned and operated by the legendary Rigger X, it's more like thirteen hours, including a brief stop to refuel in New York. For practically every minute of that flight, Frosty has been busy making arrangements for when you land. It's the sort of thing every fixer or Mr. Johnson has to do, the nitty-gritty details of negotiating a web of contacts, friends and friends-of-friends to find a secure place to stay, vehicles to be there when you land, accommodations and service fees for Rigger X and the plane...you wonder how she manages to stay awake and alert until you see her dig out a derm of long haul and smooth it out on the underside of her wrist.

Just as Rigger X turns on the ancient fasten seat belt signs, Frosty addresses you all.

"We're tight on time, so here's the situation: when we touch down, we're going to taxi the plane to a private hangar. A customs officer is going to register your fake SINs from the terminal; they will not check us or our luggage in person. RX will stay here with the plane. There will be two vans waiting for us in the hangar; we're going to take them to a safehouse. We'll have a couple hours to get oriented—sleep if you can, stand watch and secure the perimeter if you can't. At 2700 local you'll go to a meet with a local fixer to pick up some gear. After we get everything sorted, I'm going to re-align the map. Questions, comments, concerns?"

### **When the characters land:**

Rigger X doesn't even come out himself to see you off the plane; he opens the door remotely and tiny anime-style AR geisha-stewardesses direct you to disembark. A drone-stairwell wheels itself over and locks into the doorframe; around the hangar other service drones are coming to motion as your unseen pilot takes command of them. Off in the corner is an old black leather couch and a couple vending machines; your stomach growls at the sight of the prepackaged salty-sweet protein bars and colas.

Sunlight shines through the hangar doors, even though your bodies feel like its past midnight. By the time the last of you hit the ground, a driverless forklift is depositing a sizeable plastic crate next to a black, unmarked minivan and an ancient, dirty red Chevy. Frosty is already ahead of you, toting the armored case with the artifacts over to the black van.

An older human in a too-starched uniform nonchalantly walks around a corner, sucking on an electronic nicstick. It takes a moment for Frosty to register his presence, but when she does you can hear an almost literal growl and all the drones suddenly stop. Drawing a pistol and a fat stack of hard currency from her luggage, she walks over to him keeping the pistol leveled. He doesn't appear to be disturbed, and takes the wad of cash out of her hand, gives her a wink, and walks away.

#### **When they get to the safehouse:**

Ten years ago, maybe, this was a soy-packing plant. The faint aroma of spoiled soy lingers on, even after the space was divided up into lots and rented out. The vans drive themselves around to the loading dock in the back, Frosty gets out and enters a code into the old-fashioned numlock on the up-and-over door. Despite their apparent age and condition, the door retracts almost without a sound.

The inside is sparse: a row of military-style cots with a new sleeping bag and pillow on each, an industrial-sized refrigerator, a pair of foldable tables and a stack of foldable chairs stacked against the wall, a pair of plastic port-a-loos, and a portable shower unit that gets its water from a hose plugged into a wall. In the corner, an old-fashioned pair of television monitors—not even trideo—is showing the feed from hidden cameras above the doors leading into the space. Frosty tosses her suitcase onto the nearest cot and heads toward the port-a-loos.

“Unload everything,” Frosty says to the room at large, “put the big crate in the middle of the room. Then see what you can do about improving security. I'll be out in a few minutes.”

#### **When the characters go to meet the fixer:**

For the last couple of hours, Frosty has been setting up a large canvas tent in the middle of the room, filled with mystical gewgaws—a portable mana lodge. She's just putting the finishing touches on an elaborate chalk circle around the tent's borders when it's time to go to the meet. The tired elf walks you out to the vans.

A file share invitation pops up on your commlinks from IceLady3113.

“That's the equipment list and code for releasing the funds in the escrow account. I'm going to stay here and protect the artifacts—the other team can't touch me, and they'll be safe as long as they are with me. The fixer is a Mr. Chudshire—I haven't used him before and you shouldn't trust him any farther than you can throw him. Check over the equipment, it's your own ass that's going to get fragged if something falls apart during the run. The vans have the routes plugged in.”

With that she heads back into the safehouse, the door locking automatically behind her.

#### **At the meet with Mr. Chudshire:**

The traffic is murderous, and riding in the left lane is weirder than you thought it would be. More than once you think the van is going to run someone over who just dashes across the street but it stops just in time. Eventually the vehicles pull into a parking garage, then slowly circle down to the lowest level. You start to get concerned about a black sedan driving behind you, but it pulls off to park as you head down the last ramp.

Waiting in the corner of the lot are four teenage humans, two males and two females, and a single crooked-backed, emaciated dwarf with pale skin and enormous ears; all wearing jeans, black t-shirts, jean jackets and denim flat caps. The dwarf is sitting on top of a pile of boxes and gnawing a joint of raw meat. That's either the shortest, ugliest hobgoblin you've ever seen or the fixer is a goblin...

As the vans approach, they back up toward the boxes, slow down and stop. One of the humans waves his hat and the doors unlock and open automatically.

“Come on then, we don't have all night!” you hear Mr. Chudshire say, through a thick East End accent. “I want this done with. I'm feeling a might...peckish.”

He waits for you to inspect the goods, while the three humans fan out to watch for any passers-by. You can't help but notice the large and prominent bite-mark on the back of each of their necks.

#### **If the shadowrunners are satisfied with the goods and authorize payment:**

With a nod, Mr. Chudshire's men begin loading the crates in the vans. The goblin doesn't shirk the work, tossing aside the now-clean bone and picking up one the largest crate himself in a demonstration of supernatural strength. In short order the vans are packed and ready to go. He makes another nod to his helpers, and as they disperse he draws in near you.

“These goods are paid for, but someone else paid me to give yas a message along with it, a message intended for yer ears and not yer boss-lady's.” The goblin waited a beat for that to sink in, then carried on.

“John Dee said to tell yer that he'd be seeing yas shortly and to watch yer back and not trust any elves. Good advice that: never trust an elf. Stringy meat.” Chudshire looks you dead in the eye.

“I’ve never met this Dee bastard, and can’t tell you a damned thing about him. I don’t like how he found out about this little transaction, its bad business. He knows things about yer that even I didn’t know, and I don’t like that. You see your boss, you tell her we’re never doing business again. Some of her lips are too loose for my liking.”

**If the shadowrunners end up killing the fixer and his goons, for whatever reason:**

The sounds of combat over and done with, you take a breath and look at the mayhem. One of the women coughs, spitting a bit of blood. A horrible rasping sound comes out when she breathes, and it’s probably too late for anything to save her now, except magic. She stares at with one bloody eye. “Gotta tell you. D...Dee said...never trust an elf.”

The woman coughs a little more and her head hangs down, a string of blood hanging from her mouth down onto her chest.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The plane ride is uneventful unless the players decide to needlessly complicate it. The male human is an airport security officer shaking Frosty down for a bribe. Rigger X for his part is going to stay inside the hangar for the duration of the London stay.

The van and car have full batteries, upgraded Pilots, London mapsofts, and the address for both the shadowrunner’s safehouse and the meeting place with the fixer programmed in already; the keys are in the ignition and Frosty has the access codes so that the vans can be ordered around remotely using a commlink.

One minor complication is that the car—the red one which Frosty didn’t load her gear into. The back seats are covered with knit blankets, which are covering up fresh blood stains, and some bits of hair and skull stuck in the seat cushions. If brought to Frosty’s attention, she’ll look pissed but there’s not much she can do to fix it at the moment, so she’ll tell the player characters to put the blankets back and get in—unless they all want to try and squeeze into the black minivan. Also, she will specifically warn them not to open the trunk.

From the moment they leave, the characters are being shadowed and kept under surveillance by the Mystic Crusaders. Periodically when the characters have a chance to notice that they are being followed or watched—such as when their vehicles are leaving the airport for the safehouse, or when they leave the safehouse to go to the meet with Chudshire, have one of the runners make a Perception + Intuition (3) Test (or Shadowing + Intuition, if higher), or Assensing + Intuition if astrally projecting or perceiving to notice that they are being followed or something is amiss. When they notice and decide to take action, go to **On Your Six**.

The safehouse is a rental, Frosty shares the keycode to the door with all the shadowrunners. After she gets out of the bathroom, she’s going to start setting up a Rating 8 mana lodge in the center of the room—a large tent full of occult bric-a-brac; the tent fabric is actually a fine wire mesh that serves to make the whole ensemble a faraday cage, proof from outside wireless signals. It takes Frosty eight hours from the time she arrives in the safe house to set up the mana lodge; the meet is in ten hours—well past sunset, though for the player characters it’s going to feel like way too early in the morning. Players have time to sleep if they’d like, otherwise Frosty can pass out some long haul and put on a pot of coffee (*real* coffee; Jamaican Blue Mountain Roast—Frosty has her vices).

The meet with Chudshire was set up on the plane. Frosty asked for the following list of items, plus whatever little additions the shadowrunners might have asked for:

- A set of Ulysses line armored clothing (6/4) from Mortimer of London (p.45, *Arsenal*) for each shadowrunner and Frosty
- One disposable commlink (p.196, *Unwired*) for each shadowrunner and Frosty
- One Rating 3 Fake SIN for each shadowrunner and Frosty
- One backpack (p.53, *Arsenal*) for each shadowrunner and Frosty, each containing a flashlight, three days worth of dry rations (p.53, *Arsenal*), Rating 3 contact lenses (w/image link), Rating 4 ballpoint pen microtransceiver (p.63, *Arsenal*), and Rating 6 respirator
- Six Parashield Dart pistols, loaded with narcoject, with concealed holster and a spare clip of ammo for each
- Two Remington 990 shotguns loaded with gel rounds

Mr. Chudshire is a well-connected member of the London underworld; his interests are solely commercial—to complete his transaction with Frosty and his other transaction for the mysterious John Dee and be gone. For a proper inducement (i.e. 2,000 nuyen or so) he will serve as a London contact for the shadowrunners, answering their questions and ferreting out information on them by request. However, within 48 hours of the shadowrunners meeting Mr. Chudshire, the goblin will be murdered by Knight 5.

After the shadowrunners return from the meet with Chubshire, they have a few hours of downtime to sleep, secure the safehouse, play tourist in London, check in with their contacts, etc. while Frosty plays with the map. Give them free reign and play up the jetlag they’re feeling, then continue on to **A Marks the Spot**.

## PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Most of this scene is set up; the devil is in the details—and if the player characters are acting very astute and professional, there are a couple more subtle ways to push the envelope a little. First off, the older human who arrives at the hangar could be John Dee, in disguise. This would allow the player characters to recognized him when they meet

him for the first time in **London in the Shadows**. Also, the Mystic Crusaders could already have fitted ten sensor tags (p. 332, *SR44*) into the safehouse, each equipped with a microphone; the player characters won't find them unless they actively look for them.

## DEBUGGING

Ask for the players to come up with a list of equipment they want or think they'll need before running this section; anything with availability over 12F, 15R, or 18 is out, as is any single item over 8,000 nuyen; most else within reason is fair game.

Frosty gives the shadowrunners a great deal of latitude regarding what they do and how they choose to do it. For the most part she's tired, playing the situation by ear, and mortgaging every favor and resource she has. Players might not be used to that sort of freedom and lack of direction, so if necessary have Frosty explain that to them in as many words.

The players may insist on driving, even if they're unfamiliar with the English method of driving and the vehicles are perfectly capable of taking them where they need to go. This is completely fine; a -2 dice pool modifier applies to any Pilot Groundcraft checks if the character's aren't used to driving on the other side of the road.

The characters may get into a fight with Chubshire and his gang, especially if they try to press for details on John Dee, try to take the merchandise without paying for it, or just have a habit of shooting Infected on sight.

If the player characters get into it with Chubshire and are having a hard time of it, Knight 5 can come in and attack him—when asked later, he'll pass himself off as a goblin hunter (which is true enough).

## PLACES OF INTEREST

**The Hangar (Heathrow Airport)**

**The Safehouse ()**

**The Meet ()**

## GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

**The Van**

**The Car**

**Chubshire**

**Chubshire's Technomancer**

**Chubshire's Goons (3)**

## ON YOUR SIX

### SCAN THIS

From the moment their plane touches down, the shadowrunners are going to be under surveillance. The Mystic Crusaders will use a combination of technology, magic, and good old-fashioned physical observation to track the shadowrunners' movements at all times. At some point in the adventure, the player characters will probably twig to the fact that they're being followed, and take steps to evade or confront their pursuers. When this happens, Knight 1 will arrange a sit-down with the shadowrunners.

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

**Read the following to the characters if they make a successful Perception check:**

Realization hits hard as familiar face in the crowd jumps out at you and clicks into focus: a lumbering, lanky giant with close-cropped hair and a permanent 5 o'clock shadow. You've seen him before—on your way out of the airport, on the street as you were pulling out of the safehouse, driving a truck that passed you on the A40—and back at Crater Lake, pointing a minigun at you. He's one of the Mystic Crusaders! You sift through your memory, thinking of other people you might have been seeing "coincidentally" when a chain-smoking fifty-something human woman drives past you on a motorcycle. The very same one you saw driving the car that was following behind you in the parking lot when you were meeting Chubshire—and the one in charge of team at Crater Lake.

You're being tailed.

**Read the following to the characters if they make a successful Assensing check:**

The flicker of a familiar aura catches your attention. London is a city of magicians, crowded with the bright streaming auras of people and animals, cluttered with the shadows of buildings and vehicles; it's no surprise to see someone in the crowd looking back at you every now and again, or feel the passage of spirits out on their master's errands, but this is something else. An aura, definitely female, with the burning tang of youth and the sickly-sweet aftertaste of a tradition you can't quite name—she's been around you before. Not nearby, always coming or going on her own business, but ever since you've been in London you've always been seeing her out of the corner of your mind's eyes...

...you realize you're being watched.

**After the shadowrunners shake their tails:**

A microskimmer shuttles over your head, and then all your commlinks buzz in unison as a new message comes in from an unknown caller—Basque182. A flash of light from the underside of the drone catches you by surprise: it's been modified with a hologram projector that's just turned on. The face is familiar: human, female, dark hair and Mediterranean features, mid-fifties. A squeaky speaker on the drone asks you to accept the call; the hologram's lips move at the same time—whatever this is, looks like it's being broadcast live.

**If the shadowrunners accept the call:**

"Thanks for taking the call. I know we're on opposite sides with this thing, but we're both professionals. Whatever game our respective mistresses are playing at, we're the ones taking the risks here. I think you need to be brought up to speed on what's at stake—and I'd like to set up a couple ground rules so that we don't end up killing each other. If I'm going to die, it won't be for some damn game.

If you're willing to meet me, come to the Alpine House at Kew Gardens at 10 AM tomorrow morning."

**If the shadowrunners go to the meet:**

Kew Gardens are a bit of green in a city sorely in need of it. The automated entryway deducts 25 nuyen from your commlinks as you walk through the gate. Making your way along the shaded paths, you see "Basque182"—dressed as a jogger in an elastic bodysuit—walking toward the Alpine House from the other direction. Lumbering next to her is the giant you saw before, in acid-washed fatigues and a ripped shirt that shows off some of the tattoos on his chest. She sees you as well, and the two of you meet a little to the side of the building.

"Thank you for coming. I hope you don't mind, but I'd like to do the talking first." The troll stretches this way and that, making sure you can see he isn't carrying any hidden weapons—at least, no obvious ones.

"My team are Mystic Crusaders. Before the Awakening, before the oldest known civilizations, there was an age of magic—and it ended. One of these civilizations—call it Atlantis; it doesn't matter—traveled far, colonized foreign lands, made an empire built on magic and blood, an empire that collapsed when the magic could no longer support it. We believe Atlantis was fact, and that not all of its legacy is positive.

Now, the magic has returned in force. More of the ancient Atlantean artifacts and sites are returning from wherever they vanished to. There are people and things that have found Atlantean artifacts and used them to bad ends. Most people don't recognize them danger when they see it, don't recognize the truth. They're children playing with the secret fire, and they must be protected. That's what we do." She took a breath. "And that's why we have to stop you."

"I don't expect you to quit, and I won't ask you to, but I wanted you to know what's at stake. In the right hands, those chests can literally destroy this world."

**After the shadowrunners have digested that, or finished arguing/asking questions:**

"What I want from you is an understanding. According to the rules of the 'game' these *rameras* are playing, they are untouchable. We take the risks, we put our lives on the line." Basque182 pulls out a pack of cigarettes and a box of wooden matches. "So what I'm thinking is we make our own rules: you don't kill us, we won't kill you." She shakes one out, lights it, and offers another to you.

"We might not be the players in this game, but we do have a say in how it's played. So what do you say? Do we have a deal?"

**If the shadowrunners say no:**

Basque182 nods, then lights another cigarette off her dying one and turns away, the giant keeping an eye on you as they leave. You hear her mutter something in Spanish "Maldígale para hacirme hago este. Maldito mí para hacer esto." and a translation automatically pops up in your commlink. "Damn you for making me do this. Damn me for doing this."

**If the shadowrunners attack:**

Basque182 screams something in Spanish "Maldígale para hacirme hago este. Maldito mí para hacer esto." and a translation automatically pops up in your commlink. "Damn you for making me do this. Damn me for doing this."

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The Mystic Crusaders are following the shadowrunners using a combination of Matrix-based, Astral, and physical surveillance. Generally speaking, they work in pairs (Knight 1 and Knight 9, Knight 3 and Knight 4, Knight 5 and Knight 12) and switch off at irregular intervals. Knight 13 is responsible for astral perception, and Knight 7 watches her physical form while she's out. Still, if the shadowrunners are attentive the Mystic Crusaders will be seen at some point and confronted or countermeasures will be taken. When Knight 1 figures that the jig is up, she'll want to arrange a meeting of the minds with the player characters; the caches are her primary objective, but she doesn't like the game she's been forced into.

If any of the shadowrunners attempt to directly attack or intercept one of the Mystic Crusaders, their orders are to run—they will split up and bolt in separate directions, head for public places like Hyde Park or the London Underground subway system in an effort to get lost in the crowd. Failing that, or if cornered, the Mystic Crusaders will fight defend themselves and attempt to parlay. When the shadowrunners shake their tails, Knight 1—under the guise of Basque182—will make contact using the microskimmer drone/holoprojector rig.

Whether the shadowrunners agree to the meeting, put a bullet through the drone, or decide to go to the meeting or not, Knight 1 has made her peace offering. If the PCs reject it or accept it, fine, but she is satisfied.

One way or another, most of the Mystic Crusaders will be at the meeting at Kew Gardens. Knight 1 isn't stupid enough to show her full strength, but she wants to have enough assets on hand to deal with the shadowrunners if they decide to be violent. Knight 9, Groatster, is easily the most noticeable and intimidating of her cohorts, so keeping him out in the open is designed to focus the shadowrunner's attention away from the people she's hiding. At the meeting, make a Perception + Intuition (3) or Shadowing + Intuition (3) Test for the shadowrunners to spot Knights 3, 4, 5, and 7; Knight 12 and 13 will not be at the meeting.

Particularly clever players might agree to the meeting and then move quickly to seize the cache while the Mystic Crusaders are elsewhere. This is a valid plan, but just because the Mystic Crusaders have pulled back their surveillance doesn't mean it has stopped completely. Even if the shadowrunners make the agreement with the Mystic Crusaders to try not to kill each other, the Mystic Crusaders will continue to tail them—more discreetly this time; Perception + Intuition (4) Test to see them again (or Shadowing + Intuition (4) if it is higher, or Assensing + Intuition (4) for astrally projecting or perceiving characters).

## PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Matrix surveillance isn't really addressed, but there's no reason that the Mystic Crusaders couldn't also start slipping stealth tags on the shadowrunners or their vehicles, particularly if they know the player characters won't be in them (i.e. if the player characters go to the meet and don't leave someone with their vehicle, one of the Mystic Crusaders can go and stick a stealth tag on it).

To heighten tension at Kew Gardens, have a school field trip walk by the Alpine House where the two groups are meeting.

## DEBUGGING

At worst, violence breaks out and some of the player characters or Mystic Crusaders die. That's the breaks. A more difficult problem is if the shadowrunners or Mystic Crusaders are seen running around with (or worse, firing) guns or using hostile magic; all of London will start looking for everyone involved. Granted, that just means news reports with captured trideo footage of the shadowrunners' and Mystic Crusader's most identifiable members, and possibly questions from passing police if the characters don't make any attempt to change their appearance or keep out of site.

