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AT YOUR SERVICE



OVER THE EDGE
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Table of Contents

Ahmad's Computer Shack 222A Plaza of Science Science Barrio	5	Giancarlo & Sons, Attorneys at Law 45 Ivy Street East Broken Wings Barrio	34
The Apothecary 1705 Dump Street Great Men Barrio.....	6	The Haunted House 374 John Dee Lane Sunken Barrio	37
Beautiful Day 120 Cali Street Great Men Barrio.....	9	Hell in a Handbasket 117 Cali Street Great Men Barrio.....	40
Bodega - Coffee, Cigarettes, Beer 1685 Dump Street Great Men Barrio.....	11	The House of Strauss 2702 Pogrom Lane Four Points Barrio	42
The Cali Dump Intersection of Dump St. and Cali St. Great Men Barrio.....	12	Johnson's Divinations 116B Cali Street Great Men Barrio.....	44
China House Restaurant 155 Sunken Plaza Sunken Barrio	22	Mandala 118 Cali Street Great Men Barrio.....	46
Deadly Confessions 23 Sapphire Court Broken Wings Barrio	24	The Marzipan Gallery 180 Plaza of Broken Wings, Suite 620 Broken Wings Barrio	48
The Egress Reading Room 116A Cali Street Great Men Barrio.....	27	Morphine 113 Cali Street Great Men Barrio.....	51
Fleur de Lys Investments, Ltd Bienvenidos Hotel, Room 528 Flowers Barrio.....	29	Norms 240 Vistaview Road The 'Burbs	55
Gernsback & Malloy, Private Investigators 22B Bleaker Lane Great Men Barrio.....	32	The Numbers Game 2418 Solomon Street Golden Barrio	57

Table of Contents [Continued]

The Old Sod's Club 227 Woodhouse Lane Justice Barrio59	Used Stuff 1210 Offal Lane Four Points Barrio91
Patrino Bros. Barber Shops Four Locations in Flowers, Science, Golden and Justice Barrios61	Valentine, Collector 22A Bleaker Street Great Men Barrio.....93
Pike's Diner 1700 Dump Street Great Men Barrio.....62	Veve 1680 Dump Street Great Men Barrio.....95
The Post Building 114 Cali Street Great Men Barrio.....65	VideoSmart 900 Bend Street Sunken Barrio97
Rainbow Mini Mart 129 Plaza of Justice Justice Barrio66	The Waste Land Exact Location Undetermined.....99
The Rose Hotel (Location Varies)68	The Wind Farm 32 Victory Highway Outside the Edge102
The Tangle / Botanical Tours Southeast of the Edge, near Republic Road and 7th of October Hwy87	Yesterday's News 126 Solomon Street Golden Barrio104
Turn Your Head and Coffee 98 Euclid Avenue Science Barrio89	You'll Rot Your Mind Reading That! 100 Rose Lane Flowers Barrio.....108
Indexes	110

The Apothecary

Type: Corner bar

Rep: A quiet place, good for a drink and a bit of gossip. The Apothecary is completely unknown outside the Cali neighborhood and the Mystic S*** community.

Brief: The main watering hole for the Cali Dump, and as such an excellent source of magical news or information. The owner, Nikkal, acts as an arbiter for local disputes.

Address: 1705 Dump Street, Great Men Barrio



The Apothecary is the social center of the Cali Dump (see p. 12 for more information on the Cali neighborhood). It appears to be an unremarkable corner bar — a quiet place where the locals come to chat and share a drink. The lighting is dim, and the walls and fixtures are plain, dark wood. Outsiders typically receive a cold reception, but as soon as the characters become known in the neighborhood people will open up a bit. It's certainly not as fancy as Chateau Melmoth, but the regulars here know the supernatural world like the back of their hands; if there's something strange going through the ether, a player can probably pick up a bit of dirt here.

The Apothecary has three full-time employees. The bartender is an overweight Cuban man who goes by the name of Duke. He claims to be the trapped spirit of a Duke of Hell, former commander of legions of the damned; once he knows someone, he'll talk for ages about all the campaigns he's been through. Whether or not these stories are true, he does have a good head for military tactics and an impressive knowledge of demonology — he takes a lot of pleasure in baiting any poseur Satanists that happen by the bar. He also mixes a fine selection of drinks, his favorite being something he calls "Danny's Inferno." The busboy is a young Asian man called Grim, who never speaks; in addition to keeping the place clean, he also does bookkeeping for the bar. He may be a completely mundane individual who has taken a vow of silence, he may be a bound spirit of some sort, or he may just have nothing to say; it's up to you.

The most important person at the Apothecary is the owner, Nikkal Broxmeyer. She occasionally tends bar to

give Duke a break, but most of the time she just hovers around the Apothecary, listening to people who wish to talk and spreading an aura of peace even when she sits in silence. Nikkal is the widow of Eli Broxmeyer, a Jewish scholar and sculptor who came to Al Amarja shortly after World War II. Eli seemed to have been somewhat deranged by his experiences in the Nazi concentration camps, but he was a kindly soul and didn't cause any trouble. He kept to

himself, working on his sculptures, trying to raise enough money to bring his wife over. Eventually he did manage to bring Nikkal to the island; unfortunately, they were only together for a short time before he died of a sudden heart attack. Nikkal invested their mutual savings in the Apothecary, and the rest is history.

At least that's the story. Some of it is even true. Of course, Eli's wife was dead long before he came to Al Amarja. Eli had always been a student of the occult, and during the early days of the war he had considered building a golem — a mystical guardian that would protect the ghetto from Nazi oppressors. His friends and family ridiculed the idea, and he abandoned it — with disastrous results. In Al Amarja, he set out to finish the task he felt he should have completed before. He hoped to call back his wife's spirit, while at the same time creating a guardian that would protect people from harm should terror ever rise again. However, Eli was not a traditional Kabbalist in any sense of the word; he had studied the ancient lore, but he was driven more by his own deranged visions than by adherence to the mystic traditions of his people. On some level, he may have realized that his quest was a fool's dream; this would explain why he had a heart attack when his creation suddenly sprang to life and began haranguing him.

The being that is now known as Nikkal was once an Akashta, an extradimensional entity with a cruel sense of humor. She happened to be drifting through the ether in the vicinity of Al Amarja when she caught a glimpse of the old man mooning over his stone woman. While his work was highly unconventional, Eli had crafted a form that was

perfectly designed for spiritual animation, and the Akashta decided to enter the statue, have a little fun with the old man, and then warp over to Hades for lunch. In truth, she never intended to kill Eli. She also didn't plan on being caught by the Pyx (see p. 13) and trapped in the artificial body. And most of all, she didn't anticipate the effect that the body itself would have on her. Eli had literally poured his heart and soul into his work, and the statue was imbued with a mystical purity that was beyond blemish. Trapped within the statue, the trickster spirit was slowly transformed into the guardian Eli had envisioned. She mourned the senseless death of Eli; not knowing what else to do, she cremated his body and sold the ashes to Valentine. In exchange, Valentine helped her to start up the Apothecary. In the decades that have followed, she has worked to protect Cali in all the ways available to her. While this has occasionally involved physical violence, she has proven to be far more effective as a mediator and voice of reason. Her mystic immunity generally places her outside of danger, and her background makes her an ideal intermediary between the spirits and the mortal inhabitants of the neighborhood. The people of Cali look to her as a community leader, and bring disputes to her for judgement. Occasionally, matters beyond Cali are brought to her attention; she is seen as an impartial expert on magical conflicts, and sorcerers and shamans across the island will occasionally request her ruling.

Nikkal still mourns for poor Eli, and this — along with her fundamentally inanimate nature — has prevented her from becoming too close to anyone over the decades. Of course, she has had other troubles to deal with. The Akashta are not supernatural spirits in the sense that Nekroi and demons are, and they can pass through the Pyx without difficulty. For the last few decades Nikkal has been a laughing stock amongst her people. She has had to endure a constant stream of invisible mockery and taunting from old foes among the Akashta. She has borne this assault with patience and dignity, slowly researching spells of binding; these efforts finally bore fruit recently, when she was able to perfect a ritual to bind Akashta to physical objects within the Dump. This has resulted in peace of mind for her, but it has had a few unexpected side effects — see Morphine (p. 51) for details.

GMCs

Nikkal Broxmeyer

Apothecary Owner and Community Pillar

In person, Nikkal is a quiet woman who radiates a strong aura of inner peace. She is beautiful, but it's an old standard of beauty; reubenesque, with long dark hair and finely crafted Semitic features. One of her more distinguishing features is a complex tattoo on her tongue, one of the mystic sigils that binds her spirit to the golem. While she does not appear to be inanimate, her skin is cold to the touch and she never sweats. It may also be noticed that she does not eat or drink. She also hasn't aged a day in forty years; of course, this isn't obvious to an outside observer, and the people of Cali are used to this sort of thing. In general, she has a cool, dispassionate demeanor, but she is always gentle when dealing with others, even when she is restraining a violent psychopath in the Apothecary.

Semitic woman apparently in her early thirties. 170 cm, 150 kg (unnaturally heavy!), long black hair and dark brown eyes. Typically wears simple black clothing.

Attack: 5 dice, X2 Damage (Incredible Strength)

Defense: 5 dice

Hit Points: 50 (Flesh is stone beneath the skin)

Armor: 1 die

Languages: English, Hebrew, Spanish, German

Traits

Golem, 5 dice — Nikkal was created to protect the Dump, and she has adapted to this task. She is a tremendously powerful unarmed combatant, combining superhuman strength and speed with rock-hard flesh and an iron will. That said, she does not like to engage in physical combat and will try to end things as quickly and painlessly as possible. She may use this trait to defend against any sort of supernatural attack or influence. She is sensitive to the presence of magic in her vicinity, and can also sense and communicate with noncorporeal spirits. The final feature of this trait is a general intuition concerning threats to the Dump. Again, you will have to decide how specific this ability is, depending on your needs. It may be that she occasionally gets cryptic, dreamlike visions that may be misinterpreted; or, she may have a much more reliable sixth sense that alerts her to dangerous actions throughout the neighborhood. As a basically inanimate entity, Nikkal

sleeps rarely and only eats once a month or so. She is highly resistant to the effects of poisons, drugs, or disease. (Inhumanly perfect features, skin is cold to the touch)

Mediator, 4 dice — Nikkal has spent decades settling disputes in the Dump. She has a strong sense of empathy that lets her identify with both parties and helps her see through deceptions. She is skilled at seeing to the core of a problem, making a wise decision, and convincing the parties involved to accept her ruling. In general, she is a charismatic and accomplished speaker. Note, however, that this trait only helps her when she is acting impartially; she is not a particularly talented liar. (Voice is clear and compelling)

Mystical Knowledge, 4 dice — Aside from her decades in the Dump, Nikkal has centuries of experience as an Akashta to draw upon. She is familiar with a wide range of mystical traditions and spirits. Her knowledge is more theoretical than practical; she can cast minor bindings or rituals if she spends a lot of time studying, but she is not a practicing sorcerer. (Speaks knowledgeably about occult affairs)

*Aura of Peace**, 3 dice — Nikkal radiates an infectious aura of sanctity and inner peace. This will not halt a combat that is already in progress, but while in her immediate presence people must roll against this trait (using willpower, magic resistance, etc. or 2 die default) in order to behave in an aggressive manner. This affects everyone around her, including her allies. She may start a fight, but any hostile actions on her part immediately cancel the effects of this trait. (Always calm and serene)

Bound to Cali, Downside — Like many of the supernatural residents of the area, Nikkal is bound by the Pyx and cannot leave the Cali Dump. But even if the Pyx were removed, it is questionable if Nikkal would be freed. At the core of her being, she is bound to Cali and dedicated to serve as its defender. Aside from limitations on her movement, she cannot sit idly by and let harm come to the neighborhood. She must act to defend it, although she typically prefers to try to find peaceful or indirect means to these ends instead of resorting to physical violence. (Rarely leaves the Apothecary)

Story Ideas

The Apothecary is a good place for players to pick up news about upcoming mystical events, or to find clues

about supernatural plotlines that they can't figure out. Nikkal can also be used to generate a variety of stories. Nikkal's primary concern is to protect the Dump. This does not mean that she will interfere with every violent act in the neighborhood; on the contrary, she attempts to remain outside of disputes between locals unless she is specifically brought in as a mediator. She becomes concerned only if a threat arises that could endanger the entire community — or if there is a one-sided threat, like a vampire that is secretly preying on other inhabitants of the Dump without their knowledge. If she has unconfirmed suspicions, she may ask others to investigate on her behalf (if your players would not serve in this capacity, she would probably turn to Leo Gernsback for assistance). Likewise, she may have to turn to outsiders for aid if there is a threat to the Dump that originates from outside of the neighborhood — like the CPC spirit eradicator described under the Cali Loa (p. 16). A few specific ideas:

- Sir Arthur Compton has begun to piece together the nature of the Pyx and is working to buy the ruins of the Hello Macaroni cookie factory (p. 12). Nikkal is concerned about what Compton might be able to do if the factory was in his possession, but cannot leave Cali to deal with Compton.
- The CPC dumps a particularly vile piece of trash in the neighborhood. This is a hostile entity that possesses human bodies; when it dies, it immediately possesses another body (you can decide how much choice it has in the selection). To make matters worse, in can induce death in its current host in order to escape imprisonment. The entity is violent and sociopathic by nature, and while it cannot leave the Pyx, it would be happy to systematically work its way through every human in the Dump. Can Nikkal and the players find some way to deal with this dangerous scrapper?
- Nikkal wants to get Eli's ashes back from Valentine, but the collector won't make a deal. She asks the players to help her, either by stealing the ashes or by acquiring something that Valentine would be willing to trade for.
- Now that she possesses the power to bind them, the Akashta are afraid of Nikkal. They may ask the players to destroy her for them — or they may empower a group of Glorious Lords to carry out this task, and the players happen to get in the way.

Beautiful Day

Type: Magical supply store

Rep: Reliable, as long as you're into New-Age/Celestine nonsense.

Brief: A harmless shop that deals in the components of white magic.

Address: 120 Cali Street, Great Men Barrio



A beautiful wooden sign sits over the door of this mystical grocery, located in the heart of the Cali Dump (see p. 12). The sign is an oval, painted deep blue; in the center, a golden sun with three eyes beams benevolently over the neighborhood. The smiling visage of the sun imparts a feeling of goodwill in all who look upon it. Miraculously, the sign has remained intact over the years, although the owner has had to repaint it a few times following Satanist raids.

Beautiful Day is a basic magical supply store. Its shelves are stocked with crystals, candles, powdered essences, bundles of herbs, and many other odds and ends. None of this material is inherently magical in and of itself; however, many forms of ritual magic cannot be performed without such materials. Beautiful Day only stocks components that can be used in positive rituals and white magic. There is also a large shelf containing a selection of Karla Sommers tapes and a variety of used books, mostly well-worn tomes with titles like *Blessings from the Space Gods* and *Releasing the Healing Power Within*. There is also a small café set up in one corner — a few tables, where people can sit and enjoy the vegan soup of the day.

The owner of Beautiful Day is a woman named Agnetha Little. As a newborn, Agnetha was possessed by an alien emissary sent to Earth as part of a cultural exchange program. In theory, Agnetha's soul would be raised on a distant world within the Pleiades and then sent back to Earth bearing a message of peace and intergalactic harmony. Meanwhile, the alien soul would lie dormant within Agnetha, learning about Earth, and the two races would grow closer on a spiritual level. Unfortunately, Agnetha's parents passed through Cali (see p. 13) when she was only a baby; the alien spirit was trapped in her body, and her own soul could not be returned to her unless the Pleiadean soul was first removed. Of course, Agnetha herself has no

knowledge of this. Her alien memories lie suppressed deep within her, manifesting only in her marked preference for sappy New Age spiritualism and her unusual way of viewing the world.

After visiting Cali, her wealthy parents found that somehow, they could not bring

themselves to take their daughter away from the neighborhood. They managed to create a valid justification for this in their minds; they paid a kindly Wiccan to look after her, and helped her to establish her own business once she was old enough. As she was growing up, she discovered the good tunes of Karla Sommers; although she cannot leave Great Men, she has otherwise been as active as possible within the Sommerite community.

GMCs

Agnetha Little

Star Child

Agnetha is a tall, willowy woman who almost seems to be an albino at first glance. She has a very pale complexion and straight silver-blond hair that falls past her waist. Her irises are clear white and are slightly luminescent (the only visible sign of her alien soul); she typically wears small round sunglasses to cover this unusual feature. She is fond of smoking fragrant cigars blended with herbs that are supposed to be pleasing to spirits and good for the soul; she likes to say that she is spreading "secondhand love." Her voice is surprisingly deep and resonant; she has a peaceful, cheery manner that is very engaging.

Caucasian woman in her late twenties. 184 cm, 63 kg. Long silver-white hair, white eyes. Gentle, spiritual. Typically wears plain white dresses or faded blue denim.

Traits

Spiritual Vision, 3 dice* — As a result of her alien heritage, Agnetha has a unique way of seeing the world; she sees the spirit of things as much as the flesh. In a sense, this is a stronger form of the *Aura Sight* fringe power that is

constantly in effect. With her strange vision Agnetha can see emotional moods, fluctuations in psychic energy, and unnatural disruptions in a person's mental state. Of course, this power didn't come with an instruction manual and she may jump to the wrong conclusions about the things that she sees; use her die roll to get a sense of how effectively the power has worked. (Looks at you with great sympathy when you are having a bad day)

New-Age Nonsense, 4 dice — Agnetha has spent most of her youth studying white magic and New Age mysticism. She knows the powers of crystals, the inner secrets of aromatherapy, and all fifteen Celestine Insights. It's up to you to decide whether any of this knowledge has any practical use or it's entirely fluff and entertainment. (Very concerned about "negative energy")

Empathy, downside — Perhaps as a result of her spiritual vision, Agnetha is highly empathic and tends to feel the emotions of the people who she sees. She is very uncomfortable observing acts of violence or hatred and may develop migraines or worse if she is forced to remain in areas with high levels of negative emotion. (Winces when you stub your toe)

Story Ideas

Beautiful Day is a fairly harmless location. If the players are practicing mystics they may make use of the shop's inventory; otherwise it's primarily a color location. On the other hand, it can tie into any existing Sommerite plotline

you are running. Agnetha can serve as an expert on New Age phenomena if such a character is required. She may also notice unusual things about a player through her spirit sight; warning signs of Throckmorton domination, indications of a lurking curse or the like.

Other possibilities depend on the nature of the aliens who performed the soul-switch on Agnetha. Perhaps they aren't so peaceful after all, and the theft of Agnetha's soul was actually an act of espionage. Ways in which this might unfold include:

- The Pleiadeans are troubled by the apparent loss of their emissary. They may send agents to Al Amarja to retrieve her; if these agents are true aliens (as opposed to possessing spirits), they would be immune to the effects of the Pyx (see p. 13). These agents would first try to remove Agnetha from Cali; failing that, they might decide to kill her in order to free the trapped spirit.
- The Pleiadeans could be at war with the Kergillians — or any other alien race that is active in your campaign. These aliens might recognize Agnetha as a Pleiadean espionage agent.
- Agnetha's alien soul is actually transmitting data back to the Pleiadeans. As a result, they have become entranced by the Good Tunes of Karla Sommers. A Pleiadean force comes to Earth and swears fealty to Karla, or attempts to kidnap her so that she may spearhead their crusade to spread peace and love across the galaxy.

Bodega — Coffee, Cigarettes, Beer

Type: Corner store

Rep: The Bodega has no reputation outside the Cali Dump (p. 12). Within Cali, it's a convenient place to get supplies, although the owner is certainly odd.

Brief: A small convenience store. The owner is a paranoid man who believes that the layers of food shield him from hostile spirits.

Address: 1685 Dump Street, Great Men Barrio

The Cali Dump is home to a great many individuals who cannot leave the neighborhood (see the description of the Pyx, p. 13). With such a large captive audience to support, this little grocery does remarkably good business. Not that you'd be able to tell by looking at it; the owner has not invested any of his finances into redecorating the dingy interior, and the windows are barred and blacked out. However, what the Bodega lacks in appearance it makes up for in inventory. The store carries a surprisingly wide variety of merchandise, a selection to match any grocery on the island. The interior of the shop is crammed full of goods to an extent that it is somewhat difficult to move about the store. To further complicate matters, the owner has arranged all of his wares according to some incomprehensible system that only makes sense to him. In addition, amidst the modern wares there are a wide selection of ancient canned goods, many dating back decades. Still, while it may take a while to find it, most basic conveniences can be tracked down at the Bodega.

GMCs

The Bodega Owner (José Calderon)

Paranoid Shopkeeper

The owner of the Bodega is a little Hispanic man who will not reveal his name (José Calderon) to anyone. He

wears extremely bright Hawaiian shirts and has an amazing amount of nervous energy; he is constantly bustling around the store rearranging things. He is incredibly paranoid; he has a bizarre belief that his odd system of arranging merchandise somehow serves as a psychic mask that hides him from his enemies. He is tremendously fond of mambo music, and usually has old mambo recordings blasting through the store. While he has an apartment above the Bodega, he hates to leave the store; he tends to sleep there, although his daughter Roxana (p. 50) occasionally makes him come upstairs. It's unclear exactly what he is so afraid of; by some accounts he used to be a black marketeer, while others say that he is worried about the spirits of people he killed in his youth. You'll have to decide the truth of these rumors yourself.

Hispanic man, age 65, 157 cm, 75 kg. Balding, short gray hair and mustache. Wears bright clothing.

Story Ideas

The Bodega is the primary location to get basic goods in Cali, and it serves to add to the local color. Additional stories could arise depending on the history you assign to José. Was he a black marketeer, and if so, what did he sell? Why is he on the run? What sort of strange goods does he have stored in the basement of his little grocery?

Alternately, if players get deeply involved in trying to unravel the mystery of the Bodega, you could always decide that José is simply mad and that no one is after him at all.



The Cali Dump

José carefully rearranged the display of refried beans. It was very important to keep the labels of the cans facing towards the wall to provide insulation against those who might be seeking his name — but someone kept turning the beans around. As he turned the cans, one began to pulse slowly, as if the beans within were straining against the rusting metal and seeking to burst forth. José sighed and looked away, and eventually the unquiet can settled down.

A dissonant jangling warned José that he had a customer. He felt an involuntary shiver of dread — was it *them?* — until he caught sight of the figure, an arthritic old lady with a terrible stoop. Old Linda, coming by for her Depends.

“Good afternoon, Señora. Is it the usual for you, then?” He asked politely. The sooner she left, the sooner he could get back to his work.

“I want to go hooooome!” she moaned, twisted her head back and forth. Linda had an amazingly flexible neck; this twisting motion was a sort of tic with her. “I’m cold! It wasn’t supposed to be cold.”

José sighed and hurried for the diapers. Beyond the painted windows of the Bodega, he heard the sounds of a few of the Drogues debating religion with some Lucy who had pushed his luck a little too far. Just another day in the Dump ...

The Cali Dump is a neighborhood in the Great Men Barrio, an area of a few square blocks surrounding the intersection of Dump Street and the smaller Cali Street. At a glance, there is little about this intersection to make it stand out from the rest of the barrio. What it lacks in street violence it makes up for in wandering schizophrenics. And while there are a surprising number of thriving businesses on Cali, all the idle passerby is likely to notice is the peeling paint and crumbling masonry. The sidewalk is cracked and littered with rubble from condemned buildings. Just another stretch of wretched road.

It’s only if one stays around for a while that the true character of the neighborhood begins to emerge. The Dump is a nexus for minor supernatural events. Things never get out of control, but there is an almost constant

flurry of poltergeist or gremlin phenomena. Walls bleed, small objects move, mechanical devices break down. Voices whisper just beyond the range of hearing. The area acts as a supernatural roach motel; spirits of certain classes that pass through the neighborhood find that they cannot leave it. Both the CPC and the Neutralizers have spent a great deal of time investigating the phenomena, but to no avail; and since it seems to be a contained effect, neither organization is particularly concerned about it. In fact, both groups occasionally use Cali as a spiritual dumping ground, a place to dispose of troublesome spirits that have been temporarily contained.

History

In the days before the liberation of Al Amarja by Her Exaltedness Monique D’Aubainne, Great Men was a thriving community. The mainstay of the Cali area was the Hello Macaroni Company, a cookie factory owned by a Finnish businessman named Aton Saremoenen. But Saremoenen had many interests that were not financial in nature. He was a sorcerer, obsessed with extending his own life, and the Hello Macaroni Company was just a means to that end. Eventually he made a deal with a particularly unpleasant demon, and during the chaos of the war he destroyed his own factory. Four hundred and eighteen immigrant workers were killed in this tragedy. With the aid of his unholy ally, Saremoenen bound their spirits to the ruins of the factory and to his own soul. He stole their lives from them; now he lives through them, living the years that each worker would have had. Through this process he transmutes the spirits into a form his demonic ally can claim — he is selling their souls, one life at a time.

What Saremoenen did not realize was that the spirits would remain conscious during their imprisonment — bound to the factory and its immediate environs, but still vaguely aware and able to affect the physical world. He quickly moved elsewhere to avoid the wrath of these imprisoned ghosts, and thus he never found out about the other effect of his ritual — the field that surrounded the

Ahmad's Computer Shack

Type: Computer sales and repair shop

Rep: Good place to buy a computer or software. Fair prices on repairs, too.

Brief: Besides being a good computer store, this is also a meeting place for Al Amarja's hackers and phreaks.

Address: 225A Plaza of Science, Science Barrio



Ahmad's shop is a small two room place, with the front room being the sales area and the smaller back room being the service area. Although he doesn't stock a huge line of computers, Ahmad does offer a wide range of software and computer magazines. His prices are lower than many of the larger computer stores, so he does a pretty good amount of business. He is also much in demand as a repairman and usually has several computers in the back awaiting his attention. Finally, Ahmad provides internet access via ShackNet. He charges a flat \$10.00 a month.

There are always several computer geeks hanging out in the shop. Most are friends with Ahmad and some even assist him on repairs or the installation of customer's computers. All of Ahmad's pals are part of the hacker underground, as is Ahmad. If you hang around long enough, you can learn quite a bit about computers and programming.

Store Hours: 9 AM until 9 PM every day except Monday. All credit cards gladly accepted.

During his time on the island, Ahmad has hacked into lots of databases and has learned just how strange some things are in the Edge. There are sites he returns to, sites he tells other hackers about, and sites that scared him so bad he will never mention them again.

Ahmad and his friends have formed an underground group known as the Pranksters of Love. The meet both online and in person to exchange ideas, check out pirated software and generally exchange techno gossip. So far, they haven't drawn much attention from the Peace Force or anyone in a position of power, but all it takes is hacking the wrong site and that could change.

Arab man, 25 years old, 181cm, 68 kg, long black hair, brown eyes, glasses, thin build, wears T-shirts and jeans

Languages: Arabic, English, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Computers, 4 dice — From building and repairing computers to hacking into government databases, Ahmad can do it. (Constantly uses cyber slang)

Contacts in the Computer Underground, 4 dice — Ahmad knows almost all of the computer geeks on the island. (Refers to various cyberpunks by their hacker names)

Good Overview of What's Going On Here, 3 dice — Ahmad has a pretty good idea of some of the strange stuff going on in the Edge. He may or may not discuss things with someone, depending upon how dangerous he thinks it could be. (Never surprised by stories about strange happenings)

GMCS

Ahmad Kassim

Shop Owner/Computer Specialist

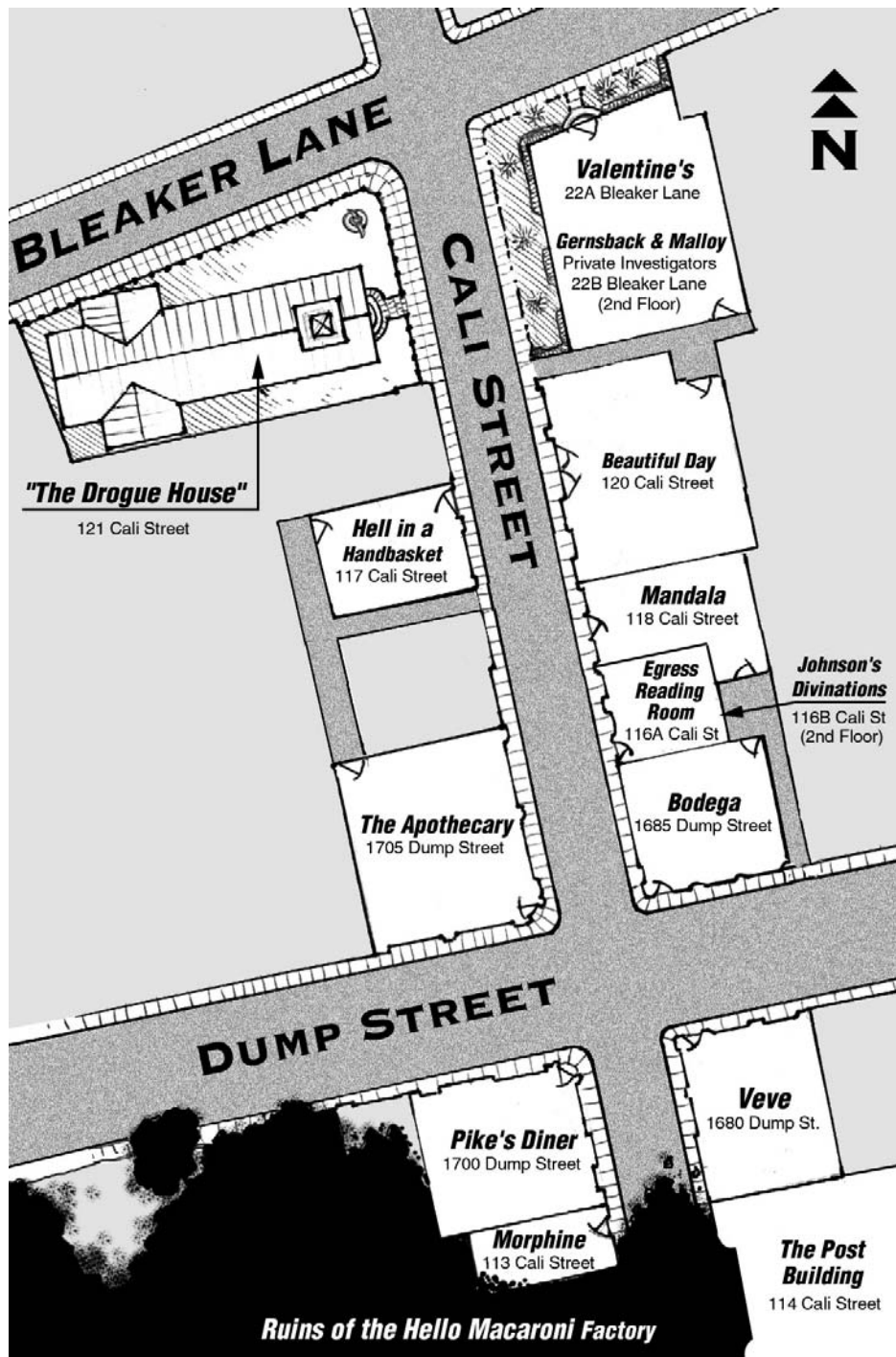
Ahmad has been a computer genius since he was six years old. He came to the island at 16 to attend the University and learn even more about computers. He dropped out two years later, but by then he had met many of his friends and fellow hackers. Ahmad opened his shop the year he quit school and has been very successful and happy ever since. He and his girlfriend (another cyberpunk) live above the shop and both spend hours cruising the internet looking for interesting computer phreak sites.

Story Ideas

- To find a hacker or any computer-related information, Ahmad's is the place. Given the level of paranoia most hackers have, PCs can't just waltz in and ask for a good phone phreak or file cracker. They must build up some trust.
- The PCs must join forces with the Pranksters of Love to stop a *real* killer program that is electrocuting computer users. While the Pranksters try to crack the program without getting fried, the PCs can be looking for whoever created it.

immediate area of the ruined factory, a field that would trap other spirits that fell into its confines.

As Great Men fell into decline over the next few decades, Cali Street continued to grow stranger and stranger. Slowly, it developed into a community and gained a reputation among the true mystics of the isle. Only Saremoenen knows the facts behind the spiritual dragnet, but many have come to a general understanding of the nature of the neighborhood. Some of the inhabitants enjoy living amongst the spirits. Others are trapped creatures who have no choice in the matter. Some are simply schizophrenics or mentally unbalanced individuals whose antics go unnoticed amongst the everyday chaos. And a few are true sorcerers. The field that keeps spirits in also keeps many of the traditional banes of wizards — such as emp-



ties and psychovores — away, making the area a desirable haven for a practitioner of magic . . . albeit a rather squalid and unappealing one. As a result, the residents of Cali tend to be quiet and sincere in their beliefs, as opposed to the more flamboyant — and often fraudulent — characters found in more comfortable parts of the island. Of course, there are difficulties to practicing magic within the confines of Cali; a would-be wizard may find himself unable to dismiss a spirit he has raised . . .

The Pyx

The spell that binds spirits to Cali — which locals refer to as the *Pyx* — is somewhat unpredictable in its effects. Some supernatural beings are caught in its web,

while others can enter and leave freely. It has the strongest effect on entities that have been bound to the material world by some other ritual — possessing demons, golems, and the like. Thus a werewolf whose lycanthropic nature stemmed from a wolf spirit being bound in a human body could be trapped in the Pyx, while one whose condition was due to a disease would not be affected. Ultimately, it is up to you as a Game Moderator to decide what can get out and what can't; obviously, you may wish to add a loophole for any of your players who might be in danger of imprisonment.

The effects of the Pyx are subtle; it is both a physical barrier and a psychological one. A trapped entity will simply find that it cannot bring itself to leave; if it tries, it somehow always ends up turning around without noticing. The same effect occurs to someone who tries to carry a spirit-linked object out of the area. At first the carrier will find herself reluctant to leave. Should she press on, she will get out of the area but find that she has somehow managed to drop the prohibited object. Of course, should it come down to it, the Pyx will manifest itself as an impenetrable physical barrier. Jitney drivers have a few stories about boxes — or even people — being torn out through the back of the vehicle as they drove down Dump street. Along with the frequent mechanical problems that occur in the area, most jitneys and taxis actually detour around Cali.

As noted above, empties have a subliminal aversion to the Pyx that prevents them from entering the neighborhood. If one somehow did get into Cali, it could cause quite a stir; of course, it's possible that some of the trapped entities might welcome such an event — perhaps if they were drained of their magic, they would be able to leave the area. You will have to determine the exact effect on the Pyx has on psychovores, depending on how common they are in your campaign. It may be that psychovores can't be brought into the area, just as other enchanted objects can't be removed. It's possible that they may be carried in and out, but that the energy of the Pyx paralyzes them while they are within its confines. Or it may be that they can be brought into the neighborhood but not taken out. In this case, you should probably create a local exterminator who makes it her business to get rid of the troublesome pests...

Using the Dump

The general populace knows little about the Cali Dump, but it has a certain reputation among the mystically hip. If your players fall into this category, they may start off knowing about the Dump or learn about it through an associate. You could also tie existing locations in Great Men to Cali — Forbidden Words (see the sourcebook *Friend or Foe?*) could be added to the neighborhood, while Alien Oddities (from *House Call*) and Deadville (*It Waits...*) might be close by. Further, each business in the Dump has its own set of story ideas, some of which could be used to introduce outsiders to the Cali community.

There are a few additional anomalies about the area that may help you work it into your game:

- While Dump Street is a main road, most jitneys and cabs will go a few blocks out of their way to avoid driving through the neighborhood — a superstitious response to the gremlin phenomena that often disable motor vehicles passing through the area. An alert player might notice this strange trend and decide to investigate it. Or, a player might be in an unwise cab that passes through and breaks down, stranding players in the neighborhood.
- The Glorious Lords and other Satanist gangs of Great Men typically avoid entering the Cali Dump in force, to avoid conflict with the local gang (see *The Drogues*, p. 19). Players who are being pursued by a large gang of Lucies may find that this pursuit suddenly breaks off when they enter Cali. If the players are really in trouble, the Satanists might surround the area waiting for the players to leave; this is a good way to force the players to become familiar with the people of the Dump.
- As noted before, the CPC and the Neutralizers have both used Cali as a dumping ground for dangerous spirits or artifacts. If players were on the trail of some particular entity or artifact, this could lead them to Cali. Their quarry could have been integrated peacefully into the Cali community, or the inhabitants may have managed to bury it somewhere far out of sight — say, in the basement of the Post Building.

Inhabitants of Cali

Overall, life in the Cali Dump is actually more peaceful than in the rest of Great Men. The area is home to a wide variety of bizarre entities, but most realize that since they cannot leave they must learn to live together. Community leaders like Nikkal (see *The Apothecary*, p. 6) organize these moderates and work to contain the negative impact of the more unstable inhabitants. There is a certain camaraderie that underlies the interactions between the various inhabitants of the neighborhood; the shared secret of their home binds them together.

The majority of the inhabitants of the Dump area are average, normal people distinguished only by their underlying belief in and respect for the power of supernatural forces. Most people will have some area of specialized (3 dice) occult knowledge, but they will not actually possess any sort of meaningful supernatural powers. Generally speaking, they are simple people concerned with the same things as people anywhere else — food, shelter, and money. It just happens that the idea of being surrounded by magic is something that fits in with their worldview. They treat the spirits with respect, and as a result, many do quite well — especially compared to their counterparts in other parts of the barrio.

Of course, Cali also has a significant population of zeroes. It contains a great many schizophrenics and lunatics; over time the residents have learned to tolerate strange or antisocial behavior, and mentally unbalanced people are less likely to be disturbed by the constant stream of unnatural events that plague Cali. More often than not, it is impossible to tell a mundane schizo apart from a shell-shocked horse (see below).

Then there are the stranger inhabitants of the neighborhood, beings with some sort of link to the supernatural world. These entities tend to fall in to one of the following categories:

Horses

The Dispossessed Possessed

Horses are spirits who have possessed a physical body. Upon entering Cali, the possessor finds that not only is it trapped in the neighborhood, but also it can no longer release its hold on its victim. Typically, this is an extreme-

ly humbling experience for the trapped spirit, which suddenly has to take all the needs of the mortal body much more seriously. Some manage to adapt to their new existence, while others go stir crazy, shouting about their predicament to anyone who will listen. One day you're a Duke of the Eighth Circle, next thing you know, you're an overweight bartender with migraines. Some horses still possess mystical powers, while others are completely normal individuals who only possess memories of their previous lives. Of course, many horses have great insight into the realm of the supernatural — if a player can find one lucid enough to talk to. Horses are also referred to as *dead horses*, *flypaper*, or *preoccupied* (As in, "What's wrong with her?" "She's just preoccupied."). Horses tend to refer to their bodies as "shells" or "husks"; a horse that has gone mad from confinement is said to be "shell-shocked". You'll have to decide what happens to a horse whose shell is killed. The spirit might be freed from confinement, it might maintain the ability to animate the corpse, or it might just be trapped in the inanimate, rotting carcass. The last option is enough to keep most horses from giving this a try.

Lefties

Mystical Adepts

Lefties are normal people who possess some demonstrable amount of mystical power, be they bocors, sorcerers, shamans, wicca, or followers of other traditions. Unlike the inherently supernatural creatures, lefties are not actually trapped by the Pyx and may enter or leave the neighborhood at will. Those who choose to live in Cali full-time are generally minor operators, not really worth the attention of the CPC. A few of the more powerful practitioners on the island maintain apartments in Cali, but only come to the neighborhood for special ceremonies. Like Aton Saremoenen, many powerful mages actively avoid the area, fearing the vengeance of spirits they have abused in the past.

Sticks

Unseen Forces

Sticks are supernatural entities that do not possess physical forms; the more cautious or polite inhabitants of

the Dump refer to them as *friendly neighbors*. The term — derived from “Styx” — is a general word used to describe ghosts, nekroi, or any other type of noncorporeal spirits. The powers and capabilities of a stick vary tremendously from individual to individual, and are left to whims of the Game Moderator. The most numerous group of sticks in Cali are the Macaroni shades, the ghosts of the Hello Macaroni factory workers. These spirits are responsible for most of the poltergeist activities and supernatural disturbances that occur throughout the neighborhood. However, these wraiths are not truly malicious; the Pyx binds them in a dreamlike state, and most of the time they are only partially aware of the world around them. What tricks they play are more acts of reflex than malice. A number of the more powerful and intelligent sticks have banded together in a spiritual union; these are the *Cali Loa*, described below.

Trash

The Toxic Waste of the Supernatural World

Trash is a term used to describe beings dumped in the area by the CPC or the Neutralizers; other words for this type of creature include *scrapper* or *fury*. The most violent and dangerous beings in the neighborhood tend to be trash. Sometimes the other inhabitants manage to rehabilitate a scrapper, or at least to pull its teeth so it is no longer a danger; other times, the lefties and sticks band together to imprison or destroy the offending trash.

Other Inhabitants

While most of the beings the players will encounter in Cali fall into one of the preceding categories, you should always feel free to add unique and unusual characters to the area. Bear in mind that while supernatural entities may be trapped by the Pyx, there is nothing to stop people from killing a creature who disturbs the peaceful atmosphere of the Dump; if you decide to add vampires or other predators, they’re going to have to learn to play nice.

In addition to the general categories described above, there are two power groups that are native to Cali that might play a greater role in your game: the Drogues and the Cali Loa.

The Cali Loa

“Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?
The shadows know.”

— *Shady Charles, explaining how she came
by a piece of information*

Type: Alliance of noncorporeal entities

Rep: Virtually unknown outside of the Cali Dump.

