

Sub Rosa

Written by Ray Nelson

Sub Rosa” is an investigative adventure featuring the secret societies of *Heaven & Earth*. It can be run as a stand-alone session or as part of an ongoing series with no alterations required. “Sub Rosa” is designed as an outline, allowing gamemasters to customize the specifics as needed. It is recommended that the GM read the entire adventure thoroughly so he is completely familiar with the events of the story. This will allow the GM to be fully prepared when the players choose to pursue different directions over the course of their investigation.

OVERVIEW

Sullivan Pierce is the owner of Hidden Treasures, a local antique shop. The shop and its proprietor have clients around the globe. Pierce has a reputation for acquiring the impossible and then reselling it for an unreasonable price. However, he does keep some more affordable objects in the front part of his building for the benefit of the locals. The secret and very expensive items he sells to bidders around the world are kept in the back. Pierce sells pieces at auctions around the world, although he gets his highest prices from Sotheby’s. Although he has heard of EBay, he considers it a pedestrian and plebian enterprise and will have nothing to do with it. He is always impeccably dressed and very insulting to those who do not meet his idea of good taste, which includes nearly everyone in Potter’s Lake. He is also a magician of considerable power.

Sullivan is curious about Potter’s Lake. He knows that there are several secret societies operating here, and he wants to know much more about them. To this end, he has acquired an ancient scroll book and arranged for a local auction. Pierce wants to see what individuals and organizations this occult tome draws out of the woodwork. To date, the scheduled attendees include: Gideon Tremain (a local professor), Belinda Wainwright (the town’s mayor), Jesse Davis (the chief librarian at St. Anselm), and Father Gorrard (the firebrand preacher of St. Anselm). Pierce has taken note of these people and is attempting to monitor their movements while ascertaining their interest in the book.

There is another individual interested in the book, although Sullivan is unaware of this fact. His name is Darius Finlay. Darius, a Boston native, is a professor of archaeology and avid bibliophile, as well as recurrent foil to Sullivan Pierce. The two men have clashed over other such artifacts in the

past, and Finlay has learned to proceed invisibly when dealing with Sullivan Pierce. To this end, Professor Finlay will draw the player characters into the plot. Since he wishes to remain unseen, Darius will use the PCs as his instruments to secure the book.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

“Sub Rosa” is designed for up to four players. However, a larger group can be accommodated if necessary. While it can be used as a stand-alone adventure, the PCs may be unsatisfied with the ending as many of their questions will be left unanswered. Gamemasters wishing to use this adventure as the beginning of a story arc or ongoing series should consult the **Springboard** section for suggestions on how to do so.

Characters can have any occupation except law enforcement. Over the course of the adventure, the PCs may have to engage in questionable activities. However, with a little tweaking, the adventure can be adjusted to accommodate officers of the law. In this case, the Gamemaster should thoroughly read the adventure and rewrite any scenes where the characters must engage in questionable legality.

IMPORTANT NPCs

The player characters will meet several important NPCs in the course of the adventure. A brief list of these characters, and a short summary for each, is provided below. Except for Darius Finlay, more detailed biographies for each NPC can be found in **Chapter V** of the *Heaven & Earth* rulebook. Gamemasters should peruse those entries prior to beginning the adventure. Secret society origins and information can be found in **Chapter VII**.

- **Sullivan Pierce:** A local antiques and oddities merchant who is more than he seems
- **Gideon Tremain:** Professor of religious studies at St. Anselm College
- **Father Gorrard:** A fiery ecclesiastic at St. Anselm who is deeply concerned with his parish’s spiritual well being

- **Jesse Davis:** Chief librarian at St. Anselm College
- **Belinda Wainwright:** Mayor of Potter's Lake
- **Darius Finlay:** Greedy scholar visiting town for the auction.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Sullivan Pierce has spread multiple rumors regarding the content of the scroll book in an attempt to cast the widest possible net. These rumors are:

