

Sky Pirates

A C13 adventure for 2 to 5 players at approximately 75/8 to 100/8 pts. The characters should be tough, heroic pulp-style adventurers. Although the characters will carry guns, they should be capable of handling themselves without resorting to lethal violence. Preferably at least one player will be able to pilot a zeppelin.

The characters are working on the Gotham (NYC) police force. They may be federal agents, liaisons, or even (with some work by the GM) private investigators. Several brazen acts of boarding and robbing zeppelins have occurred above the colonies' largest metropolis and the PC's are on the case!

The NYPD

The NYPD is world renowned for dealing with some of the strangest criminal cases in existence. The force (which is the largest metropolitan police force in the world) is responsible for security and investigation of all criminal activity within the city limits—and assistance with cases related to NYC crimes throughout the colonies (and in some cases, even the world). The NYPD uses in-house experts but also employs a “Liaison Program” where they take on personnel from other agencies for a period of time for outside expertise (other agencies are also quick to take advantage of the experience and training that their people get during their time on the force).

Character Types:

Police Detective

These guys are the front-line soldiers of the force's war on crime. They're always getting re-assigned, moved around, and switched from case to case. Many are hardened or jaded by what they've seen but what keeps them going is the quest for justice or love of “the game.” They're known for being thorough, patient, and observant.

- Police Procedure L3 (13- or better)
- Firearms L2 (13- or better)
- Driving L2 (13- or better)
- Crime L2 (13- or better)
- Streetwise L2 (13- or better)
- Interrogation (L2 13- or better)

Carries:

Badge and Credentials
10mm Police Sidearm
Light Bullet Proof Vest (2/16 coverage 4)
Hex-Proof Badge

Scotland Yard Inspector

New York, like London and Paris is one of the few truly international cities. Interpol, the International Police force, maintains a presence there and keeps agents in rotation. Their primary purpose is to assist in the investigation of international crimes, but many have joined the liaison program and work in the trenches. The stereotype of the “Inspector” is a United Kingdom investigator with an accent, a brilliant mind, and an arrogant attitude. Many are tagged as having a flair for the dramatic when having broken a case (and are considered prima donnas who only want the highest profile cases.)

- Police Procedure L3 (15- or better)
- Firearms L2 (13- or better)
- Crime L3 (14- or better)
- Streetwise L2 (13- or better)
- Interrogation (L2 13- or better)
- Psychology L2 (13- or better)

Carries:

Badge and Credentials
9mm Standard International Sidearm
Light Bullet Proof Vest (2/16 coverage 4)
Hex-Proof Badge

Police Magician

It's hard to recruit magicians onto the force: the pay isn't good, the work is often ugly, and the police don't tend to trust wizards. They're indispensable, however. Evidence of a magical nature isn't admissible in criminal court (it's usually hard to verify) but can sometimes break an impossible case wide open. More commonly the police wizards are simply used as experts (or just extra firepower). Usually they'll be assigned to a police officer whose job is to protect the wizard (the stereotype is of a slightly mad, somewhat unstable magician who has seen so many horrible things his mind is starting to snap).

- Hex Magic [2pts Weird Stuff]
- Illegal Hex Magic [2pts Weird Stuff] (Optional)
- Police Procedure L2 (13- or better)
- Firearms L2 (12- or better)
- Informational Magic [2pts Weird Stuff]

Carries:

Badge and Credentials
7mm Police Sidearm (light) or 10mm standard
Light Bullet Proof Vest (2/16 coverage 4)
Hex-Proof Badge

Federal Agent

Federal Agents could work for the Secret Service (which protects the members of the Continental Congress), the Colonial Bureau of Investigation (responsible for handling cross-boarder crimes), or even the Bureau of International Affairs (who could be anyone from a spook to a diplomatic embassy worker on liaison). Often they are stationed in NYC for a limited time on a case (or due to some specific expertise like medical skill). However, those assigned to liaison usually have been put there because their chain of command isn't happy with them! Federal agents are *less* popular with colonial forces than they are in The Dream. They have the same reputation for arrogance and skill as in The Dream but their power varies widely from state to state.

- Police Procedure L3 (14- or better)
- Firearms L3 (14- or better)
- Driving L2 (13- or better)
- Crime L2 (13- or better)
- Interrogation (L2 13- or better)

Carries:

Badge and Credentials
10mm Police Sidearm
Light Bullet Proof Vest (2/16 coverage 4)
Hex-Proof Badge

• **PLAYERS WARNING: DO NOT READ BEYOND THIS POINT** •
IF YOU DO YOU WILL RUIN YOUR ABILITY TO PLAY IN THIS ADVENTURE.

GM's Notes

Sky Piracy is almost unheard of: it involves the approach, boarding, and looting of one zeppelin by another. It's a bizarre crime (being "more trouble than its worth") but someone has done it (and under strange circumstances too!). Some of the wealthiest citizens in NYC have been hit and the characters are part of a multi-division effort to break the case.

What's Going On

Professor Eugene Merriman, a.k.a. Dr. August, has decided that the world is not being run correctly. There are too many leeches, too many pampered celebrities, the people of the colonies are distracted from productivity and the pursuit of high-minded ideas by a culture of decadence in the Middle, parasitic aristocracy in the South, and religious dogma in the North! Where are the factories? People don't understand the necessity of being on time, efficient, and learning to live with less. In short, he's decided that his vision of society is getting trampled by a soft-bodied generally spineless elite (and when they're not spineless they're greedy or isolationist or whatever) and he's going to give society the kick in the pants it so dearly needs.

Dr. August is a brilliant man: he has studied the disciplines of physics and mechanics (and found them 'too easy' to be worth his time). He has studied the discipline of magic (but found the limitations of power too confining—he had no wish to be a magician). He has, in his later years, turned his attention to the human soul (mythology and literature). However, having becoming bored (and having a bone to pick with his wealthy colleagues) he has become (with his vast inherited fortune) a "super villain."

He has recruited loyal followers (whom he treats well—loyalty from those close to you is important), built secret bases—several! Dispersed his money so he can go into hiding if necessary, and created special gear and weapons. Then he needed a plan.

Dr. August's Plan

Part 1: Soul Bottles

In the underworld a form of 'life insurance' is a Soul Bottle. There is a black art of taking a soul from its body and trapping it in a crystal. When this is done, the body can be destroyed—but the soul doesn't die—it can be 'reconstituted'—another body can be created and inhabited.

It sounds good so far: the problem is that an entombed soul suffers damage in the bottle. Personalities shift and change. The people who are reconstituted often have missing time and incorrect memories. Their personalities have degenerated. They may have strange vices and obscene hungers. There are those who have memories of suffering terribly inside the Soul Bottles. And what of the bodies? The bodies which have had their souls removed *act* like the original—but without passion—without *true* emotion. The bodies themselves sometimes become monstrous parodies of their former selves. It seems that without a proper soul the body can also become the host for the Unclean—for evil spirits ... or even demons. And that's a problem.

Finally, when a soul is reconstituted—when a body is magically created from a Soul Bottle there is a "window of vulnerability" where the soul can be bound as though it were a summoned being. Thus a crime boss might jar his soul to go to an important meeting where he thought he might be killed—but when his body *is* killed and the underworld magicians re-create him, a clever magician could *bind* him so he now serves a master.

So Soul Bottles are ... somewhat out of favor.

Part 2: The Spirit of the Empire State Building

Some buildings—some places—have spirits. In the Shallows valleys and rivers can be 'alive' and sentient. In human lands (although it is rare) buildings can develop their own personalities. Sometimes a house isn't *haunted*—it's just *aware* ... and it doesn't like you! In other cases, buildings of stature and grandeur have, well, souls. In New York City the Empire State Building is

one of these—people swear they can feel it ... it presides like a king over a courtyard of smaller structures ... it is awe-inspiring to look at—and to feel it look back. It is fueled by the pride of perhaps the greatest city on the planet, by being the icon of Colonial Progress—of being the cornerstone of the metropolis. It is a symbol of man's capability and it knows it.

If the soul of the Empire State Building was not trapped in its body of glass and steel it might (people say) appear as a magnificent eagle the size of a legendary Roc. It would be a flesh-and-bone being of phenomenal power, soaring over the colonies or bending to drink from the Atlantic itself.

Part 3: The Keystone

The Keystone is a magical diamond. It is reputed to have come from the ancient Tower of Babylon—it is said that if the Keystone is placed in the foundation of a building, that building will never fall. That's true—sort of.

