



Note

This adventure module uses the tragically brief papacy of Albino Luciani (Pope John Paul I) as its background. Pope John Paul I served for only 33 days in 1978 before his untimely death, making his reign one of the shortest in papal history. By all historical accounts, Luciani was a humble, compassionate man dedicated to serving others - a far cry from the fictional Shadow Pope.

While conspiracy theories have long surrounded the circumstances of his death, this module makes no claims about historical events. Instead, it uses the striking image of a 33-day papacy as inspiration for a pulp adventure story about cloning, underground monsters, and dark miracles. It is, like all FIST missions, meant to be played in the spirit of action-horror entertainment, mixing serious themes with occasional absurdity.

OBJECTIVE: Track down and eliminate the rogue **SHADOW POPE** clone before he can reveal himself to the public or worse: take the Vatican throne.

REWARD: The Vatican offers FIST a holy relic of their choice from the Secret Archives, plus permanent "friends of the church" status.

CONSEQUENCE: If the Shadow Pope succeeds in replacing the real Pope (now deceased), he'll have access to vast Vatican resources and secret supernatural knowledge that could destabilize the global balance of power.

INTRODUCTION

October 1978, Rome, Italy. Pope Paul VI has died peacefully in his sleep, only 33 days after taking the Vatican throne. What the public doesn't know is that the Vatican has been running **PROJECT LAZARUS**, a top-secret cloning program creating "backup copies" of each Pope. Now one of these clones has broken containment during the chaos of the Pope's death.

"POPE JOHN PAUL I DIES IN SLEEP AT 65; REIGN OF 33 DAYS AMONG SHORTEST"

The sudden death of the "Smiling Pope" has shocked the Vatican and faithful worldwide. Vatican officials state His Holiness was found peaceful in bed, having passed while reading.

The New York Times, USA, September 29, 1978

"UOMINI TALPA SOTTO ROMA? Strange Sounds and 'Chanting' From Ancient Tunnels"

Multiple residents near Vatican City claim to have heard Latin chanting from sewer grates. Local eccentric insists underground "mole men" have "found religion."

Il Messaggero della Domenica, Italy, October 12, 1978

"FOURTH MAINTENANCE WORKER VANISHES IN TRASTEVERE SEWERS"

City officials blame poor record keeping for missing persons cases. Residents report strange echoes of church bells from below ground, "smells of incense."

Il Trastevere, Italy, October 15, 1978

THE TRUTH

The Shadow Pope is a clone of **Albino Luciani - Pope John Paul I** - created just before his election. After the original's death just 33 days into his papacy, the clone escaped, driven mad by the shared memories of his "father's" brief reign and losing his life's purpose after just 33 days.

Something went wrong with this iteration of PROJECT LAZARUS (or right, depending on how you look at it); the Shadow Pope is imbued with forbidden knowledge and experimental genetic modifications. He's gathered a following among Rome's forgotten - the Mole People who dwell in the ancient tunnels beneath the city, and even some Swiss Guard who believe his claims to divine authority.

BRIEFING

"Good evening, agents.

I have an interesting contract for you, and one that requires your particular expertise. Our client is the Vatican - yes, that Vatican - and they have what we might call a personnel problem. Their target is, well... the Pope. More specifically, a clone of the recently deceased Pope who has taken up residence in the catacombs beneath Rome and is converting the local mole people to a twisted version of Catholicism. I trust you understand the delicacy required here.

I'll leave you to prepare."

POLARIS - Handler for CONSTELLATION

CONSTELLATION is a peculiar kind of shadow organization; they are the 'fixers' of the paranormal world, the liaison between clients with complicated problems and troubleshooters who are really, really good at shooting trouble.

"The situation is delicate. His Holiness passed in his sleep last night. The problem is... he's still walking around Rome. The backup was meant to be insurance, not replacement. Find him. Stop him. The Church cannot have two Popes - especially not this one. He knows too much."

Cardinal Benelli

Upon being flown into the Vatican by helicopter, **CARDINAL BENELLI** will lead FIST into the Vatican's crypts, past the cloning vats where the Shadow Pope was kept. At the entrance to the dark tunnels below, Benelli will hand out guns (M1911, 1D6 DAMAGE) and flashlights, and part with the final words:

"Buona fortuna with killing del Papa."

