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Introduction

This adventure uses the *GURPS Black Ops* setting. Game Masters running conspiracy, secret-agent or Mythos campaigns under a different setting or mechanics may be able to adapt it to their needs. Those intending to play characters in *A Minor Emergency* should not read past *The Mission*.

History

In its half-century of exploring and destroying the paranormal, the Company has dealt with bizarre circumstances more often than not. Things often happen that “never could happen,” but not all of these originate in the shadowy world of Greys and evil psis. Two of the Company’s own black ops, Nolan and Mia Mathers, created one of the stranger crises in 1985. They announced that they planned to have a child.

This, to say the least, violated Company policy. From day one, ops have been under orders to avoid procreation unless assigned one of the handful of outside secret identities requiring a family as cover. Neither of the Mathers – who had been romantically involved for about two years at the time – could claim this loophole. Both also were valued, veteran agents who graduated from the Academy in 1982. Nolan had forged a reputation in the Combat department with his macho charm and knife-across-the-throat tactics. Science op Mia’s colossal, no-nonsense intellect and huge telepathic potential had set her apart – though her cold manner and inability to communicate with Greys limited her standing among her fellow active ops and the administration, respectively.

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Neither backed down from their stated intention to have a child, and Mia was already entering her second trimester. The situation might have gone unsalvaged except for Mia's trump card: she intended to train the child, from birth, to become a black op. Her genes and Nolan's, combined with a lifetime of training, could create a superagent to put even the incredible black ops to shame, she argued.

Tempted with this proposal, the Company blinked first. The Mathers avoided disavowal, though they did endure punitive grief to show other ops that no further exceptions to the childbearing policy would get by – at least, until the Mathers experiment produced results. Mia gave birth to a boy on Dec. 16, 1985. She named him Dexter; many an op has argued whether it represents the one bit of humor she's ever displayed. The child's father took to calling him "grunto." His mother took to training him. They made their home at the Lab, the Science-department headquarters beneath the Gulf of Mexico.

The Wonder Years

Till the child reached age 5, things went fairly smoothly. Mia taught Dexter seven languages while he remained a toddler, had him reading by his fourth birthday and promised him geometry lessons as a fifth-birthday present. Nolan contributed a bit to the education, providing a perfect replica of a snubnose .38 as a rattle and teaching Dexter not to tuck his thumb into his fist when punching or into his mouth when teething. Mostly he provided an immense emotional anchor: while Mia did the child-raising, he roared his pride in both to anyone who would listen. Whatever strange bond existed between the outgoing Combat op and the mirthless Science op only deepened as Dexter grew.

Then Dexter started testing his knowledge. Mostly humor sprang from the first incidents, such as a 6-year-old Dexter sneaking a giant cockroach out of the specimen enclosures at the Lab, using a homemade bit and bridle to ride the beast. Mia went into a hygienic frenzy, but the other ops laughed. As the boy aged – and the pranks grew more cunning and inspired – fewer and fewer bystanders found themselves amused. Nor did the victims.

The situation escalated until six months ago, when Dexter, now 12, convinced Combat administrators that the Greys intended to set up a base at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Ohio. Of all his many talents, none had grown more quickly than his expertise in data analysis. Though denied access to Blacknet, the pre-teen had mastered the Internet and other media outlets. He knew how to survey them



all for seemingly innocent factoids that led to a much larger, much darker picture. More importantly, at least for several red-faced Combat ops, he knew how to plant the same sort of information for others to "stumble" across.

This prank got him confined to his room at the Lab, though only after a mission had been assembled and a team formed. Three days later, he disappeared.

The Mission

The Mathers' situation is common Company knowledge; few active black ops are more well-known than Nolan and Mia and everyone's heard of Dexter. Every player should be familiar with the *History* and *The Wonder Years* data in the present day.

The adventure starts when the player characters receive an Omicron summons to a mission briefing on short notice. Once they assemble, a Combat op steps up and announces, "The biggest mystery in the history of the Company just got bigger. Nolan and Mia Mathers have disappeared.

"As most of you know, they've been going crazy trying to figure out what happened to Dexter. Yesterday, Mia failed to show up for a refresher course that was on her schedule. Omicron didn't

turn her up. Nolan was buzzed; he didn't answer, either."

The briefing agent raises one eyebrow and lowers his voice. "Right now, they're not listed as AWOL. This is not a hunter squad. It's a Company decision that their falling outside of normal communications channels does not constitute an emergency sufficient to alert Argus. So Argus doesn't know, and won't until their next regular briefing. The bad news is, that's in a week from yesterday. If you don't have results by then, chances are you'll get yanked and some hard-core secops will have to go looking for scalps.

"We want them back. Find them, hear them out, and convince them to come to their senses. Now it doesn't take a rocket-science op to figure out this has something to do with Dexter. Maybe they found a new lead in his case and decided to handle it themselves. If so, it took them six months. You've got six days."

GMs' Eyes Only

A *Minor Emergency* is designed for flexibility. First, several important details are vague or unaddressed. For instance, is this an official, Company-sanctioned mission or are prominent Combat ops who are loyal to Nolan Mathers staging it "off the books"? The GM can decide what best fits his campaign.