## PLACES OF INTEREST

**Kew Gardens**

## GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

**Microskimmer Drone**

## A MARKS THE SPOT

## SCAN THIS

After Frosty uses the other artifacts to align the map, the precise location of the second astral rift is marked; sighting off of local landmarks and correlation with a London street map will give an approximate location for the shadowrunners to search. Still tailed by the Mystic Crusaders, the shadowrunners can search the area by car, and

eventually on foot or in the astral—but the astral rift is nowhere to be seen. A little detective work or a serendipitous moment will give the shadowrunners the idea that the rift is actually below them.

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

### **Read the following to the characters:**

You crowd around inside the tent, which is just barely big enough for all of you and a small table, where Frosty is leaning over the map. She carefully adjusts the compass and sextant, referring to the disc as symbols on the outside edge of the map shift and line up. You see the map zoom in on a symbol like the Greek letter lambda, an upside down V. Finally, Frosty seems satisfied and sits back. The map is so close that the geography is almost indiscernible; here and there a glowing line or black splotch which presumably indicates places of power, and brighter than all is a single hill, the center of a wheel of fine glowing lines, like the spider in its web. Frosty jabs at the spot with a fingernail.

“Primrose Hill; central headquarters of the New Druidic Movement and a Grand Lodge.”

With a thought, Frosty turns on a holoprojector and a street map of London is laid over the table and pulls on a pair of AR gloves. Looking at the layered data is enough to give you a headache. Frosty’s gloved hands grasp the hologram and tilt it until the AR icon for the hill aligns with the glowing beacon on the Piri Reis map, then holding that in place rotates the rest of the hologram until the neon blue of the River Thames matches up with the faint brownish outline of its course on the parchment. The symbol for the astral rift now stands in the middle of a street—Frosty taps the place and a small ARO pops up with an address on Walbrook St.

“That’s where it is.”

### **When the shadowrunners get to the spot marked on the map:**

A small tide of tourists wash up and down Walbrook St. between St. Stephen’s Church and the Mithraeum, and you have to work your way through the ebb and flow of metahumanity to the other, less frequented end of Walbrook St., where the map showed the rift symbol. When you finally get to the spot, nothing unusual happens. According to Frosty, the rift should manifest when one of the artifacts is nearby, but you don’t see anything.

### **If the shadowrunner’s have the map, compass, or the sextant:**

Standing on the spot where the rift should be, you feel something tickle the back of your brain. You’re aware of almost being rooted to where you’re standing, your awareness pushing down through the soles of your feet into the dull pavement and below. Almost compulsively, you reach to touch the artifact you have on you, as whatever it is reaching out of you goes down, down...and stops. A sudden aching emptiness fills your head, like getting your wisdom teeth pulled by a particularly brutal street doc.

You stare down at your feet. Knowledge setting in: the astral rift is right beneath you.

### **If the shadowrunners seem hopelessly confused or are about to give up:**

A tour group pushes past you, the guide talking loudly about London’s underground rivers, including the Walbrook itself, which still flows beneath these very streets. You listen with half an ear as he explains how back in Roman times and before the river ran on the surface, but over time as the city spread it was paved over and lost to sight...

Frosty’s map never gave an indication of elevation. The astral rift could be right here—but beneath you.

### **If the shadowrunners are hanging around acting very strangely for more than ten minutes:**

You see the police as they come towards you, a male human and a female ork, pushing their way gently through the crowd. The noticeable lack of guns and body armor gives them an open, vulnerable appearance to your jaded eyes, but the uniform still screams “cop” and the human’s eyes are as hard as any Lone Star sergeant’s you’ve ever met. They stop within swinging distance of you, hands nearby but not on their standard-issue tonfas.

“Good day. How are you doing?”

## BEHIND THE SCENES

This scene is pretty straightforward; following the map by personal vehicle and foot (good luck finding a parking spot; the nearest the local GridGuide can find is at least a mile away); or by public transportation (yes, the shadowrunners can ride one of the big red double-decker buses. Or the London Underground.) Once they get to the spot illustrated on the map, the confusion is bound to set in as the shadowrunners canvas the area for the astral rift marked clearly on the map. They might ask to make tests, or re-read the map, or call Frosty for advice. Let ‘em go nuts, and if all else fails use one of the solutions given above to point them in the right direction.

If the characters cause too much of a scene on the street, the London police will come along and nicely ask the shadowrunners their business; if they receive less than a satisfactory answer they’ll ask them to move along. A bit of tension, but nothing more unless the shadowrunners freak out or say something suspicious.

Periodically when the characters have a chance to notice that they are being followed or watched—such as when they leave the safehouse or are standing around looking for the astral rift, have one of the runners make a Perception +



Intuition (3) Test (or Shadowing + Intuition, if higher), or Assensing + Intuition if astrally projecting or perceiving to notice that they are being followed or something is amiss; a –2 dice pool modifier applies to this test due to the crowds on the streets. When they notice and decide to take action, go to **On Your Six** (unless they’ve done that section already, in which case Groatster puts down a newspaper and waves at them when he spots that he’s been made.)

## **PUSHING THE ENVELOPE**

If the shadowrunners absolutely need some excitement in this scene, they can spot the Mystic Crusaders (Knight 1 and Knight 9) examining the spot with a portable ground-penetrating radar device.

## **DEBUGGING**

The worst things that the shadowrunners can do—aside from firing indiscriminately into the crowd for the maximum body count—is to fail to figure out that the astral rift is below them. The *second* worse thing they can do is find out and then decide to go at it right then and there, probably by using some very effective but unreasonably violent method such as explosives or a powerful spirit of earth. Hopefully the interest of the local police will gently discourage them; failing that the police will call in for immediate back-up and a helicopter will buzz the area with Narcoject and Freeze Foam.

## **PLACES OF INTEREST**

**Walbrook Street**

## **GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS**

**London Police**

## **WHERE THE DEAD MEN GO**

## **SCAN THIS**

London is built on top of itself, layers of abandoned foundations, bricked-up basements, municipal sewer and infrastructure tunnels, the occasional monster, and entire rivers that have been paved over and forgotten. The shadowrunners may encounter all of these as they try to make their way toward the rift, using the Piri Reis map as a guide. Eventually they’ll come across all of these before finding a natural grotto carved out of the decayed urban heart of London by one of the city’s lost rivers. Shadowing them through underground London are the Mystic Crusaders.

## **TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT**

**Read the following to the characters:**

The stink alone could kill you. As you walk down the wide avenue of ten-foot diameter yellow brickwork pipes, dirty grey water flows ankle-deep over your feet, the only bit of brightness the color-coded electrical and Matrix cables are strung along at head height. The water’s just-left-the-body warm, and you don’t really want to think too hard about that.

Every now and then the pipe opens up to a weir or other vaulted chamber, sometimes with corroded but still-functional gearing, and more than once you have to clamber down a long sloping flight of shallow steps, thankful for the railing put in by some long-ago sanitation engineers to keep from slipping on turds and drowning in filth.

**If the shadowrunners look at the sewer in the astral:**

The tunnel is surprisingly active on the astral; the slate-grey water has transformed into a lambent river, glowing with life from bacteria and small swimming forms, the diffuse heat of the living earth seeps into the walls of the artificial pipe, which are covered by a layer of living slime. What really catch your attention are the markers, strange glyphs made out in astral-sensitive pigments that blend in with the faded excrement and graffiti on the walls of the tunnel. You can’t make out much of what they mean, but you can pick out the arrows quite clearly.

**When the shadowrunners encounter the Hooligan:**

Something crunches beneath your heels, and for a second there’s the panic that your feet are caught in something, which quickly passes as you kick out...and send part of a metahuman ribcage off down the tunnel. You look down and realize the tunnel is littered with bones and skulls, some of them cracked open for the marrow. They look like they washed up here, but if that was the case they would have had to come from upstream...the direction you’re heading.

Behind you, somewhere in the blackness, something howls. A small wave of grey water washes over you as something huge splashes down the tunnel toward you...

### **If the shadowrunners run into Knight 5 and Knight 12:**

Turning a corner, you see a pair of metahumans in street clothes, a male Caucasian dwarf and a female Asian human. Both of them are soaked to the waist with liquid shit, and the dwarf in particular looks miserable; neither of them carries a flashlight but as the dwarf turns his face toward you all, the bright gleam of eyelights spills from his head, making his face somewhat demonic in the darkness. His face splits into a grin when he sees you.

“Howdy! Would y’all know how to get to Fleet Street from here? We wanted to look for the river, but we got kind of turned around...”

## **BEHIND THE SCENES**

Accessing London’s sewers requires a degree of research and resourcefulness. A Data Search + Browse (12, 1 Minute) Extended Test will reveal the nearest access points, areas where London Sanitation workers are currently working, the access points and exploits used by urban explorers to access the sewer system, and both the official maps and the urban explorer’s annotations.

The easiest way to gain entrance is to find an access point already open because Sanitation crew went through it and finesse or work your way in. It’s also possible if you have the right tools (an industrial mechanic kit is sufficient) to open up *any* access point without fuss. There’s also maintenance access from the nearest London Underground station, which will require gaining access to the maintenance area (protected by a security guard and a Rating 4 keycard reader). Failing all that, you can use thermite, explosives, or magic to force your way in, though that’s a bit noisy and messy.

Once down into the system, it’s a bit of a rat’s maze of dirty old tunnels, interspersed with pumping station and other rooms full of corroded (but functional) machinery that keeps London’s sewage system working. Play up the labyrinthine aspect of going down into the sewers, let the players draw maps or get lost a little, and remind them from time to time that they’re not alone down there. At some point, the player characters should encounter the Hooligan, a mutaqua that lives in the London sewer system.

The tunnels are unlit, so the characters are reduced to whatever light sources they brought with them, or else its down to those characters with ultrasound and thermographic vision. The magical senses provided by the Piri Reis Map, compass, or sextant will be sufficient to help guide the characters through the tunnels toward their destination, though they’ll hit a few dead ends unless they have downloaded the annotated maps from the urban explorers or if they follow the astral graffiti.

The smell is overpowering; all characters are at a –3 dice pool modifier for any Perception Test based on smell or taste, and characters with enhanced senses of taste or smell will be affected by Nausea (–2 dice pool modifier to all actions) unless they’re wearing a respirator, gasmask, or the like.

Disease is also a risk; every character that goes into the sewers without a full chemical seal is at risk of contracting something nasty; if the character’s are wearing the Ulysses line armored clothing that Frosty bought off of Chudshire, the liquid-proof weave offers considerable protection (Rating 4). Every character should make a Body (+the Rating of any protective system) Test every time they descend into the sewers; failure means they’ve contracted influenza, malaria, or VITAS-III (p.131-132, *Augmentation*); gamemaster’s discretion as to which.