HUNTING THE SHADOW POPE

PROCEDURE

1. Make a RANDOM ENCOUNTER ROLL when FIST navigates the subterranean maze of sewer pipes, forgotten tunnels, buried crypts and ancient passages.
2. After resolving the results of the encounter, roll 1D6 for a RANDOM LOCATION and play out the scene. Afterwards, cross it off the list. Return to step 1.
3. If a crossed-off Random Location comes up, FIST discovers a KEY LOCATION instead. KEY LOCATIONS aren't rolled for; they are discovered in order. After resolving the KEY LOCATION, return to step 1.
4. Continue until the Anti-Sistine Chapel is reached.

If desired, FIST can navigate back to any previously visited location with a single RANDOM ENCOUNTER ROLL, given that they now know its location.

Note

Example progression: Random Encounter Roll > 1D6 [5] Resistance Sanctuary > Random Encounter Roll > 1D6 [4] Special Forces Tomb > Random Encounter Roll > 1D6 [5] Resistance Sanctuary is already visited, so KEY LOCATION is used instead > Random Encounter Roll etc.

RANDOM ENCOUNTER ROLL

1D6	RESULT
1-3	Safe; no encounter
4-5	2D6 CONVERTED MOLE PEOPLE approach
6	1D6 HERETIC SWISS GUARD approach

An encounter does not guarantee combat; it means that the listed encounter can be heard approaching down the tunnel/passage/sewer pipe etc.

If FIST has been particularly loud (firearms, explosions) in the previous scene, roll 2D6 and use the highest result.

CONVERTED MOLE PERSON

HP: 3

Weapon: Sharpened crude cross (1D6 DAMAGE)

Human-mole hybrids who've embraced Dark Catholicism. Tattered church vestments, large hands, pale skin. Chants corrupted hymns in squeaking voice.

The figure that emerges from the shadows stands hunched at about five feet tall. Its hands are grotesquely large and pale, with thick, shovel-like fingers tipped in hard, yellowed nails clearly meant for digging. Its face is a disturbing blend of human and beast - a broad, flattened nose dominates its features, surrounded by patches of sparse, whisker-like hair. The creature's eyes are huge but squinted, clearly uncomfortable in anything brighter than darkness, and seem to glisten with an unsettling intelligence. Draped across its pallid, hairless body are the tattered remains of church vestments, stained with centuries of underground grime. It moves with an odd, shuffling grace that suggests equal comfort walking upright or on all fours.

HERETIC SWISS GUARD

HP: 5

CHOKER 5: Pray to the Shadow Pope for strength.

ARMOR: 1 (Traditional Swiss Guard Armor)

Weapon: SIG SG 550 rifle (1D6+1 DAMAGE), Halberd (1D6+1 DAMAGE)

Have maintained their military discipline with zealous fervor. Believe the Shadow Pope is the true Pope.

The distinctive Renaissance-style uniform of the Swiss Guard emerges from the gloom, but something is wrong. The once-pristine blue, red and yellow stripes are stained with underground filth and what might be blood, while their normally polished armor is scratched with crude religious symbols. They maintain their legendary military bearing, but their eyes hold an unsettling zealous gleam. Their movements are precise and practiced - centuries of martial discipline twisted into something darker. Where most Swiss Guard bear the Vatican's insignia, these soldiers wear a modified emblem showing an inverted papal crown. They handle their modern rifles with the same ceremonial grace as their

traditional halberds, ready to defend their Shadow Pope with lethal efficiency.

RANDOM LOCATIONS

1D6	RESULT
1	<u>Restless Crypt</u>
2	<u>Mole People's Chapel</u>
3	<u>Wine Cellar</u>
4	<u>Special Forces Tomb</u>
5	<u>Resistance Sanctuary</u>
6	<u>Baptism Chamber</u>

RESTLESS CRYPT

A traditional Vatican crypt with rows of sarcophagi, where the Shadow Pope has "blessed" the dead to rise.

They'll wait for FIST to be in a vulnerable position before they strike. These 1D6 RISEN PRIESTS attack with precise, mechanical motions - muscle memory of old rites.

RISEN PRIEST

HP: 3

Weapon: Thurible (incense burner) wielded as flail (3 DAMAGE)

Chants in dry, breathless Latin as they attack.

MOLE PEOPLE'S CHAPEL

A surprisingly well-maintained chapel where the MOLE BISHOP leads his congregation in prayer. When FIST enters, 3D6 CONVERTED MOLE PEOPLE are mid-service.

The Bishop offers to baptize FIST in "true faith" - if they accept, they're marked with a strange phosphorescent oil that makes converted mole people recognize them as "blessed." This requires them to drop their weapons and approach the Bishop unarmed. Really build up the tension here; if they back down after initiating the ritual, the entire congregation attacks.

