SCRYPT SPRINT

CITY UNKNOWN

SATOSHI'S CRYPT · DECODE THE CITY

Seven ciphers laid across one city. Every one of them can be researched. None of them can be read — not until you find the key each one is hiding in plain sight.

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FROM THE PUZZLE MASTER

Something changes this month, and I want to say it plainly rather than let you discover it the hard way.

Every one of last month's seven clues could be answered with patience and a browser. That was never a flaw — a name is still a name, however you arrive at it. But it also meant a fast searcher could out-run a slow reader, and that never sat right with me.

So this month is a proper cipher pack. Seven of them, every one classical, every one worked by hand long before anyone had a machine to do it for them. I have not named a single method on these pages. Noticing that part is yours to do.

You may still be able to guess the city. Somebody always can — the history in here is real and public, and a determined person with a search field will feel the shape of this place before they have decoded a single word of it. It will not help them. The portal does not ask where you think you are. It asks for seven decoded answers, and only then does it ask where you are. Eight fields, every one scored.

One letter from each answer, taken from a position I will give you on the last page, spells a name this city calls itself. That is not the puzzle. That is the receipt.

Five attempts. You will be told how many are wrong. You will not be told which, and you will not be told a place — nobody is, until the fifteenth, when the Letter carries the standings and everyone finds out in the same hour.

Entry is free. It was free in Chicago and it will be free in December. Eighteen and over, anywhere on earth.

Decode the seven. The city is what you are handed at the end for having done it.

Begin.

Good luck, cipher.
Salvador Satoshi

HOW TO PLAY

1. **DECODE EACH CIPHER** — Each clue hides one answer behind a classical technique. Nothing is named for you; the clue itself carries what you need to find it.
2. **WRITE DOWN EACH ANSWER** — All seven, in order.
3. **FIND YOUR LETTER** — The meta page tells you which position in each answer to take.
4. **SOLVE THE META** — Seven letters, in clue order, spell a name this city calls itself.
5. **SUBMIT AT THE PORTAL** — All seven answers, then the city and the state. Eight fields, at satoshiscrypt.com/sprint/city-unknown-october.
6. **FIVE ATTEMPTS** — You will be told how many are wrong and how many attempts remain. You will not be told which. Places are announced on the fifteenth, in the Letter, and nowhere before it.
7. **HOW THE SEATS ARE DECIDED** — Seventy per cent on your own elapsed time, thirty per cent on the clock everyone shares. Your own clock starts when the portal opens or when this pack reaches you, whichever is later.

The Puzzle Master assumes no responsibility for lost sleep, obsessive research into dead alphabets, or sudden urges to visit a city you cannot yet name.

CLUE ONE

The Crossroads

Every road in this city eventually asks you to choose.

Before you can pass any of them — before you can dance, sing, gamble, or pray — you must first ask permission from the one who stands at the crossing. He is old. He is patient. He carries a cane and a pipe and the keys to every door that matters, and he will not step aside until he has been properly greeted.

There is no single road here. There are four, and they run toward every point a person could walk. He watches the meeting of all four, and nothing passes through without his notice.

The name below has been walked forward. Whatever ground it has covered, you must walk it back — the same four steps, in the opposite direction — to bring it home to the one who is owed the greeting.

TETE PIKFE

Who stands at the crossing?

WRITE YOUR ANSWER:

CLUE TWO

The Queen's Court

She kept her court not in a palace but in a beauty parlor, dressing hair by day and holding audience by night for senators, judges, and the desperate alike. Born free, twice widowed, and by the time she died the whole city treated her death date as a formality — her followers insisted, and still insist, that she never really left.

Her tomb is the second-most-visited grave in the country, after a certain guitar-shaped one in Memphis. Visitors mark it with three X's and leave offerings, though the caretakers wish they wouldn't; the marking damages the stone and does nothing for the dead.

She held court over this city's spirit for most of the nineteenth century, and by most local accounts she has never entirely stepped down.

Who was she?

WRITE YOUR ANSWER:

CLUE THREE

The Seventh Day

For one day only, the law allowed it.

Under an old colonial ordinance, enslaved men and women were permitted to gather on the seventh day of the week — and on that single day, in a single square, they were allowed their own drums, their own dances, their own languages, their own gods. Nowhere else in the country was this permitted. Nowhere else did it survive long enough to become the root of everything that followed.

What grew from those Sunday gatherings did not stay inside the square. It became a music, and the music became the loudest thing this city ever exported to the rest of the world.

The place has a name below, but every letter has been counted forward — the same distance as the day it happened on. Count each one back that seventh distance, wrapping the alphabet where you must, and the name returns.