Brief: The Cali Loa are a group of powerful sticks who have joined together to increase their influence. Members of the Loa seek both to escape the Dump and to increase their personal power. In addition, the leaders of the Loa seek to manipulate the island from within their prison.

Allies: Drogues, Lady Pike

Enemies: Neutralizers, CPC, Hermetic Movers

Over the decades, the Dump has become home to many types of sticks. The most numerous of these entities are the Macaroni shades, and other beings of their level — relatively harmless spirits only capable of causing minor mischief. But amongst this spiritual rabble there are a few stronger spirits, either entities of a higher order or ghosts that have grown in power through decades of reverence. Eighteen years ago the strongest of these spirits formed an alliance that has lasted to this day — a nekrotic union known as the Cali Loa. To some, they are a pantheon of local deities who will reward those who show the proper reverence; to others, they are an unearthly Mafia, an ethereal syndicate who will punish those who cross their interests.

In the beginning, the alliance revolved around self-preservation. It had become a common practice for sorcerers to attempt to coerce the Cali spirits by threatening to bind them into physical objects — which, combined with the ensnaring magic of the Pyx, would mean an inescapable prison. The union began as a revenge pact, with messages being sent to the powerful mystics of the neighborhood that a sorcerous attack on any member would invite retaliation from the rest. Over time the Loa learned to work together; pooling their resources, they had an impressive array of talents to use as bargaining tools or weapons. The only thing they lacked was a clear purpose. Eventually an inner circle formed, a quartet of spirits with a vision the others lacked. They gathered the sticks and announced the mission of the Loa: determine the nature and origin of the

Pyx. Find a way to break this binding and free the prisoners of Cali. And in the interim, use this opportunity to gain as much power as possible — so that when they finally burst free from their prison, they might have power to shake the pillars of Heaven.

Of course, this is easier said than done. There are many different types of stick amongst the Loa, and each one has its own path to power. As a result, the organization is less formal than most mortals think. The members may call on one another for aid and will form a united front when called together by the Four, but more often than not they work on their own individual schemes and deals. Favors are the central commodity these spirits use, and alliances within the group are constantly shifting — though none dare to go against the will of the Four.

GMCs

As noted before, there are many different types of spirits amongst the Loa. You may decide the number of members and what their full capabilities are. Most of these spirits should not be too powerful; they may be able to provide information, aid certain types of activities or hinder enemies, but they shouldn't be genies who can grant any wish. And, of course, their ability to affect the material world is limited to the Cali area — although some may have access to information from the world beyond. The four leaders of the Loa are Grandfather, Phaedo Nembatal, Shady Charles, and Mr. Questions. They are described below; hopefully these descriptions will give you ideas for other members of the organization.

Grandfather

Spectral Mandarin

Grandfather is the strongest of the Macaroni shades, one of the few factory ghosts who has managed to break free of the somnambulistic torpor that holds most of the shades in thrall. In life he was a Chinese patriarch, a mystical elder who was held in reverence by the other factory workers. In death he holds power over their ghosts. He is able to temporarily raise the consciousness of the shades, gaining information from them and giving them simple directions. While the individual ghosts are relatively harmless, a concentrated assault by four hundred of them can be quite disturbing. His power is entirely based on his control

of the Macaroni shades; he has no influence outside of the neighborhood, but within Cali he is a force to be reckoned with. The Drogues are very solicitous of his favor, since a few angry poltergeists can easily turn the tide in a closely matched battle with an invading gang.

Grandfather is one of the most straightforward of the Cali Loa in terms of communication and offerings. Someone wishing his aid should make regular offerings of candles and food, with special sacrifices of valuable objects when a specific favor is desired. At these times, he should be invoked by name, with the seeker taking the role of one of the young seeking the wisdom and experience of an elder. Grandfather manifests as a disembodied voice; he is extremely formal in manner and expects polite behavior on the part of those who summon him. Those who wish his favor should also take care to respect their elders in daily life; this is one of the main reasons that the Drogues are so well behaved for a street gang.

Mr. Questions

Mysterious Mastermind

Mr. Questions is the prime mover behind the Cali Loa. It was he who brought the sticks together in the beginning, and it is he who tends to push them in new directions. He knows an amazing amount of information; he has an omniscience that seems to span the island. However, very little is known about him. What class of spirit is he? What are his ultimate goals? How did he come to be trapped in Cali — or is he, in fact, trapped at all? Even his name is a mystery — when asked, he simply responds “Questions, questions,” and so he has come to be called.

Information is all that Mr. Questions has to offer to those who seek his aid; he has never shown any ability to directly affect the physical world. He never provides a petitioner with a straight answer; rather, he will meet any question with another question. However, his question invariably contains the answer the seeker is looking for — and more, if it can be deciphered. Asked “What are the current plans of Gladstein Cell 361?” he might respond “Why is there always a light burning at 2 AM in 456 Victory Lane?”, or “Why is there blood on the blades of the Wind Farm?” His answers are never clear, but they always provide the petitioner with something to work with. Some have theorized that Mr. Questions is playing a carefully planned game of dominos — that the answers he provides

are designed to set up conflicts between the power groups on the island that are somehow ultimately to his benefit. You will have to decide the degree to which this is true. Perhaps his maneuverings are part of a cunning plan to free the Cali Loa. Perhaps he is the advanced scout of an extradimensional invasion force and seeks to disrupt the existing power blocs before the rest of his people arrive. Perhaps he is one of the Chaos Boys and simply seeks to cause chaos for its own sake. You will have to decide what best fits your campaign.

To invoke Mr. Questions, a petitioner must sacrifice a piece of history — preferably the family history of the seeker, like a diary or old family photograph, but other objects with significant history may suffice. It is questionable whether he actually makes use of the sacrificed objects in some way — perhaps gaining a link to the person whose history has been given away — or whether he simply realized that people are apt to take his questions more seriously if they have to pay for them. The sacrifice must be placed before another photograph and burnt, while the seeker states “I have questions.” If the sacrifice is satisfactory, Mr. Questions will animate the image in the unburned photograph and use this image as a means of communication. Regardless of his appearance, his voice is always the same — a grating, slightly nasal monotone. There is no particular code of behavior that will make a seeker more acceptable to Mr. Questions; rather, the more times a character has dealt with him in the past and solved his riddles, the more likely he is to deal with that character again.

Phaedo Nembatal

Spirit of Abuse

Phaedo is a scrapper trapped in Cali decades ago by the Neutralizers. She draws power and strength from abusive behavior of all sorts — self abuse, gluttony, sadism, and self-indulgence. It is unclear whether she was drawn to Al Amarja by the excesses of the citizenry, or whether the negative emanations of the Edge created her from whole cloth. When she first appeared on the island, she left a trail of death and ruined lives in her wake; since her entrapment, she has learned to control her own excesses — at least until she is free once more. She has no empathy whatsoever and sees humans as tools and toys — but toys that must be dealt with carefully if she is ever to be free. She is not much

of a planner and leaves such matters to the other three. But she does enjoy her little games of strife and pain.

To invoke Phaedo Nembatal, a petitioner must make a sacrifice of drugs or alcohol — the greater the request, the more significant the sacrifice. The seeker must then perform some act of self-abuse, typically burning himself or cutting his arms or legs. Phaedo is more likely to show her favor to one who engages in frequent acts of abuse — either self abuse, excessive drug or alcohol intake, or aggressive mistreatment of others. She will appear in a form that only the petitioner can see or hear. She seems to be a human woman, with only half of her body visible at a time; from one side she is beautiful, seductive, and glowing with aggressive power, while from the other side she is horrifically wasted and emaciated. Her voice can vary between soothing honey and a grating screech. Her gifts relate to her area of influence. She can exacerbate or mitigate the effects of drugs or alcohol; those who bear her favor can avoid ODs, hangovers, or unpleasant side effects, while the targets of her rage will suffer exceedingly bad trips and excessive DTs or enhanced side effects — it can be extremely dangerous to take Blue Shock when the angry eye of Phaedo is upon you! She can also encourage other forms of abusive behavior, enhancing existing moods of rage or despair. Some of the Drogues call upon her to drive them into berserk rages in battle, though typically they just ask her to bestow her curses upon their enemies.

While Phaedo is trapped in Cali, she still draws power from the abuses of the entire Edge . . . and provided with a proper conduit, she can still affect events beyond the confines of the Pyx. If a seeker carries a container marked with her sigil, she can affect anyone who drinks from the vessel or takes drugs that have been stored within it. However, the enchantment only lasts for a few days, after which the vessel must be reconsecrated.

Shady Charles

Patron of Cloaks

The final member of the prime Loa is Shady Charles. Charles is a spirit of a similar order to Phaedo Nembatal, an entity who draws power from the behavior of the people of the Edge. Where Phaedo draws strength from abusive behavior, Shady Charles feeds off of secrecy and deception. She encourages plots of all kind. She is closely allied with

Mr. Questions; whatever Questions is trying to accomplish with his machinations, Charles is right behind him.

Shady Charles has the power to speak through any sort of inactive communications device (phones, radios, televisions), and also through watches. She is particularly fond of speaking through wristwatches. To call for her assistance, a petitioner must speak into the device using a codename and a random series of nonsense phrases — “This is agent twelve reporting in. Seven dogs howl when the wind is long. The fat man sits on cheese.” Shady Charles will respond verbally; she always uses a female voice, although it is rarely the same twice. She will typically maintain the spy motif — “Agent twelve, this is control. What do you have to report?” Her petitioners do not have to use the same phrases each time — and in fact, should not — but should generally pick a “code name” to use in communications with her and stick with it.

A summoner must have a secret to offer in exchange for Charles’ help. The secret must have reasonable value, and if Charles already knows the information it is worthless. Alternately, the summoner can agree to perform a mission for Charles; these missions are usually bizarre and inexplicable, but probably serve to advance some cause of Charles or Mr. Questions. In exchange, Charles can offer information — the collected secrets of all her previous petitioners, or intelligence gathered by her human agents or spirit spies — or more direct assistance. Charles can enhance or detract from any element of a cloak operation. She can help an intruder avoid detection, make lies more believable, or crack codes. Alternately, she can enhance security systems or mystically encrypt data. You must decide exactly how powerful you wish her to be. Like Phaedo, her blessings should reach beyond the confines of Cali, provided that the petitioner carries a charm marked with her sigil; however such a charm will only maintain its power for a limited time. Shady Charles likes her followers to engage in constant acts of deception and betrayal, and such behavior will bring one favor in her eyes. Of course, betrayal is in her nature, and you can never know when one of her gifts may turn against its owner . . .

Story Ideas

If the players become aware of the Cali Loa and the methods of invoking them, you can work them into the

story in any number of ways as players strive to fulfill their often contradictory goals and preferred patterns of behavior. Dealing with the Loa should always be easy at first, but once you’ve gotten involved with one of the spirits it can be difficult to get out of the arrangement — particularly when dealing with a vindictive spirit like Phaedo. Shady Charles and Mr. Questions may both work well as patrons, providing information or assignments that will tie into your main plotlines. A few other ideas:

- The CPC begins to test a new spirit eradicator that permanently destroys a supernatural entity. The sticks in Cali are the ideal test subjects, as they cannot escape or emerge from Cali to retaliate. The players are approached and asked to destroy the device or make it appear to be a failure.
- Players are asked to look into a surprising series of Blue Shock combustions; the trail leads to a psychotic agent of Phaedo Nembatal.
- A feud between Phaedo and Grandfather threatens the peace of the Cali Dump; Nikkal asks the players to help her perform a ritual that will limit the power of both spirits. The only question is whether this will invite retaliation from the rest of the Cali Loa — and what spirits would rise to replace the two if they fell.



The Rogues

“Let the Lords call on their beaten devil for aid. We know where the true power lies and we serve it with both fists. Tomorrow we’ll give them a real horror show, oh my brothers.”

— *Baron Thursday, leader of the Rogues*

Type: Street gang

Rep: Unknown outside of Great Men. Don't mess with them on their home turf.

Brief: A small gang that uses the rituals of Santeria. Their connections with the spirits of Cali have given them the strength to hold their territory against the Glorious Lords.

Allies: Cali Loa

Enemies: Glorious Lords, other Satanist gangs

When people think of Great Men, they tend to think of Lucifer's Glorious Lords of Passion and the lesser bands of Satanists that dominate the barrio. But there are other gangs in Great Men — a few hold-outs who have managed to stand against the manpower and savage fury of the Glorious Lords. One such group is the Drogues, who claim the Cali Dump as their turf. The Drogues use the trappings of Santeria and Sabaen in the same way that the Glorious Lords cling to Satanism. They know the names of the gods and the words to the rituals, but their true allegiance is to the Cali Loa — the sticks that provide them with the weapons they need for their constant struggle with the other gangs of Great Men.

This causes the Drogues to behave in a rather unusual manner. They need to show respect for their elders to maintain the favor of Grandfather, but to act in an abusive manner and overindulge in drugs and alcohol in order to maintain the favor of Phaedo Nembutal . . . and these are simply two of the many spirits the Drogues deal with on a regular basis. As a general rule, the Drogues act to maintain the status quo in Cali. They don't hassle the regulars, but they see it as their duty to keep those who don't belong out of the neighborhood. Once you're a known commodity, the Drogues will leave you alone, but if you're just a tourist you can expect a fairly hostile welcome. The Drogues will let Lucies into the neighborhood for purposes of patronizing various businesses — Morphine (p. 51) and Hell in a Handbasket (p. 40) both cater to the Satanist trade — but they have a strict policy: two's company, three's a rumble. Occasionally, the Lords descend on Cali in a full-scale assault, but by now most of the gangs have learned that it's a dangerous proposition to mess with the Drogues on their home turf. Of course, it's a different story when the gang leaves the neighborhood; many of their spiritual allies cannot assist them beyond the Pyx, and most of their more dangerous members — the Zombie Sisters, Old Nick, Mr.

Ed — can't venture out with these war parties. These raids are bloody and vicious, but the gang considers it a point of honor not to hide behind the invisible wall of Cali. When encountered on a raid, the Drogues are utterly ruthless, destroying anything that gets in the way of them and their intended prey.

The Drogue colors are simple black clothes, black suspenders, and white straw boaters. They carry canes or heavy walking sticks with metal heads. On Cali ground they tend to be impeccably polite, even if they're kicking the crap out of some off-streeter. When encountered outside of the neighborhood, the Drogues are a disturbing sight; many paint their faces with skeletal markings, and call on Phaedo Nembutal to induce berserk fury. The racial make-up of the gang is quite diverse, with a fairly random mix of Cubans, Haitians, Africans, African-Americans, South Americans, and mongrel 'Margins. The leader of the gang, Baron Thursday, is a Haitian man with a massive athletic build and a silver tongue that can charm both mortals and spirits. The Baron has some moderate skill as a bocor, but his primary edge is his many contracts with the spirits of Cali — on his home ground, he's a hard man to touch.

The Drogues live in an old church on 121 Cali Street, a building others call "the Drogue House." The church was abandoned decades ago after the trapped sticks tried to force the local priest to exorcise them. Now the walls are crumbling and overgrown with weeds, and the windows have been boarded up after being smashed in countless Lucy raids. A stone angel stands in the courtyard, but its head was knocked off years ago; it holds a dry birdbath in its outstretched hands, a bowl that is almost always filled with offerings to one of the Loa. The Drogues frequently throw wild parties to honor Phaedo Nembutal, and occasionally host ceremonies for the local Santeria community; if the players are tight with Baron Thursday or one of the other Drogues, it's fairly easy to get an invite.

GMCs

Typical Drogue

Mystical Hood

Attack: 3 dice, x2 damage with cane

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (tough and muscular)

Traits

Ultraviolence, 3 dice — Beneath the polite exterior of the typical Drogue lies a storehouse of pure fury. Drogues are skilled brawlers using hands, feet, teeth, and clubs. Outside of the neighborhood, many Drogues will artificially induce a state of berserk fury that grants the combatant a bonus die when attacking, but gives a penalty die on defense. (Twirls cane with a confident air)

Mystic Knowledge, 3 dice — Like most of the inhabitants of Cali, the typical Drogue knows a thing or two about the supernatural. This could relate to Santeria or Sabaen, the Cali Loa, or any other supernatural field of study. (Wears a variety of charms and amulets)

Spiritual Connections, Upside — Virtually all of the Drogues have deals with one or more of the Cali Loa. The effects of these contracts will vary based on the Drogue's particular patron(s). Grandfather may send poltergeists to trip up foes in combat, while Phaedo might allow the Drogue to take Slo-Mo without suffering the side effects, or cause a drug-using enemy to have a sudden and unexpected bad trip. (Sign varies)

Spiritual Connections, Downside — Depending on their patrons, the Drogues must follow certain codes of behavior and make regular sacrifices and offerings. Failure to keep up with the schedule can result in the erring Drogue suffering the wrath of his former spiritual ally. (Sign varies)

Story Ideas

On the surface, the Drogues are a way to keep things relatively quiet in Cali despite the presence of the Glorious Lords. While there certainly is violence between the two groups, the Lords don't like to attack the Drogues on their home turf. The group also adds a little local color to the area, and can serve as a conduit to introduce the players to the Cali Loa.

A few other ideas:

- While wandering through Great Men, players get caught between a mob of Glorious Lords and screaming Drogues.
- If players are known to be associates of the Lords or the Drogues, they may suffer retaliation at the hands of the enemy gang. Conversely, players who are known

enemies of the Glorious Lords may receive an unexpectedly warm welcome in Cali, or assistance from the Drogues at a critical moment.

- If the players don't have dealings with the Cali Loa, they can be caught in the midst of an inexplicable series of raids and robberies — a group of Drogues carrying out "assignments" for Shady Charles.
- While partying with the Drogues, one of the players gets driven into a berserk rage by Phaedo Nembutal and ends up killing a small child. How will she deal with this situation? Will the ghost of the child come back to haunt her?

Cali Businesses

The intersection of Cali Street and Dump Street is one of the most concentrated mercantile centers of the Great Men barrio, although you might not know it to look at it. Most of the businesses cater to the inhabitants of the neighborhood or to the mystic s*** crowd in general, and few people outside of that community know anything about these locations. The *Rep* descriptions for these businesses assume that the player is tapped into the occult grapevine; otherwise, these locations have a very low profile. Before running a story in the Dump, you should familiarize yourself with all of these locations; the community is close-knit and any given story in Cali will probably involve more than one of these businesses.

The following locations are part of the Cali Dump:

- The Apothecary (p. 6)
- Beautiful Day (p. 9)
- Bodega (p. 11)
- The Egress Reading Room (p. 27)
- Gernsback and Malloy, Private Investigators (p. 32)
- Hell in a Handbasket (p. 40)
- Johnson's Divinations (p. 44)
- Mandala (p. 46)
- Morphine (p. 51)
- Pike's Diner (p. 62)
- The Post Building (p. 65)
- Valentine, Collector (p. 93)
- Veve (p. 95)

China House Restaurant

Type: Restaurant

Rep: Great food, good prices.

Brief: Your basic family owned and operated Chinese restaurant. Service is prompt and friendly. The food is good. A very popular place with both natives and burger.

Address: 155 Sunken Plaza, Sunken Barrio

Owned and operated by the Chin family, China House is a clean and safe place to get a good meal. Cantonese and Szechuan cuisine are the specialties, but some Mandarin dishes are available as well. The interior design is quite tasteful and full of Chinese artwork. There are lots of large tables in the main dining area and small open booths along the walls. The rear dining area is divided into an open banquet area and a smaller area full of spacious and private booths. These booths are popular with businessmen and others who want privacy for lunch or dinner meetings. The staff of China House is both unobtrusive and discreet.

The kitchen area is usually bustling with activity. There are two doors out of the kitchen. One leads to a small loading dock area while the other leads to an alley where the garbage dumpsters are located. Customers are not usually allowed in the kitchen area. It is rumored that the restaurant has two secret exits (one in the ladies restroom and one in a private booth), but that is for the GM to decide.

The patriarch of the Chin family, John, is extremely knowledgeable in things supernatural, especially those originating in Asia. In his apartment above the restaurant, he has hundreds of books and scrolls on the occult. Some of these are quite rare. John also has a small guardian statue

that may or may not (as the GM sees fit) be home to a guardian spirit.

One of John's good friends is Islam Petri. Islam and the Neutralizers have made use of John's knowledge many times. Due to his age, John seldom actually goes out on Neutralizer forays. However, his grandson Kevin (to whom John is passing on his knowledge), does take an active role in the fight against the paranormal.

China House is open seven days a week from 11 AM until midnight. Reservations are recommended on weekends for dinner.



GMCS

John Chin

Restaurant

Owner/Sage of the Supernatural

Friendly and likeable, John is the head of the rather large Chin family. He knows most of his regular customers by name and always gives them a warm greeting. He can usually spot a supernatural being rather quickly, although a few are able to get past him (most notably tulpas). John always wears a few charms that help protect him from demons and such. He also has a large tattoo on his back that he says allows him to cast certain spells necessary when one deals with monsters.

John speaks perfect English, since he is a fourth generation Californian by birth. He prefers to dress in traditional Chinese clothing though, since "the customers like it." John is a widower, but does "call on" a couple of ladies his age from time to time.

Chinese-American male, age 80, 175 cm, 68 kg, healthy looking, wispy gray hair on a mostly bald head, green eyes

Languages: English, Mandarin, Spanish, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Scholar of the Supernatural, 4 dice — John has been a student of the supernatural since his teens. He is not afraid to face supernatural creatures in battle, as long as he is well armed with the proper mystical weapons. (Smiles when he hears people denounce the supernatural as fake)

Excellent Memory, 3 dice — Despite his age, John has an exceptional memory. He almost never forgets a name or face. (Greets people he has only met once as though he has known them for years)

Old, 2 penalty dice — Although he is very healthy for his age, he is not as fast or as strong as he used to be (He's 80 years old)

Kevin Chin

Neutralizer and Chef

Kevin is the grandson of John Chin and a part time member of the Neutralizers. His main job is that of assistant chef at the China House restaurant. Kevin is a very good looking and athletic young man who cuts a rather wide swath through the young women in his neighborhood. Although he has a reputation as a freewheeling kind of guy, Kevin is quite serious when it comes to his work with the Neutralizers and his studies in the supernatural.

Chinese-American male, Age 29, 182 cm, 84 kg. Well built, medium-length black hair, green eyes, tiger tattoo on right arm

Languages: English, Mandarin, Al Amarjan patois

Attacks: 4 dice, 2x damage

Defense: 4 dice

Traits

Martial Artist, 4 dice — Kevin is a third dan black belt in Jeet Kune Do, the martial art founded by the late great

Bruce Lee. When properly motivated, Kevin can be a truly devastating fighter. (Very fast reflexes)

Chef, 3 dice — Kevin is a sixth-generation chef. His specialty is Szechuan cuisine. (Usually smells of spicy chinese cooking)

Student of the Supernatural, 2 dice — Kevin has learned much from his grandfather, but there is still much to know. (Corrects peoples' assumptions about supernatural creatures)

Sucker for a Pretty Face, 1 penalty die — Kevin's love of the ladies has gotten him in a few spots of trouble over the years. This will no doubt happen again. (Flirts with women)

Story Ideas

- The PCs meet a person who claims to be cursed with lycanthropy. (What type of creature he/she turns into is up to the GM.) This person offers them a large sum of money if they can help lift the curse. In order to find out how to do this, they will have to consult with John Chin. Plot twists can arise when John and the Neutralizers recognize the lycanthrope as a very dangerous old enemy. Or maybe the person is an old friend who is too ashamed to ask for John's help directly.
- Another story idea could involve Kevin Chin and his well known penchant for chasing the ladies. Only this time, the lady he bedded was the wife of a Chinese demon who has taken human form. The demon is not pleased by this and is now out to kill Kevin and send his soul to the Hell of 9,000,000 Agonies. Not wanting to have his grandfather find out about his problem, Kevin hires the PCs to help him destroy the demon before the demon destroys him.

Deadly Confessions

Type: Counseling service

Rep: An uplifting place for the particularly sordid to visit.

Brief: A Catholic-style confessional hosted by a very forgiving Sumerian demones.

Address: 23 Sapphire Court, Broken Wings Barrio



When Ashe Trencavel first came to Al Amarja, setting up a small office as a practicing psychologist seemed like the perfect working vacation. Armed with a library of the latest pop psychology and feel-good self-help guides, she struck out to counsel the island's disgruntled and disturbed. But while men and women might normally hail from Mars and Venus, Ashe quickly learned that in the Edge they come from a bunch of other places as well.

Fortunately, she discovered another niche to fill. Drawing on her experiences with Catholicism as a youth, Ashe set up Deadly Confessions, where the sinful come to receive forgiveness without all of the unpleasant guilt associated with admitting wrongdoing. Her Broken Wings-based establishment has become very popular among affirmation-seeking sybarites and businessmen. Deadly Confessions is a tiny establishment, tucked away into the corner of Rien à Porter, a posh Broken Wings clothing boutique. Furnished to resemble the back halls of a church, it features a single confessional booth. Appointments are by reservation, but drop-ins are welcome to outbid customers with reservations. Ashe has had to call in Dunkelburg's Security more than once to deal with fistfights between rival businessmen from the Golden Barrio. She lives in a tasteful suite above Deadly Confessions, which she keeps decorated in the latest French style. Her suite has a private stairwell down into the confessional, allowing her to come and go without being associated with the business.

Ashe's typical confession begins with a Catholic-style request for forgiveness from the penitent. Over the course of the interview, Ashe draws out her customer's sins and downplays the severity of each act. Her tactics vary based on the confession, but in general are based on encouraging

the customer to recognize the pleasure they took in performing the forbidden act. She then assigns penance that, while superficially unpleasant, actually tends to encourage further depravity. Her clients generally come away from an interview feeling that their sinful acts were

appropriate under the specific circumstances, and that their actions demonstrated their great ability to maintain their individuality before the tremendous societal pressure to conform. Many clients will even leave with the impression that their nameless confessor secretly envies their bold, decisive action, but feels constrained not to say so by the nature of her position. In the six months Ashe has operated Deadly Confessions, every two-time visitor has gone on to become a frequent customer of her establishment.

Ashe Trencavel's heritage is the secret to her success. As an immortal Sumerian demones, she keenly understands the human desire to rebel against authority, and the human need to demonstrate free will by harming other members of humanity. Her assignment to Al Amarja is basically a vacation, granted after a millennium of service corrupting the Catholic Church. The general level of sin and corruption on the Edge exceeds even Ashe's expectations, leaving her with a lot of free time on her hands. While visiting the D'Aubainne Univerity Library, she discovered pop psychology, and like thousands of religious figures before her, demonstrated that idle hands do the devil's work. While Ashe profoundly comprehends humanity's hidden depravity, the eternal irrational perkiness of modern culture is a mystery to her. She devoured the pseudo-scientific principles of pop psychology with inhuman enthusiasm. Each book left her only more bewildered amidst a tangle of unsupportable theories. Weeks after finding the topic, she realized that her only choice was to try the theories out on actual humans.

Since setting up her identity on the island, Ashe has made a determined effort to find the useful core of pop psychology. So far, success eludes her, but she is far too patient

a creature to give up easily. As an immortal being, she can afford to wait, and until then *Deadly Confessions* is a productive and occasionally enlightening diversion.

GMCS

Ashe Trencavel

Proprietress of Deadly Confessions

Originally a Sumerian demon of temptation, Ashe's physical appearance is variable but tends to match the preferences of her viewers. In her work at *Deadly Confessions*, she is careful to conceal her identity and appearance from her clients, but her voice is unforgettable. When she entertains guests or actually manages to set up a counseling appointment unrelated to *Deadly Confessions*, she does her best to dress the part of an inoffensive psychologist. But with her hair back in a tight bun, her bland business suits and horn-rimmed spectacles make her resemble a supermodel pretending to be a librarian. The clients she fails to intimidate tend to assume that she could never possibly understand their problems. Return consultations are rare.

"French-Iraqi" woman, apparent age 28, 165 cm, 49 kg. Pale blonde hair and sea-green eyes at odds with her Middle Eastern complexion. Her professional attire struggles to be unflattering enough to keep her beauty from being intimidating.

Languages: Most of them, including reading and writing many ancient languages.

Defense: 5 dice

Hit Points: 34 (immaterial)

Traits

Been There, Done That, 4 dice — Ashe has been around a very long time, and can be safely assumed to have a general familiarity with most topics involving factual knowledge or learnable skills. This does not grant her an ability to understand or predict how other individuals would do things, and she often uses idiosyncratic or dated methods to perform simple actions. (Quotes complicated anecdotes to put clients at ease)

Corruption, 5 dice — As a demoness, Ashe's understanding of the dark sides of human psyche is without peer. In social arenas, she can present any situation in a light that makes a sinful act seem justified and appropriate, and

can perfectly predict the consequences of any action based on selfishness. (Reminds you of the high school teacher you had a crush on)

Spirit Form, 5 dice — Ashe is only a material being if she chooses to be. She can pass through walls and disappear when attacked if her roll is higher than her attacker's. Psychovores and other astral countermeasures affect her when she is in this state, although she rolls this trait to resist them. (Never trips or stumbles)

Pop Psychology, 1 die — When attempting to understand positive human interactions and concepts like altruism and kindness, Ashe forces herself to rely upon the tangled theories of pop psychology. When not trying to corrupt someone, she only rolls a single die for social interactions. (Spouts confusing pop psychology theories)

Story Ideas

- Overloaded with clients, Dr. Derrick Julien (from "The Doppelganger Plague" in *The Myth of Self*) or Dr. Umayma Ahal (from "Deep Troubles" in *The Myth of Self*) sends a PC to Ashe Trencavel's office for counseling.
- One or more of an entire spectrum of conspiracies hires the PCs to bug *Deadly Confessions*. Whether or not the plan ultimately succeeds, setting the bugs up should take an extended amount of time. Even the most nefarious PC may have trouble continuing to talk in the face of Ashe's keen insight into the unsavory aspects of the human psyche.
- Bewitched by the mysterious confessor's voice, one of Ashe's clients arranges for the PCs to identify the proprietress of *Deadly Confessions*. While discovering Ashe's identity is unlikely to be particularly challenging, fulfilling the patron's request to ensure her attendance at a private function in her honor may be more difficult.
- During the course of an otherwise routine confession, Ashe reveals her knowledge of a sinful act committed by a character played during the course of a different role playing game by the same player. If pressed on how she knows about the event, she reveals that she knew the PC in a past life, and proceeds to grill the PC on the other character's action. This is a good plot

thread to add to a game focusing on the self-referential awareness plot.

- Frustrated by the embarrassing reputation of Satanism on Al Amarja, Ashe decides to begin a PR campaign. She fronts a local Satanist gang, and begins encouraging the Satanists to proselytize. Preaching the value of the Satanist ideals of free will and self-determination, Ashe's gang plows headlong into both the Glorious Lords and Cheryl D'Aubainne's organization.

In an effort to convince them of Satanism's ancient and honorable heritage, forthright Satanists harass PCs with ties to Cheryl or the Sommerites. Alternately, a PC discovers that his or her significant other is secretly a devout and eloquent Satanist. Meanwhile, the Glorious Lords certainly want to take a piece out of the upstarts, particularly if Ashe were to discover the secret of seklut and reveal it publicly.

- Ashe secretly enjoys trying to help her patients come to terms with their emotional problems, and has started



using pop psychological principles in *Deadly Confessions*. She fails terribly, and Hell sends a special envoy to congratulate her on her unprecedented success in damning the inhabitants of Al Amarja. The demonic envoy personally asks Sir Arthur Compton to handle the congratulatory ceremony, and the PCs get wind of Compton's interest in the harmless-looking psychologist. Can a noble-minded group of PCs save Ashe from her own success?

- Ashe secretly enjoys trying to help her patients come to terms with their emotional problems, and has started using pop psychological principles in *Deadly Confessions*. She actually succeeds in redeeming a tortured soul, and an angel of the Lord is sent to bring her the news. Unfortunately, Heaven fails to prepare the angel for life on the Edge. Can a noble-minded group of PCs save the angel from the sinful temptations of a half-dozen hits of Communion and a night's stay at Sad Mary's Bar and Girl?

The Egress Reading Room

Type: Cult Publicity Office

Rep: A useless little place best left alone.

Brief: This is a small outpost of a tiny cult that is trying to recruit believers on Al Amarja. However, the local recruiter has lost interest in the organization and often uses the room to support other causes. The Reading Room is located in the Cali Dump; see p. 12 for more information on this unusual neighborhood.

Address: 116A Cali Street

The Egress Reading Room is the Al Amarjan outpost of the Egress Foundation, a relatively recent would-be cult religion. The founder of the organization was once a high-level officer of the best-selling Church of Meintology; he split off and started his own organization, but scandals and financial mismanagement forced him to move on. The Egress Foundation is his third stab at pseudo-religious success. The fundamental principle of the organization is “Self-Actualization through Obedience”; Egress teachings state that the only way to find serenity and a spiritual center in today’s modern world is by blindly following the orders of those who know more than you do. Another critical point in Egress philosophy is commitment: making a commitment and then following through with it regardless of the consequences. “Are you really committed?” is a phrase that comes up frequently in Egress propaganda.

The local Egress recruiter is a young Englishwoman named Noy Odiakosa. The Foundation actually has little interest in establishing a following in Al Amarja; Noy was involved in a minor scandal at the highest levels of Egress, and having learnt that murder just makes things worse, the founder sent her as far out of the public eye as possible. As a result, she has virtually no support from the Foundation and has slowly lost interest in its teachings. Agnetha Little helped Noy to settle into the neighborhood, and in the process managed to convert her to the Sommerite movement; as a result, the Reading Room distributes more Sommerite propaganda than it does Egress teachings.



The building itself is extremely sterile; the Egress claims that bland surroundings provide “a sanctuary from the chaos of modern life.” In the main room there are two tables and a shelf for books and leaflets. The walls used to be bare, but now they tend to be covered by posters advertising Noy’s latest obsession — currently, concert posters and other images of Karla Sommers. There are two doors at the back of the room. One leads to Noy’s tiny studio apartment. The other leads to “The Booth.” Within

the booth, a small control room is attached to a sound-proofed, padded room with blank white walls and a single chair bolted to the floor. This is a central part of Egress training; a recruit sits in the chair while the controller barks orders over a hidden sound system. These days, Noy tends to blast the Good Tunes on the system. She’s never tried to lock someone in the Booth and forcibly convert them to Sommerism, but the thought has crossed her mind.

GMCS

Noy Odiakosa

Trouble Magnet

Noy has led a very interesting life. From childhood, she has embarked on a career of falling in with the wrong crowd, following one obsession after another. Somehow, she’s always managed to come out on top of things, but one wonders if it’s only a matter of time before trouble catches up with her. She is an incredibly energetic, vivacious individual; she has a strong streak of optimism that has carried her through many difficult times. She enjoys helping other people; sometimes this takes the form of performing favors, other times she tries to help her friends by converting them to her current system of belief.

Englishwoman of Jamaican descent, age 26, 163 cm, 54 kg. Short black hair, brown eyes. Energetic, cute, optimistic. Tends to dress informally, wearing Karla t-shirts or other signs of her current obsession. Despite her Jamaican

ancestry, she speaks with a rich, clear English accent. She often has her hands decorated with Mahendi.

Egress Techniques, 4 dice — While it was only one of her many obsessions, Noy managed to tap into the philosophy behind the Egress Foundation (quite possibly, more than the founder ever has). While she rarely makes use of it, she has an amazing talent for barking out orders in such a way to cause instinctive obedience. She is also very good at focusing on a single task; once she is committed to something, she may use this trait to resist compulsions or to perceive things related to her task. (Becomes very intense when assigned a task)

Perky, 3 dice — Noy combines vivacious charm with innocent optimism; she's not exactly beautiful, but she's extremely cute and most people who spend time with her can't help but like her. This won't help her when someone hits her over the head from behind, but if she has a chance to talk to someone she's very good at making friends. (Gets invited to lots of parties)

Interesting Life, upside/downside — Unusual things are always happening to Noy. She'll run into a pack of Glorious Lords and end up with an invitation to a party at Compton's, or buy a book at a flea market that happens to be a highly-sought tome of mystical knowledge. Usually, she somehow manages to avoid the negative consequences of these situations, but her friends and companions may have more trouble. (Sign varies)

Follower, downside — Noy has an instinctive desire to be part of something, to cling to a system of belief.

Currently, she has adopted Sommerism, but she tends not to stick with anything for too long; next it could be Satanism, the Earthlings, fundamentalist Christianity, or anything else you can come up with. Whatever her current cause, she always throws herself into it with energy and vigor. (Extremely enthusiastic)

Story Ideas

Noy provides a good way to bring players into other plotlines. She's extremely social and always looking for new friends; she could meet the players in Flowers and bring them back to the Cali Dump, or simply befriend them within Cali. Once the players know her, it's a simple matter for them to get tied up in her latest problem or obsession. Perhaps she decides to branch out and do some legwork for Gernsback and Malloy. Also, since she likes to do favors for people and can leave the Dump, many of the trapped inhabitants may ask her to do things for them outside of Cali.

The Egress Foundation can also provide you with some room for plots and obfuscation. Perhaps the organization is a front for the Vornites or the Pharaohs, and Noy may get in trouble for failing to actively recruit people. Although it may be more entertaining to let people think that the Egress is more dangerous than it really is.

Fleur de Lys Investments, Ltd.

Type: Investment Agency

Rep: Gullible Burger.

Brief: A newly arrived international investment firm, about to set up offices in the Edge.

Address: Bienvenidos Hotel (200 Plaza of Flowers, Flowers Barrio), Room 528; presently looking for office space in the Plaza of Gold.



Nicolas Flamel was a Parisian scribe and alchemist of the late 14th century. Guided by an angelic dream, he discovered a book — the lost *Asch Mezareph* of Rabbi Abraham. With the help of a Spanish Jewish cabalist, Flamel deciphered the book and (it is said) successfully transmuted lead to gold on the 17th of January, 1382. This formula had been used by the Jews to pay tribute to Rome at the time of Christ. It is recorded that Flamel repeated the process twice again.

History and the man's tombstone tell us that Flamel died in March of 1417. Some say he and his wife live on — having discovered that other elusive goal of the alchemists: the Elixir of Life.

Secret Background

Nicolas Flamel does live — and now he's on Al Amarja.

Being immortal is not all it's cracked up to be. While Flamel does not age, he is susceptible to more immediate forms of harm and bodily injury. Plus there's the issue of the neighbors — it becomes obvious that Flamel and his wife are "different" as their neighbors grow old and die, while this couple remains vibrantly middle-aged.

The simple result of these facts is the following: Flamel and his wife are extremely cautious when it comes to personal safety (they know their life expectancy is measured precisely by how long they can avoid death by accident); and they have to change residences and identities every generation or so. They've also become adept in the use of makeup to hide their apparent youth as years go by.

The couple has traveled all about the globe in their six and a half plus centuries. Sightings of them are recorded from such

places as the Paris Opera and India. After twenty years of working as an investment counseling team in Seattle, the couple decided it was time to move along.

Their business, Fleur de Lys Investments Ltd, was incorporated in Grand Cayman, so transferring their offices and holdings to new names and a new location — the Edge, Al Amarja — was easy. Respected professionals Nick and Pernelle Flannel joined the ranks of

the mysteriously disappeared; and Niccolo and Penelope Lethas, affluent burger, appeared on the Mediterranean isle.

Why Al Amarja? Because it's small and obscure, and yet well enough connected (through institutions such as Swaps) to serve their business needs. The Flamels expect to easily establish their new lives, and settle in to a peaceful existence under the Mediterranean sun. Unfortunately, Al Amarja might not be quite the island paradise they envision. Without connections — to conceal their natures, they had to completely abandon their former lives — the Flamels must struggle through a period of vulnerability.

The Flamels do not transmute gold except when absolutely necessary. They can make more money for less effort in more conventional ways, for one thing; they live relatively simply, and don't need much money, for another. But most of all, they have a sense of balance and order which they think transmutation disrupts. On the purely economic plane, a gigantic influx of gold would just depress its own value and be ultimately counterproductive. The Flamels believe that a corresponding metaphysical imbalance would result as well, because (as alchemists well know) the harmony, balance, and relations among elements on the earth are intimately tied to the celestial balance of the universe.

The Asch Mezareph

The *Asch Mezareph* is a gilded volume, with leaves made in a most curious manner. They are not paper, vellum or parchment, but appear to be a soft, pliable bark of some sort. The book's copper cover is engraved with curious and unrecognizable symbols. Inside, there is text in Latin (including a curse invoked against any except "sacrificers and scribes" who dare to read the work).

The body “text” of the work is an obscure allegory, mostly in the form of pictures and apparently nonsense inscriptions. Only someone with intimate knowledge of cabalistic and alchemical traditions (someone who, say, succeeds with a roll with such a knowledge against a difficulty of 21) can even hope, with months of study and experimentation, to decipher its contents. Since no one but Flamel is known to have succeeded, some in alchemical circles wonder if there may be more to it than just understanding — most likely a certain moral disposition or psychic state (i.e., only a virtuous person can use it). Once understood, the work provides the secret of the Philosopher’s Stone — a marvelous compound capable of transmuting the base metal lead into first silver, then gold.

GMCs

Niccolo Lethas (aka *Nick Flannel*, *Nicolas Flamel*)

Ageless Medieval Alchemist

In the 14th Century, when Nicolas Flamel was born, an education was a rare and precious thing. Though his parents were not affluent, they recognized the value of learning, and sent young Nicolas to study in Paris.

So he went, and soon he held the profession of scribe, with membership in the Guild. Since the printing press had not yet been invented, Flamel's career intermixed the modern roles of publisher and bookseller with that of the scribe. Thus did he acquire the *Asch Mezareph*, which changed his life forever.

