

Self-trust is the first secret of success.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

THE RED W CIPHER

*An adventure for Mage: The Awakening
using the Storytelling Adventure System*

Written by Jim Johnson Additional Material by Eddy Webb Developed by Eddy Webb
Edited by Carl Bowen Layout by Jessica Mullins Art by Tom Biondolillo, Vince Locke,
Justin Norman, Nate Pride and UDON

STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

MENTAL	●○○○
PHYSICAL	●●○○
SOCIAL	●●●○

WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING, INC.
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STONE MOUNTAIN, GA 30087

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A millennia-long search for an ancient Atlantean artifact, the **Abedju Cipher**, is about to come to an end. The item has changed hands hundreds of times in its long history, and hearing or telling the rumors of its abilities has caused the deaths of dozens of Awakened souls.

Many Awakened factions, from Pentacle mages to the Seers of the Throne, have sought the Cipher over the centuries, using both overt and covert means to track down either it or its previous owners. Tensions have risen over it more often than not, and many oaths of enmity have been sworn on all sides.

Amidst the quest to possess the **Abedju Cipher**, an apostate of the Hegemonic Ministry of the Seers of the Throne plans to obtain and destroy the Cipher, in the hopes of striking a blow for the forces of light. Doing so will not be so easy, however, as other factions close in to capture the Cipher for their own hidden agendas.

Introduction

The **Abedju Cipher** is about trust and all its myriad depths: earning trust, bestowing trust, wondering whether one's trust in another is justified, the breaking of trust with (or in) another and all the consequences that follow from that break in faith. Implicit trust in someone is a precious and fragile thing. This story is about when to trust and whom, and what it means to be trustworthy. Within this story, the characters are introduced to an ancient mystical relic and exposed to a number of individuals and factions bent on acquiring it at any cost. The characters encounter uncertain allies, certain enemies, and could find in the end that the only people they truly can trust are each other.

This is a complete scenario that can be woven seamlessly into your **Mage: The Awakening** chronicle or run as a stand-alone adventure spanning one or two gaming sessions. Contained within these pages are all the tips and advice you'll need to run an exciting and enjoyable story. If you want to change the story line or improvise along the way, there are plenty of places within this adventure to tweak the story to your tastes. This document provides the general layout — including characters, locations, situations and various clues — for you and your players to explore. Only you, the Storyteller, should read this document.

This adventure works with the rules system in the **World of Darkness** Rulebook and **Mage: The Awakening**. A useful supplement for this story is **Seers of the Throne**, but it's not required. All the critical details you need are contained within this document. This story works best as the first adventure for a newly formed cabal, but it can be scaled up to serve as a worthy challenge to a more experienced group of Awakened.

ABOUT THE STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

If this is your first Storytelling Adventure System (SAS) product, you've chosen a fine place to start. To keep this story kit lean and focused, though, we haven't included a lot of the core premises and Storyteller suggestions that are at the heart of the SAS. Whether you're a new Storyteller or an old hand, be sure to read the *free SAS Guide*, found at the SAS website:

www.white-wolf.com/sas

Here are some of the features available in **The Abedju Cipher**:

- **Interactive links.** Clicking on anything in gold will take you directly to the section referenced, or to an appropriate character sheet or prop. The link could also take you to a useful external website.
- **Scenes.** Clicking on a scene name in the scene flowchart or the page number in the scene card will take you to the full write-up of the scene.
- **Bookmarks.** This PDF is fully bookmarked, so you can jump to major sections at any time when the file is open.

What's Inside

This storytelling kit contains the following three basic parts:

The **Introduction** provides the story overview, a description of the key Storyteller characters and all the historical notes and background information you need to help bring the setting and characters to life.

The **Scenes** are the building blocks that make up the overall story. Each scene details a specific, central action of the story and helps you keep the story moving from action to action. Each scene includes more specific Storyteller advice and several options for how characters can interact within the adventure's provided setting. Each scene also provides some suggestions on how to adjust the scene to best fit your needs as a Storyteller.

The **Scene Cards**, used to summarize each scene contained in **The Abedju Cipher**, also introduce the in-play resources section of this SAS kit. Along with the character sheets for the significant Storyteller characters and the scene flow chart, the scene cards are designed to be easy to print. If you cannot or do not wish to print out this entire scenario, just print this section (pp. 31–32), which provides you the basic information you need to successfully tell this story.



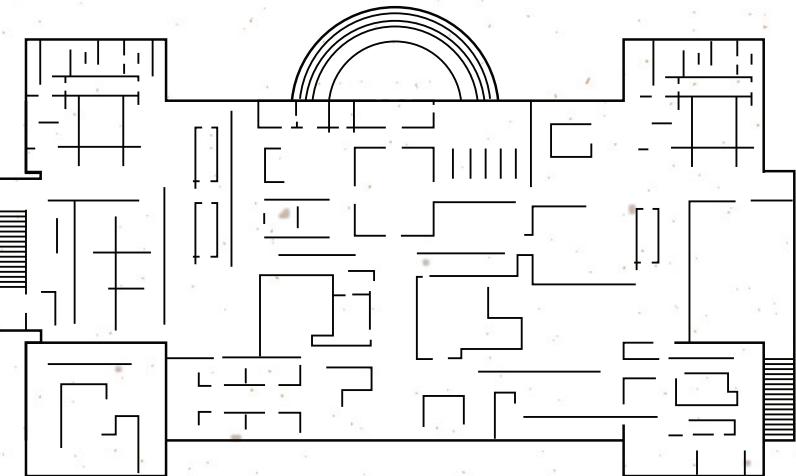
THE SANCTUM AND HALLOW MERITS

For the purposes of this story, it is ideal, but not required, that your characters not yet have established sanctums or Hallows. If they do, it's perfectly all right, but they are given the opportunity to earn either a sanctum or Hallow by the end of this adventure (which can potentially lead into another Mage story kit, *Lines of Power*).

Treatment

In **The Abedju Cipher**, an ancient Egyptian artifact tour is making its next stop at the Sanderson Museum of History, which is local to wherever the characters happen to live. Among the collected artifacts is a supposedly lost and prized magical relic, known as the Abedju Cipher. Doctor Giselle Pierpont, the curator of the museum (and reluctant member of the Hegemonic Ministry), was ordered to pull strings in order to have the tour visit the Sanderson so that she could secure the relic and send it to her superiors when the exhibition moves to the next museum. Also, other forces are already in place at the museum or are moving toward it to obtain the Cipher, including the Adamantine Arrow and the Ministry of Paternoster.

Sanderson Museum of Natural History



The story begins with the characters being invited to the gala opening of the touring exhibition by one of the museum's docents, Dara MacKenzie, secretly a novice operative of the Adamantine Arrow. MacKenzie encourages the characters to make themselves comfortable and to enjoy themselves. During the festivities, the characters also meet Doctor Pierpont and the other guests and have a chance to run into the story's main antagonist, Brother Remmy Odoya of the Ministry of Paternoster.

As the party winds down, the security gates suddenly lock and the power goes out. Some of the guests reveal concealed firearms, secure the party guests and begin scouring the museum and the exhibits for the Cipher. The characters have the option to either fight these Paternoster templars or run for cover.

If the characters look for a place to hide out and regroup, they find their way to Pierpont's arcaneously guarded office and have a chance to break in. There, they can search her private library and have the opportunity to learn more about her and about what the terrorists' agenda might be. Both Pierpont and MacKenzie offer their aid to the characters if they decide to either go after the terrorists or attempt to help free the hostages.

After learning more about Pierpont and MacKenzie, the characters can then engage in a spirited battle with the templars through the various exhibits and hallways of the museum. They might even be able to free the hostages to help keep them out of the line of fire. If Pierpont hasn't already told them about the Cipher, the characters have a chance to learn more about it when they discover that the templars are looking for it within the touring exhibition.

During the struggle with the templars, the Paternoster representative, Remmy Odoya, reveals that Pierpont is not all that she seems. The characters learn from Odoya that Pierpont is a member of the Seers of the Throne. Whom do the characters choose to believe — Pierpont or Odoya? Added to the confusion and web of deceit is the revelation that MacKenzie is actually a novice Talon of the Adamantine Arrow. With no one appearing to truly be who he or she claims to be, the characters are forced to determine whom to trust or whether they should trust anyone at all.

Depending on how things play out, the characters might have a chance to secure the Cipher and pull a bait and switch using several fake Ciphers in the artifact collection. If they can pull off the bluff successfully, they have the chance to make off with the Cipher themselves. If either Pierpont or Odoya sees through their subterfuge, it could spark off a final encounter between the cabal and the others.



Once the dust settles, a number of possible outcomes exist, based entirely on the decisions the characters made. If they have the Cipher, they can keep it for themselves and earn the enmity of all who were searching for it. If they hand the Cipher over to Pierpont, she asks them for help in destroying it. It's even possible the characters could hand it to Odoya for his own purposes.

If the characters work with Pierpont by the end of the story, she might be willing to offer them a sanctum within the museum — assuming they're interested in working with her in the future, given her uncertain allegiances and questionable reliability. The characters might even be able to call MacKenzie an ally by the end of the story, which could open up the possibility of the characters' involving themselves with the Adamantine Arrow at some point in the future.

Theme: Trust

Trust is one of the most important facets of being human and one of the most critical elements of being a mage. When trust is misplaced or broken, humans tend to feel betrayed and (in some cases) threatened. For mages, the breaking of trust is even more dangerous, as it means there could be individuals out there aware of their secrets and perhaps even willing to divulge those secrets to others who do not have the mages' best interests at heart. Hence the theme of this story. In whom will your characters place their trust? What will your characters do if they place their trust in someone who then turns around and betrays them? And, since trust works both way, perhaps your characters will encourage someone to trust them whom they can then turn around and betray.

Moods: Hope and Fear

Determining whom to trust evokes both *hope* and *fear*. Hope as you rely on the person in whom you place your trust to have earned it, and fear that the person might betray you or otherwise prove unworthy of your trust. These two complex emotions run throughout this story, driving the characters forward as they struggle to manage one of the most basic human social needs: trust. **The Abedju Cipher** presents a situation wherein there are no clear answers on whom to trust. There are no clear heroes or enemies, no one person the characters can trust at face value, save perhaps each other. Each Storyteller character they meet and each new piece of information they collect is designed to add depth to each scene and to encourage characters and players to explore their own views on trust, faith, fear and hope.

A Chapter in Your Chronicle

This SAS provides a blueprint for a story to begin or to be included in your chronicle. As such, it is meant to be flexible in design. You should feel free to add, change or delete characters or entire scenes so that this story best fits with your specific characters and plot.

One aspect suited for alteration is adding more Paternoster templars to Odoya's team to ramp up the level of danger and threat of mortality to the story line, if you would like the story to be more deadly than as presented in this story kit. You could also add in a significant Sleeper element, in the form of the local police and fire departments coming to the museum to investigate the power outage and the apparent hostage situation. The characters could get involved in a crossfire between the Paternoster templars, the fearful guests and the mundane municipal forces of their local town.

It's even possible that the actual Abedju Cipher isn't in the touring exhibition at all, and that the characters are all fighting over nothing but rumor and assumption. Perhaps the Seers suspected that Pierpont would attempt to betray them and arranged to replace part of the exhibition with fake artifacts before the exhibition arrived at the Sanderson Museum. This twist could add another layer of deception and uncertainty to the story. It could even change the relationship between the characters and any or all of the Storyteller characters.

The choices the characters make can have long-term consequences for themselves and could influence the direction in which your chronicle moves. Helping Pierpont destroy the Cipher, aiding MacKenzie in acquiring the Cipher for the Adamantine Arrow, foiling Odoya's attempts to acquire the Cipher or even holding the Cipher for themselves could earn the characters any number of potential allies or enemies. The choices the characters make in this story will directly influence what happens next in your ongoing chronicle and could even help set up long-standing subplot threads and story lines.

It's worth noting that the actual reason why everyone is so eager to get their hands on the Cipher isn't detailed in this story kit. While we have provided some suggestions as to why some of the factions and Storyteller characters want to get their hands on the Cipher, we have left the true reasons for you to customize, if such reasons become important in your chronicle.

A Story by Itself

The Abedju Cipher can also be used as an effective stand-alone adventure run over one or two game sessions, unconnected to a longer chronicle. The story provides intrigue, potential for combat and several complex Storyteller characters and also provides a series of meaningful choices for the characters to consider by the end of the story. For that sort of story, the players' characters can be invited to the gala event at the museum by parties unknown and thrust into the middle of the grab for the Cipher, a situation that is alternately dangerous and exciting. With no allies to turn to for help and little information regarding what is actually going on, the characters will have to feel their way around the potential landmines and make difficult decisions on whom to trust based on whatever limited information they can glean during the chaotic struggle.

Alternatively, you could choose to have one or more of the players' characters be a focal character involved in the quest for the Abedju Cipher. It could be that the characters have received some advance knowledge about what's going on at the museum, perhaps something that is contained within one of their histories or backgrounds. It's also possible that one or more of the characters has a pre-existing relationship or loyalty to Pierpont, MacKenzie or Odoya. The opportunity is there to not only pit the characters against the Storyteller characters, but also against each other.