1. The scroll book is a translation of the last words of Adam, translated from the original Adamic language (also known as Glossolalia) into four different dialects. The Adamic language is believed to have been spoken prior the fall of the Tower of Babel, making it the first language of mankind.
2. It contains lost writings of St. Anselm, the philosopher for whom the local college and Basilica are named. The four scrolls allegedly "prove" the existence of God using syllogism and deductive reasoning.
3. The scroll book contains four apocryphal treatises on the Apocalypse, including how it begins and how more souls can be saved. These writings are supposedly attributed to an ancient Jewish sect called the Essenes.
4. The book contains four clues to the final resting place of the Holy Grail, although the grail is not a physical object but a bloodline. Encoded in four languages for greater safety, the Knights Templar discovered and bound these scrolls together only to have them stolen when their order was disbanded and destroyed.
5. The scroll book is a collection of writings of the ancient Greek philosopher Pyrrho. The scroll in Greek takes up the majority of the book, and the scrolls in other languages are believed to be commentary upon the great work expounded in the Greek scroll.

There are five factions interested in the scroll book, and each for a different reason. The Brotherhood of Ioannes seeks the book for the possibility of information on the Holy Grail bloodline as well as it's possible connection to the Essenes, a sect that some scholars believe counted John the Baptist among its membership. Professor Gideon Tremain of The Brotherhood believes that the Grail descendants could be a powerful weapon against the Devil and his minions. However, he also believes that his order are the only people strong enough in faith and conviction to direct the divine

descendants properly.

The Zetetic Society is convinced that the scroll book is a lost text of Pyrrho, the original founder of the school of skeptics in ancient Greece. Also, the value of the book to the various factions makes it a must have for this influential society. Mayor Wainwright is acting for the interests of the society in trying to acquire the book.

The Wing of St. Michael believes the book to be a danger to everyone regardless of what it contains, and they believe it belongs locked in the Vatican. They are, however, hopeful that it contains lost writings of St. Anselm. Jesse Davis is after the book for the Vatican, but she also wants to study the knowledge it contains. She will have assistance from another Wing agent who will remain nameless throughout the adventure, though he refers to himself as Agent Smith when he encounters the player characters.

Father Gorrard wants the book because he believes it to have information regarding the Apocalypse. He has been tormented by dreams in which the book falls into the wrong hands, and he wants to protect his parish from the horrors in his dreams. Additionally, he believes that if there are lost writings by St. Anselm, they should reside at St. Anselm College.

The player characters are the fifth faction. They will operate with considerably fewer resources and much less information than the other factions, but they will have help from Darius Finlay, who will ask for their assistance at the outset of the adventure.

STRUCTURE

"Sub Rosa" is structured into four sets of scenes: **Opening Scenes**, **Investigative Scenes**, **Action Scenes**, and **Closing Scenes**. The **Opening Scenes** occur in their exact listed order and set the stage for the adventure. These scenes introduce Darius Finlay and the initial plot hook. The **Investigative Scenes** can occur in any order, depending on the decisions of the players. The **Action Scenes** can be included at any time by the GM, usually when the story is starting to get bogged down or to keep the players on their toes. If so desired, these scenes can be ignored altogether. The **Closing Scenes** occur in a strict order, but GMs may not need to use them all depending on the actions of the players.

OPENING SCENES

There are three **Opening Scenes** to this adventure. In the first, the PCs have their initial meeting with Darius Finlay. This is where the professor contracts their services for the upcoming auction. The second scene is the auction itself. The final scene is a follow-up meeting with Professor Finlay, which launches the adventure proper.

SCENE ONE: FIRST MEETING

The player characters and Darius Finlay meet at Deke's Bar

& Grill. The Gamemaster will need to determine how this meeting came to be, as well as how Finlay is going to hook the PCs into working for him. The make-up of the player characters and the interests of the players themselves will most likely dictate these decisions. The GM can prey on the curiosity of his players or have Finlay financially compensate the characters for their time and effort. The Gamemaster can have Finlay blackmail the PCs into service or have him be a friend of one or more of the characters. The occupations of the PCs can also be a good way to have the professor involve them, especially if one or more of them have ties to St. Anselm or an appropriate scholarly background. Also, if any of the PCs has a rivalry with one or more of the auction attendees, the Gamemaster can hook them in that way. GMs should put some thought into this motivation, tailoring it to the tastes and backgrounds of the players and their characters.

