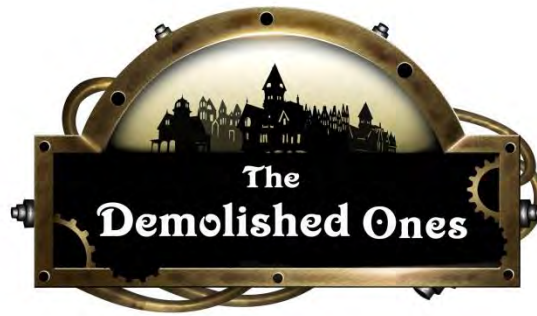


A FLY IN THE OINTMENT

BY ROBERT N. EMERSON




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A FLY IN THE OINTMENT

A Game Master's Supplement for *The Demolished Ones*

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DEDICATION:

Brian Engard—The mysterious and rich world of *The Demolished Ones* is so meaty and thick that it could not help but inspire someone. As with any good jazz, I just hope that my addition riffs well off of the source. Thank you for the Dome and The Masters.

Rob Donoghue and Fred Hicks—Without the various instances of Fate and these two folk, I do not know how comfortable I would have felt pitching this project nor following through on it. Although I have been a gamer since 1980, a fair amount of my recent gaming and freelance work has been influenced by these two men, and I am pleased to be thankful for them. My hat's off to you both, good sirs.

Steven D. Russell—My good friend and publisher, who usually has to pester me to write dedications as I often do not want to do one. Surprise, Steve, I did one without being asked. If not for meeting you, I would most likely still be someone who freelanced sporadically with occasional work and even more hermit-like than I am today. Your trust in me, as well as your patience, has always been appreciated, most especially with this work. Thank you.

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FLY IN THE OINTMENT

By Robert N. Emerson

An adventure folio and outline for *The Demolished Ones* that discusses three framework adventures of the mole and turncoat options in game play.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *A Fly in the Ointment*, an adventure and companion piece to *The Demolished Ones* (TDO). We will introduce you to **Murmuring Gullers**, dupes of a **Master** who are programmed counter to the experiment or mission of their amnesiac group. They are known so because of the mnemonic whispers, or murmurings, within their quilted minds that guide them down deceptive paths for unknown reasons.

The Demolished Ones introduced us to **the Dome** and the inhuman forces behind it known as The Masters: an amnesiac noir within a Victorian steampunk dystopia of mysterious creation and methodology. It is within this construct that the stories of *A Fly in the Ointment* occur. Added to the mix is that one of their own number, an ally of convenience, works against the goals of the group, for weal or woe.

Each scenario presented is a fly in the ointment, an unexpected occurrence that disrupts the hegemony in the cohesion of a medium. In addition to the three outline scenarios, there are liberal sprinkles of information that can help a Game Master (GM) add to their toolkit, empowering them to craft their own scenarios of betrayal and sabotage. *A Fly in the Ointment* benefits from not only the instance of Fate as presented in *The Demolished Ones* by Brian Engard, but it also benefits from the work of Bill Collins within *Amnesia*. Various aspects, stunts, and other tools from both of these books easily fit into the new scenarios presented within this book.

With a modicum of fudging—sorry, that pun could not be avoided—it should be easy to use this supplement, and others for TDO, with Fate Core. *If you, as a GM, wish to do it.* At the core of *A Fly in the Ointment* is a minimalist feel for the bait and switch common to whodunits and swerve-based mysteries. Yet the swerve is not directly from the Game Master, but instead from the player of a Murmuring Guller. Such a player is an assistant gamemaster whose focus directly connects to their PCs, as opposed to the generalized control of the story which GMs experience through their narratives and NPCs.

A Fly in the Ointment is about planting a mole or turncoat into a group of player characters. Whether they cause things to go horribly awry, or save people from making a catastrophic mistake, all depends on the story and how it plays out. While it can be a difficult set of circumstances within a game, adding an extra layer of plausible betrayal into a scenario can also make for memorable play.



SKILL CHANGES

Skills listed correlate to the list in TDO (and please see that manuscript for why skills like Contacts aren't used): Academics, Alertness, Athletics, Burglary, Deceit, Drive, Empathy, Endurance, Engineering, Fists, Guns, Intimidation, Investigation, Might, Rapport, Resolve, Science, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, Weapons

FATE CORE

has the following differences:

Contacts is not found in TDO.
Engineering is roughly equivalent to specialized Lore
Fight = both Fists and Weapons
Lore = Academics
Notice = Alertness (but Initiative is affected differently)
Physique = Might
Provoke = Intimidate
Shoot = Guns
Sleight of Hand is a specialized form of Deceit
Will = Resolve
Science may be considered a form of Lore

It is arguable that such scenarios are not for every group. It is equally arguable that such tools are excellent additions to any GM toolbox. It adds to the overall understanding of the narrative and the concept of the *unreliable narrator*. Within that spirit, welcome to *A Fly in the Ointment*. May it serve you and your players as much as it can and you wish it to.

TO REVEAL, OR NOT TO REVEAL?

A Fly in the Ointment presents scenarios about direction and misdirection, about what is construed, misconstrued, and manipulated to be one or the other.

It is also about knowing your players and what sort of license that they offer you, the Game Master, and expect from each other as players. Are your players the type who would be accepting of unknowingly playing in a scenario that would pit one player against the efforts of the others? Would they be willing to accept such a scenario if they were never warned or do they need at least some level of warning?

Basically, to borrow from the concepts within Christopher Priest's *The Prestige*, is the prestige (effect) of the scenario something that they wish to have no knowledge of before the presentation or during the setup, or should there be some level of warning within the setup? It is always plausible that there would be a reveal, or at least an inclination, during the presentation, for that is the living body of the session and anything is possible there.

Now this is definitely something that you should give serious thought toward. It can affect the thematics of the campaign and, to a degree, neuter some of the impact of the drama and suspense. Additionally, if you mis-estimate your players it could cause hurt feelings or a blase feeling toward the game.

If we look at the options objectively, there are merits and flaws to each:

Lack of Pre-Game Reveal

Pros

- Suspense
- Twists
- Unexpectedness

Cons

- Potential Loss of Trust
- Potential Disruption of Player Harmony
- Plausibility of Derailment

Some Pre-Game Reveal

Pros

- Maintain Trust
- Controlled Player Disharmony
- Firming of Player Buy-In

THE PRESTIGE

The Prestige is a turn of phrase popularized by *The Prestige* as the end cap to the following triumvirate:

The Pledge: This is the setup, the promise of what is to come, or what is to be made special.

The Turn: Here is the actual performance or presentation, that act of turning the pledge into something real, or seemingly real.

The Prestige: Lastly comes the payoff for a well thought out idea or performance, where the well-crafted piece receives adulation or the less-than-well-crafted needs further explanation.

In summary, the Prestige is the third Act of something, be it a magic trick or an exceptional piece of three act movie, stage play, or television work. (As two of the scenarios presented here are short, and follow a two Act structure, think of the payoff as coming in shorter scenes, or in the second act immediately after the turn.)

Cons

- Plausible Transfer of Otherness on saboteur Player (once revealed)
- Erosion of Suspense
- Telegraphing of Twist

There are ways to gain player buy-in to subterfuge and treachery within *A Fly in the Ointment* by way of your opening narrative or pitch to them.

A COMPANION

A Fly in the Ointment is a riff off of *The Demolished Ones*, as such this supplement uses the instance of Fate and the Dome setting as presented within same said piece.

It is our intention for *A Fly in the Ointment* to be used as a companion to *The Demolished Ones*, as you desire, whether consecutively, concurrently, or as a wholly independent source of stories within the Dome's world and/or the machinations of *the Masters*.

A Fly in the Ointment plays off of the concepts, system, and tropes presented by *The Demolished Ones*, it adds to its parental project yet it also needs its parent to play.

For Example:

“*A Fly in the Ointment* is a scenario where your world turns upside down, memories go or get replaced, who you were is not who you are, and what you plan to do might not be what you expect. Is your mission truly your mission? Is theirs? What follows might not be what you deserve, nor need, but it is definitely what you are going to get...”

With such a preliminary narrative caveat, you not only set the forthcoming elements of the campaign, but you seek passive license from the players. Players will either ask for further definitions or, if you have earnestly engaged them, they will accept your offering and move forward. Experienced players will read between the lines, while neophytes will reflect upon that narrative during the presentation (if there is a reveal) or at the prestige.