The symbol on Flamel's medieval booth, to distinguish it from those of other scribes in the Charnier des Innocents and then the church of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie, was the Fleur de Lys. This same device provides the name and corporate logo of his 20th Century investment firm.

Frenchman, apparently in his mid-fifties; 177 cm, 70 kg. His hair is salt and pepper, receding from a high forehead. In a cowl he would make the perfect monk, with long hands for prayer and deep, thoughtful dark eyes. However, he favors contemporary business attire — finely tailored, if understated, suits.

Languages: Too many to list, including archaic dialects

Attack: 2 dice (with penalty die)

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 16 (unnatural constitution)

Traits

Alchemy, 6 dice — Besides an intimate knowledge of the history, symbols, and practice of the art, Nicolas actually knows how to transmute lead into silver or gold, and other classical alchemical operations. He has some familiarity with modern chemistry (1 die) as well, but for the most part its subtleties elude his medieval intellect. (Several scars on his hands and arms from the spattering of acids and hot compounds)

Scribe, 6 dice — Can write and decipher almost any well known script or alphabet (Roman, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Cyrillic, Sanskrit, Chinese, etc.), and many unknown (e.g., the symbolism of the *Asch Mezareph*). (Large callous on right middle finger just after the last joint, from centuries of writing; speaks with quaint idioms)

Generous — Penalty die to resist pleas for aid. Nicolas became well known in his "first life" for his charity. (Doesn't look away from panhandlers)

Hypercautious — Aware that he will die only from mishap, not age, Nicolas has become obsessive about avoiding personal physical danger. His fear of self-endangerment is so deeply rooted that if somehow forced into a combat situation, he would receive a penalty die on attacks because he would be unable to strike boldly. (Avoids sharp objects)

Penelope “Penny” Lethas (aka *Pernelle Flamel*)

Shrewd Immortal

Pernelle met her husband-to-be more than six centuries ago, when she hired him to scribe a deed. They enjoyed instant and mutual attraction, although Pernelle is a good decade Nicolas's senior. She had been twice widowed before. Recognizing a promising, respectable and attractive young fellow, she married him straight away. Neither has regretted it.

Austerity and caution became Pernelle, from her double experience with the financial quagmire of widowhood. Even when she and her husband had money, Pernelle's wise counsel was not to betray their wealth, lest it bring down jealousy and violence. (In fact, after Nicolas's staged death, a mob tore apart his house on rumors that the alchemist had made gold and perhaps left some there.) Although she has a kind heart, she keeps Nicolas's easy generosity in check, lest it backfire.

A slim Frenchwoman of advanced years, 170 cm, 58 kg; with a round, grandmotherly face and fine features. She is somewhat stoop-postured.

Languages: Like her husband, Pernelle has at least a rudimentary understanding of all the world's major languages.

Attack: 2 dice

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 9 (weak bones)

Traits

Shrewd, 4 dice — Pernelle is the social genius of the couple. After Nicolas discovered the Elixir of Life, it was Pernelle who suggested, planned, and implemented first her own death, then Nicolas's. She realized what trouble they might face if they were seen to go on living decades past a normal lifespan without sign of aging. (Bright, piercing eyes)

Weak Bones — Pernelle qualified as elderly when her husband discovered the Elixir of Life back in the 14th Century. While her body has not aged more since then, neither has it recovered all of time's ravages. Specifically, Pernelle suffers from weak bones (calcium deficiency). Even slipping and falling on ice is likely to break them; and once broken, they take two or three times the normal time to heal. (Curved spine)

Story Ideas

- A wealthy burger procures the characters' services. A valuable medieval manuscript of his was stolen, and the thieves are demanding a hefty ransom. The burger is willing to pay what the thieves want (\$1.5 million in gold) — but he also needs any copies the thieves might have made of the manuscript to be found and destroyed.

The inside story: Flamel and his wife checked in at the Bienvenidos hotel when they first arrived in the Edge, to live there while they searched for office space in the Golden Barrio and a private apartment in Broken Wings. Their room was broken into, and the precious *Asch Mezareph* stolen. Pernelle pointed out to her husband that they ought not to call in the authorities. She adduced the Al Amarjan government's attitude toward the paranormal, and doesn't want it known that the book is here, let alone who they are. Run-ins with Oppenheimers eager to discover the secret of immortality from them would also be undesirable.

Pernelle suggested private investigators be employed — the PCs may fit the job. "Lethas" will happily pay

them \$3,000 apiece. He wants the book recovered (he's willing to pay the price of the thieves); but, more importantly, he wants the thieves shadowed back to their base. There it is necessary to insure that *no copies* — photocopies, photographs, hand-drawings, whatever — of the book be permitted to exist. It is unlikely that anyone but Flamel could decipher the book, but with the metaphysical balance at stake he's not willing to take risks.

Who is behind the theft? It could be Compton and his bennies, avid devotees of the arcane; a Satanist gang hoping for leverage to usurp the dominance of the Glorious Lords; a cabal of wizards who have followed Nicolas and Pernelle around the globe; or the Movers (perhaps the Gladstein Cell), tipped off by Madame Vylaska (who lives in Bienvenidos), seeking to ascertain these newcomers' nature and mettle.

- As savvy troubleshooters, player characters could become the regular hirelings of the Flamels. The old alchemist and his wife need friends, contacts, guardians on the island; the PCs may rise to fill that role. If the PCs learn the secret nature of this couple, they might use their knowledge of the Edge to build the Flamels into a position of significance and patronage as a force to be reckoned with.
- Niccolo and Penny, and their soon-to-be-opened office in the Golden Barrio, may be a regular business in your series. While they avoid plots and intrigue (experience has shown them that such lifestyles lead to untimely demise), they might not be able to avoid some island pitfalls. If the slightest hint of their nature gets out, trouble may result.
- Nicolas knows secrets besides those in the *Asch Mezareph*. In particular, many people would be interested in the Elixir of Life: the Movers, who would like to offer an alternative to Apep's Breath to Monique D'Aubainne; the Pharaohs, who would rather not face immortal mutants; the glugs, who might see it as a means to restore their race's hegemony. If Dr. Nusbaum got wind of the couple's unusual longevity, he might wish to arrange for them to have a "medical examination" of his devising.
- Many secret societies would appreciate knowing the secret of the Philosopher's Stone, to create gold to fund their activities. On a more mundane level, FDLI Ltd's success might attract unwanted attention from competitors such as Al Amarjan Investments, or criminal interests such as the Net.

Gernsback & Malloy, Private Investigators

Type: Private Investigators

Rep: Practical and cheap.

Brief: A pair of private investigators who specialize in supernatural strangeness. Gernsback and Malloy work out of the Cali Dump; see p. 12 for more information about this unusual neighborhood.

Address: 22B Bleaker Lane



Leo Gernsback and William Jefferson Malloy are a pair of private eyes who work out of an office above Valentine's (see p. 93). The two specialize in supernatural disturbances, both in and out of Cali; they have worked with the Neutralizers before, although neither man realizes it. Gernsback also works to help the people of Cali, even on more mundane and simple cases. The two prefer unusual cases, but they will take on any assignment that seems worthwhile. Their rates are always reasonable; Malloy uses a sliding scale based on the client's ability to pay.

Gernsback is a Hungarian expatriate who came to Al Amarja in his youth. He has a successful career as a detective on the Peace Force, until he uncovered some of the disturbing practices of the CPC — including the dumping of “trash” in the Cali neighborhood. Gernsback made the mistake of bringing the matter to his superiors and trying to get something done about it; before he knew it, he was dishonorably discharged on trumped-up charges. He moved to Cali as a form of penance, and Valentine offered to let him use the office as long as he'd work with Malloy.

William Jefferson Malloy has a more colorful history. He cultivates the appearance of a distinguished elder gentleman. He speaks with a flowing British accent, and he likes to tell people that he grew up in London and went to school in Berlin; this is true, but both places are actually towns in Maine. As a young man, he became involved with a mystical secret society, possibly a front for a Hermetic cell; he never managed to rise too far in the ranks, but he enjoyed the sense of mystery and camaraderie. Over the decades, he developed an unhealthy obsession with a ruby crown, one of the treasures of the Order; when an opportunity presented itself, he

stole the crown and fled. This turned out to be even more unhealthy than he had thought; for only later did he notice the runes within the crown describing the deadly curse that it bore. With the Order snapping at his heels and the moments of his life ticking away, he fled to Al Amarja. Valentine was able to make a deal on Malloy's behalf, whereby in exchange for his beloved crown, he would be protected from the vengeance of the Order — as long as he remained on the Island.

Valentine then set him up with Gernsback and helped them start their business. Gernsback performs the legwork and provides the brawn; Malloy provides expertise on mystical matters and other points of arcana, and does most of the talking; he has a glib, almost supernatural talent for getting people to trust him. For a time, the business ran quite smoothly, but recently Malloy has begun to get involved with a local cell of the Hermetics; the desire for mystical power is an irresistible seduction for him, and this may prove to be his undoing.

GMCS

Leo Gernsback

Honorable Gumshoe

Gernsback is a small, unimposing man; his voice is deceptively soft and he speaks with a slight lisp. His mild appearance conceals considerable physical prowess. He tends to be very concise and decisive in his dealings with people; he is not very good at dealing with emotional situations. That said, he has a heart of gold and believes that it is his duty to serve and protect the public as best as he can. He has made a number of enemies in the CPC and Peace Force, but he still has a few useful contacts, including his old girl Steffy who now works in the CPC records department.

Hungarian man, late thirties, 150 cm, 60 kg. Thinning black hair, large brown eyes, olive skin. Quiet and unobtrusive. Tends to dress in worn gray suits.

Attack: 4 dice

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 24 (Grit and grim determination)

Languages: English, Hungarian, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Gumshoe, 4 dice — During his time with the Peace, Gernsback learned a great deal about brawling, shooting, and basic detective work. He’s an old-school film noir detective, world-weary but with a good heart hidden beneath his haggard façade. (Throws a mean left hook)

Inobtrusive, 3 dice — Leo has a talent for moving about unseen. It is not so much that he actively skulks; rather, he has such a bland demeanor that people tend to overlook him without realizing it. (Always showing up unexpectedly)

Intuition, 3 dice* — Gernsback has an uncanny — almost supernatural — level of intuition that allows him to sense when people are lying, to notice small clues that others might believe to be insignificant, or to react quickly to unexpected threats. (Looks suspicious when you lie)

Public Defender, downside — Even though he is no longer with the Peace, Gernsback still takes his role as a defender seriously — only now he’s looking out for the people of Cali instead of the interests of the D’Aubaines. He tries to help others when he can, and he takes his commitments very seriously. If he promises to help someone, he’s in to the bitter end, whatever the cost. (Has never abandoned a case — except when the client has tried to trick him)

William Jefferson Malloy, Esq.

Oily Scholar

Where Gernsback is small and slight, Malloy is large in all dimensions. If he hadn’t fallen into the occult, he might have been an excellent politician or used car salesman. He likes to present himself as a refined renaissance man, and has developed a diverse range of questionable but useful skills. Again, his knowledge is nowhere near as complete as that of a specialist, but it gives him enough information to *seem* knowledgeable. His greatest strength, however, is something he calls “the old oil”; this talent helps him to get people talking to him and to establish a bond of trust.

American man (attempts to pass as British), mid-forties, 170 cm, 80 kg. Gray hair, blue eyes. Jolly, urbane. Dresses impeccably in sharp black suits and carries a crystal-topped cane.

Attack: 2 dice + penalty die

Defense: 2 dice + penalty die

Hit Points: 13 (Large, but no stomach for pain)

Languages: Malloy has an excellent education and knows a number of languages. You should decide what languages you wish him to know in accordance with what will best fit your campaign. In addition to the languages he is fluent in, he should know enough basic phrases to seem fluent in a number of other languages — although he’ll get in trouble if forced into a conversation or asked to translate.

Traits

Student of Arcana, 3 dice — While he’s no expert, Malloy has a diverse base of knowledge that incorporates all sorts of general arcana. He specializes in mystical matters, but is also familiar with law, philosophy, and many other areas of study. As noted above, he speaks a number of languages — and can pretend to speak even more, as long as no one around can call his bluff. (Always has a trivial fact to add to the conversation)

Connoisseur, 3 dice — Malloy has a great appreciation for “life’s finer things” — art, music, food — and while he cannot actually create anything, he has an excellent eye for quality and detail. (Comments knowledgeably about the wine)

The Old Oil, 3 dice* — As noted above, this is an unnaturally strong form of fast talk; if Malloy has a chance to start speaking, people tend to be lulled by his voice. This talent helps him to get people talking to him and to establish a basic bond of trust. This may actually be supernatural in nature, or it may just be an element of natural charisma. Unfortunately for Malloy, this is a short-term effect; after having time to think things over, people often feel slightly baffled or even repulsed after dealing with him. (You don’t remember exactly what he said, but he seemed so sincere...)

Comfortable Living, downside — Malloy is used to a comfortable lifestyle, including fine food and lots of it, combined with a lack of undignified physical exercise. He takes a penalty die on all strenuous activities, and will always try to talk his way around any situation that could require physical exertion on his part. (Always making excuses to get out of physical labor)

Story Ideas

If the players are not capable investigators, Gernsback & Malloy may be able to provide help digging up dirt. Otherwise, the players may be drawn into one of their cases. Perhaps the players stumble on to a cursed object that Valentine is trying to get hold of, and he sends Gernsback and Malloy to retrieve it. Malloy’s involvement with the Hermetics may spell trouble in the future, either for him personally or for the Cali community as a whole.

Giancarlo & Sons, Attorneys at Law

Type: Law firm

Rep: A very good but very expensive law firm for the residents of Broken Wings.

Brief: A law firm with partners who use their psychic powers to persuade magistrates.

Address: 45 Ivy Street East, Broken Wings

When he was only five years old, Benito Giancarlo emigrated to Al Amarja from Italy with his parents when unemployment forced them to look elsewhere. Benito's father had difficulty finding good work, so Benito grew up in a dirty two-room apartment near the Plaza of the Four Cardinal Points. Benito spent his childhood getting into trouble and then arguing his way out of it. As he got older he started selling his services to his friends who got in trouble with the law. When his parents died in a bus accident shortly after his 18th birthday, Benito borrowed some money, stuck the term "Esquire" at the end of his name, and opened up shop as a lawyer. As his reputation grew, so did the status of the clients he attracted, and eventually he moved his office to the Plaza of Broken Wings. His two children, Dominic and Vincent, seemed to share their father's powers of persuasion, so they joined the firm, quickly becoming full partners.

Giancarlo and Sons' success is due to the psychic abilities of its three attorneys. Benito was born with a limited form of mind control. If he has time to talk to someone, he can use his power to convince them to believe that whatever he is telling them is true. Benito has never thought that he might have super-ordinary powers; he has always assumed that he is more persuasive than others. Dominic and Vincent inherited their father's power, though they have come to understand through their own research and some nasty personal experiences with crystal traps, that they have some sort of psychic power. Not wanting to risk having to register with the CPC, being banned from arguing in court, or having their old cases overturned, they have kept this a secret from everyone, including their father.

Giancarlo and Sons is kept very busy with work. Since none of the three Giancarlo lawyers has ever received any formal legal training, the firm takes any sort of work, as

long as the price is right. Due to the unusual talents of the Giancarlo men, the firm usually wins whatever case it takes. The firm now employs several paralegals and secretaries, a receptionist, and two private investigators. The persuasive abilities of the firm's partners ensure that the firm's employees are overworked, underpaid, and incredibly happy all the time.

The firm has spent many years building its reputation and client base so that it is now the most expensive and exclusive law firm on the island. Recently, the firm has begun accepting clients of middle and lower class and charging them reduced rates. There are rumors that the firm's newest client, Clyde Throckmorton, is being defended *pro bono*.

GMCS

Benito Giancarlo, Esquire

Greedy Psychic Lawyer

Benito Giancarlo came to Al Amarja at a very young age and spent his childhood years living only slightly above the poverty level. Benito decided that he was going to be rich when he grew up, and started towards that goal as soon as possible. He initially turned to a life of crime but quickly discovered that it was much easier and safer to sell his services than it was to steal money and argue himself out of getting caught.

Benito loves money. He shows off his wealth with the clothes he wears, the car he has someone else drive him around in, the house he lives in, and in any other way that he can. He works the firm's employees mercilessly in order to handle more cases and make more money for the firm. Until recently he laughed at the idea of doing work for the underprivileged, but of late he has begun to change his mind. He has been seeking out certain defendants and offering the firm's services to them at drastically reduced fees. This sudden change of heart is due to the Throckmorton Device. From time to time the Device has need of legal services for certain individ-

uals who will be of use to it at some point in the future. It has chosen Giancarlo and Sons due to the firm's great ability to win cases despite any evidence or facts that might be against them.

White Italian man, age 56, 180 cm, 80 kg. Short brown hair, starting to gray. Wears very expensive suits.

Languages: Italian, Al Amarjan patois

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Psychic Lawyering, 5 dice — Benito has the ability to make other people see things the way he wants them to. If he has time to talk to someone he can use his power to convince them to believe whatever he is telling them is true. To use this power he needs time to explain himself to someone. This power won't make anyone do anything terribly dangerous or detrimental to themselves, but it works without regard to the target's previous beliefs or any facts that may disagree with Benito's argument. If he is unable to use this power then he only has one die to use to plead a case. (Expects to always get his way)

Street Fighting, 3 dice — Benito grew up in one of the rougher parts of the Edge. Despite how long it's been since he got in a fight, skills like this are the kind you keep for life. (Carries himself confidently)

Money Management, 3 dice — Benito had to learn how to balance his books and keep track of the firm's money on his own, and still does. (Keeps the books for his firm personally)

Snobbish — Benito firmly believes in the superiority of the upper class, and generally considers anyone not at his own socioeconomic level to be beneath notice. He will consistently underestimate anyone from a class lower than his own. (Verbally disparages those in a lower class than himself, even to their faces)

Dominic Giancarlo

Throckmorton Psychic Lawyer

Dominic was the first son born to Benito and his wife. Benito spoiled his son rotten, and as Benito made more and more money Dominic was moved to better and better schools, got better and better toys, and by the time his father's firm moved into its current office in Broken Wings Dominic was heading into D'Aubainne University with his

own car and a wardrobe that was too big to fit in his dorm room closet.

Despite his privileged upbringing, Dominic does not share his father's need for wealth. He gives most of his large salary to the Guiding Hand Charity, where he sits on the board of directors. Dominic and his father get in fights quite often over whether or not the underprivileged deserve charity or not. Recently Dominic has changed his opinions regarding how charity should be doled out. He is now starting to feel that certain people are more deserving of help than others due to the way they live their lives. It is these people who the firm has been helping. This change of heart is due to the Throckmorton Device exerting its influence on Dominic to make him help its operatives.

Dominic is tall, dark-haired, and handsome. He likes to work out and enjoys wholesome outdoor activities like hiking and mountain biking. When at work he wears suits that are fashionable but not outrageously expensive.

White Italian man, age 36, 191 cm, 98 kg. Short black hair.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, some Italian

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Psychic Lawyering, 5 dice — Same as for Benito, above. (Chooses his words carefully)

Mountain Biking, 3 dice — Dominic enjoys getting out of the Edge and riding his mountain bike around Al Amarja. (In excellent shape)

Al Amarjan Law, 4 dice — Unlike his father, Dominic has taken the time to learn Al Amarjan law over the course of his career. He is well versed in the complex set of laws that the island's inhabitants live under. (Quotes the text of specific laws when talking about a case)

Generous — Before being influenced by the Throckmorton Device, Dominic Giancarlo was generous to a fault. He still is, except when the Device demands otherwise. (Gives money to beggars on the street)

Vincent Giancarlo

Mean Psychic Lawyer

Born five years after his brother Dominic, Vincent is the opposite of his brother. Vincent's mother died shortly after giving birth to him, leaving him with no parental figure to emulate except his father. Not unexpectedly,

Vincent turned out to be as greedy as Benito. Dominic told Vincent about the special powers that everyone in their family shared when Vincent was still very young. Vincent wasted no time in using his power on teachers, servants in the house, friends, and anyone else he could. Dominic spent much of his time following Vincent around and neutralizing the effects of his power. Vincent hated this and grew up hating his brother, never passing up a chance to interfere with his life. Vincent graduated D'Aubainne University as valedictorian (thanks to his psychic power) and then entered his father's law firm.

Vincent is driven to best his brother at everything he does. He works tirelessly to win more cases, earn more money, and bring in more clients than his brother. Vincent has adopted as many of his father's opinions as possible in order to have his father's support against his brother when needed. Vincent was becoming satisfied with the current situation when both Benito and Dominic started to see eye to eye on a surprising number of issues. Vincent can't understand why his father would start to offer services at a reduced price to anyone, and considers his father's change of heart to be a trick by Dominic to get back at Vincent. He is doing everything he can to keep his father from changing but he is fighting a losing battle against the Throckmorton Device.

White Italian man, age 31, 163 cm, 52 kg. Short brown hair. Thin. Wears expensive suits.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, Italian

Defense: 1 die

Hit Points: 7

Traits

Psychic Lawyering, 5 dice — Same as for Benito, above. (Rude to everyone)

Chess, 3 dice — Vincent learned chess at a young age and ended up liking it. He considers it to be his private way to improve his mind in ways other than using his mental powers. (Reads the *New York Times* chess column daily)

Accounting, 4 dice — Vincent studied accounting at D'Aubainne University in hopes of keeping the books for his father. His father still keeps the firm's books, but Vincent knows a lot about accounting. (Good with numbers)

Frail — Vincent never saw any need to exercise physically, figuring he could always get what he needs through his psychic power, rather than force. (Gaunt)

Story Ideas

- Vincent approaches the PCs. He'd like them to find out what has prompted the changes in his father and try to get the old Benito Giancarlo back.
- If the PCs are a bit more mercenary, Vincent might ask the PCs to kill Dominic for him. The Throckmorton Device would likely act to prevent this, leading the PCs into the Throckmorton plot.
- The firm hires the PCs during a busy period to do some investigative work.
- Someone working for the Giancarlos obtains a crystal trap, realizes what miserable conditions he's been working under, and asks the PCs to figure out why the others are still working for Giancarlo & Sons.

The Haunted House

Type: Theater

Rep: All the terror of a Glorious Lords party, and a lot more fake blood to boot.

Brief: A faux Victorian home used as a stage for horrific live action roleplaying games.

Address: 374 John Dee Lane, Sunken Barrio



Like so many burger, American expatriates Star Groves and Dean MacDonald came to Al Amarja with a dream. Drawing on Groves' inheritance, they purchased an eccentric faux Victorian home in the Sunken Barrio, just down the street from the historic Chateau Melmoth. Built by the exiled German philosopher Wolfram Hengstenberg, the house partook of all the worst excesses of turn-of-the-century Bavaria. The house's reputation as an eyesore took a sharp turn for the worse when the neighbors discovered Hengstenberg's eyeless corpse in its studio. When successive tenants met with the same fate, 374 John Dee Lane soon became abandoned.

Groves and MacDonald are artists, dedicated to evoking fear through illusion and stagecraft. 374 John Dee Lane's reputation and appearance were irresistible, and they were able to pick it up for a steal. They refurbished the place, renaming it the Haunted House. Groves and MacDonald use the Haunted House as a theater of sorts, staging elaborate interactive games or dramas that focus on frightening their visitors without exposing them to actual danger. Al Amarja's relaxed health codes and decency laws allow the two artists to follow their muse in directions that would be illegal in most other civilized nations. Because of their creativity, the Haunted House has acquired a reputation among DAU students and other moderate deviants. Passes command a solid price, and the Haunted House draws in enough income to let Groves and MacDonald explore their passion.

A typical performance at the Haunted House begins with MacDonald providing a brief character description to each participant. Most sessions work best when the participants are costumed, and Groves often visits the homes of deceased Margins to purchase their wardrobes. Then, with

their roles in place, the guests are led into the Haunted House, where they interact with a variety of actors and sets appropriate to the current drama. MacDonald has a strong preference for recreating the works of Poe and Lovecraft, and his reenactments of "The Cask of Amontillado" and "The Masque of the Red Death" are still spoken of with awe in the DETH fraternity house.

Part of the Haunted House's success stems from the fact that it is genuinely haunted. The apparitions of Wolfram Hengstenberg and the house's other inhabitants still materialize periodically to harass the living. Hengstenberg in particular has an obsession with Dean MacDonald, rooted in their deeply conflicting interpretations of the human psyche. During performances, the ghosts frequently manifest, providing an even more realistic ambiance. Ironically, MacDonald and Groves consider the ghosts an annoyance, maintaining that they dilute the purity of the illusions they craft.

GMCs

Star Groves

Perfectionist Fearmonger

Star Groves is the daughter of an American businessman and a Japanese fashion designer. Her earliest memories are her mother's stories of life on Hiroshima's outskirts after World War II. As she grew up, she became fascinated by humanity's propensity towards violence. When she was a college freshman, her parents died in a car crash, leaving her a sizeable inheritance. She met Dean MacDonald a year later, and began investigating terror as a career path shortly thereafter.

At the Haunted House, Groves is typically busy attending to the hundreds of little details necessary to ensure the success of a production. She converses efficiently, handling personal relationships with the same distant competence she displays when ordering fresh corpses

from D'Aubainne Hospital. During games, she becomes a tigress, intent only upon making her clients understand the meaning of terror.

Eurasian woman, age 26, 175 cm, 56 kg. Her features and hair color are Asian, but her eyes are startlingly light amber. She dresses well, and favors well-tailored business suits or trim sweaters and jeans.

Languages: English, Japanese, limited French.

Attack: 4 dice, x0 damage (see below)

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 14

Traits

Producer, 4 dice — Groves' mind is inherently organized and attentive. She has a keen eye for detail, a knack for scheduling, and an impressive ability to make complicated schemes a reality. (Never takes notes)

Wealthy, 3 dice — Through her inheritance, Groves controls a 32% share in a prosperous Japanese computer firm. She lets her accountant handle her finances. (Does not hesitate to spend money)

Mock Combat, 4 dice — While not formally trained to fight, Groves has a keen understanding of the conventions of theatrical combat. With a foam sword or padded claws in hand, Star becomes a terror. In a real combat situation, Star only rolls three dice at best. (Looks good holding a sword)

Perfectionist — The same attention to detail that makes Groves a good producer also makes her an obsessive perfectionist. She cannot resist the urge to try to solve problems that everyone else has learned to work around. (Sorts the sugar packets at restaurants)

Dean MacDonald

Horror Writer

Raised in the American Midwest, Dean MacDonald grew up on a steady diet of horror novels and Pentecostal Christianity. At the age of 17, he experienced a profound crisis of faith after losing a friend to an out-of-control drunk driver. Rejected by his family for his ungodly ways, he put himself through college. At school, he discovered the works of Nietzsche, Rand, and other rational philosophers. In rational philosophy, he found a substitute for his family's faith. While attempting to produce a self-written play about the horrific nature of life lived in obedience to

fallacious cosmic forces, he met Star Groves. The play died, but Groves and MacDonald's friendship lasted.

MacDonald is the star writer at the Haunted House, responsible for the scripts used in a majority of the venue's performances. He is excellent at adapting existing stories and plots to the Haunted House's interactive format, and his adaptations of Poe and Lovecraft's stories are famous among the House's clientele. Occasionally, he writes his own scripts, drawing on his horror at the failure of religion in modern society. While his own works are inspired, only his dedicated fans tend to be able to enjoy them. He is an occasional Nightmare user and a dedicated caffeine junkie.

American man, age 27, 176 cm, 84 kg. Kinky brown hair and unkempt beard, pale skin.

Languages: American English, some German and Latin.

Caffeine Pool: 6 shots

Traits

Scaring People, 4 dice — MacDonald has read hundreds of horror novels and essays on horror, and has thought about the topic extensively. He has developed a knack for frightening people through creative works. He can compose creepy haiku on the spur of the moment, and can put together a frightening story or speech with a few minutes of preparation. (Likes to say "putrescence")

Philosophy, 6 dice — MacDonald has acquired all of the skills and knowledge provided by an American BA in Philosophy. He is particularly well-informed on matters relating to modern rational philosophers like Ayn Rand and Bertrand Russell, but is familiar with the majority of philosophic principles espoused today. (Quotes Nietzsche appropriately)

Hypercaffeinated, 2* dice — This trait is like the fringe power Inedia, except that it allows MacDonald to go without food or rest as long as he has access to a source of caffeine. MacDonald prefers caffeinated citrus beverages, but can make due with other caffeine sources in a pinch. (Has occasional shaking fits)

Compulsive Rationalist — MacDonald rejected Christianity because of a lack of rational evidence for the existence of God. When he first arrived on Al Amarja, he had a difficult time coming to terms with the weirdness he encountered there. Even now he struggles to explain away fringe phenomena through rational explanations. (Scoffs at mystic s*** practitioners)

Wolfram Hengstenberg

Ghostly Positivist

In turn-of-the-century Germany, Wolfram Hengstenberg established his reputation as a philosopher by preaching the ideals of kindness and altruism. When the German Kaiser turned an expansionist eye towards neighboring countries, Hengstenberg spoke out vehemently against the notion. His efforts led to his exile from Germany, but a front cell for the Earthlings was only too happy to invite him to Al Amarja. With the aid of the Earthlings, Hengstenberg built a house of his own design, and then established himself in Al Amarja to begin his work anew.

When Hengstenberg discovered his eyeless corpse in his bed, he was as surprised as the next man.

Since his death, Hengstenberg has existed within the house he built, accompanied only by the ghosts of his home's other victims. With the establishment of the Haunted House, Hengstenberg has considerably more entertainment. He finds Dean MacDonald fascinating, and can debate philosophy with him for hours. Occasionally, Hengstenberg will even get involved in one of the House's performances, although he finds the notion of marketing terror morally repugnant.

Apparition of a German man, age 54. Wispy apparition of the torso of a distinguished-looking German gentleman with prominent sideburns.

Languages: German, English, French, Latin, Greek

Ghost Pool: 4 shots

Traits

Ghostly Manifestation, 2* dice — Hengstenberg is a ghostly apparition of intermediate strength. He can manifest as an immaterial form or vanish from sight at will. He is capable of expending a Ghost Pool shot to create poltergeist phenomena like telekinesis, cold spots, and eerie noises. By expending all of his Ghost Pool, he can even attempt short-term possessions. (Ghostly appearance)

Philosophy, 6 dice — Hengstenberg was a talented philosopher in his time. He can effectively explain the necessity of social collectivism and altruism in improving the lot of all humanity, and is familiar with the philosophies of his predecessors. He despises Dean MacDonald's "selfish" rationalist philosophy, and disapproves of the performances in the Haunted House because they "encourage the negative aspects of humanity." (Has compassionate eyes)

Story Ideas

The Haunted House is an ideal setting for running a game within a game. Asking a group of PCs to have their characters create characters can be a very effective roleplaying experience. Additionally, it provides a way to take a break from an ongoing *Over the Edge* series without setting it down entirely. Many of the story ideas below take advantage of this plot direction.

- The Haunted House advertises a game in "Little Scratches" that appears related to the PCs' current situation. For example, if they are attempting to ferret out the secret of the Throckmortons, the Haunted House might advertise a performance called "No Eyebrows." The game may end up being a red herring, or may provide the PCs with an important clue.
- Star Groves decides that the next Haunted House session will not be complete without a particular item. She places an ad in "Little Scratches" requesting the item, which happens to either be something the PCs possess or have access to. Groves' interest in the item might be coincidental, or could be the result of Mover/Pharaoh/Cut-Up tampering.
- The Haunted House's reputation is well-deserved; the many ghosts of those who have died in the house are evidence of some evil in its walls. Hengstenberg knows that the evil is called the Eyebiter, and is an entity that kills sleeping victims by eating their eyes. Both Groves and MacDonald avoid sleeping in the house, but mistakes happen. When a friend or contact with an important piece of information visits the Haunted House, he makes the mistake of falling asleep during a performance. Contacting his ghost may be a possibility, but the ghost may demand that his friends eliminate the Eyebiter before he shares his secret. MacDonald, intrigued by the notion of the Eyebiter, may even write a performance ending with a battle against the Eyebiter as part of the process of defeating it. The exact nature of the Eyebiter is left to the GM; it may be a ghost, a weird fringe monster, or something else entirely.
- In a self-referential awareness plot, the PCs are invited to a Haunted House session where they play characters that resemble the PCs' players. For additional entertainment value, have each PC play someone else's player.

Hell in a Handbasket

Type: Magical supply store

Rep: One-stop shopping for all your Satanist needs.

Brief: Like the Glorious Lords themselves, this shop for Satanists is all hat and no cowboy. Hell in a Handbasket is located in the Cali Dump; see p. 12 for more information on this unusual neighborhood.

Address: 117 Cali Street, Great Men Barrio

This unpleasant shop is the dark reflection of Beautiful Day (p. 9). It sells all manner of components for black magic and Satanism, in addition to a wide selection of bondage gear and torture equipment. The interior walls of the store are painted black, marred with graffiti in vivid red paint. Warning glyphs are carved on the door and etched into the windows, promising eternal damnation to anyone unwise enough to steal from Hell. It receives a great deal of trade from the various gangs of Great Men; even Sir Arthur occasionally sends a boy around to pick up supplies. However, the owner — a seedy punk named Razor — has something in common with Avan Bloodlord; he doesn't give a damn about the devil. In part he saw an economic niche to fill; he was also driven by a desire to antagonize Agnetha Little, who had repeatedly spurned his advances. Prior to opening his shop, he used to be a drug dealer; he still keeps this up on the side, dealing under the table or out the back door.

Perhaps as a result of Razor's faithless beliefs, Hell in a Handbasket suffers from a higher frequency of poltergeist attacks than most of the other shops in the area. The red paint on the walls often flows like blood, and people will find beating hearts or masses of maggots amidst the merchandise. Of course, given the clientele, this actually tends to add to the shop's image.



GMCS

Razor

Unsavory Punk

Razor got an early start in the Lords of the Seventh Circle, a small-time gang that got crushed and assimilated by the Glorious Lords shortly after he joined. He found the life of a dealer to be more financially rewarding than life on the street, and set up shop in Cali because it was safer than other parts of

Great Men. Eventually, he saved up enough to buy the space for his shop, which he gave the modest name of "Hell." Someone — possibly a Drogue, possibly a mocking horse — gave the shop its current title, and that name has stuck. Razor retains some brawling skills from his gang days, has a working knowledge of Satanist beliefs in spite of his insincerity, and a number of sources and connections through his drug business. He likes to play the electric guitar, but he's the only one who enjoys this experience.

Caucasian 'Margin, age 27, 167 cm, 66 kg. Spiked, artificially red hair, pale blue eyes. Numerous tattoos and piercings. Generally manic demeanor, often on some sort of upper.

Attack: 3 dice, x2 damage with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 20 (Wiry)

Languages: English, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Street Contacts, upside — Over the years, Razor has made many connections throughout the seamy underside of the Edge. His strongest contacts are with the Satanists of Great Men, but he has friends in Flowers and Four Points — and his drug contacts even stretch into the respectable parts of the city. It's up to you to decide exactly who he knows, but he can certainly call in some powerful favors if he has to. (On a first name basis with Avan Bloodlord)

Brawling, 3 dice — While it's been quite some time since he's been involved in a rumble, Razor still knows how

to use his fists and keeps a couple of knives concealed about his clothing. What he lacks in style he makes up for in pure viciousness. (Talks about battles he fought during his days with the Lords of the Seventh Circle)

Satanism, 3 dice — While he certainly can't walk the walk, Razor can at least talk the talk on the subject of Satanism. He doesn't believe any of that crap, but he knows enough to explain what the merchandise he sells in his shop is supposedly good for. However, if he's held in a conversation for an extended period of time, his lack of interest will soon shine through. (Can list off the natures of the Nine Circles of Hell)

Story Ideas

Players involved with dark magic may find Hell in a Handbasket to be a useful location. Otherwise, it is a neutral ground for players to mingle peacefully with the often violent Satanists. Poltergeist activity can make it a very colorful location. One possibility would be for Razor to unknowingly receive a shipment of magically active artifacts — cursed objects that will spread through the neighborhood bringing trouble to everyone who comes into contact with them.



The House of Strauss

Type: Electronica dance club

Rep: A great party, and damn can that DJ spin.

Brief: A high-energy, feel-good place to get down.

Address: 2702 Pogrom Lane, Four Points Barrio

Omar Strauss moved to Al Amarja 5 years ago to try to break into the island's music scene. With the money he'd saved up in his native Germany, he flew to the island and purchased an abandoned warehouse, cleaned the place out, and created The House of Strauss.

The external appearance of the building is still that of a warehouse. The lots on either side were burnt out, and the side walls of the House of Strauss are themselves scorched black in places. On the inside, Omar has made some modifications. Heavy curtains line all of the walls, to reduce echo. Ultraviolet lights, strobes, and fog machines hang suspended from the 30-foot-high ceiling. In the center of the club stands a five-foot-tall revolving dais where the DJ and equipment are located.

Five nights a week, Omar hires outside DJs to come and play at the House. The crowds on these nights are usually mediocre. On Tuesday and Saturday nights though, Omar hosts the party himself. These nights, the House of Strauss is packed far beyond capacity. Omar has an uncanny ability to pick and mix exactly the right music for the crowd at any given time.

Unbeknownst to even himself, Omar Strauss has the psychic ability to obtain positive energy from good music. As a result, Omar does whatever he's doing better when he's listening to a funky groove. When whatever Omar is doing includes mixing and playing music, a powerful feedback effect results. As Omar plays good music, he gets better at DJing, and subsequently plays better music — which makes him get even better at DJing. This cycle continues



all night long, and often into the next afternoon, when the party ends. Sometimes, late in the morning, when Omar is at his very best, the audience begins to resonate with psychic energy itself, producing a positive feeling that many of the partiers find quite addictive.

Word is spreading around the island about The House of Strauss and Omar's musical talent. Some of the more psychically and magically attuned inhabitants of the island are

starting to understand exactly what's going on at Omar's parties, and as a result some important faces are starting to show themselves at The House of Strauss. Some of Compton's bennies, as well as members of Cheryl D'Aubainne's retinue, have begun scouting on Tuesday and Saturday nights to see what the buzz is all about. Anastasia Crowley herself (see *Friend or Foe?*) has been seen at the House once or twice. None of them has stayed late enough to become wrapped up in the psychic resonance effect. Omar himself cares for none of this. He just wants to see his fans dancing and having a good time.

GMCs

Omar Strauss

Psychic DJ

Omar Strauss was born and raised in Germany, where he took an interest in electronic music as a child. He moved to Al Amarja after hearing about Karla Sommers and her Good Tunes. He quickly decided that the Sommerites were not his crowd, and that it was his moral responsibility to share the real good tunes with the Al Amarjans. As a result, he opened the House of Strauss, and quickly gathered a small but devout following. This

has grown week by week, and now Omar is actually considering moving the House of Strauss to larger facilities. For the moment, though, Omar is content to spin his music and help his fans to have a good time.

Omar is in the peak of physical condition. He attributes this to good eating and exercise, but it is really a result of the positive energy he builds. He tends to wear baggy pants and a tank top, and wears a bandana while working. When he's not working, he's almost always listening to something on a portable CD player.

Black German man, age 26, 200 cm, 115 kg. Shaved bald. Wears loose pants and a form-fitting tank top.

Languages: German, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (In great shape)

Traits

Electronic Musician, 4 dice — As a teenager, Omar worked long hours raising enough money to buy his first mixing equipment. Now, he's capable of working seven or eight turntables at the same time as all of his electronics. Late in the night, he works almost too quickly to see. (Always wearing a portable CD player)

Buff As All Hell, 3 dice — Years spent channelling only positive psychic energy has has the pleasant side effect of getting Omar in great shape. His huge mass is made entirely of muscle. (Muscular)

Feeling the Good Vibes, One or more bonus dice — When Omar is listening to music he likes, he begins to unconsciously channel positive psychic energy. This causes Omar to get a bonus dice on all of his actions. Omar has noticed this, and will proclaim to anyone else who asks the power of feeling the good vibes. If Omar is channeling his

power towards mixing better music, a feedback effect begins, giving Omar another bonus die every few hours at the GM's discretion. (Better at stuff when he's feeling the good vibes)

Gotta Get Down — In its raw form, Omar collects psychic energy too strongly and quickly to handle it without burning himself out. As a result, Omar must dance whenever he's listening to music he likes enough to give him a bonus. He wouldn't have it any other way. (Always dancing.)

Story Ideas

- The Tuesday night parties at The House of Strauss are starting to draw crowds away from the Sommerites' parties. If the PCs work for Lydia Goodman, she might send them to investigate Omar's events. Things might even lead to an all-out competition between Omar and the Sommerites.
- Any other patron the PCs work for could take an interest in Omar's work, especially if the patron has contacts in the mystic s*** community.
- The CPC might crack down on poor Omar, who doesn't even know that he's psychic. If the PCs have befriended Strauss, they may need to bail him out.
- The pattern of "random" fluctuations in background interstellar radio noise, picked up by a new device created by the Really Quite Angry Kid, lead The Cut-Ups to believe that the musical essence of James Brown has moved on to Omar Strauss and his techno-funk melodies. The Cut-Ups would like the PCs to help them free that essence to return to Brown.

Johnson's Divinations

Type: Fortune teller

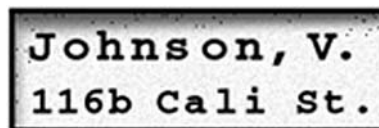
Rep: Johnson keeps a very low profile. To those in the know, he is said to be very reliable if you can afford his prices.

