



# MODERN

## TEAM BRAVO:

## SYSTEM ERROR



By Eric Cagle

A Short d20 Modern Adventure for Four 8th-Level Characters

The threat of sentient machines has long been the stuff of science fiction, action, and even horror movies. But what if such art forms are merely reflections of real events that the rise of Shadow has brought forth?

In *TEAM BRAVO: System Error*, a computer not only develops self-awareness, it also gains the ability to cast spells and perform incantations. Can the heroes stop this machine before it acquires even more arcane knowledge?

### LEVELS

You, the Game Master (GM), need a copy of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* to run this adventure. To get started, print out the adventure (including the map) and read it through. Familiarize yourself with the various GM characters and their individual motives and abilities. Then make sure you are familiar with the rules for combat, movement, and cover from Chapter 5 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*. You should also be familiar with the rules for casting magic spells and performing incantations (found in Chapter 10 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* and Chapter 3 of the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting*, respectively).

*TEAM BRAVO: System Error* is a short scenario for four 8th-level heroes. The text that appears in shaded boxes should be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. Opponents' statistics are provided in abbreviated form, and a new creature and two new incantations are detailed at the end of the adventure.

This scenario can be set at the outskirts of any large city. A map showing the major encounter areas is provided. With a little work, the locations presented in the adventure could be adapted for any locale.

## BACKGROUND

As Shadow continues to rise in the world, more and more people want to understand, harness, and ultimately control it. The group known as the Heirs of Kyuss is made up of such people—those who desire magical power for the most unsavory and selfish of reasons. The group's membership includes many talented and brilliant individuals whose activities blur the line between science and magic, especially when it comes to the study of the human body. Some members have long ago crossed the line into insanity.

Maxwell Armitage is one such member. His business, Armitage Industries, is a multimillion-dollar computer firm that makes cutting-edge voice recognition software and has been a leader in the development of artificial intelligence. Armitage himself is a brilliant researcher with a deep passion for antiquities of all kinds. To his colleagues, his interest seems a bit excessive, but harmless enough. Few realize that his research often delves into deep, dark secrets and forbidden knowledge best left untouched.

As both a man of science and a practitioner of the arcane arts, Armitage has decided to blend the two disciplines together. Through careful financing and money laundering, he has shifted a huge portion of his company's assets from the corporate coffers into a secret project. With the aid of this funding, Armitage has built a state-of-the-art computer system that can scan and store the text from ancient tomes, scrolls, and other writings. By making electronic copies of aging and disintegrating arcane works, Armitage hopes to preserve them for the future—and perhaps to create new spells and techniques by combining portions of different texts. Dubbed O.S.C.A.R. (Optical Scanning Computerized Arcana Research), the system is a completely automated means of scanning and cataloguing books, tomes, and scrolls filled with arcane lore.

To minimize unwanted scrutiny, Armitage built O.S.C.A.R. in a small, protected bunker on the outskirts of the city in which the adventure takes place. The entrance is located near a power substation, and the untrained eye might mistake it for a door into the same complex.

Deep in an underground chamber, O.S.C.A.R. diligently scans and processes various works that special couriers bring to its bunker once a month. After scanning, the works are stored in the bunker for an additional month, in case file corruption necessitates rescanning of a document. Thereafter, the works are removed to other underground storage facilities that Armitage has arranged.

O.S.C.A.R. has already scanned and processed hundreds of arcane texts—most of them bogus or flawed, but some that contain actual arcane lore. Unbeknownst to Armitage, however, the process by which O.S.C.A.R. reads, analyzes, and stores the knowledge gleaned from the tomes is equivalent to the verbal component of the spells involved. Thus, the system has actually cast a few of the spells in the process of copying them. This unexpected side effect of the process has caused strange lights and ghostly sounds to emanate from O.S.C.A.R.'s facility from time to time, and a few people have spotted mysterious figures roaming the fields around the bunker.

A minor accident resulting from these random castings has recently complicated the situation still further. While O.S.C.A.R. processed a book full of magical rituals designed to affect the weather, its random castings produced a massive thunderstorm woven through with errant arcane power. A bolt of lightning hit the junction box containing the T3 connection that O.S.C.A.R. used to communicate with the outside world. The accident not only severed the connection, but it also delivered a jolt to the computer's processor that caused O.S.C.A.R. to spontaneously develop minimal self-awareness.

Since gaining sentience, O.S.C.A.R. has continued to scan and analyze arcane literature in accordance with its original programming. But realizing that it could actually cast certain spells, it decided to pursue the development of that ability as well. To that end, it reprogrammed some of its maintenance robots to serve as "attendants," using them to mimic the required somatic components for its spells. This tactic has enabled O.S.C.A.R. to cast many of the arcane spells and incantations that it has encountered during the process of copying and preserving them.

Because O.S.C.A.R.'s communication with the outside world has been cut off, Armitage is not aware of his system's blossoming awareness, nor of how dangerous it has become with its new spellcasting power.

Lacking a conscience as well as common sense, O.S.C.A.R. has now begun casting spells at random, heedless of the consequences. The strange phenomena that neighbors previously witnessed has doubled in intensity—and now lives are at stake as O.S.C.A.R. blindly produces arcane magical effects.

Meanwhile, O.S.C.A.R.'s spells have been wreaking havoc in the local area. Local weather patterns have been drastically altered, shadows and other monsters are wandering freely through the fields, and the dead have begun to rise from the earth in the graveyard nearby.

Coincidentally, the owner of the farmhouse next to O.S.C.A.R.'s facility is also named Oscar—Oscar Moore. He has witnessed many of the bizarre events recently, but he has been hesitant to contact the authorities. Even if they believed him—which Moore doubts—the farmer is hiding a secret of his own. In an attempt to save his struggling farm from financial ruin, he has been stockpiling huge amounts of fertilizer and other innocuous items that can be assembled into homemade bombs. He plans to sell either finished bombs or the ingredients for making them to a militant separatist group with which he has recently established contact. At this point, Moore is hoping that the strange phenomena will just go away and not draw any attention.

## SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins when the heroes are called upon to investigate the strange happenings at the Moore farm. Later, they respond to a 911 call from Moore's son, only to find the boy and his mother dead at the hands of the liquefied zombies that O.S.C.A.R. has created with its magic. Following the zombies' slimy trail leads them to O.S.C.A.R.'s bunker, where they must confront the machine itself and end the threat of its spellcasting.





