

Credits

An Adventure by Andrew Peregrine

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Nocturne in the City of Lights

An adventure for Space: 1889 by Andrew Peregrine

Nations: All, Martians and Venusians are also possible.

Archetypes: Especially Academics, Celebrities, Moneymen, Reporters; less suitable for Criminals.

Introduction

This adventure is designed to suit almost any group of characters, but assumes the player characters will have a decent selection of skills and abilities between them. As it is set in Paris, all that is really required of them is the ability to get to Paris! They might be there on holiday (e.g. visiting the World Fair currently held here) or as natives of the 'city of lights'.

As this adventure takes place on Earth, the player characters will not need to have access to an ether flyer or take a journey across space. However, they need not all be human and actually having a Martian in the group might be very helpful.

Martians on Earth

As humanity colonized the Solar System, so too did many extra-terrestrials choose to make a life on Earth. Like those who come to Europe from the Dark Continent or India, Martians have joined other immigrants hoping to find wealth and work in the rich city centers. Unfortunately they often end up like any other immigrant, poor and ignored, eking out a day to day existence in the darker parts of a city a million miles from their home.

This is not the case for all Martians though, and a lucky few manage to make a name for themselves with specialist skills and abilities that make them exotic and exciting to the wealthier patrons of humanity. One such person is Alia, a Martian singer whose beauty and talent have made her a celebrated opera singer. Her voice is both captivating and haunting and has brought a new style to some of the most renowned operas. She has become the toast of Paris, and anyone who wishes to take part in fashionable dinner conversation has to have experienced her perform at least once.

Currently, Alia is performing Lakmé (by Léo Delibes) at the world famous Paris Opera House. Unfortunately, she has become a target for several groups that are looking to kidnap her. For the player characters, a night at the opera is going to get very complicated indeed.

The Language of Love

If your characters all come from Britain or America you may have an additional problem with an adventure set in Paris: that of no one speaking French. It is quite possible some of your player characters will be linguistically adept. But given the choice between more gun skills or a foreign language, plenty of players choose the former. While an understanding of French was considered a mark of civility among the gentry, plenty of bigoted Englishmen thought that if you shouted loud enough everyone understood English (and that those who didn't were just being difficult!). So what can the Gamemaster do about this?

Play Hardball: You can insist that if they don't speak French they can't understand it, period. It is only fair to warn them so they have the option of buying language skills, but if they choose not to then that is their problem. The difficulty isn't insurmountable though. Given Europeans are far better at learning languages than the British, most NPCs will have a smattering of English that will allow the player characters to communicate with them. However, if they overhear two NPCs speaking clandestinely the chances are they won't be able to understand them.

Go Soft: The easiest option is to just ignore the language problem completely. Just assume that somehow everyone understands each other. NPCs are using English most of the time or the player characters somehow get the gist. In this game, language is simply English with a different accent. If you do choose this option, you should also make it clear from the start, otherwise players who did spend their skill points on languages will be justifiably upset.

The Middle Ground: You can assume all the player characters (especially ladies and upper class characters) have a smattering of French, just enough to get by (those who have spent points on the skill might be considered fluent). This is not too unusual as speaking French was a mark of good breeding for the wealthy and privileged. In this case they can understand all the day to day conversations. However, the Gamemaster has the option of simply telling them sometimes that they can't understand certain things they hear. The characters might be talking too fast, using an odd accent, or just speaking outside the vocabulary of the listener. This essentially means the Gamemaster is going soft but can ensure the players only understand what he wants them to understand.

1889

Background for the Gamemaster

The Martian opera singer Alia has caught the attention of two groups, both of which are looking to abduct her for their own nefarious schemes. The first group call themselves '**Les Patriotes de la Terre**' (or 'The Terran Patriots'; for more information see p. 10) and believe non-humans should stay away from Earth, although they have no issue with humans taking control of other planets! They want to use Alia to publicize their cause by abducting her, gaining media attention, and executing her as a warning to other Martians. Les Patriotes de la Terre are on the whole intellectually challenged, racist thugs, but they are dangerous nevertheless. Luckily their plans are never especially complicated.