If this story is used as a stand-alone adventure, we recommend you remove the opportunity for the characters to obtain a sanctum or Hallow from Doctor Pierpont. You are also encouraged to amp up the combats involving MacKenzie and the team of Paternoster templars led by Odoya. Feel free to make the Abedju Cipher a more powerful artifact as well, to add even greater stakes to the story. Doing something like that would certainly add another layer of potential deceit and treachery to the story, which is something you might or might not want to do given your own particular needs or the desires of your players.

The story should end with the characters facing the following final choices: take the Cipher for themselves (thereby spiting all the Storyteller characters), help Pierpont secure or destroy the Cipher, give the Cipher to Odoya (forcing Pierpont to either fight or flee). Any aftereffects of the characters' decisions may be narrated before you cut to black or used as a stepping stone into

another stand-alone scenario, perhaps set a few days or weeks after the events contained in this story kit. You could even use this stand-alone story as the springboard into a longer-term chronicle for a new group of characters — a chronicle fueled entirely by the decisions the characters made and the allies and enemies their decisions generated.

Motivations

While some character groups latch onto any and all plot hooks you dangle in front of them; others require more encouragement to take the bait from a Storyteller eager to get them involved in a story. If you are going to use **The Abedju Cipher** as a chapter in your ongoing chronicle, you probably already have a good idea what it takes to get your players involved. That being said, a number of motivating factors in the story can be used to get a variety of Awakened characters involved, even if you choose not to tie the scenario into a larger chronicle.

Some of the possible motivations and reasons a character might become involved in the hunt for the Cipher (and thereby running into Pierpont, Odoya and MacKenzie) include:

- **Intrigue:** If the characters are the inquisitive sort, this scenario presents a mystery with a simple plot hook and several interesting characters with whom to interact. What is the Cipher, why do so many people want it, and what does it actually do? Seeking the answers to questions and finding the solutions to mysteries is often sufficient to grab hold of players' interests.
- **Notoriety:** If the characters' cabal has not yet had the opportunity to make a name for itself, this story provides an opportunity to get involved in the long history of the Abedju Cipher and thereby gain instant fame or infamy in the process. Either way, the characters will gain recognition, which could prove to be a blessing or a curse.
- **Justice:** As the characters get involved in the power grab for the Cipher, they discover that more than one character has committed some form of wrongdoing and might even be planning to commit more such acts. Characters with noble aspirations or a strong sense of right and wrong might want to work against the evildoers and bring them to some form of justice, whether the character metes it out or turns the villain(s) over to the appropriate authorities.



- **Friendship:** If the players' characters have little or no connection to established mage society (Pentacle mages or otherwise), their involvement in the Cipher situation could allow them to begin building relationships with Storyteller characters who have firm connections to one or more Awakened factions.
- **Mentorship:** Aiding Pierpont to obtain and destroy the Cipher could enable Pierpont to offer the characters some boons in the form of mentorship or access to a sanctum or a Hallow. Being a powerful (if reluctant) mage in her own right, Pierpont could serve as a wealth of information and training for a newly formed cabal. Alternatively, while MacKenzie is an inexperienced member of the Adamantine Arrow, a positive relationship with her could earn the characters a future with her order.
- **Reward:** Once the characters have an idea of what the Cipher is, they might want to pursue it with the intention of keeping it for themselves. In addition, they'll be involved in a battle amidst priceless ancient artifacts, so underhanded or sneaky characters could try to secure some of those riches during the bedlam. Scholarly or inquisitive characters might seek to accumulate a portion of the knowledge Pierpont possesses, and those of a political bent might want to rub shoulders with the local politicians or the Awakened Storyteller characters to further their own agendas.
- **Safety:** If none of the preceding potential hooks are sufficient to motivate the characters to get involved in the story, you might be able to encourage them to participate out of self-preservation. Pierpont or MacKenzie (possibly even Odoya) could serve as protection to the new cabal or might be able to help the characters obtain some level of safety against all the myriad forces working against inexperienced Awakened beings. While the Cipher heist can turn into a dangerous and potentially lethal free-for-all, there are allies to be made who could help the cabal survive and thrive in the days and months to come.

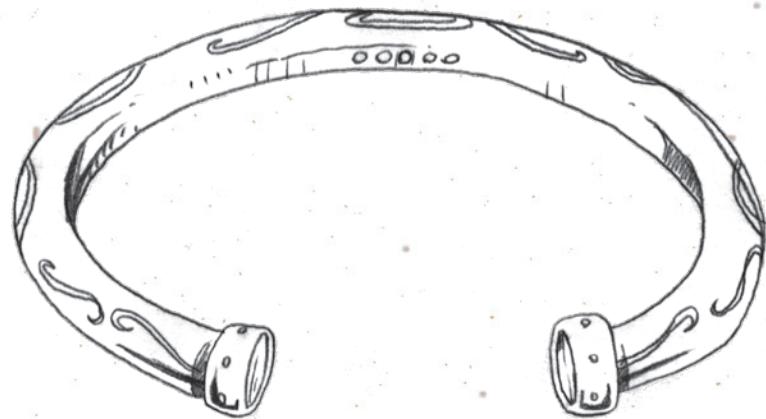
Background and Setup

While the scenes included in **The Abedju Cipher** contain all the information you need to run this story from beginning to end, there are a few things you might want to keep in mind as you prepare to run this scenario for your players.

Background

Somewhere around 3100 BCE, early during the First Dynasty of Egyptian pharaohs, an ancient cabal of magicians gathered in secret at the sun temple located in the Egyptian city of Abedju, better known by its Greek name, Abydos. At the sun temple, the mages gathered their collective powers and created (or, as some rumors suggest, unearthed) an artifact of modest power, known thereafter as the Abedju Cipher. The cabal arranged to have the Cipher added to the regalia of the first recognized pharaoh, Narmer. As part of that trove of riches, the Cipher was entombed with Narmer after he died. The Cipher somehow found its way out of the tomb and back into the next pharaoh's regalia, and was subsequently entombed and recovered with each following pharaoh of the first several dynasties.

As the dynasties came and went, as invading armies dismantled ancient Egypt, and as the members of the ancient cabal died off or had their memories altered — or in some cases, erased — the Cipher gradually disappeared into the forgotten recesses of time. It popped up now and again in the possession of one mage or another and has changed ownership any number of times over the millennia. The Cipher is currently hidden among a number of Egyptian artifacts on tour around the United States, sought after by many Awakened factions and individuals.





THE ABEDJU CIPHER (ARTIFACT

Durability 5, Size 1, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: maximum 11

This golden bracelet has three inlaid gems (ruby, diamond and lapis) set in a triangular pattern and is ornately etched with designs that appear, at first glance, to be tiny rows of hieroglyphics. When examined more closely, the glyphs are actually written in a far older script, indecipherable to all but a few learned Seers (and even fewer, venerable Pentacle mages). The true provenance of the bracelet is now lost to the inexorable passage of history.

Whoever wears the bracelet on his arm gains the benefits of the Death 1 "Speak with the Dead" spell, allowing him to see, hear and speak with ghosts within Twilight (*Mage: The Awakening*, p. 135). The bearer of the Cipher does not have to use Spirit 1 to hear spirits within Twilight, and does not need to add Mind 1 in order to perceive mental projections. He can see, hear and speak with them as he can with ghosts. The Cipher doesn't provide any ability to speak any language the wearer doesn't know, however.

Setup

It would be ideal for at least one of the characters in your cabal to have some sort of connection to Dara MacKenzie, so that the characters can start the first scene of this story ("Letter of Invitation") with a minimum of plot difficulty. If you're using this story as the beginning adventure for your chronicle, it would be easy to add MacKenzie in as a contact for the cabal or for one or more of the characters. If you are dropping this story into the middle of your ongoing chronicle, consider seeding MacKenzie into earlier chapters of your chronicle so that when she shows up in this scenario, she can be viewed as a familiar face rather than a complete stranger or a plot contrivance. Feel free to make other changes as needed to fit your own chronicle.

Motivations for the Cipher

For the purposes of this story, the Abedju Cipher is truly nothing more than a MacGuffin, a trinket the players' characters and the Storyteller characters chase as an excuse to create some interesting and dramatic scenes. The item in contention and the reasons characters fight over it aren't as important as the fight itself. While the Cipher is a priceless empowered artifact well over 5,000 years old, its greatest value is in getting the characters to meet and interact (and possibly fight) with Pierpont, MacKenzie and Odoya. That being

said, the artifact as written probably isn't as powerful as many of the characters expect it to be. Atlantean artifacts are always assumed to be supremely powerful, even if they were really just idle trinkets to please ancient mages. Feel free to change any aspect of the Cipher's abilities to suit your story, though. Again, it's more about the chase than the goal, but the reasons for the chase need to make sense for your chronicle.

The goal of this story kit is to encourage the characters and players to explore the ideas of trust, hope, fear and betrayal, using the Cipher as the magnet drawing the disparate forces together. If your characters end up keeping the Cipher for themselves, they'll have a useful tool at their disposal in future adventures, though potentially an item that makes them a ready target for any number of Awakened factions. When using this SAS kit, keep in mind that the Cipher should be used primarily to get the characters to work together in a common cause, expose them to some possible allies and adversaries and introduce the potential for longer-term subplots with those allies and adversaries.

Some suggestions follow as to why each of the factions presented in this adventure could be interested in the Cipher:

- **The Hegemonic Ministry:** While many consider the Hegemonic Ministry to be rotting from within and in danger of imminent collapse, there are those within the Ministry determined to bring the Ministry back to a position of unassailable power. Inspired by the countless rumors of the Abedju Cipher's origin and capabilities, these individuals desire the item as a symbol of their Ministry's waxing strength. By obtaining the Cipher for themselves and keeping it out of the hands of the other Awakened entities, the Ministry's leaders can help to usher in a brave new world and take their rightful place at the top of the chain.
- **Doctor Giselle Pierpont:** Pierpont has seen the corruption infesting so many levels of the Hegemonic Ministry and desires nothing more than to see a complete and final end to the existence of the Cipher. She wants to secure it for herself and potentially destroy it. She is too much a coward to keep it for herself, but she is determined not to let it fall into the hands of the Ministry or into any other mage's possession, for their own good and for the good of all Awakened. If destroying the Cipher helps bring about the ruin of the Hegemonic Ministry, so much the better.





- **The Adamantine Arrow:** The Adamantine Arrow believes itself to be at the forefront of the arcane war, and some within the organization believe that owning the Cipher will aid them in their struggles for all that they believe to be right and just. Further, they believe the rumors that the Cipher is actually an ancient Atlantean artifact and desire to possess it in order to further cement their heritage with that lost age. They are of the mind that possessing the Cipher and preventing the other factions from possessing it counts as a small victory within the context of the larger ongoing tensions with the Seers. Gaining the Cipher is not just the right thing to do, it's the just and honorable thing to do.
- **Dara MacKenzie:** MacKenzie is a novice Talon of the Adamantine Arrow and is interested in obtaining the Cipher for her order so that she can earn greater responsibilities and duties. She is eager to rise through the ranks and do all she can to support her order and to carry out the organization's goals to the best of her ability. She believes that picking up the Cipher and delivering it to her superiors will be her ticket to advancement. Failing that, she believes that the act of striking out against those who might oppose her or her order will be enough to earn respect and advancement as well.
- **The Ministry of Paternoster:** The upper echelons of the Ministry of Paternoster believe that the Abedju Cipher is a proper and necessary relic to be recovered and then housed within the Ministry's most cherished archives. Many rituals and traditions have grown up around the ideal of the Cipher, even though few members of the Ministry can claim direct or anecdotal knowledge of having ever seen or possessed the Cipher. Ritual is all, however, and it would be a coup for the Ministry's leaders to be able to claim the Cipher as their own, as is their self-assumed right.
- **Remmy Odoya:** Pure and simple, Odoya wants the Cipher for himself. He has manipulated his superiors into giving him free rein to plan his mission and to handpick his own recruits. Odoya made sure to pick operatives who, while trained, are ultimately little more than grist for his secret mill. If his operatives aren't wounded or killed during the Cipher heist, Odoya plans to eliminate them once he has the Cipher in his possession. Odoya is ambitious and desires a stronger position within his Ministry. He believes that possessing the Cipher will help him achieve that goal, regardless of the cost to his allies or his enemies.

If you're going to use **The Abedju Cipher** in your ongoing chronicle and wish to add even more factions or Storyteller characters to the hunt for the Cipher, by all means do so. The more people interested in obtaining the Cipher, the more potential for subplots, conflicts and excitement you'll be able to manufacture for your players. Consider adding one or more of the following to the story if doing so fits the needs for your characters and your ongoing chronicle (or your plans for a future adventure):

- **The Free Council:** The Free Council believes that whatever the Abedju Cipher is alleged to be is irrelevant in context of what it has done to Awakened society for so long: given all mages a reason to remain divided. The Council sees the Cipher as a useless trinket loaded with uncertain and unverifiable claims to Atlantean heritage, nothing more than a gigantic roadblock to better relations between Awakened. Finding the stupid thing and destroying it or locking it away forever will prove to be far more useful than in letting it continue to change hands and sow divisiveness for another millennium.
- **Guardians of the Veil:** There are those within the Guardians of the Veil who privately believe that the whole business with the Abedju Cipher was a blunder on the part of one of their own. Somehow a Guardian made a critical error and allowed the Cipher to fall out of the Veil's careful protection. The Guardians once tried to keep the Cipher's existence secret, and some feel that they have been running damage control ever since. It's high time such business was brought to a conclusion. Regaining control of the Cipher can put many within the organization at ease and allow the Guardians to begin shutting down the incessant rumors that seem to cling to the Cipher's existence.
- **The Mysterium:** The real battle is for knowledge, the true power in the world. Ancient knowledge is often the strongest, so it's no surprise that the Mysterium is deeply committed to tracking down and possessing the Cipher. Even if it's only a modestly useful item, its connection to the ancient troves of Atlantean power makes it too great a target to ignore. Some members of the Mysterium have dedicated their lives to tracking down the Cipher, and they will take any opportunity, no matter how dangerous, to secure it. They know that knowledge is power, but that knowledge doesn't come without a price. If an Awakened enemy needs to be eliminated to ensure the Mysterium's securing the Cipher, then that is the price that must be paid.





