

The Lost Expedition

Director Notes

This introductory adventure for ENIGMA aims to hit all the major strokes for exploring the world of pulp adventure; it is designed for 1 hour convention play, but can easily be stretched to 2-3 hours with optional encounters (marked with a 🌀) or a slower pace.

It's late August, and the anthropologist **Professor Eustice Rumberger** has recently travelled to the Amazon to search for the **Shrine of Solombra**. Rumberger's interest is in solar worship, and after examining a recent sun-disc rubbing, discovered a lead that indicated the aforementioned temple's general location.

Rumberger travelled to the **Port of Lucerna**, cross referenced the sun-disc rubbing with regional maps, and hired some wary locals to take him deep into the jungle. Unbeknownst to Rumberger, the temple has already been found - and is being used as a headquarters for a weapon smuggling ring!

The famous hunter, **Nigel Bellamy**, stumbled upon the temple on a hunting trip months ago. With the port nearby, the temple's large hidden space, and enough money to fund an operation, he decided to set up shop. To keep locals

from getting near, he "resurrected" The **Sons of Solombra**, an ancient sadistic cult, by spreading rumors and outfitting more public facing employees with purple robes and tribal weapons.

Poor Rumberger thought he was on his way to discovering an ancient temple, and with what the locals said, a tribal society cut off from the world! Unfortunately, once he navigated **The Rio Velado** - a tributary of the **Rio Juria** - and set up camp not too far from the temple's site, Bellamy's men stumbled upon him. Rumberger was captured, and after The University

of Cambridge hadn't received a telegram in over a week, so they decided to send out a search party.

Prelude

The jungle swallowed everything.

A fine mist clung to the canopy as something buzzed low near the ear—mosquito, maybe—too fast to see. Inside a canvas tent, lit only by the flickering filament of a failing lantern, a weather worn hand gripped a fountain pen. Ink blotted the final page of a damp field journal. "If anyone finds this... we were wrong about the map. The obelisk isn't a marker. It's a warning." Outside, branches cracked. A low rhythmic thump, like distant drums—or footsteps—grew louder. The pen trembled. The man froze. The lantern sputtered. And then, silence.

The jungle swallowed everything.

Introduce Characters

During character creation, at least one player should have a relation to Rumberger or The University of Cambridge, since that is how the adventurers ultimately get sent on this mission.

If you are running this adventure with a time constraint, allow the players to introduce their adventurers while on the steamboat (noted below in the Strong Start). Otherwise, allow them to have a scene at the university talking with the administration, or perhaps their first gathering as a group in the Port of Lucerna when they meet their intrepid captain.

Encounter: Strong Start

Director's Pitch

The real adventure begins once the players find themselves on a steamboat, headed upstream into the jungle. With the absinthe soaked Captain Jules Marceau behind the wheel of The Black Current, the players have nothing to worry about, right?

Wide Shot

What is one thing you notice about the boat that makes your confidence waver a little?

The Situation

After some time travelling along the river, the engine on The Black Current blows and grinds the rescue mission to a halt near a muddy bank. Smoke billows out of the engine room as Marceu charges in with a wrench claiming, "It's just a heat valve."

Notes

- > The engine will take time to repair, even with all the right parts and tools - none of which Marceau has on hand
- > The river is teeming with dangerous wildlife, most notably, large hungry crocodiles
- > Continuing the journey on foot will be slow, strenuous, and dangerous, but not impossible
- > Some cargo crates are exposed on the deck and contain useful supplies like flares and machetes
- > Night is falling soon



Encounter: Trekking

Director's Pitch

Stranded and short on time, the players might decide to continue the journey on foot. The jungle is thick and humid, the trail barely a trail at all, and the air feels heavier with every step away from the river.

Wide Shot

What's the first unnatural thing you notice about the jungle around you – not impossible, just wrong?

The Situation

The players hack their way through dense undergrowth, slogging through sucking mud and tangled roots. Visibility is poor; the light from the sun fades faster beneath the canopy. Somewhere ahead, a trail marker left by Rumberger's original expedition is spotted – but it's been defaced or altered.

Notes

- > Navigation is difficult; poor visibility and false trails force checks or create opportunities to get lost or diverted
- > The jungle is loud but directionless – calls, shrieks, and clicks echo around them, making it hard to tell what's nearby
- > Players risk minor injuries: cuts, sprains, or infections from insects and plants
- > One player may spot a small woven fetish hanging from a branch, watching the trail – a possible marker or warning.
- > If they light a fire or make camp, the smoke or smell will attract attention.



Encounter: The River

Director's Pitch

The players continue upriver, clinging to the current aboard makeshift rafts or a stalled steamboat. The deeper they go, the quieter the jungle becomes – as if the river itself is holding its breath. That's when the water starts to ripple.

Wide Shot

What is the first unnatural thing you see break the surface of the water – and why do you wish it hadn't?

The Situation

The sun bakes the muddy surface of the water, and the jungle canopy seems to pull away, giving the river a strange openness – but not safety. Large shadows slide just beneath the surface. Driftwood bumps the hull, but some of it swims. The players are not alone on this stretch of the river, and whatever's stalking them is patient, coordinated, and hungry.