Second, the narrative is presented as a series of climax points, with seeds by which the PCs can reach the next one. Rather than move the players lock-step along the storyline, this attempts to allow their own initiative to shine. A Technology op and an Intelligence op can reach the same point from starkly different directions, or the GM can allow the PCs to go off on a tangent with intent to plug the results back into the modular proceedings.

Finally, this adventure attempts to illustrate the huge potential that any single black op boasts. It purposefully limits lethality – if the PCs don't come away from the mission briefing realizing that they're to ask questions first, shoot as a last resort, then the GM might want to throw a hint their way. They should have to stretch their non-Guns skill, especially their other combat skills if all goes according to plan. Also, their adversaries will illustrate what black ops can do with their abilities, tactics and techniques. Whether the PCs excel or take a beating, they should learn something.

For this last reason, the GM should reserve this adventure until after his PCs have seen a few missions. That will give him time to see where he might best challenge and/or educate them, and make the

subtle pursuit of fellow black ops into the novelty that it should be.

The Locked Rooms

The first step in this mission entails getting an idea – any idea – where the Matherses might have gone. A squad member should realize this most likely hinges upon figuring out where Dexter went.

That's a topic the Company has already investigated to no avail. Even worse, the secops who checked into Dexter's disappearance couldn't even figure out how he got out of his room – much less a Company base submerged in salt water.

The squad should investigate in whatever style it wants, but eventually these actions (taken in Dexter's room at the Lab) will divulge where Dexter went:

- Checking out the history of Dexter's computer usage (and a Computer Operations roll at -10) will reveal that he had been following a series of strange happenings across the U.S. and in a few foreign cities. (An experienced security op who makes an Administration roll will realize the Company is actively pursuing the same investigation, so far without results.)

These happenings comprise several cases of someone finding human skin, usually too decomposed to identify or DNA-test, in out-of-the-way places. Just the skin, nothing else, and never twice in the same area. What the Company and Dexter know is that a missing-persons report invariably was filed within a few miles of the site some time prior to the discovery of the skin.

- Another Computer Operations roll at -5 will reveal that Dexter had hacked into the reservations programs of almost every major airline.

- A Criminology roll will lead an op to check that, indeed, Dexter's searches discovered reservations for trips by every person missing prior to skin-sightings – and all had a common destination: New Orleans.

- An Alertness roll at -5 will notice an old ammo box filled with a huge variety of printouts, news clippings, etc. Going through the clippings will reveal that most of them pertain to a few topics apparently of interest to Dexter.

A roll against Empathy, Psychology-5 or Criminology-8 will make *the back* of one clipping stand out to the ferreting black op: a shipping schedule for the region of the Gulf of Mexico in



which the Lab lies. Several oil tankers passed nearby en route to New Orleans.

● An Administration roll at -7 (-3 for science ops) will recall that all Lab visitors must log in any inventory brought to the base. Dexter was allowed on escorted excursions to the surface world in the past. A check of his log and a Scuba-2, Engineering (Mechanical)-2 or Physics-5 roll will reveal that on different trips he brought back all the components not easily acquired in the Lab of a makeshift scuba outfit.

Similar efforts on the Matherses' trails will reveal nothing. As experienced ops, they're way too good at covering their tracks. Innovative PC techniques could uncover the above information in a different way.

No amount of probing will figure out how Dexter got out of his locked room . . .



The Big Sleazy

These leads should send the squad to New Orleans, a city with enough paranormal history that the Company has printed its own, special guidebook.

Nothing will reveal any trace of the Mathers family, but any of a variety of methods will reveal that New Orleans, very recently, has suffered its own rash of castoff-skin discoveries. (If no one bothers to check, give them a newspaper headline stating, "More Human Skin Discovered.") The PCs should realize for themselves that this deviates from the previous pattern of solitary sightings.

However long they take to get to it, the PCs should realize the futility of tracking the Mathers and focus on the skin sightings. Shortly after they do this, they're attacked.

Random Violence

The GM may use a lot of latitude in laying out the attack, but it should be conducted by several, seemingly random New Orleans residents who shouldn't even know each other. They should use wild overkill (such as walking into a construction-supply outlet, shooting everyone, stealing a case of dynamite, then hours later lobbing the stolen goods at the black ops). They should use tactics meant to ensure they get away, despite the overkill.

Chances are, the squad will survive with ease. The attackers are ordinary folks, after all. Make it very tough for the PCs to capture an adversary in the process, though. (If using the dynamite, they lob it from a balcony of a busy hotel then disappear into the fleeing crowds.) If they don't capture an assailant, they're left shaking their heads (and evading the authorities, who will want to ask a few questions).

If they do capture one, particularly in pieces, they should soon come to realize this is not a human, but an alien creature of apparently human intelligence, externally a perfect replica of some New Orleans resident. The creature can in all ways act human. It will say nothing, just glower, ignore any level of interrogation and await opportunity to escape. Treat it as having roughly average human stats, physically. The Company has never encountered this sort of alien before.