The other group interested in Alia has a more complicated and intelligent plan. They are called **L'Agence** ('The Agency'; for more information see p. 27), and specialize in acquiring black market property for the wealthy. They are often contacted through 'someone who knows someone', being recommended across high society by word of mouth. Their work is simple: you ask them to get you something, and they will acquire it for you. The more difficult, the higher the price, but nothing is impossible. The only reason the Mona Lisa remains in the Louvre is because no one has yet decided they can afford L'Agence's fee for 'acquiring' it.

L'Agence is a very secretive and shadowy organization, and they will steal anything and anybody for their clients. In this case they have been retained by the renowned Martian antiquities collector Seigneur *Antoine DuFort*. This is not the first time DuFort has used their services, but this time he requested not some precious artifact, but Alia herself! DuFort wants her as his personal song-bird and has built a well-appointed prison for her on his estate.

Both organizations make kidnapping attempts on the same day, but L'Agence is successful. They take Alia to the catacombs under Paris, using its tunnels to ferry their 'acquisitions' across the city. Here they intend to keep Alia until the search for her calms down, at which point she can be 'delivered'. Unfortunately, while Les Patriotes de la Terre fail to kidnap Alia, they decide to announce that they have her anyway. It garners them the attention they desire, but also makes DuFort become concerned L'Agence has failed him. He demands they deliver Alia right away, throwing a spanner into their carefully constructed plans.

The player characters get involved in the hunt for Alia at the behest of her manager, and possibly her parents. After following the trail of Les Patriotes de la Terre, they realize they do not have her after all. With the help of a mysterious denizen of the Opera House, they track her to the catacombs where they face the sinister Agency. However, Alia has already been taken to DuFort's estate, granting an opportunity to not only rescue Alia but expose DuFort for the cur he is.

Act I - Divas and Dramatics



The adventure begins with the player characters enjoying Paris in the summer. It is quite possible they have come over to see the 'Exposition Universelle' a great exhibition which is being put on in Paris from May to October this year. For this grand celebration and exhibition, a new tower by the renowned engineer Gustave Eiffel has been constructed, to much controversy. The artistic community considers this new 'Eiffel Tower' a monstrous metal horror that now blights a beautiful elegant city with its ugly steel and iron shadow.

Even without visiting the exhibition (which features all manner of attractions and displays) there is the glory of Paris itself. The player characters might visit the Louvre museum and art gallery to see the Mona Lisa, drink tea in the shadow of Notre Dame Cathedral or socialize in the cafés and parks. Paris is full of theatres, museums and restaurants, and has several parks where the wealthy go for a walk or carriage ride. Cafés can be found everywhere, serving the same purpose as pubs and bars but with a little more refinement. Many offer outside tables which are very crowded in the summer. In the evening, many Parisians partake of more exotic delights such as absinthe and risqué dance shows. For more ideas on what to do while in Paris see *Appendix 3*, p. 26.

The Eiffel tower is also open to the public, but the queues are quite long so many go simply to marvel at the structure. The only place the Gamemaster should discourage them from visiting quite yet is the Grand Opera House as they will soon get a chance to visit this historical theatre.

Scene 1 - Runaway Carriage

While out and about enjoying Paris, the player characters hear a crash and a scream from further down the street. If they look to the disturbance they see a well-appointed, driver-less carriage powering down the road towards them. The two horses pulling the vehicle have a wild look of terror in their eyes and are obviously panicked. If the coach were of less sturdy construction it would have shattered. As it is, the carriage is in danger of overturning and possibly crushing or killing those inside. From within, the screams of a woman should underline the need for the player characters to do something!

Stopping the carriage should prove difficult but not impossible. A dramatic leap onto the horses or into the driving seat might allow someone to bring the horses under control. This requires an Acrobatics or Athletics test (Difficulty 2). Should no character succeed in stopping the carriage (or if none of them even tries) a policeman will intervene courageously. (In this case, however, the Gamemaster might have to adjust the following first encounter with Alia and her agent accordingly.) If they stop the carriage, they find the occupant is an attractive Martian woman who is extremely grateful for their help. She introduces herself as the opera singer known as *Alia*. Even the least artistic player character will recognize the name.

