

# The Wernicke Boxes

A modern day scenario for Call of Cthulhu



ISOLATION GAMES



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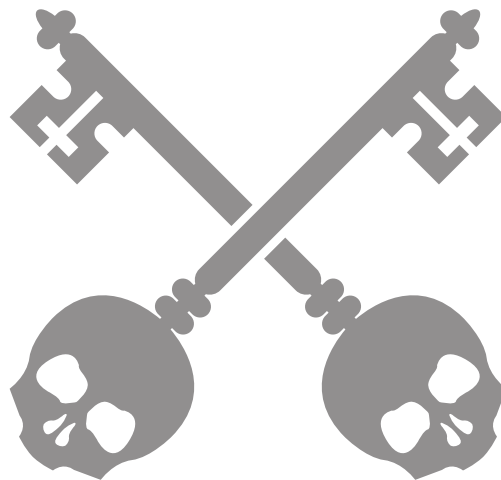
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Keeper's Information</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Involving the Investigators</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>The Wernicke Boxes</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Opening a Box.....	4
Strange Occurrences .....	5
The Incantation of Zaal-Ngah .....	5
The Guardian of Angles .....	6
<b>The Society of the Key</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>How it all plays out</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Introduction: Following a Funeral .....	6
Rutherford Residence.....	6
Researching the Wernicke Boxes .....	8
Doctor Jonathan Walsh.....	8
Being Watched in London .....	9
Contacting Valentina di Sousa .....	9
Isabella Poulan.....	10
La Chambre de Murat.....	11
Adella Moreau.....	12
Lara Breiner .....	12
Gilberto Alesci.....	13
Strange and Terrible Endings.....	13
Conclusions, One Way or Another .....	16
<b>Rewards and Repercussions</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>NPC</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Handouts</b> .....	<b>20</b>



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## INTRODUCTION

In 1935 a relatively unknown German artist named Elias Wernicke produced six exquisitely carved wooden puzzle boxes that, unlike the rest of his work, became highly sort after. Myths and rumours surround the boxes; claiming they are haunted; claiming they contain a formula for immortality; claiming that opening them allows you to see the moment of your own death.

When an old friend apparently commits suicide, the Investigators soon become embroiled in the mystery of the Wernicke Boxes, their strange provenance, and the dark curse that follows them.

*The Wernicke Boxes* is a modern day scenario for Call of Cthulhu that takes the Investigators across Europe in a quest to find the sinister boxes and unravel their mystery. It is inspired by the films *The Ninth Gate* and *Hellraiser*, as well as Lovecraft's own *The Haunter of the Dark*.

This scenario works with both novice and experienced Investigators. It can be run as a followup to the previous Isolation Games scenario *Dark Offerings*, although there is no requirement for it to be.

## KEEPER'S INFORMATION

Gerald Rutherford is an old associate of the Investigators. An antiquarian with a taste in the paranormal, Rutherford specialises in items with weird rumours and obscure legends surrounding them; the stranger the better. A month before the beginning of the scenario, at an auction in Paris, Rutherford managed to obtain one of the legendary Wernicke Boxes.

A series of Art Deco puzzle boxes manufactured in the 1930s, the Wernicke Boxes were surrounded by strange legends and rumoured to contain a great treasure, were you only able to solve the puzzle to open them.

Upon returning to England, Rutherford set about trying to open the box, mostly out of sheer curiosity. When he succeeded he realised that the rumours about the contents of the box were terribly wrong. Unknown to all but a few, the truth behind the legends of the boxes is that they are all linked to Yog-Sothoth, and when opened they inflict terrifying visions that are sent by the All-In-One itself. Worse still, opening any of the boxes is a lure to an otherworldly predator that hunts down those foolish enough to meddle with them. When Rutherford opened his box this creature began to stalk him.

Rutherford set about searching for a way to escape the attention of the creature. However, while doing so he inadvertently left his box lying open and his wife, Cynthia, curious as to what he was up to, looked into the box; drawing the creature's attention to herself as well.

Unfortunately for Rutherford the creature caught him a few days later, tearing out his throat as he worked in his study. Cynthia refuses to believe the police's conclusion that Gerald killed himself. Moreover she has begun to see ominous things around the house and now believes that maybe Gerald's strange behaviour before his death wasn't so strange, after all.

To complicate matters, a group of occultists are also interested in obtaining the boxes. Calling themselves the *Society of the Key*, the group revere Yog-Sothoth and have recently become aware of the Wernicke Boxes and their connection to the All-In-One. They have decided they must possess the boxes, by any means.

# INVOLVING

## THE INVESTIGATORS

The scenario begins, and the Investigators become involved after they attend the funeral of their associate Gerald Rutherford. Following the funeral they are approached by Gerald's wife, Cynthia, who asks for their help.

Investigators should either have links to Gerald Rutherford (a long-time friend, relative, previous colleague, etc) or his wife, Cynthia. Appropriate occupations include antiquarians, private investigators, doctors, and parapsychologists; Cynthia firmly believes something occult resulted in her husband's death: the people she turns to for help will likely have some experience in that area.

This scenario has a large investigative and social aspect, so skills that might be useful include Charm, Fast Talk, Persuade, Library Use, Computer Use and Spot Hidden. The Occult skill will also be useful. This scenario can include a small element of combat, so the various fighting skills may also be of use, although not essential.

## THE WERNICKE BOXES

The Wernicke Boxes are a set of six wooden puzzle boxes made in 1935 by German artist Elias Wernicke. Although primarily a painter, Wernicke was known to produce small sculptures and wooden curios from time to time. He was known throughout his career for his strange, macabre paintings showing shadowy vistas and cyclopean entities. Wernicke had only a small following as a painter, however the boxes with their elaborate Art Deco design and complex puzzles were extremely sought after and sold very well. Sadly Wernicke did not live very long after producing the boxes, dying of 'brain fever' in January 1939.

Over the years various strange myths have been associated with the boxes. Rumours persist that Wernicke stumbled upon a formula for immortality and hid a fragment of it inside each of the boxes. Other rumours tell that the boxes are haunted, and that opening them allows you to see the moment of your own death.

The boxes are named after the designs worked into their lids: the Rose Box, the Lily Box, the Raven Box, the Owl Box, the Snake Box, and the Hound Box. The Snake Box was destroyed when a fire consumed the manor of its owner in 1975. For years the Lily Box was also considered lost after its owner vanished in the late 60s, until it resurfaced at auction a month before the story starts.

Rumours aside, the boxes are highly valuable in of themselves. The craftsmanship involved in making them is singular and a prime example of late Art Deco. Each box is worth at least £50,000. To a collector familiar with the myths around the boxes, they are worth even more.

Each box is the size of a large jewelry box and can only be opened by completing a complex puzzle of sliding pieces and hidden buttons worked into the surface of the box. Once opened a small internal compartment is revealed, containing a multifaceted mirror set into the base of the box. Anyone looking into the mirror will be granted bizarre, ominous visions.

Also found inside each box, carved into the inside of the lid, is a fragment of a sentence in Ancient Greek. Each box contains a separate portion of the same sentence.

Very few people know the truth behind the boxes; that they were created following Wernicke's contact with Yog-Sothoth. A lifelong occultist, Wernicke had dabbled in the lore of the Mythos for years before he finally made contact with the All-In-One. The eldritch knowledge imparted to Wernicke by Yog-Sothoth resulted in the creation of the boxes, and subsequently killed him only a few years later. The visions granted by the boxes come directly from Yog-Sothoth itself. These visions can be useful, or they can blast the sanity from the recipient. Such are the whims of the Opener of the Way.

However, there is another risk to opening the boxes; doing so acts as a beacon to a creature known as the Guardian of Angles, an otherworldly beast that inhabits the place between places and is drawn to an open box like a shark to blood.

If someone opens one of the Wernicke Boxes, the Guardian will immediately pick up their scent and begin to stalk them from its own dimension. Eventually the Guardian will track them down, cross the barrier between its dimension and ours, and tear its victim to pieces.

The Ancient Greek sentence that is carved into the boxes is in fact a spell; the Incantation of Zaal-Ngah that wards off the Guardian. Wernicke spread the incantation across the six boxes, with the intention that only by possessing all of them could one be safe from the Guardian.

Due to the power contained within them, the boxes cause strange disturbances in their immediate surroundings. Nearby mirrors sometimes show strange reflections, lights flicker and distant voices echo from behind closed doors. As the Guardian draws close it will also affect the area around the box and those who opened it. It is these disturbances that have given the boxes their 'haunted' reputation.

## OPENING A BOX

To open one of the Wernicke Boxes requires an Investigator to accrue 3 successful **INT** rolls, followed by a successful **Occult** roll. These rolls can be made one after another, or over the course of hours or even days. As long as no one else interacts with the box, then the Investigator's progress in solving the puzzle remains. If the Investigator fails an INT roll then they lose one of their previous successes. Once they have accrued all 3 INT roll successes, they may make the final Occult roll. If this final roll is successful, the box opens. If it fails they lose their progress and must start again from the beginning.

Opening any of the Wernicke Boxes for the first time requires a **Sanity** roll with a potential loss of 0/1 SAN.

Looking into the mirror inside a particular box for the first time results in an automatic 1d4 SAN loss but grants an increase of +2 **Cthulhu Mythos** percentiles. Any successive looks into the same box result in an automatic 1d3 SAN loss but grant no additional Mythos increase.

Each time an Investigator looks into the mirror inside any of the Wernicke Boxes they should roll on the table below to see which vision they are granted. For ease the individual visions are replicated in the Handouts section for Keepers to give to Investigators.

1d6	Vision
1	The sky is vast and full of stars. Too full of stars. You stand on a windswept hill, above you something colossal hovers in the air, casting a terrible shadow over you. You feel a malign awareness directed at you, and with it a burning light that blots out everything. You blink and step back from the box.
2	You are stood on a cold, arid plateau of grey stone. Mist blows around you, chilling your skin and carrying with it a musty smell of mold and open graves. Something moves in the mist, something tall, angular and gangly. The wind rises and you blink dust from your eyes and are suddenly back, stood before the box.
3	You see a vision of the past. People you haven't seen for years stand and talk about things you had long forgotten. Their faces are so real it takes your breath away. And yet... something is profoundly wrong here. Some feature or detail you cannot put your finger on. Your head aches. The buzzing of unseen flies fills your ears. The taste of blood fills your mouth. Suddenly you are back, stood before the box.
4	You see a vision that must be the future. People you know talk to you, yet they look older. They tell you things, but you cannot hear what they're saying. The world is full of fog and you're skin is cold as if numbed by an icy wind. The sky above you is filled with tumultuous clouds racing across the heavens and, above them, something vast and monolithic hangs in the sky. You squeeze your eyes closed, and when you open them are back, stood before the box.
5	Time flows past you like a river. Stars wheel overhead as suns flash and die like fireworks. You watch as the universe races towards its own end, with you as the only witness. Well, you... and the presence watching over your shoulder. If you turned your head you'd be able to see it, but if you did that, you know you'd die. Don't look at it. DON'T LOOK. Suddenly you're back, stood looking into the box. The feeling of something looking over your shoulder slowly fades.
6	You float in darkness, while all around you shimmer tiny points of light. You somehow know that these lights are each a time and a place, and if you could just move towards them you would travel to that point in spacetime. Something vast moves in the darkness near you; you are a minnow next to a whale compared to it. One of the points of light rises towards you, and in a burst of light you find yourself back, staring at the box.



