

# Deep Commitment

## A Call Of Cthulhu Adventure

*When you're sure you're sane, what could it mean when everyone around you begins to behave oddly? Of course, it might just be that people have always licked each others' palms in public and you just never noticed before...*

[This scenario was inspired by the movies Committed and Invasion of the Body Snatchers, Jack Chalker's Well World novels, and Eat Right 4 Your Type: The Blood Type Diet by Peter J. D'Adamo.]

**GM's NOTE: I strongly encourage you to step out of game at the beginning and let the players know that this is not intended to be a silly game - otherwise, they will probably become silly since most people play insane characters in a very silly manner. The best way to deal with this situation is to try and get them to play their characters very straight, rather than going over the edge. This will probably be the most difficult part of the scenario from a GM's standpoint.**

### The Setting

The game takes place in the Sonderberg Institute, a private mental hospital. It has around 300 rooms, 50 staff members, and 180 patients in residence before the scenario begins. The date, time of year and precise location of the Institute is entirely up to the GM. The game is generally only suitable for the present or recent past (or near future), since some of the science involved (specialized blood typing, etc.) is fairly recent.

### Tone of the Scenario

The players should be disoriented, never quite sure of their own character's mental balance, let alone quite sure of what might actually be going on. While the obvious goal of the scenario is to overcome the invading aliens, the real focus is the interaction between the PCs.

**Note** - if you have only 5 players, involve Vincent (PC#6) in the beginning as an NPC, but make him disinclined to go with the others (he will show up later in Dr. Kimmelman's office). If you have only 4 players, do the same but use Melanie (PC#3) as an active NPC.

### The History

A week ago, a nurse and two inmates of the Sonderberg Institute were on a pleasant walk through the woods on the Institute grounds when they ran into an unusual glob of goo in a cratered clearing. This was the "lifeboat" of the Viturbi, microbial aliens. After some disaster wrecked their transport, eight of them arrived on our world encased in an apparent meteorite. The meteorite burned up, leaving the interior protein casing (and its living cargo) mostly intact. The three humans were quickly overcome by the desperate aliens and the lengthy, painful process of takeover began.

As dusk set in and a heavy rain began, a search party was sent out for the missing trio, but their search was futile. Late the next morning, two of the three - Nurse Susan Jenkins and one of the patients - returned. They were disheveled and disoriented, claiming that they had become lost and were forced to spend the night in the woods. They asked for help, claiming the other patient had fallen into the river gorge. The five people (including an orderly named Desmond Carter) who Nurse Jenkins took back to the spot to help the fallen man were in turn infested by the Viturbi.

Jenkins then returned to the hospital and claimed that everyone had become sick due to some kind of

contaminant in the area. The next rescue party (which went out prepared for toxins) went unmolested - only because the Viturbi had no more individual members of their race ready to control hosts, rather than due to the precautions the search party took.

The five fallen rescuers and the last of the first missing patients were hastily returned to the Institute and placed in quarantine. The signs of the ailment were obvious, with massive bruising and broken capillaries under the surface of most of each victim's skin, particularly in the area of the face and hands. The last of the original three infestees was dead on arrival - in a rather unpleasant manner - massive internal hemorrhaging. His body is still in the Institute's morgue freezer. The protein medium the Viturbi arrived in (and which was thought to be the toxin that caused their illness) was brought back for analysis - it was eventually used by the Viturbi as a base for the protein culture being brewed in the Institute's kitchen.

Because of the fatality, the other victims were even more closely watched by the doctors. Nurse Jenkins and the infested (but surviving) patient and orderlies were kept under close observation and enforced inactivity - a situation which suited them perfectly, since they needed the quiet time to breed more of their kind. They waited several days, until (between the seven carriers) they had raised enough new Viturbi to take over the remaining staff of the Institute. They chose to leave the patients for later, since they could hardly protest or get away.

During this lull in activity, Dr. Jeanne Benedict, head of the Institute, performed an autopsy on the dead patient and discovered that he died from massive blood clotting, leading to severe hemorrhaging when blood flow in many of his veins and arteries was completely blocked - once blood pressure rose enough, it broke through the walls of the vessels around the clots. Working with Dr. Roy Kimmelman, the Institute's serologist (blood specialist), Dr. Benedict also discovered that the reason this particular subject died and the others survived the "disease" was that the dead man's blood type was AB, which reacted badly with the (presumed) toxin. She discovered this soon before being taken over - just in time to let the Viturbi know what had gone wrong.

Though Dr. Benedict hadn't time to find out about the aliens, it turns out something in the Viturbi's excretions (which would normally be carried away through the host's bloodstream) contains a substance which agglutinates (clumps up) when it contacts AB blood, thus causing such a victim's blood to essentially "glue shut" the blood vessels throughout the host's body. The Rh (-/+) factor is insignificant.

The Viturbi seized upon this information quickly, and went through all the hospital records before infesting the rest of the staff. There was only one staff member with AB blood - Dr. Black (PC#1) who was subdued rather than infested. They also set aside the remaining patients with AB blood (PCs#4-6), as well as a visitor whose blood type was on record from the last blood drive (PC#3). The Viturbi chose not to simply kill these people, since they needed to try and find out if there was a way to neutralize the deleterious effect of the blood type - possibly through some sort of induced mutation to their own kind to adapt. Though AB blood is the rarest of the four basic blood types (less than 5% of the world's population), the Viturbi realized they would either have to find some way to take over all ABs, or to recognize and neutralize them.

Since they inherit only minimal memories and knowledge when they take over a body (generally restricted to basic physical skills, though they can pick up some language and ingrained habits), the Viturbi have had to keep Dr. Kimmelman alive and under their control to work on analyzing and neutralizing the problem. He is being promised all sorts of benefits if he helps them, though they plan to neutralize him the moment they get what they want. Many of the Viturbi Thinkers are quite versed in technical skills - from engineering to chemistry - but the vagaries of human biology is something they've never encountered before. Since they arrived here by accident, they had no previous knowledge of earth's science and customs - they have been spending a lot of time on a television crash course in human behavior.

During the week since the staff has been taken over, the patients were only vaguely aware that something odd's going on - they've been fed irregularly, and their favorite nurses, orderlies, etc., have been behaving oddly. As the game begins, the only loose, uninfested NPC is Dr. Kimmelman (the serologist), and he is closely guarded at all times.

### *Timeline for "Deep Commitment"*

The events before the game begins have relative dates and times as follows:

- **Day 1** (one week ago): Nurse Jenkins and the two patients encounter the Viturbi nest and are infected.
- **Day 2:** (midday) The two survivors return to "get help for the third".
- *(Later)* A second rescue party recovers the 5 infested members of the first rescue party.
- **Day 5:** (nighttime) The Viturbi make their takeover bid, infecting the rest of the staff in one fell swoop. They leave the inmates locked in to wait for another generation of Thinkers. Alyssa grabs some food and runs for the roof. The other PCs are locked up and drugged.
- **Day 7:** (the night before the scenario begins) All NPC inmates are infected. They will not be recovered enough to be effective during the scenario, as long as it does not go longer than half a day, but they also cannot help the PCs in any way.
- *(Later)* PC #3, Melanie, is lured to the Institute. The events during the game have no particular time attached, particularly since the PCs' sense of time should be somewhat skewed. Events are purely player- and place-driven.

