

PRISONER #8

Background

'Prisoner #8' serves as an introduction to 'Cold City' and takes the characters through a whole range of places and situations that will challenge them on many levels. It does not have to be run in a linear fashion, bits and pieces can be mixed and matched as the group sees fit. The participants should also feel free to incorporate new NPCs, conflicts, encounters and situations, especially if these arise out of the individual characters' stories and hidden agendas.

Private Arthur Grey is stationed with the Cheshire Regiment (the Cheshires), a British military unit, in Berlin. He resides in the Smuts barracks, situated in Spandau opposite the notorious prison.

Although photography is strictly forbidden inside the prison, Pt Grey managed to smuggle in a camera when he was on guard duty on the night of February 29th. Just as dawn was breaking the next day he noticed some rather strangely dressed guards taking a prisoner for a walk in the courtyard and took a couple of photographs. However, Grey got more than he was expecting. It was the secret Prisoner #8 in the courtyard, being taken for his nightly airing by well-protected guards.

The existence of #8 is a secret known only to a few. He was a high-ranking Nazi but is no longer just that. His body is covered with tattoos of arcane symbols and bindings and something was summoned into it by strange machines and even stranger rituals. The machines that brought the incursor through have never been positively identified. Those in RPA who are aware of the existence of Prisoner #8 (and there are precious few of them) have not been able to determine what exactly is inside him but they know it is powerful. They know that it can kill with a glance, and worse. All the guards wear special welding style masks with thick smoked glass that protect from his glare.

The incursor, whatever it is, has been trying to break free but they don't want to kill the man because that could potentially loose the possessing incursor (understanding of what exactly it is is extremely limited). The only thing that holds him back is a daily exposure to the sun's rays. Too little and the vessel starts to be overcome, too much and the strange tattoos start to fade.

Unfortunately for Grey, the incursor managed to project a small part of its essence (a 'spark') into his photographs. Most of it was absorbed by the film, but some leaked into Grey, with appalling consequences.

Two days later on the 1st March, after their tour of duty had finished, the Cheshires went on a drinking spree in East Berlin where the beer is cheaper. Grey dropped his camera off in a little shop on Friedrichstraße to have the film developed. Knowing that the photographs might get him into trouble he used the name of his corporal, Cpl Davey. He paid in Ostmarks and in return got a receipt to pick up the photographs in a week's time.

In the meantime, Grey started to have terrible nightmares of horrible, disjointed landscapes in which he was torturing his fellow soldiers for their misdemeanours, and enjoying it. Being a Catholic boy he visited a local priest for confession but even this did not help and two days later, on 3rd March convinced he was going to serve in hell, he went for a walk late at night and took his life by drowning in the Havel, just behind the barracks.

The next day, 4th March, Herr Gunter Roth, the owner of the camera shop developed the pictures. Whatever it was that Grey had caught a glimpse of in the courtyard had somehow managed to imprint itself more fully onto the film. It leapt from the developed picture into Gunter's head. However it couldn't control itself in such confines and caused Gunter's brain to explode through his eyes and across the small darkroom at the back of his shop. Gunter died immediately but whatever was in his brain still controlled his actions and stumbled around the room spreading bloody handprints around. Gunter's son Pavel who was keeping an eye on the front of the shop came running in and the thing leapt into his brain through his eyes.

This time it had learnt enough about humans not to destroy Pavel. Confused, it grabbed at the photographs and negatives of Spandau, something of which it had vague memories, and ran off. Finding even the dim light of the midwinter sun painful, Pavel, or what was left of him headed straight down into the U-bahn to hide out and try to make some sense of what he had become.

The scenario starts with the discovery of the Gunters by Frau Gissen, the owner of the wool shop next door to the camera shop. She alerts the Volkspolizei (VoPos) who in turn call in the RPA. The first the characters learn is in a briefing with their superior office Major Joseph Spiegelmann

Sequence of Events

The game does not have to run in this strict sequence and much depends on how the group wishes to approach it.

1. Briefing

Major Spiegelmann gives the agents their mission.

2. The shop on Friedrichstraße

The scene of a horrific murder.

3. Optional Scene: Der Regenbogen

Useful if the agents choose to investigate Pavel further.

4. Smuts Barracks

A lead from a photographic film found at the crime scene.

5. Optional Scene: Spandau Prison.

The agents may wish to visit to find out more information.

6. Tempelhof U-Bahn

The finale when Pavel is confronted. This takes places early in the morning.

7. Optional Scene: Special Briefing

Run this scene if the agents need further briefing from Major Spiegelmann about Prisoner #8.