Keepers should feel free to roll on the table below every in-game day, to see what strange effects occur around the box. Keepers should roll on the table once per box; if multiple boxes are in the same place this can lead to very unsettling occurrences.

1d6	Occurrence
1	Looking into any mirrors in the vicinity of the box will sometimes result in seeing a shadowy apparition somewhere in the reflection. These ethereal figures disappear as soon as they are noticed.
2	Occasional scratching, scurrying noises can be heard from behind the walls, even if there is no possible way something could be on the other side.
3	A cold breeze can be felt blowing near the box. Even in enclosed rooms this breeze persists. Astute Investigators might notice that the breeze seems to be coming from the corners of the room.
4	Muttering and snatches of whispered conversations can be heard from behind any closed doors near the box. When opened there is nothing on the other side. The mutterings cannot be understood, but there is a certain malign intonation to them.
5	The room the box is in is noticeably colder by a few degrees than anywhere else. There is also a certain damp, earthy smell coming from somewhere near the box; like a freshly-dug grave.
6	Lights near the box occasionally flicker, or fail to turn on. During the few seconds of darkness during these times, strange shadows can be seen just out of the corner of the eye.

## STRANGE OCCURRENCES

Due to the power contained within them, and their link to the dimension that is home to the Guardian of Angles, the boxes are foci for strange, disturbing occurrences. These phantasms are minor, and often explained away as tricks of the mind, but over time they become harder and harder to ignore.

Witnessing any of the occurrences requires a **Sanity** roll, with a potential loss of 0/1d2 SAN.

## THE INCANTATION OF ZAAL-NGAH

A powerful spell broken into six fragments and inscribed into the inside of the lids of the six Wernicke Boxes, the Incantation of Zaal-Ngah forces the Guardian of Angles (and possibly any other trans-dimensional creatures) back to its own dimension.

## THE INCANTATION OF ZAAL-NGAH (SPELL)

**Cost:** 5 Magic Points, 1d4 Sanity Points

**Casting Time:** 1 minute

A short sentence of syncopated Ancient Greek syllables, when spoken aloud this spell will instantly banish the Guardian of Angles back to its home dimension, regardless of where it currently is in the world. It will also cause the Guardian to lose the scent of any people it might be currently tracking.

The effects of this spell last until someone next opens one of the Wernicke Boxes, at which point the Guardian will begin to hunt that person as normal.

## THE GUARDIAN OF ANGLES

The Guardian of Angles is an otherworldly predator, drawn to the boxes like a moth to a flame. It inhabits a dimension at right-angles to our own; an ethereal plateau of grey stone constantly wrapped in clinging mist and buffeted by cold, mournful winds. The Guardian possesses the ability to cross into our dimension, preferring to do so by stepping out of a sharp angle (such as the corner of a room, or the nexus of two shadows) but can do so anywhere if needs be.

When someone opens a box the Guardian is immediately alerted and begins to home in on their psychic 'scent'. This can take several days, or even weeks. During that time the person who opened the box will begin to see glimpses of the Guardian as it closes in on them.

Only the person in question can see the Guardian when it manifests like this. Any of the results on the table below requires a **Sanity** roll, with a potential loss of 0/1d2 SAN.

Any Investigator who opens one of the boxes should roll on the table below each day after they first opened the box. For ease the individual sightings are replicated in the Handouts section for Keepers to give to Investigators.

1d6	Sighting
1	For a moment you see a tall, impossibly gangly figure in the corner of the room. You get a brief impression of long arms, grey skin and a blank featureless face until you blink and suddenly the figure is gone.
2	You catch sight of a reflection in a window; something moves behind you. A shadow of someone - something-else in the room, with inhumanly long arms and hands like spiders. You turn and no one is there.
3	A stench fills your nostrils; dusty, old and unpleasant. The smell of grave-mold and cold tombs. The smell is coming from behind you, but when you turn there is nothing there.
4	At the edge of your vision you see something move and turn to see a long-fingered grey-skinned hand slip into the wall, disappearing into the angle where two walls meet.
5	Something moves in the corner of your eye; you turn to see something tall and grey slip out of sight. The air is cold and smells of old stone and dust.
6	A noise behind you catches your attention; a soft dragging-thump of a footstep. You feel something stalk up behind you, radiating cold and reeking of old dust. The feeling fades as quickly as it came.

## THE SOCIETY OF THE KEY

A group of wealthy occultists with members from across Europe, the Society of the Key began as a club for rich collectors of macabre curiosities, but over the years has become a cult that reveres Yog-Sothoth. The group seek out and collect any artifacts that have links to the Mythos and Yog-Sothoth in particular.

The Society is lead by Javier Lozano, an extremely wealthy property tycoon from Spain. With their combined resources the group have access to incredible wealth, numerous expensive offices across Europe, and dozens of loyal thugs.

Due to their continued contact with Mythos-related artifacts, most members of the Society have begun to lose contact with their humanity. They have begun to resort to more and more extreme methods of procuring items they desire. Up until now this has not gone beyond intimidation, blackmail, and the occasional burglary. However, the Wernicke Boxes and their direct link to Yog-Sothoth are too much for them to resist.

Valentina di Sousa is the principle "acquisitions agent" for the Society of the Key. Charged with obtaining the Wernicke Boxes at any cost, she approached the various owners of the boxes, including Gerald Rutherford, several weeks before the start of the scenario, asking if they'd sell them to her. Every owner refused for various reasons. This lead Valentina to move onto her backup plan; steal the boxes. Valentina has dispatched several agents to watch the various owners of the boxes and steal them should the opportunity arise.

## HOW IT ALL PLAYS OUT

The scenario begins after the Investigators attend the funeral of Gerald Rutherford. This scene is detailed below. After that the Investigators can proceed as they see fit. Key locations are described below, as well as some suggested scenes that can play out at those locations. The locations are described as the should appear logically, but Investigators can visit them in any order depending on how they wish to hunt for the Boxes.

Investigators may come up with their own paths of inquiry; if so use the information below as a guide as to how to proceed.

## INTRODUCTION: FOLLOWING A FUNERAL

The scenario begins as the Investigators leave the funeral of their friend Gerald Rutherford. It is up to each Investigator how they knew Gerald, but regardless of their connection to him they attended his funeral. Gerald died the week before, apparently committing suicide one night at home.

As they leave the graveyard they are met by Gerald's widow, Cynthia. Cynthia thanks them for coming and then asks the Investigators if they'd be able to help her with something she believes only they can help with.

Cynthia asks the Investigators to come with her to her home, or meet her there as soon as possible.

## RUTHERFORD RESIDENCE

*Putney, London*

Cynthia and Gerald's house is an old three-story townhouse in Putney, London. The exterior is old and worn, and inside it is cluttered and chaotic and filled with shelves of books, curios and other strange objects d'art. There isn't a room in the house that doesn't have a bookcase or display table groaning under the weight of Gerald's various acquisitions, but he always seemed to

know exactly where everything was.

Cynthia welcomes the Investigators and, over cups of tea, she tells the Investigators she wants to hire them to find out what killed her husband. She doesn't believe the police ruling of suicide; she believes something occult caused Gerald's death. Moreover, she believes that something is lingering in her house; something to do with the box Gerald bought one month ago. She is willing to pay the Investigators, should they need a monetary incentive.

Cynthia will give the Investigators as much information as possible about Gerald's death and the strange occurrences that lead up to it:

- Gerald died one week ago, at roughly 3am in the morning. Cynthia was woken by a scream from Gerald's study but found the door locked from inside. She called the police, who broke down the door and found Gerald dead with his throat torn out.
- The police have ruled Gerald's death as a suicide. They claim Gerald slit his throat with shards of a drinking glass. Cynthia refuses to believe this; she saw the wounds and says it looked more like an animal attack.
- The police seem oddly reluctant to talk to her about the case. The crime scene specialist sent to photograph the scene left in a hurry and hasn't come back, despite leaving some of his equipment behind.
- Gerald had become reclusive and was behaving strangely for almost a month before his death. It coincided with his return from his latest antiques hunt in Paris. Cynthia was aware he purchased a rare Art Deco box for £41,000. Gerald seemed extremely pleased with the purchase, but it was shortly after this that he began acting strange. He told Cynthia it was called the "Wernicke Lily Box", and it was apparently part of a set.



- Since returning from Paris Gerald had taken to locking himself in his study for hours or even whole days at a time. He made several long phone calls and used the computer a lot, and also took several books from his extensive library into the study. He gruffly stopped Cynthia from coming into the study, asking her to leave food at the door. He would lock the study when he wasn't in it, something he never used to do.
- Cynthia thought Gerald was afraid of something. He had become nervous and irritable, and several times acted as if he had seen or heard something Cynthia couldn't see or hear.
- Three days before his death Cynthia found Gerald's study unlocked when she went to take him a cup of tea. Gerald was elsewhere in the house, so she looked inside to see what he had been up to. She saw books, notes and also the box Gerald bought, open on his desk. Cynthia confesses to the Investigators that she looked inside the box and as she did so was overcome by a strange sensation. At that moment Gerald returned and shouted at her before shooing her out of the room. Cynthia remarks that Gerald seemed terrified to find her in the study.
- As she describes the box, Keepers may wish to make a hidden **Psychology** roll for the Investigators. A success will result in the Investigators realising Cynthia is hiding something; she actually experienced a vision when looking into the box but doesn't know what it was. She has discounted it as her imagination, but if pressed by the Investigators will reveal that she saw a vision of a starry sky and something vast and incomprehensible looming over her. It only lasted a minute, but left her very unsettled.
- Cynthia will reveal that for about a week before Gerald's death, and now after it, strange things have been happening in the house. She has heard strange noises in the walls, seen odd shadows moving in empty rooms, and sometimes feels like she is being watched. It is these occurrences that have prompted her to reach out to the Investigators.

Cynthia will give the Investigators the key to Gerald's study, and also the card of the police detective who was investigating Gerald's death (Detective Jack Summers).

The Rutherfords are quite wealthy; Cynthia is willing to pay the Investigators for any expenses they may accrue during their inquiries, including any travel arrangements.

If asked Cynthia will be happy to let the Investigators take the Lily Box with them, as long as they are careful with it (she's aware of how much it's worth, and that it is probably dangerous). If the Investigators carry the box with them, Keepers should remember to make daily **Strange Occurrence** rolls to see what happens around the box.

### **GERALD'S STUDY**

A small, cosy room in the attic, Gerald's study is filled with shelves of books, piles of papers and books, and numerous antique curios. In the center of the room is a large desk with an old computer on it and strewn with papers and books. A small Art Deco box sits atop the papers and books.



When the Investigators enter the room for the first time, Keepers should roll on the **Strange Occurrences** table, to see what effect the room is currently under. Investigators witnessing any strange occurrences are required to make a **Sanity** roll (see the Strange Occurrences section for details).

It is down to the Investigators what they wish to do in the study, although a cursory examination will reveal most the clues below:

- Although the scene has been slightly cleaned, there is still dried blood on the desk, chair and floor.
- There are no signs of struggle. The door was locked from the inside and was subsequently broken open by the police. The only window is a small circular window which doesn't open and would be too small for someone to fit through in any case.
- The papers and books on the desk combine to form Handout #1.
- Searching the computer requires a **Computer Use** roll. If successful, give the Investigators Handout #2.
- The box on the desk is the Lily Box. It is closed, but has been left unlocked, it would be very easy for the Investigators to look inside it...