## **The Viturbi**

The Viturbi are hordes of germ-like entities who live in a warm protein medium, such as the blood in a warm-blooded human or animal body. They prefer human hosts, since animals don't have thumbs and are demeaning. They can even live in beef stew kept at an appropriate temperature (as in the culture being grown in the kitchen), but the functionality of stew is extremely limited.

The Viturbi come in two different types: Thinkers and Workers. Workers outnumber Thinkers by several factors - about 1000 to 1, since only one Thinker is required to order the movement of a body, while a huge number of Workers have to yank the nerves to implement the orders. Workers are not even individuals, being essentially an extension of their associated Thinker. Thinkers, though, are cloned from a past Thinker (they reproduce by splitting and share all knowledge and experience to that point) of one of the seven surviving strains (see below), but are still individuals. They inherit none of the personal memories of the person they have taken over. Viturbi are asexual and any gender references to individuals in this scenario (i.e., Nurse Jenkins as a her or Desmond as a him) are to the gender of the body each inhabits.

## **The Strains of Viturbi**

There are seven strains of Viturbi - the descendants of the seven Thinkers who arrived in the meteorite (and survived the crash). They lost one eighth of their collective knowledge when the first AB host died, taking one of the eight Thinkers with it.

Thinkers "speak" to one another through release of trace elements, etc., through the sweat glands in the palm of the hand. The person being communicated to then licks the offered palm. This will be fun to watch. They can also communicate by smell, but the human sense of smell isn't strong enough to make this as effective for communicating any but the most basic messages. Each strain has a signature smell. The seven strains are Lemon, Pine, Mocha, Mace, Smoke, Lawn and Booze. Dr. Kimmelman named each for their distinctive smell, since their names for themselves don't translate.

Each Thinker can duplicate itself by ingesting a lot of protein and resting for 36 hours. Each new Thinker has the same memories as its parent, though once they become separate entities their experience diverges. The members of a Strain holds the same basic beliefs and ideals of the original of that Strain - as well as having the same knowledge and skills. They may differentiate a great deal at some point in the future, but as they are less than a week apart so far, they are all still essentially identical.

**Lemon** are wary of humans, but sympathetic. Since Lemon1 saw a TV special on coma patients, he has been considering trying to make a deal with humans for their useless (but still living) bodies. Other Lemons can be convinced to help, though they're unaware of Lemon1's plan (see "Desmond", p. 46) to make a deal with the PCs (he began the attempts since his last split so none of the others have those particular memories). Lemons are diplomats and deal well with visual communication as well as verbal - i.e., they have an easier time with human symbology and written language.

**Pine** have a military background, and will take orders from whoever is in charge (currently Booze). If a member of another Strain manages a coup, Pine will come over. Pine are unimaginative and have a lot of trouble with learning verbal modes of expression.

**Mocha** are scientists, and will mostly be found in Medical. Mocha are certain that humans are incapable of dealing well with other species, and therefore advocate quiet infiltration and complete control of a town - though they think Booze's plans for total world domination are ludicrous.

**Mace** are technicians, and will be found in or around the Kitchen (Dr. Benedict is now Mace5). They are particularly frustrated by the difficulties of translating their profession into human terms - it's so different working with machines without any proper tools, not to mention having to adapt to new bodies. They have very little interest in who is taken over - the world, the town, or nobody. They would rather wait until they manage to figure out their new world before breeding any further, since it will be easier to pass the info along through splitting than by teaching each new Mace manually.

**Smoke** are intelligence gatherers/spies - particularly suited to adaptation to new cultures. Smoke have no interest in humans as anything but hosts, and are of the opinion that anyone who cannot be assimilated should just be destroyed. They are very sneaky and pick up human physical behavior patterns with ease. Smoke1 is in the body of Nurse Jenkins.

**Lawn** are general menials - filling in, doing menial tasks, etc. They are slavishly devoted to Booze but will transfer that devotion if someone else becomes in charge. Other than that, they are good little drones who will do exactly as told and turn in naughty humans at the drop of a hat.

**Booze** are leaders and despise any race but their own. They have grandiose plans to take over the world, and are unswayable. The original Booze was the captain of the ship they were escaping from and is trying to make up for the crash by taking over a planet. Booze1, unfortunately, took over the body of the Janitor, Pete Reilly, who has no sense of taste or smell - Booze1 thus has to communicate verbally. He could just take another body, and will do so when he has the time and leisure. For now, though, Booze1 feels he will lose control of his fellows during such a process, and would rather stick to an inferior body.

The Viturbi are not a single hive-mind, but the hierarchy is very strict - there are Workers and there are Thinkers, and every other Strain obeys Booze. Regardless of Strain, the Thinkers communicate to the Workers through chemicals released into the blood stream - the Workers then follow the appropriate order as the element reaches them. Releasing the proper chemical into a possessed person's blood stream (by injection, for example) could mess up a Thinker's control. Thinkers also can control the pain reactions of the body they infest through the release of endorphins or adrenaline, and therefore may appear to have more than human strength and stamina. It actually means that they can be seriously injured before they are even aware of it.

## **Infestation**

It takes 24 hours for a human to be completely taken over. The process is extremely painful, as the Viturbi move around the system and learn the works of a human body, which is not something they can learn too much quicker from inherited knowledge - everybody is different inside. The creatures are passed from one body to another through injection, preferably in the carotid artery, where they can move straight into the brain. They cannot be passed by mouth, since they are harmed by stomach acid. They can, however, enter through a wound.

Individual Viturbi have a great deal of sense of self. They are devastated over having lost the Thinker who died in the first patient (who would have been called Mint by Kimmelman and knew the entire history of the Viturbi - much of which is now gone forever), and because of these considerations, they are hesitant to sacrifice more Thinkers in trying to take over hosts with the dangerous blood type.

The Viturbi are working hard to convert some of their metabolism to work with AB blood, but are having trouble - which is why they didn't just kill the PCs. There were originally two other AB people, but one died when first taken over, and the other was horribly killed by the attempt to take him over after experimentation (see, Dr. Kimmelman's Office, p. 48).

Broken blood vessels and bruises visible under surface of skin is an outwardly visible sign of being taken over. The creatures are just a bit big to fit comfortably in capillaries, so the tiny veins tend to rupture when the body is first taken over.

## **The Story**

The character sheet for each PC includes a short encounter which happens before they are drugged into unconsciousness for the final time. Most of these encounters simply set up part of the scenario, but some convey clues about what's going on, or about each other. When they wake again, they have all been moved into one ward, which brings them together to begin the game. The PCs will have to escape the ward, find out what is going on, and foil the plans of the invaders.