- **The Silver Ladder:** The Diamond is the unifying hope for the future. The Silver Ladder is determined to make sure that that unification takes place, so they desire to obtain the Abedju Cipher and use it as a rallying icon. Its Atlantean heritage can be used as a point of commonality among the Diamond components, and also as a symbol for their Sleeper followers. If Sleepers can worship and support any dozens of religions and corporate logos and the like, then they'll likely rally behind an ancient artifact with a long history of rumored powers and abilities. So what if the rumors aren't all accurate? It wouldn't be the first time the Silver Ladder has lied to Sleepers in order to advance its agenda.
- **The Banishers:** Foolish mages. Following rumors of a supposedly ancient artifact and gathering to oppose each other for possession of it... Ridiculous. And yet, spreading rumors of the Cipher like breadcrumbs has enabled more than one Banisher to destroy unsuspecting mages. If this so-called Cipher is going to be at the Sanderson Museum, then perhaps more than one Awakened will arrive to try to secure it. If so, it could be the perfect opportunity to eliminate several evil sorcerers in one fell swoop. And then, destroyed or not, the Cipher rumors could continue to be used as bait for future ambushes and plots.
- **The Praetorian Ministry:** Aside from the Ministry of Paternoster and the Hegemonic Ministry, the Praetorian Ministry is another Seers faction that would find value in obtaining the Abedju Cipher. The Ministry is determined to score victories when possible, and taking possession of the Cipher would bring victory to the Ministry and a form of defeat to its rivals. While the Ministry does not believe the Cipher to be an effective physical weapon, the rumors and strife it creates by its mere presence serve nearly as well as any gun or sword.
- **The Ministry of Panopticon:** The Ministry of Panopticon is eager to get its hands on the Cipher. Having done so, it could disseminate even more rumors about the Cipher and its supposed abilities before depositing it into the unsuspecting hands of some scapegoat somewhere to continue the ongoing cycle of mystery, disinformation and rumor. The Ministry's leaders feel that the longer they keep the other factions squabbling over such a modest trinket, the less time and resources those factions have to oppose the Ministry's actions.

- **Sleepers:** It's even possible that any number of Sleepers is interested in the Cipher, unconnected to the Silver Ladder or any other Awakened. Maybe a renowned archaeologist or collector of relics has heard some of the legends and rumors about the Cipher and can't resist the opportunity to acquire it for study or for inclusion in a personal collection. Perhaps some Sleeper's ancestor once claimed possession of the Cipher and her descendants have hired a private investigator to track it down. Perhaps they have even taken the matter into their own hands, not realizing the danger awaiting them if they find it.

The Cast

Doctor Giselle Pierpont, Reluctant Mentor

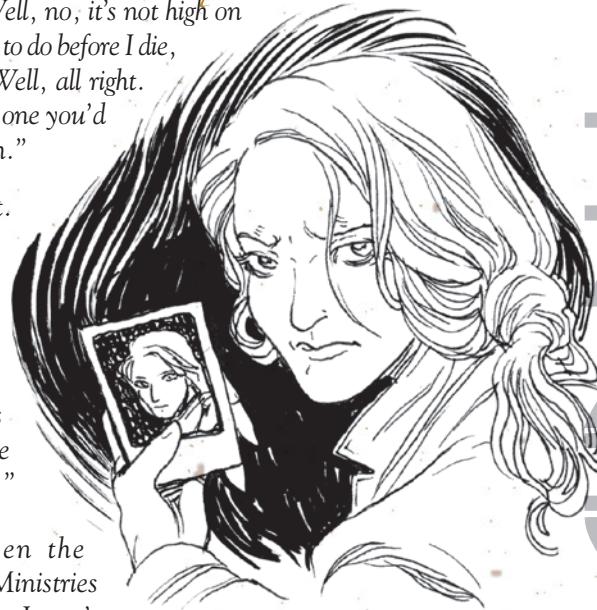
Quotes: "Yes, sir. Well, no, it's not high on the list of things I wanted to do before I die, but... Ah, yes. I see. Well, all right. If you're sure there's no one you'd rather ask to do it... Oh."

"That's quite all right. Even if I have to work twenty-hour days for the next two weeks to properly prepare the south wing for the exhibition, then that's what I'll do. Nose to the grindstone and all that."

"No, no. I've seen the inner workings of the Ministries firsthand, and I know I can't hope to take them down on my own. That fight is for someone else; someone like you, maybe. But, what I can do is help you, sort of from the sidelines, as it were."

Virtue: Fortitude. When Pierpont takes on a task, no matter how difficult, she sees it through to the end, regardless of the consequences to herself or to others.

Vice: Sloth. Pierpont is a coward at her core, unwilling to raise her hands to right a wrong until or unless there is absolutely no other option.





Background: Doctor Pierpont is the curator of the Sanderson Museum. Under duress from the Ministry she desperately hopes to quit, she arranged to have the Abedju Cipher brought to the museum, ostensibly so that she could take possession of it before the touring exhibition moves to the next museum and deliver it to her superiors. Yet, Pierpont would rather have the Cipher destroyed than let it fall into their hands, no matter the cost to herself or others.

Giselle Pierpont was born in a small suburb of Reims, France. She was orphaned as a teenager when the large manor house she lived in with her parents and two brothers burned to the ground under unknown circumstances. She awoke during the blaze, using strange talents to somehow shield herself from the conflagration. She managed to make it out of the collapsing building, but was devastated to discover that she was the sole surviving member of her family. After being adopted by a wealthy American businessman, Richard Mayweather, a friend of her father's, Giselle moved to Chicago with Richard and his wife, keeping her newfound abilities a secret from her adoptive parents.

Giselle wanted for nothing as a child and was placed into the best schools. During her undergraduate studies at the University of Chicago, Giselle was quietly introduced to a member of the Hegemonic Ministry, who soon recruited her into that organization. Surrounded by others of her kind, Giselle's arcane studies flourished along with her mundane studies, and she quickly earned modest power and prestige within the Ministry. She completed a number of post-graduate degrees, all paid for by her Ministry. She continued her climb within the hierarchy, making good use of her classical education and her organizational and managerial skills to cement a firm position for herself within the Ministry.

While on a fact-finding mission in Peru, Pierpont was caught up in an accidental crossfire between her people and the forces of the Ministry of Panopticon, during which several of her closest allies were killed. She escaped with her life and returned to her Ministry's headquarters with countless questions. She spent several weeks being debriefed by her superiors, after which she was unceremoniously assigned to a quiet desk job within the depths of the Ministry. Her rising star had suffered an abrupt fall to earth.

Disillusioned by the sudden turnaround in her fortunes, Pierpont stuck with the work given to her with admirable dedication, though the wear was beginning to show. The more time she spent working within the Ministry, the more she saw the confusion and corruption damaging the organization internally. More hegemons died in pointless missions and forays, and Pierpont gradually decided that what she wanted more than anything else was to leave the Ministry and find something better to work toward than anarchy and dissolution.

With that goal in mind, Pierpont rededicated herself to her work and managed to arrange a position as a museum curator at the Sanderson Museum, something she could take on with her exemplary managerial and curatorial abilities. Convincing her superiors that she would pose little embarrassment to the Ministry at such a small and remote posting, she was given the assignment with some modest string-pulling from the Ministry. She took up residence at the museum seven years ago and has been largely happy in that role.

Recently, the Ministry contacted her and ordered her to arrange to have an Egyptian archaeological exhibition brought to the Sanderson Museum so that she could secure one of the artifacts for the Ministry. By this point, Pierpont was an apostate (in thought if not in deed), and this "request" was the proverbial straw. Reluctant to cross the Ministry that had given her so much, but determined to do something against the organization nonetheless, Pierpont agreed and arranged to have the exhibition brought to her museum in order to further her own ends.

Description: Giselle Pierpont is a distracted middle-aged woman with a nervous tic that causes her to look regularly over her shoulder. She's in her early 50s, but the stresses she has endured over her life make her look some 20 years older. She wears well-tailored but plain dress suits, and has a pair of bifocals hanging from her neck by a thin chain. She keeps her prematurely graying long hair done up in a tight bun, though it somehow tends to look frazzled and unkempt. Her focus is on managing her museum and in trying to avoid arcane notice, particularly from members of her former Ministry.

The musky scents of ancient paper and ink tinged with the strange tang of old cedar permeate Pierpont's nimbus. Vague, haunting visages of the beings she has wronged during her tenure in the Hegemonic Ministry float about her when she casts her spells, surrounding her and seeming to chastise her for the wrongs she has committed.

Storytelling Hints: Pierpont comes off as a bookish, shy administrator, but it's a cover for her real nature, which is a powerful adept attempting to atone for her past mistakes. She sees herself as a survivor of the worst the Seers had to offer and even has ideas on how to dismantle her former Ministry, though she's very reluctant to take any direct action against them out of fear for her life. Her talents lie more toward defense than offense, given that she would prefer to dig in and hide than to draw attention to herself any more than is necessary. Her preferred tactic is to hole up in her warded office and rely on the strengths of her defenses to carry the day.

Dedicated Magical Tools: A yellowed ivory cameo pinned to a frayed black silk choker



Rotes: Death — Grim Sight (•), Soul Marks (•), Entropic Guard (••), Suppress Aura (••); Matter — Detect Substance (•), Discern Composition (•), Find the Hidden Hoard (•), Steel Windows (••), Alter Integrity (•••), Repair Object (•••), Transmute Earth (•••); Spirit — Coaxing the Spirits (•), Second Sight (•), Ephemeral Shield (••), Place of Power (••)

Dara MacKenzie, Rookie Operative

Quotes: “Good afternoon, and welcome to the Sanderson Museum. Guided walking tours begin every hour on the half hour, and self-guided audio tours are available for rental at a cost of ten dollars per headset. How may I help you today?”

“Get behind me, get behind me! I'll keep you safe from these foul cretins!”

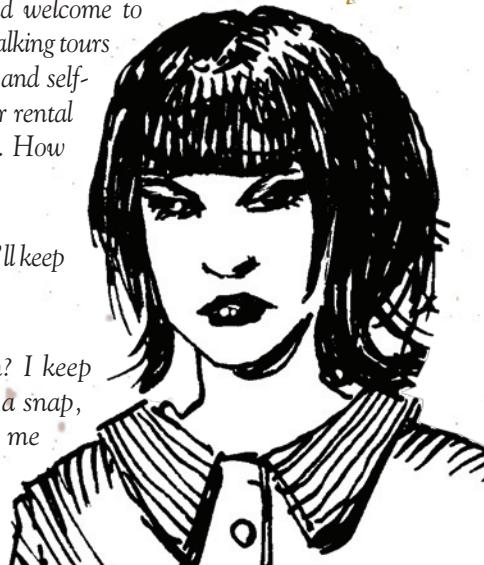
“Feel that, you son of a bitch? I keep twisting and you'll feel a pop or a snap, and then you're going to hear me laugh over your scream. After that, we'll start all over again with your next finger.”

Virtue: Justice. MacKenzie strives to be the beacon of light exposing and fighting wrongs and protecting the innocent and the weak.

Vice: Wrath. When she doesn't get what she wants, MacKenzie falls back to using schoolyard bully tactics.

Background: Dara MacKenzie is an action movie junkie. She grew up on all the classic '80s action movies and wanted nothing more than to be one of those heroes fighting evildoers and winning the day for the good guys. She grew up in a small suburban Virginia town with three older brothers who taught her how to fight, and fight dirty. While her brothers all made the football team, MacKenzie had to settle for being a cheerleader, as there was no sport she could play that wasn't too “girly” for her. She wanted to be roughhousing with the boys, not tossing a softball around a diamond.

During the junior homecoming game, MacKenzie found herself under the bleachers with a backup linebacker, who attempted to get friendlier with her than she wanted. He leveraged his strength against hers and in the ensuing struggle, she awoke and hurled the boy through the back



of the bleachers. She rushed away from him, stunned at what she had done but also secretly elated. Perhaps this was her destiny. Now she had superpowers she could use to fight the forces of evil!

MacKenzie graduated high school and struggled through her freshman year of college. She was placed on academic probation for a semester and bounced from job to job, working retail or food services or whatever she could do to keep herself fed and clothed. While out of school, MacKenzie also took to spending more time out late at night, roaming her small college town looking for wrongs to right and people to rescue with her newfound talents.

