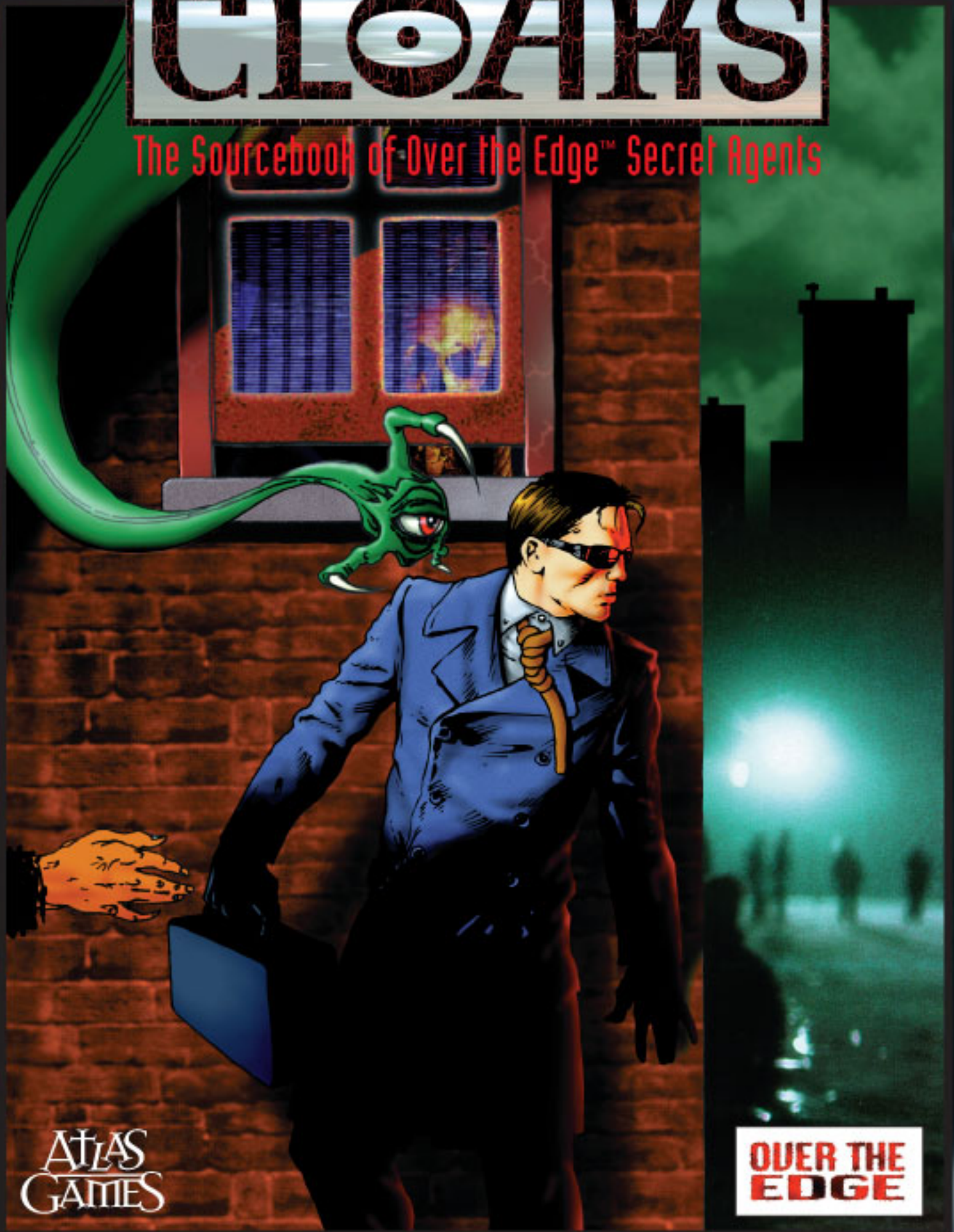


CLOAKS

The Sourcebook of Over the Edge™ Secret Agents



ATLAS
GAMES

OVER THE
EDGE

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W A R N I N G

The text of this product mixes truth, half-truth, and fiction. As with everything else you read, it is safest to regard the whole thing as bunk.

Digital Edition Version 1.0

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Facsimiles of cloaks' records of other cloaks, for use as props.

There are three ways you can use this book.

- 1) Leave it in an unattended suitcase in any public area where bomb attacks are considered a threat, such as Heathrow International Airport. The bomb squad will come to remove the ominous suitcase and find therein this bizarre book. The press will report it as “a handbook of international terrorism and espionage.” Make sure someone else’s prints are on the suitcase.
- 2) Mail it to the CIA with a cover letter explaining that you have contacts with an international espionage ring, and that you can explain the true information hidden in this “carefully coded” monograph. See if you can get a huge check from them.
- 3) Use it as a resource for featuring secret agents in your *Over the Edge™* series.

If you pick the third option, you’ll find the following useful information in this book.

Gadgets and Fringe Powers:

Even if you never run a story involving espionage, you can use some of this material.

GMCs: There are many GMCs of various power levels that you can export to your series, alter to your specifications, and exploit at will.

A Major Plot and Lots of Story Ideas: These show how you can put the above material to use.

CHAPTER ZERO

INTRODUCTION



Two cloaks talking, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

General Guidelines: Ideas for how to run stories that involve or even center around espionage.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

PAGE REFERENCES

There are three kinds of references herein: those that refer to *Over the Edge*TM, those that refer to other products, and those that refer to parts of this book itself. References to *Over the Edge* are by section rather than page number. These references are accurate whether you are using the first or second edition of *Over the Edge*. References to another product simply list its title. References to pages refer to material within *Cloaks* itself.

Since so many groups in Al Amarja are involved in espionage, you should be familiar with the various conspiracies described in *Over the Edge*. The adventures *Unauthorized Broadcast*, *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, “Deep Troubles” (in the anthology *The Myth of Self*), and several of the scenarios in the anthology *Forgotten Lives*, also provide some information about “cloaks” (secret agents) and their conspiracies, but they are not necessary to the enjoyment of this book.

The slang below is current among cloaks in Al

Amarja. Some of these terms are also in use outside the cloak community, especially within the criminal underworld. You can photocopy this list (for personal use only) and give it to players who are running cloak PCs. Otherwise the PCs can pick up this slang as they get involved deeper and deeper in the world of cloaks.

Beenie: A burglary, from “B&E” (breaking and entering).

Cloak: Noun, an operative, a secret agent. Verb, to act as an operative or secret agent. “I want you to cloak for me.” “His cloaking days are over.”

Company: Once the CIA was known as “the Company.” Now that term has come to mean any conspiracy.

Ex-tek: Weird science from elsewhere. Short for

SLANG FOR CLOAKS

“extraterrestrial technology,” but it can also refer to extra-dimensional technology, extra-temporal technology or whatever.

Frill: Noun, someone loosely tied to a *company* used for low-level espionage. A wannabe. The term “expendable frill” is redundant. Verb, to work as a frill, to perform low-level espionage.

Front: A false organization through which a *company* works. Among the Movers it’s said, “Everything’s a front.”

Hole: A secret base of operations for a *company*, especially one underground.

Margin: Al Amarjan person. Short and corrupted form of “Al Amarjan.” It replaces the previous term

“Martian,” which is now considered

out-dated (though it can still be heard on “normie” radio). This term is current in the populace in general, not just among *cloaks*.

Shiv: Fringe power. “Shiv” is slang for knife. Using this term allows *cloaks* to talk about their powers without arousing too much interest in those who overhear. E.g.: “How far can you throw your shiv?” “Keep your shiv hidden until you really need it.”

Shiver: One who has a *shiv*.

Sleeper: A *cloak* leading a normal life, preferably in a sensitive position, waiting for orders from headquarters.

Surveill: To keep under surveillance.

Toy: A special weapon, tool, or device used for *cloaking*.

This chapter provides general advice on running stories that feature espionage, plus specific ideas for stories you can run.

WHY RUN A CLOAKED SERIES?

We all have different reasons for running secret agents, and the way we portray them depends on how we see them. If you take a few moments to think about what you find interesting in the lore and myth of the secret agent, then you may be better prepared to run a brilliant series.

In the Know

When you know something that the people around you don't know, you have power. There's something seductive about this secret power. Everyone wants to be "in the know." As cloaks, the PCs in your series can be in that inner circle of people who know what's *really* going on.

High Drama

While some cloaks can fiddle around stealing trade secrets from multinational corporations, others are involved in the largest of dramas: toppling dictators, preventing nuclear war, or staving off extraterrestrial infiltration of the earth. Taking on the biggest challenges in *Over the Edge* almost demands that the PCs use espionage rather than brute force.

CHAPTER ONE HOW TO DO IT



Indie film production, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

Suspense

Secret agents deal in intelligence and counter-intelligence. They win by disseminating the wrong information, and they lose by buying the BS that the enemy feeds them. While the threat of physical danger is always present, the greater danger is that one will be misled, tricked, or betrayed. A secret agent can never be sure who's on whose side or who's telling the truth.

Toys

As if the miniature cameras, hidden weapons, and armored cars of mundane spies are not enough, the spy who's gone over the edge has access to weirder, deadlier, cooler gadgets.

Breaking the Law

Breaking the law is a power trip. Secret agents break the law all the time. Those who are working for the right cause consider themselves "above the law," while evil or selfish cloaks are simply beyond it.

PC CLOAKS

If you want PCs to be cloaks, there are two ways to go about it. They can start out as cloaks, or they can be drawn into cloaking during play.

If the PCs start as cloaks, you can assign them a specific company to work for. For example, you might want to run a series in which the PCs are all cloaks for Cell Z (though they wouldn't necessarily know it). Alternately, you can let the players devise their own conspiracy (which most likely is an arm of one of the conspiracies described in *Over the Edge*, though the PCs won't know this).

PCs who start out uninvolved in espionage can find themselves drawn into the cloaking underworld in short order. PCs are likely to start out as frills (see Chapter 5). Frill status allows a PC to be involved in low-level cloaking while the player gets the hang of espionage. When the player is ready, arrange for the PC to ascend the ranks of cloakdom.

STYLE : HARD VS. WILD

There are two ways to run a cloaked series: hard and wild.

"Hard" means realistic, careful, and subtle. In a hard series, missteps can be lethal, and dramatic use of force is more likely to backfire than to accomplish any meaningful goal. For players who like to think and who don't mind being cautious, and hard series provides great rewards. When the players succeed, they know it's because they were smart enough to solve difficult puzzles.

"Wild" means more action-oriented. Wild cloaking still involved clues and codes and passwords, but there's room for freewheeling violence, indulgent use of shivs, and sloppy investigation.

For instance, imagine a group of PC cloaks trying to get information from a bennie of Sir Arthur Compton. She's hanging out in an angst bar (black clothes, white make-up, pretentious music, poetry readings, etc.), and she's under surveillance by a Neutralizer who also is after the information she has.

In a hard series, the PCs might have to observe the bennie for an hour or two, all the while keeping an eye open for other interested parties (and possibly spotting the Neutralizer). If they draw attention to themselves, they may spook the bennie or get spotted by the Neutralizer. One PC may assume the role of an angst-ridden bar-hopper who hits on the bennie in order to get some information from her. If the PCs don't see an easy opening, they may observe the bennie for days, waiting to gather enough information to make their approach a certain success.

In a wild series, the PCs most likely blunder into the bar, some of them overacting in their attempts to impersonate the kind of people who would normally be found in an angst bar. While a few PCs find some pretense under which to approach the bennie, others sample the drugs available at the bar, pester the bar's patrons, snoop around, and possibly start a fistfight.

Which party is most likely to succeed? That's up to you. The first party seems to be doing everything right, but not every group wants to play that way. If your players enjoy a more free-wheeling style of play, let them succeed even when their PCs are goofing around half the time. If you expect careful, cautious cloaking and the players want action and flash, there's going to be trouble. I'm not saying let the players get away with anything. (In fact, see the "One Notch Up" section below.) I'm saying know what your players want and adjust the style of the series accordingly. The worst sessions I've ever run have been the ones in which I wanted to run "hard" and my players wanted to run "wild," so I include this section to let you learn from my mistake.

ONE NOTCH UP

Espionage is boring. Is that too harsh a statement? Then let's say that accurately role-playing espionage would be boring. It involves memorizing and using codes, staking out sites of possible enemy activity, tailing suspects, developing contacts, photographing potential cloaks, and so on. Espionage takes time and patience, two assets not found in profusion among role-players or their characters.

Unless you get into real-life espionage, your best bet is to run "mock-spy" series. The trick is to convince the players that they're being clever and subtle without demanding that they be as thorough and careful as a true spy has to be. The way to pull this trick off is to use the "one-notch" system. Whatever level of subtlety, planning, and caution the players are used to, raise that level one notch. It doesn't really matter how subtle they are, so long as they're more subtle than they're used to. This difference makes them feel like they're being clever, and they therefore take greater pride in their characters' accomplishments.

If the PCs usually wander around the Edge getting into brawls, make them put some clues together before they find the right person to get into a brawl with. If they tend to hammer their way into target sites, make them sneak past one

security measure before hammering the rest of the way in. If they tend to blunder into places, make them stake a place out before they learn enough to get in.

Once the players are used to the slightly increased level of cleverness that the game requires of them, you can raise the demands another notch, and keep in raising them as long as the players are having a good time.

THE CLOAK ETHIC

Killing another company's cloak can be a good tactic but lousy strategy. The same goes for capture, torture, and other unpleasanties. Why? Because what goes around comes around. Companies like to retaliate when their cloaks are spindled, folded, or stapled. Every cloak you kill increases the chances of your being put on someone else's hit list.

Instead of slaughtering each other in bloody sprees of violence, cloaks compete on the level of information. They spy on each others' actions, steal each others notes, spike each others' drinks with sodium pentathol, and otherwise compete, but they are spies first and assassins second. Cloaks who know each other as operatives for opposing companies may even exchange words civilly. Why? Because each cloak thinks he's getting the most out of the exchange. Each thinks that he's giving away less information, getting more information, intimidating and tricking the other, and generally doing a better job at being a cloak.

The Cloak Ethic is a boon for role-playing. It means that PCs can occasionally talk to other cloaks. They may be able to forge alliances with other cloaks who have similar goals. They can also chat with their enemies and exchange a few cutting remarks with them. These chats let the players develop a real burning hatred for their enemies. That way the PCs' victories become more personal, and when the time comes that they have a good reason to whack that gloating enemy cloak, they players will appreciate it double.

The Cloak Ethic doesn't mean that cloaks don't kill each other. On the contrary, there's a high death rate in the espionage business. It just means that cloaks take killing seriously and don't indulge in it except when they know it's worth the risks they're taking.

Of course, in a wild series, the players might have little patience for such discretion and they may go after every enemy cloak they can identify. If they prefer big action, toss the Cloak Ethic out the window.

PARTY UNITY

The issue of party unity becomes especially tricky in a cloaked series, but a company can also be a device by which you unify the party.

If the PCs are all individuals with their own goals, then getting involved in cloaking is just going to make it less likely that they'll find cause to work together. A PC may invite casual acquaintances (other PCs) along on a bar crawl, but the same PC is unlikely to invite casual acquaintances along on a sensitive cloaking mission. Since cloaking is a secret activity, it can reduce the amount of time PCs spend working together. If you're comfortable with following several independent plot lines, that's fine. If not, beware of this trap.

If you want the party to be unified, getting them involved as frills or cloaks for a company can help. The PCs will retain individual goals and perhaps even secret loyalties to other causes or companies, but every mission that the company provides is an excuse for them all to work together.

STORY IDEAS

Below are missions that the various companies on Al Amarja may be involved in. Use these as adventure outlines for PC cloaks or as plots that the PCs must foil. These plots also give you a

general idea of what goes on in the underground world of Al Amarjan espionage. Some of these events (generally the more mundane ones) are typical, and are repeated frequently in different variations. The more bizarre plots are less common.

Each mission concept includes a "complication," a twist in the plot that makes it more difficult or interesting. Each mission can be played with or without the complication, as you deem best.

CUT-UPS

See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes* for the whole story on the Cut-Ups and what they're up to.

EARTHLINGS

- An indie film-maker has come to Al Amarja to make a film that could not be legally made anywhere else. The Wise predict that her film will be a breakthrough hit that will shock and captivate First World audiences, leading to increased likelihood of bloody cultural war between the liberal "free expression" and conservative "decency" camps. Some Courageous are assigned to thwart production of the movie and, if possible, discredit and bankrupt the film-maker so that she won't be a threat in the future. *Complication:* The Pharaohs want the film made so that it can be used by censorship groups as an example of what happens when the government does not have firm control over information channels.
- A new grade school seems to be educating its students well, but rumors are circulating about strange and ominous practices taking place there. Earthling cloaks investigate it and take whatever action is necessary if children are being victimized or indoctrinated. *Complication:* The school is indeed doing a good job teaching, but it's because Pharaoh quislings are using weird tech and weird psych techniques. They are gathering information about knowledge acquisition and behavior modification to use when the Pharaohs begin

taking control. The school is benefitting its students, but the administrators are also using it to gather information for devious purposes.

KERGILLIANS

- A hack is writing an exposé on the First School of True Sensation. The article contains no information about the Kergillians, but it does threaten to harm the reputation of the school. Kergillian cloaks are assigned to stop him. *Complication:* The hack writer is a dupe of Gladsteins who are using him for bait. Gladstein cloaks are waiting to capture anyone who tries to stop him from getting his article published.
- A Kergillian has “gone native.” She is a security threat and must be returned to the fold or eliminated. *Complication:* She has been lured into the native lifestyle by Neutralizers, who are planning to find out more about the Kergillians from her. The Neutralizers will protect her.

MR. LETHUYS

- There are potential personality clashes among the leaders of the Mid-Eastern Compromise (see Temple of the Divine Experience in OTE). LeThuys exploit and exacerbate them. Once the leaders are fighting, they will cover their hurt feelings with righteous indignation, sparking off ill will among the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish members. *Complication:* The stakes are raised when the ideals of justice and humility allow the leaders to overcome their personal differences for the sake of the higher good. The conflict that the LeThuys create serves as a sign of the Compromise’s strength. The LeThuys either have to apply more pressure and risk being exposed or admit failure to their leader.
- City Manager John K. Mohammad (see *Friend or Foe?*) is dedicating a newly built, glitzy office building and specialty mall in Golden. It promises to renew the populace’s faith in the

Edge’s future prosperity. Mr. LeThuys try to screw it up. *Complication:* Mohammad is rather more protective of this project than seems apparent or even rational. His defenses are stronger than anticipated.

MOVERS, CELL Z

It would be giving too much away to explain what these folks are *really* up to. Their actions are for you to determine.

MOVERS, DIONYSUS CELL

- A superior Dionysian wants to move into a two-hundred year old building and renovate it. It’s now a brothel, with one section rented out to an unsavory hypnotherapist. Frills are assigned to sabotage both businesses so that the madam who owns the place will sell cheap. *Complication:* The DBI is using the brothel to spy on clients and develop psychosexual profiles to be used against them, as well as your basic blackmail schemes.
- A multi-millionaire is in the Edge visiting with a high-level Dionysian. The Dionysian host is showing his guest a good time and he needs cloaks to run interference and prevent enemies from fouling the visit. Should the visit go well, the Dionysian should be able to broker the resulting good will into a profitable relationship. *Complication:* The millionaire’s body has been taken over by an energy being from Sirius who is living through the millionaire in order to see what the high life on earth is like. It prods the Dionysian into ever more lavish events and parties and makes some rather strange requests (reflecting Sirian esthetics). *Further Complication:* The possessing entity is being pursued by family members who are held legally responsible for its behavior under Sirian law. They have possessed a motley crew of Margins, who are trying to get close to the “millionaire.” If they

can get past the cloaks who are running interference, they use their space-warping psychic powers to encapsulate the possessing entity in a space-time bubble and bring him back to Sirius. The millionaire, once free of the Sirian, is dazed and confused. He remembers everything he did, but he has no good explanation for his uncharacteristic actions.

MOVERS, GLADSTEIN CELL

- Cloaks break into Dmitri's Fix-It Shop and see how he does what he does. *Complication:* Dmitri's security is light, but the latest weird science device creates some real problems for the cloaks.
- A promising oppenheimer has disappeared. Cloaks are assigned to find her, or at least gather information on her latest scientific developments. She may be the victim of random violence, or her latest experiments may have backfired and killed her somehow. *Complication:* She's alive, but she's one inch tall, thanks to her new "reduction ray." While investigating her lab, the cloaks are accidentally hit by the ray and get reduced as well. They need to find the oppenheimer and help her reconfigure the ray to turn them back to normal. Meanwhile, they are menaced by rats, enemy cloaks, and the infamous Al Amarjan hellwasp. (It gets its name because if it stings you, you wish you were in Hell instead.) *Prop Bonus:* Use 25mm lead miniatures to represent the characters. This is the *actual size* of the PCs now, so pens, knives, tools, and bugs can all be used as props that are to scale.

MOVERS, HERMETIC CELL

- A computer programmer and magician is distilling certain magical formulas down to a few simple steps, making magic easier to learn and

practice. Cloaks monitor her progress and intend to kill her and steal her secrets once she's successful. *Complication:* Other cloaks are after the same information. Either group may decide to jump the gun and kill the magician early to keep the other group from getting her, or they may try to whisk her away and force her to continue her research for them alone.

- Mundane people start demonstrating unsophisticated but powerful magical abilities, which last for a few days. When the cloaks investigate, it turns out that the only connection between these people is that they all ate from a certain street vendor's cart the other day. Said vendor's meat is of questionable origin, and it turns out that he fed these people barbecued rat. While this is a common practice for him, the rat that these people ate had been feeding on magical plants grown by a reclusive wizard. If the cloaks can put all these clues together, they can find this garden and benefit from its secrets. *Complication:* Another rat that has also eaten of the garden is very protective of it. Gifted with intelligence and various magical powers, including the ability to command droves of its inferior fellows, the rat defends "its" garden and assaults the cloaks. Of course, you already know how *big* Al Amarjan rats get, and that they eat strychnine for dessert.

MOVERS, VORNITES

- Rumor has it that an oppenheimer is working on a designer drug that would be instantly addicting. Some Vornites want to encourage him so that they can steal and use the formula. Other Vornites want to stop him because his invention would put Control in the hands of amateurs, making the Vornites' mind-control skills trivial. Two or more sets of Vornite cloaks, each under the direction of a different superior, are therefore sent on mis-

sions in which they oppose each other.

Complication: The rumor is half true. In fact, the oppenheimer *has* invented the drug, and she's putting it to use. Now the problem becomes controlling its use or finding an antidote or blocker.

- A cloak stumbles onto a low-life who proves virtually immune to mind control of any kind. Frills are assigned to investigate and monitor her to see if there's something in her diet, genetic history, spiritual beliefs, drug habits, or other aspects of her life that has erased the Obey switches from her neural circuitry. She also becomes an unwitting testing ground for new Vornite techniques of mind control. *Complication:* The low-life proves a mystery and consternation to the Vornites. She never gives in and there is no discernible factor causing her to be any different from other people. (Perhaps it's true that everyone really does have free will, and choice can never be truly taken away from the human spirit. She simply *chooses* not to obey, and no one can do anything about it.) High level Vornites become fixated on her since she is thumbing her nose at their much-vaunted abilities without even knowing that they exist. She distracts the Vornites so much that they begin losing ground to other companies on various fronts.

THE NET

- Gladstein oppenheimers have developed cold fusion and they want to take it public. They want to enter into a business agreement with the Net so that the Gladsteins and the Net both profit more than if the process were made public and exploited via licit channels. Net cloaks investigate the Gladsteins to see what they can find out about the cold fusion process and about the negotiators who will be making the deals. *Complication:* Cell Z Movers believe that the Pharaohs want the human-mutants to invent cold fusion before taking over the planet. Cell Z cloaks sabotage the process to delay the Pharaoh strike.

- The Nigerians have been moving in on the heroin market, previously dominated by Asians associated with the Net. Nigerian representatives of drug traffickers have been lured to Al Amarja on the pretense of expanding operations in Europe. Net agents are assigned to assassinate some of the representatives and make it look like a CIA hit. (The CIA, after all, doesn't want Nigerian competition against its own drug enterprises.) *Complication:* The CIA is behind the hit, and they are using Net thugs to do their dirty work. They sabotage the hit so that the Nigerians learn the Net is behind it.

NEUTRALIZERS

- Monitor a CPC inspector and develop a simple personality profile of him. (See *Friend or Foe?* for information on CPC inspectors.) This information may be useful later should the Neutralizers need the agent's aid. *Complication:* A supernatural entity attacks the inspector and the Neutralizer cloak must drop his cover to combat it or let the inspector die.
- The Neutralizers have a new weapon in their arsenal, a new device for detecting magical emanations. Once the enemy learns of this device, they will learn to counter it, so the Neutralizers want to put it to maximum use before anyone finds out about it. Neutralizer cloaks investigate sites of suspected astral activity and people suspected to be using magic, recording the readings on the device. These missions put the cloaks close to great danger, but lets them score a victory without truly confronting these evils. Only once they have compiled the readings, they begin using it more openly in their strikes against malign wizardry. The mystic s--- community will find out about the device, but not until the Neutralizers have gathered a ton of useful data. *Complication:* Earthling cloaks follow the Neutralizer cloaks, whom they believe to be quislings, on their investigations. They use

weird tech to detect the readings on the device and make their own records. The two groups share many goals, but they may clash, each suspecting that the others are enemies.

Neutralizers ally with the Movers against their common enemy.