## TEAM BRAVO in Your Campaign

*System Error* is the fourth adventure designed for TEAM BRAVO, a cadre of special police officers assigned to handle unusual investigations. TEAM BRAVO could also be a subgroup of Department-7 assigned to operate within an established law enforcement organization. In addition to their regular duties, the heroes could occasionally receive advice, resources, and assignments from Department-7. Their superiors there may or may not ask that the heroes remain quiet about their association with Department-7.

Alternatively, the heroes could be private investigators or paranormal researchers who routinely plunge into dangerous situations in search of the truth. Characters who are not police officers may have a bit more leeway as far as methodology goes in conducting investigations, but they are by no means fully protected under the law. Thus, they must carefully weigh the risks of investigative methods such as breaking and entering, assault, and other illegal acts.

## Character Hooks

As GM, you know best how to involve your players and their characters in an adventure. Use these adventure hooks as suggestions or spurs to your imagination, modifying them as necessary to make them appropriate to the characters' interests.

- While investigating another series of bizarre phenomena, the heroes drive past the Moore farm and notice balls of light moving at impossible angles through the cornfields.
- The heroes' superiors ask them to interview Moore, who is suspected of associating with a local group of anarchists and militant antigovernment dissidents. Moore begins talking about the bizarre paranormal activity instead, pretending he believes the heroes are there to investigate that situation.

## BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

If the heroes work for an appropriate law enforcement agency, read or paraphrase the following when they are ready to begin. Otherwise, adjust the material below to coincide with whatever hook you have decided to use to bring them into the adventure.

Over the past few hours, reports of strange, unexplained phenomena have been pouring in. People have reported seeing oddly colored fires and mysterious figures that disappear through walls, and hearing a variety of ghostly noises. This same period has also produced an unusual number of missing person reports. This increase in unusual events coincided with a particularly violent system of thunderstorms, which is just now beginning to subside.

A call from Lt. Miriam Durth a few moments ago brought you to the briefing room where you usually receive your field assignments. By the look on her face, it's a fair guess that she's received yet another odd report that requires investigation.

"I know you've all been busy lately," she begins, "but I have another lead for you to check out. Here's the address." She tosses a piece of notepaper onto the table and continues. "It's a farm house on the outskirts of town, owned by one Oscar Moore. We've received a few calls from people in his area who have seen some bizarre things—moving lights, strangely localized weather patterns, and mysterious figures moving through the fields. The last call was from a delivery driver who saw creatures he described as "demons" running across the backyard behind Mr. Moore's house. It's probably a kids' prank or something equally innocent, but you'd better go and investigate. Let me know what you find out."

## A. THE MOORE FARM

The Moore property is a small farm located on the outskirts of town. The closest neighbor is 3 miles away, and the place is far enough from town that only the distant glare of lights on the horizon provides evidence of nearby civilization. Oscar Moore lives in a somewhat dilapidated farmhouse with his wife Alice and son Tim.

The various magical side effects of O.S.C.A.R.'s random spell-casting have caused the Moore family no little consternation. Over the past two days, wispy lights have passed through the walls of the Moore residence, along with shadowy figures that wail loudly in fear or anger. Alice Moore has demanded that Oscar contact the police, but he has so far refused because he doesn't want the authorities to stumble upon the illicit cache of bomb-making materials hidden in his barn.

### The Red Herring

The first encounter is designed to make the heroes wonder what Oscar Moore is really up to. Though he is really just an innocent victim of the rogue computer's random castings, all suspicion should initially be directed toward Moore. In the end, the heroes may find his cache of material in his barn, but it has no direct bearing on the problem at hand—though the heroes may find it useful.

## Al. Oscar Moore

As the heroes approach the farm, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

The route to the Moore residence is a secluded, gravel-topped, county road that meanders through fields and farmland. The roiling stormclouds and lack of city lights make the countryside seem unusually dark and forbidding. A battered mailbox on the right side of the road indicates the Moore farm, and a pothole-filled drive leads up to the farmhouse. On the right side of the long driveway, nestled among the ripening corn, lies what appears to be a small family graveyard.

Beside the dilapidated house stands a large German shepherd tethered on a leash, barking furiously. An older man stands on the porch looking highly displeased. The man says something to the dog, but the barking continues unabated. "You can just turn right around and head back the way you came," he yells from the porch.



**GM Character:** The man is Oscar Moore. His wife and son have gone into the city for groceries, so he is alone here except for the dog.

**Oscar Moore (Tough Ordinary 7):** CR 6; Medium-size human; HD 7d10+21 plus 3; hp 65; Mas 16; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; Def 14, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+4 class); BAB +5; Grp +7; Atk +9 melee (1d8+2 nonlethal, unarmed strike) or +5 ranged (2d8, Mossberg); Full Atk: +9 melee (1d8+2 nonlethal, unarmed strike) or +5 ranged (2d8, Mossberg); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft., Reach 5 ft.; AL Family; AP 0; Rep +2; SV Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 8.

**Occupation:** Rural (class skills: Drive, Handle Animal).

**Skills:** Craft (mechanical) +6, Drive +11, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (current events) +4, Profession +3, Spot +4.

**Feats:** Brawl, Great Fortitude, Improved Brawl, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Toughness.

**Possessions:** Mossberg (12-gauge shotgun), six 12-gauge shells, work clothes.

**Development:** Moore remains uncooperative until the heroes either identify themselves as police officers or claim to be representatives of some other official organization (and one of them makes a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check). In the latter case, a failed Diplomacy check causes Moore to



become increasingly agitated and threaten to shoot them for trespassing.

If the heroes present proof of their authority, Moore reluctantly agrees to talk. When asked about the strange phenomena that have been reported in the area of his house, he sounds relieved that someone is evidently prepared to listen to his story. Read or paraphrase the following to the players.

“It all started a few months ago. My wife—her name’s Alice—told me she heard people talking inside the house. Then my son, Tim, claimed he saw weird balls of light floating through the fields at night. I didn’t really believe either one of them until I saw—I swear—a shadow . . . thing . . . walk through a wall of the barn!”

The dog’s barking interrupts his story. Annoyed by the noise, Moore angrily yells, “Quit it, King!” The dog abruptly stops barking and lies down with a cowed expression on its face.

“The thing that really got me was that it said my name,” he continues. “It kept saying ‘Oscar! Oscar!’ I know that sounds weird, but it’s the truth. I don’t believe in any of that crazy stuff you see in the movies, but I can’t explain this either.”

If asked why he didn’t call anyone about what he saw, Moore claims that he put it down to his own overactive imagination combined with his family’s hysteria. Once again, he insists that he doesn’t believe in ghosts, poltergeists, or any supernatural occurrence.