## GERALD'S NOTES

Examining the scattered notes, books and papers on Gerald's desk results in the Investigators findings Handout #1.

This is a wealth of information for the Investigators. There are the names and contact details of owners of two other boxes: Jonathan Walsh and Isabella Poulan. The receipt for the box also gives the Investigators another avenue of research; the auction house that sold it to Gerald. Gerald's diary is mostly just flavour, although it does reveal to the Investigators that Gerald knew something was after him. The note about lamb's blood is a red herring; Gerald was desperate in his last few days. The photocopy is very useful; it tells the Investigators that there is a way to stop the Guardian, if only they can find the full incantation. It also names Yog-Sothoth (by way of its epithet the All-who-is-one), a **Cthulhu Mythos** roll is required to recognise it.

## GERALD'S COMPUTER

If the Investigators successfully examine Gerald's computer history they find numerous pieces of information, contained in Handout #2.

Much of this information is background for the Investigators, telling them a little more about Wernicke and his boxes. The page of star constellations is mostly meaningless, but does link to the fact that Yog-Sothoth visited Wernicke in 1935. Not that the Investigators will be able to make that leap just yet. The page of UFO sightings is a red herring, but again plays into the fact that Yog-Sothoth is sometimes mistaken for, or linked to, UFO sightings. The page on 17th century alchemy is another red herring, but it reflects that Gerald expected to find something along those lines inside the box.

## CONTACTING DETECTIVE SUMMERS

Detective Summers, the police officer assigned investigate Gerald's death, witnessed several strange occurrences while at the Rutherford house. He has passed these experiences off as figments of his imagination, but it left him wanting to be rid of the case. A few days later he was approached by Valentina di Sousa, who suggested that it would be easier (and profitable for

Detective Summers) to declare the case as a suicide. Summers accepted the offered bribe, and pushed through paperwork to have Gerald's death ruled a suicide.

If the Investigators contact Detective Summers he will repeat his conclusion to them. It is clear he doesn't want much to do with the case, calling it "a nasty business". Investigators who succeed a **Psychology** roll will be able to tell he is hiding something, but browbeating him into telling the truth is extremely difficult.

Detective Summers will tell the Investigators that the crime scene specialist assigned to the case, Walter Alby, walked into traffic the day after being at the scene ("Terrible accident, can't have been looking the right way"). Unbeknownst to anyone, this is because Alby looked into the box and was terrified by what he saw.

Ultimately talking to Summers is an exercise in frustration, but should underline to the Investigators that Gerald's death was not a suicide, and that perhaps some kind of coverup is occurring.

## WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

By the time the Investigators have finished examining the various notes in Gerald's office, and possibly talking to Detective Summers, it should be evident to them that Gerald's death wasn't a suicide and that it is somehow linked to opening the box. Hopefully they will also have realised that Cynthia is at risk due to looking into the box.

Potentially one of more of the Investigators will have also looked in the box, and so will be on a countdown to a meeting with the Guardian themselves. Hopefully they will also have the first fragment of the incantation from inside the box.

The Investigators now have two names they can follow up: Doctor Jonathan Walsh from London and Isabella Poulan from Amiens, France. They also have the address of the Paris auction house; la Chambre de Murat. They may also wish to conduct research into the Wernicke Boxes themselves. It is up to the Investigators how they proceed.

## RESEARCHING THE WERNICKE BOXES

If the Investigators wish to research the Wernicke Boxes themselves, they should make a **Library Use** or **Computer Use** roll. A success will result in them turning up the information contained in Handout #3. The information on this handout is mostly background, giving them the mundane history of the boxes.

If any Investigators wish to take a more occult angle to their research, a successful **Occult** or **Cthulhu Mythos** roll will result in them discovering the information on Handout #4. This information gives some hints that maybe the rumours around the boxes have some truth to them, and that the boxes can be dangerous.

## DOCTOR JONATHAN WALSH

*Knightsbridge, London*

Doctor Walsh is the owner of the Rose Box and lives in an expensive apartment in Knightsbridge, London. An amateur antiquarian, Walsh bought the Rose Box a year ago at an auction in Italy but has never opened it. He was only marginally aware of the history of the Wernicke Boxes when he bought it, buying it on a whim. Since learning the legends of the boxes, and coupled with the strange occurrences caused by the box, Walsh has become terrified of it and leaves it locked in a safe.

Doctor Walsh will meet with the Investigators if they contact him. He is nervous talking about the boxes, but will answer the Investigators questions. He can reveal several pieces of information:

- Walsh is shocked to hear of Gerald's death. He will assume it was linked to the boxes, but will not voice such concerns unless the Investigators suggest it first.
- Gerald contacted him two weeks ago, asking about his Wernicke Box and explaining he had one of his own. Gerald came to Walsh's apartment a few days later, asking to see his box and open it. Walsh let Gerald see the Rose Box, but refused to let him open it.
- Walsh will allow the Investigators to see the Rose Box if they ask, but will refuse to allow them to open it. He could be convinced with an **Intimidate** or **Persuasion** roll to allow the box to be opened, but will leave the room if this happens.
- Walsh is keen to be rid of the box, and will offer to sell it to the Investigators for a sum of £30,000.
- Walsh will also reveal that a beautiful woman with a Spanish accent visited him a few weeks ago, asking to buy the box. At the time he refused, due to a strange suspicion about her. He still has her business card, and will give it to the Investigators if they ask (Handout #5).

After meeting with Walsh the Investigators should have an idea that someone else is interested in obtaining the boxes, and possibly have the Rose box themselves. They will hopefully also have a fragment of the incantation. They will also have the contact details for Valentina di Sousa.

If the Investigators leave the Rose box with Walsh then the two Society of the Key agents will break into his apartment later than night, beat Walsh until he gives them the safe combination, and steal the box.



## BEING WATCHED IN LONDON

Valentina di Sousa has left two Society of the Key agents to watch Cynthia Rutherford and Doctor Walsh, with orders to steal their boxes should an opportunity arise. The presence of the Investigators has caused the agents to hold off for now, until they can work out who these new elements are and what they want.

Keepers should make hidden **Spot Hidden** rolls for the Investigators. If they succeed they realise they are being shadowed by two men as they travel around London, or they may notice the same car parked outside Cynthia's house and Walsh's apartment.

If the Investigators confront them the agents will try to bluff their way out of things, and ultimately seek to evade the Investigators once they realise they have been made. They will not go far, however, and will continue to watch Cynthia and Walsh.

If left unchallenged the agents will break into the Rutherford house and steal the box, possibly scaring Cynthia in the process. They will also break into Walsh's apartment and take his box by force, leaving the Doctor heavily injured.

## CONTACTING VALENTINA DI SOUSA

The Investigators can call the number on Valentina's business card at any time. Valentina will answer in Spanish, but easily switch to English. She is cool, professional, and intimidating. She will try to work out who the Investigators are, what they want, and how much they know about the Wernicke Boxes. She will agree to meet with the Investigators, but only if they offer to sell her one or more of the boxes.

After talking to Valentina the Investigators should be left feeling like there is a lot they don't know. Keepers should roleplay Valentina as mysterious, confident and dangerous.

Meeting with Valentina is a dangerous decision, as she will plan to take the boxes rather than pay for them. If the Investigators take this option, see the **Deal with the Devil** scene below.

## SCENE: DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

This scene can occur if the Investigators contact Valentina di Sousa and agree to meet with her to sell her one of the Wernicke Boxes. The scene can happen at almost any point in the scenario.

Valentina has no intention of buying the boxes from the Investigators; she wants to get the measure of them and ultimately plans to have her thugs ambush them and take any boxes they have.

Unless the Investigators are insistent on doing it elsewhere, Valentina will arrange to meet them at the El Retiro Park in Madrid, Spain. Valentina will want to meet somewhere open, with lots of exits, and somewhere pursuers can be lost in large crowds.

Valentina will meet with the Investigators and talk to them for a short while about the Wernicke boxes, trying to discern what they know about them, how many boxes they have access to, and why they are looking for them. Valentina will reveal she works for a group called the Society of the Key, but will describe it as a club for wealthy collectors of antiquities. Keepers should roleplay Valentina as supremely calm and confident, and a little sinister. She knows far more than the Investigators do at this point, but will only hint at the truth of the boxes.

Unbeknownst to the Investigators, Valentina will have several Society of the Key agents (equal to the number of Investigators) hidden nearby. These men and women will wait for Valentina's signal, at which point they will attempt to ambush the Investigators, wrestle any Wernicke boxes off them, and flee into the nearby crowds.

Keepers should make hidden **Spot Hidden** rolls for the Investigators to see if they notice the agents slowly positioning themselves nearby. Alternatively if any of the Investigators are actively keeping a lookout, they should make the **Spot Hidden** rolls themselves. If successful the Investigators will realise they are being set up. Failing the rolls will result in the agents making a surprise attack.

Once the agents strike the scene should switch to combat rounds. The agents will seek to incapacitate as many Investigators as they can, focusing on any who are obviously carrying Wernicke boxes. They will not pull out guns unless the Investigators do so first (they are trying not to draw too much attention at this stage), instead they will use their fists and collapsible batons. Wrestling a box off an Investigator is an opposed **STR** roll, with the winner left holding the box.

Once an agent has a box they will attempt to flee. This can result in a chase, with the Investigators pursuing the Society agents through crowds, down alleyways and across busy roads. Alternatively, if the Investigators stop the agents from obtaining the boxes from them, the chase could be flipped with the agents pursuing them.

This scene ends when one of the two parties involved -the Investigators or the Society agents- escape with one or more of the boxes. Following the scene the Investigators should now realise the Society of the Key are a significant threat. Furthermore if the Society managed to steal one or more boxes the Investigators may need to work out how to get them back (unless they wrote down the incantation fragments somewhere). This can lead on to the **Into the Lion's Den** scene.

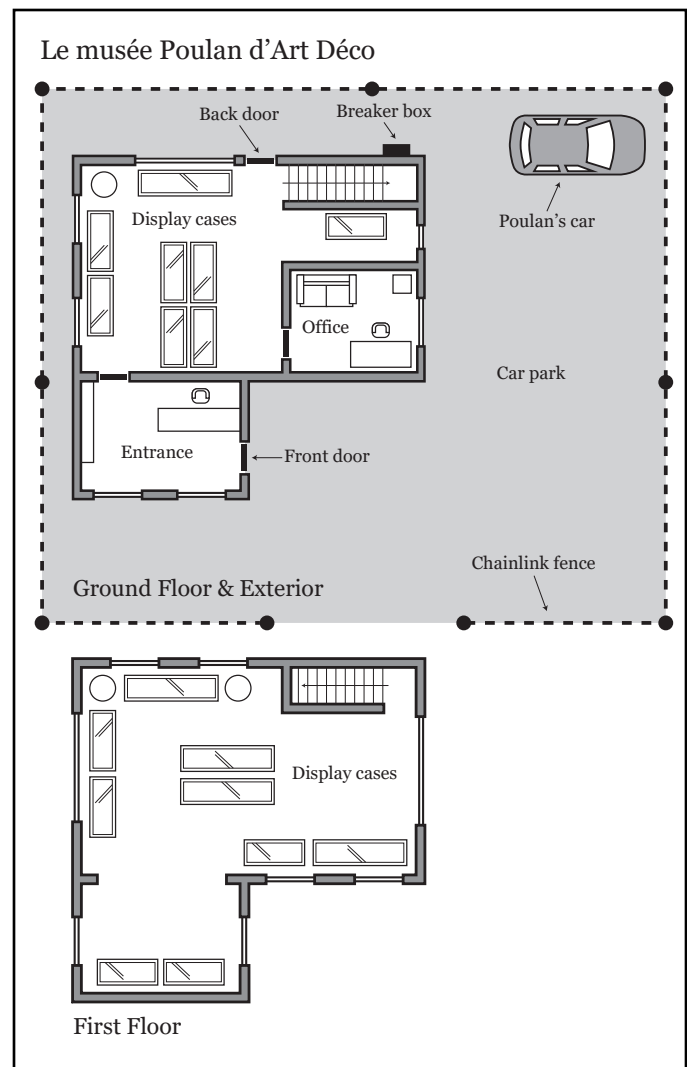
Valentina will slip away once the fight starts. If the Investigators pursue her, she will turn and attempt to dissuade them by shooting in their direction with her pistol. If the Investigators continue to follow her, she will engage them in combat until a Society agent in a car skids to a halt next to her and she jumps in. However, if the Investigators are tenacious enough this scene could result in Valentina's death; in this case the Society of the Key will become increasingly hostile towards them.