The only exception to this is PC #2, Alyssa, who saw some of what happened during the takeover, and has been hiding on the roof for the last three days. She begins the game moving through the third floor to try and get to the kitchen without being seen, since she hasn't had much food lately. As an Institute trustee (an inmate who has shown consistently good behavior and improvement and, as a reward, is given a certain amount of autonomy and responsibility), she knows the layout of the building and has a couple of keys (which are still in her room). The player who gets this character should be given a copy of the building map. This is meant to represent her knowledge of the building and is not an actual physical map, so make sure to inform her she cannot show the map to others.

The PCs have no idea which of them is sane and which are not, but should have some idea that there is something odd going on. Once they begin to interact, they should obviously begin to form strong opinions as to which of them are (and are not) sane. The PCs' ultimate goal is essentially up to them - whether they want to just escape, try to destroy the invaders, or work something out. (See "The Finale" for several possibilities.)

## **The PCs**

Each of the PCs has an encounter before the actual scenario begins (these are included with the individual character notes for the players at the end of the scenario. You can either play out the scenes or let the players read them - GM's discretion). Included here are notes about each character's true state of mind - all notes on the individual character sheets are subjective to that PC's self-perception.

1. **Dr. Richard Black** is a doctor who only recently came to work at the Sonderberg Institute. He was

here for about six days before the infestation began (Day 1). Once the Viturbi figured out what had killed one of their number, they took each AB designated person in the place and incarcerated them (he gave blood the day he arrived, which is how they tracked his blood type). Dr. Black was taken from behind with an injection of a sedative, and has been kept drugged and unconscious for the last few days while the other Institute staff has been overwhelmed.

2. **Alyssa** is a homeless woman who has been lodged at the Sonderberg Institute on the public money. She was a pet project of the head doctor, Dr. Jeanne Benedict, as an unusual delusional with an entirely fabricated history and world. When the game begins, Alyssa's delusions have been "cured" and she no longer believes in her fantasy world. The only thing is - her fantasy world was real and she is a high priestess from "Tayago" who was stolen from her home and stranded on earth. Now she has been convinced that she is merely a bag lady with a fantasy life rather than a high priestess trained to command. As her "delusions" re-assert themselves, she should logically try to convince herself that she is still just a regular person. She can, if she reverts entirely, use a Command Word (such as STOP or KNEEL) to assert herself - even Viturbi will have to obey, though only for a moment. Any other magical abilities she may have are up to the GM.

3. **Melanie Goldberg** was tricked into visiting her mother - she got a phone call from the Institute saying there was something wrong, and she rushed right down. She is not in any way insane, though she is deathly afraid of heights and falling and is a bit of a worrier. The Viturbi lured her here to supplement their AB blood pool - she gave blood during her last visit (which coincided with the recent blood drive), which is how they found out her type. Melanie is an average looking young woman with brown hair and eyes. She arrived the day before the scenario starts.

4. **Diana Zero** is a nondescript woman in her late twenties who believes she is a spy with British Intelligence. She thinks she was captured and is being held here while her government negotiates with "this one" (she doesn't know quite what country she's in) for her release. She is quite delusional, having no connection with any real government agency. On the other hand, the years of obsession she's been through (before finally being deemed unable to cope with regular society) were spent teaching herself many pseudo-spy skills which are "real" (i.e., she can pick locks, do basic karate chops, is physically fit, etc.), even if her history is not. Diana, being a fairly docile patient, has had a reasonable amount of freedom, including a private room and no restraints or heavy sedatives.

5. **Cyrus Willows** is a dangerous sociopath who has been incarcerated at the Sonderberg Institute. In legal terms he is completely sane - he knows right from wrong, he just doesn't care. When, at the age of 17, he was convicted of poisoning his mother, Cyrus played at being insane (claiming to hear voices, etc.) to stay out of jail and off of death row. He knew he would have a heck of a lot better chance of surviving a nuthouse than jail. His file lists him as being schizophrenic (specifically as hearing voices), but he isn't really. He is frighteningly sane. He has the best idea of all of what is happening in the place, and if he thought he could trust them, he might even make a deal with the Viturbi to let him live once they take over in return for his help whatever that might entail.

6. **Vincent Gilhoulie** is a prominent and wealthy middle-aged businessman on his second marriage. He had the misfortune to mention divorce to his wife, and she had him committed. It wasn't easy - she worked hard to drive him nuts (as well as to convince the doctors to believe it), but there is actually nothing wrong with him except a little healthy paranoia (she was out to get him). Vincent aches to get away, but feels his best bet is to wait and prove to the shrinks that he is sane (he has seen too many movies where outright protestations of sanity are taken as proof of nut-hood). Until they were all moved into the ward, Vincent had a plush private room.

## The Beginning

This takes place after the personal encounters. Each of the PCs awakens - beginning with Vincent, who should have several minutes to himself before the others awaken.

PCs #1 and 3-6 wake up in a strange room as a group. They are all groggy, and their bodies ache all over -

they haven't moved at all in days. They are no longer strapped down. (Give the players a chance to exchange descriptions.) There is one person in addition to the PCs. If you are playing with less than the full complement of PCs (i.e., if you have only four or five players), this NPC should be Vincent (as noted at the beginning). Otherwise, it is an elderly woman named Ella Tyler who has her hip in a cast and cannot leave the room. Adjust the number of beds, etc., accordingly. The extra NPC, regardless of who it is, will turn up dead later, so give the PCs a chance to get to know him or her. The inhabitants of the room are all wearing hospital pajamas - loose baggy pants and a top that ties shut up the back - in pale sunny yellow with a cute teddy bear print.

They have been without their normal drug ration (the IV bags they are attached to are empty or nearly empty) because the staff has been busy infecting all the other inmates. The orderly who is supposed to be watching them was called away, but will return shortly.

The room they are in is nearly bare - five beds of the wheeled "spare bed" type with none of the typical hospital adjustable dohickeys, a door, and a window. The beds are against the walls of the room - three down the right side, two down the left, with the door at one end and the window at the other. There is a tiny porthole window in the door, and the hallway is empty. The ceiling is about 15' high. In the wall below the exterior window is a heavy metal grating, behind which is a very fine mesh like a window screen, both of which are covering a radiator built into the wall. The radiator is on and the grating (and indeed the room) is very warm - though not painfully so. There is no way to damage or remove the grating without an actual crowbar, and nothing to be gained if they do remove it.

Outside the window, the players can see the Institute grounds, and catch a glimpse of the visitor parking lot. Seeing her car out there may remind Melanie that she has spare keys in a key box inside the wheel well, so even if she can't find her purse, she could get away if she could reach her car.

If the PCs make too much noise, they will attract the attention of both the returning orderly and Alyssa. The orderly will come to the door, look in through the window, open a sliding panel beneath the window and tell them to shut up. His speech is slow and halting and he won't talk much - he will either ignore any questions, or repeatedly reply "shut up". Finally, he will slide the panel shut and remain outside the door. Dr. Black's "poor stress management" disadvantage should come into play here - have the player roll against an appropriate stat (willpower, etc.) to see if he can keep himself under control, or if he begins to stress out and scream to be let out or bang on the door.