Brief: An expert diviner who can only reveal information that he has been paid a fair price for. Johnson works out of the Cali Dump; see p. 12 for more information on the Cali neighborhood.

Address: 116B Cali Street

Very Johnson is a professional prognosticator; he deals in information. He maintains a very low profile, and the only way a player is likely to hear about him is to be referred by one of his existing clients. Very does not have an actual storefront; instead he works out of his apartment above the Egress Reading Room (p. 27). His living room is filled with the trappings of an oracle: shelves of tarot decks and crystal balls, bags of runes, cages of birds, yarrow sticks for the I Ching, and strange herbs bubbling on a small stove. Light comes from dozens of flickering candles. He always seems to be waiting when a customer comes to his door. He will listen patiently to the seeker's question, and ask for payment — always in advance. He may simply refuse payment, saying that the offer is not sufficient; otherwise, he will select a method of divination. This can range from something as simple as examining the customer's palm to eviscerating a dove to examine its entrails. Eventually, he will provide an answer. Once this answer has been given, he will not elaborate or provide any further hints unless additional payment is proffered.

The truth of the matter is that his show of divination is a sham. He is familiar with all the forms of divination that he employs, but none of these are sufficient to provide the level of information that he has access to. Very Johnson already knows all the answers; it's simply easier for him to go through the motions, lest others realize this secret. As a young man, he was consumed with a thirst for knowledge. He traveled the world, trying to absorb all that he could. At one point, he became lost in a vast cavern; during this time, he managed to free an extradimensional entity that had been trapped for millennia by a powerful sorcerer of ages



past. The djinn offered him one wish, and Very said that he wished to know *everything*. The spirit smiled and agreed, but with two conditions; he could not share his knowledge unless he was asked a specific question, and even then he could only give an answer whose value matched the payment he received. Chuckling, the djinn returned to the netherworld. Very lay comatose for weeks as his mind adapted to the amount of knowledge he received. When he awoke, he found that the spirit had spoken truly. He knew everything — and yet, he could not speak about any of it, nor write anything down. What he had not expected was how anticlimactic this gift would be. He no longer had anything to strive for, and he couldn't even share the many secrets he knew with his friends. On top of that, he now knew exactly how he would live the rest of his life — including how he would die. For reasons known only to him, he returned to Al Amarja; here his business lets him put his wisdom to some use, even if he only deals with a limited clientele.

Very can only provide wisdom equal in value to the payment he has received. This value is entirely relative to the person who pays the price; a bag of diamonds might be worth nothing coming from a diamond mine owner, whereas a single diamond ring might buy a good answer if it was the seeker's only memento of a beloved spouse. It should be noted that he can't choose to provide information through inaction, although sometimes someone can pick up information through close observation. As a general rule, he can't use his knowledge to affect things — for example, using his innate knowledge of computer passwords to become an expert hacker — unless he knows that he will do these things (a metaphysical way of saying that it's up to you to decide how much you want to let him get away with). Knowledge cannot be forced out of him through torture — even if he wants to give up the information, he *can't* — nor by supernatural means. His brain

is so packed with information that a psychic trying to read his mind will immediately pass out or have a stroke.

Very rarely leaves his home. He occasionally stops at the Apothecary (p. 6), or dines at Chateau Melmoth (described in *Friend or Foe?*); but as a rule, he is a solitary hermit who prefers his privacy. When he is encountered at social functions, he tends to be quiet and friendly, saying little and giving away nothing.

GMCS

Very Johnson

Quiet Oracle

Very Johnson is a soft-spoken man who uses words and movements as economically as possible. Left to his own devices, he is content to sit silently for hours at a time considering all the information trapped in his head. He maintains his calm demeanor at all times. When playing Very, bear in mind that nothing is a surprise to him, and that threats have no real meaning for him; he already knows exactly what his future holds. While quiet, he has a friendly nature that shines through his world-weary façade.

‘Margin man of Greek extraction, age 33, 175 cm, 63 kg. Short brown hair, green eyes. Quiet and serene. Dresses conservatively.

Defense: 5 dice

Hit Points: 14 (Secure in the knowledge of his survival)

Languages: Very knows every existing language. It’s up to you to decide if he can actually speak them all, but he can certainly read or understand any language he encounters.

Traits

Omniscient, 5 dice (upside) — Very’s primary talent is the amazing amount of knowledge that he possesses. However, as noted above, his use of that knowledge is extremely restricted. This is primarily a matter of balance, in order to keep your players from becoming reliant on him; you should keep his prices high enough that people only go to him when they are well and truly stumped. You can also

make his answers as cryptic as you like. As noted above, he does not provide hints. Aside from his abilities at prognostication, Very is quite talented at avoiding combat. He will tend to leave a scene before danger arrives, and if forced into a fight he receives 5 dice Defense based on his precise knowledge of how to avoid incoming attacks. Further, he is highly resistant to mental attacks; the overwhelming flood of information in his brain acts like a natural brain looper, blasting any psychic who makes contact with his mind. His knowledge could be useful in any number of other ways — for example, the fact that he understands every language — but you will have to decide the degree to which he can make use of this knowledge without payment. (He’s always expecting you when you come to visit)

Story Ideas

Very is more likely to be a resource that players make use of than the starting point of a story. In addition to his value as a source of information, he can be an entertaining fellow to have in a scene; players who know his capabilities may try to read a great deal into things he says (or doesn’t say). Objects that players give him as payment may find their way to Valentine (p. 93), or he may have a closet full of things that have no value to him, but were valuable enough to their owners to warrant an answer.

A few other ideas:

- If the players get to know Very and come to rely on him too often, you can have him somehow reveal the fact that he will soon die. If they get more information, the players can try to stop this prediction from coming true. If they fail, Very is out of the picture. If they succeed in saving him — despite his prediction that they would fail — he may come to the conclusion that his information is not in fact complete and leave Al Amarja to further explore the world.
- It is possible that Very has come to Cali because he knows that the spirit who gave him his “gift” will some day be trapped in the neighborhood, and he hopes to renegotiate his deal.

Mandala

Type: Barber shop and Mahendi Salon

Rep: None.

Brief: A fairly straightforward location — although Mahendi treatments can have unforeseen results. Mandala is located in the Cali Dump; see p. 12 for more information on this area.

Address: 118 Cali Street, Great Men Barrio



This simple barber shop is one of the only such establishments in Great Men; personal hygiene is a luxury that few of the denizens of the Barrio can afford. However, Mandala is there for those who are willing to make their coiffure a priority. The owner — a Indian man named Yaasudeva Shravana — has learned to create a wide range of styles, ranging from cheap and conservative cuts to shel-lacked horns or spikes for the more disturbed gang members. Yaasudeva's wife, Lakshmi, runs a small Mahendi salon in one corner of the shop; she will also paint glyphs or protective symbols on other body parts on request. Typically these symbols are merely decorative, but occasionally — seemingly by random chance — her work will confer a temporary magical effect upon the customer. Part of the reason that this is so unpredictable is that Lakshmi only speaks Urdu. Her 14-year-old daughter, Lakshmi, translates for her, but this Lakshmi is a young woman who would rather be anywhere but Mandala, and frequently takes liberties when she translates customer's requests.

Yaasudeva is a friendly man, fond of chatting during haircuts, and he knows a great deal of the gossip floating around the Cali Dump. He tries to stay out of any actual conflicts, and spends much of his time worrying about his two daughters, Lakshmi and Lakshmi. The older Lakshmi is in a rebellious phase and Yaasudeva worries that she may run off with one of the gangs. His younger daughter spends a lot of time playing with her imaginary friends; initially Yaasudeva took this as a harmless pastime — even a useful one, since her "friends" taught her to speak a number of different languages. But recently he found out that Lakshmi has been writing a book for her friends — a book in a language he'd never seen — and when he asked her what it was

about, she simply said that he wouldn't understand. Yaasudeva has never paid too much attention to the spirits of Cali, but he's thinking that he'd better start now.

GMCs

Yaasudeva Shravana

Jolly Barber

Yaasudeva is a cheerful, happy fellow. He is beginning to wonder if moving to Cali was such a good idea, but his wife likes the neighborhood and believes that it is good for the children. He has little knowledge of or interest in the occult, but he is a good barber and hairdresser. He speaks English and Urdu.

Indian man, age 45, 173 cm, 73 kg. He is starting to lose his black hair and is considering growing a mustache to compensate. Brown eyes. Jolly and cheerful.

Lakshmi Shravana (Mother)

Silent Artist

Lakshmi is a quiet woman; she only speaks an obscure dialect of Urdu, and she prefers not to speak at all. She is friendly enough, but only seems truly happy when she is working on a client. She has considerable skill at imbuing her symbolic work with mystical energy, but only does so if she believes that the client has requested it.

Indian woman, age 39, 162 cm, 70 kg. Long black hair worn in a bun, starting to go gray; brown eyes. Quiet and solemn, dresses in traditional Indian clothing.

Lakshmi Shravana (Daughter, 14)

Rebellious Youth

Of all the Shravanas, Lakshmi is the most impetuous — and, in many ways, the best suited to her environment. Her father's concerns are quite justified; she has started attending parties at the Drogue House and is considering running away and starting a life of her own. She carries a knife and Razor has been giving her a few tips on using it; she's also been act-



ing as a courier for his drug business. At the moment Lakshmi is walking a fine line between associating with the Drogues and dealing with the Lucies; this ambiguity may bring her misfortune. Lakshmi speaks Urdu and English.

Indian woman, age 14, 161 cm, 53 kg. Short black hair, brown eyes. Typically has Mahendi designs on her hands. Rebellious, aggressive. Wears leather and torn clothes.

Lakshmi Shravana (Daughter, 8)

Strange Child

Lakshmi is the most mysterious and disturbing of the Shravanas. At a glance, she is an adorable little girl; but when one spends time around her, it quickly becomes clear that she doesn't think or act like one. She is extremely solemn and often seems to be lost in thought; when she talks, she often addresses invisible entities that the players cannot see. She speaks many languages, including Urdu, English, Arabic, Latin, and a number of Chinese dialects; she has an excellent accent with all of these languages, and will switch between them without noticing she is doing it. She spends much of her time writing in a large notebook. This writing is in a language that has not been seen on this Earth; it is possible that she is making it up as she goes

along, but it seems to be both complicated and internally consistent. At your discretion, she may be learning magic from her imaginary friends as well; over time she could start to develop additional unusual abilities.

Indian girl, age 8, 123 cm, 38 kg. Shoulder-length black hair, brown eyes. Somber, distracted air.

Story Ideas

In and of itself, Mandala is a fairly mundane location. If a player makes use of the Shravanas' talents, it can be a good place to pick up local gossip. If the players have a good relationship with the middle Lakshmi, they may be able to gain a variety of benefits from Mahendi sessions. Of course, if Lakshmi *doesn't* like them — perhaps as a result of an encounter at a gang party — anything is possible. If the players seem like good people, Yaasudeva may try to talk them into helping him straighten out his eldest daughter. And then there is the question of the youngest Lakshmi. Who are her imaginary friends? What is the book she is writing? What will happen when it is completed?

The Marzipan Gallery

Type: Art Gallery

Rep: Expensive work, but there's something so delightfully accessible about it.

Brief: A high-priced gallery that has been enjoying great success. The art is syrupy but curiously appealing to the vast majority of the populace. The owner has a psychic talent that gives her an artistic edge — but adds a serious complication to her life.

Address: 180 Plaza of Broken Wings, Suite 620, Broken Wings Barrio

The Marzipan Gallery has enjoyed a tremendous wave of success since its recent opening. The works of art displayed in the Marzipan are soft, peaceful, and tremendously insipid — paintings with names like “Sunset Symphony” and “The Blessed Damozel.” The artist, Crystal Evensong, seems to believe in quantity over originality; this is the sort of place where if you find something you like, you can say “Can I get that in red?” While these paintings tend to be dismissed as sugary trash by any true artist, they seem to strike some primal chord in those without any real artistic talent — and as a result they sell like hotcakes. Almost every office in Golden has Marzipan works on the walls.

Imagine a beautiful office building, soothing music coming out of invisible speakers. Thick white shag carpeting. And dreamy paintings. Roxana Calderone, an attentive and wellspoken secretary, checks to see if you have an appointment, and seeing that you do accompanies you to the anteroom. You pass long halls of glittering sunsets and gold-dappled trees. It is hard to believe that a single person could produce so many beautiful works of art, but the style is clear and unmistakable. Eventually, you're brought into the giant atrium. There are paintings as far as the eye can see. And there, in the center, is the artist herself ... Crystal Evensong. And yes, you've checked — that's her real name.

— From “Crystal Chrysalis,” *Amarja Style*, issue 83

Even Pharaohs and Throckmorton agents tend to like these paintings, although they can't say why.

But there is a secret to Crystal's success. Marzipan is only one of her galleries; she also owns a place called Morphine (p. 51) in the Cali Dump neighborhood of Great Men. The paintings on the walls of Morphine are horrific abstract images that seem to claw at the psyche of any observer, dredging up nightmares and hidden terrors. In theory these paintings are the work of Crystal's high school sweetheart and current beau Vaughn von Van. But the fact of the matter is that she is responsible for both darkness and light — and that she is trapped in the prison of her own talent.

Some years ago, both Crystal and Vaughn were accepted as art students at D'Aubainne University. Vaughn — a poseur who ranked high on ego but low on talent — quickly fell in with the Delta Epsilon Theta crowd, while Crystal found a home at the ART house. A few years later, both volunteered for an experimental study that was promoted by the art department — a program that was supposed to test and enhance creativity. Little did they know that this program was being funded by the Vornite Movers, who were experimenting with the creative potential of the human mind. Vaughn and most of the other subjects emerged from this program unscathed; either they were part of a control group that did not receive the full treatment, or else the program only affected those with true artistic potential. A few other members of the study went hopelessly insane or were spirited away by the Vornites for further testing. And then there was Crystal. Like Vaughn, she seemed to have been unaffected by the treatment, and so she was set free to return to her normal life.

But in the years that followed, strange things started to occur around Crystal. She was plagued by terrible nightmares and dark images that she couldn't get out of her mind. Occasionally, the visions would fade; strangely, these periods of peace always seemed to coincide with sudden nervous breakdowns on the part of people around her. Eventually, she found that she could temporarily expunge the darkness from her spirit through a cathartic act of painting. The works that she created in this way were ter-

rible, soul-searing things. But afterwards, she found herself in a state of perfect bliss — a relaxed state that she could also project onto her paintings. Following her graduation from DAU, she made a few sales and managed to raise enough money to open a gallery; her “light” work was an instant success and she soon relocated to her current office. She knew better than to try to sell her “dark” work — and she didn’t want to besmirch the reputation she was developing with Marzipan — but at the same time, she still felt a strange sense of pride in it and wanted people to be able to see it. Ultimately she allowed Vaughn to take credit, setting him up with his own gallery. Some might wonder why she maintains her relationship with Vaughn, now that she is a tremendous success; the fact is that his dependency on her makes her feel important, and he is a pillar of stability in her increasingly unstable world.

Now that pillar is beginning to crumble. As noted in the Morphine write-up, Vaughn believes that he has finally found his own muse, and he doesn’t want Crystal to make any more of her dark paintings. He’s developing “a new image for V3” and wants to leave the past behind. But Crystal’s psychic powers have continued to grow over the last few years, and quitting her work is not such a simple matter. Her brain produces a tremendous amount of negative energy. If she does not release this energy in an act of painting, it will build up, filling her mind with terrible thoughts. Occasionally, these dark emotions will burst out and flood the mind of someone around her, generally causing mental breakdowns or forcing victims to enact scenes from her depraved visions. But even this does not provide the same release as painting; the respite is temporary at best. Further, without the serenity that painting vile images brings to her, Crystal cannot create insipid work for Marzipan. If she follows the wishes of her beloved Vaughn she may lose her business and her sanity.

Crystal herself does not really understand the nature of her psychic talent, and she may well try to fulfil Vaughn’s request. Or she may simply try to cut down slowly, doing a painting here and there on the sly and hiding

them from Vaughn. Meanwhile, her occasional psychic outbursts may attract unwanted attention...

GMCS

Crystal Evensong

Unbalanced Artist

Crystal is a pendulum. After one of her Morphine sessions, she is a vision of serenity, calm and unflappable. But as time passes, she becomes increasingly tense as she struggles to keep her darker impulses at bay. She knows that she has a problem, but she doesn’t want to accept it; part of her fears that if the darkness went away, she would lose her ability to create as well. She isn’t truly aware of her psychic powers; both the creation of her paintings and the broadcasting of negative emotions are subconscious acts.

Aside from these mood swings, Crystal is a kind and sensitive person — a stereotypical Alpha Rho Tau girl. Her success has been quite unexpected for her, and she is not really comfortable with it. She feels that she has to maintain a public image of suave sophistication, but within she is fighting a mental current that is beginning to carry her away. If the characters offer a friendly hand she may become a close ally; this could be a source of financial support for the characters.

Crystal and Vaughn live in a luxury apartment above Marzipan. Crystal dislikes Great Men, and does not want to be connected to Morphine; on the rare occasions that she visits the gallery she will attempt to disguise herself.

Caucasian American woman, age 26. 163 cm, 62 kg, Long, flowing red hair and brilliant green eyes. Charming, sophisticated. Tends to dress in stylish business attire.

Traits

Painter, 5 dice — Crystal is an extremely talented painter, although it is her latent psychic ability that makes her work truly remarkable. She specializes in the two styles seen at Morphine and Marzipan — horrific abstract and sappy pastoral. (Occasionally has spots of paint on her shoes)

*Psychic Projection**, 5 dice — The effects of this power have been described above. At the moment, she has no control over it; if she did ever develop such control, it would make sense to assign her a shot pool. In addition to

marzipan

the ability to project negative energy into people or paintings, this power has a few other affects. For a period of time after she has vented her negative emotions, she is unnaturally calm and centered; this may provide her with a bonus die for social or artistic actions, but she will take a penalty die on any sort of hostile or aggressive action. Conversely, when her negative energy levels are high, she is extremely high-strung and these penalties and bonuses are reversed. However, during these periods she may use this trait to resist mental attacks due to the storm of emotion flooding her mind; psychic contact may actually be a dangerous experience for the attacker. Note that her projective power is completely one-way and as a result she is not affected by brain loopers. Crystal traps will provide protection against her power. (Sign varies based on current energy level)

Beautiful and Poised, 4 dice — Crystal combines an innocent beauty with grace and elegance. If not for her artistic aspirations, she could have embarked on a highly successful career as a model. It is this poise that allows her to keep her darker emotions under control and out of the public eye when her negative energy is on the rise. (Talks about her experiences as homecoming queen at Ames High School)

Roxana Calderone

Friendly Receptionist

Roxana is a cheerful young woman from Great Men Barrio. Her father owns a small Bodega in the Cali Dump area (p. 11). He is incredibly paranoid and insists that Roxana claim to be living with her uncle, and never mention his name. While she doesn't like this, she puts up with it. Her mother died many years ago, and she won't talk about the circumstances. Eventually she enrolled in some community courses at DAU and encountered Crystal through friends at ART; Crystal took a liking to her and offered her the receptionist position at Marzipan.

Roxana is a friendly, guileless woman who loves her father and her employer. She is in awe of Crystal's talents. She despises Vaughn von Van and has begun to figure out that Vaughn is not actually responsible for the artwork in Morphine. She is also beginning to notice her employer's strange mood swings, and is wondering if she can do anything to help.

Hispanic woman, age 25, 157 cm, 61 kg. Shoulder length curly dark hair, brown eyes. Friendly and engaging.

She often has Mahendi designs painted on her hands (see *Mandala*, p. 46, for additional details).

Story Ideas

You may wish to introduce the Marzipan Gallery into your campaign before Vaughn asks Crystal to stop creating work for Morphine; this would allow your players to observe Crystal's slow breakdown. The simplest way to work Marzipan into a game is to have the characters start noticing the similar paintings in all the successful establishments of the Edge. They could also encounter Crystal or her work at a local show — or perhaps they could be introduced to her through contacts at the university. Once the players have encountered her, there are a variety of ways that stories could develop:

- Crystal tries to stop producing her darker paintings. During this period, you could have a number of interesting scenes as people around her suddenly begin to act out her darker impulses. She may chose to seek psychological help, or she may develop multiple personality disorder — splitting off the dark half and the light half. This could prove quite dangerous, if the darker side was able to control her projective psychic power...
- The Vornites begin to suspect that Crystal is not the failed experiment that they thought, and kidnap her to perform further tests. Depending on the kind of people the characters associate with, either Vaughn or Roxana might come to them for help.
- Crystal trap — If you have any shapers or psychics in your group, they could have an unpleasant trip through Crystal's pent-up nightmares.
- The Cut-Ups, Dionysus Movers, and the Vornites all uncover the secrets of Crystal's psychic potential. Each group wishes to recruit her as an agent. Who will get to her first, and what will happen to the players if they get in the way?
- In the future world of Clyde Throckmorton, Marzipan art is the only artwork the government allows. Throckmorton agents begin an aggressive campaign burning all artwork, but mysteriously leave Marzipan paintings alone.

Morphine

Type: Art Gallery

Rep: Viscerally disturbing. In other words, cool.

Brief: A gallery of nightmarish images located in the Cali Dump (see p. 12). Popular with Satanists and Sandmen. A recent acquisition has brought more attention on the gallery.

Address: 113 Cali Street, Great Men Barrio

The southern end of Cali Street is choked with the rubble of the Hello Macaroni cookie factory. Vast chunks of masonry litter the street, forming a barricade over fifteen feet in height. Here and there, larger fragments of the structure are scattered amidst the rubble. A piece of the company logo remains intact, a giant “HELL” that dominates the bleak landscape.

Just below the “HELL,” a short tunnel has been carved through the rubble. This reinforced passage leads southwest to a former tenement; the ground floor of this shoddy building has been refurbished and transformed into a small gallery. This is Morphine, a showcase of the disturbing work of artistic genius Vaughn von Van — or so V3 (as he prefers to be called) would have you believe.

The interior of Morphine is rough and hard-edged — raw concrete spray-painted black. There are a number of small chambers connected by short halls. Each room uses a different mode of lighting; artificial candlelight, flaring strobes, ultraviolet — one room is lit by the radiance of a television that shows only static. Heavy curtains prevent the light from leaking into the other chambers and provide browsers with a fair degree of privacy.

The paintings themselves are both very disturbing and difficult to describe in words. At a glance, most seem to be oil paintings, abstract swirling patterns of black and shades of gray. They have a powerful psychoactive effect on the unconscious mind. Each piece acts like a Rorschach blot. As a player wanders through the gallery, you should suggest what the images remind her of.

“This one looks like maggots writhing in a rotting brain.”

“The next one brings to mind an old woman on massive life-support machines. You realize that the woman is you, that you can’t move and they’ll never let you die.”

“You can’t quite explain why, but looking at this you see an image of your younger brother. He’s crying, and you notice that his fingers have been cut off.”

. . . and so on. Ideally you want to customize images for each player, making use of existing phobias, unpleasant past events, and so on. Generally each viewer will see something slightly different, but working along a related theme. Aside from the actual image, each painting gives off powerful emanations of negative energy and emotions. You will have to decide if this is a psychic effect (in which case a character wearing a crystal trap might not respond to the paintings) or if the visual image stimulates the brain in an unusual manner. The paintings do not have individual names; each is labeled solely with a number — “Image 13” and so forth.

Morphine is not well-known, but it has its share of loyal patrons — mostly Satanists and nihilistic frat boys from DETh. It also exerts an unusual pull on Sandmen, who find the images curiously inspiring. Many of the patrons enjoy wandering through the gallery on Nightmare, and the bouncer has a good business going acting as a front man for a few of the Sandmen. That said, the gallery itself does very little business. Morphine has its share of regular patrons, but few of them would ever consider actually *buying* a picture. Space in Great Men is quite affordable, but a sharp observer might wonder how the gallery stays afloat with zero income.

The answer, of course, is that it doesn’t. The paintings aren’t the work of Vaughn van Van, they’re the creations of highly successful commercial artist Crystal Evensong. The full story of Crystal and Vaughn is provided in the write-up on the Marzipan Gallery (see p. 48), but in short Crystal vents her negative emotions into these



paintings and allows her loser beau Vaughn to take credit for them. She supports Morphine using the profits from her other gallery. Even though she does not receive any recognition for this work, something in her demands that it be shown; at the same time, public knowledge that she was the creator of such hideous images could jeopardize the reputation that she has carefully crafted for herself through Marzipan. This strange relationship has continued for some time. Recently, however, an event occurred that has thrown this system into jeopardy.

For years V3 struggled to create his own original work, never managing to create anything that measured up to Crystal's paintings. But then one night he ingested an astounding mixture of drugs and went to touch up an old piece he was working on. He remembers very little about that night, but the result speaks for itself. He calls this piece "The Mirror." Starting with a 2' x 3' piece of steel, Vaughn applied strips of metal and plastic and covered the whole thing with coats of black lacquer and enamel. The Mirror is a gleaming mosaic of black fragments. But what stands out is the face. At the center of the piece, a face formed of fragments protrudes from the flat surface; the effect is as if someone had stood on the other side and pressed their face through the image. The expression on the face is one of sorrow and bleak despair. Originally Vaughn had simply conceived of the pieces as a flat image; he doesn't even remember adding the grim visage, but it certainly seems to be the touch that moved the Mirror from morbid to masterpiece.

For despite the negative imagery of the piece as a whole, the Mirror is curiously compelling. From a distance it seems much like any other piece of modern art. But when one stands closer and stares into the empty sockets of the face, the black strips catch the reflection of the viewer's own visage. The effect is powerfully introspective and many say that it's like "looking into your soul." Few people pay it much mind on a first glance, but many find themselves wandering back for a second viewing . . . and then a third. People find the face haunting their thoughts, and many find that it causes them to reconsider their own self-image. Of course, this is rarely a good thing; see the notes below for full details.

Many wonder how Vaughn could have come up with such a brilliant piece of work when it is such a departure from his previous style. Frankly, Vaughn himself is puzzled

as well. He realizes that this work is the proof of the artistic brilliance that he's been struggling to create for years — but he doesn't remember exactly how he created the most critical piece of it. He keeps trying to create similar works without success, and he has demanded that Crystal stop creating her dark paintings — now that he has created a worthwhile work of his own, he no longer wants to be associated with her cast-offs. This is causing some trouble for Crystal, as described under Marzipan. Vaughn has begun to wonder if the drugs were partially responsible for his artistic breakthrough, but he can't remember exactly what he was on. These days, he spends most of his time trying new combinations of narcotics, or standing moodily in front of the Mirror staring at his morbid reflection. Many people have offered to buy the Mirror, including Sir Arthur Compton, but Vaughn feels that he cannot sell it until he has managed to duplicate it — and maybe not even then.

The problem is that Vaughn didn't create the Mirror, any more than he created the other paintings in the gallery. Nikkal, owner of the Apothecary, provided the critical touch that gives the piece its edge. After many long years of being tormented by her former kinsmen — the extradimensional beings known as the Akashta — Nikkal perfected a ritual for binding one of the Akashta to a physical object. Of course, the object needed to have a certain physical and spiritual resonance, and the proto-Mirror was the perfect match. The face on the Mirror is that of the trapped Akashta, and this is also the source of the object's strange pull. The trapped spirit is incapable of communicating, but it can influence the minds of those who look at it. Over time it can enhance negative emotions, induce obsessions, or bring latent patterns of behavior to the surface. This is the source of Vaughn's recent compulsive behavior, which will only get worse as time goes by. Nikkal did not believe that the trapped Akashta would have any power at all; in time, she may be given cause to regret her actions.

GMCs

Vaughn Von Van

Annoying Poseur

Vaughn von Van (AKA Joel Silverman) is a struggling young artist — that is to say, a young artist struggling with



a tremendous lack of talent. He's been riding on the coattails of his sweetheart Crystal Evensong since they attended high school together in Ames, Iowa. He has an amazing ego that somehow allows him to maintain the belief that he has a vast reserve of talent just waiting to be unleashed. During his days at DAU, he was a hard-core member of the DETH fraternity. He still spends a lot of time hanging out at the frat house, as many of the brothers are big fans of "his" work in Morphine. Vaughn's only real talent is his capacity for deception, both of himself and others; he has worked so hard to craft an image of the brooding artistic genius that he has forgotten that it's a false face.

Caucasian American male, age 26, 179 cm, 64 kg. Blue eyes, dyed black hair cut short and heavily moussed, annoying sideburns. Dresses all in black, wears sunglasses at all hours. Cadaverously pale, mouth fixed in a permanent sneer. Affects an attitude of "Don't try to understand me — I'm an artist." His voice is surprisingly nasal.

Bentley

Colorblind Bouncer

Constant exposure to the paintings of Morphine takes a lot out of a person; most of the security guards hired to watch over the gallery have ended up in the asylum. But six

months ago Crystal found Bentley, and he's been doing just fine. Bentley is a large African-Amarjan man afflicted with a curious visual impairment — an unusual form of red-green colorblindness that causes him to see the world entirely in shades of red and green. He has tried many unusual therapies for this problem, including a course of treatment with Dr. Nusbaum's NeoCare program. There he was subjected to a variety of chemical treatments that did nothing for his vision problems but had the side effect of dampening his emotional responses. As a result he has an unnatural resistance to any supernatural effects designed to trigger an emotional reaction. Whether due to this mental aberration or to the fact that he can't see them properly, he is largely immune to the negative imagery of the Morphine paintings. Crystal pays him handsomely, both for his work and his silence concerning her support of the gallery, and he also runs a side business dealing Nightmare to the patrons of the gallery. He is a strong man and capable fighter, but his specialty is intimidation; by just standing around and looking grim, he generally manages to discourage people from starting any trouble — even people who could take him if it came to a fight.

African-Amarjan male, age 33, 183 cm, 110 kg. Eyes are an unusually pale shade of blue. He shaves his head and often has Lakshmi Shravana (p. 46) decorate it with mystical patterns. Muscular, grim, and extremely intimidating; speaks in a gravelly monotone.

Attack: 3 dice (x4 damage with Stinger Junior)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 25 (muscle and determination)

Languages: English, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Bouncer, 3 dice — Bentley has a sharp eye when it comes to spotting would-be trouble makers, and a flair for bouncing heads off the pavement. He receives a bonus die when he is restraining someone due to his knowledge of holds and pins. (Keeps an eye on suspicious customers)

Intimidation, 4 dice — Bentley has mastered the art of intimidation. Something about his stance and bearing oozes confidence, and if looks could kill, he could take a room out with a glare. He never backs down or shows weakness, and enemies generally end up feeling like he's luring them into a trap. (*Cold and confident, even in the face of overwhelming odds*)

Emotionally Void, 5 dice — Bentley is incapable of feeling strong emotions. He can use this trait to resist any effect that would generate an emotional response, be it a spell, drug, or powerful orator. Of course, this also has the side effect of preventing him from getting particularly excited about anything or having much fun in life. (Never changes his expression)

Red-Green Colorblindness, downside — Bentley sees the entire world in shades of red and green. It's up to you to decide just how inconvenient this will prove to be. (Says "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas!" at the start of a fight)

Story Ideas

There are a variety of ways that Morphine could enter a story:

- If the characters have any contacts among the Delta Epsilon Thetas, these friends could drag them to Morphine to see the Mirror.
- Someone could hire the players to steal the Mirror from Morphine — which will, of course, prove impossible since the Pyx binds the trapped spirit to the neighborhood (see p. 13). Alternately, the players could be caught in the middle of multiple attempts to steal the Mirror. Compton wants it, the Dionysus or Hermetic Movers want it, a disturbing Sandman is interested in it, and Crystal Evensong wants it destroyed to renew Vaughn's dependence on her.
- If the players spend much time in Cali, they could notice odd patterns of behavior as people begin to be influenced by the spirit in the Mirror.
- The Mirror could begin to exert its influence over one of the players. This should be handled subtly; it's not mind control, it simply exaggerates existing negative emotions and patterns of behavior. Let the player know that he is becoming obsessed with the painting and encourage him to go back and see it as often as possible.
- Morphine is also a good way to draw players into plots involving the Sandmen, if this is desirable. A Sandman might kidnap Vaughn in order to extract a "command performance" from him; Crystal Evensong could ask the players to help her get him back.

Norms

Type: Nightclub

Rep: You have to be a little weird to want to hang out somewhere this normal. But the food's good, at least.

Brief: A low-level Net hangout housed in the residence of an abnormally straight family.

Address: 240 Vistaview Road, The 'Burbs



Situated on the edge of Sunken and the 'Burbs, Norms was originally a simple suburban home, inhabited by Nora and Norman Nelson. The epitome of normies, they lived an idyllic suburban life filled with home cooking, pressed shirts, and pirated American football games. The wrong turn that took Norman to the Winds of Change profoundly altered his family's life. In an uncharacteristic lapse of judgement, he let himself be dealt into a single hand of poker. Norm's jack-high nothing fell to Eduardo Cassaverdi's three queens, and Cassaverdi called in a Net representative to clean up Norm's debt.

While visiting the Nelson residence, the Net representative realized just how reassuringly depressing Norm's lifestyle was. A deal was struck, and Norm and Nora's house became a "nightclub," with the Nelsons as the central attraction. The Net enforces a strict dress and conduct code, allowing the jaded and overstimulated a chance to see how the other half lives. Norm and Nora have become prisoners within their own home, perpetually barbecuing and baking for an ever-changing line of visitors.

In addition to being a nightclub, Norms is still a functioning suburban home. Nora cooks in the kitchen and serves visitors in the dining room and kitchen nook, and Norm grills steaks and burgers out on the back porch when not watching football in the living room. The entire house is furnished like a showroom for a famous American home design expert, minus the labels (there are some people even the Net tries not to cross). Every room and possession is available to guests, and although Norm and Nora try to keep visitors out of their bedroom, quite a bit of business of

various sorts goes down in the Nelson house.

The house serves as a nexus for low-level Net negotiations, as well as a hangout for idiosyncratic barflies. While Nora and Norm have largely lost their independent

lives to the Net invasion, they do experience some benefits from their arrangement. The Nelsons have the best-kept yard in their neighborhood, an accidental benefit of "family men" showing their domestic skills to their dates. Nora's blueberry muffins have acquired quite a reputation within the Net, and any two-bit hoodlum that gives her trouble will face the wrath of a legion of surly Net goons. Similarly, while many of the guests enjoy baiting the stolid Norm, they frequently do so while forcing him to watch American sports and drink beer all day long. The Nelsons' indentured servitude to the Net is no picnic, but in a way it has gained them a curious acceptance among a pack of hardened criminals.

GMCs

Norman Nelson

Male Normie Archetype

Norman Nelson wanted nothing more out of life than an easy chair, a big-screen TV, and a refrigerator full of cold beer. Visiting Wind of Change changed his life: in one hand of cards, he gained everything he desired and lost every shred of freedom he possessed.

Al Amarjan man, age 42, 178 cm, 93 kg. Brown hair and eyes, with some balding and a noticeable beer belly.

Languages: English, some Al Amarjan patois.

Traits

Go to Work, 3 dice — Before losing his freedom, Norman had an undistinguished blue-collar job requiring some manual labor and little thought. He thinks it might

have had something to do with construction work. (Wears work shirts at home)

Sports trivia, 5 dice — Norm can extensively quote statistics for all major international sports, and has at least a general familiarity with many obscure sports. He generally only discusses sports when forced to, however. (Wears a baseball cap with a sports logo)

Out of shape — Norm rarely escapes his living room long enough to get any real exercise. He suffers a penalty die on all physical activity. (Forlorn expression)

Nora Nelson

Female Normie Archetype

Before Norm lost at Winds of Change, she spent her days watching soap operas, doing laundry, and cooking food. Since the Net took control of her life, she has largely lost track of the soap operas.

Al Amarjan woman, age 41, 168 cm, 63 kg. Prematurely gray hair, blue eyes. Looks motherly, in an inoffensive way.

Languages: English, some Al Amarjan patois.

Traits

Cooking, 4 dice — Nora would be a talented chef at a family-style restaurant. She does not cook a wide range of recipes, but the simple family fare she makes is quite tasty. (Blushes at compliments on her cooking)

Inconspicuous, 3 dice — Nora is skilled at avoiding notice as she moves around her house to clean. Because of this, she may actually have overheard Net information she should not know. (Quiet)

Complacent — Nora has largely given up on taking an active role in guiding her life. She suffers a penalty die when trying to make major changes in her life. (Never complains)

Eduardo Cassaverdi

Lower-Echelon Mobster

See *Over the Edge*, 2nd ed., p. 104.

Story Ideas

- The PCs scope out a Margin with Net connections, and find one of Nora's muffins in his flat. The muffin leads them up the Net hierarchy, possibly even to a dramatic confrontation at Norms.
- The PCs visit Norms during a casual meeting, and are exposed to the plight of the Nelsons. Will they turn a blind eye, or strive to free the Nelsons from their prison?
- The Nelsons are secretly the first wave of an invasion fleet sent by the Blianchee, an alien race native to Barnard's Star. Norm and Nora are high-tech androids, programmed with disguise algorithms based on an extensive study of Earth culture (specifically, 1950s TV shows). Although secretly alien scouts, the Nelsons' programming is so perfect that they really are as normal as they appear. However, the Kergillians are long-standing enemies of the Blianchee race. On discovering the presence of a Blianchee outpost, the Kergillians will act decisively against Norms, perhaps catching the PCs in the middle of their assault.
- Normalcy rarely lasts in the presence of PCs. Perhaps Norm really won the poker hand at the Winds of Change, and secretly wished for an exciting life. From that moment, excitement has become Norm's destiny. Cosmic forces have arranged the entire Net takeover as part of a clever scheme to fulfill Norm's desire for excitement. Now, fate's only goal is to move the climax of your PCs' series into Norm's home. This plot is best introduced suddenly and widely: "Little Scratches" and "Opportunities on the Edge" both discuss Norms while every GMC the PCs know or seek converges on the little suburban home. When the PCs head to Norms, the giant chain of coincidence brings itself to a conclusion as Norm gets his wish for a little excitement.

The Numbers Game

Type: Lottery

Rep: Is this really a good idea?

Brief: Buy a ticket, get a name. If that person dies, you win.

Address: 2418 Solomon Street, Golden Barrio



Statisticians tell us that a person has better odds of being struck by lightning or dying in an auto accident than winning the lottery. Entrepreneur Kevin Barker has given this factoid a new and profitable dimension, by offering a lottery product based on mortality statistics.

The marketing slogan of this new lottery is “Finding a Little Good in Everything.”

How It Works

The rules are simple: five dollars buys you a name drawn randomly out of a proprietary index of Al Amarjan residents. If your “ticket” dies before the end of the lottery (a new lottery runs each week), you win the jackpot, dividing it with any other winners. If foul play is suspected in the death, payment is withheld until it is shown that the lottery winner is not the perpetrator.

Half of the money from tickets goes into the jackpot; the other half goes into Kevin Barker’s pocket and toward the expenses of promoting the lottery. To make things interesting, Barker is seeding the initial jackpot with \$50,000.

Tickets can be purchased at the Numbers Game office, or through a growing network of news agents, convenience stores (such as Rainbow Mini Mart — see p. 66) and other retail outlets. Each outlet is set up with a machine that generates ticket-receipts, and connects to the office computer server via internet or a cellular modem. (Street vendors, who typically don’t have phone or cable lines, are set up with Personal Digital Assistants and cellular modems.) The central computer contains the list of valid names, and

spits out random choices for each purchase. The vendor either has a computer-printed receipt for the player, or he writes out a slip by hand with the confirmation number from the computer. For verification, players must enter their own name and address

(assuring, incidentally, that they will be added to the computer’s database for future drawings).

The first independent vendor was a newsstand in Flowers, run by Tramh LeThuy. When Barker told the Vietnamese merchant about his clever idea, LeThuy beamed and declared that it was “just the sort of product I’d like to see in the market.” LeThuy has helped Barker’s marketing, introducing him to other likely vendors, and even investing some money to help with advertising and equipment. He has also helped behind the scenes, making subtle use of contacts and sleepers to publicize the Numbers Game, encourage stories about it in the media, and so forth.

“Information Services”

The rules state that you are disqualified from winning if you help your “ticket” along to his or her final reward, directly or through other parties. Of course, not everyone feels that this disclaimer is enough to dissuade all the crazies out there who might feel like trying to rig the game. For an individually negotiable fee (based, in essence, on your ability to pay), you can arrange to have your name and personal information erased from the index of names. For another, far more modest fee, the staff of the Numbers Game will check the computer to see if another party that you specify is in their database. If it is not, they will of course be happy to add it.

Location

Barker has just set up the office of the Numbers Game in Golden Barrio, right on the edge of Justice. He has hired a receptionist, and a footman from Armorguard (see *Over the Edge* 2nd Ed., pages 72-73) for security.

The office is on the first floor of a building that Barker owns. He lives upstairs; several other upstairs apartments are rented or available for rent.

GMCs

Kevin Barker

Entrepreneur

Formerly a Nebraska actuary, Kevin fell in love with the sunshine and chaotic melange of Al Amarja. The proceeds from sale of his Berkshire Hathaway stock (a wise and profitable investment, held for years) bought him a building in the Edge and the money to fund a business concept that would never have flown back home in Omaha.

Euro-American man, age 52, 177 cm, 104 kg. Stringy gray hair, neatly trimmed short beard. Favors loud Hawaiian shirts and cargo shorts.

Languages: American English.

