

# The Inheritance of Doctor Spallanzani

## General Background

A 19<sup>th</sup> century world in which technology has gone rather steampunk, with a worrying amount of mad science – or rather, *unconventional philosophy*, that being the traditional term in the setting.

As this is something of a problem for public order, the *Department of Unconventional Philosophical Resolutions* exists to deal with such matters as best they can. This is the only department of the Home Office to have originated as a platoon of the Royal Engineers, but it now functions as a semi-secret intelligence agency. Agents have a rank structure, and can exert authority over local law enforcement when necessary (they carry identity cards), but are instructed to remain discreet for preference, as it makes their investigations easier and avoids public disquiet.

They also get their own telex machines in their homes, summoning them to action in a moment.

## Scenario Background

*Doctor Nathanel Spallanzani* was a relatively harmless mad scientist who specialized in amazingly sophisticated automatons, using a combination of clockwork and alchemy. After some early projects in his Central European homeland earned him an excess of notoriety, he decamped to *Thornwail Isle*, little more than a tiny rock with a medieval tower on it off the Hebridean island of *Herridmirk*, to work in privacy. The Department became aware of him, but noted that he seemed to be causing no trouble, so they consulted with their colleagues in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who assured them that Spallanzani was in general harmless. The Department does not like to suppress useful research, as the British Empire's prosperity is built largely on such ingenuity, while having eccentric scientists where they can watch them is better than driving them underground – and in fact Spallanzani *was* harmless enough in himself. So they never realized that they had been fed a line by Vienna.

Because the other fact was that Spallanzani was funding his operations by selling the products of his ingenuity to “connoisseurs”, in the fond belief that his customers appreciated his beautiful dancing dolls and mechanical servants. Actually, various European factions who were acquainted with Spallanzani's early work had identified its less ethical potential, and were purchasing his automatons to reprogram them as spies and assassins.

In order to facilitate his sales, Spallanzani employed the services of the infamous anarchist smuggler *Kapitan Johannes Leiden*, who took the shipping jobs on to finance his usual program of delivering guns and explosives to revolutionary movements all across Europe. Leiden came to know and like Spallanzani, and realized that he was sadly unworldly and far too trusting when dealing with powerful men and aristocrats (who Leiden doesn't trust an inch). He was unable to talk Spallanzani out of these dealings, but he did persuade him to at least take a few precautions – including depositing a full record of his activities with a London solicitor, *Makepeace & Frobisher*, and letting it be known that this would be released to other parties in the event of his death.

Unfortunately, not all of Spallanzani's customers necessarily had a clear sense of their own best interests. So now, it so happens, he's dead, and various people are very worried – and something worse is happening on Thornwail Isle...

## Spallanzani's Customers

Actually, there were a number of these, many of whom will be converging on his home in due course – but two are relevant here:

*The Austro-Hungarian Empire's Secret Service:* Having been using Spallanzani's dolls for their own purposes (assassination and espionage), the Austrians were rationally disturbed by his threats to expose them if anything happened to him. After some competent basic espionage work, they guessed that the documents were most likely at Makepeace & Frobisher; so, when Spallanzani was reported dead, they put a watch on the solicitors' offices and confirmed they were reacting to the news. They then sent an agent into the office, but he encountered the company's rather impressive safe and withdrew; the next step will be to send in a professional safe-cracker, but that takes time to organise. In the meantime, they have two of Spallanzani's own automatons – mannequin assassins – on a rooftop opposite, with instructions as to how to respond if anyone starts pulling lots of documents out of that safe...

They also realise that systematic investigations on Thornwail Isle might cause just as much trouble for them, so they're organising a small team to go in there and clean the place out. Obviously, they would like to be brisk about this, but it takes time to arrange these things – especially if you work for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. So their team, led by their agent *Carsten Sandmeier*, will arrive by boat some time during the PCs' investigations on the island. They really want to do a systematic search, but burning the place down is an acceptable fall-back; Sandmeier has a liking for incendiary shells.

*The Holy Order of St. Eligius and St. Dunstan ("The Eligians"):* A secret faction within the Vatican, originally an office of the Jesuits, created a hundred years ago to assess unconventional philosophies, and decide which were theologically acceptable and possibly even useful to the Church. Now, they're loose cannons (and loose canons) by any reasonable standards, combining the madness of mad science with an absolute conviction of their own rectitude; they can see that God has clearly granted mankind mastery of the physical universe, but only the Church can be trusted to employ most of these secrets correctly.

So they bought a number of Spallanzani's dolls off him for assessment and various missions, reverse engineered the alchemical elements in his work (they're better at that than at the clockwork), and are working on building golems for themselves. They also have an agent, *Father Horatius Baulk*, in place as the priest of the village of *An Herrid*, on *Herridmirk*, who was keeping an eye on Spallanzani and handling shipping for the occasional doll purchase. The trouble is, Baulk is no saner than the rest of them, and after applying his own alchemical knowledge to reprogram a couple of the dolls which he'd acquired without telling his superiors, he's convinced himself that Spallanzani was enslaving angels; he knew that the Order was already thinking of ways to shut Spallanzani down for being an idolatrous probable atheist, so he took matters into his own hands, poisoned Spallanzani, and is now trying to decide how to liberate the "angels" he knows are prisoners on Thornwail Isle. Another agent of the Order, *Father Quentin O'Dell*, has already arrived at *An Herrid* to consult with Baulk over Spallanzani's death by the time the PCs get there, but Baulk has decided that he was missing the point, used his two "angels" to overpower him, and now either has him chained up in the cellar or has his body respectfully laid out in the cellar with a view to disposal when feasible, depending on what works in the game.

#### Other Factions

*The Anarchist Smugglers:* By coincidence, *Kapitan Leiden* was approaching Glasgow when word of Spallanzani's death reached one of their associates in that city. His ship, the *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, will soon be steaming up the coast with a view to him paying his respects, and will arrive shortly after the PCs. Leiden assumes that Spallanzani's death was probably no accident; he wants to confirm that, then seek justice (or revenge – he's cynical about the difference) for his friend.

However, he's also cynical enough that using other people who he doesn't respect much to do the dirty work there would be entirely to his taste. He can infiltrate Thornwail Tower by way of the caves and tunnels that he used in his dealings with Spallanzani, but will proceed cautiously.

*Spallanzani's Household:* Spallanzani managed without many servants because he had three of his own dolls looking after the house. The problem is, on the one hand, they've been active longest of any of his creations, and he was continually tinkering with them; hence they've achieved a degree of self-awareness. They *don't* understand death, though, and since their creator died, they've not only continued looking after his house; they've been trying to "mend" him as best they can. They'll also defend him and the house to the death – as best they can. This is going to have implications.

## Scene 1

Our heroes wake up one morning in their various establishments to a telex message:

NATHANEL SPALLANZANI DEAD STOP YOUR GROUP TO PROCEED IMMEDIATELY MAKEPEACE AND FROBISHER NORTON FOLGATE STOP COLLECT DOCUMENTS AND DELIVER TO DEPARTMENT STOP
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They all know, or can quickly determine, that Norton Folgate is an area on the east side of the City of London, and a quick check of a city directory will confirm that there is a firm of solicitors named Makepeace & Frobisher on the street of that name. (Alternatively, any hansom cab driver will automatically know Norton Folgate, and will recognise the company name on a 12- roll.) Nathanel Spallanzani isn't a household name, but success with **Current Affairs (Science & Technology)** will recognise it; **Practical Science!** encompasses that, otherwise it's IQ-4 or (Other **Current Affairs**)-4. He's known to be a European mechanical genius who's said to have dabbled in strange sciences, verging on alchemy, and who caused some kind of scandal in northern Italy some years ago, after which he dropped out of sight. On a critical success, PCs will know that he apparently built some kind of automaton that misbehaved, which annoyed people, and someone in the Department said that he may have moved to Britain at some point.

Members of the group have a choice how to get to Makepeace & Frobisher. Hansom cab is the simplest option, fairly easy to get through expenses, but occasionally hits traffic problems; steam cab requires turning on a little more charm when indenting monthly expenditures, but is a little faster; tube to Liverpool Street is cheap and fairly quick, but then requires an approach on foot (which may be the most discreet way). Lieutenant Trace, though, has the team's vehicles in secure lock-up under some railway arches near his personal establishment in north London, and can choose which to take: a slightly cumbersome seven-person steam car or a nippy little single-seat steam tricycle.