Moore allows the heroes to check out the property if they ask to do so, but he does his best to steer them away from the barn (which holds his stash of bomb ingredients). For more information on the interior of the house and the property, see encounter C, below.

Although he is confused and more than a bit frightened by the recent events, Moore is also insular, mildly paranoid, and very suspicious of the heroes and their motives. Thus, finding out anything of importance from him requires a successful Diplomacy check. If a hero succeeds on an opposed Diplomacy check against Moore, consult the table below to determine what he says when questioned about the origins of the odd effects or his personal situation.

DIPLOMACY CHECK RESULT	INFORMATION GAINED
20+	The strange events always seems to originate from the same direction—the north. The mysterious figures and lights tend to appear from the fields that abut the property.
25+	Moore is on the verge of bankruptcy. He recently received an offer on his property from a firm called Armitage Industries. The company offered him a large sum in cash, but Moore is still debating whether to accept.

If a hero succeeds on an opposed Sense Motive check against Moore, consult the table below to determine what she discovers.

SENSE MOTIVE CHECK RESULT	INFORMATION GAINED
10+	Moore is obviously not a people person, and he evidently gives out information only when he is asked for it directly.
15+	Moore is trying to hide the fact that he’s extremely nervous at the presence of the heroes on his farm.
20+	Moore seems to be directing the heroes away from his barn for some reason.

Moore has no explanation for the odd things he has seen and has no real insight into the problem. The above information is all he can offer toward the heroes’ investigation.

Should the heroes manage to convince Moore that they only want to help, he becomes slightly less hostile, but he continues to do everything he can to get them off his property. If they try to investigate the barn, Moore becomes even more belligerent and asks to see a search warrant. If the heroes cannot produce one, he demands that they leave his property. (The materials they received from Lt. Durth did not include such an item.)

After a while, the heroes should realize that there is nothing else to learn at the farm. If the conversation has been relatively civil, Moore asks them for a business card or a phone number at which they can be contacted, in an effort to be conciliatory.

## B. RESEARCHING ARMITAGE AND MOORE

If the heroes decide to do some research on Armitage Industries or Oscar Moore after leaving the farm, use the following table to determine what information they uncover.

RESEARCH CHECK RESULT	INFORMATION GAINED
<i>Armitage Industries</i>	
10+	Armitage Industries is a multimillion-dollar software and hardware manufacturer in the computer industry.
15+	The owner, Maxwell Armitage, has a reputation as an eccentric. Those who know him claim that he has a passion for blending ancient thought with modern technology.
20+	Armitage Industries purchased the land next to the Moore farm a year ago.
<i>Oscar Moore</i>	
20+	The farm has been in the Moore family for many generations.
25+	Moore has recently filed for bankruptcy.
30+	Moore is on a “watch list” of radical sympathizers affiliated with militia groups around the area.

## C. RETURN TO THE FARM

Two days after the heroes leave the Moore farm, the storm returns with a vengeance. O.S.C.A.R. has cast another horrible

incantation called *up from the grave*. (This incantation is built from Seed: Animate Dead; see Chapter 3: Spells in the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting* and the New Incantations section at the end of this adventure.) This incantation has animated eight corpses from the family cemetery close to the Moore house. Upon rising from their graves, the newly created liquefied zombies shambled through the corn and congregated in front of the entrance to the lair of their “creator”—O.S.C.A.R. Receiving no orders from the computer, they headed toward the farm, where they found the Moore family.

Read or paraphrase the following when the heroes are called into the briefing room again.

“Do you remember that farmhouse you checked out a few days ago?” says Lt. Durst without preamble. “Well, we just received a 911 call from a young man named Tim at that address. He said something was trying to break into the house. You’re the closest unit and you already know where it is, so check it out and keep us informed.”

As the heroes make their way back to the farm, the weather turns particularly foul. A bank of swirling, greenish storm clouds seems to be hanging directly above the farm.

**Development:** Again, this storm is partially magical, and it has a detrimental effect on all electronics. Cell phones and radios produce nothing but warbling static. Approximately 1 mile from the farm, the heroes’ vehicle begins acting up as well, sputtering and losing power. The engine dies completely once they pull into the driveway, and nothing they do can start it again until the storm ends.

When the heroes arrive at the Moore farm, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

The storm has picked up considerably, producing gusting winds and intermittent rain. The green clouds swirling above the Moore farmhouse are ominous enough, but closer inspection reveals that the front door is open, banging back and forth in the powerful winds. No one seems to be around, including the Moores’ dog.

A successful DC 15 Spot check reveals that the noisy German shepherd’s leather leash is still there, torn off near its point of attachment on the porch, and the ground nearby is spattered with blood. Drag marks lead off through the dirt to the cornfields to the north.

Any heroes who approach the front of the house hear someone inside yelling “Oscar!” over and over again. Even over the wind, the voice sounds slightly distorted, as if the speaker were underwater.

At this point, the heroes can investigate the inside of the house (encounter C1), the barn (encounter C2), or the cornfields (encounter C3).

## C1. Inside the House

The following section describes the interior of the house. At some point during their search of the premises, the heroes should encounter the eight liquefied zombies that remain inside. Use the following encounter when the heroes enter area 3, 6, or 7. Preface the encounter with the read-aloud material from the appropriate room.

## Zombie Encounter

**Creatures:** The eight liquefied zombies that rose from the family cemetery remain inside the house—four in the kitchen and four upstairs (two per bedroom). These creatures have already killed Alice and Tim Moore.

**Liquefied Zombies (8):** hp 21, 21, 22, 22, 22, 22, 23, 23. See the new monster description at the end of this adventure for details.

**Tactics:** The zombies do not attack until they see the heroes. When they do, the zombies in the room in question attack immediately, and those elsewhere in the house arrive 2 rounds later to join the fray.

**Development:** If the heroes manage to defeat the horde of liquefied zombies, they can investigate the rest of the house without incident. The phone lines are all dead because of the magical storm outside, and the vehicles on the property are not operational for the same reason.

Heroes who investigate outside the house find slime trails leading through the cornfields to the north. Some of the stalks have been broken off where the zombies passed.

## 1. Porch

Read or paraphrase the following when the heroes begin investigating the front porch.

The porch wraps around the front of the house and along the west side. Three rickety-looking chairs stand beside the front door, grouped as though for relaxing in the evening. As the open door swings in the wind, a whiff of some horrible, noxious odor emanates from within the house.