**[special] Beginning for Alyssa (PC#2)** - Since she is not with the rest of the group to begin with, the game begins with Alyssa stumbling across the rest of the PCs. The GM should strongly encourage her to help and join the others, since she can hardly want to be wandering around alone at a time like this. She comes down the nearby stairs from the roof and sees the guard outside the door of the room they're in.

**Getting out of the room** - There are two obvious ways for the PCs to get out of the room - either Diana (PC#4) can disassemble part of one of the beds to make a lockpick and open the door, or Alyssa can overpower the guard, take his key, and let them out.

**The Guard (Viturbi Pine3)** - he is a burly young orderly (Alyssa knows him by sight, but not by name) who has a taser and the key to the room. He has no ID, no card key, or anything else of use. He is dressed as an orderly, though with the addition of a sweater, and seems to have been in the same clothes for some time. He has bruises all over his hands and face. He smells of pine, so he must have been doing some cleaning (floors, bathrooms) recently. He is not difficult for several people to overpower, but since he (like most Viturbi infestees) is not effected much by pain, he will keep getting up until permanently disabled. If they can get the taser away from him, a shot of electricity will effectively put him down for a while (the taser has six charges, but they have no way of knowing that).

Once they've juiced the guard, whose name is Jose, if they are still near him in a couple of minutes (when he begins to regain control over his speech), he speaks normally to them, confused. As soon as he notices the bruises on his arms, he begins to freak out, "Oh, no, I've caught it - they were in quarantine so it wouldn't spread, but it must have! Oh, man..." He doesn't know what the disease is - just that at least one guy has died from it. (Obviously, if the PCs have gagged Jose before he recovers, this will not happen.)

Jose will go on hysterically, alluding to a horrible death of some sort before suddenly going silent again as Pine3 reasserts itself - he has about three minutes of lucidity. If the PCs have not somehow immobilized Jose's body by then (tied him up, locked him into a room), Pine3 will get up and try to get his taser back. If he's hopelessly outmanned (which is very probable) he will try to get away and raise an alarm. Unless the PCs are very slow, they should still be able to stop him.

### *Sources of Electric Shock in the Institute*

Five of the orderlies (including Jose, who the PCs meet at the beginning of the scenario) have tasers, but they are spread widely throughout the building - each has 3-5 charges.

There is a room in the violent ward (East wing, second floor) which was set up for shock therapy and has gone unused for some time - Dr. Benedict does not subscribe to ECT as a therapeutic method. It is currently used for storage but the equipment is still there and plugged in. They will have to move the stored stuff out of the room to effectively use the shock therapy machinery, and it is not portable.

There are two portable defibrillators in the ambulances (if the PCs can get into the garage), and a full sized crash cart in the emergency room. These will have to be recalibrated to lower the charge before being used on an infested individual (Dr. Black could do this).

Anyone other than medical personnel using any of the medical apparatus will have a pretty high chance of doing permanent damage to the person they use it on. Anyone can use a taser. Other options, such as just shredding a lamp cord and plugging it in, should be discouraged, since the effects of such an action are impossible to control or predict.

### **Approaching the Staff**

**PC to Viturbi** - When one of the PCs first approaches an infested person, the infestee will hold out their hand (right or left, it doesn't make any difference to them), with the palm facing the newcomer. The palm of the infestee's hand is coated in a sheen of sweat, and he smells like coffee (Mocha2). He then waits for the PC to respond. If the PC does not give the proper response, which is to walk up and lick the offered hand, the infestee will look confused and then walk toward the PC, sniffing deeply. He will quickly realize something is wrong and turn to raise the alarm, at which point the PCs will most likely either flee or try and subdue him.

**Viturbi to Viturbi** - If the PCs get a chance to observe a meeting between infestees, they will see a doctor approach an orderly and hold out her hand. The orderly steps forward and licks her palm, then extends his own hand, which she licks in return. The best place to observe this is from one of the windowed walks overlooking the courtyard (there's a hall on each floor which circles the courtyard with large windows overlooking it); though from above, or from a distance, it may look like they are feeding something to one another. The staff don't usually spend much time in the courtyard, so the PCs won't be able to observe this happening more than once unless they are very patient.

The PCs may also come across someone taking notes on a clipboard - notes which are completely unintelligible pictograms of some sort. The Viturbi have a rudimentary written language which has no possible comparison to human writings. The only Viturbi who can easily read any other writing so far is

Desmond/Lemon1 (see Desmond Approaches, p. 46) - other Lemons can, however, sound out words.

### **An Odd Interlude**

This is a scene which can be interposed at any time - whenever the PCs get a chance to observe some of the infested people and they are around a TV. It is most suitable for an encounter in one of the lounges (there is one in each of the North and South wings on the ground floor).

The PCs see several doctors and nurses gathered around a TV set, which is showing Sesame Street. A letter, capital "G", appears on the screen, along with the voice-over of someone sounding it out. One of the doctors traces the letter G on the screen, while everyone else appears to be taking notes - scrawling crooked capital G's on any flat surface they can find, including the floor, tabletops, or their own clothing. They use a variety of writing utensils, from pens to crayons. The Viturbi are learning to read.

The PCs may also run into the aftermath of such reading sessions, seeing repeated strings of a single letter scrawled inexplicably on floors, walls, or people's uniforms.

### **The Gathering**

(This preferably takes place while the PCs are in a position to observe it - for example when they are looking into the courtyard) The PCs hear a chime in the distance. As they watch the courtyard begins to fill with people - it seems as though all the staff are gathering. If the PCs stay and observe, they will see a couple of doctors (one of them is Dr. Chris Thetford, the man Dr. Black was working with - he is now Mocha7) passing through the crowd carrying what appear to be humidifiers, which have extension cords that snake off into the buildings. They are passing the steam from the humidifiers over everyone, working their way through the crowd. As each person is passed, they inhale deeply and then return to the building.

*What's happening:* This is the Viturbi's main way of passing information quickly to everyone in the group. Since verbal communication is still clumsy for them, they use the chime to summon everyone to one spot (there is no facility in the building for spreading a smell reliably or they would certainly use it) and then use the humidifiers to generate the proper scent messages and pass said messages to everyone at once. They gather outside so lingering odors in the building won't confuse them later. The chime is part of the PA system, which is located at the switchboard in the second floor of the west wing, next to Dr. Benedict's office. Since this has very seldom been used, Alyssa is only vaguely aware of where it is.

Such a gathering could give the PCs a clear shot to the main doors - though the guards will still be there. Alternatively, the PCs may use the chime to bring the staff together for some kind of ambush, or just to get them out of the way for a while.