PHARAOHS

- A quisling frill is assigned to establish a relationship with a CPC inspector so that he'll be able to feed information to the CPC. The Pharaohs have found that the CPC is quite capable of handling magical threats that the Pharaohs don't want to confront themselves, and a frill who can alert the CPC to magical phenomena (and be trusted) is a well-positioned pawn. (Since the Pharaohs can't use magic, they're quite happy to see it suppressed wherever it may turn up.) *Complication:* Hermetic Movers are getting information through the CPC. When they learn that the frill is alerting the CPC to events he couldn't possibly know about, they investigate, possibly finding the Pharaoh connection.
- A quisling cloak is assigned to identify local Neutralizers and feed them information on magical threats. *Complication:* The Neutralizers aren't that stupid. They're taking and using the information, but they're also deducing facts about the Pharaohs based on what information comes in. When the cloak feeds the Neutralizers information about a group of Hermetic Movers, the

THROCKMORTONS

- A filthy, pornographic, disgusting film-maker has come to Al Amarja. Throckmortons try to beat the crap out of her. *Complication:* Pharaoh quislings are protecting her and Earthling Courageous are thwarting her. (See "Earthlings" above, for more information on this scenario idea.)
- A Throckmorton with a way with words develops a "Code of Employee Conduct." Throckmortonians take this code, which describes how employees are to act, dress, speak, and think, to employers and sell them on adopting it. The code specifies how the employees will behave on and off the job. *Complication:* The LeThuys develop a stricter code and try to get it accepted by employers. They intend to create strain in the competition between the two codes and to make employees miserable and resentful toward authority. *Further Complication:* As the Throckmorton Device has more and more influence, not only employers but also many employees feel that these codes give them a sense of pride and security. It becomes harder and harder for those who refuse to conform (or lie about it) to get jobs, creating a greater rift in society between the co-opted and the disenfranchised.

YESTERDAY'S HERO

This plot allows you to weave together various cloaks, their missions, and their abilities. It serves as a skeleton on which to hang the other information in this book (though the information is intended to be useful for other plots as well).

You can run this plot at any pace to match your style and the PCs' abilities. The PCs can be directly involved in these events or operating on the edge of the action.

PLOT OVER- VIEW

Bailitsus foh Donn, the glug hero who defeated the Eight Evil Sages, has reincarnated to fight the Pharaohs. Under the name Jean Maumon, he first searches for information that other conspiracies have gathered about the Pharaohs and then strikes at whatever weak points he can find in the Pharaohs' defenses.

Against him stands a quising armed with extraterrestrial technology. If the Pharaohs find out what they are up against, they'll devote more resources to destroying Maumon.

On Maumon's side is a band of loyal agents, plus whatever allies he can persuade to join him.

This plot is ideal for raising the power level of your series. It could draw the PCs deep into



Yesterday's hero, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

the world of espionage and lead them to any of various secret conspiracies. The return of foh Donn could even force the Pharaohs out of hiding prematurely, precipitating worldwide conflict and the end of the world as we know it.

MAUMON AND THE FIRE-BREATHERS

Jean Maumon (né Pascal Fauvel)

Anti-Pharaoh Crusader

Maumon is a mutant-human incarnation of Bailitsus foh Donn, the glug hero who spearheaded the assault on the Eight Evil Sages and died along with his enemies in the attack. (See “The History of Al Amarja” in Chapter Three of OTE.) After spending millennia in the Heaven of Faithful Friends as a reward for his heroism, foh Donn has reincarnated himself into a mutant-human body. He took this drastic step in order to prevent the Pharaohs from completing the task that he had kept the Eight Evil Sages from accomplishing millennia earlier: domination of the world.

Foh Donn chose a human-mutant incarnation so that his attacks on the Pharaohs would not alert them to the glugs who survive, and he has honed the brain and body he inhabits to lethal perfection. He chose to incarnate mutant form, so he does have some innate weaknesses, unlike a true glug, but he is afraid that he would alert the pharaohs to the existence of glugs if he took true glug form. The glugs know about him, and they support him completely (albeit indirectly, lest they be found out).

Several years ago he joined the French Secret Service, and then the Movers, to learn the techniques of cloaking. After faking his own death

twice, he has achieved independence and is ready at last to move against the Pharaohs.

Maumon fights with a weapon of his own design. It consists of a stout, metal club that is square instead of round in cross-section, a round club of similar size with a spike on the end, and a chain connecting the butts of these two clubs. He uses the square club in his right hand and the spiked club in his left hand. In his hands, it does X3 damage, but someone unfamiliar with its proper use can only do X2 damage with it. This weapon is based on the legendary weapon with which he defeated the Eight Evil Sages millennia ago. That weapon, known as the Purifier, is imbued with true human (“glug”) *ch'i*, so that it does double damage to any target that is a mutant form or glug (including “humans” and Pharaohs). Damage is doubled *after* armor is counted.

French man, age 30, 167 cm, 73 kg. Muscular, swarthy, black-haired, bright-eyed. When not consciously making himself inconspicuous, he practically shines with health and strength.

Languages: French, German, English, Arabic, Dutch, Spanish, Catalan, and Russian; some Chinese, Sanskrit, and Latin.

Attack: 5 dice, X3 with weapon (doubled with Purifier)

Defense: 5 dice

Armor: 1 point, clothes made of special polymer

Hit Points: 35 (unnaturally powerful)

Traits

Covert Ops, 4 dice — Maumon is familiar with a great range of cloaking activities and experienced in all of them. (Fishes for information)

Fighting, 5 dice — Innate physical ability and intense training combine to make Maumon an incredible fighter with a variety of weapons, including firearms and explosives (though he doesn't usually use these in Al Amarja). (Glint of confidence in his eye)

Paranormal Resistance, 6 dice — Resistance to any psychic or magical influence. (Air of confidence about him)

Physical Excellence, 4 dice — Bailitsus chose an exceptional physical body for this incarnation. Roll 4 dice for strength, endurance, coordination, balance, and any other physical activity. (Perfect skin, excellent muscle tone)

Natural Harmony — Since he lives in harmony with the world as one of its natural creations (as opposed to a vile mutation thereof), other natural creations treat him as a brother. This means that most animals will not harm him. Dogs, however, have been “humanized” to the point that they are no longer natural creatures, and they fear him as they would any other mutant-human. Puppies and children, however, are perfectly comfortable in his presence. (Seems to “fit in” in any natural environment)

THE FIRE-BREATHERS

Thanks to his remarkable virtue, personal loyalty, and inner strength, Maumon has gathered around him a band of followers, people from various fields that cover investigation and covert ops. They do not know who he is or what his goal is, but they have agreed to aid him, even if it means their deaths.

Depending on the needs of your campaign, there may be from three to twenty of these agents. Furthermore, they need not be all together, so you don’t have to decide how many there are altogether.

In terms of the game, these guys prevent Maumon’s heroism from being overwhelmed by sheer numbers of lesser mortals. They’re also useful as a weak link in Maumon’s plans, so that enemies may be able to pick off a couple of these guys during the course of the plot. If the PCs join up with Maumon early on, then there is less need for the Fire-Breathers, and you may wish to keep their number small.

One Fire-Breather is *Le Couteau* (“the Knife,” pronounced “koo-toe”). A Mover dossier on him is in the appendix.

Description: The Fire-Breathers are a varied crew, as Maumon has recruited people of various backgrounds to work with him.

Languages: All speak French, and each speaks one to three other languages.

Traits

Covert Ops, 3 dice — The Fire-Breathers are well-trained in general covert operations, including fighting. (They coordinate actions)

Specialty, 4 dice — Each Fire-Breather has a specialty, which could include fighting, athletics, security systems, and so on. (Varies)

Loyal to Maumon, 5 dice — Maumon has won their loyalty as only a true human (glug) can. Some Fire-Breathers regard him as nearly divine. (Refer to Maumon as “L’Homme” [pronounced “lum”, means “the Man” in French])

QUISLING ENFORCER

Süleyman Burin, “Saul” to his friends, hooked up with the CIA when they noticed how well he did at the university and how pro-US he was in his political beliefs. They secretly inducted him into their ranks so he could help them fight anarchy around the world. The best part of this deal is that they’ve equipped him with extraterrestrial weaponry that was built for them by the friendly aliens in Hangar 17. (The aliens want to fight anarchy, too.) Now he is on Al Amarja, fighting international terrorists and gun-smugglers.

Or so he thinks.

Actually Burin is working for the Pharaohs, who are using their contacts in the CIA to make him think he is working for that esteemed organization. His ex-tek is from aliens, but there’s a story behind it; see below.

The quislings chose Saul for this job because he is physically fit, easy to fool, and expendable. As the “Yesterday’s Hero” plot shows, the guy walking around with all the hardware is the one most likely to attract attention and get wasted. In addition, the quisling scientists aren’t too sure just how reliable their modifications on the ex-tek is. They don’t want anyone valuable using it, only to find out that it releases scads of undetectable death-energy, or that it blows up if it’s used too frequently.

Saul is a tough character, not something that PCs should just stumble onto unprepared (unless you want to waste them). Instead, the PCs should get a good dose of ominous clues about this guy before they meet him face-to-face.

EX-TEK

In the 1950s, Commander Erz from the League of Autonomous Worlds came to Earth to make official contact with humans. He came to the U.S. and brought with him an impressive array of devices as gifts to humankind. Unfortunately, the Pharaoh quislings in the U.S. government saw to it that Erz and his crew were killed, and that their ship and equipment were stored in a secret Air Force hangar. Since then, scientists who are unwittingly aiding the quislings have succeeded in determining how to use these devices and how to modify their effects to make them more “useful.”

Ray Gun

A plastic “cylinder” 12 cm long, 4 cm thick, and pentagonal in cross-section. One half of one face is clear but refractive, like a reflector on a bicycle tire. An invisible ray comes out of that field, so the device is held like an electric torch.

Originally designed as a cure for cancer, this device sends vibrations that can be set to destroy human cells of specific “sub-atomic frequency signatures.” Used correctly, it can destroy cancer cells while not harming normal cells in any way, since cancer is caused by a change in this “frequency signature” and cancer cells therefore have

a signature different from that of healthy cells. Quisling oppenheimers have jimmied the device so that the vibrations cycle up and down over the range of possible frequencies, creating a “death ray” that burns and disintegrates human flesh indiscriminately. It penetrates armor with ease, but cannot penetrate anything as thick as a wall or car door.

Non-human characters may find themselves immune or resistant to this ray since their “frequency signatures” may be beyond those for which the ray was built.

Damage: Ten dice per round. Saul can distribute this damage among various targets by “spraying” them, but for each additional target he aims at, he does one fewer die of damage. For instance, to hit three targets in one round, he has to give up three dice, leaving seven dice to divide among the targets. He could target one with four dice, one with two, and the other with one, or divide the dice 5-1-1, or divide them 3-3-1, or 3-2-2. If a targeted character gives up his action that round and dodges for cover, then beating Saul’s reaction time (2 dice) means the character takes only half damage.

Range: For each 10 m of distance, the ray loses one die of effectiveness because small movements in his hand send the ray further from its target. Past 50 m, the ray misses the target at least as often as it hits. If the target is in a tightly packed crowd, the ray does collateral damage. (Some of these “lost dice” are applied to the bystanders.)

Translator

Originally designed to translate any language by reading thought-waves. The Pharaohs have jimmied it so that it reads thought waves, reverses them, and sends them back. This causes intense confusion in the target, who is struck by contrary thoughts. The device can only be triggered if the target speaks.

Personal Force Field

Designed to let humans roam freely through outer space, this device surrounds the wearer with a force field that protects him from energy and kinetic damage, as well as providing a barrier against gases. The field even reconstitutes the air, allowing the wearer to breathe for 30 hours before having to let it down.

The field was designed to protect humans from asteroids and other fast-moving space debris, so it makes Saul practically invulnerable to kinetic damage. It stops knives, clubs, bullets, and other standard methods of causing damage. Explosions will knock him around but not even break his skin.

The field also protects the wearer from energies, such as cosmic rays and strong light. Exposed to strong light, the field becomes reflective, preventing the wearer from accidentally blinding himself by looking into the sun while out in space. This feature also protects Saul from lasers and blinding lights, and it makes it impossible to take a good picture of him with a flash camera.

Each of these devices is charged with TNT. TNT is very hard to detonate accidentally, and is suitably powerful when detonated intentionally. Detonators are hooked to a short-range transmitter surgically implanted in Saul's body. Any piece of ex-tek that travels more than 60 m from the transmitter, or that is separated from the transmitter by a barrier, blows up, causing 3 dice of nasty damage to anyone right nearby (and possibly blowing off a finger or two of anyone holding the thing).

Countering these protective explosive charges might mean detecting the radio frequency and mimicking it, or countering the frequency and causing the devices to explode while Saul is still carrying them. ("Live by the extraterrestrial flesh-disintegrator, die by the extraterrestrial flesh-disintegrator.")

FIGHTING SAUL

Saul has been designed as an unstoppable killer. Well, not really. But he's not supposed to fall for any typical attack. If a PC in your group has an attack type that I've not anticipated, then give Saul a defense against it. He's just too tough to allow some David with a sling stone to off him casually.

The way to defeat Saul is with brains and teamwork. The PCs can't get through his force field, but they can still knock him around. Newton's laws of physics still apply, so if a PC blasts Saul with a bazooka, he's going to get knocked back, though not scratched. If they could get Saul into a giant paint mixer, they could shake him back and forth so fast that his brain would knock up against the inside of his skull and give him a concussion. Eventually it would kill him. If they chain him to a wrecking ball and drop him over the Brink and into the water, his 30 hours of air will eventually run out. In fact, they could just rest a sixteen ton weight on him. If he brings down the field, he dies. If he doesn't, he eventually suffocates. It will be tough for the PCs to get him, but they'll be deservedly proud of themselves when they do.

Süleyman Burin, "Saul"

Pharaoh Enforcer

Saul carries a pistol to use in case his disintegrator fails. He's not worried about the pistol causing problems with the Peace Force since his flesh disintegrator will cause enough problems already.

Gear: 9mm automatic pistol, crystal trap, four martyrs (see p. 67), covert ops tools (lock pick, chalk, duct tape, etc.).

Turkish man, age 26, 182 cm, 79 kg. Close-cropped, black hair; well-muscled; usually has a glint of youthful exuberance in his eye.

Languages: Turkish, Greek, English.

Attack: 4 dice

Defense: 4 dice

Armor: Invulnerable



Saul, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

Traits

Combat, 4 dice — Various weapons, including firearms. (Knife scar on right forearm)

Covert Ops, 3 dice — He got as much training in covert ops as in fighting, but he just didn't care for covert ops as much, so he's not as good at it. (Can speak Greek and English without accents)

Athletics, 3 dice — (Well-muscled)

Ex-Tek — Just familiarity with how to use the devices he has. He could never hope to repair them. (Has ex-tek)

COURSE OF THE PLOT

Maumon's goal is to destroy the Pharaohs, and he plans to start with Prem K. Sharma (see OTE). Alternately, you can substitute a Pharaoh of your own design. Maumon hopes that killing Sharma will do several things.

1) It might scare the other Pharaohs into instituting their plans for world domination immediately, before they are ready.

2) It might set off a war between the Movers and Pharaohs. Maumon has ties to the Movers, and his assassination of Sharma may fool both the Pharaohs and the Movers into thinking that a war between their conspiracies has started. Not wanting to be unresponsive, each side may actually start just such a war.

3) If nothing else, it weakens the Pharaohs by eliminating one of them. If Sharma's death doesn't get things rolling, Maumon will take on another Pharaoh, and then another, and so on.

To kill Sharma, Maumon has to find out what the Movers on Al Amarja know about him and then ambush him. The plot includes the following scenes. You may arrange to have the PCs involved in each segment, or have some of the action take place "off stage."

- Maumon retrieves his ancient weapon from a fifty year old cache. The mystery of who

broke into the cache and why can get the PCs involved.

- Maumon captures Pharaoh data from Movers. PCs can be witnesses, guards, or a strike team helping him. The information hints at a Pharaoh's identity and his defenses.
- Mover counter-strike. PCs can help Movers or help Maumon.
- Earthling investigation. PCs can guard against Earthlings or work for them. The Earthlings may even wind up giving Maumon clues to help him get Sharma.
- Confrontation. There are two basic ways to handle the confrontation.
 - 1) Sharma, with his bodyguard Saul, meet a major quisling to implement an important plan. Maumon attacks Sharma before, during, or after this meeting.
 - 2) Sharma sends Saul to eliminate Maumon. Maumon goes after Sharma if he can defeat or avoid Saul.

THE SECRET CACHE

Maumon retrieves his ancient weapon from a cache where it was hidden fifty years ago. Coincidentally, the cache contains some interesting news about Monique D'Aubainne's true history. This segment can get the PCs involved in the plot, though they may at first be most interested in (or concerned about) D'Aubainne's history.

When he was in the Heaven of Faithful Friends, foh Donn (Maumon) met a glug who was killed by Movers in 1940. Before he died, however, he stashed foh Donn's legendary weapon, the Purifier, in a secret niche. The glug went to the Heaven of Faithful Friends after his death and told foh Donn about the cache. Maumon, therefore, knows about the cache, and no one else in the world does.

This event serves as a good gimmick to involve PCs. The location of the cache, therefore, is up to you. If a PC owns a home, it may

be in a secret compartment in the cellar. If the PCs are visiting a friend at a radio station late at night, it might be in the basement of the station. Just put it somewhere where the PCs are likely to be able to be involved, or at least get a glimpse of what's going on. Depending on the location, the niche could be behind a stone, plastered over, or whatever.

Maumon, perhaps with a Fire-Breather or two, breaks into the building in question, moves directly to the location of the hidden cache, opens it, and flees with the Purifier. The PCs may tussle with Maumon, or just see him as he flees. They may be able to kill the Fire-Breather, but Maumon himself should be able to escape.

After Maumon has gotten away, the PCs should have time to find the cache and get a good look at the contents before authorities arrive. The weapon inside had been covered with newspaper, which now lies in the niche or on the floor.

The yellowed newspaper is in Italian, and it dates from August 13, 1940. A front page article includes names that the PCs may well recognize even if they don't read Italian: "D'Aubainne," "Mussolini," and "Al Amarja." It states that "heiress Monique D'Aubainne of France has offered Mussolini an undisclosed sum in return for outright ownership of Al Amarja." When Monique D'Aubainne bought Al Amarja, she had all copies of this newspaper article, and all other incriminating evidence, destroyed. At least she thought she did. This newspaper is one of the very few that escaped the re-write of history, it shows that she bought the island instead of "liberating" it, and it could be sold for \$1,000 or more to the right buyer. (It could also get indiscreet PCs into serious trouble.) You can play out intrigues surrounding this article for as long as they'll last and then get back to the plot of "Yesterday's Hero."

Occult or fringe investigations of the niche may reveal that there is residual energy. (This is the glug *ch'i* left over from the Purifier.) "Humans" are likely to regard this energy as "harmful" or "mutagenic."

RAID ON THE MOVERS

In this segment, Maumon steals some Mover data on Sharma and Saul. This event gets the conflicts going, and gives the PCs the chance to get in on serious action.

The Movers have data on Sharma and Saul, and Maumon has learned about it through Wanda Sebastian, a glug infiltrator among the Movers. He and the Fire-Breathers go in for it.

The location of the Mover records is up to you. It may be in Club St. Augustine (see next chapter), or in a hole of your own design. The records might not be in a hole at all; they may just be well-hidden or well-encoded in a poorly guarded area. Suit yourself. This scene can involve combat, with Mover guards fighting it out, or wits and stealth, with the infiltrators finding their way around Mover security. If you need Mover guards with special abilities to oppose Maumon, use the Sender cloaks (p. 51).

Maumon may, at this point, have the aid of Pardhoti (see p. 56), who wishes to get into the Mover base for his own reasons.

Involving the PCs

To get the PCs involved on Maumon's side, they may kill Pardhoti. The killer then becomes obsessed with getting into the same Mover hole that Maumon wants to get into.

Alternately, the PCs might be on the Mover side, at least at first. They may have been hired as security at a business (a front), or they may have been tricked into joining a fake conspiracy that the Movers control. In any case, they ought to get a sense that Maumon is tough, but since he is there to nab information, not to kill underlings, the PCs are unlikely to be killed even if they are defeated.

The Information

The data that Maumon steals includes the following:

- A dossier on Prem K. Sharma. (See the appendix.)
- A dossier on Saul. (See the appendix.)
- A report that Sharma is coming to Al Amarja in two weeks to meet with quislings.

It may also contain whatever other dossiers and data you wish.

Further Complications

To complicate matters, you can have the "key" to the information fall into the hands of "deeps" and run the adventure "Deep Troubles" at this point (modified slightly to fit these circumstances). "Deep Troubles" can be found in the anthology *The Myth of Self*.

The glug infiltrator is prepared to kill herself rather than fall into the hands of the Movers she has betrayed. She has cyanide tablets to assure a quick death. Thus it is unlikely for the Movers to be able to get much information about Maumon from her.

MOVER COUNTER-STRIKE

Maumon lies low, waiting for Sharma to arrive. The Movers, however, are looking for him. This event keeps the the pressure on.

PCs Searching for Maumon

If the PCs were guarding the Mover data that Maumon stole, their superiors may send them looking for the data (or simply make it clear that they had better find it).

If the PCs have not been involved yet, they may be hired to look for Maumon by an apparently legit fellow with an apparently legit reason, or they may be hired as illicit enforcers. Of course, PCs already allied with (or controlled by) the Movers are given the assignment without as much disinformation.

The means of searching out Maumon are varied, and they depend on the PCs' abilities and

connection to the Movers. The Movers may have been able to get a “psychic imprint” off him while he was in their hole, and the PCs can be given a device to track this imprint. If a Fire-Breather was wounded in the penetration, then PCs may be able to use their contacts with physicians (such as Ahmed of Kwik Klinik fame or Alexandria Bennett from *Friend or Foe?*) to learn whether any of them have treated him. The data that Maumon stole may send out an energy signature that the PCs can track down. If nothing else, the PCs can be part of a force the canvasses the Edge with a security photo or artists’ rendition of Maumon and/or some Fire-Breathers.

Snooping around may attract attention from other cloaks who are looking for Maumon for their own reasons or from Fire-Breathers who are on assignment to assassinate or mislead anyone they find trying to hunt Maumon down.

Maumon is in a safe refuge, perhaps in a boat in the bay at Skylla, in a private home on the coast, or even just in a hotel where he stays in his room and orders room service.

The best that the PCs ought to be able to hope for at this point is to locate Maumon and drive him to another hiding place, maybe gathering some clues that he drops in flight or taking out some of the Fire-Breathers. The PCs may discover clues that pique their interest so that even if their employees don’t hire them to keep following Maumon, they do so on their own account. For risky drama, the PCs may even be captured by Maumon, questioned about the Movers, and co-opted into the attack on the Pharaohs. Of course, they’ll need a good reason to believe Maumon, and Maumon will need a good reason to believe them, or else the safest thing to do with the captives will be execution.

PCs Protecting Maumon

Alternately, the PCs may have hooked up with Maumon by now, in which case the roles described are reversed. The PCs may be assigned to watch false trails that Maumon has left to see what sort of manpower and fringe

power the Movers are putting into the manhunt. The PCs could be assigned to watch and learn or to attack the Movers who come sniffing after Maumon. The Sender cloaks (p. 51) may be assigned to this mission.

Other PCs that have not been directly involved but that are friends of PCs who were involved may also be targeted for less than friendly visits. Movers posing as private investigators or even government agents may show up to talk to these PCs. This gimmick can get these PCs involved in the plot so that all the PCs participate.

EARTHLING INVESTIGATION

With the Movers, Pharaohs, and glugs already involved, we might as well throw the Earthlings in. This event just muddies the waters and gives PCs yet another chance to get involved.

Certainly some of the previous action has caused large enough ripples to come to the attention of the Earthlings. The PCs may be hired (under false pretenses) to find out what’s going on, which can let you involve PCs who are not yet in the action, or direct the PCs’ attention to information they may have missed.

If the PCs are already looking for Maumon, the Earthlings may unwittingly hire them and provide them with some clues. (You know how stupid the good guys always are.)

It’s possible that the Earthlings figure out that Maumon is out to get Sharma. The Earthlings may therefore feed useful information to him. The traditional anonymous phone call or note would probably arouse too much suspicion, but the Earthlings could pretend to snoop on the Maumon, let themselves get noticed, and flee — after dropping an important clue that helps Maumon in his fight against the Pharaohs.

Clues that the Earthlings could drop include the address of an unwitting quisling who could accidentally lead investigators to Saul, a clipping from a newspaper about a strange break and entry

(caused by Saul), or the name of someone who is about to become the target of Saul's attack.

CONFRONTATION

At this point, Maumon and the Fire-Breathers face off against Sharma and Saul. There are two basic ways this confrontation can play out. If Sharma hasn't picked up on the threat, Maumon can take the offensive and attack him. Saul is there as a bodyguard. If Sharma has determined that Maumon is a threat, he sends Saul after him. Only if Maumon can avoid or defeat Saul does he in turn attack Sharma.

At this point, there's no way I can anticipate how you're going to proceed. Your choices depend on several factors, such as whether the PCs have joined forces with Maumon, how powerful they are, whether they have any clue about what they're going up against, and so on. Instead of describing how to end the show, I'll just provide several ideas for scenes or events that might apply. Pick and choose, mix and match, and build on what you find here.