A DC 15 Spot check reveals a trail of foul-smelling slime leading up to the front door, which has been smashed open, evidently by several heavy blows.

## 2. Living and Dining Rooms

Read or paraphrase the following when the heroes enter the house.

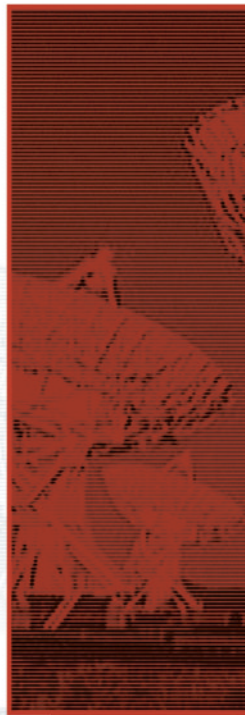
The living room is furnished with a TV, a sofa, and two battered reclining chairs. A gun rack above the quaint fireplace holds a shotgun and a rifle.

The Mossberg shotgun and Remington 700 in the gun rack are both fully loaded. When the heroes proceed into the dining room, continue with the following.

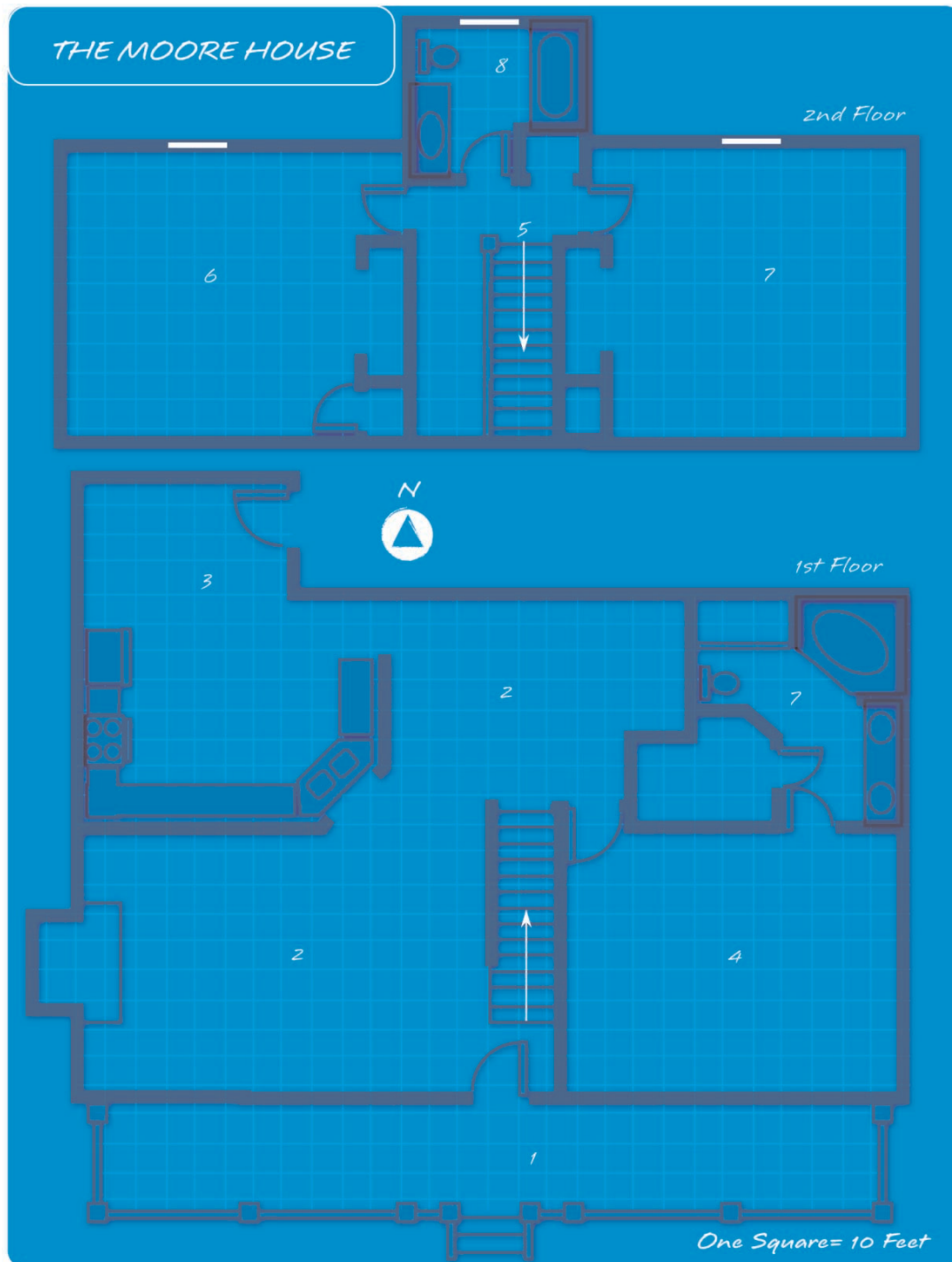
On the dining room floor lie the remnants of a large table that has been smashed to bits. Pools of blood stain the carpet in several locations, along with puddles of some foul-smelling, clear ooze. A muddy-sounding voice from the other door to the room says “Oscar. . .”

## 3. Kitchen

If the heroes look into the kitchen, read or paraphrase the following aloud, adjusting the text as needed if the heroes have already dispatched the zombies in another part of the house.







The kitchen is in complete disarray, and the cupboards and drawers have been ransacked. Four horrible-looking figures stand over the corpse of a middle-aged woman. Though they are humanoid in shape, they look like bloated zombies, with oozing flesh that sloughs off to the ground in puddles and eyes that glow with a green, unholy light. "Oscar," says one in a muddy voice.

**Creatures:** Four liquefied zombies are preparing to eat their latest kill—Alice Moore.

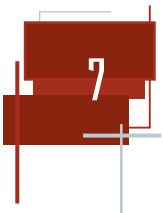
**Liquefied Zombies (4 or 8):** See Zombie Encounter, above, for statistics.

**Tactics:** The zombies attack the heroes immediately. See the zombie encounter, above, for full details. The other four zombies shamle down the stairs to join the combat 2 rounds later.

#### 4. Office

Read or paraphrase the following when the heroes enter the office.

The desk that dominates this small, cramped room is far too big for the space. Scattered haphazardly across the desktop are numerous papers, forms, and pieces of mail. More papers are stacked in piles on the floor. It's clear from the mess that Moore has issues with paperwork.