The following encounter should not occur until the PCs have had some time to begin to figure out what is happening:

### **Desmond (Lemon1) Approaches**

Desmond, the human possessed by the Viturbi Lemon1, will try to make contact with the PCs, once he realizes they have escaped. Lemon1 is the originator of the Lemon Strain (see Viturbi - Strains, p. 40), and all other Lemons are of a similar attitude - sympathetic to humans. Desmond (the name of the body he is inhabiting) would rather see the rest of his kind, particularly Ash and Booze, captured (though he would rather not see them obliterated) than have to watch them destroy an entire species. He is particularly interested in dealing with humans to trade his race's technology for the bodies of coma patients - though that is a long way off. Right now, he wants to try and win the trust of the PCs - he has no faith in Kimmelman, the only other human in the place.

There are several possibilities as to how he will approach them. Desmond has worked hard to comprehend

human writing (watching lots of Sesame Street while recuperating), and may leave messages for them written on walls up on the third floor - hoping that they will understand, since most of his kind will not be able to read them, and hopefully other Lemons will not interfere. The messages all are some variation of "TRUST LEMON" or "LEMON WILL HELP".

Alternatively, Desmond will approach them someplace on the third floor and try to convince them he is a regular orderly. Desmond's body is that of a large black man, so his nearly-healed bruises are hard to discern without close scrutiny. His story is that he was on vacation and returned today to find everyone being strange. He came upstairs to get away from them. His story is obviously flawed, since he will be too willing to work with the patients and will accept their ideas too quickly - he is also nowhere near as familiar with the building as he should be. Alyssa and Cyrus have seen the real Desmond around, but don't know him well enough to see any difference, but Vincent knows him well enough that he might realize that something is wrong - the orderly walks differently, and doesn't laugh the same way as he used to.

If the PCs attack Desmond or put him off, he will instead try to escape the building to protect himself and his Strain.

### **Meeting Nurse Jenkins/Smoke1**

Once she realizes the PCs are loose, Smoke1 (in the body of Nurse Jenkins) will try and find them - approaching them as another human. Her bruises have healed almost completely, and she has used cosmetics to cover the few traces that remain on her face, and thus can pass as human. She smells of heavy cigarette smoke. If she comes across them traveling with Desmond, it could lead to a conflict as Desmond attempts to reveal her to be an infestee without giving himself away. She, in turn, will try to get a message to another of her strain that Lemon is no longer to be trusted - at which point all Lemons will be tracked down and locked up.

Dr. Black will recognize Nurse Jenkins as the nurse who gave him the injection in the pre-beginning scene.

### **Place Listings**

**The Sonderberg Institute:** In general, the building is composed of four blocky three-story wings which surround a large courtyard and connect at their interior corners to make a shape like a plus sign with the center cut out.

Other than the room the PCs begin the scenario in and the guard watching them, the third floor is essentially empty. The elevator cannot be called from this floor (though the inside button will bring it here from below) and some of the stairwells have gates in them blocking off access to the lower floors. There are lots of rooms with no furniture, fixtures, etc. JosŽ's key will open all of the third floor room doors, as well as the door of stairwells E1 and W1, but not the padlocks for the gates in any of the other stairwells. If they can get them, Alyssa's keys will open the gates as well as the stairwell doors, since part of her duty was to check the empty floors once a week to look for broken windows, squirrel or bird nests, or anything else which might need maintenance. Neither the guard's key nor Alyssa's keys will open the doors into the violent wing or any of the card key doors (outside doors, basement door).

The north wing is where the male patients are kept (Vincent and Cyrus were here), while the south wing is for female patients (Alyssa, Diana and Melanie's mother Rosa). Patients who are more able to care for themselves and are fairly trustworthy are housed on the first floor, while those who need more constant attention (or who are more likely to try an escape attempt) are housed on the second.

The east wing houses the staff quarters, kitchen, laundry and other basic facilities on the first floor and the violent ward lock-ups and electro-shock therapy room on the second floor. They have very few truly unmanageable patients, being a private institution.

The west wing is devoted to physical medicine, as well as therapy rooms of various kinds, with an emergency area, operating room and small morgue on the first floor. Though the Institute does not function as an actual hospital, casualties are brought here for emergencies since the nearest real hospital is much farther away. The second floor of the west wing is laboratories and offices for the doctors, including the offices of Drs. Black, Benedict, and Kimmelman. The second floor also hosts the switchboard with the PA system in a cubbyhole workstation adjacent to Dr. Benedict's office.

The only places in the building which are not being kept are the stairwells and most of the third floor (the room the PCs begin the game in is moderately warm). Any room with someone an infested patient will be especially warm - it dilates the blood vessels and helps avoid the bruising problem the aliens encountered with the first waves of takeovers.

*A typical patient:* All of the patients in the place have been infected and then locked into their rooms. Their rooms are stiflingly hot, since the radiators have been turned up to full blast to help with the takeover. The patient is strapped to the bed, which has been maneuvered into a sitting position. He is twitching uncontrollably, sometimes even violently (the Thinker inside is trying to figure out which nerves and muscles control which body parts), and even as the PCs watch, bruises simply form under his skin (though nowhere near as badly as the doctors seem to have suffered) as the Workers move into their proper positions. The patient is obviously in great pain, and is oblivious to any visitors. Every room and its occupant (including Melanie's mother Rosa) will be similar.

*The dumbwaiter:* Alyssa may think of taking the old dumbwaiter (which she was told hasn't been used since the elevator was put in 30 years ago) down to the kitchen. Whether someone actually climbs down the 3'x3' dumbwaiter shaft (for instance on a rope made of bedding from the PCs' beds), or whether they pull the dumbwaiter up slowly enough that it doesn't make too much noise, anyone making the descent to the kitchen level has a chance to overhear a conversation on the 2nd floor (see "the Conversation", p. 49), and will be able to look into the kitchen once it is reached. Someone just climbing down the shaft will encounter the box of the dumbwaiter itself at the bottom and will be very restricted in their ability to see - their only vantage will be a single crack at the top of the dumbwaiter door. On the other hand, the top of the box is considerably less vulnerable of a position, since they can't be seen by anyone opening the doors.

Riding down inside the box offers better vision and a chance at food. The back of the box also opens on a door - this second door leads into the pantry. The pantry is dark and empty, and as long as the PC is very quiet no Viturbi will come in - they have already removed all the protein from the room. A scrounging PC can find canned vegetables (industrial size cans - no can opener), crackers, a couple of moldy loaves of bread, huge unopened containers of condiments (mustard, mayo, etc.), lemonade mix, and instant coffee. These last could be used to generate a false scent for the PCs to try and fake their way past some of the Viturbi in the halls (cleaning supplies that smell of pine and lemon are also around in various closets on the first and second floors). Bowls, pitchers and other containers can also be found here. Though there are no sharp knives in here, someone who tries hard enough can open a can of corn with a butter knife.

