

A Very Cyber Christmas

An adventure for the Cyberblues City roleplaying game

<https://ukrpd.com/2015/10/04/cyberblues-city/>

Premise

In this adventure the characters are all linked to the resistance movement in an fictional, near-future, authoritarian United Kingdom. The adventure can be easily moved to another country.

Under the banner Operation Mistletoe, the government has launched a crackdown on subversive elements making a number of arrests that have left the resistance reeling. How is the government getting this information? Is there a mole in the organisation?

Note quite. A new children's TV programme called "Santa's Little Helpers" conceals a secret government programme to get young children to spy on parents and other grown ups under the guise of helping Santa build up his naughty and nice list.

The player characters will be called to unmask this conspiracy and save the resistance.



Cast

Resistance Members

Ivanhoe: One of the leaders of the resistance in London. He's a tall, lanky and soft-spoken man. Real name undisclosed.

Sapphire: Ivanhoe's Jamaican wife, also a major player in the resistance. Real name undisclosed.

Lame Retort: Folk singer noted for her protest songs. Currently on the lam. Lame Retort might actually be her real name, no one is quite sure.

Karl "Bogsy" Bogdanovich: a freelance journalist, political activist and general slob.

Louis "Nostalgia Joe" Hubley: A young man who both officially and unofficially works as a courier. Handle comes from his love of old movies.

Linda "Descartes" Hensley: A university Maths professor, she is more of a resistance sympathiser than an active member and still finds having a codename a little embarrassing. She has two children Isaac and Heidi.

Fern "Frog Girl" Smoog: Recent graduate and passable hacker.

The Rest

Phil Wright: TV Presenter and anchor of the Operation Mistletoe segment of the news. The filmed segments show him at the site of the raids as they occur. He is an ill-tempered older man who used to do real journalism and is still considered a trusted face by the wider public even though he sold out ages ago.

Superintendent Alice Newton: Senior police officer in charge of Operation Mistletoe. She is a career civil servant, more of a political animal than a cop. She is aware the data for Mistletoe comes from the Home Office and from Jonathan Banks specifically but not about the connection to the TV show.

Danny Day: TV presenter of Santa's Little Helpers. Off-screen his lifestyle is less than wholesome and while he is vaguely aware that something isn't kosher about his show, especially in the way he is instructed to tell kids to spy on grown ups. He just doesn't care.

Concita Dolores: US TV producer behind both the Operation Mistletoe news segment and Santa's Little Helpers kid show. A little more digging will reveal she is also listed as a consultant to the Home Office. She the brains of the operation.

Jonathan Banks: Special Advisor to the Home Secretary Hillary Boothe. He runs the operation at the Home Office together with Concita Dolores. He is young and full of himself.

How The Scheme Works

The basic notion of Santa's Little Helpers scheme was piloted under a different format in the US. The idea was to use a combination of children and social media to collect personal data about households under an innocent, fun-looking guise.

Under Concita's supervision the state TV launched this high profile children's TV show to hook the kids in. Kids can register and get a free phone app, an Christmas elf doll, as well as other goodies like a Christmas Elf costume and colouring books. The app allows the children to report who has been naughty and who has been nice. The elf doll conceals a web cam. The colouring book is just a colouring book.

During the TV show the host Danny Day encourages the kids to help Santa prepare his naughty and nice list by using the app and elf doll to report things the grown ups are up to. On the TV programme they show some of the more heart-warming or funny stories and often invite the families involved on set.

However that is not where it ends. All the personal data is transmitted to the Home Office. This data is analysed by the security services and an extract called the SLH file containing lists of potential subversives is passed to Superintendent Newton's task force who plans the raids. Once a raid is set, Phil Wright and his TV crew are invited along to cover it. Edited footage is then shown on the main state-owned TV channel as a fixed segment of the evening news programme. The raids are seen a valuable propaganda.

Setting the Stage

On a snowy December night, the player characters are summoned by Ivanhoe to a private house in North London for an emergency meeting of the London resistance. The meeting is being held at Professor Linda Hensley's (AKA Descartes) home which is believed to be safely off the radar.

On arrival her children Heidi and Isaac, both dressed like Christmas Elves, open the door for the players. The younger one is proudly holding a Christmas elf doll. They pester the characters with questions until their mother comes to the rescue. She takes the characters to the living room to join the fellow resistance members listed above. She makes sure everyone has food and drink but does not sit in the meeting herself. Instead she takes the children and closes the door after her.