That said, there is one player who will know before the others. There is one player who must know before the others, or at least be more suspecting from the start. They can be known by many monikers, but for our purposes they are Murmuring Gullers, and their role is quite challenging, indeed.

As with the prior concerns about thematic suspense and player license, the player selected (be it by randomness or GM choice) may have the plot revealed to him throughout play or from the beginning. However, augmenting the shared concern is that the treacherous character's player is an antagonist to their fellow players. Regardless of when that is revealed, it is an extra stress for that player. They have to work their sublime sabotage while keeping their fellows in as much of the dark as possible. It is a best practice for this player to think of themselves as an aide to the GM. They help augment the story. Their role is not fully antagonistic to the other players. This practice helps avoid a full immersion in the 'versus' mentality that can often come with such player. It is not about winning for the player of a Murmuring Guller, but about how much they add to the story suspense and its winding arc.

In many ways, the Murmuring Guller's player is a scenario specific GM, with their shared responsibility growing as you reveal the machinations of their saboteur nature to them and they shoulder some responsibility to aid the forward momentum of the plot. With this in consideration, the GM should either pick a partner in 'crime' who would enjoy the opportunity or one who could be a dependable improviser. If your group has many of those, then perhaps risking the GM-Player license on randomness would be a good move.

At the end of the day, *A Fly in the Ointment* offers the opportunity to share a narrative about creativity, hidden agendas, subterfuge, and treachery in a tale best augmented by knowing your players and their level of GM trust.

SECRETS, SECRETS, WHO HAS THE SECRETS...

Running a game is about the control and management of information. The way in which we reveal this information can

THE DOME BY GASLIGHT

As with any roleplaying game, it is a best practice to know your players, their experiences, and preferences to what sort of elements they wish to explore through the course of play. Our work behind the screen, so to speak, is to adjust play when we know that a player does not like extreme gore and violence, erosion of personal power or efficacy, and other such elements.

Gaslighting, as both element of fiction and one of real world psychology, is no exception.

Outside of the game, gaslighting is a common practice within domestic violence and psychological torture. Be wary and watchful of how its usage with your players, just as you would about the level of description applied to other potentially sensitive subjects of your players. In the best possible world, such consideration would not be a concern, yet as we do not live in the best possible world, take it into consideration for your players.

build a foreboding atmosphere to a scene or a surprise twist that leaves players stunned as they scramble their PCs to action. We can share this information in many ways and fashions, be it spoken through dialog or narrative, location specific maps or through artwork, or handouts and notes. This fact is the same, regardless of whether you put a fox in the hen house or not; it is just the methodology that becomes more key.

Regardless of how you deliver messages to your players, do it consistently and with misdirection, so as to protect the PC working against the rest of the group.

Gaslighting is a concept that lends itself well to both *The Demolished Ones* and *A Fly in the Ointment*. The manipulation of one's perceptions and memory, so as to lend itself toward doubt of one's own sanity, is a theme common to psychological horror and thrillers. How sure can the PCs be about anything when they are not even fully capable of being sure about their memories and their perceptions?

The Masters by their very nature are practitioners of uncanny ability and inhuman planning, whether it's by placing PCs in bizarre situations and events or by the denial of what happened before due to adjusted memories. Using the scenario's Murmuring Guller to gaslight another PC can be an interesting usage of the mechanism, although not without its danger.

Introduced as a term by the stage play *Gas Light*, gaslighting was then popularized and conjoined by two films in the 1940s (the British's *Gaslight* in 1940 followed by the American's *Gaslight* in 1944). Thanks to those well-crafted works, gaslighting found

its way into various fictional works and non-fictional psychological study.

Gaslighting can be a useful tool against the PCs, wherein you can simply tell them that what they thought happened was not what actually occurred. A truth is now a falsehood, a perception is now a delusion, a fact is now a belief, and so forth.

Thankfully, *The Demolished Ones* built this into the world of the Dome. It is an expectation which the players have already bought into — amnesia and the recovered memory. Each player expects to receive notes during a scene in which they get clues into their past that trigger further character creation, adjustments, new Aspects, and other key moments (see *The Demolished Ones*, Anatomy of a Character).

With expectation comes opportunity; it is just a matter of selection of a method, or methods of delivering this opportune information and being consistent with it.

Delivery methods include, but are not limited to the following:

- Physical notes (hand-written or typed)
- Verbally (such as out of room conversations)
- Text messaging (be it cell phone, laptop, or tablet)
- Email in advance of a session

Whatever the means of delivery, keep it as organic as possible so that an astute player does not pick up on a ‘guller’ being in the flock too soon. Although you should expect that such a discovery will happen, it makes for a better experience if it happens through game-play.

Each scenario has reveals for the PCs, recovered or re-experienced memories that guide them along their development at key points during the Acts. Your best excuse for “feeding the murmuring gullers” is while you feed the PCs their prior lives, and you can do it right out in the open. Whichever delivery method you select, be consistent with it and concise. The moment that you make a reveal to a Guller, add covering revelations. Shift around from act to act, scene to scene. Sometimes you pass information to the Guller first, before switching the focus to another player while the Guller takes in their new information. Other times you do it in the middle or after other players receive their information. Such shifting focus should help the Guller maintain their cover for as long as possible.

STRUCTURE

As per *The Demolished Ones*, the first framework scenario follows the three Act model. The second are more about brief/short stories/narratives so they have two Acts. Within each you will find problems, goals, and key scenes. As is common with shared-narrative games, each was painted with broad brush strokes to offer opportunities for information to be gained, events to occur, and for the story to move forward. It is up to the person running the game to see what are problems and key scenes for the PCs, as these can often change with the fluctuations that come with game play.



Shared-narrative games are a rewarding balancing act, as the scenarios are quite player driven. This needs to be encouraged without pressuring. Push, without shoving; offer, without leading.

While it is possible to think of these parts as a formula (e.g. A + B = C), they are not as thematically rigid. Instead, it is looser, more like pinball or jazz. E.g. you wake up somewhere strange without a clue to what’s going on (problem), so you look around at your surroundings and notice strange folk and items throughout the room. You need to find out what’s going on (goal) and what to do next (goal), hopefully before something bad happens (problem). Just as you get a handle on the trouble that you and the other people are in, and how deep that trouble is, someone kicks in the door and all hell breaks loose (key scene). Now what? (Moving to the next Act.)

Within each Act you will find the problems, goals, and key scenes for a scenario. Each of these parts of the story must occur, at various points, in order for the story to move forward. Problems and goals are the fuel that the characters provide in order to move the Acts down the road or timeline.

Like the balls in a Pachinko machine, these elements can be in play individually or all at once, depending on the actions of the players and your actions/reactions as the GM. For weal or woe, each action or reaction has further chains of action and reaction, whether it is in a key scene for this Act or a later Act. It is all cumulative, adding to the overall story possibilities as players take advantage of an offered problem or goal, or miss out on them.

One of the rewards as a GM is finding a probability chain that allows for the players to trigger their problems, goals, or key scenes. Experienced or neophyte GMs should take time in early Acts to feel out this process. Let the players get more comfortable with it, as it can help set the tone for a scenario. Whether it is a manic thrill-ride stumbling down a steep hill into the river of adventure or a slow arduous climb of suspension until you crest the penultimate ridge into the final trek into the story's climax, finding the tempo of the interplay between problems, goals, and key scenes is as important as it is reward.

CHANGES FROM THE DEMOLISHED ONES

First, this is a toolbox of ideas and adventures openings left purposely open and incomplete. *The Demolished Ones* gave a rich, extended design to explore the Dome and the player character's real backgrounds under the overlay of the false. These scenarios play out differently, with an action base to them for a different form of intense play. *Aliens* action horror instead of the suspense horror of *Alien*.

Second, where *The Demolished Ones* provides detail for a long campaign, *A Fly In the Ointment* provides the seeds for short and medium length games. In particular, the second two Scenarios adapt well to convention play or online and Hangout games.

This leaves more work for the GM. If you have played once through *The Demolished Ones*, you may want to return to the setting with your players via one of these. Consider reading through Chapter Two: Anatomy of a Character and making notes about how you would adapt it for these scenarios. Perhaps have the players begin with one or two Skills pre-chosen (or all of them for a convention game). During Act Two for Scenario Two and Three, choose the skills, aspects and stunts early so when the PCs get to the Finale they are fully fleshed out. For a single session game, consider limiting or omitting True Aspects entirely, unless your players have some familiarity with this already.

THE PLAN IS THE FIRST VICTIM...

...of any encounter.