Over the course of the meeting, Professor Finlay will ask the player characters to attend the auction on his behalf, although he asks them to keep his involvement as secret. He will make a sizeable amount of money (GM's discretion) available to the PCs to secure the book for him. In addition to being extremely greedy, Finlay is also overly paranoid. The interest certain townfolk have shown in the scroll book has him on edge. Darius sees enemies everywhere, and he thinks everyone is out to ruin him. Since Darius Finlay trusts the player characters (for whatever reasons the Gamemaster has devised), he asks them to take note of who attends the auction. Furthermore, he asks them to do a little detective work and try to ascertain why these individuals are interested in securing the book.

During the meeting, the GM should make it plainly clear that Finlay has an intense dislike of Sullivan Pierce, that Finlay and Pierce have crossed paths before, and that Finlay is an obsessive personality.

Once terms are met, questions asked, and information exchanged, Darius will thank the PCs for their help and end the meeting.

SCENE TWO: THE AUCTION

The day after **Scene One**, the player characters will attend Pierce's auction. The location is up to the GM, but needs to be within the borders of Potter's Lake. It can be anything from a backroom at Hidden Treasures to a rented civic center. The Gamemaster should allow the PCs some time to mingle with the other attendees at the auction. This way, the players can ascertain who is interested in the scroll book. However, any attempts to discover why any of the individuals want the book will be met with obvious lies and stonewalling.

Father Gorrand, Mayor Wainwright, Gideon Tremain, and Jesse Davis are the attendees of note in this scene. Gamemasters can populate the scene with other citizens if desired, but these individuals will have no bearing on the adventure to come.

After half an hour or so has passed (to allow the characters time to mingle with the NPCs), the auctioneer will take the podium. In a quiet tone, he will regretfully inform the gathered that the auction has been canceled due to "unforeseen

circumstances." He thanks everyone for attending, welcomes them to partake of the catering before they leave, and again apologizes for this inconvenience.

Obviously, there will be some strong reactions in the crowd. Each individual was greatly interested in acquiring the scroll book. Some will ask for specifics from the auctioneer, but he will have none to give. He will inform anyone that asks that he is merely the conductor of the event and has no explanation for Sullivan's sudden cancellation. More than likely, a few of the attendees will leave in a huff.

Pierce had no intention of selling off the scroll book. The auction was simply a means of determining which citizens bear special investigation. Now that Pierce knows who needs monitoring, he has no need of the auction. Now, he must uncover their motivations and allegiances, something he will be doing in the background (which will have no bearing on this adventure).

If any of the player characters or NPCs asks to speak to Sullivan, the auctioneer will rebuff them. If they become belligerent, he will threaten to call the police. After a few minutes, and hubbub will die down, and the location will be vacated.

SCENE THREE: SECOND MEETING

The PCs will have a scheduled meeting with Finlay after the events at the auction. Darius will be alternately dismayed and angry that the characters could not secure the scroll book, though he understands that this is through no fault of their own. He will ask dozens of questions about the various attendees, hoping to gain insight into their interests in the book. Obviously, the characters will not be able to provide satisfactory answers because everyone was so tightlipped at the auction. At this point, Finlay will ask the PCs to quietly investigate the attendees to try to ascertain their motives. He also asks them to try to find out why Sullivan canceled the Auction. As in **Scene One**, Finlay will use whatever means are appropriate to gain the PCs' assistance.

INVESTIGATIVE SCENES

In these scenes, the player characters will research the auction attendees, conduct any necessary surveillance, and approach Sullivan Pierce about the canceled auction. The path taken by the players determines the order of these investigations. The Gamemaster needs to be fluid with these scenes, altering or deleting them in accordance with his players' choices.

SCENE ONE: HIDDEN TREASURES

At some point, the PCs will approach Sullivan Pierce, and Hidden Treasures is the logical place to do so. The shop is fastidiously tidy, although cluttered due to the nature of its business. It contains antique furniture, decorative bric-a-brac, artistic knick-knacks and whatever else the Gamemaster's mind can conjure. It should be noted that there may be a few

books, but there should not be an abundance of them nor should they have any value. Sullivan Pierce does not deal in books, and he will make that clear to the characters if they ask him. He will repeat this mantra, even if pressed regarding the scroll book.

During their entire visit, Pierce will be about the store. While he may offer his assistance perfunctorily, he will not actually attempt to help the PCs. He will remain aloof as long as the characters are in his store. While in the store the characters will observe the entrances of Gideon Tremain and Jesse Davis. Both NPCs will behave oddly and have whispered conversations with Pierce. The conversations will be essentially the same: securing the scroll book. Neither NPC will have any luck getting answers from Sullivan Pierce.

