

The Dispossessed

By Damien Kelly, 2001

GMs Guide

Introduction

Okay, first and foremost thanks for doing this for me and for Gaelcon, I hope you don't come to regret it. At the very least it shouldn't be an arduous task, as the whole point of this scenario is that it should require very little effort on your part to run, while simultaneously allowing you to have as much fun as you can persecuting your players as deeply as you feel able to do so. Yes, you read that right – the whole point is for you to wind up the players. The premise, when you read it, will seem terribly complicated, wholly unlikely, and the reasoning behind the seeming complexity is perverse, but since it doesn't actually figure in the execution of the plot at all, and is in fact provided solely as a handout for players, to be given out at the end of the game, you need worry very little about what it contains.

All *you* have to do, for the most part, is read the descriptions of the rooms I've supplied, run what little combat is necessary (its very simple) and (and this is your only major responsibility) fuel their personal paranoia and mutual distrust to as hysterical a peak as you can – until every move and minor decision is the subject of knife edge tension. This is what they really want out of a game of Cthulhu after all, and by <insert deity here> we're gonna give it them.

The truth is, there is no major threat in this game – no endgame baddie boss, no intricate mystery that defies solution, no heartbreaking moral decision or sacrifice to make.

But they will think there is.

Yes, the game is an elaborate headf**k, and when the players finally come to realise it they'll be after you, me and as many staffers as they come into contact with, and they'll (hopefully) be unwilling to hold back until they get blood. So, make it all worth it and have as much fun at their expense as you can in the meantime.

Before I go into the mechanics of how this will be achieved, I'll let you have a leaf through the backplot so you can appreciate why the elaborate set-up exists. What follows is the text of the post-game handout you will give each player when the time is up. Don't worry too much about remembering all the details of it – as I said, it impacts little on the running of the scenario, but you're going to need all the excuse you can get for what you put them through in the next three hours, so try and get a feel for the flavour of it.

What the hell was all that about?

Okay, two years ago occultist and mentalist Jerome Samsara became aware of a hellish alternate world through his experimentation in astral projection, a world overrun with demon spirits. Some say his explorations brought their attention, others that they had been seeking an exit from their exhausted reality anyway, but it became quickly evident to Samsara that the spirits were planning to invade his own world and bring an end to life there. Samsara alerted the Hand of Isis, an occult brotherhood capable of meeting such a threat and so began a period of preparation for war. New magics were developed to meet the threat of these demons and at the heart of these preparations lay Jerome Samsara, who, with greater care this time, began to return astrally to the demon world to spy on it. Learning the natures and movements of the enemy became vital to our defence. Worth the risk.

The risk in question was that the enemy would discover Samsara and either destroy our one chance for an understanding of them, or worse, force him to reveal our position and current state of readiness to the enemy. He might even provide them with some idea of how to open their terrible gate to our existence. To reduce the risk of this happening a young but powerful psychic called Maria Gannon was located and taken into the fold to act as Samsara's debriefer and mental programmer. After each trip to the other side, Jerome would prepare a report of what he had learned from examining the enemy world, and then Maria would wipe his memory clean psychically; temporarily removing his knowledge of the

Hand of Isis, the impending invasion etc. in preparation for his going back again. He would travel as an ignorant, and would not have his memories returned to him until he was safely back and had given over his information. In this way the chances of his leaking information to the enemy, should they attempt to read his mind, was reduced to an absolute minimal. Her ability was to be able to transfer his memory into solid objects, from which it could be extracted later and returned to him.

Of course it went wrong. Samsara drew the attention of a particularly cunning psychic demon called Ginsemoth, who figured a perfect route into our existence was simply to ride on Samsara's wandering mind, and so on Samsara's last visit he was taken over by Ginsemoth on arrival and when his mind returned to his body it was Ginsemoth who was conscious, aware and in charge. Cue a period of mad demon sultan plaguing the earth, killing innocents and conjuring up nasty oogly boogly minions to jibber and growl around his feet.

The Hand of Isis go into action, *yay the boyz!*, and they set a trap for Ginsemoth. They give him word of another mystic capable of projecting to the demon dimension is hiding in an old house, and wait for the demon sultan to come sniffing after it. The house is a trap, built on information learned from Samsara about the demon world. When Ginsemoth goes in, Hand of Isis mystics outside on the moorlands set off an impenetrable ward all round the house like a bubble, trapping the demon inside, a ward capable of contracting and crushing the house and all its contents down to a very small amount of powder and goo. Very powerful schtuff! It would seem to be the case that if Ginsemoth cannot maintain a physical form to inhabit in this world he will be forced to snap back into his own. All good. But there is another factor. The war is still imminent, the rest of the evil is still back there waiting for a way out, and when Ginsemoth comes tumbling back in he's gonna be very motivated towards getting back and getting even. They needed Samsara back if possible; his was the most comprehensive knowledge of the enemy, once his memory was restored to him, and was in himself, one of the group's most powerful and inventive mystics, all in all a very valuable ally.

So a plan was put in place, in addition to the trap, to try and save Samsara if possible. This was going to be very tricky, and could very well ruin the plan to get rid of Ginsemoth entirely if it went wrong. But the Hand of Isis leaders, being very poor at cost benefit analysis, thought it worth the risk.

Now, this is where it all gets rather complicated. You have a psychic demon that you wish to exorcise, but the expert knowledge in how best to affect such an outcome is trapped in the mind that the demon is occupying. The Hand of Isis had Samsara's notes and reports, but it was a pale second to the contribution of the man himself. What was clear was this; Ginsemoth needed a physical connection to our reality, he needed a host. It was also clear from reports of his activities that his disembodied state reduced his ability to get close to the minds he met. He could not stretch himself so far as to allow Samsara's mind the chance to fight back and regain control; that seemed clear. So he would not be able to sense the minds of mages waiting inside the house until he was upon them, and could not possess them instead until he was closer to them. But it was also clear that he was quick and very adept in taking such a host at close quarters, and was himself a powerful sorcerer, with quite horrifying magics.

The Hand had a banishing rite of Egyptian origin which they felt gave the best hope of getting rid of the demon, the Five Handed Banishing, which, as the name implied, required the contribution of five individuals to complete. When the ward bubble went up the five would remain within and attempt to banish Ginsemoth. Presuming they succeeded, the need for the ward was gone and it could be dispelled and they and Samsara would be let out. If it failed then they would die with him when the house was destroyed. But their success might be difficult to gauge from without. The risk remained that their failure would give Ginsemoth the opportunity to leap from one to the other, possessing and learning the group's secrets and objectives, once he was in proximity and presuming he could overcome them. It was felt his level of magic made it a safe bet that he could. He could take control, force them to obey, and try to trick his way to freedom.

If they succeeded they would need to prove it, and be able to free themselves. To ensure that this was after a success, the spell to dispel the ward was worked so that it would require all six to participate, to include Samsara, and would only function if all six were free of spiritual possession. A key was fashioned from six crystals to be charged at focal points in the building, which would only respond to solitary entities; those with an aura of duality could not make the key function.