She worked as a quasi-vigilante for two of the most terrifying and exciting weeks of her life, then it all came crashing down around her when she ran afoul of an Adamantine Arrow operative attempting to track down a Banisher in the area. MacKenzie nearly ruined the Arrow's ambush, but managed to help him capture the Banisher. The Arrow killed the Banisher before MacKenzie's eyes, and somehow MacKenzie sensed that getting involved had been the right thing to do. The Arrow discussed the situation with MacKenzie, answered what questions she had, and then offered to make introductions with the Adamantine Arrow recruiters (perhaps sensing the potential within MacKenzie to be an effective Talon).

MacKenzie's dreams of being a true hero had been realized. She jumped at the chance to join the organization and passed through their initiations with energy and clarity of purpose. She completed the training offered to her and has been given her first assignment: finding a job at the Sanderson Museum as a museum docent to keep an eye on the curator, Doctor Giselle Pierpont, known to the Arrow as a minor functionary in the Hegemonic Ministry. MacKenzie's superiors believe Pierpont is either a candidate for conversion or a target for elimination. MacKenzie has also been asked to keep her eyes open for other novice or inexperienced Awakened, particularly among the various school groups that come through the museum on any given day.

Description: Dara MacKenzie is in her 20s, with an average height and an athletic build. She keeps her dark brown hair cut short, believing that the last thing a true warrior should be worried about is maintaining her hairstyle. When working at the museum, she wears simple shoes and conservative business suits with skirts cut just above the knee. Outside work, she wears anything casual. Fitted T-shirts and jeans with sneakers get the job done.

When MacKenzie uses magic, a triumphant symphony can be heard on the wind as if she had her own personal musical score, and the acrid smell of an electrical fire can be scented. Her nimbus halos her body in glorious Technicolor ribbons, ranging from the darkest indigo to the brightest, eye-blinding white.



Storytelling Hints: MacKenzie is a focused young woman with an impulsive streak and an overwhelming desire to do good. She does not yet have enough practical experience to navigate the gray zones between good and evil, so she relies on her recent training with the Adamantine Arrow and fills in the gaps of her knowledge with whatever she's picked up from any number of heroic television shows and movies. When all else fails, MacKenzie fights dirty. If her combat training or her movie-star quips don't get the job done, she'll fight with teeth and nails and the basest elementary school insults.

Dedicated Magical Tools: A tarnished silver-plated derringer engraved with her mother's name (Jeanne)

Rotes: Forces — Influence Heat (•), Nightsight (•), Control Heat (••), Influence Fire (••), Kinetic Blow (••), Unseen Shield (••), Control Fire (•••), Telekinetic Strike (•••); Prime — Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Activate Enchanted Item (••), Counterspell Prime (••), Magic Shield (••), Unseen Spy (••)

Remmy Odoya, Zealous Warrior

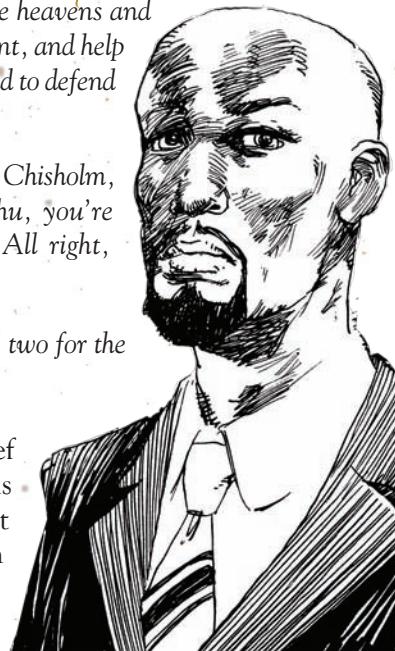
Quotes: "Great Father, ruler of the heavens and the earth, bless me, your humble servant, and help me to protect heaven from falsehood and to defend the world from damnation."

"Rollins, take Franco and swing left. Chisholm, you and Bordeaux take the right. Chu, you're with me — straight up the center. All right, templars, let's go!"

"One for each member of my team, two for the Ministry, and, well, four for me."

Virtue: Faith. Odoya's firm belief in the rightness of his order and his order's directives gives him great peace of mind that his actions on behalf of the order are proper.

Vice: Greed. While he wants what is best for his order, he wants what is best for himself even more. Given the opportunity to secure the Abedju Cipher, he'll attempt to take it for himself before handing it over to the Ministry.



Background: Remmy Odoya was born in a small village in the Congo, one that seemed to be constantly at war with its neighbors. Trained at an early age to fight tactically rather than with indiscriminate force, he was leading his own little band of guerillas before he was a teenager. During a raid on a fuel depot, Odoya Awakened and discovered his abilities could help him in a tactical crisis. While his tactics and new talents helped him and his team secure the fuel depot, there were consequences for the victory.

His allies in the strike gave him wide berth, fearing his strange abilities and wondering whether he had made a pact with the foul things of the darkness to secure them. Tensions rose, and Odoya made what seemed the only tactically intelligent choice — he killed all of his squad before they could report to anyone about Odoya's newfound abilities. He returned to his village alone with the acquired fuel, weaving a story about how he was the only survivor and that his allies had given their lives for the good of them all.

The story worked, in part due to the fact that Odoya was a young but well-respected member of the village. Odoya continued to prepare and lead other missions against the village's enemies, often finding himself forced to surgically eliminate allies to prevent them from telling anyone about his abilities or his tendency to line his own pockets with treasures gained from the raids on enemy strongholds.

Slowly and gradually, Odoya's conscience began to eat away at him over his actions. In time, he sought out the local missionaries and churches, seeking out some deeper meaning and reason to the powers he had been gifted with possessing. The questions he posed to brothers and sisters and missionaries weren't answered to his satisfaction, and Odoya grew more frustrated, wondering if he would ever find a faith that could explain why he had been made a divine tool. His questions disturbed many people of the cloth. In the midst of his depression over not finding a faith to call his own, Odoya was approached by a templar of the Ministry of Paternoster. Within 10 minutes of talking to the man, Odoya knew he had found his place in the world of the blessed.

Odoya entered the Ministry of Paternoster and devoted himself to its teachings, its rituals and its ways of life. Proving himself to be a devoted and loyal servant, he rose quickly through the ranks, discovering that the Ministry's goals and teachings meshed well with his own tactical talents and desire to do holy work. Odoya



was soon made a commanding operative and was regularly given challenging tactical assignments. He led a number of successful missions against Ministry targets and excelled in a variety of operations from intelligence gathering to quiet assassination. In time, Odoya earned the trust of his superiors enough so that he was able to start picking his own troops for his missions. He even gained a say in which missions he took and which he could pass off onto other operatives.

When the dossier for the Abedju Cipher mission reached Odoya's desk, he spent a long time studying the possibilities. It was a priceless artifact of many rumored powers, and securing it for the Ministry would be a significant coup. At the same time, however, obtaining it for himself could prove to be all the power he needed to achieve a higher rank for himself within the Ministry, perhaps even a seat in the upper echelons. With the Cipher in his possession, Odoya believes he could become a significant player in the greater workings of the Ministry. It wasn't just the right thing to do, but perhaps it was his destiny to take on such a mighty artifact and seek out a greater role for himself.

With that goal in mind, Odoya convinced his superiors to give him the Cipher heist mission. He handpicked a squad of trained templar Sleepers and headed for the Sanderson Museum with the express intention of taking the Cipher for himself. He made a private vow to himself and his Father to take the Cipher and to eliminate anyone in his path, even if it included wiping out his own team.

Description: Remmy Odoya is a tall black man in his mid-30s, with a lean athletic build, a cleanly shaven head and a thick, well-maintained Van Dyke beard. At the start of the story, he blends in with the other gala guests, wearing a tailored suit and red power tie. Once he and his men take over the museum, he changes into black tactical gear and a bulletproof vest. His shifty eyes glitter with intelligence, taking in everything and showing no signs of uncertainty. He moves with confident grace and never looks like he doesn't know what he's doing or what he wants.

The whispered chantings of an angelic choir emanate from Odoya's nimbus, along with radiant swirls of silver and black threads that twist and bend in the arcane eddies he creates. When Odoya casts his spells, they always have an element of divinely inspired power to them, tinged with the promise of either salvation or death.

Storytelling Hints: Odoya is a modern day templar, a religious warrior with the power of faith at his back. He comes across as a no-nonsense team leader who is quick to size up a situation and make a tactical decision. He'll stand and fight when it's the right thing to do, but he's smart enough to run for cover and call for backup when the need arises. Odoya has a bit of a wandering eye when he's around cash or other valuables, though. He isn't above making a quick swipe when he's confident he can get away with it.

Dedicated Magical Tools: A titanium ring with lapis lazuli inserts and inscribed Paternoster iconography

Notes: Matter — Craftsman's Eye (•), Detect Substance (•), Find the Hidden Hoard (•); Mind — Aura Perception (•), Third Eye (•), Alter Aura (••), Incognito Presence (••), Memory Hole (••), Mental Shield (••), Misperception (••); Space — Correspondence (•), Finder (•), Spatial Map (•), Conceal Sympathy (••), Untouchable (••)

ODOYA'S SQUAD OF TEMPLARS

Quote: "Don't move and you won't get hurt."

Background: Each member of Odoya's team is an employee of the Ministry of Paternoster, though none of them are Awakened (which helps against enemy mages trying to cast magic around Sleepers). Odoya picked them all for the Abedju Cipher heist mission, mostly because of their use as meat shields and cannon fodder. They have combat training at the level of a professional police officer.

Storytelling Hints: You should use as many or as few of these operatives as needed for your storytelling purposes. If you want your characters to face a modest challenge, use a team of four or five. If you want a greater challenge for your cabal, use a team of a dozen, or even several squads of four. These templars should be viewed as little more than common soldiers, mooks to be cut down en masse to make the characters feel like action heroes. Also, note that Odoya himself is not opposed to killing more than one of his own men if they get in the way of him taking possession of the Abedju Cipher.

Traits: Use the game traits for a Police Officer (*World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 206) for each member of the squad. Arm each squad member with an enhanced handgun (+2 equipment bonus) or sword (+2 equipment bonus, +2 Durability).

Note: If you wish to present an even greater challenge to your group of characters, use the game traits for a SWAT Officer instead (*World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 207), along with the enhanced weapons.



Scenes

Eight scenes are provided within this adventure kit. Some (“Letter of Invitation,” “Lockdown” and “Packing It Up,” for example) are almost certainly going to be part of the story you and your players create from **The Abedju Cipher**. Others will likely be modified as your characters make specific decisions. Some scenes might even be skipped as your players move through the story.

You could find that, depending on the nature of the characters involved and the actions they choose to take, you might need to change or alter some of the scenes or Storyteller characters. Use the provided scenes as building blocks you can then adapt, combine in new ways or leave out entirely in order to make the best possible story for you and your players. If a Storyteller character provided is not presented in a way you wish her to be used, feel free to change her potential reactions, even if they’re not detailed in the scene. Likewise, if you’re using this story kit in conjunction with an existing chronicle, you can switch out the provided characters for ones that already exist in your world. Further, feel free to use the provided characters in conjunction with additional established characters from your own setting.

Some of the scenes include a brief summary of what the characters involved might experience or sense while involved in that particular scene. These descriptions are designed to be read aloud to introduce your characters to the beginning of the scene. These descriptions can also be provided bit-by-bit as the characters actively explore the inner workings of the scene. If you feel that a scene’s description is insufficient, however, change the description to suit your needs or even omit it outright. This SAS kit is yours to do with as you need, and there is no single right way to make use of it. Use as much of it as you need — and ignore any parts that don’t suit you — for your Storytelling goals.

Scene Flow

While several of the scenes in this adventure kit are intended to be completed in a linear fashion, there is some wiggle room within them to allow for some flexibility in storytelling. The story begins with “Letter of Invitation” and leads directly to “Lockdown,” but beyond that lies more than one potential path to getting the characters to the endgame detailed in “Packing It Up” and “A Haven and a Mentor.”

Depending on the choices the characters make, “The Cipher Deciphered,” “All or Nothing,” “Hot Potato” and “Betrayal” can be run in a variety of orders, or transitioned from one to the other in almost any order. In some cases, the characters could complete one part of one scene, flow to another action in another scene, and then back to the original scene without a break in the flow of the story. Notes are provided in each scene, offering guidelines as to where the characters can go next.

No matter which order you use the scenes in, you should endeavor to present the idea that the characters are working under something of a deadline. While the heist and resolution shouldn’t take more than a few hours of in-game time, the characters have only so much time to secure the Cipher or battle Odoya and his men. There is only so much opposition to Odoya’s plan, and if the characters are badly injured or otherwise stymied during the scenario, Odoya will likely get away that night, before the characters have a chance to heal or recover. You are encouraged to do what you can to keep the energy and tension during the heist at a high level, even when the characters are researching or recovering during “The Cipher Deciphered.” Keep the pressure on them from Odoya’s men and the knowledge from Pierpont that they should not let the Cipher fall into Odoya’s hands. This pressure should serve to encourage the players to make a decision of some sort, even if their decision involves stepping back without helping anyone, helping themselves to the Cipher or even helping Odoya in spite of Pierpont’s information.