Pierce's habits and any observable information about the NPCs who are after the book should be provided to the players. Beyond this, there is nothing more to glean at this time.

SCENE TWO: THE LIBRARY

There are two matters to investigate at the college library: Jesse Davis and the scroll book itself. When the characters arrive at the library, Jesse Davis will be present, researching the scroll book. Alert PCs can gain clues from her actions and the books she has strewn about the table (GMs may call for an Awareness check or two). The books cover the following subject matter: The biblical Apocalypse, the Essenes, the Holy Grail, and Glossolalia. Also on the table, the PCs will find a copy of *Proslogium* by St. Anselm and various books written in Greek and Latin. While this scene introduces the odd interests of Jesse Davis, it tells little of the Wing's involvement. By giving the players a taste of the truth their appetites will be whet for the full story. Jesse Davis will not be particularly helpful to the players as she is absorbed in her own research, though she will be friendly towards them. Any inquiries they make, regarding the scroll book or otherwise, will be redirected to the assistant librarian.

The PCs are free to research the scroll book on their own, but without knowing the exact subject matter, this will prove difficult. However, they can research the same subjects Davis is researching in an attempt to find out what she knows and her motivations for obtaining the book. Some or all the players may assume Jesse's interest is merely a scholarly one. The Gamemaster should not contradict this belief, instead allowing his players to remain blissfully unaware about Davis' secret agenda. Once the characters have concluded their research they may want to call it a night as research can be quite time consuming.

SCENE THREE: TRAILING DAVIS

The PCs may opt to trail Jesse Davis to her house. Keep in mind that Davis is good at not being followed, so the Difficulty to follow her should be Hard or Very Hard.

Once at her home, Jesse and an unidentified man will have an involved conversation about the Wing that the PCs

RESEARCHING THE WING

If the player characters research the Wing of St. Michael, they will find information hard to come by as history and the Vatican have conspired to erase all traces of the order. The only fact the PCs will be able to turn up is the origin of the order. Namely, that it was founded in 1171 by King Alfonso of Portugal to commemorate his victory over the Moors. Little else can be learned through research, although the GM is free to invent additional facts about The Wing of St. Michael if it serves his purposes.

can overhear. The exact nature of the conversation regards securing the scroll book at all cost. The PCs need to hear some key phrases bandied about like "Wing of St. Michael" and "His Holiness' direct orders." Davis and the individual will tend to cloak their words in code and secrecy, so the PCs will need to figure out what they are talking about via context clues.

Jesse's associate will leave after a few minutes and she will turn in for bed. The PCs may want to investigate her home while she sleeps, but this approach can be dangerous. Jesse Davis is a trained agent so she will have a security system in place, and she leaves little to chance. If the PCs successfully gain access to the home, they will find a well-used travel visa with several stamps on it, the most notable of which should be "Rome, Italy." Additionally they will likely find her sword, as that sort of thing is difficult to hide. Feel free to add items that will flesh out her Wing association, like spy equipment, survival gear, or a small occult library.

It is up to the GM's discretion as to whether or not the PCs get caught in Davis' home. Likely, she would know that someone had rifled through her things, but she may not know the guilty party.

SCENE FOUR: THE MAYOR TAKES A WALK

When the characters go looking for Mayor Wainwright, they will catch up with her at Tryst Memorial Park where she is taking a quiet walk with Sullivan Pierce. If their conversation is overheard, the characters will hear Pierce rebuffing attempts by the mayor to secure the scroll book. After a brief exchange in which Sullivan refuses to part with the book under any circumstances, the two part company.

SCENE FIVE: TRAILING THE MAYOR

Trailing Mayor Wainwright, should the PCs pursue this option, will lead them to Tryst Manor and a clandestine meeting of the Zetetic Society. Although nothing sinister occurs here, the characters may be alarmed to see so many of the town's movers and shakers gathering secretly.

In the private meeting room, the PCs should notice some framed writing in Greek, as well as symbols of Ancient Greek culture, like a small statue of "The Thinker" or a gilt scroll

with writing in Theban. The individuals present will refer to themselves as zetetics during their conversations, and they will comment repeatedly about the scroll book potentially being a collection of Pyrrho's writings.

