

Arcon's an arse. He runs a local gambling place / drinking den, currently called "The Ante Chamber", Previously known as "Slot To The Future", "Poker Phase", "The River", "Flip & Twists". It desperately wants to be a classy cocktail joint, a piece of Las Vegas in Soho, the same as the real Las Vegas has models of the Nile, but the last refurbishment was a number of years ago, and it's slowly faded from a sparkling jewel to gilt by association. The columns outside are flaking fake gold-leaf, the tarnished golden chrome of the guard-rails surrounds plastic panels spray painted gold, each badly stencilled with a card suit. A heart, a club, a diamond, and a hole kicked in where the spade should surely be. One pane of the sheet-glass windows has been replaced with a wooden board with the phone number of a glazier over it.

It's earlier today, Monday daytime. It's about half an hour after you agreed to meet, and the last person's just arriving. It's probably Axis.

What do you do next?

Adepts: Four days ago you woke up without any charges, and a sense that the world wasn't quite right, at an angle from where it was before. The feeling faded, or maybe you got used to it.

Supernaturals: As of four days ago you've had great difficulty casting spells. It's gotten easier, but it was almost as hard as when you first started, and you're only about 75% of the way back. Every time you cast a spell it'll get slightly easier, and as of about three more, you start to forget there was ever an issue. This has no effect on your roles.

Arcon got a card too. It's the 8 hearts. He's got no idea where it came from, and hasn't had a chance to look into it.

The Ante Chamber did use golden cards for a while, but they're hard to autoshuffle, so they've gone back to normal ones with a fancy back. He shows you one, it's shiny and gold and contains a logo that looks like an eleven year old was given a clip-art library and MS WordArt.

Something strange happened a couple of weeks ago, some great work of magic. It's got all the Sleepers in something of a tizzy, because nobody quite knows what happened. Every Adept woke up without charges, but it's left Arcon with few resources to look at this card thing. He's got an idea, though, and if you go and do this thing for him to confirm it, he'll even talk to you about it.

There's a house in west London where an adept lives, Arcon gets a feeling that somewhere near him something's happened. Get there, find out what, and either contain it or phone this number for backup. Report back if you see anything familiar.

Deep up the central line, off at Leyton. Over the bridge, down a road, down a road, down a cul-de-sac. Many of the houses look less run down than they look run over, but one is specially decrepit today. The lawn is overgrown with dead weeds, the windows blacked out, the door peeling paint like the days after bad sunburn. The numbers have long since rusted away, but the house number to the left is too low, and the house number to the right is too high, and based on the goldilocks principle, this is the place.

The hallway is dark, the dim and bare bulb above only providing highlights to the darkness. The carpet sucks at your shoes, but the green and white stripes of the walls suck at your soul. Stairs lead up, an open door in the north to a kitchen is in front of you, a closed door to your east. There are no sounds.

The kitchen hasn't been cleaned since John Major was prime minister, grimy and black, there is a marginally clean area near where the kettle lives. In the other half of the room the dining room table slopes at a steep angle, two of the legs have snapped at some point, but the cheap plastic lawn chairs around it seem fine. In the south wall are two doors, to the hall you came in through, and another further along which has a pile of broken furniture in front of it, and looks like it goes to the same place the other door in the hall went to.

The living room is perfectly nice. Wood floors with a deep pile rug in front of a wide-screen TV, two deep and comfortable armchairs point across it. Bright sunshine streams through the top of the windows above the carved oak boards that block out natural light. The room is otherwise lit by two gallows lamps, one above each chair, that provide bright pools of friendly light. The walls are neatly wallpapered, a burgundy cross pattern up until about halfway up, then a dado rail, and a light parchment-effect on beige from that to the ceiling. A century ago, this room would have looked exactly the same, but with a bright and roaring fire where now there is a flat-screen TV.

The stairs creak loudly under your feet, to a landing as richly appointed as the hall. A black and grimy bathroom lurks in front of you, and two bedrooms are to the east, one to the north and back of the house, one to the south.

In the north bedroom the window is closed, a thin curtain defusing the light only slightly. A broken bed is in one corner, but its mattress is in another with a single duvet and pillow on top of it. A pile of clothes covers the chair beside a chest of drawers

The chest of drawers is full of fiction books, they're all from the library.

The south bedroom is painted a bright and friendly shade of yellow, has a deep white carpet around the edges, and in the middle is a large dark hole with a staircase running down it.

Once you descend below the level of the floor, everything lights up a bit. The stairs are made of some kind of pale stone, and go down about thirty feet. At the bottom is a tunnel with battery lanterns every couple of dozen feet. Some of them are dead, but there's enough light to see by most of the way.

The cave opens up all at once

There's a couple of chairs and a desk on a thick red carpet that is about fifteen feet square. The corners are bounded by standing lights, and to the edge opposite the cave you came in by is a simple wooden desk with some papers on it and an ikea chair behind it. The lamps spread their pools of light over the rough stone floor beyond the carpet, but are quickly surrounded by the darkness beyond them. The room stretches as far as the light goes, north, south, east, west and up. The only things you can hear are the whimpering of the guy in the centre of the carpet, and the faint sound of breathing from the darkness.

Breathing: It's coming from all directions, but it's only one sound.

The guy: naked from the waist up, thin to the point of emaciation, he's hugging his knees in the centre of the room. His torso is covered in mud and blood, but doesn't appear injured.

He's saying "They're gone".

Notice check: There's a heart, diamond and club in a ring around his upper arm, nearly obscured by blood and dirt.

Notice check: Surrounding him are four pale figures looking in to him, which dissipate if the players get too near.

If they get him out of the room he will recover his wits slightly, close the door to the master bedroom behind him - it will lock - close and then open the door to the small bedroom - there wasn't a door before, it will also lock - and come back a few minutes later in a white shirt and blue jeans cleaned up.

James Buzzard is a recovering Ludomancer. He's been clean for nearly ten years, he doesn't like to talk about it, but if co-erced successfully he will admit that the last thing he did was help banish the creature from the school. He pulled away from it, but it's still a major part of his life, and obsession is such a low odds bet. He slipped when someone posted a ludomantic artefact through his door. Just recognising it for what it was pushed him over the edge (It's a card, of course). If the players show him theirs, he'll bolt, but if they ask he'll say. He won't want to discuss it, but he

won't want to give it to them. If they mention they were sent by Arcon, this won't help. Knowing they have other cards is also a detriment. Successful Connect check might do this? He'll tell them what card it was.

Eldwich is screwed.

Over the last ten years, the black luck that started at the school has spread to the boundaries of the borough. The house prices are too high, and nobody moves here for more than a year unless they were born here. Everyone who leaves comes back, but there are no jobs, no businesses seem to survive. It's getting worse as we reach the anniversary. You were the trigger - though someone else loaded the gun - but it's about to get worse.

The new london council have decided to rework the boroughs again, eliminating Eldwick into a larger borough. If this happens, the miasma can break its boundaries, either into the larger new borough, or break through to the rest of the city. If we're lucky, the M25 will hold. We haven't been lucky so far. The miasma must be stopped or the boundary shift must not be allowed to happen. Arcon's been trying to reach the rest of the Sleepers, but something's up with their communications.

What do you want to do?