If the squad includes a member with Psi Sense, a successful roll will detect usage of psionic powers at all times during the combat. This may reveal (depending on the roll) that the

power emanates from a direction passing through the northern French Quarter, from a distance indicating said location, that the Telepathy power was in play, that some not-quite-right version of Telesend was used, that the attackers were the recipients of the Telesend and that the psi's personality is . . . if the telepathic black op does this well, they get an overwhelming image of something obscenely *different*, then pass out. If a player objects that this is a *black op* passing out, point out that the result takes into account the character's superhuman conditioning. That's why he's still breathing.

Regardless of the combat results, or how much the squad learns, the attack will make the local news. The Matherses will now know that black ops have tracked them to New Orleans.

Fire and Ice

The Matherses won't know the squad's intentions, a cause for some concern since by Company policy they're subject to immediate execution. They will decide that it's too dangerous to leave a squad of ops on their tails so close to the conclusion of their own work. Therefore, they'll soon ambush the ops themselves, though in less violent fashion.

The GM can use this encounter to school his players a little. If he wants to highlight a mistake they often make, he can have the Matherses take advantage of it; these experienced ops likely will know the details of any PC op's shortcomings. Barring other GM inspiration, they'll set it up in this way:

Nolan will backtrack the squad and begin following them. (Being short on foolishness, he and Mia prepared for this contingency, and invented a short-range "tracker" that stealthily signals and tracks response from the squads' Omicron devices. Since he starts out knowing exactly where the squad was when attacked, he'll likely get within range.) Within a few hours he should be able to discern who is in the squad (after all, he'll know many of the PCs on sight).

Nolan will then contact Mia. With him tracking and coordinating, she'll move ahead of the squad and lie in wait. In disguise, she'll brush past the squad (taking the instant of eye contact she needs) and use her psi powers to read the mind of the target Nolan designated. Likely, he'll select one of the combat ops, as they tend to have the lowest Will scores.

If she reads the target mind and discovers the squad means them no harm (or means to at least talk first), then the couple will set up the ambush

detailed below but stop to talk first. More likely, she'll fail or get partial information, in which case the couple will spring their ambush, then talk to the subdued ops. (Even if the single target op indicates willingness to talk, she won't be confident that the whole squad agrees without a strong Telereceive roll.) If she finds out the squad intends harm, they'll spring the ambush and confine the ops.

If a squad member recognizes her during this attempt, she'll follow roughly the same tactics planned for the ambush while Nolan rushes up from behind and does likewise.

To trigger their ambush, the couple will hustle back to their prepared site, then forge an Omicron-relayed message to the squad from the Company. This will indicate that the Company's own surveillance just picked up someone logging into Blacknet from a phone in the Amalgated Insurance offices on the seventh floor of a downtown office building.

When the squad arrives, they'll discover the seventh is the top floor. What they probably won't discover is that the top three floors have been closed for renovations which have yet to reach the seventh; the Matherses will scam away the workers and remove all evidence except on floors five and six just prior to the squad's arrival. They want a little privacy, and the construction's closing of the stairwells means the squad will have to take the elevator or get real inventive . . .

When the squad reaches the seventh floor, they'll see the insurance office at the end of a narrow (2-hex wide) hall lined with doors. The hall is rigged for video (-10 to vision rolls to notice if anyone thinks to look). If the squad stopped between lobby and seventh floor to swap concealable armor and weapons for real battle gear, the Matherses will be long gone by the time the elevator doors finish opening. If not, once the last squad member passes the second door down, the fun starts.

Mia will pop out of a side door at the far end of the hall. (Not concerned about a fair fight, she and Nolan will be battle-garbed and wearing filtration gear.) Wielding dual Dualshots, she'll strafe the squad with chemical Sleep (see *Black Ops*, p. 115) rounds at maximum rate of fire. She's not trained for dual-weapon use and doesn't much care; she wants to inflict random hits throughout the group. Any head or neck hit or torso hit from the front means the target must roll vs. the sleep agent. Arm hits from the front also require a roll 50 percent of the time.

At the same time, that second door down from the elevator will itself pop out. Nolan has removed the hinges and attached handles to it. He will use it



like a large shield to Slam squad members from the rear (see *Basic Set*, pp. 112-113), continuing to do so if he scores any overruns. Once he fails to overrun, he'll drop the door, Fast-Draw a baton and initiate melee with the nearest ops. The baton does shock damage per *High-Tech*, p. 98, (essentially HT-3 roll to avoid Stun for 20-HT seconds on contact) in addition to normal damage. Note that most hand parries will still suffer the shock effects.

Mia will continue to strafe the party while closing to within her Telepathy's 3-yard range. She'll then use her psionics and Dualshots at the same time, most likely choosing to make Sleep attacks with her mental powers as well. If at any time she feels Nolan or herself is in mortal danger, she'll switch over to her armor-piercing ammo and riddle the offender. Nolan also is carrying his pistol, but won't use it except in the same circumstances. If Mia suffers severe wounds she'll try to Mindswitch with an intact squad member!

If all goes well, the Matherses enjoy excellent odds of subduing the entire squad. Regardless, if the squad minds its manners, one of the two sides will end up bruised but relatively unhurt. If the squad seems at all open to explanation, the Matherses likely will reveal the backstory in hopes of getting their assistance.

The Backstory

The seeds of this outing actually sprang from the Company's sanctions after Mia announced her pregnancy. Aware that they might never enjoy the Company's full trust again, Mia secretly worked on ways to circumvent Omicron (*Black Ops*, p. 21) . . . just in case.