The Keystone is a Soul Bottle that works only for the spirits of buildings. If the soul of a building is trapped in the Keystone the building could be re-constructed the same way that a person is. This is a secret—no one knows about this property (or at least very few people) the common belief (and knowledge of the Keystone isn't "common" to begin with) is that it has some magical repair property that it imparts to structures: powerful ... but not nearly so interesting.

Part 4: The Corner Stone

When it left Babylon, the Keystone went to (through many hands) Pharaoh Ramses II. The king had a tomb built in the desert—a pyramid. He understood *some* of the powers of the Keystone and his magicians and architects understood the properties of the tombs they were building. The pyramid was to remain intact to take their Pharaoh to the underworld—they realized right away that the Keystone would be useful in that—moreover, they thought, the Pharaoh's sarcophagi could be bound to the Keystone in such away as to merge his spirit with the buildings—so that as long as the stone remained (and they would seal it in) the building would stand and his soul would be protected!

They discovered, upon inspection, that this would be a drastic mistake: doing this would trap their master's spirit in the stone with the soul of the great pyramid. The project was scrapped—but the stone sarcophagus remained. It was collected years later and now resides in Europe. Professor Merriman has made subtle arrangements to have it exhibited ... in New York.

Part 5: The Plan

Merriman has quite a plan: he plans to *steal the soul of the Empire State Building!* But there's more: he plans to *Summon the spirit of the ESB, bind it to his spirit and control a monster capable of bringing the Colonies to their knees!* (insert manicidal laughter). This is what he needs to do:

1. Take the Keystone (which is conveniently owned by Lady Ezra whom he knows and secretly despises!)
2. Obtain the Corner Stone (to merge the souls): if this can't be done then he'll have to use magic to bind the great eagle spirit—not preferable—but acceptable.
3. Go to the Empire State Building during its re-dedication (when the spirit will be active) and lower the Keystone down a long narrow shaft in the building's core to the foundation.
4. Steal the spirit!

In order to do this, he has planned the following:

1. He has made a dramatic entrance (since his "awakening" as a "super villain" everything he's done has been dramatic—and he's having a great time!). He has arranged a heist in the air of the Keystone—he took it from Lady Ezra himself but arranged a disguise!
2. The Corner Stone is en-route. He has his head lieutenant planning another sky-raid (dressed as him) to take it off the Hindenburg itself!

3. While the dedication ceremony is going on, he'll take his private airship and go to the top of the building. There he will steal the soul (the ground floor will be too well guarded for him to get in).

How This Is Likely To Play Out

Well, that's up to you as the GM—what we've done is given a time-line (which is flexible—but shows the order of likely events) as well as some scenes. The order we've given them in is easily subject to change or alteration. The characters may figure out that one of the two people involved in the first sky-jacking is Dr. August. That's okay—they may make the correct call and have him placed under surveillance.

That could seriously change the way things work out—or it might not. It's up to you. We've tried to set up a dramatic series of events that goes like this:

1. The characters are informed of the crime. They investigate the crime scene and question witnesses.
2. While doing so they are a) attacked by Merriman's thugs and b) there is another sky-piracy attempt (again, using a stand-in) to 'throw them off the scent'
3. Their research into The Keystone leads them to learn of The Cornerstone and they realize that it too is being brought in on zeppelin so they can intercept Dr. August's team.
4. They capture the lieutenant or follow him back to his lair (or whatever) and discover the whole plan—on the night that it's happening.
5. They rush (via airship) to the Empire State Building for the final showdown with Dr. August.

A Note On Heroic Action

This adventure is conceived of in a pulp-style. It should include exciting, "danger filled" scenes which involve narrow escapes or (preferably) non-fatal disasters. A technique which is good for this sort of action is Failure As A Complication. If a character fails a roll, the GM can, instead of simply deciding that the action fails, introduce complications (and allow another roll). The GM can keep track of a certain failure number (usually 5-10), which will indicate complete failure. The converse of this is to require a certain success number (usually 1 to 5).

Ex1: CBI Agent Howard Darkly is sneaking up on two thugs who are talking. The GM calls for a Stealth roll and decides the failure point is -5. There is no success number. The player isn't informed of the number (necessarily). The player rolls and fails by 3. Instead of being seen, the GM rules that as he darts across the street, a car makes a sudden turn, displaying him in the headlights. He has to make an AGI roll to dive for cover—and then has to lay-low for a few seconds before getting another roll (maybe he misses some of the conversation—maybe not).

Complicating things isn't done merely to reflect a roll failure—the character may well be performing flawlessly—it's done to add excitement and to possibly raise the stakes. It takes some talent to do—and shouldn't be a sure thing (the players shouldn't feel they can count on eventual success no matter what).

Another possibility is to let the player decide what complication arises that causes him to fail. This gives the player a chance to do the following:

1. Try again but with raised stakes.
2. Fail, but survive the failure.

Obviously this requires a good deal of maturity on the part of the GM and the Players (we're considering codifying the rules further to assist this sort of player-narration in gaming) but the results can be gratifying.

Optional Story Line

Ideally you'll customize this adventure to your characters—but even if you don't have the time (or think it works pretty well as-is) it's always nice to add a personal touch to an adventure. Here is an example of a personalization scenario you could introduce into the adventure to make the events hit-home for a chosen character.

The Niece

The character has a young (maybe 19 years old) Niece staying with him/here. She's in from out of town and has come to New York to join one of those Star (*)-COM Startups. The Star-COMS are so named because they are a new trend of employee owned businesses that trade stock on the Electronic Telephone Exchange—you just dial into the switchboard and use the name of the company (an asterisk followed by a three digit code followed by the company name followed by COM to indicate that it's a company) to purchase or sell stock.

Anyway, she's a smart, young Meta-Physicist and is working in the city and staying in the character's apartment. In the beginning scene the GM can note her arrival (maybe the character's neat flat is a royal mess, maybe a disorderly apartment has been restored to unwelcome order). The niece is cheerful in a slightly grating way and might encourage grim characters to cheer up, or otherwise be an ever-so-slightly annoying guest.

She is, of course, working unwittingly for one of Dr. August's companies. She's helping to build his magneto-sonic lightning cannons and such. The character won't know this, of course, and she has no idea she's working for a super-villain (she *has* met with Professor Merriman—but knows him under an assumed name) and considers him a great man (smart, funny, and generous).

A middle scene can be introduced where-in while the characters are dealing with every-day life (should this ever happen) she will try to talk the character's ear off over the phone: she's moving to a new office location—it's a big deal—a chance to work with some really cool stuff. The idea should be to play this as an annoyance (this should be played for humor). She may even talk about being improperly attracted to her boss ("*he's much older—but he's sexy for a bald guy!*").

In the end, at the Professor's Estate, the characters can find *her* there, working on theoretical equations, having no idea what's really going on. To make matters worse, although she can (if taken into the Green house to see the lab, explain everything) she'll still loyally insist that Professor Merriman is a great guy and she just *can't imagine him wanting to conquer New York—not that she'd mind it too much if he did—he's a really nice guy to work for!*

Act 1: Monday Morning

The characters are assembled and put on the case. The assignment is not a “good” one—despite the bizarre and exciting nature of the crime the consensus is that the crime is so high profile and the people involved are so rich (and twisted—and expected not to cooperate) that its felt that this job will consist of butting heads with nasty rich people who don’t want their secrets coming out!

Scene 1: The News

The characters are getting to work. This is a good place to start in with the feel of New York City, affectionately known as “Gotham.” For starters, no one drives—the characters either walk or take a bus, trolley, or subway. The 13C New York has San Francisco style above-ground trolleys. The people are unlike any in the world.

You can use the below descriptive bits and/or make up your own: New York is a city that has a vast invisible world just under its surface. To the people who live there, it is a city that is haunted—but haunted in a familiar fashion.

“Forty Second Street’s been ‘cleaned up’ but that just means that the marquees above the storefronts just down the allies shift slightly with their illusory shells advertising Typewriter Repair or Clothing Alterations. At night, when the ordinances end, the spells will be broken and Live Girls, Unspeakable Acts, and words that hint at Opium Dens will glitter above the blacked out windows.”

“Overhead you can hear the heavy scrape of a stone gargoye shifting position. The old facades become haunted over the decades and the angels and demons in the architecture stretch their limbs from time to time. So long as it stays up there, above the crowded streets, there’s no problem—but sometimes they come down from their perches (usually at night)—and then it’s Animal Control’s job. How do they deal with 1.2-ton stone monsters anyway?”

“Paper boys scream headlines from the curbs and sidewalks: “Empire State Building’s Re-Dedication Wednesday! Seventy-foot Serpent Body Pulled From River: Twelve Bodies Found In Stomach! (probably a mob-job, you think—getting a monster to play clean-up duty for their rub-outs) France Declares English Naval Vessels Engaged in Act of Aggression in Mediterranean Incident. It’s a cut-throat job, the most savvy of them using small winged imps to circle overhead looking for regular customers they can reach before the others.”

