

Act II Scene 2

“Hey! You two! Down there! Wait on!” cried Lara, completely ignoring the context of the situation.

The two Resistance members who were in the midst of a speedy getaway after what was, undoubtedly, another botched mission, turned to face her. Shocked to find that they had been stopped by an adolescent who was no more than half their age, they mentally put their own incompetence down to a lack of resources and a lack of preparation.

The Resistance members, not willing to risk another altercation, did what any courageous guerillas would do. They fled.

Lara, always willing to take on a challenge, bolted after them, tailing them on the main streets and through the back alleys, in large loops and serpentine spirals through a maze of concrete and cobblestone. To give the Resistance members due credit, they had likely become accustomed to the thought of failing a mission and being forced to flee, and, as such, had become rather adept at it.

And so the pursuit continued. There were a few instances when Lara thought that she may have lost track of the fleet-footed freedom fighters, but then her eyes caught a flash of dazzling white against the largely monochromatic cityscape, and she kept chase. Round and round they went, the Resistance agents taking intricate paths to divert and waylay, and Lara stubbornly refusing to let go. Soon, they found themselves back to where it all started — the museum.

Attila clambered back up to his feet. Sides aching, bones creaking, and muttering a little something about the insolence of youth. And while he exuded the character profile of a crotchety old man, there was still something within him that yearned for the vanities of young adulthood.

Realising that Lara had long gone without him, Attila resolved to explore the city that he once knew and cherished. ‘Once’ being the operative term, of course, for this city no longer resembled the one that Attila grew up in. It was passionless and bland — without character and without meaning. It did not feel like home.

Attila glanced up at the sky. Even Mother Nature looked disfavouredly on this place, he thought. Every shade of grey among the billowing clouds of a closing storm front was matched by the architecture — a pavement stone here, a concrete skyscraper there, dust and gravel everywhere. Even the trees, which were meant to bring life and hope to this soulless city, looked sullen and stunted, as if succumbing to the sickness afflicting this once-great city.

But, he admitted to himself, this was only a challenge. He was certain now. The misplaced items were one thing, but the lack of people and the lack of cars? The lack of noise and the lack of pollution? No, no, he thought, this was not the world that he had departed.

Surprisingly, the eerie silence made it difficult for him to concentrate. There was the strangely unsettling feeling that he was being watched...



Act II Scene 2



Attila glanced around hastily, but he could see no sign of life nor movement in his immediate vicinity. Or so he was made to believe...

“Attila! Stop them!”

Hearing Lara’s cry, Attila snapped out of his ruminations and saw two men in mottled white and grey coats directly in front of him and barrelling towards the museum where they all had just originally been.

Quick as a flash, with agility that evoked a more youthful Attila that had been firmly left in the past, Attila reached with his cane and gave each of the men a gentle tap on the shin.

The man on Attila’s left tripped without hesitation, sliding head first for several metres and inadvertently consuming no small amount of gravel and bitumen. His companion, on the other hand, took a number of stumbles before he too fell in an arguably more comical fashion, with his momentum taking him through one and a half of the ugliest forward rolls Attila had ever seen in his life.

Attila chuckled. Internally, he was rather glad that he had not left his cane back in the archive room. He had a tendency to be forgetful with matters of health.

“Still got it, old man,” he mumbled to himself.

“Oh... wow! How’d you... do that?” said Lara, between pants.

“Never mind that — who are they?”

Lara gave a rather nonchalant shrug, before approaching the final freedom fighter that Attila had tripped — the one who looked the least injured.

“Hey. You. Who are you?”

“Please don’t shoot! Please don’t! Please, I beg! I have a family! I have a life worth living! Please, I’ll tell you anything!”

Lara smirked. So this was why the Resistance had been decimated, she thought.

Behind them, the first freedom fighter, with his head partially buried in the ground, screamed the word “TRAITOR!”, followed by a number of vile expletives, before rolling over onto his back.

“Relax. We don’t work for the government. We just want to know who you are.”

The man eyed Lara with suspicion.

“Well, we’re the Resistance,” he blurted, rather manner-of-factly.

“Yes... We gathered that. But what do you do?”

The man paused. This was an intense line of questioning that he had been gravely under-prepared



Act II Scene 2



for.

“Well, why don’t I just show you?”