If they failed then the ward would in time handle things, but in the time between they could not be allowed to give Ginsemoth the means to escape. Even if they committed suicide the creature might be able to glean knowledge from their souls which would be trapped within the ward: after all it had to prevent him escaping in spirit – the only route out that had been worked in was a passage to the demon reality, the route they would send Ginsemoth down if they defeated him. They had to simply be unable to aid him. Therefore it would be necessary to take the same precautions with the operatives that had been taken with Samsara when he ventured up against the enemy – mind wipes. No knowledge of the Hand or the war with Ginsemoth, simply the knowledge of the rite and the certainty that it must be enacted against the individual who was coming to the house.

Maria Gannon became a member of the team. She would wipe all the minds, including her own, prior to the trap being sprung. But if they succeeded it meant that they would be without memory afterward, and would not know how to register their success, or free themselves from a ward they knew nothing about.

Here is where the elaborate puzzles, individually meaningful, and the issue of timing a tight window of opportunity came into play.

Presuming success, the group would need to be able to work out the means of escape without knowledge of what was going on, but from clues that could not be readily worked out by Ginsemoth without his having intimate knowledge of their minds. No information could come from without, since none of the Hand could trust that the team would be really themselves and free from duress. They had to work it out alone. And Samsara wouldn't be any help, since his mind was still wiped from before his last trip to the demon reality.

It was decided that a series of puzzles that could only be worked out by a single member of the team should be placed around the house, which would lead them to an understanding of what they should do to effect an escape. The reason for putting them in such distant locations was so that the team would be forced to move about the whole building and deal with any minions that may be trapped inside with them that could be harbouring Ginsemoth's mind. A clean up operation needed to be included in the planning to ensure the integrity of the house when it was re-opened.

Worst-case scenarios were postulated to test the plan:

Q. What if Ginsemoth isn't banished?

A. Then the ward crushes his host and all possible alternate hosts and he is shot out the only passage in the thing, snapping him back into his own reality.

Q. But we're going to delay the ward crushing effect while the team works out the spell to free themselves. What if he works out there's an escape route?

A. Then he needs all the team alive, un-possessed and participating in the spell to open the ward. He'll more likely kill them, especially if we stick in a couple of combat specialists to put up a fight of it, and a mage to counter his magic and attack him with their own. And they'll never agree to help a demon.

Q. But what if he doesn't kill them? Or, conversely, what if after success some of those abominations that follow him like lap dogs kill a team member after they're successful in getting rid of him? We have to allow the spell to work in such a way that ghost members can open the ward, so that even if a minion kills some, the rest have a chance at escape with their lives.

A. Oh yeah. Fair enough. Well, he still has to work out how to open the ward and for that he needs the contents of their heads and remember, if he's possessing one of them the spell won't work.

Q. Okay, what if he doesn't kill them, uses his magic to keep them at bay, possesses each in turn, overcomes the will of their individual minds to read their memories, uses this knowledge to work out the personal puzzles of each, finds all the portions of the key and works out how the spell is done, then uses one of his abomination minions as a temporary host and forces them in their confused state to obey him with threats or promises and gets them to open the ward for him while they are free of his spirit?

A. ...That's one huge "if".

Q. Yes, yes it is – but not an impossible “if”.

A. But hugely improbable. The number of different things he’d have to control and account for, and with no prior knowledge of what he’s facing. That’s a bit of a stretch of circumstances don’t you think? Nobody’s that lucky.

Q. He’s a demon from an alternate dimension with psychic powers. Let’s not get smug.

A. Okay. Then we rely on him not having enough time for all those things he’d have to do. We reduce the delay to just three hours to have freed themselves, after which the ward crushes the lot.

Q. But what if –

A. **OH SHUT UP!** If he can do all that you think he can do, and keep control of the situation, and overcome them all with their various abilities and specialities, AND do it in less than three hours then he can have the bloody planet! OKAY? Unless you have any further suggestions?

Q. Can we have a priest?

And that was the plan. Yes it had holes but you couldn’t account for every eventuality. Even when you included a priest on the team. It would take a mammoth effort on Ginsemoth’s part to overcome the many twisted components of the trap and its escape route, and even if he could assemble them, the Hand were betting that he couldn’t do it all in time. It was as much as they could do.

They were betting the team’s lives, Samsara’s life, their own lives and all of humanity’s lives.

And luckily, they won. So that’s all alright then, isn’t it?

That’s right. It all worked. No need for all that angst and convoluted preparation as it turned out. None at all.

Ginsemoth was banished on the first try. Walked straight in, didn’t see the trap coming and was sent packing without so much as a by your leave. All to plan. Well almost. See, the thing was, his true form was so terrible as it left the body of Samsara that it struck unimaginable horror and insanity into the minds of the team. Maria, the psychic, in her terror did what any good psychic would do in the face of such glorious evil. She screamed in panic and let loose a surge of cleansing psychic anguish that made that bad image and all the bad memories go away. And knocked the team out cold as it turned out, freshly mind wiped (again!) with no memory of the face of the demon sultan as he was ripped back to his own dimension in exquisite fury. Yes, that was unexpected. It was presumed you would at least remember that you’d just *successfully* banished something.

Even so, one little hiccup doesn’t spoil everything, and in the end there was nothing to worry about. Except that you had to work out the clues of course, and clean up a couple of piddly nasties (who were no real threat and you always knew where they were), and assemble the key and open the ward and do it all in under three hours. But you were free of evil influence and everyone could trust each other and you were all on the same side, and there was no foundation for any paranoia since everything had worked as it was planned and it was all okay. So I’m sure it was a piece of cake escaping and none of you were stressed in a situation so completely lacking in threat and no-one was crushed by the terrible ward into a space the size of a ping pong ball. Nice friendly mob like you, I’m sure you did it in no more than half an hour, which is exactly how long it took my playtest team, who did know the banishing had been a success.

Anyway, you have to admit, it was nice to play a con scenario for once where there was absolutely no nasty twist coming on the part of the writer and the GM, where everything was safe and clean and linear. Makes such a nice change from those games where you spend the whole time paranoid trying to be ready for the inevitable twist, the all too obvious double cross, and waste precious time jumping at completely innocent shadows.

Running the Game

Okay, now you know the why, here's the what, where, who, when and how.

First, you should check you have the following:

1. The Map set.

There are 5 pages of maps with this guide.

The master map is marked **GMs Map** and is the one you keep for yourself. It is marked with letters and numbers which direct you to the various sections of text later on that you should provide the players with as a description of the rooms they come to.

The other four pages have increasingly detailed layouts of the house they are in and you should tear them into separate handouts now so you won't need to hide parts of the sheets as you set them in front of the players. They are blank apart from indications of structures (walls, doorways, windows etc). Decorate them as you see fit as the session progresses, anything that you think will scare the players or play on their speculations is fine, as long as it won't eat too far into the time, or distract them too much from the puzzle or task item in each room. Bloodstains, droppings, claw gouges in wall and floor are all good for this.

2. The 7 puzzle Handouts: The spell position diagram (as per pg. 15), the anomaly in the pentagram (as per pg. 10), the Apocryphal quotes (as per pg. 14), Cooper's memories from the Falklands (as per pg. 17) the poem and its notes (also pg. 17) and the incantation (pg. 18).