She hacked the device's most basic transmission protocols for the data that allowed her to develop her countermeasure. (This knowledge also served in good stead in tracking and misleading the PC squad.) Her spoofing technology is housed in twin metallic casings worn like football shoulder pads. It jams any incoming radio signals, while feeding the wearer's Omicron device false signals indicating that all is well. The bulky should-

erware has proven inconvenient, but comes closest to ensuring that no nasty Omicron secrets will be revealed on going AWOL.

The melee damaged one of Mia's devices (she slammed it on the door jamb when she started the ambush if she took no other damage), so the Company will soon penetrate her countermeasures and locate its missing ops.

When Dexter disappeared, the Matherses spent months searching for his trail in vain. Then Mia discovered the same information that the squad uncovered, though she had no way to erase it without the very attempt highlighting its existence. Still fearful of Company priorities, the Matherses had already determined they would handle any lead themselves. They left for New Orleans.



As the only overprotective black-op mother in existence, Mia wasted no time in scouring the city for a signal from any of the seven homing devices she'd implanted in Dexter as a newborn. After two days, her instruments located him in the northern French Quarter.

She also detected something else, not with her electronics but her psi. Some powerful, immense-

ly alien consciousness was scanning the area and had found her. This chilled her, for given her utter inability to Telereceive Grey thoughts, she had reason to fear she couldn't act offensively against *any* alien mind.

Still, the Matherses pressed on, tracking Dexter's signal to an immense burial vault in an old cemetery. As they approached, though, a seemingly ordinary groundskeeper jumped them and the psi presence turned hostile, with a frightening power. The black ops carefully retreated, but Nolan tucked their "human" assailant under one arm in the process.

In Nolan's "debriefing" the groundskeeper's alien nature soon revealed itself. Mia's interrogation revealed something even more startling: she could read its mind! She soon ferreted out a horrible truth. This faux human was the offspring of a creature that thought of itself as The Superior. From within the vault, it psionically lured tourists in to be slowly consumed and replaced by its seed. These imitations had been establishing the species across the globe.

Apparently acting on a boyish impulse – or perhaps to regain some good graces with the Company – Dexter had traced the trail left by the Superior's children back to the source. Being far from a fully trained black op, he then failed to avoid being lured into The Superior's maw. Still, Mia's early training had given Dexter an incredible Will, and much to the creature's surprise this made the boy hard to digest. These many months later, Dexter is still just barely hanging on (he has 2 hit points left).

Meanwhile, The Superior learned of the Company and the black ops in its assaults on Dexter's psyche. It immediately began bolstering its defenses by luring every weak-Willed person on which it could lay its psionic tendrils.

By the time that Nolan and Mia had shown up, the earliest of these children had passed the threshold of time they could remain in human form (see *The Superior*, p. 8) and assumed their alien forms. This created the rash of skin sightings that the squad noticed.

Needless to say, the Matherses are in a hurry and a bind. They won't allow the squad to just go in blasting – Dexter is inside the creature, being slowly eaten alive, and wouldn't endure the slightest collateral damage. They will welcome fire support if they can convince the squad to back their own breathlessly risky plan: Mia intends to physically enter the body of The

Superior, then use Mindswitch on Dexter and use this vantage to assault the beast and free her son's body! Nolan will go in with her to pull Dexter out (in Mia's body), kick the crud out of the random internal organ and cut free Mia in Dexter's body if he can.

Should the secop or another member of the PC squad object to this level of hazard, the couple will do what they can to decommission the squad for long enough to see this through, though violence will be a last resort.

Stomaching the Results

With a little luck, the squad will now join the Matherses in this sortie before escorting them back to the Company fold. This can be as detailed or succinct as the GM cares to make it, though the setup allows it to be made a grand battle royale.

The PC ops should be allowed – encouraged even – to pull out all their heavy weapons for this assault. They'll be facing a new and relatively unknown threat. (The insight that Mia gained from the Superior's child won't include anymore detail than was given in the *Backstory*.) They'll also have several more "children" to deal with. The exact number is a GM option, but The Superior's had time to spit out more than 150. These servitors could easily have access to military hardware and tactics. Almost all will have Area Knowledge of New Orleans that the ops likely will be doing without.

This setup offers another chance for the GM to point out any holes in his players' general tactics, given that The Superior may well be telepathically listening in as they draw up their plans. If they overlook a weakness in their operations in general confidence that no one will notice it, now's the time to spring it upon them.

Once the extras have been cleared away, entering the crypt will reveal that The Superior has burrowed out adjacent space for its own bulk; the crypt's roughly 10-by-10 yard area sits directly in front of its mouth. The Superior will challenge the squad with its own physical and psionic attacks, and the GM should reserve some children to further challenge the black ops during the Matherses' assault. Any op who joins the foray into the creature should first have to convince Nolan he won't lose his cool or judgment, and then receive an extra experience point should he survive his bravery.

See *The Superior* (p. 9) for further details.



Fallout

After tackling The Superior, any squad survivors should report back in with any surviving members of the Mathers family. If the mission was staged off the books, a cover-up will present Nolan and Mia as officially investigating the alien creature and the hunter squad as providing support. (The Company could easily pierce this sham, but likely will choose to let it be.) The squad, of course, would have to take part in this charade; doing so will earn the undying loyalty of Nolan, Mia and all of Nolan's fans (who can turn up anywhere).