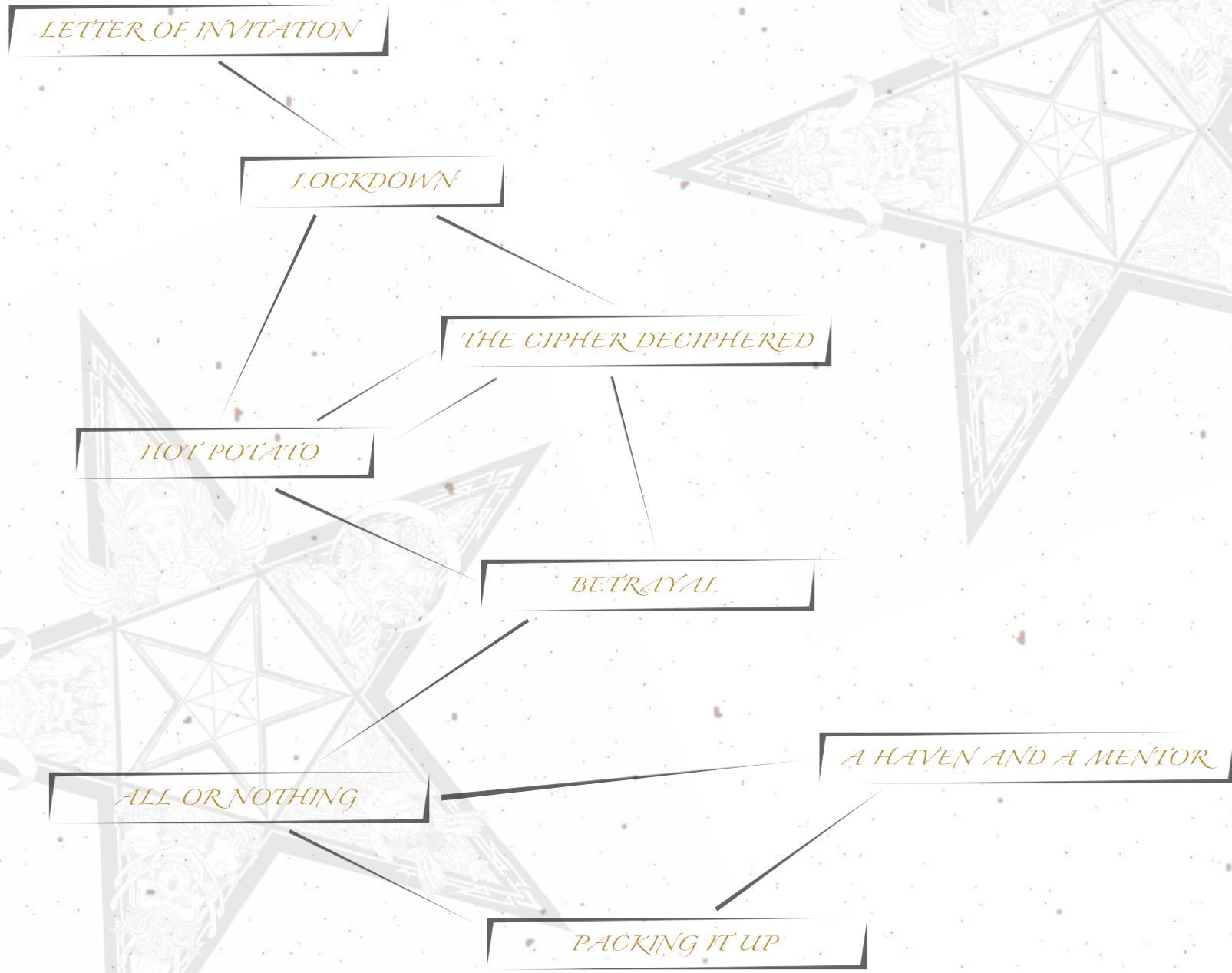
Where to Go from Here

It’s impossible to plan for every possible situation a group of players might create, but the final scenes of this story (“A Haven and a Mentor” and “Packing It Up”) include brief overviews of what might happen next given some of the likely outcomes of this adventure. If you use this SAS kit as a stand-alone adventure, you can use some of the outcomes as a wrap-up to the story. You could also use one of the outcomes as the launching point for another stand-alone story starring the same batch of characters.

If you use **The Abedju Cipher** as a chapter within a larger chronicle, you are free to use one or more of the provided outcomes as suggestions as to where to next take your cabal’s ongoing story. In either case, none of the provided suggestions for outcomes have to be used as concrete resolutions. Make changes to them to suit your own purposes, if you wish, or adjust them based on the decisions and actions the characters have made over the course of the story.

THE ABEDUYPHHER

Scene Flowchart



SCENE FLOWCHART



Letter of Invitation

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL — SOCIAL ••••

Overview

The characters arrive at the Sanderson Museum in time for the gala opening of the Egyptian artifacts touring exhibition. One of the museum's docents, Dara MacKenzie, greets them at the entrance. Ushering them inside, she reveals that she was the one who sent the invitation. If asked why she sent them the invitation, MacKenzie mentions her friendship with one or more of the characters. (If MacKenzie has not been set up as a character's friend prior to the beginning of this story, she can alternatively suggest that she knows more about the characters than they think and that she thought the exhibition might interest them in more ways than one.) Before the characters can press her for details, though, she excuses herself to attend to the other guests.

The characters can help themselves to refreshments and are free to roam the open areas of the museum and socialize with the guests, as well as with the director of the museum, Doctor Giselle Pierpont. This is an opportunity for the characters to roleplay with a variety of characters and to do a little snooping around the museum if they pick up the scent of something strange happening. The chance to explore also familiarizes them with the layout of the museum, which will serve them well in the action scenes to follow.

Most of the guests are nothing more than they appear to be: regular folks attending an exclusive party to kick off the new exhibition. Some of the politicians and patrons have their own small agendas to voice, but the real focus for the characters should be on Pierpont, MacKenzie and the handful of guests who appear to have something going on aside from enjoying the party.





Description

You arrive at the marble and stone Sanderson Museum, a large two-story edifice. The museum is decked out in colorful banners depicting a touring exhibition of Egyptian artifacts. Bright spotlights play across the banners and the stone facing of the museum. Dozens of guests dressed in gowns and suits are either filtering toward the museum's entrance or socializing on the front steps. A casual glance around shows you that most of the local politicians and patrons of the arts are in attendance, as is a smattering of reporters and cameramen. As you reach the main entrance, a young woman dressed in a professional business suit and skirt approaches with a warm smile. Her nametag identifies her as Dara MacKenzie, a museum docent.

Storyteller Goals

The characters are likely to be curious (if not suspicious) as to why exactly they were invited to the event. Feel free to give the players free rein as far as what they want to explore and with whom they want to interact. Pierpont and MacKenzie are in the public eye and aren't hiding themselves, though if questioned closely, they are evasive, which should serve to pique player curiosity. Smart or observant characters might note that some of the guests are on edge or tense. Allow the characters to investigate those feelings as well. Basically, you should set up the museum as a place to explore and present the idea that some of the people at the gala have more going on than what they're showing at surface level.

If you are running this story as part of a chronicle, this is a good scene to seed Storyteller characters that will become prominent in future stories, or even to introduce side scenes before moving to the next main scene in this story. Also, if the cabal gets a tour of the place, let the characters get a chance to see that one of the offices (Pierpont's) is warded, in preparation for "Lockdown." Their Unseen Senses should go off around the ward, and any Mage Sight spell will find it easily (though it will take time and scrutiny to determine who created the spell — see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 278–279).

Character Goals

Check out the open areas of the museum and learn all you can about the touring exhibition, Doctor Pierpont, Dara MacKenzie and the other guests.

Actions

Talking to the Guests

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion or Intimidation

Action: Instant

In order to find out about the exhibition and the various guests, the characters have to mingle and gather what information they can.

Hindrances: Lack of familiarity with museum donors and political maneuvering (-1)

Help: MacKenzie appearing at the right time to make introductions (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Most of the guests find the characters to be boorish and beneath them, and make excuses to not talk to them.

Failure: The character learns nothing unusual.

Success: Each success reveals one fact:

- Many of the items on display in the exhibits have never been on tour before, so the exhibition has scored record crowds at every museum it has visited.
- One of the items in particular, a golden bracelet with inlaid gems, is rumored to have been stolen more than 100 times over its 5,000-year history.
- The exhibition wasn't originally scheduled to visit the Sanderson Museum. Doctor Pierpont reallocated a significant portion of the museum's annual budget to make sure it would come to her museum.

Exceptional Success: The character learns all the facts listed under "Success."

Reading MacKenzie's Mind

Dice Pool: As per spell

Action: Instant

If one of the characters is suspicious enough to want to try to read MacKenzie's mind, try to dissuade the action by using drunken or obnoxious guests as distractions or by having MacKenzie be constantly moving around on one errand or another. If the characters do try, they will have to push past her modest mental shield to use "Telepathy" or another manner of reading her thoughts.



Hindrances: MacKenzie's "Magic Shield" spell (-2), various things distracting the spellcaster (-1 to -5)

Help: Circumstances (and possibly a previous relationship with the cabal or a character) make her trusting of the cabal (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character believes that MacKenzie has nothing to hide. Further, MacKenzie detects the attempted intrusion, which could color her future interactions with the characters.

Failure: The character senses a barrier between his probe and MacKenzie's thoughts. MacKenzie might sense the attempt to read her mind, depending on which spell was used.

Success: The character manages to work through MacKenzie's mental shield. Inside her mind, the character finds organized thoughts and feelings and detects an overwhelming sense of her wanting to do the right thing, whatever the right thing is.

Exceptional Success: As under "Success." The character also learns that MacKenzie was definitely trained by the Adamantine Arrow. He sees images of her reviewing messages from her superiors, asking her to attempt to secure something called the Abedju Cipher.

Reading Pierpont's Mind

Dice Pool: As per spell

Action: Instant

The circumstances and advice are the same as with "Reading MacKenzie's Mind," except that Pierpont doesn't have access to the spell "Magic Shield."

Hindrances: Various things distracting the spellcaster (-1 to -5)

Help: Circumstances make Pierpont somewhat distracted (+1 to +3, depending on whether the characters scheme to make her even more distracted)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character is convinced Pierpont has nothing secret to hide. Further, Pierpont detects the attempted intrusion and will almost certainly become hostile toward the characters.

Failure: The character fails to probe Pierpont's mind. Pierpont might notice the attempt, depending on the spell used.

Success: The character finds Pierpont's head filled with conflicting chaotic thoughts regarding the event, the money she spent to get the exhibition to her museum and whether she really wants to turn over one of the items to her superiors.

Exceptional Success: As under "Success." In addition, the character learns that Pierpont is a powerful and experienced Awakened being determined to secure and destroy one of the artifacts in one of the exhibits as soon as possible.

Detecting Odoya's Subterfuge

Dice Pool: Gnosis + Mind

Action: Instant

While the characters wander around the museum or the other guests, they might rub shoulders with Odoya and possibly detect that he's something other than the wealthy guest he appears to be.

Hindrances: Odoya's "Incognito Presence" spell (-3)

Help: Odoya doesn't expect them to be Awakened (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Odoya's subterfuge remains hidden. Further, he notices the character's unconscious attempt to scan him, effectively revealing the character as Awakened to Odoya.

Failure: The character detects nothing unusual and, in fact, forgets about Odoya once he's out of view.

Success: The character remembers Odoya the next time he sees the man.

Exceptional Success: As under "Success," and the character knows that Odoya has arcane protection.

Consequences

Whether the characters spend time talking to MacKenzie or to Pierpont, or they just keep to themselves during the gala, they will be somewhere within the museum when Odoya's agents knock out the lights and shut down the museum. Move to "Lockdown."



Lockdown

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL ••

SOCIAL ••

Overview

As the gala event winds down, the guests begin to make their way toward the exits when several other guests draw weapons and marshal everyone else toward the main lobby. These gunmen lock all the security gates, shut off the building's main power and secure the guests from escape. While some encourage everyone to remain calm, others head out among the exhibits to search through the artifacts.

Caught in the midst of the takeover, the characters have to decide what to do. Do they want to be heroes and fight the gunmen? Should they sneak away into the depths of the museum (perhaps in the warded office, if they saw it earlier) and try to determine what is going on from a position of relative safety? The characters might be able to enlist the aid of either Pierpont or MacKenzie, or both, depending on how things unfold. If the characters try to free the imprisoned guests right away, they end up embroiled in a fight. There will be time later to effect a rescue depending on what actions the characters take in "The Cipher Deciphered."

Description

Just as you've decided that the gala event has run its course and prepare to leave, the security gates cycle shut and all the lights go out! As the emergency lights kick on, some of the few dozen people remaining at the party begin to panic. Signals on cell phones and pagers are nonexistent, and all the doors and windows appear to be locked. Several guests suddenly pull weapons out from under their jackets and begin yelling and herding the other guests toward the main lobby. Their leader is a tall black man with a beard and a cleanly shaven head. He is clearly Awakened, as his nimbus crackles with energy one might describe as divinely wrought.