Some areas of the sewer contain pockets of toxic gas; treat this as Nausea Gas (p.255, *SR4A*).

Wireless signals don’t work very well in the sewers; all the rock and metal distorts the signals. A character’s Matrix access is limited to (2 x Signal Rating) meters forward or backward down the tunnel; once beyond that limit from the access point to the sewers, the character’s will lose access to the global Matrix unless they put signal repeaters of some sort down. Another option available to them is tapping into one of the fiberoptic Matrix trunks running through the sewers; this requires a hardware kit and optical tap (p.199, *Unwired*) and will place the character directly into a random signal processing node in the London Matrix.

The Mystic Crusaders will have a damned hard time following the characters once they enter the sewers—the lack of Matrix reception kills attempts to track them by that method, and the confines make shadowing them much more difficult. Once the player characters descend into the sewers, Knight 5 and Knight 12 will wait a few minutes and then go in after them, keeping well away from the characters; Knight 12 will be in disguise using his false front implant.

Periodically when the characters have a chance to notice that they are being followed or watched—such as when they stop suddenly, or reach a dead end and have to double back, have one of the runners make a Perception + Intuition (3) Test (or Shadowing + Intuition, if higher), or Assensing + Intuition if astrally projecting or perceiving to notice that they are being followed or something is amiss. When they notice and decide to take action, go to **On Your Six** (unless they have already been to that section).

When the shadowrunners do eventually get near to the astral rift, proceed to **It Was A Fraggin’ Ambush!**

## **PUSHING THE ENVELOPE**

Extend the sewers and their convoluted nature as necessary to get the player characters good and lost, and feel free to throw in encounters with a pack of devil rats or even a low-Force toxic water spirit. If you need to scare the characters a little, they can come across Chubshire’s severed and barely decayed head, nails driven into the eyes, tongue, and around the crown of the skull (some of Knight 5’s handiwork). If you really want them to have a hard time, the Hooligan could have a mate.

## DEBUGGING

If the players get *really* lost, they can run across or hire a guide. A few people make a hobby of exploring London's sewers, and in exchange for 500 nuyen or some them will be glad to show the player characters the easiest way to get into the sewer, through a few of the more popular routes, and enlighten them about the best protections against the sewer's dangers. Of course, any guide could also be affiliated with either the Spelunkers or St. John's mob, not that the shadowrunners would be aware of that...yet. In a pinch, Knight 5 will help the shadowrunners against the Hooligan, explaining that he hunts these beasts. Of course, if the player characters already know him for helping them against the goblin Chubshire, they might get a little suspicious.

## PLACES OF INTEREST

London's Sewers

## GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

The Hooligan

Sewer Guide

## IT WAS A FRAGGIN' AMBUSH!

### SCAN THIS

Just as the shadowrunners get close to the astral rift, they're caught in the middle of a firefight. Two different groups—the Bel Tann Spelunker's Society and a criminal gang called St. John's mob—are coming to blows over access to the strategically-located grotto that the astral rift is located in. How the shadowrunners react to this firefight will determine their relationship with the two groups; each of whom they'll have the opportunity to parley with later—if they survive.

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

### Read the following to the characters:

The river of grey water has been steadily rising for the last few miles and is chest-high on a dwarf now—but it's also started to clear out a bit. You consult the map and head against the current. There are over thirteen thousand kilometers of sanitary sewer beneath London, but according to the map—provided your compass application isn't completely lost—you should be getting close now.

There's light up ahead, a faint red Christmas-tree glow coming from one of the branches off the main pipe. The water is only a couple feet deep, but cold and clean—you can see the frogs in it. Following the glow you see the side of the tunnel has crumbled away, revealing a natural grotto, maybe thirty feet long and roughly six feet in diameter carved away between two separate sections of pipe, earth and rock and brick smoothed into a shallow v-shape by some of the trapped waters of the Walbrook, flowing into this section of sewers from their natural course. Tiny red bulbs attached to the natural earth of the ceilings and walls cast a dim light on it from strings running along the length of the grotto.

Then the crack of bullets on stone and bricks echoes from the other end, and you can make out figures crouching behind the lip of the wall where the grotto begins, gesturing and returning fire. Someone in the tunnel beyond lobs a grenade into the tunnel, over the heads of the defenders and bouncing down toward you.

### If one of the shadowrunners views the grotto on the astral:

Power oozes from the walls of the tiny space, like getting slapped in the face with wet earth, the sense of it fills you—and there in the center of the grotto is hole in astral space, a depression, negative space left behind where something should exist but has ceased to. Looking at it is like tonguing the gap left when you lose a tooth, except the sensation fills your whole body.

### When a shadowrunner with one of the artifacts enters the grotto:

You barely take a step into the grotto when a rough, dark hole manifests in the center of the chamber carved out by the river. Barely a meter wide and irregularly shaped, you almost feel like there's a slight breeze in the tunnel blowing toward the dark patch of space.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

This scene is essentially a combat, and the shadowrunners are caught in the middle. A group of urban druids known as the Bel Tann Spelunker's Society are at the opposite end of the grotto from the one where the shadowrunners currently are, using the wall as partial cover. St. John's Mob, a small criminal crew, is in the sewer pipe at the other

end. The shadowrunners, then, are essentially coming up behind the urban druids, and are just in the way for the flash-bang grenade that they've lobbed into the tunnel.

Have each of the player characters make a Reaction + Initiative Test; anyone that fails is surprised (p.165, *SR4A*) and gets the full effects of the flash-bang grenade, the others can roll Initiative and make the most of the situation. Because of their position, the shadowrunners will surprise both the Spelunkers and St. John's mob should they decide to attack or take action against them; they may also choose to escape unnoticed.

Neither of the two groups is exactly hardened to combat; if the shadowrunners kill, knock out, or capture two members of a group, the rest will flee or attempt to negotiate. If the shadowrunners try to talk with the Spelunkers, go to **Sewer Druids**; if they want to talk with the criminals then they'll set up a meet on the surface, go to **St. John's Mob**.

The grotto itself is a minor ley line nexus with a Rating 2 background count, aspected toward druidic magic.

If anyone bearing an artifact enters the grotto, the astral rift will manifest as in **Bel Tann's Rift**. Knight 5 and Knight 12, if not scared off previously in **Where the Dead Men Go**, will cautiously observe the shadowrunners into the grotto and then follow. Knight 5 carries the Mystic Crusader's map fragment; if he steps into the grotto the astral rift will manifest. If the astral rift manifests, the Mystic Crusaders will immediately leave to report in.

If either Knight 5 or Knight 12 survives, they can lead the rest of the Mystic Crusaders back to the grotto; if both of them die then the Mystic Crusaders will descend on their last known position in an effort to find them, and will probably stumble across the grotto in the process.

## PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

The easiest way to add difficult to this scene is simply to add more goons to St. John's Mob. A free spirit may also have its personal domain in the grotto, in which case it would be loosely allied with the Spelunkers—and would be immediately aware of the shadowrunners, meaning they would not get the drop on everyone else.

## DEBUGGING

If the shadowrunners manage to destroy the grotto (hey, it happens), then the astral rift will be buried—that can mean hours of backbreaking work to excavate it (or Frosty and one big earth spirit). The shadowrunners could also bargain with the free spirit described above, who would use its Astral Gateway power to allow them to access the rift in exchange for 3 Karma per player character. At the gamemaster's discretion, the destruction of the grotto could also have shifted the ley line network slightly, moving the astral rift to a clear space elsewhere in the sewer network—which means sloshing around in the tunnels a bit more to find it.

## PLACES OF INTEREST

**The Grotto**

## GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

Stats on the Spelunkers are given in **Sewer Druids**, stats for the criminals are given in **St. John's Mob**. **Bel Tann (Force 4 Free Spirit of Water)**

## SEWER DRUIDS

### SCAN THIS

The Bel Tann Spelunker's Society is a small initiate group of urban druids that explore the history beneath London's streets, sometimes with an eye towards preservation, always with an eye towards fun and adventure. They discovered the grotto about three years ago; a place of power that exists as a minor ley line nexus and seemed perfectly made for their rituals. While aware of the inactive astral rift, the druids have been unable to access it and assume that the aspect of the ley is somehow responsible for keeping it closed. They're willing to allow the shadowrunners access in exchange for help against St. John's mob.

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

**Read the following to the characters:**

For the first time, you have a chance to take a good look at the magicians around you. Waterproof boots and gloves are universal among them, and most have respirators and gasmasks around their necks. Other than that, clothing is pretty varied and ragged, though most of it is dirty and ripped.

A college-aged troll girl wipes a hand on her pants and holds it out in greeting. [You try not to look at her sleeveless t-shirt which looks like it's straining for dear life; you've never seen the Union Jack stretch that way before.](#)

"I'm Sheila Herzog, First-Among-Equals of the Bel Tann Spelunker's Society and Druidic Circle. Welcome to Bel Tann's Gate." She waved a hand to indicate the grotto.

“We’re a small group of urban druids who explore and preserve the sub-urban ecology of London—natural, artificial, and magical. Jenny there is writing a dissertation on it, and Freddy’s our mapper/geomancer type; Zaranj has a job with the Sanitation Department and can get us in places.” She gestured to her fellow spelunkers.

“My dad found this place...or maybe he helped carve it out...back in ’50. He was a sewer druid too. It’s a place of power, a sacred space. We want it free for everyone to use. Those jerks that were shooting at you...us...they just want it for themselves. What are you here for?”

The shaman chewed on her bottom lip a little, her tusks poking out at you.

#### **If the shadowrunners ask about the astral rift:**

Sheila crosses her hands in front of her [ample](#) chest. “It’s never opened before. I mean, I’ve know it’s been there ever since I was a little girl, but it’s never manifested before. If you need to use it, that’s fine, we won’t try to stop you or anything, but we really would like your help with those other guys. They’re creeps.”

#### **If the shadowrunners ask about St. John’s mob:**

“Bridgette St. John is a local gangster,” the troll druid explains. “They call her ‘Winsome’ St. John—Win some, lose some, right? Mostly she wins. Does good business moving things from one place to another, and she uses the sewers sometimes, same as us, but we didn’t really run into each other—she has maybe six people, and they stick to the routes they know, so we can avoid them most of the time. Last week, though, one of them found Bel Tann’s Gate and now she wants it all to herself, to move stuff between different parts of the network. Dozy bint has no idea who she’s dealing with.”