If the squad was official, Nolan and Mia will earn a royal chewing-out this time, with real question of their being cashiered to retired status . . . or worse. The PCs should receive summons to a shadowy meeting of Argus and be asked for their input on what the Matherses merit. At least one player should be wise enough to suggest mercy. If they don't advise mercy, the Matherses will disappear and all those Nolan fans will hold a long, hard grudge. If they cautiously advise mercy, the couple will be retired. If they enthusiastically endorse the Matherses, they'll retain their active status and the PCs will enjoy the same favor described above.

Dexter, should he survive, will endure the mother of all tongue-lashings from Mia, should she survive. He might show up later in the campaign, aiding the PCs in strange ways.

Guns

On leaving the Company's embrace, Nolan and Mia Mathers didn't opt to discard the Company's technology as well. Along with their other black op gear, they brought along their favorite weapons. These are TL8 Company inventions, and may well exceed the leading weapons research in a given Black Ops campaign. If so, the GM should simply replace them with something suitable.

If the weapons remain in the campaign, the PCs might be given access to them as well, though the

rarity of the discontinued Riprock system can provide a way to limit access to this more abusable ordnance.

Nolan favors the Riprock rifle/pistol tandem while Mia carries two Dualshots in combat situations. For more subtle circumstances, Mia retains a single Dualshot (with the side-mounted clip removed to aid concealment) and Nolan generally uses the other. In rare cases, he might carry the Riprock pistol as well.

These weapons are designed under the *GURPS Vehicles* rules found in the second edition.

The Riprock System

This state-of-the-art electromagnetic weapon system proved a bit too . . . robust . . . even for the black ops. Development was suspended, but a few ops continue to use it. The pistol, in particular, is tactically appalling to many ops given its slow rate of fire, but some make use of it as pocket artillery support.

The 60mm pistol and rifle share the same ammunition, which is individually loaded into internal magazines and weighs 1 pound per round. Each round incorporates its own A cell.

Generally, only explosive rounds are employed (the given statistics assume HEAT), since they weigh less than most kinetic munitions. Both weapons incorporate laser sights.

The Dualshot

This 10mm electrothermal SMG appears to be a large pistol featuring a dual feed (one magazine in the grip and one side-mounted). Ops often carry it with standard or armor-piercing slugs in one magazine and CHEM rounds in the other. These CHEM rounds create a 13"-radius cloud just large enough to reach a human target's nostrils when aimed at the chest (those outside the target hex are unaffected). It incorporates a laser sight.

Empty weight is 2.5 pounds; each 160-shot clip includes its own B cell and weighs 1/2 pound.



Weapons Table

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Dualshot	Ver.	Cr.	2 (2)	10	5	180	2,700	3.5	20	160(×2)	9	-1	\$1,600
w/CHEM	Ver.	Spcl.	per gas	10	5	120	1,800	3.5	20	160(×2)	9	-1	1,600
Riprock:													
Pistol	Ver.	Exp.	60 (10)	12	8	440	3,000	16.5	1/3	3	21	-4	16,400
Rifle	Ver.	Exp.	60 (10)	17	11	440	3,000	30.5	3	9	15	-2	21,800

The Superior

ST: 80-100 **Move/Dodge:** 1 **Size:** 24
DX: 11 **PD/DR:** 3/30 **Weight:** 10-12 tons
IQ: 10 **Damage:** 5d-1 cr **Habitat:** Sub
HT: 13/90+ **Reach:** 3

The Superior (every adult of the species thinks of itself as *The Superior*) is an alien entity intent on stealthily spreading its offspring. The adults average roughly 3 yards wide by 15 yards long. They have a triangular cross-section, with a hard, horny hide of a purple-red color. They possess no motive limbs, simply a pair of 15'-long ST 25 foretendrils ending in pods similar to a jellyfish's poison buds in intent and appearance.

Their vertical mouth commands the creature's entire foresection; it rarely fully closes and can open wide to reveal multiple, tendrillike tongues. Several green eyes overhang each side of this impressive orifice.

Superiors average a Telepathy power of 15, and skill of 16 in Aspect, Psi Sense, Telereceive, Telescan, Telesend and their own special Mind Duplicate skill. They average skill 20 in Mind Shield and Suggest.

Superiors prefer to set up a nest in an urban center, using their ability to crawl at Move 1 and burrow through anything softer than bedrock to make a tight, underground space just big enough to fit The Superior and its prey. This protects most of its length from attack and conceals its activities, which is a primary goal. Despite their incredible psi powers, Superiors try to work subtly, though no one knows whether at some "critical mass" a large Superior population would change its tactics . . .

Once it has established a lair, the creature then uses its psi powers to select and lure prey, preferably humans visiting from abroad. Most victims, upon reaching the lair, roll a Fright Check at -5; this often softens up their psyches for what follows. The Superior shoves the victim into its maw with its foretendrils.