### *The Conversation*

At some point in the scenario (a specific point may include while riding down in the dumbwaiter), feel free to allow the players to overhear the following conversation:

(the conversation is between Booze1 and one of the Smokes - possibly Smoke1, in which case they may recognize Nurse Jenkins' voice. If Nurse Jenkins is with the PCs, it is another Smoke with similar ideas. Why are they speaking English? Booze1 got a body with a very poor sense of smell/taste, and has difficulty communicating that way. If Alyssa is the one listening, she will know that the body is Mr. Reilly, the janitor, and that he has no sense of smell or taste.)

**Booze:** Have they been recaptured yet?

**Smoke:** It hardly matters. They cannot leave the building. I said we should have killed them, and instead you brought another one.

**Booze:** We cannot be sure there are not many more of this kind than they have told us - I do not trust Kimmelman.

**Smoke:** So, we will kill many of them. It hardly signifies. I do not trust Kimmelman either - we need a better scientist.

**Booze:** It is being dealt with. Lemon1 says we can negotiate with the humans. He says they will deal fairly with us.

**Smoke:** Lemon1 believed that program Alien Nation. He is an idiot.

*(They pass out of earshot.)*

*The kitchen:* The kitchen appears to be the center for activity for most of the infestees. They are bringing in cans of tuna and beef stew and pouring them into large pots on the stove. Once the pots begin to boil, the contents are emptied into a vat which is about four feet high and almost as big across (which Alyssa would recognize as having been used for a little while when they were trying out fabric dyeing as education therapy - more patients ended up blue than fabric, so they just dumped the thing in the back room - it was too heavy to even take down to the basement). The vat sits on a metal grating sitting over a bunch of sterno cans, and holds a muddy brown concoction which bubbles.

*The basement:* The basement is not as large as the building, only extending under the south and west wings. Under the west wing, the basement is an underground garage for the Institute's two ambulances, while the rest of the basement is storage. There are three entrances to the basement - one at the bottom of S2 stairwell, a ramp down from the medical area into the ambulance bay, and the exterior driveway leaving the bay. Both interior entrances are locked by card keys. The two locatable card keys are in the belongings of the janitor and the office of Dr. Benedict. The entrance in medical also opens with a punched-in key code, which Dr. Black was given by Dr. Thetford - though Black will have to calm down and concentrate to remember it. The new locks went in a couple of weeks ago when it was discovered that various of the staff (and even some of the patients) were using some of the spare mattresses in one of the basement storerooms as a "love nest" - utterly against Institute policy. Alyssa knows of this. The Viturbi can't get into the basement - they do not understand card keys. The only human they have contact with, Dr. Kimmelman, has professed ignorance as to how to work the doors, since it's the only petty revenge he can manage. The Institute's exterior doors all work on a card lock also, so the Viturbi have to leave the

main front door unlocked and open - but still constantly guarded. Every other external door is locked and the invaders can't make them work.

*The files:* If they get into the file room (for instance in an attempt to discover what is really wrong with which ones of them), they can find files for Vincent (diagnosed as paranoid delusional), Cyrus (diagnosed as schizophrenic), Alyssa (diagnosed as delusional - recovering) and Diana (diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic). There are no files for Dr. Black or Melanie Goldberg, though there is a file for Rosa Goldberg (Melanie's mother - delusional senility). From the files, they can also find out that all of them but Alyssa are type AB blood - she's B-.

*The blood storage area:* If they get into medical and check in the cooler where the blood is normally kept, they will find no AB blood left within - though the other types are abundantly represented.

*Dr. Kimmelman's Office:* Near the stairwell in the west wing, this office is labeled only "Serology". Dr. Kimmelman is generally to be found in his office - food is delivered to him and a guard, a Pine, remains outside the office at all times. If the PCs get in to see Kimmelman, he will try and put them off, then will try and warn the Viturbi of the PCs' presence (using the intercom on his desk).

If threatened, Kimmelman will cave completely and tell them everything he knows - which includes the following:

Kimmelman is aware of the AB factor and its negative reaction with the Viturbi. He also has some samples of Viturbi Workers in a culture to use in mixing with AB blood for when he tries to fix the problem - and he knows that if they get too cold, they die. He further knows there are seven Strains of the creatures, and has named them after the smell each Strain commonly exudes - Lemon, Pine, Mocha, Mace (they smell like cinnamon, but cinnamon was too long of a name - Mace is a similar spice), Smoke, Lawn (smell like freshly cut grass) and Booze (which smell vaguely like alcohol of some kind). (see "Viturbi - strains", p. 40). Kimmelman does not, however, have any idea about the individual personalities of the Strains - he just resents all of them.

Kimmelman has, however, observed some of their general behavior patterns, such as their habit of gathering when the chime goes off, and can tell the PCs where the chime originates.

*Dr. Roy Kimmelman, Serologist.*

Dr. Kimmelman has been left alone by the Viturbi in return for his work on trying to find an antidote or something which will allow them to take over people with AB blood. Kimmelman is type O.

Kimmelman is very unhappy about his cowardice - manifest in making the deal with the aliens instead of letting them essentially kill him like he believes they essentially killed everyone else in the building. He hates himself, but will continue to work with them. He is a barely competent serologist (the hospital has never needed much blood work - tests for pregnancy, STDs and blood typing is about his limit), and has been having trouble even understanding what they want. The lab they've got him working in is covered in every reference manual involving blood the hospital has. Kimmelman is aware that the task is utterly beyond him, but figures that as long as he makes an appearance of being hard at work, they will hardly harm him.

He is running every test he can think of, mixing tubes of AB blood with every virus the lab keeps samples of and then adding Viturbi Workers (the aliens don't want to sacrifice any more Thinkers - not that they're rare, just that none of them want to die). He's tried vitamins, drugs, and appetite suppressants. Nothing has even begun to work. The Viturbi have begun to ignore him, and he's afraid that the moment they find out how to read they'll find someone else to help them.

Kimmelman is getting desperate, and can be coerced into helping the PCs if they put on a show of force, but he will very likely betray them to the aliens once they take their eyes off him, since he is desperate for anything to put him back in the Viturbi's good graces.

Kimmelman also has the entire AB blood supply in the small fridge in his lab, since he is working his way through it while doing his tests. There are only 4 pints of blood left. Kimmelman can efficiently and safely draw blood, having worked his way through college as a phlebotomist (blood/plasma technician at a blood bank) if the PCs decide to personally supplement the supply.

*The anteroom* - Kimmelman's office has a smaller room which opens off it, which he will try to keep people out of. Inside the secondary room, which is surprisingly cold after the warmth of most of the rest of the place, is a body on a cart. This is the extra character the PCs woke up with at the beginning of the game. The body is covered by a sheet, and there is no movement. Pulling back the sheet, Dr. Black will be able to tell that death was caused by massive hemorrhaging - the blood movement under the skin was so traumatic that in places it has created massive "blood blisters" - bubbles of skin pushed loose and pouched out, filled with blood - which range in size from some the size of marbles to others almost as big as fists.