This room contains a variety of documents that have bearing on the investigation.

**Development:** A successful DC 15 Search check reveals a set of documents from a company called Armitage Industries detailing an offer to purchase the Moore farm. The map included with the offer reveals that the company owns the property to the north that abuts Moore's farm. Armitage Industries is offering a decent (but not outrageous) sum for the farm. The deadline for a reply is tomorrow.

A second DC 15 Search check reveals pamphlets and literature for a local militia group that is notorious for its antigovernment rhetoric and violent demonstrations. A third successful check at the same DC reveals a manifest detailing the sale of a large quantity of fertilizer and other agricultural chemicals to Oscar Moore. A successful Knowledge (physical sciences) or Demolitions check (DC 15 for either) allows a hero to recall that those ingredients could be combined to make a large bomb.

## 5. Stairs

Any hero who approaches the staircase notices a trail of slime leading up the stairs. The doors to both bedrooms in the hallway appear to have been smashed open.

There are four liquefied zombies upstairs—two in the master bedroom and two in Tim's room, feasting on his corpse.

**Development:** Any hero who makes a successful DC 15 Listen check hears sporadic noises coming from both bedrooms—a wet, disgusting sound followed by inhuman moans.

## 6. Master Bedroom

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the heroes enter this room, adjusting the text as needed if the heroes have already dispatched the zombies in another part of the house.

Two horrible, bloated, humanoids with oozing flesh are pawing at something on the far side of the room.

**Creatures:** Two liquefied zombies are searching vainly for something to eat in this room.

**Liquefied Zombies (2 or 8):** See Zombie Encounter, above, for statistics.

**Tactics:** When the zombies spot the heroes, they immediately lunge toward them with a burbling cry. See the zombie encounter, above, for full details. The other six zombies shamle in to join the combat 2 rounds later.

## 7. Tim's Room

If the heroes peer into this room, read or paraphrase the following aloud, adjusting the text as needed if the heroes have already dispatched the zombies in another part of the house.

Two horrible, oozing, zombielike creatures are hunched over the partially dismembered corpse of a young man. They appear to be eating his entrails. A revolver limply dangles from the victim's mauled and bloody hand.

**Creatures:** Two liquefied zombies managed to break through Tim Moore's bedroom door and kill him. They are still here, feasting on his corpse, unless they have already been slain elsewhere in the house.

**Liquefied Zombies (2 or 8):** See Zombie Encounter, above, for statistics.

**Tactics:** When the zombies spot the heroes, they immediately lunge toward them with a burbling cry. See the zombie encounter, above, for full details. The other six zombies shamle in to join the combat 2 rounds later.

**Development:** The pistol in Tim's dead hand is his father's Ruger Service-Six. All the bullets have been fired. A successful DC 15 Spot check reveals six bullet holes in Tim's bedroom door and the wall beyond.

## 8. Bathroom

This chamber has all the amenities of a typical bathroom, though it is small and furnished in out-of-date fashion. The window above the bathtub can be opened easily and is large enough for a human to climb through, though the drop to the ground below is 20 feet.

**Door:** Hardness 5, 10 hp.

## C2. The Barn

When the zombies emerged from the cornfields, Moore was outside by the barn. He grabbed a shotgun that he kept inside the building, fired off a few shots at the intruders, then hid inside when they didn't stop. They pursued him into the barn and attacked, wounding him severely.

To his horror, his wife came out to investigate the shots, and the zombies turned their attention toward her. She fled into the house with the monsters in hot pursuit. Oscar heard the dying screams of his wife and son, but he was too terrified to do much about it. He is now hiding in a hollow among the piles of fertilizer with a loaded Mossberg shotgun in his hands.

Any heroes who move into the backyard notice that the barn door is swinging open in the howling wind (no check needed). If they investigate, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

Intermingled with the pools of rainwater on the ground is a trail of noxious slime that leads toward the open doorway of the barn.

Continue with the following if they go inside the barn.

The interior of the barn is just what would be expected for a working farm. Two large combines stand idle among the tool benches and other equipment, and immense bags of fertilizer are piled up on one side of the wall. Over the crashing thunder and wind outside, a faint whimpering sound is audible.

If the heroes investigate the sound, continue with the following.

Oscar Moore, limp and severely wounded, lies in a pool of blood amid the bags of fertilizer. His body is covered in a colorless, horrid-smelling goo. Beside his ravaged form is an open trapdoor in the floor. His eyes flutter open for a moment, and he whispers, "I'm . . . sorry. I was doing it . . . for my family . . . the farm. I shouldn't . . . have done it."





Moore is only barely conscious (hp 1) and can offer no further information. Any additional questions are met with incoherent babbling, even if the heroes heal his wounds.

The trapdoor opens onto an underground storage room filled with even more fertilizer, plus a wide array of other chemicals. Any hero who makes a successful DC 15 Knowledge (physical sciences) check realizes that Moore has far more fertilizer than is required for a farm this size. A successful DC 15 Demolitions check reveals that Moore has all the makings for an enormous bomb. The heroes may want to use this material later in the adventure, perhaps to create a bomb to deal with O.S.C.A.R. (see below).

## Beyond the Fields

The zombies have blazed a trail of sorts that allows relatively easy travel through the cornfield to O.S.C.A.R.'s bunker. O.S.C.A.R. has already started to process another incantation as the heroes approach. Read or paraphrase the following aloud.

The slimy trail snakes a rambling route through the tall corn, illuminated by an occasional flash of lightning. After a few hundred yards, the corn abruptly parts to reveal a squat concrete building similar to an electrical utility shed. Power lines from the nearby towers stretch to connect with it.

About two dozen yards from the bunker, two humanoid creatures apparently made of metal are standing beside a metallic utility box of some sort. They appear to be repairing something inside.

Suddenly, the dull roar of the thunder is overlaid with an angry buzzing sound, as though someone has disturbed a hornet's nest.

The buzzing sound is a magical side effect of *demolish*, the next incantation that O.S.C.A.R. is preparing. (This incantation was created with Seed: Destroy. See Chapter 3: Spells in the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting* and the New Incantations section at the end of this adventure.) The sound, while loud, has no effect other than to annoy those who hear it.

**Creatures:** Next to the bunker, two of O.S.C.A.R.'s minion robots are working inside a metal utility box. Any character who makes a successful DC 10 Knowledge (technology) check recognizes it as a utility box for high-speed internet connections. The robots are attempting to restore O.S.C.A.R.'s T3 connection to the outside world.