In the mouth, the tongues can shove an unharmed victim into the stomach. Treat as a contest of ST vs. ST 20 each turn; the first contestant to win three more contests than the other wins. If the victim wins, he must scramble back out into the hex in front of the mouth or start a new series of contests. A willing victim can pass through the mouth in two turns.

In the stomach, victims surprisingly find they can see (outside light filters in when the mouth is open at -4 to light conditions in the lair). An adult

stomach averages 2 yards wide by 5 yards long and is equipped with its own tendrils. These attempt to pin victims to the stomach lining. Use the tongue mechanics, except that victims exit *to* the mouth (where they must, of course, battle the tongues again).

Once a victim is pinned to the stomach, enough tendrils ensnare him to ensure physical helplessness.

A Superior can process up to 16 victims at once, though usually they limit themselves to roughly one at a time to minimize their chance of detection.

A Superior can only digest its pinned victim in tandem with using its Mind Duplicate to replicate him. Each day it rolls its Mind Duplicate vs. the victim's Will, doing one point of HT damage for every point by which it succeeds. When its victim reaches HT 0 it dies (and is soon fully digested) and a perfect, alien replica crawls up from further down The Superior's anatomy. This process generally takes a couple of days, but can take much longer. For this reason, Superiors generally try to avoid high-Will victims, unless a nosy one needs to be disposed of anyway.

Victims become physiologically attached to a Superior in the digestion process, and receive nourishment from the creature's body if they hang around long enough to need it. Theoretically, a Superior with several high-Will cases of "indigestion" may need to go through low-Will victims rapidly to keep its nourishment up.

Superiors also avoid eating telepaths. Not only do these psis tend toward strong Will, but the Mind Duplicate process establishes a two-way link treated as Telereceive, at a "roll made by" level equal to the victim's Telepathy power. Unfortunately for the Superior, their bodily control doesn't allow them to just regurgitate a telepath (or anyone else); they must mentally duel them if foolish enough to eat one.

In combat, an adult Superior can use its foretendrils twice per round to bludgeon for 5d-1 damage (don't forget the Knockback, usually aimed at its mouth), or impale with their pods for 2d damage and a further DX-4 and 2d poison damage (both halved on a HT-4 roll). Each pod holds three doses of toxin recharged in an hour each. The toothed maw can do 7d cutting damage to anything in the hex directly before it, though not to anything within it! During the turn of a bite attempt, the mouth and stomach confines are darkened, but a Superior must leave its mouth open for at least one turn after every bite attempt.



The tongues and stomach tendrils possess DR 2, a Dodge of 11 and 10 HP. Severing two will count as winning a Contest of ST in the mouth or stomach. Generally, severing six will free a victim of digestion. The foretendrils claim DR 8, Dodge 9 and 25 HP. The huge DR of body and tendrils suggests their armor is psychically augmented.

A Superior can also command its children in combat. They obey without question, and its usage of psionics upon them is treated as +10 to Power.

These replicas of the victims are pubescent Superiors. They will possess the same attributes as the person they replaced, including memories and skills, except that their IQ won't exceed 10 and they will have Strong Will +10. They will return to the victim's home, maintain the identity long enough to cloud suspicion, then find a quiet place to shed their humanoid skin and slither off to establish a lair and grow to adulthood.

These children can only maintain their human form for 20 × HT days before they must assume their alien form. Once they (literally) shed their human guise, the parent Superior loses its control of them.

Nothing is known of their origin or further intent, since these creatures have just been discovered.

Nolan Mathers

850 points

Age 42; 6'2", 235 lbs.; brown hair cropped short and hazel eyes.

Nolan Mathers has built himself into a Company legend, but as he likes to point out, he's "done it the hard way." With 48 missions under his belt, he ranks among the most experienced active ops, and always leads his squads. His charm and diplomacy make him the favorite for this; his experience and tactical skills make him the best candidate.

Despite his popularity and normally easygoing way, many ops have seen him completely blister someone when the situation called for it. He can transform a veteran op into putty with a few choice words. This ability to switch from silver to acid tongue just adds to his reputation.

Some old hands have even seen Nolan lose his considerable temper. A few have survived to tell about it.

Assume that Mathers knows any of his TL-based skills at the TL appropriate for the campaign. That means that if he retains his TL8 firearms, he would take a -1 penalty with everyday TL7 gear.

ST 21 [120]; **IQ** 16 [80]; **DX** 20 [175]; **HT** 16 [80].

Speed: 9; **Move:** 11*.

Damage: *Thrust 2d; Swing 4d-1*

Dodge: 10*; **Parry:** 15*.

* Includes bonuses for Running and Combat Reflexes; Acrobatics and Body Language skills may further increase Dodge and/or Parry.

Advantages: Alertness +3 [15]; Charisma +2 [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Luck [15]; Patron (The Company; 15 or less) [105]; Reputation (+3 among black ops; always) [5]; Strong Will +5 [20]; Toughness DR 2 [25]; Very Fit [15]; Zeroed [10].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper [-10]; Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20]; Insomniac [-10]; Secret (Black op) [-30]; Sense of Duty (Black ops) [-10]; Sense of Duty ("Family") [-5].

Quirks: Smokes little cigars [-1]; Calls women "honey" when intent is to irritate [-1]; Never stands in front of door when opening it [-1]; Cracks knuckles just before a fight [-1]; Prone to use explosives [-1].