Notes

- > Large crocodiles or river beasts stalk from below; they strike when the party is distracted or partially split across rafts or cargo.

- > Makeshift rafts may come apart mid-scene unless actively reinforced or guided – a snapped vine or shifting weight could be enough.
- > The beasts are strategic, attacking at weak points: rudders, outermost passengers, or isolated cargo.
- > A flipped boat may scatter supplies, leading to a scramble over what to save.
- > Fighting on unstable footing (rafts, narrow decks, muddy banks) increases risk of falling in.

Encounter: The Camp

Director's Pitch

The players finally reach the site of Professor Rumberger's jungle camp. It's deserted – or close to it. The signs of departure don't match the timeline. Something is off, and some of his work remains behind.

Wide Shot

What's the first thing you notice that tells you this camp wasn't abandoned willingly?

The Situation

Tarps hang in tatters, journals lie open but damp, and a supply crate has been pried open with something sharper than a crowbar. One tent collapsed. Another is half-zipped with bloodstains near the entrance. A hand-drawn map is pinned to a post, marked with red ink and sun symbols.

Potential Thread

Any character who looks into notes or scribbles from Rumberger can gain a Thread for *The Sons of Solombra*.

Notes

- > A journal entry ends mid-sentence, referencing “the mouth of the sun” and “they walk at dusk now.”
- > Miscellaneous notes from Rumberger indicate anachronisms between The Sons of Solombra and the local mythology; the cult doesn't match up perfectly
- > No bodies are present, but signs of struggle are evident – drag marks, torn fabric, and overturned gear.

> If players linger, they may be watched – by cult scouts, animals, or something else entirely.

> An obvious bushwhacked trail leads out from the camp. If cultists really attacked, it would be strange for them to carve out a path.

Tumult: Cultist Ambush

Director's Pitch

Goons from Bellamy's operation dressed as cultists returned to the camp for a more thorough search, only to find a strange group of adventurers. Keeping their metaphorical masks on, they ambush the party!

Enemy Forces

[Minions] Goons (3)

- > Wielding archaic weaponry like clubs and blowguns
- > Dressed in purple robes with face coverings
- > Underneath their robes they wear workmen clothing (overalls, shirts, etc)

Environment

- > Dense undergrowth makes sightlines short and movement slow unless cleared
- > Raised roots, fallen logs, and hanging vines create vertical variety – ambushers might attack from trees or behind cover
- > Light filters through in sharp beams and visibility is patchy

Complications

- > A nearby wasp nest, snake pit, or bird swarm may be triggered by loud sounds or errant fire

Encounter: The Shrine

Director's Pitch

The players finally reach the lost Shrine of Solombra, and discover the ancient ruins are being used. Here, Nigel Bellamy oversees a gun-running operation under the guise of cultic devotion. Beneath the chanting and rituals, crates are packed and shipped out on the river.

Somewhere in the shadowed halls, Professor Rumberger is still alive.

Wide Shot

What's the first thing you notice about the temple that tells you this place has been recently occupied – and that it's being used for more than worship?

The Situation

The Shrine of Solombra rises like jagged stone teeth from the jungle floor, half-covered in vines, but structurally intact. Sun-symbol carvings spiral inward toward a blackened open floor. The outer ruins are crawling with men wearing purple robes and wielding automatic weapons. Bellamy runs the operation from a makeshift tent on a nearby raised portion of ruins. Rumberger is imprisoned in a shipping crate on the main packing floor.

Notes

- > Gun crates are stacked in many areas of the complex. These crates are highly volatile.
- > Bellamy primarily remains in his tent smoking his pipe, but will occasionally waltz along the edge of the packing floor with his hunting rifle
- > Approaching the shrine directly will almost assuredly alert the guards, whilst flanking the temple or utilizing disguises may lead to better success
- > The stone used to construct the temple is crumbling, and misplaced steps or grenades can easily cause rocks to break
- > Narrow catacomb tunnels run throughout the complex; Bellamy doesn't know these exist



Tumult: Hell Let Loose

Director's Pitch

Whatever plan the players had – stealth, diplomacy, sabotage – it just fell apart. Someone fired the first shot. Now, cultists are screaming, crates are toppling, fires are spreading, and the whole temple threatens to come down. This is not a clean fight; escape, survive, or burn with it.

Enemy Forces

[Minions] Panicked Goons (6)

- > Wearing purple cultist robes and blindly firing automatic weapons
- > Some may use improvised weapons like torches

[Villain] Nigel Bellamy

- > Primary goal is to save his own skin, secondarily to recover any easily grabbed loot
- > Won't hesitate to take a hostage or make a bargain for his own life

Environment

- > Multiple floors or levels of the temple: bridges, rope ladders, crumbling stairways. Vertical movement is both opportunity and threat
- > Some paths are blocked, others require quick thinking (swinging from beams, jumping to lower floors, breaking through sealed doors)

Complications

- > Smoke and confusion may lead enemies to strike one another – or a player disguised as a cultist could turn the chaos to their advantage
- > Time pressure - if they don't act fast, the temple could come down

Wrapping Up

Ultimately the journey should end when the players save Rumberger. Should they find a way to dismantle Bellamy's operation, extra points for them!

Once safe, allow the players time to clear up confusion with Rumberger, hear his side of the story, and have a drink.