If the player characters ask what happened, she will tell them it all occurred very quickly. She was on her way to a rehearsal at the Opera House when a ruffian attempted to hold up the coach and demanded she and her driver disembark. As she was about to comply and rejoin her driver at the foot of the coach, the ruffian fired his gun to underline his impatience. At which point her horses were spooked and set off at a panic. In the confusion the ruffian made a hasty retreat and is long gone by now. Alia caught little of his intentions, and he wore a scarf across his face to hide his identity. However, he was dressed in working class clothing and muttered some rather derogatory terms about Martians that Alia does not care to repeat.

After a few moments Alia's patron, *Marcel Shiveryn*, catches up with the group. He got out of the coach first and is very glad Alia is safe. As thanks for her rescue Alia offers the player characters the use of a box at the theatre this evening to see her perform. Shiveryn suggests they check with the management first but Alia dismisses his reservations. She tells them she will see to it personally and adds that the player characters should come and meet her after the show when she might take them out to dinner afterwards.

It is possible the player characters won't be interested, but at this point the Gamemaster should underline how famous Alia is. The Opera House is booked solid months in advance and the opportunity to attend the performance as her guests will be a great honor.

Scene 2 - A Night at the Opera

Allow the player characters to do as they like for the rest of the day, until the performance at 7:30pm that evening. If they attend the Opera House and mention their names at the box office, they will be escorted personally to a private box in the grand circle. This box is reserved for guests of the cast and theatre management, so it offers a very good view of the stage. Unlike many of the other boxes, it is for seeing the performance rather than for others to see you are attending the theatre! An usher will also be assigned to see to the player characters' needs and will provide

them with whatever refreshments they require, beginning with champagne, courtesy of Alia.

The performance that evening is 'Lakmé' a reasonably new three act opera by the composer Léo Delibes (written in 1882). While the Opera is usually set in India, the current production is set instead on Mars. Alia plays the title role of the daughter of a High Priest of the Canal Folk. In this tragic tale, Lakmé falls in love with a British soldier, a love which both their cultures refuse to allow. The soldier is forced to remember his duty and return to his regiment and Lakmé commits suicide, poisoning herself rather than living without him. The opera has two especially well known arias, the Flower Duet in Act 1 (now renowned as a British Airways advert!) and the Bell Song in Act 2. As you might imagine, Alia is an incredible performer, and the haunting beauty of her voice reduces most of the house to tears.

During the two intervals, the player characters will be brought more champagne and be allowed into the more exclusive bar where several wealthy patrons of the arts are in attendance. Conversation is full of enthusiasm for Alia's performance. Several notable celebrities, the theatre manager and Alia's manager and entourage are also in attendance. Marcel Shiveryn will be there and will happily introduce the player characters to anyone. The following are a few NPCs the player characters might meet. Should they get too involved in conversation, a bell will be rung to call the audience back for the next part of the performance.

- **M. Alphonse Delière and his wife Claudette:** Very wealthy opera lovers who donate substantial amounts to the theatre. This is the fourth time they have seen Alia perform and they are her biggest fans. M. Delière made his money running a shipping business.

- **M. Patrice Nouriant and his sister Louise:** This is the couple the player characters want to avoid. They are wealthy, but rising middle class and only go to the opera because being seen to do so is fashionable. Patrice is a businessman who sells clothing, and might be a useful contact for any ladies. However, he is over opinionated about almost everything. Keen to be seen as a man of wisdom, he offers his thoughts on any conversation he overhears. His sister Louise is actually quite knowledgeable about theatre, but as she is getting older she is more interested in finding a husband. She might get very close to any dashing or highly placed player character.