Skills: Acting-16 [2]; Animal Handling-15 [2]; Anthropology-15 [2]; Area Knowledge (Earth)-18 [4]; Armoury (Beam Handguns)-14 [1/2]; Armoury (Hand Weapons)-14 [1/2]; Armoury (Rifles & Handguns)-16 [2]; Armoury (Vehicular Weaponry)-14 [1/2]; Artificial Intelligence-14 [1]; Astronomy-14 [1]; Bard-18 [2]; Beam Weapons (Lasers)-23 [2]*; Bicycling-19 [1/2]; Boating-18 [1/2]; Body Language-16 [4]; Botany-14 [1]; Bow-18 [1]; Boxing-21 [4]; Camouflage-15 [1/2]; Chemistry-14 [1]; Chess-15 [1/2]; Climbing-20 [2]; Computer Operation-16 [1]; Computer Programming-14 [1]; Crossbow-19 [1/2]; Dancing-18 [1/2]; Demolition-17 [4]; Diplomacy-20 [12]; Driving (Automobile)-21 [4]; Driving (Tracked)-21 [4]; Ecology-14 [1]; Electronics (Computers)-15 [2]; Electronics Operation (Communications)-14 [1/2]; Engineer (Bombs and Traps)-15 [2]; Engineer (Combat Engineering)-14 [1]; Engineer (Electrical)-14 [1]; Engineer (Mechanical)-14 [1]; Engineer (Nuclear Weapons)-14 [1]; Explosive Ordnance Disposal-14 [1]; Fast Draw (Pistol)-20 [1/2]† (Sword)-20 [1/2]†; Fencing-18 [1/2]; First Aid-17 [2]; Forward Observer-14 [1/2]; Gambling-16 [2]; Garrote-20 [1]; Geology-14 [1]; Gunner (Machine Gun)-24 [8]*; Guns (Flamethrower)-21 [1/2]*; Guns (Pistol)-25 [8]*; Guns (Rifle)-24 [4]*; Hiking-14 [1/2]; History (specialized: Military and Martial Arts)-14 [1]; Judo-21 [8]; Karate-21 [8]; Knife-20 [1]; Leadership-18 [2]; Literature-

14 [1]; Mathematics-17 [6]; Mechanic (Automobile)-14 [1/2]; Mechanic (Helicopter)-14 [1/2]; Meditation-14 [2]; Mind Block-20 [10]; Motorcycle (Medium and Heavy)-19 [1/2]; Naturalist-15 [2]; NBC Warfare-14 [1/2]; No-Landing Extraction-14 [1/2]; Nuclear Physics-14 [2]; Orienteering-15 [1]; Parachuting-19 [1/2]; Philosophy-14 [1]; Physician-14 [1]; Physics (specialized: Ballistics)-16 [4]; Physiology-14 [2]; Physiology (Grey)-14 [2]; Piloting (Helicopter)-20 [2]; Piloting (Light Airplane)-20 [2]; Poetry-14 [1/2]; Powerboat-18 [1/2]; Professional Skill (Machinist)-14 [1/2]; Psychology (specialized: Combat Psychology)-15 [2]; Psychology (Grey)-14 [1]; Running-16 [4]; Savoir-Faire-15 [1/2]; Scuba-14 [1/2]; Shortsword-22 [8]; Sign Language (AMES-LAN)-14 [1/2]; Skating-18 [1]; Skiing-18 [1]; Spear-18 [1/2]; Speed Load (Clip-loading)-19 [1/2]; Stealth-21 [4]; Strategy-14 [1]; Streetwise-16 [2]; Swimming-19 [1/2]; Tactics-17 [6]; Telegraphy-15 [1/2]; Throwing-18 [1]; Traps-15 [1]; Wrestling-20 [2]; Writing-14 [1/2]; Xenology-14 [1]; Zoology-13 [1/2]

* Includes +2 for IQ.

† Includes +1 for Combat Reflexes.

Martial Arts Maneuvers: Arm Lock-23 [1]; Axe Kick-20 [1]; Back Kick-21 [2]; Choke Hold-20 [1]; Close Combat (Short-sword)-19 [2]; Elbow Strike-20 [1/2]; Eye Gouging-15 [4]; Ground Fighting (Karate)-20 [4]; Head Butt-16 [1/2]; Head Lock-20 [4]; Hit Location (Shortsword)-22 [4]; Jab-21 [2]; Kicking-21 [2]; Roundhouse Punch-20 [1]; Slip-10 [4]; Spinning Punch-21 [2].

Languages: English-16 (native); German-15 [1]; Spanish-15 [1]

Weapons: See *Guns*, p. 8.

Mia Mathers

850 points

Age 38; 5'10", 160 lbs.; brown hair cropped short and blue eyes.

Few of her fellow black ops really want to like Mia Mathers, but some feel they must – and others feel a little afraid to dislike her. As one of the Company's most powerful psis, Mathers holds a certain position of prestige. She cultivates this carefully. Despite her cold, humorless facade, she is a skilled negotiator and deals with others well. She just doesn't do it with warmth.

Regardless of her unique "project," Mia remains in active duty, and fills nearly her share of mission roles. As a science op and psi, she would be spend-

ing less time on missions and more time on research anyway, and she micromanages this time well to fill her more maternal responsibilities.