The young woman scratches behind her left horn.

“Maybe we could work out a deal? I mean, you want access to the rift, right? Wherever it leads, your bodies are going to stay here until you’re done. We could look after you while you’re traveling...if you don’t mind helping us with St. John and her goons. They’re going to be back sometime tonight.”

## **BEHIND THE SCENES**

Play up the Spelunkers as what they are: young, sympathetic, and fiercely devoted to their cause and each other. Herzog for her part will be completely open and honest about anything the shadowrunners ask. If the player characters threaten and intimidate, Herzog will try to play for some way that keeps her group’s access to the site, but will ultimately back down if the shadowrunners look like they’ll hurt one of her friends.

How to deal with St. John’s mob is up to the player characters; a little questioning will let them find out that St. John and her crew frequent the Hare & Hounds Pub—or if they wait, St. John will inevitably be back to take the grotto by force in a few hours, augmented by the Mystic Crusaders. Clever (or evil) shadowrunners could rig a few traps in the tunnels leading to the grotto; a grenade that goes off in the confined space of a pipe will make chunky salsa of anyone nearby.

## **PUSHING THE ENVELOPE**

In a pinch Herzog can offer some magical assets, including some magical compounds (2 doses of shade) and Awakend drugs (4 doses of deepweed), and if truly desperate might try to seduce any troll shadowrunners in the group (male or female).

## **DEBUGGING**

About the very worst that the shadowrunners could do is kill everyone here. If they do so, that’s their choice.

## **GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS**

**Sheila Herzog**

**Mad Tom**

**Lana Elfman**

**Deep Achmed**

**Deidre Deidre**

## **ST. JOHN’S MOB**

## **SCAN THIS**

“Winsome” St. John is a small time racketeer that makes it her business to transport shady goods around London without getting stopped by the police or rival criminals. Through stealth and the right bribes, she and her gang have

used London's underground network for years to move parcels unseen. The grotto with the astral rift happens to connect two different parts of the tunnel network, and St. John wants the exclusive use of it for her own operations. She's willing to talk with the shadowrunners—but she's already cut a deal with the Mystic Crusaders to get rid of the Spelunkers in exchange for access to the astral rift.

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

### Read the following to the characters:

You find the Hare & Hounds Pub easy enough. It's a slightly run-down establishment, though cleaner by far than most of the bars you see in Seattle. The leader of the crew at a table in the back, drinking a pint, and doesn't look surprised to see you. Average height, blonde human female—the eyes a little too far apart and the pudenda a little too prominent to be beautiful, but it's obvious she takes care of herself, with only the scars on the back of her hands really standing out. Good quality synthleather jacket, brand-new upscale jeans, and a plain black cotton blouse—practical wear, good for almost any time or place. She's wearing sunglasses—AR glasses, maybe?

"I was told you might come here. The name's St. John, and these are my crew." The gangster indicates her followers. "I apologize for them taking a couple shots at you. There was no harm meant for it, ye were simply in the wrong place at the right time. Y'see, I've made a business of getting things from one end of London to t'other, preferably without them getting pinched by either the police or the other mobs. That stretch of tunnel you ran across would do nicely for my business, and I mean to have it no matter who I have to go through. I haven't any idea what you all were doing down there, though, and that I mean to find out."

There's an audible click under the table—it sounded like a gun.

"So start talking."

### If the characters ask about the astral rift:

"Your friends said something about that. I don't play around with such foolishness, and don't give a damn whether you do either as long as it doesn't involve me—but this time it does. You want to go down there and meddle? Fine. Help me clear out the trog and her gang and you can have all the time as you like."

### If the shadowrunners ask to help her clear out the Spelunkers:

"Capital. With all of us, we can hit them from both ends. No time like the present, aye? Or did you all leave your guns back home? Nevermind if you did, being a smuggler has its advantages with regards to munitions." St. John downs the last of her pint.

"Let's be gone. We can hook up with your friends along the way."

### If the shadowrunners try to work out a truce:

"I can't trust that trog bitch any farther than I can throw her. She and hers needs to be put down, and if you won't help me do it your friends can."

### If the shadowrunners ask her who these 'friends' are that she keeps referring to:

St. John cracks a smile to show a couple silver-capped teeth.

"Yer Basque-lady, or Spanish as she may happen to be, the tallfella trog Groatster from up north and all the rest of her people, of course. They know all about you lot, and have told me enough that I don't want to risk killing you right now, no matter what you might have cost me down in the tunnels—hello, here she is now."

A fifties-ish human woman walks into the pub, followed by a gangly giant that has to literally squeeze himself through the doorway. One of the bartenders is already pouring a pitcher of some dark beer or ale, which he places handle-first in front of the giant. For his part, the tall metahuman nods his shaven head and picks the pitcher up in one hand. As the woman gets closer, she turns up the collar on her jacket to flash a pin—the sigil of the Mystic Crusaders.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

"Winsome" St. John would sell her own mother on the street if she could profit from the deal, which is probably why it is best for all concerned that she never met her. The Hare & Hounds is a good, public place for a meet, with good beer from a local microbrew and excellent pub food, though the neighborhood is rougher than it used to be. Most of the "patrons" in the bar are St. John's mob, just in case the shadowrunners decide to try anything. She also has a Raecor sting (p.316, *SR4A*) attached to the bottom of the table, pointed at the shadowrunners' (presumably) more vulnerable areas.

By the time the shadowrunners get to talking with Bridgett St. John herself, she'll already have made a deal with the Mystic Crusaders, who have agreed to help evict the Spelunkers in exchange for access to the site. The question is whether or not the shadowrunners will be any trouble, either before or after they find out about St. John's deal with Knight 1. Should they be willing to cooperate with St. John and the Mystic Crusaders, Knight 1 will propose that both groups open the astral rift at the same time, letting the astral quest decide the issue of who gets the cache.

How the shadowrunners et al. aim to get rid of the Spelunkers is up to them, but Winsome will insist they are physically removed from the grotto—permanently, if possible.

## **PUSHING THE ENVELOPE**

Starting a firefight in a pub will eventually bring the attention of the police—and, worse, the *real* London mob. Not St. John and her lot, but the mafia. This is something that can come back to haunt the shadowrunners later, whenever (if ever) they show their faces in London again.

## **DEBUGGING**

At worst, this turns into a bloodbath. The Mystic Crusaders have no desire to engage in a firefight in a public place, but St. John is just crazy enough she could do start one if she thinks she'll profit from it. Any stray shots are likely to kill some poor bystander that just popped in for a pint and some fish and chips.

## **PLACES OF INTEREST**

**Hare & Hounds Pub**

## **GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS**

**Winsome St. John**

**St. John's Mob**

**Bill Bellman, Bartender**

## **BEL TANN'S RIFT**

### **SCAN THIS**

The astral rift will manifest when one of the artifacts—including the map fragment held by the Mystic Crusaders—enters the grotto. This will also cause the symbol for the physical anchor to appear on the Piri Reis map and map fragment. Once the shadowrunners who are going to use the astral rift do so, the Mystic Crusaders will move in to use the astral rift themselves.

### **TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT**

#### **Read the following to the characters:**

The dull red glow of the lights accentuates the shadowy hole of the astral rift; it's like the shadow cast by something you can't see. Now that you have the time to study it, you notice that it seems like part of it is obscured by the rock of the river bed as it runs through the grotto, sinking straight into the muddy floor. Water gurgles through the rift and comes out the other side, unperturbed and unchanged.

This close, you can see the places where the Spelunkers or others have smoothed and expanded the natural tunnel. Neo-primitive cave paintings and "druidic" carvings cover the walls and ceiling—negative space hand prints surrounded by halos of red ochre, charcoal scrawls of alligators, bats, moles, dragons, and other subterranean creatures, interspersed with lines and bits and pieces of English letters and Ogham script—a sort of metaphysical map of the London sewer system, and the minor leys that run beneath the streets.

In context, the rift seems to take on new meaning; the lines seem drawn the hazy darkness of the rift. The sheer sense of *absence* you feel when looking at it hits you in the chest. Like a giant pulled the plug on the bathtub of the world, and everything wants to go down the drain...

#### **If any of the characters look at the Piri Reis map:**

Unrolling the parchment, your eyes are drawn immediately to the sign indicating the astral rift—but the placement seems wrong. No wait, the map is upside down, the symbol for the rift is over *here* so...there are two symbols.

#### **When the characters attempt to enter the rift with the artifact:**

You draw closer, artifact in hand, reaching toward the surface of the astral rift...

There's a second where you feel a terrible momentum while in freefall, like just when a semiballistic leaves the atmosphere. There's a force and a direction behind where you're headed, but in a space with no resistance, no sense of direction or frame of reference...and for a terrible moment you feel like you're falling *up*. Then...nothing. No sight, no sound, no physical or magical perception of anything at all.

#### **If any of the characters look at the active rift in the astral:**

This close to the rift, you feel like your astral form is caught in a current, gently tugging you toward a blank space that seems to recede infinitely far away from you, no matter how you try to perceive it. The ambient mana in the room is sluggishly circling in towards it, like a Matrix sim of matter getting sucked into a black hole. Most unsettling of all is the unnerving feeling that something in the rift is looking back at you.

**If any of the characters stay in the physical:**

A gentle splashing coming from the tunnels gives you a bit of advance warning that someone is coming. It sounds like people...a lot of people...

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The astral rift is marked on the Piri Reis Map with the symbol **A**. When an artifact enters the grotto, the astral rift will manifest. When the astral rift manifests, the symbol **V** will appear on the Piri Reis Map—unknownst to everyone involved, this is the location of the physical anchor that the cache is tied to, the spot where the cache will physically emerge from the metaplanar pocket where it is currently lodged.

Normally, the astral rift and physical anchor should be coterminous, but somewhere within the last couple thousand of years something weird happens and they were split; once within proximity of the astral rift the map will be able to correlate the exact location of the physical anchor as well. If the artifacts leave the grotto, the astral rift will cease to manifest but the new symbol will remain.

In any event, to actually activate the astral rift requires one of the artifacts to touch the manifestation. Anyone who touches the astral rift from that point on will automatically be dragged into the metaplanar quest as described by **London in the Shadows**. This means there can be some staggered entry, as different characters can touch the astral rift at different times. The character's physical body remains behind in the same position they were in as they touched the rift, unconscious, unresponsive, and paralyzed as their astral form journeys on. Physically dragging a character out of contact with the astral rift will automatically sever the connection and force their astral form back into their body.