Scene I: Briefing

Location description

This takes place in the Kammergericht in the American sector, the imposing neo classical building that serves as HQ to the RPA, on 4th February at around 2 p.m.

What happens

Major Spiegelmann delivers the briefing for this mission. He explains the following facts:

This morning at 10:30 a.m. the VoPos contacted the RPA (via the usual channels) with regard to a mutilated body in a camera shop on Friedrichstraße. There is something unusual about the crime and he asks the agents to investigate.

The weather is still pretty poor, more snow predicted for the afternoon and with sunset at about 4:30 p.m., the officers had better wrap up as it's rather cold out.

Members of the RPA are allowed into the various parts of Berlin on trust. You are only guests in foreign sectors, so agents should act with courtesy and discretion. The RPA cannot afford another incident like the one last week in Pankow. The French forces are still very annoyed at the destruction of their only helicopter.

Spiegelmann is not aware of any of the details of the case. It is up to the PCs to take charge. Spiegelmann does know about Prisoner #8 but this does not yet seem to have any relevance to the case. He will also slip a note to any American characters, warning them to keep an eye on the Brits and French.

When they have evidence of the involvement of the prison, if any of the characters have some kind of special security clearance (perhaps as a Trait), inform the character that they have heard a rumour that there might be more than just seven prisoners in Spandau. If the agents ask senior members of the RPA about this, or if Spiegelmann has enough information that he might judge it necessary for them to know the truth, run the Optional Special Briefing scene.

Scene II: The shop on Friedrichstraße.

Location description

The photographic shop is on Friedrichstraße, just off Unter den Linden in the Soviet sector. It used to be a fashionable, elegant area of Berlin but now much of it is in ruins. On one side of the small shop is a wool shop run by one Frau Gissen. On the other side are just the ruins of another shop. Opposite are a church, a greengrocer and a U-Bahn station. Nearby is the Am Grünen Baum (The Green Tree), the local kneipe (tavern). The shops are set slightly down from the road and there are steps leading down from the road to the small arcade. The pavement in front of the shop is covered in slushy, half-melted snow and will not hold any footprints for long.

Outside of the shop there are two VoPos leaning on police car parked in the slush by the side of the road. There is snow on the ground, the VoPos are smoking and looking bored, although one is slightly more nervous than the other because he has stolen the money from the till. Anyone coming outside suddenly from inside the shop might catch them haggling over the division of the money. The money is stashed in the glove compartment of the car.

The VoPos are only too happy to have the RPA involved (even though they don't exactly understand who the RPA are) as it is less for them to do and they will hang around until officially dismissed. Characters with Hidden Agendas related to this scene may wish to bring them into play at this point in order to influence the VoPos, get information that the other agents cannot, or otherwise advance their own agenda.

The former residents of the shop were Gunter and Pavel Roth, father and son proprietors of the small photographic business. Gunter worked in the darkroom while Pavel dealt with customers. Gunter used to be a regular patron of Am Grünen Baum and Pavel hung out with friends in Der Regenbogen Nightclub on Unter Den Linden. Both were well liked locally and not in any trouble with the law. Examination of police files (which are still in existence from the pre-war period) would show Gunter fined for a minor case of voyeurism in 1928.

Shop front: Glass cases on walls with, on the left, cameras and other equipment, on the right, photographs including one with a smiling Pavel as model. Inside there is a glass counter with cameras and till (there are no notes in the till, as the VoPos have cleaned it out). There is a ledger with details of sales on the floor and a roll of cloakroom type tickets on the counter to match films with customers. There is one other exit in the back left of the shop which leads to a corridor.

Back corridor: A short passage leading through to a darkroom, with a red light above the door and two light switches. Stairs lead up to the left. One switch illuminates the stairs and the other operates a warning light in the cache upstairs. There is the faint, bloody outline of a footprint just outside the door.

Darkroom: Heavy curtain behind the door. Light switch on the right operates a red light and special dark room light and a switch under a cover operates the main light. A small window at ceiling height at the back of the room leads to the floor level of a backyard and has been blocked off. Boxes of equipment and wares are stashed under the stairs. A workbench sits along the left-hand wall, with a small studio set up along the right hand wall with a curtain rail for backdrops and studio lighting.

There is a stool for posing for passport photographs. Washing line down the middle of the room, carrying several recently developed prints. Workbench has trays of chemicals, a negative cutter, an enlarger and other film developing paraphernalia.