3. The Character sheets.

- a. Jerome Samsara: occult explorer and mystic
- b. Maria Gannon: psychic
- c. Fr. Lucien Kilmaine: Roman Catholic priest, exorcist and theologian academic
- d. Senton Carrow: archaeologist and mystic
- e. Major Harvey Cooper: former SAS
- f. Xu Chen: former Triad assassin

Take a few minutes now to go through these and note the spells and powers that some of the characters have and will want to use, especially the abilities that Maria Gannon possesses, that can use against both the monsters and players in the game, both alive and dead.

4. The “What the Hell was all that about?” handouts: one for each player, six in all.

Presuming these are all in order, we progress to the course of the action.

A few notes in general

1. **Don't get creative just to screw with the players.** The progression of this game is linear, but can get very out of hand if you get too carried away adding fuel to the fire. We want them to agonise and bicker their way to whatever outcome they reach, but since the game is in real-time and must end after three hours with the sudden implosion of the ward, you don't want them complaining that you gave them red herrings that impeded their progression to the solution.

Don't add things to draw attention away from the puzzles or the minions. It is important that the pace is set by them and not by you. If they ignore caution and fear no matter how thick you lay it on, so be it. The game can conceivably end in half an hour – that just means they're bad role-players, and you can tell them I said that.

It is particularly important you refrain from putting any dead bodies anywhere in the place, no matter how well they put the willies up folks. It could be argued that the spirits of these bodies should still be in the house and Maria could see and speak to them, or at the very least she

could read the past off the bodies using psychometry, which is particularly sensitive for human remains. So no corpses or bloody limbs please.

2. **Remember the time limit.** The game is real time. They get three hours to get out, no more than that. Make a surreptitious note of the start time of your first description and stick to schedule. If they fail to get out, it should be because they are too busy angst-ing away and tearing each others' eyes out. That's the experience they will have wanted from Cthulhu anyway so they'll not be too put out. Apart from pledging undying vengeance on you for all that pointless punishment.
3. **Make them Paranoid. Feed their distrust.** Paranoia through complete smug innocence and candid honesty is your role in this. They are waiting for the double cross, for one of them to be a double agent or for some hideous thing to be hidden around a corner. They think they can outsmart you and me both – worse still, because it's a competition game they are likely slaving at the very notion of outwitting and defeating us. We will use this as our primary weapon.
 - a. **Divide to conquer.** Make ample use of away from the table revelations of information: the solutions and details of each puzzle should be revealed secretly and individually to the player they are meant for once that person has realised the task refers to them specifically. If not away from the table, you should pass this information to them in a note. But don't take too long in these breaks of play, the players will resent them and we want that, but don't take so long they just become bored and lose interest. 1-2 minutes tops: be brutal about this, it'll aggravate them all the more.
 - b. **Smug surety is your friend.** Stay calm and at ease when giving descriptions, and have a small smile playing on your lips at all times. No stressing things or appearing to drop hints. Don't ham it.
 - c. **Always be truthful.** Don't be tempted to make fake rolls to add tension and increase suspicion in you, that's a deception and our whole defence afterwards is that we never lied to them. Plus, everyone is wise to that nowadays.
 - d. **Make the real danger obvious, it'll make them search for the danger that isn't there all the more.** They can readily hear the movements of the three minion creatures in the house with them, and you can keep telling them that, along with their general location, if they keep asking. Nothing actually sneaks up on them: they have to imagine it will for it to be effective.
 - e. **Conspire in their mutual lack of trust.** Make them put their questions to you in notes if they want - indeed encourage this: it fuels distrust.
 - f. **Keep it IC.** Force them to do all their interactions **In Character**, we want to break the bonds of OOC friendship as much as we can. Don't let the players engage in idle chitchat, it will reduce the tension. If they do, make an obvious check of your watch and write down the time, that'll give them pause.

4. What if a Player Character Dies?

The minions they face should be easy to overcome, but there is a chance that a player could die. Should this happen the following interventions keep dead characters in the game:

- a. The ward bubble around the house means that even spirits cannot leave this place, thus ensuring Ginsemoth couldn't pull any astral projection escape trick. This means the spirits of dead characters are trapped in here too. The minions themselves are merely constructions of magic; they have no spirits and will not continue to figure in the landscape of the dead characters once they are destroyed. Depending on who dies the following comes to play:
 - i. **If anyone but Maria Gannon dies**, then Maria can still see the spirits with her psychic abilities, and can freely communicate with them, acting from then on as a go between, passing the words of the dead onto the living. Make them (Maria and the Dead) do as much of their communication as you can away from players still playing live characters, or else in whispers, to

add to the sense of conspiracy and to lay doubt on Maria as a source of honest information: *is she really telling us what the dead actually said, or is she disguising the revelations only they are privy to on the other side that might expose her?*

- ii. **If Maria is among the dead**, she can still reach the living by sending her thoughts to them, such is the strength of her power. Only she can do this though, don't entertain other dead chars who try it, or ask to attempt rolls *just in case*.
- iii. **If all chars die** before the time limit is up, just continue on with the plot. Yes, they're dead, but they are still trapped inside, and the impetus to get out should not be any less. The ghosts they can dimly view on the outside should put this across to them. More on this below.

If all the characters are dead then issues of being able to handle physical objects become apparent, as many of the chars need to lift blocks out or raise slabs or inscribe symbols in the game. To overcome this fudge in some psychokinesis for Maria Gannon. She may expend Magic Points on another player which can be temporarily turned into STR stat points for the sake of a physical action. Only she and the char she is aiding may contribute to the MP pool, and they may not amass a pool larger than the target chars original STR rating. Once this pool is amassed, make a STR Pool x 3 roll to complete the action. The activity can then take the size of the pool in minutes to complete.

Example: Everyone is dead. Maria wishes to aid Xu Chen in removing a block from the wall. Before he died Xu's STR was 17, and he has 13 MPs. Maria has 20. Between them they have a total of 33 points they can spend. Xu donates 7 MPs and Maria donates 10, making the target of 17. Xu now makes a STR roll against his STR Pool (17) x 3, which is 51. If he succeeds he may remove the block, if not the block remains, the MPs are wasted, and they will need to try again with what MPs they have left. Conversely, someone less drained could try with Maria.

Maria must always be involved needless to say. Note that the target number need not always be the maximum, indeed sometimes it cannot.

Example: Maria is aiding Samsara to inscribe the Elder Sign. This is a lengthy process, and Samsara has already failed once, but cannot waste the time needed to regain his MPs (remember dead chars regain 1 MP per minute while ghosts, unlike living chars who regain MPs at a rate of 1 per 10 minutes). His STR was 12 but has only 7 MPs left. Maria is down to 10 and does not want to risk more than 5. They need a minimum of 10 mins to inscribe the sign so decide to each risk 5 MPs, making a pool of 10 for the task. This gives Samsara a STR roll against a target of 30%, which if he succeeds will give him his 10 minutes of activity for the inscribing, but afterward with only 2 MPs he will be very weak indeed.