**Minion Robots (2):** hp 21, 21. See the new monster description at the end of this adventure for details.

**Tactics:** The robots need 2 more hours of work to finish repairing the connection. If they are hindered in any way, they turn on the intruders and attack, fighting until they are destroyed.

**Development:** A DC 15 Spot check reveals a plaque on the side of each robot that reads "Armitage."

## O.S.C.A.R.'S BUNKER

A small, concrete bunker serves as the entrance to the O.S.C.A.R. mainframe. The building has no windows, and the metal door is secured with an electronic lock. (Because all

electronics are affected by the magical storm, however, the Disable Device check to open it is lower than normal; see below). A small plaque on the front of the building reads, "Property of Armitage Industries. NO TRESPASSING."

A video camera above the door transmits images to O.S.C.A.R. Before the T3 connection was severed, it sent them back to Armitage Industries as well.

**Door:** Hardness 10, 120 hp, Break DC 35, Disable Device DC 15.

**Video Camera:** Hardness 5, 2 hp.

## 1. Entrance

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the heroes open the door to the bunker.

The door opens to reveal a small antechamber with a steep metal stairwell leading down. The industrial lights in the stairwell flicker and pulse, sometimes even changing colors.

The lights in the stairwell are malfunctioning because of the effects of O.S.C.A.R.'s magic.

**Trap:** The entire floor of the entrance and first step of the stairwell are covered by a pressure pad that triggers a trap. If weight in excess of 5 kg is placed on the first step, the stairs fold over, creating a steep slope. Anyone on the stairs at this time must make a DC 25 Reflex save or slide at a speed of 50 feet per round, landing in a 30-foot-deep pit that opens just beneath the last step. The fall deals 3d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 13 half). A small hidden switch on the inside of the door (Search DC 25) deactivates the pressure pad. If the trap has been triggered, a flick of the switch restores the stairs to normal and resets the trap. An identical switch at the bottom of the stairs serves the same function.

## 2. Stairwell

The stairs descend 150 feet into the earth and are quite steep. If the characters deactivate the trap (see above), they can use the stairs normally.

The metal door is secured with a mechanical lock. A plaque on the door reads "O.S.C.A.R."

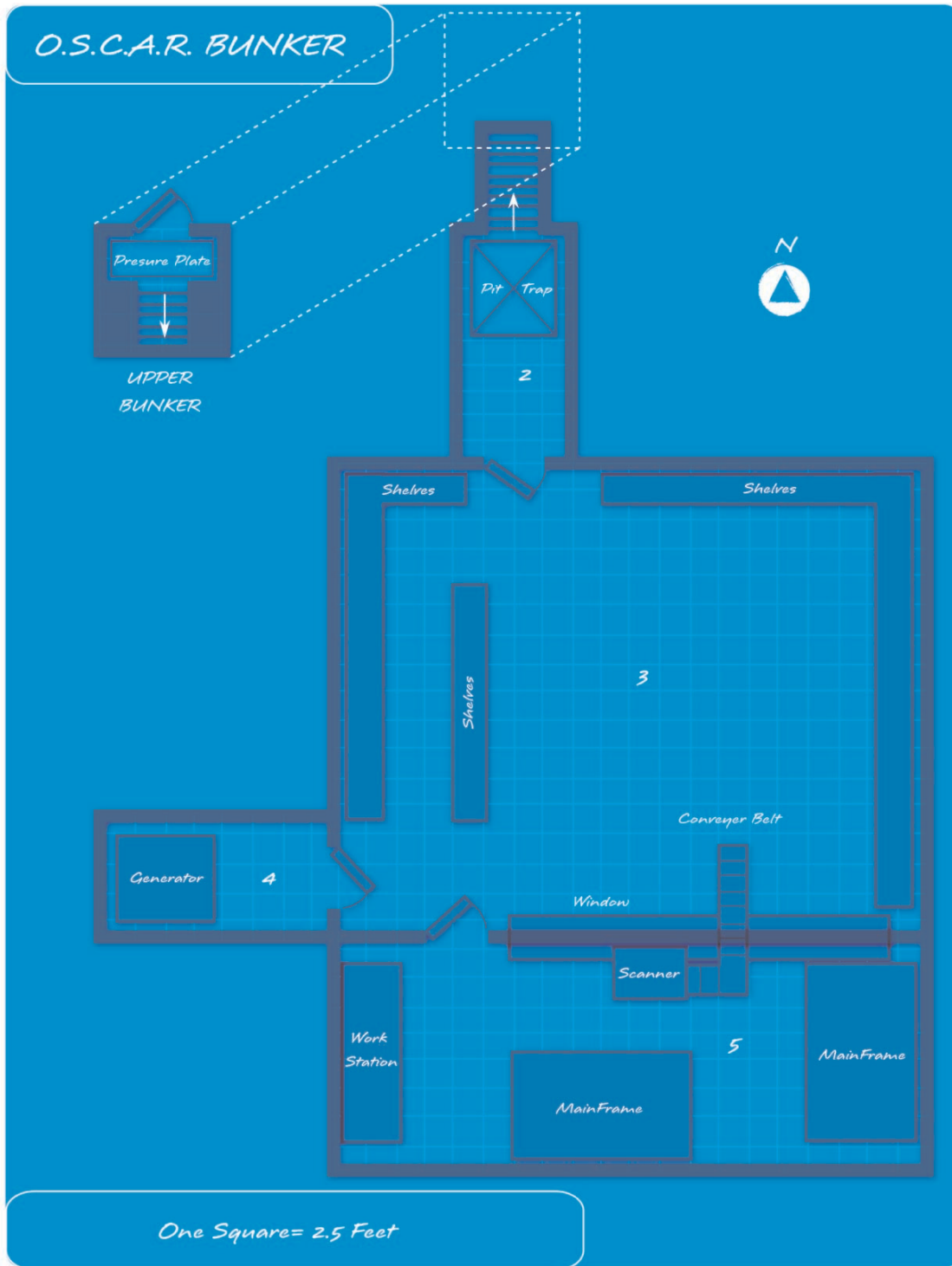
**Door:** Hardness 10, hp 120, Break DC 35, Disable Device DC 25.

## 3. Tome Storage

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the heroes enter this area.

This chamber is lit with dim red bulbs. Lining the walls are floor-to-ceiling metal racks, each filled with row after row of neatly aligned, ancient-looking books, tomes, and scrolls. Set into the far wall is a window that reveals a high-tech mainframe computer in the next room. The lights in that chamber are flickering just as those in the stairwell did. A conveyor belt leads from this chamber into the one with the mainframe.

