Zgrozy:

FUTURE ECHOES

A scenario for Call of Cthulhu 7th edition





Horror starts here!

Future Echoes and other supplements from Zgrozy series are concise materials you can use during Call of Cthulhu games. This booklet is an adventure scenario and so are most of the others, but Zgrozy contain also other materials for the investigators and Keepers alike.

Future Echoes is a concise and universal adventure. It uses English names for NPCs but contains little information about the era and setting, so that it can fit into your campaign easily. By default, the action takes place in the twenties, but setting the story in another era requires only a little tweaking, as described in **Changing the setting** section. If you need pregenerated characters, you can run this adventure using our <u>Investigator Archetypes for Zgrozy</u>.

Scenarios in *Zgrozy* series usually consist of four parts: **Background**, **Hooks**, **Plot** and **Investigation**. The **Background** describes the initial situation and the events leading up to it. The **Hooks** present reasons for the investigators to take interest in the story and the **Plot** gives information on how to role-play the world around the investigators. Finally, the **Investigation** shows how the investigators can solve the mystery.

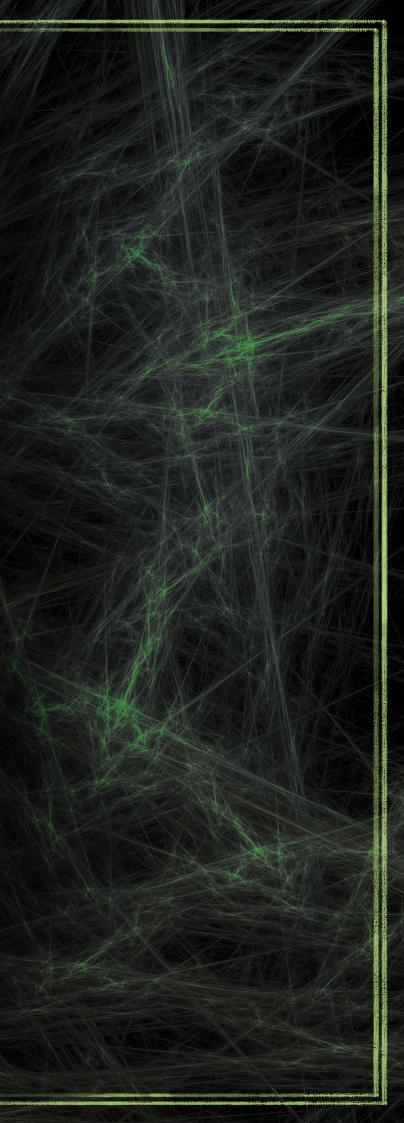
Future Echoes is intended for open-ended play with no scripted events. It's the investigators' choices that will push the story forward. While not every group of players is used to this formula, it should be easy to introduce, as the **Hooks** give the investigators a clear starting point and some ideas about where to go and whom to talk to, and then every encounter gives new clues. Additionally, each major Non-Player Character has a list of typical actions they can perform if you're not sure what should happen next.