*Steam Car:* ST/HP 63 (thrust 7d), Handling -1, SR 3, HT 12 flammable, Move 2/38 (Chase Bonus +7), LWt. 2.6, Load 0.7, SM +3, Occ 1+6, DR 4. Vehicles!-14 and Combat Reflexes gives Vehicular Dodge 7.

*Steam Tricycle:* ST/HP 41 (thrust 4d+2), Handling 0, SR 1, HT 11 flammable, Move 6/38 (Chase Bonus +7), LWt. 0.7, Load 0.1, SM +1, Occ 1, DR 4. Vehicles!-14 and Combat Reflexes gives Vehicular Dodge 8.

Everyone who comes by cab or car can be assumed to reach the solicitors at roughly the same time; Trace can park in a side-street a few yards down. Anyone coming by tube will arrive a little later, and may even be late enough to observe the first big dramatic scene blowing up as they approach the door. Make a rough guess as to order of arrival based on chosen modes of transport. There's a chance for a little roleplaying at this stage.

## The Solicitors

Makepeace & Frobisher are expecting visitors from the Department; flashing identity cards or a little charm will get everyone past the junior clerk in the front office, then *Mr Makepeace* himself (a gentleman of mature years who radiates a slightly shabby sort of Victorian professional respectability) will examine everyone's cards with apparent care before ushering them through to the large central office, with its desks for several clerks, and instructing his senior clerk, *Mr Kerry*, to bring "the Spallanzani Deposit" from the safe. Mr Kerry (a thin, hunched gentleman, probably in his late thirties) scurries off to a side room, in which some of the party may glimpse a large safe door, as Mr Makepeace makes conversation.

He actually assumes that the PCs know what all this is about, and will be inclined to clam up a little if it turns out that they don't, assumed that they are simply couriers in that case; however, applied social skills can get a bit more out of him (resists with IQ/Will 12). The company have been acting for Dr Spallanzani in minor commercial matters for a few years now – mostly importing stuff through London and onto trains for Scotland – and then, a year or two ago, a collection of documents arrived in a sealed box, with instructions to release it to "the authorities" in the event of his death being reported. Such a report arrived by telegram from the solicitors who act for Dr Spallanzani in Glasgow last thing last night, and the partners therefore contacted Scotland Yard and asked who should receive the box. The Police came back early this morning saying that the question had been put in the hands of the Department of Unconventional Philosophical Resolutions ("presumably because the late Doctor had an eccentric reputation").

## The Attack

At this point, Mr Kerry returns, pushing a small office trolley with a large wooden box on it. A large cardboard tag attached to the box has the name "SPALLANZANI" written on it in capital letters. Then, suddenly, everyone hears the sound of breaking glass from across the office, and there are oaths and cries of confusion from the clerks on that side of the room. This is *Total Surprise*; everyone who doesn't have **Combat Reflexes** is mentally stunned for 1d seconds, then starts making IQ rolls at the start of each turn to start recovering – one more turn of Do Nothing, then act normally. Those with **Combat Reflexes** can start acting immediately, but will need to take at least one turn to make a Per roll to spot the window high on the street-facing wall that's broken. Success by 5 or more also picks up the thunk of something (actually a pistol bullet) hitting a wall simultaneously with the glass shattering.

Hence, no one is in a position to act before a projectile comes through the broken window, trailing flame, and hits the box square on. The unfortunate Mr Kerry is caught totally flat-footed when the box bursts into flame, and hence he takes burns and some of his own clothes also catch fire.

(The mannequins are following efficient instructions; one shot out the window with a pistol bullet, enabling the other to take a carefully aimed shot with a single-shot grenade launcher-type weapon with an impact-fused incendiary projectile.)

This may leave some people waiting to get over being stunned, some trying to work out where this attack came from (though subsequent Per rolls are now at +4, thanks to that "rocket" attack), and some able to respond. The solicitors and clerks are all standing around totally confused.

*The Fire:* The box is burning dramatically. It's dry wood with papers inside, and the shell was an effective incendiary, so it'll need a lot of water or something to put it out – and by then the papers will be ash. Mr Kerry, on the other hand, can be saved. He takes 4 points of damage from the actual attack, and then his clothes are partially on fire, and so he takes 1d-4 burning damage per second, as

does anyone who comes into direct contact with him without protection; unfortunately, he's panicking too much to do anything about this for himself, and the other solicitors are equally confused, so a PC will have to help. Throwing a cloak or carpet around him (there are loose carpets in the office), getting him on the ground, and then spending 2 rounds rolling him around to put out the fire, will do the trick. Then he'll need First Aid (below).

*Sighting the Attackers:* Once the PCs know which direction the attack came from, they can start trying to see who launched it (or do something else, like running out of the building). For three rounds, that's easy; anyone specifically looking in the right direction, out of any of the office's windows, will see two figures standing on the shallow-pitched roof of a building opposite (an innocuous commercial premises with the shopfront of a ship's chandlers).

They appear to be slender women dressed in rather lightweight cycling outfits, but with big floppy-brimmed hats with veils attached. One of them is starting to dismantle what's evidently a bipod-mounted missile-firing mechanism, the other is standing looking toward the solicitors' office with a pistol in hand. If they realise that they've been spotted, they just grab the launcher and flee; this may come down to PC Stealth vs. their Per of 10. Once they are moving, they start making their way towards the other side of the roof they're on, with obvious intent to escape.

Once the PCs have assessed the situation, they can make their way out of the office (1 turn) and onto the street (1 turn) – or late arrivals might be there already. They may each also want to take a turn to draw weapons at some point. Then:

*Climbing Pursuit:* Someone could climb the two-storey building opposite: three turns, with Climbing rolls on the first and third at -3 each, *or* one turn with a leg up – ST roll for the booster, Acrobatics roll for the climber – followed by one turn of climbing, *or* one turn to unship a grapnel and rope, one to throw it – with a Cat Burglar! or DX roll – and one turn and a Climbing roll at -2 to get up the building. Then it's one turn to get up and over the ridge of the roof. See **Action 2**, p.18-19, for more on climbing.

*Ground Level Pursuit:* Once someone is on the street, it's one turn with a successful Per roll to spot the nearest alley leading to the back of the building opposite, then one turn to reach that, and two rounds to run down it and assess the situation at the other end. *Or* one turn to rush into the ship's chandlers, one turn and a contested social skill of some kind (probably Fast-Talk, vs. Will 10) to get implied consent to cut through, a turn of the staff making 11- rolls to point the right way (or 8- if the PC *Intimidated* them too effectively), and a turn with a DX or Acrobatics roll at -1 to get through to the back entrance and assess things out there.

*Get the Steam Carriage:* Anyone who knows where the group's transport is can reach it in two rounds and embark in a third. Fortunately, the boiler is still warm, so it's just a Driving roll to start it running...

**Meanwhile – Opposition Actions:** After firing the incendiary, the mannequins spend one turn assessing their shot (which the PCs will spend working out what happened, if nothing else), then take up to three rounds dismantling the launcher, one of them slinging it over "her" back, and preparing to depart. If they realise that they've been spotted before then, they just grab the weapon and flee – but that means that one of them has no hands free to draw a pistol until they've been fleeing in their roadster for one turn of chase.

They then spend one turn scrambling over the roof, and three scrambling down the back of the building – *unless* anyone comes into view, in which case they drop, using Catfall to do so quite safely.

Then they spend a turn getting into their concealed getaway car, then two turns starting it up (they use a known but unwise sodium-based rapid start device – not very good for the boiler in the long or even the medium term – cut that time down to one if absolutely necessary to avoid them being caught too easily), and then they can drive for it. They may attempt snap shots (Guns-12) at anyone who seems like a serious threat at this point – especially anyone who comes into physical contact with their roadster – but the one carrying the launcher can only do so after slinging it, and then uses Fastdraw-12.

And then we have a Chase scene.

#### *NPC Protagonists and Their Equipment*

**Mannequins:** ST 8, DX 12, IQ 7, HT 11, Per 10, Basic Speed 6, Move 6. Catfall, Combat Reflexes, DR 1, Perfect Balance, Mute, and any DX-based skills they need (Guns, Acrobatics, Driving...) at 12. Dodge 10, but may sometimes attempt Acrobatic Dodges (p.B375) for +2 on a success, -2 on a failure. Definitely automatons; no real question of Will, either way, and deep in the Uncanny Valley if anyone gets close enough to them to see. Note that they *don't* have High Pain Threshold; being damaged disrupts their functioning...