10 22 21 14 22 / 26 24 2 8
25 12

What is this place called?

WRITE YOUR ANSWER:

CLUE FOUR

The House on Royal Street

No house in this city carries a worse reputation, and few have earned one so thoroughly.

A wealthy socialite kept the finest table in the city until a fire in the spring of 1834 forced firefighters through her attic door, where they found what the newspapers of the time could not bring themselves to fully describe. She fled by carriage before nightfall and was never brought to account. The house has changed hands more times than any other property on its street, and more than one owner has left it faster than they arrived.

Visitors who stand outside after dark report knocking from the walls. Two sounds, then a pause, then more — as if someone inside is counting out a location rather than a word.

Arrange the alphabet in five rows of five, letting I and J share a cell, the way a jailer might rule a cell block. The first knock names the row. The second names the column. Read the address each pair of knocks gives you, in order, and the house's occupant will give you her name.

3 1 1 1 3 1 1 1 4 5 4 2 2 4 1 5

Who was she?

WRITE YOUR ANSWER:

CLUE FIVE

The Apothecary

A pharmacist on a street known for its shops kept a back room for something other than medicine.

He mixed bitters of his own recipe into brandy and served it in a small cup whose French name the English speakers mangled into something else entirely — the word that would come to mean the whole drink. Later the brandy gave way to rye, and a rinse of green liqueur was added for a color the pharmacist never lived to see banned, and then unbanned. The drink outlived the apothecary, outlived the street's original name, and is now written into this state's own law as its official spirit.

The name below has been measured from both ends at once — the first letter swapped with the last letter of the alphabet, the second with the second-to-last, and so on toward the middle, where a letter that lands on itself simply stays put.

H Z A V I Z X

What is the drink called?

WRITE YOUR ANSWER:

CLUE SIX

The Band That Walks You Home

The band leads. Behind the band walks a second gathering — the mourners, the neighbors, the strangers who heard the horns from three blocks away and simply joined in, twirling parasols and handkerchiefs, because grief here is not required to stay quiet.

It starts slow, at a funeral pace, and by the time the band turns the last corner it has become something closer to a parade. Nobody is quite sure when the sadness ends and the celebration begins. That is rather the point.

Below, two words have been woven into one, letter over letter, so that every other letter belongs to the band and every other letter belongs to what follows behind it. Take only the letters that belong to what walks behind, in order, and you will have what this custom is called.

B S R E A C S O S N B D A L N I D N S E

What is this custom called?

WRITE YOUR ANSWER:

CLUE SEVEN

The Rotunda

Listen to how each part begins. Nine parts, nine letters.

Once, this exact spot held a hotel whose rotunda was the grandest room in the city — marble floor, painted dome, a room built for one purpose above every other.

Men were bought and sold beneath that dome. Historians count the rotunda among the largest such marketplaces the country ever built, and no one who worked to erase that fact succeeded completely.

Nothing of the original building survives above the ground. A hurricane battered it in 1915, and what the storm did not finish, the wrecking crews did the following year.

In its place, decades on, a new hotel rose — same footprint, same address, a different name entirely, carrying none of the old building's stone and all of its ghosts.

Rebuilding here always means building over something. The new lobby keeps a small rotunda of its own, a quiet nod that most guests walk past without a second look.

Only the address stayed constant through every version of this corner — hotel, ruin, hotel again — while the name above the door changed with each owner's ambition.

You can stand in the current lobby and feel nothing of what happened there, which is either the mercy of time or its failure, depending who you ask.

A brand you would recognize from airports around the world owns the building now, and its own name sits over the door where the old rotunda's dome once caught the light.

Locals still argue about whether anything held over from the auction days, or whether hauntings are just a story hotels tell to sell rooms with a view of history. Either way, the name on the awning today has nothing to do with any of it.

What is this place called today?

WRITE YOUR ANSWER:

The Meta Cipher

Seven ciphers decoded. Seven answers in hand. But this month the letters do not come from where you expect.

Count into each answer to the position shown below — ignore spaces, count only letters — and take what you find there. Write those seven letters in clue order, and they will spell a nickname before they spell a place.

CLUE	YOUR ANSWER	TAKE LETTER #	YOUR LETTER
Clue One		8	?
Clue Two		4	?
Clue Three		4	?
Clue Four		8	?
Clue Five		2	?
Clue Six		1	?
Clue Seven		7	?

Seven letters. One nickname — what everyone who has ever loved this city calls it when they don't want to bother with its full name.

Name the nickname's city. Name the state. You are already there.

SEVEN ANSWERS · [CITY] · [STATE]