## ISABELLA POULAN

*Amiens, France*

Isabella Poulan is the owner and proprietor of a small museum just outside Amiens. The museum, *Le musée Poulan d'Art Déco*, is dedicated to the Art Deco movement and contains numerous paintings, sculptures, and a range of puzzle boxes that includes the Wernicke Raven Box. Isabella has owned the box for several years, but was unaware of the legends around it until Valentina di Sousa contacted her several weeks ago. Her interest piqued, Isabella managed to open the Raven Box and has since become addicted to staring into it, receiving vision after vision from Yog-Sothoth. She has closed the museum, and now sits in her office with the box, her sanity slowly fraying.

Due to her repeated use of the box the Guardian of Angles is rapidly homing in on Isabella. In addition, two Society of the Key agents have decided to break into the museum and steal the box.



If the Investigators call the phone number they have for Isabella they get her answering machine (in French) telling them she is unavailable. Calling the main museum number results in a message (again, in French) telling them the museum is closed for the foreseeable future.

Hopefully the Investigators will decide to visit the museum at some point, which will result in the **Rain, Darkness, and Monsters** scene below.

## SCENE: RAIN, DARKNESS, AND MONSTERS

This scene can occur if the Investigators decide to visit Le musée Poulan d'Art Déco.

The Investigators can arrive at the museum at any time, but Keepers are advised that having them arrive at dusk will add to the tension. As they arrive it begins to rain.

The museum is a small two-story building located just outside the main city of Amien, in a quiet suburb near the River Somme. The museum stands away from the other nearby buildings, with its own car park and ringed by a chain link fence.

When the Investigators arrive there is only a single car in the car park (Isabella's) and the doors to the museum are locked. A piece of paper is pinned to the front door, stating (in French) that the museum is closed for the time being. However, the Investigators will notice that a light is on inside the museum.

Isabella Poulan is inside the museum, and has been for several days. She sits in her office on the ground floor, occasionally looking into the Raven Box, experiencing visions. Her sanity is worn thin by the repeated visions, but she finds herself unable to leave the box alone.

Isabella will answer the door if the Investigators knock, and can be persuaded to let them into the museum with a successful **Persuade** or **Fast-talk** roll. Failing that, Investigators could pick the lock on either the front door or the back door with a successful **Locksmith** roll.

Keepers should describe to the Investigators how the museum is only partially lit; it is filled with shadows and there is an odd feeling in the air. Rain beats against the windows, and thunder echoes in the distance. Roll on the **Strange Occurrences** table to see what effect the museum is currently under.

Isabella will lead the Investigators back to her office, where the Raven Box sits open on her desk. It is obvious she has been living in the office for several days. There is a makeshift bed on the couch and discarded food packaging strewn around the room.

Isabella will answer any questions the Investigators have, but is distracted and her answers are incomplete and strange due to the effect the box has had on her sanity.

- Isabella opened the box almost a week ago. She tells the Investigators “It is my little box *les merveilles*. It has shown me so many things.”
- She will reveal she has had the box for years, but never realised what it was. It was only when a Spanish woman offered to buy it, and called it a “Wernicke Box” that Isabella decided to look into its history.
- Isabella has seen the Guardian several times. Due to her mental state, however, she is not sure if it is real or not.
- She will happily let the Investigators look at the box (requiring **Vision** rolls if they look into it).

While the Investigators are talking to Isabella suddenly the few lights that are on go out. Not realising the Investigators are present, two Society of the Key agents have decided to break into the museum and steal the Raven Box. They cut the power and break the lock on the back door. To make matters worse, during the blackout and resulting confusion the Guardian of Angles finally manifests and attacks Isabella.

- The two Society of the Key agents will enter the museum via the back door, but are not trying to be stealthy. They expect Isabella to be there, but will be surprised by the presence of the Investigators. However, they are armed and more than willing to get into a fight. If it looks like things are going against them they will flee.
- The Guardian will strike when the Investigators are dealing with the agents. It will step out of the corner of Isabella’s office and attack her. The first warning the Investigators get will probably be Isabella’s terrified scream, unless one of them is with her.
- The Guardian will attack Isabella and leave once she is dead. If the Investigators attack it, it will strike back but not seek to engage them in a drawn-out conflict.
- The Society of the Key agents will flee in terror if they see the Guardian.

Keepers should try to slowly build the tension in this scene, starting with Isabella’s strange ramblings, then the shock of the lights going out and the idea that someone has broken into the museum. Then when the Guardian appears the scene should become a terrifying sequence of something lunging out of the shadows and attacking Isabella. Unless the Investigators have flashlights, this scene should occur in very low light, with occasional flashes of lightning outside.

Seeing the Guardian requires a **Sanity** roll (see the Guardian’s stats for details). Should the Guardian succeed in killing Isabella, another **Sanity** roll is required, with a potential loss of 0/1d6 SAN for witnessing her violent death.

Following this scene the Investigators should have had their first real contact with the Guardian, and possible be in possession of another fragment of the incantation, if not the Raven Box itself. They should also be aware that the other group after the boxes are potentially dangerous.

## LA CHAMBRE DE MURAT

*Montmartre, Paris, France*

La Chambre de Murat is a small auction house in the Montmartre district of Paris, that deals exclusively in items pertaining to the occult. Rare books, strange statues and fragments of manuscripts are often found for sale here, but it is rare that an item actually pertaining to the Mythos comes up for sale. It was here that Gerald bought the Lily Box.

The owner of La Chambre, Maximilian Doumas, is an occultist himself and has some small knowledge of the Mythos. He respects his client’s secrecy, and will only talk to the Investigators about the Wernicke Boxes if they succeed a **Persuade**, **Charm** or **Intimidate** roll. Mentioning Gerald’s death will grant the Investigators a bonus die to their roll.

- The Lily Box came to La Chambre via the estate of the previous owner, Tobias Valliant. Valliant was a known collector of the strange, but died several years ago.
- The box was put up for auction by Valliant’s estate handlers to raise capital to keep some of his other interests running.
- Doumas will give the Investigators the contact details of Valliant’s estate handler; Adella Moreau, of Moreau, Schiffman, et Durand, a legal firm based in Paris.
- Doumas is aware of the myths surrounding the Wernicke Boxes, and can relate them to the Investigators, but if they have read Gerald’s notes it is nothing they have not heard before.
- Doumas is aware there are only five boxes now (one being destroyed in a fire in the 70s). As far as he is aware, one box is in France, two are in England, one is in Switzerland, and the last one is somewhere in Italy. He doesn’t know the names of any of the owners apart from Gerald Rutherford and Lara Breiner, the owner in Switzerland. He can give the Investigator Breiner’s address.

After meeting with Doumas the Investigators should have an idea where to go next; the estate handler who sold the box, Adella Moreau. The Paris address of her company is not far from Montmartre. They will also have the address of another owner, Lara Breiner, in Switzerland. They should also note that the last box is somewhere in Italy.

## ADELLA MOREAU

*Paris, France*

Adella Moreau is the executor of Tobias Valliant, the previous owner of the Lily Box. She works at the legal firm of Moreau, Schiffman et Durand, based in Paris.

Adella will be happy to meet with the Investigators as long as they give her a good reason. If they tell her they wish to talk about the Wernicke Boxes, or about Tobias Valliant, she will direct them to meet her at “Cabinet de Valliant”, a private museum in Paris.

If the Investigators meet Adella at her office she will take them to the Cabinet, which is only a short walk away.

### CABINET DE VALLIANT

*Cabinet de Valliant* is a “Cabinet of Curiosity”; a small private museum usually kept locked and only viewable by appointment with Adella. It is a small house filled with items collected by Tobias Valliant during his lifetime.

Adella will guide the Investigators around the Cabinet, which is filled with display cases and bookshelves. As they walk she will tell them several pieces of information about Valliant and the Lily Box.

- Valliant was an wealthy antiquarian from Strasbourg. He collected a huge number of antiques over his lifetime. His will instructed that upon his death his collection be turned into a Cabinet of Curiosity.

- Valliant had a keen interest in the occult. A lot of the items in the Cabinet are occult in nature, and some are peripheral to the Mythos (ritual daggers, individual pages from some mythos tomes, an ancient statue of Nyarlathotep).
- Valliant was found dead in his home over a year ago; his death has been labelled an unsolved murder. Apparently he had been completely dismembered.
- The Lily Box was part of his collection. Adella auctioned it at La Chambre de Murat a month ago to raise funds to keep the Cabinet open. This was in accordance to Valliant’s will, which stipulated some items could be sold off as and when needed.
- Adella is completely unaware of the box’s provenance. She had it appraised and sold because it was a small, high-value piece. She doesn’t know where Valliant got the box.
- If they mention the Wernicke Boxes, Adella will produce a notebook and give it to the Investigators. She explains it contains Valliant’s research on the boxes. Give the Investigators Handout #6. She will ask for the notebook back before the Investigators leave.
- Adella will mention the surprising interest in Valliant recently. The Investigators are the second group to visit the Cabinet that week; a woman with a Spanish accent visited the day before (Valentina if she is still alive, if not it was another Society agent).

After meeting Adella and visiting the Cabinet the Investigators should know a lot more about the boxes. They will hopefully also know the location of the Hound Box in Venice, and the Owl Box in Zurich. They should also be aware that Valentina di Sousa is on the trail of both boxes.

## LARA BREINER

*Zurich, Switzerland*

Lara Breiner is the owner of the Owl Box. A wealthy antiquarian, she lives in an apartment in a residential district of Zurich. Breiner was killed by the Society of the Key a day or so before the Investigators learn of her location, and her box stolen.

The important thing for Keepers to remember is that the Investigators are likely to be the first people to discover Breiner is dead. She lives on the penthouse floor of her apartment block, and rarely has visitors. No one has been up to her apartment since Valentina di Sousa visited her; the front door is ajar and inside Breiner’s body is sprawled on the floor in her library, face down in a pool of blood, her throat slashed. Discovering Breiner’s body requires a **Sanity** roll, with a potential loss of 0/1d3 SAN.

There is a concierge in the entrance hall of the apartment block. He will stop the Investigators from entering the building, and will enquire who they have come to see. A successful **Fast Talk**, **Persuasion**, **Charm** or **Intimidate** roll will convince him to let the Investigators pass. Otherwise he will insist on phoning Breiner’s apartment to see if they should be let up. Obviously there will be no response, resulting in the concierge turning the Investigators away and suggesting they come back later. Alternatively the Investigators could create a diversion somehow, or otherwise make **Stealth** rolls to sneak past him.