“One of those new SUV’s growls dangerously as you pass. Just off Wall Street, probably driven by some yuppie lawyer, the loyalty conditioning has already started to lapse. It growls like a jungle cat, shifting on its suspension like it’s ready to pounce. Inside, oblivious, a blond woman in a power-suit touches up her eye shadow.”

“Some of the boys have got an early morning wake-up call: a chalk outline outside of one of the Auto-Mat all night food dispensers. The body is covered in a sheet, but you can see it’s a messy one: looks like claws. The culinary demon inside has an IQ of about 60 when it comes to anything other than cooking and it usually can’t see the customers much less the front door. A city of over a million and not one witness.”

“The college of Areomancy is the only three-story building not to have a first floor. It hovers above a rock garden with artificial waterfalls and pools of sunlight filtered through three levels of skylight. With no stairs and a front door fifteen feet above the street you never did workout how to get in.”

“A tall, thin trans-mute a little over 9-feet high picks his way through the crowds at the subway, laconically asking for change. If you had a neck like a boa-constrictor, a body like a 98-pound weakling, and arms as long and thin as broomsticks you might ask for a handout too. Over in the corner a man and woman bard and magician act work for their money, illusory figures dancing in miniature while the man plays haunting melodies on a lute.”

The Station: The Precinct building is a big brick edifice with glass windows, a flight of polished white steps leading up to brown double doors, and two street lights with spherical white-glass bulbs on gothic iron stalks out front. Around back is the motor pool and down, underground, over a hundred years old, are the dungeon-like cellblocks. Everyone's getting in early and there's a palpable sense of camaraderie around the coffee machines and water coolers.

The characters have worked as an investigative team and are meeting in the offices. There's the chatter of typewriters, telegraphs, and radio (think about a 1940's office). Phones ring (big black ones with rotary dials) police sergeants make off-color gallows-humor jokes out by the men's room or while (grumbling) stepping outside to smoke (there has been some 'progress').

Small Talk/Description:

"One of the shifters, picked up by vice, decked out in working-girl attire talks with the booking officer in a deep rumbling baritone She—he—it? Is currently five-foot two and looking as cute and innocent as a schoolgirl. For a price it can look like a fifty year old man ... or maybe a red-skinned horned demon. Hey, some guys are into that."

"Haley over in evidence doesn't look happy as he nods to you. He's sitting on a shipment of soul-bottles picked up in a import sweep operation. They're black-market life-insurance as long as you don't mind being a soulless intellect while your essence is held in a crystal and silver sphere that can go unstable and explode like a hand grenade. Worse, no one knows if they were full-up which means that people—criminals, the rich, the perverse—but still people—could be trapped in there. It's a bad scene."

"Overheard: 'That's what I'm saying: it became animate and walked off—so is that larceny? Missing persons? Magic Squad? Aww hell, I don't even know who to call. I hate art theft cases. Has anyone seen a twelve-foot tall naked Greek made of marble? Maybe I should call vice?"

Briefing: The characters are assembled in the briefing room. There's some chatter (the station has heard about the Jules Verns theft even though the characters probably haven't). You can have someone toss a newspaper at them (if they bought one on the way in, it's second page news but they probably check the funnies first). Maybe they do know about it and are talking about it. It's exciting (see the description below).

One thing you can bring up (have a rookie ask?) is that it's a bum-job. Stolen diamonds? Air-heist? A 'master criminal calling himself Dr. August?' That's a high-profile begging-to-be-screwed-up kinda case that'll hurt you for the rest of your days (maybe the speaker looks over at the characters to make a point). *"Anyway, kid, the Gotham beat is strange enough without worrying about blimp-ripoffs at two-thousand feet."*

The Crime: Last night, the Jules Verns Express (which is a zeppelin tour that runs across the city and moors and boards at the top of the Empire State Building) was robbed. A second (much smaller) zeppelin (painted black with gold trim) pulled up along side.

1. Reports (from staff on the Express) say that a harpoon with a steel cable was fired first, attaching the craft.
2. Following that, some kind of grappling cables were launched from tubes along the side of the smaller blimp.
3. Secure, a plank was extended (a mechanical device) from one door to the other.
4. Three muscular men wearing black dress with masks came across with a blowtorch and forced the door of the Express.
5. There were six of them: they secured the forward cabin (control), moved the staff to the passenger lounge while one of them ordered the passengers (all wealthy, many tourists) to empty their wallets, remove jewelry, etc.
6. It is believed they then went to the rear of the gondola, to the Hearts and Diamond Club—and ultra-exclusive private club that meets on the blimp and proceeded to rob that. The Club members (millionaires, industrialists, and all around blue-bloods) are believed to be the real target.
7. According to statements taken from the club members, the men entered and claimed that

someone named Dr. August had commandeered the blimp and they would be meeting with him shortly. There was a scuffle and two members of the club were subdued and secured in the forward cabin (the men carried restraints).

8. Shortly thereafter, Dr. August arrived. He was tall, masked, dressed in black and gold with a cape. He carried a cavalry sword with an electrical generator attached to it (gave a nasty shock) and had a flare for the dramatic.
9. After insulting the party, he liberated them of their belongings, including Lady Ezra Colderige's world famous diamond: The Key Stone. August left and the men, after a time, followed him out sealing the door behind them.

What the Police Know/Think: Sky Piracy is *very* rare—you have to have a hidden zeppelin landing pad ... a specially equipped zeppelin ... etc. Dr. August doesn't need the money (they think). They have fingered Ezra as a primary suspect.

Why were the characters assigned: Maybe the chief doesn't like them, but respects them. Maybe because there are a lot of people on the team from different agencies, he thinks that if they screw up handling the "royalty" he can deflect the blame. Maybe they're some of his best guys and the Mayor of NYC has demanded satisfaction. The players and their characters don't *need* to know, but figure it out.

Police Procedure L3: At this skill level you are qualified to investigate the crime. A basic roll will give you this plan: Investigate the scene of the crime (The Express is moored at the ESB), question all the witnesses, and beat the underworld a little to see if anyone has tried to fence the Key Stone (or other identifiable pieces of information taken).

A roll by 3+ will suggest pulling records of who owns their own zeppelins (sure, Dr. A could have a "black market zeppelin—but even so, chances are he bought or stole it). It seems (from the description) to have been modified to disguise its appearance.

A roll by 5+ will suggest research of the Key Stone.

Crime L3: This is the skill level needed to figure out how to plan Sky Piracy. Common sense (or maybe a bit of research) will suggest that there was some air-to-air zeppelin combat in The Great War and that there were some collisions and even boarding actions. A successful Lvl 3 Crime roll will tell more:

1. The crime was designed to get at either the Key Stone (or something else) when there were no guards (at street level). It's too much work for the projected take of what they have on them.
2. Dr. August has to be very wealthy (henchmen aren't cheap). Since he's not known in the underworld he must be a contemporary of the people targeted.
3. He must have a roof-top landing facility, either a registered zeppelin or a magical Helium Mill, and a garage shop to make the materials.
4. There is a precedence for "evil geniuses." There is an underworld that would supply the parts and materials and tools necessary to set up the workshop. A Streetwise roll at L3 could be used to trace them.
5. Fencing of the goods would have been done beforehand through private channels: the buyers are already lined up and you won't find any of the stuff in a pawnshop.

Streetwise L2 and L3: This won't turn up much—Sky Piracy has left the run of the mill underworld as baffled as everyone else. There are a few underworld crime figures with the panache to attempt something of this scale and all of them are currently laying low. At Level 3, the character has contacts with some local organized crime bosses. These guys have a lot more flair than their modern-day counterparts but didn't do it (a Level 3 Streetwise roll will turn up that it wasn't a local job). Dr. August is on everyone's list of criminals to get to know (henchmen are looking to hook up, he's got style!)

Scene 2: The Scene of the Crime

Description: The characters check out the crime scene. The Express is a large-gondola blimp that runs nightly and moors to the Empire State Building. There are the control chambers, the restaurant, the observation deck, and the private club.

Encounter: The owner of the Jules Verns is Malcolm Holt, a vampirically pale and thin man. He deplores the act (and is only slightly less comfortable with the police—his club members like their privacy). He will, however, cooperate.