**(1 - Driver) HP 8:**

**(2 - Passenger) HP 8:**

*Armed with revolvers (stats for Mauser C78 Zick-Zack):* Damage 2d pi, Acc 2, Range 110/1,200, Weight 1.9/0.3, RoF 3, Shots 6(2i), ST 8, Bulk -2, Rcl 2.

Also have a “rocket” launcher, but are unlikely to use that; see later notes in the unlikely event...

**Getaway Roadster:** ST/HP 42 (thrust 4d+2), Handling -1, SR 3, HT 9 flammable, Move 2/22 (Chase Bonus +6), LWt. 0.85, Load 0.25, SM +2, Occ 1+1, DR 4. Driving-12 and Combat Reflexes gives this Vehicular Dodge 6.

**HP 42:**

#### *The Chase*

This Chase starts at **Close** range if any PCs are next to or on top of the mannequins' roadster, **Short** if any PC are on the ground at the back of the chandlers' shop, **Medium** otherwise. If any PCs are in the side alley, the mannequins can and will attempt a **Ram** on them in passing, as a special effect. The mannequins will be driving from the first; the PCs will have to spend time getting to their vehicle unless one of them was already heading that way. If the team has their car, the driver can pick up any other team members who were on the ground in the open in the first round of pursuit – they just have to make a DX or Acrobatics roll to get aboard quickly. If they fail, they either get left behind or the driver gets -2 to that round's Chase roll per person it's necessary to slow down for.

If the PCs only have the steam trike available, the driver can let one other person jump on and hang on, but that means -1 to Chase rolls, -2 for attacks executed by the passenger, and probably some DX rolls to hang on during some hairy moments. Other PCs can use social skills to get hold of a passing hansom cab or borrow *one* bicycle (there's just the one cyclist passing); note that default

#### **Non-Living Targets**

Hits on Unliving/Machine targets get the following Damage Multipliers:

Impaling, Huge Piercing: x1  
Large Piercing: x1/2  
Piercing: x1/3  
Small Piercing: x1/5  
Cutting: x1.5  
Crushing: x1

#### **TL(5+2) First Aid**

First Aid attempts at this TL take 20 minutes and restore 1d-1 HP on a success. The airship and Miss Singleton both have first aid kits that give +1 to skill; the solicitors have enough basic equipment to avoid penalties.

Teamster skill is IQ-5 (a driver who can be persuaded to actually assist will have Teamster-13), default Bicycling is DX-4. A **hansom** has Move 9 (Chase mod +3), Hnd 0, SR 2, ST 37 (thrust 4d), HT 12, SM +2; a **bicycle** will have Move 8 (Chase mod +3), Hnd +1, SR 2, ST as the rider, HT 10, SM 0.

(This may mean that the PCs have multiple vehicles or people in the chase. Compare all their Chase rolls to the quarry's Chase roll, and adjust different range bands accordingly.)

The mannequins initially use simple **Move and Attack** manoeuvres, with the driver not shooting – so the second mannequin (who may have to spend a round putting that missile launcher away) gets to blaze away at -1 for being on a moving vehicle, and any range mods). Later, the driver may take the odd shot, if it makes the Chase more interesting.

Note that in combat, vehicle “vital areas” are -3 to hit, but give all piercing attacks a x3 damage multiplier, and a miss by 1 counts as a standard body hit; wheels are -4, and those on the roadster must make a HT roll to avoid a flat after taking any damage, and are taken out of action by 5 HP of damage (see p.B555; don't forget the Unliving damage multipliers, above). The mannequins are in cover in the roadster, and PCs in the team car will be likewise; treat that as a simple -2 to hit.

After **three rounds** of Chase action down fairly uncomplicated streets, the fleeing roadster enters the docklands area downstream of Tower Bridge. This is complicated enough to allow the quarry to attempt **Hide** manoeuvres, which they'll try if at Long Range or better. On the other hand, it's a lot safer attempting **Force** attacks with fewer pedestrians around (**Force** actions before this should lead to bureaucratic problems, at minimum), and there should be lots of ways to justify **Stunt** actions.

Otherwise, after another two rounds, they'll come to a swing bridge over a dock entrance just as it's opening, crash the flimsy barrier, and try to jump the space; this amounts to a **Stunt Escape** with a -2 penalty. The PCs can only attempt the same jump (for a **Stunt** at -2 or worse – their choice) if they started at **Close** or **Short** range – otherwise, they'll need some kind of Lucky Break to maintain the pursuit. If anyone fails the jump, they go in the water, which ends the Chase – but the roadster floats for long enough for the mannequins to blow the boiler, as below.

After that, the way to end the chase is a **Force** into dockyard furniture for a crash, or reduce the quarry's driver to 0 HP with weapons fire. It's possible that the PCs will realise that they're being led round the dockside area in large circles. If the mannequins attempt a couple of **Hides** and both fail, or if things get boring, they'll **Reverse** with clear intent to **Ram**, reducing the distance to Close; if they don't crash (in which case they'll trigger an explosion next turn – see below) or get counter-rammed out of the chase, they'll try the **Ram** next turn. If they survive that, they can try using their new advantageous position to escape, or just keep trying to **Ram**...

One other possibility; if the PCs engage a lot at Close range, they may get vision rolls to note the smiling, doll-like “masks” beneath those veils. That could even be worth a Fright Check.

**Ending the Chase:** If the mannequins escape, they escape, and the PCs will just have to head back to base. If the PCs catch them, things *may* go to a shoot-out combat for a turn or so, but it's likely that they're going to get caught. In which case, before the PCs get too close (or while one of them keeps a PC busy hand-to-hand, if it's absolutely unavoidable), they do *something* with a pressure valve on the roadster – which explodes a moment later, obliterating the vehicle and both mannequins. The amount of blast and flame involved will seem excessive (the Austrians actually attach explosives to the mannequins' getaway vehicles to preserve secrecy), but if any PCs are close enough to worry, treat this as a 6d cr explosion; see p.B414-415 – damage is divided by (3 x distance in yards from explosion), torso armour subtracts, and the blast does damage out to 12 yards for the blast.

The aim here is to destroy these two mannequins before the PCs can get a clear look at them. At the most, somewhere along the line, a PC might get close enough to glimpse a smiling painted face behind a veil. The idea is to keep things weird and mysterious! If anyone did see a face, something similar may survive, but can be mistaken for a porcelain mask. The explosion will be big enough to induce a “nobody could have survived that” response, but if the PCs specifically look through the aftermath with any care, they will discover an unnerving shortage of bodies or body parts; just a lot of mechanical components...

**Aftermath:** With the chase over, the PCs can wrap things up in Norton Folgate. There’s not much that questioning can learn, though if anyone persuades the understandably nervous staff at the ships’ chandlers to talk, using Interrogation or a *lot* of friendly chat, they will eventually admit that a gentleman paid to leave his steam carriage in a space at the back of the shop a day ago. They honestly had no idea that this would be used for criminal activity – they didn’t know what he wanted, but he offered fair money, in pleasing quantity. If pressed for a description, they’ll come up with “he ’ad dark-blond hair, and a neat sort o’ moustache – medium height, he was – maybe a hint of a foreign accent, sort of thing, but well-spoke nonetheless – ’ard to say where ’e mighta come from...”

They also didn’t have a clue that anyone was up on their roof; those two must have climbed up there at some point overnight. Someone would probably have noticed if it was in daytime; the alley behind the shop is in periodic light use, and other buildings overlook it. One would think that the roof was a little cold and uncomfortable to remain on for so long.

Mr Kerry will probably have been taken off to hospital. There’s little more to learn from the solicitors, who are now thoroughly unhappy about the whole affair. If any of the PCs seem inclined to hang around looking for clues, the local coppers will begin to get irritated; they respect Department identification, but they didn’t ask to have mad scientist arsonists on their patch. If the PCs don’t head out quite soon, a telegram will arrive from the Department via the local police station:

RECOVER ALL AVAILABLE DATA AND REPORT RE INCENDIARY INCIDENT IMMEDIATELY STOP SPALLANZANI LEGACY URGENT STOP TRAVEL INDICATED STOP
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## Scene 2/Intermission: Briefing and Travel

So the party head for Departmental HQ in a building a little distance off Whitehall, maybe somewhat apologetically. Their supervisor there is *Mr. Baxter*, a senior official of rather enigmatic style; small in stature, pale, clean-shaven and with thin hair, with a soft voice and a precise way of speaking. (He’s also Intelligence Rank 4.) He’s not too annoyed by what happened earlier, unless the team made complete idiots of themselves – and he’s already seen the initial police reports.