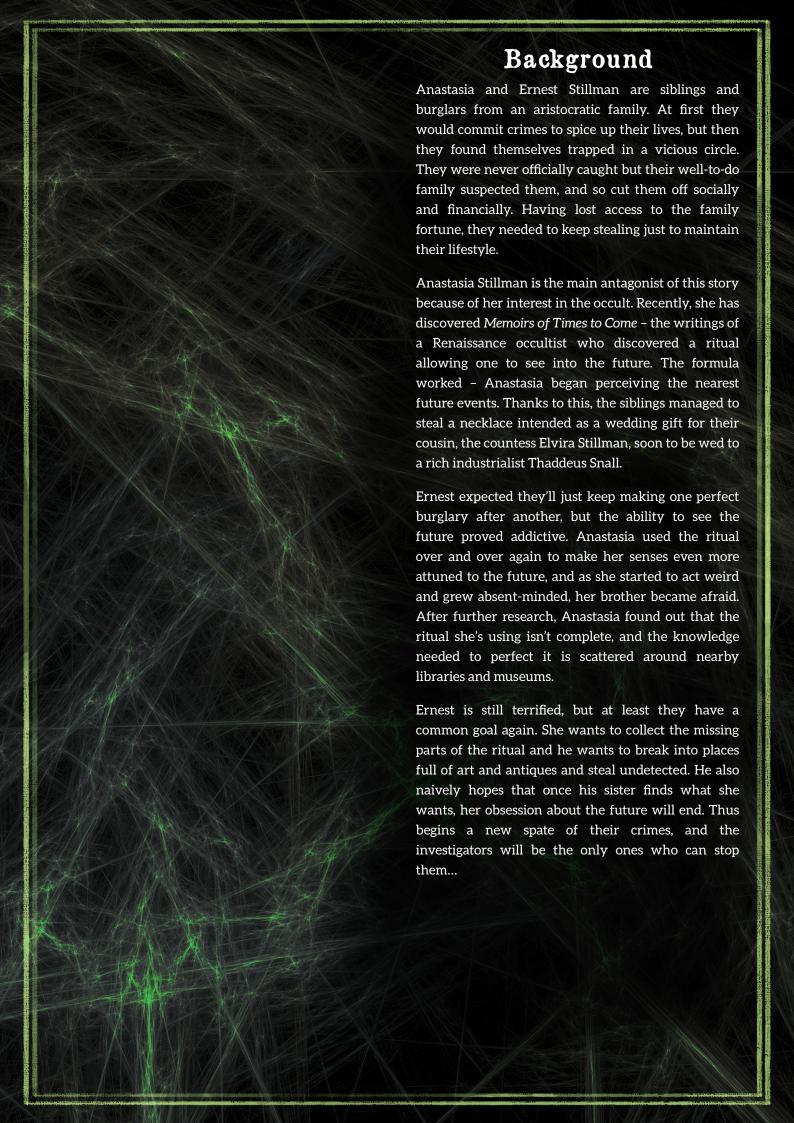
The Zgrozy series originated in Poland and Future Echoes was first released in Polish as Powidoki Przyszłości. "Zgrozy" is a slightly archaic Polish word for "Horrors" or "Terrors". We decided to keep the original title for foreign releases since it sounds unspeakable and blasphemous to non-Polish ears.

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Hooks

The scenario can start right after the theft of Elvira's necklace or after the first burglary in the new streak. It depends mostly on why the investigators are interested in this story. Before describing the plot in more detail, let's take a look at the potential motivations. Every hook can be assigned to either a single character or the entire party. Giving the investigators diverse motivations will make the game more varied and full of interesting inter-party interactions. On the other hand, giving the party a common hook will make them cooperate more closely, and thus I recommend it especially if it's one of the first sessions of your campaign.

The Case

One of the most typical hooks in Lovecraftian games: investigators are detectives or police officers sent to investigate a seemingly perfect crime – or even crimes, if you start after the first burglaries. This simple motivation can be complicated by Samuel Stillman – Ernest and Anastasia's parent and Elvira's foster-father – who is furious at his children but doesn't want them publicly accused of anything. He can press the law to punish them discreetly or even to handle the criminals to him. What's more, official investigators usually have to report regularly to their superiors, and the case is supervised by Inspector John Orchard, a total skeptic when it comes to the supernatural – this will make using the The Isolation motivation much easier.

The Scoop

Investigators want to learn everything about the perfect crime to cover it for the press, striving to reveal the truth or to provide cheap thrills. Samuel Stillman might try to control either them or their editor. This hook gives the investigators an opportunity to publish articles about the case before it's actually closed, influencing the public opinion – that's a lot of power for them!

The Mystery

Another typically Lovecraftian hook – from the start, the characters are searching for the writings of a mysterious occultist. They don't need to believe that magic works, but they surely know the writings are valuable. If The Mystery is used as the leading hook in the story, it would be better to start the session already after the first occult-related robbery – or even during it, as the investigators try to retrieve one of the supplementary artifacts and discover it's just getting stolen! This hook is perfect for investigators with some Mythos experience.

The Scandal

Due to the Stillman siblings' background, this scenario can engage upper-class investigators very easily. Elvira Stillman, Samuel Stillman or Thaddeus Snall can ask them for help in retrieving the necklace. What's more, the investigators themselves can be related to Stillmans. In this case, they might want to stop them, punish them discreetly or even help them evade the law.