It's often the first thing a neonate Game Master notices, or a flashback triggers for an experienced GM. As a GM you've provided your players with plenty of doors and windows through which to look and travel, yet they suddenly ask you about the sturdiness of the floors or ceilings or even something from the narrative that you described with a flourish yet was a throwaway thought.

HANDOUTS

Handouts are useful, however whether or not a given handout is useful can largely be dependent on knowing your players and your license with them.

Unlike a simple adventure piece, *A Fly in the Ointment* is both an outline of adventures for you to run for your players and a toolbox for you as a GM. Thus, handouts are left to you, the GM, and your discretion.

MIND SEEDS

Remember, each PC is under the influence or a previously implanted mind seed that has manipulated their memories and motivations for these scenarios. The murmuring gullers, especially, have had triggers set inside their minds by one, or more, Masters depending on the scenario.

It is inevitable, it is highly probable, and it is surmountable since it is an opportunity to roll with your role.

It is easy to rebuke a player when they offer you an unexpected thought; one might say that it is an example of the paternal aspect of the GM's role. But, if you accept that the plan is often the first thing that the players revolt against then you can focus on improvising your way past their tangent. It is an opportunity, not an obstacle.

When a player offers an unexpected twist, a GM has a chance to reward the player, or players, by working it into the framework of the story. A door becomes a trapdoor in the floor, a window becomes a hatch in the ceiling. A needed right turn because a necessary left turn. For a Fate Point, with the right aspect a player can make a declaration.

Bruce Lee talks about a segment of the *Tao Te Ching* and its commentary about the power of adaptability and flexibility: "Be like water...". As is often the case when looking at the works of Laozi, the concepts are not bound to one expression of the human condition and translate well to running a roleplaying game scenario. Within Fate this is regular shown by the 'Yes/Roll/Compel' paradigm.

When something unexpected comes at you it is easy to block it. If you redirect it, instead, then you use its momentum to keep the story going. A simple misdirect or redirect allows you to capitalize upon, or even improve the license that players grant a GM, as well as each other, when they participate in a roleplaying scenario. It adds to the greater story, instead of removing something from it.

Even if the fork in the path doesn't lead to the next key scene, or resolution to a problem or goal, it can still be leveraged to get the players into a more investigative state of mind, to pique their investigativeness. Sure, it might be a collaborative wild goose

chase. It is also an opportunity to offer up more clues toward the key aspects of a story, of a PC's nature, toward the subjective truth of a story, or any other story element that a GM might need an opportunity to guide.

In the end, if a GM observes what is going on, adapts to what is before them, and improvises a way to weave a better story, then that is an overall positive thing.

SCENARIO ONE

Synopsis

Startled awake by the acrid scent of interacting chemicals, the PCs find themselves within the control room of a water reservoir that feeds one of the major waterworks for the Dome. Scattered around them are various KITS and NOTEBOOKS - over time, and with the trigger of memories, it will become obvious that these belong to the PCs — that contain information about the waterworks, its equipment, access points, and places to interact with its pressurized systems. Additionally, there are various notes about water soluble poisons, ranging from the classic arsenic oxide to the more recent thallium sulfate.

It becomes evident to the PCs that they have poisoned the water supply. Deadly concoctions are soon to flow their way to unsuspecting people (aka residents of the Dome). (To the player's perspective, the city that they are in.) Notes on top of the pile mark that several poison packets strewn throughout the local waterworks will release their deadly cargo. The nearest packet will dissolve into the water supply within the next half an hour. At least if the time piece found amongst the scattered baggage is to be believed.

The PCs did not poison the water supply. Instead they are victims of two of the Masters number — an oily shadow known as Dr. Black and the shrouded Ma Puess. Initiated by Dr. Black, the poisonous plot is an observational experiment on the nature of human empathy and whether the lack of memorable malice effects the human commitment toward harmful action. Ma Puess, however, seeks to use Dr. Black's experiment as a cover to corrupt sections of the waterworks for her own infectious experiments.

With forethought and purpose, Ma Puess arranged to insert a Murmuring Guller into the good doctor's research sample. The Guller's purpose is to make sure two of the seven packets erupt into the waterways to poison a segment of the Dome's populace. The number must be two in seven exactly, not one more nor one less. That ratio would release enough poison into the system to kill at-risk populations, such as infants and the elderly and the sickened, without leading to an overkill that could ruin the experiments of others. While many bodies will be found, initially not enough will be found to allow for a pestilence study.

As recovered memories trigger, the PCs find themselves on a race against time to neutralize the doses of poison within the waterworks. For some it may be the lack of motivation to kill people, for others it could be that innocent life should be protected, and for some it might be the lack of reward for such a

A GULLER'S RATIO

The Murmuring Guller's instructions about the ratio are so specific that if it seems like the ratio will end up too high then the saboteur must start to aid the PCs efforts. However, simply because a packet was removed from the system does not mean that the Guller can no longer make use of it. An intact packet can be deposited into the waters at a later date and spot. It will take some guile or stealth, as well as knowledgeable placement. A Good success at redepositing a packet counts for half a ratio— 0.5 out of the 2.0 of 7.0 needed to poison the water supply— while a Great success or higher would count for a full ratio. Which skill applies is best left up to the GM, the Guller's PC and the scene.

high risk. But, for the Guller in the mix, it is about finding the key packets to ensure some modicum of poison disperses within the waters and find its way out into the Dome.

In addition to the race against time for all the PCs, there is also risk from working denizens of the waterworks. From the discovered notebooks, the PCs gain a fairly accurate and intimate knowledge of the waxing and waning of the local workforce. Whether this is from one of their own number being a worker here or knowing one or more workers is open to discovery. At any moment any of the twenty or so workers could find themselves in the path of the wandering group's machinations. [See Appendix A: Minions for statistics.]

Over the course of the next eleven hours the PCs have to navigate an underground labyrinth of twisted pipe works, sealed cisterns, unexpected interruptions, and a traitor in their midsts. All of this before lethal concoctions find their way to corrupt the local waterworks into a deadly brew. Rushing carefully along, hurried stealth, and sheer luck are likely to be their greatest allies and worse enemies.

KEY CHARACTERS

In addition to Dr. Black and Ma Puess, found at the end of this scenario, the various workers within the waterworks themselves are key players. The aspects and abilities of the workers should be ad hoc and depended on the needs of the GM, as they are encountered. The worker could be a supervisor who does not recognize the PCs, a roaming boss watchful for workers shirking their duties, or even someone who realizes that the PCs are up to no good or something less-than-good.

Their movements, sounds of their work, and constant chance of discovery by them are key to the ambiance of this scenario. Whether they stumble upon the PCs due to their own volition, or through the machinations of the hidden Masters is entirely up to how the story plays out and what the GM wishes.

ACT ONE - HARD PILL TO SWALLOW

Here in the first act the PCs awaken to their new reality, become aware of their situation, and will carve the beachhead of their story. It is where they know the least, need to learn the most, and set the players set the tone for their characters: heroes or villains. Will they be courageous or craven?

Remember, although the following is in a plausible order it doesn't mean that it is the only order, or even the best order. It is important that the players learn the information, important that key scenes occur, as it is the fuel for the story and their experience within.

It is here that the rickety mine cart is set upon the tracks, given a push, and hopefully gains enough momentum to make it through the dilapidated mine full of calamity and hazards. Which of Dr. Black's theorems shall hold true? Will Ma Puess's fine line be walked, or shall it snap out of control for better or worse? It is here where the Guller first moves to manipulate the group. Are they effective? How long can they go undiscovered before happenstance pushes the PCs toward action?

KEY SCENE—THE SETUP

Sprawled about an underground workshop, the PCs awaken in a dank room, softly illuminated and with damp air. Dream or memory, sporadic insight and sensory information stutters the PCs into consciousness.

Prior to the game you may wish to prepare handouts, and/or work through how you're going to share key information with players as the GM. Pass on the following bits and bops to the players:

- 1: Passages in a manuscript flash before your mind; the pages are filled with knowledge about water-soluble poisons.
- 2: I just wanted the bullies to leave me alone...not die.
- 3: Hot fire lances through your left arm, yet when you look at it you see an old scar running upward from your pinky to your elbow.
- 4: Acrid odors fill your nose, quickly turning to the sickening smell of burnt hair.
- 5: Intermittent thoughts of cascading doubt, of being able to stop this instead of letting it happen. Dissolved fear kept you from acting before.
- 6: Pitched voices, not angry nor said, just steady talk about making everyone pay, young, old, and all in-between.