This mark lasts the whole mission, causing **CONVERTED MOLE PEOPLE** to bow and step aside rather than attack. The mole people in the RESISTANCE SANCTUARY, however, will shun FIST if they approach.

MOLE BISHOP

HP: 6

CHOKES: 3: Burrow away

ARMOR: 1 (Filthy cassock made of rat pelts)

Weapon: Twisted crozier (1D6 DAMAGE)

Leader of the converted mole people - and fanatically devoted to Shadow Catholicism. Pale skin, huge clawed hands, sensitive eyes. Speaks in ecclesiastical Latin mixed with squeaks.

WINE CELLAR

An inconsolable cardinal sits among numerous racks of wine, pouring out the bottles one by one - his priceless collection of communion wine has all turned into water.

SPECIAL FORCES TOMB

Three dead mercenaries, sent in by CONSTELLATION before FIST. Their bodies are rigged with mines, but they carry valuable gear: night vision goggles and proper military weapons (3x M16 assault rifles 1D6+1 DAMAGE, 3x Frag grenade 1D6+1 DAMAGE).

RESISTANCE SANCTUARY

A hidden enclave of 3D6 non-converted mole people who still practice traditional Catholicism. They offer healing (restore 1D6 HP once), supplies, and information about the Shadow Pope's movements. They're led by a former Vatican librarian who "went native" years ago but maintains detailed records of everything happening in the tunnels. Those blessed by the MOLE BISHOP are not welcome here.

BAPTISM CHAMBER

Whilst in the middle of this tunnel, two heavy stone slabs slam down and block the way forward and backward. Water starts to pour in from 2 pipes in the ceiling. The water keeps pouring in until the entire chamber is submerged; caught operatives will have to make a roll (+FRC for endurance, +CRE for use of will, or whatever they come up with) to hold their breath. Failure causes 1D6 damage. Only 1 roll is needed; after 1 minute, the stone slabs pull up, the water flooding out, the baptism complete.

KEY LOCATIONS

ORDER	LOCATION
1	Hall of Quiet Shadows

ORDER	LOCATION
2	Penitent's Alcove
3	Anti-Sistine Chapel

HALL OF QUIET SHADOWS

This vast, solemn chamber holds rows of stone sarcophagi, each marked with the name and papal seal of a former Shadow Pope. Dim, ghostly light emanates from cracks in the tombs, bathing the space in a pale glow. The air feels heavy with ancient grief and latent psychic energy.

Upon entering, each operative must roll +CRE (Creative), as the psychic pleas of all former Shadow Popes assault their minds;

- **Failure:** 1D6 DAMAGE as the tormented voices of the Shadow Popes overwhelm your mind. The pleas remain incomprehensible, a maddening cacophony.
- **Partial Success:** 1D3 psychic damage, managing to push the voices out. In the process, fragments of their messages seep through, hinting at their pain and regrets.
- **Full Success:** You fully comprehend the Shadow Popes' plight and hear their whispered offer: aid in the coming battle. Accepting this aid binds the spirits to FIST, granting them spectral allies during the final confrontation with the Shadow Pope.

Operatives who fail or partially succeed may choose to engage with the voices again, risking another +CRE roll to better understand the offer. Success provides another chance to secure the spirits' assistance, while failure risks further psychic strain.

THE PENITENT'S ALCOVE

A narrow, dimly lit corridor branches into a small chamber where an ornate confession booth stands. The booth, carved from dark, ancient wood, bears intricate engravings of saints with sorrowful expressions. Despite its age, the booth remains untouched by the passage of time, exuding a faint aura of sanctity.

The confession booth appears empty, with no sign of use for centuries. However, its faintly glowing interior hints at some lingering presence.

If both curtains are closed with a FIST operative inside, the booth fills with an unsettling stillness. A disembodied, calm voice whispers:

"Speak your truth. What burdens your soul?"

If the operative confesses a genuine sin or moral failing from their past, the voice responds with quiet absolution, and the operative is **restored to MAX HP**. A hollow or fabricated confession results in silence, offering no benefits. Each operative may only attempt the ritual once. However, others can follow suit if the curtains are closed anew.

ANTI-SISTINE CHAPEL

A massive underground cathedral, with a twisted version of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Instead of God reaching out to Adam, it shows the Shadow Pope reaching up to strangle God. The painting moves and writhes.