The Jules Verns Express: Walking around the blimp will more or less just get a good sense of character—there isn't any real evidence there. It is done in dark wood and green felt. Every piece of it is ornate and dripping with class. It has polished brass fixtures, a "steering wheel" taken from a 15th century Spanish Galleon. Its observation deck has glass bottom windows that look down on the city. There are blackjack tables and open bars on each end of the red-carpeted room. There are lots of nooks and crannies, access shafts and staff rooms (the henchmen did a good job of securing the staff—whoever organized the raid did their homework).

The private club is even nicer. There is crystal from the French Revolution, a rack of wine bottles where each is unique and valued at over \$3000.00. Dr. August didn't take them—too hard to fence. The lamps in the private club were all designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and the whole place has an art-deco elegance to it. It smells, not unpleasantly, of cigar smoke and is bathed in warm amber lights. The club has brass port holes that look out at the night.

Police Procedure Lvl 3 Rolls: a successful roll will have the character (and player) "walk through the evening" as though he were there. Imagine the clink of antique wine glasses, the mummer of refined conversation—a ladies cultured, jaded laugh, and then a sudden shudder (as the harpoon speared the gondola and the Jules Verns was attached to the raider).

There is a titter and then things resume—cautiously (outside the invaders are securing the blimp—but these people don't know that). Suddenly, the door bursts open: there are two big black-suited men wearing gold masks! One has an antique blunderbuss weapon. They enter the room walking through out it ("You! Sit down! Stay in your seat! This airship has been commandeered by Dr. August, master criminal—remain seated and you'll come to no harm!")

Words are exchanged (the proprietor points out where)—a man—two men—stand (perhaps a lady's honor was insulted?). They are subdued (but not hurt badly—there is no blood). The man in the mask—the man in charge—orders them taken out (they were conscious, but cuffed and dragged). Now people are scared. Then, they wait. Time passes (the Doctor comes from his airship?) and suddenly the door bursts open.

Dr. August is tall—over six feet, decked out in black leather and gold. He laughs—a wicked sound—"So, you pampered children of wealth! The time has come to pay up! Tonight I will be relieving you of your goods—your jewelry, your imported leather handbags and ... oh ... that." He strides across the room and, with a flourish, snatches the Key Stone from lady Ezra's neck! His men, one gesturing with the ancient—but deadly firearm—circle the room collecting the unique items from the people into a black bag.

"This city hasn't heard the last of me," says Dr. August (you can hear the smile under his mask). "I am the Terror of the Skies, the bane of well heeled silvered spooned pups like yourselves, and a daring man of adventure who will someday die ... knowing that he has lived more fully than you can imagine. Farewell—we will meet again!" (and with a flourish of his cape, he is gone!)

The men wait, the gun wagging with implied menace.

"Don't you even *try* to follow us!" and then they're out. The hiss of a torch on the hinges of the door—and they're gone. Finally, another shudder as the airship departs and then banging on the door of the staff and the two men taken outside.

Notes: The above is more-or-less what actually happened (some notes below), the scene

described is what the characters will have gotten in the briefing (wait until they get to the ship do go over it in dramatic detail).

What actually happened: From the perception of the victims—the above—but the true story adds this. The scuffle was with Professor Eugene Meriman and Industrialist Horace Veldt. Eugene demanded they unhand him and leave at once—Horace got up when Eugene was struck. The fist bit was an act. Eugene is Dr. Autumn and wasn't on the airship. He was hustled out into the hall with Veldt and thrown in a servant's chamber (Veldt was cuffed and put in another chamber). Meriman changed into the August outfit (including heels that add an extra 2.5 inches to his height) and returned.

Clues: Here are clues. The players might figure them out—their characters might too (they shouldn't unless they make Investigation rolls by some really high amount).

1. Why were the troublemakers taken outside? Probably to intimidate the people. A player might notice there was only one pair of cuffs (the henchman was prepared to cuff Meriman—but only had enough for Veldt).
2. Lady Ezra might not have reliably been wearing the Key Stone (she wasn't, in fact, only some days)—if it was the target, they had to have some way of knowing it was on her (a person inside? Or did she stage it?)
3. The stone was clearly the target: he made sure he got it himself (he would have had to handle it to make sure that a) it was real and not a copy and b) he couldn't trust a henchman to reliably get it.

A Note on Style: Players may ask why he'd do this at all—it's flashy, involves a lot of people that maybe didn't have to be involved, was a terrible personal risk, etc. These are fine questions—but their *characters* wouldn't have them. Super villains (not with *super powers* but masterminds, evil geniuses, etc.) are a staple of the C13 world. The guy obviously gets off on being a super-wealthy, flamboyant criminal mastermind. It's happened before, it'll happen sense. At least he seems to have a code (not killing anyone—or even pointing the gun at them). If he's wealthy and charismatic enough, this mode of behavior might even get him *off* (there are a couple of people who've done things in a similar vein living in France under threat of immediate arrest if they return to the states).

If the Players Figure it Out: If the players figure out that A) Dr. August wasn't on the raider and B) he must have been one of the two men, they still won't know which. This is fine (but we'd prefer to think the scenario isn't *that* transparent). Don't give anything away—let them speculate.

Act 2: Investigation

The characters have begun the investigation. There are three basic parts to this.

The first is the interviews. There were a lot of powerful people in the private club—and there is a feeling that whole thing was staged for/by one of them. This section is meant to be interesting (although unless the characters are brilliant it won't be likely to be too productive).

The third part is interspersed action: Dr. August sends some thugs to delay them. There is another miss-direction attempt on a Zeppelin (while the characters are hitting the streets), and there may be some interesting encounters with underworld types and such.

The third part is research on the stone itself. This isn't the age of computers so the characters will have police researchers doing most of the work for them. If the PC's have research skills they can hit the NY Public library themselves for a look at the facts. This is the part most likely to bear fruit: they learn that the KeyStone has mystical properties and that (more importantly) a second piece that it is associated with is coming into the country via Zeppelin.

Scene 1: The Usual Suspects

Description: In this scene the characters meet with and interrogate each of the witnesses. There were six members in the club. There were three servants. All of them gave brief statements last night.

Note: This segment can be deadly dull if it isn't run right (what is 'right' will vary from group to group and even player to player). Going around and talking to NPC's, trying to get *the clue* out of them isn't any fun. Try to keep this fast paced. Each person has a bit of flair described (and a point of interest). Here are some suggestions if the players don't seem interested in conducting a lot of question-and-answer sessions (if they do, by all means, play it up!).

1. During the commission of the questioning, Dr. August will send thugs to stop the characters. It is his intent to delay them from the case for a few days (until he can do his thing with the ESB). That can add excitement.
2. This isn't a treasure hunt: explain to the players that while they might get some good clues by asking the right questions, their characters are adept at this—they don't have to wrack their brains to ask the right thing. Simply "saying we conduct the interview" may be enough. That said, if they do take an active role in the questioning they can get more out of it. It's up to them.
3. Ideally, talking with these unique people will be interesting to them—think of this as short cut-scenes where the characters meet a lot of interesting people. It's a chance to make contacts and maybe even engage in debate.

Person	Notes
Lady Ezra Coleridge	Famously wealthy daughter of a deceased British Knight (she was born in America). She has a reputation for saying scandalous things to the tabloid reporters. She has a fiery temper and there are rumors that she is in great financial trouble.
Industrialist Horace Veldt	A cool, intelligent man. He is a developer and has recently been involved in Atlantis, an undersea "kingdom" that is said to be millions over budget, over a year behind schedule, and falling apart!
Professor Eugene Meriman	A noted professor of Mythology at Columbia University. Author of several scholarly books, and renowned literary critic. He is known to have an acid tongue and several grudges with his contemporaries.

Playboy Howard Kane	A drunk, rich inheritor of his father's vast holdings in diamond mines. He is said to possess unlimitedly deep resources (the mines are bountiful!) and to be plumbing those depths! He is insolent and arrogant.
Starlet Janice Morrison	Beautiful, dark-eyed, and said to be cursed, she is a Broadway sensation and prodigy at the age of 23. She plays first chair violin in the New York Philharmonic Orchestra as well. She is talented and (in her private life) vicious.
Super-Capitalist Jason Carter	A self-made man with a massive physique, dazzling intellect, and intense loathing of the 'freeloaders' who 'try to milk the system.' He has fought in wars, traveled the world (including going very dangerous places in the orient), survived shipwrecks, pirates, and dangerous natives in the East Indies islands.
Bitter Failed Author Gary Vane	He wrote one great novel—and it is considered the finest of the 20 th century. Everything else has been downhill. He drinks too much, has a foul mouth, and a bitterness that comes from being savaged by spurned critics waiting for another masterpiece he doesn't have in him.