With any luck these convoluted rules won't be necessary because at least some of the players will survive, but in the event of a massacre (how the hell did you let this happen!?) come get me and I'll run thru' this again if it's unclear. ☺

- b. For any, or all, of the characters that end up dead during the session the landscape of the house will subtly change. The ward is far more visible and oppressive to the dead, who feel a natural urge to be free of it and on to a better world. It is visible as a pale red light that surrounds the house and is unpleasant to approach and thoroughly impenetrable. Outside it are visible the host of the dead who have perished in the passage of Ginsemoth and his minions to this spot. They cannot be communicated with, but their faces are wracked with anguish and sadness, pity for the dead character within is clear, and their beckoning to join them, to be free as they are, is

overwhelming to any dead char who looks on those faces. They offer comfort and solace it seems, and seem to be trying to show the chars the path to heaven where they belong.

Typically the players will decide this is a trap and ignore them, but we shan't be accused of not trying to show them that they had already won.

- c. Interacting with the setting when dead shouldn't differ much from when they were alive: their spirits remember to stay on surfaces and will only pass through things with conscious effort that robs *1D3 Sanity and 1D3 Magic Points* each time they do it. Simple weapons (not the guns) will come over to the other side and can be used to attack minions just as if they were still solid and alive. The minions, being creatures of magic and therefore multi-planar, can harm spirits as readily as they can harm the living, and vice versa. Below are additional rules for spirit combat. They're in-house for this scenario and will suffice in favour of any you may know better and prefer.
 - i. When a player dies, their *Magic Points* become their *Hit Points*.
 - ii. Combat resumes against minion adversaries exactly as it would for living chars, except with dead chars restricted to Hand to Hand or Melee with any bladed or bashing weapons they had on them at point of death. Dead chars may only attack minions, not live chars, and no live char may attack a dead char's spirit.

The exception here is Maria Gannon, who can lash out psychically against the spirits at the cost of *1 Magic Point* to herself taking *1D4 Magic Points* off her target on each successful matched roll of POW on the resistance table. They cannot retaliate.
 - iii. A char reduced to no *Magic Points* is rendered insubstantial and exhausted until the magic points can build up again. The energy trapped in the house will feed this regeneration, and a point will regenerate per minute of rest (*in contrast to 10 minutes for a living character*). This should stop a second "death" slowing the overall game, but will likely put any dissipated spirit out of that combat until after it is over in rounds.
 - iv. The spiritual attacks of dead chars reduce a minion's *Hit Points*, not their *Magic Points*. Multiple chars attacking one minion will be targeting the one goal – after all, we do want the chars to beat the minions.
- d. If all else fails, and it really looks like the minions are going to rock the boat too much by consistently rendering all PCs dead and insubstantial – fudge the dice rolls and let them win. Let's not flog a dead horse here.

The course of the scenario

Okay, here's the meat of the scenario, broken up into the activities expected in each room. If you refer to the GMs Map you will see that each room is numbered 1-7, and the game begins in **Room 1**. Additionally other key areas within certain rooms are highlighted with the letters a-g, mostly so you can find them easily when you want to point them out to the players on their own maps, but I've put in a bit of description for them too as necessary. As I said earlier, feel free to decorate as you see fit, just don't add things which are likely to distract the PCs from the task they need to focus on in each room, should it be dealing with the three minions or solving the personal puzzle.

Once out of **Room 1**, the PCs are free to wander about as they see fit – it's a limited setting and many of the rooms feed into the same central space. The maps I have provided should allow you to progressively build up an overall plan of the house without the chance of revealing the details of a location they've not seen yet – try to use them thus rather than just putting out the full map from the beginning, it adds to the feeling of blind unease and suspense.

A number of the players will have abilities that require the expenditure of *Magic Points*. These regenerate at the rate of 1 per 10 minutes here due to the restrictions of the ward, which makes it

impossible for magic to dissipate very far. *Remember this: it's different to the regeneration of MPs for dead chars should anyone end up that way - they get MPs back at a rate of 1 per minute.*

Before you begin

The usual standards apply: hand out the character sheets and have them read them as fast as they can. This seems unfair, but I've kept the character descriptions short on purpose, since wiped minds are usually confused minds, so they really shouldn't need more than 5 mins. Remember we are on a schedule – preparation time cannot be allowed to eat into it.

I've included an additional 1990's 5th Ed Char sheet in the handouts so you can check base %'s for those who do not have the skill listed on their separate sheets.

What is important is that you do not allow them to reveal anything from the character sheets to each other, even OOC. Be explicit about this from the beginning and do not let them put out nametags in front of them. Make them take a number from 1-6 and refer to them using this number until they have revealed a name (either their real one or a pseudonym) to the group. Being referred to be the GM as 2 or 4 will only add to their unease. Be careful not to drop names yourself.

Room 1 – do not display a map while PCs remain in this room

The PCs wake in one end of the room, beside the closed and locked steel door, their bodies huddled together as if for warmth. They are naked and unarmed, and this will likely cause a moment's distress. Looking about they can see a bundle of clothing in one corner, which they may take and use to dress themselves. These are simple cotton pyjamas the colour of linen and brown leather slippers. There is a set in the appropriate size for each of them. They are unmarked.

The PCs do not recognise each other. Any tattoos any of them would have had have been removed so as to make them as faceless as possible to Ginsemoth. It also makes them relatively faceless to one another. They can tell the relative age of the others, see that Major Cooper and Xu Chen have defined builds, that Chen is Asian and that Maria is a woman. That's about it.

This rectangular room is faced with exposed stone and has a single window in one wall, and a single doorway opposite. It measures roughly 14ft wide by 20ft long, and is some 12ft high. The walls bear no gross obvious markings to the casual observer.

Looking Outside

The window is boarded up from the outside and faced with a wire grill inside of this. Gaps between the planks of wood are narrow, but some details of the exterior can be made out. It is night outside, but only just; the final hues of dusk are slowly expiring on the horizon. The landscape beyond is flat, a moorland, and unrecognisable to any of the group.

Keen eyed PCs (*ask for Spot Hidden*) will make out figures in makeshift cover out there. The Major and Xu can make out automatic weapons, the mystics can identify the unmistakable tools of ritual magic, the bloodiest kind. Any attempt to remove the grill will require substantial physical efforts and need tools of some kind which are not readily to hand. Weapons are hidden in the room which might be employed to some effect, but at the first sign of movement in any of the boards of wood, the Hand assassins outside will fire warning shots not to continue. They will not communicate with those inside, nor answer calls for aid, just keep shooting wide so dissuade them from knocking out the boards. The Major will be able to tell the shots are warning shots and well off their mark.

Back Inside

The floor is a riot of symbol and form. It is covered entirely with occult writings and spell components, and at its centre is an elaborate pentagram that the mystic Senton Carrow will be able to identify as the Five Handed Banishing of Egyptian origin: a spell to remove an evil spirit (make an *Occult* or *Cthulhu Mythos* roll), usually from a possessed host, and requiring the contribution of five individuals at the foci – hence the name. That there are six individuals in the room can mean only one thing to Carrow: one of them was the victim of the possession, no other observer would have been allowed. Tell Carrow

he's been part of such a banishing before: he's bound to tell the rest of them this fact as some form of defence to his legitimacy should accusations arise, and with luck it'll be seen as an all too convenient excuse for not being the victim.

This of course presumes Carrow will reveal the ritual information to the group. If he doesn't give it a minute then take Samsara aside and reveal the nature of the ritual to him also – he's just remembered it. If they both refuse to reveal the nature of the pentagram by that point the group will start picking at them until the issue is resolved. Just keep quiet and smile a lot.