Baxter can explain any background that the team don’t already have, producing a slim cardboard file. Doctor Nathaniel Spallanzani was an artificer of northern Italian extraction (actually from an alpine area under Austrian control, but Mr. Baxter will only mention that if someone asks, and has to check his files to confirm the point), who came to Britain around five years ago, and came to the Department’s passing attention perhaps a year later for “various reasons” (the Department tracks unusual purchases in the scientific equipment world, and a lot of professional gossip), as being possibly somewhat unconventional in his thinking. He appeared to be interested in both clockwork engineering and archaic alchemy. However, he did nothing to *worry* the Department, and their best information was that he departed his homeland owing to some social embarrassments rather than being driven out by any rabble with pitchforks. As the Department and the Empire are all in favour of advanced scientific research, so long as it does not overstep the bounds of sanity, Doctor Spallanzani

was merely noted as possibly in need of watching – and he shortly afterwards moved to a remote area of Scotland (an island in the Hebrides named Herridmirk, it appears – “or rather, some place named Thornwail Isle, but the address we have for that is ‘An Herrid, Herridmirk,’ which seems to be the nearest village”), which might have been a bad sign but did place him safely away from large population centres. After which, he did nothing to attract particular attention for four years.

Then, Scotland Yard contacted the Department last night, saying that Doctor Spallanzani’s London solicitors had been in touch to say that he had been reported deceased, and that this obliged them to deliver those documents to the authorities. Some smart police inspector suggested that this sounded like Department business – and the PCs know the rest. Preliminary enquiries by the Department’s Glasgow office confirm that this death has indeed been reported. So, apparently, Spallanzani had some information which some unknown party was desperate to prevent reaching the Department. That makes the Department determined to learn more, and thus the PCs now have an assignment.

Scotland Yard will be investigating the attack on the solicitors’ office, and will be receiving assistance from the Department’s Analytical Office, but the PCs are required to investigate Spallanzani’s activities, possible acquaintances, and death. Tickets will await them at Euston Station for the midday train to Glasgow, which will get there by evening. They will then be able to obtain a dirigible through the Department’s local office, which should be the quickest way to reach Herridmirk; fortunately, the Department has one based in Scotland for various tasks, and it will be prepared while they’re *en route*. It should apparently take 5-7 hours to fly to Herridmirk, so they should be there tomorrow. Now, they had better go and fetch the bags they doubtless keep ready packed, and get to Euston in time to pick up those tickets. Any questions?

Mr. Baxter will answer sensible questions; requests for material support may be a chance to show off the Assistance Rolls rule (**Action 1**, p.24). Improvise as required.

### The Train Journey

The party then have time to get home, grab overnight bags, and get to Euston. They can make the train okay, and they then spend the next seven hours sitting in a compartment together, apart from a stroll to the dining car for lunch. The question of how they spend that time may be a hook for roleplaying; if they’ve brought research matter or something, great, but they may well end up twiddling their thumbs, chatting, reading the papers, etc.

When they arrive in Glasgow, they are met by *Captain Macbride*, the Department’s local office supervisor, a Scots soldier-engineer. He’ll reassure them that the dirigible will be available whenever they want it tomorrow; he won’t say unless asked, but it’s about ready now – he just assumes that nobody will want to fly anywhere overnight. It’s in a hangar down near the docks; he’ll give them the address. Meanwhile, he’s booked them rooms in the Station Hotel (which is of acceptable standards).

### The Airship

*Departmental Dirigible*: ST/HP 100 (thrust 11d), Handling -4, SR 4, HT 8 flammable, Move 1/10 (Chase Bonus +4), LWt. 9, Load 0.9, SM +9, Occ 2+4, DR 1 (gasbag)/4 (gondola). Vehicles!-14 and Combat Reflexes gives Vehicular Dodge-4.

If people insist on starting the flight overnight – one would hope after at least some dinner – then that’s Navigation (Air) at -3 not to get dangerously lost and be somewhere in the Highlands when the sun comes up, needing to find the nearest community and then take as long to reach Herridmirk as they would anyway. Default for that skill is Navigation (Sea) at -2 or Astronomy at -5 (allow that

Practical Science! grants Astronomy), so total -5/-8. If they do get there, journey time is calculated as below, but with -1 to the Pilot roll and no complementary Navigation roll. Night flying also means lost sleep for everyone aboard; -2 FP. A quick test flight would just be unmodified Navigation (Air), followed by a Piloting roll to get it back into the hangar okay. That takes the dirigible's -4 Handling penalty and another -2 for bad light, which can be compensated for by Night Vision; missing by no more than the dirigible's SR of 4 just means a retry and some bumping and scraping, with an hour's mechanical repair work to follow.

Otherwise, the flight starts whenever all the PCs get to the hangar on the morrow, when the ground crew hand them some basic charts with a course ready plotted. Assume that they get there around 9am unless they make special efforts or distract themselves somehow; sunrise here at this time of year is around 8am. Preparations for the trip take about half an hour unless they made a successful test flight, or anyone insists on rushing, which gives -1 to the journey Pilot roll (below).

Given prevailing weather conditions, base time for the journey is 6 hours, and a Pilot roll is required (with no modifier for Handling, because this isn't a precision manoeuvring job); a complementary Navigation (Air) roll is optional. Critical success makes the journey time 4½ hours; ordinary success by 7+ makes it 5 hours; ordinary success by 3+ makes it 5½ hours; each point of failure adds 30 minutes to the time, and a critical failure leaves the dirigible short of gas and ballast for the rest of the scenario – the party will need resupply before the return trip, and will be having to make extra rolls if they take the dirigible out during the scenario.

The journey will also provide the PCs with time to decide on their story when they get to their destination.

### Scene 3: Arrival at Herridmirk

Anyone consulting the charts can see the layout of things at the destination. Herridmirk is a fairly small island, just a few miles at its longest but not very far offshore from the mainland, and An Herrid seems to be the only real village of any substance on the island, nestling on a shallow bay facing the wild Atlantic; Thornwail Isle in turn is a very small island – it can barely rate as more than a rock outcrop – a couple of hundred yards out in the bay. When the dirigible comes in view, all this is confirmed. In addition, there is visibly a house – or perhaps more accurately, a tower – on Thornwail Isle, actually on the highest point, almost seeming to overhang the ocean. An Herrid is built on a patch of fairly flat ground, and has a small jetty, doubtless to support the small flotilla of small fishing boats that can be seen bobbing in the bay.

*If* the PCs take their dirigible out to sea to survey Thornwail, they will fairly easily note that there's an indentation in the rock – functionally a shallow cave – under the tower. You could fit a quite substantial boat in there. (Actually, Spallanzani – or rather, some of his visitors and customers – did. The cave can be accessed through the cellar of the tower, and Spallanzani despatched most of his doll sales that way.)

(There's no **BAD** at this point – or rather, BAD just now is 0.)

The PCs may consider trying to moor or land on Thornwail Isle, but there are problems with that; there's little flat space there, no mooring facilities, and no one visible who might be induced to help the process. As there's also a light but definite breeze, even approaching the tower close enough to attempt anything will require a Pilot roll with the dirigible's Handling Modifier; failure by no more than its SR means abrupt backing off and a small expenditure of ballast, whereas failure by more means 1d damage (scrapes and minor leaks that will need attention *soon*), and critical failure means 3d damage. Dropping someone off means opening the gondola door, throwing out a rope, and then

making a Pilot roll as above, which is treated as complementary to the other person's Acrobatics roll, but with double penalties for failure. If the pilot fails that roll, the other person gets a DX roll not to go if they choose. The other person then gets to roll Acrobatics (default DX-6) to descend safely; failure means a fall of (margin of failure x 3) yards onto a hard surface, +3 yards for a critical failure; see p.B430-1 for falling rules. The dirigible will need two people on the ground to execute a mooring, and they'll need to make two DX rolls each to help guide it in; failure means yet another Pilot roll. And mooring means driving stakes in somewhere, with a chance of these being yanked out by a gust of wind...