A dead man is lying face up on the floor, eyes missing, blood on his face and hands, with bloody prints on the walls and floor. A burnt out photograph lies on the floor. A footprint of the son

partially covers one of the handprints and leads out of room, fading quickly. Filing cabinets contain folders with business information and developed films. Large bottles of developing fluid stored under the workbench. There is a small safe behind some boxes under the stairs. It is sunk into the concrete and contains money, contracts and personal certificates (birth, marriage, and death).

The photographs on the line show tourist images of West and East Berlin along with some of British soldiers in and around what will be recognisable as Smuts barracks. They can be linked through the ledger to a Cpl Davey, who deposited them here on 1st March.

The burnt out photograph shows the courtyard of Spandau prison as taken from a position on the walls. The Sten gun in the foreground marks it out as taken by a British soldier, but only someone familiar with Spandau Prison could identify the origin of the photograph.

Upstairs. The stairs emerge on the right hand side of the flat, with doors leading left and right. The left-hand door leads to a single bedroom at the back of the building with one bed and Gunter's personal effects. The right hand door leads to a front room with sitting area and convertible sofa bed with Pavel's personal effects. A door leads to a small bathroom. There are two windows over the street in the front and one overlooking a yard at the back.

Optional Extra

The secret room: this is contained in the space above the stairs. The entrance is through the bathroom behind the door from the front room.

This small room has a warning bulb that lights up when activated from the corridor downstairs. This room contains backdrops for the studio and a filing cabinet with pornographic photographs (the extent of which is left to the group's discretion). The key to the safe downstairs hangs on a hook on the wall. There is another logbook in the safe recording details of sittings for photographs, names and addresses of models and code names of buyers. The real names of the buyers have gone to the grave with Gunter. Decoding the entries may be possible with some time and effort, and could, potentially, contain significant names that could be used to advance a characters Hidden Agendas.

What Happens

Investigation of the scene is very much up to the players. At the end of it they should have certain information and leads

Gunter died because his brain exploded through his eyes.

Pavel saw what had happened to Gunter and ran off. He may have taken the evidence of the negative and the two photographs with him, and possibly the contents of the till.

The photographs were from a film deposited here by a British soldier, Cpl Davey. Major Spiegemann, or any contact with the British Army will reveal that Davey is stationed at the Smuts Barracks in Spandau.

Optional Scene: Der Regenbogen

Location description

Der Regenbogen (the Rainbow) is a nightclub just round the corner from Friedrichstraße on Unter Den Linden. It is in the basement of a bomb damaged building and is a regular haunt for the local youth. It also has a reputation for good jazz music which attracts American soldiers. Soviet and American Military Police (MPs) use a smoky backroom as venue for their regular poker nights. This means that black marketers are discouraged and there is little in the way of drug dealing too. Not that the MPs would necessarily put a stop to these activities, but they'd certainly demand a cut.

What Happens

The PCs might meet a few of Pavel's friends here but they don't have anything to say that has any bearing on the scenario. On the other hand, it might be interesting for the PCs to discover and become involved in the gambling.

It's a pretty high-stakes poker game with bets such as twin pearl-handled revolvers and a hat worn by someone who stormed the Winter Palace (allegedly).

However, even the MPs (whether they be American or Soviet), will be highly suspicious of strange people asking questions. The agents might find themselves in an intimidating, and potentially violent, conflict with a good number of drunk and aggressive soldiers.

Scene III: Smuts Barracks

Location description

The Smuts is one of the five British Barracks in Berlin and is located in the western suburb of Spandau about 10km from the centre of Berlin. The barracks are next to Spandau Prison on Wilhelmstraße and near the Havel River. There are several barrack huts and a sports ground here. Some of the Cheshires will be having a snowball fight by the river in an attempt to raise their spirits. They are likely to bombard anyone who isn't terribly sympathetic (bigheaded Americans in particular). Cpl Davey is with them.

Davey shares a hut with the rest of the Cheshires, including their officer, Lt Spence, who has his own room at one end of the hut. One bed in the hut is draped with a Union Flag with an open footlocker containing well presented kit. This is the deceased Pvt Grey's bed. His body is in the morgue of the American military hospital pending an autopsy as part of the inquest into his death. Grey's kit includes his camera, one of the new East German models, a Leica IIIf.

Optional Extra

Grey's camera has been changed by taking a photograph of Prisoner #8. It is now sensitive to spirits and other usually unseen influences. Anyone who looks through the eyepiece will see a ghostly Grey standing to attention by his bed.

What Happens

The agents have the opportunity to meet Cpl Davey and it will soon become apparent that the photographs were taken by Pvt. Grey, not least because Davey is actually in several of the snaps from the same reel. Davey will have mixed emotions about this. On the one hand he has lost a close friend, and on the other this 'friend' almost framed him for a crime.