The Murmuring Guller: *A feminine voice, soft yet scratched with command:* "Five in Seven must be stopped, free to fizzle or be popped. Two in seven must be free, ignore the rest listen to me." [The GM should consider taking the Guller aside post-session to explain at this point.] "You have to make sure that at least two of the seven water conduits gets poisoned. Without them noticing."]

NOT-SO-RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

If you, as the GM, ever feel that there is a lull in the development of the story, one that needs a shot of adrenaline to push it forward, then a handy *compel* that attracts the attention of one of this wandering workers should be the go to "kick" to the door of plot development. Anywhere within the waterworks is an equally likely place to run into a worker, or workers.

Think of them as *not-so-random encounters*.

To up the tension and plausible worry of the scenario, you can always point out to the players that some of the pipes sound as if the "water" inside of them changes directions, as well as speed of flow. Time this to go with the proximity of the PCs and what their conversations are about. Whether this is a truth or a falsehood depends wholly on where you would like the scenario to go, and how it impacts the story.

Imagine the potential consequences of placement of a poison package in the wrong spot or pipe, with the sudden revelation of an inhuman nature to the Masters and Ma Puess's plan falling apart so observably.

Stagger the PCs into their awakened state, either through randomization or through your own scripted reasons, thus allowing them each a handful of moments to investigate things in their own way. Without prior knowledge of who they are, or why they are here, it is an excellent time to grant the players opportunity to start initial discovery of who their characters are and how they now think. Skill challenges, role-playing, and other aspects are an excellent engine for this discovery.

THE WORKSHOP

If the workbenches, tool chests, fixtures, and the dank smell of grease-tainted water, or water-tainted grease are any indication - this room is a workshop. The lack of natural sunlight, replaced by flicking lamplight, hints: either the room is deep within a building or underground. The floor is a worked stone or tile, while the ceiling appears to be a maze of pipework running here, there, and anywhere. The sound of rushing liquid, of various pressures, speeds, and consistencies comes from the plethora of pipes.

There are two heavy doors of plated metal: each is set in two adjacent walls. One wall is short and the other is long. The other two walls of this seemingly rectangular workshop appear to be without an exit portal.

The workshop entrances are 50 feet long, by 20 feet wide, and easily 15 feet tall. Each of the PCs is scattered about the room,

away from the doors, in various states of consciousness. Each has some form of container near them, be it a satchel, a field bag, a backpack, or a carpetbag. Within each bag are the tools of saboteurs, burglars, and other ne'er-do-wells. There is a lingering familiarity to each PC: the bag nearest to them rings true, as if it is their own personal kit.

WHAT'S HERE?

Each of the PCs has a feeling of YOU DO NOT BELONG HERE as they look at the seven workbenches and ten metal stools that are scattered about the room. Although the floor is well tiled, possessing drains every six feet or so, it seems to be QUITE SLIPPERY when walked upon. It's as if the PCs lack the proper footwear. In one corner of the room, where a long wall with a door meets the short wall without a door, is a bank of lockers set against the shorter wall. These lockers are LOCKED TIGHT and require modest effort to open (either Might of a Fair (+2) difficulty or a Burglary of Average (+1) difficulty). These aspects follow the PCs throughout the waterworks.

As each of the PCs awaken and notice each other, their gear, and their surrounds, feel free to test them as they inspect themselves and their personal bags. An Investigation success (difficulty of Modest (+1)) if they're dumping their bags or an Alertness difficulty of Fair (+2) to notice that the bags have an odd heft to them because of tools or secret pouches.

If they inspect their bags, the PCs find the remnants of various items used in the poisoner's craft, or some other form of saboteur. The Murmuring Guller's bag has a map with seven locations throughout what must be the waterworks that they and the other PCs are within.

ACT TWO - FLUSH OR FLUSHED

KEY SCENE - DISCOVERY OR LACK THEREOF

If the Murmuring Guller did their part, then the PCs are all in pursuit of stopping the poison, whether for selfish or selfless reasons. The second act should be the heftiest, as much of the action and anticipation are built up and experienced in the scenes of this act. It should be a discordant carousel, with unexpected ups and downs that challenge the PCs and ramp up their wariness.

As the PCs make their way from station to station, there are plenty of opportunities for them to be discovered and deal with waterworks laborers. Whether it is by disclosure, guile, violence, or some other means, this is the actions act where the

PROBLEM

If the players start to hammer their way into each of the lockers, it could attract the attention of laborer or a group of laborers.

This might be an excellent kick-in-the-door motivator, if the GM uses the *YOU DO NOT BELONG HERE* aspect and makes a Fair (+2) difficulty on an Alertness challenge.

It could also be an object lesson, both by using the compel and making the players nervous, without having anyone actually hear the players in the workshop. As always, it is up to the GM's discretion and the story's need.

SUICIDE PACT

As an extra motivation toward undoing the mayhem, one of the other PCs, at random or at the GM's wish, might find evidence that the PCs may have been poisoned themselves, either accidentally or as some form of pact.

However, it is best to use this option with care, as it could feel like a "ring through the nose" motivator. Although, if you gifted *the guller* with WHAT'S THIS then they could find the information about a possible suicide pact attached to the poisoning.

momentum from the first should carry things on through to the last.

Additionally, this is also the act of mechanical risks, dangers in the design of a working water works, and quizzical pondering that might have the PCs question how various poison packets were placed in the first place. It is also where some of the encounters should be tailored to allow the Guller opportunity to perform mayhem and mischief. If the PCs succeed easily against external threats like the laborers, consider making them stronger by upgrading their quality or numbers. The environment itself can also contribute.

Environment Ideas: DEEP DARK TUNNELS, DRIPPING & SLIMY or CONSTANTLY WET, SUDDEN FLOODS



ACT THREE - OUT IN THE RINSE

KEY SCENE - THE OUTCOME

Act Three is the end game, where the PCs actions that fall along the gradient of positive or negative outcomes shall be determined and witnessed here.

How effective was the Murmuring Guller at subverting the actions of the other PCs? Are all of the Dome's inhabitants safe from poisoning or are the most at risk slain?

Were Ma Puess's actions covert enough to skirt Dr. Black's gaze or will the Guller pay the price?

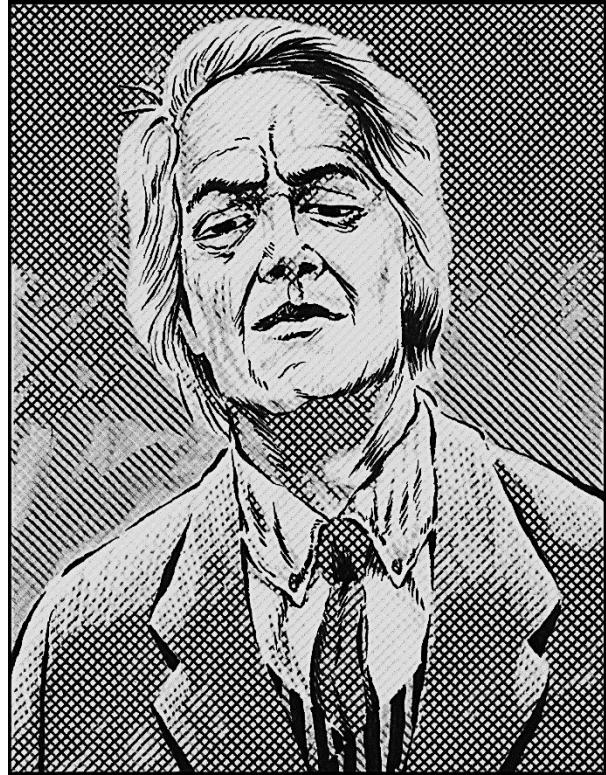
It is here where the PCs actions all come to a head. It is also here that the other PCs learn of the Murmuring Guller's betrayal. It is a place where you'll know, as a GM, if you served up the story well enough that your players will accept your twists or rebel.

DR. BLACK

Empirical evidence and observable science are key to the Master known as Dr. Black, a cold detached practitioner studying the human subject and its actions. Nature versus nurture are a key focus to this formless ebony being, thus his experiments at memory manipulation and removal. Dr. Black feels that the lack of self-reference is key to showing the nature of a human, as it is the utter removal of confirmation bias and observer bias.

Dr. Black is an obvious proponent of great reward coming from great risk, in that most of his experiments involve tests that could end up with dire outcomes should the negative potential behavior of his subjects win out over the positive. Whether it is poisoners in the water plant, the impact of ritual or serial murder upon community morale, or infant mortality fluctuations correlation to increases/decrease in conception rates, Dr. Black is quite open to testing both the darker and lighter impulse of the human mechanism.