Messy Murder Spree

To make Al Amarja safe for Sharma's appearance, Saul uses his ex-tek to assassinate several potentially dangerous cloaks. A string of particularly messy murders may attract the PCs' attention. A major advantage to this plot device is that the PCs see what Saul can do with his flesh-disintegrator before it gets used on them, and forewarned is forearmed.

The Fire-Breathers Turn on Maumon

Despite their loyalty, the Fire-Breathers just don't have the ability to withstand Sharma's ten-dice "command voice." Sharma can easily order them to turn on Maumon. Can the PCs somehow help the Fire-Breathers resist, or at least keep them from taking out their own leader?

Face Off in the Factory

The PCs face off against Saul after hours in a factory. The factory provides big machines to hide behind, so there are plenty of corners for ambushes and cover for protection from attacks. If the PCs can get the machinery going, they may also be able to use it against the otherwise-invulnerable Saul. His personal force field keeps him from getting hurt, but if a PC in a forklift drops a ton of pig iron on him, it's at least going to slow him down.

Impersonate Contact

Sharma's coming to Al Amarja to meet with a high-level quisling, who turns out to be a plant in another company. If the PCs work for a company, the double agent could be their own superior. The PCs find out about this double agent and can then impersonate him, allowing them to get close enough to Sharma to do some damage. Alternately, weird explosives or poisons secretly planted on the contact may provide much the same result from a safe distance.

Club St. Augustine

It turns out that the Gladsteins in Club St. Augustine are, unknown to themselves, working for the Pharaohs because their superior is a quisling double agent. (See p. 41.) Sharma's Ur-Master ability might be the "secret ingredient" that makes Thomas's re-identification program work. He comes to the club to help the process along, and that's where Maumon chooses to ambush him.

Glugs Rise

Just when Sharma and Saul have Maumon (and the PCs?) on the ropes, a horde of shopkeepers, accountants, bicycle mechanics, and waitresses descends on the fray. Strangely immune to Sharma's Ur-Master ability and oblivious to personal danger, they overwhelm and bring down the enemy, taking massive casualties in the process.

These are the glugs of Al Amarja, ready to risk exposing their secret identities at last in an attempt to save their great hero, foh Donn, and to help start the reclamation of the earth.

Foh Donn's Legacy

Maumon (foh Donn) dies in his assault on Sharma, but as he gasps his last, he tells a nearby PC where to find a secret cache of valuable information. This cache provides the PCs with important data that can help them go after other Pharaohs, so they have the opportunity to carry on Maumon's crusade.

REPERCUSSIONS

Think about this before you get to the end of "Yesterday's Hero." Will Sharma's assassination force the Pharaohs to tip their hand and try to take over the world? You can play it several ways. Here are some possible approaches.

Nothing Changes: Things go back to normal once the plot is resolved. The Pharaohs are too slow to respond to move their plans ahead just because one of their number has met the end for which he was never intended.

Heightened Conflict: The amassing forces do not launch themselves into open warfare, but the stakes are raised. Plans that have been laid for years spring into action, sleeper agents get their first orders in decades, and cloaks clash in more frequent and more deadly conflicts. The PCs get caught up in plots that, in quieter times, they'd never have been involved in. If Maumon is still around, he may continue his quest, picking out a new Pharaoh target. After enough Pharaohs have died, their hand will be forced.

World War: This is it, folks. Captured UFOs driven by quislings fly through the skies at impossible speeds, blasting Mover strongholds with weapons that turn mountains to slag and steam. Banks of meditating Earthling psychics in Tibet detonate the UFOs, and one flying over Peru irradiates the Peruvians with strange energies that turn them into highly-evolved energy beings.

These beings infiltrate television broadcasting stations and have themselves beamed by satellite into the living rooms of people all over the world, who then receive subliminal instructions to rise up against their governments. The governments are now under control of the High Command, operating out of a base in Colorado. The Cut-Ups, however, use the ineffable word-knife to cut the last two letters off the High Command, turning it into the High Comma. As the High Comma, it can no longer command the global military forces of the quislings (and its generals pause, frequently, and needlessly, when they speak). But still the independent military forces rage on. A pot-bellied Vietnamese gentleman taps into secret channels and orders the launch of nuclear missiles, which have been re-targeted to hit population centers across the world. The Hermetic Movers use the massacres to power unspeakable spells that call up hideous and unbelievable creatures from dimensions that can only be thought of as hells. These creatures freeze the brains of massing Kergillian hosts, leaving the parasitic creatures helpless and dying in unresponsive skulls. Kergillian firepower, however, comes to bear on the demons as flying saucers and giant lobster troops come down from the base on the far side of the moon. Elsewhere, military units come under the dictates of various Mover cells, and they spend as much time blasting each other as they do blasting Pharaohs. Still other military units take their own initiative, and platoons of eyebrow-less soldiers conquer cities, where summary executions are handed out to trendy lesbian intellectuals, mixed race couples, and long-hairs. Meanwhile, the top assassins from most conspiracies converge on Al Amarja, each trying to be the one to get final and personal revenge on Her Exaltedness, who had manipulated their companies for so long. The tables turn, however, when the entire island is gassed with SACQ and Monique herself jets off to a secret getaway. There she and her daughters watch the fireworks and draw up plans for the new world being born before them. Once the dust is settled, the people will, of course, need a strong hand to guide them back to civilization.

CHAPTER THREE

CLUB ST. AUGUSTINE



Narwas and Team Tigress, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

This chapter details a Mover hole and its front. You can use it in a variety of ways depending on how your series runs. You can even involve the PCs first in the front, which is interesting in itself. Only later do the players need to learn that there's something behind — or below — Club St. Augustine.

The first section describes the front, Club St. Augustine, as it is known to most of its members. The second section deals with the hole beneath the front. At the end are story ideas involving one or both sides of the Club.

CLUB ST. AUGUSTINE

Type: Private Club.

Reputation: Extravagant and wild.

Brief: A club where sensual mystics and impious pleasure-seekers each think they are exploiting the other group. A Gladstein front.

Address: St. Augustine Way (north of 7th of October Highway, between Cromo Stream and Seventeen Stream).

THE LEGEND OF ST. AUGUSTINE

St. Augustine's *Confessions* recount how he gave up his sensual lifestyle when he became a

Christian. What they don't recount are his frequent bouts of sensual indulgence after he became the bishop of Hippo (in what is now Algeria) in A.D. 396. Unwilling to risk discovery by exercising his sensual appetites in Hippo or Rome, he frequently visited Al Amarja. In fact, he had a home built overlooking the sea to accommodate him on his visits.

Is this true? It's the story that the members of Club St. Augustine tell, and they claim to be situated on the very site of St. Augustine's villa, but it would be pretty hard to prove the story, or disprove it.

GOOD TIMES AT CLUB ST. AUGUSTINE

The club members have dreamed up various activities to fill their time, sate their appetites, and tickle their fancies.

Feasts

Feasts are lavish, rich, and expensive. For the true "gourmand," vomiting between courses allows one to eat one's fill more than once.

Massages

Scented oils, massage tables, and skilled hands make for exceptional massages. Inability to enjoy a massage non-erotically is considered a sign of immaturity.

Drugs

Generally the preference is for drugs that heighten the experience, not deaden it, so cocaine, pot, and blue shock are more popular than alcohol or heroin.

Sauna

The howls of members jumping into ice-cold water punctuate many club gatherings.

Whirlpool

Members have been known to add scented or "magic" herbs to the whirlpool to enhance the effect.

Exotic Dancing

Surprisingly, purists among the Sybarites hire legit dancers, not hookers who just shake and jiggle. In an effort to experience the pleasure purely visually, the Sybarites forgo having sex with, or even touching, the dancers. Mystics sometimes arrange for dancers to follow arcane patterns and use magical gestures in their dances.

Outing

Members invite closeted or (preferably) repressed and self-denying homosexuals to a party, get them stoned on something or other, and then have same-sex members seduce them. Alternately, they arrange for the invitees to seduce each other, perhaps in supposed privacy while the other members look on through closed circuit TV. The release of psycho-sexual energy is astounding, and the Mystics love to arrange this event, when they can.

I/O

Stands for "Isolation/Overdose." Participants cloister themselves in cells for a week, where they eat only gruel, drink only water, see only the dull room, and talk to no one. The release of these members from their cells is the focal point of a party, during which the formerly isolated members now overindulge. For addicts, the forced denial and sudden return of the addicting substance is a big kick. (The PCs may come across members in their cells and think they are captives, especially when one of them kicks at the door and screams for help. The "prisoner," however, begs not to be released, but to be given a cigarette.)

Wrestling

Usually naked, in vegetable oil. It can be a spectator performance or a free-for-all with everyone involved.

Tarantism

Tarantula venom is administered to volunteers, who then are overcome by a compulsion to dance like mad. Feverish, sweaty, and approaching delirium, they whirl about to the very quick sextuple beat of the tarantella. After hours of exertion, which drives the venom from the body, dancers collapse and then generally recover the next day.

MYSTICS VS. SYBARITES

Members fall into two groups: Mystics, who are concerned with gathering and using magical energy, and Sybarites, who are looking for a good time. The Mystics consider Club St. Augustine to be a way to gather magical energy for their use, and they believe they are exploiting the Sybarites by encouraging them to indulge themselves and then gathering the magical energy that their excesses produce. The Sybarites, however, consider Club St. Augustine to be a pleasure palace, and they believe they are exploiting the naïve Mystics by getting them to provide all manners of amusements.

Such a deep split among the members might seem like it would doom the success of the club, but just the opposite is the case. The Mystics believe that, just as creative energy can be generated between opposites such as male and female or light and dark, the conflict between the mystic and material can generate useful energy. They believe the Sybarites serve a purpose that more Mystics could not serve. Likewise, the Sybarites enjoy the idea of exploiting a bunch of “naïve” Mystics. And the Gladsteiners who run the whole show maintain the conflict in order to hide their own machinations better.

POINTS OF INTEREST

No map of the club (except for the Gladstein Hole below it) is provided. However, here are some of the key features found within the Club.

Lawn

A generous lawn surrounds the club, including stone-paved walkways, goldfish ponds, modest gardens, and so on. Members sometimes have open-air gatherings here.

Foyer

A large open area with hardwood floors; loveseats, chairs, and sofa; and small tables often covered with tasty goodies. Doorways lead to several smaller rooms for those who prefer more intimate surroundings.

Dining Hall

A large, long room with an immense table that can comfortably seat forty. (That’s more than usually show up, but if every member were to attend, only about two-thirds could find seats here.)

Courtyard

An enclosed area that has walkways leading to the four sections of the club that surround it. One walkway includes a footbridge over a stream. In the courtyard are the garden and the pool area.

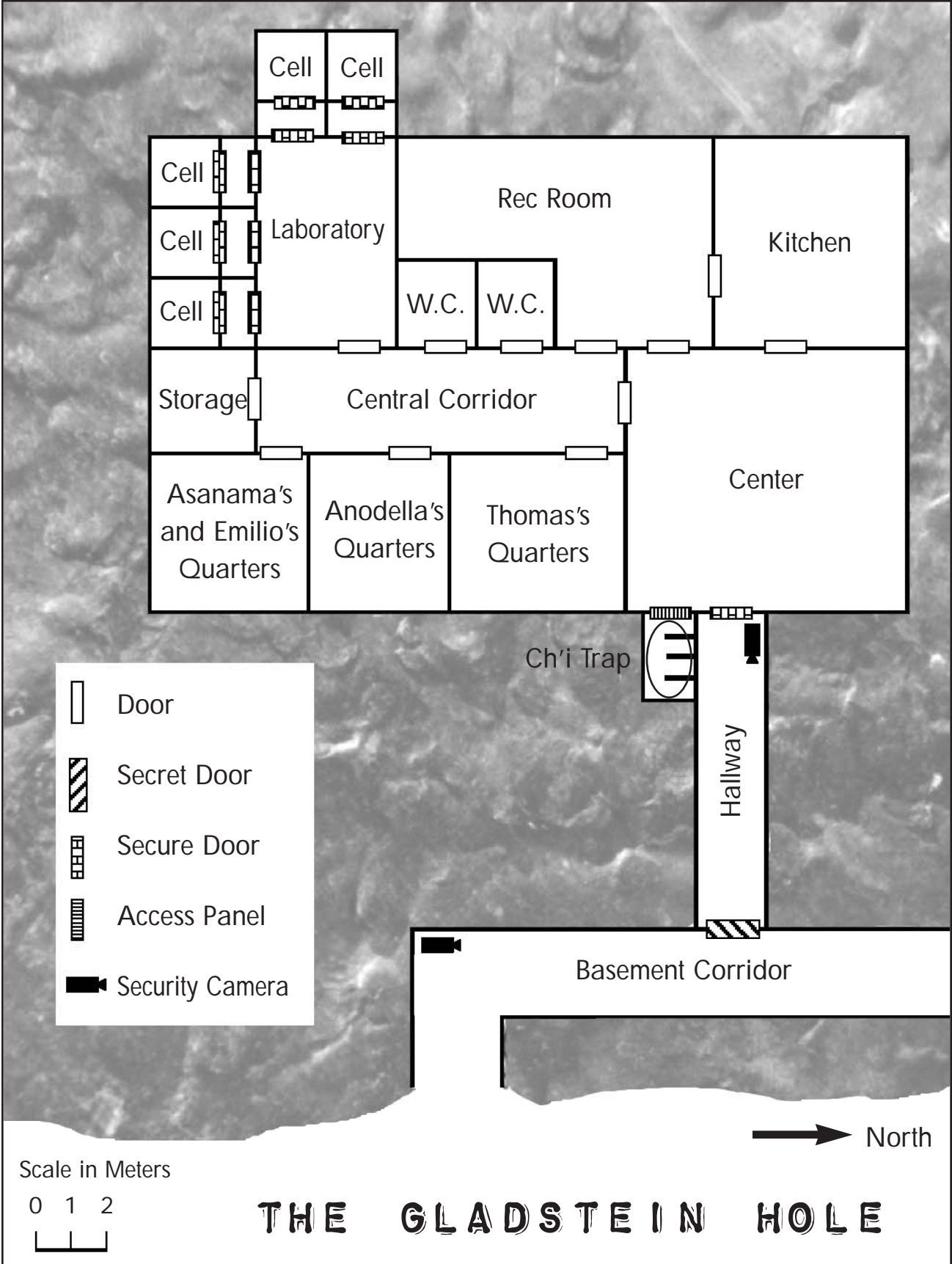
Garden

This walled garden is filled with pleasure-bringing plants. Some are brilliant and beautiful, others fill the air with rich scents, and the rest are psychoactive.

Pool Area

Includes a lighted pool, a whirlpool, and a sauna. Swim suits are unheard of here.

CLOAKS



THE GLADSTEIN HOLE

Playrooms

Various rooms, especially on the ground floor, are designed for specific activities, such as watching movies, exercising, bondage, and spying on people in other rooms.

Suites

These luxurious quarters are for members to sleep in.

Offices

These offices have records of membership lists, legal actions against the club, background checks on suspicious members, minutes of meetings, expenses, and so on. Security is light.

Security

A first floor room with a few video monitors and alarms. The security room is operated 24 hours a day, always with a single unimpressive guard (2 dice fighter). The club's guards have handcuffs, mace, a billy club, and a radio to contact authorities if the phone lines are cut.

Deprivation Rooms

These are small cells used for the isolation stage of I/O activities (see above).

Basement

Beneath the club are deep basements with twisting corridors connecting numerous chambers of different designs. Down here are strange and unique amusements, such as three thousand year old Egyptian wine, secret chambers, prison cells, stuffed endangered animals, taxidermied people, amusement chambers, surreally decorated rooms, a swimming pool, miniature landscapes, a fun-house, and so on. "Gloucester," the Gladstein who poses as the head butler, works down here a lot to tend the various rooms, and brings food down to residents.

No one but Gloucester knows exactly what's down here, but most members have favorite rooms they visit, or where they like to take newcomers. Use your imagination.

Also down here is the secret entrance to the Gladstein hole. See p. 35.

GMCS: CLUB ST. AUGUSTINE

The GMCs listed here follow this format:
Name (Real Name, if different and relevant), *Tag*

Staff

Gloucester (Jan Voorhij), "*Butler*," *Chief Mover*
Other staff: One chef, two assistants, two maids, three butlers

Mystics

Transylvania Gold, *High Priestess*
Richard, *Transylvania's Slave*
Verna Rush, *Mystic*
Vandros, *Wizard*

Sybarites

Mamduh Narwas, *Head Sybarite*
Team Tigress, *Narwas's Sexy Bodyguards*
Robert Slathe, *Sinking Sybarite*
Cordelia Hünemörder, *Journalist, Unwitting Frill*
Peter J. Ruin (John Peter Williams), *Reclusive Author, Unwitting Frill*

Instead of having story ideas, the GMCs that follow have notes for "interaction," how they may be used when the PCs visit Club St. Augustine.

Staff

Gloucester (Jan Voorhij)
"Butler," Chief Mover

Jan Voorhij's (yon voor' hees) masterminded Club St. Augustine, and his personal ministrations have kept it going strong. Under the alias "Gloucester," he serves as Head Butler in Club St. Augustine. In that position he finds himself ignored as club members carry on private or sensitive conversations, and he has authority to move about the Club as he wills.

Interaction: Gloucester should go unnoticed, until the Gladstein hole is threatened.

Dutch man, age 47, 178 cm, 71 kg. Short, straight blond hair; clear blue eyes; long face. He is rarely seen out of his butler's uniform, and his demeanor seems always to be a touch severe.

Languages: Dutch, English, German, Italian, some Arabic (pretends to know only Dutch and English).

Traits

*Not There, 2** — In his butler uniform and in the environs of Club St. Augustine, "Gloucester" can blend in and move about unnoticed. He is in no way invisible; people simply pay no more attention to him than to the furniture. Anyone who actively looks around to see if anyone's in the room will spot him if he's there, but people trying to recall "was there anyone else in the room" and the like have to roll to remember that he was there. Do not mention Gloucester's presence unless he speaks or the PCs pay special attention. (Butler uniform)

Moving, 4 dice — Manipulating the attitudes, actions, and beliefs of groups and individuals, especially through seemingly innocuous actions, such as in what order he offers drinks to people or the tone of voice with which he speaks to people. (Enjoys the trust of major players in Club St. Augustine)

Fighting, 3 dice — His specialty is striking with surprise, turning instantly from the "invisible" butler to a black and white blur. He gets at least two bonus dice when attacking with surprise. (Often positions himself near pokers, candlesticks, and other weapons of opportunity)

Other Staff

One chef, two assistants, two maids, three butlers. They are expected to maintain professional decorum, confidentiality, and detachment.

They do not involve themselves in the goings on of the members.

Mystics

Transylvania Gold

High Priestess

Transylvania, as she prefers to be called by those who won't call her "Priestess" or "Mistress," is the self-appointed and popularly accepted leader of the Mystic faction in the Club. She claims to have traveled the globe learning magic from various traditions and people of power, and she obviously enjoys the position that these claims grant her in the Club.

Transylvania is always followed around by Richard, her personal slave.

Interaction: She can provide the PCs with misinformation, inside information, or magical assistance. She may also present possibilities for strange role-playing.

Asian-European-African woman, age 33, 171 cm, 64 kg. Long, raven black hair, golden skin, almond-shaped brown eyes, tall and thin, long-legged, every body part bedecked with tattoos. Wears revealing and outlandish costumes.

Languages: At least Spanish and English, but she is hesitant to reveal whether she is familiar with other languages as it might help other pinpoint her place of origin.

Traits

Dominance, 4 dice — Transylvania only engages in sexual exchanges based on total submission. "Anything else is a compromise and a lie," she says. To her, dominance is purely psychological, not physical. For example, a "lesser" male who forced himself on her by superior strength would, in her eyes, not be a master but

rather a rebellious slave deserving the harshest punishment. (Has a slave)

“*Magick*” — Transylvania styles herself as a practitioner of magick, but her actual abilities are up to you. She may be exactly what she claims to be, someone who uses the energy of the Club to perform magical and spiritual feats. She may have fooled herself into thinking she’s working magick when instead all she’s really doing is using psychological techniques that make her seem magical and powerful. Or she may be tapping into magical power, but without understanding exactly what she’s doing. The activities at the Club are certainly generating energy; Transylvania may be using only part of the energy, and may be misusing that energy that she does tap. (Mystic tattoos on body)

Richard

Transylvania’s Slave

Richard, who has given up his last name, has signed a legally binding contract committing him to perpetual enslavement to Transylvania. Though the two of them have sex, the mistress-slave relationship defines their interactions 24 hours a day, and sex is a small part of it.

Richard has “Property of Transylvania” tattooed on his left breast, and he has a ring in his left nipple.

Interaction: Richard demonstrates Transylvania’s nature.

Al Amarjan man, age 24, 177 cm, 70 kg. Light skinned, buzz cut, brown hair, well-muscled, tattoo and ring on left breast.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois.

Traits

Service, 3 dice — He is sensitive to the needs of others and is talented at fulfilling them. He gets a bonus die when serving Transylvania because he knows her so well. (Quietly watches those around him)

Athletics, 3 dice — Richard works out and lifts weights to keep himself fit for Transylvania. (Well-muscled)



Transylvania & Richard, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

“Magick” Assistant — He has helped Transylvania with her rituals for years, so he has picked up a lot of her knowledge and techniques, though he never acts on his own. His true powers are up to you, and depend on how much a true magician Transylvania herself is. (Small tattoos of magical symbols on his arms)

Verna Rush

Mystic

Rush uses the path of mysticism to get away from normal life, in which she would be just an unassuming, plain, overweight woman of average intelligence and limited talents. Under the tutelage of Transylvania, she has transformed herself into a sexy, self-confident woman. Outside the Club, however, she loses most of her energy and confidence.

Al Amarjan woman, age 28, 152 cm, 62 kg. Short and plump, just this side of obese; brown skin; eyes too far apart; black hair in long, narrow braids; cosmetic scars on her forehead and on the backs of her hands. She usually wears loose, colorful robes and copious jewelry.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois.

Traits

Sexy, 3 dice — Although Rush doesn't fit the Hollywood ideal of the attractive woman, she is in touch with her sexual energy, and is therefore sexy, at least in person. Photos of her, however, make her seem simply plain. (Physically expressive)

Disconnected, penalty die — Rush avoids “real life.” She doesn't follow politics, keep her check-book balanced, or know how to jump start a car. (Changes the topic when her life outside the club comes up)

Vandros

Wizard

Vandros (vahn' drohs) is an authentic wizard, who is doing exactly what Transylvania Gold claims to be doing: drawing on the astral energy generated in Club St. Augustine. He spends most

of his time weaving magical tapestries which he then hangs about the Club. These tapestries capture and channel the astral energy generated near them to Vandros, who puts it to use as he meditates. Vandros is using the energy to crystallize his astral self. Once his astral self is crystallized, it will assure his personal survival after physical death. In addition, infused with the energy he is gathering here, the body will allow him to travel to dangerous and normally deadly places on the Astral Plane and survive. He will then be able to gain knowledge and powers that only a handful of sorcerers through the ages have been able to acquire. Vandros has been crystallizing his astral body for seventeen years, and expects to be at it another five or six years.

Vandros regularly avails himself of the pleasures of the Club, though he does so only to vent off unwanted energies, not for pleasure's sake.

Interaction: Vandros may be a red herring, and apparently intriguing character who proves to be too involved in his own affairs to worry about Mystics, Sybarites, Movers, Pharaohs, and so on. Or he may have loads of information that he simply hasn't bothered to act on.

Portuguese man, age 60, 175 cm, 55 kg. Thin and frail; pale skin; bald; perfect teeth; back horribly scarred from an unfortunate encounter with an Indian demon. Wears only an off-white loin cloth.

Languages: Portuguese, reads Sanskrit, snatches of English.

Traits

One Step Ahead, 2* dice — Sensitive to signs, portents, and astral vibrations, Vandros can stay ahead of events that would effect him. He can clear out before hostiles find him, encounter the right person “by chance,” calm an angry person with an appropriate word or phrase, and so on. (Never caught by surprise)

Astral Manipulation, 3* dice — This trait indicates how well Vandros operates on the astral plane. He can use it for astral attack and defense rolls, and it determines his astral hit points (21).

It also indicates his ability to manipulate astral energies while on the physical plane. (Ascetic)

Vital, 3 dice — While small and thin, Vandros is filled with vital energy, giving him above average strength and endurance. (Walks at a rapid clip)

Other Mystics

Two other Mystics live in Club St. Augustine and about twenty more are active members.

Sybarites

Mamduh Narwas

Head Sybarite

Narwas has an endless appetite for sensual pleasure, and he uses to Club to provide both a means to and a justification for attempting (futilely) to sate it. As long as he is indulging himself as part of a group, he feels as though he is being sociable and sharing enjoyment with others.

Interaction: Narwas is obviously a man to talk to for PCs who want to learn more about Club St. Augustine or who want to get on the Sybarites' good side.

Algerian man, age 41, 166 cm, 82 kg. Short and fat.

Languages: Arabic, French, English.

Traits

Sybarite, 3 dice — Narwas knows how to enjoy himself, what drugs to avoid, when to ditch a party, how to read a woman's non-verbal invitation, and so on. (Good-humored)

Organization, 3 dice — Arranging parties, delegating authority, etc. (He's the boss)

Charming, 3 dice — Lacking a conscience and any compunctions about manipulating others, Narwas has taught himself to be quite charming. (Holds doors open for women)

“Team Tigress”

Narwas's Sexy Bodyguards

Narwas retains three nubile women as bodyguards and concubines. They are largely symbols of status, and he makes sure that they properly frisk visitors and then fawn over him.

