



# Yardleygram

In 1932, Herbert Yardley of the American Black Chamber, the forerunner of the NSA, published a book of cryptographic puzzles called *Yardleygrams*. It is set as a fictional challenge between an old spy and a young man interested in codes.

What follows is a paraphrase of one of his ciphers. It can be solved with a pencil and paper. Yardley recommends using graph paper.

## Self-Murder by Command

Intelligence suspected a man named Sammis of being a German spy. The German spy organization in the US, H-Seven, kept its distance, so that nothing could be pinned on Sammis. When a US agent tried to gain access to his hotel room, “Sammis escaped through the window. It was a sleety winter day and the fire escape steps were encrusted with ice. Sammis slipped and fell, striking his head against the lower railing. He was taken to the hospital and died a few hours later. He had previously torn the letter into bits which we pieced together.” The letter contained a cipher written in a secret ink.

**ciphertext:** nsrfq ctclm srnes gdvzk zsnmb d

**decipher:** take the first letter of the ciphertext and continue the alphabet in vertical columns. Take it to at least five letter deep.

nsrfq ctclm ...  
otsgv dudmn ...  
...  
...  
...

Don't forget, the message may be hidden in a mass of senseless letter.