The Fate of the Washington Bros.
by Matt Ryan

This One-Page Scenario was written during the COVID-19 pandemic and is designed for a Keeper and one or two players, depending on your stay-at-home situation. A single player will portray both Roland and Cecil Washington, while two players can portray one apiece. This OPS is derived from the Chaosium book *The House of Rhys*, and serves as a side adventure between chapters 1 and 2. If you are listening to Reckoning of the Dead Radio and the special *Rhys on Rhys* series, this adventure falls between episodes 5 and 6.

For the Keeper

The Church of Starry Wisdom is assembling occult art objects to renovate the lost cities of Irem and the Grey City, located in Egypt and Kenya, respectively, in an elaborate ritual to summon their Elder God masters, Nyarlathotep and Cthulhu. The leader of the cult, the mysterious figure known only as “J. S.,” needs to move a half-dozen paintings from Boston, Massachusetts, to Buffalo, New York, where they will be loaded aboard a cargo ship and transferred to Cairo. He needs a pair of drivers who will move the shipment and not ask questions.

For the Player

The Washington Brothers, Roland and Cecil, operate a small trucking company located in Boston, Ma. While they have truced contraband in the past, both booze and stolen items, they are not part of the New England Mafia and do not work for Gaspare Messina, the head of organized crime in Boston. They have a reputation for getting the job done. Their last job put them at odds with Desalvo Father and Sons Trucking, a company that is part of the Messina crime family.

The Setup

It is February 1922, and the brothers get an anonymous call to meet at sundown at a warehouse in Boston. The caller doesn’t introduce himself but promises to pay $200 if the brothers drive a shipment to Buffalo, NY, no questions asked, and the crate is unopened before loading them. If they have been opened, they will warm up to the brothers. If told that the pair are heading to Buffalo, the drivers will warm up to the brothers. If told that the pair are heading to Buffalo, the drivers will warm up to the brothers.

The Warehouse

The warehouse is located on Boston’s North End, an area that both brothers know is notorious for its criminal activity. A hard *Spot Hidden* roll reveals a couple of shady characters lingering on a street corner, the ever-present eyes and ears of the Messina mob. At the appointed hour, a sleek Cadillac Type 51 arrives. Seven men exit the car, including a large man dressed in top hat and cloak, holding a silver-tipped walking cane. As his colleagues open the warehouse for the brothers’ truck, the man foregoes introductions and explains that the brothers will ferry two large wooden crates to the docks in Buffalo, leaving immediately. He holds a crisp $100 bill in his white-gloved hand, and promises a second $100 upon the safe delivery of the cargo. The items are listed on the manifest of the SS *Tokosa*, a Norwegian cargo ship bound for Cairo.

The brothers are likely curious as to the identity of their client. A *Know* roll suggests that he is unconnected to the Messina family, as he does not have one of the many New England accents. His formal attire is conspicuously out of place for the environment. With a successful *Spot Hidden* roll, the brothers notice the initials “J. S.” on the man’s cuffs, a golden charm bracelet works around his left wrist, with a small heart inscribed with the name “Lisa.” The men working for him speak to each other in a foreign language, which a successful *Education* roll indicates is Lithuanian. If the brothers start any trouble, J. S.’s men are expert thugs with appropriate skills for violence and mayhem.

The cargo is two large crates; the first eerily sized like a coffin and the second the size of a bureau or a chest of drawers. They are nailed shut, as per standard shipping regulations, and quite heavy. The Lithuanians will load the crates on the brothers’ truck. The longer box smells bad, like a dead rat, and a *Hard Listen* roll indicates faint scraping inside the box. Once the truck is loaded, J. S. bids the brothers adieu.

Leaving Boston

To fulfill the conditions of the bargain, the brothers have to leave town immediately. If they saw the seedy pair hanging on the corner outside the warehouse, they will have a head start on the Messina gang when the inevitable pursuit begins. Two Ford Model Ts roar out of the night, each bristling with armed mobsters curious as to what the brothers are hauling. If the brothers flee, a chase ensues, with opposed *Drive Auto* rolls determining if they can outrun the gangsters. Consider them two “locations” behind the brothers’ truck, as per the regular *Call of Cthulhu* chase rules. If the brothers failed to see the seedy pair at the warehouse, the chasing gangsters are only one space behind the brothers. If the gangsters ever draw parallel to the brothers – i.e., occupy the same space – they try to shoot out the truck’s tires, which requires a *Hard Firearms* (Handgun) roll. They won’t shoot at the brothers unless the brothers shoot at them first, and any sustained injury makes the gangsters back off.

Right Around Albany

If the brothers left at sundown, which is around 18:00, they hit Albany, NY, at around 22:30. The Mack AB is gasping for gas and the brothers must find a filling station. A successful *Navigate* roll means the brothers found a filling station and gassed up before a nosey New York State Trooper notices them, a failed roll means they pull into the gas station minutes ahead of the police officer and need to fill up before travelling on. Astride his horse, the Trooper asks the brothers what they are doing this late at night. A Hard *Fast Talk, Persuade, or Charm* avoids further inspection, but anything less and the trooper wants to look inside the truck. Only violence will stop him at this point.