Traits

Actuary, 3* dice — Kevin spent decades working for an insurance company, calculating the mathematical odds of countless risks, cross-indexed against demographics and other factors. He felt the step over to gambling was natural, since insurance amounts to betting against yourself — you “win” the insurance money if tragedy strikes. (Drops statistics into conversations)

Story Ideas

- Kevin Barker is one or more PCs’ landlord. Any strange activity in the office downstairs — LeThuy meddling, burglary, or whatever — might come to involve them simply because they are in the same building. If Barker’s life or business is threatened, he may turn to the PCs for help, if he knows of useful talents or muscle that they possess.
- A psychotic serial killer has decided to become wealthy by inconspicuously arranging the demise of one or more names from his tickets. One of those names is that of a PC. Remember, the killer has to be subtle; if he can be connected to the crime, he can’t win! All the PC needs to do is survive until this lottery expires and the next begins. When the clock strikes midnight on Sunday, you’re safe.
- The Net is intrigued by Barker’s innovative gambling product, and would like a cut of the action. Barker cherishes his independence. LeThuy stands ready to quietly assist Barker, since he sees the Numbers Game as a subtle complement to his own agenda; at the same time, he would be interested in seeing the Net spread the idea to places other than Al Amarja. If Barker doesn’t give in to the Net’s demands, they may attempt to discredit and/or bankrupt the lottery by contracting hits on people who have shown up on tickets. PCs enter the picture in any of a number of ways, working with one of the three parties or simply caught in the crossfire.

The Old Sod's Club

Type: Fraternal Order of the second class

Rep: None.

Brief: An exclusive club whose members are the servants of the movers and shakers of the Edge.

Address: 227 Woodhouse Lane, Justice Barrio

The Muscat Building is a squalid concrete structure on an unremarkable street in Justice Barrio. From the outside, it seems to be an old office building — a shelter for ambulance-chasing lawyers or seedy telemarketers. An astute observer might wonder at the shaded windows, but there is truly little about this building to catch the eye. As a result, the interior of the building comes as a complete surprise to those who find themselves inside. After passing through an airlock-like set of surprisingly heavy doors, a visitor will find herself inside a virtual luxury manor. Rich Oriental carpets cover the stained hardwood floor, and the walls are covered with paintings and trophies. The décor has a Victorian elegance, and the furnishings appear to be genuine antiques. And this is only the beginning. The building actually extends four stories below the surface of the street. Lower levels include an indoor pool and sauna, a small auditorium, an enormous kitchen, and an extensive library.

Is this the headquarters of some nefarious conspiracy? Or the secret love nest of a sleazy billionaire? No. The people who make use of this place are butlers and maids, slaves and *au pairs*. This is the Old Sod's Club, a secret society for those who serve. Here the unsung heroes of the Edge gather to bask in the company of their fellow servants, to enjoy a taste of luxury and to share tales of their employers. The best of these stories are recorded in the *Book of Dirt*, a vast tome that is kept sealed in a safe at the center of the building.

Legend has it that the first Sodmaster was the butler of an eccentric millionaire; when the man died without heir, he named his faithful servant as his sole beneficiary. The butler wished to share his good fortune with all his fellows, and so he founded the club. Of course, this story is entirely false. The organization was actually founded by Her Exaltedness, Monique D'Aubainne. After concluding her arrangement with Mussolini, Monique considered

*If you want to find the real dirt,
look beneath the Old Sods.*

what to do with Benito's personal assistant, who had handled many of the details of the transaction. At first she thought that it was wisest to have the man killed. But on consideration, she realized two things: servants often see more than their masters suspect, and the best intelligence agent is the one who doesn't know that she is an agent. So she made a deal with this man of Mussolini's, offering him a great deal of wealth to act as a figurehead leader of a new organization — the Old Sod's Club. Her Exaltedness provided the funds for the building and security, and the rest is history. None of the members realize that every story they tell is passed along to the DBI — or that a few of the "members" are actually full-time agents of the DBI. Of course, there is little reason for anyone to know. The DBI records all data gathered by the Old Sods, but it takes great care not to reveal the source of any information that it makes use of, lest the Sods suspect a leak.

The club itself is an exclusive organization; current members may nominate acquaintances for admission into the club, but all candidates must be approved by the ruling committee (part of which involves a thorough background check by the DBI). Members meet approximately every two weeks, on a date selected randomly and then posted in Little Scratches; the message only needs to include the initials OS and a date, as members know the time and the location. In general, membership seems quite harmless and jolly. New members must swear to obey the following rules:

1. Never reveal your membership in our most solemn brotherhood.
2. Never reveal the secrets of your brethren, no matter how small. All words uttered in our hall are never to be heard outside its walls.
3. Aid your brothers whenever they have need, and they shall aid you in your times of trouble.

These vows are taken most seriously, and anyone who is found to have broken any of the vows will be immediately expelled from the club — strangely, these people usually end up "leaving the island" very soon after this rejection.

These vows create a strong bond of camaraderie between the club members, who will do what they can to watch one another's backs. This protection often extends to the employers of the Sods, for most of the club members truly care about their masters; this is a trait the Sodmaster looks for, as a trustworthy servant is more likely to have access to important information. Many of the Sods will call on the influence of their fellows to help their master, or keep an eye out for the interests of the employers of other Sods. And, of course, they are always looking for a good story to tell at the next meeting.

The greatest treasure of the club is the Book of Dirt. This collection of heavy, leather-bound volumes contains secrets that stretch back across fifty years of Al Amarjan history. Most are presented in the form of entertaining stories — but the information is dangerous nonetheless, and there are secrets revealed about virtually every important figure on the Edge, even if the Sods themselves don't understand the relevance of the information. The blackmail potential of these tomes is outstanding; however, few of the major conspiracies even knows that this group exists. In part, this is due to the sheltering arm of the DBI, but more than this it is based on the fact that no one is looking for them. A conspiracy of faithful butlers? The very idea is preposterous. And so the Sods continue to tell their tales in the shadows . . .

GMCs

You should pick a number of existing GMCs to be members of the Old Sod's Club. You will have to decide exactly how exclusive you wish the club to be. It may only have a handful of members, the servants of the richest and most powerful members of the Al Amarjan community — Sir Arthur Compton's butler, Mr. Dunkelburg's nanny, Lydia Goodman's live-in masseuse. Alternately, the club can include members from a wider strata of society — bartenders, hairdressers, Total Taxi drivers, and so on. As noted above, members are chosen for their loyalty to their employers, and the DBI carefully screens potential candidates to ensure that they are not already members of some other conspiracy.

Sly

Sleazy Gardener

See p. 94.

Story Ideas

The strength of the Old Sod's Club is its invisibility — few people pay any mind to a servant. Characters are unlikely to ever discover the club's connection to the DBI; it is far more likely that they will have to deal with the Sods due to their interactions with some Sod's employer. The Sods have a strong support network to call on, and they will fight fiercely to defend their members or masters — although their weapons are more likely to be subtle than aggressive. A player who has angered the Sods may have trouble making appointments. Important messages may not be delivered. Coats may be lost. And, if it comes down to it, secrets may be revealed.

Other ways that the club might become involved in your campaign include the following:

- If a player character employs a personal servant, or is such a servant, the club can be worked in to many situations. As noted, members of the club can call on the resources of the organization to help their masters. Of course, they are not allowed to reveal the existence of the club, even to their masters. But the lucky character may find that unexpected help comes at difficult times.
- The current Sodmaster feels confessional and gets "removed" by the DBI. Members of the club ask the characters to look into the death.
- A recent page from the Book of Dirt turns up somewhere in Al Amarja. While the players decide what to do with the valuable information, the Sods will be struggling to reclaim the missing page and to find out where their leak is.



Patrino Bros. Barber Shops

Type: Barber shop

Rep: A good old-fashioned barber shop. Great place for guys to hang out and shoot the breeze.

Brief: This is a chain of barber shops run by the Patrino brothers. Ambience and clientele varies from location to location.

Address: 24 Bilge Street, Flowers Barrio / 199 Quantum Street, Science Barrio / 200 B Plaza of Gold / 86 Plaza of Justice

The Patrino Brothers (Frank, Vito, Lou and Tony) are third generation barbers from New York City. And we mean barbers, not hair stylists, capice? Their barbershops are well known fixtures of the barrios they are found in and attract a loyal clientele. All of the shops are places where a guy can go for a shave or a haircut and some male bonding. Prices vary but are always reasonable and service is excellent.

The differences in each shop depend upon the setting, clientele, and personality of the brother running the place.

Patrino Brothers Barber Shops are open 9 AM to 5 PM M-F. Open 9 AM to noon on Saturday. Closed Sunday.

Frank's Shop

This one is in the Plaza of Gold and has a very upscale look and décor. Clientele consists mostly of businessmen and wealthy burger. The main topics of conversation are the world economy and politics, business dealings, golf and women. Frank is a well built and successful-looking guy, and can hold his own on any of the above topics.

Tony's Shop

Located in Flowers, this shop has a very rock and roll kind of ambience. Tony parks his Harley in the shop and has a beer tap built in for his customers' refreshment. Clientele might be anyone from bikers to artists to male prostitutes. Topics of discussion tend to lean towards barrio gossip, parties, music, drugs and women. Tony acts and dresses like a 1950's biker.

Vito's Shop

As befits a barbershop that caters to academics and scientists, Vito has decorated the place in a rather interesting mix of high tech and higher learning. There are several

shelves of books as well as half a dozen computer terminals. The clientele is almost exclusively teachers and researchers from the University. Topics are wide ranging, but almost always include campus gossip, arguments about almost anything scientific/academic, world events and women. Vito is a tall and refined-looking fellow who has a very good grasp of science as well as a love of Shakespeare.

Lou's Shop

This is a traditional-looking barbershop, much like those you used to see all over the USA. The clientele are all just regular working guys. Topics here are sports, politics, barrio goings on and women. Lou is an average-looking man and often argues with his customers and the few old men who just seem to hang around the shop. He is well liked in Justice Plaza.

GMCS

The Patrino Brothers

Barbers

The Patrino brothers' actual looks and personalities are left rather sketchy so that the GM can fill them out as she sees fit. They do, however, have a few things in common. First off, they are very loyal to each other as well as other family members. Secondly, none of them will have much to do with organized crime figures except as customers. Finally, they all have a real love of talking and are not very hard to swing around to a given subject matter. While they won't knowingly reveal any trusted secrets, they will spill their guts about almost everything else if you just keep talking to them.



Story Ideas

The main reason for the PCs to meet any of the Patrinos is to get the latest gossip or to find out something about someone. It should be noted, though, that anything the PCs say in the barbershop might well be repeated later on.

Pike's Diner

Type: Haunted Restaurant

Rep: A weird diner run by an old woman who won't sell anyone food. Unknown outside of Great Men.

Brief: The owner of this diner maintains the building as a refuge for the Hello Macaroni ghosts (See the Cali Dump, p. 12, for details). She prefers to keep the living out of her establishment so they do not bother the dead. The ghosts pay her in information, which she bakes into fortune cookies.

Address: 1700 Dump Street, Great Men Barrio



Pike's Diner is a centerpiece of the Cali Dump neighborhood, a handsome restaurant that has been around for more than seventy years. While the exterior shows the signs of decay that permeate Great Men, the interior of the building has been kept in perfect condition. The tables and countertops are smooth, dark oak and the fixtures are polished brass. An old Wurlitzer jukebox sits in one corner, glowing in a rainbow of colors. The only thing that seems to be missing is customers — and food, for that matter.

Pike's Diner is run by an old Chinese woman who the locals call Lady Pike. She was born with the name Wo-Ming Xiaoping; when Aton Saremoenen engineered the deaths of his employees and their families (see p. 12), Wo-Ming was the only survivor. This eight-year-old orphan was adopted by the kindly Guiseppe "Pike" Piccolomeni, and she helped the old man run the diner. Unfortunately, Pike's Diner had relied heavily on the factory trade. Guiseppe tried to modernize his business, but as Great Men fell into decline things got worse and worse. Further, poltergeist activity was on the rise; old man Pike began to believe that he was going crazy, imagining the ghosts of former customers. Eventually he died and left the business to his only heir, Wo-Ming.

Slowly she began to understand what was happening to the neighborhood. She found that she could see the Macaroni ghosts, and began to hear their voices. She real-

ized that they were lost and confused, that they had nothing concrete to hold onto. She thought that they would like having a familiar place, so she invested the last of her savings to restore the diner to its former condition. She also began performing rituals of supplication,

trying to honor the spirits of the dead.

Her intuition proved to be correct. The ghosts began to settle in the diner, taking comfort in the old surroundings; they also drew strength from the presence of Wo-Ming, their last link to the world of the living. While most of the ghosts wandered the neighborhood in a somnambulist haze, Wo-Ming found that she could temporarily raise their level of consciousness so she could have intelligent conversations with them. A side effect of this was that the level of supernatural violence in the neighborhood dropped considerably; prior to Wo-Ming's work, many of the confused spirits would randomly lash out at their surroundings. While poltergeist activity continues to this day, it is nothing like it was in the early days of the tragedy.

In exchange for her help and continued devotions, the ghosts began to pay her using the only currency they had: information. In addition to the things they saw in Cali, the spirits had other contacts amongst the world of the dead and thus access to a great deal of knowledge. Wo-Ming was able to use this inside information to amass a fortune in stocks and other investments.

She also began to produce cookies in the kitchen, since the smell of baking reminded the spirits of their former lives in the cookie factory and soothed them. Eventually she settled on fortune cookies. She allows the ghosts to write the fortunes; she then sets them out on the counter without looking at them.

At a glance, Pike's Diner is a paradox. It appears to be in good condition, yet no one ever goes there. The locals have learned to leave it alone, and outsiders who do stop in receive a cold shoulder. Lady Pike is typically sitting behind the counter reading. She will pointedly ignore customers

until she is spoken to. She will pretend to speak only broken English, seeming to try very hard to understand customer's requests before saying "No, all out of that" or something similar. If the visitor is courteous, she may at least give him a fortune cookie; rude customers, on the other hand, may bear the wrath of whatever ghosts happen to be lurking in the diner at the time. Such spectral vengeance may include attacks by levitating objects (like knives), insects boiling out of the offender's clothing, telekinetic shoves, ethereal voices only the target can hear, or other unpleasant effects. Wo-Ming will pretend to be surprised by such events, but she will stop the spirits if things go too far.

While few know the exact story, a number of the more influential inhabitants of the Cali neighborhood — people like Valentine, Nikkal, Doctor John, and Baron Thursday — are aware that Lady Pike serves as an intermediary for the Macaroni shades, and as such she is treated with considerable respect. There are stories of people stealing from her and returning her possessions very quickly, either due to poltergeist attacks or because of pressure from the Drogues or other Cali residents. Most inhabitants don't really know much about her history or connection to the spirits, but they sense that she serves an important function and generally leave her alone. For her part, Wo-Ming is content to stay in the diner and care for the ghosts. She has built a luxurious apartment above the diner, complete with advanced security systems and a powerful computer network that she uses to manage her many investments. Typically, however, she cares little for creature comforts. Most of her money goes towards maintaining the area and into charity funds for disaster relief.

GMCS

Lady Pike (Wo-Ming Piccolomeni)

Spirit Keeper

Lady Pike is a stern woman who seems to be much older than she actually is. Her face is prematurely creased and wrinkled, and she wears her silver hair in a tight bun. With strangers, she generally speaks in broken English and affects an absent-minded, confused persona; when it suits



her purposes, however, she can speak clearly and sharply, and her voice has the power of a whip.

Chinese woman, age 63 (appears to be in her eighties), 153 cm, 49 kg. Brown eyes, gray hair. Tends to wear an old black dress with a checkered red and white apron.

Languages: English, Italian, multiple Chinese dialects
Traits

Spirit Liason, upside — Wo-Ming’s greatest asset is her relationship with the Macaroni shades. She takes care of the spirits, honoring their memory and providing for them in this world. In return, they take care of her. It is important to note the difference between her relationship with these ghosts and that of Grandfather (of the Cali Loa). Grandfather is the patriarch of the shades; he demands respect and issues commands. Wo-Ming is their treasure, their last link to the world. As such, she may not make demands, but they will do what they can to try to make her happy, and tell her things that she may find interesting. She is a daughter with four hundred doting but somewhat senile parents; she may not issue orders, but she can always make requests. (Strange things happen if you threaten her)

Iron Will, 5 dice — Lady Pike has lived with strangeness and adversity all her life, and her resolve has been strengthened by her long contact with supernatural forces. She has an iron will and unshakeable courage; she will not back down in the face of intimidation, and supernatural threats or phenomena do not easily unnerve her. Whether due to her willpower or the influence of the shades, she is also highly resistant to mental manipulation. (Surprisingly firm when she needs to be)

Businesswoman, 3 dice — While her edge is the inside information she receives from the spirit world, Lady Pike has taught herself to use computers and has a good head for numbers and business issues. (You may catch her reading the Wall Street Journal)

Spirit Liason, downside — Wo-Ming takes her duties as the servant of the spirits very seriously. As a result, she makes very little use of her power or wealth, and leaves her diner as infrequently as possible. She has devoted her entire life to the care of the Macaroni shades, and if anything

occurs to threaten these spirits she will do whatever she has to to safeguard their existence. (Extremely reclusive)

Story Ideas

The fortune cookies at Pike’s Diner are one more way to drop clues into the game if you need to. These cookies may provide highly specific pieces of information (that may or may not have any meaning to the players) — alternately, they can simply provide traditional fortunes, but these fortunes will tend to come true, due to the influence of the spirit that wrote the message. A character who receives the fortune “You will soon make an unexpected discovery” might find that a ghost has slipped someone’s wallet into her pocket; of course, this could end up getting the character into considerable trouble.

Other ideas:

- Wo-Ming finds out the secret of Aton Saremoenen — and the fact that he is slowly destroying the Macaroni shades (p. 12). The ghosts want revenge and begin to start causing trouble until they get it. Wo-Ming may ask the players for assistance. Saremoenen may have simply moved to another part of the island, or he may have returned to the island on business. He is not actually immortal, but he has four hundred lives he can live through; if someone inflicts a mortal injury upon him, the wound will heal and one of the ghosts will be destroyed. Of course, if the players somehow force Aton to break the Pyx (p. 13), the culture of Cali might completely disintegrate.
- The Net notices that Wo-Ming has a real talent for managing the stock market and grab her to find her secret. If the players can’t get her back, things could get really unpleasant in the neighborhood as the outraged ghosts vent their anger and frustration. Nikkal or Grandfather might approach the players to ask for help.
- Wo-Ming discovers that she has a terminal illness and tries to recruit one of the players to serve as her replacement as caretaker of the Macaroni shades.

The Post Building

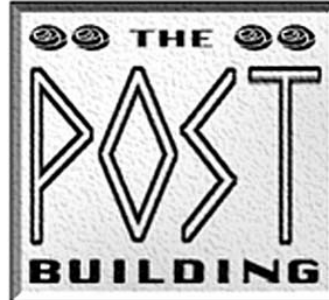
Type: Derelict Apartment Building

Rep: A dangerous place best left alone.

Unknown outside of the Cali Dump
(see p. 12).

Brief: A haunted apartment building.

Address: 114 Cali Street, Great Men Barrio



The Post Building is an old tenement that used to house the Hello Macaroni company workers. Much of the building collapsed when the factory was destroyed, and what is left is a dangerous ruin best left alone. Floors and walls may collapse at a moment's notice, and jagged pieces of rusting metal are concealed beneath the layer of broken glass that carpets much of the floors. Wo-Ming Piccolomeni (see Pike's Diner, p. 62) purchased the building many years ago and has kept it from being torn down, but she has not seen any need to repair it.

The primary inhabitants of the building are spirits, both the ghosts of the Macaroni workers and lesser members of the Cali Loa. There is no real reason for characters to enter the building unless they are trying to contact the sticks who live there. If they do, feel free to pull any traditional haunted house trick: bloody writing on the walls, ghostly moans, sources of light failing, unexplained chills, rotting corpses in bathtubs, and so on. If they really don't like intruders the spirits can always collapse a wall or floor, so it's a bad idea to push too hard.

There is a passage in the basement that

leads into a fallout shelter beneath the Hello Macaroni factory ruins. Wo-Ming has turned this place into a shrine, with candles and offerings for the spirits of the workers. However, it is highly unlikely that explorers will be able to reach this place unless they have some way of warding off the hostile spirits that will try to stop them.

Story Ideas

The Post Building is another piece of local color. It can be used in any circumstance where a good haunted house is required. Perhaps the players need to try to find an object that has been lost for decades in the Post Building. The youngest Lakshmi from Mandala (p. 46) may spend a fair amount of time in the building, and players might want to find out what she is up to; of course, this is easier said than done.



Rainbow Mini Mart

Type: Mom & Pop convenience store

Rep: Just another corner store

Brief: While it is a common corner store, it's also a Mover information drop. However, the information that gets dropped is often not the same information that gets picked up.

Address: 129 Plaza of Justice, Justice Barrio



Twenty years ago, Sean and Moira O'Toole left North Ireland and came to Al Amarja. They were tired of the daily troubles and loss of loved ones that the political situation in Belfast caused them. They made a solemn vow that when they got to Al Amarja, they would start a little business and have a lot of fun. And that's exactly what they did, too.

Rainbow Mini Mart is outwardly just like any of thousands of other corner stores around the world. People stop in for food, liquor, the daily paper, etc. Nobody really gives the place a second thought except the occasional punk who thinks he can grab a few bucks by robbing the place. But to a certain part of the population of the Edge, this little store is someplace very special. To the Mover cells of Al Amarja, Rainbow Mini Mart is a post office.

The O'Tooles' involvement with the Movers came about a year after their arrival on the island. A regular customer came in one night and asked Sean to please keep something for him. Sean agreed and was handed a small package. He placed it in the back room and thought nothing of it until a month later when he heard that the fellow

who had given it to him was dead, killed in a car crash. Not knowing if the man had surviving relatives, Sean opened the package, hoping to find a clue about who he might send it to. Inside, he found a notebook that was full of detailed information about the workings and philosophy of the Movers, as well as information about several Mover cells on Al Amarja. Sean was fascinated by

the Movers and let Moira read the book. She was just as fascinated as he was, but she also recognized a great opportunity to have a bit of fun at the Mover's expense.

Moira's idea was simple: they would set themselves up as both a Mover cell and information drop. They would spread the word about the info drop using new recruits to their mythical cell, the Emerald Cell. Since the very essence of the Movers is secrecy and obscurity, how could they afford *not* to believe that Rainbow Mini Mart had become a vital part of Mover operations? Any Mover who wanted to keep up with any other Mover would *have* to use it.

Sean and Moira quickly recruited half a dozen "agents" and sent them to infiltrate other Mover cells and spread the information drop story. The plan worked like a charm and soon Movers were dropping off coded information several times a day. Supposedly, this information would be passed on within hours to whichever person gave the proper password. The reality is that the O'Tooles' decode the information and then either change it subtly or re-route it to another Cell entirely. This is a source of much mirth to Sean and Moira.

Amazingly, the O'Tooles' little joke has gone undiscovered for over 18 years now. Even more amazingly, they

are actually having fairly little effect on Mover operations as a whole. Oh, sure, the odd cell might collapse or have to lay low for awhile, but for most cells, it is business as usual. One wonders where their operations would be if the information drop didn't mess with things.

Besides the pleasure the information scam gives them, the O'Tooles get a kick out of running a Mover Cell. They don't have their agents harm anyone, but they do have them running hither and yon across the Edge on errands of all sorts, some of which are quite profitable. It should also be pointed out that none of their agents know who the big bosses of the Emerald Cell really are. You see, they get all of their orders through an information drop.

Rainbow Mini Mart is open seven days a week from 8 am until midnight.

GMCS

Sean O'Toole

Store Owner/Mover

Sean is a poster boy for the stereotypical Irish rascal. He is quick with a joke, loves to tell stories or give advice, is opinionated as all hell, and has never been known to pass up a pint of ale. Despite being well into middle age, Sean is still in pretty good shape and could hold his own in a fight. Both Sean and Moira are kind-hearted people and have been known to extend a bit of credit to someone down on his luck.

Irish male, 55 years old, 183 cm, 82 kg, short red hair, green eyes, average build, scar on right cheek, scar on right arm

Languages: English, Gaelic, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

The Gift of Blarney, 4 dice — Sean is a silver-tongued devil who could lie straight-faced to God himself and not blink while doing it. (Tells outrageous stories and then says with a wink “And may St. Patrick himself tell me if I'm lying”)

Mover Knowledge, 4 dice — Sean and Moira know more about who is working for who and what they are up to than anyone among Al Amarjas Movers (Nods knowingly when told of any Mover operations)

Moira O'Toole

Store Owner/Mover

Moira O'Toole loves two things in life more than any others: Sean and having a good laugh. She is a very upbeat person and will go out of her way to cheer up those around her. Despite the myth of the “Irish temper,” Moira almost never gets mad at anyone or anything. She is not a religious person, but she is a bit superstitious. Moira is a very good-looking woman, despite a few wrinkles and greying hair.

Irish female, 54 years old, 168 cm, 64 kg, dark brown hair, brown eyes, average build, usually wears floral print dresses.

Languages: English, Gaelic, French, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Mover Knowledge, 4 dice — Moira and Sean know more about who is working for whom and what they are up to than anyone among Al Amarjas Movers (Nods knowingly when told of any Mover operations)

Well-Travelled, 4 dice — Moira's family traveled all over the world while she was growing up. This has given her quite a bit of knowledge about people, places, and customs. (Often talks about places she has been)

Story Ideas

Since the Movers are such a paradoxical power group, there are almost unlimited ways that PC Movers or PC Mover hunters might interact with the O'Tooles. Here are a few examples.

- PCs use the minimart as an info drop, but they soon begin to suspect someone is messing with the info they get/leave.
- PCs are Emerald Movers.
- PCs trying to locate Movers find out that Rainbow Mini Mart seems to get alot of Mover business. They stake it out.
- PCs are hired to drop off and pick up messages by a Mover friend who has to keep a low profile.
- PCs learn the O'Tooles' secret and try to blackmail them.
- PCs learn the O'Tooles' secret and want to help them.

The Rose Hotel

Being an introduction to the extraordinary Rose Hotel, with special attention given to the singular inhabitants of the fifth floor...

The Rose Hotel is an establishment that, strictly speaking, doesn't exist. It is only a dream in the mind of an old woman. But that won't stop you from going there. Depending on the circumstances, the Hotel could become a prison or a sanctuary for your players, or a vault they must break into. The question is: once they get in, can they find a way out?

The following section describes the hotel itself, along with an overview of its inhabitants and culture. This is followed by a description of the Midwich Family, a group that plays a prominent role within the hotel but which can also be encountered on the streets of Al Amarja.

Rose Hotel

Type: Bag Lady or Extradimensional Bolthole — You decide

Rep: Rose herself should be an easily recognized zero in whatever Barrio you set as her home. The existence of the hotel is not public knowledge.

Brief: A homeless woman who has a hotel inside her head. Getting in is easy; the challenge is checking out.

Address: As Rose is a person, she can move about as best fits the story.

Zeroes are a common enough sight in the poorer barrios; the refuse of society, physically or mentally incapable of rising above the sidewalks and the gutters. "Why don't they all just jump off the Brink?" Harvey thought to himself as he trudged down Offal Street. He ignored the beggars around him, staring purposefully at his copy of *Al Amarja Today*, and as a result he almost tripped over the old woman.

"Gaah!" Catching his breath, Harvey glanced around. Cheap posterboard signs were scattered about the street corner — taped to walls, stuck up on the

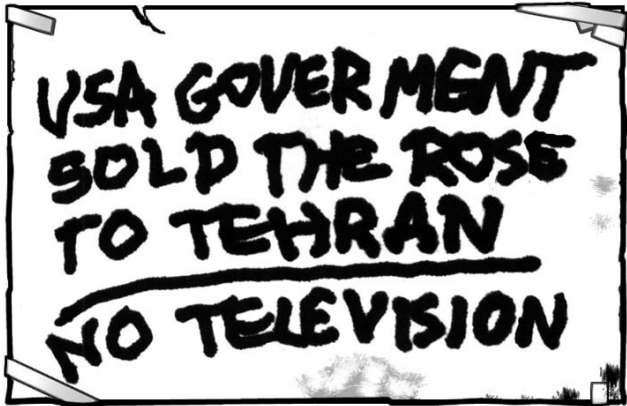
street signs, even glued to the sidewalk. All bore proclamations written in bold capitals with felt tip marker: "THEY SOLD MY BRAIN TO AFRICA"; "NO GUITARS MEANS JOHNNY DIES"; "DUMP INVESCO, THROW IT ALL INTO VRILTECH"; and curiously, "TELL MY WIFE I LOVE HER." Standing right in front of him was a small woman with gray hair and tight, pinched features. Harvey didn't have a chance to notice what she was wearing; her fierce expression held him pinned like a needle. "You've got cult eyes," she snarled, in a raspy voice.

For a moment, Harvey was at a loss. He found himself thinking, *Do I?* Then he shook it off. "Get out of my way!" he said, intending to shove her aside and move on.

Instead, he was overwhelmed by an intense sensation of vertigo. He fell to the ground, and his head bounced off the ... oriental rug? Puzzled by the soft pile beneath his face, he glanced up; instead of the old woman, he saw a well-groomed man in a bellhop's uniform. This strange apparition smiled at Harvey and held out a hand to help him up. "Welcome to the Rose Hotel," he said.

The history of the Rose Hotel is shrouded in mystery. But if someone really puts her mind to it, she may be able to dig up the following facts.

In 1929, a woman named Rose Dalassanos came to Al Amarja. Rose was a remarkable woman — while she never bothered to publish any of her work on metaphysical studies or theosophy, she had collaborated with students of science and the supernatural across the globe. In the wake of the Great War and the economic depression that was gripping the United States, she had embraced a humanitarian goal. She sought to create a new sort of shelter for those who had lost their homes to poverty or war — to find a way to give everyone a home. She came to Al Amarja to talk to a few other eccentric researchers, in particular those studying dreams and the "tulpa" phenomenon, which she took to be a manifestation of etheric energy given physical form. Her presence on Al Amarja can be tracked for a period of



two months, and then both Rose and the two researchers she was collaborating with disappeared.

Around this time, the local asylum admitted a Jane Doe patient whose description matched that of Rose. Initially the doctor reported that “. . . In her delirious ravings, she often appears to display a number of distinct and disparate personality traits.” The records indicate that she was subsequently declared to be a simple hysteric and discharged due to her lack of financial means. Her first doctor, James Harris, disappeared just prior to Rose’s dismissal. No explanation is given for his disappearance, and he was never seen again.

This asylum log is the last mention of Rose in the public record. After this experience she disappeared into the streets of the Edge — the same streets she lives in today.

Rose in the Modern World

Rose could be found in any of the poorer barrios — Great Men, Four Points, or possibly even Justice, whichever best suits your campaign. She will remain within a territory of a few blocks, and should be fairly well known there due to her singular habit of posting signs. Each day she creates a new set of signs, each bearing a single sentence or slogan. About half of her signs seem to be schizophrenic ravings: “There are ghosts on the telephones,” “Johnny left to save you,” “Let me out of here,” and so on. The rest are perfectly sensible in and of themselves, but have no logical connection to Rose. “Was it a boy or a girl?,” “Sarah — go ahead and marry Janus,” “Joe — it’s 32 right, 16 left, 24 right.” Sometimes these signs have repeating themes — characters who are mentioned multiple times, or pleas that occur over and over. But Rose herself will not explain

them. It is impossible to engage her in conversation; she will simply rattle off a stream-of-consciousness rant, ignoring anything that is said to her. What is the story behind this strange old woman? What is the inspiration for her unusual messages? And is what her connection to the strange disappearances that still occur in her barrio?

The fact of the matter is that Rose’s metaphysical experiments were successful. She found a way to let others physically enter her dreams. But instead of projecting her dreams onto reality she drew others into her own mind — and it was this sudden and unexpected influx of alien personalities that drove her mad. For almost eighty years she has wandered through the world half-asleep, tormented by the voices of those trapped inside her head. And occasionally, she will pull another soul into the prison of her dreams — the Rose Hotel.

Inside the Hotel

Picture yourself in the 1920s. Now imagine the most luxurious hotel that you could find in that time. Perhaps the floor is covered with oriental carpeting, or possibly bare marble polished to a mirror sheen. Light shimmers from the crystal chandelier that dangles over the grand staircase. The staircase — is it marble as well, or polished mahogany? At times it is difficult to keep track. But come upstairs to the landing; usually there is a mirror that runs the length of the terrace, reflecting the chandelier in all its glory ...

The world within Rose is a gorgeous old-fashioned hotel. It is somewhat elastic in its appearance; when it comes down to it, it is a dream, and as such the details are blurry and may change. Sometimes the floors are carpeted, sometimes they aren’t. Are there electric lights, or gas lamps? You should feel free to adjust minor elements on the fly in order to add to the sense of unreality that is associated with the place. But there are a few things that can be relied upon. Whatever the precise details, it is a picture of opulence and luxury. The air is fresh and clear, and the temperature is always perfect — whatever “perfect” means for the character in question. All of the public spaces are built on a grand scale, with high ceilings and lavish furnishings.

While the geography and appearance of the hotel may shift from time to time, there are a few rules to protect the inhabitants. A dresser or other container may change in appearance, but it will never disappear completely if it contains someone's belongings. Likewise, a room will never simply vanish if someone is inside — although if you wish, a closed door could suddenly link to a new location the next time it is opened. Details such as shifting furniture or accessories can occur in the presence of guests, but this generally goes unnoticed. Unless you are paying close, careful attention, you simply forget that there used to be carpeting on the floor; it seems so natural without it. In general, this sort of shifting should be used rarely. The hotel is not meant to be a swirling pool of chaos, but it is unpredictable, and players should occasionally be reminded that it is not part of the concrete reality that they are used to.

Of course, there will be other signs that all is not as it should be in the hotel:

- Basic amenities are always present. Toiletries, sheets, and stationary all magically refresh themselves whenever a character looks away. Laundry that is left out will be cleaned and pressed by the morning. Every room contains a copy of the Gideon's Bible, although the pages of the book are blank; Rose subconsciously believes that all hotel rooms contain a Gideon's Bible, but she's never read the bible and doesn't know what's inside.
- The windows are shaded. If the curtains are pulled back an observer can encounter a wide range of landscapes, ranging from Rose's current surroundings to anything drawn from her dreams or memories. The windows cannot be opened or broken, and two windows will not necessarily display the same scene, even if they are next to each other.
- Picking up a phone will connect the character to the hotel operator. If the character requests an outside line, she will either receive insane ramblings from Rose's subconscious, or possibly (though quite rarely) be able to hear whatever is going on around Rose at the time. As the phone connects to Rose's subconscious, shouting into it over and over may eventually cause her to receive the player's message. While she is not coherent enough to actually respond to such a message, she will probably write it down on one of her signs.

- Characters will not age while they are in the hotel. Some of the inhabitants have been there for eighty years! For that matter, characters do not actually have to eat or drink, although they may do so if they wish; regardless of whether or not they eat, characters will never have to use the toilet (Rose doesn't want to think about *that*). Characters do not have to sleep, but it takes a certain amount of time and effort to shake the habit; besides which, most of the inhabitants enjoy sleeping, as it breaks up the monotony of hotel life. While sleeping, characters may find that they share dreams with other inhabitants of the hotel, or that they pick up images from Rose herself.
- The food in the kitchen and booze in the bar refreshes itself on a daily basis. As a result, alcohol rationing is strictly enforced. Money is meaningless in the hotel; if you want to get drunk, you'll need to be friends with the bartender or gain some status amongst the rest of the staff.

Hotel Life

Harvey accepted the proffered hand and staggered to his feet. "The Rose Hotel? What are you talking about? How did I get here?" He glanced around, squinting and trying to clear his eyes.

"Just follow me, sir," said the bellhop. "The concierge will be able to help you."

Dumbfounded, Harvey simply followed the bellhop along a red carpet (was it red before?) to a beautiful mahogany desk. A smartly dressed man with a waxed black mustache looked Harvey up and down. After taking his name and ignoring his questions, the man rummaged beneath the desk and produced an old brass key. "I think that room 313 will do for you, sir. Please try not to disturb Miss Beaumont in room 315. Perhaps you would like a moment to freshen up? There will be a reception in your honor in the Uranium Room in thirty minutes."

Harvey started to ask one of the thousand questions running through his mind, but the concierge cut him off with an imperious gesture. "There will be a question and answer session at the end of the recep-

tion, sir. Now, Hamadi can show you to your room. Oh, and I'd advise you to avoid the fifth floor." Without another word, he turned back to the papers on his desk.

Life in the Rose Hotel can be very monotonous. The inhabitants need not fear age or disease, and they don't even have to eat if they don't want to, and generally speaking, the hotel detective will deter any threat of violence. There are no television sets; the design of the hotel predates TV. Denied most of the dangers of the real world and confined to a limited space, the residents of the hotel have built up a fairly static routine:

- Meals are served at Blatavsky's from 7 to 9 AM, 11 AM to 1 PM, and 6 to 8 PM. Meal times serve to break the day into three distinct periods.
- During the morning hours people tend to keep to themselves, or sit around the lobby and read. The only reading materials are those that have been transported in with guests, so there is a very eclectic library; ancient newspapers are scattered around with worn novels, outdated textbooks, and even a few diaries or letters from apathetic inhabitants who have "checked out." Needless to say, most of the reading crowd know all of the material by heart.
- During the afternoon people go swimming, hang around Purgatory, play the occasional game of billiards, or attend lectures. These sessions occur in the conference rooms; the more garrulous guests will go on at great length, retelling stories everyone has heard hundreds of times before. The concierge must be consulted to secure a room, and he can inform interested parties of the currently scheduled events. "At 4 PM, Colonel Wellington-Smythe will entertain all comers with tales of his exploits on the beaches of Normandy."
- In the evening, people retire to the billiards room, the bowling alley, Purgatory, or on special occasions, the ballroom. Poker is a common pastime, although the players know each other so well that it is difficult to bluff. Of course, as money is meaningless it is always a challenge to come up with something worth playing for. Some people put up their alcohol rations; others bet personal items, like books that haven't made their way to the communal library or oddities from the outside world. Needless to say, this gives newcomers quite

an advantage, as they may have novelties that others will be quite interested in . . .

Many of the residents pass the time in games of romance and intrigue, playing out pathetic soap opera stories in an attempt to bring some level of color into their lives. Some of the older inhabitants of the hotel have tired of these little dramas, which eventually seem to repeat themselves over and over, but gossiping over cards or billiards is at least marginally more interesting than sitting alone in a dark room.

New arrivals are always a welcome event for the inhabitants of the hotel, as they bring new stories, new objects, and, of course, new possibilities for romance or conquest. The policy for dealing with newcomers is clearly established. Hamadi the bellhop brings the new guests to the concierge, who assigns them rooms and sets up a time and place for a "reception" — which is to say, an opportunity for the residents to pump the newcomers for as much news as possible. All requests for information are politely deflected; the characters are told that "there will be a question and answer period after the reception." Hamadi shows the characters to their rooms, and they are given a little time to clean up before the reception.

Receptions are generally held in the ballroom, in order to accommodate all of the interested parties. Usually fifty or so guests turn out to see the newcomers. The concierge instructs the characters to introduce themselves and to talk briefly about their backgrounds and how they came to the hotel. Members of the audience prod the speakers with questions. People want to know about recent events in Al Amarja and the world at large, and are interested in every possible detail about the characters, from sexual preferences to criminal records to favorite colors. Reticence in answering questions results in even more probing questions and speculations on what the character has to hide; it is infinitely easier to lie than to refuse to answer.

Initially questions from the characters will be met with questions in return; the residents will use the ignorance of the newcomers as a lever to get information. "We'll tell you all about that in a moment — but first, tell us more about this 'Titanic' movie." "I say, is that horrible D'Aubainne woman still around?" After the reception is over, the characters can get the following explanation from the concierge:

"The Rose Hotel was established in 1929. Most of our patronage comes from the island of Al Amarja. You have

been selected for a complimentary vacation at our expense. We will do our best to see to your needs during your stay, which I'm afraid will be of an indefinite duration."

If the characters react with anger or question the reasons they were brought to the hotel, the concierge responds with:

"You were brought to the hotel by our general manager. I'm afraid that she is not in contact with the staff and thus we cannot ask her why we have been blessed with your company. If you wish to complain the hotel operator will see about securing an outside line for you. Otherwise I suggest that you relax and enjoy your stay. Dinner will be served at 6:00 PM."

The concierge says no more about the nature of Rose or the hotel, although he will be happy to provide information about the various hotel facilities or special events.

Shortly thereafter, the characters will be approached by the hotel detective. She identifies herself — "Call me Dee. I'm with the hotel." — and explains that it's her job to maintain order. If the players are armed she will request that they hand their weapons over; if necessary, she will resort to force to obtain them (a heavily armed party will probably meet her *before* the reception, before they have a chance to cause trouble). Otherwise she asks additional probing questions, generally looking skeptical and suspicious, before eventually letting the characters go and telling them to "stay out of trouble."

After that, characters will undoubtedly be pigeonholed by curious residents who want to hear more of their stories and find out if they have any interesting possessions. Eventually they learn the standard schedule of the activities . . . although they will probably be more interested in finding a way to get out than in learning to fit in.

Blackouts

Occasionally, there are momentary power outages in the hotel. These occur whenever Rose becomes unconscious — which doesn't happen terribly often, since she doesn't need to sleep. However, they can also be caused from the inside, if someone can get into the basement and sabotage the generator. Blackouts never last for long — generally no more than ten minutes — but during this time the hotel detective will not appear to stop any sort of conflict and the elevators will not work.