Once they discover Breiner is dead, Investigators are likely to take two possible courses of action; either they will investigate the apartment for clues and then leave without saying anything, or they will immediately call the police.

If they search the apartment the Investigators can discover several clues:

- A successful **Spot Hidden** roll will reveal that there is a rectangular void in the blood, caused by something being dropped when Breiner was killed and subsequently picked up. This was where Breiner was retrieving the Owl Box from a shelf when Valentina attacked.
- A successful **Computer Use** roll will reveal a series of emails on Breiner's computer. The emails, from a "V. di Sousa", make repeated offers to buy the Wernicke Owl Box, for increasing amounts of money. Each time Breiner refused, becoming less polite with each enquiry.
- A successful **Biology** roll will reveal that Breiner was killed by a single powerful slash to the throat from behind. Breiner must not have been expecting the attack for the killer to have got close enough to strike.

The concierge could also be questioned, in which case a successful **Persuasion**, **Charm** or **Intimidate** roll will convince him to reveal that Breiner had a visitor the day before; a beautiful woman with a Spanish accent (or, if Valentina is dead by this point, another Society of the Key agent).

If the Investigators call the police then they will become mired in the subsequent police inquiry. They will be asked why they were visiting Breiner, how they know her, why they are in Zurich, and so on. Keepers should caution their Investigators that contacting the police may not be the best course of action before they do so.

Following the visit to Breiner's apartment the Investigators should realise that the Society of the Key now have the Owl Box. Whether they attempt to get it back from them or not is down to the Investigators, but should they do so it may result in the **Into the Lion's Den** scene.

## GILBERTO ALESCI

*Venice, Italy*

Gilberto Alesci is an elderly and thoroughly evil occultist who collects mythos-related antiques. He currently owns the Hound Box, and has owned most of the other boxes in the past. He is fully aware of what the boxes are and the risks involved in using them, and has protected himself from the Guardian of Angles with powerful magic. He has also managed to gather five of the six fragments of the incantation, he is only missing the fragment contained in the Lily box, which he desires intensely.

Alesci lives in a three-storey house in one of the quieter quarters of Venice, Italy. He has cast a powerful warding spell on his home that prevents the boxes from working inside the house. The spell also prevents the Guardian of Angles from manifesting. Because of this, Alesci never leaves his home.

The Investigators can come across Alesci's name in their searches for the Hound box, or by reading Valliant's research on the boxes. If they contact Alesci he will be curious as to why they are interested in the boxes. If the Investigators mention they have access to the Lily Box Alesci will be barely able to contain his excitement, and ask them to visit him. Alternately,

Investigators may plan to simply turn up on his doorstep, in which case Alesci will treat them suspiciously until they give him a good reason to let them in.

The meeting with Alesci can form a suitable finale to the scenario, depending on how it plays out. See the **Strange and Terrible Endings** section for two suggestions as to how the Investigators might deal with Alesci.

## STRANGE AND TERRIBLE ENDINGS

Below are several suggested scenes that may play out as the scenario reaches its climax. These are only suggestions; Keepers are encouraged to tailor their games to their Investigators actions.

### SCENE: INTO THE LION'S DEN

This scene can occur if the Investigators choose to try and reclaim any of the boxes that have been stolen by the Society of the Key. This scene assumes that the Investigators wish to attempt a diplomatic approach to dealing with the Society. If they choose a more combat or stealth-based approach, see the **The Hard Way** scene below.

There are several occasions over the course of the scenario when the Society of the Key can get their hands on one or more of the Wernicke Boxes. Any boxes taken by the Society will be brought to the group's headquarters in Barcelona, Spain. These headquarters are a set of lavish offices in the center of Barcelona, nominally listed as *Lozano Acquisitions International*. Inside the offices are numerous rooms filled with the artefacts the Society have obtained over the years, as well as an extensive library, and a shrine to Yog-Sothoth. The offices are guarded at all times by a number of Society agents.

The Investigators can learn of the location of the group's headquarters several ways: it is on Valentina de Sousa's business cards that she left with several people; it can also be found if the Investigators incapacitated and searched any of the Society agents who attack them at various points in the scenario. A **Computer Use** roll while researching Lozano Acquisitions International will result in finding their office listing as well.

If the Investigators decide to contact Lozano, or perhaps Valentina di Sousa, they can attempt to negotiate some kind of deal for the fragments of the Incantation of Zaal-Ngah the Society have. This would take a Hard **Persuasion** roll to convince the Society to give up their parts of the Incantation, but if successful they will be willing to share information in exchange for any fragments the Investigators have recovered. They will insist the Investigators come to their headquarters for any kind of exchange, however.

If the Investigators have already had a confrontation with the Society, such as in the **Deal with the Devil** scene, then the Society will be more cautious dealing with them, if not outright hostile depending on if the Investigators caused the death of any of their agents. This will increase the difficulty of any kind of negotiation with the group, resulting in a Penalty die to the Investigator's Persuasion rolls. It will also make the Society much more likely to attempt to double-cross the Investigators at the climax of the scene.

Assuming the Investigators go along with the Society's instructions, they will arrive at the Lozano Acquisitions office in Barcelona and be greeted by Valentina and Lozano himself. They will escort the Investigators into the offices, which are sumptuously decorated with dark wood panelling, high arched windows, and expensive artwork.

Lozano, who is darkly charming and charismatic, will explain the group only seeks to expand their knowledge of the mysteries of the universe, and that everything so far as been an unfortunate series of events that he regrets. A successful **Psychology** roll will reveal this is all a lie; in actuality Lozano cares nothing for the plight of others.

The Investigators will be lead into a room where the various boxes the Society have claimed are laid out on a table. Lozano will be happy to let the Investigators examine and even open any of the boxes, as long as they return the favour with any boxes they possess.

This is where things can start to take a turn for the horrific. Hopefully there will be at least two or three boxes in the same room at this point, and their proximity to each other, and so many people who have looked into them, will act as an exceptional lure to the Guardian of Angles. The boxes themselves will also begin to cause disturbances of a level not experienced before. The building lights will flicker, hissing voices will be heard from behind the walls, and shadows will dart across the room. Witnessing these dire manifestations requires a **Sanity** roll, with a potential loss of 1/1d4+1 SAN.

The Guardian will immediately manifest and attack Lozano, Valentina and any of the Investigators who have looked into one of the boxes. With luck the Investigators will have the completed Incantation of Zaal-Ngah at the point; if not then the only way they can survive is by driving off the Guardian through physical force, or by sheer ingenuity.

A possible ending to this scene is, just before the strange events begin and the Guardian manifests, is to have the Society attempt to double-cross the Investigators; holding them at gunpoint and demanding their boxes from them. When the strange events begin this can prove a good distraction for the Investigators to escape, leaving the Society members to be massacred by the Guardian.

### SCENE: THE HARD WAY

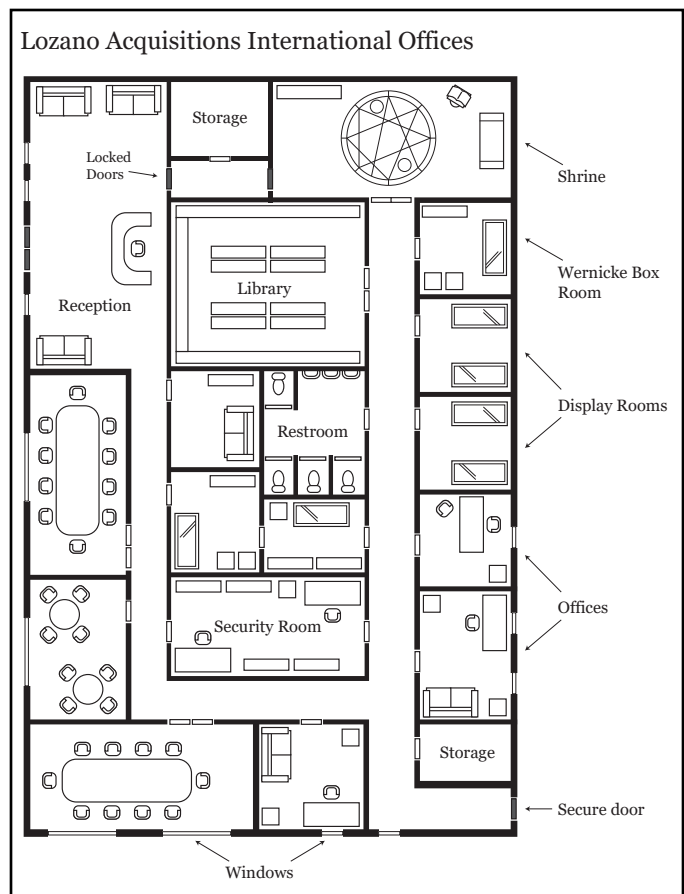
This scene can occur if the Investigators choose reclaim any of the boxes that have been stolen by the Society of the Key and decide to do so by either force or stealth.

The Lozano Acquisitions offices are guarded during the day by eight agents of the Society of the Key. There is also 24-hour video surveillance, monitored by a Society agent inside the offices security room, and silent alarms on the various doors and windows.

Breaking into the office is probably best done under cover of darkness, when there are only four agents on duty. Investigators will need to make successful **Stealth** rolls to avoid being spotted by the guards, as well as **Hard Locksmith** and **Electronics** rolls to pick the locks and overcome the alarms. Failing any of these rolls will not alert the guards, but pushing them and failing will.

Once inside the offices, the Investigators can locate and obtain any Wernicke Boxes the Society have stolen, as well as being presented with a number of other Mythos-related artefacts. Keepers are cautioned not to allow the Investigators to claim too many artefacts, but this does provide an opportunity for them to reward their Investigators with some useful items.

A more direct, yet dangerous route the Investigators may take is to stage an armed heist. In this case they will not only have to deal with the Society guards, but potentially the local police, who will respond to any kind of break in or armed assault as they would any other crime.



For added horror the Guardian of Angles could choose to manifest when the Investigators break into the offices, turning a simple theft into a deadly game of cat-and-mouse as the creature stalks the Investigators through the darkened offices.

### SCENE: THE FIEND ALESCI

This scene can occur if the Investigators choose to visit Gilberto Alesci to ask about the Hound Box. This scene assumes that the Investigators are taking a diplomatic approach and want to talk to Alesci about the boxes. Alesci, however, has other plans.

Alesci is a suspicious and unpleasant old man, but the possibility of getting his hands on the Lily Box is too much for him to pass up. He will invite the Investigators to visit him at his home in Venice, and suggest they bring the Lily Box. When they arrive he will greet them and invite them in.

Alesci's house is more like a museum than a home; the corridors are filled with dusty shelves of rare books and display cases of strange artefacts. Rare, expensive and disturbing paintings hang on the walls.

As the Investigators enter the house Keepers should make hidden **Spot Hidden** rolls for them. A success will result in the Investigators noticing the inside of the doorframe (and the window frames, should they examine them) are carved with strange, arcane symbols. These are a potent warding spell, keeping (among other things) the Guardian of Angles at bay.

Because of these wards, there is no need to roll for **Strange Occurrences** or **Sightings** of the Guardian while in the house. Similarly, the boxes do not work and the Guardian cannot enter the house while the symbols are intact.