Lady Ezra Coleridge

Where She Lives: She lives in a penthouse in Sunset Towers. The Towers are four massive art deco high-rises that look down on a courtyard that houses a small private "town." The high-rises have huge red, orange, umber, and yellow stained-glass arcs of windows set in them and for most of the day, the town down below is bathed in sunset-like light. She has a giant place with wide open wooden floors and massive windows front and back (she apparently doesn't worry about privacy in most of her home).

Why She Might Have Done It: The jewel was insured for several million dollars (a *tremendous* sum in C-13). When the investigation concludes (and she wasn't responsible) all her financial problems will be solved.

Who She Accuses: If asked or accused herself, she'll blame Veldt: his 'undersea kingdom' could either benefit from the stone's reported powers or else he could sell it to recoup his loss.

Interesting Points: She'll tell the characters the history of the stone. It was used in the foundation of Babylon (and taken by the apprentice to the chief engineer). The tower fell and the apprentice was caught and skinned with clam shells (!). It was in Egypt for Ramses II's great pyramid project—but a vision caused him to have it removed: he felt it would trap his soul if it was part of the structure (true!). It disappeared for a while but was numbered as a prized treasure of Alexander the Great and then later, it was given as a gift to Queen Isabel of Spain. It is said to grant protection to any building it is part of—but the building has a cold feel to those within it.

Professor Merriman

Where He Lives: The campus of Columbia University. He is extraordinarily wealthy as the result of an inheritance. He lives in a three story brick home surrounded by a wall (brass plate in front saying that the house resides on university land as a the result of a grant in 1885 by Ernst J. Merriman).

Why He Might Have Done It: Well, under a cultured exterior he believes himself to be a Nietzschean Super-Man: a person of such stature that they are beyond conventional morality and

good and evil. He is appalled by high-society (while being a part of it). He has decided to use his vast sums of money to build a criminal empire from which to eventually control massive tracks of land (Eastern Seaboard?).

Who He Blames: He'll blame Industrialist Veldt (the other guy who was taken out of the room)—but only if asked ("I surmise that it might have been Veldt—he has always had delusions of grandeur and the stone might have magics to save his properties.").

Interesting Event: Dr. August Strikes again! While the characters are there—or just after (or even just before) over the city, near the outskirts, the Jersey Airborne Express is accosted by a small custom blimp—identified as Dr. August's transport. The Express is ordered to stop her engines (over radio) and prepare to be boarded. There was a tense chase where the blimp made for an emergency landing pad—August's blimp threatened to ram it and used some sort of electrical weapon to shut down three of its four turbines. It managed to evade the smaller blimp and land. The location of August's airship is unknown.

Notes: Professor Meriman is a mythology professor—but he is also a technical genius (in fact, he went into literature because technology came 'to easily' for him). He has a spotless record—but those who work for him know him to be brilliant and arrogant with subordinates.

Capitalist Jason Carter

Where He Lives: Just outside of the city in a huge stone estate. There are two statues (9' high) who speak to those who approach ("*who goes there?*"). The characters will cross a courtyard where a massive black-steel Atlas holds a sphere made of curved I-beams (it isn't solid). When the characters meet him, have them make MEM rolls at -3 (if they just make it, they remember stories about how he ruthlessly crushed his competition in the steel industry). If they make it by -3 they notice that the Atlas 'holding up the world' out front looks like him! (if they don't, cool—it'll be brought up later). The house is palatial with two distinct wings and a center section. The characters are greeted by a servant.

Why He Might Have Done It: Well, he's a tough guy and he didn't lift a finger to stop it. He seems to disdain crime (well, robbery, anyway) but he didn't mind seeing those people shaken up.

Who He Blames: If asked or accused, he speculates that the Cursed Starlet Janice Morrison might have done it—her name is in all the papers now, you couldn't say that after her last performance.

Interesting Event: He is studying Over-Unity Engines. The concept of the Over Unity Engine is one that puts out more power than it takes in. He has a collection of fraudulent "perpetual motion machines." He'll talk to the character about how magic doesn't actually violate the second law of thermodynamics—it's just a fast way to move energy from place to place and change its form. He shows a "Bell Jar" which holds a frog's soul (the frog dies as he lowers the glass). Energy meters jump and dials glow (if the characters are appalled by the callous frog death, Carter will disdain them as 'only human souls are morally valuable.'). The souls of living things are wonderful powersources (albeit dangerous ones). He's looking at theoretical ways to draw energy from the aether itself.

Industrialist Horace Veldt

Where He Lives: the characters find him in his office. He has an entire floor at the top of the Monroe Building. Outside the characters can see a chess motif worked into the stone beneath the window—a closer look shows another chess game, across the city (going on 50 stories up)—and another. Veldt is using buildings to 'play' chess with a number of other investors. The game isn't actually chess—but they have agreed upon rules and he has bought buildings for strategic advantage.

Why He Might Have Done It: There's a scale model of Poseidon's Realm, an undersea luxury resort. Green domes of glass sit on the platform and inside one can see dormitories, waterfalls, and small brass submersibles (and glass tubes to walk through). It's being called The Poseidon Adventure in the newspapers (because it's sinking).

Who He'll Blame: He wouldn't put it past Carter—the man feels he's better than all the old-money and has a juvenile sense of humor ("Have you seen the statue that man has in his front courtyard!? It's him!")

Interesting Facts: He can tell them what happened to him (he was hit—hard, cuffed, and locked in a closet and told not to move until they came for him). He can also tell them about the chess game. He speculates that many people are playing games like this on their own levels. He'll tell the PC's that he'd rather be robbed by Dr. August any day than a common thug or a socialist politician (something he and his enemy Carter agree on!).

Playboy Howard Kane

Where He Lives: In the penthouse suite of the Crown Building on Park Avenue. He enjoys sitting out on his balcony in a bathrobe and watching the suited men go to work (since he doesn't). He

has several women (slinky, sexy women) on call and will drink hyper-expensive brandy and not offer the characters any (although if they're cheeky enough to take some, he won't object).

Why He Might Have Done It: Well, the characters may not know this when they get to him (although if they visit the starlet first they will) but he made a serious pass at Lady Ezra (although she's much too old for him) and was turned down. He swore revenge!

Who He'll Blame: "Ow should I know who done it? Dr. August! Damn, you're the detectives!"

Interesting Facts: He has two enchanted dueling pistols under glass in his foyer. He just acquired them and he'd love to show them off. One was owned by Lord Watts one was owned by Lord Grall (both of these were 16th century British Lords). They hated each other and had the Fighting Fish Pistols created. The Pistols were imbued with fragments of their souls and the two guns *hate* each other. They can't move when people are watching and would have a hard time loading themselves—but you can *feel* them glaring at each other. He has a tin with shot and gunpowder on the table. He cheerfully tells the characters that yesterday the Grall one (or was it the Watts—he can't tell) managed to break its glass: he found it on the floor below the table with the powder! He loves the showdown (the fact that he's risking relics doesn't bother him at all!)

Starlet Janice Morrison

Where She Lives: Outside the city—but she's staying in The Dakota. The Dakota is a gothic hotel of the highest order—looking like some insane castle it has ramparts and balconies and windows ... it is awesome to behold and she's got a room there.

Why She Might Have Done It: She's had five interviews in the past day (and, as it turns out) one offer! The high-profile crime has captured the public's attention.

Who She Accuses: Playboy Kane. He had a grudge with Lady Ezra (Morrison also avoids him assiduously). After being rebuffed he told her "She was losing out—oh yeah! She'll recognize that!"

Interesting Fact: She is said to be under a curse—she works in movies as well as on Broadway and it is said that actors who work opposite her have a way of dying (it's happened to two and a third was injured). This is said to have been caused by a death curse of an obsessed fan (whom, rumor has it, she led along and then cruelly spurned!)

Interesting Fact 2: Janice has an apartment in the Dakota apartment building. Constructed in 1882 by architect Henry J. Hardenbergh it is a magnificent building of turrets, gables, towers, and balconies. The iron gates around it display gargoyle faces—its rooftop is a maze of spires and peaks. It has been a symbol and wealth and luxury for over a century. When the characters approach (by way of Central Park) they will feel it looking down on them—a palpable sense. The building is one of the very few that is alive—the characters will not know it has a spirit but they'll feel a sense of being watched from its windows.

Inside they will have a sense that they don't belong—they don't live here. In an apartment which has housed Boris Karlof (a movie star in the Middle Colonies), John Lennon (an important British performer—again, in the progressive middle—and vilified in the North), and others they feel "on notice" in the sound-swallowing dimly-lit halls.