Their names are Jasmine (the Asian), Savannah (the African), and Cream (the European).

Interaction: The “Tigresses” demonstrate Narwas's status and inclinations. They also protect him from any danger that the PCs might represent.

Women (one Asian, one African, one European), ages 20 to 26, average height and build, maybe a little on the slim side, all of them attractive.

Languages: Each speaks accented English in addition to her native tongue.

Traits

Sexy, 3 dice — Fit, shapely, young, and lascivious. (Wear skimpy clothes)

Bodyguarding, 3 dice (+ penalty) — Includes fighting, spotting hidden weapons, loyalty, etc. (Always hang around Narwas)

Off Training, penalty die — They've usually been up all night drinking, dosing, and diddling, and their exercise regimens emphasize slimming and toning over building strength and endurance. (Drink on the job)

Robert Slathe

Sinking Sybarite

Slathe is on his way down. Leaving his family in Canada to seek sensual gratification elsewhere, he has lived in New York, L.A., Bangkok, and finally the Edge. Here MDA-Cubed gave him a new start, but two years after his first experience he is spiralling down toward utter hopelessness.

Thanks to his proselytizing efforts, a good third of the Club have tried MDA-Cubed. The others are smart enough about their pleasures to avoid it.

Interaction: Slathe serves as a mood piece, dark comic relief, and an object lesson about the dangers of being an expendable NPC in one of

my products. If you wish, Slathe can really liven things up by scoring a huge supply of MDA-Cubed and spiking the punch (or whatever) with it, or at least plotting to do so.

Canadian man, age 38, 178 cm, 84 kg.
Overweight.

Languages: Canadian English.

Traits

Desperate — Gives him a bonus die when trying to satisfy his needs. Any positive traits or skills he may have had have been sacrificed on the altar of self-gratification. (Hungry eyes)

Cordelia Hünemörder

Reporter, Unwitting Frill

Hünemörder (hY' nuh mœr' deh, pronounced “honeymurder” by all too many English speakers) is a Swiss freelance reporter. Her friends keep telling her that she has great talent for investigative journalism, but she never manages to land or hold a decent reporting job. Actually, the Vornite Movers have recognized her talent and have sabotaged her jobs so that she remains a free lancer, and open to assignments they may need her to perform.

Hünemörder's Vornite contact is an elderly Norwegian Lapp named Neergaard. She considers Neergaard to be a close friend. Hünemörder frequents a hypnotherapist to help her keep slim, maintain self-confidence, and so on. The hypnotherapist is actually a Vornite who implants post-hypnotic suggestions that keep Hünemörder trusting Neergaard despite his greater than normal inquisitiveness.

She has come to Al Amarja to scout after the reclusive author John Peter Williams (posing as Peter J. Ruin, see below). He is here to enjoy the special luxuries of Club St. Augustine. Little does she know that Neergaard has subliminally encouraged her to come here, suspecting Williams of some sort of conspiratorial involvement.

Interaction: Hünemörder may stumble onto important clues that the PCs need, and she may

die in the process. She may also suspect and inexpertly surveil the PCs.

Swiss woman, age 29, 163 cm, 51 kg. Short, light brown hair, light brown eyes, pale skin (though possibly tanned or burned now that she is on Al Amarja), boyish build. Likes to wear boots, shorts, and a tank top, but wears whatever it takes to get her story. Often carries a knapsack with notebooks, snacks, fruit, and other goodies; usually has her camera slung around her shoulder.

Languages: High and Swiss German, good French, passable English.

Traits

Talented Investigative Journalist, 4 dice — Telling a good lead from a dead end, taking good shots with a complicated camera, asking the right questions, sensing when someone is evading an issue, posing in a role, lying and subterfuge. She gets a penalty die if she tries to use these skills for espionage rather than for a story because she gets nervous and because her skills have been carefully crafted for journalism, not spying. (Carries an expensive camera)

Yelling, 4 dice — She's got a set of lungs like you wouldn't believe, and she can let loose with a howl that will rattle your teeth. She may be able to use it to call for help, startle attackers, or intimidate people.

Post-Hypnotic Suggestions — The Vornite who is her hypnotherapist can plant any post-hypnotic suggestions she wishes. These suggestions have much more power than “traditional” hypnosis, since the Vornites guard the secrets of truly effective hypnosis from general practitioners. The hypnotherapist lives in Bern, where Hünemörder also lives. (Advocates hypnotherapy, “It helped me not to smoke any more.”)

Peter J. Ruin (John Peter Williams)

Reclusive Author, Unwitting Frill

After writing *Day in the Park*, an internationally best-selling novel, Williams realized that he was exposing his soul to masses of strangers across the globe. He stopped writing, or at least showing

others his works, and went into seclusion in Geneva. The very clear and personal introspection that made *Day in the Park* a hit also made the process of publishing too frightening for Williams to repeat.

His writing found fans among the Pharaohs. While they don't understand the novel, it being essentially a treatise on the human soul, their quislings recognized it as potentially valuable. A Pharaoh paid Williams a visit one day and "persuaded" him to share some of his writing. The Pharaoh has since managed to pull Williams into the circle of elite quislings (though Williams still doesn't know the truth about his new benefactor).

Williams's writing has taken a new turn now that he has been exposed to the Ur-Master ability of the Pharaoh. His keen ability to introspect has allowed him to discover that obedience is the natural state for humans, and this revelation enlightens his recent prose. The quislings are secretly copying his writing for distribution once the Pharaohs exert their power; it will help win over the intelligentsia to the cause of universal slavery.

The Pharaohs also use Williams to probe the souls of other, carefully chosen writers, whom he invites to his secluded estate. He also occasionally travels, albeit incognito and under the alias "Peter J. Ruin."

"Ruin" has come to Club St. Augustine to enjoy himself, including indulgence in sex games involving dominance. Hünemörder (see above) is following him, hoping to get a major story about the reclusive author.

Interaction: "Ruin" should be in the background, at least at first. His soul sight ability may make him react strangely to some of the strange PCs. If the PCs are ready for it, finding out the truth about "Ruin" might be a step to uncovering deeper Pharaoh plots.

English man, age 54, 179 cm, 68 kg. Tall and thin, short gray hair, clean-shaven, deep wrinkles around the eyes. Dresses conservatively in clothes of moderate price.

Languages: UK English, passable French.

Traits

Soul Sight, 5 dice — Nothing mystical or magical about it, Williams just has an uncanny ability to look plainly at the "soul" or "core" of a person, including himself. This ability has made him a confirmed misanthrope. If he were to happen upon a glug here in Al Amarja, he would see for the first time a "pure soul." While the experience would give Williams new hope, the glugs would need to silence him to protect their cover. (Takes little joy in human company)

Art Connoisseur, 4 dice — Put off by people, by religion, and by most prose, Williams takes consolation in visual and musical arts. (Pauses to look at paintings, even graffiti)

Out of Shape, penalty die — Williams suffers a penalty die on rolls involving strenuous activity. (No spring in his step)

Other Sybarites

Two other sybarites live in Club St. Augustine and over thirty more are active members.

GLADSTEIN HOLE

PCs can mess around in Club St. Augustine and have full-fledged adventures without ever having a clue about the hole. (In fact, if you can arrange such an event, I'd recommend it.) But eventually the PCs, especially if they're cloaks and not just bumbler, are going to look one level deeper into the club, and they're going to find the Gladstein hole.

Be warned: This hole is as deadly as the Club is safe. It has defenses that will slaughter cloaks who don't take precautions. If you think your players will be reckless, you can either reduce the danger found here or let the PCs get creamed. PC cloaks will need some kind of edge to get into the hole. It's up to the PC group whether this edge is clairvoyant intelligence, mind control over

“Gloucester,” teleportation abilities, or whatever else. You might even want to arrange for the PCs to acquire special equipment to get them into the hole safely, such as gear that their superiors assign them for the mission.

CLOAKS IN THE HOLE

Four cloaks are currently assigned to this hole. They are:

Christine Thomas, *Poorly Anchored Oppenheimer*. She is executing the re-identification experiments (see below).

Vijay Asanama, *Quisling Plant*. He’s the technician of the group.

Aniella Anodella, *Failed Cyborg*. She’s the guard and combat expert.

Emilio, *Errand Boy*, *Earthling Plant*. He’s a teenager, bottom dog.

RE-IDENTIFICATION

The current project underway in the Gladstein hole is re-identification, pioneered by Chris Thomas. Thomas’s theory is that human identity is highly malleable, and that we surround ourselves with “props” that remind us of who we are. These “props” include photos of family, favorite books, religious symbols, and even friends and lovers. The process of re-identification is to strip a captive of these props and then to substitute someone *else’s* props. Treating the captives as if they were the people whose props they now have completes the process. After that, the captors merely wait for the captives to re-identify themselves and “become” the people from whom the props were taken. Thomas theorizes that it’s easier to achieve re-identification if the captive and the target self are similar.

For example, the Gladsteins have captured a woman who looks a lot like Madame Vylaska (Plaza of Flowers in OTE), and they have stolen



Emilio, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

some of Madame Vylaska's personal effects. Now the captive is in a cell with Vylaska's photos, clothes, and jewelry, and every day Thomas interrogates her as if she *were* Madame Vylaska. At first, the captive cried and screamed and insisted she was not the person they wanted. Now, however, weeks have passed, and she is beginning to answer questions as if she were Madame Vylaska. The Gladsteins have yet to verify the accuracy of these answers. (And even if they prove inaccurate, that does not prove that the project has failed. After all, the real Madame Vylaska would probably answer questions untruthfully anyway.)

In addition, Thomas is trying various other methods of breaking down the personality, such as drugs, sensory deprivation, and sensory overload.

Only Thomas and Asanama interact with the subjects. Thomas theorizes that having too many people looking at them and thinking "That's the subject of an inhuman experiment" rather than "That's a captured enemy" might interfere with the process somehow.

Re-Identification Results

This project is Thomas's first real chance to put her re-identification theories to the test. That means it's up to you to determine how well the project works.

- Re-identification could be a bust, at best brainwashing people into believing they are someone else, but providing no real connection between the target and the subject.
- Re-identification could be workable as a *magical* process, but ineffective through Thomas's pseudo-scientific approach. Any success that Thomas could be having is then due not to the process itself but to the magical energies coursing through Club St. Augustine, thanks to the Sybarites and Mystics.
- Re-identification could work partially, turning the subjects into pale shadows of the targets. The subjects then really can provide information that only the targets know, but their information is limited.

- Re-identification could be a brilliant success, producing subjects who actually comes to look like the targets and who fully assume their identities. Whichever conspiracy masters this technology would have great power because they would be able to interrogate enemies without actually capturing them first.
- Re-identification might only work for targets who have died. One could, for instance, re-identify someone as Albert Einstein, since his "self" isn't currently in use.

Re-Identification Subjects

It's up to you to decide who the subjects are that the PCs find in Thomas's re-identification cells. See the entry on the cells in the key, below.

Penetrating the Defenses

This hole has not been written up so as to let PCs in. Rather it has been written as the Gladsteins built it: to keep people out. Casual investigation is not going to let the PCs break in. If that were the case, it wouldn't be much of a hole.

By the time the PCs are in a position to get into a Gladstein hole, they had better have the exceptional skills, shivs, or toys to make it possible. Otherwise they'll be stymied—or creamed.

If the PCs can get the entrance code to the secret door, they can get in.

If the PCs can use clairvoyance, wandering eyes, or other distant surveillance methods, they may be able to get an idea of the hole's defenses before they blunder in.

If they can possess some Gladsteins or influence them from a distance they may be able to use insiders to let them in.

If they can use sleeping gas or other means of disabling the cloaks, they may be able to investigate the hole without a fight.

Defensive Actions

If the PCs penetrate the hole, the Gladsteins may take any of several defense measures, depending on what they're up against.

Trigger alarm

The alarm sends a radio message to a Gladstein monitoring station, alerts all cloaks in the hole, and electronically seals the compartments that contain sensitive information. These compartments can now only be opened with a code that will be sent from Gladstein superiors, and small explosives in the compartments will detonate in 6 hours if this code is not sent. (This keeps intruders from getting a slew of information, but there are likely to be tapes and records left out of the compartments when the intrusion begins, and these can still be captured easily.)

Cross-fire defense

Asanama and Anodella take different positions and open fire with their pistols, hoping to catch intruders in the cross-fire. (It's hard to take cover from bullets coming from two directions at once.)

Emilio's ace

Emilio flees to his room and shakes his magic sistrum to summon the angels of death. This will take out seven people, Gladsteins as well as intruders.

Destroying evidence

Thomas grabs her accumulated notes and rushes them to the disposal in the kitchen. If she needs to, she will dump these down the disposal to keep them from falling into intruders' hands, but since these notebooks represent her life's work, she'll delay until the last possible minute. She may delay too long.

Key to the Hole

Basement Corridor

This looks a lot like a typical basement corridor, with a concrete floor, fluorescent overhead lights, and cinderblock walls. Two things make this corridor stand out: graffiti and the security camera. The graffiti are lurid, amateurish spray-painted scenes that combine mystic and sexual imagery. The security camera leads to the hole's Center (see below), not to the Security room on the ground floor.

A secret door is in the west wall. Pressing two cinder blocks simultaneously releases the door, which slides back into the wall and then slides to the right, revealing an entrance into the Hallway. Finding the door and the blocks is difficult but not impossible. The door's edge matches the outline of the cinderblocks, and someone with a keen eye could notice the seam. Spying on Emilio as he uses the door is an even surer method of finding the door.

When the door opens, lights and bells go off throughout the hole, except in the laboratory (where random stimulus could ruin an experiment).

Hallway

Like the outside corridor, this hallway has a concrete floor and cinder block walls. The hallway is designed to lure invaders away from the secret door (which closes automatically) where they can be hit with concentrated human *ch'i*. The *ch'i* bombards those who enter the hallway. Any non-humans are affected by the overpowering, "alien" life energy, while humans notice nothing, since this *ch'i* merely harmonizes with their own. The damage done to intruders varies according to how close the character is to human. Damage is in the form of systemic and unshakeable weakness.

| Humanity | Examples | Damage |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Near human | Glug, mutant | three dice |
| Partly human | Werewolf, half-human hybrid | six dice |
| Not human | Extraterrestrial, dog | twelve dice |

Astral canaries are killed instantly, alerting owners to danger. A dead astral canary may fool a perfectly human (and thus perfectly safe) character into thinking there is danger in the hallway.

The *ch'i* comes through the wall, so there is no way to spot the trap visually.

The west door is steel, and it can only be opened from the Center. The security camera allows the cloak in the Center to see who is on the other side of the door before opening it. (There is also a radio code to open the door, but none of the cloaks in the hole know it. The code serves as a back door in case all the cloaks have to abandon the hole, allowing Gladstein superiors to open the door.)

Center

Like most of the rest of the hole, this room has cinder block walls and institutional carpeting.

Dominating the room are video banks linked into the security and surveillance cameras throughout the Club, a computer, and files filled with the tapes of incriminating scenes. Someone is always monitoring the screens, though Emilio (one of the cloaks, see below) is prone to getting distracted when on the job.

In the east wall is the security door leading out. This door can only be opened from this side, by pressing a button on the wall. Also in the east wall is an access panel into the *ch'i* trap, allowing it to be maintained. The trap looks like platinum coils with barrels pointing to the north wall of the chamber. Asanama cleans and disinfects the trap regularly; it's such a strong source of human *ch'i*, that parasites on human *ch'i* (e.g., disease-causing microorganisms) flourish there.

Among the files in the Center, the PCs may find dossiers of other cloaks (see the appendix).

Kitchen

This is where the cloaks cook and eat. There is a generous garbage disposal built into the wall for disposing of most waste. The cloaks may try to

dispose of evidence by tossing it down the shaft into the disposal.

Rec Room

Television, VCR, video games, stereo, board games. Agents spend many off-hours here.

Central Corridor

Nothing special here.

Thomas's Quarters

Thomas's own sense of identity is slipping, and she bolsters it in her private quarters. The walls are covered with photos from her past to remind her of who she is, and a handwritten journal at her desk is filled with banal statements about herself. A sample page from the journal is provided on p. 40; you may photocopy it as a handout for your players.

As these excerpts indicate, there isn't much left to Thomas's identity, not much that makes her different from other people.

Her notes about the re-identification process are also here, filling several notebooks.

Anodella's Quarters

Near the foot of the bed is a high voltage electric cord that runs into the wall. This cord plugs into the socket in Anodella's heel, powering her muscles while she sleeps.

Asanama's & Emilio's Quarters

There are two beds in this room, one for Asanama and one for Emilio. On the nightstand near Asanama's bed is a book of hand-written poetry (see his "twin writing" trait, below). Hanging on the wall is Asanama's pistol in a holster. On Emilio's nightstand is a sistrum with bells on it. This sistrum is capable of summoning angels of death (see below).

Handout: Thomas's Journal

Tuesday

I like vanilla ice cream. Chocolate is good, too, but sometimes chocolate doesn't come off right. I remember eating a vanilla and chocolate twist with Harvey, before we broke up.

Wednesday

I like my work, but I like to find time for myself, too. I like to read. Mostly I like easy books, like mysteries, nothing difficult like histories. If you're reading for fun, why make it into work? I like reading about other people.

Thursday

I have had trouble in relationships before, but I think I am more mature now, and I would like to get involved seriously again. I think I could do a better job this time.

W.C.s

Nothing special here, either.

Laboratory

Most of the room is full of material that Thomas isn't using: biofeedback machines, strobe lights, a polygraph machine, an E.E.G. machine, sedatives and stimulants, and records of earlier experiments. On one table are materials that she uses frequently: a video camera, VCR, TV, tape recorder, and stereo. She uses these to record conversations with

re-identification subjects, and the tapes of these interviews fill several shelves. Several bottles contain drugs she uses to help break down identity, including THC, LSD, psilocybin, and mescaline.

Cells

Re-identification subjects are kept here, in concrete cells, each behind two electronically-locked doors. Neither door can be opened from the inside. Originally the doors were wired so that the inner door couldn't be opened unless the outer one

were closed, so that there would never be an open route between the cell and the lab, but that meant someone had to wait outside the door whenever Thomas interviewed a captive, and it got to be a hassle. Against regulation, Asanama re-wired the doors so Thomas could prop the outer door open and still open the inner door. (If they ever had dangerous prisoners, Asanama would return the wiring to its original, higher-security scheme.)

Opening each door requires punching numbers into a keypad, and if the alarm was triggered, even these codes will not work until the electronic system has been given the deactivation code from the local Gladstein monitoring center. (Activation of the alarm also shuts off the air circulation in the cells. Prisoners will suffocate in 24 hours unless the doors are opened.)

Each cell includes a toilet and sink. Above the sink, where a mirror would be, is a picture of the person whose identity Thomas wants the prisoner to assume.

Below are some ideas for prisoners currently undergoing re-identification. Use whatever ideas you want. There need not be a captive in every cell. In most of these cases, the PCs may have to balance their own desire to use the captives or learn from them with the ethical imperative to return them to their families.

“Madame Vylaska”: The Gladsteins have enough intelligence on Vylaska’s operation that the subject’s information can be checked.

While Thomas hopes to gain something from the re-identified “Vylaska,” she is mostly interested in the “Vylaska” subject as a test of the process.

A Player Character: A captive who looks like a PC, with items stolen from the PC or fished out of his garbage. The captive may actually think he is the PC. He can even call up details from the PC’s life that other people don’t know. (The subject, however, is probably in bad shape mentally, since re-identification is no smooth process.) So what do the *other* PCs do when they find someone who looks like their friend, who recognizes them,

who can tell them secrets that only the friend should know, and who says, “I’m so glad you’ve rescued me at last”? Suspicion may fall on the actual PC, who could be an imposter, a clone, or whatever.

Blank Slate: Re-identification has had an unexpected effect on this man; it has opened up his latent psychic abilities so that he can easily re-identify himself as just about anyone. This man can serve as a “can-opener” to give the PCs intelligence from highly secure conspiracies, allowing you to plunge the PCs deeper into machinations in the Edge. Unfortunately, this re-identification carries a price, and the man’s brain slowly slips away like a worn transmission until he becomes “no one.” Eventually he has no personal traits and no ability to adopt more; he becomes a cipher, capable of little more than seeing to his immediate needs for food, rest, and elimination. Or it might be creepier to leave him one ability, such as playing chess or reciting Poe.

Newcomer: She was recently captured and has as of yet been little affected by re-identification. She may have useful information about the Gladsteins, but once the PCs rescue her, she also knows something about them. Treated casually, she could become an intelligence leak. But how can the PCs keep her secrets safe without killing or imprisoning her? Clever cloak PCs will use her as disinformation. (“Don’t worry about our wounds, miss; we’re from Pluto, and these artificial bodies we’re using will heal themselves in short order.”)

Anne Fletcher: See p. 55. It could be her or her manufactured double.

Important GMCs: Include GMCs who could lead the PCs to new plots of your own design or deeper into the major plots of the game.

Casualties: Science has its price, and these people have paid it. They are deeply damaged by Thomas’s attempts to re-identify them.

Storage

You know the routine: cleaners, a vacuum, rags, tools, etc.

GMCS : GLADSTEIN HOLE

Christine Thomas

Poorly Anchored Oppenheimer

Thomas, the mastermind behind the re-identification process, is unsure of her own identity. This lack of certainty helps her approach individuation with genius and insight, but it also threatens to destroy her.

British woman, age 31, 164 cm, 59 kg. Brown hair cut very short; light brown eyes; pale skin; small, elfin face; androgynous build. Wears a lab coat most of the time.

Languages: British English, passable French.

Traits

Sensitized to Individuation, 4 dice — From years of introspection and watching herself, Thomas has developed a keen eye for what individuates people, for what makes a person “that person.” She can see through disguises and detect external manipulation easily. (Good memory for names)

Re-Identification, ? — No one knows how good she is at re-individuating others. The success or failure of her current project will help her learn how well her process works. The project may be a breakthrough, or it may be a complete failure. (Studies people intently)

Slipping — Thomas’s identity is fragile, and her experiments in re-identification have threatened it. She can easily be manipulated and controlled. If stressed, she may undergo a spontaneous change (or simply loss) of personal identity. (Room crowded with memorabilia from her life)

Vijay Asanama

Quisling Plant

Asanama is a quisling plant. Actually, he has no idea who he’s working for (though he suspects it’s Cell Z). His twin brother knows the truth, and Asanama simply trusts his brother.

His role in the hole is the technician. He also has a 9mm automatic pistol for use against intruders.

Indian man, age 26, 173 cm, 65 kg. Brown skin, black hair, dark brown eyes, carefully trimmed moustache. Missing little finger from right hand. Wears a jump suit and has a tool belt.

Languages: Hindi, English, and Tamil.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 with knife, X4 with pistol

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Twin Writing — When keeping notes, Asanama goes into a light trance, in which state he is sensitive to the thoughts of his identical twin brother, lodged deep in a Pharaoh stronghold. Asanama writes down his brother’s thoughts, while his brother writes down his. In that way, Asanama’s notes seem innocuous to his fellows, while the reports he makes on the Gladsteins are telepathed directly to the Pharaohs. (Keeps an extensive journal of petty poetry)

Fringe Technician, 3 dice — Keeping the machinery in the hole in operation. He can repair certain fringe tech, but not invent new devices. (Wears a tool belt.)

Moving, 3 dice — He’s no genius, but he’s had standard Mover training. (Chooses his words carefully)

Fighting, 3 dice — Unarmed, knives, and firearms. (Armed)

Aniella Anodella

Failed Cyborg

Intended as a secret weapon to be used in assassination, Anodella actually turned out to be something of a liability. Oppenheimers used experimental technology to give her cybernetic, super-powerful muscles made from a plastic

metal. The muscles do work, but with several drawbacks.

- 1) They make a distinct hum, thwarting attempts at stealth.
- 2) They draw more power (electricity) than the designers intended.
- 3) The force of the muscles does internal damage to Anodella.

Unsuited for the subtle work of assassination, Anodella has been stationed in holes where she can plug in to power sources easily and where her hum doesn't attract attention. Her latest assignment is to the hole under Club St. Augustine. Here she performs routine functions, such as operating surveillance equipment, and serves as a guard, should she the hole ever be discovered.

Italian woman, age 36, 166 cm, 220 kg (metal muscles). Short black hair, dark eyes, tan skin. Fit, athletic. Wears jump suit with a pistol (9mm automatic) strapped on her hip.

Languages: Italian, heavily accented English

Attack: 4 dice, X3 damage with fists; 3 dice, X4 damage with pistol

Defense: 4 dice

Armor: Takes half damage from normal attacks (metal muscles); 1 die bullet-proof armor (jump suit)

Hit Points: 21 (tough)

Traits

Metal Muscles — Makes her fast and strong (4 dice in attack and defense). For every "1" rolled in melee attack or defense, Anodella takes 1 point of damage as the over-powerful muscles pull her apart internally. (She can choose to attack or defend with fewer dice to reduce the damage she is likely to take.) The muscles also absorb significant damage, so she only takes half from most sources. Damage that is not slowed by metal muscles, such as a psychic blast aimed at the brain, does normal damage. She has a high-power socket in the heel of her left foot, to which she connects to a power source for two hours every day. (Hums)

Moving, 3 dice — Her specialty is combat, but she's learned standard Mover techniques as well. (Small burn scars on shoulder blades, the result of experimental negative reinforcement techniques used to teach her certain Mover techniques)

Firearms, 3 dice — (Armed)

Emilio

Errand Boy, Earthling Plant

Emilio's role in the hole is as a general functionary: cooking, cleaning, operating surveillance equipment, and, when necessary, running errands outside the hole. The other cloaks in the hole think Emilio is a low-level Gladstein. He thinks he's a high-level Gladstein acting on secret orders from the other cloaks' superiors. The "superiors" from whom he's taking secret orders, however, are actually Earthlings.