SCENE SIX: THE BROTHERS' CUP

If the PCs observe Professor Tremain at work or at home, they will find that he lives a quiet and boring life. At no time during their surveillance does Gideon make contact with his fellow knights in the Brotherhood of Ioannes. However, a discreet investigation of his office can lead to some interesting clues. Like Jesse Davis, he will have various books strewn about his desk. The topics covered by these books include the Knights Templar, the Holy Grail, John the Baptist, and the Essenes. Some of these books may lead the characters to believe that Gideon is somehow associated with Jesse Davis in clandestine activities. While this is incorrect, gamemasters should allow their players to labor under any false conclusions of their own making. Also, tucked away in the closet, the characters will find a robe, perhaps a ceremonial sword or a long knife, and various ritual type accoutrements of the GM's choosing.

Although the clues in Tremain's office should be tantalizing to the PCs, very little can actually be ascertained from their rummaging about. If they question Gideon about anything they found in his office, he will admonish them for spying and answer no question honestly. He will make up a number of different stories, including (but not limited to) a society of Biblical scholars, the St. Anselm Latin Club, his own College fraternity brothers, or a group of church investigators.

SCENE SEVEN: GORRAND & DAVIS

When investigating Father Gorrand, the PCs will observe a heated exchange between the pastor and Jesse Davis. They should observe it from a distance, perhaps overhearing the Father berate the librarian for breaking the Lord's laws, at which point Davis will leave in a huff. Attempts to question Father Gorrand will be difficult as he is a commanding presence more interested in the characters personal sins than in any foul play afoot. However, if the matter of the book is broached directly, he will begin preaching to them to stay away from "licentious works of the devil himself" and exhort them to confess their sins. The Father will not give any information directly, although if the characters work him up enough, he may let something slip while preaching at them. If any PCs do elect to confess, make sure the Father is their priest and have him ask pointed questions about the book.

ACTION SCENES

The following scenes are confrontational in nature. They can be interspersed among the investigative scenes as the GM sees fit. These scenes are best used to spice up the adventure when things are slowing down due to too much investigation or the PCs attention is starting to wane. Likewise they can be

RESEARCHING PYRRHO

If the player characters research Pyrrho, the GM can refer to **Chapter VII** of the *Heaven & Earth* rulebook and extrapolate as desired.

important tools for maintaining the pace of the adventure and keeping the players on their toes. Conversely, the GM can ignore any off these scenes if doing so better suits the story.

SCENE ONE: AGENT SMITH

Jesse Davis fully anticipated securing the scroll book, one way or the other. Once she had the book, she planned to transfer it to another member of the Wing of St. Michael, who in turn would transport safely to Rome for study and eventually storage. Once Davis realizes the PCs are interested in the book, she will have this fellow knight threaten the characters in an attempt to discourage their interest in the book.

The other Wing agent will approach the characters. If the characters participated in the **Trailing Davis** scene, they will recognize the knight as Davis' co-conspirator. At this point, the GM should have the Wing agent begin to ask questions of the PCs in an intimidating manner. If they refuse to answer or want to see a badge, he will quickly flash one and put it away. If they PCs make a proper Awareness check (Difficulty of Hard) they will spot the word "Vatican" and a cross, but that should be about it. He will not show the badge again and he will not identify himself other than as Agent Smith of the U.S. Government (an obvious pseudonym). If he cannot get the PCs to cooperate, he will leave them with an ominous warning about watching their step. If the PCs attempt to follow him, he will lose them, though perhaps after an interesting chase. The GM should remember that Agent Smith is a trained operative of the Wing of St. Michael and easily outclasses the player characters. In other words, not only does he have the skills to eventually shake their pursuit, he could probably kill them easily if he wanted. Lucky for the PCs, the knights have a deep and abiding respect for human life, taking it only in the most extreme of circumstances.

SCENE TWO: FIREWORKS

At various times, the Gamemaster should have Finlay check in on the PCs' progress. During one such update, Sullivan Pierce arrives on the scene. By this point, he will have marked the PCs as interested parties and begin interrogating them about the book, their interest in it, and any other relevant facts. Finlay will become angry with Pierce, and Pierce will laugh at him and mock his ineptitude at acquisition. Eventually the PCs will be able to find out that Pierce outbid Finlay on this very same book in a New York auction, and has refused to give Finlay any details on the book's history or contents. Finlay will storm off at some point, and Pierce will

laugh at the PCs attempts, believing them to be pawns in the game between him and Finlay.