Apparently young, whiny Starlet Janice Morrison isn't so welcome either. When the characters arrive she has a building engineer in there and is yelling at him (he's horrified—she's a powerful important person). Her water is too hot or too cold, the tea burns, reception is horrible, lights blow out! He is trying to explain that it isn't her room—it's the building itself ('herself') and that these old buildings—the old and stately ones—have a spirit. You can't exorcise it or get rid of it ... and it just ... seems ... to have a problem with you ma'am. He promises to see what he can do to mollify the building.

Failed Author Gary Vane

Where He Lives: A small but nice apartment in mid-town. It is nicely appointed and he'll meet them in the library. He has a stiff drink and offers them one. His breath smells of alcohol.

Why He Might Have Done It: There's no real reason to think he did—but he was working on a book about blimp boarding actions.

Who He'll Accuse: If confronted he'll accuse all of them. He thinks that everyone—including the professor and the starlet could have hired that guy. They all have the money. They (us, all of us) lead boring lives that fall geometrically into the same repeating patterns day after day after day going nowhere! (thunder this in Iambic Pentameter)

Interesting Note: He is a Muse Addict. Muse is an illegal designer drug (magical) that is said to make the user become (or at least feel) more creative. He has a typewriter imp taking dictation—a diminutive thing pounding away on the keys of a massive machine. The characters will see the spoon and small straw used to do Muse. It's illegal—but not heavily prosecuted (they'd have a hard time brining him in).

Copies of his novel, the great American novel, Out of Whack line one entire shelf of the library. Any good detective roll will find that he's been burning them in frustration in his fireplace.

Scene 2: The Thugs

Description: Dr. August (Prof. Merriman) knows the characters are poking around and wants to delay them. He isn't bloodthirsty and doesn't want them killed (or assassinated). He just wants to delay them—and a few days recovering might do just that. He has hired some thugs through double-blind underworld channels to do the following:

- a) Wear his colors (black cloaks, gold masks)
- b) Lure the characters to a location in the park
- c) Thump them (and he has provided a special "signature magical weapon" to help out).
- d) The thugs are under orders not to kill any of them—both because he isn't a killer and he doesn't want the NYPD out for his blood either.

The Set Up: The characters get a call from their HQ (their car has a radio). A message has arrived—someone with knowledge of the Sky Heist wants to talk to them—alone. Be at a pay-phone on 7th and Main at 8:30 tonight.

The phone rings. The voice says that it's someone inside the operation—he's got information. Come to Central Park [location]. Hurry. He doesn't want to be picked up or surrounded by a SWAT team.

The characters are being watched—but not followed. The watcher is across the street. If the characters show up for the phone call with a police escort, he'll know. Afterwards, he goes inside and calls a number and tells them if there are more than just the investigators mobilized.

The Meeting: The head thug has worked with Dr. August before (but not on the Sky Piracy thing). He is a tall man, and powerfully built. He has the Sonic-Magneto-Cannon pointed at them. This is a device that emits "Magnetically-bound-Sound Waves" that pulverize metal objects (the character's guns).

The characters will meet with him—he is grandiose in the way that August is—he doesn't know who exactly his employer is (which is why he's here—he's a dead end) but he knows that August is brilliant and will soon "hold this city in his clutches!" He also knows that the skies aren't done with him yet (he's been promised another job on a Zeppelin heist if this goes well—and the Doctor keeps his word!).

He will warn them off—from dabbling in the affairs of a man greater than they are—he will even try to recruit them (perhaps) telling them that Dr. August is a man of great vision and that he will bend the world to his will!

If the characters protest, he will initiate combat (if they draw their guns, he'll fire the magno-blaster).

The Fight: The PC's, even without their guns, shouldn't lose this. Essentially Dr. August underestimates them. If there's no way the characters can win without their guns consider having the special weapon fail (or partially fail).

The Sonic-Magneto-Cannon

Mounted on a platform and covered in a tarp it looks like a generator with a radar dish at the end. It hums loudly. It can be fired in two modes: charge-up mode, which takes 5 seconds and is very powerful or snap-fire mode, which is what will be used if the PC's draw weapons. When fired it emits a blast of "Magnetically-Bound-Sound Waves" (whatever those are) that set up vibrations in metal objects only. It does 48pts of damage to metal objects. This will be enough to break guns. Golem-Modified characters will suffer as well. It gets one shot in Snap Fire mode.

Dr. August's Lieutenant

PHY 13 REF 12 INT 11 (21 DP)
Toughness +4, Iron Jaw L3
Street Fighting L3 14-, Boxing L3 14-
Wears 2 / 8 body armor.

4 Thugs
PHY 11 REF 11 INT 10
Street Fighting 13-
Use +4 damage clubs.

One of Dr. August's Personal Bodyguards (Asian man)
PHY 12 REF 14 INT 11 (WIL 13) (18 DP)
Toughness +4, Thunder Punch 1x per round(8pts damage with Kiai yell)
Karate L3 15-, Kung Fu 15- (16- Block), Acrobatics L3 14-

Scene 3: The Research

Description: Someone is looking into The Keystone (if for no other reason than to determine who might buy it on the black-market). This may be being done 'off camera' by police researchers (assistants to the detectives) or may be done by the PC's themselves. If a PC decides to take it on himself to do some poking around, run the scene. Otherwise, they'll get a call near the end of their investigation telling them something has been found.

Note: In addition to some basic facts about the stone, the important thing to note is that it has a counter-part: an Egyptian Sarcophagus was built to house the stone (and the pharaoh) but was abandoned—it is being brought to New York for an exhibit. When the characters get this information they will, likely, drop everything, and try to figure out how to catch the thieves in the act. This will usher in the last scene.

If, for timing purposes, you wish to play out the rest of this act—feel free to have the library staff uncover bits of evidence at a time and release the final piece of information when you feel its appropriate. Alternatively, if a player researches the topic, makes a successful roll, and/or asks questions like "is any other magical artifact affiliate with the Key Stone?" feel free to give him the data.

Research Rolls: The time it takes for a character to uncover important data will depend on the timing the GM is using. There are not automated searches—the characters have to pour over numerous volumes, check indexes in old books, and ask historians for help.

Some notes:

1. The history of the Key Stone is well known and can be found in a number of works. History L2 that includes the Middle East region (or just a straight L3 roll) will give some basic background. The stone is one of a very few treasures reputed to come from Babylon.
2. In books of magical gem-stones it will be mentioned—it's building repairing properties are questionable (other than once in Egypt they've never been tested) but could be quite real.
3. Noted Magical Historian Henry Fortwright (England, 1872) demanded that it be removed from his historical, and haunted, winter home. He said "It shall not reside in any of my buildings of character." *He said this because he understood that it was a Soul Jar for buildings that had spirits—but the text will not convey this.*
4. As a trivial note, during The Great War it was high on Prussia's list of treasures to be sought by foreign agents.
5. There is an expert on the stone—Wallace Gordon—and he works *right here in the library!*

Dr. Wallace Gordon: Wallace works in one of the underground chambers dedicated to Egyptian Research. His office is in the underground stacks of the New York Public Library. The inter-office intercom system has been out for weeks. Down there (in the Egyptian room) are numerous old tomes and scrolls and even statues and artifacts. The library works with the New York Museum of natural history and lots of research goes down. The character's questions will take him underground and deep below the library. When the character asks questions to the personnel, an

aide will be summoned to take him down to meet Dr. Gordon. She'll take a candle and with her since 'some of the lights don't always work.'

In the world of C-13, it's a scary place: the walls are done in brick with exposed water pipes overhead. There are metal doors and corridors that say "No Admittance" in large letters on aging signs. Down here are restricted magical texts. Some of these are downright dangerous.

Some things they might see (these may or may not be explained to them)

- A room with a metal door and a huge Gutenberg press inside it. It is possessed and prints books by its original owner, a monk. The books are works of madness but are kept and cataloged. It is *dangerous*—it weighs over 300 pounds (this is a model that has rollers and weights and plates of blocks and mechanical armatures and such). It can sort of move around—enough to lunge and catch someone. It growls and hisses as it prints.
- A group of floating candles. These are not born by ghosts (although it looks that way, they wander around). In 1885, the Wanderer Candles were given by Sir. Alfred Benning to the library. They don't melt or burn hot. They were supposed to follow people around, but they've become less effective and now just wander aimlessly underground. Unfortunately there is a 300-year grant that the library will lose if they get rid of them—so they just ignore the candles (which sometimes follow people and sometimes just loiter or lurk).
- Jars with Lieber flukes pickled in them. Each has eaten one or more unique titles and has been preserved.
- A stack of books written in invisible inks (with notes telling how to make each one visible).