At some point they are going to want to get out of this room. The door is locked; it's new, steel and sturdy and isn't going to be forced. The window is an obvious no go option. They'll have to search the room. The flagstones on the floor don't budge, and the blocks of the wall within reach do not move either. There is a large block near the ceiling which will come away but it will take locating, which they won't do by chance, and it will take two people to move, both standing on the shoulders of others. The secret to finding this block is on the floor and is Carrow's personal puzzle.

Carrow really has been a part of this Banishing before and knows the layout of the spell components well. Much of it, he will know, is more for decoration than anything, and it is precisely in these decorative parts that the inconsistencies lie. The Coptic(Egyptian) text here has been subtly changed (both a successful *Spot Hidden* and *Egyptian language* roll on Carrow's part are needed for him to get to this – should he fail, make him wait five minutes of being useless before you allow him a second go. He knows from the outset something here is not right, but he'll just have to buckle down and read the thing to find what).

The section comes from the prayer of Nefer-uben-f in the Book of the dead, a priest of Thoth, and concerns the power held by Set over his weaponry. The passage takes as its setting the Lake of Sekhet-Ar, which is in the North, or Lower Kingdom. But here the Lake is identified as Thoth-Hapi, which is the mythical point where the Nile rises, and was thought the highest point in the South, or Upper Kingdom. It should not escape Carrow that much is made in the added text that South is also Up, rather contrarily. Details of this are provided in a handout to save you explaining it.

All this should direct them to the uppermost blocks on the south wall above the window. They can discern the wall with the window is due south by having Xu, Cooper or either of the two mystics look at the stars in the night sky through the gaps in the window boards (ask for *Idea* and *Astronomy* rolls of course beforehand). Two of them can work together to slide the block out, perched on the shoulders of two others. Behind it are the key to the door and two .45 automatic pistols, each with a full clip already loaded and 2 more clips to spare. There are also a couple of machetes, a medical kit, 2 torches (with batteries) and a full water bottle.

Weapon	Start Skill	Damage	Range	Attacks	Clip	HPs	Malfunction
.45 Auto	20%	1D10+2	15 yards	1	7	8	00
Machete	20%	1D6+1+db	Touch	1	-	10	-

Now, getting the stone out and fetching the weapons has been a group effort, and it would be easy at this point for the players to fall into trusting each other early - you must squash this notion. Make them pause and decide immediately who is going to get which weapon, and who will get the medical kit.

Remind them they all have weapons skills, but don't explicitly point out what. Make it an absolute, tell them you want to know at all times who has the guns and machetes. Presuming they still haven't given out their names yet, tell them you want to be clear of this issue because without names it's hard to keep track. But make it sound as lame an excuse as it is, get them thinking that some of them will not be armed when they leave this room, and that they don't know the people they are arming. With that done, let them out.

Room 2

Okay, you can now take out the first map and put it in front of them. Maps make people edgy, it smacks of strategy and position and cover under fire, especially when you point out the scale measure at the bottom, which just screams movement rates and weapon range.

The door out of **Room 1** opens onto a series of steps leading up. At the top they give way to an open space, a long, broad stage running the length of one wall of **Room 2**, with another set of steps at the far end, again leading up to another raised landing. From somewhere beyond this landing can be made out the guttural growl of some monstrous animal - a minion beast (*see Additional Area e below*). They see nothing of this thing, and will not until they reach the access to **Room 3** from this far landing.

This dais stage overlooks the rest of Room 2, which is all is about 40ft long and 25ft wide, has similar boarded up windows to Room 1 (see locations on map) and is missing most of its plasterwork on the walls, showing exposed stone as in Room 1. What little plaster remains gives the impression that the whole place is some ruined medieval manse, and this, its minor banqueting hall. No identifying heraldry adorns the walls, and the floor is bare flagstone.

Sections of the walls have gaping holes in them, some just about big enough to climb through, but should they try, they get another volley of warning fire from the Hand agents now clearly visible beyond. Additionally nothing can actually get through these holes, they repel all things physical and metaphysical and anyone who does get any way near to putting anything through the hole finds the way barred by an invisible barrier - the ward.

The ceiling is some 40ft high as well, and the room is overlooked by the balcony of **Room 6** (circled on the GMs map), which is in darkness. Clearly from this location, however, can be heard the scrabbling and growls of yet another creature - the second minion beast. They cannot see it at all, nor identify it from its sounds. It will not leave Room 6, but the PCs don't know that, and it will appear that it could readily leap from the balcony to get at them. The corresponding balcony on the other side of the room has long since crumbled and the opening been blocked up. *This room (which would exist above Room 5) does not figure in the plot and is not included on the map.*

There are partition walls and arches under the balcony projection at the far end of the room, creating a sort of corridor leading from the **Main Entrance (a)** to the **Large Staircase (c)**. They can from the vantage point of the dais make out the darkened entrance to **Room 4** in this corridor, but can see nothing within. The torches do not stretch a light that far.

The Dais (d) is about 10ft high, and at its far end the second set of steps rises another five feet to the landing outside **Room 3 (e)**. Same thing here: boarded windows, gunmen beyond in the rising mists.

Additional areas:

- a. **Main Entrance.** This wide-open archway looks out onto the moors and the night mists. The opening is 6ft wide and 10ft high at the mouth of the corridor, and has little in the way of cover, just a few niches no more than a couple of feet deep. Just beyond the mouth lies the invisible barrier, which cannot be passed through, and the waiting volley of warning fire if they try to leave, which is very wide of the mark. Indeed should any fire stray near to the opening at all, the PCs might well see that the bullets bounce off the ward, seemingly keeping those on the outside out as readily as those on the inside are kept in.
- b. **Small Staircase.** This winding stone staircase leads up to Room 7. It has no windows and will allow access to only one abreast, so they will need to climb in single file.
- c. **Large Staircase.** This wide spiral staircase, again without windows, will allow up to three PCs to walk abreast as they make their way up to Room 6. They can readily hear the minion beast growling above as soon as they come near these steps. Nothing they do outside of Room 6 will entice the thing to leave the room, although it will attack immediately once they are visible to at the top of the stairs.

- d. **The Dais.** This stage is 12ft wide and 25ft long, running as it does the length of the room. It stands 10ft high above the flagstone floor and is constructed of oak. It is solid and intact. Should the PCs find some way to break into the dais it is hollow and empty within.
- e. **Small Landing.** At the opposite end of the Dais from the door to Room 1 is a small landing up a flight of steps. From here an open archway gives access to **Room 3**, up a few steps. Long before they reach the landing, the PCs will have heard the growling of the minion beast. Now that they are on the landing the growls escalate in volume, the glow of its green eyes can be seen amid the shadows and it will paw and rage in near frenzy inside the room. It will not come out though, and will wait for them to enter first.
- f. This **passageway**, next to the doorway to **Room 4** gives access at the end to **Room 5**. Once reached the third minion beast can be heard moving inside, its snufflings echoing down the corridor. Otherwise this corridor is dark but featureless, though you may dress it up as you desire.