AREA 51 CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

concerning ALIEN ARTEFACTS

This report on suspicious alien activity depicts some strange alien markings found by our personnel in the surrounding area. The locations of discovery for the following structures are indicated. These structures have been deciphered by our xenosymbologists.

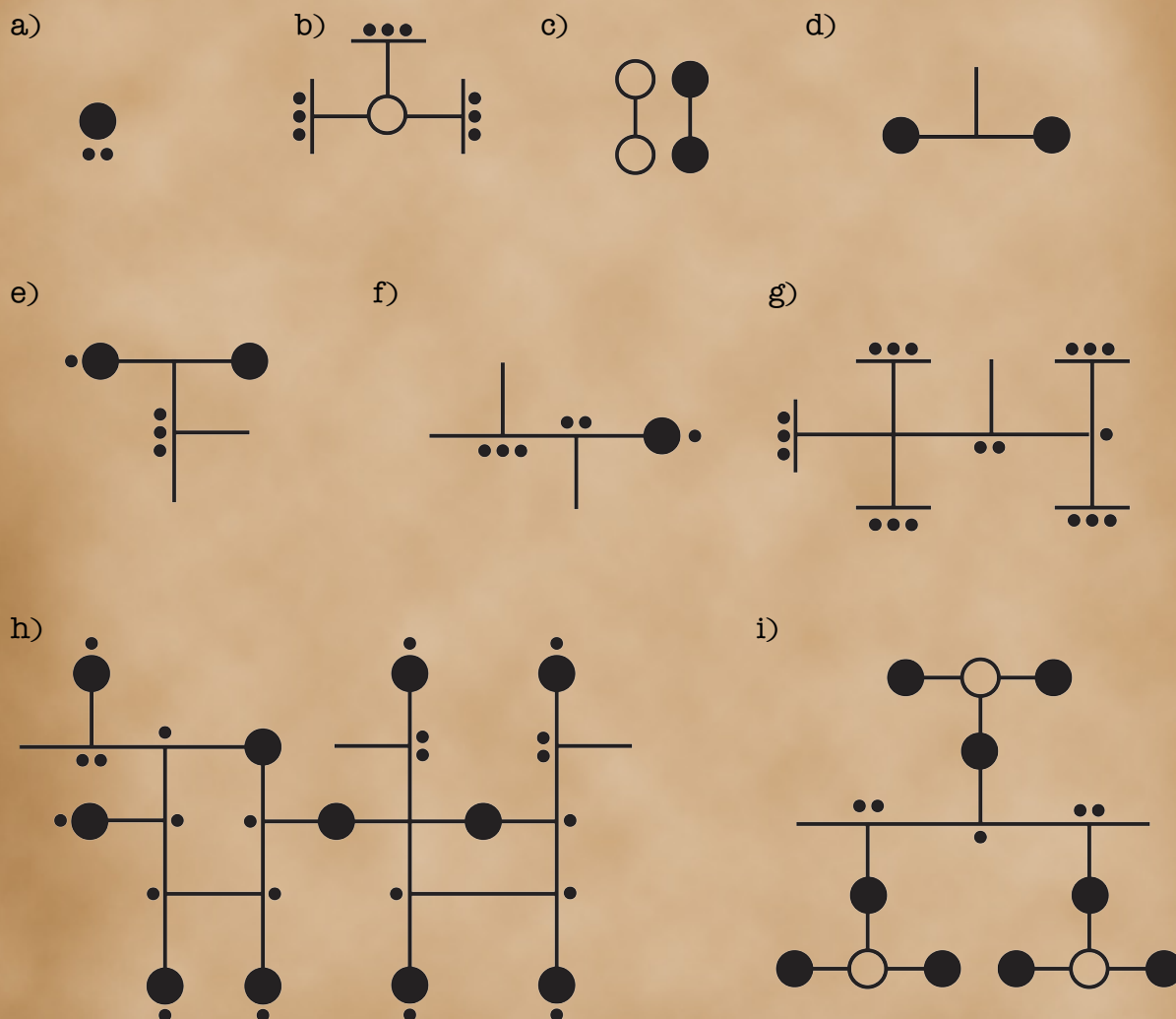


Figure 1) Alien artefacts found near: a) a lake; b) a rotting fish; c) a tyre pump; d) an exhaust pipe; e) a salad; f) a distillery; g) a petrol tank; h) a cane field; i) a dynamite stick.