Alesci will quiz the Investigators on what they know about the boxes, why they are investigating them, and for details of Gerald's death (and any other deaths they may have witnesses that are linked to the boxes. A **Psychology** roll will reveal that Alesci derives a perverse pleasure in these deaths. As the Investigators talk to Alesci, Keepers should roleplay how unpleasant and disturbing the old man is. He delights in chaos and death, and is utterly unrepentant at his part in it.

Alesci is quite happy to chat to the Investigators. He plans to kill them shortly, but until then he will reveal several useful pieces of information:

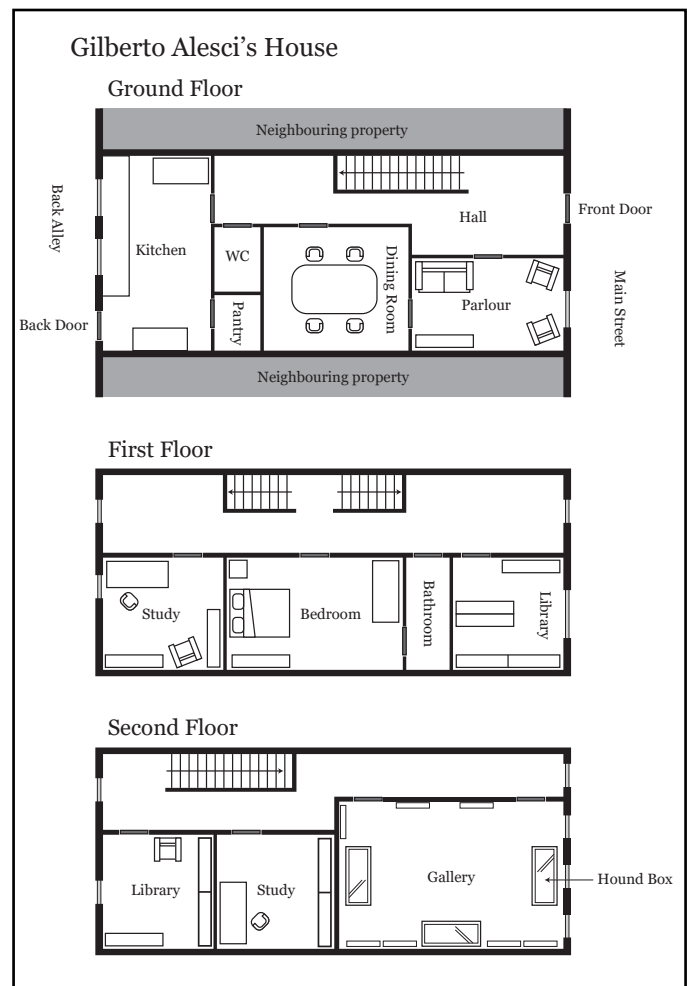
- Alesci is aware of the Society of the Key. He hates them with a passion, seeing them as rivals. He can inform the party as to the Society's interest in the occult, that they are lead by a man named Javier Lozano, and the fact that they seek the boxes for their own gain.
- He will reveal he has owned the Rose, Raven and Owl boxes in the past, and willingly sold them once he had recorded the fragments of the Incantation of Zaal-Ngah contained within them. He knows he only needs one box, plus the full incantation, to learn Yog-Sothoth's secrets safely. He doesn't care that the boxes went on to cause further death; in fact he enjoys the fact that they did.
- Alesci has managed to get a copy of the fragment of the incantation that was inside the Snake box. In fact he now has every part of the Incantation apart from the fragment inside the Lily Box.
- He will confirm he has the Hound box, but is quite uninterested in letting the Investigators see it, or helping them.
- Alesci is quite knowledgeable about the Mythos, and can reveal facts about Yog-Sothoth or other entities should the Investigators ask.

As he talks to the Investigators, Alesci will try to find out if they have the Lily Box with them at that moment. If they do then he will attack them, seeking to overpower them with his magic so he can take the box for himself. While not physically dangerous, Alesci is a powerful sorcerer and will use his magic against the Investigators. This will typically begin with him Enthralling the Investigator he believes is the most dangerous, then using Implant Fear and Clutch of Nyogtha on the others.

If the Investigators do not have the Lily Box with them, or claim they don't, then Alesci will tire of them and send them away, telling them to return with the box as soon as they can. If they do so, he will attack them then.

When Alesci attacks the Investigators it should be a sudden and shocking switch from dialogue to combat. Keepers should describe how he calmly talks to them before suddenly asking for their opposed **POW** roll to resist the effects of his Enthrallment. The old man then lashes out at them with strange, withering magic.

If the Investigators accidentally or intentionally damage or erase any of the warding symbols around the doors or windows of Alesci's home during the confrontation with Alesci (or feasibly, at any time) then the Guardian of Angles will immediately manifest and attack and kill Alesci. This can be one way they deal with the ancient sorcerer, watching as the Guardian bloodily tears him limb from limb (although doing so would require a **Sanity** roll with a potential loss of 0/1d6 SAN).



If the Investigators survive their confrontation with Alesci they may want to search his home. See the **Stealing Alesci's Box** scene below for details on finding the Hound Box.

### SCENE: STEALING ALESCI'S BOX

This scene can occur if the Investigators choose to break into Gilberto Alesci's house and steal the Hound box, rather than talking to him (or perhaps, after talking to him and deciding theft is the better option).

Breaking into Alesci's home is relatively straightforward; he has no alarms and the locks on his doors and windows are simple and easily picked with a successful **Locksmith** roll. However, forcing the locks on the doors or windows runs the risk of accidentally damaging the warding symbols on the door and window frames. If the Investigators take this route, keepers should ask them to make a **Luck** roll; on a success they enter the house with no issues, on a failure they have damaged one of the wards (although they might not realise it). For now, nothing happens, but it will very shortly.

Assuming the Investigators wait until dark to break in then Alesci will be asleep in his bedroom on the first floor; the Investigators need to make successful **Stealth** rolls to avoid waking him. Failure will not wake Alesci, but will result in a muffled snore from his rooms that indicates he has stirred in his sleep. Pushing the roll and failing will result in the old sorcerer waking, and attacking the Investigators.



The Hound Box is kept on the second floor in a locked display cabinet, in a room filled with other strange curios. The fragments of the Incantation of Zaal-Ngah that Alesci has collected are kept in the same case, in a small leatherbound book. The lock on the cabinet is sophisticated, and requires a Hard **Locksmith** roll to pick. Smashing the glass is fair easier, but much noisier.

There are a number of Mythos-related tomes in the same room as the Hound Box; it is possible that the Investigators may take the opportunity to take a few. Keepers are cautioned not to allow the Investigators to claim too many tomes, but this does provide an opportunity for them to reward their Investigators with one or two items.

Once the Investigators have got the Hound Box things start to go south. If they damaged the wards on the doors or windows, now is when the Guardian of Angles turns up. It will first attack Alesci, possibly as the old man sleeps, and then start hunting any Investigators who have looked into any of the boxes. The first thing the Investigators should know of this happening is a bloodcurdling scream from Alesci's bedroom, and the sound of rending flesh. This scream alone is enough to require a **Sanity** roll with a potential loss of 0/1d3 SAN.

Hopefully by this point the Investigators will have the complete Incantation of Zaal-Ngah, which will allow them to banish the Guardian when it then comes for them. Keepers should play up the tension of the scene, however, with the Guardian stalking them through the shadows until the Investigators can utter the incantation.

Another possible conclusion to this scene is, if they did not damage the wards, that Alesci wakes and surprises the Investigators just after they find the box. In this case they will suddenly be faced by the old sorcerer, who will use his spells against them.

## CONCLUSIONS, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

Broadly speaking there are two possible endings to this scenario; the Investigators either succeed in finding the boxes, or at least all the fragments of the Incantation of Zaal-Ngah, and banish the Guardian of Angles, or they fail and end up dead at the hands of either the Guardian, Gilberto Alesci, or the Society of the Key. A minor variation can exist in which the Investigators take too long to find the boxes and the Guardian tracks down and kills Cynthia Rutherford, which ultimately makes the Investigators actions meaningless (unless they are also being stalked by the Guardian).

Ideally the best course for the scenario to take is for the Investigators to follow the the clues as they are laid out, visit the various owners of the other boxes, confront either Gilberto Alesci or Javier Lozano to obtain the final fragments of the Incantation, and then return to Cynthia to banish the Guardian and save her (and any Investigators it was also following).

But what then? Assuming she survives, Cynthia will expect some kind of explanation as to what the Investigators learned about Gerald's death. Depending on how they explain it to her, she will be relieved, horrified, or possibly even traumatised. She will, however, thank the Investigators for their work, and for saving her from the Guardian.

The Society of the Key may or may not survive the scenario intact. If they still exist, they may see the Investigators as enemies now; if so they can become a dangerous antagonist for future scenarios.

And what of Giberto Alesci? The old man is a vengeful and dangerous sorcerer; if he survived and the party have wronged him, will he seek revenge on them?

## REWARDS AND REPERCUSSIONS

If the Investigators successfully saved Cynthia from the Guardian she will offer them a reward of either money, or books from Gerald's collection. If they chose the monetary reward, it is enough to increase their **Credit Rating** by +1d6. The books from Gerald's collection will increase one skill from the following list by +1d6 percentiles: **Appraise, Archeology, History, Occult.**

In addition, the following Sanity increases/decreases may occur depending on what happened during the scenario:

Saving Cynthia	+2d6 SAN
Dismissing the Guardian	+1d4 SAN
Cynthia dies	-1d6 SAN
Jonathan Walsh dies	-1d4 SAN
Isabella Poulan dies	-1d4 SAN

## NPCS

### CYNTHIA RUTHERFORD

#### *Hunted Widow*

Cynthia is a woman in her early 50s with greying hair and a proud bearing. She dresses conservatively and speaks in a strong, but caring manner. A professor of history, Cynthia is highly knowledgeable about a range of subjects, and has a calm, analytical personality.

Cynthia was happily married to her husband Gerald for 25 years, until his violent death a week ago. She loved Gerald dearly and is still very traumatised by his death, but refuses to show her grief too publicly.

Never one to believe in the supernatural, she always treated Gerald's fascination with the occult as an endearing eccentricity. Now, however, she is starting to wonder if there is some truth to it.

STR 40	CON 50	SIZ 60	DEX 50	INT 70
APP 50	POW 60	EDU 80	SAN 55	HP 11
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 7	MP: 12	Luck: N/A

#### **Attacks per round: 1**

No attacks above base

**Skills:** Credit Rating 70, History 80%, Library Use 65%, Language (French) 65%, Language (English) 85%, Persuade 50%, Psychology 50%

## DETECTIVE JACK SUMMERS

### *Disturbed Detective*

Jack Summers was assigned to investigate Gerald Rutherford's death. In only a few visits to the Rutherford house he has seen several strange occurrences, leaving him slightly disturbed at the thought of having to go back there. A few days later he was approached by Valentina di Sousa, who offered him a significant bribe to see the case was closed quickly. As such he ruled the death a suicide. Jack is otherwise a good detective; it is his brush with the supernatural that has caused him to compromise his integrity.

Jack is a tall, well-built man in his mid 40s. He dresses in a smartly and talks in an authoritative manner. He has developed a nervous habit of checking the corners of rooms since experiencing the strange occurrences in the Rutherford house.