This scene assumes that the shadowrunners, after having dealt with either (or both) of the Spelunkers in **Sewer Druids** or the criminals in **St. John's Mob**, or maybe just took the opportunity to dive in while the two sides were shooting each other at **It Was A Fraggin' Ambush!** have free access to the astral rift.

Anyone who stays behind to guard the bodies will eventually hear someone coming down the tunnel. If the shadowrunners made a deal with the Mystic Crusaders and St. John's mob, then this will just be more of St. John's employees, eager to move contraband through the grotto. Otherwise, the sound is the Mystic Crusaders (everyone except Knight 7 and Knight 13) converging toward the grotto. They won't try to pull the shadowrunners out of the astral rift (they have no idea what that would do to them) or slit their throats, but if not stopped they'll bind their arms and legs with plastic restraints and then enter the astral rift themselves.

If unable to access the astral rift because of stiff resistance or protections put up by the shadowrunners (i.e. collapsing one side of the grotto, laying a literal minefield, Force 15 Physical Barrier spell, etc.), the Mystic Crusaders will pull back and wait for the cache (and the shadowrunners) to emerge. The events at the physical anchor are covered in **The London Stone**.

## PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

If the shadowrunners have everything going their way, then one or more of the Spelunkers could accidentally fall into the astral rift and end up on their quest with them. The Mystic Crusaders can take advantage of the shadowrunners' lack of ability to defend themselves in order to overwhelm the Spelunkers. Better late to the astral quest than never.

## DEBUGGING

If none of the shadowrunners thought to bring one of the artifacts, the free spirit Bel Tann can use its Astral Gateway power to bypass the normal restrictions and allow them to use the astral rift. It requests 2 Karma per player character for this effort.

## LONDON IN THE SHADOWS

### SCAN THIS

The player characters that go through the astral rift will find themselves in a shadowy future city; the most augmented of the shadowrunners maimed and nigh-immaterial. The city ends at a river of boiling pitch; a bridge once spanned it, leading to a dark glass tower on an island in the middle. If the player characters can get past the lake, they can enter the tower—where they will find both the cache, and its guardian.

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

**Read the following to the characters:**



The first thing you see is the sky, low-lying clouds of slowly burning amber like a roof on the world. Claustrophobia hits suddenly, and a distant fear of being buried alive. When you remember to take your first breath of the cool and greasy air, the taste of metal and the smell of a people sear your lungs. You gag for a moment and steady yourselves, your brain sifting through the scents in the air—there's something like the Redmond Barrens after an acid rain, the barrios of Tenochtitlan and Metropole, and an ancient simsoft memory of an open sewer.

For a moment you feel you're back up on the surface of London. You find yourselves on an empty black street, the darker, grimmer mirror image of Walbrook Street. Black buildings rise up from well-worn sidewalks that could have been carved from the living rock of the earth, and an open sewer runs down a street of acid-eaten ferroconcrete. A tide of people move past you on either side—a solid stream of brown and grey trench coats, hats and scarves covering up every head you can see, gloves or mittens on every hand. You're finding it difficult to stand still against the tide.

**If there are any technomancers in the group:**

The gentle pressure of the wireless Matrix is gone. Absent. In its place is a sussuration; the insect-wing chattering of a thousand demons in the night. There is something almost mathematical about it, like seeing and hearing moiré patterns as layers of static and white noise overlap and interact; two-dimensional planes of information intersecting to form three-dimensional constructs with fourth-dimensional echoes.

Disturbingly, it's almost comforting.

**If any of the shadowrunners fight the inhabitants of the city:**

After the first blow, one of the citizens falls down, their hat and scarf fly off—and reveal multifaceted eye sockets set into maggot-pale flesh, thin and gangly antennae are bunched like dreadlocks on a still-human-looking skull, and the hint of mandibles emerging from a toothless mouth. The thing shrieks and dives for its hat and scarf.

**If the shadowrunners manage to kill all of the insect people:**

The last of the damned silent bugs fall, its chitin-covered head leaking a slightly glowing, metallic liquid. In fact, now that you have a moment to catch your breath you notice that the green goo isn't flowing straight into the gutters on the sides of the street. You watch the blood leaking from the ruins of all the insect people flow together, like mercury, filming the entire street. If you remember right, it's heading toward the river.

**When the shadowrunners arrive at the bridge:**

The smell of burning rubber starts to pervade your senses as the crowd edges you on. Bones skitter under your feet as you walk past the brown skeleton of some ancient dragon that is laid out on the street, cracks still showing in the metallic stone from where it landed. [For a moment you catch sight of something that flashes gold in its rib cage, but then the crowd urges you on.](#)

The street—and the city—suddenly gives way to a sluggish, wide river of black fluid, heavy and turgid with bits of detritus. A heavy skin covers the surface, contorting in the current, broken every now and again by blister-like black bubbles that rise to the surface, taut with trapped gasses, and popping with barely a whisper.

The road narrows and stops at a broken bridge of black chrome, your eyes follow the truncated metal pylons across the river of pitch to where the other end of the bridge lies; on an island in the middle of a lake of boiling crap. Rising up from the island to pierce the sky is a tower of black glass that reflects the lights of the sky and city.

Hovering slightly over the bridge is an older man, impeccably dressed in a custom-tailored suit, pale and translucent like a window in Augmented Reality. A satchel at his side seems to contain a thick, hardcopy book.

"Good day my friends. I am John Dee. I am here to assist you in your little endeavor."

You've heard of a ghost of a smile, but this is the first time you've seen a *wraith* of a smile; it's nasty and cruel and vicious.

**If the shadowrunners give John Dee a chance to talk:**

The spectral character gets a distant look in his eye.

"In this world, there are certain groups who have done everything they can to keep everyone else...small. Mundane." He literally spat the word, drops of intangible phlegm flying off to disappear before hitting a solid surface.

"Tir na nOg, Tir Tairngire, Azania, Pomoyra...the Elven states, the so-called Awakened nations. They have hoarded and conspired to hoard the legacies of thousands of years of *human* magical history for their own ends, to promote their own biases. You and your competitors, the Mystic Crusaders, are working for those interests."

He takes a moment to settle down, one intangible hand putting his spectral hair into place.

"I have not come here to ask you to abandon your task. I am here to assist you however I can. I do wish to let you know, however, that at some point you will have to make a choice—and I do not feel it is hyperbole to say that your choice may influence the course of metahuman history. Soon, you will have the opportunity to hand these lost treasures over, either to your employer or your foes or...someone else."

The specter avoids looking all of you in the eyes, staring straight into the burning sky.

"You cannot trust me, I know. You do not know me, or my motivations, I understand. I cannot force you to choose as I would choose; I can only tell you, here and now, that there *is* a choice beyond the limited options that they offer you, if only you open your eyes to the possibilities inherent in your position."

**When the shadowrunners arrive at the tower:**

The tower has no door, only an open gateway lit by a single bare, primitive electric bulb, and leading to a short hallway. As you walk down the corridor, the black glass skin of the tower proves to be a façade over an older structure, the walls changing layer after layer from concrete to brickwork to crumbling dressed stone. Your feet kick up the dust of ages as you trudge down the hallway. Dee glances around with interest.

At the end of the hallway is a circular chamber, lit by glowing yellow crystals set into the walls about two meters off the ground, with a massive stone statue of a kneeling man stands in the center. Statue and floor seem to be of apiece, black marble shot through with veins of silver.

Dee floats ahead of you to examine the walls. Carved into the stone are scenes of—you. The etchings show you as you are now, standing in the chamber before the statue and breaking the light-crystals, but seem unbelievably old.

Then the statue rises in front of you; what you had taken to be stone was rocky flesh, thin and taut with age until almost translucent. Arms spread; the figure turns to each of you and speaks a few words in an unknown language.

**If any of the characters can speak Sperethiel or Or'zet:**

You're surprised to hear the deep baritone voice of the statue switch to a familiar language as he turns to you. His terms are ancient, formal, but he speaks slowly and you can pick out the meaning.

"Welcome, our children, come to claim your inheritance, the gifts of the Eternal Library. To re-found our Empire, the island-that-is-the-world, you must travel in darkness; when the light crystals are extinguished, our power will return to the world."

**If any of the Mystic Crusaders are there:**

As the stone man turns to address the Mystic Crusader, a brief look of shock and awe settles across their face.

"He says "Welcome, our children, come to claim your inheritance, the gifts of Atlantis. Break the light crystals, and our lore will return to the world.""

**When the light crystals are smashed:**

As each crystal cracks and the magical light within dies, the chamber gets darker and darker, until only the light from the entrance provides any light at all. With an audible sigh, the stone man sinks into the earth, seemingly becoming part of the floor. There is a shower of sparks as the tiny bulb explodes, and then a moment of perfect, preternatural darkness. There is no perception of sound, even from those around you, no sense of movement or motion or heat.

Then you open your eyes, and you are back in the Walbrook grotto, the tiny red lights glaring at you. The perpetual shadow of the astral rift is simply gone.

**To any astrally perceiving characters, or those with the sextant or compass:**

A sudden pressure building before your eyes, that quickly intensifies and then passes, leaving you momentarily confused and drained. You can feel the walls and floor shake a little...and the pressure starts to build up behind your eyes again.

**To anyone looking at the Piri Reis map or map fragment:**

A ripple, hazy grey static and vaguely ring-shaped, moves across the map from a V symbol. As it passes through where you stand, a tiny tremor moves through the walls and floor, the water in the brook shuddering as it goes on.

**If the Mystic Crusaders did not accompany the shadowrunners on the astral quest:**

Back in the tunnels again, you splash gently toward the surface.

Someone's standing in the middle of the tunnel, smoking a cigarette. Behind her looms the giant, a minigun in his massive hands.

"There's twenty meters of detcord under this water, stretching back from where I'm standing. In this confined space, it'll turn you into hamburger. Give me the cache and everyone walks out of this alive."

You hear a click and whine as the minigun barrels turn on and start to pick up speed.

**BEHIND THE SCENES**

After a brief transition, the shadowrunners (and anyone else) who went through the astral rift will find themselves on the crowded streets of a shadow London, the first step in their astral journey. It isn't really London, though the street layout is the same, and despite the smell it's mostly empty. All of the "buildings" are slabs of rock, the doorways and windows are carvings, merely ornamental—like a massive movie set created by a mad god.