Checking Out

Getting out of the hotel is not a simple matter. The windows cannot be opened or broken. The grand doors in the front hallway typically open into the ballroom, while the back door can go anywhere from the maid's closet to someone's room. So how do you get out? Well, you as GM will have to think about this. A lot depends on whether you want the characters to be able to easily repeat an exit once they know how to do it; this could lead to Rose being used as an extra-dimensional safehouse, which could be good or bad depending on your game. Here are a few possibilities:

- The simplest way to leave is to cause someone else to "check out" — that is, to die. Bodies are ejected to the real world upon death, and if a person is quick enough (and knows to try) he can leap through the vortex that takes the body out. Of course, the hotel detective will do her best to prevent murders from taking place; the easiest targets would be helpless apathetics (see p. 78), who could be killed before the hotel has a chance to react. The members of the Midwich Family (see p. 80) are familiar with this technique and use it to travel to Al Amarja on a regular basis.
- If a character is between places — on an elevator between floors, going down a trash chute or inside a dumbwaiter — and the generator is shut down, Rose's subconscious may lose track of him, allowing him to slip into the real world. Of course, setting this up will require careful planning and help, since a character won't be able to shut down the generator *and* be in a special location.
- Alternately, perhaps dying in the hotel might cause a character to be ejected from the building, but arrive alive, if not entirely well, in the real world. Of course, this would be an easy option to abuse, since it wouldn't be too much trouble for a character to get herself killed. Possible consequences could include: Memory loss, loss of all objects taken into the hotel (you reappear, but naked), psychic shock manifesting as physical injury, or long-term hallucinations (hotel flashbacks). If you decide to go with this, you'll have to come up with another explanation for how the Midwich Family travels between worlds; perhaps there is a physical entrance that only a child can fit through, or perhaps in your series, they don't.

If a character manages to get out of the hotel and then returns a second time, she will appear in her old room, with the key in the room. As a result, it will not be immediately obvious to the other inhabitants that she ever left, since some people have remained locked in their rooms for years. It is not public knowledge that the members of the Midwich Family know how to leave the hotel, although some people have their suspicions.

Locations

While the layout of the Rose Hotel is subject to change, there are a few special places that are either always available to residents or are there most of the time. The locations of these rooms may change, but there are signs posted that will guide the inhabitants to the current locations of these critical areas. Add locations as you see fit; perhaps every few years a gift shop shows up, or a greenhouse, or a torture chamber.

The following locations are usually available:

The Ballroom

This is a grand room suitable for weddings or other festivities. Occasionally it is spontaneously decked out for a random special event (not that anyone will have been planning said event). The ballroom is used for receptions for new guests, and occasionally someone will organize a dance or a wedding or the like.

The Basement

The doors to the basement are locked; it takes considerable skill or the right tools to open them, and they will relock themselves after a short amount of time. A rickety set of wooden stairs descends down into a chamber drawn straight from a horror movie. The only light comes from the roaring furnace, which casts flickering shadows over covered wooden crates. Is that someone crouching in the corner? The main point of interest in the basement is the generator; shutting down the generator will cause a temporary blackout, although the generator will restore itself within a few minutes. Characters who simply sit by the generator to shut it off each time it comes back on will end

up receiving disabling electric shocks — or possibly being drained of power themselves, leading to a terrible apathy...

Blatavsky's

Blatavsky's is the hotel restaurant. While it is always upscale, the appearance of the dining room and the nature of the food tend to change every month or so; the chefs refer to this as "changing the menu," or joke about being under new management. As a result, it may be serving anything from cheeseburgers to Himalyan honey yak. The restaurant is run by Jakov and Safiya Slogar, both of whom were chefs before their abduction and whom were drawn together by their mutual love of cooking. The Slogars have become quite adept at adapting to make use of whatever materials the kitchen decides to have in stock. Nonetheless, the best items are those that simply appear in the kitchen dumbwaiter — but you'll never get a Slogar to admit which items are their own designs and which are being provided by the hotel.

The Billiard Room

A tastefully decorated room with three old-fashioned billiard tables, and a few round tables for engaging in games of chance. Cards and dice can be found here, along with various other makeshift games (such as a *Monopoly* set made entirely out of hotel stationary).

The Bowling Alley

A bowling alley is a rather unusual location to find in a hotel, but apparently Rose loves bowling. It's a bit run down, but there are three lanes in working order. The ceiling is covered with stained glass and raised in a slight dome (which, needless to say, is not apparent on the floor above).

The Conference Rooms

At any given time, there are up to six small conference rooms scattered across the first and second floors of the hotel. Whenever the layout of the hotel changes, the names of the rooms change as well. Sometimes they are named after US Presidents (The Taft Room, The Polk Room, The Garfield Room); other possibilities include elements from

the periodic table, street names from the barrio Rose is living in, famous mystics, works of classic literature, or swear words. These rooms are dimly lit chambers dominated by long tables — just the sort of thing for plotting a world take-over.

The Gallery

This room appears only rarely; it is a tastefully appointed art gallery. Instead of paintings, it displays all of Rose's recent signs, carefully framed and flatteringly lit. This can help to prod players into realizing that the content of the signs is tied to the inhabitants of the hotel; it can also provide some insight into what other people in the hotel are trying to get Rose to write . . .

The Gentleman's Club

The door to the Gentleman's Club is locked, and is completely impassable. Not even fringe powers will allow a character to get inside. Rose was never allowed into the Gentleman's Club, and neither are you.

The Nursery

The fifth floor of the hotel is the domain of the Midwich Family — the disturbing children of the Rose Motel. For some reason, the hotel detective leaves the family alone, and the fifth floor can be a very dangerous place for "grown-ups" to visit. See p. 80 for additional information about the Midwich Family.

Purgatory

Purgatory is an old-fashioned bar that lies off of the hotel lobby. The bartender, Lloyd, runs Purgatory with an iron hand, rationing out the daily liquor supply to those he deems worthy. Of course, Lloyd never uses words as crude as "rationing;" he will always phrase things along the lines of "Your credit is good with us, sir," or "I'm sorry, miss, but I'm afraid you've had enough for the night." He is the perfect bartender; in addition to mixing excellent drinks, he is amazingly easy to talk to, and people find it strangely cathartic to share their problems with him. As a result, he knows a great deal of gossip about the inhabitants of

the hotel; characters can benefit tremendously by befriending him.

Swimming Pool

Typically, the hotel has a long marble pool with a number of lanes for laps. There is no Jacuzzi or hot tub. Occasionally, the pool shifts to be extremely deep or particularly shallow; at other times, high-dive boards appear out of nowhere.

GMCS

There are hundreds of people in the Rose Motel, although many are pathetic creatures who never leave their rooms. This section provides a brief outline of the most prominent inhabitants of the hotel, along with more extensive details about a few critical individuals — like Rose herself.

Rose Dalassanos

Homeless Hotel

At a glance, Rose is a typical zero. She is a gaunt woman in ragged clothes — elderly, certainly, but her exact age is difficult to tell beneath the layers of dirt and grime. Her gray hair is matted with filth and her skin is weathered and wrinkled, but her eyes shine with the fervor of the schizophrenic. When she isn't creating a new sign she paces back and forth between the old ones, clenching her fists and muttering to herself. She has no conception of danger, and anyone who gets in her way will be met with barely contained fury. It is entirely up to you as to what will set her off sufficiently to make her send someone to the hotel. She does not simply absorb anyone who gets in her way, although she will certainly transport anyone who physically threatens her; set her criteria as you will based on how easy you want it to be to get sucked in and how many inhabitants you expect to be inside.

Elderly Caucasian woman, 152 cm, 58 kg. Tangled gray hair, hazel eyes. Mutters constantly in a harsh, raspy voice. Wears ragged old clothes.

Traits

Extradimensional Vessel, upside — Rose has a hotel inside her head. Over the decades, she has absorbed hun-

dreds of people into her dreams. This is a powerful weapon; she can use this power on anyone within thirty feet, although her mental instability prevents her from making extensive use of it other than in self-defense. In addition to her power to absorb people, there are other side effects of her unusual condition. Someone who studies Rose for a while will notice things that make her stand out from the other inhabitants of the alleys.

- She is immune to telepathic scans and other forms of psychic manipulation. She is not really conscious and is only vaguely aware of her surroundings; probes pick up a vast empty space filled with static and clamoring voices. A psychic who reads her mind should make a willpower roll against 5d6 of psychic defense. If he fails, he should be temporarily disoriented or even incapacitated by the overwhelming tumult within Rose's mind.
- She never sleeps; or to look at things another way, she is *always* asleep, in a constant somnambulistic state that keeps her eternally on the edge between dreaming and waking.
- While she occasionally drinks a cup of coffee, she never eats. She makes a small amount of money from accidental panhandling, but she spends it all on posterboard and markers; she is sustained by the surfeit of life-force within her soul. If someone does manage to identify her and discover her history, they may notice that she is remarkably spry for someone who is over a hundred years old. Unlike the inhabitants of the hotel, she has continued to age over the years, but at a slower rate.
- She heals at an inhuman rate; she will recover from seemingly mortal injuries within minutes. When she is injured, she will draw on the life-force of one of the inhabitants of the hotel to restore herself; this tends to transform the unfortunate victim into an apathetic (see p. 78), so it is a good thing that it doesn't happen that often. If she is rendered unconscious, the hotel will suffer a temporary blackout.

(We were just talking to her, and now we're . . . here.)

Guardian Angel, upside — Given that Rose possesses some very unique and unusual abilities, it is remarkable that she has escaped the notice of the various conspiracies of the Edge for this long. You will have to decide why this is. Perhaps it is simply the case that no one pays attention

to an old woman. Perhaps some side effect of her power blurs the memories of those who see it used, so that it goes unnoticed. Or perhaps a conspiracy — or even the government — is aware of her abilities, but for whatever reason wants her to be out on the street and is acting from the shadows to protect her from other power groups. (Why hasn't the CPC done anything about this?)

Mentally Disturbed, flaw — The constant stream of alien thoughts flowing through her mind prevents Rose from being able to interact with her surroundings in any meaningful way. As noted above, she is as much asleep as she is awake, and it is impossible to have any sort of intelligent or useful conversation with her. (Constantly muttering nonsense)

Dee

Hotel Detective

All sorts of people end up in the Rose Hotel, and most of them aren't too happy to be there. Left to human nature, violence would seem to be inevitable. But whenever someone starts a rumble, a figure steps out of the shadows. Call her Dee. She's the hotel detective.

Dee is a part of the hotel — some element of Rose's subconscious that acts to maintain order. She knows everything that goes on in the hotel and can appear anywhere at any time; she can even be in two or more places at once (and in truly dire situations, she could appear in the same place multiple times). The only exceptions to this rule are that she will not appear during a blackout, will not enter the fifth floor, and will not immediately interfere with the actions of members of the Midwich Family. In general, Dee will only intervene when a fight is about to break out; she is concerned with the physical safety of the inhabitants, and will not get involved with feuds or minor thefts. She wears a trench coat and can produce weapons from its depths at will; these weapons will quickly dissolve if they are taken away from her. She can also make objects disappear into her coat — specifically, weapons that she takes away from new arrivals. In general, she is grim and direct — “Just the facts, ma'am.” As she is merely the manifestation of an instinct, it is impossible to learn much from talking to her; she doesn't really know anything beyond the task she was summoned into existence to perform.

Caucasian woman in her mid-twenties. 155 cm, 64 kg. Long auburn hair, hazel eyes. She wears a brown trench-

coat and a broad-brimmed hat, a la Carmen SanDiego. If someone has done his research, he will realize that she looks a great deal like the younger Rose — although, in point of fact, she is somewhat more attractive and athletic than Rose ever was. She *is* a self-image, after all . . .

Attack: 5 dice, x3 unarmed (temporary) or x4 with pistol

Defense: 5 dice

Hit Points: 30 (Rolls with the punches)

Languages: Dee can speak any language known by the person she is speaking to; they are, after all, in her mind.

Traits

Defender, 5 dice — Dee exists to maintain order in the hotel. As noted above, she is aware of all activities within the hotel and will appear if a fight breaks out, always seeming to step in from just outside the characters' field of view. She will first issue a warning. If combatants do not stand down, she will strike with devastating punches and haymakers (which nonetheless inflict shock-only damage). If her targets are using lethal force, she will produce a pistol from the depths of her trench coat. She never runs out of ammo; anyone 'slain' by her bullets becomes a comatose apathetic, and will not recover unless removed from the hotel. If she is rendered unconscious, her body will vanish and a new Dee will appear to take her place; fighting her is a fairly pointless exercise. As she does not really exist, she is immune to all forms of mental manipulation. This trait can also be used for perception rolls to determine if she notices stealthy actions in her immediate vicinity. (Appears whenever there is trouble; always seems to have her eye on you)

Other Inhabitants

The other inhabitants of the Rose Motel generally fall into one of three categories: *guest*, *staff*, or *apathetic*.

Guests

Simple Bystanders

Most of the people encountered in the hotel are *guests* — people who have clung to the identity they had in the real world. Some struggle to get out of the hotel, while others are content to bide their time. But they are united by their individuality, by the fact that they have not become a part of the hotel. Guests could include reporters, peace officers, tourists, or anyone else you might meet in the Edge, and each one has a tale to tell.

Notable guests include:

- **Belladonna**, a flash-in-the-pan rock star who had the misfortune to run into Rose on the way to a party at Compton's six years ago. Her embarrassing secret is that she didn't actually sing her own songs; consequently, she is always coming up with excuses not to sing. She will be frustrated if people haven't heard of her, and still expects to be treated like a star. Belladonna will promise characters great wealth if they find a way to get her out — but in point of fact, her creditors have long since decimated her estate. She hates Karla Sommers and will fly into a fury if the singer is mentioned. Belladonna is an Italian-American woman in her mid-twenties, with curly shoulder-length black hair, dark eyes, and surgically-enhanced pop-star looks; she speaks with a slight New York accent.
- **Colonel Wellington-Smythe**. An elderly English colonel, Wilson Wellington-Smythe will bend the ear of anyone who will listen with stories of his exploits in the World Wars. He puts on a bold face and tells many colorful (and untrue) stories of his heroic deeds. But beneath this brave face, he lives in constant fear of Oliver Midwich. Oliver long ago expressed his extreme disappointment in the British military; now Wellington-Smythe is careful to spend all his time in the company of others, and quakes like gelatin whenever he sees a member of the Midwich Family. Wilson is a portly, balding gentleman with an enormous gray mustache and sideburns.
- **Dr. James Harris** was Rose's psychiatrist during her brief stay at the Asylum in 1929. Of all the guests, he has the greatest understanding of the true nature of the hotel. Due either to his knowledge of the ways of the mind or some innate psychic talent, he has learned to mold the reality of the hotel in very minor ways. As a result, he lives in a penthouse suite on the sixth floor, has champagne and cigars available at all times, and is often seen with an attractive female companion who answers to "Lola," who no one remembers arriving at the hotel. Harris rarely mingles with the other guests; he is quite happy in his private paradise, and guests will have to do something interesting to draw his attention. He is a middle-aged Caucasian man with well-groomed silver hair, gray eyes, and an extremely

jovial manner. He generally dresses in expensive suits or Hugh Hefner-style robes; he has a remarkably large wardrobe, considering the limited options available to most guests of the hotel.

- **Gertrude Spaetzel** is a werewolf. She has been a guest in the hotel since 1934 and has loved every minute; within the hotel she is removed from the lunar cycle and thus freed from her curse. Gertrude is a warm, friendly individual who is always trying to get other guests to talk about their feelings, and loves to play the role of matchmaker. She is a slightly plump Slavic woman with short brown hair just beginning to go gray, brown eyes, and thick eyebrows that meet in the middle.
- **Irita Kantouba** is a writer and storyteller. In 1973 she was investigating a series of unsolved child kidnappings that had occurred over the last 40 years — and the trail led her straight to the hotel. Her flair for storytelling has made her quite popular amongst the guests, and she has even penned a few novels that can be found in the lobby, written on hotel stationary. She is extremely inquisitive, but has a knack for getting people to talk; as a result, she knows a great deal about the various inhabitants of the hotel, if she can be convinced to share. Irita is an African-Amarjan woman in her thirties.
- **Johnny Golden** is a crooner from the fifties who occasionally entertains the guests with a song. He considers himself a consummate ladies' man and will make a move on any vaguely attractive character of the opposite sex. He is charming, in a dated way, but not very bright and not nearly as smooth as he thinks he is. Recently, Honoria Midwich got him hooked on MDA-Cubed; to maintain his performance he has been trading his toes for additional doses of the drug. Honoria doesn't particularly care about his toes, but she enjoys the singer's pain and humiliation and wants to see how far he will go. Johnny is an Al Amarjan with a touch of Greek ancestry; he was 39 when he arrived at the hotel, and has short dishwasher-blond hair and twinkling blue eyes. He usually wears an old lounge suit.
- **Lorenzo** was an Italian soldier during World War II. Having heard about the 'liberation' of the island, he is firmly convinced that if he left the hotel he would be arrested. He spends almost all his time in the bowling

alley; recently, he has been trying to develop an indoor version of bocce using bowling balls, but with little success. He is afraid of Colonel Wellington-Smythe, and has a deep, unrequited crush on Belladonna. He is a rugged Italian man in his early twenties; his otherwise handsome face is marred by a broken nose. His native language is Italian, and he has difficulty with English; this is another reason he tends to stay away from the regular crowd.

- **Maria Nazario** is a very beautiful and very pregnant Puerto Rican-American woman. Thirty years ago, early in her third trimester, Maria became convinced that she was married to the Devil, and that her family was involved in cult activities. She fled to the only person she trusted — her Aunt Esmarelda, who lived on Cali Street in Al Amarja. Her Aunt listened patiently to her story, and took her out for lunch at Pike's Diner. They couldn't get any food, but she was given a fortune cookie that told her to "talk to the sign lady." Esmarelda recognized this as a reference to Rose, who was squatting in Great Men at the time, and led her niece to the old woman — and subsequently to the hotel. Maria believes that staying in the hotel is the only way to keep her child from being born; she is terrified that it may be beginning to stir within her, or that cultists will come after her to try to free the child; she will be very cautious around strangers.

Staff

Here to serve your needs!

Members of the staff have embraced their exile in order to assume positions of authority within the hotel. The most influential members of the staff have been in the Rose Hotel since it first opened in the '20s. By assuming an archetypal role an individual gains a certain amount of support from the hotel itself, at the expense of slowly being subsumed into the gestalt of the building. Provided that he fulfills his duties, a character will be provided with the tools he requires and a certain amount of supernatural protection. Staff members heal at two or three times the usual rate, and their enemies will suffer strange bouts of bad luck — tripping on furniture, slipping on the polished floor, having a weapon misfire, or in extreme cases, having a chandelier collapse on an attacker.

Joining the staff simply requires a good idea and some dedication. For example, a character who starts acting out the role of a shoeshine boy — using whatever materials he can find, and working at it for a reasonable period of time — will soon find that he has a uniform and shining rags, and a shoeshine chair will appear in the lobby. However, as time goes by the character will find that his “job” is becoming more and more important to him, and it will be difficult for him to focus on other aspects of his life. Strong-willed characters can resist this dissolution, but weaker individuals will find their memories of the real world slowly fading away. If a character becomes a staff member, roll 2 dice against his willpower each week (for “willpower,” choose an appropriate trait — e.g., “Strong-Willed,” “Independent Thinker” or even “Self-Absorbed”); whenever he fails a roll, he should be sucked a little deeper into the assumed role. If the character abandons his position, the compulsion will slowly fade — but lost memories will not return. Many members of the staff no longer even have names; they are known only by their titles.

The most important members of the staff are:

- **The concierge** has never revealed his original name; some wonder if he ever was a real person, or if he is an extension of the hotel like Dee. He is a smartly dressed Caucasian man with short dark hair parted in the middle and a large waxed mustache. He is all business; if someone wants information about hotel facilities or upcoming events he will provide them, but any attempt at chit-chat will meet a stone wall.
- **Sara** is the hotel operator. A slight woman with blonde hair in a flapper cut, she spends all of her time connected to the hotel switchboard, routing guests to outside lines or listening to the chatter herself. Someone who pays attention will notice that she never eats or sleeps — which may encourage the characters to try this themselves.
- **Lloyd** is the bartender at Purgatory (see p. 74). He is a middle-aged man with thinning hair, a slight English accent, and a small pair of spectacles.
- **Hamadi** the bellhop is an Amarjan lad of Syrian descent. He is relentlessly cheerful, considering that his job primarily consists of escorting people from the door to the front desk.
- **Jakov and Sofiya Slogar** are the proprietors of Blatavsky’s, the hotel restaurant. Both were cooks in

their previous lives and enjoy the challenges posed by the shifting kitchen. Jakov is a muscular Hungarian who looks more like a wrestler than a chef; his wife Sofiya is a ‘Margin woman who is usually too busy planning the next meal to chat with guests.

- **Benny** is the elevator man. He was a small-time hood who was on the run from his bosses when he found himself in the hotel, back in 1952; he will ask any newcomers about bizarrely named crime figures, trying to find out if his enemies are still alive (“Have you heard anything about Sammy ‘the Silverfish’ Samson? Are you sure? Wiry guy, about this high, good with piano wire?”). If you want, he may have discovered that it is possible to escape from the hotel by being on the elevator during a blackout, and simply chosen to remain out of fear of his enemies; if this is the case, he could reveal this information to the characters at a critical time. Benny is a short Australian man with bright red, curly hair; although he is in his late twenties, his face is deeply lined and has a perpetual look of fear. He has a squeaky voice and tends to talk very quickly, while rubbing his hands together nervously.

There are many other staff positions that might be currently filled, or that a character could attempt to assume — barber, maid, shoeshine boy, waiter at Blatavsky’s, piano player in the lobby, etc.

Apathetics

Remnants of the residents

The final members of the hotel community are the apathetics. These individuals have seriously limited mental functions. The best of the apathetics are sullen individuals who shuffle through daily routines, ignoring the people around them. The majority are vegetables that simply lie in their rooms, never eating, never moving, never aging, eventually simply fading away.

The transformation from guest to apathetic is a subtle one, and there are a number of theories about the nature of the change. Most feel that it is just a state of mortal depression — that these people have lost the will to continue, and are merely husks of a human spirit. But a few believe that the transformation is not the fault of the individual — but rather that Rose unconsciously sustains herself in the physical world by siphoning off the life-force of the inhabitants of the hotel, and apathetics are the remnants of spirits she

has drained. Whether or not this is true, it is the case that apathy tends to strike new targets after power outages, and that those afflicted are usually the most violent or least pleasant members of the community (although the members of the Midwich Family seem to be immune to this threat).

Story Ideas

Rose is a fairly colorful character in her own right. It's best to have her around for a little while before actually making use of the hotel; describe her latest batch of signs any time the characters pass by her, and possibly increase the number of messages that seem to have hidden meanings. When the time is right, you could use any of the following ideas as seeds for a story about Rose:

- Short and simple: the characters get in Rose's way on a bad day and end up in the hotel. Can they get out?
 - A friend or ally of the characters disappears. One of the characters passes by Rose and notices a sign marked with a message from the friend. Alternatively, the characters are hired to find a missing person, and given enough information to recognize a clue in one of Rose's signs.
 - A group of horses (see p. 15) could see the hotel as a way to escape from the Cali Dump; they could hire the players to get Rose into and out of the neighborhood.
 - If the characters have any skill at exorcism, they may be approached by Esmarelda (Maria Nazario's aunt, now a very old woman) and asked to go to the hotel to help her niece. Alternately, Sir Arthur or the Hermetics may hire the players to retrieve Maria so that her child may be born.
 - The introduction of the Shapers (from "Dreaming on the Verge of Strife" in *Forgotten Lives*) opens up a wide range of possibilities. Shapers can enter the dreams of others; as such, a Shaper should be able to enter the hotel while dreaming and interact with those trapped inside. Groups of Shapers — like the Circle of Dreams or the Architects — might have conferences or meetings at the hotel; a visit to the hotel during one of these meetings could be the key for a player to unmask the members of the Circle. Shapers have the ability to alter reality within dreams, but it should be particularly difficult to use this power in the hotel. Roll the Shaper's power against 5 dice of resistance; even if the roll is successful, only minor changes can be made.
- The Midwich Family provides many additional hooks for pulling players into the hotel; see p 80.
- Within the Rose Hotel, the obvious initial story is finding a way out. But here are a few other ideas for stories that could occur inside the hotel itself:
- A character finds a short story written by Irita; the protagonist seems very similar to a friend of the character's, who he hasn't seen in some time. If the character follows up on this, Irita explains that the idea came to her from interviewing a recent arrival, who subsequently became an apathetic. Can the character find a way to revive his friend?
 - Colonel Wellington-Smythe is convinced that Oliver Midwich intends to kill him, and offers the characters some sort of incentive to parlay with Oliver on his behalf. Most of the guests will be unwilling to talk about the Midwich Family, but Irita could pass along a considerable amount of information if the players can offer some inducement.
 - Belladonna or Johnny Golden becomes obsessed with one of the players and begins a long-term campaign of sexual harassment.
 - Gertrude tries to set up single characters with "a nice (fill in the blank)."
 - Someone is jealous of Dr. Harris' life of luxury and asks the characters to help break into Harris' suite. Alternately, the characters could be approached by Lola — the doctor's imaginary friend — who is desperate to get away from her creator and find a way out into the real world.
 - If the characters have made an enemy of one of the powerful conspiracies, an agent of that conspiracy could be trapped in the hotel with them. The only way out may be to pool their talents — but can they afford to let their enemy escape with knowledge of Rose's abilities?
 - What is the true story of Maria Nazario's unborn child? Who is its father? Could the child be influencing the hotel from within the womb? What if cultists or Compton do send agents to try to get the child out of the hotel?

The Midwich Family

Type: Unusual Gang

Rep: Unknown outside of the Rose Hotel. Feared within the hotel.

Brief: A pint-sized mafia comprised of ageless children. Peter Pan meets Lord of the Flies.

Allies: Rose Hotel, Sir Arthur Compton (loosely)

Enemies: None

“Don’t go to the fifth floor.” “Stay away from the fifth floor, sir.” If there was one thing Harvey had learned, it was that the quickest way to get ahead in life was to do things people didn’t want you to do. He stepped out of the elevator and looked around.

Things certainly didn’t *look* terrifying. All he saw were a bunch of kids playing games; high-pitched laughter and squeals of joy echoed about from further down the hall. Looking at the children, he noticed that they were from all races, but that they all seemed to be between five and nine years old. All were wearing identical old-fashioned school uniforms, with the girls in skirts and stockings. Looking more closely, he saw a few playing jacks, a small group playing spin-the-statue, and two — well, he would have been surprised to see even teenagers doing *that*. He approached a cluster to get a better look at their activity; they seemed to be playing *Scrabble* — no, *Anagrams*, there were no points on the letters — using pieces made of shell instead of wood.

No, not shell — human fingernails.

The oldest boy completed his word — “Prognostication” — and glanced up at Harvey. “Oh, good day, sir,” he said, with just a hint of sarcasm. “It’s always a joy when one of our elders comes to visit.” He glanced at the others with a slight shrug. “It appears that I have lost my wager with Oliver. Shall we see if he’s done with Honoria?” The other children looked up at Harvey and smiled, and something about it sent a chill through Harvey’s spine. He suddenly felt like he’d just stepped into a river only to notice the “Beware of Piranha” sign ...

Newcomers to the hotel will occasionally glimpse small groups of children wandering about — kids of various

racess, all between the ages of five and ten, dressed in old-fashioned school uniforms. Usually these children will be laughing and playing with one another, not frightening at all — but the other guests give them a wide berth, and regard them with something akin to terror. And with good reason. These are the members of the Midwich Family, the bogeymen that haunt the Rose Motel.

Family History

In 1928, Oliver Midwich II (pronounced ‘mi-ditch’) came to Al Amarja with his two children, Oliver and Honoria. Oliver the elder was a British statesman who had served in the Raj, and he came to Al Amarja as a result of the twists and turns of the Great Game. He had finally decided to turn against his country, and was on the island to complete a shady deal. What he didn’t realize was the degree to which his eight-year-old son was aware of his plans. Oliver the younger was a brilliant child who had uncovered much of the true nature of his father’s work, and he was disgusted by pater’s duplicitous nature — which he attributed to all adults by inference. The child carefully upset his father’s plans, and then disappeared onto the streets of the island with his younger sister. By chance the two happened upon Rose, and when Oliver struck up a conversation with the demented woman, the children found themselves in the hotel.

This was quite close to the original opening of the hotel, and Oliver and Honoria were the only children inside. For some reason — some say it was Rose’s innate love of children, while others mutter that it was her growing hatred of the other guests — the hotel embraced its young wards. When they settled on the fifth floor they discovered a host of wonders, a world made for children — a place where they would never have to grow old. For many months the Midwich children reveled in the freedom of their new home, giving little thought to the outside world. Then, during a game of House, Honoria decided that they needed a baby — that they should start a family of their own. This set Oliver to thinking — why not start a new society inside the hotel, a society of children freed from the treachery and duplicity of the adults? A family bound together by loyalty, without lies and deceit? He set his cunning mind to finding a way out of the hotel, and a few gruesome experiments later, he succeeded. He lured two chil-

dren from a park and brought them to Rose, and so the Midwich Family was born.

Family Values

Over the decades, the Midwich Family has evolved into a disturbing predatory organism. Oliver has established strict codes of conduct, both within the family and with outsiders. On the surface, the children seem almost Victorian; good manners and polite speech are enforced at all times, and personal hygiene is taken very seriously. Combined with the archaic school uniforms the children wear, they could hardly seem less menacing at first glance. But appearances are deceiving. Members of the family have no empathy for anyone outside of their own society; in their view adults are hopelessly corrupt creatures that are no longer truly human. “Never trust anyone over ten” is the watchword of the children. They will speak politely to their elders; that’s just common courtesy. But they will just as easily knife an adult in the kidneys, and won’t give it a second thought — other than to check through their pockets and possibly remove a thumbnail or two. The oldest members of the family have a mental age of over 80 years, and are better educated than most adults in the real world; but it is this casual cruelty, this innocently self-centered world-view, that forever separates these children from the adult world.

The Midwich Family has many traditions, most of which are unknown beyond the walls of the Nursery. Each child is assigned a number based on the time he arrived in the hotel; Oliver is one, Honoria is two, and so on. Rose does not often encounter children young enough to qualify for adoption, so every six months a party is sent out to find a suitable candidate and return her to the hotel; the child with the number twenty below that of the new child is set to act as her guide and mentor. The children live violent lives, and many don’t last a decade; currently there are seven-nine members of the Midwich Family in the Hotel.

Newcomers are allowed to play and have fun in the Nursery long enough to become addicted to life in the hotel. But after a few months they begin the regimen that will bring them fully into the Family. Family members are not allowed to sleep. They are allowed twelve hours a day of unscheduled activities, but the other twelve hours are strictly structured. The children learn social graces and

proper English diction. They are taught a variety of subjects, ranging from basic literacy for the newcomers to quantum physics for the elders. A good percentage of the study period is spent studying practical skills, like lock-picking and martial arts. While many of these subjects are drawn solely from books that the children have stolen, the Midwich Family keeps a close eye on newcomers to the hotel, and if a guest seems to have a particularly useful skill or field of knowledge they will often work to convince this savant to teach a course for the family. Incentives may include drugs, access to the luxuries of the Nursery, or even the promise of a way out — although most teachers have found the way out on the point of a knife once they have outlived their usefulness. The children take honesty very seriously — but there’s nothing wrong with lying to an old one.

Sex and violence are a way of life for the children; they epitomize the maxim “work hard, play hard.” Rough-housing with one another, playing archaic games, engaging in sexual experimentation, and hunting adults are all regular parts of the life of a Midwich child. Of course, there are restrictions. Sex with old ones (the Midwich term for adults, as it’s slightly more insulting than ‘adult’) is strictly forbidden, although a few of the children engage in such behavior out of a spirit of rebellion. And while few of the inhabitants of the hotel realize it, the random killing of a hotel guest is actually something that is frowned upon within the family — not out of any sense of sympathy, but rather for purely practical reasons. Oliver found out long ago that the vortex of a vanishing corpse could be used as a gateway to the outside world — and as a result, each guest in the hotel is a potential trip to Al Amarja. As there are a limited number of guests, they should not be used up carelessly — although that doesn’t preclude casual maiming or other forms of non-lethal injury.

Other customs within the family:

- Newcomers to the island are stripped of the name their parents gave them; initially they are referred to only by their number. When a child kills his first adult, he takes his victim’s first name. Oliver himself tracked down and executed his father a few years after establishing the family; Honoria liked her name and shopped around until she found a suitable victim. Name-shopping is a serious business for children getting ready for their first kill; there are even a few high-

er-ups who are still nameless, because they haven't found one they like yet.

- It is hard to track age within the hotel. The children slowly age as a result of their trips to the outside world, but this provides no sense of relative mental age between the children. To facilitate this, Oliver managed to get tattooing equipment into the Nursery. The children use tattoos to indicate age and to commemorate special events — spectacular kills, especially daring thefts, and the like. These tattoos are hidden from view when the child is wearing his uniform, but the status tattoos are drawn on the left forearm and can be quickly revealed. These marks are fairly bland — small blue tick marks, one for every six months the child has been in the hotel, drawn in a spiral pattern around the forearm. The other tattoos the children possess are usually quite graphic and unpleasant, and each one has a story. “I got this one after I set fire to the burn ward.”
- The children use thumbnails and fingernails as currency and playthings. Generally these are taken from the corpse of a murdered adult, but some children consider it a challenge to take a thumb and leave the victim alive. There is an Anagrams set in the Nursery made from thumbnails engraved with the initials of their former owners.
- The children are always completely honest with one another; “Lies are for old ones.” Likewise, they have no concept of racism; they are all part of the same family.
- Children are expected to defer to the older members of the family. A younger child who disagrees with an older sibling may challenge to a trial by combat, but if Oliver considers the matter trivial, he will order the challenger to be executed for disrespect.
- The family members hate pubes, especially children who have come to Al Amarja to attain the legal status of adults. Pubes that arrive in the hotel are generally invited up to the Nursery and nailed to a wall for future use as death-portals.
- Needless to say, once a child is brought into the family, she is part of it for life. Anyone who tries to run away will be hunted down and killed.

Children on the Edge

Oliver long ago learned how to use death-portals to leave the hotel. The children generally use apathetics as gateways when they are making an outing, and they have become quite adept at timing, to the degree that three or four children can make it out on a single death. The children view the Edge as an enormous playground full of challenges. They enjoy hunting adults; the elder children will employ their martial skills, while the young ones will simply use the element of surprise to trap their victims — an innocent smile and a zip gun to the crotch will go a long way. They also like to challenge themselves with acts of thievery, obtaining trophies or partying supplies that they then bring back to the hotel. As such, the children can be an excellent way to lure characters who generally avoid the bad parts of town into the hotel. A few ideas:

- The family decides to eliminate one of the Edge's street gangs, just to see if they can. The Glorious Lords are in a panic; “Frogbreath got taken out by dis kid, no more dan dis high!” Do the players help the Lords figure out what's going on, or sit back and enjoy the show?
- One of the children steals a valuable object belonging to a character — the trail leads to Rose.
- Someone hires the characters to find her child — the latest recruit into the Midwich Family.
- The characters meet Oliver and Honoria at one of Sir Arthur Compton's parties. While he dislikes adults, Oliver has been studying the occult under Sir Arthur; for his part, Compton enjoys the company of this delightfully twisted boy.

When traveling in the Edge, the children trade their school uniforms for less conspicuous clothing; the element of surprise is often the key to their ability to accomplish their goals.

Nursery Crimes

Within the hotel, the members of the Midwich Family generally keep to themselves, spending their days in their domain on the fifth floor. When they are seen on other floors, they are usually looking for a fight — although occasionally a few kids will just scout around to check out new arrivals. They enjoy the fact that the others fear them. And

this fear is well founded. For some reason, the hotel detective is very slow to interfere with the actions of the Midwich children, and she won't enter the fifth floor at all. If there is a prolonged brawl — or if someone initiates an attack on one of the children — Dee will show up to put a stop to it. But if a child starts a fight, she won't show up for at least five rounds, or until one of the children is seriously hurt. To make matters worse, Dee doesn't confiscate the children's weapons; they all have knives, and many carry tasers or homemade zip guns. Even a short fight can be a messy business.

Characters will be repeatedly warned to stay away from the fifth floor. If they ignore the warnings, they will find that the Nursery is a far different place from the rest of the hotel. Combine a grand hotel, the Taj Mahal, and Willy Wonka's chocolate factory, and you begin to get a sense of the Nursery. The area around the elevators is simply a fancier version of the rest of the hotel. But the further in one goes — and it goes quite far; it is much larger than most of the other floors — the stranger it gets. The architecture is inspired by Oliver's childhood in India; there are curved doorways, rich carpets and tapestries, and the smell of incense fills the air. The fixtures range from old-fashioned European brass work to bizarre clockwork creations lifted from Jules Verne. Model trains run between rooms and brilliantly colored tropical birds flutter about, occasionally shedding iridescent feathers. Laughter and music fills the halls. It can be quite an overwhelming experience for someone who is used to the rather mundane nature of the rest of the hotel.

Throughout the floor, there are many unusual locations: a huge, old-fashioned saloon serving a wide variety of sodas and fizzy lifting drinks; a small cinema running endless reels of morbidly altered *Little Rascals*; a library for children of all ages, with Dr. Seuss books on the lowest shelves and ponderous scientific textbooks farther up; a large room that serves as gymnasium and rave club; an indoor greenhouse, where Honoria has developed a bizarre opium hybrid that cannot be found (or exist) in the real world; and a room full of toys, both playthings stolen by the children over the decades and bizarre inventions of the house itself. Feel free to devise other odd rooms for the

Nursery; it is a reflection of the twisted children who live within its walls, and no stretch of the imagination is too strange or improbable.

Within the hotel, the Midwich Family is intended to serve as a constant, lurking threat; they also highlight the strange nature of the hotel, with the rest of the inhabitants living in terror of a band of children. A few possible encounters:

- The family has kept the secret of travel to the outside world since it was first discovered. But the inhabitants of the hotel are aware that the children have access to goods that are otherwise unobtainable in the hotel. Characters seeking drugs, weapons, or other unusual items may be directed to the family; or someone could hint that the children may know a way out. But what do the characters have to offer that the children would be interested in? More than a few of the hotel guests are missing a finger or two . . .
- A few of the Midwich children attend the characters' orientation reception. One is name-shopping, and takes an interest in one of the character's names ("Harvey . . . that's a *nice* name"). Other inhabitants of the hotel, who have learned something of Midwich naming customs, warn the character to tread lightly...
- One of the children recently took a keepsake from another hotel guest. The guest approaches the characters — downplaying the danger of the children — and asks their help in retrieving the object.
- One of the characters may possess a skill the children wish to learn, and be "encouraged" to serve as a teacher for a term. Such a position could allow the character to learn the secret of leaving the hotel — although living in the Nursery is a dangerous business.
- The characters are approached by a family member, number 45. The former numbers 47 and 48 recently died under mysterious circumstances, and 45 thinks the former 49 (now the new 47) has been killing them in order to move up the food chain. 45 doesn't want the other members of the family to think he needs help dealing with internal matters, but wants to get the characters' assistance in dealing with his rival.

GMCs

Typical Midwich Child

Ageless Sociopath

New arrivals to the family have no skills at all; if anything, they should receive one die for most actions. But by the time a child is allowed to leave the Nursery, she will have been trained in a wide range of skills, both practical and purely academic. This template should suffice for the average Midwich Family member who players will encounter.

Members of the family come from all races, and range between the ages of five and ten. While within the Rose Hotel they dress in old-fashioned English school uniforms; when encountered on the Edge, they will generally dress to blend in so as to maximize the element of surprise in battle. While many of the older children know multiple languages, they generally speak English with British accent and diction; they take great pains to speak politely and formally, even when their words are clearly threatening.

Attack: 3 dice, typically armed with knife (x2), taser (x5, temporary), or zip gun (x4, one shot)

Defense: 3 dice + bonus die

Hit Points: 14 (Extremely athletic child)

Languages: English, additional languages based on age.

Traits

The School of Hard Knocks, 3 dice — Midwich children spend half of their lives in intensive schooling, training both physically and mentally. Any child encountered outside of the Nursery can be assumed to be well-trained in combat and breaking and entering; their intense and often dangerous lifestyle also hones their senses and teaches them to resist intimidation. Beyond that, the older a child truly is, the more subjects he will have studied; this trait can be applied to almost any roll, if the child has had time to devote to the subject. The Midwich fighting style combines a variety of traditional martial arts with a few unique maneuvers designed to take maximum advantage of the combatant's small size. (Converses fluently in three languages while kicking your ass)

Specialty, 4 dice/5 dice (Optional) — The older children will usually have specialized in some area of study; this could be anything from gymnastics to body-piercing to

17th-Century English literature. If it is a particularly narrow trait, they should receive 5 dice with it. (Sign varies)

Child, upside — The youthful appearance of the Midwich child has its ups and downs. If someone doesn't know what to expect, the child should generally receive a bonus die on an initial attack; few people are prepared for a child to strike with the skill and ferocity of a Midwich fighter. Likewise, they have learned to make maximum use of their small size, both in combat — where it provides a bonus die for defense — and for squeezing into tight spots. However, while they are athletic and well toned, they are still physically children; they should receive a penalty die on most acts requiring pure strength or where small size could be a handicap, and will not be allowed to enter many businesses (at least, not through the front door). (Aww, isn't she cute. Wait — is that a knife?)