SCENE THREE: THE CHASE

Agent Smith threatens the player characters more seriously after his initial warning is not taken to heart. Smith will attempt to scare the characters off the case with his black sedan. If on foot, the sedan attempts to graze one or more of the characters before speeding away (it is Smith's aim to scare them and minimally wound them if needed, not kill them). If in a vehicle, Smith attempts to run the characters off the road. Obviously this encounter should occur in a relatively deserted area, such as a side street or a road on the edge of town. If the GM desires, a protracted car chase can ensue, with the PCs being hounded for a bit before the sedan turns away in another direction.

With a successful Awareness check, Difficulty Hard, the characters can get the license plate number of the sedan. Any research reveals the plate is a local rental. Obviously, Smith has used false credentials to secure the car, and nothing will come of investigating the matter.

CLOSING SCENES

These are the scenes that close out the adventure. They occur when all the investigative scenes are concluded. Each occurs in the listed order, but not every scene necessarily occurs. At each scene (after the first one), the player characters will have a chance to get their hands on the book. Depending on their tactics and die results, they can stop the adventure at any one of these junctures. If not, events move forward. For example, if the PCs do not secure the scroll book during **Scene Two**, the GM should proceed to **Scene Three**. If they do not secure the book then, the Gamemaster will need to proceed to the next scene. This will continue until Finlay and the characters have the book.

SCENE ONE: THIRD MEETING

The player characters and Darius Finlay will have a final meeting at Deke's. At this meeting, the PCs should share everything with Finlay, fulfilling their duties. After divulging their information, Finlay will warn the characters that they are dealing with some dangerous individuals, namely the Wing of St. Michael. Finlay is familiar with this secret Vatican order that trains beside the Pope's Swiss Guard. Exactly how much the professor knows is up to the Gamemaster. If the GM wants to fill in many of the blanks, he can have Finlay relate a good bit about the Wing. Conversely, the GM can have Darius provide few details, keeping the players much more in the dark about the order. Regardless, he believes that Agent Smith, Jesse Davis, Father Gorrاند, and Gideon Tremain are all part of this Vatican conspiracy. Considering the information the players have gathered, they are likely to agree with the professor even though he is only right on two

of the accounts. Only follow-up adventures will concretely prove or disprove Finlay's assumptions.

Finlay will suggest they stake out Hidden Treasures for the next few nights. He believes, rightly so, that agents from the Wing of St. Michael will break in and steal the scroll book. Finlay mistrusts the Catholic Church and promises the PCs that the last thing they would want is to have the book fall into the Wing's hands.

SCENE TWO: BREAK IN

During their stake out of Hidden Treasures, a group of three masked and black-garbed figures break into the warehouse behind the shop. They are obviously skilled, as they disable the alarms and locks with ease. Should the PCs elect to follow them in, they will see a warehouse filled with crated items and a small office area where the culprits are busy. The masked and hooded culprits are knights of the Wing of St. Michael led by Jesse Davis. It will be impossible for the PCs to confirm this, but they might notice that one of the masked perpetrators is a female (Awareness check with a difficulty of Challenging). Although unlikely, the PCs can attempt to secure the scroll book at this time. However, any attempt to accost or grapple with the Wing should be met quickly with non-lethal violence. As soon as they have the book, the Wing will vanish into the darkness. With some good action checks, the PCs may be able to follow them back to St. Anselm College. Regardless, the players will probably assume Gorrاند, Tremain or Davis is involved and proceed to the college anyway. If the PCs secure the book here, proceed to **Denouement**. If not, proceed to **Scene Three**.

SCENE THREE: DAVIS' OFFICE

At the college, Davis secures the book in her office. In the morning, Agent Smith will depart Potter's Lake to deliver it to Rome. This gives the player characters a few hours to try to secure the book. However, getting into Davis' office will prove difficult. First, the characters will need to get into her office unseen (Difficulty of Average). Next, they will need to break into her office, by force more than likely (a Strength test with a Difficulty of Very Hard if they are using a lever on the door or attempting to bust the lock – a Strength test with a Difficulty of Average if they attempt to bust out the window on her door to access the lock from the inside, though this approach is liable to make a lot of noise and leave tell-tale signs of a break in to passing janitors). Once inside, they will need to locate the hidden scroll book (an Awareness check with a Difficulty of Very Hard). If the characters succeed in getting the book in this scene, proceed to **Denouement**. If not, proceed to **Scene Four**.