However, Dr. Black is of a neutral opinion, with respect to what expectations he has from the human subjects within the Dome. The good doctor has no negative or positive opinion of the species, and simply desires to enact the most empirical studies possible with as little observer bias or other potential testing errors upon them. As feasible, Dr. Black would prefer to do mass biological resets to the Dome or use multiple Domes in his experiments. Whether or not this has been done before, or could be done soon, is entirely speculative and most likely a common discussion point amongst the Masters.



At the end of the day, Dr. Black is a calculating scientist whose ethics are as dark as his shadowy form, a form that is equally flexible if rumors are to be believed.

Aspects

My Maze Matters, Bait and Switch, Deductive Forethought, Oddly Flexible

Skills

Superb (+5) Academics, Engineering, Science
Great (+4) Alertness, Deceit, Investigation, Resolve, Stealth
Average (+1) All others

Special Abilities

- **Inhuman Toughness:** Dr. Black has six health stress boxes instead of four. He can take an additional physical consequence.
- **Mind Control:** Dr. Black can use a Deceit maneuver to place a "Mind Seed" aspect on a character. He can compel this aspect to force the target to take any action he wants them to. The aspect goes away when the character succeeds at a Resolve roll at Good (+3) as an action, or at the end of the scene.
- **Inhuman Elasticity:** He possesses absolute control over the elasticity of his physical being. Once per scene, Dr. Black can elongate his form into shapes that could easily travel through the smallest of hydrological piping and under even the slimmest of portal base plates. For a fate point, he may use this ability a second time in a scene.

Fate points: 5

MA PUESS

Ma Puess is one of the more indifferent of *the Masters*. She sees the humans of *the Dome* as more material components than sentient beings. Humans are delivery systems, statistics, incubation machines, self-propagating components in a grand experiment of entropy versus order.

Basically, Ma Puess has utter objectification of the human species, and looks at them in the same manner in which she casts her gaze upon a beaker of solution or the burner below it. If one breaks during an experiment, or in breaking destroys other materials, then that is simply more data to be collected and examined for useful theorems and other implications.

Indifference is not neutrality, however, so Ma Puess would be more accurately labeled as being inconsiderate toward the human species. She seems them as another organic with which to experiment and subject to her studies and theoretical tests. Unlike Dr. Black, Ma Puess is not as hesitant to allow her experiments to grow outside of their limitations and confines. She is just secretive about her work and prefers covert studies instead of overt ones. Her matronly ways often piggyback upon the studies of others, looking to run concurrent studies within the works of the other Masters, such as within Dr. Black's poison experiment. Perhaps she might test out the effects of mercury on the mental health of subjects within a hospital environment, or chemical reactions within increased environments rich in carbon monoxide?

Whatever the reason may be, if it is possible to twist the work of another for her own purposes, Ma Puess shall find a way and an opportunity.

Aspects

Beyond Indifferent, Let's Tweak a Few Things Here, Means to an End, ...is Simply a Tool, Only Fools do no Harm

Skills

Superb (+5) Deceit, Rapport, Science
Great (+4) Academics, Alertness, Investigation, Resolve
Average (+1) All others

Special Abilities

- **Inhuman Toughness:** Ma Puess has six health stress boxes instead of four. She can take an additional physical consequence.
Mind Control: Ma Puess can use a Deceit maneuver to place a "Mind Seed" aspect on a character. She can compel this aspect to force the target to take any action she wants them to. The aspect goes away when the character succeeds at a Resolve roll at Good (+3) as an action, or at the end of the scene.

Fate points: 5

MISPLACED SPECTACLE: THE ALTERNATE MASTERMIND OF VAH LE MA

If one were to ponder the Masters, they would come to the uncomfortable realization that they are as the heavens and the sky. A part of the firmament of reality, they are an 'always have been' not a 'then they became.' All save for one.

The Master known as The Vah Le Ma is most unusual, a being that showed that there was a power inherent in repetition. A crucible that showed that limitless testing could produce unexpected results, proof that the plausible could come to be in spite of the improbability of it.

By agreement blame was left claimed or lain, it was simply understood that there was a limit to the number of times a subject could be used in the experiments. Within the mind of mankind vigor could be found, strength equally to its inability to understand what lies beyond mortal ken.

With repetition lines of power could be drawn. With laden experience lines could be woven. Within the weave a path to the firmament existed, and for a price it could be claimed.

Childhood friends and a faithful animal companion seemed so steep, yet so readily paid if justice was to be gained.

SCENARIO TWO

Synopsis

It is less than a quarter of an hour before the bank - in which the PCs awaken - opens. One of their number— Laurel a person with larger than average ears and buck teeth—tells the other PCs that they have just locked the bank employees within an airtight VAULT. A vault that is large, with approximately an hour's worth of breathable air for those locked within, maybe less. Additionally, there are two hired guards laying dead in the grand lobby, which were supposedly slain by some of the PCs. They leave unsaid but obvious that they are bank robbers.

The Bank in question, Bloch, Derleth, & Howard Loan Services, is known to service landlords, moneylenders, and those who work with commodities and other venues that need immediate cash stores at the start of each day. Said cash stores are currently spread out between several CARPET BAGS found among the various pieces of equipment, including ARMAMENTS, that seem to belong to the PCs. The weapons are a mix of EDGED

BLADES (knives and swords) and several REVOLVERS, as well as a modicum of the EXPLOSIVE compound trinitrotoluene (commonly known as TNT) in stick form.

Unbeknown to the other PCs, Laurel the PC who seems to not be a bank robber is actually a Murmuring Guller placed to dissuade and mislead the PCs away from the choices that would lead to them surviving their current experience. Whether it is one of them, or all of them, the Guller is here to ensure that the PCs fail and die. An amnesiac execution with manipulated memories that implicate, rightfully or wrongfully, the other PCs in the deaths or harm of the Guller's kith and kin.

However, the reality of the situation is that the Guller is actually a killer, and each of the kith and kin from his memories were strangers slain previously by the ritualistic murderer in their previous life. Facts that point to this are spread throughout the memories of the other PCs. Can they find those memories in time to stop the Guller from killing themselves or their fellows?

Backstory

The PCs are all criminals who have had their memories removed to see how much of their prior actions were because of their collective experiences and how much was because of their own physical potential. If they steer away from their criminality, then each PC who does so shall start a new life within the construct known collectively as The Dome. But if they choose to continue being criminals, then they shall be punished in a most permanent and lethal fashion.

The Murmuring Guller is there to insure that the other PCs meet a most painful demise, as a permanent cessation of recidivism.

The Master behind both aspects of the unfolding event is within the sealed vault, under the pseudonym of Vern D. Ahnt, chief loan officer of the bank. Unlike his fellow Masters, Mr. Ahnt feels that the odds should be stacked against the PCs and included a Guller for just such a purpose. Although Mr. Ahnt is not fully against the plausibility of rehabilitation, he does not feel that it should just be given away by happenstance.

MR. AHNT

Known for his loamy scent and unusual pallor, Mr. Ahnt often surrounds himself with twitchy, energetic sycophants of a rabbit-like visage.

By ensconcing himself with the other hostages, Mr. Ahnt has insured more direct influence over the situation. Additionally, due to his extraordinary nature, this plant-like Master provides increased oxygen for the vault and engorges himself on the exhalation of his "fellow" employees. And, if the PCs turn most selfish, or incompetent, and the hostages all die...then a most rarefied meal shall be had by Vern.

PLAYER KILLER

This scenario is by far the more adversarial. It has one PC actively leading to the demise of a fellow PC. In common parlance, it is player killing, pure and simple.

It takes the license of trust between GM and player the most for granted. Not to beat a dead horse, but this scenario should raise the issues discussed in the To Reveal, or Not Reveal section of A Fly in the Ointment. While it can definitely take the shared-storytelling experience to an intense level, it could also damage the group dynamic if presumptions were made incorrectly. Building in an extra layer of distrust expectation, where each player knows or feels they know that a twist to the story can come from any direction, from anyone, might be a good idea. Akin to the dinnertime murder mystery boxed set, or other such treachery games, it is perhaps best practice to make the players aware of the plausible traitor in their midst.

For the PCs, this bank job gone awry places them on the forking path, where one direction leads to redemption and the other leads to the ultimate punishment. Added to such choices are the facts the bank's clientele who are about to come to the establishment, expecting access to their money and familiar faces. They likely raise an alarm if they are unable to do so. With impending constabulary intervention likely, shall this rush the PCs to action, shall they flee or shall they entrench themselves and try to save the hostages within the vault? Then there is the unknown murderer posing as their ally to contend with.