STR 50    CON 50    SIZ 70    DEX 40    INT 60  
APP 50    POW 80    EDU 60    SAN 76    HP 12  
DB: 0    Build: 0    Move: 7    MP: 16    Luck: N/A

### **Attacks per round: 1**

No attacks above base

**Skills:** Art/Craft (Acting) 20%, Handgun 45%, Intimidate 45%, Law 55%, Listen 40%, Persuade 40%, Psychology 40%, Spot Hidden 45%

## DOCTOR JONATHAN WALSH

### *Unwitting Collector*

Doctor Walsh is the current owner of the Rose Box. A general practitioner and an amateur antiquarian, Doctor Walsh bought the Box on a whim while on holiday in Italy, largely unaware of its history and the stories associated with it. He has since come to regret his impulsive purchase, and is quite afraid of the box.

Doctor Walsh is a nervous, bookish gentleman in his mid 60s. He is tall and thin, with a receding hairline head and a nervous habit of playing with his glasses. He dresses well, and is softly-spoken and polite.

STR 40    CON 50    SIZ 70    DEX 60    INT 60  
APP 50    POW 50    EDU 80    SAN 50    HP 12  
DB: 0    Build: 0    Move: 7    MP: 10    Luck: N/A

### **Attacks per round: 1**

No attacks above base

**Skills:** First Aid 70%, Language (Latin) 40%, Medicine 75%, Psychology 35%, Psychoanalysis 10%, Science, (Biology) 70%, Science (Pharmacy) 60%

## ISABELLA POULAN

### *Doomed Collector*

Isabella is the current owner of the Raven Box, and owner of Le musée Poulan d'Art Déco. She bought the Raven Box some years, but has only recently become aware of its history. After opening the box, Isabella has become captivated by the visions granted by looking into it, and has worn away much of her sanity by repeatedly gazing into it.

Isabella is a small, slim attractive woman in her mid 40s, with black hair cut in a bob and pale skin. She dresses in fashionable suits, but when the Investigators encounter her she has not changed in several days and looks rather disheveled. She has a wild, strange look in her eyes and constantly jumps at unheard noises.

STR 40    CON 50    SIZ 50    DEX 50    INT 60  
APP 70    POW 60    EDU 80    SAN 30    HP 10  
DB: 0    Build: 0    Move: 8    MP: 12    Luck: N/A

### **Attacks per round: 1**

No attacks above base

**Skills:** Accounting 55%, Archeology 30%, Appraise 75%, History 55%, Library Use 50%, Language (English) 50%, Language (French) 80%, Language (Italian) 40%

## MAXIMILIAN DOUMAS

### *Antiquarian Occultist*

Maximilian is the owner of La Chambre de Murat, and an antiquarian and occultist. He has a little knowledge of the Mythos, but has never really pursued a deeper understanding.

A short, plump gentleman with greying hair and blue eyes, Doumas has a serious manner and speaks quietly and eloquently. He dresses in an expensive suit, an embroidered waistcoat with an antique pocket-watch, and wears small round glasses.

STR 40    CON 50    SIZ 60    DEX 50    INT 60  
APP 50    POW 70    EDU 80    SAN 30    HP 11  
DB: 0    Build: 0    Move: 7    MP: 14    Luck: N/A

### **Attacks per round: 1**

No attacks above base

**Skills:** Appraise 75%, Art/Craft (Fine Art) 45%, Cthulhu Mythos 10%, History 65%, Library Use 40%, Language (English) 60%, Language (German) 35%, Persuade 35%

## ADELLA MOREAU

### *Helpful Lawyer*

Adella is a partner at the legal firm Moreau, Schiffman et Durand. She is enthusiastic and helpful, with a sunny disposition that is at odds with her serious vocation. As part of her job she looks after the Cabinet de Valliant, which she enjoys.

Adella is in her mid 30s, and is pretty and of average height. She wears her auburn hair in a ponytail, and usually dresses in smart work attire.

STR 50    CON 40    SIZ 60    DEX 50    INT 80  
APP 70    POW 50    EDU 60    SAN 30    HP 10  
DB: 0    Build: 0    Move: 7    MP: 10    Luck: N/A

### **Attacks per round: 1**

No attacks above base

**Skills:** Accounting 25%, Charm 45%, History 35%, Law 75%, Library Use 20%, Occult 15%, Persuade 40%, Psychology 60%

## JAVIER LOZANO

### *Worshipper of Yog-Sothoth*

Javier Lozano is an incredibly wealthy property tycoon and leader of the mysterious Society of the Key. He is a disciple of Yog-Sothoth, and seeks to obtain any artefacts that have links to his god no matter the cost. Although genial, there is a menacing air to Lozano, and he has a hair trigger temper.

Lozano is tall and handsome, with dark mediterranean skin and oiled black hair. He is always well-dressed, preferring expensive suits, gold cufflinks and a diamond stud in his right ear.

STR 50    CON 50    SIZ 60    DEX 50    INT 50  
APP 60    POW 80    EDU 60    SAN 60    HP 11  
DB: 0    Build: 0    Move: 7    MP: 16    Luck: N/A

#### **Attacks per round: 1**

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3 + damage bonus  
Switchblade 25% (12/5), damage 1D4 + damage bonus  
.357 Magnum Revolver 40% (20/8), damage 1d8 + 1d4, range 15 yards  
Dodge 25% (12/5)

**Skills:** History 45%, Intimidate 35%, Language (English) 50%, Language (Italian) 25%, Listen 40%, Occult 45%, Persuade 35%, Psychology 30%, Spot Hidden 45%

**Spells:** Call/Dismiss Yog-Sothoth

## VALENTINA DI SOUSA

### *Deadly Enforcer*

Valentina is the primary agent of the Society of the Key, and Javier Lozano's right-hand woman. She is utterly dedicated to serving Lozano and is also a cultist of Yog-Sothoth herself. Valentina is a cold, merciless woman; she feels no remorse at killing to get her way, and is a dangerous opponent.

Valentina is breathtakingly beautiful, with long black hair, pale skin and dark brown eyes. She dresses in elegant European fashion, usually in red, and often wears sunglasses.

STR 70    CON 60    SIZ 70    DEX 80    INT 60  
APP 90    POW 50    EDU 60    SAN 40    HP 13  
DB: +1d4    Build: 1    Move: 8    MP: 10    Luck: N/A

#### **Attacks per round: 1**

Martial Arts 55% (27/11), damage 1D3 + damage bonus  
Combat knife 55% (27/11), damage 1D4 + 2 + damage bonus  
.45 Automatic 60% (30/8), damage 1d10 + 2, range 15 yards  
Dodge 60% (30/8)

**Skills:** Charm 35%, Intimidate 45%, Language (English) 50%, Language (French) 45%, Language (Spanish) 60%, Language (German) 35%, Spot Hidden 40%, Stealth 45%

## SOCIETY OF THE KEY AGENTS

### *Black-clad Thugs*

The Society of the Key employs several dozen agents across Europe, most of them former military or mercenaries. Tough, loyal and paid enough not to ask questions, these thugs carry out the orders of the Society. They usually dress in dark suits and sunglasses, but can dress down when trying to be incognito.

STR 60    CON 55    SIZ 65    DEX 50    INT 50  
APP 50    POW 55    EDU 65    SAN 55    HP 12  
DB: +1d4    Build: 1    Move: 7    MP: 11    Luck: N/A

#### **Attacks per round: 1**

Brawl 40% (20/8), damage 1D3 + damage bonus  
Collapsible baton 40% (20/8), damage 1d8 + damage bonus  
Glock 17 9mm Pistol 30% (15/6) damage 1d10, range 15 yards  
Dodge 35% (18/7)  
**Skills:** Disguise 35%, Intimidate 45%, Listen 40%, Spot Hidden 40%, Stealth 45%

## GILBERTO ALESCI

### *Malevolent Collector*

Alesci is in his 80s but his sun-wrinkled skin and sunken eyes make him look a lot older. He is completely bald, with dark liver spots covering his head, and has dark eyes. He usually dresses in an expensive smoking jacket. Due to his dabbling with magic over the years he has a strange, sinister aura around him. He often has to use an oxygen mask, which he carries around on a small trolley.

Alesci is a cruel and vindictive old man. He delights in the suffering of others and derives a sadistic glee from causing chaos and pain. Alesci covets the Incantation of Zaal-Ngah, for with it he will be able to use the Hound Box without repercussion.

STR 25    CON 20    SIZ 60    DEX 25    INT 60  
APP 25    POW 80    EDU 85    SAN 63    HP 8  
DB: -1    Build: -1    Move: 7    MP: 16    Luck: N/A

#### **Attacks per round: 1**

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3 + damage bonus  
Dagger 30% (15/6), damage 1d4 + 2 + damage bonus  
Dodge 12% (6/2)

**Skills:** Credit Rating 80, Cthulhu Mythos 30%, Intimidate 55%, Occult 80%, Persuade 45%

**Spells:** Clutch of Nyogtha, Elder Sign, Enthrall Victim, Evil Eye, Implant Fear

## THE GUARDIAN OF ANGLES

### *Otherworldly Predator*

The Guardian of Angles is a strange, otherworldly predator from a dimension at right-angles to our own. It can cross from this dimension to ours seemingly at will, but only does so while on the hunt. It is drawn to the Wernicke Boxes, which have some indeterminate link to its dimension. When someone opens one of the boxes, the Guardian immediately picks up their scent, and begins to track them from its dimension, occasionally crossing over to triangulate and get its bearings in our world. It can take the Guardian weeks to hunt down a chosen target, or only days. When it finally strikes, it does so in an orgy of violence.

The Guardian is a tall, gaunt humanoid creature with pale grey flesh and a blank, featureless head. It possesses a wide mouth filled with jagged teeth, and arms almost as long as it is tall, with wide hands and long, grasping fingers.

Magic such as the Voorish Sign can repel the Guardian for a short time, and there are other spells such as the Incantation of Zaal-Ngah which will dismiss it entirely. The Guardian is an intelligent predator; if a target presents too much of a risk, or puts up a fight, the Guardian will cross back into its own dimension and wait for another opportunity.

### **SPECIAL POWERS**

**Dimensional Travel:** The Guardian is able to cross between its own dimension and ours at will, preferably at the conjunction of two angles but not necessarily. Crossing between dimensions costs the Guardian 4 magic points and takes a round to complete. During this time it may be attacked, however it cannot inflict damage on their attackers. As such the Guardian prefers to use this power to ambush its prey.

STR 95    CON 80    SIZ 95    DEX 60    INT 30  
APP 00    POW 50    EDU 00    SAN 00    HP 17  
DB: +1d6    Build: 2    Move: 8    MP: 10    Luck: N/A

**Attacks per round:** 2 (only 1 Bite per round)

**Fighting attacks:** The Guardian can attack with both hands using general unarmed attacks. It may also attempt to grab an opponent, allowing it to bite them the next round.

Fighting 45% (22/9), 1D6 + damage bonus

Grab (mnvr) The Guardian grabs an opponent in one of its many-fingered hands and pulls them close for a bite attack the next round.

Bite 55% (27/11), damage 1d8 + damage bonus

Dodge 30% (15/6)

**Armor:** 4-point thick hide

**Skills:** Stealth 30%

**Sanity Loss:** 0/1D10 Sanity points to see the Guardian of Angles



# HANDOUTS

## HANDOUT #1: GERALD'S NOTES

A mess of paperwork, badly-written notes and printouts from various websites. Many of the printouts have notes scrawled on them in Gerald's awful handwriting. Not much of it makes sense.