As a metaplanar location, the character's physical forms and any equipment they had on them are reproduced, and they use their regular stats (with a few changes as noted below). None of the damage the characters suffer on this metaplane translates back to their physical form (though they don't know that), and if a character "dies" then they are returned to their physical bodies, unconscious but otherwise unaffected.

Astral perception and astral projection do not work on this metaplane, though a character can substitute their Assensing Skill for the Perception Skill in any Perception Test they may make. Any character with the Astral Combat Skill may substitute it for any combat skill (Blades, Pistols, Unarmed Combat, etc.) on this metaplane, dealing normal damage for the type of weapon they are using.

In this place, none of the shadowrunner's implants or augmentations exist—they gain no bonuses from them, and they are physically absent from the characters: characters with cyberlimbs have only stumps, characters with cybereyes have only empty sockets and are effectively blind, etc. The character isn't actually damaged, injured, or in any pain from these gaps and holes in their form, and the character doesn't die even if any critical bits are missing.

A curious property of this place is that the more Awakened or Emerged a character is, the less strongly they are tied to this plane; powerful characters may be almost intangible and transparent, little more than images. Characters with Magic and Resonance subtract their Magic or Resonance rating from their physical attributes (Agility, Body, Reaction, Strength); if this reduces an attribute to 0 or less, then the character is effectively insubstantial, like a spirit or astral form manifesting on the physical. The character cannot physically touch or be touched; though they may cast and be affected by Mana spells normally.

Any spirits the characters may have summoned or bound, however, always appear materialized, even if they normally have the Possession power. Any technomancer characters can communicate with the insect people through a limited form of telepathy; this also allows the character to judge the location and number of the insect people within their Signal range.

After a moment of getting settled, the player characters (and anyone else that shows up) will be gently pushed along by the flow of the crowd. The "people" on the street—aren't. Without their concealing clothing they appear to be a very weak and cowardly form of hybrid form insect spirit. Individually they are a pushover, but together they can swarm and wear down any group. However, these critters' primary desire is not to fight the shadowrunners, but to herd them toward the tower. If confronted violently, or if the characters make a determined effort to push back against the crowd, the hive people will fall back, leaving a space around them—and wait. A living sea of insect-people will hover just out of their range, leaving the avenue toward the tower open.

Most characters, confronted with lots of weak insect spirits, will probably opt to fight or flee. Diplomacy isn't generally going to work unless the shadowrunners include a technomancer; the insect people can understand them but can't or won't talk to them—they will just wait for the player characters to move in the right direction.

If the characters insist on fighting, let them. The insect spirits will only attempt to grapple and subdue, no more than three or four of them per character; any subdued character will be carried over the insect-people's shoulders down to the bridge and laid on the ground.

John Dee is there to answer a few of the shadowrunner's questions, and to expound a little. At this juncture, he is not going to ask the shadowrunners for anything—not to betray their boss, or hand over the cache, or anything; he merely wants to try and build their trust in him. In this place he is insubstantial and immune to physical attacks, so he feels confident and secure in addressing the characters here. If he sees the Mystic Crusaders, he'll try to destroy them using Manaball spells, which he will read from his book; if asked about it he will state that the Mystic Crusaders are their enemies and he was aiding the shadowrunners by attacking them.

Once the characters get to the river of boiling pitch, getting across is up to them; John Dee will watch and offer suggestions and feedback. Insubstantial characters can literally float right over the burning river; the others have a harder time of it. Anyone touching the river must resist 1-5 DV Fire damage (p.164-165, *SR4A*) depending on how much they were exposed—1 DV if they stick a hand or foot in, 5 DV each round if they fall in or jump in. Any reasonable means of getting across is okay. Some possibilities include:

- Jumping from pylon to pylon; Agility + Athletics (6, 10 minutes) Test—a +2 dice pool modifier applies if the characters create a rope of some sort. This test may be taken as a teamwork test by all non-intangible members. A glitch means that a character brushes the boiling pitch with an arm or leg and must resist 3 DV fire damage—a critical glitch means a character has fallen *into* the river and resists 5 DV Fire damage each round until they can get out.
- A summoned spirit could ferry the characters across, or assist in the characters making their way across
- Crafting a makeshift raft from available materials (dragon bones, clothing, the bodies of dead insect people, etc.); any relevant technical skill + Logic (6, 10 minutes) Extended Test
- A technomancer can convince the surviving insect people to form a living bridge with their own bodies; any relevant social skill + Charisma (6, 1 minute) Extended Test
- Swimming the river—not generally a good idea, but if the character is an adept with Elemental Resistance (Fire), has the benefit of an Armor spell, and/or armor with Fire Resistance, they might try it. Swimming + Strength (10, 1 Combat Round) Extended Test; the character must resist 5 DV Fire damage each round.

The bulb on the gateway isn't actually powered by electricity, if a character unscrews it, the light remains on. It may be smashed like any old glass bulb, and the filament extinguishes itself if that happens. John Dee keeps pace with the shadowrunners, urging caution.

In the chamber itself, the Guardian creature will awaken and survey the room. If any of the characters are insect magicians or toxic magicians or spirits, Infected, cyberzombies (including Knight 12), drakes, or possessed by shedim, the Guardian will attack those characters and spirits immediately, ignoring everyone else. After they are destroyed (or

if none are present) he will greet each character in the chamber in turn, every race in a different language—Sperethiel for elves, an ancient form of Or’zet for orks, something like the Naacal language spoken by the Mystic Crusaders for humans, and completely alien languages for everyone else. Anyone familiar with these languages can catch most of what the Guardian says; a Mystic Crusader will translate if present.

If asked in Naacal, Or’zet, or Sperethiel, the Guardian will answer questions, responding in those languages—he knows approximately where the physical anchor is, can explain about the artifacts and their powers, give a general overview of what’s in the cache or where the next one is. However, he doesn’t recall a great deal else, such as the people and civilization that created the cache, or his own name. Feel free to make things up and have him contradict himself, slip into other languages at important points, or ask if the characters have seen his lucky preces foot. The Guardian steadfastly ignores John Dee.

There are eight light crystals, set into the wall exactly 1.81 meters above the ground. They have Barrier Rating 4 and Structure Rating 3 (p. 166, *SR4A*). Removing a crystal from the wall for any reason requires a successful Strength + Strength Test. Once all eight of the crystals are smashed, the light bulb (if unsmashed) will dim out, and the characters will find themselves back in their bodies in the grotto. The astral rift will be gone, but the symbol for the physical anchor will still be present on the map.

Knight 1 is bluffing; there is no detcord. If it’s obvious the shadowrunners don’t have the cache, she’ll fall back and regroup. The actual physical emergence of the cache is covered in **The London Stone**.

## **PUSHING THE ENVELOPE**

If the shadowrunners aren’t having enough trouble, add some more company in the form of clumsy spelunkers, or Mystic Crusaders that managed to force their way in to the grotto. In a pinch, Knight 1 and Knight 13 could astrally project past most of the defenses and get in touch with the astral rift that way.

## **DEBUGGING**

An infinite number of the same generic enemy is lame, and this is no exception. Make it clear to the players that their characters aren’t facing a million insect-people—there are exactly 101 of them. If the shadowrunners (and others) manage to maim, kill, or destroy all of those insect people, then so be it. It’s a valid option.

If the Guardian is destroyed before he can give the message about how to release the cache, or if the player characters just don’t have the resources to talk to him, then the highly detailed carvings on the walls of the shadowrunners breaking the light crystals should do it. John Dee can point this out if necessary.

If for whatever reason the player characters are at a loss of what to do when they return, the first wave should give them a direction to follow. Any surviving NPCs nearby can suggest the connection.

## **PLACES OF INTEREST**

### **Shadow London**

#### **The Tower**

## **GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS**

### **Insect People**

#### **The Guardian**

## **THE LONDON STONE**

### **SCAN THIS**

The astral rift that leads to the cache’s hiding place on the metaplanes and the physical anchor have been separated; while the astral rift is now located beneath London’s streets the physical anchor is one of London’s oldest landmarks—the London Stone. When someone succeeds in retrieving the cache from the metaplanes, it will appear in the physical world at the London Stone. The shadowrunners and Mystic Crusaders will both be racing for the stone—either to claim the cache, or to destroy it and prevent it from coming through.

## **TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT**

### **Read the following to the characters:**

The site **V** marked on the map is almost entirely unremarkable; a small roofed courtyard off Cannon Street, barely big enough for a pair of trolls to stand abreast, nearly lost among the modern buildings. You look around to see if anyone is watching you before heading in, but all of the people on the street are moving except for across the street, where a pair of women dressed in burqas are sitting at a café, talking and drinking small cups of tea or coffee.

You head into the small space. There, kept in a cement house behind a glass display case guarded with decorative iron grillwork is a lump of rock. As you draw close enough to read the metal plaque nailed over top, an ARO pops up announcing you have arrived at the London Stone.

**If the players read the ARO or the plaque:**

This is a fragment of the original piece of limestone once securely fixed in the ground now fronting Cannon Street Station.

Removed in 1742 to the north side of the street, in 1798 it was built into the south wall of the Church of St. Swithun London Stone which stood here until demolished in 1962.

Its origin and purpose are unknown but in 1188 there was a reference to Henry, son of Eylwin de Londenstane, subsequently Lord Mayor of London.

**If the stone is viewed in the astral:**

On the astral, the London Stone has a presence larger than its physical shadow would imply; there is the indescribable impression of immense size and pressure to its aura, and things shift and move within it like a living thing. The Stone brings to mind every impression you've had of London since you set foot here, all the sights and smells of ancient and modern streets, the urban English accents layering on each other in a gentle cacophony, the taste of oysters and fish and chips...it's like experiencing the city in miniature.

**Once the astral quest is completed:**

For a moment, the limestone remnant seems to grow and expand, and then the London Stone has a presence larger than its physical substance would imply; there is the indescribable impression of immense size and pressure to its aura, and things shift and move within it like a living thing. The Stone brings to mind every impression you've had of London since you set foot here, all the sights and smells of ancient and modern streets, the urban English accents layering on each other in a gentle cacophony, the taste of oysters and fish and chips...it's like experiencing the city in miniature. You realize that you are somehow seeing the aura, the essence of this most ancient landmark.

Which is why it is so very frightening to see a fine bright crack trace its way through the stone's aura, and perceive the pulse rippling through the air, like the beat of a dying heart.

**Once an artifact touches the stone:**

The air seems to congeal around the artifact as it touches the surface of the stone, the glowing cracks crazily remapping themselves like lambent wires into a three-dimensional outline of a cube—and then the cube is real. A chest of stone, lying on the ground in front of the London Stone. Behind you, there is the beep of a horn.

