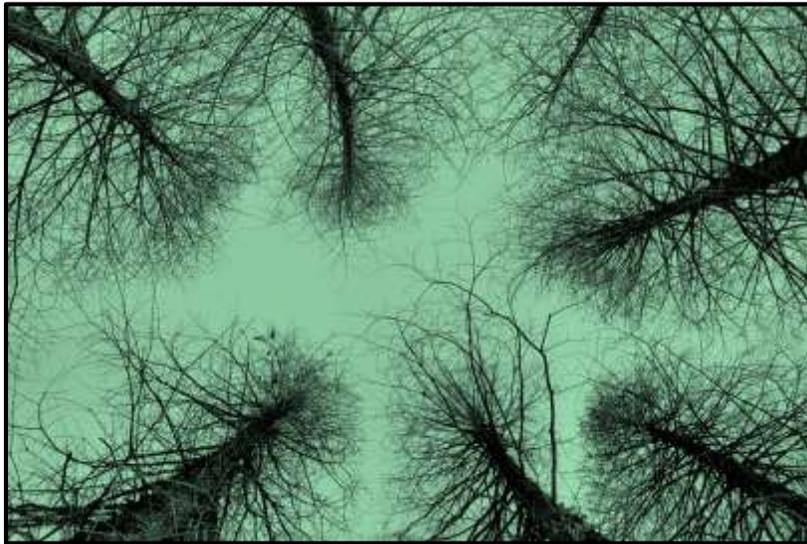


THE LAUNDRY WORLD

KNIGHT AZURE

A SCENARIO FOR THE LAUNDRY WORLD RPG

BY OTSO HANNULA



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PREFACE

The Laundry Files is a wonderful series of novels and short stories by author Charles Stross. In it, the agents of Her Majesty's Occult Secret Service, a.k.a. the Laundry, fight the good fight against inevitable odds in a world doomed to fall, but not just yet. It is a hilarious but deceptively deep combination of mind-bending Lovecraftian horror and mind-numbing bureaucratic office humour. With a stiff upper lip and a spell-blazing smartphone in hand, Bob Howard and his colleagues face the unimaginable, just hoping to get back to their modest civil servant homes at the end of the day.

Both The Laundry World rules system and this scenario have been written with the idea that at least the MC is familiar with the setting in order to explain things like geases, computational magic, occult politics and so on. Adhering to the design philosophy of Apocalypse World, everything in The Laundry World rules system works just like in the books unless there's a specific move that details how things work in the game. A good example is the NecronomiPhone, which has an extensive move description that also works as a reference for all sorts of computational daemonology one might want to do in the field, while the warrant cards that each character possesses have no rules – you'll just have to figure it out.

This scenario was conceived for introducing The Laundry World to Ropecon 2014 with the theme "Power". The Laundry setting is great for guessing the "real" mythos-related motives behind all kinds of contemporary phenomenon and politics, and I wanted to highlight the role of power in horror. A quick internet search into what people are terrified right now got me interested in surveillance technology, and how one might that unnerving feeling into full-fledged Lovecraftian horror. The end result, well... You'll just have to read on.

Happy gaming!

Otso Hannula

5th March 2015

WARNING:

**READING THIS DOCUMENT AFTER THIS PAGE WILL SPOIL THE
SCENARIO FOR POTENTIAL PLAYERS**

KNIGHT AZURE MEMO

TO:	Board of Directors, Interdepartmental Liaison Group
CC:	Arcana Analysis
FROM:	Internal Security
DATE:	18 April 2010
ADDITIONAL KEYWORDS:	N/A

CLIFFNOTES

The Laundry agents are sent to Bath University to evaluate and apprehend a computer science student who has been identified as a potential threat by the GCHQ. The mission is a key joint operation between the usually rival organizations. Once on site, the agents feel like they are being watched by a group or an entity that knows their very darkest secrets...

In reality, the student has been manipulated by his thesis instructor, a member of an ancient forest cult, to create a new method of summoning "wood spirits" in the flesh. The instructor also two cult member groundskeepers on the campus to kill the student off and steal the laptop once the instructor notices that the agents are looking for him. The sense of being watched turns out not to have been the doing of the cult, but a level 4 daemonic entity given to GCHQ by the Laundry as a method of enhanced remote surveillance.

