

IN THE VERY END OF HARVEST [MATURE]

A SCENARIO FOR NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS BY MATTHEW TARPLEE (HUNDMATHRA) RPG GEEK ONE SHEET CONTEST 2015

GUMSHOE, Night's Black Agents are a trademarks of PelgranePress Ltd and used with permission. I agree to allow Pelgrane Press, Ltd and to allow anyone to redistribute my submission non-commercially. This submission cannot be distributed commercially.

DIRECTOR'S EYES ONLY BRIEFING

Author's note: the adventure presented here is a rough framework. Many of the details are left purposely incomplete to allow the Director to tailor the adventure to their campaign mode and specific vampire concept (or any of the pregenerated vampire archetypes from the core book). The author suggests allowing the players to shape the specifics of the adventure either through direct input or their paranoia, suppositions, and table chatter.

THE JOB

Iraqi warlord Faris Abd al-Mumīn has survived a long time; through the revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, the Saddam years and both invasions of Iraq by the US. He prospered under al-Maliki, but now with the rise of DAESH (ISIL to the westerners) and the failure of the Iraqi state, he has seen the writing on the wall. Getting himself and his legitimate assets out of the country is relatively uncomplicated. Getting the millions in US currency embezzled from Iraqi reconstruction funds, CIA bribes, and stolen cultural artifacts is a lot more complicated. The loot is in play and the Agents have been tasked to retrieve it.

UNKNOWN UNKNOWNNS

The most prized of Abd al-Mumīn's cultural artifacts is a sarcophagus bearing a vampiric entity that he refers to as al-Qadīm. Depending on the Director's concept, the sarcophagus can be: Babylonian **[supernatural][alien]**, rumored to contain the remains of a Islamic saint **[alien] [damned]**, or a soviet era containment vessel **[mutant]**. Abd al-Mumīn can be: a willing servant or unwitting pawn of al-Qadīm. Abd al-Mumīn may view al-Qadīm as a source of immortality, a weapon, and/or a final

bargaining chip. Conversely Abd al-Mumīn could be much older then he appears to be.

OPFOR

The Director can add an extra layer of complexity by adding a third competing faction for the treasure. This can ramp up the pressure on the players, add an extra element of uncertainty, and drive the momentum of the story forward. ISIL seems ready made to serve in this capacity. The natural choice is to have ISIL working for a hostile vampire faction. Use the Militia or Terrorist templates (NBA pg 69,70) for rank and file, and the Spec Ops Soldier (NBA pg 70) for lieutenants. Directors who want to add an element of the supernatural can have the antagonists led by a Renfield (NBA pg 152) or Dhampir (NBA pg 149). Conversely, having ISIL trying to hunt down and destroy the vampires inverts expectations nicely.

THE FACILITATOR

The Agents are recruited for the **Job** by Mitchel Roberts, Abd al-Mumīn's former CIA handler, who is working as a middleman on behalf of their secretive employers (the employers may be a legitimate government agency looking for deniable assets or something more sinister). Roberts can be presented as a cynical opportunist (either fully retired or working as a private contractor) or a world weary patriot, still laboring mostly anonymously for the agency.

- Roberts can provide insights into Abd al-Mumīn's capabilities, a rough sketch of his known network; he has connections to Sadr City and Basra, and solid estimate of the amount of illicit funds he is trying to move (quite literally large bales of US currency).
- At 70, Abd al-Mumīn has outlived many of

his rivals and most of his immediate family. His eldest son, Harun, was killed during the Iran-Iraq war, Asad, the middle son, died during the 2003 invasion, and his youngest, Bahir, was killed fighting DAESH. His wives, Ain and Hafa, and their two daughters, Juman and Nada, all disappeared or died under mysterious circumstances. He is rumored to have a fourth illegitimate son by a mistress. Abd al-Mumīn has become more reclusive since the death of Bahir.

- Abd al-Mumīn has a reputation for playing both sides against the middle, and cold blooded pragmatism when it comes to changing allegiances to the winning side. His militia is linked to a number of alleged atrocities.
- Towards the end of their working relationship, Abd al-Mumīn's health began to deteriorate and he became interested in more esoteric subjects (occultism and/or fringe science depending on the Director's chosen idiom)
- Abd al-Mumīn's clan is involved in shipping and they own some oil interests. He has personally increased his wealth first through accepting CIA bribes to switch sides during the surge and inform on his rival militias. He later secured and then embezzled from several reconstruction contracts. There are rumors that his shipping companies have made a lucrative sideline in smuggling (most recently looted antiquities) though there are also persistent rumors about human trafficking as well. **Accounting, Bureaucracy, or Traffic Analysis** spends can show ownership of a small fleet of ships

of various registries including **The Black Ceres**.