Room 3 - hold off showing the map of this room until the creature inside is dead

From the small landing (e) that gives access to this room, three steps lead up through the simple stone archway into the gloom of this high domed room. Pitch dark, its twin windows in the north wall have been bricked up and without the limited range of the torches, nothing can be made out. Apart that is from the twin lurid green glows of the minion beast screaming and roaring at their arrival.

While they remain outside the room it will not move, but as soon as anyone enters it will leap to attack. This is a plain scrap and the stats for the minion beast are below, with Hit Points and Magic Points set out so you can mark them off as the combat progresses.

Minion Beast, Servitor of Ginsemoth

Description: The Minion beast looks for all the world like a hairless sabre toothed tiger, and stands about the same height and length as a full-grown male Bengal. The skin is a slick and oily looking affair of green and grey tones and the eyes glow with a baleful emerald hue. The mouth has a ferocious looking set of greatly extended and viciously hooked canines, just like a sabre tooth, and the paws bear claws at least three inches long. The creature is tail-less. It stinks like a pile of rotten flesh.

STR 17, CON 21, SIZ 18, INT 9, POW 13, DEX 14, Move 12

HPs	20:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
MPs	13	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13								

Skills: Dodge 50%

Weapons: Claw 30%. Can attack with both forepaws at once at the same DEX rank, Damage 1D6+1D4. Once struck will attempt to *Grapple 50%* to allow for a Bite next round.
Bite 40%. Damage 2D6. Cannot Bite and Claw in the same round, but can choose to Bite without the Claw and Grapple move outlined above.

Armour: 1 point skin

Spells: None. An Elder Sign will have an effect on this creature if the PCs take the time to set one up.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 to see a Minion Beast.

The Minion is quite single minded, and if the PCs retreat from the room the beast will pursue them until either it or they are dead.

If Maria Gannon attacks the Minion with *Backlash* and reduces it to no Magic Points it will lose solidity and vanish. It will likely target her especially if she tries this.

Once the creature has been dispatched the PCs may examine the chamber it was in. The room is roughly 25ft square with the same bare flagstone floor seen everywhere else. The domed ceiling is some 30 to 40ft high; it's difficult to make out in this gloom. The floor is slick with the slime of the minion beast, almost as if it were marking out its nest with a sea of filth and the stench is quite awful.

Should any of them make spectacular *Spot Hidden* rolls (*critical successes only*), they will notice as they disturb the layer of slime that some of the tiles below seem to have retained their original colour, showing through as a deep brick red against the otherwise grey slabs. The layout of these red flagstones on the floor maps onto a makeshift grid of numbers scratched into the wall in the small side room (**g**) just off this main room.

Additional area:

- g. Dungeon room.** This small chamber is accessed through an iron gate, an ageing prison door that hangs precariously from its hinges, and seems to have been some kind of small dungeon or interrogation chamber. Age old rusted chains with rudimentary cuffs lie discarded in a corner. A successful spot hidden will show up the remains of a prisoner's calendar scored into the stones of the wall; a simple grid of bygone days.

The calendar is caked with mud from the floor, seemingly a product of its age, which needs to be scraped away to expose it clearly. A successful Idea roll, however will note that the application of mud seems new, and lacks the fine vegetative growth that adorns the clay elsewhere on the walls.

The trick here is that the calendar provides a numerical base set, which can have the coloured squares from the outer room mapped onto it by matching the grid references. Small marks on the calendar match the location of the doors and windows of the outer room and indicate that the grid of the calendar matches the layout of stone slabs in the outer room also.

It will take the PCs to shift the filth out of their way in the outer room to locate the red squares, but then this is a punishment game after all. Once the PCs begin actively examining the outer floor for clues it is no longer necessary to enforce the critical success rule for them to see the coloured tiles. This mapping procedure then produces two numerical codes:

4, 30 & 12, 19

Make the priest Kilmaine make an Idea roll. If he fails make him make a Theology roll and then try him again on the Idea roll until he gets it, with five minutes pause in between. Do this in real time to annoy him.

Once he gets it he will realise the codes match a pair of Apocryphal scripture quotes he has long taken to heart.

From Bel and the Dragon, 4:30-32

"What you have lost you can find again in heaven; look to the above and remember always. Suffer not the dragon in your midst, resist him where he shows his face."

From the Book of Susannah 12:19

"The wise soul scours for the keystone, the rock to hold firm to."

These lines refer to the task facing Maria Gannon in **Room 7**, check this section for details. (*Quotes are available as handouts.*)

Room 4

This room is exactly like the others, unadorned stone walls and bare flagstone walls, with a boarded up window in the north wall. You can add the rest as you see fit.

The money issue is a single 2ft cube of stone against the east wall. It's covered with incomprehensible symbols. Incomprehensible that is to all but Samsara. Get him to make a *Cthulhu Mythos* roll, heck get him to make as many as he needs in 5 minute real time periods as usual, to identify the markings as Deep One tattoos. It becomes clear to him that someone has bound the hide of a Deep One into the stone to make it seemingly indestructible. He's pulled this little known trick himself once before to keep something locked inside beyond reach. The block can be chipped and scraped, but it won't break. Whatever is encased within is very safe indeed. Except to one course of action. An Elder sign. Inscribing an Elder sign on the block would smash it apart.

The question will arise should he?

Presuming he does take the time to inscribe the sign on it, the block splits and blows apart in a cloud of dust, destroying the symbol and revealing a steel box inside.

Inside the box is a pair of inscribed pebbles – two of the six keystones needed to open the ward. The symbols on the stone tell Samsara that no soul touched with a taint may use the stones. No need to tell him they're keystones yet if he hasn't already had his memory of the spell to open the ward returned to him (see **Room 7**).

Room 5

This room is accessed from the end of the corridor lying between it and **Room 4**, and the sound of the minion beast inside is clear from the minute the PCs reach the corridor itself, as detailed in **Room 2**, area **f**. Once again it won't come out but will fight to the death once anyone enters. Stats are repeated below for your convenience.

Minion Beast, Servitor of Ginsemoth

Description: The minion beast looks for all the world like a hairless sabre toothed tiger, and stands about the same height and length as a full-grown male Bengal. The skin is a slick and oily looking affair of green and grey tones and the eyes glow with a baleful emerald hue. The mouth has a ferocious looking set of greatly extended and viciously hooked canines, just like a sabre tooth, and the paws bear claws at least three inches long. The creature is tail-less. It stinks like a pile of rotten flesh.

STR 17, CON 21, SIZ 18, INT 9, POW 13, DEX 14, Move 12

HPs	20:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
MPs	13	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13							

Skills:	<i>Dodge 50%</i>
Weapons:	<i>Claw 30%. Can attack with both forepaws at once at the same DEX rank, Damage 1D6+1D4. Once struck will attempt to Grapple 50% to allow for a Bite next round.</i> <i>Bite 40%. Damage 2D6. Cannot Bite and Claw in the same round, but can choose to Bite without the Claw and Grapple move outlined above.</i>
Armour:	1 point skin
Spells:	None. An Elder sign will have an effect on this creature if the PCs take the time to set one up.
Sanity Loss:	0/1D6 to see a Minion Beast.

The Minion is quite single minded, and if the PCs retreat from the room the beast will pursue them until either it or they are dead.