The Isolation - An emergent motivation

No matter what motivates the investigators at the start, the events of the game will gradually give them an additional hook – isolation. As the characters discover that burglaries are surrounded by supernatural circumstances and Anastasia Stillman seems to see the future, it will become harder to communicate about the case with people around. It will take hard evidence to convince anyone that "magic" is happening. The investigators should feel that they're the only ones who understand the gravity of situation and thus the only ones who can deal with it. Playing this scenario can even lead investigators into life-long isolation if they learn the ritual and decide to use it.

You're not paid to talk me into believing that my daughter is a clairvoyant!

Plot

As the plot starts, the key Non-Player Characters are Anastasia Stillman, her brother Ernest, their father Samuel, their cousin Elvira, her fiancée Thaddeus Snall and, finally, Inspector John Orchard. Two antiques traders – a divorced couple, Urban and Irene Thomasson – can provide investigators with valuable information but won't act on their own, so they are described in the Investigation section.

Anastasia plans further robberies, but their pace should depend on investigators' progress. New crimes will create tension, a welcome addition to any game, but introducing them too often will leave the players with no time to investigate things that have already happened.

Let's start presenting the plot in a typical *Call of Cthulhu* way – with a book.

Memoirs of Times to Come

Writings of a Renaissance occultist collected in a small leather-bound book. The mysterious author doesn't give his name, but boasts a lot – he studied occult traditions of Europe and Asia, spoke with the goddess Hekate, knows from a vision that one day the Church will include his writings in the Bible, and so on. His identity shall be revealed "when the time is right".

The Memoirs are mostly filled with vague thoughts on the nature of time. They suggest one should look at time as an additional dimension of space – a surprisingly modern approach for a Renaissance writer. The main part of the writings describes the Unbinding of Sight ritual:

Unbinding of Sight

Cost: 1D6 Sanity points to draw the glyph, 5 Magic Points and 1D8 Sanity points to meditate on it.

Casting Time: 5 hours to draw the glyph, then 1 hour each time a character meditates on it.

The spell consists of a complex glyph and a meditation technique required to attune to it. A character learns both of those as they study the spell. Once the glyph is drawn, looking at it causes vague hallucinations and costs 0/1 Sanity, but gives no

knowledge about the future.

Gaining any knowledge requires meditating on the glyph for an hour, eyes following the patterns described in the *Memoirs*. This practice gradually frees ones' sight from its focus on the present, allowing one to see afterimages of the future. However, as humans are completely unprepared for such experiences, they are left exhausted, and most visions are incomprehensible.

After paying the cost of the spell, its user makes an **INT** roll. On a failed roll they gain no Visions, on a regular success one Vision, two on a hard success and, finally, five on an extreme one. Every additional element of the ritual that Stillman siblings are after gives a bonus die to that roll.

Visions are hazy impressions that can be understood only right before the foreseen future would come to pass. Mechanically, Visions are a point pool that can be spent to understand what will happen in the next few seconds. By using them, a character can automatically get a Hard success on a single roll when success depends on timing or predicting other characters' actions. They can, for example, sneak past a guard when he looks another way, hit an enemy by predicting their dodge, or understand that Samuel Stillman seeing his daughter will be too shocked to call for help at once.

Vision pool lowers by 1 each time a character goes to sleep, as their perception gets back to normal. If they go to sleep with no Visions, their attunement to the future ends. While they are attuned, they can force an additional Vision at any time by sacrificing 1D6 Sanity and permanently reducing Power by 1D6 points. It's the only way for characters who failed the initial **INT** roll to benefit from the ritual.

As long as the ritual effects last, the character adds a penalty die to all **Listen** and **Spot Hidden** rolls, as future echoes interfere with normal senses.

If meditation is interrupted, the spell gives no benefits but still costs Sanity and Power Points.

Vision addiction

Future echoes don't give much useful information, but they do give an addictive feeling of omniscience. If a character loses 5 or more Sanity when meditating or forcing a Vision, they become addicted to the future instead of risking temporary insanity. Every time they could benefit from a Vision, they need to make a **POW** roll or use it immediately, even if they would have to force it. What's more, after going to sleep and waking up, they have to make a **POW** roll or start the day with another casting of *Unbinding of Sight*. After this roll the addiction effects cease, but they might return if the character performs the rite again.