On the other hand, if any PCs get down onto Thornwail, they do get a chance to explore the tower straight away. See *Visiting Thornwail*, below, noting that Spallanzani's body has already been moved to the lab.

### Stopping at An Herrid

Still, it's probably better to moor over at An Herrid. The village has a green of sorts with enough space, there are a couple of low, scrubby trees to which it can be moored while someone drives a few stakes into the ground to attach tethers, and there are a few locals around who can be persuaded to help. So there's no need to roll for this – it's a straightforward enough operation, and the scenario needs the PCs safely here – but it may be worth establishing exactly how the PCs handle this to determine their relationship with the locals. Manoeuvring down to the ground is Pilot + Handling modifier + 4, and someone stepping out in the brief moment while this is then entirely safe is DX or Acrobatics; getting the locals to help needs either a good Reaction, a neutral Reaction and the offer of a drink, or a bad Reaction and a cash bribe. Without that, at least three of the PCs will need to get out, grab some cables, and make a Knot-Tying roll (default DX-4 or Seamanship-4) at +5. The locals are at least part-time sailors (Seamanship 11+), and will handle this easily enough.

After that, the PCs will need somewhere to stay and someone to talk to. The village pub can offer three rooms – enough for all the PCs with doubling up – if they have time to clean them up a bit; imposing on anyone else will need an excuse and a Very Good or better reaction. This *is* possible with Father Baulk, despite the fact that it'd probably blow his secrets all the faster; he's not exactly sane.

As for talking to people – the PCs will need a cover story, and the players may need to be reminded that they work for a semi-clandestine agency and shouldn't just go round identifying themselves too casually; Unconventional Philosophy is sometimes a matter of national security, and wild rumours are not conducive to public order. Fortunately, the people of An Herrid are, frankly, rustics, and will provisionally buy any line they're fed, or at least not bother questioning much. They'll be a little startled if they hear that anyone has responded to news of "the guid doctor's" death so promptly, though. The landlord of the pub is probably the first person to approach; Father Baulk is the other resident individual of obvious standing. The village has a council of sorts, and *Brian Mactarry*, a respected veteran fisherman, is its chairman, but that just means that he takes charge as best he can when the village needs things done.

### The Doctor's Death

The villagers will talk about Doctor Spallanzani willingly enough, either in response to official enquiries or as a matter of taproom gossip. Apparently, the day before yesterday, *Kevin MacPeters* took his boat over to Thornwail, carrying old *Mrs. Brown*, who did some cooking for the doctor, and a regular load of supplies. The doctor didn't meet them at the jetty or at the front door, though, and didn't respond to knocking. So they came back and, after a little consultation, fetched a couple of solid fellows over, who were able to force the door. They then found the doctor's body, in his

nightgown, fallen on the stairs, all cold and stiff; the general assumption (and hope) is that he was taken quickly, although morbid-minded individuals may say that his expression was of “some distress”.

As he had no relatives, and was a stranger to the district, someone then took a boat over to the mainland and fetched *Constable MacBrian*. By the time he arrived, the doctor had been laid out on his bed. (“Leave him where he lay? On the stairs? No, there’d ha’ been no dignity in that. An’ there was no one else in the house, so there was no question o’ foul play...”) MacBrian made some notes, took a look through the doctor’s desk, and said he’d found the name and address of the doctor’s agents in Glasgow, and would be telegraphing them for instructions. Meanwhile, *Mr. Fraser*, the district’s undertaker, came over to see to a few things, and will be arranging either a funeral or transport of the body elsewhere when instructions have come from Glasgow.

That, if anyone asks, was yesterday morning – and no, no one has been to Thornwail since. There’s a dead body there, after all, and nothing else of much interest to these people. In the unlikely event of anyone sneaking over to the place to do anything untoward, the village would know soon enough, after all, and these are “decent folk” who’d be offended by any suggestion of possible felonious doings.

#### *Unstated Implications and Extra Facts:*

- (1) No one but the doctor actually lived in the tower. Mrs. Brown cooked for him, but a little prodding will determine that she didn’t spend enough time there to keep the place running properly (and she’s getting on a bit). If she’s questioned directly and the subject is raised, she’ll say that she was occasionally required to cook for visitors as well as the doctor himself; the visitors seemed like fairly substantial gentlemen, and may well have been foreigners, but they said little in her earshot; there were never more than two or three at a time. The locals realised early on that the doctor’s apparent ability to keep the place clean and tidy without full-time servants was peculiar, but they assumed that he was a strange foreigner who surely only used a little of the tower and can’t have been afraid of hard work. Those who went over after his death can say that the place seemed to be entirely in use and quite clean and tidy, but haven’t given this much thought yet; frankly, thinking about it would just give them the creeps.
- (2) The last person to see the doctor alive was... Well, actually, it was Kevin MacPeters, who ferried him back to his island after he’d had dinner with Father Baulk, the night before his death. (MacPeters had a nice little earner going playing ferryman for Spallanzani.) That leads on to the chance to find out that Baulk was the only person in the village to socialise with Spallanzani (well, they were the village’s two educated men), and was the last to have a conversation with him.
- (3) Spallanzani had been in the village for about four years, having had the tower refurbished after he bought it from the local landowner. Visits to Father Baulk aside, he kept himself to himself – but he wasn’t especially disliked or feared. He did receive occasional visitors; some ferried over from the mainland and said little, others came by sea, in their own boats – “Quite large vessels, some of them. Sometimes maybe it was deliveries of goods, not social calls.”

#### Background

Two significant things have happened lately of which the villagers are largely unaware:

- (1) Father Quentin O’Dell came to visit Father Baulk regarding Spallanzani, arriving late last night. He came over by boat from the mainland, and as it was late and O’Dell said he didn’t

need to return, the boatman didn't stick around. Two male villagers, *Old Rabbie* and *Billie Brown* (Mrs. Brown's son), saw a **dark figure** arrive on the jetty and stride through the town to the priest's house, and *Puir Annie Stuart* glimpsed his arrival and hid in terror, but the men will only volunteer this information as and when things get boozy and chatty in the pub this night – they're not sure what's going on, but they assume that Baulk has a private visitor, and they respect him as their priest – and *Puir Annie* will only mention it in the course of some insane rambling, claiming that she saw "The Divil comin' for the Doctor". Anyway, O'Dell began to notice that Baulk was being evasive, and made the mistake of saying something. Baulk overpowered him with the aid of his "angels," and is now either keeping O'Dell tied up in his cellar, or wondering what to do with his body – depending what seems best for the game.

- (2) Spallanzani's own mannequin-servants came out of hiding overnight on the night before last, found their creator unresponsive in his bed, and after conferring in their own strange way, spent any time when the house was unoccupied preparing a solution for the problem. Then, last night, they moved him to the laboratory and began subjecting him to a range of alchemical treatments. Eventually, these will restore him to a ghastly parody of life...

## Scene 4: Investigations

The PCs now have various strands to pursue.

### In the Village

Just hanging around the village is likely to lead to encounters with *Puir Annie Stuart*, who wanders round the place (especially the sea shore) being tragically mad, and *Father Baulk*, who shows up after they've been there a little while to make polite enquiries. See below for more on these two.

Aside from them – well, there's not a lot to see, though this is a proper village, with a church and a very small public house; the villagers go over to the mainland for actual shopping. Meetings with the villagers are an opportunity for demonstrations of the reaction rules. They're a little suspicious of strangers, but not paranoid. One thing that looking round will determine is that the church is Roman Catholic; it turns out that the local community is functionally solidly Catholic.

### Father Baulk

Father Baulk will approach the PCs fairly soon after their arrival, politely inquiring what brings them to this quiet little place; his pose is as a priest who just wants to know about what's going on in his village. He'll initially come across as a diligent, quietly-spoken fellow in his 30s; he'll react to what the PCs say, but he'll be probing for their real reasons. If they clam up on him; he'll back off, but continue to watch them, while if they claim official status, he'll take the excuse to stick around with them, suggesting if they ask that they'll need someone to vouch for them to the community.

Baulk does a fairly good job of hiding his nervousness and secretiveness, but he's not at all sane; after a few minutes of conversation, pitch his Acting-13 against the PCs' Psychology or whatever, and if they win, they pick up his high-pitched laugh and low blink rate, and maybe his evasiveness on some topics if they raise the right questions. Unless handled exceptionally brilliantly, he'll assume that the PCs are representatives of some unknown secular faction who also seek to enslave angels; if he thinks it's necessary, he'll rouse the village against them and then sneak off to try and "liberate" Spallanzani's mannequins before anyone else can "enslave" them. This may get him killed by zombie-Spallanzani. He'll only let his mannequins out in public in extreme emergencies.