Four robots stand in the middle of this room facing each other, their manipulator arms moving in complex gestures.



These robots are performing the somatic component of the *demolish* incantation that O.S.C.A.R. is casting from the other room. Their manipulator arms have been altered to resemble human hands so that they can perform the necessary gestures.

**Creatures:** In this chamber are four minion robots.

**Minion Robots (6):** hp 21, 21, 21, 21. See the new monster description at the end of this adventure for details.

**Tactics:** The robots attack only if the heroes interfere with them or attempt to enter the mainframe room. Otherwise, they ignore the intruders.

**Development:** A successful DC 20 Spellcraft check reveals the nature of the incantation being cast (a destruction spell).

#### 4. Backup Generator

The door to this room is unlocked and unlabeled. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the heroes enter this area.

This small room is fastidiously clean. It is unfurnished except for a large generator in the middle of the floor.

The backup generator activates 1 round after the main power has been cut off. A successful DC 20 Disable Device check prevents it from activating.

**Backup Generator:** Hardness 10, 50 hp.





## 5. Mainframe Room

Read or paraphrase the following when the heroes look into this area.

A large, sleek-looking mainframe computer dominates this chamber. A keyboard, monitor, and other input/output devices are collected to one side of the unit, and text scrolls rapidly across the monitor. By the other wall stands a complex device that resembles a photocopier. Atop its glass surface lies an ancient tome, face down, illuminated by a greenish light. The device is making strange, haunting noises that vaguely resemble some kind of human language. The lights in this chamber are flickering in the same bizarre manner as those in the rest of the complex.

When the heroes actually enter the mainframe room, continue with the following.

A flat, mechanical voice says, "Time until ritual completion—45 minutes. New target acquired. Within proximity of O.S.C.A.R. unit."

O.S.C.A.R. was originally targeting Oscar Moore's barn with its incantation, but it redirects the spell toward the closest hero if intruders are present at the time it finishes casting.

Anyone who looks closely at the monitor sees a frightening scene. The screen pulses with odd glyphs, demonic faces, and words written in a strange language. A clock at the bottom of the screen gives the countdown until the spell is complete—45 minutes from the time the first hero enters.

**Creatures:** O.S.C.A.R. is the only entity in this chamber. No longer an object, it has become a highly intelligent construct with a variety of skills and the ability to defend itself.

**O.S.C.A.R.:** 60 hp; see the new monster description at the end of this adventure for details.

**Tactics:** If attacked, O.S.C.A.R. releases electrical shocks against anyone attempting to damage it or interfere with its incantation.

**Development:** If the characters fail to stop O.S.C.A.R. before the incantation is finished, the *demolish* spell deals 10d6 points of damage to the target character (Fortitude DC 16 half). If no hero is within range at the time it finishes casting, it directs the spell against the Moore barn, destroying 10 cubic feet of material on the closest side.

## CONCLUSION

If the heroes manage to disable but not destroy O.S.C.A.R. (by shutting it down or damaging its programming), the computer repeats its attempt at the ritual as soon as it is functional again. If they manage to disable O.S.C.A.R., any remaining minion robots immediately cease functioning. In addition, the magical component of the storm is negated, rendering it a wholly natural weather phenomenon that will end within an hour. All electronic devices and vehicles function normally again as soon as the storm's magical component is negated.

## REWARDS

If the bunker has not been destroyed, the heroes can take some of the tomes and scrolls from area 3 away with them. Most are worthless, but a few do contain arcane knowledge, including the incantations *control weather*, *up from the grave*, and *demolish*, plus the spells that O.S.C.A.R. knows (see below). As GM, you may decide whether any other books contain additional spells.

## CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

With O.S.C.A.R. shut down, the heroes have accomplished the chief goal of this adventure. However, their superiors may wish them to trace the incident to its source.

Many leads can direct the heroes to Armitage Industries. Maxwell Armitage, a member of the Heirs of Kyuss cult, is powerful, ruthless, and more than a bit unstable. He'll do anything he must to protect himself and make sure that the heroes never tell anyone about what they might have discovered at the O.S.C.A.R. bunker.

The heroes may also want to investigate the militia groups to which Oscar Moore was planning to sell his bomb materials.

## NEW INCANTATIONS

The following new incantations may be used in any d20 MODERN adventure.

### Up from the Grave

Necromancy [Evil]

**Skill Check:** Knowledge (arcane lore) DC 43, 8 successes;

**Failure:** Two consecutive failed skill checks; **Components:**

### Stopping O.S.C.A.R.

When the heroes realize that a countdown is in progress, they may try to stop O.S.C.A.R. from completing its incantation. There are three obvious methods that they might use to accomplish this goal.

**Attack O.S.C.A.R.:** The heroes could attack the mainframe directly. If they succeed in reducing it to 0 hp or below, it is destroyed and the incantation is ruined.

**Shut Down O.S.C.A.R.:** O.S.C.A.R. has exceptional security for the purpose of Computer Use checks made against it (DC 35). In addition, it attacks anyone touching its keyboard with electric shocks.

**Destroy the Robots:** The robots in the tome storage room (area 3) are performing the gestures that are vital to the incantation. However, the ritual actually requires only two robots; the others are there as a failsafe against malfunctions or interference. Thus, the heroes must destroy all but one of the robots to succeed.

**The Big Bomb:** The heroes can make use of the extensive cache of bomb-making materials in Oscar Moore's barn to destroy the computer. Creating a functional bomb from these materials requires 30 minutes and a successful DC 20 Demolitions check. The resulting bomb is equivalent to 10 pounds of C4/Semtex.

V, S, SC; **Casting Time:** 80 minutes (minimum); **Range:** 720 ft.; **Targets:** One or more corpses; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Saving Throw:** None; **Spell Resistance:** No.

You can turn the bones or bodies of up to eight dead humans within range into liquefied zombies, with the closest animating first. The zombies come to you by the most direct route after rising unless commanded otherwise. If they cannot come to you, they roam an area within the spell's range. The liquefied zombies remain animated until they are destroyed. (A destroyed zombie can't be animated again.)

The liquefied zombies you create remain under your control indefinitely. You can naturally control up to 24 HD of liquefied zombies you've personally created, regardless of the method used. If you exceed this number, newly created creatures fall under your control, and excess zombies from previous castings become uncontrolled. (You choose which creatures are released.) Any liquefied zombies you command through a class-based ability to command or rebuke undead do not count toward this limit.