OPTIONAL: DIRTY SECRETS

This scenario was originally designed to be run with hidden information on the player's part. Each player was given at random one personal secret from <http://www.confessions.net/>, printed on a piece of paper. This is supposed to be a very personal thing that the character is unwilling to disclose in most circumstances. During the game the GM can then drop hints to these secrets to invoke a sense of horror for the player about their loss of privacy and the feeling of a malevolent presence watching them. While the scenario hasn't been tested without this mechanic, the author is confident a similar mechanic can be created if one is unwilling to prepare the secrets beforehand.

INTRODUCTION

"By the abjuration of Dee and in the name of Claude Dansey I hereby exercise subsection D paragraph sixteen clause twelve and bind you to service from now to forevermore."

You had a life of your own, once. Might have even been recently. You work for the British government, and have for a few years. That's what your family and friends know.

And it's not entirely false. The secret organization you work for is called the Laundry because the original Q department of the wartime SOE was based above a Chinese laundry in Soho in the 1940's. The Laundry was originally tasked with occult warfare against the Ahnenerbe-SS, the esoteric division of the Nazi regime that organized the even more unsavory parts of the Third Reich left off from history books.

While ritual magic has been around for a very, very long time, (names, blood and sacrifice carry a lot of power) it is messy, unpredictable and will eventually lead to madness and death as the spillover from your summonings eat your brain away. The creation of the Laundry (and it has had a great many official names since then) coincided with Alan Turing discovering mathematical proof that certain computations can invoke creature from dimensions beyond our own to do... Magic, at the lack of a better word. This formed the field of Applied Computational Demonology, which is behind all sorts of weird things, up to and including the end of the world.

And let this be absolutely clear: the End of Days is coming. Not a test, not a joke. The world will end and you will probably be around to see it. As computers have taken over the world and we have more and more people to living and thinking, our world has been calling up a lot of attention to ourselves. The walls of reality are running thin along the edges, and while CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN has been only theorized thus far, it isn't far away. No one knows what will happen then, other than it is only years away, at most. Your job is to protect the public from both reality excursions and the knowledge of such phenomenon, for a widespread belief in extradimensional entities will only hasten the end of the world...

Hand over the character sheets and let the players create their characters. Once character creation is ready, read the following piece aloud:

New Annex is a lump of mid-seventies concrete brutalism squatting over closed discount stores South of River Thames. The building is supposed to be the temporary space for the Laundry while the downtown head office is being rebuilt, but the public-private contract has stretched from months to years with no end in sight. But since no one thought anyone would be working here or more than six months, the place is really low-comfort, low-convenience. Your office space is in the middle of the building, adrift in the midst of a haphazard collection of desks and whole fleets of discarded office chairs basking in the fluorescent limelight.

Let the players introduce their characters and what their characters have done at work today between 8 and 10 am. Remember that the Manager is responsible for introducing the department, and is automatically to be blamed for all deficiencies in the characters' lives.

As the morning stretches on, a calendar invite simultaneously jumps up on each of the character's monitors. The subject is "BRIEFING" and timing "RIGHT NOW" in bolded red. The Manager should take responsibility for getting everyone to the briefing and be quick about it.

*The briefing is given by **Alan Frost**, a salt and pepper moustachioed line foreman from Internal Security that happens to share the office with you. To start the briefing, Alan take out his warrant card and informs everyone present that they have been cleared for code word KNIGHT AZURE, and that all material and subsequent activity is secret with that code word. In practice the characters are physically unable to share classified information with non-cleared individuals because of the geas binding them to the Laundry.*

GCHQ, the UK government's signal intelligence and mass surveillance unit, has supplied the Laundry with SIGINT information about a potential reality excursion in Bath, Somerset (150 km from London, 20 km from Bristol). Mission statement is as follows:

- GCHQ has profiled a computer science student, **Noel Craine**, to be a high-risk target for inadvertent reality excursion because of his reserch.
- Your assignment is to do a low-key investigation at-site to identify how real of a danger his reserarch poses to the general public.
- Cover story is that team is doing educational peer-review from London College of Communication. Appropriate names have backstories from LCC that can be verified by the university.
- You liaison for the visit is the mother-like **Rosalie Carter**, head of public relations and the carry-all for the School of Science (which includes computer science and mathematics, your areas of interest)
- A Laundry-affiliated SAS fire team is on standby in Bristol that can be transported, or in the case of immediate escalation, airlifted, on-site. Escalation of the mission is highly detrimental to the relations with GCHQ and should be reserved for CODE RED (enemy action in friendly territory).
- Alan Frost will act as the mission operator in London. Off the record he hints that the collaboration with GCHQ will put on additional scrutiny on the mission.
- The team is to conduct an independent investigation and be in contact via phone only if the mission parameters have significantly changed.