Also, if anyone visits his house (next to the church, naturally), they get a Per roll to notice a faint but definite chemical smell – more like a professional laboratory than anything else. Baulk will flat-out

deny this if asked. If a PC who notices this later visits the tower, they'll note a similar but stronger odour around the laboratory there. Oh, and he wears an "Eligian" symbol under his cassock; a pendant with a cross overlaid over the Greek letters Epsilon and Delta.

## εδ

(The PCs won't recognise that.)

That house is mostly appointed as you'd expect of a humble priest's abode; any correspondence relating to the Eligians is locked away securely in his writing desk. However, the door to the coal cellar is locked, and the coal chute hatch outside is securely bolted from the inside; the place has had an *ad hoc* alchemical laboratory, with two rough benches cluttered with obscure ingredients and lab equipment. More significantly, it's where he keeps his two mannequins most of the time, and where he's currently holding Father Quentin O'Dell – or his body.

Note that discovering that the respected local priest is actually a murderous mad alchemist with a couple of animated mannequins in his basement is probably worth a Shocking Revelations Check, at around -3.

A live Father O'Dell would naturally like to be rescued, but won't want to let on anything about the Holy Order of St. Eligius and St. Dunstan; his line will be that the diocese was concerned for Father Baulk's mental wellbeing and sent him to have a word, but nobody had any idea that Baulk was engaged in anything as deranged as this. Body Language/Detect Lies/Psychology vs. his Acting of 12 will pick up clear signs of evasiveness. Also, his robes have been disarrayed enough to expose his Eligian pendant; Per roll to spot this, or close inspection (such as for cause of death, if applicable – he was stabbed repeatedly), and then IQ roll to note that it's non-standard. If he is liberated alive, he will tag along with the PCs, saying that he feels the need to see things through to the end before he reports to the diocese – but probably end up trying to get into Spallanzani's papers, or somehow induce the Austrians to burn them, in order to cover the Order's tracks.

### *NPC Protagonists and Their Equipment*

**Father Baulk:** ST 11, DX 10, IQ 14, HT 11, Basic Speed 5.25, Move 5, Dodge 8. Status 1, Clerical Investment, Religious Rank 1. Acting-13, Alchemy-14, Guns (Shotgun)-10, Hidden Lore (Weird Alchemy)-13, Public Speaking-12, Stealth-12, Theology (RC)-14.

### **HP: 11**

Late on, may show up wielding an antiquated blunderbuss (loaded with shot); 1d pi, Acc 2, Range 30/600, Weight 7, Rof 1x13, Shots 1(35), ST 11, Bulk -4, Rcl 1, Malf 16.

**"Angel" Mannequins:** ST 8, DX 12, IQ 8, HT 11, Per 10, Basic Speed 6, Move 6. Catfall, Combat Reflexes, DR 1, Ambidexterity, Extra Attack, Perfect Balance, Mute, and any DX-based skills they need (Knife, Acrobatics...) at 12. Dodge 10, but will often attempt Acrobatic Dodges (p.B375) for +2 on a success, -2 on a failure. Definitely automatons; no real question of Will, either way, and deep in the Uncanny Valley if anyone gets close enough to them to see. Note that they *don't* have High Pain Threshold; being damaged disrupts their functioning. Both are dressed in slightly shabby floor-length white dresses, with, slightly incongruously, a pair of slim polished steel daggers hanging from a simple rope belt on each.

These two obey Baulk absolutely, and have very little initiative. If anyone gets into the cellar, they will at first appear to be a couple of lifeless mannequins leaning against the wall; examining them

closely causes them to move enough to notice, otherwise it's a Per roll to notice this while poking round the cellar – either way, this may be worth a Fright Check. They'll only react if attacked (making a move for their knives counts as an attack) or if anyone attempts to rescue a live Father O'Dell.

**(1) HP 8:**

**(2) HP 8:**

*Armed with two daggers each:* Damage 1d-4 imp. Note Ambidexterity and Extra Attack; that's two stabs a turn.

**Father Quentin O'Dell (if still alive):** ST 10, DX 10, IQ 13, HT 10, Basic Speed 5, Move 5, Dodge 8. Status 1, Clerical Investment, Religious Rank 2. Acting-12, Administration-13, Alchemy-12, Hidden Lore (Weird Alchemy)-12, Public Speaking-12, Theology (RC)-15. May be down a couple of HP even if discovered alive.

**HP: 10**

#### *Father Baulk Exposed?*

If Baulk is found out at any point while he's around, he'll order the mannequins to cover his retreat (rationalising to himself that death in battle with "idolaters" will free them to return to Heaven) and run for it. If he can get away, he'll eventually find a just-functional rowing boat somewhere and get over to the tower for the final scene. If he's caught, he'll start screaming about Spallanzani being an idolater who had trapped angels. O'Dell will seek to take charge of him and seek to "take the poor fellow away somewhere he can recover his wits". O'Dell's ideal result will be to get Baulk locked up somewhere safe on the mainland so *he* can sneak back to Thornwail to destroy Spallanzani's blasphemous work (and all evidence of the Order's entanglement here).

#### *The Mad Girl on the Shore*

The other feature of the village that's hard to miss is "Puir Annie Stuart". She can be thrown into the scenario to pace things, in particular slowing things down and giving the PCs an encounter if they rush to get over to Thornwail, if the PCs seem to be at a loose end, or if someone just goes out for a look around the village.

Annie Stuart was a fairly ordinary, if exceptionally devout, village girl who found part-time work doing some housekeeping for various people around the village, especially Father Baulk. Unfortunately, a few months ago, the "angel" mannequins took to wandering around the house, due to the clumsiness of Baulk's attempts to unlock their "true" natures by alchemy, and Annie encountered them. She was frightened out of her wits, and Baulk explained that they were angels who'd been trapped in this weak guise on Earth due to the actions of "evil men"; eventually he added that Spallanzani was the evil man in question, and that there were more angels held prisoner over on Thornwail Isle. However, he was working to reform Spallanzani, and in the meantime, it was important to keep all of this secret because otherwise "terrible things would befall".

So Annie kept quiet, but the stress has been getting to her ever since, and she's taken to walking the sea shore day and night, watching out for whatever evil Spallanzani might unleash. Despite her promise, she wanted to warn people against this danger. She was pleased at first to hear that Spallanzani was dead, but then she realised that this was wrong, because his soul was lost. She also thinks that someone ought to be doing something about the angels Spallanzani trapped. Unfortunately, Baulk largely dispensed with her services after her madness started giving even him the creeps (he has a bit of a conscience), and has been evasive ever since Spallanzani's death.

Annie also saw a dark figure stalking through the village last night. This was of course Father O'Dell, but she's convinced it was the Devil, or maybe the Angel of Death, come for Spallanzani's soul. She hid from him immediately.

So Annie alternates vague warnings about Spallanzani's evil, regret that his soul is lost now "an' the devil came to take him last night", mutters about how even angels may be hurt, and refusals to say more because "terrible things will befall" and she's said too much already. Her parents don't know what to do about her, but won't initially mention that the priest may be involved in her madness somehow, because they're devout and don't want to believe this – though both have half-guessed this. On the other hand, Annie is watching the sea obsessively, and may see useful stuff...

### Visiting Thornwail

The PCs will probably decide to visit Thornwail sooner or later; explaining this to the villagers may or may not be tricky, depending on their initial cover story. They may need to pay for transport over there – Kevin MacPeters is the obvious local to ask.

If they rush into this too fast, pace the game by having them meet Puir Annie Stuart (below) on the jetty. She announces that "the foreign man, he was a terrible man, terrible", that she thinks it's good that he's dead, "but that's wrong o' me, for his soul could ha' been saved", and that "The Divil came for his soul last night – I saw him – he may be on Thornwail still". MacPeters (or any other local) will look sad, but tell her to "leave the visitin' gentlemen be", apologising for the poor girl being touched.

Anyway, whoever takes the PCs over will politely insist on staying with them as they explore the place, unless he's *very* impressed with them; they're strangers of uncertain motives, after all.