Meeting with Dr. Gordon: He is a wild haired man who seems very much a mad scientist. He works in a lab with papyrus parchment scrolls, transcribing them into books and examining artifacts for cataloguing in records of archeological finds. He will be friendly enough, if a bit distracted.

When the characters ask about the stone, he will tell them the story of Pharaoh Ramses (Ozymandius) II who had his *first* tomb built to last forever—and to house the Keystone in his sarcophagi at its foundation. The tombs were meant to be the vessel—the protection—of the spirit until it made its final journey. They were often haunted themselves (*meaning: they had their own spirits—but he won't necessarily put it that way*). Anyway, a special stone vessel was made—to be sort of a 'cornerstone' to the pyramid and entomb the body and the key. It was designed with the specific resonance of the key's magical properties in mind, techniques that have been lost.

Things were all set to go when something went wrong: the Pharaoh's Magician told him to abandon the project—the stone coffin was already in place—the building was all but built. Although the pyramid might 'last forever,' the Magician said, the Pharaoh's spirit would never complete its journey. No one knows exactly why—but construction of a new, even greater pyramid took place—the one that stands today?

And what of the special container for the stone? Well it is in Germany—for now. In fact—why in just a few days it will be coming to the city itself—to New York—via the Hindenburg.

Note: If the characters don't do the research: simply have an aide tell them they've found something—the Cornerstone is coming in—and the two of them together might be ... irresistible to Dr. Autumn.

Act 3: Conclusion

The characters have realized that Dr. August is going to strike again—this time, probably, against the Hindenburg—en route from Europe over the Atlantic ocean. They realize that this could be their best chance to catch him if they can get onto the blimp before he does (which shouldn't be too hard).

The catch is that (although the PC's won't know it) Dr. A's right-hand man is doing the job—Dr. A. doesn't *need* the sarcophagi (although it would make his life easier). Instead, he is going to make the final arrangements at the re-dedication of the Empire State Building.

The characters prevent the stealing of the sarcophagi and get a lead to Dr. August's secret lair. There they find the missing piece of the puzzle: what does he plan to do with the stone—what is it's secret? Armed with that knowledge, they set off to stop him (culminating with a battle atop the Empire State Building).

What Could Change: Well, anything. First they might figure it out themselves—the ESB has a spirit (like the pyramids, the haunted house in England, and The Dakota that they recently visited). Soul Bottles have special properties they've heard of—although they might figure out his basic plan (to steal the ESB's soul) they probably won't know exactly what he plans to do with it—not that it matters.

If the players figure it out, they can have enough security on hand to stop him (provided they have some at the top floor). This can be considered anti-climax. You'll have to decide what to do. If you have a particularly insightful group of players you can consider not putting in any clues about the ESB's re-dedication.

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The PC's Might Blow It: The characters might not want to safeguard the blimp—or might order it to land elsewhere due to being a target. Presumably the characters are men and women of action and would rather collar Dr. Autumn themselves—but the point can be made that letting the airship run into the assault would be putting innocents in danger.

If they try to divert the blimp, have the company that runs it decline to have their course altered. They believe they are in no danger from sky pirates (the captain finds the idea ridiculous) and will instead ask the city to provide an escort—or security—so the important people onboard can make their destination in the time promised. The characters get duty.

Other Ways of Breaking The Case: There are a few other things that might break the case. Dr. Merriman's operation is well run—he has a 'staff' of very loyal (mostly immigrant) workers who are smart and well trained. However, he has had to work 'outside of his network.'

A good enough Streetwise roll (or Crime roll at Level 3) could provide a break: someone—possibly August, has been poking around about the Hindenburg. A manifest was acquired from its company (the manifest contains proof that it holds The Cornerstone). If the characters go to the Hindenburg's parent company they will discover that (in addition to many other things) a historical exhibit from Egypt is coming over as a private collection. They will see The Cornerstone listed (it is, remember, a stone sarcophagus) and questions will turn up its relation.

Magical Avenues of research are tough (again) but if a character has contacts with a mystical being that can answer very hard questions they might well learn the following:

- The Keystone is a soul-bottle of a type (the source should not know that it's purely for building souls).
- It is very powerful and dangerous: a containment item was built for it (the Cornerstone) and they are 'coming back into conjunction'. It might mention the name Cornerstone.

Mystical Introspection: Dr. August has used Complicate Matters to distance himself from the crime (so use of investigative magic will not show Professor Merriman *robbed* the rest of them). However, examination of Merriman's Monad will show a relation to the stone—one that others have—but not so strongly. The mage will have to ask about specific relations to the stone to get this information. If questioned, Merriman will admit that he has always found it *appalling* that a "second-rate" social dilettante is wearing a historical treasure out to the club.

If extensive magical research is done, the players should be able to determine that:

- Yes, someone in the room was responsible for the thefts.
- Dr. August is a friend of at least one or more people in the room (the only person this isn't true for is Merriman himself—he *is* Dr. August).
- The stone is being used in conjunction with something else as part of a larger plot.

Scene 1: The Hindenburg

The Hindenburg: A stately Zeppelin (hard-bodied airship) it is returning on a six-day journey from the other side of the Atlantic and is carrying the Von Schnell Collection (which includes the famous Ramses II Sarcophagi—The Cornerstone). It is already airborne and is scheduled to land in New York [today? Tomorrow? It depends on the time-scale of the campaign].

It uses four 1200 HP V-16 Mercedes-Benz Diesel Engines, has propellers 20 feet in diameters, and is over 813 feet long. It has over 7,200,000 cubic feet of gas (it uses magically stabilized Hydrogen) and had a 5-6 day cruise range in 1936 when it was first launched. It has over 100 people on board.

It is 78 feet shorter than the Titanic and four times larger than the Goodyear Blimps. Its appointments are lavish: it has reading and writing rooms, an aluminum baby-grand piano, dining rooms and pantries, accommodations for 72 guests, and panoramic windows that look down from its lounge. It has two decks, the lower of which features a smoking room (on what was a giant, hydrogen filled aircraft!).

It's huge and plush. It caters to the very, very wealthy and it is an icon of European achievement. In our world it was a product of the Nazis—it isn't in C-13. There are no swastikas painted on it.

Interception: The characters will need to get to the Hindenburg first. In order to do this, the NYPD will scramble a prototype zeppelin with a special engine to get them out there. This is a very small craft that is used by the Colonial Navy for spotting off the coast. It has a rocket engine for a burst of speed to get it back ahead of warships or seamonsters or anything.

If a character is a zeppelin pilot, they can be allowed to fly (not realistic—but cinematic: the regular pilot is deathly ill and there is a storm coming).

Onboard: The characters dock with the Hindenburg (in this world it has three docking ports at the back port side). Docking is tricky but the speeds are low (these craft can practically stop). The characters will be greeted by the staff—the Hindenburg doesn't want to alarm the passengers and considers it likely that the NYPD is being alarmist. They will treat the characters with respect, however (and ask the characters not to explain what they are doing on the craft).

Rickman Von Schnell: This is the wealthy aristocratic owner of the Cornerstone. He will meet with the characters in the Library (a smallish chamber with glass fronted shelves holding expensive leather bound books). There is about an hour of lead-time before the Zeppelin gets to Manhattan. If the characters want to move the Cornerstone, they're welcome to—although it's very heavy. It is in a cargo space on the lower deck.

The Approach: There is a storm over Manhattan—lightning, thunder! Wind blows (but no rain yet). Suddenly, cutting through the low cloud cover is a small fast zeppelin. Radio contact is made: the blimp has a "Lightning Gun" that it threatens the blimp with. If necessary the small blimp will fire across the bow.

What happens Next: Well, a bunch of things. If the PC's let the enemy zeppelin dock, they can take on the crew of Dr. August's airship. If they decide to engage with their own, there'll be a battle over Manhattan. If they decide to let the crime go down and follow the perps back they can tail them back to August's Lair. Whatever the case is, the outcome should be as follows:

1. The crew of August's Zeppelin *does not* include Professor Merriman. He wants The Cornerstone but doesn't need it. In fact, he is working *right now* to take the soul of the Empire State Building.
2. If the characters follow the zeppelin back to Dr. A's lair (and the crew are unaware they are being followed) the PC's will intercept a communication from Dr. August: "Return to the lair—wait for me there and I will bring back the prize."
3. If the PC's capture the crew, they'll reveal the location of his lair—they know his plan involves holding the city hostage. They'll talk although they are loyal because Dr. A. has instructed them too—he doesn't want them unnecessarily hurt.
4. In the event of an aerial battle the lightning gun will malfunction, forcing the zeppelin down. The PC's should be discouraged from being too bloodthirsty.