What's worse, meditating about the glyph makes a character think about a potential event they are worried about. It can be a close person's death, parting ways with a love interest, a war, the apocalypse, or any other dreadful event. As long as the character has any Sanity Points, they only see hazy glimpses related to this topic. When they lose all Sanity, however, they get a clear vision of this disaster and are compelled to share it with everyone around them. The vision becomes the truth in the game world and, if it doesn't contradict the Keeper's approach to player agency, cannot be altered. It might come to pass in years, centuries, or eons, of course.

When an investigator uses the glyph, the Keeper should choose their obsession by consulting it with the player. If a character using the glyph becomes temporarily or long-term insane for other reasons, the Keeper can decide that the standard insanity effects are replaced with noticing hidden meanings in other complex shapes and patterns and searching for them compulsively. It's up to the Keeper if this behavior is pure madness or if the character has really discovered a deeper meaning in the world.

The Memoirs and the Mythos

By default *Memoirs of Times to Come* fit the *Call of Cthulhu* game simply because of their general themes and mood – it's a mysterious book that allows one to see beyond normal senses at the price of sanity. That's universal and easy to fit into any campaign. If you want, however, you can decide that this is an actual Mythos tome that contains allusions to the timerelated forces of Lovecraft's universe, and that it gives its readers Cthulhu Mythos points.

If you want to make the *Memoirs* a Mythos tome, use the stats below, given in two versions depending on how powerful you want the book to be:

Sanity loss: 1D6 or 2D4+1

Cthulhu Mythos: +2%/+4% or +3%/+8%

Mythos Rating 15 or 28

Study: 4 weeks or 10 weeks

Suggested spells: Contact Hound of Tindalos, Fist of Yog-Sothoth, Unbinding of Sight, in the stronger version Call/Dismiss Yog-Sothoth, Time Gate.

Old Gods will rise from the earth and new ones will fall from the sky. Together they'll turn humanity to ash. We are the last generation.

-a reader of the *Memoirs*, afraid of the apocalypse



The Stillman siblings

The idea to became criminals started with Ernest. Both Stillmans, spoiled by their luxurious childhood, are decadent and amoral. Their crimes were never discovered by the law, but their family knows about them and is disgusted with their behavior. The siblings' relatives don't want the criminals to be publicly caught, however, as it would stain the family reputation. Anastasia and Ernest have traveled a lot to evade their kin. For their last robbery, however, they came back to their hometown. The reason for their return was petty malice - they don't approve of Elvira's engagement with Thaddeus, a "commoner", and they stole the amulet for its value, but also to play a trick on the betrothed. The siblings pretend to be a couple and they stay under false names in "White Rose", a nice and discreet suburban hotel.

The siblings' relationship is a quagmire. Anastasia loves her brother but she can't help looking into the future. The more she uses the glyph, the better she sees the moment of Ernest's death – it's her obsession. She tries to push her brother away from her, hoping that this will make the deadly visions stop. Ernest, however, is worried about Anastasia and doesn't intend to leave her. The more she works on improving the ritual, the more he wants to drag her away from occult research.

Anastasia, I see your passion – but it's not you anymore. You're becoming someone else!

-Ernest Stillman

Ernest Stillman

Anastasia's brother has always seen eye to eye with her, her interest in the occult being one of the few things they don't have in common. He is just as clever and addicted to danger as her. Now he is terrified about how she changed and feels distant from her for the first time ever. He agreed to the new robberies, naively hoping that a common goal will rebuild their strained relationship. He can do anything to regain his sister, and he won't accept that it's probably not possible anymore.