Thornwail Isle has a small jetty at the foot of a short, steep flight of steps up to the door to the tower; the door itself was forced the day before yesterday, and has now been closed up with a makeshift bar lashed in place. Removing that takes a few seconds. Inside, the medieval fortress has been converted for moderately comfortable modern habitation.

*The Ground Floor* is an entrance hall with a bit of domestic storage; part of it has been partitioned off to serve as a working kitchen. There's a trapdoor that presumably leads down to a cellar, and a narrow (one-person-wide) stone staircase on one wall leading up; this has no handrail, just a grab rope fastened to the wall. There are a couple of oil lamps lying around, which could be useful.

*The Cellar* is empty and dark, though if someone brings a lantern down, a Per-based Housekeeping roll (Per at -4 default) will note that it seems to have been swept and kept adequately clean lately, despite being currently empty. PCs will note a trapdoor in the floor which is held shut by a couple of bars, but which hinges downwards; opening that will reveal another dark space and the sounds of waves – there's a raw stone cave down there, and the sea itself ten or twelve feet down. The cave they may have glimpsed in the side of the rock evidently runs under the tower.

*The First Floor* is living space, and has been partitioned into two rooms. The first has a fireplace, a comfortable armchair, a small dining table with two chairs, and a couple of bookshelves full of books, mostly in Italian but also including some in English and some in German. A survey taking a couple of minutes will suggest that these are a mixture of alchemical texts, monographs on mechanical engineering, and translated medieval romances. The other room is a bedroom, with a large four-poster, a washstand, and a bedside table. Here, any locals accompanying the PCs will mutter an oath, cross themselves, and take two steps back; the bed is empty, though a quick

look will suggest that someone or something has lain on it since it was last made up. As the local will make clear if the PCs don't guess, this is where they left Spallanzani.

*The Second Floor* largely consists of a single chamber accessed from a small landing – and it's currently locked and bolted. The door has DR 2 and 29 HP; the lock is good enough to give -3 to attempts to pick it, and the key cannot be located anywhere in the rest of the house (because it's *inside the room*). Even if the PCs succeed in picking the lock, the door is bolted on the other side; the bolts might be finessed, but that will need tools and at least an hour's work, and any locals around will make a reaction roll at -3 to see what they think of the idea, or of the PCs smashing their way in. Getting in from the outside might actually be better; one could climb down to the window from the roof fairly easily, jemmy the window with a simple DX roll, and then squeeze through... The room inside is actually *Spallanzani's Lab*, doubling as his office. See below for details.

Access to *The Roof* is through a trapdoor above that landing. There's not much to see up there; it's a platform with a slight pitch and crenelated stone barrier around the edge that's only a foot high in most parts. (This is also where PCs descending from the dirigible are likely to land.) It's not actually terrible unsafe most of the time, but a climactic fight here could involve a plunge to the rocks or waves below.

#### *Spallanzani's Lab*

The laboratory is poorly lit, thanks to there being just two fairly small windows with heavily leaded glazing, and furnishings that create a lot of shadows. An oil lamp on the wall could eventually be brought to life, but PCs may be a little creeped out by then. The first obvious reason is that there's a dead body lying on a laboratory bench in the middle of the room. Yes, it's Spallanzani; a late-middle-aged man, wearing a plain nightgown, apparently dropped rather carelessly, limbs askew and with his nightgown somewhat disarrayed. However, even a cursory examination will show that the body has been mutilated; there are multiple small incisions up and down the arms and legs and all over the chest. These prove on closer examination to be bone-deep in many places. Detailed examination with chemical testing and multiple uses of Chemistry skill will suggest that the body has been treated somehow with some of the complex alchemical compounds that can be found around the lab.

The second thing that might trigger Fright Checks is the collection of a dozen mannequins, hanging limply like puppets from a rack at one side of the room, all with their unnerving painted smiles. This group are all wearing maidservants' uniforms... They're hung up in three rows of four; actually, three of the four at the back are "active", while the rest are inert. The only way to distinguish them immediately is by close inspection with Per rolls, which will determine that those three have stains on their wooden hands from blood and chemicals, and one of them has the key for this room in the pocket of her costume. It's possible that the PCs have run into Baulk's "angels" at this point, and that they'll start smashing these up or something – which is one way to discover that they have complex clockwork mechanisms inside their thin wood-and-metal shells. In any case, the three "live" ones will respond to threats to themselves or to Spallanzani's body by attacking. Because Spallanzani had been experimenting on them for so long, they have an excess of "animal magnetism" flowing through them, making them more dangerous; see their details. A Practical Science! roll can identify the phenomenon once they start using it.

Aside from all that, the room has two large benches; the one on which Spallanzani's body is lying was used for alchemical work – and much of the equipment has been carefully lifted off and placed underneath – while the other is basically a watchmaker's bench, with lots of tools and tiny metal cogs and components. There's what might be taken for a severed arm on that, but a quick look

determines that this is actually artificial, with a complex mechanism; a part for a mannequin, of course. And there's a bureau and a simple chair; opening the former will find the usual odds and ends needed for correspondence and household accounts – and several books full of what look like accounts and ledgers. These are partly encoded, and full of personal abbreviations; puzzling them out is likely to take days. Of course, they're actually half of what this little mission is all about.

Questioning villagers about what happened to Spallanzani's body will elicit confusion followed by outrage, with plenty of opportunities for distrust of these outsiders. Even if someone could have sneaked onto the island somehow, who'd do anything so pointlessly disrespectful? It doesn't make any sense at all. Basically, the locals will get a bunch of minor Fright Check and Social Disorder Check failures... Father Baulk will react similarly but with a show of more thoughtfulness, though this gives PCs who are close by at the time another chance to spot that his responses are *off*, though he's genuinely somewhat puzzled.

**Housekeeper Mannequins:** ST 8, DX 13, IQ 8, HT 11, Per 10, Basic Speed 6, Move 6. Catfall, Combat Reflexes, DR 1, Ambidexterity, Extra Attack, Perfect Balance, Mute, and any DX-based skills they need (Brawling, Acrobatics, Housekeeping-based-on-DX...) at 12. Dodge 10. Definitely automatons; no real question of Will, either way, and deep in the Uncanny Valley if anyone gets close enough to them to see. Note that they *don't* have High Pain Threshold; being damaged disrupts their functioning...

**(1) HP 8:**

**(2) HP 8:**

**(3) HP 8:**

*Special Attack:* The sheer power of the alchemical energies that Spallanzani has been pumping into them has given them gross quantities of *animal magnetism*. They typically attack each turn with one Grab and one Stun attack; roll against 13 with both. Once the opponent is grabbed, note that they are at -4 DX, and so -2 to parries and -1 to Dodge, and cannot Retreat; the mannequin will subsequently go for a kick (roll 11, 1d-2 damage thanks to hard feet) and a Stun attack. See p.B371 for what to do when grappled; note that the PCs will probably easily win the contest of ST to break free.

If a Stun attack hits, the victim gets a HT-1 roll to resist; on a failure, they Do Nothing except defend at an extra -4 and attempt a recovery (again, HT-1) each turn. Once the victim is stunned, the mannequin will go for a Grab if not already grappling, then kick as much as possible. Roll random hit locations for kicks (p.B552); anything is valid – the mannequin will be all over their opponent.

#### *Dealing With the Discoveries*

The PCs can take the lead on what to do with the mutilated Spallanzani, but may have to persuade the villagers to go along. Leaving him where he's lying will be okay in practice, as will moving him back to his bed; bringing him over to the village will require more argument, and nobody is likely to be happy about putting him anywhere but the church. In that case, one of the active mannequins will eventually swim/float over to the mainland, allowing it to "awaken" him later; the mannequin may even leap from the lab window later when no one is around, leading to worrying puzzlement for the PCs when they find one missing. They may also do stuff like re-lock the lab door or *clean up* the house when no one is present...

It's possible that the PCs will decide to take no chances and burn the body – though that's rather disrespectful by 19<sup>th</sup> century standards, and the villagers will react badly. This will also trigger an attack by the mannequins, in the cover of which, the burning Spallanzani will rise up and hurl himself in the sea, ready to come back for the final scene (albeit 5 HP down). Trying to stop him hits the

slight problem that he's *burning*, with strange-coloured alchemical flames even; that's worth 1d damage on prolonged contact, 1d-4 on a quick touch.