- Rows of pews can provide temporary cover
- Hanging thuribles (incense burners, remember?) can be dropped as hazard
- A massive pipe organ is playing *Dies Irae* on repeat ([which sounds like this](#))
- Massive pillars break line-of-sight and offer cover

The SHADOW POPE stand at the far end of the Cathedral, flanked by 4 HERETIC SWISS GUARD, performing a dark mass for NUMEROUS MOLE PEOPLE.

"Ah, the faithful arrive! Or should I say... the faithless? My predecessor lasted thirty-three days. A mere month of divine authority before they took it from him. From *me*. But look around you - *I* have built a true church here in the darkness. *I* have found followers who understand real devotion. And unlike my... *father*, I will not go quietly into that good night.

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Maligni!"

Upon seeing FIST approach, the crowd of MOLE PEOPLE splits in half, moving fearfully towards the walls. The Shadow Pope foresaw this, and it is not their place to intervene. The SWISS GUARD have no such qualms, however, and will support the Shadow Pope in the showdown to come.

Important

If aided by the spirits of all past SHADOW POPES following the HALL OF QUIET SHADOWS, all FIST operatives gain +1 WAR DIE at the start of the showdown.

SHADOW POPE

HP: 20

CHOKE 4: Deliver angry sermon about his 33 days

ARMOR: 2 (Anti-blessed Papal Vestments)

Weapon: Corrupted Papal Ferula (1D6+2 DAMAGE, can perform Shadow Miracles)

ANTI-DIVINE INTERVENTION (BOSS MOVE): Upon dealing damage to the Shadow Pope, there is a X-in-6 chance of the Shadow Pope taking no damage due to anti-divine intervention. X starts at 4, and is lowered by 1 each time it is triggered.

ANTI-MIRACLE - WALK NO MORE (BOSS MOVE): The Shadow Pope crosses himself (in reverse order) and makes one FIST operative who can walk lame, until they pass a +FRC roll. Partial success restores legs in the next 'round'.

ANTI-MIRACLE - STIGMATIC ASSAULT (BOSS MOVE): The Shadow Pope's palms begin to bleed profusely, the blood forming into projectiles that he can launch at multiple targets (1D6 DAMAGE each to up to three targets).

ANTI MIRACLE - INVERTED LEVIATION (BOSS MOVE): The Shadow Pope can walk on the ceiling, using the corrupted Sistine Chapel painting as his floor. While inverted, he gains +1 ARMOR from the difficult angle of attack, but his own attacks suffer -1 DAMAGE due to the awkward position.

A perfect copy of Albino Luciani, with a perpetual scowl. Charismatic but bitter about this "father's" brief reign.



DEATH OF THE SHADOW POPE

When reduced to 0 HP, the Shadow Pope staggers, his papal vestments stained with his own blood. He looks up at the twisted ceiling painting, his own face reflected in it, and speaks:

"Father... forgive them, for they know not what- no. Forgive me, for I knew exactly what I was doing. And I'd do it again! I- eurghh..."

He collapses, and a low keening emanates from the gathered MOLE PEOPLE. They emerge from the shadows, dozens of pale forms moving in perfect synchronization. With reverent care, they lift their fallen pope onto their shoulders. As they carry him deeper into the tunnels, their squeaking voices join the corrupted version of the Dies Irae.

The last thing FIST sees is the Shadow Pope's lifeless hand dropping his corrupted *ferula*, which shatters upon hitting the ground.

EPILOGUE

Dawn breaks over St. Peter's Square as FIST emerges. **Cardinal Benelli** waits with a group of elderly cardinals who look like they haven't slept. Without a word, they lead FIST to a hidden chamber in the **Vatican Archives**, where three relics rest on velvet cushions:

THE VATICAN'S OFFER (choose one):

1. **The Lazarus Shroud** A fragment of burial cloth that can bring one operative back to life, but they return changed - players must swap one of their traits for a new randomly rolled one.
2. **Saint Peter's Skeleton Key** A key that can open any door - physical or metaphysical. Just once, it can be used to:
 1. Create a door where there wasn't one
 2. Open a portal to any previously visited location
 3. Lock something away permanently
3. **The Pope's True Crown** A simple silver circlet that allows the wearer to issue one command per mission that cannot be disobeyed. However, each use ages the wearer by one year, permanently.

As FIST makes their choice, a bell tolls somewhere in the Vatican. The cardinals hurry away - the conclave to elect the next pope is beginning. As they leave, one turns back:

"We trust you'll be... discreet about all this. After all, you're friends of the Church now."

In the distance, white smoke begins to rise from the Sistine Chapel's chimney.

CREDITS

The method of exploration used in this module is inspired by [Flux Space by Nick LS Whelan](#).