While it is likely that the PCs choose to stay and liberate the hostages, if they do choose to flee with their ill-gotten gains, then the scenario shall turn into an improvised chase and evade. The reason for this? It falls right into Mr. Ahnt's tertiary plan—the PCs were not worthy of rehabilitation and should be executed. The police circulate their images within The Dome as bank robbers. They are wanted men and women now. The GM should point this out by offering a Fate Point. "Would you like the sticky ASPECT WANTED FELON?"

THE HOUND

"It went sideways, right down the hill and off a cliff..."

If the PCs take the money and run, then the traitor PC shall turn into a hound among the foxes. He shall be on borrowed time, as memory revelation with the other PCs increases the chance of remembering that this Murmuring Guller was most recently a known ritual murder. He or she had a proclivity for endearing themselves to their victims as a confidant and friend before killing them.

Not only will the hound be against them, either with them as they flee—posing as a hostage-turned-ally, for example—but the

citizens of The Dome shall also see them as murderers and thieves. By leaving the bank early, without letting the hostages out of the vault, the PCs engage in murder most foul. The hostages suffocate and died most horribly, in part due to Mr. Ahnt's participation, because of the PC's callous actions.

KEY CHARACTERS

In addition to Vern D. Ahnt, whose information is at the end of this scenario, the various bank workers within the vault, and the early morning account holders, and the potential constables they may alert, are key to the initial scenes.

CONSTABLE MANAHAN

Additionally, if things go horribly wrong, there is a constable who is prone to visiting the bank. Constable Manahan is an overly familiar friend of the bank's, often found flirting with a teller or telling tales with an account manager. Manahan is useful for steering faltering characters or jump starting stalled ones. He is also useful as a narrative device for encouraging dialog or negotiations. He can be triggered using MERCURIAL MANAHAN, either by a player needing a friendly face when dealing with the constables or as an inquiring one when the scene demands moving the narrative along.

Aspects

Flirts Too Much; Mercurial Manahan

Skills

Good (+3) Empathy
Fair (+2) Rapport, Stealth

Equipment

Revolver, Truncheon

MR. NYMM

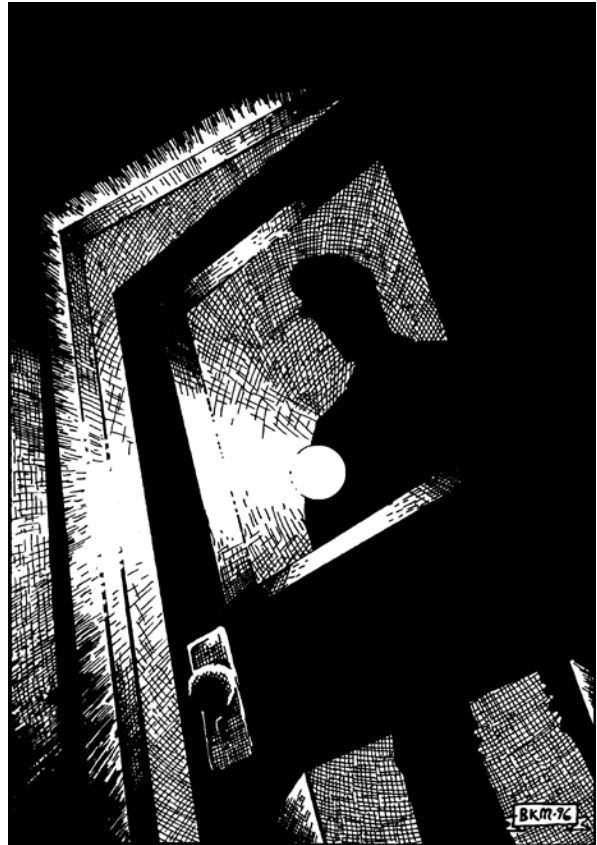
Should the players invade the vault violently, Mr. Ahnt may have a sturdy henchman, Mr. Nymm, with him. You may turn him into a Monster from the Dome once the PCs invade, or use these statistics:

Aspects

Loyal to a Vault; Thick as a Brick

Skills

Sleight of Hand +4



Endurance +3; Might +3
Fists +2

Stunt

Bone Breaker (see *The Demolished Ones*; turn a mild consequence into moderate 1/scene)

Fate points: 1

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE - OH SO LATE

The first scene determines whether you have "crooks" with a heart of gold or a survival horror campaign.

Now this scene should get a lot of room to chew up the scenery, both for the PCs and the Guller, since it will allow them the most flexibility to decide their paths. If any urgency is offered to them, it should be internal to the bank and their motivations.

Do we take the money and run? Do we leave those people to die? What about the police? Hostage taker or murderer?

KEY SCENE - THE SETUP

The PCs awaken within the lounge of Bloch, Derleth, & Howard Loan Services, a modestly posh financial institution. They smell cordite in the air, as well as the coppery taste of blood and the bitter offal that follows a murder. Confused, lacking context, and lying with dead bodies is never the best of circumstances to become aware of.

THE BANK

Akin to a cathedral, the PCs find themselves in a place of vast openness, wooden obstacles, and leathery furnishings. While there is plenty of opportunity for cover and concealment, there is NO WHERE TO RUN. Unless, that is, an athletic PC finds comfort in vaulting over the Fair (+2) difficulty counters. However, the bank provides PLENTY OF COVER for PCs and NPCs wishing to hide from one another, or make difficult an opponent's ability to strike a successful blow. Whether it is counter, catalog, chair, sofa, desk, shelf, or other common furnishing to a bank, there is no lack of hiding places within this institution.

The floors are MARBLE and do not help silence footfalls or movements. DID YOU HEAR THAT? is an open ended Scene Aspect that can be used against a character whose movement was faster than a crawl.

WHAT IS HERE?

There are enough weapons for each of the PCs to arm themselves, however less than half of the PCs shall be in possession of a revolver. There are enough long knives for each of the PCs to be armed, thusly. There are a number of carpet bags equal to the number of players, each filled with more cash than any of the PCs have ever seen. Last, there is a demolition kit with TNT, blasting caps, cord, and a plunger. There seems to be enough explosives to blow a bridge.

Unknown to the PCs, the Murmuring Guller has a straight razor with the gear aspect of SHARP ENOUGH TO SPLIT HAIR. When using it the Guller treats their Weapons skill as if it were one (+1) higher than it normally is.

- *one REVOLVER for every two PCs
- *one LONG KNIFE apiece
- *one CARPET BAG per PC filled with CASH
- *one DEMOLITION KIT

Guller: RAZOR (see above)

PROBLEM

Time is of the essence, at least for the PCs. The weight of time passing should never be allowed to slip their minds. They have half an hour to decide upon a course and set about their business.

At the end of that half an hour, the PCs shall either be entrenched as bank robbers and hostage takers or be set upon by the citizenry of the Dome itself as the murderous brigands that they now seem to be.

Either way, NO TIME TO WAIT is a hefty aspect that shall follow them around throughout this Act, and the others. A sand timer or suitable timing device placed upon the table - which you may stop for appropriate out of game discussions - may add weight to the Aspect.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO - GOTTA HURRY

This part of the Act should be manic, without much time to slow down or think. Regardless of the choices made, PCs should look back at this scene with dread about if the right choice was made or ignored. HINDSIGHT IS 20/20 is a Boost that each PC may access once, in reflection upon this scene. It should aid them with a choice based on what they could have done differently here or a realization about how they had no real choice.

Snap-snap-snap! Pop-pop-pop!

Like fireworks, it should be action and reaction. Doors should fly in, get kicked in or blown up, and people should be rushing to handle three problems at once, whether it's securing the bank from outsider rescuers or fleeing across town from hounds, angry mobs, and various other folk with torch and pitchfork. (If the PCs flee, scenes and guidance from *The Demolished Ones* may apply here. See p.28 Fighting the Police, and p.34 Police Patrols.)

KEY SCENE - THE DOWNHILL RACE TO A DECISION

This is the rushing around of the PCs, the rapid weighing of options, and the alacrity of choice, good or bad. It is less a scene and more an experience, as the PCs should feel unsure of the rushed decision, regardless of their sticking to it.

ACT TWO - NOW IS THE TIME

KEY SCENE - THE HAPPENSTANCE

Does selfishness and fear send the PCs on a speedboat to hell? Did selfless action earn them a reprieve? Recidivism or rehabilitation?