Emilio's secret superiors have ordered him to watch the results of Thomas's re-identification experiments and to wipe out the other cloaks if anything goes wrong or if anything dangerous results. The Earthlings want to find out whether Thomas's system works, and if so, how. They also don't want to blow Emilio's cover just yet. That's why they're letting these horrible experiments continue.

The superiors have also given him the means to take out the other cloaks: a device to summon angels of death (see p. 66). It is a magically enchanted sistrum with seven little bells along the cross-bars. When it is shaken, each bell connects to an angel of death and guides it to the material plane. Once manifested here, it does what angels of death always do: snatches the nearest soul. The holder of the sistrum, however, is spared. It takes a while for the angels to appear since they have to cover vast astral distance. Emilio is not sure how long the angels will take to arrive, and they may not all arrive at the same time. (You can use this vagueness to pace the action accordingly, should Emilio choose to summon the angels of death.)

Al Amarjan man, age 15, 171 cm, 60 kg. Curly, brown hair; light brown, pimply skin; scattered, curly facial hair; droopy eyes. Wears shorts and T-shirt. In the hole, he keeps a fighting knife strapped to his hip.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice + penalty die, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 17

Traits

Innocuous, 4 dice — Emilio looks harmless and not a little unappealing, and he has cultivated these features into an asset. People are unlikely to pay attention to him. In the environment of Al Amarja, he looks like just one more sorry teen. (Droopy eyes)

Fighting, 3 dice — The Movers have trained him, giving control to the street fighting style he'd developed independently. (Armed with a knife)

Immature, penalty die — He doesn't have as much strength, mass or tenacity as an adult. Among other things, this gives him a penalty on his attacks. (Teenager)

Portuguese citizen. (He is.) If so, the lawyer is prepared to hand over a substantial inheritance to him. This inheritance was generated and left behind by Vandros in his immediately previous life as an Indian slave trader. The money has been generating interest for decades as the executor firm has painstakingly used occult means to track Vandros down. The best way to verify Vandros's identity is gain his trust and see his Portuguese passport, which he still keeps. This means coming to the club and trying to fit in, and Vandros rebuffs all direct attempts by strangers to contact him.

- The PCs track a Gladstein (or possibly a cloak who is posing as a Gladstein) to the Club, where she is lying low. In searching for her, the PCs find the Gladstein complex.
- Open warfare breaks out between the Mystics and the Sybarites, precipitated by ill-advised consumption of Zorro, a mystical misfire, or similar circumstance. Not provisioned with weapons, the members take to each other with whatever they can find: champagne bottles, fire extinguishers, candlesticks, and so on. Where sensual pleasure was the rule, now violence and pain have taken over, providing for startling imagery: naked people floating face down in the hot tub, blood on silk sheets, and so on. Depending the PCs' reasons for being their, they may try to restore order, join one or the other side, or carry out their personal agendas while confusion reigns.
- A PC is tailed by PIs. When confronted, the PIs say they are looking for the PC because he's deserted his family. This is just a case of mistaken identity, and it turns out they were looking for someone who looks just like the PC. If the PCs investigate, they eventually follow leads to Club St. Augustine. The "deserter" has actually been captured and is being held in the redoubt, where by now Thomas's re-identification process has convinced him that he is the PC.

STORY IDEAS

- PCs are invited to a party at the Club by friends or accomplices. If invited by Sybarites, they may be surprised at the presence of Mystics, and vice versa. Instead of cracking any mysteries, the PCs simply have a wild time for a weekend and go home (perhaps to return some day in the future).
- PCs are dupes sent to the Club in order to provide a distraction, fodder, or a test of the Gladsteins' security. The duping conspiracy could be the Earthlings, the Neutralizers, another Mover cell, or even rival Gladsteins.
- The PCs are hired by an Indian lawyer to find out whether the recluse Vandros (a wizard who lives at the Club) is actually Mário Soarta, a

CHAPTER FOUR

AGENTS

This chapter provides several sample cloaks that you can use in your series. Many of them may be involved somehow in the “Yesterday’s Hero” adventure, but all of them can also be used for your own purposes.

LIST OF CLOAKS

Below is a list of the cloaks that appear here, listed by their companies.

Center for Paranormal

Control: “Tremor,” *Rajah Haruq*, CPC Cloak with a Detachable Soul

Earthlings: *Helen & Keller*, Deaf Cloak and Blind Cloak

Glorious Lords: *The Final Pollution*, Dupe

Glugs: *Jean Maumon*, Anti-Pharaoh Crusader (see p. 15)

Mr. Le Thuys: *Rim Zaqar*, Subtle Disabler

Movers, Senders: Overrider Team

“CB,” Eavesdropper

“Gourmet,” Chemical Analyzer and “Skunk”

“Projector,” Vision Overrider

“Scourge,” Touch Projector

“Vertigo,” the Tripper Upper

Pharaohs: *Süleyman Burin*, “Saul”, Pharaoh Enforcer (see p. 18)

At Large: *Jaswinder Pardhoti*, Renegade Mover, Dominated by the Urge



Tremor and his soul, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

DESCRIPTION OF CLOAKS

The cloaks below are listed according to the companies to which they are attached.

Each cloak's description includes typical missions that they may undertake.

CENTER FOR PARANORMAL CONTROL

Most CPC inspectors operate overtly, but a few are cloaks. "Tremor" is an example of one such cloak.

Missions: Surveillance registered psychics, infiltrating mystic s--- groups, monitoring CPC agents.

For more information on the CPC, see *Friend or Foe?*. It contains descriptions of two inspectors, Rixa Bekker and Anima Nee-Owoo, along with a short treatment of the CPC itself.

"Tremor," *Rajah Haruq*

CPC Cloak with a Detachable Soul

Tremor's been killed five times now. It's not a pleasant experience, but he can live with it. That's because it's only been his body that's gotten burned, blasted, beaten, and broken. Whenever he's on the job, his soul is safe at home in the apartment, probably eating popcorn. His soul, when out of his body, looks for all the world like a meter-long iguana.

Tremor can detach his soul (or, rather, his soul can leave his body) at will. He's naturally private about the process, but if anyone were to see it, it would look like an iguana was climbing out of Tremor's mouth. The soul can re-connect with the body by climbing back in. While the soul is in the body, Tremor is metabolically and meta-

physically normal. When the soul is outside the body, things get weird.

The body can still move around, think, and act as if it were normal. It is, however, not present on the astral plane, so it is immune to magic that affects the astral body. (Spells that affect the being directly, like Grip of Stone, do so by affecting the astral self. Spells that are indirect, like Serpent's Tongue, can still affect Tremor.) He is affected by psychic powers, but he has a crystal trap to protect him.

While the soul and body are separate, they are experientially distinct. Once they re-unite, the soul gets all the memories of the body.

The main advantage to going soulless is that if Tremor is killed, he returns. Some time between twelve hours to three days after his previous body is done away with, a new one shows up in the vicinity of the soul, generally dressed the same way he was when he died, with keys to the apartment in his pocket.

Tremor has a standard issue 9mm semi-automatic pistol, but if he's caught with it, it may blow his cover, so he only takes it on dangerous runs in which he's likely to need it.

Tremor's apartment is a chaotic jumble of records, dirty tableware, fungifying clothes, and unreturned library books. For various reasons, he lives alone.

Al Amarjan man, 172 cm, 68 kg. Short, dark brown hair; swarthy; wide face; thin lips. Dresses as unobtrusively as he can.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, Arabic insults.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with a knife, X4 damage with pistol

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (rugged)

Traits

Lizard Self — See above.

DBI/CPC Training, 3 dice — He's been trained to fight armed and unarmed, spot trouble, identify paranormal events, file reports, and follow orders. (Watchful)

Story Idea

“Tremor” is a pretty minor threat, so you can use him as an opponent of the PCs without worrying about him slaughtering them. His disconcerting habit of returning from the grave will certainly attract the PCs’ attention.

EARTHLINGS

Two Earthling operatives work together, forming an effective and inseparable team. “Helen” is deaf, and “Keller” is blind; and they have learned to turn these “disabilities” into strengths.

The bandwidth of consciousness, you see, allows only a finite rate of data transmission. By eliminating a major source of data (sight in one case, hearing in the other), one can assimilate more data from the other senses. Not only does this arrangement give Helen & Keller acute senses, but it also helps them defeat the subterfuge of other cloaks. A Mover’s careful control of his tone of voice will never fool Helen, nor will the scrupulous manipulation of one’s facial expression trick Keller. Furthermore, Keller is sensitive to vocal phenomena too subtle for the ear of most sighted people, so she can detect tell-tale signals that an enemy cloak can’t even hear, let alone control. The same goes for Helen’s ability to see subtleties of gesture, expression, and body language.

Helen & Keller can also fulfill specialized needs. For example, Helen may be called on to penetrate the defenses of someone who is known for using subliminal audio messages. While other operatives would be affected by whispered messages pumped over the PA, Helen would walk past untouched.

Despite these advantages, Helen & Keller are still vulnerable. They specialize in investigations, and leave more violent missions to the likes of Joana d’Fabelle (see OTE).

To communicate, Helen & Keller use Morse code transmitted through small transceivers. These transceivers may be put on a wristwatch, carried in the hand, glued behind the ear, or used in any variety of ways. In any event, they respond

to being pressed, and they in turn vibrate in response to taps on the opposite transceiver. Helen can have her transceiver in her watch, and appear to be nervously tapping on her wrist, when in fact she is sending a Morse code message to Keller, whose transceiver is pulsing behind her ear.

Missions: Doing character assessments, determining who might be potential allies in the “good fight” (PCs may be checked out this way); surveillance of enemy cloaks; investigating Maumon (see p. 15).

Helen

Deaf Cloak

Tanzanian woman, age 34, 178 cm, 82 kg. Tall and overweight, big head of processed hair, full-figured. Often wears conservative, outdated outfits (but she’ll wear whatever a mission demands). Speech distorted (because she can’t hear what she’s saying).

Languages: Swahili, English, some Arabic.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 25 (big)

Traits

Cloaking, 3 dice.

Non-Auditory Acuity — Because she is sensitive to the non-auditory stimulus that usually evades people with hearing, she is harder to trick. When another character attempts subterfuge of whatever kind, only the highest two dice count; the others serve only as bonus dice. For instance, a PC with “Slick Liar: 4 dice” would effectively get 2 dice plus 2 bonus dice. There is no reason to tell the player this as long as you can see his dice. Ignore what he says is the total is and just add the two highest dice together.

Deaf — She can read lips. (Distorted speech)

Helen & Keller, illustrated by Ovi Hondru



Keller

Blind Cloak

Tanzanian/English woman, age 27, 156 cm, 53 kg. With her smoked glasses and white-tipped cane, she can present an image of class and reserve. Without her glasses and wearing tattered clothes, she appears to be a pitiful casualty of modern life.

Languages: Swahili, English, some Arabic

Attack: 2 dice (see below)

Defense: 2 dice (see below)

Hit Points: 21 (tough)

Traits

Cloaking, 3 dice — She has general espionage training, including fighting. She loses a die from her fighting ability because she is blind. Use the 2 dice stats when she can wrestle someone or hold them at bay with her cane. If someone can get the advantage on her (such as by knocking her cane away or striking her with a weapon that has superior reach), she may be virtually helpless. (Has a sturdy, metal cane)

Non-Visual Acuity — As with “Non-Auditory Acuity” above, when another character attempts subterfuge of whatever kind, only the highest two dice count; the others serve only as bonus dice. (Smoked glasses)

Blind, flaw — (Smoked glasses)

Story Idea

Helen & Keller are getting a secret shipment: fringe science devices that promise to hook them up psychically so they can work together even more effectively. These devices may be from off-island, or a native oppenheimer (such as Dr. Seversen) may have constructed them. The PCs may be in a position to:

- stumble onto these devices by accident, and then deal with the Helen & Keller’s efforts to get them back
- find the devices because someone has planted them on the PCs while being pursued by Helen & Keller
- steal these devices for their own use
- steal these devices for a third party
- sabotage the devices so that they cause permanent brain damage to Helen & Keller
- sabotage them so that the PCs can pick up Helen & Keller’s thoughts
- retrieve the devices once they have been stolen by another cloak
- get caught in the cross fire

Glorious Lords

Cloaking is not the Lords’ typical style, but Avan Bloodlord sometimes wants to know what is happening in the world of covert ops. One of his warriors, one with a special gift from the seklut, does the cloaking that Bloodlord desires.

The cloak’s name is The Final Pollution, or Final for short. Without an intelligence agency backing her up, Final has few leads to go on. She may lurk in the shadows observing passers-by. She tails those who catch her interest and tries to uncover useful information: the location of drug

stashs that the Glorious Lords can steal, traitorous intentions of malcontent Lords, the actions of rival gangs, and so on. She has also had to execute a few people who had stumbled onto Bloodlord’s secret weapon — the seklut.

Unfortunately for Final, she is definitely a hack when it comes to espionage, and cloaks for other groups have already identified her as a neophyte spy. They have begun to leave disinformation for her to find, such as a letter in which the author claims to have discovered the secret behind the Glorious Lords. The author, of course, is an enemy of the cloak who planted the letter, and Final saves that cloak the trouble of bumping off the supposed author.

Since Final is so easily duped, her enemies have made some effort not to let her meet an immediate end. They’d like to keep her around for some unspecified future use.

When doing a dangerous hit, she brings Glorious Lord thugs with her, in which case she is careful not to leave witnesses (as the thugs are more easily identifiable as Lords than she is). See the Glorious Lords in OTE for basic stats.

Missions: Hunting down those who have insulted the Glorious Lords; lurking around and following anyone who seems to have a secret; unwittingly doing errands for other power groups.

The Final Pollution

Dupe

Final cloaks for Avan Bloodlord, but other cloaks often trick her into working for them.

Al Amarjan woman (favoring Berber stock), age 26, 170 cm, 62 kg. Short, asymmetrical, black hair. Usually follows Al Amarjan fashion rather than identifying herself as a Satanist.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English, some Arabic, and a few words of French.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 with a knife, plus poison (see below)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Armor: Leathers, 1 point

Traits

Poisonous Blood — The seklut's poison serves as a catalyst in her metabolism, turning it poisonous. Before a fight, she often cuts herself (1 hit point damage) and coats her knife in her own blood. The poison (classifiable as metallic) affects the blood of the target and damages the circulatory system. Three rounds after the target is struck, he takes 1 die of damage. Half an hour later, he takes another die of damage. One hour after first being struck, and each hour for the next 8 hours, the target takes another 2 dice of damage (total of 20 dice). (You may modify this damage if the victim is exposed to a great deal or only a small amount of the poison.) Obviously, this poison will kill almost 100% of the time unless the victim gets medical help. With proper medical attention, damage drops to 1 point per hour. The victim recovers half this damage (as per normal recovery rules) after some rest. Symptoms of the poisoning include nausea, headache, tremors, convulsions, muscle tightness, and pain. Convulsions set in once the character drops below 0 hit points.

Since her poison takes a while to set in, Final often strikes a target a passing blow, flees, and then returns when the victim is falling ill. The poison has more strategic value (taking an enemy out of operation temporarily) than tactical value (since its delay is too great to make it useful in combat).

(Her skin turned mottled white and gray under the effects of seklut poisoning, but she uses makeup to retain her former complexion.)

Glorious Lord Lifestyle, 3 dice — Includes partying, using hard drugs, knowledge of the gang's (bogus) demonology, loyalty to Avan Bloodlord, and so on. (Brand of pentagram on right shoulder blade)

Fighting, 3 dice — (Muscular)

Sneaking, 3 dice — (Lithe)

Story Idea

Final goes after the PCs because some other cloak has led her to believe that they have something on the Glorious Lords. Her attack allows the PCs to capture an enemy without immediately breaking open the mystery they are working on. After all, she really doesn't know the real reason she was after the PCs. If the PCs can (somehow) convince her that she's been duped, she may even turn into a temporary ally in the fight against the person who tricked her and who is out to get the PCs.

Glugs

Jean Maumon (né Pascal Fauvel)

Anti-Pharaoh Crusader

See p. 15.

MR. LETHUYS

Mr. LeThuy has operatives everywhere, many of them sleepers, most of them amateurs. One cloak, however, stands out, thanks to her special skill in determining how people work together smoothly. Of course, now that Rim Zaqar is a Mr. LeThuy, she's using these skills to gum up the works.

Missions: Consulting with businesses to "help" them deal with labor disputes, joining business clubs and getting involved in the election of officers, writing harassing letters to people in key corporate positions.

Further examples of LeThuy cloaks can be found in *Unauthorized Broadcast*, "The Doppelgänger Plague" (in *The Myth of Self*), and "The Fürchtegott File" (in *Forgotten Lives*).

Rim Zaqar

Subtle Disabler

Years ago, Zaqar was an ergonomacist who earned big bucks helping major corporations pollute the physical and social environment. When she realized that all she did was help a few wealthy

people prey on those around them with greater efficiency, she retired and gave up hope. A riveting newspaper vendor, however, has given her new “hope” and “purpose.”

Her work has power because it is not noticed. Unlike other cloaks, her work is aimed almost entirely at businesses and organizations, rather than at other cloaks.

She portrays herself as a savvy and insightful woman in semi-retirement, working as a business consultant when the mood suits her.

When in a dangerous area, she may have a bodyguard, also a LeThuy. (An elderly, wealthy lady having a bodyguard is nothing unusual.)

Her purse is full of useful items: business cards, change in various currencies (to leave as tips), black markers for graffiti, a pen knife for marring things, pens for leaving disturbing messages, a bottle of fake pills (to take while faking various illnesses), and a bottle of Zorro to offer to “friends.”

Egyptian woman, age 63, 155 cm, 54 kg. Soft, wrinkled face; white, curled hair, nimble fingers. She wears pant suits that mark her as wealthy and business-like. She wears minimal jewelry.

Languages: Arabic, good English, some French.

Attack: 1 die

Defense: 1 die

Hit Points: 9 (frail)

Traits

Gumming Up the Works, 3* dice — Using her ergonomics skills to the reverse effect, identifying subtle means of disrupting smoothly-functioning businesses and organizations and executing those plans secretly. Since only a trained and gifted ergonomicist can even recognize her techniques, her victims cannot identify why things suddenly go wrong. For instance, she may identify a certain sales clerk as a valuable psychological commodity in a store, someone who mediates between two managers who would otherwise be unable to work together. She then poses as a customer and finds an excuse to demand that this clerk be fired. In

the businesses that she strikes, communication bogs down, productivity wanes, and job satisfaction declines. (Watchful eyes)

Business Connections — Thanks to her excellent references from her former employer, she has gotten to know many businesspeople in the Edge, and has sometimes gotten herself hired on as a consultant. (Many business cards in her purse)

Frail, -1 die — Old, small, and essentially sedentary. She gets one fewer die than normal on most physical tasks. (Wrinkles)

Story Idea

Introduce Zaqar as a harmless and sympathetic GMC. That way she can appear again and again without raising the players’ suspicions, and when the players finally figure out why things have been going poorly, they’ll kick themselves.

MOVERS : SENDERS

The small Sender Cell of the Movers takes credit for developing training methods in the shiv “Overriding.” The Vornites claim that the Sender Cell is a front for the Gladstein Cell, and the Gladsteins claim it is a front for the Vornites.

In order to activate a subject’s psychic potential (such as “overriding”), the Senders repress a powerful urge in the subject’s psyche. The energy from this emotional block would normally cause suicidal depression, schizoid thinking, and general dysfunction, but the Senders divert the energy into the brains latent psychic abilities. Nevertheless, the process causes some damage to the subject’s personality.

The following five cloaks can each override one sense. They may work as a team, individually, or in small groups.

Missions: Penetrating an Earthling hole, assassinating enemy cloaks, subtly sabotaging an oppenheimer’s lab, surveilling government officials.

“CB”

Eavesdropper

When the Senders acquired “CB,” he was a homeless mystic on the streets of the Edge. In touch with the divine reality just behind the thin veil of maya, he needed very little to be content. The Senders forcibly freed him from his “delusional” state, for which “CB” remains grateful. His mystic side suppressed, “CB” now sees the world in strictly material terms, and he is hostile to any expressions of belief in the intangible, such as in God, love, justice, purpose, and meaning. On Wednesdays, he attends “In Your Face” services at the Temple of the Divine Experience, where he engages in vicious and sometimes two-fisted debates with believers.

“CB” has a “sound squisher” (see p. 70). Depending on his assignment, “CB” may also have various traditional bugs.

Gear: false ID, fighting knife, “sound squisher.”

Italian Al Amarjan man, age 33, 182 cm, 80 kg. Short, black hair; dark eyes; several moles on his face. Dresses as circumstances dictate.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, some Italian.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Armor: 1 point (tough clothes)

Hit Points: 21 (tough)

Psychic Pool: 4 shots

Traits

Covert Training, 3 dice — Fighting with a variety of weapons, moving stealthily, spotting people on his tail, hiding evidence, etc. When eavesdropping, he gets 3 dice + a bonus die because of his excellent hearing. (Good muscle tone)

Override Hearing, 2* dice — See p. 75. (Good hearing)

Excellent Hearing, 3 dice. (Continually distracted by distant sounds)

Sensitive Hearing, downside — Loud noises are especially painful to him. (Has a white noise



CB at “In Your Face” night, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

generator to mask loud noises, uses it when not “on the job”)

“Gourmet”

Chemical Analyzer and “Skunk”

“Gourmet” was one of the top-ranking sadists in the Edge when the Hermetics recruited her as an assistant interrogator. Eventually, the Senders acquired her (without her knowing who she really had been working for or that she had shifted allegiance). The Senders suppressed her sadism, and now she’s an overrider. Since then, her love affairs have been short, all ending when she physically or emotionally attacks her lover. She can’t stand to see people in pain, and she occasionally flies into a rage and attacks those who are hurting others.

“Gourmet” projects flavors and odors onto others’ tongues and noses. She also has incredibly sensitive taste and smell himself, allowing her to do limited chemical analysis by taste. She’s the team’s field chemist.

Gear: false ID, fighting knife, portable (rudimentary) chemistry set, nose plugs.

French-Arab Maltese woman, age 30, 160 cm, 51 kg. Short, black hair; dark eyes; tan skin; prominent nose; slim and athletic; small breasts. Often wears sexy clothes with false breasts, so she can ditch the breasts when she needs to change identities.

Languages: Maltese, English, some Arabic

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Armor: 1 point (tough clothes)

Hit Points: 21 (determined)

Psychic Pool: 4 shots

Traits

Covert Training, 3 dice. (Good muscle tone)

Override Taste/Smell, 2* dice — See p. 75.

(Circular scars on scalp, hidden by hair, from the time the power surged while electrodes were attached, during psychic evaluation)

Excellent Taste & Smell, 4 dice — Very sensitive and highly trained, used in conjunction with Chemistry trait. (Eats “subtle” [bland] food)

Chemistry, 1* die — Rudimentary knowledge, limited mostly to poisons, knock-out gases, drugs, and other substances she is likely to contact. (Has chemistry set)

Sensitive Nose, downside— Offensive odors can really knock her on her butt. (Has nose plugs)

“Projector”

Vision Overrider

“Projector” came to Al Amarja for the pube women. He had a taste for young women (not pre-pubescent children) who are generally deemed “underage.” The Senders hooked him with a pube agent, suppressed his interest in young women, and taught him overriding. Unfortunately, the ideal of feminine beauty (including smooth skin, firm breasts, and vulnerability) is essentially the ideal of “youthful” beauty. “Projector” finds good-looking women repulsive and ugly women ugly. He’s considered scoring some MDA-Cubed.

“Projector” can project sights into others’ eyes. He also has excellent vision and standard covert ops skills.

Gear: false ID, fighting knife, “opera glasses,” infrared light/viewer.

Greek Cypriot man, age 33, 179 cm, 77 kg. Straight, black hair; dark brown eyes; long face. He often wears a false beard that he can ditch when he needs to change identities.

Languages: Greek, English, some Turkish.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Armor: 1 point (tough clothes)

Hit Points: 21 (trained and trim)

Psychic Pool: 4 shots

Traits

Covert Training, 3 dice — Fighting with a variety of weapons, moving stealthily, spotting people on his tail, hiding evidence, etc. When

surveilling, he gets 3 dice + a bonus die because of his excellent vision. (Graceful step)

Override Sight, 2* dice — See p. 75. (Wears sunglasses to protect his eyes)

Excellent Vision, 3 dice — His vision is highly trained, including depth perception, color differentiation, and fineness of detail (spatial and temporal). He has 20/15 vision. (Periodically scans horizon to keep lens-focusing muscles warm)

Sensitive Vision — Strobing lights, flashes of light, and so forth bother him excessively. Also, he cannot watch movies because he processes visual data so quickly that he sees the frames flickering. It's too irritating to watch. (Wears sunglasses when not scoping)

“Scourge”

Touch Projector

“Scourge” was a restless creator who came to Al Amarja to pursue avant-garde art. She painted, sculpted, and sketched, with some video and poetry thrown in for good measure. She never met with any real recognition, but she lived happily. The Senders recruited her, telling her she'd be a freedom fighter in the war for the human soul. They took away her muse and left her a shiv. Now she's an avid movie-goer and devoted fan of Harrison Ford.