When asked, Kimmelman will admit that he injected the dead man with the Viturbi Workers - to see if his latest concoction would work. He insists he was forced to do it by the aliens, that he had no choice but to kill the guy. He may even get huffy and insist that the PCs should be grateful to him, since if it wasn't for his insistence that they should be kept alive for experimentation, the aliens would just have killed them - they would be dead if it weren't for him!

The one time Kimmelman might be far from his office would be if the Viturbi take him to the third floor to decipher a message written in English on the wall (see "Desmond Approaches", p. 46). What Kimmelman will tell the Viturbi when asked to read the words (i.e., whether he will reveal the traitor, or even understand what the message is supposed to mean) is left entirely up to the GM.

## The Finale

There are several possible endings to the scenario, depending mainly on the group of players you have. The basic four possibilities are:

**Escape:** The PCs may decide they can only get themselves out, and that they will try to get someone else to return to deal with the aliens. The only ways out are: (1) through the front door, past the guard; (2) down the old, forgotten fire escape, which is only accessible from the roof; or (3) locating one of the card keys and getting out through a side door or the basement. (See ideas to build into your campaign, at the end of the scenario.)

**Destroy:** They can get into the basement and overheat the boiler (it's very close to the max already, since the Viturbi are heating all the patients' rooms), which will explode and burn down the building. There is always the chance that some of the infestees will escape - though they can only get out through the front door.

**Rescue:** It is possible to save the people who have been taken over, though it is a long and difficult process, and the players will have to figure out a suitable method for themselves. They can get some help from Dr. Benedict, if they can locate her (Alyssa will certainly recognize her), and figure out that if they zap her with a charge of electricity (after what happened to their guard JosŽ when he was zapped - if that did not happen, try and show them the effects of electricity somehow), it will temporarily immobilize the Viturbi in control of her (a Mace) and free her to think. A taser shock will work, though any other shock will have to be carefully controlled (preferably by Dr. Black, who can recalibrate a crash cart to give a mild enough charge). Once informed of the situation and of the Viturbi's problem with cold, Dr. Benedict will suggest immobilizing someone and lowering their body temperature. She is willing to be a guinea pig, since she'd rather be dead than not be herself. Dr. Black will have to do all the work - both the freezing and the reviving afterward. Even if they manage to rescue Dr. Benedict, she will be too weak to be anything but dead weight for several days. She can help with ideas, but is certainly unable to do anything physical.

**Negotiate:** Working with Desmond, they could negotiate some kind of concessions with the Viturbi. This is left up to the GM's discretion.

## Ideas to build into your campaign

This scenario could make an interesting prologue to a more typical adventure. For one session the players play the characters included here - in which case they should be encouraged to escape and report the invasion to the authorities - and then when the next session resumes with their own ongoing characters, they are sent to the Sonderberg Institute to deal with the invaders. They may even have to meet their previous characters at some point - the most obvious being Melanie (who could make the report without being re-captured and locked up, unlike the various certifiable individuals) or Alyssa, who might return to the Institute since she really has no place else to go.

- The Viturbi can also be a recurring species the PCs can deal with. A possible scenario involving them would be that a PC encounters a person they last heard was in a coma - the person doesn't seem to recognize the PC, and turns out to no longer be the same person - could it be a government plot to trade coma patients' bodies for alien technology, or is it just a sneaky plot of the Viturbi's?
- It is also possible that the Viturbi will land in another site on Earth - perhaps with more strains and less confusion as to their purpose.

## **1. Dr. Richard Black, E.R. specialist**

You could have been anything you wanted in the doctoring line - having graduated cum laude from Harvard medical school five years ago. You had offers from all of the best hospitals, and did your internship at Johns Hopkins Medical Center. Unfortunately, your chosen forte, emergency medicine, tends toward very high stress (which you've usually been very good at) and you had a bit of a blow up. After taking a three-month sabbatical, you were advised to take a less strenuous post, possibly at a private hospital. The Sonderberg Institute made a generous offer, and you came here to take over their tiny emergency practice. They expected you to help with general medical tasks as well, since Dr. Thetford, their GP, was about to retire. Besides, they have very few emergencies at a place like this. You arrived during the bi-monthly blood drive, and elected to show good faith immediately by participating, particularly since you're type AB, which is very rare. You were only here for a couple of weeks before everything blew up. One night you were knocked out, and have seldom woken up for more than a few minutes since, which makes it very hard to tell how long its been since that night.

Skills: Doctor - First aid, emergency surgery

Drawback: Bad stress management

A while ago, you woke up feeling groggy and drugged. You were in restraints in a hospital bed in a private room, with an IV connected to your arm. Before you had a chance to waken fully, a nurse came in to the room. She was businesslike and cheerful, but refused to discuss what happened to you or to let you get up. When you told her you are a doctor, she merely replied "of course you're a doctor" with no conviction whatsoever. Then she went on to say that "when you are more willing to behave like a doctor, you can be treated like one". Then she injected something into your IV and left the room as you blacked out again. The nurse's nametag said "Jenkins".

## **2. Alyssa [surname unknown], indigent**

You have been through a long period of recovery from a psychotic episode they've told you was particularly bad about two years ago. Apparently, you were found raving in the middle of the street somewhere, screaming for help and speaking a mixture of English and gobbledy-gook and attacking anyone who came near you. You even threw a rock through a car's windshield when it approached. The whole event, which you don't remember very clearly, is a source of acute embarrassment nowadays. After all, you've recovered. You know now that there is no land of Tayago, and you are not its high priestess. You know there is no such thing as magic. It's sad, since Tayago was such a pleasant fantasy, but everyone has to face the real world. You're just lucky that Dr. Benedict, your therapist, brought you with her as a charity case when she was invited to become the head of the Sonderberg Institute. She's brilliant, but was always frustrated by the fact that she couldn't break through the memory block and take you back to any real event which took place earlier than the moment you were found in the street. Even now (with you pretty much cured) she lets you remain in the Institute as a trustee, working for your keep, since you have no place to go and no family you know of.

Skills: Survival, self defense

Drawback: Prone to psychotic episodes (particularly under stress) where she believes she is the high priestess of Tayago.

Advantage - knows the layout of the building; keys, if you can get to them.

A couple of nights ago, you saw the people who got sick in the woods the other day (you don't know much about what happened to them) sneaking around the hallways with syringes. You tried to get to Dr. Benedict's room, but there was too much activity in the halls, not to mention the staff members thrashing around in their rooms, being sick. Rather than risk getting caught, you grabbed up a stashed bag of snacks - kept under the bed for emergency midnight snack attacks - and tried to get away. You tried to get outside, which is when you realized you'd left without taking your keys - not that you have

a key to the outside doors, anyway - they're on a card lock. The only other place to hide - since the basement just got a card lock on it, too, after the nookie scandal - was the roof. You've spent the last couple of days on the roof trying to convince yourself this was somehow just another part of your recurring delusion.