Ivanhoe gets up and explains how Operation Mistletoe is hitting the resistance hard, often targeting people who are just loosely connected but crucial to the struggle. Recent arrests include:

Katia Culver, a Primary School teacher who was also secretly known as The Pirate Queen, a subversive radio DJ. Her secret identity was not widely known even in the resistance movement, though she and Lame Retort were friends.

Albert "Rabbit" Edgestone, an engineer was also exposed and accused of industrial espionage. Bogys will explain what Rabbit actually did was leak to the press documents showing government complicity in faked the auto emission tests of a major car maker. He is called Rabbit due to his 12 children and nervous disposition.

Other examples include the arrest of the organiser of Sleepers in the Park, the demonstrations in which people wear ghost sheets to protest over the lack of affordable housing.

Allow the players time to ask questions and formulate theories. If nothing comes up maybe someone will suggest there is a mole in the resistance.

The Raid

While this is happening a resistance-sympathiser contact in the police will call one of the characters. Use an existing contact or make one up, for instance Officer Chester Brown. Officer Brown will warn him that apparently the Operation Mistletoe task force have got the location of Ivanhoe and are closing in, fast.

You can score some easy irony points making clear the policeman has no idea the character is actually with Ivanhoe at that very moment. Have him say something like " If you have any means or know anyone who can contact Ivanhoe, you might want to do that now."

The party need to act fast. The police (or rather the private security firm contracted by the Metropolitan police) will come in force and set roadblocks all round the area.

The party will need to devise a way of getting Ivanhoe, their fellow conspirators, the Hensleys and of course themselves to safety. Or maybe just some combination of the above, sacrifices may have to be made. Nostalgia Joe might offer to stay back and buy the rest more time because he's that kind of guy. Also, if you can fit it in, in chaos that ensues have Heidi complain that she left her elf doll in the living room.

Anyone remains on the scene long enough they will see Phil Wright and his TV crew present at the raid.

Use the random rules in Cyberblues City to generate for the police Goons and to handle car chase scenes if required. The longer the characters take, the more Goons there should be.

What Happens Next?

Assuming the characters manage to get away and catch their breath, they will need to decide what to do next. While it isn't possible to predict what different groups of players will choose to do, likely actions include:

- Investigate Mistletoe
- Try to uncover the suspected mole
- Rescue anyone caught in the raid

Investigating Operation Mistletoe

The most obvious leads to follow up on Operation Mistletoe are the Officer Brown (or whoever tipped off the characters about the raid), TV Anchor Phil Wright and Superintendent Newton. Information can also be gained electronically hacking into the police (very hard) or TV station (not as hard) systems.

All these sources should eventually point to something called the SLH file sent from the Home Office to police.

A search on what the acronym stands for will give these top results.

- Solar Luxury Homes - an interior design firm
- Steven Lawrence Heston - singer/song writer
- Santa's Little Helpers - TV show
- SLH Plumbing
- Saint Lucy's Hospital
- She's Leaving Home, the Beatles Song

Santa's Little Helpers is of course the lead that matters, the others are just dead ends. If the characters choose to look into the state-funded TV show they will easily discover that the budget for the show is unusually generous. The names of the presenter Danny Day and producer Concita Dolores will come up. The latter won't mean much at this stage but might become significant if they start looking into the Operation Mistletoe segment of the

news programme she also produces or into the Home Office where she is listed as a consultant.

Finally if the characters choose to watch a few episodes of Santa's Little Helpers they will see how during the show Danny Day goes about asking children to help Santa build a naughty and nice list using the app or his advice on positioning the Christmas elf doll. A little technical investigation will show that the data from the app and doll goes straight to a protected government server farm and not to the TV station. If challenged, the authorities will is just a temporary arrangement to allow for Data Protection audit.

Looking into the arrests of Rabbit and the Pirate Queen doesn't reveal much other than both individuals were around children out a lot. Use any excuse to show kids in Christmas elf costumes.

Uncovering the Suspected Mole

There is no mole (unless you count the children) but the characters might suspect one and choose to follow up on one or more people at the resistance meeting. There is no dirt to be found but by keeping tabs on these resistance members may be able to prevent one or more others fugitives from getting arrested in subsequent police raids. Try to fit in any of these scenes example of children in Santa's Little Helpers outfits looking at a police raid in progress with an expression of satisfaction.