Turning, you see cars have suddenly stopped as one of the women in burqas run toward you. The smaller one is collapsed at the table, but a manifestation of her astral form, hellish and horrible streaks toward you...

## BEHIND THE SCENES

Once someone completes the astral quest, the cache will attempt to come through at the physical anchor—however, it needs contact with one of the keys to do that. The metaphysical momentum of the cache is such that an astral shallow will form around the London Stone courtyard (p. 116, *Street Magic*), allowing everyone to experience the stone's aura. The cache will also start sending out little astral ripples (very small mana surges, too small to actually affect the use of Magical Skills) at irregular intervals. Unknown to everyone, the astral shallow around the stone is now permanent.

If the shadowrunners kept the Mystic Crusaders from accessing the astral rift, then once the shadowrunners return (sans cache) they're going to quickly figure out (using their map fragment) what the ripples and V symbol means and head for the London Stone. The shadowrunners are going to have to figure out what's going on (if they haven't already) and head there with at least one of the artifacts as well. Essentially, unless the player characters thought to station someone at the London Stone when they noticed the V symbol appeared on the map (provided they noticed the V symbol) both the shadowrunners and the Mystic Crusaders are going to be racing toward the anchor point.

The two women in burqas are Knight 7 and Knight 13, who are stationed to watch the stone as soon as the V symbol pops up on the map fragment. They do not actually have the map fragment, however, so for right now they will just wait and nonchalantly observe the Stone.

Getting at the stone is pretty easy, actually. The frontage of the enclosure has a Barrier Rating of 4 and a Structure Rating of 4 for purposes of breaking through it, or it can be opened with a crowbar and a successful Strength + Body (3) Test. Once an artifact (including the map fragment) physically touches the stone, an astral rift will temporarily appear and deposit the cache.

Then the shadowrunners just need to get it out of there, through Knight 7, Knight 13, and any of the other Mystic Crusaders that managed to show up by that time.

Whether the shadowrunners get the cache or not, proceed to **Recovery**.

## PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

It needs be said, but destroying the London Stone before the cache materializes is an option to keep the other side from getting the cache. The Mystic Crusaders won't pursue that particular option, but there's nothing keeping the shadowrunners from doing so. If they ask Frosty and it appears to be the only option to keep the cache out of their hands, she'll even recommend it to the player characters. The London Stone has a Barrier Rating of 6 and a Structure Rating of 12.

## DEBUGGING

At worst, the player characters fail and the Mystic Crusaders grab the cache. They can probably pursue the Mystic Crusaders through London, back towards the London offices of the Atlantean Foundation, which are very well defended indeed...if the cache makes it inside the building, Frosty will call them and tell them to back off. Breaking into the office to take the cache can be an interesting side-run.

For their part, the Mystic Crusaders are not (yet) willing to start a running chase through London if the player characters get the cache in a vehicle and drive off. They might be willing to capture one of the shadowrunners and hold them prisoner, offering them in exchange for the cache—such an exchange or rescue plan would also make a nice side-run.

## PLACES OF INTEREST

**The London Stone**

## RECOVERY

### SCAN THIS

The last thing most shadowrunners want to see after successfully stealing a crate of pre-Awakening magic from dangerous, gun-toting people—or alternately, the shadowrunners, having lost or destroyed said cache—is to go back to their quarters and find a strange elf sitting on their couch, Frosty nowhere to be found. Harlequin for his part has decided it's time to talk to the shadowrunners a little and make sure they understand their place in this game, and what the stakes are—at some point Frosty will cut him off and tell the shadowrunners to pack their gear. Next stop: Azania.

## TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

### **If the player characters call Frosty and update her on what's happening:**

Frosty listens to everything you tell her, then asks if anyone is hurt and how badly. After giving her the rundown, she tells you to meet her at the airport; she'll pack up the safehouse on her own and meet you there.

### **Read the following to the characters as they pull into the hangar:**

It's dark as you pull into the hangar. The plane appears fueled and ready, maintenance drones engaged in their mysterious duties as Rigger X sends you a perfunctory “get your asses on the plane” message and the boarding platform drone wheels itself into position.

Everything is pretty much how you left it, except for a strange elf sitting on the old black leather couch. You've seen him before—he was one of the guys that showed up at the end of that thing in Tir Tairngire. He rises to meet you, and you see he's in some sort of costume, green-and-black harlequin's dazzle, his face painted white with a single black diamond over his left eye; a sheathed longsword is held in his left hand. The way he smiles at you shows far too much teeth; it reminds you of that docusim where the chimpanzee is just about to rip the zoo keeper's arm off.

“Harlequin, pleasetameetcha. Frosty will be here in a few minutes. I thought we might have a little chat.”

### **Read the following if the shadowrunners don't automatically attempt to kill Harlequin:**

While talking to you, Harlequin is playing with a long, skinny balloon.

“In your line of work, you help people that are already rich get richer, or at least remain rich. Faceless corporations hire you for reasons that only make sense as a couple of cells on a spreadsheet somewhere. I think you're probably comfortable not knowing things about who and what you're working for. Look a little too hard to find out their names and motivations will get you killed.

“This is pretty much the same situation. The quest you have undertaken—sorry, the bit of employment you're enjoying—involves some very powerful people and organizations. Because of your role in the whole affair, and what you've seen and what you're *going* to see, if you survive, you might well be concerned that those people are going to see that you're dead or at least mindwiped when all is said and done.”

Stopping for a second, the elf looks at each of you. “I'm just going to ensure you right now that won't happen, because I'm not going to allow it. It is very important to me that you do the best that you possibly can during this little exercise, and I don't want you blowing it by imagining your frontal lobes have a date with a chemical guillotine.”

Without further ado, he takes off the top of his head and removes his living brain. Dropping his scalp, he grabs the balloon—which you see now has been twisted into a freestanding mechanism with a very sharp, slanted blade.

Squishing the front part of the brain into the slot, the blade comes down and lops the grey matter off—then continues straight on through and pops the balloon. The elf stares for a second then discards the busted balloon and starts to juggle the two pieces of his brain.

“What Those-Who-Sit-Above-In-Shadow does not want you to do is go around blabbing to people about ancient relics from Atlantis or any of that kind of thing. At least, not without proof, and not through any media outlet except the ones they control.” He makes a gesture of tossing the illusory brains away, and suddenly his head is whole again.

“Me, I could care less. You might make a few yen off it, but Atlantis never existed in quite the way the Ancient Wisdom channel would have you think, and some of us literally know where the bodies are buried. That whole ‘perfect island empire of magic’ myth is going get popped one of these years, you just mark my words.”

He gives you an exaggerated wink, then pulls out another long skinny balloon, this one deflated.

“So, friends. Thoughts, questions, concerns, requests? I do a mean giraffe.”

#### **When Frosty pulls in:**

Frosty’s car comes in on automatic pilot, settling only a few inches from your rear bumper. She jumps out of the car and starts shouting.

“What the frag are you all standing around for? We need to load up the plane! Come help me with this sh...oh.”

She stops in mid-sentence as she sees Harlequin. When she starts talking again, her tone is completely different.

“You’re not supposed to be here.”

“Au contraire, my dear. I’m supposed to be observing this contest, and that means getting to know all the players...and making sure they know me.” He walks over to give her a hug and a peck on the forehead, then holds her out at arms length and crosses his arms.

“Sorry. No fraternizing with the principals. You’ll just have to contain yourself until after all this is done and we’re alone.”

The sudden snap kick Frosty delivers is a thing of beauty; Harlequin manages to skip out of the way before his testicles are relocated somewhere up near his kidneys.

“Seriously now, you all need to get going! No time to waste. We’ll all dance in the moonlight later.”

#### **If the shadowrunners did not get the cache:**

As you taxi around the runway, Frosty looks at all of you. “I know we didn’t win this one, but this thing isn’t over yet.” Then she rubs a long haul derm on her wrist, then starts poring over the map. By the time you’re in the air, she hits the call button wired to the pilot’s cabin.

“We’re going to Azania.”

#### **If the shadowrunners did get the cache:**

As you taxi around the runway, Frosty looks at all of you. “We won this one, but this thing isn’t over yet.” Then she rubs a long haul derm on her wrist, then starts poring over the map. By the time you’re in the air, she hits the call button wired to the pilot’s cabin.

“We’re going to Azania.”

She looks back at you and rests her hand on the cache. “I think it’s time you all found out what we’re fighting for.”

## **BEHIND THE SCENES**

If any of the shadowrunners is badly hurt, Frosty will tell them to open the trunk of the car—which contains a stripped-down Valkyrie module (p. 146, *Arsenal*), able to hold one ork-or-smaller metahuman. Any character placed in the trunk will immediately be stabilized, and a character in the front seat can use the AR interface to apply First Aid using the Valkyrie module’s Rating 4 medkit.

Harlequin will be waiting for the shadowrunners when they arrive, and is basically there to answer any questions they might have (“What? You don’t have any at all? Wow. I’d have shot somebody in the kneecap to get the straight line on what the heck is going on and who the hell was shooting at me by now.”) At the very least, he briefly recaps the rules of the *chal’han* as they apply to the player characters and reminds them that no matter how noble the Mystic Crusaders may be, their bosses are not exactly paladins (“Take from someone that knows.”) Some of his answers will be somewhat misleading (“Immortals? Everyone dies sometime. Even elves, even dragons.”) or circle back (“You know Frosty’s good for the money, right? I was very generous with her allowance when she was still living under my roof.”)

Frosty arrives with all of the shadowrunner’s gear and most of her own; she sort of firebombed the safehouse after she got done packing so chances are anything the player character’s might have had hidden there is now gone.

When everyone is done asking questions and they’re in the air, it’s time for **Chapter 3**.

## **PUSHING THE ENVELOPE**

John Dee can appear, as a manifest astral form of course. Once he sees Harlequin he’ll curse and try to erect a defensive spell; Harlequin will appear puzzled and hit him with a spell so powerful it’ll blind your third eye for a

moment...not a bad way of establishing his power, but he'll probably also have a few hard questions for the shadowrunners as well.

## **DEBUGGING**

The shadowrunners might decide to kill Harlequin. That's fine; he has enough innate protections and illusion magic to put on a convincing show, he'll play dead and then "wake up" when Frosty arrives. Boy, the look on their faces when zombie-Harlequin sits up, face pulled into a rictus grin...