### Scene 5: That Night

Hopefully, though, things will still be a bit open when night falls. The next event that drives the plot is the arrival of the *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* at Thornwail, at about midnight. Even if the PCs go to bed early, the unhappy Puir Annie Stuart will be up and around, and will run through the village crying out that "The Devil's Ship has come for the Wicked Man's soul". Hopefully, the PCs will take an interest, and if they don't, one or two villagers will. Hence, someone will see that a fair-sized (and totally non-supernatural) steamship is pulling to on the far side of Thornwail Isle. Even if the PCs insist on staying in bed for a while, there'll be some discussion among the villagers about what to do about this.

Meanwhile, Kapitain Leiden is preparing for a little chat with whoever brought that big fat airship to An Herrick – which he'll guess means minions of the state, because he's cynical like that. He takes a boat into the cave, makes his way up to the cellar, and prepares to greet anyone who comes down there. He'll be standing on the hatch that grants access to the cave, with a pull cord in his hand; if anyone starts shooting at him, or comes closer than he asks them to, he just gives a tug and drops into the water, where his crew pull him out. Or, if his crew report any other vessels coming round the Isle and into view, he can come back out to talk from the *Proudhon's* deck just as easily. He just wants to talk.

His a thin, pale character of indeterminate age, clean shaven, with a definite German accent. He addresses everyone as "*Mein Freund*", never as "Sir", and gives his name freely if asked. Current Affairs (Headline News) at +2 recognises it; note that the default for that skill is IQ-4 or other Current Affairs at -4. He's a notorious anarchist and gun-runner!

...Which he doesn't deny if challenged, commenting that the PCs are doubtless servants of the self-declared ruling classes, but he's not here to talk about that just now. Otherwise, he describes himself as a specialist in shipping goods quietly to any coast where they are wanted. Sometimes, he works for good causes, but he must eat and purchase for fuel, so he also works for pay. And *Herr Doctor Spallanzani* was one of his customers, who became, in due course, his friend.

Spallanzani, he comments, was a truly good man – one of that rare breed – and hence, sadly, too trusting. It became obvious to Leiden than many recipients of Spallanzani's shipments were in fact minions of various rulers, and not people who Leiden would trust one inch. He tried to warn his friend, but Spallanzani was too good a man. Leiden did convince him to take some precautions, though, depositing details of his sales in a safe place...

And then, Leiden heard of Spallanzani's sudden death. Call him a cynical man, but he doubts that this was natural. And so he came to see what could be done about vengeance. ("Justice" is a fantasy of the ruling classes, *mein freund*.) But it seems that someone else is already on the scene – and to arrive so openly, in such an impressive if bloated airship... It has the look of arrogance, but not of secret killers, somehow. Or so he hopes.

And so he'll willingly exchange notes with the PCs. He's a fair judge of people and politics himself, and basically wants to fill the PCs in on the background so they can nail the right people. Yes, he's taking a chance, but he has a lot of nerve. Eventually, though, he'll run out of things to talk about, and make his dramatic exit. The *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* will depart the island soon after; the PCs may not guess that actually, it'll hide in a cove just down the coast. Leiden wants to see how this plays out.

## Scene 6: The Climax

Things come to a climax mid-morning the next day, while the PCs are maybe prodding round the tower more, investigating Baulk, or whatever falls out of player actions. Another, slightly larger steamship, the *Nebelmeer*, comes into view from the open sea and drops anchor a little further out in the bay than Thornwail Isle. Moments later, a couple of small steam launches are lowered, and it should soon become obvious that they're each carrying five armed men. One will head for the cave, the other for the jetty in front of the tower. The Austrian Secret Service has come to call, the dirigible has told them that there is already a faction in play, and they aren't trying for subtlety.

How things play out from now on depends partly on the PCs' actions, and partly on how things have gone until now. The Austrians, led by Carsten Sandmeier, just want to obtain or destroy any remaining records of their dealings with Spallanzani; obtaining them is better, as there may be all sorts of other interesting information in the same books, but is also less reliable, so they may well resort to burning down the tower and everything in it. Because they don't particularly want to kill everyone they meet, they won't admit to their specific allegiance; Sandmeier, who'll be on the boat that approaches the jetty, will address the PCs as fellow professionals, while pointing out that they are outnumbered and can't win this fight, if that's what it becomes. "There are, we believe, certain records of ... private business in that building. We cannot allow them to fall into the hands of those who might misuse them..." Just to be sure of things, the agents on the launch that approaches the cave will hit the hatch with an incendiary shell to destroy it, then come up through the cellar. Things may all get a bit *Die Hard*.

*But* other factions will be in play. For one, if Baulk is still on the loose, he'll set out to rescue the "angels" from the tower, bringing his own mannequins along if necessary and possible. If he's not been exposed at this point, he'll harangue a confused local into giving him and his two mannequins – initially thinly disguised in improvised robes, based on ecclesiastical stuff from his own wardrobe – a ride out to the island, loudly command Sandmeier and his goons to depart, and march up to the tower to fetch the mannequins there. Left to his own devices, he'll then get his throat crushed by Spallanzani.

Because more importantly, when the tower mannequins understand that there's a serious threat, they'll trigger the last stage of their "resurrection" of their creator. Spallanzani rises as a nigh-mindless animated monstrosity, accompanied by any surviving mannequins (who keep dancing around and "presenting" him), and hopefully gets to do something horrible to either Baulk or Sandmeier, or both, and then to anyone else who gets in his way. (This should be good for Fright Checks *and* Shocking Revelation checks, at penalties, at various points.) He's hard to kill, and partly fireproof – bonus points if Sandmeier shoots him with an incendiary missile, only to get himself killed by a *burning* monster – but the PCs should get to finish him off eventually; Practical Science! should provide a chance to guess that the sickly pulsating green glow inside his chest represents his power source; Targeted Attacks to the Vitals are a valid option here, getting the traditional x3 damage multiplier...

And in the end, the last remnants of Sandmeier's party may get to escape to their ship and flee. Pursuit by dirigible may be feasible, but stopping them will be hard – except that, a few moments later, the *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* will heave into view around a headland, reveal a deck gun, and blow the rudder off the *Nebelmeer*. As Leiden may have said already, justice is what we make of it.

**Carsten Sandmeier:** ST 11, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 11, Basic Speed 6, Move 5, Dodge 9. Attractive, Intelligence Rank 3, Status 2; Fluent in English, French, German, and Italian. Callous, Ambitious, Likes

Incendiaries. Administration-14, Area Knowledge (Europe)-15, Guns (Pistol)-13, Intelligence Analysis-14, Leadership-13.

*Armed with a revolver (stats for Mauser C78 Zick-Zack):* Damage 2d pi, Acc 2, Range 110/1,200, Weight 1.9/0.3, RoF 3, Shots 6(2i), ST 8, Bulk -2, Rcl 2.

**HP 11:**

**Austrian Goons:** ST 11, DX 10, IQ 9, HT 11, Per 10, Will 11, Basic Speed 5.25, Move 5, Dodge 8. Guns (Rifle)-12, Intimidation-11, Soldier-12.

*Armed with rifles (stats for Mauser Gew98):* Damage 7d+1 pi, Acc 5, Range 1,100/4,600, Weight 9.5/0.3, RoF 1, Shots 5(3), ST 11, Bulk -5, Rcl 4.

A couple on each boat also have *Incendiary Launchers:* Damage 1d-1(0.5) cr + 4d burn inc, Acc 1, Range 15/250, Weight 8/0.3, RoF 1, Shots 1(3), ST 8, Bulk -4, Rcl 2.

**HP 11:**

(Note; these goons will actually drop out of play after one good hit. They aren't fanatics.)

**Zombie Mad Scientist:** ST 20, DX 10, IQ 6, HT 12, Per 9, Basic Speed 5.5, Move 6. DR 2, Ambidexterity, Extra Attack, Hard to Subdue 5, High Pain Threshold (**not vs. Vitals hits**), Immune to Metabolic Hazards, Unkillable 1 (never dies until -200 HP; **not vs. Vitals hits**), Berserk (6), Mute. If hit with burning attacks, catches fire with strange violet flames until 10 points lost to fire, then rampages around as a smouldering skeleton. Throws two punches/turn, All-Out for +4 to hit, doing 2d-2 cr with each – or tries two-handed grabs for the neck, also All-Out (so roll against 11), then Choke/Strangle (p.B370-1).

**HP 20:**

*Small Cargo Vessels*, as seen in this last scene, have Move 6 (Chase Mod +3), Hnd -3, SR 6 – just in case it's relevant.