Rescuing Resistance Members

The characters might choose to focus on rescuing fellow resistance members caught during the opening or later scenes of the adventure. What they will find is that in all instances the police sub-contracted the raids to Rapier Law Enforcement (RLE).

RLE will hold the prisoners in their own facilities for up to 48 hours while they are "being processed" (that is to say, while they are waiting for payment from the Metropolitan police to come through). After that they will be transported to a proper private detention facility from which escape will be near impossible. The

characters' best bet to affect a rescue is while they are in the RLE building or while in transit to the prison.

The RLE building is a two storeys high. The prisons are in the lower ground level. Security card are required for access. Most of the staff are support office staff though there are normally up to four teams of law enforcement agents ready to go out on mission and protect the site (use the random Goons rules).

Unexpected Help (Optional)

The success of the Santa's Little Helpers TV show is upsetting the major private cable TV network. It is unhappy with the vast amounts of money the government is pumping into their show which is in turn killing the ratings of their own children's programming. And all this at Christmas is when the advertising revenues on these channels are worth the most.

If the players start digging into the Santa's Little Helpers show a team of operatives from the network will make contact and offer to collaborate and share intel. This is an opportunity to pass on to the players any additional clues they may have missed or at least provide corroboration for what they have discovered so far. More importantly this offers an important avenue for the characters to expose the scheme once they have uncovered evidence.

For additional comic effect have the network team consist of analogues of the player character's party.

The Obligatory Trap (Optional)

The more the party investigate the more likely Banks and co will notice their activities. Should they start getting to close, Banks will get a third party (mostly likely Phil Wright) to set up a meeting on the pretext of making a full confession. The meeting however is just a setup aimed at eliminating the nosey characters once and for all. This time there are no cameras, no witnesses or regular RLE agents, but an elite group of mercenary cyborgs known as Vulture Brigade (stats below).

Tying Things to the Home Office

There are various things that connect the scheme to the Home Office. There is a data trail from the app and the SLH file transmission to the police task force. Superintendent Newton can connect the SLH file with the Home Office and Jonathan Banks specifically. Both Danny Day and Phil Wright will have come across Jonathan Banks name over matters of the show's funding and they both have weaknesses that can be exploited. Conchita is of course tied to everything.

In the end it comes down to gathering enough evidence to expose the scheme to the general public. That is where contact the cable network may prove handy though there are alternative media channels that can be used. Banks will end up carrying the blame (the Home Office will of course distance itself).

Alternatively the resistance might choose to use Santa's Little Helpers scheme to spread misinformation. It's up to them.

Stats

Below are the stats for the Vulture Brigade. Use the Goon rules for all other GM-controlled characters.

Name	Vulture	Close Call	Tricks	Oberon
Thinking	GOOD	FAIR	FAIR	GREAT
Fighting	FAIR	SUPERB	FAIR	FAIR
Shooting	GREAT	MED	SUPERB	FAIR
Strength	GOOD	GREAT	FAIR	GOOD
Reflexes	FAIR	FAIR	GOOD	FAIR
Cool	GREAT	FAIR	GOOD	GREAT
Toughness	6	7	5	6
Extras	Armour (-1 damage) Leadership Laser Gun (+1 damage) Glider Wings (Flight)	Heavy Armour (-2 damage) Nano-Enhanced Sword (+2 damage)	Armour (-1 damage) Two Gun Fighting Twin Handguns (+1 damage)	Armour (-1 damage) Zen Awareness Laser Shotgun (2 damage) Smoke Grenade

ABOUT FUDGE

FUDGE is a role-playing game written by Steffan O'Sullivan, with extensive input from the Usenet community of rec.games.design. The basic rules of FUDGE are available on the internet via anonymous ftp at oz.plymouth.edu, and in book form or on disk from Grey Ghost Press, Inc., P.O. Box 838, Randolph, MA 02368. They may be used with any gaming genre. While an individual work derived from FUDGE may specify certain attributes and skills, many more are possible with FUDGE. Every Game Master using FUDGE is encouraged to add or ignore any character traits. Anyone who wishes to distribute such material for free may do so — merely include this ABOUT FUDGE notice and disclaimer (complete with FUDGE copyright notice). If you wish to charge a fee for such material, other than as an article in a magazine or other periodical, you must first obtain a royalty-free license from the author of FUDGE, Steffan O'Sullivan, P.O. Box 465, Plymouth, NH 03264. You must include at the beginning of each derivative work the following disclaimer, completed with your name, in its entirety

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