Storyteller Goals

This scene establishes Odoya and his team as the primary antagonists of the story. They lock down the museum, secure the remaining guests and begin to work through the exhibits, looking for something specific. Odoya and his team won't resort to lethal force unless provoked, so the characters can potentially sneak away unscathed. If the characters wish to make a fight of it, they're welcome to do so, but you are encouraged to add as many additional members to Odoya's team as necessary to suggest to the players that now is not the time to stand and fight. It should also be established that Odoya is not a pushover. He and his team were ready for the lockdown and have a number of protective spells already cast or prepared, which should serve to keep the characters off balance until they can catch their breath and regroup.

This scene should also act as a way to introduce Pierpont and MacKenzie to the group as something more than what they've been letting on up to now. They're both Awakened, though at very different power levels. Pierpont is reluctant to bring the characters into her confidence, but she will to an extent, given that she definitely does not want the Cipher to fall into Odoya's hands.

You might want to look ahead to "Hot Potato," as there is the opportunity for more skirmishing with Odoya and his squad in that scene. This scene, however, should not degenerate into a long battle. Consider using this one to set the stage, and the later scenes to ramp up the tension and the forces brought to bear. If the characters push to turn this scene into a stand-up fight, have Odoya and his team retreat to secure ground in order to better defend themselves. They did not expect a significant arcane battle to take place, and if the characters expose themselves, Odoya will want to regroup to appropriately prepare for his inevitable counterattack.

Character Goals

You have a choice in this scene: either fight it out with Odoya and his team, or find cover to regroup and figure out what's happening. Given that you probably have the help of both Pierpont and MacKenzie, the latter option probably makes more sense. Yet, it's just as likely that (if you do want to fight Odoya) Pierpont and MacKenzie could come to your aid later.



Actions

Breaking Through Pierpont's Office Ward

Dice Pool: As per spell

Action: Extended

If the characters don't yet have Pierpont's help but want to use her office as a hideout (since it's been arcaneously warded), they can try to break into it.

Hindrances: The protective warding around Pierpont's office (Potency of 6).

Help: None

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Pierpont is alerted to the attempted break-in. Interactions with her later in the story could be strained.

Failure: The character fails to break into the office.

Success: The character disengages the arcane wards. Now he need only bypass the mundane lock to gain access to Pierpont's office (see "Lockpicking," *World of Darkness Rulebook*, pp. 74–75).

Exceptional Success: The character successfully gains access to the office. Even the mundane locks offer no challenge. Furthermore, he is able to reattune the warding locks to one or more characters and re-ward the office against other attempts to break in. Now if anyone (including Pierpont) tries to enter the office, the character will be informed.

Roaming the Museum

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation or Computer

Action: Extended

Hindrances: Odoya's operatives roaming the halls of the museum in search of stray guests

Help: Knowing the layout of the museum (+1 to +5, depending on whether the characters spent some time familiarizing themselves with the layout during "Letter of Invitation," whether anyone thought to grab a map brochure or if any of the characters can hack into the networked help stations located throughout the museum), MacKenzie offering to help get them around the museum (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Certain she knows where she's going, the character makes one wrong turn too many and ends up walking right into the main lobby where the gunmen are stationed, guarding the frightened guests. The templars notice and yell at the character to sit down with the others.

Failure: The character wanders around the extensive exhibits and finds herself completely turned around and lost among the historical baubles and information placards.

Success: The character knows where she's going and gets there with a minimum of distraction.

Exceptional Success: As with "Success." The character also finds an unlocked doorway leading to the private employee hallways, which could make for effective shortcuts around the museum.

Consequences

If the characters lock themselves into Pierpont's office along with Pierpont and/or MacKenzie after the initial skirmish with Odoya and his squad, go to "The Cipher Deciphered." If the characters instead choose to continue the battle through the museum, go to "Hot Potato."



The Cipher Deciphered

MENTAL ...**PHYSICAL —****SOCIAL ...**

Overview

Now that they're locked in Pierpont's office and protected behind its defensive wards, the characters have a chance to regroup, recover, heal (if necessary) and gather information about what Odoya is seeking. If Pierpont didn't join them during "Lockdown," she soon enters her office through a secret passage into the employee hallways and stumbles upon the characters. Likewise, if MacKenzie didn't join them earlier, you can have her knock at the door, asking Pierpont to let her in. Whatever the case, you are encouraged to set it up so that at least Pierpont is with the characters during this scene. Having MacKenzie there as well adds another layer of roleplaying potential.

Pierpont's office contains several bookcases filled with hundreds of books, mostly focusing on history, archaeology and various worldwide religious and magical practices. Some of the titles are very old and esoteric, which might pique the curiosity of some of the characters. Pierpont also has a cutting-edge computer tower under her desk, with nigh-instant Internet access. The computer is also connected to the museum's intranet. A creative and talented computer hacker could make the computer access the museum's security systems.

When Pierpont arrives, she and the characters can have a discussion. If the characters have searched her computer and her office, they can ask her some specific questions. Otherwise, play the scene as appropriate. Pierpont reveals that she was ordered to have the exhibition brought to her museum so that she could secure one of the artifacts, a golden bracelet known as the Abedju Cipher, and deliver it to her superiors in Europe once the exhibition moves to the next museum. She does not reveal her background as a Seer, though a character might try to parse this information from her mind with magic. (If so, refer to the action listed in "[Letter of Invitation](#)" on p. 16-17.)

If the characters are willing to help Pierpont, she provides them with a picture of the artifact and helps them formulate a plan to go after it and the gunmen. She volunteers to remain in the office and act as the cabal's eyes, as she can access the security cameras from her computer.

She can provide the characters with two small security headsets that can be used for communication. If pushed, Pierpont remains adamant about remaining in her office. She is a coward at heart and is unwilling to stand on the front lines. She is, however, willing to do as much as she can to help from within the safe confines of her office.

If MacKenzie is with the group, she offers to go with them out into the museum. She's itching for a fight and is gung-ho to join them, especially if one of the characters or Pierpont mentions that Odoya and his men appear to be Awakened. She can reveal that she knows that Pierpont is Awakened, but she won't tell the characters that she knows that Pierpont is a member of the Hegemonic Ministry. This is a secret that MacKenzie knows, but is not willing to tip her hand either way just yet. The simple fact that she reveals herself as Awakened should pique the curiosity (and suspicion) of the players and of Pierpont, so feel free to emphasize or de-emphasize that according to how you feel the inter-personal relationships should play out in your own version of the story.

Description

You listen at the locked door and hear muffled shouts from the terrorists and, occasionally, running feet slapping against the marble floor outside. As you catch your breath and begin to formulate a plan, one of the many bookcases in the office recedes into the wall and Doctor Pierpont steps into the room. She looks surprised to see you, but covers her shock with a nervous smile.

"Mon Dieu. I didn't expect to have guests at this time of night. But since you're here, you clearly have talents I am not aware of. Would you care to assist me with the current crisis?"

Storyteller Goals

The characters need to figure out what's going on and formulate a plan as to what to do next. It's okay to give the characters free rein here. You could even delay Pierpont's arrival in the scene to give the characters a chance to snoop around in her office and check out her library, her computer system and so on. Pierpont should come across as trustworthy and in need of the cabal's help, but there should be enough questions left unanswered that perhaps the characters suspect there's something else going on and that their trust in Pierpont should be guarded at this point.



If MacKenzie is part of this discussion, you can also reveal that she has some arcane abilities of her own. If MacKenzie and Pierpont are in the scene together, Pierpont is suspicious and concerned to learn that MacKenzie is also Awakened. Nevertheless, she asks MacKenzie for help along with that of the characters. The opportunity is here for the characters and the two women to work together, though there should be enough secrets left unspoken that trusting each other might be difficult to do right away. Playing up the suspicion angle on everyone's part could help bring another level of tension to the story.

Character Goals

Gather what information you can on the gunmen, Pierpont, MacKenzie and the exhibition's contents.

Actions

Hacking into Pierpont's Computer

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Computer

Action: Extended

If one of the characters has high computer skills, she can try to find information on Pierpont, the exhibits and other guests. She might even be able to link the computer to the museum's intranet and access the museum's security cameras and systems.

Hindrances: Extensive password protection (-2)

Help: High-quality equipment (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The computer system crashes and shuts itself down while the character hacks into it. The character loses all accumulated successes and is unable to attempt to hack in again.

Failure: The character is unable to break into the computer system.

Success: The character manages to get through the password protection and can search through the computer files and access the Internet and intranet. Each success reveals one of the following facts:

- Pierpont has an email from an undisclosed sender ordering her to remove a specific golden bracelet from the exhibition and mail it to an address in Switzerland once the exhibition leaves her museum.
- There is a text file containing what looks like a shopping list of arcane items Pierpont would need to complete a destructive ritual.
- MacKenzie's personnel file is available for review as well. Pierpont has added a note to it: "Need private discussion with MacKenzie. She could be Awakened, and I need to know her provenance."

Exceptional Success: The character gets all of the facts under "Success." In addition, she manages to link the computer to the museum's security cameras and can view the terrorists as they guard the guests and search through the museum and the exhibits.

Consequences

Once the characters have gained the information and have talked to Pierpont and MacKenzie, they might try to go after the Cipher themselves. If so, go to "Hot Potato." If the characters decide that directly attacking Odoya and his team is the better idea, go to "Betrayal."



Hot Potato

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL ... SOCIAL •

Overview

The characters find themselves in the middle of a fight for the Cipher, a fight that has them roaming the halls and exhibits of the museum chasing or fleeing Odoya and his team. MacKenzie might also be part of this chase, helping the characters where she can, if the characters feel they can trust her enough to have her help. The Cipher is arranged in an exhibit containing dozens of nearly identical golden bracelets. In addition to fending off Odoya and his troops, the characters will probably spend time sifting through the bracelets, looking for the actual Cipher lost amid the forgeries.

Description

A team of heavily armed men moves carefully into the main exhibit hall. A few of them methodically smash some of the exhibit cases. They look over the contents before setting them back into a bed of glass shards and moving on.

Storyteller Goals

Make this a fast-paced action scene with lots of twists and turns and dramatic fight moments as the battle rages through the museum halls and exhibits. There should be display cases shattering, artifacts strewn everywhere and crunching underfoot, people sliding across the marble floor, and a spirited relay race for the Cipher.

Character Goals

Get the Cipher before Odoya's templars do. Alternatively (or in addition), try to free the guests held hostage. In the meantime, beat up the gunmen and try to thin their numbers.

Actions

Looking for Trouble

If the characters have already completed "The Cipher Deciphered," they know what the Cipher looks like. If they have not, they can try to spy on Odoya and his team (with magic or through an extended Wits + Stealth action) to learn that they are specifically looking for a golden bracelet with inlaid gems. If the characters have Pierpont working with them from within her office, she can help them by virtue of her having access to the museum's security systems. She can operate the security cameras and lockable gates from her office, and using either can prove helpful during the battle with Odoya's team.

In addition, any character might decide that freeing the imprisoned guests is a good thing to do, in order to get them out of the line of arcane combat, or in order to have Sleepers around to increase the risk of Paradox. If the thought comes up (and you could have either MacKenzie or Pierpont suggest it if the characters do not think of it), Pierpont's access to the security systems could help the characters free the guests by remotely deactivating the security gates and alarms. Freeing the guests is a positive action, though the characters might want to stick around to secure the Cipher from Odoya. Clever or ruthless characters might also find that releasing the guests makes for a good distraction, one that could be used against Odoya. Whether the characters want to put innocent lives at risk is a decision they have to make.

Odoya and his team are reluctant to use lethal force unless the characters choose not to hold themselves back. If the characters do let loose, Odoya takes off the gloves and will stop at nothing to secure the Cipher. You might, however, want to build up to the final showdown and save Odoya's lethal counterattack for a later scene, such as "All or Nothing."

Consequences

If the characters have not yet encountered Pierpont in her office, go to "The Cipher Deciphered." If they have already completed that scene and now have Odoya on their bad side, go to "Betrayal." If Odoya manages to get hold of the Cipher, go to "Betrayal" and adjust the story line as needed. If the Cipher ends up in the possession of the characters by the end of this scene, adjust later scenes accordingly.



Betrayal

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL ••

Overview

If Odoya can capture one or more of the characters during the battle for the Cipher, or find a way to communicate with them (possibly via the radio transmitters he and his team use during the heist to keep in touch), he can sow dissension among the characters. Odoya reveals that Pierpont is not what she seems. He tells them she is a member of the Seers of the Throne (the Hegemonic Ministry, in fact), who desires to possess the Cipher for her Ministry.

When confronted, Pierpont neither confirms nor denies the accusation, trying to remain on the characters' good side so that they'll help her against Odoya. If pushed, Pierpont reveals that she would rather see the artifact destroyed than let it fall into the hands of the Ministry of Paternoster or even her own dangerous masters. She tries to push her agenda of trying to do something good, in the hopes of convincing the more noble characters to go along with her for the greater good.

Description

The voice of the squad's leader is deep and firm. "I am Remmy Odoya," he says in a confident voice, "and I need to tell you that your friend, Ms. Pierpont, is not at all what she appears to be. Listen to me, and you can start making some smart choices about what's going to happen here."