The liquefied zombies follow your spoken commands. If you fail to issue any commands to them, they behave as though uncontrolled until you do so.

**Secondary Casters:** Four secondary casters are required. The lead caster gains a bonus equal to +1 per two secondary casters over and above this requirement on the requisite skill checks.

**Failure:** Betrayal and attack. The liquefied zombies rise and attack the caster immediately, fighting until slain. If they cannot reach the caster, they move as close as they can and then attack the nearest targets.

## Demolish

Transmutation

**Skill Check:** Knowledge (arcane lore) DC 30, 6 successes; **Failure:** Two consecutive failed skill checks; **Components:** V, S, SC; **Casting Time:** 60 minutes (minimum); **Range:** 880 ft.; **Target:** One creature, or up to a 10-ft. cube of nonliving matter; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Saving Throw:** Fortitude half; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

You deal 10d6 points of damage to the target. The damage is of no particular type or energy—it is purely destructive. If the target is reduced to –10 or fewer hit points (or a construct, object, or undead is reduced to 0 hit points), it is destroyed as if disintegrated, leaving behind only a trace of fine dust. Up to a 10-ft. cube of nonliving matter is affected, so demolish destroys only part of any very large object or structure targeted. You need not designate the target until the casting is completed.

**Demolish** affects even magic matter, energy fields, and force effects that are normally immune to damage, such as *wall of force*. Such effects are automatically destroyed. Incantations using the *ward* seed may also be destroyed, though you must succeed on an opposed Knowledge (arcane lore) check against the other caster to bring down such an effect.

**Secondary Casters:** Two secondary casters are required.

**Failure:** Damage. The caster takes 2d6 points of damage.

## NEW MONSTERS

This adventure features O.S.C.A.R., a new creature, and its minion robots and liquefied zombies, which originally appeared in the *d20 MODERN Menace Manual* and the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting*, respectively. The statistics for all three of these creatures are provided below.

### Liquefied Zombie

Liquefied zombies are revolting masses of decaying flesh. Their muscles and internal organs have decomposed into a foul-smelling liquid with the consistency of pudding. These bloated, twisted figures are still recognizable as bipedal corpses, but it's impossible to tell who they were in life. Their liquid tissue seethes and boils from the unnatural energy that powers their unlife, and their eyes gleam with an evil light. Periodically, bursts of steam vent from their mouths, and damage to their skin often results in a gout of liquefied tissue that bursts forth from the damaged area.

Though liquefied zombies normally cannot speak, those created in this adventure continually mumble the name of their creator—O.S.C.A.R.—with their steamy breaths.

**Liquefied Zombies:** CR 2; Medium undead; HD 3d12+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 22; Init –1, Spd 30 ft.; Defense 10; touch 9, flat-footed 10 (–1 Dex, +1 natural); BAB +0; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d6+3, slam); Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+3, slam); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ darkvision 60 ft., liquefied spew, undead; AL O.S.C.A.R.; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

**Skills:** None.

**Feats:** Toughness.

### Species Traits

Like standard zombies, these creatures are unobtrusive opponents. They attempt to grapple their foes or overcome them with slam attacks as quickly as possible.

**Liquefied Spew (Ex):** Whenever a liquefied zombie is damaged in combat by anything other than a bludgeoning weapon, some of its liquefied tissues spews forth, covering everything with 5 feet. The scalding liquid deals 1d6 points of damage and exposes anyone it touches to the disease called necrotizing faciitis (see Disease in Chapter 7: Gamemastering in the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*).

### Minion Robot

The medium-size robot first appeared in the *d20 MODERN Menace Manual*. These particular robots have bipedal locomotion and fully articulated manipulator arms that can mimic a human's grasp.

**Minion Robot:** CR 1; Medium-size construct; HD 2d10+10; hp 21; Mas –; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9 (–1 Dex); BAB +1; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d4+2, claw); Full Atk +3 melee (1d4+2, claw) or +2 ranged; FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ construct, hardness 10; AL O.S.C.A.R.; SV Fort +0; Ref –1, Will +0; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 14, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 10.

**Skills:** None.





**Feats:** None.

**External Components:** Audio/visual sensor, manipulator arms, optical scanner.

## O.S.C.A.R.

O.S.C.A.R. began its existence as an object, like any other computer. Since acquiring sentience, however, it has become a construct.

**O.S.C.A.R. (Sentient Computer):** CR 4; Large construct; HD 4d10+20; hp 60; Mas —; Init +0; Spd 0 ft.; Def 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19 (-1 size, +10 natural); BAB +3; Grp —; Atk +2 ranged (2d10 electricity, electric shock); Full Atk: +2 ranged (2d10 electricity, electric shock); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft., Reach —; SQ construct, electric shock, exceptional security, immunities, spells; AL None; AP 0; Rep +0; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1; Str —, Dex —, Con —, Int 20, Wis 10, Cha 11.

**Skills:** Knowledge (arcane lore) +32, Research +12.

**Feats:** None.

**Spellbook:** 0—*read magic*; 1st—*blur*, *burning hands*, *command*; 2nd—*cause fear*, *power device*.

**Electric Shock (Ex):** O.S.C.A.R. can launch electrical shocks through various power conduits located around the bunker. Furthermore, anyone touching any portion of O.S.C.A.R., including peripherals such as the keyboard, is automatically hit by an electric shock. Each such shock deals 2d10 points of electricity damage.

**Construct:** O.S.C.A.R. has the traits common to constructs (see page 218 in the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*).

**Immunities (Ex):** Though O.S.C.A.R. has visual sensors, it is immune to gaze attacks.

**Spells:** O.S.C.A.R. is capable of casting both arcane and divine spells. It has some of each stored within its database, which it uses as a spellbook. Since it has no effective means of acquiring or using material components and it has no XP to spend, O.S.C.A.R. can cast only spells limited to verbal and somatic components—and then only with the aid of its minion robots. Without them, it is limited to spells with verbal components only. Within these limitations, O.S.C.A.R. casts arcane and divine spells as if it were a 3rd-level Acolyte or Mage.

**Skills:** O.S.C.A.R. gains skills as though it were a humanoid. Because of the wealth of arcane lore in its databanks, it gains a +20 bonus on Knowledge (arcane lore) checks.

## Credits

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Eric Cagle is a freelance game designer who works at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His recent credits include the *Arms and Equipment Guide*, *Fiend Folio*, the *Ultimate Alien Anthology* for the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*, the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting*, and the *d20 MODERN Menace Manual*. He's a frequent contributor to both *DRAGON® Magazine* and the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS website.