Act Two is the pay out: one way or another the PCs will see the fruit of their labors. Mr. Ahnt's cruel intentions will play out, one way or another, but how much wiser will the PCs be for it?

It is here that the PCs either find themselves on the run from the whole populace of the Dome or they hold off bystanders and the police while they attempt to extract the hostages from the vault. Trick, treachery, or temerity, the PCs shall use all of their skills and aspects to accomplish their goals and/or, per Ahnt's desires, die at the hands of the Guller. The PCs may, once in this Act, use the HINDSIGHT IS 20/20 Aspect, per Act One, Scene Two. You could drop them into Old Bollard's Ale House (see *The Demolished Ones*) when they think that they have a moment to breathe, and spin that scenario out as they seek someone to help them escape, only to run into the Monsters in the Cellar and the other Masters.

Anything is possible in this Act. DESPERATE TIMES... is a scene aspect for the final scene, however any PC seems fit or able to justify. For this moment, regardless of direction, is a desperate time with desperate measures. In addition to the police and potentially the whole of the Dome out to get the PCs, there is also the Guller and their plan to slay the PCs.

VERN D. AHNT

Mr. Ahnt is of the opinion that the other Masters coddle the humans of the Dome with undue concern and consideration. Guilty until random happenstance implies the possibility of their innocence is the most accurate example of Ahnt's feelings on the matter. It is through their guilt that humans give service to the Masters, and it is through this service that these humans will have a chance to show the potential for innocence within themselves.

Vern D. Ahnt is quite set in his ways, not only as they apply to his selection of assistance and henchfolk, but also in the areas within which he runs his experiments. Financial institutions, high stress environments, areas with common manipulation of commodities, and the like are the rarefied air that feeds Ahnt. It could be Ahnt's own confirmation bias showing. He prefers to test his theories out on populaces with more likely sociopaths. Whether this is unconscious or purposeful, Ahnt seems prone to selecting test subjects from those least likely to change his opinions of humanity.

In the end, Mr. Ahnt looks at human beings as a source of food, intellectual curiosity, and as useful instruments. If any of the Masters could be said to need the human species, or have some level of positive consideration for them, it would be Vern D. Ahnt.

Aspects

Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child, Play the Long Game, What Happens Happens, And What Do You Taste Like?

Skills

Superb (+5) Alertness, Deceit
Great (+4) Empathy, Engineering, Rapport, Resolve
Average (+1) All others

Special Abilities

- **Inhuman Toughness:** Vern D. Ahnt has six health stress boxes instead of four. He can take an additional physical consequence.
- **Mind Control:** Vern D. Ahnt can use a Deceit maneuver to place a "Mind Seed" Aspect on a character. He can compel this Aspect to force the target to take any action he wants them to. The Aspect goes away when the character succeeds at a Resolve roll at Good (+3) as an action, or at the end of the scene.
- **Plant Physiology:** Although superficially an average human being, Vern D. Ahnt is actually comprised of plant matter. His systems are adept at mimicking a wide variety of humanoid appearances, skin tone, and forms. When attempting to disguise his true nature, Ahnt's Deceit skill is treated as two (+2) higher than its normally Superb rating, thus making it Epic (+7).

Fate points: 3

SCENARIO THREE

Synopsis

The PCs awaken to a scolding by Sigmund, a psychologist at the Sanitarium for the Criminally Insane, at least if the sign outside the window is to be believed. They fell asleep in the Day Room, a practice that is frowned upon greatly, instead of using the room for its purpose of creative outlets that help establish a normal routine to their day. There is talk of removal of privileges, medication and treatment changes, or worse yet isolation.

All of these seem to be quite serious, an infraction of the highest order and not to be taken lightly.

However, there is one major problem with all this whole situation—the PCs are seemingly not insane, at least as far as they can tell. (The GM following TDO may wish to grant each the Persona Aspect NOT INSANE RIGHT NOW to all characters.) They realize that such a denial is unlike to be met with much belief, nor sympathy. The PCs are currently not medicated,

either. The staff of the Sanitarium initially act as if their charges are drugged to the gills (just as all the other patients are), yet the PCs are quite lucid in thought and quick of mind, regardless of the lack of memory.

With this dawning revelation, Sigmund continues. The PCs find out that this most recent infraction was the last in a supposed series of infractions that automatically volunteered them for an experimental treatment. The application of directed electroshock to a person's brain has shown to bring about personality changes from disruptive into a state of placidity. In an effort to turn more disruptive patients toward the latter over the former, the application has been approved for use with these patients. The risk of death is modest, and with each test they get closer to an acceptable number. "Escape attempts will put you at the beginning of the line!" the psychologist says.

The PCs are likely to be disinclined to undergo such a procedure. The alternative is to escape the Sanitarium, because any vocal objection is met with unfriendly reactions, up to hefty doses of medication administered by strong orderlies.

None of this is true, though. Within the group of PCs is a Murmuring Guller who knows the real truth: the other PCs are insane, criminally so, and the Guller is in fact their psychologist.

While it is unknown which of The Masters attempts to thwart the plan of Dame R. Leem (another Master), whose lipstick is so red it grants the seeming of blooded lips, a Guller has found a way into the group of killers that she wishes to unleash on the Dome. That is no good.

Dame R. Leem is an emaciated woman of corpse-like pallor, with lips so garishly red that it is as if she had recently fed on a steak rare enough that it still chewed cud and made noise.

For Sigmund's statistics, use the Insane Patient from Appendix A: Minions, with an extra Fate Point, and the *Vicious Lie* stunt from *The Demolished Ones*.

Leem "owns" the Sanitarium, and has for quite some time. Recently she noticed a dwindling in her population; folks were dying off faster than they were coming in. This fact was unacceptable, and needed to be corrected immediately. Thus the plan: manipulating some of the more predatory patients into thinking that they are sane and need to escape before they are "improperly" treated. Either the patients would escape, thus returning to their true nature and drumming up more subjects to observe, or they would die trying and alleviate the boredom that comes from no new subjects.

The PC playing the Guller knows the truth. The Guller not only needs to protect the public from the threat that the other PCs would be once they escape, but also needs to protect the PC's new state of sanity. The threat of treatment by electroshock is empty, for the facility does not have such a device. The psychologist making the threat is just another patient. In time, the Guller knows that the ruse will fall apart and they shall take back their position of authority.

PROBLEM

It goes without saying, the difficulty for the PCs is that this scenario is a death trap. What they feel is in their best intentions is actually the opposite of what is best for them.

A GM should be careful with this scenario, as you do not want it to feel like contemporary torture porn. It is not the *Saw* series, nor should it be. Instead it should be handled more like *The Prisoner* or even *Big Trouble in Little China's* escape scene before the major showdown.

In the end, the PCs who survive should feel like they saved themselves, while the PCs whose characters died should feel like they did their best and missed their chance to survive.

But, can the PCs be delayed long enough, and well enough, for the machinations of the Dame to fall apart and what passes for order to return to the Sanitarium?

In many ways this scenario will turn GM and the PC playing the Murmuring Guller into the shoulder riding angel and devil of popular culture. They will be oppositional forces pulling at the nature of the other PCs. Oppositional, shared-storytelling with the angel seemingly talking out of their backside and the devil pushing the direction that you already want to go.

Basically, it is the old adage of whether or not the easiest path is the best or if it leads to destruction.

By design, only one or two of the PCs should survive any escape attempts. Nearly all of the routes to the outside—at least those that make themselves available to the PCs—are death traps designed to return the PCs to insanity or kill them while trying. Yet, as the Guller has deduced, the window for the attempt is finite. The attention of the other Masters shall be drawn to the sanitarium, again. It is their way, and purpose, to keep those touched by their minds in a safe place (whether it is for future use, or simply memorializing the end results of their experiments). The response can range from a simple, overheard phone call "Ah, good the experts are on the way then?" to Monsters loose on the grounds to a dozen orderlies corralling the survivor to take to the real Electro-shock Device.

It is the Murmuring Guller's purpose to save the lives of their prior charges, regardless of the sum of their previous lives. They are now charged by their memory loss, and subsequent potential recovery, and this experience might lead them down a path of rehabilitation. However unlikely, the slimmest plausibility is, in and of itself, a bright bit of optimism in a bleak world, akin to the glow of the lantern fish's bait.

KEY CHARACTERS

Dame R. Leem, her staff, and the other patients are all key players. They can be used to propel the PCs down the path of realization that not only are they supposedly sane people trapped with the insane, but they can also be used to subtly direct the PCs down one of the death trap exit paths.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE - IS THAT NOT WHAT A CRAZY PERSON WOULD SAY

KEY SCENE - WHAT IS COMING...