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Our xenosymbologists, however, were unable to decipher the following artefact. It is a priority to uncover its meaning before Area 51 is stormed by hostile elements.

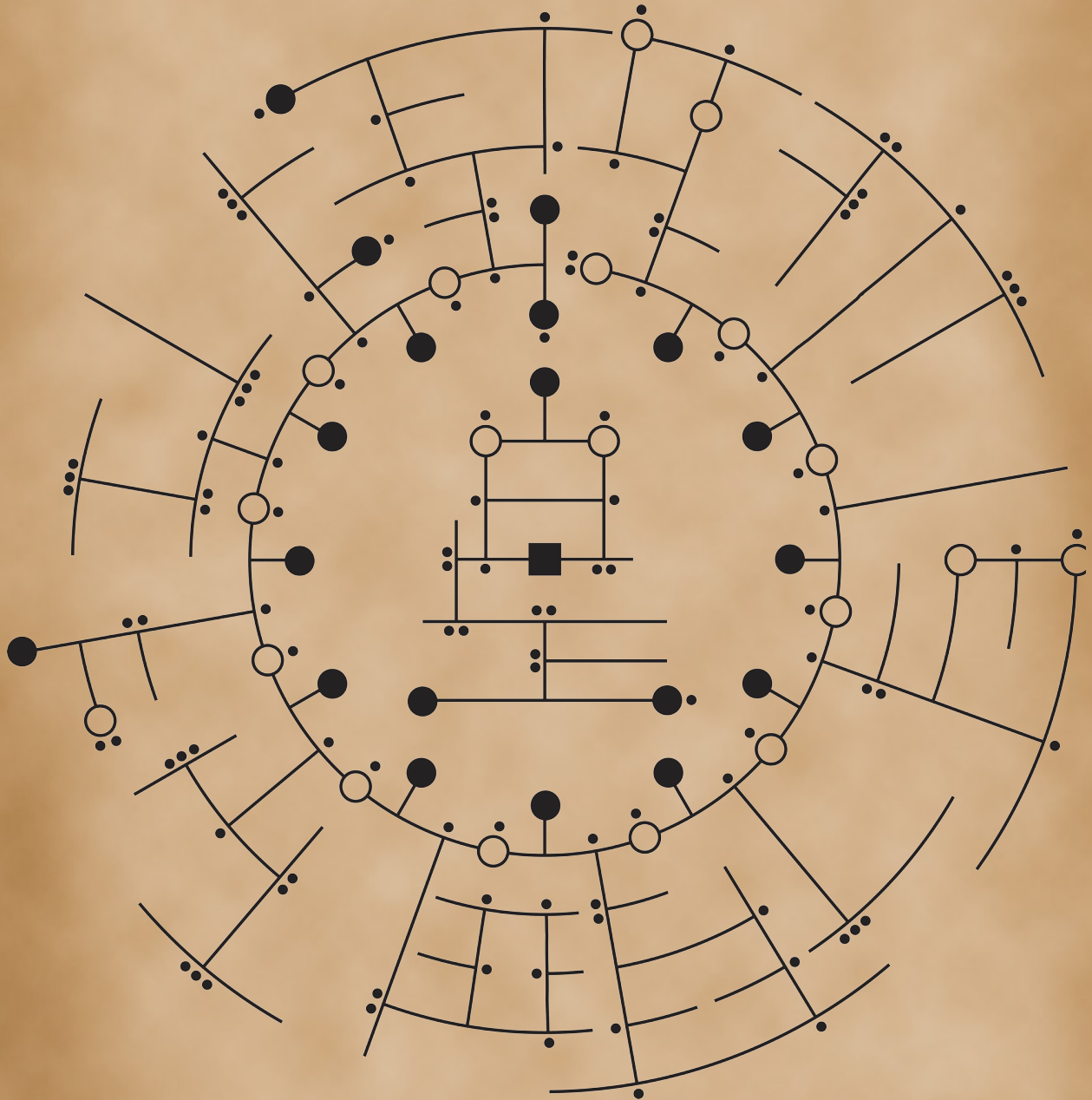


Figure 2) Alien artefact found near a dairy and egg farm.