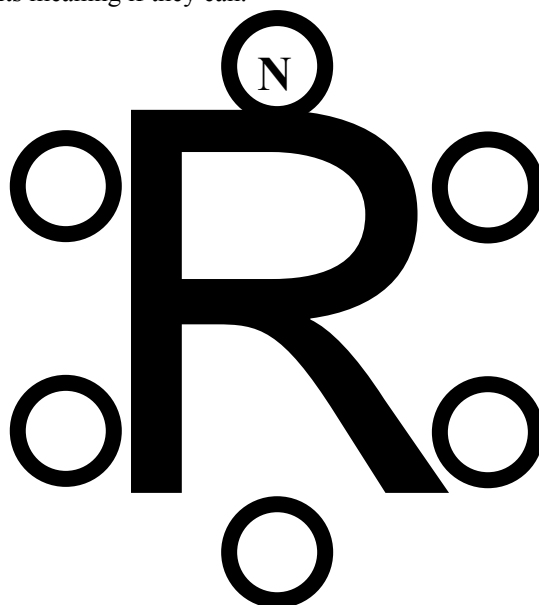
If Maria Gannon attacks the Minion with *Backlash* and reduces it to no Magic Points it will lose solidity and vanish. It will likely target her especially if she tries this.

Once the minion beast in this room is dealt with, the puzzle for Xu Chen can be discovered. As a former Triad gang member he was a member of a group called the White Tigers, whose favourite catchphrase was that *when you thought you knew where they were they were sure to be behind you*. This line is quoted on his character sheet so don't go reminding him about it at this point.

Now while at first this room appeared featureless, multiple successful *Spot Hidden* rolls and 10 minutes careful searching reveal that there is a small, white, tiger shaped symbol scratched into the wall near the door. Presuming the Xu Chen player remembers the quote on his sheet he'll locate the block on the wall behind him as he faces the tiger symbol that is in the corresponding position and move it out.

Behind it is a second pair of keystones for the open ward spell and a simple diagram scribbled in pencil on a sheet of paper. It shows a six armed star shape, each arm ending with a circle, and the uppermost arm marked with an N for north. This is a sketch of the positions each of them must take for the spell, each with a keystone in hand in order to make the spell work (more details on the spell in **Room 7**).

Each of them must be at a sixty-degree rotation from each other, beginning from the first person who is at magnetic North on a compass. But there is no info on where the centre is located in the house or how they are to gauge the compass positions without a compass. These problems will be resolved with Cooper's puzzle in **Room 6**. All they need from here is a notion of the positions they should take come the spell, which Samsara will cast (again see **Room 7**). All you need do is show them the diagram below, let them work out its meaning if they can.



(This is available as a handout)

Room 6

From the Large Staircase (**Room 2**, area c) the PCs can gain access to Room 6 on the upper floor. This is the Room whose balcony overlooks Room 2, and where the loudest and angriest sounding minion beast is located. The usual rules apply: it'll hold its ground until the PCs are visible at the head of the stairs, then go for broke to kill as many as it can. This one is a little beefier than the previous two, so double-check the stats over the page.

Minion Beast, Servitor of Ginsemoth

Description: The minion beast looks for all the world like a hairless sabre toothed tiger, and stands about the same height and length as a full-grown male Bengal. The skin is a slick and oily looking affair of green and grey tones and the eyes glow with a baleful emerald hue. The mouth has a ferocious looking set of greatly extended and viciously hooked canines, just like a sabre tooth, and the paws bear claws at least three inches long. The creature is tail-less. It stinks like a pile of rotten flesh.

STR 19, CON 21, SIZ 22, INT 6, POW 13, DEX 16, Move 12

HPs	22:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22
MPs	13	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

Skills: Dodge 60%

Weapons: Claw 30%. Can attack with both forepaws at once at the same DEX rank, Damage 2D6+1. Once struck will attempt to *Grapple* 50% to allow for a Bite next round.
Bite 40%. Damage 2D6. Cannot Bite and Claw in the same round, but can choose to Bite without the Claw and Grapple move outlined above.

Armour: 1 point skin

Spells: None. An Elder sign will have an effect on this creature if the PCs take the time to set one up.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 to see a Minion Beast.

The Minion is quite single minded, and if the PCs retreat from the room the beast will pursue them until either it or they are dead.

If Maria Gannon attacks the Minion with *Backlash* and reduces it to no Magic Points it will lose solidity and vanish. It will likely target her especially if she tries this.

Once this ugly has been dispatched successfully, the room can be examined.

The most immediately noticeable feature is the collapsed doorway into the room beyond, the room that would have stood above **Room 5** below. The doorway is barred with stone and rubble, too much to move without harming the integrity of this room and bringing the walls and roof in on the PCs head. This barred doorway I have marked on the maps with a jagged grey symbol, more dramatic looking than the barred way is in the game. The PCs can have a poke at this barrier if they like, but make them aware that the fall of dust and unpleasant sounds coming from the wall aren't for effect.

The floor here, like in **Room 3**, bears a number of red stone tiles as well as the brown grey ones seen everywhere else. They bisect the room horizontally and vertically, forming a cross on the floor. They bear no other marks, but are slightly raised.

A successful *Spot Hidden* will show that on one wall has been scratched the message

"Go No Further, Winged Soldiers of England".

This message will be immediately recognisable to Major Cooper.

Cooper served in the Falklands and was one a member of D squadron who was sent in 1982 to establish an observation point at Fortuna Glacier on the island of South Georgia. As soon as they got there the weather took an incredible turn for the worst, dropping to incredible lows and freezing up the weapons. They had to be airlifted out the next day, but not before while trying to establish a patrol perimeter for the night, Cooper had come across a series of stone slabs laid out in the snow in a cruciform, the centre stone bearing this very message. How anyone could get in under the noses of the SAS and do this in those conditions he could not tell, but he could feel a tangible sense of dread reading those words, like some awful thing was watching to make sure he paid attention. *(This is on a handout)*

You should remind him of the details of this experience away from the table, but add that he thinks the scratched message is in his own hand this time. This should lead him to check the centre slab of the rudimentary cross shape that has been formed on the floor. This slab will lift with a little effort, it being a bit raised an all, and underneath is the final pair of keystones for the spell (see **Room 7**), a crowbar and a scrap of paper.

The scrap of paper reads:

**If you can read a map and find your way
And trust your compass and follow where it may
If you can trust yourself when we all doubt you
And make allowance for our doubting too**

**Yours are the wings and everything that's Pen-y-fan
And which is more - you're SAS my son**

This is part of a poem by Sir David Stirling, founder of the SAS, but it's a corruption of the lines. The Pen-y-fan reference is not in the original line, which actually reads:

Yours are the wings and everything that's with it.