“Scourge” can project sensations onto another's skin. She also has a fine sense of touch, making her the safe-cracker and lock-picker of the team.

Gear: lock-pick set, gloves (to protect hands for hard labor), false ID, fighting knife.

Spanish woman, age 28, 162 cm, 58 kg. Long, black hair; pale skin; full lips; wide shoulders. She wears comfortable, notably silks and cottons. The “long, black hair” is a wig that covers short, brown hair.

Languages: Spanish, English.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Armor: 1 point (tough clothes)

Hit Points: 21 (resilient)

Psychic Pool: 4 shots

Traits

Covert Training, 3 dice. (Good muscle tone)

Override Touch, 2* dice — See p. 75. (Does “concentration exercises” to keep psychic faculties in tune)

Light Touch (up-side), 4 dice — Can read large print (not braille) by touch, feel tumblers in a lock, pick pockets, read a pulse while lightly touching a knuckle, etc. (Wears soft silks & cottons, not wool or harsh fabrics)

Light Touch (down-side) — Sensitive skin. Acids, burns, and abrasions are especially painful to her. (Wears soft silks & cottons, not wool or harsh fabrics)

“Vertigo”

The Tripper-Upper

“Vertigo” came to Al Amarja in search of better psychedelics. She had spent most of her adult life on some sort of mind-altering drug, and she was generally creative and happy, though not particularly productive or dependable. Others could get a contact high just from being around her. The Senders arranged to have her arrested and sent to a “rehabilitation program,” where she lost her ability to appreciate an altered state of consciousness and gained her shiv. In the bargain, she lost her appreciation for art, puns, paradoxes, and flights of fancy. She only reads histories, and she won't even take caffeine.

“Vertigo” can alter the internal sensations of another person, such as balance. She also has excellent balance and body awareness herself. She's the martial artist of the team.

Gear: false ID, two sai, three shuriken.

French woman, age 35, 166 cm, 60 kg. Short, curly, light brown hair; small, round nose; small mouth; eyes set wide apart. She usually wears clothes that give her full freedom of movement, such as loose jeans, T-shirts, etc.

Languages: French, fair English, some German.

Attack: 4 dice, X2 damage with sai

Defense: 4 dice

Armor: 1 point (tough clothes)

Hit Points: 28 (blocks pain)

Psychic Pool: 4 shots

Traits

Covert Training, 3 dice. (Graceful step)

Override Internal Senses, 2* dice — See p. 75.
(Meditates to exercise concentration)

Kook Sul, 4 dice — The “kitchen sink” martial art. She knows a little of everything. Her skill is especially high because she is minutely aware of her internal senses, such as the angles of her joints, velocities of her limbs, energy in her muscles, etc. (Excellent posture)

Restless — Sitting still is hard for her. She has a good sense of her muscles’ movements, and she likes to keep them moving. She gets irritated and “itchy” if she can’t move around. (Restless)

PHARAOHS

The Pharaohs have an intricate network of cloak on Al Amarja. Their chief enforcer and “secret weapon” is Süleyman Burin, who uses corrupted ex-tek to great effect.

Süleyman Burin, “Saul”

Pharaoh Enforcer

See p. 18.

AT LARGE

Not all cloaks are members of conspiracies, as “the Urge” demonstrates.

The Urge

Seymour really loved Anne, but he should have found out more about her before falling so hard for her. When CIA operatives kidnapped her for “questioning” about involvement with various conspiratorial activities, Seymour tried to find her and rescue her. He sold his video rental store in

Toronto to hire private investigators and to go searching for her himself. For his trouble, he was shot and killed, but his overwhelming desire to rescue Anne was stronger than death itself. The guard who shot Seymour found himself overcome with a desire to find and rescue someone, but he wasn’t sure who.

The strength of Seymour’s desire created a psychic entity that we can call “the Urge.” This entity is simply an overwhelming desire to rescue Anne Fletcher, but it exists as a parasite in the mind of its host. When the host is killed, the Urge travels the Thanatic Intent Waves to the mind of the killer and settles there. (The Urge may be unable to travel to a new mind if the Thanatic Intent Waves are attenuated by distance or time, so that if the host is slain by a trap, it may be unable to travel to the one who set the trap. In this case, the Urge may either dissipate or settle into some other susceptible mind nearby.)

The Urge has chased Anne Fletcher’s trail through government intelligence agencies and conspiracies most of the way around the globe. Its current host is a Mover who killed the Urge’s last host in India. He has now come to Al Amarja where he believes Fletcher to be held.

Of course, Pardhoti’s superiors in India are after him, assuming that he has gone over to another side or just gone nuts. They’d like very much to capture him themselves rather than face the embarrassment of calling on allied Movers in the Edge to do so.

Who is Anne Fletcher?

She is an Earthling, but the Pharaoh operatives who have infiltrated Interpol framed her as a Pharaoh quisling so that the CIA would capture her. Unfortunately for the Pharaohs, some Chaos Boys played a hard rock concert with the music of the spheres in that locale, causing several polarity reversals and smokestacks, and as a result some Movers were able to spirit her away.

She is valuable because the Earthlings have implanted a message into her that describes an experimental process of destroying the human

capacity for blind obedience. Fletcher, however, doesn't even know how the message is implanted. (She was exposed to a virus that altered her junk genes; they now carry the message in code.)

Torture, mind probes, mind control, and minute examination of her person have failed to reveal to her captors the message that she carries.

The Urge in Play

In its incarnation as Pardhoti, the Urge can be just your typical cloak. The PCs may aid him, oppose him, or just get in the way. He is trying to penetrate Mover defenses, so he may cause some disruption in the underground scene.

His efforts against the Movers may coincide with those of "Yesterday's Hero" (see p. 21) or Helen & Keller.

How to Get Rid of the Urge

The most direct way to free oneself from the Urge is to get killed and let the Urge move to one's killer, but that option has its own drawbacks.

Another option is to find and rescue Fletcher, which ought to be a good chase. That quest has gotten the Urge killed several times already, so obviously it's not easy, but then the Urge is closer than ever before to the culmination of the search. The Urge may also carry with it various passwords or Mover secrets that will allow the host to penetrate Mover defenses and counter-intelligence that would otherwise be very difficult to get through. Once the Urge has rescued Fletcher, it dissipates, having completed its mission.

Alternately, Anne may serve as a permanent romantic interest for the PC, with the Urge settling down, but by no means dissipating.

For a trickier option, an oppenheimer may be able to mimic death and create false Thanatic Intent Waves to suck the Urge out of a character's body.

Weird Options

- After the PCs have dealt some with Pardhoti, he gets killed, but it's by a baboon or a truck.

The non-human killer takes up the quest where Pardhoti left off.

- Anne has been killed, but her need to be reunited with Seymour has formed an Urge of its own, and now inhabits another body. The Urge (in a PC or in Pardhoti) finds Anne, inhabiting a new body. After a final consummation of their love, both Urges dissipate, satisfied. Of course, the two Urges may not be in sexually opposite bodies.
- A Throckmorton kills Pardhoti, and the Urge temporarily infiltrates and influences the Throckmorton device. Without warning, fascists, skinheads, and people without eyebrows converge on the place where Anne is being held in an inexplicable free-for-all.

Jaswinder Pardhoti

Renegade Mover, Dominated by the Urge

Sikh man, age 27, 173 cm, 68 kg. Short, black hair; light brown skin; fine features.

Languages: Hindi, English.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

The Urge, 5 dice — Pardhoti feels an overpowering need to find and rescue Anne Fletcher. The Urge makes him nearly immune to diversions and temptations, as well as to any form of mind control. This trait transfers to anyone who kills Pardhoti. The Urge, obviously, prefers death to incarceration. (Has no hobbies, no books, no magazines, no stationary, nothing that does not relate to his goal)

Psychic Baggage — The Urge, as it has leapt from dying mind to the killer over and over again, has pulled with it certain mental baggage: snatches of memory, old habits, tastes in music, and so forth. This trait transfers to Pardhoti. (Hums Brazilian pop tunes)

Covert Combat, 3 dice — Includes familiarity with easily-hidden weapons. (Armed with garotte)

CHAPTER FIVE

FRILLS



Death switch, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

Q : What's the difference between frill and a sewer worker?

A : The sewer worker *does* know s---.

FRILLING

Companies need agents for several types of low-level espionage. On Al Amarja, these expendable, entry-level operatives are known as "frills."

Below are some ideas for jobs that frills may be assigned. The PCs may encounter GMCs on these missions or be given these missions themselves.

DISTRACTION

When a cloak is passing information, sneaking through enemy territory, or otherwise hoping to escape notice, a distraction can be useful. A distraction is a frill or cloak whose job is simply to distract any enemies in the area from the actual action. A distraction may be ordered to commit a petty crime, start a fire, or, more often, just "look suspicious." The more time the enemy agents spend watching the distraction, the less chance they'll spot the real action. The frills, since they can easily be caught and interrogated, generally have no idea of the real reason they are present.

Green frills may be sent as distractions without their knowledge. They are told to meet someone, pass along some information, or otherwise

perform a simple task. Since they are nervous and inexperienced, enemy agents are likely to spot them.

Distractions can backfire in two ways. First, a distraction that is obviously a distraction may alert enemy cloaks that there must be some authentic espionage action happening nearby. Second, a duped distraction may be so subtle and discrete that he actually doesn't distract anyone.

Story Idea: A PC sent as a distraction has skills that the company doesn't take into account. He may spot and defeat the enemy agents that he should be distracting or, for a good twist, spot and defeat the allied agent that he's supposed to be covering. Such a turn-around is a prime opportunity for the PC to learn that the company he's working for isn't what they claim to be, anyway.

FEEDS

A frill can be used to feed disinformation to the enemy, though the disinformation has to be very important before the company will do so, since the frill is generally "used up."

For a feed, the frill is given false information and told that it is very important. The company then arranges for the frill to be captured by the enemy, who will extract the disinformation. A less dangerous variant is to run the frill past a known mind reader working for the enemy.

If the disinformation is exceptionally important, the company may sacrifice a full-fledged cloak in a feed.

Story Idea: PCs capture an enemy frill who's been fed disinformation. They need to verify the information they gain from the frill on their own before reporting it to superiors.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

Companies need photos of suspected enemy agents, their places of operation, their residences, their friends and acquaintances, their cars, their

pets, their favorite grocery stores, whatever. Sometimes these photos are simply used for identification, though attacks based on sympathetic magic are also popular. Taking photos is relatively easy and boring, so frills often get these assignments. They can be given assignments even though they have absolutely no idea what's going on. A frill doesn't need to know who he's working for or who he's following; he can just be told "Follow this guy and take photos of everywhere he goes and everyone he talks to."

Story Idea: Superiors want photos of a list of people suspected of being enemy cloaks and frills. Some of the people on the list are duds, so that, if the list falls into the wrong hands, it won't do as much damage. *Complication:* The list is also a coded message sent to a double agent in another company. That agent is assigned to spy on the frills. She gets a look at the list (and receives the coded message) without ever making any friendly contact with her true cabal, and she checks up on the frills to be sure that they are not slipping secrets to the enemy. *Complication:* Some people on the list are involved in illicit activities that the frills' cabal doesn't care about. They try to thwart, threaten, or even kill the frills who take their pictures.

SCOPING

Frills often gather basic information about a subject, such as where he goes for lunch, who his friends are, what times he goes to work and returns, and so on. Frills generally do this sort of investigation for "cool" subjects, ones that are not currently involved in the company's actions. Frills would not be given the chance to mess up operations surrounding a "hot" subject.

Scoping can also serve as de facto "touching the fence" (see below). If the scoper winds up dead or missing, the company can assume that the subject is up to something and send better investigators to the scene.

Story Idea: Scoping puts the PC in a great position to spot strange events, meet weird people,

and so on. A frill scoping out a tourist might record only mundane details about the subject, but notice something fishy about E-Z Sleep, where the subject is staying.

TOUCHING THE FENCE

Frills, pretending to be vandals or burglars, violate the security perimeter of a suspected enemy site. The defenses that are mobilized against the incursion show the company how well-guarded the site is and what systems the enemy has in place.

The term “touching the fence” comes from a joke that cloaks tell about sending frills to see “if the fence is really electrified.”

Story Idea: A straight fence-touch is an excellent adventure plot because it induces fear. The PCs are told to test security at a site but are told that they are not expected to breach it. The PCs therefore expect to face overwhelming defenses, and the mark of a good frill is pushing the security system to the edge, getting as much information as possible without getting killed or captured. Unlike a standard adventure in which the players expect the PCs to defeat the enemy, the fence-touch expects the players to pull the PCs out at the right time, before they’ve gone too far to escape.

FRONTS

Companies always deal with frills through fronts, artificial organizations that provide a layer of disinformation between the company and the frill. This deception is necessary to protect the secrets of the company should the frill fall into enemy hands. It can also present an attractive front to the frill, ensuring philosophical loyalty.

Below are some example fronts that you can use to attract PCs to a life of espionage.

THE BAVARIAN ILLUMINATI

Surprisingly, people still take the Illuminati seriously. Those that do may be recruited by a front claiming to be the Illuminati. The front generally attracts wealthy people who want more power than mere money can provide.

This front is perfect for the Dionysus Movers, who are well-connected in the circle of the super-rich, and the Pharaohs, whose control of international bankers parallels the supposed power structure of the Illuminati.

THE CIA

Patriotic US citizens are often approached by cloaks impersonating CIA agents. (People with a clear sense of what the CIA is up to, on the other hand, are usually told that the CIA is the *enemy*.)

Enough conspiracies have infiltrated the CIA that many of them can use the actual CIA as a front for recruiting frills to their own causes.

THE CIRCLE OF THE MIND

Psychic PCs may be recruited by the Circle of the Mind, a group of psychics devoted to protecting their kind from persecution and promoting the understanding of psychic powers so that the “neglected faculties of the human mind” can be developed.

This may be a Mover front, in which case the stated goal is authentic, though the parallel goal is to identify psychics and channel their powers for the good of humanity.

It may be an Earthling front, in which case the goals it presents are authentic, though only part of the overall Earthling agenda.

It may be a Pharaoh front, in which case the Circle is the Pharaohs’ way of fighting fire with fire. When the Pharaohs are ready to take over

and the Circle has destroyed all enemy psychics, the Circle will be eliminated.

THE EARTHLINGS

Anyone can pretend to represent the Earthlings. The sense that one is doing right by humanity helps many frills get used to the violence and deception that is demanded of them.

HIGH CONCORD ALLIANCE

The Alliance is a group of highly evolved beings who have come to the physical plane of earth to help earthlings evolve spiritually. They hail from other, more advanced planets and from higher dimensions.

This front is used to snare tripped out artists, New Age devotees, and people who take their drug trips too seriously. Recruits generally feel honored and proud to be singled out from the masses as potential comrades to the highly evolved beings in the alliance. A central tenet of the Alliance is that the physical world is essentially illusory, though, like a dream, there is an underlying meaning or motive, and the imagery, while illusory, does signify something real. This “real but not real” paradox allows the controllers to get the frills to do just about anything. “The real world is an illusion, so don’t worry about dying.”

RECRUITMENT

Frills suffer from a high attrition rate, so companies are constantly recruiting new ones. Some cloaks even specialize in recruiting frills.

When a company recruits a frill, the largest obstacle is getting the frill to perform the first illicit act. Once the frill has stolen business secrets from the boss, participated in a beating, or sabotaged an enemy site, getting him to perform the next mission is much easier. Not only is the frill more willing to break laws or personal ethical

codes a second time once they’ve already been broken once, but the company now has dirt on the frill and can blackmail him into continuing to work. Depending on the philosophical bent of the company, there are various hooks they can use to get new frills to perform that first act and then to continue to work for the company

PERSONAL HOOK

A frill or cloak becomes emotionally or romantically involved with the recruit and then needs the recruit’s help. The company can even stage a scene that appears to threaten the cloak to propel the recruit into action. Once the recruit has beaten up enemy frills, passed coded information, or otherwise acted on the cloak’s behalf, the frill is then “in the club.”

EASY MONEY

A recruit may be offered a ridiculously high amount of money to steal petty information from his employers. The information is trivial enough that the recruit can justify stealing it. After that, the company uses this act to blackmail the recruit into committing more serious espionage for less money.

PHILOSOPHICAL ALLIANCE

This hook is hard because people who will really risk themselves for an abstract cause usually define that cause pretty narrowly. For instance, the Earthlings may be able to get an idealistic youth to join their cause, but even then the youth may see things differently or have different priorities from the Earthlings, so they cannot depend on his support in all operations. A company can also manipulate a frill to perform a few, specific actions and little more. For instance, the Earthlings may trick one of Otto’s Men into bashing a gay Mover without ever telling their frill that the target of the attack is involved in underground activities. (And

the Earthlings may then provide evidence of the assault to the Peace Force to get one more homophobe off the streets.)

The dilemma of the philosophical hook is whether to find frills that are aligned with the company's true goals. If so, then the frill knows the company's goals and may become a security liability. If the company uses a front, the frill can never become a fully aware cloak because he does not agree with the company's actual goals.

THE PYRAMID SCAM

Eventually, most frills want to back out of the business. They've seen too much danger, come too close to death, or are just ready to retire. By this time, however, the company has invested a lot of effort into the frill, and they don't want to lose a valuable asset. Some companies have an ingenious method for letting these frills back out: they can "buy" their way out by recruiting replacement frills. Each frill must recruit two or three other frills to the company's service, and they are then allowed to retire. These new frills, in turn, may one day buy their way out as well. Thus the influence of the company grows.

CONTROL

Companies want to give loyal and reliable frills more power and responsibility so that they will have better tools at their disposal. They need ways, however, to ensure loyalty in those to whom they give goodies. Below are some ways they may control their frills.

MENTAL HANDLE

Via weird science, hypnosis, drugs, and brain-washing, the company can implant a "mental handle" in the frill. Examples include:

Seizures

These can be caused by strobe lights of a certain frequency or combination of frequencies. This handle allows the frill to be incapacitated by a specially modified strobing flashlight. The seizure knocks the frill out for fifteen minutes to an hour.

Latah Word

A specific words causes the frill to "go latah." He will then mimic every action of the last person who spoke the word. Generally, another word turns the latah state off.

Compliance Word

A specific word creates compliance in the frill. He will obey anyone who speaks the word.

Death Switch

A radio-controlled device physically implanted in the frill's abdominal cavity. It releases cyanide upon receiving a specific radio signal. This device doesn't control the frill too well as he may doubt that it has actually been installed. In addition, it may rupture and spill its poison as a result of physical trauma.

BLACKMAIL

Many cloaks in Al Amarja are experts in global, extra-dimensional, and psychic espionage; they can usually turn up dirt on their own frills. Indeed, the frills' actions themselves could be the grounds for blackmail.

HOSTAGES

Just as cloaks can find their frills' dirt, they can find their families. Even if loved ones are not literally captured and held at gun point, a company can make it obvious that family members are so easy to tag that actually holding them at gun point would be redundant.

GOODIES

As frills become more experienced, reliable, and valuable, the companies that sponsor them give them special benefits to reward them and to make them more capable of carrying out more dangerous and demanding missions.

BETTER JOB

Companies can find employment for their frills, the bigger the company, the better the job. A small conspiracy may be able to pull strings and get the frill a promotion. Most conspiracies can get a frill a do-nothing desk job with a comfortable salary. Larger companies can arrange for a valuable frill to become a Hollywood star, a renowned scholar, or a head of state. (We've all seen people who enjoy prestige and status far above what they deserve. Many of these people are enjoying the benefits of service to a major conspiracy.)

Sometimes the job is just a reward for services rendered, a reward that cannot be easily traced back to the grantors and that doesn't give the frill a suspiciously large cash flow. The job may also help the frill provide greater service to the company. A promotion from an hourly to a salaried position allows a frill more flexibility and security, so that missed work and odd hours don't cause problems. Some jobs put one in a good position to serve the company, such as personnel director, which gives one access to plenty of confidential files and also lets one help other frills find good jobs.

Giving a frill a job benefits a company in another way: What they give, they can take back. The frill's lifestyle and prestige are dependent on the job, and a frill who refuses to go along with the company's increasing demands risks losing that position.

WEIRD TEK

While the best weird tek stays in cloaks' hands, where it's (relatively) safe, some can find its way to

frills' hands. Sometimes these are tools that the frill can use for the company, such as a ring that warms in the presence of strong psychic energy. Other times they're simply rewards for the frill's personal use, such as cassettes of instrumental music that inspires certain emotions in the listener. Companies have been known to give experimental devices to their frills so that if something goes horribly wrong, they only lose a minor pawn.

TRAINING

Companies often fund training that is unlikely to arouse suspicion, such as classes in photography or self defense. Reliable frills may be trained in identifying fringe phenomena, surveillance, and other specialized skills.

SHIVS

A frill with psychic or astral potential is a valuable asset, but bringing a frill to a psychic mentor entails risks. The frill might not be reliable, he might be followed, he might be secretly controlled by another company, and so on. But if the company is sure of a frill, they may help him develop a shiv (psychic or astral ability).

A frill with shivs usually goes through a probationary period during which the company watches him closely. If he remains dependable, he is given more information and responsibility, soon becoming a full-fledged cloak. If he uses his powers dangerously or proves unfaithful, the frill may be vivisected by one of the company's neuroscientists in an attempt to find out what makes fringe power work.

SAMPLE FRILLS

Below are two sample frills, plus reference to two others that appear in Chapter 3.

Husayn Couveau

Altruistic Dupe for Sir Arthur Compton

Couveau has seen hatred and pain. His native Algeria has suffered dictatorship, massacres, and now bitter and violent political battles between Muslim fundamentalists and a government that no longer represents a majority of the population. Couveau is sick of the pain, and he wants to make things better.

Luckily for Couveau, he was contacted three years ago by an underground force called simply “the Light.” Since he had some military experience and a heart in the right place, they wanted his help, and he gave it. He collects information for them, performs occasional dangerous missions, and collects cash bonuses. They take his information and uses it against the diabolical enemies of goodness and justice.

Unluckily for Couveau, “the Light” is a front for Sir Arthur Compton. He needed a good-hearted person who could slip past the watchful eyes, the trained ears, and the aura-readers who guard the do-gooders of Al Amarja. Couveau is a good person, and he can therefore get into places where the people who want to hang out with Compton could never get. Couveau is usually told that he is ferreting out traitors and spies within the altruist community. In fact, he’s just getting the dirt and the scoop on the white-hats.

Arab Algerian man, age 26, 174 cm, 67 kg. Tan skin, clear eyes, black hair, clean-shaven. He wears Western clothes and dresses a little out of style.

Languages: Arabic, poor French, poor English.

Traits

Surveillance, 3 dice — Keeping an eye on a target while not getting spotted himself. (has a nice camera)

Self-Defense, 3 dice — Couveau favors defense, though he can use this skill to attack. If he tries to escape, a successful attack means that he’s gotten free of his attacker, but has done no damage. (Fit)

Lubna Denucci

Anti-Muslim Frill, Unwitting Quisling

Denucci left her native country, Saudi Arabia, in 1987 to find freedom in the West, and what freer country is there than Al Amarja? In 1990 she married Guiseppe Denucci, and since then they’ve had two children, Gloria (age 6) and Andre (age 4).

Her frilling began two years ago when agents from “Arab Liberty” approached her after a social meeting of Arab ex-pats. They explained that they were working underground to free the Arab world from rising fundamentalism, and they enlisted her aid. She gave it willingly, and they have called upon her several times over the past two years.

Unfortunately, “Arab Liberty” is a quisling front; she’s really working for the Pharaohs.

There is a dossier on Denucci in the appendix.

Saudi woman, age 31, 165 cm, 56 kg. Long, black hair; small nose; thin lips; medium build; beating scars on small of back and top of buttocks. Wears shorts, T-shirts whenever she can. Prefers gold jewelry.

Languages: Arabic, Al Amarjan patois.

Traits

Rudimentary Investigation, 3 dice — She’s good at the basics, like lying and eavesdropping. She does not have skills that require extra training, such as picking locks or lifting fingerprints. (Comfortable in unusual social situations)

Good With Numbers, 3 dice — She’s a book-keeper at a construction company. (Discusses interest rates intelligently)

Cordelia Hünemörder

Reporter, Unwitting Vornite Frill

See p. 34.

Peter J. Ruin (John Peter Williams)

Reclusive Author, Unwitting Pharaoh Frill

See p. 34.

CHAPTER SIX

TOYS

This chapter covers weird weapons, tools, and devices that are in use among cloaks in Al Amarja. Naturally, cloaks also use the more standard devices described in *Over the Edge* (especially in the Deep Overview chapter), and others besides cloaks may also be using some of the following toys.

ASTRAL CREA- TURES

The psychovores described in *Over the Edge* are merely one type of creature native to the astral plane. Other creatures have been found there as well, and, when under the proper control, they, too, prove useful in the covert battles that rage below the surface of the Edge, across the world, and across dimensions.

CONTROLLING ASTRAL CREATURES

The standard way to control an astral creature is to have it bound to some physical object or location. If necessary, the object can have a feedback system linking the material to the astral plane. For instance, an astral canary is useful because it dies when it is exposed to malignant astral energy. A canary could be bound to a belt or something, but if the user can't tell when the canary dies,



Angel of death, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

CREATURE SUMMARY

| <u>Creature</u> | <u>Brief</u> | <u>Attack</u> | <u>Defense</u> | <u>Hit Points</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Angel of Death | Killer | 12 dice, X3 | 8 dice | 60 |
| Argus | Guard | 3 dice, X3 | 4 dice | 32 |
| Canary, Astral | Sensitive | 0 | 1 die | 7 |
| Hound, Astral | Tracks astrals | 2 dice, X2 | 2 dice | 14 |
| Martyr | Sacrifices self | 0 | 3 dice | 18 |
| Psycho-Skeeter | Drains energy | 3 dice | 1 die | 7 |
| Tube Worm, Astral | Kills | 6 dice | 1 die | 7 |

he gets no benefit from it. So if the canary can be bound to an electronic wristwatch with an alarm, the binding spell can include the contingency that when the canary dies, the alarm goes off.

