

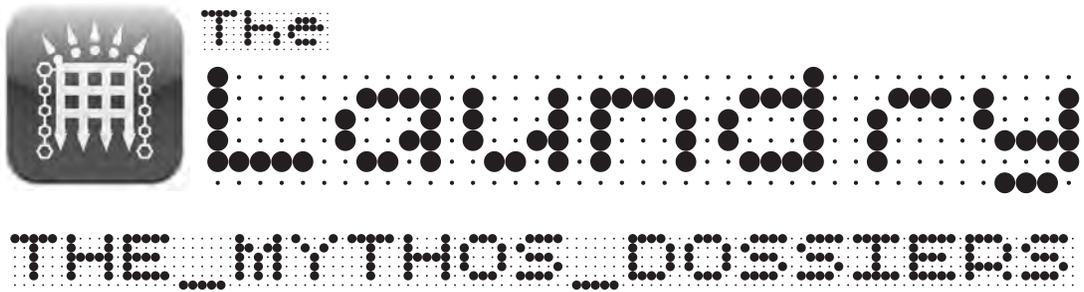


THE MYTHOS DOASTER

FOR USE WITH THE LAUNDRY RPG



By Gareth Hanrahan, Andy Klosky, James Knevitt, WJ MacGuffin,
Paul L Mathews, Brian Nisbet, John Snead, Jay Stratton and Graham Walmsley
Based on the 'Laundry Files' novels by Charles Stross



Based on the Laundry Files novels by Charles Stross.

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THE MONSTERS & THE SPIES

There have always been monsters amongst us.

The Laundry exists to protect the United Kingdom from brain-eating horrors and slimy things with teeth, and management may talk about thin lines (in a nameless colour, and traced through dimensions that can only be described with contradictory mathematical equations) that protect Us against Them, but the truth is that They've been here all along. This is their world, not ours. We're just the latest tenants.

For most of human history, the existence of the 'supernatural' was universally accepted. Humanity shared the planet with other hostile species. What we term 'myths' were often attempts to describe the unimaginable. Accounts from Roman legions describe meetings with gods and monsters in the same matter-of-fact way they record tallies of supply stores. History books are replete with mentions of ghosts and ghouls.

The Agricultural and Industrial revolutions changed how humanity dealt with the supernatural. The world population doubled in the eighteenth century, and became much more urbanised. As many supernatural entities are derived from humans – either through mutation or possession – this resulted in the likelihood of encountering such an entity increasing more than five-fold in that century alone. In turn, the improvements in firearms and the greater centralisation of power meant that humanity could more effectively respond to the emerging threats. Ghouls were gunned down, gorgons imprisoned by the state, cases of possession locked away before they could spread. A similar shift occurred across the Western World; the British Empire killed more witches than the Inquisition.

By the start of the twentieth century, there were few monsters left, and those that survived were driven underground or forced to conceal themselves among the populace. Knowledge of the supernatural was suppressed, and the history books rewritten to turn monsters into legends. The population were only too willing to embrace this safer, saner, expurgated version of history.

That which cannot be named cannot be categorised. By removing the supernatural from the everyday vernacular, the authorities also made it impossible for ordinary people to articulate their experiences. A thirteenth century villager who saw a ghoulish had a place for it in his *weltanschauung* and would have been able to name the monster and respond appropriately to it. A twenty-first century cubicle drone has no such context for the monster; he can only describe the ghoulish by analogy, by metaphor, by oblique references.

The Monster Control Act, 1864

The mid-1800s were a period of great upheaval in London. Joseph Bazalgette's grand sewer works were being run under the ancient city, as his Embankments were being erected along the Thames. The workers dug down along the course of the buried Fleet river, and built a maze of tunnels under the streets. But they were not alone down there in the darkness – the ghouls of London waged war against Bazalgette's workforce. Questions were asked in Parliament and in the newspapers. Were these ghouls inhuman beasts who should be shown the business end of a Gatling gun, or were they desperate, poverty-stricken beggars who had taken refuge underground because they had nowhere else to go? When does a man become a monster?

The government enacted the Monster Control Act in 1864, after four years of subterranean skirmishes. The Act gave the government authority over those who were of 'questionable humanity.' Previous to the Act, there were no legal restrictions on the treatment of monsters. The Act protected the semi-human from cruel and unjust mistreatment and dictated how creatures should best be constrained for the good of society. It also established a new police district, referred to as Z District, which encompassed the sewers and other underground tunnels (Z District was folded into the Laundry in 1952).

The Dossiers

Deep beneath Mornington Crescent underground station, the Stacks snake out like a run-down version of Borges' Infinite Library. The shelves are crammed with documents and reports. Eyewitness statements, newspaper cuttings, court transcripts, the diaries of madmen, autopsies, scientific papers, archived material – from these, the Laundry works to piece together the shape of the world. A seemingly innocuous report may contain vital information when correlated with a dozen other files. Triangulate the doctor's report about an outbreak of strange dreams with seismic activity under the Pacific, and find the traces of the sleeping god.

THE LAUNDRY

This book contains extracts from the murkier reaches of the Laundry's archives, a selection of unexplained encounters, unverified reports, uncorrelated data, loosely organised by whatever codeword seemed to fit. The truth exists in the unseen connections between them.

'I had a strict rule, which I think secret services follow, too: No piece of information is superior to any other. Power lies in having them all on file and then finding the connections. There are always connections; you have only to want to find them.'

– Umberto Eco, Foucault's Pendulum

How To Use This Book

The Mythos Dossiers is divided into eleven chapters, each covering a different creature. In each chapter, you'll find half a dozen reports and articles related to that creature – although working out exactly how some of the files connect to the creature may take a little lateral thinking or deduction. For the Gamemaster, there are fuller descriptions of the new creatures in Appendix 1.

The simplest way to use these files is as a summary of what the Laundry knows about a given entity. Treat the book as a monster manual that the players can peruse as needed. Read and remember, and maybe you won't be eaten by a shoggoth. Or, if you are, you'll know exactly how its digestive system works. There are secrets here – secrets that the Laundry has already discovered, but not understood.

Secondly, if the player characters are up against ASTERION SNARL or ANNING BLUE SKULL, and they pop down to the Stacks to find out what's on file, you can just give them a handful of photocopied documents in a manila folder and let them work out the connections. A successful Research roll gets the characters the relevant documents; if the players fail, then give them a random document and let them tie their brains in knots trying to work out how it all ties together.

Thirdly, you can use the files as plot hooks. Just give the players a single document and send them off to investigate the situation it describes. Many of these files are leads that the Laundry has yet to follow up, or describe cold cases that were never closed. With the Laundry in upheaval following the events of *The Fuller Memorandum*, many old files are being re-examined. The clues needed to navigate CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN could already be in the archives, if only we could make the right connections...