Storyteller Goals

This is Odoya's attempt to sow distrust between Pierpont and the characters if it's clear that they're working together against him. Use whatever devious tricks or spells you can come up with to have Odoya spin a web of lies, half-truths and well-timed facts to undermine Pierpont's trustworthiness and lay some level of doubt in the characters' minds. Observant characters might real-

ize they're being manipulated, but use Odoya's subtle persuasions to best ability. He's not really trying that hard to convince them anyway; it's just a distraction tactic to get them to let down their guard long enough for him to disable them and secure the Cipher for himself.

As with other scenes in this story kit, MacKenzie could prove to be a wild card. If she is available to the characters, she can help to counteract Odoya's accusations and perhaps offer the characters an alternative point of view or even some protection against his manipulation. MacKenzie doesn't have as many devious underhanded things to accomplish in this story, though she does have some secrets, and you could play her up as the most trustworthy of the three Storyteller characters. Your characters might simply decide not to trust anyone, but MacKenzie is there as a support if you need her to play that role.

Depending on how you run the balance of this story, this scene could end up being unnecessary. You could also fold elements of this scene into either "Hot Potato" or "All or Nothing" to adjust the narrative flow of the action. MacKenzie could end up being a wild card in this scene too, since Odoya didn't know about her existence until encountering her in the museum with the characters. Her presence could give Odoya more ammunition against Pierpont ("She's also working to double-cross the Adamantine Arrow"), but she could just as easily prove to be a foil to Odoya's attempts at persuasion.

Character Goals

Figure out whom to believe, or decide to trust no one but yourselves.

Actions

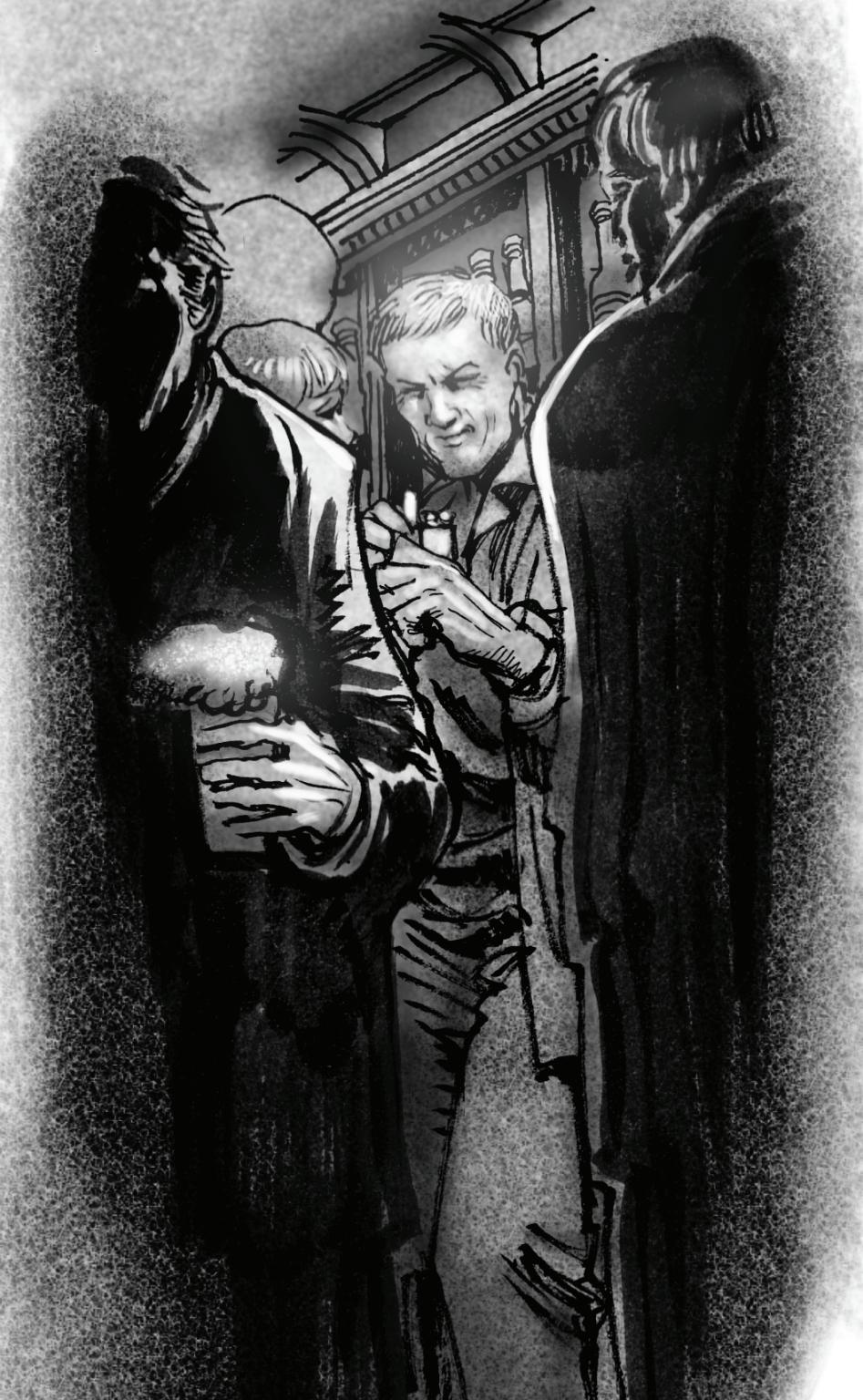
Getting a Read from Odoya

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy + equipment vs. Odoya's Wits + Subterfuge + equipment (dice pool 8)

Action: Contested

Characters might want to get a sense of Odoya's emotional state as he tells them about Pierpont.

Hindrances: Odoya is talking to them remotely (over a phone, through the radio, yelling across the room and so on; -3); Odoya is actually telling the truth (-1)



Help: Odoya isn't trying very hard to hide his emotional state (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character completely believes that Odoya is sincere, suffering a further -1 to detect any further lies from Odoya for the rest of the story.

Failure: The character believes Odoya to be sincere.

Success: Regardless of whether Odoya is telling her the truth or not, the character gets the feeling he's trying to manipulate her.

Exceptional Success: The character knows that Odoya is trying to manipulate her. Further, she also knows that he's telling the truth (at least about Pierpont being a Seer).

Consequences

After talking to or interrogating Pierpont and getting to the heart of the matter, it's likely the characters will want to take matters into their own hands. They'll either grab the Cipher for themselves, if they don't have it already, or destroy it before Pierpont or Odoya can get their hands on it. Move to "All or Nothing."



All or Nothing

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL ... SOCIAL •

Overview

The characters have the Cipher, and this is Odoya's last attempt to secure it for himself, no matter the cost. It is also likely Pierpont's last real chance at convincing the characters to help her keep the Cipher away from him. Pierpont is too much of a coward to take direct action against Odoya herself, so she's really forced to encourage, bribe or otherwise convince the characters to help.

Alternatively, this scene could play out as something of a grand bait and switch, especially if the characters are able to get the Cipher and several of the fake artifacts in the exhibition before anyone else. They could trick Odoya, Pierpont and MacKenzie into thinking that any one of them has the real Cipher.

Description

Odoya whispers to some of his men, who quickly disperse around the museum. He raises his voice and says, "This is your last chance. Give me the Cipher, now. I don't have any more time to waste on this mission, and you are in serious danger of simply being shot and having the Cipher taken from your corpse if you don't do as I say." He walks toward you.

Storyteller Goals

Bring the story to a climax by either running a full-blown, gloves-off battle for the Cipher, or take the opportunity to run something of a con game, with the players attempting to pull a fast one on all of the Storyteller characters. Keep the action moving in either case and bring the various interwoven personalities and web of lies and truths to a tangled resolution.

Character Goals

You have the means at your disposal to keep the Cipher for yourselves and to fool everyone else involved by giving them fake Ciphers. Since most of the bracelets in the museum are virtually identical to

the Cipher save for a magical charge, you might be able to fake a magical resonance on the bracelets and bluff your way past Odoya and, if necessary, Pierpont and MacKenzie.

Alternatively, you can buckle down and make the most of your combat abilities, and try to dig in and win the day by force of arms. Depending on how your relationship is holding out with MacKenzie or Pierpont, you might have allies during the battle, though MacKenzie proves to be the more effective fighter. Pierpont works from behind the scenes and from the safety of her office.

Actions

Fighting Odoya

This scene could be a strong combat scene with a more dangerous angle if Odoya feels compelled to use lethal force to see his plan through to the end. He willingly sacrifices his entire team if it means getting hold of the Cipher. He throws his men into certain death against the characters as needed, which could result in a dangerous, no-holds-barred combat for the characters to deal with, possibly the most dangerous fight of their young lives.

MacKenzie could prove to be the characters' lifesaver in this scene. This moment plays right into her childhood goal of being an action hero for the forces of good, and she won't hesitate to jump into the combat with her gun and nimbus blazing if it means helping the characters and securing the Cipher. As long as the characters have maintained a decent relationship with her over the course of the adventure, it's almost certain that MacKenzie would come to their aid when they most need it. The opportunity is there for you to give MacKenzie the dramatic entrance at just the right time, though it's possible you or your players might want to resist such a *deus ex machina* ending. Finally, it's likely that MacKenzie would be willing to give her life to save the characters, especially if events play out as a fight between good and evil.

To spice things up even further, you could have the local police department come storming in during the fight, perhaps aided by Pierpont's efforts to unlock and disable the museum's security systems. Having the characters deal with both Odoya and his men and the well-meaning but overmatched (and confused) mortal police officers at the same time could add an additional layer of tension and excite-



ment to the story. If the characters were to accidentally wound or kill a police officer, it could dramatically change the outcome of this story and any future story with the same characters (though the same can be said if the characters help rescue one or more police officers from harm). The line between future heroes and future villains in this case would be razor-thin and entirely dependent on the actions of the characters.

Consequences

If the characters retrieve and secure the Cipher and give it to Pierpont, she's grateful for their services and asks them to help her destroy the Cipher. Go to "A Haven and a Mentor." If they decide to give the Cipher to MacKenzie, she asks them to follow her to Pierpont's office so that she can give it to her or possibly help in destroying it. Go to "Packing It Up."

If the characters keep the Cipher for themselves or manage to destroy it on their own, you can go to "Packing It Up," though you'll likely need to adjust the ending of the story to better fit with the characters' decisions.



If the characters decide to give the Cipher to Odoya, go to "Packing It Up" but adjust the finale of the story line to fit. In this situation, the characters might have a major falling out with both Pierpont and MacKenzie, possibly even coming to blows with MacKenzie. You're welcome to encourage the players to take this action, unless you'd rather keep MacKenzie and Pierpont around for future story lines.

If Odoya manages to get his hands on the Cipher and escape the museum, that's the last the characters will see of him for the remainder of this particular story. Go to either "A Haven and a Mentor" or "Packing It Up," as appropriate. The story is now largely at an end, but the characters might be able to salvage something positive from it in the form of a possible

ally in MacKenzie, and a possible mentor in Pierpont.

Perhaps a future story could involve the characters' hunt for Odoya and the Cipher, with the assistance of Pierpont or the companionship of MacKenzie.



THE
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CIPHER

A Haven and a Mentor

MENTAL • PHYSICAL — SOCIAL •••

Overview

Depending on how the characters interacted with Pierpont during the story, they might end up trusting her or at least earning her trust by the end of the story. If the characters give her the Cipher or tell her that they have destroyed it (whether they have or not) and Pierpont decides to trust them, she offers to help the characters as they continue in their development as mages. If circumstances feel right within the story you're crafting, you could even have Pierpont offer the museum's attic offices to the characters to be used as a private sanctum. She also offers to act as a mentor for them, as she has some abilities and could prove useful. The catch, of course, is that she has enemies in the Seers and might not seem entirely trustworthy herself. Further, the characters likely realize that by rejecting her Ministry, Pierpont has made herself a target for future retribution. They'll have to decide if they want to hang around someone who has effectively painted an arcane bull's eye on her own back.

Description

Pierpont looks at you gratefully. "I am... impressed with your abilities and pleased at your show of trust. I'd like the opportunity to repay you, if I can."

Storyteller Goals

This scene is an opportunity for Pierpont to come forward and offer her services as a mentor to the characters, and also to offer the characters a sanctum if they don't yet have one. Pierpont should come across as somewhat trustworthy, given that the characters know her key secrets by now and she's likely done what she can during the course of the story to help the characters. If your chronicle hasn't yet given the characters an opportunity to secure a sanctum, this is the perfect opportunity. If you need the characters to accept Pierpont's offer of a sanctum to fit in with a future chronicle goal, play up her trustworthiness accordingly. If taking her offer of a sanctum isn't as important to the characters or to your planned direction for the chronicle, consider leaving her trustworthiness more vague or uncertain. Pierpont could be used as an uncertain ally in future stories, and this scene can help set up the characters' relationship with her.

Character Goals

If you trust Pierpont, consider accepting her offer of a sanctum and her offer to mentor you. Otherwise, fall in with MacKenzie or push to get the Cipher for yourselves.

Consequences

Depending on the relationship the characters have with Pierpont, this scene can serve as the epilogue to the story. If the characters want to have some final words with MacKenzie, or want to help Pierpont destroy the Cipher, conclude the story by going to "Packing It Up."



A HAVEN AND A MENTOR



Packing it Up

MENTAL ...

PHYSICAL •

SOCIAL ...