- Abd al-Mumīn has started grooming his illegitimate son, Da'ud al-Basri (**The Playboy**), as his successor and has him listed as the head of a number of the dummy corporations.

THE PLAYBOY

Da'ud poses as an art dealer; he can be found either partying in Ibiza, or attempting to wheel and deal in Dubai. As a narcissistic member of the nouveau riche, Da'ud is vulnerable to social engineering or other interpersonal methods. More aggressive information gathering techniques run the risk of alerting Abd al-Mumīn.

- Da'ud has been brokering the sales of the smuggled antiquities and is working on brokering a deal for the sarcophagus. He will readily divulge the location of **The Warehouse (Core)** either through appalling operation security or proof of the sarcophagus' providence (smartphone pictures with intact geotags, bragging about his dangerous connections, etc.) but he is unaware of its true significance.
- With an appropriate spend he will divulge a rough timetable for the evacuation, and the location of where the loot is being offloaded after being smuggled out of Iraq, but he doesn't know how it's leaving the country or what vessel it's on. With a 2-point spend he will reveal how to contact the smuggling party when they are en route.

THE WAREHOUSE

The warehouse is located in Sadr City. Finding it may be the least of the Agent's worries as the locals bear a deep-seated grudge against westerners. Heavy use of **Networks, Disguise/Language, Streetwise, Human Terrain**, or old fashioned bribes will be necessary to operate unmolested. Depending on the

Director's narrative concept, tracking down the caravan may be as simple as shadowing the trucks as they leave the compound. Alternatively, the caravan's route should be readily accessible (retrievable from an undamaged SIM card, hard drive, or memory stick from a hastily destroyed device, or one of the locals may volunteer the information for a small cash donation.). Investigating the warehouse interior yields clues about the sarcophagus' true nature.

- Incomplete records hinting at its contents: clay tablet fragments, rubbings, or old medieval Arabic texts or partial/damaged schematics, etc...
- Physical evidence of the sarcophagus: wood or stone fragments, anomalous soil residue, chemical preservatives or refrigerants, expended strontium 90 batteries, etc...

AL-KHIDHIR AMBUSH

The caravan follows Highway 8, a smaller and more circuitous route from Bagdad to Basra. The Agents may choose to ambush the convoy in some of the more remote stretches, or they may decide to watch and wait. If they haven't done so already, this is an opportune time for the **OPFOR** to make an appearance.

- The convoy is either a diversion or the rump end of the assets being evacuated. It is carrying approximately \$10,000 USD in Iraqi dinars and some smaller less valuable artifacts; more ominous is the bloodstained medical equipment.
- Some of the cargo are blocks and/or banes specific to the Director's vampire idiom: white phosphorus, weaponized silver nitrate, du'a's (prayers) chalked on the doors windows and loading gates of the trucks, etc...
- (**Core**) the loot is being smuggled out of the country on **The Black Ceres**, a ship docked at Al Maqal Port in Basra. This can be discovered by: communications intercepts, a doctored cargo manifest,

interrogating one of the drivers, or by tailing one of the survivors.

THE BLACK CERES

The climax of the investigation happens onboard **The Black Ceres**, a small coastal tanker with Georgian Registry. One of the ship's storage tanks has been converted into a concealed smuggling hold which contains the loot and the sarcophagus. For dramatic effect the Agents catch up with the ship at night and underway, unbeknownst to the Agents in the claustrophobic bowels of the tanker, al-Qadīm has awoken and hungers. Depending on the Director's preference, when the Agents arrive, the crew can be: alive and oblivious to the danger that has woken below them, fighting for their lives or hiding (either against al-Qadīm, **OPFOR**, or both), or conspicuously absent. Al-Qadīm will wait for the Agents to go below decks before attacking. It will try to isolate members from the group and ambush them one by one.

- For Directors who don't have a Vampire Archetype in mind, the **Nosferatu (Double Tap pg 110)** makes an excellent template for al-Qadīm and can be easily customized to fit the Director's chosen idiom. Drop garlic as a bane/dread, add running water as a block, change the compulsion to "isolate prey, attack weakest target first, kill and drain a fallen enemy", and change the requirement to "must sleep in sarcophagi (al-Qadīm cannot benefit from the daily full health refresh without this)."
- The **Ghoul (NBA pg 150)** also makes a good and thematically appropriate template as well.
- If the Agents manage to escape and/or defeat al-Qadīm there are a number of loose ends that can be explored if this scenario is incorporated into a larger campaign.