A piece of paper with the name 'Dr Jonathan Walsh, Knightsbridge, London' a phone number is written next to it, and an address. Written at the bottom of the paper is a note: *"Went to see Walsh, lucky sod doesn't even realise what he's got. Let me see it, but was nervous about me opening it. Take whiskey next time, might calm him down."*

A flyer for 'Le musée Poulan d'Art Déco'. Written in French, it seems to advertise a museum in Amiens, France that exhibits Art Deco pieces. The flyer has a number of photos of puzzle boxes. One of the photos has been ringed in pen; it shows a box with a raven on the lid. The name 'Isabella Poulan' and a phone number is written on the flyer in biro.

An auction receipt from 'La Chambre de Murat' in Montmartre, Paris. The amount paid is €47,000.00 and the item sold is listed as 'Lily Box, E. Wernicke, est 1935'.

A diary, written by Gerald. Much of it pertains to antiques, research on new acquisitions and day-to-day life. The last few weeks are sporadic, however. The last few entries describe Gerald's purchase of 'the Wernicke Lily Box' in Paris and his excitement over it. Entries follow describing Gerald's attempts at opening the box, which requires solving a puzzle consisting of sliding strips and pressure points on the box. It seems to have taken Gerald a week or so to work out, but finally he opened it.

Entries following this become increasingly incoherent. Gerald writes about *"seeing everything come to an end"* and *"I didn't think it'd be like this"*. Scribbled notes describe *"Seeing a creature, here and not here"* and Gerald's belief that something was hunting him. The last entry reads *"Cynthia looked into the box. How foolish I was, leaving it open! Now it's going to come after her as well. I must find the rest of the inscription, if I am to save us both. I will call Walsh tomorrow, and then Poulan. Then find the other boxes."*

Scribbled notes, seemingly copied from a book. They describe how lamb's blood can be used to paint symbols to ward off evil. The notes have been screwed up, but then flattened out again.

A photocopy of a page from a book that seems to have been occult in nature. The page describes the "Six Wernicke puzzle boxes". Apparently each box is named after the design worked into the lid: the Rose Box; the Lily Box; the Raven Box; the Owl Box; the Snake Box and the Hound Box. The page notes that the boxes can only be opened by solving a complex puzzle worked into their design and that the interior of each box contains part of a spell; the Incantation of Zaal-Ngah. It also notes that opening the box should be done with caution, as *"those that do so will attract the attention of not only the All-who-is-one, but its servant the Guardian of Angles. Only by reciting the full Incantation of Zaal-Ngah can the Guardian be assuaged"*.

## HANDOUT #2: GERALD'S COMPUTER

It looks like Gerald visited several websites repeatedly in the last few weeks:

A website about Elias Wernicke, a German artist born in 1902. Part of the Art Deco movement, Wernicke was primarily a painter but was known to produce small sculptures and wooden curios from time to time. He was known throughout his career for his strange, macabre paintings showing shadowy vistas and cyclopean entities that went against most Art Deco sensibilities. Wernicke had a small following as a painter, however he was most known for the six 'Wernicke Boxes' that he produced in 1935.

The boxes, with their elaborate Art Deco design and complex puzzles, were extremely sought after and sold very well. Sadly Wernicke did not live very long after producing the boxes, dying of 'brain fever' in January 1939.

A page of star constellations, dated 1935.

A page on UFO sightings in the UK and Europe.

A page on 17th century alchemy and the pursuit of the elixir of immortality. The page describes how alchemists would store the elixir in clocks or other vessels to amplify the effects on the user. It also notes that recipes for the elixir varies, but that many alchemists credited 'the Black Pharaoh' for the most potent formula.

### HANDOUT #3: RESEARCH ON THE WERNICKE BOXES

Your research yields the following information, collected from a series of antiques websites and folios:

The so-called 'Wernicke Boxes' are a set of six wooden puzzle boxes, created in 1935 by the German artist Elias Wernicke (1902 - 1939). The puzzle boxes are noted examples of late Art Deco work, and the the craftsmanship involved in making them is singular and well appreciated. Each box is named for the design worked into its lid; the boxes are referred to as the Rose Box, the Lily Box, the Raven Box, the Owl Box, the Snake Box, and the Hound Box. The boxes have changed hands between collectors numerous times since their creation, usually selling for a significant amount at auction.

Each box is the size of a large jewelry box and can only be opened by completing a complex puzzle of sliding pieces and hidden buttons worked into the surface of the box. Once opened a small internal compartment is revealed.

Of the six boxes, only four are accounted for in public record. The Lily Box vanished along with its owner in 1963, and the Snake Box was apparently destroyed in 1975 when a fire consumed the home of its owner.

A number of rumours and legends are attached to the boxes. Some stories claim that Wernicke stumbled upon a formula for immortality and hid a fragment of it inside each of the boxes. Other rumours tell that the boxes are haunted, or that opening them allows you to see the moment of your own death.

### HANDOUT #4: OCCULT RESEARCH THE WERNICKE BOXES

Your research yields the following information:

The Wernicke Boxes have changed hands between collectors repeatedly over the years, with a frequency that seems a little odd. Stories of 'cursed objects' sometimes reference the boxes as examples of such items, and yet they remain highly sought after.

Elias Wernicke, the creator of the boxes, was certainly not unknown in occult circles in the 1930s. His paintings, which often portrayed otherworldly vistas and disturbing, colossal entities, were often lauded by occultists, and Wernicke himself was rumoured to be a practitioner of the dark arts.

Several contemporary occult sources discuss the stories attached to the Wernicke Boxes; the rumours of hauntings, bad luck, and secrets of immortality are repeated to a degree that hints that there may be some kernel of truth behind them. The strange disappearance of the Lily Box along with its owner in 1963 is often attributed to the bad luck the boxes bring, as is the mysterious fire that destroyed the Snake Box in 1975. Certainly there have been a number of deaths in proximity to the boxes. Frequently their arrival at auction is due to the death of a previous owner.

### HANDOUT #5: VALENTINA DI SOUSA'S BUSINESS CARD

An expensive-looking business card.



## HANDOUT #6: VALLIANT'S NOTEBOOK

A small notebook, filled with writing in a mixture of English, French and German, with numerous additional sheets of paper, notes, and photographs stuffed into it. The notebook contains a wealth of information on the Wernicke boxes, concerning their history, design, known owners over the years. While much of the information is interesting only from an antiques point of view, some particular entries catch your eye:

*Current owners: Raven - Isabella Poulan, Amiens, France. Hound - Gilberto Alesci, Venice, Italy. Rose - Jonathan Walsh, London, England. Owl - Lara Breiner, Zurich, Switzerland. Lily - ???*

*"The boxes are named after the designs worked into their lids: the Rose Box; the Lily Box; the Raven Box, the Owl Box and the Hound Box. Another box, the Snake Box, once existed but was destroyed in a fire alongside its owner in 1975. The whereabouts of the Lily Box are currently unknown; the last known owner, Ava Muller of Weirenstadt, vanished under mysterious circumstances in 1963 along with the box."*

*"The true origins of the boxes are known only to a few. Somehow Wernicke communed with Yog-Sothoth, the All-who-is-one. It was this contact that gave Wernicke the inspiration for the boxes, and ultimately caused his downfall.*

*A spark of the Great Key is trapped in each box. Or rather, perhaps, each box opens into the realm of Yog-Sothoth itself. Either way, the visions granted by staring into those faceted mirrors come from a terrible and alien place, one not suited for our fragile, linear minds.*

*Worse still, by accident or by design, opening any of the boxes draws the attention of a terrible creature. The Guardian of Angles tracks those who open a box across the dimensions, stalking them with unwavering, inhuman patience. Once it has your scent, it cannot be stopped except by reciting the incantation Wernicke inscribed into the lids of the six boxes."*

A series of entries describing the boxes, noting the subtleties of their construction and how each differs from the other. There are faded photographs of each box. A piece of paper falls out of the notebook, containing a note in French, which seems more recent than the rest of the notes: *"Since the loss of the Snake Box in '75 the boxes are deadly to any user. No longer can one possess the full incantation. However, I believe a copy of the fragment from inside the Snake Box may exist in the collection of Gilberto Alesci. The old fiend has owned most of the boxes over the years, yet somehow remains untouched by the Guardian. I suspect he has been recording the incantation. It would be just like the vile old vulture to keep the incantation to himself and sell the boxes on, revelling in the death caused by such duplicitous action. I believe he still resides in Venice. I must seek him out, and make some kind of deal with him."*

### VISION 1

The sky is vast and full of stars. Too full of stars. You stand on a windswept hill, above you something colossal hovers in the air, casting a terrible shadow over you. You feel a malign awareness directed at you, and with it a burning light that blots out everything. You blink and step back from the box.

### VISION 2

You are stood on a cold, arid plateau of grey stone. Mist blows around you, chilling your skin and carrying with it a musty smell of mold and open graves. Something moves in the mist, something tall, angular and gangly. The wind rises and you blink dust from your eyes and are suddenly back, stood before the box.

### VISION 3

You see a vision of the past. People you haven't seen for years stand and talk about things you had long forgotten. Their faces are so real it takes your breath away. And yet... something is profoundly wrong here. Some feature or detail you cannot put your finger on. Your head aches. The buzzing of unseen flies fills your ears. The taste of blood fills your mouth. Suddenly you are back, stood before the box.

## VISION 4

You see a vision that must be the future. People you know talk to you, yet they look older. They tell you things, but you cannot hear what they're saying. The world is full of fog and your skin is cold as if numbed by an icy wind. The sky above you is filled with tumultuous clouds racing across the heavens and, above them, something vast and monolithic hangs in the sky. You squeeze your eyes closed, and when you open them are back, stood before the box.

## VISION 5

Time flows past you like a river. Stars wheel overhead as suns flash and die like fireworks. You watch as the universe races towards its own end, with you as the only witness. Well, you... and the presence watching over your shoulder. If you turned your head you'd be able to see it, but if you did that, you know you'd die. Don't look at it. DON'T LOOK. Suddenly you're back, stood looking into the box. The feeling of something looking over your shoulder slowly fades.

## VISION 6

You float in darkness, while all around you shimmer tiny points of light. You somehow know that these lights are each a time and a place, and if you could just move towards them you would travel to that point in spacetime. Something vast moves in the darkness near you; you are a minnow next to a whale compared to it. One of the points of light rises towards you, and in a burst of light you find yourself back, staring at the box.

## SIGHTING 1

For a moment you see a tall, impossibly gangly figure in the corner of the room. You get a brief impression of long arms, grey skin and a blank featureless face until you blink and suddenly the figure is gone.

## SIGHTING 2

You catch sight of a reflection in a window; something moves behind you. A shadow of someone - something- else in the room, with inhumanly long arms and hands like spiders. You turn and no one is there.

## SIGHTING 3

A stench fills your nostrils; dusty, old and unpleasant. The smell of grave-mold and cold tombs. The smell is coming from behind you, but when you turn there is nothing there.

## SIGHTING 4

At the edge of your vision you see something move and turn to see a long-fingered grey-skinned hand slip into the wall, disappearing into the angle where two walls meet.

## SIGHTING 5

Something moves in the corner of your eye; you turn to see something tall and grey slip out of sight. The air is cold and smells of old stone and dust.

## SIGHTING 6

A noise behind you catches your attention; a soft dragging-thump of a footstep. You feel something stalk up behind you, radiating cold and reeking of old dust. The feeling fades as quickly as it came.