But the reference to Pen-y-fan often cropped up in SAS men's conversation with each other. Pen-y-fan lies in the centre of the Brechen Beacons where the SAS once trained exclusively. It was Stirling's belief that the hostility of condition found at Pen-y-fan would match any unpleasantness the SAS had to suffer elsewhere in the world, if not in physical replication, but in the effect on the mind and soul. Thus, in the secret common language of the SAS themselves, the reference "*Pen-y-fan*" comes to mean "*What you have found here, you will find elsewhere*". *(This is all on a pair of handouts)*

This is meant to tell Cooper that what he has had to do in this room he will have to do in another. This should send him off to each room looking for a central cruciform shape that can be identified on the floor of that room, even if the tiles are not red as they were in this room. He will find this in Room 2. The floor there does have the same symmetrical layout of slabs as in Room 6, and this is more clearly seen from the balcony of Room 6, should anyone think to examine the floor from above (*Spot Hidden* again).

Once this is discovered you can find details of what happens when this cross is examined in the section marked **Opening the Ward and Escape.**

Room 7

This room lies at the top of the Small Staircase (**Room 2** area **b**) near the main entrance, and is smaller than **Room 6**, the only other intact upper room. The usual general description still applies, bare stone walls and floors, *yada yada, add blood and crap to taste if you so wish*. This room also has a boarded up window looking out over the moorelands, but unlike the larger windows seen elsewhere in the house, this is but a small arch, its grill long gone.

This room is the "*above*" referred to in the scripture quote found by Kilmaine in **Room 3**, and the "*keystone*" being "*scoured*" for is the keystone of the window arch. The ledge seat of this small arch window is roughly carved with the word **WISDOM**. This should suggest to people the "*wise soul*" from Kilmaine's quotes, and set Maria Gannon to thinking.

She uses the word "*scouring*" to describe what she does with memories she removes and stores in solid objects. Hopefully she will see the message of the quotes is for her to touch to check the keystone in this room. If she does, her touch will discover that there is indeed a memory hidden in the stone, shielded deeply to hide it from anything but a scan by physical connection, making it very unlikely to be discovered without it. Make her make a *Luck Roll*, but it'll be spectacular if she fails it.

Once she has found this memory she can retrieve it easily and identify it as belonging to *Jerome Samsara*. This name is all she can glean from the memory, and if Samsara has kept his identity secret until now, then he is going to have to reveal himself if he wants this memory back. Presuming he is willing to allow Maria to go messing with the inside of his head.

She cannot read the memory itself, only what she herself has impressed on it to identify it. At this point she will become aware that *Maria placed this name on the memory herself*, and that the reason this faint memory was visible at all to her was that *she* had placed it there.

Presuming that Maria returns the memory to Samsara, and that he allows her to (she puts her hand on the stone and the other on his head and ...oh I dunno, add whatever sfx occur to you), Jerome will be impressed with an incantation he now remembers to open an impenetrable ward such as this one.

It requires the group to form a circle to an exact design (this is design found by Chen in **Room 5**) each holding and concentrating power into a keystone (the six keystones from **Rooms 4, 5 & 6**) and for him to speak the incantation. The incantation line is

Haddaat kaadaaki shu marijat! Nut Nyogtha Seddat loki kaadaaki shu marijat!

[A *Cthulhu Mythos* roll will reveal details of Nyogtha to those who succeed should they wish to pursue this information - he is a Great Old One, The Thing That Should Not Be, and a patron of witches. He is trapped in a cave. The incantation mentions him only because as a powerful opening spell he could pervert it for his own freedom and the incantation abjures him against such an eventuality. But not speaking the language of the spell, the group won't know that.]

This is all well and good, but the positioning needs to be exact: the centre of the ward and the exact spots for the spell-casters need to be established.

But if Cooper works out the hint he has been given in **Room 6** to look for a matching cross shape on the floor of one of the other rooms, and they know they want the centre of the house from this memory, then this should lead them back to **Room 2**, where they will be on the home stretch.

Opening the Ward and Escape

Once they have completed all the tasks in the other rooms, then they should be lead back to **Room 2**.

To recap:

- **In Room 1**, Senton Carrow will have discovered the anomaly in the pentagram, which leads to the discovery of the weapons, water and medical supplies, and freedom achieved through teamwork.
- **In Room 3**, Fr. Kilmaine will have identified the two scripture quotes that suggest they look upstairs for a means to restore their memory, and suffer not a demon in their midst - a call to resist Ginsemoth should he be forcing them to aid him. This leads them to **Room 7**.
- **In Room 4**, Samsara will have discovered 2 of the keystones and the information that they will not work for anyone tainted by evil, meaning possessed.
- **In Room 5**, Xu Chen will have discovered 2 of the keystones and the layout of the positions the PCs need to take to cast the open ward spell. The first person is due north from the centre and the rest complete a circle at regular 60° rotations from each other. (If they haven't twigged this yet, once Samsara has his memory of the spell back, make him make a *Cthulhu Mythos* roll to work this information out.)

- **In Room 6**, Major Cooper will have discovered the last 2 keystones and should understand from the poem that he's looking for another cruciform layout of slabs to check under, as he did in Room 6. He will find that in **Room 2**, but needs the crowbar to lift the much larger and heavier slab out in this room. This slab is not raised as the ones in Room 6 will have been.
- **In Room 7**, Maria Gannon will have recovered Samsara's memory of the spell and returned it to him, making him ready to speak the incantation once the circle is correctly formed, and everyone has a keystone.

Which leads to here. Back again in **Room 2** the group, especially Cooper can indeed see that the slabs running horizontally and vertically through the centre of the room make the same cruciform shape. This would also have been evident to anyone succeeding their Spot Hidden roll while on the balcony in **Room 6**.

Lifting the slab at the centre with the crowbar reveals a compass set into the earth below, its needle pointing north. If they haven't been able to establish north by now by peeping out at the stars, and they really should have to free themselves from **Room 1**, then they can now see where North lies. Attached to the centre of the compass, tied to the fix of the needle are six long threads. The threads are all the same length.

The idea is that by each holding a piece of thread the PCs can back out from the compass at the centre (presuming they don't pull it out of the earth, in which case they need to put it back in the exact location to make this work) to the correct position for the spell, aligning the thread with the degree of the compass they should be at. Simple.

Once all are in the right position, they concentrate on the keystones, Samsara speaks the incantation, each of them loses **2 Magic Points** (if any of them cannot afford 2 Magic Points they will need to rest for 10 mins real time per point they need back), and the ward opens.

Once the ward is open, the PCs can leave by the **Main Entrance (Room 2 area a)**. When they get outside the Hand of Isis troops will be closing on them in SWAT gear with automatic weapons, roaring at them to drop their weapons, lie on the ground, etc. Go mad; scream your guts out at them.

Once the PCs are disarmed and prone, Hand mystics will scan them for signs of the demon or any other spirit they may be carrying. Once they are happy that the coast is clear they will apologise to the PCs for the scare they gave them, help them to their feet, assure them they are safe and that their memories will be returned to them presently. The PCs have blankets placed about their shoulders and are congratulated for saving the whole planet and Jerome Samsara's life all the way to awaiting helicopters. Tell them they will be remembered as heroes once this war is over.

When the PCs give you that confused look, and ask "*Is that it?*" smile and pass them each a "**What the Hell was all that about?**" sheet and tell them the general information on the sheet is explained to them in the choppers as they are flown out of the place.

Thank them for playing, and while they are distracted reading the back plot, *run away*.

I'll be GMing nearby, so if you have any problems or queries come and hassle me for an answer. Once again, thanks for doing this and I hope it didn't cause you too much strife.

Damien.