S 45 CON 60 SIZ 50 INT 75 POW 55

DEX 70 APP 65 EDU 65 SAN 47 HP 11

Damage Bonus: none Build: 0

Mov: 8 Magic Points: 11

Weapon: Firearms (.38 revolver) 35% (17/7), 1D8 damage

Skills: Credit Rating 55%, Disguise 45%, Dodge 35% (17/7), Intimidate 70%, Listen 50%, Locksmith 65%, Persuade 55%, Psychology 45%, Spot Hidden 50%

Typical actions:

- Protects his sister at all costs
- Does his best to avoid killing anyone during the robberies
- Mocks his family and all aristocracy
- Does anything that can stop his sister from using Unbinding of Sight
- Betrays his sister to stop her
- Gives Anastasia's plans to investigators or the police

Anastasia Stillman

An intelligent heiress not impressed by boring chores of a typical rich girl. Drawn to mystery and danger since childhood, Anastasia eagerly joined Ernest's life of crime. The occult has been her passion for long, and after returning to her hometown she managed to buy *Memoirs of Times to Come*.

She used the Unbinding of Sight ritual for the first time to show Ernest that her interest in the occult can be useful. Thanks to her visions, they easily stole Elvira's necklace from Ivone Thomasson, a jeweler. Ernest was confused, excited and sure they'll plan further perfect crimes soon, but all Anastasia did after the robbery was looking deeper and deeper into the glyph. Finally she understood that the clairvoyance ritual can be enhanced by using other writings and artifacts connected to the Memoirs.

She suggested they should break into places where those utensils are kept. Her brother agreed, seeing this plan as the only chance to use her new talent according to their original idea – and simply to be with her and avoid an argument.

The newly gained occult power has quickly made Anastasia an addict, and now it's stripping her humanity away. She is aware that she can shatter her mind, but she won't stop using the glyph anyway. This fills her with a mix of nervous ecstasy and grim determination.

Stats as Ernest but only 31 Sanity and different skills: base Persuade and Psychology, Library Use 65%, Occult 66%.

Anastasia's Madness

Throughout the entire adventure, Anastasia is under the effect of the *Unbinding of Sight* ritual and vision addiction. You can count her further Sanity and Power loses according to the rules given in this scenario or just assume that she loses the last point of Sanity in a suitably dramatic moment. When her Sanity reaches zero, she'll see a vision of her brother's death and share it with everyone around her. Choose a death cause that suits the story so far – optimally a very immediate one! It's up to you if this future is really unavoidable or if the investigators can change it with some effort, but either way, Anastasia believes it's set in stone.

Typical actions:

- · Organizes another burglary
- Closes herself in the hotel room and investigates the glyph
- · Protects and shields Ernest
- Tries to repel her brother
- Muses on the delight of seeing Time itself
- Announces what will happen in a moment

You won't destroy me. I am destroying myself – and don't you dare to stop me! It's a beautiful end...

-Anastasia Stillman

Samuel Stillman

The father of the siblings. After discovering their criminal proclivities, he declared them dead to him and channeled all his love into Elvira – his niece, a half-orphan, a girl just as clever as the siblings, but without their impropriety. Samuel cares deeply for his family. He is also a proud aristocrat who doesn't acknowledge how noble birth is losing its meaning in the modern world and considers himself a man above reproach. He has no qualms about intimidating the police or paying detectives or even thugs in order to catch the siblings and regain the necklace without threatening the family's reputation with a public trial.

STR 60 CON 70 SIZ 65 INT 65 POW 70

DEX 50 APP 60 EDU 50 SAN 70 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4 Build: +1

Move: 7 Magic Points: 14

Weapon: Fighting (heavy cane) 60% (30%/12%), damage 1D6+1D4

Skills: Charm 50%, Credit Rating 95%, Firearms (Rifle) 50%, Intimidate 50%, Notice 50%, Persuade 60%, Spot Hidden 50%

Typical actions:

- Praises Elvira
- Indulges his guests with expensive drinks and cigars
- Gets furious at any sign of disobedience
- Tries to bribe the investigators and policemen
- Keeps repeating that this city belongs to him

Elvira Stillman & Thaddeus Snall

A perfect couple – modern, young, attractive and deeply in love with each other. Both have progressive opinions and don't see Elvira's aristocratic roots as something that could stand between them. Thaddeus is furious at the theft and wants the guilty to be punished publicly. It might well put him into conflict with Samuel – in that case, Elvira would first try to mediate, and eventually take Thaddeus' side. The betrothed are far from believing in anything supernatural.

Both have stats as Samuel, but Credit Rating 65%, **CON** and **SIZ** 50 (no Damage Bonus, Build 0), base Intimidate and weapon skills.