The astral canary works automatically, but some astral creatures require orders. The astral hound, for instance, has to be directed when to commit magical scents to memory and when to follow these scents. It also needs to be able to get information to the cloak so that cloak can follow where the scent leads. If the cloak doesn't mind talking to an inanimate object, the binding spell can be cast such that the astral creatures can respond to spoken instructions or "magic words." Otherwise an electronic device like a calculator makes a handy binding site, since the cloak can input plenty of different commands through the keys, and the display screen allows the astral creature to respond.

TRAITS FOR ASTRAL CREATURES

Astral creatures do not have the same traits that physical creatures have. Each creature described below has these traits.

Mentality: The creature's intelligence and temperament.

Astral Attack & Damage: The Astral Attack ability represents the creature's ability to affect other astral beings. Since these creatures often attack each other (and hapless cloaks), the rating is called "Astral Attack," but a creature with no attack ability may instead have a similar rating called "Astral Power," "Astral Will," etc.

Roll the Astral Attack when the creature attacks an astral being or uses a special ability that affects other creatures (such as paralysis or domination). For a standard attack, if the attack roll exceeds the defense roll, the target takes damage equal to the difference between the two rolls multiplied by the damage factor.

Astral Defense: This trait represents the creature's resistance to the astral power of others, such as astral attacks, spells, magical abilities and so on. If the creature has an ability that affects itself, such as the ability to heal itself, roll this trait when the creature uses it.

Astral Hit Points: In general, these are equal to the maximum plus minimum rolls on astral defense (in the same way physical hit points relate to a physical trait such as Strong). Astral hit points work like physical hit points in all ways except for healing, which is faster for astral creatures. Every day, a free-roaming astral creature recovers a number of astral hit points equal to the number of Astral Defense dice it has. (Example: A psychovore with 3 dice gets 3 Astral Hit Points back per day.)

CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

Angel of Death

These overwhelmingly powerful creatures are—thankfully—extremely rare. When they manifest on the material plane, their response to human contact is always the same: to grab the soul of the nearest person, drag it out of the body, and carry it off to astral parts unknown. To those left on the material plane, it simply seems that the victim has died. The more tightly the victim is connected to the material plane, the messier the separation of body and soul. Those who can face death calmly often just subside, while those tied to the material may kick, scream, vomit, or even split open in their futile attempts to resist.

Use standard astral rules for the “attack,” though death means the soul has been taken, and the death angel then leaves with it. Each death angel takes only one soul.

Astralists speculate that angels of death are highly evolved beings from distant planes, and that they carry the victim beyond the material plane to higher levels of consciousness and existence. Whether this behavior is vile interference or “tough love” depends on who you talk to. It’s possible that the death angels are actually doing the best thing they can for the low-evolved humans they meet, and that only those who see things from the material perspective see physical death as a misfortune.

The chosen target of an angel of death sees it as the grim reaper, a churning void, a heavenly being, or a deceased loved one, depending on his state of mind. Others see the angel as a vague presence of glowing energy.

Mentality: Super-human, uncompromising, ineffable

Astral Attack & Damage: 12 dice, X3

Astral Defense: 8 dice

Hit Points: 60

Argus

The argus is a psychovore often used for guarding. It has excellent senses (6 dice vs. any attempts to sneak past it) and can defend against up to five attackers simultaneously without their receiving bonus dice on their attacks.

On the astral plane, an argus looks like a mammalian beast with numerous eyes, arms, and claws.

Mentality: Childlike and stubborn

Astral Attack & Damage: 3 dice, X3 damage

Astral Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 32

Canary, Astral

Bound to an object that is carried around. When any sort of dangerous astral activity is present, the canary dies, alerting the agent before the agent would feel the effects. Of course, the agent does not know the type of danger present.

Mentality: About as smart as a cat, nervous

Astral Attack & Damage: None

Astral Defense: 1 die

Astral Hit Points: 7

Hound, Astral

An astral hound can “smell” magic and discern between magics cast by different beings.

A character must move to the astral plane (as with the shiv Astral Navigation) or have an astral reader (see below) to communicate with the hound.

On the astral plane, an astral hound looks like a caterpillar 50 centimeters long and 15 centimeters thick. It has feathery antennae in three rows along its back.

Mentality: Smart as a dog, curious

Astral Attack & Damage: 2 dice, X2

Astral Defense: 2 dice

Astral Hit Points: 14

Martyr

Martyrs are highly advanced astral beings, perhaps the descendants of human-like creatures that evolved into bodiless, astral entities. They come from distant areas of the astral plane where they live lives that humans cannot comprehend. When encountered and brought in contact with humans, a martyr's most common reaction is to attach itself to the human and watch it constantly. Theory has it that they are bored with their lives and find humans' lives fascinating. Fascinating enough to die for.

When malignant astral energy threatens the martyr's charge, it interposes itself between the energy and the target. If it can match the incoming energy with its astral defense roll, the martyr is unharmed. Otherwise the martyr dies. In either case, the spell is blocked.

Martyr's do not discriminate between those who do or don't deserve to be saved. They are as willing to lay down their lives for scoundrels and villains as for heroes and altruists.

Mentality: Beyond human, incomprehensible.

Astral Attack & Damage: 0.

Astral Defense: 3 dice.

Astral Hit Points: 18.

Psycho-Skeeter

Though they are called skeeters ("mosquitos"), psycho-skeeters are much more dangerous than their namesakes on the material plane. They are small, subtle psychovores. Instead of attacking outright, a psycho-skeeter latches onto a target's astral body and drains astral energy from him. This drain causes a loss of vital energy. The host is lethargic, cranky, and not capable of performing up to par (penalty die on all mental, psychic, and perceptive rolls). In addition, if the character has an Astral Pool, or otherwise gains fringe power from his astral body (GM's discretion), a psycho-skeeter reduces the character's pool by one shot.

Two psycho-skeeters feeding off the same person will cause two penalty dice on mental, psychic, and perceptive dice; two shots from the Astral

Pool; and a penalty die on all other rolls.

Fortunately, psycho-skeeters are very protective of their prey and generally fight over an astral body until only one of them is left to prey on it. This fighting, however, involves sending their own astral energies into the host's astral body, this spoiling the host's energy for the rival psycho-skeeter. As far as the host is concerned, the result of this kind of fighting is dizziness and disorientation.

Getting rid of a psycho-skeeter can be tough, especially because many people are not even subtle enough to notice the problem in the first place. Reversing polarity works, generally giving a skeeter a bad enough "taste" that it will not return to the host. (Roll the victim's Reverse Polarity ability against the skeeter's Astral Defense.) Other ways of altering or "souring" the host's astral energy have also been found successful in driving away a skeeter. Of course, traveling to the astral plane and just smashing the irritating things works as well. Meditation and similar disciplines make one's astral energy harder to drain, discouraging skeeters, but only the strongest are truly immune.

Psycho-skeeters are common, and a significant but small minority of the human population is afflicted by these parasites without knowing it. Wild skeeters may drain a victim for days or weeks before being sated. Skeeters used as weapons are generally starved before being freed near the target.

On the astral plane, a psycho-skeeter often appears as a grotesque insectoid almost a meter long.

Intelligence: About as smart as a lizard.

Astral Attack & Damage: 3 dice, special.

Astral Defense: 1 die.

Astral Hit Points: 7.

Tube Worm, Astral

The virus-like creatures might not be living things at all, but simply some type of dangerous astral structure. They may be naturally occurring, or the creations of some unknown evil genius in distant space/time.

CLOAKS

When the tube worm contacts one's astral body, it begins burrowing until it reaches the physical body, which takes perhaps 10 to 20 seconds. At that point, the victim feels something disturbing touching his flesh, followed almost immediately by blinding and incapacitating pain. At this point, the tube worm has created a shunt from the material to the astral body, and the energies of different levels of self being to mix rapidly. Within another 10 to 20 seconds, the various levels of self have dissipated into undifferentiated astral energy, leaving the body completely lifeless. Cause of death seems to be stroke, heart attack, or some other sudden tragedy.

Attempts to contact those killed by a tube worm have so far met with failure, as far as the experts know (or are admitting to each other).

Polarity reversal may expel a tube worm, as can fighting it on the astral plane.

The really tricky thing about the tube worm is that it is fickle. It is as likely to fall upon someone trying to use it as it is to strike that person's intended target. No one knows why this is, but despite precautions taken by those who wish to use the worms, the handlers are as likely to be struck as are the targets. This inexplicable fact makes the hideous and lethal tube worm an assassination tool only for the desperate or committed.

On the astral plane, a tube worm often looks like a shifting, wriggling, bumpy, organic tube about a meter long and 10 to 15 cm wide.

Mentality: None discernible.

Astral Attack & Damage: 6 dice, special damage.

Astral Defense: 1 die.

Hit Points: 7



Astral tube worms, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

DRUGS

Cloaks use some of the weird recreational drugs described in the Deep Overview chapter of *OTE*, but these two drugs are almost exclusively used by cloaks.

HOSUFF

Keyed to the speech center of the brain, hosuff completely suspends the target's ability to comprehend speech, even the internal speech of thought. As a result, anyone who takes it hears spoken words as nonsense sounds and written words and simply lines and curves. As internal speech (thought) becomes impossible, the taker quickly loses the ability to understand intent or causality. Under the influence of hosuff, one reverts to a mindless, timeless now. (Ingrained habits, however, such as using a toilet or even smoking a cigarette, often survive.) The drug latches onto the neurons and won't let go until washed away by the antidote.

Given offensively, hosuff can incapacitate an enemy. Used defensively, it can prevent one from being interrogated. Even psychic probes prove useless against a hosuff-user. (It is a bit less extreme than the traditional cyanide capsule.)

Those who have come out from under prolonged hosuff intoxication are often overjoyed at being "reborn." Others, however, inexplicably kill themselves out of unspeakable despair.

Though the supply is limited, and currently only in the hands of a very few, it's possible that some people with access would choose to use the drug recreationally.

The name "hosuff" doesn't mean anything at all.

POLITICO

Sodium Pentathol and other "truth serums" aren't all they're cracked up to be, so some oppenheimer cooked up "politico," the "lie serum." Politico causes people to lie. Since cloaks are prone to lying when interrogated, the drug is hard to resist. Getting lies out of a prisoner isn't as good as get-

ting the truth, but it's better than getting ambiguous results, and truth is hard to come by in the first place. The added advantage is that the subject of interrogation often comes away thinking "I didn't give them a drop of information."

Here's an example of a quisling being interrogated while on politico:

Interrogator: We understand that you're working toward the overthrow of the human race.

Quisling: No way! Not at all!

Interrogator: Now what we need to know is whether your masters are extra-dimensional.

Quisling: That's right. They're from a dimension called Omega Blue.

Interrogator: So they *are* extra-dimensional?

Quisling: Yes.

Interrogator: And are they also immortal.

Quisling: Immortal? What a stupid idea. No chance.

WEIRD TEK

Booster Music

Non-commercial cassettes (or CDs) of what sounds like "space music." Soothing, sweeping tones, reminiscent of the surf, slide over simple and complex rhythms of electronic notes. This music mimics on an audible level the functions of a healthy brain, bolstering the listener against all manner of mental attacks. In addition to simply aiding relaxation and inner harmony, these tapes provide a bonus die to resist fringe attacks, such as *bangungot* (see p. 74). Those who have these tapes often sleep to their sound or even go about listening to the music on headphones.

Those who are concerned about security split booster music into two separate tapes. Only when these two tapes are played simultaneously, and in sync, does the music provide any special benefit.

D'ngium

A metal that burns living flesh. See “Deep Troubles” in *The Myth of Self*.

Flip-Flop

A gas that confuses directional polarities. See “Deep Troubles” in *The Myth of Self*.

Identi-Tapes

For the cloak who needs to be someone different. Put on the headphones, play the tape, sit back, and become someone else. (It works best when the cloak has some way of softening the barriers between I and Not-I, and these psychic barriers prevent one from taking on the traits of others. A joint or self-hypnosis are both good bets.) The tapes subliminally implant ideas, mannerisms, and similar tags so that the cloak can assume a new identity more effectively. The cloak’s old identity is not erased, and the new identity is clearly differentiated as “other” in the mind of the cloak, so there is very little risk of damage to the self.

Rumor has it that these tapes are made by making psychic recordings of actual people, whose minds are destroyed in the process.

The Last Word

It’s not actually a word. In fact, very few people even know what it is. It’s some combination of sensory stimulus, probably visual but possibly combining hearing or other senses, that shuts down the human brain.

The origin of the Last Word clouded in contradictory hypotheses. Some say that it was a safety feature built into the slave-mutants by the Eight Evil Sages, something that they implanted in the warped genetic code of “humanity” to protect them in case the Pharaohs ever sent their troops against their masters. Others say that the human brain is a computer designed to answer a specific, unknown question that is beyond the human ability to conceive. The Last Word, according to this theory, is actually the answer to this question.

Once the brain receives the stimulus, its job is done, and it shuts down.

Historically, the Last Word has only been used by the Movers. In the Fifties, the Movers used the Last Word in several key operations around the world, and when other operatives, including Pharaoh quislings, figured out what it was, the Movers stopped using it. The fear is that if the Pharaohs were to get it, they would be able to take over the world within months. Rather than risk letting it fall into Pharaoh hands, the Movers have stopped using it. They claim to have destroyed all knowledge of the Last Word, but this is highly unlikely. Any reported use of the Last Word will no doubt cause great interest in the entire conspiracy community.

Sound Squisher

An electronic device that fits over the ears like a headphone. It receives sounds and transmits them to the wearer, who can use dials on the squisher to can alter the frequency (pitch) of sounds. Since the human ear is especially sensitive (“tuned”) to sounds of certain wavelengths especially those found in speech, many loud sounds are barely audible because they are high- or low-pitched. The typical setting of this device “squishes” sounds, making high pitches lower and low pitches higher. The user, therefore, can more easily detect low sounds (heavy objects moving, cars approaching, etc.) and high sounds (electronics devices in operation, a minor tremors in a liar’s voice). For greater sensitivity, the squisher can also be set to raise or lower all pitches encountered.

Without training, one has a hard time using the sound squisher because sounds are distorted. The squeak of a door, for example, doesn’t sound like a door squeaking when it is at a lower pitch — unless one knows what to listen for.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: For information on actual toys that cloaks may be interested in, check out *CORPS Technology 1991* by Greg Porter, a supplement written for his game *CORPS™*, both published by Blackburg Tactical Research Center.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SHIVS



Polarity reversal on the astral plane, illustrated by Ovi Hondru

Fringe powers and devices are good and bad for cloaking. They're a fun part of the series because they let the PCs do things that others can't do, helps them get more deeply involved in plots, and stretch the imagination.

They're bad when they become so important that they resolve the problems, leaving the characters themselves out of the equation. If a PC uses mind scanning to pick up important clues and move the plot along, that's great. If the PC uses mind scanning to solve the mystery at hand by means of a die roll, then it's out of hand.

When the fringe abilities or tools of the PCs are getting out of hand, it's about time to use judo on them. In judo, you turn the momentum of your opponent against him. It's the same in this case. If the PCs are solving mysteries by telepathy, then their nemesis uses a "thought mimicker" to feed the PCs disinformation. Used to relying on telepathy, the PCs fall easily into a trap once the enemy can trick the telepath. If the PCs rely on fringe weapons to overcome their opponents, then a few opponents who are immune to these attacks, or who can disable the weapons, will force the PCs to re-learn caution.

LEARNING SHIVS

Companies often train their cloaks in the use of shivs. Every teacher has a different style, and every student may respond to a different approach, and every shiv may require a different method of instruction, so there are no hard and fast rules of what it takes to learn a shiv. General rules for learning shivs can be found in the Fringe Powers section of the Game Moderator's Rules chapter in OTE.

Each shiv described here is rated according to how difficult it is to learn. Use this rating as a guideline for how much effort a character must go through to learn the shiv. If the power is of medium difficulty, use the standard rule (the player must roll a single 6 in the experience roll). If the power is easy, the player must roll at least one 5 or 6. In addition, this power is easier to pick up than a medium power, requiring less training and potential. If the power is difficult, the player must roll *two* 6s. If he rolls one 6, he can "keep it" and apply it toward a later experience roll. (He doesn't have to roll both 6s at once.) In addition, set the requirements (time, training, and talent) for learning a difficult power higher than the requirements for learning a medium or easy power.

Of course, many cloaks learn shivs through non-standard techniques, and it's quite possible that you'll use some other system to simulate PCs learning fringe powers. If so, simply use the "easy, medium, difficult" ratings as a guide.

TECHNIQUES

Below are some ideas for different approaches that companies might take.

Structured fringe science catalyst: This might mean a carefully planned regimen of biofeedback and psychoactive drugs, direct stimulation of certain portions of the brain to activate latent psychic potential, or use of a virus to implant "psychic"

genes in the subject. These methods are popular among Gladsteins, Senders (Movers), the CPC, the D'Aubainnes, and the Pharaohs.

Experimental fringe science catalyst: As above, but with less certain results and a higher risk of side effects. Possibilities include exposure to strange energies, introducing powerful chemicals into the bloodstream, or just applying a series of chemical, psychological, physical, and electromagnetic stressed until something "gives." These dangerous methods are in use by the LeThuys, and other companies also use them occasionally, both to produce fringe powers and to experiment.

Psychic or Magical Tutor: An accomplished shiver guides the student in developing psychic or magical powers. This process is slow, and it demands a good deal of time from a powerful shiver, but it is also low on side effects. Earthlings, Vornites, and Hermetics prefer this method.

Psychic or Magical Stress: Magic and psychic assaults, psychological stress, mental confusion, and exposure to strong magical or psychic energies can sometimes bring forth latent powers. The subject rarely even knows that he is being "taught." In theory, this process never leads to psychosis, but the results are unpredictable. Sir Arthur Compton is the most renowned practitioner of this art, but Hermetics and Earthlings have been known to use it as well

EXPLAINING NEW SHIVS TO PLAYERS

There's no guarantee that the PC's teacher is going to explain every detail about every power the PC may learn. Even those explanations that the teacher can give must be couched in real-life terms, not in terms of game mechanics. No mystic mentor would say, "And if your target is more than ten meters away, you get a penalty die," though one might say, "The closer you are to your target, the better."

LIST OF SHIVS

| Shiv | Brief | Type | Difficulty |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|------------|
| Astral Navigation | Operating on the Astral Plane | Astral | Medium |
| Bangungut | Attacks sleeping men | Astral | Difficult |
| Detachable Hands | Independent hands | Special | Special |
| Dog's Nose | Smell fear | Psychic | Easy |
| Override Sense | | | |
| <i>Sight</i> | Replaces target's vision | Psychic | Difficult |
| <i>Hearing</i> | Replaces target's hearing | Psychic | Difficult |
| <i>Touch</i> | Replaces target's touch | Psychic | Difficult |
| <i>Smell/Taste</i> | Replaces target's smell & taste | Psychic | Difficult |
| <i>Internal Sense</i> | Replaces target's internal sense | Psychic | Difficult |
| Polarity Reversal | Astral defense | Astral | Easy |
| Rabbit in the Hole | Target heads to safe place | Spell | 15* |
| Senso-Temporal Distortion | | | |
| <i>Sight</i> | Moves sight through time | Psychic | Difficult |
| <i>Hearing</i> | Moves sound through time | Psychic | Difficult |
| <i>Touch</i> | Moves touch through time | Psychic | Difficult |
| <i>Smell/Taste</i> | Moves smell & taste through time | Psychic | Difficult |
| Wandering Sense | | | |
| <i>Eye</i> | Attaches sight to other | Psychic | Medium |
| <i>Ear</i> | Attaches hearing to other | Psychic | Medium |
| <i>Skin</i> | Attaches touch to other | Psychic | Medium |
| <i>Tongue</i> | Attaches smell & taste to other | Psychic | Medium |
| Whammy | Stuns target | Psychic | Medium |
| Wolf-Loping | Tireless action | Astral | Easy |

* See description.

Power: Name of the shiv.

Brief: What the shiv does.

Type: Psychic, draws on the user's power and works on the "psychic plane." Astral, draws on the user's connection to astral energy and works on the astral plane. Spell, as astral, plus it is learned and used according to the rules for spells.

Difficulty: Easy, can be learned by someone with limited psychic or astral potential; roll a 5 or 6 to learn it. Medium, can be learned by someone with moderate potential, provided with adequate instruction; roll a 6 to learn it. Difficult, can only be learned by someone with good potential and plenty of training; roll two 6s to learn it.

Gimmicks

It's possible to learn "gimmicks," small tricks or skills related to a shiv. A gimmick expands the possibilities of a shiv but is not important enough to qualify as a trait or shiv in its own right.

Learning a gimmick usual costs 3 experience dice, but it can cost from 1 to 4 dice depending on its power. (If it is powerful enough to cost 5 dice, then it's powerful enough to be a trait or shiv in its own right.) The cost of a gimmick, and whether it's possible in the first place, are subject to GM approval.

For instance, the shiv Wandering Ear allows one to hear through another's ears. One possible gimmick related to this shiv is the ability to repeat the words heard simultaneously, so that those around the shiver can essentially listen in on the conversations that the shiver hears. The shiver, however, cannot accurately repeat foreign languages and can even mess up thickly accented words and phrases. This gimmick costs 3 dice.

Creating gimmicks is a great way for PCs to personalize their shivs, and a great way for you to throw an unexpected challenge at players who think they know how to deal with enemies fringe powers.

SHIV DESCRIPTIONS

ASTRAL NAVIGATION

Medium Astral Shiv

Getting to and moving about on the astral plane. This ability does not allow one to interact with the material plane. For instance, the character cannot attack the astral bodies of material beings, spy on the material plane, or otherwise affect material things.

A character can use this ability for both astral attack and astral defense rolls. Unless the character learns other shivs that increase his damage-dealing capacity, his damage factor with astral attacks is X1.

Range: Self

Duration: Indefinite

BANGUNGUT

Difficult Astral Shiv

An advanced magical attack that sends one's astral form to a sleeping man. Each night, the attacker rolls versus the defender.

- If the defender's roll is double the attacker's roll, the sleeper has broken the contact and is thereafter immune to the attacker's bangungut shiv (until the attacker gains another die in this skill, at which point he can strike again).
- If the defender's roll matches or exceeds the attacker's, he is unharmed that night.
- If the attacker's roll exceeds the defender's, the defender takes damage as in combat, with a X2 damage multiplier. This damage takes the form of weakness and fatigue. If the subject cannot recover above 0 hit points, he dies, apparently of cardiac arrest.

The defender may wake up during a bangungut attack. If he rolls a 6 on his defense roll, he wakes up and senses the attack. It feels like doom, apprehension, and helplessness, possibly accompanied by labored breathing. The subject often has a sense that someone is nearby, and may even see a small man or fiend sitting on his chest. (Someone unfamiliar with magical assaults may mistake these sensations for nightmares or hallucinations.)

Bangungut affects only men because it attacks the victim by calling up the subject's phallic energy and using it against him.

"Bangungut" means "to rise and moan in sleep" in Tagalog, and is called "*pokkuri*" in Japan. This form of magical attack was originally developed in southeast Asia, and some doctors believe that Asian men are simply more susceptible to

dying in their sleep than are men of other races. (Every year, several hundred apparently healthy men are found dead in bed in the Tokyo District alone [Ishiyama, 1982].) In fact, there are simply more practitioners of bangungut in Asia than elsewhere. (Ishiyama I., et al. "Fulminant deletion of myoglobin fibres in state of acute cardiac failure inducing sudden cardiac arrest." *Lancet* 1982; 2: 1468-1469)

An attacker can only use bangungut against one target per night.

Range: 100 km (must have a link to the target, such as a photo of him or possession of his)

Duration: Each attack lasts a minute or two

DETACHABLE HANDS

Special Power

The cloak's hands detach at the wrist, where they are joined to the arm by a barely detectable seam. The hands are in telepathic contact with their owner, and they can scurry about and manipulate objects. They cannot see or hear, nor can they float through the air. Since they have so little mass, they are largely ineffectual in combat.

The hands can be telepathically commanded, and they can also be left with simple "standing orders." For instance, a hand could be placed on a plug in a wall socket and ordered to pull the plug when it feels the vibrations of footsteps in the room.

One drawback of detachable hands is that they can be knocked off in a fight. This event is uncommon, but any force that would sprain or break a wrist will dislodge the hand instead.

It's hard to handcuff someone who has detachable hands.

This shiv isn't so much a skill as a physical trait. It can't be "learned"; it must be produced through fringe surgery. When the surgery is complete the character has a 1 die skill in controlling the hands, and this skill can increase through experience.

Range: No known limit to range of control

Duration: Continuous

DOG'S NOSE, AKA "FEAR SNIFFING"

Easy Psychic Power

Smelling fear, as dog's are reputed to do. Beginners can tell when someone nearby is afraid, and that information may help them detect subterfuge. Advanced practitioners can track down frightened people by their scent. It takes repeated exposure to a subject to learn to differentiate that subject's fear-scent from that of others.