ALAN FROST
Senior Officer, Internal Security
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salt and pepper moustache• Acts as the operator in this scenario• Fatherly with an irritation to junior characters• Shares the open office space with the characters• Always happy to talk about work, but not his

If you did not have a break after character creation, this is a good time to suggest one

BATH, SOMERSET

Once the mission has been briefed and they exit the briefing room, **The Manager's** player should be notified that due to another team's spending earlier this quarter, there is no budget for travelling in the mission. **Possible solutions:** Loaning a relative's car, pitching in for coach tickets, calling in favours, etc...

Once the players have figured a way to get to Bath, introduce the town and hand over the campus map.

Bath is famous for its Roman... Baths (puns inevitable). The settlement that Bath is built on is ancient, like the City of London "from time immemorial" ancient. The city itself was built by the Romans in the first century as a resort because of the springs there, and the city has been rebuilt over and over ever since with an emphasis on the esoteric.

The springs under Bath were, according to legend, capable of healing the leprous prince that founded the settlement there in 500 BC, so there's plenty to go in terms ley-lines and druidic practices. In the 1700's the Georgian limestone center was built with the idea of tapping into the thaumic force present in the soil. Since Bath is a natural hotspot for thaumic activity, it is usually monitored from the Laundry operations in Bristol, but the situation with the GCHQ has put enough pressure onto the Mahogany Row (i.e. the management) to send people over from New Annex.

The players are free to approach the area in whatever manner they wish, but the cover story would indicate they start at the main entrance info desk. See section "Potential areas on interest on the campus" for touring the players and "Parallel events" for what's happening while the players nose around.

PARALLEL EVENTS

The campus feels small and exposed, even in the midst of the ten-foot hedge walls, and even inside the buildings. The characters feel aversive to security cameras and power outlets. If alone, the surroundings of characters feel like expanding, leaving the character defenceless.

If the characters fail to perform to expectations (for whatever reason), they will get a call from "Internal Security". An unidentified voice will reprimand the character for their misgivings and reveal that they have information the character has not undisclosed (such as the secret handouts if you gave them at the beginning of the game).

If contacted, Alan Frost will try to determine if there is any other occult activity beyond the presence, and appears unconcerned about its effects. Instead, he will advise the agents to focus on Noel and factors directly linked to his disappearance.

Try to make the players a bit paranoid and go in for a bit of personal horror. There should not be some person watching them, but instead they are under the lid of something unimaginably vast...

If the agents let the university staff on that they are looking for Noel, and especially if they take interest in Noel's research, a surprisingly agile elderly groundskeeper in Bath Golf Club overalls (**Wystan**) makes an attempt on an agent's life in the Northern part of the campus. The groundskeeper is armed with a rake-spear (2-harm, reach) and a sacrificial bronze sickle (2-harm, close). If possible, he will drag a bleeding agent to be sacrificed in the forest later in the game.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF INTEREST ON THE CAMPUS

<p>Department of Computer Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noel's instructor, professor John Kilfedder describes Noel as a brilliant student, but doesn't describe the research area but in the vaguest terms. If explicitly questioned, he admits hinting about the area of research, but finds a reason so scurry off is pressed. Noel's working partner or anyone else for that matter hasn't seen Noel for a day or two, but this wouldn't be the first time he took a couple of days off to whack away at his laptop in his flat. Noel made some early commits to the department server a month ago, and a sufficiently proficient person can verify that he was working on a decision-tree shortcut using set theory for artificial intelligence research. 	<p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noel shares a two-bedroom flat on the other side of the campus. His flatmate Owen reports that some staff members have come around asking for Noel in the past two weeks, and he last saw fresh laundry yesterday. Breaking into Noel's room, a home server will reveal a more recent commit that the department from a week ago. The fresh code commit hints at a novel approach to cracking the Turing-Dee theorem, which is Bad News on a Bath-now-located-in-Yith level. An expert demonologist can identify work on mass transfer gates.
<p>Records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noel is a master's student, working towards a degree in computer science. Noel has been awarded multiple stipends by the department for academic excellence, and was very active in the student council until he started his work on the thesis project. 	<p>Campus security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting into the campus security will need some serious escalation: no benchmarking committee will get their hands on tapes or video live feed, and asking will get the agents in trouble (think domestic terrorism). On the tapes, Noel can be seen wandering around the campus in the dead of night, disoriented and stiff Live feed will find Noel in the library (if alive) or near the pond (if dead)

