

The Sybil at Suds-Your-Duds

Description: One wall of eight front-loaded washers with circular glass lids, located in the back of an otherwise normal laundromat. Above each washer is a continuous metal shelf with eight wicker baskets (one for each washer). A bleached plastic chair at one end is reserved for the use of the current Sybil. The Sybil does not have to be present constantly, but she (traditionally referred to as 'she,' although more than one man has temporarily been one) always lives onsite, and never takes vacations.

The organization that keeps the Sybil at Suds-Your-Duds running at full capacity is **not** at the laundromat. It will not let you *visit* the laundromat for your divination until you have and can show everything that you will need for your divination. Do not try to waste the organization's time: somebody else wants your time slot, and will be able to take it over on no more than five minutes' notice.

Operation: Write out the question you wish answered eight times, on eight different pieces of white cotton (a t-shirt is acceptable, and is indeed the usual choice) in black ink. Present the questions to the Sybil, and take them back from her. Place one question in each washer,

along with a regular load of your own laundry (each load must have at least one piece of clothing in it that you legitimately like). Go down the line and start each load of laundry, not stopping until the last one is started. Then sit, facing the washers, and wait for the wash cycles to complete. Sleeping, reading, listening to music, or simply staring vacantly into space is acceptable, as long as you do not leave the area. By the time that the washing cycle is done, all eight questions will have disappeared -- and one piece of favored clothing will be covered with writing and/or pictures that will answer your question, reasonably accurately and without too much obfuscation.

Cost to use: sixteen dollars in quarters, and a favor to the current Sybil. This favor cannot be refused, put off, or even too-creatively interpreted; and as long as the favor is unredeemed, the Sybil (and her oracle) cannot be harmed, directly or indirectly, by the person or group owing the favor. Favors, however, are to the **office** of Sybil, not the person currently serving at one; while an Oracle can and does use favors for her own purposes, once she gives up the position all existing favors go to the new Sybil.

There's a waiting list, of course. Although most Sybils find it convenient to keep at least a few slots available per week, and rather more convenient to reserve one day for

local petitioners (there's usually someone who won't mind getting bribed to transfer his slot). Non-local customers are usually rich, but the Sybil at Suds-Your-Duds gets more wealthy individuals than she does companies. It's sometimes hard to explain to a skeptical shareholders' meeting why your company had to do a significant favor to somebody sitting at a Laundromat.

But sometimes that company will consult the Sybil anyway. Even with the favor thing complicating matters, there just aren't that many reliable and straightforward oracles out there. There are in fact enough corporate entities that know about the Sybil at the Suds-Your-Duds, including ones that provide security services, to ensure that one unscrupulous group or individual cannot take the entire operation over. More than one group that has tried has discovered that receiving a divination and not paying off the favor makes it impossible for them to threaten the Sybil, for an extremely and sometimes obnoxiously broad definition of 'threaten.' Most groups don't, though. Most play nice. Business is business.

The exact reason why such an effective and even comprehensible oracle exists in a laundromat is best left to the individual campaign. It's probably divine in origin, of course. Even a half-forgotten deity of prophecy or

divination could retain a significant amount of specialized power. And the animating force of the oracle is not capital-E *Evil*, as conceived. At worst it'd be persnickety and a bit legalistic, and that only to petitioners who were determined to be tiresome.

The general feeling of the Sybil at Suds-Your-Duds should be that of a professional and busy institution that does genuinely care about good customer service but is also trying to keep the schedule rolling along, because that line will be out the **door** if you let it. Smart players on-site will let the process work itself out; then again, if a particular group or individual needs to be messed with, this is one place to do it. If you don't mind making enemies who can ask the question "How do I get rid of these guys?" and get a functional answer for only sixteen bucks and an open ended favor.

*Note: the author does not **generally** create things with which to spank unruly player groups, but he is forced to admit that this writeup would likely do an excellent job at it.*

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