### **3. Melanie Goldberg, Visitor**

You are a secretary in an advertising firm. Luckily, since you've been with the same firm for nearly ten years and your mother Rosa is technically your dependent (being an invalid) your insurance covered it when you finally had to have her committed. You love your mother dearly, but the worry you were going through - always afraid that someone in the neighborhood would call and say she'd gone out on the roof again, or, worse, that the police would have to ring and inform you that she did something to start the house on fire...again. At least you found a fairly nice place for her - The Sonderberg Institute. You still can't help but worry - your therapist says you worry too much, and that you have to understand that everything is not your fault.

Skills: word processing, handwriting analysis

Drawback: worrier, afraid of heights and falling

After the phone call from the doctor - he sounded so strange! - telling you there was something wrong with your mother Rosa, you had to rush to the Sonderberg Institute! Cursing the six hours it takes to drive that far (but it was the nicest place within a day's drive that you could afford), you floored it all the way, not even bothering to check into the hotel in town before coming up, the way you normally do. You parked your red Miata in the lot and nearly ran into the building. No one was at reception, which made you worried, and when you finally found someone, it made you even more worried - the doctor was all covered in bruises! When you asked about your mother, he smiled calmly and led you down the hall - not the way to mother's room, though! As you were going down the hall, you caught a strong whiff of lemon-scent - like cleaning stuff. Then, from a speaker somewhere overhead came a chiming sound - you noticed that as the doctor stopped walking for a moment as he heard it, then all the other people in the hallway began to walk off down another hall which led into the exercise courtyard. Though he seemed to want to go with them, your escort just took you by the arm again and led you to a nearby door. You stepped into a room you'd never seen before (and your mother wasn't there), and were about to turn around when you felt a sharp prick in the back of your neck and went unconscious.

### **4. Diana Zero, spy for MI5**

You have been imprisoned here for several months, though they have been treating you well. You figure they haven't been able to crack your cover story, since they've not yet begun interrogating you - obviously they have yet to discover how much classified information you've been privy to. You've managed to bribe the "orderly" - a thinly disguised guard - to carry messages to your "family", but you're not sure if any of them get through, since there has as yet been no response. You're fairly sure this really is a hospital, though most of the people you have a chance to interact with are certainly operatives. They claim this is America, but you suspect this is a lie to keep you from finding the truth. For the moment, you are content to wait and hope the government will make a trade for you. Soon, though, you've decided, you'll need to make a break for it - it's your job, after all.

Skills: Spy - lockpicking, karate, gun.

Drawback: Compulsive need for secrecy

A couple of nights ago (you're really not sure), you were awakened by the sound of violence in the hall. A while back, you figured out how to work the sliding window slot in the door using a piece of old chewing gum. Peering out through a tiny slot from your darkened room, you felt fairly sure that no one

would notice your observation. You saw one of the nurses, dressed in a nightgown and robe, being chased down the hall by a man in a doctor's coat - he must have been hurt, since you saw bruises mottling his arms. You felt no need to draw attention to yourself, since if this was a coup by your own people, they'd find you soon enough - and if it was The Opposition, you wanted to remain just another patient. Since then, food service has been erratic (and really bad). It was about a half a day after that when they gave you drugged food.

## **5. Cyrus Willows, Writer**

You have come to the conclusion that you are a sociopath. This conclusion has been hard to come by, since you don't understand what it is that defines a sociopath, since everything the standard description claims that one lacks is so inexplicably stupid and maudlin. Early on, a decade or so ago, when you were 17, you killed your mother - with poison - just to see if there really was a thrill to it, since you'd already figured out you didn't get many thrills from anything else. Oddly, there wasn't. The thrill came during the police investigation and the court case, the intellectual thrill of strategy and questions. It got even more fun when you started into the world of psychosis. It was late into the prosecution when you first let drop to your lawyer that you were hearing voices, and he took it from there. It was complete crap, but the jury bought it, and you landed in a cushy institution rather than a cold impersonal (and dangerous) jail cell.

Being more perceptive than most people, particularly the other inmates here, you think you may be the only one to notice (or at least to have any comprehension of) the change which has come over some of the staff and patients recently. Closely observing the fracas which took place a night or so ago, you became sure this was verging into Stephen King territory and that people were being taken over by aliens, or possibly demons. The behavior and demeanor of the orderlies and nurses who have been delivering the food since then has simply reinforced this belief. You could care less if the world is taken over, since you don't particularly like anyone anyway, but your own life is very important to you. You also have not yet figured out a way to tell the possessed from normal people, since while weird behavior from the nurses is pretty obvious, while strange behavior among the inmates is a non-event. It's the first thing to have intrigued you in a long time.

Skills: Writing, trivia, chemistry, poisons

Drawback: sociopath, curiosity

You don't remember being drugged, but you awoke in the middle of a night some time ago to find yourself in a room with several other people - odd, since you've been well-behaved enough to have your own room for some time now. You were also in restraints - odd again. A nurse came into the room with a wheeled cart, and began going around switching each of the IV bags, taking down empties and putting up full ones. You tried to get her attention when she came near, but she didn't seem to even understand what you were saying. She was covered in dark bruises - at least on her face and arms. That was when you became certain that your hypothesis about aliens was correct, and in a not very well calculated outburst whispered your offer to help them take over the world and kill anyone in their way. She still ignored you, and as the new bag was put onto your IV, you fell back into a drugged stupor.

## **6. Vincent Gilhoulie, Businessman**

You've been at the Sonderberg Institute for about six months so far. Why? Because your wife was afraid you would divorce her and leave her with a measly six-figure yearly allowance. Rather than give up the life you made her accustomed to, she had to convince a doctor you were paranoid and have you put away. You wonder how much money she had to give the shrink to get him to sign the papers, and hope it wasn't too much, since it will be a waste - you're pretty sure you can eventually convince Dr. Benedict that you're perfectly fine. You haven't been trying directly to convince her so far, since the very protestation of sanity would be seen as a sign of insanity - making this a very difficult game indeed. Of course, once you're out, you'll have to deal with your bitch of a wife, but at least she showed

initiative.

Skills: Business, strategy, manipulation of people

Advantage: Drugs go through your system faster than normal.

Drawback: Paranoid

You've been in and out of a drugged stupor for a couple of days. You figure the only reason you've been awake at all is that they - whoever they are, since they can't be doctors or they'd have figured out what they're doing wrong - didn't bother to check your chart and see that you had a high resistance to most common sedatives. Probably came from all that crap your wife was pumping into you while she tried to drive you bonkers. Anyway, sometime in the night - maybe last night, but you're not sure - you were awake when the nurse came in to change the IVs again. You didn't let on you were awake - better to hide any advantage you might have, so you didn't even open your eyes - but as she moved around the room, you heard someone talking to her. It was just a whisper, so you couldn't even tell if it was male or female, but whoever it was was offering to help her "take over the world and kill everyone". You knew there were other loonies locked up in the room with you, but you'd never heard anyone who sounded that frighteningly dangerous. You didn't hear anything else, not even a reply from the nurse, before she connected the new IV bag to your drip and you passed out.