Typical actions:

- Inviting the investigators for tea
- · Organizing a charity event
- Showing their love publicly
- Complaining about conservative attitudes

These damned thieves prove that nobility is hogwash! Elvira would be just as perfect if she were a peasant's daughter!

-Thaddeus Snall

The Law

John Orchard, the main police officer of the neighborhood where the burglary happened, is a torn man. On one hand he wants to capture and punish the burglars, on the other he suspects them to be the Stillman siblings. He knows that if he exposes their crimes, Samuel can take revenge, maybe even force the police to fire him.

That's why John sent his men to investigate the crime scene, but didn't share his suspicions with them. He hopes rank-and-file policemen will gather the clues and then he'll decide what to do next.

The investigators can meet the policemen at any point during their investigation. John can be found at the police station or in Samuel's villa during a "friendly" talk with the aristocrat.

Typical policeman stats:

STR 60 CON 55 SIZ 60 INT 50 POW 50

DEX 55 **APP** 45 **EDU** 30 **SAN** 50 **HP** 11

Damage Bonus: 0 Build: 0

Move: 8 Magic Points: 10

Weapon: Firearms (pistol) 45% (22%/9%), damage 1D8

Skills: Dodge 45% (22%/9%), Fighting (Brawl) 45%, Notice 60%, Intimidate 50%, Law 35%, Persuade 35%, Spot Hidden 60%.

John Orchard's stats are better when it comes to the following: **INT** 60, **EDU** 55, Credit Rating 45%, Fast Talk 55%, Psychology 40%

John's typical actions:

- Notes down anything suspicious
- Warns about meddling in aristocrats' affairs
- Confiscates evidence and notes

InvestigationFurther burglaries

There is no set order to when further burglaries should happen. Artifacts from every location are equally precious to Anastasia. Simply introduce a new burglary each time the plot stalls or the investigators don't know what to do next.

A single burglary is enough for the investigators who know about the *Memoirs* to understand what the criminals are after. A character hearing what was stolen can make a **Library Use** or **Occult** roll to infer that. If they don't know about the *Memoirs*, they get a penalty die, but if they succeed nevertheless, it turns out they have heard about this book somewhere.

Town hall archive

It contains a letter by an 18th century occultist who wrote his fiancée about the *Memoirs*, describing how to improve the ritual described therein. The town hall is protected by three guards (stats as policemen) and is located near the police station, but nobody suspects that it can be a target of a burglary.

Urban Thomasson's antiques

Anastasia bought the *Memoirs* here and now she understands that *Treaty on Proportions*, a Renaissance geometry handbook, will help her perfect the glyph. She will only buy from the bookstore if she considers it safe for her, otherwise she'll send Ernest there or plan a burglary. Urban knows Anastasia and if he meets her again, he'll surely notice that she seems strange. The bookstore can't afford any guards.

Ivone Steiner's Jewelry

After numerous arguments, Urban's wife divorced him, returned to her maiden name and opened her own jewelry shop. Stillman siblings stole the necklace from this very place. One of Ivone's most precious wares is a nineteenth-century copy of the Reverse Chronometer, an intricate hourglass crafted by the *Memoirs'* writer. Looking at sand slipping though the Chronometer allows one to focus deeper on the glyph. The shop has a bodyguard, Anatol Bohum, a conscientious Belarussian who has been obsessed with watching the property since the last robbery (policeman stats, local language 45%).

Local museum

Museum of art or literature or simply the most famous museum in town. The collection contains excerpts from the *Memoirs* by the same occultist whose letter is in the town hall. Excerpts are kept here as a part of "History of Superstition" collection. The museum is always watched by two poorly paid, overworked guards (policemen stats, but a penalty die in all rolls).

The Stillman manor

Samuel collects old prints and his collection includes anonymous Latin medieval treaty *Contemplations on the Nature of Time*, often referenced in the *Memoirs*. After the necklace theft, Samuel pressed the police into keeping watch over his manor, so there are always at least three policemen nearby.

You're in my house not only in this manor. This town belongs to me!