Close inspection of Grey's corpse by a pathologist will reveal recent lesions to the occipital lobe (and in particular Brodmann Area 17, the primary visual cortex) at the back of the head and the optic nerve, without any apparent external trauma that could have caused this. The pathologist can suggest that this might be caused by alcohol or drug abuse but toxicology and investigation of other organs, combined with testimonies of barrack mates, will not point to such a lifestyle. Getting this information would usually take several days.

Unless events dictate otherwise, the inquest will return a verdict of "Drowned, death by misadventure." Grey will then be buried in the local military cemetery (the British weren't in the habit of repatriating dead soldiers).

Optional Scene: Spandau Prison

Location description

Spandau Prison stands next to Smuts Barracks in Spandau. Nearby is Zitadelle Spandau, a red brick Renaissance fort. The prison was built in a similar style in the 19th Century. It houses seven Nazi war criminals:

Albert Speer, Nazi architect.

Erich Raeder and Karl Dönitz, Admirals and uncomfortable colleagues.

Baldur von Schirach, Nazi youth leader, and Walther Funk, Minister of Economic Affairs, close friends.

Konstantin von Neurath, diplomat and Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia, genial.

Rudolf Heß, deputy Fuhrer and paranoid hypochondriac.

The prison is staffed on rotation for a month at a time by the occupying powers. Last month it was Britain and this month it's France. The flags on the four towers are rotated at handover with the flag nearest the gate indicating who has charge that month.

What Happens

Entry to the prison is difficult to arrange and it's even harder to see any prisoners. Only von Neurath is likely to want to talk to anyone, although Heß might see someone if he thinks he might stand to gain from it.

In any case, neither of them knows anything about the current investigation although Heß might well harangue someone with his paranoid theories of being poisoned if anyone cares to listen.

Everyone will deny knowledge of their being any special prisoners in Spandau although Major Spiegelmann will be notified and recall the PCs to the RPA HQ for the Special Briefing Scene. Agents will have to answer to their own consciences as to the rights or wrongs of gaining information from these noted and reviled prisoners. Hidden Agendas could very easily come into play here and influence the actions of the agents.

For GMs and players who are uncomfortable with the thought of roleplaying out interactions with such notorious Nazi criminals, this scene can be avoided by having the prison authorities

totally refuse to allow anyone access to the prisoners. Interactions with guards could serve as a replacement for interactions with the prisoners.

Scene IV: Tempelhof U-Bahn

Location description

This scene takes place in the U-Bahn and starts at Paradesstraße station near Tempelhof airport in the American sector. It is a typical underground station with no intersections. There are entrances on either side of the street that lead to a ticket hall at one end of the station. From this there are stairs down to two platforms from which the trains can go north towards Friedrichstraße or south towards the terminus at Tempelhof.

The set-up is similar at Tempelhof except that beyond the end of the platform is a marshalling yard with space enough for four trains (and four trains are parked there at the time) along with offices and staff rooms for drivers and cleaners. The trains are switched off and in darkness except for the second train from the left. Cleaners are currently on this train, preparing it for the next run out. Even with all the trains switched on, there will be considerable areas of shadow and darkness, especially towards the back of the yards.

What Happens

If the PCs think to investigate the U-Bahn starting from Friedrichstraße or if the investigation seems to be petering out, run this scene. You can place it either very early in the morning, just before rush hour, which means very few people will be about, and most of them will be U-Bahn staff, or later in the day when it will cause considerable panic amongst the commuters, some of whom will rush to see what is happening and some to get away.

In either case, the PCs are alerted to an incident on the U-Bahn in which a member of the public has been killed. Someone fell or was dragged off the station platform at Paradesstraße and into the tunnel towards Tempelhof. The lines were switched off and staff investigated. They found a body on the track apparently bearing the hallmarks of the previous killing at the camera shop. The staff sent for help from the police who arrived with a medical team. The police went first but there were such terrible screams that the first aid crew refused to enter the tunnel. Through its extensive network of contacts, the RPA quickly found out about the situation and dispatched the team to the scene.

The power has been switched off in the tunnel so it is safe to walk along the tracks. A string of emergency lights that runs along a walkway at the side of the tracks but Pavel has broken the cable, plunging the tunnel into complete darkness.

The first thing the PCs will encounter are the bodies of the police officers. It's an extremely bloody scene. The eyes of the policemen and the U-Bahn crew have all exploded covering the area in gore. These are in fact living corpses (not unlike STs), re-animated by a tiny fragment of the Incursor and who have been commanded by Pavel to play dead until investigated, at which point they will rise up and attack.