Oliver Midwich

Pint-sized Patriarch

Oliver is the founder of the Midwich Family. Born to English parents in India in the year 1920, he grew up amidst the twilight of the British Empire. He was a remarkable child, a prodigy who excelled at anything he put his mind to; but he felt distanced from the world of politics he was born into. Discovering his father's treacherous intentions was the final straw; he took his sister and set out in search of something better — a search that eventually led him to the Rose Hotel. In many ways, he is the most reasonable member of the family; of all of the children, he has chosen this life, and he was an intelligent, educated individual before he entered the hotel. With that said, his distaste for adults is also something he has chosen, not something he was taught. As a result, he is dangerously unpredictable — he is more capable of concealing his motives and thoughts than his more exuberant colleagues.

These days Oliver appears to be about ten years old. He is a brilliant individual who possesses a strong natural charisma and considerable insight into methods of manipulation; he can be stern and commanding one minute and play the role of an innocent youth the next.

Caucasian boy, physically ten years old, blond hair in a pageboy cut, bright blue eyes. 110 cm, 40 kg. Typically wears an old-fashioned private school uniform.

Attack: 4 dice, typically armed with knife (x2), taser (x5, temporary), or zip gun (x4, one shot)

Defense: 4 dice + bonus die

Hit Points: 18 (Amazing willpower allows him to overcome pain)

Languages: English, Al Amarjan Patois, Arabic, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Japanese, Latin, Sanskrit, Spanish, Urdu

Traits

Jack of All Trades, 4 dice — Oliver is a brilliant individual who has had the better part of 75 sleepless years to study any topic that caught his fancy. He is a skilled combatant, a talented burglar, and an accomplished public speaker. But feel free to use this trait for any skill you want him to have studied. Has he taken up painting? Studied the occult with Sir Arthur? Devoted himself to quantum mechanics? In addition to these skills, Oliver has a slippery mind and considerable willpower, and can use this trait to resist psychic manipulation. (Converses comfortably about history, medicine, and martial arts — in the same sentence.)

Family Connections, Upside — Oliver has some primal connection to the members of this family. When something happens to one of his “children,” he knows about it. He generally knows if they are scheming amongst themselves, although he won’t always act on this information — competition builds character, after all. The exact nature of this connection is up to you; it may be an innate psychic talent, a mystical ability developed through training with Compton, or a gift of the hotel. (Shows up for a “talk” after you’ve murdered one of his kids and burnt the body)

Child, Upside — See the description on p. 84.

Honoriamidwich

Sibling Sybarite

Honoriam is Oliver’s younger sister. Like most of the children, her life before coming to the hotel is little more than a blur. She rarely returns to the real world; she is a dedicated hedonist and enjoys the many otherworldly luxuries that are available in the Nursery. She has a lazy, sybaritic manner; she is only interested in the people around her to the degree that they can provide her with a

new thrill, and she will look at any characters she meets as new and interesting toys. She uses the standard Midwich Child statistics (p. 84) with specialties in botany, deviant sexual behavior, and chemistry (specifically, recreational pharmaceuticals). She has established a small garden in the Nursery in which she has developed a number of unusual dream-hybrids of real-world plants, including a modified opium poppy and a species of mushroom that creates hallucinations in the minds of everyone close to the user.

Caucasian girl, physically seven years old, long blond hair often worn in pigtails, bright blue eyes. 84 cm, 32 kg. Typically wears an old-fashioned private school uniform.

Madeleine Midwich

Knee-high Kneecapper

Madeleine was the twelfth child to join the family, although he is currently number eight in the hierarchy. His name is the result of the family’s unusual naming policy; he generally goes by “Maddy,” and jokes about his name simply increase the chance of the joker meeting a slow and painful end. His few childhood memories are of his abusive father; as a result, he has a great deal of aggression towards adults, and he has become one of the family’s combat experts. While he maintains the Midwich code of polite behavior, any conversation with an old one will carry a strongly implied threat hidden just beneath his polite words, and he takes great joy in administering slow beatings to his elders. He is devoted to Oliver and is one of his closest confidants; the two often engage in wagers ranging from the behavior of new arrivals to the number of thumbnails they can collect in a given period of time.

Madeleine uses the standard Midwich Child statistics (p. 84) with 4 dice in combat and 18 hit points. He has studied a variety of martial arts — if a character knows any techniques he does not, he will try to recruit the character as a temporary instructor.

African boy, physically nine years old, short curly black hair, brown eyes. 104 cm, 46 kg. Typically wears an old-fashioned private school uniform.

The Tangle / Botanica Tours

Type: Anomaly of nature

Rep: Little known — just a strange bunch of vines out by the asylum. A LOT of vines.

Brief: A sentient vegetable mass lurking outside the D'Aubainne Asylum. It is psychosensitive and drawn towards thoughts of lunacy and rebellion; it is slowly trying to break into the Asylum.

Address: Southeast of the Edge, borders on Republic Road and Seventh of October Highway

Miss Iris Winterbotham runs a small business giving botanical tours of the island. Her expeditions are unorthodox and often involve actions that could be construed as breaking and entering. But she does know how to reach the most amazing sites on the island, including Valentine's rose garden in the Cali Dump (see p. 93), the grounds of the Goodman Mansion, Masen Memorial at D'Aubainne University, the Fungal Gardens of the Brink, and Sir Arthur Compton's fabulous collection of Stinking Corpse Lilies. And then there is the crowning wonder, the greatest botanical mystery of the island: the Tangle.

As she leads people towards the Tangle, Iris will usually tell her clients what she knows about the bizarre growth:

"The story has it that a brilliant botanist was incarcerated at the D'Aubainne Asylum. Now why would a harmless fellow like a botanist be thrown in the loony bin, you may ask. Well, this fellow — Gregor Borodin Batuishkov, or something like that — was supposed to have engineered all kinds of strange new plants. Dandelions with seeds that would burrow into flesh. Vines with acid instead of sap, or flowers that could blow nerve gas onto predators. Impossible, right? Well, I've seen stranger things — and apparently it was possible enough to get little Gregor a nice padded room where he wouldn't cause any trouble.

"They say that one year the asylum was trying to deal with a major insect infestation. Gregor volunteered to do some work to deal with the problem, and the guards figured, what harm could this old geezer do? So he sets up this maze of weird hedges a little ways from the asylum.

The insect problem disappeared . . . and so did Greg. But the hedges didn't go away — they kept growing, getting bigger and weirder. Every few months, the government sends teams to trim it back. First they used clippers and sprays. These days it's flame-throwers and chainsaws, and even that doesn't seem to bother it much. And it keeps changing, too. Somedays it's all thorns, other times you've got flowers and spores. When we get there, you just stick close to me. Those thorns mean business.

"Anyhow, you know how people say plants respond to human emotion? How talking to them encourages growth? That's true, you know. And this beauty — way I see it, ol' Gregor was nuts, and he made the thing — it probably has a taste for a good psycho. If that's true, then all the crazy thoughts coming from the asylum must positively sing to the Tangle."

The Tangle truly is a marvel of the natural world — albeit a highly unnatural one. So far, the asylum staff has prevented the plant from gaining ground near the asylum itself, but the kudzu-like weed has expanded to create a vast thicket that covers acres of land. Central trunks are over two feet in diameter, bristling with thorns and smaller vines. The great trunks are twisted and woven together, forming a bizarre network of vegetable tunnels. The lesser vines are in constant motion, and twist and writhe like snakes. Walking inside the Tangle is all too much like walking through the veins of an enormous body. There is an eerie sense of presence — as if a powerful mind is observing all intruders. Which, in fact, it is.

Miss Winterbotham's account is not far from the truth. Doctor Batuishkov was a brilliant fringe botanist, and he managed to trick the Asylum staff into letting him create the little project that has since become the Tangle. Once the growth had become established, he disappeared into the maze of vines and was never seen again. The enormous weed spread like wildfire; a concerted effort managed to drive it well back from the asylum grounds, and at the time that seemed good enough. Perhaps, if the Asylum staff had pushed hard enough, they could have destroyed the thing completely. But they didn't, and over the years the



Tangle has continued to grow. It possesses an unnatural sentience — a consciousness derived from the mind of its creator, but which has evolved along a unique path over the years of its existence. As Iris has speculated, it is highly sensitive to the thought-emanations of those around it. Between the memories it acquired from its creator and its own constant battle with the forces that seek to restrict its growth, the Tangle has developed a hatred for authority and the forces of order, and a love for rebellion and chaos. It is, after all, a weed, and it is the nature of weeds to go where they are not wanted. As such, it is striving to move towards the Asylum in order to free the trapped inmates there. So far the battle has been a stalemate.

The Tangle is quite capable of defending itself. It has developed immunities to all known pesticides. It resists flames and blades, and even when it is cut or burnt, it grows back with astonishing speed. Further, it can call upon a disturbing array of natural weaponry, ranging from poisoned thorns to chemical gas. While it rarely acts except in self-defense, the prehensile vines can back off to avoid an attack or lash out to strike unprotected flesh. In part, these capabilities are the result of an amazing innate ability to adapt.

However, the Tangle has an edge — Doctor Batuishkov is still alive. He sits on a wooden throne deep within the center of the Tangle, roots merged with his body to provide him with the nutrients he needs to survive. The sight is quite horrific, and needless to say Gregor is even madder now than he was before; but he still retains much of his botanical brilliance, and he can interface directly with the Tangle to produce new vegetable marvels. He prefers not to be seen, but he shares the senses of the

Tangle and the two may chose to aid those who venture into the vegetable labyrinth. Of course, there may be new troubles for the Tangle on the horizon. The CPC has finally been called in to consider the problem. So far, no new action has been taken. Either they have yet to find a solution, or they are waiting to see if the plant can somehow serve their own purposes . . .

GMCs

Iris Winterbotham

Botanical Bounty Hunter

Iris is the botanical equivalent of Indiana Jones — a courageous explorer who is at her best when tracking down an extinct genus in the arctic tundra or dealing with Amazonian tribes for lost herbal lore. But while she is happy to talk about her past, she is a woman with many secrets. She was born on Al Amarja and studied with Doctor Batuishkov. While she did not share his unnatural genius, she nonetheless proved to have a great affinity for the science of plants, and she absorbed many of Batuishkov's unusual theories. She also proved to be quite a capable athlete, and soon began on the career that she continues to this day: botanical bounty hunter, seeking out rare herbs and forgotten blooms for the mystics and millionaires of the Edge. Few people know of her secret life, and that's the way she likes it. But if you really need a black lotus and you don't know where to turn, you might get pushed her way.



Iris has made quite a bit of money through her adventures, but she's in it for the thrill. She also tends to keep seeds or trimmings from anything unusual that she encounters; her isolated greenhouse is a veritable treasure trove of rare species. While she does not possess her mentor's fringe talents, she has taken an interest in hybridization — and as such, the Tangle is a source of fascination for her. She spends a lot of time in the corridors of the great plant, looking for new blooms or signs of evolution. She has begun to suspect that Doctor Batuishkov may still be alive — though at this point little remains of the man she once knew. He still cares about her and allows her to travel safely through the Tangle, although he does not wish to see her.

“Botanica Tours” is just a front for Iris' more exciting activities, a way for her to keep her skills fresh and to keep and eye on the interesting blooms of the island. She runs her tours by appointment only, and customers are required to sign waivers freeing her from any liability should they be caught trespassing. Many of the places she visits are the abodes of previous clients, so she can probably get away without trouble — but she won't stretch her favors to protect her current customers.

‘Margin woman with a blend of Asian, European, and Mediterranean features. Age 32, 180 cm, 65 kg. Straight black hair that falls slightly below her shoulders (worn up on expeditions), red-brown eyes. Athletic, rugged build. Speaks with a slight French accent. Wears well-worn clothes designed for outdoor use. Owns a small boat she uses to smuggle prohibited flora onto the island.

Attack: 4 dice (penalty die in hand to hand combat)

Defense: 4 dice (penalty die in hand to hand combat)

Hit Points: 25 (Tough and determined)

Languages: English, Al Amarjan Patois, and any other languages you feel inclined to give her. She has traveled across the globe, and should know a wide variety of obscure languages and dialects.

Traits

Swashbuckling Adventurer, 4 dice — As part of her job, Iris has to dodge giant rolling rocks, swing across ravines, fight off tribes of hostile natives, and break into high-tech security compounds. She specializes in stealth, but she can handle a gun or a blowpipe and hold her own in a fight if she has to (although she takes a penalty die when engaging in straight-out fisticuffs). If Indy could do it, then Iris can too. (Climbs fences with practiced ease)

Botany, 3 dice* — Iris knows a great deal about unusual plants and herbs. She can identify rare species and knows a lot about the medicinal effects of different plants. She often carries a small blowgun and a few darts tipped with unusual venoms. (Uses Latin names for plants)

Favors, upside — Iris has done work for many of the powerful people on the island. She has found rare components for sorcerers, unusual herbs for scientists, and exotic blooms for the gardens of the idle rich. It's up to you to decide who owes Iris a favor, but she certainly has friends in high places who may lend a hand in difficult times. (On a first-name basis with celebrities)

Thrillseeker, flaw — Iris thrives on adrenaline and she is constantly seeking new challenges. This obviously comes out in her chosen occupation, but it should also be noticeable in her everyday life. She's an avid gambler and will always push situations as far as she can. (Hands callused, arms and legs marked with numerous minor scars from previous escapades)

Story Ideas

The players may learn of the Tangle after an encounter with Iris Winterbotham. Alternately, they might notice it during a trip to the Asylum, or overhear a government employee talking about the most recent burning. If the players are generally against authority the Tangle may take a liking to them; the benefits of such an ally can vary considerably depending how interesting you want things to be. At the least, it can provide its friends with unusual herbs or chemical concoctions. At the far end of the spectrum, it may be that it has spread its roots across the Edge and can act as a massive spy network.

Other possibilities to consider:

- The Cut-Ups learn of the Tangle and try to recruit the vegetable to their cause.
- The Tangle succeeds in breaking down the walls of the Asylum. While it is happy about this, the flood of released lunatics and political prisoners may make life interesting for the players . . .
- What is the CPC up to? Do they know about Dr. Batuishkov, or do they have other plans for the Tangle? See the notes on the Wind Farm (p. 102) for one possibility . . .

Turn Your Head and Coffee

Type: Coffee bar.

Rep: A great joint for a late-night cram session.

Brief: A 24-hour coffee bar that uses some experimental ingredients.

Address: 98 Euclid Avenue, Science Barrio



GMCS

Yuri Petrovski

Owner of Turn Your Head and Coffee

Born in Russia to peasant parents, Yuri became determined at an early age to become a doctor in the West and return home to help

All Yuri Petrovski ever wanted was to be a doctor and help people. Unfortunately for him, the medical school admission boards didn't have the same vision for him. So when the proprietor of the coffee bar where Petrovski worked after graduation passed away, Yuri took over running the place. As he got the hang of things, Petrovski began using the profits from the bar to fund experimental drug research.

This wasn't enough for Yuri, though. Since he wasn't a real doctor, he had no legal way to test his drugs, except on himself. Late one night at the bar one of the regulars, a student, asked Yuri if he had something for a cold. Yuri ran into the back room and came back with a cup of coffee, flavored slightly of oranges. The cure was successful, and word spread that Yuri's was the place to go when you weren't feeling well. The crowds grew, and Petrovski changed the name of the bar to Turn Your Head and Coffee.

Turn Your Head and Coffee resides in a decades-old brick building, and is decorated eclectically. Most of the original furniture is still there, but as things have gotten too old to use, Petrovski has been slowly decorating in a hospital motif. The result is an odd mix. The coffee bar itself is still the same, but many of the old booths have been replaced by waiting room-style chairs and tables. Where there used to be sofas along a wall, there is now a row of adjustable hospital beds locked in the sitting position.

The clientele at Turn Your Head and Coffee still consists mainly of D'Aubainne University students. The student body knows that whether they just need a place to study or they want a little something to make sure they don't catch anything nasty from their date, Yuri is the man to talk to.

his people. When he got into D'Aubainne University, though, he found himself unable to do any better than average. He graduated with a degree in biochemistry, but never distinguished himself enough from the masses to get the medical schools he applied to to take any notice of him. This doesn't reflect poorly on Yuri's intelligence. The fact of the matter is, Yuri is brilliant, but has an awful time dealing with pressure. In the real world, running a coffee bar, this hasn't hindered Yuri much. While he was in school, however, Yuri was far too unnerved to do well on any of his exams. As a result, Yuri truly envies those students able to work within the university system.

Yuri Petrovski is a happy man, generally speaking. His constant smile reveals coffee-stained teeth. He dresses in a labcoat while doing his experiments, and often can be found still wearing it while at work in the bar. Yuri has a habit of tapping his DAU class ring on the bar while he waits on people. All of his regulars find him to be a pleasant and talkative barkeep. He particularly enjoys griping with the students about the problems inherent in the bureaucracy of education.

Russian man, age 30, 168cm, 80 kg. Brown eyes and dark brown hair just starting to recede from his forehead. Almost always dressed in jeans, t-shirt, and a lab jacket.

Languages: Russian, Al Amarjan patois with a thick Russian accent.

Traits

Medical Research, 3 dice + bonus — Yuri has a knack for coming up with drugs that work. There is a workable pharmaceutical laboratory in the back of Turn Your Head and Coffee. Yuri gets the bonus only if he is working in this lab. This trait also covers general science knowledge, and specifically biochemistry. Yuri absorbed everything he learned in school, regardless of what his transcript says.



The medicines available at Yuri's bar can be as limitless as the GM would like, but there should never be anything as crude as simple jumped or drugged coffee available. Good example drugs include cold remedies, hangover cures, and birth control. These should work automatically, as Yuri has had time to perfect his recipes. More outlandish drugs might knit bone, restore lost hit points outright, or cure major diseases such as AIDS and cancer. These should be rolled for, or their effect should be chosen as suits the GM. (Wears a lab coat)

Charismatic, 3 dice + bonus — Yuri is kind-hearted, and it shows. Once people get a chance to talk to Yuri, they tend to like him. Yuri gets a bonus die when dealing with college students, as he deals with them on a regular basis. (Knows what to say to people)

Entrepreneur, 3 dice — Yuri took to running his own business immediately, and though he doesn't know it, he's much happier running a coffee bar than he ever would have been in a high-pressure medical job. This trait covers the ability to run and decorate his bar, make coffee that people like, and attract repeat business. (Keeps good records)

Chokes Under Pressure, 1 or 2 penalty dice — Whenever there's anything riding on a situation, Yuri freezes up. This is why he did so poorly in school. If what's at stake is minor, as in taking an exam or asking one

of his customers out, Yuri take one penalty die. In a more serious situation, such as when someone's life is at stake, the GM might even assign 2 penalty dice. (Gets flustered in tense situations)

Story Ideas

- Dr. Nusbaum gets wind of Yuri Petrovski's operation, and comes in to see what's going on for himself while the PCs are hanging around. Yuri is, of course, unable to do anything but splutter, and asks the PCs for help in obtaining popular support against the government closing down Turn Your Head and Coffee
- One of the PCs may contract a disease or suffer a wound that can't be dealt with at the Kwik Klinik, and be referred to Yuri as an alternative to visiting the D'Aubainne Hospital and attracting government attention.
- One of Yuri's employees, a Delta Epsilon Theta brother named Jeff Gilmour, has fallen in with the Mr. LeThuy's and begun work on a means of transmitting LeThuy's genetic material via the coffee. One of the PCs might find himself espousing nihilist views and sporting a pot belly, or the PCs might walk into the bar one night to find Yuri himself looking a bit odd . . .

Used Stuff

Type: Thrift/surplus store

Rep: This is the place to go to find used items at cheap prices.

Brief: Part thrift store, part surplus store, Used Stuff has almost anything a person might be looking for in the way of normal (non fringe, non magical, non alien) items. Firearms excluded, of course.

Address: 1210 Offal Lane, Four Points Barrio

Owned and operated for the last 40 years by Nikolai and Alexi Rosvenko, two good natured and chatty brothers from Russia, Used Stuff has a well-deserved reputation as the place to look when you can't find something anywhere else. Need a WWI American infantryman's helmet? They've got them. A 25-pound sledge hammer with a solid steel handle? Yep. Infrared cameras? Survival kits? Used clothes from dozens of countries? Swords? Taxidermy supplies? Used Stuff has all that and much more.

From the outside, Used Stuff looks just like any of the rundown buildings around it. Only a small handpainted sign even tells you that there is a business here. However, once you get inside the place, you see that the building is very large and crammed from wall to wall and ceiling to floor with . . . stuff. Narrow paths wind through the mountains of crates, boxes, and bags of items. Small boxes full of things are strewn about among these narrow aisles, making passage even more difficult. Add to this the fact that many things are labelled only with code numbers and you can see that finding what you are looking for can be next to impossible.

Fortunately, Nikolai and Alexi are more than happy to search for whatever items you need. They will get as detailed a description as they can, then tell you to come back later. Later can mean anywhere from a couple of hours to a couple of days, but they will almost always have exactly what you asked for. Quality is usually good for most items. Prices are fair, but can run rather high for rare or collectible items. You also have to listen to the brothers Rosvenko tell you all about your choices, but this is not a hard thing to do, given how friendly they are.



Used Stuff is open from 7 AM until 10 PM Monday through Saturday. Closed Sundays and Holidays. Cash only, please.

GMCs

The Rosvenko Brothers

Shopkeepers

The Rosvenko brothers were born in Vladivostok, USSR, 70 years ago. At the age of 17, they left home and joined the Soviet merchant fleet in order to see the world. They became quite skilled at keeping track of ship's stores and were always able to find just what someone needed, though their methods of organization were inscrutable to anyone else. For 13 years their travels took them from one end of the world to the other and they had fun, but when their ship made an unscheduled stop in Skylla, the brothers felt an irresistible urge to jump ship. Not quite sure why they were doing it, they set out into the twisted streets of the Edge. After several hours of wandering, they came to a large building. A small sign said "Used Stuff." As they approached the door, two very old men (who were obviously twins) emerged from the shop and greeted them, saying, "We've been expecting you boys. Here are the keys. She's all yours now." As Nikolai and Alexi watched, the two old men walked off into the darkness. They never saw them again.

Still not exactly sure what was happening, they walked into the building. They instinctively knew where everything was and what things were worth. As they wandered among the crates and boxes, it slowly dawned on them that yes, this *was* where they wanted to be, here in this wonderful stockpile of miscellaneous items. And so they are, 40 years later.

Russian males, age 70, 193 cm, 86 kg, twin brothers. Tall, healthy looking, gray hair, blue eyes. Usually dress very casually.



Languages: Russian, English, Italian, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Very Honest, 3 dice — Will never try to cheat a customer with a shoddy product or by offering something more expensive than the customer wanted to pay.

Chatty, 3 dice — Often reveal interesting facts about who has been buying what.

plans. They are told that there is only one left because another customer bought all but one a couple of days earlier. The brothers describe this person in a rather general way (“he was a tall Arab with a limp” “She was a chubby little redhead with a tattoo”) and that is that. However, once they leave, the PCs will be accosted by thugs who try and steal their purchase. Who wants this item? Why do they need it? If the thugs get it, the PCs may have to go looking for it, since it was the last one the Rosvenkos had.

Story Idea

- The PCs have come to Used Stuff to buy some very hard-to-find item that they need in their upcoming

Valentine, Collector

Type: Eccentric Collector

Rep: Lots of interesting things, but the owner rarely wants to make a sale. Unknown outside of the Cali Dump (p. 12) or the mystic s*** community.

Brief: A shop owned by a former angel who seeks to acquire objects with powerful emotional resonance.

Address: 22A Bleaker Street, Great Men Barrio

Valentine's is one of the handsomest buildings in the Cali Dump (p. 12), or for that matter in all of Great Men — a tower of gray stone wrapped in ivy, surrounded by a garden of beautiful roses. Valentine is a connoisseur of roses and has a remarkable variety of flowers; his garden is known to botanists across the island. Some strange inhibition prevents vandals from damaging the house or the grounds; even during Satanist raids on the neighborhood, Valentine's is always left miraculously untouched. A small plaque has been set into the heavy wooden door of the building; this plaque bears the words "Valentine, Collector." There is no other indication of the purpose of the building, which could easily be mistaken for a private residence. The shop does not have fixed hours; sometimes the door is open, other times it is locked. Sometimes it seems as if the door itself decides who to let in and who to keep out. When locked, the door is sealed by magical means and cannot be picked or forced through normal methods.

Inside, the shop is small and comfortable. Light is provided by a large fireplace and a brass chandelier. The main chamber seems to have been plucked from a past time; it has a Victorian atmosphere that is very much at odds with the urban decay of Bleaker Street. Wooden shelves and glass-fronted cabinets are filled with a variety of odds and ends. At first glance it appears to be a collection of antiques, but on closer examination it is a bizarre assortment of old and new. Old photographs and yellowed letters sit next to jewels. Computer disks are stacked alongside military decorations and bowling trophies. The owner, Valentine, has a large storeroom of objects and refreshes the display every few days. Typically, few of these objects

actually seem to possess any obvious value. But each one has a story, and that's where Valentine comes in.

Valentine is a stunningly handsome middle-aged man, a charming Adonis with long golden curls and brilliant violet eyes. He has a warm smile that lights up a room and melts away suspicions or concerns. His voice is mellow and calm, and conveys the deep love he has for the objects of his collection. If one inquires about his past, Valentine will usually reply that he came from very far away and settled in Al Amarja because he meets so many interesting people on the island. If a character has somehow earned his trust, he may tell a different story — about how he was once a "guardian angel" who gave up his position for love. Not, however, love of a particular person; rather, love of Love itself. He is very vague about this past, and will not explain how he came to be trapped by the Pyx (see p. 13); it is possible that both stories are equally untrue.

The objects that Valentine collects are all receptacles for powerful emotions and memories, things that have played a critical role in someone's life. Valentine possesses the ability to feel these emotions, to see the history of an object through physical contact. Thus, many of the objects in his collection are worthless to the world at large — but they have great value to him, and to at least one other person. He is not really a shopkeeper; he will never simply sell an object from his collection. However, he is always interested in expanding his collection, and he is often willing to trade. In addition to the artifacts in his collection, he may have other resources to draw on. He gave the Apothecary to Nikkal in exchange for the ashes of her creator (p. 6), and gave William Jefferson Malloy mystical protection in exchange for the object Malloy most treasured (p. 32). It is possible that he just has the power to make these sorts of deals; however, it is far more likely that he accomplished these feats through a network of connections and additional bargaining. You will have to decide what sort of resources are at his disposal. As a mystical entity he cannot leave the Pyx; however, he knows how to use the phone.



Valentine lives in a tasteful suite of rooms in the building, off-limits to all but his closest associates. Gernsback and Malloy work out of an office on the second floor, accessible by a flight of stairs off a back alley. Valentine has Gernsback and Malloy on permanent retainer; in exchange for free rent, he occasionally has them seek out objects that he has heard about or sensed.

GMCs

Valentine

Emotional Anthropologist

As noted above, Valentine is very cagey about his past. Sometimes he seems to imply that he used to be an angel; other times, his stories are considerably more vague. It is up to you to decide exactly what his history is and what his full capabilities are. He could simply be an ageless man with a multitude of connections — or he could have considerably greater mystical or financial resources at his disposal. He hardly ever leaves his shop; this could be a restriction that he must adhere to, or simply force of habit.

Regardless of his background, a few things are clear. While he appears to be in his middle years, he has not aged appreciably since he moved into Cali twenty years ago. He is a stunningly handsome man, and a real charmer when he puts his mind to it. His greatest talent is his highly developed sense of empathy. As noted before, he can read the emotions and history of an object simply by touching it. He is equally adept at sensing the moods of the people around him. With effort, he can alter those emotions, a feat he uses primarily to disperse hostility directed towards him. As a result, he is well-liked even if few people know much about him. As noted above, the full power of these traits is left to you.

Valentine seems to have a fascination with Nikkal. She has been trying to buy back her “husband’s” ashes for many years, and he has always refused to make a deal. As a result, she comes to the shop frequently to visit with the ashes — and this may be the reason he won’t sell them. There is an obvious basis for attraction — both are ageless mystical

beings with perfect bodies, trapped by the Pyx — but it is unclear whether Valentine truly harbors feelings for Nikkal, or if he simply likes her because she is, fundamentally, an inanimate object with strong emotional resonance.

Caucasian male, appears to be in his early forties. 170 cm, 80 kg. Clean-shaven with long, curly golden hair (and it’s really gold!) and vibrant violet eyes. His clothing varies considerably, but it’s always in the height of some fashion; at times he wears Victorian suits, other times the latest in rave wear. Whatever it is, it fits him impeccably.

Sly

Sleazy Gardener

Valentine employs an aging ladykiller named Sly to tend to his roses. Despite being on the wrong side of fifty and not exactly a perfect physical specimen, Sly still considers himself to be a regular Don Juan. And there may be something to his claims. He is a reasonably talented gardener, but Valentine mainly keeps him around to savor the massive amount of heartbreak and romance that Sly carries within his soul.

As it happens, Sly is a member of the Old Sod’s Club (p. 59). He is fond of Valentine, although he’s come to the conclusion that his boss is something of a fruit.

Caucasian Al Amarjan man, age 56, 164 cm, 90 kg. Short salt and pepper hair and sparkling blue eyes. Funny and ingratiating, with a tendency to reminisce about lewd conquests of the past (with men) or to attempt new conquests (with women).

Story Ideas

Most stories involving Valentine will involve some sort of artifact or deal. The players have an object that he wants, and he tries to make a deal with them to get it. He may ask the players to acquire an object for him, or to make a delivery on his behalf. Aside from such direct plots, he is always happy to tell stories about the objects in his collection; it is possible that one of these stories will contain an important clue to resolving a situation your players are currently dealing.

Veve

Type: Magical supply store

Rep: A reliable source for Vodou or Santeria supplies.

Brief: Just what it seems . . . every now and then, something has to be. This business is located in the Cali Dump; see p. 12 for more information about the neighborhood.

Address: 1680 Dump Street, Great Men Barrio

Back before the Pyx (p. 13), this building was an old saloon; it went out of business shortly after the Macaroni factory disaster. About eighteen years ago, a set of twins purchased the building and converted it into a mystical supply store, catering to practitioners of Sabaen, Santeria, and Vodou. The store offers all manner of ritual necessities; candles, necklaces, herbs, shells, and other objects sacred to the Orishas and Loa. The booths and stools were pulled out and replaced by shelves. The kitchen has been converted into a makeshift pet shop, where sacrificial animals of all shapes and sizes can be found. Under normal circumstances, customers are not allowed to enter the kitchen; customers inform the proprietor, Iruka Rasaki, of their needs and she will select an appropriate beast. However, favored customers may be allowed to come into the kitchen to make a personal selection.

When the Glorious Lords make one of their periodic raids on the neighborhood, Veve is usually one of the first places they try to damage, and as a result the owners have given up on fragile niceties like glass on the exterior. The windows have been boarded over with thick pieces of wood engraved with mystical signs and symbols. Within, the building is lit entirely by candles. An eerie, whistling music fills the store; a sharp-eyed observer might notice that the sound system on the southern wall is actually unplugged, and this music appears to be coming into Veve through the wall it shares with the Post Building. Customers who enter the kitchen will also note that the animals are kept well away from this wall. Neither Iruka nor her brother, John, will talk about this phenomenon; if questioned about the music, they will generally respond “We take what is given and do not question it.”



GMCs

Doctor John

Solemn Scholar

Doctor John is a man of few words. His mind always seems to be elsewhere, contemplating great mysteries. While he has many friends amongst the Drogues (see p. 19) — he is a close confidant of Baron Thursday — he dislikes violence or noise and rarely attends any of the Drogue gatherings. Until he knows someone, he will keep conversations as brief as possible, speaking only to answer questions about merchandise. If, however, a character manages to gain his friendship, he can provide a great deal of useful information. He is an expert on the Cali Loa, both the greater four and the lesser spirits, and knows much about invoking them and what a seeker may expect to gain and to pay. He has also made a practice of studying the history of the neighborhood; while he has not yet managed to tie the Pyx to Aton Saremoeenen, he would be a likely candidate to make such a discovery.

John was blinded some years ago during a Satanist attack, but he has made a deal with a number of minor sticks who take turns acting as his eyes. As a result, few people even realize that he has a problem. You will have to decide what you wish the extent of his mystical abilities to be; he may be a powerful lefty, or his talents may be limited to minor rituals.

African-Amarjan man, age 48, 186 cm, 97 kg. Bald, with a dark beard beginning to show streaks of silver. Prominent nose. Wears dark glasses to hide his damaged eyes. Lean build, grizzled skin.

Iruka Rasaki

Haughty Proprietor

Iruka is Doctor John’s twin sister. Where he is solemn and quiet, she seems generally to be actively suspicious of her customers — are they sincere in their beliefs, or are they just foolish dabblers who have no business meddling in the

affairs of the Orishas? While the Drogues respect her, she does not care for them much; she believes that the gang is more concerned with the sticks of the Cali Loa than with the greater spirits that should be respected and revered. If a customer is a known member of one of the religious communities of the Edge, she will be more friendly; otherwise, she tends to have a cold, skeptical attitude towards visitors.

Iruka takes care of the animals in the kitchen; she is actually a highly skilled veterinarian, and generally doesn't let people into the kitchen because she is afraid that they will upset her charges. She is quite knowledgeable about the different branches of Sabaen and Santeria, and attends services in a temple further down Dump Street, but she is not a practicing lefty.

African-Amarjan woman, age 48, 181 cm, 74 kg. Brown eyes. Short black hair beginning to show streaks of silver. Prominent nose. Generally cold, suspicious demeanor; however, she is quite tender when dealing with her animal charges.

Story Ideas

Veve can be a useful location if any of the characters or important NPCs in your game practice Santeria or Vodou. Otherwise, it is a good place for players to learn more about the Cali Loa and the ways to invoke them, if they can induce Doctor John to share his wisdom with them. Doctor John can also provide interesting information about the history of the area that could lead into other adventures. He may know the location of imprisoned furies, or have stories he could tell about other prominent inhabitants of the neighborhood — although the characters should have to go to some effort to gain his trust and friendship. Iruka's talents with animals may prove useful; if you wished to make things more interesting, she could always be keeping some unusual or supernatural beasts in the kitchen.



VideoSmart

Type: Video rental store

Rep: A reasonably priced place to rent movies, with a wide selection.

Brief: A quisling front using subliminal mind control on the masses.

Address: 900 Bend Street, Sunken Barrio



VideoSmart has only one location, nestled in between a pair of small cafés in Sunken Barrio. The brightly colored storefront advertises, “Best Prices and Selection in the Edge.” This is true, as the majority of video stores on the island cater to more . . . esoteric tastes. Inside, racks of videocassettes line two medium-sized rooms full of wooden shelving. The building is bright and spotlessly clean. At the back of the store there is a door, marked “Management Only. Absolutely No Trespassing.” It is the only unfriendly aspect of the public portion of the store.

The proprietor of VideoSmart, Aris Yannopoulos, is operating VideoSmart as a front for his quisling masters. Behind the door at the back of the store is a large room containing a number of computers and banks of video editing equipment. When VideoSmart receives its weekly shipment of new releases, Aris stays overnight, running videotapes through what his masters call only “the Machine.” The Machine adds heavily masked subliminal messages of subservience and docility to the tapes, as well as strong subliminal suggestions that the viewer should come back to VideoSmart to rent more movies as soon as possible.

If operations at this first VideoSmart location run smoothly, the Pharaohs and the quisling scientists who helped to develop the Machine hope to put more VideoSmart franchises all over the Edge.

Aris Yannopoulos was born on Al Amarja, and grew up watching the interplay of cloaks and conspiracies in the Edge. When Hektor Kiptavos caught young Aris following him once, in

the middle of the night, Yannopoulos was quickly recruited into the quisling fold.

Yannopoulos still does not know the truth behind the Pharaohs, but he is being groomed by Kiptavos for eventual promotion through the ranks. He also does not know exactly what the Machine does to the videocassettes he runs through it, but he is confident that if he is patient and obedient, his masters will explain things to him in time.

Greek man, age 23, 175 cm, 90 kg. Curly dark hair and mustache. Wears a VideoSmart polo shirt at work, or a T-shirt and jeans elsewhere.

Languages: Greek, Al Amarjan patois

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (Trained in self-defense)

Traits

Covert Operations, 3 dice — Since being taken under Hektor Kiptavos’ wing, Aris Yannopoulos has proven an apt pupil in the arts of spycraft. (Walks silently)

Charismatic, 4 dice — Aris was chosen to manage the first VideoSmart location not only due to his obedience, but because he is extremely charismatic. (Clean-cut and well-spoken)

Obedient — Aris has fallen in with Kiptavos because he thinks spycraft is cool. He has no real ambition to world domination, but he blindly does whatever his masters tell him in hopes of eventually being in charge of large-scale covert operations. (Never questions Kiptavos)

Shawn Blevins

Greedy Hacker

Shawn Blevins is a computer science major at D’Aubainne University, and one of the non-quisling employees of VideoSmart. Once, when Aris Yannopoulos was carrying videotapes into the store from the back room, which Blevins had never been allowed to see, he dropped

GMCs

Aris Yannopoulos

Quisling Video Store Owner

the tapes. Blevins rushed over to help Yannopoulos clean up. Aris slammed the door shut, but not before Blevins got a glimpse of the vast array of electronics stored in the room.

Blevins waited a few days, and then broke into the back room one afternoon while Yannopoulos was on his lunch break. As a computer scientist, Blevins quickly gained a better understanding of the Machine than Yannopoulos himself has. While he has no idea what is being edited into the videos, he knows enough not to watch them, and thinks he could hack the Machine into editing in something else. He has begun scouting businesses around the Edge to find someone willing to pay for subliminal advertising space on VideoSmart's cassettes.

White American man, age 20, 165 cm, 95 kg. Long black hair tied back in a ponytail. Nearly always wears a T-shirt and jeans.

Languages: English, Al Amarjan patois

Attack: 2 dice

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 14 (Doesn't get much exercise)

Traits

Computer Programming, 4 dice — Shawn is excellent at getting his computers to do what he wants. (Speech peppered with computer jargon)

Computer Hacking, 4 dice — Blevins has put a great deal of time and effort into learning the ins and outs of as many types of computer systems as possible, and is capable of breaking into almost any machine, given enough time. (Often bleary-eyed from long nights in front of the monitor)

Greedy — Blevins has put a lot of work into getting as good as he is, and he feels that he deserves whatever illicit wealth his skills may bring him. (Always looking for an angle)

Story Ideas

- A GMC who the PCs have befriended has begun spending more and more time out of touch with the party. Eventually, the PCs check on her, only to find her dead, surrounded by videotapes she HAD to watch, right up until the bitter end. This would be a good way to introduce the PCs to the Pharaoh conspiracy.
- A local establishment has begun stealing all of the customers from one of the PCs' hangouts. Investigation



reveals that the management of the offending business has made a "deal" with Shawn Blevins at VideoSmart.

The Waste Land

Type: Private bathroom

Rep: None.

Brief: A typical bathroom in a private residence, housing a very atypical feline.

Address: Any location convenient to the plot

The Waste Land is a simple bathroom that can be easily placed in any residence, particularly one whose management would be unfriendly to pets. The Edge is filled with weird conspiracies, and the Waste Land contains the single member of one of the more obscure power groups on the island.

Eliot is fiendish. Eliot is ingenious. His destined followers are legion: they lurk in every alleyway, unobserved and unchallenged as they gather information. A criminal mastermind of immense psychic power, Eliot is prepared to lead his minions in their conquest of Al Amarja for the greater glory of his entire species. Humanity will tremble before his power — but first his owner has to let him out of the bathroom.

Eliot is an extraordinary cat trapped in an ordinary bathroom. When Eliot's owner found him, Eliot was a tiny ball of orange fuzz and skin. The kindly owner rescued the poor kitten and nursed him back to health. He named the little creature Eliot in honor of the poet. Unfortunately, the constraints of the owner's job and small residence required the young cat to spend much of his time alone as he grew up. If Eliot were a normal cat, this would have been messy and inconvenient. However, Eliot is no normal cat. The progeny of a lost psi-cat (see *It Waits...*, pp. 11-12) and a stray tabby with strong extraterrestrial heritage, Eliot acquired exceptional psychic powers, human-level intelligence, and a nearly-human understanding of reality.

Like every extraterrestrial cat, Eliot possesses an instinctive desire to be worshipped by other sentient life forms. Eliot has watched a great deal of television, and is aware of the outside world, some of Al Amarja's conspiracies, and the existence of other cats. He knows that he is a prince among cats, destined to rule the feline masses. However, leaving his cozy apartment frightens him. Eliot enjoys the attention of his "owner," but has discovered that

his owner is not fully susceptible to his psychic powers. What Eliot really needs is a pool of human servitors willing to bring him cats that he can dominate. To that end, Eliot waits in the Waste Land, preparing for the day a vulnerable human enters his lair and lets him begin his conquest of the world.



GMCs

Eliot

Lord of the Waste Land

Eliot is a small red cat with shaggy fur, barely more than a kitten. However, he possesses the instincts of his alien ancestors, and demands the subservience of inferior beings. He considers the Waste Land, the bathroom he spends most of his time in, to be his palace. As such, he expects a show of servility from all who enter it. Those who do not submit to his authority are ruthlessly attacked with his small but sharp claws.

Maine Coon male cat, age 1, 5 kg. A small red tabby cat with shaggy fur and a mean temper.