-Samuel Stillman

Clues

Each of the clues described below can let the investigators discover the scenario's main plot if they scrutinize it deeply enough. Depending on when you start the story and on investigator motivation, some of the clues might not be available from the start.

Ivone Steiner's shop

Ivone Steiner and Anatol Bohum do their best to maintain the shop's reputation despite the robbery. They are very hesitant to talk about the theft. Anatol in particular avoids this topic, because he feels he failed his employer. Investigators can encourage them to speak with good role-playing and social skill rolls.

Ivone can tell them she was visiting Thaddeus Snall at the time of the robbery (Thaddeus can confirm it). Anatol can share his suspicions that the burglary was planned in advance. He was in the toilet when the burglars came, and when he jumped out, they were already disappearing in the back door. He only managed to hear a male voice shouting "you were right, dear, the guard wasn't there!". Anatol will be very hostile to any suggestions that the person who staged the burglary could be Ivone herself – he correctly believes that his employer would never do anything like that.

Urban Thomasson often takes a stroll near Ivone's shop. If asked by the investigators he'll explain that he avoids meeting his ex-wife, but he's worried about her and checks if everything's alright with her. If they ask him about Stillman siblings, he'll confess Anastasia has recently bought the *Memoirs* in his shop. Only a social skill roll or hard evidence will convince him that the siblings are the burglars – he likes Anastasia too much.

If Urban gets a hint that it might be important, he'll mention that the Reverse Chronometer kept in Ivone's shop was crafted by the same person who wrote the *Memoirs*. If the investigators ask about the book, the Chronometer, or other occult topics, Thomasson can tell them about all five *Memoir-related* artifacts.

Talking to the police

John Orchard likes to complain. He repeats woefully that the burglary was a perfect crime – done in broad daylight on a busy street, but with no witnesses. Anatol didn't tell him what he heard because he didn't want a shadow of accusation to fall over Ivone. Orchard isn't superstitious, so he believes the burglars must have simply watched the shop closely, waiting for a perfect moment. He suspects the Stillman siblings, but he's afraid of Samuel's reaction and not eager to share this suspicion.

Criminal contacts

The investigators may find, or may already have, contacts in the local criminal underworld. Low-rank criminals think about the Stillman siblings with a mix of respect and envy. They know Anastasia and Ernest are in the city and suspect them of the necklace robbery, but they prefer to keep quiet about it. Making them speak requires a social skill or **Credit Rating** roll. A hard success lets the investigator hear about Black Joe, a petty thief who knows where the siblings are living. Joe will try to betray both parties he'll share what he knows with the investigators, but also warn Stillmans about them.

Failing a pushed roll in any interaction with the criminals might end with a brawl or a beating.

Memoirs of the Times to Come

If the investigators know about the book, they can find out in any library that its readers were fascinated by the understanding of the future it contains, but also highly skeptical about the author's conviction that this approach allows to influence time in any way.

It's easy to trace the *Memoirs* to Urban Thomasson, no rolls are required. A **Library Use** roll lets one realize that there are also other artifacts related to this tome – a regular success reveals one item, a hard one two, and an extreme one all of them.

Aftermath

It's impossible to predict how Future Echoes will end. Keep playing as long as you're enjoying it and as long as there are still plot threads to be explored. The story might end with the siblings' death, their escape, with insane Anastasia being committed to an asylum and Ernest returning to their father in despair... It all depends on how the game plays.

After the adventure, the Keeper should award the investigators 1D4 Sanity points for every difficult situation they solved or tragedy they evaded, up to 3D4.

Changing the setting

Future Echoes are easy to adapt to an earlier setting, and they fit almost any historical period – you just have to modify the range of Samuel's influence and the time of the Memoirs' creation. Running it in a more contemporary times requires you to consider the developments in communication technology and security measures.

An interesting way to modernize the scenario would be to assume that the *Unbinding of Sight* ritual allows one to see all possible versions of a few nearest seconds – thus Anastasia could, for example, see the password to a laptop she just opened.

In more contemporary settings, noble birth might not work well as a source of Samuel's influence. It might be better to decide that Stillmans are filthy rich or dealing with politics. Thaddeus Snall should be powerful for a different, maybe controversial, reason, so that Samuel can approve of his relationship with Elvira while the siblings do not.