Scene 2: The Lair of Dr. August

Location: Outside Manhattan. There is a large dark estate that has been abandoned. It is owned by a holding company Merriman controls obliquely. The house is a boarded up gothic mansion—it's the greenhouse around back where the zeppelin lands. There is no crew there (the five people in the Zeppelin are the only people in this inner circle).

Inside the Greenhouse: There is a scale model of the Empire State building (with lights!) and a diagram (with blown-up architectural blueprint overlays showing infrastructure). For the dedication the spirit will be "present and active" (notes on the wall). There is a central shaft that the Keystone can be lowered down. He has the spells to make it active.

There is a preparation "tank" for the Cornerstone sarcophagus to be lowered into. It is a deep iron tank with tubes and brass pump mechanisms leading into it. A mobile box with brass trumpets that look like old phonograph speakers is hooked by thick tubes to the tank. This can be rolled outside to the field in back of the house—there his beast will be created.

Figuring Out What's Going On:

When the characters get into Dr. August's Greenhouse they will see (immediately) that he's got designs on the Empire State Building. Depending on the character mix and dramatic pacing it may be utterly clear to them what's going on—or it may be something they need to investigate in order to figure out.

1. There is a laboratory with Soul Jars set out (and machines hooked up to them). There are

<p>a few pages of notes showing how to bind spirits as the spirit was taken too and from the jar.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. There is an astrology chart for the Empire State Building showing how it's soul is active and inactive—it shows <i>very active</i> tonight! 3. There is an artist rendition of the spirit of the building—a magnificent eagle—rising above the tower and spreading its wings over the metropolis. 4. There is a scientist/magician there who will gladly explain everything!
<p>The Encounter: Depending on pacing you can do any or none of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An encounter with armed guards—Dr. August doesn't have much armed security (after all the more people in his inner-lair the more who might talk) but he could have some. 2. Immigrant servants who are trained and deadly martial artists. 3. Dr. Lauren Diasimo, a chaos-theorists scientist kicked out of Columbia University for experiments they didn't approve of! She is bitter and brilliant and has a penchant for the dark side—she's also a blather-mouth. If the PC's corner her in the greenhouse she might well tell them what genius Dr. August is—and how soon he will control the world (and how!) 4. Robotic Defense Systems: Dr. August might well have big, clunky two legged robots marching around his estate on defensive patrol. They'd be a bit like large golems with hydraulic systems outside. This is good for heavily armed parties.
<p>Resolution: The characters have uncovered his plan—he's there, right now, and they have an airship! They can make all the radio calls they want—they'd better get there to stop him.</p>

<p>Scene 3: The Empire State Building</p>
<p>Location: The characters arrive and they will see the Empire State Building all lit up. Near the top is a small (very small) black zeppelin. The larger airships are not present and as they get in close they can see that it has actually <i>landed</i> on one of the rooftop ledges.</p>
<p>Resolution: Dr. August and two or three henchmen are there working. They have sent in a guided machine to find the shaft and are lowering the Keystone. The last thing Dr. August wants is to be killed in a gun-battle—but here are some ideas.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He has another Sonic-Magneto Cannon that can wreck firearms. This can "even the playing field" 2. He can leave two huge thugs to "hold the PC's off" while he goes inside after the stone. 3. He has bullet wards but carries and is susceptible to swords. He wouldn't mind fencing with the characters if anyone has the skill—he even thought to have a second blade nearby (remember, he's a megalomaniac). 4. He might have a hostage (say a female concierge from one of the restaurants near the top of the building)—maybe she saw something strange and went to investigate. He won't truly endanger the hostage but will attempt to get some sort of a stand-off.
<p>Solutions: Depending on how the characters play it, it could go down like this:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The characters flank him and go after the Keystone—he sends his henchmen to slow them down—if they beat them off, he'll run for it if it looks like they can get there first. 2. They open fire on his zeppelin to prevent his escape. This is bad news for him—but he'll go inside, start barricading and hope to get the stone and escape downwards! Eventually he'll give up.
<p>Drama: Dr. August isn't, even with henchmen, likely to beat the characters in a battle. However the final solution should come down to him facing them off with his magical lightning rapier and trying to convince them to join him. He'll tell them how soft the colonies are—how men like them are taken for granted—derided as relics from a less civilized time—how they spend their days dealing with red tape rather than criminals, etc. He will regale them with his vision and such.</p>
<p>Possible Ending: If the PC's have the Keystone (or cut off his access to it) he will climb—he can climb pretty well up towards the spire. There's a storm overhead ... and the spirit of the Empire State Building doesn't <i>want</i> to be his personal servant. Talon shaped tornadoes, bolts of lightning,</p>

or a sudden series of electrical explosions ... with no body remaining are all good ways to end the reign of Dr. August. It's up to you.

Another Possible Ending: Trying to extract the soul of the Empire State Building wakes up the spirit ... and makes it angry! A great possible ending is for Dr. August and the characters to have to team up to use his energy weapon to "disincorporate it" before it wrecks a city-block. Dr. August doesn't a) want a massive loss of life and b) doesn't want to see the city destroyed.

If you choose to go with this ending when the characters arrive, Dr. August is trying to *un-do* his plan with the Keystone. There is a red, crackling ball of expanding energy overhead. The characters will be met with his lieutenants.

He realizes that the spirit is forming and that it'll be almost unstoppable. His blimp has been damaged by a stray lightning bolt and he's trying to get a clear shot with his energy gun. The gun is in three pieces: a wave-form generator, a projector, and a power-converter. It takes a person to run each piece (and someone has to hold the generator out of the door while it's fired).

Dr. August is (probably) the only character who can run the wave-form generator (if it isn't run just right the beam-corridor collapses and the gun won't fire). When the characters arrive, there may be brief combat with his team before he comes down—he'll explain what's going on. The wow finish involves the zeppelin pilot dodging talon shaped tornados, the character's zeppelin absorbing lightning bolts (August can bring a spare power-pack and the first can be knocked out on the way up) and the blimp tilting wildly as the unlucky character who holds the projector tries to aim it out the door.

Dr. August (Professor Eugene Merriman)

Description: In his mundane identity Merriman appears as a fit man in his late fifties. He is bald with a thin ring of white hair about his ears. He has blue eyes that twinkle with inner laughter. He evokes the image of a kindly uncle.

As Dr. August, he is taller (special shoes and better posture) and more commanding. He wears a black outfit that highlights his excellent musculature with gold-highlighted gloves, a golden mask, and a black cape. He has an aura of command and charisma. His voice is modulated so as to be deeper and more reverberant. He has a golden belt with several pieces of gear.

Personality: Merriman is too smart for his own good: forsaking the physical sciences after believing he had ‘mastered’ them, he delved into the human psyche. He became convinced that in the days of old (especially the times of the Greek Legends) mankind had discovered its essential spirit—which was then lost to corruption and a constrictive society.

He does not hate humanity—in fact, he is almost noble in his aims. He treats his underlings well and goes out of his way to avoid harming innocents. He believes in leading by example and acts with style and flair that his mundane persona doesn’t indicate.

PHY 12	STR 13	BLD 10	CON 12	
REF 13	COR 13	REA 13	AGI 13	
INT 13	RES 14	MEM 13	WIL 13	
Minor	Major	Critical	DP	
7	20	40	20	
Punch	Kick	Grapple		
5 (7)	7	8/6		
Tough +6		Boxing	L3	15-
Leader L3		Fencing	L3	15-
Likeable L3		Acrobatics	L2	12-
Light (-3 BLD)		Firearms	L2	14-
		Mechanics	L3	15-
Twisted Genius L1		Electronics	L3	15-
Defensive Technique		Physics	L3	15-
(CHI MA Book)		Mathematics	L3	15-
		Pilot (Airship)	L3	14-
		History	L3	15-
		Literature	L3	15-
		Etiquette	L2	13-

Special Gear

Dr. August has several pieces of special gear he carries and wears. These are:

The Electro Saber

The saber is not sharp—but carries a vicious charge. When a target is hit, it will shock for 8pts of Electrical damage (-1 to CON rolls for each Minor Wound’s worth of damage). It crackles menacingly.

Micro-Glider-Pack

Under his cape is a deployable hang-glider. If he jumps from a high place, he can use his Operations skill to glide it down.

Armored Suit

The suit has a layer of “hydro-gel” armor that absorbs blows while highlighting his musculature. It is fairly bullet resistant and light. It gives him 3 / 20 Armor with full coverage.

Night Vision

His mask conceals night vision gear. It isn’t great but removes -3pts of darkness modifier.