SCENE FOUR: FOLLOWING THE BOOK

If the players have yet to secure the book, they can do so in this scene. While monitoring Davis' office or the college,

they will see Gideon Tremain leaving with the book. If they monitor the office itself, they will see Tremain pick the lock, search for the book, and abscond with it. This may cause some confusion among the players if they believe Tremain and Davis are on the same side.

The Professor, while an excellent teacher and researcher, is not a super spy. The PCs will have no trouble taking the book from him if they wish too. If the characters trail Gideon, they will follow him to his house. Foolishly, the professor places the scroll book on his study desk (an event observable through the window) rather than hide the book carefully. Again, the GM should keep in mind that Tremain is not a trained spy but an average man who makes mistakes. To make matters worse for Gideon Tremain, the window to the study is unlocked. The characters will have no difficulty entering the room and taking the book. If any of the PCs are hesitant, have Finlay perform the break in.

The chase is over. The player characters and Darius Finlay have at last secured the scroll book.

DENOUEMENT

Once the fervor has died down, Finlay will start translating the book. Because he is thankful for their efforts and has finally found individuals he feels he can trust, he shares his research with the player characters. The title of the book is “The Vulgarities of Comedie: Collected Essays on Laughter, its Benefits and Harms”. The four scrolls are written in the following languages:

Scroll 1: The largest of the bound scrolls is in Greek.

Scroll 2: The smallest of the bound scrolls is in Latin.

Scroll 3: This scroll is penned in Arabic.

Scroll 4: The final scroll is penned in Middle English.

At the Gamemaster’s discretion, the Greek scroll can originate from Pyrrho, or have ties to his followers, to lead the characters to additional clues about the Zetetic Society. However, the gist of the scrolls is that they are a big joke played on the local societies by Sullivan Pierce, containing little (if anything) of note. Finlay will leave in disgust, abandoning the scroll to the PCs. Allow them to decide what to do with it, whether they are moved to hand it over to one of the sides in exchange for information or keep it to hang as bait for the local societies. Pierce will not be interested in its return, if they try to return it. He has gleaned the information he sought using the scroll, which was additional identification of secret society members in Potters Lake.

SPRINGBOARD

As stated earlier, this adventure works well as the start of a story arc or as part of an ongoing series. In these cases, here are a few suggestions where to take things:

1. Father Gorrard can be investigated. There may be some confusion as the PCs try to tie him to the Wing of St. Michael or the Brotherhood of Ioannes. The GM should encourage this type of mistake, as it will broaden the scope of future investigations. For more information on the Father and his dreams consult **Chapter V** of the *Heaven & Earth* rulebook.
2. The Mayor and her affiliations can be investigated. This one will be somewhat tougher than the other investigations due to the influence she wields. However, by playing smart, the PCs can find out plenty about the Zetetic Society.
3. Professor Gideon Tremain is also a suspicious character that the PCs can investigate further. Investigating the professor can lead to investigating the Brotherhood of Ioannes and eventually lead to the overarching plot of *Heaven & Earth*.
4. Sullivan Pierce can be the subject of an entire session. Not only can he be used to springboard the characters into the world of magic, he also can be used as a plot device who comes across interesting oddities that the characters can use.
5. The Wing of St. Michael can be investigated further. Jesse Davis in particular can be watched, but remember that she is not the only Wing agent active in Potter’s Lake.
6. Should the players elect to keep the book, any one of the secret societies can attempt to acquire it. This may spur an action-based session in which the characters play keep away or an investigative style adventure where an exchange is planned for mutual advantage (e.g. the book for secret information on other societies). Each society is loath to reveal their secrets but seem only too happy to sell out the other groups.

These are some ideas. Story possibilities are wide open for these secret societies. Ideally several concepts could be intertwined to create a “Secret Society Story.” However, the GM has sole discretion on how this adventure unfolds. Cut and paste as desired.