Let’s Take a Look Inside

At some point someone will want to look in the crates. The larger crate contains five paintings by Richard Upton Pickman, renowned Boston painter turned ghoul. The paintings, professionally wrapped in cheesecloth and sawdust, depict a ruined city in the jungle (the Grey City in the Congo), a dune-swept ruined city in the desert (Pillared Irem), a dark stairway leading up to three glowing red eyes (The Haunter), a dilapidated castle on the moors (Skeetoom), and a weed-covered island surrounded by crashing black waves (*Rhys*). Viewing any of the paintings invokes a *SAN* roll (1D3). The shorter, longer crate contains two corpses and a ghoul. The ghoul is protection if the larger crate is disturbed, the corpses the ghoul’s ration for the ride.

If an NPC opens the coffin-shaped crate, the ghoul springs forth and kills them, forcing *Sanity* rolls from the brothers for seeing the ghoul (1D10). Once slain, the ghoul drags the freshly slain feast into the crate. It will not attack the brothers, having been told by J. S. that they are essential to the rendezvous.

A Hotbed of Social Unrest

At 1:30, in the middle of the night, the brothers pull into Syracuse, New York, the fifth largest city in New York State. After thirsty for gasoline, the brothers pilot their Mack to a late-night gas station located on the industrialized section of Erie Blvd., between the Smith Corona Typewriter plant and the assembly plants of the Franklin Automobile Company. In the early years of the 1920s, Syracuse is notorious for labor class, and racial violence, and, as luck would have it, the gas station the brothers pick is the secret headquarters of the local chapter of the Communist Party USA. Led by Tomás O’Regan and his grown son Taglh, the group of chain-smoking revolutionaries are instantly suspicious of the brothers. More interested in the drivers than the cargo, Tomás and Taglh ask who the Washingtons are and why they are driving through Syracuse so late. Suspicious and threatening, the Communists are not ultimately dangerous, and, with appropriately applied social skill rolls and roleplaying, the group will warm up to the brothers. If told that the pair are heading to Buffalo, the Communists will warn them how dangerous the city is and offer to sell them military-grade rifles.

Does this Town ever Sleep?

The Washingtons roll into the Buffalo docks at 4:30, about two hours before sunrise. If they were expecting a quiet entry they are disappointed, the docks bustle with activity. The SS *Tokosa* is surrounded by working longshoremen loading heavy cargo. Not all of them are members of the Starry Wisdom Church, but the foreman is. Directing the drivers to maneuver the Mack to the stern of the vessel and the aft winch, the foreman merely wants to see that the crates are unopened before loading them. If they have been opened, he asks if the cargo is still intact. Have the player(s) make any sort of ‘social skill they’d like, but the result is immaterial; the plan all along was to kill the drivers. As a trio of longshoremen hoist the crates to the ship’s deck, the crate holding the paintings first, a *Spot Hidden* reveals that the nearby dock is empty, the rest of the cargo has been loaded, and only a single gangplank connects the ship to the dock. The ship’s running lights are on and a *Know* roll indicates that the ship is preparing to sail. A series of man approach, holding machine guns, and as soon as the foreman is clear they open fire.

This is the climactic finish so don’t hold back. The brothers might have a chance if they have the Communists’ rifles, or if they know about the ghoul and manage to release it on the foreman. Consider the scenario a “win” if either brother survives. Regardless of the outcome, the paintings are loaded aboard the ship and will next be seen in Cairo . . .
### Reckoning of the Dead Character Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Roland Washington</th>
<th>Pronouns: He/Him</th>
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<tr>
<td>Occupation: Truck Driver</td>
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#### Characteristics

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#### Skills

- Drive Auto: 70
- Persuade: 60
- Mechanical Repair: 60
- Navigate: 50
- Firearms (Handgun): 50

- Fighting (Brawl): 50
- Dodge: 40
- Psychology: 40
- Spot Hidden: 40
- Appraise: 25

#### Background & Equipment

The Brawns of the operation. +1D4 Damage Bonus

Small caliber handgun (6 shots capacity, 1D10 damage)

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### Reckoning of the Dead Character Sheet

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name: Cecil</th>
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| Occupation: Truck Driver | Age: 31 |

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#### Skills

- Fast Talk: 70
- Navigate: 60
- Mechanical Repair: 60
- Firearms (Handgun): 60
- Drive Auto: 50

- First Aid: 50
- Fighting (Brawl): 40
- Spot Hidden: 40
- History (Boston): 25

#### Background & Equipment

The Brains of the operation.

Small caliber handgun (6 shots capacity, 1D10 damage)

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### Mand McRally

**General Map**

**Northeast Mileage Chart of the United States**

- **Legend**: Dotted lines denote mileage


- **Distance**:
  - Boston to New York: 237 miles
  - New York to Providence: 73 miles
  - Providence to Hartford: 37 miles
  - Hartford to Springfield: 46 miles
  - Springfield to Boston: 101 miles
  - Boston to Providence: 73 miles
  - Providence to New Haven: 101 miles
  - New Haven to Hartford: 37 miles
  - Hartford to Springfield: 46 miles
  - Springfield to Boston: 101 miles
  - Boston to New York: 237 miles

**Lake Ontario**

- Major Cities: Toronto, Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, Albany, Plattsburgh, Watertown