Some fear-sniffers develop a strong distaste for the scent of fear, and they only feel comfortable socializing with confident people. Others develop an appreciation for, or even addiction to, the smell. Many of these latter shivers become bullies, stalkers, or even rapists and murderers as they pursue the scent of fear.

Range: Self

Duration: Indefinite

OVERRIDE SENSE

Difficult Psychic Shiv

Causes the target to sense what the Overrider wants him to sense. For instance, Override Hearing allows the shiver to alter what the target hears (such as changing the tone of a third party's voice), add some sound (such as a call for help from another room), or even completely blank out normal sounds and replace them entirely with phantom sounds under the shiver's control. Override Internal Sense allows the shiver to alter the target's sense of where his limbs are, which direction is up, and so on. Override Touch allows the shiver to induce sensations on the target's skin. While these sensations can be painful, they never do damage. The other version of this shiv are self-explanatory.

Five forms of this shiv are most common (sight, hearing, touch, taste/smell, and internal sense), though narrower abilities (such as projecting voices or projecting specific sensations) have also been reported. The small Sender Cell of the Movers takes credit for developing training methods in Overriding.

An Overrider must imagine vividly any sensations to be projected onto another, so sensations with which the Overrider are familiar are most effective. Since the shiver must be able to imagine a sensation vividly to project it, cloaks who Override Touch are generally subjected to torture as part of their training. That way they can better project painful sensation.

Sense Overriders must overcome resistance in the target mind to be effective. The mind protects its reality-hypothesis staunchly, and sensations that deeply challenge the target's reality-hypothesis may be summarily dismissed or categorized as meaningless. For instance, if one projects the Voice of God to a dogmatic atheistic, his mental defense systems may categorize the voice as "just my imagination — gotta get more rest." If no other option exists, the mental filters may just cause the consciousness not to pay attention to stimulus that threatens the reality-hypothesis.

Range: Sight, within 15 m

Duration: Concentration

POLARITY REVERSAL

Easy Astral Shiv

A trick that reverses one's astral polarity momentarily and then reverses it back to normal. This trick shrugs off psycho-skeeters, astral (magical) domination, and so forth. It also drives off any psychovores in contact with the Reverser, though only for a moment. If the roll is unsuccessful (compared to a roll for the attacker's astral strength), it means the Reverser was unable to reverse polarity completely, as contact with the

attacker kept him connected to his previous, normal polarity.

Range: Self

Duration: Instant

RABBIT IN THE HOLE

Level 15 Spell

Developed from a mundane spell to cause fear, Rabbit in the Hole has a specific purpose. It makes the target afraid and makes him seek out the safest place he knows. This added effect makes the spell very useful for determining where a cloak's hole or his hiding spot is. Cast Rabbit in the Hole on him and follow him.

The spell has been known to backfire in amusing ways, as when a targeted cloak leaves Al Amarja altogether and flies back to his mother's house.

Range: Sight, 100 m

Duration: Until completed

SENSO-TEMPORAL DISTORTION

Difficult Psychic Shiv

This is the ability to displace one sense in time. There is a separate shiv for each sense: sight, hearing, taste/smell, and touch.

The most common effect is to displace sound backward, so that one hears and makes sounds, for example, thirty seconds late. Imagine that someone with backwards-shunted sound walks down a hallway toward a guard. The guard will not hear the cloak's footsteps until thirty seconds after the cloak takes his steps (by which time an efficient cloak will have disposed of the guard). On the other hand, if the cloak trips an alarm, he won't hear that sound until thirty seconds later.

A clever cloak can do several tricks with this ability. For instance, he can yell at the guard in

the above situation, hurry to a hiding place, and then wait for the guard to come investigate the yell thirty seconds later. At that point, the cloak may be able to slip into the door that the guard had been watching.

Displacing sight is a powerful shiv because it makes the cloak temporarily invisible.

Unfortunately, the cloak then cannot navigate by sight, since he himself is receiving old visual data, so it can be as much a hindrance as a help.

The actual time that one can displace senses equals the shiv roll in rounds. If the player does not want the sense displaced the full amount, he can choose any die or combination of dice from the roll instead of using the full amount.

Range: Self

Duration: The roll in minutes

WANDERING SENSE

Medium Psychic Shiv

There are four versions of this shiv: Wandering Eye, Wandering Ear, Wandering Skin, and Wandering Tongue.

Eye — Lets the shiver see what the target sees. The target still sees normally and does not even notice the intrusion unless he can somehow detect otherwise indiscernible psychic phenomena. The shiver actually receives the target's sensorial input. If a color blind shiver wanders his eye onto someone with color vision, he sees color. (This particular trick can be mind-blowing for someone who's never seen color before.) A blind person can even see by wandering his eye onto someone else.

Getting one's sight back can be difficult. Strange psychic fields, the presence of a powerful psychic, chance harmonics between the trivial (non-message-bearing) DNA of the target and the shiver, and other unpredictable complications can sometimes make it difficult to retrieve one's sight. Sight has also been known to wander off, flitting from person to person, following the subtle tides of psychic fields.

The player must roll for Wandering Eye when placing the sight on the target and when maintaining it.

To wander sight onto a target, the target must be in sight of or touching the character, and the player must beat the target's psychic defense roll (default: 2 dice). Touching the target gives the shiver a bonus die, as does maintaining concentration for three rounds (touching, staring, etc.) The shiver suffers a penalty die if the target is 10 m or more away; he suffers 2 penalty dice if the target is 100 m or more away. One kilometer seems to be the practical maximum distance for this shiv.

You may increase the target's resistance roll if the target is of a different nature from the shiver. A mutant with altered vision may get 3 dice instead of the default 2, an extraterrestrial or animal may get 4 dice, and an android may be impossible to target successfully (unless it is organic).

Once the eyes have been successfully wandered to a target, the shiver cannot see through his own eyes. Navigating becomes very disorienting, worse than walking with one's eyes closed because the character gets visual data that contradict tactile data rather than getting no data at all. To operate as merely "blind" rather than "worse than blind," the character must be able to make a Wandering Eye roll of 9 or better, representing enough familiarity with the phenomenon to ignore visual stimulus even on a reflex level. (Of course, if the target has his eyes closed or is in very dark room, the shiver is already effectively blind, and the roll is unnecessary.)

The shiver must also roll to maintain contact with a target who is out of sight. These rolls must be made when the target first moves out of the presence of the shiver and then again every minute. The rolls are again versus the target's psychic defense (default: 2 dice).

The shiver must make whatever other rolls are called on when circumstances interfere with the contact. For instance, if the shiver is injured, the target passes behind a psychic barrier (such as a Seversen Disruption Field; see Defensive

Technology in OTE), the target is exposed to blinding lights, and so on.

A shiver can attempt to wander his eyes onto two targets at once. He can either wander his eyes onto both simultaneously, or onto first one and then the other. In the first case, the shiver rolls for each target, and he must beat the rolls on the targets' psychic defense abilities added together. For example, if the character tries to wander his eyes onto two people with normal psychic defense (2 dice), each target would get a resistance roll of 4 dice. In the second case, the first attempt is of normal difficulty. To make the second attempt, the shiver must beat a roll of the two targets' resistances combined. In addition, the shiver must immediately roll to maintain the first target at the new, combined resistance. In either case, all rolls to maintain the contact are against both targets' resistances combined. It's possible, but impractical, to add a third target. The shiver can take in visual input from all connected sources simultaneously.

Ear — Like Wandering Eye, but with hearing.

Skin — Like Wandering Eye, but with touch.

Those blessed with this shiv give a new meaning to the term "safe sex."

Tongue — Like Wandering Eye, but with taste and smell.

Range: Sight, out to 1 km (see above)

Duration: Concentration; costs one extra psychic shot per hour, in addition to the shot used to establish contact

WHAMMY, AKA "PSYCHIC BLAST" OR "THE HAMMER"

Medium Psychic Shiv

A powerful but imprecise version of Sending (see OTE), the Whammy directs energetic

thought-waves at a target's mind. While "Sending" aligns the target's thoughts in such a way that the target "hears" the Sender's thoughts, the Whammy just knocks thought around at random. If the Whammer's roll exceeds that of the target, the target is stunned for one round and after that receives a penalty die on all actions for a number of rounds equal to the number of dice in the Whammer's skill.

Since every action has an equal and opposite reaction, the Whammer runs a risk of being knocked around himself. If the attacking roll is half or less of the defending roll, the Whammer suffers the effects that the target should have.

Range: Sight, out to the roll in meters

Duration: Instant

WOLF - LOPING

Easy Astral Shiv

Moving about in one's sleep and performing basic tasks. The Wolf-Loper goes into a trance and sets to the task, asleep. He can continue until the task is done, at which point he falls asleep, or conscious intervention is needed, in which case he wakes up. A Wolf-Loper who is typing handwritten notes into a computer would fall asleep once the notes were done, but a phone call or knock on the door would rouse him. If there were enough notes to last a complete sleep cycle, the Wolf-Loper would wake up as normal.

This skill was originally developed by native North American shamans, who frequently used it for running great distances as they slept.

The roll on this ability represents how well and efficiently the Wolf-Loper operates while asleep.

Range: Self

Duration: See above

APPENDIX

DOSSIERS

Gaining information for a dossier and determining what information to include is a major part of many cloaks' workloads. When writing a dossier, the agent does not want to include extraneous information (which distracts those who consult the dossiers) but also doesn't want to neglect potentially vital data. Thus skill and experience determine how effective a dossier a cloak is able to compose.

The following dossiers might be found in the Gladsteiner hole under Club St. Augustine (p. 35), in the Mover hole that Maumon penetrates (p. 21), or anywhere else they would fit. Cloaks of other companies, as well as other cells within the Movers, use different formats for their dossiers, so invent different standards when creating other cloaks' records.

Some of these dossiers, of course, are wrong. Sometimes the cloak who writes the dossier gets the wrong information. Sometimes the cloak is a double-agent and inserts misinformation intentionally. Sometimes the cloak puts the misinformation in the files so as to foul up anyone who might steal the records.

Notes on Dossiers

Subjects of Dossiers

Al-Baqr: See Plaza of Flowers in OTE (Madame Vylaska).

Le Couteau: A contact for Maumon (p. 15-16). This dossier underestimates him.

Lubna Denucci: This is essentially accurate. See her description on p. 63.

Karny Geissler: This dossier is the only write-up of Geissler. There is no description of him elsewhere, so it's up to you to decide what's really going on with him.

"Melter": This is Saul (p. 18). The author of this dossier knows precious little about him.

Prem K. Sharma: See Pharaohs in OTE. He is the target of Maumon (p. 15).

Madame Vylaska: See Plaza of Flowers in OTE. The Movers either don't know that she is actually a high-level Cell Z agent, or they want to help her cover, because this dossier confirms the ruse she presents to al-Baqr.

Explanation of Dossier Terms

KA: "Known As" (i.e., most common name or nick-name).

AKA: "Also Known As."

RES: "Residence" Note that, for privacy's and safety's sake, most Al Amarjans do not list their addresses in the phone book, and many have no entry at all, so this information is not trivial.

SEC: Basic appraisal of security, usually of the residence, possibly personal. "O" means "offensive," such as mantraps, gases, curses, and so on. "O & D" means "offensive and defensive." Unless otherwise noted, security is defensive (preventing or detecting entry, but not harming intruders).

TIES: Connections to various covert groups, ranked from 1 (peon) to 10 (leader). Connections listed in quotes are what the subject *thinks* is the case.

RACE: Race and nationality.

GENDER: Sex and preference.

HT: Height in centimeters.

MS: Mass in kilos.

BIRTH: Year of birth (often approximate).

PHYS: Physical description.

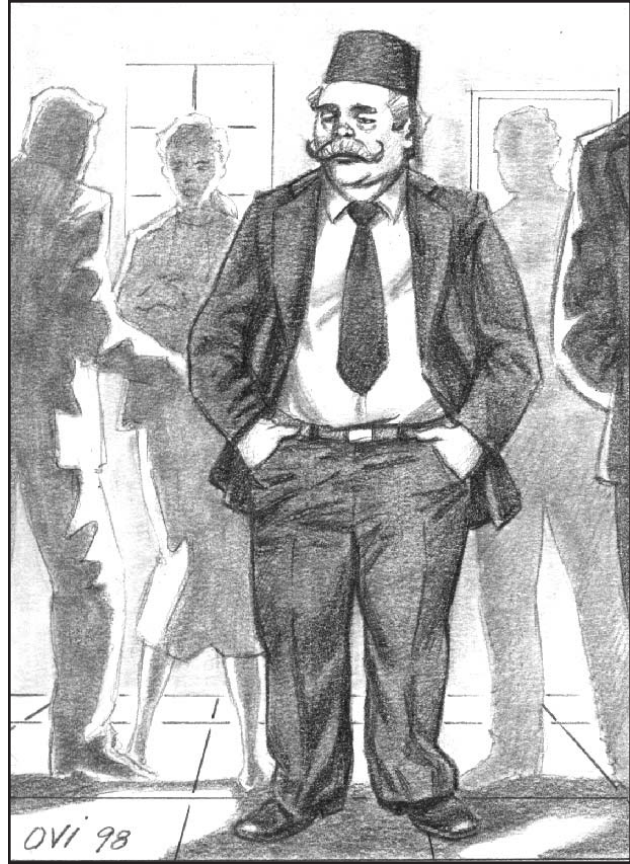
ABILITIES: Apparent skills and talents, mundane and fringe.

ACTIVITIES: Covert activities, or other reasons for holding the person in suspicion.

FAMILY: Most cloaks are single or operate away from their families.

, **, ** Asterisks represent degrees of uncertainty. The more asterisks, the less sure the writer was that this information is accurate.

KA: Hamoud al-Baqr
AKA: Hamdi Waijalti
RES: Unkn.
SEC: Covert bodyguard
TIES: Vornite 5
RACE: Turk
GENDER: Male unkn.
HT: 170 cm
MS: 80 kg
BIRTH: 1939
PHYS: Fat
ABILITIES: Sub-vocalization*
ACTIVITIES: Courier, investigator.
Travels the Mediterranean: Al
Amarja, Libya, Egypt, Israel,
Turkey, Greece.
FAMILY: Estranged*



FILE IMAGE/PHOTO

KA: Le Couteau
AKA: Pierre Ascon
RES: 178 Mother-of-Pearl Ave.,
Burbs. 560238.
SEC: Dog, else unkn.
TIES: None*
RACE: Gallic French
GENDER: Male hetero
HT: 180 cm
MS: 75 kg
BIRTH: 1960*
PHYS: Muscular, good shape.
ABILITIES: Athletic, martial
arts**, excellent verbal.
ACTIVITIES:
As editor at AAT, has access to
information, including that
not published.
Frequent correspondence with
friends in France.
Fan of cinema. Regular at Cinema
d'Vivisection.
1989: A free lance reporter for AAT sent him an article with informa-
tion about a time-space-consciousness distortion related to Agent
Widder's demise. Le Couteau did not publish the article, but did
send word of it to friends in France. His messages were inno-
cent.*
1992: Hosted friend from Tunisia. The friend, Etienne Marush, is a
frill for an underground anti-fundamentalist movement.**
FAMILY: Distant, living in France.



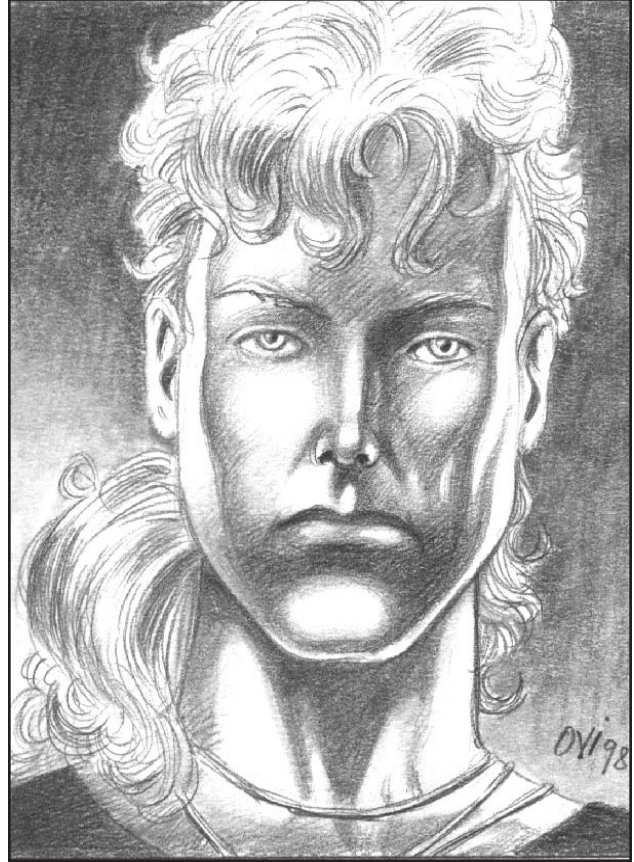
FILE IMAGE/PHOTO

KA: Lubna Denucci
AKA: -
RES: 451 Bismark #307, Four
Points. 732095
SEC: Poor**
TIES: "Arab Liberty 2," Quisling
Frill 1.
RACE: Arab Saudi
GENDER: Female monoandrous
HT: 165 cm
MS: 55 kg
BIRTH: 1963
PHYS: Medium build, long black
hair, small nose
ABILITIES: Rudimentary investiga-
tion
ACTIVITIES:
Convinced by quislings that she
is working for non-existent
"Arab Liberty," a covert group
whose goal is to liberate the
Arab world from fundamentalist
Islam.
Strongly anti-Muslim. 1984: Fled Saudi Arabia for freedom of the
West.
Gathers information on inhabitants and visitors, usually Arabs.
Provides information to quisling cloaks posing as "Arab Liberty"
agents.
*Traditional Muslim targets underestimate her because she is female,
allowing her to observe without raising suspicion.
1991: Recruited by "Arab Liberty."
1993: Surveilled al-Baqr.
1993: Surveilled Mahmud Mallaga. Mallaga is an Earthling* agent with
an ability to manipulate time**. He was in AA to help arrange
truce status with the Company.*
1994: Surveilled Husayn Ajbar, a Dionysian contact. Denucci's con-
trollers did not understand Ajbar's true value to Dionysians.**
FAMILY: Husband- Guiseppe Denucci, Italian, b. '49. Daughter- Gloria,
b. '88. Son- Andre, b. '90.



FILE IMAGE/PHOTO

KA: Karny Geissler
AKA: Carnivore, Der Fleischesser
(Ger. "meat-eater"), Heinrich
Geissler
RES: 610 Guatama Blvd., 3rd Floor,
Great Men (actually lives in
3rd & top 4th floors).
SEC: Electronic, psychic, astral,
O & D hex, O & D hardware,
Safe n Sound.
TIES: Dionysus Cell 7, friendly
with other Cells
RACE: Nordic German
GENDER: Male bi
HT: 185 cm
MS: 80 kg
BIRTH: 1960*
PHYS: Tall, energetic, blond, blue
eyes, thin nose, hex-tattoos
on buttocks.
ABILITIES: Excellent personal
influence, excellent
painter/musician/ dancer, art
as vector for psychic/sublimi-
nal influence*
ACTIVITIES:



FILE IMAGE/PHOTO

Prominent in the AA art scene,
giving him access to information
in the collective unconscious,
and ability to influence same.
Resource for other Movers, consults on symbolic, artistic, or poetic
problems not soluble via materialist idioms.
Access to wealthy patrons of the arts, accepted (albeit not always
respected) in Broken Wings society.
Cultivates cadre of artist frills, cloaks, bodyguards, wannabes,
groupies, and friends. Three attempts to infiltrate cadre led to
two repulsions and one hostile** conversion.
1992: Newly introduced violent elements in dance performance caused
mob uprising against rival dance artist Hemlock. Hemlock survived,
but with permanent nerve damage that prevents her from dancing.
Hemlock used her art to influence collective unconscious.* Hemlock
is a Vornite agent.**
1994: Music/dance routine directed psychic energy of the audience to
help Hermetics reconstitute Scroll of Falling in Darkness. Several
audience members experienced migraines with evidence of permanent
neural damage. In return, Hermetics improved Geissler's astral
security systems.**
1994: Pansexual art musical causes riot. Audience members hurl
objects at performers and storm stage, killing two performers
before being subdued by Geissler's psychic security. This event
is the result of a psychic attack on Geissler*, agent and motive
unknown.
FAMILY: Unkn.

KA: unkn.
AKA: "Melter"
RES: unkn.
SEC: Personal weaponry only*
TIES: Pharaohs** 5**
RACE: Human(oid).
GENDER: unkn.
HT: unkn.
MS: unkn.
BIRTH: unkn.
PHYS: Humanoid, athletic**
ABILITIES:

Flesh disintegration.* Highly lethal.
Damage resistance.**
Thought suppression.** (Could be accomplice's shiv.)
Knowledge of security systems.

ACTIVITIES:

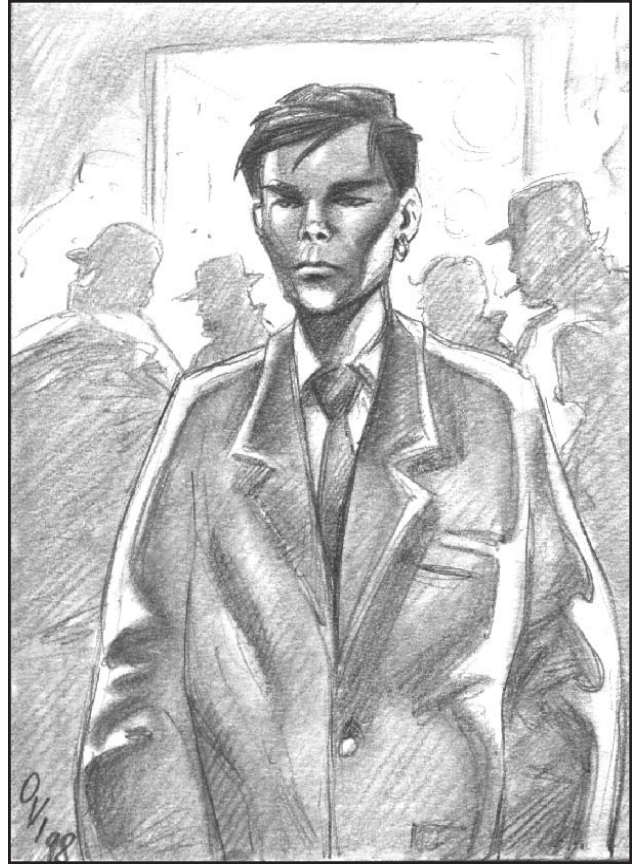
- *1993, assassinated Agent Rodeo, who was psychically dominating a quisling. Rodeo's body was "melted" or "disintegrated," but her clothes and gear were unharmed. Penetration showed knowledge of security systems.
- **1994, "blanked" Agent Sultana while he negotiated with Vornite. Sultana reports being unable to keep his thoughts straight every time he began to speak. Taken for a Vornite attack, this incident caused break-down of negotiations and eight Agent casualties.
- *1994, "blanked" Earthling agent in attempted exchange of information about Pharaohs, causing skirmish, three casualties, and end of truce conditions. Earthlings and our agents detected and attacked "Melter" to no effect. Stunner, coma gas, and projectiles proved ineffective. "Melter" hit three of our agents and two Earthlings with an invisible beam or projectile, causing terrible, burn-like wounds. Armor was untouched (and ineffectual).

FAMILY: unkn.

PHOTO
NOT
AVAILABLE

FILE IMAGE/PHOTO

KA: Prem K. Sharma
AKA: unknown
RES: Northern Africa,* western Europe*
SEC: Bodyguards, untested.
TIES: Pharaohs 9
RACE: "Indian," Pharaoh
GENDER: Male
HT: 175 cm
MS: 65 kg
BIRTH: ?
PHYS: Brown skin, short black hair, thin, clean-shaven.
ABILITIES: Ur-Master, any other non-fringe ability.
ACTIVITIES:
Operatives in AA.
Northern Africa: supporting fundamentalist movements and government crackdowns on same.
Germany: supporting Neo-Nazi movements.
***Asia Minor: Influenced composition of Nicene Creed.
**Europe: 1848-1852, corruption of French Second Republic, leading to Napoleon assuming title of Emperor.
**England: 1944, coordinated formation of U.N.
**AA: 1971, masterminded massacre of Moon Sisters, Hermetic sub-cell.
FAMILY: None.



FILE IMAGE/PHOTO

KA: Madame Vylaska
AKA: Petrushka Vylaska
RES: 523 Bienvenidos Hotel, 200
Plaza of Flowers, 756892 X7523
SEC: Electronics & hardware
TIES: Vornite 2
RACE: Slavic Pole
GENDER: Female hetero
HT: 165 cm
MS: 70 kg
BIRTH: 1945*
PHYS: Overweight, black hair,
brown eyes.
ABILITIES: Business management.
ACTIVITIES:

Gathers data for al-Baqr.
Runs Vylaska's Party Favors (drug
retail) in the Plaza of
Flowers.

*1990: Her vendors surveilled
Agent Libya during contact
with Earthlings.

1991: Called on Aries Gang to help Vornite agent escape our agents.
She does not know who was after him.*

1993: At al-Baqr's direction, cut marijuana stock with experimental
mind-control drug. Drug was failure.

*1994: At al-Baqr's direction, cut cocaine intended for Contact
Retsina with unknown partial poison. Partial poison interacted
with a substance Retsina consumed in Sad Mary's and killed him.
Retsina babbled as he died, possibly indicating that Vornite agents
were present to gather data. Retsina's babblings were meaning-
less.**

FAMILY: Estranged*



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