Overview

This scene brings the adventure to an end. The characters have either secured or given away the Cipher and are left alone, at least for now. They have potential connections with Pierpont and MacKenzie to consider, though it's possible that neither can be fully trusted. Perhaps this was a one-time situation, or perhaps this is a sign of how things to come play out, with the characters unable to trust anyone but themselves. The path of the Awakened is a long and dangerous one, with no shortage of trust issues to deal with on all sides.

If Pierpont is given the Cipher, she is determined to destroy it, but MacKenzie attempts to argue that the Cipher should remain intact and in the museum's possession. Pierpont is strong willed enough to want to see the destruction carried out to the end, though the characters have a chance to try to change her mind. If asked how to bring about its destruction, she mentions a ritual that she's unearthed that allows someone to disrupt the connections that the Cipher has to the Supernal, essentially "burning out" the magic woven into the bracelet. Whether this solution is a permanent or merely a temporary one is up to you. Mages only barely understand Atlantean artifacts, so even a permanent solution might not be enough.

If the Cipher fell into Odoya's hands and he made his escape during "All or Nothing," the Cipher is lost to the characters, at least for now. The story ends on a bittersweet note, which could be mitigated by Pierpont's offer of mentorship and a sanctum in the museum if the characters want one, or by MacKenzie's offer of connection to the Adamantine Arrow.

Description

The golden bracelet feels slightly warm as you look at it. Your palm itches as you hold it, and you can sense voices just outside the range of your hearing, faint snatches of conversation that almost make sense if you could just hear a little more of them.

Pierpont looks at you. "This thing needs to be destroyed, or all of this will just happen again."

Storyteller Goals

This scene wraps up the story. The fate of the Cipher is decided in this scene (if it hasn't already been lost to Odoya). Now is the time to bring all the disparate threads and assorted lies and truths together into a satisfactory conclusion.

Character Goals

If you choose to keep the Cipher for yourselves, you have to lie your way past Pierpont and MacKenzie and get out of the museum. If you choose to hand it over to MacKenzie, MacKenzie gives it to Pierpont. If you give the Cipher to Pierpont directly, she asks for help in destroying it. Alternatively, you can (with MacKenzie's help) try to convince Pierpont to keep it intact and store it in the museum. Doing so will be difficult, though, as Pierpont has long desired to work against the Hegemonic Ministry and sees the destruction of the Cipher as a good means to damage the Ministry. Barring that, you could even try to convince both Pierpont and MacKenzie to allow your cabal to maintain possession of the Cipher, though doing so would require some fast thinking and clever roleplaying.

Actions

Destroying the Cipher

Dice Pool: Gnosis + Occult

Action: Extended (10 successes). This action is subject to the teamwork rules, but only for characters with a Gnosis trait.

Mages can attempt to pour raw Supernal energy into the artifact in order to overload it and burn out any magical abilities it might have — at least for a time.

Hindrances: The actor has not scrutinized the Cipher's resonance at all (-2)

Help: The actor has carefully scrutinized the Cipher's resonance in order to find weak spots (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The artifact causes a backlash of Supernal energy. Every mage in the action takes one point of lethal damage. All accumulated successes are lost.

Failure: No successes are gained toward destroying the artifact.



Success: Successes are added toward the goal of 10 successes. Once 10 successes are reached, a soft screaming is heard from the Cipher, and a bright light erupts that blinds everyone in the room (as well as anyone in Twilight and the Shadow). Once the light dies down, the Cipher appears to be a normal, mundane antique to all magical spells and senses.

Exceptional Success: Successes add to the goal. There is no additional benefit for rolling an exceptional success.

Changing Pierpont's Mind

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion

Action: Instant

Characters can attempt to convince Pierpont not to destroy such a priceless artifact.

Hindrances: Pierpont's history with the Seers and her overwhelming desire to see this "mission" to the end (-2)

Help: MacKenzie offers her two cents' worth (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Pierpont not only ignores the character's advice, but also fires MacKenzie and asks the characters in no uncertain terms to leave the museum and not come back. It can be assumed that she finds some way to destroy the Cipher on her own.

Failure: Pierpont considers the character's argument, but declines to agree. She will destroy the Cipher with or without help.

Success: Pierpont agrees to keep the Cipher intact and promises to keep it secure in her office at the museum.

Exceptional Success: Pierpont agrees that the Cipher should not be destroyed and goes along with whatever the characters think is best. Likely options include storing the Cipher in a safe place at the museum or letting the characters take ownership of it.

Consequences

If Odoya ends up with the Cipher, he escapes with it and any remaining members of his team (whom he promptly eliminates off-screen). This scenario could set up Odoya to return as an antagonist in a future story. This story could be chalked up as a loss for the characters, though Pierpont's offer of mentorship and her possible

offering of the museum as a sanctum for the cabal might mitigate the pain of defeat. Having a connection to MacKenzie (and through her, a connection to the Adamantine Arrow) could also be a reward in spite of losing the Cipher.

If MacKenzie ended up with the Cipher, she considers giving it to Pierpont out of misguided loyalty and with the hopes that the good doctor will not destroy it, but rather secure it for "the forces of good." If Pierpont gets her hands on the Cipher, however, she remains true to her word and attempts to destroy the item, possibly asking the characters for assistance to do so. If she tried to do that with MacKenzie present, you could add an additional scene to the story involving a battle between MacKenzie and Pierpont.

Aftermath

This story can end in many ways. The characters could secure the Cipher for themselves and keep it away from everyone else trying to obtain it, thus placing themselves on the watch list of several factions, including the Adamantine Arrow and the Ministry of Paternoster, in the process. They might even end up being personal targets of Odoya and his team, which could be a recurring issue for the cabal in stories to come.

Or the characters could hand over the Cipher to Pierpont and possibly help her destroy it once and for all. In so doing, they could secure a sanctum or Hallow from her within the museum. Pierpont could become a useful ally to the characters in future stories, though her trustworthiness and loyalty might remain a question for some time to come. Further, her betrayal to the Seers will eventually be reported, which could result in some dangerous times for those close to her once her former Ministry decides to come looking for revenge on her and any of her allies.

Further, the characters will be known to MacKenzie and, by connection, to her superiors in the Adamantine Order. MacKenzie will likely retain her job at the museum to continue to keep an eye on Pierpont for the Adamantine Arrow. If the characters maintain a connection or friendship with MacKenzie, she might be able to be called upon as an ally in time of need in future stories. Depending on how well the characters handled the fights with Odoya and his team, it's possible MacKenzie could attempt to recruit some or all of the cabal for the Adamantine Arrow.

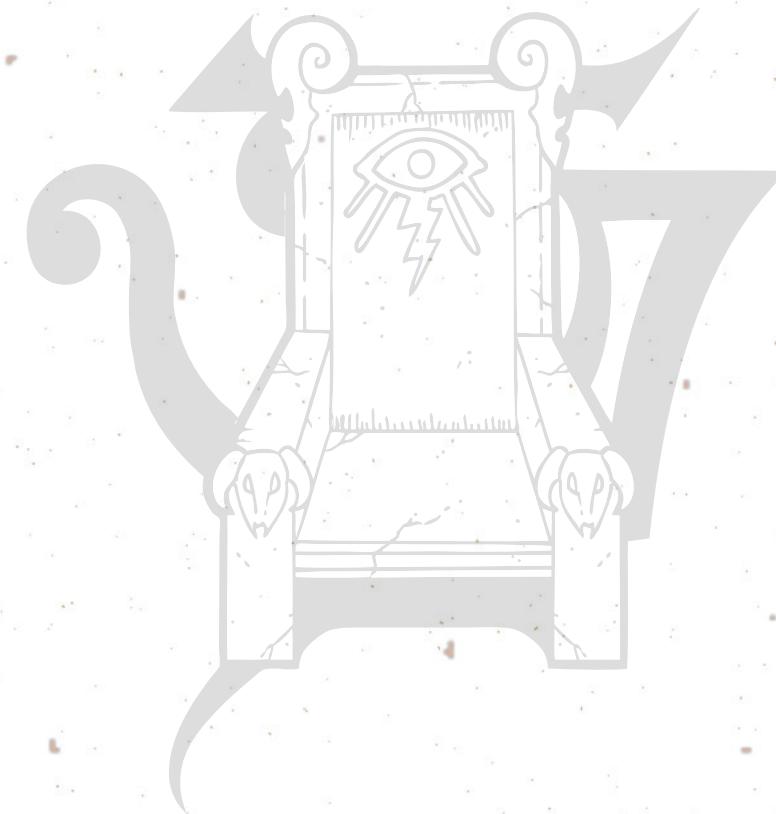


It's even possible that the characters decide to side with Odoya and thumb their noses at Pierpont or MacKenzie, or both. Turning the Cipher over to Odoya could earn his gratitude, especially if owning it allows him to secure more power within the Ministry of Paternoster. If that were to happen, the characters could be invited to join the Ministry and operate as templars against other mages of the Pentacle or other factions within and without the Seers of the Throne. It's not recommended you do this unless you're sure you'd like your characters and ongoing chronicle to explore the idea that the characters are working against the Pentacle mages in service to the Seers of the Throne.

Experience

Experience points are handed out after each chapter according to the suggestions in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 216–217. Depending on the actions of the characters, there are a few additional points that can be awarded after the story is completed:

- **The Guests:** If the characters manage to free the guests and help them escape from the museum, they each get one experience point.
- **The Seers of the Throne:** If the characters talk to Pierpont or otherwise learn about the existence of the Seers of the Throne and about the internal power struggles within the Seers, they each earn an experience point.
- **The Abedju Cipher:** If the characters destroy the Cipher or secure it as their own, they each get one experience point.



SCENE: LETTER OF INVITATION

15

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL ••••

HINDRANCES

Lack of familiarity with museum donors and political maneuvering

MacKenzie's "Magic Shield" spell

Odoya's "Incognito Presence" spell

Distractions abound

HELP

MacKenzie appearing at the right time to make introductions

Circumstances (and possibly a previous relationship with the cabal or a character) make MacKenzie trusting of the cabal

Circumstances make Pierpont somewhat distracted

Odoya doesn't expect them to be Awakened

OTHER

SCENE: LOCKDOWN

18

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL ••

SOCIAL ••

HINDRANCES

The protective warding around Pierpont's office

Odoya's operatives roaming the halls of the museum in search of stray guests

HELP

Knowing the layout of the museum

MacKenzie's willingness to help out

OTHER

STs

Get the players interested in the events at the museum

PCs

Gather information

STs

Establish Odoya as the antagonist.
Reveal Pierpont and MacKenzie as possible allies

PCs

Escape from the templars' attempts to corral the guests

SCENE: THE CIPHER DECODED

20

MENTAL •••

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

Extensive password protection

HELP

High-quality equipment

OTHER

SCENE: HOT POTATO

22

MENTAL •••

PHYSICAL •••

SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

None

HELP

None

OTHER

STs

Give the characters a chance to gather more information and talk to Pierpont

PCs

Gather more information on Pierpont, the exhibition and the terrorists

STs

Give the characters an action-packed scene

PCs

Get the Cipher before the templars do and, if needed, kick their asses

SCENE: BETRAYAL

23

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL ••

SOCIAL ••

HINDRANCES

Odoya is talking to them remotely

Odoya is telling the truth

HELP

Odoya is not trying to hide his emotional state

OTHER

SCENE: ALL OR NOTHING

25

MENTAL •••

PHYSICAL •••

SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

None

None

OTHER

STs

Attempt to sow distrust between Pierpont and the characters

PCs

Figure out whom, if anyone, to trust

SCENE: A HAVEN AND A MENTOR

27

MENTAL •

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

None

HELP

None

OTHER

SCENE: PACKING IT UP

28

MENTAL •••

PHYSICAL •

SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

The actor has not scrutinized the Cipher's resonance at all

Pierpont's history with the Seers and her overwhelming desire to see this "mission" to the end

The actor has carefully scrutinized the Cipher's resonance in order to find weak spots

MacKenzie offers her two cents' worth

OTHER

STs

Offer Pierpont as a mentor and the museum as a sanctum

PCs

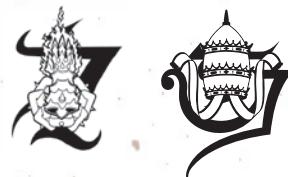
Decide whether to trust Pierpont enough to accept her as a mentor

STs

Bring the story to a conclusion

PCs

Determine the fate of the Cipher



NAME: Remmy Odoya *VIRTUE:* Faith
CONCEPT: Zealous Warrior *VICE:* Greed

PATH: Mastigos
ORDER: Ministry of Paternoster
CABAL:

INTELLIGENCE	●●●○○	STRENGTH	●●●○○	PRESENCE	●●○○○
WITS	●●●○○	DEXTERITY	●●●○○	MANIPULATION	●●●○○
RESOLVE	●●●○○	SCAVENGER	●●●○○	COMPOSURE	●●●○○

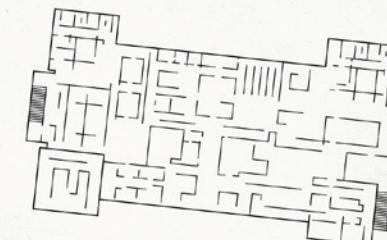
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..... ○○○○○



SANDERSON MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

MUSEUM MAP

2ND FLOOR



1ST FLOOR