Her inability to read Grey thoughts limits Mia's use to the Company, and most of her offensive psi options vs. the aliens, but her overall competence counteracts this.

Assume she knows any of her TL-based skills at the TL appropriate for the campaign. That means that if she retains her TL8 firearms, she would take a -1 penalty with everyday TL7 firearms.

ST 14 [45]; **IQ** 20 [175]; **DX** 16 [80]; **HT** 16 [80].

Speed: 8; **Move:** 10*.

Damage: *Thrust 1d; Swing 2d*

Dodge: 9*; **Parry:** 13*.

* Includes bonuses for Running and Combat Reflexes.

Advantages: Alertness +3 [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Patron (The Company; 15 or less) [105]; Strong Will +5 [20]; Toughness DR 1 [10]; Unusual Background (Psionic) [50]; Very Fit [15]; Zeroed [10].

Disadvantages: Cyber-Rejection [-10]; Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20]; Guilt Complex (Dexter) [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Secret (Black op) [-30]; Sense of Duty ("Family") [-5]; Vow (Psi-ops' Code) [-5]; Workaholic [-5].

Psionics: Telepathy Power 12, Eye Contact Only [48]; Aspect-17 [1/2]; Illusion-25, Instantaneous [17]; Mind Shield-20 [4]; Mindswitch-25, Instantaneous [17]; Mindwipe-19 [2]; Psi Sense-18 [1]; Sleep-25, Instantaneous [17]; Telecontrol-20, Instantaneous [5]; Telereceive-25, Instantaneous, Not Vs. Greys [15 1/2]; Telescan-20, Instantaneous [5]; Telesend-20 [4].

Quirks: Favors most questions with blank stare [-1]; Never raises voice [-1]; Tends to lurk at back of any group [-1]; Mildly absent-minded [-1]; Watches Nolan with strange expression when he's not looking [-1].

Skills: Acting-20 [2]; Animal Handling-18 [1]; Anthropology-19 [2]; Area Knowledge (Earth)-22 [4]; Armoury (Hand Weapons)-18 [1/2]; Armoury (Rifles & Handguns)-18 [1/2]; Artificial Intelligence-18 [1]; Astronomy-18 [1]; Bard-18 [1/2]; Bicycling-15 [1/2]; Biochemistry-20 [8]; Boating-14 [1/2]; Botany-18 [1]; Bow-14 [1]; Boxing-16 [2]; Chemistry-19 [2]; Chess-20 [1]; Climbing-15 [1]; Computer Operation-19 [1/2]; Computer Programming-19 [2]; Crossbow-15 [1/2]; Dancing-14 [1/2]; Demolition-18 [1/2]; Diplomacy-20 [4]; Disguise-20 [2]; Driving (Automobile)-16 [2]; Driving (Tracked)-15 [1]; Ecology-19 [2]; Electronics (Computers)-23 [12]; Electronics Operation (Communication)-18 [1/2]; Electronics Operation (Medical)-18 [1/2];

Electronics Operation (Security Systems)-18 [1/2]; Electronics Operation (Sensors)-18 [1/2]; Engineer (Electrical)-18 [1]; Engineer (Mechanical)-18 [1]; Fencing-14 [1/2]; Gambling-18 [1/2]; Geology-20 [4]; Gunner (Machine Gun)-20 [8]*; Guns (Flamethrower)-17 [1/2]*; Guns (Pistol)-20 [4]*; Guns (Rifle)-19 [2]*; History-18 [1]; Judo-18 [16]; Karate-17 [8]; Knife-17 [2]; Leadership-18 [1/2]; Literature-18 [1]; Mathematics-19 [2]; Mechanic (Automobile)-18 [1/2]; Mechanic (Helicopter)-18 [1/2]; Metallurgy-17 [1/2]; Mind Block-21 [4]; Motorcycle (Medium and Heavy)-16 [1]; Naturalist-19 [2]; Orienteering-18 [1/2]; Parachuting-15 [1/2]; Paraphysics-20 [8]; Philosophy-18 [1]; Physician-18 [1]; Physics-20 [4]; Physiology-18 [2]; Physiology (Brainsucker)-

17 [1]; Physiology (Grey)-18 [2]; Piloting (Helicopter)-15 [1]; Piloting (Light Airplane)-15 [1]; Poetry-19 [1]; Powerboat-14 [1/2]; Psychology-20 [4]; Psychology (Grey)-18 [1]; Research-20 [2]; Running-16 [4]; Savoir-Faire-19 [1/2]; Scuba-18 [1/2]; Shortsword-14 [1/2]; Sign Language (AMESLAN)-18 [1/2]; Skating-14 [1]; Skiing-14 [1]; Spear-14 [1/2]; Stealth-16 [2]; Streetwise-18 [1/2]; Swimming-15 [1/2]; Tactics-18 [1]; Teaching-24 [10]; Telegraphy-19 [1/2]; Throwing-14 [1]; Wrestling-15 [1]; Writing-18 [1/2]; Xenology-18 [1]; Zoology-18 [1]

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Languages: English-20 (native); German-19 [1]; Latin-19 [1]

Weapons: See *Guns*, p. 8.



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