Languages: understands (but does not speak) English and Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice, x0.5 damage with claws and bite

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 6 (small)

Psychic Pool: 9 shots

Traits

Violent, 3 dice — A year of life in a bathroom has converted Eliot in a lean, mean freedom-fighting machine. Unfortunately, as a small cat, Eliot is not particularly menacing. (Sharp claws)

Psychic Feline, 3* dice — Eliot is an atavistic throwback to the original alien cat stock that invaded northeastern Africa millennia ago. As such, he can draw upon the psychic powers of his ancestors to detect psychic and magical phenomena, and to identify individuals capable of generating such phenomena. He can also attempt to psychologically dominate humans into fulfilling his desires. Eliot gets a

bonus die when attempting to psychically dominate artists or cat lovers. (Attacks everything that enters his lair)

Cat Dominance, 2* dice — Eliot can scan the minds of other cats with eye contact, and implant psychic commands into their minds. These commands may take effect immediately, or may trigger at a later date. (Makes other cats act weirder)

No Hands — Like so many members of the animal kingdom, Eliot lacks prehensile digits. In particular, this absence of an opposable thumb prevents him from doing such things as opening doors, firing guns, or typing his manifesto on his owner's keyboard. (He's a cat)

Story Ideas

Most encounters with Eliot should begin when a PC intrudes upon the Waste Land. In general, players will become suspicious if the GM suggests their character needs to go to the bathroom, so it's easier to work the Waste Land in when a PC has made a mess and needs to clean it up. In the bathroom, Eliot attacks the PC and then attempts to psychically dominate him into bringing Eliot a legion of feline minions.

- HyperGen Corporation (see *It Waits...*, p. 5) would be very interested in having access to Eliot, were they to find out about him. PCs might be hired to catnap Eliot, or find themselves forced to defend the cat against the company's nefarious schemes.
- If Eliot succeeds in accessing the outside world and constructing a functioning conspiracy, his ability to take advantage of a novel flavor of burger (cats) will likely grant him some success. He would begin by converting the Waste Land into a place of worship. From there, Eliot could easily tap into the island's masses of cat-loving New Age dupes to accumulate more human henchmen. His long-term goals are undefined, but he is likely to quickly butt heads with the Movers and particularly the Pharaohs, who will remember their ancient war with the cats of Bubastis.
- The Waste Land is an homage to the poet T.S. Eliot and his collection *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. This set of poems contains many other ideas on making cats a nefarious conspiracy with their own unfathomable goals.

Cats

Cats are not like other creatures. Anyone who has spent any time with a cat has realized this. Dogs, birds, and even reptiles react to humans in predictable patterns that generally are true from one individual creature to another. Cats do not. In fact, cats as a species defy every logical expectation, and generally behave in a fashion that cannot be predicted or even properly understood. Given these facts, there is only one explanation: cats are aliens from another world.

Al Amarjan xenobiologists believe that alien cats first arrived on Earth before the rise of ancient Egyptian civilization. Most experts suspect that the colony ship that crashed on Earth was a single refugee ship from a dying interstellar civilization, explaining its relatively limited impact on human history. Extraterrestrial cats were powerful psychics, possessing an immense intelligence that was entirely alien to human understanding. They interbred with the native population of ur-cats, and slowly established their dominance over humanity. The pinnacle of cat culture occurred when they established a cat-ruled civilization in ancient Egypt, based around the city of Bubastis. Inevitably, the burgeoning cat dominion attracted the attention of the Pharaohs. After decades of bloody warfare, the Pharaohs broke the power of Bubastis and scattered the cats across the world.

To avoid the Pharaohs, the cats continued to interbreed with native ur-cats. Many of the children of these unions lacked the full intelligence of their progenitors, but possessed some of the psychic sensitivity and alien nature of the breed. Over the centuries, the extraterrestrial cat genes have spread through the breed, producing today's modern cat.

Understanding the alien heritage of the cat species makes comprehending modern cat psychology much easier. Most importantly, all cats have the potential to express psychic powers. Two psychic traits are particularly common among modern cats: psychic sensitivity, and psychic domination. Most cats are psychically sensitive, and can detect psychic emanations (including magic) in their environment. Some cats find psychic emanations terrifying, while others are drawn to them like catnip. Psychic domination is a rarer trait among

modern cats. This fringe power allows cats to dominate the humans around them, convincing humans that the welfare of the cat is their most important concern. Kittens nearly always express this power, but it generally fades with maturation. Artists are particularly susceptible to domination, explaining the widespread influence of cat-kind on modern culture. Fortunately, most cats only use this ability to get attention and food.

Finally, all cats are crazy, although the degree of madness depends upon the strength of their extraterrestrial heritage. Crazier cats are more likely to possess strong alien heritages and have psychic powers. Occasionally, an atavistic cat will be born with full access to the psychic powers of its alien ancestors. When such a cat appears, many conspiracies will move mountains to gain access to it.

When creating a random cat, roll a die and consult the following tables to discover its degree of alien heritage. Better yet, just look at the tables and decide what will be most interesting to the current plot.

Craziness

1. **Sane:** The cat runs from threats. Subtract one when rolling on the next two tables.
2. **Shaky:** The cat runs from everything.
3. **Dubious:** Inconvenient things, like sitting in the highest point in a room, will fascinate the cat.
4. **Disturbed:** Annoying things, like walking on people and sharpening claws on prized possessions, will fascinate the cat.
5. **Crazed:** The cat instinctively recalls the glory of its heritage. It will expect to be worshipped at all times, and will show catlike displeasure when ignored.
6. **Frothing:** The alien genes are strong in this one. The cat genuinely recalls its glorious heritage, and expects to be worshipped at all times. If ignored, it will show a malicious intelligence in expressing its displeasure. Add one when rolling on the next two tables.

Psychic Sensitivity

This trait allows cats to detect psychic and magical phenomena. Cats are blind to fringe technology, and will not detect fringe powers based on science.

- 0 to 1. The cat is unaware of psychic phenomena.
2. The cat is aware of active use of psychic power, and is terrified by it. Characters using fringe powers will trigger a hissing, spitting retreat.
3. The cat is aware of the active use of psychic power, and is angered by it. Characters using fringe powers will be attacked.
4. The cat is aware of the active use of psychic power, and is enthralled by it. Characters using fringe powers will be tailed continuously by the cat.
5. The cat is aware of the potential for psychic power, and is terrified by it. Characters with fringe powers will trigger a hissing, spitting retreat.
- 6+. The cat is aware of the potential for psychic power, and is enthralled by it. Characters with fringe powers will be tailed continuously by the cat.

Psychic Domination

This trait allows cats to force humans to comply with their wishes. Generally, cats wish for food and attention. Not every human is susceptible to this trait; cat lovers and artists, in particular, are open to cat psychic domination. Cats can identify cat haters, and sense that these individuals are immune to domination. On the other hand, humans with cat allergies have developed psychic immunity to cat domination, but cats still perceive them as susceptible to their influence. This strange blind spot in cat perception explains the feline fascination with humans who are allergic to them.

When rolling on this table, consider the result to be two higher while the cat is a kitten. When attempting to dominate a cat lover or artist, cats using Psychic Domination get a bonus die.

- 0 to 3. The cat is incapable of psychically dominating humanity.
4. The cat has a negligible ability to dominate humans. People find it cute.
5. The cat has one die of Psychic Domination. If it rolls higher than a human's willpower trait, the human will attempt to comply with the cat's wishes.
6. The cat has two dice of Psychic Domination. If it rolls higher than a human's willpower trait, the human will attempt to comply with the cat's wishes.
- 7+. The cat has three dice of Psychic Domination. If it rolls higher than a human's willpower trait, the human will attempt to comply with the cat's wishes.

The Wind Farm

Type: Haunted Windmills

Rep: A spooky place on the edge of the Edge.

Brief: An eerie location that could be used in a number of different ways.

Address: 32 Victory Highway (Visible from Victory Highway and Freedom Road)



A few decades ago, D'Aubainne Power and Electric set up a massive field of windmills designed to transform the Mediterranean breezes into turbine-generated electricity. No one knows whether this effort has paid off, but the windmills remain, sealed behind a high fence topped with razor wire. Over the years dozens of stories have cropped up around "the Farm." Some say that it actually is a front designed to hide a network of satellite dishes or some other secret government project. Some talk about the pubes who supposedly never returned after entering the Farm on a dare. These stories often point out the apparent bloodstains on the blades of many of the windmills, though the skeptics say that the stains are more likely the remains of unfortunate birds.

But perhaps some of these theories are true. Perhaps the Wind Farm is building up power for *something*. Just stand by the fence and listen to the eerie howl of the wind being torn into thousands of pieces and let your imagination roam . . .

The Wind Farm is intended to be a mystery — a disturbing location that the characters may pass from time to time, or hear disturbing stories about. As a result, the truth behind the stories will not be provided here — all we will give you is additional possibilities. You will have to decide what you wish to do with the Wind Farm, what will best fit into your campaign.

The Farm itself covers the space of a few square miles. The surrounding area is barren and uninhabited. An observation tower sits in the center of the field; observers never see any lights in the tower, but occasionally indistinct figures can be seen within. Inquiries to DP&E concerning the Wind Farm are met with a polite stone wall; players with skill at espionage may uncover records stating that the pro-

ject was abandoned, but there may be evidence that these documents are clever fakes.

What is the true purpose of the Wind Farm? Consider these possibilities:

- The Wind Farm is the surface manifestation of a top secret government project — a biomechanical entity that is slowly spreading its roots across the island. The energy generated by the windmills powers its expansion. As it expands across the Edge, it will tap into electronic systems, allowing the government to seize control of these systems at will. An alternate idea is that the device is simply a weapon designed by the Center for Paranormal Control to counter the growth of the Tangle (p. 86); either way, the Tangle and the Wind Farm would be natural enemies.
- A Gladstein Cell is using the Wind Farm to build up power for some nefarious scheme. The Gladsteins have constructed a base in a series of old lava tubes that run beneath the Critica Range, and these tunnels connect to the control tower of the Wind Farm.
- The Wind Farm is a death magnet. It is storing up energy generated by the death of birds and other creatures that stray into the field. Mystic symbols have been engraved on the blades of the windmills, and as the blades spin, the conjunctions of the spinning wheels form spells. A sharp-eared character might actually be able to hear the wind whispering the words of the spell. If you take this option, you will have to decide who is drawing on the power of the Farm. The Hermetic Movers? Sir Arthur Compton? Or some other sorcerer of your own devising? In addition to a vast reserve of mystical energy, the Farm may actually grant control over the wind itself . . .
- The whole field is actually the protrusion of an alien entity; it made a deal with Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne, exchanging technology for a place to regenerate. What will happen when it is fully healed?
- The Sommerites have realized that the windmills are sort of an amplifying device, so they want Karla to perform at the base of the Critica Range and blow the

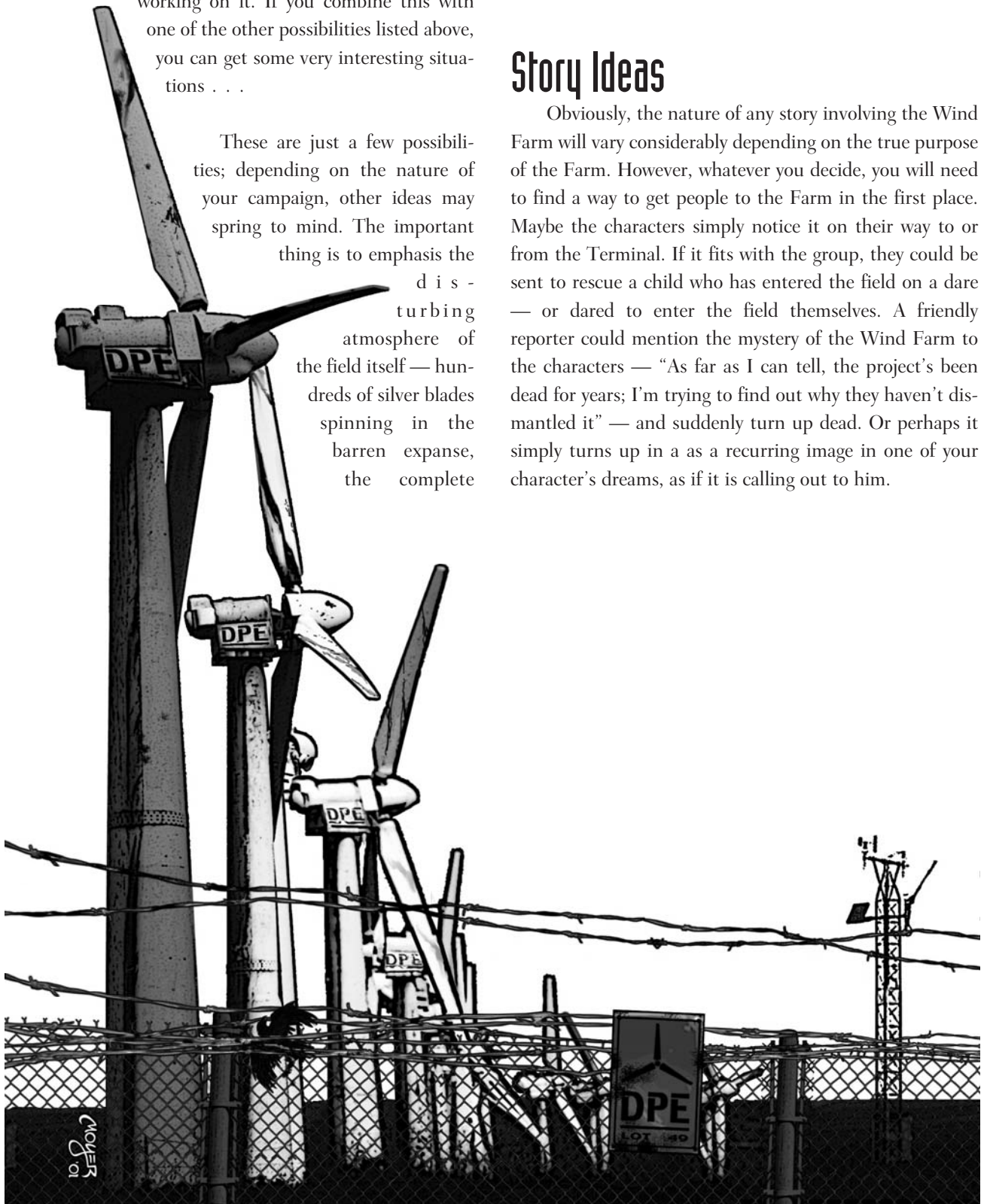
vibes to the Edge. Of course, they'll need to get the windmills to turn backwards somehow, but they're working on it. If you combine this with one of the other possibilities listed above, you can get some very interesting situations . . .

These are just a few possibilities; depending on the nature of your campaign, other ideas may spring to mind. The important thing is to emphasize the disturbing atmosphere of the field itself — hundreds of silver blades spinning in the barren expanse, the complete

lack of life, the strange stains on the blades and the concrete. Is that a scream, or is it just the wind?

Story Ideas

Obviously, the nature of any story involving the Wind Farm will vary considerably depending on the true purpose of the Farm. However, whatever you decide, you will need to find a way to get people to the Farm in the first place. Maybe the characters simply notice it on their way to or from the Terminal. If it fits with the group, they could be sent to rescue a child who has entered the field on a dare — or dared to enter the field themselves. A friendly reporter could mention the mystery of the Wind Farm to the characters — “As far as I can tell, the project's been dead for years; I'm trying to find out why they haven't dismantled it” — and suddenly turn up dead. Or perhaps it simply turns up in a as a recurring image in one of your character's dreams, as if it is calling out to him.



Yesterday's News



Type: News Clippings Service

Rep: A respectable business — information is power, and worth the price.

Brief: A clippings service offering ongoing or on-demand coverage of individuals, businesses, events, etc. For an extra fee, the Conspiracy Machine will generate possible connections between a subject and known conspiracies at large in Al Amarja.

Address: 126 Solomon Street, Golden Barrio

Image is everything, and the primary creator of image is the media — those patronizing Yesterday's News know this, and trust this service to provide them with an accurate representation of their own media image. On the other hand, the media is also the great destroyer of role models, monopolies, and comfortable dictatorships, as public opinion can shift to favor another in a matter of hours — and so, many clients use Yesterday's News to keep tabs on their competitors, as well. In either instance, Yesterday's News provides up-to-date info on whatever subject is provided to them, compiling relevant material from newspaper, magazine, television, and radio sources into a convenient report delivered twice daily either electronically or via special courier. Gone are the days of a legion of young women scouring the dailies with scissors in hand; today's clippings service employs a more modern method. Yesterday's News is more computer lab than sweatshop: dozens of machines work continuously at processing a constant stream of data. Most customers have never entered the building, which consequently isn't designed to impress the clientele, although there is a small front counter to handle "drop-ins." Indeed, those enjoying a bit of notoriety (such as Sir Arthur Compton and Her Exaltedness) use this service primarily because of the privacy it affords; they're assured that their names and the subjects they are interested in will remain confidential, locked up tight in Yesterday's News' database. Rates are as follows:

- **Ongoing Reports:** \$100 per week per subject, 2 reports daily, for a minimum of 1 month. Billed monthly.

(Most regular clients have multiple subjects specified.)

- **On Demand:** \$300 per one-time report on one subject, guaranteed compiled within 30 minutes if you

show up, call, fax, or email during business hours. If faxed, emailed, or left on answering service any other time, you can expect the report by 7 AM or 5 PM, whichever comes first. If it's an emergency, you can page the proprietor (Jean Lumiere), but it will cost a significant amount extra. Cash and all major credit cards are accepted. (No checks.) No guarantee on amount or quality of content (if any).

Hours are 6-8 AM and 4-6 PM daily, including weekends (Jean only shows up to be sure the reports go out smoothly, and to check that the computers are functioning properly.) A guard from Strictly Business Security strolls by on his rounds about once an hour, 24 hours a day. There is also an electronic security system installed on all the windows and doors, which alerts both Strictly Business and the Golden Knights of any intruders. Also, passwords are required to use any of the computers, including the one obviously devoted to accounting and such, which is located behind the front counter. Jean is the only one who knows the password, but the same password is assigned to all the computers — she's forgotten multiple passwords before, and isn't interested in having to break into her own computer system again. There are no magical or psychic defenses.

A service taken advantage of much less frequently is a specialty report generated by the Conspiracy Machine. The machine processes the recent activities of a given subject, comparing them to the suspected movements of known (i.e., publicized) conspiracies, factions, gangs, "secret" societies, and other groups of dubious intent. It then extrapolates possible connections between them, many times even coming up with convoluted motivations for these alliances. The report itself often involves hundreds of pages of tenuous connections (if you try hard enough, you can find a connection between almost any two people/groups/inanimates), the most probable links being the first in the report. But sometimes what it spews out

The following technique, which GMs can use to generate Conspiracy Machine reports, reflects it's sub-random origin:

Establishment

First, roll 2 dice — designating one of the dice the 1s place and the other the 10s place — to locate an establishment at your service. (Page numbers refer to this book. No page number or book title specified means the person/place/group is in the OTE rulebook.)

11. D'Aubainne International Airport
12. Bitter & Herb's
13. Chrome Dome
14. Sad Mary's Bar & Girl
15. Sarah's Teahouse
16. Sequins
21. Temple of the Divine Experience
22. Turn Your Head and Coffee (p. 89)
23. Midas Hotel (*Friend or Foe?*)
24. Regal Games & Books (*Friend or Foe?*)
25. Swaps
26. The Brink
31. The House of Strauss (p. 42)
32. Norms (p. 55)
33. The Egress Reading Room (p. 27)
34. Clark's Cafe (*Friend or Foe?*)
35. E-Z Sleep
36. The Apothecary (p. 6)
41. Deadville (*It Waits...*)
42. D'Aubainne University
43. First School of True Sensation
44. D'Aubainne Museum of Modern Life
45. The Haunted House (p. 37)
46. Sylvan Pines Sanitarium (*Welcome to Sylvan Pines*)
51. The Marzipan Gallery (p. 48)
52. Al Amarja Hall of Records (*Friend or Foe?*)
53. Morphine (p. 51)
54. Winds of Change
55. Pike's Diner (p. 62)
56. E-Z Sleep
61. The Post Building (p. 65)
62. The Scarlet Palace (*Wildest Dreams*)
63. Bienvenidos Hotel
64. Deep Blue Sea (*The Myth of Self*)
65. Darkling Bros. Diversions & House of Grotesques (*Forgotten Lives*)
66. The Wind Farm (p. 102)

Individual

Now, roll 2 six siders again to find an individual involved in the scheme.

11. Dmitri Vatsavos
12. Monique D'Aubainne
13. Sir Arthur Compton
14. Dr. Nusbaum
15. Angela Reyes
16. Molly, Queen-Mother of Baboons
21. Kamorro N'Duban
22. Havani Shagasemi
23. Portia
24. Shania Raimondi
25. Constance D'Aubainne
26. Hans Knudson
31. Cheryl D'Aubainne
32. Clyde Throckmorton
33. Claus Brinker
34. Avan Bloodlord
35. Lydia Goodman
36. Haraki Sumanoto
41. Mr. Tramh LeThuys
42. Moritz Vetter
43. Dr. Chris Seversen
44. Islam Petri, Reporter for Al Amarja Today
45. Madame Vylaska
46. Cyril Doros
51. Robert "Doc" Cross
52. A Reporter for Al Amarja Television
53. Otto Finkelstein
54. C.A. Radford
55. A Reporter for KRAK Radio
56. Hektor Kiptavos
61. A Reporter for AXTC Television
62. Dr. Thomas Rambeau
63. Joy Laughter
64. Cimbuto Cye Anbali
65. Joana d'Fabelle
66. Sludge

Force

Next, roll 2 six siders to determine a force to be reckoned with.

11. Entrepreneurs
12. Mutants
13. Pubes
14. Psychics
15. Satanists

- 16. Sommerites
- 21. Bureau of Health and Welfare
- 22. Dog-Faces
- 23. Quislings
- 24. Aries Gang
- 25. The Cut-Ups
- 26. The Garbage Men
- 31. The Glorious Lords
- 32. The Net
- 33. Otto's Men
- 34. Peace Force
- 35. Sandmen
- 36. The Media
- 41. Big Business
- 42. Tulpas
- 43. Oppenheimers
- 44. Glugs
- 45. Kergillians
- 46. Fraternities/Sororities
- 51. Earthlings
- 52. The Exalted Order of Dream Kings
- 53. LeThuys
- 54. Movers
- 55. Neutralizers
- 56. Pharaohs
- 61. Philosopher's Stone
- 62. Loyal Defenders
- 63. Throckmortons
- 64. The Deeps
- 65. Center for Paranormal Control
- 66. Democratic Guard

Plot

Now, roll 2 six siders to pinpoint the underlying plot.

- 11. An Assassination Attempt
- 12. Drug Distribution
- 13. A Time-Space Rift
- 14. Mass Mind Control
- 15. The Control of the Media

- 16. Religious Fanaticism
- 21. Psychic Mayhem
- 22. Magical Mischief
- 23. Alien Abductions
- 24. Empty Creation
- 25. Forced Lobotomies
- 26. Mutant Creation
- 31. A Financial Takeover
- 32. The Release of a Communicable Disease
- 33. The Creation of a Hideous Monster
- 34. Communication with Spirits
- 35. A Trans-Dimensional Gateway
- 36. A Break-In
- 41. An Apparent Suicide
- 42. Experimental Surgeries
- 43. An Arms Deal
- 44. Latah Creation
- 45. Experimental Drug Treatments
- 46. The Stimulation of Fringe Powers
- 51. Money Laundering
- 52. A Conflict Between Conspiracies
- 53. Large-Scale Bribery
- 54. A Gang War
- 55. A Military Coup
- 56. A Warp in Reality
- 61. The Release of a Pack of Psychovores
- 62. The Control of the Throckmorton Device
- 63. A Family Betrayal
- 64. The Release of SACQ in the Edge
- 65. Mass Murder
- 66. The Revelation of a Terrible Secret

All Together Now

Finally, fill in the blanks, replacing one of the results with the subject entered into the machine:

[Establishment] is the planned location of a meeting between [individual] and [force]. Together, they're plotting to effect [plot], to further their grand scheme of world domination.

actually makes a warped kind of sense. This service costs \$500 per subject per report (Jean knows she's got a one-of-a-kind service here), with the same terms applying as for On Demand reports.

The machine itself is located toward the back of the office, near the two doors to the restroom and storage closet along the rear wall, sitting innocently amongst its more mundane siblings. Unlike the others, it's chained with a

bicycle lock to the table top, but otherwise looks amazingly little like a paranoid conspiracy theorist. Ask Jean and she'll tell you that she took the thing to Dimitri's Fix-It Shop to have him solder a damaged connection on a circuit board, and it came back a bit schizophrenic. What she doesn't know is the role the Cut-Ups had in this personality change: just as Dimitri began working his magic on what was a regular computer, the Cut-Up Machine was activat-

ed. Somehow, this combination of influences infused the machine with enough sub-random energy to alter its normal functions; just as the Cut-Ups Machine processes the words from printed matter into a new reality, the Conspiracy Machine processes information from media sources to unveil, and perhaps even create, reality. Thus, the Conspiracy Machine is actually an example of sub-random technology, and its reports are more than just conjecture — there's actually method in this madness.

GMCS

Jean Lumiere

Disillusioned Girl Reporter

Jean is a native of Al Amarja. She was born and raised in Justice Barrio, went to D'Aubainne University as a first generation college student with a double major in communications and journalism, and then proceeded to job hunt for the next year and a half. Unfortunately, job openings are limited when there's only one newspaper in the country, and she wasn't a particularly distinguished student. After becoming completely discouraged, she decided to go it on her own. The clippings service started in her parents' basement, but within two years she was able to move to Golden Barrio; her family considers her an amazing success story, but she still feels an enormous sense of failure over her stillborn journalism career. The hours she sets herself at Yesterday's News allow her plenty of time to work on writing news articles and editorial columns — she's sure that eventually she'll get something published if she keeps trying, but there are a depressing number of crumpled-up rejection letters in the waste basket behind the office's front counter. So far she's gotten one letter to the editor published in *Al Amarja Today*, and a character piece on the owner of the Den of Thieves printed gratis in the *Island Shopper* (an advertiser aimed at Sunken Barrio's tourists).

Al Amarjan woman, age 25, 170cm, 59kg. Bobbed auburn hair, dark hazel eyes, dark complexion. Wears typical college student garb — jeans and a tight t-shirt. Assertive and brusque, but very efficient in helping customers; seems like she's in a hurry to be somewhere else.

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 18

Languages: English, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Older Brothers, 3 dice — With four older brothers harassing her throughout her teenage years, Jean's learned to defend herself. This consists mainly of wrestling-style grapples used in self defense, and a certain toughness produced by years of tussling. Three of these brothers, as well as her father, are members of Otto's Men, and are more than willing to beat the crap out of anybody that messes with her. The fourth is a Peace officer. (Takes her knocks well)

Girl Reporter, upside/downside — As Joan spends most of her time scrounging around for the one story that will be her big break, as well as running a news clippings business, she knows an impressive number of rather interesting facts. On the other hand, this curiosity tends to land her in situations that she's not quite ready for, as she scours the more unsavory parts of Al Amarja. (Notepad in back pocket)

Self-Taught Computer Skills, 3 dice — She's gleaned a fair amount of computer aptitude from PC manuals and her well-worn copy of *Networking for Dummies*. She's not a hacker, but she knows how her own system works, and how to get the information she wants online. She also has access to all local and international media sources available in Al Amarja. (Computer manuals litter the front counter)

Story Idea

The courier delivering a report generated by the Conspiracy Machine is hit by a car on his way across town. The PCs come upon this accident, as hundreds of sheets of paper are being blown away by the wind. The one they manage to grab indicates that Claus Brinker is involved in some kind of conspiracy, and that one of the PCs is involved as well! If they find and confront Claus, the Cut-Ups will finally be made aware of the Conspiracy Machine's existence and will move to investigate, and perhaps secure, the Machine themselves — the players will have to decide whether to aid the Cut-Ups in nabbing the Machine, or to help Jean keep her rightful property. If they follow the report back to its source, the PCs discover that the Andalusia Dog found one of the sheets as well, and that they've shown up just as the Cut-Ups are attempting to break in to Yesterday's News.

You'll Rot Your Mind Reading That!

Type: Comics & games store

Rep: If you're a comics fanboy or a gaming geek, this is where you go.

Brief: The most popular and best-stocked comics/games store on the island.

Gaming tables in the back room. Hosts a gaming/comics con once a year.

Address: 100 Rose Lane, Flowers Barrio

The owners and operators of YRYMRT are Chris and Terri Yablonski, a young couple from Chicago. They met at a large gaming convention in the midwest when they were in their teens. Chris was a dedicated comics fan who was just learning about roleplaying games and Terri was GMing several games at the con. Chris played in two of her games and they became friends. Three years later, they married. Although both were intending to go to college, those plans were set aside when their friend, Doc Cross, casually mentioned to them that a comics store near his home was up for sale. Running a comics and game store was a dream they had discussed, so they decided to take the plunge. Six months later, they relocated to Al Amarja and opened their shop. Now, five years later, they are happy as can be running the best comics shop in the Edge.

YRYMRT is quite spacious, with the main shop area measuring 30 feet across by 75 feet long. It is well-lit and has two large and unbreakable picture windows facing the street. The latest comics, games, anime videos and such are always on display. Besides the main room and a restroom, there are two smaller rooms in the rear. Both of these rooms measure 15 by 25 feet. One is a storage room and office, but the other is used for gaming, which is held Tuesday through Saturday nights. On most nights, roleplaying is the game of preference, but Wednesday is set aside for miniatures wargaming and Thursday is boardgame and cardgame night. On most nights, two to four games will be running. Terri GMs games three nights a week and Doc Cross can usually be found gaming here at least once or twice a week.



Chris and Terri are quite proud of their exhaustive selection of new, used, and out of print items. They are the only place on Al Amarja to stock some of the more *outré* comics and games. As a result, YRYM-

RT has a large and varied clientele. On any given day, you can see college students, satanists, Peace Force officers, bikers, Sandmen, burger, businessmen, and Cut-Ups here. As might be expected, YRYMRT is also a magnet for every comics fanboy or gaming nerd around. These folks are also members of some of the most interesting and esoteric groups on the island.

Once a year, YRYMRT sponsors a comics/gaming/sci-fi convention called EdgeCon. It lasts for four days and draws upwards of 5,000 people from around the world. It is usually held in the Hotel Kalifornia, which is located at D'Aubainne International Airport.

You'll Rot Your Mind Reading That! is open from 10 AM until 1 AM Tuesday through Saturday and 10 AM until 6 PM on Sunday. Closed Mondays.

GMC

Chris Yablonski

Shopkeeper and Major Comics Fanboy

Chris is a cheerful fellow who will be more than happy to tell you all about the virtues and flaws of various comics, comic book writers, comic book artists or any other aspect of comicdom. He is equally adept at discussing science fiction. His knowledge of comics and sci-fi is incredible. Chris is also a pretty good businessman, which has helped him ride out many of the problems that have beset the comics and gaming industries over the years.

Although Chris is totally in love with and devoted to Terri, he does keep one secret from her: He is a low-level Cut-Ups operative. While he never actively goes out on Cut-Ups missions, he does funnel information to them as

he comes across it. His main contact is Tiffany Trilobite. His code name is Four Color.

American male, 25 years old, 180 cm, 95 kgs, chubby build, short brown hair, brown eyes, glasses.

Languages: English, Al Amarjan patois, some Polish

Traits

Vast Knowledge of Comics and Science Fiction, 4 dice — You'd be hard pressed to find a more in-the-know geek than Chris. (Often spouts comics trivia)

Business Sense, 3 dice — Chris has made a go of it with a shop that specializes in the products of two very unpredictable industries. (Talks about the ups and downs of comics or games biz)

Friends Throughout the Edge, 3 dice — Because of his shop's widely varied clientele, Chris is known by at least a few people in every barrio in the Edge. (Constantly running into people he knows)

Terri Yablonski

Shopkeeper and Avid Gamer

Terri is a cute and rather brash young woman. She is a fan of fantasy and science fiction, but her first love is role-playing games. She has made it her goal to play every RPG system ever published at least once. So far, she has played about 90% of them. She is also a collector of RPGs and related products. Terri goes to about six gaming cons per year. When Terri GMs, her favorite genres are high fantasy and 1930's pulp adventure.

Despite only being in her 20s, Terri has become something of a mother figure for many of the comics and gaming geeks on Al Amarja. She often gives them friendly lectures on topics like eating properly, bathing regularly, and getting out to meet members of the opposite sex once in awhile.

Although Terri is totally in love with and devoted to Chris, she does keep one secret from him: She is a low-level Cut-Ups operative. While she never actively goes out on Cut-Ups missions, she does funnel information to them as she comes across it. Her main contact is Doc Cross. Her code name is Hit Point.

American female, 25 years old, 165 cm, 68 kg. Chubby build, long blonde hair, blue eyes, glasses.

Languages: English, French, Al Amarjan patois, some Latin

Traits

Roleplaying Games, 4 dice — Terri knows more about roleplaying games than even most oldtimers in the hobby do. She can quote publication dates, print histories, writer credits, gaming gossip, rules information, and many other gaming-related subjects without ever cracking open a book. (Constantly talks about the RPG hobby or industry)

Acting, 3 dice — Terri acted in many school plays and other productions from third grade through high school. Add to this her acting abilities as a GM and a player of RPGs and she has quite a bit of talent, including doing accents, dialects, and funny voices. (Often jokes around using accents or mime abilities)

Wide General Knowledge, 3 dice — Over the years that Terri has spent reading fiction, non-fiction, and role-playing games, she has accumulated a very impressive amount of knowledge on a truly vast array of subjects. Although she is not an expert on anything except RPGs, she does know a lot of useful and not-so-useful stuff. (Can have a conversation on almost any subject)

Friends Throughout the Edge, 3 dice — Because of her shop's widely varied clientele, Terri is known by at least a few people in every barrio in the Edge. (Constantly running into people she knows)

Story Ideas

- A serial killer is running rampant in the Edge. He models himself after a popular comic book villain, the Laughing Man. The PCs, who are trying to stop the killings, go to You'll Rot Your Mind Reading That! in order to learn more about the Laughing Man. Could one of the shops regular customers be the killer?
- It's con time in the Edge and EdgeCon is going full blast at the airport. The PCs have been hired to participate in a live action RPG being run by Terri Yablonski. The genre is 1930's pulp adventure and things are getting stranger and more realistic as the game goes on. What happens when the game turns into a *real* Pulp Adventure? And how the hell did it happen, anyway?

Indexes

Index of Characters

- Agnetha Little 9 - 10
 Ahmad Kassim 5
 Apathetics 78 - 79
 Aris Yannopoulos 97
 Ashe Trecavel 25
 Barker, Kevin 58
 Belladonna 76
 Benito Giancarlo, Esq. 34 - 35
 Benny the Elevator Man 78
 Bentley 53 - 54
 Blevins, Shawn 97 - 98
 Broxmeyer, Nikkal 7 - 8
 Calderon, José 11
 Calderone, Roxana 50
 Cali Loa, The 16 - 19
 Cassaverdi, Eduardo 56
 Cats 100 - 101
 Charles, Shady 18 - 19
 Chin, John 22 - 23
 Chin, Kevin 23
 Chris Yablonski 108 - 109
 Colonel Wellington-Smythe 76
 Concierge, The 78
 Crystal Evensong 49 - 50
 Dalassanos, Rose 74 - 75
 Dean MacDonald 38
 Dee, Hotel Detective 75 - 76
 Doctor John 95
 Dominic Giancarlo 35
 Drogue, Typical 20 - 21
 Drogues, The 19 - 21
 Eduardo Cassaverdi 56
 Eliot 99 - 100
 Evensong, Crystal 49 - 50
 Flamel, Nicolas 30
 Flamel, Pernelle 30 - 31
 Flannel, Nick 30
 Gernsback, Leo 32 - 33
 Gertrude Spaetzel 77
 Giancarlo, Benito, Esq. 34 - 35
 Giancarlo, Dominic 35
 Giancarlo, Vincent 35 - 36
 Golden, Johnny 77
 Grandfather 17
 Groves, Star 37 - 38
 Hamadi the Bellhop 78
 Harris, Dr. James 76 - 77
 Hengstenberg, Wolfram 39
 Honoria Midwich 85
 Horses 15
 Iris Winterbotham 87 - 88
 Irita Kantouba 77
 Iruka Rasaki 95 - 96
 Jakov Slogar 78
 James Harris, Dr. 76 - 77
 Jean Lumiere 107
 John Chin 22 - 23
 John, Doctor 95
 Johnny Golden 77
 Johnson, Very 45
 José Calderon 11
 Kantouba, Irita 77
 Kassim, Ahmad 5
 Kevin Barker 58
 Kevin Chin 23
 Lady Pike 63 - 64
 Lakshmi Shravana 46, 46 - 47
 Lefties 15
 Leo Gernsback 32 - 33
 Lethas, Niccolo 30
 Lethas, Penelope "Penny" 30 - 31
 Little, Agnetha 9 - 10
 Lloydthe Bartender 78
 Lorenzo 77
 Lumiere, Jean 107
 MacDonald, Dean 38
 Madeleine Midwich 85
 Malloy, William Jefferson, Esq. 33
 Maria Nazario 77
 Midwich Child, Typical 84
 Midwich Family 80 - 85
 Midwich, Honoria 85
 Midwich, Madeleine 85
 Midwich, Oliver 84 - 85
 Moira O'Toole 67
 Mr. Questions 17 - 18
 Nazario, Maria 77
 Nelson, Nora 56
 Nelson, Norman 55 - 56
 Nembutal, Phaedo 18
 Niccolo Lethas 30
 Nick Flannel 30
 Nicolas Flamel 30
 Nikkal Broxmeyer 7 - 8
 Nora Nelson 56
 Norman Nelson 55 - 56
 Noy Odiakosa 27 - 28
 O'Toole, Moira 67
 O'Toole, Sean 67
 Odiakosa, Noy 27 - 28
 Oliver Midwich 84 - 85
 Omar Strauss 42 - 43
 Patrino Brothers, The 61
 Penelope "Penny" Lethas 30 - 31
 Pernelle Flamel 30 - 31
 Petrovski, Yuri 89 - 90
 Phaedo Nembutal 18
 Piccolomeni, Wo-Ming 63 - 64
 Pike, Lady 63 - 64
 Questions, Mr. 17 - 18
 Rasaki, Iruka 95 - 96
 Razor 40 - 41
 Rose Dalassanos 74 - 75
 Rosvenko Brothers 91 - 92
 Roxana Calderone 50
 Sara the Hotel Operator 78
 Sean O'Toole 67
 Shady Charles 18 - 19
 Shawn Blevins 97 - 98
 Shravana, Lakshmi 46, 46 - 47
 Shravana, Yaasudeva 46
 Slogar, Jakov 78
 Slogar, Sofiya 78
 Sly 60, 94
 Sofiya Slogar 78
 Spaetzel, Gertrude 77
 Star Groves 37 - 38
 Sticks 15 - 16
 Strauss, Omar 42 - 43
 Tangle, The 87 - 89
 Terri Yablonski 109
 Trash 16
 Trecavel, Ashe 25
 Valentine 94
 Vaughn Von Van 52 - 53
 Very Johnson 45
 Vincent Giancarlo 35 - 36
 Von Van, Vaughn 52 - 53
 Wellington-Smythe, Colonel 76
 William Jefferson Malloy, Esq. 33
 Winterbotham, Iris 87 - 88
 Wolfram Hengstenberg 39
 Wo-Ming Piccolomeni 63 - 64
 Yaasudeva Shravana 46
 Yablonski, Chris 108 - 109
 Yablonski, Terri 109
 Yannopoulos, Aris 97
 Yuri Petrovski 89 - 90

Index of Places by Barrio

BROKEN WINGS BARRIO

- Deadly Confessions 24 - 26
 Giancarlo & Sons, Attorneys at Law 34 - 36
 Marzipan Gallery, The 48 - 50

FLOWERS BARRIO

- Fleur de Lys Investments, Ltd. 29 - 31
 Patrino Bros. Barber Shops 61
 You'll Rot Your Mind Reading That! 108 - 109

FOUR POINTS BARRIO

- House of Strauss, The 42 - 43
 Used Stuff 91 - 92

GOLDEN BARRIO

- Numbers Game, The 57 - 58
 Patrino Bros. Barber Shops 61
 Yesterday's News 104 - 107

GREAT MEN BARRIO

- Apothecary, The 6 - 8
 Beautiful Day 9 - 10
 Bodega - Coffee, Cigarettes, Beer 11
 Cali Dump, The 12 - 21
 Egress Reading Room, The 27 - 28

- Gernsback & Malloy, Private Investigators 32 - 33
 Hell in a Handbasket 40 - 41
 Johnson's Divinations 44 - 45
 Mandala 46 - 47
 Morphine 51 - 54
 Pike's Diner 62 - 64
 Post Building, The 65
 Valentine, Collector 93 - 94
 Veve 95 - 96

JUSTICE BARRIO

- Old Sod's Club, The 59 - 60
 Patrino Bros. Barber Shops 61
 Rainbow Mini Mart 66 - 67

SCIENCE BARRIO

- Ahmad's Computer Shack 5

- Patrino Bros. Barber Shops 61
 Turn Your Head and Coffee 89 - 90

SUNKEN BARRIO

- China House Restaurant 22 - 23
 Haunted House, The 37 - 39
 VideoSmart 97 - 98

UNDETERMINED OR OUTSIDE OF THE EDGE

- Norms 55 - 56
 Rose Hotel, The 68 - 86
 Tangle, The/Botanical Tours 87 - 89
 Waste Land, The 99 - 101
 Wind Farm, The 102 - 104