- **M. Thierry Guillory and his wife Danielle:** M. Guillory is a lovable fellow who has little idea what is going on in the opera but enjoys the spectacle. He is actually accompanying his wife, who is a celebrated opera critic. She will rightly get rather annoyed at characters who don't know who she is and assume her husband is more important than she is. What has also put Danielle in a bad mood is that she really likes the opera and Alia's performance in particular. She has made a name as a harsh critic and savaged a recent production of the same opera (without Alia in it). To praise this one will be to potentially backtrack on what she said of the other production. So she is looking for other people's opinions to try and make a decision about what to write tomorrow.

- **Edgar Degas (Painter – 1834-1917):** The celebrated Impressionist Degas is in attendance. Having made a career of painting ballerinas as well as Parisian scenes, he is looking to secure a commission to paint Alia. Unfortunately, he has something of an 'artistic temperament' and can be very argumentative. He is especially annoyed at the recent breakup (in 1886) of the 'brotherhood of impressionists' that he put together. He is not shy about expressing his loathing for the word 'impressionist'.

- **Marcel Shiveryn (Alia's manager):**

Marcel discovered Alia when she was singing after dinner at a gala on Mars. He recognized her talent and risked everything he had to give her the proper training and secure performances for her. It is only now that he is reaping the rewards of that investment, but it should be clear to the player characters that should anything happen to Alia (who he treats like a daughter) he would quickly be reduced to penury.

- **Eugène Ritt (1817-1898) and Pedro Gailhard (1848-1918) – Theatre Managers:**

The opera house is run by two managers who took over in 1884. Pedro Gailhard is a retired opera singer himself and will effusively praise Alia's performance to anyone who listens. He may also 'treat' the gathering to a rendition of some of his favorite works.

- **Éloïse Chagal (Theatre Secretary):**

While Ritt and Gailhard manage the theatre; its day to day operations are taken care of by Mlle Chagal. In her younger days she worked as a high class courtesan, and counts several powerful men as contacts. As her beauty declined, she retired and took up the position she now has in the theatre. Éloïse is around 40 years old and while a little past her prime, is an elegant and intelligent woman. She is also a member of L'Agence and has facilitated most of the plan to kidnap Alia. She is interested in talking to the player characters to discover if they are going to make things difficult. But she will avoid showing her hand and excuse herself (declaring she must return to work) if they ask too many questions.

- **Seigneur Antoine DuFort and his wife Amélie:**

While the players won't know it yet, Antoine is the villain of the piece. He has basically come to inspect the merchandise he has ordered. Perceptive PCs may notice he is acting like a host this evening, even though he is a guest. Antoine and Amélie are a charming noble couple, who don't need to make much effort in society as they are remarkably wealthy with an old family name. They will talk to the PCs about Martian artifacts, of which they are very knowledgeable, and proudly mention some of their collection is on display at the Exposition.



Monsieur & Madame DuFort

player characters and asks them to follow him. The usher takes them backstage to Alia's dressing room where they find Marcel and the theatre managers. The room is in considerable disarray and Alia is nowhere to be found!

The managers have called the police, but Shiveryn is very worried the potential scandal might affect Alia's career (and his percentage). He refuses to believe she might have been abducted and suggests she is prone to occasional 'artistic fugues' and may have caused the breakages before running off. The managers are not convinced and, being concerned for their own theatre's reputation, have called the police and insisted the staff remain to be interviewed. However, the audience is long gone and the waiting VIPs are all too important to be detained without more scandal.

The player characters have been summoned in the hope they might help, as they proved so useful earlier in the day. Before the police arrive, they have a few moments to investigate the crime scene. The Gamemaster should allow them to interview Shiveryn and the managers and make a few *Perception* or *Investigation* rolls to notice the following clues:

- The lock on the dressing room door has been forced, as if someone shouldered the door open. (*Difficulty 1*)

Scene 3 - The Lady Vanishes

At the end of the performance, the player characters are invited to remain in the VIP room so they might meet Alia again. If they decline, Marcel Shiveryn will insist, saying she very much wants to thank them again and hear what they thought of the production. Then she intends to take them to a late supper. Usually, Alia greets her guests in costume, but does take a while to remove her stage make up and freshen up before seeing guests. However, nearly half an hour passes and there is no sign of her. As the guests begin to speculate as to her whereabouts, an usher approaches the