Pavel has run off to hide in the carriages in the Tempelhof yards. The incursor inside him, although powerful, is actually quite scared. It doesn't understand how our world works and is trying to make sense of things. It is possible that the PCs might find some way to capture it, possibly using its fear of light, and they might even be able to communicate after a fashion, but true understanding is probably alien to such a creature from beyond.

Optional Scene: Special Briefing

Location description

This scene takes place if the PCs ask about Prisoner #8 or if Major Spiegelmann decides that they need to know. The location is a briefing room in the Kammergericht, the RPA HQ. The door to the room is marked Room 225/3. This room has no windows and there are twelve desks in the room all facing a larger desk with a blackboard behind it. There is some electrical equipment on the desk, something that looks a bit like a reel to reel tape-recorder. The spools are turning but without any tapes mounted on them. There are maps of Berlin on the walls and a face down piece of paper on each desk. Next to the piece of paper is a small knife and pen, the old-fashioned kind with a nib.

What Happens

As the PCs are ushered in, they are each asked to sit at a desk each but not to turn over the piece of paper. Major Spiegelmann explains that this is a special briefing but that to be given the information that they need, they first have to sign a declaration. He stresses that they must still not turn over the piece of paper, nor discuss it. At this point they may leave the room if they want but to have any more information about the special briefing, they need a security clearance that they can only get by signing the piece of paper. That's right, knowledge of the details of the declaration have a security status that can only be gained by signing it. If they see it and don't sign it, they will be considered in breach of security clearance and dealt with in the usual manner.

It's up to the GM whether any players whose characters won't sign have to leave for the duration of the briefing. Any agent who looks at the other side of the piece of paper but refuses to sign it will, on leaving the room, be arrested and charged to appear before a court martial. They will never be seen again.

On the obverse of the piece of paper is a declaration about security clearance GAMMA RED MEDUSA. The first part is the usual stuff about penalties applied to anyone who discloses any information passed on under this security code, including only talking about such things in areas designed for such discussions. Knowledge of such areas is not covered by the GAMMA RED MEDUSA security clearance but can be obtained on a operational basis from a GAMMA RED MEDUSA briefing officer (which means Spiegelmann himself, Kazakov or Wright).

The second half of the declaration is written in Hebrew. Obviously only Jewish PCs or those who have good occult knowledge will be able to understand any of it. It is in effect an evocation to the Archangel Michael to smite anyone who breaks security clearance GAMMA RED MEDUSA. Whether this has any effect in the game is up to the GM.

PCs are asked to sign in blood using the knife and pen provided. Spiegelmann will be obviously nervous at this point and, at the edge of hearing, booted feet can be heard shuffling outside the door.

Once the PCs have signed the declaration, Major Spiegelmann will explain that, under security clearance GAMMA RED MEDUSA, he can reveal that there are at least eight prisoners currently incarcerated in Spandau Prison. He will also reveal the information from the 'Background' section. For the purposes of this operation, he will allow the PCs to discuss Prisoner #8 when they are alone.

Main Characters

Pavel Roth

Pavel was once human but is now possessed by a 'spark' from the essence of the incursor contained in Prisoner #8. Although the spark can jump from person to person, it can be destroyed if its current body is destroyed.

Occupation: Ex-camera salesman now incursor possessed killer.

Background: Only a child during the war and tries not to remember it.

Draw: Possessed by the something from a photograph

Action: 6

Influence: 2

Reason: 1

Traits:

- (+) Sneaky and stealthy
- (+) Able to create living corpses from the dead bodies of the recently deceased
- (+) Possessed of curious and inexplicable strength
- (-) Unused to his surroundings
- (-) Can see in the dark but afraid of light

Hidden Agendas

Personal: Stay free, avoid capture and gain greater understanding of what his circumstances are.

Weapons: Fists +1

Killing sight, +6

Can make people's brains explode by looking into their eyes.

This effect is blocked by thick glass.

Possession +1

The incursor in Pavel can jump to another person by looking in to their eyes and overcoming their Influence stat. This effect is blocked by thick glass.

Corpses

These abominations are created by Pavel and follow his orders to the letter. They are not very bright and need to be in Pavel's presence to be given new orders.

Occupation: Former commuter.

Background: Has no memory of anything.

Draw: Killed and reanimated as a living corpse by Pavel.

Action: 5

Influence: 0

Reason: 0

Traits: (+) Only dead when it falls apart.

(+) Oblivious to pain.

(+) Single minded in pursuit of orders.

(-) Can't understand language.

(-) Not very fast.

Hidden Agendas

Personal: Follow Pavel's orders.

Weapons: Fists +1