Aspect

Coming Doom

At the opening of Act One, this scene should impart on the players the clinical, definitive foreshadowing of what shall happen to them on the morrow. It should be made in such a fashion that even with the PCs knowing that they are sane, they equally know that this place will follow through with the COMING DOOM of electroshock. This Aspect is one that the GM should feel free to compel each of the PCs with at least once, whether it is what the guller is worried about or that of the other PCs.

THE SANITARIUM FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE

Clean, yet worn. Institutional colors, yet torn and chipped. Foreboding, yet oddly comfortable. SAFE, YET NOT EVEN REMOTELY SAFE.

That is the Sanitarium of Dame R. Leem, a place of contradiction and compulsion. A place purportedly of healing, yet the seeming of the place that forgotten people go to die.

WHAT IS HERE?

With a modicum of thought and suggestion, the PCs should be able to find whatever they would need to escape. As the Dame wishes for them to escape into the death traps, the Sanitarium is seeded with useful things. However, these items would also be useful to PCs wishing to stay and hide from the supposed 'therapy'. UNIFORMS, TOOLS and MATERIALS that could be



used to make weapons, lock a person in a room, break or bypass a lock, and more are about. So many WONDERFUL TOYS can be found, it is just a matter of the PCs' purpose and *reasonable* creativity, although no direct weapons (guns, explosives) are to be found within the Sanitarium.

The opening act could have the most alacrity, in that the PCs know that they're sane, do not wish to receive electro-convulsive therapy, and begin to form plans at avoiding it.

However, try and keep a governor applied to the act because it is here that PCs will most-likely determine whether they will attempt to escape the torture or attempt to evade and elude it. It will also be the scene where various alliances will be established for the PCs, especially the Murmuring Guller. If the scene is too rushed then opportunities will be missed, and things could turn real nasty.

Nasty for the PCs.

Nasty for the Dome.

Nasty for the Guller.

Keep the feeling of impending doom and foreboding at the ready. Give all the PCs a chance to find their problems and goals, as well as hit the high points needed to aim for the most optimal outcome. Have the Guller help split up the party to move about more "efficiently".

Environment Ideas - BARRED WINDOWS, HIDDEN DEATH TRAPS, A MAZE OF CORRIDORS, SAFETY DOORS, TREATMENT ROOMS

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO AND BEYOND - YOU MUST TRUST ME...

KEY SCENE(S) - CONSPIRACY

This should be a series wherein the PCs conspire among one and other. Note regularly who is close to who in which location, who can overhear what is being said, who might not be able to hear what is said, and who cannot hear what is said. In fact, it might be a good practice for PCs to take discussions out of the room, with the GM, so as to add to the suspense.

Fretting or unripened fruit, that will be a hallmark of the second act. BUT I AM NOT CRAZY is another possible trigger for GM and PC alike, whether it helps or hinders the plotting is up to the manner in which it is used.

PCs will begin to either come together as a group or decide on whether they're going their own ways, or in smaller teams. Will they risk being found and electrocuted or will they take a chance on escape?

The PCs shouldn't have too much free reign to organize, though, as they are in a sanitarium and under observation. It should be an excellent opportunity for clandestine movements and meetings, secret conversations, messages left in paper craft, and other such creative methods.

In many ways, think *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, with a plausibly more hopeful moment.

In fact, it might be a good idea to read or watch *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. It's a good thematic source, even with its less than accurate psychological model. *Girl Interrupted* would also be a solid thematic source, especially for the covert relations and other aspects of plotting within a sanitarium. The surreality of *Sucker Punch* may also inspire.

ACT TWO - ...COME HELL OR HIGH WATER

The climactic act, the final countdown, might be the longest scene of this scenario. It is where the outcome of the PCs' choices will bear fruit, it is where truths are revealed, and it is where there will be blood, either in small amounts or infinite.

HELL OR HIGH WATER is the aspect for this Act, and fitting for pushing through with a difficult choice. PCs and the GM should be more than able to find a good usage for just such an aspect, either in their escape or in the intestinal fortitude that comes with the risk of electroshock therapy and hope that someone will be coming to stop it.

KEY SCENE(S) - COME WHAT MAY...

It is at this point that you will either have a drawn out series of individual and/or collaborative attempts at escape and evasion.

Many of the escapes will lead to death, whether it is the death of a PC or the deaths that come from the unhinged murderer loose upon the Dome. It is totally up to the PCs and their actions.

The evasions have the potential to lead to the more positive of results, in that it will show that even the worst offender has the potential for rehabilitation once their memories are wiped and no new triggering events are inserted into their lives.

This act will also be the the more memorable, as the players will have numerous opportunities at development, positive and negative, and a fair amount of obstacles and puzzles to solve on

their way out of the sanitarium or deeper within it to hide from unjust punishment.

DAME R. LEEM

Selfishness and boredom, Dame R. Leem currently embodies both of those states in her current form of being. She will make all those in her charge pay for such feelings. Dearly, truly pay.

For no discernible reason, R. Leem hates humanity and feels trapped by their existing in the observable universe. It is as if their mere presence requires her reciprocal presence, thus her ire turned to outrage turned to hatred. Whether it is an actual power over her or a compulsion, the rosy lipped one is less than pleasantly inclined toward humanity and has little to no compulsion against charging them a bloody price for her perceived, required attendance.

That said, while Dame R. Leem's glower and glare are obvious, they are not out of control or an inclination of a seething pit of emotion. Her disdain for humanity is as sharp and precise as a scalpel, and as accurate in its methodical usage. She does not fly off the handle, nor roar in outrage, but instead adjusts and controls a situation so that the most damage can be done with only a modicum of effort, and accountability, on her part.

Dame R. Leem's malevolence is akin to a capricious predator playing with their foodstuff, more so because the predator is likely full yet cannot keep themselves from slaying their prey. The human species is the latest in entertainment, nothing more nor less.

Aspects

Always In Control, My Way or No Way, Those Dead Red Lips, Tell me about your Trouble

Skills

Superb (+5) Intimidation, Science
Great (+4) Academics, Alertness
Good (+3) Engineering, Resolve
Average (+1) All others

Special Abilities

- **Inhuman Toughness:** Dame R. Leem has six health stress boxes instead of four. She can take an additional physical consequence.
- **Mind Control:** Dame R. Leem can use a Deceit maneuver to place a "Mind Seed" aspect on a character. She can compel this aspect to force the target to take any action she wants them to. The aspect goes away when the character succeeds at a Resolve roll at Good (+3) as an action, or at the end of the scene.
- **Clinician's Rapport:** Dame R. Leem may substitute her Intimidation skill for Rapport when she is within the confines of any mental health institution. This is due to her implied authority in such environs, as well as how these environs often require stern demeanors.

APPENDIX A: MINIONS

This selection of standard minions keys to where they typically appear. For additional minions to insert into a given scenario, modify these or create your own. Each minion will have Stress appropriate to their Quality (e.g. a Fair physical Minion will have two physical Stress). Stunts have not been assigned; if your scenario warrants them, any from *The Demolished Ones*, *Amnesia* or *Fate Core* may be appropriate. As in TDO, if the PCs succeed in besting opponents like the police easily in a given scenario, escalate the capacities and fate points of the minion type at their next appearance.

MINIONS TABLE

Minion Type	Location	FP	Quality	Relevant Skill(s)	Equipment
Citizens	any	0	Average	one at +1	n/a
Hounds	outside any	0	Fair	Athletics +2, Teeth (Weapons) +2	n/a
Insane Patient	Sanitarium	1	Good	Deceit +3, Intimidation +2, Teeth (Weapons)+2	variable
Laborers	Waterworks	0	Fair	Engineering+5, Weapons +2	HUGE WRENCH
Mob Member	Outside, any	0	Fair	Fists +1, Weapons +1	BRICKS, IMPROVISED WEAPONS
Police	Bank	1	Good	Guns +3, Weapons +3	REVOLVER, NIGHT STICK
Psychiatrist	Sanitarium	2	Fair	Intimidation +2, Science +1	ETHER
Orderly*	Sanitarium	1	Good	Might +3, Fists +3	GURNEY, STRAIGHTJACKET
Security Bank Teller	Sanitarium Bank	1 0	Fair Average	Weapons +2 Alertness +1	NIGHT STICK n/a

*Under rare circumstances an orderly may have a) Empathy and b) related stunts.

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