<p>ROSALIE CARTER</p>	<p>JOHN KILFEDDER</p>	<p>OWEN MACLAREN</p>
<p>Head of Public Relations, Bath University School of Science</p>	<p>Professor of Computational Networks Department of Computer Science</p>	<p>Noel's roommate Master's Student in Comp.Sci</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overbearingly social Insists on having constant coffee breaks to lecture about the university Can't stop using the word "innovation" Is oblivious to anything the Comp.Sci department does and why would anyone be interested in it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White unkempt beard, an ill-fitting grey suit Admires Noel's work but laments that "they don't come as bright as they used to" Tries to make contact with the senior agents such as the Expert, despises the Geek as an upstart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhausted after the hackathon's afterparty last night (or actually morning) Really jumpy around police-type characters Thinks Noel spends way too much time of his thesis and not playing Halo

SHOWDOWN

Ultimately, Noel is either found dead missing his laptop or geased and taken to the woods. Either way, the showdown will take place with professor Kilfedder and his two groundskeeper henchmen fleeing to the woods with Noel's laptop. Once in the forest they will very quickly reach the forest clearing in which they have set up a summoning circle.

If aerial surveillance has been called in (for example if the agents have decided that Noel should be reported as a missing person) it will reveal that the professor and the groundskeepers have taken Noel and his research (and any captured agents) to the nearby Bathampton Wood in the Golf Club grounds. Otherwise a chance encounter or eye witness can tip the agents off that they are fleeing either with Noel or from Noel's murder scene.

If you want Noel to be found dead on scene by the agents, he can have run across the second groundskeeper (**Swidhun**) who is trying to enter Noel's apartment while coming back from the library with his laptop.

If an agent has been captured professor Kilfedder will prove to be an apt geaser. Once in a safe forest clearing will ask everything from the agent under a truth-telling geas before torturing the agent to death by asking Laundry-related questions that the Laundry geas will stop him from answering.

The stakes should be high at this point and any remaining groundskeepers can try and ambush the agents between the campus and the clearing. If possible, have Kilfedder set up the summoning circle before the agents come around. The agents aren't faced with direct violence, but instead the build-up should aim for building up a sense of urgency and powerlessness before the cathartic (or pyrrhic) victory.

The final confrontation will start with Noel's laptop in a summoning circle. The thaumic resonance is enough to trigger the outpost in Bristol even if the characters don't pick on it. Note that the entity that has been watching the agents for the whole time does not have presence in the woods where there are no power lines or surveillance cameras.

You approach a forest clearing in the twilight, weary of the deep shadows cast by the ancient grove. In the clearing you can see Noel's laptop's glow and the faint outline of a man in a suit. You quickly identify that they are in an old school summoning circle complete with candles, animal skulls and complex woodcarvings.

Naflilyaa ngsl'ha ch' y-nglui stell'bsna cshugg uln, y-lloig uln h'nglui grah'n kn'a ftaghu, vulgtm nashogg ngilyaa naflhafh'drn uln gnaiih. *The words coming from Kilfedder's mouth have stopped being words at all, but instead sound like they are coming from the forest, the ground, and the flickering bale lights dancing in the trees. The sounds are deeper than anything a human body can produce, the whistles not heard but merely known. And then the portal answers. The wood is filled with a voice speaking in the whisper of galaxies cast in the void, the gurgle of primordial oceans, the crackle of a cooling planet, and the thunder of creation. They have a gate to our world, and they have taken notice.*

While Kilfedder can use geases and a sacrificial sickle, he should be quite vulnerable to lethal force such as firearms. The destruction of Noel's laptop will stop the summoning, although with heavy thaumic spillover.

DEBRIEFING

In the debriefing, the agents face the geases of the Auditors. They have a chance to address their fears and concerns, but will face uncomfortable questions they have to speak truthfully about. Alan Frost will ask them about the feelings of surveillance and nod on each answer. If pressed, he will tell that the presence was not enemy action but a new OCCINTEL methods they were testing in collaboration with GCHQ. Unless it caused deaths or cases of clinical insanity, it is approved for wider use under the codeword MONARCH JERICO LECTERN.

For [names of agents], this panel will convene at a later date for an additional inquiry regarding Operational Oversight. As for the rest of you, I warmly advise you to continue your daily life without thinking about the existence of these kinds of technologies.

THE END